

## Remember When...

By Barbara (Spencer) Politis in honor of her father,  
Orono native Frank W. Spencer, Jr.

...you were a young boy and purchased your green Kennebec canoe? How excited you were as you paddled down the Stillwater River admiring the surroundings of Maine's natural beauty filled with rugged tree-lined banks. You must have felt as if you were the only person in the world as you paddled quietly along in the peacefulness of your own little world. Little did you know of the joy it would bring to many people.



...you took Ralph Palmer from the University of Maine on a guided tour of the Stillwater River? Ralph Palmer chose you to guide him down the river so he could study the beautiful birds along the way. What an honor to be chosen to guide him along his important expedition.

...you paddled along the Stillwater River and approached an area impassable by canoe? You would paddle to the shore, carry the canoe on land and return it to the water where it was safe. Then, sadly, one day your precious canoe broke on the rapids. Due to the kindness of your sister, Evelyn, the canoe was repaired while you were serving your country so that, upon your return, you could continue your adventures.

...you took your future wife on peaceful rides and included her in a special part of your little world? Let us not forget the sunburn she came back with.

...you took your daughters on canoe rides at Beech Hill Pond and taught them how to paddle and maneuver? The canoe had a new home at Beech Hill and would give much enjoyment to the family you were raising. During the winters, your Kennebec canoe had a special spot on the rafters inside the camp, protected from the harsh winters. To this day, that special spot still adds character to the coziness of camp.

...time after time we had our chance to experience the pleasures of your Kennebec canoe? We all could tell a story or two of our paddling adventures in your precious canoe - especially Mr. Finneault. Mr. Finneault, being of Indian heritage, gladly accepted your invitation of going for a paddle in your precious canoe. We all purposely did not tell him of the pet name we had for the canoe. As he ventured out towards the middle of the lake, we all watched in anticipation of what was inevitable. Mr. Finneault was about to discover that

the lifetime nickname for that great canoe was "THE TIPPY CANOE". To this day, I still remember the dismayed and surprised look on his face when he fell in the water!

Your canoe is filled with many memories for not only you, but for many people. The infamous "TIPPY CANOE". Who would ever guess the green



Kennebec canoe you purchased many years ago would be the source of so many adventures, thrills, and memories for your family, friends and a dignitary. Dad, if your Kennebec canoe could speak, I am quite certain it would begin by saying, "Frank, remember when...?"

**Both photos: Frank W. Spencer, Jr. on Pushaw Lake, circa 1940  
Donated by his daughter, Barbara (Spencer) Politis**

## Barbara's notes about this page:

My father, Frank W. Spencer, Jr., grew up on Kell Street in Orono, Maine. During his youth before and after serving his country in World War II, he enjoyed his 'Kennebec Canoe' by paddling on the Stillwater River and Pushaw Lake in the 1940s.

My mother was given a family cottage on Beech Hill Pond in Otis, Maine by her generous parents in the early 1960s. My father's Kennebec Canoe found a new home on Beech Hill Pond where we enjoyed our summers paddling on the lake. We have a lot of memories of my father's canoe and find ourselves curious of the canoe's historical path in life.

The photographs show my father in his canoe on Pushaw Lake. I wrote the poem "Remember When..." for my father many years ago. I gave it to him along with a small model of his Kennebec Canoe which he placed on his mantel at home.

My father's grandmother, Nellie Weeks-Spencer of Orono, Maine was one of the first women to graduate from the University of Maine. Nellie was a school teacher.

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