

Ah, those Sunapee summers!

By C. David Gordon

The following is part 2 of a series that describes C. David Gordon's beloved summer vacation in Sunapee, N.H., with his family.

In part one, Gordon and his family arrived by taxi at their vacation "hotel" and found a stark, two-story wood-frame building, with no guests in sight.

Where was the architectural elegance we had expected? And where was there room for any luxurious lawn we thought we'd be walking and playing games on? Why, this hotel's grounds didn't have room enough to accommodate even a croquet court.

The hotel had been built into a hillside, the land sloping down in back and, with the road running across its front, dipping down toward the center of Sunapee Harbor. Looking down the road we saw a commercial garage, a bingo parlor, a playhouse, a snack bar and gift shop combination, and just a small section of lake, none of it including a beach. All pretty uninspiring.

We did take our chance, though, struggled from the taxi, and brought ourselves and our baggage through the hostelry's front door. Inside the dark, cool lobby we met Ruth Kansor, who operated

the hotel.

She may have looked a bit harried, but she was friendly and cheerful. In no time we became convinced she was utterly devoted to her guests and their well-being.

She and her husband, Joe, whom we met later, were new owners of the hotel, and she was still getting comfortable in her new role. In order to make ends meet, Joe served as a bartender at an elite hotel located halfway along the shore road to the next town.

Each morning he'd leave the Harbor Hotel in his posh prewar Cadillac convertible with its dark red leather seats. His good looks, debonair moustache, and immaculate dress summed up for me all that I thought a hotel proprietor should look like. By contrast, the constant pressure of the daily operation of the hotel

left Ruth no time to look after what she was wearing or how she looked.

We soon discovered, though, that our hosts were excellent innkeepers. The food in the dining hall was wonderful and the waitstaff dedicated and capable.

By nightfall we had met a dining-room full of other guests, all of whom had been

away from the hotel on their own short trips during the day. Most of them were repeat lodgers from communities along the Atlantic coast. Some families brought three generations together at their dining-room table. Every one of them was

ready to welcome us into their midst. Following supper, we joined a group rocking and talking on the front verandah, while observing the busy night life starting up in this vacation spot.



Charles David Gordon



Harbor Hotel at Sunapee Harbor, N.H., in 1944.

Our room, a second-floor corner over the front door in the main portion of the hotel, was spacious and immaculate. From our front window we could see activity at what must have been the only farm located within the village itself.

From our side window, we could see, at the other end of the Harbor, the imposing Ben Mere Inn. Three stories high with a central tower rising majestically above it, the inn was set back on a swath of lawn facing the Harbor's central commercial docks.

Extending beyond them, in the distance, was an excellent vista of a long section of the lake with wooded shores.

At first we thought of the Ben Mere as the epitome of the grand hotel. It wasn't until after the war when we got to travel around the lake and saw the hotel where Joe worked as bartender, the Granliden Hotel, that we began to understand what true elegance and architectural beauty in hotels was all about. By then we knew of the Granliden's reputation for providing a range of hotel services and diversity of on-campus activities matching in fineness its physical appearance.