

Benches, Benches—Who's On the Benches?

by Chris Turner for the Community Revitalization Effort

The Village of Speculator and Town of Lake Pleasant (plus Piseco Airport) have a new look these days. In addition to extensive beautification efforts highlighted by flowers seemingly everywhere, the public roads into Speculator, at the Four Corners, at Oak Mountain and along Route 8 to and beyond Lake Pleasant hamlet now have 32 attractive cedar benches (with 3 more on the way) made at Jerry's Wood Shop for residents and visitors to spend a bit of time taking in the passing scene. Each bench has had a benefactor whose contribution has been merged with in-kind support from the Village and Town for installation and maintenance.

There is an almost-eerie connection from the present to the past in the list of honorees whose sponsors have had plaques affixed to the benches. While the majority of the benches honor deceased residents (both summer and year 'round), several recognize current community stalwarts and institutions. Perhaps the living and the "spirits" have an invisible but real connection as the benches are used and appreciated. Imagine:

...Here's ex-Mayor Collie Smith continuing in his long-time role (even in retirement) of checking on the lifeguards at the Public Beach, where benches honoring the Korb, Bailey and Pomerleau families are occupied by sun lovers in warm weather and leaf-peepers in cool. Collie might look over to the Osborne Point Park, given to the community by David and Gloria Fant, where a bench dedicated to them is nestled among the flower beds, and where benches placed in remembrance of Judge Steven and Beatrice Toth, Kathy Huber, and Larry and Jane Coolidge by their families make being among the old and new trees near or along the wall at the outlet of the lake even more satisfying, or to the "Pavilion" side of Route 8, where Mary Finkle, the Camoin Family, the Carr Family and Bill Finnerty are honored;

...of course, as Collie went a-walking from Oak Mt. Drive along Elm Lake Road and down Routes 8&30 to the Public Beach, he might have encountered the friendly ghosts of Bill Snyder (at Oak Mountain), Pastor Dick Snider, George Sherman, Lucille and Guy Wood, Charlie and Dot Downey (and their parents) looking down at the NAPA auto store, the Speculator Inn's Charlie and Ruby Price (at the McGovern home); stopped for a moment to take in the Keehn Family bench at Dave and Judy Nelson's flower-festooned garden and home, and then to say hello to the very much alive Liz Gillespie dispensing good cheer and spirits;

...and as he passed King of the Frosties, he might have remembered being served by Bill Snyder's daughter, then when he looked in at The Lemon Tree he might have felt the presence of Joe Simola visiting Peter and Marilyn over the years, and remembered when The Lemon Tree was Schoonmaker's.

...Perhaps on the same day, a resident of the area might have taken a drive around Lake Pleasant and Sacandaga Lake to connect with Rod Dill (at Isaiah's Picture Show), Frank Edwards (at the Methodist Church and the Library), Jack Rudes, Margaret Perkins at the "Church hole," Connollys present and past

(at the Lake Pleasant Post Office) and the Zimpel, King and Wang Families; and beyond to appreciate Dick Snider again (overlooking the golf course), Beverley Visscher and Rod Dill again (at the Airport);

...our driver might also have noted the many public benefit institutions along the routes: the fire houses and ambulance centers, the Senior Citizen Center, the Library, the Primary Care Center, the Twigs House, all of them and others staffed by “The Dedicated Volunteers Who Serve Our Community.”

The stories of the benches’ honorees bring forth past and present memories and aspirations for the communities. There may be more to come—the capability to winter-store the benches has grown, and what seemed to be a limit reached now may become open for more. Who will be added? Time will tell.

Chris Turner 8/3/11