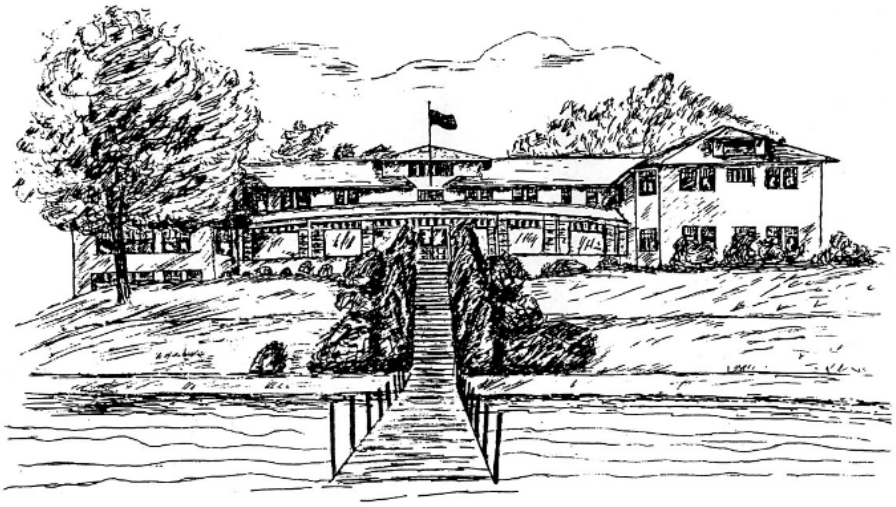

SOUTH SHORE INN

THE BETTER TO SEE — The big glass windows on the front of the South Shore Inn, shown, helped two teenage girls spot eight survivors of the Wawasee storm of 1943 who they helped rescue. Six people lost their lives. The drawing is by the late Ken Harkless and was provided by the Syracuse-Wawasee Historical Museum.

Fourth in a series —

Sudlow remembers the great Wawasee storm of 1943

By MARTHA STOELTING
Staff Writer

Anna Sudlow touched on the subject of the deaths of six boaters on Lake Wawasee due to a terrific storm July 21, 1943, at her talk at the Syracuse Public Library's centennial celebration. She elaborated further when being interviewed.

She and her husband lived where Sudlow Pier Shop is still located. It was then directly across the street from South Shore Inn. South Shore Condominiums now occupy that space.

The storm was legendary at the time because of its suddenness, ferocity and the unfortunate loss of six lives including a soldier home on leave, but has been little discussed or known about in recent years.

South Shore Inn played an important role is the rescue of eight survivors. Sudlow commented, "If we'd only known, we could have helped. It was blowing and raining so hard even though it was only around 6: 30 p.m., it was difficult to even see the lake."

Two teenagers, Rita Niesse and Jacqueline Casey, were part of a crowd looking out the big plate glass windows of the inn. A loud crash had drawn them there. The storm was raging. Trees toppled, house parts were flying through the air, piers were falling to the 6 feet high waves churning Lake Wawasee.

According to reports, it was a sudden and spectacular display similar to the finale of a fireworks. While taking this all in, one of the girls, Casey, noticed a sailboat anchored. There were strange things on its side. Realizing it was people, Niesse streaked out of the building followed by Casey. They jumped into the rough water and started swimming.

They made it to the sailboat through heroic effort and started helping people swim across the lake to land and the inn. A man in a boat joined in the rescue effort. When it was realized only eight of the 14 in the original group out boating had been located, 20 boats were launched looking for the other six. It took three days until the last body was found.

Those who died were Sgt. Lloyd Burkholder, age 25, Goshen; Dean Yoder, 21, Elkhart; Lloyd Conklin, 21, Goshen; Dorothy Beckerich, 21, Billie Brinkley, 20 and Virginia Rush, 20.

The survivors, who owed their lives to two spunky young women were Earl Markham, 32, Ray Reim, 27, Eloise Reim, 24, Doris Radkey, 22, Betty Radkey, 20, Betty Yoder, 13 and Robert Yoder, 9 all of Goshen and Barbara Castetter, 13, Rome, N.Y.

An account of the storm of 1943 is available online at www.chr.noaa.gov or google Wawasee storm.

Sudlow is still haunted by the loss of life, 66 years later. "Thank goodness we now have better weather forecasting and the technology so people know that a storm is coming, even if they are out on the lake, and can get in."

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