

## 1998 Rolf Eliassen Award: A Visit with Frank Gordon

Frank Gordon first came to Sunapee at age seven. He had fallen victim to an outbreak of influenza and pneumonia that swept through New York City just after World War I. To help young Frank recover, his parents rented a house in Sunapee Harbor for the summer of 1918.

Eighty years later, Frank, obviously recovered from childhood pneumonia and a recent bout with the infection, credits his recuperation to that lakeshore vacation.

While Frank recovered from one bug, his father was bitten by another. He fell in love with Lake Sunapee. He bought 100 acres that falls on both sides of the Georges Mills inlet and in two towns, Sunapee and New London.

Except for a few years, the Gordon family has spent summers ever since at "Chetwood" on the New London shore. Frank and his wife Dot have lived year-round next door since 1981, after retiring from a law practice in New York.

"This is the home symbol for our family," says Frank. "Scarsdale NY was never home. That was just where mother and dad lived."

Frank says the family's love of nature was passed down by his parents, especially his father. "He was city born and bred; he loved every pine tree on this property and there were a lot of them then -- until (the Hurricane of) 1938."

His father bought such a large tract of land in order to protect it. "He did it so we wouldn't have a procession of houses."

Frank and his brother Lincoln inherited not only their parents' land, but their love of nature and open space. Together, they have protected the family land from development through a gift to the state and conservation easements to the Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust (ASLPT).

For their generosity and commitment to the Lake Sunapee area, the Lincoln and Frank Gordon extended family this year received LSPA's Rolf

Eliassen Distinguished Service Award.

"It's very comforting," Frank says of receiving the award, which sits on the fireplace mantle. "It is warmly appreciated, especially since we got it when we're still alive."

To witness the legacy he and Lincoln have preserved for their family and the community is a great satisfaction to the Gordons. In the early 1980's Lincoln Gordon donated to the state 35 acres along Jobs Creek Road in Sunapee. "That was all he could do at the time, donate it to Fish and Game," Frank observes. "There was no ASLPT then." Lincoln also has an easement on another 36 acres and 700 feet of shoreline on the Sunapee side of Georges Mills.

Through two conservation easements donated to the ASLPT, Frank and Dot have protected 63 acres and 3000 feet of shoreline on Sunapee, and 900 feet on Otter Pond, from development, while preserving wildlife habitat, water quality and public access.

"In effect, what you're creating is a park," Frank said. "It's our neighbors and friends who use it."

Protecting the land without a conservation easement was not an option for Frank and Dot Gordon. A conservation easement generally lowers a property's assessment and therefore probate taxes; as Frank noted, "That's what could hurt you: the death taxes. Then we wouldn't leave anything for our children," he said. "The conservation easement allows the children to have these two houses. They can hunt, fish, cut firewood..."

"...and keep it as it is," Dot finished.

"That's number one," Frank said.

*Beth Cote*

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