

Hills man recalls the Depression years

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By snowfall, members of the camp were still sleeping in tents, which housed up to six. They were warmed by fires in the tents, each of which sported a chimney. Some were assigned to keep the fires going all night.

It was an often rugged, but healthy, outdoor life.

"MOST AVERAGED 18 months with the program, but Polluto, who requested that he do field work, was trained as a heavy machine operator and stayed seven years.

During that time, he served at

camps including Camp Newberry, Camp Manistiquie and Camp Lake Superior. An ROTC member, he was given the rating of leader when he arrived. By the time he left, he was a first sergeant, responsible for overseeing others.

"I had to see that they got up in the morning, got out on time and stood at attention when the flag went up in the morning and when it went down at night," he said.

The barracks and mess hall were kept spotless, he said. Penalties for violating rules could include washing dishes or serving men in the mess hall.

"It was a really happy life," he said. "Everyone was so thankful to have three meals a day. Most of them were so proud of being there, and being able to send money home to the folks, who were really desperate for money."

THE CCC was not all work. Weekends were free, and the men made forays into nearby towns where roller-skating and ice-skating were favorite activities.

They also went to the theater and dined out. The \$5 they earned a month went a long way, and they still came back with change, he said.

"Coffee and doughnuts were a nickel, and you could get a hamburger for a dime," he recalled.

Often, romance bloomed with girls in the towns.

"Three different boys that I know married girls from Manistiquie," one of the camps where he was based, Polluto said.

Lifetime friendships were also forged, not only with each other, but with those they met in town. "A lot of them are still corresponding," — as he is, he said.

Polluto still has a copy of a program from the farewell dance held at the Old Gym at Manistiquie for members of Camp Manistiquie. It fell on his birthday, Friday, Sept. 24, 1937. It was sponsored by businesses in the town.

"They all appreciated us," he said.

They corresponded, but lost touch when he became a POW. After being discharged, he contacted her again.

They built a house in the Farmington area, from which they recently moved to their current Farmington Hills residence. They have a son, Joseph, 38, a Millard resident, a daughter, Judith Getchell, 37, of Bloomfield Hills, and five grandchildren.

Since Polluto retired 12 years ago, the couple have enjoyed favorite activities, including gardening, fishing and traveling in the summer.

"We have taken our grandchildren to just about every state in the Union," Polluto said.

They also spend time in northern Michigan, where they own property at a resort near Clare.

year of the CCC. He will soon become a member of the newly formed Charter 58 in Flint.

Activities include a monthly meeting, potluck get-togethers and an annual reunion at North Higgins Lake State Park, site of the first CCC Michigan camp, opened in May 1932. A museum was dedicated to the CCC at the park June 7.

THE GRAND RAPIDS chapter has grown from 50 to 900. More and more CCC alumni are joining as they hear about it, Polluto said.

For instance, he said, after advance publicity on the museum dedication, "so many people dropped everything and came up to Higgins Lake."

And an old CCC colleague he was reunited with recently told him, "I've been looking for you for 37 years."

Polluto plans to donate several items from his CCC days to the museum. They include a well-worn workshirt, which was part of his CCC uniform, the Camp Manistiquie farewell dance program and a photograph of the tents at Camp Newberry, before the barracks were built.

"If any of the old CCC boys want to get in touch, or join our chapter, they could just call me up at any time," Polluto said.

His telephone number is 474-0895. When they do, many are sure to remember him. "There's not too many that I didn't get to talk to, or raise havoc with," he said.

Municipal liability reformed

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thority, in which governmental units band together to provide self insurance.

Both cities joined the authority after years of being forced to pay high premiums and, in some cases, to buy separate policies from different private agencies to cover certain city departments. Insurance premiums under the authority have been less expensive than the cities were paying prior to joining the MMRA, according to both city managers.

Insurance premiums are based among other things on the amount of risk faced by a municipality, said Deidman, MMRA chairman. "As losses diminish, it certainly would reflect in premium deductions," he said.

ANOTHER REFORM passed by the Legislature is the extension of immunity from lawsuits of governmental officials to employees, such as police officers, when carrying out their responsibilities and duties. Previously, only elected officials and

top managers had such immunity. But under the reform, those municipal employees would not receive immunity in cases of gross negligence.

In the past, municipal employees were not immune from lawsuits for their actions while performing a governmental function. Yet even though the municipality itself was not liable, both Farmington and Farmington Hills still protected its employees, which cost both cities money.

Consequently, extending immunity "should, in the long term, have an effect on premiums," Deidman said. Although Municipal League officials are "very appreciative of the various reforms made," Berron said the changes "are not a total solution. In some cases, we got relief; in other areas, we didn't."

An issue of continuing concern to the Municipal League is that although the state Legislature adopted some caps on damages, it will result in little benefit to cities. "Therefore, the cities are still vulnerable to costly lawsuits against them," Berron said.

Also of concern is that while immunity was extended to municipal employees, immunity was "not granted at the board," he said. While actions that are considered "discretionary" are not liable, those that are considered "ministerial" are. The resulting problem will be in how those two actions are defined. "What is discretionary or ministerial?" Berron asked.

DEFINITIONS AGAIN are a concern to the Municipal League when it comes to the exceptions to governmental immunity. A municipality is not immune from liability when it comes to the maintenance of roadways, roads and streets, operation of a government-owned vehicle or maintenance of public buildings.

POLLUTO LEFT the CCC to serve from 1941-45 in World War II. An Army paratrooper, he was wounded when he was captured and became a prisoner of war. He was originally listed missing in action.

At the end of the war, he returned to the Detroit area, where he worked for 37 years as a heavy machine operator for Darin and Armstrong, a Detroit construction company, utilizing the skills he had learned at the CCC.

During that time, he was transferred for brief periods to Grand Rapids and Flint.

Polluto married his wife, Dorothy, in 1946. The couple had met on a train leaving Detroit while he was in the service. He was going back to his base, and she was on a vacation trip.



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