

The Mississippi River - A "Fish Story".....Full Story: Alan Todd, November 2005

Framed by the pastoral Lanark County surround of farm and forest the quiet dark flow of the ancient Mississippi River slides by beneath willow bough and evening. The water view from my historic island home above the rapids on Glen Isle seemed complete; within reach a slow moving pool alive with countless shining small mouth bass; airborne, feeding, showing off, all playful jokers rising and falling swallowed by brilliant watery circles drawn in a surface of fading light. Then, not a moment passed when the water was still and in this swirl a natural harmony of connection seemed evident in all. The robust fish-play connected my sense of wonder in nature with a deep personal commitment to remain in this island paradise forever where I could witness the peacefulness in each summer evening; always!

It seemed sudden even after seventeen years as observer in this environment when it became apparent that there was a profound decline in fish numbers. This wild place was now transformed; not one fish could be seen where there were hundreds and in the process my idyllic life on the island would lose it's great context. The real nature of the river to the common eye had not changed but in the practice of agriculture and habitat destruction the change was inevitable; it was preventable but beyond our willingness to understand and act in defense of a world out of sight. This separation between nature and society; this dislocation, prevents us from acknowledging the effects of loss. This careless "roll the dice" lack of responsibility scared me. There was a certain ominous-aggressive, them and us character to the conversation about this matter spoken in the community that became worrisome. Consequently, I chose to leave my spiritual home on the island when my first daughter was born. In leaving was the belief that the natural order of the island had been so altered by the apparent new river chemistry and that the immediate surroundings had become more risk than I wished for in my infant child's growing years.

Alan Todd and his family left their home on Glen Isle in August of 1987.

Today I really can't face what has been lost in the world believing that I/we might have done something to have prevented this catastrophe.

We must create responsible partnerships between all of us and sponsor joyful purpose for the serious work that lies ahead – a renewed sense of good stewardship.

I now enjoy my volunteer work with the Ottawa Riverkeeper knowing that my activities are a positive vehicle for my real concerns.

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The water view from my historic island home above the rapids on Glen Isle seemed complete; within reach, a slow moving pool alive with countless shining small mouth bass; airborne, feeding, a complete fascination. It seemed sudden when it became apparent that there was a profound decline in fish numbers. Now seventeen years later not one fish rose from this wild place - transformed. Consequently, I chose to leave my spiritual home on the island when my first daughter was born. In leaving was the belief that the natural order of the island had been so altered and that the surrounding water had become more risk than I wished for in my infant child's growing years.

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