Toft remembered on her 100th Birthday

By Estelle Zahn

The Ridges Sanctuary sponsored a celebration in memory of Emma Toft's 100th birthday Saturday, Feb. 9.

The day began with tours of Tofts Point at Mud Bay. Friends and relatives enjoyed seeing surrounding structures, the main lodge, three double cabins and two single cabins. The tours were given by Paul and Kathleen Regnier, Roy Lukes and Carl Scholz. Hot chocolate and cookies were served at the lodge by Paul and Kathleen.

At 6 p.m. 55 to 60 relatives and friends enjoyed a potluck dinner at Immanuel Lutheran Parish Hall. Following the dinner, Paul Regnier, naturalist at the Ridges Sanctuary, greeted those in attendance? Roy Lukes showed slides of Miss Emma that she narrated, giving the history of Tofts Point, Mud Bay, where Emma was born, Feb. 9, 1891. The slides showed the lodge and cabins, the vegetable and flower gardens which Emma cared for. Emma was a lover of flowers, wild animals and birds. She had a pet skunk and helped many young deer to stay alive. She took many a walk in the woods at Tofts Point, admiring the huge trees growing there. In the main lodge at the point Emma received guests in the summer months. She had a wood-burning stove to do her baking and cooking and to supply heat for the home. Emma was famous for her Danish Aebleskivers, which she shared with friends and neighbors.
Emma enjoyed picking thimbleberries and would make many a jar of jam each year. Kerosene lamps supplied the building with light. They put up ice each winter to be used in the ice box in summer. In 1941 when electricity came to Mud Bay the ice box was no more.

Emma and her mother lived in town in their home on the corner south of what is now the Red Geranium Gift Shop. Emma would take the cows up Docks Hill to pasture every morning.

Nearly 57 years ago when Walter and I were married we lived across from Emma in the Willard Zak home and we bought our milk, butter and eggs from Miss Emma. Many times I watched Emma churning butter. Later when her mother died, her brother William and wife Anne lived in the building which is the Red Geranium. He was the Post Master with the Post Office in his home. The old home was taken down and Emma moved in with Will and Anne. She continued going everyday to Tofts Point.

Emma was instrumental in preserving precious natural areas in Door County in particular The Ridges Sanctuary, She respected all the beautiful wild flowers growing there. She became very disturbed when she saw anyone picking them. She wasted no time in reprimanding them for their actions.

Several slides were shown of Emma, Jens Jensen, Albert Fuller and Mertha Falkerson at The Clearing, Ellison Bay. Emma loved to snowshoe to Tofts Point from town inviting her friend Virginia Booth to accompany her to the point. Miss Emma's motto was “Always Love The Wild Things, Flowers, Birds, and All Animals.”

In 1968 Tofts Point was sold to Nature Conservancy, which later was given to the UW-Green Bay. A nephew, Atty. Thorval Toft, and wife Ruby, and other family members, Sturgeon Bay, niece Virginia Johnson and family members and nephew Harry Wilson, friends from Green Bay, and many local friends were present and reminisced on years of friendship with Miss Emma. It was so nice to hear Emma’s voice once again. Thank you, Roy, for a lovely program on Miss Emma.

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