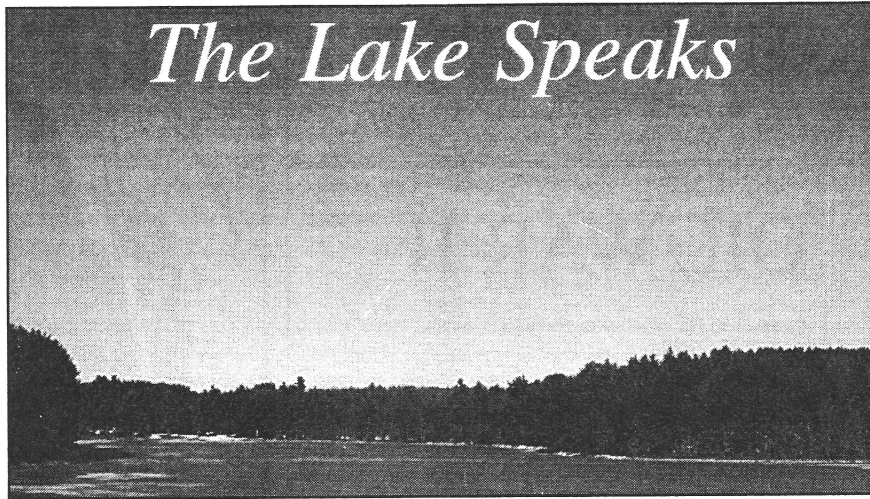


THE VIEW FROM LAKE PLEASANT



BY KATHERINE MAYFIELD

About a year ago, I went for a walk down to the lake. As I got close to the water's edge, I heard unfamiliar noises, like hundreds of arrows being released from their bowstrings to fly through the air. As the "pings" echoed vibrantly back and forth from one side of the lake to the other, I tried to figure out exactly what the noises were. My first thought was that every hunter within fifty miles had come to try his or her luck. But if the sounds were rifle shots, I reflected, they must be coming from some kind of tiny, high-gauge plastic rifles, they were so high and clear. My second thought was that if hunters were that close, I'd better get out of the way.

On the way home, I stopped at the post office to ask Joyce Cote, a generous well-spring of Lake Pleasant information, if she knew what the sound might be. She said it was the sound the lake makes when its crust of ice is shifting. I visualized all the little sheets of ice singing their songs as they jockeyed for position, and thought for a long time how wonderful it was that the lake speaks, at least every now and then. I've taken many walks around the lake this season, hoping to hear its song again, but with no success yet.

Old Man Winter has been speaking quite loudly this year. After last year's mild winter, this one has come as something of a surprise, waking up all of those snow-shoveling muscles that didn't get much of a workout last year. I've been blessed with neighbors who have helped me clear snow, and I'm

grateful to be getting used to those muscles little by little rather than all at once.

Some cultures believe that snow is a symbol of cleansing and purification, and I try really hard to see it that way when I put on my boots for yet another shoveling session. In many traditions, water is believed to reflect our emotions. When it shows up in a dream, for example, murky water means murky emotions, clear water is more of a positive sign, while ice represents frozen emotions. Some primordial part of my brain makes me think that this year Nature is offering us the opportunity to cleanse and purify our feelings, after the horrors of September 11th, 2001 and the unearthing of so many dark secrets last year in the realms of organized religion and big business.

It has been a difficult start for a new millennium. When I woke up on New Year's Day, I was especially grateful to be able to leave last year behind. Though this one begins with some grim forebodings in the realms of economics and world events, I'm hoping it will become more positive as it rolls along.

Speaking of purity, one of the things I appreciate most about Lake Pleasant is that the lake has never been polluted. It was closed before motorboats were created, and has been protected as a possible drinking water source for many years. Mollusks that have not survived pollution in most waters in this country have recently been found here. I love that the lake is so clean and natural, and hope it will always stay that way. Maybe this year, the lake is letting winter speak first.