

News

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COMMUNITY LEADERS

Protect Lake Charlevoix For Our Present Users And Future Generations

By **John Keyser**

I was urged to write about Tom Darnton, President of Lake Charlevoix Association and also a Board Member of Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, as he is truly a tireless, devoted community leader.

As background, Tom spent his childhood summers in Charlevoix beginning in 1951; his great grandfather arrived in Charlevoix in 1900, literally! That ancestor had two grandchildren, a boy and a girl, both of whom eventually became year-around residents of Charlevoix. That granddaughter was Tom's mother.

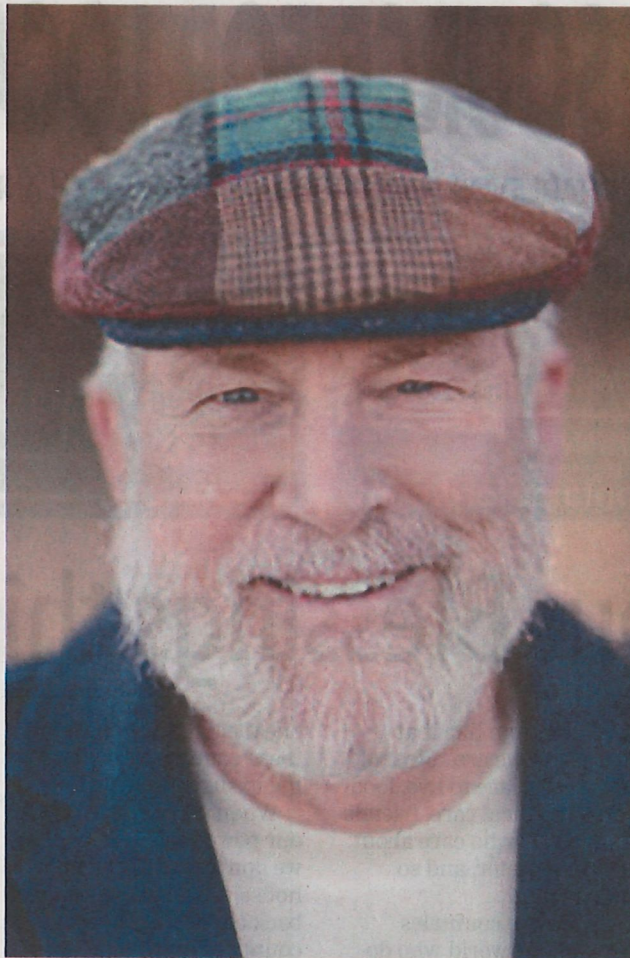
Everyone in his family, including Tom, truly loved Up North Michigan, Charlevoix and, very definitely, Lake Charlevoix.

I love these stories. His grandmother grew up here, attended Charlevoix schools, and wrote in her diary about taking the train up to Petoskey for their high school basketball games. Tom's father was in the automobile industry, lived in Flint, which is where Tom went to school. That said, he remembers that his mom would bring

him, his brother and sister up here on the day school ended and they stayed till Labor Day, as school began again the next day. Tom loved Charlevoix and to him, school was just something we had to do till we could get back up here. In 1967, as a collegiate undergrad, Tom's summer job was "boat boy" for the Belvedere Club.

In 1972, Tom graduated with his law degree from U. Michigan and practiced law for 40 years in Ann Arbor, while continuing to spend frequent summer weekends here. But in 2012, he was diagnosed with cancer and went through surgery and extensive treatment. For a while, he did not know if he would live much longer and for two reasons he closed down his law practice, the reasons being his mother, who lived here, was seriously ill and he wanted to help her and also, he himself, wanted to spend his last years here.

Tom's Mom passed away in 2014. Not knowing his own life expectancy because of his cancer, he worked three seasons at Boyne Mountain's cross-country facility. Fortunately, Tom was completely cured of his cancer, was fully healthy



TOM DARNTON

again, and four years ago, actually November 1, 2018, he took over a real estate law practice here in

Charlevoix and also became involved with Lake Charlevoix Association and Tip of the Mitt Watershed

Council, following his parent's involvement with each. Now he is very involved with this important work – to preserve this place of natural beauty.

The challenges include accepting that while there will be development along the lake, this must be managed by educating the public as well as lake shore property owners about how to best use our lake – and how to avoid abusing the treasure we have here.

The ongoing goal is to educate watershed property owners and others enjoying the lake about the important function our shoreline serves to protect the native plants and animals that make our lake such a treasured place. We must preserve this natural area if the lake is to continue as a treasured place. A key focus needs to be on protecting the watershed, i.e., the water that flows into Lake Charlevoix from rivers, streams and sanitary systems.

The Lake Charlevoix Association is dedicated to actively sharing knowledge about lake preservation via social media and an active email list of property owners and others nearby. In June of 2022, the Associa-

tion joined with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) to convene a daylong meeting of watershed stakeholders to develop a deeper understanding of shoreline protection solutions that meet the needs of all concerned, including humans and the wild creatures in the unique environment presented by Lake Charlevoix. The work begun at that conference is continuing.

Overall, the goal which Tom and everyone with Lake Charlevoix Association and Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council strives for is the best balance between conservation and development. Thankfully we have Tom's true and sincere love of our area and his dedication to preserve the treasure it is for us.

I encourage visiting <https://www.lakecharlevoix.org/> and <https://www.watershedcouncil.org/>. Both are nonprofit organizations and thankfully receive financial support from residents who love our very special natural resources.