

Richard and June Syrewicze  
Luther, MI 49656

My Interview with Rich and June Syrewicze was held on June 13, 2003 at their home in Luther, Michigan.

Rich was stationed at Big Sable Point Lighthouse and employed by the Coast Guard from July 2, 1949 through the summer of 1953.

Rich was the second assistant, Homer Meverden was the first assistant, and David Sauers was the keeper. All families bonded well and spent much free time with each other. Rich served in Pentwater and in Ludington with the Coast Guard as a boat patroller.

Rich worked the shoreline of Lake Huron and Lake Superior putting a lot of lighthouse keepers out of work by converting the lighthouses from kerosene to electrical operation. The Coast Guard then maintained the light after this conversion.

They came to the Big Sable Point Lighthouse with one child and had a daughter in the summer of 1951.

June said the lighthouse was always very warm. The upstairs windows were open most of the winter months for heat rises and they had a very good coal furnace. She said there was seldom snow around the lighthouse, it seemed to always blow over into the dunes. She does remember one evening returning from a movie in Ludington. They got part way to the lighthouse and the snow was so deep they could hardly pry open the car door so they had to walk to the lighthouse. In the morning they sought help and when they returned, all the snow had blown away and the ground was bare, they were so embarrassed!

The water was very close to the tower and rift raft was brought in for fill and new pilings were installed to save the tower.

June remembers when she first came to the lighthouse she thought she would never get a good nights sleep because whenever the fog horn would blow, June would shiver with the vibration. Soon, June did get a good sleep and eventually never heard the foghorn.

Quite often in the winter months, we would gather ice and make homemade ice cream and the Meverdens would join us while the kids took their turn turning the crank.

Beverly Meverden and June occasionally rode their bikes to Ludington, 18 miles round trip, to buy a chocolate soda. June remembers during the summer months she wore a bathing suit most of the time and often they would go to the State Park to swim and spend the day at the beach. Beverly Meverden was also their babysitter.

The Syrewicze family remembers one time a group of four panic-stricken individuals, came across the dunes. They had been lost for hours and they were so relieved to see the lighthouse. Also, where the Au Sable River comes into Lake Michigan, there was always an undertow and during a Sunday school Picnic one day, a small child drowned. Several others drown over the years.



Rich remarked how damaging the sand was on their vehicles. The cars would be sandblasted to the point of removing the paint on the cars.

*We have good memories of roasting hot dogs over an open fire on the beach with the Meverdens. The kids would wrestle and throw each other into the lake during very cold weather. We all had fun together and have very fond memories of the good old days living in Big Sable Point Lighthouse.*

They shared some of the annual duties of working at the lighthouse:

Every spring they had to paint the entire lighthouse in and out. Rich said it was a daily ritual, to clean and polish the Fresnel lens, make sure the light was lit and the foghorn was working as to guide the boats.

*We were given the "White Glove Test" often and very unexpectedly by the Coast Guard, so it was a chore to keep the Lighthouse in tip top shape at all times. We have not been back since we left in 1953, we want to remember the lighthouse, as it was when we left.*

*I so enjoyed meeting and visiting with Richard and June Syrewicze from Luther, MI.*