

Vernon Kipp: Trapper, Hunter, Teacher



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My great grandfather is a very influential figure in my family, as well as around the North Country, because of what he did for people and how he introduced them to the beauty that is the Adirondacks. In a way, I am trying to follow in his footsteps by going on to college to pursue a degree in Expeditionary Studies and begin a career in guiding services. Stories that I have heard from my mother and aunt about him are what intrigue me about a man that I never knew. I can tell anyone that he was a well-loved man by the people that knew him and, although he passed away years before I was born, he seemed like the elder I would want to have teach me things about something I've come to love so much, the outdoors. My grandfather's name was Vernon Kipp, and he was an avid trapper and hunter who let nothing go to waste, including the knowledge he had of the outdoors and the environment around him. His passions were hunting, fishing and trapping. To my mother he was a very wonderful person to know and was a great teacher for her and my aunt, as well as many other people he educated during his life.

Vernon Kipp was born in 1903 to Harry Kipp and Lillian Cole Kipp and was raised in the Adirondacks in the early part of the century. He completed school up until the eighth grade, at



which time he dropped out to work and raise money. His jobs were numerous in number and nearly all of them required him to work outside and to embrace the Adirondack wilderness. He worked according to the seasons; in summers, he was a caretaker at Camp Woodmere (now Southwoods). In the fall and spring, he

was a guide at Elk Lake Lodge completed a number of guiding services for patrons who visited. In the fall, he would help them hunt and in the spring he would help them fish. In the winter, he was a trapper. Trapping is probably what he is most known for in the Schroon Lake area. He

prepared his own bait for his traps and trapped animals like beaver, otter, muskrat and mink. He skinned them and made his money by selling the pelts to fur traders in the North Country. Some of my most vivid memories as a child are times when I would look at the pelts sitting on the wall of my old house and feeling them and say that I wanted a blanket made out of “ugly fur”. My great grandfather did many things for the people in Schroon Lake and did a lot to help the tourist business that this town has thrived off of for so long.



The house that I grew up in, until it burned down seven years ago, was also the same home that housed three generations of my family. Vernon bought the house in 1940 for his family to live in. He had a large garden and planted many vegetables and fruits to help feed everyone through the winter. He also had crafted a boat, which he used all the time until he finally got to purchase a new one. He married Edith Christiansen around 1935 and had two daughters, Anna and Marcia. Anna, my grandmother, always speaks very highly and lovingly of her father whenever she is asked about his memory and that makes me feel that he was the man that everyone says he was; a genuinely kind person who was also a good family man. He also had a step son, Jeremy Fifield, who he raised and loved as his own. He was also grandfather to six children. My mother and aunt, the two people who have told me the most about him, were two children that he looked after and helped raise for some time, and they both grew to love and admire him. For a few years, and every single summer, he watched over my aunt and mother, and taught them about the outdoors and how to do things like fish and hunt. He loved to play card games with his grandchildren and took my aunt and mother everywhere with him. He took them camping, to go fish, ice fish and trap. My mother’s stories about doing these things are

filled with such happiness that it often comes through when she's talking about it and it makes it easier to want to know what kind of man he was.

He was also a mentor to many young men in the area while they were growing up. Dick Simpson, Bruce Murdock, Jim Roblee and my great uncle, Angelo, are all men that he spent time with and affected in his life. Whether he was simply working with them or giving them advice, he shared his knowledge freely. His efforts to help people learn about the outdoors and his desire



to help the town through his abilities to trap and hunt earned him a reputation for being a reliable guide, hunter and person in general.

He is mentioned in different publications such as an article in

Adirondack Life, and a couple of pages devoted to him in the

book, The Medic and the Mama-San, by Mike Hall. His picture

was also hung up in the Schroon Lake drug store for many years.

The same picture now hangs in our home. He passed away in 1978 from an aneurysm, when he was a lively 75 years old.

My great grandfather did many things to help his family and the Town of Schroon Lake. Through his time spent with young people, he intrigued them about the outdoors and the unique environment we have in the Adirondacks. He also taught them character and a strong work ethic, which were very important then, just as they are now. He helped my aunt and mother have an unforgettable childhood and did what he could for them and all of his family. His contributions to the town itself were also very important. His draw as an effective hunter and guide all helped businesses in the area and his reputation was not poorly earned. He did everything possible to ensure that he did a good job, no matter what the task. This essay is a perfect opportunity for me

to learn more about not only my family, but also to get to see how much of Vernon Kipp still lives on in myself. His intrigue and mystery to me is what made me write about such an outstanding character in my family and what I have learned about him has only made him that much more extraordinary.

