

Forward, into the Past

Huckleberry Memories

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"I think we always ate more than we brought home," said Terry Canceleno, reminiscing about picking huckleberries on the mountain as a child, "We picked a lot of berries, but most went into our mouths."

Terry remembers spending her summers in a cabin just off **Ice Caves Road** where her grandmother took care of Terry, her sister, and cousins (*perhaps like one of the cabins in this 1990 picture, below, by Eric Krieger in an article in the Times-Herald Record*). Both her parents worked during the day (her father was a plumber at *Rose & Douglas*), so a young aunt often "kept an eye" on the children. There weren't summer recreation programs to entertain children during the July-August school vacation, so the children occupied themselves with simple pleasures. A frequent time-filler for the children was to take a walk up the road, often with metal pails and buckets in their hands in case they found a bush or two loaded with huckleberries. "Yes, we always called them huckleberries back then," Terry added. "Now, everybody calls them blueberries."



"I remember the berries being much larger when we picked them ourselves, but when you buy them now, you are lucky if there are a couple of big berries in a box," she commented. "We picked for fun and food. Grandma (Doris Avery) used what we brought home for baking."

Terry was Vernon and Evelyn Avery's second daughter, her father being one of Doris Avery's eleven children, so there were many aunts, uncles, and cousins as part of her childhood memories.

She remembers the many deer who were completely unafraid of the berry pickers and "Yes, we met up with a couple of snakes, but my aunt always went first, throwing stones so the rattlers would know we were coming, and get out of our way."

"We always waved to the Ranger up in the **Fire Tower** as we walked down the fire road, and he always waved back," Terry reminisced. "And I remember an older man up on **Ice Caves Road** who had a lot of animals; he had a cabin on the left, further up than ours, and he didn't really know us, but he would always wave. I'm sure that if he didn't see us coming back by a certain time, he would have checked with my grandmother."

"We had fun days up there, and to this day, blueberries are still my favorite food, believe it or not."

It was pleasant to talk with Terry Canceleno at *Village Cleaners* on **Canal Street**, which she owns and operates with her husband, John. Perhaps her most poignant comment was uttered when she talked about the extended



Avery family, "We all took care of each other." What a wonderful memory of growing up in the Ellenville area in the late 1950s and early 1960s!

Much older memories of huckleberrypicking are recorded at the *Ellenville Public Library & Museum* (including all the photos or artifacts in this article, such as the 1906 picture above) where there are two berry picker's boxes in the collection (*photo below*). The one most people remember is a large, decorated box which was presented to the local history collection by William Fahy, who had used it for many years, as did his father before him, and before that, the original craftsman who made the container. Mr. Fahy had owned the box for fifty years before presenting it to the *Library*.

The box, now at least 125 years old, was made by Will VanSchaick, who was a friend of Mr. Fahy's father (also a William). When VanSchaick became too old to pick huckleberries, he gave the box to the senior Fahy and told him to pass it on to "little Willie."

The box is a prime example of folk art. It measures 25 inches high, eight inches deep, and 15 inches wide, with canvas straps to hold it on the picker's back. It is padded where the box would meet the picker's shoulders. The yellow painted sides are striped for a wooden effect and the front is lettered "Little Willie V," probably identifying Willie VanSchaick as a boy. The front contains a fanciful scene of birds, ships, sea and lighthouse, but nothing to

