

## Lois and Bee

It would not be a stretch to say that Lois McClure and Bee Tabakin know each other so well they can finish each other's sentences, and that's just what they do when they are asked how and why they became involved with the American Cancer Society and Hope Lodge.

"Everybody has someone they know..." Lois starts, and Bee finishes, "...who has a friend or family touched by cancer."

Lois and Bee first came to know one another as next-door neighbors while summering at Cedar Beach on Lake Champlain in the 1940s. Between the two summer camp families, there were seven children: six girls and a boy.

"The cottages were very close together, so you wanted to be good friends with your next-door neighbor," Lois says, laughing as the two share tales of summer celebrations.

While their camps drew them close, cancer drew them even closer. Over the six decades since they first met, each woman has lost a daughter to cancer. Lois' daughter, Judy, died in 1961 at the age of nine, one year after doctors discovered a kidney tumor. A room in the first Hope Lodge Burlington was dedicated in her memory. Bee's daughter, Ruth Ann Kaye, died in 1990 at the age of 42, following more than two years of treatment for lung cancer. She left three teenaged children.

Their experiences with cancer didn't end there: Bee has survived two rounds of breast cancer, which was first diagnosed in 1980. Lois' husband, the late Warren "Mac" McClure, was diagnosed with lymphoma and melanoma, and her younger sister, like Bee, twice battled breast cancer.

In the 1960s, Lois' husband was chairman of the annual American Cancer Society Crusade effort, while Bee was one of the troops of women who went door to door to raise money for the Society's programs of research, education, and patient services. "And I sent my kids out too," she says proudly.

So she didn't hesitate to help when the American Cancer Society set out to establish the first Hope Lodge Burlington in 1983, to provide temporary lodging for cancer patients traveling long distances to Fletcher Allen Health Care for treatment. She learned about Hope Lodge through a Reach to Recovery volunteer.

Two decades later, as plans began taking shape for the new building, Bee decided Lois was the person to call for help, and they met to discuss what needed to be done.

"I said, 'Do you think you'd be interested in donating?'" Bee recalled. "I asked thinking she would go home and think about it, but she just said right then and there: Yes."

In honor of the campaign's top donor, it seemed natural to name the new Hope Lodge after Lois. But when the time came, Lois wanted the building named for Bee. Bee would have no part of it, so the two settled on joint recognition.

For Lois, the decision to donate came easily, with the memory of her young daughter's death still with her each day.

"Looking at it now, 46 years later, you think people should take some satisfaction in how things have developed for cancer patients, but it doesn't mean we are through yet. Not by any means," she says.

Bee shares that sentiment as she talks about her dreams for the new Hope Lodge.

"My real dream is to have no more cancer," she says. But until that time comes, "My dream is to have a nice place for people to stay."

"I think the building is going to be pretty nice, don't you, dear?" Bee asks, turning towards Lois, who is nodding her mane of white hair in agreement and smiling with excitement.

There's no need for her to finish the sentence.