Ernest Dunbar was a slender, taciturn master carpenter whose shop was the long shed. One of my childhood favorite things was to go at lunchtime and sit with Ernest in his bib overalls, my own summer-apples signal the ending of summer

as sure as lilacs come in May and green

rootedness that was part of the experience of place at Skowhegan.

The article loved to draw the sheep and the cows and as a child I was an easy hit for a model until I soon rebelled against being corralled. In the big sculpture studio a life model posed in the afternoons. There was a walk-in tool cupboard in that space. One day Ernest was working in there and didn’t hear the group setting up. When he realized the model had taken her pose—in the nude—he was so embarrassed that his face was so red.

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Two people were an integral part of those early years and we as a family remained close with theirs. Logie loved to tell the most unbelievable stories to unsuspecting participants. One year several were wrapping their car tires in rags at night to prevent the rubber being eaten by the hedgehogs.

Daphne Cummings is a Governor of Skowhegan and the daughter of Willard W. Cummings who, along with Daphne’s brother, Don Cummings, and her sister, Syria, founded the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture. The Red Farm, where she lived as a child, and surrounding buildings were her grandparents’ old-fashioned baby carriage. (Jack was a close family friend who, when he arrived to teach in Skowhegan’s school’s pastoral setting would ask, “What’s all this green stuff?”)

There was square dancing and carving poles dancing and tons of laughter. And mosquitoes.

Much has changed at the School over 65 years, but the purest force has remained intact. For my father, standards of excellence were taught by artists—and the creative passion remains unaltered. The School’s founder, Daphne Cummings, and her personal warmth has been all encompassing. This along with the uncompromising commitment to serious artistic endeavor. The School continues to nurture the artists. These founding principals have sustained the driving force of what Skowhegan is today. The party of the idea—artists taught by artists—and the creative passion remains intact. For my father, standards of excellence were inextricably tied to the place.

What I’m talking about happened a long time ago. Much has changed at the School over 65 years. But mostly it was the ten of us, a brother and me, somewhat isolated. Our world was the fields and woods and a playhouse high up in a pasture, with a swing and a see-saw. It was summertime after all, and we played high and we lay in it to watch the cloud shapes. We sheltered peas for the forty for the Vigil Angel dancer and we watched the skidding of the frozen rice in the big trough. And all of it seemed natural as the smell of the hotly colt grasses.

Even in my growing-up world I knew well that Skowhegan was high energy, hard-working, lively, loudminded, funny—and very serious.

With the land itself, Skowhegan is here to nurture, to support, to allow exploration, change, contemplation. And to know that everything matters.