

# *Freddy the Frog*

*by Frederick Wickert*

Twenty years ago, or so there was a heavily wooded area about seven miles west of the world renowned, horse racing town of Saratoga Springs, New York in the Adirondack Mountains. This is all known as "Leatherstocking Country," as described in the famous novels of James Fennimore Cooper.

The heavily wooded area rested within the town of Milton, but is considered to be part of Ballston Spa. A large part of the wooded area was purchased by Developers, and much of the land was cleared to make way for a new housing development. My Niece, Sheila, and her husband Bob decided to have a home in the new development. They bought a place with a field next to it, containing a pond and swampy section.

Many wild life remained in the area, and Bob and Sheila delighted in observing them come and go.

When landscaping their property, they constructed a flower garden with a small pond in the back yard, which they stocked in summer with Japanese Koi goldfish. Because the winter is too cold for their survival, they were removed from the pond in the fall and returned to the dealer. They were then picked up and replaced in the pond each spring.

The pond in the field next door had a large hatching of frogs every spring. As they summer dried the waters of the pond in the neighboring field, thus lowering the water level, a number of the smaller frogs came to the garden pond to live. This was beneficial to Bob and Sheila as their main food supply was mosquito larvae and held down the mosquito population.

One summer, a much larger frog came to their pond along with the smaller ones. He was a big bullfrog with a voice like a foghorn. It was deep and loud and they were entertained each evening by his music.

The big bullfrog was friendly and sat in the sun each day on the ledge that surrounded their pond. Bob squatted down beside the frog and talked to him on a daily basis. Sheila suggested that Bob try to pet the frog. Bob did so, and the frog enjoyed it.

Winter came and the frog was gone. When spring came, Bob went to the pond, and sure enough, there was the frog and the friendship resumed. Squatting for long periods of time was uncomfortable, so a new bench was purchased and placed at poolside so that Bob could more comfortably pet the frog, which for no special reason, he named Freddy. The frog came to recognize the name and responded to it.

This relationship between Bob and Freddy continued for several years. Bob and Freddy became very fond of each other and every spring, Bob looked forward to the end of hibernation and the return of Freddy.

About two years ago on a sunny summer afternoon, Sheila received a phone call from the neighbor across the street. The neighbor told her she had just observed a Blue Heron fly low over her house and believed it might have landed in her back yard. Sheila went to look, and the great bird was standing with its long legs, in the fishpond in the flower bed.

Sheila called to Bob to see it. Bob had an office on the second floor and was working there at the time. Bob came downstairs. They both stood by the back door and watched. The great bird stood in the pond like a statue, never moving for the longest time.

Bob decided to step out in the yard and perhaps get closer. Just as Bob stepped out, the great bird thrust its long beak into the water of the pond and immediately took flight. A plaintive cry escaped from Bob as he realized, tightly clamped in the beak of the great bird was his beloved frog, Freddy.

Freddy was never to be seen again. The great bird revisited the pond several times over the next few days, effectively cleaning all life from it. Bob lost interest in the pond and flowerbed from then on. He just was no longer interested. Last summer the pond lay uncared for and this year, Bob has begun dismantling the pond entirely, no longer wanting it around.