

REMBEMBERING SABRINA

The Introduction (Edit) by David Taylor

Charmed by Audrey: Life on the Set of Sabrina

In the autumn of 1952 we did not leave our summerhouse and return to New York as we normally did at Labor Day. Instead we stayed on the coast of Maine and moved a half-mile along the shore to a house belonging to friends, which had the advantage of a furnace, a necessity in Maine where the first frost often comes by the end of September. We were there (my brother and I, our mother and father) because my father, Samuel Taylor, wanted to finish the play he was working on, and he felt that Maine would allow him a tranquility to do so that New York City did not always provide.

The house we moved to was one of four houses in a compound belonging to one family—four if you did not count the large stone boathouse a mile or so down the shore. Next to our house, past the tennis court, was a four-car garage with a two-story apartment at one end where the chauffeur lived when the family was in residence. The play my father was writing was about a chauffeur's daughter who grew up above the garage on a rich family's estate. This was not by chance.

The play begins:

*Once upon a time,
In a part of America called the North Shore of Long Island,
Not far from New York,
Lived a very small girl on a very large estate.
The house on the grounds had many rooms, and many servants,
And in the garage were many cars, and out on the water were many boats.
There were gardeners in the gardens,
And a chauffeur to drive the cars,
And a boatman who hauled out the boats in the fall
And scraped their bottoms in the winter
And put them back in the spring.*

The estate that inspired this was, as you can see, not on the North Shore of Long Island, but on the coast of Maine. The name of the play was *Sabrina Fair*, and the name of the girl was, of course, Sabrina. Eventually she would be embodied by Audrey Hepburn in the movie of that name. The name Sabrina comes from Milton's *Comus*, his epic poem about a water nymph who saves a human:

*Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
Listen for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save!*

If ever there was a water nymph who could save a man, it was Audrey Hepburn. But first there was the play.

... In Mark Shaw's wonderful photographs of Audrey she appears vivacious, energetic, mischievous, and gamine. Truly, it is in these photographs that we see the water sprite of legend.



David Taylor was born and, for the most part, raised in New York City. He was sent to school there, in Switzerland, and in Massachusetts, and graduated from Yale University. He has published short stories and magazine articles, has written for television and the movies, and has done one musical Off-Broadway. He lives in Boston with his wife, the cellist Priscilla Taylor. They have two daughters—neither of whom is named Sabrina. He is currently working on a Broadway musical, *Sabrina in Love*, based on the play *Sabrina Fair* and the movie *Sabrina*.