

*"The almost 40 years since August 1, 1947, have seen many changes and improvements in the physical plant at WAPO. This is especially true this spring of 1987, as the new dining area and kitchen facility is nearing completion. But one*

*thing has not changed. The emphasis of the camp is still on imparting the living truth of the Word of God to every life touched by the camp. That was the purpose for which the camp was dedicated July 4, 1948, and we trust will be the continuing goal in the years to come."*

## ***Bethel Horizons Dodgeville, Wisconsin***

In 1966 a group of people appointed by the church council of Bethel Lutheran Church of Madison, Wisconsin, searched through the hills and valleys of Wisconsin's driftless area for a piece of property that would serve as a camping and retreat setting for the church. They had a number of specific goals in mind: the land needed to be within one hour of Madison, it needed to have adequate access and it needed to be "wild" enough to provide a true wilderness camping setting for small groups.

Two years later, Pastor Duane Hanson was called to help develop a new camping ministry. Working with the land search committee, they located a farm in a valley adjacent to Governor Dodge State Park north of Dodgeville. It had all the prerequisites except one - it was not easily accessible. Miraculously the adjacent farm located on the uplands near the property was put on the market in 1969, and with a gift of \$10,000 from the Bethel Endowment Foundation for a down payment, 440 acres of prime camping land was secured. The Bethel Horizons Foundation was incorporated, and the initial fund-raising dinner was held at

Bethel Lutheran Church in 1970.

In 1970 the first camping program began in earnest, with a weeklong summer programs for 7th and 8th grade young people, including wilderness camping in the valley and river tripping on the Kickapoo River. The following year the camping program was expanded to 8-12 year olds. Approximately 50 percent of these campers were from Dane County Social Service agencies. This was an important part of the vision of Pastor Hanson - to extend camping ministry to urban children.

Using the services of land planner Art Harrison, a master plan was developed for the property. This landmark decision included designating a "line" along the upland ridge to separate the main site area, where limited development and construction could occur, from the wilderness valley that would remain "forever wild."

Gary Forbes was hired as resident manager in 1971. During his tenure, the valley farmstead was torn down and the land restored to a natural state. An additional 20 acres of land was purchased. Pastor Hanson organized a "Friends of

Horizons" group in 1975. Dan Ensrude began serving as resident manager in 1978.

Bethel Horizons, under the leadership of Pastor Hanson, has developed many unique programs. It promoted the Outdoor Awareness and Earth Stewardship Project through the Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. Dr. Ruth L. Hine served as consulting naturalist for the many camps in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan through this project developed by Pastor Hanson.

In addition, the retreat ministries and special events of Bethel Horizons speak of a special relationship to the congregation. An annual congregational picnic draws 500 to 600 people; a cross-country ski-in began in 1975; the XYZ program (Extra Years of Zest) provides quality experiences for older adults; a choir retreat, pottery workshop and handbell seminar!

## ***Other Camps Wisconsin***

One additional camp was affiliated with The American Lutheran Church in Wisconsin. It was called the Homme Home Wilderness Camp and was located near Exeland, WI.

Homme Home is an agency of Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and cared for youth assigned by courts to the home for incarceration or treatment. The wilderness camp was used for field trips

Bethel Horizon's vision for outdoor education has met with incredible success. Mark Breseman was hired to serve as environmental education director in 1986 and established a school program. A beautiful nature center was built in 1987 to complement a ropes course and thousands of school children, trust building groups, business leaders, and staffs attend the creative programs of Bethel Horizons.

Additional construction at the camp includes a resident manager's home and maintenance building (1984) and the nature center (1987). These facilities complement the original retreat center built around the old barn on the farmstead located on the uplands.

Bethel Horizons remains owned by the Bethel Horizons Foundation in relationship to Bethel Lutheran Church. Its ministry is dedicated to social change within an ecumenical spirit.

and consisted of 570 acres. Some rentals were also offered to groups and in 1966, 96 other youth utilized the camp program

Homme Home itself is located in Wittenberg, WI, and is considered a highly effective program for youth (Camp Amnicon, located near Wentworth, WI, is included in the Minnesota chapter of this volume).

# *The Camps of Illinois*

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*Camping in Illinois did not flourish as much as might be expected. In the former American Lutheran Church, only one camp had its physical location within the state: Green Wing Bible Camp near Amboy, though among its predecessors was a camping program led by the Chicago Circuit of the ELC, whose story is taken from on of their newsletters and included below.*

*There were a number of circumstances that led to this arrangement. First, congregations in the Illinois District were spread across a significant geographic area. Those in the southeast Illinois, near the Ohio River, rented facilities in the Vincennes, Indiana, and area. They also joined with other Lutherans to rent camps for specific summer weeks near St. Louis, MO. Congregations of the ALC also rented East Bay camp, located near Bloomington. Rented facilities seemed to offer the parishes opportunities to camp without the expense of site development.*

*Lutherdale Bible Camp north of Elkhorn, WI, was and is considered an 'Illinois Camp' having received much of its support from ALC parishes in Chicago. It has always been part of the Chicago culture to 'go north' for camping and vacation opportunities and both shores of Lake Michigan have been favorite vacation destinations for Chicagoans. This pattern would remain true in outdoor ministries for many camps were held in southern Wisconsin, especially in the Lake Geneva area. An example of one of these rented camp programs is included in this history.*

*Green Wing Bible Camp was the only site ever developed by congregations of the American Lutheran Church in Illinois and its history was not long. This, in part, is another testimony to the difficulty of maintaining long-term funds for camping programs, particularly those that speak to social ministries.*

## ***Chicago Circuit Luther League Bible Camp Lake Geneva, WI***

The Chicago Circuit Luther League of the Evangelical Lutheran Church held many Bible camp sessions on Lake Geneva, near Walworth, WI, during the late thirties and forties. Generally, a specific week was selected for each summer and arrangements were made to rent a camp or resort facilities to conduct the program.

A typical camp was like the one held July 9-16, 1944, at Camp Aurora on Lake Geneva, WI. The camp dean was Rev. Stanley R. Olson, Rev. Alvin A. Snesrud was registrar, and Rev. Orville M. Running was Dean of Men. The Rev. A. E. Hanson, Brookings, SD, was brought in to serve as Inspiration Leader, and the Rev. R. W. Solbert served as Bible Teacher. Rev. A. Gordon Nasby was Song Leader and Rev. Ariel R. Molldrem was Athletic Director. The Chicago Circuit published a camp newsletter called *Bible Camp ECHOES*, which offered an excellent opportunity to share the excitement of camping with adults and Luther league participants.

Rev. Hanson explained the evangelical purpose of the camps in the January 1945, issue:

*"Your Bible Camp is a place where God wants you to tarry while He endues you with His power...Perhaps it will not be your calling to go to the 'uttermost parts' and again perhaps it may. Of this we are certain, God wants you to be His witness right were you are, and now...There will be much to do by way of spiritual reconstruction*

*in the post-war world. That's where God will need effective witnesses."*

This same issue reminded campers of their Bible study focus called 'Men God Made.' Rev. Richard Solberg wrote the article about "a company of five ancient Hebrew heroes." They included Joshua the conqueror, Gideon the timid, Solomon the ruler, Elijah the preacher, and Nehemiah the builder.

Part of the Camp Aurora theme was a poem written by Rev. M. E. Fretheim of Monticello:

*"Fair Aurora--the Goddess of the morning  
That the hearts of our heathen forbearers deeply  
did inspire  
Has come again--the life of youth adorning  
And touched our hearts with living Christian fire.*

*At Camp Aurora we greet the daylight  
As it rolls its chariot o'er Geneva's main  
And darkness yields as from Heaven's light  
We drink from fountains where no one drinks in  
vain.*

*The Men that God Made' deeply stirred our  
emotions,  
To Listen, to Learn, to Leave, to Love, and to  
Live,--  
The heart-searching prayers poured out at  
devotions--  
Thirsting souls to receive, quenching Spirit to give.*

*So Camp Aurora gets its name from the  
Morning*

*In legend and in story of the Northern Lights -  
Its power is of the Spirit - young lives adorning,  
Keen edge to the sword--and zeal to the fight."*

-- M. E. Fretheim

Without doubt, the memories of the participants will best describe the typical Bible Camp experience:

*"Loads of fun but wish I could get to sleep at night!" (Betty Diephause, Christ Church)*

*"I have a hard time choosing which attracts me most - the women or the horses." (Herbert Southwell of Medill).*

*"I like everything about camp except the insects and the night prowlers." (Anita Riechman, Our Saviors)*

*"Those last famous words of Rev. Sniesrud and Rev. Running, 'Lights out and Quiet, please.'"*

*"Where do flies disappear to when you pick up the swatter?"*

*"When the electricity failed in our cottage was it because the main switch had been pulled?"*

*"...one camper thought in this day of alphabetical designations, preachers should be called A-men."*

Two hundred and fifteen campers attended the program during 1944. It is clear from the newsletter that the strong Christian relationships that developed between the campers and their camp leaders were the most appreciated quality of the camp program. The pastors in attendance were often described in

memorable ways. The Dean of Women was Sister Magdalene Klippen and she was remembered for her ability to "heal any ailment but a broken heart."

The pastors were remembered because of their active role in monitoring activities, keeping campers in their dorms, and participating in camp ball games and swimming. They are pictured with whistles around their necks and remembered for their discipline or obvious lack thereof. One camper remembers that the campers were generally not disciplined as much as the pastors may have thought.

*"all those people Rev. Olson was supposed to have a talk with."*

*And "We heard Pastor Running say 'Halt' at 11:30 on Tuesday night. Why did you run, Lloyd?"*

Week long camps such as these were often conducted through various circuits or district Luther League organizations. Their pattern was clearly established in the late thirties and forties, and many leaders from throughout the country were called upon each summer to participate. Seminary teachers, recognized evangelists and preachers, and church lay leaders all contributed to the development of these programs.

The Chicago Circuit moved their camp to Cisco Beach on Lake Geneva in the following year of 1945. The camps led by the Chicago Circuit Luther League were eventually moved to Lutherdale Bible Camp upon its development in the late forties.

## *Green Wing Bible Camp Amboy, Illinois*

Green Wing Bible Camp, located just south of Amboy, Illinois, was the only camping site and program of the former American Lutheran Church located within the state of Illinois. It began as an endeavor to serve people from seven conferences in the Illinois District.

Initially a District Camp Association formed within the state suggested that there was a need for a permanent site. They alerted Lutheran members to begin a search for a suitable piece of land that had from 100 to 500 acres and might be centrally located to serve the many congregations spread throughout the state of Illinois.

A suitable site was located in Lee County near Amboy. It consisted of 490 acres. Originally owned by the Charles Walgreen (whose family owned the national chain of Walgreen Drug Stores) and the Shaw Newspaper family of Dixon, the property consisted of a mix of wooded land and fields. It had a small cabin located near the woods and was used as hunting property, with the fields rented out to neighboring farms.

On May 15, 1968, a Board of Directors was formed to begin "looking into the possibility" of purchasing this land. Board members included Pastors Ronald Belanger, Robert Patterson, Herman Lehman, Alvin Bergh, and Leonard Carlson. In addition, three lay members participated on the Board: Richard Pubfrey, Erhart Renken, and Cora Schafer. An option to buy the

property was purchased by the group and they recommended forming a church association to own the camp.

19 member congregations banded together to form an association to purchase the property on August 18, 1968. The option to purchase the property was exercised only 15 minutes before the allotted time was to expire. The remaining \$12,500 was brought to the bank and the camp officially belonged to the association of American Lutheran Church congregations on November 5, 1968. Dedication of the camp took place the following spring on May 18, 1969.

James Splitt was called to serve as program director during Green Wing's first summer of operation in 1969. During the summer, Pastor Paul Wittenberg came to Green Wing as the first Executive Director. Pastor Paul served Green Wing until February of 1971, and during this time, an area for family camping was cleared in the forest and the original hunting lodge was remodeled to serve as a small, year round retreat center.

Mr. Arlen R. Holman became Executive Director in April of 1971. As a professional lay worker from Chicago, "Arly" continued to develop facilities he felt would help the camp to reach out to a wide variety of populations. In 1972, a second retreat center for year round use serving 46 persons was built. It was constructed of donated pre-formed cottages used by area migrant farm

workers. Arly developed programs to serve the children of migrant farm workers and offered summer programs for the children who traveled with the migrant laborers each summer.

In 1978, a dining hall was built as an addition to the retreat lodge. This new unit could seat 175 people. Also, several study cabins were built to provide more comfort for youth campers. All campers up to this point had lived in tent villages arranged in isolated areas throughout the camp property.

Holmen continued to seek new ways of bringing a wide range of campers to Green Wing. His recruitment efforts established a tradition of camping among a variety of ethnic backgrounds from the Chicago area, including residents of urban projects such as Cabrini Greens near the Chicago Loop. A relationship was developed with a residential facility for developmentally disabled to bring campers with physical or emotional needs to Green Wing. These youth were generally mainstreamed into the camp programs and shared in all daily life activities.

Other improvements to the camp included the development of a small

## ***Other Camps Illinois***

Many congregations in Illinois organized camps at a large facility called East Bay, located NE of Bloomington, IL. The camp had a capacity for 630 campers and in 1966 ALC churches led a program that served 472 campers.

office and maintenance buildings, and staff housing arrangements as the staff increased in size to five persons.

Since its early history, the Green Wing Bible Camp Association struggled with the financial realities of operating the camp program. Its programs for urban campers were expensive to operate for no child was ever turned away for lack of funds to pay for registration fees. Special needs programs also required a significant outlay in staffing. And the association did not grow as expected; thus financial challenges began to shake the foundations of Green Wing Bible Camp.

Following the departure of Mr. Arlen Holmen in the mid eighties, the camps future was looked at closely by the Board and appointed committees. When the American Lutheran Church made plans to unite within the Evangelical Lutheran Church, it was apparent that no clear home could be found for Green Wing. After several consulting studies, the camp was sold to a consortium of Lutheran agencies whose intent to develop a wide range of programs was never realized. The history of Green Wing thus ended in 1988.

One can assume the camp used a "conference model" for program with daily class periods, organized recreation and inspirational worship and campfire opportunities

# *The Camps of Iowa*

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*Camping in Iowa has a rich and long history. Among the very first camps related to The American Lutheran Church was Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, established by the Sunday School Teachers Association of the Danish Lutheran Church in the early years of the nineteen twenties. Thirty years later, EWALU was established in the opposite corner of Iowa.*

*Iowa camping in the Lutheran Church is also a reflection of theological heritage of the state. It is not without reason that the camping ministry focus was built upon inspiration and evangelism. Roots of Haugian Lutheranism can be found in the constituencies of these camps; the concern for lay leadership and independence from bureaucratic interference may also be found. Camps may have been seen as centers for evangelism and outreach.*

*The history of Iowa camping often includes a creative "can do" spirit. There is much concern for involvement of a wide range of people to be engaged in Christian outreach. An independent spirit among congregations may have also contributed to a clear identification with their own camp.*



## *Okoboji Bible Camp Milford, Iowa*

Lake Okoboji Bible Camp is among the oldest Lutheran camps of the former American Lutheran Church. It began in 1922 when the Iowa District Sunday School Committee first suggested the idea of forming a Bible Camp at Lake Okoboji, a well-known resort and outdoor area in northwestern Iowa.

The first camp in 1924 was held at Miller's Bay on Lake Okoboji and was designed to train Sunday School teachers. Forty teachers attended the weeklong session. Over 500 people in a meeting held in a large tent joined them on Sunday. Housing was provided in near by cottages and tents and many people camped in their cars.

Camps were again held in the same area the following two years. It was during this time that the Articles of Incorporation were drafted for the "Lake Okoboji Bible School Association of the Iowa District of the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America."

Property was purchased the following year in 1927. Lots were purchased for \$1,000 and a chapel was built with \$1,200 all of which was borrowed. In 1931 the Luther League of the Iowa District of the UELC financed the cost of two small dormitories at Okoboji. Thus, Lake Okoboji Bible Camp had its roots not in youth camping programs but as a training center for adults, while youth camping was added at a later date.

A dining hall with dormitory rooms

was built around 1940, and during the following decade the old Miller's Bay Hotel was purchased and moved to the Okoboji's growing campgrounds. Soon after WW 2, old barracks were purchased and erected to serve as additional dormitory space, office and canteen facilities.

Lakefront property was finally purchased during the fifties and the growing camping program for youth meant that additional facilities were constructed. As the decade ended, and the new American Lutheran Church began to form, Okoboji became a district camp from 1960 through 1962. This form of ownership became cumbersome and the camp was given back to the congregations of the conferences in western Iowa.

Also in the sixties, an attempt was made to operate Ingham Lake Bible Camp, a camp of the former Evangelical Lutheran Church, jointly with Okoboji. Each camp went back to separate management and it would be another twenty years before the camps would be united in a joint working relationship.

During the years of 1972-75, Lake Okoboji Bible Camp entered into agreement with Lutheran Lakeside Camp to operate with a joint director, Rev. Ernest Lantz.

In 1976, the dedication of the newly winterized dining hall at Okoboji was held. It was called the Thomsen Center in honor of Dave and Nora

Thomsen who had served from the beginning of Okoboji's ministry for over 35 years. This same year, Connie and Jeanne Sorensen were hired as Co-Directors. Under their leadership the first Senior Citizens camp was held and the Shalom Cottage was received as a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Bill Nystrom of Sioux City, IA.

During the next four years, youth camper numbers increased from 320 to over 1,000 campers. Family use increased from 85 families to 340. Additions to the campsite included the Galilee cabin given by Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Mennen of LaMars, IA. It was moved to the camp and remodeled as a retreat center.

In 1981 a special campaign called the *Enrichment Appeal* raised \$337,000 toward the construction of a new Adult/Family Retreat Center. The funds

## ***Ingham Lake Bible Camp Milford, Iowa***

Ingham Lake Bible Camp was established just prior to 1948. Warranty deeds to the Estherville Circuit Bible Camp Association by Edgar Iverson and Percy Herum were filed in this year. The first cabin and the dining hall were erected with volunteer labor in 1949. This later became known as Boy's Cabin #3. The chapel and five more cabins were built on the campsite in 1950. Dredging material from High Lake was used to fill in the low ground that is not used as a recreation field.

Three weeks of summer camp were held in 1951. A total of 283 campers were

were also used to purchase the Beach Property. The adult center was dedicated the following year and named the Christopherhaus. The increase in family and adult retreats was dramatic.

It was in 1982 when a trial working arrangement between Ingham Lake and Lake Okoboji Bible Camps was proposed. In subsequent years this arrangement became stronger as Steve Mork began to serve Ingham Lake as director in 1983-84. Both constituencies approved new Articles of Incorporation into one and Connie Sorensen was named the Executive Director. The camps officially were united in January 1985.

By this time Okoboji's ministry was serving 680 youth campers, 2000 summer family and adult campers and over 3,000 guests during the retreat season.

served in that initial year of ministry. During the fifties, many additional facilities were built at Ingham Lake Bible Camp. Mr. Sylvester Berge became the camp manager and held the position for 14 years.

An attempt was made in the early sixties, around the time of the newly formed American Lutheran Church, to work cooperatively with Lake Okoboji Bible Camp. After two years, the camps returned to their original management structures.

In 1978 Richard Schroeder was hired as the first full-time director of

Ingham Lake Bible Camp.

In the early eighties, a joint ALC/LCA design for Iowa Lutheran Camps was established. Its purpose was to encourage cooperative ministry without competing interests. Formal working relationships between Lutheran camps in western Iowa were developed. A

### ***Riverside Lutheran Bible Camp Story City, Iowa***

Riverside Lutheran Bible Camp was dedicated July 4, 1943. The dream of Pastor A. J. Bringle became reality as pasture land donated by O. A. Mortvedt held campers in tents during its first summer. Pastor Bringle was known as "Mr. Bible Camp" for the camps he started and his devotion to camping ministry in church circles.

The Story City Circuit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church accepted ownership of the camp in 1944. In 1952, the St. Ansgar Circuit joined the association. In subsequent years, congregations in the Des Moines, Forest City, and Mason City conferences of the former American Lutheran Church also became members of Riverside.

It was in 1944 that the first buildings were constructed - a boy's cabin and three girl's cabins, as well as an administration building. In 1946, Uzziah and an additional girl's cabin and washroom were built. The Bringle Chapel was built in honor of its founder in the 50's. Also in the decade of the fifties, the swimming pool and camp manager's home was built. The Fellowship Hall

cooperative arrangement was also developed for shared leadership with Okoboji at this time. On January 1, 1985, Ingham Lake and Okoboji joined together in a unified outdoor ministry program. This same year, attendance at Ingham reached 372 campers and over 1,500 persons attending special events.

followed in 1957; it later became known as the O. A. Mortvedt Hall, in memory of the original landowner and friend of the camp.

In 1963, Pastor A. J. Bringle returned to Riverside as the first full-time camp director. Family camping began in the summer of 1965. With the acquisition of more land, part of it a farm, Bringle Village was completed with a hall for 70 campers. The farmhouse was modernized for the camp manager.

Pastor Kearney Frantsen became director in 1970. Beginning in 1972 Eric Johnson served 16 months as manager, and in 1973, Warren Johnson came to serve Riverside as the camp manager. Pastor Bringle retired and moved to Lake City, MN, in 1973.

The Peter Hansen Lodge was built in 1972 as well as a new kitchen. The Zion/Aaron duplex was built in 1974, and the Yaacob/Xerxes duplex was finished in 1975. The Founders Prayer Chapel and two full size tennis courts were also added in 1975.

In 1976 Pastor Franzen resigned, and Pastor Dan Knudsen was installed as

director in December. The new retreat center was begun in 1977 and completed the following year. A trail ride program was also established during the seventies, and two footbridges over the Skunk River were built.

Pastor Knudsen resigned in 1979, and the search committee recommended Pastor Arthur Vorhes to serve as the director of Riverside. A fund drive was planned for the first months of 1980 to reduce indebtedness and to raise funds for new projects. A suspension bridge across the Skunk River was built in 1982.

Meanwhile Riverside's program had developed many unique traditions. During the seventies and eighties a Lutheran Youth Encounter international team called 'Cross Fire' worked as summer counselors each summer. The camp also had a program established with the Training School for Girls in Mitchellville and carried on a program of canoe instruction with the Iowa State Training School for Boys in Eldora. Umegashima Bible Camp in Japan became the sister camp of Riverside and there

have been exchanges of staff members between the camps.

Financial development programs fostered through a consulting relationship with Richard Sayther of GSB Associates has helped Riverside form a Partners Club, conduct a yearly phonathon and send direct mail appeals to add stability to the annual needs of Riverside.

Following the retirement of Pastor Art Vorhes, Pastor Jim Cherry, a former director of Wilderness Canoe Base, accepted the call to serve as Executive Director. Pastor Cherry assisted Riverside in conducting another appeal that resulted in facility expansion through unique tree houses located on a bluff overlooking the river. The program has grown to serve substantial numbers of campers in a year round ministry.

Since its inception in 1943, Riverside has maintained its link to congregational ministry, serving as an extension of congregational life, while affirming its theme: "If you are in Christ, you are a new creation."

## ***EWALU Camp and Conference Center Strawberry Point, Iowa***

In the late 1950's many individuals of the Iowa District of The American Lutheran Church felt the need to establish a Bible camp in northeastern Iowa. A variety of locations were searched for a site. Among the sites under consideration was the St. Sebald Church property and Kleinlein Hollow area near Strawberry Point.

On September 23, 1960, a committee and a camp architect approved the present site along the Maquoketa River west of Strawberry Point. Following the approval of the District Executive Committee, 280 acres was purchased in 1961. W. Glen Wallace, a nationally recognized camp architect, was engaged to plan and develop the site.

Two weeks of tent camping took place in July 1961, under the leadership of Albert J. Bringle, the pastor at St. Sebald. Pastor Bringle had also been active in the establishment of Riverside Bible Camp in Story City. The only building on the camp was a woodshed brought from St. Sebald and used as a "cook shack." Yet the Rural Electric Cooperative duly provided service to the camping area.

Activity increased in 1962 when ten weeks of camping was scheduled for young people who had completed sixth grade through high school age. Bill White headed the camp staff. Construction of the main lodge began in early summer when a well was drilled and a fund raising campaign was initiated under the watchful eyes of Pastor Bringle. His report on February 22, 1963, listed commitments toward the appeal of \$222,000.

The association was incorporated in 1963 and the name EWALU was chosen, standing for "Eastern IoWA Lutheran." Alvin Zwanziger was to serve as the first president of the corporation for eight years. In May of 1963 construction of a 5,500 square foot swimming pool began; its first use was in July of that year. The lodge was dedicated on July 7, 1963, with Pastor Homer Larsen of Cedar Falls addressing the gathering estimated at 1000 people.

The registration fee for the 797 young people who participated in the camping program that summer was \$18 per week. Meanwhile, construction continued during the camping seasons for the latter part of the decade. A bathhouse, maintenance building, two unit lodges, eight cabins, sewage and

utility lines, a picnic shelter, and a director's residence were completed.

Over the years other improvements would take place. An addition to the main lodge for food storage and preparation, and a meeting room was added. An administration building with office space and individual guest rooms was also built. The former "cook shack" remained for years as the canteen. EWALU expanded over the years to include two sets of farm buildings and more wooded area so the total acreage was increased to 500. Most of the tillable land acquired with the farm buildings has been sold to neighboring farmers.

Early in 1984 the Three Crosses Boys Ranch of 960 acres located about two miles north of Strawberry Point became available. It was acquired for development as an adult retreat center. The property included a dormitory, director's home, and a set of farm buildings. The dormitory was extensively remodeled so that it now accommodates 56 individuals in deluxe private rooms with bath. Approximately 700 acres of the land was sold to finance remodeling costs leaving 250 acres on what is now known as the "EWALU Stone Center," named for Mr. and Mrs. Herb Stone who had earlier donated the land for the boys ranch.

EWALU's history, being relatively new, has included the memories of a number of people who were instrumental in its beginnings. Included are many interesting memories such as this anecdote from Ethel J. Zwanziger:

*"On Sunday, June 17, 1962, most of the*

men from camp had gone to Fredericksburg for a Brotherhood meeting. Two men, Bernard and Erwin Philipp, stayed at EWALU to see that everything went as it should. About two thirty, storm clouds began to gather in the west, and we became concerned for the safety of the young people who were in our care that Sunday afternoon. When the storm was imminent, and still no men back from Fredericksburg, Burnard and Flippie called all the campers together and asked them to get inside the big tent and stay there.

"Then Bernard, in his calm way, announced that there was a storm on its way but that we were confident God was in the storm and that we would be safe. Then he said, 'Flippie, you go to the north end of the tent and I'll go to the south end. We'll hold the tent down and

Ethel, you stand in the middle and pray!' I DID! After some strong winds and lots of rain, the storm abated and we left the tent, looked around, and found all was well..

"When the men returned from the Brotherhood meeting, they were concerned about the camp and campers because on their way home they had found many trees uprooted, telephone poles and wires down, and other evidence of a severe storm. But the camp and the campers were safe. God had indeed been in the storm; he had guided the wind and the rain around and away from the big tent. He had indeed watched over His own that day. I shall never forget it."

(From EWALU REMEMBRANCES by Ethel J. Zwanziger).

# *The Camps of the Dakotas*

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*The history of camping in the prairie states is among the oldest in the country. One might think that the distance between communities and the small population base in the Dakotas might have created barriers too great to overcome. In fact, the opposite is the case. The twin facts of distance and camper numbers have always contributed to the importance of building Christian community at Bible Camps. As a result, the camps in the Dakotas, particularly those in South Dakota, have shaped Lutheran camping in many ways, providing a core of young camping leaders who moved on to other camping corporations.*

*It is remarkable that there was a camp for every conference in the Western North Dakota District! And camps such as Outlaw Ranch in the Black Hills also set standards that were followed throughout the country. Another first for the Dakotas: the first full time camp director position in the American Lutheran Church was at NeSoDak Bible Camp in northeastern South Dakota (Pastor Richard Borrud). Camping had considerable value to Lutherans in the Dakotas.*

## *Camping in North Dakota*

*Lutherans are the predominant denomination in the Dakotas, far outnumbering other church groups. The Dakota values of helping each other out, volunteering, and making things work contributed to concerted effort to create camps. Within a few decades, the spirit of camping swept the prairie, and camps were established throughout North Dakota. As previously mentioned, there was a camp for each of the ALC Districts in North Dakota.*

### ***Badlands Ministries Medora, North Dakota***

The property on which Badlands Ministries is located has had a long and tortuous history. Western North Dakota, near the Badlands, has been a land of legend. Ranching has been its main enterprise, and visitors have included cowboys, trappers, and hunters. President Teddy Roosevelt enjoyed the North Dakota Badlands as their shadows and drama make this part of North Dakota a land of extremes.

Originally, the camping program known as Badlands Ministries purchased an 800-acre spread that had twice folded as a guest Dude Ranch. The land was purchased by congregations in the southwestern part of North Dakota in 1945. It was held in receivership, after having failed as a Dude Ranch both in the late 1800's and during the close of the Roaring Twenties.

Youth camping was not new to these churches for their youth had often camped at rented facilities and participated in Bible Camps. A CCC

Camp located north of Medora had been the most recent location of the Bible Camps prior to the purchase of the property.

The camp utilized as its primary facility the old log lodge that had been built in the twenties for the Dude Ranch operation. In addition, a boy's and girl's dorm, each serving between 30 and 40 campers were built in the fifties. About this same time, financial difficulties prompted the association to sell off the major portion of the acreage. All but forty acres were sold in its attempt to continue to operate the camp program.

Within ten years of the sale, oil was discovered underneath the land that had been sold, and the neighbor who purchased the property became a very rich man.

The camp program was operated during these years during the summer season with modest use during other months of the year. Congregations would band together and establish programs that were attended by youth



from western North Dakota. Some conversations were also held regarding the sharing of leadership in Lutheran camping during the sixties.

In the mid seventies, the camp facilities received the gift of the Normal Lutheran Church building, located north of Scranton, North Dakota. It was moved to the camp premises and converted into a small year round retreat center with 20 beds.

About the same time, Mr. John Hoyme served as the summer program director for a short period. By the end of the decade, the Board began to seek full time leadership, and soon called Pastor Jim Liefeld to serve as Executive Director. Jim was well liked and as a 'city kid' embraced the western lifestyle, wearing his large brim hat and sporting his handlebar mustache. Camp

### ***Metigoshe Ministries Bottineau, North Dakota***

Metigoshe Ministries has its historical roots deep in the camping activities of the Lutheran Churches of North Dakota. Starting in the early days of the 1930's, pastors would join together to bring their students from the plains of North Dakota to the sparkling Lake Metigoshe for a week of Bible camp at the state park. In the early sixties these congregations were finding the ministry of camping to be invaluable. Finding a peninsula on Lake Metigoshe, they bought the land and incorporated the Metigoshe

programs were filled with excitement and inspiration, and story telling became a fine art.

Pastor Carl Kelly followed Liefeld's departure and brought with him his musical talent. The camping program, however, experienced the loss of campers often found in rural areas where population waned.

Improvements were made to the facility and small cabins were built to improve the quality of the camp environment.

Subsequent directors have included Dave Anderson, Carl Buettemaier, Greta Kessel, and Lowell Krogstad. The camp programs have continued to this day to provide quality outdoor experiences for Lutherans in Western North Dakota.

Lutheran Bible Camp.

To further meet the needs of the growing camping ministry, the camp corporation joined together with the local Lutheran congregation to call a pastor to serve these two ministries. Under the direction of Rev. Mark Ronning, and with the help of many committed people, the Bible camp blossomed into a strong, active, summer camping and winter retreating ministry.

In 1968, Metigoshe Lutheran Church built the Lakeside Chapel, a

rustic A-framed wood and glass chapel overlooking Lake Metigoshe. Every summer in this chapel, the Metigoshe congregation and the camp staff would work together to offer musical and meaningful worship services for the lake's summer residents.

In the early 1970's, with the help of many people, the camp built the Lakeside Christian Center. Metigoshe Lutheran Church worshiped in this stone and wood facility on Sunday mornings while local groups used the facility for retreats. To accompany the growing number of retreat groups, the camp also moved the Nordland church building (one of the original churches of the area) and adapted it to serve as a second retreat facility. This became known as the "Life and Growth Place." At the same time, the camp purchased 268 acres on Pelican and Sandy Lakes, five miles east and south of Lake Metigoshe for wilderness camping.

Soon the camping program grew to the point of needing a full time director. Pastor Mark Ronning left his duties as part time pastor of the church to assume full time duties with the camping ministry. He served as Camp Director of Metigoshe Lutheran Bible Camp until his death in November of 1983.

In the mid seventies Mr. Dave Brunkow was called to serve as Associate Director of the camp. As the program had expanded, the need for another person to assist with retreats, staff recruitment, and staff leadership

meant the addition of full time leadership. Mr. Brunkow resigned in late 1978 to accept a call to serve as Executive Director of Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota.

In February of 1984, Rev. Paul Leslie became the new camp director. During the eighties, the camp corporation continued to grow and expand in new directions. It amended its name to be known as "Metigoshe Ministries" to reflect its wide spread growth. The camping program, being limited on the 20 acre Lake Metigoshe site was moved in its entirety to the 268-acre site on Pelican and Sandy Lakes. There, canoeing, sailing, fishing, swimming, and nature hikes are just a few of the many recreational activities to be enjoyed.

The spiritual rhythm of the camp included morning worship, Bible study, and evening campfires. The rustic camp and nourishing meals kept the lifestyle simple but highly meaningful, "anchored in Christ."

It was in 1988 that Pastor Leslie accepted the call to become Executive Director of Lutheran Outdoors of South Dakota. The Board of Directors called Rev. Marsh Drege to serve at Metigoshe Ministries. Pastor Drege brought a creative program touch to continue the nationally known quality of camping practiced at the camp. Known for its emphasis on music and worship, Metigoshe Ministries continues to provide a spiritual anchor to thousands of guests each year.

## *Red Willow Bible Camp Devils Lake, North Dakota*

Rev. R. A. (Rudy) Ofstedal led camping trips on the shores of Devils Lake as early as 1926. Rudy was a great football player for Luther College and despite his gentle nature, his stature was formidable and thus he made a successful impression on young people. His group of Luther League girls from his Edmore parish would camp during the district Luther League convention located in Devils Lake. The following year, 14 boys attended a four-day camp in the same location with Pastor Ofstedal leading a study on the Lords Prayer. When 35 youth signed up in 1928, the camp was moved to Red Willow Lake. Each young person paid \$1.50 and was expected to furnish a supply of provisions for the commissary.

In 1929, McVile Parish joined the Edmore group and 60 young people studied scripture under the leadership of the Rev. C. B. Ylvasaker. It was on this year that the campers gathered on Lookout Point for a sunrise service and prayed that "if God so willed" the land might someday become a permanent home for a Bible Camp. Enrollment reached 150 the following year, with representatives from many parishes throughout the district of North Dakota.

Despite the effects of the Great Depression, camping for young people grew between 1931 and 1935. Ofstedal

literally took his congregation from Valley City to the Red Willow site and invested the better parts of his summer building up the camp. Bible study leaders included Ylvasaker, the Rev. J. C. K. Preuss and the Rev. F. B. Anderson. During these years other camps began their missions in North Dakota, including Badlands Bible Camp near Belfield and Metigoshe Bible Camp in the Turtle Mountains. A new camp at Park River was also operating.

Between 1936 and 1939 camps were held at rented facilities at the conference grounds near Cooperstown and at Chautauqua Park in Valley City. The park was located on the Chautauqua River. Campers gathered annually to watch Pastor Swan leisurely walk over the bridge and suddenly dive into the water. It became known as the original 'swan dive.'

Then in 1939, Revs. M. A. Braaten and L. B. Brakke completed negotiations with Peter Jacobson for purchase of a campsite on Red Willow Lake that would become the permanent location of the camp. The prayers of the young people took 10 years to become reality as Lookout Point became the focus point for the Bible Camp!

The first year of operations, in 1940, much planning and building was completed. A kitchen and dining hall

was built first. Thanks to the efforts of Rev. M. T. Bratrude of Sheyenne, a barn was moved in from his parish to be used as the first dormitory. Over the years, many improvements were made as the camp expanded its summer operations. The program was conducted primarily through the efforts of pastors and lay leaders, and hundreds of youth from across the state enjoyed the inspiration of the camp.

In 1963, Gaius Aasland was hired as the first full-time camp director. This was a major step as Gaius was commissioned to hire 15 resident counselors and train them for summer program leadership. The following year, the camp was used every week of the summer season. Canoe camping on the Sheyenne River became part of the Red Willow decentralized program in 1965. In 1965, 1800 campers were served through the ministry of Red Willow!

In 1966 Red Willow also conducted the programs of Park River

### ***St. Olaf Retreat Center Devils Lake, North Dakota***

Pastor E. L. Rude had served a small country church, known as Norway ALC congregation, and located 11 miles west of Devils Lake in Pelican Township on a part-time basis for a number of years. In May 1968, the congregation merged with St. Olaf. The original facility held great

and Lake of the Woods Bible Camps. Over 60 staff members were recruited to participate in this large programmatic mission. The Board of Directors also decided to begin construction of the Ofstedal Center as soon as feasible. The Center was dedicated in 1967 to inaugurate the first year-round ministry.

By 1978 full time staff was expanded to include a Retreat Hostess. Environmental education was a fairly new concept, and the Board investigated a program called "Whole Earth Education" in 1981. In the mid eighties, another 300 acres of property was purchases from the Jacobson and Svaren families for expansion of the camp programs.

Today the ministry of Red Willow is a vibrant program serving thousands of guests each season. The program has included festive musical reviews, inspiration, and traditional camp and retreat programs throughout the year.

memories and thus no one wanted to see it deteriorate or be torn down for living quarters or storage facilities.

Pastor Alan Schultz suggested that it might serve well as a retreat center. Shortly after Pastor Roger Thoreson came to St. Olaf, the retreat center project was organized. After the

congregation voted to make use of the church building, Mrs. Esther Hanson and Robert Week donated a plot of land located in a wooded area on the west shore of Creel Bay. Since this required a move of about 10 miles across fields, it was necessary to wait until the soil was frozen deeply. The move was made on a cold day, February 26, 1975. It was early spring when it was placed on the new foundation on a steep hill overlooking the lake; by careful planning, this was accomplished without removing more than a few trees.

The building has since undergone many changes. A balcony was built to provide extra seating space in the upper level. This opens onto a large balcony over the lower level entrance, built by the National Guard as a work project, using iron rails from an abandoned railroad. A stonemason from Rugby, North Dakota, Edroy Patterson, constructed two large fieldstone fireplaces.

Many people have donated their time, money, equipment, materials, and labor to the various projects that made the center what it is. It will provide overnight indoor sleeping space for 40 people. There is additional picnic and

camping space, access to the lake for water recreation and both floors are accessible for the physically challenged. Outdoors there is a beautiful setting for a worship service. Sweet rockets bloom among the trees.

The mission of the St. Olaf Retreat Center is to provide for all age groups within the congregation as well as the surrounding community an outdoor setting that offers a place for worship, fellowship and an appreciation of creation.

The center has been used as a retreat for Bible camps, circle and committee meetings, family reunions, anniversaries, weddings and even a funeral or two. During the summer months, an early morning worship service is held every Sunday followed by breakfast.

Bishop Nelson Preus dedicated the St. Olaf Retreat Center May 15, 1977, at a 7:00 AM festive worship service. At Norway Cemetery, where the church stood for so many years, evergreens have been planted and a fieldstone cairn was built with a bronze plaque marking the location. The plaque is fittingly engraved "Mission Accomplished."

## **Park River Bible Camp**

### **Park River, North Dakota**

*An excellent history of the Park River Bible Camp has been published in honor of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the camp in 1996. It was written by Darlene Hendrickson of Edinburg, ND. According to the Park River Bible Camp Board of Directors, Darlene is considered "our Camp*

Historian." She had researched old newspapers and camp minutes and used personal interviews to gather together 60 years of historical information. This summarized story of Park River Bible Camp is thus taken from her excellent research.

When the Park River Circuit Luther League met at Hoople, ND, in 1935, a recommendation was made to establish a Bible Camp in the area. Mr. Albert Fagerholt of Hoople was president of the Luther League and he and Mr. Olaf Torson of Park River agreed to assist in its establishment. According to Eunice (Fagerhold) Vold, daughter of Albert:

*"I really doubt that this camp would be here today, had not Dad and Olaf Torson from Park River given so freely of themselves... They did it for the extension of God's Kingdom here on earth and in heaven forever. Here were two laymen who were concerned about the salvation of souls and that's why they donated their time and talents to the camp."*

With the help of Rev. Gustav Halmrast of Edinberg, Albert Fagerholt and he drove the countryside searching for the ideal site. "The Smith farm, three miles south of Edinburg, was chosen as the first site. Since the road to this area might not be accessible, due to heavy rains, it was agreed upon to use Golden Park. The Omland Brothers owned the land and they still own land south of the camp."

A small group was organized to constitute the first Board of Directors with Rev. Halmrast as chairman and Albert Fagerholt as Business Manager.

They formalized the camp's establishment in 1936. Early program opportunities began almost immediately by using a large tent with "old time religion." Mr. Carl Paulson of rural Hoople was in charge of the tent that was owned by the Luther League.

*"It was used as an auditorium and girls dormitory before the chapel was built. The tent measured eighty-four feet by forty-five feet. The tent was set up on the north end of camp... The pulpit was on the west end of the tent... Three long poles or pipes were placed down the middle of the tent... Sledge hammers were used to drive in stakes along the outside... at times the tent had to be lowered due to strong winds or a storm."*

The first camp held 104 campers from 21 of the Norwegian Lutheran and Free Church congregations and was conducted June 15 through June 22, 1936. Memories of this camp are abundant in those who experienced the first week.

Mrs. Bertha (Sundvor) Jenson of Edinburg recalled her work as a camp cook:

*"The sun wasn't quite up at four o'clock when Mrs. Lillian (Fredrickson) Schautz and I got up to prepare breakfast. We had to light lanterns in the cook car and keep putting wood in the cookstove to keep it going... We slept in*

*the cook car during the one week of camp. It was so cold we had to put our bathrobes over the blankets to keep warm."*

*"It was a wonderful time, something that stays with you all your life," said Alice (Eagleson) Hall, of Edinburg who was a camper in 1936. 'Living for Jesus' was a song she learned and still likes. Alice remembered a makeshift stand which held a barrel of water. It sat in the sun all day so the temperature was just right for washing up. Everyone who wanted to go swimming had to walk north to the Sundvor farm and then east to the Smith's swimming hole. A big tree hung out over the water. The boys would climb out on a limb and jump into the water. The girls never had the nerve to do that."*

*"Eleanor Grace, a daughter of Rev. Halmrast, went wading in the river. Everyone heard her screaming so we went to see what was wrong. Her legs were covered with bloodsuckers. We took sticks to get them off. No one wanted to touch them."*

By 1940 the camp opened with 166 students. On November 1, 1940, the camp Board of Directors met at the G.O. Omland farm and a verbal agreement to purchase Golden Park for \$2700 was made. A contract for deed for forty acres in Golden Township was approved. During this decade, the camp was able to secure materials such as government granaries, lumber and other buildings. The first cabin was built in 1940.

*"My high school graduation present from my parents was a week of camping," Frances (Froiland) Kjelland said. "In*

*1940 there was only one cabin and tents were still being used. My sister, Irene, and I slept in the cabins. I remember the campfires on the hillside every evening. Kids would sing and give their testimonies. Sometimes they would sit at different levels. Singing would start at the top and it would echo down."*

In 1942, Rev. O. Gornitzka taught a week of study for older people who preferred Norwegian.

Camping during the days of WW II was challenging. Permission for materials and food had to be obtained by the local rationing board (because of the need for supplies for soldiers engaged in battle). In 1943, with rationing board approval, a Delco light plant was installed and campers were asked to bring one can of processed food such as corn or peas to share. In 1945, lifelong friends Oscar Laaveg and Floyd Lien were ordained at Park River Bible Camp.

The cornerstone for the new chapel was laid on Sunday, July 27, 1947. Lumber for the chapel was secured from Canada the previous winter. It was hard to get the lumber into the camp because of the deep snows. The 60 X 100 building was designed to seat up to 1100 persons and a large addition with a fireplace built of fieldstones would furnish classroom space for the camp.

Volunteers were used throughout the process. Eugene Loftsgard hauled lumber in his '37 Chevy. Olaf Torson built the altar, altar ring, pulpit and benches for the

chapel. Eunice Vold remembers the year the chapel was built.

*"Dad worked at camp from early spring to late fall. I think of all the lunches that mother packed for him each day. I remember the first services that were held in the chapel in 1948, and its dedication on June 27, 1948."*

Rev. Oscar Hanson, Executive Secretary of the Luther League conducted the services.

The Park River flooded in 1951 and changed the course of the river through the camp. Dirt covered the cement dam and old car bodies were pushed against the east bank of the river to stop erosion. With the new chapel in place, this decade proved to be an exciting time for Park River Bible Camp.

Rev. Jim Brooks, Lawrenceville, GA, recollected:

*"The Bible Camp I remember was a camp that emphasized the Bible. Albert Fagerholt explained to me as a young pastor that his hope was for a place here on earth in which the Word of Christ would dwell richly (Col 3:16) among His people; and that's what we all experienced. It was 'Rise and Shine' at 7 a.m. with 'Morning Devotions' and 'Cabin Clean-up' before breakfast at 8:15...Classes started at 9:00 a.m.; and there were three periods for these before the noon meal. 'Bible Study' took the first fifty minutes until 9:50. Then it was 'Mission Hour' until 10:40, or so. This was followed by a brief break before a session on the 'Christian Life' before dinner."*

*"And those evening services! The*

*people responded! Those sun-tanned farmers and their families drove in from miles around and filled the whole central area with cars. They loved it too! WE had guest musicians, our own Camp Choir, and preaching to warm the heart."*

A new swimming pool was constructed in the early fifties, pumping water from the Park River to fill the pool. Before the pool was built, the camp borrowed a grain truck from a farmer neighbor "and hauled campers to Homme Dam for a swim."

Many changes would take place in the sixties. In 1963, a study conducted by Rev. Richard Borrud, from the Bible Camp Association of the American Lutheran Church, addressed important issues regarding stewardship of the land, the quality of the water in the swimming pool, and the size of the property for the large program it was maintaining. In the Borrud report, the summary statement included these words:

*"The PRBC is 'on the move.' The improvements have been almost revolutionary. You stand on the threshold of a new era of Christ-centered camping in our church. Your leadership will not only speak to your local area but to the whole church."*

To reduce impact on the land, the Board decided to cancel evening services that had brought in large numbers of people. A statement in the summer brochure now said "No evening worship services." Next the



Board hired Mr. Jerry Hauge from Mt. Vernon, SD, to serve as the program director. Some of the roles played by pastors now were given to young summer camp counselors. In addition, because of the small size of the camp, a merger with Red Willow Bible Camp was explored. In 1966, cooperative agreements between the two camps were in place.

During the seventies, many needed improvements to the camp were made. It was also a decade of soul searching for its theological roots and its relationships to other Christian bodies. A new bathroom was constructed in 1971 and plans for a new dining hall were laid. The swimming pool was removed and the hole filled.

At the same time, questions arose over the relationship with Red Willow Bible Camp. On January 22, 1974, a discussion was held regarding camping in the Eastern ND District of the American Lutheran Church. It was felt that loyalty to the camp was being lost. There was also a theft of funds from Red Willow that made those associated with Park River concerned about operations. The following October delegates to the annual meeting dissolved the merger with Red Willow. A period of reflection, loss, and forgiveness was needed in the days to come.

Theological issues were also discussed during this decade. The use of altar calls was questioned in terms of Lutheran practice. As rentals to other Christian groups became more

common (such as the Navigator's and use of speakers from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association), it was important to state clearly the organization's principles.

Yet the Bible Camp ministry continued to serve campers by providing important spiritual direction. Maren (Flaten) Harki, Alaska, remembered her days as a staff member at Park River Bible Camp in 1980:

*"My impression of the camp...I loved the physical aspect of the camp, in that it was sort of in a circle and the chapel was at the head, a little bit higher than the rest. Also I loved the campfire locations, on top of those big hills, where you could see the big beautiful North Dakota summer skies. How did it help my faith grow...well, it was kind of funny because I had attended church and Sunday School all my life, but the real meaning of a living faith in Jesus did not hit me until I went to Bible Camp. In speculation, maybe it was the constant prayers by the people running the camp."*

On June 26, 1984, the decision was made to have a full time director of ministries. Pledges were received to secure funds for the staff position and Corey Bjertness was hired as the camp's first full time Director. Director Bjertness emphasized safe and sanitary operations.

*"The second thing we stressed was that everyone who comes through the PRBC gate needs to be presented with the Gospel of Jesus*

*Christ in some way and challenged in some way, and asked just where is God at in your life."*

On March 14, 1986, Park River Bible Camp celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a banquet and worship service. According to Bjertness:

### ***Camp of the Cross Garrison, North Dakota***

In May of 1954, the Bismarck Circuit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church invited all the Lutheran pastors in the area to meet in Washburn, ND, to discuss creating a new camp to serve Lutherans. Responding were representatives of the American, Augustana, Evangelical, and Missouri Synod Lutheran Churches. At the meeting, all agreed there was a great need for a church camp and that it would be best to pool their efforts to build a single camp that all might use. Two pastors and one layman from each of the respective church bodies agreed to serve on a committee to establish the new Lutheran Bible camp.

To select a location, the committee viewed a variety of prairie sites that would eventually become lakeshore along the Garrison Reservoir project under development by the Corps of Engineers. This huge reservoir would create a gigantic lake out of the Missouri River once completed. But at the time of site selection, the committee walked prairie

*"There was an attitude of 'hey we've got something good going here. Let's keep it going! It was nice because it was the time when the ELCA merger was happening, and it was a source of unity for the entire area when it was needed most."*

and could only envision the shore by the small stakes hidden in the grass by the engineers.

To their credit they selected a 92-acre parcel of land overlooking a ravine located 10 miles southwest of the city of Garrison. The ravine would eventually back fill from the reservoir and provide sheltered shoreline from the main body of water. The beautiful location would later justify itself, as the camp's location was to be on a lovely point surrounded by water.

The United States government had established terms for use of reservoir shore lands. If an organization could become an "incorporated character building group," the land could be leased for \$1 per year. Attorney Harold Anderson from First Lutheran Church in Bismarck drew up the necessary Articles of Incorporation and the Lutheran Bible Camp Association was formed.

After the water defined the site, early camp leaders led by the first

president, Rev. W. H. Munding began the task of constructing the camp, which was called the "Garrison Bible Camp." Having very little in available funds, a total of \$67,000 was borrowed from various individuals. Equipment for the camp was purchased beginning in April of 1955. Early workers took advantage of the recently vacated buildings that had housed the builders of the Garrison Dam. An offer of \$10,000 secured the buildings and they were moved to the camp to provide basic housing for campers. A caretaker's house was also moved to the property.

There was an incredible amount of volunteer hours put into the construction of the camp that was built on pristine prairie land. In June of 1956, Mr. John Torske of Underwood was engaged as the general construction manager of the camp. The camp was dedicated on September 2, 1957. An address was given by Mr. Martin Vaaler, the Public Service Commissioner for the region. A youth choir made up of youth from a number of the supporting churches sang, "God So Loved the World" and "If With All Your Hearts" with rousing and controlled voices. It was a day of celebration for the first camps were offered the following summer of 1958.

*(Note: An old brochure states that the official opening date of camp was June 15, 1957. This may have been delayed as a Board communication states that the camp opened in 1958).*

From the beginning pastors were the key people in the camp program and operations. They served as teachers, counseled young people and created interest in camp participation. This was continued for many years, with various church groups selecting different weeks during the summer schedule.

The camp became a part of the American Lutheran Church upon its formation. However it remained pan Lutheran having ties with Lutheran churches affiliated with the Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Church in America. Sometime in these years, the name of the camp became *Camp of the Cross*. The name refers to the prominent role that the message of Christ's death and resurrection has in our lives.

In 1966, delegates to the annual meeting asked the Board of Directors to hire a full time camp director. Due to finances this was not possible, but the organization was successful in finding a part time director. This brought about many program changes. The camp began to use more youth counselors and the budget was increased, creating some concerns about finances. And some of the pastors felt their roles were diminished.

In 1969, the Board of Directors decided to utilize clergy more fully and move from a camp director to a manager, leaving clergy in charge of programs. Mr. John Lee served in that capacity during the summer of 1970, and the camp program began to use the

Pastor Dean of the Week system. In 1970, a week of family camp was offered for the first time. And Operation Knock-Out was launched to retire the remaining debt of \$30,117.00 all that remained from the original loans of \$67,000.

Camp programs continued to flourish but heavy use also took its toll on buildings and grounds. At one point a girl named Darlene notices the erosion of shoreline near the dining hall. Knowing that the camp was in danger of losing valuable property and perhaps buildings she wrote to her senators in Washington, asking them to save her beautiful camp. What might be described as a miracle happened. The United States Congress ordered the

### ***Shalom Bible Camp Grand Forks, North Dakota***

Shalom Bible Camp was established in 1956 when Pastor John Gaardsmoe, Senior Pastor of United Lutheran Church, Grand Forks, ND, felt a need for an affordable place for personal reflection and spiritual growth. Believing that many people would benefit from a place set apart for ministry, United Lutheran Church purchased a farm on the north side of Maple Lake just south of the town of Mentor, MN.

In the early years, volunteers cleared rubbish from the farm buildings, cleaned up farm residue, and made improvements to the buildings

Corps to place a protective rock barrier on the shore to stop the erosion.

Camp of the Cross continued to provide faithful service to congregations in North Dakota. But the declining number of youth in North Dakota meant that the camp would need to adapt to changing rural patterns. The camp struggled some during the mid to late seventies, as funding was very tight. Yet modest improvements and volunteer activity continued under the leadership of their director, Garritt Van Hunnicks. Just prior to the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in 1988, Ms. Marcy Burns was called to serve as Executive Director of Camp of the Cross.

that were kept for use by the camp. Among the buildings that were saved was the original farmhouse, silos that were used as "beach changing rooms" and a garage. Two additional double garages were moved onto the property and connected to serve as a dining hall and kitchen.

For many years the camp served the congregation's needs. Families and youth would enjoy outings at Shalom Bible Camp and participate in recreation, study, prayer, and worship. Then in the early 1970's, a year-round retreat center was built to expand the program opportunities. Soon a cement

wall basement structure was built into the side of a hill near the lake to serve as a chapel. In 1975 the unit was completed when the upper portion of the facility was built. The chapel could seat up to 500 people. It was named the "Gaardsmoe Center" in honor and memory of Pastor John Gaardsmoe, the founder of Shalom Bible Camp.

During the early seventies, Pastor Phil Knutson devoted a portion of his time as a pastor of United Lutheran Church to provide direction to the camp. Various members of the pastoral staff took turns leading Sunday morning services at the camp. For the most part, members of United Lutheran Church attended the worship services.

In 1975, Pastor Arden Norum was called to the staff of United Lutheran Church to focus upon youth ministry and to develop the program and facilities of Shalom Bible Camp. Pastor Norum was the first person on the staff specifically called to assume responsibilities for Shalom.

During the summer of 1975, Red Willow Bible Camp had been asked to hire and train the summer staff. The schedule was expanded to seven full weeks of camp and included programs for confirmation camping, elementary camps, and the "Tiki Camp," a ten day outreach camp for children living in the neighborhood surrounding United Lutheran Church in Grand Forks.

Housing was far from adequate and the campers slept in tents of poor

quality. Nevertheless, the success of the program launched a vision to improve the quality of the facilities and equipment owned by Shalom Bible Camp. The following year, new tents were purchased and plans were laid to construct new cabins. In the late seventies six cabins to serve 48 campers were constructed by volunteers. The staff expanded to 12 to 14 summer staff members.

The retreat center was remodeled in 1980 creating flexible space for groups up to 24 people in size. A tent and trailer campground with 54 camping sites was also created. Twenty of the sites in the campground were serviced with water, electrical, and sewer hook ups.

Summer camp attendance continued to grow under the leadership of Pastor Norum. The continuity offered with Pastor Norum enabled the worship services to expand from 50 people to an average attendance of 350. On festival Sundays there were often over 500 people in attendance. Each of the services was followed by a potluck meal, coffee and snacks.

An additional program was added in the early eighties when several Grand Forks schools took advantage of a new environmental education program. Each May weekend would be filled with groups seeking to learn more about nature and creation.

Projects added to Shalom Bible Camp during these years included a large maintenance shed and a new home for a caretaker was moved onto

the site. Several bathhouses were also built.

Kathy Norum served as Assistant Director and Director of Food Services during the early years of the decade. In 1984, Pastor Arden Norum and Kathy Norum left the staff of United Lutheran Church as a result of a call to serve as Executive Director of Luther Crest Bible Camp.

United Lutheran Church determined to return to its previous staffing model where different staff members were to "look after the camp." Summer site directors were hired but without specific year-around leadership for Shalom Bible Camp a number of programs were lost,

### ***Upper Missouri Bible Camp Epping, North Dakota***

First Lutheran Church of Williston, North Dakota, owned the Upper Missouri Bible Camp. The 34-acre site offered camping for confirmation students, children and youth and families. The congregation often used the camp for special events and outdoor worship.

The camp is located on the wind swept prairie of North Dakota. Long vistas can be seen and the camp has a

including the environmental education use by the schools of Grand Forks. Attendance began to decline without adequate marketing and the program grew smaller.

By the time of the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Shalom Bible Camp remained connected to United Lutheran Church, although its program was much smaller in scope than in previous years. Nonetheless, Shalom Bible Camp is a classic example of an outdoor ministry that was shaped out of the needs of a single congregation that emphasized growth in faith through the experience of outdoor ministry.

long history of faithful service to the church. It is also open to many children from the community.

Mr. Tom Hind<sup>l</sup> served as Camp Director in the early eighties and developed a small retreat program offering hospitality and friendship to those who came for retreats. The summer camp program uses a wide range of creative programs and is staffed by trained summer counselors.

## *Camping in South Dakota*

*South Dakota was one of the very first camping traditions that saw the benefits of uniting for the sake of statewide ministry. Lutherans Outdoors was not born out of an idea as much as a necessity. Its success today might hide the tension of its early days. Yet there were no models for this first umbrella organization to follow. Its slow but thoughtful construction became the model for unified camping in the country. And one of its camps, Outlaw Ranch, became a well-known national ministry, widely recognized for its excellence and creativity.*

*The history of camping in South Dakota has been recorded in anniversary and festival booklets and shared with many over the years. The following histories have been drawn from these official publications of Lutherans Outdoors and edited by Dave Brunkow, former Executive of Lutherans Outdoors, Steve Peterson, former director of Outlaw Ranch, and Dick Borrud, founding director at Outlaw Ranch. We are also indebted to Dave Brunkow for writing down his memories and record of the Klein Ranch project, from which the following history is taken.*

### ***Lutherans Outdoors of South Dakota, Inc. Sioux Falls, South Dakota***

Lutherans Outdoors of South Dakota was formed by the 1968 Convention of the South Dakota District of the American Lutheran Church. This action came upon the recommendation of the District Camping Ministries Committee to form a corporation to own and manage the ALC campsites in the South Dakota District. Their purpose was to provide quality coordination of camping, based upon sound Lutheran theology, on behalf of the congregations of South Dakota.

In the early years, Lutherans Outdoors was more of a federation of independent camps than a single unit.

In 1968, the formation of such an umbrella organization as Lutherans Outdoors was a major, some used the term “radical”, move. The first Executive Director of the corporation was Rev. Roy Satre who served from 1969 too 1972. Following Roy, Gaias Aasland served between 1972 and 1977.

In the early days of Lutherans Outdoors there was an Executive Director with no central office. Each camp maintained its own checking account and purchased its own supplies. There was no central financial record, no unified balance sheet and no unified income and

expense statements. Site directors continued to be in charge of programs without an overall program plan. The largest part of the site director's job was maintenance, leaving little time for contacts with area congregations, program development, and promotion. The facilities at each site were suffering from years of inadequate maintenance due to limited budgets.

During these years, the Board of Directors of Lutherans Outdoors worked diligently to draw together administrative and development functions as it moved the camps into an organizational plan while attempting to make its modest resources stretch to cover a variety of crisis.

Following the departure of Gaias Aasland in 1977, Lutherans Outdoors operated without an Executive Director. The Board and Executive Committee were meeting frequently, providing day-to-day management. It was apparent that steps were needed to reorganize the management of the corporation, devote time to long range planning, and find additional financial support so that its camps might receive the care they needed.

The Board asked Norris L. Erickson, Assistant Vice President of Planning and Engineering at the University of South Dakota, to evaluate the mission, goals, financial condition, and day-to-day operation of the corporation. His report, A Look at Lutherans Outdoors, was presented to the Board in December 1977. By mid 1978, most of Erickson's

recommendations were completed.

In 1977 the South Dakota District Convention authorized a capital fund drive that raised about \$135,000 to relieve the financial pressure of accumulated debt and enlarged maintenance costs. The following year, the District Convention provided further support for Lutherans Outdoors by adding the corporation as a partnership ministry line item in the District budget, beginning February 1, 1979. The first year's contribution was \$82,000, and it would eventually rise to \$95,000. The importance of this stable source of support for Lutherans Outdoors cannot be overstated.

In February 1979, Mr. David Brunkow was called to serve as Executive Director. He agreed to start in September of 1979 in order to finish his responsibilities at Metigoshe Bible Camp in Bottineau, ND, through the summer season. His addition to the staff completed the organizational restructuring of the corporation. With the addition of professional management the Board was able to turn its attention to planning program and facilities for the future.

In May 1981, Lutherans Outdoors adopted its first Long Range Plan. Within a few years the challenges of that first plan were met. A comprehensive master plan for all the camps of Lutherans Outdoors was completed in 1983. Day Camp programs were developed in 1983 to serve congregations across the state and camping sites were rented to serve



congregations in southwestern South Dakota where distances prevented some from attending the owned sites. In 1985, an environmental education program was established. And also, a state wide capital improvement campaign that raised almost \$1,065,000 began in 1985, enabling dramatic improvements in its facilities at all four sites.

### ***NeSoDak Bible Camp Lake Enemy Swim, South Dakota***

Although the NeSoDak Bible Camp was not organized until 1942, camping in South Dakota was run under the NeSoDak Bible Camp Association as early as 1936. This organization operated under the Luther Leagues of the Aberdeen and Sisseton Circuits of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. But pastors of this church between 1933 and 1936 conducted the earliest camping in eastern South Dakota.

The pastors of this area organized camps at rented facilities at lakes Kampeska, Clear Lake and Big Stone. One of these camps held at Clear Lake, near Sisseton, was called "Ne-So-Dak Bible Camp." Thus in 1936, a constitution was drawn up with Pastor J. L. Kildahl of Webster serving as President. Leif E. Evans was selected as Secretary-Treasurer.

At a meeting on July 9, 1936, the Bible camp committee met at Clear Lake. Pastor Kildahl, Miss Esther

On July 1, 1987 Lutherans Outdoors adopted another Long Range Plan. This plan included a new mission statement along with statements of value, objectives, and procedures. In August, Mr. Dave Brunkow resigned his position to join the financial development firm of Gronland Sayther & Associates.

Chilson and Miss Lillian Olson had investigated the possibility of holding camps at the Jack Rommel Resort (Camp Dakota) at Enemy Swim Lake. The facilities included a hotel with dining room, several cabins, and private cabins in the area were also for rent. The only "auditorium" in the area was at the Boy Scout pony shed, located one-half mile out into the prairie. In 1937, the first camp was held on what would eventually become the site of NeSoDak Bible Camp, with 130 campers present.

The camp was a great success. According to the *Webster Reporter and Farmer*, dated June 1937, the camp was open to anyone and daylight saving time would be used so no artificial light would be necessary. The pony shed proved to be inadequate since those who trudged into the prairie got wet feet in the morning grass. Camp fees were \$5.00, including tuition, meals and room for seven days.

Pastor Kildahl served as camp dean, which meant carrying water, wood, supervising even the mundane jobs, picking up fresh foods each day in Webster or Waubay, and generally supervising all aspects of camp life.

Jack Rommel, owner of the resort, had been skeptical of the camp. But he quickly grew to like the youth and recognize the leadership of Pastor Kildahl. He wanted them to come back, and knowing of the inadequacy of the pony shed, he offered to advance the group \$300 for the purchase of building materials to construct an auditorium on two lots known as "the triangle." This was a very generous offer to the organization because this area of South Dakota was just beginning to come out of the terrible drought caused by the dust bowl days.

Shortly thereafter, news of the success of the camps reached a wide area. Interest from congregations in the Brookings and Madison Circuits, along with involvement from the Watertown Circuit expanded the number of participants. These circuits also joined the NeSoDak Bible Camp Association, and finally in 1942, the corporation gained legal status within the state. By this time, land bordering Camp Dakota (part of the resort) was also loaned to NeSoDak by the Northern State Teachers College, thanks to Dr. Lipscomb of the faculty at the college.

Pastor J. L. Kildahl was clearly recognized as the *Founder of NeSoDak*

*Bible Camp*. His leadership was instrumental in not only creating the structure of the organization and expanding its base, but also as the person who assumed primary responsibilities for running the operations of the camp. Shortly after its Incorporation, the organization purchased the original Camp Dakota property in January 1943, consisting of the hotel and several cabins for a total cost of \$9,500. 48 congregations were members of the corporation at the time. Its waterfront opportunities and excellent location on Lake Enemy Swim in northeast South Dakota has long served as a focus for program development and facility construction. Additional acreage was acquired within time, including the property and dorms owned by the teachers college, and property belonging to the former EUB Camp with two dorms and several cabins east of the road. NeSoDak served 2000 campers per summer by 1945.

For many years NeSoDak served congregations from throughout the state of South Dakota. Hundreds of people would enjoy its summer camping programs. Also providing retreat opportunities for Christian renewal, NeSoDak developed as a full service year round camping facility.

Growth continued into the fifties as the Mitchell Circuit joined. The camp negotiated additional purchases of the log cabin home of Mr. and Mrs. Rommel for \$16,200 including interest. This property

included the parking lot. Later in 1957-59 the camps built boy's and girl's bathhouses at a cost of \$3,157 and \$4,575 respectively. Some 50 double bunks and mattresses increased the investment to the property. In 1960, six pieces of property were purchased to expand the camp, and a new dining hall was built.

In 1960, the NeSoDak Bible Camp Board issued a call to its first professional Camp Director, Pastor Richard Borrud of Hayti, South Dakota. Borrud supplemented his role as camp director by serving in interim ministries. The philosophy of the camp began to change under his leadership. Through involvement in the Bible Camp Association of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, new ideas were being promoted, many of which were advocated by Pastor Borrud, who was the first full time Camp Director in the newly formed American Lutheran Church, of which the ELC became a part.

Borrud spearheaded a new programmatic and managerial style that was soon to become a trend throughout the church. New and dynamic small group programs using paid summer camp staff who were carefully selected and trained soon became part of ALC camping. Borrud led creative programs for NeSoDak until 1962, when he was called to Outlaw Ranch in the Black Hills and to serve part time as a National Staff person for Outdoor Ministries in the ALC.

Mr. Gaius Aasland served as interim director in 1962 until he became director of Red Willow Bible Camp in Binford, ND, in the fall of 1962.

Pastor Fred Lutz became the new director and served for five years on a part time basis until 1967. Lutz shared responsibilities with the Webster Nursing Home where he was part time chaplain. Mr. Earl Jensen was the site manager. Program development continued as many programs were written that encourage Christian growth focused on small group camping concepts. In 1963, NeSoDak acquired the Jim River camp near Parkston. Thus, camping programs of NeSoDak spanned the entire Eastern border of South Dakota. A program venture called the Minnewaste Canoe Base was conducted, but because of the inability to purchase the leased property it could not be maintained. And in 1965, an addition to the main lodge enabled NeSoDak to undertake a year round retreat program.

The rising financial burden that was assumed during the construction phase of NeSoDak forced the camp into a period of reduced staffing. Following the departure of Pastor Lutz and Earl Jensen, Pastor Willard Olsen and Pastor Dick Bahnson (director of Outlaw Ranch) shared managerial duties. New plans were laid to meet the fiscal needs and continue to offer the strong program tradition of the camp.

In 1968 the camping programs

of the ALC were united into a new corporate structure in South Dakota called Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota. Early in 1972, Dick Iverson was hired by Roy Satre, the first director of Lutherans Outdoors, to serve as the new site manager at NeSoDak. Shortly thereafter, a new Executive Director of Lutherans Outdoors of South Dakota was hired to replace Satre. The Board turned to Mr. Gavis Aasland, a former interim director at NeSoDak. Under his leadership, the duties of Dick Iverson were expanded to include all program and management responsibilities for the camp.

Under Iverson's leadership investment in the facilities continued. Renovations to the retreat facilities and new equipment expanded the camp's potential. Efforts were made to establish canoe trips, hunting and fishing camps, and sailing programs. Iverson also undertook a major effort to catch up on long deferred maintenance of the aging buildings.

The Executive Director position for Lutherans Outdoors was open in 1978, and the Board called Dave Brunkow to serve in the capacity. In the same year, Dick Iverson accepted the call to serve as Director at Outlaw Ranch in 1978 where he not only assumed duties at the ranch but also acted as interim director for NeSoDak during the transition period, particularly the summer season of 1979.

In the fall of 1979, Mr. Neil Sorensen was hired by Dave Brunkow

to serve as the new Director of NeSoDak. He continued the prior efforts to improve the quality of the camp, utilizing many volunteer groups and staff. Painting, removal of old buildings, and modifications of retreat centers became major tasks.

In these years another challenge was in the making. The loss of populations in rural areas contributed to the adaptation of camp programs from youth to families and older adults. Realigning budgets and changing facilities to meet congregational needs was an ongoing challenge. NeSoDak, through Sorensen's leadership, responded to these challenges in exciting ministry way.

Many theme camps were also developed such as music and conservation camps and programs for the developmentally challenged. To serve larger retreat groups, NeSoDak remodeled the chapel and upgraded its well and septic system. Serving a wide range of groups, NeSoDak's retreat ministry has expanded during a time of population decline.

Most significant was the development of an Environmental Education program. In the mid-80's, Joe Harber was hired to direct the EE programs at both NeSoDak and Outlaw Ranch. The Glacial Lakes area around NeSoDak proved to be an excellent site for youth to learn about the importance of the balance of life and their responsibility as stewards of creation. Many public schools have enjoyed NeSoDak's Glacial Lakes

Outdoor School.

In the 1985, NeSoDak embarked on expansion and facility improvements. The chapel was renovated and expanded. A new dining facility was constructed on the same site as the old one and retreat facilities were renovated as part of a state wide capital campaign led by Lutherans Outdoors. Four lots were purchased and given by the Satrum's near the southeast end of camp. A new residence for the director was built. Many old cabins were removed and replaced with new camper cabins. Many congregations and groups assisted in the development projects.

In 1988, NeSoDak began assumed responsibilities for off-site day camp programs to congregations. This program had begun in 1983 and had

## ***Outlaw Ranch Custer, South Dakota***

Lutheran pastors and laity began to search for a site that would be suitable for a Bible camp in the fall of 1956. They were looking for a location in South Dakota's West River area (west of the Missouri). For many years these parishes had contracted for a week of Bible camping at the Nemo Organization Camp, and the numbers gradually grew stronger with each year.

At the Black Hills Circuit Fall Convention in 1956, Pastor John Hjelmaseth proposed that a Bible Camp committee be formed to search

been administered by the Lutherans Outdoors office in Sioux Falls. Up to 20 congregations were served each year. Teams of counselors with a director are sent to congregations where they set up a "camping program in the church community." Programs at the camp took on new dimensions, too. The age group served at NeSoDak was expanded to encourage children in 3rd grade through youth in high school to participate.

NeSoDak remains a powerful program of the local congregation in South Dakota because of its unique gift of a Christ-centered experienced shared with other Christians in the outdoors. Many will testify to the sense of renewal and vision they have gained through a Christ filled experience at NeSoDak.

for a site. The committee reported the following year that nothing much had been done. They continued their search and began to focus on the Balzer Gulch area and the Clarkson place, both of which were unable to attract enough interest. The committee heard of Outlaw Ranch and after visiting favored that location. An option to purchase the ranch was obtained on April 11, 1958, but the Black Hills Circuit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) took no action towards its full purchase.

Because of their indecision, a group of men formed a new organization called the Lutheran Men's Bible Camp Association of Rapid City. On May 30, 1958, this group signed a note for \$10,000 to make the first payment to owner Jane Butts. The president of the Board was Robert Hart, George Bilden was first vice president, second vice president was M. S. Haugen, and James Ness was secretary. The name was changed to Lutheran Men's Bible Camp Association because their appeared to be great interest in their initiative by churches in the entire West River area.

The ranch was located near Bismarck Lake in the Black Hills and was purchased from the widow of the late Ben Butts who operated the Outlaw Store at Winner, South Dakota. The Outlaw Store was rumored to have received its name thanks to an unsatisfied customer who painted the word 'outlaw' over the front of the store. Later, the Butts took the outlaw name with them to their ranch in the Black Hills, where for many years, it served as their retirement home. The ranch was appraised at approximately \$120,000 but the purchase price had been set at \$45,000.

Many questioned the name Outlaw Ranch. But it stuck, in part, because in a way, it represented a camp that nobody seemed to want, at least initially. There was also the theological connection with Jesus, who as an 'outlaw' called upon his followers to take up their cross and become

'outlaws for Christ.' This witness to a kingdom not of this world reflected the heart of what the ranch program was about. A common theme in programs and campfires was 'make us outlaws for Christ,' and since it was already well known as *Outlaw Ranch*, the connection with the local community was kept.

On June 10, 1959, a loan of \$40,000 was negotiated with 1st National Bank of the Black Hills to permit the organization to make full payment for the purchase of Outlaw Ranch. Construction at this time included the building of the kitchen-dining hall in the old machine shed under the Trocadero. This was called Luther Hall for a while and is better known as the Trading Post. The entrance cabin was remodeled. Showers and toilets were added and a complete septic tank and drainage system for the grounds was installed. Outlaw Ranch was dedicated on October 20, 1959.

During these first years, many hours of volunteer assistance were needed to keep it going. Camp use and programs were planned and remained the responsibility of each congregation or circuit that rented the facilities. The camp was also helpful in encouraging Lutheran congregational development in Hermosa, Custer, Newcastle, and Hill City. Challenges included developing a strong financial base and determining a mission that would enable the camp to serve the church. Questions regarding its facilities and the need for improvements were also

raised.

Following three years of camping, the Lutheran Bible Camp Association Board of Directors voted to accept the offer of Pastor Dick Borrud to serve as the first camp director of Outlaw Ranch. He began his duties in October of 1962. Among his first duties was to replace the camp's entrance sign, Lutheran Bible Camp of the Black Hills, with the old historic Outlaw Ranch sign. This was a symbolic gesture that hinted at the new directions that would soon begin under his leadership.

*"The philosophy of teaching young people that following Jesus would set them apart from the peer culture and paganism of the times was to be taught by using the sign of the cross which was reserved for 'Outlaws' in ancient Roman law. Outlaw Ranch could be used to point campers to the Savior, Jesus, who died on a cross."*

Pastor Borrud received permission from the Board to move forward with a paid staff and to invite campers from other areas of the country to participate in this newly developing ministry.

Borrud brought horses from NeSoDak and began a horse program. He also brought from NeSoDak a number of key staff members who brought experience. Within three years, Outlaw Ranch increased its participation from 200 campers to 1000. This explosion of its reputation had the effect of attracting more local

campers and stimulating interest in camping by local pastors.

Borrud also developed a tradition of hospitality, through the hiring of a hostess, open houses for the area communities, and through developing the slogan "the staff makes the camp." This well known philosophy of Outlaw brings a positive not among camping people. It was not just the beauty of the Hills that brought people back to Outlaw Ranch, but the quality of a staff fully dedicated to Christ, trained and supervised to assure a high quality program.

The Outlaw Ranch program included many traditional camp activities such as Bible study, campfires, worship, discussion and inspiring talks. The Life of Christ Pageant, the Outlaw Ranch Rodeo, formal evening vespers and the use of drama by staff and campers, and learning about the natural environment all helped to make Outlaw Ranch a well respected program.

Outlaw also used a 'village' program model, where each camper group was charged with the responsibility of presenting one portion of the camp program. Pastors were integrated into the village planning so that campers were not necessarily talked at but were part of the programs that were conducted. The dramatic increase in campers attested to the success of this model.

Additional development to meet the needs of the increase campers included the construction of the Alpine Cabins at a cost of \$250 each. Also, a

parking area and traffic pattern was established and remodeling was done on virtually all the camp buildings. Environmental projects included restoring the flume from the creek to the pond and it was stocked for fishing. Pastor Borrud also placed a \$500 deposit on a land contract for the Elba Williams Place on Custer Limestone Road. This would eventually become Atlantic Mountain Ranch.

In 1967 a concern was expressed for Outlaw Ranch and NeSoDak to work more closely together. Pastor Dick Bahnson, who served on the staff of Outlaw Ranch, assumed some managerial duties for NeSoDak, to assist them during a period of limited financial resources.

In May, the South Dakota District of the American Lutheran Church amended its bylaws to establish the District Committee on Camping Ministries. At that meeting, representatives from Outlaw and NeSoDak expressed concern that operating as two separate corporations was not advantageous to South Dakota. The committee expressed desire to form one corporation as indicated in the minutes:

*"It was determined that program and program direction are the most essential parts of the camping ministry. The facilities are secondary. This means that ownership of facilities may not always be desirable, but that the program can be just as effectively used at suitable campsites owned by other parties. Our future need, then, is to have available*

*suitable camp sites that are accessible to everyone in the district."*

A steering committee drew up Articles of Incorporation and the 1968 District Convention adopted the charter for a district wide camping program that became known as Lutherans Outdoors of South Dakota. On October 28, 1968, the Outlaw Ranch corporations voted to turn all properties over to the corporation, and on January 1, 1969, Rev. Roy Satre became the first director of Lutherans Outdoors. (NeSoDak completed the process on February 17, 1969).

It was during these years that family camping became the most popular program at Outlaw Ranch. With more activities for youth at Atlantic Mountain Ranch, eight weeks of family camping at Outlaw quickly developed. People from throughout the Midwest and beyond used the family camping experience. The A frame Alpine cabins served the basic needs of family, and the great draw of the Black Hills provided many enriching activities. But it was the inspiration of Outlaw Ranch with its stories, worship life, Bible study, and guest resource leaders that brought families back each year.

Mr. Dick Iverson assumed the Executive Director position in 1978-1987. Iverson set about the task of renewing the facilities and program. Many improvements were made during these years as part of the Lutherans Outdoors capital campaign begun in



1985. The Alpine cabins were replaced and a new central water system and sewage disposal system was developed. The Retreat Lodge, the original guest lodge of the Butts family, burned to the ground on November 2, 1986. A new Retreat Center was designed, built, and completed by June of the following spring. It was funded through insurance proceeds and a special fund

### ***Atlantic Mountain Ranch Custer, South Dakota***

This 'wild west camp' was developed beginning in 1963 as a youth outpost of Outlaw Ranch. It has since become a full summer Christian camping program with the flavor of early mining and pioneering days in the Black Hills.

The site was originally called the Elba Williams Place on Custer Limestone Road. Pastor Dick Borrud, director at Outlaw Ranch, bought the place for \$500 down on a land contract. It was used as an outpost camp for youth, and unique living villages with early pioneer themes were developed for small groups. This enabled the participants to become totally immersed in a living laboratory of faith.

The camp property was later purchased by the camp board of Outlaw Ranch and used as an adjunct to Outlaw. The director of Outlaw Ranch also provided leadership for Atlantic Mountain Ranch since its inception, offering a well-organized

drive claimed by Jodeane Joy of Willep.

Jerry Manlove was asked to serve as Camp Director following the departure of Iverson in 1987 and brought his many years of experience as the former Executive Director of Camping for the ALC to the ministry. He led Outlaw Ranch for several more years as it entered the ELCA.

camping ministry for all ages in the Black Hills. Many church camping leaders have had experience serving in program director roles at Atlantic Mountain Ranch, including Rev. Sheldon Tostengaard at Luther Seminary, Gaias Aaslund, Wayne Jarvis, Bruce Williams, Steve Peterson, Augie Berdardt, Jeff Barrow, and Paul Leslie, all having served for many years in camping leadership roles.

The Wild West theme fit well at Atlantic Mountain Ranch. A covered wagon village was designed to accommodate 25 campers while another 25 stayed in an A-Frame village. Each group spent half a week at the main village site, and the other half on a pack trip through National Forest land with a horse drawn covered wagon carried their gear. A favorite overnight stay was at Mile High Spring on the forestlands.

Another creative village called *Fort Courage* included a fort with two

blockhouses in which 45 campers lived. There was a separate village of tepees designed to accommodate 30 more campers. During the week, camper group engaged in food preparation, camp chores, Bible study and campfires, and primitive outdoor living.

The camp followed the model of decentralized small group ministry that had been used by many other camps. A variety of living villages were created at different locations on the property, using historical motifs of the region. This form of camping promoted independence, self-direction, and small group study, reflection, and worship among the participants. The site includes an authentic gold mine where at one time, over 2000 miners searched frantically for gold. There had been

### ***Klein Ranch Mobridge, SD***

In the late 1960's, Jake and Martha Klein of Mobridge, SD, gifted their ranch property to the American Lutheran Church Foundation through a charitable gift annuity. Within a few years, Jack contacted the foundation and expressed his displeasure that the ranch, located on the Grand River, 70 miles southwest of Mobridge, had not become a youth camp as he had hoped. The Foundation began to negotiate a return of the land to Mr. Klein until Pastor Dick Borrud of University Camps, based out of South Dakota State University Lutheran Campus Center, offered to run a program for

plans to develop this theme and call it Bugtown Gulch.

In the seventies, Atlantic Mountain Ranch began to assume more identity as its own program and site, rather than an outpost of Outlaw Ranch. Although many staff members shared time between the two camps, leadership has fallen under the direction of the camp director of Outlaw Ranch.

Atlantic Mountain Ranch serves as a base for a wagon train camp and a unique 'vision quest' program that includes backpacking and servant camps on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Also established on the property is Fort Courage, where youth enjoy a Christian camp experience in a rustic replica of an 1880's stockade.

youth and young adults in 1971. Pastor LeRoy Iseniger provided pastoral leadership for the camp.

In 1972 the property was turned over to Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota for management and programming although it remained the property of the Foundation. Lutherans Outdoors also assumed responsibility for the annual payment to Mr. Klein until his death in 1985.

From 1972 until 1997, Mr. Gaias Aasland staffed and directed the Klein Ranch programs during the summer months hosting school groups from the upper Midwest. A few church groups

used the facilities, one of which was Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls. Pastor Ray Engh and Dot Thomas, director of education, served as key staff for the programs both of which would serve in national outdoor ministry leadership positions in future years.

When Aasland left Lutherans Outdoors in the fall of 1977, Klein Ranch's future as an outdoor ministry was questioned. The 1978 and 1979 camping seasons had minimal participation from congregations with the exception of Our Savior's in Sioux Falls. The school programs also departed from the Klein property to attend the new operation developed by Aasland on the Missouri River.

A local rancher, Larry Weitzel of McLaughton, was asked to assume the role of camp manager. He did so, refusing any compensation. He arranged lease agreements with a local ranching family, the Arnold brothers and provided ongoing supervision to maintenance. Joe "Little Joe" Severson of Iowa was hired as summer program director. After strong program leadership and good reviews from the churches that did participate in 1979, Lutherans Outdoors agreed to give Klein Ranch one more year rather than return its management to the ALC Foundation.

A strong marketing and promotional effort was launched during the winter of 1979-80 and a significant increase in camper participation was realized. Because of Severson's program leadership and the

partnership with the Arnold Brothers Arrow 5 Ranch, the Klein Ranch program flourished in the years that followed.

The Ranch program takes advantage of its authentic working ranch focus. Perched on the Great Plains under wide-open skies, the Christian ranch has nearly 3,000 acres and is a horseback rider's paradise. The program was based upon horseback riding, hiking, visits to an Indian Mission, small group Bible study, and campfires.

The Arnold families hosted campers and staff at their ranch on a weekly basis in order to observe a working cattle ranch with its many activities. Local Native American families, the Bunkes, Agars, and Yellows befriended the camp. The horseback riding opportunities on the ranches nearly 3000 acres captured the imagination of campers across the United States.

These traditions continued after Joe Severson left his duties to assume a full time youth ministry position and as Klein Ranch came under the program supervision of the NeSoDak Director, Neil Sorensen, in 1988. Dining and housing facilities were expanded thanks to the generous support of the Lutherans Outdoors Capital Appeals in 1985. In order to keep camper numbers at a reasonable level to ensure a true ranch camp experience, participation at Klein Ranch is limited to 50 campers or fewer each week. Many groups continue to be turned away each summer.

## *Other Camps South Dakota*

Two additional sites in South Dakota were related to The American Lutheran Church. The Jim River Camp north of Parkston, SD, was leased by three ALC conferences in eastern South Dakota. NeSoDak operated the camp for the benefit of local congregations.

The site was a 22-acre site along

the river frontage. Activities included canoeing and horseback riding.

Camp Pickerel, on Pickerel Lake near Grenville, SD, was a small 2-acre site owned by a local corporation of ALC congregations. It was used for small group youth activities and for picnics. In 1966, 85 campers were recorded as participating in a program.

# *The Camps of Michigan and Ohio*

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*Camping was one of the gathering forces for Lutherans in Michigan. Michigan was one of the first states to think strategically about its camp programs and service arenas. A District Camping Committee managed the camps of the American Lutheran Church and its history as a multiple site organization is quite old.*

*The camping program of Michigan was well respected by colleagues in camping. The family camping programs of Pleasant Hill were considered to be models of excellence and many organizations sought the expertise of Sally White, the staff person who was instrumental in its development in Michigan.*

*Likewise, Ohio camping developed cooperative models for outdoor ministries long before they became the norm. Ohio camping also was instrumental in involving campers from many walks of life in their program, taking seriously the call to serve all of God's people.*

*The Ohio camps were particularly effective in generating quality leaders for future positions in the church. Not only did they encourage leaders to serve in camping roles but also many staff members found ways to become involved in youth ministry or parish ministry. It illustrated what could happen when camps were linked in a close partnership of ministry.*

## *Camping in Michigan*

*Outdoor ministries in Michigan had a way of overcoming traditional boundaries. Often a camp can serve people from many different geographic, economic, and ethnic differences at the same time. This has been true in Michigan. Serving urban communities has always been a central focus in its historic mission. Michigan's reputation as a family camp leader was nationally recognized; bringing together diverse populations in a family community has been at the heart of its mission.*

### **Michigan District Camps Detroit, MI**

Camping has been one of the gathering forces for people in ministry in the Michigan District. The forms and structures evolved as the community spirit of the campers and retreat participants grew. At first, a district committee managed camping in Michigan. As the need for administration and continuity grew, the committee sought assistance from a full time director.

Pastor Bill White was called by the District Camping Committee to serve as Executive Director when they saw the need for administration and continuity. Glenn Wegmeyer was chairperson of the Call Committee at the time.

Under White's leadership, the camps serving congregations in the Michigan District were drawn into one cooperative District wide organization. Each camp developed a special personality yet together they were to offer a wide range of services to congregations. The camps were also spread throughout the geography of Michigan, providing easy access to the majority of congregations in the District.

White also supervised the

development of efficient standards, administration, and registration processes for the camps. Hiring of summer personnel was pulled into a cooperative venture. Staff members could move between camps to better serve the needs of camping in the district.

Pastor White spent a great deal of energy on staffing and programming. There was a serious commitment to develop an inclusive staff. One of the authors of the camp history documents contributors to this collection commented:

*"This writer, for one, was given much hope in the New Testament promises that there are 'neither Jew nor Greek' during experiences with these summer staff people."*

Following Bill White's departure, Pastor Dick Feucht led the camping program. Dick was interested in sailing and although the camps already had sailboats, his love of this sport made sailing an integral part of the camping ministry. Many volunteers have fond memories of their sailing stories, just as

those who fish have fish stories.

Pastor Paul Christ joined the Michigan camps as Executive Director in 1987. Paul's history with Michigan is remembered as being a time of renewed

## ***Pleasant Hill***

### ***Pleasant Hill, MI***

Located in central Michigan, Pleasant Hill presented a unique challenge to the church. Early efforts to use it part time for confirmation camping proved less than exciting, due in part to its limited land and facilities. Another effort to provide ministry for migrant children in the area also met with limited results.

Sally White provided new energy and wisdom in building Pleasant Hill into a unique family ministry whose focus was on building Christian community. Sally in particular became well known for her creative and sensitive program, and often served as a national consultant to other camps interested in developing family camping.

Among the principles of the camp program was to accept people as they are and to provide flexibility in housing and

## ***Tecumseh Woods***

### ***Tipton, MI***

Tecumseh Woods, located 1 1/2 hours west of Detroit, was purchased shortly before the formation of the American Lutheran Church and brought into the Michigan camping programs as a

enthusiasm for the hiring of a diverse, multi cultural staff. The commitment to this sense of openness has been a mainstay in the history of Michigan camping.

meals. This hospitality was a sign of the camp witness to the Christian faith that is open to people of all backgrounds and types. In addition, a program called *Foxfire Week* gathered people who demonstrated skills in animal husbandry, crafts, and other areas. Guests have experienced demonstrations in refinishing wood, splitting stones, making cedar shingles and much more.

Another interesting program was the development of the Bass Lake Festivals. In the afterglow of Woodstock, camp leaders began to dream about gathering 1000 youth at Pleasant Hill for a weekend of music and inspiration. Although 1000 was a bit high, 300-400 people have gathered regularly for this special outreach event.

summer facility and winter retreat center.

Over the years it developed within the Michigan camping tradition as a significant retreat ministry. Retreat growth was significant as the camp

invested in key leaders to support the retreat ministry. The staff included Denny and Bege Wiegman, Don Jones, and Pam Wurster, and together they welcomed, provided worship, and offered

### ***Stony Lake*** ***Stony Lake, Michigan***

Stony Lake is located near Lake Michigan and its massive sand dunes. It challenged summer campers to become aware of the majesty of God's land. A dining hall designed by Paul Schmidiknect enabled the camp to expand its program vision. Its porch has provided many a camper with opportunities for personal

### ***Other Camps*** ***Michigan***

Camp Hemlock was a 35-acre camp owned by St. Paul Lutheran Church of Toledo, OH, located on Hemlock Lake near Quincy, MI.

The camp was primarily for the use of members of St. Paul and at one time

resources to retreat guests and their leaders. Tecumseh Woods was sold in 1991 following a reconfiguration of camping objectives in the ELCA.

growth and served as a location for group building and Christian community.

The camp committee of Stony Lake made an environmental decision to "let the trees grow" which has changed the character of the camp from a lakeside setting to a feeling of isolation in the woods.

served up to 400 campers per year. In addition to summer camping programs, the facility was open for seasonal retreats. The camp served mainly junior and senior high school students.



## *Camping in Ohio*

*Camping in Ohio has developed into a hybrid umbrella organization. Lutherans in Ohio have had historic traditions of camping and outdoor ministry. In addition to the development of their Bible Camp sites, the unique 'non site' program ministry of Miami Valley Outdoor Ministries was developed, based upon the former model of volunteers who rented sites for the sake of providing Bible camping to their youth.*

*Today, Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Ohio is one of the most unique organizations in Lutheran camping. Structured statewide to take advantage of coordinated effort, each camp continues to operate with a local Board in a decentralized manner. Thus the organization creates a deliberate tension between local and statewide vision. The resulting creativity has produced remarkable results and outstanding programs. It has grown into the largest camping corporation in the nation. Still, Lutherans who love camping in Ohio are able to talk about their local Bible Camps - whose histories are told here.*

### **Lutheran Memorial Camp Fulton, Ohio**

In the midst of World War II, the dream of establishing a Lutheran camp in central Ohio was conceived. Many Lutheran church organizations had been renting other camps around the state. The Ohio District Youth Board of the American Lutheran Church proposed that a district-owned facility made good sense; there were many congregations with families who wished to memorialize the sons and daughters who had served their country and had not returned. Thus the idea of a memorial camp owned by the church was born.

On June 21, 1945, the District Executive Committee appointed a site selection committee. Members included Rev. Van Mechofer of Berea, Andrew Bradow of West Alexander, and Rev. Rennix Van Scoy of Crestline. After investigating seven sites, Rev. Henry Young of Galion suggested the land that

would become the Lutheran Memorial Camp. 59 acres were purchased from Grover and Abigail Fissell on September 5, 1945. An additional 47 acres including a barn and house were purchased from Kenneth Randolph. 6 acres were purchased from Delbert and Mary Liggett to keep a proposed road on high ground. A master plan was approved and within a few months, a campaign to finance the project was launched.

Work began on the site quickly. Brush and timber were cleared by the "Silver Dollar Men," a group of volunteers from local churches of the North Central Conference. They worked in rain, sleet, and sub zero weather and were paid a silver dollar for their labors at the end of the day.

The following work was completed by the fall of 1948: a campfire circle, the open-air chapel, six cabins, and Cedar

Lodge. Lutheran Memorial Camp was officially dedicated to the glory of God and in memory of those who served their country in the Armed Forces on October 24, 1948. In 1949, the first camp was offered. Two five-day sessions at a cost of \$12.50 per person were offered, including transportation from Mt. Gilead.

The following year, Pastor Weldon Bittikofer was called to serve as the first resident manager and the first full summer camping season began in 1950. The theme in 1950 was *God in Nature*, a study that would make ample use of the wonderful outdoor resources of the camp. By 1954, eight more cabins had been added and the swimming pool was constructed in 1956. Fred Gliem arrived in May of 1958 as resident manager and facilities continued to grow as more buildings and conveniences were added. Modern sanitary facilities were built in 1959; a nursing cabin and more cabins were added to the camp plan in 1965; Twin Cherry Lodge was winterized in 1966; Shepherd's Fold and more cabins were built in 1967.

Up to this point, Lutheran Memorial Camp served mainly as a facility where groups came to do their own programs. Summer staff members included many volunteers. In 1966 the Ohio District Executive and Youth Committees requested a comprehensive study by the Bible Camp Association of the ALC. A team of camping leaders reviewed the program and recommended the establishment of an Outdoor Ministry Committee that completed a Master Plan. This was approved in 1967 by the district convention. The first full-time summer

staff was hired in 1969 and served the entire season under the leadership of Rev. John Gaverick.

In 1972, Rev. Tom von Fischer was called to serve as Executive Director. Under full time leadership, new plans began to be formulated for the future of Lutheran Memorial Camp. The need to provide programs for all ages throughout the years was apparent. Sixty acres of additional property had been purchased in 1971, and an extensive winterization program was undertaken to expand winter capacity from 30 persons to 150.

As a result of these steps, rapid expansion followed. In August of 1975, the *Homestead* concept was approved for small group camping. Ms. Deb Yandala became the first director of environmental education on September 20, 1975. She developed an extensive program for public and parochial schools that used the camp during fall, winter, and spring weekdays. Two hundred and fifty five acres of land was purchased to bring the total camp size to 428 acres during this period. Family camping and adult retreats continued at a steady pace. More off-site programs were added to the camp offerings for youth.

Ms. Margie Fieldler was hired as the first on-site associate director in 1977. She was to provide essential leadership to the expanding programs for many years.

In June of 1981 the Priebe Staff Center was added to the camp, located in a wooded area near the swimming pool. It was built and used as a staff center until 1985, when it was adapted to serve as a pleasant retreat center during the fall, winter, and spring seasons.

Pastor Tom von Fischer left his position on February 1, 1982. Pastor Lea Johnson assumed responsibilities for the directorship and became the first full-time resident director of Lutheran Memorial Camp. Pastor Johnson provided camp leadership until December 1985. On January 1, 1986 Dave Irvine began serving as Executive Director with his term running through December 31, 1988. Following Dave Irvine, Mr. Steve Lee assumed the position of Director of Lutheran Memorial Camp.

A major restructuring of camping

### ***Miami Valley Outdoor Ministries Cincinnati, Ohio & Vicinity***

Miami Valley Outdoor Ministries is a camping program that does not own properties. Its history is rooted in people and congregations who desired a local Lutheran camping program. They saw the value of a positive Christian experience in an outdoor setting and wanted to be sure that the young people of their area could take advantage of outdoor ministry opportunities.

Lutheran Youth Camp was founded in the early sixties to provide summer camp for youth in southeastern Indiana. Two weeks of camp were held each summer at rented sites, primarily Versailles State Park near Versailles, Indiana. Local pastors and lay volunteers provided leadership for the camp program. Mrs. Adelaide Meyer served as director in the initial years. Most of the youth were from Indiana congregations, but some traveled from southwestern

Ohio since there was no Lutheran camping program serving the area. occurred in Ohio following the creation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Lutheran Outdoor Ministries in Ohio (LOMO) was formed in 1988 as a ministry of the three Ohio Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Joining with three other camps serving congregations in Ohio, Lutheran Memorial Camp became part of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Ohio. The organization's first Executive Director was Ms. Margie Fiedler, who served until the fall of 1996.

Ohio since there was no Lutheran camping program serving the area.

Incorporated in 1967, Lutheran Youth Camp's stated purpose was to "provide camping experience for youth in participating congregations that will be definitely religiously oriented, Bible based and Christ centered, to rent available camp sites for summer camping within the area of participating congregations, but never to acquire, by purchase or otherwise, any real property for the purpose of developing a camp site."

From its inception, MVOM has been an inter-Lutheran camping agency. Lutheran Youth Camp was started by those mainly from LCA congregations, but ALC and LC-MS congregations also participated. After an LCA camp opened in Brown County, leadership shifted to ALC congregations with involvement from all Lutheran bodies.

Meanwhile, Lutherans in southwest Ohio were concerned that there was no Lutheran camping program in their area. They felt that support for Lutheran Memorial Camp and Camp Mowana was low because of the distance involved in traveling to the camps. In 1972 a group of persons representing the ALC, LCA, and LC-MS began to meet. Calling themselves Miami Valley Camping Ministries, they explored the need for an umbrella organization that could provide camping programs for Lutherans in southwest Ohio and southeast Indiana.

Their stated purpose was to provide "an organization dedicated to provide experiences of Christian education and fellowship in the outdoors. Our focus is to support the ministry of the local congregations by providing leadership and program assistance for various parish groups. We do not own any property but rent other facilities as the need arises."

In 1976 Miami Valley Outdoor Ministries was incorporated in Hamilton, Ohio. The original leadership felt much enthusiasm for a local camping program. MVOM worked cooperatively with Lutheran Youth Camp to offer several camping programs. Two weeks of summer youth camp continued to be offered in Indiana with leadership primarily from the Indiana congregations. Several other outdoor ministries programs were offered including weekend family camps, work camps and canoe trips. Pastor Gary Leopard served as director of Lutheran Youth Camp from 1978-1982.

During 1978 and 1979 the MVOM board along with judicatory leadership

pursued a feasibility study with pastors in the Miami Valley area. Three options were presented for reaction: a traditional camp, a retreat center or a resource person. The traditional camp option received the lowest interest, primarily due to cost. The retreat center and resource person received higher interest.

The results of the study were shared with judicatories a decision to hire a full time director was made in 1981. The purpose of the position was to coordinate summer camping programs and provide retreat resources and leadership for congregations. Ms. Deb Yandala was hired to fill this position beginning in the fall of 1982.

The MVOM office was established at Messiah Lutheran Church in Cincinnati. It was later moved to the offices of Lutheran Social Services Family and Children's Services in Dayton. In 1983 MVOM hired a staff of five to work with volunteers to offer a nine week summer program, consisting of youth camp at Versailles State Park, confirmation camp at another rented site, a youth leadership program, and three weeks of day camps held in congregations. During the year, Ms. Yandala led a variety of retreats and consulted with congregations in coordinating various retreat programs at a number of different centers.

By 1985 the number of summer staff had grown to 15 with five weeks of resident camp and day camps at ten sites. Canoe and backpacking trips were also held. At least two weeks of camp at Versailles State Park in Indiana continued each summer.

During the same period, in 1984,

MVOM began to employ a program director on a part time basis to assist with program leadership for the growing retreat needs. In 1986 a retreat leadership team was formed with various leaders available to congregations on a contractual basis. In addition, a variety of retreats for senior adults, young adults, confirmation students, and youth were offered. Youth ministry workshops and Christian education training were offered

### ***Camp Frederick New Columbiana, Ohio***

Camp Frederick has from its beginning been aware of its unique outdoor resources. Its northern part includes glacier till, gravel and rock deposit by a glacial outwash. It also has an ample supply of birch, beech and maple along with the southern forest tree types that includes oak and hickory.

Two streams, the Big Bull and the Little Bull, also divide the property. There is an abundance of wildflowers, a marsh for nesting birds and rock ledges along the creek. The land was originally donated to the Boy Scouts in 1932 by Mr. F. C. Reese. After two years, the camp became the property of Westminster Presbyterian Church of Youngstown. It was used for over 25 years to bring young people closer to God's "out of doors." The camp was owned by Mr. J. Allen Frederick, an Elder of the congregation and leased to the Presbyterian Church for \$1 per year.

Camp Frederick was purchased in 1966 by a small association chartered by

as day events. Boat cruises on the Ohio River have also been utilized for fellowship building events.

MVOM entered into the organization of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Ohio following the creation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Its day camp ministry has dramatically expanded to over 70 sites each year throughout the state of Ohio

15 Lutheran congregations located near Youngstown, OH. The congregations were affiliated with The American Lutheran Church and a Bible Camp Site committee purchased the camp following two years of study. On September 14, 1966, Rev. Thomas Rehl, the first president of the Camp Frederick Board of Directors, signed the purchase documents. The property included 70 acres of hardwood forests. Additional land was soon purchased across Big Bull Creek.

One of its first directors was Rev. Bill Wilkins. Bill emphasized small group tent based camping for junior high youth and began to build support for the program from youth and families attracted to the beautiful setting. Pastor Wilkins also served as an Outdoor Ministry Coordinator (OMAC) for the ALC, covering the camping area of the East Coast. The camp became part of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Ohio following the creation of the ELC.

# *The Camps of Pennsylvania and the East*

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*Camping in the Eastern part of the United States at first glance may seem limited in terms of the number of sites that were available to Lutherans in The American Lutheran Church. However, the various denominations that would form the Lutheran Church in America were well represented in Pennsylvania, New York, New England, Virginia and the Carolinas. Several camps including Camp Calumet in New England, Lutherlyn in Pennsylvania and a Lutheridge in North Carolina were large facilities of the LCA that welcomed use by ALC congregations.*

*Nonetheless, two examples of camping in the East sponsored by the ALC developed around the metro areas of Pittsburgh and New York City. Koinonia in New York became one of the primary models for camping in the ALC and its principles were used in many camp programs across the country. Camp Agape, representing a smaller constituency, also played an important role in the life of many small congregations in the Pittsburgh area.*

*A third site, Lutherock, was developed near Boone, NC. It holds substantial property and has offered a number of adventure-based programs for Lutherans over the years. It is now linked with Lutheridge, a camping center of the former Lutheran Church in America, in a new corporation.*