

GROVE CHRISTIAN SERVICE CAMP

THE DREAM

For a number of years a few high school students were taken to a summer camp, always at some distance from Cottage Grove. The youth leaders were Bob and Marian Beach. They and the Elders began to talk of a camp nearer home. The Beaches owned the property where the camp is located. They offered to give 3.46 acres to the Church to start the camp. Jim Hemenway worked with the County to get the approvals necessary and the permits. This began in 1950. The first camp was in 1951.

THE BEGINNING ACCESS

The access to the property was to cross the bridge at Dorena and go west on Booth Kelly Camp Rd. to the Beach property and then across Beach's property to the site. It was a poorly graveled road with many potholes, dusty in dry weather and slippery if it rained.

The bridge was flooded out in the flood of 1964. Ray Thies and Delbert Owens worked on removing the bridge structure and debris. Many people worked to repair the structures.

After the loss of the bridge, the Beaches gave a road easement from the public road that surrounds Dorena Lake. This road too was very muddy and rough the first years. Cars got stuck at times and there had to be continual work on it. As time went by the road was gradually getting better and more useable in wet weather. This allowed for more use of the camp and a much better access.

CONSTRUCTION

As soon as permits were obtained, Church members began to work on the

construction of the Lodge. Herbert Strong a Church member was hired as contractor in charge. Many Church folks helped many hours. Bob Beach brought two trees to our farm and Jim split and hauled all the shakes to the camp site. Almost all the work other than Herbert Strong's was volunteer. Amil Thies built the huge stone fireplace. Owens, Strongs, Crosbys, and Hemenways spent many evenings after work, sometimes others came. We'd bring a potluck and the little kids, and have good fellowship in our work and time together. Ray Thies built the tables and benches that were needed.

Our Church building had burned in 1947. The Church body had done most of the work voluntarily and it was done without incurring debt. The same goal was in practice as the camp began. We began to use the Church building as soon as the basement was finished, and so we began a camp when just the lodge was built.

It was pretty open air the first years. In the first camp the boys were on one balcony side and the girls on the other. The downstairs on each side of the stage were used by the preacher-manager and a camp speaker. It was just a high school camp.

The second year there was a big tent for the boys, and for a year or two after that until the cabins were built.

Each year saw improvements and additions were made. The camps grew and grew in numbers of attendees and more ages, Jr. High was added and then Junior. Then a men's camp, and some other special occasions. Area Churches were invited to send their kids.

County regulations became stricter so improvements needed to be made to comply, particularly in the kitchen. In the early years ladies canned a lot of food for camp. Government regulations made that impossible later.

SOME PROBLEMS

Bob and Marian Beach, along with their two sons were killed in a tragic airplane accident in 1957. It took a good deal of time to settle the estate. A Mr. Brown became the owner of the property. There were a couple or three years of difficulty with him. It turned out some cabins were built over the line. The swimming hole and playground area was on his property. We were unable to use the swimming hole. It was no problem while the Beaches owned the property, but now we were ordered to stay off his property.

Jim Hemenway began to work with Mr. Brown to try to work things out. It was difficult to begin with as Mr. Brown was very firm. Jim was patient and became a friend of Mr. Brown. Eventually Jim got an excellent agreement with him to buy the property. Then the Church had to figure a way to raise the money. The decision was made to ask the other area Churches to become involved and a Camp Board was formed. The money was raised, and the property purchased.

Another problem that the Elders had to deal with was that a couple of neighbors across the river complained about the noise of the kids and the dust created with traffic in and out. Gradually they began to see we were good neighbors and of course with work on the road the dust got less. When we had only summer use of the camp, sometimes illegal people who vandalized the property came when it was unoccupied. Later we got year round caretakers and built a home for them.

GROWTH

Now the camp owned approximately 106 acres with nearly a mile of river frontage. There was a good stand of timber that was selectively logged which paid for the improvement costs as well as pay off the debt.

Mrs. Amil Thies and May Thies were early cooks. The preachers were managers and teachers. Local members were teachers and house parents.

Mina and Winfred West were manager residents after the house was built. (There were some others for a short time). Mina and Winfred were residents when we had the big flood that flooded the camp and the home. Randy and Maryann Russell have managed for the longest and have done a super job of getting the grounds and buildings in tip top shape.

There have been many well-known preachers, missionaries, bible college groups, and professors come to help in the camps. As the buildings, roads and other improvements have been made, camps have been extended and is used year round. Some groups have to reserve their time long ahead.

The camp has been a great example of co-operation and dedication to give of time and resources. There has been great preaching and teaching and many have been challenged and strengthened in their Christian lives. In addition many Christian lives have begun there. Some have said they got their challenge to enter

the ministry at camp. Besides the challenges and learning there have been hours of fun and fellowship.

After Jim had passed away, we were asked if it would be acceptable to name a new structure (the pavilion) for him. We (David, Ruth, and me) felt appreciative and humbled. It is a great addition and is a much used facility. Jim was always a man of vision. This was so evident when the camp could have the extra acreage. I know he would be so thrilled with the present plans to build the new facilities that can serve couples. This should bear much fruit too.

Grove Camp has been a part of our family experience from it's conception until this present time, and I hope it will be for many years to come.

DATA FROM CHURCH ANNUALS-(OTHERS SEEM TO BE LOST)

1953 Annual-Sherwood Smith was minister. A junior week of camp and an adult week were added. Mrs. Amil Thies was in charge of cooking. May Thies took over being camp cook in a year or two. There always were several helpers each year.

1957-Dean Pence came to be minister. Men's camp started.

1958-Bob Beach, Marion and two sons died in a plane crash.

1959-151 men registered for this 2nd camp. Started a last chance camp over Labor Day weekend for high school and college age students. Began Ladies Watch for women to attend at the church while the men were at camp.

1960-New rest room completed. (First one separate from lodge). Road was graveled.

1962-Began caretakers' cottage.

1963-Caretakers' cottage finished. Roy Stedman came to minister.

1964-Family camp was planned for future over July 4th weekend. There were 89 at High School, Intermediate camp had 80 youths, and Junior camp had 78 in attendance. Row River flooded the camp ground and caused much damage. Two cabins were needing replaced, the caretakers' home was damaged greatly, and the road was terrible. The bridge was ruined, the water line had to be redone, and some plumbing had to be replaced. Much volunteer of Churches made much of the repair work. Winfred and Mina West were Caretakers and they had loss too.

1965-Doug and Mickie Raymond became caretakers. Work continued on flood damage. Began a family camp.

1966-There were very good camps and also family camp and men's camp. This year the camp had concerns over camp boundaries. Bob Beach's estate had been settled and a new owner of the surrounding land asked to not trespass, which

made a couple of cabins partly on his property and the swimming hole and some of the playground. Camp actually began on Memorial Day and a big crowd attended.

1968-Roy Stedman said SUCCESSFUL. This is the word to describe our camp this season. Marie Cochell was cook.

1969-Raymonds moved to Eugene after camp season and Winfred and Mina West became caretakers.

1970-Over 300 again at family camp. Lots of local people helped in the kitchen, as teachers, house parents and other ways. This may be the last church annual that had camp reports or at least the last I know of.

