

History of Olympic Lutherhaven Camp on Wildcat Lake

Revised 8/28/07

It all began May 1955. Emil Sunderland of Silverdale Lutheran Church received a phone call from a friend, Mrs. Roseboom, telling him she was going to sell her property on Wildcat Lake, which was known as Rosey's Roost Resort, consisting of 35 acres and over 1,000 feet of waterfront. She wondered if he would be interested in buying it, and she would give him time to think it over.

Emil thought "What a nice place for a Bible Camp," so he called his cousin Albert Hegland of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Bremerton to share his idea. The more they talked about it the more excited they became about the possibility of a Bible Camp in Kitsap County and the Olympic Peninsula. Then they shared their idea with Bill Tennesen, also of Our Saviour's, who agreed with them and said, "Let's do it." Some money was put down to hold the property while Emil Sunderland made the final arrangements with Mrs. Roseboom.

Mrs. Roseboom said that if it was going to be used for a Bible Camp, she would sell the property for only \$22,500. The initial payment was agreed to be \$375 which included the down payment of \$250 and the first month's payment of \$125 on the contract. The remainder of the contract would be payable at the rate of \$150 per month for the next three months and thereafter at the rate of \$250 each month until the contract was paid. The interest rate would be 5%. This contract was agreed to.

After contacting a few of the churches, a steering committee was formed. The idea was to try to get all the Lutheran churches in the area involved.

The members on this steering committee were: Lloyd Valentine of Emmanuel Lutheran, Bremerton; Bill Tennesen of Our Saviour's; Emil Sunderland of Silverdale Lutheran; and Melvin Myrvick of First Lutheran, Poulsbo.

This committee contacted all the Lutheran churches in the area and got representatives from each congregation to attend their meeting, where the ground work was laid for a Bible Camp.

The following churches agreed and became charter members: Our Saviour's Lutheran, Pastor A. O. Wigdahl; Grace Lutheran, Poulsbo, Rev. Hamar Benson; Bethany Lutheran Missouri Synod, Port Orchard, Rev. A. T. Lewis; First Lutheran, Port Orchard, Rev. A. T. Moen; Vinland Lutheran, Poulsbo, Rev. C. K. Randoy; Silverdale Lutheran, Rev. C. K. Randoy; First Lutheran, Poulsbo, Rev. F. W. Eide; Island Lake Lutheran, Rev. C. K. Randoy; Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Bremerton, Rev. S. C. Gunsten.

To fund the Bible Camp the churches all agreed to pay 10 cents per confirmed member per month in order to have a cash flow.

Each church was to elect two members to be on the Board of Directors. The first Board was formed July 27, 1955. The members were Earl McClellan and Bill Tennesen from Our Saviour's, Martin Anderson and Sig Guldjord from First Lutheran, Poulsbo, Thor Hegland and Joe Larson from Grace Lutheran, Robert Shadbald and Larry Baughn from Bethany Lutheran, Emil Sunderland and Ken Grandy from Silverdale, Ed Swalling and Nick Lakeness from Vinland Lutheran, John Mathson and Gunnar Bjorlee from Island Lake Lutheran, Ed Runquist and Roy Claey's from Emmanuel Lutheran, and Rudy Anderson from First Lutheran in Port Orchard.

The officers on the first Board were: President Bill Tennesen from Our Saviour's; Vice President Emil Sunderland from Silverdale; Secretary Ed Runquist from Emmanuel; Treasurer Thor Hegland from Grace Lutheran; Corresponding Secretary Earl McClellan from Our Saviour's.

The first committees formed were: Constitution- Earl McClellan, Joe Larson and Robert Shadbald; Grounds Committee -Sig Guldjord, Ray Claey's and John Mathson; Corporation Committee -Bill Tennesen, Emil Sunderland, Ed Runquist, Thor Hegland, and Martin Anderson; Construction and Repair Committee -Ed Swalling, Nick Lakeness and Robert Shadbald.

Dave Pelkey of Our Saviour's was a faithful ex-officio member of several Lutherhaven committees. Curtis Coons from Our Saviour's served as attorney on all legal matters.

At the July 27, 1955 meeting the official name "Olympic Lutherhaven" was adopted.

On October 5, 1955 the camp was officially incorporated, thanks to the dream of Emil Sunderland and Albert Hegland.

The original concept of the Bible Camp was that the camp was NEVER to be sold. It was to be used as a Bible Camp and Retreat *for* all Lutheran Churches in the area. If cost became too great, or the enthusiasm waned, then all the churches in the county would be invited to participate so it would always be a place for Christian people to meet and picnic.

The Camp was divided into 3 areas -Bible Camp area, a Boy Scout area, and a picnic area.

The first caretakers at the camp were David and Mary Bjorklund.

Work parties were held every week and the participation from all the churches was excellent.

Ed Swalling of Vinland Lutheran supervised the building of the Camp Chapel and the first cabins. To construct the cabins, over 1,100 poles 8" to 10" in diameter and 30 feet to 40 feet long were cut on the Tennesen Farm by volunteers and used for building purposes. The cedar shakes came from the logs taken from the camp property. Making the shakes was supervised by Pastor Milt Nesse of Our Saviour's with donated help from senior citizens in the congregations.

Over the years, funding for the Bible Camp, outside the assessment from each church, came from special donations from different organizations in the churches such as: Ladies Aids or Guilds, Circles, Brotherhoods, Luther Leagues, Sunday Schools, individual trust funds, and special offerings which were all appreciated. The more funds we have the more that can be done to improve the camp.

Over the years the young and old have donated generously of their time and talents to build the chapel, cabins, picnic tables, outdoor kitchens, restrooms, etc.

There is always need of repairs; upkeep and new construction in the camp. It is a never-ending job that is done by faithful volunteers.

On January 1, 1970 the final payment was made on the contract.

All the churches agree that the Bible Camp is a sound investment for the enjoyment of our church families.

In years to come we hope our future generations will enjoy and cherish the camp more and more - because it is a unique and beautiful place - and it will be more and more difficult to find such a place in the future.

THANK YOU, LORD, FOR LUTHERHAVEN. HELP US TO MANAGE IT WELL AND USE IT TO YOUR GLORY.