

Ace's Run – Built on a Family Legacy

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Deep Creek Lake, Maryland

Will O' the Wisp Resort and Ace's Run Restaurant & Pub are built on the firm foundation of family legacy, yet they remain contemporary establishments offering first class accommodations and updated menus for guests. The founders of the resort, Gustav and Alice Heise, set a standard of excellence that has been passed down through more than eight decades of service.

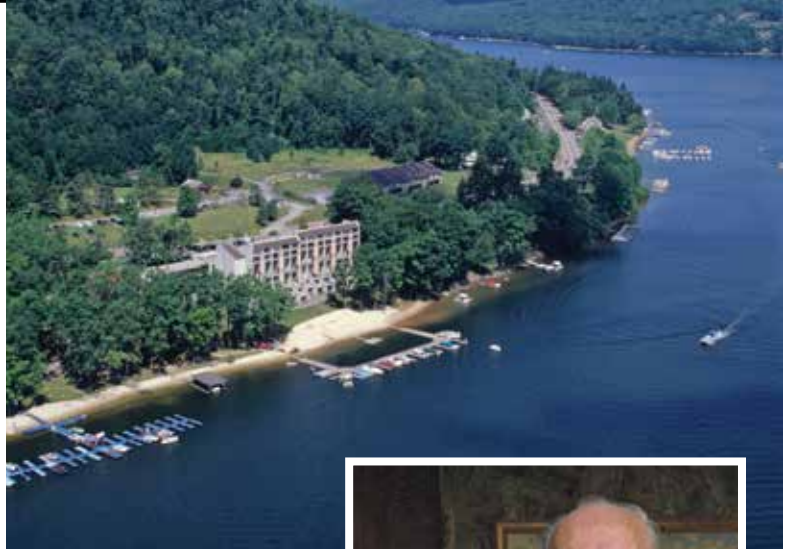
The family's involvement in the resort and restaurant site can be traced to 1943 when patriarch Gustav Heise acquired lake front property from Dr. Thurl Bullard. The doctor was an early entry into the burgeoning Garrett County hospitality industry and construction of 28 small board and batten cottages marked a major development at the time. Dr. Bullard's intriguing name for the business, Will O' the Wisp, was derived from mysterious lights that often appear over bayous in the south; the alluring name proved to be popular and continues today as the resort's name.

Following acquisition of the property, Gustav began a series of improvements that required both vision and determination during a time when guests were not plentiful.

Helmuth Heise, son of Gustav, purchased the property in 1953 after he and wife, Evelyn, took out a \$10,000 second mortgage, a sum exceeding \$89,000 in contemporary purchasing power. Construction of a ten-unit motel complex occurred in 1954.

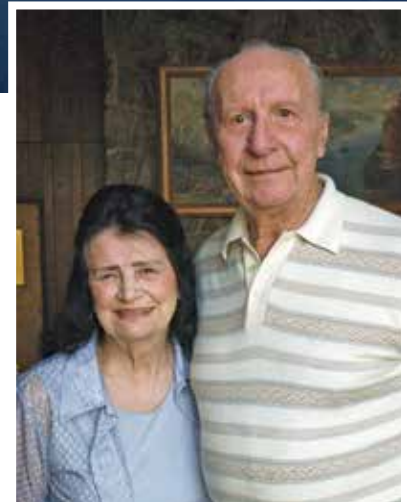
Helmuth realized that year-round activities needed to be offered if he was to succeed in attracting guests during the winter months. After visiting several ski areas, Helmuth and Evelyn decided to open a ski resort in nearby McHenry. With the addition of winter attractions, occupancy at Will O' the Wisp continued to grow.

The next logical improvement to the resort was providing dining options for guests, and in 1964 the Four Seasons Dining Room at Will O' the Wisp opened under the direction of the Heise's and their son Martin. In addition to an extensive menu, the dining room featured four massive wooden arches and a commanding view of Deep Creek Lake. Over the years the dining room became a Garrett



**1999 Aerial view
of Will O' the Wisp
Resort.**

**Helmuth "Ace"
Heise and wife,
Evelyn.**



County landmark and destination known for fine food, banquets, and individualized attention to guests' wishes.

Helmuth's passing in 2009 brought changes to the Four Seasons Dining Room. With Evelyn in declining health, Martin decided to close the restaurant. Martin's wife Brenda McDonnell, owner of Brenda's Pizzeria and Traders Coffee House in Deep Creek, understood the tradition that Four Seasons represented and could not bear to see it remain idle. Brenda's offer to spearhead the re-opening of Four Seasons was met with favor by Martin who knew that she would honor the restaurant's legacy while bringing a fresh perspective to menus, décor, and appliances.

The most obvious change involved was re-naming the dining room Ace's Run Restaurant & Pub. "Ace" was Helmuth's nickname and namesake of a trail run at his



ski resort. The Ace's Run logo emblazoned with a vertical white line honors Helmuth's ski resort legacy.

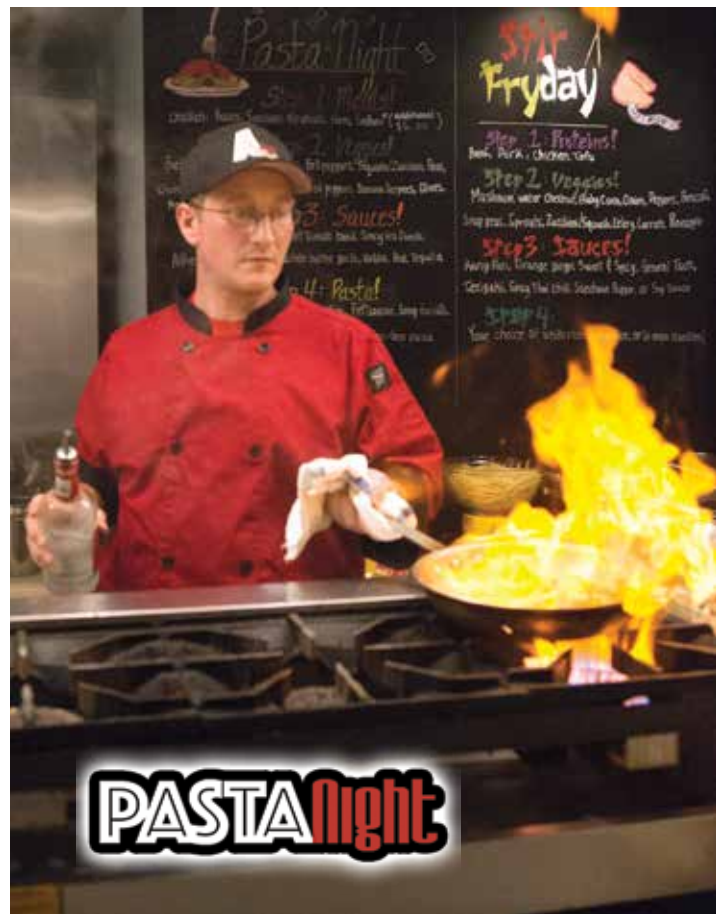
Brenda stresses the resort's uniqueness is derived from its history. "Our customers continue to return and tell us stories about their experiences. Sometimes it's about honeymoons, sometimes about other events, and we really appreciate the history that Ace's Run is built upon."

In addition to a loyal customer base, Ace's Run connects to the past through long-time staff members. "We have enjoyed working with young people who establish careers and later return to work part-time. It is great to have those local connections."

Supporting local enterprises is also an important part of doing business in Garrett County. Brenda notes, "We are

Top photo: Ace's Run Pub features Happy Hour Sunday through Friday from 3 - 7 pm.

Right: Chef Andrew Granke, prepares a pasta dish during Open Kitchen Pasta Night, held every Wednesday.



the biggest customer of local farm fresh produce and have a solid relationship with the Garrett Growers, a small farmer cooperative.”

Martin Heise, owner, states, “We are the longest continuously operated restaurant in Garrett County and have gone through many trends and phases over the years. Brenda wanted to build on that legacy while bringing a new look to the restaurant. To accomplish that we extensively remodeled the restaurant and pub to create a more casual atmosphere. Our theme could best be described as ‘eclectic’ and the atmosphere is greatly enhanced by the widest view of Deep Creek Lake.”

The first highlight to the new menu was “Open Kitchen Nights.” With Wednesdays as “Pasta Night” and Fridays as “Stir FRYday” guests become bosses as they watch their meal being prepared beneath the dining room cooking hood. Chefs assemble guests’ choices of ingredients to create unique and individual favorites. The close relationship between guests and chefs brought a new excitement to ordering at the restaurant and both nights have proven to be popular attractions.

Additional items were soon added to the menu including “Burger Tuesdays” that offered guests eight sauces and thirteen toppings to build the perfect hamburger. As Brenda notes, “We wanted American favorites and comfort foods, while meeting current food trends.”

The Pub menu features lighter fare, including nachos, chicken sliders, mussels, crab fries, gyros, and tacos. Enhancing the Pub’s ambiance is a patio with a spectacular lake view. Unique warm weather access to the Pub is

provided for boating enthusiasts who may dock their crafts nearby, while snowmobile riders are privileged to park in designated areas during the winter season.

Additional catering services are also offered for retreats, wedding rehearsals, business meetings, or other special events.

When long time guests return to Will O’ the Wisp and Ace’s Run Restaurant, they are always ready to share stories with Martin, Brenda, and staff. Guests are also pleased to see the recent renovations, expanded menu, and vibrant atmosphere that continue to be the hallmark of a three generation Garrett County tradition.

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Granddaughters, Ruth and Eve Beard, enjoy choosing their own ingredients during “Stir FRYday” night.



Below left: Chef Nick Pratt, prepares a customer’s choices at “Stir FRYday.”

Below right: Chef Angela Luby, serves a “Stir FRYday” finished meal.

