

Lake Reflections

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**

New Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of articles about the history of Deep Creek Lake.

The founding of Holy Cross at Deep Creek Lake, featured in the fall/winter 2003 issue of *Mountain Discoveries*, prompted Mountain Lake Park resident, Ray Mattingly, to recall a similar Carmelite religious retreat located along the Glendale Road. Land for a facility was purchased in 1945, when Harland and May Beckman sold 56.3 acres to the order for \$3,000. Mr. Mattingly's mail carrying duties in the 1950's brought greetings from Carmelite men recently assembled at the community, fostering conversations and friendship. Approximately 20 Carmelites, a religious order of the Roman Catholic Church that stresses service and contemplation, enjoyed the summer facility, "staying very much to themselves. They would travel about sometimes on bicycles but generally stayed at the retreat," recalled Mr. Mattingly.

Carmelites lived a communal life that discouraged material possessions. To support such a lifestyle, the men lived in one, long building, about 24 x 80 feet. One room was devoted to worship; others for daily necessities. Another small building, located east of the main structure, was known as the "fasting shed," a place where only water was available to the Carmelites during special devotions. In common features of the Carmelite lifestyle included wearing sandals, instead of shoes, and eating in silence. Carmelites also enjoyed assembling under trees, on small seats, to read and meditate, in keeping with their reflective attitude. According to Mr. Mattingly, "There would be one fellow under one tree, and others scattered around. They often spent their time in studies and contemplation."

Daily visits and conversations led to an ecumenical exchange, with Carmelites attending Mr. Mattingly's Lutheran service, and an invitation being extended to



Pictured above is the Carmelite religious retreat in the 1940's and at right, today as the Carmel Cove Inn.



the Mattingly family for supper at the retreat. "As I recall, the head priest was from Spain, and he didn't use a lot of sweets but my wife, Betty, took along a German chocolate cake. Several days later a Carmelite friend came out and said that my wife was paid a high compliment. 'Even though we eat in silence; the head priest had a second helping of cake. That's about as high a compliment as you can get.' According to Mr. Mattingly, the Carmelites abandoned the retreat sometime in the late 1960's or early 1970's.

In more recent years, the facility was converted to a mountain lodge, Carmel Cove Inn.



Carmelite Priests during construction and performing services in the completed chapel.



A very young Wisp in the early 1950's, but even then a huge undertaking for Helmuth and Evelyn Heise, pictured above today. Even though the Heises' have sold Wisp they still play an active part in it.



Ray Mattingly (left) also recalled another small retreat located on the inlet at McHenry. This facility was dedicated to ensuring that young children from the Pittsburgh area had enjoyable vacations. Mr. Mattingly spent several weeks at the camp during

the 1940's, as his grandmother and aunt were employed there and lived in the facilities year round. "It was operated by individuals from Pittsburgh, and the facility was a large, rambling log structure. The boys would come over for a period of camping, and my grandmother and aunt did the washing and cooking for them. I would get to go over in the summer, and when you looked to where the ski slope is today, you would see "Farmer Sam's," a local resident who raised turkeys that would often wander down to drink from the lake." The turkey farm was a Deep Creek Lake landmark by the early 1940's, as "Farmer Sam" was emblazoned in large letters on the barn roof.

In the same area where turkeys and cows once enjoyed freedom to move about is Wisp Ski Resort, a well-known winter vacation destination, established by Helmuth and Evelyn Heise, in 1955. The genesis for a Deep Creek Ski Resort can be traced to a visit by the Heises to Davis, West

Virginia, where a successful slope was in operation by the early 1950's. Having purchased Will O' the Wisp Motel in 1952, from his father, Gustav Heise, they soon realized winter activities needed to be established at Deep Creek Lake to augment the summer tourist trade. That need became a reality when the Heises' only earned \$13.00 in revenue during the first February in business, and according to Mr. Heise, "that was because two cars got stuck along the road in a snow storm and couldn't get to Oakland." Following up on their idea, the Heises were able to secure a lease in 1955, from Webster Brenneman, on land located in McHenry. Their new enterprise was called Marsh Mountain Ski Area. A change in business partners by 1956



The old ski hut was a real gathering place and social hub for early skiers at the new Wisp. At right, (center) is Mr. Heise giving pointers to skiers. Far right: having a good time 'round the stove in the "lodge."

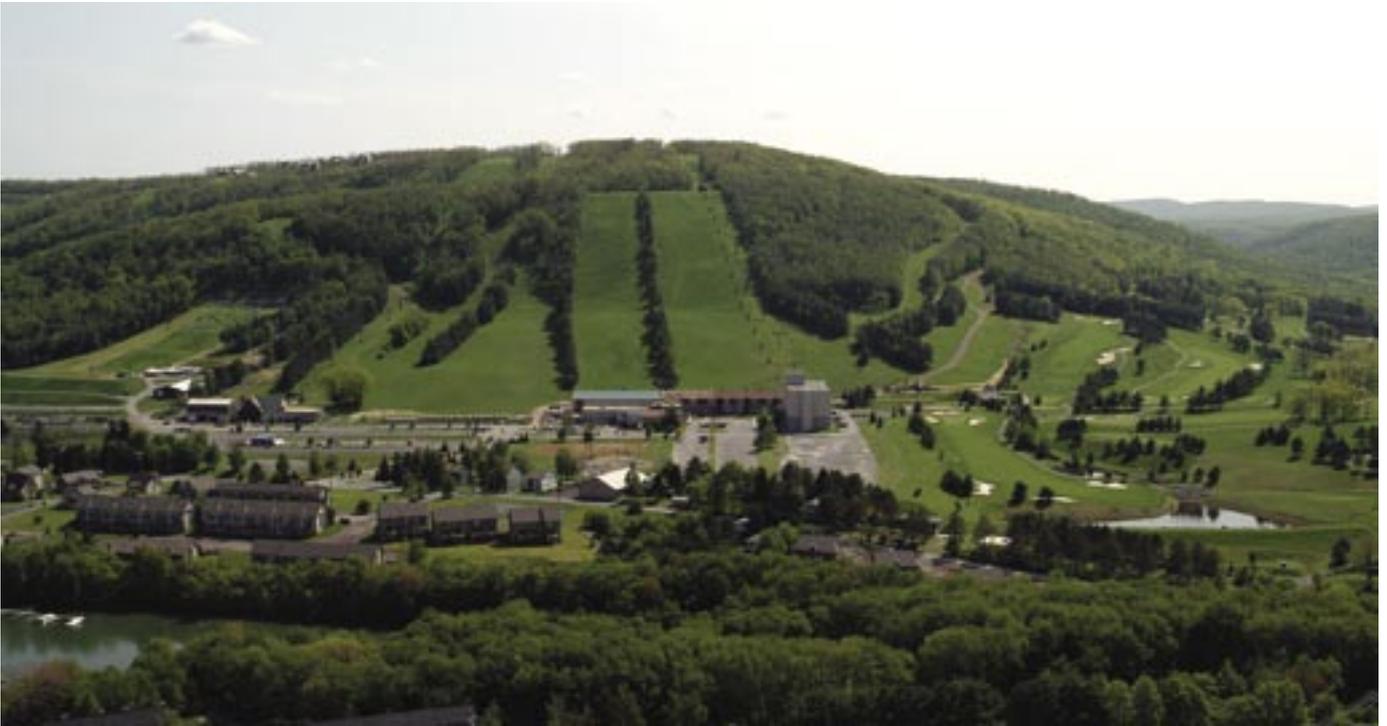


prompted the Heises', and a few associates, to rename the enterprise "Wisp," because it was associated with Will O' the Wisp they already owned.

The first year of the ski resort saw a small shack with a potbellied stove serving as a "lodge," and "cows were there, while people were skiing down the slope," recalled Mrs. Heise. "I would cook the food on my stove at Will O' the Wisp and take it down there. We had to build a kitchen, so we could have food at the site. The next year, we would build something else or buy a ski lift. We were always building and promoting." The Heises' entrepreneurial instincts proved to be reliable, and skiers trekked in increasing numbers to the resort, including those on a B&O train that traveled from Maryland metropolitan areas to Oakland. Wisp continued to grow over the decades,

and facilities were enlarged several times to meet the expanding winter tourist and ski trade. The resort remained under Heises' ownership until 2001, when it was sold to DC Development Corporation, which is continuing to expand with vision and daring.

Helmuth and Evelyn Heise had to balance winter business at the Wisp with year round operations of Will O' the Wisp Resort. Dr. Bullard, a local dentist, started the camp in the 1930's, soon after Deep Creek Lake was created, by building 23 batten board cabins. The cabins, some with potbelly stoves, were only intended for summer rental. One of the original, rustic cottages remains and is currently used as a marina. That cottage had been improved in the 1940's, by adding exterior stonework, and it became their home during the first year of ownership. Mr. Heise



A view of Wisp in 2001 with new construction underway for an expanded resort area. Construction continues today with many updates and new features.

stated, “We went from wood cabins to a 10 unit motel; then we started to develop the rest of it. In the early days, most of the vacationers were from Pittsburgh, but that changed over the years, to Baltimore and Washington as being the predominate area for tourists.”

Two prominent guests from the metropolitan area who became key supporters of Heise’s development efforts were Maryland Governor, Theodore McKeldin, and Economic Development Director, Earle Poorbaugh. “They were so happy we were doing something in Garrett County. The Governor and Mr. Poorbaugh helped us a lot because people began to know where we were. We didn’t have much money so we couldn’t advertise,” recalled Mrs. Heise.

According to Martin Heise, son of Helmuth and Evelyn, the Governor and Economic Director became friends with the family and would visit frequently. One particular stay by Governor McKeldin was memorable because it carried political and religious implications. During his term, an execution was to occur. “McKeldin was a very religious man, so when it was going to take place, he wanted to get as far away from Baltimore as possible. He was staying in our motel when it happened, and a huge thunderstorm came up. Governor McKeldin thought that surely God was talking to him.”

While friendship with government officials helped to spread the word about Will O’ the Wisp, it was not government programs or money that built it, but rather, a strong work ethic and determination. As Martin remarked, “Father and Grandfather didn’t hire a contractor; they actually built it.” The only subcontracted labor was tile work. The 10-unit motel was completed, and subsequent additions developed the expanse of lakeside property along Route 219, including the Four Seasons Dining Room, added in 1960. Care was taken during construction to create an ambiance within Will O’ the Wisp, reflecting the outdoor beauty Garrett County has always offered vacationers. Oak wood, harvested from Wisp property, graces the restaurant and complements the beautiful exterior and interior stonework of the resort. Guests benefit from more than five decades of planning and responding to unforeseen economic conditions that marked the Heises’ success and service to Garrett County. “It was a lot of hard work,” summarized Mrs. Heise.

Moving a short distance from Deep Creek Lake toward Swallow Falls, along Old Sang Run Road, was a landmark country store operated by the Rheam’s family. According to Adra Hinebaugh, last proprietor and daughter



Above: Gathered around the old potbellied stove, (at left Mr. Reams, center, the mail man and at right, Mrs. Reams), for warmth, a little coffee, and to catch up on the local news. A daily event at the old store. Right: The old store before being torn down and replaced with a new house for Adra Hinebaugh (Tater), far right. Adra says she "really misses the old store and the daily visits by the locals and a few out'a towners too."



of the store's founder, the structure was traced back to 1924, by recorded deeds, but is probably even older than written records indicate. The store provided products and services to men building Deep Creek Lake. "At that time you weighed out everything, like beans and sugar. It was nothing like it is today. They could also buy bib overalls and gloves." Mrs. Hinebaugh recalled her father kept a ledger with everybody's name on it that lived in the area. When the Great Depression hit, "It was hard times, and they would come to the store and deal their pay out. That is how they survived. There I was, when it came time to settle up, I would have to add up all their food from those ledger slips, and see if they had any money coming to them. 'Lots of times, they didn't. I know what the Depression was all about.'"

To supplement income, the Rheam's family took in boarders on many occasions. "Can you imagine how much work it was to keep boarders without any plumbing or electric in the house? My mother used to cook for them and packed lunches. It was hard work."

Rheam's Store never had a cash register; instead, it had a wooden drawer with holes to place the coins. "We had a drawer where we kept the money, and it had little holes for different coins. Then a little bell would click when we opened the drawer. We clicked it so many times that it wouldn't work."

Not just a commercial establishment, Rheam's Store was a great place to gather and pass the time during evening hours. "We had chairs everywhere. That is how I kept in touch with everybody. People would stop by all the

time.” The store was equipped with a coal bucket, wood box, and potbellied stove that kept visitors cozy during evening discussions. Residents passing the store would often notice the warm glow of light, reflecting through the front window, giving warmth to cold, Garrett County nights. It was really an old-fashioned store. The best part about operating an old-fashioned store was having time to talk with neighbors. Lifelong friendships were fostered there. When looking back on a lifetime of serving generations of customers, Mrs. Hinebaugh summarized it by simply stating, “I liked them all.”

Unfortunately, times changed and the local meeting place was no longer insurable, so Mrs. Hinebaugh decided to close the store in 2002. Soon after, the building was razed, thus, placing Rheam’s Store solely in the memories of residents.

There are many memories of the Deep Creek Lake area that help us to create a picture of what life was like during a different era; a time when community was defined not only by place but also by friendships built over long periods of time. Change occurred slowly during the first three decades at the lake, but accelerated quickly, thereafter. And if history is to be our guide, we can be certain that even greater changes will be realized in the future.




Crab Alley Seafood

at Canal Place, Downtown Cumberland
I-68, Exit 43C

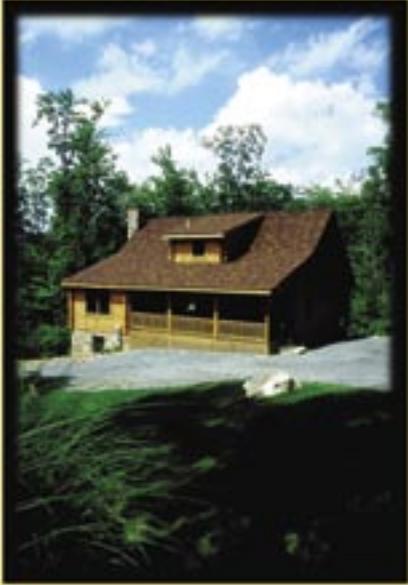
Fresh Blue Crabs
Every Variety of Seafood

301-724-7472

HOURS
Tues.-Thurs. 11-9; Fri. & Sat. 11-10
Sunday 12-8; Closed Mondays



Make Your Dreams Come True!



Mountaineer Log & Siding produces custom log homes packages in nearby West Virginia from a renewable natural resource. Complete packages with 8" solid log walls,

including all materials. Enjoy the natural warmth and beauty of wood in your own log home. Mountaineer will assist you every step of the way to make your dreams come true.



Mountaineer

Log & Siding Company

See Our Model Home at Rt. 219, Deep Creek Lake, McHenry, MD 21541

800-336-LOGS (5647) www.mountaineerlog.com