

Olympic Lutherhaven
What? Where? And How?
Revised 6-03-07

By Ed Swalling, charter board member from Vinland Lutheran Church, past President of the board and building foreman during the construction era of the camp. (My recall of the events and happenings that occurred during this period is from memory only and, as such, may have some errors.)

Olympic Lutherhaven picnic area and Bible Camp grounds is a 35 acre tract of land with 1,500 feet of lake frontage on pristine Wildcat Lake, 15 miles north and west of Bremerton. It was formally known as Rosie's Roost picnic grounds.

The land is bordered on one side by a county park. Two county roads border most of two sides; a state land tract borders still another side as a partial boundary line. The nature of the contiguous properties gives the site a unique secluded area. Two county roads give direct access on two sides; one entrance is to the caretaker's house and church picnic grounds, the other road gives direct access to the Bible Camp area.

The property has a natural demarcation line as a stream divides it - the picnic and swimming area on one side and the Bible Camp area on the remainder.

The picnic area was cleared except for a few fruit trees. The Bible Camp area is densely wooded. This makes for an ideal set up. All these amenities are God-given and now it is up to the owning churches to preserve and augment these gifts.

The "HOW of the campground speaks of Divine intervention. Rosie's Roost was owned and operated by two sisters. Advancing age made them realize that they wouldn't be able to operate and maintain the property in the near future. Faced with this fact, they voiced their desire to sell and retire. This is the time and place where Divine intervention is apparent.

A member of the Silverdale Lutheran Church owned a summer home near the resort. On learning of the owners' wish to sell, he envisioned a God-given opportunity for the Lutheran churches in the area to have a church picnic grounds and a Bible Camp. He secured an option to purchase the property and with the aid of Bill Tennyson from Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Bremerton, canvassed the Lutheran churches in the area pertaining to the purchase.

The Bible Camp concept was new to this area's churches but the possibilities were very enticing. As a result, these churches decided to enter into an agreement to form a board of trustees, organize a corporation to purchase the land and plan for a Bible Camp. As part of the agreement, each church approved a monthly assessment based on their membership.

The board, under the chairmanship of Bill Tennyson from Our Savior's, entered into a contract of sale with the owners of Rosie's Roost. Olympic Lutherhaven was now a viable entity whose mission was to purchase the land, plan and operate a church picnic grounds, and to build and maintain a Bible Camp.

The first permanent structure was a picnic type open kitchen. The next building was a 20x24 foot building used as a meeting place for the board, a nurse's station, and office space for the dean of the camp. This building had a 24x40 foot plastic covered pole addition. This structure served as a temporary chapel and mess hall for the campers. These amenities were in the picnic ground area. A rustic week long camp was held for several years in these primitive surroundings.

On paying off the property and securing a deed, the board went forward with plans for a permanent camp facility. The estimated cost was \$10,000. Ten members of the board agreed to underwrite \$1,000 each to a bank for a loan. Attempts to secure financing from the local lending institutions came to a standstill.

The banks maintained since there were no buildings on the property, each of the guarantors would be held jointly and severally responsible for the full \$10,000. This was more than each member felt they could sign for.

Building plans were at a standstill. At this time "Sam" Christopherson, a delegate from Our Saviour's and owner of Ace Paving, obtained a contract in Alaska. Before leaving, he came to the board meeting and handed our treasurer a check for \$6,000. No strings attached. This generous act allowed the board to proceed with the building plans. After the buildings were completed, the board had no difficulty in securing a loan to repay Mr. Christopherson.

Several board members were aware of my building experience and proposed to the board that I be asked to be the building foreman for this project. The board appointed me building foreman with complete autonomy as long as I adhered to the original plans as a guide. Details of construction were left to me. I informed the board that I would volunteer my time every Saturday until the project was completed. This was to ensure that volunteers on Saturday would have a leader and to ensure original plans were followed. This helped to unify the workers as I was on the same basis as they were.

The main building was a rustic "A" frame with two wings giving the building the shape of a cross. The 30 x 60 foot length was designed as a chapel and mess hall; while one wing served as the kitchen, the second wing housed the nurse's station and staff offices. A round open pit fireplace divided the main hall. The cross adorning the east end window was constructed from a tree on the property. The log was rough cut on three sides; the fourth side was dubbed with an axe to simulate the Rugged Cross. A similar rustic "A" frame design was used for the cabins and restrooms.

Building plans called for hand split cedar shakes on the roofs. The property had nearly enough cedar for the shakes. Most of the volunteers had never seen a shake froe, let alone ever used one. They had no concept as to its proper usage. After a few demonstrations, several volunteers accepted the task of splitting the shakes. They did an excellent job. The buildings required almost 70 squares of shakes; at 200 shakes per square, it meant we had to split 14,000 shakes. As soon

as some were split, the rest of the crew was kept busy applying them.

When the building was completed, the next step was the plumbing and wiring. These are highly technical jobs and usually require hiring professionals but the talents exhibited by the volunteers was such that the job was completed without hiring any professionals.

None of the above accomplishments could have been achieved without the enthusiasm and the zeal of all the volunteers and the support of the owning churches.

All of the member churches may reserve one Sunday for their picnic and one week of the campgrounds for their Bible Camp. This is on a first come-first served basis. They have the option of joining with other churches if it is mutually agreed. The camp is open to non-member churches on a space available basis.

Throughout this job, I felt a guiding hand assisting me to lead this project to a successful conclusion. At this time, I wish to thank Vinland Lutheran Church for choosing me as a delegate to the board and to the board members for entrusting to me the foremanship of the building program.

May Olympic Lutherhaven continue to be used as another tool to spread His Word.

Glory be to God!

Respectfully submitted,

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