

# Will O' the Wisp Since 1943

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**NO RESTAURANT AND LODGING ACCOMMODATIONS REFLECT DEEP CREEK LAKE'S HERITAGE MORE CLEARLY THAN WILL O' THE WISP.** With a history nearly as old as the Lake's, Will O' the Wisp is well known by local residents and a must-visit destination for guests who enjoy fine dining and first class accommodations. Here you will discover a unique blend of hospitality and charm that have become a tradition for Deep Creek Lake and for the family who has lived and worked here for three generations.

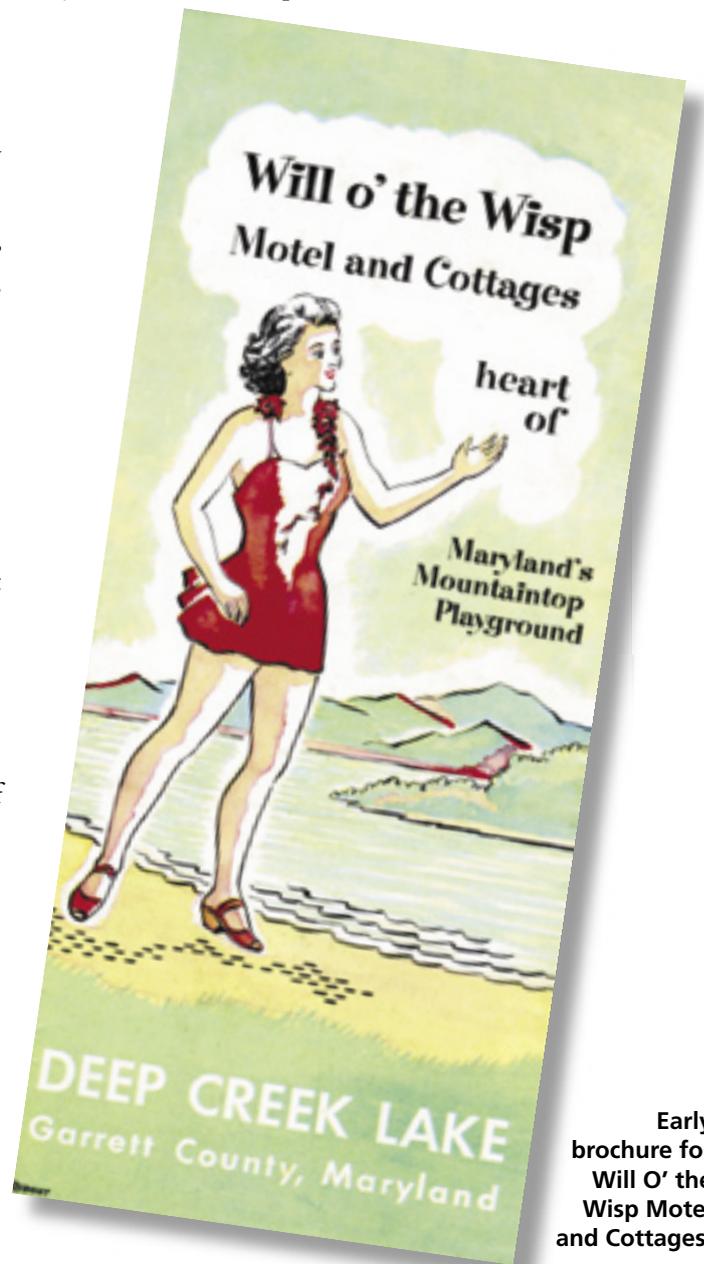
Maryland's largest freshwater lake was constructed after two corporations, the Youghiogheny Power Company and Youghiogheny Water and Electric Company, decided that a hydroelectric power plant located in Garrett County, Maryland, would be profitable. Eastern Land Corporation, a Delaware chartered company, was subsequently set up for the purpose of acquiring property for the proposed lake. Garrett County attorney, Fred A. Thayer Sr., facilitated the purchases, including the principal conveyance in 1925. Mr. Thayer later accepted acreage as payment for his services to the Eastern Land Corporation. The land he received was located along Maryland Route 219, a site that would later become Will O' the Wisp. Thayer's property was sold a few years later to Dr. Thurl Bullard for \$1,000 an acre. Fred Thayer, Maryland Circuit Court Judge and grandson of the attorney, stated in a 2004 interview, "My grandfather thought he had really cleaned up on the sale of the property."

Dr. Bullard, a local dentist, decided to enter the hospitality business by constructing 23 small batten board cottages on the property that he christened Will O' the Wisp. The intriguing name was derived from a term used to describe the mysterious lights seen over bayous in the South. Will O' the Wisp is a chimera, a mysterious and alluring beckoning to explore the unknown.

The small wooden cabins were intended for summer use only since each was equipped with only a pot bellied

stove for heat and an ice box for cold storage. A recreation hall served for the common benefit of campers, while bathing remained a cold water lake experience.

In the early days, most Deep Creek Lake visitors arrived from Western Pennsylvania. Regular visitors included Gustav and Alice Heise, who had settled in Pittsburgh after emigrating from Hamburg, Germany, during the chaotic days of the Weimar Republic. Helmuth Heise, son of Gustav,



Early brochure for Will O' the Wisp Motel and Cottages.

**The Good 'Ole Days — Motel and Cottage Rates at Will O' the Wisp during the 1960's.**

grew to love the lake and the summertime camping experiences at Will O' the Wisp. A chance remark by Dr. Bullard set in motion a series of events that would accelerate development of Will O' the Wisp and foster the Heise family's creative spirit. Dr. Bullard expressed to 16-year-old Helmuth a willingness to sell the lake front property, who quickly responded, "Don't sell it to anyone else because we are going to buy it."

Helmuth's response proved to be accurate because Gustav purchased the property from Dr. Bullard in 1943.

The Gustav and Alice Heise family soon made Deep Creek their permanent home and, since 1943, Will O' the Wisp has been a family enterprise driven by vision and determination. A strong work ethic was certainly required in those days of few visitors and limited hospitality facilities; Deep Creek Lake was not then well known. Initially, Gustav remained in Pittsburgh during the week to maintain steady employment, and then traveled to Deep Creek Lake on weekends to work on the camping facilities. When he was able to move to Will O' the Wisp full-time, Gustav began a series of improvements to the property, including the installation of indoor toilets in 1945.

Helmuth's participation in the family business was interrupted by military service in World War II. Gustav and Alice continued to operate and improve the facilities during their son's tour of duty.

Following the war, Helmuth Heise met Evelyn Lambert and they married in 1947. Helmuth decided to pursue higher education at Temple University, where he earned a degree in business administration. Deep Creek Lake once again beckoned, so Helmuth and Evelyn returned to Will O' the Wisp and decided to purchase it from Gustav in 1952. Although Helmuth and Evelyn became the new

owners, Gustav remained an active part of the enterprise and retained his residency there.

Father and son built the first "modern" facility on the property in 1953, a 10-unit motel complete with electric heat and indoor plumbing. According to Martin Heise, son of Helmuth and grandson of Gustav, "Father and Grandfather didn't hire a contractor; they actually built most of the motel themselves. The only subcontracted labor was tile work." The heavy work included digging the foundation by hand, carrying heavy stones, and setting them. Will O' the Wisp's addition of modern motel units to the rustic cabins marked the most extensive improvement to the business since its establishment by Dr. Bullard.

Despite the newly improved facilities, the Heises found it difficult to attract visitors any time other than the summer season. Winter was especially lonely. In February 1954, Will O' the Wisp took in a total of \$14.00 for the entire month, and according to Helmuth, "That was because two cars got stuck along the road in a snow storm and the drivers couldn't get to Oakland."

The idea for a ski slope was born in an effort to attract visitors year 'round because Helmuth realized that winter activities were needed at Deep Creek Lake to

### New Modern Cottages at Will O' The Wisp

Designed for Gracious Vacationing



On the outside of the cottage there is a patio overlooking the lake, with porch furniture and outdoor private heat cooking facilities and, of course, the fire our guests.

Everything is furnished in these cottages: Saven, blankets, silver, cooking facilities, dishes, toaster.

#### Summer MOTEL DAILY RATES—

Every Room Has Free Television  
June 18th Until Labor Day

2 Persons	.....	per night	\$14.00
3 Persons	.....	.....	\$17.00
4 Persons	.....	.....	\$21.00
(Two bedrooms with private tile bath, tub and shower combine)			
4 Persons	.....	.....	\$21.00
5 Persons	.....	.....	\$24.00
6 Persons	.....	.....	\$24.00

#### MOTEL WEEKLY SUMMER RATES

(One bedroom with private tile shower)

2 Persons	.....	per week	\$84.00
3 Persons	.....	.....	\$105.00
4 Persons	.....	.....	\$132.00
(Two bedrooms with private tile bath, tub and shower combine)			
4 Persons	.....	.....	\$132.00
5 Persons	.....	.....	\$156.00
6 Persons	.....	.....	\$156.00

#### DAILY OFF-SEASON RATES

Labor Day Until June 18th  
(One bedroom with private tile shower)

2 Persons	.....	per night	\$8.00
3 Persons	.....	.....	\$10.00
4 Persons	.....	.....	\$12.50
(Two bedrooms with private tile bath, tub and shower combine)			
4 Persons	.....	.....	\$12.50
5 Persons	.....	.....	\$15.00
6 Persons	.....	.....	\$17.50

#### WEEKLY OFF-SEASON RATES

(One bedroom with private tile shower)

2 Persons	.....	per week	\$48.00
3 Persons	.....	.....	\$60.00
4 Persons	.....	.....	\$75.00
(Two bedrooms with private tile bath, tub and shower combine)			
4 Persons	.....	.....	\$75.00
5 Persons	.....	.....	\$90.00
6 Persons	.....	.....	\$105.00

### Rustic Cottages . . .

These COTTAGES can only be reserved by the week from SATURDAY to SATURDAY beginning June 18 until Labor Day.

#### Summer WEEKLY COTTAGE RATES—

June 18th Until Labor Day

Cottage No. 1 and 3-6-7 persons	.....	Rate	\$72.00
No. 2-6-7 persons	.....	.....	\$75.00
No. 4 and 5-8 persons	.....	.....	\$75.00
No. 6 and 21-30 persons	.....	.....	\$75.00
No. 11 and 16-6-7 persons	.....	.....	\$75.00

#### Weekly Off Season Rates

Cottage No. 1, 2 and 3-6-7 persons	.....	Rate	\$48.00
No. 4 and 5-8 persons	.....	.....	\$52.00
No. 6 and 21-30 persons	.....	.....	\$52.00
No. 11 and 16-6-7 persons	.....	.....	\$52.00

These cottages are furnished with dishes and adequate cooking utensils. (This does not include all-furnished bed linen, towels, dish towels, soap, etc. in weekly cottage rentals.)

augment the summer tourist trade. In 1955, he, along with local businessmen Lonnie Long and Dave Marple, were able to secure a lease from Webster Brenneman on mountainous farm land located about five miles away in McHenry. The new enterprise was named Marsh Mountain Ski Area, later renamed Wisp because of its close association with Will O' the Wisp. Investors and partners at Wisp changed through the years, but Helmuth continued to lead in developing skiing operations at Wisp from 1955 until its sale to DC Development in 2001. DC Development has continued to expand and improve Wisp, and even at 80 years old, Helmuth continues to work there.

Further improvements at Will O' the Wisp occurred in 1962, when six additional motel units and a restaurant were built. Local architect Russ Minter designed the Four Seasons Dining Room and Chef Charles Apostolou of Pittsburgh organized the kitchen. It was considered daring to feature such menu specialties as blue cheese dressing and shrimp cocktails, delicacies not offered in Garrett County until then. The original dining room boasts four massive yet graceful arches and a fine lake view through its grand picture windows. The Four Seasons has long been a local culinary landmark, known for its fine food highlighting the bounty of the season and for its renowned banquets, emphasizing presentation and individualized attention to guests' wishes. Expanded in the 1970's to its present size, the main dining room features yet more windows to take advantage of the vista of Deep Creek Lake at its widest point, along with oak wood harvested when Wisp added new ski trails and extensive stone work saved from the original motel that Gus and Helmuth built. The addition of a bar and lounge in what was the original dining room is planned for this summer.

The most dramatic change at Will O' the Wisp occurred in 1975, when the ten original motel units were replaced by The Prestige Condominiums, a seven-floor complex featuring an indoor pool, wi-fi, whirlpool, sauna, game room and exercise facility, along with a sandy beach and boat marina on premise. Lodging guests are as warmly welcomed now as when Gus and Alice rented cabins and sold them kerosene for their stoves in 1945.

Helmuth credits his success to his approach to challenges encountered over the years. "I felt we could achieve anything if we just tried to do each thing better," he mused



**Photos (top to bottom):** Early entrance sign on Rt. 219; a dirt county road at that time.

First cottages were equipped with few conveniences — only a pot bellied stove for heat and an ice box for cold storage.

The Quarry was directly across from Will O' the Wisp's main entrance.

One of the "modern" conveniences was behind each cottage.

when reflecting on his life, the greatest portion of which has been spent at Will O' the Wisp. "I just kept at it. I was never one to give up, and Evelyn was always working right alongside me." After sixty years of marriage, he can say with conviction, "We operate as one."

Martin is the third generation of Heises to live and work at Will O' the Wisp, where his training in hospitality started as a youngster. "I was born the year the original motel was built. As in most families, my brother Gary and I both had daily chores. Ours included raking the beach, bussing in the front dining room and washing dishes in the back. My parents and grandparents set a high standard for hard work, and Dad was always happiest when he was outside digging a ditch alongside the other men or mowing grass or building something else for Mother to run. When asked about the rapid growth of Deep Creek Lake in recent years, Martin said, "Grandmother and Grandfather, Aunt Doris and Father, a little later joined by Mother, came here to escape for a while from the city, almost seven decades ago. Visitors are still coming here for the same thing. I hope Deep Creek Lake can remain for them what is for my family: a refuge and haven. And that Will O' the Wisp can be for them what it has been for us: a home."

Perhaps the best explanation of why the Heise family has been successful can be found in the words of Helmuth: "I've been lucky. What I wanted to do was the same thing that I did."



**Martin Heise**



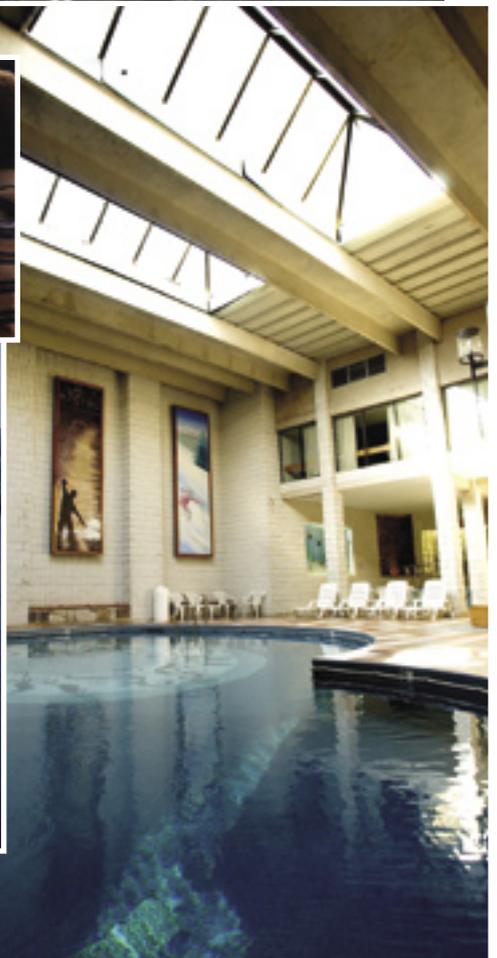
**Evelyn and  
Helmuth Heise**



Flaming pasta is a treat offered every Wednesday evening at "Pasta Night" at Four Seasons Restaurant. It has become quite popular at Deep Creek Lake. Just choose your favorite ingredients from a large selection of vegetables, meats, pastas, toppings and sauce, and watch as it is prepared by your personal chef.



This photo and others on the facing page show some of the modern comforts today at Four Seasons Restaurant and condo's at Will O' the Wisp—both at the same location. The dining room and all condo units have an outstanding view of the Lake with easy access to the water. Handy boat docks and sandy beaches add to guest's pleasures.



**Will O' the Wisp is on the Lake with an indoor year-round pool, whirlpool, sauna, game room, exercise room, banquet facilities and more. Even with so many amenities, Will O' the Wisp is making plans for further development.**