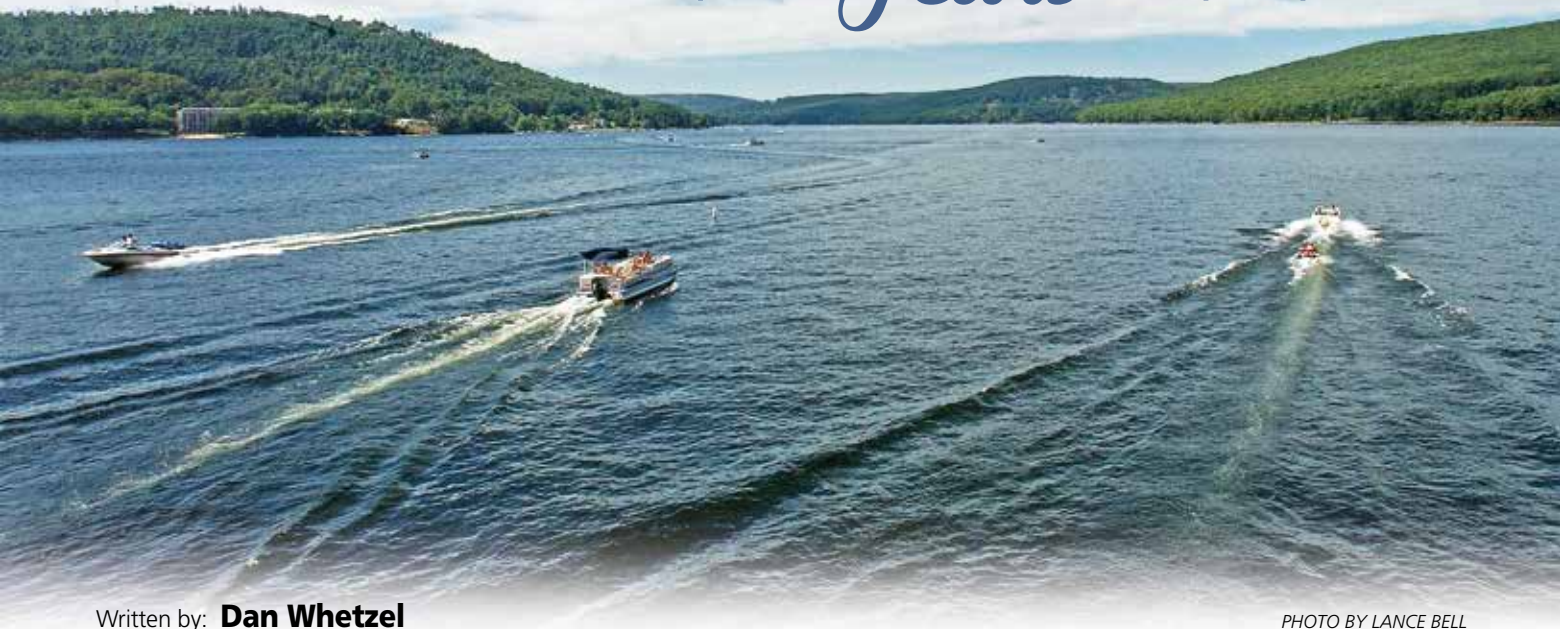


# DEEP CREEK LAKE

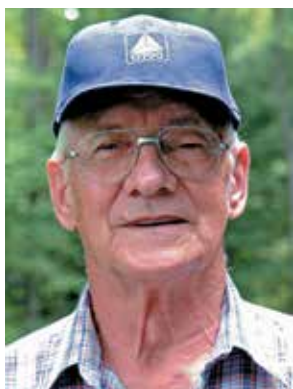
100  
1925 • Years • 2025



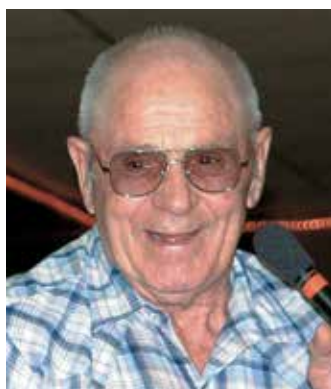
Written by: **Dan Whetzel**

PHOTO BY LANCE BELL

In 2003 and 2004, *Mountain Discoveries* interviewed several Garrett County residents to document their memories of early life at Deep Creek Lake. Those memories were compiled in a series of articles called "Lake Reflections." This year as we focus on Deep Creek Lake's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, *Mountain Discoveries* has chosen to reprint excerpts and photos from those original articles along with various updates. Although some of those early interviewees have passed on, their memories create a nostalgic account of the making of Deep Creek Lake and how the area has evolved in more recent years. We hope you enjoy these reminiscences of early Deep Creek Lake's development and growth.



**Frank Beckman**  
1931 – 2010



**Leo Friend**  
1925 – 2004



**Grace King**  
1914 – 2008



**Tom "RT" Thayer**  
1926 – 2010



Deep Creek is Maryland's largest freshwater lake and Western Maryland's premier recreational destination site, as each year thousands of vacationers enjoy the four-season activities the lake offers. The increasing popularity of Deep Creek Lake has caused many changes over the years, especially in the development of lakefront property. While change has brought growth and undeniable economic benefits to Garrett County, it has also prompted longtime residents to recollect when the lake was undisturbed for years, and the tree covered shoreline only hosted wildlife. As Deep Creek Lake approaches its 100th year, let us take a trip down memory lane to an earlier time when the region remained a hidden treasure waiting to be discovered by vacationers.

Ground was broken for Deep Creek Lake on November 1, 1923. Its name was derived from a stream located between Roman Nose Ridge and Marsh Hill Ridge, and its purpose was to provide hydroelectric power for the Pennsylvania Electric Power Corporation of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Approximately 8,000 acres of land were purchased to begin the project, including 140 farms. An ambitious undertaking, a new rail connection from the B&O Railroad in Oakland, Maryland, became necessary to transport heavy equipment and materials to the excavation site. A quarry for stone crushing provided raw materials for the dam work, while steel bridges were erected to accommodate rising waters and vehicle traffic around the water. After months of planning and construction, the hydroelectric plant went on line in May 1925.

Fred Thayer has maintained both a historical and legal interest in Deep Creek Lake. Personal recollections have been augmented by legal efforts of his grandfather, Fred A. Thayer, Sr., on behalf of companies who created the lake in the early 1920s. Fred Thayer noted, initially there were plans for a dam and several separate impoundments on Youghiogheny River, in the vicinity of Swallow Falls. Eastern Land Corporation, a Delaware chartered company set up for the purpose of engaging in real estate operations, began the acquisition of property for the various impoundments, and according to Mr. Thayer, "My grandfather, Fred A. Thayer, Sr., locally began acquisition of all the ground that became Deep Creek Lake and perimeter. The first deed was to Youghiogheny Hydro-Electric Corporation in 1923. There were several deeds, but the principle conveyance was in October 1925. My grandfather accepted his pay in acreage, which is now Will O' the Wisp. He was able to sell it to Dr. Thurl Bullard, who had one of the early recreational areas, for \$1,000 an acre. He thought he had really cleaned up."



**Top: Youghiogheny Hydro-Electric Corporation Power House Foundation, July 1, 1924.**

**Bottom: Tunnel beneath the Deep Creek Lake Dam, 1924.**

Eastern Land Corporation was purchasing some parcels but mostly farmland. Apparently, there was a general willingness to sell property to Eastern Land Corporation, although "some were tougher to deal with than others, I recall my grandfather saying. But I can tell you that as far as the Deep Creek Lake impoundment was concerned, every property was acquired voluntarily. There was no instance of eminent domain." There later came a time when the state of Maryland acquired property for a public park, but that was unrelated to the original construction of Deep Creek Lake.

Not all of the original hydroelectric plans came to be realized, while new ones surfaced. The first plan to be eliminated called for building additional impoundments near Swallow



Falls. New plans to install flashboards on the Deep Creek Dam, which would have raised the level of the lake four vertical feet, were proposed. Flashboards would have put lake water within a minimal distance of being able to empty into the Potomac River watershed as opposed to flowing westward into the Ohio River. Nothing ever came of the plan, but it explains a quirk of Deep Creek Lake. The level of the lake today, at maximum spillway level, is 2,462 feet elevation. Pennsylvania Power Company, commonly referred to as Penelec, owned the land at least as far back as a line established at elevation 2,466, plus 25 lineal feet. That explains the actual difference between spillway level and the four additional feet from the flashboards that were never added to the dam. Penelec, therefore, owned the water and land as far back as four vertical feet. In some cases, that was a considerable distance.

In February 1942, the Youghio-gheny Hydro-Electric Corporation conveyed to Pennsylvania Electric Corporation the property at Deep Creek Lake, with the exception of some excess property, which was retained by Eastern Land Corporation but managed by Pennsylvania Electric. The extra land was conveyed from Eastern Land Corporation to the Smith family who acquired numerous parcels around the lake including Thousand Acres, Blakeslee, Pergin Farm, Marsh Mountain and Stumpy Point.

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

Economic development by the Smith family and Fred Thayer's own family have brought changes to waterfront property in particular, and the county's economy in general. When asked to describe the changes that have occurred at Deep Creek since the late 1930s, Fred Thayer summarizes by stating, "There has been an ever increasing tempo of growth."

The Harvey name has been associated with Deep Creek Lake since the early 1920s when Earl K. Harvey purchased



PHOTO BY LANCE BELL

**Early photo of the old Deep Creek Bridge (top) and the current Deep Creek Bridge.**

farmland from Charlie O'Brien, in the North Glade area of Deep Creek. The family raised a variety of crops including potatoes, corn, and peas that were canned at Mtn. Lake Park. Raising chickens, sheep, hogs, and cattle were also priorities on the farm. Fannie Mae (Harvey) Kolb, one of 11 siblings remembered, "We always had a big garden, and people would often stop to buy vegetables and whatever else we had." While not a formal store, summer residents from the peninsula would be interested in making conversation and purchasing fresh food.

Creation of Deep Creek Lake took approximately 25 acres of Harvey farmland. Pennsylvania Electric Power Company later offered to sell unused land, and Mr. Harvey purchased 44 acres, thus adding to his farm after the lake was filled. Earl Harvey worked the farm until his death in 1975 when two sons, who both lived on the property, continued to

operate it. In recent years the Harvey farmland was purchased by real estate developers, while the farmhouse sold at a later date and became a bed and breakfast establishment. If one looks at the structures on the North Glade property, they can only imagine the rolling potato fields that once were the Harvey farm.

The lake provided electrical service to distant customers but offered few activities to residents during the years prior to World War II. Organized events were hardly necessary as the only population center was McHenry, a village settled in the 19th century.

Local folks recall the early days of Deep Creek when only three stores offered goods in McHenry: C.M. Railey's, Glotfelty's, and Hubert Bowman's. They were general merchandisers, while Bowman's also served as a Post Office. Resident Leo Friend reminisced that as a youngster, it was typical for him to walk a distance of three miles to make grocery purchases at McHenry stores where his father had accounts. Mr. Friend's first soda was purchased at Bowman's, and he "bought cherry because it was red." The only boats he observed were small fishing vessels, while other forms of recreation were limited to swimming and ice-skating. As the 1920s ended and the Great Depression wore on, money stayed scarce, the lake area remained sparsely populated, and visitors were infrequent. Leo Friend could see only one house on the opposite side of the lake from McHenry, an area today that bustles with private residences and commercial activity, including Wisp Ski Resort.

Matthew "Matt" Storey, Sr., established one of Deep Creek Lake's first restaurants in 1935. Originally from Brownsville, Pennsylvania, he started the business after purchasing 14 acres of property near McHenry along Route 219. The building was a small, one story structure with "Lunch" painted on a front window. According to Garrett County resident, Sam Storey, his father decided on pursuing the restaurant business because, "family members kept coming over from Brownsville and he got tired of feeding them for free." Sam worked at the restaurant from age seven, waiting on tables. Six siblings also helped at various times. Sandwiches and beer were staple items with local customers. Sam Storey recalled, "Beer cost 15 cents a bottle, two for 25 cents, or seven for \$1.00 to go. Sunday's menu was special because it featured a half chicken, two vegetables



**Matt Storey, Sr.'s restaurant, one of Deep Creek Lake's first, was established in 1935. This photo was taken in the early 1950s.**

and a drink, for 49 cents. Pie was ten cents extra."

Residents provided Storey's with a customer base, and "any tourists were a plus for our business."

Restaurant work required daily and weekly preparation. Mr. Storey stated, "It was nothing for us to dress 50 chickens on Saturday. We also made our own ice cream. My job was to turn the crank until it was done. When it was ready, we sold it for five cents a dip." The busiest time was Friday because it was typically pay day. Local people tended to congregate there for food and relaxation. "The bar business was steady, even during the winter. Oakland people even came over on a regular basis. We personally knew most of our customers."

Storey's Tavern's appearance didn't change much over the years. "We added restrooms because when we first opened, it had outside toilets," recalled Mr. Storey. Following Matt Storey's death, Bob Storey operated the business for approximately 20 years until it was sold in 1982, thus bringing an end to one of Deep Creek Lake's oldest establishments.

While housing did not significantly increase during the lake's first two decades, a modest start to nightlife began when C.M. Railey built Stone Tavern near McHenry. The tavern was one of the first local establishments to serve alcoholic beverages after prohibition was repealed. It was also a hotspot for square dancing on weekends, as residents would pack the dance floor to enjoy the entertainment provided by live bands. The tavern, a local landmark, was razed in 1969 when the new Deep Creek Bridge was constructed.



## STONE TAVERN



Stone Tavern, built in 1932 by Charles Mahlon "C.M." Railey and Edith Merrill Railey, was located by the Deep Creek Lake bridge, built eight years earlier. The Tavern was their second business development following Lakeside Park and Inn, built in 1925, the year Deep Creek Lake was completed.

Stone Tavern was a restaurant, bar, and lively dance hall; it also had a gasoline station, grocery store, and pay telephone. It was one of the first establishments to serve alcoholic beverages once Prohibition was repealed. Stone Tavern was razed in 1969 when the State of Maryland widened U.S. 219 and constructed the new bridge.



Above: Stone Tavern and the Deep Creek Lake Bridge.

Middle: These stone rental cottages overlooking the lake were built by C.M. Railey between 1935 and 1938. They were located across Rt. 219 from Stone Tavern, on the same side as Lakeside Park and Inn.

Bottom: C.M. Railey, holding his granddaughter Beverly, with two of his sons, Jim (left) and Charles "Bud" (Beverly's father). PHOTOS COURTESY BEVERLY RAYLEY ROBINSON



Lakeside Park and Inn (above), constructed in 1925, eventually led the way to Railey's second development, Stone Tavern. The yellow arrow indicates the future location of Stone Tavern in relationship to Lakeside Park and Inn and U.S. 219.





**Cabin Lodge, constructed in the 1930s, began as an ice cream stand, then a souvenir shop, and then a restaurant. It was one of the busiest nightlife spots at Deep Creek Lake. Eddie and Louise Fry operated the business.**

**Today, Cabin Lodge Grill resides at the location of Cabin Lodge, next door to Lakeside Creamery and Deep Creek Donuts.**



PHOTO BY ANNIE WHETZEL



Tom Thayer of Oakland recalls Rainbow Inn as being one of the prominent commercial establishments outside of McHenry, at the lake during the late 1930s. The busiest nightlife spot according to Mr. Thayer, however, was Cabin Lodge, where free shrimp on Wednesday nights caused patrons to “drink mountains of beer to cool off the shrimp; they really made out on that.” Cabin Lodge was appropriately named, as it was constructed of logs in the early 1930s; Eddie and Louise Fry operated the business. Adjacent to Cabin Lodge was Thayer’s Barn; a typical agricultural structure that was built before the lake was created but later converted to a restaurant and a “roadhouse.” Tom Thayer remembers several other barns around Deep Creek that were converted to entertainment spots including Arden’s Boat Club in McHenry, McComa’s Beach on Red Run, and Blue Barn on Beckman’s Peninsula, where a summer theatre operated for a number of years.

The beverage of choice for lake revelers was beer, and a special cap on Garrett County beer bottles was required because of a tax levied by the county. Tom Thayer stated, “People would go to West Virginia to buy their beer to save the tax. Supposedly, West Virginia beer was only 3.2%, but everybody would sneak up to Terra Alta on Friday evening to buy a case of beer and bring it home.”

## JOHNNY’S BAIT HOUSE

Leaving early Deep Creek nightlife behind, let’s make our next stop at Johnny’s Bait House, located along Route 219, south of McHenry. Scarce is the fisherman who did not stop to consult with Johnny about water conditions and “what the fish were hitting.” It could be said, without exaggeration, that visits to Johnny’s Bait House became a rite of summer for many vacationers.

John Marple began his business as a youngster in a modest way, selling night crawlers from an old washtub along Route 219, for 20 cents a dozen. The washtub marketing enterprise lasted a couple of summers until Mr. Marple’s father constructed a 3’x5’ building that enabled the young entrepreneur to offer customers hooks and tackle to supplement live bait sales. A subsequent improvement was moving the business location to a dock on the lake where keeping minnows was possible. A small building on the



PHOTO BY DAN WHETZEL

**Adjacent to Cabin Lodge was Thayer’s Barn, used as an actual barn before the Lake was filled. It was later converted into a restaurant and “roadhouse” in the 1930s and 40s.**

**Today, this empty lot along Garrett Highway (Rt. 219) is the site of the former Thayer’s Barn — just north of Lakeside Creamery and Deep Creek Donuts.**

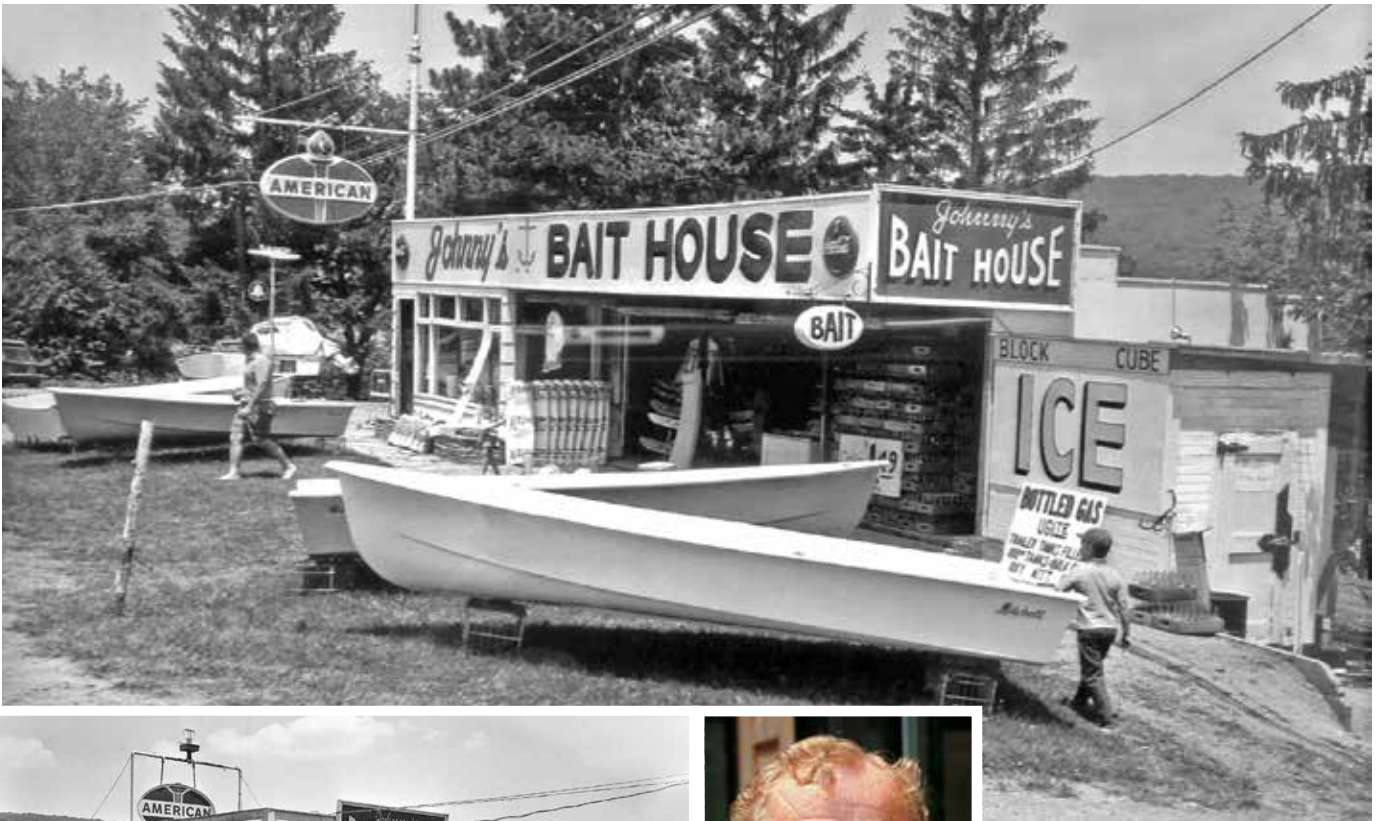


PHOTO COURTESY JAY FERGUSON



Johnny Marple

**Johnny's Bait House, owned by Johnny Marple, was a staple at Deep Creek Lake for over five decades. A variety of goods and services were provided including bottled gas, fishing boat rentals, and boat repairs. There was also a lakeside dock at the site (inset). The business was sold in 2002.**

**Today, this is the location of the former Johnny's Bait House. It is directly across Rt. 219 from Bill's Marine Service main office.**



PHOTO BY DAN WHITZEL

dock housed tackle and additional boating supplies his customers requested. Following a two-year stint in the military, Mr. Marple returned to Garrett County, purchased lakeside property, and constructed a small building that was to be the basis of his business over the next five decades. Over that time period, a variety of goods and services were provided including bottled gas, fishing boat rentals, and boat repairs. Mr. Marple recalled that in the 1950s and 1960s, most customers were from the Pittsburgh area, but from that time forward visitors increasingly came from the northern Virginia and Washington-Baltimore suburbs.

One promotion that attracted customers to his store was "Johnny's Bait House Fishing Contest," a joint effort of Mr. Marple and the former Garrett County Promotion Council. "I would give them (fishing contest winners) a silver dollar for the largest fish of the week, and it got customers into my store. I would relay the weekly winners' names to the council, and they would have it printed in the newspapers. We ran that about 40 years, and it turned

out pretty good. I really handled a lot of fish during that time." Not content to weigh and measure other people's catch of the day, he also angled from his dock several times a week as a form of sport and relaxation. "I always did say that you would never need a psychiatrist if you fished. I solved a lot of problems from that dock." Mr. Marple noticed over the years that yellow perch was the





The original swan (left) and the rebuilt swan (right).



**Noel Obenshain**  
1906 – 1994

## THE SWAN BOAT

Noel Obenshain's creative idea, and one that would attract attention for decades, was a swan boat that glided across Deep Creek Lake carrying passengers of all ages. Mr. Obenshain's initial inspiration was quickly transferred into action and the swan made her Deep Creek Lake debut on July 1, 1964.

The design of the 21-foot swan boat contained novel ideas. Running lights were incorporated into the eye sockets — red for port and green for starboard. The swan's head and neck stretched 14½ feet in height and had the ability to lower when approaching the bridges. Air horns were also mounted near the swan's bill, and when sounded, the mouth opened as if voicing. More conventional aspects of the swan

included a 40-horse power, 2-cycle engine that was housed in the tail, providing speeds of up to 12 knots and a passenger load of eight adults.

For more than two decades, afternoons were the most likely times to spot the swan. Unfortunately, the swan's excursions became less frequent as the years passed, and by 1990, they ended altogether.

The Larry Madson family rescued the swan many years later and entrusted her to Ervin Sweitzer of Grantsville, Maryland, to rebuild the entire boat, taking it apart to make a pattern (the outside sections were damaged or completely rotten). The gear box and its motor were replaced by a stronger and more modern system as well as other improvements and the swan was relaunched on Deep Creek Lake during the summer of 2005.

dominant species in the lake, although it also produced nice size blue gills. "The lake has never been a pay lake where you throw a line in and catch fish; you have to work at it."

Johnny's Bait House sales grew with the increased traffic to the county. At first, there were a few summer cottages to attract vacationers, some without roads to them. "People used to come and enjoy the mountains, water, and lake. People also came to take a boat ride for one dollar. Not many people had boats back then." According to Mr. Marple, growth remained steady at the lake until sewage services became available and then major development occurred because condominiums could be accommodated on lake-side property. Another significant change occurred when Johnny's Bait House was sold in early 2002. Mr. Marple indicated the new owner offered to keep the store name,

but he "decided it was time for Johnny's Bait House to end." It was a good run.

## BOWMAN'S MARINA

Reflections of Deep Creek businesses would not be complete without Bowman's Marina, a popular stop for boating enthusiasts. The marina's owner, Charles H. "Skeeter" Bowman, started boating early "when two logs were nailed together with old scrap boards, and we propelled it by using long poles." Mr. Bowman grew up in McHenry on the family farm, now the site of Garrett County Fairgrounds. "My dad had this farm, and we milked the cows by hand, and my job was to bottle the milk, in glass bottles, and carry it to a cold spring, and then deliver it to cottages in our area of the lake." Mr. Bowman's father also operated the local Post Office and a general store, so other business opportunities became available including fishing boat





**Charles H. "Skeeter" Bowman**  
1925 – 2014  
and wife, **Mary Lillian Bowman**  
1929 – 2019



**Top:** View of Bowman's Marina from the lake.

**Middle:** Early aerial photo of Deep Creek Lake, McHenry area, highlighting Bowman's Marina.

**Bottom:** The marina today, owned by Bill's Marine Service.

*PHOTO COURTESY BILL'S MARINE SERVICE*

After World War II, Skeeter Bowman returned to Garrett County and resumed the boat rental business. In 1952, it was decided that a marina in McHenry offered business opportunities, so Bowman's Marina was born. After two decades, the Bowman's decided to sell the business to semi-retire.

Bowman's Marina was bought by Carlton Bohrer and Gerald Perry in 1972. They retained the original name until 1981 or 1982 when the marina was bought by Charles Rusky and became Crystal Waters Marina.

In 1984, Joida V. Sherwood and Robert Browning purchased the marina, changing the name to Quality Marine.

Bill's Marine Service acquired the marina in 2005 for their North Rental Location. Along with their main office at 20721 Garrett Highway, they continue to operate the marina today.

rentals, the first such service on Deep Creek Lake. Skeeter Bowman purchased a few wooden fishing boats in the mid-1930s and continued to offer them for rental until the start of World War II. “There really wasn’t much to McHenry at that time, just a few country stores and a few residences.”

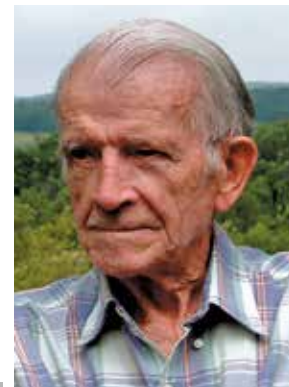
Skeeter Bowman was always fascinated with flying, so he enlisted in the Army Air Corp after World War II was underway. Following military duty on Tinian, and bombing missions over Japan, he returned to Garrett County and resumed the boat rental business. In 1952, it was decided that a marina in McHenry offered business opportunities, so Bowman’s Marina was born. It offered a full line of boats and a spectrum of boating supplies including Johnson Outboard Motors and Chriss Craft wooden boats. In those days, boats were constructed from wood, a labor-intensive boating material. “Refinishing boats kept us busy in the winter,” recalled Mr. Bowman. After two decades of marina ownership, the Bowman’s decided to sell the business in 1972, to become semi-retired.

The marina occupied much of his time, but Mr. Bowman’s passion for flying aircraft had the added benefit of providing vacationers with an alternative means of arriving at Deep Creek—flying in by single engine aircraft. A portion of the Bowman farm was developed as an airfield, on a site now occupied by the fairgrounds, and vacationers from Pittsburgh would fly in for weekend visits. The airstrip also provided the entrepreneur with his own airline service to metropolitan areas. “I used to joke that I had the first airfreight service in the area because I would fly to Baltimore and pick up boating supplies and stack them in my plane.” The one-day supply service provided speedy service to marina customers.

## MATT STOREY’S BOAT FACTORY

Long time visitors also recall Matt Storey’s Marina, located along Route 219 in McHenry. Mr. Storey not only sold and rented boats, but he learned to build them as well. “I went to Florida and got a job in a boat factory; that’s where I learned how to make boats.” Following service in the Coast Guard, Mr. Storey decided to locate a business at Deep Creek and put his carpentry skills to the test. Boats in those days were made from oak and plywood, and special precautions had to be taken for swelling and shrinkage caused by water. Mr. Storey saw a potential market for boat sales on the lake because the product was not plentiful before the war, but a revitalized national economy after the conflict promised economic growth and more affluent consumers.

Storey’s boats were designed for fishermen and came in two lengths, 12 and 14 feet. Deep Creek’s first boat factory was located in an old chicken coop along the water, and he generally had one employee during that time. Boat building only lasted about three years as large companies began to enter



**Matt Storey**  
1920 – 2005



**Matt Storey’s chicken coop — Deep Creek Lake’s first boat factory.**

the market and mass-produce them, making boat sales and rentals a more profitable enterprise. He became a franchised outboard Mercury dealer and a showroom dealer for many boat companies. “I would go to a boat show every year and order new boats. I had many different lines of boats over the years.” Mr. Storey found that after 20 years, the lake and business was growing too quickly. “It just became too big, and I decided to sell it,” thus ending an important link between Deep Creek and recreational boating.

Fred Thayer’s earliest memories of Deep Creek Lake can be traced to 1938 when his father rented a small cottage, south of the Glendale Bridge, along Glendale Road. Thayer’s rented cottage, and several others, had been relocated from the coal mining town of Vindex, a present day ghost town near Kitzmiller, Maryland. Cottages were virtually the only camping option offered to vacationers at that time since motels and campgrounds for tents were not yet available. Summer cottages remained primitive as they lacked heat and other amenities. One vivid memory of those camping days was the appearance of motorboats. “Motorboats were so scarce that if we heard one, everybody would come out to see. It was an event,” recalled Mr. Thayer. The first motorboat the Thayer family witnessed was a white model, owned by Dr. McComas, who cleverly dubbed his craft, “Samoc.” “There was only an occasional pleasure boater but a lot of fisherman that used the lake for recreation. No one ever heard of water skiing back in those days.” According to Mr. Thayer, there would be an occasional swimming meet or boat-racing contest, but such events tended to be sporadic.



# FLYING SCOT®



Flying Scot #2 on Deep Creek Lake.

Over forty years of sailing and marine construction experience prepared Gordon K. "Sandy" Douglass to produce his most successful design, the Flying Scot®, a Sailing Hall of Fame design. Each Flying Scot is hand-crafted with the highest quality materials and methods and designed for speed. The boat's low displacement and flat, tapered profile in the stern allow it to "plane" — a nautical term that conjures up images of flying as the boat swiftly skims the water's surface.

Sandy Douglass launched the Gordon Douglass Boat Co., Inc. in 1956 in Ohio, but moved the business to Oakland, MD in 1957. Eric Ammann joined the company in Ohio and then moved to Oakland when the company relocated. In 1971, Sandy sold the business to Eric and Mary Ammann, who continued the tradition of quality and personal service. Harry and Karen Carpenter purchased the business in 1991 when the Ammann's retired. They changed the name to Flying Scot, Inc. and continued to build the best boat possible and provide exceptional customer service.

Since 2019, Carrie and Tyler Andrews (Harry and Karen's daughter and son-in-law) own and operate the business at the factory in Deer Park, MD. Flying Scot, Inc. remains solid as a family business in the Deep Creek Lake area.

*BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS COURTESY FLYING SCOT, INC.; COLOR PHOTOS BY LANCE BELL*



Eric Ammann at the helm.



First factory in Oakland, MD.



Current factory in Deer Park, MD.

While marinas, boats, and related fishing goods provided business opportunities for lake entrepreneurs; Grace King is able to reflect on a time when the word “Lake” was not attached to the title. Having moved there in 1919 from Red House, she and her father would frequently cross the stream, called Deep Creek, on a bridge where Johnny’s Bait House would later be built. She remembers one occasion when her father returned from a sale to find the stream flooding the bridge, preventing folks from crossing and creating general concern. Remnants of the road that Mrs. King traveled on are now located under the water between the former Johnny’s Bait House and Rock Lodge Road. Another vivid memory of pre-lake days is when her family was able to “pack up the old Ford on a Sunday” and visit the construction site of the dam where intake tunnels were being dug through the mountain. Her brother supervised the family’s tour of the massive tunnels, as he was employed there as a construction worker during 1924-1925.

As time passed, Grace King married and established a residence on the hill that overlooked the old bridge and road site. In 1946, the King’s decided to build a small cottage for friends who requested visits to the lake. Mrs. King recalled “friends didn’t visit too frequently, and when they did, they stayed in our house; I put a board out near the road with ‘Cottage For Rent’ written on it.” Her marketing efforts proved to be successful, as she rented the cottage for \$5.00 the first night. Over the next few years, they purchased additional cottages for vacationers and seasonal workers. Mrs. King maintained her rental properties without assistance from 1964 forward, as her husband passed away that year. Visitors came from all over the United States, and even foreign lands, to stay at the summer cottages. After 56 years of hospitality work, a decision was made to sell the property and move to nearby West Virginia, close to her birthplace. Even after five decades of general inflation and real estate appreciation at Deep Creek, Mrs. King’s 2002 cottage fee was still a reasonable \$65.00 per night. Not one to regret decisions, Mrs. King said it was time to move on, to enjoy the country atmosphere of Aurora, West Virginia.

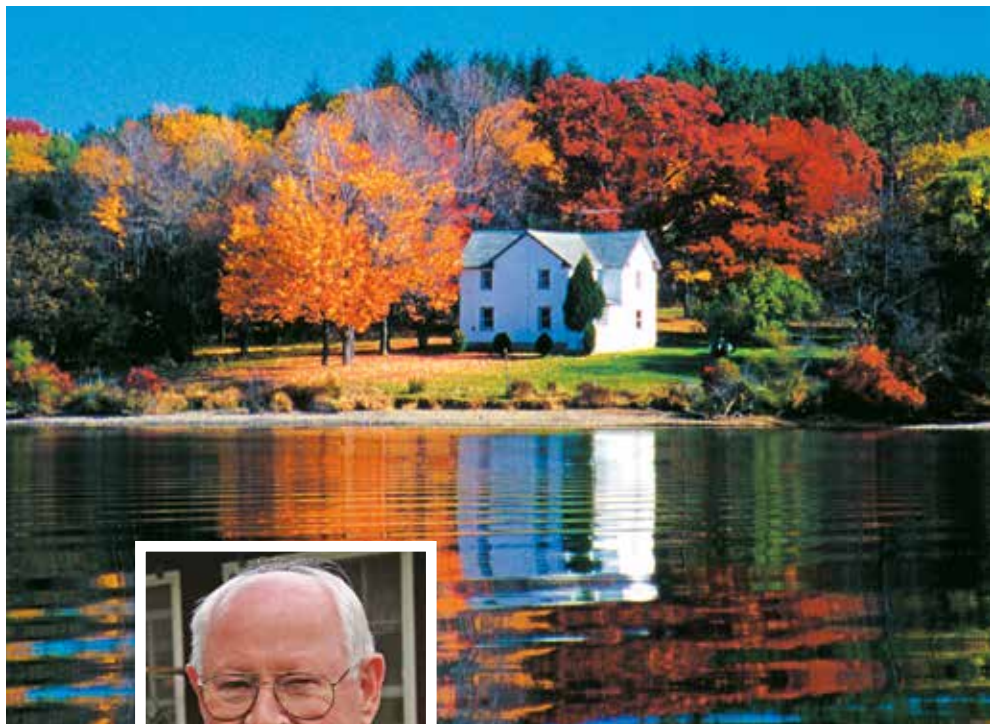
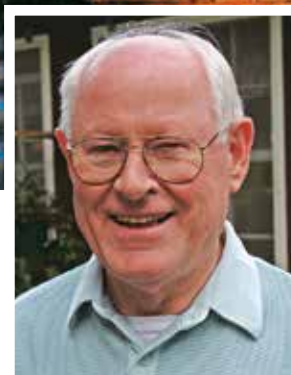


PHOTO BY LANCE BELL



**Rev. William Melody**  
1929 – 2015

## HOLY CROSS HOUSE

As residents recall early establishments at Deep Creek, one location mentioned but little understood, is Holy Cross House. To recollect the genesis of Holy Cross House, one has to turn

the clock back to 1930 when Pennsylvania Electric Power Corporation was approached about selling lakefront property to the Congregation of Holy Cross religious order of the Roman Catholic Church, for the purposes of constructing a retreat for seminarians studying at Holy Cross College in Washington, D.C. The power company proved to be reluctant about the sale because it didn’t desire to become embroiled in real estate development issues, a concern that proved to be unwarranted as the men who purchased the property desired “a place of retreat,” not economic development, as long time visitor and Holy Cross Priest, Reverend William Melody, recalled. The land originally belonged to the Lohr family prior to the lake’s construction, and according to Father Melody, Mrs. Lohr wanted to move from the homestead, as she believed the rising waters near the house threatened the safety of her children. The waters inundated much of the farm, leaving 36 acres of the original tract for occupation by the priests and brothers of Holy Cross. Father Melody stated the potential purchase received criticism within the order at the time. “What are they doing, wasting money during the Great Depression, on a barren hill in Western Maryland?” Despite opposition, the property, including the Lohr house, was deeded to the order for \$3,000.

The facilities were built primarily by Holy Cross men who lived in tents during the first few years. The first building to be completed was the lodge during the summers of 1930-1932, followed by the





**The Lodge at Holy Cross was the first building to be completed during the summers of 1930-1932.** PHOTO BY DAN WHETZEL



**The Chapel, completed in 1937, featured wormy chestnut wood and a warm, rustic atmosphere.** PHOTO CIRCA 1940



**The Holy Cross Peninsula was purchased in 2003 and is now The Reserve at Holy Cross, an exclusive lakeside community with 31 homesites.** PHOTO BY LANCE BELL

dining hall in 1932, and the chapel in 1937. According to Father Melody, the seminarians and priests used the skills they had, and the skills they could read about, to build stone and wooden buildings on the site that were enjoyed for more than 78 years. Father Craddick, who had a degree in architecture from Notre Dame, designed the chapel that featured wormy chestnut wood and a warm, rustic atmosphere appropriate to the purposes of a retreat facility. Father Wojciechowski built the altar, while Father Paul Beichner carved Stations of the Cross that adorned the chapel walls. Father Beichner went on to become head of the graduate school at Notre Dame for a number of years.



**One of the hand-carved Stations of the Cross that adorned the chapel walls.**

PHOTO BY DAN WHETZEL

A number of other prominent church officials also enjoyed the beauty of Holy Cross House at Deep Creek including: Father Theodore Hesburgh, President of Notre Dame for 35 years, Archbishop Heston, pastor of a congregation in Rome, Archbishop Graner of Bangladesh, and Father Patrick Peyton, known as the Rosary Priest. "A World At Prayer Is A World At Peace," a well-known admonition, is among Father Peyton's credits. "There were great stories of great men here. Many of them left and went to the missions in India, Bangladesh, South America, and Africa, where they built churches and also established services like sinking wells, building schools and hospitals, and educating."

Not all Holy Cross House activities have been directly related to Biblical studies, but they have always had spiritual and recreational qualities of

undeniable benefit. “Our men were great athletes. We challenged the local towns around here to baseball contests,” stated Father Melody. The Holy Cross team would pile into the back of an old truck and make the journeys to Oakland, Deer Park, Crellin, Terra Alta, Westernport, Morgantown, and Kitzmiller. Holy Cross would, in turn, host the teams at their Deep Creek setting. Additional information on the games was provided in a 1996 report written by Father John Paige. According to the report, Father Kehoe, who played shortstop, remembered “the Holy Cross team was dubbed the All-Stars because their uniforms were used by all teams at Holy Cross and were all different. Local teams would bring in ‘ringers’ and consolidate all the best players from surrounding teams to play us. There were good crowds for the games. It was quite a social pastime for the small towns, and for us.” Father Melody concurred, “People remember those games and the spirited contests and fellowship.”

Seminarians, priests, and brothers also provided the general population of Deep Creek with weekly spiritual renewal after they made the improbable purchase of a surplus U.S. Navy lifeboat, complete with canned rations. Father Melody reflects, “We used to go down at night singing Gregorian chants, American hymns, and ‘God Bless America;’ it was a weekly thing, and people would be out on their porches waiting for the choir to come by. It was still going strong in the late 40s. We had a great choir.” During an earlier time, Father Houser reported a similar experience. “We would line up the main boat that the men built; we put a Buick motor into it, and behind that, a sailboat and 3 canoes. We tied them together in a long string and that Buick motor pulled everything. We sang the old songs, and we heard from the people that lived along the stretch of the lake that they just waited for Wednesday nights to hear us in the boats singing.”



## CARMELITE RELIGIOUS RETREAT

Mountain Lake Park resident, Ray Mattingly, recalled 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 1950s brought greetings from Carmelite men recently assembled at the community, fostering conversations and friend-

ship. Approximately 20 Carmelites, a religious order of the Roman Catholic Church that stresses service and contemplation, enjoyed the summer facility, “staying very



Carmelite religious retreat in the mid-1940s — Carmelites take a break from construction (left) and during a service in the completed chapel (right).





**Today, Carmel Cove Inn is set in the former Carmelite religious retreat surrounded by 2 acres of peaceful woods. The ten-bedroom lodging house is perfect for family gatherings or corporate retreats.**

*PHOTO BY ANNIE WHETZEL*



**Ray Mattingly**

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

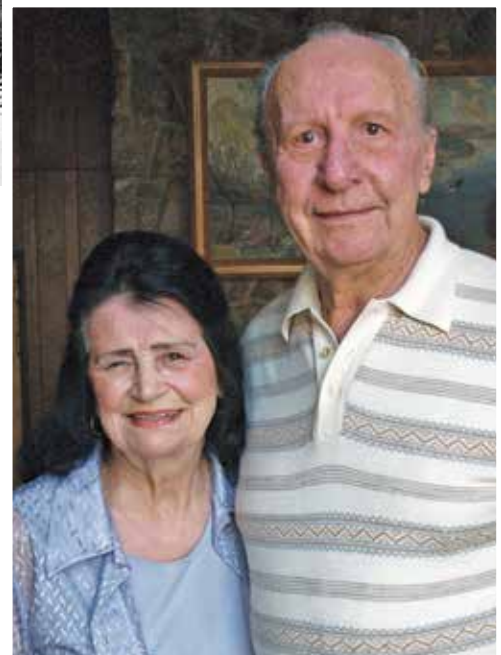
Lutheran service, and an invitation being extended to the Mattingly family for supper at the retreat. “As I recall, the head priest was from Spain, and he didn’t use a lot of sweets but my wife, Betty, took along a German chocolate cake. Several days later a Carmelite friend came out and said that my 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 1960s or early 1970s. In more recent years, the facility was converted to a mountain lodge, Carmel Cove Inn.

## WISP SKI RESORT

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 “Ace” 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 1950s. 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



## WISP SKI RESORT



**Evelyn Heise  
1928 – 2016  
and Helmuth "Ace" Heise  
1927 – 2009**

**Top photo: A very young Wisp Ski Resort.  
Top inset: In the early years a small shack with a  
potbellied stove served as the "lodge."  
Left inset: Mr. Heise (center) giving pointers to  
a group of skiers ready for the slopes.**

*PHOTOS COURTESY MARTIN HEISE*



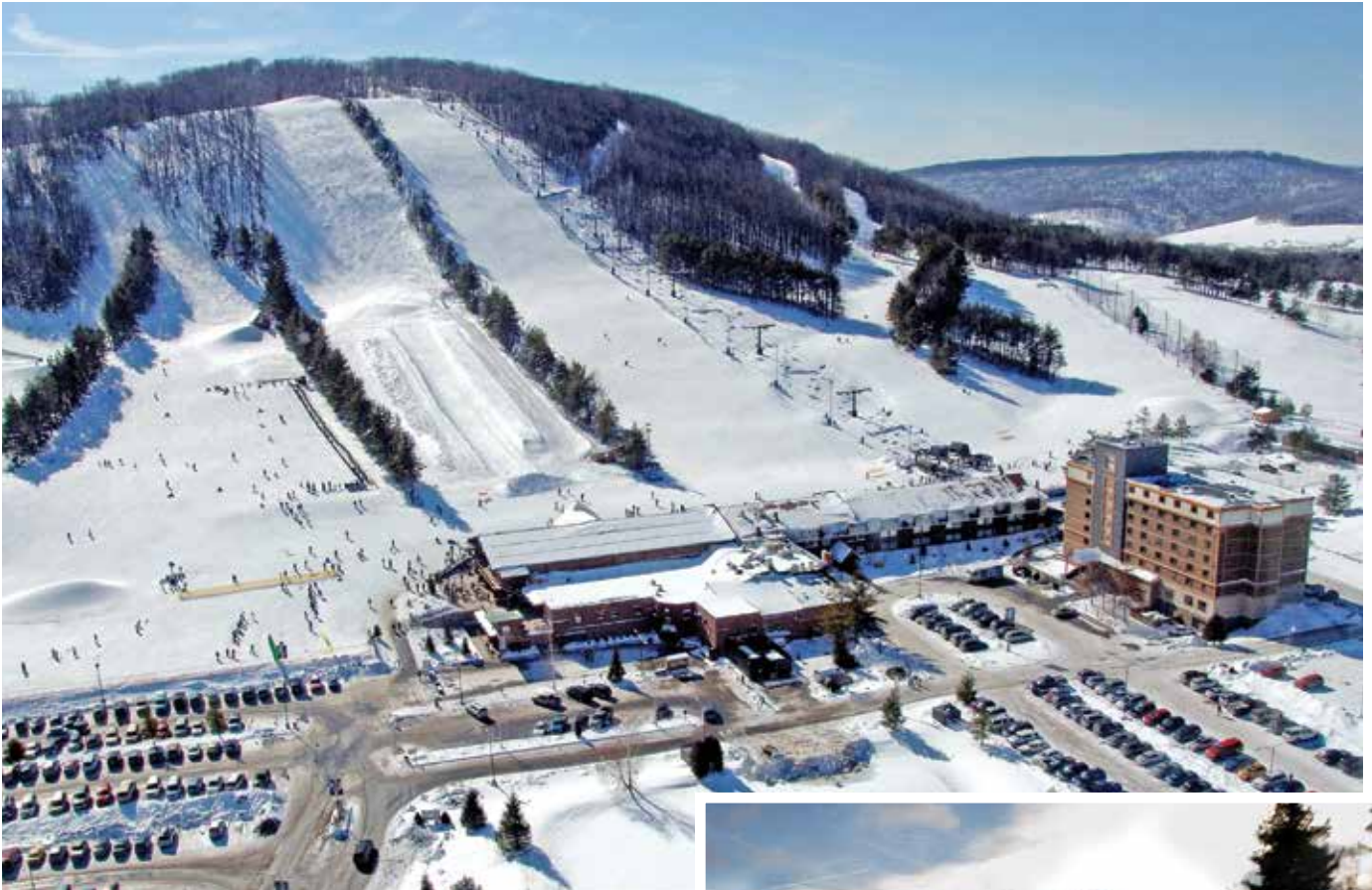


PHOTO BY LANCE BELL

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 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 the Heises’ ownership until 2001.



**Today, Wisp offers a variety of winter sports — skiing, snowboarding, tubing, mountain coaster and more. Summer sports and activities are also available for year round fun!**

PHOTOS COURTESY WISP RESORT





## WILL O' THE WISP RESORT

Ace 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 1930s, 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 had been improved in the 1940s, by adding exterior stonework, and it became their home during the first year of ownership. Mr. Heise stated, "We went from wood cabins to a 10 unit motel; then we started to develop the rest of it.

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 Ace and Evelyn, the Governor and Economic Director became friends with the family and would visit frequently. 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."



**Top to bottom:** The original batten board cabins from the 1930s (top left) at Will O' the Wisp Resort were originally only intended for summer use.

Helmuth "Ace" and Evelyn Heise constructed a 10-unit motel in 1953 at the site of the original cabins (top right).

In 1962, Four Seasons Restaurant, known for its fine food and lake views, was added to Will O' the Wisp Resort. *PHOTOS COURTESY MARTIN HEISE*

A dramatic change at Will O' the Wisp occurred in 1975 when the 10 original motel units were replaced by The Prestige Condominiums, a seven-floor complex featuring an indoor pool, game room, exercise facility, sandy beach and more. *PHOTO BY LANCE BELL*





The old empty boathouse on the Will O' the Wisp property (left), was recently razed, but both timber and stone were saved for reuse.

Brenda McDonnell, Martin Heise's wife, turned that space into a beautiful new building (below) to feature the property's expansive views of the lake. Firewater Kitchen and Bar was completed and open for business in 2021. Inside, patrons can sit at a long, four-sided bar, or at tables positioned in front of the windows. On the decks, outdoor tables and comfortably-cushioned chairs provide flexible seating arrangements. Flames flicker in a 32-foot-long, glass-enclosed fire pit outside and from a smaller one inside.



PHOTO BY MIKE CALHOUN

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 1962. 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.

The Four Seasons Dining Room is now known as Ace's Run Restaurant & Pub (to honor Helmuth "Ace" Heise) having been remodeled and expanded, but continuing the original beauty and ambiance of the property.

Will O' the Wisp continued expanding the location in 2021 by opening Firewater Kitchen and Bar with indoor and outdoor seating at lakeside. Additional docks have been added for the convenience of boaters visiting Ace's Run and Firewater.



Over the years, old Deep Creek gave way to a newer version, and summer cottages faded away as large, multi-use facilities replaced them. The first condominium near the lake was built in 1970, by four partners including Tom Thayer. It was not entirely certain that such an enterprise would be successful, so the unusual name, “Four Hoopole South,” was born. “We called it ‘Four’ because there were four partners, ‘Hoopole’ because that is what the area was called, and ‘South’ because that was where we were going if it failed,” reminisced Mr. Thayer. Needless to say, the first condominium proved to be successful, and others soon followed. Thayer believes that development of Interstate 68 provided the impetus for lake growth as vacationers from the Washington, D.C., suburbs found the lake to be a convenient four-season retreat.

Not all recollections on our trip down memory lane are of places; some are noteworthy events like the marathon swimming races that occurred in 1939 and 1940. According to Tom Thayer, contestant, the race was organized through the efforts of well-known swimming coach, Joe Sollars. It was reported that a crowd of 5,000 persons witnessed the four-mile event between Cabin Lodge and Stone Tavern, including hundreds of parked motorists along Route 219, who would move their vehicles to keep pace with the swimmers. “I was 13 years of age in 1939, and I entered the race against my mother’s wishes but at my father’s urging. I was second that year. A fellow named John Nelson, from New York, was first. The second year, 1940, I entered it again and won it, beating John Nelson.” Tom Thayer’s time was 2 hours and 12 minutes, and his prize was a wristwatch, donated by Shaffer Jewelry Company of Oakland.



In 1940, 14-year-old Tom “RT” Thayer (center) won the Deep Creek Lake marathon swimming race. The race was a 4-mile event between Cabin Lodge and Stone Tavern. His time was 2 hours and 12 minutes and his prize was a wristwatch.



Halsey’s Snack Bar was begun in 1941 by World War I veteran, Ogilvie Halsey. He was born in Manhattan, New York City and married Blanche Jane Green of Swanton, Maryland. They raised a daughter and five sons while running Halsey’s Snack Bar and Lakeside Park along U.S. 219 between McHenry and the Deep Creek Lake bridge. Customers could rent a boat, go fishing or have a snack at the popular snack bar.





Known to many as the “Pink Store,” The Trading Post was a Deep Creek Lake Landmark that delighted all ages with a variety of trinkets and souvenirs. It was a family business that began operating in the early 1950s.

Today, this area is home to Brenda’s Pizzeria, Trader’s Coffee House and High Mountain Sports.

*NEW PHOTO BY DAN WHETZEL*



Another unusual event during the 1940s was ice boat sailing. A small group of men built the boats as a hobby, as they enjoyed gliding across the lake at high speeds. Frank Beckman, the youngest member of the group, credits four older men with getting him started in the sport. They were: “Pip” Thayer, “Shorty” Long, “Buzz” Gosnell, and Lonnie Long. The boats were of wood construction and featured three runners, two in the front and one under the seat. Mr. Beckman recalls, “The sails were about 10 or 12 feet, and you would have to duck when the sail turned around. Winds would come down from the mountain and you would really fly across the ice.” Homemade ice boat sailing lasted about five years; later such boats were commercially produced and offered for sale at Deep Creek.

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. Reflections about the past help us capture a moment in time when Deep Creek Lake exhibited little commercial development and life was simpler. The keen observation that one can never go home is true because change is a constant that we all live with, but reminiscing about the past helps us better connect with the present and establish a sense of community that is important in building a better future.