

**BEGINNINGS OF LUTHERAN CAMPING IN THE CHAUTAUQUA LAKE AREA**  
**WITH THE STORY OF**  
**“A MIRACLE OVER THE ICE”**

WELCOME TO THESE MOMENTS TOGETHER!

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO IS DUST OFF SOME OLD MEMORIES, DO SOME SHARING, AND END UP WITH SOME CHERISHED REFLECTIONS.

WE WILL BE THINKING ABOUT EVENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE BETWEEN 1935 AND 1962. THAT'S A LONG TIME AGO! JUST THINK, THAT IS 60 TO 80 YEARS AGO. WHY DO WE PICK THOSE PARTICULAR YEARS? IT IS BECAUSE THOSE ARE THE YEARS OF AUGUSTANA CAMPING, WHICH WE SEE TODAY AS AUGUSTANA'S LEGACY TO OUR EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA.

I WAS INDEED HUMBLED TO BE ASKED TO SHARE THIS RICH EXPERIENCE. IT HAS BEEN AN EXCITING ENDEAVOR AND A REAL CHALLENGE TO RESEARCH THIS HISTORY AND FIT THE PIECES TOGETHER.

THERE WERE SOME THINGS THAT WERE NEW TO ME AND MANY GAPS THAT NEEDED TO BE FILLED. I HAVE ENJOYED EVERY BIT OF THE WORK AND OWE A HUGE DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THE MANY INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE ASSISTED ME IN LOCATING HISTORICAL DATA---ESPECIALLY PASTOR CURT OLSON AND HIS WIFE, MARIAN, AND MY WIFE, JAN, MY PERSONAL “LUTHERAN COMPANION” FOR OVER 61 YEARS, SO FAR, AND OTHERS WHO HAVE SHARED THEIR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH ME. THANK YOU SO MUCH.

**MY PRIMARY SOURCES HAVE BEEN:**

--THE HISTORY OF LAKE CHAUTAUQUA LUTHERAN CAMP 193? TO 1962 WRIT-  
TEN BY GEORGE MANOS, FORMER CAMP DIRECTOR.

--LCLC HISTORIC MILESTONES BY MARTHA GROEZINGER - OCT. 2006 AND RE-  
VISED IN JANUARY 2012

-RECORDS FROM THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE-- AUGUSTANA LUTHERAN  
CHURCH 1955-1962

“SAGA FROM THE HILLS” BY M. LORIMER MOE.

NUMEROUS PHOTOGRAPHS AND PERSONAL STORIES

LASTLY, MY OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCES FROM 1940 TO 1956

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN? WHAT BROUGHT THE CAMPING PROGRAM INTO BE-  
ING? WHAT WAS THE CATALYST? WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN AND WHO WERE  
SOME OF THE KEY PEOPLE?

THE STORY STARTS IN THE 1930”S IN JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK. PASTOR SAM-  
UEL MILLER, THE FORMER DEAN OF THE LUTHERAN BIBLE INSTITUTE IN  
MINNEAPOLIS, CAME AS PASTOR OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH FROM 1931  
TO 1935.

IN THE BOOK “SAGA FROM THE HILLS” BY M. LORIMER MOE

WE READ ON PAGE 42:

“DR. MILLER’S MINISTRY AT FIRST LUTHERAN (1931 - 1935) FOCUSED  
RENEWED EMPHASIS ON BIBLE STUDY. HIS OWN RELIGIOUS FERVOR  
LED TO A REVITALIZATION OF CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS, ESPECIALLY  
THE JR. AND SR. LUTHER LEAGUES. HUNDREDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE,

MANY FROM OTHER CHURCHES, ATTENDED HIS SUNDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY SESSIONS. DR. MILLER WAS A HANDSOME MAN, WHO BOTH SPOKE AND SANG BEAUTIFULLY; HIS TALENTS WERE IN GREAT DEMAND IN JAMESTOWN AND ELSEWHERE. HE COMPOSED SEVERAL HYMNS FOR WHICH HE WROTE BOTH TEXT AND MELODY. THE ACCOMPANIMENTS WERE ARRANGED BY HIS WIFE, HELEN FORSBERG MILLER, AN ACCOMPLISHED VIOLINIST. HIS WIDELY USED HYMN "JESUS ONLY" WAS TRANSLATED INTO SWEDISH BY REV. EINAR KRON, A RETIRED LUTHERAN PASTOR."

AS A RESULT OF THE REVITALIZATION THAT CAME WITH DR. MILLER'S SUNDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDIES, THE JAMESTOWN DISTRICT LUTHER LEAGUE SPONSORED THE FIRST KNOWN RETREAT AT ALLEGHENY STATE PARK IN 1935. THEY USED WHAT WAS CALLED "THE JAMESTOWN HEALTH CLUB." IN 1936, THE JAMESTOWN DISTRICT LUTHER LEAGUE SPONSORED TWO WEEKS OF CAMP. HAVING NO PROPERTY, THEY RENTED THE GIRL SCOUT CAMP NEWATAH. THEY CONTINUED IN 1937 WITH ANOTHER SESSION OF CAMP AT THE NEWATAH FACILITIES.

IN THE MEANTIME, DR. SAMUEL MILLER HAD MET WITH A SMALL GROUP OF MEN FROM VARIOUS LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS IN THE JAMESTOWN AREA, AND CHALLENGED THEM TO CONSIDER A CAMPING PROGRAM LIKE THE ONE OPERATED BY LBI, KNOWN AS MT. CARMEL NEAR ALEXANDRIA, MINNESOTA. THE GROUP OF SEVEN MEN RESPONDED TO THIS CHALLENGE. RHEU REIN WAS INTERVIEWED BY GEORGE MANOS AND RECALLED THAT THIS GROUP INCLUDED: HERBERT S. ANDERSON, DANIEL CARLSON, KENNETH JOHNSON,

ERNEST JOHNSON, CLIFFORD HOLT, JOHN SMEDBERG, AND HIMSELF.  
OTHERS WERE SOON ADDED, INCLUDING MY FATHER, J. ELOF JOHNSON.

OUT OF THIS CAME A DEDICATED GROUP OF LAYMEN FROM SEVERAL  
OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES OF THE JAMESTOWN AREA. THEY CHOSE  
THE NAME "EASTERN LUTHERAN BIBLE ASSOCIATION." THIS ELBA GROUP  
WAS OFFICIALLY FORMED NOVEMBER 28, 1937.

FOLLOWING THE FORMATION OF ELBA, THE JAMESTOWN DISTRICT LUTHER  
LEAGUE TURNED OVER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CAMPING PROGRAM  
TO THE EASTERN LUTHERAN BIBLE ASSOCIATION IN 1938. THIS GROUP  
FAITHFULLY CARRIED OUT THE CAMPING MINISTRY UNTIL THE MERGER IN  
1962, WHEN THE CAMP WAS GIVEN AS A GIFT TO THE LCA.

HERE ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS FROM 1935 TO 1941:

- 1935 PASTOR MILLER'S BIBLE STUDIES INITIATED REVITALIZATION  
FIRST KNOWN BIBLE STUDY RETREAT AT ALLEGHENY STATE  
PARK SPONSORED BY JAMESTOWN DIST. LUTHER LEAGUE.
- 1936 SUMMER BIBLE STUDY RETREAT AT CAMP NEWATAH  
SPONSORED BY JAMESTOWN DIST. LUTHER LEAGUE.
- 1937 SUMMER BIBLE STUDY RETREAT AT CAMP NEWATAH,  
SPONSORED BY JAMESTOWN DIST. LUTHER LEAGUE.  
E.L.B.A. ORGANIZED ON NOVEMBER 28, 1937.
- 1938 CAMP HELD AT NEWATAH SPONSORED BY ELBA.
- 1939 CAMP HELD AT FINDLEY LAKE AT THE UNITED BRETHREN  
RETREAT CENTER SPONSORED BY ELBA.
- 1940 & 1941 CAMP HELD AT NEWATAH, SPONSORED BY ELBA.  
A PROPERTY SEARCH COMMITTEE WAS FORMED.

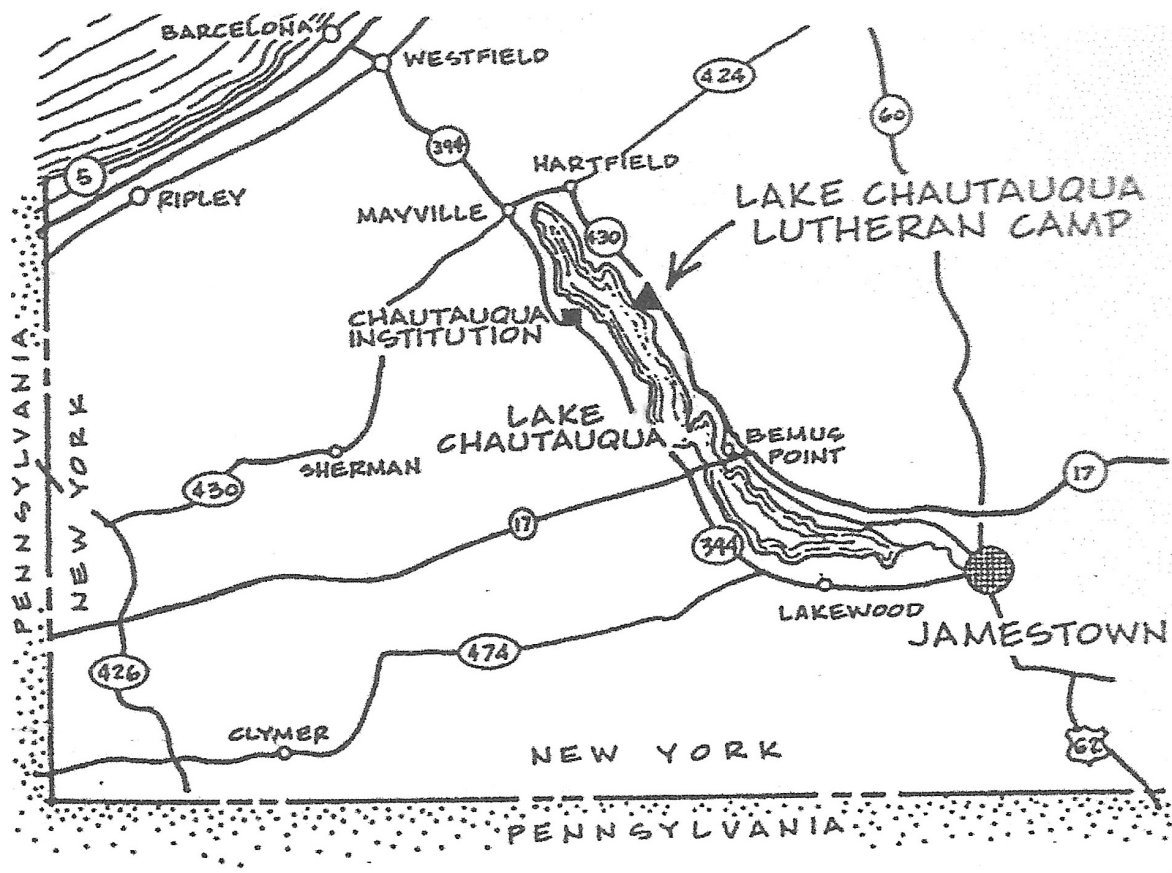
MY FATHER, ELOF. JOHNSON, SERVED ON THIS PROPERTY SEARCH COMMITTEE. HE TOOK ME ALONG ON SEVERAL OF THESE EXCURSIONS. ALTHOUGH I WAS ONLY 10 YEARS OLD AT THE TIME, I DO REMEMBER THE SUNDAY AFTERNOON WHEN MY FATHER, THURSTON PETERSON AND I VISITED A SITE IN THE MAGNOLIA AREA ON THE WEST SIDE OF LAKE CHAUTAUQUA, JUST NORTH OF THE GROUNDS OF THE CHAUTAUQUA INSTITUTION. IT HAD BEEN A PRIVATE GIRLS' CAMP NAMED TONKAWA, AND IT WAS NOW FOR SALE. I WASN'T IN ON ANY OF THE DETAILS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT I RECALL HOW DISAPPOINTED MY DAD WAS WHEN HE FOUND OUT THAT THE NEXT DOOR PROPERTY OWNERS, THE BELLINGERS, DID NOT WANT ANY TYPE OF RELIGIOUS GROUP NEXT TO THEM. IN SOME MANNER, MRS. BELLINGER PURCHASED THE PROPERTY OUT FROM UNDER THE ASSOCIATION; HOWEVER, SHE DID ADVISE THEM THAT THEY COULD REMOVE ALL OF THE BUILDINGS THAT WERE LOCATED ON THE PROPERTY, AND USE THEM AT SOME OTHER LOCATION.

THE FACILITIES INCLUDED A GOOD-SIZED BUILDING HOUSING A KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM; A MEDIUM-SIZED CABIN PROVIDING AN OFFICE AND SLEEPING QUARTERS FOR TWO; SEVEN SMALL CABINS FOR STAFF; AND A SMALL BUILDING FOR A CANTEEN. THERE WERE NUMEROUS SECTIONS OF DOCK AND THE STANDARDS TO SUPPORT THEM. ALSO INCLUDED WERE TWO OLD ROW BOATS AND SEVERAL CANOES, OF WHICH ONE WAS A LARGE 14-PASSENGER WAR CANOE. MANY, MANY SMALLER ITEMS SUCH AS KITCHEN UTENSILS AND SPORTS EQUIPMENT WERE INCLUDED.

MUCH OF THIS WAS WELL WORN, BUT MANY PIECES WERE STILL USEABLE.

IN THE MEANTIME, SEVERAL OTHER PROPERTIES HAD BEEN CONSIDERED. THE ONE CHOSEN WAS THE ORIGINAL FARM PROPERTY OF THE WELCH FAMILY, MADE FAMOUS BY THE WELCH GRAPE PRODUCTS OF WESTFIELD, NEW YORK. A PART OF THIS PROPERTY HAD BEEN PURCHASED BY THE HOAG FAMILY, BUT HAD NOW BEEN ABANDONED. IT WAS ADJACENT AND TO THE NORTH OF THE GIRL SCOUT CAMP NEWATAH PROPERTY. THIS PROPERTY WAS VERY ROUGH, FILLED WITH OLD BURROWS, HIGH GRASS, GOLDENROD AND OTHER THICK BRUSH. THERE WERE FEW TREES AND MANY, MANY WOODCHUCK HOLES. THE JAMESTOWN NORTHWESTERN RAILROAD OWNED THE RIGHT OF WAY ALONG THE ENTIRE EAST SHORE OF LAKE CHAUTAUQUA AND WENT THROUGH THIS PROPERTY. IT HAD BEEN A STEAM LOCOMOTIVE LINE UNTIL THE 1930'S AND THEN CHANGED TO A TROLLEY LINE. THE ASSOCIATION PURCHASED THIS PROPERTY WITH ITS 30.87 ACRES AND 695 FEET OF LAKE FRONTAGE FOR A SUM OF \$4,000. A CAMP GROUND OF OUR OWN WAS BECOMING A REALITY.

NOW, WHAT ABOUT ALL THOSE PIECES OF EQUIPMENT THAT WERE STILL ON THE OTHER SIDE OF LAKE CHAUTAUQUA-- SO CLOSE, AND YET SO FAR FROM THE NEW PROPERTY THAT HAD BEEN PURCHASED?



**(SEE MAP OF LAKE CHAUTAUQUA)**

LET'S DIGRESS FOR A MOMENT, AND THINK ABOUT LAKE CHAUTAUQUA. IT IS A FAIRLY LARGE BODY OF WATER, ABOUT 21 MILES LONG. THE NAME "CHAUTAUQUA" IS AN INDIAN NAME MEANING "A BAG TIED IN THE MIDDLE." - THAT'S THE SHAPE OF THE LAKE. DURING MY HIGH SCHOOL YEARS, I RECALL ONE NIGHT, WHEN WILLIE WALL, RICHIE HULT, RONNIE STRUMBECK AND MYSELF WALKED ACROSS THE ICE. THIS LAKE DOES NOT ALWAYS FREEZE HARD AND DEEP ENOUGH AS DO THE NORTHERN MINNESOTA LAKES, WHERE ICE FISHING HUTS ARE LEFT OUT FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. **BUT**, THIS WINTER, **APPARENTLY**, NO **OBVIOUSLY!** GOD WAS AT WORK. MANY OF THE FACILITIES OF ONE CAMP WERE SLID ACROSS THE LAKE, OVER THE ICE, TO

THE OTHER SIDE. IN THAT MIRACLE, SO MANY PIECES OF THIS PUZZLE WERE FITTING TOGETHER TO BRING FULFILLMENT OF SO MANY DREAMS. IN THIS CASE, GOD DIDN'T CHOOSE TO SEPARATE THE WATERS AS HE DID WITH MOSES, BUT HE DID HARDEN THE WATERS INTO ICE, AND GAVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO OUR PART.

THE STORY OF THE MIRACULOUS CROSSING OVER THE ICE HAS BEEN QUESTIONED BY A FEW,. AN 85-YEAR-OLD MEMBER OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH STATED THAT A CONTRACTOR FROM FIRST LUTHERAN SAWED THE MAIN BUILDING INTO 4 PARTS. HE PLACED THEM ON A FLAT BED TRAILER TRUCK AND MOVED THEM TO THE NEW SITE, WHERE THEY WERE REASSEMBLED AND PLACED ON CINDERBLOCK PIERS. THIS COULD VERY WELL HAVE BEEN THE WAY THE LARGE DINING HALL WAS TRANSPORTED. SINCE THERE WERE NO ROADS FROM THE UPPER GROUNDS OF THE PROPERTY TO THE SHORE AREA, AND THERE WAS THE NATURAL BARRIER OF THE RAILROAD TRACKS, THE LIKELY ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE DINING HALL BUILDING MAY VERY WELL HAVE BEEN MOVED BY TRUCK, BUT ALL THE REST OF THE MANY ITEMS WERE SLID OVER THE ICE AND STACKED ON THE SHORELINE. I WAS THERE WHEN WE BEGAN TO ASSEMBLE THE ITEMS THAT HAD BEEN PILED ON THE SHORE.

WE WERE BLESSED IN THOSE EARLY YEARS WITH A WONDERFUL GROUP OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO GAVE AND GAVE AND GAVE OF THEMSELVES. WHILE OUR NEW CAMP ELBA WAS UNDER DEVELOPMENT, SO MANY PEOPLE SHARED THEIR TALENTS AND SKILLS. I HAD THE JOY OF SHARING IN THIS



ACTIVITY. THERE WERE CHURCH GROUPS FROM BUFFALO, TITUSVILLE, LUDLOW, MT. JEWETT, WARREN, BRADFORD AND EVEN ASHTABULA, OHIO. I RECALL WORKING WITH CLIFF HOLT (WHO WAS THE PRESIDENT OF THE ELBA BOARD). I REMEMBER CARL HOLT, HERB ANDERSON, RHEU REIN, HUB MALM, AND THURSTON PETERSON. THERE WAS A COOK WHO HUMBLY CALLED HERSELF "STINKY CARLSON." HER HUSBAND WAS A SKILLED CARPENTER. THERE WAS HOOPLE JOHNSON, A JACK OF ALL TRADES, I RECALL ROY WAGNER, ONE OF OUR EARLY DIRECTORS, WHO HAD RETIRED FROM THE YMCA CAMP ONYASA. THERE WAS ELEANOR PETERSON, HEAD COOK; AND MY MOTHER, ALICE JOHNSON, AND BETTY PETERSON, ASSISTING COOKS. OTHER PERSONS I REMEMBER INCLUDE HAROLD AND ARLENE GUSTAFSON, GLADYS LAWSON, CHARLES AND ESTHER GUSTAFSON, VIC AND LOIS JOHNSON, RUS VICKSTROM, MISSIONARY GRETA ENGBERG AND MANY PASTORS OF THE AREA INCLUDING CLARENCE ANDERSON, ERNEST ANDERSON AND WILSON FAGERBERG .

NOW LETS GO BACK TO 1941, THAT WAS THE YEAR IN WHICH THE PROPERTY WAS PURCHASED. WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE END OF 1941? ON DECEMBER 7, THERE WAS PEARL HARBOR AND THE 2nd WORLD WAR. SO MANY YOUNG MEN WERE IMMEDIATELY DRAFTED; THERE WAS RATIONING OF GAS, TIRES AND FOOD ITEMS. MANY PRODUCTS WERE HARD TO GET. MY BROTHER IN LAW WANTED TO BUY A SET OF BARBELLS, BUT PRODUCTS OF STEEL WERE NOT AVAILABLE. NO AUTOMOBILES WERE MANUFACTURED UNTIL AFTER THE WAR. ALL EFFORTS WERE FOCUSED ON THE WAR. WITH THE LACK OF MANPOWER AND MATERIALS, NO BIG PROJECTS WERE

UNDERTAKEN AT THE CAMP, BUT CHURCH GROUPS DID WHAT THEY COULD.

IN SPITE OF THE RESTRAINTS OF WAR, CAMPING CONTINUED EACH SUMMER BY RENTING CAMP NEWATAH. THEN IN 1946, THE NEW CAMPGROUND WAS USED FOR THE FIRST TIME. ALTHOUGH THE GROUNDS WERE IN ROUGH CONDITION, THE PHOTOGRAPHS WE HAVE OF THESE YEARS VERIFY THAT CAMPING TOOK PLACE. MY SISTER, ELSIE, TELLS ABOUT THAT FIRST ADVENTUROUS SUMMER, WHEN SOME OF THE GIRLS SLEPT UNDER THE STARS.

GEORGE MANOS WRITES IN HIS HISTORY OF THE CHAUTAUQUA LAKE LUTHERAN CAMP: "A GROUP OF LAYMEN ARRIVED AT THE SITE TO IMPROVE THE GROUNDS. THERE WERE STILL MANY BURROWS, HIGH GRASS, GOLDEN-ROD, MANY BRAMBLES, AND HUNDREDS OF WOODCHUCK HOLES. THEY HIRED A LOCAL FARMER TO DIG A WIDE DITCH AROUND THE ONLY STANDING BUILDING (THE OLD DINING ROOM). THEY BEGAN A PRACTICE KNOWN AS 'BURNING OFF.'" AS THIS WAS A MILD, BRIGHT SPRING DAY, THEY FELT THEY WERE SAFE IN STARTING FIRE TO THE UNDERGROWTH. AS IT HAPPENS MANY TIMES, ON LAKE CHAUTAUQUA, A VERY MILD DAY CAN SUDDENLY PRODUCE MANY, MANY WIDE GUSTS OF WIND. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED AND THE FIRE GOT OUT OF CONTROL, THREATENING THE OLD DINING ROOM AND EVEN APPROACHING THE ADJACENT GIRL SCOUT CAMP. IT WAS A HECTIC HOUR OR SO, BUT WITH THE HELP OF THE MAPLE SPRINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT, THE BLAZE WAS BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. THE GOOD NEWS BEING - THE UNDERGROWTH WAS GONE.!"

GROUPS CONTINUED TO COME AND THE WORK WENT ON.

WE CLEARED WHAT WAS CALLED "THE JUNGLE AREA", WHICH WAS ACROSS THE RAVINE, AND THEN CONSTRUCTED A BRIDGE TO MAKE ACCESS EASIER. THE JUNGLE AREA, CONSISTED OF 7 OR 8 TENTS FOR ALL THE BOYS.

RICHIE HULT AND I WORKED IN CLEARING THE BEACH OF ITS DENSE BRUSH.

THE WEEDS WERE TALL AND THICK. RICHIE AND I WERE POISONED BY ONE OF THESE PLANTS AND OUR ARMS WERE COVERED WITH BOILS. WE WERE PUT IN THE HOSPITAL FOR THREE DAYS. THOSE ROUND THE CLOCK SHOTS WERE UNFORGETTABLE, BUT WE RECOVERED. WE LEARNED LATER THAT IT WAS A STAPHYLOCOCCUS - AUREUS INFECTION. WE ASSEMBLED THE WOODEN DOCK SECTIONS WHICH HAD BEEN LEFT STACKED ON THE BEACH. THE IRON FRAMES HAD TO BE ADJUSTED TO MATCH THE DIFFERING DEPTHS OF THE LAKE. SHORTLY AFTER, HOOPLE JOHNSON USED HIS WELDING SKILLS TO MAKE A NEW DOCK. HE ALSO WELDED THE LARGE FRAME TOWER FOR THE BIG BELL THAT CALLED THE CAMPERS TO THE DAY'S EVENTS.

CINDER BLOCK RESTROOMS AND BATH HOUSES WERE BUILT. DURING THUNDER AND LIGHTNING, THE CAMPERS TOOK REFUGE WITHIN THEIR WALLS. TWO LARGE CABINS WERE BUILT BY MASTER CARPENTERS WHO HAD EMIGRATED TO JAMESTOWN FROM SWEDEN. STEPS WERE BUILT, LEADING DOWN TO THE BEACH, AS WELL AS BOAT RAMPS, THE LIFE GUARD'S TOWER, AND THE FLOAT WITH A DIVING BOARD. I RECALL GOING WITH HUB MALM TO SELECT A DIVING BOARD. SINCE WE HAD LITTLE EXPERIENCE WITH WOOD, THIS ONE BROKE IN TWO WHILE IN USE. LUCKILY, NO DIVERS WERE INJURED.

ROADS AND PATHWAYS WERE CLEARED AND LEVELED. A GROVE OF 40 MAPLE TREES WERE PLANTED IN ONE DAY, UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF HUB MALM. A LARGE-SIZED PAVILION WAS CONSTRUCTED. WATER LINES WERE DUG, AND WE STRUNG ELECTRICAL LINES BETWEEN THE CABINS AND OTHER AREAS WHERE LIGHTS WERE NEEDED. THE EXCITING WORK CONTINUED.

WITH SO MANY PROJECTS UNDERWAY ON THE NEW PROPERTY, WE STILL MET FOR SUMMER CAMP AT NEWATAH. IT WAS IN 1944, ONE OF MY EARLY CAMPING EXPERIENCES, THAT I RECALL THE NIGHT, WELL AFTER HOURS, THAT SOME OF US BOYS DECIDED TO SNEAK OUT OF OUR TENTS TO SEE IF THERE WAS ANYTHING ELSE GOING ON. WE LEFT THE BOYS' AREA AND HEADED FOR THE GIRLS' TENTS. ALL OF A SUDDEN, HEADLIGHTS OF A CAR WERE COMING TOWARD US. WE FROZE AND DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. THE DRIVER TURNED OUT TO BE PASTOR EINAR OBERG FROM BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN IN FALCONER, WHO WAS RETURNING FROM A LATE MEETING IN TOWN. WE VERY QUICKLY RETURNED TO OUR TENTS, PROBABLY AFTER TRYING TO CONVINCING PASTOR OBERG THAT "WE WERE JUST OUT FOR A WALK."

AMONG THE MANY WORKERS WAS DICK SMEDLEY FROM TITUSVILLE PA. (FOR SEVERAL YEARS, HE WAS MY CHIEF ASSISTANT AND CO-WORKER WHO DID ENDLESS HOURS OF MOWING). OTHER HELPERS WERE DANNY THORNE, DAN CARLSON , DAVID REIN, DANNY SWANSON, DAVID SWANSON, JIM PETERSON, DON SWANSON, CHUCK CARLSON AND MANY OTHERS.

CHUCK NOW LIVES IN HENDERSONVILLE, NC AND WE HAVE REMINISCED TOGETHER ABOUT THOSE YEARS. HE TOLD ME THAT HE HAD BEEN A CAMPER AND A COUNSELOR. IN THE SUMMER OF 1955 OR '56. HE STAYED AFTER THE CAMPING SEASON TO HELP CLOSE UP THE CAMP. HE REMINDED ME THAT HIS PAY WAS \$5.00 FOR THE WEEK.

IT WAS A LOT OF WORK, BUT WE ALSO TOOK TIME TO EAT AT DAVIE'S FISH FRY

RESTAURANT ACROSS THE HIGHWAY AT THE ENTRANCE TO OUR CAMP.  
IN THOSE DAYS, WE COULD GET A GENEROUS FISH DINNER FOR 50 CENTS.

AS THE CAMP DEVELOPED, WE REALIZED THAT THE REAL MIRACLE THAT TOOK PLACE WAS NOT THE PREPARATION OF THE PROPERTY, BUT THE INSPIRING PROGRAMS AND THE LIVES THAT WERE TOUCHED. CRAFTS, SPORTS, AND BIBLE STUDY WERE HIGHLIGHTS OF EACH DAY. THE EVENING SERVICES WERE LIKE AN EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH AND THE PARKING LOT WAS FULL OF FOLKS FROM OUR LUTHERAN CHURCHES IN THE ENTIRE AREA.

ONE EVENING, I HAD NOTICED A PASTOR FROM PENNSYLVANIA IN ATTENDANCE. I ASKED HIM TO CONCLUDE OUR SERVICE WITH A CLOSING PRAYER AND BENEDICTION. BEFORE WE SANG THE CLOSING HYMN, I ANNOUNCED TO THE CONGREGATION THAT HE WOULD LEAD US IN PRAYER. AS WE SANG THE CLOSING HYMN, A CAMPER WHOSE NAME WAS THE SAME AS THE PASTOR'S WAS DESPERATELY AND FRANTICALLY TRYING TO GET MY ATTENTION, AND KEPT WHISPERING RATHER LOUDLY "HEY, I CAN'T PRAY; I CAN'T PRAY!" WHAT A RELIEF IT MUST HAVE BEEN TO THE CAMPER AS THE RIGHT PERSON CAME FORWARD AND LED US IN THE BENEDICTION.

NOW I WOULD LIKE TO TELL YOU ABOUT MY PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE CAMP. I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK, OF SWEDISH DESCENT. MY FATHER EMIGRATED FROM SWEDEN IN 1925 AND MY MOTHER'S FAMILY HAD PRECEDED HIM.

THE HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH OF THE JAMESTOWN LUTHERAN CHURCHES HAD A VERY ACTIVE ORGANIZATION KNOWN AS 'YOUTH FOR CHRIST.' THEY HAD A SATURDAY EVENING CHOIR AND PRAYER GROUP, AND EVEN SPONSORED THEIR OWN WEEKLY RADIO PROGRAM. MY FOUR SISTERS AND I WERE VERY ACTIVE IN THIS GROUP. FOLLOWING MY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION, I ATTENDED THE LUTHERAN BIBLE INSTITUTE IN MINNEAPOLIS. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY LUTHER COLLEGE IN WAHOO, NEBRASKA AND GUSTAVUS ADOPHUS COLLEGE IN MINNESOTA. THEN CAME MY FOUR SEMINARY YEARS AT AUGUSTANA IN ROCK ISLAND. FOLLOWING MY INTERNSHIP IN 1956-7 IN POINT COMFORT, TEXAS, AND MY FINAL YEAR AT SEMINARY, I WAS ORDAINED IN 1958 WITH 70 CLASSMATES AT THE FESTIVE SERVICE AT THE CHAUTAUQUA AMPITHEATER. MY FIRST CALL WAS AS A PASTOR-DEVELOPER IN DALLAS, TEXAS. AFTER 21 1/2 YEARS, I WAS CALLED TO DEVELOP ANOTHER CONGREGATION LOCATED IN GARLAND, TEXAS.

MY FIRST EXPERIENCE AS A CAMPER WAS WHEN I WAS 11 YEARS OLD. AFTER A FEW SUMMERS, I BECAME A CAMP COUNSELOR. WHILE STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL I COMPLETED MY CERTIFICATION, AND SERVED AS A LIFE GUARD FOR THREE YEARS. IN 1953, I BECAME ASSISTANT CAMP DIRECTOR AND IN 1954, 1955, AND 1956, I WAS DIRECTOR OF CAMP ELBA. THERE WAS A DOVE-TAILING BETWEEN MY NINE YEARS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND MY SERVICE AT THE CAMP.

MANY SIGNIFICANT EVENTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE SINCE 1956. IN NOVEMBER OF THAT YEAR, THE ELBA TRANSFERRED THE OWNERSHIP OF THE LAKE

CHATAUQUA LUTHERAN CAMP TO THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE. IT WAS GRATEFULLY RECEIVED BY THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE WITH THE EXPRESSED INTENTION OF FURTHER DEVELOPING THE CAMP AND ITS PROGRAM. A SECOND ADDITION OF NEW PROPERTY CAME IN 1957, WHEN THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE CONVENTION APPROVED THE \$50,000 PURCHASE OF AN ADJACENT PIECE OF PROPERTY TO THE NORTH OF THE EXISTING CAMP. IT CONTAINED 31.4 ACRES AND 595 FEET OF LAKE FRONTAGE. THIS MORE THAN DOUBLED THE SIZE OF THE CAMP GROUNDS, AND MADE NEW MINISTRIES POSSIBLE, SUCH AS THE RETREAT CENTER, WHICH WAS EQUIPPED FOR YEAR-ROUND USE AND PROVIDED SPACE FOR FAMILIES WITH THEIR OWN TRAILERS AND TENTS.

THE TRANSITION CONTINUED IN 1958. A STEERING COMMITTEE WAS APPOINTED WITH REV. AXEL BECKMAN AS CAMP DIRECTOR, AND REV. PAUL CORNELL AS CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE TO SUPERVISE THE ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCES OF THE CAMP. IN 1958, A TEN WEEK CAMP SESSION WAS HELD INCLUDING A CONFERENCE MISSIONARY CONVOCATION AND A SPECIAL CAMP SESSION FOR THE GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS CHILDREN'S HOME OF JAMESTOWN.

A FORMULA WAS ESTABLISHED FOR ELECTING THE BOARD MEMBERS. THE FORMULA WAS-- "ONE PASTOR AND TWO LAY PERSONS FROM EACH OF THE JAMESTOWN, CLEVELAND, AND WILCOX DISTRICTS, AND ONE PASTOR AND ONE LAYMAN FROM THE PITTSFORD, WARREN, AND WILLIAMSPORT DISTRICTS."

AN ARCHITECT WAS ENGAGED TO INSPECT THE FACILITIES AND TO PREPARE A MASTER PLAN FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT. MR. HENRY GUSTAFSON OF LEWIS RUN, PENNSYLVANIA WAS HIRED AS RESIDENT CARETAKER. THE 1959 SESSIONS WERE DIRECTED BY REV. PAUL BECK.

THE CAMP HAD GOOD GROWTH AND THE WESTERN CONFERENCE OF THE ULCA BEGAN SOME PARTICIPATION. PASTOR BECK AGAIN DIRECTED THE CAMPING PROGRAM IN 1960.

REV. HOWARD GUHL WAS APPOINTED PROGRAM COORDINATOR. THROUGH A MONETARY AND MANPOWER GIFT, THE MEN OF THE WESTERN CONFERENCE BUILT TWO DORMITORY-LIKE CABINS-- EACH HOUSING 20 - 24 CAMPERS, INCLUDING TWO COUNSELORS. AT THE CLOSE OF THE 1960 SEASON, REV. PAUL CORNELL, CHAIR OF THE CAMP COMMITTEE, LEFT TO ACCEPT THE POSITION OF CAMPING AND OUTDOOR MINISTRIES IN THE SOON TO BE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA. MUCH OF THE DEVELOPMENT DURING THE AUGUSTANA YEARS AT LAKE CHAUTAUQUA LUTHERAN CAMP CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO PASTOR CORNELL'S LEADERSHIP.

IN 1961, SESSIONS WERE DIRECTED BY REV. JACK SERSIG. ASSISTING WERE PASTORS FROM BOTH THE NY CONFERENCE AND THE WESTERN CONFERENCE OF THE ULCA.

THROUGH MONETARY AND MANPOWER GIFTS FROM THE WESTERN CONFER-



ENCE OF THE ULCA AND THE CLEVELAND DISTRICT OF THE NY CONFERENCE, THREE ADDITIONAL DORMITORY-LIKE BUILDINGS WERE COMPLETED. THIS PROVIDED HOUSING FOR 100-120 CAMPERS, PLUS A STAFF OF 10 UNDER ROOFS INSTEAD OF TENTS.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT WAS IN A HOLDING PATTERN, IN ANTICIPATION OF THE COMING MERGER, WHICH FORMED THE LCA IN 1962. MR. LAWRENCE PASER OF DUNKIRK, NY SERVED AS THE DIRECTOR, ASSISTED BY PASTORS FROM THE NY AND WESTERN CONFERENCES OF THE ULCA.

AT THE END OF 1962, THE CAMPING PROGRAM UNDER AUGUSTANA ENDED. MR. GEORGE J. MANOS, ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR CAMPING AND YOUTH WORK OF THE NY AND NEW ENGLAND SYNODS OF THE ULCA, WAS HIRED AS THE FIRST FULL-TIME CAMP DIRECTOR OF THE LAKE CHAUTAUQUA LUTHERAN CAMP.

AT THE END OF THE AUGUSTANA YEARS, THE CAMP CONSISTED OF ALMOST 62 ACRES AND ALMOST 1300 FEET OF LAKE FRONTAGE. COUNTLESS LIVES OF OUR YOUTH AND FAMILIES HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED IN THEIR FAITH THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF THE CHAUTAUQUA LAKE LUTHERAN CAMP.

LET US SUMMARIZE THE HIGHLIGHTS FROM 1942 TO 1963:

1942            PROPERTY FOR CAMP ELBA (FORMER HOAG FARM) PURCHASED FOR \$4,000 (30.87 ACRES, 695' LAKEFRONT)  
  
                  (PEARL HARBOR AND WORLD WAR II)

- 1942-5      CAMPING CONTINUED, RENTING CAMP NEWATAH.
  - 1946      FIRST CAMPING SESSION AT CAMP ELBA  
              IMPROVEMENTS OF GROUNDS, BUILDINGS & PROGRAM
  - 1957      ELBA AUTHORIZED OWNERSHIP TRANSFER 12-6-57
  - 1958      N.Y. CONFERENCE OF AUGUSTANA ACCEPTED GIFT WITH  
              GRATITUDE
  - 1959      ADJACENT TUNISON PROPERTY (31.4 ACRES, 595' LAKE  
              FRONT) ACQUIRED TO NORTH SIDE OF CAMP ELBA
  - 1963      WITH MERGER FORMING LCA, CAMP ELBA BECAME KNOWN  
              AS "LAKE CHAUTAUQUA LUTHERAN CAMP."
- MANY IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUED THROUGH THE FOLLOW  
 ING YEARS. CAMP NEWATAH (41.9 ACRES) WAS PURCHASED  
 ESTABLISHING THE SOUTHERN BORDER OF THE PROPERTY.

HAVING REVIEWED THE HISTORY OF AUGUSTANA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE  
 EARLY YEARS OF CAMPING IN THE CHAUTAUQUA AREA, LET US SHARE A FEW  
 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

- The initial inspiration for our camping program came from the centrality  
    of Bible study in the Augustana Lutheran Church.
- The early years of the camping program always featured speakers, teachers,  
    and missionaries on furlough who kept Bible study central.
- The Lutheran churches of the Chautauqua Region shared the Augustana  
    Swedish heritage. This resulted in a strong cohesiveness among its people.

**WHERE DID YOU GO TO CAMP?**

**HOW HAS CAMPING INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE?**

SUBMITTED BY:  
 REV. G. DUANE JOHNSON  
 JUNE 2016

