

# Reflections on the Roots and History Of Camps, \*Conferences, and Youth Work

## In the Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ

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\*denotes gatherings of any size for two days to a week on Christian subjects and church concerns.

## Preface

Our goal as a Wisconsin Conference History Committee is to preserve the history of all the major outreach of Conference life. At the core of this life has been the Christian education which has taken place through our outdoor camping program.

This significant program has deepened the faith of countless Christians young and old; it has encouraged many to enter the ordained ministry of the church; it has fostered families to vacation together while they experience faith and fellowship nurture in an outdoor setting.

It is prudent to capture insights about this virulent and dynamic arm of the Conference before all the key players in its growth and development disappear from the saints on earth and join the choir in heaven. Therefore, since January, 2003, we have interviewed many of those whose leadership implemented this ministry at our camp sites.

In the chapter that follows, Ramon Hernandez gives an in-depth overview of the roots and early history of the camps, conferences, and youth work. Jack Remaly, Obid Hofland, Jim Martin, Jann Weaver, Robert Mutton, and Aurelia Hale continue to fill in the details of the camping ministry as it developed through 1987, when camping responsibilities were re-defined for the managers in consultation with United Church Camps, Inc. Board.

Manager interviews begin with Pilgrim Camp Managers, since Pilgrim is the oldest camp site of the United Church of Christ and its antecedents. They are provided by: Les and Audrey Pettack, Joan Findlay, Richard and Kathy Hutchison, Bruce and Darlene Antle, and Jeff Puhlmann-Becker who also served as an interim at Moon Beach Camp before becoming manager at Pilgrim.

The Moon Beach Managers follow with their insights. Interviews are by: John Gerber, Vern and Carol Bernardo, Jan Witthuhn (for her deceased parents, Ray and Mary Witthuhn), Betty Nimmer-Jones, Judy Holcomb, Palmer Van Beest, and Glenn Svetnicka. (Manager, Karl Swanson, who served for 14 months between the tenures of Palmer Van Beest and Glenn Svetnicka, could not be reached.)

The last piece is a questionnaire reflecting upon Moon Beach Camp, since it is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Moon Beach in 2007. It is a response by the editor to the committee planning the Moon Beach anniversary celebration. Some personal remembrances of Pilgrim Camp prior to the 1957 merger of the denominations that comprise the United Church of Christ are included following the Moon Beach memories.

The camping ministry at both camp sites is ever evolving. This history will never be complete. Hopefully, there will be more interviews of the leadership of this ministry as it develops in the future. It has been a privilege to be involved in sharing and preserving these insights.

The Rev. Harvey L. Kandler  
Interviewer & Editor  
November, 2006

## **WISCONSIN CONFERENCE UCC YOUTH MINISTRY: ITS ROOTS and EARLY HISTORY**

**By Ramon R. Hernandez  
June 1, 2004**

### **Introduction**

At the request of the Historical Committee of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ, the following recollections are of my years as a pastor of St. Stephen UCC, Merrill (an “E” church from the former Evangelical & Reformed tradition), 1960-64, and as Minister to Youth and Coordinator of Camps, Conferences and Retreats for the Wisconsin Conference UCC, 1964-70. They go back to the roots and early history of youth ministry in the Wisconsin Conference.

The United Church of Christ is the result of a union, nationally, of former Congregational and Christian churches and the Evangelical and Reformed church in the summer of 1957. In Wisconsin, the antecedent bodies united at a joint meeting in Madison in October 1962 of the Wisconsin Congregational Churches Conference, the South Wisconsin Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed (E&R) Church, and the North Wisconsin synod of the E&R Church. The effective date of the new Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ was January 1, 1963.

### **Historical Background**

Youth ministry in the new Conference did not emerge out of a vacuum. There was a long history in all the uniting traditions. *Jugend Vereins* (Young Peoples Societies) in the old E tradition existed back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and probably also in the old R tradition.

As the E tradition adopted English in its life and work in the era following World War I, there emerged Junior (usually grades 7-9) and Senior High (usually grades 10-12) leagues. The term “league,” common in old E language, evolved into Fellowship, as in Junior High and Senior High youth fellowships in the era following World War II. In my own E experience in Chicago, the terms Junior League and Senior League existed as late as my high school graduation in January 1954.

I am not familiar with youth work in the former R tradition.

In Congregational churches, “youth work” found expression in the “Pilgrim Fellowship.” For extensive information on youth work in Congregational churches in Wisconsin, the recollections of the Rev. John Remaly, now living in retirement in Florida, would be invaluable. Jack was the first to be both the Wisconsin Conference UCC Minister for Youth and Coordinator of Camps and Conferences (January 1963 – June 1964), and the same in the former Congregational Conference, 1956 – December 1962. And, he was also a “preacher’s kid” growing up in the Wisconsin parsonage of his Congregational father, the late Rev. Earl Remaly.

Finally, by way of background, “youth work” in the former traditions had several components at the local level: youth fellowship, Sunday school, Confirmation, choral music groups, athletic activities and summer camps and conferences.

At the judicatory and denominational level these were expanded to include E&R synodical youth bodies, and programs such as “Caravanning” (older senior high school and college age); the International Youth Exchange (older senior high school), and Volunteer Service (college age and older).

My very first experience in youth work in Wisconsin was on Labor Day weekend 1960 at the annual gathering of the North Wisconsin (E&R) Youth Synod at Moon Beach Camp in St. Germain.

### **UCC Youth Ministry: Its Early Years**

Although the new Wisconsin Conference UCC formally and legally began on January 1, 1963, youth work in the new Conference had been evolving since the national merger five years earlier. The first manifestation was the disappearing of the general term “youth work” and the appearance of the term “youth ministry.”

National Christian education leaders from both sides of the union worked together in “fleshing-out” just what is the educational ministry of the church generally, and to children and youth specifically. The result was what was popularly called “the new curriculum.”

Prior to the new United Church of Christ curriculum, churches from both traditions used the *Church and Home* Sunday school curriculum. Theologically sound, fairly understandable for the children, and almost universally used (especially on the E&R side), *Church and Home* lacked educational vitality. With no color and virtually no illustrations in the middle to upper grades, it was, frankly, boring. As both a Sunday school student and teacher, I found it lacked luster in attracting the student even at a minimal level.

My guess is, if one asked any teenager in our churches between World War II and the new UCC curriculum of the early 1960s, including those of us who went into the pastorate, s/he would not have one memory of the old *C&H* curriculum. But ask me about my pastor, my friends in Confirmation and senior League, Sunday school teachers, and summer camp, and you will get testimonials ad nauseam. And therein rested the core of Youth Ministry in the new UCC – the **total** ministry of the church with its children and youth.

### **The New United Church Curriculum**

By 1962, the Nursery portion of the new curriculum (1959-60) and the Kindergarten portion (1960-61) had been published. The remainder, Primary (grades 1 & 2), Lower Junior (grades 3 & 4), Junior (grades 5 & 6), Junior High (grades 7 & 8), Middle High (grades 9 & 10), Senior High (grades 11 & 12), and Adult (out of high school) were published by 1962.

The new curriculum was attractive, theologically sound, biblically rooted in my opinion (although many said it wasn't because there was no systematic or chronological approach), colorfully illustrated, and appealing. I think it was the first of its kind in any mainline denomination.

There was not only a pupil's book and a teacher's guide at each level, but theological and biblical manuals as well. To use an overworked word, but aptly descriptive for me, it was exciting.

I was blessed by being at the right place, at the right time, with the right congregation, and with the right leaders and teachers. St. Stephen church in Merrill, in the early 1960s, had 450 enrollments, nursery through junior high, in its Sunday school. One of those rare things was virtually handed to me on a platter – time for a change. For example, Nursery and Kindergarten departments had 75 pupils each.

Staff was stretched and stressed. “Help!” was the cry of the times. Most of all, the folks in this almost 2,000-member church were good, solid and caring folk. (I married the Kindergarten superintendent.)

In my first year, 1960-61, we started with the Nursery and Kindergarten curriculum. In September 1961, I returned to Eden Seminary for the final eight months, knowing that I would return to continue on in the summer of '62. I proposed the following: two Sunday schools at the same time as worship, 9 & 10:30. With the new lower junior department and two separate sessions, we cut department size in half.

We'd have only adult teachers (out of high school), with teens assisting as aids. We recruited more male teachers. There was a “contract” of teaching--two years on and one year off--and eleven Sundays of teacher training by me prior to teaching.

Everyone involved in the decision-making process (superintendents, teachers, and church leadership) “signed-on.” It was challenging, but fun nonetheless. When Cal Fischer (Senior Pastor) and I look back, we agree these were among very happy and rewarding years.

I saw specific folk in the church as excellent role models. I got almost all of them to sign-on, plus the incumbents. What joys to see these folk do such wonderful things and really get into it.

### **The New Wisconsin Conference UCC Early Years**

By 1963's end, not only were the new UCC conference structures in place in Wisconsin, but so was that of the new four Associations. On December, 31, 1962, Jess Norenberg (whom, oddly, I never met, but whose widow was a good friend of my mother's for many years at the UCC Fairhaven Retirement Center in Whitewater), the former Congregational Superintendent, retired.

The new UCC Conference President (as the office of Conference Minister was titled then) was hired from the outside. This was Clarence McCall, the son of congregational missionaries in Japan, a graduate of the Congregational College in Berea, Kentucky, and Illinois Congregational Conference Superintendent.

“Mac” as he was known, was the right person for the times. Urbane, articulate, and intelligent, Mac was initially suspect to E&Rs. He was an “outsider,” not even a “Wisconsinite”. He was already “chosen” (if not formally called) by the planning powers. The convening joint conference at First Congregational Church, Madison, in October 1962 merely “rubber-stamped” the selection. And, “worst of all” he was “CC” (a Congregationalist). “They” would totally “take over,” E&Rs feared.

E&Rs were suspicious. Congregational polity (local church autonomy) had been “forced upon” us. In deliberations in Madison, E&Rs were geographically separated: we North Wisconsin Synod folk were in the chapel at First Church; Congregationalists were in First Church's sanctuary; and South Wisconsin Synod folk were a quarter-mile south at Memorial Church (an R congregation).

Congregational practices were suspect. There was no organic tie between the denominations and its seminaries, a bond dear to E&Rs. Apportionment (i.e., benevolence goals) was mediocre, at best. And hierarchy had no ultimate legislative power, which can lead to poor local standards and powers. And were not congregational pioneers odd – the “witch hunter” Cotton Mather and the fanatic Jonathan Edwards? But few knew that Presbyterian Calvin Coolidge was the only Congregationalist president.

Congregationalists were suspicious also. Some even thought E&Rs spoke only German! E&Rs were characterized as pious simpletons – Mission House College & Seminary in rural Sheboygan County! Only

Adam & Eve know where Eden Seminary is! Certainly E&Rs were the embodiment of the old German State Church in the New World.

Few realized that the Niebuhr brothers and Tillich were products of the E tradition, and young R theologians like Paul Hammer at Colgate-Rochester and Fred Herzog at Duke were nurtured at Mission House!

I credit Mac with building a strong Conference. Sure, in the early 1960s, society, mainline churches generally, and the Wisconsin Conference UCC specifically were at their peak optimistic times. Mac was dealt a strong hand.

He traveled to several locations in each Association and met in groups of 15-20 pastors and lay leaders in get-acquainted sessions and “frank exchange of views,” amid “angst” (pardon the German word). Both sides got to appreciate at least two things. First, yes, we came from different backgrounds, but as individuals we were “nice folk.” And second, Mac was a great guy: cool under pressure; focused on “what we are about” (the “in” phrase of the times); firm but gracious; articulate, but an excellent listener; and quite a sense of humor. In Japan, he and his sister were essentially “home schooled.” They learned from both parents, and often while knitting (Mac could knit a “mean” sweater!). How many of us “Herr Pastors” could do that?

We “young Turks” had a special bond which began at the October 1962 unifying conference after hours over (what else?) brats and beer on State Street. There was Jack Remaly, Roger Knight (Orchard Ridge CC, Madison), Ed Stanford (South Milwaukee CC); Don Laue (Associate at Plymouth CC, Milwaukee); Don Minnick (Associate at Wisconsin Rapids CC); Paul Schippel (E&R at Wisconsin Rapids & Arpin); and Bob Schieler (his father’s associate at Ripon E&R) to name just a few.

Organizationally, on January 1, 1963 the staff was Mac, hold-over executives Paul Kehle, Sr. (former South Wisconsin Synod president) as Southeast Association Minister; John Scheib (a mentor of mine, and former North Wisconsin Synod president) as Northeast Association Minister; and Richard Wichlei (Norenberg’s Associate Congregational Conference Superintendent) as Southwest Association Minister. The Northwest Association Minister position would be filled in the spring. John Remaly was re-appointed to his Minister to Youth Congregational post and Camps & Conferences Coordinator; and Miss Mary Germ, who had been hired as Director of Christian Education in 1962 by the South Wisconsin Synod.

Mary Germ is a forgotten hero in early Wisconsin Conference history. For over a decade, she was the quintessential hard worker. Of different background and temperament than either Jack or I, Mary was slight of build and older – in her 50s. She had been an advertising executive for several decades in New York and/or Pennsylvania, and left the corporate world to enter seminary, graduating now with an MRE from Lancaster (R) Seminary. Neat, business-like and courteous, Mary was a strong person.

She was passionate about Christian Education, the new curriculum, and her calling and work. She is one of the few people I have ever encountered who would not take “no” for an answer. As a woman church executive, she had to “fight” harder for her cause. She could drive her staff colleagues “up the wall” with her tenacity, but she almost always “won,” because we all knew she was right. Her training of leaders in the spread of the new curriculum was thorough and extensive. She traveled the entire state setting up training workshops, and spreading “the word” of the new curriculum to local churches and Associations. I recall one staff meeting on a Monday just after she had been in a meeting in Wisconsin Rapids. Visibly shaken, she recounted that the night before on that very lonely stretch of Highway 13 between the Dells and the Rapids, a deer darted in front of her car. Both she and the deer realized too late that an unfortunate encounter was about to take place. She hit the brakes and the deer leaped. The deer landed

on top of her car's roof, virtually crushing the roof. We were aghast. Knowing Mary well, we all feared for her personal safety and, equally, who could ever replace her!

Although a private person, Mary and my family became friends over the years. We lived in the Conference-owned home at 513 Charles Lane on Madison's west side, and Mary lived in the top floor of the (new then) Park Towers on Sheboygan Avenue near Segoe Road, also on Madison's west side. We often drove together to meetings. In the summer of 1970, as I was about to leave the Conference staff, Mary had our family over to her apartment for dinner. We all enjoyed the beautiful view from her windows.

With Mary Germ what you saw was what you got. She was a classy lady. We corresponded over the years, mostly at Christmas. We heard more from her when she retired in Florida. Her handwriting grew shakier, but she seemed alert. While we were living in Ann Arbor, in the mid-1980s, I think, her family wrote of her death. She was, indeed, a good and faithful servant.

### **The Focus of the Educational Ministry of the Church**

The new curriculum had its biblical *locus foci* (focal point) in the great Commandment of Jesus (Mark 12:28-34, with parallels in Matthew and Luke): "which commandment is first of all? Jesus answered, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these'" (RSV, the Bible version used in the new curriculum).

"As yourself" is not seen in modern biblical interpretation as bad or as selfishness, but rather as good, as self esteem. So the focus of the new curriculum was to enable persons of all ages to grow in relation to God, others and self. That was the crux of the new UCC's educational ministry, and also the how the Wisconsin Conference also saw Youth Ministry and camps and conferences.

This focus is essential in understanding where the Conference was in its early years. Youth ministry was not the sum total of youth work and all its components. Youth ministry was *the total conscious ministry* of the church to its youth. The implications of that mind set were legion.

Local churches were encouraged to consider seriously for themselves, what exactly were they trying to do with their children and young people. This was brought home to me by a St. Stephen's high school junior, who in the summer of 1962 went to a national youth event and brought back the Youth Ministry message. It further strengthened our conviction that we were on to something at St. Stephen.

### **National Youth Leaders and Programs**

National youth work pioneers in the former E&R were well-known fixtures in the denomination. First and foremost was Henry Tani, a Japanese-American layman, who had lived, as a teen, in a WWII internment camp. He was a soft-spoken dynamo, of average height and stature. His book, published by Christian Education Press in the late 1950s was entitled *Ventures in Youth Work*. It was the standard for the times. In the winter of 1960-61, he came to St. John's E&R in Appleton to conduct a one-day youth leaders' training workshop for the North Wisconsin Synod.

Here he proposed his idea that senior high youth ministry might be more effective in involving young folk in the experience of a small group – the "C" group. "C" stood for "cell," a word known at the time in a negative way in the context of a communist cell. Henry sought to legitimize the word. A group of 6-

10 persons with an adult leader, each person would commit her/himself to a weekly gathering for about 10 weeks using the four “Ss” as its driving force: a Study, a Service, a Skill, and a Social.

At St. Stephens it worked well for two years, but Henry’s sudden death in late 1961 or 1962 led to its not being fully fleshed-out, and the experiment passed from the scene.

Other national E&R youth leaders included Ethel Schellenberger, Henry’s associate, and also program developer for camps & conferences and leader of the Caravan program out of the Philadelphia office (the Schaff building at 1505 Race St.).

There was Ed Schlingman, head of camp site development and head of the International Christian Youth Exchange (ICYE) and Volunteer Service, and Carl Bade, Ed’s associate. They worked out of the Volunteer Training Center in rural Pottstown, Pennsylvania.

Both St. Stephen, Merrill, and Orchard Ridge, Madison, actively participated in Caravanning, ICYE and Voluntary Service.

Caravanning, led by Ethel, was an annual summer experience dating back to the end of WWII in the E&R church and continuing into the 1970s. A team of four senior high and college youth would fan-out across the country in local churches for about eight weeks serving in local churches training youth ministry leaders (teens & adults), leading a vacation church school, work projects, local mission experiences, and even serving on camp staffs. There were some 15-20 teams sent out. There were not paid a salary, but did receive room and board, travel expenses, insurance, and expense money for supplies. Each team spent about one week in a Conference, so they were all exposed to a variety of experiences.

Before her death around 2000, Ethel had had a couple of reunions of caravanners. Many are UCC church workers and leaders today. Caravanning also made the national church very real to local folk. The enthusiasm of those young people was contagious.

I was fortunate to participate in the early-June training of caravanners in Pottstown, Pennsylvania Volunteer Training Center for several summers during my tenure on the Conference staff. I was also responsible for their orientation in Wisconsin.

The International Christian Youth Exchange (ICYE) was Ed Schlingman’s responsibility. Ed and his wife Ginny lived in a lovely 18<sup>th</sup> century rural home on the grounds of the Volunteer Training Center and Camp Fernbrook (the campsite for the Penn Southeast Conference). The program emerged out of the reconstruction of Europe (primarily) following WWII. Ed was the UCC representative to the program. In ICYE, a late senior high or just graduated youth would spend a year abroad living in a home that had at least one other youth. The person’s local church was then responsible for hosting a foreign youth for a year. I recall Merrill and Madison ORUCC youth going to and youth coming from the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Iceland, Norway, and France, and possibly other countries. ICYE also ended some time in the mid-1970s.

Carl Bade’s Voluntary Service still exists in the UCC in a much-modified form today in the Global Sharing of Resources Ministry of the UCC’s Wider Church Ministries. Susan Sanders, Carl’s successor, in the late 1980s (I think), now heads the GSR. Voluntary Service predates the Peace Corps and VISTA by at least a decade. These latter programs appeal to virtually the same persons as VS did: college and post-college youth and older adults. Thus these governmental programs have replaced VS.

Herman Ahrens, also out of the Schaff Building (1505 Race St.) in Philadelphia, edited youth publications, the best of which was the award-winning *Youth* magazine. Pocket-sized (about 4”x6”), *Youth* was

published monthly with occasional special issues such as on race relations & civil rights, and world religions. We used it often in both youth work and camps & conferences. Sadly, budget cuts in the 1970s forced it out of publication.

On the Congregational side, Scott Libbey was the key person in youth work, and became the first UCC Youth Ministry staff person in the Div. for Christian Education. (This new UCC Division was led by Congregationalist Ed Powers.) Scott wrote one of the mid- or senior high curriculum. He later became Division head (as I recall); then Homeland Ministries head; and then Iowa Conference Minister. When Scott left youth ministry, he was succeeded by Ralph Moore and Russ Claussen. Russ, who was a few years older than I, was also a north side Chicago E&R, and we worked together at caravan training in Pottstown several summers in the late 1960s

### **Wisconsin Conference Youth Ministry by 1964**

By the end of 1963, the Conference and four Association structures were in place. At the Conference level there were Commissions (such as Christian Ed.) in which there were Departments (such as Youth Ministry).

At the Association level there were Divisions (such as Christian Ed.) and Committees (such as Youth Ministry). Generally, the Conference Commissions and Departments were made up of the chairpersons of each Association's Divisions and Committees.

Each Commission and Department had a separate chairperson elected at the Conference's Annual Meeting; and each was assigned a Conference program staff liaison. In the case of Youth Ministry, it was Jack Remaly – although Mary Germ was staff person relating to Sunday school curriculum for teens.

One holdover program from the Congregational tradition was the "Midwinter." It was a gathering of senior high youth from Pilgrim Fellowships across the state on a Saturday in January or February. It was not held in 1964 because Jack Remaly was involved in camps & conferences consolidation.

A second holdover was the prestigious Youth Ministry Leadership Conference held the third week of August at Pilgrim Camp, just before school started. Only incoming youth officers were allowed to attend to hone skills and develop programs for the upcoming year in their churches. Pastors and lay folk with youth ministry in their portfolio were the leaders of that conference.

On the E&R side, the only noticeable holdover tradition was the youth synod cabinet. There was an active cabinet in the North Wisconsin Synod which promoted synodical youth activities. The Youth Synod gathered annually on Labor Day weekend at Moon Beach. Cathleen Stark Wille, spouse of the Rev. Art Wille [former pastor] of the Congregational UCC church in Neenah, and [Northeast Association Minister,] today, was the 1960-61 secretary of North Wisconsin Youth Synod.

I have no knowledge of the South Wisconsin Synod youth work structure or programs.

A truly remarkable program took place in the 1963-64 that creatively stimulated youth ministry in our early Wisconsin Conference UCC years. In the summer of 1962, the Rev. Gale Wolf, Minister to Youth at First Congregational UCC, Madison, attended the World Youth Assembly on the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor. At that assembly, two Union Seminary (New York)-related persons wrote, scored (for piano and voices), and staged the premier of the youth musical *For Heaven Sake*, a cutting edge story of the ministry of Christ and people's response. It included songs such as "He Was a Flop at 33," "Aim for Heaven," "Get Me Out of the Box," and its signature song, "For Heaven Sake."

Himself a musician, Gale returned with an idea. He had the musical scored for an orchestra and gathered teens from all the Madison area UCC churches to produce it in Wisconsin. The Conference fronted the initial \$500 for having the musical orchestrated, and paid other expenses (such as bus travel & lodging), which were to be recouped by contributions when it was presented at least twice in each Assoc. in the 1963-64 school year.

It was a sensational hit. Well-rehearsed, full of energy, well presented, and performed before packed crowds, Wisconsin's *For Heaven Sake* was a smash hit in all of the Associations.

On Friday, Nov. 22, 1963, the newly-organized Conference Youth Department met in Jack's UCC office at 2719 Marshall Court in Madison. Present were Ed Stanford of South Milwaukee, the Conference-elected chairman; Don Laue, Milwaukee and Southeast Association Youth Committee chairman; Bill Charland of Appleton, Northeast; Roger Knight of Madison, Southwest; I of Merrill, Northwest; and Jack Remaly, staff. I recall two main items on the agenda: the expansion of the summer-ending Youth Ministry Leadership Conf. to include former E&Rs, and the organization of a Conference's Youth Ministry Board to include the adult Youth Department named above and two youth from each Association.

Having completed the latter topic and other items, we went to lunch at the Cuba Club, a popular west-side eatery near the Conference office. It had been cold and rainy, and although it remained so in the northern part of the state, the sun broke through around noon in Madison, and the sky brightened. Between 1:30-2:00 p.m., as we were back in session, the Conference office receptionist entered, announcing, "President Kennedy has just been shot in Dallas, and they think he's dead!" We were horrified. We immediately adjourned and drove over to Jack's home (to be my home a year later) to watch Walter Cronkite report the news.

Many of us marked that event that day with the loss of post-WWII innocence, and the beginning of turmoil that was to mark the infamous "1960s." On that day, of course, we had no way of knowing what that was to mean. Into such a new national and a new denominational scene, I was to enter.

### **The Wisconsin Conference in 1964**

By the time I began my new work in November 1964, the Conference and Associations knew why they were in business, what they were to do, and how to do it. Essentially, the Conference was the final legal authority. It was incorporated. The Associations were not. All staff – professional and clerical – were technically employees of the Conference.

The Association served, basically, three functions. First, it was the body (held over from the Congregational tradition) that gave ecclesiastical standing to the churches and their called staff (ordained and commissioned). Second, it was the program arm for the churches, such as Christian education workshops and youth gatherings. And third, an intangible, it provided the glue for inter-church fellowship, such as the embodiment in men's & women's activities of the new Lay Life & Work (the adult equivalent, so to speak, of youth ministry).

By 1964, the Conference had established a top-notch professional staff: Mac, Jack, Mary, and Bill Rogers, a layman from First Congregational Church in LaCrosse, and a young executive at the Trane Company, leading Lay Life & Work, Stewardship and Mission education.

The four Association ministers were products of a Depression-era youth and World War II young adult life. Dick Wichlei was in the Southwest Association.

After John Scheib died suddenly in February 1963, one month after being called to his new position, Paul Olm, pastor of the Conference's largest church St. John's, Monroe was called as John's successor as Northeast Association Minister in late 1963. In August 1953, when I was a senior in high school, Paul, then a young pastor at Hales Corners, was my senior high camp director at Pilgrim Camp on Green Lake which numbered 131 girls and 43 boys from the North and South Wisconsin synods and the North Illinois Synod.

In the spring 1963, Jim Savides was called to the vacant Northwest Association Minister position. Jim was pastor of Union Congregational Church, Waupun at the time. He was to serve over a quarter century in "the Northwest Territory," fearlessly driving long distances through all kinds of storms and blizzards.

When Paul Kehle, Sr., retired at the end of December 1964, the Conference turned to St. Louis and called Roy Alberswerth as Southeast Association Minister. Roy had been active in urban and inter-racial work at Faith-Salem church in St. Louis. He steered the Conference from a rural SE WI direction to an urban one. Never having even visited Wisconsin, Roy arrived in early summer 1965. Retired now, he has never left. These four Ministers were not only superb leaders, but also became close friends.

No sooner were the staff in place, changes began. In June 1964, Jack Remaly left to start a mission church in southern California. It is difficult for youth ministers to emerge from that professional stereotype, and Jack was in his late 30s.

In July 1964, Mac visited Merrill when he was the annual guest preacher for E&R Day, an annual Sunday festival of E&R churches from Wausau, Schofield, Merrill, Antigo, and Medford. It was usually held at Marathon County Fairgrounds in Wausau, but this year it was changed to the Lincoln County Fairgrounds and renamed UCC day, with former Congregational churches from Antigo, Tomahawk, Tripoli, and Rhinelander invited. After worship, Mac spoke with me and asked if I might be interested in filling Jack's position. It was not untimely.

Cal had announced his resignation from St. Stephen in June 1964 to succeed Paul Olm in Monroe. It seemed best to have a complete regime change, and so I had been in conversation with the search committee from the Nekoosa church. Mac, who was spending the summer in the "white cottage" at Pilgrim Camp, asked Fern and me to meet Barbara and him at Moxies' Restaurant in Ripon, later that month. After our dinner meeting, Fern & I agreed that at 28, I was young enough to try full-time youth work, realizing the potential professional-stereotyping pitfalls down the road. I was experienced in the area and, politically, it balanced the Conference staff to four CC's and four E&R's.

The Conference Board called me. Cal left Merrill on Labor Day weekend 1964. I started at the Conference office on Monday, November 2, 1964, the day before the U.S. presidential election.

Not long after Roy Alberswerth arrived in late spring 1965, Mac left to become Southern California Conference minister, the only position, he said, that would have him leave Wisconsin. Although his tenure was only 2.5 years, he was marvelously effective. The Conference was unified and morale was high. He had done well, indeed. Sadly, within two or three years, Mac died of a sudden heart attack. I do not think he was even 60.

In July 1965, the Rev. Dr. Robert C. Stanger was hired by the Conference Board to be interim Conf. President. Dr. Stanger had just retired as president of Elmhurst College (1957-65). An Elmhurst and Yale Divinity School grad, his father, Christian, had been an Elmhurst professor, 1896-1946. The younger Stanger had also been a professor at Elmhurst in the early 1930s, and then he was Rheinhold Niebuhr's successor, one pastorate removed, at Bethel Church, Detroit. In the summer of 1948, he succeed

Henry Dinkmeyer as pastor of the (then) large Bethany Church near Wrigley Field on Chicago's north side, where my mother was organist from 1926-1966.

Dinkmeyer had left to become president of Elmhurst College from 1948 to his sudden death of a heart attack in March 1957. Dinkmeyer had married my parents, and baptized my sister and me. At the time of his death, I was an Elmhurst senior and editor of the college newspaper.

I had been in Dr. Stanger's first Confirmation class in the spring of 1949, along with his younger son, Dick, my childhood and teenage friend, who also became a UCC pastor. When Dr. Stanger came to Madison, we renewed wonderful memories of Bethany's peak years in the late 40s and early 50s. The Conference minister's parsonage was on Odana Road just east of Segoe Road, about a mile from our home.

In the office and at staff meetings, all, except Mary and me, addressed him as "Bob." The first time this happened, I came home and told Fern, I can't call him "Bob." First, he has always been "Dr. Stanger" to me; he is my elder, not my peer. And second, although he is a warm, gentle, gracious person, he is definitely not a "Bob." I resolved the social difficulty of either not saying his name or mumbling "Dr. Stanger," clearing my voice with an "ahem" at the same time.

Ten members of the Bethany youth group in Dr. Stanger's time were Elmhurst College students at one time between 1955 and 1957. Three of us went in to the UCC ministry; one married a UCC pastor; and most today (all retired now) are still active church folk. Ask any of them and they'll say "Dr. Stanger" was an inspiration.

### **My Early Wisconsin Conference Years**

Mac was up front about the need to re-structure salaries. Mary was paid about \$1000 per year less than Jack – almost 20%. Bill had to be paid more because he was a layman (that made many underpaid Wisconsin clergy angry because the Conference bought-into the myth that lay folk are worth more than clergy). So I received \$6200, down from Jack's \$6800. Mary was appropriately raised to \$6200, to make both positions equal. Bill was paid \$7500, just \$400 less than each Association minister. The Conference minister was paid, I think, \$11,500 in 1964-65. There were all the standard clergy benefits of the day for me: a parsonage (as for the Conference President), utilities, mileage, pension, etc. Mary, Bill and the Association ministers received a housing allowance.

I recall move-in day. By now Fern and I, who were married by Cal at St. Stephen on August 11, 1962, were emerging from our grief over the death of our first child, Beth Marie, shortly after birth on October 18, 1963 in Merrill. With furniture and boxes scattered everywhere (it was the first move of our married life), Bill and Ruth Schultz dropped by and invited us for dinner that evening in their lovely home on Miami Pass in Madison's Nakoma area. Bill was pastor of Memorial (R) church, the only formerly E&R church in Madison. Bill had been student pastor from Mission House at St. Stephen in the early 1940s, and Fern was in his first-year Confirmation class.

By now Roger and Beth Knight had become friends through youth ministry work. So, we joined their Orchard Ridge Church almost immediately. We also joined the choir and made life-long friends in the congregation. Fern was to serve on the diaconate and be a regular delegate to Conference and Association meetings. Roger was a great pastor and OR UCC was a vibrant, growing young church on Madison's southwest side.

Mary Germ was a member of Bill Schultz' Memorial Church. Bill & Helen Rogers were at Middleton Community; Clarence & Barbara McCall and Dick & Marge Wichlei were members of First Congregational.

What was wonderful about Conference staff work was that not only were these folk good colleagues and immensely competent, but they were my friends. And this was true of the office staff: Joyce Sylvester the office manager and Mac's secretary; the legendary Norman Schowalter, retired CFO of West Bend Aluminum, and unpaid Conference treasurer; and Naomi Gander, the quintessential competent bookkeeper.

It was like a family. Almost all of the children (most of whom were teens) of the Association ministers, including the two youngest sons of Mac, were active in youth work and camping.

When I arrived, I received a thorough briefing on the everyday routine at the Conference office and the expectations of my work. I had somewhat of an advantage. I knew youth work well at all levels. I knew camps & conferences well at Moon Beach, and to a degree at Pilgrim Camp. I knew the former North Wisconsin Synod clergy and most of the lay leaders. I knew many South Wisconsin folk, and a growing number of former Congregational clergy and lay leaders. And I knew the Association and Conference structure, as well.

First on the agenda were three things: planning for the 1965 summer camps and conferences; reviving the mid-year Youth Conference, and moving it to April; and bailing out the financially plagued *For Heaven Sake*. Mac said, "Your first job is to take over its management and make it solvent." Only a few performances were left, all in the Madison area.

I met with Gale. I was to manage the entire business end. No item, even a paper clip, could be purchased without my approval. He was to concentrate solely on the artistic end. (I felt like a producer in "show biz.") Slowly, things fell into place and by the spring 1965, when it ended its run, we were just about in the black. The group even cut a record. Gale and "the kids" (they're almost 60 years of age now!) were great.

The Conference Youth Ministry Board met to publicize and, where necessary, coordinate activities. Each Association also had a board or cabinet of youth advised by its Association's committee adult chairman. The YMB's main activity was to plan the soon-to-be annual Spring Youth Conference, a revival of the former congregational Mid-Winter Youth Conference. Only this time, the Conference began on Friday night and ended on Sunday noon.

To ensure its success, the first one was held at Orchard Ridge UCC, Madison, where Southwest Association YD chairman, Roger Knight, was pastor. I have no memory of the program. But I do recall other things: many youth slept on the floor of the Worship Hall and Fellowship Hall (gender separated, of course); we had excellent local TV coverage; and there emerged women leaders. Beth Knight was to become well regarded as a song and recreational leader in the denomination. Patricia Jane Goldberg, a Carroll College grad out of the Port Washington Congregational Church, was an elementary school teacher in Madison. She was to leave that occupation in 1966, enter the Chicago Theological Seminary, and become a Christian educator at the local, denominational, and currently (Iowa) conference levels. Pat was to serve many summers as Director of Creative Activities at Pilgrim Camp.

Other women leaders included Carol Knight, Roger's sister-in-law, from their native Eau Claire; Jan Davis, spouse of the Rev. Al Davis, of Berlin; and Carol Bernardo, co-manager at Moon Beach Camp.

Youth leaders included so many great kids that I can't remember all the names. Young women such as Cathy Stark Wille, mentioned earlier; Karen Nelson Mohr of Wisconsin Rapids; and Debbie Alberswerth Payden not only married Wisconsin UCC clergy, but themselves assumed high leadership posts in the Conference. Debbie, along with Jan Davis and Pat Goldberg mentioned above, all became ordained UCC clergy.

Young men of that era who went into the UCC clergy included Dick Runge (Black Creek), pastor of First Reformed, Manitowoc; Bill Handy (Orchard Ridge, Madison), an intentional interim pastor in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Keith Karau (Merrill), pastor in St. Louis; Mike Bausch (Watertown), pastor in Waupun; Keith Weiland (Wisconsin Rapids), a pastor in Malone & Sheboygan; Charlie Wolfe (River Falls), pastor of Plymouth, Madison; and Bill Klossner (Memorial, Madison), a pastor in Florida.

In April 1966, SYC was held at Union Church, Green Bay, and the keynote speaker was Senator William Proxmire. During my years (1964-70), if I recall correctly, other SYC sites were at First Congregational UCC, Wisconsin Rapids; Faith, Milwaukee; First Congregational, Sheboygan; and First Congregational, LaCrosse. The average attendance from across the conference was well-over 200 each year. UCC identity and friendships became real for these senior high youth.

I particularly remember the Wisconsin Rapids SYC because the radical sociologist Edgar Friedenburg of SU NY-Buffalo and author of the critically-acclaimed *The Vanishing Adolescent* was to be the keynoter. About two weeks before the event, he cancelled, but recommended a campus chaplain from a major Big Ten (not UW) university. This man came. Following the opening program, before all the conferees went to their hosts' homes, some gathered in the lounge. None of them noticed, but I did (in horror): he lit up a marijuana cigarette! Afterwards, I read him "the riot act."

### **Youth Ministry in Turbulent Times**

On July 1, 1966 the Rev. Ralph Ley was called to be the new Wisconsin Conference President, my third in less than three years. Ralph, a Mission House grad, came from Peace UCC in Chicago, but before that he had been pastor at E&R churches in Waukesha, Green Bay and Kohler. Again, Ralph, like Mac, was the right man at the right time. He was a calm voice in very turbulent times.

By now, both the Vietnam War and the civil rights struggle fully exploded on our national scene. In 1967, Dave Rohlfing joined the Conference staff as the Minister to Metropolitan Mission, based in Milwaukee. (His salary was paid by the BHM.) He did a great job in keeping the Conference involved in the urban issues of the times, and interpreting back to our churches what was happening.

Not only did SYC's take on themes relating to these issues, they were also tackled in our local churches and camping program. Local UCC church youth groups participated in urban seminars and work projects. Inner city kids were recruited to our camps and conference; Herb Huebschmann, pastor of Friedens, Milwaukee, took an active role in this area at the Cedar Lake grounds, near West Bend.

In 1967, events hit their peak with the non-violent open housing marches in Milwaukee, led by Roman Catholic priest, the Rev. James Groppi and the NAACP youth council "commandos" out of St. Boniface Church on the north side. UCC pastors became involved. The most visible was the Rev. Alan Kromholz, pastor of First Congregational Church in Watertown. Al, whose two sons I baptized when he was pastor of our Evansville church, was a Merrill native and Elmhurst and Eden grad. In seminary he had participated (and was beaten) in Mississippi in voter registration work. He also spent his clinical year at Eden ministering in the copper mines of Chile. He led folks – youth and adults - in the marches. A climate of suspicion in Watertown led to harassment of Al and his family, and, sadly his ouster. A political science doctoral student at the University of Michigan wrote a book on the subject, *Crisis in*

*Watertown* (University of Michigan Press, 1969). At one evening march in October, Al oriented me well into the real world of the urban poor and black.

Earlier, in the spring of 1966, I think, I, with a couple other Conference staffers attended at multi-day workshop in St. Louis on urban community organization, sponsored by The Urban Institute. The leader was the foremost community organizer of the day, Saul Alinsky. He was well known in the press as a radical. What I found in him and his presentations on urban poverty, racial bigotry, and environmental injustice made perfect sense.

Although I grew up in the big city of Chicago, these experiences were also certainly conscious raising and positive!

Another area that was emerging in the mid-1960s was the impact of ecumenism on youth work and camping. Ecumenism's impact on camping is found in a separate report about these times.

Mac and then Dr. Stanger asked me to serve as liaison to the Wisconsin Council of Churches involvement with the Wisconsin Protestant Legislative Council. WCC was led at that time by dynamo Ellis Dana, a layman. I recall several luncheon meetings at Crandall's, just off the Capitol Square, with Ellis and (then young) State Sen. Fred Risser, a member of First Church, Madison, growing up under the influence of his legendary pastor, Dr. Alfred Swan. WPLC produced an excellent notebook on everything you needed to know about State government – its workings, members and staff, and especially the “ins and outs” of legislation of interest to the religious community. I think it became too costly to maintain, and if I'm not mistaken, it WPLC evolved into something else by 1968, which Ralph Ley dealt with personally.

Ellis' associate, the Rev. John Gaus, was WCC staff related to youth work. I think the Wisconsin Presbyterian synodical Christian Education staff person, the Rev. Robert Raymond, was WCC Youth Department chair in the mid-1960s. I was the UCC rep. WCC/YD publicized the various denominations youth work activities and each denomination was invited to have youth share in the other denomination's activities. But in both 1967 and 1968, it sponsored a three-week study seminar to Europe. Both were led by Dr. Walter (“Ben”) Washburn, an MD, and his spouse Sally, an RN. Ben and Sally were Madison activists in their church (Covenant Presbyterian) and in justice issues in society. Ben was also our family physician. On alternate years Ben & Sally would take a vacation and then on the other year volunteer for a month in a poverty area somewhere on the planet. Although Ben was home on March 17, 1966 to deliver our son, Rob, he was in Nepal on November 4, 1968, when our daughter, Mary (now Maria) was born.

I was asked to be the clergyman on the 1967 seminar. Ralph approved, although it meant my being gone the last three weeks of June, as the camping season was beginning.

In so many ways, the trip was an eye-opener. It was my first ever to Europe. There were 36 teens from many denominations and races. Among “the kids”, who are now in their mid 50s were: Jo Beth Marshall, First Congregational, La Crosse, now Associate Pastor of St. Paul UCC, St. Paul, Minnesota; Ray Allen, Fellowship Community UCC, Milwaukee, now a Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development executive and recently retired long-time member of the Madison School Board; Pia Kinney, St. Paul A.M.E., later a pioneer and now retired African-American police woman in Madison; Charlene Harris, Mt. Zion Baptist, later a pioneer Madison African-American TV news personality.

Jeff Haswell of Windsor UCC, later a middle school music teacher in Whitewater and friend of my mother, who resided at Fairhaven. Myron Jones, Jr., Waterloo Methodist and Jack Remaly's nephew.

Darryl Coons, Presbyterian & Native American from Eau Claire. Anita Morland, Zion UCC, Sheboygan and daughter of the President of Lakeland College.

The world in which we traveled included the just-finished Six Days War between Israel and its Arab neighbors. It included racial unrest in the USA, and the Vietnam War. It included world heavyweight boxing champ Mohammed Ali's being jailed for his conscious objection to the War. Later that summer, while the open housing marches were going on in Milwaukee, Detroit was to erupt in inner city violence. And, of course, we were at the height of the Cold War with the Soviet Union.

The many daily experiences were deep. In the Netherlands, there was the Rijksmuseum and Rembrandt; the Ann Frank house; and the International Court of Justice in The Hague. In West Germany, there was the huge Cologne Cathedral, across the street from the main train station, from which 6,000 Cologne Jews were sent to concentration camps, only a generation before. There was a delightful lunch in Bingen, overlooking the famous Rhine vineyards. In Stuttgart, we had our first meeting with German youth. In Worms, we saw where Martin Luther refused to recant his revolutionary beliefs. Near Munich, I sobbed at the ovens in the Dachau concentration camp. In Berchtesgarden, we donned special clothes and took a salt mine tour into a mountain, that included a boat ride across a lake inside! In Salzburg, where "The Sound of Music" was filmed the year before, we heard a lovely concert in a large church and saw Mozart's haunts.

Then we went behind the Iron Curtain into Czechoslovakia, where 14 months later eastern bloc nations, led by the Soviet Union, were to crush a democracy movement. In Prague, we met secretly with Christian youth in a Brethren church. We visited Lidice, where Hitler murdered all males over 13 before the eyes of the women and children, for the assassination of ruthless overseer, Heydrich. There was beautiful Prague with its Vlatava (Moldau in German) River; the Charles Bridge and the weather beaten statues of the apostles of Christ. I conducted our very quiet Sunday worship in one of our hotel rooms with all 39 of us packed in. Our first lunch in Prague was at a student beer house, where one of our (over 18) youth, a Lutheran from Milwaukee (where else?) won a chug-a-lug contest over a local. That did much for east-west relations. A good time was had by all.

We trusted the youth on their own when we had a free night. All we asked was not to get arrested, and not embarrass our churches and our country. Ben, Sally and I went out on our own, also. In Prague we had an ice cream at a sidewalk café one night. Ben paid with an American Express credit card. I was shocked; the communists accepted the epitome of capitalism!

From Dresden to Berlin, in East Germany (the German Democratic Republic), we traveled an almost-deserted autobahn built in Hitler's times. It was eerie. We arrived at the East German/West Berlin border in darkness and in heavy rain. Straight out of a spy novel, there were armed GDR border police and equally not-so-friendly German shepherd dogs. The sky, barricades and barbed wire were all lit by huge lights. (The Berlin Wall was less than six years old.)

Again, the experiences in Berlin were many and deep. Considering the venue, we saw "Dr. Zhivago" (albeit dubbed in German) barely 2km from the Wall on the Ku-Dam. Our site tour in East Berlin still showed destruction from WWII, barely 20 years ago. One dark night we crossed Checkpoint Charlie on foot to see a play in an East Berlin theatre. We sat in the balcony. Soviet soldiers sat in the seats on the main floor. When the large-size hero tried to climb the lattice work to the heroine, the set collapsed. Our teens laughed! En masse, the Soviet soldiers shot a disapproving glance up our way.

As we left, West Berlin into East Germany, our bus was delayed for four hours by East German border guards. They knew we were Americans. We were en route to Hanover for the biannual "Kirchentag"

(church festival). Although our visit was short, we did meet, and hear speak, the Englishman who wrote the 1960s religious best seller *God's Frozen People*.

Our trip ended with few days in England including not only visits around London, but also a visit to Oxford University and the Coventry Cathedral. Coventry was particularly of interest because it had been bombed in WWII by the Germans, and its ruined structure still stood. And now it was a partner city with Dresden that we the British and Americans pummeled with bombs, too.

On the penultimate evening, we had enough money left in "the kitty" to treat the kids to a performance of *Hello Dolly*. At intermission, a woman tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Ray Hernandez, what are you doing here? I thought I saw you at the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace this morning, but this is too coincidental." It was Martha Baumer, a high school English teacher in Germantown, Wisconsin, daughter of the Rev. Harry Baumer in West Bend, a youth worker and camp counselor. She was on her way to studying in Scotland for the summer

Marty left teaching a few years later; went to seminary; and was ordained. Now recently retired from Eden Seminary, Marty has been prominent in the UCC as pastor and executive for over three decades. Over the years, we often laughed about our chance encounter a quarter-way around the world in June 1967. When Marty left for Eden Seminary in June 1999, I was the interim at Windsor UCC for about a year.

### **The Final Years: 1968-1970**

If 1967 was unsettling in our national and church life, 1968 may have come to represent the tumultuous ultimate in "life in the 1960s." Here's a partial list.

In March 1968 two events occurred so close together, I am not sure which came first.

One Saturday or Sunday evening, Cal & Judy Fischer drove up from Monroe with their two older daughters to join Fern and me at the Madison Coliseum. We got there 90 minutes early for the event, and got some of the last seats in the coliseum. Thousands that night stood outside in the cold to hear U.S. Sen. Eugene McCarthy, Democrat from Minnesota, speak. Anti-war sentiment had been building for months.

Just the previous October (about the time I was marching in Milwaukee), there had been many injuries as Madison police bludgeoned students in a sit-in demonstration in the Commerce building (today Ingraham Hall). The students were protesting the recruitment by Dow Chemical Company, which manufactured napalm. The incident received nationwide media attention. In 2003, David Maraniss, a UW freshman in the Fall 1967, and today a *Washington Post* writer, published his Pulitzer Prize winning book *They Marched Into October*. It juxtaposes the two-day Dow protests with a battle going on in Vietnam, and U. S. President Lyndon Johnson's personal struggle over what to do.

That March 1968 evening in Madison was the equivalent of us average folk venting anti-war feelings. Even Republican Governor Warren Knowles' feisty wife was at the rally. Politics in our country was changing.

Also in March 1968, one Sunday, in the late afternoon, I was driving down I-90 to Janesville for a Southwest Association youth event. I turned on the radio to hear President Johnson announce he would not seek another term as president. As we said in the '60s, this was "heavy stuff."

In April 1968, Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis. He was an inspiration to me. I look upon his "I Have a Dream" speech at that huge rally at the Lincoln Memorial in August 1963 as one of our

nation's most stirring, poetical golden moments. I think his early 1960s "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" to white and some Black clergy refuting the "go slow" approach worthy of biblical canon. America burned and grieved. In July 1965, I had escorted two WI UCC youth (Joan Laurion of Madison Orchard Ridge, and Dick Runge of Black Creek) to General Synod V at the Palmer House in Chicago. Our high light, was hearing the Rev. Dr. King speak, amid the heaviest security I had ever seen up to that point in my life.

In June 1968, carrying now the McCarthy anti-war mantle and the legacy of JFK Camelot, presidential hopeful Bobbie Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles. What more? I thought.

On July 30, 1968, while on a singing tour with a Chicago men's chorus in Germany, my retired father took ill and died of pneumonia and meningitis in Berchtesgarden. I was up at Moon Beach when my mother phoned with the news, and Camp Manager Ray Wittuhn located me.

In late August, the Soviets and their allies invaded Czechoslovakia, crushing the reform movement of "The Prague Spring" (of 1968). What more? I thought.

A bright light did occur that year, personally, when our second daughter, Mary Martha Hernandez was born on November 4, 1968. With Latina consciousness, she legally changed her name to Maria Marta two decades later.

Although there was turmoil in UCC churches, I credit Ralph Ley with steering a steady ship in uncertain waters.

Youth ministry in local churches took a new direction. It was manifested in two ways:

First, churches took head-on the issues of the times. After all, their young men faced being drafted into combat in a war that seemed unending. Their women and men were now going out into a world of great change. Since they could die in war at 18, the law of the land was changed to give the right to vote at age 18 – down from 21. So issues were not only war and race, but others such as who am I, where am I headed, and what is my responsibility.

Second, a "new" educational model was plucked right out the radical movements of the day: action-reflection. You acted (hopefully with thought and responsibility) and then reflected on what that action did and meant. Such a tactic limited sitting around in irrelevant discussion, and thrust the person into involvement and taking responsibility for his/her actions. Work camps and urban experiences boomed locally, in judicatories and nationally.

By early 1969, as I recall, Bill Rogers resigned. Later that summer the Rev. Curtis Claire from the Bay area in California was called to replace him. Curt, Elsie and their family moved into their own home on Midvale Blvd., about a mile from us.

Shortly after their arrival, I went on sabbatical leave. In late 1968, I was entering my fifth year of youth work, and taking on more responsibilities. They included the merging with the Presbyterians into Co-Operative Camps and Conferences, now at four campsites, plus a number of off-site and year around opportunities. And they included the corporate merger of Moon Beach and Pilgrim Camp to form United Church Camps, Inc. I was spending less time at home with my family. And I began to raise the questions; will I get stereotyped as Jack did (the answer proved to be "yes")? What do I want to do next?

With Ralph's approval, I went to Midwest Career Development in, I think, the fall of 1968, at the campus ministry center at Ohio State University in Columbus. If not the first, I was one of the first to go into that three day program of testing and counseling. MWCD was funded by all the mainline denominations. Excluding air travel, it cost me about \$150. Although the process was interesting, the program was only in its infancy, and when the testing part ended, the computer spit out "used car salesman" as my top profession to be. Needless to say, that was not what I was expecting. But the director hastened to add that of course our final conversations would probe deeper.

I knew that deep down there was an academic and an administrator in me. (Norman Schowalter had drilled me well in the world of budget and finance.) I told the Director that as a boy I loved the museums of my native Chicago, and in college (history major) and seminary (education and Hebrew Bible double major) I was enthralled with research. I added that in August 1963 on our way back from pastor's family camp in Estes Park, Colorado, I fell in love with the just-opening Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa. He said, "Give it a shot."

Upon my return I enrolled part-time (one course a term) in the Masters program in the graduate school of library science at UW. Fortunately, the school was located on Henry Mall and University, about a block from First Congregational Church. (Pastor Ed Beatty let me park at First Church.) I was torn. The church and my own denomination had been my life since the day I was baptized as an infant. So I went on a dual career path: continued employment in my current Conference work and theological librarianship.

By the summer of 1969, I was 33.5 years of age and facing the same situation Jack Remaly did five years earlier. With the help of the Association ministers, discreet feelers were sent out. The only churches interested in me wanted me as a Christian Ed person or an associate pastor. As we came to say in the 1990s, "been there, done that." It was clear that I was stereotyped.

I briefly considered teaching. The UW offered me a fellowship to pursue a double Masters in history and teaching. They signed me up to do student teaching at East high school before I had even taken an education course. The fellowship was generous, but it could not support a family of four.

Just before my 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday in January 1969, I began my first library school course. In the summer sessions, I took two more. As I immersed myself more, I found theological librarianship more to my liking, but presidential librarianship lurking in the back of my mind. When sabbatical time came in the fall, Ralph approved my going full time, including vacation time, for the fall term. So that the 1970 summer camping preparations flowed smoothly, I was in the office two days a week, but no weekend obligations. All my research and papers, including an independent study, were geared toward theological librarianship.

By my return full-time, at the beginning of 1970, I was back in the swing of things: visiting local churches; guest preaching; training youth leaders; planning the Spring Youth Conference; and gearing up for the summer. Since 1968, I was directing a Roman Catholic-Protestant family camp each summer at Moon Beach.

By then, I knew I was getting "too old" for youth work. No local church was interested in me other than in a role I had been doing for over 10 years. So, in the spring, as I approached my comprehensive exams for my Masters degree in the summer, I applied for the librarian position at UTS in New Brighton, Minnesota and the college librarian position at Elmhurst, my alma mater. Neither even granted me an interview. That was a blow. I then took the federal civil service exam for presidential libraries in April. By mid-May, I heard nary a word.

About that time, I received a phone call from my dear friend Edna Kraft, a St. Stephen church member in Merrill, who was supposed to retire already in 1968 as Director of the city's public library. She simply said, "Come back to Merrill." I knew several of the employees. I knew the chair of the search committee, a prominent Methodist laywoman, whom I credit to this day for giving me my break in my second career profession, which turned out equally rewarding and successful. And, the chairmen of two major board committees were husbands of close childhood friends of Fern.

In the third week of May, I interviewed and was offered the position. I accepted. My last library school grad course was Public Library Administration. I resigned my Conference position of nearly six very active and wonderful years, effective August 31. The family moved on August 1, and my last day was the day after one of the most memorable days in Madison history – the bombing of UW's Sterling Hall.

### Epilogue

I was sad that my Church denomination didn't find my skills good enough to call me to a new service. In 1994, when I took early retirement from my position as Director of the large Ann Arbor (Michigan) public library position, I applied for the open position of Director of the Eden Seminary/Webster College library. I didn't get an interview. Nothing seems to change.

Back in the fall, 1970, I learned that there had been some resentment that I left the Conference less than a year after my sabbatical ended. That led the Conference Board to enact a policy requiring staff to stay on at least one year after a sabbatical leave ends. I was sad about that because I tried everything I could think of to stay in the employ of the church.

In late October 1970, I received a very generous offer from the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Texas. It was too late. I thus embarked on a wonderful career of nearly a quarter-century in public service. And today, in retirement, I have been a member of the Madison Public Board since July 1, 2000.

As I was considering options following my early retirement in mid-1994, I applied for a vacant position that always fascinated me: Library Director of the Wisconsin Historical society in Madison. (In library school, I had trained there in an archives course.) I never even got an acknowledgement of my application.

So, on August 1, 1994, after six months as part-time interim at a small UCC church near Ann Arbor, I accepted their call to be full-time pastor. In October 1994, while visiting our son and his wife in Madison, our daughter forwarded a call from our home in Michigan. It was from the Wisconsin Historical Society saying the Society Director was not interviewing anyone but me, and the job was mine. Having just begun my full time work at the church, I couldn't leave. But such is life. It's been a great life, especially the dear hearts and gentle people in the Wisconsin Conference in the 1960s.

## II

# WISCONSIN CONFERENCE UCC CAMPS AND CONFERENCES: THEIR ROOTS and EARLY HISTORY

By Ramon Hernandez  
July 10, 2004

### Historical Background

Camps and conferences had a long history all three uniting traditions, including the decades-long use of Pilgrim Camp (the Congregational camp) on the southeast shore of Green Lake by the two E&R synods.

In a mini version of the national Chautauqua movement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Congregationalists began the Green Lake Bible Institute in the 1890s, on the site of what is now the Pilgrim Conference Center (formerly, in my years, Pilgrim Camp). As I recall from anecdotes, big tents were pitched on wooden platforms. Within a large wooden building near the lake, persons could eat meals inside, where campers also assembled for programs of lectures in religion and the humanities, drama, and music. Of course, there was leisure time for water activities and nature walks.

I think there is a sketch of the 100+-year history of Pilgrim Camp. I have no knowledge of the details of when and how the Green Lake Bible Institute evolved into Pilgrim Camp. Perhaps the Rev. John Remaly, 1956-64 Camps & Conferences coordinator for the Congregationalists and UCC, now retired in Florida, might have specific knowledge and anecdotes. It seems that from the World War II era to the early 1960s, Pilgrim Camp was almost exclusively a camp for junior and senior high youth. Each camp session was about a week long, beginning on a late Sunday afternoon and concluding on Saturday morning after breakfast, a format still used today.

On a parallel track, the American Baptist Convention developed the Green Lake Baptist Assembly on Green Lake's northwestern shore, which grew into a sophisticated year-round conference center complete with a golf course.

To the best of my knowledge the South Wisconsin Synod of the E&R church owned no synodical camp. Until Moon Beach, a former resort between St. Germain and Eagle River on Moon Lake, was purchased in the late 1950s, the North Wisconsin Synod of the E&R church also did not own a camp. [1957 purchased....ed.]

As far as I know, there is a history of both E&R synods jointly renting and using the Congregationalists' Pilgrim Camp at least as far back as the early 1940s, if not further.

My wife, the former Fern Muschinske, from St. Stephen (E) Church in Merrill, attended a junior high weekend camp at Pilgrim c1943. I asked her what she remembers about the experience.

She recalls the good-looking (hmm) college lifeguard, Ted Crusius, who later was a long-time E&R pastor in Wisconsin. The Rev. William Schultz, who was a student pastor from Mission House "R" Seminary in 1941 and later longtime pastor at Memorial "R" Church in Madison, was also on that weekend's camp staff, along with two young women from the Merrill church. She thinks she was one of three girl campers from the Merrill church. And she recalls a "Vesper Point" and staying in a cinder-block cabin, which dates some of those well-known cabins at least to that period.

Also of note historically are the “two nice girls” she met from the Sauk City church. This obviously means that weekend experience was a joint North and South WI synods venture.

In August 1953, just as I was leaving high school, four of us from our Senior League youth group at Bethany (E) Church in Chicago attended a week long senior high camp at Pilgrim. One of my friends, a girl, died of leukemia just a few years later. The other girl, a sophomore then, later graduated from Elmhurst (an E) College, and is married to a now-retired UCC pastor. The other boy has been a life-long friend, now living in Florida.

The camp, which had 135 girls ☺ and 47 boys, was jointly sponsored by the North and South Wisconsin synods and the North Illinois Synod of the E&R church. Although the North Illinois Synod held youth camps at its East Bay Camp just west of Lexington (near Bloomington), Illinois, many Chicago area folks were more acquainted with such Wisconsin vacation spots as Lake Geneva, Wisconsin Dells, and Green Lake. I clearly remember our families discussing whether we kids should go to Pilgrim or East Bay. My family spent late June and early July visiting relatives on an auto trip to Mexico City, so a late summer camp was better for me.

I made many friends. One boy was from St. John’s E&R church in Belvidere, Illinois. After camp, I met him and his family at the Wisconsin State Fair in West Allis, and returned with them for a week to Belvidere, where they introduced me to their new just-out-of-McCormick-(Presbyterian)-seminary, Cal Fischer, who became my life-long close friend and colleague.

I too recall the cinder block cabin. Mine, “across the road,” was Savides cabin. We pronounced it SA-ve-dees. It was donated by a Congregational minister and family of that name in memory of his wife/mother. Only later, in April 1963, when I voted for the Rev. James Savides to be our Northwest Association UCC Minister, did I learn it was a Greek name, pronounced Sa-VEE-dees.

The camp was directed by a young pastor from the Hales Corners church, Paul Olm. His wife, June, was on staff, and their two children were present also. Ten+ years later, daughter Kay Olm was to be active in Association and Conference youth ministry boards. I hired her to be Director of Creative Activities at Moon Beach Camp in the summers of, I think, 1968-1970. Miss June Landmeier, long time head of Christian Education for the North Illinois Synod was on staff, as was Walter Lauer, a North Illinois Synod pastor and long time synodical youth advisor. Charlie Koch, long time pastor at New Holstein, was on staff, as well as the pastor from Darlington and Dorothy Dietrich, a laywoman from Merrill, who was to be a parishioner of mine within the next decade.

But the kids made the experience. I met four guys who would later be Elmhurst College schoolmates. I met two really nice gals from Ralph Ley’s (whom I didn’t know then) church in Waukesha. I was beginning to learn a girl can be a friend without being a “girl friend.” By the end of camp, I experienced what many, if not most, campers have experienced at camp, a bond so strong you will never forget the experience. We even had a small reunion at Christmas vacation time at the Hales Corners church. This was one more drop of glue that bonded my life to the church which has nurtured me, sustained me, and supported me for over two-thirds of a century. By the end of the year, I decided to become a pastor, myself.

### **Camps & Conferences By 1963**

The new Wisconsin Conference UCC officially began on January 1, 1963 and the campsites were fully involved and “joined-at-the-hip” with youth work. (I have a photo of the North Illinois Youth Synod annual conference (about 150 youth, plus staff) at East Bay (Illinois) Camp on Labor Day weekend,

September 1954. In it are many young people who would rise to prominence in the work of the church.)

My very first experience as a young pastor at the Merrill Church was the annual gathering of the North Wisconsin Youth Synod on Labor Day weekend of September 1960. Among the adult leaders were Rev. Ted Crusius (Manitowoc), Rev. Roger Wentz, Mrs. Carol Bernardo (St. Germain), Rev. Paul Schippel (Wisconsin Rapids), and Rev. Quentin Moeschberger (Chilton). Youth included three of the four young men from Merrill who would go into the UCC ministry, as well as ten other gals and guys from Merrill. Youth leaders, I recall, included Jerry Bernardo, St. Germain; Kathy Stark (Wille), Oshkosh; and Karen Nelson (Mohr), Wisconsin Rapids.

I have no knowledge of what the South Wisconsin Synod did along the same lines.

In the Congregational Conference, the week-long Youth Ministry Leadership Camp, just before the opening of school, in late August, was a solid tradition. It helped senior high Pilgrim Fellowship youth leaders hone skills and develop programs for the coming year.

The Rev. John Remaly, was both Minister to Youth and Coordinator of Camps & Conferences. He and his family lived all summer at Pilgrim Camp, in "The Brown Cottage," just west of the chapel, on the western boundary of the camp. As late as 1965, my first year as Jack's successor on Conference staff, I stayed a few nights in the Brown Cottage. That became impractical, since I had to travel to Moon Beach as well. The Brown cottage was rented out for a while (to anyone who knew of its existence) and later used for permanent summer staff lodging. I have no idea what eventually happened to it.

Across the road, on the southwest edge of the Camp, was "The White Cottage". Congregational Superintendent, Jess Norenberg and his wife, Loretta, lived in it in for the summer. Dr. & Mrs. Clarence McCall, the first Wisconsin Conference UCC president, lived there too in the summers of 1963 & 1964. Dr. and Mrs. (Juel) Robert Stanger, the 1965-66 interim Conference president, did not live there in the summer of 1965 (he had just arrived on July 1) and was gone by the summer of 1966. Ralph and Ruth Ley never resided there. It became the home of the Pilgrim Camp cook, I believe. I do not know of its use today.

I do not know how involved Jack Remaly was in E&R camp planning, directors & staff recruitment, and program implementation prior to 1963.

My own first camp counseling experience was in the summer of 1961 at a junior high camp led by The Rev. Robert Schieler, Assoc. pastor to his father, the Rev. Egon Schieler at First Evangelical Lutheran (soon to be Our Savior UCC) in Ripon. Bob, or "Rip" as we called him, was an Eden Seminary schoolmate of mine. Number two on the staff as Recreation Director was The Rev. Paul Schippel, pastor of the E&R churches of Wisconsin Rapids. Paul, or "Ship," as we called him, was a long time friend: a Chicagooan, an Elmhurst College & Eden Seminary schoolmate.

But there were other top notch folk on staff: the Rev. & Mrs. (Lydia) Bruno Romanowski, Oshkosh); the Neillsville Children's home legend, Ella Stuckey; Asta Scheib, wife of the North Wisconsin Synod president; Evangeline "Van" Nelson from Paul's church in the Rapids. There was Harold and Millie Keen from the Rev. Harvey Norenberg's church in Neenah; Harvey, himself; Mr. & (the late) Mrs. Hank Svetnicka, lay folk from St. John's, Appleton (whose son is Moon Beach camp manager today); and school teacher Blanche Schneider from Alma. And there were others.

This group essentially remained together in the summer of 1964 as well. Both summers, I was a boys cabin counselor in Tamarack Cabin, the very last cabin down the beach and up on the hill near Vesper Point. I don't think I could hike it today.

All these aforementioned camper and counseling experiences were solid preparation for my emerging leadership roles.

### **Moon Beach Camp**

Whereas the South Wisconsin E&R Synod had no camping facility, and the Congregationalists had a facility for over two-thirds of a century, the North Wisconsin E&R Synod had just acquired one about five years before the formal beginning of the new Wisconsin Conference UCC on January 1, 1963. It was called Moon Beach Camp, and its history has been chronicled elsewhere in Wisconsin Conference records.

A former resort of over 200 acres, I think, Mr. George Phillips of St. Germain sold it c1957 to the North Wisconsin Synod for less than, I think, \$200,000. (Somewhere in my memory I recall it being indicated the late Mr. Phillips was the father-in-law of retired UCC Wisconsin clergyman Marwood Rettig.)

A key player in the early years of Moon Beach Camp was St. Germain businessman and Community UCC member Royal Meyer. Other key persons in that area were the Rev. Ed Hennig, of Elkhart Lake; the Rev. Lowell Ferguson ("Fergy") of Salem church, Plymouth; the Rev. David Gumm of Community church, St. Germain; the Rev. Harvey Kandler, First Congregational, Eagle River; and the Rev. Cal Fischer, St. Stephen, Merrill.

The first camp manager in 1957, if I am correct, was the recently widowed Rev. John Gerber, who vacationed near Eagle River. John had two daughters, one of whom Ruth, met a Merrill boy a decade later at Elmhurst College and married him, the late Rev. James Laak, pastor of Peace church, Schofield, 1983-2004. (Ruth's dad was pastor of the Barrington, Illinois, E&R church by then.)

In 1958, Vernon and Carol Bernardo came to manage the camp. They had been members of Fergy's church in Plymouth. They had three children – each active in youth work and camping – Jerry, Faye and Lee. Vern, in my judgment, was an outstanding camp manager. A WWII Navy vet, he could do and fix anything. He solidified the image with his down-home and low-key demeanor, and he smoked a pipe. Carol was gregarious, active in youth work, and a musician, the pianist at the St. Germain church. Jerry was an older teen; Faye a younger teen; and Lee older elementary age, when I arrived in Merrill in September 1960. When I interviewed in Merrill in May 1960, Cal drove me up to Moon Beach (about 90 minutes away) to see the facility. En route, I, a city boy, saw animals we only saw in the Chicago zoos: deer, porcupines, skunks, raccoons, and the like.

I met the Bernardo family. Upon being introduced to Lee, he greeted me by kicking me in the shin! A couple of years later he was to take me on my first snowmobile ride on, across, and around Moon Lake. And today, I understand, he is an active member of Peace church, Stevens Point.

The Bernardos, operating on a "shoe-string" budget, earning less than they did in Plymouth, in my mind, will always be Mr. & Mrs. Moon Beach Camp manager. When I recruited Northland College President Bailey to direct a family camp in the summer of 1965 or 66, I didn't realize that that decision would cost Moon Beach dearly. Bailey "stole" Vern Bernardo in 1966 to be head of maintenance at Northland. I was devastated when they left. They embodied the ideal, in my opinion, of the church camp manager.

The camp managers lived in “The White House” at the interior entrance to the camp, at the “top of the hill.” The early camp cooks were the Fockels, a retired couple from the Fox Cities area, I recall. They were there before I arrived in 1960 and after I left. At first, the Fockels lived in a large camp cabin, but then moved into a double size trailer – quite a cozy home behind the (then) Pavilion, then an open-sided screened-in structure, now named Hennig Hall. I think Ed Hennig was chairman of the Moon Beach board from its beginning until we merged it with Pilgrim to form United Church Camps, Inc. in the mid-1960s.

Moon Beach was a gorgeous north woods resort. White framed cabins, with knotty-pine interior walls, indoor plumbing, and at least two bedrooms sleeping six, plus one bed in the entry room. It was on a good size, virtually private lake with a pristine sand beach, pier and raft. And of course, there was the traditional large log-built lodge with a lounge, hearth, dining room, kitchen, and canteen. Secluded in a northern pine forest there was a virtual outdoor laboratory of flora and fauna. This was camping!

Sometime in the mid-1960s, Moon Beach swapped acreage with its neighbor, Mr. Olson, owner of a Chicago carpet company. The swap gave both parties a good “land fit.”

Like Pilgrim Camp, Moon Beach was conceived to be mainly a youth camp. Because it had been a resort, the Synod also experimented in the early years with a few weeks of family camping. They turned out to be “a big hit,” and that led to change when I arrived on the Conference staff in November 1964.

At all the camp facilities, the camp managers hired the “permanent” staff: cooks, maintenance folk, lifeguard, etc. I only hired and supervised the directors of creative activities and (later) the “core” staff, but in my physical absence they were to obey any directive from the camp manager.

### **Camps & Conferences Programming 1964-1966**

My hiring and terms of employment are detailed in my June 1, 2004 recollections on youth ministry. By the time I arrived on the job in November 1964, I had been a camper at Pilgrim in August 1953; a leader at the North Wisconsin Youth Synod on Labor Day weekend 1960; a junior high camp counselor at Moon Beach in 1961 & 1962; and a middle high camp director at Moon Beach in 1963 and 1964. As in the area of youth ministry, I was experienced, knew most of the folk on the E&R side in the camping scene, personal friends with the Bernardos, and knew a few of the Congregational leaders.

My predecessor, Jack Remaly, had been in charge of the programming side for both camps since January 1, 1963, and was technically the administrator of Pilgrim Camp, under the Congregational set-up, as secretary of the Pilgrim Camp Corporation. Technically, I assumed those roles as well. In practice, I saw the wisdom in not being corporately aligned with either camp facility, lest favoritism be perceived.

I was not permitted to take summer vacation. I visited the camps each week, trouble-shooting and forming links with directors, staff and managers. I felt it improper to closely relate with campers, so as not to interfere with the resident bonds that staff was building with the campers. I would drive to Moon Beach on a Thursday evening and visit staff and managers until Monday morning, when I'd drive back to Madison for office and family time. On the next weekend, I did the same at Pilgrim. That way, I was at each camp at each facility for at least 1 ½ -2 days every week. It was fun, when I was young. I can't even imagine doing it now at my advanced age! And all the wonderful and interesting folk I met.

By 1965, Herb Huebschmann in Milwaukee and John Heintz in Kohler were also developing small-scale, but well-attended, junior camps on Cedar Lake campus, near West Bend.

The very first thing I did in November 1964 was to establish close ties with Les and Audrey Pettack at Pilgrim Camp. They lived in the manager's home (along the main road) with their daughter and two sons. Les and Audrey were good, salt-of-the-earth people. I had met them earlier in 1963, when Jack gathered directors at Pilgrim Camp in the late winter for orientation.

When our first daughter, Beth Marie, died shortly after birth in October 1963, Audrey & Les were among many couples who sent condolences, who had also lost their first born child. I never forgot their kindness and their own personal pain. I consider the Pettacks good friends. What you saw was what you got. They were hard workers as well. Les was laid-back; Audrey was gregarious.

Since I was a camper at Pilgrim in 1953, the chapel had been built. Norenberg Lodge had just been built, although it was not so named at the time.

Around 1960, I think, Faville Hall, the year-around retreat building just east of the manager's home along the road, was built. It was modern for its time: year-around sleeping quarters for around 50; central bath rooms; kitchen & dining facilities; and a meeting room with a fire place – all under one roof. (The Rev. Dr. Theodore Faville had been Congregational Conference superintendent from 1922-47, when succeeded by Jess Norenberg, 1947-1962.) Many UCC churches and judicatory groups met at Faville during the 1960s.

Although there was one large cabin winterized by 1963 at Moon Beach (I think our Merrill senior high youth group was the first to use it), it was still too far to drive for a day or two-day meeting or retreat in an unpredictable Wisconsin winter.

I insert the word "retreat" because I had the title of Minister to Youth and Coordinator for Camps, Conferences and Retreats. During my six years on the job, I led a number of retreats, the very first one at George Williams College camp in late November 1964 for a "no-voting" southern Wisconsin Congregational church. Retreats were quite popular for all age teens, and gave a pastor and youth leaders a chance to bond in a setting other than "back home." I also published a Retreat Guide booklet for others to use.

Perhaps the philosophical difference and thus staffing implications between camping programming in the 1960s (and I think after "my era", throughout the 1970s) with the 1980s onward should be noted. In the 1960s & '70s, camps and conferences programs were both philosophically and structurally understood as an integral part of the educational ministry of the Wisconsin Conference to children, youth, adults, and families. The theological base was that "campers & conferees, in an out of doors residential setting, would grow in their relation to God, others, and their own self."

That changed in the early 1980s, I understand, when the Conference wanted more staff time in other areas and turned over camps and conferences programming entirely to the camp corporation.

In the 1960s, the Wisconsin Conference Commission on Christian Education had oversight of the camping program. It determined what camps would be offered at which sites; the recruiting and training of weekly directors and staff; the choosing of themes and materials; the preparing and mailing of promotional and registration materials; and the hiring of any paid program staff (such as Directors of Creative Activities and later the "Core" staff at Pilgrim and Moon Beach).

I recall visiting Moon Beach in the summer of 1998, and relating this structure to an employee. The employee responded, "That's an odd way of doing things." Well, maybe so, but it might depend on how a judicatory sees its ministry to its churches and folks. I think the UCC identification and support waned when it eliminated the personal touch and restructured its ministry to its people and churches. Gone

are the exciting judicatory and national programs of caravanning, ICYE, voluntary services in a broad sense, well-attended youth camps & conferences, Conference and Association youth boards, and Conference and Association youth gatherings.

The membership and number of churches in the Wisconsin Conference in 2004 is 2/3 to 3/4 of what it was in the 1960s, and we have more Conference and Association staff today. Yet Wisconsin is one of the “stronger” Conferences in the UCC today.

By 1965, some changes were obvious. Although there had been family camps interspersed throughout the summer at Moon Beach, it was decided “to bunch” the camping program with junior and junior high camps in the first three weeks, followed by consecutive weeks of family camp the rest of the summer. Family camping at Moon Beach is quite alive and well to this day – almost a half-century later.

Youth camps by the mid-1960s were lessening in attendance chiefly because of other competition to young people’s summer recreational time. Thus the Moon Beach senior high camp was back to 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades.

By 1966, off-site canoe senior high camps (based at Moon Beach) began. And a family camp for those with special needs (physically and learning challenged) were first introduced.

Taking advantage of the lovely fall color in the Moon Beach area, Over-55 weekend camps were also first introduced, with Ruth and Ralph Ley being the pioneer leaders.

At Cedar Lake, West Bend, Friedens E&R, Milwaukee, pastor Herb Huebschmann was expanding inner city camping, and the Rev. John Heintz of Kohler continued to expand junior (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grades) camping.

At Pilgrim Camp, a long-held family camp of active Congregational folk, continued, as did junior high camps. But others were seeing signs of decrease. So a plan was devised to diversify. First, during some weeks, two camps were held simultaneously – e.g., a junior camp and a senior high one. Youth were separated on either side of “the road.” Another was the introduction in 1966 of a sailing camp, which I recall was held simultaneously with a junior high camp.

Second, we introduced a Music, Art, and Drama (MAD) camp about the same time. (I understand that dance has been added in recent years.)

A third, off-site opportunity was senior high urban experiences (seminars and work camps) in the city of Milwaukee, coordinated by Herb Huebschmann and the new (in 1966) Minister to Metropolitan Mission, Dave Rolhning.

### **Staff Development**

As the 1960s rolled-on, recruiting for youth camps staffing became a challenge. Veteran camp directors often preferred “the plum” of a “free vacation” with their families at a Moon Beach family camp. The dedicated lay staffs were getting older, and it was more difficult to recruit both weekly directors and staff.

One response was more extensive training than just the day before camp opened. Mid-west camping coordinators, such as I, hosted at East Bay Camp in central Illinois, a training session to training directors back home. It was led by Ethel Schellenberger and Ed Schlingman from our national staff in PA. Back home in our Conferences, these leaders then trained directors and staffs in later winter or spring at Pilgrim Camp for the upcoming camping season.

I recall no single reported incidence of staff misbehavior toward campers in those years and the Pettacks and Bernardos (and later the Whittuns) kept close watch. That does not mean we didn't have a few problems. At Moon Beach, one summer, a boy at a family camp was allegedly injured in a water hose competition, which led to the popular event being permanently halted. At another Moon Beach camp, it was reported that one out-of-state volunteer counselor took an overdose of sleeping pills in an alleged suicide attempt. But those are the only two out-of-the-ordinary incidents I recall.

By the mid-1960s, arts and crafts played as big a specialty role as water activities. So I proposed and we enacted a full-time summer position at both camps to staff a program position of Director of Creative Activities. So, in 1966, at Moon Beach and Pilgrim, we hired two DCAs. Karen Nelson (now Mrs. James Mohr), who had been a Lakeland College student, from St. John's Church in Wisconsin Rapids, was hired for Moon Beach. At Pilgrim, we hired Patricia Goldberg, who was a Chicago Theological Seminary, former Madison elementary school teacher, and was raised in the Port Washington Congregational Church.

In late spring 1966, Karen, Pat and I traveled to Defiance College in Defiance, Ohio, for a five-day recreation workshop. (Defiance is, I believe, the only "Christian" college from the Congregational and Christian side of the merger.) It was one of the most learning, fun and horizon-broadening experiences I have ever had. The multi-day workshop was led by our national staff and had outstanding leaders in song-leading, outdoor and indoor games, creative activities in a number of arts, crafts, dance, and drama areas, worship, camping skills, international ethnic traditions, etc.

Each spring, I attended the UW-Extension two-day recreation camp at the Marathon County UW Campus and County Park. Although it was good – especially for non-religious camping leaders – I always felt the Defiance College experience was the best. As it turned out, I became fairly good at camp song leading and outdoor group games.

In 1968, we began to think a permanent paid core staff was needed at youth camps. So, beginning in 1969, I think, we hired and trained about six college women and men at Moon Beach and Pilgrim to be a "professional" core of staff. Each was paid \$1000 for the summer, plus room and board. They were also to be resource and support people for volunteer staff. Because of the quality of the young men and women, it worked well. I know two of the young men, Mike Bausch from the Congregational Church of Watertown and Bill Handy from Orchard Ridge UCC, Madison, went on to become UCC pastors. I know the Core Staff program continued on for many years, but I have no knowledge of it's or a similar program today.

I also felt that our camp facilities should be in the main stream of accredited camp facilities. So in late 1965, I think, both Moon Beach and Pilgrim joined the American Camping Association. We applied for accreditation. Both sites were inspected and evaluated for accreditation, and won approval. Both sites the affixed the ACA accreditation sign on its camp entry sign.

I remember attending the ACA national convention in Chicago in March 1966, because shortly after I returned, our son Robert Frank, was born (on St. Patrick's Day). I recall also attending the ACA national convention one other time – 1967 or 1968 – in St. Louis. At these gatherings, one was exposed to new ideas, programs, legal issues, equipment, supplies, and other products. If I'm not mistaken, Les & Audrey Pettack went to part of the Chicago ACA convention also.

## Ecumenical Relations and Impact

Beginning in 1960 with the choosing of the reformist Pope John XXIII and at the same time in the USA of the Blake (Presbyterian)-Pike (Episcopal) proposal, the decade began with an active ecumenical spirit that continued throughout the 1960s. It saw its way into the UCC's camping program.

Many Roman Catholic lay folk and some priests welcomed the "opening of the windows" of their church to let the fresh air of the modern world in. Both in Madison and Milwaukee, there arose lay communities within RC parishes. I gained a new insight and respect of the RC church that could not only tolerate, but embrace alternative worship styles and personal scriptural consciousness. In Madison, I became personally familiar with two such groups: The New Community and the John XXIII Community, born out of the reforms of the Vatican II Council of the early '60s.

In addition to renewal within the RC church, the fresh air of the open windows drifted over to interfaith dialogs, with a program and text ("Living Room Dialogues") for RC and Protestants to get together in homes. This led to my proposing and our hosting an ecumenical family camp at Moon Beach. I co-directed it in 1969, I think, and directed it in 1970 and 1971 (something like that).

We would have a RC priest and a UCC or Presbyterian minister leading the adult sessions, and families who registered as close to half-and-half as we could. Each year the camp was filled. It was great. Great people; great spirit; great fun; lively discussions.

Many anecdotes: one priest brought along a prominent woman psychologist colleague to assist in the discussions. Within five years, he left the priesthood and got married. When I retired back to Madison in 1998, I met them at a theological symposium, enjoying married life some 25 years later.

One year, I had a pastoral counselor, a former seminary professor of mine, on staff. He was so well received, by mid-week he was holding family counseling with some couples.

One evening around the fireplace in the Lodge, the families had bonded so well, frank questions were now comfortable. One RC couple, in its early 40s with nine (!) children was asked (and remember, this was the "anything goes" '60s), "how do you two cope? How do you stay together?" Dead-pan-faced, they jointly replied, "Easy. Whoever asks for a divorce gets ALL the kids!" We all understood and roared with laughter.

We prayed together; sang together; and worshipped together. I even think we communed together, or at least when the Protestant pastor led communion, all RC's were invited to participate, which they (including the RC priest) did. But, I must confess of not having any recollection of Protestants participating in the Eucharist in a RC mass.

Another ecumenical effort was through the Camps and Conferences Committee of the Wisconsin Council of Churches – a very active group of judicatory staff and committee chairmen, who were mostly the same folk involved in youth work and Christian Education. I became very close in all the efforts with my Presbyterian, Methodist, EUB, LCA, ALC, Episcopal (Milwaukee Diocese only), and ABC colleagues. As a matter of fact, the West Methodist Conference staff colleague, Wayne Helmerich, lived across the street from us on the 500 block of Charles Lane on Madison's west side. His two daughters were our kids' baby sitters. We are still in touch now with LaVerne, Wayne's widow, at Christmas time.

Bob Raymond was a solid Presby. synodical staff person based in Waukesha, as well as Rev. Schultz, the LCA man out of Milwaukee. Art Basilie was a most gracious ABC staffer out of Elm Grove. And I found all the EUB clergy – to a man – to be top notch: spiritually, biblically, and pastorally.

We agreed that anyone from each ones denomination could attend any denomination's camps at the same rates and under the same rules and registration procedures. From 1966 to at least when I left, after the 1970 camping season, we published an annual joint camping brochure, listing sites, age-group events, dates, costs, and location.

This was the era of the Consultation on Church Union (COCU), which grew out of the proposal of the Presbyterian's national Stated Clerk, Eugene Carson Blake, and San Francisco Episcopal bishop, James K. Pike. Their idea was the Christian churches separation was a scandal in the eyes of God, and that all the mainline (at least) Protestant denominations come together in a structured organic union. Thus began COCU, which ended in the mid-1990s, I think. Its result was the recognition of ministries and ordination of each of the participating mainline groups. I have no knowledge of what the specific impact of that policy has had, although folks today seem less denominational conscious.

In the UCC, the ecumenical spirit of the '60s had a significant impact, when we merged camping programs with the Presbyterian Synod of Wisconsin in 1966 (I think that was the first joint camping year). In that act, we created Cooperative Camps and Conferences.

I wish to close this section by noting that "ecumenism" connotes more than interdenominational (including RC's) awareness. The word has its root in "belong to the whole house" (economics), and broader the whole world (the household of God).

Thus, we always had a world friendship visitor at our camps – introducing the youth and families to the broader world in the personification of a person from Africa, Asia, South America, or non-Anglo Europe. For many of our folk this was a first time experience of actually living, eating, and interacting with someone from a really far off place.

### **Cooperative Camps and Conferences, 1967-70**

There has been a long history of cooperation between the UCC and Presbyterians. Going back to the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a Comity agreement, when Congregationalists and Presbyterians would vote in a community as to with which denomination it would affiliate. (My last church in southeast Michigan began as a Presbyterian church in 1840, but then went Congregational in 1848.)

In Wisconsin, Congregationalists and Presbyterians even divided up railroad lines, and establish one denomination in one town, but not in the other. So, in Eagle River, Rhinelander, Tomahawk, Antigo, and Wisconsin Rapids, there is a Congregational church, but not a Presbyterian church. In Merrill, Wausau, Stevens Point, and Marshfield, there is a Presbyterian church, but no Congregational church.

It could be argued that on the E&R side of the UCC, there is a theological kinship with Presbyterians – all three bodies have roots in the Reformed tradition of Protestantism.

By 1966, serious discussions were taking place with the Presbyterians about merging our two camping programs. Because of corporate legalities, we would not merge the camp facilities. (As a matter of fact, I do not think the corporate merger of Pilgrim and Moon Beach had not been cemented yet.)

The Presbyterians' camping philosophy, experiences, and structure (i.e., age group breakdowns) were virtually identical to ours. We would ecclesiastically "bump-into" one another a many ecumenical events and discussions. For a brief period – a year or two in the late '60s– our denominations' national magazine, **A.D.**, was one.

The Wisconsin Synod of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (its name prior to the merger with the southern Presbyterians) owned two camp facilities. One was Camp Galilee near Mellen in northwest Wisconsin about 30 miles south of Lake Superior. It was a north woods cabin facility, slightly similar to Moon Beach, but not nearly as well developed. Even the lake was wanting – wading through high grass to get to its part which was swimming friendly.

The other was Camp Montello, an undeveloped “pure” camping facility on Buffalo Lake (a widening of the Fox River, upstream from Montello). By 1970, the Montello site was formally renamed Camp Corbin, in honor of retired WI/DNR forester, Joe Corbin, of Madison, who literally ran that “wilderness” camp. A gentle, low-key, hard working, Joe was a great guy.

It was agreed that I would be the program staff person for all four facilities with a quasi-administration role at Galilee and Corbin. So in the later years of my tenure, I traveled to all four sites. I was young. The Presbyterians paid something, but I cannot recall how much. But their cooperation and organizational supports was excellent. I got to know many of their leaders and pastors.

The resources of the Waukesha office were at my disposal, and Bob Raymond’s secretary, Eva Christiansen, was a gem. The issue of my having Presbyterian ecclesiastical standing didn’t arise, but might have had I stayed on the job longer and the national Presbyterian structural changes not occurred. However, the Presbyterians did send me to a week-long national camping training session in Pacific Palisades, northwest of Los Angeles. In everyday practice, I was “one of them.” From 1966 or 1970, I used CCC stationery with both denominations logos and names, and my office address in Madison, whenever it involved camping matters.

This ecumenical, organizational commitment sat well with Ralph Ley and the WI Conf. Board of Directors. Camp Corbin brought a “wilderness” and pure camping dimension the UCC’s didn’t have. And Galilee was closer for our northwest UCC churches. It worked pretty well for youth camping.

In those later years, we also had a junior high camp for UCC’s and Presby’s in the far, far northwest at the West Methodist Whispering Pines camp, near Frederic. It was a beautiful site, and, yes, the pines actually whispered! For those UCC & Presbyterian folk in the far, far northeast, we had a junior high camp at a camp near Crivitz, which I think was run by Forest County. I remember its gorgeous log cabin style buildings among the tall pines.

By 1970, CCC had jointly almost 100 different kinds of summer camps and conferences experiences from Frederic, Mellen, St. Germain, and Crivitz in the north, to Montello, Green Lake, West Bend and Milwaukee in the central and south.

In 1970, the Presbyterians, nationally, restructured. The Synod of Wisconsin merged with Minnesota as the Synod of Lakes & Prairies, or as Bob Raymond grumbled, “The Synod of swamps and Sink Holes.” Many Wisconsin Presbyterians were saddened that their future rested not ecumenically with UCCers in Wisconsin, but with other Presbyterians in our neighboring state. After all, didn’t this run contrary to (our own) Eugene Carson Blake’s vision? By the time I left the Conference at the end of August, 1970, Bob’s office was closed and moved from Waukesha to the inter-church center in Minneapolis.

I must confess, I do not know how long CCC survived after that. Also, about the same time, the Presbyterian’s abruptly pulled out of **A.D.** and restarted its own national magazine. The light of ecumenism began flickering.

## United Church Camps, Inc.

When the merger officially took place in Wisconsin on January 1, 1963, discussions began on the legal merger of our camp facilities. It was a reasonable step to get our whole new structure in order.

Pilgrim & Moon Beach were different legal structures.

Pilgrim, dating back 75 years to the old Green Lake Bible Institute, was actually a separate not-for-profit stock corporation, with the WI Congregational Conference holding the overwhelming amount of shares. The Conference President was Pilgrim Camp's corporate president, and the Conference's Minister to Youth was corporate secretary and chief administrator of Pilgrim Camp.

Moon Beach was corporately integrated into the North Wisconsin Synod, with its board members elected by the Synod.

Historically, both structures made sense to each body's individual constituency. But in the "new order," it was somewhat akin to mixing oil and water. Oddly, E&Rs may not remember nor appreciate that in this merger, the new entity smacked more of E&R tradition. It was more difficult for Congregational camp leaders to accept.

Here's how it looked, practically. The old structure of Pilgrim was not effective in the long run. The new Wisconsin Conference, headed by Mac, didn't want to be directly involved the running of the camp, legally. Mac voted the overwhelming amount of shares and could legally do what he wanted. But, he had to deal with history, loyalties and personalities.

So, there was a two-track process on the Pilgrim Camp side to get things in line with the more effective Moon Beach corporate structure. First, there was the legal track. We turned to Foley & Lardner, the prestigious Milwaukee law firm, which served the merging church bodies well in the early 1960s. Its attorneys studied the situation and outlined the most logical alternative, beginning with the dissolving of the stock corporation. Then, tweaking the Moon Beach structure just a tad, proposed a united camp facilities corporation, United Church Camps, Inc.

In between, there needed to be some hand-holding. Mac was at his best in this. The Pilgrim Vice President was a physician from First Church, Madison, whose name I've forgotten. He lived in Shorewood Hills, and I would pick him up to go to board meetings at Pilgrim (in the Faville Hall lounge). The treasurer was Clayton Tinkham, prominent Ripon realtor and insurance man, who was a member of First Church there. The financial secretary was Miss Christine Krueger, a banker I think) and laywoman from First Evangelical Lutheran (now Our Savior's UCC) in Ripon, an E&R church. It was helpful that I knew a relative of each. Clayton's niece (?), Natalie, was a librarian at Madison Public Library and Miss Krueger's brother, T. Howard, was head of the school of music at Elmhurst College, under whom I sang in the Chapel choir, and who taught me much about classical music. He was also my mother's boss.

In a patient process from 1963-65, Mac worked through the history and loyalties without much ado. By late 1965, I think, the new corporation was complete. Ed Hennig, "the patron saint" of Moon Beach was elected president of the new corporation, legally related to the Wisconsin Conference UCC. My Conference position was appropriately removed not only as an officer, but even from the board. I was ex-officio with voice, but without vote.

Board membership was appropriately increased, and now members were (are still?) elected on staggering terms. There was no consideration as to CC or E&R, but that was in the back of the nominating committee's mind in the early years. And keep in mind, former South Wisconsin Synod E&R

folk had no legal input into this process. It never was corporately involved. There was no consideration as to geography of board members, although it became obvious that all four new Associations should be represented. And, the camp managers had no vote, but full voice.

This new structure made matters of insurance, legalities, salaries, benefits, personnel practices, capital projects, etc. more efficient for the new Wisconsin Conference UCC.

Unlike today, the programming for camps and conferences still was part of the philosophy and organizational duties of the Conference, personified by the Minister to Youth and Coordinator for Camps and Conferences. I understand that ended in the early 1980s, and UCCI does the whole thing.

### **Epilogue**

When I left the employment of the Conference in August 1970, I continued to direct a family camp each summer through 1972, I think. My son, Rob, worked on the Moon Beach maintenance staff in 1984, the summer following graduation from Lincoln High School in Wisconsin Rapids, and before he began at UW-Madison. The rest of our family was at camp that summer, our last time, as we then moved to Ann Arbor, MI. Later that same summer, camp manager Ken Nimmer died. The Nimmer's junior high son, Lee, had been in my cabin way back in the summer of 1961.

Song leading was a favorite activity of mine, having learned from so many. In June 1970, upon Ed Schlingman's invitation, I spent a week at the UCC Volunteer Training Center in the hills outside of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, as a member of the 1970 edition of the *Songs of Many Nations* songbook committee. Over the years, I loved each edition of that wonderful camp songbook. Sadly, that 1970 edition was the last one ever published.

A church camp experience is sometimes described as close to an emotional religious experience as one can get in the UCC. I know its bonding can be life-transforming. Almost everyone I have ever known, who has been to church camp says it was one of the most important and cherished experiences of life. To this day, church folk will come up to me and say, "I was changed by church camp, and even, I entered the ministry because of what influenced me through church camp." Can you imagine my own joy, being an integral part of that – and they even paid me!

### III

## CONFERENCE MINISTER OF YOUTH WORK AND CAMPING QUESTIONNAIRE

### I

Answered by Jack Remaly (JR)

**HK: When did you first begin your work with our church camps? Had you ever been a camper or at the Moon Beach or Pilgrim Camp sites before you were a Conference employee?**

JR: I first began in 1957. I was not a camper, but was a counselor at a Senior High Camp held at Northland College, Ashland, and a Junior High Camp at Pilgrim Camp when I was in college.

**HK: What kind of work were you doing before you became Minister to Youth Work/Camping? What were you told by the Conference Board when they hired you for this position?**

JR: I was a seminary student and a student pastor.

**HK: Did they give you a job description to follow? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

JR: No written job description. Since I was the first person to hold this position for the Wisconsin Congregational Conference and the Wisconsin Conference UCC, the job evolved.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became Conference Youth Worker/Camping? Were you commissioned by that church? Did that church give you and our camps support while you were in this position?**

JR: I was a member of Orchard Ridge UCC, Madison, Wisconsin, and they supported me and the camps.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract with the Conference Board? What was your first yearly salary and how long did you serve in this position?**

JR: I was to oversee the camping program and to promote Pilgrim Fellowship. We immediately began joint work with the two Evangelical and Reformed Synods. We had a joint committee on the camps and conferences of which I was Chair, and Reuben Huenemann was the secretary. Combined youth ministry efforts were slower but eventually merged when the Wisconsin Conference UCC was formed. My salary the first year was around \$4,000 annually, with some minor benefits.

**HK: Describe your first meeting or event at Moon Beach and Pilgrim Camp.**

JR: This is a tough one. Since I started in February, most meetings I attended were not held at either site. I'm not sure, but I think Moon Beach had either just been purchased and was not yet operative, or was in the very early stages. During the 7 ½ years I was in this position, I attempted to attend part or

all of the Junior High and Senior High Camps at both locations. According to my recollection, the Junior Camps at West Bend operated somewhat independently.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as Conference Youth Work/Camping Minister.**

JR: The challenge was to learn the whole program in as short a time as possible. I read every file on camping and Pilgrim Fellowship I could lay my hands on, talked to many people, met with camp directors that had already been recruited for that summer, and in general, tried to get up to speed. Serge Hummon, Associate Conference Minister, who had worked with some of the camps, was very helpful in my orientation. I learned a lot in the first three years, and may even have done some good work in the last 4 ½ years.

**HK: Name any other major challenges during your tenure**

JR: Recruiting volunteer staff for camps and conferences was always an annual challenge. As three separate entities, a Conference and two Synods, just learning to trust each other was probably the greatest challenge. When that began to happen, we found it relatively easy to work out the necessary compromises.

**HK: Does one year stand out as the greatest year of your service to the Conference in this capacity?**

JR: Not any one year. I think the years leading up to the merger into the Wisconsin Conference UCC, when we were already working together in Youth Ministry and the Camps and Conference and in most other areas of Christian Education, were really the good years.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

JR: In the beginning, working for a Conference Minister who had very firm expectations was often difficult. However, I also learned much about church administration from him. I am now grateful for the opportunity he gave me so early in my ministry and for his strong guidance.

**HK: What changes happened during your tenure that made a difference in the Youth work/camping program?**

JR: I look back on those years as a kind of “golden age” of Youth Ministry & Camping.

The greatest changes were those that took place as we tried to respond to the civil rights and peace efforts which dominated those years.

**HK: Name special people who helped make your years as a Conference employee fruitful and meaningful (this could be Conference staff, other church people, camp leaders, etc.)**

JR: My pastors, Norman Jackson and Roger Knight, Jess Norenberg, Serge Hummon, Paul Kehle, Jim Savides, Paul Olm, Hilton Grams, Joe Grandlienard (Wisconsin Council of Churches), Reuben Huenemann, Vernon Jaberg, many camp directors and counselors.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Camp Boards/UCCI? In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

JR: I felt that I had excellent support from the Youth Ministry and Camping program committee members. I did not have much contact with the Moon Beach Board of Directors. Program was planned mainly through the program entities. I was on the Pilgrim Camp Board, however, and had excellent cooperation from them.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference Board.**

JR: The Conference Board mainly tried to keep costs down. It would have been helpful to have a better salary.

**HK: Will you share with us some people stories that may be of interest or where lives were changed?**

JR: One of my favorite people is Ray Hernandez. Although we came from different denominational backgrounds at first, we worked very well together, and, I felt, affirmed each other. Because of the strong religious/emotional nature of camping, I believe many lives were influenced and changed. I cannot point to any one such experience at this time.

**HK: Did you help institute any new kinds of camping during your tenure, e.g., canoe camping, etc.**

JR: I helped institute some new camping trends as a facilitator for a joint effort mainly on the part of the camp directors who met several times each year to plan and develop program.

**HK: Did you feel your time as a Conference staff youth worker/camping minister was a “growth” experience? Has it left a mark on your life?**

JR: Definitely “yes” to both questions.

**HK: Do you have any advice to give to future Conference personnel in this capacity, to camp board members, camp managers, or the churches in general.**

JR: I feel that in many ways much enthusiasm on the part of youth and churches was lost when we moved from the connected “fellowship” emphasis to Youth Ministry at the Association, Conference, and National levels. However, it’s a different era, and any advice I could give now would be seriously out-dated.

**HK: If you have any insights to share from your era as Conference Youth work/camping minister that would be worthy of preservation for history that you have not already mentioned, please share them now.**

JR: I am very grateful for having had this opportunity so early in my ministry. It opened up possibilities for service that I had not had up to that time—opportunities I had not imagined were possible for me, and helped me to connect with truly creative and charismatic leaders in the UCC who have enriched my entire life.

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**Answered by Obid Hofland (OH)**

**HK: When did you first begin your work with our church camps? Had you ever been a camper or at the Moon Beach or Pilgrim Camp sites before you were a Conference employee?**

OH: I began my work with the camps in November of 1970. I had been a camper at Moon Beach several times while I was in high school in Fountain City, WI.

**HK: What kind of work were you doing before you became Minister to Youth Work/Camping? What were you told by the Conference Board when they hired you for this position?**

OH: I was Minister for Youth at First Central Congregational UCC in Omaha, Nebraska. --I was told that the Wisconsin Conference had a good youth program and that it needed to continue with some new "blood".

**HK: Did they give you a job description to follow? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

OH: I did have a job description to follow. As I remember it, it was very general. I did realize what I was getting into when I took the job.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became Conference Youth Worker/Camping? Were you commissioned by that church? Did that church give you and our camps support while you were in this position?**

OH: I was a charter member of Madison Christian Community. I was commissioned by that church, and that church gave great support to me and to the Conference-wide program of camping and youth ministry.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract with the Conference Board? What was your first yearly salary and how long did you serve in this position?**

OH: I do not remember any of the provisions of the first contract, and I never kept a copy. I thought my first yearly salary was pretty damn good at the time.....although I don't remember the amount. I served in the position of Minister for Youth and Camping until November of 1977.

**HK: Describe your first meeting or event at Moon Beach and Pilgrim Camp.**

OH: I don't remember my first meeting or event at either place. I suspect it was with UCCI.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as Conference Youth Work/Camping Minister.**

OH: a)recruiting counselors for camp; b) recruiting counselors for the annual Spring Youth Conference of 1,500 youth; c) keeping Gladys Hefty off my back about finances

**HK: Name any other major challenges during your tenure**

OH: My son, Joel, was born within the first year I was on the job. He was six weeks premature, and it was a challenge to be with him, attend the Conference Annual Meeting, and train camp staff all at the same time and in the same week.

**HK: Does one year stand out as the greatest year of your service to the Conference in this capacity?**

OH: No

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

OH: The most difficult thing I had to deal with was the constant recruiting of camp directors and other staff. Unless we offered pay, it was always a challenge.

**HK: What changes happened during your tenure that made a difference in the Youth work/camping program?**

OH: Many changes in the number of paid CORE Staff; changes in the Spring Youth Conference place and style; changes in Camp Director training and recruiting, just to name the three that I remember.

**HK: Name special people who helped make your years as a Conference employee fruitful and meaningful (this could be Conference staff, other church people, camp leaders, etc.)**

OH: Ralph Ley, Pat Goldberg, Jan Davis, Bob and Joan Findlay

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Camp Boards/UCCI? In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

OH: Yes, the support was always there. The Board(s) were always open to new ideas and to helping wherever and whenever they could.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference Board.**

OH: Support with money; support with other staff (secretary, etc.).

**HK: Will you share with us some people stories that may be of interest or where lives were changed?**

OH: I feel that at least three young people chose the Professional Ministry as a career because of my work and my relationship with them while I was on the Wisconsin Conference Staff.

**HK: Did you help institute any new kinds of camping during your tenure, e.g., canoe camping, etc.**

OH: Mission trips to different parts of the USA; and new kinds of family camps.

**HK: Did you feel your time as a Conference staff youth worker/camping minister was a "growth" experience? Has it left a mark on your life?**

OH: It definitely was a growth experience in many, many ways: with youth, with other adults who cared about youth and camping, with the Conference Staff changes and support. It has left a great mark on my life, and I learned a great deal about people and churches while in Wisconsin.

**HK: Do you have any advice to give to future Conference personnel in this capacity, to camp board members, camp managers, or the churches in general.**

OH: Use people's gifts!!!!

**HK: If you have any insights to share from your era as Conference Youth work/camping minister that would be worthy of preservation for history that you have not already mentioned, please share them now.**

OH: None

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**Answered by James Martin (JM)**

**HK: When did you first begin your work with our church camps? Had you ever been a camper or at the Moon Beach or Pilgrim Camp sites before you were a Conference employee?**

JM: Began my work September, 1978. No, I had not been a camper at either site.

**HK: What kind of work were you doing before you became Minister to Youth Work/Camping? What were you told by the Conference Board when they hired you for this position?**

JM: This position was the start of my seminary internship, under the direction of Robert Mutton, who was an Associate Conference Minister at the time. I did not interview with the Conference Board, only (as I recall) a couple of people from UCCI and JYMTF (Junior and Youth Ministry). This was to be a nine month position with shared responsibilities in both camping and youth ministry.

**HK: Did they give you a job description to follow? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

JM: A job description? I'm not sure. This was a new position and seemed to evolve—maybe it was just I who evolved. My responsibilities primarily involved camp director recruitment (and assistance in training), conducting outdoor ministry presentations at quite a few churches around the state, and publicity and program for the Winter Event (in January) and Spring Youth Conference (in April). I also worked with the Presbyterians in coordinating outdoor and youth ministry—so camps at Gallilee and Corbin were also in my charge. I think I realized as much as possible what I was getting into; it would all be new and I would learn a great deal.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became Conference Youth Worker/Camping? Were you commissioned by that church? Did that church give you and our camps support while you were in this position?**

JM: As a seminary intern, I had relatively little contact with my home church in Villa Park, Illinois. While in Madison, I attended Community of Hope UCC. I was not commissioned, and my primary support came from Bob Mutton.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract with the Conference Board? What was your first yearly salary and how long did you serve in this position?**

JM: There were few provisions for anything in my contract. I believe I received \$800 per month--\$150 of which was used for apartment rental. No other benefits.

**HK: Describe your first meeting or event at Moon Beach and Pilgrim Camp.**

JM: I believe UCCI met at Moon Beach for its Fall meeting. The Lodge was our central gathering place. The board members were friendly and competent, extremely cordial, and hard working—the sessions were long and late. I listened and learned. I'm sure I didn't talk much. The winter meeting was at Pilgrim Center. At the time, it seemed that Moon Beach was the favored site—the Cadillac of Church Camps. Pilgrim, on the other hand, seemed to struggle for its life—as a sickly child that no one knew what to do with.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as Conference Youth Work/Camping Minister.**

JM: It was all a challenge. Director recruitment required much effort-- Constant work. Communication with perspective directors was often slow. I didn't want to send mimeographed form letters to recruits, so all 50 letters were individually typed. Joyce in the office helped me on this as she had time. For the youth programs, I designed the event publicity and coordinated the mailings (I think I still have copies of these if they'd be useful). I also developed a multi-media presentation for outdoor ministry that was well received.

**HK: Name any other major challenges during your tenure.**

JM: The loneliness of living in Madison with no support community to speak of was the major challenge. Bob Mutton did an admirable job of keeping an eye out for me.

**HK: Does one year stand out as the greatest year of your service to the Conference in this capacity?**

JM: Following my internship ('78-'79), I finished seminary and continued to work with the camping program as a UCCI Board member from '80-'83. In 1982, as vice president, I designed the publicity for and coordinated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration for Moon Beach. It was a memorable event, and no one died—though one of our distinguished dinner guests really tried.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

JM: This was not solely my responsibility; however, the on-going financial struggles of the camps were a constant point of concern for me. Where would the money come from for essential repairs and upgrades at both sites? It was obvious we were not keeping up with our basic needs. Despite the hard work of our site staffs and board members, without greater financial backing from the Conference, our outdoor ministry was threatened.

**HK: What changes happened during your tenure that made a difference in the Youth work/camping program?**

JM: I'm not sure there were any. I was asked to make sure that publicity for the events was effective and timely, so I tried to do that. Both Winter Event and Spring Youth Conference were well received—as I remember, about 130 and 210 in attendance, respectively.

**HK: Name special people who helped make your years as a Conference employee fruitful and meaningful (this could be Conference staff, other church people, camp leaders, etc.)**

JM: So many—Bob Mutton, Nancy Mutton, Rollie Cooper, Howard Kanetzke, Mary Ann Neevel, Ken and Betty Nimmer, Ralph Ley, Mary Nack, Allen Martling. A great bunch of people!

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Camp Boards/UCCI? In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

JM: Yes, they were generally supportive. I was frustrated, however, with my role as liaison between UCCI and the Nimmer's at Moon Beach. I was to listen carefully to their concerns and bring them to the Board for consideration. For a variety of reasons (the greatest of which was probably the financial crunch), their concerns seemed always to be put aside.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference Board.**

JM: None to speak of. I really had no contact with them.

**HK: Will you share with us some people stories that may be of interest or where lives were changed?**

JM: Nothing specific comes to mind. Generally, the experiences seemed to cement people's relationships with the wider church—an indispensable avenue for growth.

**HK: Did you help institute any new kinds of camping during your tenure, e.g., canoe camping, etc.**

JM: Some week-long intermediate camps were added to the schedule, and tenderfoot camps were started. Also, sailing camps for senior highs were started—as I remember, from significant financial support and encouragement from Reed Forbush and First Congregational Church in Sheboygan.

**HK: Did you feel your time as a Conference staff youth worker/camping minister was a "growth" experience? Has it left a mark on your life?**

JM: Yes, I grew a great deal through this, and made by share of mistakes. Overall, it firmed up my support for outdoor ministry in general. We've directed many camps over the years. Also, we've been able to encourage many of our church members to participate as campers and financial supporters.

**HK: Do you have any advice to give to future Conference personnel in this capacity, to camp board members, camp managers, or the churches in general.**

JM: Remember that it's an important ministry and deserves adequate financial backing.

**HK: If you have any insights to share from your era as Conference Youth work/camping minister that would be worthy of preservation for history that you have not already mentioned, please share them now.**

JM: I was primarily there as a student—to learn and help where I could. It was a rare opportunity to see a larger view of the church than most seminarians get. If possible, I'd like the Conference to look for similar opportunities for training seminary students.

**October, 2003**

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**Answered by Jann Weaver (JW)**

**HK: When did you first begin your work with our church camps? Had you ever been a camper or at the Moon Beach or Pilgrim Camp sites before you were a Conference employee?**

JW: I began my work as Youth Minister and Camping the Fall of 1977 and continued through the summer of 1978. During this time I led four camps and trained leaders for elementary school camps and junior high camps. I worked with leaders on youth programming at Pilgrim and helped with the staffing of camps and setting up special weeks of camping.

I had been a camper as a youth in 1968 (Pilgrim Camp), where the UCC and United Presbyterian were working together, and I continued to go there every summer through high school, as well as attending spring and fall youth conferences. I had two years of leadership training with Obid Hofland, who held the position in the Conference that I later held. These sessions took place 1970-75.

**HK: What kind of work were you doing before you became Minister to Youth Work/Camping? What were you told by the Conference Board when they hired you for this position?**

JW: I was doing one semester of graduate study at the University of Wisconsin, and I didn't want to go back to school, when Bob Mutton worked on me to accept the position as a conference employee. Bob Mutton then set up a meeting with the Conference Board and Dr. Ralph Ley and urged them to hire me as a good way to give conference youth programming full attention and a boost.

**HK: Did they give you a job description to follow? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

JW: Since I had done a lot of camping, I knew what I was getting into. I did not have a written job description, but was fully aware of all things.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became Conference Youth Worker/Camping? Were you commissioned by that church? Did that church give you and our camps support while you were in this position?**

JW: I wasn't a member of a particular church until seminary, when I joined Orchard Ridge UCC, Madison, in 1978. I was ordained in 1982. I had gone four years to Eden Seminary with scholarship help. My financial support came from the Southwest Association, where I was "in care". The balance of money would not have to be repaid if I remained a pastor for five years in the UCC.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract with the Conference Board? What was your first yearly salary and how long did you serve in this position?**

JW: The main provisions were \$500 a month salary plus insurance. This continued throughout my year of service. There was a tense time between me and the rest of the women that were on the staff of the Wisconsin Conference in the office. I was being paid more than some of them, and they had been there longer. These women were giving their lives for the conference work, whereas I would only be there a short time. After they got to know me, things thawed somewhat, and at the end we had a good time—one even offered to do some of my secretarial work.

**HK: Describe your first meeting or event at Moon Beach and Pilgrim Camp.**

JW: The first big happening was the spring youth event at Pilgrim with Dow Edgerton, the keynote speaker. I was so inspired by what he had to say about vocation, that I suddenly saw myself going to seminary.

Way back at age 10 I had some thoughts about seminary, but then resisted it, because I would break my family rule where women were not supposed to be ordained. Even after I became a minister years later, my sister wouldn't talk to me for three years because she thought a woman should not be an ordained minister. To this day, except for my father, my family doesn't talk much about what I do, but my father is willing to converse about it. We were Presbyterians growing up, and that seemed to be prominent Presbyterian thinking--no women clergy. In terms of generation, I became the second wave of women clergy in our conference and state. Myrtle Baker, one of the first wave of Wisconsin women clergy, died around Easter Sunday, and I became the first woman full-time pastor in the Southwest Association after her in 1982. Other women ministers had been in the conference, but not full-time.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as Conference Youth Work/Camping Minister.**

JW: The biggest challenge in my year was working with the office secretarial staff until we became friendly at the end (see above). The second challenge was to find counselors and leaders for all the camping and youth events. I remember one time when I was really desperate and found the last counselor the night before they were coming in on Sunday afternoon!

**HK: Does one year stand out as the greatest year of your service to the Conference in this capacity?**

JW: Youth ministry stood out the greatest. I always emphasized to the young people to get their registration in early because we were going to have an exciting time together, and amazingly, we did. Bob Mutton convinced me this was a good way to promote youth activities.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

JW: The office situation—see answers above.

**HK: What changes happened during your tenure that made a difference in the Youth work/camping program?**

JW: I don't remember if I initiated anything particularly new; but I brought an enthusiastic personality that encouraged charisma amongst the youth. I was very strong on the arts and music. We used old music that was traditional and the contemporary of our day, and introduced young people to singing with the guitar. We often made up words that could be sung with the guitar.

**HK: Name special people who helped make your years as a Conference employee fruitful and meaningful (this could be Conference staff, other church people, camp leaders, etc.)**

JW: Bob Mutton, my vocational counselor; Dow Edgerton, my inspiration; and Sharon (can't think of her last name), wife of the Business School Dean at the University of Wisconsin (he died the year I went to seminary). She was a great support to me.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Camp Boards/UCCI? In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

JW: No absence of support.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference Board.**

JW: I didn't know the Conference Board members well, but they did support my position by funding it. I felt I did not have the support of Dr. Ley.

**HK: Will you share with us some people stories that may be of interest or where lives were changed?**

JW: Obid Hofland was very supportive and saw leadership potential in me. Larry Bremer, in my late junior high and high school years, was very attentive to the struggles I was going through about my future, and helped me to focus properly. Jackie Smith remained a good supportive friend as long as she lived in the Wisconsin Conference.

**HK: Did you help institute any new kinds of camping during your tenure, e.g., canoe camping, etc.**

JW: I don't remember if I began the arts and drama camp, but I helped to keep the program very strong, and youth appreciated it.

**HK: Did you feel your time as a Conference staff youth worker/camping minister was a "growth" experience? Has it left a mark on your life?**

JW: My time on the Conference staff definitely left a mark on my life. It was a significant growth experience and helped me to define that which I loved to do. It also pushed me to at least try seminary. Furthermore, this conference job matured me in the work place.

**HK: Do you have any advice to give to future Conference personnel in this capacity, to camp board members, camp managers, or the churches in general.**

JW: Always provide an umbrella youth ministry/camp and youth work program. It is these efforts that keep people interested and concerned about God in their lives. It helped my going into the ministry,

and has helped others, too. It is not, therefore, a discretionary program that can be dropped at will. I believe it is so important that it helps to determine the future of the church. It stimulates and provides committed people to leadership in the church and is a conduit toward encouraging ministry.

**HK: If you have any insights to share from your era as Conference Youth work/camping minister that would be worthy of preservation for history that you have not already mentioned, please share them now.**

JW: Conference youth work/camping is getting youth together. Camp cares for you in a different way than your parents care about you. Even when the camp program isn't always the best, or doesn't work and is not stellar, it does not matter. A bad camp or youth event is still good, because young people are getting together with older Christians and are trying to learn to be Christians together, and that's always important.

Also, I am eternally grateful that the UCC and the Presbyterians did work together then while I was growing up. It made a difference in my life and in women going into the ministry. I am grateful for those people that took time to do this, because it made my life. We, as a church, should work together with as many denominations as we can, especially in youth work, because in that way we will bridge the gap which older Christians can't seem to get over.

October 2006

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**Answered by Robert Mutton (RM)**

**HK: When did you first begin your work with our church camps? Had you ever been a camper or at the Moon Beach or Pilgrim Camp sites before you were a Conference employee?**

RM: September 1981, I began my work. NO, I never was a camper.

**HK: What kind of work were you doing before you became Minister to Youth Work/Camping? What were you told by the Conference Board when they hired you for this position?**

RM: Parish minister in Webster Grove, Missouri

**HK: Did they give you a job description to follow? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

RM: Yes, they gave me a job description. No, I did not realize what I was getting into. I had done lots of Youth Work, but was unfamiliar with camping and C.E. (Children-Church School/Christian Education). I was tutored by Bob Johnston, Jan Davis, George Schowalter, and many others.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became Conference Youth Worker/Camping? Were you commissioned by that church? Did that church give you and our camps support while you were in this position?**

RM: I was commissioned by Community of Hope Church, Madison. They sent a number of youth to camps.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract with the Conference Board? What was your first yearly salary and how long did you serve in this position?**

RM: The main provisions included CE (Christian Education), Camping, and Youth Programming. Salary? I served 5 years in this position.

**HK: Describe your first meeting or event at Moon Beach and Pilgrim Camp.**

RM: I remember being very impressed by the beauty of Moon Beach—not so with Pilgrim; it was a mess.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as Conference Youth Work/Camping Minister.**

RM: The challenges were money; the camps, especially Pilgrim, were in bad shape. We needed a manager with maintenance skills. Had to let the manager go. It was not easy for the Board.

**HK: Name any other major challenges during your tenure**

RM: Adult leadership and youth leadership consistency were major challenges.

**HK: Does one year stand out as the greatest year of your service to the Conference in this capacity?**

(No answer)

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

RM: Personal issues when camp managers needed to be replaced.

**HK: What changes happened during your tenure that made a difference in the Youth work/camping program?**

RM: The lowering of the age for younger campers from Junior to Tenderfoot and to Mom and Dad and Me Camps.

**HK: Name special people who helped make your years as a Conference employee fruitful and meaningful (this could be Conference staff, other church people, camp leaders, etc.)**

RM: Jan Davis, Bob Johnston, Jim Martin, Pat Goldberg, George Schowalter, Allen Martling, Marty Baumer, Jann Weaver, Betty & Ken Nimmer, Karen Mohr

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Camp Boards/UCCI? In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

RM: Yes, excellent support, good counsel, friendship, encouragement, good learning.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference Board.**

RM: I think it was similar to the above. The Conference had a real commitment to the ministry of the camps, and that was financial as well as moral. Bob Horst as Chair was very helpful.

**HK: Will you share with us some people stories that may be of interest or where lives were changed?**

No answer

**HK: Did you help institute any new kinds of camping during your tenure, e.g., canoe camping, etc.**

RM: Tenderfoot camps and some specialty camps, but I can't remember their names.

**HK: Did you feel your time as a Conference staff youth worker/camping minister was a "growth" experience? Has it left a mark on your life?**

RM: It was my introduction to the Wisconsin Conference. The people have been supportive and kind and patient. That is partly why I've stayed here for as long a time as I have.

**HK: Do you have any advice to give to future Conference personnel in this capacity, to camp board members, camp managers, or the churches in general.**

RM: It is very important to recruit good and thoughtful people to serve on the Camp Board.

**HK: If you have any insights to share from your era as Conference Youth work/camping minister that would be worthy of preservation for history that you have not already mentioned, please share them now.**

RM: I came into a very healthy program that was built by wise and theologically sound folk!

September 2004

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**Answered by Aurelia (Ree) Hale (RH)**

**HK: When did you first begin your work with our church camps? Had you ever been a camper or at the Moon Beach or Pilgrim Camp sites before you were a Conference employee?**

RH: I began working for the Wisconsin Conference on August 1, 1982. I had visited Pilgrim Center during my interview in the spring of 1982, but had never camped at either site.

**HK: What kind of work were you doing before you became Minister to Youth Work/Camping? What were you told by the Conference Board when they hired you for this position?**

RH: I was the Executive Director of Deer Hill Conference and Retreat Center, Wappinger's Falls, NY. It was owned and operated by the Metropolitan Association (New York City) of the New York Conference UCC. (See answer 3 for answer to part B of this question.)

**HK: Did they give you a job description to follow? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

RH (#3): Attached is the job description. It was updated in 1987. Since I had already been the director of a center for five years, I was familiar with the operations. I was told of Dr. Fred Trost's desire for Easter House, and soon learned he hoped to get rid of Pilgrim Center and build a whole new camp.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became Conference Youth Worker/Camping? Were you commissioned by that church? Did that church give you and our camps support while you were in this position?**

RH: My husband, Peter Fabian, and I joined Middleton Community Church (UCC), Middleton, Wisconsin, shortly after moving to Wisconsin. We lived in an apartment there until we purchased our home in the village of Oregon. My clergy standing was transferred from the Metropolitan Association to Southwest Association in September of 1982. Middleton Church was supportive of the Wisconsin Conference Outdoor Ministry, even though they own their own camp on Bass Lake near Eagle River.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract with the Conference Board? What was your first yearly salary and how long did you serve in this position?**

RH: The attached job description shows that ½ of my work was Outdoor Ministry. The other half was Youth and Young Adult combined. I think my first yearly salary was \$23,000, plus benefits, but that is just a reasonable guess. I know that it stayed at the beginning salary for 17 months. I served as Associate Conference Minister from August 1, 1982, through September 1, 1990.

**HK: Describe your first meeting or event at Moon Beach and Pilgrim Camp.**

RH (#6): My first memory (probably not the first event) at Pilgrim Center was a gathering of some 150 people, mostly adults, in the Fall of 1982. The group had just finished singing a hymn, when the Rev. Paul Kehle stood up and said, "Now, let's sing it in German!" And they DID! I immediately became aware of a whole new element to the Wisconsin UCC. German was completely lacking in my New York/New England Congregational UCC experiences.

At Moon Beach, the early outstanding memory was the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (I think). It, too, was the Fall of 1982. We had a wonderful program in a beautiful setting and were having a great dinner, when an elderly woman and long-time supporter of Moon Beach (whose name I can no longer recall), choked on her food. She received good care from a daughter or daughter-in-law nurse, and the emergency squad arrived pretty quickly. It sure made us all thankful for qualified people and prayer on the part of the entire gathered group.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as Conference Youth Work/Camping Minister.**

RH: Challenges—Both Moon Beach and Pilgrim Center were in great need of main-tenance. Much was delayed because money was scarce. Usage needed to increase at both sites. The question of selling Pilgrim loomed large, as well.

With Youth Ministry—the Youth Cabinet was there in name only. Getting enough youth to serve and an adult leader from each Association to serve took constant work. The Rev. Nate Miller, the Associate Minister at Rhinelander chaired the Cabinet and worked closely with the youth. I tried to work on recruiting and other things.

The Young Adult Committee had become its own small group and was having a hard time getting attendance at announced events.

**HK: Name any other major challenges during your tenure.**

RH: The biggest challenge for me and for UCCI was gathering the “hard data” to prove to Fred Trost and the Conference Board of Directors that keeping Pilgrim Center and building a retreat center there was the way to go. 80% of the membership of the UCC churches in Wisconsin is within a two-hour drive of Pilgrim Center. We finally convinced them and Oak Mound Lodge has become a pride and joy of Pilgrim Center.

**HK: Does one year stand out as the greatest year of your service to the Conference in this capacity?**

RH: I suppose it would be 1989 – 1990. Pilgrim Center and Moon Beach were included in “With One Accord” (the Conference Fund Raising Campaign to strengthen the institutions of the church within the state). The retreat center would be one of the first places money would be spent. The Great Lakes Region sponsored a Young Adult Event at Tower Hill Camp, Sawyer, Michigan, in the spring, and the Wisconsin UCC hosted the Regional Youth Event at Lakeland College, Plymouth, in the summer. It was a very full and fulfilling year.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

RH: It would probably be the six years that it took to gather the “hard data” to convince Fred and the Board of the value of Pilgrim Center and its need for an adult retreat center.

**HK: What changes happened during your tenure that made a difference in the Youth work/camping program?**

RH (#11): Several new camps were begun. They included: Junior High Adventure Camp, Senior High Adventure Camp, and Mom or Dad and Me Camp. I made the connection with Northland College, Ashland, to be able to offer the Elder Hostel Programs at Moon Beach that produced good response. We hired professional managers at both sites. Site managers became involved in NACOM, National Advisory Committee on Outdoor Ministries, and attended meetings and CONSULTS.

I was also involved in establishing a state-wide Ecumenical Camp Group with connections to the American Camping Association and Christian Camping International.

These connections also helped provide places for Youth and Young Adult Ministry events to occur throughout the state. The Pilgrimage Program also came to Pilgrim Center. The Conference sponsored its first summer camp that prepared a music event and traveled to churches throughout the state.

In Youth Ministry: large groups of youth attended the National Youth Events and the Regional Youth Events. For every NYE and RYE, we over-reached our quota but were always able to take all our registrants because other Conferences could not make their quotas. In 1990 Wisconsin hosted the RYE at Lakeland College. We began getting youth to attend General Synod. Youth and Young Adults

together took their first international mission to the southwest of England, led by The Rev. Tom Payden and me.

Young Adults began to be involved in regional UCC Young Adult Events and even an ecumenical one.

**HK: Name special people who helped make your years as a Conference employee fruitful and meaningful (this could be Conference staff, other church people, camp leaders, etc.)**

RH: I've thought a long time on this, and I know I'll leave someone out. This takes much more time than you thought it would. I'm just going to list people: Fred Trost, Mary Nack, Jim Savides, Don Hinze, Bob Horst, Bob Mutton, Carol Martell, Ken and Betty Nimmer, Jeff Puhlmann-Becker, Judy Holcomb, Alan Martling, Jan Davis, Dick Allen, Gail Holmes, Ralph Schultz, Tom Pugh, Dick Runge, John Seidler, and John White. Nate Miller, Tom Payden, Jim Martin and Jenny Dawson, Pat Goldberg, Bryan Sirchio, Gary Stillwell, Mark Schowalter, John Helt, Susan Stull, Judy Heize, Lisa Hamilton Hart, Becky Johnston, and many other youth and young adults. I have no way to look up their names.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Camp Boards/UCCI? In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

RH: Generally, I felt support from UCCI. We were moving forward, small steps at a time, and were mostly at it together, because we all believed so much in Outdoor Ministry at our two terrific sites. Of course, sometimes we had different ideas on how to reach the goals. We still worked together at achieving them.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference Board.**

RH: The Conference Board of Directors was generally supportive for the same reasons. It wanted the camps to be successful IF they could support themselves. We were all working toward that goal. From time to time we needed to work at clearing communications and making reporting more responsive to the Board membership.

**HK: Will you share with us some people stories that may be of interest or where lives were changed?**

RH: See the stories above in #6.

**HK: Did you help institute any new kinds of camping during your tenure, e.g., canoe camping, etc.**

RH: Find the answer to that in the 11<sup>th</sup> question.

**HK: Did you feel your time as a Conference staff youth worker/camping minister was a "growth" experience? Has it left a mark on your life?**

RH: The major mark that remains very visible to me is the many friends I continue to have throughout the Conference from those years we served together in Youth, Young Adult, and Outdoor Ministry. I continue to believe strongly that all three of the above areas of ministry are very important for the current and future church. My ministry has continued to be primarily in these same areas—camp/conference/retreat and youth and young adult. It has always been where I have understood my call to be.

**HK: Do you have any advice to give to future Conference personnel in this capacity, to camp board members, camp managers, or the churches in general.**

RH: Keep communication lines open to all groups or persons involved: Conference Minister, Board of Directors, UCCI, as well as the site staff and volunteers. Be sure everyone has the SAME information. Pray for the same things, not at cross purposes. Keep the pastor and church informed and connected to the ministry at the sites. The same is true for Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Keep the pastors and other church leadership in touch with young/young adult programming, involve them, and invite them to take part. Keep connections with other UCC and ecumenical sites and youth leaders for support.

**HK: If you have any insights to share from your era as Conference Youth work/camping minister that would be worthy of preservation for history that you have not already mentioned, please share them now.**

December 18, 2003

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## IV

### PILGRIM CAMP MANAGER QUESTIONNAIRE

I

Answered by Lester & Audrey Pettack

**HK: When and how did you first hear about Pilgrim Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being managers, and for what reason were you there?**

L&AP: The Rev. Jim Savides came and talked to us. We had not been to the camp before.

**HK: Who contacted you about being managers, and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

L&AP: The Rev. Jim Savides contacted us. We were farmers and he was on the Pilgrim Camp Board at the time. We looked at the work of being camp managers and said, "No." They hired another couple and two years later the man died. We then were contacted again and said, "Yes," because we had had time to think about it.

**HK: Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

L&AP: As camp managers, we were to see after the grounds and those who would help us. No, we did not get a thorough description of the job, because one or two years after we took the job, all of the work changed. That year all registrations for the camp were to take place on the camp site. When we took the job, all registrations were done at the Conference office by the Rev. Jack Remaly. When it changed, it doubled our work!

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became managers? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were managers of Pilgrim Camp?**

L&AP: We belonged to UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH in Waupun. We were not commissioned by the church. They supported us by coming out to the camp once a year for a picnic as a church family.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

L&AP: We were to do as much work as we could and hire outside help for the kitchen and other grounds work that we could not get done by ourselves. Salary for the first year was \$240 a month (\$60 a week plus our home and utilities—food when the camp was in session). Later our salary was \$400 a month, and when we left it was about \$5,200 a year.

**HK: Describe your first day on the job at Pilgrim Camp.**

L&AP: A family camp from Racine came for Friday evening through Monday a.m. over Labor Day. This continued for the next 5-6 years.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as managers.**

L&AP: The biggest challenge was learning where everything was, because the former manager had died, so we had to locate all plumbing, light switches and breakers, etc.

**HK: Name the major challenges of your tenure as managers.**

L&AP: The major challenge was working with ministers and others who had never been to a camp and were not concerned about the property or the safety of themselves and those who came with them.

**HK: How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

L&AP: We served 12 ½ years. The year we were fired was the saddest and worst year, because a couple of Board members had a minister friend who they thought would do more than us, but later they found out this was not true.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

L&AP: Family Camp was the most difficult, and the swimming rules were hard to enforce. They would say, "We swim at the Y and don't need anyone to look after us." Well, Green Lake is different!! And we told them so.

**HK: Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were managers? (or the campus).**

L&AP: We added a walk-in freezer, which Lester built and also a walk-in refrigerator. We tiled all the bathrooms on the main grounds and built a big addition to Favel Hall and the manager's home.

**HK: Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

L&AP: The Conference Staff, especially the Rev. Jack Remaly; Board member, Clayton Tinkham; workers—Mrs. Blade, head cook; Mrs. Leon Mickler, nurse; and the Rev. James Savides and the Rev. Myron Close.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Pilgrim/UCCI Camp Board? In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

L&AP: NO.....Too many have never been campers or directors. Several had no idea what went on during a week at camp. Several knew nothing about the camps. One time Lester took one of the Camp Boards for a walk and one of the members asked, "Who lives in the house next to the camp?" When he was told it was part of the camp grounds, they could not believe it. A lot of them had no idea what property was involved as a part of the camp site.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

L&AP: The Conference Staff was great.

**HK: Will you share with us some "people stories" where lives were changed?**

L&AP: The Rev. Michael Bausch, now pastor at Waupun, was a counselor who became a minister. Two other high school workers now have become ministers.

**HK: Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp). What specialty camps did you have during your years? e.g. canoe camp, etc.**

L&AP: A typical day started at 6:00 a.m. Lester would help start things in the kitchen, and then check the grounds. Next we would eat breakfast. When everyone else was eating their breakfast, he would check all the bathrooms on the grounds and then go to his work for the day. He would work all day on all the different projects. After the evening snack time he went to the house about 8 or 8:30 p.m.

Audrey would start at 7:30 a.m. checking orders for meals etc., then plan the rest of the day. She would check with the nurse for any problems; work on special things, such as Jr. High cook-outs, getting the boxes of food ready. She would help the main cook where needed. She would go to town for items that were needed by the cook, go to the office, check on the mail, and check with the camp directors each day for any special needs or problems. After lunch Audrey worked in the home on laundry or did camp book work. She was always in the kitchen and dining room during meal times and did week-end cooking so that all the staff could have a day off.

**HK: Did you see your time at Pilgrim as a “growth” experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

L&AP: Yes, it was a growth experience, and we have worked with churches and other places, including schools, where young people are important, so it has definitely left a mark on our lives.

**HK: What words would you give to future Pilgrim campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

L&AP: The Conference has a wonderful place at Green Lake. Keeping a manager there to do the work as well as working with the people, is very important. It is better than someone who hires all the work done from the outside.

**HK: If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Pilgrim Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

L&AP: We started with summer camps always in the “red”, and ended our time with year ‘round, full camps and retreats, with our income in the “black”. The camp should always have directors that know about camping before they get there.

[The Pettacks have donated thirteen photographs from the early years of the Green Lake Bible Institute and Pilgrim Camp, for which we are most grateful. Ed]

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**Answered by Joan Findlay (JF)**

**HK: When and how did you first hear about Pilgrim Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being managers, and for what reason were you there?**

JF: Pilgrim Camp Board notified me and my husband by mail, requesting us to apply for the job of Camp Managers. We had never heard of the camp. We were chosen out of a group of nine couples.

**HK: Who contacted you about being managers, and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

JF: My husband, Bob, was a minister, and I was a housewife. I/we were honored to have even been considered for the job.

**HK: Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

JF: A job description was sent along with the application. I do not have it or remember it.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became managers? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were managers of Pilgrim Camp?**

JF: Prescott United Church of Christ in Wisconsin. The church had a "good bye" celebration for us.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

JF: I have no idea what kind of money we made.

**HK: Describe your first day on the job at Pilgrim.**

JF: It was wonderful to see all the children and their smiling faces. The adult leaders and teenagers were nice, also. I worked in the arts and crafts building and also in the kitchen.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as managers.**

JF: The biggest challenge was the fact that campers were all ages, but this also made it fun.

**HK: Name the major challenges of your tenure as managers.**

JF: The major challenges were dealing with all the different age groups.

**HK: How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

JF: We served four years. All the years were great.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

JF: Working in the kitchen was the most difficult, due to the amount of meals that were needed to feed all the people.

**HK: Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were managers? (or the campus)**

JF: The outside of the Lodge was painted during our time as managers. My husband helped to paint the Lodge yellow.

**HK: Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

JF: Obid Hofland, Conference Youth Minister, was good to work with. Garnet Bladl worked in the kitchen with me. She was the cook, and I assisted her.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Pilgrim Board/UCCI? In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

JF: The Camp Board visited regularly.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

JF: The Camp Board gave us support.

**HK: Will you share with us some “people stories” where lives were changed?**

JF: A minister’s son lived in one of the cabins, and he had a troubled life. After his experience with my husband and me, he went on to be a wonderful young man. I think he may now be a minister.

**HK: Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp). What specialty camps did you have during your years? e.g. canoe camp, etc.**

JF: We had a sailing camp, which was a specialty camp. We typically got up fairly early each day, ate breakfast, had a devotional hour in the commons area, free time, camp activities, or specialty camp, lunch, devotionals, evening campfires, stories, etc., and then bedtime.

**HK: Did you see your time at Pilgrim as a “growth” experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

JF: We had our five children there with us. Pilgrim Camp was a wonderful experience for everyone.

**HK: What words would you give to future Pilgrim campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

JF: Pilgrim Camp will be a good experience for everyone.

**HK: If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Pilgrim Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

JF: My husband, Robert Findlay, was loving to everyone. He loved the camp and all its participants. He took much pride in everything all around, including the image of the building.

[Joan's husband, Bob Findlay, now deceased, was good at playing a guitar and led many groups in folk songs. Joan sent with this document six pencil drawings of art work of her remembrances of Pilgrim Camp, especially Sailing Camp. They are remarkable because she has made these in spite of her paralyzation due to a stroke. She had someone else write this for her. Ed]

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**Answered by Richard & Kathy Hutchison (R & KH)**

**HK: When and how did you first hear about Pilgrim Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being managers, and for what reason were you there?**

R&KH: The Conference President in the mid 1970's was The Rev. Dr. Ralph Ley, who one Sunday came to lead worship at our church. Rich had always been active in church camping in the Methodist denomination, since age 10—camper, counselor, etc.—and had asked Dr. Ley what kinds of opportunities might exist for full-time service. Dr. Ley mentioned the managerial opening at Pilgrim Camp. Having never seen Pilgrim Camp before, we went to Green Lake that same afternoon and looked over the camp situation (Dec.?) snow on the ground—depressing gray cement buildings, junk cars lying on their sides—and Rich knew that day that this was where we would be going. Rich had been into restoring antique cars and boats, old houses, old furniture, etc. and could see the potential there at Pilgrim. That previous June we had moved into our old “dream house” out in the country, where we thought we would spend the rest of our lives. Ha! Ha! What do we know?

**HK: Who contacted you about being managers, and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

R&KH: Through Dr. Ley, we were put in contact with members of the UCCI Board of Directors. Pat Goldberg contacted us, and we interviewed in Greendale on the coldest day of January, 1977. We were called shortly thereafter, and Rich immediately accepted. Rich regarded the position as a life-time form of ministry, not just a job, and had left a long held job at Mercury Marine, where he had been making about three times as much money. We knew camp-experiences to be life changing for many people in their relationship with Christ. At one time, over half of all Wisconsin Methodist clergy could point to a “church camp” experience as the doorway to their calling to parish ministry.

We wanted to be a part of that journey for others, caring for the site where others could come to the Lord. We also learned and appreciated more and more of the history of the Green Lake Bible Institute, and felt it had been, and should be, an important part of the church's “discipling” of young and old alike.

**HK: Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

R&KH: Yeah, right!!!! And we found out why not at the time we resigned 4 ½ years later (to attend seminary). Several Board members laughingly said that, of course, the job description was vague and incomplete, since they figured no one would take the job if they knew what they were really getting into! They treated this as a joke! Pay checks would be made out to Richard only, even though they intentionally hired us as a couple.

Kathy was told she would only be “part-time”, a few hours per week. We thought this was “do-able”; since she wanted to be a full-time Mom to our two sons, age 4 and 7. At the time of our leaving for seminary, several long-time Board members also chuckled when they told us that they had been intentionally deceiving regarding Kathy’s work load, for the same reason—no fool in their right mind would consider the job. We left the last meeting feeling immensely “used”. It was almost three years before the Board split the pay check between the two of us, so that Kathy could get social security credits—actually, the social security department demanded it. Her actual work load was usually around 60 hours per week. We found it interesting that the Board President at this time was a woman who was getting national recognition for her work in the area of “women’s rights”, but who hesitated to split the pay check, since it would (in her words) cost the Board more money. (I thought we believed that justice began at home).

The last line of the job description included the phrase “and any other duties assigned by the Board” (watch out for those last lines!!). That made the job very full-time for both of us. We soon found out that some members of the Board knew very little of what was required on the site, thinking this was a good job for someone who wanted to “retire from a full-time job and enjoy the lake.” (Incidentally, during those five summers, Rich was on the lake five times, Kathy twice). Some members didn’t even know that there were “eleven buildings and three septic systems” in the woods across the road!

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became managers? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were managers of Pilgrim Camp?**

R&KH: We were members of the Malone UCC, northeast of Fond du Lac, and, No, there was no commissioning service at the time we moved and started as managers. However, three ladies from Malone Church came to the camp to help clean the house to get ready for us to move in. Five of us worked on the house, kitchen, for four days, and it still was not clean—that’s the situation we were stepping into throughout the camp. That’s also the reason for the change of managers. The past situation also resulted in a significant increase in “micro-management” from the Board during most of our time there—I think, making up for having ignored the situation before. Even relatively minor decisions were not left up to us. We eventually accepted the fact that we may have had the title of co-managers, but the job was little more than that of glorified caretakers.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

R&KH: Contract? The actual work load (partly due to the deterioration of the camp) far exceeded anything put down on paper. However, the “contract” also called for a “full-time cook, maintenance couple” to work with us. The budget, however, allowed only \$5,000 cash pay, split between two people, plus the “cook’s cottage” for housing. That uninsulated summer cottage (southeast corner of the camp) was far from being a year-round facility. Just once we were able to hire a young couple for only a short time (perhaps six months) out of the 4 ½ years we were there.

Our first year’s salary was \$4,000 for each of us (\$8,000) plus housing and meals when we were cooking for others. The first year’s raise was \$100--\$50 each. Increases in pay were minimal and we do not

recall the salary at the end of our tenure. We can't check on this, since we have no paper work from back then. The late 70's and early 80's were high inflation years, but we realized after our second year that we were never going to be able to work hard enough, accomplish enough in the eyes of others, to warrant some kind of adequate raise.

**HK: Describe your first day on the job at Pilgrim.**

R&KH: Richard's mother, Ruth, a proficient office manager, came over from Plymouth to help put the office in order. She left in tears at the end of the first day, wondering what her family had gotten into. Enough said about that day. We started pretty much from scratch. The camp managers from four years earlier, Les and Audrey Pettack, still lived in the area and they were a real blessing as a source of information.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as managers.**

R&KH: Rich made daily trips to the Ace Hardware for many months the first year—repairs, repairs, repairs, supplies, etc.

Both camp vehicles were junked, and we agreed to use our own station wagon and trailer to meet camp-transportation needs, until we could determine what type of vehicle would be most suitable to the programs needs. Our recommendation at the end of the year was for a multi-seat van and a large 4 wheel tilt-bed utility trailer. The Board Property Committee ended up buying for Moon Beach a 4 x 4 truck and plow, which the managers hadn't even requested, then got a stripped pick-up truck for Pilgrim instead of a van, since there was not enough money left. (Micro-management) Later, the Board insisted we allow the summer program directors to use our three seat wagon for their staff to take our kids on outings, since the camp didn't have adequate transportation! We received 5 cents per mile! I.e. a 20 mile round trip for a bog walk = \$1 and one filthy car. (We sold our wagon. It would take several hours to clean it each time.)

Thirty-one buildings (including the camp house, Faville Hall, walk-in freezer and cooler, etc.) were on one 200 amp circuit. We experienced countless brown-outs. Storm blown branches bringing down wires were common. We eventually buried most all of the wiring and upgraded the electrical service to 600 amps.

The canteen had also been used for laundry storage and had experienced continual water problems—seepage. The linens and old canteen stock, etc. were rotted and ruined. A Board member and his family from Appleton came one Saturday to help. After shoveling out the debris and trips to the dump, he said that he wouldn't have blamed us if we had walked off the job the first day; he had no idea that the camp was in such a condition.

The camp house was in deplorable shape. Rain dripped from the light fixture onto the piano. The basement, where the office was, would be flooded during heavy rainstorms, every time it rained. (The house got the first new roof in June, 1977) Furthermore, the sewer lines were too shallow and would freeze up.

Faville kitchen—4 of us spent two weeks in March cleaning the kitchen. As Richard once said, "It looks like they had a war in here using tomato grenades!" We could go on and on—you get the picture—this is too depressing!

**HK: Name the major challenges of your tenure as managers.**

R&KH: To be frank, there was great favoritism—partially on the part of the Board—towards Moon Beach Camp, where many of them went to enjoy family camp during the summer. Their only time at Pilgrim (for many of them) was at the winter Board Meeting—once a year!—usually a time of frozen pipes, and cars stuck in the parking lot. The fall meeting was held at Moon Beach, a beautiful season, amid a beautiful setting, and some board members just couldn't do enough to help the managers of Moon Beach—Ken and Betty Nimmer—a wonderful couple, who were aware and rather embarrassed by (and at times apologized for) the obvious discrimination. (The year we got \$100 raise, Moon Beach managers received \$1,000 raise, and they had a full-time cook/maintenance couple to help them, and to take over when they wanted to visit family or get away!) We didn't leave Mercury Marine and come to Pilgrim for the money, but the continually blatant unfairness through the years in a supposedly Christian atmosphere was something we had never experienced in 15 years in the secular world of industry.

Scheduling of camps—another challenge. Some summer camp directors wanted ONLY their campers on site during their weeks. For sailing camps, especially, this meant 12-16 campers plus 2 counselors for the whole site for those weeks, (in a camp facility that would house almost 200 at that time) and then we would be told that there wasn't enough summer camp cash flow to justify raises!??? This was an on-going problem. Some directors manipulated the camping program for their own purposes. Others were trying hard to put on a spiritually meaningful experience with rather limited materials and facilities. Some directors regarded us as team-members-in-ministry, and some just wanted us to keep the toilets working and not look too closely at what was going on.

Funding—when the Wisconsin Conference voted \$16,000 per year for two years (\$32,000) for improvements at the Pilgrim facility, some Board members managed to transfer our yearly \$10,000 Capital Improvements Fund from the Pilgrim regular budget to the Moon Beach regular budget for Capital Improvements at that site.

This gave Moon Beach \$20,000 per year and Pilgrim \$16,000 total, instead of the \$26,000 that should have been spent at Pilgrim. Their reasoning was that since we were doing much of the work ourselves, we “couldn't possibly spend the other \$10,000 along with the \$16,000.” It was not the Conference's intention to give \$20,000 of the \$32,000 to Moon Beach, but that's what some Board members managed to do. We felt that the site and the Conference had been defrauded. We learned you don't make friends using such terms. In trying to defend the Pilgrim site, Rich was too-slowly learning the art of diplomacy.

Vacations--two weeks were allowed, only when nothing was scheduled at the camp or conference center. For cash flow reasons, we were instructed to book and double-book as many groups as possible, whenever possible, including holidays. This meant that our vacations were always over Christmas/New Year/early January—when virtually no one would schedule the site. That necessitated taking our boys out of school if we wanted any vacation at all—usually tent camping around the Gulf Coast or a busman's holiday at another church camp, renting a cabin and eating in their kitchen with their staff.

For several years the camp-house furnace was on the list of equipment needing replacement, (the heat exchanger was leaking combustion fumes into the house—evident on the walls near the registers, and this had been determined by professional inspection). Each year the Property Committee would remove it from the list in favor of improvements to other buildings. The furnace was in the camp office, and after it blew up and sent Richard to the hospital in Ripon with second degree burns to his face and hands/arms, it finally got replaced. And after we found out that it had already burned two other managers with Board knowledge, we were outraged. This was the kind of callous disregard that we found hard to understand.

**HK: How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

R&KH: We served March 1977 – August 1981. The last year was the best/least frustrating, because new Board members were bringing more attention to program quality. Every summer we had great staff, and were blessed to have Jean Michler of Fond du Lac as our nurse (each of our summers). Jean and her family had spent their summers at the camp for quite a few years before we came to serve there.

One really great blessing was having a college student named Gary Bargholz of Milwaukee on staff for four summers. He was great with electricity, mechanicals, sailing and boat repair. Whatever we needed, Gary was willing to tackle, and did it well. Gary and Rich would be up late into the night patching sail boat hulls for the next day's sailing camp. They did it because it needed to be done.

We also had a River Falls College youth group coming each June to help with roofing and whatever! We never would have been ready that first summer without them. God provided all the way along.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

R&KH: The work was not the most difficult. Much of that was quite enjoyable. (The frustrations are noted in the above questions)

**HK: Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were managers? (or the campus)**

R&KH: When we came, the gray cinder block buildings had the “ambience of a concentration camp”. (An expression of some of the retreat visitors) After consultation with an artist, picking several earth-tone color schemes, volunteers and summer staff painted most of the buildings, and that made a dramatic difference.

Faville Hall got a stucco/half-beam treatment inside and out (along with the basement of the house)—metal frame windows were replaced with wood frame double hung; most work on Faville exterior was done by Jack, the sometimes-hired handy? man.

Faith UCC of Milwaukee funded the storage addition on the workshop, and helped to erect it that first summer over Memorial Day weekend. Some Faith church members were visiting the site in the spring and took note of the total lack of storage space—many things were stored outside under tarps.

Norenberg Lodge received very little renovation during our stay—mostly just maintenance and a new electrical service. Plans were started to put in year-round rest rooms to service the heated lounge.

Major improvements coming from the Conference monies included burying all above-ground electrical service and a 600 amp upgrade, and sinking main water lines below the frost line. What fun it was the day we cut off the old above-ground wires at the nurse's cabin and watched almost all the power poles on the camp fall over!

All of the 31 buildings were re-roofed during this five spring period. The last was the chapel, which Gary (above) and I finished minutes before a wedding took place inside of it.

It is exciting for us to see how much has been done over the intervening years at Pilgrim, at winterizing and expanding Norenberg, and with the other retreat center near the chapel. It makes what we

accomplished pale in comparison, but we knew our work was primarily “recover and make preparation” of the camp for just such major improvements. Paul sows, and Barnabas waters.

**HK: Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

R&KH: We’ve mentioned a few already, but others who encouraged us included our Faville kitchen cleaners, Cathy & Dale Grahn, neighbors up the road, and her brother, Dave Berndt, who volunteered soooo much of his time to cleaning out the shop and Faville during those first hectic months. The Rev. Jim Kennedy, of Lake Geneva, the Rev. Dr. Bob Mutton, who was the Conference Camping Coordinator and an occasional woodsman (Dave and Bob kept Rich from doing quite so much chain saw work alone); Carol Navis, from Rosendale, who served faithfully as summer camp head cook for several years, and who was so easy to work with; Karen Weidig, from Princeton, was a God-send to Kathy for help as a retreat center cook and cleaning staff; The Rev. Frank and Dottie Fagerberg, Green Lake, were a continual source of encouragement and wisdom; Jan Davis, was an excellent elementary camp director, and we were pleased to see her starting to serve on the Camp Board as we were leaving (Jan’s son, Steve, also served one summer on the staff); The Rev. Alan Martling, of Ripon, was one of several Board members who was helping the Board of Directors to be more sensitive to the needs of its employees; Marcia Sheets, (who wrote the checks from the Conference office to pay Pilgrim’s expenses) was a big help to Kathy, regarding procedures, etc. and with a cheerful note now and again.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the UCCI/Pilgrim Camp? In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

R&KH: Everything above covers this question—but we saw improved relations with many of the newer Board members (people who didn’t have hidden agendas and had a better working knowledge of the Pilgrim site). We had suggested for several years having two Property Committees—one for each camp site—but a few folks could see what might happen, and would not allow it. Separate committees might have been able to diminish the very evident favoritism.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

R&KH: See above and previous questions relating to favoritism between camp sites.

**HK: Will you share with us some “people stories” where lives were changed?**

R&KH: Because of Board restrictions regarding our limited involvement with program, our “people stories” come more from summer staff than from campers. Our weekly meetings were a little opportunity to affect the lives of some of the staffers. Several kept in touch with us for years after we left the camp. Some became more involved with Christian ventures.

**HK: Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp). What specialty camps did you have during your years? e.g. canoe camp, etc.**

R&KH: Refer to the above discussions of the questions.

**HK: Did you see your time at Pilgrim as a “growth” experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

R&KH: At our last UCC Conference at Lawrence University, we were invited forward by our Camp Board Chair, as they expressed thanks for what was accomplished over the previous four years. Richard received two Bible Reference books for his upcoming studies in seminary. Kathy received a hug—a hug—and that was it! 60 hours a week for 4 ½ years, and she was still not recognized as an equal member of the team! On our way back to the dorm she was in tears, asking, “Couldn’t they have gotten me a simple set of ear rings, or something? Anything?” This last contact with the UCC Conference was pretty indicative of what the previous years had been like. We received far more appreciation and encouragement from the individual pastors and lay people around the Conference who used the site throughout the years, and for their thanks, we are grateful.

Our understanding is that the next full-time long-term manager was hired as a single individual (instead of hiring another couple with one paid and the other expected to work full-time for free). We felt that hiring one person was a wise decision.

Thank you, for the opportunity to finally share with the Wisconsin Conference just what was going on back a quarter-century ago. We have never had the chance to communicate any of these thoughts and emotions with anyone where it might do some good. We have now had a chance to do some venting of pain which we should have done some 25 years earlier. We hope, and assume, that things continued for the better at Pilgrim with personal issues, based on the continual improvements to the facility. When we are in the Green Lake area, we usually drive through the site, and a couple of times we have stopped in to chat with whoever was on duty at the time.

**HK: What words would you give to future Pilgrim campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

R&KH: Yes, we have been delighted to see how much you have done to provide suitable year-round accommodations for Christian education and camping. I also hope both sites are being handled much more equitably.

And, yes, there have been times of regret and disappointment during some of the all-too-human behavior and happenings of the past, and forgiveness, too. God was using all of the experiences for His own purposes and preparation. Please call the managers of both sites soon, and let them know how much you appreciate the hidden sacrifices they are making on your programs’ behalf. That would make our day!!

**HK: If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Pilgrim Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

R&KH: We, Rich and Kathy Hutchison, have spent the last 23 years in parish ministry. Our years at Pilgrim Conference & Retreat Center were an experience which the Lord used to prepare us for many similar situations serving in the local church. Some painful experiences and Camp Board relations in which I made mistakes allowed me to learn and grow in preparation for what God wanted in our future. In many ways, camp managing and parish ministry have similar environments, and the Pilgrim years have, in some ways, served as my first church experience, a place of major learning, mistakes—and more learning, as well as leading. We have accepted the fact that March, 1977 - August 1981 included times of considerable pain and frustration, but were necessary in my/our preparation for preaching and ministering in the Word. I’ve never felt that we were outside of God’s Will for us, or His care. The Green Lake community and the Federated Church there were a great source of support and love, and that united congregation voted their unanimous declaration of confidence for my call to ministry. Yes, the UCC’s and American Baptist, as well as the United Methodist!! They all wanted to vote, not just the

Methodists. What a great congregation, living out what it means to be the Body of Christ. Praise God for His leading, even or especially, when we don't always know where we'll end up! Had I known what those years at Pilgrim entailed, I never would have taken my wife and boys through that, but thank God we don't know, for we grow the most in faith during the desert journey.

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**Answered by Bruce Antle (BA)**

**HK: When and how did you first hear about Pilgrim Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being managers, and for what reason were you there?**

BA: I had been a resort owner in Northern Wisconsin, which my wife, Darlene, and I had converted to condominiums. We had owned the business for ten years and developed it. We loved it very much, but were considering selling it. I was in the Choir at Nicolet College, Rhinelander, and when driving home, the pastor of First Congregational UCC, Rhinelander, David Michael, asked whether we would be interested in becoming the managers of Pilgrim Camp. They had been searching for a manager for nine months, and there were 30 days left to get my application in. We ended up to be one of four couples being considered, and were chosen for the job. That's how it all began.

**HK: Who contacted you about being managers, and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

BA: After David Michael recruited me, I reflected back upon my being a product of the church from young on. I had grown up as a Presbyterian in Missouri, taught Sunday school, became assistant Sunday school superintendent, helped with Vacation Church School, president of the Youth Group in high school, attended retreats during my growing up years as well as church camp. The call to serve as Pilgrim Camp managers was an extension of the church jobs I had done while growing up. I saw it as an opportunity "to manage a resort for God".

**HK: Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

BA: I did not receive any job description for camp manager, but discovered that Pilgrim Camp was in appalling physical condition and barely had enough budget to pay the manager's salary. I started looking into the possibility of having multiple groups on the camp site for retreats, rather than just booking a retreat for twelve people while the rest of the camp site, which was large, was not in use.

I realized what I was getting into, because I had run a resort, but I didn't always realize what it meant to work with a Board. None of the Board members had run a resort before, and there was no handbook or anything available for me to look to, except the Board itself, one third of whose members changed every time there was a yearly election. This made a difference—sometimes because newly elected members did not always have the vision or knowledge of those who had gone off the Board.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became managers? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were managers of Pilgrim Camp?**

BA: As I mentioned above, I belonged to First Congregational Church in Rhinelander, but soon transferred my membership to First Congregational Church in Ripon, where Alan Martling was pastor, and who was also President of the UCCI Board. The Ripon churches, First Congregational and Our Saviour's, where Jim Mohr and Harley Tretow were pastors, gave a lot of good support to me and to the camp. I was never commissioned, just showed up for work.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

BA: The main provisions of my first contract were \$10,000 a year for Darlene and me, plus all the food we could eat, including leftovers; housing; pension; and insurance. There was some increase of my salary during my three years—1982-1985.

**HK: Describe your first day on the job at Pilgrim Camp.**

BA: The first weekend was a retreat, basically a one-day event on Saturday. At the same time, there was a food show in Appleton, which my wife, Darlene, and the cook wanted to attend so they could do their best in meal preparation. They said everything was ready for me to feed the retreat group, and I offered to take care of it all alone. It was quite the experience! I called it a darling lunch—I had lots of fun taking jello out of moulds, and the whole thing proved to be a comedy of errors, as I also tried to greet the incoming people. In the end we all worked together to complete the meal.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as managers.**

BA: I came at a time when Pilgrim Camp was at a low ebb. I had never had to go to a Board of Directors to ask permission, since I ran my own business/resort in the past. Thus, at the first Board meeting I had an unusual experience—I bought a whole bunch of things that were necessary without their approval, and then I proceeded to get bids and proposals for up-dating the clusters, especially the bathroom areas, and to bring the whole camp up to what it should be. The Board was beside themselves (in a positive way). They could not believe that in two weeks time a camp manager could have gotten bids, etc. all together and expected them to act on proposals. Though they were short on money, they found ways to pay for it and supported me in making the improvements.

We started with a \$125,000 budget, and over the years, with Board support, tripled the budget. In all things we were excited to serve the Lord—not as caretakers, although we found that to be our expertise (a piece of cake), but as spiritual leaders--with this becoming a foot step toward ordination.

**HK: Name the major challenges of your tenure as managers.**

BA: New people coming on the Board who wanted more control than the first Board, and my being used to making all decisions autonomously....my idea of promoting the camp as a retreat center all year round was a new idea for some (Pilgrim Camp had not had more than one group at a time on the campus). We began this immediately—we would have a group in Faville, and another group in one of the clusters, and sometimes even a third group. We'd schedule the use of the chapel or other buildings at different times, and would try to eat together if at all possible. This made for much better use of our facilities than had been done before.

**HK: How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

BA: Three years—and all were positive years. We felt very good with what we did the first year, and each year built on the other. It was fun to do retreats. We loved being with the groups. The highlight of my experiences was the awareness that Pilgrim Camp was a “sacred site”—not just now, but historically. It was a sacred site for the Winnebago Indians, and there were Indian Burial Mounds on our property. The Council Rock, which is located near the lake, was identified by Ripon College and declared a historical site, as well as the mounds. The Winnebago people made a pilgrimage to this rock in the early 1800’s, and the Chief then declared it a primary site. It is where the Chief would stand and speak to the people. We had a group of retreaters who put railroad ties around the rock and held a dedication ceremony, with Ripon College people and Dr. Fred Trost, then Conference minister, present. There should be a pamphlet at the camp that records the sacred history of this site.

We wanted to please God in running the camp, but after three years found that the 18 hour days, 7 days a week, created burnout for us. We loved our job and our ministry, but wore out. The final event that tipped the scale for retiring was when Ken Nimmer died and we found out that the Board would not continue the contract of Betty Nimmer. She really had been the camp manager, and Ken the camp caretaker. We felt that was not right, and, therefore, our employment would also be in jeopardy if one of us should die.

We want to say that we had a great going away party. Rhee Hale set up a beautiful luncheon in order to say good bye. We then left, and I became the Training Director for Speed Queen, which reminds me to say that the camp should always have its facilities available for couples and groups from corporations and the business world to use. That vision will support the purposes of the rest of camping. We hope that would be pursued.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

BA: The most difficult thing for us was coming to the realization that the Board was hiring a couple for \$10,000. They weren’t just hiring me—they were hiring my wife, too. So I insisted that the salary be split between us. You cannot expect the wife to come along and be a part of the work force without pay. You must pay her, too. I insisted she receive half the pay, and that she be titled co-manager. This was a new concept for some Board members

**HK: Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were managers? (or the campus)**

BA: The camp buildings needed a lot of repair and upgrading, and during our stay we made every effort to bring them into good shape.

**HK: Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

BA: Alan Martling, UCCI Board President, gave huge support, as well as Dr. Fred Trost.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the UCCI Board? In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

BA: Rhee Hale gave good support with the Conference program. The Camp Board by and large gave good support, but we were self-starters and really only needed moral support. We often saw something more than what the Camp Board did. They saw this as a church camp—we saw it as a Retreat/Conference center, as well as a church camp. We had a vision that was more expansive. We

even felt the camp site should think about a future indoor swimming pool so that the site would become very appealing for church groups as well as business groups in the future. At the time, we felt it could have been done for \$100,000. The idea was that business groups, as well as church groups, could plan their meetings at Pilgrim Camp, and the revenue they brought in would support the church purposes for camping and retreats. Sometimes the Board members gave moral support, but didn't always have the expertise for proceeding with camp projects. We understand they were either volunteers or recruited for their positions, and therefore their function was more of moral support than technical support.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

BA: Dr. Trost and Ree Hale gave good support and tried as much as possible to support us with finances. The UCCI Board seemed to focus more on summer outdoor ministries and did not think as much about retreat business, which they should have for the long-term future of Pilgrim Camp.

**HK: Will you share with us some “people stories” where lives were changed?**

BA: We had many positive groups that left Pilgrim Camp feeling the spirit of God.

**HK: Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp). What specialty camps did you have during your years? E.g. canoe camp, etc.**

BA: A typical day was getting up at 5:30 A.M. to meet the food trucks and to begin the breakfast of the day, being busy all day, and ending the day with the 10:00 P.M. snack, doing dishes, going to bed, and starting it all over again. But we wanted to please God, and running the camp was “running it for God”.

The specialty camps that we began were: a cross country ski weekend, a fall colorama, and trying to have one special event each month of the year. We tried to promote camping and retreats constantly, and worked at getting businesses to come and use the buildings for their meetings. We also made every effort to book more than one retreat on a weekend, assuring groups that we could work together, and thus we increased our retreats during my tenure. We started an Adventure Camp, which was highly successful, and incorporated riding stables with the camp life. We had two weeks of it.

**HK: Did you see your time at Pilgrim as a “growth” experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

BA: Without a doubt, being at Pilgrim was a growth experience. It led to my being ordained as a pastor. My pilgrimage went like this: I worked for Sears after college, in human resources; then to resort management in the northwoods; Pilgrim Camp, managing for God; and after Pilgrim Camp I became a human resource development person for Speed Queen, Ripon. From there I went to Best Buy, who sent me to St. Louis where we attended a Methodist Church, and I became the director of Youth Work. I then felt that I should pursue theological education, and entered Eden Seminary of the UCC, where I received my degree as Master of Divinity, with my emphasis on outdoor ministry. I studied UCC and Methodist church polity, thinking that I could next pursue a career on the Conference staff for Outdoor Ministries in the UCC or Presbyterian churches. Also, during my Eden Seminary days, I was a youth minister for a church of 1400 in St. Louis.

However, instead of entering a ministry on the Conference level, I began serving other churches—a Methodist church in St. Charles as a youth minister, a church in Jefferson City as an executive pastor—it is during this time that I went to Pillsbury Seminary, a Baptist School, and received my doctorate degree. My wife's parents were already deceased, but my parents became ill with Alzheimer's disease and a

stroke. Since they lived in Florida, the Methodist bishop gave me an appointment in Sarasota to be close to them. Boca Grande came next, followed by Naples United Methodist Church. They decided to start a mission church, and that's where I am today, as well as in the real estate business with Darlene. I am combining being a pastor and a businessman—both are a love for me. This is the path that I took as a result of my involvement with church camping, and I am grateful for the influence that it gave to me.

**HK: What words would you give to future Pilgrim campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

BA: You must have a vision to hire people to be camp managers. You must have clear objectives. Do you want them to be a caretaker only? Do you want them to be a spiritual leader, or both? Make sure when you define your vision, that your objectives are not only clear, but are attainable. Is the program to be God's recreation and God's re-creation? How do we plan to fulfill both visions? How do we get the word out and provide the money to make the vision happen? Camp is a "hands on" experience of being a pastor as much as being a caretaker.

**HK: If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Pilgrim Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

BA: Singing "Kum Bah Yah" around the fire makes a difference in the fabric of life when you're away from camp. Remind camp directors how essential those kind of experiences are.

Never lose sight of the historical significance of this camp site—the experience with the Winnebago Indians and the holy places of this site shall forever be memorable. People go to places because of their uniqueness. Development often bulldozes Indian mounds; thus, we must preserve this site.

Remembering that Pilgrim Camp was the Green Lake Bible Institute is an historical remembrance. Before it became Pilgrim Camp it was "a time share for the Lord". Various church denominations, including the Evangelical & Reformed Church, came here as a part of their time share to train young people for the Lord. Be sure to keep the pictures of the old site. Before the UCC merger, history was also important because of the consistency with which our lives are woven together with the people that have come before us.

I hope that the History Committee will print a booklet, perhaps paper back form, of all of these interviews and make them available for Conference people to pick up and read.

October, 2006

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**Answered by Jeff Puhlmann-Becker (JP)**

**HK: When and how did you first hear about Moon Beach Camp/Pilgrim Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being manager, and for what reason were you there?**

JP: I was working in the Michigan Conference and was involved in closing down one camp and perhaps taking those funds to rehabilitate another when, in the winter of 1984, I attended a regional outdoors

ministry gathering at Moon Beach Camp to discuss common concerns of outdoor ministries (it was called Educational Outdoor Ministries Networking). At that camp one of the UCCI Board Members spoke to me of the possibility of becoming the interim manager at Moon Beach.

**HK: Who contacted you about being manager and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

JP: As you can see above, I had been working in camping for the Michigan Conference. Jackie Smith then contacted me after the winter gathering and did a telephone interview (March). Moon Beach was a beautiful site; the Conference was healthy and excited about the camping program, so it was very quick for me to decide to say “yes” as the interim manager. It was to be a six month position, through October, 1985. Jan Davis was chair of the Board. What I did not know was that Betty Nimmer, whose husband had died October, 1984, would be remaining for the summer (she moved in September). The result of this was a good relationship, but yet some very difficult moments e.g. every time that Betty walked in the dining hall or met people, they didn’t know how to greet her, whether it should be in sympathy for Ken’s death, or some of them in anger because the Board did not re-hire her. There were many such times of tension. Betty herself could not understand why she was not re-hired, but was very gracious in working with me. Her speaking to others about the situation sometimes made it difficult for me. It was not my fault that the Search Committee made that decision. I was just there to do my job. Furthermore, it was not understood by Betty or others that a transition was being made at that moment as to the position of Manager. Previously, the manager included an office person, a maintenance man, a cook, and general overseer of the facility. The new job description was to include not only the above, but site management for the purposes of program, recruitment of directors and other staff, and marketing. The whole summer was a difficult transition.

**HK: Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

JP: Note the above comment about site management; however, as I said before, I was not aware of the relationship that I needed to make with Betty Nimmer, and thus I was not entirely prepared for what the job would entail. During 1985 the Search Committee, headed by Jackie Smith, was interviewing several candidates, since now both camp sites needed a permanent manager. Ben Campney was the interim manager at Pilgrim Center during the summer of 1985 and was leaving in the fall of ’85. He replaced Bruce and Dee Antle April of ’85 when the Antles became upset that Betty Nimmer was not hired as full-time manager and chose not to be a part of a Board that made such decisions. Therefore, as the search committee hired Judy Holcomb to be the Moon Beach manager, I was put in the position of leaving Moon Beach or accepting the new challenge that they put before me—the Search Committee talked to me about going to Pilgrim Center. All I could say was, after having seen the campsite, “Oh, my goodness, the site is so run down, I don’t know whether I want to get into this!” Besides, the summer of 1985 had only a handful of youth as campers. I wasn’t sure that Pilgrim had any possibility. I told them I would have to think about it for 24 hours. They were dismayed, and hoped I would still say yes. I did, the next day, but discovered again the difficult transition because of the disrepair and general decline of camping program at Pilgrim Center.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became manager? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were manager?**

JP: I was born in 1959 and baptized in the United Church of Christ, Allentown, PA. I have been a life-long member of the UCC and feel I have gotten great support from the churches of the Conference

while I have been manager. I was never commissioned by any local church. My bringing closure to one camp in Michigan and being on the Conference staff to try to revitalize another camp prepared me for the kind of church support that would be possible; however, I found that the Wisconsin churches have given better support to the camping program than those in Michigan.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

JP: My first contract at Moon Beach as an interim was \$1,000 a month, insurance, housing, and meals. Presently my salary, health insurance, pension, sick days, continuing education, sabbatical, and housing are all a part of my compensation program.

**HK: Describe your first day on the job at Moon Beach/Pilgrim.**

JP: I was woefully under-prepared for the needs of Moon Beach, and to a degree the needs of Pilgrim when I became manager there. At Moon Beach there were many misunderstandings since I was hired to be the overall site management person, and many felt that Betty was still in charge. Difficulties arose e.g. Ken didn't have an office—I needed a director's office, so the staff dining room in the old Lodge became the office, and the staff was asked to eat with the campers. This was good for them, anyhow, to observe the youth and for the youth to identify with them. The canteen was moved forward right next to the living room of the Lodge. My office was put next to Betty's in the back of the canteen. Betty was gracious in all these changes, and it was beautiful to be there in spite of the above, because the Michigan outdoor ministry program was falling apart.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as manager.**

JP: The challenge for me was the uncertainty of the Board as it was trying to figure out what it was doing. There was the prevailing idea that Moon Beach paid all the bills and Pilgrim spent all the money, which wasn't true when it was analyzed properly. That was the problem—the accounting system was not doing the job. There was a six-month drag from the time that a bill was incurred to when it showed up in the system to balance it against receipts. This made it impossible to try to keep expenses and receipts even-up.

When that got figured out and we changed the bookkeeping system from a six-month report to having an accounting report 1 ½ weeks after the end of every month, things got better. The Board also created much uncertainty in Pilgrim Center when they appraised the facility for sale and I didn't even know about it. That was hard to take.

**HK: Name the major challenges of your tenure as manager.**

JP: The first major challenge was to keep the Pilgrim site from being sold. To turn around that concept and to turn around the cash flow were the big tasks in the beginning. The camp Board looked at selling the property, but before it would do so, it went to different sites, especially around Green Lake, but after each visitation of a site, they came back stating that they were attached to Pilgrim from its past history, its emotional feelings, and the fact that it was also a Native American site before it became Pilgrim Camp. In the discussions some said, "We can always tear the cabins down and build new ones, but we can't replace the beauty and value of this camp grounds." I made it my duty to convince the Board of this and to affirm it every chance I had. I said, "If we replace facilities here and meet peoples' needs, Pilgrim Center will prosper." Up to this point it has been a poor step-child. Moon Beach got the new equipment like a truck, we got the beat-up one. We recognized that fairness was not buying the same thing for each site, but fairness meant doing the right things at each site. It took five to seven

years to turn around that mentality. Ben Campney and I worked on turning around that mentality when I was interim at Moon Beach and he was at Pilgrim, but I needed to continue that effort after I came to Pilgrim. Things changed when the “With One Accord” program went full steam ahead in 1990, and included Pilgrim Center as getting money to revitalize the site. In 1992 we were able to build Oak Mound Lodge.

**HK: How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

JP: One summer season at Moon Beach and twenty-one years at Pilgrim Center. The happiest or pivotal event during my tenure was the turn around from selling the property to envisioning it as a year-round conference center. “With One Accord” campaign in 1990; dollars were put behind that camp vision and program. People began to care about Pilgrim Center because they had an investment in it. They could see the future, and it was good.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

JP: Looking at the possibility of selling, or giving up Pilgrim Camp, and some were even saying keeping Moon Beach only for summer sessions because of a lack of dollars, made me very gloomy because I saw the possibilities that are at these two sites for developing church leadership for faith exploration and outdoor Christian education. It would have been a total loss to the church and individual lives.

**HK: Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were manager? (or the campus)**

JP: First, normal maintenance. Oak Mound, built in 1992. “With One Accord” funds provided sound proofing for walls which made for privacy and included adequate meeting space. Oak Mound is designed for two groups at a time, or one large group. Prior to this, Faville, on the hill, could only accommodate one group at a time, and couldn’t expand. If a group of ten was using the building and another church said they would come with 40, you would have to turn down the latter. So Oak Mound was a real “plus”. Prior to Oak Mound you could only do 15 people on average for a retreat or small group. After Oak Mound, 50-60 could be accommodated. Oak Mound doubled the usage and produced extra cash for the budget.

1987—The office moved to the old Seward Cabin, which was the Canteen. The building was remodeled  
1992—after Oak Mound, we no longer used the dining hall in Faville.

1993—Folsom remodeled to a year-round facility

1994—new dining hall (adjacent to the old one) was built. Remodeled the kitchen, added 50 feet of floor space; deck and porch put on the lake side of the dining hall; New black top in the old portion of Pilgrim Center.

1995—Hatch cottage; the cook used to live there, but it was in such poor condition that an apartment was made in the bottom of Faville where the kitchen had been, and at first the maintenance supervisor lived there. The small apartment covered about 1/3 of the lower area of Faville.

1998—The craft shop, or Puttery, on the hill was moved to the basement of the Lodge dining hall. The area was remodeled and could accommodate many youth and provide sufficient space with tables for creative arts. At the same time, the nature center was moved to the old craft shop.

1999—Across the road there were two clusters of cabins for youth and there were two bathrooms (one for each cluster). The bathrooms were in poor shape, were health hazards, and gave boundary concerns, since there were gang showers, etc. These were torn down and a new, large bathroom was built in between the two clusters, so all cabins can use it. You could say this bathroom is a “state of the art state park type facility”, best on the scene.

2001—new parking lot established on the hill. Old dining room remodeled with better lighting. Cut a large window in the west side of the Chapel to provide more light in the worship area. More remodeling will be done there when “Forward in Faith” funds come to the camps. A \$50,000 donation was given to provide a new house where the Hatch cottage was. Donor was grateful for what Pilgrim Camp had done for them. Total cost for the maintenance supervisor house was \$120,000. \$50,000-\$60,000 also was given to remodel the manager’s home and add an addition. The remodeling included new electrical and plumbing work.

2002—the upstairs of Folsom was remodeled, with new bath and beds. It now holds 12.

New cabin built in the first cluster area across the road where the old bathroom stood. This cabin is wheel chair accessible and has all the bunks on the first level for use with people who need them, and can accommodate 6.

2006—increase and replace the old beds with new ones—three will be wheel chair accessible.

Gradually all beds will be replaced with new ones. South side road for the west end cluster of cabins was re-built.

Besides buildings, we also developed a new brochure on hard stock and improved the quality of our relationship to the general public and to the churches.

**HK: Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

JP: Fred Trost had the vision to begin a capital campaign which became the turning point for Pilgrim Center and Moon Beach’s strengthening. It provided funds for new buildings at both campsites, lodges at both sites. David Moyer—strong support for the camping program, understands its history and future. Jan Davis—Search Committee and Board chair who brought me into the Wisconsin Camping program and has given insights and support throughout my tenure. Crystal Helm—she represents many staff persons who have enthusiasm and skills they want to offer to all who come into these doors. She is the example for all. Colleagues, like those at Moon Beach, have always been cordial-- Palmer Van Beest, and now Glenn Svetnicka have done their best to get rid of the idea that the camps are pitted against each other; instead, the camps must work together to meet the needs of those who come to us and fulfill our Conference vision. I have had a mutual good relationship with Glenn and his predecessors. Ralph & Carol Di Biasio-Snyder have been great spiritual leaders and fed my soul during my tenure.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the UCCI Board? In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

JP: The Board was in a desperate situation. They were losing money and got into micro-managing in the early years of my tenure. They needed vision instead of spending time on what color to paint a room or how much to order of this or that. They needed to focus on the larger visions and policies. A \$60,000 gift saved the day and helped all to look to the future and to keep the Board and Conference on a better course. After that gift they allowed the camp manager to do things, like determine paint colors and make orders and determine what to fix. If help was needed in that area, the manager could always ask for a sub-group of the Board to give some direction. The Board now began to focus on policy, vision, direction, and reciprocal relationships. This is the right focus.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

JP: Yes, but refer to the question above.

**HK: Will you share with us some “people stories” where lives were changed?**

JP: People stories: A number of incredible leaders were developed through the camping program and are serving in unique places, uplifting the cause of Christ and His church. Some of these include pastors, too many to mention; a lay person, Manda Stack, is an example of a person that came out of the camping program with dynamism and is at work in the Union Grove UCC. Another people story comes from a Dad whose son got bullied in everyday life, and especially at school. He wrote to me and asked if that would happen at camp, and I said we can't guarantee it, but we try to make camp a community where love is shown to everyone, and see that it does not happen. We would do our best to prevent any bullying. He said, Thanks for letting me know. His son came to camp without incident. I never heard from him until right after Thanksgiving, when he sent a grateful note about his son's experience at camp. He said there were few places in life where he didn't get picked on, but camp illustrated that it was a good community, and he said he delayed his note because he thought there was no better time to tell me than at Thanksgiving. Camp is supposed to develop leadership and strengthen the future church and enhance the faith of the people, young and old, who come there, and I believe it has done that.

**HK: Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp) What specialty camps did you have during your years? e.g. canoe camp, etc.**

JP: Polar bear swim at 7:00 a.m.; Breakfast, 8:30; Morning program, 9:30; Other activities, including games, arts & crafts, 10:30 – Noon; Lunch: 12:30 (hoppers before); Rest hour, 1:30 p.m.; Activity period (3 different activities possible) 2:30 – 5:45 p.m.; Dinner: 6:00 p.m. with singing; Evening program: 7:15 p.m.; Snacks: 8:30 p.m.; Bedtime: 9:00 – 10:30 p.m. (depending on age)

**Specialty programs:** Mom and Me (4 years—pre-school); Dad and Me; Grandparent and Me; Single parent family; Junior and Senior High Adventure Camp (includes biking, horse back, canoeing and sailing—one activity per day). Adult Shawl & Quilt Making; Adult Scrap booking; Our Whole Life Camp (especially designed for Junior High Camp to accept themselves as sexual beings in Christian teaching) I have kept on file several copies of each year's camping program of the Wisconsin Conference, which lifts up Moon Beach and Pilgrim Center for the sake of history, and would be willing to share one copy of this with the Conference History Committee.

**HK: Did you see your time at Moon Beach/Pilgrim as a “growth” experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

JP: Surely. I was 26 when I came to Moon Beach, and I am a middle-aged man now. My faith and skills have grown appreciably in every area. This is a healthy Conference with a healthy camping program in which we are living together very fulfilled.

**HK: What words would you give to future Moon Beach/Pilgrim campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

JP: Purchase the property next to the cabin clusters on the south side. The old gentleman whose wife died does not wish to give up the property because he raised his kids and lived the good life with his family there; however, he has had a stroke, has been moved into town, and it is thought his daughter is amenable to selling the property to the camp.

Build a second Oak Mound type Lodge. I am confident it would be filled regularly.

**HK: If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Moon Beach/Pilgrim Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

JP: It is all that we have done in the above, and what we continue to do together.

April 20, 2006

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## V

### MOON BEACH CAMP MANAGER QUESTIONNAIRE

#### I

**Answered by John Gerber (JG)**

**HK: When and how did you first hear about Moon Beach Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being managers, and for what reason were you there?**

JG: I was on the Christian Education Committee of the Synod and was in charge of the search for a manager when Moon Beach Camp was purchased (1957). It was a hectic search time. On that day we met at the Moon Beach site and the result was positive. We were jubilant and happy, of course. We had several candidates, and I was one of them, and was chosen as the first manager of Moon Beach Camp.

**HK: Who contacted you about being managers, and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

JG: As above, you can see how my name came to be, and how I was elected. Previous to this I had been pastor of Ebenezer Evangelical & Reformed Church in Sheboygan. Prior to the purchase of the camp and my being named manager, there was hectic activity and great confusion for me. My wife, Lone, had recently died after surgery as a result of Caesarean Section due to a stillborn child. I then decided to resign my ministry at Ebenezer Church, Sheboygan; hence, I was available.

**HK: Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

JG: No, I was to be the first manager and could see from being at the campsite what the work would involve. What an honor and what a thrill to be named manager!

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became managers? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were managers of Moon Beach?**

JG: Ebenezer Church, Sheboygan. I was not commissioned—I would have had to do it myself. They bought a canoe for Moon Beach and supported me.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

JG: My salary was to be \$500 per month. (The salary did not change while I was camp manager.) I can't produce the written statement as my papers and many records have been lost in the following moves of our household: to Moon Beach, to Barrington, IL. to Evansville, IN., and to St. Charles, MO. Poor excuse, but so it is. The Synod records should be a good information source, and June Platz, our first camp secretary, might have some information. She is from Ebenezer Church in Sheboygan.

**HK: Describe your first day on the job at Moon Beach.**

JG: You see, I was acting as a “babe in the woods” on this job. Fortunately, I had good helpers in the office, the kitchen, and as grounds keepers. It was a great experience for me and for the initial year of Moon Beach Camp. The Lord was with us all the way.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as managers.**

JG: The newness of all things (see above).

**HK: Name the major challenges of your tenure as managers.**

JG: Tenure was short (see above).

**HK: How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

JG: One year

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

JG: Getting everything ready for camping.

**HK: Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were managers? (or the campus)**

JG: They remained as they were purchased.

**HK: Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

JG: June Platz, secretary, and those who helped to direct the camp.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Moon Beach Camp Board. In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

JG: They provided all we needed the first year.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

JG: The Synod leadership was fine.

**HK: Will you share some people stories where lives were changed?**

JG: I can't recall any at this time.

**HK: Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp). What specialty camps did you have during your years? e.g. canoe camp, etc.**

JG: My records are gone.

**HK: Did you see your time at Moon Beach as a “growth” experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

JG: Yes, I still have a soft spot for Moon Beach.

**HK: What words would you give to future Moon Beach campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

JG: Rely on God’s grace.

**HK: If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Moon Beach Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

JG: None

[John is now 90 years old, living in St. Charles, Missouri. He says the 90 years are taking a toll on his memory and ability. Furthermore, his wife, Geraldine, is languishing on the brink (of death) at the Lake St. Charles Health Care Center. He wishes all a good summer and God’s blessings. Ed]

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**Answered by Vern & Carol Bernardo (V&C)**

**HK: When and how did you first hear about Moon Beach Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being managers, and for what reason were you there?**

V&C: I, Vern, was President of Salem E & R Church, Plymouth, Wisconsin, a church looking for a Minister, at the time of the purchase of Moon Beach Camp. We had been hired as caretakers of Moon Beach Camp.

**HK: Who contacted you about being managers, and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

V&C: The Rev. Ed Hennig contacted us at Moon Beach and asked us to meet with him at his church, and he offered us the manager’s job, which we accepted immediately.

**HK: Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

V&C: The manager’s job evolved and came about so quickly that we had no time to think about a job description. We had no idea of what we were about to undertake.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became managers? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were managers of Moon Beach?**

V&C: We were members of Salem E & R Church, Plymouth, Wisconsin, at the time of becoming managers of Moon Beach Camp. We were not commissioned by the church, as things evolved so quickly. Salem gave great support, both financially and sending campers.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

V&C: We had no contract, just a verbal agreement. Our salary was \$3,600 per year for two people, plus home and utilities. We had food in the summer season. At the final time of our employment our salary was \$10,000 a year for two people.

**HK: Describe your first day on the job at Moon Beach**

V&C: Our first day as managers was starting to close up the Camp for the season.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as managers.**

V&C: Not all churches were in favor of the Synod purchasing the Camp. Therefore, it became our task to visit with Pastors to sell the benefits of camping at Moon Beach, raise funds and encourage churches to send campers. We were also involved with the Town of St. Germain to get tax exemptions and calm their fears of taking business from the resorts of the area. Hiring our staff, taking reservations, feeding unexpected visitors to the camp, not hiring outside labor in order to economically manage, purchasing food and supplies, and whatever needed to be done were also challenges.

**HK: Name the major challenges of your tenure as managers.**

V&C: All the things we listed in the answer above, plus camp staff problems—a cook quitting in the middle of the camping season and I, Carol, having to take over as cook until a cook was found! Trying to find uses for the camp during the off-seasons, such as 4-H Camp, retirees from Allis Chalmers, and retreats from local churches were also major challenges.

**HK: How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

V&C: We served nine years the first time we were managers, and four years the second time around. We cannot say that there was any one year that was special; all of them were great and meaningful.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

V&C: We can't think of any major difficulties. There were a few minor trying times, but nothing that was such that we could not handle.

**HK: Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were managers? (or the campus)**

V&C: There were two open car ports, and an ice house, Lodge, manager's home, and twenty cabins. The Lodge was log, open porch—inside was a dining room, lounge, kitchen with walk-in cooler, storage area, and an room used as an office and canteen. There was also a small staff dining room. A larger staff dining room was built and office space added later. A new roof was put on the Lodge. The walk-in cooler was re-insulated. We tore down the old Partridge building and built a new four bedroom, two bath unit. We enclosed one car port for a workshop and a craft shop. The open pavilion was expanded

to double the size and enclosed and heated. We re-roofed and painted cabins--many dry walls were installed. A new electrical system was installed for the entire camp. Mr. Olson had the Lagoon built on Little St. Germain Lake. All of the roads were re-coated.

**HK: Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

V&C: It is going to be impossible to name all the special people with whom we dealt because they are too numerous, and we are certain to omit many of them. However, we will begin with Ed Hennig, who was Chairman of the Camp Board, from the beginning to the end of our tenure. All of the Moon Beach Board Members were special and more than cooperative and helpful.....all were very dedicated to making Moon Beach a success.

Our camp staffs over the years were special people. They were dedicated to service and camp promotion. To name some of them: Art and Erna Buck, of St. Stephens, Merrill; Mildred and Ed Fockel, of Black Creek; Millie and Harold Keen, of Neenah--all of them were special cooks. The camp chaplains, Tom Townsend and Woody Rettig, were special. The Minister to Youth, Ray Hernandez, deserves special mention. All of the directors and their staff were great and cooperative and are too numerous to try to name.

Other churches and people are also numerous. To mention some—Martin Stroschoen, who delivered our main supply of groceries; Ken Nimmer, contractor; Carl Dassow, electrical assistance; Dale Hackbarth and Leo Walker, who furnished all the electrical wiring and equipment, plus labor, for the re-wiring of the camp; Ed Ruh, who built the fireplace in the pavilion; Harold DeRuiter, who assisted in the building of the workshop and the craft shop. This has just been a small listing of the exceptional cooperation and help for which we were grateful.

The Work Camps were also a great help and came from all over the state and even outside of Wisconsin. To name a few: Hilton Grams and crew from Brookfield; Marty Koehler and group from Fond du Lac; Gene Rapp and group from Oshkosh; Hal Ley and group from Evansville, Indiana. We know we are forgetting many others. We should also mention the Salem Church Congregation, Plymouth, who always came through when we needed certain items, and also made the curtains for the pavilion. We are grateful for the work of the secretary, Mary Rose Lumme, and The Rev. Lowell (Fergie) Ferguson.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Moon Beach Board/UCCI. In what ways? If not, why not?**

V&C: The Board, before the merger of the Camps (Moon Beach and Pilgrim), was extremely helpful and cooperative. After the merger, we felt that the Board was somewhat split in loyalties that were obvious. It would have been more helpful if all could have been more united in the purpose of better camping.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

V&C: We were appreciative of the financial backing and assistance of Ray Hernandez.

**HK: Will you share with us some “people stories” where lives were changed?**

V&C: Most of the stories of life changes would come from campers, directors, and pastors. Our only knowledge of our staff was that Tom Townsend and Ruth Keen found each other and got married.

**HK: Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp). What specialty camps did you have during your years? e.g. canoe camp, etc.**

V&C: Junior High: our responsibility was to provide three meals, have life guard on duty for swimming period, and anything extra that the director would ask for. Also, we had to prepare for Consecration Services.

Junior Camp: Same as the above, with the added “home-in-the-woods” meal preparation and assigning home-in-the-woods boxes, and also furnishing an evening snack. Sometimes we had to take care of homesick kids. Many times we had a camper in our home until the homesickness passed.

Senior High: Same as Junior High

Family Camp: Assigned cabins, furnished three meals, and met family demands.

Canoe Camps, Handicapped Family Camp, 4-H Camp, Over 50's, Retreats, Work Camps, and Ecumenical Family Camps were some of the specialty camps that were a part of the camping program during our time.

**HK: Did you see your time at Moon Beach as a “growth” experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

V&C: We definitely saw our years as a “growth” experience, and a ministry to the Church, and we hope that we may have somehow left a little of ourselves there at Moon Beach, and that we may have touched someone's life. We will never forget the wonderful people we met, and with whom we shared hours.

**HK: What words would you give to future Moon Beach campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

V&C: To the campers: We hope that you will find wonderful and meaningful times at camp, and will return to your homes fulfilled.

To the Board: Always have the camps at heart when making your decisions as to the camping program in Wisconsin.

To the Managers: We always looked at the camps in a very personal way, and will trust that all future managers will carry on as if it were their own, and love it as much as we have.

To the Churches: You have always given us the greatest support while we served Moon Beach. We feel that it is a very important part of Christian education and a wonderful experience for all ages. We trust that you will continue to support the programs offered and continue to send campers.

**HK: If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Moon Beach Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

V&C: At this time, we would like to first of all give thanks to GOD, who gave us the knowledge, energy, and leadership to carry on our ministry at Moon Beach Camp. Without HIM, we are nothing. Some of the outstanding camps that we remember were the Canoe, Handicapped, and Over 50's.

Canoe Camp: When campers arrived at the camp, they had come from all areas, and most of them were strangers to each other. The greatest joy was to pick them up at the landing site and find a complete family of happy and loving campers.

Handicapped Camp: "This was a most loving experience," as one family told us; it was the one week that their child was loved by everyone, and not someone who was taunted by others who did not understand. Also, it was a time for parents to better understand their child and themselves.

Over 50's Camp: Another great experience. So many of the campers were living alone, and the fellowship of being here and being able to sit down with others at meal time was enjoyable to all of them.

In conclusion, there are so many stories and memories that we could probably fill a book—some sad, but mostly wonderful and happy. As we have said in some of the other answers, we were very thankful to have had our time at Moon Beach, and the wonderful people at times made it feel like an unreal world. It was the greatest environment for the raising of our family, and all three of our children will attest to that! We will all leave this world with nothing but the fondest memories and thanks to all of you who made our lives so special. **Thank you again, GOD, for being with us every step of the way.**

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3

**Answered by Jan Witthuhn (JW)  
(For deceased parents, Ray & Mary Witthuhn)**

**HK: When and how did you first hear about Moon Beach Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being managers, and for what reason were you there?**

JW: My parents first attended Moon Beach Camp as family campers August 11, 1957. I worked on the Moon Beach kitchen crew 1963-1966, and kept talking about it with them.

**HK: Who contacted you about being managers, and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

JW: I encouraged my parents to seek information about the managers' jobs when I knew Vern and Carol Bernardo were leaving. My Dad was sales manager at WHBL Radio in Sheboygan. My Mom was a housewife. Deciding to move was a difficult decision for them.

**HK: Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

JW: Because they were so familiar with the camp, my parents knew what they were getting into. I don't know about the job description.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became managers? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were managers of Moon Beach Camp?**

JW: We belonged to St. John's UCC, Sheboygan. I'm not aware of any commissioning or support, other than continued contact with long-time friends who came to Moon Beach as campers.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

JW: Unknown

**HK: Describe your first day on the job at Moon Beach.**

JW: Unknown

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as managers.**

JW: The largest challenge I remember was the effort it took to do things their own way after Bernardos' long tenure.

**HK: Name the major challenges of your tenure as managers.**

JW: One challenge was my Mother's health, which deteriorated while we were there. Another was the fire that burned down the workshop.

**HK: How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

JW: September, 1966 – August, 1969. The first summer was their best because they really enjoyed the kids on their permanent staff that year.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

JW: See above—mother's health and fire.

**HK: Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were managers? (or the campus)**

JW: The only thing I remember was the installation of the first dish washer in the Lodge kitchen. Also, the modular home for the Fockels (cooks) was installed while they were there.

**HK: Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

JW: Ed and Mildred Fockel, the cooks, demonstrated daily through their work together, and even through their infrequent squabbles, the true meaning of enduring loves.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Moon Beach Board/ UCCI. In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

JW: Unknown

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

JW: I know my Father always returned from the meetings renewed and re-invigorated.

**HK: Will you share with us some “people stories” where lives were changed?**

JW: Like many teen-agers, I felt my parents were impossibly out of fashion, etc. When they became finalists for the managers’ job, were interviewed by a psychologist, and then hired, they became my heroes. Because I thought so highly of Moon Beach Camp, I had to begin to treat my parents with greater respect. It changed our family relationship forever.

**HK: Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp). What specialty camps did you have during your years? e.g. canoe camp, etc.**

JW: Days began early—getting to the lodge by 6:00 A.M. to sweep up and supervise the kitchen/dining room preparation. The permanent staff ate before the campers; then there was clean-up. Dad and the boys worked on maintenance tasks; Mom worked with the cooks to prepare lunch and dinner. She also did the bookkeeping. The days always went well into the evening due to programs and keeping the “canteen” open.

**HK: Did you see your time at Moon Beach as a “growth” experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

JW: Yes, my parents definitely felt it was a ministry and a great one for two people without the college educations most ministries requires.

**HK: What words would you give to future Moon Beach campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

JW: Being a camper, manager, or staff member is something you will never forget. Everyone with whom you work becomes like “family”.

**HK: If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Moon Beach Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

JW: I have a number of photo albums from 1957-1969, Moon Beach days. I have no family to leave them to—I’d be pleased to donate them if they would be of interest or help to the historical project.

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**Answered by Betty Nimmer Jones**

**I. When and how did you first hear about Moon Beach Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being managers, and for what reason were you there?**

Our family was members of IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Kaukauna. Our daughter, Marysue, and our son, Lee, were campers at Moon Beach Camp. We stopped in to see the camp on various camping trips to northern Wisconsin. Our pastor, Harvey L. Kandler, knew Ken's business was remodeling or constructing new homes. When they needed to rebuild Hennig Hall, Ken had the trusses built in the area.

**2. Who contacted you about being managers, and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

When we lived in Kaukauna, Bill Lammers, came to see us and asked us to become managers of Moon Beach Camp. We slept on it overnight and made the decision to go to camp with all the available construction work and Betty's knowledge in the office. We both had good jobs and it was a hard decision to move, leaving behind relatives and friends.

Kenneth W. Nimmer was manager of Moon Beach Camp (where we lived) from January, 1974 to September 23, 1984, at the time of his death.

**3. Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

Yes

**4. What church did you belong to at the time you became managers? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were managers of Moon Beach Camp?**

We were commissioned at Immanuel UCC, Kaukauna, on January 27, 1974, by Harvey L. Kandler, Pastor. Dr. Donald W. Hinze, Northeast Association Minister; The Rev. Reed Forbush, President, United Church Camps, Inc.; and Bernard Hupperts, President of Immanuel, signed the Certificate. We had a reception in the church. The commissioning gave us the high calling of helping to fulfill the potential of young lives and helping older lives grow in faith and self-discovery. We received a wall plaque of a canoe with paddle on Moon Lake, made out of wood and created by Raymond Nagel of Kaukauna, dedicated layman of Immanuel Church, as a memento of the commissioning.

On the day of commissioning, Jan. 27, 1974, we were given the Certificate of Commissioning. It reads, "Having qualified as Camp Managers, Ken and Betty Nimmer are hereby commissioned as lay workers in accordance with the rules of the United Church of Christ, Wisconsin Conference, United Church Camps, Inc., and are thereby called upon by the church to take up the privileges and responsibilities of serving our Lord as Moon Beach Camp Managers." Ken and I did find spiritual fulfillment as we became managers of Moon Beach Camp.

During our time at Moon Beach our home church, Immanuel, Kaukauna, brought work camps for twelve years in the month of May. Wayne and Fay Paschen, John and Joyce Smith, Michael & Karin Weaver were the coordinators and recruiters, assisted by Pastor Harvey Kandler. Groups ranged from 50-70 adults and youth. Much work was accomplished.

**5. What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

Our salary was \$8,000 a year, plus room and board—that was for both of us. Ken built **Seymour Cottage**, remodeled many cabins, put a new floor in the Lodge; there was no end to the things that had to be done. I worked with camping for the summer, retreats over weekends, plus all the things that had to be done in the office. After Ken died, the UCCI Board re-dedicated the Lodge, calling it **Nimmer Lodge**.

**6. Describe your first day on the job at Moon Beach.**

Vern and Carol Bernardo (past managers), the ministers of the Conference, directors of each Camp, and the UCCI Board, gave us direction as we managed the camp from Day 1 on. It was hard, but fun.

**7. Name or list the challenges of your first year as managers.**

Staffing for the summer camps was always a great problem. In 1974 we were looking for a lifeguard. I talked to Jan Mason of Chicago (now married to David Rauk, who lives in Moscow, Idaho), who was undecided whether to go to Girl Scout Camp or come to Moon Beach. I told her how exciting it would be to come and become lifeguard—see all the trees in Northern Wisconsin. We have become great friends and a couple of weeks ago she gave me this information, which I am relating to you:

*“Youth Camp was filled with activity to keep the children busy. Early morning (7:00 AM) started with polar bear swims. This is when sleepy kids woke up to a refreshing dip in Moon Lake. Following the icy swim was a quick run to the cabins up the hill to a hot shower, then breakfast at the Lodge.” Plenty of nature hikes, archery, swim lessons, crafts, softball, canoeing and fishing filled the days. Campers fell asleep after lunch during their required ‘shoes off’ time. Following an hour rest time, it was down to the beach for free swim, row boating and canoeing. Many times we had water Olympics and other activities planned.”*

**8. Name the major challenges of your tenure as managers.**

See question 7 (staffing)

**9. How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

January, 1974 through September 23, 1984, when Ken died, and then one more year following Ken’s death.

**10. What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

Ken’s death because it totally changed our life and my relationship with the camp.

**11. Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were managers? (or the campus)**

See answer of question 5, Seymour Cabin and Nimmer Lodge

**12. Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

For the staff, there were many college age youth, who grew up during summers working at Moon Beach Camp. These youth were shaped into adulthood by wonderful role models, such as Bev and Dale

Heinen, Cathy and Guy Weiter, plus ministers from every city in Wisconsin, and the great families who we knew as campers every week. Jan Mason also says that we, Ken and Betty Nimmer, were the best of role models for the youth.

**13. Did you feel you had good support from the Moon Beach Board /UCCI? In what ways?**

**If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

Yes, they helped in every way they could with the amount of money available.

**14. Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

(See above.)

**15. Will you share with us some “people stories” where lives were changed?**

For Jan, “Ken Nimmer became a father-like figure as she lost her Dad at the age of 7. The “**boss man**” as she called him, made a real impact on Jan and others, who learned when to be serious and when not to be, the value of hard work and getting really tired, and the spirit of teamwork. Many of the yard boys Ken trained grew up to be fine young men.

“Betty was termed “**boss lady**” as she was as much of a leader at the camp as Ken. She was true to the staff and led quietly by example. She was a great trainer, too, for those who worked in the office for her.” For Jan, who worked at Moon Beach Camp for three summers, Betty was more than she will ever know. She was a role model, trainer, friend, a second mother, an inspiration, and a life-time friend of over 30 years.

**16. Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp). What specialty camps did you have during your years? E.g. canoe camp, etc.**

**See Youth Camps/Question 7.**

**Evening meals** were huge and delicious, with many songs before, during, and after we ate. Activities in the evening offered some Bible study groups, discussions, songs and skit night, as well as softball games. The cabins had counselors to keep the kids on task. The counselors were especially helpful during clean-up time when they did some type of service project for the camp.

**Canoe Camps** (four per summer) involved five nights away from camp—a real wilderness experience for youth to become one with God and nature. Ken built a trailer so it would hold canoes, gear, and everything that is needed to go on a canoe trip.

**Family Camp:** this was a wonderful week for families to bond. Each family had a cabin for their Sunday-Saturday visit to paradise—the second cleanest lake in Wisconsin—MOON LAKE. The swimming test started the week as the lifeguard “banded” those who could take out boats and swim to the raft. Moving into the new “home” for the week finished and everyone gathered at the Lodge for the “welcome to the week at Moon Beach Camp” from Betty and Ken Nimmer—a review of camp policy, rules, and schedules. Then came the huge Sunday supper and songs!

**Monday-Friday** had similar program outlines. After Polar Bear (7:00 a.m.) Swim, which children loved, and only a few adults enjoyed, came breakfast. Ken Nimmer and the yard boys worked every

morning on repairs to the cabins, roofs, gates, or fence. The boys learned from the “boss”, a wise teacher, how to do things. Jan learned office management and all about camps (preparing her well for jobs in recreation, business, and human resources). Other Camp Staff prepared food in the kitchen. Betty coordinated menus and staff to insure food was ordered, prepared on time, and was paid for. She was a great role model for Jan. All this work was done while family campers enjoyed fellowship, Bible study, discussion groups, crafts, sports, swimming and boating. Program staff led activities during most of the day, often following a theme.

**After lunch** everyone rested a bit--then fun time or free time began. Unscheduled program staff was free to enjoy activities, as were the campers. During the afternoon time, people would buy a camp T-shirt or an ice cream in the canteen, or take a hike, play archery, badminton, shuffle board, table tennis, or swim. It was a restful time for some, enjoying nature, while others filled every minute with fun activities. Most of the kids could be found in or near the waterfront of Moon Beach, or near Nimmer Lodge, as it became known, named after the managers who made camp so special for both the campers and the staff.

**After a great dinner** came lots of songs and skits. Joan St. Arnold of Kaukauna, and Jan Mason taught the “Rooster Song” and performed the skit, “Who’s on First” more times than one could count. Many campers performed in the Skit Night by playing an instrument, telling jokes, or singing a song. Once a week there was a cook-out, which was an outdoor meal, not in the big dining room. Olympics, treasure hunts, and other events rounded out the week. Campers went home on Saturday morning, after closing thoughts.

**17. Did you see your time at Moon Beach as a “growth” experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

See the above paragraphs and you will see how it made a mark on our lives and others. See also question 4, second paragraph.

**18. What words would you give to future Moon Beach campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

Work hard, love people and God!

**19. If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Moon Beach/Pilgrim Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

See Question/answer 15.

(Since having some physical difficulties (mini-stroke), I was assisted with questions 7-19 by Jan Mason, long-time friend. My second husband, Ralph Jones, has assisted me in the first part of the questionnaire.)

March 2003

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**Answered by Judy Holcomb (JH)**

**HK: When and how did you first hear about Moon Beach Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being manager, and for what reason were you there?**

JH: I had never been to Moon Beach. Jackie Smith sent a job description to a friend in our church in Billings, Montana, who passed it to me to see what another Conference was doing in Outdoor Ministries. At the time I was an elementary school teacher and the director of our UCC Camp, Camp Mimanagish, in the summer time. I wasn't looking for a change, so I believe that this was definitely a call from God to pursue this direction into full-time camp ministry. I went through the full job search process with the Moon Beach search committee. After consulting with my high school aged son, who would be affected by a change, I decided to accept the position as Managing Director of Moon Beach

**HK: Who contacted you about being manager, and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

JH: See above

**HK: Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

JH: The job description was quite clear. Having experience at Camp Mimanagish gave me some idea of the demands of camp life.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became manager? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were manager of Moon Beach Camp?**

JH: I belonged to a UCC church in Billings, Montana. Other than contact with friends, I had no support from that church because it was a struggling, new-church-start.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

JH: My first contract, beginning September, 1985, included salary, (\$13,000), family health insurance, pension, meals when campers were being fed, mileage, and housing. I believe my final cash salary was about \$27,000, ending mid-March, 1994.

**HK: Describe your first day on the job at Moon Beach.**

JH: My first day/camp was the Singles Camp, led by directors from Green Bay. Jeff Becker was a huge help in orienting me to the traditions and management systems of Moon Beach.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as manager.**

JH: A major challenge of the first year included a three-week sub-zero stretch of weather in early December that broke many water pipes at Moon Beach and around Vilas County. Being so far from family and friends was a major adjustment, too.

**HK: Name the major challenges of your tenure as manager.**

JH: Staff issues are always important and challenging. Developing a long-range plan for upgrading the facilities and funding was important, as the Board and I wanted to move from a “band-aid” style of patching physical problems to fixing them properly for long-term improvement.

**HK: How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

JH: I served 8 ½ years from 9/85 to 3/94. Great/happy years would be those when the summer staff “clicked” and were responsible and enjoyed each other.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

JH: Working with difficult employees and terminating someone’s employment was the most stressful aspect of management.

**HK: Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were manager? (or the campus)**

JH: Changes made to the facility: Upgrade of cabins with “adopt-a-cabin” by churches, replacing the well and water lines in the main camp area, developing trails throughout the woods, installing shuffle board courts, developing plans for replacing the old Lodge, moving the craft area to Hennig Hall, and turning vacant space into accessible retreat lodging.

**HK: Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

JH: Supportive Board members were: Jackie Smith and Bruce McCain, many campers and directors, like Holly Whitcomb, Bob Ullman, Mark Schowalter and family, John and Aurelia Seidler, and many, many others who loved Moon Beach.

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Moon Beach Board/UCCI. In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

JH: Most of the time I felt UCCI gave good support. Sometimes the distance made for isolation. Regular phone calls and checking in with the Chair of the Board could have helped prevent communication gaps. One should always shape their decisions with prayer, communication, and compassion. A “business” model for managing staff alienates and divides rather than creating understanding and cohesion. Always leave room for the movement of the Holy Spirit in the midst of decisions and visioning.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

JH: Conference people shared a vision of the importance of the ministry that occurs at our outdoor ministry sites. Including the camps in a capital campaign allowed the completion of the new Lodge and retreat facilities that began as a dream 15 years ago.

**HK: Will you share with us some “people stories” where lives were changed?**

JH: I can’t be specific on this one, but believe that many staff and campers were changed by their experiences at Moon Beach. I believe the outdoor ministry experience heals souls and allows physical

rest from frenetic lifestyles. It's a place of safety, a place to be yourself and play with your family members. I am now taking my grandchildren to Family Camp so we can "bond" and develop the memories unique to the camp experience that they will remember all of their lives.

**HK: Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp). What specialty camps did you have during your years? e.g. canoe camp, etc.**

JH: Moon Beach hosted two weeks of youth camps and six to eight family camps during the summer months, senior camps and elder hostel in the fall, then a variety of weekend retreats throughout the winter and spring. The schedule for camps is similar to current schedules. For family camps, that meant a Bible study time in the morning and vespers in the evening; craft, swimming, hiking opportunities throughout the day were offered. Specifically, camps that we developed during my tenure included Gourmet Cooking Camp, Epiphany Camp, and Fishing Camp.

**HK: Did you see your time at Moon Beach as a "growth" experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

JH: Moon Beach was definitely a time of personal growth. I witnessed the deep faith of campers and directors as they led campers through fun and engaging experiences. Witnessing a baptism of two youth in the lake, sharing in many wonderful vesper services, and creative Bible study sessions helped me grow in my faith in God and in the importance of camp experiences for people. As I observed faith-filled, earthy UCC pastors who were down-to-earth, and not holier-than-Thou, I wanted to develop my understanding of the Bible. This led me to take some lay classes in Old and New Testament studies, then eventually to full-time seminary study. I've now served two churches as pastor for the past 8 years! My first sabbatical included some time at an outdoor ministry site in Washington State! Yes, outdoor ministries is forever in my blood.

**HK: What words would you give to future Moon Beach campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

JH: Keep promoting the camps. Families need to be strengthened and supported through quality programs offered at Moon Beach and Pilgrim Center. We know that a high percentage of pastors claim their faith was ignited through camp experiences. Keep upgrading the facilities (new beds in the cabins at Moon Beach, please!)

**HK: If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Moon Beach Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

JH: All has been said!

**HK: THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR PRESERVING THIS PART OF MOON BEACH HISTORY. WE ARE EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR EFFORTS!**

JH: Thanks, Harvey, for your work on this project. Your love of Moon Beach goes on and on, too, doesn't it?

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**Answered by Palmer Van Beest (PV)**

**HK: When and how did you first hear about Moon Beach Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being managers, and for what reason were you there?**

PV: I first heard about Moon Beach Camp in February of 1994 from Rev. Robert MacDougall at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Menomonie, WI. We were at a meeting for a men's group and Rob mentioned that there was a job open at Moon Beach; I asked Rob to get me additional information. Several weeks later I followed up with Rob; he told me if I was interested, the camp wanted to hear from me that week so I made a phone call and finally spoke with Rev. Ardie Johnson of Greendale, WI. I asked Ardie to send me information but she insisted on scheduling me for an interview, I told her to just send me the information and, if I was interested, I would contact them; Ardie was very persistent and would not take no for an answer. At the time, the camp was searching for an interim Managing Director. I had never been to Moon Beach prior to being offered the position of interim Managing Director.

**HK: Who contacted you about being manager and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

PV: Rev. Michael Bausch was President of UCCI and Linda Buchs-Hammonds was chair of the Moon Beach Camp Site Committee. I believe that Rev. Ardie Johnson contacted me late in the evening of the same day that I did my second interview.

Prior to going to Moon Beach I was working as a social worker at Dunn County Department of Human Services. I was a trained marriage and family therapist and worked with many children and families in crisis. I had been doing this work since February of 1985. I was not job-searching at the time I was called to serve at Moon Beach but we were open to making a change in our lives as this affected our whole family, though our son, A.J. was a freshman at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Even though UCCI wanted an immediate answer, I told them that I would not make a commitment until I saw the camp. Nancy Dawn, my spouse, and I made arrangements to immediately come up and see Moon Beach. We met Jeff Puhlmann-Becker, Dick Preuhs, and Charlie and Loretta Durkee and received a cursory tour of Moon Beach Camp. We had decided on the drive up to camp to accept the call baring something seeming glaringly wrong with the camp.

**HK: Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

PV: My first response is to write, you're kidding, right? No. Information seemed pretty general and sparse. I did not realize the scope and depth of the job but was open to the faith journey. Rev. Ardie Johnson was instrumental in helping me be open to the power of the Holy Spirit in guiding and leading the camp. Reverend Mike Bausch was also exceptionally helpful in helping me to examine and frame the Managing Director's role in the larger scheme of the camp community and history. Linda Buchs-Hammonds worked tirelessly to support and guide me as I began my service as the Managing Director of Moon Beach. It also should be mentioned that the permanent staff at Moon Beach: Alice Strutz, Office Manager and Registrar, Charlie Durkee, Maintenance Supervisor and Fleur Phelps, head Chef, were all extremely supportive and helpful. Jeff Puhlmann-Becker, the Moon Beach Site Committee, the UCCI

Board of Directors and the other ministers of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ all were supportive and willing to help me as I began my call on April 29, 1994.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became manager? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were manager of Moon Beach Camp?**

PV: We belonged to First Congregational United Church of Christ in Menomonie, WI. We were not commissioned by the Church, nor by the Conference (either/both would have been nice and helpful in the preparation for the journey). The church remained our home church and welcomed us in worship on those rare occasions and also participated fully in programs at Moon Beach including some additional retreats. The church also hosted a gathering of friends from the church and community for a send-off for us, though the event was actually planned by colleagues from my work place.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

PV: I was hired as an interim Managing Director for a period of one year; I began my service on April 29, 1994. The initial salary was \$21,000 + housing + meals with campers when camps/retreats were in session. Compensation included a dollar amount equal to the cost of the UCC Health Insurance for a family plan medical coverage; we elected to take this coverage. Days off were limited to one day a week from May through September, otherwise 2 days a week. Vacation was negotiated to 3 weeks. There was no pension/retirement offered during the interim period.

When I was offered the position of Managing Director (as opposed to interim) a retirement provision was added to my compensation package that added an amount equal to 14% of my salary to be put into a 403.b for my retirement.

My ending (I ended my employment with UCCI on November 30<sup>th</sup> 2000) compensation package was \$38,844.00 + housing and meals with campers when groups were in camp.

**HK: Describe your first day on the job at Moon Beach.**

PV: I drove into Moon Beach Camp, coming from Menomonie, WI, at about 9 pm. and drove straight past the Managing Director's residence ("the white house") and drove down to Nimmer Lodge where I met Charlie Durkee, Maintenance Supervisor and Linda Buchs-Hammonds, Moon Beach Camp Site Committee Chair. I was introduced to a group of about 40 campers who were there for a work-weekend. We welcomed the campers and told them that we would make their work assignments in the morning. Linda, Charlie and I stayed up till midnight planning the work what would happen the next day. Tasks included sawing through the concrete floor in the lower level of Seymour to begin the renovation of the basement into winterized, accessible housing; hauling wood and preparing firewood, removing storms and installing screens, opening lake-side cabins, raking, setting up the waterfront and the lagoon boating areas, and I'm sure a myriad of other tasks that I don't recall.

After our planning, I drove up to the Manager's residence, walked Spinnaker and Orca (our 2 Newfoundland dogs), and went to bed.

I was up bright and early the next morning and the weekend went by in a blur of hard work and coordination of tasks. When all was said and done, the camp looked great and I had a real sense of how the larger camp community could pull together to make things happen; this was borne out again and again over the years.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as managers.**

- PV: - Getting to know the operational systems and schedules that were in place.
- Building those initial personal relationships with guests and year-round staff
  - Planning the new lodge
  - Recruiting volunteer leadership “cold”
  - Recruiting qualified, dedicated staff from WI UCC Conference Churches

**HK: Name the major challenges of your tenure as managers.**

- PV: - Building a collaborative and supportive relationship between Pilgrim Center and Moon Beach; Jeff and I put a lot of energy into putting the “United” into United Church Camps, Inc.
- Recruiting competent, creative, spiritually grounded leadership for summer camps.
  - Dealing with violations of camp policies/covenants.
  - Facilitating the design, construction and transition into the new lodge.

**HK: How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

PV: I served as *Interim* Managing Director from April 29, 1994, until January of 1995 when I was offered the position of Managing Director. My final day of employment with United Church Camps, Inc. was November 30, 2000. The short answer is that I managed the camp for seven full seasons. Every year I was at camp was full of wonder and joy (and a few challenges to boot!)

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

PV: The most difficult things I had to deal with involved violations of camp policy/covenant by certain staff. I believe that this was the most difficult because it was a violation of implicit trust I had placed in them as part of the camp management team.

**HK: Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were manager? (or the campus)**

PV: In September of 1996 the camp began construction of Moon Beach Lodge and in the spring of 1997 Nimmer Lodge was razed. Nimmer Lodge was a beautiful, rustic, vertical- log facility with fieldstone fireplaces at each end. The dining was at 8 foot rectangular tables with metal folding chairs. In the winter and spring, changing the storms and screen was a task that took all day and during the winter the porch was wrapped in plastic to keep out some of the cold. Speaking of the porch, many campers came to love the bare cedar posts with burls that held up the porch roof. Nimmer Lodge accommodated about 80 comfortably and 120 in a pinch. Unfortunately, there were numerous code violations that needed to be rectified as well as major structural problems with the foundation of the lodge. The board ultimately made the difficult decision that it would be better stewardship of limited resources to replace Nimmer Lodge.

Moon Beach Lodge began operation in June of 1997. Moon Beach Lodge has a massive fieldstone fireplace in the gathering room. The rock in the fireplace was primarily from stones salvaged from the fireplaces in Nimmer Lodge and from special stones that campers brought to camp the summer before construction began. There is a rock on the front of the fireplace with natural markings resembling the UCC emblem; this is a rock I discovered in the forest up in the area. The first summer the lodge was in operation, every camper made an origami crane--there were over 800 of them hung from the beams in the great room. In the dining room, the woolen panels hung from the ceiling were designed in

collaboration with Alice Strutz (camp registrar at the time) and myself and Mary Burns, a weaver up near Manitowish Waters; the panels depict creatures one might encounter at Moon Beach and were designed in a pictographic style. The buffet incorporated the old buffet from Nimmer Lodge and a new custom built section. The kerosene lamps (rewired for electricity) in the lodge were also salvaged from Nimmer Lodge. The Bear that greets you as you come into the lodge came from Hawks Nest carvers up on Hwy 2, as does the beautifully carved loon bench in the lodge. Torrey and Steve graciously donated the funds for the bear and Tip Tyler graciously donated the funds to purchase the bench. There is an original drawing in the lodge that captures many of the special aspects of Nimmer Lodge; this picture was commissioned by the camp and done by local artist and friend, Peggy Grimvalski from Minocqua-Woodruff. It should also be mentioned for posterity, that there is a time capsule sealed in the wall of the camp!

(I hope I'm correct on my dates above)

**HK: Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

PV: Jeff Puhlmann-Becker, Managing Director of Pilgrim Center – knowledgeable, dedicated, far-sighted, supportive; Linda Buchs-Hammonds, Moon Beach Camp Site Chair and later UCCI Board President – wise, patient, visionary, faithful, hard-working; Fred Trost, WI Conference Minister – faithful and supportive; Nancy Dawn Van Beest, - creative, insightful, willing to help in any way she could

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Moon Beach Board/ UCCI. In what ways?**

PV: First of all, clarification to the above: there was a Board of Directors of United Church Camps, Inc., a Moon Beach Camp Site Committee, a Pilgrim Center Site Committee, and Jeff Puhlmann-Becker, who was the Managing Director at Pilgrim Center. There was very strong, excellent leadership and process. Mike Bausch, Linda Buchs-Hammonds, and Jim Gorman were presidents during my era, and were very solid. Mark Stalhout and Mark Severtson gave strong support. I was particularly impressed.

At the first Board meeting they brought out the plans for a new Lodge and had the architect go back to re-draw it, because the Board wasn't totally satisfied. When he came back, the new plans are the Lodge we have today. This shows the kind of Board I had to work with.

**HK: If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

PV: They were basically always helpful.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

PV: Fred Trost, Conference President, and the Conference Treasurer were always great to work with. Fred Trost set up a group of 15-20 people to wrestle with and hammer out camp policies, and that group did it well.

**HK: Will you share with us some “people stories” where lives were changed?**

PV: Everyone who was a serious camper's life changed--certainly my life; I came as having a management experience, but didn't know what a faith calling it would be, and how it involved my whole life. I came

as a one-year interim and didn't know my future, but camp made it a spiritual experience that is with me to this day.

Other people stories: A staff member, Vadzim Pivnev, from Belaruse (Russia), said his life was changed. He ended up staying in the U.S. and received an advanced degree in the Twin Cities; Jonathan and Justin from Wisconsin Rapids may end up in seminary as a result of Moon Beach. You enter a whole different world of sacred space when you come to Moon Beach. Glenn Svetnicka, present Manager, said to me one day, "What I wouldn't give to have a job like yours!" And then he became Manager just like me!

**HK: Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp). What specialty camps did you have during your years? E.g. canoe camp, etc.**

PV: Typical day: 7:00-7:30 a.m. -- Polar Bear swim (for the foolish and brave); 8:00 a.m. -- Breakfast; 9:00 -10:30 -- Program; 11:00 - Noon -- Free time; Noon - Lunch and singing; 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. -- Rest Time.....FOB (feet on bunk—flat on back); 2:00 - 5:00 -- Canteen, waterfront, arts and crafts; 5:30 - Dinner, singing; 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. -- Vespers and special programs ; 8:00 p.m. -- Evening snacks and sometimes campfire; 10:00 p.m. -- Bedtime

During the Friday evening, most camps had a floating cross in the water with candles lit, taken out from shore as a part of their closing worship. The staff prepared this. It was very impressive. Family Camp had some variations, such as: one day, Wednesday, they took off the whole day to explore activities in the St. Germain/Eagle River area. We served brunch, and for those who wanted it, had sack lunches available for off-site activities. The evening was a cook-out picnic which all enjoyed.

Types of Camps: Junior/Junior High Exploration Camps held the same week; 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Camp; Junior High MAD Camp (Music, Arts, Drama); Fishers of Men, Women and Children camp; Over 50 Camps – 4 day retreat; Rainbow Family Camp (gay & lesbian families)—Alan Beatty, Sparta, son of Ed & Doris Beatty, organized this camp in 1998—it was a full camp between 80 and 100 people and expanded to two separate weeks.

**HK: Did you see your time at Moon Beach as a “growth” experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

PV: See answer to people stories above. It also was a growth experience in that my own faith and trust of other people grew. I was able to delegate things and see things unfold before me. I had not had such experiences before. When Nancy, my wife, went back to school in 1997 in the Twin Cities, it was also a test of faith, since she was mostly gone during the school year. It meant doing all things by myself during that period of time. I appreciated her presence, but learned to rely on my own abilities, appreciate the world around me, and live in it.

**HK: What words would you give to future Moon Beach campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

PV: A deep, deep appreciation for people's financial and emotional commitment to the camp and a toil of love to make a success of the camp. That needs to be celebrated over and over again down through the years. Also, encourage everyone to immerse themselves in the forest and the creation that exists at Moon Beach. It is a way of drawing close to God, the Creator. Mike Bausch said, "Moon Beach is larger than any one person or any one group. It is a sacred space where the Holy Spirit works and touches a lot of people in many different ways."

Make sure that the Conference Presidents and Boards of the future should **never, ever succumb to selling Moon Beach or Pilgrim Camps**. They are too valuable for Christian growth. UCCI has gotten the camps through thick and thin, and that should be their platform every year.

Tell everyone that Moon Beach is a very safe place that has allowed people to be vulnerable and share their inner selves in a safe way. Let's work to keep it that way!

**HK: If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Moon Beach Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

PV: Hanging of the Woven Banners: (see page 94). The animals are 2 ½ x 4 feet of the different creatures you might encounter at Moon Beach—dragon fly, turtle, etc. Mary Burns, Manitowish Waters, made those. She is a professional weaver; Alice Strutz, who has a great sense of aesthetics, did a lot of the initial decoration of the Lodge. She used beige for sand, okra—a Native American color, for the banners. I worked with her many hours.

Also, the glass lanterns on the walls in the Gathering Room of the Lodge are from the old Nimmer Lodge. Lloyd Weiman from Wausau (St. Paul's) rewired all the lamps and re-installed them in the new Lodge.

The most difficult piece of history was the storm of 1997 during Larry Bremer's camp. Trees were down everywhere from Eagle River to St. Germain. It looked like a bomber had gone down Birchwood Drive as you enter the camp. It happened on a Friday night. A woman was injured when the wind blew so hard. As she was closing the window, the glass broke and cut her severely. She needed to be taken in for medical care, but there were so many trees down, you couldn't drive out of the camp road. St. Germain firemen came with saws to cut a path for the ambulance from the outside, and Charlie Durkee, our maintenance man for 13 years, plus men like David Moyer (who was there with his wife, Ann), started cutting trees from the camp side until they met and could get the ambulance through. It was quite a night!

**Recommendation for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee of 2007:** Have one or two weekend events in which only former camp directors and/or counselors are invited back to share their stories about Moon Beach. Then have a taping booth in which someone would video tape their stories for posterity.

May 5, 2006

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**Answered by Glenn Svetnicka (GS)**

**HK: When and how did you first hear about Moon Beach Camp Camp? Had you been there before you were contacted about being managers, and for what reason were you there?**

GS: I heard about Moon Beach through my Dad, Hank Svetnicka. My Dad was on the Camp Boards Site Committee, and he and my Mom took our family from my birth on to family camps, as well as work camps at Pilgrim Camp. I was with them all the time.

**HK: Who contacted you about being manager, and when? What kind of work were you doing at the time? Did you immediately agree to serve, or did you think about it for awhile?**

GS: The Camp Board contacted me about being an Interim Manager after Karl Swanson left after 14 months. I had been a general manager for Marshall Fields, Inc.—14 years in Chicago, then in Minnesota; Bismarck, North Dakota; and Lansing, Michigan. As Interim I was riding the ship through all its challenges and pretty quickly got a sense of “call” to be full time manager. The skills I had acquired, plus my talents, as well as a passion for camping and the outdoors is what the camp needed. After 7 months, I was hired full time in 2001.

**HK: Did you receive a thorough description of the job of manager? Did you realize what you were getting into when you took the job?**

GS: I received somewhat of a description and learned a lot on the job. The job description ended with the words “and all other duties”, which covers the field of responsibilities that you don’t even know about. In theory you realize what you are getting into, but in reality it’s not half of the expanse of running it. The running of the camp as a facility was “duck soup”. The ministerial side of being a camp manager caught me by surprise. People came to me to “spill their guts”, share their joys, lay on me their disappointments, and seek comfort and advice. In other words, they were asking for counseling. Also, the pulpit supply and marketing of the camp on behalf of OCWM (Our Christian World Mission) was a challenge that I did not understand to the fullest until I got into it.

**HK: What church did you belong to at the time you became manager? Were you commissioned by that church? What kind of support did that church give you while you were managers of Moon Beach Camp?**

GS: I was a member of St. John’s United Church of Christ in Appleton as a youth until my family switched to First Congregational UCC in Appleton. After leaving Appleton, I belonged to a Catholic Church in Lansing, Michigan, which gave me the ecumenical flavor before I once again became UCC. I did not have any service of commissioning and have not received any specific support from these churches, but I am hopeful that I can cultivate it for the future.

**HK: What were the main provisions of your first contract? What was your first yearly salary? Your last yearly salary?**

GS: The first contract included a package deal of \$45,000, which included room and board, pension, and health insurance. It is a year-to-year contract and, thus, open ended. The months I was an interim I received some of the above, but not as much.

**HK: Describe your first day on the job at Moon Beach Camp.**

GS: The first day I was driving down the road and I met the cook. She talked with me briefly and left. There was no one in camp. I was alone, putting stuff away from my car, saw the activity board where you pin up events and noticed it was empty except for one piece of paper. In the dim light I could read the saying on it: “Light a torch, keep it burning before you hand it on to the next generation” .....George Bernard Shaw. It is a splendid saying and has stuck with me since, and I intend to keep

lighting torches in people's lives. When I read those words I felt I was "greeted by the Lord". My first major event was the West Allis retirees group—a week long camp which proved to be a lot of fun.

**HK: Name or list the challenges of your first year as manager.**

GS: It was at a family camp. I had been at these all my life, but this one was unusual, since a camper had a heart attack at the camp. His name was Mike Juedes. It was quite a challenge. He survived, was taken into the hospital—they put in a couple of stints and he came back to camp at the end of the week.

**HK: Name the major challenges of your tenure as manager.**

GS: The turnover of the head cook in June, just at the start of a camping season; Secondly, the nurturing of an aging infrastructure, and the financing of it; Thirdly, United Church Camps, Inc. to become "we", instead of "us" versus "they".

**HK: How many years did you serve? Does one year stand out as the happiest or the greatest year?**

GS: I am completing five years, and still love it very much. The greatest year was 2004. We put up two new cabins, put on new blacktop throughout the camp, re-routed and added an approach road for safety purposes and added a parking lot, renewed the septic system and took care of the water issues. Much of this was made possible through the "Forward in Faith" and "Make a Difference" campaigns of the Conference. We received \$400,000 for upgrading the facilities and the way the facilities are used e.g. the restructuring of Heritage Hall, which used to be Hennig Hall.

**HK: What was the most difficult thing you had to deal with and why?**

GS: Using the Forward in Faith monies for all the above projects still fell short of what we needed to complete the two new buildings, which ran over budget by 10% (approximately \$20,000). I had cultivated extra gifts to cover that amount, but had to maintain confidentiality at the Board meeting where I presented the bills for the over run. Part of the Board became upset, didn't support me, and didn't understand that I would make every effort to raise the money. I thought at the time we had enough trust that all Board members would support me. In the end, it turned out all right.

**HK: Describe the campus buildings and especially the Lodge. What changes were made to the buildings while you were manager (or the campus)?**

GS: Metal roofs and uniform coloring put on all the buildings; New lights for the pathways to the cabins; \$40,000 spent on the septic system and water delivery, just for basic repairs; a labyrinth was constructed back of the Lodge; up on the ridge the ball field was redone—new fences, the ground leveled, and new blacktop for the volley ball and tennis courts; Seifert Memorial used for acoustical board to have better sound in the dining hall--overhead lamps and a few other items to upgrade the lodge, \$23,000. This Memorial gift was from Immanuel UCC, Kaukauna, who tithed the LeRoy/Villa Seifert Estate that was left to the church. We are grateful.

Year round staff people integrated to be a part of the Team, and not just functional, hired labor. The site committee of the Board to become more collaborative with its expertise, which is very helpful for maintaining good quality on the Moon Beach Campus.

**HK: Name special people (and say a word about them) who helped make your years of managing fruitful and meaningful (this could be staff, other church people, camp leaders, and Conference staff.)**

GS: The Rev. Phil Garrison, The Rev. Joel Huenemann, Margaret Brubaker, Jamie Hunt, Paul Elmhurst, Dale & Brenda Mierow, and a whole host of other people. My wife, Adele, was number 1 in her support!

**HK: Did you feel you had good support from the Moon Beach Board/ UCCI. In what ways? If not, how could they have been more helpful?**

GS: Good support from the UCCI Board, which included providing for spiritual direction; that is, guidance on leadership issues relating to counseling as a continuing education. My mentor is Jolyn from the Marywood Spirituality Center, Minocqua. My suggestion is that the Board always have active ownership and responsibility in all the mechanics of UCCI.

**HK: Describe the support you received from the Conference and its leadership.**

GS: Outstanding backing especially in finances (yearly budget, Forward in Faith, etc.) and excellent support from Dave Moyer, Conference Minister.

**HK: Will you share with us some “people stories” where lives were changed?**

GS: This is the single best part of my job. You have a front seat in people’s faith journeys. There are too many to list all of them. But I will mention one. In the heart attack mentioned in page 2, I was in the hospital with Mike’s wife while Mike Juedes was in surgery; campers awoke to make a Prayer Circle in the Lodge to pray for Mike, who had now been transferred to a Wausau Hospital for the stints. This middle of the night Prayer Circle was so powerful, that Mike’s wife told me that she could feel something was going on at Camp during the time they were praying. It brought a lump to my throat. (Editor’s note: Glen got tears in his eyes).

**HK: Describe the schedule of a typical day and give the general outline of a typical week (this may vary for Junior, Junior High, Senior High, or Family Camp). What specialty camps did you have during your years? e.g. canoe camp, etc.**

GS: The camp schedule for a typical day is about the same as otherwise in the past; however, we changed the following schedule: 8:30 a.m., Breakfast; 12:30, Lunch; 5:30 Supper

The change in meal schedule made a difference. It gave the campers more time to sleep, and I noticed that people were not as burned out, they did not need to rush as much to the morning breakfast, and it helped the camp staff throughout the day to better accomplish preparing for the meals and doing their other duties.

We added these new camp opportunities:

1. Camp Awesome (for children in the autistic spectrum)
2. Extreme Makeover—Moon Beach Edition (a week-long work camp with campers upgrading the camp facilities)
3. Double Digit Retreat Programs (which includes local church retreats, a retreat by the DNR, and a retreat by the local health care systems)

**HK: Did you see your time at Moon Beach as a “growth” experience, as a ministry to the Church? Has it left a mark on your life?**

GS: My time at Moon Beach has definitely been a growth experience. It is living life with God first. It has made all the difference in the world in my attitude and way of doing things. I am not a finished product, far from perfect—God is still working on me!

**HK: What words would you give to future Moon Beach campers, boards, managers, directors, the churches in general, and the Wisconsin Conference?**

GS: To serve as a manager, or on the Board, you have to clearly understand that you are working for the Lord and the Board of Directors as disciples of Christ. You must add prayer to the decisions that you make and the plans you envision, and you can accomplish anything.

**HK: If you have any stories or insights to share from your era about Moon Beach Camp that would be worthy of preservation for history that have not already been mentioned, please share them now.**

GS: It's 50 years next year for the life of the camp. I look forward to a great celebration for the ministry of a camp that has affected thousands of lives. I am grateful to Bernie Hupperts, Vern Bernardo, Howard Kanetzke, Bev Heinen, Edi Moore, and Harvey Kandler, for their work in preparation of our celebration. The more we study our past, the more safe and beautiful our future will be.

September, 2006

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## VI

### Harvey Kandler – Reflections on Moon Beach

#### I. How did you become a Moon Beach Camper? What camps have you attended?

I never was a Moon Beach camper as such; my Moon Beach experiences were all in the capacity of leadership:

- Junior Camp, 1965 – 1987 (2 yrs. as counselor in the '60's and the rest of the time as a director)
- Family Camp, 1966 – on staff as discussion leader; 1971, co-director
- Over 50's (now 50's Plus), three years in the late '60's as a drama/rhythm choir leader; three years –'03-'06 as discussion/worship/song leader
- Nine years Moon Beach/UCCI Board of Directors (and secretary), approximately 1965-1974
- Planned the Dedication Service for Ed Hennig's retirement as President of Moon Beach Board and planned the dedication of Hennig Hall in his honor
- I was a part of the Board of Directors at the time when Pilgrim and Moon Beach Camps were united under one corporate body, UCCI, and thus had one Board of Directors
- Planned and helped to lead 12 spring work camps at Moon Beach with the people of Immanuel UCC, Kaukauna, 1972-1984.

#### 2. What stands out as a favorite camp event and what year did it take place?

The Vesper services at Moon Beach were always special.

- **Vesper point:** the beauty of worshipping with such a terrific background of trees and water, with a gentle wind blowing on your face or back
- **Galilean service:** (mimicking Jesus' preaching from the boat to the people on shore) at two different places, either right off the dock in Moon Lake or off the point at Little St. Germaine Lake. Those leading the worship service were in row boats (two or three) and would anchor 20 yards from the shore. The service would be a dialogue between the boat people and the shore people using scriptural readings and songs from the camp book. The message often was the reading from Luke of launching out into the deep, and the boat people would echo the shore people with singing Amens and Taps.
- **Small group worship in the home-in-the-woods:** we would sit around the campfire, informally read scriptures, talk about them, sing camp songs, and enjoy being in the woods after usually having had a cook-out.
- **Worship on the north shore of Moon Lake** where the huge tree was leaning in the water, uprooted by storm. Our theme for the night would be—Firmly Rooted in Christ, singing and reading the scriptures of the wise man building his house upon the rock (Sermon on the Mount).
- **The Friday evening dedication service:** with the blazing campfire at the back of the Lodge (actually where the Lodge stands now), where songs were sung and stories were told, and finally everyone took a candle to go back to the Lodge or to their cabins, ending with Taps being sung on one side of the Lodge and echoed on the other side. Everyone would dedicate themselves once more to serving God as seen in the Lord Jesus.
- **Home-in-the-woods cook-outs:** were special times to practice skills of home-in-the-woods living, fire-building, and cooking. The inner and inter-relationships of the group were tested, honed, and most often beautified.
- **Hike around Moon Lake:** this was done several years in the '60's and was quite an endurance event, taking almost three hours.
- **Recreation and singing** (especially during the years when there was significant rain for four out of the five days of camp week!): It was amazing what could be done with these two tools of camping

to still make it a worthwhile week when it was wet and without sunshine. I remember one special worship service that we held in the Lodge around the fireplace that became the most meaningful event of the week.

### **3. In your experience, tell us about what Moon Beach Camp means to you.**

Moon Beach Camp is a place where God is at work in His nature, interacting with people to draw their souls closer to Him. The interplay between the beautiful setting, young people, adults, committed leaders, managers, and staff is unique in making the church become real. There are experiences in that communication of personhood with nature and the eternal God who made it all that cannot easily be equaled in a church building and a congregational setting. Not everyone gets re-converted or their soul refreshed and broadened by the camp experience, but if they will let themselves be open to what God is doing through that experience, their inner being will be refurbished for going back to the hard knock experiences of regular life in their home towns, families, communities, and churches.

### **4. Are there things you know about that should be included as we write about the history of Moon Beach Camp?**

Most of these historical things I have already shared with Glenn Svetnicka and Bernard Hupperts in previous camp meetings. But my intent is to make sure that they have every one of the documents that have been written about Moon Beach from the previous Camp Managers and Conference leadership people which I have developed over two years' time for the Conference Historical Committee. I also have shared some things from Royal Meyer (who previously lived in St. Germain during the time Moon Beach Camp was acquired). I might add that Royal Meyer also sold and donated some of his adjoining property on the south end of Moon Beach, which has allowed it to have a bigger expanse in that direction. Which reminds me, all should be aware that property was traded with Mr. Olson on the northeast corner of Little St. Germain Lake. Those kinds of details should still be available from Vern and Carol Bernardo, one of the first managers of the camp.

I intend to look through some more of my records from my Moon Beach era and may be able to furnish some Board minutes and/or samples of things that happened during the camps which I directed. I will send these up to Moon Beach when I complete this task.

### **5. Are there special people who helped make your time at Moon Beach memorable and why are they important?**

There are many individuals who stand out as beautiful people to work with in the camping program. I hesitate to mention any of them for fear of neglecting someone, but will make some comments:

**Vern and Carol Bernardo** were super above all others to work with and accomplish the tasks that needed to be done. The same can be said about **Ken and Betty Nimmer**. These four people were Mr. and Mrs. Moon Beach in every respect. They gave heart and soul and 24/7 commitment.

I also want to acknowledge **Ray and Mary Witthuhn** and all of their fine cooperation.

I know there have been fine camp managers—**Palmer Van Beest**, and presently, **Glenn Svetnicka** (Glenn is in the heritage of his father, Hank, who also loved Moon Beach and is doing a splendid job), as well as others. I have not worked as closely with them as I have with the earlier leadership.

We also need to acknowledge **Ray Hernandez** on the Conference level, and the yeoman efforts that he put into the camping program. **Dr. Ralph Ley** was a camper at heart and worked unceasingly to get

the camping program to be on the forefront of Conference youth and witness. It was his special efforts that brought into being UCCL.

**Ed and Mildred Fockel** were probably the best cooking team that the camp ever had.

**Ed Hennig**, as president of the Moon Beach Board, was definitely the king pin that kept Moon Beach alive and progressive during the first ten years. He was the George Washington of Moon Beach Camp.

**Royal Meyer**, one of the founding fathers of Moon Beach Camp and living in its back yard, was an invaluable resource in making connections for all the different things that Moon Beach needed in the early years and even to some degree in the latter years. He always had Moon Beach at work in his heart and life and promoted it every chance he could.

There are literally hundreds **of counselors and other staff people** with whom I have worked who were excellent and made Moon Beach what it was. I praise God for the good talent that came out of the churches to work with me and to stand in the trenches together during all these years.

## **6. How have your experiences at camp influenced your faith walk?**

Moon Beach affirmed the hymn, “For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies, for the love which from our birth, over and around us lies; Lord of all, to Thee we raise this, our hymn of grateful praise. For the wonder of each hour, of the day and of the night, Hill and vale and tree and flower, Sun and moon and stars of light; For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child; friends on earth and friends above, for all gentle thoughts and mild; Lord of all, to Thee we raise, this, our hymn of grateful praise.”

Each verse of beauty and wonder and human love have enthralled my spirit in the Moon Beach Camp setting with people of faith and people growing in their faith. The Moon Beach experience leads to the 4<sup>th</sup> verse of that hymn, “For thy church that evermore lifteth holy hands above.” Moon Beach caused people to become the church there and to lift up holy hands, and on every shore of that lake, as the hymn goes on, the church from throughout the state and world, as it brought in friends from everywhere, demonstrated the pure sacrifices of love that Moon Beach campers and staff learned from the Lord himself and then allowed to become real and special in the setting of God’s beauty.

So, on this 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we say, LORD OF ALL, TO THEE WE RAISE, THIS OUR HYMN OF GRATEFUL PRAISE!

## VII

### Pilgrim Camp Reflections

As a Junior High youth in Ebenezer Evangelical & Reformed Church, Chilton, I went to Green Lake Bible Institute (now Pilgrim Conference Center) in 1947. Then during high school I took part in the Junior High camp for two years as a staff member for leadership training as a way to help churches with their youth groups back home. I also was the recreation director for three years and lead a worship workshop there for Junior High camp one of those three years. In 1952 while on the Junior High staff as a recreation director and workshop on youth leadership, I met my wife, Nancy, for the first time--five years later we were married. I served as Junior (one year) and Junior High Camp Director (one year) in the early 70's.

Memories from these Pilgrim Camp experiences include: vigorous, funny, and beautiful table singing—the home in the woods across the road—the hike pilgrimage to a canyon on a farm two miles east of the camp—the launch boat rides across the lake to view the Green Lake Baptist Assembly Grounds from the lake—the fun times in recreation in the basement of the Lodge with folk and square dancing—the inspiration at vesper services at vesper point—the ball games (campers against the staff; as a Junior High camper I slid into second base and knocked down a visiting missionary, Ted Feierabend, who played for the staff, injuring him slightly). There was always a great emphasis on fun, fellowship, worship, and missions.

The buildings at Pilgrim Camp then were older, somewhat worn down, wooden board construction, but the people made the difference, e.g. Ray, Harold, & Ralph Ley, Ruth Zimmerman, Hilton Grams, Ed Rodel, John Gerber, Walter Trost (science teacher and missionary to Africa), plus many others. God's spirit was ever present amongst the church family at camp, and it helped to mould my spirit into future camp leadership and ordained ministry.

Harvey L. Kandler, Retired Clergy  
Kaukauna, Wisconsin  
Conference History Committee Member

Thanksgiving, 2006