

We've come a long way, as you can see
From 1937-67 by Rachel and then the last 20 or more years by Edie.
It shows you how much we've grown over the years
With plenty of laughter and a few little tears.
In the summer the beach is crowded with bare skins
All sizes and shapes, tall, short, fat and thin.
The raft is sometimes tilted to one side,
With so many people tanning their hide.
You see sand castles on the beach each day
Where the children have laughed, dug and played.
Then you see our picturesque rock across the pond
And you say "how lucky we are to have Solair
With all its scenic beauty of which we are so fond.

Many thanks to Mary and Dave, Bob, Herbie, Dick and Carroll, and Marlene, who reminisced with me and helped me.

Edie 1988

In the back is a copy of the Solair song written by Margie S. many years ago. I thought you all would like to have it.

# PRESIDENTS OF THE FIRST 50 YEARS

Al Jones

Bob Shields

Al Jones

Bob Sherwood

George Blicker

Don MacIntire

Al Duchesneau

Ed Kiernan

Willard Vail

Roger Walcott

Bill Spellman

Dave Buck

Barbara Cooley

Mary Groezinger

Len Baronowskis

Bob Browning

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#### PREFACE

I have compiled this "Story of Solair" with the idea of not only reporting the facts, as far as I can ascertain them, but also show the growth and development over the thirty years.

I am beginning with a copy of a brief history published by Pat (daughter of Alfred and Hazel) ten years ago. I'll briefly bring that phase up-to-date. I mainly wish to show the physical growth, the things we can see about us; the story of the Lodge, the Beach, the Chapel, the various buildings, the development of the water, sanitary, electrical systems and all we now take for granted. They each have their story of a DREAM and of a tremendous amount of work on the part of the planners and members to make the dream come true.

I dedicate this "Story of Solair" to Florence B. and Al Jones in recognition and appreciation of their unlimited vision and labor in establishing this camp.

To the ones who have helped me with information; Florence B., Al J., Orrell (Leona), Bill(Louise), Willard (Lucy, Leonard (Ann), Doris and Red and Alfred and Hazel I wish to extend my thanks. Without their help, this story could not be.

Rache1

1967

# The History of Laurel Ridge and Solair Taken from SOLAIRAMA, published by Pat in 1957

The promotion of the Solair Recreation League began on June 14, 1934, with three individuals in active participation and ten or twelve prospects who had been contacted through the I.N.C.

A small, but beautiful campsite was located within a week and it was on this where the few outings of the first season were held. This place could have been purchased for only \$150, but before sufficient enthusiasm could be raised to produce this amount of cash, the property was purchased by another party, so the group was left to search elsewhere for a playground. The first season, there were only three paid members, but in all, twelve adults and one child attended the outings. The receipts for the first season were \$30.00 with expenditures of \$20.92.

The following spring, 1935, the group set out early and on July 20, after driving hundreds of miles in search of a camp, they secured a small farm of thirty-five acres. This they leased for the remainder of the season, only as temporary quarters, for it had no satisfactory facilities for bathing. At this camp, the first organization was formed with the election of officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. However the President lasted but three weeks and then resigned the office and disappeared. The managerial work of the club then fell onto the Secretary and Treasurer. During the 1935 season, the paid membership mounted to twenty-one, but in all the season fifty-five adults visited the camp. The receipts for the season were one hundred eighty-five dollars with expenditures of eighty-seven dollars and nineteen cents.

Again, in the spring of 1936, the search for a camp-site was on and many miles were covered before a place was secured which seemed suited for the purpose. This was a forty-acre corner of a large farm which included a beautiful lake. In some respects, this place was ideal, but in other ways not so desirable, especially in its lack of privacy. It was not a place which could be continued with any degree of certainty. At this camp, the paid membership was raised to twenty-four, but there was a total of sixty-four adults and three children who visited camp that season. The visitors were mostly prospects, but due to unsettled condition as to the camp, the members did not succeed in enlisting many. The receipts for 1936 were one hundred ninety dollars and expenditures were one hundred seventy two dollars and fifty-nine cents.

As spring of 1937 rolled around, the group found itself again without a playground and so decided to make an effort to purchase a permanent camp, if a suitable place could be found. Their efforts were soon rewarded in finding the present camp site. This finding was reported to the group at a meeting in Worcester on April 10, 1937. So impressed were those present with the description given by Mr. Charles Alexander, Treasurer, that a committee was created to proceed with negotiations for the purchase. A survey of the property was made on May 2, 1937, from which a map was drawn and sent to all members of the club and to desirable prospects, along with a circular letter giving full description of the property and

its possibilities. The response seemed to warrant going ahead with the purchase. By May 11, when the deed was drawn up, there were sufficient funds in the hands of the treasurer to meet all requirements. Each member and prospect had also received the proposed financing plan and all its details.

At the onset, it was planned to finance the new camp by selling shares and paying dividends. A co-op camp was intended and Solair members were asked to contribute. On the first land payment of \$1,000, \$500 was raised and \$500 was borrowed. The place was to be called Laurel Ridge. The people who paid into these early beginnings were called Laurel Ridge Associates, as well as Class A members of Solair. They automatically became owners of Laurel Ridge. Those who did not contribute became tenants of Laurel Ridge and Class B members of Solair.

All newcomers were received as Class B members of Solair Recreation League and were not considered for Class A membership, or Laurel Ridge Associate membership until they had been in camp long enough to be judged congenial and truly interested in the camp.

The Laurel Ridge Associates worked long and hard through the years to clear and build up the camp. They gave of their time and money, over and above their annual dues. Laurel Ridge Associates landlords made no personal gains. They loved the place, believed in the movement and wished for other congenial persons to join with them and, in time, to help make a truly co-op camp whereby the tenant and the landlord basis could be dropped as speedily as possible.

In October of 1952, the subscribers certified, "that we do hereby associate ourselves as a body politic and corporate under the statute laws of the State of Connecticut; and that the name of the corporation is LAUREL RIDGE INC." and with these words, the management of Solair as we know it today, five years later, was born. Who were these people who saw the advancement of Solair under this new arrangement? The incorporators were three men, tried and true - Irvin, Bill (our present director) and Stephan.

The amount of capital stock, authorized, and subscribed for at the outset was thirty shares of Common Stock having a value of fifty dollars each and for all of which there was paid the full amount of sixteen hundred dollars - six hundred in cash and one thousand in property.

The first corps of officers included Al as President; Archie, Vice-President; Lydia, Secretary; Bill S., Treasurer; Jud, Assistant Treasurer; and the members of the first Board to serve the corporation were Al, Bill and Jud.

It is significant to look back on these humble beginnings and to realize that at this year's (1957) annual meeting, there were one hundred and two shares of capital stock outstanding. In five years the investment of the eleven original subscribers has more than tripled.

# 1960 - 1967 Written by Rachel in 1967

The buying of stock was not compulsory until April, 1960. In 1957 and 1958 Ken W. sold considerable stock to raise money for the installation of electricity in camp. Some members did work for the camp and took their pay in stock, others bought a share when they wanted a light pole installed to bring electricity to their lot. At a special Stockholders meeting held April 24, 1960, it was voted that every membership couple or single must subscribe to one share of stock. At the same meeting, the By-laws were changed with nine directors now necessary. This was later amended to seven directors as it now stands. May 1, 1960 the corporation became a non-profit tax-exempt one. In September, 1965, it was voted that each adult member must hold a share of stock. At the 1966 annual Stockholders meeting it was voted to reduce the value of each share from \$50 to \$10 -- the other \$40 from each share reverting to camp improvement use as "initiation fee". That wasn't how it was voted but that is the end result. All new members now pay a \$40 initiation fee, \$10 for stock and current dues upon joining.

Before this plan was adopted, several times members were assessed yearly sums for specific improvements, as the dredging of the pond, etc. One way or another money has to be raised.

So much for business, now on to more interesting, pleasant subjects.

To give you a bit of pre-Solair history of this location, for those who are interested, this whole area and much beyond was once a logging community. Down in the woods beyond are numerous cellar holes where were once the homes of loggers and their families, a schoolhouse also. Our pond, dam and the sluiceway where our waterfall is, are all that remains of the saw mill. The road into camp and the unkept ones that wander off into the woods were once logging roads. I've been told that after the Civil War, the Ide family was granted over a thousand acres for logging purposes. The original purchase of this land for the camp was made from a descendant, Sam Ide, and I expect the property the camp has acquired since was also part of this Ide Family grant.

I'd like to relate to you the story of Florence's first visit to view this area and the first year in camp as she told it to me. It was in the early spring that she and her husband, Willard, accompanied "Charles Alexander" to this place he had located. The road was visible but grown up and MUDDY. They drove in a distance - Florence's car got deeply mired and Alexander had quite a job getting it out. From that point they walked and came to the remains of the bridge (near the gate). All that was left was one stringer across the spring-high, dark and COLD-looking water. The other stringer and flooring had long ago collapsed into the water. With Alexander holding one hand and Willard the other, she slowly inched her way across the slippery stringer. When they came to where the culvert now divides the pond and lagoon, that bridge was gone so they walked down the side of the lagoon to the dam and crossed over

by way of a tree trunk lying across the sluiceway. This was their way of entrace and exit from camp the first year. When they began to stroll around the area where the Lodge now stands, the somewhat level area in back and over to where Al and Rita's cabin, Mary and Jim's trailer, etc. are and admire the beauty of the trees and laurel, Florence said, "THIS IS THE PLACE". As she spoke of the beauty which was enhanced by big snowflakes falling on the firs before they left, several times mentioning the Laurel and how careful they were to preserve it as they built, one got a vivid picture of how much this all meant to her. It was to be the culmination of a dream.

After the group purchased the land, the entrance bridge was built first. Then Capt. Greene, the caretaker, built a small cabin for his use. This still stands as the front portion of John and Laura's cabin. At first members came just for the day or slept in their cars but as soon as they could, they built a large tent platform, acquired an Army mess tent and that became the camp dormitory, sleeping twelve to fifteen people. As nearly as I can ascertain, it stood where Mary and Jim's trailer and the road to Alan and Joyce's cabin is now. Florence said she went to the Salvation Army and anywhere she could find cots and toted them in her car. She used her own sheets and slips, begged old blankets from family and friends, which she covered with all sorts of material. She remarked that some were funny to look at but they were clean, whole and kept people warm. And so, they slept the first year.

Up at the Lodge area she hired a man to take out several trees at a cost of \$32 and another to build the community fireplace that still stands in back of the Lodge - Cost \$30. I'm not just sure whether this was done the first year or after the Lodge was built, but it was in the early days.

## The Lodge

During the winter of 1938 at a meeting in Worcester, it was decided that a more permanent home was necessary and so the idea for the Lodge was born. Alexander located and purchased a supply of old lumber, strong but full of nails, which he brought into camp. The pulling of the nails fell largely to Florence and she spent hours at the task. When the timbers were ready, Alexander started the building - 16 by 32 feet, consisting of one large room and a porch on the first floor and a half-second floor. When he was ready to set the foundation posts, after creosoting them, he wanted a certain kind of rock to put into the cement mixture. Again, Florence was pressed into service. The proper rock was found (whole); she splintered it by taking a large rock and continually dropping it on the desired kind. When all was broken up, she carried it to the location for use. Later, her son built the outside stairway to the second floor. Florence, with a wry smile, remarked that the stairway was half an inch off but Alexander never knew it.

After the building was completed, the second floor was used as a dormitory. The main room and porch, as you would expect, was used

for gathering to talk, play cards and games and probably on unpleasant days to eat in. The first year, all cooking was done outside on the fireplace. Can't you just imagine a big coffee pot brewing out there for the gang? I don't know that it happened that way but it's a nice thought. I have heard that each family prepared their meals and usually were outside. Maybe as they got acquainted, they began to "Pot-Luck". Whichever way it was done the word has always been that it was FUN.

However, there were times when there were drawbacks to the outside cooking - the weatherman did not always cooperate and it was tedious to carry utensils and supplies to and from the Lodge, so the next year the summer kitchen was added. This was equipped with an old oil stove so now they could cook and eat outside or under cover. Later Al J. changed the oil stove for a propane gas stove, safer and quicker.

The use of the Lodge continued in this manner until the Canteen was built. The Lodge and surroundings were "The Camp". People began to set up their own tents, Al brought in a trailer for his use, a small cabin or two were built but the Lodge was the center of activities. According to an item in Doris' diary, the mode of feeding the group changed in the later years of the use of the Lodge as the community center. She mentioned that Ann had prepared a turkey dinner for all. It was cooked in the summer kitchen, the plates filled and passed through a little door in the walls, someone taking them on that side and placing them on the table.

After the Canteen became the center of activities, the Lodge continued as community living quarters. The dormitory remained as such, the lower floor was divided, making two small rooms and a fair-sized living room. One small room was rented by Alfred and Hazel on a seasonal basis, the other used by Pat, at that time the Secretary, as an office. The next year Pat discovered it was easier to do her work at her trailer while little Jay was napping, so a bed was put in the room and it was rented on weekend or vacation The next year Hazel and Alfred rented both rooms and the living room was gradually transformed into their kitchen and dining room. All continued to use the summer kitchen, stove and refrigerator as community property for some time, but in time this ceased. The dormitory continued as such with little patronage. For two summers in the early 60's it was used by family groups - then became a storage place. The summer kitchen was converted to a seasonal rental room about the same time and thus the Lodge ceased to exist as a community center.

A correction just came to me by phone from Hazel. I think it is interesting enough to pass along. In connection with the serving of meals, prepared in the summer kitchen and served in the living—dining room, I had said they were passed through a door. I'm wrong; it wasn't so easy. When the Lodge was built there was a rear window. When the kitchen was added, which incidentally was screened, the window served as a pass—through BUT the kitchen was on a much lower level and Ann is not very tall, so she not only cooked and served but she also *STRETCHED* as she passed each plate upward to an assistant on the other side of the window. I bet the canteen kitchen was heavenly after the conditions she worked under there.

The canteen, according to Al, had originally been planned for the area near the Lodge, but with the development of the beach that brought the people gathering there, the plan was changed to build it on the present site. It was started late in '54, worked on by members, mostly Al, Leonard and Bill S. during '55. The first reference I can find of it being used was an account of Ann serving dinners in '56 but it may have been finished for use late in '55. It was used much as the Lodge had been, meals prepared and served, parties enjoyed by all on special occasions. Now the canteen is not used as extensively as it was. The members of long-standing regret the fast-growing membership that changed their old, happy ways - perhaps some day before too long we can have a hall large enough to draw us all together again with the sociability and camaradeship of days not too long gone by. That is the dream of many.

### The Beach

When the group first came in 1937 and for several years after the beach area was marsh - sedge grass and bogs, bushes and trees to the water's edge and beyond. In 1938 a bridge was built between the pond and lagoon with a little dock for boarding a boat. The timid people did their bathing by standing on the dock and sprinkling each other with a watering can. A few hardy ones dunked down into the water but the pond was too full of leeches and snakes for the tastes of most. So bathing was not an important part of life at camp for some time. During the period before a small area had been cleared to the pond, Al had cleared out the brook below the point where the little Red house (now Brown) of Fox Hollow Lane now stands. He carried in sand in a wheelbarrow and made a bathing area for the children.

Florence gave Al J. credit for most of the clearing of the beach, pulling out the sedge grass first. Al told me how he gradually made a path in back of the marsh and bushes to a spot near where the dock is now where they could approach the water over a board. He made the path by stopping at San Souci's sand pit each time he came into camp, filling his pick-up truck and backing in to dump and spread the sand. After each trip he could back farther until he had a path to a little cleared area. That was the beginning of swimming. Then he, with help from members, began cutting trees and uprooting brush, enlarging the open area. In a letter from Willard (Lucy) he speaks of many weekends of working on the beach in such a manner. Al told of several ways they tried to get rid of the mud and muck at different times. Once it was trying to use a hand scoop, attaching it to his tractor pulling it on to the shore. Afterwards they had to carry the muck away as it smelled UGH! Another reference in Doris' diary, Sept 1959, tells of Dick, Scotty and Al enlarging the beach and carrying away the muck. Maybe this was the same time Al referred to, maybe a continuation.

Each time after clearing on shore or in the water, there were the trips to the sand bank for sand to fill with. So over the years, the sunning and swimming area was enlarged - all by hard, manual and often unpleasant work. Finally, in late 1956, machinery was brought in to dig a hole twenty feet around and ten feet deep so one could dive from the float without striking bottom. At the time the beach was considerably enlarged. Al stayed here to superintend the job until completion, Dec. 8, 1956.

In 1960 a culvert was put in with one outlet pipe, this then being closed to raise the level of the pond. At the same time quite a bit of work was done in repairing the dam. Up to this time two bridges had been built, the first was washed away over into the lagoon or brook as I believe it was then.

In 1963, during the fall, machinery was brought in to take out that culvert, the pond was completely drained, the road bed dug down and two larger pipes put in, one over the other. In the spring, before the pond was filled again, the beach area was dredged from the culvert way around a bend, sixty feet out and eight to ten feet deep. Sand was spread along the shore and the lower pipe covered to let the spring rains fill the pond. The dam was also extensively repaired at this time. The height of the pond is now controlled by boards in the sluiceway. Many loads of white sand were spread on the beach. The next year the pond was lowered some and plastic was spread along the shore from the water level out and covered with sand to keep the oozy, clay soil of the pond bottom from working up through the sand. All these efforts over many years have changed a marshy pond to a pleasant beach and sunning area.

After Al J. got the beach cleared somewhat, he began to work back clearing the new recreational area and parking lot. This was the same story of cleaning out brush, felling trees and removing stumps, large boulders, etc., filling holes and then smoothing some parts at first by dragging an old bed spring around. He had help, but the bulk of the work was done by Al J. with crowbar, shovel and wheelbarrow, the same process as was used for the early developed roads. In 1956 a contractor was hired to bring in much fill for the parking lot - which made Pat in her Solairama remark about "the new look in the parking lot". Thereby hangs the tale of the camp gaining new members - not right away, though. Norman (Bernice) was the driver of a truck hauling fill and he "fell" for the camp. He really FELL - not only in love with the place - also into the drink, truck and all! He was crossing the bridge between the pond and lagoon and over he, in his truck, went into the water on the lagoon side. Fortunately, there wasn't as much water there as there is now. It was some years later before he persuaded Bernice to come to camp.

This section of camp has seen many changes since the first clearing started: the canteen, then the steambath in '62, the teenage building in '65, Bill L. spent one whole summer chipping out rock to make the drive from one level to the other near the steambath, more and more fill, etc. Now, in '67, we are enlarging the area for a new volleyball court, putting in shuffle board courts and other recreations. It is a story of constant change and improvement.

As with the parking - recreational area, so with the roads. At first a road to the Lodge and adjoining area was enough, but after World War II, when the camp was re-opened after being inactive for about four years, there began to be a spreading out. The first few



A real sauna is one of the popular installations. In the above, water is being poured on the red hot coals to fill the building with steam. Temperatures go to 200°.

Ed's Sauna

buildings except for Capt. Greene's and the Lodge which were pre-war, were built in the immediate area. The ones now owned by Al and Rita, Len and Ann, and Arnold and Vera are of early post-war vintage, also Al J.'s. That one was the first individually owned, built by Florence's son for a man named Atwood, later owned by Ann's (Chaplain Bill) parents, then by Al. At about the same time Roger, then President of the club, built Al and Rita's on a Tent Platform brought over from about where George and Mary's cabin now is. Later Roger let it fall in disrepair and Al J. fixed it up for a camp rental. The other two were built for the camp and were rented also. Some time along the "Duplex" was built for rental by the camp, also. Then in '50 Willard and Lucy started their cabin and in '52 Bill S. This started a scattering and also improvements of roads by the hand method mentioned before. Where there was a continual wet spot, flat rocks were laid in and covered with fill, and always the process of filling pot holes. In '56, when Fernglades closed, we had a sudden influx of about thirty members from there that led to more sites and more roads. Also, according to Red, at that time he was building and talking and persuading others as to the joy of having a cabin. So in the fall of '57 and '58 having run out of sites on this level, trees were cut and a road bull-dozed out on the lower level, now called Fox Hollow Drive. Bob and Ella were the first to take residence there in their trailer now used by their daughter, Jan and family. Again in '63 roads were cut through -Whippoorwill Drive, etc. The cabins and tenting sites keep increasing, soon it will mean more cutting of trees and bull-dozing of roads to open more sites.

In '59 four of the early cabins that were camp-owned were sold to individuals. In '57 the split-level with four small rooms had been built for weekend rentals. After acquiring and converting Eddie (Ivah's) cabin and steambath building, the camp made both the duplex and split-level into seasonal rentals. At the present time the camp-owned buildings are: the Lodge, Canteen, Steambath, Teenage Pavillion, two tool sheds, the Duplex, Split level and two Motel buildings and four toilet buildings. Oh, yes, I must add, - two out-buildings for emergencies!!

The steambath idea was first brought into camp when Eddie (Ivah) opened one on the hill in May, 1958 - to which he later added the Dressing room. It was heated by a stove, serviced from the inside, with a tank of boiling water to make more steam. That meant, in the winter when it had its greatest use, bringing in several five gallon cans of water to fill the tank and provide water to douse the hot seats and the people, a popular practice. It was only the pranksters who ran to the pond or rolled in the snow. It was fun to watch them when they got going. At first Eddie was allowed to charge a small fee of which the camp had a percentage, but that practice was discontinued when it was learned that by charging, it left him liable for State inspections. Donations were then in order. In 1960 there began to be suggestions from some to have a camp-owned steambath near the beach. With that in mind, donations were asked for, camp help was enlisted and in 1962, in November, in time for the winter season, our present one was completed. The steambath and shower part was of plain cement construction and that



BLOCKHOUSE BATH



THE CANTEEN

winter it was discovered that blocks that stood in the cold all week did not readily heat up for the weekend. So the next fall insulation and siding were put on the inside of the steamroom and all went well until one wintery, Sunday night after most had gone home, fire was discovered between the rafters etc. Extensive damage was done, but before spring, all had been repaired, this time with fire-proof materials. The shower room had also been tiled and looked so nice. We thought we were all set but we hadn't counted on the steambath becoming so popular during the summer months and the whole place getting such extensive use. Today it is far from attractive – it can't stand up to the use and abuse it gets.

I nearly forgot to tell the story of the Teenage Pavillion. In 1965 we had a large active group who liked to get together, play their kind of noisy music, and dance. That didn't set well with some of the older people who wanted to play cards and talk, the Canteen being the only center for both. So the young folks got together and raised the money by having games of chance during social times, bake sales, etc. They had a few money gifts by way of encouragement and help from parents and friends in the actual building. They also had gifts of lights, benches and tables and a record player but they maintain their own building, make their own rules and are showing themselves as responsible members and an asset to the camp in helping around on various jobs. This year they have planted two Rhododendron bushes near their Pavillion in memory of their lost friend, Terry.

## Water? Lights and Power? Sanitary Facilities?

All most necessary and so taken for granted were not always what they are today. The first water supply was the old sink and hand pump out in front of the Lodge, brought in by Florence in her car. The source of the water was the brown water from the pond that many refuse to even swim in now. The first lights were, of course, lanterns and lamps. The first toilet was really something, details given by Florence in her picturesque manner. Near Capt. Greene's cabin grew three trees from a common root, large enough apart to hold a pail in an upright position. So - in went the pail... Willard cut a hole in a board and there was the seat. For privacy, Florence nailed a piece of canvas around the three trees overlapping like a tent flap. Can't you just imagine crawling in there each morning? The janitorial services necessary at the end of each weekend were performed by Florence and her daughter, Olive, who thrust a pole under the handle of the pail and carried it down back and dug a hole. After a bit of washing, all was set for the next weekend. The next season, 1938, one tree had fallen so a similar set-up was made nearer the Lodge. After the Lodge and stairway were completed, a slight improvement was made - a chemical toilet was put under the stairway. The janitor services were supposed to be shared week-by-week by all the male members, but it was the same of duties being done today, some do and some don't so the task falls on a few. After the camp started up again in '46, the building we call "Grand Central" was built - water supply for it being a barrel in back.

After each flushing, the member using it was supposed to pump a pail of water and pour it into the barrel ready for the next. But, as one might expect, Al usually had to do it. After a while he got tired of it and at his own expense, installed a ram to pump the brook water up to the barrel. The members liked this innovation so well, they reimbursed Al. This was used in this fashion until the advent of electricity, first supplying pond water - later well water.

As the camp spread, the members on the north-west end began to call for a toilet in their locality so "Penn Station" was built with two barrels in back to hold the water pumped from the pond. First a gasoline pump, later on an electrical one was installed where now we are filling, to service this area. In 1962, the larger block was built (by Herbie and his son). In 1964, it was winterized by putting the water pipe underground, putting in a gas heater and a hot water tank. Really coming up in the world, huh? In the fall of 1965 and spring of 1966, the Red House on Fox Hollow Drive (now brown) was built, a smaller edition but with all the facilities of the White House.

The outhouses were a somewhat recent addition - to provide facilities for those who began coming after the water was shut off in October and for early spring. Now they are used only in emergencies, as when power is off. Next time you have to use the emergency facilities, don't gripe - just think of Florence's early invention!

It was in 1957 (July) that the betterment of the water supply came about when an artesian well was driven in back of the Canteen. Pat, in her Solairama, had a few words that express how welcome that was, "No more rationing, no more dry glugs from inside that good?, old hand pump. No more clanging cans in the back of Al's truck and no more 50 cent purchase of crank case oil as an 'in' to 50 gallons of water". Even the hand pump on a clear artesian well was heavenly after the water situation as described above. With the coming of electricity, a submersible pump was, eventually, installed. That meant year-round water for the showers and two faucets where members could draw their clear water instead of pumping. In time it was carried into the kitchen, then to the sinks and the toilet buildings - the pond water still being used for flushing. With the hot and cold showers we no longer had to use the outside showers, which were fine on a hot day if you were one of the first to use them in the afternoon. The water was warmed by the sun on two barrels laid on the roof of the Canteen. After the supply of sun warmed water was used or on sunless days, the water was COLD, straight from the pond.

In July 1962, a water committee was set up, a pressure tank installed, the well water carried to all facilities and to all lot sites paying a yearly fee of \$10 to underwrite expenses. Until then some lot sites close to the toilet facilities could have pond water at their sites but had to go to the faucet at the steambath for water for cooking and drinking. How good it was to have good, white water at the sink even though it was only cold water. It was in the late fall of 1964 that the water pipe to the then almost new cement block bath was put underground so the facilities could be used in winter.

In the fall of 1965 additional water and toilet facilities were started - a second artesian well being driven, a new house built almost single-handed by our Al and in the spring toilets, pressure tank and water heater were installed. In the fall electric heaters were added, ready for the day when we need that service opened year round.

This story of electricity and toilet facilities are all bound together in the report of development - in the early days not much connection. Electricity means light and power. Let's take the light first, in here, meaning, as I've stated before - lamps and lanterns. Many were, apparently, quite satisfied with the dim light. To us in the days of bright lights the lamps would only furnish a romantic (if slightly smelly) light - something to listen to soft music by. When some started agitating for electricity and had checked with the Connecticut Light and Power Co., discovering that the cost was to be \$2100 and fifteen customers had to be guaranteed, they had to work hard to find the required number to raise that amount. It was June, 1957 that they first began to look into the matter. It was just a year later that they succeeded in getting seven members, plus five camp outlets that allowed them to go ahead. The money was raised during 1957 and 1958 by Ken selling stock. After many problems, which included getting someone to cut brush and fell trees from the right-of-way from Brickyard Road over the hill and through the woods to the end of the pond and up the road to the center of camp, the poles were set in the fall of 1958, the wires in the spring of 1959. According to Red - he came into camp one weekend and said to Al, "The wires are hot". Al did not believe it as he had no notification from the C.L. & P. Co. But, according to Red some FOOL connected them at his cabin and they had light. When Al saw that, he rushed to his cabin and came back with a toaster and percolator. They all sat down to coffee and cinnamon toast, prepared by electricity in Solair - then down to the Canteen to turn off the gas lights and on the electric. No more dark corners - as Pat described in thanking Alfred and Hazel for the new lamp they had given for the Lodge Room, "We night owls enjoy not having to sit in murky corners".

It was several years before there was any outside lighting other than the flood lights on the front and rear of the Canteen. In 1962 or 63 a string of lights was given and strung up across the rear of the beach, the next year a few street lights as far as Red's. Ove the next two years Dave and Dick extended the lights up and down the streets and as Fox Hollow Road developed, the lights went that-a-way, too.

## The Solair People

So much for business and the physical aspects of the camp - let us turn to People. Without the people it wouldn't amount to much. I'll try to give you a brief story about our long-standing members and a few interesting things that have happened here.

Florence joined Solair at one of the earlier camps. She is still with us as an honorary member. Only the members who have been

here for some years know her as she has not attended for some time. When I visited her at her home, I tried to persuade her to come for the 30th year party, but she thought her health was such that she could neither stand it or enjoy it. She is eighty-four years old, so it is understandable, but I was disappointed.

Al J. told me he, too, joined in 1936, but there is little record of him in the years prior to 1946. From 1942 to 1946, the war years, the camp was dormant. Al and his son were in Maine. Alexander and Capt. Greene and others had moved away, too. Some members began to write to Al, asking him to come back to camp and open it, I suppose as caretaker or manager or maybe just an interested member. I forgot to ask. But, anyway, from then on he seemed to be the one who took the active interest in the camp welfare. Some time after then his name was put on the deeds, which had always been in Florence's name, and remained so until the camp incorporated and they were put in the name of Laurel Ridge, Inc.

Orrell is not a member here now and is still a nudist also, he is the earliest to attend a camp of any of the early group. For that reason I am telling you about him. He first went to a camp in New York in 1932 and joined Solair in one of the early years. It was he who took Florence and Willard to the camp in 1936. He stayed with Solair until two or three years ago when he joined Hampton Pond. Orrell told me of two incidents of interest in two early camps. At one, a single man on a trial visit, tossed a match after lighting a cigarette. It landed on dry grass and away the blaze spread. They barely had time to get to their cars where their clothes were. Needless to say, that ended outings in that location. Another time a group, not Solair, had rented a spot at a pond on the Connecticut - Rhode Island border and were enjoying themselves when in strolled a Rhode Island State Policeman. They were on the Connecticut side, cars in Rhode Island. He hauled them all into court, they were able to square themselves but it scared most so they wouldn't go back. That ended that group.

These three are the only ones of the early group as far as we know. After the camp reopened in '46, a few new members began to join. Al thought there were about 20 or 22 at first. Bill and Thora S. joined in '49. Bill has always been active, serving as Treasurer and President. He has also been the builder of many cabins and buildings. It was through Bill that the camp gained its "Four Generation Family". After Thora died and before he married Louise, he brought her into camp. When she returned home, she said, "Where do you think I've been today?" and told her family. To make a long story short, she joined in 1956. Her brother Bob and Ella, also Bob and Louse's parents, Robert and Alice joined in '57. In '58 Bob and Ella's daughter, Jan and Richie became members and their children as they arrived. So, we have the four generations.

Lucy and Willard are another pair of '40ers. Willard served as President and until recent years, was active here. Now they spend more time at camps in Florida in the winter. During the growing season, they are busy with gardens and fruit trees, so seldom get out here. Their cabin, built in 1950-51, has recently been sold to Bob and Irene.

Ann (Chaplain Bill) has been a long time member, joining as a

child in 1947. Bill came in 1954. In between, during the summer season, he was at Sunny Rest as Chaplain and in a chidren's camp in connection with that camp. He and Ann were married in '59 and in the next year they brought the children's camp here, but in time that petered out. At this time I am going to insert a story about Solair Chapel that should have been in before but I didn't get the data in time.

Since Chaplain Bill has been here he has conducted services on Sundays during the summer months - sometimes in the Canteen, later in the open where the Chapel now stands. He had been offered a site at the other end of camp but walking on rough paths was difficult for some members so the Directors at that time offered the present site. Four or five years ago a platform was given, another purchased by the Directors and set up. These were painted by voluntary help to preserve them. At first services were held on them in the open air. Later a large Army wall storage tent was erected on the platform so services could be held regardless of inclement weather. Several pews that had been used in a church rebuilding program were added next.

During this time offerings had been accumulating and along with some special gifts, it made it possible to start the Chapel building. Bill is doing most of the work. He has had help - one member strengthening the roof and putting on the roof shingles, another wiring the building and donating the lights. There have been innumerable gifts of money, materials and furnishings, the last being a Magnus Chord Organ. Perhaps the dearest to our hearts is the Terry B. Memorial Alter and Panel, fashioned by the loving hands of Bill in memory of one of our teenagers who left this life while visiting camp last summer. Another gift is to become a part of this memorial soon.

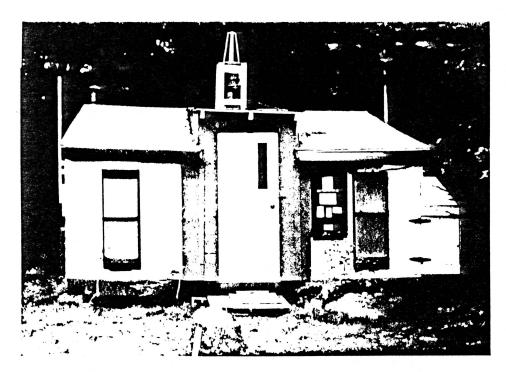
This building is incomplete, maybe not beautiful but the part it is playing in the life of the camp is important. We have had our first memorial service there. We have had our first wedding there when Marge and Vic were reunited, both happening in 1966. These were both heartwarming experiences but the weekly attendance, the desire to give, to help, to serve are the most heartwarming of all and the most important.

According to a membership list brought to me by Ann, kept by her mother, Lydia, when she was secretary in 1950, Bot and Irv, also Frank and Peggy were members then, maybe earlier. My records don't show the dates of their joining. At least we know they have been with us for seventeen years, quite a stretch.

Archie joined in 1952. He is a quiet, single, not here often until he retired in '66. Then as he was about more people began to ask him if he were a new member, much to his amusement.

Stephan K., also quiet, and only a Sunday visitor is an old-timer, having joined in 1951. He was one of the three incorporators when we became Laurel Ridge, Inc. instead of Associates.

Ann and Leonard have been members since 1953, Len serving as Treasurer for several years. Ann prepared and served meals at the Lodge and later at the Canteen. Leonard furnished me with a list of members belonging at that time, 43 in all.



OUTSIDE OF CHAPEL



INSIDE OF CHAPEL

Red and Doris joined the next year, '54. They are the only ones joining that year who are still with us.

After that there are quite a group having belonged as follows:

8	_	for	11	years	18	_	for	8	years
16	_	for	10	years	16	-	for	7	years
9	_	for	9	years	18	_	for	6	years

You can see from this that while we have a coming and going of members, we keep many familiar faces with us and some of those who have been with us up to five years will, in all probability, become "Old Timers".

This is my story. It is not professional. I never professed to be a writer, nor am I a typist. My only idea was to give interested people a picture of what has gone into making Solair what it is today and maybe entertain you a bit. May it stand as a testimonial to the hundreds of people who with their money, work, and pleasant ways have made this the happy place we all love.

こう IR. 1968-1988

# 1967 to the Present Written by Edie in 1988

To carry on where Rachel left off, I'll go back a little. In the late 50's - early 60's, while Leonard of Ann was treasurer, he used to check all the number plates on the cars to make sure all had registered in his office. Another thing that happened in those days was people used to cover their number plates so no one knew where they were from. In those days nudism was hush hush!

While Al Jones was still in charge of this camp, everyone - adults and children - had to be in their tents or cabins by 11 p.m. with curtains drawn. He also would not allow anyone to have a clothesline, and he would not permit the wild cutting down of trees.

As Rachel mentioned about the two barrels on the roof of the canteen for use, there was a hose that came from the roof that the water ran through into a lattice-work shower stall with two nozzles, barely big enough for two people to stand in. It was located near where the children's jungle gym is today. Then a few years later the showers were installed in the building with the sauna, in back of the canteen.

One couple who were not mentioned earlier, but joined in 1955, were Dave and Mary and their 3 little blonde daughters. The girls grew up here in the summers and now in '87 have come back with their children to visit. Mary and Dave are the couple who have been members of the camp the longest. Herbie is next. He joined in 1956. From there on, people began coming and joining more and more.

Preacher Bill (Chaplain), who also joined in 1954, held Sunday services in the hand-built chapel for those who wished to attend. It was nondenominational. Preacher Bill also had a comical side to him and during the late 60's - 70's he'd do a skit in our talent shows of a "Lady Taking a Bath". It was hilarious.

In the 50's, when the pond was drained, all the trees and roots in it were dragged out by a "human chain" of men.

In 1956 the lagoon was drained and Herbie and Al Jones and other members put rocks along the sides to keep the banks from washing away, and a plank was put across smaller banks towards our waterfall to help control the depth of the water in the pond.

Between the '50's - 60's, "before civilization grew" at Solair, nature was a sight to behold. We all saw animals of many varieties. Raccoons roaming freely at night for food (still do) and tipping over garbage cans. Deer drinking from the pond by moonlight, wildcats screeching in the woods, red and silver foxes (barking like dogs, only not as loud) at night, as well as an old all-white skunk and a Johnny skunk leaving their perfume around camp, reminding us we were invading their territory.

One experience some of us will remember about a raccoon was the time Carroll S. found a coon that had been injured. Carroll made a cage for it and nursed it back to health and then let it go. The raccoon had only one eye.

As we have been growing, people have come and gone. Mostly they came and stayed for quite a few years. Then because of job changes or family problems some leave.

We have made many changes - improvements in the camp over the years.

In 1960 the teen club was formed. They called themselves "Neetagers", using the letters in teenagers. Edie became the Teen Advisor from 1960 - 1975. During that time there were 20 teens. One rule out of 15 they kept was no one under 12-3/4 years of age could enter the teen pavillion. That was strictly for teens. They had earned enough money to build the pavillion by having cake sales, game day with a kissing booth, and they sure enjoyed it. One of the initiation things the new teen members had to do on one Sunday every summer was take part in the Teen Service. The Chapel was always overflowing on that Sunday. They also had their own dances, games, and even served afternoon tea to their parents. That was the only time parents were allowed in their club house other than Edie and Art, and once in a while Captain Ed of Doris. He was the one who would take them water skiing at Webster Lake. Half went on a Saturday afternoon, the other half on Sunday, with a couple of parents going along. The teens helped to do things about the camp when asked. They also went once a year to dinner and miniature golf - using their own money. They earned enough money so that they had \$500 in thier camp bank account by 1974. The older group went by themselves to the Woodstock Fair each year, and the younger ones went with womever had a couple of station wagons for them to pile into.

One of the Church Services they did, Edie had the 5-12 year old youngsters take part. They learned "Jesus Loves Me", and after everyone was seated, they marched in singing it. All they wore around their shoulders was a medium size white towel with a navy blue bow. It was very impressive and adorable. One of the Sermons the teens did, Preacher Bill taped and used it at the school where he taught.

When Edie retired as Teen Advisor, after 15 years, they surprised her with a party. They had for her a large cake with a little rocking chair on it, and a beautiful plaque which says on it:

EDITH - TEEN MOTHER - 1960 - 1975
TO ONE WHO GAVE SO MUCH AND ASKED SO LITTLE
OUR LOVE AND RESPECT
TEENS OF SOLAIR

This is something I will always cherish.

The teens dwindled down after that with parents moving away, just leaving camp, or the teens not wanting to come any more.

We've had different advisors since then doing a good job with the teens. We have about 6 or 7 teens now, but with the growth of family into the camp again the younger generations of children should bring the number of teens up once more in the next few years.

The teens, mostly the boys, nude, used to go up to the sand pit,

and jump from the top of it, where Dan and Isabel's trailer is, down into the rough sand and roll the rest of the way down. Great Fun!

Another thing that happened many years in a row - once every summer - at a back edge of camp (Laurel Ridge, Inc. property) the Enduro motorcycle race went through. Well, some of the teens and some adults would go and rearrange the trail, then they'd hide in the trees or bushes and when the cyclist would see the nude bodies jump out at them they'd wipe out. No one was ever hurt, but a photographer for a motorcycle magazine caught one picture and it was printed in the magazine. You could pick out 2 or 3 of our teens and a couple of the adults. Needless to say, the following year there were a lot more bike riders in the race.

In the early 60's there were wooden flat wide benches built for people to sun themselves on. Then we all gave \$5.00 per person and bought some nice sand for the beach.

As the camp grew, it was great to see the change from one light in the small canteen and a few kerosine lanterns along the main road to electricity all over the camp, plus pumping water from the well by the canteen. When you became a member after that and received your camp site, you had to buy an electric light pole at \$45 (now it's over \$300), so you'd have electric power on your site.

From the 60's on there were many bonfires, cook-outs, sing-a-longs and marshmallow roasts on the left side of the beach, near where the jungle gym now stands. We also had many pot luck suppers.

Carroll S. used to paint cute animals on the tiny tots' backs with washable paints. They would then parade around afterwards and each child received a prize of a tootsie pop or candy bar.

Then there were the mud baths, the children, mostly teens, would cover themselves with the mud clay from the bottom of the pond. They would let it dry on them and parade around like zombies.

From the 60's - 80's we had snoopers at different times. They's be sitting on top of our big rock, or sneaking in by the road. A bunch of teen snoopers were caught and the directors threatened to undress them all and make them stay. They were really scared and swore they'd never come back and they didn't. Others were seen on the rock and someone yelled "Snoopers on the rock!". Our gun club responded and one shot was fired into the sky. Needless to say the snoopers never came back.

There is a small airport nearby and every so often we'd have a plane fly low over camp, so low you could see the people in it, so we just waved and it went away.

We have had many delicious dinners over the years put on by our different members. They all have been great and the entertainment very interesting. This is what makes our camp, all the volunteer help and ideas. It's great.

One of those impressive dinners was Len and Jan's Hawaiian Luau with the catamaran coming across the lake in the dark with its Tiki lamps lit on it as well as the Hawaiian music, and dry ice making the fog coming across. The men in their Hawaiian shirts and the ladies in grass skirts and leis running to the shore to help them bring the food onto the beach which was in coolers on the catamaran. A real good time was had by all.

During the 70's we started having Talent Shows every year, as well as the skit Carroll S. and Margie S. used to do called "Mabel and Harry's first day at a nudist camp". They were Great.

Margie S. emceed the talent shows for about 5 years, then when Margie stopped coming to camp, Edie did them for 6 years. They lasted about 1-1/2 hours. They were a lot of work, but so much fun for everyone in and out of them.

Margie was also a comedian, a song writer, and played the accordion fantastically. Bob Supernor and son Bobby had a band and played some of the music for the shows, as well as for dances held in the canteen.

As time went on, many beautiful cabins have been built in camp. The oldest one is Frank and Fuzy's (now owned by Hug). It's by the parking lot, near the tennis court. It has the colored lights on it at night.

Back to nature again, around the camp you can see many wild flowers, lady slippers, and plenty of Laurel, as well as blueberry bushes and raspberry bushes, plus all the beautiful trees and shrubs and birds.

There is always an election time in September each year with healthy competition for different directors and plenty of rumors pro and con, but after the election is over everyone accepts the outcome and everyone settles down and the camp works together again. We also have camp managers as well as the seven directors. We have many committees. There is the Finance Committee, the Recreation Committee, the Membership Committee, the Tennis Club, the Beautification Committee, the Long Range Planning Committee, the Construction and Maintenance Committee, and maybe a few more I can't think of. We also have a gun club.

Carroll S., for over 25 years, has put on his puppet shows with Goggles, Pistachio, and friends, much to everyone's delight.

The Lodge, in which Hazel and Alfred lived before moving to California, was struck by lightning in 1977 and burnt to the ground. It also used to house the little camp library in the back, and it was run by Ann of Preacher Bill. The Lodge stood just about where the new round building is today. The chapel was situated further back.

In the 70's the tots' building was built. For the conventions it was turned into a refreshment stand for the camp, then in the late 80's it was turned back to the tots. It's located near the tennis court.

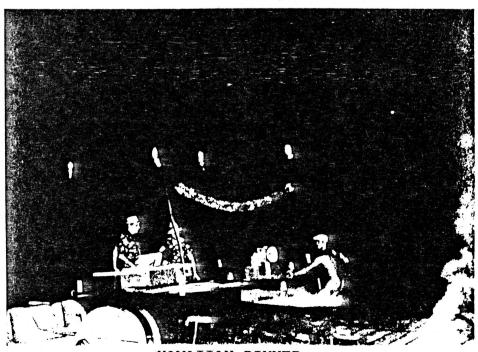
In 1979 we had the ESA Convention and in 1982 the ASA Convention. We had about 1,000 people attend these, and both conventions were handled very well. The members worked very hard before, during, and after the conventions. Cooperation was great. Again thanks to all who pitched in and helped so much.

One entertainment was nude sky divers floating down and landing on our raft. There were both men and women. A helicopter landed on the water near Dave and Mary's. Another was John of Pauline firing his small cannon on the beach.

In the late 70's a solarium was built on the beach mostly for winter sunny days. Also, in the winter they used to plow the snow off the ice with a piece of plywood attached to an Austin Mini Minor



PISTACHIO AND GOGGLE



HAWAIIAN DINNER



HELICOPTER LANDING IN '82



CANNON AT '79 CONVENTION

Car. Leicester of Nancy and others used to use the sauna - then break the ice in the pond and jump in. BRR!

Another thing Leicester would do was wake up in the morning and give a couple of good Tarzan yells and wake up the late sleepers.

Frank of Fuzy had a Tarzan call, train whistle, siren, and a voga horn on their car, so everyone knew when they arrived or left camp.

Blueberries were a delicacy in those days. The children would pick enough, take them to Doris of Red, who would bake blueberry muffins for the children. These beat Betty Crocker by a long shot.

Red of Doris gave all the children on the beach Saturday and Sunday a tootsie pop. He'd come to the beach with a big bucket full of pops. In no time he looked like the pied piper walking around.

Adults used to row across the lake and look for blueberries. They'd stand in the boat holding onto a branch while balancing themselves and while trying to pick the berries would get a good sunburn.

As time has gone by, more cabins have been built. More roads made. We first had the lower road called Fox Hollow Drive. We now have the lower, lower road called Pine Needle Creek Road, as well as Beaver Lane, where most of the large trailers are. These were mostly all updated in 1987-88, so now it's called "Beaver Estates".

In 1984 the pond was drained once again and a new culvert was put in under the supervision of Norman of Flo.

The biggest project that was started in 1985 has been the round building, the Arent Pavillian. It is beautiful with its new coat of juniper blue paint and white trim (1988) and it has in it on the first floor, bathrooms, showers, electric sauna, dressing room, and hot tub. Upstairs there is a large recreation hall and more bathrooms. It has added a lot to our camp. Milan of Erna was the "Super in charge" while the building was being built. The building was Milan's idea.

They have had many functions upstairs in the building such as game nights and dances, and socials. Square dancing was part of our fun way back when Bob Shields Dad was the caller. Now we have it again with Barbara and Howard doing the calling.

In 1987 lawn mowing races began with Ed of Billie in charge. They have many different style mowers to use. Some real old.

During the early pioneering days we had an embarrassing incident which can now be told since so much time has passed.

We had been challenged by a large nudist/lawn mowing racing club and in our enthusiasm forgot to pick up gas for our racing mower. We found an old mower in what we thought was a trash pile, and it had plenty of gas, so we "borrowed" some. To our surprise, that mower was their racer, and we had to tell them we had depleted their tank. To keep from being arrested, thrown out, etc., we had to agree to cleaning up and tuning their mower before the race. Although their racer was now in excellent shape, their team wasn't and we easily defeated them.

We have never been defeated. We are the undisputed champions and because of our sparkling performance, have been unchallenged for the last two years. We enjoy racing among ourselves and keep in tip-top condition.



TOTS' BUILDING



NEW ROUND BUILDING

On June 18, 1988, a doe - female deer - swam across the pond from the rock, stood by Billy and MaryAnn's car for a few minutes before she took off. Then on June 21st, 1988, a scarlet tanager landed on the beach about two yards from where we were sitting, stayed for a while, then flew off. About 3 weeks before that, some members saw a wild cat sitting up on the big rock at dusk. This spring we've had 2 sets of Canadian Geese. Each set had 4 goslings. They stayed until the little ones' wings were strong enough to fly away. Once again we are seeing wild life around here. Now one set of the geese are back.

Since June we've had a barbecue, square dance, pot lucks, Tennis Tournament, Volley Ball, President's Bavarian dinner with German Band, old camp movies, young kids' camp-out on beach, parades, Mexican dinner by the teens and their parents, hay ride, Christmas in July, Carribean Festival with a steel band and Hungarian dinner plus Las Vegas Night, New England boiled dinner, prime rib dinner and entertainment, the talent show, and some dances. We will probably have a few more good dinners by our members. So you see, everyone has something to do, thanks to our entertainment director and her committee.

Through the years, Volley Ball was the big thing at Solair, now Tennis is the big thing. Volley Ball is still played, but not in competition with other camps as yet.

Many, many trophies were won by our Solair Volley Ball Travel Team over the years. Tennis is real great here now and the court is busy most every day.

This brings the history of Solair up to date as of the year 1988.



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