

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LAKETRAILS SINCE 1951

(Last updated on 03/17/2008)

Year	Camp Director	President--Bd of Directors	Event
1951	Bill Mehrkens	Francis J Schenk	Year of Preparation:
			~In a Mehrkens-Noesen brainstorm along a hot South Dakota highway, the seed of Laketrails germinates
			~August: Fr Bill Mehrkens and Jerry Noesen, for the first time, push through wild raspberry bushes and hip-high grass of Oak Point on Oak Island to decide if the Booth Fishery property would be a good site for a canoe camp
			~October: Laketrails rents Booth Fishery property on Oak Point for \$100 and begins fund raising
			~Many Laketrails supporters donate to and join the Laketrails "Riggers"
			~The <i>Laketrails Idea</i> , the foundational document of Laketrails, begins to take form
1952 1st Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Francis J Schenk Board President	~17 June: The Base Camp opens for first time as staff and volunteers haul gear by truck to Warroad, and then by boat and barge to Oak Point on Oak Island
			~Larson Boat Works in Little Falls builds Laketrails first boat, the <i>Star</i>
			~June: Staff/campers on Oak Point move into M*A*S*H style canvas one- and two-pole tents with metal army cots
			~7 July: First canoe trips paddle around and explore Falcon and Windigo Islands (the first "First" of Laketrails)
			~A ham radio "Lake of the Woods Net" connects Laketrails to the Bay Store and local airplane pilots
			~Cy Kaiser and Ed Minarik earn the first Laketrails "Pilots" licenses
			~Winter: Laketrails publishes the first <i>Voyager</i> (Boys Camp only)
1953 2nd Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Francis J Schenk Board President	~15 June: Staff arrives to open camp
			~June: Staff builds high dock on old Booth Fishery cribs on west side of boat slip
			~June: Laketrails designs and begins using unique 12x12 canvas trail shelters
			~19 July: Fifteen staff/campers paddle to Kenora and back
			~Benefactors donate the <i>Loon</i> to Laketrails
1954 3rd year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Francis J Schenk Board President	~Eight-foot wide screened porch and canteen are built on southwest side of Mess Hall
			~4 March: Corporate Board decides to start a Girls Camp at Laketrails
			~Ed Herold becomes Camp Director of Girls Camp
			~Boys Camp paddles to Shoal Lake for the first time
			~7 August: Laketrails Girls Camp begins on Blackbird Island with Sisters of St. Joseph as senior staff
			~The Laketrails motto comes to life: "Live, Love and Laugh"
			~September: Laketrails purchases property from Booth Fisheries for \$3,000.
			~5 November: Laketrails becomes a legal corporation
			~Winter: Laketrails publishes first <i>Adventurer</i> (Girls Camp annual)
1955 4th year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Francis J Schenk Board President	~Boys Camp paddles to Arrow Lake for the first time
			~Girls camp at Blackbird migrates south to Base Camp on Oak Point
			~Jerry Noesen begins installing CB radios at Laketrails, at a few local resorts, and on the <i>Island Queen</i> , <i>Bert Steele</i> and <i>Resolute</i>
			~Staff builds the first sisters' residence near docks (later the Knob Hill structure)
1956 5th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Francis J Schenk Board President	~Laketrails celebrates its fourth anniversary---"still living on spuds and a shoe string"
			~Laketrails shares a conservation program with State of Minnesota Department of Conservation
			~Single-pole pyramid tents replace the two-pole tents
			~Staff builds Machine Shed for the camp generators, storage, tools and a work bench

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1957 6th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Francis J Schenk Board President	~More campers (including minorities, the disadvantaged, kids in trouble with the law, etc.) canoe at Laketrails ~Supporters join the Laketrails Booster Club with a pledge of \$100 ~Laketrails purchases the <i>Island Queen</i> ~Board of Directors and camp staff plan a new Chapel to replace tent chapel ~Staff relocates Knob Hill residence (built in 1955 near docks for sisters) to hill on the southwest corner of island ~Laketrails operates "the northern-most and smallest phone system in these whole Yew-Nited States"---aka the "Laketrails Grapevine Telephone System"
1958 7th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Francis J Schenk Board President	~A new high for numbers of campers---192 campers (60 girls and 132 boys) ~Staff and Laketrails supporters complete the new Chapel ~Laketrails sinks, raises and renovates the <i>Island Queen</i> on Lake of the Woods
1959 8th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Francis J Schenk Board President	~7 August: Laketrails dedicates the new Chapel
1960 9th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Francis J Schenk Board President	~The Laketrails motto expands to "Live, Love, Laugh and Learn."
1961 10th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Francis J Schenk Board President	~Jerry Noesen connects more area islands and boats with CB radios equipped with larger antennas ~Ben the Osprey and Gus the Gull (Herring) are camp mascots
1962 11th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Francis J Schenk Board President	~The magnificent and popular sandbar between Oak Point and Oak Island begins to drift and disappear ~Laketrails becomes an island
1963 12th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Earl Enright Board President	~Laketrails "purchases" the <i>Trade Winds</i> sailboat for \$1.00 from Dr. Leland Hughes of Warroad
1964 13th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Leon Pribula Board President	~Canoe trip preparation includes a night-before popcorn and conservation film party
1965 14th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Leon Pribula Board President	~Laketrails "Live, Love, Laugh and Learn" generates its first marriage: Julie and John Ditzler
1966 15th Year	Earl Jenkins Camp Director	Leon Pribula Board President	~Laketrails continues to generate marriages: Lois & Earl Jenkins, Rosemary & Larry Schmitz and Jeannie & Jack Wollack ~Earl Jenkins becomes camp director with wife Lois as cook (first resident woman at Boys Camp) ~Laketrails becomes a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation
1967 16th Year	Larry Schmitz Camp Director	Bill Mehrkens Board President	~10 April: Laketrails corporation decides to keep its doors open in spite of serious financial problems ~Larry Schmitz becomes camp director with wife Rosemary as camp nurse ~First babies at Laketrails: Chadrack Jenkins, Laura Wollack and Jenny Schmitz ~Concrete floor laid in Mess Hall along with outside slab for future addition ~Laketrails initiates tradition of inviting lake neighbors for brunch after Sunday church ~Earl Jenkins scrounges five tons of nu-ply siding/flooring from Bemidji and recycled rough-cut 2x4s from Flom, MN, to start a major building program ~Staff builds the nu-ply Jenkins staff cabin just east of the docks ~John Kuznia and staff build John's Villa as a sister's residence
1968 17th Year	Larry Schmitz Camp Director	Bob Koch Board President	~Staff builds a nu-ply addition to north side of Mess Hall on concrete slab (including a new office) ~Staff builds nu-ply Swallow Hollow as wilderness room and staff residence ~Staff builds a nu-ply Dock Shack and Wheel House

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1969 18th Year	Larry Schmitz Camp Director	Bill Mehrkens Board President	~Fr. Bill brings Bemidji State College students to Laketrails for "Operation Wilderness"
1970 19th Year	Larry Schmitz Camp Director	Robert Hoel Board President	~The new road to the Northwest Angle opens and Laketrails uses Angle Inlet as its port of entry
1971 20th Year	Larry Schmitz Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~Staff builds nu-ply kitchen addition on east wall of Mess Hall ~The <i>Island Queen</i> , afflicted with dry rot, is hauled off Lake of the Woods to Bemidji.
1972 21st Year	Larry Schmitz Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~14 July: Laketrails celebrates its 20th Reunion with 100 former staff and campers ~A concrete block pump house and generator shed built ~Board organizes a committee to create a master plan for Laketrails buildings
1973 22nd Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~Bill Mehrkens begins second term as camp director ~Committee presents a master plan to renovate buildings ~Electricity arrives at Laketrails by underwater cable---the old generators go silent ~18 April: Laketrails purchases the <i>Island Princess</i>
1974 23rd Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~Laketrails draws 184 campers for the summer
1975 24th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director	Jean Lutgen Board President	~Laketrails purchases an old bus to haul campers from the Twin Cities and local cities to Laketrails
1976 25th Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Pat Zavoral Board President	~185 campers at Laketrails ~Jack Wollack and Laketrails use Peterson's Camp at its port of entry---campers often canoe the 10 miles to camp
1977 26th Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~189 campers at Laketrails ~Staff refinishes the inside of the Mess Hall northside addition with white cedar and driftwood ~Laketrails has its first co-ed camping session
1978 27th Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~130 campers at Laketrails ~Laketrails experiments with a 10-day camping session is successful ~14 July: Laketrails celebrates its 25th Reunion---missed last year
1979 28th Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Jeff Odendahl Board President	~Laketrails begins using Young's Bay as its port of entry
1980 29th Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~130 campers at Laketrails ~Camp director's cabin near the docks burns down
1981 30th Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~Jack Wollack introduces the Laketrails Adventure Program, a wilderness summer school program with the intent of Laketrails becoming an outdoor learning center ~300 campers at Laketrails
1982 31st Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~199 campers at Laketrails ~Staff tears down the old porch on the south side of the Mess Hall and John Kuznia oversees construction of the southside annex
1983 32nd Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~The adult camping sessions begins at Laketrails

Year	Camp Director	President--Bd of Directors	Event
1984 33rd Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~20 July: Laketrails celebrates its 30th Reunion (missed in 1982) ~First signs of Dutch Elm beetles on Oak Point
1985 34th Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Ed Herold Board President	~This was a slow year with the island getting hit by low camper attendance and rampant Dutch Elm beetles
1986 35th Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Bill Conway Board President	~Staff and Laketrails supporters cut down over 100 dead elm trees who fell to Dutch Elm beetles. The magnificent elm tree crown of the island disappears. ~Jack Wollack plants a number of seedlings on the island to replace lost elm trees
1987 36th Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Bill Conway Board President	~Staff and benefactors renovate, paint and varnish the chapel and build a new altar
1988 37th Year	Jack Wollack Camp Director	Bill Conway Board President	~Board decides to improve housing for campers and staff ~A radio telephone to the outside world is installed for emergency use only (yeah, right. . .)
1989 38th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director (& Mark Harren)	Bill Conway Board President	~Bill Mehrkens begins third term as camp director ~Mark/Trish Harren co-direct the camp with Mehrkens, and Mark considers becoming camp director ~The Laketrails program continues to transform kids from landlubbers to voyageurs. ~Ed and Bernice Herold donate materials for the first camper cabin ~Staff begins a new building program with Herold's Hideaway and the Honeymooner ~The old buildings continue to get face-lift after face-lift
1990 39th Year	Bill Mehrkens Camp Director (& Mark Harren)	Bill Conway Board President	~13 August: Mark Harren takes over as camp director ~Bill's Bunkhouse (wood frame) built ~Cape Cod and Kal's II built ~The last canvas of the army one-pole pyramid tents is burned
1991 40th Year			~The old Mess Hall keeps plugging along with campers, mice and squirrels ~Knob Hill gets a face-lift
1992 41st Year	Mark Harren Camp Director	Lois Jenkins Board President	~Camp Director position becomes a year-around position ~3 July: Laketrails celebrates its 40th Reunion with 200 former staff and campers ~The staff pulls out the last two-pole canvas tent for the 40th reunion ~October: Laketrails Summit gathers at Vacationaire Resort north of Park Rapids, MN, to plan the renewal the Laketrails program and facilities ~Bill Mehrkens revises the <i>Laketrails Idea</i> ~Jack Wollack pulls together 30 years of wilderness experience and adapts his "Ten Commandments of Survival" to the Laketrails program
1993 42nd Year	Mark Harren Camp Director	Lois Jenkins Board President	~23 January: Board authorizes negotiations to buy Scout property (Phil Smith homestead) on Oak Island ~Eagan High School's Summer Science Institute begins at Laketrails ~Laketrails publishes the first <i>Portage Runner</i> ~12 March: the Laketrails Corporation approves Laketrails <i>Mission Statement, Role & Scope, and Goals</i> as guides for the coming years ~12 March: Laketrails Board appoints a Building and Grounds committee to evaluate and master-plan the camp properties and facilities ~1 June: Laketrails publishes <i>Laketrails 1952--1992</i> written by Jack Conway ~August: A San Diego, CA, architect visits Laketrails and drafts a master plan of base camp

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1994 43rd Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Lois Jenkins Board President	~Jeff Odendahl (Mary Kranz) begins as full time camp director
			~May: Construction crew builds Wilderness building with an extended overhang on north & east sides
			~May: Coast Guard rebuilds light house on south tip of Laketrails island
			~16 June: Laketrails purchases Scout Property and Laketrails Base Camp doubles its acreage
			~Laketrails holds its first 6th grade session
			~3 August: Jarvis Architects of Oakland, CA, drafts and presents a master plan of base camp to Laketrails
			~3-5 November: Open Forums at Fargo, Bemidji and Minneapolis on rebuilding program and facilities
1995 44th Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Lois Jenkins Board President	~Summer Campers: numbers increase to 100% capacity for first time in many years
			~15 May: Board decides to build a new Great Lodge with a septic system.
			~May: 1st Annual Memorial Day Work Week to open the camp prior to staff arrival
			~May: New high dock repair begun (completed in August)
			~May: Carpenters enclose the east side overhang of the Wilderness building
			~16 August: Laketrails removes Chapel and begins construction of the new Great Lodge on its site
			~22 September: Benefactors donate the 24 foot Sea Ray, later named the <i>Islander</i>
			~Fall: Noble House and Noesen's camper cabins completed
~Fall: A sauna, built by Jen Noble and relatives, arrives on island			
1996 45th Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Dan Whalen Board President	~Summer Campers: 100 % capacity
			~February: Construction crew removes old Mess Hall, Swallow Hollow, and Engine Room (Ed's Shed)
			~Winter: Construction crew struggles to enclose and complete the new Great Lodge
			~May: New porches added to camper cabins: Bill's Bunkhouse, Harren's Rookery, Herolds Hideaway
			~May: 2nd Annual Work Week to open camp during Memorial Day weekend
			~May: Work Week crew assembles new wooden bunk beds in all camper cabins
			~26 May: Laketrails dedicates the new Great Lodge
			~June: Wilderness Building and Shop completed
~June: John's Villa remodeled into a canteen/lounge for campers			
~10 August: Laketrails Board of Directors hold first Staff Appreciation Meal and listening session			
1997 46th Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Dan Whalen Board President	~Summer Campers: 100% capacity
			~Laketrails hires its largest staff ever
			~Winter: Workers truck Museum (scrap pile) off island to recycling facility
			~May: New water treatment and storage plant installed in log Pump House
			~May: Construction crew removes foundation and floor of old Mess Hall
			~May: Construction crew builds log cabin, the Far Side, for staff and visitors on south shore of island
			~May: 3rd Annual Memorial Day Work Week to open the camp prior to staff arrival
			~May: New low dock (east) completed
~June: Stonelayer completes stone work on the Great Lodge foundation and porches			
~June: Staff relocates the wilderness food storage area to south end of Wilderness building			
~1 August: Laketrails Board of Directors holds second annual Staff Appreciation Meal and listening session			
1998 47th Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Mike Ford Board President	~Summer Campers: 100% capacity
			~May: 4th Annual Memorial Day Work Week to open the camp prior to staff arrival
			~May: Staff removes old Dock Shack and builds a new Dock Shack for storage

Year	Camp Director	President--Bd of Directors	Event
			~May: Carpenters attach a graded ramp to west side porch of the Great Lodge
			~June: American Camping Association (ACA) visits and evaluates Laketrails for accreditation
			~1 August: Laketrails Board of Directors holds third annual Staff Appreciation Meal and listening session
			~October: Camp Director position becomes full-time
			~8 December: American Camping Association (ACA) presents Laketrails with accreditation certificate
1999 48th Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Mike Ford Board President	~Summer Campers: 90+ percentile capacity
			~May: 5th Annual Memorial Day Work Week to open the camp prior to staff arrival
			~May: Shower/Laundry facility and septic system completed (laundry room and five individual showers)
			~June: Old laundry/shower facility is converted to sleeping cabin
			~31 July: Laketrails Board of Directors holds fourth annual Staff Appreciation Meal and listening session
			~August: Peacetrails #1: Bosnia/Herzegovina youth undergo training at Laketrails
2000 49th Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Mike Ford Board President	~Summer Campers: 100% capacity, 16% minorities
			~Laketrails Board begins planning for the 50th reunion bash
			~May: New Knob Hill camp director's cabin completed
			~June: upgraded staff training on environmental studies and how the Assets program relates to the Laketrails Idea.
			~May: 6th Annual Memorial Day Work Week to open the camp prior to staff arrival
			~May: New camper cabin ("Cokes") east of John's Villa
			~May: 26 foot Thompson passenger/freight boat purchased
			~June: Ramp added to Bill's camper cabin
			~19 August: Laketrails Board of Directors holds fifth annual Staff Appreciation Meal and listening session
			~August: Peacetrails #2: Bosnia/Herzegovina youth undergo training at Laketrails
			~September: The Harren brothers and family begin to construct the new Chart House (multipurpose) immediately south of the Great Lodge
2001 50th Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Mike Ford Board President	~Summer Campers: 100% capacity (410 campers)
			~May: 7th Annual Memorial Day Work Week to open the camp prior to staff arrival; Bemidji's Northwest Minnesota Juvenile Center kids also help in this volunteer event.
			~Summer: Laketrails begins using the unfinished Chart House
			~Highest water level in 50 years
			~Music Camp #1 (kids from London and HSRA of St. Paul)
			~August: Peacetrails #3: Bosnia/Herzegovina youth undergo training at Laketrails
			~June: Water at highest level in 50 years---water on all five sides (NESW & under) of Wheelhouse makes Mehrkens a skipper again
			~3 August: Laketrails Board of Directors holds sixth annual Staff Appreciation Meal and listening session
			~December: Laketrails completes its building program, begun in 19, with the Chart House
2002 51st Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Mike Ford Board President	~May: Memorial Day gathering to open camp (8th year)
			~Full use of completed Chart House (but still no rug)
			~East main dock extended & canoe dock constructed
			~Eagan High School SSI-10th year
			~Music Camp #2 (kids from London and HSRA of St. Paul)
			~July 5-7: "Rendevous. . . in 02"---50th anniversary celebration of Laketrails at Oak Island
			~High water forces Fr. Bill to abandon Wheelhouse; Angle road closed to bus, so campers transported by boats from Warroad.
			~Drought in second half of camping season
			~August: Peacetrails #4: Bosnian campers refused entry to Canada; Harren's boated them from Warroad to camp for Peacetrails 4th year

Year	Camp Director	President--Bd of Directors	Event
			~Northern Lights Adult canoe trip
			~Five high-class outhouses constructed
			~October: 2nd Laketrails Summit in Twin Cities
2003 52nd Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Mike Ford Board President	~May: Memorial Day gathering to open camp (9th year)
	10th Year		~283 campers; 25% minority enrollment
			~Attractive new colored brochure published
			~Eagan High School SS (11th year)
			~Two adult canoe trip sessions
			~Peace Pole planted near Chart House
			~LT video developed by Angela Stamschor
			~LT camp songs CD created by Jerry Noesen
			~Established Opportunity Fund with Mpls Foundation
2004 53rd Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Mike Ford Board President	~253 campers
	11th year		~Jeff Odendahl announces that this will be his last year as Camp Director
			~Working Health Department on a pilot program, we installed ewnenbrae filters on our water system.
			~Memorial Day 10th annual gathering to open camp (approx 1400-1500 people hours donated)
			~Intercultural sessions with campers from inner-city Twin Cities and rural Roseau & Lake of the Woods counties.
			~Eagan High School Summer Science Institute (12th year)
			~Major gift of hand tools and small implements (John Ford)
			~Adult canoe trip again his year
			~September: Carpet installed in Chart House
			~Board of Directors Selection Committee seeks candidates and sets up interviews for new Camp Director
			~Board announces selection of Kevin Turain as the new Camp Director
			~Board hosts a great going-away party for Jeff Odendahl and Mary Kranz and family.
2005 54rd Year	Kevin Turain Camp Director	Kathy Drozd Board President	~May: Bemidji Juvenile Center youth help open camp (5th year)
	1st Year	8th Year	~May: Memorial Day gathering to open camp (11th year)
			~June: Kevin Turain, his wife Ike and children Maddy and Baxter move into their new digs on the island
			~Eagan High School Summer Science Institute (13th year)
			~The three camp founders: Bill Mehrkens, Jerry Noesen, and Ed Herold--along with longtime promotor Leo Stelton--meet at Laketrails.
			~On a very windy day, canoe trips faced a rescue by boat and two evacuations of sick paddlers.
			~Adult canoe trip with nine canoeists.
2006 55rd Year	Kevin Turain Camp Director	Kathy Drozd Board President	~May: Northwest Minnesota Juvenile Center youth help open camp (6th year)
			~May: Memorial Day gathering to open camp (12th year)
			~Eagan High School Summer Science Institute (14th year)
			~A large group of kids from the Boys' and Girls' Club of Central Minnesota (St Cloud area) arrived at camp
			~The "Big Trip" takes a 15-day trip
2007 56rd Year	Jeff Odendahl Camp Director	Denny Foreman Board President	~May: Northwest Minnesota Juvenile Center youth help open camp (7th year)
			~Kevin Turain resigns as Camp Director, and Jeff Odendahl signs on as Temp Camp Director
			~May: Memorial Day gathering to open camp (13th year)
			~Eagan High School Summer Science Institute (15th year)
			~New boardwalks for some trails and new benches for the campfire area (Rebers and other staff)
			~Voyageur canoe arrives
2008 57rd Year	Wade Herbranson Camp Director	Denny Foreman Board President	~Wade Herbranson of Ely, MN, becomes the new Laketrails Camp Director

Year	Camp Director	President--Bd of Directors	Event
	1st Year		~March: Dreaming dreams of an expanded canoe program.
			~May: Northwest Minnesota Juvenile Center youth help open camp (8th year)
			~May: Memorial Day gathering to open camp (14th year)
			~Eagan High School Summer Science Institute (16th year)
2052 101st Year	Guess Who	Guess Who	~July 5-7: 100th anniversary celebration of Laketrails at Oak Island

**LAKETRAILS BASE CAMP, INC., OAK ISLAND
OVERVIEW AND TIMELINE: 1952--2002**

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For more detailed history: 1) Laketrails History 1952--1992; 2) Laketrails History 1992--2002; 3) Laketrails Canoe Logs (selected) 1952--2001:
Email <laketrl@uslink.net> or Call 1.800.450.6460