



THE ARC-ives



Volume 1 Issue 4

The Association Retreat Center, a ministry of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

Winter 2005-06

ARC looks to next 25 years of service *Twin Cities retreat groups frequent former military facility*

by Delores Topliff

One hour from the Twin Cities, a retreat center is located on a former post-World War II military base. In 1950, the U.S. Defense Department announced it was building a special base near Osceola, Wisconsin.

"A secret classified military installation will be constructed (near) Farmington. Total cost will be approximately \$1,120,000 and when completed will employ 250 fulltime military and civilian employees," said military officials. "National security does not permit more ... information regarding this project."

By November, men in blue Army Air Corps uniforms began arriving, half of them from the southern U.S. Several dozen loved the area so much they returned after the war to settle within a 100-mile radius of the base.

One of those men was Army Airman Bob Bantz who grew up in Iowa where his dad ran a small town machine shop. After completing boot camp in Wyoming, Bantz arrived in Wisconsin at the U.S.A.F. 674th Aircraft Control Warning Squadron Radar Support group.

When he came in 1956, the 80-acre 350-man base had three high-tech radar towers triangulating aircraft approaches to the Twin Cities for incoming flights. Before leaving for Japan in 1978, and later seeing Korean combat, Bantz married Irene who lived on a nearby farm.

The base remained productive for 25 years but during President Ford's administration, changes in U.S. defense strategy made the base obsolete. The base closed in 1975 and sat idle until 1978, when it was purchased by the nonprofit Association Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC). It reopened in 1979 as an ALFC retreat center but soon became available to other groups honoring AFLC's vision.

Today the Association Retreat Center (fondly called the ARC) operates year-round in modernized facilities serving 15,000-plus people per year with group sizes ranging from 25 to 640. The ARC features a large dining area, nine meeting rooms with full A/V equipment, seven winterized sleeping facilities with beds for 60-131 people and an 800-plus capacity multi-purpose center with well-equipped indoor or outdoor recreational activities.

The present staff includes seven full-time employees, five part-time workers and 25 summer staff. Many staff live on-site in a family atmosphere, meeting daily for devotions and prayer. All staff are dedicated to preparing a special place where God meets people to change lives.

The first Director of the ARC, Bob Dietsche, set a distinctive camp flavor by assigning Bible street names like "Emmaus Way," "Jericho Way" and "the Gaza Strip." Similarly, buildings are named "Good News," "Tabitha," "Daniel," "Covenant," "Bethel," and so on. The cooks prepare meals in the "Manna Inn," where 300 campers at a time "can eat great food and come back for seconds." The original air base supply building is now named the "Joseph" community center.

Celebrating 25 years of operation in 2004, the ARC has begun its second quarter-century of public service. Affordable rates are offered to groups for single day to week-long retreats, conferences, small groups, receptions, parties, family reunions, craft programs like scrapbooking or quilting and other activities. "Eden Prairie, Blaine, South St. Paul and Anoka school districts have come for excellent week-long marching band camps," said current ARC Director Pat Flanders. "About 85 percent of ARC's guests are here for church small group retreats from denominations reflecting diverse cultural backgrounds and language groups. We're pleased that those who attend once have a 90 percent return rate after their first experience."

Old photos of the base as it was in the '50s are being restored. But more than photos are restored here. Bantz said, "I returned from Korea a bitter man, a heavy drinker who didn't attend church." Disabled and having difficulty farming, Dietsche invited Bantz to head up the ARC's motor pool. Bantz replied, "I have to sell our home first, then we'll come." "Come now," Dietsche said, "We have housing ready."

"If there's a second place to heaven, this is it," said Bantz, now 67 and still going strong. "That was the beginning of a major life change. This place has made a huge difference for me. That's why we've stayed." Bantz's wife, Irene, and granddaughter, Heather, work together in the kitchen. Younger granddaughter, Abreanna, often drops in.

Flanders left a job paying more than twice his salary to bring his family to the ARC. "It's worth it," said Flanders. "The ARC blesses and changes people. God does powerful things when we allow him to."

(This article originally appeared in the Minnesota Christian Chronicle.)



AFLC 'Classics' Retreat to the ARC

by G. Barnum Smith

Where September and October joined each other about two-dozen of us seniors spent a memorable time at the Classics Retreat. On the first evening, Gene Quist, the dynamic youth leader from Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minnesota, spoke to us about ministry to youth.

On the first day of the new month, our primary speaker, Pastor Jerome Elness, led us in several sessions on the topic of God being in the business of blessing people. The word "bless", he said, occurred 88 times in the Bible, while "blessing" came alongside at 62 times. Consider the truth that even a day of rest can be a blessing. Wherever Abraham went, he built an altar. However, when he went to Egypt with Sarah, for some reason he did not do so [build altars] and trouble ensued. When we, in these times, neglect worship, we bring problems upon ourselves. The pastor spoke to us also on God's promises. Have you any idea how many of them are in God's Holy Word and how many of them are for us?

Having learned two Chinese languages, the pastor was also able to share with us (in English) about ministry in the country of China. He also has a daughter, Elen', who serves as a missionary-physician in Pakistan. We were all able to glean much new information as a result of Pastor Elness' experiences in other places.

On the days of our fellowship together we were as a warm group. During the



Lasting Friendships.....

John and Ruby Abel (former missionaries in Brazil) and Roger and Marian Kopperud (Revere, MN) were Married on the same day: September 3, 1949. This photo was taken at Family Camp at the ARC last summer, where the couples met for the first time and formed a friendship that will last an eternity.

Praise & Petitions

As the ARC expands its ministry to a growing number of diverse groups, needs arise that are not a part of our annual budget. Following is a list current needs. If you can donate some of these things, or would like to help with funds in their purchase, please email us at: the_arc@centurytel.net

We Praise God for the recently donated/acquired items:

- Christian wall hangings and paintings (still need more).
- \$4,500.00 towards Tabernacle project.
- Suspended ceiling tiles and grid work.
- Furnace/ductwork for staff housing.
- Chevy van for Guest Services.

Financial needs:

- *Reduction of \$1.5 million load.*
- *\$75,000.00 Tabernacle Remodeling.*
- *\$50,000.00 annual operating budget shortfall.*

Equipment needs:

- *AED Defibrillation Unit*
- *2-LCD Projectors*
- *Laptop Computer*
- *DVD/VHS players*
- *CD players/Boom boxes*

- *Portable sound system*
- *5 foot folding tables*
- *2-electronic keyboards*
- *Newer Christian paintings and wall hangings*
- *Truck inner tubes for tubing hill*
- *Twin sized fitted sheets*

Vehicle needs:

- *Four wheeler with dump box for gardening/landscaping*
- *Tractor operated turf sweeper*

The ARC-mobile Arrives at the ARC



Former director Bob Dietsche and Guest Services Director pose with the ARC's 'new' van. Bob was the winner of the 'Name the Van' contest held among ARC staff members. As a result of his name being chosen from many other worthy names, Bob gets his picture taken with the 'ARC-mobile' and one of the first rides around the camp. Way to go Bob!!

The van will be used by Jim Keller and his guest services crew to move tables, furniture and a variety of other items around the grounds. All in an effort to make your stay a better one.

A huge thank you to the person who donated this van to the ARC.



Spotlight on the ARC

Pastor Phil and Hazel Featherstone

On most summer mornings, if you get up very early at the ARC you may catch a glimpse of a solitary figure walking the grounds with a five gallon bucket in hand. The bucket becomes the final resting place for discarded pop cans, candy wrappers and other miscellaneous castoffs. Or, maybe you just got up out of one of our comfortable beds, newly refinished and repaired for your comfort. The clean grounds and comfortable beds are just two of the ways that Phil Featherstone makes his presence felt at the ARC.

Phil (known as Pastor Phil to many) works behind the scenes at the ARC to repair, restore or maintain the grounds at the ARC. On your way to Manna Inn, on those cold fall and winter mornings, you may smell the wood smoke from the wood stove in Phil's shop.

Pastor Phil came to the ARC in 1995 after retiring from the ministry. He was born on June 24, 1923 in Featherstone Township, near Red Wing, MN. Growing up in the township that was settled by his ancestors in the 1840's, Phil spent the first part of his life working as a carpenter. However, God had other plans for Phil. As Phil tells it, "God had to put me in a position where I would listen to Him, and that was flat on my back!"

One day, June 23, 1966 to be exact, Phil's life took a change in direction. While working on a barn roof, Phil fell some 30 feet and landed flat on his back. For the next six weeks, Phil was in a position to listen to what God had been saying to him for some time. It was time for Phil to build lives, not walls. After his back was healed, Phil enrolled in seminary and was ordained as a Lutheran Minister in xxxx.



During Phil's first pastorate in Minneapolis, MN, his wife, Delores was called home as a result of cancer. Phil was a widower with five children to support and a church to pastor. Again, God had a plan though. Phil would tell you that he just didn't want to 'break in another mother-in-law'. After being married to Delores for xx years, Phil married her older sister Hazel on March 17, 1974.

Phil and Hazel moved to Wisconsin shortly after Delores' death and became pastor of Running Valley Lutheran Church near Colfax Wisconsin. It was there, that Phil met Bob Dietsche, who would later become the ARC's first director.

Phil and Hazel moved west in 1978 after accepting a call to Pequanna South Dakota. For the next ten years, the couple raised Phil's five kids in a spacious home 100 miles west of Sioux Falls.

Phil says he 'retired' from full-time ministry in 1988. Anyone who knows Phil knows he still ministers, just in different ways. Phil always had a heart for the ministry at the ARC. He often attended workdays and did whatever he could to support this ministry from afar. After retirement, he and Hazel moved to the ARC to be closer to his five children, and to work on various projects around the ARC. Just a few years ago, Phil's daughter Martha was called home unexpectedly.

Currently, Phil (or Grampa Tigger, as he's called by the family) stays busy working in his shop behind the motor pool or somewhere around the ARC doing whatever needs to be done. Wherever he is, Phil always has a good word to share, and a smile to pass along. When he isn't at the ARC, he's helping Hazel, or spending time with his 14 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Oh, and the 'Grampa Tigger' title? Ask Pastor Phil the story. He'll be glad to fill you in.



Tab Project update

Over the last 26 years of ministry, the ARC has slowly refurbished virtually every building on campus. This has continued to pay off for groups using ARC facilities by offering more efficient and pleasant surroundings for a variety of uses. There are really only two buildings that have remained largely untouched since the AFLC purchased the property in 1979. These buildings are the apartment building, next to Manna Inn, and the Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle is the largest of the original buildings on campus and was used as the communications building by the USAF. It is now used primarily as a large group meeting area. However, an outdated heating system, inefficient lighting and poor, if any insulation has made this building nearly unusable during the winter

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Making Memories at the ARC

Over the last several years the ARC has become host to craft oriented retreats. The vast majority of these groups are Creative Memory (CM) groups that take advantage of the spacious meeting areas where tables and 'projects' can be worked on unimpeded for an entire weekend. It's common on a scrapbooking weekend to see lights on in several buildings until the wee hours of the morning. During the 2005-2006 winter camping season, approximately 31 CM groups totaling 1025 'scrapbookers' will attend ARC retreats. Following is an excerpt from a thank you card sent by Sharon.



Thank you again for once again providing us with a wonderful setting for our scrapbooking retreat. You do so much for me and the women who attend...we love the changes you've made to Good News Lodge! Everyone commented on how nice it is. We appreciated the extra effort made to have it ready for us...for keeping a warm fire going...for moving all the furniture...for making the delicious meals...[and] for making a special trip over to bring us coffee cups for the yummy chocolate chip cookies. You really do an amazing job for us year after year. I look forward to coming back next year!

The ARC would like to thank Sharon for her words of encouragement, and Stephanie (a member of her CM group), for sharing the sunset picture used on this issue of the ARCives. Your words of encouragement allow us to share with others how God is using this ministry to change lives.

North Heights Men: 25 Years Strong

Over 25 years ago, Merlin Morken and a few other men from North Heights Lutheran Church sat at Lake Wapogasset Bible Camp listening to the vision of a Bible Camp and Retreat Center near Osceola Wisconsin. It was 1976 and the USAF had just abandoned 80 acres of land housing a few buildings, some radar towers and little else.

That discussion led to a relationship with North Heights Lutheran Church that has been in existence as long as the ARC has existed. Merlin has seen many changes since that first men's retreat in 1979. Back then there was one place to meet, the Dining Hall, now Manna Inn. One of the dorms was open and heated. As Merlin states, "It was a mess up here. There were weeds grown up all over the place."

Since then buildings have been refurbished to make better lodging and meeting facilities available year around. One of the biggest and best changes, according to Merlin, has been the addition of the full-size gymnasium. This building has allowed groups to have indoor recreation facilities all year long.

North Heights Men's groups have ranged in size from as many as 150 and as few as 50. But whatever the numbers, the results have been the same: great food, great facilities and a spiritually refreshing stay.

The ARC's relationship with North Heights has branched out as a result of the Men's retreat. The metro area church sends several alpha groups to the ARC each year as well.



Gearing up for 2006!

Following is a list of AFLC camps for 2006.

REGISTER EARLY!! YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS BEING HERE.



Those registering for SidebySide or Jr. Sno Daze will receive a FREE 2006 ARC t-shirt if they register by January 3, 2006. WHAT A DEAL!

AFLC Camps 2006

February 3-5

Jr. Sno Daze (Grades 4-7)
Speaker: Pastor Eric Westlake
Cost: \$85.00
Side by Side (Grades 7-12)
Cost: \$85.00

February 17-18

Couples Retreat
Speakers: Pastor Wade & Michelle Mobley
Cost: \$120.00 per couple

March 31-April 2

Women's Retreat
Speakers: Gilmore Girls
(New Image Players: Presenting "The Daily Grind")

April 21-22

Men's Retreat

June 11-16

Junior Camp (Grades 4-7)

June 16-17

Kid's Camp (Grades 1-3)

July 23-29

Family Camp

August 18-29

Family Retreat

September 22-24

Classics Retreat

ARCSIVES

December

2-4 St. Mary's Coptic-S. St. Paul
Maranatha-Minneapolis
16-18 Hmong Alliance Church-Maplewood
29-31 Pastor David Johnson Reunion

January 2006

6-8 Lutheran Renewal Young Adults
13-15 Creative Memories-Deb
Creative Memories-Annette
13-14 St. Croix Valley Boys Choir
14-15 Lord of Life-Ramsey
20-22 Creative Memories-Sharon
27-29 U of M Leaderquest
Angelica Cantanti-Bloomington
Boy Scout Troup #226-Savage
Creative Memories-Amy

January 27-29 (continued)

Creative Memories-Jean
Creative Memories-Donna

February

10-12 Creative Memories-Julie
Creative Memories-Carol
First Baptist Church Men-Cambridge
Emmanuel Christian Center
17-19 Friendship Church Youth Retreat
Assembly of God Youth-Rochester
24-26 Stillwater Evangelical Free Men's Retreat
Creative Memories-Kellie
Creative Memories-Sue
Lord of life-Ramsey
Woodland Hills Alpha



THANK YOU!!

As the Association Retreat Center ends another year of ministry, and looks forward to a new year of opportunities, we would like to thank the ARC Board and Corporation members for their support in the past year. These men and women faithfully support the ARC by assisting us in keeping our vision and mission spiritually sound and culturally relevant. We have listed the board and corporation members here so that you can be remembering them in prayer. While they are behind the scenes, and spread out over a wide geographical area, they are vital to our existence. Thank you as well to those who have faithfully completed their terms this year.

Term Expires 2006

Mr. Ivar Borge	Rev. Randy Nelson
Mr. Dennis Holmquist	Mr. Jason P. Norlien
Rev. James R. Johnson	Mr. James D. Ray
Rev. Mel Meyer	Mr. Roger Timm*
Mr. & Mrs. Ernie Miedeman	Rev. Jonathan Unverzagt

Term Expires 2007

Rev. Steve Carlson	Mr. Erling Langness
Rev. Phil Featherstone	Mr. Steve Lehman
Mr. Dennis Jacobsen	Mr. Glenn Mork
Mr. Phil Johnson	Mr. Eric Rasmussen
Rev. Earl Korhonen	Mr. Bob Rudebusch

Term Expires 2008

Mr. Dale Bentley*	Dr. Steve Johnson*
Rev. Michael Brandt	Mr. Brad Nelson
Mrs. Kathy Carlson	Rev. Joel Rolf
Rev. David Johnson	Mr. Cliff Seldal*
Mr. Larry Johnson	Pastor Ken Thoreson

Term Expires 2009

Mr. Allen Anderson	Rev. Walter Johnson
Rev. Rich Carr	Rev. Wade Mobley
Mr. Paul Handsaker	Mrs. Penny Nash
Mr. Ernie Hilbert	Mr. Brian Rice
Rev. Rodney Johnson	Mr. Curtis Twedt

Term Expires 2010

Mrs. Oryen Benrud	Mr. Dennis Parsley
Pastor Tim Carlson*	Pastor Tonnes Pollestad
Pastor Jason Holt	Mr. Roger Quanbeck

* Denotes Association Retreat Center Board Member

Tab Project Update:

(Continued from page 3)

months and marginally used the remainder of the year.

Groups of 150 or more in need of large group meeting space in the winter months, are often forced to choose the Gymnasium for recreation OR meeting, not both. This hinders us from booking more than one large group during the winter months.

Currently, we are seeking funds to refurbish the Tabernacle in four phases, as follows:

1. Insulate walls and ceiling/roof area: Cost-\$5,000.00
2. Remodel bathrooms/plumbing system: Cost-\$13,000.00
3. Insulate/refurbish main meeting area: Cost-\$42,000.00
4. Insulate/refurbish small group meeting areas: Cost-\$15,000.00

Total cost for the project will be around \$75,000.00. This does not include all labor costs as much of the labor will be done by volunteers, or by ARC staff. With the addition of the Tabernacle as a meeting area, we really gain two buildings as it opens the Gymnasium for recreation and alleviates any need to use it as a large group meeting area.

Currently, \$4,500.00 has been donated towards the Tab Restoration Project. If you would like to invest in this project through time, finances, or donations please let Pat know by phone (1-800-294-2877) or email us at the_arc@centurytel.net.



STOP!!! THAT'S ENOUGH ALREADY.

It was a church far from civilization. It was a church that had been racked by rebellious leadership, immoral membership and physical hardship. But it was time for a change. It was time for a new direction, for a leap of faith into unknown waters.

The pastor stood before the congregation. "We need a new building," he said. The Lord told me how to build it. If you are willing to help we will need money and plenty of volunteers.

We've all heard horror stories of building projects that have split churches, destroyed friendships and ended ministries. But this story is different. The people responded by bringing far more money than could possibly be spent. Skilled workers came from nowhere to volunteer the very best of their labor. The building was up in no time and a new, different ministry began.

Sound too good to be true? Check out Exodus 35:1-36:7. It's the story of Moses building the Tabernacle in the wilderness. It was a new direction for a 'church' still hurting from 'golden-calf-gate'. Yet the people responded so eagerly that workers had to stop construction to deal with all the donations. At their request, Moses had to command that NOONE bring any more offerings.

The story in Exodus teaches us some good sound giving principles. First, only those who were willing and moved to give participated in the program. God wants us to give, but only with right motives (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Secondly, the giving was immediate and often. The people went home, took an inventory of what they could give, and made their pledge for the project. There were no phone calls, no fundraising drives. The only motivation for giving was the announcement of a need.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, in this age of insurmountable debt, the people gave, as they were able and moved, not as instructed.

Lastly, there were two types of gifts given for the construction of the Tabernacle. They were gifts of physical possessions (gold, etc.) and gifts of time and abilities (skilled laborers). It's interesting that the Bible makes little distinction between them. God wants us to give according to what he has given us. Whether you can give 2% or 50% isn't the issue. Whether you can give financially, or from your gifts and abilities doesn't matter to God. Are you asking God how you can give, or does he get the leftovers.

Thrivent Financial Services gives you great ways to make your gift count for the ARC. As a member of the GivingPlus® program, Thrivent will give \$1.00 for every \$2.00 you give. That makes your gift go 1/3 of the way farther to further the work at the ARC.

For those short on cash and long on skills, Thrivent also will donate \$25.00 to the ARC for every 25 hours of volunteer labor. In 2005 ARC volunteers put in over 2000 hours on projects around campus. The new pavilion is just one example of how volunteers have made a difference. Volunteering isn't hard. Check out the list on the right. If you see something you can do, give us a call and set up a time to visit...and work! We provide a warm bed, great food, and plenty of exercise.

The ARC's TOP TEN list:

Volunteers drive this ministry. Following are some of the most important needs right now for volunteer help. If you can use your gifts to help, the ARC will allow you up to two nights of free lodging...along with some great food. Just another way to say thanks for your partnership with us.

- ◆ Painting
- ◆ Stenciling
- ◆ General cleaning
- ◆ Tabernacle Project
 - Insulating ceiling
 - Installing suspended ceiling
 - Installing lighting
- ◆ Installation of rain gutters
- ◆ Assembling donated pole building
- ◆ Sorting/organizing maintenance rooms

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Want to help produce this newsletter and help your business at the same time? Send us your card and a donation for postage! Call the ARC for details.

ARC-tifact:

How many pounds of spaghetti noodles did the ARC staff boil up in the summer of 2005?

Answer: 250 pounds of noodles!