

# Camp Columbus celebrates 30th birthday

By SHERRI HORVAT  
of The Herald

Camp Columbus celebrates its 30th anniversary this year.

In the early '50s, the need for a Catholic recreational summer camp for Southern Alberta's children became apparent, and a survey of five Knights of Columbus councils indicated that four of them were anxious to expand their involvement with youth activities.

Although the YMCA had successfully operated a non-denominational summer camp in Waterton Lakes National Park for years, it was indicated their existing camp facilities were to be abandoned and possibly located elsewhere.

The K of C councils took up the challenge. With the approval of the Bishop of the Diocese of Calgary to operate a camp closely tied to the Catholic faith, plans were drafted and application made to National Parks of Canada (now Parks Canada) for a site in Waterton Lakes National Park.

In spring, 1956, one of three sites offered was chosen, located on Knight Lake about a mile from the town of Waterton.

It offered reasonable access to town facilities and proximity to electrical power. As well, the site offered remoteness, away from the general public but handy to the highway which served the park.

Knights involved in the site selection included Urban Pittman, Stan Sawicki, Eugene Cody, Joe Hovan, Charlie Wadden and Joe Jordan. Adam Schamber and Joe Sieben of Milk River were hired as general contractors to build the camp.

Soil turnings for footings and foundations were early in 1956. After hundreds of hours of work by Knights, their families and friends, the camp became a reality.



SINCE 1957, CAMP COLUMBUS has been a summer recreation spot for countless youngsters who have come to enjoy the outdoors at Waterton Lakes National Park.

Although some of the construction materials were purchased with funds raised by involved councils, thousands of dollars worth of materials were donated by various businesses and individuals.

In spring, 1957, construction was completed, staff recruited and Camp Columbus put into operation. Separate camp periods for boys and girls were operated on a weekly schedule for July and August. Father Bruce Field, then a young seminarian, was first camp director. Grace Kulgian was camp cook. Nurses from the area were in

attendance when camps were in operation.

Others who served as directors, assistants, cooks and so on in the early years include Father John Petravicius, Mike Tandy, Richard Bednar, Juliet Weiler, Mary Sladnicki and Paul Kaupp.

Stana Sawicki served as secretary treasurer from the camp's opening until 1969, working with various directors. One of these was the late Father Fred Cahill, who served on two occasions.

Bob Costanzo took over for Sawicki, with Charlie Wadden as president and

Yony Geiger as vice-president for the next eight years. During that time Father McCann was director for several years and Jim McNeil for two years.

After 1977 Geiger assumed the presidency for several years, during which one of the camp directors was Keith Germain. During this time as well Father Cahill returned to direct the boys' camp and held that position until his death.

Father Cahill brought John Cain as his assistant, and Cain holds the position of boys' camp director now. During this time Toti Tompkins was director of the girls' camp.

During the past few years the presidency has turned over more frequently. The position was held by Ernie Fanlin and Dennis Eirich, and Eugene Wauters holds it now. Joe Bruder of Pincher Creek was camp secretary for many years until he relinquished the job to Lee Hochstein.

The Knights of Columbus takes great pride in the fact that in 30 years of operation, it has never turned away any child because of lack of funds. Although it is a Catholic camp, it is open to children of all faiths.

Camping season is upon us and Camp Columbus invites young people to spend a week there.

Camp dates are, for boys, July 5 to 12, boys 9 to 12 years; July 12 to 19, boys 10 to 12 years; July 19 to 26, boys 12 to 14 years; July 26 to Aug. 2, boys survival camp, age 13 to 15 years.

For girls, dates are Aug. 2 to 9, girls age 9 to 10 years; Aug. 9 to 16, girls age 10 to 12 years; Aug. 16 to 23, girls age 12 to 14 years.

Regular camp fees are \$95 per week per camper. Boys survival camp July 26 to Aug. 2 is \$125.