

Retreat center offers a local alternative

by SCOTT NEWTON

Educators, church leaders and persons involved with community agencies no longer need to lose regional seminars to surrounding cities.

There is now a facility in the area that can handle groups of up to 120 in the day, or 66 for events that require people to stay the night.

One of the advantages of holding a workshop at the Alton L. Collins Retreat Center is its wilderness setting.

Driving down Highway 211, one would never know that the road just south of the Deep Creek bridge, about four miles south of Sandy, leads to a contemporary building large enough to support small groups.

Groundbreaking for the \$1.2

million facility was in September of 1980, and although there are still a few things that need to be done, the center is complete and is being used.

In fact, the center is already booked, on weekends, through May, which pleases Kathy Trotter, director, who is responsible for seeing to it that the facility is self-sufficient.

Mid-week reservations, however, are still available, and on some weekends smaller groups may still be able to get bookings.

The retreat center was established in memory of Alton L. Collins, a Portland-area lumberman. It is owned and operated by the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference has eight camp sites, two

of them good-sized. But, they are in traditional camp settings.

"And, there were some adults who were physically not able to cope with that," Trotter said, "and others that just weren't willing to cope with that rusticness."

The United Methodist Church has a strong adult education program, according to Trotter, and the intent of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference was to keep these people involved by providing modern facilities, while still retaining a wilderness setting.

Although the retreat will serve the United Methodists, it is also available to other groups whose philosophies are compatible with the United Methodist Church's.

About six to 10 persons will be employed at the center, with the number varying according to the size of the groups using the facility.

"I am employing, and very conscientiously, local people," Trotter said. "I see that to be good for me and good for the community."

The tables are set and meals are served family style, although an area where picnics may be held or summer buffets served will be available downstairs.

The kitchen, a combination dining room-large meeting room

(which can be separated by a partition), Trotter's office and a lobby are all on the main level. Upstairs, there are three "guest leader suites," small meeting rooms and the Sue Collins Memorial Library, named for Alton Collins' wife.

A sleeping wing is connected via covered walkways on both floors. On the main floor, the rooms are furnished for two. Upstairs, bunk-type beds have been installed, providing sleeping areas for four.

The rooms on the main level may eventually also be furnished for four, depending on the demand.

Also in the sleeping wing there are two rooms, to accommodate two to a room, for handicapped persons. They feature an especially wide bathroom and shower stall.

Each room has a private bath and a patio.

The lower level, located opposite of the sleeping wing, is not finished. Plans for the lower level include a wood stove, and carpeting and linoleum. Like the rest of the west side of the building, the large room on the lower level is encased in windows.

Also, the lower level will provide space for a second large meeting room.

The center was built by the

Western Modules Manufacturing Company of Portland, and was designed by Architect John Kyle, also of Portland.

"It's a very artistic building, I think," Trotter said. "He did some really interesting things with the round surfaces."

That has made for some unique decorating problems, she said, adding, "But, it's fun."

Much of the landscaping was done by volunteer work, and the grass is just starting to come up.

A short path going into the woods will be completed in the spring, after the rock base has had a chance to settle. A hard-surface finish will be put on the path so that persons in wheelchairs, or older people a little unsure of themselves on a more rugged path, will be able to enjoy the solitude of the forest.

Traditional hiking paths along Deep Creek are planned for the future.

The Collins Retreat Center is located adjacent to Camp Leewood, which is another of Trotter's responsibilities.

Trotter, and her husband Dick, who is an ordained United Methodist pastor and serves as chaplain, live in a new residence near the center.

Both have experience doing this kind of work. "So, we felt real comfortable just moving right in," Trotter said.

They have three daughters, Terri, 13, Nancy, 11, and Laurel, 10. All attend Boring School.

Trotter was executive director for camps and conferences for the United Methodist Church for two years in the Black Hills of South Dakota (a job her husband held for six years before going back to work as a pastor), so the Trotters are used to the wilderness. They are not used to the rain.

"We moved the eighth of April, and it was raining," she said with a laugh, "and it rained until the 16th of June."

She added, "It's kind of a neat area, as far as having the best of all worlds available to you in about an hour or two hours in any direction."

"I think we're going to like it." And, there are other plans for the Collins Retreat Center. Adding computers, and tying them in with other resources, is a possibility for the future.

Trotter envisions a place "that gets people in touch with basic needs, but meets them in a real up-to-date way."



Kathy Trotter



The east side of the Alton Collins Retreat Center is pictured above.

Staff photos

December off to fast start for Hoodland Fire Department

by MICHAEL P. JONES
Post Correspondent

An increase of calls has marked the month of December as one of the Hoodland Rural Fire Department's busiest.

On the average, the Hoodland Fire Department answers 40 to 50 calls per month, according to Fire Chief Don Armintrout. The first 13 days in

December the department has responded to 31 calls.

Not included in this figure are the many times they administered minor first aid or provided public assistance.

In the past week fire personnel gave first aid to 13 persons and made one public assist.

Chief Armintrout said that it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what the

reasons are for the increase in calls, but contributed some of them to the turn in weather and the opening of ski season, which has increased the volume of traffic in the area.

"There's surely more traffic going up and down the highway," said Armintrout. "In November we only had six or seven accidents. This month, so far, we've had even more."

Last Sunday, icy road conditions

sent a car over an embankment on Lolo Pass Road just north of Zigzag. The driver of the vehicle escaped injury.

On Saturday, Dec. 12, at 9:30 a.m., during the peak morning ski traffic, the department responded to a non-injury accident on Highway 26. The accident occurred at the "Rock Cut" (also known as the "Double Cut" just below "Map Curve." Icy conditions

on this section of highway had sent three cars off the road earlier that morning, despite sanding efforts by the State Highway Division.

One Dec. 9 a car containing three persons slid into a telephone pole one mile east of Rhododendron at 10:30 a.m.

The injured were transported to Gresham Community Hospital by Alpine Ambulance, where they were

treated for lacerations and abrasions. Once again, icy highway conditions were determined to have been the cause.

Two days later, just above this same area, at the bottom of Laurel Hill, another accident occurred. No one was injured in the accident. The cause—icy roads.

Sergeant Dan Wolf of the Oregon State Police, commander of the Government Camp outpost, said that the best weapon drivers have against icy roads and bad weather is to obey the new traction law, which requires traction tires or chains in ski areas such as Mt. Hood.

However, the law only covers state highways, and not side roads or Forest Service roads, which means although they are not posted, hazardous driving conditions could still exist.

An example of this is a recent accident that occurred on Still Creek Road above Rhododendron. At 5:15 a.m. a motor vehicle accident occurred on this Forest Service Road. The cause—improper traction devices, or tires too bald to safely travel the icy back road. The injured person was taken to the Zigzag Ranger Station and administered first aid for minor injuries.

Two structural fires, as well as a chimney fire, also kept the fire department busy this past week.

Sunday a fire, caused by moisture entering an electrical box, struck a summer home on Road 10. Armintrout said that the fire caused only minor damages to the house.

On Dec. 8 another fire was caused by a malfunction in an electric panel box. Armintrout said that the fire department responded at 7 p.m. to a residence located in the Alder Creek area. Damage to the structure was minimal.

While en route to this fire, at 7:05 p.m., high winds blew a tree limb into a Portland General Electric 13,000-volt feeder line and shorted out a transformer near Wildwood Park. One thousand residents in the Brightwood area were without power until about 8:15 p.m.

At 5:45 p.m. on Dec. 12, the department responded to a chimney fire on East Plaza Trail. The house suffered no damages and the fire had been extinguished by a neighbor prior to the arrival of the fire department.



This picture of Mt. Hood was taken recently about a mile west of Sandy.

Staff photo