

Wilderness Program opens its doors



(Upper right) The first residents and Wilderness Program employees gathered on the porch are (from left) Fred Muniz, the two clients, Mark McKenzie, Bev Snow, Don Moccasin and Leona "Sweets" Boye. Not pictured is counselor Austin Smith. (Above) One of the new clients has discovered that splitting wood is good exercise. Wood splitting is a daily chore shared by all at the ranger station since wood is their only heat source.

Spilyay Tymoo Photos by Rangila



The first clients of the Tribes' Wilderness Program settled in at the Schoolie Ranger Station last week, and the place is beginning to look like a homestead. Stacks of split wood and a pile of rounds to fire the woodstove greet the visitor, as well as four cats and 13 Rhode Island Reds (chickens).

Designed to help kids who are in trouble, the Wilderness Program offers clients a place to stay for 90 days while they do some serious thinking about themselves and their lives. Program head Don Moccasin remarked that it's good for the kids to be away from their peers

and their reputations. "They can be themselves here and respond to us and new situations in their own way," he said.

One of the clients, a teenage girl, is warming up to her new surroundings and lifestyle. Although she isn't used to going to bed at 10 p.m. or rising at 7 a.m., she said she kind of likes it out there. Eyes shining, she said that Mark (one of the counselors) is going to teach her to cross-country ski this winter.

The house itself is taking shape. The kitchen and bathroom have been re-done, the shelves are stocked with

food, and the water system puzzle has been solved. Now that the mornings are getting chilly, the woodstove is fired up every day. In anticipation of the coming winter, they are laying in as much wood as possible since it is their only source of heat.

There are nine more clients "on paper", and in about two weeks the Wilderness Program should be up to its limit of 10 kids. Noting that it generally takes about three years to really get such programs going, Moccasin said that right now they're just feeling their way along, taking each new situation as it comes.

Kah-Nee-Ta renovations

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asked to stay on and assist with the special work and the limited daily operations. The rest, about 65% of the staff, would have to make other arrangements.

"Finding a job will be a pretty damn tough thing to do at that time of year," said one employee. Pauli described some of the alternatives he is exploring, such as absorption of laid-off workers into Tribal and Madras payrolls. He plans to approach contractors about hiring from the Kah-Nee-Ta staff and look into the possibility of a CETA training program to occupy employees during the lay-off. Unemployment benefits will be available with waits no longer than a week, said Pauli, who has alerted the State Employment Office to the potential claims.

Some may simply opt to enjoy a two-month holiday, said Pauli, adding that he could not force anyone to come back to the resort when it reopens. Although he had not considered it previously, Pauli answered a question about housing and rent by saying, "I believe that I owe every consideration to every employee affected by this." He expects to adjust rents based on each individual's change in income.

Apart from their concern about employment, Kah-Nee-Ta staff seemed to share Pauli's enthusiasm for the renovation. Representatives of various departments cited problems they were having that might be solved by updating, replacement or conversion. "Overall it's a damn good idea," said one employee, while another added, "I think it's a great idea, Mr. Pauli. I hope you get the money." One staffer even

remarked, "You're not thinking big enough."

"The need is now"

The proposed renovation comes—rather unexpectedly—at a time when Kah-Nee-Ta's year-old Board of Directors is beginning to wrestle with a long term direction for the resort. The board was to come up with recommendations for Tribal Council to consider by mid-1980, but Pauli and board members feel that the million dollar improvements for early 1980 would be compatible with any course charted for Kah-Nee-Ta. In fact there is a sense of urgency about the project.

"The need is now," said Miaullis, indicating that some repairs and replacements could not be put off much longer without costs becoming prohibitive. The short term goal in his mind is to "bring the occupancy level up and sell that which we have to sell," before any expansion is considered.

Pauli concurs, adding, "We have to maintain our image as a first class resort....we have an investment to protect." Enterprise manager Ed Manion, who once headed up the resort, said, "Something should have been done with the Village a long time ago," but more pressing financial problems at the Lodge received first priority.

Hungry and thirsty guests

Pauli and the board hope that changes at the Lodge will increase not only the occupancy rate, which has slacked off at a 3% yearly rate, but also the food and beverage revenues, which have suffered because of inadequate space. The problem has been with the seating capacity and turnover rate of the Juniper Room and overcrowding in the Eagle's

Nest, say Kah-Nee-Ta managers.

On the average weekend this summer, a little over half of the Lodge guests had dinner in the Juniper Room. With seating for 90 and a table turnover rate of two hours and more, it is impossible for a full house of guests to be fed. Guests are also turned away from the Eagle's Nest, either because there is no room or because they dislike the lively music. Memories of being hungry and thirsty in a \$50 room do not promote return business, said Pauli.

Converting the Appaloosa Room downstairs, which presently serves breakfast, lunch and an evening barbecue, would triple the capacity of the bar and enlarge the bandstand and dance floor. For the quieter drinkers, a piano bar is planned for the Juniper Room. Three meals a day would be served in the formal dining room, where "an illusion of informality" could be created by day, restoring elegance at night, said Pauli.

Attempts have been made in the last year to relieve pressure on the dining room and bar by opening a porta-bar on the patio (boosting beverage revenues by 30%), serving more banquet-style meals to groups, and offering an Indian salmon bake by the pool. Pauli has preferred not to increase the table turnover in the Juniper Room in favor of retaining a relaxing atmosphere.

When the house isn't full

Increasing capacity is perceived as the best solution, even though there are currently not enough guests mid-week and in the winter to sustain larger food and beverage operations. Advertising will

continue to focus on groups and conventions for the off-season, said Pauli, an effort that has resulted in "better than ever" group business this fall. Local business would also be encouraged even more.

Rumors that the proposed January-February shutdown is the first in a series of annual closures, are apparently unfounded. "I don't envision it," said Miaullis, stressing that this would be a one-time shutdown for specific renovation purposes. But he did say that the shutdown could be considered as a "trial" run, to help determine the feasibility of a seasonal operation. "Many, many organizations operate on an 8-10 month basis," said the chairman, adding that a 12-month operation is preferable.

Savings are not expected to be dramatic during the closure, if realized at all, said Pauli. Kah-Nee-Ta normally loses \$125,000 per month between November and February with a reduced staff. This year the staff would have been further reduced even without the shutdown, he said, so payroll savings would be minimal. Expenses during the shutdown will not be a whole lot lower, and with absolutely no revenues for two months, the financial picture looks bleak.

However, Pauli's new 10-month operating budget shows a lower overall loss projection for 1980. The gain will not be from increased sales volume from the closure ("We may reduce some bills," said Pauli) but from increased sales volume with a minimum of staff growth as a result of the conversion and renovation. Neither Pauli nor Miaullis had

computed the actual financial impact of their proposed improvements.

Wheels are rolling

Despite the looming "if", Pauli has started the wheels rolling and has a tentative timetable. He is meeting with architects to obtain their preliminary thoughts and line drawings, and has initiated discussions with his managers to solicit their needs and suggestions about both the aesthetic and practical aspects of the changes. In two weeks Pauli hopes to have a "basic game plan" worked up, outlining the tasks and sequence of work, to be accomplished.

The job should go out to bid by the first of November. By early December, Pauli expects to have a good idea as to the feelings of the tribal membership and hopes to be able to sign a contract. "In theory this all begins January 1," said the manager, but there is some preliminary work that can be done before the end of the year. However, he does not want to disrupt the holiday business which is normally healthy.

No one dares predict the outcome of the budget presentation and posting, but cautious optimism reigns. Ed Manion feels the people will be "pretty willing" to spend the money, especially in light of comments he has heard about the condition of the facility. Giving tribal members "something to be proud of" is one reason for the proposed plans, said Miaullis. "We need the reservation people. Unless the community is behind the business, it won't succeed," he said.