

The History of Camp Illahee

What is the Camp Illahee experience? Thousands of girls have been influenced by their days spent at Illahee. Those days were experienced as special times, something unique that would live and shape them for a lifetime. There was the joy of experiencing something new and finding an ability to achieve something that they didn't even know was in them. Friendships were formed that have lasted throughout their lives. Former campers remember Illahee songs and find themselves singing them almost spontaneously. Who could forget the Illahee "Birthday song" and every year when someone special in their lives celebrates a birthday the tune learned at Illahee is sung. The Pinetree song fills their memory with images so fresh it was like it was yesterday and friend's faces and instant memories come flooding back. Illahee is an experience of leaving behind a world of labels and niches to arrive at a new beginning where everything glistens with the beauty of nature and new friends, new role models and unexpected experiences await. Illahee becomes a world in and of itself where a girl finds the extraordinary in the ordinary.

The story of Camp Illahee begins in the late 1890's with the birth of J.H. (Joe) Tinsley in the Avery Creek section of what is now the Pisgah National Forest. The Tinsley family had a small farm a few miles north of Brevard, NC where Avery Creek intersects with the Davidson River. Joe Tinsley and his family made a livelihood selling timber and living off the crops grown on their land. It was a hardscrabble existence so when land agents for the newly arrived and exceedingly wealthy George Vanderbilt came knocking at their cabin door they were receptive to the proposals they had to offer.

Vanderbilt dreamed that he would own all the land that he was able to see from the Southern portico his newly built castle in Asheville, NC. Looking out across the Blue Ridge Mountains from this vantage point he could see wave upon wave of mountains extending all the way to Transylvania County and the Davidson River Valley. He hired a small army of land agents to do his bidding with the mandate to visit every farm and small homestead across the vastness of this relative wilderness and to offer each landowner up to three dollars an acre for their property. This was the offer made to the Tinsley's as well and what is perhaps surprising to us today, most of the people agreed to sell. Vanderbilt was able to amass an amazing amount of land one farm at a time, until he had over 76,000 acres and his dream was fulfilled. The Tinsley's land was included in his purchase and would eventually become the heart of today's Pisgah National Forest.

The change in Joe Tinsley's life proved to be fortuitous for the young man was ambitious and eager to make his mark on the local community. He tried his hand at several business ventures. He owned the first nursery in Transylvania County after which he opened a successful barbershop in downtown Brevard. However, it wasn't until he decided to go into land development that his real passion emerged and the story of Camp Illahee begins. By 1919 Joe Tinsley had a dream – he wanted to build a summer camp.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the private summer camp movement saw dramatic growth. Camping had its beginning in the Northeastern United States in the 1870's taking root in the Adirondacks of New York. The Adirondack summer camps catered to both boys and girls of wealthy New England families interested in exposing their children to the lessons of nature and the rigors of the out-of-doors. As the popularity of private camps spread it became evident that there was an interest in summer camps in the Southern U.S. as well. The mountainous region around Brevard was already known by the enchanting labels, "The Land of Waterfalls" and "Sapphire Country," and with the abundance of natural beauty, the temperate climate, and the availability of affordable land the Brevard area soon became recognized as a good place for summer camps.

In 1919 Brevard was a relatively remote place but it was not isolated. Getting to the high mountains was no easy feat and many travelers realized this as they ventured up the windy, steep roads of Blue Ridge Mountains either by car or by train. The Southern Railroad had been completed, at great human cost, a rail line through the mountains. There were train stations in Asheville and Hendersonville and a Southern Railroad spur connected Brevard with the rest of the system. These stations primarily served the East Coast and enabled the necessary access to Brevard. For those coming from points West there was a mountain logging train that served passengers needs. The tracks wound its way up over the mountains from Waynesville, NC, crested the top of the Blue Ridge at 5000 feet elevation, and then followed the Davidson River down the other side arriving at the train station in nearby Pisgah Forest.

By 1912 two summer camps for boys were in full operation in the Brevard area: Camp Sapphire and Camp French Broad. The success of these two camps most likely inspired Tinsley's belief

that there was potential for another. In 1919 he bought approximately 100 acres of land from G. I. Glazer in the Cathy's Creek Township of Transylvania County with the expressed purpose of developing a summer camp. Whether he ever intended to run the camp himself is uncertain but it seems unlikely for within a year he signed a contract with Mr. Hinton McLeod, a teacher from Harrison County, Mississippi, to lease 30 acres of his land so that McLeod could open and direct a summer camp especially for girls.

Hinton McLeod already had a deep appreciation for the Brevard area from the summers he spent as a counselor at Camp Sapphire. He was a natural outdoor enthusiast with a love for young people and the idea for starting a summer camp most likely came about during the summers he spent at Camp Sapphire. Although he was a respected teacher in Mississippi it was to summer camping that he truly felt called. When it came time for him to commit to his chosen vocation it was the Brevard area where he returned to find the perfect place.

How he and Joe Tinsley became acquainted is uncertain but on August 11, 1920 a contract was penned between the two. It was agreed that Hinton and Frances McLeod would serve as directors for the new camp and Tinsley would be responsible for the development of his property. Camp Illahee began to take on a definite shape. Crude sketches of the buildings and their placement on the grounds were made and included in the original contract. The agreement stated that Tinsley would erect and maintain one main building to serve both as the Lodge and the dining facility (today's Dining Hall) and that it would be ready for use by the summer of 1921. Along with the one main building six smaller buildings were to be erected and maintained by Tinsley. These included an office building, an infirmary, three separate houses joined by a covered porch and with a private toilet for the Directors, and a "ventilated" toilet with four flush toilets and two showers for the girls. No permanent cabins were included in the original design for it was the McLeod's intention to put up ten semi-permanent canvas tents that were to be wired for electricity and with hardwood floors with room for six girls and one counselor in each. In the contract Tinsley also agreed to build a dam to create a swimming lake 12 feet at its deepest point. With the lake as the centerpiece, the Lodge was to be convenient to all camp activities and the camper's cabins would line its shore. Two year-round springs with water enough to maintain a lake flowed from the side of one of the mountains on the property so the choice for a lake was obvious and agreeable to both parties. In the development plan Tinsley was not only in charge of all the maintenance of the permanent structures, but he was to dig a well that would provide safe, pure drinking water and a permanent septic system for the camp. Tinsley also agreed to grade a road wide enough for automobile traffic that would run from the public road in the area known as Rocky Hill that would end at the doors of the new Lodge. Today the area at the top of the hill where Illahee Road comes off of Highway 64 is still known as Rocky Hill and it is most likely that the course of Illahee Road has not changed from Tinsley's original design of 1920. The McLeod's were responsible to have electricity wired to all of the camp structures, grade and establish athletic fields, tennis courts and other areas for activities for campers and to have the property "in first class shape" for a girls camp on or before July 1, 1921. The grand total for the rental cost to the McLeod's was \$800.00 a year with one half to be paid on the first day of July and the second payment to come the first day of August. The lease period would last for ten years. This would change before the end of the ten-year lease but it was a contractual start and both parties knew exactly what was expected of them. The last clause of the contract included a more personal note allowing Tinsley the rights to the fruit of an old orchard that was on the grounds as well as fishing and swimming rights for his family in the new lake. With the signatures now on the contract the history of Camp Illahee truly begins.

Both parties got to work. Joe Tinsley proved to be as good as his word. It is remarkable to realize that in only six months, using local materials and draft horses to construct the camp

buildings, he was able to erect a substantial dining hall with a rock fireplace, a fieldstone porch and a working kitchen. He had dug and put into working order a new septic system; the road was graded from Rocky Hill to the new Dining Hall; the additional buildings were complete, and the new lake and was dammed and filled with water. The McLeod's also lived up to their part of the contract. The fields were leveled for games and dancing; four clay tennis courts awaited the girls; all the permanent structures had been wired for electricity; a large camp garden was in its early stages of growth, and a facility for horses was ready. As the McLeod's had promised the place was truly in "first class shape." All the planning, preparation, and dreams were now complete. Camp Illahee was ready for girls!

But where did the name Camp Illahee originate? As any camper who comes to Illahee knows, the origin of the camp name is a Cherokee word meaning "heavenly world." It is natural to assume that the McLeod's named Illahee but was the name already in use before the contract was signed? Here one moves into historical speculation and an argument could be made either way. Tinsley was a North Carolina native and likely familiar with the neighboring Cherokee culture. Could he have heard the word "Illahee" at some point in time and thought that this would be a suitable name for the beautiful piece of property he owned? In an article in the Transylvania Times from 1926 it states that Joe Tinsley "bought and developed Illahee Camp, then sold it." Or was it the McLeod's who came to Brevard looking for land to establish a girls camp, having in their imaginations the word "Illahee" that expressed beautifully their hope for their new camp? The answer lies somewhere in the mists of history but no one would disagree that the name is descriptively correct and by using a local Native American term it also gives the camp a sense of place within the old Cherokee Nation.

(photo of cover of first Brochure)

The date is June 27, 1921. The camp truck, which the girls later affectionately named "Henry," has just returned from the train station in Hendersonville. As the girls pile out of the truck with their one steamer trunk that they were allowed to bring for the summer, the McLeod's are there to offer them a warm welcome. There are only 11 girls signed up for camp this year and with just four counselors the camp is small. Six of the girls are from Indiana and only one from the McLeod's home state of Mississippi, the rest are from various other states. The McLeod's have enlisted the help of a Dr. Raymond to be their new Assistant Director. Over the summer his responsibilities will range from being the camp's hike leader to its Sunday School teacher. Dr. Raymond's wife is also there to serve up the food from the camp garden and to make sure that the girl's diets are nutritious and tasty.

An eight-week camp was scheduled that first summer and since everything was new and untested the McLeod's must have felt a mixture of excited anticipation as well as a nagging uncertainty about the camp's future that July day. But the McLeod's knew what they wanted to achieve. Their emphasis was to be on the welfare of each camper and they firmly believed that she would benefit from actively participating in the "invigorating properties of the natural world." At 6:30 a.m. the next morning the first sound the campers heard was the piercing shrill of a whistle being blown by Hinton McLeod himself. The girls were expected to be lakeside at 6:45 a.m. for what the McLeod's called a "waking up dip." In the cool of the early mountain morning the girls lined the shore, shivering and tentative and still drowsy from a fitful nights sleep. (It seems that on that first night of camp the frogs in the lake croaked so loudly that one camper expressed a deep desire to "throw a shoe" to quiet the noise.) Finally, each of the girls jumped into the lake and as one camper put it the water felt as "cold as ice to us who had been used to indoor pools." They were beginning to learn just what the McLeod's meant by the "invigorating properties of the natural world." Arriving a day later the six Indiana campers were yet to experience this early morning

ritual. The next morning when it came their time to jump into the water they proved their hardiness by diving into the cold lake without “standing and shivering with apprehension.” Our log writer says of the girls from Indiana - “in fact, they were everything an Illahee girl should be.” From this statement there is a realization right from the first that there was a distinctive quality to being an “Illahee Girl.” This was just the second day of Camp Illahee’s existence so our Log writer was yet to fully understand what she fully meant by this designation, but by identifying with the girls of Camp Illahee and seeing in their characters some commonality, an image of what it meant to be an Illahee Girl was beginning to take form. Over the course of the summer each girl would discover aspects of herself and her capabilities that she never imagined before. She would uncover latent abilities and talents as yet to be realized. But what our Log writer was sensing early on was that there was a joy she had never experienced before by being at Illahee and sharing these experiences with girls who would become dear friends. Everything an Illahee girl should be.

The first days at camp saw the new girls being initiated into camp life in silly as well as meaningful ways. Informal initiation began with the harmless fun of “Joining the Lodge.” What a surprise for the girls when they discovered that the initiation ended with each new camper finding her face covered in white flour. For the truly uninitiated there was the perennial camp favorite - the “snipe hunt.” Three of the new campers were handed a bag with which to catch the snipes and instructed to “hold the sack open so a snipe can run in.” “I didn’t even know what a snipe looked like” said one camper, “but I did as I was told.” As early evening began to darken into night they were sent out into the woods to look for the illusive snipes. Standing amidst the shadows from the trees a “creepy” feeling overtook them. It didn’t take long for them to wise-up. “They must think we’re crazy staying out in the woods alone trying to catch a snipe and we don’t even know what a snipe looks like,” said one of the Log writers. Making her stand she continues, “They sure are fooled, I’m not going to hold that sack any longer.” When they finally got back to camp they heard a loud cry from the rest of the girls, “you sure did bite,” and realized that the joke was on them. The next morning it was reported that the three girls holding the sacks were served “snipes” for breakfast. These were fun experiences for the girls and had the effect of bonding them together as one unit.

In 1921 Camp Illahee settled into a routine that was spirited and rather informal. Flexibility was a must for rain could change plans in a hurry. An example of this adaptable schedule was the day the girls walked to the circus. On this particular occasion the girls were excited about attending the circus in Brevard. The day started off with promising weather but as the afternoon approached rain began to fall and a discouraging mood set in amongst the girls. The camp truck wasn’t available so someone made the suggestion that they go anyway, even if they had to walk. There was hearty agreement all around. Donning their ponchos they trudged into town not allowing the rain to dampen their enthusiasm. After a wonderful time at the circus it was time to return. The rain was still falling and a flurry of discontented grumbling was heard among the girls as they prepared to walk the two and a half miles back to camp. With grim resolution and little other choice they began their trek back. They had walked only part of the way when they saw the camp truck rolling towards them with Dr. Raymond at the wheel. Even if ol’ Henry was open to the elements it was better than walking so they all piled in the back, laughing and shouting about their good fortune. When they arrived back at the Dining Hall, drenched from the rain, they were greeted with hot cocoa and cookies prepared by Mrs. Raymond. They all agreed that what could have been a dismal affair turned into a delightful evening.

There were many daily activities on the girl’s schedule and choices had to be made. She could choose between organized dance classes, basketry and weaving, archery, singing, tennis, canoeing and swimming. The first summer “swim meet” took place at the end of July with the

highlight of the afternoon being the “treading water” contest. After 30 minutes two girls were still treading water and each was determined to win. Finally Mr. Mac called the contest a tie and awarded prizes to both girls. Another hard-surface tennis court was added that summer and the girls amused themselves by the riding on the heavy machine that was used to flatten the court. The girls’ favorite activity, however, was horseback riding. Wednesday was horseback riding day and the more advanced riders would leave early in the morning on all-day trips headed for such places as Glenn Cannon Falls or Rosman 15 miles away. Each day seemed to bring some kind of new surprise that first year of camp. The day the canoes arrived the girls hurriedly unpacked them and eagerly launched them onto the water of the lake. The lake was a scene of splashing paddles and laughing girls. The girls who had never paddled a canoe before had fun learning how to propel forward while making every attempt to keep from tipping over and spilling out into the water. Through proper instruction they quickly honed their skills and by the middle of July they were confident enough to tackle a 20 -mile canoe trip down the French Broad River.

Though there were many organized activities there were days when the schedule didn’t seem that important. On one bright sunny day the girls decided that they wanted to dig worms and go fishing. The French Broad River was within walking distance and the chance to catch fish. Each girl carried her own fishing tackle, worms, and a basket for lunch dreaming about how many fish they would catch that morning. They fished all morning and only caught a total of six. Undaunted, they set out to find a place to have their lunch. Just as they found a suitable area flat enough to spread out their food a sudden afternoon thundershower made them scramble for cover. The only place they could find that was dry was a nearby barn where they shared their dry space with its current occupants – chickens and horses.

The evening program was a highlight of the day. Each cabin was put in charge of planning and presenting some form of evening entertainment. These nightly entertainments usually consisted of plays, dances, group singing, dance recitals, taffy pulls or a simple game of “kick the can.” But it was the night of a dance that thrilled the girls the most. Because of Hinton McLeod’s connections, Sapphire Camp boys and Illahee girls along with the girls from Keystone Camp attended dances together. Gleeful cries could be heard around camp on the day of a dance: “What will I wear? I wonder if HE will be there?” When the Illahee girls finally arrived at Camp Sapphire for their first dance of the summer one Illahee camper reported that “it was like coming into a small town with the long rows of tents and the big lake with its canoes and other paraphernalia.” Illahee also hosted a dance that summer with the “Kissem Brothers Orchestra” providing the music.

During the summer of 1921 the girls had many opportunities to walk and hike - and by the McLeod’s standard there were differences between the two. They “walked” into town on several occasions to buy candy or an ice cream soda or to go to the circus. Hiking, on other hand, was a more organized affair and took them into forests instead of town. They hiked the six miles to Connestee Falls, the five miles to See-Off Mountain and the seven miles Glenn Cannon Falls. Being that the Brevard area was known as the “Land of Waterfalls” usually a waterfall was their destination. One camper wrote about the hike the girls took to Maiden Hair Falls on the fourth of July. It proved to be more challenging than she had expected. Before setting out they were told that it was only two and half miles to the falls but after they had walked a long time there was no falls, not even the distant sound of plunging water to lift their spirits. Mrs. McLeod “cheerfully” informed them that it wasn’t but two miles further. Tally – ho! They trudged on. After an arduous climb they finally came to the falls and their “breath came in gasps, for most of us girls it was our first experience in seeing such a beautiful piece of Nature’s work.”

The culminating hike of the summer was the three-day camping trip to Looking Glass Mountain. The girls packed the camp truck and were driven as far as the Pisgah National Forest. There they boarded the logging train that took them as close as possible to their campsite but they still had a considerable hike ahead of them before they reached the foot of Looking Glass. With gear in tow they crossed over the Davidson River on a homemade bridge that Mr. Mac (as he was called) had constructed out of fallen logs. Up the mountain they went until they reached their camping area. Mr. Mac showed them how to make a tent out of their ponchos and poles and they gathered pine boughs to use for a mattress. "As it was the first time most of us had slept on the ground, there was much twisting and turning to find a soft spot in the spruce boughs and blankets." The next day they hiked the 8 miles to the top of Looking Glass Mountain and when they returned to the campsite, exhausted and cranky, they were greeted with the smells of a wood fire and the aroma of food being prepared by Dr. Raymond. As soon as dinner was over and dusk set in they went to bed. On the last day of their adventure they were awakened at 5:00 a.m. for an early breakfast before embarking on the 12-mile hike back to camp. By the time they reached downtown Brevard they were ready for a ride. They did not hesitate to rent two cars to take them the rest of the way, which pleased them greatly. After a good meal the remainder of the day was spent resting.

Sunday was a day set aside for rest from the week's routine. Dr. Raymond led worship and evening vespers and the girls had opportunities to attend a camp-wide Sunday School. The rest of the day was spent resting, taking a short walk, reading or an afternoon swim. Still referring to Sunday as the Sabbath the McLeod's made every attempt to preserve the sacredness of the day. "Without hardship and without annoyance, the girls are taught that God's day should be different from other days, even at camp." The girls were asked to bring a Bible with a concordance to camp with them and was one of the items listed in the "what to bring to camp" section of the brochure.

A Farewell Banquet was planned for the last night of camp. In 1921 awards were handed out to those girls who had attained a certain competency during camp and these tributes became a lasting feature of the Final Night Banquet. At some point during the dinner the McLeod's handed out a personal letter to each girl "of which we are very proud." The evening ended at the council fire where the counselors had an opportunity to say their good-byes to the girls and the McLeod's gave a farewell speech. As a final act, candles were lit and as the girls walked back to their cabins in silence with their candles in their hands many found their "eyes full of tears." The first campers at Illahee experienced some of the same sad but grateful feelings that campers have felt on that last night of camp. As one of the young girls wrote in the Log "no one can tell how our hearts ached to leave that dear place, but we made a vow then and there to be back next year if at all possible. It was a very silent and heavy-hearted bunch that boarded the morning train for home."

As the years went by the Final Night Banquet became more formalized. For the Final Night in 1927 the Dining Hall was decked out with elaborate decorations. The Dining Hall resembled a dense forest representing the wilderness in which a Native American lived. The floor and walls were covered with green foliage and a huge wigwam made from animal skins stood prominently in one corner. There was a miniature lake with a foot of water in it and on the surface of the water a small canoe with a doll represented the Illahee campers. Around this lake moss and flowers banked the sides. Awards (emblems) were handed out to respective girls for excellence in a certain activity. The highest achievement came with the awarding of the Camp Spirit Cup given to the camper who best represented the qualities of self-giving and the Illahee spirit. (By 1930 the name of this special award had changed to the Silver Loving Cup but it still went to the camper who displayed the best camp spirit.) But every girl received some sort of award that

evening. The McLeod's divided the girls into three stages of camper development. In the first stage, and usually presented to the youngest campers, the letter "I" was awarded. As a camper continued to excel, and these were usually returning campers to Illahee, she was recognized with the letter "C." Finally, the Camp Seal was awarded to those attaining the third and highest level of achievement. As they explained in a 1931 camp bulletin "in this way progressive stages of camping are recognized and the small girl and the girl who is not especially athletic may receive an award commensurate with her attainments." Beginning with the McLeod's, Camp Illahee has never fostered a competitive environment as a way of determining a girl's merit or to inspire campers to higher attainment. As was witnessed in the early years with the McLeod's, compelling activities and personally challenging goals achieve the same results and allow each girl to rise to her level of competence without the fear of failure.

That first summer saw the beginning of some long-standing traditions for Camp Illahee: The first Log was written; the first Swim Show took place; the first Final Night Banquet was a celebratory affair; and the last Council Fire ended with the lighting of the candles, a precursor to the contemporary tradition of sending "wishboats" on to the lake. In addition, that first summer singing became a vital part of camp life and this began a long and happy tradition of group singing at Illahee. It is not overemphasizing the importance to the future of Camp Illahee to recognize that the first summer had to be successful. If the McLeod's had failed to provide a memorable experience for the few girls who attended, or if the camp facilities had not been adequate or if the girls safety had been jeopardized or camper allegiance had not been fostered, Illahee would never have had the opportunity to thrive over the years and the positive influence it has had on countless lives would never have become a reality. But it was a success and the McLeod's could look back with pride on their first summer and plan ahead for future years with optimism. It seemed that Camp Illahee was here to stay!

Over the next three years Camp Illahee continued to grow in camper enrollment and, subsequently, in financial security as well. The McLeod's early hopes for camp were based around the idea that Illahee would be a place where girls wanted to come for the summer and their expectations were being realized. With these positive results bolstering their confidence, the McLeod's again sat down with Joe Tinsley in June of 1924 to enter into a new contract. Hinton and Frances McLeod were willing to be "indentured" to Tinsley for a period of 10 years with the option of first refusal should Tinsley decide to sell his property prior to the end of the set time. The price for Camp Illahee was set at \$20,000. This would prove to be a heavy indebtedness for the McLeod's, especially during the bleak days of the Great Depression, but in 1924 their optimism ran high. In the new contract the McLeod's no longer were simply renting 30 acres, now they had the rights to over 110 acres to develop Illahee as they saw fit. By this time in their lives they were completely invested in Illahee and in that year "Mr. and Mrs. Mac" and their two boys moved from Mississippi to Camp Illahee to make this their permanent home.

Because campers were having a great experience at Illahee, enrollment continued to grow. Between word of mouth and the McLeod's own efforts at recruitment, by 1927 there were 21 counselors and 58 campers in attendance. Also by 1927 the original tent cabins had been replaced by permanent wooden cabins. A new cluster of cabins lined the shore of the Swim Lake on the spot known today as Heigh Ho. At that time the cabin clusters were known as the Gold Hill and the Blue Hill representing the two Illahee colors. The lake still served as the focal point of camp and all the new buildings were erected around it. This helped instill a sense of inclusiveness and harmony to the entire camp. And what was the fee for eight weeks of camp in 1927? - \$250.00. In an early camp brochure, under the heading of "Happy Girls" the McLeod's quote a "well known educator" who stated that "The campers share worthwhile friendships, health-giving sunlight, knowledge of the open, unfailing energy, the goodness of sound sleep, and

the delight of wholesome food. These are essentially the kingdom of youth.” In italics, and in the McLeod’s own words, they second his thought by adding, “*money spent in a summer camp is not an expense but a well paying investment.*” Although the McLeod’s had the heart for girls summer camping they realized that this was their livelihood as well. A few well-chosen words regarding the return a parent could expect on their payment made good business sense.

As the number of girls enrolled at Illahee continued to increase new facilities were needed. As early as 1924 a new lodge was constructed that filled the increasing need for activity and community space for the girls. The Lodge (which received its present designation as the McLeod Lodge in 1977), was situated opposite the dam at the end of the Swim Lake and added beautiful symmetry to the existing cabins. One of the unique features of the Lodge was the porch. Originally it was built without a roof and the porch extended out over the water making a wonderful place for the girls to sit as well as to canoe under. The entire structure was sided in chestnut bark giving the building a rustic, natural look nestled as it was, in its tranquil setting. More importantly for camp life, however, was now the Dining Hall no longer had to serve a dual purpose. The entire camp could easily assemble for evening activities and camp gatherings in the large open space of the new Lodge.

(panoramic photo of Illahee)

“Wholesomeness” is one word that describes the essence of the McLeod’s approach to camping. They advertised in a camp bulletin that they served “wholesome food,” with plenty of vegetables served at meals harvested yearly from the camp garden. The cooks prepared “wholesome home-made bread and pastries” baked in Illahee’s own ovens. They encouraged wholesome friendships in a wholesome environment with girls participating together in wholesome recreational activities. Other values they deemed important were self-reliance, grace, and leadership and they believed that a girl could learn these qualities best in the outdoors at a place like Illahee. In a Camp bulletin from 1926 the McLeod’s stated purpose was “to furnish a place suitable for just such invigorating and delightful recreation that Camp Illahee has been established. Here, under the leadership of expert athletic directors, and in the companionship of a splendid force of Christian women, a girl may safely enjoy all the pleasures of ideal camp life, and receive the physical benefit and the unconscious moral and spiritual uplift which inevitably result from a close communion with nature.” This was their “camper-centered” philosophy and it proved to be a foundational cornerstone for the future of Illahee. Add to this mixture the lasting friendships made while attending Illahee and the experience of today finds its emotional, spiritual and life-affirming roots from its very earliest days.

Illahee continued to prosper even after the initial shock of the Great Depression of 1929. On August 1, 1930, Hinton McLeod borrowed \$14,500 from Brevard Banking and paid off the remaining balance he owed to J.H. Tinsley. Now he and Frances were the sole owners of the 110 acres of land that comprised the boundaries of Camp Illahee. The tuition for camp in 1931 was \$300.00 for an eight-week session. It wasn’t long, however, before the Depression began to take its toll on Illahee’s financial stability. Camp continued its yearly operation from 1931 through 1934 but by the end of camp in 1934 the McLeod’s no longer were able to pay on their mortgage. With no other option left to them the Brevard Banking Company foreclosed on the McLeod’s loan and Illahee was slated for auction on November 19, 1934. That November morning, on the steps of the Transylvania County Courthouse, Illahee’s fate was going to be in the hands of the highest bidder. But there was no other serious bidder present that morning so the Transylvania County Board Commissioners had the winning bid of \$5000.00 and in what appears to be an unusual display of generosity, the commissioners turned around and assigned the property back to the McLeod’s for a \$1000.00 bond and five promissory notes for the rest of the balance. They

were back in business and the McLeod's could now continue to run the camp they loved so much. Though these were difficult times for Illahee they didn't know then but the real struggle lay ahead of them.

From 1934 until 1939 the fate of Camp Illahee was even more perilous. The Depression showed no signs of lifting and continued to hold the nation in its devastating grip. Troubled financial times in the nation were reflected in troubled financial times at Illahee. Illahee was open for the summer of 1935 but that would be the last summer Hinton McLeod's was there to inspire the campers. In the fall of 1935 the man with the dream for Camp Illahee died suddenly and Illahee faced its greatest challenge. With his death much of the spirit and drive of camp died with him. It is a testimony to Hinton McLeod's love for Illahee that one acre of Camp Illahee was never sold. It was his wish to be buried in a peaceful glen at the edge of camp property where he rests to this day, along with Frances, and which is reserved for the McLeod's as a family cemetery. Although Frances McLeod was committed to keep Illahee going she soon found that she could not continue to run camp by herself. Heartbreak and financial trouble were just too great a burden so on December 20, 1937 Mrs. McLeod either sold Camp Illahee or had it repossessed, (it is not clear in the county records,) by the Transylvania Board of Commissioners and for the next two years the fate of the now abandoned Camp Illahee was in serious doubt.

In the summer of 1938 Camp Illahee's gates were closed and the laughter of the campers and the joy of community were replaced with nature's silence. A development company from Atlanta purchased the camp property as an investment expecting the right person or persons to come along to develop the land or to continue Illahee as a camp. That same summer at a camp just outside the city limits of Asheville, North Carolina, a young woman with character, vision and experience was trying her hand at directing a private girl's camp for the first time. Kathryn "Robin" Francis Curtis leased the Chunn's Cove Camp for Girls for the duration of just that one summer. The camp had many amenities for various activities, such as a lake, tennis courts, a riding ring, a lawn bowling area, and places to hike and ride horses in the mountains, but there was one drawback: it was a small acreage and with Asheville growing around it there was little opportunity for expansion. Even if it had been for sale, which it was not, the prospects for owning her own camp at Chunn's Cove seemed unlikely. This had been her first attempt at directing a private girl's camp and it had gone so well she decided this was what she wanted to do with her life. Over the years she had quietly been nurturing this dream of owning her own camp, but questions about the feasibility of her dream kept surfacing: how could she afford it? She was not wealthy, and if by some miracle she found a way, where would be the camp for her? On a fall day in 1938 on the main road just outside the city limits of Brevard, she turned left onto the gravel of Illahee Road and drove right into her future.

(picture of a young Robin)

Kathryn "Robin" Curtis grew up in Lunenburg, Massachusetts and graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in Psychology. After graduation she still was uncertain about what direction to take in her life. She knew she would like a position that combined her interest in camping and her love for people. She held herself to a standard of high ideals and she wanted a position that would allow her to teach these values to young people. As fate would have it, in 1928 she attended a course on Girl Scout Leadership led by Corrine Chisholm Frost at Edith Macy Girl Scout Camp in Briar Cliff, New York. They immediately became friends and their friendship proved to be a lasting one. Corrine Frost, known affectionately as "Frosty," continued to be a mentor and a source of continuing support for Robin throughout her career in camping. But it was in those early years that Frosty helped Robin get a start in camping. She encouraged Robin to take a position as a Girl Scout executive in Houston, Texas in 1928. Although Girl

Scouting was a relatively new phenomenon, beginning as it did in 1916 in Savannah, Georgia, it was a growing outlet for adventure and learning for girls from all walks of life. With this new position in Scouting Robin found her life's direction. Robin liked the opportunities she found in Scouting and soon her talents were recognized on a national level. In 1931 she accepted a position on the National Staff of the Girl Scouts of America as the National Brownie Advisor and moved to New York City to assume her new duties. In her work on the National Staff she traveled throughout the United States inspecting camps and leading training courses. In her later years, when she looked back on her time in scouting, she considered those 10 years the best kind of training ground she could have possibly had for running Illahee. She was able to spend a lot of time at many different camps observing and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each and through these experiences she began to formulate in her mind the requirements necessary for an excellent camp.

On that fall day in 1938 Robin walked the grounds and peered into the now vacant buildings of Camp Illahee. One can imagine the excitement she must have felt as she began to see that here was a place for her dream to become a reality. With her that day was James Coleman, a real estate agent from Asheville with a good eye for land. She had known the Coleman's through her work with the Girl Scouts. During the early 1930's Robin spent three summers at Occoneeche Girl Scout Camp outside of Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. The Coleman's sent their three girls to Occoneeche and they were so impressed with Robin that it wasn't long before she was spending time at the Coleman's home, even occasionally babysitting the Coleman girls. How could she have imagined then that these same girls would be among her future campers? As they got to know her better she shared her dream about directing a camp with them. James Coleman listened attentively and when he discovered that Illahee was for sale he remembered the dream Robin had shared. As the two walked the land that day she began to envision Camp Illahee as a place where girls could learn the lessons of the out-of-doors in a safe and beautiful environment; it would be just the right place to help girls refine their social skills and deepen their respect for others; and in a caring community such as Illahee she could see girls learning about the joys of living a life given in service to others. And here it all was – Camp Illahee! Even though Robin intuitively knew that this was the right place there was one major problem standing in her way - she didn't have the money needed to purchase the camp. James Coleman along with his wife, Florine, showed what supportive friends they were. He told her he thought he might be able to interest some investors from Asheville in buying the camp with their agreement to lease the facilities to Robin until she was able to buy it outright. He went to work and on February 20, 1939 Robin Curtis leased a 138 acres from Miss Evelyn Taylor who was listed as the owner of Camp Illahee in the 1939 camp brochure. Robin was now able to move ahead with her dream. In just five short months after signing the lease, and after being closed as a girl's camp for two years, Camp Illahee opened once again in the summer of 1939 and a promising new future was on the horizon.

(photo of the Tindall girls)

In Robin's first summer, camp ran from July 1st through August 25th and tuition for the eight-week session was \$300.00 - the same amount that Mrs. McLeod charged in 1931. Even though there had been no organized camp for over two years it is a testament to Robin's optimism and a very remarkable achievement to realize that Illahee was full that summer with 75 girls registered. How did she accomplish such a feat? When it came time for her to recruit she appealed directly to her former campers and counselors from Chunn's Cove. She was counting on a camper and counselor allegiance from Chunn's Cove to sustain her in her move to Illahee and, characteristically, she was able to convince many of them to move with her. Throughout her time in camping it was said of her that, "she could get a girl to do anything she wanted simply because

you wanted to please her.” An example of the way she blended the two camps together was the promotional brochure she put together during the winter of 1939. Photographs of Illahee camp life were out-of-date and no longer applied to her situation so she filled the brochure with pictures of activities taken during her time at Chunn’s Cove Camp. The pictures show girls participating in activities ranging from archery to dance to riding, and noticeably stitched into the camp uniforms are the initials CC standing for Chunn’s Cove. She was able to use a few pictures of the Illahee facilities taken during the time of the McLeod’s. On a two page spread in the center of the brochure there was an especially attractive wide-angle panoramic shot of the Swim Lake with the Lodge in the background and two rows of cabins off to each side. Since she was new to Illahee much of the written description was taken directly from the last brochure put together by the McLeod’s. One exception was a personal note in which she addressed the campers from Chunn’s Cove; “this is our camp now and it will be here in the future. When we found it necessary to change our location from Chunn’s Cove in Asheville, we realized that Illahee was the ideal camp to which to take our campers and counselors. Illahee is to be our permanent camp through the coming years.”

(Photo of Chun’s Cove girls)

Robin knew from experience that it was important to find the right people for leadership positions. The people she turned to first were the ones she had come to trust at Chunn’s Cove. Two of the first persons she enlisted were Thomas and Myrtle Dye from Chattanooga, Tennessee. They had been the very capable riding instructors at Chunn’s Cove and she invited them to come with her to be the “Directors of Equitation” at Illahee. The Dye’s agreed to join her at Illahee and with their decision the Illahee Riding Program was set on a course of excellence for years to come. This was the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship between The Dyes and the girls of Camp Illahee that would continue until 1960. Under their leadership the riding program became the centerpiece of Illahee’s reputation and a camp activity that girls looked forward to year after year. Robin not only convinced them of the new opportunities at Illahee but she also persuaded them to bring 10 horses from the Roxboro Riding club in Atlanta, Georgia with them. And what a group of horses it was in 1939: Helen Missouri, Smoky Joe, Goldie, Southern Boy and Bo Peep were a few of the girl’s favorites. Besides adding the needed professionalism for the Illahee staff the Dyes were encouraging teachers often imparting wisdom to their students through their work with horses. An example of Mr. Dye’s quick wit as a teacher comes from one girl’s account of her first experience of riding a horse in 1939. Mr. Dye saddled a horse for her named “Smokey Joe” and when she saw the size of the horse the girl was overwhelmed; “he was enormous, in fact, a horse never looked so big to me before.” Mr. Dye smiled at her and told her, “‘trust’ is a bigger horse.” She goes on to say parenthetically “I had cause to doubt the gentleman’s word.” The Dye’s and their horses were often the subject for writings shared at Sunday night Log readings.

(photo of Mr. and Mrs. Dye) (photo of girls with Mr. Dye)

Song – (A Bicycle Built for Two)
Mr. Dye, Oh, Mr. Dye
Give me a horse good and true.
I’m just crazy for a ride or two.
I cannot handle Pinto,
Or even Patsy or Colonel,
But I’d look sweet astride the seat
Of your sweet little horse Bo-Peep!
Betsy Goodwin
Anne Mitchell

The Dye's established a riding program that first summer that set a precedent for the following years. Beginning riders learned the basic fundamentals within the safety of a riding ring. When they proved their proficiency in the ring the girls progressed to trail riding. For the most experienced riders overnight camping trips were the most highly anticipated events. Overnight trips allowed the Dyes to teach the necessary skills involved in the care and grooming of the horses and each girl took primary responsibility for her horse throughout the trip. An example of an overnight ride was the "supper rides" to See Off Mountain. By mid-afternoon on the day of the trip the girls saddled their horses and lined up single file behind Mr. Dye's horse. They headed off down Illahee Road (still a little-used dirt and gravel road) until they came to the trail that led to the top of See-Off Mountain. Up the mountain they rode until they crested the top and then it was time to unsaddle the horses and prepare a supper over a campfire. If the weather was cooperative they camped for the night. With a majestic view of the French Broad River Valley below them and the stars overhead, with just their ponchos for tents, these privileged girls shared a memorable world all their own.

(photo of girls single file on an overnight on horses)

For many campers the Hendersonville Horse Show was the highlight of the summer and being chosen to ride in the competition was an honor many former campers still fondly remember. This tradition began in 1939 and spanned the entire time the Dyes were riding instructors at Illahee. Riders from Illahee participated in the "Camper Class;" the Open Class; and particularly the Camp Illahee Class of the Hendersonville Horse Show. To be chosen to ride in the Hendersonville Horse Show a girl had to not only show exceptional riding ability in her particular event, but just as important was her willingness to display sportsmanship throughout the competition. Over the years Illahee girls consistently performed well at the Show bringing home ribbons to the admiration and applause of their sister campers.

(photo of girls with ribbons)

Another more lighthearted and whimsical horseshow also began in 1939. Bringing the idea with them from Chunn's Cove, Mr. and Mrs. Dye held the first Illahee "Gymkana" on July 29th. Many guests, including the girls from Camps Keystone and Cataleeche were in attendance. There was much boisterous approval for the riders that day as the girls from Illahee competed in such events as the Potato Race, the Bundle Race, Steal the Bacon, Musical Chairs, and the outrageous Costume Class, all on horseback.

(photo of girls changing outfits on horses)

As Robin carefully assembled her new staff, Mr. Edward Dukes, affectionately known to campers and counselors alike as "Uncle Fudd," also agreed to come to Illahee from Chunn's Cove. He cut quite a figure wearing his "Smoky the Bear" hat and with a plume of smoke rising from the ubiquitous pipe he carried with him. He was known as an expert trail guide and an excellent campfire cook but his favorite activity was leading the girls on overnights trips to peaks around the Pisgah National Forest in wilderness that most of the girls were unaccustomed. "I lead them over the mountain trails, I teach them the mountain lore" he is quoted as saying. If it were up to Uncle Fudd he would take the girls to one of his favorite mountain camping places, a rustic wilderness outpost called Pisgah Pines located near Mount Pisgah in the Pisgah National Forest. For three years it was a vital outpost for Camp Illahee.

(photo of Uncle Fudd)

(Cover picture of first camp Brochure by Robin)

On the cover of the camp's brochure for the years of 1939 through 1942 Robin promoted Camp Illahee and Pisgah Pines as one camp experience. The cover of the brochure read: "Illahee and Pisgah Pines Summer Camps for Girls." Pisgah Pines played a crucial role in the early days of Robin's leadership as a more primitive camping experience for the girls. At an altitude of 5000 feet, 2500 feet higher than Illahee, and with a total of 50 acres nestled within walking distance of Mt. Pisgah, the girls who went on overnights delighted in this natural environment. Hiking, nature study and creek wading occupied most of the girl's time and "Uncle Fudd" was always ready with knowledge of the mountain's flora and fauna and a well-prepared and hearty meal at the end of the day. Barbara Good wrote about her Pisgah Pines experience in the 1939 Log; "We left camp in the pouring rain and it didn't stop until we arrived at Pisgah Pines. We went up to the cabin and made up our beds after drying the bedclothes, for some of them got damp on the trip. Dick (Trips co-leader) built a wonderful fire around which we all gathered to get warm. After everyone had gotten settled we went to eat a marvelous dinner cooked by Uncle Fudd. Some friends of Dicks played the guitar and the mouth organ during our dinner. After supper we listened to the music and washed the dishes. Later we went to bed and told ghost stories. The next morning we rose about eight o'clock after a sound sleep and got dressed. Later we went to a wonderful breakfast of eggs and bacon. Soon we left for Illahee after a glorious and unforgettable trip to Pisgah Pines." Robin also enjoyed her time there. In a photo in the 1941 camp brochure we see her sitting in a rocking chair in the rustic lodge next to a blazing fire with a dreamy faraway expression on her face and her dog in her lap. What happened to Pisgah Pines is uncertain but by 1942 the Pisgah Pines property was no longer promoted as an extension of Camp Illahee

(photo of Robin at Pisgah Pines)

One of the highlights of the summer of 1939 was the trip several of the girls made to the Smoky Mountain National Park riding in a "luxurious bus driven by a competent driver," as one of the participants expressed it. Their destination was a camping area in the eastern part of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park called Smokemont. Their itinerary included stops at Toxaway Falls, Sylva and the Cherokee Indian Reservation. When they arrived in Cherokee they were met by Ethelyn Arch who had been on staff at Illahee that summer teaching the girls how to weave and make baskets for a class entitled Indian Crafts. She had had to leave camp early to begin her school year and when she was reunited with the girls from Illahee she greeted them "very kindly." She escorted the girls around town and answered their questions about her life in Cherokee and on an Indian Reservation and as she related stories about her life our Log writer became more and more enthralled by the experience. With naïve wonder she concluded that Cherokee "is a place where the Cherokee Indians can have their own school and live together happily without paying taxes." After a time of shopping for souvenirs it was off to their campsite in the Smokys. As the evening darkened it began to rain causing several of the girls to climb back onto the bus and spread out on the seats to sleep. The next day was no better with a misty rain dampening the spirits of the girls. Late in the afternoon it was decided that enough was enough and they all piled back onto the bus and headed back to camp. "We thought there was no sense in sleeping in wet blankets and being rained on when we could be back at Camp Illahee in time for supper and sleep in warm beds." She ends her account of the trip in typical optimistic form by saying, "we'll give three cheers for the great Smoky Mountains, North Carolina, and one grand trip."

(photo of basket weaving)

Two activities were required for each Illahee camper in those early years - horseback riding and swimming. During the rest of the day the girls could choose classes they wished to attend. At the Swim Lake girls were placed in one of three skill levels depending on their ability. To move to the next stage a girl had to pass a swim test proving her right to advance. For novice swimmers there was a shallow, roped off section of the Swim Lake reserved just for them known around camp as the "crib." Even though the crib was a safe place to learn basic swim strokes there was a certain unwanted stigma to being there. Just the name itself proved to be a great incentive for the girls to want to progress. As one girl after another moved on to the next level of swimming the few each summer who remained in the crib continued to strive to advance. Barbara Sheffield, in a Log piece entitled "I'm Out Of The Crib!" shares her surprise at being at the next level: "Yesterday was my first day out of the Crib. I found that it wasn't as easy to swim out of the crib as I thought. Much to my surprise I found that the water is all over my head. Of course I didn't know what to do since I had been used to standing up whenever I got tired. I guess it will take me some time to get used to the deep water." The most challenging stage of the swim program was Life Saving. Each day the girls warmed up by swimming eight lengths of the lake as a prelude to their other activities. Besides passing a rigorous swim test a girl had to learn the technical maneuvers of artificial respiration to be certified in the Red Cross Life Saving program. To do this, girls paired off with one being the victim and the other performing the respiration exercise. One Log writer tells of her experience of being the victim first. "They had to put their hands on my back and say 'out goes the bad air, in comes the good air'. It's a cinch that the air went out but no air came in to take its place. It was a comfort to know that I would get even with my friend when it was my turn to squeeze!"

(photo of girls in the Crib) (other swim pictures)

Spending eight weeks together at Illahee afforded the girls some unique opportunities. For campers in 1939 there was time enough to produce the first Illahee Water Pageant. There was also time for the advanced swimmers to learn intricate synchronized swim patterns. There was time to design elaborate sets, create enchanting costumes, and coordinate music choreographed to the swimmers movements. To be a participant on the synchronized swimming team a girl had to be able to swim 16 laps in the Swim Lake and learn coordinated patterns that often were physically demanding. But Water Pageants were not just for the technically advanced. They were a camp wide affair. Every Illahee camper participated in some way either as a canoeist, a swimmer, a props person, costume maker, singer or reader and the even the youngest girls were cast as extras. Over an eight-week period the drama department had time to learn their choral readings and everyone participated in some way to make the Swim Pageant something special. Over a hundred guests lined the dam in anticipation of the 1939 show. The theme for the pageant that year was *Spriteland*. The production centered around three water nymphs and a dwarf (presumably one of the younger campers) who set out on a quest to find a missing magical pearl and to return it to its rightful place in Spriteland. Everything went off without a hitch and with the success of Illahee's first Water Pageant a summertime tradition was set that would continue for over two decades. At the conclusion of *Spriteland* the canoeists took to the water to showcase their skills through complicated formations. But the finale of the day came when the swimmers once again splashed into the water and came up in perfect timing spelling out the words "Illahee" and "Robin." After all the guests were gone the swimmers gathered in the Dining Hall to sip hot chocolate and dry their hair by the fire and to revel in the glow of a performance well done.

(Water Pageant photos) (Legend of Illahee photos)

Water Pageants soon became one of the premier events of summer. Performed at the end of the camp session it was a joyful culmination for the summer's activities. In 1942 and then again in

1943 the Water Pageant was entitled “Dedication To Faith.” In the long tradition of water pageants, however, one pageant was so central to the lore of Illahee that it became a tradition in itself. The first production of “The Illahee Legend” was performed in 1946 and was repeated every fifth summer through 1960. The inception for turning the written Legend into a water pageant was inspired by a visit to camp by Mrs. McLeod in the summer of 1945. In a discussion with the girls during the evening program she explained how in 1921 the first group of counselors at Illahee came up with the story of the Legend of Illahee. In the audience that evening was Harriet Hill. She was so inspired by what she heard she took it upon herself to expand the Legend into a working water pageant, complete with scripted words and accompanying music. The Legend of Illahee became a beautiful recreation of the story and a fitting tribute to the first girls ever to attend Camp Illahee.

On the second evening of camp in 1940 a very meaningful tradition beckoned campers to reflect on their upcoming experience at Illahee. Walking in single file from their cabin units, the two Hills, Heigh Ho and Hill Brook, sang together as they made their way to the campfire circle for the first “Ceremonial Campfire.” This special time was set aside for the girls to focus on the reasons they were at Illahee and what they hoped for themselves for that summer. The girls stood shoulder to shoulder in a circle around the fire singing familiar camp songs such as “Ashgrove” and the Illahee “Welcome” song. The air that evening was filled with voices of girls singing mingling with the crackling sound of the bonfire. Following the singing a quiet fell over the circle as each girl stepped forward, one at a time, to read her “wish” for the summer. After she finished reading she placed her written wish into the flames. It was a beautiful and thoughtful way to begin a camp session. It was also an initial step in exposing the girls to another tradition that would take place weekly for the rest of their time at Illahee – the reading of the Camp Log.

(girls singing at campfire)

The reading of the Camp Log became a Sunday tradition in 1939 and continued in some form for the 30 years that Robin was Illahee’s Camp Director. Bringing the idea of the “Log” with her from Chunn’s Cove, the reading of the Log gave campers and counselors an opportunity to share with the rest of the camp just what it meant for her to be at Illahee. Themes for the evening Log readings spanned a variety of subjects. There were serious poems as well as lighthearted and humorous ones; there were short essays on the meaning of friendship or the awesomeness of nature; there were tributes to special friends or counselors or staff; and there were accounts of trips made and special days observed. Almost any experience that had a personal meaning to a girl was grist for the mill. From 1940 until 1945 the girls gathered in the Lodge on Sunday evening to read their contributions but in 1945 it was moved to the campfire ring. Within the horseshoe of white hydrangeas that surrounded the campfire ring, an intimate and protective atmosphere prevailed, and although it seemed a safe environment to share one’s feelings and thoughts it was still a daunting proposition for most. Wilma Pooser, writing in the “The Log” of 1943, penned her own thoughts about what it was like to read in front of the rest of the camp in a poem she entitled..... “Sensations While Reading For The Camp Log.”

First your knees begin to shake
Then your courage melts away
Next your face starts to bake
And then you think,
“Why did I write this anyway?”
But as you read a little more,
Your voice is almost clear
As to what you are saying, goodness knows!

Often campers wrote tributes to Robin telling about the influence she had upon their lives. Nine-year old Alice Norton put it this way in the 1939 Log:

Robin, you are my ideal.
Never failing to help with zeal,
Every girl at Camp Illahee,
So that this will her best summer be.
Happy, sunny, bright and gay,
Always smiling through the day.
But very serious when you should
Like our storybook, Robin Hood.
Kind and noble, firm and true.
Oh, dear Robin, this is you.

She took her role as leader seriously and most Sunday evenings she read something that she wrote that week as well. It was an integral part of her philosophy that to be a good role model one must risk sharing oneself with others. As has been said of her, “she lived it and people sort of caught it.” She responded to a request in 1951 to publish some of her writings for that summer’s Log. In an especially beautiful and poetic piece entitled “A Few Thoughts On Life Collected Over The Years,” she writes:

Life is the incense of chimney smoke mingled with the fragrance of honeysuckle
Life is the flame of a candle consuming its own white taper
Life is an atom in the hands of a scientist
Life is the battle between an elephant and a mouse – in which the mouse sometimes wins
Life is an infinitely repeated geometrical figure
Life is a rather surprising chemical reaction
Life is the dropping of the sands of the sea grain by grain into a limitless ocean, only to have them washed ashore again
Life is the jet lace of bare branches against a crimson sky
Life is confetti thrown in the face of death
Life is the path to the moon on a shimmering sea
Life is an ember glowing at the breath of the bellows
Life is a white jade bowl holding a single black tulip
Life is a grinning mask hiding the sobbing face of harlequin
Life is a red balloon pricked by a cigarette ash
Life is the black silhouette of events on the white snow of time

Robin followed the Sunday tradition first set by the McLeod’s. Sunday was a day set aside from the rest of the weeks bustling activity to allow time for the girls to be inspired by the beauty of nature around her; to nurture the friendships that surrounded her; and to quietly reflect on her experience at Illahee. There was time on Sundays for a short hike on camp property or a swim in the lake but mostly Sunday was a day for rest, reflection and writing – either home or for the Log. Two services became a part of Illahee’s Sunday schedule. Until 1948 worship was observed on Sunday evenings. In 1948, with “One World” as its summer worship theme, the campers and counselors took the responsibility for the Sunday services and worship was moved to Sunday morning. In 1950 an evening Vespers was added and for many years Rev. Ashby Johnson from the First Presbyterian Church of Brevard came to camp to speak to the girls. The first Woodland Chapel was dedicated during the summer of 1945 and occupied a pleasant setting behind the Lodge. It was a place of special significance to many Illhaee campers, and to Robin, and as she

explained it, she hoped “that the chapel will be used at any time of the day, by anyone who would like to meditate in the quiet beauty of the chapel.”

Evening campfires were frequent nightly activities at Illahee. After all the singing and the stories and the campfire time came to an end a hush fell over the girls as they held each other’s hand in a “friendship circle.” The last song of the evening was the “Pine Tree Song” and often the realization of the friendships they had formed at camp entered the girls’ thoughts. “I glance down for just a minute at the person’s hand I am holding, because I know she has helped to make someone happy today. There are so many more things I think about as we start the first line of our “Pine Tree Song.” This is how one camper expressed her feelings about being around the campfire circle in 1951.

(photo of posture class)

What was it that Robin brought to Illahee that defined her direction and leadership? Searching for a brief explanation of what camp was like at that time, Kitty Neff described Illahee as “something akin to a finishing school.” And there is ample reason to believe that this is an apt description. If you were a camper during the 1940’s or 50’s you attended posture classes; you were taught good manners and proper etiquette and why it was important; you were instructed in proper nutrition and body care and efforts were made to help you achieve your best self; and you were reinforced weekly and in many different ways about the benefits of the kind treatment of others. Robin believed that these simple forms of civility were necessary skills and helped refine a girl’s character. It was unquestionably a considerable part of the Illahee experience. A good example of this kind of camp emphasis was the hiring of Mrs. Margaret Maaske in 1945. She led classes in posture, care of hair and skin, and the development of “personal popularity through thoughtfulness of others.” Sometime during that summer Mrs. Maaske conducted an hour-long interview with each girl in camp to assess her need for further instruction and to offer her hints on how she might make a more presentable impression. During the summer of 1947, a stylish counselor, Vesta Bednardz, led discussions with girls on the topic of fashion. She divided the girls at camp into three groups; one for those under 5’ 3;” one for the average or tall girl; and one for the plump girls. Seemingly unperturbed by the directness of Vesta’s counsel one Log writer exclaims, “Vesta told us our figure defects and we found each others. We studied the ideas of some of the world’s great designers and found the clothes best suited for us.” Counselors, and even some older campers, often gave talks and held open discussions on such topics as dietetics, nursing, teaching, social work, floral arrangements, library science, art, the care and raising of dogs and horses, clothes, landscape gardening, architecture and physical education. In a 1941 “Croaker” article under the heading of “did you know” the first two things listed were, 1) “that it is not correct to clap at Vespers, and 2) that it is correct to be on time for all assemblies and meals.” At times a girl learned these fundamental lessons of character the hard way. For instance, if a girl was late to dinner she had to walk up to Robin’s table and apologize for her tardiness. Robin even penned a little poem that expressed perfectly how small things are really big things when it comes to the way we affect others.

For you, yourself can’t hear.
But it’s really little things like this
Whether of no or little merit
Just these things no matter how small
That help to create the Illahee spirit.

In the 1940’s and 50’s a girl approaching womanhood lived with a more narrowly defined expectation about who and what she should be in society. This attention to the more feminine

qualities complimented the prevailing social mores. However, it should be noted that this was just one part of the Camp Illahee experience. During her time at camp she experienced the fun, the friendships and the challenges that gave an Illahee Girl a new confidence in her abilities to achieve beyond even her own expectations. Robin was aiming to not only help perfect a young woman's social skills, but as well, to help create women who would make a difference in their families, communities, and chosen vocations.

The first "Pill Week" began in the summer of 1939 and was one of the ways Robin used to teach the value and importance of showing consideration towards others. Pill Week taught the girls the reward of thinking of others, but not only just thinking of about them, then acting on her thoughts. Pill Week began on a Sunday evening with the girls gathered in the Lodge. They drew one name out of a hat and the girl drawing the name was the "capsule" and the name she drew was her "pill" for the week. Part of the fun was the secrecy that was involved. A "Pill" would unexpectedly find fresh picked berries at her place in the dining hall, or there might be a new comic book on a bed at rest hour or someone's bed would mysteriously been made when a "pill" returned from breakfast. All this was accomplished with great care to keep the capsules identity secret. "Politeness was in all its glory this week" was how one excited camper expressed it in the Croaker. On the last night of Pill Week there was a pajama party in the Lodge. Girls tried to guess whom their capsule was for the week and if she could not guess correctly the capsule stood up to the cheers of all the other girls. One enthusiastic girl said in 1940, "we really had a good time doing things for others and what fun it would be if Pill Week could continue all summer!" Pill Week was so successful that Robin continued to incorporate it into the summer schedule until the late 1950's.

By the end of the 1939 camp session the uncertainty and the apprehension that Robin must have felt as she began that first summer at Illahee were replaced with a growing confidence in her own abilities as a Camp Director. The bills were paid on time; the camper response to her and at being at Illahee was overwhelmingly positive; and perhaps most importantly to her, she realized that Illahee could have a wonderful effect on all the girls. Always camper-centered she expressed her hopes and dreams in an open letter to all the campers of 1939 published in that years "Log." She started her letter with the salutation "My Dear Campers" and then she continues with these words: "You have told me what camp has meant to you – true friendship, sportsmanship, loyalty, improvement in camp activities, leadership, courage, reverence. In addition to what you have told me, do you know what I hope it (the Camp Illhaee experience) has helped to give you?

- a sympathetic understanding of other people
- an inner poise of spirit as well as poise of the body
- a generous and gracious personality
- Opportunities for achievement and growth of a sense of personal worth
- The ability to grasp situations quickly and deal with them intelligently
- Joy
- Mental alertness
- Character
- Radiant health
- A sense of humor
- Self reliance and dependability
- Faith in God and in people
- An appreciation of the good, the beautiful and the true in this life of ours

Always wanting to be on a first name basis with everyone who was a part of camp, she signed her letter, "Robin."

It is interesting to note that after that first summer at Illahee Robin promoted an end-of-camp excursion for campers and their families. When most camp directors were glad to have some time off from the constant demands of running a summer camp she was leading a trip to New York City and the 1939 World's Fair. The nagging uncertainty of the Depression was lifting and better times seemed ahead so "The World of Tomorrow" offered Illahee families a glimpse at the marvels of a promising new world of technology. Robin had lived and worked in New York prior to coming to Illahee and she felt qualified to lead the trip. She advertised this opportunity in her first camp brochure and encouraged those who wanted to go to sign up. There is no record of whether the trip was a success or not but it was the first of several attempts at coordinating extra-camp trips under the Illahee name. As it turns out, only one extended trip for campers in 1957 seems to have been truly successful.

A full contingency of 75 campers was signed up for the eight-week camp session in 1940 and Illahee was buzzing with excitement at the opening of camp that first week of July. First time campers were getting to know their cabin mates and "seasoned" campers were renewing old friendships. A second year "settling in" was taking place for Robin and that summer she would lay the groundwork for both camp growth and traditions for years to come. For the first time Robin's Birthday was celebrated on July 25, (although this date was not her actual birthday) and her birthday became a full day of fun-filled activity. For the first time Illahee girls experienced the cold waters and the splashing fun of Sliding Rock -- a camp-wide tradition that continues to this day. Pisgah Pines continued to be a success for the few fortunate campers who spent overnights there. The overnight wilderness experience the girls had at Pisgah Pines laid the groundwork for future overnight trips to places like Mt. LeConte and Lake Burton in years to come. Down at the barn the Dyes had brought many of the favorite horses back with them and riding trips were being planned and talked about. Later that summer two Illahee girls won first place ribbons for exceptional riding in the Camp Division at the Hendersonville Horse Show outshining their main rivals from Camp Greystone. That summer the girls enjoyed hiking to the top of a nearby mountain, called Hi-Ho Mountain, more for the experience of the sliding down a muddy ravine on their way back than for any other reason. Many pairs of jeans were sacrificed for the thrill of the slippery slide. The Water Pageant featured the usual beauty of synchronized swimming and living water lilies, retrieved by two campers with the help of Uncle Fudd from a pond in Pisgah Forest, added visual effect. And the Final Night banquet became firmly established as the closing night activity. The Pine Tree song was sung as the official camp song and the Log was published and distributed to all the girls for the second year in a row. It was a good summer for all involved and Robin could expect a great camper return rate for the summer of 1941. But behind the laughter, camp accomplishments and the newfound joy of friendships there loomed the worsening situation in war torn Europe. It was hard to escape the news of war even at camp and as the United States came ever closer to entering the conflict there was an uncertainty that clouded the future for Camp Illahee.

The effects of the Depression were easing and the financial outlook for Illahee never looked better. The first two summers of camp were successful giving Robin confidence in the camp's future. On July 31, 1941 Robin purchased the 140 acres that comprised the boundaries of Camp Illahee from the estate of Evelyn Taylor who was now deceased. Camp Illahee never again experienced the turmoil of bankruptcy. (Although Robin continued to advertise Illahee as 140 acres, even suggesting it was 160 acres in the 1950's, it was later determined that the acreage was actually less. The discrepancy was due to the method of survey. The original surveyors used chains that they pulled up and down the mountains calculating each foot of ground as they went. When the property was again surveyed in the 1970's using more modern methods, it was determined that Illahee comprised only 110 acres. As Frankie Hall, Illahee's future owner said with tongue in cheek, "somewhere along the way I lost 30 acres.")

(photo of Jo Osbourne) (picture of glee club)

In the summer of 1940 a music teacher from the Asheville, North Carolina School System came to Illahee to serve as the camp's Choral Director. For 19 summers Josephine Osborne, "Jo" as she was known around camp, lent her talents to Illahee's various arts programs. As choral Instructor and Head of Drama, she helped to make each year's Water Pageant something special through her musical interpretations and her expertise in production. But there was another yearly event on which she left her mark - - the annual combined choral concert with a nearby boy's camp, Camp Mondamin. It became a highly anticipated yearly event. Early in the camp session Jo began preparing the girls for the concert and for Jo there was no girl who couldn't be a part of the choral events at Illahee regardless of how a camper perceived her own talent or singing ability. To Jo, it was the effort that counted. As she would say to reassure the girls "anyone can sing who can breathe and think." Each summer, on the evening of the Mondamin-Illahee choral concert, the Illahee girls and the Mondamin boys each sang several songs separately and then joined together as a combined choir to end the evening. Usually the concert consisted of a collection of sacred songs, patriotic numbers, with several popular songs sprinkled throughout the evening's repertoire. Though singing was the focus for the evening the concert served a two-fold purpose: the first was musical and the second was social. After each concert there was time to socialize and mingle with the boys. It was another chance to put into practice all they had learned from their classes on posture and many girls tried out the secrets of a "winning personality" from hints she had garnered from behavior classes. A week before the Mondamin concert in 1941 an article in the Croaker offered some practical advice about what a boy just might appreciate in a girl. The girls were told "proper posture would make each of them look more interesting and intelligent." They were reminded not to talk about themselves all the time for that would be "deadly." Chewing gum was especially heinous and to help them remember what a social transgression this could be, an old adage was printed lest they forget: "a cow chews her cud and a girl chews her gum, but the cow has the more intelligent look on her face!"

In 1955 a Junior Glee Club was formed at Illahee to develop the interests and talents of the youngest singers. Also in 1955 a new boys camp came to Illahee to share the annual choral concert. Until that year it had always been the choir from Camp Mondamin but in 1955 the boys from Camp Sequoyah joined the Illahee girls to put on the summer concert. It was a special evening for all involved for not only did Camp Sequoyah bring their singers but they brought their camp orchestra and a folk dancing group as well. In the audience that evening were many parents from both camps along with the campers from Gay Valley and Keystone camps. It was the Folk Dance group that energized the crowd that evening. When the Sequoia Folk Dance group got up on stage to perform they began with an English Morris dance, followed that Appalachian clogging, and ended the night with a sword dance using real swords. It was a memorable evening for all in attendance.

The "Illahee Croaker," subtitled "Campers Views of Illahee News," was published for the first time on July 9, 1941. Taking the title from the frogs that croaked each evening at camp, the Croaker gave the girls an outlet to express themselves in newspaper form. The campers themselves, aided by interested staff, reported for the paper, did the layout and editing and were responsible for the publishing. In each issue there was a little camp gossip; some necessary camp news about upcoming events; articles recounting the adventure of some trip or overnight; and each issue usually had a biography of a camper or counselor. The Croaker also gave Robin an outlet for her own reflections about camp. In her weekly column she called "Robin's Notes," she typically encouraged the girls to be good sports, to remember to be thoughtful to others, and usually she had a special thanks for the campers for jobs well done. It could be expected that

sometime during the summer she would proclaim in her article that that years camp was “the best camp ever” and proceed to say why. Many times she would end her column with a quote from Rebecca McCann’s book entitled The Cheerful Cherub.

Any camper who attended Illahee while Robin was Director will be familiar with The Cheerful Cherub. Robin considered the book a source of wisdom and used it often. She often read from the Cheerful Cherub during morning meetings at the Lodge. This was a daily time for the camp to share the beginning of the day and to sing together and hear announcements. Before dismissing the girls Robin would take out her copy of the Cheerful Cherub and share a thought or two. Each poem was a reminder of one of life’s great truths stated simply enough for a camper to carry the thought with her throughout her day. The following are some examples from the Cheerful Cherub that Robin used in her column.

Battling Fate

For all I know fate goes ahead
In its ways, not regarding us.
Well, if I cannot change a thing
At least I’ll make an awful fuss!

Stars

“When stars fill the sky
Shining steadfast and far,
So lovely to think
That we live on a star!”

Laugh

“I’m often more clever
and catty than kind
it’s such a temptation
to show off my mind,
but if to gain laughter
I hurt a good friend
It’s plain that the laugh
Is on me in the end.”

Conduct

A rule for good conduct
Which hasn’t failed yet
Is just to do nothing
You’d like to forget.

Accompaniment

Truth makes life a noble thing
And courage makes it strong,
But grace and tact must set them off
As music does a song.

Advice

At times you ought to stay alone
I make so bold as to advise
And just be friendly with your soul

Your soul will miss you otherwise.
(Robin concludes this poem by saying, “our outdoor chapel is a wonderful spot to take yourself and your soul for a rest. Try it.”)

Gloomy

Whenever I am gloomy,
in time I come to see
It’s just because
I’m thinking entirely of me.

Hurrah!

I did the thing I feared the most
Excuse me while I cheer
Now here I stand, a stronger soul
And all I’ve lost is fear.

True Success

A true success my life will be
Though fame and riches I renounce.
It isn’t what life gives to me
It’s what I bring to life that counts

Cast-off

Let go of your troubles,
Why cling to them so?
They float off like bubbles
When once you let go.

Artists

We cannot all be artists
Yet each one in his place
Can give his daily living
Artistic charm and grace.

Know Thyself

We only find ourselves
In everything we see,
The more new friends I know
The more I’ll learn of me.

(photo of Frosty)

Corrine Chisholm Frost, known affectionately around camp as “Frosty,” joined Robin as Co-Director in 1941. This was not Frosty’s first summer at Illahee for during Robin’s first summer her dear friend and mentor came to Illahee to help her through the challenges of starting her own camp. In 1941 she became Robin’s Co-Director and ended up spending 15 summers doing a little bit of everything. Her many talents are revealed by how many different things she eventually had leadership responsibility for around camp. She was Program Director, Head of Drama, she took girls out on dark nights for star studies, she led hikes, taught mountain climbing, as well as arts and crafts, and even demonstrated the technique for standing on ones head. Robin was so grateful for all that Frosty had meant to her and to Illahee that she called her the “miracle woman.”

There is one other role for which she will always be remembered and that was as the “story-lady.” Often in blackface, her retelling of the Tales from Uncle Remus amused and delighted campers for years. She was also a poet like Robin. She wrote several poems about the constellations and in one especially poignant poem she writes:

The way to play with stars is just to lie
Flat on your back where forest trees grow high
Outlining bay and sea,
Where golden boats appear entrancingly.
Oh, golden boats, so steadily they move
The guidance of a Father’s hand they prove,
In everlasting care
And who can doubt his presence, here or there?

Even after she retired in 1956 her association with Illahee continued. During her summers at Illahee her love for the mountains and the Brevard area deepened. After the death of her husband she moved permanently to Brevard from New Orleans and for years afterwards she welcomed campers to her home for one of her parties. Invariably, sometime during the evening she gathered the girls around her out on her patio and held them spellbound. Even to this day her memory lives on in the lives of the girls who had the chance to go to Frosty’s house and enjoy her lively presence.

(photos of Oliver)

By 1941 Robin had a strong nucleus of outstanding staff around her. But in that year one other person also joined the staff and made contributions to Camp Illahee that were incalculable – Oliver Byrd. Oliver had so many skills that people to this day tell of his knowledge. “There wasn’t anything Oliver couldn’t do,” is how he has been described. His title at Illahee was technically that of “Caretaker” but on top of that he was the facilities manager, plumber, gardener, electrician, builder, square-dance caller, storyteller, horseback riding instructor, good-natured prankster, chauffeur, and a welcoming committee of one. On most mornings during camp you could find Oliver sitting in front of Curtis Lodge wearing his overalls and floppy hat greeting each girl who passed by with a hearty, “Mawnin!” When Mr. Dye was drafted into the army during WW11 it was Oliver who assisted Mrs. Dye as instructor for the riding program under the title of Trail Ride leader. A native of McDowell County, North Carolina, Oliver’s early training in equitation was riding his father’s mule, but that didn’t keep him from having some real horse sense. The story is told of one particularly dangerous incident. Oliver had gone with the Pine View girls on an overnight ride and in the middle of the night two horses began fighting causing a panic throughout the campsite. It was Oliver who knew how to handle the situation. Rushing into the middle of the commotion he quieted both horses until once again the girls were safe. For a number of years he grew a large camp garden that supplied most of the fresh vegetables that the kitchen staff used on a daily basis. He is also remembered for his Mongoose. Many former campers remember the mysterious box he carried around camp. When he felt like playing the prankster he would call over an unwary girl and surprise her with what was inside the box. It was a trick he played for years always getting a surprised reaction out of an unsuspecting girl. By 1962 the Mongoose was so popular it was honored with its own day. On that special day the mongoose could do anything it liked. A special guard was placed attentively in front of its cage at the entrance to the dining hall to insure the mongoose’ protection. Oliver’s wife, Annie, worked the camp laundry and during the 40’s, the laundry was a very busy place. Each day every girl in camp had her uniformed washed and ironed by the laundry staff. Oliver and Annie lived on camp property year-round and raised a family of five children in the small cabin known today as the Paw-Paw patch. As the family outgrew their small

cabin Oliver built his family a residence near the canoe lake, known today as the “villa” and though small, it provided the needed space for his family. In a poetic tribute to Oliver in an article for the Croaker in 1960 the writer says this of Oliver:

He helps to fix the grounds, he works down at the barn,
And on the over-night horseback trips, he can cook up quite a yarn.
On Saturday nights, we always love to do the shoo-fly swing!
But without Oliver calling square dances we couldn't do a thing.
He's ever kind and cheerful; he does things with a smile,
And we all hope that he'll be here for a long, long while.

In 1941 Christmas candles were given out each Illahee girl as she left camp to be lit on Christmas Eve. The intention was for each girl to light her candle as a way for her to reconnect with her other camper friends and to rekindle their memories of her summer at Illahee. Writing in a special Christmas letter to campers in 1941 Robin said this about the candles; “as our candles burn brightly, we shall see pictures of Illahee – red and green canoes on a blue lake, girls cantering on horses on the trails, the station wagon with a cheering group off to Frying Pan Gap or Sliding Rock. Each of us will see special pictures that mean much to us. As the candle flames burn down, let us all wish for Illahee that the summer of 1942 will be the best, happiest and most worthwhile one we have ever had, and that soon we shall all be back together again.”

Recruitment became a way of life for Robin in the off-season. Armed with reels of movies taken during the summer she started traveling in January and made an effort to visit every Illahee camper and prospective camper she could. In the early 1940's New Orleans and San Antonio were pockets where Illahee had good camper representation, but it was Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina that lead the way in numbers of girls. Robin attempted to bring a diverse group of campers to Illahee each summer believing that this mixture of girls from various parts of the country, and the world, enriched the camper experience for all. “All roads lead to Illahee!” 120 girls and 46 counselors from 17 states in North, South, East, West all meet in a place that we all love best!” This rhyming ditty was a featured page in the 1943 Log and speaks of Robin's intention to recruit nationally. Diversity was also a priority for her. A camp song entitled “Robin's Favorite” expressed her hope that any prejudice or difference in culture would be set aside as Illahee girls learned to live together as friends during their time at camp.

“There's a camp named Illahee, the place we all love,
The land of the mountains and the sky.
There the girls of the North and the South we meet,
To play as the days go by.....
For we're all friends tonight, and we're comrades too;
There's a seat on the log by the campfire for you....
For a friend is a friend, and we're all friends here!”

Over the years she recruited campers and counselors from other countries as well. Beginning with the camp season of 1944 a photo of the foreign campers and counselors was proudly displayed in each camp brochure. There were 6 campers in 1944 from as far away as Norway and Italy. International campers had a special place at Illahee. Each summer they were called on to share aspects of their culture with the other campers especially during evening entertainment. Other ways Illahee celebrated a girl's native country was by honoring them for one day during the summer. On that day the international campers wore traditional clothing and at dinner a culinary specialty from their country was served to all the campers. Robin stated her philosophy by saying, “There is no finer place than camp to develop socially for where else can we live with so

many persons from different states and countries?" An international Folk festival was held at Illahee in 1959 that took the girls around the globe through costume and dance. As one girl reported, "the Folk Festival helped us to realize even more that people the world over are very much alike in many ways." Foreign campers who experienced Illahee shared the Illahee spirit and experience with much the same zeal as American girls. Fourteen-year-old Gloria Menendez from Havana, Cuba shared her impressions of Illahee one Sunday night at the Log reading. "When I first arrived to this heavenly world, its greatness and magnitude frightened me...I was afraid of everything and everybody. I began to enjoy this new way of life. I opened my eyes, and I could see life-real life and true friendship. These are Illhaee's best things. Camp Illahee, you are everything in my life, and I will never forget you!"

In 1942 a new Co-Director took her place alongside Robin and Frosty. Treeva "Teeter" Tilley grew up in Toronto, Canada and like the other two directors, she also had a Girl Scouting background both in the United States and Canada. She graduated from McGill University in Montreal, Canada with a degree in Health and Physical Education and with her credentials decided that camping was her calling. At the time she joined the staff at Illahee she was the Girl Scout executive in Greenville, South Carolina. Being in such close proximity to Robin in Brevard, and with both women sharing a mutual interest in camping and the Girl Scouts, it seems almost inevitable that the two would meet. They attended a camping conference in 1941 at which time Robin and Teeter struck up an immediate and enduring friendship that would team them together as co-directors of Camp Illahee for 28 years. It was a match that brought out the best in both and allowed their complimentary strengths to come through. Robin was the inspirational leader who set the direction for Illahee but Teeter had the knack for making sure that these goals were met. She was thorough, had a good business sense and a keen eye for detail. Robin was charming and her presence was felt throughout camp. Teeter, on the other hand, was the "behind the scenes" person making sure that everything was taken care of so that camp could function smoothly. She was so attentive to the details of the camp operation that there wasn't a piece of litter that Teeter wouldn't find to pick up. It was Teeter who put up the "keep our camp clean" sign in 1959. It was a yearly crusade for her to keep a litter-free camp and she was constantly motivating the campers to remember not to litter. Teeter had a delightful personality that often went in humorous and zany directions. She drove a small foreign car with a fold back sunroof that she zipped around camp in, often at excessive speeds. If someone saw her coming it was best to stand aside and let her roar by. If you wanted to know a weather forecast the saying around camp was "ask Teeter, she'll know."

Among the many things Robin and Teeter shared in common the raising of dogs was an especially important passion for both of them. Robin and Teeter were great dog lovers and they always had at least one dog apiece romping merrily around camp. Wendy, Bonnie, Scottie and Nickie, and many other dogs were raised at Illahee and became part of the camp landscape. In the camp bulletin from 1943 we see Robin pictured with her dog Paddy Wackus Horton Francis Curtis. She was so devoted to Paddy that Paddy shared the limelight with her on her birthday. When the girls came to serenade Robin on her porch, there at her side was Paddy, wagging his tale and reveling in the attention. In many camp brochures, under the heading of Camp Directors, a photo was taken of Robin and Teeter smiling and kneeling beside their dogs. A dog kennel was built near Cabin One on Hill Brook and even the girls had a chance to grow close to the dogs over the summer. By 1947 they had three Collies and one Welsh Terrier. But dogs weren't the only animals around camp. Besides the horses that Oliver tended to year round at the barn there was Downey the duck who took up residence in the swim lake and each summer the Nature Center displayed an assortment of snakes, rabbits, and native insects that delighted the girls.

Dances were special times at Illahee. Dancing of any type was lively fun and by 1947 Illahee square dances were so popular that every Saturday evening Oliver was calling out his routines in the Lodge. The Shoo-Fly Swing, the Four-Leaf Clover, London Bridge, and Little Georgie were among the girl's favorites. Although Oliver called most of the square dances, on one occasion in 1943 a nationally renowned square dance caller, who went by the name of "Red," came to camp. Red had been recorded for the Smithsonian Institution and was known for his trademark "Train Whistle Call." Enthusiasm ran high at square dances and when there were no boys to dance with the Illahee solution was to divide the camp into two groups with one half of the girls dressed as boys and the other half dressed as girls. The "boys" wore jeans and plaid shirts and the "girls" promenaded in "broomstick" skirts and bright bandannas. On the fourth of July in 1942 Bunny Kirby wrote in the Croaker that, "everyone sang and whooped with enthusiasm (at the square dance) and when the fun ended we were all given a lollipop." If a boy's camp were coming to Illahee for a dance, and in the 1940's Camp Carolina came most often, the girls spent most of the day in preparation and planning to look their best. Special outfits were set aside for the upcoming dance and girls tried to miss their swim class to keep from getting their hair wet. There were times that Illahee was invited to Camp Carolina for a dance as well. Decked out in their best outfits they would pile into the camp station wagon and a couple of cars yelping with excitement about the evening ahead. In 1951, for an Illahee dance with Camp Carolina, the girls of Pine View adopted a motto that was soon picked up by the whole camp: "to have a good time, give a good time." The evening had a usual pattern and began with Square dancing. Square dancing allowed for a more informal and less threatening way for the boys and girls to meet. The last part of the evening was devoted to the much anticipated social dancing. It was during the social dancing that many infatuations blossomed as was noted in the Croaker in July 1951. After a dance that summer some of the "lucky girls" had more letters in their boxes than usual. Dances always seemed to come to an end to quickly and by 9:00 p.m. the evening would end and "good-byes" were said.

Robin moved permanently into the Directors house in 1942. This had been the McLeod's original housing and it was rustic living without the benefit of central heat, but she wanted to be at Illahee year round. By this time the camp facilities consisted of the barn and a riding ring, the cabin groupings of Heigh Ho and Hillbrook, the Lodge, the Dining Room, the swim lake, a small office, a camp fire circle, activity areas for badminton, soft ball, a putting green, two tennis courts, a croquet ground, an archery field, a cook's cabin, a small cabin for the camp nurse called the Wishing Well, and a crafts hut called the Hobby House. As camp enrollment continued to increase it became evident that more could be done with the property to enhance the camper experience. In 1943 two rustic Adirondack cabins were built in the woods for overnight campouts suitable for even the youngest campers to enjoy. The girls stayed as many as three nights in the open-fronted cabins and during the day they participated fully in their scheduled activities. These overnights gave the girls an opportunity to practice their camp craft skills and prepared them for overnight trips out of camp. One such skill learned at the Adirondack cabins was the making of a corn-shuck mattress. Utilizing the corn-shucks from the previous summers garden the girls stuffed their own mattresses in the old-time Appalachian way and slept on them that night. In 1947 "camp craft" became a part of the activities program at Illahee. The first "woodcraftkhana" took place that year with girls demonstrating the skills they had learned such as fire-lighting, bed-rolling, split kindling, log chopping, and cutting shavings.

During the 1940's Mrs. Medford played an important role in the ongoing life of Illahee even though she had nothing directly to do with camp operations. Mrs. Medford lived at the end of the Illahee Road on Country Club Drive and hers was the closest telephone connection to camp. Every afternoon between 2:00 and 4:00 someone from camp would drive to her house and retrieve any telephone messages for campers or camp staff called in that day. But Illahee was

definitely on the mail route. Daily expectations arose with the arrival of the mail and although packages of food were discouraged, letter writing was encouraged. Campers were required to mail at least one letter home a week and Robin encouraged the girls to have the weekly Croaker mailed home as well as a way for families to keep informed of the happenings around camp. There were other opportunities for family interaction. Parents were allowed to visit their child on Visitation Day on Sunday. On special event days such as the horse shows or the Water Pageant, parents and friends lined the fences or found a place to sit around the Swim Lake to observe their daughters performances. The reminders of everyday life were few and the closest thing to a general store where snacks and treats could be purchased was the "Trading Post." Every afternoon girl's lined up at the Trading Post to buy a cold drink, stamps, or a candy bar, stationary or Kleenex.

The United States entered WWII late in 1941 and the country began a strict regimen of rationing necessary goods. Gas and sugar were rationed and tighter restrictions were imposed on travel. The Office of Defense Transportation specified that the transportation of boys and girls to and from summer camps should be seen as "essential operation" which made it possible for parents to continue to send their girls to Illahee. The rations of some goods applied to Illahee as well and in response to the limitations girls brought their sugar rations with them to camp to supplement the camp's short supplies.

Even in the midst of the pastoral beauty of Illhaee thoughts of the turmoil in Europe crept into the minds of some campers. In a Log reading in 1942 one girl likened her wish for a letter from home to a soldier who waited for news from loved ones:

"What wouldn't I give for a letter,
A package even more,
Now I know how a serviceman feels
When marooned on a distant shore."

The contrast between the beauty and peace of Camp Illahee and the destruction in Europe did not evade the recognition of one counselor as she wrote; "Could it be possible that in different parts of the earth people were killing and plundering with a hatred in their eyes? As I thought these horrible thoughts a surge of thankfulness came over me. I was thankful for America and its freedom from the tyranny of the would-be conquerors. Thankful for Illahee and its wonderful girls."

Even though Illahee was an idyllic, safe place where life went on with its special routines, war preparations found its way to her gates. On August 10, 1942 Western North Carolina experienced its first total blackout. Cooperating with the air-raid wardens the camp went totally dark at 9:00 p.m. and at 10:00 p. m. sharp the air raid sirens began to wail. As the air-raid sirens blared a warning note to the people of WNC, one camper wrote that "here at Illahee we hardly realize that a war is being fought.....we could well remember the happy peacefulness that we enjoyed during our eight weeks together, and use the same methods to give our defense minded friends at home a part of our serenity." In a special Christmas edition of the "Croaker," sent to all the campers of 1941, Robin encouraged each girl to "think that we can help our country this coming year, in the National emergency, by doing our usual jobs unusually well, by thinking how we can be helpful to our families, neighbors and friends."

Life at Illahee continued much as usual during the war but the girls did make efforts to contribute to the victims of war. A knitting club was started in 1944 to make scarves to be sent overseas for refugees from the conflict. Knitting continued to be a popular pastime in 1945. The girls called themselves the "Knit-Wit Club" and so many campers were interested in knitting that summer that the office staff was overwhelmed with requests for knitting needles. \$9.00 worth of needles

was ordered from a shop in Brevard and as one writer in the Croaker expressed it, “we exhausted Brevard’s supply of yarn and needles.” The knitting needles continued to clack in 1946 much to the amazement of one girl who said, “Illahee must seem more like the ‘Old Ladies Knitting Society’ than a bunch of hearty, healthy girls.” That year, too, the knitters had a charitable purpose. Using the slogan “don’t you or the Europeans get cold feet,” socks, sweaters and even an afgan were knitted and sent to the American Red Cross to be distributed to persons recovering from the devastation of War.

Even after the War Illahee campers, like much of the rest of the nation, felt the effects of those turbulent times. Out of the ashes of war a new idea was being born. There was a worldwide effort to see that such destruction never occurred again and the United Nations was the result. Carrying this hopeful idea to Illahee in the summer of 1946, Illahee campers chose “One World United” for the summer worship theme. Mary French wrote of the theme, “what will happen if we don’t build this thing we call ‘one world?’ Think it over for yourselves and I am sure you will all want to work and make this a peaceful world, and united world-one world.” Though World War II had left its mark, Illahee continued to prosper and by the end of the War camp was on firm footing and ready for more expansion.

Robin’s birthday was always a red-letter day. Every year she would report to the girls, through her column in the Croaker, that that year’s birthday “was the happiest and most wonderful birthday party I have ever had in my whole life!” As early as 1942 her birthday was celebrated throughout the day. Beginning in the morning the whole camp gathered around her house to start the day with a singing telegram wishing her well. That was the first year that Teeter shared the spotlight with Robin on her birthday and Teeter received a gift that day as well. That evening Robin escorted Teeter to a dance in the Lodge and afterwards all the campers and counselors gathered around Robin’s house once again and serenaded her. Such was the devotion and love felt for Robin. In subsequent years her birthday continued to stretch the limits of the campers imaginations. In 1947 a circus theme was put together for her birthday. The Illahee circus in town that day was the “Cousin Curtis and Kin Circus.” Booths were set up around camp for games and competitions but the big event that day was the circus parade. Each hill marched past a reviewing stand, (Robin’s front porch,) laughing and singing and reciting original verse. A tall man, a midget, a fat lady, a strong man, a snake charmer, a sword swallower, and turtle trainers all passed the stand that evening much to Robin’s great delight. With her movie camera in hand she recorded the events to use for the next years camp promotion. A bar-b-que supper followed the parade, and in what became a tradition, the camp chefs created an enormous birthday cake that was ceremoniously set before her as everyone sang the birthday song. Each summer the girls tried to outdo the girls of the previous summer in shows of affection and evermore elaborate productions. In 1949 floats representing four “national holidays,” Valentines Day, Easter, Halloween and Christmas, passed the viewing stand. All campers dressed in costumes with masks on and it was even “hard to recognize your neighbor,” as it was recorded in the Croaker. That evening the King and Queen of Illahee, (Robin was queen and Teeter was King) reigned over the evenings festivities of skits and plays. In 1951 the girls gave her a “Folk Dance Festival” for her birthday. Each cabin learned a dance that represented a country or continent and presented it to her that evening in the Lodge. Robin’s birthday wasn’t just a display of affection it was a chance for camp to come alive for one festive day in the middle of the camp session. In many ways Robin’s birthday was as much for the campers as it was for Robin for everyone who participated had fun in the process.

Even at camp the girls were still aware of the world around them. In July 1945 the movie “National Velvet” starring Elizabeth Taylor opened to rave reviews. It was not totally unexpected then, when some of the campers began requesting that they too have a chance to see

the movie. It was agreed that they could go. One hundred and fifty seven "Illaheeians," all clad in blue uniforms and wearing yellow ties, walked to the Co-Ed Theater in downtown Brevard to see the picture. They were treated to "ring-size" boxes of popcorn to crunch on during the movie and "to nourish her for the two mile walk back."

The highlight of the 1943 Final Night Banquet was the crowning of the Illahee King and Queen. But another great honor was being chosen to be the Illahee Toastmaster. Endurance, Courage, Neighbors, Discoveries, Sportsmanship, Initiative, Pals, Tomorrow and Inspiration were the highest ideals that Illahee girls could live out and usually a counselor made a toast weaving through words the connection that each of these ideal had for an "Illahee girl" and her time at camp, all directed and coordinated by the Toastmaster. By 1943 the Final Night Banquet also included a tradition that continues to this day – candlelight "wish boats."

Until 1945 there had only been one eight-week session of camp. Most girls stayed for the entire eight weeks although allowances were made for those who could only attend for four weeks. Seeing that there was a need for a shorter two-week camp Robin and Teeter initiated the first "pre-camp" that summer. Pre-camp was an abbreviated version of the eight-week camp session with all the regular camp activities available for the girls. Even a shortened Camp Log was published and handed out to the campers as they departed. This expansion of the camp schedule allowed for the possibility for even more girls to attend Illahee. In 1945 the eight-week session was filled to capacity with 126 campers and a fully functioning staff of 43. "Pine View Hill" was added that winter to accommodate a growing number of older campers. At that time Pine View consisted of two canvas-sided tent "cabins," each with a wood floor, and an out door latrine was situated between the two. A young woman, entering her senior year at the Florida State University in Tallahassee, was hired to be "head of hill" for Pine View --Frankie Hall. Over the years she would go on to devote much of her life and passion to Camp Illahee. Frankie was chosen as the "Counselor in the News" in the July edition of the Croaker. The Croaker writer tells about Frankie's duties at camp adding a brief history of her background. She concludes by saying that Frankie was "loads of fun and well-liked by all."

1945 was also the first summer that Maria Culp served as Illahee's Business Manager. She was an integral part of the camp program handling correspondence, sending out catalogues, and keeping the books straight. She still holds the record for number of years of service to Illahee with 39. She lived in Fort Mill, South Carolina and supervised the student teachers at Winthrop College during the school year. But when school year ended she loaded her typewriter onto the front seat of her car and she headed for the mountains. When seat belts became more prevalent she even strapped her typewriter snugly next to her on the seat. When she arrived at Illahee she organized her desk in the office, which at the time was a cramped, small space with little room to maneuver. She has been reported as saying that she had to open the door to just to slide the carriage back on her typewriter.

The Hobby House, today known as the Busy Bee, was the craft house. It is worth noting that in 1946 wood projects were first introduced to campers as a part of the craft program. Over the summer the girls had a choice about what kind of wood project they would like to create. These included bookends with metal fronts, wooden plates with wood-burned designs etched into them, wooden trays or trinket boxes. These first woodworking projects set the stage for the much-expanded woodworking program that evolved in the years that followed. At the end of each summer a craft show was held to proudly display the girls works much to the enjoyment of parents and other campers. Along with the wood projects, copper bracelets, leather wallets and other craft items made by the girls at the Hobby House and were proudly displayed at the annual camp crafts fair.

Every summer the Fourth of July was filled with festivities celebrating America's freedom. The day began with the camp gathered around the flagpole to sing a patriotic song together. After the singing ended they quietly headed to the Dining Hall for breakfast where the tables were festively decorated with red, white and blue. For lunch a camp wide picnic was served with all the favorite summertime foods on the buffet table with ice cream as a special treat for desert. Tributes to America and her freedoms were themes for the morning gathering time and again during the evening program. On most of these occasions the campers presented the programs and it was not unusual for the day to end on one grand patriotic note. An example of this occurred in 1952 when camper Ann Walters, dressed as Lady Liberty, stood alone on the island in the Swim Lake with a burning lamp of freedom held high above her head. The letters USA were burning around her and as girls retired to their cabins that evening the flames from the patriotic display illuminated the lake with a special, inspiring beauty.

In those first years of Robin's leadership, theme days punctuated the summer with special excitement. Backwards Day, Song night, Movie Night, and the Big Sister, Little Sister party changed the pace for a day and filled the camp day with heightened excitement. Other entertaining events during the summer were the nights that the Illahee Players showed their talents in plays and skits. The annual Pet Show gave each girl, especially the younger girls an opportunity in the spotlight. To be a contestant in the Pet Show a girl decorated her favorite stuffed animal or turned her pillow into something that looked like a pet. Winners were chosen by the amount of applause they received. Every summer the annual Illahee Court held session to the delight and amusement of the campers. Girls were charged with crimes ranging from getting up before the rising bell, to chewing gum outside of a cabin, or to coming late to a meal. Even if she defended her innocence of the charges she stood little chance for leniency before a jury of her camper peers and a judge determined to convict. Most often Teeter played the role of judge and after great and extravagant deliberation she would sentence those charged to display one of their talents.

The Riding Program continued to be the centerpiece of the Illahee activities program. Mr. Dye spent three years in the Army during the Second World War but Mrs. Dye, with the help of Oliver and others, continued to offer superb training in his absence. Supper Rides to See Off Mountain and to Camp Rockbrook were especially popular. But for the riders at Illahee the Hendersonville Horseshow was the highlight of the summer. The event drew horses and riders from around the Southeast and there was a special category just for camps that riders from Illahee participated. As the horseshow became even more prestigious the officials of the show decided to subdivide the camp category. Each camp was given its own place in the show, however it was in the broader category of camp competition that Illahee girls displayed their skills. Often Illahee riders won the Valla Elam Walker Challenge Trophy, the highest riding award given to competing camps. The Illahee Horse Show was also an annual competitive event where many more campers were able to show the riding skills they had learned over the summer. Riders competed in an "inside the ring" class where walk, trot, and canter were judged.

Food and health were high priorities of camp life at Illahee. Mrs. Z.M. Netherton served as the camp dietician for many years, following Robin from Chunn's Cove camp to Illahee. Mrs. Netherton made a concerted effort to supply the camp with delicious and nutritious meals made with fresh produce from the camp garden. As more and more campers found a summer home at Illahee the necessity for a steady stream of daily produce from the camp garden was reduced when "huge" electric refrigerators were installed in the kitchen in 1946. Refrigeration allowed for daily deliveries of food from Brevard and Asheville and were able to be stored for longer periods of time. In 1945 several girls were asked what their favorite dish at camp were and such

camp favorites as blackberry cobbler, muffins, banana pudding, chicken pie and chicken, dressing and rolls.

Illahee girls came in all shapes and sizes. Proper nutrition and strenuous exercise programs were designed to help the girls proportion themselves to fit their desired image. As Erna Seifart wrote in the 1941 Log, "you may think our diet table and body conditioning class is only for the stouter members of Illahee, but they also take care of the smaller people. If you want your legs built up or your hips taken down just ask Linda what exercise to take. It is very simple! Just sit this way and roll like this or raise your legs this high. So if you are big or little, come one, come all to the conditioning class." Attention was paid to the weight of each camper and supplements of milk we added between meals to the diet of underweight campers. In 1951 the Harvey Club was started to promote the eating of vegetables by the girls. A girl could join by eating at least four bites of all the vegetables served at her table. A girl's counselor was the arbiter of whether a girl could belong to the Harvey Club. When a deserving camper qualified for the club she received her "rabbit ears" as a sign of good eating practices. Eating at least one bite of everything on a girls plate had been promoted for years but this club allowed for recognition of that accomplishment.

If a girl had a birthday during the summer it was a special occasion at Illahee. "Birthday Queens" reigned supreme on their big day. A cake was baked for them and their tablemates, and the finale came with the singing of the "Birthday Queen" song.

Oh, Birthday queen, oh, birthday queen,
We wish you joy today.
Oh, birthday queen, oh, birthday queen,
May you always be bright and gay.
We love the ice cream and the cake,
Which at our camp the cook doth bake.
Not only for the queen to take,
Let's have more birthdays, for goodness sake.

Beginning in 1941 "haircutting day" involved almost all the girls at camp. The day the haircutter came to camp filled the girls with questioning and, in several cases, real trauma. Campers were given numbers and when their number came up it was their time to have their haircut. The girls always had a choice whether to have their haircut or not but peer pressure seems to have influenced many. Ruth Geissmar writes in an article for the Croaker entitled "The Haircutters Big Day" about the experience. "Next, next. And those treasured locks of hair fall to the floor amidst a series of groans. My, how could anybody change their mind so many times? Number 18!" She ends her account of the travail by summing up, "Trampled lie my joy and pride. Gone! Gone forever is my hair! Well, at least I don't have to worry anymore, for a while." The day Mr. Ard, came to camp in 1947 was an especially memorable one. He cut 80 girls hair with Robin the first to have her haircut. By the next day many of the girls were comparing their new haircuts with each other and many reassuring comments such as "cute, cute as can be," were heard around camp.

In 1948 140 campers called Illahee home for the summer and along with the 43 counselors, 18 states and 4 foreign countries were represented. Major construction projects were completed during 1947-48. A new barn was built next to the riding ring and with the completion of Pineview Lodge Illahee was positioned to offer even better facilities and service for campers.

The summer of 1948 was an especially memorable one for Illahee campers and their families. During most summers family and friends were invited to spend time with their child on visitation days or on special events such as the annual Swim Pageant - but not 1948. Across the nation the

polio epidemic was spreading panic among young and old alike and no vaccine was available at the time to ward off its effects. During the summer of 1948 Illahee voluntarily issued a camp-wide polio quarantine so that no longer was there an easy come and go between campers and their guests. Certain allowances were made, however. Parents could still visit their child but they could only talk with one another at a designated spot at the entrance to camp and a chain fence separated the parties from actual contact. The epidemic changed the camp's summer routine as well. Most of the yearly trips the girls enjoyed were canceled and the preponderance of camp activities took place on camp property. In spite of the heightened uncertainty, camp went on with a joyful spirit. Tournaments became a regular highlight of the summer. Many friendly competitions involved girls competing against each other on the archery range, on the softball field, at the ping-pong table and on the tennis courts. To carry the tournament theme even further, Robinhood Day was held that summer to honor Robin on her birthday. The camp Glee Club serenaded camp but without the vocal contributions from the boys of Camp Mondamin. "Hat Day" delighted all with hats that campers created out of found objects. The colorful and whimsical hats added a certain flare to the heads of many girls on "hat day." Another fun activity that summer was the camp "Turtle Races." When enough turtles were collected the girls drew a large circle in the grass and the turtles were placed tail end to tail end with the winner being the first turtle to cross the line. The girls stood around the circle yelling and urging their chosen turtle on to victory, but even the most ardent supporter could not convince her turtle to move when, as many of the turtles did, they just ducked their heads inside their shells and refused to have any part of the game. Of course the Hendersonville Horse Show was out for the riders of Illahee but the Illahee Horse Show went on as planned. Even with the noticeable absence of parents in attendance the thrill of the show did not dampen the enthusiasm of the girls. Robin handed out ribbons to the winners but, as was her custom, she emphasized the importance of Sportsmanship as a more important virtue than winning. She was always highlighting the contributions of all the girls so that none felt left out. A few of the popular activities continued as usual. Overnights were taken to the nearby mountaintop of Whalebone Ridge and to a spot at the golf course at the end of the road. And no summer would have been complete without a slide down the ravine at the ever-popular Hi-Lo Mountain. Realizing that there was little chance of encountering people on a river the girls completed a canoe trip from Rosman down the French Broad River ending at a takeout near camp. Several of the girls even went to Pisgah National Forest for an all-day photography trip. Although tournaments and plays and the usual yearly events had always been a part of camp routine, the unusual circumstances of the summer of 48 brought a new spirit of cooperation at Illahee. When the camp season ended one can almost hear in the words of Robin the awe she felt at the happy conclusion of what could have been a very trying situation. At the closing campfire she begins her talk to the girls with a series of "I remember" as she recounts the memorable times during a most memorable summer. An idealist at heart and an optimist in spirit one can hear her building to a crescendo when she concludes, "We can build greater than we dream. Then let us go in unified spirit from Illahee, and let us build toward that one living world in which there shall be peace and fullest life for all."

The summer of 1949 was notable for the newly formed "clubs" that proliferated. There seemed to be a club for almost any behavior considered to have a beneficial effect on the girls. Robin started the "Thoughtfulness Club," continuing to stress her philosophy that good manners, good thoughts, good living and kindness towards others made camp and the world a better place in which to live. Membership into the club was based on small acts of kindness a girl could do to make camp a better place. Acts such as picking up paper around camp, obeying the buddy whistle, coming to activities on time, or opening doors for others, qualified a girl for membership into the club. She used a short poem as a way to help remind campers of the importance of thoughtfulness: "be thoughtful, considerate, kind and full of fun- another day has begun." 1949 also saw the beginning of the "Good Manners Club." Those initiated into this club were the girls

who displayed proper etiquette, (as delineated by Robin,) such as “chew with your mouth closed! Sit up straight! Hold your fork properly!” The “Pine Tree Club” offered membership to those campers who held their stomachs in and their shoulders erect. Clubs were Robin’s way of emphasizing the small things a girl could do to be pleasing to others while benefiting herself as well. Continuing the club idea in 1950, Robin started the “cheerfulness Club.” Becoming a member of this club was simple – being a cheerful presence at Illahee.

Marge Leonard came to Illahee for a weeks visit in the summer of 1949 and was so impressed with what she saw she ended up accepting a position on staff that very summer. She had met Robin and Teeter at a camping convention that winter and from their description of Illahee she wanted to see for herself what Illahee was all about. During the school year Marge was an instructor in the Physical Education Department of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She was a gifted and enthusiastic leader and quickly moved into a significant leadership role at Illahee. For the summer of 1950 she agreed to become Illahee’s Program Director and by 1951 she held the title of Co-Director. From her contacts with students at UNC-G she proved to be an invaluable recruiter and source for many Illahee counselors. Marge went on to be an important presence at Illahee for almost a decade serving as both friend and role-model for campers and able team-player with Robin and Teeter.

The Director’s new home for Robin and Teeter called Pine Crest, was completed over the winter of 1950. They soon opened their doors to Illahee campers and staff by holding parties for the girls of each cabin and their counselors. They delighted in these events. This time together gave them a chance to share the beauty of their new home while allowing them the chance to get to know each camper on a more informal basis. Pine Crest was also the locale for Robin’s “conferences.” At some point during the summer Robin invited each individual camper to her home. They would sit next to the expansive windows that looked out over the pastures, the riding rings and the mountains beyond and talk about what was important and on a camper’s mind. Invariably, sometime during her conference, Robin would stress the importance of “enthusiasm” as a quality in life that each girl must nurture to find life’s rich reward.

Sis Vereen was the camp nurse as well as a surrogate mother for many campers over the 34 summers she spent at Illahee. She came to Illahee in 1948 and continued her faithful service until . Everyone at camp knew Sis’s way of welcoming and instructing at the same time. “Please come to the Wishing Well only after breakfast, rest hour, and dinner except in case of emergencies.” Sis’s role at camp was varied. In 1953 Sis started the “Good Health Club” which included the “Get Plump Club” for underweight girls, the “Palm Tree Club” and the “Pine Tree Club” to help girls achieve perfect posture. Sis led the Pine View girls in discussions on topics such as health, poise, tolerance, self-confidence and appearance. For girls new to camp and experiencing the pangs of homesickness, she would prescribe a couple of “homesick” pills, (sugar pills) to ease the transition to camp. She found it worked wonderfully to soothe the anxiety of being separated from family. Over the winter of 1949 she gave birth to a daughter named Paige. By 1950 both mother and daughter were both at Illahee. Paige was just eight months old her first summer at camp and as reported in the Croaker she had “stolen the hearts of everyone in camp.” That year Sis and Paige lived with the Directors at Pine Crest but most other years she and Paige lived in the old infirmary known as the Paw Paw Patch.

In 1951 camp was full for the eight-week session with 161 campers and a staff of 66. A banner headline in the first Croaker for the summer proudly announced “Largest Camp In History!” 16 states were represented with Georgia leading the way with 42 campers with the majority of Georgia girls coming from Atlanta and Savannah. Pine View had grown to 41 older campers and camp was off to a roaring start. A new Woodland Chapel was being constructed that summer so

Sunday services took place in the Lodge. Riding continued to be popular and supper rides were complimented by Breakfast rides. Seven Illahee girls rode to Camp Keystone for breakfast and seven Keystone campers returned the favor by riding to Illahee. Lorraine Larson joined the staff that summer as the canoe instructor and would continue to be a major influence on Illahee programming for years to come.

When the girls went on their first overnight in 1951 to one of their favorite spots, See-Off Mountain, they did not recognize their old campsite. The trees were gone and fences were everywhere but the view was still the same and the food tasted good after the arduous hike. This was a sign that the land around Camp Illahee was beginning to change. Illahee, though within walking distance from Brevard, had, for most of its history, been an "off the beaten path" kind of place. But by the early 1950's development had begun its inevitable advance. The Illahee Hills housing development was one of the first new communities of up-scale housing in Brevard and new houses were being built right next to camp property lines. The neighboring Brevard Country Club was by this time being developed for new houses. Plans were in the works to pave Illahee road and the little traffic that the road had seen for so many years began to increase. But Illahee adjusted and even though change was happening around it, Camp Illahee continued with its purpose of offering girls the opportunity to grow in character, experience and meaningful friendships.

The lucky girls selected to go on the Smoky Mountain honor trip that year set out for New Found Gap. Upon their arrival they found a suitable camping place along a stream and set up camp. The next challenge that day was a hike to the top of Clingman's Dome. One memorable experience for the girls on the walk that day was the bears they saw along the path. Bears viewed from a distance were one thing but when one visited their campsite that night that was something entirely different. They all were alert and aware of the danger a bear might pose so for the rest of the night the girls "slept (restlessly) with one ear opened." The next day they hiked to the top of the Chimney Tops. This hike proved to be more challenging than they had initially counted on and the reason became obvious when they read a sign on their way back down the path that stated that the hike (the one they had just completed) was for "only the most experienced people." No Smoky Mountain trip would be complete without a stop in Cherokee and in 1951 this included a night at the outdoor drama "Unto These Hills." Illahee campers were used to going to special events around Western North Carolina such as trips to the Biltmore House and the Craftsman's Fair in Asheville, so in 1951 "Unto These Hills" became a regular part of the summer schedule. The eight girls on the Smoky Mountains trip met up with the rest of the girls from Illahee at Cherokee just for this special entertainment. The four busloads of girls from camp had departed early enough to allow for time for shopping in Cherokee but due to delays along the way they arrived too late for any browsing. As one writer states, "both campers and counselors showed magnificent spirit in agreeing to leave it off entirely." In the outdoor amphitheater the girls were treated to the colorful and inspiring story of the Cherokee people but equally impressive was the theater itself. They were amazed to be able to hear each actor as they spoke their lines without any form amplification. Parting ways with the rest of the camp the overnightrters returned to Smokemont where they had set up camp for their second night out. That years Smoky Mountain trip was a real success and as one participant put it, they were "tired but happy with many memories."

The Final Night Banquet received a new name in 1951. It was now called "Night of Friendship." The traditional toasts to Miss Illahee were again the highlight of the evening. The ideal girl, "Miss Illahee," was symbolized as a sunbeam with the Illahee girl as the center of the sun and the rays of sunshine radiated from the center were her special virtues. Miss Illahee received nine toasts expounding on various virtues read by counselors and staff with the Toastmaster

moderating the evening. Virginia Vighi's toast exemplified the rarified atmosphere of the evening: "I raise my toast to Miss Illahee of 1951 and her high ideals. Our Miss Illahee is a fine camper and person. Her life is a pattern of high ideals. To understand her pattern, let us review her characteristics. The characteristic of loving and being loved is hers. Our girl is a perfect example of friendship. She has the ambition and ability to win friends wherever she goes. You can depend on her no end. Always she is willing and ready to help. No one can be found more generous. She shares and receives a joy of knowing she's making someone happy in return. Her time isn't spent in doing glamorous things but just little things, helpful things often known only to her and God. Our fine camper is a quiet person, yet the strongest of leaders. The quality of trusting friends and people is possessed by her. A quality which is too little possessed in this time of turmoil. But don't think Miss Illahee is perfect because then she couldn't be human. She makes mistakes, foolish ones too, but she realizes them and attempts to correct them. She isn't a stuffy person either - - one that walks around with a halo on her head. No, she loves fun as you and I, only she knows when fun ends and hurting people begins. The last example is her cheery smile. Whether skies are gray or blue, you can depend on her smile to carry you through! You may wonder who Miss Illahee patterns her ideals on. She patterns them on Christ, the greatest example of them all. If you also pattern your standards on Christ's example, you, too, can be of highest qualities and of highest ideals."

Honor trips were awarded to older campers who excelled in certain areas of pioneering activities. Trips to the Smoky Mountains had been a yearly event from the start and with growing interest in camping and the expanding outdoor program the need arose for a place to store the ever-increasing array of camping and outdoor equipment. The first "Trips Room" was organized in 1952. Lining it selves were axes, tents, cooking utensils, and sleeping bags - all the things needed for the expanding Trips Program. During their time in an activity entitled Pioneering, the girls learned how to saw and chop wood, how to build a fire, safe ways to handle a knife, how to prepare a meal in the outdoor cooking class, and how to tie knots including at least four different kinds of lashes needed for putting up a tent. In an article in the July issue of the Croaker our writer tells of the expertise being learned in the Pioneering classes: "This week, the pioneering girls have been practicing chopping wood. They take turns with the axes and have lots of fun chopping away on logs." When these skills were mastered they were qualified and ready to go to Lake Burton. The first trip to Lake Burton occurred in 1950 and, like Pisgah Pines in an earlier era, this out-of-the-way spot became an outpost camp for Illahee. Camp Illahee leased a cabin and a small parcel of land from the state of Georgia that served as a home base for their experience. In those days Lake Burton was an undeveloped lake nestled in the mountains of North Georgia outside the town of Clayton. One camper described Lake Burton this way in a 1952 Croaker article: "The lake itself is about thirty-five miles long. Beautiful green, gray, and purple mountains surround the lake as if guarding it from the outside world. Really the lake is a world all in itself. The cool, clear green waters are so inviting that you can't wait to swim in them." The girls spent gleeful days sailing, canoeing, swimming and cooking over an open fire, but the camping trip on the second day was the centerpiece of the Lake Burton experience. On the second morning the canoes or sailboats were loaded with the necessary supplies for an overnight with such items as sleeping bags, food, and cooking utensils. Then it was time to push off from shore for the eight-mile paddle to a distant campsite whimsically named "The Laughing Place." When the tents were up and the geared safely stored away the girls set off on a leisurely evening sail. They would drift along the lakeshore as the sky darkened, slowly sailing until the moon appeared in the sky. In a descriptive narrative from the very first time Illahee girls went to Lake Burton one camper wrote, "our sail boats were really heeling too. There was a big wind on this beautiful lake and as we sped through the crystal clear green waters it made our hearts leap with excitement. It made you feel inside that you wanted to burst out with the news to the whole world of this glorious spot so close to Heaven." 1957 was the last year that Illahee used Lake

Burton as an outpost camp but other places such as Lake Adger and Nantahala Lake were destinations for the same kind of experience in subsequent years. For girls who had spent time at Lake Burton, however, neither experience held the same kind of allure. After the early 1960's canoe and sailboat camping ceased to be an annual event.

Any day at Illahee the girls could choose to participate in many different activities. The list of activities included: canoeing, dramatics, riflery, land sports, riding, exploring, crafts, swimming, archery, woodcraft, creative writing, choir, and folk dancing. Land sports covered a myriad of activities including softball, badminton, volleyball, tennis, archery, horseshoes, and a new activity that the campers liked very much – tetherball. In 1952, listed under the area of “land sports,” Nancy Maples offered her leadership and skill at golf with the campers for the first time. The next summer, after talking with the Pine View girls, it was decided that she would teach a class on golf designed especially for older campers. They met on the softball field the first week to learn how to handle different clubs and soon thereafter they tested their new knowledge at the Brevard Country Club.

Riflery was a sport that most girls had never tried before coming to camp but over the years it became one of the most popular activities. Illahee was licensed by the American Rifle Association and girls were able to earn their marksmanship awards while at camp. Girls were honored when they accomplished a good score on the range and even the youngest campers could participate. At the rifle range campers used two different categories of rifles. The younger campers used spring-type air rifles and for girls over ten, .22 caliber rifles were used. The young campers enjoyed shooting at paper animal targets and the older girls used traditional circle targets. In 1959 Skip and Dolly Thomas came to Illahee for the first time as instructors and riflery became, not just an activity the girls loved, but a place where they experienced love. Bolstered by their nurturing and lively presence the girls came to love Skip and Dolly and many to this day remember vividly not only their instruction at the rifle range but their life instructions as well. Skip would call out to the girls, “Ready on the right? Ready on the left? Ready on the firing line? Commence firing!” After four years under the leadership of the Thomas' the riflery program had become so popular that out of the 195 campers in 1962, 180 of them signed up for riflery. In 1962 Col. Alexander from the National Rifle Association inspected the rifle range at Illahee and he commended the camp for having a riflery program that ranked highest among girls camps in the Eastern United States. Skip and Dolly continued to devote themselves each summer to the girls of Illahee and more will be told of them at a later time.

In 1952 construction began on a new office and recreation space for the girls and the office staff. During the winter of that year Robin and Teeter took a cruise to the Caribbean and upon their return they named the new facility the S.S. Holiday after their memorable time. Anecdotal stories have it that the new building reminded them of a ship with the porch resembling a ship's deck. 1952 was also the first year that Frances Ferrell from Brevard came to Illahee to be camp secretary. For 29 years she served as Robin's personal secretary writing correspondence, keeping in touch with the campers, and making sure that the camp flowed smoothly even during the off-season. The annual Illahee horse show was postponed due to rain for the first time since 1939. The water pageant that year was a take-off on Peter Pan, a very popular Broadway Show at the time. The night before the final banquet a gala Mardi Gras was celebrated at camp. The theme for the day was “The four Seasons Around Lake Illahee” and a “krewe” of canoeist showed their skills before the appreciative girls that afternoon. The idea for the occasion came from Dorothy Babin, a dance instructor from New Orleans. She brought many of her costumes from the Mardi Gras with her to camp and the evening of the Mardi Gras the girls donned her elaborate attire and held the first Masquerade Ball at Illahee. Mr. Dye was chosen King of the Mardi Gras event and part of his duties included sitting on his throne and greeting the ladies that were presented to him.

The Gymkhana continued as an annual horse-riding event. The Dyes officiated the event that included a new fun activity -- the horse doughnut race. Girls laughed at the bareback riding contest as they watched their fellow campers trying to mount and then stay on a horse without a saddle. The balloon-bursting contest was perhaps the highlight of the afternoon. Each rider tied a balloon around her arm and set out to burst the balloon of competing riders until only one rider remained. In 1953 a "canoekhana" was added to the other competitive events of the summer and, as with the other events with the suffix "khana," in it two teams competed against each other with one team being the Blue Team and the other the Gold Team. Some of the events in the "canoekhana" were canoe-over-canoe rescue, bobbing, hand paddling, the deck race, band and go, the standing race and others.

Lifesaving classes were an integral part of the Illahee activities program from the beginning. The Mcleod's first introduced Lifesaving in the 1920's and during Robin's time as Director it remained a substantive program for advanced swimmers. Junior Lifesaving classes were offered as well for girls ages 12-15. To qualify for the Junior Lifesaving class girls had to pass several requirements from diving, swimming 200 yards, treading water for 30 seconds and floating for 60 seconds. Senior Lifesaving was offered to girls 16 and over and the requirements were the same except that in Senior Lifesaving the candidates had to swim for 440 yards continuously.

For the summer of 1953 Robin's birthday was an extravagant all-day affair. Camp went about the usual efforts to lavish Robin and Teeter with gifts, both handmade and bought, and the "splendiferous" birthday cake baked by the George Thornton, the camp chef, was the largest cake anyone could remember as year after year the cakes kept getting larger.

Hansel and Gretel was the theme for the 1953 Water Pageant and, as was typical for Robin, she declared it "the best pageant ever." The day the Water Pageant took place included a full day of activities for campers and their guests. A special treat for family and guests was browsing through the many arts and crafts items on display in the SS Holiday.

Polio continued to be a threat to camp activities during the summer of 1953. A reported outbreak of polio in Eastern North Carolina caused alarm all the way to Camp Illahee. The Hendersonville Horse Show was on the camp's schedule and Robin knew how much the girls looked forward to the yearly event. But was it safe to go and be in a crowd of people when the poliovirus was still spreading? It was a crisis for Robin. Knowing what a disappointment it would be for the girls not to have the chance to ride in such a prestigious horseshow she had to make a tough decision. Gathering doctors, nurses, parents, campers and counselors together at Pine Crest she put it to a vote and by a large margin the decision was made to stay away from the horse show. She was so impressed by the groups decision that she stated in the "Robin's Note" section of the Croaker that "I have attended camps since I was ten years old and again I say that I have never, in any other camp, or even here at Illahee, seem a more unselfish, grown-up group!" Still, knowing what a disappointment this would be for some riders, she ended her column on an optimistic note by saying "in 1954 let's go to the Hendersonville Horse Show and just outdo ourselves!" Frances Owen had written a journal about her experience that summer at Illahee that was printed in the Log. She expressed her feeling by saying, "I am trying hard to be a good sport about the whole affair, for I wanted to go....it was my first opportunity to be in a really big horse show, but like the majority of the girls, we think it is wiser not to take a chance." In the place of the Hendersonville Horse Show, Illahee held its own horse show on camp property and called it "The Little Hendersonville Horse Show." Many days later Owens writes of the experience, "The Little Hendersonville Horse Show was this afternoon, and it was perfect!" It was a part of Robin's cautious nature to try and see trouble before it happened. Always attentive to any dangers that

might occur at camp, (or out of camp for that matter,) she displayed her careful temperament on this occasion. But by having the girls look forward to the next summer she used her encouraging, optimistic side as well and all went smoothly.

During the early 1950's the Illahee Glee Club drew many campers to the summer chorus. The 100 girls who signed up for the Glee Club in 1952 were separated into three sections of singers - altos, second sopranos and first sopranos. Along with the Combined Chorus with Camp Mondamin, the other premier event for Choral singing was the Water Pageant. This was in keeping with Robin and Teeter's emphasis on the classical arts. Classical music was promoted as high art by Robin and Teeter and they continually encouraged campers to display their talents before the rest of the camp. One such event took place in the summer of 1952. Three talented pianists were among the Illahee campers that summer and together, through music, they depicted the Life of Chopin. The first Illahee orchestra also took part in the evening festivities. Consisting of clarinets, recorders, and a guitar they too played music from Chopin.

One of the theme days each summer was Surprise Day. As the campers awoke to Surprise Day in 1955 Teeter came charging down from Pinecrest on her wooden steed, (Teeter, evidently did not like to ride horses) clearing the path for Robin and Marge. Robin rode (and posted, as several riding enthusiasts noticed) one of the horses named Ace. Marge brought up the rear galloping along on foot. This set in motion a day filled with extra ordinary fun. Campers got to sleep in longer than usual and pajamas were acceptable attire for breakfast. When they arrived at their breakfast tables their counselors were there to serve them their food. But the great surprise of the day occurred when the entire camp lined up single file on that rainy evening, and walked to the Brevard Country Club filled with anticipation. What they found upon their arrival was "Illahee Wonderland" an evening filled with music, skits and funny songs. The finale of the evening was the rhythm band conducted by Teeter dressed up as a majorette and behind her, while the band was playing a snappy tune, Marge Leonard did the Charleston. In 1959 "surprise day" became a "strange day." The perennial favorite the "do-do" bird made the rounds of the girl's cabins. The point of the game was to find the bird then hide it in another cabin as quickly as possible for losers had the dubious honor of having to present the evening program.

The Smoky Mountain trip had long been a favorite summer camp activity. In 1955 Mt. LeConte became the destination for the girls and continued to be for years to come. That year a four-day trip for the girls was planned but the trip took several unexpected turns. While camped on top of Mt. LeConte on the second night of their adventure it rained so hard that the girls had to find shelter at the LeConte Lodge for the night. The next morning they returned to their campsite to discover that in the rush to get out of the rain the breakfast tins of meat were left behind. A ranger brought them a mangled piece of tin from their campsite where a bear had tried to eat their breakfast. Salvaging what was left of the food they enjoyed a breakfast of doughnuts, prunes, cocoa, and bread with peanut butter and jelly. The next day a flat tire slowed them down and on the third night, gnats were a bothersome ordeal, but as was reported, they all made it back to Illahee "tired but happy."

In 1962 the "Big Smoky Trip" was planned as usual following a camping routine that had developed over the years. The girls camped the first night near Heintooga Gap in preparation for the eight-mile hike to the top of Mr. LeConte the next day. There they would camp on the summit for the night and enjoy the panoramic view from the top. The last night was spent at the Chimney's Campground near Gatlinburg. Most of the girls had never been challenged like they were on the hike to the top of LeConte and though eager to arrive on the summit, there were times along the way that the agony of the hike took over. An ingenious system of walking was devised in which they would walk for fourteen minutes, rest for one minute, walk for ten minutes and rest

for five. It proved an effective way to reach the top. When they finally got to the top they found, much to their delight, that a boy's camp from Tennessee was camped in the area as well. They joined the boys in singing and sharing their stories for the rest of the evening. The strenuous hike was not always the most adventuresome part of the trip. Bears were a common occurrence for the girls and "bear-hunting" on this trip "met with much success." On the way back to Illahee the girls on the 1962 trip wrote a song to the tune of "Battle of New Orleans" that told of their adventures.

We took our little hatchets and we took our little packs,
And we started out a-hiking at the point of Newfound Gap.
And we went straight up the mountain with the load upon our back
And we smiled at all the peeps we met along the track.

Chorus

Oh, we hiked those miles but the trail kept a-coming
Along the Boulevard of the night LeConte.
We puffed and we panted as we climbed straight (up and down) the mountains.
We thought we'd never make it to the summit and end of our jaunt.

We reached the top of the mount by three;
Met by forty boys from a camp in Tennessee.
And by the glow of the camp fire light
We sang with the guitar until the still of the night.

Then with visions of bears and snakes in our heads
We jumped into our downy double decker double beds.
The next thing we knew we were sliding down the slopes,
Creeping round the cliffs, and clinging to the ropes.

A new camper experience was tested for the summer of 1956. Calling the new initiative The Illahee Travel Club eight girls signed up to tour the country under the auspices of Camp Illahee. Taking camping and cooking equipment with them they set out from Illahee to points West. Staying in State Parks and the occasional hotel room along the way their Western destination was Lake Louise in Canada. The Travel Club returned and shared movies and commentary about their trip. Their tales sparked the imaginations of the rest of the camp and ideas for the next summer's trip ran wild. High on the list of suggestions for the summer of 1957 were Hawaii or perhaps an ocean steamer that could take the girls from North Carolina and arrive in California. Though there had been high hopes that the Illahee Travel Club would become a yearly camp adventure for older girls, 1956 was the only summer of its existence.

For the summer of 1956 Robin's Birthday continued to be impressive. That year the theme of her birthday was an Hawaiian luau complete with canoe formations and flaming torches. The Water Pageant that summer was a rendition of Cinderella and trips away from camp included the Craftsman's Fair in Asheville and the annual trip to Cherokee to see Unto These Hills. Camp Sequoyah again join Illahee in a combined Glee Club sing and the Smoky Mountain trip was eventful as usual. 39 Illahee girls won ribbons at the Hendersonville Horse Show and night tennis was available for the first time after Oliver and his crew erected poles with lights attached to the great appreciation of the girls.

As a youthful rock-and-roll culture began to influence young people around the country Illahee took it in stride. The Pine View girls gave a "Rock and Roll" party in the Lodge that they renamed for the evening - "Club 56." Dr. Jive narrated the evening's festivities and one camper

did an Elvis Pressley imitation while another four girls pantomimed the song "Seventeen." The Illahee Horse Show continued to be a successful yearly event and the Final Night Banquet theme that summer was "Frontierland" complete with a split rail fence in the dining hall.

During the summer of 1956 ground was cleared and a dam built for a new lake. The clay for the dam was taken from a hillside next to the barn leaving a level place that eventually became a riding ring for beginning riders but it wasn't until the summer of 1957 that campers had use of the lake. With the new addition of the lake more water skills could be learned. Surfboarding was popular with the girls as was canoeing, but the water bike - a large water-wheeled contraption - was especially popular. So popular was the water bike that during free time the girls would line up to give it a try. A putting green had been added during the winter of 1958 and with the availability of the Brevard Country Club golf continued as an important camp activity. The arts were always an integral part of Illahee but in the latter part of the 50's Creative Writing, Modern Dance, and Drawing were activities that all the girls were encouraged to take. By 1959 a new Outdoor Chapel was built along the shores of the new canoe lake offering the girls a setting of beauty and inspiration in which to worship.

As the decade of the 1950's came to an end Robin, Teeter, and Marge could look back at all the growth of the camp facilities; the steady enrollment of campers; the success of the activities and programs and feel confident that Illahee was on solid financial and programmatic footing. Camp Illahee was truly a wonderful and memorable camp experience for all who were fortunate to be a part of it. Though they had adapted to the changing times they still held to the foundational principles that shaped Illahee during their time of leadership - kindness to others; reverence for nature; an appreciation for God as seen in nature and through each other; good sportsmanship; the Golden Rule; and the importance of having fun. But with the advent of the 1960's a turbulent time of change emerged. Would the Directors hold fast to the values that had been so effective for the girls of Camp Illahee for 20 years or would the cultural shift that was taking place in the 60's change the direction of the camp?

In 1960 Illahee had grown to include 260 campers, counselors and staff and as Robin reminded all of them if each one smiled at someone 20 times a day, the camp will be blessed with 5,200 smiles a day. Realizing the need to keep camp relevant to the times water skiing at Boyd's Lake was added to the summer schedule. One of the favorite evening programs was humorous take-offs on popular television shows such as "This Is Your Life." Dances continued to be one of the favorite evening activities especially for the older girls. Camp Carolina was the boys camp most often invited to dances at Illahee, but Camp Tsali, and later, Camp Deerewood were also included. In 1962 even Hillbrook had a dance with Camp Carolina. Minerva Giles, one of the Hillbrook counselors for the summer, related the activities of the evening this way: "For the first few minutes, silence prevailed except for a giggle now and then from either the boy's corner or the girls' corner. Then, as they jumped into action with a lively square dance the ice was broken. When we walked in the door, some of the little boys were hiding under the tables. They looked as though their last moments of life had come." Camp Carolina came to Illahee for afternoon tennis matches and this became a regular activity for the tennis players. At the traditional Big Sisters and Little Sisters party older girls and younger girls were paired as each other's sisters for the summer. Robin, Teeter, and Marge held hill parties at Pinecrest during the summer to allow the girls a more informal way to get to know them. Lake Toxaway became the new outpost for girls on overnights and sailing again became a popular activity. The French Broad River canoe trips continued a tradition started during the first years of camp but now they were 20-mile excursions beginning in Rosman and ending near camp with a stop at "lunch rock" for rest and food. Outings to the Ruby mine outside of Franklin, North Carolina gave the girls a chance to find gems among the sludge, but as one Croaker writer expressed it, "don't think it is easy."

Everyone works! Even though the ride to the ruby mines and back is tiring and the mud is practically knee-deep, everyone has a wonderful time finding the precious stones.” The Creative Writing group visited both the Thomas Wolfe House in Asheville and in 1962 they all piled into the camp station wagon to go to a play about Robert and Elizabeth Browning at the Flat Rock Playhouse. “The Sound of Music” was chosen as the theme for the 1961 Water Pageant borrowing on the popularity of the then current Broadway play. An operetta entitled, “The Man With The Crooked Nose,” was staged by Drama club that summer. The annual “Sing At the Lake” was a meaningful tradition and continued as such even with the move to the canoe lake in 1961. On those memorable evenings each hill gathered on a different side of the lake near a blazing campfire whose glow was reflected in the water and then, beginning with Hillbrook, sang to each other.

Each year camp enrollment continued to be full. So it was in 1963. Some of the summers highlights included: “I’m Pinocchio!” the theme for the summer’s Water Pageant; Robin’s birthday celebrated her “Young at Heart” disposition; the girls continued to excel at riflery with 173 girls out of 175 taking up the challenge and the Craftsman’s Fair was a big hit. Two Smoky Mountain trips left from Illahee and the Pine View girls enjoyed a first -- a hayride in Pisgah Forest. Ukeleles were all the rage up on Pine View that summer as the popularity of Folk music prompted many girls to learn to play. By 1964 there were 21 states represented among the campers and counselors at Illahee. “Pack Trips” from Illahee to a campsite in the Cathy’s creek section of Pisgah National Forest had been added to the summer schedule. On these pack trips the girls carried their own backpacks and food and hiked from Illahee to the site. Cathy’s Creek was mainly used as a testing ground for the more physically demanding Smoky Mountains trip. Sliding Rock continued to be a summer highlight with all cabin groups going to the slippery rocks at least once during the summer. Weaving looms became a favorite camp pastime and many beautiful articles were made on them. The tradition of walking in pairs to the Woodland Chapel began in the early 60’s. Walking together in their Sunday Whites the girls would quietly approach the Woodland Chapel as a way to mark the difference between regular camp activities and worship. “Hansel and Gretel” was the summer operetta for the summer of ’63 and “Swan Lake” was a successful Water Pageant. The Hendersonville Horse Show and the Illahee Horse Show were still the high points for the Riding Program.

The arts through Drama, Nature, Creative Writing, and Dance took up more and more of the program activities. By this time Robin had been making Camp Illahee a special place for girls for nearly 30 years. She was always mindful of the risks of running a camp, and as she got older that concern for camper safety increased. Nearing retirement age she came to see that it was time for someone else to carry the torch for Illahee and by 1968 she had made the decision to retire from camp Directing at Illahee.

The Final Night Banquet on August 12, 1969 was the last event that Robin and Teeter presided over as Directors. Appropriately, the theme for the evening talks was entitled “A Walk With Me....At Illahee.” It was the culminating event of the summer and a special meal was served, awards were presented, the annual gift to Oliver Boyd was given to him and his family, and as always, there was plenty of singing. The evening went on with the usual end of summer excitement but amidst all the cheering and laughing and singing there was a note of sadness to the celebratory atmosphere. Everyone knew that this was the last time they would sit together with their beloved directors. On the back cover of the evenings brochure there was a written tribute to the two. Composed as a poem with no particular attribution of authorship it expressed in a heartfelt way the sentiments and feelings of all those (estimated at 10,000) girls who had ever been influenced by Robin and Teeter. It reads as follows: Most precious of all, at Illahee—we have walked with Robin and Teeter; A walk that will never be forgotten. A walk of kindness, of

patience, of understanding, of humility; A walk of happiness, of joys, of smiles, of fun; A walk of love—encompassing each camper and counselor that has ever entered the gates of Illahee. To our beloved two, we dedicate ourselves, our time, our energy and efforts to help carry on that spirit which you have started, developed, nourished and dreamed of for this camp. Thank you, Robin and Teeter, for walking with us through the years...For, “this is camp...in all its form...so simple, so wondrous, so everlasting...”

On a warm spring day in 1945 a young undergraduate student at Florida State University from Jacksonville, Florida had just shown up for her kinesiology class. She was especially anxious that morning for she was scheduled to give a class presentation. As her classmates settled down for the morning's lecture the teacher asked if anyone was interested in meeting with two women who needed counselors to teach swimming at a camp in North Carolina but to qualify one had to have a Red Cross Safety Instruction Certificate. This was her chance. She had been scheduled to make a class presentation that morning and this was a way to postpone the dreaded presentation and skip class with the teacher's permission. She was the first one out the door. Down the stairs she went to meet the women knowing full well that she had no intention of going to North Carolina to a girl's summer camp with the odd name of Illahee. But something happened during that meeting. She began to change her mind. The two women (Robin and Teeter) made the camp sound so attractive that before she knew it she had agreed to serve at the waterfront, be Head of Hill for Pineview and teach riflery and folk dancing as well. By the end of summer, after the Head of the Waterfront had to leave camp, she was assigned her duties as well. So in June of 1945 Mary Frances “Frankie” Hall was on her way from Florida to North Carolina for the first of many summers that would eventually lead her to one day owning and directing Camp Illahee.

When she arrived at Illahee for her first summer she went to Pineview to take a look at the cabins that she would be supervising. What she found were two canvas sided tents with wooden floors and space for six girls in each tent and two cabins of ten campers each. There was only one latrine and although it was primitive the challenge was enticing to her. From the very first day she knew that Illahee was a special place and she set about making the most of her days that summer. Frankie invested herself in camp leading the waterfront activities, mentoring the girls of Pineview and actively participating in all aspects of camp life. She enjoyed Illahee, so much so that she returned for the next two summers.

Frankie wanted to be a teacher. Her first job out of college was a teaching position in the Physical Education Department at Mainland High School in Daytona Beach, Florida but camps continued to be an important part of her life. Like Robin and Teeter before her she too was involved with Girls Scouts of America. During the summer of 1948 she was the Director of Deer Lake Girl Scout Camp in Ocala Forest, Florida. She enjoyed the camp environment but at that time in her life she felt called to be a teacher at the university level. She enrolled in the Graduate program in Higher Education at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa graduating in 1949 with an M.A. degree. Her gifts as a teacher were recognized by her alma mater and by the time she graduated from Iowa she was a full-time faculty member at Florida State University. During the 1950's her life was filled with teaching at Florida State, working on her PHD, and helping her students develop their potential as future teachers and coaches. But in the spring of 1958, after her Ph.D. was finally behind her, the allure of Illahee once again beckoned. Although it was late in the spring she called Robin though she saw little chance of there being a space available for her on the staff for that summer. Robin assured her that there was a place for her and that she should make plans to spend her summer at Illahee. After many years away she once again found herself in the welcoming beauty of Illahee. In 1958 she came on staff as a trip leader. It was an important role at camp and Frankie knew she had a unique opportunity. She wanted to try out

some new ideas that she felt would broaden the girl's abilities and expand their self-understanding. As a trip leader she set out to grow the adventure program through hiking, canoeing, and overnights for the girls. Every day there was a hike to take or an overnight to prepare for or an adventure activity that complimented and expanded the traditional activities Illahee was known for. Now an "Illahee Girl" could invest herself in outdoor adventures like never before in addition to exhibiting the good manners and the flair for maneuvering horses like always. Most of the girls had never tried this kind of challenging adventure. Though Robin's cautious nature was intuitively opposed to such "high risk" activities she trusted Frankie to be a competent leader. As Frankie explained it "she approved but she didn't want to watch."

Frankie loved Illahee and felt that it was like a second home for her. During the summers of 1959 and 1960 she would pack her car and head back to Illahee after her spring exams were given and her grades submitted at Florida State. Her responsibilities at Illahee continued to increase with each successive summer. She was counted on to be a trips leader and in 1959 she was also given the position as the Director for the C.I.T. program. She reveled in her time at Illahee but by the end of the camp in 1960 she knew, sadly, that this was to be her last summer at Illahee. Her career in higher education was demanding more of her time and as Chair of the Graduate Program in the Physical Education Department at Florida State she knew that her academic duties were going to require her to be at Florida State full time. There was no other choice. She did have one connection with Illahee that she knew she could rely on to keep her in touch with the camp she loved so much: her sister, Sis Vereen. By this time Sis was a much-loved summer fixture at Illahee serving as the camp nurse for a total of 34 summers. But that was not all. Not only would she have a first-hand staff accounting from Sis but Sis had a young daughter, Paige, who almost "grew up" at Illahee. Coming to Illahee as a toddler Paige was the young child all the girls liked to hold or be seen walking around camp with. As Paige grew older she then came to Illahee as a camper for many years and finally, culminating her Illahee experience as a counselor. There was no way that Illahee was about to fade from the mind and heart of Frankie.

For the next eight years Frankie devoted herself to her students and the responsibilities of her chosen profession. She was in a university setting in an administrative position during a time of cultural change and civil unrest that was bursting out on college campuses of the nation. As Bob Dylan, in an anthem of the age put it, "The Times They Are A'Changin'" and she experienced the changing times first hand as the Chair of the Graduate Program in Physical Education at Florida State University. As the backlash to the Vietnam War led to student protests she watched as her beloved campus became embroiled in the chaos of the day. Her natural idealism and the hopes she cherished for her University and for her students began to undergo a change in the late 60's as the Administration of her institution abdicated much of its directional responsibility. As she put it "the students were in control." She also grew more frustrated by the attitude of the students. As Frankie stated it, "the students were interested in a degree but not an education."

At Illahee the summers continued to unfold in predictable and lively fashion. Almost magically, joy and determination and friendships continued to shape the lives of young girls. It was a safe, beautiful environment that seemed somehow set apart from much of the noise of the world. Even though Illahee remained the "Heavenly World" a different change was coming to Illahee. Quietly growing in the lives of Robin and Teeter was the awareness that they had a difficult decision to make. Robin had been Director of Illahee for nearly three decades and Teeter had invested almost as much time and even though their love of camping and their affection for the girls of Illahee had not diminished some of their energy had. They both felt that the time to retire was near. If we could look back to the year 1967 during the off-season we would probably see Robin and Teeter sitting on their porch at Pinecrest and looking out over the beauty of the canoe lake and the mountains in the distance and invariably their conversations would turn to the topic of

retirement. They felt they could retire if they could find the right person or persons to continue the tradition of quality camping for which Illahee was known and to which they had devoted much of their lives. Though there were probably many able persons who could capably carry on what had been established at Illahee, they knew the two persons they wanted to see as Directors and they were Frankie Hall and Lo Larson. They saw in Frankie a woman of keen intellect and untiring energy who loved Camp Illahee. She had experience and had proved her leadership during the years she spent at camp. It is worth noting that this wasn't the first time Robin had considered Frankie and Lo as possible people to be Illahee's next Directors. In the early 60's Robin made a similar proposal to Frankie. At the time Frankie's commitment to her career in higher education was too great though she seriously pondered the possibility. By 1969 her disillusionment with the state of higher education found her exploring other possibilities for her life. In the spring of 1968 she had an interview for a position in the Physical Education Department at a college in Virginia. On the way home from the interview she stopped to visit Lo in Asheville and Lo suggested that they make a trip to Illahee to visit with Robin and Teeter. It was on this occasion that Robin presented Frankie and Lo with the same proposal she had made in the early 60's – she wanted Frankie and Lo to follow her as Directors of Camp Illahee. Frankie mulled over in her mind the many connections to Illahee she had over the years, from her days as a young college-aged counselor to the later years as trips leader. She remembered all the family connections that kept her involved with Illahee through Sis Vereen and Paige and the joy she found in camping, but especially prominent in her thoughts were the girls who had made Illahee such a great place. Illahee had never gotten out of Frankie's blood and when the door opened this time she was ready. Neither Frankie nor Lo had the funds to make the required down payment so Lo got together some family financing and Frankie sold just about everything she owned (except her log cabin at Toxaway and her hand made walnut hutch) to get the money. She sold her house, car, furniture, and even her academic regalia to collect the funds. Robin, Teeter, Frankie and Lo met together in the spring of 1969 and Frankie and Lo decided that this was what they wanted to do as a team. They knew the challenges before them were great but they both felt up to the task. Frankie packed up her belongings in Tallahassee and moved to Illahee determined to keep alive the traditions as well as all the intangibles that had made Illahee such a special part of the lives of so many people. For one summer Frankie and Lo worked under the tutelage of Robin and Teeter learning the ropes and becoming acquainted with the busy routines that enabled camp to run smoothly. In October of 1969 they became the official owners of Camp Illahee.

After 30 years Illahee had undeniably become closely identified with Robin and Teeter's leadership. Realizing this, Robin and Teeter, in a generous spirit of cooperation, took it upon themselves to assure campers and their parents that Frankie and Lo were the perfect women to take over for them. In the camp brochure for 1970 in an "Open Letter to Parents" Robin included the following remarks: "Treva Tilley and I proudly present to you the new owners and directors of Camp Illahee, Dr. Mary Frances Hall and Miss Lorraine Lee Larson. We believe sincerely that we have found two perfect young women to carry on the high standards and the philosophy of our camp.....'Frankie' and 'Lo', both former staff members here have the ideal professional training and outgoing personalities to direct Illahee. They love people, from the youngest child to the oldest counselor. They are aware of the beauty in a person, in nature, in all forms of art...They have dedicated their lives to creating a truly 'child-centered world' at Illahee...We know that the two of them will receive the same love and loyalty given to Illahee and to us over the years. We welcome them to the Illahee family with happiness!" Corinne Chisholm Frost seconded Robin's endorsement by adding these thoughts in her own letter, "Of the new owners and directors, both of whom I know well as being creative, brilliant and joyous, I can say they have grown up professionally trained for the care of growing girls, and -- beyond this special competence, they live 'that something' called love which is an essential quality of Illahee." The underlying message was "continuity." The letters reassured the parents of Illahee campers that they could

count on an almost seamless transition in leadership and that Illahee could enter confidently and positively into the next phase in her history.

In the same spirit, Frankie and Lo also adopted the theme of “continuity” assuring campers, parents and alumnae that Illahee would stay much the same as always. In the same 1970 brochure under the heading “To Be Remembered,” Frankie reminisced how on a Sunday afternoon in late September of 1969 a reception was held at Pinecrest in honor of Illahee’s new Directors and to honor and remember the contributions Robin and Teeter made to Illahee and to the lives of so many girls. Frankie says in the tribute, “countless gifts of the spirit (and the spirit of Robin and Teeter) now pervade and penetrate every facet of life in Camp Illahee. Deep in the hearts of the new directors, these priceless gifts are memorialized: To Be Remembered.” She was saying, in essence, that she and Lo would draw on that spirit to inform their own leadership in the coming years. So significant was their legacy that it was important to remember them and emulate their best traits.

In October of 1969, Frankie and Lo moved into the basement of Pinecrest while Robin and Teeter temporarily lived upstairs. The original purchase agreement had Robin and Teeter reserving six acres on which Pinecrest was located. They wanted to continue to own Pinecrest and the surrounding land, allowing the new Directors the use of the Pineview cabins and Lodge during the summer. After that first winter, however, they determined that it would be best to relocate to Florida and pursue their retirement there. For two years they kept the land unwilling to give up their association with Illahee completely but as they settled more comfortably into their new home in Fort Myers, Florida they agreed to sell their parcel of land back to camp and from that point onward their connections to Illahee were limited.

For two years Lo Larson, whom Frankie had known since the days when she was her student at Florida State, served as Co-Director along with Frankie. But other sources help came from the people who knew the ins and outs of camp such as Frances Ferrell Ormand, Maria Culp, and Sis Vereen. They enabled the transition to be a smooth one. As Frankie says, “they really saved our hides more than once.” Lo had been associated with Illahee since 1951 serving in various capacities including Program Director. During the school year she was a teacher at Lee Edwards High School in Asheville, North Carolina (now Asheville High). Because she was such a positive influence on her students she also proved an able recruiter enlisting the help of many qualified summer counselors for Illahee. Her intimate knowledge of the “Illahee way” offered needed continuity and valuable experience as the change in leadership took place.

Oliver Byrd retired in 1970 and turned over the keys to Mr. Ernie Rollins. Before he left he offered Frankie some sage advice about the smooth operation of camp. “Two things you need to know,” he told her, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it, and water’s gonna run downhill.” Although retired from the daily caretaker’s duties, Oliver continued to help when needed. Because of his service to Illahee he was honored in 1974 with the naming of the barn in his honor. A plaque bearing his name declares the barn shall be known as the “Byrd Barn” from now on.

When Frankie and Lo took over the leadership of Illahee they encountered a tremendous learning curve. There were no job descriptions for being directors and no clearly marked separation of duties and what ever needed to be done one of them did it. Having equal say as to the operations and direction of Illahee proved to be difficult and at first problems weren’t dealt with. Lo was experienced as the Program Director and she assumed much of those responsibilities. Frankie spent much of her time directing the counselors and helping them to see their responsibilities and devotion to the campers. Working with the counselors was difficult at first. In Frankie’s estimation it was the counselors who had changed the most over the years. When she was a

counselor in the 40's and 50's there was a spirit of cooperation and counselors accepted their myriad responsibilities. By the 1970's the young women counselors who came to camp came to enjoy themselves more than to serve as role models for young girls. Frankie wanted to help them see the value and the necessity of accepting the necessary responsibilities that the job required. It was challenging but good results were forthcoming. By the 1980's she was confident that the old sense of responsibility and devotion to campers was back and the counselors were living up to the high standards that were expected of them.

The first summer that Frankie and Lo were Directors was the summer of 1970. There was a three-week "pre-camp" and a six-week regular camp with a total enrollment of 175 girls for each camp. Fortunately for the new directors camp was full that summer and they soon realized that girls came to Illahee for the experiences gained and the lifelong friendships made. As Frankie puts it, "the physical buildings were not camp, it was the relationships, program, the learning and the leadership that was the value of camp. It was the camaraderie of friends that really cared about you." By the end of pre-camp the new directors were finding their stride and the uncertainty they had about the success of camp was evolving into a fresh confidence. In a letter to all campers and counselors dated June 30, 1970 they write, "We must candidly admit that we were a little nervous about our first summer, as we're sure some of you were. But we should have known that the "Illahee spirit" that Robin and Teeter worked for, loved for, planned for, and prayed for, would be reflected in the lives of old campers and counselors and perceived by the new campers and counselors....We hope that we continue in the footsteps that Robin and Teeter started....You have brought meaning to the mountains and lakes of this beautiful heavenly world. You have helped us to better see our shortcomings, but you have renewed our faith in life's verities."

Frankie and Lo were careful to offer continuity in programming as well, staffing most of the same activities that were offered during the directorship of Robin and Teeter. At the riflery range girls still strove to win NRA certifications. In the Busy Bee various arts and crafts projects were completed and looms were still strung for weavings. Girls still eyed targets at the archery range and golf fundamentals were now taught on the new par three course on camp property. At the barn and in the riding rings the horseback-riding program continued to flourish. At the swim lake girls practiced their Red Cross skills and synchronized swimming was still an elective activity. The drama class put on a production of *Oliver* and paddles still propelled aluminum canoes across the canoe lake. Mt. LeConte and the Smokies trips were still an honor for older campers and all the campers looked forward to the thrill of Sliding Rock. Sparks still ascended from campfires mingling with the voices of girls singing Ash Grove or Plant A Little Watermelon. Girls fortunate to have a birthday during camp were camp queens for a day and rain still fell on Camp Illahee. There was still Surprise Day, Big Sisters-Little Sisters, and boys still came for dances. The annual Swim Show was still the culmination of a summers work at the waterfront, and the Horse Show was the all-day highlight for Illahee riders even though by this time the Hendersonville Horse Show was no longer held. Girls continued to "Sing Around The Lake" and the Final Campfire still inspired tearful reflections from the summer. So much was intentionally the same, especially the emphasis placed on the arts, that Illahee remained a very familiar place for all the campers who had been there for years and a totally unique experience for first-year girls.

Though there was no doubt that Frankie was committed to carrying on the Illahee traditions, so lovingly nurtured and perpetuated by Robin and Teeter, she also had a few ideas of her own about what makes a camp effective. One of Frankie's main purposes for purchasing Illahee "was to introduce safe activities involving risk and challenge, things that would involve the girls putting themselves on the line, to prove themselves." In her estimation a girl's camp was the perfect

place to do things they couldn't (or wouldn't) do in school. Here a girl didn't have the concern of looking foolish in front of her peers, (especially boys), and was freed from a debilitating self-consciousness. Add to this freedom an environment that was beautiful and healthy and the formula for new personal success was present for each girl.

For Frankie, being in the out-of-doors was the key to opening the girls to this new awareness. As she reflects on the subject she says, "To be in the out-of-doors, to experience the out-of doors, and to learn from the out-of-doors" this was what camp offered a girl that couldn't be duplicated at home or school. In the out-of-doors and in a non-competitive environment such as Illahee's a girl could try things that would enlarge her understanding of herself and give her a new confidence that if she would try she could learn that she could accomplish more than she ever expected from herself. Beginning in the summer of 1970 she began to make subtle transitions toward a more "challenging" Illahee experience for girls, especially older girls, which fit with the growing opportunities afforded girls to grow physically and emotionally in team-oriented sports across the country. Although a tradition, the Mount LeConte trip offered the kind of challenge that Frankie had in mind. It was a difficult eight-mile hike to the Lodge at the top of the mountain and though an honor trip "about half way up you wondered whether it was an honor or not," Frankie humorously quipped. It was challenging but it was also eye-opening. In 1970 nineteen girls were invited on the LeConte trip and through their reflections we see how thrilled the girls were by the experience. The writings from Lyn Ross are a good example. She wrote, "I felt a closeness to nature as I never had before. The rippling of the streams, the tallness of the trees; the wildflowers bursting with color, had a new meaning to me as if I had been blind and I was regaining my sight." Just the kind of life-changing, positive experience Frankie was hoping an Illahee girl would discover. Under Frankie's leadership the challenges continued to evolve. For example, the traditional canoe trip down the French Broad River was expanded to also include the Davidson River. Honors trips for the exceptional paddlers challenged their skills down the rough and tumble ride on the whitewater of the Chatooga and Nantahala Rivers. If girls in the past had found climbing up the sides of a few steep boulders on the way to the top of Mt. LeConte a thrill, by the 1970's climbing had reached the status of an organized activity and rappelling became a part of the summer program with ropes, helmets and qualified instruction. With safety always the primary concern, the girls would first practice on clay banks near camp. After they had shown proficiency with ropes and the necessary knowledge of safety off they would go to the rock cliffs in Pisgah National Forest to test their skills. Frankie and Lo intentionally maintained Illahee's core program of the arts, the value of personal relationships and necessity of applied social skills that had been a hallmark of Illahee for many decades, but now a new direction was emerging that combined adventure and a new skill level that would broaden the camp experience for girls.

Like all past Illahee Directors one vital part of the Illahee experience would never change: a camper-centered focus. Under the heading of Illahee's Purpose these words expressed the intentions of the new directors: "Our purpose is to encourage an atmosphere of relaxation and excellence under the direction of concerned quality leadership...but even more important is our determination to provide experiences which will contribute to the feelings for the order of nature, the tolerance and understanding of self and others and for a reverence for living and life."

Illahee had always been a place for girls to deepen their understanding of their spiritual life and their relationship with God and others and under Frankie's leadership it continued to be an important part of camp life. An "Illahee Prayer" was adopted in 1971 and was used during times of worship in the outdoor chapel. It is believed that Skip Thomas wrote this prayer that expressed many of the Illahee ideals.

The Illahee Prayer

Our Father, we come again to thee
In the joy of another day,
With thanks for the many blessings
As we go along life's way.

Thanks for the mountains ever-towering
Into the blue toward thee,
Thanks for the wayside beauty—
The flowers, a bird, a tree.

Thanks for eyes to see thy splendor,
Thanks for friends with whom to share.
Friends with hearts of understanding
Speak thy presence everywhere.

May we to our friends be loyal
And to our ideals true...
Faith in thee, the never-failing,
In ourselves, and others too.

May these days bring happy memories
To carry with us all life through,
May we have a broader vision,
Dare to hope, and will to do.

At the last worship service at each session Frankie used a prayer she had paraphrased from something she had read that stuck with her. It became a tradition that summed up her intense love of nature, the hidden mysteries of God and the privilege of being at Illahee.

Frankie's Prayer

God of the hills, as we return home, grant us the strength to go back without faltering;
Strength to do our daily tasks with enthusiasm; Strength to help our neighbors who have no hills
to remember.

God of the lakes, grant us thy peace and thy restfulness. Help us to share thy peace in this world
of hurry and confusion.

God of the trees, help us to stand tall like the pine tree and help us reach out like the poplar.

God of the stars, help us to spread the light of love and friendship to all of our friends – old and
new.

God of the universe, let us have understanding for those who do not know the hills, the lakes, the
trees, and the stars.

Help us to be grateful for where we have been, where we are and where we are going.

Let us be thankful we have had the opportunity to live and worship these past few weeks in

THE GREATEST CATHEDRAL; THE OUT OF DOORS

During the early 1970's Illahee girls were a part of the larger world that went on around them even during their weeks at the "Heavenly World." For young people growing up in the 1960's and 1970's it became a time for questioning accepted values. The "generation gap" was a prominent theme in the lives of young people and the call for justice under the guiding principle of love echoed across the land. It was a time of looking inward and reaching outward and often there was a spiritual connection to the girl's thoughts while at Illahee. One can hear the influence of these themes in the girls' writings for the Log in 1971. One such entry was written by Margaret Price under the title of "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me," which at the time was the first line of a popular camp song. "Why fight a war with no purpose or reason? Why not? You're only losing a few thousand lives. Why chop down a tree when you could build around it? Why not? You're only losing one tree. Why cheat a neighbor or friend? Why not? You're only hurting your own brother. Why love a God who gave His only Son to us? Why not? This time you've nothing to lose." Adding to the same theme Lisa Corbin wrote of war, "Men are dying more and more from a terrible thing we call war. Bazookas, guns, traps, and knives every day take a thousand lives. What could anyone want any more than to stop this thing we call war!" With the heading of "Justice" Cindy Curtis wrote, "Justice is a word that is spoken very often. But do we all have the same meaning? Justice to many people is a fairness expressed to all. But is it given to people of different skin colors and creeds? If we all work together, we will end up with a justice that you and I have hoped and strived for." Though the world seeped into camp life it still was a place set apart from the everyday where girls could notice the wonders of nature and learn the meaning of friendship. The Secret of Illahee was the subject for 15 year-old Alison Dexter in the Log of 1971. She wrote: "When I'm under trees with a soft blowing breeze, I feel as if I'm being let in on a beautiful secret that few people feel. The bustling and hustling people never have time to sit under a big oak tree and enjoy the beautiful scenery and the towering mountains in the distance. Perhaps if you ever stop and listen to the soft noises of the wild animals, the rippling brook, and the blowing breeze, stop and listen to everything they say. For if you listen hard enough, you too may know the secret of Illahee."

By 1970 a system had been devised that would prove to be an invaluable training ground for the future counselors at Illahee. Under the title of "Training Future Counselors" an initiative was developed that opened the way for fifteen-year-old campers to volunteer for a summer of personal exploration into the qualities and responsibilities of being a counselor. Older campers who had reached the age of 15 and showed potential as counselors were qualified to be "Sparks." The next level of camp commitment was the Counselor in Training Program, or, more commonly, C.I.T.'s for girls 16 years of age. By the age of 17 prospective counselors were enlisted in the Junior Counselor program. They were given opportunities to assist with their favorite activities, to hold round-table discussions on subjects of their choice, to observe good teaching methods and to gain an understanding of child psychology. From this pool of interested girls came some of Illahee's best counselors. From the beginning the Counselors in Training (C.I.T.'s) were an invaluable resource for the ongoing life of camp, performing many necessary tasks from helping in the kitchen to assisting the activities leaders. Especially prominent in their duties was the planning of evening programs and assisting in worship services. Yearly, this young and enthusiastic group of girls provided the needed energy to propel a project forward. One of the highlights of the summer for C.I.T.'s as well as the campers was the planning and execution of Surprise Day. From the first sound of the morning bell to the playing of Taps the day was a well-coordinated event that thrilled the girls with group games, favorite foods, and often an excess of silliness.

Summer counselors were recruited from college campuses from across the nation but most were recruited from Southern colleges. Counselor recruitment was always a daunting task for Frankie but she was careful in her selections. She knew each counselor would have a great influence on

the girls of her cabin and quality leadership was, as it had always been, at the heart of the Illahee experience. The interaction between a counselor and her campers created the atmosphere for a positive experience for both. The ritual of cabin routines combined with spontaneous moments of joy made cabin life memorable for counselors and campers. Even to this day to walk into a cabin at Illahee is to see etched in the wood the names and dates of girls who shared much the same experience as current campers. One camper put it this way.

“Black and blue ink, all faded and gray
Writings from another time, another day
Names and dates, I see them all
Carved in cabins never to fall
Campers that see them, counselors too,
All of the time, remember them, do you?”

There was a pace to each day for the girls and their cabin mates. As the day came to a quiet close girls would lie in their bunk after taps, the echo of the last notes still ringing out across the lake and one would hear, if they listened closely, the giggles and the stories of the days events being whispered back and forth. These were special moments for most campers at Illahee, and as one Hillbrook camper put it, “After Taps the flashlights go on to read and write and do no wrong. Then dear Flo makes us turn them off, hugs us goodnight and then is gone off. We talk quietly about our day and how we laughed and how we played. Then we say good night to each other and close our eyes for the night.” Then the bullfrogs cranked up. What goes on between the counselor and a girls cabin mates lingers long in the hearts of campers and many an Illahee girl can recall with vivid clarity the person who helped guide her along her Illahee experience as her counselor. Over the years many written tributes were read at Log readings about the unique quality of a girl’s counselor. In the simplest way possible Kerry Reeves, age 9, expressed how many girls felt about their counselor. “Nancy Enger is my counselor. She is so nice to us. She always has a smile on her face. She always talks with us and makes us happy. I love, Nancy.” And counselors found happiness in their work with their campers. Vicki Simmons, a counselor during the summer of 1973, delightfully expressed in the Log her feelings about what makes a counselor happy.

“Happiness is..... coming in at midnight from a day off, and your covers are turned down. Coming in a half hour before taps and your campers have their pajamas on and retainers in. When everyone volunteers for tomorrow’s nightly devotion. Overhearing someone say they enjoy your class. Is hearing Elizabeth say, ‘Look, Vicki! I scored 36 this time!’ remembering that last class period she was having trouble hitting the target. Is singing ‘He’s everything to Me’ around the campfire, and feeling every word of it. Is a letter from a camper’s mother showing concern and love. Knowing that Ernie is on the way to your cabin to remove a three-foot black snake. Getting ‘5’s’ for inspection everyday for a week. Sleeping late and flexing all morning. A rainy rest hour, followed by a sunny afternoon. Seeing one of your campers sharing with 200 others at the Sunday Worship Services.”

The counselor experience included several common threads. One common requirement for all counselors was patience. In the Log of 1982 the counselors combined their thoughts to write an article entitled “Don’t Ask Us!” It captured whimsically the never-ending stream of questions a camper seemed to ask a counselor each and every day.

Can counselors really have candy?
How long is it going to rain?
What’s for the evening program?

Where does tennis meet?
 Which horse do I get to ride?
 What's for dessert?
 Do we have to wear jeans to riding?
 Who's trip staff? Is that your boy friend?
 Is there early morning riding tomorrow?
 What time is taps?
 What are we going to do in diving today?
 Is this a light or a dark (in reference to laundry)?
 Can we have a free swim today?
 Who's on hill duty?
 Where's Sis?
 Are we having inspection?
 How long does it take to drive up LeConte?
 Do we have to rest the first half of rest hour?
 When can I get my package?
 Can we rearrange the cabin?
 What do you do in Curtis at night?
 Is the mail up yet?

Counselors had their own places of refuge that were off-limits to campers. One such rustic building was the Pilot House. The Pilot House had been the former office but when Curtis Lodge was built the Pilot House was turned into a lounge for counselors. Counselors found that the Pilot House offered some much needed R and R from their busy activity schedules as well as a place where they didn't have to be "on." When they crossed the door to the Pilot House the girls could relax, gossip, share some quiet moments, use the phone or share stories about camp. Pat Minnaugh was Director of Drama at Illahee for several summers and a teacher of drama at Barry College during the school year. Writing in the Log in 1974 she captures perfectly just how the Pilot House was perceived around camp. "P.H. (Pilot House) – according to the campers: Where the counselors hide from the campers. According to the counselors: Where the counselors hide from the campers. According to the directors: Where the counselors hide from the directors and the campers. According to Sis (the camp nurse) - She says it defies description."

An Illahee counselor was always a special person with special qualities who gained as much from her summer at Illahee as she gave. Rhonda McIntosh and Ellen Whitener were counselors during the summer of 1974 and they wrote a very inclusive poem for the Log about their experiences at Illahee. Borrowing the cadence from a popular song at the time they wrote:

I Love
 (With apologies to Tom T. Hall)
 I love paper bag suppers, sourballs at rest time,
 Pitching a tent, and golf.
 I love Maxie's old
 wagon, hiking through a puddle,
 The upchuck truck and candy.
 And I love you, too.

I love swimming with the fishies, and thinking 'bout
 Surprise day, waiting for the mail and packages.
 I love doughnuts for breakfast, peanut butter
 Sandwiches, Biltmore ice cream and cereal.

And I love you, too.

I love Skip and Dolly's rifles, riding on Betsy
Saturday cokes and frogs.
I love exploring in the woods, finding new friends,
And sleeping bag and snakes.
And I love Taps, too.

LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGOGERYCHWYRNDROBWILLIANTYSILIOGOGOGOCH.
That is not the work of some typewriter gone wild. It is the name of the place. Of course, the locals are smart. They call it Llanfair P.G. for short. In Welsh it means "The Church of St. Mary in a hollow of white hazel, near a rapid whirlpool and near St. Tysilio's Church close to a red cave." This could only mean one thing -- Skip and Dolly Thomas and for those lucky girls who could pronounce the Welsh word, a trip to Biltmore Dairy Bar. From 1958 until 1977 and then again for the summer of 1984, Skip and Dolly were much more than very capable riflery instructors. To many hundreds of Illahee campers they were their competent teachers and their loving friends. Spanning the years when three different directors were leading Illahee, Skip and Dolly were there as a presence of love, patient teaching and needed continuity for the girls. From the beginning the girls were grateful for the friendship they bestowed. Many tributes to Skip and Dolly were written by those girls who experienced their attentive nurture.

Skip's given name was John but as a Boy Scout he was the skipper of a Sea Scout ship, so instead of calling him "Skipper," his friends and family shortened it to "Skip" and it stayed that way for the rest of his life. "Dolly," was an adopted name as well. She was born "Alvina" and as a little girl she played with dolls. One day somebody dubbed her "Dolly" and it stuck.

Their first year at Illahee was in 1958. It was a difficult year for them due to less than desirable living conditions. They were housed in Willow cabin along with Mr. Dye with only a shower curtain separating their living quarters. The place was so crowded that to get out of the door they had to sit on the bed before exiting. Another problem were the fleas. Mr. Dye stored a few false horse tales in his closet that were a magnet for fleas. In spite of all the problems over their first summer at Illahee they grew to love Illahee and the girls with whom they worked. Robin knew what an asset to camp the two were and she wanted them to return. That winter she purchased a separate trailer for their use and the privacy proved to be just what was needed. From that summer on they were a fixture at Illahee - much to the delight of everyone who knew them.

Their tutelage on the firing range reaped results from the very beginning. 1964 was an especially good year for marksmanship at Illahee. In competition with other camps throughout the country Illahee girls won every class they entered in National matches, winning more awards than the combined total of the three nearest competitive camps bringing home a total of 89 trophies. And their expert help continued throughout the years. By 1977 they had trained 151 "Experts" on the rifle range as certified by the National Rifle Association.

But it wasn't just on the firing range that they shared their gifts. Skip was good with words and could put his thoughts into poems that he used to express his feelings about the girls of Illahee. One such poem was entitled, "Dad's Little Girl." Each summer the girls and counselors would sit transfixed as Skip read the poem. In it he expressed his love for his daughter, who by this time was a camper at Illahee, and his love of Illahee. Through his words he encourages all who have been entrusted to care for the girls during their time at Illahee to know how significant this experience is for her and for a parent.

Dad's Little Girl

My daughter, to me, is the pride of my life
(excepting, of course, my adorable wife)
from the time of her birth, to the day she was wed,
We nurtured and cherished, that sweet little head.

Now dad, as a man, has been put to the test
Shunning the vain, and demanding the best.
The forge of reality fashioned his life –
Protecting his children from trouble and strife.

The ways of the world are not always straight –
Twisted by avarice, ruttled with hate.
A place has been found where ideals are high
So dad's little girl can reach out for the sky.

A haven of peace, where true friendships abound;
Where woodland and lake with laughter resound.
A fountain where youth can refresh at the spring –
A heavenly world, where compassion is king!

Now dad's pride and joy is entrusted to you,
To taste of your talents, and loyalty true.
Please love her, and mold her, and tenderly bear
This product of sacrifice, pleasure and care.

For dad is a jealous man, guarding his own;
Repaying the harvest so zealously sown.
So, brighten his days – let his banner unfurl!
Go that one extra mile, for dad's little girl.

Skip's story of The Legend of Princess Me-Li (Mary) was a quiet reminder to the girls of the connection that Camp Illahee had with the native American Cherokee Indians. It also inspired in campers a reverence for the natural beauty and sacred trust given to each of them to listen for the spirit of beauty every time they were they were at Illahee. The story continued to be used around the campfires of summer sessions well into the 1980's.

The Legend of Princess Me-Li

“This story is about Princess Me-Li, a lovely young Cherokee maiden. Her father was Chief Running Bear, and he was a very brave warrior.

Sitting around the camp fires at night, as the flying embers climbed lazily into the starlit sky, Chief Running Bear would relate the stories of his tribe's great accomplishments; and as the drums beat out an ever-increasing rhythm, they would dance until they became exhausted!

Princess Me-Li always loved those wonderful moments, and vowed that she would never leave her Illahee, her heavenly world!

But the peace of the Cherokee nation was shattered in 1828 when the United States Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, which ordered the Cherokees to leave the home of their ancestors, and walk hundreds of miles to the West to new reservations on barren ground. Then the white settlers took over the vacated rich farm land and hunting grounds. When the time came for Chief Running Bear and his family to leave on what became known as the Trail of Tears, Princess Me-Li ran off into the friendly hills and hid in a small cave. She again vowed she would not leave Illahee, her Heavenly world!

The princess, at first, was very lonely and unhappy. She missed her family and friends, the evenings around the campfires, and the dances they shared together; but she soon learned that the wild animals in the forest and the birds in the trees were her new family! She would talk and sing to them, and they responded by loving her.

Food was plentiful in the fields and streams and as time passed she became a living legend. The white men who settled in the area soon told the story of the spirit maiden who lived with the wild-life in the mountains and she became known as "The Spirit of Illahee."

No one ever saw her again, but the legend never died. Frequently at night, as the pioneers gathered at their cooking fires, they would sing of home, and the unseen spirit of Illahee would visit them filling their hearts with love for all the wonderful things God had created.

Many years have passed since that time, but Princess Me-Li is still to be found here in this camp. She may visit you around the campfire, in the woodland chapel or in the privacy of your own cabin as you lie asleep!

The spirit of Illahee lives in the heart of every camper who believes. You must prepare yourselves for this wonderful gift by filling your hearts with love for your cabin mates, your counselors, and your family and friends at home. The Illahee spirit can be seen in everything you say or do. Be kind to all living things, both great and small, admire and preserve God's handiwork with which we are so richly blessed and then, but only then you will feel the presence of Princess Me-Li.

She will come to you one night as you lie asleep. A great feeling of tranquility will possess you and your heart will overflow. As she kisses you on the forehead, you will finally be filled with the true Spirit of Illahee. As you gather around the campfire and as you gaze into the dying embers, you will silently make a vow to return to Princess Me-Li to Illahee, your Heavenly World."

In 1977 Skip and Dolly made the decision that 20 years of teaching girls how to shoot at the rifle range was enough. They had come to represent all that was good about Illahee and the girls they touched with their love and care loved them back. In a letter for the Log that summer Dolly wrote: "Through all these years you campers have meant so much to us. Your lovely gifts....your cards and letters, have been very much appreciated. But, most of all, we treasure the love, trust and respect which you have shown. The friendships we have made are the roots which bind our lives together forever." But in 1977 it was time for them to retire to pursue their love of travel and writing. They had retired to Brevard and joined the Presbyterian Church where they were active at all levels. They did not realize at that time that a young couple from Atlanta would purchase the camp in 1983 and invite them to return to offer their unique blend of love, nurture and teaching.

During the summer of 1973 the girls of Pine View embarked on an ambitious project – an Illahee totem pole. On August 6 of that summer the totem pole was dedicated. An official parchment was presented to Frankie on behalf of the camp from the girls of Pine View that explained what each totem represented. The Illahee Legend inspired their efforts and from the story many of the totem pole's symbols were captured in the 15 - foot log. At the top of the totem pole was the inscription 1921, the year in which Illahee was officially established when the great flame of spirit was first lit. Below this the CI symbol which has symbolized Camp Illahee for many campers throughout the years. The owl, known as the wise, opened-minded priest and guide was used by the girls to represent understanding and spiritual fulfillment. A rising sun represented the hope and joy that Illahee had brought to thousands of girls over the years and at the base written in Cherokee were the words "heavenly world" "which is what Camp Illahee strives to be, not only here but in the lives of all who come and go from Illahee to all sections of the world." The colorful totem pole eventually decayed to the point that it needed restoration or replacement. In 1992 a group of former Illahee campers and counselors gathered in the basement of Frankie's home to once again carve a pole. It took almost every weekend for six months to complete. A total of 30 former counselors and campers left their marks on the pole. Not all at one time. Small groups came for the weekend to do the work and enjoy each others company. Caroline Hines carved the impressive eagle that adorns the pole. In the end they accomplished the job and their results were erected in the same place the original pole had stood.

The annual Swim Show found a new name during the 70's: The Swimarama. No longer was there a Swim Pageant with the elaborate sets and costumes of years before. During the heyday of the Water Pageant the whole camp would be involved in some aspect of the shows production and it would be the major focus for the eight weeks the girls spent at camp. The camp sessions had changed over the years and the eight-week session was divided into a three-week pre-camp and a five-week regular camp. However, the Swimarama did remain as one of the red-letter days at camp. The new swim show became an exciting day of team competition between three groups of swimmers: the "Boom-Boom, the Diddum, Daddum, and the Watum Chew." The three teams competed in relay races such as the inner-tube push, the comic book relay, the Tee-shirt relay and other races. To highlight the talents of the divers a diving demonstration would follow with the water ballet show capping off the afternoon.

Golf had been an activity at Illahee since the 1950's. Girls learned a few of the basic strokes in the early years and with the Brevard Country Club adjoining the camp property there were plenty of opportunities to take their new found skills and play a round on a real course. By 1960 the Brevard Country Club was no longer a golf club and although golf continued to be an activity at Illahee there was nothing at Illahee that would match the environment of a golf course until 1973. A small three hole par three course was built that year in the lower field below the barn to help girls really hone their chips and putts and to give a more authentic learning environment.

Judy Rink became the Associate Director in 1973. Judy received her Bachelor of Science degree in physical education from the State University of New York and a Master of Science degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. After three years of public school teaching in New York she assumed a position on the staff of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She first joined the staff of Illahee in 1970 and became the Associate Director in 1973 a tenure that lasted until 1976.

During the winter of 1975 the earth seemed to shake when the largest pine tree on Illahee's property was cut down after a lightening storm set the immense crown on fire and after a year the tree became a camp hazard. Charlie Rose, the caretaker at the time and Frankie stood looking at the tree and an idea came to them: cut the tree into halves and use the portions for benches they

could place in front of Curtis Lodge, the Dining Room porch and the Rec Lodge. Although a difficult task they soon had fashioned the tree into benches. They then moved the massive tree halves to their designated spots where they still offer rest to campers, staff and visitors. The massive base of the tree was used as a pulpit in the Woodland Chapel. An inscription from the 121st Psalm, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills," was carved on its front by Caroline Hines.

In 1976, after an eight-year hiatus, the Croaker was again in print at Illahee. Joanna Beckman was a pre-camper in 1976. One of her early joys was reading her mother's Croakers from the time that she had spent at Illahee. Joanna made the suggestion that the Croaker be brought back into print and everyone agreed. On July 2, 1976 the first edition of the new Illahee Croaker became a reality offering campers and their families a glimpse of camp life as it was going on.

1976 was also the year of the country's bicentennial celebrations. From the first week of camp a special Sunday evening patriotic observance was held at the flagpole. The event began at 5:30 with a solemn flag lowering ceremony with all the girls attending and those who had a part in the celebration dressed in Bicentennial Minuteman costumes. That summer Jan Walker played taps for the occasion. Happy Hollow Day hosted the Fourth of July celebration. It was a day of games including a cracker-eating contest and a kneeball game. The most memorable part of the afternoon occurred when each girl in camp was given a helium balloon to which they tied a very personal wish. On the count of three all 200 of the balloons were released at once and the sky filled with colorful ascending balloons. At the same time, in a rare display of nature's beauty, a rainbow appeared over Illahee and the girls stood silently watching the last of the balloons disappear out of sight reaching towards the rainbow. Also that summer an antique printing press was given to Illahee complete with all the letters and numbers that were needed to be hand-placed. Ellen Whitener was called on to learn how to use the printing press and by pre-camp that year she was ready to help campers learn the finer points of printing. For many years the printing program was led by Virginia Hines followed by her daughter Florence "Flo" Hines who served as teacher. Printing became an activity at camp and the girls made stationery, certificates, menus and name cards.

Sunday evenings were spent around the campfire listening to the thoughts and feelings of fellow campers and counselors. Rosemary McMahan and Sandy Barto concocted a "Recipe for a Log Reading" in 1974 to help others find a perspective from which to write. Their recipe included

"1 person
1 piece of paper – any size, shape or form
1 writing implement
A dash of creativeness
A pinch of humor or sincerity extract (depending on taste)
Take all ingredients and mix in a quiet place.
Temperature setting depends on mood of cook. Simmer.
Just before serving, strain to remove all misspelled words.
This recipe will serve 200 at an Illahee campfire.
Age or intellect makes no difference. No two recipes come out alike. Guaranteed to please."

Mrs. McLeod died in the late 1970's. There was a walking path to the private cemetery on the one acre of land that the McLeod's had reserved from Illahee property for the family plot but there was no road. Because of this the hearse could not drive to the grave itself. Knowing the importance of having her buried at Illahee Frankie asked Ernie Rollins to clear a path big enough for the tractor to pull a trailer to the site. With the casket carefully placed on the back of the

trailer the tractor inched its way along the makeshift path to the grave. There were a few family and friends for the graveside funeral and then Mrs. McLeod was lowered into the ground to join her husband in an adjoining grave to rest peacefully forever at her beloved Camp Illahee.

The theme for the summer of 1977 was "Roots." Frankie believed that knowing ones history and honoring those who had given their life's work to Illahee gave life and meaning to rituals and traditions that over the years had been lovingly preserved. The highlight of the summer came on July 31 when Camp Illahee enjoyed a Day of Dedication honoring former owners and a caretaker. The Day of Dedication began with a worship service at the Woodland Chapel. Under the heading "The Roots of Memories" the C.I.T.'s resurrected two memorable services from the past as a part of their service. The first was a meditation on Friendship written in 1951 by Marge Leonard, the Program Director at Illahee at the time. The meditation dealt with Friendship and Marge used a modern day fable to illustrate her point. Her fable was entitled "What The Butterfly Learned" and during the mornings worships several of the C.I.T.'s represented the flowers that the butterfly encountered. The meditation ended with this advice: "Take time to look at the sky during the day; the stars at night; the tall, green trees; the shadows on the lake in the late afternoon; the soft pink and blue of the sunset over the tree tops; the distant mountains that change from green to a deep blue -- sometimes bathed in sun and shadow -- sometimes in clouds and fog. Take time to look at smiling faces and thoughtful acts. If you would be a friend, grow like the beauty around you. Absorb the kindness and love that will attract others. In some small measure devote part of your life to thinking of others first as did the greatest Friend of all times -- Jesus."

To end the morning worship Eleanor Westbrook Beckman read again a devotion she had first given in 1955. It was a thoughtful piece entitled "Mountains" and for Dedication Day she presented the reading. In her reading that morning she repeated her thoughts to the campers of 1977, part of which were: "Each of us has had a mountain top experience here at camp. Maybe to you, it was the service in the Woodland Chapel when you were close to God, or maybe it was around the campfire when you felt close to your friends, or maybe it was a program that had a special meaning to you. Do you remember that mysterious moment when had a vision of God in all His glory and majesty? There were those times when clouds hung low, and sorrow filled your heart. You bowed your head and worshipped. God soothed you. Yes, each of us has some mountain top experiences." To end the special service one of the C.I.T.'s, Cathy Ward, had written a song for the morning entitled "Somewhere Deep In My Heart."

The dedication part of the program began at the barn. Skip Thomas had written a song in honor of Oliver Byrd who had been caretaker of Illahee for 30 years. The girls sang this tribute to Oliver and the barn was then named the "Byrd Barn."

To Oliver

(tune of: He's a Jolly Good Fellow)
When Oliver greets us with "Mawnin"
It may be evening or dawning
His mongoose springs without warning
And gives us all a thrill!

With hammer, saw and drill,
And "little boy on the hill"
His jokes are funny and mellow
For he's a jolly good fellow
For he's a jolly good fellow
And so say all us --
"Mawnin' Oliver"

From the barn the group moved to the Curtis Lodge, named in honor of Robin Curtis who had planned and supervised the building of what had previously been known as the S.S Holiday. A poem by Pat Minnaugh, a counselor at the time was read marking the occasion. This is her tribute.

Robin

Ever the lady but always a child at heart.
The Illahee Spirit blossomed because of her part.
Jock was her dog and always on a leash was he
He fought his wood-carved image which was a sight to see.
He nipped at campers but Maria he loved dearly,
Robin was his mistress and of all others he was leary.

Born in Massachusetts and her accent was really neat.
All listened when she gave announcements for it was really a treat.
“Would you like that?” and “Best ever” were the phrases she was usually heard to utter-
and you always did what Robin asked without a mutter.

Champion of the underdog in games and life alike
She knew what went on in camp although she was not always in sight.
You did your best for Robin even if you did not know
That she was more than willing to give you a second chance if
The first one you did blow.

Always with a smile on her face and super salesman to the core
She charmed the parents and awed the campers and both came back for more.
For idealism was her Bible and from it she never swerved.
She was fair and appreciative of all you did and was always
Ready with a kind word.

Kathryn Francis Curtis, was her name on a legal type of paper
But “Robin” was her name in camp, a beacon, a glowing taper.
The Holiday is dedicated this day, a symbol, the key, the chart
Of Robin, who was ever the lady, but always a child at heart.

Then it was time to move on to the Dining Hall which was being dedicated the Tilley Lodge for Treeva Tilley the co-director from 1942-1969. The girls joined in singing “Pass It On” and several other favorite songs and then a poem of dedication was read about her.

Teeter

Canada born our Teeter to American shores
And it wasn't long before she came through Illahee's open doors.
And here she stayed until 1969 under our heavenly pine
It was because of her that Illahee ran on time.

For run she did on tiny feet or in her car
Skip had to give her a speeding ticket, which didn't get him far.
A speeding governor on the car was put –
Which somewhat limited Teeter's heavy foot.

Just five foot one

But – oh – what this woman got done.
A notebook and pencil were always in her hand
She knew where everything was in Illahee land.

Teeter is what we call her, the name that brought her fame
But Treva M. Tilley was actually her proper name.
Laddie and Lassie, Wendy and Bonnie were her Collie dogs
And you'll find the campers loved them and her and wrote
About them in many Illahee Logs.

Tiny in size but a heart as big as all out doors
Kindness, gentleness, and love coursed through all her pores.
Here, today, we dedicate a favorite – the dining hall
Which only goes to prove once more that Teeter is loved by all.

At the McLeod Lodge the building was named in honor of the founders of Illahee, Hinton and Frances McLeod. As campers and guests stood in the Lodge once more a poem was read by Pat Ninnaugh dedicated to the visionary dream the McLeod's had set into motion.

McLeods

Many years ago before most of us were born
a man and his wife enfolded a dream one sunny morn.
The beauty they saw they translated so well
And a camp was born at the foot of the hill.

It took courage and strength and purpose of mind
And no two more visionary people than the McLeods could you find\
To bring to this land – a place of goodness and glee
Our “heavenly world” – our Illahee

The building that we dedicate is the base, the root the core,
The Lodge – that beckons us through its open door.
The Mcleods built it in 1929
And it stands today as it will for endless time.
As a reminder to us all of their spirit, their dream, they had that sunny morning
That is a tribute to the McLeods as each year Illahee is reborn.

Following the renaming of the four buildings an informal reception was held in Curtis Lodge. Although not in attendance that morning, Robin and Teeter sponsored the reception for campers, former campers, counselors and guests. Old pictures, catalogs, and Logs were on display for the guests to thumb through eliciting many fond reminiscences about their time at Illahee. The daughters and granddaughters of former campers and counselors served refreshments and the special day ended at the flagpole with a flag lowering ceremony. Mary Stone Fraser once again blew Taps as she had done at camp for three years in the late 1940's. The organized activities ended for the day but one more special entertainment followed dinner. The Pineview girls presented a slideshow and skits using pictures they had assembled from old catalogs. Taps was played by Mary Stone Fraser once again signaling the end of a very special day in the life of Illahee.

In 1977 Pinocchio was the main drama production for the summer but other shows captivated the attention of camp as well. Ming Lee and the Magic Tree displayed not only the talents of the Drama activity but the talents of the make-up class as well. The Talent Show was again one of

the highlights of the summer. Trips were always a highlight for the campers and 23 campers were excited by their finds at the Shuler Ruby Mines outside of Franklin, NC. That summer Skip and Dolly handed out 250 awards in their riflery program. The Camp Archery Association named Cathy Ward an "American Archer" and the Biltmore House trip thrilled 22 girls. The swim show for that summer was entitled "Six Little Ducks" and featured the talents of the synchronized swim classes. Two vans headed out to see "Unto These Hills" and the annual Honors Trip to Mt. LeConte was again a challenge to the 17 campers chosen to go. As in past years "Surprise Day" was one of the best camp-wide days of the summer. "Oz-mania" spread throughout camp as Dorothy and the Emerald City were recreated at Illahee much to the delight and amusement of all the campers. The Busy Bee offered an array of classes that could appeal to any taste. One particular activity was the Dulcimer Making class that interested many of the girls. A special room was set aside for the making of the dulcimers and many girls learned the beauty of the music they could make. The "circular pillow" was a popular activity in the crafts area where everyone in camp seemed to be making one. New activities that summer included backgammon, quilting, jogging and sign language. The range of activities for Illahee girls seemed to suit any taste or interest. One program that Frankie was most proud of starting was the woodworking program. The woodworking class met in Pineview Lodge and the girls had an opportunity to create projects made out of wood. This fit with Frankie's desire to expose girls to non-traditional activities which would allow them to explore new areas of interest in their lives. The two Backpacking groups went on a trip to Mt. Mitchell to experience the challenge of the highest mountain east of the Mississippi River. They drove to the top of the mountain and hiked down spending the night along the way.

By the end of camp that year Frankie could look back and see that all had gone well. At the final campfire she read a prayer that she had revised over the years but expressed her gratitude to all who made Illahee the "heavenly world."

Dear Lord, as we go home from camp, give us the afterglow.

May the memories of high moments linger on:

The greeting of the dawn

The light mist over the lake

The mountaintop after a long hike

The warblings of the wren

A quiet giggle after lights out

The warm sun at noonday

A rainbow in the evening sky

The love of those at home and those at camp.

Our voices raised in song

A friendly greeting from a smiling face

The sharing of well-earned successes

The thoughtful act of a fellow camper

The gift of time from a counselor

The dedication of those who care for us

The feel of a cool breeze just before a storm.

The memories of those who lived in this beautiful

Spot before we came

The sound of Taps at the end of the day

And the great high moments when our spirits touched

With the spiritual

Give us the lingering sense of friendship from the

Friends we make at camp.
Dear Lord, we are leaving camp
Give us the afterglow!

During the late 1970's the United States experienced a deep recession as inflation and extremely high interest rates caused financial uncertainty in homes across the nation. Illahee was not immune to the effects of the economy and a belt-tightening occurred. There was a slight dip in camper enrollment as parents had to make choices about family priorities. But Illahee had weathered difficult financial times before and Frankie was committed to making it through these times as well. "I was determined that camp was not going to fold during my administration," was how she summed up those difficult times.

Camp continued to grow in both facilities and programming. In 1978 the canoe trip program went on a seven-hour whitewater-rafting trip down the Chatooga River, made famous by the movie Deliverance. "Interest groups" offered girls a wide variety of activities from photography to jogging to ceramics to macramé and a class for aerobics. A new water slide produced many splashes and thrills at the swim lake that summer and a two-court extension were added to the existing tennis courts. Drama productions continued to be an important part of the summer for many girls. In 1978 Peter Pan and The Lion Who Wouldn't were the two major dramatic efforts. Also that year five girls from Illahee set the record for greatest number of times down Sliding Rock – 80.

In 1979 a lively day was added to the summer line-up: Deerwoode Spaz Day. The Illahee girls and the Camp Deerwoode boys joined together for fun competitive team games such as the blindfold race, the dizzy bat relay, and stilt walking. Perhaps the most memorable activity of Spaz day was the log wrestle over the mudhole. Team after team ended up completely muddy and happy at the same time. By 1981 more activities were added to the day and the tug o'war was now located over a mud hole as well. Camp Deerwoode became the boy's camp of choice for Illahee girls for activities such as Spaz Day, tennis competitions, and dances. Camp Deerwoode was the closest boys camp to Illahee and the directors of each camp were personal friends. The close association with Camp Deerwoode and its director extended into the off-season in the year 1981 when Bill Mayes personally lent a hand at helping complete the new Recreation Lodge at Illahee.

Rain had always had its effect on the activities at Illahee. Realizing a need for an indoor area large enough for the whole camp to congregate Frankie had long dreamed about the possibility for a Recreation Lodge that would offer campers activities even in the rain. She envisioned a stage for performances and evening programs, storage facilities for costumes, a fireplace that could be lit for times when rain prohibited outdoor campfires, basketball courts, and an area large enough for dances. Because the need was great she set out to raise the funds for the facility and with the financial help from a few major donors she was able to begin. Construction began on the 60 X 100 foot building on February 17, 1981 and took a little over a year to complete. It truly became a labor of love for Frankie. In the spring of 1981 after the steel frame had been erected, Frankie, with the help of Bill Mayes from Camp Deerwoode, literally erected the building themselves hammering each piece of wood siding together to make the lodge a reality. Tom Caputo was the caretaker at the time and with his help together they built the stage, the costume room, the sound room, dulcimer room and the storage room. "I was a basket case by the time we finished," Frankie quips.

Before the day of dedication for the new Recreation Center the Nature Class, under the direction of Skip Thomas, planted several young pine trees in front of the new lodge to provide more

privacy and to screen camp activities from passers-by. For decades the Illahee Road that was known as “a road from nowhere to nowhere” as Frankie explained it but by 1981 had become more widely traveled and the trees helped as a buffer. At last on July 17, 1982, people filed into the Recreation Lodge for the long-awaited dedication. The day was even a star-studded occasion. Jo Ann Pflug was present to add a touch of star power. At the time of the dedication Jo Ann had just left her very successful television show, *The Fall Guy*, and had come to Illahee with her daughter, Melissa, for a two-week respite from her career to think about her future options in show business and to allow her daughter to enjoy Illahee just as she had. Jo Ann’s mother was one of the nurses at Illahee assisting Sis with her duties and Jo Ann had spent two summers as a camper on Heigh Ho. In 1981 she found Illahee filled with “the same ol’ Illahee spirit.” Although the Lodge was not completely finished it soon found a central place in the daily life of the campers and Frankie’s dream had become a reality.

In the off-season Frankie would walk the woods of Illahee and over the years she reckoned that she must have walked every foot of ground on camp property. It was on one her many walks in the woods that she began to wrestle with a difficult decision: should she sell Illahee? Her love of camp had grown each year but by 1982 Frankie was nearing retirement age. If she decided to sell she was determined to see that Illahee remain in the hands of someone who would cherish the traditions and carry on in that intangible spirit of Illahee, just as Robin and Teeter had done years earlier. Opportunities for the sale of camp came her way but in her mind none of the potential buyers would do justice to all that Illahee had come to be. She consulted with Kitty Coleman Tindall Neff about her decision to sell to see if she might have any suggestions for her. This was not the first time that a Coleman played a decisive role in the future of Illahee. Kitty’s father, James, had helped Robin Curtis purchase Camp Illahee back in 1939 and over the years Kitty had remained active in the life of Illahee, first as a camper, then as a college-aged counselor and finally as a “Mama” counselor when her children were small. Her daughters, Julia and Catherine spent many summers at Illahee as campers and eventually as counselors and even Kitty’s son, Frank, spent time at Illahee as a small boy. Her love for Illahee was deep and persistent and it wasn’t long before she began to talk with her son Frank and his fiancée, Elizabeth, about the possibilities of their becoming owner/directors of Camp Illahee. They were interested and decided that this was their future together. (More about the Tindalls to follow) Frankie was there through it all. She continued to be available to the Tindalls for one more summer, 1985, and helped guide the young couple in the intricacies of directing a camp. Even after she moved to a mountaintop home west of Asheville, North Carolina she continued to be available to the new owners when they had a question about camp operations. In the regular session of the Log for 1984, the last under the leadership of Frankie Hall, she address the campers and counselors that summer with these words:

“Dear Regular Campers and Counselors of 1984,

You have made this summer, my last one as owner-director of Illahee, memorable in so many ways.

The campers were so responsive and appreciative of what we want Illahee to be and the counselors were so responsible and dedicated to the Illahee Spirit. All of you were fun to be with and I take great pride in the fact that you contributed so fully to Illahee’s ongoing tradition and growth.

You have been a part of something very special and you have made it very special to me. I know you join me in supporting Bret, Elizabeth, Frank and Jack as they continue with Illahee’s growth in the future.

Remember.....Climb mountains while you may, and sing your song....

Love to each of you,
Frances Hall

With these remarks, Frankie prepared to pass the leadership of Illahee to others. When asked about what she viewed as one of her greatest achievements as director she is quick to answer that "Illahee was left in good hands and it's still there." It has been said of Frankie that "she put camping back into Camp" and for those staff who were influenced by her dedicated leadership or those campers privileged enough to attend camp while Frankie was Director this seems a fitting tribute to her vision and love for Illahee.

Even as a young teenager growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, Frank Tindall knew that someday he would like to own a camp -- at least that was his hope. As a camper at Camp Deerwoode for 10 summers he would revel in the freedom and the fun of being in the out-of-doors, of learning new skills and establishing lasting friendships with boys from across the country. As he got older and his love of camping grew stronger the idea began to take on a clearer shape in his imagination. During his summers off from the University of Georgia he returned to Camp Deerwood as a counselor. Again he found his thoughts returning to the dream that grew to be more like a calling than simply a career choice. Many evenings at Deerwood he and a few of his fellow counselors would talk into the night about what they envisioned for their future. Frank would say he wanted to be a camp director, and because he had a deep love for Camp Deerwood, he would state that preferably it would be right here. In his imagination it was the kind of fit he was looking for in his life. He wanted to "work with children and make a difference in their lives" and to Frank there was no better way to help a child grow in mind, body and spirit than at camp in an "outdoor setting." He was a Business major at the University of Georgia and even that seemed to dovetail with his ideas for his future for he could see owning a camp as "running a small business." As his college graduation neared it seemed as if he might have to abandon his real desire and join the world of business to begin a career within its confines. He was engaged to his college sweetheart and being married entailed a commitment not only of his heart but his responsibility to financial security as well. Although he never gave up his idea of being a camp director he now put it a little further from his thoughts and by that first September after graduating Frank was back in Atlanta commuting each day to one of the big banks in downtown Atlanta. The dreamed of possibilities of being a camp director seemed a long way off.

In the summer of 1982 Elizabeth Hopkins, an undergraduate at the University of Georgia, was catching the Illahee spirit as an Illahee counselor for the summer. Frank was nearby at Camp Deerwoode and since the two were committed as a couple it made sense that they would be near each other and involved in the same kind of activities. Little did they know at the time but Frank's dream was closer to a reality than he would have ever thought.

As he and Elizabeth began to plan their future together Frank talked about his dream of owning and directing a boy's camp and Elizabeth came to share his dream. He soon found that being a banker didn't suit him professionally and he found that the persistent dream he nurtured kept coming back to him. He decided to begin at the logical starting point -- Camp Deerwoode. Frank approached his mentor and friend, Bill Mayes, to inquire about the possibility of purchasing Camp Deerwoode. This was the very place that had shaped him as a person and instilled the love of camping in him. Bill had always been a personal friend of Camp Illahee's helping Frankie on numerous occasions, especially pitching in to help build the Recreation Building, and to Frank he was a hero -- some one he looked up too. Bill informed Frank that he stilled found joy in being the Director of Camp Deerwoode and it was not for sale, but he informed him, Camp Illahee was!

Frank hesitated for he had always seen himself as a director of a boy's camp and this new possibility would take some new ways of thinking. "We really don't want to buy a girl's camp," Frank told Bill, but the ties to Camp Illahee ran deep in Frank's family. He grew up hearing stories about Illahee and meeting his mother's Illahee friends so at least he was familiar with Illahee and had very favorable opinions of the camp. His sisters had gone to Illahee as a camper and counselor and Frank had shared summer evenings with Illahee girls at Illahee-Deerwoode dances. The seed was planted and very shortly Frank and Elizabeth started to get serious about the possibility. There was one huge impediment to his all-out enthusiasm -- he was just 23. Bill Mayes and his wife Liz gave Frank and Elizabeth some advice that seemed to bolster their courage. They told them "give it your best, it's going to be hard, but what's the worst that can happen?" With this thought in mind there was no turning back and the vision of being owner-directors of Camp Illahee came clearly into focus.

Events in the lives of Frank and Elizabeth were moving quickly in 1984. Negotiations with Frankie were going on for the purchase of Camp Illahee. Not only in the midst of these life-changing events, earlier that February, Frank and Elizabeth announced their engagement to be married. In April they signed the papers agreeing to purchase Illahee and in May, Frank moved into Brookside cabin and in June Elizabeth moved into the Wishing Well. She spent the summer planning a wedding and helping Frank during his first summer as one of Illahee's new Directors. The summer of 1984 was the last summer that Frankie would serve as Illahee's director. It was a great learning curve for Frank and Elizabeth but having the opportunity to learn from Frankie was a good start. She offered her knowledge of camping, her precise way of doing things and the maturity to see that all went well. She also gave Frank and Elizabeth the help they needed to find their own way. But after the summer of 84 they knew that they would be in-charge and there really was no manual for how to run a camp.

In the beginning Frank and Elizabeth were joined by Brett Allen and Jack Hall as partners in their new venture. Brett was a long-time friend of Frank and Elizabeth's and was an accountant from Atlanta but upon joining the Illahee team Brett became a full-time resident at Illahee, living in Pinecrest in the basement apartment. He served as the Business Manager until 1989 at which time he left Illahee to become the Regional Director for Young Life in the Spartanburg, South Carolina area. Jack Hall was a teacher at Westminster School in Atlanta, Georgia during the school year but that first summer he took up the duties of Program Manager for camp. The four of them formed a team relying on each other and their talents and gifts to make it all work.

On October 1, 1984, by now newlyweds, they closed on the purchase of Illahee and on October 2nd they moved into Pinecrest, their new home. That evening after a long, tiring day of moving it dawned on them that they now owned a camp and it was their responsibility to make a go of it. They looked at each other and not knowing exactly what to say they both uttered the words -- "Now what?" But what they lacked in experience they more than made up for in optimism and enthusiasm. It was a whirlwind of a year but one that set their course and the course of Camp Illahee for the next 17 years. Looking back on it they would say that the most amazing thing about it all was that they were barely older than most of the counselors they would work with those first few years.

They quickly realized that "what's next" was recruitment. They assembled a slide presentation, created a new Illahee brochure with their pictures as directors, made a major change in the traditional summer schedule and set out to visit as many places as they could spreading the Illahee story and their hopes for its future. Traveling as a team they took to the road visiting 70 different cities a year those first two years. There was a dual purpose in their total devotion: first, this was an opportunity to get to know Illahee families on a personal basis and secondly,

they were not at all sure they would be received as the new directors and they wanted to assure Illahee families that they were capable. To keep the camp enrollment growing they needed to sell themselves. Frank puts it this way: “for the first few years we had to ask ourselves ‘did they like us?’ ‘are we meeting their needs?’ ‘will they trust us with their children?’” But they knew that their hearts were in the right place. From the start, for them it was “all about the children.” Anywhere they could tell the Illahee story they would be there with slides and camp brochures in hand. Being young, and as yet childfree, enabled them to devote this kind of time. They would pack their small Honda and head out for two weeks at a time returning for two or three days to wash clothes, tend to a few office matters, rest as much as possible and then they would head out again. Those early years were so financially lean that if they had the opportunity they would stay in the homes of the Illahee representatives or in the home of friends they knew from college. Cutting costs was the name of the game. One memorable day they drove to Mobile, Alabama and back just to save on the expenses of a motel room. While the Tindalls were away Brett Allen stayed busy around camp performing maintenance tasks during the day and making sure calls were answered and accounts brought up to date at night.

The group of four set out to write down a stated purpose that would summarize what they believed Illahee meant and what they, in turn, meant for Illahee to be. In their first published catalogue in 1985 they wrote their stated purpose in bold type as: “At Illahee, campers are able to relax and have fun away from the pressures of school and learn new skills, make new friends, and develop values.” Expounding further, but not highlighted with bold printing, they continue to explain just what they meant by that. “In this changing world there is more than ever a need for young people to be made aware of and to acquire the unchanging values – courage, loyalty, unselfishness, friendliness, good sportsmanship, and honesty. Illahee’s purpose is to build character and self-confidence based on the firm foundation of these values.” In a later version of an Illahee catalogue, the purpose stayed basically the same, the only change was to use the words “traditional values” to strengthen their stated purpose and to clarify that Camp Illahee was a place of stability, safety and a catalyst for positive growth based on values most Americans hold dear but find hard to teach.

For many years campers at Illahee could sign up for either the three-week session or the five-week session. They decided early on that offering two, three-week sessions and one four week session seemed to make more sense for them. Opportunities for girls were expanding and they reasoned that perhaps offering opportunities for a shorter camp experience would appeal to more girls. It was a major increase in the length of camp overall, going from a total of eight weeks to ten. The first summer they implemented the new schedule was 1985 and that year it was especially meaningful to them. The final August three-week session had no returning campers and every girl in that session was a first year camper at Illahee. They considered this “their session – their campers.”

After five years of devoting their off-season to a torrid travel schedule the benefits of their hard work began to fall in place little by little. Enrollment began to increase, their own confidence in their ability to direct Illahee blossomed and more and more girls began to sign up to attend one of the summer sessions. By the early 90’s enrollment began to reach capacity and after that the enrollment snowballed. They would never have to worry again that there would not be enough campers to fill camp and that meant that 245 girls would be at Illahee at any one time. They based their success on Illahee’s good reputation but a great deal must be attributed to the kind of compassionate leadership and direction they displayed.

Betty Loucks was a constant presence at Camp Illahee during the summer quietly doing what needed to be done to keep camp functioning smoothly. She would come to Illahee from her home

in Ormond Beach, Florida and over the years not only her daughters were campers but her granddaughters as well. She was very loyal to Frank and Elizabeth and aided them in countless ways. She was the “camp mom” for the staff and it has been said that the staff “adored her.” If something needed done in the office Betty was there to make sure it happened. Her efficient way of handling all situations was like a rudder for camp and during her time at Illahee she was a tireless supporter of its program.

There weren't many campers that first summer of 1985 but to the leadership team that was not the most important thing. It was the “intimacy, caring, optimism, and relationships that mattered.” Frankie continued to stay on call the summer of 85. Whereas Frankie had the knowledge, the precision, and the maturity, Frank and Elizabeth brought their own kind of gifts to the equation. They had youth, optimism, emotion, passion and a commitment and unlimited energy to creating positive relationships. They went by the philosophy of “love these children; put them first; and do what you think is right.” They emphasized love and caring and the Illahee Spirit, which to them meant, basically “it's all about friendships.”

Skip and Dolly Thomas were coaxed out of retirement once again during the summer of 1985. Their mere presence was reassuring to all staff and campers alike. They were the grandmother and grandfather figures that made everyone feel at ease. They were also the link with the past to the present and just having them around lent an air of stability. Skip was there on July 7, 1985 at the opening campfire to inspire the girls once again. In a poem he wrote entitled *Walk With Me* one hears the gentle strength that must have quieted the most homesick heart that first night.

A Walk With Me

Illahee beckons to every girl from city, town and state,
Extending hands of welcome, on this our opening date.
Our hearts are filled with gladness: relax, and smile, be free,
Enjoy all nature's blessings – come, take a walk with me.

The soft surprise of sunrise, as it dries away the dew,
Enhances waking moments, beneath God's heavenly blue.
You hear the song of angels, in the robin's early plea—
O campers, rise and shine—come, take a walk with me!

Illahee shares her treasures, with campers, young and old,
Each seeking true contentment, through friends with hearts of gold.
Fond memories will linger through the weeks that are to be—
So take my hand, dear camper—come, take a walk with me.

In 1985 Camp Illahee had a solid core of activities and nearly 65 years of accumulated traditions. These two aspects of Illahee were the bedrock foundation that had served the directors and campers well and Frank and Elizabeth were to continue these with a faithful diligence. As they began to decide what was important for Illahee's future they saw that they could make an impact in three different areas: camp maintenance and further facility growth; expanding the outdoor activities for older girls; and entering the new era of technology to keep Illahee well-placed in a competitive world of summer camping for girls.

While keeping a practical eye on what needed to be done to keep Illahee growing, an even more important direction was coming from who Frank and Elizabeth were as people. For Frank and Elizabeth, Illahee was as a place for girls to grow as persons in an environment that naturally fostered lasting friendships. For them it was what happened between the girls in the cabin,

around the dining room table, at the riding ring, around the campfire, in the Busy Bee, at the Illahee Olympics, or with their counselor - wherever intimacy was nurtured and the bonds of friendship were strengthened something of lasting value in the lives of the girls was created. Add to this the freedom to have fun in a safe, and even sometimes challenging environment, and it was the perfect mixture for a successful camper experience. This, to them, is what the Illahee Spirit meant. This is what made an Illahee Girl special and this is what Frank and Elizabeth wanted to accomplish as Directors. They wanted to “give the girls a place to relax and get to know each other surrounded by caring persons interested in knowing what they were doing” is the way Elizabeth puts it. Even though the girls coming to Illahee were perhaps more sophisticated than previous generations they still needed what Illahee could offer – a simplicity of living; an out-of-doors experience that would enrich their lives; and a safe haven separate from the seductions of marketing, shopping and the emerging technologies such as the internet. To their way of thinking what Illahee had to offer seemed even more important now.

In inspirational talks around the campfire or in the Woodland Chapel or during Orientation Week “friendship” was often the theme. They viewed it as their mission to foster this idea of the enduring and transforming power of caring, nurturing, and love for others and they saw their role as living this for all to see.

Camp, A Place for a Fresh Start

The first year I came to Illahee I didn't know what to expect.
I thought that nobody would like me, I felt like a major reject.
I had so much fun that year, so much you would never believe.
And when the last day of camp came, I didn't want to leave.

I remembered friends, the laughs, and the tears. And that's why I came back for three more years.

Maggie Hackett, 1991

Rules to Help Illahee

1. If you open it, close it
2. if you use it, put it away
3. if you borrow it, give it back
4. if you get it dirty, clean it
5. if it cries, love it

Anna Moreno Nava

Over the years Illahee never espoused a definite creed or religious affiliation but Christian values were always set before the campers and the leadership as a model of what could be achieved in the lives of Illahee campers. Girls of other faiths were always welcome at Illahee and on certain occasions they shared their faith to the interest of all the girls. When girls respected and treated others with concern and love – when a reverence for creation was taught and practiced – when spontaneous joy flowed from a child's heart, this was what camp, at the deepest level, was all about. And this was the current of Christian living that all girls experienced at Illahee. Very significant religious rituals over the years had been nurtured at Illahee. On Sunday mornings the entire Illahee community dressed in their white uniforms and quietly walked in single file to the Woodland Chapel for worship. Reflecting on God as present within the beauty of nature were often worship themes at the Woodland Chapel. Many a former camper can, to this day, remember an especially meaningful chapel service that seem to speak directly to their heart. Frank and Elizabeth believed that the Christian faith could find a unique expression at a place like Illahee due to the beauty of its setting and the closeness of its community. Both of them had deep spiritual roots in Christianity. At college they were active in the Young Life movement and found an uplifting and close spiritual community there. Even after moving to Illahee they

continued to offer leadership in the local chapter of Young Life. Frank explains his faith this way: "It's a part of who I am and it was the way we directed camp." They began each meeting with prayer and offered a weekly voluntary Bible study during the summer for any interested staff member. In a counselor training brochure from the late 80's they defined their philosophy on Illahee's Christian traditions as: "A Christian camp, Illahee is not affiliated with a particular denomination. We emphasize the importance of upholding Christian values in everyday life. Our objective is to serve as Christian role models, living and teaching by example. As counselors, we strive to create a camp atmosphere that is loving and accepting of others without preaching or being judgmental. We will be serving children of different faiths and need to be sensitive and understanding." They were promoting the most positive approach to Christianity they knew. It was not evangelical but it was open, tolerant and unapologetic. Frank believes that the firmness of their faith had a profound effect on the spirit of the staff at Illahee. "It changed the culture of our staff," he says.

Carla Vera was a counselor from Venezuela in 1989. After 10 years at Illahee she expresses beautifully this "change in culture" that Frank described. "As I leave these hills, this land of waterfalls and love, I feel my throat begin to tighten. My heart is flowing with a love that I long suspected to exist. Everything I leave behind me is too great for words. It is more valuable than anything I could own in this world. My integrity, my maturity, and my security; my experience, my friends, my faith and my love; my passion my truth, my answers, myself. All these things have come forth from this land. The seeds were planted in my soul and have been nurtured through the past ten summers - My vanity, my doubt, my fears, my loneliness, hatred, my resentment, my regrets. They have all been lost perhaps as I walked quietly through the woods one day or as I talked to a friend one night. Maybe I left them behind as I rode a horse or swam in the lake. They may have burnt in the campfire or they may have washed away by tears of a parting friend. Yet as I leave, I hear the bells of children's laughter in my ears. I feel the squeeze of my friend's hug. I perceive the sweet perfume of pine needles. I see everything more beautiful for the love in my heart. The Lord has blessed this place. There is magic about it not to be found elsewhere on earth. It is a feeling that invades you if allow it and rules your way of life forever. I pray that the Lord will keep this place as it is so we may rekindle the fire we have built in our hearts. I hope that somewhere in our travels someone feels our warmth and learns from it."

One day while looking over some of the old photos taken of Illahee in the 1920s, Frank noticed a long slide that began on the hill over the banks of the Swim Lake in the area now known as Heigh Ho. This monster of a slide slipped through the trees on the hill and ended with a precipitous drop into the Swim Lake. The McLeods knew a good thing when they created it and the Tindalls thought that it was time to bring it back. When the girls came to camp in 1985 their attention must have been attracted to the shiny new metal slide supported by wooden beams known as The Streak. It would soon become one of the girl's favorite waterfront activities. This was not the only new addition to the Swim Lake. On the opposite bank, connected to a muscular limb of a large Oak tree, was a rope swing known as the Tarzan Swing. Girls participated in this old-fashioned fun by holding on to the rope and at the apex of the swing they would let go and drop, shrieking with joy, into the water. The Swim Lake had traditionally been the place for swim shows, elaborate synchronized swimming demonstrations, diving competitions, and Red Cross swimming instruction. These activities would continue but now there was also a new twist – some amusement park-like fun.

The Streak

"The Streak is so much fun to go down, slippery slipping down. And the only place it can be found is Camp Illahee." Elizabeth Birchmore 1988

It was important to Frank and Elizabeth that Illahee look attractive to visitors and campers alike. They began with small things that improved the appearance immediately. They planted flower gardens around camp to offer color; they blacktopped the old concrete tennis courts and built stonewalls to neaten and add definition to the property. They moved their office from the basement of their home to Curtis and weatherized it to allow for year round use. As the camps financial situation improved they looked to bigger projects to meet the camps needs. By the late 1980's the Tindalls saw a definite need to update the girls cabins. Still framing the swim lake were many of the cabins built in the 1920s by the McLeods and even though they had sentimental value they were showing their age and it was time to build new ones. A three-year plan was set in place that would phase out the old cabins with new cabins built on their footprint. They began with one cabin on Hillbrook. When the girls returned to camp the next summer they dubbed the new cabin the "condo-cabin" for its relative comfort and spaciousness. Over the next three years they would replace all the cabins around the lake offering campers newer and safer living arrangements.

Frankie had initiated a program that was proving to be very popular – woodworking. The girls found satisfaction creating gifts for their parents such as a toolbox for Dad or a garden stool for Mom. The program activity was originally housed in Pinebranch, the small cabin located next to the Director's home. This space worked well until the need arose for the Sparks to have their own cabin in which to live together. Woodworking then moved to what is now the Laundry Room underneath the Dining Hall. The ceilings were low and the noise was nearly unbearable, but even with all the drawbacks the activity continued to grow in popularity. In 1991 plans were drawn up to build a new Woodworking shop that would incorporate the latest equipment, offer nearly triple the space, and with the large sliding doors on either end, allow for a much better ventilation. In the off-season the Woodshop would also serve the needs of camp as it expanded. The building had a design similar to the PBS show The New Yankee Workshop and blended well with the look of camp.

The Riding Program at Illahee had always and continued to be a favorite activity for the girls. Over the years Illahee had become known for the quality of riding instruction the girls received. But there was one condition that continued to hamper the activity -- rain. Ren and Liz Bannerman had offered Illahee their expertise in riding for nine summers. They wanted to expand their program to a year-round operation but the weather was fickle and the need for an indoor riding ring became apparent. In 1993 ground was broken for a covered riding ring that would serve both purposes: a year-round riding program and a place to ride in inclement weather during the summer. After its completion Illahee had a place to continue to ride even in the heaviest rainfall. It complimented the existing rings and served the same purpose for riders to advance in their abilities.

Sitting on the knoll across from the Dining Hall stood the venerable old building known as the Wishing Well. It had been the place to aid the illnesses of campers for nearly six decades but it was small and cramped and the time had come to create a new more spacious building for Illahee. A new two-story Wishing Well was designed to be a place of comfort for campers and a residence for the volunteer nurses who came to be a part of camp each summer. With a porch for sitting, a kitchen to dispense medicines and a large living area to relax in, as well as offering the needed bed space for sick campers, it also had the advantage of being a "guest house" for visitors during the off-season. The official opening of the Wishing Well took place in 1997 and has become an integral part of today's Illahee.

As with past Directors, Frank and Elizabeth saw the expanding facility needs of Camp Illahee and worked to meet them. By the time they completed their work at Illahee the camp had the look of

a beautiful, well laid out and maintained facility that everyone affiliated with could be proud. Much credit must go to Danny Stewart. Danny was the Illahee caretaker for many years while the Tindalls were directors. He had an eye for the little things that would make camp a beautiful place to visit. He was a perfectionist when it came to camp property spending the time needed to make the grounds a reason for pride. It was a given that if the details of camp were tended to and well-maintained a parent would could rightfully think that their child would be safe at such a place.

Programmatically, Illahee continued to offer most of the activities that had proved successful for so many years. One area in which they made significant changes was the "Trips" program for older girls. Frank and Elizabeth originally followed the trips design initiated by Frankie in which an older camper would follow a weekly schedule in which one day she would go climbing, another day for kayaking or canoeing, and finally one day for outdoor adventure which might, for instance, be a challenging hike. By the mid 90's a girl could come to Illahee and choose either climbing or kayaking as her major focus for the summer. "Most girls found their niche and they stayed with it," Frank explained. This was a chance for a girl to attain a higher skill level each year.

By the 1980's an explosion of technological advances was reaching into every niche of life in America and changing the ways people communicated with each other. So rapid were the developments that it was hard to keep pace with the newest trend. For many decades Illahee had prospered on the simplest forms of communication but it worked well enough for the times. When the Tindalls purchased Illahee in 1984 there was one phone line for both the office and the Directors home, a mimeograph machine, and a primitive intercom system whose lines were strung from tree to tree that connected the main buildings with each other. There was a gradual shift in the ways the Tindalls began to use the newest technology to aid them in their efforts. In their first year they purchased an IBM memory typewriter that could produce copies from the original. A second telephone line was installed and then, when they became available, a fax machine was added. The first four years that they recruited they used slides to show perspective campers what Illahee was like. By the late 80's they were showing Illahee prospects a videotape of life at Illahee.

They continued publishing an abbreviated version of The Log each summer. On the cover of the Logs were the theme for each summer: "Put a Little Love In Your Heart;" "It's a wonderful Life;" "Follow Your Dreams;" "Camp Illahee; the Happiest Place on Earth;" "Make New Friends;" "Camp Illahee: You've Got a Friend;" "Come as you are; Leave as you want to be;" -- are examples of the themes adopted for various summers. If fun and friendship, love and caring was the spiritual lifeblood of Illahee for Frank and Elizabeth, judging from the writings of the girls for the Log it soon becomes obvious they too caught the spirit.

Why I come to Camp Illahee

I come to Camp Illahee because I want to be with my friends. I also came because I want to make new ones. Without camp there would be no fun. I love camp and my friends. The only place I can make the best friends and have the most fun is at Camp Illahee. Betsy Burris (92)

Speechless

Words will not come to my mind, to describe the tears in my eyes. If I try to speak, I feel as though I am wording the foolish lies. The best friends that I've ever known are right here by my side. They have laughed with me and talked with me and held me while I cried. I am trying to keep from weeping hard, as I think of leaving here. Scared and lonely, as I deeply fear this might be my last year. Each face I strive to lock in my mind, memories my heart will file. Aas we hug,

we swear to keep in touch, I pray to God we will. Wherever I go, whatever I do you will never be far from my thoughts. I just wanted to thank you for always being there, and becoming a space in my heart. Grace Stephens – 1991

Camper letters

Dear Mom,

Camp is going great. I'm meeting a lot of new people. Everyone, including my counselor, is nice.

My favorite thing to do here is ride. At the stables there is a cute pony named April, who I ride. She's really sweet. April and I gave Wilson a short pony ride when he came to visit.

Archery is also a lot of fun. If you hit the bulls-eye, you get a free Coke. I'll try really hard.

People also say that riflery is fun. I think I'm the only one in my cabin not taking it. We just had the Illahee Olympics. Barnwell's Bacteria won. The team I was on almost won. I can't wait until the dance this Saturday. I hope it'll be fun. I'm having a lot of fun, and I hope I can come back next year.

Like the sign in the cafeteria says: "I don't want to make reasons for you to stay, only reasons for you to return." Well, Illahee has plenty of reasons. Love Hadley

As Frank so simply put it, "It's all about friendships."

As each session came to an end Final Night was a special time for quiet reflection. As the girls gathered by the tall Pinetree for the final campfire various campers and counselors read their heartfelt words about what Illahee had meant to them that summer. The nearness to the end camp brought with it a deep feeling of sorrow and gladness mixed together – sorrow that the girls would have to leave their dearest camp friends and a gladness that Illahee was there as a place to come and be themselves. The evening ended with the lighting of the Wishboats. Standing around the Swim Lake, shoulder to shoulder, often with arms draped across each other's shoulders, silently each girl would hold a block of wood to which a candle is affixed. The wishboats represented a girl's deepest longing and hope. Once a girl had allowed her mind to accept her wish she knelt along the edge of the lake to place her wishboat on the darken water. The illumination from all the candles shown in the faces of the girls and in that reflected beauty something inside was also set free with the wishboat. It was a moment between being in the Heavenly World and returning to the life from which they came and often tears fell down cheeks and a special friend's hug held particular meaning. As a counselor in 1989, Debbie Tallarico wrote about the wishboat experience and the surprises she beheld.

Wishboats

The end of the day at final night and the children and counselors place their pine disk-candle lit wishboats on the swimming lake's surface. It seems sort of symbolic that the youngest children are the only ones down on their knees relighting the wishes that are blown out by the breeze. Innocently restoring the hopes and dreams of the elders all in a game when in truth it is the youth and only the youth who may one day restore the hopes and dreams of the world. The crowd clears and the wish lights go out one by one. The children are tired and most go to sleep. I stay and watch with curiosity as to which light may be the last to go out and wonder what the wish behind it may be. The candles melt slowly and finally it is left with two. One light sits on a tall candle sheltered by a cement wall and overshadowed by a steel bar. The other candle is much shorter and is sheltered in a wide angled corner of cement wall. When questioning a girl as to

which one she thought would last the longest she replied that surely the one under the bar would be the very last to burn out because it was the tallest and the strongest. I think that would have been most people's reaction, but for some reason, I wanted the shorter more hopeless candle to last. So I sat and I watched and another young girl came and sat by me while everyone else was gone. She asked me what I was doing and I explained. She never attempted to make a judgment as to which might last the longest, but merely watched with me and talked and asked questions. She stepped away for a minute when one of the two candles went out – it was the tall one – the tall one went out first. So I called and said, “come look the tiny one is still lit – look, it is down to the wood base and is still lit.” She came over next to me and sat down and watched with a smile. We stared at the final candle until it too went out and then she reached down in the water, picked it up and said, “I wonder if we can take these with us?” I said, “Sure, take it.” She looked at it and then reached it out towards me and said, “here, do you want it?” I did want that last wish at first, but then thought that the mere generosity in this little girl with such a simple and exciting thing was enough of a wish for me. I said, “No, you take it.” She clutched it in both hands and with a smile she stood up to walk to her cabin. But before she left, she turned around in the dark and said, “one more question, what is your name?”
Debbie Tallarico ('89)

Final Night so often revealed just how dear camp friendships were. It was these friendships that proved to be the hardest part of leaving.

Final Night

The final night of camp is one to be remembered, one to enjoy but one that is wished to never come. This is the time to think back and realize all the fun we've had, but also know it is a time that is very sad. This last night is full of emotions and thoughts to be cherished, Full of friendships and love to be spread—
As final night comes to its close, we gather 'round with friends that we've grown to love
And think of all the special times we've had together and think of the good times to come.
Elizabeth Dye ('85)

Reflection

As I sit here on my bed having a peaceful rest hour, I reflect on my years at Camp Illahee. These past five summers have been some of the best times in my life. The best part of all, though, is the friendship that grows between people here. I have never felt as loved as I do when I'm staring at the wish boats floating in the water with loving arms around my shoulders. The Illahee spirit has truly touched my soul. I know that wherever I go I will carry it with me in my heart. To all of you who know the gift that I am speaking of, treasure it, and don't ever lose the warmth that it gives. This camp has meant a lot to me, and it will be very hard for me to leave, but I just want to say one thing before I go from this Heavenly World, love and you shall be always happy.
Anonymous 1994

In 2002 Frank and Elizabeth were surprised when on three different occasions three different people seriously offered to buy Camp Illahee. They interpreted these offers as perhaps God's way of trying to tell them something. Camp could be very consuming and their two children were growing up quickly. Perhaps if they sold they could spend the time they wanted with family and bring a more balanced direction to their lives? It started them thinking. Over the years they had become close friends with a couple who were the camp directors for the non-profit camp, Camp Merriwoode just down the road in Cashiers, North Carolina. They had spent many evenings together comparing camping experiences and sharing strategies about what had worked for them. They were close both professionally and personally even taking vacations together. If God was trying to tell them something about selling Camp Illahee, they knew who it was they wanted to carry on the Illahee traditions and spirit – two people whose heart was in the right place and who

knew how to run a camp - Gordon and Laurie Strayhorn. Almost casually over dinner one evening Frank brought up the possibility of their selling Illahee. The conversation was light at first but then Gordon said more seriously, "let's talk about it." The only handy piece of paper they had available was a restaurant napkin and on that they began to write. The first draft of a contract to buy Camp Illahee was written on the back of a napkin but in a matter of weeks the formal contract had been worked out and Gordon and Laurie Strayhorn would become the next owners/directors of Camp Illahee.

The young, inexperienced couple of 17 years earlier could now look back and see just what they had accomplished – Camp Illahee was prospering and campers were having the time of their lives. Frank put it this way, "we were good stewards of Illahee while we were there." It was what they felt called to do and they worked hard and did their best to see that each and every child who called herself an Illahee Girl knew she was loved and cared about. They created a culture where the whole community cared about each other and each child's strengths was encouraged. If from the start their camping philosophy was "love these children, put them first" no one who spent time at Illahee while Frank and Elizabeth Tindall were Directors would ever doubt the truth of the statement.

Camping had always been important in the lives of Gordon and Laurie Strayhorn. They met when they were both counselors at Falling Creek Camp in Tuxedo, North Carolina during their college years - Gordon was a junior at Sewanee College in Sewanee, Tennessee and Laurie was a sophomore at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. On one of their days off Gordon and Laurie went traveling in the mountains of Western North Carolina together. It was their first date and almost by accident they ended up driving down the gravel lane that led to Camp Merriewoode. Camp Merriewoode had always been an important part of Laurie's life. As a girl she spent many wondrous summers there as a camper. Her emotional attachment went deep in other ways as well. Her mother spent time as a camper at Merriewoode as a child and her grandfather was instrumental in helping the camp become a non-profit foundation, serving on its founding board. So it is not surprising that they found themselves there on the shore of the lake that fronted camp that hot summer day. They borrowed one of the camp canoes and headed off onto the water. After paddling for a while they both looked back at Merriewoode and it became obvious how much work the camp needed to be brought back to its former glory. There was a lot of deferred maintenance and every building seemed to need some sort of attention. Gordon even commented at the time on how much hard work it would take. Little did he realize how providential that comment would be.

Gordon continued his education earning a Masters degree in Parks and Recreation at the University of Indiana in 1987. Soon after graduation Gordon and Laurie were married and in the fall of 1988 they both accepted teaching positions at the Parnell School in New Jersey. At this time in their lives they were thinking about making teaching their careers. They were happy at Parnell and not actively looking for another job. One day, however, a Camp Merriewoode newsletter arrived at their apartment and while paging through it Laurie noticed that the camp was in the process of searching for a new director. They quickly sent out a resume' to the search committee never seriously believing that they would be in contention for the position. Rather than getting their hopes up they adopted the attitude that "if it was meant to be it would be" and they went on with their lives. Not long after they sent their letter they received a call inviting them to come to Cashiers for an interview and much to their surprise they were offered the positions as co-directors. A whole new and unexpected direction for their lives opened before them. Leaving Parnell and taking on the responsibilities of running a camp, especially one that needed so much upgrading and care, seemed risky to them at the time but it also seemed like a response to a

calling. So in the summer of 1989 they took up residence at Camp Merriewoode and began their first summer as Directors. They would remain there for the next 13 years.

The world of private summer camps in Western North Carolina is a close-knit community. Everyone knows everyone else. Camp owners, directors or full-time camp employees know the joys, the hazards and the hard work of running a camp. This shared experience brings camp personnel together periodically to share experiences and keep up with others both professionally and socially. It wasn't long before Frank and Elizabeth Tindall and Gordon and Laurie Strayhorn would meet at one of these gatherings. For the Strayhorns, the Tindalls were the "other young director couple" and they gravitated to each other. "We always respected the way they ran camp and how carefully they would think through things," Laurie remembers. Though their friendship was initially based on their similar career paths they soon found other common ground that brought them even closer. Both couples had a living Christian faith that guided their lives; both couples viewed camping in many of the same ways and would use each other as sounding boards; even their hobbies, such as skiing and traveling, were similar. As their respect for each other grew, the seeds for the next generation of Illahee ownership slowly began to be planted. Laurie remembers how, almost offhandedly, Elizabeth mentioned to the Strayhorns one evening over dinner, "You'll have to buy Illahee when we retire." Laurie's first thought was "Oh no, it's too nice. We'll have to buy something run-down."

The Strayhorns were happy at Merriewoode and any decision to leave would be difficult. They had become an integral part of Merriewoode over the 13 years they served as its Directors. The camp's Board of Directors were pleased with what they had accomplished and were eager to see them continue in the Directors position. Many buildings had been updated and improved; enrollment was at capacity and Merriewoode had a national reputation as a quality summer camp for girls. They were respected and treated well and had found great personal gratification in their positions. But it had always been in the back of their minds that some day they would like to purchase their own camp. An opportunity or two had come there way over the years but in each instance it just didn't seem like the right fit – not until Camp Illahee became available.

By the spring of 2002 the conversations between the Strayhorns and the Tindalls took a more serious bent. The Tindalls realized by this time that they were ready to retire and they approached the Strayhorns to feel out their interest in buying Camp Illahee. It was spring and the demands of the impending summer were facing both couples. The last thing the Strayhorns wanted to do was sit down with friends and talk about a business deal. And besides Gordon and Laurie were happy where they were. The Tindalls continued to inquire. In the middle of that summer they called again and their response was the same: "no, we're really happy here." After the summer season was over the Strayhorns went on vacation and for the first time thoughts about owning and directing Camp Illahee began to enter their minds. As Laurie explains it, "It kept nagging in the back of my mind, 'we should explore this.'" When they returned from vacation they decided to spend a day at Illahee, walking around the camp and getting a feel for the place. In a quiet "Ahaa" moment Laurie realized that "I could picture living here." Their hesitation began to evaporate. There were the obvious reasons that owning Camp Illahee made sense. They knew that Illahee was the kind of camp that girls committed to. An Illahee girl didn't "jump camps" and go somewhere else for summer camp. Illahee loyalty was strong and they liked that. They also knew that Frank and Elizabeth had done a great job. The camp looked beautiful and the enrollment was at capacity. The fact that Illahee was in such good shape and was such a top camp actually was a bit intimidating to them at first. They only hoped that if they bought Illahee they would "measure up to what had already been established." The feeling began to grow stronger. They even felt directed by God to make this step; "there was a spiritual pulling toward Illahee" as Laurie puts it. By the close of 2002 a contract had been agreed upon and Gordon and

Laurie began to make plans to move to Illahee. Right from the start they had a perspective that they legally would be the owners but as Gordon summarizes it: "Everyone who comes to camp Illahee over the years owns the camp. We are just its stewards and that's how we fit into the line of past directors." Gordon and Laurie Strayhorn would become Camp Illahee's new directors determined to be good stewards of all that had been and all that would be of a "heavenly world" named Illahee.

They had never been in a camp situation in which everything was working so well. Frank and Elizabeth had financially invested in Illahee and its facilities. "Nothing was broken and there were no skeletons in the closet," Gordon reflects. Without the necessity of having to work hard just to get a place in working order they decided it was important to first learn about Illahee and find out what worked well. Laurie summarized their initial approach like this: "We knew not to come in great guns. We wanted to know what it was that people really loved about Illahee." Frank and Elizabeth were their guides in this process. They went above and beyond to help build a bridge with campers and alumnae for the new owners. They were there that first summer to answer any questions the Strayhorns had about procedure and to mentor them in the more subtle nuances of running Illahee. Just seeing the former directors and the new directors together had a reassuring and calming effect for parents and campers alike. The older returning campers had been with the Tindalls almost from the beginning. Having this last summer with them was an opportunity for these campers to share together with them and to mourn their leaving in an orderly way. Even into the fall the Tindalls continued to help the Strayhorns. Elizabeth made the calls and set up the arrangements for the fall travel season. With Elizabeth and Laurie traveling together Laurie was able to meet the Illahee representatives and learn how Elizabeth had run the camper shows assured that they would be successful. The Illahee community adapted very quickly to their coming and the Strayhorns soon realized they were "accepted with open arms." Their decision to spend the time it would take to listen to people and to learn about Illahee proved to be just the right approach. "It helped the process by engaging people and finding out what it was that they really loved about their camp," Laurie says.

They had come a long way in defining their new roles as directors but there still seemed to be a long way to go. By the beginning of 2003 they were on their own and Laurie remembers the first few months this way: "For the first four months I didn't want to answer the phone because I wasn't sure I would know the answers." They spent many reflective hours together figuring out what the culture of camp was like and, because they considered themselves to have a "zany side," they were also "trying to figure out what humor would work here." Laurie remembers the first time she instructed the girls in the idiosyncrasies of the septic system. Trying to let them know that some things went into the septic system and some things did not she used the "three P's – poop, pee, and paper" as a way for the girls to remember. As she looked out at the girls sitting there at their dining room tables she noticed that no one was speaking and the girls were just staring at her. No one had ever used the word "poop" before at camp and the campers did not know exactly how to respond. On another occasion Laurie hopped up on a chair in the dining hall to lead the singing the girls thought it was hilarious. They had never seen this kind of leadership before. The Tindalls were much loved by everyone associated with Camp Illahee but they were not prone to spontaneous zaniness. This was something different and the Strayhorns began to make their own mark and do it their way.

Most Illahee traditions have been nurtured and cherished over the years and campers have come to expect and anticipate them. Gordon and Laurie have appreciated and carried on those meaningful community expressions realizing that "children need tradition in a changing world. They need something they can count on," as Laurie says. But they have added to the traditions in fresh ways as well. One of their first initiatives was the enhancement of community life and

community time. They were intentional about adding a new tradition they call “Rise and Shine.” It was very reminiscent of the morning meetings that Robin had during her time as Director. Each morning, after breakfast but before the activities of the day begin, camp gathers in McLeod Lodge for a morning assembly. They begin by singing a peppy rendition of Rise and Shine, and Give God The Glory and then stories are told, more songs are sung and the camp has a chance to share together the upcoming day.

Gordon had developed many skills as a builder during his time at Merriwoode and at Illahee his first major project was a climbing tower. During the off-season he set to work and by the time camp rolled around the next summer the girls were happily amazed to see, next to the woodworking shop, a five-sided tower rising almost to the tops of the adjacent trees. Various climbing challenges were worked into the design such as a zip line and several lines connected by poles almost at treetop level. Since then, new tennis courts have been added, the parking for counselors has been moved to a more out-of-the-way yet convenient place, and the drive through Illahee has been re-routed and freshly paved.

Gordon states that he “wants Illahee to be the best camp around,” and the facilities are an important part of that vision. But even more central to this vision is what Gordon simply states as their desire to “make sure that each camper has a great experience.” Program activities that are engaging and “hands on” are a crucial part of that experience but so is the food, the evening entertainment, the quality of leadership, the spiritual nurturance, and the myriad other expressions involved in operating a camp. Camp is like a microcosm of a living city. It is complex and multifaceted. To be the best camp around it takes what Gordon describes with the acronym E2 – Exceed Expectations., and quickly adds a third E-- Every Day. With this as a leadership model they have set out to make Illahee top-notch in all ways – from the food, to the grounds, to the program, to the facilities, and to the leadership. To their way of thinking it is the only way to be the best camp around.

Another direction they have emphasized is the opportunity camp affords each girl to experience the wonders of nature. They have intentionally set out to offer the girls more chances to go hiking, have an overnight camping trip, or to spend time at the nature center. “Camps have a responsibility to foster a love of nature, in nature,” Laurie says.

This camper-centered focus has been the cornerstone for Camp Illahee since its earliest beginnings and it remains the most important thing about camp for the Strayhorns. “We desire for each girl to feel known, to know that she is important to her counselor and to us. We desire that she knows she is being heard, even the quiet and sometimes overlooked child, for her to know just how important she really is.” And for Gordon and Laurie they feel that they are in just the right place to help make this happen.

