

Community Center embraces the past and looks to the future

by Chuck Landever

Imagine the area around Bill's Creek Road in the early 1950's. According to Felix McDaniel, who was a teenager during this time, the area was very different than it is today. Many roads off of Bill's Creek Road still were unpaved. Few families in the area had phone service and those who did had a choice between a four or an eight family party line. There were only two televisions in the area. One privately owned by Oney Freeman and one owned by Wallace Earley who ran the Dalton General Store. Felix McDaniel remembers 50 men squeezing into the Dalton Store on Wednesday nights when the boxing matches were aired on TV. Most people in the area were farmers or tradesmen. A few owned businesses or mills. This was the Bill's Creek Community in the early 50's. This was the backdrop that brought together 75 local families in 1953 to form the Bill's Creek Rural Development Club, later to be known as the Bill's Creek Community Center Club. The purpose of the grassroots group was to encourage people to work together to build a better community. The Club, spearheaded by Virginia Wilson and Paul Dalton, soon realized that the best way to achieve their goals was to build a community clubhouse.

The builders represent the Who's Who of the Bill's Creek area. Families whose lineage dated back to the 1700's. Family names like, McDaniel, Wilson, Dalton, Howell, Norbitt and Flynn are just a few of the families who joined together in 1954 to start planning the Bill's Creek Community Center.

Using the motto "Working Today for a Brighter Tomorrow" as a rallying cry to come together, the dream of a Community Center started to become a reality. The McDaniel family donated land. The Cheek family donated the timbers. The Dalton family donated the use of their sawmills.

Verno Parton dressed the lumber. Local truckers and Farmers hauled

lumber. Local carpenters, masons and other skilled tradesmen gave up their free time. Families would come out on building days to support the workers with food and the offer to help where they could. Farming families raised and sold crops to raise construction funds. Community members held BBQ Chicken and Fish Fry dinners to raise funds. In short, a community of humble means sacrificed their time and their income to build a better tomorrow.

Before the building was started the group built a picnic area where workers could come together to plan and families could come together to support the workers. According to Felix McDaniel, who helped lay out and finish the hardwood flooring in the Center, the building process went smoothly.

Ralph Robertson was the lead carpenter. McDaniel remembers Ralph as coordinating construction. The Bill's Creek area was lucky that they had almost all the trades needed in the neighborhood. The one exception to this was a mason to build the chimney. Eventually they found a person who lived off of Cedar Creek Road to do the mason work.

In 1957, the Bills Creek Community Center was completed. It quickly became a meeting place for the community. The picnic area and baseball fields were actively used. Church based baseball teams would play against each other, bringing people from other areas into the community. The Bill's Creek Community Club won awards at the Rutherford County fair in 1956, 1964, 1965 and 1967, awards based on the Community Center's efforts and creativity. In 1966, due to the success of the Bill's Creek Community Center a delegation from the WNC Community Development Program visited the center and toured the local area. Distinguished visitors included a former congressman, a representative from the Governor's office, the Mayor of Asheville, the Executive Vice President of the WNC Community Development Program and many representatives from the State and County Agricultural Extension Offices.

In 2004, the Bill's Creek Community Center received its 501 (C) (3), non-profit, status from the IRS. The Bill's Creek Community Center Club continued its social and civic activities. Youth 4-H groups were formed. Monthly roadside trash pick-up teams got together. Neighborhood beautification groups painted mailboxes, planted gardens and then installed Community Center signs. During the last 15 years, under the leadership of Jane Howell and VerAnn Kimbrough, the Bill's Creek Community Center has continued to be used for a wide variety of functions. It is a place where neighbors can hold a family reunion, wedding or birthday party. The Community Center has partnered with the Bill's Creek Fire Department in fundraising efforts. The Community Center continues to be used by different civic and fraternal groups for meeting space and for fundraising dinners. Ms. Howell says, The Bill's Creek Community Center has a rich history. All neighbors, whether they are

new to the area or have lived here all their lives, should be proud of the Bill's Creek Community Center and should appreciate the sacrifices made by the families who built it.

Ms. Howell organized a planning meeting in June. The purpose of which was to continue moving the Bill's Creek Community Center forward, and to find ways to better utilize the Community Center. New Officers were elected. It was agreed that a greater effort needed to be made to enhance communication with all our neighbors. To achieve this a Bill's Creek Community Center Facebook page has been set up and posts on Nextdoor will now also be seen. Signs will be posted. Every effort to make the public aware of meetings and events will be made.

The new Officers of the Bill's Creek Community Center have many thoughts on ways to bring neighbors together. Ideas like a marshmallow night, family game day,

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Fishin'
by
Michael Lewis

This year has been a roller coaster! In the summer I planted my garden and it did not rain for three weeks. This fall I planted my turnip patch it did not rain for 17 days. Prior to that we had one rain that washed out Chimney Rock and flooded the valley. A few weeks later there was a hurricane that tore Florida all to pieces and it was headed straight at us so they lowered the lake and the hurricane turned and went away. Too much rain, not enough rain better safe than sorry. As for the fishing it was actually really, really good this year — when you could get your boat on the water. I've been fishing this lake for

years and years and years and there's a lot of different ways to fish. For example if somebody is fishing down the bank or the wall I'm not going to cut in front of him or fish behind them because it's just not smart to fish behind them and it's not good to block them off. But for years, myself and the other guides and other fishermen have fished together on schooling fish either in the open part of the lake or around the island. We almost surround them so that we can catch them and keep people from driving through the fish while they're jumping up chasing bait. We've done this for years, but the lake is starting to get crowded and that calls for extra safety. We have been catching large mouth and white bass like crazy.

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Michael (right) and some fishermen show off their recent catches.



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meet the candidate meeting, front porch music jam and a food truck night. A "Meet & Greet" will be held in August and September and the Community Center, in cooperation with the Bill's Creek Fire Department, will bring back the Bill's Creek Community Center Thanksgiving dinner. That dinner will be held on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. The new officers of the Cen-

ter recognize that the future of the Center, like its past, depends on community involvement. They feel that there is a renewed interest in the Bill's Creek Community Center, an understanding that a strong Community Center will have a positive social and economic impact for all its neighbors. To get involved or to find out more information about future Center events email billscreekcommunitycenter@gmail.com. Donations to help continue the revitalization of the Center can be sent to the Bill's Creek Community Center, c/o Chuck Landever, PO Box 787, Lake Lure NC 28746.

“You can tell a lot about a person by the way they handle three things: a rainy day, lost luggage and tangled Christmas tree lights.”

- Maya Angelou

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