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Fire Consumes Lincabin

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FIRE consumes Lincabin



Little remains of Lincabin after a forest fire destroyed the Linfield landmark in July.

Linfield College lost a piece of history and folklore when Lincabin was destroyed by a forest fire in July.

The rustic dwelling was located on private land in the forest about 10 miles southwest of Sisters. Despite the best efforts of fire fighters to save the structure, it was completely destroyed.

It is a major loss to some of the people who used the cabin for many years.

Drannan Hamby '55, professor emeritus of chemistry and physics, was one of several individuals involved with Lincabin from the beginning. The idea for a cabin evolved after an outdoor program was established in the early 1970s. Construction began in 1973. All of the labor was done by Linfield faculty and students, Hamby said. There were no indoor toilet facilities, electricity or running water and originally a Franklin fireplace provided heat.

"One could get either one's front side or back side warm, but not both at the same time," Hamby said. The Forest Service later donated a big double-barreled wood burner that warmed the cabin. Eventually a

wood cook stove was added that baked many loaves of bread over the years.

The cabin was home to the spring and summer outdoor program and fall orientation programs for many years, and many faculty and departments used the facility, including the Departments of Physics, Modern Languages and Physical Education.

Hamby taught a January Term winter outdoor course and was joined in 1987 by Doug Cruikshank, professor of education, now emeritus.

"The cabin provided an ideal base for the course," Hamby wrote. "It was primitive and isolated enough to provide challenge, but warm and tight enough to provide a learning place that was comfortable and safe for starting a winter outdoor adventure."

Cruikshank is writing a book about the winter outdoor course, complete with journal entries from students. One chapter focuses on Lincabin, and one of his fondest memories is teaching the students to bake bread, which "resulted in baking frenzies."

In 1981, Peter Richardson, professor of German, established a tradition of taking students to "Linhütte" for total immersion German weekends. Diane (Fox) Close '84 carved a wooden "Linhütte" panel that was affixed over the door. The weekends were filled with cooking on the wood stove, as well as singing, hiking and playing games, speaking nothing but German.

Mike Roberts, professor of biology; Gudrun Hommel-Ingram, associate professor of German; Scott Smith, assistant professor of history; and Peter McGraw, director of corporate and foundation relations, have all participated in those weekends.

McGraw recalls Richardson demonstrating how to make German noodles, preparing the dough and caramelized onions and inviting the students each to take a turn.

"It wasn't easy, and after everyone had had a turn and the expert returned to finish the job, we sat down to a huge and delicious meal of Spätzle layered with cheese and onions," McGraw said.

Lincabin represented something more than just a hut in the woods, Roberts said.

"It was an institution in itself, a sort of campus annex that made certain experiences better," he added. "Being away from campus seemed to make the students willing to work harder at communicating. Many found that their German got better as the weekend progressed

Top right: A view of Lincabin during the winter when Drannan Hamby '55 and Doug Cruikshank taught the winter outdoor course. Below: Making bread was a favorite student activity.





and they learned words that were specific to mountains, forests and nature.”

And those weekends had a profound effect on some students, Richardson said.

“A junior sidled into my office one year and said she had gone to Linhütte as a freshman,” he said. “She had not said much during that visit, being reticent about using her first-year skills when there were better speakers present. She told me that weekend had been an unforgettable milestone in her Linfield education and thanked me for it.”

Close, the student who carved the Linhütte panel, was not a particularly strong German student, Richardson said. But after graduating, she moved to Germany to make her way in the art world. She married there and years later returned to give a talk at Linfield about her art, a talk delivered in halting English with a heavy German accent.

Upkeep of the cabin was a labor of love for those who used it. It had been re-stained, had its roof and gutters repaired and the stove chimney straightened. Some years major repairs were required after the cabin was vandalized. A few years ago, a new outhouse was needed, since the existing one was “listing to the side as well as showing plenty of use,” Cruikshank wrote in his book. That January, surrounded by snow, the old outhouse was burned to the ground.

“The two mental images I have today are of the old



Top: Relaxing, reading and writing in journals occupied some of the time students spent in the cabin during the winter outdoor course. Below: Burning the old outhouse.

outhouse burning and a snow-laden tree standing out against the blue-white sky,” Cruikshank added. “Drannan and I agreed that it was the passing of an era.”

— Mardi Mileham

(Editor’s note: The Office of Alumni Relations has created an online group so those who spent time at Lincabin can share their memories. Share your own memories or read what classmates have to say at <http://groups.google.com/group/lincabin>.)