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Fire Consumes Lincabin

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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 “Linhuette” for total immersion German weekends. Dane (Fox) Close ’84 carved a wooden “Linhuette” 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.

McGrath 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.
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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 against the blue-white sky,” Cruikshank added. “Drannan and I agreed that it was the passing of an era.”

Kelly Warren ’07 has been an avid waterfowl hunter since first strolling through the marsh with his father and grandfather at age 2. So when Warren, an environmental studies major at Linfield College, set out to find a topic for his independent research study, he turned to the subject he knows best – geese. After deciding to identify and analyze the seven Canada goose subspecies found in the Willamette Valley, Warren contacted state and national environmental agencies for background material.

While sorting through Oregon’s complicated hunting regulations, Warren saw the need for a better hunter education tool and took the initiative to develop the “Identification Field Guide to the Geese of the Willamette Valley and Lower Columbia River.” It was a major undertaking but one that will aid the average hunter, according to Brad Bales, a migratory game bird biologist with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for 26 years.

“Kelly took thousands of digital photos, which adds to the overall field guide,” Bales said. “It took a tremendous amount of time.”

Warren took some 4,300 photos, which he narrowed down to 95 for the publication, and included information on the geese such as history, behavior, management and maps charting breeding and wintering areas. The final product is a 40-page field guide targeted to hunters, biologists, birders and the general public.

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The project ultimately earned Warren an A in his Linfield class, along with a byline on a field guide now distributed by state and national wildlife agencies. The guide and a DVD will be available this fall at http://www.dfw.state.or.us/ODFW/html/InfoCntrWild/goose_testing.htm.

Warren’s interest in wildlife biology has broadened while at Linfield, where the liberal arts environment nurtures students to think within larger contexts, according to Tom Love, professor of anthropology and Warren’s project advisor. “Kelly took his interest in geese and developed it into a first-rate project which will be widely used,” Love said. “In addition to the academic skills he’s developed at Linfield, Kelly has a sixth sense, which a good hunter has, about habitat, reading a landscape and knowing waterfowl behavior. On top of all that, he has admirable drive and perseverance.”

Warren plans to build on this project with a senior thesis on the one subspecies that nests in the valley and has become a local nuisance.

He later plans to attend graduate school in environmental policy, and ultimately obtain an environmental law or teaching degree.

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