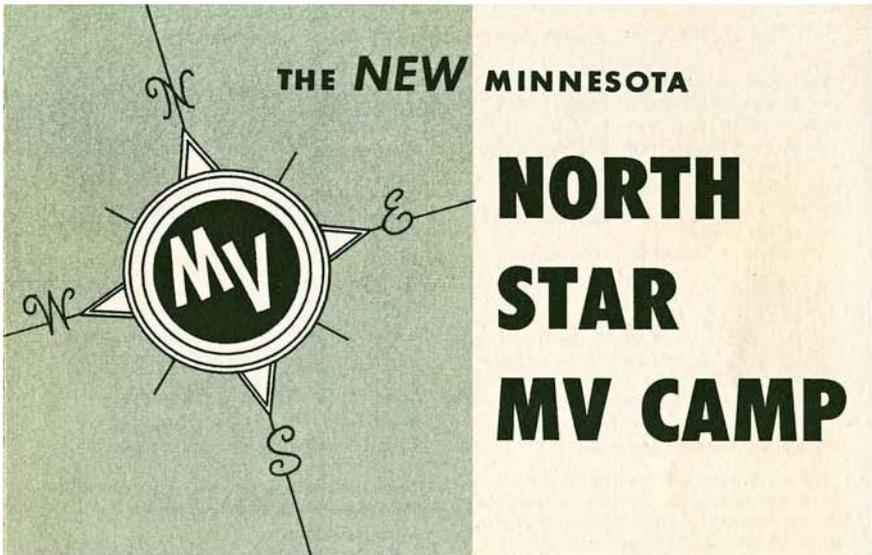


Harris H Jones



# The Founding of North Star Camp

This is the story of the birth of what is now known as North Star Youth Camp of Minnesota, on Rice lake in Brainerd, Minnesota.

I've never until now made public how this camp came to be bought. No one ever asked, and I never have attempted to relate the complete story. It has been some years past now, but I think I can still bring you the fundamentals of what took place.

I want first, to bring out the fact that it did not happen because of any greatness on my part. I am certain it was the will of God, and He led out through the entire experience. I want to bring to your remembrance a text in Matthew 6:8 which says:

Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before you ask Him.

How true this is. And again in Matthew 7:7 it says:

Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.

I wonder how much these wonderful promises mean to some of us. I can sincerely say, after this experience, they surely have meaning to me.

In 1956, some of you may remember the call that came out in the *Outlook* for anyone who knew of a suitable piece of land, that would make a good location for a youth camp.

We need a place where our youth can be brought together in God's out-of-doors, to get a firsthand study of nature, of His own handy-work in creation. If anyone knows of such a location, they are to notify the brethren at the conference office as we are in great need of a place to take our youth for a campout.

There were numerous replies, but nothing suitable turned up and the matter was dropped for a short period. When another notice appeared in the *Outlook* and more stress was placed on

the need of such a place, there were replies but not of value. It was at the time of this second notice that my story begins.

The *Outlook* is the shortest lived church paper that I get. If you want to read it at all you must do so the day it comes or shortly after. But you know something, this one particular *Outlook* had nine lives. Almost every time I turned around there was that paper. I read the article several times.

On returning home from church one Sabbath, I sat on the sofa while the girls and their mother prepared a lunch. Looking for something to read, the first thing I picked up was that old *Outlook* again.

I got up, took that paper and tucked it deep in the wastebasket. I did not want to see it again. At the same time I thought, "Why does that paper irk me so?" However, my line of thinking was broken when the call came that lunch was ready.

After lunch I returned to the living room and the girls who had finished sooner, returned to the kitchen to put away the food and dishes.

Again thinking of that paper, you can imagine my concern when I saw it again lying on the stand by the lamp. I picked it up and, going into the kitchen, asked, "Who took this paper out of the wastebasket?"

I guess I was rather loud. I calmed down as my daughter, Dorothy, replied, "I did daddy; I was looking for a letter I had thrown in there and came across that *Outlook*. I was reading that article about a youth camp." Then she added, "Why don't you find a good choice there in the office where you handle so much land?"

I just can't express the feeling that came over me at that moment. The rest of the day I put a lot of thought into her remarks. Why was I disturbed at the sight of that paper? It seemed I was no longer plagued by it. Reading the article again it seemed to mean something to me for once. Then the thought

came to me, could it be possible, just possible, that the Lord was laying a specific burden upon me and the evil one was trying to discourage me from it?

Mrs. Jones and I talked about it and prayed about it that evening and as we went to bed, it seemed to be a great relief to us.

I was up early Sunday morning and drove to the office. I spent the whole day going over records and maps, but came up with nothing that I thought suitable.

Before leaving for home, I went into the large vault where we store records and where I had prayed many times when alone. I asked God for help. "If it is my lot to find a suitable campsite, guide me on the way I should go." On my way home that night I was sure I was doing what He wanted of me.

During the coming week, I confided with those with whom I worked in our office. I explained the kind of place we wanted and why, and the great need of such a place for our young people. They all agreed to do all they could to help me. Many different areas were looked into and discussed that week but to no avail.

Then on the follow Sabbath afternoon, my brother and wife drove out, and he brought me a magazine. This he had done often when he thought some article would interest me. This particular magazine, however, had an article or story about the so-called "smoke jumpers" or fire fighters out west. Having once been a Ranger and firefighter, I was interested in this story. It told how the men jumped from planes with their equipment and how the planes would stay overhead and warn them of unseen dangers or guide them to safety.

After reading the story, the thought came to me, how easy it is from above to look down and pick out certain areas. I had flown considerable myself and this gave me the idea of looking for a campsite from the air.

This I did the following day. Not literally from a plane but in the extension office we had a large file full of aerial photos



approximately three foot square and covering approximately four square miles each. These covered the entire county. I started at the top of this cabinet and examined them all, ruling out all but four or five. These I studied carefully, again ruling out all but one. This map

seemed to be special or to mean more to me than the others. It was an area I knew would make a good place. I mapped this area carefully and prayed that, if this was to be it, the Lord would guide me and open the way. I did this, not knowing that He had already done just that.

In 7T p. 30 we are told:

To everyone who offers himself to the Lord for service, withholding nothing, is given power for the attainment of measureless results.

The following week I was busy looking up legal descriptions and record owners in the Register of Deeds office. These I studied and looked over several times. One area seemed to be the only suitable site. This area I had known well some time ago, but was not familiar with its present condition. So much had changed in the years.

I knew of a friendly gentleman who owned property joining the property in question. I called on this man to obtain what information he could give me. Mr. Wright knew the owners quite well, but informed me quite emphatically that I might just forget about it as the property could not be bought at any price. I would have to see the owners' agent anyway, not the owners themselves. He further told me that for years land agents from

many areas had tried to buy that land, and it could not be bought.

I got the agent's name, Grace E Polk, and the next day I called on her. What a blow I got! She laughed at me and said our church did not have enough money to buy that land.



Furthermore, it was not for sale. Then she turned her back on me and went about her work.

I was up against a blank wall. I began to lose courage. That night we prayed again about it. In my sleep I dreamed I saw large

buildings on this property and many people milling around them. The dream gave me courage, and the following forenoon I told my friends in the office I was going to call on the owners themselves. They all laughed at me, but, nevertheless, they wished me luck and promised to come to my funeral.

I found the owners to be two elderly sisters, Katherine and Mary Whiteley. They were the daughters of a gentleman, Robert K. Whiteley, who at one time held the title to thousands of acres in this area. He was gone now and, with him, all of the land except this piece I wanted to buy. The sisters, upon learning of the reason for my visit, very curtly ordered me out of the house.

At this time I think my spirits were at the lowest ebb of anytime in my life. They explained that their agent handled all their dealings and I told them I had seen her and talked to her. Then they asked, "Why do you come and bother us?"

Katherine was talking quite loud, and I was working my way toward the door. But not quite willing to give up, I again pleaded with them explaining that I was not a land agent, rather, we wanted the land for a church camp, not for resale, and that Mr. Presttun, a friend of theirs, was helping me locate a site.

They insisted it was no use for me to argue; that piece of land was all they had left' it was going to be kept as a memorial.

When I heard that, I think something exploded in my line of thinking. I had a new argument to present. I asked her what better memorial could she want than to see that piece of land built into a beautiful youth camp where children could come learn of God and nature and a Christian way of life.

She was quiet for a few moments. I was breathing a fresh prayer, "O God, touch this woman's heart."

Then she asked me again, "What church did you say you belonged to?"

I told her.

"Is that part of the Jehovah's Witness," she asked?

I assured her we were not.

She then took her sister, who was in a wheelchair, into the next room. There they talked for several minutes. I assure you, all that time I spent in earnest prayer.

She returned rather suddenly and caught me with my eyes full of tears and running over. Giving me a straight stare, she said, "You really want that property don't you?"

I couldn't answer for a moment. But, I didn't have to for she again asked, "You don't know what that land would cost you?"

I told her I was not concerned over the price, it was their consent to sell it to us that I wanted.

She stood silent for a while then gave me the good news, “Well young man, you can have our permission to sell, providing Mr. Presttun says it is Okay and on the level.”

I asked her if she would put that in writing, and she very happily agreed. She sat right down and wrote it out for me.

I thanked her and took it, wishing God’s blessing on them again.

I think I almost floated out that door. I was really walking on air, only to come back to earth with a thud as the outside door flew open and I met their land agent, Grace Polk, face to face.

Wow, have you ever faced an angry woman when you are the one she is angry at? She grabbed me by the collar and shook me like a paper bag. She yelled at me, “What, are you doing here? I told you to stay away from here. What did you tell them? What did they say to you!”

Getting no reply, she gave me a shove and stormed on into the house.

Did I go? My old car could not seem to go fast enough. I do not know what took place in that house afterward, but you know that they kept their word because we have that beautiful youth camp on Rice Lake.

As I returned to the office, I was greeted with cheers. I guess it was written all over my face that I had won. That night at home Mrs. Jones showed me a statement in 9T p. 272

When He (God) designates that a certain property should be secured for the advancement of His cause, and the building up of His work, whether it be for sanitarium or school work or for any other branch, He will make the doing of that work possible if those who have experience will show their faith and trust in His purposes, and will move forward promptly to secure the advantages He points out. While we are not to wrest property from any man, yet when advantages are offered we should be wide-awake to see them that we may make plans for the upbuilding of the work.

Then in I John 5:14 we are told:

If ye ask anything, according to His will He heareth us.

When I read that, it brought to my memory one in John 15:7:

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

These texts bring great courage to those who believe.

My story does not end here. There were other pieces of land that we would need and they were in Conservation. It is not the rule of the state to open any land in Conservation for sale when it is on lakes or rivers. But I contacted our local land commissioner and explained to him my plans and needs.

He did not think it to be any use for us to write St Paul on the issue, but if I wished, he would try. And, he added, he would add his letter of recommendation. This he did, and in five days he received



1969 Unveiling of Memorial  
Harris Jones, Phil Young, E. F.  
Armour, Arthur Kiesz,

word from St Paul that would open the land we wanted for sale, being it appeared to be a worthy cause.

Further checking revealed that part of the area we wanted was in the city limits of Brainerd and was on the delinquent tax list. It had been on the list for so long that it should be forfeited. I was fearful about this, so the Commissioner and I called on city hall. After explaining our situation, they agreed to work with us in doing all possible to get this land on the sale, also. This they did.

Six weeks later, this property had been forfeited, taken from forfeiture, placed in Conservation, taken out of Conservation and put up for sale. This normally would have taken six months to a year to accomplish.

Now the stage was set. My helpers and I made new maps and wrote up all the descriptions on all the property. I took our complete set of records to our pastor, and he was not interested.

I was furious. The following Sunday evening we had a visiting minister speak at our church. After the service, my wife and I contacted him explaining it all to him and asked him if he would take it to the conference for us and put a fire under it. He did.

The following Sunday, Elders Earl Osmunson, Lyol Netteberg, and Boyd Olson came up to look it over. It rained all day, but with raincoats on, I took them over it all. They agreed to return the following Sunday. They did return, and with them Elder R. H. Nightingale, Harold Maddox, and Irvile Rush. It rained all day again and was cold out, but we went over the entire area and held a meeting approximately where the dining hall is now.

They were well pleased but concerned about the condition of the beach. As cold as it was, Elder Olson stripped off all but his shorts and waded in. While I held his clothes, he walked the full length from the point up to the entrance to the little lake. He came out chattering that he was satisfied with it. If any of



recall the land I mentioned in the city limits. Part of it was on the island and part on the mainland. There were two city employees who wanted that property. They intended to bid high for it. But when they showed up for the sale, they were told that city employees could not bid. They rushed down to the county attorney's office and were told they could bid if they had cash to the amount of their bid. They rushed back to the sale. As they walked through the door, the gavel came down, "Sold to Elder Rush for the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

We now had the land, but no road to the land. A road on the property line would be too costly. I had worked with the engineers when we built the airport and knew the men on the Airport Commission well. I went to Mr. Walter Wieland, who was chairman at the time. I explained to him our need. He told me to have Mr. Prestun go with me and stake out a road. He would see we got an easement for it. We soon had our road and

the other brethren also wished to check it out they could hop right in. Needless to say, there was no response.

All agreed, and the proper machinery was set in order. All went well until the day of the sale.

At a sale of state land, anyone can bid if they have the cash money. I feared a heavy opposition in the bidding. You

## NORTH STAR CAMP

Dedicated to the  
Youth of Minnesota

In Memory of

ROBERT K. WHITELEY

By His Daughters

Katherine A. Whiteley - Mary A. Whiteley

and

The Minnesota Conference of Seventh-day Adventist

easement, a copy of which, with maps, is on file in the County engineers office where I left them.

## All Things Possible

Mark 9:23

By Pearl Waggoner Howard

All things are possible  
To him who but believes;  
All things to him are open  
Who reaches and receives

Why go we then so faint,  
Impoverished and weak?  
When rich reward is promised  
To him who will but seek.

Why do we do without  
The strength for given task  
When all things are in waiting  
For those who simply ask.

From blest experience  
Why stand we still without?  
When all who knock may enter  
With joyful victor's shout.

All things from God's rich store  
With Christ are freely given,  
E'en here, for full enjoyment-  
A glad foretaste of Heaven.

Then rise, and pause no more  
Thy heritage to claim!  
All things are theirs forever  
Who ask in Jesus' name.

I am sorry there has been no effort put forth on behalf of the Whitely sisters in the way of some kind of a monument in their memory for relinquishing their title to the last pieces of land they had thought so much of. They could have received an enormous price for that land had they wanted to sell but they had a warm spot in their hearts for young people and were happy to let them have it. But they never have received any credit as a memorial. I have spoken to some of the conference brethren about this, but have received no response.<sup>1</sup>



Mayor Clyde R Gorham, Phil Young, E. F. Amour, Arthur Kiesz

Before I close my story, I must make mention and pay tribute to those who so willingly gave me so much aid and courage, those with whom I worked. They were not Adventist, but put forth much effort willingly:

First, Mr. John (Pete) Humphrey, who was a great man when it comes to doing anything for the youth, who aided me in locating lines and stakes, and checking records. He was also a great recreation promoter for the youth.

Second, Mr. Jake Presttun and Claud Stuard who did much to help our surveys and maps.

---

<sup>1</sup> Years after the passing of the Whiteley sisters, a memorial was erected on the campsite honoring them for their relinquishing the title for a good cause. Several pictures of the dedication of that memorial are included in this pamphlet.

Mr. Georg Kenny, our county and state land Commissioner, who played a great part in advancing this wonderful course.

Mr. Walter Wieland, who made our road possible across Airport property.

I am so thankful I had a part in locating this beautiful camp, and it is my sincere prayer that many young people will give their hearts to the Lord at this place, and that they will live a better life for having been there.

You will recall the land agent that became so bitter at our obtaining this property at the beginning. She later turned on our side. She was suddenly taken with a heart ailment. In her will we found she had left \$500 for the aid of our camp. This proved that, although she was never married, she had a love in her heart for young people.

This has all been put on tape, a copy of which was turned over to the Minnesota Conference in St Paul.

(This Manuscript was written in the 1960s by Harris Jones and is now in the possession of his son, Tom Jones of Eagle Bend. It was edited and prepared for print by Bob and Lesli Brauer.)



**If you would like a printed copy  
of this booklet or if you wish  
to make a donation to  
North Star Camp,  
contact:**

**Minnesota Conference of  
Seventh-day Adventists  
Attn: Youth Director  
8232 Highway 65 NE,  
Spring Lake Park, MN 55432**

**<http://www.mnsda.com/>**