

Timberline Ranch is a Christian ranch and kid's camp located in Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada. Beloved by many thousands of current and former staff and campers, Timberline celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2011.

Toby's Timberline is a look back at the early years of Timberline Ranch, reliving the joyful journey of one happy camper, turned counselor, wrangler, and kitchen helper!

Ever wonder how Timberline Ranch came to be?

Included in **Toby's Timberline** is **Rockette's Story: The History of Timberline Ranch**, and **Tim's Round up of Timberline Horses**. This is inspirational, real, and humorous reading at its best: the retelling of authentic Christian living and plain hard work of ranch life and ministry development.

*"Writing **Toby's Timberline** became a journey back home. What a joy to reflect and spend time again with many of the 'Timberline pillars,' men and women of God who have given of themselves to so many. My story is a small reflection of their work, offered in the spirit of thanksgiving for what was given to me. I hope **Toby's Timberline** will help others journey back and remember their own Timberline Ranch experience"* **Toby (Faith Richardson)**



"I wrote this because the new generation needs to know the beginnings—all the answered prayer and the struggle that went on in the early years"
Rockette (Doris Wittenberg)



TOBY'S TIMBERLINE

Richardson



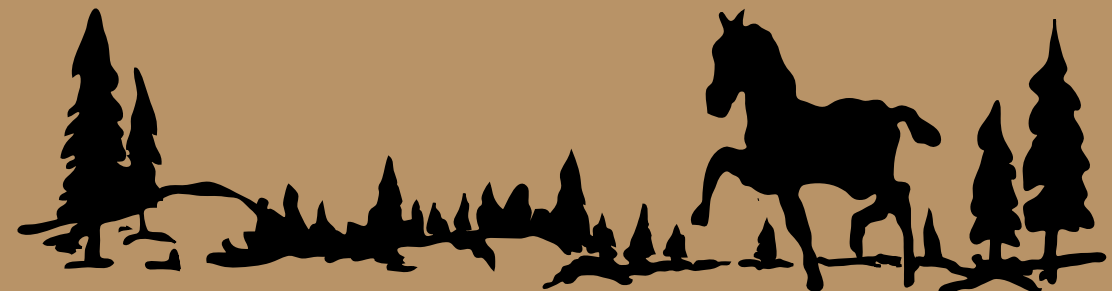
with **Rockette's Story,
The History of Timberline Ranch**

by

Doris Wittenberg & Tim Wittenberg
as told to Faith Richardson

by

Faith Richardson



Toby's Timberline

Horses!

It was the first day of my first summer camp at Timberline. I had gone through the check-in process, met my counselor, said a slightly nervous, but cheerful 'good bye' to my parents, sisters and brother and carried my sleeping bag and suitcase to my cabin. At that time, the cabins were away up in the ring of trees, a good five minute walk from the bunkhouse and kitchen complex through the horse pasture. I had come to camp with a school friend, also a horse nut, so our priorities aligned well. The second we plunked down our gear on a bunk bed in our cabin, we headed out on a search to find the horses.

Rockette's Story

"More beans, please!"

When we first started TR, Peter and I had no idea what camp even was—your kids know what camp is all about, they've gone to camp—but we hadn't! I had no idea, and here I was set to cook for camp. I had no idea of quantities for shopping. A 5 lb bag of corn starch was a huge amount to me! I remember one time early on, getting a camp lunch of beans, opening up a giant can of beans and setting this out. I thought this was lots! It wasn't. I opened another giant can. That was gone! I'll never forget the look on this boy's face who kept coming back, "More beans, please!"

Books by Faith Richardson

Toby's Timberline

The Orbits of Clytie Series:

☾ *Dark is a Color*

☾ *Hoverlight*

☾ *Meet the Dawn*

Angel Walker

Tree Root and River Rat

The Peacock's Stone



Toby's Timberline

by

Faith Richardson

with ***Rockette's Story:***
The History of Timberline Ranch

by **Doris Wittenberg** and **Tim Wittenberg**

as told to **Faith Richardson**

Published by Fox Song Books
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Dedication

*For Rocky and Swede,
two men of God in word and deed.*

In memory of Tim (Candy), a faithful friend.

*This is written with grateful thanksgiving for the many,
many people involved in the ministry of
Timberline Ranch,
especially Rockette and Swedie,
mentors who lived out leadership
from the heart, mind, and soul.*

*In heartfelt appreciation of all my TR buddies—
steadfast pals through thousands of mosquito bites,
multiple rainy camp weeks,
more than a few bee stings,
and one double-barreled outhouse:
‘the rancher’s life was the life for us at the
ranch called Timberline!’*

*With special thanks to:
Topsy and Blackjack
Princess
Twilight, Melawanna, and Sunweila
Revard
Sunny
and Burrita, too*





Upper left: Rocky & Rockette (Peter and Doris Wittenberg)
Above: Rocky and Swede
Left: Swede and Candy (Tim Wittenberg)
Below: Swede & Swedie (Ted and Marge Hall) leading campfire; Rocky in foreground.



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May we suggest that you mail your registration form early, as many were turned away last year.



Mail to:
Timberline Ranch
N. 224th St. RR 2
Maple Ridge, B.C.
V2X 7E7

SEE YA
THIS SUMMER
PARDNER!

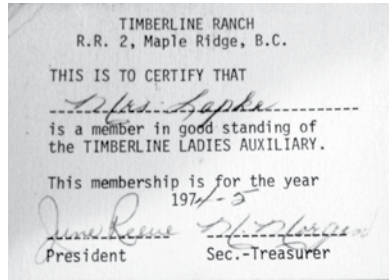
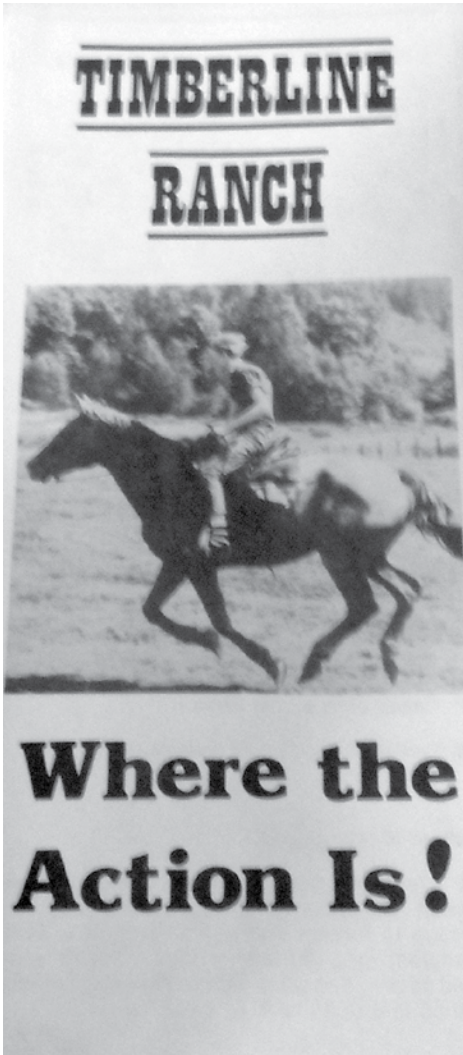


Your Hosts
Mr. & Mrs.
Peter Wittenberg.

"Rocky and Rockette"

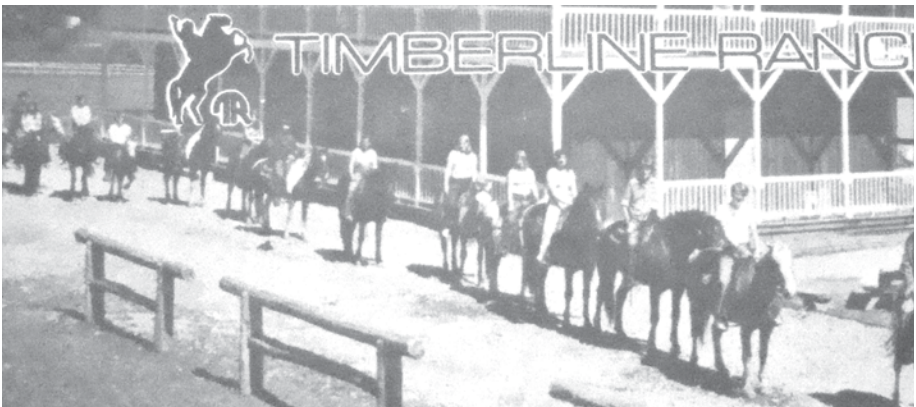


Toby's Timberline



Above:
my mom's Timberline
Ranch Ladies Auxiliary
Card, 1974-5

Below: Hard to see, but I
am 5th in the line up, on
Revard.



Preface

It seems that most book prefaces always start with the author moaning about how they were dragged into writing the book they are introducing. You will not find this here! I cheerfully proclaim that I thoroughly enjoyed every bit of this project and that no one could have wanted to do it more! I only wish it weren't finished ... I loved my reflective visits back home to Timberline as a camper and summer camp staff member.

Toby's Timberline did not start out as 'Toby's' at all. Originally, this was to have been a more serious work of history. I was quickly to learn, though, that the journey of ministry development is, like the Timberline experience itself, laced with humor and rawness of life that reveals itself best when unwrapped in the stories of encounter.

Rockette provided stories of relationships and divine meet-ups that provided a living history of Timberline Ranch—what a mentor she was to me even in this. Candy (Tim Wittenberg), who worked with the first herd of horses at the ranch, captured memories of many of those oh-so-loved equine characters. What was I to do but stand back and enjoy? They inspired me to draw on my own Timberline memories and stories of encounter. ***Toby's Timberline*** slowly came into being.

Writing ***Toby's Timberline*** became a journey 'back home' to TR. What a joy to reflect and spend time again with many of the 'Timberline pillars' with whom so many of us were privileged to be mentored. I am thankful for these men and women of God who gave of themselves so steadfastly. In hindsight, their longsuffering kindness astounds me! At Timberline, I encountered Christ lived out in faithfulness without retreat from the complexities of reality and without falling into the snare of hair-splitting dogma; I saw authentic Christian living.

This steadfast living was not only demonstrated by the 'Timberline pillars,' but by many of my staff peers. I'm immediately brought to mind of Jinx and her unfailing generous spirit, as well as the kindness of Woody in befriending me and walking alongside when I was a junior counselor.

A memory that I believe Christ brought back to me during my personal journey of faith from evangelical fundamentalism into the sacramental tradition of faith in the Catholic Church, was Rocky's calm approach to denominations and church allegiances. During one camp, as new counselors, we had created a small tempest trying to ensure that all evangelical T's were crossed and I's were dotted. I think at the time we were quite bothered because a camper had a 'catholic bible' with the deuterocanon. Rocky simply pointed us to Christ, the Redeemer. Yes, this was the word about THE Word. We didn't need to solve man-made dilemmas; we were called only to '*turn our eyes upon Jesus.*' Kind of an ironic memory for me now, but also a comforting one!

Toby's Timberline is a small reflection of the work of these men and women of God, offered in the spirit of thanksgiving for what was given to me.

I hope that ***Toby's Timberline*** will help others to journey back and remember their own Timberline Ranch experience. Echoing Rockette's words, I hope also that it provides the new generation of leadership at the ranch a knowledge of the measure of grace and miracle upon miracle of answered prayer that formed the foundation for Timberline Ranch.

There are many people to acknowledge and thank for their help and support in this project. My mom, one of the charter members of the Timberline Ranch Women's Auxiliary, not only edited drafts of the book, but is responsible for cultivating my hoarding habits. Thanks to her, I kept so much Timberline memorabilia that I had my own archives to visit—in my basement. My mom also had plenty of her own TR archives, including my letters home from camp, and many of Rocky's Timberline Ranch letters and reports. My Timberline Ranch golden horseshoe was a constant inspiration to me, as well as a few dried up circular hoof clippings from various horses ... you thought I was kidding about the 'hoarding' habit, didn't you!

I also have my many mentors at Timberline Ranch to thank. In particular I want to thank Rockette, Swede and Swedie, Curly and Curlette, Rusty and Sunny, Jinx, Candy, Nik and Chips for being on board with me so early on when this project was simply an idea. The time you spent meeting with me, allowing me to tape interviews, sending me tapes of recollections, and enjoying with me that amazing campfire back in 1995 at the ranch provided priceless stories and inspiring memories. I thank God that Swede and Candy were able to be a part of this project early on. Rocky, already in heaven when we all met up that summer, I'm sure was helping to orchestrate things from his position in the 'New Timberline' above.

Perhaps he had already placed that sign in Heaven that he had spoken about so long ago in chapel: **TIMBERLINE RANCH CAMPERS THIS WAY!**

I want to thank Kermit, Anita Wittenberg Tow, Rocky and Rockette's daughter and my dear friend and TR comrade for her support and the photos of our lovely Rocky and Rockette that she provided to me so quickly in response to my panicked Facebook message to her.

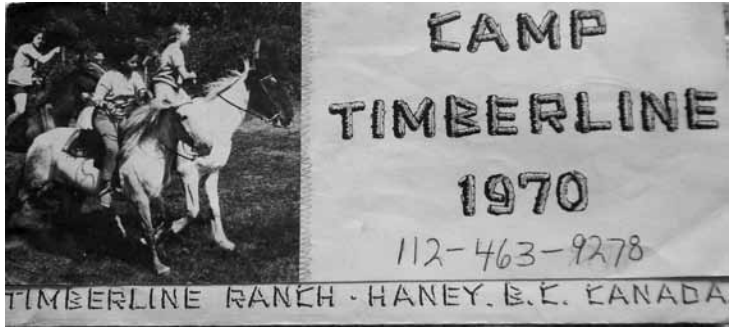
Thinking of additional panicked Facebook messages, so many thanks go to Levi, Holly Hall Johnson, and Ted 'Huck' Hall for providing me with pictures of their parents, our beloved Swede and Swedie, and for double checking Swede's lyrics and lyric arrangement of traditional camp songs that became TR specials.

Now that I'm on a Facebook train of thought, thanks to the TR Staff Alumnae page for the ability to post quick questions—and thanks to all those TR folk who responded, especially Odz, Little Hoss, Chips and Nik.

Craig Douglas, the current Executive Director of Timberline Ranch, deserves thanks for quickly responding to a semi-panicked email and phone message asking for permission to use early Timberline brochures and promotional materials for graphics and illustrative inspiration.

My husband, Vincent Richardson, drew very heavily on the feel of the early Timberline artwork to design the cover graphics, and by use of digital photography, he was able to drop several of these early pieces into the book to lend the feel of a scrapbook to ***Toby's Timberline***. Thank you, Vincent, for all your hard work! Thanks also for letting me play Swede and Swedie's albums over and over and over again ...


In the words of an early TR brochure, "Howdy, Partner! and may I add, "Welcome to ***Toby's Timberline!***"



"We are Cabin Number 5"

The Timberline Theme Song
(by Ted 'Swede' Hall)

We are the campers of Timberline
We like it here where the camping's fine
We ride, we shoot with gun and bow
It's a rancher's life that we love so

Timberline, Timberline, 
The rancher's life is fine! (yes, sir!)
The rancher's life is the life for me
At the ranch called Timberline.

We are the campers of Timberline
We like it here where the camping's fine
We read of Jesus in God's Word
It's the sweetest story ever heard.



I asked Swede and Swedie for the story behind the writing of the TR theme song. Because it is such an iconic Timberline memory, I was expecting quite the story. However, Swede couldn't remember any details of writing the song—just that it had been written his first or second year at Timberline (1967 or 1968), and that he wrote it while driving from TR to Seattle and back again. Swede said that he felt strongly the need for Timberline to have a theme song, so when no one else wrote one, he did. Just like Swede to see a need and quietly get it met—and met superbly!



1

The rancher's life is the life for me ...

At Timberline, we became cowboys. Male or female, small or tall, fat or thin, the rancher's life was the life for us, at the ranch called Timberline. One of my favorite memories of Timberline was on a Saturday late afternoon, four of us staff, jumping on our horses and riding to the little country store for a freezie. How perfect that the Haney corner store had a horse rail instead of a parking lot! We lived in cowboy boots and jeans, and rarely were seen without a cowboy hat. Regardless of whether we worked in the kitchen for the week, wrangled at the barn, or were camp counselors, we were first and foremost, ranchers.

Where did this ranch obsession come from? I suppose that for most of us it started with an early and unmitigated love affair with horses. For many of us, a connection between 'horse' and 'cowboy' became fused, too. Perhaps in my case, the Cowboy Peewee tee shirt I wore as a three year old was to blame for that. All I know is that recorded by a Brownie box

camera, there I am at three, four, seven years decked out in a cowboy outfit complete with holster and hat. Although Cowboy Peewee has long gone to tee shirt heaven, I still have the holster in a box in our basement, as well as the stick horse that took me down many a trail in our backyard. For me, 'cowboy' was a slight misnomer; 'horse girl' was a better name. Cows, although interesting in their own way, were simply a backdrop to living a life surrounded by horses. In a neighborhood game of cowboys and Indians, I moved happily back and forth; sometimes I was an Indian, sometimes I was a cowboy, and most often, I was a horse!

Can you imagine then, my exuberant joy when I heard there was a place called Timberline Ranch? My dad, a junior high school teacher, sponsored the Christian youth chapter of Interschool Christian Fellowship (ISCF) at his school. He discovered Timberline Ranch while seeking out a camp where the ISCF kids could go for a retreat. We got to visit Timberline Ranch to arrange for the retreat and I remember roaming around gazing through the wire into the big pasture drinking in the view of those horses and ponies. Every tail swish, every skin-shivering movement, hearing the crunch of hay between their teeth. What a wonderful visit. A few weeks later, we towed our house trailer out to Haney, BC, and the whole family got to attend our first weekend at Timberline Ranch.

I was nine years old. I had never seen a whole herd of horses up close. They stood side by side in the corral. Etched in my mind are these pictures: a row of saddles in a small, dusty tack room, a black pony foal kicking and bucking in a circle around his thickly-maned mother, the criss-cross marks of hooves cutting through the sod, and a line of horses crossing the bridge over a stream lined with fern and skunk cabbage. Although the camp had few amenities in the late 1960's when our family first became acquainted with it,

Timberline Ranch quickly became my metaphor for heaven. My memory of Timberline Ranch in those early years is fragrant with the good rich earth, crushed blackberry vines, and sun-baked house-sized boulders covered in moss and lichen. I hear the water squelching under the horse's feet near the swamp; smell the wood shavings underfoot and the meadow hay spilling out of the pasture rack. I remember seeing the flash of a small, light brown salamander in the pasture stream.

Over the next couple of years, Timberline Ranch became a part of our family history, as the family joined Dad's ISCF groups for weekend retreats at the ranch. I still have a copy of one of the brochures that my older sister drafted for an ISCF Christmas retreat weekend at Timberline. It was 1972 and the weekend cost was \$10 per student. For \$10, students got to go horseback riding, do riflery and archery, hiking and games, food and lodging—including a banquet on Saturday night with a singing group. In addition, evangelist Reverend Peter Wittenberg was scheduled as the speaker to give 'talks on Christian living.' Talk about a full weekend and an incredible bargain—even in 1972. What is funny, is that the brochure I have in my scrapbook has the registration form carefully filled out by me—including a neatly drafted forged signature of my mother in the parental permission box. I guess I really was not going to take a chance at missing out on that weekend!

There was little danger of missing that, or other weekends and events at Timberline. My parents by this time had a deep appreciation for Reverend Wittenberg, whom we quickly came to know as 'Rocky,' and recognized the value of our time at Timberline not only as social development and good, clean fun, but also of spiritual growth and soul-deep mentoring. What Timberline lacked in facilities during those years, it made up for in spades with, as one long-time

camp program director, Curly, said, “Love. Timberline was all about love—the kind of love that wasn’t afraid to set boundaries for kids and hold them accountable to their own God-given worth.”

Speaking with Jinx, Candy, Chips, Nik, and Rockette one afternoon, a number of years ago, we mused about the lack of amenities in those early years. Our conclusion was that somehow, for us it was a good thing to have less. Although we were a smaller group back then, we had comparatively less and had to share more. Jinx pointed out, “Even outhouses! Remember, the ‘Girls’ outhouse had two ‘holes’ ... and it was a good thing! Three cabins, one outhouse, you could have been out there all night waiting in line!”

Of course Jinx’s statement brought up the memory of what was not so good about outhouses—the number of flashlights that rolled down and disappeared into the depths. I recall a few occasions when that outhouse had an eerie glow coming from it very early in the morning. I also recall, the very helpful Jinx being lowered down to retrieve one with a coat hanger. Yes, Timberline staffers are a resilient, innovative, and hardy group, always ready to provide assistance where needed—but, Jinx, that was definitely going above and beyond the call of duty!

Many TR staff have done just that: taken to heart the call to serve. Curly, like many of those early staff members, annually devoted time to Timberline camps, relocating his wife (Curlette) and their growing family from their home a province away to come to Timberline for a few weeks every summer. Rusty and Sunny were another couple who volunteered time and energy, traveling from their homes in the United States to come to this small town of Haney, BC, and give of themselves to mentor young camp counselors and nurture campers in Timberline’s rich environment of boundless love for God, the creation, and kids.

Swede and Swedie, also from the United States, gave entire summers and sabbatical times to the ministry of Timberline Ranch, leading music, becoming puppeteers and master story tellers, and experts at reading heart-deep needs of campers and young staff alike. At one point they relocated their family for two years to live at the Ranch. In the very first edition of the **Timberline Times** (1974), Rocky wrote under **News Bits**:

“Swede & Swedie’ have driven 500 miles (one way) to be with us for our four week-end camps—they sure must love you campers eh?! Swede has some terrific new magic tricks—they sure keep ya guessing ?????????”

What was it that drew these people from their professions and daily lives to come to Timberline Ranch—at that time, a place of mud, mosquitos, perpetual building projects, floods, and shared bathrooms? I know what brought kids out to Timberline; at least initially, it was the horses and living on a real, honest-to-goodness ranch. Horses brought kids out, but the staff kept them there, and kept them coming back. Why would a law professor, teachers, business people, known musicians, and other professionals return again and again to give of themselves?

At that time Timberline was roughly made up of horse pasture, swamp, and very few, well-used buildings. The early Timberline brochures refer to rustic cabins, and indeed they were rustic! As an 11-year-old, I remember being thrilled that our cabin in the trees was ‘on stilts’ and that I could reach through the floorboards and pat Topsy and Blackjack, who sheltered there for protection from the rain. There was a washhouse and one running tap up in the circle of cabins, and there were outhouses. Yes, indeed, the girls’ outhouse was a two-seater. We thought this was a great invention, given the ‘scariness’ of leaving the sanctuary of your cabin at night. Girls always went in groups!

The main camp had a bunkhouse/dining room and kitchen complex with one Mens' and one Womens' bathroom behind it. The dining room was the largest room with the kitchen attached on the far end. I do recall being so pleased as a kid to sit in the dining room with horse pictures on the walls and notice that small bits of straw protruded from a few of the half-rounds that lined the inside and outside of the bunkhouse. We guessed that the bunkhouse had been insulated with straw and felt this was so very 'old west.' I don't know if it really was or not, but that was my camper-cowboy fantasy. I also loved the fact that we had to walk across a real cattle grid to get back and forth from our cabins back to the main camp. I remember stepping with pride in my scuffed cowboy boots (the more battered your boots were, the better) across the cattle grid rails, thinking that I really was living the cowboy's life.

At one end of the horse pasture, bordering the swamp, stood a tiny tack shop/hay barn that was home base for a small herd of horses and ponies who, although fiercely loved by campers, for the most part, would have looked out of place in a show ring. Down towards the road, also bordering the swamp that formed a semi-circle around the property stood two small houses. One of these houses was home to Rocky, the camp director, and his family. The other smaller house was lodging for the volunteer staff families, usually the program directors for a series of camps. It was also, in those early years, the first aid station. Swede and Swedie recall staying in that little house along with many uninvited critters! Talk about the cowboy life! That house was very old and was taken down in the years following to make room for a newer, bigger, 'house on the rock.' But, at that time, these few, very rustic buildings were the measure of Timberline Ranch. Somehow, Timberline was immensely more than the sum of its parts.

The bunkhouse, at the time of this writing, remains at Timberline today, but in the early days, along with the kitchen and dining room, as I recall, there were a couple of areas for sleeping and a storage area. One room doubled as a sleeping room when needed, or a lounge and meeting area, where counselors and staff got together, and prayer meetings and devotions were held. I recall chapel being held there too, although fairly rapidly camps overflowed the small room and spilled out onto the boardwalk. This room eventually became Candy's Cave, the Tuck shop. The bunkhouse was, and is, noted for its long boardwalk with an overhang, and big wooden steps leading up and down from both ends. A hitching post and horse rail ran the length of the boardwalk. We loved the western feel of the bunkhouse and we adored that boardwalk. Our boots sounded so good on it!

With every new camp the boardwalk became the hang-out site for campers and counselors almost immediately. The cabins, earlier on, were located up through the horse pasture in the trees, the dining room was off limits except for meal-times, and Candy's Cave didn't exist yet. The boardwalk was the spot to be. I recall listening to the music of Swede and Swedie, or other country-style gospel singing coming through the speakers as we sat in groups on the railings and laughed and chatted on that boardwalk. This was the site for mosquito-bite counting contests, and the telling of the tales of the morning: did you get to ride your favorite horse? Did your group get to gallop? Who shot a bulls-eye? What did you do for Cabin Clean up?

The boardwalk also was the place for announcements and prayer just before meals. Campers would line up in straight lines perpendicular to the boardwalk (if it wasn't raining!) or up and down the boardwalk if it was raining. The straighter the line, the quicker Swedie's eagle eyes would spot your good behavior and allow your cabin into the dining room.

Those boardwalk steps were filled with anticipation, fun and laughter, but they were also the site of deep conversations. The boardwalk steps were a great place for, as Curly said to me, ‘time outs and heart-to-hearts.’ Curly was most often the program director for Junior Boys’ camps. He recalls talking with a boy who had been fighting, and this young man finding Christ right there on the bunkhouse steps. For many searching kids, the door to Heaven was an easy reach from Timberline soil—and those bunkhouse boardwalk steps.

Junior Boys camps could be challenging for the director and staff because of little-boy energy and aggression. But there were many troubled kids of all ages and both genders. The ranchers’ life attracted so many who were seeking a different life from what they knew. At that time, Timberline had a high percentage of children and teens attending camps that were, what was dubbed at the time ‘Ministry’ kids, meaning they were in the care of government agencies rather than living with parents. Most often these children were no different in behavior or attitude than any of the other children and teens attending camp; sometimes, however, they had challenges and came across as ‘tough’ kids. These kids were used to being overlooked and had a hardened attitude from needing to look out for themselves. Within a couple of days, most found the ‘Timberline difference.’

The Timberline difference in dealing with ‘tough’ kids was the TR staff themselves. They genuinely were rooting for these kids. There was hopeful expectation that they would turn around and joy when each one would respond more and more with each passing day. There was only heartbreak and a sense of failure among the staff when, rarely, a camper had to be sent home.

Swedie recalls that every once in a while Rocky would have to make a decision to send a kid home:

It was always a heartbreak and we tried every way of getting through to these kids before the decision had to be made; usually because there had been some physical threat of violence, or fight. But, in those rare cases where a kid had to be sent home, there seemed to be a sense of relief in the camp and the whole atmosphere of the week improved—so I suppose that was an affirmation that it needed to be. That said, there was always a sense that we failed when someone had to be sent home. You know, everyone was rooting for the tough, troubled kids. And so often Monday and Tuesday might be very difficult in the week of camp, but by Wednesday, things would turn around, hearts would soften, kids would open up and be less guarded. The camp would become cohesive and by Friday, no one was looking forward to going home the next day. Wednesdays were days filled with small, but very real miracles!

Rusty and Sunny most often were program directors for mixed teens and younger mixed camps. Behaviours that were challenging in Junior Boys and Girls camps often are even more concerning in teens, as they are much bigger and more able to act on aggressive feelings and long standing habits. Sunny recounted to me how Rusty and Rocky were doing a routine walk through of a teens camp and happened on a group of boys beginning a chain fight. I asked Rusty how he and Rocky had stopped such violent behavior. Rusty paused and thought about it a minute. Sunny smiled and said that Rocky simply told them that fighting just was not done here. Rather amazingly, the chains were handed over and there was no more trouble from these teens for the remainder of camp. Rusty and Sunny continued the story, saying, “campers knew, in a deep way, that we were all ‘on board’ for these kids—from the staff in the kitchen to the wranglers in the barn to the counselors and camp director—we were here seeking to be Christ to these kids and they saw it.”

Curly and Curlette agreed, adding that campers and young staff, too, saw love that wasn't afraid to be lived out, "Love that included the discipline needed to keep everyone safe and happy. Many of these troubled kids who were kept in line left at the end of the week changed and just wept when they had to go home."

The early years at Timberline saw too, a mix of staff that ranged from openly Christian individuals, to youth from Christian families, and from frankly troubled kids with little to no church upbringing of any kind. I recall one summer there were a number of older adolescents, under care of the Ministry, living at the Ranch and involved in working on the grounds and building projects. These youth were expected to live in accord with Timberline standards, and for the most part, they did. There were many deep and heartfelt conversations around the campfire or dining room table after the campers had left for home. Rocky expected the ranch to truly come together in daily chapel and that included ALL staff! Surprisingly, these youth, although they grumbled at times and kept up a veneer of toughness, truly appreciated Rocky and Swede and other weekly camp leaders. I remember Odz, Nik, Jinx and I smiling when we would see 'tough' staff begin to melt under the Timberline atmosphere.

In one of Rocky's annual reports (1972) he makes mention of this program:

"A 'preventive care' for 'Teen boys is still a great possibility for Timberline—staff and proper facilities are holding us back. For the past two years we have had two or three boys nearly all the time but this entails much extra work. A young boy, who was not wanted by his parents, stayed with us for a time, but because of the above reasons we felt we could not keep him and he was placed in another home. To-day he is in prison. We feel badly, for had he been able to stay at

the Ranch he may have been following the Lord and learning to be a useful citizen. Continue to pray with us re: this open door of service to help disadvantaged boys.”

When I first went to Timberline as a camper and then as a counselor, all the Timberline camps were two weeks long. At the time, there were no hot showers for campers so there was pressure from health and safety to either provide bathing facilities or shorten camps. At the same time, there was a growing demand for more camps; potential campers were being placed on waiting lists. The decision was made by Rocky and the Timberline board to move from two week to one week camps. We, ‘two week’ veterans mourned the loss of two week camps. As campers, of course, we did not see the need for hot showers—after all we went swimming in the river all the time, but I’m sure others thought differently! Swede and Swedie, however, and many of the program directors, had a different concern. They wondered if the change from two week to one week camps would change the dynamics of camp, the ‘Timberline difference,’ especially for the ‘tough’ kids that needed time to melt into Timberline life. Swedie recalls asking, “How can we make a difference in a kid’s life in only one week?” Swedie answered her own question for me, “We were afraid, but we were wrong. The change just happened quicker!”

The Timberline difference; love for Christ, creation and others, lived out regardless of amenities. There was an energy of care and a blanket of prayer that covered the campers, the staff, the horses, and, yes, even that bunkhouse boardwalk.

Rockette's Story

The History of Timberline Ranch



**Rocky and Rockette
(Peter and Doris Wittenberg)**

Preface

A history of Timberline Ranch, you ask? Well—yes, I suppose it is needed. So often those who begin a work, and those who follow through the hard times, are forgotten, or simply unknown to present generations. Not that we are all about that—being remembered and honoured like old war heroes or the like—but we cannot let the wonderful memories of answered prayer, the miracles that God did for us in those early years simply slip away.

Timberline Ranch as it stands today, a solid ministry beloved by literally thousands of children and young adults, now grown, now with children of their own, is the result of much answered prayer, faith in a God who loves, and back-breaking, hard work.

I am not a writer. I'm sure others could do better, but I will try and relate some memories, tracing God's leading during the early years of Timberline Ranch--from 1960 to 1983. Those early years are vivid; later, memories became

submerged in the busy life we experienced in our years as Ranch Directors. Many of you reading this could write books of Timberline memories. I hope you will!

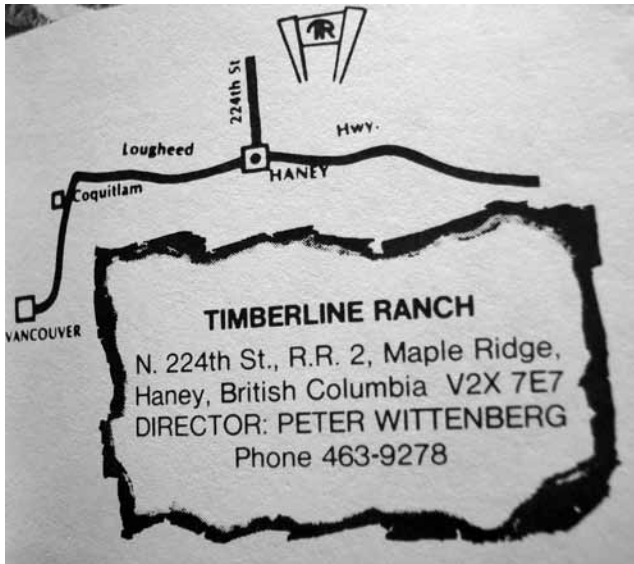
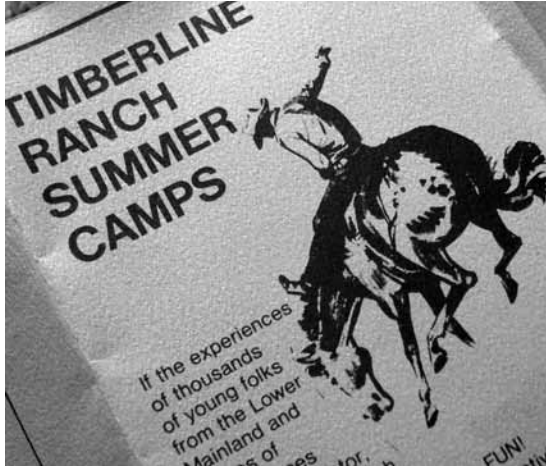
I want to give “honour to whom honour is due,” as Romans 13:7 says. Many have had a part to play in the birth and growth of Timberline Ranch. Many, many people expressed interest in the work, offering encouragement when most needed. Others funded Timberline when funds were scarce! Some folks we did not know, others we have—regrettably—forgotten over the years. But to all of you, who did service “as unto the Lord,” our God remembers! He will, in his great love, reward you accordingly (Matthew 10:42).

A Word about the Board of Directors ...

Timberline Ranch, being a non-profit society, has a board of directors who are chosen from interested and participating folk. The term is, generally, for three years, and then new members are voted in on a rotating basis, so that there is always a mix of new as well as experienced members. Reports are provided to the members each month, and to the public and governments, once a year.

Over the years 1967–1984 many have served and shared their talents with us. In alphabetical order they are:

Peter Allinger	Ross Gamble	John Reeves
Kjell Aalhaus	Walker Gervan	Neville Sprinks
Len Backlin	Henry Harder	Lawrence Swift
Alf Barber	Mary Harvey	Leslie Simonson
W.H. Brooks	Ron Hoskyn	Dave Standerwich
Al Best	Ted Hall	Bill Thiessen
Eric Best	Brian Kerr	Bud Uren
John Dyck	John Kinney	Kay Westcott
Arnold Essler	Jake Jantzen	Peter Wittenberg
Walter Engler	Cecil Leng	Al Williams
Gordon Fowler	Don Lawrie	Doris Wittenberg
John Garrod	Don Layland	Ken White
Claud Gelines	Jean Matheson	Jack Wittenberg
	Bob Ostrosser	





Everything has a beginning. As a general rule, most churches, missions, camps, and even businesses are started because someone identifies a need. Then, three things happen:

First, that person prays about the need and their part in it.

Second, they share their thoughts and prayers with someone else.

Third, if they received positive support from the person they shared with, they begin to do something about the need.

So it was with the beginnings of Timberline Ranch.

The conversation probably started like this: “You know, Joyce, I sure would love to have a farm, or someplace in the country, where I could take these school kids for the weekend. Just to get them out of the city and into a different environment for a few days.” And the wheels began turning.

Joyce and Cecil Lang lived in Vancouver. Cecil (or “Cec” as he has always been called) was a school counselor. In the 1960’s many of the kids he came into contact with were referred to as “juvenile delinquents.” Cec saw the need of these kids, and the more he pondered that need, the more these children and adolescents burdened his heart. He began to pray about it.

Then, he began to speak about this need. Cec and Joyce were active in church fellowship at the Alliance Church on Tenth and Ontario in Vancouver. Cec shared his burden with his friends and the pastors at the church. Well, Reverend Peter and Doris Wittenberg had a three acre property in the wilds of Maple Ridge, BC, about an hour from the city.

Twice a year, the church youth and the choir would come out to the Wittenberg’s for a country outing. It was at one of these outings that Cec shared his desire with them. The need he saw, the burden he felt, had become a “dream;” a dream to have such a place for his kids to experience a new environment.

It also was the dream of the church youth—they expressed their desire to be able to camp for a weekend in the country. The more this desire was talked about and prayed for, the more it seemed a possibility. And little did they know where such a dream would lead. Peter and Doris Wittenberg would even experience a change of name! Yes, we became Rocky and Rockette, and by those names we are known to thousands to this day.

We met many people during these outings on our Maple Ridge property that began to share the dream. Walter Engler, a fine young man, offered to build an iron rack over our fire pit. This project, used for many years, was the beginning of a long association with Walter. He and his talents became a big part of Timberline Ranch development.

At this time, Rocky had a tent ministry, and one of his board members, Jake Meilke, delivered a sling load of lumber on our property to build the first bunkhouse for Cec's dream. A mutual friend, Kjell Aalhus, sketched up the building plans and we were away! Of course, no thought was given to such a thing as municipal building regulations--we lived in a free country! Later, we found out there were many regulations, restrictions, and inspections necessary to build even the most humble of structures.

Cec had never stopped sharing his vision with others. Many of his friends supported him. Cec and his friend, Don Lawrie, began step three in earnest: they began seriously to appraise the situation and to act on Cec's dream. They came out to our place again and decided our three-acre property, which we had offered, simply was not big enough for a ranch-type camp. They tried to obtain a ten-acre property adjoining ours, but were told it was not for sale. Then they found a large property, known as the Ballentyne place, which they were told was to come up for sale soon.

The first time I walked onto this property to view it with Cec, Don, Gordon Fowler, and Rocky, I thought it looked hopeless. But Cec got so excited when he saw some old chicken coops; he had visions of turning them into bunkhouses for kids! I remember thinking, "He sure has more faith than I have." The property was in a secluded area and had an island surrounded by swamp land in summer, flood water in all three other seasons. "An exciting place for boys to camp," enthused Cec.

The second visit to the Ballentyne place included exploration of the swamp island. Rocky happened to be the only one wearing rubber boots, so he carried each man over the swamp to the island and back again. Rocky's standing joke began that day, "I carried Timberline on my back from the beginning!"

Mr. Ballentyne, the property owner, lived in Spain. While we were exploring his land for possible use as a ranch camp, he was seriously ill and not expected to live. The real estate agent was waiting for word of his demise; after such word came, the property would be up for sale. The word never came! Mr. Ballentyne recovered, returned to Canada, and moved back to Maple Ridge. He was to become our neighbour, and his property was to host the television series, "*Border Town.*"

Next door to Ballentyne's, a family named Francis, who were raising Arabian horses, put their property up for sale. The place was equipped with two small houses, a barn, and an old slaughter house from the days when it had been a hog-raising operation. The price was right—\$23,000 for 73.5 acres and the buildings, such as they were.

After much prayer, the Leng's and the Lawrie's decided to sell their Vancouver homes and pay the down payment on the property. They would start a summer camp. If all went well, they purposed to make the camp into a non-profit society for camp work in perpetuity. They named it **Timberline Ranch**. And that is, perhaps, the first thing you notice when you drive down the gravel road and onto Timberline Ranch. The trees stretching up the mountainside, emeralds against a blue sky, or the dark forest outline disappearing into a grey cloud bank on rainy, west coast evenings.

So Timberline Ranch was born. The biggest step three yet! This would be a big move for the families of Cec and Don. Joyce, and Shirley, Don's wife, would have to leave their nice city homes and come to live in somewhat sub-standard accommodations. The Leng's, with their two children, moved into the little house on the rock, and the Lawrie's family of three children, moved into the older house just below the rock. The children had to be transported to school, and there were no end of inconveniences associated with living in an isolated situation.

Cec continued teaching in Vancouver, commuting daily. Don's blacktop business ensured that he also have a long, daily drive to work as well. Don put his bulldozer and trucks to use on the ranch to clear mountains of blackberry bushes and to build roads.

Few know little of the work that went on during those first years. The first project was to clean out the barn, tear out the box stalls, and visualize it into the camp dining room! This long building, sided with "half rounds," resembled a log building. It had a cement floor with drains (handy for cleaning!) and the south end was first used as a tool shed, and later, made over into a cabin. The north end became the kitchen. The old feed room (off the east side) was remodelled into a lounge. A furnace room and two wash rooms were built on the west side. From the air, the building took on the form of a cross. Joyce made cute yellow and brown curtains for the windows; sun-yellow and earth-brown became the Timberline colours.

Along with the dining room and the lounge, the kitchen gradually took shape, with cupboards, a huge old logging camp stove, and, the ultimate luxury, a sink with hot water! Joyce became Timberline's first cook, and we heard no complaints from the many mouths she fed!

During this time Howard Reaney came to live with the Leng's. He lived in a cabin at the front gate, just below the rock, that became known as "Howard's Cabin," even after he had left. We lived in "Howard's Cabin" our first summer at Timberline, and Rocky later moved it to its present location opposite the Hotel, where it changed names to the "Wrangler's Cabin," and later to, "Sparky's Cabin." Howard was a sort of all-round fellow; I understand he helped put in the old oil furnace used to heat the dining room, and aided also in installing the two washrooms. Although these washrooms left much to be desired, they served for many years!

Before you can have a camp, you need a place for youth to sleep. So plans for cabins high up in the woods along the rock ledge were drawn. Several had to be built on high stilts, with steps going up to them. Each cabin had four bunk beds and wood-burning stoves made out of barrels. Many volunteers came to help in the building of these twelve cabins. With little money and time, they did the best they could, thus “character” was built into every one of them. Numbered One through Twelve, they spread from the west to the east of the rock ledge along the timber line. Next came outhouses and wash stations, with water being hauled up the trail morning and evening.

Campers grew to cherish these rustic buildings. Although it meant a lot of walking for counselors and camp directors, for hauling water and night patrolling of the campsite, the effort was rewarded by the campers’ devotion to “their” cabins. Cabin Cleanup became an anticipated daily event for campers, not a chore, as each cabin group tried to outdo their neighbours. There was real sorrow expressed by the old guard of campers when, many years later, the cabins had to be deconstructed and moved down into the ranch complex where they are now.

The first years, 1964 to 1968, emphasized a youth training program for up to six weeks during the summer. Practical Christian living was not only taught, but demonstrated by the leaders living in such close contact with their trainees. An average of 20 to 25 youth also helped with cleaning, carrying lumber, fencing, constructing outbuildings, the many, many tasks that remained. The first Timberline Camps for youth were two weeks long and were called, “Tenderfeet,” “Buckskins,” and “Mustangs.” Campers totalled 110 that first summer.

In 1966 to 1968, Timberline hosted a Navigator training program. These were older university students, some in

graduate programs, some ex-servicemen, for six weeks of the summer. They ran their own program of studies during the mornings, and in the afternoons they worked for Timberline. Their morale was terrific! They contributed significantly to the building of Timberline in those early years: two cabins, the blockhouse, and the cementing of the hotel basement floor. Don Lawrie became involved with the Navigator program, eventually leaving Timberline to become their director in BC, and later, Canada.

By now it was evident to Cec and Don that Timberline was rapidly becoming established and should be legally organized. Summer camps were going well, and public interest was rising. Thus a constitution and by-laws were written, the first sign-ees being: Cecil Leng, Donald Lawrie, Dave Stand-erwick, W.M. Thiessen, and Rev. W.H. Brooks. By March, 1964, Timberline Ranch had become a registered society under the Society Act of British Columbia.

Now that Timberline Ranch was a registered non-profit society, the funds the Leng's and Lawrie's had invested into the property became a liability to the Timberline Ranch Society; in due time these funds were repaid to them. The former steering committee of seven men became Timberline's first Board of Directors: Cecil Leng, Chairman; Alf Barber, Secretary; W.M. Thiessen, Treasurer; Don Lawrie, Rev. W.H. Brooks, Rev. Gordon Fowler, and Rev. Peter Wittenberg. A camp council was also elected; they met to help chart the summer camp programs, choose speakers, and act as a reference council.

In June, 1964, Bob and Megan Ostrosser joined Cec and Joyce in the work. They began a daily radio program called "*Happy Trails*," that promoted Timberline Ranch. They released an album of organ music; on the cover was a drawing of the future Timberline Hotel. Megan helped with office work, as well as commuting daily to her office in Vancouver.

The Ostrosser's lived in the green house on 224th street, opposite the Big Horn Ranch.

Spring and Fall "Round-Ups" were held at Timberline, as well as Christmas banquets in Vancouver. All these events stimulated considerable interest in the camp. More and more church groups were using the facilities throughout the year; it was becoming increasingly evident that more and better facilities were needed. The Hotel needed to become a reality!

Architectural plans for the western-style hotel were drawn. Cec invited the Honourable Phil Gaglardi, then Minister of Highways for the province, to speak at a ground breaking ceremony and dedication service. A good crowd turned out for the occasion, generating further interest in the ranch.

Then the basement for the hotel was dug. Of course, mountains of dirt lined this huge hole in the ground. In rainy weather ... well, you can imagine. Kids loved it—the ultimate mud slide and ooze ball playing field! The dirt—mud or dust, depending on the weather—lasted for several years. The first green grass around the hotel was so beautiful to see, and was guarded with great diligence!

During this time Rev. and Mrs. Victor Leng (Cec's brother and sister-in-law, missionaries in South America), came to stay at the ranch. Victor built a clothes cupboard in the house, and helped with the foundation of the hotel. When they left again for South America, some of their children stayed on at the ranch and became part of Cec Leng's family.

The first annual meeting of Timberline Ranch was held on January 15th, 1965. I will never forget it due to the sudden appearance of an uninvited guest. A small group of us met in the lounge (now the tuck shop). It was rather cold, and not too pleasant in those still, rather rustic surroundings. Cec was giving his report when, all of a sudden, a large

rat ran across the floor to where Mrs. Brooks and I were sitting. We did the natural thing—screamed and jumped up on our chairs! Cec, very calmly, said, “Oh, don’t let a little thing like that bother you, we have lots of them around.” No great comfort! The room formerly was a feed room; I suppose the rats had not bothered to move when we changed it to our lounge.

My memories of some of the roundups and banquets are vivid—for a different reason! I remember one being held in what is now the tool shed. The open side of the three-sided building was draped with plastic and a big wooden stove heated the interior. Joyce brought down trays of her home baked tarts and cookies—a treat for the many friends who had braved the trip out to Timberline. Another was an elaborate spread put on by Cec’s chef friend, Claude Gelinas. Claude later became a Timberline Ranch Board Member; he was instrumental in introducing the Leng’s to Ted Hall, who later, with his family, became an integral part of the summer program at Timberline. Then there were the Christmas banquets held in churches in Vancouver, catered by either Joyce or Claude.

After the Ostrosser’s left Timberline, Cec brought in a young couple, Pennard and Joanne Hauge, to help with ranch work. They arrived just a few months before Cec became ill. He had surgery for stomach ulcers, and was forced to choose to either carry on teaching, or continue with Timberline Ranch. With the mountains of work facing him at the ranch and his poor health, he felt it best to carry on teaching. The opportunity also came for Cec to go into the restaurant business with some friends, with Claude Gelinas as chef; this he hoped would help to support Timberline.

Pennard and Joanne Hauge put in a hard winter in 1967. I remember one of the weekend groups they hosted—mud everywhere—and they had to have the campfire in the

tool shed. They took the youth over to Burke Mountain riding school to ride, but it also was full of mud! I felt so sorry for Pennard and the group and thought, “Never again—not until we have something to offer.” However, the kids seemed to have fun and for \$6.00 for the weekend they probably thought they had a bargain. But I sure began to wonder what we had gotten ourselves into, as we had taken over the ranch the fall of 1967.

It was now evident to the Board that summer camps alone could not support full time workers and keep up such a large property. Pennard and Joanne left the fall of 1968. The hotel building was desperately needed for adult retreats and year-round facilities. However, there was no money in place for the building of the hotel, and no plans as to how to raise a loan—or pay it back! Some suggested that the ranch be sold. Others objected, but the question remained, who would take on such a task?

Cec had spoken to Rocky about directorship earlier in the year, but he had felt very inadequate for such a task. Rocky promised to pray about it, however. At that time Rocky had engagements in South America with his evangelistic work, and, although he loved horses and children, and knew something about ranch work, he knew little about running a camp.

Many felt we were making a mistake when we decided to take over the ranch. “What’s a preacher doing riding horses and spending time with kids?” was the question we heard. However, Rocky, after he returned from South America, felt led of the Lord to take on the challenge of Timberline Ranch.

That fall of 1967, as we settled onto the ranch, Rocky thought perhaps this could be a summer ministry and he could still do evangelistic work during the winter months. It soon became self-evident that Timberline was more than full-time work. Thus, Rocky came to the conclusion that

Timberline Ranch would be his mission field. That fall also, the Aarie DeVoss family moved into the house and took care of the few horses that were there. Aarie was attending Burrard Inlet Bible School during the mornings and working on a dairy farm the rest of the day.

With spring came more requests for week-ends and, of course, needing funds, we did our best to accommodate them. It meant cleaning up the cabins, carrying up clean sheets for the old mattresses (and chasing out the mice that had over-wintered there), cutting firewood for the stoves, supplying the wash stations with jugs of water, and repairing this and that. All new experiences! I now was camp cook, and this truly was a new experience. I often wonder why anyone came back!

The summer of 1968 was our first camping season. We followed the program that had previously been set up. We also had to get into the bookkeeping, printing of brochures, mailings, scheduling It was a challenge, and Rocky thrived on challenge! So with much prayer, faith, and hard work, we began our lives at Timberline Ranch.

We met Ted Hall that summer. Ted was an attorney for the Swedena Restaurant chain in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The year before he had come out to the Billy Graham meetings in Vancouver. A friend of his, Claude Gelinias, was also a friend of Cec Leng, and he invited Ted (known as Swede) to visit Timberline. Swede, being a western singer, was very interested in the ranch-style camping ministry. He said that he and his wife, Marg (known as Swedie), would love to help with the singing over the summer. So the following summer, the Hall family arrived.

Swede and Swedie had three children at the time (the fourth would very nearly be born on the ranch, some years later!). The Hall family, Holly, Teddy, Shery, and two nieces, Debbie and Jane, moved into the old house below the rock.

Debbie and Jane were teenagers and were of great help to the camp during the two summer months: peeling mountains of potatoes, washing dishes, and, of course, baby sitting for the Halls.

Swede and Swedie took care of all the music, and Swedie directed the girls' camps. Their help was immeasurable and their music superb. Chapel, the Friday night banquets, and, of course, campfires rang with the music of Swede and Swedie. Rocky led the early morning prayer times, spoke at the chapels for all the camps, and taught horsemanship and riding. This became his regular summer routine for many years.

After the DeVoss family, who had cared for the horses at Timberline, left, Dale Hoskyn, who was living with us at the time, and Rocky moved onto the ranch to care for the animals and property. That spring, 1970, we rented our house and moved as a family onto Timberline. It was not easy to leave our nice home, and the house at Timberline was too small for all of us, as I had my aged mother living with us. Our son, Tim, had to spend the nights with Dale Hoskyn in "Howard's Cabin," as it was still called. Anita, our daughter, stayed with us in the house. We were now settled into Timberline and the workload ahead loomed immense. But by His grace, it became the most exciting, exasperating, blessed, and exhausting seventeen years of our lives!

Around this time, Rocky accepted the position of Senior Pastor of the Capital Hill Alliance church in Burnaby, BC. This was a heavy load, but proved to be a blessing to Timberline as well, for here we met many wonderful people who shared greatly in Timberline. One such young lady, Lorraine Smith (Nik), who later married Dale Hoskyn's brother, Ron, along with Ron became active in full time service at Timberline and have been involved in the ministry of Timberline for many years.

Along with the hole in the ground that was to become the hotel, we faced two other more immediate needs: a new powerline into the ranch and a well for water. The old powerline was condemned, and the present water system came from a spring located behind Cabin One. Periodically it ran dry during summer months. A camp cannot run without power and water.

The Lord knew the need and, in spite of a strike, we got our telephone and power poles and the lines. A deep hole had to be dug on the roadway going up to the house for the main power pole. With no heavy-duty machinery available, there was only one alternative—Rocky and Dale dug it out by hand! I can still see it—Rocky holding Dale by the feet while he went head first down the hole. Dale would fill a bucket with dirt and then Rocky would haul it up. They finally got the hole dug deep enough, but how to raise the big pole into it was another problem.

Then that prayer was answered! Ed Giesbrecht, a friend of ours, called and asked if he could stay with us over night. He was moving his crane machine back to Vancouver. Just what we needed to place that power pole in the hole! He came and in short order the main power pole was in place. Thank you, Lord!

We had power, now, where was the water? Reverend Wannop, then pastor of Maple Ridge Alliance, came out with a water-witching stick to find a good source of well water on the ranch. The first drilling hit solid rock, but the second drilling hit water. That well would serve for several years.

So, with power and water assured, we turned our attention to the hotel.

*If you are interested in finding out more
about the ministry of Timberline Ranch,
please visit their website:*

www.timberlineranch.com

