



Above, members of the Lutheran Vanguard Marching Band entertained campers with music and a few dance moves during Mackinaw Mill Creek Camping's 50th Anniversary celebration parade Tuesday night. Below left, Horseback-riders, antique vehicles, floats, and a 50-piece marching band all paraded through the Mackinaw Mill Creek Camping's grounds. Below right, Malcolm and Phyllis Smith, seated in back, were the first two campers to check into Mackinaw Mill Creek Camping when it first opened on July 1, 1964, and were honored as the Grand Marshals of the parade. BRADY HEBERT/TRIBUNE



Mill Creek campground celebrates 50th anniversary

By BRADY HEBERT

bhebert@cheboygantribune.com

MACKINAW CITY — Campers in Northern Michigan know Mother Nature doesn't always cooperate with sunny skies and warm temperatures, but that doesn't stop them from having a good time.

Tuesday night was no exception, as unseasonably cool temperatures and a little rain didn't stop large crowds coming out to celebrate 50 years of camping at Mackinaw Mill Creek Camping just south of the city off of US-23.

The celebration kicked off with a parade featuring the Lutheran Vanguard Marching Band, antique vehicles, floats, and Grand Marshals Malcolm and Phyllis Smith of Livonia, the first campers to check in when the campground opened on July 1, 1964.

The parade made its way down to the waterfront, where campers enjoyed music by Denny Beach and Sam King, hot dogs and refreshments, log carving, and a demonstration by the Jack Pine Lumberjack Show.

Quinn Rogala, granddaughter of the campground's founders Richard and Rose Rogala, made a heartfelt speech, and the Mackinaw City Chamber of Commerce was on hand for a ribbon cutting and the presentation of a plaque commemorating 50 years of camping.

"We did a lot of planning to make sure our 50th anniversary is special. We wanted to honor the memory of our parents," said Vince Rogala, general manager of the campground. "They dreamed

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MILL CREEK

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of creating a campground in a beautiful natural setting where people could come to reconnect with nature and each other.

The camp opened with just 17 sites renting at \$2 a night. From the start, campers liked mom and dad's little place on the lake with a sandy beach. With a lot of work, little by little, year after year, our family has built the park into one of the largest and most popular campgrounds in the Great Lakes region," added Rogala.

That small plot of sandy beach first purchased in 1963 by Richard and Rose has grown into more than 200 acres of campground with more than 600 sites and a mile of shoreline, which offers views of the Straits of Mackinac and

the Mackinac Bridge.

The Rogala family still owns and operates the campground, which features rustic sites all the way up to recreational vehicle sites with sewer, water and 50 amp electric. Cabins are offered as well, from basic cabins up to two-story loft cabins with three bedrooms and a bathroom.

The family continues to upgrade the campground with innovations, and was one of the first campgrounds in Michigan to have its own online reservation system.

Free high speed WiFi is offered for campers, and many of the fire pits are made from upcycled propane tanks. Using wind powered generators and the reuse of shipping



Campers lined the parade route at Mackinaw Mill Creek Camping for a 50th Anniversary parade Tuesday despite cool temperatures and a little drizzle.

BRADY HEBERT/TRIBUNE

containers for buildings are some of the possible projects being looked at by the Rogalas for the future.

The recipient of numerous awards throughout the years, the campground was

recently named the favorite campground in Michigan by viewers of 9 and 10 News.

The family also owns and operates the 31-acre Mackinaw Club 18-hole golf course in Carp Lake.