

Galilee Memories - Linda Chambers Faiss Amstutz

The sight, sounds, smell and spirit of Galilee have very much been a part of my life for most of my life.

My first memory of Galilee was as a child watching my father Larry Chambers, my uncle Randy Dick and their pal Deke Shearer working to prepare the foundation for the chapel that was being moved from Goldfield. Working alongside them was Bishop Lewis, a giant of a man with huge hands and a booming laugh who I recognized from his visits to St. Peter's in Carson City. His stature was so impressive and his demeanor so warm that I imagined God Himself must be a lot like Bishop Lewis. And there he was, sleeves rolled up and sweating in the Tahoe sun with these Carson City men in their khaki work clothes.

My father, a surveyor, laid out the foundation for St. John's at an angle that would put the snow cross on Mt. Tallac, right above the altar. For the longest time we had a model of St. John's in the Wilderness on my father's desk in the dining room. Except for critical rituals -- baptisms, confirmations, Christmas programs, and weddings -- my father did not regularly attend church. But he certainly helped to make it a memorable experience for countless others at Galilee.

My uncle had not been a churchgoer, but he recalled that, "Bishop Lewis so inspired me that shortly after our job was done, Little Helen (my cousin) and I were both confirmed," and he served as a "rock" at St. Peter's for many years. He remembered that Deke helped tear down the church in Goldfield, and that Les Stratton, "a real artisan," put up the stone arches and even created new keystones where they were needed.

Fast-forward 40 years to the 1980s when my children Marcy and Justin started collecting their Galilee memories. While Marcy had the classic Galilee experience of drama, romance, new friendships and some truly spiritual moments, it was Justin who needed Galilee the most and made the most of it.

Justin first went to camp as a troubled 10-year-old who was reeling from the break-up of his parents' 19-year marriage. As the wounded party, it was hard for me to give him the comfort and reassurance he needed to understand that everything would be all right. I couldn't do it, but Galilee did. His seven years as a camper were followed by two years as a counselor, followed by service on the Galilee Board.

Thank God for Galilee! With every Galilee experience Justin's foundation was strengthened. It would have been wonderful for my father to have known how important the foundation he was laying at Galilee was going to be for his own grandson.

Fast-forward again to 2016, I was married at St. John's to Jim Amstutz, surrounded by family and friends who danced with us until sunset at Galilee, the most sacred place on earth.