

Prayer Requests & Praises

Praise:

- ♦ God moved mountains and allowed us to buy the 109 acres next door.
- ♦ Praise God some more for moving mountains and allowing us to buy the 109 acres next door.
- ♦ Keep praising God for moving mountains and allowing us to buy the 109 acres next door!
- ♦ God provided for another year of ministry to our campers and indirectly to their families.
- ♦ For some great conversations with campers and parents during visitations.

Prayer:

- ♦ God's provision for normal year round ministry and for the remaining \$100,000 needed for the land.
- ♦ That God will speak into the lives of our campers who are reading the Bible while working on the Snail Mail (and hopefully at other times too).
- ♦ For our Winter Mini Camp coming up February 4-6. Specifically that God will use this time to draw campers closer to Himself.



See www.raybird.org/new_land for more pictures or call to schedule a tour.

Ray Bird Ministries, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by a board of directors including: Rev. Craig Clapper, Bob Fogley (honorary), Michelle Helmkamp, Jeff Korhorn, Rev. Verneil Lewis, Chris Linker, Randy Meert, Tom Thompson, Billie Jo Wawrzynski, Myrtle Wilson, and Tom Yarger.

The mission of Ray Bird Ministries is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with Michiana children and teens, nurture those believers, and prepare them for participation in local churches. Ray Bird Ministries specializes in serving families who could not otherwise afford meaningful camping experiences.

Donations were made...

In memory of Helen Hostetler
(from Albert and Marilyn Lichtenbarger)

In Memory of Garry Tetzlaff
(from Leone Tetzlaff)

In Memory of Mary Irvin
(from Roy and Linda Kaufman)

In memory of Robert and Betty Parsons
(from Douglas and Pamela Callantine and
from John and Sue Shirrell)

In Honor of Sue Beebe
(from DeAnn Schlatter, Jenna Beebe,
Matthew & Anna Beebe, and Michael &
Susan Beebe)

In Honor of Kidron Weaver
(from Jim and Ruth Banner)

In Memory of Scott Hudson
(from Eric and Linda Larson)

In Honor of Tom Yarger
(from Steven Yarger)



The Potter's Wheel

A publication of Ray Bird Ministries "God's Hand Shaping Young Lives"



When I arrived at camp nearly ten years ago, there was a large map on the wall similar to the one on the left. The director at the time had written in red marker: "PRAY FOR IT." When I became director, this prayer was always in the back of my mind.

On December 16th Camp Ray Bird closed on this 109 acre property next door. I personally had been working on and praying for this consistently for three days short of five years. And I am told that prayers were prayed and efforts made for decades before me.

The way it all came together was amazing and I believe it was truly a work of God. I have taken the time to write it down for the glory of God and as a reminder to all of us that God really is able to move mountains. I hope you enjoy this special issue celebrating God's power, goodness, and incredible timing.

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the amazing way God gave us the land

In the **fall of 2005** there was an indication that a donor might be interested in making a substantial gift to Camp Ray Bird. With this in mind, on **December 19th of that same year** I felt inclined to write a letter to our neighbors expressing an interest in buying their land if they ever wanted to sell it. The large donation was never made but my letter did begin a dialogue with our neighbors about their beautiful 109 acres. There were several meetings over the years, but finally in the **spring of 2010** it seemed we had come to an impasse. We still prayed that God would make a way, but in my mind I concluded that this was probably never going to happen. To my surprise, I received a phone call in **early May** that they would sell to us for \$534,000 provided that we could commit by **November 15th** and close by **December 15th**. We quickly scheduled an appraisal of the timber on the land. The appraised value of the timber and the appraised value of the land substantiated their price such that we felt comfortable moving forward.

My first call was to a certain person at a bank in town. This bank administers a family foundation that has been very generous to Camp Ray Bird for decades. I was shocked to find out the person, who over the years had become a friend of mine, was no longer working for the bank. My heart sank. Surely we would need the help of this foundation to even have a chance of buying this land. In my mind the contact who had intermediated so many generous donations would also be essential. But I remember thinking of Proverbs 20:7: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God." Even though my chariot was no longer employed at the bank, I believed that God could work all this out and moved forward in trust.

I wrote a request to the new contact at the bank, a person whom I have still never met, requesting that she ask the foundation for a gift of \$350,000. Sure this foundation had been very generous to Camp Ray Bird in the past, but we had never asked for a gift this large. Unfortunately by this time it was already **late July** and most of the funds from the foundation had already been dispersed for the year. But the woman at the bank said that she would ask the family to make a personal gift above and beyond their foundation. I was shocked that she was willing to do this. We prayed many times that God would put it on the hearts of these people to give generously.

I did not hear anything from the bank or this family for months, and I did not feel comfortable calling to ask what was happening. In **late October** I did receive an email from the bank in which our contact wrote: "I am hopeful that I will be able to give you good news." We continued to pray. Sometimes I would sit on the yurt deck and pray with my hands outstretched east towards the new land. I embarked on many prayer walks and jogs along the property line (along the lines of Joshua and Jericho) in hopes that God would work a miracle through the generosity of this foundation. In the meantime, another foundation awarded us a \$100,000 grant towards the land purchase. Needless to say I was crushed when just days before the **November 15th** deadline, the bank representative said that the foundation would be giving us zip, zero, zilch, nothing toward this endeavor. When I heard this news on my voicemail I felt sick to my stomach and wanted to cry. The dream had died.

After sitting in my office with my head in my hands for several minutes, I called the sellers and told them we would not be able to buy their land. The hope I had been holding onto for all these years was gone. It was hard to think about anything else over the weekend.

On Sunday evening that same weekend, I received a call from one of the sellers requesting that we meet to talk the next day. In my mind I was shouting, "There ain't no point!" but with my mouth I politely agreed. By Monday someone had stepped forward and pledged \$90,000. So in our meeting the sellers asked, "Do you think you can get the rest of the money by December 15th (the deadline for closing according to our purchase agreement)?" I think I responded, "I'll kill myself trying."

The scary thing now was that we needed another \$90,000 to close assuming we took out a \$200,000 mortgage. So I wrote some letters, laid hands over them in prayer, and mailed them out just **before Thanksgiving. The first week of December** I had to do what I hate most: call up these donors who had received letters and ask if

they intended to give. Almost everyone I spoke with was supportive. Many sacrificial gifts were made including \$400 from a person whose car had recently died. When I asked if he really wanted to make the gift, being that he needed to buy another car, he responded, "There's always public transportation." After all the calls were done, it seemed we would be about \$15,000 short. But remember the family foundation that decided not to give? Well, they sent us an unexpected check for \$17,500 with no explanation. And really, none was needed. I knew exactly what to do with it.

There were still many things that had to come together. There were problems with the bank we were planning to borrow money from (even though we had been talking for months). As **December 15th** drew near this bank informed me that it was not likely that we would be able to get final approval on the loan until after Christmas. This presented a huge problem. The sellers were very clear that if we were not able to close by December 15th the deal might very well be off for several complicated reasons that I did not fully understand. But God moved again and two friends of the Camp offered to loan all \$200,000. An attorney friend of the camp had notes and mortgages drafted for our lenders in an incredibly short time (and at no cost!) so that we would be able to meet the closing deadline.

A couple of days before the scheduled closing date, the seller's attorney suggested that we close on **December 16th** instead. I asked him to put in writing that this was OK with the sellers, because too much work had been done to see this go awry. The attorney complied. The funny thing was that this extra day turned out to be essential. Remember the \$100,000 grant we were awarded? Well, I didn't actually receive the check until **December 14th**. I deposited it to our bank that same day, but it was not available for wire until the next day. I wired it on the 15th so that the funds would be available for the closing the next morning at 10:00 AM.

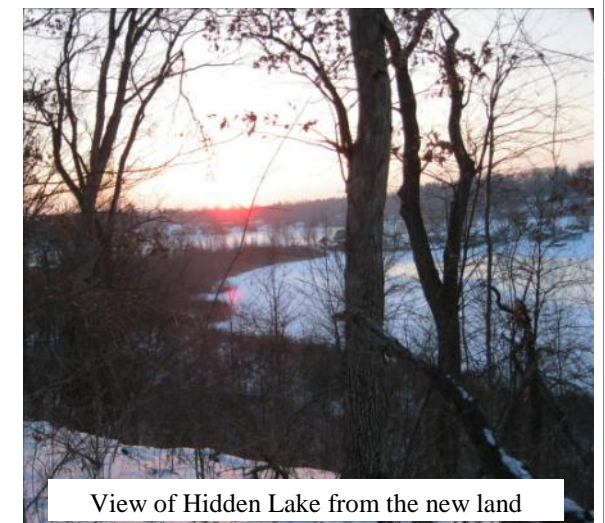
Even though everything was coming together nicely I struggled with borrowing \$200,000. Would the Lord really want us to do that? Our board of directors was comfortable but I was not totally settled. There was a guaranteed way to pay it off; the timber on the land could be harvested and sold for a little over \$200,000. But potentially we would have to sacrifice every mature tree on the property. That would be a huge loss. Especially since my plan was to use this land for hiking, rustic camping, and environmental education. Based on Romans 1:20 which states: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, *being understood from what has been made*, so that people are without excuse," I believed that such an experience would help in the presentation of the good news of Jesus to our campers. Through a challenge grant of \$100,000 made by a donor associated with the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County, God showed me that this was an acceptable path. Because this gift was made prior to closing, I had complete peace as we signed the mortgages.

Last week I found out that the woman at the bank whom I worked with has left, so I will be working with a new person yet again. This would have troubled me eight months ago, but I believe, more than ever, that God is going to take care of this final \$100,000. After all, I have learned that for Him it's merely chump change.

I am ashamed to admit that at times I was faithless and doubted that it could happen. I know from the Bible that God can move mountains. But now I have seen it with my own eyes. I'm so thankful that He is faithful even when we are faithless.

If you feel God is leading you to play a part in this, there is still something you can do. \$100,000 is still needed to match the \$100,000 challenge grant we have been awarded. Also we would like to replace money borrowed from a fund that was set aside to remodel the lodge. Lastly, please remember that our mission is to share the gospel with our campers and your support is always needed to assist us in that endeavor. Thank you to all who prayed and all who gave. Thanks for being part of God's mountain moving.

Sincerely, *Mike*



View of Hidden Lake from the new land