

Photo at right, from left are Mrs. and Mr. Willis (Bill) Combs, and Bill's mother, Mrs. Lyla Combs, all of Queen Creek, and who donated the 7 acres of wooded meadow land near Williams for the Pinal 4-H Camp. They are talking to Keith Jones, Pinal County 4-H Agent, who is seated in the car.



It all started when Mrs. Lyla Combs of Queen Creek offered 7 acres of land to Pinal County 4-H Board of Directors as a campsite for 4-H boys and girls.

Her proposal reacted upon board members, adult leaders and boosters of 4-H as if the idea had all the unexplainable power of an unusually strong dust devil.

It stirred things up in Pinal county. Sucking people, equipment, money, labor and ideas upward into the whirlwind.

And when things settled down, Pinal county 4-H boys and girls had their own summer camp.

It's on a site with a mountain meadow, rimmed with tall ponderosa pine occasionally sprinkled with a mighty oak.

It's near Williams.

And, for Mrs. Combs it was a dream come true.

You see, she had always wanted to use the land for children. At first she thought of the joys and benefits her grandchildren would realize from such a wonderful location.

But, now her grandchildren are no longer little. And, the boys and girls of Pinal county's 4-H clubs are.

So, with the encouragement of her own grown children, Mr. and Mrs. Willis (Bill) Combs, she offered the land.

The camp is located six miles East of Williams. It's on an East slope giving a wonderful view of the San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff.

The meadow is large enough to support a ball diamond, and in the thick stands of ponderosa there is room for archery, hikes and other recreation facilities.

The whirlwind offer set the nine member 4-H Board of Directors going.

They all caught the infectious spirit of their goal — a camp. Just as they did several years ago in building and providing a fairgrounds for the county's youth.

When a freight train jammed cars into the Picacho overpass, South of Coolidge, one of the cars was an 8,000

After the Dust Settled . . .

They had a 4-H Camp

gallon capacity, double walled tank car used to haul vinegar. Its inner lining was stainless steel and just ideal as a water tank for their camp. Allison Steel Company of Phoenix found a way to donate this tank to 4-H.

The tank weighed 16 tons. And, to move it from Picacho to the Williams area they needed help. A trucking company took on the responsibility of getting it installed at the campsite. And, because of the double wall it tends to be insulated from temperature changes.

Certified safe water is obtained in Williams and the 8,000 gallons serves a full camp complement for a week.

Restroom and shower facilities are modern and were their most expensive installations.

Each building consists of double cabins connected by a covered breezeway. They were obtained at auction in Pinal county, dismantled, hauled to the campside on a borrowed truck which broke down South of Flagstaff.

With this plight they were helped

by Bill Milliner of Flagstaff and Scottsdale who managed to get the trailer to within 25 feet of where the cabins were to be erected.

They went to Bogle Farms near Maricopa for a donation of steel, double deck bunk beds to fill the cabins.

Interested people in the county got together and made enough mattresses to fill each bed with a "thick, comfortable mattress." These were made from purchased ticking and donated cotton at a cost of only \$3 each.

The Rowe Brothers helped the Board of Directors plan, gave advice on construction of the campsite and provided loading and hauling equipment.

They were given wire for installation of electricity which the Arizona Public Service Company installed through the help of Millard Meccia of Williams.

The camp is wired in such a way as to blend with the surrounding without calling attention to itself.

As Roy Swisher of Coolidge says, "we begged, borrowed and borrowed without the intention of returning almost all of the fixtures in the buildings."

There is no mess hall as yet but each cabin has a small table and they all cook as a unit on grills made by vocational agriculture students from materials furnished by the area farmers.

In the event of rain each group move their cook units under the breezeway.

Roy Swisher is an accountant from Coolidge. He and Keith Jones, Pinal County 4-H Agent with the U of A's Cooperative Extension Service say that the people in the county have been wonderful in the help they've given through donations of cash and materials, as well as labor and equipment.

The 4-H clubs pitched in as well. Stanfield 4-H Club made miniature cotton bales which were sold at the fair permitting them to contribute \$150 to the camp kitty.

The Apache Junction Prospectors' 4-H Club donated \$100 they had raised while the Thunderbird 4-H Club from Queen Creek put in \$35.

Roy and Keith tell that the camp now represents an investment of \$5,000. Half of this sum is covered by a public service loan from the Valley National Bank in Casa Grande.

They are emphatic about their next objective of paying off the indebtedness after which they have their sights trained on the addition of the other needed facilities.

They need a combination recreation-mess hall with a kitchen estimated to

cost about \$20,000. They need another building for toilet facilities for about \$5,000, and two more housing units with double cabins for \$3,000.

Presently they have in storage between Coolidge and Casa Grande a walk-in refrigerator. It's being kept there until they find a way to haul it to the camp.

Rod Goff of Stanfield and president of the current Board of Directors will solve this problem with the help of the other board members. They are: Mrs. Mike Bidegain of Kearney and vice president; Mrs. Max Taylor of Coolidge and secretary; Jim Harvey of Valley Farms and treasurer; Mrs. Willis Combs of Queen Creek; Joe Cooper of Florence; Bud Jackson of Casa Grande; Mrs. Richard Roorda of Apache Junction; and Oliver Anderson of Maricopa.

Swisher, though he has served out the allowable terms on the board, acts unofficially as their accountant.

This live wire supporter of 4-H says, "the boys and girls get more out of summer camp than any other thing I know of."

"Some of them have never been away from their parents for an overnight stay. Some could not afford camping expense, or would never get to a camp any other way."

"After a week at camp," his eyes flashing with joy, "these kids are just different people."

"They make better 4-H'ers for the
In bottom left photo, from left, are Jones and Roy Swisher, Coolidge Accountant, who contributed so much energy, time and ingenuity in getting the camp built and supplied with facilities. In bottom right photo Joe Cooper and his wife, Ann, also were key people in the development of the Pinal County 4-H Camp.

rest of the year!" he exclaimed.

He has been a 4-H camp counselor for many years. As a volunteer he has seen the changes in the personalities of the 4-H boys and girls.

He and his family traveled the 225 miles to camp each week for 13 trips while building it.

And with his hands used to a pencil and calculator, they gained new experience digging ditches for water and sewage lines. He served as carpenter, painter, electrician and plumber. He enjoyed every blistering minute of it, too.

But, he wasn't alone.

Many others from Pinal county also worked on the camp. And, while there isn't room to list all who helped, the Joe Cooper family should be included.

Joe and his wife, Ann, and their children Cort, 16, Brent, 14, and Pam, 11, loaded their family pickup week after week to put in long weekends of work on the camp construction, pitching in with shovel, hammer, saw and pliers.

Cooper who also has been active in 4-H activity pointed out that they'd had trouble booking their own 4-H camping programs in other people's camps. Competition for such time is heavy.

He said, "you need to get out and sleep with these boys and girls to get to know them."

This experience he felt adds to closer working relationship during the balance of the 4-H year. "It's great!" he said.

And, while he said it his wife, Ann, sat near him beaming her agreement.

All of these people believe in 4-H.

