

## **My Time at Holden - October 2018**

*By Joel Matter*

In the first of my articles to the Quill (April 2018) last year I stated that I planned for “three visits ... to work on the village archives.” That was the plan. Actually I made four visits. I now have the opportunity to report to you this last visit of mine to Holden Village in 2018.

This fourth visit began on the last day of September, a Sunday. Given the lateness of the year I did not know what kind of weather to expect. So I packed a lot of clothes, so much that I went over the boat company’s per-passenger luggage weight limits. So I had to pay extra freight charges round trip. But it was worth it, for I used most of the things I packed.

I went up-lake with Nancy Winder and her husband Larry Howard, who is the board-appointed village archivist. Nancy was on teaching staff this time. Larry warned me not to start a conversation with her during the boat trip. She was busy preparing for her classes as well as for the sermon she was to preach at the evening Eucharist. So Larry and I spent most of the time discussing what we would be doing, what to look for, and some lessons he has learned through this process of taking inventory of the materials in all the banker boxes. What we had accomplished to that time has already been used to help find items for Holden staff and miners’ family members. On the bus ride up, we looked at the fall colors on the foliage.

Once again I was put on short-term staff. This means that I get involved with staff functions and duties like dish team, “garbology” (first time I was scheduled for it in 2018), attending scheduled staff meetings Wednesdays after Vespers, assist in “carrying chains” to lift luggage from busses to the loading dock and groceries from the once-a-month truck to the refrigerators, attend staff functions, and other volunteer opportunities.

I got to meet Melinda, the current interim pastor. She presided over the September 30 service while Nancy preached; on October 7, the two swapped duties. This past Fall season, when pastors came to Holden as guests or on staff, they also participated as ministers in the Sunday evening service. My first volunteer duty was to assist with Holy Communion by holding the basket that collected the emptied communion cups. I noticed that the creed was not recited during the service. When I asked Nancy about it, she said that leaving out the creed makes the service more open and available to all who come to Holden.

I stayed in Lodge 1, one of the staff lodges, on the first floor. There were very few people staying in that lodge at the time. The first night, during the middle of the night, I saw a mouse roaming the floor. In the early morning, I saw two mice. I decided to take action. I talked with Marc Rerucha-Borges, the Operations manager, who recommended setting a live trap: a metal box with an offset entrance from which the caught mouse cannot exit. While the trap can hold several mice inside, Marc said it is best to just catch one mouse then take the trap out to the ball-field (0.7 miles west of the village) to release the critter; when two or more mice are caught together in the trap, the mice can become agitated, stressed, and turn on each other, making for a mess to clean up in the trap. Marc recommended placing the trap on the floor in the hallway against the wall, with the

offset entrance next to the wall. He also said that the trap had to be monitored often. So I took the trap from the Ops office in the Dining Hall and set it in the hallway after lunch. Before dinner I checked the trap ... and there was a mouse inside. I decided to wait until after Vespers to take out the trap and set the captive free. By that time it was dark and raining. I did not have enough hands to hold the trap, a flashlight, and an umbrella. So I got some assistance from one of the few also staying in Lodge 1 to help. It turned out that he had already taken out the trap and released the captive. The mouse in there now was the second mouse! Very effective trap! Off we went into the darkness, heading west. He had a very good, bright, LED flashlight. By the time we reached the footbridge, he was ready to release the captive. I was dismayed, because it was contrary to Marc's instructions, and that he had done that with the first mouse. His reason was that his feet couldn't stand such a long trek to the ball-field. I coaxed him to go across Railroad Creek via the footbridge to a clump of vegetation near the hydro building, where the second mouse was released. After returning to the lodge I set the trap again for any other mice. (There were none.)

The next day I told Larry of the success catching and releasing the mice he gave me a look of disdain. He told me of one time when he came up to the archives for the first time that year in the Spring where there was a mouse on the floor of the first landing of the archives. Each was surprised of each other, but Larry reacted by lifting his foot and stomping on it. He killed it. He thought that method better as it ensures for no returning critters.

Larry allowed me to attend Nancy's classes. In the first week in the morning her topic was the Holden Prayer ("O God, You have called us to ventures ...") and its author, Eric Milner-White. She talked about what led to the adoption of this prayer by Holden Village (basically from Carroll Hinderlie, the first executive director, 1963 - 1976). She traced how it became known (in Service Book and Hymnal [1958], Prayer 96: For guidance; originally printed in 1941, "Daily Prayer" by Milner-White and G. W. Briggs, entitled "The Call of Abraham"). She has been granted permission to visit the King's College Archive Centre to view and study the papers of Milner-White to learn more about the origin of this prayer. In the second week she discussed the life of William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English from its Hebrew and Greek sources, whose translation still makes up the majority of the wording found in the NRSV.

In the late afternoons Nancy offered book club discussions. The first book was "Go Went, Gone" ("Gehen, Gingen, Gegangen") by Jenny Erpenbeck, as translated from the German by Susan Bernofsky. It's about a retired classics professor who comes into contact with African refugees in Berlin and has compassion on them. The second book was "American by Day" by Derek B. Miller, a sequel to his "Norwegian by Night". This one is about a Norwegian police detective on leave from the department when her father requests her to go to the U. S. to find her brother.

The portion of the Pacific Crest Trail in the Agnes Creek valley continued to be closed due to fire while I was at Holden in early October. Just like in August / September, several backpackers came through the village to eat, rest, wash up, and move on. For them it was late in the season and, if they wanted to complete the trek to Canada before snow set in (which it started to do in the high elevations), they needed to hurry. Some stayed overnight. One threesome - "Rocket", "Squirrel",

“Whirligig” (a gal and two guys) – came on the day of the final evening of operation for the pool hall and bowling alley for the season. I set bowling pins for them.

Another of the fun things I did in the evenings was work on jigsaw puzzles. The sister of Ed Short brought and donated two puzzles I worked on in the library in Koinonia. Working on these puzzles was a treat because you knew all the pieces were there; many of the puzzles in the village are missing two or more pieces.

During my time at Holden this visit, there was one special arrival and several departures. The special arrival was the return of the directors, Chuck Hoffman + Peg Carlson-Hoffman. They left the village while I was still there on my third visit in September. Peg at first thought I had been in the village the whole time they were gone. Peg had been diagnosed with breast cancer and had had a mastectomy while away from Holden. Included in the departures were people who had been on long-term staff. When such people do leave the village, the rest of the staff give them a special sendoff just before bus departure. I participated in three such sendoffs. A particular sendoff was for a person had been on staff for over three years. What was worrisome in two of the three sendoffs was that these people were leaving before their scheduled departure date. More on that later.

Also during my time there in October several of the long-term staff took “outs” from the village. They were taking these short vacations at that time because it was just before the start of the Winter season, when it would be much harder to take such a leave. During the winter, the boat on Lake Chelan makes those trips only on certain days of the week. The winter boat schedule started the week after I left Holden. One downside, besides the village being short-staffed this year, was that all the staff that had piano-playing talent took “outs” that included Sunday, October 7. So the music accompaniment during the evening Eucharist was heartfelt but “different”.

Regarding actual work, I made inventories for four boxes during my two weeks there. One of them came from Werner Janssen, the first business manager, 1963 – 1984. It included lots of photographs for which I needed assistance from Nancy to identify several of the people depicted. It also included 20 small spools of 16mm color film. (We need to find a working 16 mm projector to find out what is on them.) Another box contained the correspondence of Dr. Wilton E. Bergstrand, who led the Holden clean up operation in 1961 and 1962, as well as press clippings and related documents from that time. I had heard of the “Forerunners” and the “Undertakers” as names for the first groups of people who came and worked those years on the clean up. But I learned there were other group names for succeeding work parties: “Trailblazers”, “Anticipators”, “Participators”, and “Ambassadors”. This box also contained sensitive materials from the 1970’s when Holden tried to be a group home for troubled high school teenage boys.

During the second week I was at Holden, the first of two Work Weeks was held. On Sunday people came up lake to help the village be prepared for the Winter season. In previous years, more than thirty people each week would come and give their time and energy to Holden. In 2018 there were less than twenty, all of whom were older than I am and ready to work.

During Work Week there is always a Blitz Day, where all the staff take time from their normal tasks and join the Work Week people on a project. This Blitz Day was spent on the annual transformation of the Dining Hall to Winter operation. Tables and all woodwork were cleaned. Tables from the east end are taken down, removed and stored. A special wooden partition is retrieved from storage, assembled and installed; one side acts as storage of games and puzzles, the other side has pegs on which to hang coats and winter gear. A ping-pong table was installed near the partition, and a  $\frac{3}{4}$  size pool table was placed between the sinks and the south wall. Between the pool table and the piano some sofas and comfortable chairs were arranged. I did none of that heavy lifting. My task was to clean and sanitize all the salt and pepper shakers, the paper napkin dispensers, and the prayer sheets. I did this with Barbara Gamrath, whose mother was a long-time president of Holden's board of directors. After my task was complete, I was allowed to return to my inventory work in the Archives.

Nancy and Larry did not stay the full two weeks. They had family business to take care of which could not wait until the following week. So I was given the key to the archives so I could finish up what I was doing.

Each Wednesday evening in 2018 the liturgy for vespers was Vespers '86 by Marty Haugen, which we know as "Holden Evening Prayer". I volunteered to lead the service on October 10. When Melinda brought me the full score for the service, I opened it looked at a page of music and said, "Whoa, look at all those little black dots." Melinda was not fooled. Nancy Rerucha Borges played the accompaniment splendidly, just as she has done for many years. (She and husband Marc had just returned from their "out". I was very grateful that she had returned and played that night.) The service went well, and I received many kind remarks about it from staff and guests for several days afterward.

On Thursday evening, October 11, there was a special staff meeting, one that was not like the normal Wednesday night staff meetings. It was a continuation of a community conversation led by two people from the kitchen staff. It was a grassroots effort to come to grips with the anxiety, confusion, tension, and uncertainty that were being felt by the staff people. It was already a hard year with not enough people to fill the positions at Holden needed to operate it in a proper manor. In that the people who were there stepped up to meet the challenge, taking on two or three roles so that the guests continued to enjoy their time at Holden, they did a wonderful job. That heroic effort came at a cost to staff people's well-being and understanding of what the Holden community is about. Then on top of the hard work and effort, certain people on long-term staff were leaving before their scheduled departure date, including people who gave spiritual leadership to the village. In my article in the October 2018 Quill, I mentioned that the husband and wife pastor team left in September after only one year of a two-year commitment. The Holden board announced to the staff of the pastor team leaving a few days before it happened. The staff was not prepared for this, and the reasons for the pastors' early departure could not be revealed. Other early departures followed, including the ones I mentioned earlier. During most of this time the directors were out of the village, also previously mentioned. Hence, these community conversations, which were more successful in uniting the Holden community to allow what everybody on staff who attended them had to say about what was happening in the village and what was not happening.

As I was on staff during this visit, I attended what turned out to be the third session. The previous sessions wrestled with the following questions:

How do you feel? How can the community tend to one another? Why did you come to Holden?

What needs attention from the whole community?

Because I was not in the village when the first and second sessions were conducted and did not know what was said in them, I felt out in left field. I still wanted to contribute to the conversation if I were given the opportunity. The question for the third session was:

What is your investment in this process as a staff member?

The format of the conversation allowed all attendees a turn to speak. While we were seated in a large circle in Koinonia Fireside, there was no order to when people were given a turn. Each speaker offered their thoughts and feelings in "I" terms, from each person's own perspective. When a speaker was finished, s/he asked someone else in the room, who had not yet been given the chance, that s/he would like to hear what that person had to offer. Whoever was selected could pass or offer his / her thoughts, and then ask the next person. Most people offered their support of the process of the community conversations, that they were invested in it; only one person passed. This was the first session that the directors Chuck + Peg attended, and they spoke of their support for this grassroots effort. After the new business manager had her chance to speak, there were two people left who had not spoken: myself and someone who came on staff the day before. I asked to be called last: I did not get my wish. I prefaced my remarks by offering my thanks and gratitude to all the staff for all the work they have done, for stepping up when the lack of people on staff necessitated additional effort. I then talked about some history, when it was announced by the board that the first executive director was leaving and no explanation was given as to why, how mad I was that – when I had my opportunity to be on staff – he would not be there. I made the comparison that, back then, there was no community conversation for processing that event; I conceded that there was no issue concerning a lack of staff personnel back then, either. The point, though, is that the village got through it and survived. I supported the community conversation process but, if it somehow broke down and didn't fulfill its mission, there were other avenues and methods to explore and try.

On Friday Larry passed on email from Bill Phillips that he needed materials from the archives for a project. Bill Phillips grew up at Holden during the mining days, and lives in the Magnolia area of Seattle. Larry thought the contents of "Box 23" were what Bill needed. This put me in a bind since I was already overweight as far as the boat company was concerned with all my luggage. I received gracious assistance from Barbara Gamrath, who took the box on board and gave it back to me upon reaching Field's Point.

One of the opportunities that a staff person or guest has is to offer a First Word at breakfast. (In the old days this was called Matins.) It is supposed to be short – three minutes or less – on any thought provoking or generative message of peace, harmony, belief, etc. I gave one each week, each utilizing materials I found in the archives. The first week I read a poem found in a 1967 Holden Village quarterly publication. The second week, on my day of departure I talked about

alternate lyrics for the hymn tune "Blest be the tie that binds". I gave three examples, two of which were related to Holden: the "Popcorn Song" from Wes Prieb, and a verse that was sung back in 1961, in the days of the Forerunners, when people left Holden.

Meeting people new to you at Holden is a common and joyful occurrence. On my last day there I met someone who was visiting for the first time since she was a child there in the mining days. During a short interview I took notes so Larry could contact her at a later date for a more thorough interview. I also thought Bill Phillips could use the information as well in his project.

The good news about this visit is that the inventory phase was completed. All the work and effort throughout the four visits in 2018 to Holden paid off in getting this task done. There is plenty of work left to do. I hope I will be asked to help with the work that remains.