

## *The Lakengren Story*



In Celebration of the Twentieth Anniversary  
of the Lakengren Property Owners Association  
and

In Appreciation to all who have participated in  
the collection of material

The Lakengren Story is dedicated

**LAKENGREN** (lock-n-grin), a Viking name meaning “Lake of the emerald green hills,” is a very picturesque community with trees, lakes, and 22 miles of roads winding over rolling hills. It is a planned private residential-resort development conceived by Mr. Ed Wrenn, president of American Realty Service Corporation (ARSC), governed by a covenant, an unpaid nine member Board of Trustees elected by the members of the Lakengren Property Owners Association (three rotating each year) and a General Manager hired by the Board of Trustees.

The development of 1,561 acres built around an impounded lake (Lake Lakengren) of 207 acres, approximately two miles long with a shoreline encompassing 9 ½ miles and a depth, which varies from 4 to 60 feet averaging 15 feet throughout. Lake Lakengren is fed by Paint Creek, a watershed ratio of 27-1 and numerous springs.

The water stored in the lake is controlled by a 300-foot concrete spillway, which empties into a flume 850 feet long with 10-foot high walls. The water then continues down Paint Creek. The lake can also be manually lowered by opening a 36-inch by 36-inch gate valve at the base of the dam. The earth works for this dam represent 2,400 feet of embankment, 20 feet wide at the top and 400 feet wide at the widest point at the base of the slope. The Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) inspects it on a regular basis and it must be maintained according to their regulations at our expense.

The ODNR was a constant watchdog over the building of the dam, with Mr. Ed Cummins, ARSC construction engineer and Cisle Construction Company of Cincinnati, the building firm. The engineer was on the job site most of the time. The heavy equipment worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Every time Mr. Cummins left the site, upon his return he inspected every inch of the work done during his absence. If he detected one shovel of dirt instead of clay, it was all removed and re-done in clay. Lakengren has one of the best dams in this part of the country with the highest quality of clay and no soil.

After completion of the dam, artesian wells in the basin, surrounding tile ditches and Paint Creek filled the lake within a short time. In the summer of 1970 the lake was being stocked with fish and enjoyed by property owners for fishing, boating and swimming.

Recreational amenities include six smaller stocked lakes, a 4,500 square foot outdoor filtered swimming pool holding 176,000 gallons of water during a single cycle period, a children's pool and a bathhouse. There is also a marina with boat launching, boat docks, fishing tennis courts, shuffleboard, horseshoes, softball diamond and two playgrounds for the children. There are public access areas, some with fireplaces, tables, picnic shelters, and boat docks. A beautiful clubhouse (Valhalla Lodge) has a snack bar and a sand beach for lake swimmers.

Buses from two school districts transport the children to and from Eaton and Preble Shawnee schools.

Rural carriers deliver mail to mailboxes at each driveway. Phone service has always been available from the beginning with party lines; private lines are now available. Weekly trash pick up by an independent company, which charges each customer a quarterly fee, is a necessary service. Cable TV is in the process of being installed. Several newspapers are delivered daily.

Guards at the main entrance admitting owners and their guests to the development provide security. A security car patrols the development and is helpful in directing fire or emergency vehicles from Eaton and Camden when it is necessary. Communications with the Preble County Sheriff is available via two-way radio.

The exact date when the development was first conceived and put into action is no longer known. Because of this uncertainty, many interested people began to look back and ask when did this start; where did it begin; who were the planners and what steps were taken to accomplish this?

Records have been shuffled and lost, people who were in charge have moved on and records stored in the Valhalla Lodge office were destroyed in the January 1988 fire. This has made the task of gathering information difficult. However, there has always been an interest in maintaining an accurate history of Lakengren, specifically by the Board of Trustees and a Historical Committee, functioning since the early 1980's, to carry on the search.

An article appearing in the May 15, 1991 Register-Herald, Eaton, read, "About 50 Eaton area residents attended an informational meeting Thursday, May 18, 1966 in the Eaton City Council chambers to hear about a 950 acre lake and housing development which is proposed southwest of the city. The area being considered is about 3 miles southwest of Eaton, and bounded by Ohio 732 on the north, Winters Road on the west, Paint Creek on the east, and would go south about two miles to Longman Road, all east of the Sugar Valley community. A representative of Developmental Services, Inc., said the entire project would actually be a town, which would have its own police protection, commercial area, and governing body formed from lots and homeowners. Fire protection would be furnished by Eaton and Camden departments, as they now serve the area."

In the summer of 1967 an interested developer looked at two sites - Preble County and Brookville, Indiana. Brookville was considered the more desirable but the Federal Government had already bought the land.

In the summer of 1968 U.S. Land Development Co. optioned the land being considered in Preble County, then allowed the option to lapse.

In January 1969 topographical maps were reviewed. Mr. Ed Wrenn, president of American Realty Service Corporation (ARSC), decided to locate a development southwest in Preble County. He owned the company with no stockholders, but with many diversified interests. Lakengren would become the seventh of eight developments for ARSC in Ohio and the 52nd throughout 19 other states since 1945.

This location was chosen to satisfy a need in a market area surrounded by Cincinnati, Columbus, and Indianapolis, with Dayton falling within this radius. There was a source of water, Paint Creek, crossing Ohio 732 southwest of Eaton in Preble County which seemed to be a promising location for such a development as Lakengren.

An engineering crew flew over a site farther south of the present southern boundary and located an ideal site for the dam; which had to be the first consideration. The proposed entrance would have been located on Sugar Valley Road. Approximately 400 acres of the Woodland Trail Boy Scout Camp were needed; however, they refused to sell at any price. The desired procurement would have made Lakengren at least twice the present size.

A second site for a dam was located just south of the present dam, but the owner refused to sell.

The third site is the dam location that now exists. If this site had not been obtained there would not have been a Lakengren and this could be "The Story of Where We Almost Weren't."

Two men from ARSC contacted the property owners who would be involved and other leading citizens in the community but they did not receive much encouragement.

The idea lay dormant for a time when two promotional men from the ARSC approached the Preble County Commissioners. They were referred to the Preble County Engineer. He was familiar with such problems as ARSC and other developers had in various parts of the country and were prepared with requisites and standards for such a development.

The County Engineer insisted that this was the only way the county would work with them. At this point, they left without agreement; however, they returned at a later date and agreed to work with the county officials under the conditions set forth.

Gaspar Township had no zoning ordinance but it was discovered that the northeast portion of the planned development was within the three mile radius of Eaton city limits which allowed the Eaton City Commission and townspeople to voice their opinions or opposition to the site. The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVRPC) and the Eaton Zoning Committee oversaw zoning regulations. They must approve and sign all mylars (developmental maps) before each map could be recorded. This was a 12-member committee and each member had to be contacted personally and sign the document before witnesses.

Each of the 19 landowners was contacted and an option was taken on their property. Legal process was commenced and a local attorney finalized all the land deals within one day, the final day of the second option. The farms were optioned first in January 1969 and payment for the farms was made and recorded in June 1969.

Good farmland in this area was selling for \$150-\$200 per acre. Most of this was not good farmland; it was scrubby wasteland. Three farms were purchased for trade; 1,561 acres were purchased with an average cost of \$600 per acre.

One million two hundred thousand dollars (\$1,200,000) was borrowed from Melon National Bank in Pittsburgh, PA. for the purchase of the land. The loan was a secured real estate loan that was fully paid, plus 10% interest, within the first year of development. Lakengren was the costliest of all the ARSC developments to date. Preble County National Bank of Eaton, Fifth Third Bank of Cincinnati and Westinghouse Credit Corp. of Philadelphia were the financial institutions that handled the finances for 2,200 lots of which 2,161 were offered for sale.

An Ohio state attorney in Columbus finalized all the deeds and contracts pertaining to covenants and restrictions within the state legal department basic to all ARSC developments and modified them per community. A gentleman of Fredericksburg, Va. represented ARSC with the Federal government for the finalization of all matters pertaining to Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The concern about proper road construction, presented by the County Engineer, has been rewarded as the roads have proven to be satisfactory for the most part. The drainage and side ditches were properly completed but have suffered from the sewer installation, building construction and erosion.

Most important was the requirement of a covenant with every person who made a purchase of one or more lots about those regulations. It became apparent that the County Commissioners would apply the original covenants and act immediately.

At this point, it was necessary to comply with the County, State and Federal procedures to meet all the requirements. First, they must go to the MVRPC to present their case. The MVRPC deferred, using arguments that were not then nor ever would be enough for users within Lakengren to justify a sewer project of such a proposed size and expense.

The Preble County Health Department would not be involved, so it was necessary to contact the Ohio State Health Department for approval of the water and sewer drainage.

Under supervision of the State Health Department, 28 pits were dug to accommodate drainage. These were called perk tests and were the deciding factor in the testing for a septic system. Thirty-three acres were allocated for future sewer systems.

The County Commissioners then drew up a "Paper of Points" pleading that the Lakengren community merited a sewer system because its population potential as a water recreational-residential development. Fortunately, the local officials were more accurate than the MVRPC. After receiving state approval of the sewer, it was necessary to go to the Chicago office for the same procedure through the Federal authorities. After approval in Chicago in 1975 A Federal grant was received toward the project.

Lakengren Utilities, Inc., a privately owned company, constructed the Lakengren water system in 1969 and 1970. The system consisted of two wells, high service pumps, filter system, water tower and approximately 40 miles of water mains. This system was purchased from Lakengren Utilities, Inc., in March 1989 and is now operated by Lakengren Water Authority.

Two original roads in the development (Gasper and Winters) were closed. "The Bridge" on Gasper Road, near the junction of Lake Lakengren and Lakengren Cove, was either removed or is in the bottom of the lake. Most say it was removed. County officials would not permit the closing of Longman Road; therefore, a group of lots considered a part of the basic plan is outside the perimeter. This is the location of the modern sewer plant.

The first Sales Office was a tent on Ohio Route 732 near the present entrance. After roads were cut, the tent was then moved a short distance south on Lakengren Drive. Later a house was built on Erickson Drive to be used as a Sales Office.

At the height of sales and construction, ARSC employed a manager, assistant manager, office manager, three office clerks, one commercial artist, 10 men in the demolition crew, five heavy duty equipment operators, six bush hog and mower operators, two surveying team of four men each, five carpenters, 12 others employed in the construction of the lodge, eight cement workers on the spillway, two janitors, and 45 salesmen.

These salesmen worked directly from the Sales Office seven days a week. Weekends during the summer were picnic days – sometimes hot dogs and soft drinks or fried chicken with the trimmings. Approximately 1,000 prospective buyers participated each week. Boiler shops consisting of telephone sales personnel were operated in Cincinnati, Richmond, and three in Dayton. Promotions and incentives totaling \$50,000 per week during the height of sales were given, including small transistor radios, television sets, stereos, mink stoles, etc. Another promotion was dinners at good restaurants with a party and a sales pitch; the salesmen sold a dream.

By 1970 the swimming pool, lodge and recreation areas were nearing completion and being used.

Lakengren Property Owners Association (LPOA) was organized under the laws of Ohio on June 16, 1969 when the development was first commenced. At its inception the incorporators (Lakengren, Inc.) chose temporary trustees to conduct the affairs of the Association until such time as the development was completed and sold-out and permanent trustees could be elected by the entire LPOA membership. Temporary trustees from Lakengren, Inc. were K.D. Lauer, Richard W. Wrenn and R. Leroy Allen (Allen was replaced by Thomas M. Boone, Jr.), all official of ARSC.

In just over 2 years (1969-1971) all construction was completed and all lots were sold once. Lakengren was no longer “little less than an engineering dream.” “Operation Count Down,” launched by the Lakengren sales force set a target date for sell-out of the development. “As soon as the ‘Sold-Out’ sign is hung out an election by all property owners will be held for the purpose of electing a Board of Trustees for the LPOA and Lakengren will become a closed community,” announced Developmental General Manager, Ken Lauer.

This goal being met, on Friday, October 1, 1971, the LPOA held its first general election in Valhalla Lodge for the purpose of electing a nine member Board of Trustees.

An October 4, 1971 meeting between the newly elected Board of Trustees, American Realty Service Corp. and Lakengren, Inc. was held at Dowlar’s Café, Eaton, Ohio.

Mr. Lauer stated that pursuant to an agreement between Lakengren, Inc. and the LPOA, Lakengren, Inc. has executed certain general warranty deeds conveying parcels of real estate to the LPOA, those being the community area including the lake, dam, basin, and 22 miles of surfaced roads as well as another tract specifically reserved for a future sewage treatment plant. He indicated the sum of \$182,728.48 was on deposit in a savings account in the name of the LPOA, which represented the total amount of dues and initiation fees collected to date. He also indicated that this amount would be released and turned over to the Treasurer of the LPOA who would be elected later in the meeting.

Mr. Lauer, retiring president of Lakengren, Inc., then said he would entertain nominations for the office of President of the LPOA Board of Trustees. The newly elected President would assume the Chair to proceed with the conducting of the election of other officers. In open ballot, Mr. Earl Beck was elected president.

President Beck received nominations for Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. All motions for candidates were dully made; seconded and unanimously elected to office.

After it was determined all the promises of ARSC had been met, the newly elected LPOA Board of Trustees assumed control of the operation and management of Lakengren on Tuesday, October 5, 1971. The first meeting of the LPOA Board of Trustees was set for 7 P.M. on October 7, 1971 at the sales office of the development.

In the 20-year history of the Property Owners Association, Lakengren has been the fastest growing community in the area with an increase of approximately 25 houses a year (50 in some) with 19 under construction this summer – 1991. By August 191, 532 homes were completed; 406-full time, 101-part time, 13-rentals; and 12-vacant for a total of 551 houses of all shapes and sizes from “A” frames to stately two to four level homes.

The tax value of Lakengren property when it was farmland in 1969 was \$99,000; in 1976 the valuation was approximately \$7,500,000 and in 1985, \$12,000,000. Figures for the 1991 at not available at this printing; however, the revenue to the county taxes alone makes Lakengren a valuable asset.

In 1984 the 413 registered voters of Lakengren made it necessary to establish a new precinct, known as Gasper 2, for Lakengren residents, the Lodge being the voting place. In May 1991 registered voters totaled 642.

A maintenance barn was constructed below the dam in 1972, at a cost of \$11,000.00 to provide a work area and storage space for tools and some equipment necessary for maintenance; mowing equipment, trucks, bulldozers and a snow plow. (Snow and ice removal from the roads was begun in March of 1974.) And of course a home for the stray dog who found a home there a few years ago.

Funds for the operation and maintenance of Lakengren are required from dues and assessments paid annually by LPOA members.

Two major expenditures in Lakengren history have inflicted a burden upon its financial condition, the fire at Valhalla Lodge on January 8, 1988, being one. The restoration, which was completed with a Grand Opening on September 24, 1988, caused expenditures that had not been anticipated. Insurance covered a large part of the restoration expense; however, there were new building codes to which we had to conform, there was a rent to pay for an interim office, which was located in an empty house on Thor Drive, and the furnishings for the restored Lodge. The clubs mostly underwrote the furnishings and volunteers who donated many hours of hard work did much of the work cleaning up.

Secondly, the dredging for silt removal from the North End of the lake, begun in the summer of 1990 was completed in June 1991. This project caused a difference of opinion among the membership regarding the expense and immediate necessity. It turned out to be a greater expense than was estimated. In addition to the dredging, a reservoir had to be constructed on leased land, graded, seeded and later, due to orders from the ODNR, the reservoir had to be re-vamped.

Previous to this, there have been other projects for silt removal. The first was in the North End area by an outside contractor. Other removals of silt at the North End, Marina and several dock area around the lake were done with a dragline and trucks purchased by the Board of Trustees and operated by Lakengren employees.

Seeing the need of a united effort, in January 1973, John Norton, former General Manager, contacted the other real estate lake developments in Ohio. His idea was to have meetings to discuss the problems of such developments and hopefully find some solutions to some of the problems we shared. There were several meetings of this group, "Real Estate Lakes Luncheon," then the idea lay dormant for a time. Greg Watling, also a former General Manager, created interest in another organization and the Ohio Lake Communities Association (OLCA) was formed. Twenty-four to 27 organizations are active in this Association, Lakengren being one, which meets semi-annually at different lakes to share mutual interests and information. Lakengren has been host to these groups several times with the Ladies Auxiliary serving the luncheon.

Lakengren is a proud community. Just drive around the development and you are impressed by the modern well-built homes, landscaped yards with beautifully cared for flower beds, trees, shrubs and beautiful Lake Lakengren.

The lot and homeowners are a cross section of the Midwest. Many retired people have located here and contribute their talents and expertise, along with the many younger residents, to projects undertaken in the community and county. There are working people living in Lakengren who travel as far as Cincinnati, Dayton, Greenville, Hamilton, Indianapolis, Middletown, Richmond and Wright-Patterson AFB to their places of employment.

Growth at Lakengren has proceeded at a steady pace. Yes, it is a growing community and experiences growing pains; however, few people would deny that the "Lakengren Story" is one of success. It is a wonderful place to live with loving and caring neighbors, a source of pleasure and enjoyment to many people who call it "HOME."

"When Ed Wrenn, a real estate developer came, he started with a dream which became a stark reality and planted a dream within us."

#### Lakengren Sewer Preble County Sewer District #1

In the beginning waste water treatment and disposal was handled on an individual basis, by use of septic tanks and various aerobic treatment devices, and followed by tile fields and leaching beds being installed. A larger aerobic unit served the Lodge.

In 1973 causes for concern for the maintenance of a healthful environment for the residents of Lakengren led to the authorization by Preble County Commissioners to advance funds for engineering and legal expenses to make a study and to prepare a special report which was compiled by M.M. Schirtzinger and Associates, Limited Consulting Engineers of Chillicothe, Ohio. The report outlined the type, size, and location of the necessary facilities, which would adequately provide a complete sewage collection system and treatment facility for Lakengren, and would provide steps and procedures to construct the sewage facilities, as well as a suggested method of financing the needed improvements.



Preble County Sewage System – District #1 was established in 1975. The county received a Federal Grant for one and a quarter of a million dollars to put in a central Sewer System for Lakengren.

The sewer project forged ahead and was expected to be completed and ready for use by September 30, 1976.

In the fall of 1976 Kenneth Crowell resigned as manager of Lakengren to become manager of the Sewer Plant. He remained as manager there until he retired in December 1979. John Kellenbarger became manager of the sewer plant from 1979 until his retirement in 1989. Tom Barnes now oversees the Sewer System.

### Lakengren Water Authority History

Lakengren Utilities, Inc. (LUI), a privately owned company constructed the Lakengren water system in 1969 and 1970. The system consisted of two wells, high service pumps, filter system, water tower and approximately 40 miles of water mains. Lakengren Utilities, Inc. started charging \$5 per month per property (houses and vacant lots). Later the charge was raised to \$20.42 per quarter. In 1988 LUI billed \$50 per quarter. In 1986 LUI declared bankruptcy and a bankruptcy trustee operated the system for approximately 2 ½ years.

In early 1988 the Lakengren Property Owners Association offered to buy the water system from the Federal Bankruptcy Trustee. The LPOA Board of Trustees did some negotiating for this purchase during 1988. In December 1988, the Preble County Common Pleas Court Judge (at the request of the LPOA) established the Lakengren Water Authority (LWA) as a political subdivision. The LPOA Board of Trustees appointed three Trustees for the LWA on December 15, 1988 to complete negotiations for the purchase to administer the water system after the purchase was completed. The Trustees appointed were: Charles Cook (one year term), Hal Yoder (two year term) and Paul Beaver (three year term).

After many, many negotiations with the Bankruptcy Trustee, and reviewing and changing many documents with the attorneys, bond counsel, trustees and underwriters, the water system was finally purchase on March 15, 1989. On this date, all documents were signed and \$1,150,000 of 25-year tax-free revenue bonds was issued. The \$1,500,000 was used as follows:

- \$75,000 – Purchase of the water system and valid accounts receivable from the Bankruptcy Trustee.
- \$135,500 – Repayment to the LPOA for all the legal fees, professional evaluations and expenses.
- \$108,000 – Reserve, which includes the final year cost of bond-principle and interest.
- \$156,500 – Reserve for improvements and repairs.

The bonds were sold to private investors, though not one of the bonds were purchased by any member of the LWA Board of Trustees. Star Bank, Cincinnati is the Bond Trustee.

The Lakengren Water Authority, a political subdivision, is subject to the provisions of the Ohio Revised Code, Section 6119.

The LWA Board of Trustees in April 1989 hired an office manager and an operations manager. The LWA Board of Trustees also established new water rates. It was determined that every property owner should pay \$32.50 per quarter to cover all the capital costs of the water system and the related debt costs. It was also determined that every homeowner should pay an additional \$39.00 per quarter for the water system's operating costs. Beginning in July 1991 homeowners were billed monthly instead of quarterly. The monthly rate being billed is \$10.84 for availability and \$13.00 for water use.

In 1989 the LWA Board of Trustees decided to install meters at all homes. In 1990 all new home taps included the installation of meters. During 1991 meters are being installed at all homes built prior to 1990. After all meters are installed, all homes will be billed monthly on a meter basis.

Since 1989 major improvements have been made to the pumps and casings at the well field. During 1990 the complete filter system was repaired and the filter media was replaced. In July 1991 major repairs were completed on the interior and exterior of the water tower.

The LPOA Board of Trustees appoints the Trustees of the Lakengren Water Authority for three-year terms. The appointments are based on the recommendations of the remaining two LWA Boards of Trustee members. The LWA Trustees and their terms of service are as follows:

Charles Cook 12/15/88 to 12/15/89

Hal Yoder 12/12/88 to 12/15/90

12/12/90 to present with new three year term expiring 12/15/93

Paul Beaver 12/15/88 to 7/31/90

Dan Hild 7/31/90 to present with term expiring 12/15/92

Since the LWA is a supplier of water to the public, the LWA is subject to all the regulations of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Hundreds of tests are conducted every week, month, quarter or year to insure good, safe water quality. To date, all testing has been very favorable as compared to the EPA Standards.

The Lakengren Water Authority, being a political subdivision, is subject to audits by the State of Ohio. The LWA also has a certified, independent audit done each year.

From March 15, 1989 to the present time, the LWA has made timely payments of bond interest and principal and has met all the reserve requirements as specified in the bond issue.

## LPOA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The first LPOA Board of Trustees was elected October 1971. Some were quite shocked when, preparing for this election, they found the Lakengren Property Owners Association, Inc. had been in existence since June 1969. The officers were:

President: K.D. Louer  
Vice President: Richard W. Wrenn  
Secretary-Treasurer: R. Leroy Allen (replaced by Thomas M. Boone, Jr.)  
Assistant Secretary: Gertrude Austin

On October 4, 1971 the new LPOA Board of Trustees officers were elected:

President: Earl Beck  
Vice President: Howard Muth  
Secretary: Fred J. Bolle  
Treasurer: Harold Yoder  
John Kellenbarger  
Lucille Morefield  
John W. Norton  
Carl Noffsinger  
O.O. (Bud) Miller

This Board hired John W. Norton as the first Manager in February 1972. Norton then resigned from the Board and Ted Gay was appointed by the Board to replace him.

## LPOA SECURITY Newsletter 11/10/71

“(First elected Board) kept the same guard as used by American Realty. They are bound by the Preble County Sheriff and are authorized by him to make arrests when they deem it necessary. The security guard will not only maintain a 24 hr watch at the guardhouse, but will make spot checks all over the property. We have instructed the guards to be very strict at the gate, no one will enter the property without a paid-up membership card, current automobile sticker or a valid guests pass. Until complete rules and regulations are prepared, driving laws within Lakengren will be the same as those in the State of Ohio. For example, posted speed limits will be enforced, no minors will operate and type of vehicle including auto, motor bike, etc.”

Security Chiefs (1971-1991) have been:

Ken Strange  
Fred Tipton  
Randy Payne  
Greg Shiverdecker  
Bill Williams

## ORIGINAL PROPERTY OWNERS

The 19 original landowners were: Gordon Berkshire, Richard and Myrtle Eck, Eleanor Howard, Tom Howard, Harriet Heckman, W.C. Hubbard, Harriet Lohrey, Everett Mann, Herman Pfeiffer, Everett Poos, Paul and Vera M. Proeschel, Elza Ratliff, Willis Ratliff, John Schoenling, Clarence and Evelyn Taylor, Carl Thomas, Jay Unger, and Charles and Mildred Wright.

Homesteaders who lived here before Lakengren was developed and are still residing in the same home are: Myrtle and Richard Eck, Faye and Von Ratliff and Clarence and Evelyn Taylor.

## THE LAKENGREN CLUBS

As Lakengren celebrates its 20 years of existence, there are some things that property owners need to be reminded of. Each year near the end of March, they open up their checkbooks and shell out their yearly membership dues. In exchange, they receive for themselves and their family a little card, automobile and boat stickers, which entitle them to all of the rights and privileges accorded members of the LPOA (Lakengren Property Owners Association) in good standing. Having accomplished this yearly ritual, they sit back with a satisfied feeling, knowing for a certainty that come summer, they can expect the grass along the roadways in the community to be periodically mowed, the lakes will receive the required treatment, the Manager and his support staff will be available when needed, the security force will be at their assigned posts around-the-clock, and when the winds of winter unleash their fury, the road and snow removal crews will do “their thing.”

These are just a few of the services, which are guaranteed to LPOA members. But there are many important services which the once-a-year membership dues do not begin to cover, but nevertheless services which property owners have come to expect. These are services, which would fall in the “essential” category, and services, which would cost “BIG BUCKS” if the LPOA had to pay for them, and would double their membership dues. These services are performed and paid for by the clubs within the Lakengren community whose members volunteer their time and talent to enhance life for them. They are called “Unsung Heroes.” Who are they? What do they do?

They don't snort fire, nor do they hide in dungeons, but the LAKENGREN DRAGONS are a formidable force to be reckoned with when it comes to rolling up their sleeves, flexing their muscles and tackling any task around Lakengren. The Dragons are an outcome of a meeting, which was spearheaded by former Lakengren Manager, Jack Block (deceased). This organization meeting was held in the fall of 1979; its stated purpose being to make the community of Lakengren a more desirable place to live through such programs and projects as promoting fellowship and recreation under which the LPOA must operate. The first elected officers were: Ed Shively, President; Bill Story, Vice President; Don Volkert, Secretary-Treasurer; Howard Muth, Executive Advisor; Fred Tipton, Sergeant-at-Arms.

During the past 11 years, this group of dedicated men has rendered immeasurable service to Lakengren. To name a few, they have initiated a yearly Jack Block Fun Day as a memorial to the person who was instrumental in the organization's beginning. Jack Block served as the LPOA Manager from April 23, 1979 until his death on June 18, 1980. This special day is an occasion for Lakengren members and their families to get together for a fun-filled day of fellowship. The first annual Jack Block Fun Day was held on Saturday, July 22, 1980 at the beach and lodge area with about 500 people participating in the festivities. In addition, the Dragons are responsible for semi-annual clean-up days (May and October) when the fellows (aided by the ladies) put on their walking shoes and old working clothes and get into the ditches and ravines to clear out the debris that is so carelessly discarded. Other accomplishments include building new docks around the lake in 1979, 1980 and 1981, building new restrooms at the marina; building the Rick Krohn ball diamond at the south end of the lake; remodeling kitchen, restroom and storage room at the lodge; repairing and painting fence and dragons at the main entrance to Lakengren; painting pools and restrooms at the pool area; furnishing picnic tables for recreation areas; new jackets for Life Guards; flags in the lodge and at the main entrance. As an added function, the Dragons maintain a resource pool of various talents to undertake jobs for property owners, which are often considered too small for contractors. Money earned from these jobs is returned to the LPOA is goods and services wherever needed.

As the Dragons celebrate 11 years of service to the Lakengren community, they salute the following deceased members whose efforts can never be forgotten: Jack Block, Jim Ledford, Dave McCoy, Paul Winkler, Paul Cook, Gordon Doty, Harlan Hatch, Roy Reigelsperger, Charlie Black, Howard Muth, Bill Hamby, Bill Storey, and Don Hileman.

In 1972 and early 1973, much thought and speculation was given to starting an organization made up of the ladies who reside at Lakengren. As a result, 10 ladies met and formalized this group, with Mary Reigelsperger and Evelyn Taylor designated as Acting President and Acting Treasurer respectively. In November 1973, the ladies officially organized what would be known as the Lakengren Ladies Auxiliary functioning under the sponsorship of the Board of Trustees. Since its original inception, this group of ladies has sponsored fundraising projects, which have enabled them to purchase much-needed items for Lakengren. To name a few: folding tables and chairs, along with numerous other accessories for the lodge such as stainless steel flat-ware, dishes, coffee makers, roasters, shower room accessories, coat racks, speakers, clocks, sweepers, step ladders, roman shades for the entire downstairs and part of the upstairs area of the lodge. In addition, the Auxiliary purchased a mimeograph machine for the office, which, for a time, reaped dividends in reproduction of the Viking Newsletter. An ornamental gate was purchased for the lodge stairway, storm doors for the Guard House, screen doors for the Marina and upstairs lodge office, along with TV sets for the Guard House. The ladies donated \$1,000 towards the construction of restrooms at the Marina. Ceiling fans were purchased and installed in the lodge, which results in conservation of energy in winter and summer. These are just a few of the tangible items, which this group has furnished; however, there are many items and services, which cannot be measured in dollars and cents. In recent years, the Auxiliary has established a food closet for distribution of food, clothing and other items to those Lakengren families who have met with adversity through unemployment, unexpected medical expenses and circumstances beyond their control. In addition, in the event of death of a resident, the ladies lend whatever assistance is needed including insuring that sufficient food is supplied to the bereaved family. As new residents move to the Lakengren community, the Auxiliary has a "Welcoming Committee" who make a personal welcoming visit to acquaint new families of the many services and social activities available to them.

The success of the Lakengren Ladies Auxiliary has been due, in large part, to the unselfish leadership of those who have served as Presidents. From its inception, the following have served: Mary Reigelsperger (Acting-1972-73); Mildred Crowell (1973-74); Laverne Mikesell (1975); Lena Johnson (1976); Doe Zarley (1977); Jeanette Vorhis (1978); Dorothy Shipley (1979); Janet Kaylor (1980); Linda Hodler (1980-81); Helen Winkler (1981-82); Helyn Hickman (1982-83); Linda Hodler (1983-84); Virginia Wehrley (1984-85); Elsie Young (1985-86); Dorothy Frick (1986-87); Carrel Horine (1987-88); Past Presidents Alternating (1988-89); Lena Johnson (1989-90); Teresa Krohn (1990-91).

Tis said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. If true, it is a sheer delight to behold the many beauty spots in and around the Lakengren community, which are the creation of the LAKENGREN GARDEN CLUB. Organized in October 1977, by Anne Yoder, this club has 12 charter members. The club has landscaped the Front Mall, Pool Area, Marina, and Bluebird Cove and is doing some tree plantings at Thor Lake. They have planted over 1,000 daffodil bulbs at the Mall, Lodge and Marina and each spring plant 50-60 dozen marigolds at the Lodge, Marina, Pool and Bluebird Cove along with the barrels at the Lodge. The Mall entrance to Lakengren was accomplished between 1978 and 1982 at a cost of \$6,278, which included planting of 127 trees and shrubs, 400 bulbs and various other gardening items necessary for the maintenance of the area. The club has established a tree farm, which is a resource for current and future beautification projects. For the past 4 years, the club has purchased, wrapped and delivered more than 2,400 seedlings (each year) to students in Kindergarten through Grade 6 in the Eaton and Preble Shawnee School Districts and planted an evergreen at a designated school in each district for Arbor Day. In addition, the group has sponsored the "Yard of the Week" and "Lot of the Week" contests for 13 years to encourage property owners to beautify their property and take pride in Lakengren. Along with Don and Mary Reeves, the club has started the Lakengren Bluebird Trail. In 1985, 57 Environmental Workbooks were purchased for teachers to use in the Eaton and Preble Shawnee School Districts. Money for the projects is generated by Card Parties, Luncheons, Ox Roasts (for a period of 10 years), Christmas Bazaars, sales of calendars and a cookbook. Approximately \$30,000 has been raised since the club's beginning for these projects. The Lakengren Garden Club is a member of the Dayton District Garden Club of Ohio, Inc., Central Atlantic Region, National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc., and the Preble County Garden Club Association. The club won the distinguished honor of "Garden Club of the Year" in 1983 and 1984 by Garden Club of Ohio, Inc., for their many civic projects at Lakengren. But history of the group would not be complete without adding the many hours of muscle and sweat that were expended by members in digging, pruning, weeding and the back breaking TLC (tender loving care) that have made Lakengren a very special Garden Spot of America.

Anyone who has ever attended the Jack Block Fun Day held each July, has seen the “water extravaganza” put on by the LAKENGREN SKI CLUB. This effort does not come by accident, but is the result of many hours of hard work by a lot of dedicated people. What is seen and enjoyed are the polished results of months of patience, practice and perseverance on the part of the guys and gals of the club. The Ski Club provides a useful outlet for people of all ages who want to learn to ski and they set a good example of water safety and readily lend their time and talent to assist the Marine Committee and any other Lakengren group with projects concerning the lakes. The Ski Club was formally organized on June 16, 1981, under the leadership of Kenny and Phyllis Strange and Ed and Marsha Mullins. The club chose the name “Laquanauts Ski Team” with the stated purpose “to promote skiing in a safe and enjoyable manner.” Since 1982, the club has presented an annual show for Lakengren at the special festivities of the Jack Block Fun Day. The Lakengren Dragons have been important supporters of the club; they have provided much special equipment and in 1985 built a special ski dock at the marina for the club’s use. In addition, the club participated in various civic activities to promote Lakengren to the surrounding community. These include parades for the Special Olympics, the Preble County Pork Festival, and the Preble County Fair. In 1989, the Ski Club won the Third Place prize overall (out of some 170 entrants) for its entry in the Pork Festival Parade. One other event in which the club traditionally participates is the Annual Cane Pole Fishing Derby sponsored by the Marine Committee. Each year the club sells bait and refreshments at the event, which enhances the derby and provides some additional funds for the club. Throughout its history, the Ski Club has provided its members with an opportunity to learn and practice ski tricks and maneuvers safely, which might otherwise be dangerous without proper instruction and supervision. It has helped new skiers develop their skills while providing an avenue for the experienced skiers to practice more advanced maneuvers. As they perform, they are indeed a joy to behold.

In April of 1972, the Lakengren Board of Trustees appointed a boating committee, for the purpose of making recommendations to the Board regarding all lake activities. This committee grew into what is now known as the LAKENGREN MARINE COMMITTEE. So when you hear the enormous contributions of the committee, don’t discount it as merely a “Big Fish Story” –they are in fact a group of dedicated people concerned with the betterment of the Lakengren waterways. They are a “working/social” group that has Lake activities for the purpose of fellowship, enjoyment and profit. And these profits spell dollars and cents to property owners, with a definite bearing on their yearly membership dues. These profits are channeled back to the Property Owners Association, and are derived from such projects as Pro-Bass Tournaments; Spring and Fall Fishing Derbies; and Kids Cane Pole Derbies. In the past several years, the Marine Committee has purchased and stocked the lake with various species of fish; made dish shelters for the lake; and made and posted fish limit signs.

Ask any property owner what enticed him or her to relocate to Lakengren and the one most singular factor was the lure of the lake and the fun of water sports.



Whether its “Deck the Halls” or “Deck the Trees”, come December property owners can enjoy the handiwork of the LAKENGREN CHRISTMAS LIGHTS COMMITTEE. This committee evolved in the late fall of 1990 by Nancy Erbaugh who wanted to spruce up Lakengren for the holidays. To get started, she sent out Christmas stockings with numerous volunteers to ask for donations towards the project. As a result, the committee was chartered at the January 11, 1991 Board of Trustees meeting. To help finance the project, aside from individual donations, the small group held a “Light the Lights” dance, raffled a cash gift certificate, held the first “Pictures with Santa” day, and is currently selling Lakengren sweatshirts, T-shirts, hats and visors. As a result of all the efforts put forth, a lighting ceremony was held before the “Light the Lights” Dance to light the front entrance mall. The guests of honor were Clarence and Evelyn Taylor, one of Lakengren’s first and original families. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor were given the privilege of throwing the switch on the first holiday display of lights. There also were several trees donned in orange ribbons to show support for the troops in Desert Storm. A special poster was put up in the lodge listing Lakengren loved ones who were serving their country as well as an orange wreath placed on the mantel. In addition, the group has taken on the task of sponsoring the LPOA Children’s Halloween and Easter parties.

“All work and no play” (you know the rest). So, when the work of supporting the Lakengren community is done by day, residents find time for play and relaxation at night. One of the most enjoyable avenues for this play is to enjoy a game of cards with friends. This purpose is served by the LAKENGREN CARD CLUBS. This group now consists of Evening Bridge, Euchre, Double Deck Pinochle and Single Deck Pinochle which all meet one night a month. There is also a weekly Tuesday afternoon Bridge group.

Former Lakengren Manager, Rick Krohn, organized the first card club, which was Euchre, sometime in the fall of 1982. They met one Friday a month. The next card club was Single Deck Pinochle started by Dottie (deceased) and Ed Frick, in late 1984. They met on the third Thursday of each month. On January 9, 1987, Dottie and Ed Frick and Loraine and Charles Adams started Double Deck Pinochle, which met on the first Friday of each month.

On January 8, 1988, the lodge burned and all activities were suspended indefinitely. The Euchre Club met several times and the Catholic Church in Eaton. Some of the card clubs met in private homes until the lodge reopened. On Friday, September 30, 1988, the first card game (Euchre) was held back in the remodeled lodge.

On May 25, 1989, Marge and Buzz Gullion started the first Bridge Club, which met on the fourth Thursday evening of each month. On June 19, 1990, the Gullions started the afternoon Bridge Club, which met every Tuesday at 1:00 P.M.

On Thursday, August 30, 1990, the Card Club members held a meeting at the Lodge. They wrote a charter and list of rules, and asked Marge Gullion to present their proposal to the Board of Trustees. It was decided that the purpose of the Card Clubs would be fellowship and service. After approval of the charter by the Board of Trustees in September 1990, the Card Clubs started their regular meetings on October 5, 1990. These clubs are open to all property owners and their guests.

An effort has been made to cover all of the current clubs operating within the Lakengren community. However, the history of Lakengren cannot be complete without citing efforts, which have come from clubs, which are no longer active. An example is the LAKENGREN TEEN CLUB. For a time, this group of youngsters helped with Jack Block Fun Day and the Clean-up projects sponsored by the Dragons. These youngsters fearlessly climbed ladders and decorated the lodge for our annual Christmas festivities. They also donated their time and talent to bring Christmas carols and cheer to shut-ins at a nursing home in the City of Eaton and they have collected for the Heart Fund and Jeremy's Kids (Muscular Dystrophy Association). We cannot forget these willing workers.

Another now defunct club that was active in Lakengren for a time was the LAKENGREN BOOSTERS CLUB. They did a lot to enhance the image of Lakengren in the immediate area as well as in the surrounding community. They sponsored out participation in the Rose Parade and Pork Festival. In addition, they sponsored an annual Arts and Crafts Show that served as a vehicle through which local talents were able to display their wares. Funds from such projects were used to sponsor the Miss Lakengren contests, which were featured attractions at the Jack Block Fun Day.

Following the devastating fire, which the lodge suffered in January of 1988, the task of rebuilding and refurbishing was quickly undertaken by all of the clubs in Lakengren. No one group can take total credit for this successful effort; it was the combined efforts of the entire community, which pooled their resources and efforts to accomplish this seemingly insurmountable task. The Lakengren Lodge, as it stands today, is a testimony to the camaraderie and caring that has made Lakengren a community that has stood the test of time for these last 20 years.





