

Pedley Valley and Darby's Palomar Mountain Resort

Robin Howell with Peter Brueggeman. Version 2, 30 May 2020

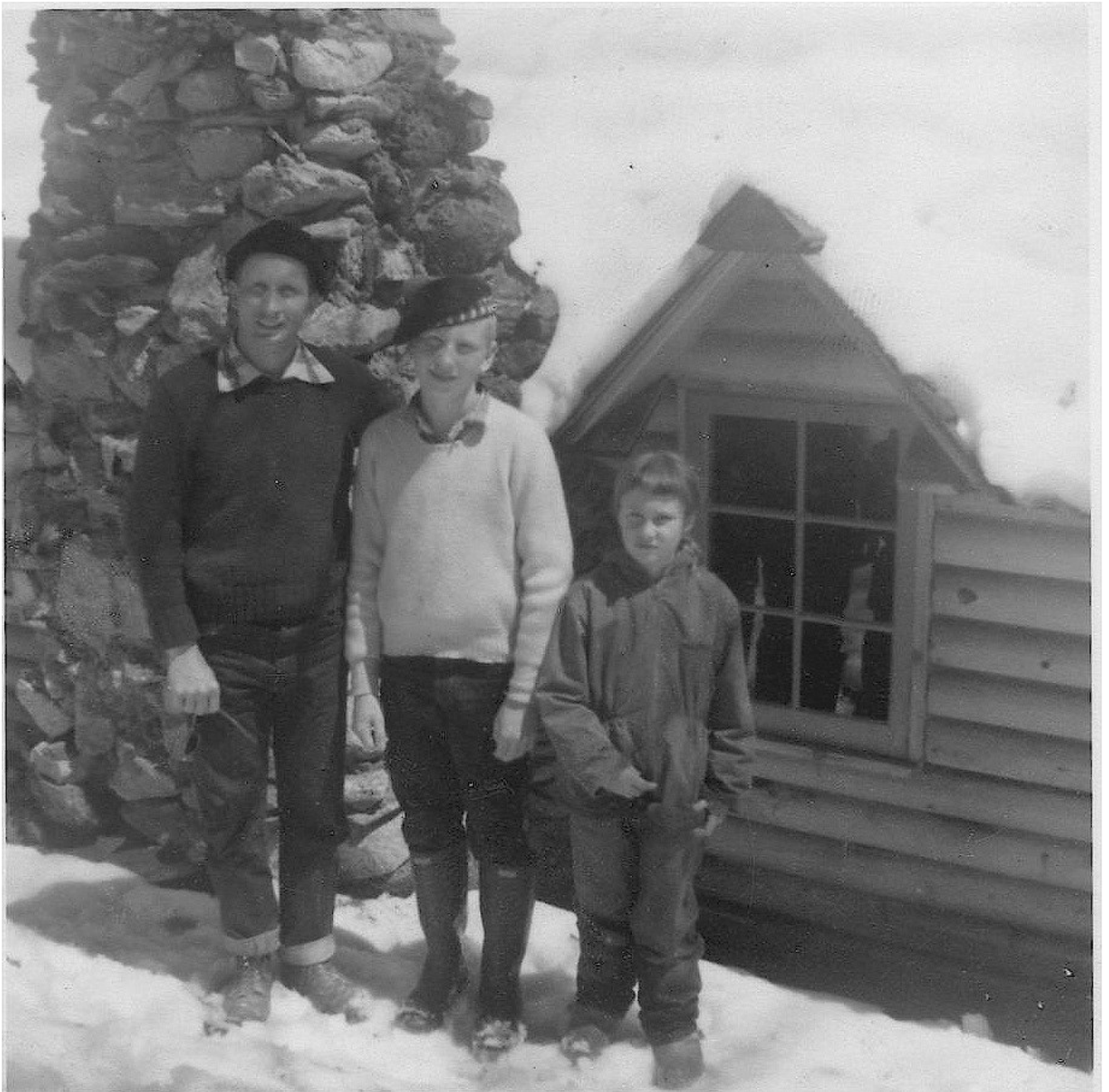
Text by Robin Howell (2 April 2005): My dad and my mom (Charles and Jean Darby) bought the upper 40 acres of Pedley Valley in the early 1950's. I was about 6 years old then. The property was a deep valley with a stream running through it. I remember meeting Mr. Pedley and his wife only once. They drove down from the L.A. area to visit my parents in La Jolla. My dad loved the property and wanted to build a small resort. My parents built a small lake there and four cabins. The property was called, "Darby's Palomar Mountain Resort." I think he really bought it for himself and not for a money making venture.



Charles Darby. Robin Howell photo

I remember the very first time I went up there. We camped alongside the creek where my father pitched a tent. He didn't know at the time that he had pitched the tent on a deer path, and all night the deer passed by the tent. I remember some of them stepping on the outer edge of the canvas. Needless to say, no one got a lot of sleep. The name of the creek was Iron Springs Creek. I am sure it got its name from the high iron content in the water, as the taste of it was pretty strong. My brother and I used to play in it a lot. This area is just below the now existing dam. That is where my dad built our first well.

When he bought the property there were no buildings on it, the lake wasn't there and there was no road. I think, at first, we used the water company road to get to the property. There was a pump house (?) at the end of the road, just on the other side of our property line. There was no electricity on the mountain at that time, and everything was run by generators (Observatory).



Charles Darby with his children Martin and Robin. Robin Howell photo

The first thing my dad did was build the cabin "Moonwinks," and I think it was built over one summer. This is a picture of our cabin "Moonwinks."



Robin Howell photo

The "Moonwinks" sign that my dad made for our cabin is still there, and the other cabins were named "Winky", "Twig" and "Dogwood". The latter or Dogwood burnt down shortly after my dad sold the property, and another cabin was built near the same spot by the new owners. The blue paint trim on the "Moonwinks" windows is the same color of the paint that it used to be and the door was also blue at one time. "Moonwinks" looks pretty much the same now as it did then, except it had log railings on the porches. I took this picture (above) a couple of years ago in the winter.



Moonwinks cabin with Martin Darby and their dog Buddy at the woodpile, Jean Darby standing next to door, and Robin Darby in the door's window. Robin Howell photo

My dad used a hand saw to build it as there was no power to run electric saws. The lumber came from Solana Beach Lumber and consisted of special -milled half logs made to look like logs on the outside and smooth flat on the inside. The rocks for the fireplace were gathered by my brother (Marty) and me, and the water for the cement was carried in bucketfuls from the creek. The windows came from an old house in La Jolla that was torn down and they had the old rippled glass panes in some of them. The stairs to the loft (my brother's room) was built of logs that we gathered and the railings on the porch were made of logs. My dad put in a bathroom even though there was no power for the hot water heater or to run pumps at that time. He thought eventually there would be power on the mountain. We had an outhouse along a path that seemed to me to be at least a mile away. Especially at night and when there was snow on the ground.

The road was built around the same time as the lake, about a year or two after the cabin. We have old 8mm movies of it being built. The man who built it was from Escondido. I remember that he and his wife stayed in our cabin for the summer while it was under construction.

The lake took up about five acres, and during the time that we owned the property, it was only full once with water over the spillway. Usually it was about 2/3 full. My brother and I had our own rowboats that my dad built for us. They were white on the outside, and on the inside, mine was pink and my brother's was blue. The lake was stocked with bass and bluegill. Every year we would go during trout season over to Doane Pond and catch fish. One year my dad brought the fish back alive to our lake and put them in. The trout survived and grew to a very large size.

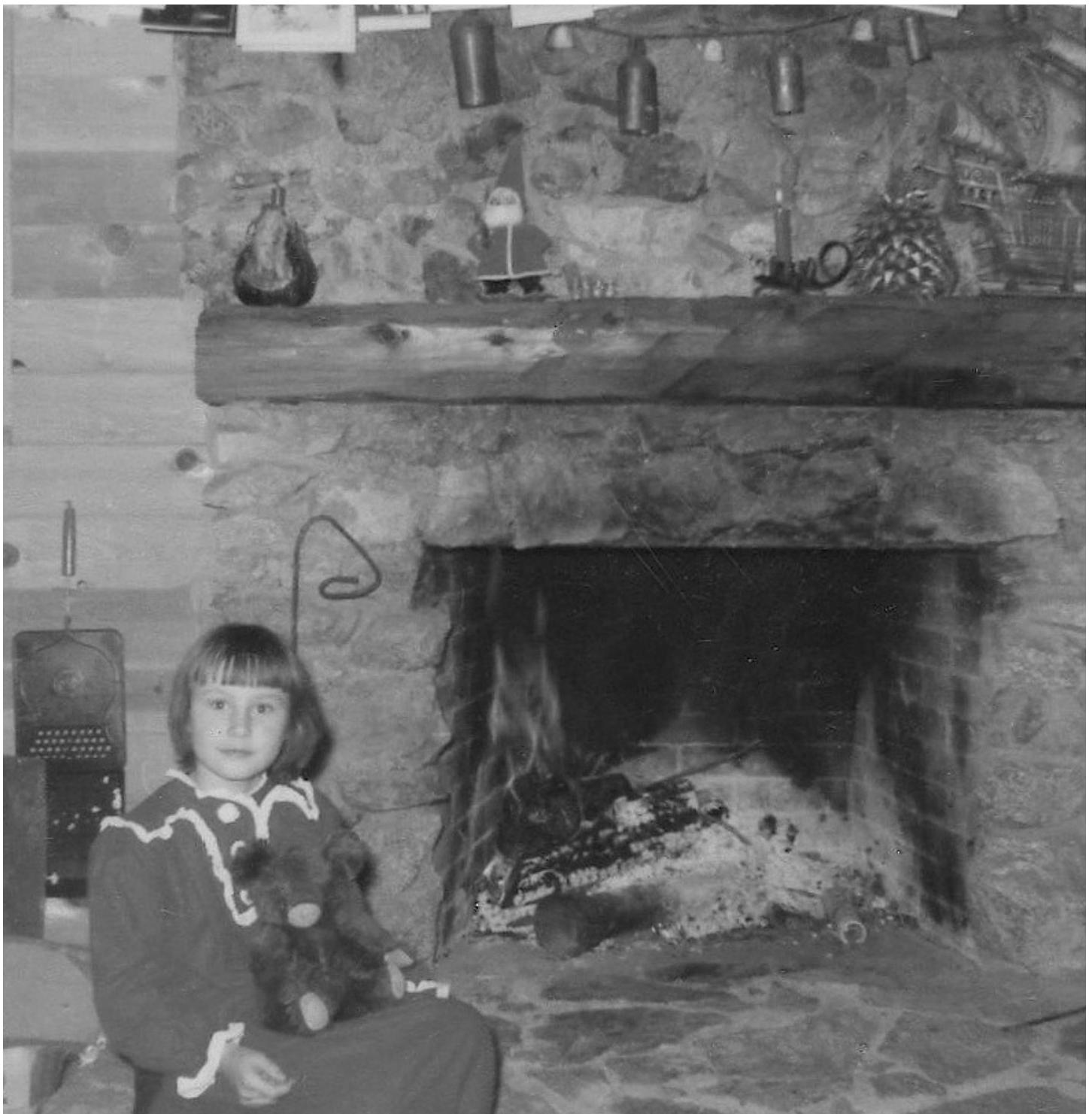
If you were lucky enough to catch one, that was a big day! I got up one morning before anyone else was up and snuck out of the cabin and took my fishing pole over to where the creek ran into the lake. I threw in my line and thought I had snagged it on a log. I pulled and pulled and thought I would break the line. Then all of a sudden the fish started running with it and he jumped really high out of the water. I was so excited and my heart was pounding. I landed the fish, threw down the rod and ran back to our cabin with this huge trout in my hands yelling all the way, "I caught Old Mossback!" My dad ran out on the porch to see what I was yelling about. It was a very exciting day. I didn't realize at the time that there were several Old Mossbacks in the lake.



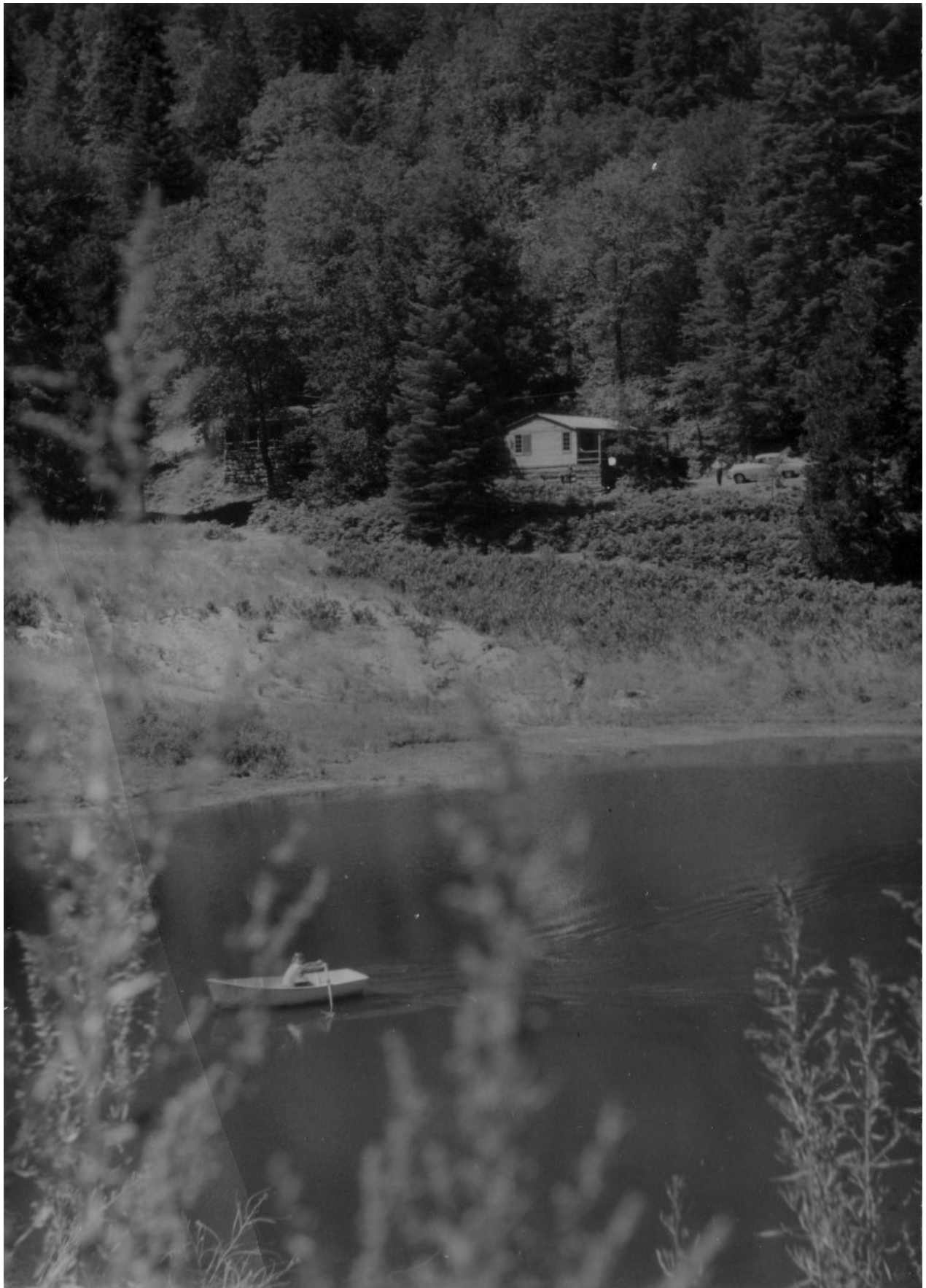
Thanksgiving at the Darbys' Moonwinks cabin. At the table from left: Charles Darby, Martin Darby, Robin Darby, Pam Beach, Jean Darby, Janet Beach, and Julie Beach. Robin
Howell photo



Moonwinks porch. Robin Howell photo



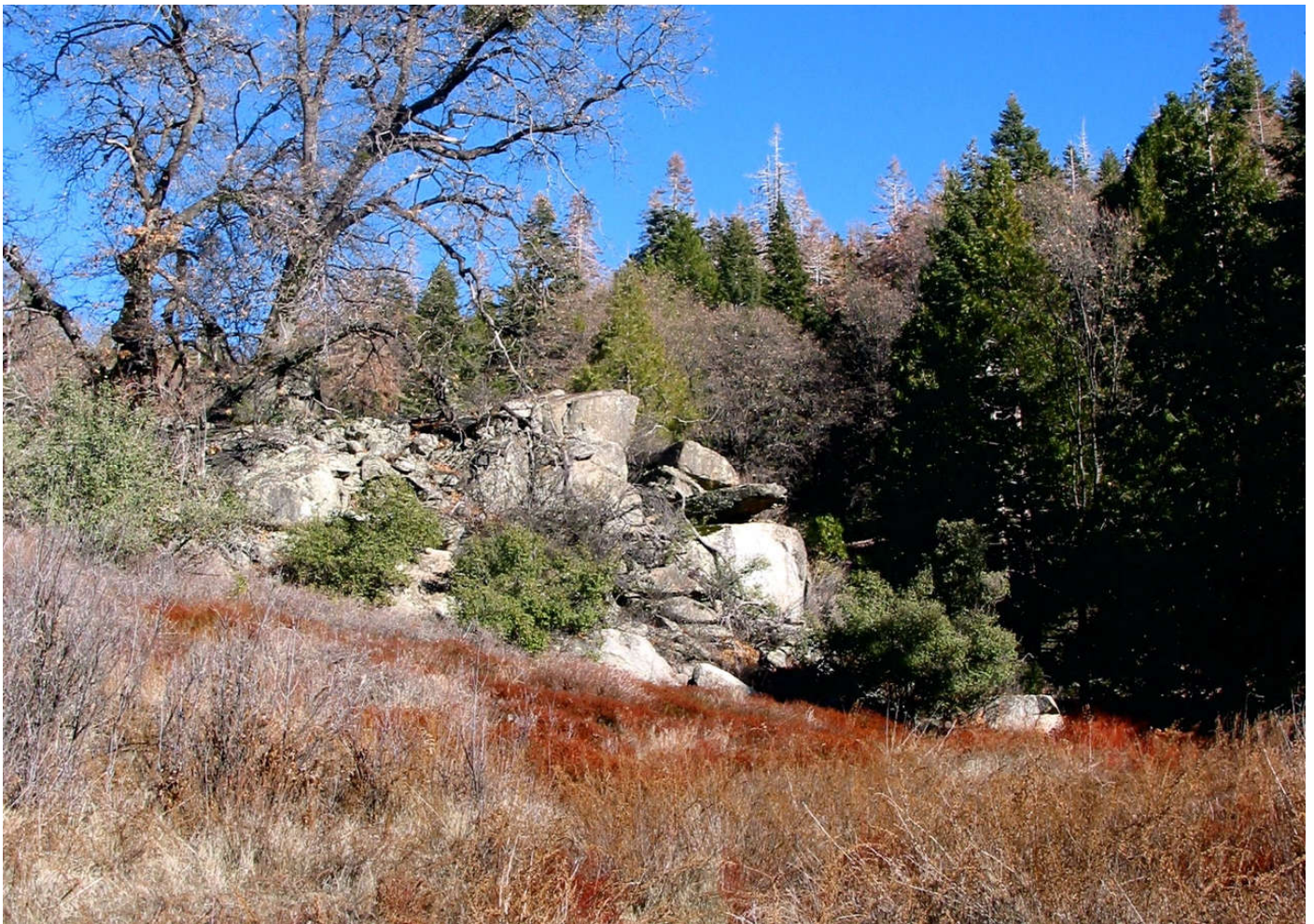
Robin Darby at Moonwinks fireplace. Robin Howell photo



Robin Howell rowing on the Pedley Valley lake, now known as Doctor's Pond. Winky Cabin in background. Marian Beckler photo

My brother and I spent lots of time playing at the lake, swimming, fishing and rowing our boats. With the boats we had races to see who could row to the other side of the lake the fastest. We had splash fights in the summer where we would put the boats end to end and then use the oars to splash each other. We would also turn the boats upside down in the water and try to walk on top of them. The first one to sink into the water lost. It was lots of fun! The area just above where the creek runs into the lake was what we called the "Willow Patch". It had a little waterfall and was all green and mossy like a fairy land. There we used to make forts out of the willows with sides and roofs, and we tied the willow sticks together with willow bark. I lived on one side of the creek and my brother lived on the other side. We made bows and arrows from the willow and played like we were Indians.

Right above this area is what we called "Indian Rock". It is a great pile of granite rock, and it has old Indian mortars in it, which the Indians had used to grind their food.



Robin Howell photo

We used to play a lot up there grinding choke cherries and acorns. One of the larger rocks forms a ledge and we would crawl under it and watch for the "enemy" below. There is a plant that grows at the bottom of the rock pile, and during the Fall, it turns a bright orange/red; I would gather that for our Thanksgiving table. Behind Indian Rock is a patch of Skunk Cabbage and when it was full grown and high in the summer, the deer used to sleep there at night. During the

day my brother and I would play in it. We also used its wide leaves for plates to serve our tasty meals that we had ground in the rock mortars.

Below the dam on the east hill was a large oak grove, and a deer path led to it and ran through it. I thought it was the most beautiful place on earth. The oak trees formed a thick canopy and the sun would filter through in rays. There were some old tree stumps there, and I used to take my dolls there and pretend that the logs were castles. It was my own place to play. I usually took our black Belgium Sheep dog with me, but after a while he would leave and go back to the lake. One day as I was playing I heard voices and so I hid in the tree stumps. It was a group of hunters, and I was so scared! I just lay there quietly until they passed by, then I ran as fast as I could back to the cabin. I don't think I ever went back to play there again.

We used to go on hikes down to the lower Pedley Valley. There was an old apple orchard there, and Mr. Pedley told us that we could help ourselves. So each year at apple season we would go and pick a bag of apples. They were wonderful apples! They were green, small and very crisp with just enough sugar content to make them a little tart. There was also an old abandoned cabin there that Mr. Pedley and his wife and children had lived in at one time. It was fun to explore inside the different rooms. It was very old and falling apart, and so as children we were very intrigued by it. I think that they had a saw mill there at one time - it seems to me that I remember someone saying that.

Following text by Peter Brueggeman:

There was the Striplin-Wihite sawmill in Pedley Valley. The Darby property was sold in 1967 to three doctors, and the pond became known as Doctors Pond. Following are notes from a December 2007 interview of Jean Darby by Peter Brueggeman:

Charles Darby was a home builder in La Jolla. He wanted mountain property that had snowfalls to enjoy as a side interest. He looked at property in Julian and Cuyamaca, and scouted Palomar, contacting the Pedleys about selling some of their land. The Darbys bought the upper 40 acres of Pedley Valley in 1951 or 1952; that area was called Old Bull Pasture. The Darbys thought they might retire there.

Charles Darby and family built four cabins for their Darby's Palomar Mountain Resort. They built the Moonwinks cabin first, in which the Darbys lived. The logs came from Solana Beach Lumber, and were handcut on site. Rocks were gathered on site. They dug their own well, and used kerosene lanterns. Their furniture was covered in Scotch plaid fabric, the Darbys being Scottish descent.

They built a road by hand down to their land from Birch Hill. The Darbys engaged Brewer of Escondido to build the lake, using bulldozers. The road and lake were built a year or two later after Moonwinks cabin.

The Winky cabin was built second, and was a rental cabin. The Dogwood cabin was

built third, to left of Winky, and it burned down shortly after the property was sold. The Twig cabin was built fourth, between Moonwinks and Winky. The Darbys went most weekends and holidays to their property. They left La Jolla after school on Friday, and got the rental cabins ready for visitors, who usually arrived Saturday. They went every weekend even without renters; the property was purchased for their enjoyment and not intended as a business endeavor.

The lake was stocked with bass and bluegill, delivered from the Whitewater hatchery in Palm Springs area. Trout were caught at Doane's Pond and released into their pond.

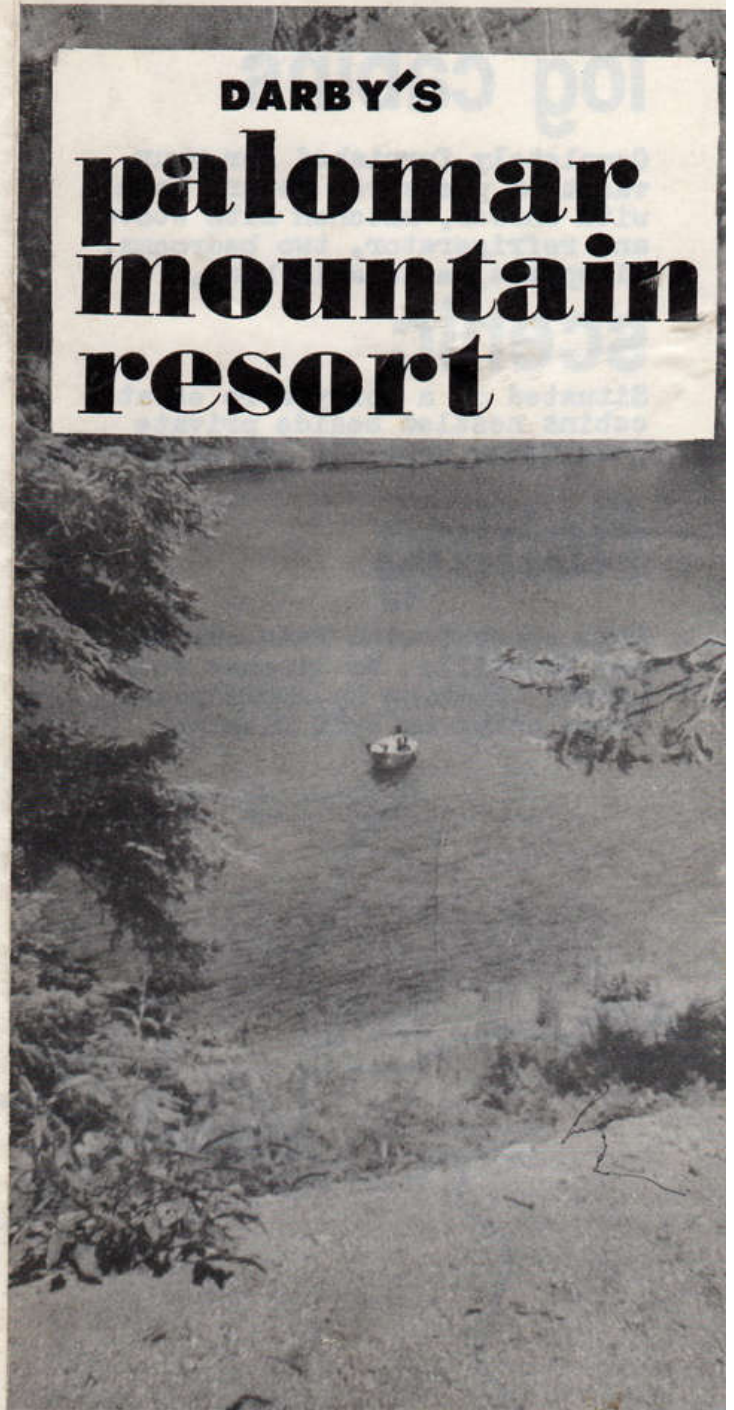
They hiked in the area, including to a crashed plane nearby.

Charles Darby ran a ski operation starting late 1966, on property rented from the Bergmans. He put in ski runs and a rope tow, and produced a brochure. Snow was made and applied. The ski operation opened in what turned out to be a warm winter, and closed the season thereafter.

The Darbys sold the property in 1967 to three doctors from San Diego.

Brochure for Darby's Palomar Mountain Resort

DARBY'S palomar mountain resort



C.H. Darby P.O. Box 477
La Jolla Calif. Glencourt 46433

log cabins

Completely furnished for your vacation pleasure. Modern bath with shower, kitchen with stove and refrigerator, two bedrooms, fireplace, automatic heat.

scenic

Situated on a forty acre estate, cabins nestled beside private lake under huge fir and cedar trees.

fishing

Lake stocked with Bass, Trout, and Bluegill. No license required. Fishing by artificial lures only, no bait fishing.

historic area

Situated just four miles from Palomar Observatory, home of the world's largest telescope.

rates

\$12.00 for four persons per night.

1.50 for each extra person to six.

Weekly rates on request. Check out time is 2 P.M. No pets. RATES INCLUDE: use of rowboat, swimming, fishing. All bedding and linen are furnished.

