

The Lehi Outdoor Swimming Pool

In the days of working on a Lehi City Pool, Lehi City was one of the most struggling cities in Utah County. The tax rate was one of the highest in the County. There was basically very little income from sales tax because the city had very few businesses except for the steady Lehi Main Street Businesses who were the solid base of both citizen and financial support of the community.

American Fork City had constructed their new community pool. Their old pool was still in use. Most Lehi Citizens who wanted swimming lessons would go over to American Fork for them. I remember my mother loading up me and my friends and taking over there for our weekly swimming lesson. The citizens of Lehi were very envious and upset over what American Fork had and Lehi didn't.

Saratoga Resort was still in business. It was a central part of Lehi City Recreation. In those days, the City Recreation was a joint summer venture between Alpine School District and Lehi City. Jim Gray, the Principal of the Old Lehi Jr. High which was located where the Lehi City Public Safety Building is today was the School District's representative. I was the Lehi City Councilmember over the Recreation. Jim Gray, one of the greatest men I have ever met, would drive a shaky old Alpine School District cast off bus to Saratoga three times a week. He would load them up and have a bus full and take them to Saratoga. Saratoga gave the city a break for these students and they would swim all day for a dollar or two. Jim would then load up the bus and go and pick them up.

We would also have summer Walt Disney movies in the Auditorium of the old Lehi Jr. High. The movies were free, but we would have candy and popcorn to sell at the theatre. The place was packed with kids of all ages and you could hardly hear the movie because the noise was so loud. Jim did this service for summer after summer. I was so excited to watch Bedknobs and Broomsticks, because I had never seen it. I was still single, so I didn't have children to bring, but I had a great time, selling popcorn and candy to kids of all ages.

Soon a citizen group rose up to take on the idea of a Lehi City swimming pool. As a city we knew, on our own, we couldn't accomplish a swimming pool. We were working on getting a third of our citizens with sewer and off of their old

decrepit septic tanks. Gil Van Wagoner, Ingrid Hinckley, John Rockwell and others led the team to try to come up with funds for the cause. I remember one of their first efforts was a hypnotist show. I had never been to such a program before. While there wasn't a great crowd, there was a significant crowd from out of town. I ended up on the stage. I really can't remember what went on but I was made fun of for many weeks to come. I have been a lot more careful when I have attended similar shows since then.

It became apparent really fast that if Lehi was to have a pool, there would need some additional sources besides fundraisers. An Outdoor Recreation grant came up and we worked to come up with a plan for an outdoor Swimming Pool. I worked on the project filling out the application for a grant from the State Outdoor Recreation. We asked for everything available for the Swimming Pool. The other cities of the County and other cities all over the State were also going for the same fund. We didn't really have any real hope that we would get the funds.

There were many factions in Lehi who found fault with going after funds for a Swimming Pool. Swimming Pools are costly and they would rather see us go after funds for new ballparks or other recreation facilities. Some of the community were upset that it was only going to be an outdoor pool and wanted to put a tent over the pool similar to what American Fork does in the winter with their pool.

A real miracle took place. Lehi was able to receive every dollar of the Outdoor Recreation funds. No other city in the State received any funds. Lehi City had to hurry and arrange a bond resolution to arrange for the other funds for the project to become a reality.

The Swimming Pool was built on property originally bought with funds to build a new hospital. A hospital was never built, but the property was used for the Swimming Pool.

Joe Shelton was named the Councilmember over getting the Swimming Pool up and running. Kim Cooper, local resident and American Fork Jr. High Coach was hired as the director of the Swimming Pool to run the pool in the summer when he was not teaching school. On Saturday, 07 June 1980 the long awaited Swimming Pool opened to the Public.

After a riot at Saratoga Springs, and thousands of dollars in damages, Saratoga Springs decided to close down. They offered to donate their slides from their pools to the Lehi Outdoor Pool. The slides were remnants of the old Saratoga

resort and it was an immediate hit and addition to the Lehi Pools.

The fencing around the pool was created and installed by the Lehi High School FFA. The Lehi High School students under the direction of Byron Memmott designed and installed the fencing at the pool. The fencing is some beautiful metal work.

Memories flow from the place as I think of the youth parties, and family outings with my seven children. It was a magical part of the summer.

One year, Kim Cooper had been really sick and had not finished the preparation to open the Swimming Pool. Some of us friends of Kim and Laurie came to the pool. All I remember is how much fun we had cleaning toilets, showers, the lockers, lawn furniture and sanitized walls, ceilings and floors. It was a memorable night for all of us and how happy we all were when the swimming pool opened that Memorial Day Weekend.

My mother, Shirley Haws had terminal cancer. One of her wishes before she died was to go down the slides. She rented the pool for a family party where we had the pool to ourselves. My mother was a big woman and all of us children, couldn't imagine her going down that slide. I wish that I had taken pictures of all her children and grandchildren around the landing pool waiting for Shirley to come into view. What a thrill it was when she splashed into that pool. A roar went up among her children and grandchildren. She was brave enough that we had an encore and she did it again. She died a few weeks later.

When the Council had thought of closing down the pool, a sadness came over me as I remembered the journey. How satisfied that wise men and women came up with solutions to have these memories and fun times continue with keeping the pool open and adding new slides, climbing wall and the other fun adventures of the pool.

As I would travel on second south during Main Street closures, it always warmed my heart to see the pools packed and cars way down the street. That pool was built when the City had very little money and great sacrifices had to be made. This City Council have made sure that these sacrifices were not in vain.