

THE
HISTORY
OF
The
Galena Territory

By
Norene Harber

PREFACE

The following series of five articles were written by Norene Harber and are reproduced as they appeared in the "Territory Times", - a publication of the Property Owners of The Galena Territory. These articles relate the history of The Galena Territory from 1970 through early 1982.

Norene is the widow of Lester L. Harber, who was a Vice President of The Branigar Organization, Inc. and the Project Director of The Galena Territory from inception of the project until his death in May 1981.



Les Harber

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The entrance sign as it originally appeared.

HISTORY OF THE GALENA TERRITORY

Many people can remember hearing Les reminisce about the beginning of the Territory, how the property was acquired, and many of the succeeding steps along the way. It has been suggested that a series of articles would be of interest to property owners-especially if you have never heard about how it all began. I'm going to write such a series, using my memory and those still around whom I can question.

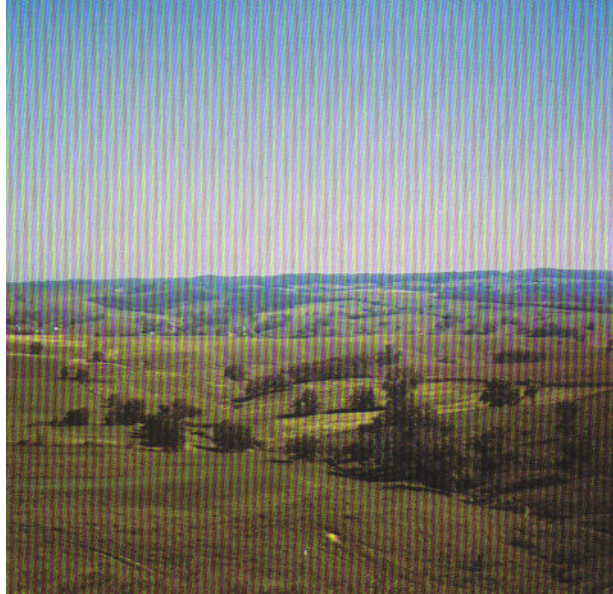
PART 1- THE ACQUISITION

Over the years Branigar had developed several recreational second home projects, learning much from each one. Based on the success of these projects, Branigar began to think of future developments with more amenities. In anticipation of selling the last of their lots at Apple Canyon Lake, they started to look for another possible development. This time it was decided to consider a larger, more complex project with a lake as just one of the amenities.

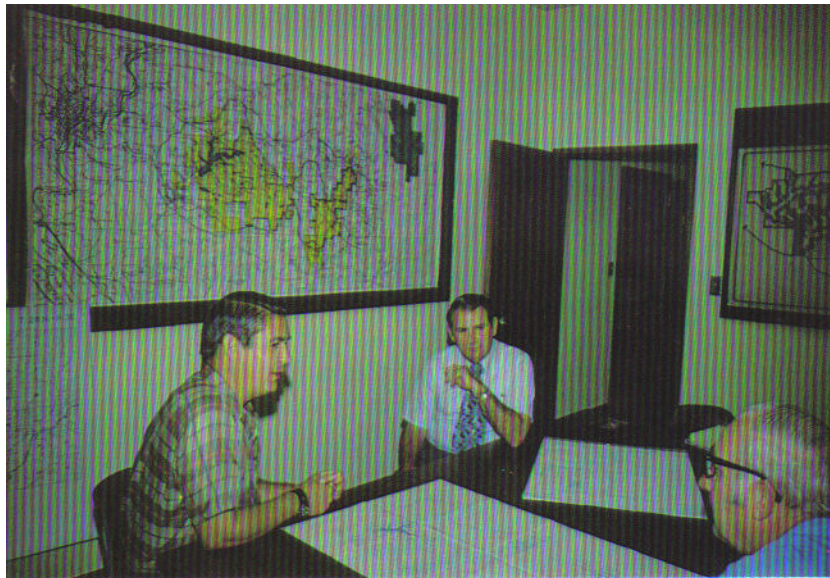
Before proceeding with such a development, certain considerations must be taken into account. The land to be flooded for the lake must be free of any buried oil or gas lines; there must not be any major highways, railroad tracks or cemeteries in the project. In other words, it must be open farm land with few existing roads and those able to be incorporated with the overall plan of development. If a lake is to be part of the plan, then there must be hills with a valley floor and places where the hills come together close enough to create a dam within practical cost considerations. With these criteria in mind, - Branigar began to look about for a possible location for a new project.

A man by the name of Bert Getz owned 4800 acres of land in Jo Daviess County which he used as a cattle operation, part of which was a potential lake site. When approached by Branigar to sell this part, he was willing to sell the whole thing and so began what was known as The Small Pox Creek project; named so because Small Pox Creek is the creek dammed to create the lake. (For those who do not know, Small Pox is the creek you cross on Rt. 20 on the way to Galena just before climbing the last hill into town.)

After deciding to go for a larger project, it had to be determined how much more land should be acquired besides the Bert Getz property. In the first office, upstairs in the First National Bank of Galena, a large map was hung on the wall with a circle encompassing the possible areas to buy. Les was put in charge of the acquisition with three men to help him. Some of you may still remember them. They were Glen Sandberg, Monty Clark and Cliff Bowgren.



At time of acquisition



Glen Sandberg, Les, and Monty Clark (right to left) in the map room also known as the “war room.”

The task of acquiring such a large tract of land is no easy job. It was made up of many farms of various sizes owned by many different people. Some of these people were anxious to sell, some open to persuasion, some not interested, and some openly opposed to the whole idea. The task then is to see if enough land can be acquired to make the project work. The acquisition began in 1970. For such a large and long-lasting project, it was decided an officer of the company was needed on hand at all times, and so in August of 1971 Les and I and our children moved to Galena.

Then began a long process of seemingly unrelated threads to be slowly woven into what is now The Galena Territory.

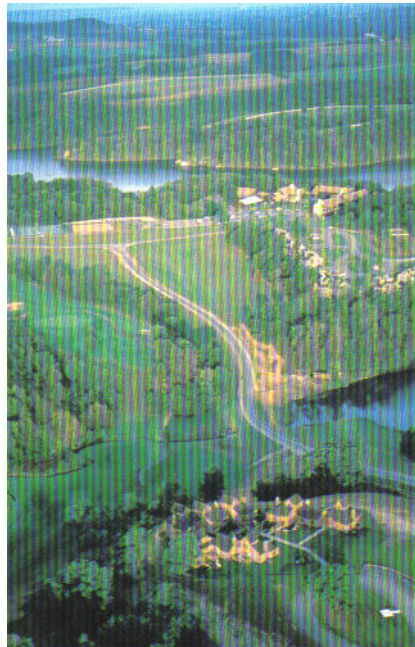
The method used to acquire the land was by option. If a farmer was willing to sell, Branigar was given an option to buy, usually for a year, although some were for two years. When a project of land acquisition like this is started, it is like starting a big clock. All the options must be made and exercised before any run out- or you must be sure that any options coming due can be and are renewed. There were certain key pieces that had to be acquired or the whole project would be abandoned. This does happen on occasion. In the past, Branigar has backed away from projects because of difficulties encountered. One such case was in Ogle County, Illinois, where a key piece could not be acquired; another was in Pennsylvania when coal rights could not be resolved. The timing on such an endeavor obviously becomes vital. Hours and hours were spent convincing farmers to sell their land. The area to buy shrank as some farmers made clear they would not sell- others took months to decide. During this time a close watch had to be kept on all the various contracts to keep all options up to date. It is a juggling act that must be done while a myriad of other angles are pursued.

Meanwhile, other things had to be happening. Having decided to have a larger, more complex project, the company wanted not only a mix of amenities- horses, golf, tennis, water- but also a mix of housing- single family, multi-unit, or cluster housing, townhouses, as well as a resort core. This was all part of the “master plan of development” and was accepted as such by the governmental bodies early in the project’s development.

Sasaki Associates of Watertown, Mass. was consulted and contributed to the overall ideas to be developed. A land planning company of St. Charles, Illinois, - Selig, Stevenson, Peterson and Flock, did the detailed planning of the development. Many concepts were considered and later eliminated as not workable for various reasons- such things as a downhill ski hill, mini farms, etc.



Hours were spent convincing local farmers to sell their land as Monty Clark is doing here.



The results of master planning as shown here with the Farmsteads and Townhouses.

The governmental approvals were also on-going during this period and equally vital to the eventual success of the project. The county board, the planning board, the health department, the township governments- all had to be convinced that this “big city developer” was trustworthy and should be cooperated with. Probably the most important job Les had to accomplish was to show he represented a responsible and reputable firm with good intentions. There was a segment of Jo Daviess County of openly negative opinion. It might be difficult to realize today with everything built, and the obvious advantages clear, to picture the time when the local residents had misgivings of such a thing coming into their home area. They liked their quiet, peaceful county and weren’t sure they wanted it to change. There was a strong vocal group openly opposed to the whole idea.

So, while the land acquisition continued, Les had to work closely with all the various governmental bodies to reassure them of Branigar’s plans, seek out their approvals of preliminary plans, and quietly work to get the concept accepted.

There are many stories about how the farms were acquired. Les made many different deals, tailored to individual needs of the people with whom he dealt. Some were made as straight sales, some as trades (their farm traded for another somewhere outside the area being bought), and some with a life estate clause. One of these was the Richards’ farm. Many of you are aware of the old farm house on Guilford Road and Susquehanna Drive near the entrances of Thunder Bay 2 and 3, that is, the Richards’ farmhouse. Les spent many, many hours visiting Mrs. Richards before she finally agreed to sell with a life estate clause- that is the farm land was transferred to Branigar but the house, buildings, and three acres were hers on which to live until her death, and then they too reverted to Branigar. Mrs. Richards, well into her 80’s, continued to live in her old-fashioned farm house until recently when, I heard, she had entered a nursing home.

The ultimate amount of land acquired was 8,500 acres in two parcels, separated by a small tract of land. The final decision was made to use the west 6,500 acres to develop the project and the 2,000 acre “east tract” sold off in large parcels (mainly 220 acres, etc. with a few exceptions) and was never part of The Territory. The 6,500 acres became the present 6,800 acres when a 300 acre farm adjacent to the Territory was acquired in 1975. It is the parcel of land just behind and to the east of the Information Center. My home stands on part of it.

So, three years later the project was ready to begin. The first deposits on lots were taken in late fall on 1973. The site chosen for the entrance was the only property touching Route 20, and then for just a few hundred feet. It was a very important acquisition allowing the entrance to be on Route 20. Originally, a small, old farm house stood on this location. It was torn down and on the site of the present Information Center was a trailer that was used for the first sales office. That trailer has been moved about since and used for many purposes. It is now located at the golf course maintenance building area still being used as offices for the Security Department and the construction crew.



One of the country lanes before road construction began.



Mrs. Richard's farmhouse.

The first amenity to be built was the stables. The reason being because its location was on an exiting road so it could be started without waiting for road construction. The Information Center was next, followed by The Territory Club, the marina, the golf course, the Pro Shop and lastly, The Inn.

While all the land was optioned, none was bought until all were optioned- then the options had to be exercised before the timing on them ran out. I remember clearly the cliff hanging feeling as the last piece was finally acquired; it was a vital, key piece at the bottom of the lake without which there would be no lake, and possibly no project. It was a quiet celebration (or, should I say: “it was quite a celebration?”) at our house since it was an accomplishment on which Les had worked very hard and of which he felt justly proud. In all, he and his acquisition staff acquired 22 farms to form what is now, “The Galena Territory.”

PART II- THE BEGINNING

As the acquisition continued, the land plan was further refined. You have all seen the “topo” map at the Information Center. That has been there from the beginning and shows how the overall concept was developed before any construction was started.

How did the project get the name, “The Galena Territory?” The company realized the project must have a name. It could not be called the Small Pox Creek project in promotions- can you imagine the logo? In late 1972, it was decided to have an employee contest to name the project.

Four winners were picked. The names and winners were; Branigar High Country- Ted Johnson; Homestead- Jack Alterman; The Greenings of Galena- Stu Knapp and Valleys of Galena- Jim Hall.

Obviously none of those were the one finally chosen. The advertising agency, Campbell-Mithun, Inc. tested several names in a consumer research survey done in shopping centers- 81 men and 79 women were tested. The names they tested were: Charter Oaks, High Country, The Galena Territory, Blackhawk Country, and Powderhorn Valley. The Galena Territory was chosen with the logo of the sun setting below the hills. Looking back, I think everyone agrees it was a perfect choice.

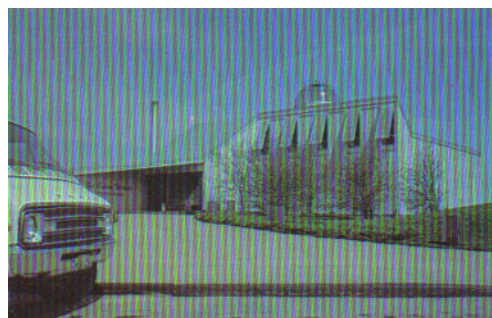
The Information Center was started in the spring of 1973 and completed in early 1974. The design, resembling a farm building with a silo was intended to blend into the surrounding countryside. The silo is an observation tower with steps leading to the top; the dome is made of tinted glass. The views from there are tremendous-Iowa, Wisconsin, as well as Illinois- they can all be clearly seen. If you have never climbed to the top, you should. The Information Center was intended as a place for customers to learn about the project and begin a tour. It has developed into truly an Information Center and not only a sales center.



The Shenandoah Riding Center



Les pointing out to a visitor the highlights of the Territory
as shown on the “topo” map in the Information Center.
The “topo” was donated by Branigar to the Galena
Territory Volunteer Fire Department.



The Information Center.

The riding center was built next, started in January 1974 and completed during that year. It was built early because it was planned to be on an existing road, so it did not have to wait for roads to be constructed. It is a beautiful facility with both an indoor and outdoor arena, as well as many stalls for horses. It is one of the finest stables in the area and over the years has contributed greatly to the success of the Territory and the pleasure of the property owners.

The property owner's complex was started in mid-1974 with completion in early 1975, making the facilities available to the very early property owners. The buildings are on property formerly owned by Bert Getz. Some foundations of old farm buildings stood on the site chosen for the complex. The decision was made to use the existing foundations. While no one denies they are very interesting and add tremendously to the appearances of the lounge and administration buildings, using the foundations proved more costly than if they had been torn down and foundations started from scratch. The old foundations had to be completely reinforced before any building could be started. The unusual pink coloring was caused by fire. The original farm buildings were burned down and the chemical reaction on the stone caused the pink color to appear.

An anecdote in connection with the early days of The Territory Club comes to mind. The first Thanksgiving the Owner's Club was used, Les and I attended the gathering. I remember how black it was without lights. We had to feel our way from the parking lot to the gym. That same night, on the way to the party, Len and Ruth Solomon, in the blackness, with no signs on the roads and unfamiliar with the area, came down the hill near the "Ridge Toppers." Instead of turning right to go to the Owner's Club, they continued straight ahead. This was no road at all. It is now the road that leads to the Inn, but at that time it was just a farmer's lane. They followed this lane, which led them to the bottom of the hill, where the 11th fairway of the golf course now is, and out into the lake bottom where they became mired down in mud. Not being able to see, or knowing where they were, they spent the night in the car. Modern day pioneers!

The way a project of this size is developed is in small parcels or units. The whole development is not done at once- roads, water and surveying of lots are done in small amounts. Done in small parcels, it becomes manageable both financially and physically.

Once the county board has accepted the over-all master plan of development, each unit is more easily accepted, but still each unit must have approval of the planning board, the county board and HUD in Washington, D.C. HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) approval is required for any large scale land development.



The Association office in Spring with the redbuds in bloom.



The Lounge- a place to relax for the members.



Members enjoy the pool.

To illustrate the amount of advance planning needed to develop a project of this size, six months or more are needed to make soil tests, surveys, and land planning plus another six months are needed to get all the governmental approvals. So a year lead-time must be taken into consideration before property is ready for sale. In the case of major buildings, six months to a year lead-time is needed to cover planning, architectural design and contracting. So, much of Les' time was spent getting all these approvals well in advance so that once selling was started, a steady stream of property was available.

Since much of the property is on septic systems, Branigar had to have approval by the County Board of Health as all new subdivisions must meet soil test requirements. All the property must be surveyed and the various units determined, both the lot itself and the greenways. Speaking of greenways- did you know that the platted subdivisions to date, 21% of the acreage is in greenway? This is in addition to the open space of the lake and the golf course.

As all this was going on, the roads too were being constructed. Many of you have seen the 6'8" giant striding about whenever new roads are being built. That is Dave Stortz, who with his crew and heavy equipment has quietly been doing the tremendous job of getting an ultimate 60 miles of road built. The roads are built to county specifications, so they eventually become township roads, and, as such, are maintained by the township. The roads are periodically accepted by the township officials after being inspected and meeting their standards. Until that time, they are maintained by Branigar.

The entire project is served by a central water system. There are about 60 miles of water mains, as well as a like amount of electric and telephone lines, all buried to add to the untouched country look. A central sewer system was added in 1980, this serves the Inn, Golf Course, Town Houses, Aspens and other housing located near the Inn.

By 1975 the Information Center, the stables and the Property Owner's Complex were completed. So, with a name, essential buildings, roads and 497 property owners, a community development had begun.



The beginning of a road building project. Surveying was a necessary early step in the Development, as Monty Clark is doing here.



Ditching a new road.

PART III- THE LAKE

Construction began on the lake in 1974. Creating a man-made lake takes a lot of planning. As I reported in the first article, there must not be any buried gas or oil lines, cemeteries, major highways, railroads, and of course ownership of all the land to be flooded is essential. Also, the plans for the dam must be approved by the State of Illinois. One of Les' high priorities at this time was to get the dam permit from the State of Illinois. This permit was issued by the Department of Transportation on October 30, 1972.

Bauer Engineering designed the dam, and Harza Engineering was used as a consultant. The dam and spill way were designed to withstand a 1,000 year flood. This means that the spillway is designed so that the amount of water from a flood that statistically would occur only once in 1,000 years, would still be safely carried over the spillway and not over the top of the dam.

The dam was built between two existing hills. The selection of the dam site is where two hills are close enough together to bridge with a dam, and hold the water in the valley. In the case of Lake Galena, the hills are 1,100 feet apart. Part of the design includes a spillway. This was blasted off the existing hill, leaving part of the hill as the abutment that is used to attach the dam. If you can visualize that dam from the water side as you face it- from the left there is a hill, the dam, a hill and then the spillway, which was created by blasting the hill on the right. A small portion of the hill remains, to attach the dam, then the spillway- the sheer wall on the right shows the result of the blasting. The spillway is 200 feet wide and 600 feet in length.

A concrete wall, about five feet high, was built across the opening about midway in the 600 foot length, leaving some 340 feet before a sharp drop of 40 feet. This is the waterfall. When the lake reaches its designed level, excess water goes over the concrete wall, trickles some 340 feet through the back half of the spillway- now grown over with vegetation- and falls over the drop. The channel it falls into was created during construction. It carries the water across the valley floor behind the dam to join Small Pox Creek, and continues on its way to the Mississippi River.

A little humanistic touch occurred in connection with the construction of the concrete part of the spillway. Kramer Brothers, Inc. did that part of the construction. When the concrete was poured, but not set, one of the workers carved into the wet concrete, in large letters (maybe three feet high) the initials KBI- standing for Kramer Brothers, Inc. Perhaps you have noticed them and wondered what they stood for. They are on the upright concrete wall against the hill on the dam side. No one quite knows why the worker did this- certainly he wasn't instructed to do so. I think he thought it could be smoothed back out. Unfortunately, it was set, and could not be removed. Furthermore, later attempts to cover them up with more concrete were not successful. Needless to say, certainly not Les, nor I suspect, his employers were too pleased. But there for posterity stand those initials.



Smallpox Creek at dam site before construction.
Note in background, hillside preparation for dam construction.



The spillway soon after the lake filled.



The spillway showing newly constructed channel which
carries water back to the original stream.

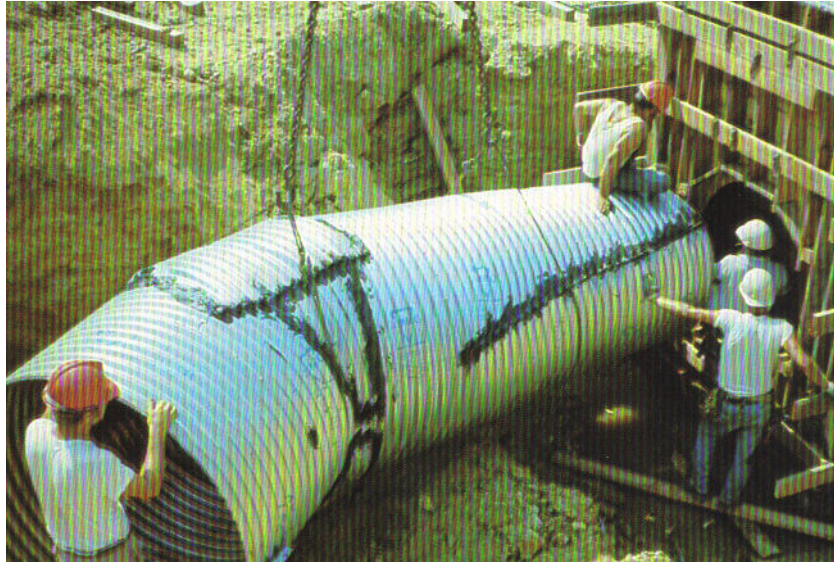
Once the land is acquired, and the dam permit issued by the state, many forms of construction begin and continue at the same time. When the dam is designed, the exact level the lake will reach is determined. Dave Stortz and his construction crew's responsibilities were to clear the lake bottom. Stakes were put in all around the hill sides indicating the level the water would reach. Everything up to that point had to be removed. This included one major set of farm buildings, (barns and a farmhouse). There were two iron and concrete bridges, and of course, trees, bushes and vegetation. You might think, if it is to be flooded and all these things covered with many feet of water, why bother to remove them? The answer to that is- in time the water would rot these things and they would pop up to the surface, not only creating very obvious hazards- but what a mess!! While clearing the lake, any wells must be sealed. If they were not, they could cause a reverse action, and cause the water to siphon out of the lake, and surface who knows where.

Ryan Construction Company of Janesville, Wisconsin had the contract to build the dam. While the clearing was going on, the construction of the dam started. This began in June 1974. The area for the spillway was blasted and cleared of resulting stone.

In order to build the dam, the ground is dug down to bed rock, and then a key is blasted into the bed rock. The sides of the hills are also taken down to rock. A "key" is a slot blasted into the bed rock, to be able to further anchor the dam. When building a dam, the material to be used is called "spoil material," which is just a name for solid clay. The location of this material is very important. The farther away it is found, the more expensive it would become. In this instance, it was found just one-fourth of a mile away. The clay is used to make the core of the dam. It is layered in- starting with the key. Each layer is compacted with large machines. The eventual compaction is greater than the original ground.

At the same time as the core is being layered up, rock is being layered along side it on each side. The rock used for this is the rock that was blasted when the spillway was created. In all, 180,000 cubic yards of rock were used and 353,000 cubic yards of clay.

As the dam was built a tube about four feet in diameter was put in under the dam at about where the original stream bed had been. This tube is controlled with a valve which when opened allows water to go under the dam and on the downstream. The original Small Pox Creek ran more or less along the hillside on the golf course side of the lake. The dam is 280 feet across at its base and slopes up to about 10 feet across the top. The water at the dam is about 50 feet deep.



View of the tube under dam as it is being put in place.



Les inspecting control valve structure.

When the clay and rock have been layered up to complete the dam, grout is added. Grout is a liquid mixture of cement and sand. The dam has been built between two abutment- hills- the grout now helps tie the dam and the hills together. Holes are drilled in the tip of the dam, and then the liquid mixture pumped in under pressure until the hole fills up. Under pressure this solution finds and fills all the cracks and crevices, sometimes as much as a quarter of a mile away. The holes were made 10 feet apart all across the dam. Additional holes were drilled closer together in any spot that seemed to be taking large amounts of this mixture, to make sure all the cracks and crevices are filled. When the grouting is completed, a curtain of concrete all across the inside of the dam has been created, and also into the hill sides on either side, adding strength to the dam. The amount and cost of grouting can never be completely anticipated, because no one knows how many places will be needed to be filled. In this case, in excess of 65,000 cubic feet of grout was used.

To me, one of the more interesting points to the building of the dam is the rip rap. What is rip rap? It is the carefully placed rock on the water side of the dam, put there to prevent erosion by water action. These rocks extend about 10 feet below the water level. When you saw these rocks, did you realize each one was carefully placed there for a very specific reason?

Watching the dam being built was a fascinating thing to do. I can remember several times that summer, Les and I would drive up the hill, walk out to the edge and stand on the hill above the spillway. We looked down on all the huge earth moving equipment, hauling dirt and rock, and almost looking like toys from our vantage point. I'm not sure my sons shared my fascination; both of them worked as college and high school students on Dave's crew that summer. They were busy with the tiring work of chain sawing trees and brush on all those hill sides, feverishly working to clear the area before the flooding would begin.

Not only are the engineers able to determine the exact level the lake will reach, they also can estimate how long it will take to fill. In the case of Lake Galena, they judged it would take 18 months. It took just seven weeks. What happened was an unusual set of circumstances. The winter of 1974-75 there was a lot of snow. In March there was a thaw while the ground was still frozen, the water had nowhere to go but into the lake. Then there was a lot of rain within several weeks, and the next thing we knew the lake had filled to within two to three feet of its potential level! This created unexpected problems. There was still clearing to complete. Dave Stortz recalls how his men were working with bulldozers getting out a steel and concrete bridge as the water rose. Utility poles were also caught in the water. I remember seeing the poles in several feet of water while taking a boat ride on the lake. Jo Carroll Electric removed the poles after the water had begun to fill the lake- this was in the area near the north beach.



Earth moving equipment looking like toys as they construct dam from our vantage point on the bluff above the spillway.



Another view of dam construction.

There were two township roads that had to be vacated because of the dam. A process called vacating a road must be gone through anytime a dedicated road is removed from public use. This is done by the County Board. Mt. Hope Road went under the dam and up the hillside just beyond the dam on the water side. Mt. Hope is the road that goes to Route 20 from behind the dam. The other road affected was Wachter Road. This road used to come down the hill by the 11th fairway- into what is now the lake across Small Pox Creek (one of the bridges torn down while the lake was filling) continue across the valley, go along the hillside by the farm buildings, also torn down, turn down the finger of the lake where the north beach now is. In fact, the road leading to this beach from Guilford Road is all that remains of that portion of the road. The farm flooded at this point was last owned by a family by the name of Pooley, and was the only home site actually covered by the water.

Lake Galena is kept filled with run-off water and springs. The excess continues downstream both by the spillway and the tube under the dam. So, the actual water downstream is never cut off. Actually the lake is a form of reservoir. It drains a huge watershed area of 65,000 acres. There should not be any difficulty in keeping the lake full of water even in the driest times. It's final size is 225 acres.

Once the lake held water, potential property owners were given a pontoon boat ride to view the lake, but they didn't board the boats at the present marina-boat dock area. In that first summer, you drove down Wachter Road, which was more of a lane than a road, to the bottom of a hill where the 11th fairway is now located. Of course, this was before the golf course or the Inn were built so the road stopped at the water's edge. At any rate that first summer the boat docking area was rough and primitive at best, a far cry from the facilities we now enjoy. The marina was built at the same time. The north beach needed additional work, and it was not completed until later.

When investigating how Lake Galena got its name, it turned out to be very simple. Bob Farr, a vice president of Branigar who worked closely with Les over the years, told me what happened. The ad agency submitted some twenty-four names and ideas. These were narrowed down to Longbow Wilderness and Territory. Les, Bob and Jack Alterman, another Branigar employee, sat discussing the various possibilities when it occurred to them that they were making a hard job out of an easy one. They decided rather than add another name to the list of places at the Galena Territory, why not just the simple words "Lake Galena." Sometimes the obvious is best.

During the summer of 1976 the lake was stocked with fish. There has always been fish in Small Pox Creek, of course, and these were in the lake, but in addition 800 pounds of brown and rainbow trout, 500 large mouth bass, 4,000 blue gills, 2,100 channel cats, 2,000 perch, 50,000 northern pike and 50,000 walleyes were added. Since it is primarily a fishing lake, this certainly prepared the way for the plentiful supply of fish the lake now has.



A view of Mt. Hope Road as the dam is being constructed over it.



Les standing on completed dam viewing rip-rap.

Several unique things were made a part of Lake Galena. First of all, most of the shore line was designated greenway. This meant there would never be any waterfront lots, which are usual on most lakes. The shore line is to remain in its natural state for all to enjoy with just the two beaches and the one boat launch at the marina. Also, the boat use was limited to 10 horsepower motors, thus excluding speed boating and water skiing. This makes for a quieter lake and allows sailing, canoeing, and fishing to be enjoyed without large motors causing waves. Exceptions to the horsepower limit can include Branigar sales, lake security and the State Conservation Department.

With the completion of the lake, and important amenity became a permanent part of The Galena Territory community.

PART IV- THE GOLF COURSE

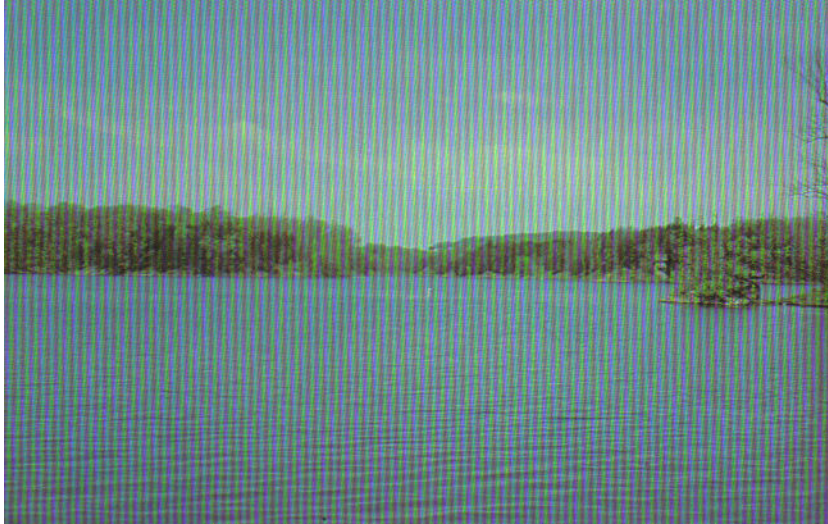
“The building of Eagle Ridge Golf Course has been something very special and personal for me.” The above is a quote from Les that was printed in a golfing magazine, and I think it expresses very well how he felt. All of the Territory was an interesting and challenging job, but the building of the golf course was a joy.

The original clearing of the golf course began in October, 1975. The clearing was done by Branigar. Once again Dave Stortz, along with Bob Graunke, worked until Christmas that year clearing timber, doing rough grading and laying one mile of culverts for drainage. The work covered all 18 holes of the golf course.

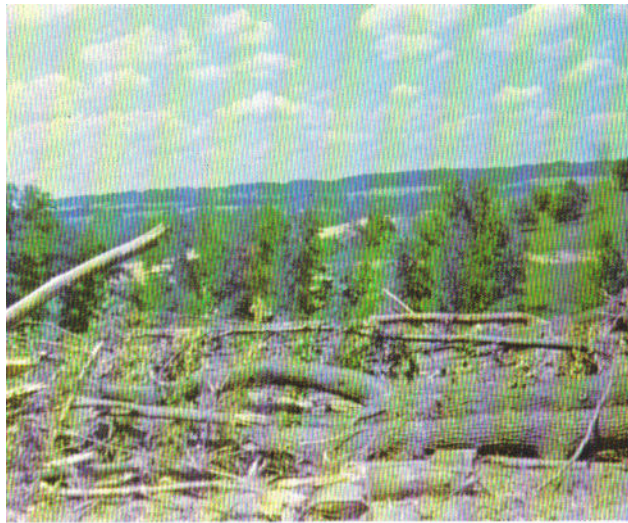
The golf course was designed by Roger Packard of Packard, Inc., a well-known father-son golf course architectural firm. Among other courses, they designed Innisbrook of Tarpon Springs, Florida, Prestwick, Sweetwater in Houston, Texas, which will be the future home of the Ladies P.G.A.

Brent Wadsworth of Wadsworth, Inc. was the general contractor. He is considered tops in the field of golf course construction and has built several courses for Branigar. During the rough grading, the men worked from preliminary plans. Brent Wadsworth and the Packards supervised the work to make sure it proceeded correctly. Les, of course, was in daily contact with the work.

Les, too, was well qualified for this work. Not only was he a lifelong golfer who knew and loved the game, he had worked much of his life in and around golf courses. Les was a caddy and a ground maintenance worker during his school year and ultimately managed golf courses- including 12 years at Mohawk Country Club in Bensenville. He was also in charge of construction for Branigar of the 36 holes of Indian Lake Golf Club in Bloomingdale. There was plenty of talent available to oversee Eagle Ridge's construction.



Scenic lake view.



Golf course fairway in the midst of clearing.

In May of 1976, Wadsworth moved in with his equipment. The first thing to be accomplished was the laying of the irrigation pipe, beginning on the 11th fairway. At the same time, Dave and his men continued the rough grading. As with the building of the lake, many things continued at the same time. Some of this was not as easy as you might imagine, because none of the roads that exist now were there so traveling about was a bit difficult. Dave's crew also were busy building roads at the same time.

At the time Eagle Ridge was built, the irrigation system was the latest, most sophisticated available. As in everything this electronic age, today there are even more refined systems available, and Eagle Ridge has added many new features.

Eagle Ridge's irrigation system involves two pump houses. One is at the 11th fairway and the lake; you've all seen that little building there. The other is behind the 16th green. This one contains a 14,000 gallon reservoir. Dave and his crew built the first pump house and Kramer Brothers built the one containing the reservoir.

All tees, fairways and greens are watered. This sprinkling system is completely automatic and is operated from the maintenance building. There is a master control panel in Bob Graunke's office that enables the sprinklers to be turned on all over the course at whatever combination is desired. There are also satellite controls on the course to allow individual irrigation programming.

As the construction of the golf course proceeded that summer by Wadsworth, under the direction of Bob Massey as superintendent, Bob Graunke, who worked directly for Les, had a small crew to accomplish detail work. Bob's group did things like rake sand in traps, use small machines to shape and edge around traps and dozens of other small, necessary jobs. One of the things they did was walk in a line down the fairways picking up sticks, twigs, rocks that the big machines turned up. Then the machines would go in and plow up the ground again, unearthing more sticks and stones and the line would form again to once more pick up rocks, stones, sticks, etc. Larry and Brad (my student sons) once again worked that summer and were part of Bob's crew. As you can imagine, bending over and picking up rocks and sticks was not their favorite past-time. They would come home complaining that their job for the day had been "stick up picks," their way of expressing their feelings about picking up sticks, stones, etc. To this day if you ask them about the building of the golf course, they rather disgustedly mention "stick up picks." Somehow their father's joy was not reflected in them.

Les had a passion about trees. He hated to lose any not absolutely essential to the design. All the trees were tagged with ribbons so there was no doubt which trees were to remain. Those to remain were carefully hand pruned. As a result of all this care, a minimum of trees were lost.



Irrigation pipe being installed on 7th fairway.



Golf construction around sand trap.

Meanwhile, Dave's crew was busy spreading black dirt over the graded and shaped golf course. Wadsworth's men then did the final grading and the seeding. The seeding was done in September 1976. It was dormant seeding- the seed not intended to sprout and grow until spring.

For those who do not know, greens are the heart and soul of a golf course. How good the greens are is important to how good the golf course is, which in turn affects the golf game. (How good his golf game is- is very important to a golfer!!) Greens are very sensitive to disease and require constant care and watching. Understandably, then the method of construction on the green is vital. Wadsworth did the greens.

Controlled watering is essential to proper greens management. Irrigation pipe and drainage tile are apart of the greens construction. Eagle Ridge's greens are pure sand. In fact they were the first in the area so constructed. Also, greens are usually grown either from bent plugs or actually sodden with bent grass. These greens were grown from Pencross bent seed, which has proved to be a very successful way of making greens. Constant watching and checking of the process of the golf course was necessary, and every Monday morning Les along with Brent Wadsworth, one of the Packards, Bob Farr, and Bob Graunke walked the golf course. This group was soon dubbed "the camel committee" because as they walked about, they constantly made gestures- frequently large sweeping motions in the shape of mounds. This looked like they were describing a camel's hump, so someone called them "the camel committee" and the name stuck.

As the work on the course progressed, Les and others of "the camel committee" would carry golf clubs and balls with them on their weekly walk. They would test out how a hole played, by actually playing it- or how a green worked by hitting balls to it, and adjustments could be made depending on what they found.

On one occasion, Les wondered about the location of the ladies tees on a couple of holes. So he corralled a friend of mine and me. We went bouncing out to the 14th tee (remember there were no roads and only rough grading on the golf course). She and I teed up our balls where they were planning a ladies tee to see if an average lady golfer could hit a ball across the little creek and safely onto the fairway. The other hole we tested was the 8th. If you play the course, you know there are 2 ladies' tee locations, one up high where the men's tee is and the other down at the bottom of the cart path. The lower one is where it was originally designed to be, but Les wanted to see if ladies could hit it from up high, where he felt it would be more interesting. So, my friend and I hit balls from several spots until he was satisfied where the ladies tee should be located. To this day, I enjoy playing that hole from the high tee, and am proud I had a part in its being there.



Construction of 8th green; equipment in foreground placing rocks around the lake edge. Note: Distinctive rock outcropping now in the middle of the sand trap.



Finished 8th green as seen from the tee.

Luck always plays a part where weather is an important factor. That year was the year of the drought. Day after day of sunny dry weather occurred, enabling the men to work sun-up to sun-down. Not only was that important in the obvious way- that of no time loss, but more important there were no heavy rains to wash out the loose and freshly cultivated ground. In designing a golf course the natural terrain is modified to create the right pitch, shape and direction for each hole. Rain, especially heavy rain, could undo all the work, and in some cases cause deep crevices that often can never be repaired. But in those years of 1976 and 1977 there was very little rain. Not good for everybody, but a blessing to the construction of Eagle Ridge.

In the spring of 1977 the master control panel was put into use, carefully controlling the watering of the tees, fairways and greens and coaxing along the growth without disturbing the contours of the course. The only thing that needed natural watering was the rough, and that year there were perfect spring rains to keep that growing. I can remember Les saying- now we need a little rain to water the rough and sure enough a little rain would fall- but never a gully washer to cause the deep ruts that would result in serious damage.

Growing grass as we all know has an inevitable progression- it must be cut! A new golf course requires a lot of equipment. Branigar bought all new Toro equipment. At the time, it was the largest single order Toro had ever received. Believe me- it was an impressive sight to see all the bright and shiny red equipment waiting to go to work.

The Clubhouse was built during the winter of 1976-77. The front nine was ready for play on Memorial Day weekend 1977. I can remember that since the Clubhouse was not completed, tables were set up outside- near the first tee where green fees were collected and score cards and pencils were made available.

The Grand Opening was held on the 4th of July, 1977. Les spent much time planning the affair, and I think the results were well worth it. First of all, four well-known pros agreed to come help open the golf course- Bob Goalby, Lou Graham, Jay Haas and Miller Barber. A group of friends and dignitaries both from near and far were invited to play golf that day. The pro's rotated playing with them, so that everyone had a chance to play with one of them. Also the pros gave a free clinic for all who wanted to come.

Harvey Branigar, Jim Reed, Rich Burke, Brent Wadsworth, Roger and Larry Packard all were there, as well as other political and business dignitaries. Ray Libner, as president of the Board of Directors, represented the Property Owners. The day was marvelous, but the temperature reached over 100 degrees. Les was Master of Ceremonies and presided over the opening day proceedings.



Seeding process included blowing seed and straw onto fairway.



Some of new Toro equipment being delivered.

After several speeches, it was time to play golf. Les hoped to get Harvey Branigar or Jim Reed to hit the official first ball. But between them, they insisted Les should be the one. Well! Was that one of those beautiful drives Les was capable of? You guessed it; I have a picture of him as he hit the first ball. He followed the flight of the ball by looking straight up in the air. It landed a few yards in front of him. But still, he had the honor of starting off the first official game, and I think a very fitting climax for the person who invested so much of himself in its construction.

An interesting bit of excitement was added to that day. It was decided to award a \$500 savings bond for the first eagle, and for the first hole-in-one at Eagle Ridge. At the Grand Opening, Bob Goalby chipped in from a sand trap on the second hole for an Eagle- then, not to be outdone, Lou Graham had a hole-in-one on the eighth hole. Due to my daughter, Kristine, I chanced to witness that, and it was a thrill to see. Kris was helping out on the 8th tee by handing out little “goodies” to the players. I was delivering lunch to her just as the four-some playing with Lou Graham were teeing off. He used an eight iron, and it was “on target” all the way. So, the offer of awards did not last long- but it added so much to the grand opening that it was well worth it.

At a picnic held later that day at the Owner’s Club Complex, I had an interesting conversation with Larry Packard. He described what he, as a golf course architect, felt were the ingredients to create an excellent golf course. I recently wrote him to see if he recalled this conversation and if he would repeat it. He wrote me the following letter which I’d like to share with you. He says it so much better than I could.

Dear Mrs. Harber:

Yes, I do recall our conversation at the Grand Opening regarding the things it takes to make a project like Eagle Ridge golf course not only a success but an outstanding great success.

I remember telling you that there are five elements or keys, if you will, which are needed to create an outstanding fine golf course project. All are important and without any one, a project may be quite good, but will never be great. I have added a sixth which I feel is equally important.

First, there must be an owner with adequate financing not only to acquire the land needed in the first place, but also with sufficient funds to construct a complete facility in the very best possible way, including golf course, practice facilities, clubhouse, and maintenance buildings, equipment, and staffs. The owner’s staff must be caring and sensitive to the potential in the site desirous to have the best possible course.

Secondly, the site selected must be one of the great beauties, containing all three elements requisite for a classic course, woods, wind and water. The rolling wooded hills at Eagle Ridge afford many breathtaking views of the surrounding hills and of Eagle Ridge’s own lake.

Third, the course must be designed to the standards of all classically great courses, where the playing of every hole is a memorable experience. The course must be eminently playable by golfers of all abilities, while presenting the most varied array of challenges for the most expert players. Such a course will undoubtedly be the product of a master golf course designer.



Les as he hits the first ball on opening day. In background, a view of The gallery including (left to right) Brent Wadsworth (arms folded), Roger Packard (hand to face), Jim Reed, Branigar President (standing directly behind Les), and Ray Libner, Association President (seated behind the podium).



Fairway bridge at 11th ladies tee.

Fourthly, the course must be meticulously constructed by experienced and prideful builders who know full well how to apply the golf course designer's plans to the ground, not losing any of the subtle nuances of the design but rather enhancing them to the fullest extent possible.

Fifth, once constructed, the course must be brought to maturity by the tender loving care of the resident golf course superintendent and his crews and maintained thoughtfully and with pride down through the years.

Sixth, there must be a man/men with a vision and a dream. The dream must be the desire to create an outstanding and unique golfing facility and the vision must be to recognize the particular place on earth where the dream can be made to come true.

I am certain that the reality of Eagle Ridge came to pass because of the dream and vision of Les Harber working in concert with the Branigar Organization planning team. The Eagle Ridge Golf Course of Galena Territory has all six of the above tests of greatness in full measure in my opinion, and I am proud that my son, Roger, was given the responsibility for the design of the golf course.

Sincerely
E. Lawrence Packard

The golf course added a great amenity to the Galena Territory. From the very beginning it has enjoyed a tremendous reputation, attracting golfers from all over the Midwest.

Through a combination of location terrain and design the golf course turned out to be more than those who first envisioned it had ever dreamed. If you haven't played it, you should. If you don't play golf, you should at least try to walk parts of it just to appreciate its beauty.

The maintenance and care of the golf course continued to be Les' responsibility until his death. Bob Graunke was appointed superintendent of the course worked closely with Les to bring Eagle Ridge to the completed maturity it is today. Each time Les played the course he made mental notes, and he and Bob toured with the course weekly; consulting on how best to make it a better course to play. As I said in the beginning, it was Les' pride and joy, and it showed.



Equipment over 14th green perched on rock outcropping.



Aerial view of 2nd green and 3rd hole.

PART V- THE CONCLUSION

Have you ever seen the eagles soaring over the ridges of The Galena Territory? They do, and what an obvious name to give the golf course-inn complex, and so we have Eagle Ridge Golf Course and Eagle Ridge Inn.

Once the golf course was well underway, a golf pro had to be considered. Les began interviewing men for the job during early spring of 1977. As anyone who has talked to Pete Jones, the man who became golf pro knows he's a southern boy. Pete was a pro at the golf course in Disney World before he came to Eagle Ridge. He said he recognized the excellence of the golf course when he first saw it, and was impressed with the people at Branigar. So, in April 1977, he became the pro at Eagle Ridge. He recalled the very primitive conditions that existed in the beginning. There was no furniture or carpeting in the golf course club house, and, of course, no Inn- it was yet to be built. All he had to sell at first were green fees and beer. But things rapidly changed from 7,000 golfers that first summer of 1977 to 23,000 in 1978, increasing to 28,000 rounds of golf in 1981. The club house was completed and soon served full course meals yet in 1977.

The Chicago District Golf Association, one of the largest amateur golfer's organizations in the country, rated Eagle Ridge. Rating is a means of determining the degree of difficulty compared to other courses in the country according to guidelines set up by CDGA. Eagle Ridge's rating is: championship 72.2; men 70.3, and women 71.1. This only has significance when it is compared to other course ratings. The higher the number, the greater the degree of difficulty. Although Eagle Ridge can be a challenge to the very best golfer, it is an enjoyable experience for all levels of players and its beauty is unsurpassed.

The men from CDGA who rated the course were so impressed with it, that they asked Les about the possibility of holding the Illinois Amateur Open there. This was arranged, and it was held at Eagle Ridge in August, 1978. The resulting publicity of this even added to the growing reputation of Eagle Ridge, the timing was perfect for spreading the word, and Eagle Ridge was off. Golfers now come from a variety of places within a 150 mile radius of Galena. Bob Lavacek serves as a teaching pro and he, as well as Pete, is available for lessons.

We get so caught up with Eagle Ridge as a golf course, we forget it takes on a new look in winter. Golf is from mid-April until November, and then it magically becomes the center of cross-country ski activity. The Pro Shop has 120 set of skies, boots and poles as well as skates, snow shoes, sleds and toboggans to rent. There are 55 kilometers of ski trails for the very beginner to the most experienced skier, so in the years of good snow there is lots of fun to be had.

The tennis players were not forgotten. The four tennis courts were finished in 1979. There is now a full-time tennis pro in the summer- his name is Ron Mescall. The courts are kept busy with as many as 80 people playing in one day.



Dredging lake near shore on 8th hole.



Golf Course pro shop under construction.

A special event occurred at The Galena Territory in January, 1982. A part of the Illinois Special Olympics was held here, including the events of cross-country skiing, speed and figure skating. The Property Owners Association helped sponsor this event, and I know that all of us who participated in this got a lot out of it. It is planned to be held again in 1983, once more in cooperation with Chestnut Mountain.

While the Pro Shop was started in December 1976 and completed in time for the July 4, 1977 grand opening, the original part of the Inn was not started until October 1977 and completed in June 1981. Do you see a pattern here of winter building? It may seem a strange thing to do, until you consider that openings were timed to have the facilities ready for the summer season.

Once the Inn was completed, the responsibilities of The Territory were getting so large and complex that it was more than one man could handle. While Les continued as the man in charge of the project and its overall development. John Capes came to the Territory to assume responsibility for operations of the Inn, golf course and stables- or as they are known, the commercial operations. John started in June 1978 when the Inn had seven rooms in the main building and 24 in the adjoining building. With the new addition, there are a total of 67 rooms. The rental housing in The Territory is an integral part of the Inn's operations. In the beginning there were 18 rental housing units-there are now 75. In 1981 there were 49,000 overnight guests putting all these facilities to good use.

John is particularly proud of the fact that Eagle Ridge has been awarded the Mobil Travel Guide four star rating- only two percent of the 22,000 restaurants, hotels and lodging facilities in the U.S. and Canada that are inspected get this rating.

Housing, too, has developed with the years, until now there are approximately 300 houses in The Territory. The houses are in a variety of styles, built by several builders from the area. About one-third of them have been built by Branigar. Branigar, too, has built a variety of houses to meet different needs, from the original Ridge topper houses in early 1974, the first Acorns in 1975, the Pedestals in 1979 and the Townhouses in 1980 to the cluster houses, such as the Aspens, Farmsteads and in the rental program. The owners like this because the homes are used and maintained. But many other property owners choose to pick their own design, have it built, and enjoy its use for themselves.

This is the great thing about The Territory- something for everybody- quiet and secluded, busy and active or perhaps something in between. We also have a large portion of property owners who enjoy the property and the local amenities by using the local camping or motel accommodations.



Aerial view of Eagle Ridge Inn and the Townhouse area.



Ridgetopper under construction.

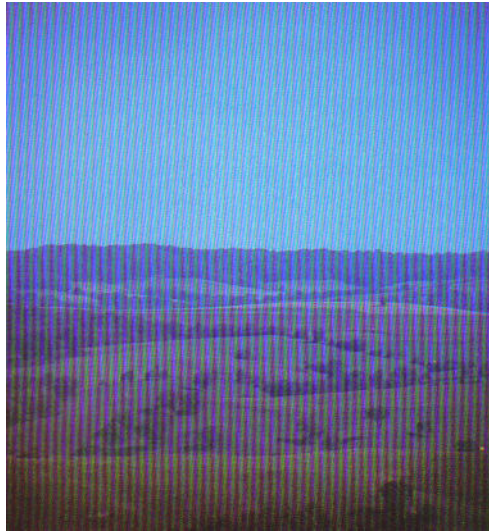
There are many people who help make a project like this a success. One group that is probably best known to the property owner is the sales force. The first sales were in the fall of 1974, and of course, the sales people are still actively involved in the project. In most cases that is who the potential property owner meets first and who introduces them to the "Territory." A very vital group to the success and growth of The Territory.

The security force is another vital part of our community. It was first formed in 1976. It has grown from a small beginning until, in January 1981; it became the full-time 24-hour seven-day-a-week protection we now have. Dave Shuey, our very able chief, started in August 1979 and I know he makes us all feel someone is out there at all times.

As the project grew, a special maintenance crew was formed with Mike Houy in charge. It is he and his crew that sees that everything looks so neat and well kept, which adds to all our enjoyment and pride.

In the first article, I related the reluctance of some of the local people to have a large developer come into their community. As we look back on 11 years of growth, we can see the positive impact The Galena Territory has had on Jo Daviess County. It is now one of the largest employers in the county- the Inn employs 280 people, the rest of the project 85 with an additional 17 employed by the property Owner's Association, for a total of 382 people. It is not only the employees who have added to the economy, but Branigar is also a buyer of all sorts of good and services. In addition, local trades people have found many new opportunities, and the property owners themselves have become customers of the local merchants. Over the years, Les was told many times by local people what a great addition The Galena Territory was to the county. After all his initial struggles, it was indeed gratifying to hear this. Yet in the beginning, their concern was understandable, and, I hope, they now feel he was justified to persist.

I also mentioned in the first article what Branigar wanted in this project was to have a mix of not only amenities such as horses, golf, tennis and water, but also a mix of housing; single-family, multi-unit or cluster housing, townhouses and a resort area. This was all part of the "master plan of development" and accepted as such by the governmental bodies early in the project's development. Now 11 years later you can see that The Galena Territory didn't "just happen," but was a well planned and thought out development. One that many, many people contributed to, but guided through it all- from my purely prejudicial view- by Les. An accomplishment, I know, he was proud to have had an opportunity to do.



Vista of the Territory.



Les keeping in touch in order to be on top of all aspects of development;
he could be contacted at any time, anywhere on the project, or even
at home by radio. Here he is in his vehicle doing just that.

This concludes my personal view of the history of The Galena Territory. I hope you have found it interesting and informative. I, too, could not have done it alone. I would like to thank all those whose help was invaluable to me. All the Branigar people whose memory I tickled; Jim Reed, Bob Farr, Jack Alderman, Al Cechvala, Bob Graunke, Dave Stortz, Pete Jones, and John Capes. I want to thank the staff at the Owners' Club for their endless help in typing, especially Julie and Debra, and last but not least, Dave Jansen, who patiently read and reread until I got it right.

A final thank you to the man without whom I would have had nothing to write about, and to whose memory I dedicate this history- my husband-

Lester L. Harber

July 26, 1926- May 22, 1981

Rest easy, gentle spirit



Back row left to right: Les, Brad and Larry

Front row left to right: Norene and Kris

EPILOGUE

At the time of Les' death, the property owner's board of directors decided to honor him by calling the 17 acres containing the lounge, administration, gym buildings, pool etc. the Lester L. Harber Complex. On May 15, 1982 a dedication ceremony was held during which the memorial shown below was unveiled. It was a moving and touching experience for my family and me and a lasting tribute to a man who so richly deserved it by contributing so much to the Galena Territory, but who would never have expected such an honor.



Monument- The plaque reads- Welcome to the Lester L. Harber Complex. In memory of Les Harber, Vice President of the Branigar organization for his untiring efforts and dedication as project director for the development of the Galena Territory (1969-1981) and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Galena Territory Association from its inception (1973-1981).