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Trout Talk

**Larry's Cedar Resort:
The Legacy Continues**

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by Laura L. Valenti

April 2023

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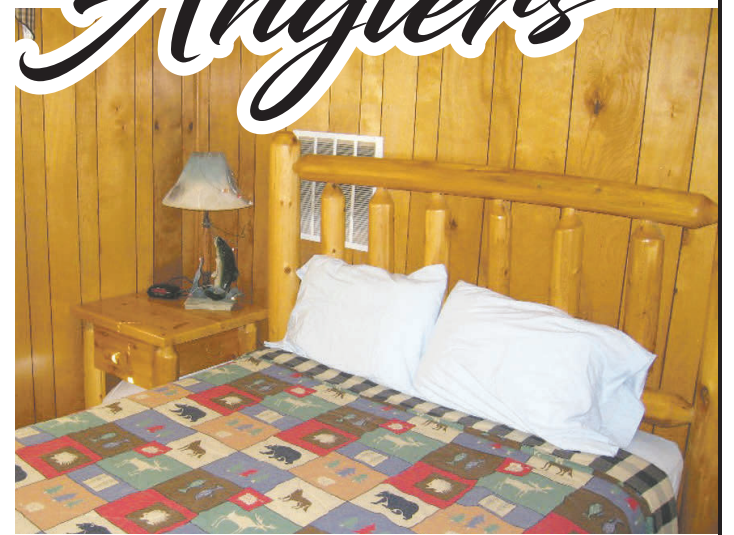
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Larry's Cedar Resort: The Legacy Continues



Trout Talk Photos/Laura Valenti

Cover photo, pictured from left to right are Seth Shockley, Carrington Peace, Kelly Peace, Kay Peace and Kyler Peace outside of Larry's Cedar Resort Fly Shop. Top, Kay Peace (middle), her son Mike and his wife Roma in front of Larry's Cedar Resort sign. Above, the cabins at the resort.

LAURA L. VALENTI

For nearly six decades, Kay Peace and her late husband, Larry offered lodging and convenience store services to visitors at Bennett Spring. As the owners and operators of Larry's Cedar Resort located at the park's main entrance, they have provided quality cabin rentals and wholesale as well as retail fishing tackle since their return to the area in 1957 after a brief few years at the Montauk state trout park at Salem, Mo.

"Larry's parents, Frank and Pauline Sullivan were the concessionaires at Bennett Spring and I met Larry while working for my sister and her husband, Willa Jean and Ralph Usery who had cabins and trail horses at the head of the spring. I led trail rides along the old Spring Trail, now closed, that ran along the Spring Branch, starting at the spring," Kay

Peace remembered recently, while seated in her home across from the cabins she has owned and managed for so many years.

The state park now owns a set of cabins constructed in 1986 that replaced the Userys' cabins. Listening to Kay and her son, Mike and his wife, Roma of Springfield as they reminisced about days gone by at Bennett Spring, is a veritable walk through the area's history of the last 50 years.

"We made a bid on the concessionaire position at Montauk after we got married," Kay continued, "and we got it. So we started off there, running their cabins and dining lodge. When we got the chance to come back here, we bought the resort with six cabins. There was a house at the lower end of the property which we later converted into rental units."

See 'LEGACY' / page 5

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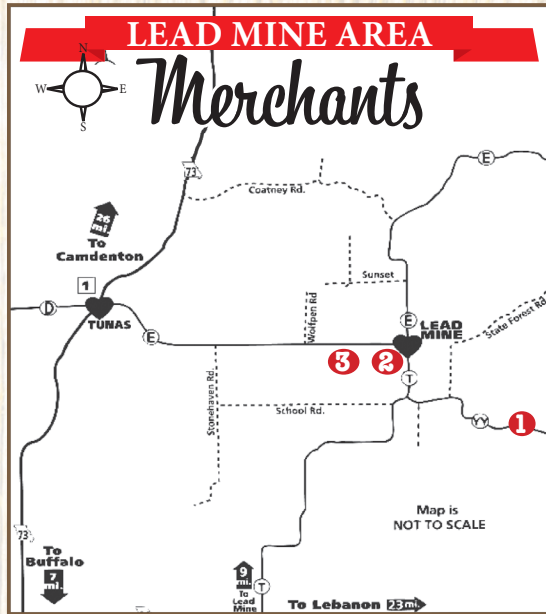
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Legacy

from page 3

For many years, Larry and Kay lived in the white house just east of the store which had once been Mother Bennett's house, the name by which everyone at Bennett Spring knew Louie Bennett. Wife of William Sherman Bennett, who sold the state the original 565 acres, along with his sister, Josie Bennett, that began the park in 1924-1925, Louie Bennett's name was synonymous with the establishment of the park.

Kay shared. "When we built our house across the road, we also rented out our old house but it was a very special place, part of the history of this whole area, so I was very careful about just who I rented it to." And care would be a word that applied to all of the rentals that Kay has managed over the years, which also explains why the Peace family has developed the loyal following that they have.

"The best part of all of this," she continued, "is to have been blessed with so many friends who have become like family. We have the fourth

generation of some of our families coming now, after having served the grandparents, parents, and grandchildren," the normally humble tiny lady who has managed to continue to operate the resort for the last four years since the passing of her husband Larry, glowed with a bit of pride. "Some of them refer to coming to Larry and Kay's rather than coming to Bennett Spring."

Kay's sons, Mike and Kelly and their wives, Roma and Lynne have also been a major part of the family operation. While Kelly's is the familiar face that so many associate with the store and fishing equipment, Mike and Roma have played a quieter behind the scenes role of support to Kay, after their return from Australia several years ago.

Both Mike and Kelly graduated from Buffalo High School and Mike went on to work at Zenith in Springfield as an engineer for many years before moving into computer software.

SEE 'LEGACY' / PAGE 8



Kelly and Lynne



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Legacy

from page 5



Trout Talk Photo/Laura Valenti

Larry's Fly Shop is a full service fly shop offering fly and spin tackle in Bennett Spring State Park.

From there, their family got the opportunity to emigrate to Australia where they stayed for 11 years. Their sons were teenagers when they moved and while one returned to Missouri with them, the other has remained in Australia.

Kelly, who has operated the store for many years, and his wife, Lynne live in Lebanon. "Lynne retired from teaching school at Lebanon last year but she has lived with this store through me for all of these years," Kelly laughed. "Now for the first time we are going to be able to spend more time together because we won't be on such competing schedules."

Both their son, Kyler and their daughter, Carrington took turns working briefly at the store and have now started their own SnoBiz shaved ice business, including a kiosk in the Larry's store parking lot. They have continued that business in Springfield

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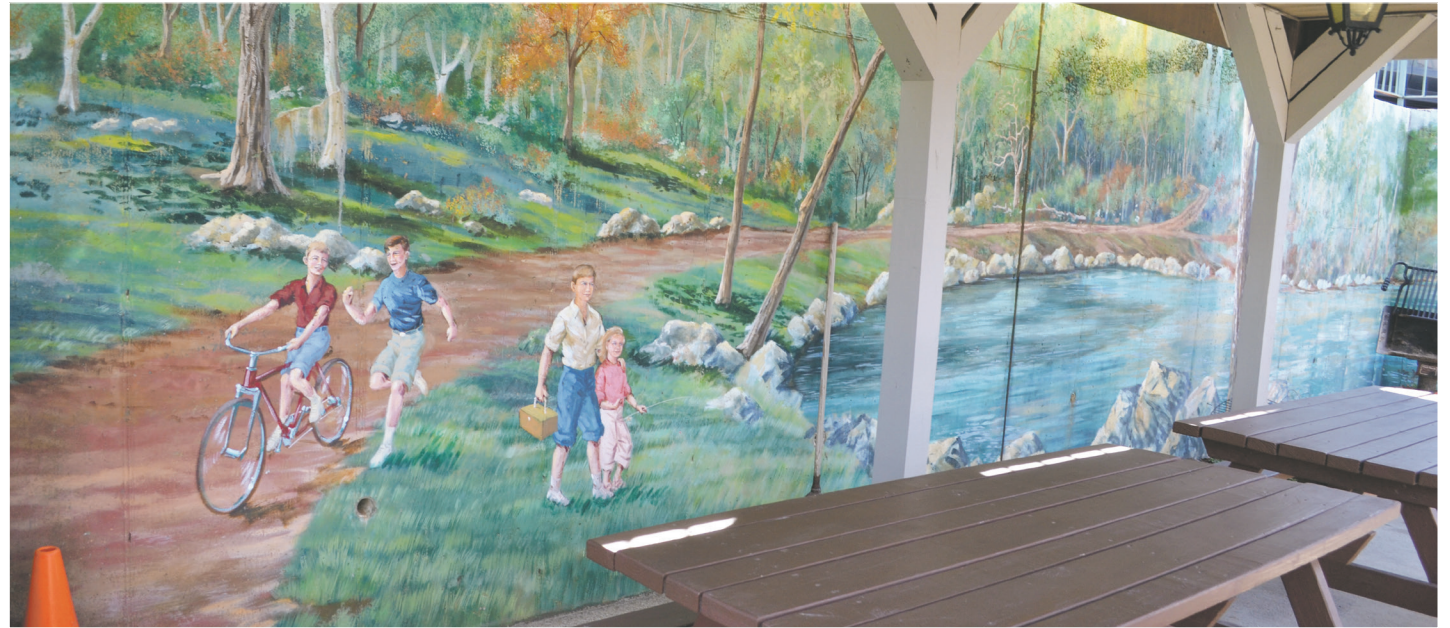
and Bolivar and have recently become the area's regional distributor. As they leave Larry's to the new owners, Kelly and Lynne will be working to support their kids in their new business venture.

"They have five trailers," Kelly concluded, "so there is plenty to keep up with. We are also looking into getting into the wholesale fly business. We're planning on launching a small online store to start."

Meanwhile, new owners Logan Miller of Long Lane, Mo, and Isaac Stewart of Rogersville, both of whom have been in the real estate and rental business for years, are looking forward to continuing the legacy established by the Peace family. Chip McGeehan of Northview, Mo., a long-time area businessman, is also a third partner.

"I've been looking for a way to branch out in recent years," Logan Miller added. "I'll be the managing partner in the daily operations. We hope to increase the inventory of the fly shop in the store but to keep it as a family trout fishing resort."

Kay Peace says she has no clue as



Trout Talk Photo/Laura Valenti

Visitors to Larry's Cedar Resort will also see a mural painted by professional muralists Roberto Regalado and Linda Spencer of Laughingwell Studio in Long lane.

to exactly what comes next for her. "I'm thinking I'll get to do some of the things I haven't had time to do for the last 60 years," she laughed. "I

especially want to make it to Australia for my grandson's wedding.

"Mostly, I just want to say thank you to all the people who have become

a part of our family over the years and have allowed us to become part of theirs."

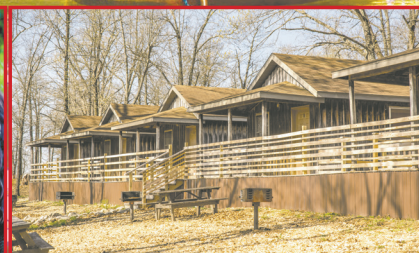
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Trout Talk

BENNETT SPRING STATE PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA



Opening Day 2023



Trout Talk Photos/Beth Durreman
Above photos, attending opening day is a tradition of 16 to 40 years for some of these fly fishermen. Above left, left to right: Dick Martin of Liberty, Terry Robbins of Shawnee and Bryan Rogers of Kearney. Above right, left to right: Dave Simmons of Kearney, Matt Grundy, Matt Grundy, Don Grundy, and Sam Bergener (2nd year) all of Liberty. Right, Kaiden Demorest a 12 year old sixth grader from Freeman caught his second lunker since fishing in Bennett Spring. He has been coming to the park since 2016.

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