

# The life of Christopher Creek pioneers

Folks settle in Christopher Creek for many reasons — its natural beauty and cool summer climate; its charming summer colony atmosphere; its friendliness.

In 1938, when the Ashby family bought the CI Ranch from John Bowman, only a few friendly neighbors resided in the area to share its beauty and climate, including Bob and Mary Kaiser on the Kaiser Ranch, the Bowmans at the Thirteen Ranch, and the Allenbaughs at what is now Colcord Estates.

Paul Revere Ashby, a plastering contractor in the Valley, needed summer relief for his allergies. His wife, Polly Rodema Mendenhall Ashby, left electricity and city conveniences behind. Fourteen-year-old Glenn, three of his four older brothers, and five of his soon-to-be six younger sisters and brothers, helped load the flat-rack truck.

Early morning still glowed in the horizon as they left the pavement in Mesa and bumped and jiggled along the road parallel to the lakes, up the mountains, through Payson, a town of about 200 residents, and on east to their new Christopher Creek home beneath See's Canyon and Springs. Arriving before dusk, Glenn's mother sent the children to chop weeds while she cooked dinner with all the convenience of water running in the creek.

The ranch homesteaded by

**JUDY  
WHITEHOUSE**



**A LOOK  
BACK**

Isadore Christopher, a retired Army scout, boasted a 1883 cabin, the third built on the site, chinked with an imaginative mixture of hog blood, hair, and mud, with protruding bristles that can still be felt today. Polly traded her electric ironer for a wash tub, board and flat-iron that required no electricity.

The older children either quit school or alternated like Glenn: freshman year at Phoenix Union where he was class president; sophomore year at Christopher Creek studying by correspondence, junior year at North High, senior year again studying by correspondence, and a final year at North to finish requirements.

Despite the sacrifices, the beauty and climate were a bonus. Land to explore, to support a few cows, to farm corn and alfalfa, and to grow an abundant garden — not only to provide vegetables for the 10

children still at home during those years, but also to sell to neighbors from Payson — was a blessing.

At that time Kohl's Ranch, with its bar and dance floor, entertained area families with dance music by fiddlers Sam and Pappy Haight, John Bowman's grandson Bill, Ralph Hale from Gisela, and an occasional piano player. Glenn remembers as a teenager hanging out with Aaron, Clebourne, Dwight, and Danny Haight, while the dance floor shook to the dust-raising steps of the Varsoviene and the Kohl's Ranch Stomp.

Glenn recalled from those early years a saddle horse galloping in from pasture to escape a mountain lion that left claw marks from his shoulders to his flank. On another occasion Glenn's brother Norman caught and killed a mountain lion that was raiding the hen house.

In 1950, Glenn and his wife Rebecca (whom he'd known since sixth grade at Creighton School) began developing Christopher Creek Lodge. Friends scoffed at Glenn, his dad and their friends for laboring by hand to pour a cement floor, the first in the area, and erect block walls.

Electricity finally arrived in 1955 and Glenn's parents op-

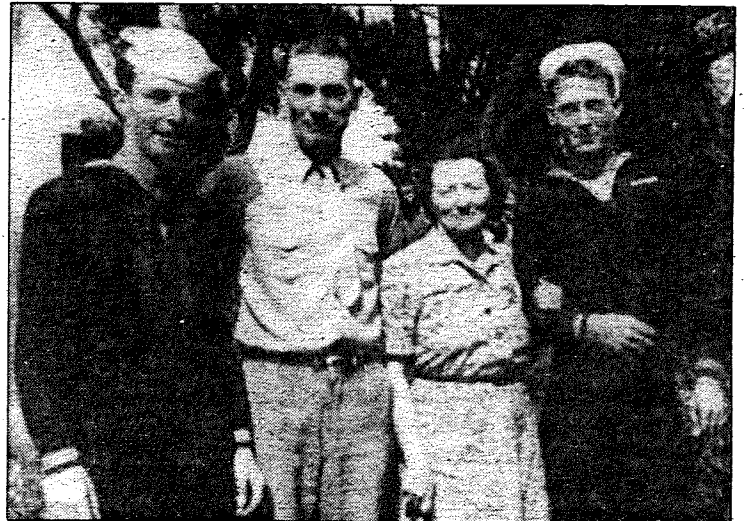
erated a store and bar there until they built The Landmark down the road.

The lodge which Rebecca and Glenn own and operate includes 24 rental units along with the original building, their home. Glenn is enjoying the last laugh since the building still stands in good shape nearly half a century later, while many wood-floored structures are long gone.

Glenn's dad subdivided the ranch in the late 1950s, selling the land north of the highway to his brother Lynn. The elder Ashbys sold the Landmark Store and Restaurant to Heber and Blanche White, but much of the

ranch land south of the highway remains in the Ashby family along with the lodge. Glenn's brother Clayton owns an R.V. Park and brother Norman's family lives on at the old home place after his death last year.

Perhaps no pioneer sets out to become one — it happens as he or she makes a life. But Christopher Creek was not the totality of that life. Glenn also earned his doctorate in education at Arizona State University and spent nearly 39 years in the Creighton District, retiring as assistant superintendent, proving that pioneers aren't just the risk-takers but are also those who persevere.



Paul Revere and Polly Rodema Ashby (third owners of the CI Ranch) pictured with their sons, Norman and Glenn, shortly after their enlistment into the Navy during World War II.