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LIFE AT  
**Center Hill Lake**  
& The Upper Cumberland Region

# THE TENNESSEE MANEUVERS

BY CHRIS TRAMEL

It was a morning like so many others. Chores had to be done on the Willoughby farm, cows had to be milked, animals fed, and there were plenty of things to do around the house. Gaynelle had made her way out to the chicken coop to feed her nearly 100 pullets. The chickens had been purchased a few weeks earlier and had been kept pinned up to get them used to their new location. On this morning, Gaynelle had decided it was time to let the chickens out to peck in the yard.

It was then that Gaynelle heard a strange noise. There was a rumble coming from the road leading to the farm. It was a mechanical clamor, the sounds of engines and metal scraping along the gravel road. She couldn't quite make it out, but it was drawing closer to their rural Liberty home.

In an instant, Gaynelle recognized what was coming. She saw what she would later learn was a Stuart Tank climb up the embankment in front of their house. It was followed by another, then another. The tanks had forgone the gravel road that snaked around the front of the hill on which the house stood, and had climbed the steep grade off road through the front yard. Along the road, troop carriers and Jeeps made their way to the farm.

Suddenly, the tanks burst through the fence that separated the yard from a pasture, and with it chickens flew into a frenzy. The hens scattered in all directions, terrified by the mechanized onslaught that had befallen the farm. It was the midst of World War II and the 2nd Armored Division had just arrived for training.

In June 1941, Major General George S. Patton conducted maneuvers with the 2nd Armored Division in Middle Tennessee, which led to the creation of the Tennessee Maneuver Area. With its rolling farmland, woods, and sunken roads, the area closely resembled the rural countryside battlefields of Belgium, France, and Germany. The Cumberland River was also perceived to be similar to that of the Rhine.

A year later, Tennessee Governor Prentice Cooper, announced that nine counties would be used as a maneuver area by the Second Army, and the area was eventually expanded to twenty-one counties by 1944. The counties included Bedford, Cannon, Coffee, DeKalb, Hickman, Humphreys, Jackson, Lawrence, Maury, Moore, Perry, Putnam, Rutherford, Smith, Sumner, Trousdale, Warren, Wayne, White, Williamson, and Wilson.

By 25 July, 1942, the War Department selected Cumberland University, in Lebanon, as the Headquarters for the Army Ground Forces, and between 1942 and 1944, seven large scale training exercises were held

that included more than 850,000 soldiers.

During the maneuvers, General Patton perfected his armored strategies, based on tactics used by Tennessee Civil War Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Ironically, Forrest's tactics also heavily influenced Patton's main adversary, German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel.

The maneuvers were divided into two armies, the Red and the Blue, with the troops capturing towns, crossing rivers on pontoon bridges, moving in convoys in the middle of the night, digging entrenchments, bombing bridges with sacks of flour, and firing blank cannon and rifle rounds.

Back on the Willoughby farm, there was no anger over the broken fence or the intruders now occupying their pasture land. It was war and they would do all they could to help support the troops. Most excited was young Mac Willoughby. The boy now had the real army literally in his back yard.

The soldiers would be kind to the youngster, gifting him with all the accoutrements a young soldier could wish for. He was given an army helmet, mess kit, and even an army shovel, which he used, much to the dismay of his parents, to dig a foxhole in the front yard.

In fact, the soldiers received warm support from the whole community. Neighboring farmers and their families would come to see the soldiers, give the men baked goods and treats, and provide writing material so they could write home. By the end of August 1942, a U.S.O. facility had been set up in Smithville.

One person wrote in the Smithville Review at the time: "To be sure, the boys were under strict orders not to eat other than what was rationed to them under army regulations, and the people of the community knew that they had been requested not to offer food. Well, the boys were well disciplined, and we as civilians wanted to cooperate in the training. But most people seem to get the idea that this don't eat order had been issued just to help preserve the food supply and was not especially binding." The communities fed the troops anyway.

One incident happened on the Willoughby farm, where several privates had showed up to the house in the early morning. They were invited in to eat breakfast, but during the meal one of the men noticed their drill sergeant walking towards the house. The men all scattered trying to hide from their superior. The sergeant walked into the house, sat down at the table, and yelled to his men, "Are y'all going to come eat?" It seemed a good home meal was hard to pass up.



# PREPARING FOR WORLD WAR II

Another incident on the farm occurred when several of the local farmers were shown the different vehicles in the unit. Among the tanks and Jeeps, were also troop carriers. The heavy truck was fitted with a roller at the front of the vehicle designed to push over trees and heavy brush. A soldier attempted to demonstrate the function, but unfortunately chose a big Tennessee white oak as his target. The truck slowly inched up the trunk of the tree until it was nearly vertical. Realizing the truck was no match for the tree the soldier started backing the truck down, but as he did so one of the front fenders snagged on a tree limb and ripped it off the vehicle. That fender still sits in the woods to this day.

The people of Middle Tennessee were happy to support the troops, many knowing the horrors that they would face in the European theater. For years after the war, Gaynelle and the family would receive letters from soldiers they had cared for during the maneuvers.

In the 25 June, 1943, issue of the Smithville Review a letter was published from PFC Herman J. Wood, who had spent the previous several weeks in DeKalb County. It reads: "Dear Friends: Now that maneuvers, for us, are drawing to an end, I would like to thank the people of nicest town in Tennessee for all they did toward making our stay here a pleasant one. I know you expect no thanks or words of gratitude, but I feel since your little town was such an exception, you deserve much more than mere thanks for what you did for the boys on maneuvers."

"On different occasions, while riding through in convoy, dusty and sleepy, I personally received favors that I shall never forget. On one occasion I received ice cold drinks, on another ice cream, and on still another cake and cookies. I wish to thank all the nice ladies who so generously donated these things, for I have thought of it often, and I wish to thank especially the little girl who gave me the big red rose. Little as it seems, she was proud to give it, and it was something I shall never forget."

"So again, in leaving I say thanks a million to the people of this little town in Tennessee."

Many of the soldiers that trained in Middle Tennessee would go on to fight in North Africa and eventually in the D-Day Invasion, pushing through all the way to Germany. Many would not return, making their time in Tennessee the final hometown kindness they would receive. Their time here not only affected them, but also the lives of those who supported them.



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# YOUR **G**lamping ADVENTURE

BY CHRIS TRAMEL



The word “Glamping” may be a recent addition to the modern vocabulary, but the practice has been around for centuries. The idea of “glamorous camping” was once reserved for royals and the wealthy and is described as a style of camping with amenities.

In the 16th century, a lavish experience was prepared in the Highlands for the visiting King James V and his mother, while the most extravagant example was the Field of the Cloth of Gold, a diplomatic summit in 1520 between Francis I of France and Henry VIII of England in northern France.

Elsewhere, the Ottomans had palatial tents transported from one military mission to the next. Entire teams of artisans travelled with the army to erect and maintain these imperial tents. The exquisite ornamentation both inside and out of the tents used by the Ottoman sultans made them imposing dwellings fit for a ruler.

In the 1920s, African safaris became popular among wealthy Americans and British. But wealthy travelers, even those in search of adventure, were not willing to sacrifice comfort or luxury. From electric generators, to folding baths, and cases of champagne, travelers were afforded every domestic luxury while on adventure.

Today, glamping is not just reserved for the wealthy. Experiencing nature with the comforts of home is more popular than ever, and even right in your own backyard.

Dawn Doll and Matt Bragstad were both born in Minnesota, but Matt grew up in Saskatchewan, Canada. Twelve years ago, Matt made the move to Nashville and would later marry his childhood sweetheart.

“We kissed on a dare when we were 15 and 13,” Matt explained. “Later in life, we both married other people and we both ended up getting divorced. We reconnected and nine years ago she moved down here. She’s a Minnesota girl and the first thing she asked was, ‘Alright, where’s the lakes?’”

“We looked at every single lake within two hours of Nashville. We looked at Dale Hollow, Percy Priest, we looked at Old Hickory, we looked at Tims Ford, but when we hit Center Hill, we just fell in love. It was extraordinary,” Matt said.

“As a Yankee, from the land of 10,000 lakes, lakes need to smell like something and they need to taste. So many of the rivers around here, well,

## NATURE IN COMFORT

they taste and smell like a river. They don’t feel like a lake and have that thermal climb that when you jump in you feel going from 80 degrees down to 70 degrees,” Matt continued.

Bragstad said that it was during the pandemic that he and his wife came up with an idea. One that would change their lives. “Within a year of her moving here, we bought a cabin at Four Seasons. It wasn’t until COVID hit that we went down a wine infused rabbit-hole, while sitting on our deck overlooking the lake. We discovered glamping.”

“I think both my wife and I felt the need to merge our professional lives with our passion,” Matt explained. “She’s a real estate agent and I’m a software executive. She grew up on a horse farm, and I grew up with two hippy parents that loved to travel. I’ve been to every part of Canada and most of the United States in an old Volkswagen pop-up camper. So, we both knew about glamping, but we had never really done it. We wanted to be close to nature.”

While sitting inside one of the Bragstad’s domed glamping structures, Matt described the camping experience without leaving behind modern comforts. “Glamorous camping is the idea is that you can sleep under a cloth like this, but you have air conditioning and you’re sleeping on \$3,000 mattresses. We have a full kitchenette with a freezer, but at the same time, when the turkeys are gobbling, it feels like they are right here with you.”

“We are a piece of 16th inch fabric away from being in nature. When lightning storms hit, this whole structure lights up like you’re in a photo bulb. That’s what really made us fall in love with this idea and got us excited about it on the lake that we love and think represents Middle Tennessee more than any lake we’ve ever seen.”

Bragstad’s currently have two rental units with six more being built. Matt said that the new units will be inspired by European style glamping structures. “We went to the American Glamping Association Convention in California and met a company out of Canada that specializes in bringing to North America really unique European glamping stuff. We have gone down a beautiful path with them. We have four







**A PIECE OF 16TH INCH FABRIC BETWEEN NATURE AND COMFORT**

tents coming from the Netherlands to be added to our property.”

“We own another piece of property on Prater Road, which we’ll have these really cool acrylic tubes coming from Switzerland that we’re going to install over there. Picture staying in a 747 but with all the walls see through and you’re getting 360 degree views of nature. They will be next to a private waterfall.”

The Bragstad’s 72 acre property overlooks the Pine Creek Cove of Center Hill Lake and offers spectacular views with the chance of seeing some unique wildlife. “Some of the nature you might experience while staying at Your Glamping Adventure include bald eagles,” Matt said. “There are 17 pairs of bald eagles nesting on this lake. We see lots of red tail hawks, and turkey vultures, but what is cool about the eagles is that they fly really close to the water, so from our Swiss Family Robinson style decks you can look down at the backs of the eagles as they fly around looking for fish.

“We have about 40 turkeys, many deer, and even an armadillo that we’ve named Arnie. There is also a king snake that we call Elvis.”

The site also offers trails that lead down to the lake for fishing and nature hikes.

Your Glamping Adventure is located at 323 Cantrell Rd, Smithville, TN, Tennessee, and offers dynamic pricing ranging from \$300-500 per night depending on the date. Units sleeps five with a king and queen size beds, along with fold out furniture.

You can contact Your Glamping Adventure at (615) 828-3630 or by email at [tellmemore@yourglampingadventure.com](mailto:tellmemore@yourglampingadventure.com). Booking info is also available on AirBnB and VRBO, as well as their website at [yourglampingadventure.com](http://yourglampingadventure.com).



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## **Sonrise Diner**

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Smithville, TN 37166  
615-215-3463

## **Ace's Steak, Seafood & Italian Restaurant**

110 W Walnut St  
Smithville, TN 37166  
615-215-2237  
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## **Patty's Restaurant**

715 W Broad St  
Smithville, TN 37166  
615-318-1158

## **Cloverleaf Restaurant**

10905 Nashville Hwy  
Liberty, TN 37095  
615-536-5534

## **Twisted Oaks**

3349 Nashville Hwy,  
Dowelltown, TN 37059  
615-318-1290

## **F.Z. Webb Soda Fountain**

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Smithville, TN 37166  
615-597-4186

## **McDonald's**

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## **Hardee's**

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## **Arby's**

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## **KFC/Taco Bell**

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## **Sonic Drive-In**

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## **Bumpers Drive-In**

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## **Los Lobos Mexican Restaurant**

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## **Disco Tienda Latina**

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## **Fiesta Jalisco Mexican Grill**

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## **Dairy Queen**

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615-597-5545

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## **Pizza Hut**

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## **Dominos Pizza**

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## **Wheel House Restaurant**

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## **Blue Water Grille**

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## **The Dam Restaurant**

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## **Coppertop Restaurant**

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## **Bridgeway Motel**

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## **Eastside Inn**

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# PLAY

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# MARINAS



## CENTER HILL MARINA

Center Hill Marina features over 600 rental slips, a fully stocked Ship Store, cabin rental, pontoon rental and a floating eatery The Copper Top Restaurant.

The Ship Store offers a full range from groceries to snack, cold drinks, beer, ice, boating supplies, marine parts, bait, tackle, resort apparel, sunglasses, souvenirs and many other essentials for your boating experience. It also offer non-ethanol fuel in 87 and 93 octane, as well as oil and propane exchanges.

After spending a full day out on the water, end the evening with a delicious meal at Copper Top Restaurant. It is open mid-May thru Labor Day and offers a wide variety of delicious foods.

Center Hill Marina is located at 450 Cove Hollow Circle, Lancaster. Visit their website at [www.ctrhill@dtccom.net](http://www.ctrhill@dtccom.net)

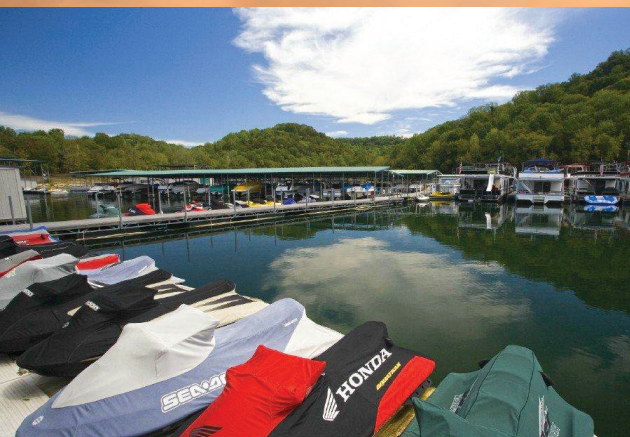
## COOKEVILLE BOAT DOCK

Cookeville Boat Dock is located at 13800 Cookeville Boat Dock Rd., Baxter, TN and is a family friendly marina. They offer yearly dockage, boat and gear rental, a pro shop, mechanical services along with a floating restaurant. This marina has been family owned and operated for over 50 years.

They offer pontoon and fishing boats, kayaks and stand up paddleboats. The store is stocked with everything from cold drink to wake boards.

Drive down or boat up and enjoy a meal with a beautiful view from the floating Lighthouse Restaurant,

The menu includes something for every taste- catfish, burgers, homemade pie, ice cold sweet tea, and fresh salads, just to name a few.



## EDGAR EVINS MARINA

Edgar Evins Marina is located inside Edgar Evins State Park, on one of Tennessee's cleanest and most beautiful lakes. You will discover the marina is family oriented, eco-friendly – a full service marina offering over 350 private slip rentals, security staff and coded entry gate, free wi-fi, plumbed in pump-out system throughout for boats withholding tanks, a full rental fleet including luxury houseboats, ski boats, pontoon, bass and fishing boats and jet skis.

The marina has its own gas island and a Ship's Store featuring grocery items, fishing license and tackle, boat supplies, live bait, film, apparel, refreshments, snacks and more.

The Galley, one of the finest restaurants on the water, features gourmet cuisine with indoor/outdoor dining.

Edgar Evins State Park is located at 1630 Edgar Evins Park Road, Silver Point, TN 38582



# HIDDEN HARBOR

Hidden Harbor Marina knows that boating is central to enjoying your vacation, provides an assortment of pontoon boat rentals, fishing boat rentals and houseboat rentals, so you can have several options! All boats are well-maintained and designed for your fun and enjoyment. Whether you are looking for a houseboat, pontoon, deck or fishing boat, you can find it right here.

After spending a fun day on the lake, pitch your tents at one of the camp sites or stay in one of the cozy cabins. Cabins are comfortable and welcoming home-away-from-home where your family and friends can grill out, relax and enjoy the surrounding beauty near the lake. We offer two different sizes of cabins for our guests to choose from. Each of these cabin rentals in Tennessee include a bathroom with shower, kitchenette with refrigerator, electric stove and oven, microwave oven, and cooking utensils for your convenience. Each cabin also has a front porch with charcoal BBQ, picnic table and rocking chairs so that you can enjoy the beautiful weather at Hidden Harbor Marina. With so many amenities, there isn't much for you to do except relax and enjoy your stay.

The Ship's Store at Hidden Harbor Marina carries all the supplies you might need including grocery items, cold drinks, souvenirs, fuel, fishing supplies and more. A short order grill is also located at the store.

Hidden Harbor Marina is located at 2685 Casey Cove Road, Smithville. Visit their web site at [www.hiddenharbortn.com](http://www.hiddenharbortn.com)

# HURRICANE MARINA

Hurricane Marina is located off Highway 56 North at 864 Floating Mill Road, Silver Point and offers 600 boat slips, boats and houseboat rentals.

Center Hill Lake's oldest marina has been transformed into a state-of-the-art facility in one of the lake's only natural harbors. From their 24-hour fuel stations that accept all major credit cards to the new Blue Water Grille restaurant, every inch of our marina was designed with the boat owner's convenience in mind.

The Ship Store has everything you need to host a party or outfit your boat on Center Hill Lake, and the golf cart valet service will take you directly from the parking lot to the pier. To ensure that you have the safest boating experience, Hurricane Marina has also installed an extra-wide main pier that won't buckle or warp over time and increased the lighting in parking areas and along all docks. A security gate and cameras throughout the marina and parking lot for your safety.

If you are hungry after a day on the lake check out the The Blue Water Grill. The restaurant was voted Best Restaurant on the Water" by Nashville Lifestyles Magazine. Menu items include appetizers, sandwiches, pizza, salads, steak, chicken, grouper and lobster. Visit them at [hurricane@suntexmarinas.com](mailto:hurricane@suntexmarinas.com)



# PATES FORD MARINA

Pates Ford Marina, located at the southern end of Center Hill Lake at 6323 Jefferson Road in Smithville, not only features pontoon boat rentals, boat slips, cabin rentals and FishLipz Grill, it plays host to numerous events including one of the largest on the lake, WakeFest.

The Annual In-Water Boat Show, scheduled to be held May 30-31, will feature houseboats, wake boats, pontoons, fishing boats, personal watercraft and more – all on the water and ready to drive. A new Sea-Doo Spark will be given away on Sunday after the show.

TNT Watersport's WakeFest is a community outreach event designed to promote the sport of wakeboarding. Started in 2005 on Old Hickory Lake, WakeFest has ever growing popularity not only locally but in the southeast. With divisions starting as young children and up to professional, all ages and skill levels are celebrated in this grassroots tournament.

In 2012, Wakefest re-located to Pates Ford Marina at Center Hill Lake in order to expand and attract an even larger group of riders and spectators. The re-location was a success with over 75 riders and 2,000 spectators making it one of the largest grassroots tournaments in the Southeast.

This year's Wakefest again will award thousands of dollars in prizes. For more information and registration details visit the marinas site at [www.patesfordmarina.com](http://www.patesfordmarina.com)



# SLIGO MARINA

Sligo Marina offers pontoon boat rentals, boat slip rentals, Ship's Store, cabin rentals, gas island, and the Wheel House Restaurant.

Pontoon boats are available for half-day and full-day rental. Double deck pontoon boats include a slide and have a 14 person limit. If you are looking for a place to store your boat at Center Hill Lake Sligo Marina has multiple options available. Slips available include covered and uncovered and can accommodate boat sizes ranging from Jet Ski's to large pontoon boats. The marina has a launch ramp and nightly tie-ups are available. Electricity and water are available.

A rental cabin is a great way to spend the weekend at Center Hill Lake. The rustic rental cabins sleep six and include three full beds, two baths, kitchenette, and screened porch. The cabins overlook the lake and include a boat slip.

The Sligo Ship's Store carries most common items needed for a day on the lake. There is also a gas island for boat refueling. If you are hungry after a day on the water stop by the Wheelhouse Restaurant for a great meal.



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# MOVIES FILMED IN AND AROUND CENTER HILL LAKE

BY CHRIS TRAMEL



The Center Hill Lake area is far from the lights and glitter of Hollywood, but that doesn't mean the area hasn't been featured on the silver screen. There have been several movies and productions filmed in and around DeKalb County with some major Hollywood stars.

Most of the locations seen in these films can be easily visited today, allowing you to walk where you favorite stars, or even monsters walked before. Here are just a few movies that were filmed on or near Center Hill Lake.

**I Walk the Line (1970)** – Starring Gregory Peck, Tuesday Weld, Estelle Parsons, Ralph Meeker, and Charles Durning. Directed by John Frankenheimer. Filmed in DeKalb County, Dry Creek, Center Hill Lake, and Gainesboro, TN.

**Country Strong (2010)** – Starring Gwyneth Paltrow, Tim McGraw, Garrett Hedlund, and Leighton Meester. Filmed in Nashville and Liberty, TN.

**The Specialist (1994)** – Starring Sylvester Stallone, Sharon Stone, James Woods, Eric Roberts and Rod Steiger. The opening scene was filmed in Rock Island at the Great Falls Dam on the Caney Fork.

**Old Henry (2021)** – Starring Tim Blake Nelson, Scott Haze, Gavin Lewis, Trace Adkins, and Stephen Dorff. Filmed in Watertown, TN.

**The Jungle Book (2016)** – Starring Bill Murray, Ben Kingsley, Idris Elba, Lupita Nyong'o, Scarlett Johansson, Giancarlo Esposito, Christopher Walken, and Neel Sethi. Portions were filmed at Fall Creek Falls State Park.

**King Kong Lives (1986)** – Starring Brian Kerwin, Linda Hamilton, John Ashton, and Peter Michael Goetz. Portions filmed in Pigeon Forge, Fall Creek Falls State Park, and the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

**Raw Deal (1986)** – Starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Kathryn Harrold, Darren McGavin, Sam Wanamaker, Paul Shenar, Steven Hill, and Ed Lauter. Filmed partially in Gallatin, TN.

**Shut In (2022)** – Starring Rainey Qualley, Jake Horowitz, Luciana VanDette and Vincent Gallo. Filmed in Nashville and Watertown, TN.

**Showdown at the Hoedown (1976)** – Documentary – The quiet town of Smithville, Tennessee prepares for their fourth annual Fiddler's Jamboree festival, where fiddle-player Frazier Moss takes on an up-and-coming musician named Paul Chrisman in a special competition.

**Charlie's War (2002)** – Starring Olympia Dukakis, Lynn Redgrave, and Diane Ladd. Filmed in Nashville, Watertown, and Lebanon, TN.

**No Justice (1989)** – Starring Bob Orwig, Cameron Mitchell, and Steve Murphy. Filmed in Cookeville and Smithville, TN.

**Dr. Otto and the Riddle of the Gloom Beam (1985)** – Starring Jim Varney, Glenn Petach, and Myke R. Mueller. Filmed at Fall Creek Falls State Park.

**What Waits Below (1984)** – Starring Robert Powell, Timothy Bottoms, and Lisa Blount. Filmed at Cumberland Caverns, Fall Creek Falls State Park, and Cathedral Caverns in Alabama.

**Race with the Devil (2016)** - Starring Stacey Dixon, Ashley Pereira, and Jim O'Rear. Filmed in Nashville, Hendersonville, and Watertown, TN.


**Red Forrest (2018)** - Starring Ryan Barboza, Gentry Brys, and Aaron Cravens. Filmed in Nashville and Watertown, TN.







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# ACE'S

STEAKS • SEAFOOD • ITALIAN

## THE PLACE TO BE FOR A GREAT MEAL

BY CHRIS TRAMEL

As with most small towns there is an abundance of places to eat. Fast food places offer the usual burgers, chicken and pizzas while meat and threes offer home town style meals. There is nothing wrong with these establishments, though something the area was missing was a restaurant with a nice atmosphere where you might take a date or celebrate an anniversary. That all came to an end last fall after Ace's Steakhouse opened just off the Smithville Town Square.

Ace Gonzales, owner of Ace's Steak, Seafood & Italian Restaurant at 110 West Walnut Street in Smithville, TN, is no stranger to the restaurant business or DeKalb County. Has owned restaurants in Boca Raton, FL, and later he was the former owner of the Cloverleaf Restaurant in Liberty.

On October 5, 2022, Ace made a move to Smithville, renovating an old building and offering some wonderful food.

"We offer great steaks, chicken, pork and seafood," Ace said. "Our prime cut is called upper two thirds choice that is two thirds from being prime. I cut the ribeye, one of our best sellers, at 18 to 19 ounces, and by the time I trim it we end up with 16 to 15 and a half ounces. It melts in your mouth, just the way a steak should be."

Ace said he wants customers to have the best meal possible and goes the extra mile to provide the best food. "We cut all our steaks, and we have fresh fish too. I filet it and cut to order. We also have shrimp, royal reds and white Atlantic, and we also offer lobster. Of course we offer a surf and turf."

"We have homemade soups and homemade desserts as well," Ace continued. "Nothing is premade or store bought. Sometimes I'll do a chocolate ganache or a tiramisu, and we have a crème brûlée cheesecake with caramel on the top and bottom. It's really good, as is our 'Death By Chocolate' with a vanilla custard sauce, which is called anglaise. We decorate and garnish that up really nice."

When asked why he decided to open up an establishment in downtown Smithville, Ace said he saw something that was missing from the local market. "We needed a restaurant like this in Smithville. To me, there were not enough choices. We have enough Mexican restaurants, and meat and threes, but there was nothing where if you had a date night and wanted to go out and casually meet, and have a good meal. You had to go to Cookeville, or Murfreesboro, or Nashville. Now, you can get it here."

"All my meats we get from local purveyors, with no hormones," Ace continued. "The beef, chicken and the pork is all organic. Nothing that has been injected. You're not going to get that here. We want to keep the customers healthy and keep them coming back."

Ace also said he takes pride in revitalizing Smithville's downtown and tries to offer local or American made items. "We remodeled this whole building. I heard it was once a furniture store, and later a gun shop. The chairs are American made, the tables are American made, as well as the silverware, dishware, and glassware. I'm gung-ho for this nation, so we're going to keep it working."

The restaurant is also a family affair for Ace with many of his family members working at the establishment. "My daughter and my granddaughter are up front. Margaret, who has been with me for seven years, came up from the Cloverleaf. In the kitchen I have my son, my son-in-law, and my wife. I opened this to do something great up here in Smithville, and I wanted something for my kids. That was my dream."

Ace's Steak, Seafood & Italian Restaurant is open from Tuesdays through Thursdays, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., and Fridays and Saturdays from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. For reservations please call (615) 215-2237 or visit them of Facebook.

110 W Walnut Street

**"I opened this to do something great up here in Smithville, and I wanted something for my kids. That was my dream."**

18 Center Hill Lake



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# 75 YEARS

## OF CENTER HILL LAKE

BY CHRIS TRAMEL

For most of us that live in the Middle Tennessee area, Center Hill Lake has always been here. There are many fond memories of families fishing and camping along its banks, or waterskiing on its waters. It's hard to believe that there was a time when its deep blue waters were not around. In fact, this year Center Hill Lake is celebrating its 75th birthday.

The idea for Center Hill Dam began in the 1920s when the Corp of Engineers, along with other agencies, did survey work for future projects aimed at preventing annual flooding not only locally, but also further downstream to the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. It wasn't until the 1930s that the plans for the dam took off.

As the Great Depression hit the country, President Franklin D. Roosevelt looked for ways for the government to create jobs and infrastructure. Center Hill Dam was part of President Roosevelt's New Deal as part of the Big Dam Era. The New Deal was a series of programs, public work projects, financial reforms, and regulations enacted by Roosevelt between 1933 and 1939.

By the time construction began on the new dam in 1942, the United States found itself in the midst of yet another crisis, World War II. At the time, Center Hill, Wolf Creek, and Dale Hollow dams had been

priorities to complete during the war to provide power during the war effort, but due to manpower and limited resources it was later decided to suspend Center Hill and Wolf Creek between 1943 and 1946 to focus solely on Dale Hollow.

After the war, America found itself in an economic boom and construction resumed with Center Hill Dam being completed in 1948.

According to Park Ranger Ashley Webster, the original purpose for the dam was simply for flood control, but as plans progressed an additional purpose was found.

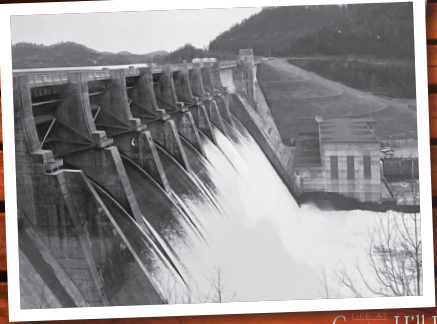
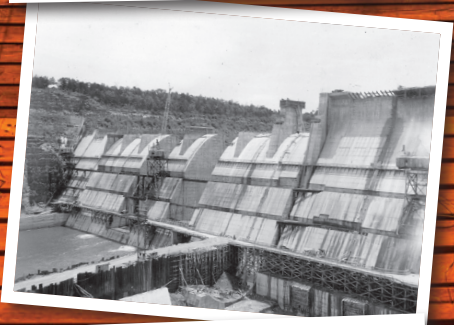
"There was some conflict between some agencies and power companies over whether the Corp of Engineers should step in to produce hydroelectric power," Webster explained. "Initially it was frowned upon both inside and outside of the Corp, so the original project was based on flood control."

"As the project progressed, it was gradually accepted that the dam should also produce hydroelectric power, due mainly to a dam constructed by the Tennessee Valley Authority at Muscle Shoals, Alabama. They saw TVA put a dam in to produce power and it was working out great."

"Putting in hydroelectric power was not an original mission, but literally as they started breaking ground it became a mission. The dam was completed in 1948, but the powerhouse was not completed until 1951," Webster said. "We work with the Southeastern Power Administration which produces power for TVA. We work with TVA in a roundabout way. We are not in the marketing of hydroelectric power, we are just the makers of hydroelectric power. Center Hill Dam has three generators that produce 135,000 kilowatts."

According to Park Ranger Webster the location of Center Hill Dam was actually the Corps' second choice.

# HOW IT ALL BEGAN



When building the dam, workers had to factor in water levels and the topography of the area.

“When they were looking at building Center Hill Dam, they assessed two areas based off of the topography. They ended up choosing the second location for the dam with the original location site for the dam two miles upstream,” Webster explained.

Center Hill Lake has 38,000 water acres and 38,551 in land, and 64 miles in length with 415 miles of shoreline. The Caney Fork River is 145 miles long, which makes it the largest tributary to the Cumberland River.

Center Hill Dam was constructed by Metcalf Construction, Massman Construction, and Gordon-Hamilton Contracting, and cost \$11 million without the powerhouse included, with a total of \$43 Million after the powerhouse was completed.

The lake covers parts of DeKalb, Putman, White, and Warren Counties, with the dam standing 250 feet tall and 2160 feet wide (1382 feet Concrete and 778 feet Earth). The elevation at top of dam is 696 feet mean sea level, with the top of gates at 685 feet mean sea level. The dam controls 2,174 square miles of runoff drainage area.

“Since the dam was constructed, we have prevented \$1.058 billion in flooding,” Webster said. “Annually we have spring rains, but back in the day we would have had flooding. One way or another, somewhere in the United States, we were preventing flooding.”

Of course the building of the dam was controversial, with eminent domain forcing the removal of family homes, churches, cemeteries, and infrastructure. The once fertile farm land was also used for logging and for gathering sand, floating items down to the Cumberland River.

Family homes from the earliest settlements of DeKalb County were torn down with families forced to move to new areas. Churches and schools had to be moved, cemeteries relocated, and new roads and bridges had to be built.



At the same time, jobs were created in the mostly rural area, and later a whole new industry would emerge. The recreation industry. Today, Center Hill Lake brings in \$35 million in tourism annually

The earliest plans submitted to the Corp of Engineers for a marina was for Sligo Marina, submitted in 1943. Other marina plans were submitted in 1949 and approved in 1950. Since then other marinas have popped up on Center Hill shores.

“We have nine marina, seven day use areas, two state parks and three campgrounds that the Corp alone operates,” Webster said. “The state parks, Edgar Evins and Rock Island, have their own camping facilities. Activities include fishing, hunting, camping, picnicking, boating, canoeing, hiking, and many others. The area also features many of the birds and animals that call the lake home.”

As with any manmade construction, repairs have to eventually be made. The same was true for Center Hill Dam. The dam recently underwent a major overhaul to fix problems caused by the terrain it is built on.

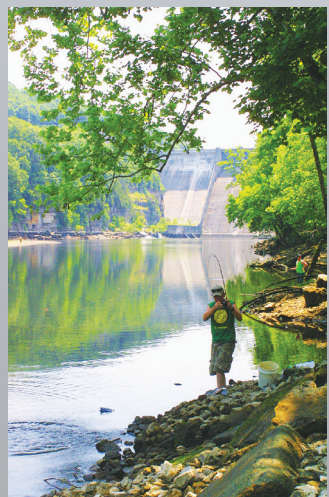
“In Middle Tennessee we have something known as karst topography and that has several challenges with it. Karst topography is essentially limestone that dissolves through rainfall or water contact. We have had some projects since the dam and powerhouse were completed to combat that topography challenge,” said Webster.

“A study was done and determined that Center Hill Dam was in need of repairs due to water leaking through the limestone in the area,” Webster said. “It was a three phase project with the first phase essentially pumping in concrete into the earthen part of the dam to fill in the karst topography voids. The second phase was a 300 foot foundation wall, with the third phase working on the auxiliary dam. They went from 2005 until 2020 with a price tag of \$353 million.”

Today Center Hill Dam stands stronger than ever and with its 75th birthday this year there are plans for varying events.

The Corp is planning school and public tours from May to October, along with a five-mile run from Edgar Evins State Park to Center Hill Rec area and back to Edgar Evins. The dam is also planning a dedication ceremony to be held on October 14, 2023.

For more information you can visit their Facebook page at [Facebook.com/centerhilllake](https://www.facebook.com/centerhilllake), email [centerhilllake@usace.army.mil](mailto:centerhilllake@usace.army.mil), or call (931) 858-3125.



# FISH

## WHO DOESN'T LOVE TO FISH?

It's just one of the many favorite pastimes at Center Hill Lake. Whether fishing from the shore or a boat, enjoying casting for the big one year round. Fish species found in the lake include Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, White Bass, Spotted Bass, Rock Bass, Striped Bass, Walleye, Sunfish, Catfish, Crappie, Paddle Fish and Bluegill.

<u>FISH SPECIES</u>	<u>SIZE LIMIT</u>	<u>DAILY LIMIT</u>
Striped Bass	15 inches	No Limit
Large Mouth Bass	15 inches	5*
Small Mouth Bass	18 inches	5*
Spotted Bass	No Limit	5*
Rock Bass	No Limit	20
White Bass	15 inches	No Limit
Walleye	16 inches	5
Sunfish	No Limit	20
Crappie	10 inches	15
Paddlefish	Off Limits	Center Hill Lake is closed to taking or possessing paddlefish.
Catfish	No Limit	No Limit NOTE: Fishermen may only keep one catfish longer than 34 inches per day.

Tennessee State Fishing License to fish on Center Hill Lake is required anyone 13 years and older.

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# HARVESTER

## PERFORMANCE & EVENT CENTER

BY CHRIS TRAMEL

Smithville has a new event venue for those need space for both large and small gatherings. The newly remodeled historic building is also offering entertainment events for the revitalized downtown area.

The Harvester Performance & Event Center is the brainchild of local businessman Bert Driver, who for several years has hosted concerts and events at a portion of his nursery business, as the Burlap Room. Driver said he saw the need for an event space in Smithville, where all sorts of events can take place.

“First and foremost it’s an event space for reunions, weddings, quinceañeras, receptions, seminars, live events, and much more,” Driver said. “We’ve had surprise birthday parties, and someone is going to have a 15th wedding anniversary here. There’s been church services here. The point is you can use this venue for anything.”

Open for a little over a year now, the 6,000 square foot center is set up to serve beverages, as well as food with its catering kitchen. It has an icemaker, walk-in closets, a walk-in cooler, and really nice bathrooms. “We have a lounge area we call the ‘Yellow Dog Lounge’ and there’s a mezzanine that overlooks the main area. I like having that spot for a VIP area during a show,” said Driver.

“We are fire rated for 590 people for standing shows, but we have seated 240 for a wedding, but we could probably accommodate 350 people for a show or even a political speech or fundraiser. You can rent this space any day of the week. It’s completely open. Its main purpose is to be a rental event space. Most people rent the whole space, particularly if there is going to be 100 people and up, but you can rent smaller rooms in the building for smaller events.”

The main venue features the Flatwoods Concert Hall, with the Yella Dog Lounge, and a black walnut bar. The space also features a mezzanine, a state-of-the-art sound and lighting system and 100-year-old church pews.

“This building was constructed in 1948, post-World War II,” Driver explained. “This was the original Highway 70. This was originally an International-Harvester Tractor dealership, hence the name. The Harvester

## Music, Family & Fun

seemed to be a nod to our area. It’s a rural, regional farming area, and with my other business with a nursery, it was obvious what the name should be.”

Another feature in the main venue is a 100-year-old chandelier that hangs over the stage. “That came from the 1929 Noel Hotel in Nashville, now the Noelle Hotel. There were three of them and I’ve got two, with the other one in Atlanta. It’s pretty cool to have one here at the Harvester and the other at the Burlap Room.”

Along with private events, the Harvester also has public events scheduled. “We also are having ticketed shows, like we do at the Burlap Room for the summer, so we have something to do in the winter,” Driver said. “I really like to drive people down here to downtown Smithville of Fridays, and to Shop Late Local on Thursdays, where you can grab a bite to eat and enjoy some entertainment and keep shopping. They can come here, grab a cocktail and catch a show. I like that.”

A few of the planned performances upcoming at the Harvester include several musical acts, comedy performances, and even a couple of plays, A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Macbeth. “We have a lot of entertainment. We focus on rock-n-roll, blues, and some jazz. We’ve also done a lot of this new country, which are all 20-year-olds and American Idol runner ups, that can song write and play.”

The Harvester is located at 206 West Main Street in Downtown Smithville. For more information you can visit [www.harvestertn.com](http://www.harvestertn.com) or [bertdriver.com](http://bertdriver.com), or contact them at 615-597-2000 or email at [Booking@harvestertn.com](mailto:Booking@harvestertn.com) or [info@bertdriver.com](mailto:info@bertdriver.com).







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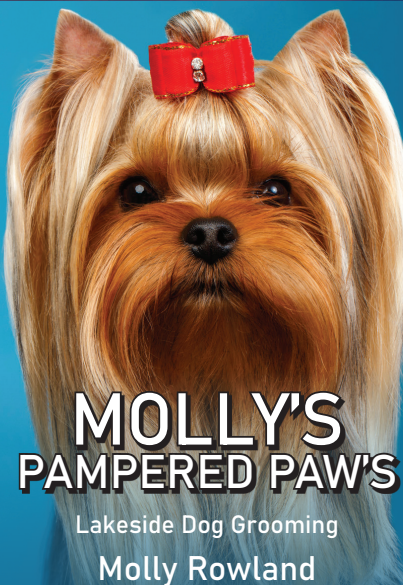
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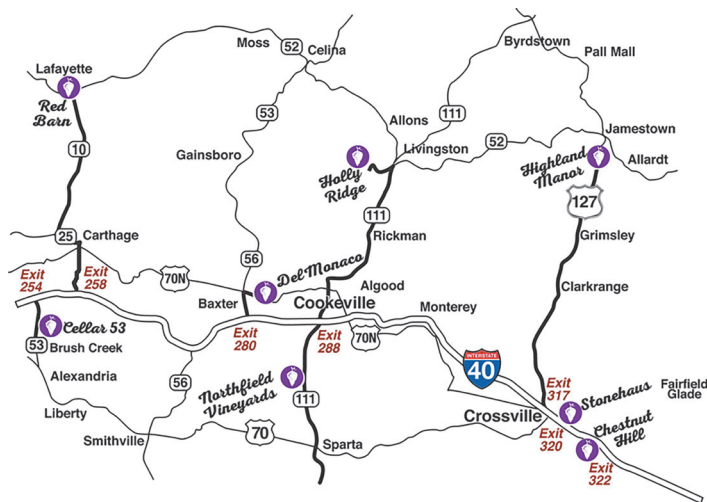


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Family-owned winery, with capacity of over 23,000 gallons, making it one of the largest wineries in the state of Tennessee. All wines are produced and bottled at the winery. Our friendly staff offers award winning dry to sweet wines with complimentary tastings and a large gift shop. Open 7 days a week, check website for hours, tour availability and shipping.

### Stonehaus Winery

444 Genesis Road • Crossville  
931-484-9463  
[stonehauswinery.com](http://stonehauswinery.com)

Stonehaus Winery is Tennessee's only winery with statewide distribution. The winery is proud of its wines, heritage, and family they have created here in the beautiful Cumberland Plateau. They invite you to come and share our wine and experience the best in southern wines! Tours and complimentary wine tastings daily.

### Highland Manor Winery

Highway 127 • Jamestown  
931-879-9519  
[highlandmanorwinery.com](http://highlandmanorwinery.com)

Tennessee's oldest winery! The winery has won several awards for the dry, semi-dry and sweet wines produced in house. The winery is housed in an English Tudor building with a classic wine cellar. Tour and tastings offered.

### Holly Ridge Winery & Vineyards

486 O'Neal Road • Livingston  
931-823-8375  
[hollyridgewinery.net](http://hollyridgewinery.net)

Family-owned and operated, this winery produces an assortment of wines from 14 grape varieties grown in their farm's hillside vineyards. Customer favorites include Riesling and Gewurztraminer.

Hours are Mon-Sat from 10am – 6pm.

### Northfield Vineyards

515 Ray Cemetery Road • Sparta  
931-761-9463  
[northfieldvineyards.com](http://northfieldvineyards.com)

The Ray family has operated this working farm for five generations. Repurposed as a winery and vineyard, the family specializes in a variety of wines from sweet to dry. Tours, wine, and hard cider tastings are available daily.

### DelMonaco Winery & Vineyards

600 Lance Drive • Baxter  
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Take a walking tour through our 20+ acres of manicured vineyard and enjoy tasting their award-winning wines fermented on the premises of the beautiful Tuscan style winery. Tastings of wines and tours are available daily.

### Cellar 53 Winery & Vineyards

115 Oak View Drive East • Brush Creek  
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On a six-generation family farm, this winery and vineyards produces a range of Tennessee grown wines ranging from dry to sweet. Landscaped grounds dotted with flower gardens among the vineyards offer a relaxing location for picnics. Tastings are by appointment only. Check the website for special dates.

### Red Barn Winery & Vineyard

1805 Tanyard Road • Lafayette  
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[redbarnwinery.com](http://redbarnwinery.com)

Red Barn Winery & Vineyards is between Lafayette and historic Red Boiling Springs, off Hwy 52. The scenic Red Barn Winery & Vineyards is the first in Macon County to become an Agricultural Farm Winery. Open Thurs, Fri & Sat from 12pm to 6 pm, and extended hours by reservation. Call for bad weather closing.



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