

# Pond: a natural experience

by Donna Brown  
Hilltop Times staff writer

*Oh, give me a home where the ducks can roam  
and the kids and their parents can play;  
where seldom is heard a discouraging word  
and the waters get cleaner each day.*

Hill AFB has it—a natural location that not only serves a practical and necessary environmental purpose, but one that has the potential for education and recreation.

Pond #3, on the south perimeter of the base, is a storm water holding pond. It is designed to temporarily hold excess runoff until it can be accommodated by the natural off-base drainage network.

The pond also functions as an emergency catch basin in the event hazardous materials from industrial areas and runways accidentally enter the storm drain system, so they can be captured and cleaned up before entering state waters.

This may not sound like the place to spend a Sunday afternoon, but according to Murray Sant, natural resource manager for the Directorate of Environmental Management, people across the base and throughout the community have gone to great lengths to turn the holding pond into an experience in nature.

Development of the pond as a nature center was initiated in 1982. The area was set aside to provide outdoor recreation and to enhance the base with its aesthetic setting.

Gen. Charles C. McDonald, commander of the Air Force Logistics Command, took an interest in the area while serving as commander of Ogden Air Logistics Center. He was instrumental in early planning to ensure the area would be used as intended.

"Very few bases have such a natural asset," Mr. Sant said. "Instead of having to spend a lot of money to develop it, we've got it right here."

Mr. Sant said the pond could someday be the

showcase of the base.

The cattails, rushes and sedges that surround the lazy, sprawling body of water provide a home for domestic waterfowl. While the wild habitat and the animals have a great aesthetic value, they also serve a practical purpose, according to Mr. Sant.

When water leaves the pond to enter bodies of water off base, it is much cleaner than when it enters. The specific types of vegetation absorb contaminants, process them and release them into the environment naturally.

The purpose of the domestic ducks and geese is to help keep waterways clear of too much vegetation. The birds feed on the roots and young shoots of the aquatic plants.

To keep the ducks from wandering and becoming a traffic hazard, they get a diet supplement.

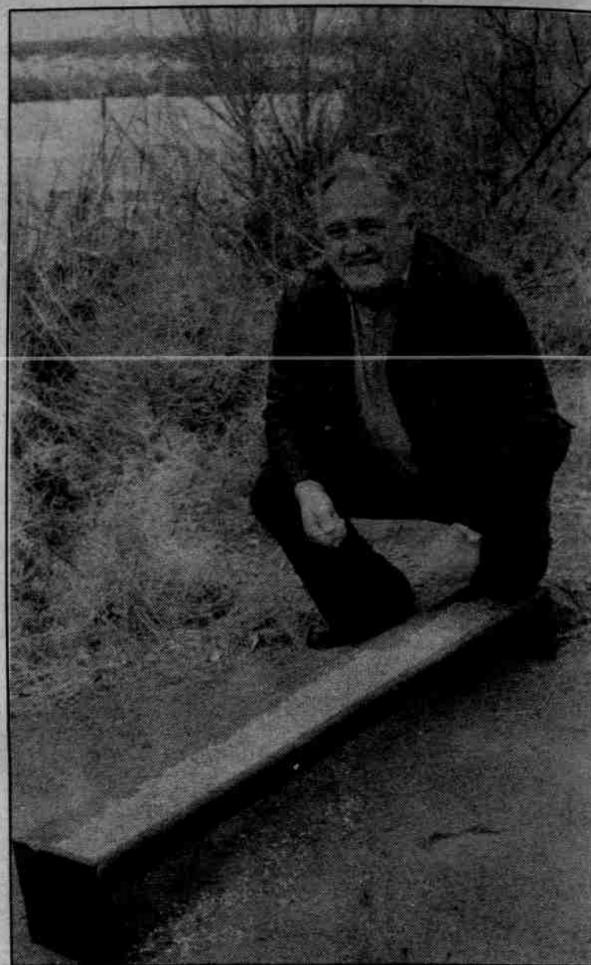
In January, Boy Scout Troop 490, North Ogden, built feeders for the ducks to earn Eagle Scout awards.

Mr. Sant said he sees the area as an opportunity for local schools to get involved and adopt small areas of the nature setting to learn about the state's wetlands, vegetation and animals that live in wetlands.

On-base organizations have also taken the area under their wing, so to speak. The 6545th Test Group built a pavilion and deck that overlook the pond and face both the Great Salt Lake and the Wasatch Mountains.

Mr. Sant said there is plenty of room there for snow tubers, sleds and even cross country skiers and ice skaters. In the summer he encourages parents to use the area just to relax and "romp with their kids." Other recreational and educational developments are in the pond's master plan.

Because funding is not available for all of the developments, Mr. Sant says he hopes the project can be developed as a self-help initiative.



U.S. Air Force Photo by Donna Brown

It's all natural...

Murray Sant, a natural resource manager in the Directorate of Environmental Management, supplements the diet of domestic ducks and geese living in Pond #3 on the south perimeter of the base. By feeding the waterfowl in the nature area, he keeps them from wandering onto the road and becoming a traffic hazard.

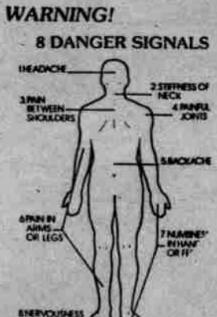
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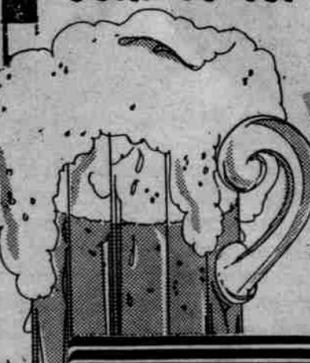
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