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**WILDERNESS RESORT'S  
DEVELOPERS' HISTORY CAN BE TRACED BACK TO  
THE LATE 1800S IN THE WISCONSIN DELLS**

WISCONSIN DELLS, Wis. — Tom Lucke, Wilderness Resort owner; Pete Helland Jr., vice president and owner; Tim Lucke, project manager and owner; and Pat Helland, director of development and owner; can trace their family heritage in Wisconsin Dells back to the late 1800s. Their grandfather, Oliver “O.P.” Helland, the son of a Norwegian immigrant, was one of the first local rivermen to organize sightseeing boat tours along the Wisconsin River when he founded the Riverview Boat Line in 1921. As a respected businessman and civic leader, O.P. Helland helped transform the local economy by recognizing its tourism potential and elevating the town into what is now one of the Midwest’s leading vacation destinations.

Shortly after its inception, Riverview Boat Line expanded its holdings by acquiring land along the Wisconsin River and developing retail shops, a restaurant and tavern, a gas station, and a hotel. Hotel Helland was built across from the busy local train station and served tourists and businesspeople alike as they traveled through the area.

O.P.’s son, Peter Helland Sr., (Pat and Pete Jr.’s father) began overseeing company operations in 1952. Together with his sister, Virginia Helland Lucke (Tom’s mother and Tim’s grandmother), and their brother, attorney Hans

Helland, they picked up where their father left off — following O.P.'s legacy of hard work, attention to detail, and concern for the community.

Over the past 50 years, the company's holdings have included Pirates' Cove Mini-Golf, Riverview Park & Waterworld, Fort Dells, Goody Gum Drop Candy Shop and a partnership in the Upper & Lower Dells Boat Tours and the Original Wisconsin Ducks. While Peter Sr. managed the company's daily operations, Virginia operated and oversaw the firm's retail division.

Growing up in the local tourist industry, Tom, Pat and Pete Jr. worked for the family's business. From scooping ice cream and selling boat tickets to piloting boats and amphibious Duck tours, the boys learned the value of hard work and customer service. With this experience in hand, Tom bought his first motel, the Riviera, at the age of 28. Over the next ten years he single-handedly re-defined the hotel industry in the area by recognizing and capitalizing on the popularity of outdoor and indoor interactive pool centers.

The Wilderness Resort, which opened in 1995, is Tom's most extravagant themed hotel in the Wisconsin Dells area. The hands-on developer also created Glacier Canyon Lodge, Wilderness on the Lake which are part of the Wilderness; the Polynesian Hotel (a 230-unit tropical-themed resort), the Atlantis (79 units), the Bahama Bay (60 units) and the Caribbean Club (a 68-unit hotel/condominium resort). Later he used his expertise to open Wilderness at the Smokies Resort in 2008 and Soaky Mountain Waterpark in 2020 both in Sevierville, TN.

In 2018, Tom and his cousins invited Tim Gantz to join the ranks of Wilderness owners. For 18 years, Tim Gantz was the owner of Noah's Ark, America's largest outdoor public admission waterpark in Wisconsin Dells before selling the company to Palace Entertainment in 2012. Tim's experience and creative insights have helped Tom and his cousins to grow Wilderness Resorts and Waterparks to new levels. Tim was the mastermind behind the development of Soaky Mountain Waterpark in Sevierville, TN, and has served as Chairman of the Board of Directors for the World Waterpark Association. In 2009, he was inducted into the World Waterpark Association's Hall of Fame.

Tom is a 1977 University of Wisconsin graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Marketing. Pat graduated from Colorado State University with a degree in Construction Management. Pete Jr. is a 1988 Yale graduate and also has a Master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Wisconsin. Tim graduated from the University of Nevada-Los Vegas' William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration.

Today, Wilderness Resort consists of over 600 wooded acres in Wisconsin Dells and is home to Wilderness Hotel, which features 446 guest rooms, 40 Vacation Villas, 76 Frontier Condominiums, 36 cabins and 8 treehouse cabins. It is also home to Wilderness on the Lake, which features 108 luxurious two- and three-bedroom condominium units overlooking Lake Delton; and Glacier Canyon Lodge, which features 460 upscale condominium units.

Combined, these three properties offer four indoor and four outdoor waterparks that total nearly 500,000 square feet – that's over 12 football fields of extreme water fun! The resort is also home to Glacier Canyon Conference Center; Sundara Spa; Wild Rock Golf Club; The Woods 9-Hole Golf Course; Aquavia Lumina Enchanted Night Walk; three massive prize arcades; Timberland Playhouse; three Clip 'N Climb Challenge Walls; The Wild Abyss indoor 3-D black light mini golf; Lost Cabin Laser Tag; indoor and outdoor go-karts and kiddie-karts; Lost Canyon Zip Line Tour; Northern Lights Sky Ropes Course; three Room Escapes by DOA; Take Flight Ariel Adventure; and outdoor Jurassic mini golf. Dining options include Field's at the Wilderness; Sarento's; Survivors; Swimm'n Chick'n and several other quick service options.

For more information on the resort or for reservations, visit their web site at [wildernessresort.com](http://wildernessresort.com) or call 1-800-867-WILD (9453).

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