In 1951 Vine invited me to lead the Crusader Union at Napier Boys' high School.With Vine's encouragement I organised a weekend winter snow camp. One week before the due date we had only three registrations, so I phoned Vine in Auckland and said it seems we'll have to cancel the camp owing to lack of interest.But he replied No, don't cancel- I'll gladly come for three boys. That was typical of Vine; he would travel from Auckland to help three boys. In the event, several others came,and this was the first of a number of winter camps with Vine, when, as I am sure many of you will have experienced in other parts of the country, we climbed the highest hills in Hawkes Bay,slept in tramping club huts or pup-tents, and Vine ran a hilarious Saturday night concert with 30 boys in a 4-bunk 14 ft. x 8 ft. hut.

In 1960 I went with Vine on a ten day adventure camp on Mount Ruapehu, again sleeping in pup tents or ice cave, and all these experiences caused Vine to see the value of a Scripture Union Lodge where the essential Bible-teaching ministry of Scripture Union could carry on even in adverse weather conditions.

At this time the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, with Warner Hutchinson as General Secretary, had the vision of building such a Lodge in partnership with Scripture Union,and the benign Government of the day,promoting schemes to benefit the youth of New Zealand, actually offered a site of several acres,on a north-sloping piece of land in Hanmer, with a magnificent view towards the mountains, all for a nominal charge of 100 pounds. But because of problems of disposal of effluent, and the unwillingness of the Council to extend the drainage system, the whole project was abandoned, and Vine's thoughts turned again to Mt. Ruapehu.

A site for a Lodge, high on the mountain, among the existing ski clubs was suggested, and preliminary plans sketched, but this position, though giving immediate access to the snowfields, was not ideal for young people arriving perhaps at midnight, deposited in a strange area, finding their way in the dark to a building they had never seen.

So when the Parks Board made available a site at the Lodge Clearing, half a mile above the Chateau, set in the environment of native bush, with a superb view of the summit, suitable for year round activities, this area was accepted, and a 30-bed Lodge was planned.

On 10 February, 1965, a contract was signed on behalf of Scripture Union by Lawrie Becroft, and the contractor M.B. Kepka, in the sum of 6,545 pounds 10 shillings, to erect the building, supply but not fix all interior linings, and to bring power to the building, but leaving all subsequent work to be completed by voluntary labour.

All the framing timber was pre-cut in Taradale, transported to the mountain on 3 trucks. The building team stayed in the motor camp, worked from dawn till dusk, and completed the building in 3 weeks. The manager of the camping ground was amazed that in those 3 weeks there was not one shower of rain. On the day the roof and walls were completed, down came the rain in torrents! He was left to ponder the power of prayer!

A number of voluntary workers, both tradesmen and amateurs,spent many hours completing the building, and Vine's vision became a reality, and has been in regular use now for 33 years as a venue for I.S.C.F. camps, church and school camps, seminars, retreats, family camps,and any function where, in the atmosphere of mountain and bush,away from

the daily routine,our thoughts turn to the Creator of our beautiful world, who also became our Redeemer.

Vine subsequently instituted a system of bi-annual workparties, first based in Auckland, then in Napier, to carry out maintenance; and many of you will have enjoyed those weekends of fun, fellowship, worship, and, yes work! And on the wall of the Lodge hangs this typical photo of Vine with the caption,"Whoops- nearly forgot to say grace!" as a constant reminder of this greatly loved man of God remembered for his humour, his understanding, his capacity for friendship, his skills in mountain and bush craft, in teaching the principles of Scripture, and in the way he modelled for us all the quiet walk with God.

A History of the Lodge

THE VISION REALISED

Dr Vine Martin

In the '50's and '60's Dr Vine Martin and Martin Yeoman ran adventure camps for teenagers on Mt Ruapehu, sleeping in ice caves and pup tents. These were so enjoyable that they wanted something more permanent. Vine had a vision to see a Lodge on the mountain where young people could go, experience mountain adventures and learn from God's Word too. Martin Yeoman was the architect who designed the Lodge.

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EXTRACTS FROM A REPORT BY MARTIN YEOMAN

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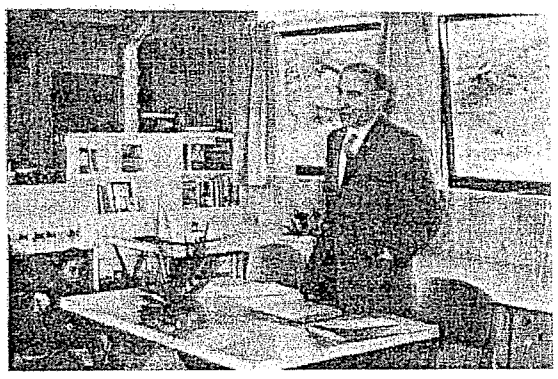
THE OPENING CEREMONY

The new Lodge was officially opened on Saturday 23rd October 1965 before a group of some 60 SU friends. Mr K J O'Sullivan (Council Honorary Chairman) presided at the gathering and those taking part included Mr J W Mazey (Chief Ranger, Tongariro National Park Board), Mr R P Fraser (Council member an Chairman of the Lodge Planning sub-committee), Mr R M Yeoman (Architect), Dr V C Martin (Boys' North Island Travelling Secretary), Alan Ogle (Ex-Crusader from Hawera) and Rev. Ted Lewis (former staff worker, and for many years Crusader Leader at Wellington High School and Wanganui Boys' College). Mr Lewis performed the actual opening ceremony and gave the Dedicatory Prayer. The Lodge was put to good use in the August vacation and has already proved its usefulness and potential in our camping programme.



Mr K J O'Sullivan at the official opening

taken from SU News November 1965