



NORTHERN TIER NATIONAL HIGH ADVENTURE

REFLECTIONS

— CHARLES L. SOMMERS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC. —



Doug's Fantastic Run as General Manager Winds Down!

by Mike Holdgrafer

Editor's Note: This article was written at the time of Doug Hirdler's retirement.

On Labor Day 2008, Doug Hirdler, retired after forty and one-quarter years of professional service to the Boys Scouts of America. For the past eleven and one-quarter years, Doug has been the General Manager of the Northern Tier High Adventure Base and has been the ninth "Base Director" in the Base's eight-five years of history. For Doug, this final leg on his Scouting career was a dream job that was the height of land to his career.

When people speak of transitions in leadership, we often hear the phrase that the next



Doug with Grandson Gage Hirdler.

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REFLECTIONS

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person will have some awfully big shoes to fill. I prefer to look at it differently.

Charlie Guides are intimately familiar with the movement of a canoe, especially how the sternman's stroke of the paddle influences the direction in which the canoe is headed. A twist of the wrist on the slip stroke or a little bit of a sweep can re-align the canoe on course. For many, the majority of our time on the

water has been spent in the stern of a canoe. Regardless of who paddles the bow we remain confident in our control of the canoe from the stern. Each of us has also likely experienced that moment of trepidation when we have moved to the bowman position and looked over our shoulder at a sternman with whom we were unfamiliar as to their paddling skills.

From September 1970 until

May 1997, Clyde "Sandy" Bridges was seated in the stern of the Northern Tier canoe until illness compelled him to retire. Whoever replaced Sandy was going to be subject to great scrutiny, especially from the SAA volunteers and supporters of the Northern Tier program. Seated in the bow, we looked back at Doug when he first took his seat in the stern and wondered what the future would bring. Like any bowman and sternman who have paddled together for the first time, it takes a little time to coordinate and develop a rhythm. Before long, operating in tandem, prior concern is dissipated and replaced by confidence and trust.

Doug has handled the stern exceptionally well during his tenure. As a canoeist, he recognized that his success in the stern was tied to developing relationships with the SAA volunteers and supporters of the Northern Tier. In looking back at Doug's career at Northern Tier, he was a steward of the traditions and legacy of the program. Yet, like his predecessors, he knew when to implement change to enrich the program; striking a balance between change for the betterment and retention of traditions and values.

(continued on page 4)

Directors and Officers

| NAME | OFFICE | TERM EXPIRES | HOME TELEPHONE |
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| Mike Holdgrafer | Director, Vice President (Exec. Comm.) | 2010 | |
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| Chuck Rose | Director, Secretary (Exec. Comm.) | 2011 | |
| Allen Rench | Director (Exec. Comm.) | 2009 | |
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| Steve Niedorf | Director | 2010 | |
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| Kevin Dowling | Director and General Manager Northern Tier National High Adventure Program, BSA P.O. Box 509 Ely, MN 55731 (218) 365-4811 |
| R. Ray Wood | Chairman, Northern Tier National High Adventure Committee, BSA 707 Harrison Avenue Rockford, IL 61104 |

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MOVING? Please let the Alumni Association know so they can update the Alumni database. Please provide your new address, phone number, etc. We will include your e-mail addresses in the member directory. Send your address changes or additions to P.O. Box 428, Ely, MN 55731-0428 or go to www.holry.org and click "Update Information." **The US Postal Service will forward your newsletter to you – HOWEVER – they do it at the Alumni Association's expense!** The statement "Address Services Requested" on the newsletter tells the USPS that we want them to forward your newsletter so you don't miss an issue. It also provides us with your new address. For each issue we have between 50-100 address corrections that we pay \$0.80 a piece to the USPS for this service. Please help us reduce this cost to the Association!

Editor's Campsite – Holry

by Mike Holdgrafer

Living far from Canoe Country, I vicariously live ice-out each spring. Being in Oklahoma, I watch the Weather Channel for daily temperatures in the Arrowhead Region, read the entries in the *Ely Echo* annual contest to guess the ice-out, and I can even go on-line to view cameras on Moose Lake and Farm Lake. Based upon those cameras, there is still a lot of ice as I write these notes.

I also can speak to my North Country friends. My most reliable source has been and remains **Butch Diesslin**. According to Butch, the days have been warming up into the 60s, but with the overnight temperature still dipping below freezing, the process has been slow. Plus, Minnesota has not seen any warming spring rain. From my perspective, it looks like there may still be some rotting lake ice in places when the walleye season opens. Clearly, another change in seasons is in the works, albeit slowly, and another canoe season will be upon us by the time you receive this issue of *Reflections*.

Change happens around us constantly. Recently, **Mike (Bing) Bingley**, decided to step down as Editor of *Reflections*. During his tenure, Bing brought changes forth to *Reflections* and ensured that the SAA members received outstanding news articles. In mid-May 2008, he was blessed with his first born, Ben. This was followed by a promotion and relocation with Scouts Canada, his employer, last fall. In reaching that point of balancing one's life, especially with a young son, Bing elected to pass the Editor's pen, or perhaps more appropriate, the key board. Speaking on behalf of

the Board of Directors, we appreciate Bing's efforts and the tremendous contributions he brought to the position of Editor and the SAA in this demanding volunteer position. Thank you, Mike.

Other changes will be forthcoming as we deal with communications. As evidenced by this edition, we have moved to color, something Bing had initiated prior to his stepping down. We have also modified our publication dates, slightly, to ensure that we publish three times annually. This calendar can be found on-line at www.holry.org. You will be seeing more notices and solicitations for newsworthy articles via email.

While we continue to publish *Reflections* in print media, we will be re-examining the processes by which we communicate to our members including the website and electronic communications. We will be considering everything as we re-examine our communications structure. Ultimately, there may be some changes. For example, some international members have inquired about electronic notices that *Reflections* is available on-line. Understanding that one of our largest expenses is international postage, such a change can be a win-win for the international member, who gets more timely delivery, and for the SAA, which reduces expenses.

My commitment to you, as Editor, is to improve communications over the next two years. Two years may sound like an eternity, but we want to ensure we take all options into consideration and thoroughly examine them before we implement substantive changes. However,

while we are engaged in this re-design process, with the support of the Board, we are committed to delivering three issues of *Reflections* annually. During this process, we will be soliciting input from SAA members and looking for resources among our members. As **Pat Cox** noted in his column and in another article herein, there is a need for volunteerism and opportunities exist in this regard. Every portage is a little easier if others help to carry the load.

Finally, a word about the change of General Manager

for the Northern Tier High Adventure Program. As written herein, Doug Hirdler retired effective September 1, 2008. In the next issue of *Reflections*, we will have an interview with Kevin Dowling, who has now been on the job as General Manager for almost nine months. Foremost among Kevin's new responsibilities is continuing the planning and development of a new, multi-purpose dining hall and trading post, another change that is in the works.

– Red-eye, Mike ■

Alumni Trip Opportunities

An exclusive opportunity for members of the *Sommers Alumni Association* or the *Philmont Staff Association*.

Alumni Wilderness Voyage June 12 – 19, 2009

A 7-Day Canoe Trip in Northern Minnesota's BWCAW from Sommers Canoe Base with a Northern Tier Interpreter as the member of a Crew composed of SAA and PSA members. See the accompanying article in for more information.

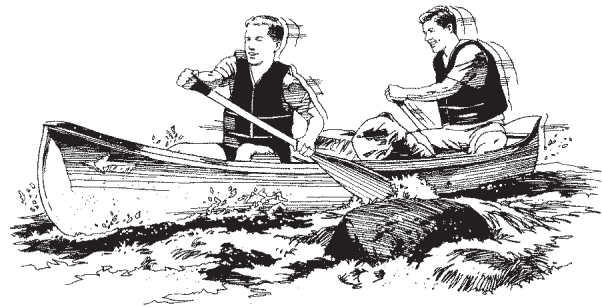
The sign-up deadline has expired. Please email Butch Diesslin at butchnlucy@frontiernet.net.

Philmont Alumni Trek July 26 – August 1, 2009

A 7-Day Trek at Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico as the member of a Crew composed of SAA and PSA members.

Those in the immediate family of SAA or PSA members are invited to participate. All participants must be a member of the BSA and meet the participation requirements for the respective High Adventure Base.

Please go to http://www.philstaff.com/?page_id=1891 for more information.



President's Canoe

by Patrick Cox

By the time you receive this, we will be looking back at last September's Rendezvous 2008.

Many people worked long, hard hours to make last year's Rendezvous a very special event. Before I get too far along, I want to thank **Allen Rench** (sorry about the missing "W" there Allen) for his efforts as the Rendezvous Chair. If you were not able to come this time, please consider yourself invited to attend next time in 2010.

From the Association's beginning, we have traditionally passed the organizational responsibilities from one Director to another to coordinate all the pieces, such as planning the Rendezvous. It all started with **Dave Greenlee** running the first of the modern era reunions. Many of you recall that we used to hold a reunion in the winter in Minneapolis and later it moved to Ely. We switched to Labor Day weekend because it seemed more people were interested in a summer event. We would like to hold it in mid-summer to encourage more people to attend and from time-to-time, we discuss this among the Directors. But, that does not work as the Base is in the middle of their busy season. After Dave ran the first two, he passed the baton to yours truly. I coordinated the next couple

of reunions until **Chuck Rose** took over. Chuck then passed the baton to Allen.

We have also had many, many people over the years help with the Rendezvous in one way or another. Any list will undoubtedly leave someone's name off whose contribution was generous and needed. I will not try to remember all the names from my time or Dave's. Chuck and Allen had a great deal of help from **Larry Hanson**, who also served as a Director for a several years; **Barb Cary-Hall**, who also donated a copy of the recording from her father's last interview to us for our website in addition to many of her father's sketches and paintings for our silent auctions, along with volunteering a huge amount of her time; and **Don Richards**, among others.

We appreciate everyone's help!

If you have talent with event planning or just want to learn, please step forward. In today's world, geographic location is not a limitation. I organized a couple of reunions from Chicago and later from Texas. It is mostly phone calls, emails and scheduling. Being involved is something you will never regret.

Looking forward to seeing you soon.

– Red-eye, Pat ■

Doug's Fantastic Run as General Manager Winds Down! (cont'd.)

(continued from page 1)

For many years, it has been my privilege to speak to a new generation of Charlie Guides during staff training about the legacy of Charlie Guides delivering program to thousands of youth in canoe country. When a person becomes a Charlie Guide, they become a part of a most unusual family, composed of many generations in age and without any boundaries. However, we all share that passion for canoe country and points north on the compass. A Charlie Guide from the 1940s can readily share his experiences in common with a Charlie Guide from this century. Doug has embraced and promoted this legacy throughout his tenure.

When he arrived in 1997, seasonal staff was recruited from one job fair. Since that year, Doug has expanded the Base's efforts to recruit quality individuals from multiple job fairs each spring. It does not take long for a volunteer assisting with staff training to realize the quality, as well as the diversity, of today's staff. The dividend has been the delivery of the highest quality wilderness experience possible to thousands of Scouts and Scouters.

As a newcomer to Ely in 1997, Doug, together with Terry Schocke, who retired as Director of Programs in 2007, surreptitiously checked-out the equipment that outfitters used in the Ely area. Doug recognized that changes were needed to overhaul and upgrade trail equipment. Foremost was the development of lightweight canoe rentals. Crews responded positively to this change in 1999; after all, carrying a Kevlar canoe was much easier than portaging an aluminum one. It enhanced the



Doug attends his final Staff Training Rendezvous as the Bour.

wilderness experience for thousands of Scouts and Scouters. From Doug's perspective as General Manager, it created an additional revenue source used, in part, to purchase new canoes on a regular cycle. Doug also focused on buying off-the-shelf products as opposed to more expensive custom-made products that required longer depreciable lives.

The denial of a building permit by the Lake County Planning Commission years ago signaled a need to elevate and improve relationships with the Ely business community and Lake County neighbors, something that Doug has diligently taken to heart for many years as an Ely Rotarian. Similarly, he has remained committed to, and fully supported, the ongoing Order of

the Arrow Wilderness Voyage Program, which has directly benefited the relationship with the United States Forest Service. Perhaps the best compliment that evidenced the elevation of the Base's presence in Ely was a recent comment by a staff member who said he did not mind going to Ely in his uniform followed by a call from a local merchant who admired the conduct of the uniformed staff in his retail store.

During his tenure, Doug guided the Ely program to levels of participation reminiscent of those from the 1960s. In fact, SAA founder and former SAA President, Dave Hyink, has closely watched the Ely participation numbers given that he worked at the Base in 1966 when the high water mark was set at 3,447. Overall,

the Northern Tier program has continued to grow and expand under Doug's leadership both in Ely and in Canada, along with Okpik.

In 1997, total canoeing participation was 2,583. For 2007, summer participation was 4,907 and for the summer now winding down, the number should exceed 5,000. If you talk to Doug, he will quickly tell you that many factors contributed to this success, including enhanced investment in the Northern Tier by the BSA. But, he was sternman instrumental in many enhancements and improvements.

Not bad for a kid born in Red Wing, Minnesota on the day after Christmas in 1942. It is obvious that growing up on the shores and backwaters of the Mighty Mississippi helped hone his canoeing skills. Little did Doug know then that he would end up responsible for delivering wilderness adventures that spawn life-long memories among thousands of Scouts. But looking back on his childhood, it may not be such a surprise. His mother was a Den Leader and his father, a World War II Army veteran, was a Scoutmaster. According to the local newspaper, Doug was an active member of Troop 35 in Red Wing and spent a number of summers working at Camp Hok-si-la Boy Scout Camp near Lake City, Minnesota. Like the overwhelming majority of staff at the Northern Tier over the decades, Doug earned the Eagle Scout Award. He is also a Vigil Honor member of the Order of the Arrow.

He was an athlete in his youth, playing football and basketball. Doug's career initially started down the path of an educator; in Waubay, South

Dakota, where he landed+ his first job teaching social studies and girl's physical education, was the head football coach, an assistant basketball coach and the head track coach. During the summer he worked at a Boy Scout Camp in South Dakota. He taught and coached one more year at Waubay before he accepted a teaching and coaching position in Independence, Wisconsin, for one academic year.

From there, Doug transitioned to Scouting as a professional for the next forty years, starting out as a District Executive in Tomah, Wisconsin. He progressively advanced in Scouting, relocating his family to LaCrosse, Two Rivers and Appleton, Wisconsin. In 1986, he became the Council Scout Executive for the Lake Superior Council in Duluth, Minnesota, until it merged and became the Voyageurs Area Council. In 1995, Doug joined the Heart of America Council as a District Director and Assistant Director of Field Service, his last stop before coming to the Base. Interestingly, this last position, in southern Kansas City, was perhaps the one Scouting position he held that was furthest from the water.

Doug has done a lot of volunteer coaching over the years, including grade school football when his son, Todd, played. He also assisted coaching girls basketball when his daughters, Paula and Dawn, played in grade school. There is no doubt Doug loves sports. It was common to find him playing basketball with Northern Tier staff outside the staff lounge or watching the NBA finals in the staff lounge when he was on MOB (Manager-on-base) duty. Doug is also a rabid Vikings' fan. In this regard, we must forgive him.

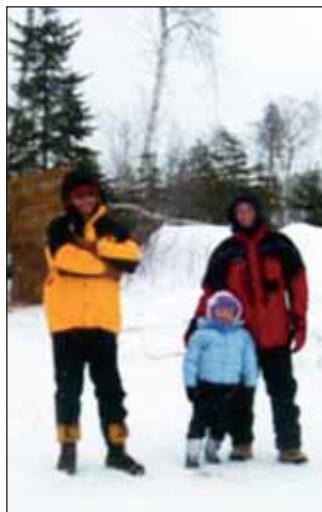
Doug and his wife of forty-

three years, Sharon, will continue to reside on Farm Lake. With six grandchildren; Daniel, Kyli and Gage in Appleton, Wisconsin; Alyssa, Emmanuel and Lilliana in Shakopee, Minnesota; and two grand dogs, Cheese and Angus, Doug will have his hands full as he skips this precious cargo around the lake on his pontoon boat. Perhaps Sharon will recruit him to help her harvest her berry crop. In any case, we hope that when he finds a quiet moment, looking across the lake while some distant loon wails in the distance, Doug will think back in pride as the sternman of the Northern Tier, having successfully guided it forward over the past decade.

I know I am grateful, for his leadership, support and friendship. Sitting in that bow with other SAA members and supporters of the Northern Tier in 1997, I wondered about our direction with Doug in the stern. Eleven years later, having worked with him as a volunteer, he proved he was the best sternman for the job.

Doug, *in winding up, thank you for the fantastic job and best wishes!*

Your friends in the Sommers Alumni Association. ■



Doug with Granddaughter Alyssa Fick, and Son-in-law Doug F.

Rendezvous 2008

by Allen Rench



Five old Alumni (50s - 60s).

Editor's Note: This article was written immediately after the September 2008 Rendezvous.

The campfire is now just a glow, the canon blasts have ceased and the last cars have headed down the road toward home. I am standing on the porch of the dining hall looking out toward Moose Lake. The drones of the motor boats are replacing the laughter and the reminiscing conversations that filled this place this weekend. What a weekend it was. It is hard to imagine that the reunion has come and gone so quickly. I have to say; seeing so many faces reconnecting with old friends was well worth the time spent in preparation and planning. To make this event a success it required the efforts and sacrifice of many people and sponsors.

First and foremost, I thank my wife, **Dianne**. She spent countless hours solely taking care of our family while I was

in the basement office working out the details of the rendezvous. She helped me pay attention to the finer details which enabled our alumni families to have a more enjoyable time.

I must also thank our calling committee: **Lynn Tolbert, Steve Spencer, Roy Cerny, Robert Rench, Chris Wolf, Roy Conradi, Jeremiah Gardner, Ted Hingst, Brian Craft and Kevin Grewell**. Their time on the phone made coming to the reunion just a little more personal.

Jerry Hanson and the members of the Rendezvous Encampment were incredibly willing to teach and share their knowledge with us. This made our weekend one to remember. In turn they came away with a profound appreciation of the Sommers Canoe Base.

The generous donations from our alumni and sponsors (continued on next page)



Musket firing in the A-Go-Go.

Rendezvous 2008 (cont'd.)

(continued from previous page)

gave us some exciting moments during our live and silent auctions. I wish to thank: **Real Berard**, St Boniface, MB; **Butch Diesslin**, Ely MN; **Barb (Cary) Hall**, Ely, MN; **Larry Hanson**, Adventure Sport Marketing, Alexandria, MN; **Tom (Brook) Holleran**, Milwaukee, WI; **Dan Kondos**, Kondos Outdoors, Ely, MN; **Don & Spencer Meany**, XY Company, Atikokan, ON; and **Steve Piragis**, Piragis Northwoods Company, Ely, MN.

My deepest gratitude also to **Bob O'Hara** for being our banquet speaker, who raced into Ely Saturday after just returning from another summer of canoeing in the Arctic; **Doris and Cory Kolodji** for our Friday campfire and sing-a-long and transportation to the International Wolf Center;

Nigel Cooper who handled acquiring our Rendezvous tee-shirts; together with the **Staff of Northern Tier** who provided us with our excellent meals accommodations and trading post service.

Finally, a heartfelt "Thank You" to each and every one of you who traveled north in body as well as in spirit to be a part of the weekend's festivities.

The memories of Rendezvous 2008 will linger as the fire's embers fade, but planning is underway for 2010. Many people came together to make 2008 a success and we welcome the same support from volunteers for 2010. You never know, but the next phone call may be your opportunity to join the fun.

Until we cross portages again. Red Eye. ■



Dave Hyink gets the Hedrick Award.

2008 Philmont Exchange Trek

by Jack Olson

(Jack Olson is a member of the Sommers Alumni Association and a former "Charlie Guide." Jack hiked the Philmont trails in August 2008 as a member of Crew 810-PSA-1 as part of the exchange program between the Philmont Staff Association and the Sommers Alumni Association. It was Jack's first experience at Philmont and these are his observations.)

Carpe Diem!

Seize the day! Friends told me I should see the Philmont Scout Ranch near Cimarron, New Mexico, and I finally agreed with them. At age 73, I was not getting any younger, so I signed up for a "Trek" offered as part of the exchange program between the Sommers Alumni Association and the Philmont Staff Association. There were 12 persons in the crew, 5 of whom had worked at the Northern Tier or were their family members, and the others who had all worked at Philmont or were their family members, such as young **Reade Furey** from Pennsylvania whose PSA dad, **Mark Furey**, was a loud proponent of the virtues of that desert wasteland. At least that's what I imagined it to be. What is a land void of lakes and rocks such as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in northern Minnesota? I was soon to find out.

Day One

It's my habit to carry a small daily devotional booklet and I try to not use it as some folks use an astrological table but, wow, this one spoke to me: "True Teamwork"! Here

we were; a father and son from Seattle, a man from Georgia, a couple from New Hampshire, a man from Tennessee. You get the picture. We were supposed to work together? But remember, we all had a love of the outdoors, camping and the ideals of Scouting as a common base. By the end of the first day we were a team.

The end of that day was a long time coming for me. I had borrowed a backpack and was still learning how to adjust it. I had about 15 pounds more stuff than I needed and I had never really tried to climb a mountain with a 45-pound load on my back. The little ski hill where I had practiced had a top on it which I could see. These New Mexico mountains went on forever. But after the hour lecture on what bears like to eat and how lightning seeks out metal backpack frames, we got started, had lunch at Lover's Leap, got back down that hill and got a good start on the next one. We saw deer, cattle, turkeys and a buzzard circling overhead. Did the buzzard know something I didn't?

Finally, I began to feel at home. The trail still went uphill but it had a sizeable flow of water coming at us, just like the portage trails in the Canoe Area. We had arrived at Crater Lake! However, try to find level ground to pitch a tent on the side of a mountain!

After a good supper of "just add water then place in a too small cup" we had a mountain top campfire. I was freezing and a bit bored but the view was fantastic. I could see bea-

cons and other lights 40 miles away, and the fading light on the opposite mountain was something to behold.

Day Two

I thought we were about as high as we could go. But that "hill" on the far side of the campground looked intriguing. I wondered what it would be like to climb something that high. Little did I know we would have lunch on the top of that "hill." About half way up, **Mack Lankford** from North Carolina wanted me to use his hiking poles. I didn't need another thing to carry but I agreed to try them. What a difference! I had some support and felt I may not fall off that steep sloping path. It was akin to using my ski poles so I soon got into the swing of the pace. But, I was still trying to keep up with people who knew what they were doing. Eventually **Lee Huckstep**, the organizer of the trek and our "Advisor," the equivalent of the adult in a "crew" of Boy Scouts, put **John Nitardy** in front. John is a young man of 71 who I had met the year before on the PSA/SAA joint canoe trip; a fine friend and an experienced mountain backpacker. He set the pace, kept checking on my progress and generally got me to slow to a rate where I wasn't going to die in the attempt to not slow the group down. I followed John, and then Lee followed me to make sure I was okay. If I got too shaky, but too proud, to call for a break, John would do it for me. I had a feeling I was slowing everyone down but then I sensed the others enjoyed a more relaxed pace.

After passing Fowler Pass we had lunch at the edge of the lower Bonita meadow. A man on horseback passed us with his lovely companion, a young German Shepherd. I thought of

all the cowboy stories I had read about the man kissing his horse and riding off into the sunset. I didn't know he had a dog as well.

Eventually, Fish Camp came into view a long way down the mountainside and I realized I just might make it there in one piece.

The program at Fish Camp was the story of how Waite Phillips, owner and eventual donor of the ranch to the Boy Scouts of America, used the place to bring his family and guests to fish in the Rayado and Agua Fria, and enjoy the beauty of the surroundings. We tied flies, toured the old cabin

logical effect was tremendous. Then, we started up another valley bordering the Rayado. This meant numerous crossings on narrow logs and well placed rocks. Of course we were unbuckling our backpack straps at each crossing in case we fell and had to shed the pack. I had a waist strap and a chest strap and would usually forget to undo one or the other only to be reminded of my error. I was still learning how to do backpacking safely. I looked with envy at the wide road alongside us but was told it was safer to follow the trails.

We had lunch at Phillips Junction where Lee surprised

It was still scary to be constantly short of breath. High altitude, the 40-pound pack and narrow sloping trails over loose gravel just seemed to take my breath away.

Next stop was Beaubien, a staffed camp with a program of horseback riding, roping, branding and a fabulous chuck wagon dinner. They didn't add water to this meal. They did toss big bags of prepared stew into boiling water to heat, sort of a reverse to what we were used to. The Dutch Oven peach cobbler was fantastic also. Of course, I had too many servings and was in some discomfort during the night.

It was suggested that I take advantage of the hot shower. Can you imagine? Roughing it and still having to keep clean?

Day Four

Paul and John Nitardy got up early the next day to hike Trail Peak. That would start a seven hour day of hiking for John. But then he's only 71. Reade, together with **Dennis and Sharon Wogaman**, did the horseback riding. I continued in an endless effort to get organized. When we were all together again at 11 a.m. we hit the trail to Black Mountain. Our camps were not really on a mountain top but often in a canyon. If they said we're going to Urraca Creek it would have more meaning to me. On the way to Black Mountain we passed a small coal pile. There used to be a sign and bucket. Scouts were to bring down a pail of coal. The theme at this camp was the time period just after the "War Between The States" and all the staff wore Army uniforms of the time. We were informed that we were signing up for a 3-year stint in the Army. But since some of us had already served (continued on next page)



Lake Photoshop at the Tooth of Time.

and dried out bedding in the hot afternoon sun. It was a beautiful spot. Crew member **Mark Furey** even related how a bear "befriended" him when he worked there as a young man. He said it was months before he could get over the memory of having the bear slobbering over him. I made sure all of my "smellables" were in the bear bag that night!

Day Three

I imposed upon **Tyler Griffin**, our Ranger, who was returning to Base that morning, to take some of my extra things back to save me from being overloaded. The bag of returned items amounted to only 7 pounds but the psycho-

us all with Hudson Bay Bread, a staple trail food on canoe trips out of Sommers Canoe Base. There were also home made cookies. Thank goodness Lee loves to bake because his camp stove baked dessert supplements to our basic "add water" dinners were a real treat. Nearly everyone also had a wet shower. Notice I didn't say "warm" but it was still refreshing.

After leaving Phillips Junction, we left the stream bed and followed a steep trail with numerous switchbacks. But I didn't mind. I think I was getting acclimated and had the proper pace and hiking poles.

THE ELY ECHO/Page 8

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2008

Section 2

Sommers Canoe Base Alumni host Rendezvous for public, officials

Trader Steve Hudson (left) is working on softening a piece of hide. He will be at the Harvest Moon Festival and by then he will be smoking this hide. Steve has been a regular at most of Ely's rendezvous working with fabric, antlers, leather, blades, a wealth of voyageur skills. He'll be camping with the other voyageurs in Whiteside Park during the Festival, demonstrating life in the 1800s. He's talking to Mr. Alexander Morrison, partner in the Northwest Fur Company. Mr. Morrison offered that his company has the goods here to trade with natives, voyageurs or anyone else who comes in with furs they want to swap with anything that his clerk might have in the post to trade.



Amy Florentz played mandolin for passersby at the 1880 logging camp on their Sunday day off. People would relax, sit back and play music. Music in the 1800s was different in that people would all participate, grab a spoon or washboard, join in and have a little fun. Amy played mandolin, fiddle and guitar and kept a song in the air.



Scott Florentz stoked up the fire for branding his log ends. On Sundays loggers would have the day off but this Sunday (in 1881) they were having openings for the logging camp for the winter. There were all sorts of positions open, (see photo with pay scale below). People had to try the cross cut saw, road monkeys had to pick up the horse droppings for a buck a day plus room and board. The food at the logging camps were some of the best you could get. If it wasn't good, people would move along to the next camp. Logging companies would mark each log end with their logo or image. Most used a hammer to stamp an image on the log but Scott used a hot brand to stamp his logs. (There would have been someone down by the water's edge with a fire going who would get the brand hot and mark the logs before they'd head down the river to the sawmill.) Scott had the Rocking Circle R Log Company. Jordan Sorenson helped hold the log in place.



White cooper or bucket maker, Steve Carlin from Rochester, Minnesota with his son Nate crafted a bucket at the Rendezvous sponsored by the Alumni Committee of the Northern Tier National High Adventure Base at Sommers Canoe Base, reenacting life at a trading post in the early 1800s. A cooper makes open top vessels, shovels, tubs. The vessels are designed bigger at the bottom so that when they are carried or if they are on a ship and splash, it splashes back into the bucket and won't tip over as easily. They are working on the bottom which is called the crow, and there is a crow's groove just up from the bottom about a half inch that the crow sets into. The inside of the bucket is shaved smooth, then the bands are taken off, the crow is placed in the groove, then the bands are replaced and the bucket holds together. The crow on this bucket split in half so Nate is carving dovetails to splice/lock it back together. Nate says learning to make buckets is a real skill.



Charles Sawyer practiced throwing hawk, just like the bird, only this is the tomahawk, shortened to hawk. Marksmanship practice is something brought from Europe. This hawk is a trade hawk, traded with the natives for information or services and food. They are mainly used for having fires, pounding stakes, and they found another good use: target practice.

Photos by Pam Roberts



Kevin Dowling (left) is the new general manager for the Northern Tier National High Adventure Base in Ely. He's been living in Ely this last month and so far thinks it's fantastic! He comes here from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He started his career in Baltimore, then New Jersey and Pittsburgh, all with the Boy Scouts. Shaking his hand is Doug Hirdler who retired over the Labor Day Weekend after 11 years as general manager for the Northern Tier National High Adventure Base for the Boy Scouts. Northern Tier High Adventure Base includes three Scout bases: Adirondack, Ontario, Bissett, Manitoba and Ely's Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base on Moose Lake. Doug says, "It's been a great run. It's been the best job I've ever had, with the Boy Scouts of America. I've enjoyed working with people from all over the country. Even so it's going to be super to retire after 40 years with the Boy Scouts." He will participate in Northern Tier as a unit commissioner and plans to continue volunteering for the Boy Scouts. Before he got into scouting professionally, Doug was a high school teacher for three years and also coached football and track and was an assistant basketball coach.



Georjanne and Zhade Carlin are doing needle art of generations ago. Georjanne displayed some of her Norwegian needle work called handtager, white on white work with cut threads which is a beautiful needle work used to adorn the garments of baptismal wear and royal wear. She was also doing some patchwork quilting where women of that era would have meticulously collected pieces of fabric to make a full size quilt. Zhade is knitting, making a scarf with spun wool. This wool is one ply with unique thickness differences. In this era, people had access to three types of materials, primarily, linen, wool and cotton. Those who could afford it had silk but at a very high price. Needle work for women was a necessity. It was a skill that was desired in a wife because the husband needed someone who was able to clothe the family while he was working the land. Women who had more means and luxury of time did it more for enjoyment.

Thanks to these public minded businesses for furnishing this advertising space to benefit community interests.

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2008 Philmont Exchange Trek (cont'd.)

(continued from previous page)

in the Revolutionary War we got out of it. After setting up camp we tried our hand at the black powder rifles, 58 caliber blunderbusses. Then at the blacksmithing session we all helped make an "S" hook. With all the smoke from the forge and shooting, the staff hadn't seen a bear all summer.

Later, at the evaluation we all agreed Black Mountain Camp was the most enjoyable. The scenery was fantastic and we got to dip our water out of the stream. However, the Pilot-To-Bombardier (latrine) was at least 20 years old, half-way up Black Mountain and ready to slip down the hill even with no one sitting on it. One really had to go to make that effort. Supper that night was a weird combination of spaghetti marinara with the bacon cheese sauce stirred in and pretzels sprinkled on top. But, as my Dad used to say, "I have to eat something!"

My meditation for the day said, "God never puts you in the wrong place to serve Him."

Day Five

North Fork Urraca Creek trail was my kind of path, only 47 stream crossings, or was it 49? I got to "wet foot" a number of them. That was easier than falling off a log, the tree branch the Trail Crew had placed for us to use. At Crossing 29, or was it 30, we found the hornet nest so made a detour down, then straight back up, a 60 degree slope. It took a lot of scratching and praying with a backpack on but we all made it.

Lunch was at the final crossing. Then it was all up hill! But by then it didn't seem

quite as hard for me. Soon enough we made the top and started down a long slope filled with massive Ponderosa pines, an occasional mule deer and a family of turkeys. It seemed like a park. Sure enough, it was Miner's Park, our last campsite on the trail.

The program there was rock climbing and a short environmental walk that we did in the evening. The rock climbing was something else. After a long walk up to the rock face we had to don a hardhat and harness and be instructed on how to proceed. We had to pick a nickname so the person on top with the safety rope knew who was on the rock. I picked "Not", short for "Not So Old", a name given to me by our Scoutmaster when we finished a canoe trip in Ontario. I got up about 10 feet and decided I'd had enough. I just didn't have the strength to pull myself up with an arm that depended on fingers grasping a questionable handhold just beyond my reach. It was the one thing I could quit on the trek and still be successful.

We ascended by age. **Bob Smith**, age 72, scrambled to the top followed by John. Then the others all made it with Reade, our 17 year old crew leader, rappelling down after the climb like a real pro.

The weather had been ideal but that evening and night we got some rain with hail. We found out later the hail was hard enough to dimple Dennis Wogaman's airplane back in Raton. I was glad it all stopped before we hit the trail the next morning. I don't like sliding off muddy mountain trails.

The hike back to our vehicles was pleasant and uneventful. Did you ever hear about the horse heading back to the barn? I was the first one back but for a different reason. Remember? Drink 6 gallons of

water!! Don't they know what happens next? But the big thing was that we made it and had a fantastic time.

This has been a lengthy monologue. Now I want to share some of the comments heard along the way and given in retrospect. One I'll ponder for a long time: I think God wants us to be happy. When we do things that make us unhappy we aren't serving God. That is a paraphrase of what Lee said as we walked along. Others thanked Lee for all the desserts. Some stressed the importance of both staff and alumni associations working to educate others about the excellent programs of each High Adventure Base. There was even suggestion for a new program of canoeing in the big lake just below Tooth of Time (Isn't trick photography wonderful?). Perhaps the most meaningful accomplishment was how we set a good example to young Reade of putting the ideals of Scouting into action: having fun while respecting and working with the rest of the group.

My thanks to the eleven I was privileged to hike with. You made my first Philmont experience truly memorable. See y'all at Sommers!

The members of this crew were Dennis and Sharon Wogaman, John and Paul Nitardy, and Jack Olson, all Sommers Alumni Association participants, and Mark and Reade Furey, Mack and Mary Lankford, Bob Smith, Lee Huckstep and Richard Wertz, PSA participants. ■



Third Annual Alumni Wilderness Voyages June 12 – 19, 2009

Editor's Note: Due to the timing of this edition of Reflections, if you are interested in participating, you need to email Butch Diesslin at butchnlucy@frontiernet.net IMMEDIATELY as the deadline expired on April 15, 2009.

The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc., and the Northern Tier National High Adventure Programs are sponsoring the **Third Annual Alumni Wilderness Voyage**. This is your opportunity to:

- **Re-Visit** the canoe country in a Northern Tier "Crew";
- **Re-Connect** with other former "Charlie Guides";
- **Re-Fresh** your understanding of the Northern Tier canoeing program by experiencing it with a current **Interpreter**.

Eligibility Requirements:

The **Alumni Wilderness Voyage** is an opportunity for members of the **Sommers Alumni Association** or the **Philmont Staff Association** – or a participating member's immediate family to be crew members on a 7-day canoe trip with a Northern Tier Interpreter. The Wilderness Voyage is open to 16 participants. Up to 8 of these participants may be Philmont Staff Association members and family. The balance of the participants will be Sommers Alumni Association members and family.

Each Participant Must:

1. Be a current member of the Sommers Alumni Association or the Philmont Staff Association – or an immediate family member of a SAA or PSA member participating in the Voyage.
2. Be a current member of BSA.

3. Be a "swimmer" under the standards of the BSA **Safety Afloat Plan**.
4. Have a completed **Northern Tier Health and Medical Record (BSA Level 3)**.

The Voyage:

Participants will be divided into **normal sized** Sommers crews of up to 8 participants, and will travel under the guidance of a current **Northern Tier Interpreter** for the entire voyage. This will give each participant the opportunity to experience the current Northern Tier program trip, to experience how current procedures differ from the past, and to re-live some of the experiences of past wilderness canoeing voyages.

The Alumni Wilderness Voyages will all be entirely within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) in Minnesota. Accordingly, no citizenship documentation is required since there will be no border crossing into Canada.

The Schedule:

June 12 – Arrive at the Sommers Base after Lunch and before 2:00 PM. Meet your Interpreter and fellow crew members to begin your trip preparation, packing and planning. Spend the night in the on-base cabins.

June 13 – Start your voyage after an on-base breakfast.
(continued on next page)

Third Annual Alumni Wilderness Voyages June 12 – 19, 2009 (cont'd.)

(continued from previous page)

June 13-18 – Enjoy the peace and solitude of wilderness canoe camping with your Interpreter and fellow crew members.

June 18 – Return to the Sommers base in the afternoon for a sauna before supper in the Dining Hall. After supper, share trip experiences with the other alumni crews.

June 19 – Head for home with a packsack of memories.

The cost for the Wilderness Voyage is \$450 per person. This fee includes: BWCAW camping fees, trail food, canoes, paddles, PFDs, packs, group equipment, on-base lodging and facilities use plus all of the on-base meals. **Participants are responsible for their transportation to and from the Charles L. Sommers**

National High Adventure Base near Ely, Minnesota.

Each participant is responsible for providing their personal gear.

Voyage information, including a medical form, a "swimmer certification form and a personal gear list, will be sent to participants with the notification of acceptance of their participation fee payment.

On-line Resources

You are encouraged to visit the Northern Tier website at www.ntier.org

This website contains the general information about the Northern Tier programs.

You can also download copies of the necessary forms to be a participant (medical forms, Safety Afloat requirements, and personal equipment lists). ■



Dorothy "Ma" Harry Memorial Planned

by Doris Kolodji

Dorothy "Ma" Harry began the Girl Scout canoe trip program in the early 1960s outfitting out of the back of her pick-up truck from the A&W restaurant parking lot in Ely. She was a woman before her time. When she started taking girls into the canoe country it was generally not approved of, and at best, controversial. In those days there were not very many women in the woods. She took constant criticism that she was trying to make men out of these girls and had no business teaching them to do things like carry canoes. It was the Boy Scout guides from Charles L. Sommers Base whom she trusted to teach her and her girls the ropes. What an amazing compliment to the Charlie Guides she called friends.

The Girl Scout Canoe Base is planning to dedicate a "Ma" Harry memorial plaque on Sunday, July 12th. The plaque will be attached to a boulder and placed on the shore of Moose Lake at the Girl Scout Canoe Base.

Back in the day when it was legal to have more than nine people on a campsite, "Ma" Harry invited many a Charlie Guide and his crew to share a campfire and songs with her girls. Many years later, she would be recognized as an honorary member of the Sommers Alumni Association.

In her memory, the Girls Scouts invite SAA members, albeit some forty years later, to come and celebrate this remarkable woman's life, her dedication to Scouting, and her contribution to getting hundreds of kids into the canoe country. This event is part of the Girl Scout Canoe Base Alumni reunion. All are welcome.

Dedication Ceremony:
Sunday, July 12, 2009

Location:
Girl Scout Canoe Base,
Moose Lake

Details:
paddleanimal.org or
Doris Kolodji at
dakolodjis@yahoo.com. ■

Philmont Staff Association Alumni Trek July 26 – August 1, 2009

Up to 8 members of the **Sommers Alumni Association** are invited to be crew members in the annual **PSA Alumni Trek** at **Philmont Scout Ranch**, near Cimarron NM, with members of the **Philmont Staff Association**. Please go to http://www.philstaff.com/?page_id=1891 for more information.



Lodge Restoration Brushes Past Milestone

by Mike Holdgrafer and Dick Shank
November 18, 2008

In contrast to the varied restoration efforts reported for 2007, this year's activity was singular in direction: Dip, stroke. Dip, stroke. Dip, stroke. Dip, stroke. Dip, stroke... etc.

This sounds similar to paddling a canoe except that when a person is brushing varnish across the surface of sixty-year plus old logs, the view does not change as it does when paddling through canoe country. Plus, the fresh breeze upon your face is that of fans ventilating the varnish fumes instead of the aromatic smell of pine and fir. The only "plus" is that you are out of the rain assuming you avoid varnish drips.

We could end the report as follows: From June 1 to June 9, SAA Directors **Dick Shank** and **Mike Holdgrafer** got a base coat of satin varnish, followed by a second coat, on every log surface in the great room of the Lodge. More importantly, with the final coat of varnish, all interior log surfaces in the Lodge are now cleaned, prepped and varnished with at least two coats. But, we will continue.

"This was a milestone for restoration work," said Dick, noting that both the exterior and interior log surfaces are completely renovated. "We began interior surface restoration in the middle room in 2004, with the help of **Mark Nordstrom**, since those logs had been exposed to the greatest wear and tear over the years." Once restoration techniques were established, work progressed more rapidly. Plus, in some areas the logs needed less prep work. Dick noted this was the case in the great room. Even though there was more surface to be cleaned

and varnished due to the cathedral ceiling, purlins, ridge beam and rafters, work progressed at a much faster pace. Plus, rented mobile scaffolding allowed high work to progress faster and provided incentive to avoid a second week's rental charges. Interest-

hand-crafted the Lodge during the winter of 1941-42. Other signs of their ax work and hand tools were evident as well.

With the log restoration completed, the "fun" stage begins with attention directed to installing technology



Dick Shank photographing the finished varnish job.

ingly, it was evident to the Dick and Mike that no more than one coat of varnish existed on the great room logs that were out of arms' reach. On some logs, the single, original coat of varnish had failed due to moisture and simply rubbing a hand across the log removed the failed varnish.

Working directly with the logs was like stepping back in time. Dick's grandfather operated a small logging company, so he was quick to note the peavey or cant hook marks in the logs made by the seven Finnish immigrant loggers who

throughout the Lodge for presentations and self-guided interpretive displays, together with improved lighting. In addition, existing displays will be renovated, while other museum quality displays regarding the Base, its history and other relevant topics of the surrounding area will be set-up. As reported last year, there remain many projects to complete both on the inside and outside, including:

- Gutter installation, where appropriate.
- Sealing the chimney and

other foundation stonework.

- Removing moss on the roof and installing zinc strips
- Caulking gaps to prevent moisture and air infiltration.
- Developing a maintenance plan for future preventive work.
- Re-finishing every window.
- Blending the wainscot with the restored logs.
- Hooking up the PEX heating in the middle room to a manifold.
- Repairing radiant heat piping leaks.
- New window coverings.
- Caulking checks in the replaced crown ends of exterior logs.

The good news is these projects are more manageable and will not cause disruption in the use of the Lodge in future years for seasonal staff training and other use.

"It took us over five years," noted Mike, "but we finally addressed the log blemish in June that was the catalyst for this project." "For years, I always pointed out to Dick during staff training that when the lighting was updated during the last major renovation in the 1990s, the electrician shaved the face of a log to install a five switch gang box for lights." "It drove me nuts because the shaved area of the log was blond, bare wood and no longer blended with surrounding varnished surfaces," he explained. From that one blemish, Dick and Mike inventoried additional work to restore the Lodge and came up with a proposal to renovate the Lodge years ago.

"Dick and I appreciate the help we have received over the
(continued on next page)



Varnished rafters.

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years from other alumni and the Base management team has also been highly supportive and exceptional to work with," said Mike. "It has been fun to get to know alumni from other eras and our hope is now that we are moving into the next phase of smaller projects that we will attract even more help from alumni." Both Directors agreed that even a few hours help is a tremendous boost to the overall effort.

This project not only ensures that the Lodge is preserved for all of us who hold it dear in our memories about the program, but it ensures that it will remain a part of the memories of the thousands of youth and adult leaders who will venture forth into the BWCAW and Quetico for generations to follow. Consider the following:

Imagine for the moment you are a Scout from Kansas at the Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base for the first time. In your life, you have never ventured beyond the plains and now after two days on a bus you are in the Northwoods, preparing to embark on what will be the greatest personal adventure in your young life. In the midst of what may seem like chaos as your crew of fellow Kansans criss-cross the Base between

the off-road cabins, the Bay Post and other buildings, the names of which you've already forgotten, you walk down a road to a log building. Your interpreter tells the crew that this is the Lodge and that it is the oldest structure built by the Boy Scouts specifically for high adventure. Some of what he is saying slips by you. As you step inside, you, like your friends, are instantly mesmerized and begin to look around this Paul Bunyanesque structure. The stories you heard, the photos you saw and the dreams you have are becoming reality.

The walls are adorned with all sorts of displays; old paddles, a yoke used to haul water from Moose Lake, furs, a two-man cross-cut saw and historical items. On the wall is a photo of Charles L. Sommers with a plaque describing his vision to offer canoeing adventures to Scouts. In the middle room there is a flat screen monitor and the speaker is talking about the voyageurs who traveled the canoe routes to transport goods and furs between Montreal and the wilderness, the same routes your crew will be taking. The prize of the European hat industry was beaver fur and in the room is a taxidermy mount of a beaver. In another portion of the room there is a display about the history of the Base,

while on a touch screen monitor a Scout is listening to and watching information about moose and wolves. Another interpreter is pointing to a wall map and telling them about pictographs and fishing. You have not even hit the water yet to embark on your canoe trip and already memories that will last your entire lifetime are beginning....

Both Directors accuse the other of having started this consuming project, but Dick and Mike quickly agree that everyone benefits from this project, most important being the youth that are served through the Northern Tier program.

Neither Director will miss spending their time varnishing logs next June. Mike even hopes next June he will have a chance to take a break away and drown some minnows going after walleyes. If you are interested in lending a helping hand next June, please drop Dick or Mike an email at Richard.Shank@allina.com or mike.holdgrafer@dtag.com, respectively. There's plenty of room, fellowship, opportunities and minnows. ■



Finished log wall.

2009 Alumni Work Week

by Dick Shank

Please join us for a North Woods break from your usual routine!

Alumni Work Week is slated for May 31 – June 10 at the Sommers Canoe Base, coinciding with seasonal staff training for the Northern Tier staff. Join us for fellowship, work, and interaction with the new generation of seasonal staff. This is a great opportunity for alumni "sweat equity" in the Northern Tier program.

Heavy work on the Lodge renovation, ongoing since 2004, is done, with the focus this year on smaller projects. These include window frame refinishing, and preparation for displays and high tech electronic features consistent with the anticipated museum and interpretive function of the building. Prior expertise and experience are not required to participate in this excellent project!

Meals and accommodations on the base will be provided at no cost. You'll have the added bonus of participation in training week activities as your interest and time permit, and also a chance to meet and interact with current seasonal staff as well as fellow alumni. **Bring your skills and/or enthusiasm; on the job training will be provided.** We can use help for a day or a week, so come as early and stay as late as you can! For more information, contact Dick Shank (richard.shank@allina.com), or call me at [REDACTED], or contact any of the Sommers Alumni directors, contacts at (Holry.org).

Consider combining some time at the base with some fishing and/or canoeing! The base will be glad to help outfit you if needed. **We hope to hear from you!** ■

Sig's Special Award

by Dick Shank

Sigurd F. Olson (1899 – 1982), an honorary member of the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc., is one of the country's best known naturalists and a best-selling writer of over a dozen books about the wilderness, especially the canoe country. During and after his lifetime, Sig received numerous awards for his writing and science from the Wilderness Society, National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club and the Izaak Walton

League. His 1974 book, *Wilderness Days* was awarded the John Burroughs Medal, the highest honor in nature writing. The Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin, which was Sig's alma mater, was named in his honor. Since 1992, the institute has awarded the Sigurd F. Olson Nature Writing Award to writers in recognition of remarkable environmental adult literature. A Blooming-

ton, Minnesota school is also named after him.

But in 1963, before most of this acclaim, Sig was awarded the Silver Antelope, the highest Regional award from the Boy Scouts of America. Others that have also received this prestigious award include Charles L. Sommers, the Region X Chairman for twenty-six years, and **Dave Hyink**, who had the vision to form the Sommers Alumni Association.

I first found out that Sig had received this award through correspondence with David Backus, a former Ely Echo reporter who wrote the 1997 book *A Wilderness Within: The Life of Sigurd F. Olson*. Subsequently, I talked to Sig's son, **Robert**, who worked at Sommers in 1941 and was the SAA 2000 reunion banquet speaker. He sent me a copy of the banquet program from his father's memorabilia; which stated:

SIG OLSON is probably the most noted wilderness canoeist in America and is known among his closest friends as the "Bourgeois," an old fur trade term for leader. Living on the edge of a great wilderness area, he has traveled by canoe through thousands of miles of it as far north as the Arctic. He is a leading conservationist and a wilderness ecologist for the Izaak Walton League. For many years he has been a consultant to the President's Committee for the Quetico-Superior Area. He was a prime mover in the founding of the "Friends of the Wilderness," and one of the leaders of the movement to save the roadless area of the Superior National Forest. For five years he was President of the

National Parks Association and is still a board member. In his present position with the government he has traveled wilderness areas in all parts of the United States.

Mr. Olson was a close friend of Carl Chase, founder of the Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base, and was helpful in the establishment of the base. He comes there each spring as a part of guide training to talk about wilderness manners and the history of the area.

Mr. Olson was dean of the Ely Junior College and was Scoutmaster of Ely's Troop 1 for 10 years. He led what was probably the first Scout canoe trip when he took his troop on a trip in 1922. He has been a member of the Boy Scouts of America in the Headwaters Area Council since then as Scoutmaster, member of the executive board, and council member.

He is an outdoor writer of foremost ability with many magazine articles and three books to his credit.

Oh my. Reading those words, followed by more investigation, I learned several important pieces of history. For example, while I had known that Sig was involved in Boy Scouting from his earliest days in Ely, much before his writing career, I did not know the extent of his involvement. As a Scoutmaster of three years, ten years of service showed remarkable dedication. His son, Bob, had also stated that the Boy Scouts rented gear from Sig's company, Wilderness Outfitters, in Winton during the late 1920s. In addition, the BSA's history in wilderness canoe tripping (continued on next page)

Charlie Guide Remembrances

by Steve Spencer

From our time at Sommers there are thousands of great memories. Sometimes, a word or phrase is all it takes to spark that memory. Butch Diesslin came up with the idea and the first list. What would you add to the list? Send your list to Steve Spencer@Quietcanoes.com. Put "Holry before mud" in the subject line. Also include your name and any nickname you had when you worked at the Boat Camp

Some fond remembrances of an old Charlie Guide, **Butch Diesslin (1961-1980):**

- Old Town Canoes & Seliga Canoes
- Canvas Water Buckets
- Treat and Mystery Meat
- A-6 Packs
- Fitgers
- GBI
- Sanding and Spot Painting
- Henry
- The Bay Post Mine
- The Dining Hall Mine
- Clearing The A-Go-Go Swamp
- "You're gonna be cold, You're gonna be wet..."

- The P. B.
- Meals in the Lodge
- Food packing before plastic bags
- Keystone and Smiley Cook Kits
- Vic's Customs Popcorn Stand
- Fisherman's Headquarters
- Sodie's Soda Shop
- The Gravel Fernberg
- Hibbard's & Kirk's
- Sig Olson's Visit
- The Moose Lake Campground
- Cabin 16 & Ottawa Island Customs
- Quick Shifts and Shafts
- Pecharich's "Last Chance"
- The Piggly Wiggly Bus Stop
- The Forest Hotel
- Tent City
- The Old Saunas (2)

David Hyink (1966-1970):

- Elna's
- Dee's
- The Portage
- Ma Harry
- Shagawa Beach Steak Fry
- Louise Seliga
- Zup's
- The Made Rite
- The Ely Speed Wash ■



The Adventure

by Carrie Clifton

One day while paddling my canoe across a small little lake, deep in the wilds of canoe country, I picked up a little spirit who had been roaming in the woods. Most of the time he's quiet, like he's slumbering, and I can almost forget he's there, but then I hear his soft voice in my head. You may have picked one of his kin up, too, paddling around; or you may have already had one, which is what brought you up north to begin

Sig's Special Award (cont'd.)

(continued from previous page)

has always been credited to have started in 1923, but given Olson's 1922 trip and his involvement with Chase, one may interpret the program as starting a year earlier than commonly thought; Sig could be credited with the genesis of what has become the Northern Tier programs.

Since attendance at all the Northern Tier programs has exceeded 1,000,000* days in the wilderness, this might be considered Sig's greatest legacy.

*Note: 187,000 participants averaging about a week each; well, you do the math. ■

with. My little spirit friend: he's my sense of adventure.

My parents being Scouters, I grew up loving camping and canoeing. I was camping with my mother before I was old enough to sign up in the organization. But I didn't really understand adventure.

Then I spent two summers as an Interpreter. From that amazing job I think I learned as much as the youth I was working with. I had lots of fun, drew a handful of sketches, wrote many poems, made lots of friends and created memories that will be with me for the rest of my life. But I think the best thing I gained was a strong sense of adventure, the urge to know what's over the rise or beyond the next lake, the insatiable curiosity to explore.

But my sense of adventure doesn't just limit his whispering to camping and canoeing. Soon after my first summer with Northern Tier I headed to the United Kingdom for three weeks with a friend. It was my first experience backpacking.

Adventure is what brought me to Japan. My life is a grand adventure now; I live in a foreign country, I'm learning to speak the language, and I'm

traveling. It seems like every day I discover something new or unusual. I'm seeing and doing things that I've only dreamed of.

My most extreme trip, thus far, has been climbing Mount Fuji. The two questions everyone asks me when I tell them that I've been to Fuji are, "Who did you go with?" and "Did you make it to the top?"

Well, I went by myself. That prompts everyone to say that I'm crazy. Yes, I am, but I'm also concerned about safety; if I wasn't before, Northern Tier certainly drilled that in. I understand the balance between safety, risk and fun. I did my research; I knew what I was getting myself into. And I wasn't really by myself. During the official climbing season there are always lots of people up on the mountain. I might not have been in a crowd the whole time, but if something had happened there were people around.

"Did you make it to the top?" Yeah, I did. I was so thrilled with that accomplishment. I hiked at night so that I'd be at the summit to see the sunrise. In Japan seeing the sunrise from the top of Fuji is a very special, sacred thing. There really is nothing quite like sitting up on top of the world at the dawn of a new day, the glorious sunrise made sweeter by from the hours of toil to reach the summit. I do generally prefer sunsets, but that's one sunrise I'll not soon forget. After seven hours of climbing up the windy mountain, let me assure you I was very proud to reach the top. I was cold, tired and sore, but I loved every moment of it.

Sometimes people ask me why I climbed Fuji or travel by myself. Well, I'm not going to let the fact that no one wants to go with me, stop me. When I was planning my Fuji trek I

invited my friends that I thought might like to go. Several did show interest, but in the end they all settled on tamer plans. Some did think that since I didn't have anyone going with me that I wouldn't go. No way. Climbing Mount Fuji was on the top of my list of things I wanted to do while in Japan. There was no way I wasn't going to at least try.

For my winter vacation I went to Okinawa. I did a lot of island hopping in the southern island groups. On my last day down there I wanted to go to the southern-most island of Japan. When I got to the ferry I was told that it may not be heading out, the winds were strong and the waves rough and if it did go, it likely wouldn't make the later trip for me to return when the wind picked up in the afternoon. I was concerned because to be able to make my flight back to Osaka that day, I had to be on the midday ferry. The forecast didn't look great. It looked like a fifty/fifty gamble. Just as I was thinking that I should play it safe and find something else to do a little voice in my head spoke up.

"What's the worst that could happen?"

"Well, I'd be stuck on a small island and miss my flight," I replied.

"So what?" the voice defiantly retorted.

I thought again about my situation. I had enough money to pay for a night's stay. As for the flight, well, I still had four more days before I had to get back to work. So, what if I had to buy another plane ticket? Is it worth it? Is the adventure worth it?

"Is it really an adventure if there is no risk?" the little voice asked.

I made up my mind to get on that boat. I felt a warmth spread through me, yes, I was looking



Staff Photo

forward to everything on that small island including the uncertainty of getting back. I smiled. So, my sense of adventure led me to that island, and I had a great time; I made it to the southern most point in Japan, walked along the beach, went beachcombing (I even found a very small glass float), saw some old ruins, climbed a lookout tower, went and prayed at a seaside shrine, hiked through the jungle to see old tombs, and rode my rented bicycle down unpaved roads. I do admit that I was very happy to see the ferry pull in to the dock.

My sense of adventure has given me so much. At the Northern Tier I saw sunsets from up on top of boulders, paddled at night across monstrous lakes while making popcorn in our canoes, portaged through a swamp swatting mosquitoes while carrying my pack and canoe,

did 'laundry' by jumping in the water and taking a swim, discovered the unusual delights of grape Kool-Aid, and made 'moose muck' cake by an open fire. In my current adventures, I may not be roughing it, but I've had a great time. I've been to the top of Fuji and saw the sunrise bright and early, I've hiked along the Great Wall of China, went past police and armed military guards to wander the Forbidden City in Beijing; I've been to the southern most part of Japan in Okinawa, and I even went swimming in the ocean in December.

I love my little adventure spirit. He makes me listen to the unknown land calling. He whispers in my ears of the awaiting delights. Never fearing the small paths, we make our own way in the world. Thank you, for the adventure. ■

The Staff Photo

by Steve Niedorf

For the last eight years, I have been coming up to the Base during seasonal staff training week to present a few classes and take the staff picture. As I look back, it's been an interesting time period because so much has changed in so many ways, Base staff, administrations and the facilities.

One thing has stayed the same and that is the atmosphere and spirit of the staff during those first few weeks. There's excitement in the air for what the summer will bring, the camaraderie formed on the swamper trips, the patient way the experienced staff shares hard earned knowledge and insights, and that intangible quality and confidence of young people taking on a difficult job for which they are well trained

and well suited. The staff knows it will be hard and will probably entail more responsibility than they have ever had before, but they are going to have a blast!

When I started shooting the staff photo years ago, I used a medium format, 6x7cm film camera; then a sweet little 6x4.5 camera; and today I shoot with a 21 mega pixel digital SLR. When I started taking the photos I stood on a ladder and shot a small group standing in front of the Lodge. As the staff grew so did my need of elevation and we slowly evolved to an electric lift and then a scaffold.

This year, due to some minor logistical issues, there was no scaffold or lift. Coincidentally, it was also the largest group we've ever had to shoot. *(continued on next page)*

Staff Photo (cont'd.)

(continued from previous page)

But, a location photographer always has to think on their feet and we found a great location off the Bay Post porch on the lakeside. Already elevated with clear ground, the site was well shaded from harsh morning sun and it was perfect. Except for one mirror problem; rain! Due to scheduling we had to shoot when we had to shoot, so we grouped everyone together for a quick session during a light rain first thing after breakfast.

The odds of getting everyone looking good or even looking at the camera during a typical photo session are slim but during a drizzle it is impossible. That said, thank the photo gods for Photoshop. After reviewing the files I selected the one with the most “good” faces and then I proceeded to pick and choose heads from other files with open eyes and smiling faces to cut and paste where I could. A couple hours later after further toning and retouching of the wet ground and some trees, we had an image.

Back in the day, the next step would have been a Fedex shipment of film; now I just send a download link for the high res file via email. The image file was cropped, exposure adjusted and ready to print.

The final print may not mean all that much in the scheme of things. I’m hoping that maybe in a few years someone will run across that 8x10 when they are sorting through a pile of old photos, take a look at their young and confident face, smile and pause for a minute or two and think about that special summer and photo session in the rain. ■



June 2008 Staff Rendezvous

Christmas in June

by Mike Holdgrafer

The evening of June 10th generally concludes the majority of staff training. On that evening, Northern Staff meet in the Dining Hall to eagerly await the arrival of Santa (**Butch Diesslin**) and his elves (SAA alumni in attendance) bearing gifts from the SAA. Although I write this tongue-in-cheek, the staff has come to refer to this evening as Christmas, for it is the one night when the SAA, represented by Butch and other members, take center stage to solidify the SAA’s presence and support of the Northern Tier program. On this night, we recognize the returning staff and the contribution they make in enhancing the program with their return, by giving away XY paddles to second year staff, a Kondos guide’s pack with the SAA logo to third year staff and the staff member’s name embroidered on it, along with

other incentives provided to returning staff.

We also discuss the credit established in the Trading Post for staff, together with a gift book as to voyageur history or some other relevant topic. Further, we present the Northern Tier Scholarship Program to the staff. As you can imagine, the evening begins to sound a

little bit like Christmas.

June 10th is also the day when seminar sessions are conducted across the Base. Each staff member has the opportunity, having returned from their swamper trips on June 9th, to elect what sessions s/he wishes to attend to refine his or her skills or knowledge. Over the many years since this was imple-



Experienced staff explains canoe terminology using a water bottle.



Judging the Aluminum Chef Cook-off.

mented by **Terry Schocke**, many SAA members have been presenters, including **Cory Kolodji**, **Bob O'Hara**, **Chuck Rose**, **Steve Spencer** and **Steve Niedorf**. In 2008, **Butch Diesslin** presented weather and route planning as topics, while **Dick Shank** conducted nature hikes and **Mike Holdgrafer** instructed staff on cooking fish and related fish stories (lies), along with the science behind the northern lights. **Steve Niedorf** was present the day before to take the annual staff photo, which is no small event given that training involves both Canadian and U.S. personnel. It does not help matters when it is cold and rainy like when Steve took the 2008 photo.

Other SAA alumni also pitched in to help with earlier training. In addition to Dick, **Winnie Renner** and **Kim Bielawski** stepped forward to shoulder wilderness medicine training, something Winnie and Kim have done for many years, often joined by **Linnea Renner**.

As a reader can see, in many ways we have stepped forward as an organization to help support the Northern Tier program. This leads us to a more exciting opportunity and role in 2009.

While talking to **Carl Boyles**, Director of Program, an idea evolved that creates a

win-win situation for everyone. Starting this year, the SAA will be responsible for the seminars and evening program. We have agreed to step forward and to recruit presenters from within our ranks, the staff and from outside to put on the seminars. We will take care of all aspects of the seminar day along with our role in Christmas. This sounds simple, but it will take a lot of effort to coordinate and ensure that we put the best possible programs forward. In other words, it takes a lot of elves to pull this off.

In addition, we will be ramping up involvement in other areas of training. We will schedule a SAA dinner and other down-time activities for SAA members, which we hope may include a chance to join Butch for a real shore lunch. This is an exciting opportunity and we look forward to helping Carl, as well as **Kevin Dowling**, the now not-so-new General Manager, and **Joe Mattson**, Program Director. Please consider this an invitation to participate. If you are interested, please email me at mike.holdgrafer@dtag.com.

Finally, if you are present on Christmas this coming June, Butch does not require that you wear an elf suit. ■



Angela Stuart displays Mexican trail food.



Selecting a canoe for the Swamper Trip.



What is it?

Association Launches New Membership System

by Alex Nepple

The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association has launched a new membership system that allows alumni access to alumni records and other information through an online portal. This portal has many exciting features for alumni including the ability to update your alumni profile, upload a photo of yourself, become a member or renew your membership. Members of the Association have extra incentives including the ability to search an interactive alumni directory and participate in a private discussion forum.

Please log-in with your email address at:
<http://portal.holry.org/>

You will need to assign yourself a new password by clicking the "Forgot Password" link.

Please enter your e-mail and we will e-mail you instructions on how to establish your password. If your email address is not found or you cannot log-in contact the association at [REDACTED] with your full name. Once we update your record you will be able to log-in.

We are working to add more features and improve the portal. If you have any comments or questions please feel free to contact us at [REDACTED]. ■

Fishing with Butch, Pheasant and the Boys

by Chris Wolfe (1969-71, 1975)

One of life's best activities is fishing. For me, it is a means to an end. It's great to come home with a stringer full of fish or pictures of the fish that were caught and released. But for me, it's not really the catching that has got me hooked on this sport, it is the fishing itself. Fishing essentially becomes a means to an end; in this case spending some serious time on a pristine lake or river with some fishing buddies. If you are fishing for walleye, small-mouth bass or lake trout, that means a trip to the Boundary Waters. Since my walleye catching skills had gotten rusty, and I had never caught a lake trout in my life, I was delighted to be invited on Pheasant's (aka Dave Hyink) annual Lac La Croix "family" fishing trip.

The trip was timed after the Rendezvous held in Ely over Labor Day weekend. At the conclusion of the Rendezvous, we headed for Crane Lake and stayed in a fishing cabin across from Anderson's Outfitters. The next day we were flown in to Campbell's Cabins on the Ontario side of Lac La Croix. What followed were four days of the best fishing I've ever experienced.

Aside from Dave, our fishing party consisted of Butch Diesslin, former Charlie guide and Swamper Keeper at Sommers Canoe Base; Mike Holdgrafer, former Charlie guide; and Dave's brothers-in-law, Billy and Rod, both able and avid fishermen. All had been on previous fishing trips in the Boundary Waters and all knew what they were doing. My most recent Quetico fishing experience had been on a family canoe trip two years



earlier. On that occasion, after setting up camp at Russell Falls, I discovered that I had left both of my spinning reels in the truck back at Crane Lake. Fortunately, I found a spool of 12 lb. Maxima leader and was able to catch a few fish by holding the fishing rod in one hand and controlling the spool in the other. During this year's trip, I double-checked that both spinning reels were safely packed before departing the dock at Crane Lake.

I drew the long straw and got paired up with Butch along with our fishing guide. The combination of having a Lac La Croix First Nation fishing guide, a depth finder and Butch all in the same boat, not necessarily in that order, practically insured us of success. Butch and Curtis started catching fish right off the bat. We were fishing a reef about 45 feet down that was close to the US-Canadian border. This honey hole was full of big walleye, several over 25 inches, and trophy-sized smallies over 20 inches in length. Since I wasn't catching fish and Butch and Curtis couldn't keep them off their lines, I needed to figure out what I was doing differently from Butch and Curtis. I

quickly learned that gently jigging a few inches off the bottom was the ticket to success. Later, while fishing the mouth of the Namakan River, Butch showed me how to tie up a Lindy Rig. One variation that Butch showed me that worked quite well was to tie a floating jig on the end of the Lindy Rig. The floating jig head kept the hook from getting snagged, much like a corky does on the drift rigs commonly used in the Pacific Northwest where I live.

When we gathered on an island for a shore lunch, all the rest of our party had done well. Rod had caught and released a 46 inch northern pike on an Erie Dearie, a spinner with a rather long metal shank that is designed for walleye trolling. Although Rod wasn't using a steel leader, the metal shank prevented the northern's razor sharp teeth from slicing through his 10 lb. test leader. That fish turned out to be the largest that had been caught at Campbell's all summer long on Lac La Croix.

The next day was cold and rainy. For some reason, I elected to wear shorts along with my Gortex raincoat. While guiding canoe trips for Sommers Canoe Base, this had

been my standard approach in dealing with wet weather. The raincoat was long enough to keep my shorts dry. When the rain eventually stopped, my legs would dry quickly and I felt much warmer than if I had been wearing long pants, which invariably got wet. What I had failed to consider was that while canoeing, one generates considerably more heat than one does sitting in the bow of a fishing boat jigging for walleye. As the day wore on and I began to shiver, my jigging cadence progressively got more rapid and ultimately became violent. Needless to say, the bite turned off somewhere between the "slow" and "rapid" cadence. Meanwhile, Butch and our guide were nice and dry in their Gortex rain coats and rain pants. They continued to catch large walleyes and bass all day long. Next year, I'll bring some rain pants along!

On the final day of our trip, we were flown into Poohbah Lake, located in the Quetico Provincial Park. The First Nation Guides have negotiated a treaty with the Canadian government, allowing them to fly into two lakes within the Quetico per year. These lakes rotate on a bi-yearly basis. As it turned out, Poohbah was the destination of the final trip I guided for Sommers at the end of the 1975 season. After portaging into Poohbah from Conmee via the three notorious one mile swamp portages, we had camped on the very island that we I stood upon after being dropped off by float plane. When we arrived at Poohbah in 1975, our crew was so exhausted from a long day of portaging that no one

considered wetting a line. We set up our tents, cooked up some macaroni and cheese and went to bed. It turns out that Poohbah is a highly productive lake for walleye and lake trout in the Quetico. I suspect that because of the difficulty in reaching this lake by paddle and portage it receives little fishing pressure from canoeists. Between Butch, the guide and me, we caught and released between 50 and 75 walleye before a late lunch that day.

After lunch, we focused on catching lake trout. Butch put on a clinic. Within five minutes, Butch had caught and boated two very nice lakers. He then pointed out that to effectively fish with the barbless 2-ounce jig required to reach the 80 to 90 feet depth that lake trout prefer, one needs a stiffer, medium action rod than the one I was using. He generously loaned me his rod, reel and jig and explained that I needed to start jigging at the bottom and then reel the line in a crank or two at a time as one continues to jig. Soon after, I began to catch lake trout, as well. Meanwhile, Butch pulled out his ultralight rod and continued to catch and release lake trout on very light tackle. I was impressed.

As it turned out, one of the most productive holes for lake trout fishing on Poohbah was just off the east side of the island where we started. Within two canoes lengths from shore, the water dropped off to 90 feet. This hole was just teeming with lakers! Although we caught several of these beauties from a boat, I am sure that we could have fished from shore with equal success. Had we only known that back in 1975! ■

2008 Northern Tier Seasonal Staff Scholarships

by Mike McMahon

During 2008, the SAA along with the Northern Tier Advisory Committee awarded twelve scholarships to Northern Tier seasonal staff. This year's awards totaled \$11,000. Since the inception of the Scholarship Program, \$215,500 in total scholarships has been awarded.

Staff members become eligible for the scholarships after completing two years on the seasonal staff at one of the Northern Tier bases. Each staff member is eligible to receive up to \$3,000 during his or her tenure. The scholarships are sent directly to the financial aid office of the staff member's school for payment of education expenses.

The Northern Tier Staff Scholarship fund has three designated scholarships. The Christopher D. Breen Memorial Scholarship is awarded to the seasonal staff member who embodies the "can do attitude" and "service to Scouts" that was the legacy of **Chris Breen**. This selection is made annually by the professional

staff of the Northern Tier High Adventure Program from staff members applying for the seasonal staff scholarships. The 2008 Chris Breen Memorial Scholarship was awarded to **Josef Simon**.

The Terry J. Wall Scholarship was established by Dr. Terry Wall, who participated in the Northern Tier Program in 1970 as a Scout, as well as several times as an advisor from 1981 to 1995. The 2008 Terry J. Wall Scholarship was presented to **Ryan Slack**.

The Erickson Memorial Scholarship recognizes an employee who has worked in a base-staff position, gone "above and beyond" expectations in support and service to Northern Tier attendees, demonstrated leadership to the program and has exhibited a strong work ethic. Selected by the professional staff, **Daniel Moser** was the 2008 recipient of an Erickson Memorial Scholarship.

Michael Carter, Alexander Moss, Megan Reid, Ben

Schroeder and Josef Simon received \$500 scholarships as second-year staff members. Third-year staff members **Mark Baxter, Alexander Griffin, Shane Johnson and Ryan Slack** each received a \$1,000 scholarship. Fourth year staff members who received \$1,500 scholarships were **Michael Bentsdahl and Daniel Boser. Scott Wickham**, who has been a staff member for nine seasons, also received a \$1,500 scholarship.

Northern Tier seasonal staff members who have completed at least two years with the program, are enrolled in college or university programs, are students in good standing, and have worked on staff for at least ten weeks in the year are eligible to apply for the scholarships. Scholarship applications are available from the professional staff and distributed during seasonal staff training. *Applications, including transcripts and essays, for 2009 are due no later than August 1, 2009.* ■

The Need for Volunteerism

by Pat Cox

The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to providing support to Northern Tier Seasonal Staff (the Charlie Guides and Base Staff at Ely, Atikokan and Bissett); developing the camaraderie of the Association's membership with the common wilderness interest; and encouraging participation in wilderness experiences for

youth. As an all-volunteer organization, we need people willing to give of their time, talent, and financial resources to make the mission succeed. Most of the membership helps in one way or another. Almost everyone expresses a desire to do more but simultaneously confirm that they are not sure how to help.

As a starting point, each member is encouraged to help

by working on a project or leading a project. We (your current Directors and officers) encourage each member to consider volunteering to serve as a Director of the Association. We actively recruit members who volunteer on projects or who volunteer to lead projects to serve as Directors. Additionally, anyone who
(continued on next page)

The Need for Volunteerism (cont'd.)

(continued from previous page)

is a member who wishes to serve as a Director is eligible to run for Director. The most common question concerning being a Director that we are asked is to explain what is expected of a Director.

The Directors and officers of the Association put together and approved a set of expectations of each Director who agrees to serve. Please review this and consider volunteering more of your time and talent to help make the Association more effective in accomplishing its mission.

Directors are expected to do the following:

1. Attend at least one (1) Director meeting per year, either in person or electronically (conference phone call, web interface of some sort, etc.)
2. Financially participate in the Crossing Portages annual giving campaign.
3. Participate in all electronic actions, feedback and written follow-up. Much of the initial discussion on topics

will take place via e-mail.

4. Recruit and/or engage your peers in the activities and business of the association.
5. Contribute or sponsor one article per year for Reflections or www.holry.org.
6. Agree to actively serve on one standing committee or task force. Examples include Tree Planting, Staff Training, Work Week, Administration, Communication, and Rendezvous.
7. Most importantly – self govern your participation. Resign as a Director of the Association if circumstances change and make active participation unrealistic or impossible.

If you cannot be a Director but you want to help, consider volunteering to lead a project. We accomplish a great deal each year, but we also have been forced to put some good ideas on hold due to insufficient volunteer leadership.

Please contact any of the officers or Directors if you are interested in taking a leadership role as a Director or leading an Association project. ■



A younger Chuck holding a stringer of Lake Trout.

Meet Your Directors and Officers

by Mike Holdgrafer, November 17, 2008

The following article is the start of a new series to provide a little information about one or more Directors and Officers of the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. in each succeeding issue of Reflections.

Charles “Chuck” Rose

Chuck Rose is starting his fourth 3-year term as a SAA Director and his fifth year as Secretary. I caught up with Chuck, an Associate Professor of Environmental and Technological Studies at St. Cloud State University, as he was preparing a class presentation. Whether Chuck realizes this or not, Chuck has been involved in education for most of his adult life if one includes his years on the staff at Northern

Tier, as a volunteer in Scouting and at Northern Tier, and as devoted parent.

Chuck worked almost every summer from 1980 to 1989, excluding 1986 and part of 1987, in some capacity for the Base. He was an interpreter from 1980 to 1984, the last four summers being in Bissett, Manitoba, while also in Atikokan, Ontario in 1984. He was the Atikokan Director in 1985 and split his time as Bay Post Director in Ely. For part of the summer in 1987, followed by 1988 and 1989, Chuck was the Guide’s Chief. In 1987, he joined Bob O’Hara, renowned arctic canoeing explorer, and took a trip on the Thelon River in the Northwest Territories and

LIFETIME GIVING

What? Tax Deduction and Tax Savings for you now. Permanent support for the SAA now and later.

How? Donate appreciated property where you have substantial gains such as stocks, real estate, art work, etc.

When? Anytime – as part of your estate planning or to reduce current taxes.

We will work with your attorney and tax advisor to make this an effective tax saving strategy for you and your estate.

Please contact SAA President Patrick Cox by phone at 281-497-4226, ext. 2010; by email at patrick.cox@coxcpa.net; or any SAA director or officer. The directors and officers with knowledge in this subject area donate their time. No fees are charged to the SAA for your donations.

Nunavut (Please see the accompanying photo of a younger Chuck holding a stringer of Lake Trout). Chuck also guided a Northern Tier trip in 2002.

Since his days on the staff, Chuck has remained actively engaged as a volunteer supporting the Northern Tier program. He recently was appointed to the Northern Tier Committee. For many years, he has presented programs on BWCAW water quality, instructing staff on the use of Secchi discs to determine lake water clarity, as well as sharing his years of knowledge and experience in traditional woods' skills, such as portaging a canoe, with seasonal staff. Chuck has taken on a number of projects over the years to preserve pieces of the Base's history such as compiling the Base's promotional films onto a DVD. He has also authored multiple articles about the Base and has researched the life of Sigurd F. Olson and others who contributed in their own way to rich history of the program and the surrounding area. *The Art of the Canoe*, which documented the life of Joe Seliga, contains material provided by Chuck. It should come as no surprise that Chuck's flotilla of canoes and kayaks includes a Seliga.

His vocation has taken him to England twice. In March 2009, Chuck will be a presenter at Canoecopia, the "World's Largest Paddlesport Expo" and his topic will cover water quality in the BWCAW. While Chuck is in Madison, Wisconsin for Canoecopia, he may catch-up with his eldest daughter Caroline, who is a freshman at UW-Madison. Chuck told me that Caroline proudly sports a tee-shirt showing Bucky Badger skydiving as she is an avid, licensed skydiver (The writer failed to find out if she was on

the Badger Skydiving Club or the Madcity Skydivers.).

Chuck's son, David, is a sophomore in high school in Sartell, Minnesota. More importantly, he is a Life Scout and commencing his Eagle service project soon. Also active with David in Scouting, Chuck presently serves as the Scoutmaster of Troop 211 in Sartell. This past August, the Troop completed a kayaking adventure in the Apostle Islands National Seashore following Chuck's return from England.

In essence, Chuck's avocation is similar to his vocation in that it also deals with water; that is, he is an avid canoeist and kayaker. Since his children were young, Chuck and his wife, Barb Rosene, have ventured into the BWCAW many times to instill the spirit of the Far Northland in Caroline, David and Katherine, who is their youngest daughter in 8th grade. Chuck has mastered family canoe trips and Barb's father of 78 years of age joined the clan on one expedition.

When asked about his most memorable Northern Tier experience, Chuck quickly answered it was his first trip as an Interpreter in 1980. Chuck had never been to the Base as a participant, but the stories of older Scouts in his Troop fostered a desire in him to be a Charlie Guide. Chuck's first trip was to Sunday Lake, looping back to the border up Knife, to Ottertrack, then back through Ester, Kekakabic, Alice and Ensign, back to the landing. In essence, his first trip as an educator.

Chuck teaches us that his vision for the SAA is simple; to preserve the spirit of the Far Northland through preserving history. In preserving the spirit of the Far Northland, it improves the staff and enhances the experience of each participant. ■

Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. 2007 Annual Membership Meeting Minutes

*Respectfully submitted,
by Chuck Rose, Association Secretary*

The Annual Meeting of the membership of the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc.; was held at the Lodge building at Sommers Canoe Base on the 30th day of September A.D. 2008 at 1:45 P.M., pursuant to Article III, Section 2 of the Bylaws of the Corporation.

The following members were in attendance: Kimberley Bielawski, Donn Christensen, Roy Conradi, Nigel Cooper, Cyd Cooper, Bill Erickson, Keith Gallaway, Jeremiah Gardner, Dave Greenlee, Barbara Cary Hall, Doug Hirdler, Mike Holdgrafer, Tom "Brook" Holleran, Dave Hyink, Cory Kolodji, Joe Mattson, Michael McMahon, Alex Nepple, Knute Niswandt, Robert Oliva, Doug Rausch, Allen Rench, Bob Rench, Don Richard, Greg Richter, Chuck Rose, Dick Shank, Steve Spencer, Laurel Theis, John Thurston, Roger Underwood, Larry Whitmore, Bob Winchell, Chris Wolfe, Ray Wood and Steve Wunderlick.

The meeting was called to order with a Holry! by President Cox.

Election proxies were distributed and collected.

Tom Holleran reported on a project to collect staff stories in two categories, what really happened and what the crews were told.

Mike Holdgrafer gave details of the SAA's continuing work on preservation and enhancement of the Lodge. The SAA has partnered with the Northern Tier in maintenance including replacement of logs and varnishing. The SAA has committed \$28,000

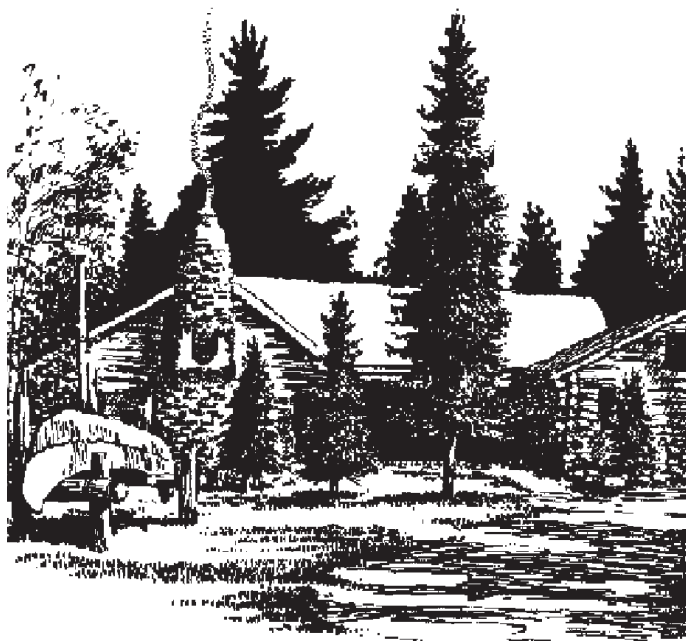
for technology in the building to present history and interpretation to the participants.

Doug Hirdler gave the General Manager's report for 2008. There were 5221 participants in 2008 for all the programs (third highest ever) which were serviced by 192 staff (including 26 Canadians). Americans working in Canada were provided with a work permit and Remote Area Border Crossing permit. The summer was a very safe one with only 37 incidents in the first aid logs. Only 11 staff applied for the scholarship program this year, nine were deemed eligible. Doug stated that the location of the new dining hall (estimated \$2.5 million cost) will be decided soon with the Rendezvous campfire area being the leading candidate. The Triple Crown program (for attending all three National High Adventure bases) was reviewed. Profits from selling Triple Crown patches (guessed at \$15,000 for 2008) are used for staff scholarships.

Kevin Dowling, the new General Manager of Northern Tier introduced himself. He has been at Northern tier since August 1. He has a long background in professional Scouting. In 2007, Kevin's son participated in an Order of the Arrow trail maintenance trek.

John Thurston thanked Doug for his 40+ years of service to the Boy Scouts of America and wished him well in his retirement.

Butch Diesslin reviewed the Sommers Alumni Association/Philmont Staff Association exchange program. In 2007, (continued on next page)



2007 Annual Membership Meeting Minutes *(cont'd.)*

(continued from previous page)

members of both organizations participated in a BWCA trip, the 2008 trek was at Philmont. Butch and Lee Huckstep from the PSA are coordinating the program.

Nigel Cooper gave the treasurer's report. Our annual income (from memberships and donations including Crossing Portages) and expenses (scholarships, staff perks, and communications) are both around \$50,000. The SAA has about \$250,000 in the back including endowments for scholarships.

Allen Rench described work on archiving crew and other photos from 1961 to 1975 to be put on www.holry.org with the capacity for participants to find their crew photos and add their stories to the site. He also discussed the ongoing miniature paddles displayed in the Lodge.

Mike Holdgrafer reported that Mike Bingley, Pat Cox, Alex Nepple, and Chuck Rose were elected to three year terms as directors of the SAA.

Pat Cox described the SAA's Crossing Portages fund raising campaign and asked for suggestions on improving the process. More frequent reminders and being able to donate to specific projects were suggested. Dave Hyink and Larry Whitmore have both written the SAA into their wills and Hyink also emphasized estate planning. Cox also thanked Allen Rench for organizing the 2008 reunion.

Barbara Cary Hall donated a 2' x 3' original acrylic painting by Bob Cary titled Night Crossing to the Northern Tier with the stipulation that it be displayed in a prominent place at the Sommers Canoe Base for as long as it remains. The SAA thanks her for the donation.

Alex Nepple is working on converting the SAA database from Microsoft Access to the web-based Wild Apricot system which also has additional membership management options.

With the singing of *The Far Northland*, the meeting adjourned at 3:35 P.M. ■

Notes from the Portage Trail

Travis McCormick and Johanna (Wogaman) McCormick daughter of Dennis Wogaman were married on October 18, 2008 in Suncook, New Hampshire. Travis is working as a District Executive for the BSA in the Old Colony Council and Johanna works as a Project Engineer with Dimeo Construction Company. They currently live in Cumberland, Rhode Island.

Mike "Bing" Bingley and his wife Lindsey Bingley are pleased to announce the birth of their son, Benjamin Douglas Bingley on May 13, 2008. Ben has been introduced to paddles and finds them delicious.

Dave Hyink has completed a book report/Powerpoint presentation on "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder" by author Richard Louv. Dave states that:

For any number of valid and invalid reasons, increasing numbers of young people are becoming further and further detached from quality contact with nature and the outdoors. The implications and ramifications are monumental. Author, Richard Louv, has done an admirable job of capturing these reasons, their effects on children and society, and the many opportunities

that exist for turning back the rapid advance of what he calls "nature-deficit disorder."

He painstakingly cites relevant research to back up many of his key points and provides the resources for those interested in exploring various individual topics in more depth.

In my opinion, this book should be required reading for parents, educators, and vision-ary leaders of all persuasions.

Dave's work will be posted soon on www.holry.org for anyone interested.

Dick Lavine, who worked at the Base from 1939 to 1942, died earlier this year on January 5, 2008. His obituary will be posted under a new section of www.holry.org to be entitled "Broken Paddles" in the first quarter of 2009. Our deepest sympathies go out to the family of Dick.

Joe Mattson's father, Verner T. Mattson (88), a long-time supporter of Scouting with the Gulf Stream Council in West Palm Beach, Florida, passed away on November 2, 2008. Shortly thereafter, on December 26th, Joe's mother, Lois Mattson (88), passed away. Our sincerest sympathies go out to Joe and his family. His parents' obituaries can be found on-line at the Ely Echo website. ■



Blessed for Decades with Artwork

The Northern Tier High Adventure Program and Sommers Alumni Association have been blessed for decades with artwork by **Bob Cary** up until his death in June 2006. Since then, **Barb Cary Hall** has continued to graciously provide us with artwork completed by Bob prior to his death. At the Annual Meeting in September 2008, Barb donated the painting shown at right of voyageurs in a birch bark canoe paddling at night towards a distant campfire for the auction.

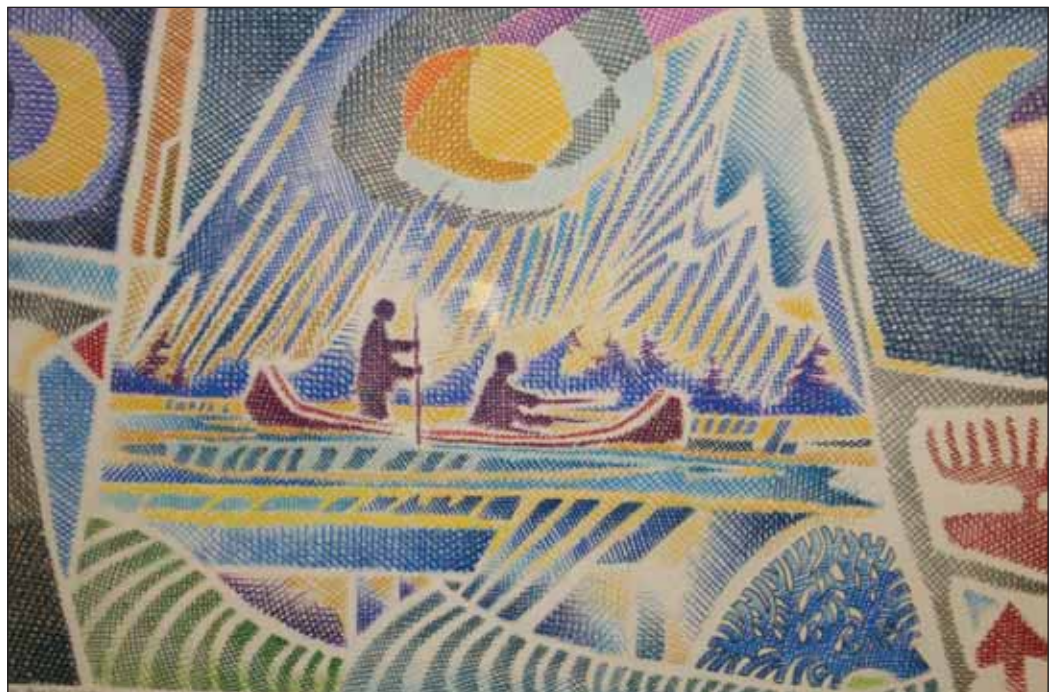
Thank you Barb for this generous gift and for all of your support over the years! ■



Painting by Bob Cary of voyageurs in a birch bark canoe paddling at night towards a distant campfire for the auction.

Exclusive Painting by Réal Bérard for 2008 Rendezvous

Shown at right is “Between Two Crescents,” painted by **Réal Bérard** exclusively for the 2008 Rendezvous. **Réal**, renowned in Canada as an illustrator, sculptor and painter, is an honorary Charlie Guide and has supported the Sommers Alumni Association by donating a painting for the past several Rendezvous, which is then auctioned for the scholarship fund and used on the Rendezvous tee-shirt. *Merci beaucoup Réal, for these paintings and your continued support! ■*



"Between Two Crescents," painted by Réal Bérard exclusively for the 2008 Rendezvous.

SOMMERS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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