



Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc.

REFLECTIONS



Supporting the mission and programs of Northern Tier National High Adventure.

FALL 2020 EDITION



President's message

By Eric Peterson

In late July of this summer, I was fortunate enough to be able to take my crew up to Northern Tier. We paddled what will be the "The Charles L. Sommers Trek" during Northern Tier's 100th season in 2022 and the 100th Anniversary season in 2023.

This trip will commemorate the Eagle Scout trips of the 1920s and 1930s. It follows the route of a canoe trip in 1930. My crew put into Fall Lake a few hundred feet up the shore from the original Winton landing where those trips departed.

We then paddled down to that exact location. The scene now is quite different from what appeared in the photos of "Canoe Base" by George D. Hedrick and "Diamond in the North" by Gene Felton. Rather than Scouts loading their canoes along the logging pier of the decaying St. Croix Lumber Company, it consists of a wooded shoreline with a few docks and cabins.

We journeyed up Basswood, across Crooked Lake and over to Iron Lake. The pinnacle of the trip was the stretch through the Beartrap River in the Sundial Primitive Management Area (PMA). It provided my Scouts with a physical and mental challenge that they all conquered. There was quite a feeling of accomplishment expressed by my Scouts after we settled in at our campsite on Thunder Lake

and reflected on the rigors of the day.

This trip would not have been possible had it not been for the extraordinary efforts of the Northern Tier staff in executing an effective COVID management plan. The Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base was able to open to crews in July and August, though the Canadian Bases remained closed all summer. During the two months, 220 crews consisting of 1,621 participants were able to experience a wilderness adventure that will last their lifetime.

I returned to the Canoe Base in mid-August. I had the pleasure of speaking to the advisor of the last crew of the season as they ended their journey at Felton's landing. He was grateful for the opportunity that Northern Tier provided his Scouts. He stated how since March, his Scouts had lost the experiences of school, sports, and camp. It was the only activity they had since then, and it was fantastic.

Many of us will be looking forward to shredding, burning, or deleting our 2020 calendars at the end of the year. These Scouts will hold the fond memory of their 2020 Northern Tier wilderness canoe trip.

Paddle on!

New programs ready for the 100th anniversary of wilderness canoeing

By Dave Hyink

Programs to celebrate the 100th anniversary of wilderness canoeing at Northern Tier High Adventure are in place. The celebration will span two summers to involve as many Scouts, leaders, and staff members possible. It will include the centennial season of 2022 and the 100th anniversary in 2023.

The events will kick-off at the reunion in August 2021 and conclude at the reunion in the fall of 2023.

Trips will honor the Boy Scouts of America's Region Ten. It guided the summer canoeing program through the first five decades. In recognition, there is a new award based on the original participant award called the **Paul Bunyan Award**. There are three ways to earn it. The first way is to take part in a crew from one of ten current local councils that were once part of Region Ten. The second is to take a canoe trip that exceeds 100-miles.

The third way to earn the award is to take part in one of two featured trips. The trips honor the first and last chairmen of Region Ten: Charles L. Sommers and Paul R. Christen.

The **Charles L. Sommers Trek** will commemorate the Eagle Scout trips of the 1920s and 1930s. It follows a 1930 Eagle Scout trip, which consisted of 21 Eagle Scouts, leaders, and canoeing experts. This trip will leave from a location near the original departure point at the former St. Croix Lumber Company mill in Winton, MN. The route will take the crew from Fall Lake, through Newton Lake and Pipestone Bay to Basswood Lake, Basswood River, Crooked Lake, Iron Lake, and Bottle lakes to Lac LaCroix. The original trip returned to Winton by Beartrap River and Beartrap Lake. This trip stays in the Boundary Waters. It appears that the 1930 trek took a side trip to Rebecca Falls in Canada and also visited the pictographs on Lac La Croix. The side trip

to Rebecca Falls is not part of the trip, but a paddle to the pictographs will be.

The **Paul R. Christen Trek** will follow one of the popular routes for extended trips by Region Ten crews – the circumnavigation of Hunter Island. This 200-mile Hunter Island loop requires 12-days on the trail. Hunter Island is bound to the south by Ottertrack Lake, Knife Lake, and Basswood Lakes on the international border, to the east by Saganaga Lake, to the north by Kawnipi and Sturgeon lakes, and on the west by the Maligne River. With the Saganaga-Maligne drainage to the east and north and the Basswood drainage to the south and west. The “island” is approximately 45-miles across east to west and about 32-miles north to south. This trek begins and ends at Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base.

Reservations for the 2022 summer canoeing season open on October 1, 2020. Learn more by visiting ntier.org/summer-adventures/100-years-of-high-adventure/

(Dave is the chair of the Northern Tier Advisory Committee's program task force.)



The original Paul Bunyan Award.



The new Paul Bunyan Award patch emblem.





The summer of 2020 at Northern Tier. The same, but different.

By Leslie Thibodeaux

The COVID-19 pandemic struck early in 2020 as the Governor of Minnesota issued a Stay at Home Order. We knew our summer was going to be different than any before. The full-time team immediately began planning for how we could safely operate our program through the pandemic.

Led by Abby Wilkes, associate director of programs, the COVID-19 plan came together. With many virtual meetings, the team developed a plan for everything. From before a crew arrives, return to base after their trip, and heading home. The final document, draft ten, was a 69-page document. Yep, you read right, 69 pages! Once draft six was in place, we realized the only way we could succeed was to make sure all levels of the seasonal team felt confident in it. With reviews by our spring seasonal team and then summer managers, a final version developed where the staff felt they could still provide an outstanding program.

Were we successful? Absolutely! There was only one confirmed case of COVID-19 at Northern Tier this summer. Our strict health and safety guidelines, as well as quarantine requirements, allowed us to contain and keep it from spreading. This enabled us to continue providing the program to Scouts.

Scouts and staff alike followed the updated procedures, which included:

- Mask wearing by all participants and staff
- Regular hand washing and sanitizing before entering any buildings
- Twice daily sanitizing of all touch surfaces including door handles, sink handles, and more
- Outside dining by all crews
- Curbside pick-up at the trading post or scheduled times to limit capacity
- No visitors (we missed the alumni this year and hope that we can see them again soon!)
- Closure of all indoor social areas (including staff lounge and saunas)

What was the result? Northern Tier opened the Ely base on July 1st, but both Canadian bases remained closed due to the border closure. We tried to accommodate as many of the crews heading to Atikokan and Bissett at the Ely base. There were many cancellations. Due to state restrictions, families being uncomfortable, and other COVID-19 related concerns. In the end, we provided the program to 220 crews and 1,621 participants. We had over 100 seasonal staff, including 16 from the US Naval Academy.

What did our participants say?

- *"Great COVID-19 precautions in place."*
- *"This was the best trip ever! Thank you so much for keeping it open and not closing due to COVID."*
- *"We appreciate the Northern tier being open this year with COVID in the world. When Philmont closed this year having this program open truly made a difference in the lives of our scouts."*
- *"Amazing accommodation, rules, and policies to allow the NT treks to continue during the COVID pandemic. We always felt safe."*
- *"Awesome job. Glad you worked around COVID!!"*

Where do we go from here? We learned a lot from our procedural changes. COVID-19 or not, there will be some updates to the way we plan and prepare for crews – we discovered more efficient ways of doing things.

We are in the final planning stages for the Okpik 2020-2021 season. We are currently expecting 26 Holiday Stay crews, down from 30. This is because we have reduced the capacity and spread the crews over three instead of two sessions. The rest of the season looks to be on track for normal attendance.

The summer of 2021 is shaping up to be a record-setting attendance year. We are keeping an eye on the pandemic. We expect to have to adjust our operations again in 2021 to provide a safe program. Now that we have done it once, we know we can do it again!

In a challenging summer, the academic scholarship program continues

By Alex D. Nepple

The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. continued its tradition of providing academic scholarships to the seasonal staff of Northern Tier. This year the length of the season was shorter at two months, and the size of the staff was smaller at around 100. Yet, the number of scholarships remained impressive at 25 returning staff receiving scholarships.

This year's academic scholarship recipients are Joshua Anderson (Erickson Memorial Scholarship), Carl Brownbridge, Robert Bruner, Matthew Bruton, Haakon Colwell, Mark Davie, Blake Ferree (Marshall Hollis Scholarship), Jonathan Gardner (David Hyink Scholarship), Elijah Greiner (Christopher D. Breen Memorial Scholarship), Charles Kilbourn III (Butch

Diesslin Scholarship), Amos Kolodji (Jack and Mary Osborn Scholarship), Allen Lowenstein, Hagan McHenry, Annarlene Nikolaus (Friends of Tinnerman / Tinnerman Guide Association Scholarship), Hunter Oliver, William Olson, Emily Pearson, Daniel Rogan, Tim Satterthwaite (Clifford J. Hanson Memorial Scholarship), Julianna Schmidt (Robert T. Marquardt Scholarship), Jonathan Slezak, James Steuteville, Andrew Taylor, Matthew Warrick (Terry J. Wall Charles Sommers Scholarship), and Patrick Williams.

Congratulations to the 2020 scholarship recipients! Thank you to our members and supporters for your generous support of the association.

Fee for new life memberships changes on November 1st

By Alex D. Nepple

Beginning on November 1st, the cost of a new life membership will increase to \$300. It's the first time in over 28-years the association has increased the fee for joining as a life member.

Last year the annual membership was also simplified. The "annual" and "sustaining" annual memberships were consolidated into one membership. The fee increased for the first time to \$20 a year.

The modest increase ensures the association is sustainable and has the resources to fulfill its mission. In today's dollars, the new membership fee is

close to the original when adjusted for inflation. It remains the least expensive life membership of all high adventure alumni associations.

Current staff at Northern Tier are still eligible for a discounted life membership. The discounted life membership will be \$200, which represents a 1/3rd discount.

Those interested in joining as a life member before the increase can do so online at holry.org. Payments must be received or postmarked by October 31st.

Calendar of events

Annual Meeting of Voting Members

November 1, 2020
Circle Pines, MN

Canoecopia and Alumni Dinner

March 12 – March 14, 2021
Madison, WI

Alumni Work Week and Seminar Day

May 24 – June 7, 2021
Northern Tier High Adventure, Ely, MN

Northern Tier / Sommers Alumni Reunion

August 20 – 22, 2021
Northern Tier High Adventure, Ely, MN

For further information visit holry.org

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