



Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc.

REFLECTIONS



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

WINTER 2017 EDITION

Reflection's Silver Anniversary Edition: Celebrating 25 years of service to NT The SAA seeds are planted

By Dave Hyink

In 1985, Sommers Alumnus and former Canoe Base Committee Chair, Gene Felton, organized and revived the notion of the periodic Sommers Staff Reunion. This highly successful event resulted in the biennial Rendezvous that continue to this day. It was there that Sandy Bridges took Bill Stigler and me aside and laid out his concept of a formalized "alumni association" whose purpose would be to provide advocacy and support for the Northern Tier and to supplement and support the efforts of the Northern Tier Committee. Sandy's vision included such things as staff training support, special projects, reviving reunions and establishing a staff scholarship program. Those dreams of 1985 are realities today!

In 1986, Bill and I were added to the Committee and tasked by Chairman Ted Carlson to "organize the alumni." Now Charlie Guides - being a rather independent bunch - were quite content with the existing informal organization which many referred to as

The Moccasin Telegraph; and for the next few years the proposed formal organization was a tough sell. However, by 1991 it became apparent that the Telegraph was necessary, but clearly not sufficient, as nearly 70 years of Boy Scout canoeing was threatened by major changes proposed by the US Forest Service in the BWCAW Management Plan. In my opinion, this policy initiative by the USFS was the catalyst that solidified both the need and support for the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. Salient aspects of the SAA's involvement in shaping the final BWCAW Management Plan appear in Gene Felton's book "A Diamond in the North: A History of Scout Adventure in the North Country 1923-1998." (reprinted below) Perhaps one day, I will put a pen to the rest of the story.

Today we celebrate those 1985 seeds sprouting and growing into deep-running roots that provide the strong foundation for today's SAA.

Alumni Become a Force

Reprinted from "A Diamond in the North: A History of Scout Adventure in the North Country 1923-1998" by Gene Felton, Sommers Alumni Association, 1998

Sommers staff have always felt their unique bonds forged by love of the country and their common north woods experiences in Scouting. The thought was expressed many-a-time... "If we could only tap the alumni as a resource..." Some alums were on the Canoe Base committee, to be sure, and some stopped in at Moose Lake and then, sometimes with their kids. But there was no concerted effort to organize them - until 1985. That summer, a major effort was made to attract alumni to an August reunion, and it drew 65 people. That started a movement that has grown even faster than fish stories. The Alums decided to meet every other year.

Early in 1992, the Sommers Alumni Association was incorporated as a non-profit Minnesota corporation, and its influence has grown steadily since. Today the association has more than 300 members and a mailing list of 1,000. The association raised \$150,000 toward Northern Tier support in the association's first four years, plus providing "sweat equity," staff training expertise and networking connections. Those who had speculated about the political and communications

muscle that a mobilized alumni could wield were rewarded in 1992. The U.S. Forest Service proposed dropping the group size in the BWCAW from 10 to six people and reducing overnight entry permits by nearly 30 per cent. The change would have severely crippled Northern Tier's program and those of a number of other youth organization sending groups into the BWCAW.

Organizations that in the years past had fought for wilderness preservation, to the benefit of canoeists, were on the opposite side from youth organizations this time. The perception was that many people arguing for the group down-sizing were opposed to youth groups using the BWCAW. In pushing for the smaller-size group, they were attacking the heart and soul of youth group canoeing in the area.

The Sommers Alumni Association stepped up and, under its president, Dave Hyink, sent out information alerting people of the proposed USFS change. The result was more than 700 individual letters from Sommers alumni, other Sommers supporters and youth groups in general. The final USFS plan released in August 1993, recognized youth group concerns on two

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key points. Party size was reduced from 10 to nine with a maximum of three canoes, and the number of available campsites was not changed. Both were acceptable to Northern Tier and other youth groups. Entry point quotas were reduced as proposed (without credible supporting data, the Alumni Association felt), but the association board felt that over-all, the final plan adequately recognized and provided for wilderness access by youth. However, the Alumni Association intervened on behalf of the more than a dozen outfitters in their appeal of the three-watercraft limit. Dave Hyink wrote the appeal document which argued that four-canoe groups wouldn't have any more measurable impact than three canoe and that four canoes would increase load safety and trip flexibility. The USFS did change the plan to accept four canoes to a party.

Renovation and remodeling the Lodge was the first major money project to which the Alumni Association put its shoulder. The association raised more than \$47,000 for the Lodge renovation project in 1992-93 and added another \$10,000 for the Lodge from the group's Crossing Portages fund-raising effort. Jim Sowell, a Dallas, TX, businessman and staff member in the late 60's, started the Lodge renovation drive with a \$10,000 donation contingent upon two-for-one matching funds being raised. They were.

In 1995 the association embarked on a "Crossing Portages" campaign, a five-year fund development effort to finance projects at all three Northern Tier bases. This money would be an important supplement to National BSA capital support. The \$100,000 pledge goal was reached in 1996. The first "Crossing Portages" project was two more first-night cabins at Moose Lake.

From the President's canoe

By Karl Huemiller

Hol-ry,

Twenty-five years ago, a group of Charlie guides came together to support the mission and programs of the Northern Tier National High Adventure Base. These 223 Charter Members recognized the impact the Northern Tier Program had on their lives, and the lives of so many others. They wanted to provide support to ensure the quality, availability and longevity of the Northern Tier Program. As we all know, incredible things happen when Charlie Guides work together.

Over the past 25 years, we have transformed our Association from an idea to an essential pillar of the Base community. We have grown to over 500 members, and contributed tens of thousands of dollars' worth of our time, talents, and treasure each year to support and maintain the program that so significantly impacted our lives.

Over the past 25 years, we have seen friends pass on. It has not always been easy. We now have members who, when the Association was formed, were not even a twinkle in their parent's eye. As we reflect on the past 25 years, we also need to look forward to the next 25. We need to recommit to the challenge laid before us by those first Association members, to support the programs of Northern Tier National High Adventure Base.

I ask that you provide support however you are able, the Association not only requires money to maintain our programs, but passionate people to drive the vision and programs of the association. If you have a passion for the Base, contact me or any of the directors to be part of one of the committees that can turn vision into reality.

Red-Eye!

2018 Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association Board of Directors

The results of the Board of Directors elections were announced at the November 4th Annual Meeting. Congratulations to Angela Miller, Karl Huemiller, Brian Lux and Don Lee upon their election to the Board. They will join current Board members Eric Peterson, Cory

Kolodji, Roger Dellinger, Blake Edwards, Kyle Ford, Dan (Vern) Miller, Don Richard and Liz Vollmer-Buhl. New officers will be elected at the Board's first meeting. Please give them your support.



Lunch time during staff training/work week. Photo by Alex Nepple.

Canoeecopia and work week...the traditions continues

The Charles L. Sommers longstanding tradition of giving back to the base continued this year. First there was Canoeecopia. As Julie Engel explains it, she “headed to Canoeecopia, one of the largest shows dedicated to canoeing/kayaking enthusiasts. When it comes to paddling any vessel, anywhere, at any time, you can find anything you ever wanted at Canoeecopia except for a dog and a spouse. Held annually in March in Madison, WI, Canoeecopia attracts thousands of paddling enthusiasts. Northern Tier has a booth every year and capitalizes on the concentration of paddlers to recruit staff, spread the word about the many programs, and have a mini-reunion of sorts for folks in the Midwest. Don MacDonald urged me to attend, and for the first time in many years, I listened to him!”

Alumni volunteers this year included Cory Kolodji, Chuck Rose, Jim Varcho, Sean Ferrier, Karl Huemiller, Paul Holte, Steve Niedorf, Alex Nepple, Dick Shank, and

Julie Engel. An alumni dinner was arranged by Alex Nepple, with 18 in attendance. This was the 10th year that SAA has helped staff the booth. For the last five years, the SAA has run the booth for NT.

Then at the end of May, alumni lead by Dick Shank descended on the base to help get it ready for opening. Projects included roof repair on the Welcome Cabin, door and ventilation repair to the sauna building, electrical repairs to the Depot building, library organization, and numerous additional items. Volunteers included Neal Olsen, Tim Huemiller, Laura Damon, Mike Holdgrafer, Chuck Rose, Al Person, Don Lee, and Owen Gibbs.

The “Work Week” initiative was started more than 25 years ago, led by Red Renner, Butch Diesslin, and others, and was likely a contributor to the founding of the SAA organization in 1992.

Work Week and Canoeecopia photos by
Alex Nepple and Tim Huemiller.



Regional reunions

By Karl Huemiller

This past summer we had two regional reunions, one in Minnesota and one in the Pacific Northwest. At each of these Local Charlie Guides were able to connect with old friends and make some new ones, meeting people from across generations. Neither regional reunion was large by traditional standards, only 15 – 20 people but everyone had a great time. In Minnesota we kept it pretty simple, grilling some burgers and brats in the backyard, and hanging out around the campfire.

Independently each group decided they wanted to have another regional reunion in 2018. The Minnesota Regional Reunion will be on Saturday, September 8th at Craig Pendergraft's house in Prior Lake, MN.

SAA jamboree reunion

By Eric Peterson

Among the 40,000 Scouts and Scouters attending 2017 National Scout Jamboree at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in West Virginia were a number of members of the Sommers Alumni Association. The Jamboree provided an excellent opportunity for Alumni from across the country in attendance to come together.

An informal gathering was held at the High Adventure tent with refreshing Dorothy's Root Beer provided by Northern Tier. A great time was had as Alumni reminisced and shared stories of adventures past. Alumni had the opportunity to chat with current staff manning the Northern Tier booth. New acquaintances were made and friendships renewed. The meeting adjourned with a group photo outside the

I always enjoy getting together with other Charlie Guides to talk about our shared experiences at the base. Although sometimes it is even more interesting to hear how we have taken that experience and put it to use in the world. Regional Reunions are a great way to get together. If you would like to host a regional reunion in your area, contact me at www.holry.org/about/contactus and we can help you by promoting the event to other Charlie Guides in your area. I would love to see Charlie Guides gathering at Regional Reunions all across the United States and Canada in 2018!

tent. The canoes in the photo were available throughout the Jamboree for scouts to learn how to portage a canoe, or to demonstrate their prowess if they already knew how.



The Lodge

By Mike Holdgrafer

The mention of individuals, places and events in Canoe Country evinces a variety of emotions among the generations of Charlie Guides. Among this broad tapestry of Charlie Guides, blessed to share so much in common, no one forgets the common thread all share; that being "the Lodge." No other program structure like it exists within the High Adventure Program. Cross the threshold into the Great Room and one hears the voices, songs and laughter from the hand-hewn logs. Everyone has such memories; memories we carry, memories we share until our final portage. The Lodge is hallowed.

The Lodge has stood the test of time but like any structure built by man's hand, and in this case, truly built by hand, Northwoods' weather has ravaged the Lodge. Intervention by the SAA twice in prior years not only restored the damage of nature, but ensured the Lodge continues to echo memories of the past with future memories.

Early Years

On May 17, 1942, Scouting dignitaries and guests dedicated the newly-built Lodge. The Region Ten Wilderness Canoe Trails was re-named as the Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base to honor Charles L. Sommers. "Charlie" had helped organize Region Ten of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), which included Minnesota's Canoe Country, and would serve 26 years as the region's chairman, earning him the nickname, "Mr. Region Ten." More importantly, he embraced a vision in late 1925 to take the experience of local council and outfit canoe trips on a regional basis. Every Charlie Guide should toast Charlie, a canoeing enthusiast, for his passionate leadership and steadfast dedication.

Canoe outfitting was first conducted in Winton, Minnesota until the launching point moved to the southern end of Moose Lake. Procuring a lease with the U. S. Forest Service, pine logs from a blow-down, purchased at an USFS auction, were hewn and joined

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by position by skilled Finnish loggers during the winter of 1941-42 at the present site on Moose Lake.

Initially, every program operation was housed in the Lodge including dining hall, food commissary, outfitting equipment, office administration and even staff accommodations. As the program expanded over the years other buildings were constructed. The Lodge slowly evolved to program use only but, even then, its seasonal design limited use for Okpik that was growing in popularity.

Mid-1990s Renovations

In early 1993, after some renovations by the BSA, the Base Committee, through Clyde S. "Sandy" Bridges, directed a request to the SAA; help convert the Lodge to year-round program use, house the Base's collection of books and other documents in the re-located Hedrick Library, and upgrade the meeting and interpretive functions of the Lodge. The first SAA Executive Committee, led by SAA president Dave Hyink, unanimously embraced the request and launched a special campaign to raise \$50,000 to fund the renovations. Jim Sowell, an entrepreneur while working on staff who had continued his successful ways after the Base, pledged a \$10,000 challenge match to the SAA.

Charlie Guides are an interesting lot. There can be a lot of opinions with a few embellishments along the way and, sometimes, everyone wants to paddle in the stern. But, when tasked to come together like back in 1993, the result is like a well-honed crew hitting its last portage before heading to the Base landing and a sauna. The special campaign hit its financial target with the treasure of over 200 Charlie Guides and friends. Charlie Guides also came together to provide time and talent. Butch Diesslin secured period-style lights and radiators for the Great Room; Dick Hall worked on the installation of a cold roof and Bob Oliva installed wainscoting to hide new electrical and plumbing lines. Many others pitched in and contributed also, so an apology is issued to those who are not listed. Rest assured; however, these efforts will never be forgotten.



The gang box that started the Lodge project.

Many other projects were completed, including, among others, storm windows, a new concrete slab in the middle room with PEX heating lines, a new radiant heat furnace, a custom fireplace insert, a curved staircase, display lighting and artifact replicas and artwork.

Renovations in the 21st Century

As the 21st Century came and passed without incident, the Lodge remained a fixture in the hearts of Charlie Guides, but its overall use declined. As the Northern Tier program grew under Doug Hirdler, the Lodge was too small to accommodate meetings of the entire staff. Technology was a challenge also. Slowly, the Lodge slipped a little. Capital for projects was invested in new buildings including the F.A. Bean Outfitting Building, the Tent-Drying Building (a boring name) and a new shower and sauna building for women.

The Northwoods is non-relenting. Like the summer and winter versions of Wilderness Grace; sun, rain, ice and snow continued to take its toll on the exterior of the Lodge. To the majority of visitors, the Lodge looked like the old, venerable structure it was. To Mike Holdgrafer and Dick Shank, they saw issues with the Lodge. Conducting seasonal staff training in the Lodge, both poked around and inspected the Lodge from sill log to purlin, from crown end to rafter. Although there were lots of issues, including many structural issues, one relatively minor issue was like a mosquito bite that never stopped itching from year to year. During the 1990s, a log was shaved for the installation of a 6-gang switch. The blond, exposed and un-varnished log was a never-ending reminder to address the decline of the Lodge.

Mike and Dick, then SAA directors, discussed the Lodge's future. Discussions of this nature are often drawn from the past and personal experiences. Sandy's vision was the Lodge would be an interpretive center. Despite the best efforts of the mid-1990s, this vision had never been fully realized. An opportunity presented itself to restore this priceless structure not only for the past generations, but to also enhance it with museum-quality artifacts and displays, using state-of-the-art technology. Working with Doug, both men believed the SAA was the natural partner to join with the BSA and transform the Lodge.

In June 2004, techniques to restore the interior log surfaces were conducted over two days on an interior wall. These techniques followed extensive research about restorative work of log structures. More than a dozen dyes were tested in advance for compatibility and match. Unlike the polyurethane product used in the mid-1990s to stain the wainscot, TransTint Honey Amber dye at \$17 for two ounces was selected to achieve optimal matching and compatibility to existing varnished surfaces. From this initial experiment, a

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formal proposal was drafted to restore the structural integrity of the Lodge together with maintaining its aesthetic appeal, and retaining historically significant artifacts while developing the interior as a museum-grade interpretive center.

Over the next couple of summers, volunteer-driven work progressed in the middle room and log surfaces were cleaned and finished with two coats of spar varnish. In April 2007, Wisconsin-based Edmunds & Company Log Home Restorations, LLC sandblasted the exterior before treating it with a borate preservative and log home finish. More critically, twenty-two crown ends and over thirty feet of logs were replaced. The exterior work was funded by the Northern Tier, with a commitment by the SAA to complete the interior restoration and interpretive center. This important financial collaboration secured the structural integrity of the Lodge.

With all work essentially happening once each year for one to two weeks, work progressed in the Great Room where the logs were power-washed and then re-varnished by volunteers on erected scaffolding. By the end of June 2008, both the exterior and interior logs had been resurrected and brought back to their amber-rich color. Detail work, sometimes a challenge at the Base, was the next order of business for the summer volunteers and windows were removed, stripped, sanded, re-glazed and re-varnished.

Among the many projects from 2008 forward was installing two commercial-grade LCD projectors with screens, installing a pine plank floor over the sub-floor in the Hedrick Library, upgrading some electrical circuits, hooking up the circulating system for the PEX plumbing in the slab floor and upgrading the fireplace efficiency. Volunteers continued to step forward and shoulder much of the remaining work, completely re-finishing the Hedrick Library while cataloging all materials, re-coating the exterior and continuing various interior and exterior touch-ups. When swamper training ended in 2012, volunteer efforts wound down. During this period of nine years, many volunteers stepped forward to help carry the load, including Mark Nordstrom, Rob Wagner, Jon Dahl, Steve Spencer,

Rolland White, George Schroeder, Al Person, Zane Beaton, Jack Olson, Mark Kelly, Bill Erickson, Chuck Rose, Owen Gibbs, Dave Sheffield, Bob Rench, Dennis LaFollette, Paul Holte, Paul Carter and his sons, Eli, Blaine and Blake. Butch Diesslin gave the volunteers a much-deserved break by taking many fishing on Basswood. Plus, Doug Hirdler and Kevin Dowling patiently stood by as the Lodge was taken out of use during training each summer and secured additional resources and help when required to help the SAA. Again, if someone was missed, please accept this apology.

One individual warrants special recognition. Jim Sowell again stepped forward and generously assisted the SAA with a gift of \$200,000. This gift funded the resources and contractors to complete the renovation phase. The residual, more importantly, was the foundation for the engagement of Split Rock Studios, a nationally renowned company specializing in museum projects. After Dick confirmed the quality of their work at Chik-Wauk Lodge Museum on the Gunflint Trail, and personally met with their team in Saint Paul, it was determined Split Rock Studios was the preferred vendor. With generous assistance also coming from the Northern Tier Committee and BSA, an additional \$150,000 was contributed to fully fund the proposal and contract.

Split Rock Studios delivered as promised and a single photo of any display is self-explanatory as to the quality and craftsmanship involved. Again, a number of volunteers, led by Dick, chipped in to review displays, provide content and provide equipment or materials for eventual display. Much appreciation is directed to Butch Diesslin, Allen Rench, Dick Shank, Bill Erickson, Chuck Rose, Mike Holdgrafer and Barb Cary Hall.

Final Thoughts

The echoes of the past live on in the Lodge. Memories forged on wilderness treks are awakened and shared; old friendships re-kindled; and new adventures cast forward. Two renovations and a vision satiated have ensured the echoes live on for every Charlie Guide, forever.



Replacing rotten crowns. Photo by Mike Holdgrafer.



Before and after varnishing ceiling. Photo by Mike Holdgrafer.

2017 alumni scholarship recipients

Twenty-four 2017 summer staff have been awarded SAA scholarships totaling \$24,000. NT management reviewed applications submitted by this year's staff and forwarded their list of nominees to the SAA for approval. This year's recipients are: Michael Beeksma, Nicholas Birkhimer, Marshall Boone, Gregory Brooks, Jack Boyette (Clifford J. Hanson Memorial Scholarship), John Butkevicius (The Jack and Mary Osborn Scholarship), Adam Caldwell, Clancey Craig, Philip Daly, Patrick Darby (Butch Diesslin Scholarship), Heath Geil-Haggerty, Noah Hale (Erickson Memorial Scholarship), Jason Hickey (Terry J. Wall Charles Sommers Scholarship), Connor Kooistra (Marshall Hollis Scholarship), Daniel Koponen (Christopher D. Breen Memorial Scholarship), Jessica Lisy, Dylan Murphy, John Ness, John Payne, Rachel Poppe, Frederick Sanford (Friends of Tinnerman / Tinnerman Guide Association Scholarship), Russell Wicklund (David Hyink Scholarship), Isaiah Woodruff and Charles Yates.

One of the dreams of Sandy Bridges was to have a scholarship program for the seasonal staff. The Northern Tier Committee and the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association brought this dream to fruition by creating the scholarship program in 1995. Funded by individual contributions to the scholarship funds, the first scholarships were awarded in 1998. Fifteen scholarships were awarded that year.

Staff having completed two seasons may apply for the scholarships (\$1000 a year, up to three years of

awards) if they successfully complete their contracts and are invited back for the following season. The scholarships are sent directly to accredited schools, not to the person. Well over \$400,000 have been awarded.

Central to the program are endowed (at least \$25,000) named scholarships of which there are currently nine. Contributions have come from individuals such as Terry J. Wall and Marshall Hollis, two endowments honor our founding president and secretary, Dave Hyink and Butch Diesslin; scholarships endowed in memory of individuals include Cliff Hanson, Chris Breen, the Erickson Family, Jack and Mary Osborn as well as the former Tinnerman Canoe Base previously run out of the Greater Cleveland council. Naming rights also includes reasonable restrictions on the awards. For example, the Erickson scholarship is for an outstanding base staff member, the Wall scholarship is awarded to Eagle Scouts. Most named awards are open to all applicants.

Over the years, these donations have been invested in a variety of ways from Certificates of Deposit to low-risk mutual funds. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, the program continues to provide aid to these young adult's education. A good number have expressed that the scholarship was a contributing factor to them returning for another season in the Far Northland.

New endowed scholarship established

By Chuck Rose

The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association is proud to announce the creation of its tenth endowed scholarship. The Robert T. Marquardt Scholarship was endowed by his son Steve Marquardt of Lake Lillian, Minnesota to honor Bob who served from March 1946 to November 1949 as Special Deputy Regional Executive of Region Ten and manager of the Region Ten

Canoe Base at Moose Lake, and thereafter as Scout Executive in Mankato and in the Chicago Council. In retirement Bob volunteered at Tomahawk Scout Reservation in Wisconsin. Award preference is given to a female seasonal staff member and be based primarily upon financial need.

Apparel embroidered with the SAA logo available online

By Eric Peterson

Members can now order apparel embroidered with the SAA logo from the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. (SAA) clothing store, brought to you by Lands' End Business. It's designed to make shopping for SAA branded clothing quick and easy. In addition to being able to offer more clothing items embroidered with the SAA logo, the association does not have to carry any inventory or manage shipments.

A variety of men's and women's products are available including polos, t-shirts, dress shirts, camping shirts and jackets. To order your SAA clothing, log in at www.holry.org and click "Visit the SAA Member Clothing Store." A reminder, before adding an item to your bag, be sure to click "Apply Logo(s)" to specify that the SAA logo should be embroidered on the item.

Past Presidents

David Hyink (1991 – 2000), Allen Rench (2000 – 2004), Patrick Cox (2005 – 2010), Mike Holdgrafer (2011 – 2013), Dick Shank (2013 – 2014), Chuck Rose (2014 – 2016) and Karl Huemiller (2017 – present)



Award of Excellence: Foggy Morning on Bushey Lake by Frederick Sanford

2017 SAA Staff Photo Contest

Award of Merit: Lone Voyager by Morgen Woldt



Award of Merit: Chasing the Sun by Eric Gibbons



Staff support – 2017

Alumni have a longstanding tradition of supporting NT staff...training, gear to help them do their job and information that can help them on the water. Read on to see how alumni continued this tradition in 2017.

Staff training

Alumni once again organized and presented Seminar Day for the seasonal staff. This is an annual event intended to provide additional education to our seasonal staff, giving them an opportunity to explore additional topics of their interest. Presenters this year included Mike Holdgrafer, Scott Wickham, Chuck Rose, Karl Huemiller, Terry Schocke, Butch Diesslin, Cory Kolodji, Jim Barott, and Steve Niedorf, in addition to other volunteers from the community. Seminar Day has been managed by SAA since at least 2005. Wilderness First Aid and CPR/AED training were provided by Chuck Rose, Kim Bielawski, and Dick Shank. WFA classes are also given at Northern Tier during the winter and spring for Northern Tier staff and community Scouters.

On-the-trail gear

In recognition of service and to incentive seasonal staff to return, the Association created a seasonal staff program in the early 2000s. First year seasonal staff receive a \$35 credit at the Northern Tier trading post to purchase the gear they need to fulfill their rolls better. Second year summer staff receive a custom canoe paddle made by the XY paddles company of Atikokan, Ontario; third-years receive an Ely-made guide pack embroidered with their names and the SAA's *Twilight Paddlers* logo. Fourth year staff receive a quality fillet knife, fifth and beyond can choose from a variety of artwork by canoe base supporters Bob Cary and Real Berard. Winter Okpik staff also receive the trading post credit while second year staff are provided a neck gaiter and third year staff a steel vacuum bottle, both with the SAA logo; fourth year staff receive a quality headlamp.

A total of 165 gifts worth over \$9000 were presented this year. We hope these gifts are treasured over the years and will remind the recipients to "pay it forward" to future generations.

2017 Edition of Charlie's Guide issued

The 2017 Northern Tier summer staff received a new, updated version of Charlie's Guide. The updated edition, compiled and edited by Adel Huemiller, replaced the 2013 edition. Charlie's Guide is a compilation of information about lakes canoed by NT crews. Information includes campsites, fishing, portages, points of interest and information supporting the optional Geocaching patch crews can earn. Entries are sorted by lake name and give map number and coordinates for each entry. The guide is designed as an on-the-water resource for Interpreters when canoeing a new lake or area.

Charlie's Guide was first issued in 2004 as a result of a proposal Bill Erickson made to the SAA Board of Directors. He compiled information obtained from data sheets completed by Interpreters after trips, books and journals in a database that could be updated and edited as needed. With increased usage and input from the staff, new editions were issued in 2005, 2006 and 2008. Karl Huemiller compiled, edited and reformatted the 2012 and 2013 issues.

Duffer Cards

In 2012, the SAA provided Duffer Cards for crews. Duffer Cards are designed to be used by the person riding in the center and contain information about the many things. The idea originated in conversations between Sandy Bridges and Butch Diesslin. The idea kicked around for many years and upon Butch's retirement, he had the time to develop a series of 60 cards that when printed, could be cut and assembled as a booklet. The topics covered were Natural History, Plants and Trees, Fur Trade History, Native Peoples, Fish and Fishing, Birds and Animals, Night Sky and Weather and Travel Tips and Tricks.

The 2012 Duffer Cards written and assembled by Butch were printed on non-waterproof paper and with black and white images (See "Butch's Duffer Cards", *Reflections*, Vol. 20, #1). This past summer, every Northern Tier crew was issued a new booklet only this version was published in color and on 39 waterproof pages. Published and designed by Ely Design Works, it is a slick publication for crews to use.



2017 duffer cards

Formal alumni group organized

Reprinted from Reflections, Vol. 1, 1991

Based upon feedback from the most recent Sommers Alumni Questionnaire, as well as many discussions held at the Reunion September 1, 1991, the Sommers Alumni Association (SAA) Organizing Committee was formed. Members include Dave Hyink – President; Blaine (Butch) Diesslin – Vice President; Lorri Hanson – Secretary; Zane Grey Beaton – Treasurer; Roy Conradi – Newsletter Editor; and John Christiansen, Jay Walne, Dave Greenlee, Barry Bain – Members-at-Large.

The purpose of the Sommers Alumni Association is to provide a continuing interest in and support for the mission of the Charles L. Sommers National High Adventure Base and the Northern Tier National High Adventure Program in keeping with the policies of the Boy Scouts of America.

Consistent with the above purpose, the objectives of the Association will be to: (1) preserve and promote wilderness camping, high adventure and training opportunities or other primary objectives of the Northern Tier National High Adventure Program that may be authorized by the Northern Tier National High Adventure Committee; (2) bring relevant needs and suggested programs to the attention of the Northern Tier National High Adventure Committee; (3) offer the

time, talents and assets of the Association's membership to the Charles L. Sommers National High Adventure Base and the Northern Tier High Adventure Program, and to local councils of the Boy Scouts of America; and (4) spread the "Charlie" spirit throughout scouting.

Greg Kvam is helping the Organizing Committee with drafting such documents as (1) Articles of Incorporation, (2) Constitution and (3) By-Laws of the Association. We will also be investigating the possibilities for obtaining some type of "tax-deductible" status.

In addition to working on "organizational detail," near-term goals include: (1) publishing at least two newsletters per year, (2) organizing, updating and expanding the "alumni database," and (3) establishing and filling various national and regional Association committees. Please complete the enclosed membership information form. Your feedback and ideas are welcomed and encouraged, as is your \$10 to help defray the costs of meeting our near-term goals. **Before completing the form, why not make some copies for other Sommers Alumni you know.**

Reflecting on the past and the future

By Bill Erickson

This edition of Reflections celebrates the 25th Anniversary of the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association. It offers an excellent opportunity to reflect on the past and look to the future for both Reflections and the Association.

The first edition of Reflections was published in 1991. It discusses the formation of the SAA Organizing Committee at the September 1, 1991 reunion (see above article). Other articles discussed the dedication of Hanson House and a request for volunteer staff and trainers. Sandy Bridges reported that 1991 saw over 2500 participants, there were BSA capital funds available for a good "house keeping" and remodeling the Lodge and that OKPIK was celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Since that time, over fifty newsletters have been issued by Roy Conadi, Mark Nordstrom, CT Hart (2002 – 2005), Mike Bingley (2006-2008), Mike Holdgrafer (2009-2012), Cory Schumacher (2014), and Bill Erickson (2015 – present). Issues of Reflections have been a vehicle for many things. It has rallied support for changes both within and without the organization. It has been a vehicle to raise funds to support NT and its staff. And it has been an information conduit to keep alumni informed about fellow members and NT. You can see all Reflection issues at www.holry.org/reflections.

The key to SAA's future is a sustainable and growing membership. This is a challenge for all organizations as their current membership age and younger members

join. How do we make the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association attractive to alumni five years after being on staff? Fifteen years after being on staff? How we answer these and other questions will determine how well we can serve the needs of NT, its staff and our membership.

Changes have been made to when reunions are held to make it more attractive to those who do not belong to the Silver Brigade. The last few reunions have been moved back a few weeks from Labor Day and this year, there were regional reunions. When will they be held in the future? (The next scheduled reunion is August 23, 2019 at Charles L. Sommers canoe base.)

Reflections has and will play an important role in reporting and championing changes. Our younger, future members live in an electronic world where everything (almost) is digital and the SAA is increasing its use of social media and the Internet. This transition is difficult for some of us but vital for the future. One small example is the distribution of Reflections. Many of our older members still want hard copies mailed to them. However, the cost and work involved in distributing Reflections can be significantly reduced by going electronic-only. The saved money and effort could then be put to use for additional support of NT, its staff and/or our membership. When can we make the inevitable move to electronic-only distribution? It can't be too soon.

Crossing Portages Contribution

Please count on my support for the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. and its efforts to assist the Northern Tier National High Adventure Program, BSA in promoting character development and outdoor skills through wilderness canoeing and winter camping.

You can contribute online at CrossingPortages.holry.org (credit card) or by sending this form with a check made out to "Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc." to:

Crossing Portages
P.O. Box 428
Ely, Minnesota 55731-0428

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

_____ Singing Brook Portage (\$50)
_____ Prairie Portages (\$100)
_____ Meadows Portages (\$200)
_____ Horse Portage (\$500)

_____ Yum-Yum Portages (\$1000)
_____ Grand Portage (\$1500)
_____ "Double Packing" (\$2000)
_____ Other \$ _____

_____ I am interested in establishing an endowed scholarship. Please contact me.

Crossing Portages — you can still make a difference

By Liz Vollmer-Buhl

Thank you to everyone who has donated to the 2017 Crossing Portages Campaign or otherwise to the support the mission of the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. (SAA). At the time of writing, we had raised \$40,135 to support Northern Tier programming. Funds raised are used to provide the returning staff scholarships, support and training for seasonal staff, and contribute to other programs and facilities that assist Northern Tier in continuing to offer youth outdoor

adventure programs.

Named scholarships are an important part of the opportunities and support that alumni can provide. As reported on page 3, our tenth endowed scholarship was established this year in honor of and named for Robert T. Marquardt.

If you wish to support the Crossing Portages Campaign and/or endow a named scholarship, visit CrossingPortages.holry.org or use the above form.



Alan Person repairing the Welcome Cabin during Work Week. Photo by Tim Huemiller.



Alumni gather for dinner in Madison, WI during Canoecopia. Photo by Alex Nepple.



A view from the Sandy Bridges Program Center (Dining Hall) of Moose Lake during Work Week. Photo by Alex Nepple.



Don MacDonald and Bill Erickson going through the line at the last Rendezvous meal served in the old dining hall.

Contributors. The following members contributed articles and content for this edition: Liz Vollmer-Buhl, Julie Engle, Bill Erickson, Mike Holdgrafer, Karl Huemiller, Tim Huemiller, Dave Hyink, Travis McCormick, Alex Nepple, Eric Peterson, Chuck Rose, and Dick Shank.

Calendar of events

Canoeconopia - Volunteer at the Northern Tier booth

Madison, WI

March 9 - 11, 2018

Alumni Dinner

Madison, WI

March 10, 2018

Alumni Work Week

Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base

May 25 -- June 8, 2018

2019 SAA Reunion Rendezvous

Ely, MN

Aug. 23 - 25, 2019

For further information and to register, see the website at www.holry.org

SAA Officers

President:

Karl Huemiller, [REDACTED]

Vice President:

Eric Peterson, [REDACTED]

Corporate Secretary:

Cory Kolodji, [REDACTED]

Treasurer:

Roger Dellinger, [REDACTED]

Reflections Newsletter

Editorial Staff:

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Technical Advisor:

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Advisor:

Karl Huemiller