



# REFLECTIONS



NORTHERN TIER NATIONAL HIGH ADVENTURE

## Clyde "Sandy" Bridges, 1939 - 1997

### A Man for all

### Seasons

By Curt Garfield  
NEWS OUTDOOR  
EDITOR

Middlesex Daily News,  
Thursday, January  
1, 1998

Unless you've been connected with the Department of Defense Equipment Testing Laboratory (better known around these parts as Natick Labs), or worked in the High Adventure Program of the Boy Scouts of America, you've probably never heard of Sandy Bridges. But if you've done any camping, hiking, canoeing or boating, he's had an impact on your life. In some cases, equipment he designed may have saved your life.

Clyde Sanders Bridges was born in Arkansas in 1939, but his real love was the wilderness canoe country of northern Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. He came to the Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base as a Scout in the late 50s, signed on as a guide in 1960, and never went home. He wound up serving 30 years on the National Staff of the Boy Scouts of America, much of it as Director of the Northern Tier High Adventure Program which trains and outfits crews of Scouts and Explorers for trips into the Boundary Waters wilderness areas.

Sandy discovered very quickly that running an outfitting base was a lot different from running a Scout camp. When you're 60 miles from the nearest road, a simple axe or knife cut or an upset canoe in white water can be deadly. While waiting to recover a submerged body along the Falls Chain in Quetico Provincial Park in Canada, he de-



*C. Sandy Bridges as photographed by Kathy Strauss of the Duluth News-Tribune in 1997, after the decision to retire, when he learned he had cancer*

signed the three-piece Stearns personal flotation device (PFD) that is now the standard of the industry.

He noted that the PFDs available at the time were uncomfortable and that the kids, especially the one sitting in the middle of the canoe, wouldn't wear them. The three-piece model was not only more comfortable, but could be worn as an extra pad when portaging canoes and packs from lake to lake.

Sandy's relationship with the scientists at Natick Labs was a

symbiotic one. He was designing a national winter camping program for the Boy Scouts of America and needed sophisticated cold weather survival gear. Natick needed a place to test its prototype equipment and an expert in winter survival to do the actual testing.

Consequently much of the equipment that is worn by our military troops today first saw the light of day on the backs of Scouts and Explorers spending

a week in minus-40-degree temperatures on the Minnesota-Canada border. Sandy called the program Okpik, the Inuit word for the snowy owl.

Tents, packs, sleeping systems, winter clothing, stoves and innovative food packaging all fell under his critical eye. Manufacturers and the military both sought his advice. He was a frequent visitor at Natick, generally returning to Minnesota with crates of prototype gear to be tested. Many of his sug-

gestions were incorporated into the final designs. In 1985, he travelled to Swedish Lapland where he worked with members of the Swedish Army's survival program in the first of many international collaborations. His most recent trip was to St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1995.

Sandy expanded the Northern Tier high adventure program by adding satellite bases at Bissett, Manitoba, and Atikoken, Ontario, which were made available to Canadian as well as American Scouts. He engineered a land swap between the Boy Scouts of America and the U.S. Forest Service so that, for the first time, Sommers Canoe Base was protected by a quitclaim deed.

Sandy Bridges died the day after Christmas after a year-long bout with lung cancer. His material assets were modest, but his real legacy was the tens of thousands of lives he touched through the development of outdoor equipment and the training programs at the many bases along the Northern Tier. He will be missed.

*("Sandy" continued on page 5 and more on page 6)*

## Rendezvous '98, Sept. 4-7

by Dave Greenlee

Get ready for Rendezvous '98, the Sommers Alumni Association Reunion and a very special celebration of the 75th year of Sommers Canoe Base operation. Mark your calendar for Labor Day Weekend, September 4-7, 1998, with events to be held in Ely and at the Sommers Canoe Base 20 miles northeast of town. For those who have access to the web, check out our Rendezvous '98 pages on [www.holry.org](http://www.holry.org). For those who aren't "wired", our next newsletter will contain more details and a mail

back reservation form.

Barb Cary Hall has organized a music program that includes some of Charlie's best musicians for informal singing around the campfire on Friday evening at Parley's Rock, a Children's Concert on Saturday morning, and folk songs in the lodge on Saturday afternoon. On Saturday evening, we expect a large crowd at the Holiday Inn Sun Spree Resort in Ely, as we hold our banquet with featured speaker and famous outdoors writer Sam Cook. Sunday morning will include

hymns in the lodge at the base. Other highlights will include family events in the fur trade theme, tours of the base, and maybe even some beans and wieners in the dining hall.

We are planning organized tours of Sig Olson's writing shack in Ely and his Listening Point on Burnside Lake. Also, we will make time available for tours of the Dorothy Molter Museum, the Interna-

*("Rendezvous '98" continued on pages 4 and 6)*

# President's Message

In my last message, I said "...1998 will be BIG!" I was wrong. It's shaping up to be ENORMOUS! In addition to another year of hard and meaningful work by the staff, committee, and alumni, it will be a year of great CELEBRATION. Most obvious will be our commemoration of 75 continuous years of serving scouts with wilderness adventures at the Charles L. Sommers Base during Rendezvous '98, September 4-7.

Let's celebrate and thank the 145 alumni and friends who came forth to help underwrite the production of the book, "A Diamond in the North," by Gene Felton (1951-53, Cmt 1973 - ). Thanks to the devoted efforts of Gene and the many people who supported him, future generations of scouts and staff will have a window to the past to help guide them as they create new and exciting histories in high adventure.

Let's celebrate the deployment of nearly \$600,000 of capital in 1998 to fund planned facilities upgrades at the Atikokan and Bissett Bases and to meet the equipment needs for the 1998 season - most likely the biggest since 1968.

Let's celebrate the fact that BSA artist and illustrator Joseph Csatri (featured in the September 1997 issue of Scouting) is using the 75th Anniversary of the Sommers Base as the theme of his annual Boy Scout calendar painting.

Let's celebrate (albeit bitter-sweet) the establishment of the Sandy Bridges Memorial Training Fund. Through the extreme generosity of the Bridges family, along with other memorials from alumni and friends, the fund already has over \$7500 that will put to immediate use to assist in training seasonal staff.

In January, in both Duluth and in Little Rock, we celebrated the life and contributions of Sandy Bridges (1957-60, 62-97) to the Base and to his fellow man. As he now takes his place with past Directors Chase, Conger, Ludlow, Marquardt, Witcraft, Felton, and Hanson, let us continue to celebrate and perpetuate their collective contributions and common dedication to providing scouts with wilderness adventure.

Finally, let's continue to celebrate that intangible magic of the Far Northland that binds generations of us together - based upon a common experience, and in pursuit of a common goal.

I invite and encourage each of you to "celebrate in '98!" Recruit a staff member, volunteer to guide a crew, participate in Alumni Work Week, help out with Staff Training, attend Rendezvous '98! I promise that you'll renew that "swagger in your step."

# General Manager's Comments

by Doug Hirdler.

As of February 5th the attendance at the Northern Tier High Adventure Bases for 1998 is projected at 4,054 which will be the highest attendance ever, erasing the figure of 3,492 that has been the "rule mark" since 1968. The breakdown by base shows Atikokan with 74 crews with 582 participants (35 more than their best year), Bissett with 33 crews and 289 participants (17 short of their all-time high), and Ely with 3,183 participants involved in 429 crews (just 29 short of the second highest Sommers figure set in 1970).

Because of this record attendance the National Executive

Board of the Boy Scouts of America met on February 11th and approved capital expenditures for the Northern Tier Program amounting to \$372,600 for the 1998 program year. That means, with the projects approved but not completed, a total of \$582,600 will be invested in the Northern Tier Program during 1998.

A breakdown of the 1998 projects for Ely shows a \$50,000 expenditure in two base vehicles; \$10,000 remodel of eight first-night cabins (crank out type windows installed where permanent

(continued on page 3)

## Alumni Association Directors and Officers

Director/President (1)*	Dave Hyink	(253) 863-6406
Director/Vice President (3)	Barry Bain	(612) 944-5178
Director/Secretary (1)	Butch Diesslin	(218) 365-6904
Treasurer	Nigel Cooper	(612) 738-1242
Director (1)	Roy Conradi	(770) 496-0920
Director (1)	Robert Welsh	(425) 454-5628
Director (3)	John Christiansen	(417) 646-8526
Director (3)	Mark Nordstrom	(614) 833-0499
Director (3)	Linnea Renner	(218) 365-3655
Director (2)	Patrick Cox	(214) 342-8786
Director (2)	Dave Greenlee	(605) 594-6287
Director (2)	Wade Herbranson	(218) 365-3162
Director (2)	Jay Walne	(901) 278-2633

\*Number in parenthesis is years remaining in current term

## Program Liaisons

Mr. Bill Spice	National Director of High Adventure Philmont Scout Camp, BSA Cimarron, NM 88714 (505) 376-2281
Mr. Doug Hirdler	Director and General Manager, Northern Tier National High Adventure Program P.O. Box 509 Ely, MN 55731 (218) 365-4811
Mr. Norman Augustine	Chairman, National High Adventure Committee Lockheed-Martin Corporation 6801 Rockledge Drive Bethesda, MD 20817-1877
Mr. Steve Fossett	Chairman, Northern Tier National High Adventure Committee Marathon Securities 401 So. LaSalle Street, Suite 200 Chicago, IL 60605

**Volume 8, Number 1.** *Reflections* is the official publication of the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc., P.O. Box 428, 5891 Moose Lake Road, Ely, Minnesota 55731-0429. *Reflections* is published three times a year (Oct, Feb., and July). The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. is a nonprofit Minnesota corporation. The IRS has determined that the alumni association is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations to the alumni association are tax deductible. Membership to the Sommers Alumni Association is open to all persons 18 years and older. Association dues are \$10 for Annual membership, \$25 or more annually for Sustaining membership or \$150 (one time) for Life Membership. The association's dues year begins January 1. **Moving...** please notify the alumni association of 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 to Butch Diesslin via e-mail at: [b.diesslin@vr.cc.mn.us](mailto:b.diesslin@vr.cc.mn.us)



# Fossett's 3rd RTW Try Lands Short

*Taken from Fossett's Solo Spirit home page by permission of Washington University in St. Louis*

Steve Fossett said he was "very nervous" as he launched his 160-foot hot-air balloon, Solo Spirit, into a cold, blue, late afternoon sky Wednesday, December 30, 1997. It began his attempt to become the first human balloonist to fly Round-The-World without landing. His silver balloon lifted out of Busch Stadium in St. Louis shortly after 5 p.m. on the beginning of what he hoped would be a 15-day journey.

Fossett said at launch the flight would be full of risks. "The launch poses a lot of risks; a lot of things can go wrong. This is a dangerous endeavor, and I don't enjoy the danger, but I try to control the risks. I'll be much more relaxed when I get up to my flight altitude and I have all the equipment working."

Early last year, Fossett ended

the larger balloon, called the gas cell. He controls the balloon's altitude and direction by working a propane ethane burner. "You can't make any sharp turns with a balloon," he said. "To make a change of altitude to get a different wind direction, I might have to climb 3,000 feet to get only a 10 degree difference in direction."

Fossett, a Chicago millionaire who is president of his own securities company, is one of five balloonists attempting to be the first to circle the globe. Anheuser-Busch has offered a \$1 million prize to the winner, half of which will go to charity. Fossett, who paid for his \$350,000 balloon himself, said he was making another attempt "for a sense of personal achievement. This is, perhaps, the greatest unachieved goal in aviation."

"This is more like camping out," he said. "I'll be flying mostly at 24,000 feet. It will be about minus 30 degrees outside, and I'll have a cabin heater that will keep it about 50 degrees inside, and I'll (eat) boil-in-a-bag military meals. It's going to be a camp-out in the sky."

## The Landing

Monday, Jan. 5, 1998, 8:55 a.m. CST (2:55 p.m. GMT) — "Steve has been retrieved and is in very good condition and he has been taken to the small town of Novokoporskaya," said Mission Control Director Alan Blount. He said Fossett, who slept little during the flight, planned to go straight to sleep. "This is the second-longest flight anyone has ever made in a balloon of any kind," Blount said. "It's a very arduous task, difficult to master. If it were easy it would have been done years ago." Fossett's flight last year was the longest.

## The Call

At approximately 11 a.m. CST on Monday January 5, Steve Fossett called Mission Control at Washington University in St. Louis. He was in Krasnodar, Russia, near where he safely landed his balloon, Solo Spirit, at about 5:27 a.m. CST. Since launching from St. Louis, Missouri, on Wednesday, Dec. 31, Fossett, 53, had traveled approximately 7,300 miles in four days, 11 hours.

Fossett said he was fine after his smooth landing in a wheat field on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, where about 100 local farmers helped him deflate the balloon.

Though tired and disappointed, Fossett thanked his Mission Control team and praised his equipment. A main problem in the flight was a failed heater in the

but it's proved to be much more difficult than any of the competitors have anticipated." Fossett is the only one of the five competitors to attempt to circumnavigate the globe in an unpressurized capsule. "I'm going to have to reflect on whether or not this unpressurized capsule is a viable approach to flying around the world," Fossett said.

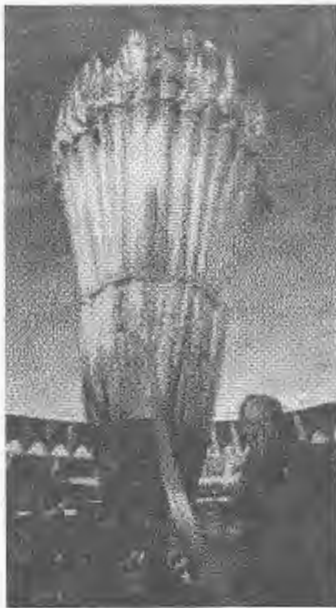


*The Flight Path to Solo Spirit's landing.*

unpressurized capsule that brought the temperatures to between 10 and 15 degrees, Fossett said. Also, controls for the propane burners that adjust altitude malfunctioned, and he could not make repairs. "That was a catastrophic failure for the flight," Fossett said.

Still, an around-the-world flight wasn't out of the question, he said. "I certainly feel it's possible to do,

Fossett needed to arrange to have his equipment packed and shipped from Russia to either Colorado or England, before he returned to the United States. For the moment, Blount advised, "Go to bed, Steve."



*Steve Fossett and Solo Spirit. Fossett is Chairman of the Northern Tier National High Adventure Committee*

his last RTW effort in a mustard field in India after six days in the air. He blamed the failure on not carrying enough propane fuel to allow the proper altitude changes that are needed for steering. This time, he said, his balloon was 28 percent bigger than the last one "and will allow me to carry half again as much propane."

Fossett actually used two balloons. A small helium-filled balloon is wrapped under a tent, over

## General Manager's Comments

*(continued from page 2)*

windows now appear); \$5,100 Polaris Trail Touring snowmobile; \$2,500 type cabinets installed in the Administration Building's print room; \$110,000 two new staff duplexes; and \$25,000 to install walkway lighting from the Administration Building to the Dining Hall.

Projects for 1998 at Atikokan are \$40,000 for building four new crew cabins and moving two and \$50,000 to build an additional staff duplex.

Bissett's projects for 1998 include \$30,000 for construction of two new crew cabins and \$50,000

for an additional staff duplex.

With this type of an investment I urge each and everyone of the Alumni Association members to do two things during the next few months:

- 1) Help in the recruitment of staff to insure the best High Adventure trip ever for the 4,054 participants signed up this year.
- 2) This is the easy one: "Come back home!" Register today for "The 1998 Reunion" and see all of the improvements for yourself.

# Tidbits on The Sommers Clan

**Thomas Carr (68,72,81 Adv)** is retired and living in Ventura, CA with his wife of 53 years. The Carr's have two Eagle Scout sons.

**Jon Dahl (68,69)** is an Account Executive at ShowCase Corporation (jdahl@showcasecorp.com). He lives in Spring Valley, MN with his wife and three daughters.

**Paul Nitardy (84-86)** is employed by Kinsey Engineers in Seattle, WA.

**Robert Cargill (54,55)** reports that one of his three children will be making him a grandfather in April 1998!

**Terry Wall (81,83,85,91,93,97 Adv)** and **J. Patrick Ross (97-Cmte)** have recently helped "share the load" by supporting our Crossing Portages financial campaign at the Grand Portage level. Enjoy your paddles, and thank you!

**J.P. Fassbender (93)** married Nicole King this past summer. They are both currently enrolled as graduate students in the Geography Department at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, IN.

**Rodger Peterson (58)** and his wife are planning a "Man Chain" trip in late August and hope to be off the trail in time to attend Rendezvous '98.

**Jonnie Stark** (granddaughter of canoe base program founder Carlos Chase) indicates that she, and at least two of Carl's three daughters, will be attending Rendezvous '98! She told her aunts, Elaine Chase Mitchell and Laura Chase Vendetti, about the new canoe base history book and Rendezvous '98. They are planning a family reunion in conjunction with the Rendezvous.

**Bill (71-74) and Robert (70-72)** Hingst are Anheuser-Busch wholesalers in North Central Indiana and active in Scouting. Brother Ted (77-80) is a full-time student living in Vail, CO.

**Bill Menges (69-71)** is an attorney in Kokomo, IN and the V.P. for Administration in the Sagamore Council, BSA.

**Mike Miler (58-66)** recently retired after 32 years with the Boy Scouts of America. Wife Judy teaches school.

**Robert E. Morgan (78,80 Adv)** recently transferred to Orange Park, FL with Lucent Technologies.

**Don Curry (60-62)** is bringing three crews to the Base in the summer of 1998.

**John "Jock" Stoops (41-42, 46-47)** guided the very first crew

to leave the Base after it opened on the current site. He will be at Rendezvous '98 to tell you all about it!

**Roy Cerny (64-70)** and his son, Matt, own Cerny Construction in So. St. Paul, MN.

**Allan Batterman (1989-Cmte)** will free himself from the "shackles of bachelorhood" on June 13, 1998.

**Michael "Brent" Richards (91-93)** married Annette Marie Heaslip. They are currently living in Duluth pondering their future.

**Richard Grant (1982-95 Adv)** is an original member of Sandy Bridges' "Ambassadors" and has served as the high adventure trainer/chairman for the Heart of America Council, BSA for the past 15 years.

**Lou Sabatini (69-72)** flies a Cessna 206 filled with high tech equipment for traffic surveying and control in the Washington, DC metro area. Wife Kristine and two sons, Mark (8) and Luke (10).

**Don Richard (83-85,87)** is a civil engineer, working for Barr Engineering. He is also a graduate student, hoping to complete his Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering in the next three (or so) years.

**Richard Reisdorf (63-66)** lives in Mankato with wife Betty. They have seven children - aged 15-30. He does Arch Stone drafting and estimating and ship model building.

**Lynn Reeve (69-72)** is the proud father of a new Eagle Scout, Eric. Lynn hopes to be able to make it to Alumni Work Week again this summer.

Sommers Alumni correctly identifying the cover photo of the November 1997 issue of National Geographic as "Charlie's A-Go-Go" (a.k.a. Chapin's Pond): **Jeff Dahl, Jack Parker, and Don Christensen.**

**Bruce Wyman (69-70)** after teaching school, lately at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, changed careers and move to Red Wing, MN where he is a production potter at Red Wing Stoneware.

**Lee Sessions (82-86)** works with Intel as a regional HRD manager. He will be living in Manila, Philippines.

From the financial underwriters of Gene Felton's A Diamond in the North, those indicating plans to attend Rendezvous '98: Jon Dahl, Jack Parker, Larry Luebben, Dean Rau, John Erkkila, Paul Bruns, Rodger Peterson, Jonnie Stark,

Elaine Mitchell, Laura Vendetti, Kay Ingebrigtsen, Dave Ingebrigtsen, Mark Ingebrigtsen, Jeff Dahl, Mike Miler, R.A. Dadisman, Bob Suter, John Stoops, Roy Cerny, John Oosterhuis, Richard Grant, Bryan Craft, Ann (Gillard) Craft, Lou Sabitini, Don Richard, Ed Janzen, Don "Digger" Helms, Richard Reisdorf, Lynn Reeve, Bob Henry, Bruce Wyman, Ray Mattson, Steve Gottschalk.

**Don Freeman ('41)** is now a member of the association. Don is retired, living in Brainerd and still active in scouting. Thanks to Chuck Rose for informing Don of the association.

**James Karthaus (75-76)** said he was "The best guide in the World in '76." James is now a teacher in Kerryville, TX.

**Martha Karthaus (78, 80)** is now living in Plano, TX.

Best wishes to **Dr. Chris Wolfe ('69-71, '75)** as he enters into a private practice as a Cardiologist in Olympia, WA. The Wolfe's new address is 3220 Sunset Beach Dr., Olympia, WA 98502.

We extend our deepest sympathies to **Fr. Paul "Nobby" Kumasaka** of Australia on the recent death of his mother. Nobby was an International staffer from Japan in 1980.

## Rendezvous '98

(continued from page 1)

tional Wolf Center, and the Soudan Underground Mine State Park. Of course there will be time to sit around to swap tales and visit old friends.

If you have an interest in float plane rides to take off from the Canoe Base or from the Sun Spree, contact a committee member or Carlo and Julie Palombi at Vista Air Seaplane Tours of Ely (218) 365-4797. Julie (Nystrom) Palombi was a guide for Dorothy "Ma" Harry in the sixties.

If you are interested in taking a round trip, 40 passenger, chartered bus directly to the base from the Twin Cities airport for \$50 per person, please contact a committee member. The bus takes about 5 hours one way and it can travel either Friday evening or Saturday morning to the base. Please give your preference. Tentative plans are for the return trip to leave late Sunday morning. If you're interested, please indicate what would be most convenient for you.

Make your plans early! Accommodations at the Base will be crew cabins as available. For those who desire resort accommodations, we have asked the Sun Spree to set aside a block of rooms, and you may contact them directly to reserve on a first come, first served basis. Also, you can make your reservations at one of the other first class hotel/resorts listed below. Keep in mind that this is Labor Day Weekend, a busy weekend for the

Ely resorts so early planning is needed. The following list is from [www.ely.org/bus\\_hotels.html](http://www.ely.org/bus_hotels.html):

Holiday Inn Sun Spree Resort 400 N Pioneer Rd., Ely, MN (218) 365-6565 Boundary Waters Motel (218)365-3201 Budget Host Motel Ely (218)365-3237 Four Star Motel (218)365-3140 Hill's A-frames (218)365-3149 Lakeland Motel (218)365-3330 Paddle Inn (218)365-6036 Shagawa Inn Resort/Motel (218)365-5154 Silver Rapids Lodge (218)365-4877 Smitty's On Snowbank (218)365-6032 Super 8 Motel (218)365-2873 Timber Trail Lodge (218)365-4879 Westgate Motel (218)365-4513 White Wolf Inn (218)365-3466

To learn more about Rendezvous '98 or to get more involved in the planning, check out the web site at [www.holry.org](http://www.holry.org) or contact a planning committee member. It's not too late to help. We could especially use help on the fur trade theme ideas and events.

Dave Greenlee (605)594-6287  
<[greenlee@dakota.net](mailto:greenlee@dakota.net)>  
Chuck Rose (320)252-2768  
<[crose@tigger.stcloudstate.edu](mailto:crose@tigger.stcloudstate.edu)>  
Barb Cary Hall (218)624-0329  
<[pulihall@abby.skypoint.net](mailto:pulihall@abby.skypoint.net)>  
Ray Mattson <[mlj@sprynet.com](mailto:mlj@sprynet.com)>  
Mike McMahon  
<[mcmahon@minn.net](mailto:mcmahon@minn.net)>  
Cory Kolodji (218) 263-6288  
<[mnkolodji@hotmail.com](mailto:mnkolodji@hotmail.com)>



## Sandy

by Roger C. Clapp

The Boundary Waters lost a staunch ally this past Christmas. Many of us lost a personal friend, a loss as immeasurable as the loss to the wilderness advocacy community, and the loss should be recognized.

I came to know Sandy Bridges when he returned to Ely from the deep South, as I had shortly before him, to taste again the clear silver of Louisa Falls and other favorite waters. We were, I recall, the same age and like Barry Bain and some others, spoke and understood Southern. It was early in my glorious summertime career of guiding out the Canoe Base. Then Sandy did what I and surely many other converted voyageurs yearned to do: he returned permanently to follow the call of the loon and to do his part to help balance our use of precious habitat with far-sighted preservation of its character.

Sandy Bridges did not just follow. He led, in his usually gentle, but always insistent way, and there are innumerable beneficiaries in the Ely area and the United States. His reputation may not have been as widely established as that of, for example, our mentor, Sig Olson, for Sig had unique gifts of communication and more decades of opportunity for legendary battles against wilderness foes. However, I know Sandy was inspired by Sig and other giants who visited us at the canoe base, and I know that the nationwide effect of Sandy's work on thousands of impressionable boys and their adult leaders has yet to be fully appreciated. Each of us can help encourage others to work for our common cause by observing Sandy's life. Thank God some of us gathered in Duluth last June to try to tell Sandy and Cherie how much we appreciated them.

One day I'll take a stab at describing a few of the countless memorable experiences of my idealistic youth in the wind or mud somewhere between Moose Lake and Kawnipi, or along the Knife chain, anticipating or reminiscing about Dorothy Molter's rustic welcome mat, or on a wet ten-day marathon around Hunter's Island with brave young explorers who, as Cliff Hanson used to say when he was director at Charlie's Place, left Moose Lake as boys and returned as men. Meanwhile, I want others to know that Sandy paddled those waters and puffed along those portages, but more importantly, he

significantly advanced their preservation by a lifetime of service. I can't read or listen to stories about Boundary Waters experiences without being flooded with heartfelt personal memories of places and events eerily similar to those described. I can't think or write or tell my four sons or my grandsons about these jewels in my mind's eye without Sandy's image floating in and out of the picture with other happy faces, people to whom you and I are indebted. Hol-ry Sandy! Thanks.

*Roger and Sandy became close friends when they worked together as guides during the late 50s.*

## A Forever Friend

Sometimes in life you find a special friend;

Someone who changes your life just by being a part of it.

Someone who makes you laugh until you can't stop.

Someone who makes you believe that there really is good in the world.

Someone who convinces you that there really is an unlocked door just waiting for you to open it.

This is Forever Friendship.

When you're down, and the world seems dark and empty,

Your Forever Friend lifts you up in spirit and makes that dark and empty world suddenly seem bright and full.

Your Forever Friend gets you through the hard times, the sad times, and the confused times.

If you turn and walk away, your Forever Friend follows.

If you lose your way, your Forever Friend guides you and cheers you on.

Your Forever Friend holds your hand and tells you that everything is going to be okay.

And if you find such a friend, you feel happy and complete, because you need not worry.

You have a Forever Friend for life, and forever has no end.

## Eulogy

My association with Sandy goes back to the early 1960's. In the late 1970's when everyone was intro-

ducing themselves to one another during the first week of the season, I mentioned my long tenure on the staff. Someone felt that I had been around since the rocks were still soft - To which Sandy interjected that I had been around since Before Mud! This was a few years after the "Rabid Chipmunk - Oh My Goodness!" incident.

I was talking to Chuck Buenger not long ago about Sandy and his years as director of the base. Chuck is a retired Director of High Adventure, Sandy's boss. Our conversation did not dwell on Sandy's specific accomplishments over the 30 years. Our conversation focused on two things - Sandy's ability to use seasonal staff members so successfully in management positions year after year; and that Sandy's program decisions were always made for the good of "The Chipmunks" - the name Sandy so often used for the scout participants. These two points are central to so many of the statements made about Sandy by those that have known and worked with him over the years.

Sandy had the innate ability to see individual staff member's potential to perform successfully in positions well beyond our maturity, training and experience. Sandy was able to see how we could adapt, not only for our personal growth, but also for the betterment of the base program. I am one of the many who thank Sandy for his role in our gaining experience well beyond our years. With Sandy's faith in our abilities and his support as we struggled in the position where he knew we could adapt and successfully perform. We thank Sandy for allowing us to adapt, and supporting us as we grew personally and gained life skills.

Sandy never lost sight of "The Chipmunks" - the scout participants. Sandy's decisions over the years were made with the quality of The Program for these "Chipmunks" in mind. Sandy was always looking for ways to enhance the program for the good of "The Chipmunks."

Sandy classified himself as an Adapter and a Modifier, not an Inventor, when it came to having the most suitable equipment for use by "The Chipmunks." The equipment adaptation that best typifies Sandy's working for the good of "The Chipmunks," was his role in developing a better lifejacket. The result was a lifejacket that is comfortable to wear and is used almost universally by canoeists.

Thank you Sandy for your faith in me - and so many other staff

members - over the years. We probably would not be where we are today without your wisdom and support. We are forever in your debt.

Thank You Sandy, on behalf of all "The Little Chipmunks" who have had their lives and experiences improved because you cared for them. They too, are ever in your debt.

Thank You, Brother Scout.  
Butch Diesslin

## Thank You Letter

"Thanksgiving" for our family occurred sans turkey on January 3 and 25 when friends gathered with us in Duluth and Little Rock for a celebration of Sandy's life. We thank you for joining us physically or in spirit. Your presence, cards, phone calls and e-mail messages were appreciated. We realized anew the blessings of true friends.

When Sandy was first diagnosed with cancer in late '96, he compared undergoing the chemotherapy and radiation treatments to a very arduous portage, knowing that a good paddle on a clear lake lay beyond. We used the portage metaphor many times during the past year. By facing his own death bravely, Sandy was once again the teacher in showing us how to die. His wit never left him. He enjoyed the stream of visitors throughout our home even when he was no longer able to converse. I remember with special gratitude those friends who sat silently with him in the last days so that he would not feel alone.

The Australian poet, Adam Lindsay Gordon, expresses my sentiments well:

"Life is mostly froth and bubble, Two things stand like stone, Kindness in another's trouble, Courage in your own."

Thank you for your encouragement and support of his work and your gifts to the S.A.A. Memorial Fund to support staff training, a project dear to his heart. But, most of all, thank you for your friendship.

Sandy considered himself a steward of the Canoe Base and its traditions. He was confident that each of you would enable that legacy to continue serving young people.

Love,  
Cherie



# Sandy Remembered in Litle Rock, Ark.

By Mike Holdgrafer and Dave Greenlee

A memorial service was held in Little Rock in addition to the service in Duluth. This allowed Sandy's Arkansas friends and family (some of whom could not travel to Duluth) to gather at a small lake in the hills near Little Rock to commemorate Sandy's life. It was held in a small church with a knotty-pine interior and a large window that looked out onto a lake beyond. The service included bagpipes and trumpet music that drifted up from down by the lake. It should be of no surprise that many members of Sandy's Canoe Base family also found their way to Little Rock, as Sandy's life affected thousands of people and he made friends who range far and wide. Toward the end of the service, Sandy's ninety-some-year-old father, Sanders, got up to tell us how proud he was of Sandy, and how much it meant to him that we had come from all over to honor Sandy's memory. It was a stirring moment in the remembrance of Sandy Bridges, a truly great man.



Before Sandy's cancer had been diagnosed, a group of Sandy's friends that called itself The Bridges Brigade presented Sandy with a special gift of appreciation. This 500th product of Joe Seliga was made specifically for Sandy and it was presented to him during the 1995 reunion. The gift honored the 30th anniversary of his service as a permanent employee of the Boy Scouts of America. Shortly after the presentation Sandy took the canoe out for a try on Moose Lake. Paddling in the bow is Bob Oliva (1980).

## 4:11 a.m. on A Tuesday in January

by Rabbi Meyer Tzvi "Hank" Linden

Usually at 4:11 a.m. on a Tuesday in January I am sleeping. This Tuesday morning was different. Two things woke me up. One was the soft knocking on our bedroom door by our nine-year-old daughter. The antibiotics we have been giving her since Sunday did not help. Her ear ache was back. I came downstairs, gave her two teaspoons of Pediacare, a cup of water, and guided her back to bed. Our daughter's knocking was not as much of a disturbance this particular morning as it normally would have been. I was already half up, thinking of a certain envelope delivered the day before.

On that particular Monday, upon returning home from work, I found the mail neatly piled in its place on our kitchen counter. As circumstances dictate, this was one of those rare moments in the year when I was the only one home. I carried the mail to the living room, leaned back on the couch and began. Two envelopes contained announcements from independent sweepstakes companies imploring me to respond promptly before forfeiting my \$50,000 early bird bo-

nus. There were bills for the car insurance, phone and gas, a packet full of advertisements from York Photo Labs, a penpal letter from Montreal for our 14-year-old daughter, and a fully-stuffed, light brown envelope from the canoe base.

Due to a shortage of qualified applicants, the base was sending out a leaf to any and all guides from yesteryear who might be interested in taking their "packsack to the road" and answering the call of "The Far Northland" for just one more summer. To expedite matters, included in the letter were updated samples of current canoe base literature, a medical form, a checklist of discounted personal equipment I might want to order, and a contract and policies and to agree to serve as a guide from the second week in June until the last week in August.

I began working it through in my mind. The tree older kids would go to sleepaway camps for the entire summer. My in-laws could assist as the three younger ones attended day camp. Without having to provide for so many people, my

wife would finally be freed up to begin graduate school in the field of her choice. As an employee of

the New York City public school system, I would have the entire of "4:11 a.m." continued on page 7)

## Rendezvous Campfire Music

The Base has a long tradition of music on the trail and at Rendezvous '98 that tradition will be honored with several informal gatherings throughout the weekend. Musicians, singers and listeners of all ages are encouraged to attend these events:

- Campfire Sing: Friday, 8pm at Parley's Rock
- Kid Sing: Saturday, 10am at Dining Hall Deck
- Alumni Sing: Saturday, 2pm at Lodge
- Hymn Sing: Sunday, 10am at Lodge

The music will be primarily acoustic in a relaxed format. Barb Cary Hall will host all four activities. Many former guides and staff have signed up to play and sing. For more information contact Barb Cary Hall (218-624-0329) or e-mail address pulihall@skypoint.com



Barb Cary Hall has organized several opportunities for relaxed song gatherings during Rendezvous '98

4:11 a.m.

(continued from page 6)

summer off. The coast was clear. No roadblocks in sight. I would fly to St. Paul, get my paddle out of my mother's garage and take the next bus to Ely.

What could be wrong? Why were these thoughts disturbing my sleep in the wee hours of that Tuesday morning in January? Every possible angle had been thought through. All the hitches were gone, the snails were set, the wind was at our backs and the entire length of Lake Agnes rolled and slapped up on the rocks in the distance as far as we could see. Only one problem remained... by the end of August our children would be home from camp, my wife would be finished with her summer semester of graduate school, my in-laws may be in need of a bit of quiet time away from their grandchildren, my job with the school system would be starting... Who would I be able to fit in a guides' trip at the end?? How could it be? Struggling for a solution, I was startled by the sound of someone knocking on the door.

The pedicure, the glass of water, and the ear ache were real. The rest was a dream.

This summer I hope to be leading the same "crew" I led through the fall and winter and spring. They don't get on a bus and go home the morning after they get back to the base.

To many of us who frequented Prairie Portage in the latter years of our youth, the Moose Chain and that secret, out-of-the-way lake that has no name seem about as accessible as the moon. However, the lessons we learned at the canoe base, our training ground for life, are always right there at our fingertips. Whenever it's cold and wet and the wind is blowing fiercely, day after day, in what appears to be the wrong direction, we know how to make the best of it and we know how to help the members of our "crews" do the same.

Who can ever forget the speech Sandy would give to the adult advisors before each trip, "Fellahs, some of our best trips have been with groups who went out there and had eight days straight of rain and cold without seeing the sun at all. Why? Because they made the decision to have a good time, no matter what. Having a good trip takes effort. It doesn't happen by itself!"

*A Memory Jogger - (There are certain little phrases that bring back a whole flood of memories from past summers at the canoe base. This is intended to be the first of a series of articles about these Memory Joggers).*

When the majority of the 1965 seasonal staff arrived in early June they couldn't help but notice a large black metal tank sitting next to the road to the dining hall, where the toilet building across the road from the office building is now located.

One of the early arriving staff members had taken a brush and a can of white paint and labeled this tank "Charlie's A-Go-Go." This was when "Go-Go Dancers" were a featured attraction in many night spots across the country.

"Charlie's A-Go-Go" is a large aeration and settling tank for the canoe base's sewage treatment system. To many, this sewage treatment system tank is still known as "The A-Go-Go."

Prior to 1965 the waste treatment needs of the base were met initially by outhouses, then by septic tanks. The lack of sufficient soil for proper drain fields to accompany the septic tanks necessitated the installation of a better and more centralized waste treatment system. This new system involved installing pipe, manholes, a lift station, the treatment tank and the creation of a settling pond.

Canoe base committee member Edward B. Chapin accepted the responsibility of coordinating the fund-raising for the sewer system project. Ed is still an active member of the Northern Tier committee. An engineering firm was hired to design and supervise the installation of the new sewer system.

The canoe base staff provided a work force to convert a spruce and cedar swamp into a settling pond. This work force was mostly the

base's between trip Guides, working under the leadership of Assistant Directors Ron Walls and Henry Bradlich. The trees were cut and hauled off to fire the sauna. The next task was to pull the stumps out of the sometimes knee-deep swamp muck, to reduce the amount of existing decaying organic materials competing with the decomposition of organic materials coming into the pond from the "A-Go-Go."

The primary stump pulling tools were axes, picks, "tanker bars" and a hand-cranked cable winch. The task had questionable pleasure during that rainy and buggy June. The characteristic odor of swamp muck added an additional memory to the experience. The black muck stained all our clothing forever.

After the stumps were removed from what was to become the bottom of "Chapin's Pond," the former swamp was smoothed with a bulldozer, operated by Ron Walls. What nice, level surface almost the size of a football field. A little soft, but level. So what better to do on this nice flat and soft field than play a game of Football! I missed the game because I was in the woods with a crew, but from all accounts "a good time was had by all."

All the staff in 1965 received a "Sewer Rat" certificate for their efforts "in the muck and mire..."

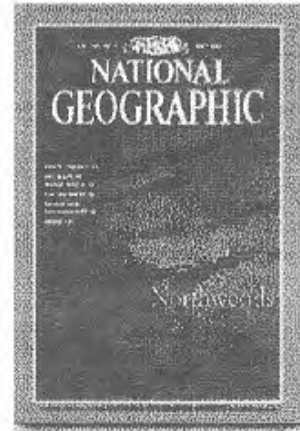
It wasn't long before the nutrients in the pond water nourished the best crop of "duckweed" in the area. Some people were afraid the duckweed would hinder the pond's

ability to purify the water before it flowed out of the pond. Many alumni will remember scraping duckweed. Four Staff members in two canoes were used to drag a seine to remove the duckweed from the surface of the pond and pile it on the shore. Canoes were swamped more than once during this seining process. It was later learned that the duck-

weed was actually helping the treatment process.

In the early 1970's Butch Diesslin and Cherie Bridges bought some Mallard ducklings. These ducklings were raised and released next to the A-Go-Go."

There is still duckweed on "Chapin's Pond," and there are still Mallards enjoying the fruits of our labor. This is very evident in Jim Brandenburg's photograph of Chapin's Pond on the cover of the November, 1998 National Geographic magazine.



November, 1997 Cover of National Geographic. Photo by Jim Brandenburg. Reproduced by permission of the National Geographic Society

As much as Sandy contributed to the canoe base, camping, scouting, and the world at large, I will remember him most for this sparkling message of active optimism that he so eloquently taught

through his words and example. While going backwards in time only happens in dreams, Sandy gave us valuable tools with which to go forward as each day becomes a new red line on the maps of our

lives.

*Hank was a guide 1972-74.*



# Staff Recruitment and Training for 1998

The Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe base will handle many more crews this summer than it has in recent years and the base is asking for alumni to help in recruiting. You can help in many ways, but just participating in your local council, while you carry staff applications with you, can be easy and surprisingly effective. Some alumni carry out ambitious projects, opening booths in local scouting exhibitions or touring explorer meetings to suggest the opportunity of working for the summer at the base, but even the smallest effort gives you a chance of finding someone who will thank you for decades for showing them a great opportunity.

The base has already sent scout councils around the country a prospective ad, soliciting applications. There's no assurance that it will be used. A simple call to the person in your council who handles the news publications can mean that the ad will be used when it otherwise might not have been.

You may discover that the scouters in your council are anxious to draw upon your expertise as a former Charlie's staffer. Canoeing merit badge oversight, various adventure programs in the council and camping programs are among the projects in which you may find yourself welcome to participate. You may find several very good reasons you never had before to get out in a canoe in your area. Of course, those are also great opportunities to get to know the people who might be interested in working at the base or who can help you find someone who is.

If you haven't received applications already, you can get them by calling the base at 218/365-4811 or by writing to PO Box 509, Ely, MN 55731.

Staff training will begin around the week after Memorial Day and continue into the following week. As with Alumni work week (which takes place during the same period) room and board are furnished for you at the base. Your help is needed

in off-the-water sessions teaching and refreshing various camping, cooking, canoeing, navigating and first aid skills as well as in sessions teaching specifics on how to apply those skills using the base's equip-

ment. Some on-the-water assistance may also be needed. You simply need to show up and work with the base staff conducting the training to find the jobs that need to be done.

## Alumni Work Week

Alumni can help the base prepare for scouts during the week after Memorial Day. The annual event attracted 18 alumni last year and two staff cabins were remodeled, steps to other buildings were repaired and signs around the base were repaired.

During past work weeks alumni have built overnight cabins, reglazed all the windows on the lodge and prepared sites for building construction. It's an opportunity to alumni to spend a week (or whatever part of a week they can get free) at the base, with fellow alumni, enjoying their surroundings and their camaraderie.

All you have to do to participate is bring tools and show up during the week of May 25 through 31. All room and board are furnished, however some staff have been known to travel to other locations in the area for food and drink beyond what's available on the base. All have reported having a good time.

### Directory

The revised SAA directory will be assembled this spring. Changes in address, e-mail address, etc. should be directed to Butch Diesslin by early April.

SOMMERS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
PO BOX 428  
ELY MN 55731



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT  
POSTAGE  
PAID  
Ely MN  
PERMIT NO. 102