

## Remembrances of Red Renner

by Butch Diesslin, Dave Greenlee, and Larry Whitmore

I came to know Bob [Red] through our mutual interest and support of the Boy Scout canoeing programs through the Sommers Canoe Base out on Moose Lake. Bob's connection began when he was on a canoe trip when he was a 15 year old scout. As a young adult in the 1950's, Bob came back to work five summers at the base - as a guide, then as the manager of trip outfitting and as the base maintenance director. In the mid-1980's Bob joined the advisory committee for the canoeing programs. For the past 16 years, Bob and I have served as members of the canoe base's advisory committee.



Red was an educator. He relished assisting others to not only learn skills, but also to learn about life and living. Red taught mostly by example. He never expected anyone to do something he wouldn't do himself. He also did his best to inject humor into what might otherwise be a very unpleasant and/or arduous task.

Bob and I shared the common desire to give back to Sommers canoe base. We felt that the program of the canoe base provides the young participants with so much more life-skills learning in a short period of time than most other experiences.

Bob's giving back was through his willingness to contribute his knowledge, expertise and "sweat equity". In doing so he educated others so they could do likewise.



Bob took it upon himself to be in charge of volunteer work weeks at the canoe base's facilities. He would lead and work along with other volunteers to improve the experience of the scouts who would come, participate in the program of the base and never know Bob.

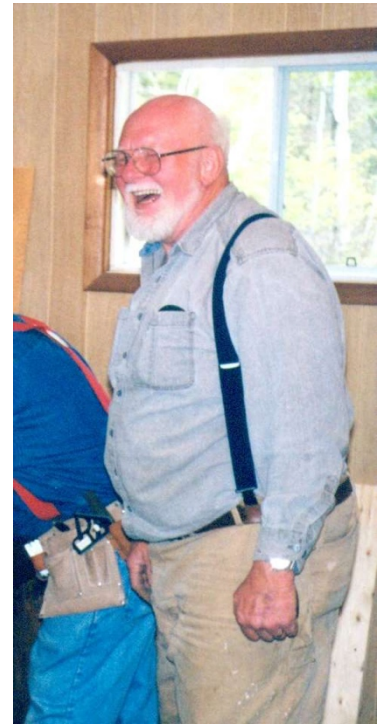
Bob loved a good laugh, and a good joke. Last March Bob met three other canoe base committee members in the Albuquerque airport and then shared a rented car for the ride to Philmont Scout Ranch for a meeting. Everyone was kept laughing with Red's stories and jokes.

The twinkle in his eye sometimes gave away his intentions for mischief.

The work projects that Red led at times sounded more slap-stick than productive. But productivity seemed to increase with the silliness of the sounds. The greatest aches reported from the volunteers were stomach pains from all the laughter. Some of the participants this past summer in Atikokan felt they should "Go ask Moe."

Bob was a lover and a promoter of practical jokes. I would venture more than one hapless scout or novice canoe base staff member was sent off in search of some shoreline, a smoke-shifter, or a sky-hook.

His brother Jim related to me how, during the one summer they worked together at the canoe base, Jim received many letters to commemorate his birthday. The custom at the canoe base was that receiving three letters in a day meant being thrown in the lake - clothes and all. Jim ran out of dry clothes because he received at least three letters each meal for a day or two. Interestingly, the mail only arrived at the base once a day.



One of Bob's canoe base contemporaries remembers Bob as being "trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and mostly irreverent." Irreverent, not in a religious sense, but in his humorous sense, and his honesty in letting people know what he thought and where he stood.

Red was a true friend. He gave his friendship to all who would accept it.

I feel that the true measures of a person are the person's accomplishments; and the impact the person has on improving the measure of others.

Bob "Red" Renner's true measure is larger than his sizeable physical stature.

"There are giants in the land -- and we are privileged to have known one of them."

## **Butch Diesslin**

Red Renner was a big man in every way. He was also a Charlie Guide through and through. If you ever wonder what a Charlie Guide is, take a look at the way Red Renner lived his life. He guided canoe trips in the fifties, and then began a career as a teacher of youth - for over 30 years.

He was a teacher's teacher. He was a man who could do beautiful work with his hands, and who could show others how to get the job done when it needed to be done.

I never took an accredited class from Red, but I know I've been in his classroom. We got to work together on a cabin at the Base last year, and I was his student - no question about it. I usually think of myself as pretty handy, but Red was always several steps ahead of us all - sometimes just a bit impatient that we were struggling to keep up. You always knew where you stood with Red, because he told you exactly what he meant. I would like to be able to hit a nail like Red, with sure strokes and right on the head every time. I mean that both literally and figuratively.

Red didn't spend much time telling you what he thought you should do. His actions seemed to say, "C'mon you guys, there's work to do - let's get at it". When there was a job to do at the Base, Red not only could see it, but he usually got started on it before the rest of us could even get there. I think he probably invented the term "work week", a time when old Charlie Guides could get together to work on the things that needed to be done but that somehow weren't getting done. He was a no-nonsense worker when there was work to be done, and he inspired the rest of us to take his lead.

Red was a man full of love. When the Northern Tier Committee got together in New Mexico last year to meet with the Philmont and Sea Base folks, we met at the airport in Albuquerque and drove up to the ranch together. Red was the last to get there, and he greeted us with a big hug. I'll never forget it. When I saw my own father this year, I traded my usual handshake for a big hug. I guess Red reminded me what that can feel like. I hope my dad understands how much I love him.

Yes, Red was a great teacher. The Base will miss his loving leadership and so will I. If we ever are unsure of what needs to be done at the Base, I think we will never go far astray if we ask ourselves "What would Red want us to do?".

We will surely miss Red but we will always remember him for all the things he taught us and for the way he lived his life.

Rest easy, Charlie Guide.

**Dave Greenlee**

Oh Lord! Now Take Back the Soul of Robert Red Renner, Whom you  
shared with us, and we Loved Him Well..

The Earth has nothing so Fair to Share than the Soul of a Man !

And in His Splendor, All things Bright and Shining in the Glittering  
Mornings Sweet Air.

His New life, in its calm temples Lie

Unto the open fields and drifting sky

And Sweet was his Strong and All Might Heart, now lying still.

Like a Knight-at-Arms

And a Garland for his head

To adorne his sojourn, across the Golden Lake, of his New Life

Dear God! Please Welcome him at your council fire's.....

Our most Befriended and Beloved Brother.....

And let him drink from the endless cup of Life.....

We Honor him, As He has been called by You, upon The Eternal Journey.....

Between the Earth and Heavens.....

As the Lone Voyageur that Paddles into the Long Day.....

Where the Lights begin to Twinkle form the Water and Rocks...

And the Slow Moon Climbs into a Newer World....

Beyond the Sunset .....

Divine --- Divine ----

The Stars!

The Heavens!

The Soul of God!

So Long My Dear Sweet Friend ----

We're Going to Miss You!

**LodgePole Lar - - Guide (Larry Whitmore)**

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