

Rendezvous 2000 – Part I: The Reunion

by Dave Greenlee, photography by Tom Beaton

I just returned from Rendezvous 2000 on Labor Day weekend, a very special trip to the Quetico, and a meeting of the Northern Tier National High Adventure Committee. It was a wonderful time. I feel the need to share some of the highlights, especially for those who were not able to be there. Just as I have felt after many previous trips to the Quetico, I am recharged and energized. I'm sure this is an experience I have shared with many others. This time I also feel a new sense of mission as a Charlie Guide and an alumnus, but I'll explain more about that in Part II.



First, let me say that Rendezvous 2000 was a great time to be in the company of Charlie Guides past and present, to relax and reminisce about the times we have spent together and to enjoy the special bond we share. The older I get, the more I realize how much of my life has been affected by those experiences. We were so fortunate to be able to live in the woods, to travel as voyageurs, and to learn to live a simple life. As Charlie Guides, we came from all over, and we brought a diverse set of life experiences. By the time we had left the Base and gone our separate ways, we had developed a common bond that has bridged the time and space that now separates us. We will always be friends, and we will always be Charlie Guides.

I really enjoyed our visit to Listening Point and Sig Olson's writing shack in Ely. After reading David Backes's book "A Wilderness Within" and viewing the film that Sig and son Robert made in 1948 entitled "Wilderness Canoe Country", I feel that have a better understanding of the special sacrifice that Sig made to take on the forces who would have dammed the lakes, clearcut the woods, and used seaplanes to fly people in to wilderness lakes in order to build resorts and cabins. Robert Olson is a Charlie Guide from the 40's, and he was our banquet speaker. It was special to have him share his memories with us.





I had never before visited Sig's Listening Point on Burntside, nor had I visited Sig's writing shack next to his house in Ely. I do remember Sig coming out to the Base during our training at the beginning of the summers in the late 60's, and I especially remember him taking the time to talk with me one evening on the street in Ely in the summer of 1970. What stands out most in my mind is not only that Sig was willing to talk with me but that he seemed interested to hear about OUR trip, the trip we had made to Hudson Bay in 1969.



On Saturday, several of us managed to slip into town to visit Master Canoe Builder, Joe Seliga. Joe will turn 90 years old in April. We stood around in his shop for over an hour talking with him about his canoes and the times we have spent in and around them. Last year Joe built me number 640, and I will treasure it always. On the evening we visited him, he was working on numbers 648 and 649. He told us with a grin and a wink that he is shooting for 650.



As we talked with Joe, I realized that he is also a person who is interested in what others have to say. He was happy to hear about our trips in his canoes, and he was glad to answer our questions about how he built them and how we should take care of them. So many times I have looked at his canoes while paddling down a lake and marveled at the workmanship, wondered about where he got the wood, and tried to figure out how he fit certain pieces together. Judging by his interest and his enthusiasm in talking with us, I would guess that Joe has also wondered about all the places his canoes have been and whether they are being properly used and cared for. After awhile, Nora came out to see who was there

and, though she wouldn't say so, I think she probably wanted to tell Joe that it was time for supper. For the benefit of the few people who hadn't met her, Joe introduced her as his canoe building partner and a person who has clenched more brass nails (to hold planking onto ribs) than any person on the planet.



After the reunion, Tom Beaton, Mike Sawinski, John Thurston, Craig Pendergraft, and I put our Seliga's into Moose Lake and headed North for the Quetico. Having seen the now famous note Sig Olson left in his typewriter on the day he died, his words of encouragement were fresh in our minds:

**A new Adventure is coming up and I'm sure it will
be A good one.**

