



NORTHERN TIER NATIONAL HIGH ADVENTURE

REFLECTIONS

— CHARLES L. SOMMERS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC. —



Where Will You Be on Labor Day Weekend?

The hope is that when Labor Day weekend rolls around starting on Friday, August 31st, you and your family and friends will be greeting old friends and making new acquaintances at the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc.'s Rendezvous 2012! You read that right, it is time for alumni to gather again at the Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base operated under the Northern Tier High Adventure Program BSA on Moose Lake.

Rendezvous weekends are a great time to re-kindle friendships and to share stories about working at the Base, and to reflect upon the wilderness spirit that is a part of each of our lives. On Friday night, enjoy watching the evening's campfire slowly burn down to coals behind the Lodge as loons join in the chorus of The Far Northland. Perhaps you'll be rewarded with a display of northern lights dancing below the Milky Way as you make your way back to a cabin or car.

The program on Saturday depends upon your own preference, as it does Sunday. Venture into Ely for some shopping, or tour the Dorothy Molter Museum, the International Wolf Center or North American Bear Center. If you prefer to spend some quiet time on the water, your escape starts at the waterfront where you can step into a canoe and



2010 Rendezvous participants gather by the old Dining Hall.

feel the sun and wind upon your face as you head out on to Moose Lake. If you've never paddled a north canoe, the Rendezvous will offer you a new opportunity. Expert instruction will be on hand to master the stroke of the voyagers...or not, if a stroke per second per fifty minutes an hour is not to your liking. But is you want to do something really unique, on Sunday there will be opportunities to take the north canoes to Prairie Portage and back, unless you'd rather do so in a Minnesota II with a buddy canoe.

If you packed your hiking shoes, the trails to Ennis and Blackstone are great opportunities to spend some solitude in the woods and enjoy the fall asters and late summer flowers. For those wondering what

inspired Sig Olson to pen his stories of places, people and the Quetico-Superior region, tours of Listening Point will be available.

If your energy level is set for relaxation or dialed even lower, the new deck overlooking Moose Lake is a great spot to kick back in an Adirondack chair while the breeze whistles through the pine and spruce; a place where there are likely to be many smiles as stories are told and re-told.

As always, the Lodge beckons to all; its logs filled with voices and laughter and song. Listen closely and step back in time to when you worked at the Base.... Do you hear it?

On Saturday night, meet at the Sandy Bridges Program Center for our banquet and bring your checkbook to

bid on auction items. There will be lots of unique items, including another Real Berard art piece, and a lot of cajoling to inspire you to spend more than you wanted. Remember, it is for a great cause. ■

Rendezvous Registration

Memories come alive at the Rendezvous.

Make your memories come alive.

Join us at the Rendezvous!

**Friday, August 31 to
Monday, September 3rd**

\$10/adult – \$0/child

Register online at

<http://reunion.holry.org>

or call Allen Rench at

507-990-3854 (before 9PM CT)

Meals and Lodging:

Meals and lodging reasonably priced by Northern Tier. Lodging is limited and first-come.

Banquet: \$17.50 in advance;
\$25 at the door; children \$7.50.

SUBMISSIONS TO:

REFLECTIONS

c/o Mike Holdgrafer
2310 S. Birmingham Place
Tulsa, OK
74114-3222

or email in MS Word to:
reflections@holry.org
with the subject line
"Reflections."

Please submit photos in
high quality .jpg format.

**DEADLINE for next issue:
NOW.**

Directors and Officers

NAME	OFFICE	TERM EXPIRES	TELEPHONE
Mike Holdgrafer	Director, President (Exec. Comm.)	2013	
Chuck Rose	Director, Vice President (Exec. Comm.)	2014	
Alex Nepple	Director, Secretary (Exec. Comm.)	2014	
Nigel Cooper	Treasurer (Exec. Comm.)	2012	
Roger Clapp	Director	2014	
Allen Rench	Director (Exec. Comm.)	2012	
Owen Gibbs	Director (Exec. Comm.)	2013	
Steve Niedorf	Director	2013	
Chris Wolfe	Director	2013	
Steve Pratt	Director	2012	
Dick Shank	Director	2012	
Steve Spencer	Director	2012	
Karl Huemiller	Director	2014	

Program Liaisons

John Clark	National Director of High Adventure Philmont Scout Ranch, BSA Cimarron, NM 88714 (505) 376-2281
Kevin Dowling	Director Northern Tier National High Adventure Program, BSA P.O. Box 509 Ely, MN 55731 (218) 365-4811
R. Ray Wood	Chairman, Northern Tier National High Adventure Committee, BSA 1610 Shaw Woods Drive Rockford, IL 61119

**Graphic Design
and Layout** laurabourgeault graphic design

Volume 20, 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 twice a year (Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter). The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. is a non-profit 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 let the Alumni Association know so they can update the Alumni database. Please provide 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 go to www.holry.org and click "Update Information." **The US Postal Service will forward your newsletter to you – HOWEVER – they do it at the Alumni Association's expense!** The statement "Address Services Requested" on the newsletter tells the USPS that we want them to forward your newsletter so you don't miss an issue. It also provides us with your new address. For each issue we have between 50-100 address corrections that we pay \$0.80 a piece to the USPS for this service. Please help us reduce this cost to the Association!



Editor's Campsite – Hol-Ry

by Mike Holdgrafer

This will be my last edition as editor of *Reflections*.

The search has been officially launched to find one or more candidates who will bring fresh creativity and content to elevate *Reflections* for its SAA readers.

I have greatly enjoyed putting together the last few years' issues of *Reflections*. It has been great to receive personal notes and correspondence from alumni members, together with pounding out keystrokes on my computer as I drafted articles to supplement the number of articles submitted by other authors. I have also greatly enjoyed working with Laura Bourgeault, our graphic designer tucked away in Calgary, Alberta, who was first brought to us by my predecessor, Mike Bingley. She has been a great find and helped us elevate the quality of our newsletter. Thanks Laura, and thanks Mike!

As *Reflections* has evolved into more of a magazine, it has required more time to solicit and assemble the many articles, compose edi-

torials, locate and touch-up photos (and even take photos in anticipation of using them in future issues) and to edit articles, some requiring a few more tweaks than others. I am deeply indebted to individuals like Chuck Rose, who always finds a couple items to publish. Thanks Chuck! A tip of the hat goes to Roy Cerny also, who provided chapters from *Keep on Paddling*, his recently published book, which helped add to the quality material of prior *Reflections*. I know there are many others I should thank but please accept my apology as I am focused on getting through this last editorial and it is late as I type these thoughts.

By stepping away as editor, it opens up an opportunity for someone else to take the stern. As a Charlie Guide, we tend to get pretty comfortable sitting in the stern seat and knowing we are in control of where the canoe is headed. But, there comes a day when it makes sense to switch places and to either go to the bow to paddle or ride as a duffer; and in exchange, to allow our sons

or daughters, our friends, or in my case, a member or two of the next generation of alumni, to take the stern. Together with the Board, I've got plenty to do already and can use my freed-up time on other SAA matters. My wife, Michelle, is also glad I will not be tied-up putting together editions of *Reflections*.

In a re-focused effort to live up to the commitment to timely publish *Reflections*, the Board recently reviewed the magazine-type issue and compared it to the prior, smaller newsletter editions. The Board determined that there will be a minimum of two issues per year; one in the spring (February/March) and one in the fall (November). A third or special edition is possible during the year. By bracketing the summer canoeing season, future summer activities, events and Rendezvous can be announced in the spring edition, while the fall or pre-holiday edition will look back on the summer activities while looking forward to winter and its fun. In addition, the decision was made to reduce the publication's size from twenty-plus pages to twelve pages, and return to the newsletter approach. In part, this will help us keep printing expenses down while at the same time meeting the commitment to publish *Reflections* to our members. Electronic newsletters will continue to be used but the Board recognizes many members still prefer the paper version of *Reflections* as opposed to electronic communications, so the emphasis will be to ensure a minimum of two issues come out each year.

There is no job description for the editor position yet, but I think the foregoing pretty well addresses what the expectations are that will come with being the editor or even a co-editor if we can find two persons with the

energy and drive to take on this responsibility. Soliciting articles from a diverse lot of Charlie Guides can be like herding cats, including getting articles from each of the directors. However, I think the new publishing parameters will ease the burden of producing an issue while ensuring the quality of the publication remains high. Plus, there is always a core of articles we publish routinely each year, such as announcing scholarship recipients, looking back every two years at the Rendezvous and announcing volunteer opportunities like work week.

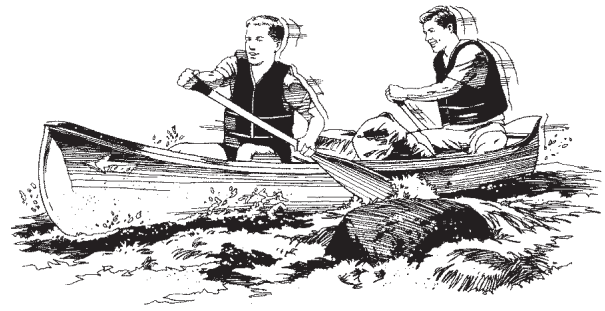
I will remain committed to publish one article for each edition of *Reflections* beyond the column as president, as well as to provide some photos. I would hope I can get other alumni to consider publishing a blurb or two, or even sharing a photo, such as a photo from the Liniment Brigade (hint, hint).

So, as the clock moves past midnight while the air conditioner hums away on a warm night, my hope is that one or more alumni will see this as an opportunity to volunteer and bring their skills forward to be the next editor. Simply call me at 918-630-9437 or drop me an email at mike.holdgrafer@dtag.com.

Oh, and before I forget, this position is unpaid. But having worked at the Base, you already knew that. I look forward to hearing from one or more of you interested in being the editor.

I sincerely appreciate everyone who has been so supportive the past few years. I hope that this support will continue and more importantly, grow in connection with the individual or individuals who will step into the editor position.

— Red-Eye, Mike ■



President's Canoe

by Mike Holdgrafer

I thought I would spend some time “rambling,” a phrase I used when I would correspond with Sandy Bridges many years ago. There's no telling where this column will go or how it will end.

As I write this, it was only a couple weeks ago I was at the Northern Tier with my daughters, Nicole (10) and Natalie (7). Since my return to Tulsa, Duluth was hit with flooding rains, summer is taking a firm hold, my wife and I have been ferrying kids to and from camps, and work has only gotten busier. I'm sure variations of this sound familiar to many of you. It did not take me long to miss being up north. The fact is I wished I could have stayed another week at the Base. My oldest daughter wanted to spend at least two more weeks and would probably opt for the summer. Had I another week to spend, there are some more things I would have hoped to accomplish, including spending some quality time with friends in the Ely area. If there was one “miss” this was it and I regret when I am not able to see friends or spend more quality time with them. I am sure this is something every reader has experienced.

Between all three bases, the Northern Tier will employ over 270 staff this summer. It is numbing to visualize, so imagine being in the dining

room of the Sandy Bridges Program Center (SBPC) that was designed to hold 250 people and seeing it almost filled from wall-to-wall. The flip side to this, of course, is that now most of the staff have been dispersed and are on-the-water, and instead of staff filling the SBPC it is now crews. We were all in that position while working for Northern Tier, sharing a beer early in the season with fellow Charlie Guides, knowing we may be lucky to see them at some time again during the summer before everyone headed home, to college, to jobs or other adventures.

For most of us, summers at Sommers were some of the best times of our lives; opportunities we will never experience again. For some lucky alumni, they have had the opportunity to live vicariously through the lives of their children who have followed their parent in working at the Base, and there have even been a few grandchildren.

The Rendezvous that Allen Rench and other dedicated alumni have been planning for some time is an opportunity to get together with fellow alumni and share memories of these good times. I hope that you will consider joining fellow alumni during the Labor Day weekend. Sitting on the *(continued on next page)*

President's Canoe *cont'd.*



Pagami Creek Fire from NT Entrance.

(continued from previous page)
deck that overlooks Moose Lake and chatting with friends as the sun sets is something you have to experience in person. After all, it is spending quality time with friends without any rush or hustle.

As to the old Dining Hall, local fire departments initially intended to use it for fire-fighting training this past May. The Pagami Creek Fire coupled with dry conditions during the early spring (now over) clearly influenced a subsequent decision to forego the burning-down of the Dining Hall. The Pagami Creek Fire started in mid-August after a lightning strike and smoldered for some time before the USFS was required to fight the fire. Unfortunately, a confluence of conditions turned what had otherwise resembled other historical BWCAW fires into a fire that raced sixteen miles in one day and burned over 70,000 acres, an event that was unprecedented as recently

reported by the USFS. Ultimately, the fire consumed close to 93,000 acres and smoldered into the winter, impacting BWCAW entry points to the east of the Base.

As to the Base, it was never threatened by the Pagami Creek Fire incident, but the Northern Tier did get some public recognition in helping to train hotshot crews in canoe use since motorized travel is prohibited in the BWCAW. Interestingly, the USFS appears to have changed its attitude towards mechanized travel in the BWCAW when suppressing fires and recommended in its post-incident report using motors to assist in moving crews in future incidents. Likewise, the Base was under no threat when a fire raced up Highway 1 towards Ely in May before being contained on the southern outskirts of town. Given these incidents, it comes as no surprise that burning down the Dining Hall is no longer a viable option.

What will become of the space when the old Dining Hall is removed? There have been a couple ideas but one that appears to be pretty reasonable is to relocate the canoe yard, now in and around the old Teepee site, up the hill. Eventually, with the growth in the staff the past few years, the staff lounge and lockers will have to be renovated or rebuilt within the staff area which was once the shop and administrative building. The biggest priority; however, is to build a new male shower and sauna facility that is compliant with youth protection guidelines of the BSA. Planning is underway but project funding will drive when this will occur. The best case scenario is completion prior to the 2014 season, but many pieces have to fall in place to allow this to happen. A reasonable estimate is that it will take around a million dollars to fund this project.

The Lodge renovation has reached the final stage where

the primary focus has been redirected to transforming it to a museum and interpretive center. A new floor of salvaged pine will be overlaid in the Hedrick Library on the existing 1x6 pine flooring this fall. This will strengthen the existing flooring and resolve the issue as to refinishing the old floor.

Later this year, a three-dimensional model of the BWCAW-Quetico will be constructed by a company that makes such models for the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C. Imagine that not only can a crew plan its route on the map board, but it can then look at its route on the 3D model to get an idea of elevations and portages, such as Yum-Yum. As to the map board, a professional consultant will be recommending upgrades and additional museum-quality lighting for the map board, displays and rooms, including LED lighting. Although other

displays will be upgraded or acquired, the most important task will be to complete the touch-screen and LCD monitors in the facility so that anyone can access information about the history of the program, staff, the fur trade, native cultures and the area, as well as information about nature, geology, etc. Finally, some type of fire alarm system needs to be installed that can alert management if, for whatever reason, the Lodge falls victim to a fire. Again, many thanks go to Jim Sowell for his generous support. In the end, we will end up with an incredible facility in the Lodge that all of us may be even more proud than we are today.

That's not to say there are not other minor renovations to the Lodge, as there are. The good news is that major work that disrupts the use of the building is done and we can stay out of the way of others looking to use. In some respects, it's like we have baked the cake and now it is time to find the best frosting and finish the cake.

Changing directions, since Doug Hirdler was General Manager, the Northern Tier has continued to see participation grow. The recent addition of the SBPC will ensure that participants, as well as staff and others, have a first-class facility for meal service, retail sales, meetings and conference. At the same time, the focus remains upon recruiting and retaining the highest quality staff to deliver a wilderness adventure that lasts a lifetime. Those volunteers who have participated in staff training for a while have seen the staff seemingly improve each year for quite a while. This may be more perception, but it was clear that this summer's staff had the hallmark of being another exceptional

staff. This is great for the program and Kevin Dowling and his management team should be proud as they had to recruit the largest staff ever this summer. It certainly makes it easy to support the program when you see first-hand the quality of the persons who ultimately deliver the program.

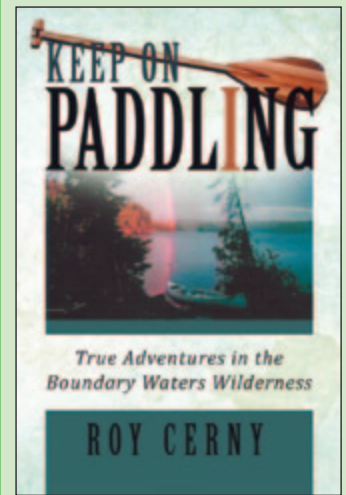
When I see such a large staff and get the opportunity to visit with them, my hope is that we can accelerate their joining the SAA. Membership is a challenge for our organization. Ultimately, membership drives all aspects of our association. I've mentioned it before, but our membership is static and possibly declining due to the age of our population. One possible initiative to implement in the near future is to establish a director solely responsible for member engagement. Somehow, we have to tap into younger alumni sooner. We have not seen our membership increase even though we have a robust network of social networking in Facebook and Twitter. My guess is that social networking does not translate to membership and what may be considered "active participation." This is an area where I remain open to ideas and fresh perspectives, and I stand ready to tear this process down and rebuild it if necessary in order to see growth.

Speaking as to participation, one evening after dinner I spoke to Davey Warner, the Chief Interpreter. Davey has further university education to complete and is preparing to head back to UW – La Crosse. He is building a house boat so he can live on the Mississippi while attending school. Davey questioned how he could be active in the association but, in my words, not jump in over his head. It was a great question, because I think that too often,

current and future alumni may be hesitant to get involved because they are not able to be as active as some alumni members they see engaged in work weeks and seminar days. In other words, dipping a toe in the water is as far as they want to go. As the president of the SAA, I would rather have 100 alumni members that dip a toe in the water than one member that jumps in over his or her head. "Dipping a toe" can be pretty simple. Maybe you make a call, visit a unit to talk about NT, send a photo to *Reflections* or to our Facebook, or send a blurb about a weekend canoeing trip down the Wapsipinicon River (clue, it is in Iowa). Perfect examples are Dennis LaFollette and Jim Barott. Dennis joined the work crew for one day at the Base, while Jim spent his Sunday doing nature hikes during the seminar day. My point is that to be active, you do not have to do much; participation, at whatever level you can do, is perfect.

Before I end this rambling column, I want to thank Kevin, Leslie, Mark, Karen, Laura, Jon, Nicole, Davey and the CIS staff, along with all of the staff which are too many to name, for treating us so warmly and making us feel so welcome to be a part of your staff training.

Next year will be the Northern Tier's 90th anniversary. The success of the Northern Tier Program for almost ninety years has been due to the staff that delivers the program each and every summer, as well as the winter. The program was great when it started in 1923 and has remained so. Each one of us, as alumni, share in this great legacy. Wherever and whenever you are next with fellow alumni, raise a toast to our legacy. We've earned it. ■



Earlier this spring, **Roy Cerny** (1964-70), published *Keep On Paddling: True Adventures in the Boundary Waters Wilderness*. Those familiar with Roy know he is a gifted storyteller and after years of putting his true tales on paper, he finally launched his new book. Roy was raised on the South Dakota prairie and fell in love with the Quetico-Superior area when he made his first trip as a Scout in 1959. Returning several years later, he worked as a guide for seven summers. Roy considers his summers working at the Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base as the most fun and rewarding job he ever had. Roy has continued to renew his passion for wilderness canoeing each summer with church groups, family and friends. For those readers unfamiliar with Roy, he made the huge entrance sign with the two paddles for the Base many years ago that stands as a popular backdrop for crews to take photos. He and his wife, Midge, reside in South St. Paul. For several years, Roy has made his stories available for publishing in *Reflections*.

Roy will be at this year's Rendezvous and will hold a book-signing for interested alumni. *Keep on Paddling* comes in hardback and paperback versions, as well as a Kindle edition. Well done Roy! ■

No More Varnishing – Work Week and Staff Training Winds Down

by Dick Shank and Mike Holdgrafer



Robert M. Hedrick Library

Finally, there is no more major varnishing left to undertake in the Lodge. After years of work each June, this year's team of volunteers achieved a major milestone. With days to spare before Wild Paddle Ball IV, the seasonal staff's now annual evening social event during staff training, the last major coat of spar varnish was applied to the interior of Lodge in the Robert M. Hedrick Library. Before any sealer and varnish could be applied, there was a little prep work that had to be done.

Over the decades, the Hedrick Library had become a repository books, published materials, historical artifacts, posters, maps and quite frankly, some junk. This past winter, **Mark Kelly**, Associate Director of Program, leading a team of Okpik staff, catalogued and inventoried every item they could lay their mitts

on in the library. For probably the first time ever, everything was organized, before the SAA hurricane blew in.

Mark's work was then boxed-up and hauled downstairs. **Dennis LaFollette** (1975-76) drove in from Babbitt, Minnesota, to pitch in and help with this effort, while **Bill Erickson** (5-time Advisor/Staff in 2002 & 2004) from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, removed upstairs' windows to refurbish them. Bill took a couple years off with early season trips but joined the work week again. Normally, **Rolland White** (1963, 1964 & 1967) from Hot Springs, Arkansas, would have directed this aspect given his prior years of working on windows, but Rolland was busy helping **Dick Shank** (NT Committee 1984-present) instruct wilderness medicine and CPR for the first wave of seasonal staff.

Rolland has participated multiple years during the work week. Earlier in the week, **Chuck Rose** (1980-85, 1987-89), a "regular" with staff training, had come up to the Base to lend a willing hand to help with staff training before he headed back to his hometown of St. Cloud to deal with graduation weekends.

The work force continued to swell. **Dave Sheffield** (Advisor 1999 & 2000) drove up from Oxford, Georgia for a second work week and jumped right back into the project, or perhaps more appropriately, crawled back into the project to coat the ceiling planks and rafters with varnish. Dave's son, **Joe "Peaches" Sheffield**, worked at the Base from 2001-2003 and Dave brought us up to speed on his son's life post-Northern Tier, including the fact Joe is an avid distance runner.

Paul Carter (1993) returned for a consecutive year and brought his whole family, including his wife **Samantha**; his two daughters, **Rachel** and **Angela**, along with his four sons. **Eli**, **Blake** and **Blaine** had pitched in and been a great help in 2011, and it was not long before they were helping move boxes and clean logs and planks. This past June their older brother **Jarem**, who is seventeen and soon to earn his Eagle Scout Award, also came up from Fairview, Missouri, and helped volunteer. **Kevin Dowling**, General Manager, did not miss a beat in trying to recruit Jarem to be a part of the 2013 seasonal staff, as did the other alumni.

The ceiling planking, rafters, ridge and post in the Hedrick library had never been completely coated with varnish and if it had been coated, it had happened only once in the life of the Lodge. With unseasonably warm temperatures that were favorable to drying the sealant and varnish, it only took three days to varnish the logs and planking with two coats of varnish. In the process, Dave earned a lifetime membership (inside joke) in connection with removing a non-load-bearing decorative post. Rolland, together with Bill, Eli and others, busily refurbished the windows while **Greg Simpson**, a Northern Tier staff carpenter, whipped-out new screens for the library. As best as could be determined, there had only been one screen for the library since the Lodge was last renovated in the mid-1990s.

The lack of ventilation with screening made the library a rather uncomfortable place to sit back and relax until the new screens were installed.

Between coats of varnish and while the final coat dried, a council of sorts was convened among the volunteers to sort through the books and other materials that had been boxed-up or otherwise carried downstairs. Each item was reviewed to determine its relevance to the Northern Tier Program before moving it back to the library, saving it for sale or auction, or sending it to a purveyor of used books or to be recycled. As decisions were made, Paul entered the decision on to the inventory that Mark created during the winter.

It is probably worth explaining how the retention process worked. The book, *A History of Region Ten*, was deemed historically relevant to the Northern Tier so it was retained. In contrast, *Hiroshima*, a book of pictorial images following the first atomic blast, was deemed to lack any relevance to the Base and discarded. Remarkably, many books were marked as discards from various municipal libraries. In between the “keep” and “discard” stack there were books and items that clearly had value to someone outside of the Northern Tier Program, so the decision was made to retain them to enter into the silent or live auction during the Rendezvous, or to sell via e-Bay. For example, there are many old BSA books, such as the Second Annual Report of the BSA that has value to collectors of Scouting memorabilia, but which lack any other relevance to the Northern Tier. Proceeds from these sales will be deposited in the Northern Tier Scholarship Fund and

possibly a portion may be used for campships.

In the case of any doubt, the decision was to retain the item for reconsideration. A beat-up collection of forestry and other maps fell into this category.



Fresh Varnish and Organized Shelves.



One of the Best Places on Base.

Some items were found to be so historically significant to our common past that these will be framed for future display for everyone to enjoy.

As the work week wound down, some volunteers departed for home while others arrived for Christmas and the seminar day.

Chris Bursch (Okpik Advisor 2005-06), who has

now participated as a seminar presenter for several years, used his fifty-plus years of outdoors' experience to conduct four sessions. The sessions covered rigging a camp against Canoe Coun-

across the end of the parking lot using red pine poles harvested by **Butch Diesslin** (too many years to count) from his property on Fall Lake.

Sandra Lee and Katherine Farion, Master Naturalists, led a group of intrepid staff on a birding hike to learn there were birds in the Northwoods besides bald eagles and loons. Imagine thirty years ago when seeing a bald eagle not as common as today. **Dick Shank, M.D.**, the “Base Doctor,” and **Jim Barott** (1975-79), with the USFS, took staff on portage trail hikes to Blackstone and Secret Lakes, sharing their years of Northwoods' experience along the way to help expand an interpreter's knowledge of the trees, plants and other wildlife encountered on portage trails, while picking up a few ticks.

Terry Schocke (1997-2007), former Director of Programs, joined the training early on to present a history of the Base and its programs to the staff. He then returned on the seminar day and helped instruct advanced paddling strokes. **Tom Nolz**, a Scouting volunteer who has become a regular for helping to instruct paddling strokes, came up from St. Paul. **Derrick Passe**, Project Coordinator for the Kawishiwi Watershed Protection Plan, again joined the team to instruct lake and watershed ecology and protection.

What fish will we catch? What do they bite on? Is this big enough to eat? We've all heard these questions from crews. **Mike Holdgrafer** (1977-82, 1990-present), joined by **Rob Hinrichs**, Atikokan's Fishing program Director (who has a goal to make at least ten casts each day this summer or maybe even this year), taught a couple sessions on fishing, *(continued on next page)*

try's weather; making a fire when it has been raining all day; how to hang a single pot or multiple pots over the fire using pot holders and hangers; and for interpreters seeking solitude away from crews, how-to information to get started in hammock camping. Chris spent a few more days on the Base and helped design and build a tripod rail fence



A New Lustre for an Old Library.



A Luna Moth Takes Refuge on a Varnish Can.

(continued from previous page) as well as a shore lunch session where not a single pan was scorched by the staff as they cooked walleye fillets. Mike also presented a session on how lake country was formed about 20,000 years ago by the last glacier, including a short field trip to the “whale-back” rock on Base, together with some very basic geology that included learning about Ely greenstone.

Bill Erickson switched gears from work week to present two seminars; the first being about the 43-day Thompson Brigade he took that traced the route of David Thompson down the Columbia River in 2011. Bill also shared his knowledge of expedition treks he has taken in the past

decade. Bill, who designed the current geocache program for the Base, also instructed staff on the use of GPS units.

What or where does one start to describe the role and value of **Butch** to training? Butch, a SAA founding Director and retired professor from Vermillion Community College who has worked at the Base and volunteered for over 40 years, was instrumental in working with **Leslie Thibodeaux**, Director of Program, **Mark Kelly**, and **Davey Warner**, Chief Interpreter (who looks and sounds like the Guide Chiefs of olden days, and is building a houseboat to live on the Mississippi river outside of La Crosse), in helping to refine the swamper curriculum.

As mentioned elsewhere, Butch also developed “Duffer Cards” and presented a seminar about North Country weather patterns and how to forecast weather while on the water. Butch ended his day in instructing the staff on the night sky while Mike glazed their eyes with the science of the northern lights in the late afternoon heat of the Lodge.

Roy Cerny (1964-70) was introduced at Christmas to tell the staff about his new book and on the following day presented two sessions in which he shared a few stories and how to effectively tell stories with crews. Roy was joined by his wife, **Midge**.

Allen Rench (1975-1979), former SAA president and current director, donned Ojibwe apparel and presented a seminar on the awareness on First Nation culture, past and present, including some storytelling and history to share with crews. We unfortunately failed to get a picture of Allen. Allen also worked with **Nigel Cooper** (1977, 1979-80), founding treasurer of the SAA, in teaching interpreters in a packed room about guide tips to make their life simpler both on the Base and on the water. Nigel also worked with

staff in the canoe yard to show them some tricks on how to teach portaging to their crews.

Owen Gibbs (1967-70, 2008 to present), SAA director, came up this summer and is repairing canoes until the end of June. Owen is responsible for the Northern Tier Scholarship Program and staff perquisites. He was joined by **Tink Groth** (1969-70) who left near the end of May.

At Christmas, held the night before the seminar day, Dick Shank was recognized by Kevin Dowling for his years of service as a medical officer for the Base. Butch, as Santa Claus, dispensed canoe paddles, embroidered guide packs and other recognitions to returning staff. All of the alumni present were recognized and warmly applauded by the Northern Tier staff.

Once again, this past June was an incredible display of involvement by the SAA in carrying out its mission statement of support to the Northern Tier. Thank you, to Kevin and all of your staff for making us feel so welcome! Thank you, work week and staff training alumni, for your time and effort in demonstrating to future alumni what it means to be a Charlie Guide for life! ■

Online Alumni System

The association has an online alumni system. To access it you must have a current email address on file. If you have not received an email from us recently, please let us know your current email address by visiting:

www.update.holry.org

The online alumni system features include:

- Searchable alumni directory;
- Update your own alumni record in the directory;
- Join or renew membership;
- Save trees by choosing to receive mailings and newsletters by email only.

My Canoeing Partners

by Mike Holdgrafer



"1947 - The Boy Scout Wilderness Canoe Base"

The recent staff work week brought forth a variety of what could be considered "hidden treasures" that were located in the Hedrick Library. One of those treasures is a framed, hand-drawn, water-colored drawing by **Ed Woolverton**. For *Reflections* readers who have followed the Lodge renovation project, Ed was the individual who hand-carved the name of Charles L. Sommers into the wooden plank affixed to fire place stone work when the Base was dedicated on May 17, 1942. Not only was Ed a wood-carving artisan, but he was equally at ease with pen and ink.

The drawing is titled, "1947 - The Boy Scout Wilderness Canoe Base" and lists sixteen individuals as "My Canoeing Partners." Some of the signatures are faded and the spelling

difficult to read, but the Canoeing Partners listed are **R. Marquardt, Jock Stoops, Al Nisswandt, John Lund, Milton "Punk" Knall, Vic Lasbrooke, Walsh "Mack" Shief, Fred L. Knudsen, Rick Roach, Tom James, Dick Gibson, Bob Adams, Gordy Gilbert, Fred McCool and Bill O'Brien** (Some of these spellings may be wrong, so if anyone can help to properly identify the 1947 staff please write the editor.). Ed drew thirteen caricatures and someone came back in to add names and nicknames to the caricatures, as well as naming a pine squirrel "Belle." Of historical significance to the early days of Moose Lake is the sign pointing the way to Kirks Resort down the lake. Perhaps there is some hidden message about Kirks being a location

where chilled beverages could be found. Who knows except the Charlie Guides of that era who left their own indelible mark on the legacy we share as alumni.

1947 would have been the sixth summer of operations at the Base. Ed's drawing prominently pictures the Lodge in the center of the drawing, reflecting that the Lodge was the heart of all operations: outfitting, meals, administration, staff lodging and program.

As to the final disposition of the drawing, several things will happen. First and foremost, it will be re-framed in an archival manner to preserve the drawing as against further degradation, including acid-free mounting and museum-grade glass to eliminate ultraviolet damage. At some time, it was framed by Cyko Art Studio in

Ely, although it appears the drawing was removed and then re-mounted. As an aside, Cyko will be familiar to former staff who used to buy Kodachrome and have slides or other film developed at Cyko. It seems odd to mention camera film in this age of digital images, let alone mentioning Kodak Kodachrome. Anyway, a little TLC, together with a plaque describing the drawing's historical significance, will go a long ways to ensure this treasure will be around to cherish for a long time.

Although there will be further discussion on the drawing's final placement in the Lodge, the preliminary thought is to hang it in the main room or at least downstairs where everyone can view it as opposed to keeping it in the Hedrick Library where only staff may view it.

A high resolution image will be also made of the drawing so that **Allen Rench** can post a copy on [REDACTED] for anyone visiting that website. This website, maintained by Allen, is chocked full of digitized photos and other printed material related to the Base, its history and the characters that are a part of its past. PDF copies of the drawing will be maintained in other locations for redundancy.

Finally, a digital image will be printed, framed and made available for either the silent or live auction at the upcoming Rendezvous with the proceeds to help fund the Northern Tier Staff Scholarship Program. Who knows, maybe a handful of un-framed prints will be available for purchase. Join your canoeing colleagues and find out for yourself at this year's Rendezvous! ■

Butch's Duffer Cards

by Mike Holdgrafer

No one ever accused **Butch Diesslin** of just sitting around. When he is sitting around, it's either in a boat trying to coax a walleye to hit his bait or he is likely at his computer working on some project or corresponding with friends. Butch's latest project has been an idea that started many years ago when **Clyde "Sandy" Bridges**, then the Base Director (the General Manager position today) and Butch discussed ways to enhance the trips for participants. The thought was to develop a set of cards that would contain information as to the history, cultures, flora and fauna, and other topics about Canoe Country. After all, as Butch noted in his introduction pages to the Duffer Cards, there is more to a wilderness experience than

paddling and camping.

The thought was that the "Duffer" in the middle of the canoe could occupy his or her time in reading the cards and this information would be shared among the crew. Thus, the name "Duffer Cards" as opposed to other less eloquent references to the middle person.

For some time, the topic of creating Duffer Cards has resurfaced from time-to-time. *A Charlie's Guide*, developed by **Bill Erickson**, was in some degree an extension of this concept but directed at developing a reference book as to physical locations that Interpreters could use. The Duffer Cards, in comparison, were a resource for the participants.

Over the past several (continued on page 16)

About the Title: "Duffer Cards"

The idea for this booklet came about many years ago during evening conversations between the author and Clyde "Sandy" Bridges, then the General Manager of Northern Tier. The topic of these conversations was frequently about how to enhance the Northern Tier experience for the participants beyond learning canoeing and camping skills.

We agreed that there are many interesting things about the Canoe Country - natural history, fur trade history, native peoples, wildlife, flora and fauna, etc. - of Minnesota, Manitoba and Ontario. Being introduced to these other interesting things is not a necessity to enjoying a canoe camping experience. We thought of a "deck" of small and informative cards, with each card covering one of these interesting topics.

The Duffers - sitting in the middle of the canoe - are the members of the group not actively involved in making the canoe move across the lake. We felt giving each canoe a stack of Duffer Cards seemed to be a positive way to help occupy the Duffer's time with interesting bits of information about the Canoe Country.

When retirement came for the author, it allowed the author to write these Duffer Cards. The decision was made to print these "cards" as a small booklet - rather than having a number of individual cards. Losing one or more of 60+ cards seemed to be a greater risk as a source of litter than one little booklet.

Duffer Cards

A Collection of Bits of Information
About The Canoe Country

- Natural History
- Plants and Trees
- Fur Trade History
- Native Peoples
- Fish and Fishing
- Birds and Animals
- Night Sky and Weather
- Travel Tips and Tricks

Northern Tier National
High Adventure Canoe Bases
Ely, Minnesota, Atikokan Ontario, Bissett, Manitoba

The Common Loon

The Common Loon is Minnesota's State Bird. In the summer loons have very dark green heads, a white neck ring, white bellies, and white-flecked black backs. During the winter loons are silent, plus lose their white specks and neck ring.

The call of a loon can be a long high-pitched wail or a rapidly repeated shrill laughing sound. Loons will answer you back if you can mimic their call.

Loons eat small fish and minnows they catch by diving to depths of 100 feet or more. The legs and feet of a loon are far back on their body for swimming and diving - so far back they can't stand or walk on land.

Loons mate for life, will lay 1 or 2 eggs, make a crude nest along a gradual shoreline so the female can slide in and out from the lake. Eggs are lost to nix and other predators. Baby loons are all black, can swim at birth, but are often seen riding on a parent's back.

Yearling loons spend the summer in large groups and can be seen on some of the larger lakes. This is believed to be a time of mate meeting and selection. Loon flesh cannot be digested - cooked or raw.

44

Grand Portage

The North West Company Depot on the West Shore of Lake Superior site was chosen where the best interconnected water route into the vast area where the company had interior trading posts. The water route from Lake Superior used the Pigeon River as the first water reached.

The land along the shore of Lake Superior rises rapidly going away from the lake, resulting in all of the rivers running into Lake Superior to have numerous rapids and waterfalls coming down the hill. To get beyond the worst of the falls and rapids, one long portage was established - The Grand Portage. Grand Portage is about 9 miles long from Lake Superior to the Pigeon River.

The pay of a Voyageur going inland for a winter was determined by the number of portage Pieces the Voyageur was able to carry across Grand Portage in a day. The minimum was 2 Pieces.

Frederated rest points - "Poses" - were established based on the difficulty of the trail. It was common for a Voyageur to take two loads alternately from one Pose to the next, giving them a "rest walk" back for the other load.

13

Introduction

The term *Duffer* is used to refer to the person riding in the middle of the canoe. I learned the meaning of *Duffer* when I took my first canoe trip in 1958 as a Scout. Our Interpreter told us that trying to paddle while *Duffing* was very tiring and did little to help move your canoe. The *Duffer* is sitting too low and must reach too far to the side to be effective. *Duffers* are better off resting and save their energy for when it is their turn to paddle.

Duffing was a time to rest once muskies until the next portage, read the map, look for wildlife and at the surroundings. I found *duffing* to get boring on a long lake and wished I had something to read, especially if it would tell me things about the Canoe Country. This booklet has information about the Canoe Country. The topics are things my crew members asked about when I was a Northern Tier Interpreter in the 1960s. Hopefully these *Duffer Cards* will add to your Canoe Country experience.

Blaine "Butch" Diesslin

© 2012 Blaine R. Diesslin

Carnivorous Plants

There are no Venus Flytraps in the Canoe Country, but keep an eye out for these plants that "eat" insects to provide them with nutrients - especially nitrogen.

Bladderworts have lacy leaves that float freely just under the surface of the water, sometimes forming large mats; they grow a small, snapdragon-shaped, yellow flower that sticks above the surface around July 1. The invertebrate-trapping bladders quickly open when trigger hairs are disturbed.

Pitcher Plants are most likely found on the edges of "floating mats" of moss, insects, mites, and spiders are attracted to the red lip of the pitcher-shaped leaves, nectar-filled red veins lure the prey downward; the curve of the tube is lined with downward-pointing hairs forming an efficient trap.

Pitcher Plants were used by the Native Peoples as a smallpox remedy with good results.

59

Water Lilies

There are two major groups of water lilies native to the Canoe Country. Water lilies can only grow in water 8 feet deep or less.

The *White Water Lily* (usually fragrant) can be distinguished by the relatively large flowers (10-20 cm) and also by their leaves which are semicircular, have a shallow notch and a vein pattern which spreads out from the center. There are many variations in the color patterns especially of white lilies.

At the right time of year, you may find a unique variation on South Lake in Quince Park, where the white lily flowers have pink petal tips.

Yellow Water Lily flowers are usually smaller (3-5 cm), with leaves that are heart-shaped with a prominent vein originating at the notch.

The leaves of both lily types are nearly round and minimize the effects of wind. The leaves have waxy upper surfaces which shed water easily. The flowers and leaves are on separate stalks, those stalks are hollow (or nearly so) allowing gases including oxygen to move around inside the plant.

Water lily roots (horizontal growing rhizomes) are rich in starch and are sometimes seen floating out top of the water, this usually indicates that they have been uprooted and partially eaten by moose.

58

Contents

Growing Glaciers of the Past	1
Melting Glaciers of the Past	2
Continental Divides	3
Knife Lake Siltsone	3
Native Peoples of the Canoe Country	5
Photographs	6
Beaver Hairs	7
North American Fur Trade Era	8-9
Voyageurs	10-11
North West Company Post	12
Grand Portage	13
Height of Land Portage	14
Fort William Fur Depot	15
The Kam-Doq Trade Route	16
The Versatile Paper Birch Tree	17
Finch Bark Canoes	18
Wild Rice	19
Harvesting Wild Rice	20
Processing Wild Rice	21
Wild Blueberries	22
Logging History	23
Logging Camps	24
Log Booms	25
Hoist Bay	26
Logging Dams	27
Knife Lake "Isle of Pines"	28
Canoe Country Fishing	29
Tips on Landing Fish	30

"Height of Land" Portage

The fur trade water route going west from Grand Portage goes upstream on the Pigeon River, then through a series of lakes and streams for about 40 miles to the *Height of Land Portage*, between South Lake and North Lake.

The *Voyageurs* used this change of water flow to celebrate the newcomer's becoming *Nor'Westers* - those to travel inland and spend the winter. The newcomer's were "Baptized" with a Cedar bough dipped in the water of North Lake, made to promise to not allow other newcomers to pass without also promising, and to promise to never kiss another man's wife without her permission.

The Height of Land portage is only one of two places the International Boundary between the US and Canada lies on land. The other over-land place is Monument Portage on the east end of Ottertrack Lake.

This international border was set by a treaty between England and France, ending the French & Indian War, to follow the customary fur trade waterway from Lake Superior to the northwest most corner of Lake of the Woods.

14

Furred Animals

There are quite a few animals living in the canoe country that have been trapped for their fur. All are meat-eaters, excellent climbers, have excellent eyesight and hearing and are very seldom seen.

These animals include: *Fisher*, *Pine Martin*, *Least Weasel*, *Long-tailed Weasel*, *Mink* and *River Otter*. All are slender and 1-2 feet long, except the Otter being 2-3 feet long.

The *Least Weasel* is the smallest, less than a foot long, has a year-round black tail tip and changes the fur color from brown in summer to white in winter - when they are called *Kermine*.

You are likely to see an *Otter* because of their curiosity, plus they den and live near water - eating mostly minnows, fish, mussels and crayfish. Otters are smart and have been known to open catches on fish keeping live boxes. Otters are excellent swimmers and divers. The winter tracks of an Otter are series of a couple of bounding steps followed by a belly-slide groove in the soft snow.

None of these furred animals hibernate in winter, so winter is when their tracks can be seen in the snow.

43

Beaver

The beaver is the largest rodent found in the canoe country. A large adult can weigh 50 pounds or more. Beavers are water oriented and have webbed hind feet. Beaver have two layers of fur - outer long, coarse guard hair and a much shorter inner layer of waterproof fur.

Beaver are most active at night and known for being ambitious builders of stick and mud dams to control the water where they live. They use their large ever-growing incisors to cut trees of all sizes to get the materials needed for food, housing and dam building.

The home or lodge of a beaver can be a pile of sticks and mud built in shallow water of a lake or pond. The beaver's lodge can be built into the shore or the bank of a stream. Beaver will make an underwater winter food pile of smaller limbs near the lodge. This allows the beaver to eat without going on land in deep snow and be easy prey for predators. The entrance to the beaver's home is always from underwater.

A swimming beaver will warn others of potential danger by slapping their tail on the water.

42

Fort William Fur Depot

The North West Company moved its Lake Superior fur trade Supply Depot from Grand Portage to the mouth of the Kaministiquia River in 1783, after the American Revolution. This new main Depot was named *Fort William* in 1807 - after Sir William McGillivray, Chief Director of NWC (1804-1821). The site of Fort William was about 50 miles northeast of Grand Portage - on British controlled land and not in the United States and subject to US business taxes.

French *"Gens de Bien"* fur traders had previously built a post at this site and used the Kaministiquia River as their route inland from Lake Superior about 1760. These "free" traders did so to reduce contact - and avoid conflict - with NWC Voyageur brigades on the Grand Portage route.

Fort William Depot was closed in 1821 when The North West Company became part of The Hudson's Bay Company and all shipment of trade goods and furs went through Hudson's Bay.

A reconstruction of the 1800's Fort William is located on the Kaministiquia River about 12 miles upriver from Lake Superior.

15

Remembering Larry Whitmore; A Broken Paddle

by Dave Greenlee (previously published on the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. blog)

Friends of Larry Whitmore,

Larry Whitmore passed away on January 1, 2012. He had been battling cancer for several years. My remembrances of Larry will not be about his health issues, but rather the unique person who was my good friend and colleague.

As near as I can figure, we met over 45 years ago, when we were both Boy Scouts in the Sioux Council Order of the Arrow ceremonial team. The Order of the Arrow is a brotherhood of honor campers in Scouting, and as the ceremonial team, we took our duties seriously. We wore special buckskin Indian garb, carefully memorized our lines, including lots of Indian words that we probably butchered in their pronunciation. We conducted a nighttime ceremony where we "tapped out" new honor campers after paddling into camp at the shore of a lake, skillfully lighting a campfire with a flaming arrow. All of this had been carefully rehearsed to maximize the impact of the solemn ceremony. Larry and I shared a respect and reverence for Indian ways, and I suspect our feelings go back to our time in the OA.

Also as Scouts, Larry and I spent time together on a wilderness canoe trip through the Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base near Ely, MN. It was a great experience. We both ended up getting jobs there the next year, first getting trained and then working as wilderness guides. Each subsequent summer, we took 5 or 6 Scout crews into the woods for ten days at a time, paddling hundreds of miles, portaging between lakes, and "delivering the Wilderness



(L-R) Larry Whitmore, Dave Greenlee, Roy Cerny and Cliff Hanson, Base Director.

Experience." In between trips to the woods, Larry would play his guitar, usually drawing a crowd around his locker in the guide's quarters. Some of his songs were folk songs; some were songs of the day, some of my favorites were written by Bob Dylan, and some of Larry's songs he had written himself.

Larry guided canoe trips at the Sommers Canoe Base for seven years, much longer than most guides who might last a year or two, or maybe three or four at the most. Larry generally got excellent reviews from his crews; his trips were always an adventure, and that's why they came up to the Base. Remarkably, he also got excellent reviews from his adult advisors who weren't always there for an adventure in the woods. Many were just there following up on their commitment to the boys and Larry somehow got them into the spirit of the wilderness treks, thus earning their respect and admiration.

Larry had lots of friends in the days he was guiding, and why not? He was an adventurous voyageur among fellow

voyageurs; someone to look up to...to hang out with...to aspire to be like...and he could sing and play guitar and tell stories all night long.

After our days guiding, I sort of lost track of Larry for a few years, even though we were both within a few miles of Sioux Falls. We were busy working our jobs and raising our families. We did hunt together once in awhile. My God, could that man shoot a shotgun. I understand he was a champion trap shooter. One of my favorite stories is how he got to be a "hired gun" for some of the ranchers who hosted goose hunts out on the Missouri River. Everybody paid the rancher for the experience of hunting in the "pits" based on how many geese they brought home. Larry's job would be to take the end pit, patiently waiting for everyone else take their shots, and then make sure that none of the honkers got past him. For his trouble, Larry's fees were generally waived. I think they had his phone number on speed dial for the times when they expected a hunting party with questionable shooting skills.

Years later, Larry began to develop a series of health problems that seemed to consume his energy and change his spirit of optimism and adventure. For those of us who knew him in the good old days, he always seemed to have time for us; to laugh and sing and recall tall tales and great memories. I think it became harder and harder to change gears and be the Larry that we grew up with. The crowning blow may have been when his fingers became so numb that he couldn't play guitar.

I believe Larry is playing his guitar again now, singing, and sharing stories with his friends. In my mind, I can picture his spirit enjoying some of the many places he visited, bringing in some pheasants or catching some fish for supper. He was my great friend, and I will always remember the times we spent together.

Editor's Note: On January 5, 2012, friends, family members and fellow Charlie Guides came together to celebrate Larry's life in Sioux Falls, while others posted thoughts and memories on-line. Larry was also remembered this past June at the "Broken Paddles" memorial service when current Northern Tier staff came together at the waterfront on a spectacular June evening to honor the memories of alumni who had crossed his or her final portage, while reflecting upon the spirituality that is instilled in all who travel in Canoe Country. **Roy Cerny**, together with **Shane Johnson**, an Assistant Chief Interpreter, and a first-year staff member, laid this year's cedar boughs upon the waters of Moose Lake during a moment of inward thought. ■

Music from Yesteryear

by Mike Holdgrafer

In 2011, **Rolland White** gave me a copy of a songbook used at the Base when he was on the staff during 1963-64 and 1967. My intent was to include a couple pages of that songbook in *Reflections* so others may enjoy a glimpse of the music used at the Base almost fifty years ago. After all, since the 1970s, the Base has used the songbook, "Les Chansons des Nouveaux Voyageurs" and music has always been a part of our shared past, something we share with the voyageurs.

Lo and behold, as the SAA work crew sorted through the Hedrick Library, someone found a stack of original songbooks that Rolland made his copy from.

Although we are all bound by "The Far Northland," each generation has songs unique to those times, just like "The

Last Saskatchewan Pirate" (performed by the Arrogant Worms*) is unique to the Northern Staff over the past decade. Preserving our collective past is important to both the SAA and the many individuals that it represents. Like other historical documents, a high resolution image will be made for [REDACTED].

A few excerpts have been copied here for your enjoyment.

*If you have no idea what this song is, then go to Youtube and enter "Last Saskatchewan Pirate" in the browser where several versions can be pulled-up, including one with The Arrogant Worms performing with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. But if you really want to see this song performed in its full glory, check out a post-canoë trip Rendezvous at the Northern Tier! ■

SONGS

from

SOMMERS WILDERNESS CANOE BASE, REGION TEN
Boy Scouts of America, Ely, Minnesota

THE FAR NORTHLAND

It's the far Northland that's a-callin' me away,
As take I with my pack-sack to the road.
It's the call on me of the forest of the North,
As step I with the sunlight for my load.
From Lake Agnes and Louis, to Kawnipi I will go,
Where you see the loon and hear it's plaintive wail.
If you're thinkin' in your inner heart there's
swagger in my step,
Then you've never been along the boarder trail.

ON MY HONOR

On my honor
I'll do my best
To do my duty to God.
On my honor
I'll do my best
To serve my country as I may.
On my honor
I'll do my best
To do my good turn each day;
To keep my body strengthened
And keep my mind awakened,
To follow paths of righteousness.
On my honor
I'll do my best.

Songs on the trail -- the sign of a true Voyageur. Paddling, Portages, and around the campfire, or at the close of the day - alone or with your comrades - a song in your heart.

Many of these songs were written by our modern day Explorers as they were out on these lakes and portage trails. Then they taught them to us at their last campfire. We hope you can teach us a new one that will be even better.
Let's All Sing!

SOMMERS CANOE BASE SONG

On the hills above Moose Lake
In among the trees,
Flows the flag of Region Ten
Waving in the breeze;
Hail to Sommers!
Hail to Sommers!
With your Guides so true,
With your spirit of Good Scouting
Hail, all hail to you.



THE HOL-RYE SONG

(Tune: Cigarettes & Whiskey)

CHORUS:
Hol-Rye, Hol-Rye
And ol' Red-Eye;
They'll drive you crazy,
They'll drive you insane!

The Guide said "Portage,"
We started along,
But by the middle
We knew we'd done wrong.

The portage was long,
The trail was steep,
The mud on the end
Was ten feet deep.

We came to the end
And sand to our hips,
And then, by golly,
We climbed in our ships.

We paddled and paddled
And paddled some more,
We called to the Guide
And he said, "Let's do more."

The Hol-Rye was good,
The Red Eye was fine;
The only thing wrong
We don't have no swine.

Peanut butter
And old musty bread
We must have
A hole in the head.

Green canoes
Scrape over the rocks;
Why, oh why
Don't they build any docks?

Paddle and portage
And portage some more,
After Meadows,
My feet sure are sore.

"Don't scratch that canoe,
The Guide, he did say;
We scratched it
But we did not get away.

We went up the Man Chain
And up to old "Sag,"
And by that time,
Our tails did drag.

We made it to Base Camp
On the last day;
And then we worked,
And boy, that ain't hay!



PADDLE AROUND THE CLOCK

(Tune: Rock Around The Clock)

Oh, we paddle all day
And portage all night;
And eat Hol-Ry
While the stars shine bright.

CHORUS:

We're gonna paddle
Around the o'clock tonight;
We're gonna paddle and portage
'Til the stars shine bright;
We're gonna paddle and portage
Around the o'clock tonight.

The Crew Leader told me
To carry a canoe;
I went half-way and said,
"To Heck with you!"

Our Leader had a nicotine fit;
He smoked the paper
From the toilet kit.

Our Guide really thought
He'd been around;
We ended up in the Lost and Found.



Ten Feet Tall

by Roy Cerny

It was early June in the summer of 1967 when we were undergoing our guide training week at the Sommers Canoe Base. We had all braved the cold water and practiced swamping our canoes in the lake and paddling them back in. We had been issued our kettle pack gear and each of us had put the finishing touches on the logos on our paddles and fixed up our Selega canoes with fresh paint and varnish and in some cases fiberglass patches. The older more experienced guides enjoyed sharing tales of the past summers canoe trips with the newest guides just hired that summer. Sharing experiences was important in the learning process. The highlight of training week was the guide trip.

The 60 or so guides hired each year would be divided up into groups of 6-10 with an older experienced guide appointed as the leader. The groups all tried to outdo each other in the length and difficulty of the training trips that would go out for 5 days after the initial training week. The trips were like an intensive boot camp for guides. The camaraderie developed during the trips was unlike anything you could imagine. The guides taught each other by example and sometimes you had to place a lot of trust in your fellow guides to get you out of a tough or dangerous spot. The trips were intensive in physical and mental training that the staff would need to handle the scout groups that would soon be coming to the base to start their canoe trips. The base put over 3000 scouts on the trail each summer and each guide was responsible to make each group's trip as memorable as

possible. The guides had to show the scouts how to cook, navigate, paddle, and stay safe. They had to share stories about the voyageurs, the Indians, the loggers, the explorers that all had an impact on the area. They had to show them how to fish, how to recognize plants and animals in the area, and how to take care of themselves in the woods. They taught them how to be courteous to others and to leave no trace of their presence in the woods.

Each guide would develop his own persona. The guides grew beards and let their hair grow long so they would look like mountain men. It was a time of butches, buzz cuts and flat tops so the guides did indeed stand out in a crowd. The outfits the guides wore on the trail were as individual as their personalities. Some wore cutoffs, some wore lederhosen, others dressed as voyageurs complete with knitted hats and colorful sashes. One guide wore a tuxedo and a top hat and insisted on being called the Boushwa. I wore a leather fringed war shirt decorated with rattlesnake rattles and leather breeches. Hats and headbands came in every style and color. We each were memorable in our own way. We were colorful, brash, and each of us enjoyed immensely the role we played

I took my first canoe trip when I was 16 in 1959 and I still remember Jim Thomas who was my guide. He was everything I described above and more. He was big and tall and wore a black Stetson. He could carry a pack and a canoe and never rested on portages. He could cook up a seven-course supper in the

(continued on page 17)



Packing food for the Swamper Trip.



Heading to the landing.



Escaping from the Base!

Crossing Portages

Crossing Portages, the SAA's fund raising campaign, allows our organization to communicate with members, sponsor reunions and trips, and support the mission of the SAA to support the Northern Tier Program, including the granting of scholarships and incentives to the seasonal staff. Thanks to the generosity of the following people who have made pledges over the past year. If you don't see your name below, please consider donating at <http://portal.holtry.org/CrossingPortages>.

John Bass	Don Melander
Thomas Beaton	Robert Morgan
Kent Behnken	Chuck Moyer
Doug Bender	Alex Nepple
Dave Bird	Steven Niedorf
John Breen	Albert Nisswandt
Mike Breen	Bob O'Hara
Phil Cady	Ralph Olsen
Robert Cargill	Richard Olson
Mike Cichanowski	John Parish
Roger Clapp	Jon Pederson
Michael Clayburn	Eric Peterson
Jim Cole	Rodger Peterson
Collin Cooper	Randy Pfeifer
Cynthia Cooper	Brian Pomeroy
Kenneth Davis	Steve Pratt
Blaine Diesslin	Mike Quinn
Dan Dineen	Dean Rau
Sparky Duroe	Jason Reis
William Erickson	Chuck Rose
Jack Fenoglio	Robert Rosene
Monte Fronk	Brenda Ryther
Roderick Garlitz	Louis Sabatini
Owen Gibbs	Dale Schroeder
Duane Hanson	Lee Sessions
Lorri Hanson	Richard Shank
Mark Hayman	David Sheffield
Greg Heidrich	Benjamin Smith
Mike Holdgrafer	Steve Spencer
Dan Houchin	Bill Stark
Lee Huckstep	Bruce Tannehill
Timothy Huemiller	John Thurston
Karl Huemiller	Mike Tucker
Ian Humphreys	Jim Varcho
David Hyink	Brian and Liz Vollmer-Buhl
Dennis Knight	James Wedge
Bob Kohns	James Wilson
Greg Kvam	Dennis Wogaman
Robert LaFortune	Christopher Wolfe
Don Lee	Ray Wood
Michael McMahon	David Wortendyke
Marvin Mealman	

Okpik's Cold Weather Camping Manual

by Mike Holdgrafer

Among the many achievements of **Sandy Bridges** was the development of the cold weather camping program known as Okpik. It is a crown jewel among the program offerings at the Northern Tier and offers participants an opportunity that is unique to the Northern Tier. It's success has resulted in many councils, nationwide, adopting, modifying or developing their own Okpik program.

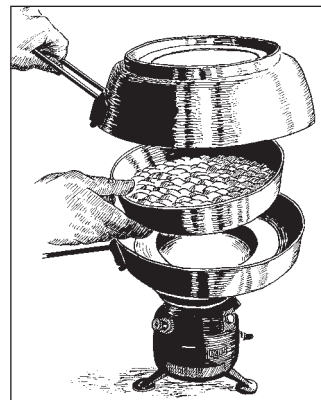
A lot of research went into the development of Okpik. Sandy was passionate about learning as much as he could about cold weather camping and survival from experts around the globe. Along the way, he acquired books and materials, equipment, and most importantly, invaluable knowledge. When the Base became the Cold Weather Camping Development Center and was adopted as the BSA national cold weather camping program in the early 1990s, Sandy wrote the *Cold Weather Camping Manual* for the BSA.

Sandy, who by then had collected shelves of survival and winter camping manuals, knew that the manual had to be illustrated in order to effectively educate the user. So, he went to **Bob "Jackpine" Cary**

for Bob's help to illustrate the manual. In prior issues of *Reflections*, we have addressed the value of Bob, who was a member of the Northern Tier Committee, in supporting the Northern Tier during his lifetime. Bob proceeded to draw most of the illustrations for the manual, including the portrait of the Snowy Owl that many readers will quickly recognize.

Among the discoveries found tucked away in the Robert M. Hedrick Library were all of the illustrations used in the manual. These included many original pen and ink illustrations by our gone, but never forgotten friend, Bob Cary.

Accompanying this article are images from the manual, including a lynx, the Snowy Owl mentioned above, and an illustration of a Coleman Stove and trail oven. These will be framed and displayed in the Lodge. ■





The Diesslins and Hyinks cordially invite you to join them on a **10-day cruise – Princess Cruise's Eastern Caribbean Voyager (E305)** aboard the **Emerald Princess**, departing February 5, 2013 from Ft. Lauderdale. Balcony State Rooms are \$1,749 pp/do + taxes, fees and trip insurance.



We are hoping for a large group of friends and family to join us. If our numbers become significant there is the possibility of rebates. We plan to donate any rebates to the Sommers Alumni Association's Seasonal Staff Scholarship Fund and each cruiser will receive pro rata credit for a charitable donation. Please make arrangements through Sherryl or Mardi at Dawson's Travel in Virginia, MN. 800-962-2368. For more info visit: www.princess.com

Day	Port / Date	Arrive
1	Ft. Lauderdale, Florida Tuesday, February 5	
2	At Sea Wednesday, February 6	
3	At Sea Thursday, February 7	
4	Antigua, Antigua & Barbuda Friday, February 8	8:00 AM
5	St. Lucia Saturday, February 9	8:00 AM
6	Barbados Sunday, February 10	7:00 AM
7	St. Kitts, St. Kitts & Nevis Monday, February 11	10:00 AM
8	St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands Tuesday, February 12	7:00 AM
9	At Sea Wednesday, February 13	
10	Princess Cays, Bahamas Thursday, February 14	9:00 AM
11	Ft. Lauderdale, Florida Friday, February 15	7:00 AM



Notes from the Portage Trail

On April 4, 2012, Northland College awarded an honorary degree to **Robert Olson**, son of Sigurd F. Olson, at an Honors Day ceremony. Olson received the degree as a result of his contributions to public service, as well as his work to protect and preserve natural resources.

"Throughout your life, you have demonstrated an abiding concern for the development of harmonious relationships between individuals, cultures, nation states, and the natural environments on which they all depend," said Alan Brew, interim vice president of academic affairs and academic dean at Northland College. "In recognition of your many achievements in developing and promoting such relationships, Northland College is pleased to honor you with the degree Doctor of Public Service, *honoris causa*."

Olson's history of service began with his studies of international relations at Northland College, Carlton College and

the University of Colorado in Denver. He worked for 20 years as a diplomat for the United States Foreign Service at embassies and posts throughout the world, including Libya, Lebanon, France and Canada. During that time, Olson fulfilled special assignments working with marine forces in South Vietnam, the World Health Organization in Geneva, and the State Department in Washington D.C.

Olson is now retired and lives in Seeley, Wisconsin, where he restored and managed his grandparents' property. He has authored two books and has served as the president of the Northwest Chapter of the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association. "I'm 86 and I could either close up shop and call it quits or go on living for something," Olson said. "Northland has given me the actual opportunity to do that as a volunteer and advisor."

Olson also helped establish the Listening Point Founda-

tion to preserve his father's Burntside Lake retreat and Sigurd F. Olson's legacy of wilderness advocacy.

Last fall, **David Hyink**, was recognized as a Distinguished Alumnus by Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA). Dave graduated from SFA in 1971 with a bachelor's degree in forest management and in 1972 with a master's degree in forestry biometrics.

Carl Boyles, Program Director, accepted a position as Director of Support Services with the Greater Cleveland Council, effective December 1, 2011. Carl had been with the Northern Tier since June 2007.

Leslie Thibodeaux is the new Director of Program. She was the Camping and Operations Director for the Longs Peak Council where she worked for over ten years. Her husband, **Cade**, a former Scouting professional, is an interpreter this summer. They have one daughter, **Tracy** (5). ■

Butch's Duffer Cards (cont'd.)

(continued from page 10)

months, Butch took the idea and created a list of contents for the Duffer Cards. He then drafted the information corresponding to each topic, organizing the information in a manner that the pages can be cut and published in a small booklet. Accompanying this article are representative pages of Butch's efforts. Without any hesitation, the result is outstanding. Maybe we'll have a few around at the Rendezvous for all to enjoy.

Thanks Butch!!! ■



Seliga Canoe Available for Trips!

For alumni who do not own but wish to use a Seliga canoe for their next summer trip in the BWCAW or the Quetico Provincial Park, there is a virtually brand new Seliga hanging in one of Butch Diesslin's outbuildings for use. **Tom Beaton** (1970-73), the owner of the Seliga, wants SAA members to know they can use his Seliga, provided they make a donation, of their choosing, to the Sommers Alumni Association.

If anyone is interested in arranging to use Tom's canoe and wants to take him up on his offer, please call **Butch Diesslin** at:

(218) 365-6904

or email him at:

butchlucy@frontiernet.net



(L-R) Ann Shipley, watching Nicole and Natalie be asked by Sutton Roe if they can be voyageurs.



Wild Paddle Ball IV – The Last Pirate of the Saskatchewan.



Ryan Sievert. Need we say more? Wild Paddle Ball IV.



Jared Davidson, History Program Director, leads another great Rendezvous!



Garrett Marcus, donning his Skipper's hat before heading out on the Swamper Trip.

Ten Feet Tall (cont'd.)

(continued from page 13)

rain standing in front of the fire in his underwear singing joyfully some silly ballad. He could find his way with only a compass and map through fog so thick you couldn't even see the bowman in your canoe a few feet away. He knew how to tie the canoes together to make a catamaran and to rig a sail out of the dining fly so we could sail 20 miles up Lake Agnes running before the wind in only two hours. He knew where the fish were and what to use to catch them and showed us how to fillet them. He showed us moose tracks and deer droppings and pointed out the nesting bald eagles and the heron rookeries. He could do no wrong in our eyes. He was TEN FEET TALL! Yes, I'll never forget him. He took me on the trail as a boy but brought me back a man.

Sigurd Olson spoke to our group of guides that year when we had all returned from our guide training trips. He was old and frail and trembled badly from Parkinson's disease but he used the words ten feet tall to describe how we were regarded by the scouts

we served. I never have forgotten what he said. I can name only a few of the hundreds of scouts that I have introduced into the boundary waters over the years, but I know they all remember me. I hope I have lived up to their expectations and I am thankful that I had the opportunity to turn them into men. ■

In the Next Issue

- *Meet the new Editor(s)*
- *2012 Scholarship Recipients*
- *Recap of the 2012 Rendezvous*
- *2012 Atikokan to Ely SAA Trip*



Can Someone Help?

Among the many rolled-up maps and posters in the Lodge there was a collection of winter clothing patterns once used to sew winter apparel. *Are there any SAA members who could take these over-sized patterns, organize them and scan them for digital retention?* Not only would this preserve these patterns and eliminate the risk of future damage in their paper form, but we could then dispose of the paper patterns which may be considered a fire hazard in the Lodge. Please contact Dick Shank or Mike Holdgrafer.

2013 Coral Reef Sailing Adventure

by Alex Nepple



Sailing, snorkeling, fishing and new friends await you in the Florida Keys. **The Florida Sea Base and Friends Association** (SBAFA) is proud to host the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. (SAA) and Philmont Staff Association (PSA) for the **2013 Coral Reef Sailing Adventure**. This is the second time this Adventure has been hosted by the SBAFA in the Exchange Program of the SBAFA, PSA and SAA.

During your Adventure, you will sail the Florida Keys in a 40 to 45-foot sailing vessel and have the opportunity to snorkel and fish some of the most beautiful reefs in the Keys. You'll also learn navigation, fish identification and coral reef ecology, and hang out with friends, old and new. Except for the last night, you will sleep on your vessel and fall asleep to the rocking of the waves.

Sailing Adventure Basics

The Sailing Adventure is **February 17 to 23, 2013**. The cost is **\$6,100 per vessel**. There is a minimum of 6 sailors per vessel, maximum 7 sailors per vessel. On a per sailor basis, this means that a six sailor crew would pay **\$1,016.66 per sailor**, and a seven sailor crew would pay \$871.43 per sailor. Your actual charge will be determined by taking the total cost for the number of vessels required and divided by the total number of sailors. For example, 20 sailors would

require 3 vessels and the resulting charge to each sailor would be \$915.

Your fee includes a berth on the vessel, all fishing licenses and gear, on-water food (*fresh – not trail food!*), snorkel gear, on-base lodging and meals, a Coral Reef Sailing Mate on base and a fully qualified captain for your vessel. You are responsible for the limited personal gear required and your transportation to and from the Sea Base in Islamorada, Florida.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Be a current member of the SAA, SBAFA, PSA or eligible family member.
2. Be a registered member of the BSA.
3. Presented a completed medical form.
4. Pass the basic BSA swim check upon check in – persons not passing the swim check will be required to wear a personal flotation device at all times.
5. Be 13 years old and have completed 8th grade, or 14 years old, by arrival day – youth participants will be required to present a valid ID showing proof of age.

Eligible family members are your spouse, child or step-child, sibling, parent, grandparent, grandchild, niece, nephew or in-law who meets the eligibility requirements above.

Becoming a member of the BSA is straightforward: register at your local Scout office by explaining that BSA

membership is a requirement for participation in an event at the Sea Base, pay nominal fees and pass a background check.

BSA swimming requirements are simple: jump feet first into water over your head, swim 75 yards in a **strong manner** using a forward stroke, turn over, swim 25 yards using a resting back stroke and then float motionless on your back for one minute.

The Schedule

Sunday, February 17

Arrive at Sea Base by 10:00 a.m., meet your Coral Reef Sailing Mate and fellow/sister sailors, have lunch in the Sea Base galley, go through swimming re-check, snorkel instruction, food pick-up and crew photos. Set sail from Sea Base before dinner and eat Sunday dinner on your vessel.

Monday, February 18

Sail the Keys.

Tuesday, February 19

Sail the Keys.

Wednesday, February 20

Rendezvous at **Big Munson Island**, site of the Sea Base's **Out Island Program**, and complete a fun service project and tour the island. The opportunity to visit Big Munson Island is not offered to regular Coral Reef Sailing Adventure participants – *just you!* Then visit the **Brinton Environmental Center** for hot showers. Wednesday evening return to your vessel and set sail again.

Thursday, February 21

Sail the Keys.

Friday, February 22

Return to Sea Base, participate in a luau, and receive your **Sea Base participant's award**. Those persons having earned participation awards at all three BSA High Adventure Bases will receive their **Triple Crown Award**. Spend the final night in a Sea Base bunkhouse.

Saturday, February 23

Depart Sea Base.

Deviations from the above schedule are not possible. Persons arriving a day early can sleep at the Sea Base at no charge.

How to Register

To reserve your slot, you must pay a \$100 deposit by November 30, 2012. Except as set forth below, this deposit is **non-refundable**, but it is **transferable**. Immediately after November 30, the number of vessels required will be determined and the final price per sailor calculated. You will be immediately notified of the final price and the balance of the final price must be paid in full by **December 10, 2012**. *Once paid the balance is not refundable and the purchase of trip interruption/cancellation insurance to protect you against unforeseen cancellation is advised.*

In the event the number of registrants is such that all cannot be accommodated on vessels, sailors will be awarded their slot based on the order in which their registration was received, priority beginning with the first registrant. *Sailors who cannot be accommodated will receive a refund of their deposit.*

All registrations will be handled by PSA. To register and get top priority for a slot mail the form below, together with your check in the amount of \$100 per sailor payable to "PSA", and mailed to *Philmont Staff Association, 17 Deer Run sRoad, Cimarron, NM 87714*. Download the registration form at <http://www.holry.org/>.

Don't miss out on this; the first Coral Reef Sailing Adventure in 2011 proved to be very popular.

Northern Expeditions 40 Years at Bissett – 1972-2012

by Mike Holdgrafer



This summer marks the 40th anniversary of the Northern Expeditions program.

In 1972, Sandy Bridges was already eyeing the future of wilderness canoeing adventures for Scouts. Changes were already in process as to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA). The 1970s would be an active period of intensely polarized and divergent views regarding the management of the BWCA, during which the BWCA Wilderness Act (Public Law 95-495) would be passed into law and legal challenges to the new law and its implementing regulations in the Federal court would follow in the years to follow.

With the implementation of a quota system to re-allocate BWCA users and the future somewhat cloudy as to future management of the BWCA, Sandy turned his attention across the U.S./Canada border and came upon the relatively

sleepy town of Bissett in Manitoba. In some respects, Bissett was similar to Ely, albeit on a much, much, much smaller scale. It was a mining community supported by the San Antonio Gold Mine. It also had a forestry industry. But outside of these two commonalities, there wasn't much else to Bissett *except* it was a portal to canoeing in the surrounding wilderness region and more importantly, there was no direct competition to these canoeing opportunities. At the same time, local leaders welcomed the potential new business that might come from having a Boy Scouts of America canoeing operation in Bissett.

That same summer of 1972, the first crew camped out on Wallace Lake and embarked upon the first trip in the region. As noted in *A Diamond in the North*, by Gene Felton, outfitting would

occur in the years that followed at the Old Variety Store in Bissett. Other businesses, such as the San Antonio Hotel owned by the Shindruks, would provide hospitality to Northern Expeditions crews.

Northern Expeditions was off and paddling.

At some point in time, Sandy elected to adopt the polar bear as the logo or brand for Northern Expeditions. A close examination of early stickers indicates a 3-legged bear, while the earliest participant patch in 1976 shows a 4-legged bear. Given that the Bissett operations were not anywhere close to the native territory of *Ursus Maritimus*, the question is how did Sandy come up with the Polar Bear as the brand? Bear in mind (excuse the pun), Sandy was a visionary and believed that the program could expand into those areas where Polar Bears do reside. After all, a

much younger Bob O'Hara, who Sandy knew, was already engaged in far north expeditions after having completed a Lake Winnipeg to Hudson Bay trip in 1967 followed by a Thelon River trip in 1969.

As once explained by Sandy, in part he came upon the design based upon the logo used by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). The GNWT uses a 3-legged Polar Bear and not only it is strikingly similar to that initially used by Sandy (which bear faces to the left instead of to the right), but the aquamarine color scheme is boldly similar. Sandy's explanation was simple. Items stenciled with the 3-legged polar bear were identified as being owned by the government and if left cached in the wilderness, less likely to be stolen. By using a 4-legged Polar Bear, it would be similar to the GNWT bear but with the fourth leg, different from the GNWT logo. But, what did the GNWT 3-legged Polar Bear have to do with canoeing operations in the eastern portion of Manitoba? After all, shouldn't the logo have been a bison? If you check-out the GNWT logo today, it is much more stylized (as is the Manitoba bison) than that used in the 1970s. The GNWT government has even adopted a Visual Identity Program complete with an online manual to ensure its brands are properly displayed. As a somewhat humorous aside, the current landing page for the Province of Manitoba website (*continued on next page*)



OA Wilderness Staff Greytan Counts (bottom) and Zack Jones (top), during a campfire skit.



The first few dancers of Wild Paddle Ball IV.

(continued from page 19)

not only shows the bison logo but also shows a photo of, what else, a Polar Bear.

Regrettably, we cannot go to the original source and any documents that may clarify Sandy's intent appear to be gone like footprints in melting snow. One thing is clear; however, and that is that Sandy did not see any limit to northern expansion. With an eye to Churchill, Manitoba, the Polar Bear was and remains an extension of his vision.

About the same time Sandy was expanding into Bissett and starting to look at Atikokan, consider what was happening in southern latitudes. Sam Wampler, the Camping Director for the South Florida Council who would become founding Base Director of what is today the Florida Sea Base, and a group of council volunteers, were developing a sailing program from Miami to Freeport in the Bahamas. In 1979, the Florida National High Adventure Sea Base found its permanent home while in Bissett, the newly-constructed base building was open for crew use. As a factoid, for lack of a better term, many years later this same building would be jacked-up and rotated 180 degrees.

This summer, 59 crews will use embark on trips from the facility in Bissett. Although participation has been up and down during the past 39 years, the program has come a long way to become a premier wilderness canoeing adventure.

Getting to Bissett was a challenge and remains a challenge even today. First, there was the border crossing. Even three-plus decades ago there was no assurance you would get into Canada. This was especially true when a Suburban filled to capacity with gear and guides pulled-up to

the entry point at Warroad. Special luggage racks had been fabricated that were attached to the roof of the vehicle. The box-like rack would be filled with paddles and PFDs, with not one or two canoes, but sometimes three canoes strapped on top. Packs would fill the interior and if the group was lucky, it would not be towing a trailer. Plus, there were the passengers; a rather scruffy-looking group of Charlie Guides.

There was a time when such a group hit the border and spent most of the day, or so it seemed, with gear strewn along side the road while the Canadian Customs Agent attempted to verify what the heck was heading into Her Majesty's Dominion. Without the luxury of today's cellular phones, the effort was to reach Sandy Bridges to explain what was going on. The Customs Agent, upon over-hearing the name "Sandy" said, "Sandy, you mean Sandy Bridges, eh?" After a quick affirmation, the agent replied, in effect, "I know Sandy; you're cleared to enter!" If only the group had known earlier in the day to use the magical words, "Sandy, Sandy, Sandy," which as you may guess, became something of a theme that summer.

The second part to the remote trip to Bissett was the road or what was called a road, Highway 304. Although it is wider than two lanes, the gravel road was effectively a one-lane road and there was one simple rule to remember; whatever you drove, it was smaller than a logging truck barreling down the middle of the road and you had to give way to the truck. During time when the road was in decent shape, this was somewhat manageable, but when the road was muddy, with ruts and potholes, there was no tell-

ing what may happen when the driver made his way to the side so a logging truck could pass. It is a road that has claimed the life of many tires, and unfortunately, even the life of an advisor.

Since the establishment of Scout Lake, which allows Northern Expeditions to cache canoes, crews now fly-in and fly-out. That was not always the case. Initially, crews had two options when leaving Bissett for a trip; they would be taken to Wallace Lake where the crew could head to Siderock Lake and take the portages into Obukwin Lake, or take the less arduous but time-consuming Wanipinigow via the Broad Leaf into the south side of Aikens Lake. The "Obukwins" was a rite of passage and nothing that the crew would face after that day would rival their first day on the water, or perhaps more appropriately, their first day on the portage trails. It seems like all portages grow longer and get tougher the more Charlie Guides talk about them, but the Obukwins were tough. They had a little bit of everything you could expect from a portage; length, mud, muskeg, black spruce bog, vertical height and small "pot holes" like Have-A-Lunch Lake between portages where you hardly got a break before coming up on the next portage.

To make it a little worse, the portages were intensely burned over such that in 1980 all that remained was rock and desolation. My camera was not working well and one of the slides I received from the San Antonio crew was the advisor and two Scouts leaning against a huge boulder, surrounded by the charred remains of the forest without any shade. Little did they know the worst part of the day was yet to come; a stretch of

thigh-deep mud through a black spruce bog that came to an end on floating muskeg. It turned out that pulling the canoe was a lot easier than carrying it. What I will always remember is how the portage trail, although strewn with burned trees, showed the least signs of damage from the fire, due perhaps to the compression of foot-traffic, and showed the quickest signs of recovery. Later on this same trip, the same Texas crew came upon a smoldering ground fire that had bridged the river and we spent a short while examining how the fire was burning underground through the minimal duff. In 1987, Wallace Lake would be devastated by a tremendous fire that burned local cottages to the ground.

For those individuals lucky to have experienced Northern Expeditions, a lot of different elements combine to make a canoeing adventure through the Atikaki Provincial Wilderness Park, the first such park established by Manitoba in 1985, and the Bloodvein Canadian Heritage River, an experience to remember for a lifetime.

It doesn't take long for crews to recognize the cultural and historical significance of the Bloodvein River to the First Nation. Pictographs regularly appear upon the rock outcroppings that dominate the waterways through the boreal forest. It's been some time back, but at one time the pictographs on the south shore of Bloodvein just before it flows into the eastern arm of Artery Lake were selected as the fourth-best pictograph site in all of Canada. The intensity of the red ochre paintings, together with the sheer number and the diversity of images, is a memory one can never forget. Of particular

remembrance was the shaman and, getting back to the prior discussion about Manitoba's logo, a buffalo. For any crew closely coming near this area on the Bloodvein, this is a site to behold. The fact is that along the entire length of the Bloodvein to the First Nation village on Lake Winnipeg there are pictographs evidencing human travel through this region.

Back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, although others traveled through the river systems of the Gammon and Bloodvein, it was common that the only people a crew may encounter would be another Northern Expeditions crew. Today, browsing the internet reveals many different users and outfitters, including one that guarantees a sweat lodge ceremony at the conclusion of the trip at the Bloodvein River First Nation.

The Precambrian shield and the rivers that flow through the Atikaki, such as the Gammon and Bloodvein, provide fast-water that ranges from riffles to spectacular rapids. Back in the 1970s, Hap Wilson's book, *Wilderness Rivers of Manitoba*, wasn't available as a resource. To his credit, Wilson has done a wonderful job of mapping the rapids and portages of Manitoba, and there are a lot more names to many of these rapids than were on the maps used by Northern Expeditions. Most were not named, especially on the 1:50,000 maps. One wonders where all of the names come from, but in any event, it is often fun to read through his detailed descriptions about the Bloodvein and Gammon, and retrace the portages and rapids encountered, including the route to "Sas!" But in the 1970s, the key to being a Charlie Guide in Bissett was information-sharing and a lot of it was being developed

over time and filled-in on the wall map. Fortunately, Real Berard, was another source of information about various routes, but sometimes the detail was lacking when it came to specific rapids and portages around them, so scouting was important.

One particular rapids, called "The Squeeze" in Wilson's book, had an accompanying portage of 380 meters on the north shore with a shorter portage on the opposite shore if a portion of the rapids was shot. The long portage paralleled a rock gorge through which the Gammon sliced. The advice to interpreters was to take the portage as there was a Grumman canoe wrapped around a rock in the rapids for a number of years before the spring thaw and ice-out dislodged it. The Northern Expeditions sticker had allegedly been removed at some point. As it turns out, this portage was highly memorable. As is typical on the Canada Shield where bare rock and jack pine dominate the landscape, as a person portaged across the top of the glaciated rock you had to rely upon rock cairns to follow the portage as there was no discernible portage on the glaciated rock. It was unique enough to document with photos. Then again, many of the rapids and falls were unique in their own way as tannic-stained waters cascaded over the rocks.

In some cases, the names of such rapids remain today, wrapped in the mystery of the First Nation people who named them. Others lack any mystery and the name expresses it all, such as Lucifer's Boiler, a cauldron of cascading water that comes together and pulverizes anything caught in its force. Right below Lucifer's Boiler there (continued on next page)

(continued from page 21)

is a fantastic campsite on the island. One of the hallmarks of the region that Sandy spoke highly about and that entices Northern Expeditions crews forty years later is the fishing. Seventeen walleyes on seventeen consecutive casts at Lucifer's Boiler is a memory hard to forget.

Northern Expeditions offered chances to deal with "water play;" where chutes of deepwater and standing waves allowed crew members to kneel down (please note this Don MacDonald) and try their skill with un-loaded canoes. In 1979, armed with an auto-winder, Steve Spencer was caught on film, wearing his engineer's cap, as he successfully negotiated a small chute with an advisor on the Gammon just before it empties into Aikens Lake. Another lesson learned in Bissett was that there was often more than one portage take-out or put-in, depending upon the level of the water. Dick Shank, SAA Director, refers to these as "Canadian" versus "U.S." portages. In other words, the Canadian portage take-outs tended to be much closer to rapids and falls, requiring more skill to negotiate as compared to a U.S. take-out which may be tens of yards upstream. The more apparent explanation is tied to high and low water conditions, and Wilson's book evidences the existence of dual portages around many rapids.

In the early years of Bissett, fly-in or fly-out trips were not routine and both gear and canoes had to be loaded in or out. If you could deadhead trips back to back, then the canoe problem was resolved, for one crew left Wallace Lake with the canoes and the second returned with the canoes. Imagine the Obukwins as the

last day of a trek. In 1979, five Florida crews flew out of Aikens Lake Wilderness Lodge on the same day, which was the largest organized fly-out trip at the time. The following year, Dennis Breen was on the water when I arrived at Bissett with a first-generation Gore-Tex raincoat that was shipped to him. The arrangement was for me to meet him at Aikens Lake when he flew-in with his next crew and I flew-out. Up to that point, I'd worn some anorak pull-over that didn't breathe at all and allowed you to take a personal sauna. One day in the rain with the new coat was all the convincing needed to upgrade rain gear. During the forty years of Northern Expeditions history, Gore-Tex is now engaged in defending itself from monopoly claims by a number of companies who have come out with other breathable materials.

From the commencement of Northern Expeditions through the summer of 2012, it has offered Scouts and the many staff who have worked there, a wilderness canoeing opportunity that is simply unique to all of Scouting. Everyone who has been a part of Bissett have memories shaped by the people they encountered and the Atikaki. This article recounts a mix of stories and history, with many left un-told simply due to space. The past forty years is but a starting point for a greater future to come. The Pigeon and Berens Rivers remain to be opened to Northern Expeditions' crews, and beyond that the Land of Little Sticks, the Hayes and other northern rivers. Sandy had it right in selecting the Polar Bear.

Before this ends, I leave you with one of my fondest memories of the Bloodvein.

It was an overcast August day with spotty sunshine that

instantly warmed you when it broke through the clouds, only to disappear. The wind had been stout from the northwest, with a cool taste of changing seasons. At points along the Bloodvein, the wind was barely noticeable where the channel was protected by shield outcroppings. As we headed downstream, my canoe was in the lead so as to scout whatever rapids and portages came before us.

As we rounded a bend with an outcropping to our right, motion caught my eye on the northern shore. I quickly picked-up on two wolves standing above us, one being a normal gray pelage for a wolf while the other had dark fur and looked black. But to my surprise, we then picked

out three more wolves that had been laying down in the lee. Protected from the wind and warmed by the intermittent sun, this pack had found a place to rest on a blustery day. For us, the wind was blowing into our faces and covered any scent or the noise we made as we rounded the rock face and suddenly came into the wolves' view. The wolves nonchalantly rose and headed uphill and back into the boreal forest beyond as our canoes drifted by. In typical fashion, I couldn't dislodge my camera fast enough from the plastic bags I carried it in but the memory was indelibly cast; a moment unlikely to be repeated in a lifetime.

**Happy 40th Anniversary
Northern Expeditions! ■**

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, August 22 – Saturday, September 1
Alumni Wilderness Voyage
(Atikokan to Ely)

August 27 – 31

**Northern Tier 2012
Wilderness Fishing Invitational**
(Lac LaCroix, Ontario/Ely, MN)

Friday, August 31 – Monday, September 3
Rendezvous Reunion
(Ely, MN) Hol-Ry!

February 5 – 15, 2013

SAA Eastern Caribbean Cruise
(see page 15)

February 17 – 23, 2013

**Florida Sea Base:
Coral Reef Sailing Adventure**
(Florida Sea Base, Islamorada, FL)

Visit www.Holry.org for further information.



Crew 725C (1966) – Hyink's first crew as a Charlie Guide with Crew Advisor John Stransky (top row, white neckerchief).



Alumni Dinner (2011) – Dave Hyink, David Lenhart and John Stransky.

Young men and women continually come to "forks in the road" whether they recognize them at the time or not. If they're really fortunate, there will be a caring adult there to help steer them in the right direction. Thank you so very much, David Lenhart and John Stransky.

Charlie Guide and Crew Advisor Reunited After 45 Years!

An after dinner discussion around a campfire deep in the Quetico Provincial Park in July of 1966 ultimately resulted in **Dave Hyink's** decision to study forestry at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, TX. Hyink graduated in 1971 with a Bachelors degree in Forest Management and again in 1972 with a Mas-

ters degree in Forest Biometric under major professor David Lenhart. Roll the clock forward 45 years to November 11, 2011, Starlight Ballroom, Baker Patillo Student Center on the SFASU campus where Dave was honored with the 2011 Distinguished Alumni Award. Among those seated at Dave's table were

his former major professor, David Lenhart (himself a former Sommers Crew Advisor in the 1970's) and Dr. John J. Stransky, USFS Wildlife Scientist (retired), the Crew Advisor on the very first trip he made as a Charlie Guide. Another *Big Circle* completed. And, it was a very fun and memorable evening. ■

CHARLES L. SOMMERS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. BOX 428
ELY, MN 55731



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
N. Houston TX
PERMIT #247

24 • REFLECTIONS

Vol. 20, # 1



Cherie Bridges cuts the ceremonial cedar bough ribbon at the dedication of the Sandy Bridges Program Center last August.



Tim Babb, Bissett Assistant Director, before singing his outstanding rendition of St. James' Hospital by guitarist and folk singer, Doc Watson.



Two-person Swamper Brigade yoga lessons.



Dutchee Arnett performs an Indian fire ring dance, another outstanding performance.