



Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc.

REFLECTIONS



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

SPRING 2018 EDITION

Alumni Work Week: Join us to give back and have fun!

By Dick Shank

This is your chance to support the Northern Tier programs. You'll earn a "sweat-equity" polo shirt and enjoy camaraderie with your fellow alumni while giving back. A win-win proposition!

This year's "Work Week" is May 28th to June 10th. We can use help for a day or a week, so come as early and stay as late as you can! Bring your skills and enthusiasm; we will provide on-the-job training and tools. As a bonus, you can take part in training week activities as your interest and time permit.

For this year's project, we will construct a new deck outside the "Welcome Cabin." The deck is for arriving crews during their check-in. A variety of other smaller projects will be available, including indoor locations. We will provide meals and bunkhouse accommodations at no cost to you. A volunteer dinner will occur around June 9th.

Seminar day sponsored by the alumni association will be on June 10th. It provides staff additional education in outdoor and guiding skills. Past seminars covered topics including route planning, storm-proofing, plant identification, geology, trail baking, fishing, birding, shore lunch skills, history, ecology, astronomy, and weather. Contact us on the website at

Work Week: May 28th – June 10th

- Arrange your Work Week participation in advance by registering at www.holry.org (see the box "Upcoming Events").
- Sign up early to help Northern Tier and your fellow alumni with planning.
- Come as early and stay as late as you can. Arrivals starting Monday, May 28th with departure by June 11th.
- Be a member in good standing. Join online at www.holry.org/joinus.

www.holry.org/about/contactus if have any expertise to share during this day.

Consider contacting your fellow alumni to participate with you and make your own reunion part of the fun. You may choose to volunteer a few days and then head out on a trip. The base will be glad to help outfit you if needed (you must make advance arrangements with Northern Tier at [REDACTED]).

We hope to hear from you! For more information and to register visit www.holry.org (see the box "Upcoming Events").

President's canoe

By Karl Huemiller

Every year I look forward to the spring pilgrimage to Canoecopia in Madison, Wisconsin. I enjoy meeting the vendors, listening to the speakers, and checking out the changing gear. The best part is helping at the Northern Tier booth and hanging out at the annual dinner with all the other alumni.

The outpouring of interest in attending Canoecopia was exciting. At the event the excitement about the alumni association was clear. We had three times as many attendees as in 2017 at the Saturday-night dinner. Half were under the age of 35. Everyone was catching up and discussing ways we can make a positive impact on Northern Tier's mission.

This year Angela Miller has stepped up to lead the membership committee and Ryan Sievert and Mike Goodwin are taking the lead on the 2019 reunion. Other alumni are also stepping up to take the lead on initiatives they are passionate about. You can make an



impact by joining one of the four operating committees. Check out who is serving on each committee on the membership tab when you log in to the website at www.holry.org and contact us to join in. We can't do this without you!



Life of an Okpik Interpreter

By Will Cuddy

I wait for the crew in the dining hall. If I am lucky, the crew report contains what time they are expected to arrive. Otherwise, I just wait in the warm dining hall.

I often talk to other interpreters about what I am hoping for in a crew. Sometimes I hope they want to put as many miles behind them as possible and go into the furthest reaches of the Boundary Waters. Sometimes I wish they wanted to sled all the way to the North Pole and become the crew of legends.

Sometimes I hope they just want to camp on Flash and build quinzees snow shelters and play kickball all day.

One by one, the other interpreters get their crews until I am the only one left. They pull in and I rush into the winter chill to greet them, introducing myself with a smile, "Hi, my name is Will."

Once they are all out of their vehicles, I gather them in a circle and have them repeat after me: "I am cold and I need help." I have them say it again, louder, "I am cold and I need help." I explain to them they have said it once, and there is no shame in saying it again.

The rest of the evening is like summer. We do a shakedown, visit the bay post, check out gear, go to first-night orientation, and plan our route. I also show the scouts a sample cold-weather system, something that scouts who arrive at Northern Tier during warmer months don't see.

I tell them to wake up early the next morning because everything takes longer when it's cold. I walk

them down to breakfast. We pack our sleds and go.

The first mile or two is the hardest as sleds tip over and people overheat. This is about when people move their water bottles to outside their jackets. Despite my warning, it will get cold and freeze.

We get to our campsite. The first thing we do is set up a snow kitchen by shoveling snow into a shoulder-high horseshoe shape. After that, we build our snow shelters, either windbreaks or quinzees. By the time we finish piling snow for that, the snow kitchen has hardened enough to carve it into shelves. We drill a hole in the ice, which takes more time than it should, and we boil water.

A good dragonfly stove should sound like a quiet rocket engine. "Hrhrhrhrhrhrhrhrhr." From the moment the sun goes down until the scouts are ready to go to bed, the stoves are on.

"Hrhrhrhrhrhrhrhrhrfssssshhhhhhh." Water boiling over sometimes puts a stove out, and the race is on to light it again before the fuel jet cools down.

Dinner is ready. I serve three scoops to each scout. I say the same words over and over. "No, you are not allowed to have only two scoops. It is your duty to lighten the collective load by eating food. Yes, there will be seconds." By the time everyone has eaten their fill, my glove liners are coated in chili mac and my hands are cold.

After dinner, we fill our water bottles with boiling water, seal them, and throw them in our sleeping bags.

(Continued on next page.)

Once we are done with that, I take the participants a short distance from the campsite, gather them in a football huddle, and tell them this is the most important part of the night. I pick a scout.

"Tag. You're it."

Everybody scatters, and the game begins. When they tire of that, I teach them a tag-like game called "angels and demons," and then we switch to soccer or kickball. Once they are thoroughly warmed up, I send them off to bed.

While they are preparing for bed, I straighten up the campsite. I put the food away, tie up the trash bag, and gather all the kneeling pads that have been left around. They make great pillows or can extend your sleeping pads a little beyond your feet.

The campers are ready for bed. I go to each sleeping site and ask a series of questions to make sure all the clothing layers are in the right location in the sleep system. Often enough, there are boot liners left in boots. Boot liners are supposed to be kept between the inner and outer sleeping bags; I give the scouts a few minutes to rectify this problem. When everything is where it should be, I give everybody an oatmeal cream pie as a midnight or morning snack.

The next few minutes are the worst part of Okpik. Everybody else is asleep in a Russian tent or quinzee, and I am left by myself in the silent darkness, with nothing but a windbreak to sleep in. I think it is a primal fear of darkness that sets me on edge; in prehistoric



times, when the fire went out, the wolves would come close.

This is when my mind is screaming at me the loudest. Humankind has spent the past 10,000 years building walls, inventing central heating, and killing predators. Making it possible to live my entire life in a city and never know what it means to be cold.

So why am I outside, in the cold, risking hypothermia in the winter at this latitude? Why? I still don't know the answer to this question.

Okpik is a mental game.

Regional reunions

By Karl Huemiller

Last year we had three amazing regional reunions in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Madison, Wisconsin; and Portland, Oregon. We will have additional regional reunions this year because the date for this year's reunion has been pushed forward. If you're wondering, the regular reunion has moved to 2019 so that a future biennial reunion will occur on Northern Tier's 100th anniversary in 2023.



Craig Pendergraft will host a regional reunion in Prior Lake, Minnesota, on September 8th, 2018. This will be an opportunity to gather with your fellow alumni and view Craig's new house! Charlie Guides live all over the country and it is always good to connect and find out what others in your area are doing. Register for this regional reunion by visiting www.holry.org (see the box "Upcoming Events").

If you would like to host a regional reunion in your area, let us know by contacting me on the website at www.holry.org/about/contactus.

Wanted: Reflections newsletter editor

Thank you to our long-time Reflections editor Bill Erickson who has recently "retired"!

We're looking for a new member to step up and become the new editor of the Reflections newsletter. The newsletter is published twice a year in spring (4 pages) and winter (8 pages). The editor is responsible for gathering and editing articles, layout (training provided), and mailing.

If you're interested, contact us at www.holry.org/about/contactus.



Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc.
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Calendar of events

National High Adventure Bases Alumni Reception

May 24, 2018, 5:00 – 6:30 PM
Sheraton Dallas Hotel, Majestic Room 1 (37th floor)

Alumni Work Week

May 28 – June 10, 2018
Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base

Minnesota Regional Reunion

September 8, 2018, 6:00 – 9:00 PM
Prior Lake, MN

Canoecopia – Volunteer at the Northern Tier booth

March 8 – March 10, 2019
Madison, WI

Alumni Dinner

March 9, 2019 7:00 – 9:00 PM
Madison, WI

2019 SAA Reunion Rendezvous

August 23 – August 25, 2019
Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base

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



“Cold rain on Basswood Lake” by Blake Ferree

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