



REFLECTIONS



NORTHERN TIER NATIONAL HIGH ADVENTURE

Start Planning for the Gathering Rendezvous 2004 September 3-6

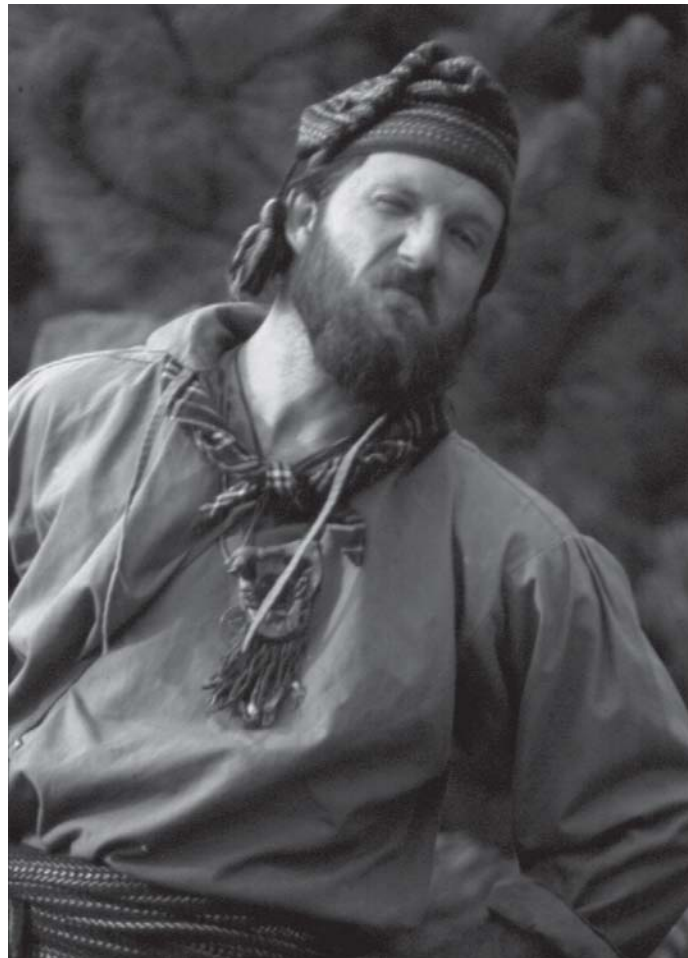
Calling all Charlie Guides. Time to start planning your expedition back to Ely for the Sommers Alumni Association's biennial Reunion on the beautiful shores of Moose Lake. Many of you will be surprised by the recent changes including the new Bay Post building. You may even be surprised by friends old and new

Registration

Please mail the enclosed registration (pages 3 & 4) soon to help us with planning and to save some money. Check in at the Welcome cabin will start on Friday afternoon and continue on Saturday morning. You'll get a bunk for the night, a schedule of events, and a chance to catch up on what's new at the Northern Tier. Let us know if you have an unusual schedule.

Opportunities

Friday night, you may find us singing around the fire with **Barbara Cary Hall** or laughing at the jokes of voyageur **Cory Kolodji**. Saturday morning after breakfast, you'll have a chance to reacquire yourself with the Canoe Base. Tours of the facilities will be available as will a variety of other activities. Our own brigade of Voyageurs including **Cory Kolodji** and **Eric Simula** will be on hand with activities and games of skill like the tomahawk throw. Eric is also a birch bark canoe maker who works at Grand Portage National Monument. If you're willing to walk a bit, join **Brian** and **Liz Vollmer-Buhl** in rock climbing at Ennis Lake, east of the Moose Lake Road (this is a non-BSA activity). Kids activities will be supervised by **Doris**



Voyageur Cory Kolodji

Kolodji. Blacksmith David Hanson will be back as well. Of course, canoes, paddles, and lifejackets will be available too. Moose Lake is full of fish, right? You could hike over to Flash Lake, too. The Trading Post will also be open to sell souvenirs, Dorothy's Root Beer, and the book *The Art of the Canoe with Joe Seliga*. Also, contact **Butch Diesslin** about a chance to fish on Basswood Lake using his motorboat permit.

Annual Business Meeting

The annual SAA business meeting will be held at the Lodge at 1:30 PM on Saturday, September 4, 2004. Among the agenda items will be election of directors as well as a discussion of the Association's accomplishments during the past year. After the meeting, we traditionally stick around for pictures, usually grouped by decade.

(continued on page 3)

Red Renner Memorial Work Week 2004

Where? Charlie's Place (Ely and maybe Atikokan)

When? Sunday, August 29, 2004 to Friday, September 3, 2004 (week prior to Rendezvous 2004)

How? Anyway you care to get there – by canoe, car, plane, hitch hike, crawl, etc.

Details: Come for some or all of it. Pre or post work week canoe trip options available. Get your group together and come work and then paddle for a few days – or do it in reverse.

Contact: Patrick Cox

Cell: 713-628-2532

Work: 281-497-4226

Email: patrick.cox@coxpa.net

Summer? What happened to Spring?

As Roseanne Roseannadanna use to say "it's always something." Computers are wonderful labor-saving devices when they work the way we expect them to, and horrendous black-holes for all our time and energy when they do not.

Unfortunately, about halfway through the production of the spring edition of Reflections, my computer bit the dust in a big way. It took several weeks to get the hardware repaired, and even longer to recover the data and software that go into the creation of this newsletter.

So my deepest apologies, but since I am so late in getting this edition created, it just seemed to make sense that we combine the spring and summer editions.

- CT (Editor)

President's Message

by Allen Rench

What's in a name? Recently among the directors there was a lively email conversation about the naming of a canoe trekking booklet that was produced by Bill Erickson. The book details lake by lake the "GOOD" campsites, fishing holes, points of interest and any other guiding trivia. This was done to help the new or not so new interpreter to provide the crews an outstanding canoeing experience. Bill titled the book "A Charlie's Guide". This drew some very important comments from our Canadian staff. There seemed to be a relational disconnect between the Sommers, Atikokan and Bisett staff members and the core values that have grown to bind us all together. Superficially being "A Charlie Guide" represented to most of us a summer full of adventures not quite knowing what lay ahead around the next point of land. For me over the years it has grown to mean something much deeper and longer lasting. We were and are entrusted with the character of a mother's and father's son or daughter. They

allow us to lead them into a place where they can experience nature's wonder, the beginnings of independence and adulthood. We are given the opportunity to help shape countless individual's lives in a positive way. And we may never come to know the outcome. Most of us did not work at the base with that intent in mind. But through it all a living breathing entity emerged called "A Charlie Guide". Which, to me embodies the best of the best qualities that the Boy Scouting and Northern Tier High Adventures can offer. Regardless of which sides of the border you work on we are all one and the same and we are all carrying the same torch.

It has been said that an individual can influence up to 255 people in a lifetime. We were blessed to exceed that number. How many more lives can you influence?

The coffee pot is soaped and on the fire. I will be waiting at the gate to greet you this September.

Have you seen this guide?

There are more than 500 former staff member names in the alumni database without current addresses. We are requesting your help in getting the database as correct as possible. Please check this partial list of "Lost Guides" and see if you know any of them. Please send any info to Butch Diesslin [butnlucy@cpinternet.com].

Swails, Mark	1969-	Peterson, Mike	1978-80
Swails, Steve	1968	Peterson, Robert	1969
Swails, Tom		Peterson, Steve	2000
Swanson, Hale	1956	Pfeiffer, Paul	1998
Swanson, John	1954-58,62	Picken, Joel	1966
Swanson, Leif	1983-84	Piegras, Colin	1989
Sward, Ric	1970	Pio, John	1982-84
Taft, Greg	1988-89	Ploke, Ingrid	1987
Taggart, Fr. Rob	1999	Port, Robert	1953
Takle, Bob	1961	Price, Blake	1978
Taminenn, Pasi	1985	Pummell, William	1986,92
Telford, Jim	1968-69	Purcell, John	1961-62
Thoe, James	1955	Putnam, William	1995
Thom, Nathan	1995-97	Putnam, John	1956-61
Thomas, Paul	1988-90	Quick, Duncan	2002
Thome, Tim	1983	Quinn, Tom	1979-80
Thompson, Anthony	1977-78	Rabenold, Mark	1980
Thompson, Danny	1975	Rablee, Chris	1987,88,92
Thompson, Sarah	2000-01	Rachey, Paul	1970
Tierney, Richard	1956	Radosh, Mike	1999-00
Tobin, Jan	1974	Rahm, Bruce	1956
Troehler, Greg	1992	Rainey, Justin	1993
Turman, Rich	1975	Rajhel, Jeff	1983

Directors and Officers

Director (1)	Roy Conradi	(770) 496-0920
Director (1)**	Dave Hyink	(253) 863-6406
Director (1)	Mike Holdgrafer	(918) 743-5565
Director (1)	LeRoy Heikes	(616) 685-0083
Director (3)	Lynn Reeve	(507) 235-5107
Director/President (3) **	Allen Rench	(507) 536-0736
Director (3)	Larry Hanson	(651) 628-4923
Director (3)	Kevin McKee	(807) 334-9223
Director (2)**	Patrick Cox	(713) 628-2532
Director (2)	Dave Greenlee	(605) 594-6287
Director (2)	Chuck Rose	(320) 252-2768
Director (2)**	Michael McMahon	(651) 483-5759
Treasurer**	Nigel Cooper	(715) 325-6521
Secretary**	Butch Diesslin	(218) 365-6904

Number in parenthesis is years remaining in current term
**Executive Committee Member

Program Liaisons

Mr. Keith Galloway National Director of High Adventure
Philmont Scout Ranch, BSA
Cimarron, NM 88714
(505) 376-2281

Mr. Doug Hirdler Director and General Manager,
Northern Tier
National High Adventure Program
P. O. Box 509
Ely, MN 55731
(218) 365-4811

Mr. Terrance P. Dunn Chairman,
National High Adventure Committee
Dunn Construction
929 Holmes
Kansas City, MO 64106
(816) 391-2530
Fax: (816) 460-2786

Mr. James W. Shepherd Chairman, Northern Tier
National High Adventure Committee
507 Brookwood Blvd.
Birmingham, AL 35209
(205) 870-1213

Volume 14, Number 1. *Reflections* is the official publication of the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc., P.O. Box 428, 5891 Moose Lake Road, Ely, Minnesota 55731-0429. *Reflections* is published three times a year (Mar., July, and Oct.). The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. is a nonprofit Minnesota corporation. The IRS has determined that the alumni association is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations to the alumni association are tax deductible. Membership to the Sommers Alumni Association is open to all persons 18 years and older. Association dues are \$10 for Annual membership, \$25 or more annually for Sustaining membership or \$150 (one time) for Life Membership. The association's dues year begins January 1. **Moving...** please notify the alumni association of your new address, phone number, etc. We will include your e-mail addresses in the member directory. Send your address changes or additions to P.O. Box 428, Ely, MN 55731-0428 or to Butch Diesslin via e-mail at: butnlucy@cpinternet.com



Sommers Alumni Association's Rendezvous

September 3-6, 2004

Registration Form

Please complete both sides, cutout and mail Registration and Payment to:

Chuck Rose
103 1st Ave. N., Sartell, MN 56377

Contact clrose@stcloudstate.edu
information: 320-252-2768

Your Name: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Housing

On Base: Cabin accommodations on a first-come, first-served basis for available space. You will need to bring your own bedding and towels. Space is assigned at check in on the first day of the event. Requests for families to occupy a cabin privately will be honored to the extent we can. No guarantees as beds are limited. Adult and child overnight cost is the same.

Off Base: Arrange for off-base accommodations on your own. There are several local hotels. The host of our *Rendezvous 2004 Banquet on Saturday night is the Grand Ely Lodge*. The Lodge has agreed to hold a block of ten rooms until July 15, 2004. Contact them at 1-800-365-5070. Our special rate is \$129.95 per night plus taxes. Rooms with or one king two queen sized bed(s) are available.

Other stuff to help with planning: I am interested in child care during the banquet **Yes** **No**

I am willing to help with the reunion activities: _____

Sorry, I won't be able to attend, but here's some recent news to share with everyone:



Rendezvous 2004 Continued from page 1...

Banquet, Program and Auction

Atikokan paddle maker, trans-Canada racer, and Quetico Ranger **Don Meany** will be our guest speaker at this year's banquet. The Rendezvous Banquet will be held at the Grand Ely Lodge on the shores of Shagawa Lake. Doors open at 6:00 PM and dinner will be served at 7:00 PM. The banquet menu will include



Champagne chicken, wild rice, pasta salad, baby red potatoes and other delicious choices. The banquet will be followed by our semi-annual program coordinated by **Mike Holdgrafer**. We will also be auctioning an original **Réal Bérard** picture titled *Tracks, Pictographs, and Sash at Northern Lights Lake*, a full scale Bérard map, and other silent auction items. If you have any items to donate, please contact **Chuck Rose**. Proceeds from the auction items will go to the staff scholarship fund.

Catch your Breathe

Sunday is more of a quiet time. Church music will be led by Barb

Hall and various volunteers. Favorite activities include fishing, paddling, shopping, visiting the International Wolf Center, Dorothy Molter Museum, and old hangouts. We will also have an opportunity to tour Sig Olson's Listening Point with **Larry Hanson** and **Don Richard**. Break out your old photos and memorabilia to share.

Time to Go Home

While many people need to use Sunday as a travel day, others stick around until Monday, heading home after breakfast and taking advantage of Labor Day. It may be hard to leave, but the next Rendezvous will only be a few years away. If this piques your

interest and you want to help with the festivities, please contact **Chuck Rose** at 320-252-2768 or clrose@stcloudstate.edu. If you can't make it, send in an update letter for people to pass around, especially if you've moved recently.



Registration Form *continued....*

Date	Item or Event	Number	Cost per Unit	Total
	Registration	Family Individual Active Staff	\$35 \$25 Free	
	T-Shirt Additional T-shirts	Specify Quantity and Size(s) Child S M LXL XXL	One shirt included with registration \$12.00	
Friday, Sept. 3	Supper	Adult	\$5.00	
		Child*	\$2.50	
	Overnight		\$2.00	
Saturday, Sept. 4	Breakfast	Adult	\$3.00	
		Child	\$1.50	
	Lunch	Adult	\$4.00	
		Child	\$2.00	
Supper	Adult	Not available		Not available
	Child	Not available		Not available
	Banquet		Before Aug. 8	
		Adult	\$18.00	
		Child	\$15.00	
			After Aug. 8	
		Adult	\$22.00	
		Child	\$16.00	
	Overnight		\$2.00	
Sunday, Sept. 5	Breakfast	Adult	\$3.00	
		Child	\$1.50	
	Lunch	Adult	\$4.00	
		Child	\$2.00	
Supper	Adult	\$5.00		
	Child	\$2.50		
	Overnight		\$2.00	
Monday, Sept. 6	Breakfast	Adult	\$3.00	
		Child	\$1.50	
	Lunch	Adult	\$4.00	
		Child	\$2.00	
	Membership Dues	Active Staff	\$5.00	
		Yearly	\$10.00	
		Sustaining	\$25.00	
		Lifetime	\$150.00	

Total _____

Please make checks payable to the Sommers Alumni Association.



#Child is defined as less than or equal to 11 years of age as of 9/3/04. Age of 12 or greater will be charged at adult rates.

Jock Stoops takes the southwestern route

by Butch Diesslin



Sommers staff alumnus John "Jock" Stoops has left the lakes of north woods, but hasn't quit playing in the water and swinging a paddle. He now spends time leading river rafting trips on the Salt, San Juan and Colorado rivers. Jock leads and organizes rafting trips for the fellow members of the Sun City West Sportsman's Club, and also does some guiding in the spring on the upper Salt River. Jock's first of 11 trips down the Colorado River was on his 60th birthday. He has experienced some pretty wild rafting and has even been thrown out of a raft in a rapids. No wonder his license plate is "RIVRAT"!

Jock was a guide out of Moose Lake for the Region Ten Canoe Trails base beginning in 1941 - the year before the Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base Lodge building was built. Jock was also a member of the 1942 staff when the new Charles L. Sommers base opened. Jock also came back in 1946 and 1947 after a stint as a Naval Pilot during World War II.

Since Jock retired, he and his wife Marilyn have moved to Sun City West, AZ and now make their home there. Jock was Claim Manager for Ohio Casualty Insurance Co. at the time of his retirement.

Jock was the first of the Stoops to work at the canoe base. His son, Dan, was on the staff 1969-73 and his Granddaughter Melissa worked on the summer and the winter staff during 1999-2003.

The portages and the years have taken their toll on Jock, like a lot of other former "Charlie Guides". Jock now has new knees and has lost his gallbladder, however admits that he hasn't lost his gall.



Are You a Potential Director?

The Sommers Alumni Association is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to providing support to Northern Tier Seasonal Staff (the Charlie Guides and Base Staff at Ely, Atikokan, and Bissett), developing the camaraderie of the Association's membership, and encouraging wilderness experiences for youth. As an all-volunteer organization, we need people willing to give of their time, talent, and financial resources to make the mission succeed. Most of the membership helps in one way or another. Almost everyone expresses a desire to do more but simultaneously confirm that they are not sure how to help.

As a starting point, each member is encouraged to help by working on a project or leading a project. We (your current directors and officers) encourage each member to consider volunteering to serve as a director of the Association. We actively recruit members who volunteer on projects or who volunteer to lead projects to serve as directors. Additionally, anyone who is a member who wishes to serve as a director is eligible to run for director. The most common question concerning being a director that we are asked is to explain what is expected of a director.

The directors and officers of the Association put together and approved a set of expectations of each director who agrees to serve.

Please review this and consider volunteering more of your time and talent to help make the Association more effective in accomplishing its mission by volunteering to lead a project or by volunteering to serve as a director. Please contact one of your directors if you are interested in either role.

Directors are expected to do the following:

1. Attend at least one (1) Director meeting per year, either in person or electronically (conference phone call, web interface of some sort, etc.)
2. Financially participate in the Crossing Portages annual giving campaign.
3. Participate in all electronic actions, feedback and written follow-up. Much of the initial discussion on topics will take place via e-mail.
4. Recruit and/or engage your peers in the activities and business of the association.
5. Contribute or sponsor one article per year for Reflections or www.holry.org.
6. Agree to actively serve on one standing committee or task force. Examples include Tree Planting, Staff Training, Work Week, Administration, Communication, and Rendezvous.
7. Most importantly – self govern your participation. Resign as a Director of the Association if circumstances change and make active participation unrealistic or impossible.

Third Scholarship Endowed

The family of Edith and Axel Erickson has endowed the Erickson Memorial Scholarship in their memory and honor. The family includes the son of Edith and Axel Erickson, Sommers staff alumnus Bill Erickson (2001-02) of Los Alamos, NM.

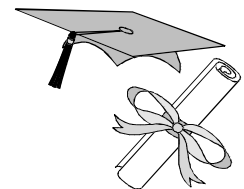
The Erickson Memorial Scholarship has been established to recognize a Northern Tier seasonal employee who works in a base-staff position, has gone 'above and beyond' expectations in support and service to Northern Tier attendees, has demonstrated leadership in the program and exhibited a strong work ethic.

Edith Erickson (1913-1993) was born and raised in northeastern Illinois by Swedish immigrant parents. She spent most of her adult life as a homemaker and was a mom to more than just her children. She enjoyed embroidering, knitting, crocheting, high school sports and the Chicago Cubs.

Axel Erickson (1905-2003) was born in Sweden, left school after the 6th grade to work on the family farm. He immigrated to the United States in 1927 and worked various jobs during the depression, often for room and board. He became a pattern maker and later a partner in E&E Pattern Works.

Edith and Axel had a profound effect on the members of their family. They were people of utmost integrity, could always see the positive side of even the most difficult times, were dedicated to one another and their family, worked hard and expected nothing more than they had earned. Edith and Axel had a high caring for neighbors, friends, the family of friends, acquaintances and for strangers.

Bill joined the Northern Tier staff at an age when most "Charlie Guides" are no longer involved with the program. He first came to Northern Tier in 1990 as a crew advisor, then returned as an advisor in 1992, 1995, 1996 and 1998. Bill returned in 2003 as a volunteer during the staff training week, and has just completed "Charlie's Guide", a printed version of the information formerly shared amongst trail staff members about the portages, lakes and sights of the canoe area on the big map in the staff lounge. Bill is a Life member of the Sommers Alumni Association.



Get Involved!

If you are wondering how you can be more active within the Sommers Alumni Association, here is your chance. We would like to establish a Nation wide network of willing members to act as a Northern Tier Trek Resource.

The volunteer would make him or herself available to local Scout groups wishing to gain knowledge about canoeing at the Northern Tier Canoe Bases. In meetings you can pass on your wilderness experiences to the group and help better prepare them for what lies ahead. In doing so you enable them to have a more enjoyable Trekking adventure. Plus, these groups can meet the people that established the name of Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base.

Please take the time and fill out this form, clip it out, and mail it to:

Sommers Alumni Association, Inc.
PO Box 428
Ely, Minnesota, 55731-0428

Or email the information to NTTResource@charter.net

I am interested in participating as a Northern Tier Trek Resource

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email address: _____

Enjoying every bit of life

Ely man, 92, a master canoe builder for 65 years

by Angie Riebe, staff writer

reprinted with permission of Mesabi Daily News

ELY — Joe Seliga makes it clear as he recounts the story of the Mukluk Ball: The 92-year-old master canoe builder doesn't want anyone to get the idea he can actually dance.

Truth is, Seliga, soon to be 93, has become quite a rollicking socialite during the past year or so in his hometown of Ely. "Don't go saying that I'm a dancer," says Seliga, a sparkle emitting from kind eyes that squint nearly shut each time he smiles. For more than 60 years, Seliga shied away from the limelight, despite the word-of-mouth notoriety he earned from his expertly crafted wood and canvas canoes. He mainly kept to himself, raised three children with his wife, worked in the mines, and in what time was left over, lovingly and painstakingly built the famous canoes at his home-based workshop. But the limelight is no longer a stranger to Seliga.

When the book "The Art of the Canoe With Joe Seliga" came out, he was suddenly thrown into the public spotlight, booked with newspaper and television interviews and signings for the hard-covered book that has made the Minnesota Bestsellers list twice.

The life story of an outdoors and family man, who by chance years ago began building the canoes for which he would forever be associated — canoes he still constructs with sturdy skilled hands — was already out there for anyone to read.

His beloved wife of more than 68 years — and partner for so long in the thriving canoe-making business — was gone. But rather than dwell on the devastation of her death in 2000, Seliga decided to seize his newfound fame and script another, quite lively, chapter in his well-lived life.

Seliga, who had never even placed an ad for his canoes, bloomed.

"I let myself loose," Seliga said, sipping coffee at a round kitchen table, covered with a bright poinsettia-patterned tablecloth, in his cozy Ely home. "I want to enjoy every bit of life."

And he's proven quite capable of that.

The Mukluk Ball is just one such example. Seliga, named the grand marshal of last year's Ely's Voyageur Winter Festival, was asked to make an appearance at the opening ceremony of the festival's dance.

Once a man more inclined to few words than oration, Seliga had quite a lot to say that night, said Linda Fryer, executive director of the Ely Chamber of Commerce. Seliga's daughter waited for him at his home, expecting him back early.

But Seliga was not about to leave the ball. He watched the dancers, some wearing mukluk boots, move across the dance floor, and he thought to himself, "I can dance like that," he said. Even though "I never danced in my life." And dance, he did. With every woman there, Fryer said. "He never sat down."

"I let loose," Seliga admitted. In the meantime, his daughter grew worried. It was after midnight when "he walked in with this big grin on his face," Fryer said. "She was so relieved to see him." The following Monday, Seliga went for his usual lunch at the Senior Center. There his buddies bantered him about his romping evening at the Mukluk Ball. Seliga wondered how they had heard and learned his Saturday night escapade had been a topic of discussion on WELY radio.

Seliga's face flushes with a huge smile as he recalls what fun

he had. But he insists, nonetheless, that he is not a dancer. "When the book came out, Joe blossomed," Fryer said. "When he got the book deal, his personality changed. He finally got the notoriety due to him and realized it was not a bad thing. He's eating it up and having a ball. He's like a 20-year-old now." Ely is known to have its share of colorful folks, and Seliga certainly fits the "Ely character" bill, she said.

Seliga recognizes his own transformation. The book "changed the whole thing," he said, bringing out to share a batch of homemade bars someone had given him. "People are so nice to me. I've made a lot of friends in my life."

Seliga, grandfather to nine and a great-grandfather of 20, plus "two in the hopper," was asked earlier this month to play the grandpa in the elementary school performance of "The Nutcracker." His role called for a dance with a little girl. They twirled across the stage and bowed and curtsied to the audience, he said.

"I enjoyed myself," said Seliga, telling how proud he was of the children and of his part in the play.



Personal Information Update

Addresses are changing, area codes keep changing, e-mail addresses keep changing.

Please send any personal information changes that you would like to share with the SAA and other

alumni members to: **Sommers Alumni Association**
PO Box 428
Ely, MN 55731-0428

or e-mail the changes to:
Butch Diesslin
[butnlucy@cpinternet.com]

Association members can check SAA's current directory information at **www.holry.org**

Name: _____

Years at No. Tier: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Other: _____

Occupation/Employer: _____

Scouter? ___ Position(s) _____ Scout Council: _____

Additional Information To Share: _____

"When I was in school, I would have run away."

"I'm having so much fun," said Seliga, whose joy is obvious with each story he tells. His conversation is peppered with laughter. Wearing a flannel shirt and blue jeans hooked with suspenders, he smiles often, eyes shining, as he gets caught up in his own tales.

Snapshots of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren — who range up to age 20 — are everywhere, some in envelopes scattered about the kitchen table, some stuck into the glass door panels of a nearby hutch.

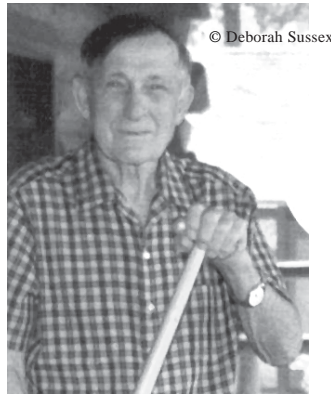
Seliga knows he's lucky to be in such good shape at his age. His hair is still dark, with just hints of gray. He sees well without glasses. And while his hearing may be a bit deficient, he has plenty of energy, which he needs, for Seliga is still a hard-working man.

Seliga could never fill all the requests for his meticulously crafted canoes. He'd have to live a whole other life, he says. But he does his best to fill orders for each canoe, which takes six weeks to a couple months to construct, said Seliga, who was in his mid-20s when he built his first one. Through the years he fine-tuned the work, earning himself the title master canoe builder.

Born in 1911 to Czechoslovakian immigrant parents, Ann and Stephen Seliga, he was the fourth of 12 children and grew up around the waterways of Ely.

Some years before he was born, his father purchased a canoe. There were few roads at the time and immigrant families fished and hunted and traversed the numerous lakes — some now a part of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness — by boat. In 1905, his father, who worked for the mining company, "bought a bigger canoe. He must have anticipated a big family," Seliga said. It was an 18-foot B.N. Morris canoe, made in New England.

When Seliga was 4 years old, his dad built a new home, and the family moved from Shagawa Lake into town. At the time, their house was the farthest one south in Ely. The area behind their home was a wonderful place for children to explore, with woods and fields where timber companies had cleared forests. "It was my



playground," remembers Seliga, who was raised on a lifestyle of hunting, fishing, and wild berry picking. Washington elementary school was built nearby in 1915. Seliga entered kindergarten the following year. Memorial High School went up in 1924, and Seliga was a member of its first freshman class.

He graduated in 1928, with the Great Depression soon to follow. Seliga worked for a short time at a local mine and fished and hunted for supplemental food.

He soon met Eleanor "Nora" Kroger of Biwabik, who was visiting her sister in Ely. A courtship began, with Seliga hitching frequent rides to see her. The couple married in 1932. The following year, their son, Richard, was born.

It was in May 1934, when for 23-year old Seliga, who was living with his young family in an apartment in the upstairs of his parents' home, a pivotal moment occurred.

On that spring day, he and his father set out with the 18-foot Morris on a fishing trip for walleye and lake trout at Nina Moose Lake. The water was higher than expected, and "my dad wanted to run the rapids," he said.

Seliga was hiking a nearby portage with their gear as his father paddled the canoe, when he heard the terrible cracking noises. While trying to navigate the rapids, his father "smashed up the big canoe." The father and son retrieved the capsized boat, which suffered 21 broken "ribs." Seliga was devastated by the injured boat. He vowed, that day, to find a way to repair the canoe.

Months later, while gathering fire wood, the young Seliga had an idea. He cut down a couple cedars, had them sawed into boards, fired

up his camp stove, and devised a makeshift method of steaming the boards to form new, curved cross-beam ribs for the damaged canoe. He then found a way to mend the outer canvas as well.

The careful repair work garnered notice from local outdoorsmen, and Seliga was soon fixing their boats as well. Seliga welcomed the work during an era when "everyone had plenty of time and no money." He also joined one of President Hoover's Depression time "alphabet programs" — the Works Progress Administration. Seliga dug ditches for Ely's sewer system and helped to lay sidewalks. Later, in the 1940s, he found a job at a local mine, starting out at \$5.25 per day, working various positions for 17 years until it closed.

But the steadfast labor of his life was just getting started.

In 1937, Seliga decided he knew enough about the construction of canoes to try to build one from scratch.

He tinkered around, and after much effort and thought, careful measurements and experiments, Seliga crafted himself a canoe. He eventually built himself a form for a 16-foot canoe, marking the beginning of a lifetime pursuit. Around that time, "motors had come into size," Seliga said. He designed his 16-foot square-stern model to be used with outboard motors. The boats became known as his "fisherman" canoes, and were popular in the area, said Seliga, who sold his very first craft for \$40.

As the years went on, and Seliga developed various models of canoes, orders poured in — from local anglers, visitors, and area camps.

When World War II ended, people had more time for recreation, and paddling canoes on the many nearby lakes became even more popular. The YMCA Camp Widjiwagan, based on Burntside Lake, ordered its first Seliga canoe in 1948. The Seliga canoe is still in style at the camp, where many young campers have their first taste of canoeing in one of his models.

The Boy Scout camp at Moose Lake also became a faithful customer. It had a "standing order" every year — first for five canoes, then 10. One year the camp

ordered 25. By then, Seliga had dabbled in constructing canoes with a fiberglass covering, which he built for a stretch in the 1950s. Seliga worked tirelessly to fill the mounting requests — with help from Nora. "My wife helped me in my shop," said Seliga, who had his hands full with working at the mine and caring for his family, which had grown to five with the births of their daughters, JoAnn and Nancy. "I was a pretty busy guy. I burnt the midnight oil."

The family had moved to a new home not far from the original Seliga dwelling, and Seliga set up a shop in a backyard garage. With Nora's help, he averaged 15 canoes per year.

Nora helped her husband with the numerous detailed steps involved in constructing a wood and canvas canoe. She assisted in bending the ribs and became an expert nailer. In fact, Seliga included a dedication in the book to his late wife, whom he said had "driven more brass canoe tacks than any other woman." The couple took a trip one year, after Seliga had been building canoes for some 30 years, that included visits to various canoe manufacturing facilities in the country. Seliga was astounded at how closely his building process — which he had devised through his own intuition and invention — was to that of the larger factories.

Today there are more than 660 Seliga canoes in about 30 states, said Seliga, a member of the Wooden Canoe Heritage Association, which will honor him next year at an event in Lake Placid, N.Y.

One of those canoes is on display at Camp Widjiwagan. It is the last canoe Nora helped Seliga build before her death on Oct. 28, 2000.

Nora had not been feeling well on Oct. 18 of that year as the couple wandered around the Ely Harvest Moon Festival, said Seliga, who took her to the hospital, where she was diagnosed with a lung tumor. "She was gone 10 days later," he said.

He struggled with deciding what to do with the last canoe he and his wife had worked on together. He had already made canoes for each of his children,

Continued on page 9

Building Projects Report

by Doug Hirdler

Thought you might be interested in how the building projects are coming along. As of a few months ago the Tent Drying and Staff Duplex Buildings are complete on the outside and the finish carpenters are busy on the inside. The Baypost will probably not have the roof finished until late March, but 30# felt was placed down instead of the normal 15#.



The Tent Drying Building

They are currently sheetrocking the interior. The Baypost siding is currently drying in the basement of the building. Won't be long now!



Foundation slab for the Baypost



Staff Duplex Buildings

Who Am I?

A picture worth a thousand... Memories?

Do you have any idea who this patient fellow is? Can you name the year he was a guide? Or can you stump us with a great shot like this from your guiding days? Why not share it with all of us and we'll do a little reminiscing over those special kodak moments.

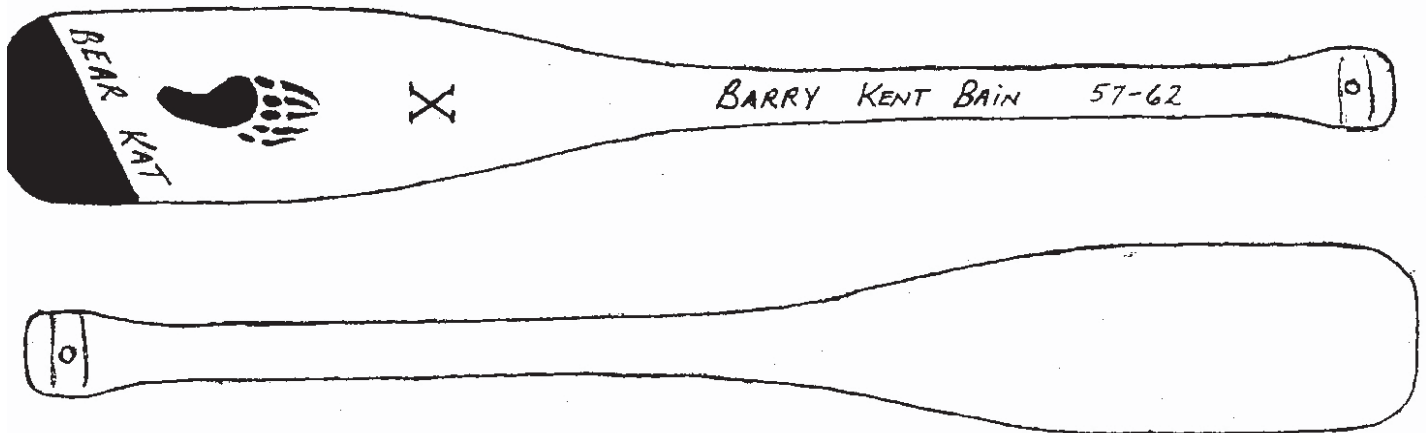
If you do have a picture buried somewhere you'd like to share with the rest of us, find it, write to us about the story behind it and send it to:

Great Charlie Guide Photos
The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association
PO Box 428
Ely, Mn 55731



Be sure to include a self-addressed stamped envelope so that we can get your priceless gem back to you. We can't wait to see what you've got!

Miniature Paddle Brands



Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Red Tip: Yes No Region 10x: Yes No

Years Guided ____ to ____

Checks payable to **Sommers Alumni Association**
Mail to: The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association
PO Box 428
Ely, Mn 55731

Remember gazing at the Paddle display case and seeing all of those paddle designs of those bygone days and imagining the faces that went with them? Well here is your chance to leave your mark once again at the Canoe Base and have someone ponder your logo. With the addition of a second paddle display cabinet (crafted by Red Renner) in the Lodge there is plenty of room to add your brand to the growing collection.

For \$25 you can have your very own paddle brand placed on a miniature paddle and put on display. A full size sample is provided above as a template to place your artwork. Sketch your logo on the sample or send in a picture of your artwork and let us do the rest.

When completed your design name and years you served at the base will appear on the paddle to share with a whole new generation of Scouts and Guides. If you didn't have a paddle brand, but had a special canoe name or logo, put it on the paddle too. OKPIK staff — we have room for miniature skis or snow shoes too. Additional instructions, please staple them to the order form.

Enjoying every bit of life

continued...

grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He settled on giving the canoe to Camp Widjiwagan, which affectionately named it "Nora's Canoe," and honored it with a plaque. The camp also established the Nora and Joe Seliga Wood Canoe Endowment, which will become the permanent home to Seliga's forms when he decides to part with them.

The camp, which now has 45 Seliga canoes, presented Seliga with a bronze statue in 2001, based on a photograph writer Bob Cary of Ely had taken of him with a canoe in the 1970s. The statue now sits proudly in Seliga's kitchen. He motions to it and then finds the black and white photo in a copy of his book.

It is among several early photos documenting Seliga's canoe craftsmanship in the book, written by Jerry Selmok, of Maine, also a wood and canvas canoe builder. The book includes more than

80 pages of photos taken by Ely photographer Deborah Sussex showing Seliga at work, depicting every step of the canoe building process from boiling the cedar ribs to applying the canvas to nailing on the cane seats.



© Deborah Sussex

Both the writer and photographer have been honored with awards for the book, Seliga said.

After so many years of avoiding too much press on his canoe building, Seliga agreed to share his

work in the book, with the help of his daughter, JoAnn Nilsen of Cottage Grove, Minn., who is his manager, he said.

Seliga is well-cared for by the women in his life, he said with grin. He receives a visit from his daughter, Nancy Richards of Ely, every day. Although his son, Richard, a retired banker, lives in Ely Lake, it's his daughters who are his bosses, he says, his grin growing wider. And he wouldn't have it any other way, he said.

In fact, according to Seliga, the country would be in much better shape if it were run by a female. "I think we should have a woman president," he said.

"He was always a family man," Richards says of her father, while stopping in for a cup of coffee. She is happy to see him now receiving recognition for his work from the book, she said.

Seliga is currently working on Canoes No. 664 and 665. He runs his hand along the side of one of the canoes he is finishing in his

workshop, full of tools, planks of fragrant cedar, and his canoe forms. The future owner has been taking frequent photos of the canoe as it progresses, he said proudly.

These days, Seliga keeps "out of trouble" by continuing to build the crafts that are so dear to the soul of a 92-year-old master canoe builder.

But life wouldn't be any fun if no trouble was to be had, and Seliga says it's OK to get in a little mischief once in a while, as long as you "live a clean life and respect your elders."

Seliga has been known to live it up a bit from time to time in recent days, but it's all "good, clean fun," he said. "I don't even need to have a drink."

Just don't accuse him of being a dancer. "I can't dance," he says once again. "Don't go thinking I can dance, now."



Laundromat, Plumbing Supply

by Mark Nordstrom

I remember arranging my routes so crews from around the United States of America could see a bald eagle in Canada. The Cerny map had bald eagle nests marked on it. We all talked to each other and we told each other where the nests were. If you were lucky you went there and you were lucky you could see one. It always made a big impression on the crew to see America's national bird in flight over their heads. That was a few decades ago and I'll bet every one of the crew members who saw those birds still remembers it today.

I thought of that when I was in Alaska with my parents in 1999. We had been traveling and our clothes were dirty and we found a Laundromat to change that situation. The Laundromat had lots of washers, driers, video games, TVs with dull stuff on them and bored people staring at each other. My father and I went outside. We walked out the front door, took a few steps and looked around. To the left, across the street was some kind of warehouse. Straight ahead, on our side of the street, was a plumbing supply warehouse. I don't even remember the

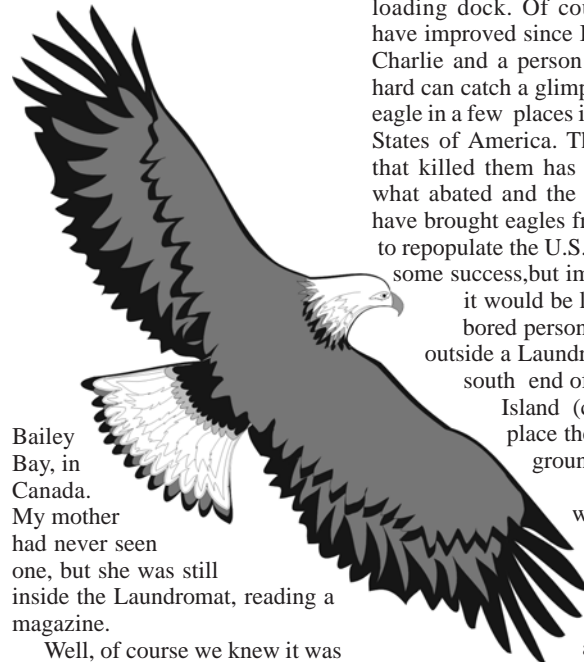
town. I think it might have been Juneau (you-know, in Alaska). Confronted with that exciting scenery, we looked at each other and just accepted the fact that we were bored and there was no respite.

That's when a bald eagle soared between us and the plumbing supply warehouse (about 25 feet from us) and landed in a scrub tree about 60 feet away, just past the plumbing supply warehouse. Like the crews I worked so hard to bring into a situation where they might see a bald eagle, I will never forget that sight. I was looking at the loading dock of a plumbing supply warehouse and getting the best view of a bald eagle I had ever had. I stood and stared. The eagle, of course, was very nonchalant about the whole thing and after it had rested there for a few minutes, flew back out over the saltwater bay, probably to look for fish. I watched it fly away like I would a girlfriend who had just told me she only wanted to be friends. Then I looked at my father, who had helped me recover from those situations in the past, and he looked worse than I felt. We just

could not cope with the surreal experience of seeing a bald eagle calmly perch next to a plumbing supply loading dock. He had been the advisor of two Sommers crews and I knew the only bald eagle he had ever seen had been on

in most of the country. During that trip we saw many more bald eagles and everyone got to see one. However, the closest I have ever been to a bald eagle was that day standing outside a Laundromat, looking at a plumbing supply loading dock. Of course, things have improved since I worked for Charlie and a person who works hard can catch a glimpse of a bald eagle in a few places in the United States of America. The pollution that killed them has been somewhat abated and the people who have brought eagles from Alaska to repopulate the U.S.A. have had some success, but imagine what

it would be like, if some bored person could walk outside a Laundromat on the south end of Manhattan Island (close to that place they now call ground zero) and distractedly watch a bald eagle ease in, take a rest, then cruise out and look for more fish.



Bailey Bay, in Canada. My mother had never seen one, but she was still inside the Laundromat, reading a magazine.

Well, of course we knew it was hunting and pollution that had wiped out the national bird



SAA Card Sale



Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association is taking orders for Greeting Cards. Some cards come with holiday messages, others are blank inside. They can be used year

round to send greetings as well as a message of commitment to Northern Tier programs.

All cards are printed using high quality thermography on

premium cards of recycled paper.

The backs of the cards carry a message saying you are a supporter of Northern Tier High Adventure. These are distinctive and very

handsome greeting cards. The cards come 25 per package, including envelopes. All orders are subject to availability.

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Holiday Greeting/Blank inside

___ 2000 Cards - "Company Coming" moose approaching campsite	NA/___ x \$25.00= _____
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___ 1998 Cards - Commissary	NA/___ x \$20.00= _____
___ 1995 Cards - Canoe Yard	___/NA x \$20.00= _____
___ 1994 Cards - Hanson House	___/___ x \$20.00= _____
___ 1993 Cards - Winter Lodge	___/___ x \$20.00= _____
___ 1993 Cards - Summer Lodge	NA/___ x \$20.00= _____
___ Holiday Sampler - 25 assorted cards	x \$20.00 _____
___ Special , save 40%, off original issue price. 1999-1993 (five boxes, 125 cards) Our choice. Will try to honor requests.	x \$75.00= _____
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