



BLUFF LINES



Sixth Edition, August 2024

The journal of the Camp Orr Alumni Association and Friends of Camp Orr, remembering and preserving the legacy of scouting summers in the Buffalo River Valley.

Hey, Camp Orr Alumni, we're still at it with our Sixth, "kinda" quarterly Bluff Lines. **Check in frequently and add informally on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CampOrrAlumniAssociation>.**



Troop 102 Lounging in the campsite, 1969

The membership requirements for the Camp Orr Alumni Association are 1) treasured memories of scouting summers in the Buffalo River Valley and 2) a desire to preserve and share them. Please send in your own memories, even if it's a snippet and/or pictures; we'll contact you and see if we can work it into an article. Forward this to your old Camp Orr buddies, and/or forward us their email address.

In this Edition:

- 'Coon in Camp!
- Save the Smokehouse
- Reunion!
- Scouts to the Rescue

‘COON IN CAMP!

Jack Butt, camper 1961-1964, staff 1964-1966

1966 was my second year on staff at Camp Orr, I was in charge of Campcraft and Nature, which included classes for the early ranks in knife, ax, knots and lashings, and a slew of merit badges including Nature, Forestry, Wildlife Management, Pioneering, Camping, and so on.

The staff campsite was then where it is now, with staffers sharing with a tent mate two- person wall tents on platforms. My tent mate was Don Crunk, an Eagle Scout from Ft. Smith, who assisted Uncle Frank Lewis on the archery range. We became good friends, got along well, and had a good time that summer. Don of course had his archery merit badge, but was also possessed of a Ben Pearson recurve bow.

At that time, for a teenager who knew anything about archery, having such a bow was to archery, kind of like what a Stradivarius violin might be to a musician. Ben Pearson was a native Arkansan, born in 1898 in Paron Arkansas, who made his first bow based on the article published for the Boy Scouts in 1926 by Dan Beard, “How to Make your Own Bow and Arrow.” With a bow he made, he became the Arkansas State Archery Champion, and placed 7th in 1938 in the National Archery Association Tournament and well ahead of Fred Bear, another archery pioneer in the U.S. Pearson took world record Grizzly and Polar Bears with his bows and did exhibition shooting throughout the U.S. which typically ended with his throwing a ping pong ball into the air and then shooting it with his bow. By 1963 (two years after I became a Boy Scout and 3 years before the summer described herein) Ben Pearson Inc. was selling 3,000 bows and 4,000 arrows a day. Ultimately, he was among the first group inducted into the Archery Hall of Fame (check it out at the original Bass Pro Shop Outdoor World in Springfield, Missouri). He probably remained Arkansas’ greatest retailer until Sam Walton and Don Tyson came along. ‘Nuf said about how well Ben Pearson was known among boys who shot bows in the 1960’s... my tent mate not only had his own bow, it was a Ben Pearson.

Several weeks into camp, staff noticed that some varmint had poached food from their tents – maybe a piece of fruit, maybe a Twinkie bought at the Camp Store saved for a midnight snack – suspicions were aroused over who, or what, the rascally thief might be.

Then one night, middle of the night when all were asleep, there was a crashing, banging coming from the 55 gallon, open-topped metal drum that sat in the middle of the campsite serving as the campsite garbage can. Some of the staffers, aroused by the racket, grabbed flashlights and discovered a very large raccoon exiting the garbage can and heading for the woods. Perpetrator positively identified!

Now the much-discussed question became how to get rid of it, before one of us found it sitting on our chest in the middle of the night snarling up cake crumbs from the dessert we’d brought back from the dining hall!

No one had a trap or poison, so the collective thought was that if a Ben Pearson Bow could take down a bear, it darn sure could take care of a ‘coon, so the garbage can was baited with some tasty-smelling leftovers from the dining hall, and Don and I undertook to wait up, just inside our tent and in clear sight of the garbage can, for the coon: Me as the spot lighter, Don as the archer. No one doubted Don’s marksmanship. We waited up a couple of nights as long as we could, knowing that reveille and mandatory flag assembly came early - but without any luck.

We lost our zeal after a couple of nights, and started turning in at the normal time, but flashlight and bow at hand in case an opportunity arose. Several nights later, in the pitch black, one of us heard scuffling coming from the direction of the garbage can, there was frantic whispering to wake the other up, and arrange plans to

open the tent flaps, flash on the light, and nock, draw and release the arrow before Mr. 'Coon could make his escape; plans hurriedly made, we went to "execute!" I flashed on the power light (one we had used for frog gigging), quickly brought it to rest on the 'coon, Don executed a quick draw, aim and release, and **THWAAANNG!!**, arrowed the trash can dead center exactly behind where the 'coon had been standing a split second before.

If you've ever wondered what kind of noise an arrow from a 75-pound draw bow makes when it hits an empty metal 55-gallon drum, the answer is, very, very loud, especially when against the background, dead silence of midnight in the woods. Within moments, the staff area was swarming like a disturbed hornet's nest with staffers pouring out of their tents in their skivvies to see what the Heck had happened. It didn't take a Congressional investigation to figure out that the 'coon was quicker than the arrow, and probably would continue to be.

So like Wily Coyote, frustrated in one scheme to catch the Roadrunner, we came up with Plan B.

Sam Hudson of Parthenon, Newton County, Arkansas (population 325) was on the senior staff that year. He had only recently graduated from Arkansas Tech, and was I believe either the shooting sports supervisor or program director. Sam's something-great grandfather settled in Newton County near Parthenon on the Little Buffalo River in 1832, one of the first white settlers in that part of the state. In fact, the Little Buffalo River that runs through Jasper was originally called "Hudson's Fork" of the Buffalo River. Sam recounted that one of his grandfathers had discovered the now tourist attraction Diamond Cave, by following his hunting hounds into it, where a bear had killed two of his hounds whereupon he killed the bear. Another grandfather reportedly had a hand-to-hand tussle with a cougar before killing it with a butcher knife. Sam was not only a college graduate he was as an authentic-as-you-can-get mountaineer/Ozark hillbilly (using that with the most admiring connotation.).

At that time, just out of college, Sam was the superintendent for the Parthenon independent school district, which had to be one of the smallest and poorest districts in the country.

There was thus no lack of credibility when Sam offered that he had some coon hounds, which we could bring to camp to rid ourselves of the 'coon.

But we had to drive him to his house in Parthenon to get the hound, which Sam and I proceeded to do in an open top jeep late one night. Parthenon was around 30 miles away, which with the exception of a mile or two paved going through Jasper, was all dirt, curvy, and steep roads, and with a max speed of 42 mph for the 1940's jeep, I remember the trip as somewhat of a marathon in the old jeep which took us around 3 hours. But we got his hound, a big, long-legged black and tan dog with heavy jowls and long floppy ears and returned with him to camp.

I've learned in the years since then, that the typical end of a coon hunt is that the hounds find the coon, tree it, whereupon it is shot. I don't remember Sam having a weapon or describing that as an outcome. I really wasn't sure exactly how the hound-enhanced pursuit would end. We brought the dog to camp late, late in the evening; Sam took it to the trash barrel to sniff around, and the dog, trailed by Sam, headed briskly into the darkness. The next morning the dog was gone, Sam said matters had been taken care of, and we never saw the 'coon again.

Save the Smokehouse!

In the last edition of this Alumni Newsletter, the plight of the log smokehouse was described with a call for

volunteers. We are going forward with that project on Friday, September 27, 2024, starting around 8 a.m. and working that day until the roof is replaced. Volunteers are welcome to arrive any time that day. We are going to re-roof it, clean it out, and evaluate further repairs which, with the roof in place to protect it, can be done in the fullness of time, perhaps towards being an apt welcoming station for Troops arriving to camp. Food, drink and tools will be provided; if you want to help, please contact me at jbutt@dbtcfirm.com. Thanks!



The smokehouse needs YOU!

ALUMNI REUNION

If you want to once again cruise down the beautiful upper Buffalo River Valley heading to Ponca, take the roller coaster twists and turns climbing highway 74 from the river valley up to Mt. Sherman, and then grip your steering wheel for the brake pumping, downshifting dive down the iconic road to Camp Orr as your anticipation grows to once again greet the bluffs, meadows and vistas of the Camp of your favorite memories, save the date and join us for this year's Camp Orr Alumni Reunion, October 18-20, 2024. Plenty of downtime to visit your old haunts, hikes guided and unguided, Dutch Oven cookery demos, skeet shooting, take a canoe out on the old swimming hole, and/or sit down for a National Park update and naturalist program, all as your mood

suits - and of course, a really big campfire with Smokey Joe on the program. Registration is open: <https://www.naturalstatecouncil.org/camporrreunion2024> We were able to fund our picnic-table-building service project at last year's reunion with contributions made by alumni; whether or not you're coming, if you want to help fund new tables in the campsites, built by alumni at this reunion, this link will allow you to make a tax-deductible contribution to that effort: <https://www.naturalstatecouncil.org/camporralumnidonate>

SCOUTS TO THE RESCUE

Shortly after the press conference last December, 2023, announcing the merger of Westark and Quapaw Councils into the Natural State Council and including the critical aspect that Camp Orr would be preserved and continued as a council camp, all of which was carried in statewide television and print news, the below letter arrived at the Little Rock office of the Council, without return address. Efforts to determine the sender have not been successful. Anyone know anything about this event or any of the scouts or others involved in it? Scouting working its miracles in many ways:

To the Boy Scouts of America,
This letter is a long time coming. Our Bible Study Teacher challenged us to write a letter to a person who made an impact on our lives.
So after thinking of several people who had inspired me, or had an impact on my life, I realized that I was long overdue in giving my thanks and gratitude to the Boy Scouts, who saved my and my cousin's life so many years ago, on the beautiful Buffalo River in the summer of 1958.
We were playing in the river that day, like we had so many times before, and as usual, our mothers were visiting and talking to each other, when we went under the water.
I was 12, and my cousin was 16. I could swim, but she could not, so we stayed in the shallow part of the river. We had a heavy rain a few days earlier, and it must have created a deep hole that hadn't been there before.
Before I knew what was happening, my cousin stepped into the hole and grabbed me, pulling me down in with her.
My first thought was to swim for help, but she had a death grip on me, trying to climb her way to the top. There was no way I could free myself from her.
I realized we were going to drown; and then, all of a sudden, there were hands all around me. Pushing and pulling me out of the water.
They lifted me up and sat me on the edge of the bluff, and there, sitting beside me, was my cousin.
They stayed with us a while to make sure that we were alright, and then went on their way.
I guess it all happened so fast, and we were so young, that we didn't realize we had almost died on that beautiful day on the Buffalo River. Our mothers never knew what happened.
My cousin and I have talked many times about that day, and how grateful we were that the Boy Scouts were camping at the river that day.
I later had two boys of my own, and I became a Den Mother for the Cub Scouts. I told them about how the Boy Scouts saved our lives that day, and how the lessons they learn in scouting could make an impact on their lives, and the lives of others. They taught me how to put a worm on a hook while we were fishing on the banks of the beautiful Buffalo River.
We owe our lives to God and the Boy Scouts of America.
God bless the Boy Scouts of America.
Sincerely,
Linda Ruff



Please remember, the Camp Orr Alumni Association will grow and thrive based solely on your input of stories, pictures, and additional contacts. Please submit ideas, stories, pictures and comments to Maribeth Harris jersey_burn@hotmail.com

Until the next newsletter, yours in Scouting!

Westark Camp Orr Alumni Committee:

Jack Butt, chair jbutt@dbtcfirm.com

Maribeth Harris jersey_burn@hotmail.com

Bryan West dominosnorth@hotmail.com

Billy Williams, *ex officio*, Camp Ranger

Mike Boness *ex officio*, Camp director