



BLUFF LINES



Third Edition, November, 2023

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 third quarterly Bluff Lines. Big news since our last version in August! We held our first successful alumni reunion November 3-5; and Westark Area Council is now a bigger, better, Natural State Council with great promise for the preservation and improvement of Camp Orr as a place where young scouts can have experiences and make memories to last a lifetime.

Read on. 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.

Join us October 18th- 20th at Camp Orr for our
2024 Alumni Weekend!!!

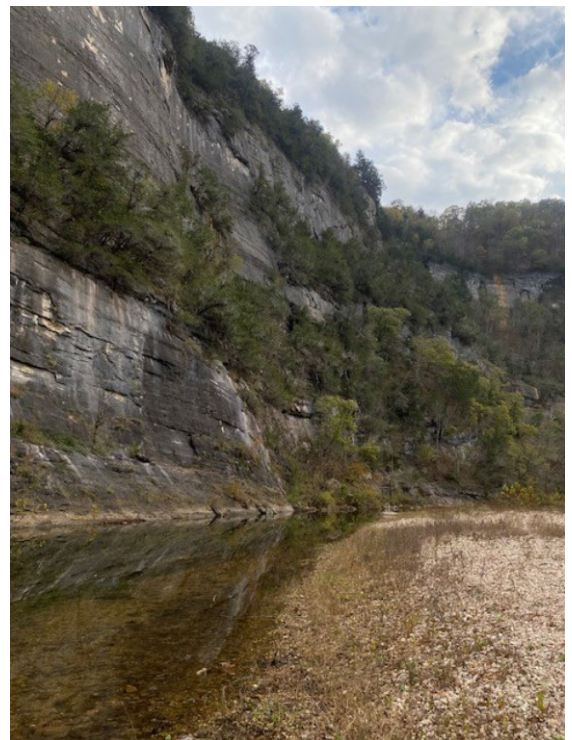


***CAMP ORR ALUMNI REUNION,
NOVEMBER 3-5, 2023***

We did it. A Camp Orr Alumni Reunion, Saturday-Sunday, November 3-5. More than thirty showed up. One from the east coast! What did we do? A lot. Nothing. Soaked up Camp Orr and its memories. Discovered that Signal Pine is still there and visible from the Mess Hall, though it lost one of its “cross bar antennae” to storm several years ago. Half a dozen of us made the trek up and back.



Took in the glory of the River and bluffs bathed in autumn colors.



Ate some hearty and bountiful mess hall meals and drank lots of coffee.



Discovered that we all truly shared in common many warm memories of the Camp, which was more than enough to fuel dozens of little groups that formed

throughout the Camp, broke up, and reformed with new participants, never running out of fun stories and special memories.



With \$750 contributed by those who couldn't attend, we built 7 new picnic tables for campsites whose old ones after 20 years were failing.

Boxes and boxes of decades old t-shirts and flags, taken to and brought back from Antenna Pine, bearing the troop numbers, dates and scouts' names, and draped for decades on the Mess Hall rafters, had been removed in

the last few years because the new commercial ceiling fans blew the dust and cobwebs gathered on them onto the diners below. Each of those shirts were carefully photographed to archive in the Council records (a second service project), and then at the closing campfire laid one by one onto the closing campfire, the flames, sparks, and memories rising to a clear, star-littered sky while each of us named out loud those now gone who through scouting had made a difference in our lives. It was a fitting tribute to both the memories in the shirts, and special scout mentors.





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We snuck off in solitude to Twin Falls, the waterfront, the upriver trail, the Vesper Circle, and other places in Camp to reconnect with our memories of that

wonderful place. We complained about the eternal contrariness of the road coming down the hill. We raised and lowered the flag on the Parade Ground with the solemn respect and salute it deserves.

The National Park Service sent a representative, Fenn Wimberly who had been a camper himself decades ago, to share some very interesting perspectives about the National River, its politics, and its future. He was generous with his time and knowledge in a long, informal question/answer session – and he's signed up as an Orr Alumni. Thanks, Fenn!



We had a roaring huge campfire under a brilliant starlit sky complete with comets, opened by 4 torches borne by 4 generations representing 60 years of scouts who had attended Camp Orr.



It proceeded with corny skits and jokes, campfire songs that somehow sprung from memories closeted for decades, and as the fire died to coals, heard once again the legend of Smokey Joe, sang Scout Vespers, and retired to our sleeping bags.

And we voted unanimously and enthusiastically to do it again next fall (October 18th-20th). Check out the Camp Orr Alumni Association Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CampOrrAlumniAssociation> .

Many thanks to Maribeth Harris who shouldered most of the planning and work; her mother, Karen Harris (herself an Orr Alumni by virtue of having been on the cooking staff for several years), for some grand camp grub; and those of us who attended who pitched whenever and however asked to help cook, wash, gather firewood, or advance the service projects. Be Prepared!...for a bigger, better time next fall!



ICONIC WHEELS OF ORR

By Jack Butt, Camper 1961-1964, Junior Staff 1965-1966

At the beginning of *World War II*, which indeed involved every continent and every country in the *world* along with most of its 2 billion plus people, almost a hundred million of which perished from the War, and which reshaped the world politically in ways that still affect us daily, the United States was an isolationist nation whose armed forces stood 19th in the world. Only the forward-looking leadership of our nation, which began preparations several years before the U.S. was actually fighting as an ally or enemy, gave us the slight edge which in the end is why we speak English today, instead of German or Japanese.



Among those preparations was the solicitation by the U.S. Army extended in the late 1930's to over 160 automobile manufacturers for a light reconnaissance, 4-wheel drive vehicle - nothing the likes of which existed, anywhere, and which would substantially replace horses in the Army's inventory of ways to move people, equipment, and do reconnaissance over not only roads, but rough, roadless terrain. Only 3 manufacturers made a bid, and the Kaiser Willys Company won. As prototypes were built, tested, revised, and went into production, Kaiser Willys didn't have the necessary capacity to meet production quotas, and under license from Kaiser Willys, Ford jumped in to the effect that in the next 5 years, the two companies produced over *three quarters of a million* Jeeps (acronym for General Purpose vehicles) which were put into service all over the world with at first our allies, and then through all branches of our armed forces.



They were parachuted out of planes, landed at D-Day in gliders, and driven out of first wave landing craft; and with apt modifications, pulled artillery, baggage and water trailers, mounted heavy machine guns and rocket launchers as an attack vehicle, held stretchers to remove the wounded from the battlefield, laid communications lines, fitted with snorkels crossed rivers underwater, performed long range desert reconnaissance patrols, and seated five star generals (and every rank beneath that)

as they led victory parades into re-conquered cities, towns and villages all over the world while news reels recorded them: Eisenhower, MacArthur, Bradley, Patton, down to the least, but frazzled and heroic lieutenant depicted in a D-Day movie. Jeeps brought ammunition, food, water, and medical help to front line combatants and were credited thousands of times with saving lives and winning battles.

Every one of the hundreds of infantry regiments (about 2,000 soldiers per regiment) in the U.S. Army was assigned 140 of them, and while they were simple and easy to repair, the average “life” of a jeep in combat conditions was about 90 days.

U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall described the Jeep as “America’s greatest contribution to modern warfare” and iconic war reporter Ernie Pyle wrote that “It did everything, it went everywhere, it was as faithful as a dog, as strong as a mule, and as agile as a goat. It constantly carried twice what it was designed for and kept going.”

While most of this above-detailed history of the Jeep was *not* known to a boy of scouting age in the 1950’s and 1960’s, those boys watched with rapt attention many of the thousands of movies, TV shows and news reels generated by World War II (and later the Korean War, 1950-1953). And almost every such production had a single, common, unscripted, and silent, leading hero: the Army Jeep, which caused the Jeep to be totally and uniformly recognized and idolized by practically every male American who had served in, or was part of the baby boom from, World War II - including the boys in Boy Scouts. Jeeps were totally, totally, awesome to scouting aged boys in the 1950’s and 1960’s.

After the War, those Jeeps that survived and weren’t kept by the down-sized military, went out in Army Surplus programs into civilian use, many going to state and local governments and non-profit agencies. It was thus that Camp Orr had, by the time I arrived in 1961, at least 3 Army Jeeps that I remember.

So we campers, when the Camp Director, or some chauffeured VIP tooled past in one of the Jeeps, all turned to look with pride, curiosity, and covetousness – not at the driver or passenger, but at the Army Jeep, wondering had this been one that had fought the Germans, or the Japanese, or the North Koreans, or ferried some general victoriously at the head of marching combat troops into Salerno or Paris? And when we found one parked around camp, we would gather around and look and talk about it – the blackout lights for night operations, all the stick shift levers that could trigger 4- wheel drive and a low enough gear to climb a cliff; where the



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machine gun mount was, and the double battery compartments to provide extra power for communications equipment; and so on.

They had no tops, and were pretty beat-up, but that just made them all the better. **And when we got home, and family and friends would ask, “What did you like, what was great about Camp Orr?” The answer always included a reference to its Army Jeeps – “The camp we went to had and used real Army Jeeps!”** So that is a significant memory of mine from Camp Orr days.

Beyond generally living in daily awe at camp of those battlefield hero vehicles then among us, I only have three, particular Camp Orr jeep stories. My first year at camp in 1961 my tent mate was my #1 running buddy from growing up in Fayetteville, Carie Buckley. We went through Cub Scouts together, but he was one of the many that after his first year in Boy Scouts, the program just didn’t make the cut of priorities, and he dropped out. However, four years later and my first year on staff (1965) Carie’s dad, a respected family doctor in Fayetteville, volunteered to be the camp doctor for a week, and brought Carie with him. We were still close friends, my staff job had lots of flexibility, and just the two of us did as many of the adventures as we could: Twin falls, exploring the several caves (long since off limits to preserve the bats), and canoeing and fishing the swimming hole in the evenings.

I wanted to show Carie Hemmed in Hollow, and Dr. Buckley said he wanted to go as well – but he was not willing to take the requisite hike. However, the Camp Doctor got some major perks for their “free” medical service: a real cabin to stay in, and use of a camp jeep for the week. So Dr. Buckley said he would drive us in the Jeep to Hemmed in Hollow. Oh, man! Not only did I get to ride in the Jeep, but much more than just ferrying the bigs around camp, we were going on a true, four-wheel-drive, mettle-testing, jeep-worthy expedition! But I had made the hike that summer several times as a staffer taking scout troops and had real doubts about whether any vehicle, even a Jeep, could make it. But I figured if we hit an impassable place, we’d just park there and walk the rest of the way.

Well, we hit plenty of what I thought were impassible places, but Dr. Buckley was fearless, persistent, probably a bit foolish and over-confident, and very darn lucky that he made it through, and back and forth across the River the several times required, to make it all the way in the jeep to where the Hemmed-in-Hollow trail headed off of the River and up its creek. He gunned it, shifted it, swerved it, back-and-forthed it, and not only did we make it to the Hemmed in Hollow trailhead, we

made it back to Camp. In the Jeep. Wow. And I then understood why Army Jeeps were held in awe by the GI's who lived with, fought in and depended on them.

Then Bob Largent, Springdale Troop 107, on the staff a couple of years ahead of me in the early 1960's, gave me this tale. At 15 years old (a year below the Arkansas driving age), he was very proud to be recruited by Council Exec and Camp Director Pat Bolin to learn to drive the jeeps, to provide more folks to get jeeps up and down the hill to rescue cars on the busy opening and closing days of camp. Of course, Jeeps had a standard/stick-shift transmission, where one had to learn to use the clutch, gear shift stick, and gas pedal in proper and rapid sequence to move among the forward gears and into reverse – as well as two other “sticks” to put it into or out of 4 wheel drive, and compound low gear range. It wasn't a self-intuitive process and required tutelage and practice. So Pat Bolin was standing next to the Jeep, with Bob in the driver's seat, running him through the gears: “First gear...okay, now second...okay, now reverse...”etc. Pat called out, “okay, first (forward) gear” whereupon a confused Bob jammed it into reverse, gave it gas, and released the clutch, promptly backing over and breaking Pat's foot. Which left Pat limping for the rest of the camp session! Bob never told me whether Pat thereafter trusted him with a jeep.

My final jeep story is really an amalgam of several. On rainy weekends, it was not unusual for ordinary passenger cars, bringing scouts to and from camp, to become mired, or slide off, or just chicken out on that always substandard road down the hill from Mt. Sherman into Camp. The word would filter down the hill to Camp that, say, Bentonville's Troop 42 had a parent's car in distress. Two or three of us staffers would load into a jeep with a senior staff driver, pile in some rope, shovels and axes, and head up the hill for a rescue mission.

Usually, after some hillbilly engineering, we could get them out, but Jeeps are actually a very light vehicle - about 2,000 pounds, narrow tires, 60 horsepower, and it was also quite possible that just one, or even two jeeps couldn't manage the rescue, so we would send down to Camp for the Deuce-and-a-half.



The first-year campers to Camp Orr in 1955, including Fayetteville's Troop 102 scouts George Faucette, John Backus and my brother, Tom Butt, who went



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back for several years including staff duty, recall that the road, in its initial condition the first year or two, was truly horrible, and that in fact, the Harrison National Guard unit had loaned the Camp several of its Deuce-and-a-half trucks for those first few summers, to get scouts down to camp, and back out at the end of their week, while parents ventured no further than the top of Mt. Sherman with their passenger cars. In those days, there existed no four-wheel, or all-wheel, or even front wheel drive SUV's that a parent could have relied on to get them down and back up that hill – very few people had Army surplus jeeps – which didn't include any of the parents driving scouts in from all over the Council.

By the time I got to Camp Orr, there was just one Deuce-and-a-half still there, which ostensibly belonged to the Council. The Deuce-and-a-half has a storied history that makes it a first cousin to the Army Jeep. Developed in the pre-World War II years, it was designed to carry 5,000 pounds/ two and a half tons of cargo off-road, thus “Deuce-and-a-half”. It generally had tandem (2) back axles, each with dual wheels (i.e. 4 per axle), so in effect, with the front wheels also taking power from the engine, it was a 10-wheel-drive vehicle. It was the thousands of these vehicles (out of almost 800,000 produced during World War II) which landed in France right behind the assault troops on D-Day and successfully supplied the Allied armies rapidly advancing on Germany, through the “Red Ball Express” with over 12,000 tons of supplies every day for months on end of hard combat. It had a flat bed with low sides, which could be fitted with wooden hoops extending the sides up and overhead to hold a removable canvas cover. Hinged, wood-slatted benches folded down from either side to give passengers, up to about 16 at a time, a very hard, bumpy place to sit in the bed. It had about a 100-horsepower engine that could be geared to an incredibly low and powerful “granny” range. If the Jeep was an invincible David, this megamonster truck was the true Goliath.

If the Jeeps got stuck getting cars off the hill down from Mt. Sherman, the Deuce-and-a-half went into service, and to my knowledge, never failed to make the required rescue.

Bob Largent, the above-described Jeep reverse expert, recalls that when the weekend came, and Camp Orr emptied of campers, Scout Executive/Camp Director Pat Bolin would gather all of the junior staffers with their loads of dirty laundry, pile them into the Deuce-and-a-half, and head into Jasper. While their laundry was running in the laundromat, Pat treated them all to a restaurant steak dinner, and then a movie at Jasper's tiny movie theatre on the town square, the staff practically filling the place. Bob discovered later that the dinner and movie came

out of Pat's pocket, not the Council budget, just another tribute to one of Westark's great scouters.

By the time of my second year on staff, the Deuce-and-a-half was gone - where or why, I don't remember, if I ever knew in the first place. But by that time, I was 16 with a driver's license, and the truck being used to haul tents and other heavy bulk items around the camp was a red 1950's model flatbed truck, about exactly like the one pictured below. It wasn't nearly as neat as the now gone Deuce-and-a-half, but by virtue of my driver's license I was allowed to drive it around camp as we loaded and unloaded hundreds of tents, mattresses, cots, and other camp stuff, getting ready for and taking down the camp. It had no sides, no top, and no benches, which was fine for hauling stuff, but when it came to moving people, could make things exciting as described below.



Finally, James Anderson, a camper and later staffer from Ozark during camp years 1958 to 1967, also recalls as does Bob Largent, the staff weekend trips to Jasper for laundry, a restaurant meal and movie. But James remembers, as do I, the trip not being made by

Deuce-and-a-half, but on the flatbed, with 10 or so of us simply hunkered down on the middle of the flat bed, no sides, praying that whoever was driving would not take a corner so fast as to fling us off. I also recall the Camp Ranger in 1966, Buster Mayes, being talked into taking a bunch of the staff to the top of Indian Creek on a weekend, so we could hike back through the Creek and its natural bridge, waterfalls and caves, to Camp Orr. His pickup wouldn't hold everyone that wanted to go, so we all jumped on the flatbed. Seatbelts, airbags, grab handles, seats? Not. Squeeze to the center, and hold on with your fingernails, and pray Buster would take it easy going around those Mt. Sherman curves!

WE ARE A NEW COUNCIL!



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Camp Orr is, and you may presume always will be, a wilderness area camp where scouts can learn, play, grow, and develop lifelong memories of outdoor adventure in one of the most beautiful wild areas in the United States, situated along the Buffalo National River. However, your Westark Area Council patches are now collector's items!

Effective December 1, 2023, Westark Area Council, its 17 counties and 4 districts merges with Central Arkansas' Quapaw Area Council, its 39 counties and 7 Districts into the new Natural State Council with 56 counties, 11 Districts and approximately 5,000 scouts and 1,000 registered leaders.

Several years ago, each council had its own scout and scouter numbers more than that present total of both councils. More recently, several unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances greatly impacted scouting numbers throughout the U.S., including Arkansas. Most recently of those circumstances, the Covid pandemic totally disrupted practically every key area of scouting: recruiting; den, pack, patrol, and troop meetings; group camping and summer camps; merit badge and other advancement; and fund raising.

That demanded out of the box thinking and aggressive action for Westark to preserve its scouting program. While both Councils are bouncing back materially in numbers, activities, and fundraising, economies of scale by merging the two councils offered huge advantages to scouting in Arkansas, to reduce costs to scouts while providing more and better resources. Thus, negotiations began between the Council about the prospects of a merger.

The first "card played" by Westark leadership in what turned out to be rapid, dynamic, and very positive negotiations between the two councils, was that Camp Orr would be sacrosanct as a camp, regardless of what the council's name or structure may become. As it turns out, Quapaw was as eager to now share ownership and progress the camp, as Westark was to preserve it. The remaining negotiations, inspired by that common goal, went quickly and successfully.

Among many other positive facets, Quapaw has its own outstanding and well-developed summer camp, Camp Rockefeller, north of Conway which is part of a larger Gus Blass Scout Reservation of some 3,200 acres. Lacking the hundreds of miles of hiking trails, opportunities for multi-day paddling trips, and endless high bluffs for climbing that Camp Orr can offer older scouts as a high adventure base, Camp Rockefeller has a lake and an Olympic size swimming pool, where the full array of aquatic merit badges can be earned, regardless of whether the Buffalo River's flooding or drought might cancel aquatics for days or weeks at Camp Orr. The two camps are about two hours apart, making it possible for a troop to visit both camps during a week or during the year, or to split a troop between the two camps based upon the scouts' needs and interests.



The merger has already resulted in a substantial decrease in the annual dues that scouts must pay, and many more economies of scale and improved programs, including those to enhance Camp Orr, are in the works.

We are scouting forward, better together!

Please remember, the Camp Orr Alumni Association will grow and thrive based solely on your input of stories, pictures, and additional contacts.

Until the next newsletter, yours in Scouting!

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