

**First edition, May, 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.



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## What's This About?!

Welcome to the originating effort of the Westark Area Council to create the Camp Orr Alumni organization! The membership requirements are 1) treasured memories of scouting summers in the Buffalo River Valley and 2) a desire to preserve and share them. Since we obviously have your email address, you are now a member, until you reply requesting removal from the mailing list. No dues, no attendance requirements, no dress code, no uniform requirements, no secret passwords nor handshakes. Sit back and enjoy, participate when it suits your fancy – but understand that this effort is nothing more or beyond your participation. We need your memories, your ideas, your participation as we move forward. It will not exist without you contributing one way or the other.

This effort proceeds as a special project of the Westark Area Council of Scouts BSA, which has owned Camp Orr since 1953 and operated it as the Council Camp since 1955. Its purpose and goal is to preserve and enhance the scouting memories and experiences of the thousands of young men and women who spent very special times in this very special place while growing up, and give them the opportunity to support its successful continuation for many generations to come. How will that happen? Only as you, its membership, chooses.



As selected and guided by the Westark Council Executive Board, an Alumni Committee shall guide and implement this effort, which at this, its start, seeks to publish a periodic journal of yarns, remembrances, histories and legends of the camp with updates as to the Camp status, plans and dreams, and augmented by an annual alumni reunion at Camp Orr.

There soon will be a website, integrated with a Facebook page to accomplish the effort. Read on and enjoy!

*Uncle Frank Lewis demonstrates proper archery technique to Troop 102 Scouts Stephen Widder and Charles Thorn, c. 1965*

## TWO MORE MILES....

*As told by Jack Butt, Fayetteville Troop 102, camper 1961-1964, junior staff 1965-1966*

The following is as I remember it. It occurred more than sixty years ago, and my memory has not been refreshed or corrected by any who shared the experience for more than fifty years. So if it is not the whole truth, it is not for want of honesty, nor intended embellishment, but simply the frailty of the human memory.

When I crossed over the Webelos bridge from Pack 7, to Troop 102, Central United Methodist Church, Fayetteville, in 1961 it had an excellent and experienced scoutmaster, Roger Widder. Mr. Widder taught music at the University of Arkansas, played the oboe (or maybe in was the bassoon?) in the Northwest Arkansas Symphony, and could play, if not fully master, many instruments. He was noted for finding the highest point at each fall and spring District Camporee, and after the final lights-out call around 10 p.m., filling the darkness with the wail of his bagpipes to bid final goodnight to the tented assemblage of the District's scouts and scouters.

But Mr. Widder, though respected, was not iconically idolized by the younger boys. That was reserved for the Ford Brothers, Donnie and Richard. Donnie was in college, Richard in late high school, and both stood well over 6 feet tall, each with a commanding presence. Donnie was an Assistant Scoutmaster, Richard a Junior Assistant Scoutmaster in the Troop. Incidentally, Donnie went on in his adult years to be the Air Force pilot for Air Force One, the President's plane, and Dick an Airborne Ranger infantry officer decorated for gallantry in the Vietnam conflict. When I joined the Troop, they had only recently arrived themselves - from Germany, where their father was an Army officer, and their Troop charter sponsor was an infantry unit! Most of the dads in that troop were army personnel, highly trained in hiking, camping, first aid, orienteering, marksmanship, survival and such critical scouting skills and eager to teach the scouts what they knew. The troop quartermaster supplies were amply stocked with more really neat Army surplus stuff than a Troop could use - wall tents, pup tents, folding shovels, hatchets and saws, compasses, map cases, canteens and mess kits, water bags, web belts and all the cool stuff that snapped to them, sleeping bags, cots, etc., etc. The Fords had scouted through the troop of every boy's fondest dreams.

In those days, outdoor sports, like hiking and camping and orienteering were not main stream, and the Cabela's, and Bass Pro shops and Wal-mart's and REI's and North Face's, and all of their high tech, extensive, outdoor supplies simply didn't exist...at all. There was literally nowhere to buy a backpack or canteen, except from the local Scout store - and it was expensive, and not necessarily good (more on the Yucca Pack later). The gold standard and practically sole source for real camping equipment was Army surplus, sold at Army surplus stores that had bought for pennies on the dollar the millions of items of gear left over from World War II and the Korean War, then only a decade or two in the past. It was then marketed to a very small outdoor sporting market, peopled mostly by Boy Scouts who needed tried and true camping gear for a reasonable price.

In this context, the Ford brothers had managed to bring back from Europe a whole garage full of such stuff, which to an 11 year old Tenderfoot Scout was the ultimate candy store of really awesome stuff to covet.

As if all of that weren't enough, they were both Eagle Scouts, with palms, in a Troop which at that time, despite being large and active, had no other Eagle Scouts. And they knew close order drill - they could line us up at Troop meetings, and before long had us looking like the Texas Aggie band with our dress rights, columns left, and countermarching.



## BLUFF LINES



### *Two More Miles..... (cont'd)*

In short, we younger scouts held the Ford brothers in total, total awe.

So when, as my second summer at Camp Orr approached in 1962, Donnie Ford proposed that the Troop hike into Camp Orr, that sounded to all of us like just the greatest adventure ever, giving us bragging rights over all the other Troops who would be coming by mere cars down the road to Camp Orr.

Donnie laid out the plan, and apparently had the trust and approval of Mr. Widder and the parents. He would be the sole adult leader on the hike (one of many, many ways Scouts has changed in the last sixty years). Apparently no one gave that a second thought or concern. Parents would drop us off at Compton, a wide spot in what was then a dirt road coming out of Harrison towards Ponca, on top of the mountain across the river from Camp Orr. Using our topographic map and compass, we would land-navigate our way the approximately two map-miles from there to Camp Orr, in an easy, downhill (according to the contour lines on his map) traipse to the River just upstream from Camp Orr. Mind you, none of the well-developed trails in and out of the Buffalo River valley that now exist, were there. We would be land navigating and bushwhacking, literally making our own trail to Camp Orr. Very cool! Antennae Pine, though not marked on any map, was reported to be somewhere along the way, and if we found it, we were excited about hanging a flag there on the way down.

We would carry overnight gear and food, and camp that evening on the Buffalo River, before marching victoriously into Camp Orr the next morning to check into our assigned campsite for the week.

About a dozen of us scouts loaded out of our parents' cars at Compton (an old barn was all we could see of that "town"), full of vim, vigor and adventure, shortly after noon – we had about 7 hours of daylight to cover two miles, and were looking forward to arriving shortly at the river for a long afternoon of swimming and playing in the river. We unloaded where a dirt track headed off of the road we were on, going generally the direction we needed to go. The first half mile we followed our compass on a bearing leading to Camp Orr, through a farmer's hilltop pasture before hitting the woods line, and then downhill. It got very steep, very quickly; we were grabbing trees to keep from sliding, and we found that our compass bearing was blocked by a small cliff – maybe 15 or 20 feet – not terrifying, but too big to jump down. So we turned, right or left, I don't remember, walking along the bluff quite a ways looking for a break, and finally found one, where we could scramble down to the bottom of that ledge.

More steep ground there, quickly leading to yet another small bluff line, requiring the same angling along its top, and away from our desired bearing, looking for yet another break.

This repeated itself several times, and increasingly the "level" benches we were on between the blocking bluff lines were narrower and steeper and had fearful exposure. And more than once, we found that there was no descent possible through the bluff line we had arrived at, and had to go back to how we got there, climbing back up to the next higher ledge and go further, or a different direction along it, to get to a more promising descent. The average age of us scouts was probably 12, this may have been the first time some of us had carried anything heavier than a daypack. There was a fair amount of slipping and sliding, and some falling, which we tried to brave through, but as the afternoon wore on either the heavy packs, or scraped knees and hands, brought forth some tears.

## Two More Miles..... (cont'd)

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BOYS' LIFE for MAY, 1948

### THERE'S AN OFFICIAL SCOUT PACK FOR EVERY CAMPING USE CHOOSE THE ONE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU!

Trust the official Scout seal to identify packs of superior quality. They're ruggedly made of water-repellent, heavy-duty army duck that will stand up under the roughest going afield. Pack frames are made of sturdy tubular aluminum. Wide shoulder straps are adjustable for your comfort.

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**Taking a trek into the wilderness? The Camper Pak will do the job when you must take everything you need for several days. Gear stays dry in bad weather because of drawstring closure with rain hood. Frequently used articles show handy in side pockets or zippered front pocket. Hides on pack frame or with strap attachment No. 13072 available at \$1.00. Size: 15" x 8" x 22".**

**The Yucca pack is the perfect size when your patrol heads out for a campsite or a long weekend. It's big enough to carry all your own gear plus your share of the patrol equipment. You can lash barrels or a tent to the rings attached to pack. Keep small articles within easy reach in its special pocket. Pack rides on wide web shoulder straps that won't rub or cut. Size: 15" x 7 1/2" x 18".**

**A PAIR OF REAL PALS WHEN YOU'RE HIKING WITH YOUR PATROL OR BUDDY**

**No. 1307 DAY HIKE BAG \$2.50**

**No. 1308 MESSENGER BAG \$2.95**

**The Day Hike Bag is a longtime favorite for trips away from base camp and the hikes you enjoy with your buddy. Lots of room in its interior to stow spare articles of clothing, a day's chow, and the gear you want to take along. If you head out with your patrol, the Day Hike is large enough for you to shoulder a fair share of your unit's equipment. Size: 15 1/2" x 9" x 15".**

**The Messenger is ideal on travel trips or when you and another Scout take your five-mile hikes to pass Second Class test. It's big enough to carry your own's crows and other personal gear. Slings on bag adjust for maximum comfort. Top flap slides down tight to keep your gear dry. Size: 14" x 8" x 9 1/2".**

OFFICIAL SCOUT UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT SOLD ONLY BY YOUR LOCAL SCOUT DISTRIBUTOR

I digress here to discuss the packs. At that point in time, pack frames were not common, in fact, mostly unheard of. The standard overnight pack sold by the Boy Scouts was the Yucca Pack, basically a square canvas bag, with two fairly narrow and unpadded shoulder straps, no internal nor external frame, and no waist belt. The Boy Scout handbook demonstrated that if you folded and packed everything properly, heavier things on top, soft things against your back, you had (per the pictures in the Handbook) a tidy, square pack fitting snugly and comfortably against your back. The Boy Scout smiling broadly from the pages of the Scout Handbook at the reader, in full uniform striding boldly forward, waving with one hand, his hiking stick in the other, his totally square pack fitting firmly against his back, looked as though he'd just won the lottery and was quite convincing that a Yucca pack was the top shelf ticket to adventure. In reality, after a few hundred yards, and a slip or fall or two, the Yucca pack felt like a full grown baboon doing somersaults on your back, impairing balance while the unpadded shoulder straps cut cruelly into your shoulders; and in the meantime, the soft things you had carefully packed to be against your back shifted, so it was the metal mess kit or edge of the Pork and Beans can that was grinding into your backbone.

At this point, we had been struggling for about 3 hours; our one canteen each of water had, in the hot afternoon, been mostly drunk, and we emerged onto a very flat, prominent rock (think Hawksbill Crag) which had a commanding view of the stunningly beautiful Buffalo River Valley below us, and at our feet, the River itself – about 500 hundred vertical feet below us.

I was hot, dirty, sweaty, thirsty, and was trying to reconcile the beauty of this scene, with what was becoming a terrifying fact, that after 3 hours, we were only about a third of the way down to the river from where we started, and not really sure we could get there from here. And I was probably in better condition, mentally and physically than most of the other boys.

By now, each of us had asked our flawless, heroic, dependable, idol of a leader, Assistant Scoutmaster Ford, an increasing number of times, in increasingly desperate voices, "Donnie, how much further?"

If Donnie said it once, he said it fifty times: "Only two more miles". Indeed from where we started and as the crow flies, it had never been much if any more than two miles. Unfortunately we were not crows and were facing the reality, that we had no way out, except to continue our steep, scary, side to side, uncertain descent to the River.

## *Two More Miles..... (cont'd)*

As dark approached, after six hours of scrambling, falling, slipping, and wandering looking for a viable downward course, Donnie stopped us on what was a relatively flat bench – where you would have to roll at least 15 or 20 feet in your sleep, to fall off the related bluff line. He declared that we needed to stop there for the night. It was a piteous camp – there was no wood for a fire, not really a fully level place to build one, we had little or no water left, and not enough room to try and pitch a tent. The food we brought anticipated cooking dinner: potatoes to roast on the coals, meat to fry or bake on a stick, etc. and we had no fire. We ate raw what we could tolerate of what we had, rolled out sleeping bags on ground cloths, and hungry, thirsty, exhausted and dirty, tried to sleep.

The early morning sun brought mixed emotions: fresh morning air, bright light, a new day: but we were still stuck, high above the river, thirsty and hungry. We continued our downward struggle, asking and hearing repeatedly, “only two more miles”, until after about two hours, we finally hit the river across from what is now Kyle’s Landing. At the time, it was just an abandoned pasture – Kyle hadn’t yet been there, and it was not yet a National River with improved campgrounds. So we were in the middle of nowhere, but we were down from the bluffs!

Oh.My.Gosh, did that feel good to plunge into the river, fully clothed! There was no effort to purify the water that we gulped down – thankfully it was free of whatever bugs could have devastated us. We built a fire, we cooked and ate our food, and we lay down on the level gravel bar and went to sleep in the midmorning sun, after an exhausted but relatively sleepless night on the bluffs far above.

By then we learned a lesson, which was burned into my brain and used later many times to essential advantage – in Army training and expeditions, and thousands of miles of hiking all over the world – *contour lines mean something*, and if they are close together, you’d best calculate very carefully what the actual pitch is, lest you find yourself stuck on the edge of a bluff at dark, still “two more miles” from your destination!

As I started to drift off to sleep on the gravel bar in the warm morning sun, I learned a second, important outdoors lesson: A hand-grenade-loud explosion from the middle of our campfire brought us all involuntarily to our feet, finding ourselves covered with hot Pork and Beans and its related funky sauce – one of us (not me!) had undertaken to warm his rations by simply putting his can in the fire unvented. We all learned by first hand and memorable experience, that an unvented can put on a fire, will violently explode. And as with so many other lessons that could have been disastrous, we thanked our lucky stars that none of us had been victims of the exploding shrapnel.

We survived, we learned, we were lucky. I have found that the trail to Eagle, like making sausage or legislation, may not always be pretty to watch, but the resulting knowledge and maturity is impressive! And for my remaining years on Troop 102, whenever a tired, younger scout on a hiking expedition would desperately plead, “how much further?” the answer was always...”just two more miles.”



## **Bob Fairchild, the Mythic Lizardist.**

*As told by Bob Fairchild, Fayetteville's Leverett School Troop 100, Camp Orr camper 1955-1958, waterfront staff 1959-1960*

I attended Camp Orr its first year, 1955, with Fayetteville's Leverett School Troop 100. My father was its Scoutmaster. I attended four years as a scout, followed by two years on the staff. This event happened my last year there, 1960.

It was late in the last week of camp, where I had been working waterfront staff all summer. I was heading up a trail towards a troop campsite, I don't remember which one or why, when I encountered a group of 9 scouts from the Siloam Springs troop. I remember just one of those scouts, Dick Latta, who went on in his adult life to become a multi-millionaire truss contractor.

But at the time, he was simply one of an excited group of young Scouts that were quite animated about a blue tailed skink which they had just caught and displayed to me. It was tiny, even for a skink. At that moment, the Devil grabbed my wits: I was worried in this last week of camp that my trading post bill had run up way beyond my cash means; my parents were on vacation out of state and thus would not be the ones to bring me home from camp and settle my accounts; and so I had no source of funds to pay my bills. And so up jumped the Devil and caused me to say: "for a dime apiece from you, I'll eat that skink!"

The pot was quickly gathered, I took the skink tail first, leaned my head back and dropped it headfirst down my widely opened mouth. The skink being accustomed to scampering down dark holes to escape danger, helped me greatly as it scrambled its way down my throat into my stomach. And I was 90 cents richer. That may not seem like much, but the inflation factor tables show that 90 cents in 1960, is worth more than \$10 today, so at the time, the swallowing of a small skink seemed well worth it for a broke junior staffer!



By supper time, word had gotten around camp that there was a skink-swallowing counselor, and as the troops lined up for dinner on the big Mess Hall porch facing the flagpole and I arrived, the crowd was ready: "There he is, that's the guy that ate the skink!" "Hey, did you really eat a skink??" "Will you eat another one?!"

Up jumped the Devil, again, and his words flew out of my mouth, "For a dime apiece, I'll eat another skink!" Maybe 25 scouts crowded around, hands outstretched with their tender of ten cents each, and from the crowd a skink was produced. Whoa! This one was not a baby skink, but instead probably 2 or 3 times longer than my first effort. But the bargain was struck, and the same technique produced the same result that the skink, dropped headfirst into my mouth, assisted the unpleasant swallowing by a helpful scampering down the pipe.

"O—o-o-o-h!! Aghhh!, Ughhh! "The crowd voiced its reaction, and I was another \$2.50 richer.

Pat Bolin, the much beloved Council Executive and Camp Director had picked and prepped me earlier that week to present at the closing campfire on that last night, the legend of Smokey Joe. As I pondered that through supper and the twilight hour leading up to the Campfire, these random factors milled about in my brain: For several minutes after the skink swallowings, I could feel them scurrying around in my stomach. If someone would pay to watch me eat a skink, what might they then pay to feel it scurrying around in my stomach? And for one brief minute, after the spellbinding story of Smokey Joe ended, the attention of every scout in camp would be on me...just me.

## ***Bob Fairchild, the Mythic Lizardist. (cont'd)***

The campfire was held, the songs sung, awards given, skits and cheers presented, moments of meditation and thought experienced, and then the Legend of Smokey Joe was told. And breaking the prolonged moment of dramatic silence at its end, the Devil announced in my voice: "After the campfire closes, I will be at the Trading Post to swallow a lizard; for a quarter you can watch, and a dime more, you can feel it scurry around in my stomach. Someone bring a lizard!"

I trusted three other staffers from Fayetteville's Troop 102 to control the door: Tom Butt, John Backus and George Faucette. George who was the quartermaster that year was the bagman, to collect the money, as advertised, 25 cents to watch, another 10 cents to feel the post-swallow stomach movements. In the middle of the room we set up a lunch room table that I was to stand upon so everyone would have a good view of the performance.

The room was packed to absolute capacity; my doormen shut the door, George as bagman holding several dollars' worth of admission fees, and I mounted the table, and called for a lizard.

As added drama, we knew that the Harrison Troop had sent a school bus over that last night along with some Troop families to watch the final campfire and bring their scouts home the next day. Included in those family members were four Harrison High School Goblin (cute and attractive) cheerleaders, who somehow made their way to be immediately in front of the table that I was standing on.

With excitement thick enough to cut with a knife, a particular jerk in the crowd, whose face I still remember with resentment, called out in an annoying voice: "he's gonna trick us! He's not eating no lizard; he's just gonna drop 'em down his shirt! Take your shirt off, you con man!!" So in front of the gathered crowd, and immediately in front of the 4 cheerleaders, I pulled off my shirt, just as a kid emerged from the crowd with a small box, about the size to keep a lizard in, and presented it:

"Here's your lizard!"

I took the box, cautiously tipped open the lid, and JEE-E-E-E-Z! This was no skink. It was a full grown, scaly-skinned, brown-grey, very fat, ugly, fence lizard, twice as long as the longer skink, maybe 7 inches long.



I had betrayed the Scout Motto, for I certainly was NOT prepared to swallow anything like that. I grabbed it firmly by the head, lifted it out of the box, and standing atop the table held it up high for the packed room (and 4 cute cheerleaders at my feet) to see. I was panic-stricken to find options to avoid swallowing this lizard. But the crowd's reaction was immediate, and immediately clear; If I didn't swallow this lizard, Camp Orr may well experience its first staff member being ridden out of camp on rail, if not lynched.

So modeling what had worked with the skinks, I stuffed its head and as much of its body as I could into my mouth, hoping that like the skinks it would assist my efforts by scampering down the dark hole (i.e. my esophagus) in front of it. That effort left the lizard's back legs frantically scrapping and its tail wildly whipping outside my mouth for all to see. There was significant crowd reaction to this phenomenon, and it was certainly a novel experience to me to have my face lashed by tiny lizard claws and whippy tail, while I confined the front works of the lizard in my mouth.



# BLUFF LINES



## ***Bob Fairchild, the Mythic Lizardist. (cont'd)***

However it became quickly and clearly manifest, that a fence lizard's survival instincts are not to go for the dark hole, but to go for the light, and the ferocity of its movements cause me to instinctively open my mouth, and the lizard popped out into a high ark and fell hard 8 feet to the floor where the now screaming cheerleaders had just stood.

It was stunned from the fall. I was in sheer panic, managed only by instinct. I dropped to the floor, grabbed the stunned lizard by its head, ascended the table again, and made an adrenalin-fueled jam of the hapless lizard as far into my mouth as I could and swallowed as if my life depended on it. The lizard went down. Somewhere along there it came to, and began scurrying about in the dark recesses of my innards. Hands appeared and coped their ten-cent feel.

And it was over. There are rumors, which have floated now for more than half a century: That I was medevacked to the Harrison hospital where my stomach was pumped; that immediately after the swallow, I ran outside and puked. They are malicious, false, unfounded. The truth was merely that by 2 a.m. I had a very upset stomach, and not knowing from any of my extensive Scout first aid training whether swallowing a lizard might be fatal, or what the first aid for it was, I waked up the camp doctor for consult and treatment. He dosed me with Pepto Bismal, and sent me back to bed. And I have detested for the 60 years since then that medicine and its taste, deeming the medicine worse than the malady – that being the last Pepto Bismal I was ever to take.

But if there were to be a reunion of Camp Orr alumni, and if there were to be presented a skink of moderate size, then one more time and in exchange for donations to Camp Orr, I would swallow a skink....for the future of the good ol' days at Camp Orr.

## ***The Critter Crawl***

*As told by Jack Butt, Fayetteville Troop 102, camper 1961-1964, junior staff 1965-1966*

I don't know when the Critter Crawl started, or when or why it stopped. I just remember that it was "THE" marquee event every Thursday at Camp Orr summer evenings in the years I was there from 1961 to 1966.

It was a race among critters. There was no entry fee, you just needed to show up in the early evening twilight hours after supper was over, in the bare dirt side yard of the Mess Hall: on the trading post side, just outside the kitchen doors. With your critter. Maybe once in a while if we had a bugler and he knew the call, he would blow "Assembly". Maybe.

Various members of the junior staff served as masters of ceremony, referees and ushers for the event, which required etching in the bare dirt, with rock, stick or other apt tool, two, concentric circles. The inner circle was about a foot in diameter. The outer circle was about 10 to 15 feet in diameter...more or less, measuring tapes were not used, exactness was not necessary.

As the track was being prepared, the camp gathered in from wherever their post-supper dawdling had left them – trading post, outhouse, troop campsite, horseshoe pitch, Mess Hall porch - and crowded in around the marked circles for a place from which to watch; until in due course, the junior staffer in charge called the assemblage to order, to announce the rules: Competitors would be called randomly from the crowd, two at a time; proceed to the center of the inner circle; set their critter down and restrain it there until released upon the command, "ready...set...GO!!!" At that point, it was up to the critter to get itself to the finish line, i.e. the outer circle, before its competitor did. The critter handler was strictly,... strictly forbidden to touch the critter – to do so was immediate disqualification. But they could yell, whistle, wave or clap their hands, stomp their feet, blow, or do whatever else they conceived could motivate their critter across the finish line first. It was a bracketed, single elimination event, winner take all.

## ***The Critter Crawl (cont'd)***

There was a prize; I can't remember if it was an ice cream bar or soda or camp neckerchief from the PX, or maybe a special cake from the Mess Hall cooks, but what really drove the competition was the Olympic quality recognition the winner (and their troop) had from just winning outright, among all the campers there, the Critter Crawl.

All of this prospectively had been announced at the Camp's opening campfire or chow hall announcements, with reminders daily, giving every scout in camp four full days to find, capture and train a critter. The critters? Frogs, toads, turtles (land and water), insects (big roaches and grasshoppers were a fav), spiders, lizards and skinks, snakes, millipedes, "thousand leggers", crawdads, mice and rats. Oh my! As the week progressed, the buzz was as universal and excited as the precursor week to the Super Bowl or NCAA final 4. Vast cogitating over what critter had the instincts and abilities to win? Who had already recruited what that looked like a front runner? And while imagining that a full grown bull frog could clear from the center to the finish line in a single hop, and a black racer snake could beat his handler in a foot race, well... finding and catching, and safely keeping such franchise players was a different and far more daunting task.

As the week progressed, rumors would flash through camp like lightning through a tree: "Jim Bryant with Springdale Troop 107 just caught a really fast Garter Snake!!" "Oh yeah? Well Bart Hudspeth with Harrison 56 has a bullfrog that jumped 10 feet in a single jump last night!" and campers would sidle their way into other troop's campsites just to lay eyes on the alleged champions. But despite conceptualizing and even capturing a true franchise competitor, it was never a certain win.



**Vs.**



The critters were fragile, and had a way of wilting, or going comatose, or dying, while in captivity training camps, or simply disappearing altogether by escape or otherwise (some folks suggested critterknapping was going on), such that many of the early favorites didn't show up at all on Thursday evening. And some that did, could not be motivated to move. There was the 10-foot jumping bullfrog, which released into the middle of the starting ring just sat there bedazed, while its handler jumped, screamed and clapped all around it, - who'd a thunk a wild animal wouldn't have an instinctive flight from fear under those circumstances? While its belittled bracket competitor, a three toed box turtle, gradually poked its head and legs out, and ambled steadily to the outer circle and a win.

## The Critter Crawl (cont'd)

And then there were the Daddy Longlegs, accidentally stomped to death by their handler's over-excited and inaccurate efforts to urge them forward, and the blue tailed skinks which won the race darting deep into the encircling crowd, never to be seen again and thus disqualified from the next bracket. And it was a constant drama that whoever seemed



to be winning as they headed for the outer circle, apparently encountered a wall of screaming scouts, and reversed course heading for the other side of the circle – again and again and again, while their slow but steady competitor, maybe a large beetle or roach, unfazed by the ring of screams, just piddle on across for a win. The most dramatic competition recollected was when a small leopard frog (or maybe it was a woodrat?) was making straight and good time for the finish line, when the seemingly comatose black racer snake frozen in the middle, exploded into a lightning fast slither, and ate its competitor in a single bite, followed by a long swallow.

However, consumed by the energy of digesting such a meal, the snake wouldn't, and couldn't be compelled by any kind of many efforts, to move further to cross the finish line, only inches away. This called for a judges' ruling by the junior staffers in charge, who disqualified the snake for failing to finish the race – or maybe it was unsportsmanlike conduct for consuming the competition...alas, the rules were unwritten and the results never recorded.



I suppose it was the concern for cruelty to animals, and rightfully so, that ended the critter crawl. But in our search for those critters who could go faster, further, higher, we did learn much more that we would have otherwise, about animals, their habitats and their behavior. And it was a load of fun.

**Editor's note:** *Upon somewhat unexpectedly being elected President of the Westark Area Council at the beginning of this year, I acquired connections to attempt a long held ambition: a Camp Orr Alumni Association. Actually I was not the first to try. Several former staffers formed a separate nonprofit corporation by that name about five years ago, held a reunion/service weekend once or twice and established a Face book page which still actively exists. But things like marriages, kids, careers, travel, hobbies, advanced studies, etc. jumped on, traction stopped, and but for the Facebook page, it has languished since then. That group, with one of their organizers now on our committee, has endorsed this effort and is combining its name and goodwill into this Westark Area Council program, which will hopefully give it the staying power to reach its best and highest purpose, preserving and sharing treasured memories of scouting summers in the Buffalo River valley.*

*As you may have noticed, I've had to personally prime the pump of short stories/yarns in this first edition with my limited collection of recollections. My inventory is petty limited and almost exhausted. If you like this idea, for it to work, you **must** 1) respond to the following questionnaire so our program can indulge your interests; 2) Share your memories, stories, yarns, and pictures (please caption any submitted pictures), no matter how short – even if it's just a quickie on an experience of the scary kind with a snake, we may gather it up with half a dozen other shorties about wildlife encounters to make a good couple of pages; and 3) send us the names and email addresses of any of your Camp Orr*

*compadres who didn't get this...we need to get the largest audience we can get. **It will only thrive with your input.** Thanks, and I look forward to sharing a lot memories of great times in a special place with all of you. Jack Butt*

## Council & Camp Update

*By Chris Daughtrey, Scout Executive/CEO Westark Area Council BSA*

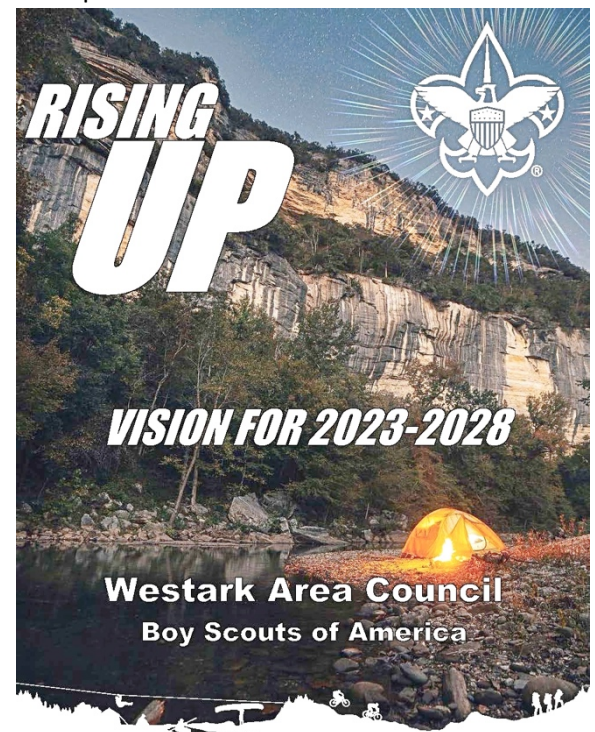
The status of Scouting in Westark and Camp Orr is good! Let it be noted that Scouting has seen many changes and challenges over the last 10 years. That withstanding, my hope is that this newsletter is a way for people who love Camp Orr to connect and share stories from the past and work together to share positive support for the BSA's ongoing mission to positively impact the lives of youth and families.

In 2023 Camp Orr Scouts BSA Resident Camp registration is up almost 33% over last year. There will be about 600 youth attending three weeks of resident camp. Note that those numbers and the number of weeks may be very different from when some of you attended summer camp at Orr. For each newsletter there will be a story by a Council Staff member or key current volunteer about Camp Orr and Scouting as it is today, comparing with our past. In the time of summer camp from when some of the articles in this edition of the newsletter were written, Camp Orr was used for summer camp only. Today, Camp Orr is used most weekends of the year. And the last weekend of April 2023 there were 441 Cub Scouts, parents, and staff there for our spring "Cub Family Campout." At these council-level events Scouting offers programs for the whole family, including siblings who are not in Scouts. It was exciting to see toddlers at camp getting to experience camp and to start to develop for them the love of the outdoors that so many of us cherish, and that is at the core of Scouting!

Westark Area Council, like many nonprofits, and many businesses had a really rough time through COVID. The programs of the BSA really only succeed as in-person events. We tried to do online and other ways to connect, but it just didn't resonate. In future articles we can expound on new features and updates to Camp Orr like the almost 10 miles of professionally-built mountain bike trails on Camp Orr property, program feature updates, and some of the new changes in the Scouting program.

The connections we can make through groups like this are incredibly important. Scouting needs your help. We need more quality volunteers, and we need people to help us tell positive Scouting stories of impact and fun – to attract young people and their families! I hope you all take it as an obligation, like I do as an Eagle Scout, that it is my duty to share how Scouting helped me both as a youth, and as an adult. I want others to have a chance to get experiences through BSA that they may not be able to get anywhere else!

The Westark Executive Board has a Vision Document for where they want to take Scouting in our council. Camp Orr is a very important part of that mission and vision. If you click on the picture to the right, or on the text below the pic, you can view that Vision/Strategic Plan. We hope that your engagement through the Camp Orr Alumni Association will be a way you can share memories, connect with others who love Scouting and help us continue to create new memories for youth and families in Westark!



<https://bit.ly/westarkvision>



# BLUFF LINES



## Camp Orr Alumni Association Survey

If you would rather fill out survey online than paper – click here: <https://forms.gle/rkmxUeQWdugjqGgT7>

***For the Camp Orr Alumni Association to continue, please answer as many of these questions as you wish, and promptly scan or mail this sheet back to the addresses at the bottom:***

Did you enjoy this newsletter? 1 to 10, ten being best: \_\_\_\_\_

What publication frequency do you like? quarterly\_\_\_\_\_semi-annually\_\_\_\_\_ annually\_\_\_\_\_

Will you write an article for it? Yes \_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

Is your answer to the above different if capable editorial assistance was provided in writing the article? \_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_no

What ideas for Topics do you have, or would like to see? \_\_\_\_\_

Schedule permitting, would you probably attend an alumni reunion weekend at Camp Orr?

Would you be more likely to attend \_\_\_\_\_ a one day event or \_\_\_\_\_overnight(s) event? Note that sleeping options presently are limited to bringing your own cot, pad, sleeping bag to set up in the Mess Hall, your own tent, or very limited number of permanent tents.

First three choices of reunion month, in order of preference:

Check those activities you would like to have at a reunion weekend: 1 = very much 2= so/so 3= not interested:

\_\_\_\_campfire event (and specify campfire activities desired if you wish)

\_\_\_\_work project to improve camp

\_\_\_\_ on your own hiking

\_\_\_\_on your own canoeing

\_\_\_\_on your own mountain biking (the Orr Trails are not for beginners)

\_\_\_\_guided mountain biking

\_\_\_\_guided hiking trips

\_\_\_\_guided nature walks

\_\_\_\_archery range

\_\_\_\_rifle range

\_\_\_\_shotgun range

\_\_\_\_Personal displays of scouting pix, paraphernalia, & patches



## BLUFF LINES



- ☐ Ropes/climbing course
- ☐ Patch trading bazaar
- ☐ National Park River presentations
- ☐ participatory story-telling
- ☐ lots of down time to just chill

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you serve on an alumni committee to assist in managing alumni activities events and programs for:

- ☐ Newsletter
- ☐ website maintenance and management
- ☐ Facebook Page
- ☐ Instagram page
- ☐ planning and accomplishing alumni weekend(s)

Please provide here any other ideas or suggestions to accomplish a fun and productive Camp Orr Alumni Association:

**May the Camp Orr Alumni Association publish your name and contact information in a directory, which is only used to mail directly to its members, as a way for members to stay in touch?** ☐yes ☐no

Name:

Email address:

Phone Number:

Mailing address:

Troop town, charter organization and number while a scout:

Calendar years attended Camp Orr as camper:    As junior staff;    as senior/adult staff or scoutmaster:

***Addresses for alumni (you!) to send questionnaire, and any stories, pictures, or other submissions to:***

***Email to [westarkbsa@gmail.com](mailto:westarkbsa@gmail.com)***

***Regular postal mail: Westark Area Council Service Center  
Attn: Camp Orr Alumni  
3409 Elm Springs Road, Springdale, AR 72762***



# BLUFF LINES



## **WESTARK AREA COUNCIL CAMP ORR ALUMNI ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE**

The Camp Orr Alumni Association is managed by a committee of volunteers appointed by the Westark Area Council President. The present committee membership represents close to a century of scout, scouter and staff years at Camp Orr, spread over 7 decades of attendance. If you feel more comfortable submitting ideas or posing questions to a committee member than through the primary contact points above, please do so:

Jack Butt, Chair [jbutt@dbtcfirm.com](mailto:jbutt@dbtcfirm.com)

Maribeth Harris [jersey\\_burn@hotmail.com](mailto:jersey_burn@hotmail.com)

Bryan West [dominosnorth@hotmail.com](mailto:dominosnorth@hotmail.com)

Charles (Chuck) Boster [charlesboster@yahoo.com](mailto:charlesboster@yahoo.com)

Chris Daughtrey, *ex officio*, Council Scout Executive [chris.daughtrey@scouting.org](mailto:chris.daughtrey@scouting.org)

Billy Williams, *ex officio*, Camp Ranger

Mike Boness *ex officio*, Camp director