

BOYS SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Central Minnesota Council

Memories of Camp Clyde

Merrifield, Minnesota

Background: Several years ago Scouters were trying to find the history of Camp Clyde now known as Parker Scouts Camp located in Merrifield, Minnesota. One of the committee members recalled the story of Bob and Mary Jo Litke working their as youth and it was also there that Bob popped the question to Mary Jo. Below are their memories from Camp Clyde - enjoy!

By: Mary Jo Reinhart Litke

At age 12, my Dad, Ken Reinhart, took Troop 51 to Camp Clyde. My brother KC was now a Scout who had crossed over in the Arrow of Light ceremony the spring of 1964. He and Dad were out in the Troop site (seemed like in the next state!) as it was located across the road from the main part of camp. My Mom, Joan Reinhart, was at Family Camp which was the total opposite end of the camp. She had 4 children with her (ages 12, 8, 6 and 6 months!)

To my recollection, there was no electricity nor water in the family camp cabin. We used a lantern in the cabin only for nighttime trips to the outhouse. We pumped water from the outside pump. We had to learn how to “prime” the pump. Anything refrigerated was up the hill at the mess hall kitchen, a bit of a walk. The 6 month old needed bottles and us older kids had to go get them!

A story about the kitchen. One of the first times my sister (6) and I went for a bottle, the chef was working at the counter. When we approached, he turned around. We screamed and ran! Mom was not happy that we did not have a bottle so she had to go get it.

What happened?! Well, the chef turned and had a meat cleaver in his hands from the food prep he was doing; the chef was very tall to us and black. Living in central Minnesota at that time, we had not seen a black person before.

My parents, wise and ahead of their times, did not stereotype. They did not even differentiate boy chores or girl chores. They also knew each person has an extreme amount of value in making our community and world work. After the fine dinner that night, Dad had the chef (I wish I could remember his name...he was on camp for a couple of years) come sit with us at the table. He told us where he was from, why he had scars on his face (tribal markings), about his family and how he enjoyed working at Camp Clyde. He gave us a tour of the kitchen and said we should sing a song as we come through the door for a bottle. That way, he could start to get it out of the refrigerator.

The chef, staff director, , and program director all lived in round houses with “thatched” roofs! The chef gave a tour of his house too. My parents were wise, we children had no reason to be frightened. We had many smiles & conversations with the chef over the next few years. It was a great lesson our parents instilled in us!

Camp was very enjoyable. The family camp beach was right outside our cabin door. We swam and canoed each day. The “C” lodge (conservation) was under the mess hall. We’d go there and try our skill at matching up eggs to birds; rocks to the name; check out the taxidermy of birds, mammals and reptiles. We also learned the names of all the animals that were taxidermied.

Meals were in the mess hall. It was a screened deck with large square tables and benches. After meal time, everyone in the mess hall was led in song. Some of those songs still remain with us older kids! Ever heard of: Rabbit Foo Foo? Great Green Gobs? Hunter in the Window? Many of these songs would not be used at camps today!!

Camp in 1964-1967 did not have as much used land as it did in later years. The main area was centered around the dining (mess) hall. The campsites were across the road and into the woods. The family camp was the opposite direction from the mess hall.

My Dad would drive the Order of the Arrow team up to Camp Clyde on Thursday evenings. They would help with the Calling Out ceremony for the Troops who were in attendance that week. The ceremony was very solemn. It began in silence in a parking lot and we walked “deep” into the woods to the council circle. The Order of the Arrow team explained the dances for the ceremony.

As Scouts prepared for the ceremony back at their Troop meeting places, there was a Scouter who was Native American who would visit with Troops and help them learn the authentic way to place their feet and the body movements to go with it. The meaning of each dance was so interesting that I and sometimes a friend would accompany my Dad and another driver on Thursday nights when they had room for us.

It was after one of the Calling Out ceremonies, in 1969, that I asked my brother who a particular dancer was. This Scout was very serious about the regalia he had made and the defined placement of his feet in the dances. Well, come to find out it was a Scout in the next town from mine!

We started calling each other. In May of 1972, while out canoeing on North Long Lake, just off the shore from the Conservation Lodge, he proposed to me! Bob and I journeyed into life together. He finishing college at the U of M in Wildlife Management. We lived on the Rum River Scout Reservation in Ramsey, MN putting that knowledge to use. We raised two sons there while we cared for the camp for 35 years!

By: Bob Litke

As a young Scout, I attended Camp Clyde first in 1964 with Troop 39 from Pierz, MN. We camped across the road from the main entrance. I became a CIT (Counselor in Training) in 1969. To be out in nature, “on my own” from family and the indoor family business. When the hometown Troop came to camp, I knew exactly where and what each program was.

Camp Clyde was much more concentrated than Parker Scout Reservation. The programs were based around many merit badges which had the materials/

environment readily available through staff members. Swimming, canoeing, archery, rifle, crafting, and nature studies were the core activities.

After being on staff a couple of years, in 1972, I was the C-Lodge (Conservation) Director. The C-Lodge was the area under the dining hall. It was mostly enclosed but rather dark and had a dirt floor. During this time, I maintained the light up matching boards for Scouts to learn about animal tracks and habitats, geology and fish. There was not a lot to work with: taxidermied birds and mammals, informational charts, a fish tank and the matching boards. Adding leaves, pine cones, rocks, and the like to keep the Scouts looking a bit longer.

The Northwest Paper Company and Department of Natural Resources came to camp in 1972. We developed a reforestation plan. The campsites had been used since 1962 and it was time to maintain the land.

One of my projects was to clear a nature trail. One had been established but not maintained for years. This trail was shorter. Among the signs was one in the back woods about the neighbor's "garbage" pit. That part of the trail and sign were removed about a week later as the neighbor did not like his environmental practices being studied.

Every Thursday night was a BBQ for family night for the Scouts who were at camp that week. The Order of the Arrow did a calling out ceremony for the Troops. Candidates were called out after everyone dined and then quietly, solemnly journeyed to the OA council ring.

I remember Central Minnesota Council hosted the CAN-AM jamboree. It was in 1974. The patch was a triangle in black and yellow. Exchanging patches was a real highlight when meeting fellow scouters.

The Winter OA gatherings were COLD. The water was shut off to the mess hall. We fetched water from the lake, after chopping an opening. The water was used for cooking and drinking. Everyone stayed in the mess hall. The window boards over the screens still let in plenty of wind!

THANK YOU BOB AND MARY JO LITKE