



Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc.

REFLECTIONS



Supporting the mission and programs of Northern Tier National High Adventure.

FALL 2015 EDITION

Welcome aboard!

By Bill Erickson

John van Dreesse became the 11th general manager of Northern Tier this spring succeeding Kevin Dowling who became the general manager at Philmont Scout Ranch.

He grew up in central Wisconsin and stated that "I still have brothers and sisters who live in Wisconsin and spent many summers directing scout camps in the North Woods, so this is very much like coming home." His wife Andrea passed away about four years ago. They did not have any kids, but "I have two golden retrievers that we treated like kids. My dogs' names are Sage and Sunday and they are already having a ball meeting staff and crews and almost daily swims in Moose Lake. Not sure how they'll take to winter and snow..."

John brings a wide background in outdoor programs, administration and finances to the job. He is an Eagle Scout, an Order of the Arrow Distinguished Service Award recipient and brings 37 years of professional scouting to the job. He comes to Northern Tier from Santa Ana, California where he was director of outdoor adventure.

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, John started his scouting career as a district executive in Champaign, IL. After serving in various positions in councils in Illinois and Wisconsin, he accepted the position of associate director of program at Philmont in 2004. He later served as associate regional director/programs – western region and senior outdoor program specialist.



Welcome aboard, John. The SAA looks forward to working with you to make Northern Tier the best it can be.

Recipients of 2015 SAA scholarships announced

The names of the SAA's Seasonal Staff Scholarship Program recipients for 2015 were announced by Owen Gibbs. Requirements for the scholarships: complete two years on staff having fulfilled their terms of employment, enrolled as a student in good academic standing at an accredited post-secondary institution, and receive the recommendations of management at Northern Tier.

The scholarship recipients are: Brenden Carr (Butch Diesslin), Travis Gibson (Friends of Tinnerman / Tinnerman Guide Association), Raymond Hill, Erik Keeler, Christopher Kolischak, Christopher Martin, John McKinney, Mathew Meyer (Christopher D. Breen Memorial), Jeremy Neufeld, Derek Richard, Isaak Ridge

(Clifford J. Hanson Memorial), Katherine Rose (Erickson Memorial), Daniel Smith (Terry J. Wall Charles Sommers), and Tressa Theis (David Hyink).

Congratulations to all recipients and we look forward to your return to Northern Tier as staff and as alumni members of the association.

Support the program

The SAA's Seasonal Staff Scholarship Program is made possible by the generous donations of members and friends.

You can help support the program by making a donation online to the SAA at <http://bit.ly/SAAScholarshipDonation>.



From the “end of the road” to Cimarron

By Mike Holdgrafer

After serving almost seven years as general manager of Northern Tier, Kevin Dowling assumed the position of general manager at Philmont Scout Ranch on June 1st. WELY has considered itself the “End of the Road Radio” for over sixty years for its Northland listeners whether over AM 1450 and FM 94.5 or streaming over the Internet. It seemed that the position of Northern Tier general manager was a position where dedicated scouting professionals finished their careers at the end of the road. It was also a place where, for many years, the expectation was that only a scout executive would hold the position of general manager. Kevin Dowling changed these perceptions.

Kevin came to Northern Tier in August 2008 with a strong facilities-oriented background. An Eagle Scout, he started as a camp ranger and joined the professional ranks as an associate district executive in the Baltimore Area Council, rising to senior district executive. His last stint before coming to Northern Tier was with the Greater Pittsburgh Council as director of support services that included managing six camping operations.

Upon his arrival at Northern Tier, Kevin partnered with Ray Wood, chairman of the Northern Tier committee. With an unprecedented commitment from the BSA to the Northern Tier program, Kevin led the day-to-day physical transformation of the Northern Tier. The Sandy Bridges Program Center (SBPC) came on-line and handled its first crew on June 5, 2011. While the final plans were being finalized for the SBPC, the general manager’s residence was completed. The downstairs accommodated small meetings, lodging and social hours. This was followed by current projects including the facilities at Bissett and Atikokan undergoing rejuvenation and a new million-dollar sauna and shower facility. This facility had been Kevin’s focus for over two years and was just completed. A three-bay canoe repair

building was recently complete, an operation previously completed outside or in tents.

While at the Base, Kevin surrounded himself with a team of young and not-so-young full-time and seasonal staff; providing opportunities for personal growth and leveraging experience to ensure that the program continues to enrich the lives of thousands of Scouts and Scouters. Little escaped his watchful eye as he allowed his staff opportunities to learn and expand their personal horizons. Kevin also embraced and recognized the value of the SAA, as a whole and its members, time and again.

In looking back at Kevin’s six-plus years, a lot changed, but a lot remained the same. His leadership and fiscal responsibility allowed future construction to be funded while maintaining and expanding the delivery of the highest caliber wilderness canoeing program and winter camping experience possible. Not bad for a former camp ranger.

Kevin has come a long way down the road since eating crab cakes in Maryland, to flaky walleye in Ely and now trout at Fish Camp. Together with Carol and daughter, Casey, they formed many lasting relationships with their Moose Lake and Ely neighbors and friends. One wonders if Kevin had aspirations to be the Philmont general manager when he trekked the back country of Philmont on SAA and PSA Trek 726-2 in 2009 with Casey and youngest son, Jake, who also worked at the Base. (See Reflections Volume 18, #1.) Kevin’s other sons, Todd and Sean, together with grandson Sam and his mother, Tracy, will no doubt find winters in New Mexico somewhat warmer than in Ely. The end of Moose Lake Road was left in great shape by Kevin.

Congratulations to Kevin and best wishes at Philmont! And THANK YOU for your contributions to Northern Tier. You can always come back to the end of the road.



"Mesaba lake" by Robert Dunne (Award of Excellence)

2015 SAA staff photo contest results

These outstanding photographs were judged to be the top three of fifty-five photographs submitted by the nineteen 2015 staff. Judging was done by Steve Niedorf, professional photographer. Steve gave an insight into how photographs are judged in the Winter

2013/2014 issue of Reflections that can be found at <http://www.holry.org>. Thanks to all who took time to submit their photos for this year's contest. All photo contest entries can be viewed on the SAA's Facebook page at <http://bit.ly/SAAFacebook2015>.



"Reflection" by Charles Yates (Award of Merit)



"Conquering Heartbreak" by John Young (Award of Merit)

From the President's canoe

By Chuck Rose

WOW! We have an amazing group of people who continue to make Northern Tier and the BSA better. To start the avalanche of appreciation, thanks to Bill Erickson and Alex Nepple for their work on this and previous newsletters.

Members who helped with work at the Base this past June on storage space include Garrett Owens (and his father Mark) as well as Mark Kelly (and girlfriend Beneditta). Dick Shank and Chris Felton (who flew 4,000 miles to get there just in time) who co-taught Wilderness First Aid to new and renewing staff.

Gratefulness also goes out to the following for their contributions to the SAA seminar day and Alumni Recognition Program: Sandra Lee, and Kathryn Farion (birding and portage trail nature walk), Steve Niedorf (photography and canoe country navigation), Jim Barott and his Forest Service friends (portage trail nature walk), Mike Holdgrafer (staff training and shore lunch), Scott Wickham (storm-proofing camp, and USA canoeing opportunities), Butch Diesslin (fishing and weather), Owen Gibbs (Northern Tier staff recognition),

Cory Kolodji (Trees and Voyageur iTunes), and Dick Shank (portage trail nature walk).

The lodge project continues to move forward, pushed by Dick and Mike plus a host of others. Other people from the Base have done great work include Dan Asleson, Dominique Baker, Riley Berg, Dustin Counts, Davin Ferren, Cortney Grosz, Wade Herbranson, Tristan Lewis, Brian Lux, Travis McCormick, Shane Miller, Dave Nguyen, Andy Oh, Gil Rogers, Aaron Seier, Kieran Thompson and advisers Scott Beckett and Dan Segersin who received the Centurion Award given to "hometown heroes" as part of the Order of the Arrow's 100th anniversary celebrations, as well as Kevin Dowling and Sean Ferrier who received the Order of the Arrow 2015 Distinguished Service Award.

I am sure that this is just the tip of the iceberg of all the wonderful service that our members and friends provide. I personally love to hear about these awards and adventures so please let me know when and how our members are making an impact. – Chuck

By-laws amended

At their June 21, 2015, meeting, the Board of Directors amended the bylaws to change the process for electing members of the Board of Directors. Previously, the directors were elected at the annual meeting of the members by the vote of those attending and those represented by their proxy holders. In the new process effective January 1, 2016, active members will elect members of the Board of Directors by written ballot.

Each year the President will appoint a Nominating Committee by January 1st. This committee will provide the President their list of nominees by July 1st, which will be published to the membership no later than August 15th. Requests by active members to be included on the ballot can be submitted for up to 30

days after the names of nominees are published. The request must be supported by signatures of at least 10 active members.

The Board of Directors is responsible for determining the election time and method by May 1st. The election period must start no earlier than September 16, last at least 21 days and conclude by November 31. The election results must be published to the membership by December 31st. Newly elected directors begin their term on January 1st.

A copy of the current bylaws and fact sheet is available on the Governance page at <http://bit.ly/SAABylaws>.

Réal Bérard

Réal Bérard, cartographer and artist, drew the map that was used at Bissett, Manitoba in the "early" years. More recently, he has provided the paintings that were auctioned off at the last seven reunions to help support the SAA's Seasonal Staff Scholarship Program.

Check out this article on the Winnipeg Free Press website: <http://bit.ly/RealBerard>. If you are up on your French, you can check out this video: <http://bit.ly/RealBerardVideo>.

Pay it back

Memories, good times and life long friendships, skills and interests... things we gained from time spent at Northern Tier. Want to pay back some of these? The SAA's purpose is to support the mission and programs of Northern Tier. We need your help in continuing to provide memorable experiences that last a lifetime.

Opportunities abound such as helping out at "Work Week" and staff training, contributing to the Charlie's Guide knowledge book for staff, promoting Northern Tier at Canoecopia, preparing the newsletter, or helping organize the biennial reunion.

Contact us if you are interested in volunteering by going to our website at <http://www.holry.org> and click on "Contact Us".



New sauna and shower building opens

By Dick Shank

The new male sauna and shower building is open at last! The new facility is across the road and down the hill from the old unit, and contains 18 private bathrooms, each including toilet, sink and shower stall.

In addition, separate adult and youth saunas are present, as well as a new laundry room with four washers and dryers for staff. The building boasts in-floor radiant heat and will be operational year-round.

This facility replaces the old and outdated building at the top of the hill, long a source of participant and staff frustration related to inadequate space, lack of privacy, and alternating cold and hot water blasts from the showerheads. An improved well water management system will also prevent the occasional loss of water pressure that plagued the old building. This building joins a host of improved facilities over the last 10 years.

Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. honors Paul R. Christen

By Dave Hyink

At its February 2014 meeting, the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association Directors took action to recognize a critical, but little understood, supporter of the Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base. In researching the history of Region Ten, BSA, it was determined that Mr. Christen, as the final chairman of Region Ten, significantly and steadfastly maintained that the Region Ten Canoe Base be incorporated into the National High Adventure program and appropriately supported. Mr. Christen is a highly decorated Scouter.

BSA's fourth high adventure program, The Paul R. Christen National High Adventure Base is named in his honor. The SAA Directors issued a proclamation that highlights his accomplishments and awarded him an Honorary Life Membership in the SAA. They were presented to Mr. Christen in his office in Huron, South Dakota by SAA member Dave Hyink on July 21, 2014.



Paul R. Christen and Dave Hyink. Photo from Dave Hyink.

Whereas: Paul R. Christen began a life service based upon the principles and skills he learned as a member of the Boy Scouts of America where he earned the Eagle Scout Award in 1943,

Whereas: As an adult, he used his Scouting skills not only to save his own life but to continue to serve his country and community as a Scoutmaster and Scouting volunteer,

Whereas: He served as Council President of the Pheasant Council, and followed in the footsteps of the inaugural chairman of Region Ten, Charles L. Sommers, as the final Chairman of Region Ten where one of his most significant accomplishments was to solidify the future of the Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base as it transitioned to a National High Adventure Base in 1971,

Whereas: His exceptional service to the youth of America through Scouting and his success in the business world has resulted in his receipt of the Silver Beaver (Pheasant Council), the Silver Antelope (Region 10), the Silver Buffalo (National Council) and the Distinguished Eagle Scout Awards,

Whereas: His distinguished legacy of support for High Adventure which began in Region Ten and is now evidenced in The Paul R. Christen National High Adventure Base at the Summit – joining Philmont, the Florida Sea Base and the Northern Tier Bases,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. is delighted to convey an **Honorary Life Membership** in our association to Paul R. Christen. By our hand this day, February 20, 2014, the Directors and Officers of the Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc. so proclaim.

SAA launches the “Grand Slam” award and changes to the “Triple Crown” award

By Alex Nepple

First conceived as an idea in 1995, the Triple Crown of National High Adventure award has recognized those who have attended high adventure programs at all three National High Adventure bases (Northern Tier, Philmont, and Florida Sea Base). The award has served as a tool to promote the Boy Scouts of America’s National High Adventure programs and help identify those Scouts with a thirst for high adventure that may be interested in serving on the staff. The award has gained significant stature over the years and gained additional notoriety when Joseph Csatari portrayed it on the Eagle Scout’s uniform in his “100 Years of Eagle Scouts” painting released in 2012. This summer, twenty years later, a significant milestone was reached when the 10,000th Triple Crown was awarded.

In the summer of 2014, a fourth National High Adventure Base named “Paul R. Christen National High Adventure Base” was opened in West Virginia at the “The Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve” facility that is now the permanent home of the National Jamboree. The new high adventure base has significance as it is named after Paul R. Christen who was the last chairman of Region 10 before its dissolution and ensured that Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base persisted as a National High Adventure Base.

The SAA has continued to recognize those who attend three National High Adventure Bases by launching enhancements to the Triple Crown. With four possible combinations to earn the award, the changes introduce an additional three new patch designs. Award recipients receive a patch with the symbols reflecting where they participated in a high adventure program. The symbols used for each National High Adventure Base on the patch are a loon for Northern Tier, bull for Philmont, dolphin for Florida Sea Base, and black bear for Paul R. Christen.

Also, with the addition of the fourth National High Adventure Base, it was known there would be those who would attend a high adventure program at all four. To recognize those Scouts and Scouters, the SAA has launched the **Grand Slam of National High Adventure** award. The new 3 ½” award patch features all four symbols of the National High Adventure Bases. In recognition that Scouting is about the youth in the program we serve, the first Grand Slam was presented on September 17th to Eagle Scout Owen Buzan from

Troop 1550 of Leesburg, Va., in the National Capital Area Council. Owen was the first youth member in Scouting to formally ask the SAA about such an award. Headed to both Northern Tier and Paul R. Christen (at The Summit) that coming summer he wrote to us, “Are there plans for a Quad Crown Award?”. For Owen, who turned 18 in June, the Grand Slam represents the last award he earned as a youth member. He is now serving our country, having joined the U.S. Navy and started boot camp on September 21st.



Owen Buzan presented the first “Grand Slam” award on September 17th. Photo by Craig Dubishar.

The awards were first announced on Scouting magazine’s “Bryan on Scouting” blog on September 25th. This was followed several weeks later with an additional post about the first recipient of the Grand Slam. The awards were featured in the November edition of Boys’ Life magazine as part of a section captioned “Awards for High Adventure”. The awards will also be featured in the January-February edition of Scouting magazine in a section captioned “Awards honor frequent adventurers”. The awards have also been featured on Facebook, including the official pages of the Boy Scouts of America, National Capital Area Council, Scouting magazine, The Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve, Northern Tier, and Florida Sea Base.

As part of the preparation to launch the awards, the “High Adventure Recognition” committee consisting of Eric Peterson, Karl Huemiller, and Alex Nepple took a “deep dive” to review and analyze the previous processes used for awarding the Triple Crown. The previous award application process involved mailing a paper application, payment by check, and manual data entry. A new improved award application process was launched where award applicants now apply and pay online using the new dedicated website <http://www.NationalHighAdventureAwards.org/>. Once an application is approved and processed the recipient receives a shipping confirmation email that includes a shipping tracking number and special instructions to immediately print a customizable full-color award certificate.



XY Paddle Company: Innovation in the north woods

By Chuck Rose

In his shop in Atikokan, Ontario, Spencer Meany builds—no crafts—canoe paddles traditional and modern. He took over the XY Paddle Company from his paddle-crazy father, Don, after a stint as a pro hockey player. XY Paddle Company provides the paddles presented to second-year staff at the SAA's annual Northern Tier staff recognition during staff training.

Among their modern design elements, the most striking may be having the upper handle bent back toward the paddler (allowing the wrist to be in a more natural position for paddling); this combined with a spooned blade and bent shaft creates a unique tool. Spencer has also added the innovative handle to traditional designs such as Ottertail and Beavertail paddles. The original XY Company was innovative for its time, challenging the dominant Northwest and Hudson Bay Companies in the fur trade during its short life.

XY paddle models have always been named after early Canadian explorers (Fraser, MacKenzie, Simpson, etc.); the most recent design is their first named after a female. Charlotte Small became the wife of map maker/explorer David Thompson in 1799. The couple had 13 children; they died months apart after 58 years of marriage. Together, by paddle and moccasin, they traveled an estimated 27,000 miles. Charlotte certainly appears to be a fine choice.



Charlotte small paddle (center). Photo from Spencer Meany.

The Charlotte paddle has all the features of the XY's most common bent shaft paddle but with a diamond shaped blade (smaller at the tip). Spencer put considerable thought and experimentation into the new design over the past couple of years. Racer friends of his have praised its efficiency. But the next innovation in his thought process came from a non-paddler. While at a fine craft show near Toronto, Spencer was talking to a potential customer and asked if she was a paddler? No. Was anyone in her family a paddler? No. Friends? No. She bought a Charlotte anyway. Many people, of course, appreciate the beauty of wood grain. Consider this

quote from the book: The Art of the Canoe with Joe Seliga by Jerry Stelmok:

"Because wood is the is the principle building material of a canoe, each one will display a unique blend of grain, color, marbling of light sapwood and darker heartwood, and even signature blemishes such as a harmless, tiny knot up near an end. Canoes are especially subject to this when you consider the sheer number of individual pieces...The variety of combinations is perhaps why builders like Joe never tire of watching their canoes develop, no matter how many years they're in the business."



Spencer and Don Meany. Photo from Spencer Meany.

Spencer wholeheartedly agrees, wood with blemishes that once went into the furnace is now prized by his customers. And last year he made yet another innovation with his paddles: asymmetry. Maple leaf inlays are set to one side rather than centering them. Spencer is now making very conscience efforts to use the unique designs and blends of wood. Of course, he still has many symmetrical designs. Who knows what ideas he'll come with for the next generation of paddles.

Alumni snapshot



Paddle brand on White Otter Lake. Photo by Cory Kolodji.



Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association, Inc.
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(Address Label)

Calendar of events

Canoecopia – Madison, Wisconsin
March 11 – March 13, 2016

Alumni Work Week – Northern Tier
Late May – Early June, 2016

SAA Alumni Reunion – Northern Tier
August 26 – 28, 2016

For further information, see the website at
<http://www.holry.org>

SAA Officers

President: Chuck Rose, [REDACTED],
[REDACTED]

Vice President: Owen Gibbs, [REDACTED]
Corporate Secretary: Cory Kolodji,
[REDACTED]

Treasurer: Eric Johnson,
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Reflections Newsletter

Editorial Staff: Bill Erickson, [REDACTED]
Technical Advisor: Alex Nepple
Advisor: Chuck Rose



"To The Sledding Hill" by Parker Prewitt