



# REFLECTIONS



NORTHERN TIER NATIONAL HIGH ADVENTURE

## Work Week August 25-31, 2002

### The same gift of service with a brand new name

by Pat Cox

Work Week is getting a new title. The Board agreed unanimously to rename Work Week in honor of Red Renner. It will now be known as "Red Renner Memorial Work Week."

For those who missed the announcement, we lost the pleasure of Red's company with his death last year. Work Week exists primarily because of Red's drive and determination to make his corner of the world a little better for his having been there. Red put in the effort to get the projects going and made the Work Week time so much fun that everyone who participated looked forward to the next year's projects. Making this great donation of time, commitment and effort was a gift that went above and beyond the call of duty. The SAA Board decided that the best way to honor Red's dedication was to name Work Week in his honor.

Even though Red cannot be with us in person, we all know he will be watching our efforts and reminding us to enjoy the time we spend while we work to make Charlie's Place a little better.

#### Dates:

August 25<sup>th</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup> of 2002

This is the week prior to the Great Reunion Rendezvous Weekend.

#### This Year's Projects:

- Remodel the Staff Lounge Area – the new Teepee area.
- Peel the logs to be used in the construction of log buildings for a Blacksmith Shop and other period type facilities as the Base continues to enhance the Voyageur theme and appearance of the Base.
- Screen and enlarge the Atikokan porch.

#### Contact:

Pat Cox to let us know you are coming. You can reach him via @ 281-497-4226 (WK) or 281-693-7780 (HM) or email patrick.cox@coxpa.net

#### Other Options:

Can't make the Work Week options or the Reunion events and still want to do something? Consider one of the following:

- Contact Mike Holdgraef to join his Staff Training program next June.
- JJ is the new maintenance director at the Base. Contact him at the Base to set up a time when you can come up during the summer and do some projects around the Base. There is always something to do.



## Charlie's Smithy

by Chris Clay

There is a project underway at Sommers Canoe Base that ties together the past, present, and future. For over 75 years the base has sent young adults out on canoe trips to provide present day adventures and opportunities for personal growth, while imparting on them the history of the area and those who came before them. The fur trade era connected with this region contains a very rich history which has been and continues to be passed along to those who come through the canoe base. Part of Sommer's long range plans are to construct a collection of Hudson Bay style buildings down by the visitors cabin arranged much as they would have been at one of the fur trade outposts to bring that history alive. The Alumni Association has offered their support for this idea and done preliminary work on some of the actual buildings which would include a Blacksmith Shop, Canoe Shop, and Museum. Opportunity sometimes comes in strange forms and it has come to us in the form of White Pine logs salvaged from the blow-down three summers ago. We have sufficient raw materials for the timber framing of the Blacksmith Shop and the Canoe Shop and are concentrating on the smaller Blacksmith Shop as the first project.

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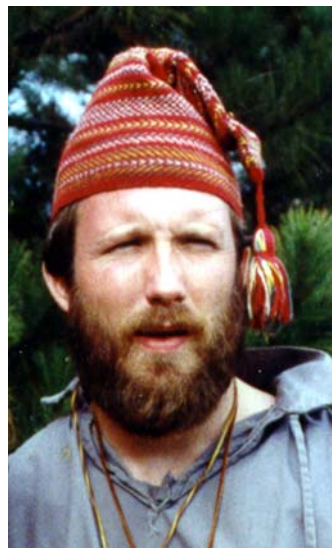
## Rendezvous 2002 August 30-September 2

by Chuck Rose

Be prepared. The SAA Rendezvous 2002 is fast approaching. There will be a ton of activities with friends, old and new. Here's a preview of some of the action.

#### Fun

Whether you arrive Friday night or Saturday morning, please check-in at the Welcome Cabin. Friday night, you may find us singing around the fire with **Barbara Cary Hall**. Find a cabin, get cozy, and join in the fun. Saturday morning after breakfast, you'll find have a chance to reacquaint yourself with the Canoe Base. Tours of the facilities will be available as will a variety of other activities. Our own brigade of Voyageurs (including **Cory Kolodji**, **Steve Clouse**, and



**Eric Simula**) will be on hand with activities and games of skill like the tomahawk throw. Eric is also a birch bark canoe maker who works at Grand Portage National Monument. Blacksmith Dave Hanson from Duluth will also be sharing his skills.

Kids activities will be supervised by **Dianne Rench**, **Doris Kolodji**, and **Laurel Theis**. Of course, canoes, paddles, and lifejackets will be available too. Moose Lake is full of fish, right? You could hike over to Flash Lake, too. The Trading Post will also be open to sell souvenirs, Dorothy's Root Beer, and (we hope) the new book on Seliga canoes (see related article on page 4).

(continued on page 5)

## President's Message

by Allen Rench

Wow its that time again? Schools out and summer is almost here. The kids are home not quite knowing what to do with all of their free time. You contemplate mowing the grass. Then, your mind starts to drift back to those feelings of anticipation, of heading North to the Base. Waiting for that moment in May was almost unbearable. You are hurriedly making those last minute preparations. Gathering up your gear, getting the car packed, saying good-bye to mom and dad and then at last, "THE ROAD TRIP". You spend hours on the highway pushing yourself to the limit just to be one of the first ones to arrive. Finally you are cruising through Ely. You stand amazed at how slow everyone is moving. You pass the DQ and you head down the Fernburg. It seems an eternity since last August when you went home for the winter. In a flash it is all washed away. You are turning onto the Moose Lake road. You have only a few more rights and lefts to go. Then you see it. You slide to a stop. You are at the entryway. That place of long awaited adventure. Your drive is over. Your summer is about to begin. As you shut off your engine. The silence starts to take over. You feel the cool breeze lifting off the lake. The freshness of the air, the sounds of the woods are mesmerizing. As you take in one big gulp of air, your eyes go monstrously wide a sick feeling envelops you as you realize, I have left my sleeping bag, paddle and boots on the front lawn back home. WELCOME TO ANOTHER SUMMER AT CHUCKIES.

Well I can never openly admit to forgetting my gear. I can say that every time I go North I do get that giddiness about going to the Base.

Well the staff has arrived, the buzz of summer fun is in the air, and I have to gladly say the Vision is Alive.

During the opening campfire I asked several staff why they were at Sommers. Everyone had a wonderful answer. Each was inspired by their wilderness surroundings, a sheer passion for working in the out of doors and also working with other scouts.

On this the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the completion and dedication of the Lodge I brought it to their attention that the vision of a special group of individuals, Dr Edward Rynearson, Hod Ludlow, Carl Chase and of course our Bases name sake to name a few, was the reason that they were there. Because of their vision, you, I, the current staff and all of the lives that have crossed those gates would not have been able to experience the adventures of the North. I am so thankful for my time at the base and I am so excited for the current staff with the travels that lay before them. This years staff seem to be shaping up to be some of the best I have seen in a long time. They will be carrying on where we left off. The directorship of Doug Hirdler, Terry Schoke and Joe Matson are to be commended for their hard work and dedication in their dillegance for providing a place where any Scout can come and walk away with the adventure of a life time.

While it is wonderful to fondly look back at the past we have always got to keep our eye focused ahead. What visions do you have, what dreams can you help relaize and how many people are you going to influence? Have a great summer and I will be waiting for you at the Gate this Labor Day.

## Thanks Mark!

Reflections is making a change in editors. CT Hart has accepted the blue pen from Mark Nordstrom, who received it from Reflections creator Roy Conradi. Roy created the original newsletter; developed the style of its appearance, and found the people to write the articles. Much of the stature that the Sommers Alumni Association enjoys in Scouting is the result of the appearance and content of Reflections and Roy Conradi is the person most responsible for that. Mark assisted with some newsletters, then produced several more. Now CT Hart is assuming the editor's office, and looking for contributions from SAA members to help continue the standards Reflections has set. Often a letter you might write to a friend about an experience you shared at the base would turn out to be a great article in Reflections. Send it in and let CT include it in a future issue. The newsletter is printed in Ely and Butch Diesslin, Linnea Renner, Mike Sawinski, and other folks get the difficult job of sorting and applying address labels done for every issue. Their work deserves credit and our appreciation. We hope you enjoy every issue of Reflections and that you keep in mind that your literary and photographic contributions can help other members enjoy the next issue.

## Alumni Association Directors and Officers

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Number in parenthesis is years remaining in current term

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# CONTINUING THE LEGACY - NOR'WESTER

## STAFF TRAINING 2002

Driving through Ely on the evening of Monday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, there was professional photographer and SAA member Steve Niedorf ordering ice cream at the window of the home-made ice cream business in Ely. Steve was en route to a dawn shoot in Finlayson the next day. Hours earlier, he was perched on erected scaffolding at the Base, some twenty feet in the air, to shoot multiple pictures of the combined staff of over 150 individuals from Ely, Atikokan and Bissett in front of the Lodge. Thirty minutes earlier on-Base, Richard "Dick" Shank, MD, was seen driving around on a Kawasaki mule giving Don MacDonald, Canadian Program Director, personal canoeing instruction. Steve and Dick, like other SAA members and other volunteers, had come to the Base to lend a hand and assist with this summer's Nor'wester staff training, which had officially kicked off ten days earlier on the evening of Saturday, June 1<sup>st</sup>.

The presence of the SAA was apparent from the very start of training. As staff arrived on Saturday afternoon, they were greeted by a new "Holry!" banner emblazoned with the SAA "twilight paddlers" logo and mounted on the stockade wall. SAA Director Lynn Reeve had obtained the banner to help promote the SAA. As alumni may recall, the first day is filled with a Base tour for first year staff; settling in new surroundings, making new acquaintances with fellow staff and perhaps overcoming some self-doubt. Eventually, everyone heads down the hill to the Lodge for the opening evening. June of 2002 marked the 61<sup>st</sup> season that the venerable Lodge has been in use as Doug Hirdler, General Manager, stood before the crowded room and welcomed the staff to the Northern Tier. Doug followed with introductions for Terry Schocke, Director of Program; Joe Mattson, Program Director, who has been involved with the program for over twenty years, and other professional staff. Also introduced were Co-Chief Interpreters Aziz Al-Arfaj and Zach Imes (once known as "Guide

Chiefs"), joined by Tobin Osburn, Assistant Chief Interpreter, who make up this summer's Interpreter Management Force ("IMF"). Allen Rench, President of the SAA, followed these introductions and provided insight to the staff as to the role of the SAA with the Northern Tier and the staff. Allen also spoke about the SAA's plans to construct fur trade era buildings in the rendezvous area of the Base (See Reflections Vol. 12, #1 and Vol. 11, #3), subject to the Lake County permitting process. In the audience were a number of SAA members, including Paul Holte, who had come up from the Twin Cities for the day. Bob Richards and Brian Seeton, Co-Directors of the OA Wilderness Voyage Program, discussed this program which combines portage work with a canoeing trek, and which has helped to solidify relations with the US Forest Service the past summers. As any SAA member would expect, Monday evening ended with "The Far Northland".

### Pre-Swamper Trip Training

As seems customary throughout staff training, the next morning came quicker than most staff expected. Following a chapel service and a "Thorns and Roses" session, the training brigades launched into a series of training sessions, focusing on crew equipment, youth protection, food packing and cooking skills. Toni Nemanik conducted a session on sexual harassment. Butch Diesslin, SAA Secretary and perhaps the most active, long-time volunteer of the Base, displayed various techniques to portage a canoe.

In the afternoon, Mike Holdgrafer, SAA Director, introduced the staff to the legacy of professionalism that has been a hallmark of the Northern Tier Program since the first canoe left the dock at Winton in 1923. Mike's comments focused on the critical role the Interpreter plays in making the program successful and the expectations that are part of being an Interpreter.



Brigade training sessions continued into Monday, with Barb Cary-Hall and Winnie Renner



conducting a joint session on the treatment of lacerations and burns, while Dick Shank, a good cribbage player and long-time volunteer who has provided many hours of professional instruction and consultation to the Base, lectured his groups on medical perils that crews may face in the Northwoods, including dehydration, hypothermia and parasitic invaders when local fish are eaten as sushi.



Aziz, as the Medical Officer, finished the triple crown of medical problems, discussing joint and bone ailments that may be encountered. Following rotating sessions conducted by the U.S. Forest Service on "Leave No Trace" trail procedures, Butch Diesslin was busy at the waterfront teaching paddling techniques, including the slip stroke commonly used by Charlie Guides for decades.



Near the Welcome Cabin, Pete Popham, Chief Outfitter and an experienced Interpreter, showed brigades how to perform the canoe-over-canoe rescue should a canoe swamp while mid-lake.



"Jackpine" Bob Cary, local author, fishing guide and a long-time volunteer to the Base, spent time with the entire staff Monday evening and shared his knowledge of the indigenous peoples of the BWCAW, their culture and language.



Enrichment sessions like the one conducted by Bob are important to the development of the staff in preparing to take crews into the Northwoods. Barb Cary-Hall then played her guitar and led the entire gathering in the Lodge with several songs before closing the evening program.



On Tuesday, June 4, brigades went through a morning swim test at the Ely Grand Lodge and then spent the remainder of the day preparing for their swamper trips leaving the next morning. There is little to report on these preparations for the next morning departure, or even the swamper trips themselves, as most SAA members have

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# Joe Seliga News and Book Preview

Joe Seliga and many other Somers Alumni Association members are looking forward to the publication of Joe Seliga and the Art of the Canoe with text by Jerry Stelmok, pictures by Deborah Sussex, and contributions from numerous SAA members. By special arrangement, the book will hopefully be available for the Somers Alumni Association Rendezvous 2002. The hardbound 10" X 10", 156 page book's forward was written by SAA honorary member Sam Cook of Duluth and introduction by Bob Cary. The suggested retail price is \$34.95. Both Joe and Deb are planning on attending the Saturday night Rendezvous banquet and will be available to autograph copies. Motorbooks, Inc. of St. Paul, MN is sponsoring an official launch on September 15, 2002 at the Barnes and Noble store in Duluth, Minnesota. Check out:

<http://www.deborahsussex.com>  
and <http://islandfalls.wcha.org>  
for more information.

**BIG NEWS:** Profits from books sold at the Rendezvous will be used for staff scholarships. Book costs to the Alumni Association depends on the quantity of books ordered. There may be limited availability of books, so please pre-order using the Rendezvous registration form. With pre-order numbers over 50, we can save a lot of money.

Last fall, with the help of J.J. Sheely (Northern Tier Maintenance Director), Joe was able to obtain a couple of salvaged cedar logs from the July 4, 1999 storm that affected the Base and much of the Canoe Country. Joe had them milled and is now using some of this lumber in ribs and planking as he completes canoe # 02 655 2 (Year 2002, canoe number 655, started February). Joe also reports this spring that he is feeling better than at anytime in the past couple years; he says he's able to carry a canoe again.

We wish to thank Jerry, Deb, and Motorbooks for this book excerpt:



## Chapter One

### *Coming of Age at the Edge of the Wilderness*

Twenty-three-year-old Joe Seliga was up against it. It was early May 1934, and he and his father Stephen had put their canoe on the Nina Moose River where it flowed beneath the Echo Trail, hoping to spice up the family's larder with some lake trout from Big Moose Lake. When the father and son saw how high the water was from the spring rains and snow runoff, they figured they might be rushing the season. But there was no harm in trying. Or so they thought.

### *Incident on the Nina Moose*

Twenty-five miles or so northwest of Ely, the Nina Moose River crosses under the Echo Trail, connecting a small chain of lakes plentiful with walleyes and lake trout. The best time to catch these fish was in the early spring, and although the water level was extremely high, in May 1934, Joe and his father loaded the 18-foot Morris onto the car's fender wells and set off on a weekend expedition to make the first big catch of the season. The water was even higher and cooler than they expected, depressing the fishing and making canoe travel a tricky proposition. Between Big Moose and Nina Moose lakes, a portage trail offered an alternative to a rough stretch of rapids. When the Seligas reached the trail, they found it flooded, with a large volume of water tumbling over the rocks out in the river. It would be too risky to run in a loaded canoe, but Stephen foresaw little difficulty in taking the canoe down empty while his son portaged the gear down the wet trail. They'd used similar strategy many times before.

Joe's troubles on the soupy portage trail, crisscrossed with winter's fallen trees, took all his attention, but he stopped short when he heard an unfamiliar and very disturbing sound above the

loud rush of the freshet. As Joe recalls, "I was carrying the big pack along the portage trail when I heard a strange sound, even over the water. It was terrible. It was like someone taking a stick and breaking it over his knee, only maybe a dozen sticks. I dropped my pack and ran through the brush to the shore."

Joe scrambled to the bank just in time to see his soaking wet father struggling to pull himself onto the far shore. His relief was only momentary, however—a glance out on the channel filled the young man with a hopeless dread. Out in the fast water, still pinned by the beaver-felled tree that had snagged it, was the beloved Morris, capsized and broken, beating up and down in the current.

The father and son team had to think fast. They were still a long way from the road, and abandoning the cherished canoe was unthinkable. Joe managed to throw a rock attached to a fishing line across to Stephen, by which means the father pulled a rope over to his side. Using this line for a measure of safety, he was able to make a frigid crossing to his son, attaching a line to the trapped canoe at the same time. Using their combined strength, they pulled the canoe free of the snag and hauled it ashore.

An initial inspection of the damage was truly discouraging: the sides and bottom of the canoe were badly out of shape and the whole craft flexed oddly—21 frames, called ribs, were cracked or broken, many of them badly. Luckily, the canvas covering was still intact, and if they could figure out a way to reinforce the broken wood, they might still paddle out.

There were plenty of alder saplings along the bank, as well as the hulk of a burned-out tree, and the pair still had their axe. They discovered they could force the ribs roughly back into shape around the hollowed tree and hold them in place with saplings and copper wire they had brought along to use as weight for their fishing line. When they were done, the canoe had regained some of its original stiffness. Also, to their great surprise, it barely leaked when they put it in the quiet water below the rapids. They carefully loaded up, got in, and paddled the several miles back to the road.

It was only a temporary victory, however. The canoe was badly damaged and, for all they knew, beyond repair. It was a significant loss to their lifestyle. In addition, their specially made oars from Maine had washed out of the canoe and disappeared downstream.

The possibility of repairing the damage began revolving in Joe's head, even on the ride home. As would become his practice, he lay awake in bed that night trying to figure out the best way to make the necessary repairs. "I started getting ideas and pretty soon I figured out how I might repair it,"





he explains. "But I didn't have the time to do it in the summer. I thought about that canoe all summer long, but I had to wait until winter before I could start it."

There was no literature or courses in those days, and no canoe factory in the region at which to have the Morris repaired, or even from whom to buy parts. Joe determined he would repair the broken canoe himself, and he was not going to scab together any "Rube Goldberg" patch job that would look odd or be incorrect. Young Joe Seliga would bide his time, and when he did repair the 18-foot B. N. Morris, he would make a first-rate job of it.

#### *Recognition and Respect from Trial and Error*

The following autumn, when Joe was cutting firewood outside town, he happened upon a couple of straight cedars and took them down as well, split them, and dropped them off at a mill to be sawn into boards. He then took the boards to the high-school shop, where he milled them into rib stock and planking.

He went home and removed the canoe's canvas skin — still wondering how he would ever stretch on a new piece as tightly — and started removing the broken wooden ribs and planks. Joe recognized that he would have to somehow steam the ribs to make them pliable enough to bend into the correct shapes. He figured his Coleman camp stove could serve as a source of heat, but couldn't decide what to use as a steam chamber. Joe finally settled on an unconventional solution: a length of automobile inner tube tied shut at both ends, with a length of hose channeling steam from water boiling in an old gas can. Today, Joe laughs when he thinks about the contraption that inflated like a fat sausage, and he wonders why he didn't blow himself up in the process or at least scald himself with the pressurized vapor. "But you know," he smiles, "it worked pretty darn good just the same."

Using it and working by trial and error, he would eventually make a very good repair on the wooden hull.

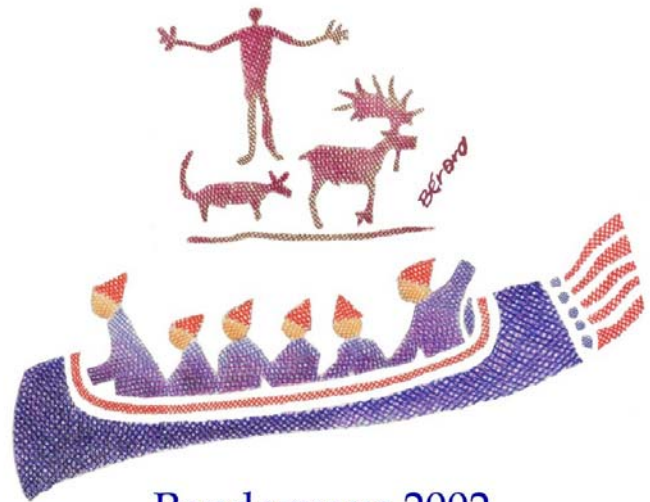
Still facing Seliga, though, was the challenge of replacing the canvas, which on a wood-and-canvas canoe is not adhered to the surface of the wood, but rather is stretched tightly around the hull and fastened with tacks along the gunwales

and around the curves of the ends. Stretching the heavy material around the complex shape is anything but simple. Joe spent many more nights lying awake pondering, before he finally purchased a length of canvas duck and resolved to go for it. He pre-shrank the fabric in his mother's washing machine, then fiddled with ways to adequately stretch it around the canoe, finally employing a length of chain twisted taut with an improvised Spanish windlass. The process wasn't without its ups and downs, but it worked well enough. Before Joe was finished, the canvas was as smooth and drum-tight as the original covering.

The canoe companies back East had been developing special compounds to fill the weave of the canvas and make its surface waterproof, paintable, and resistant to abrasion, but the compounds were considered trade secrets and the companies were not about to share their formulas with anyone. Nor were the compounds available in any ordinary hardware store. Recognizing the mildew-resistant properties of white lead, readily procurable in those days, Joe mixed up a concoction of the toxic compound with a measure of linseed oil—a pretty good solution, except that he used raw linseed oil, which forever stays tacky, unlike the boiled version. As a result, the canvas covering on the restored Morris would not last a normal life span, which for such a covering, could be 30 years or more.

Still, after refinishing the new woodwork inside the canoe and painting the exterior, the Morris appeared as good as new and was just as seaworthy, carrying the Seligas into the backcountry for fish, game, and berries. Seliga had a right to be proud. He hadn't rested since the Morris had very nearly met its fate on the Nina Moose. He had pieced together a very cogent plan for making the repairs and thoroughly followed through on each step. The gleaming canoe, once again floating proudly on the surface of Shagawa Lake the following spring, had taught the young craftsman much. Local outdoorsmen were impressed. His efforts would result in welcome extra work fixing other peoples' boats and, in the long run, would lead to a business that would bring Seliga recognition and respect not just in Ely, but everywhere fine canoes were built and appreciated.

# Rendezvous 2002, continued...



## Rendezvous 2002 Northern Tier High Adventure Base Sommers Canoe Base

Ray Mattson has created a Rendezvous T-shirt design from an original **Réal Bérard** picture.

#### **Business**

The annual SAA business meeting will be held at the historic Sommers Lodge at 1:30 PM on Saturday, August 31, 2002.

Among the agenda items will be election of directors, discussion of the Association's activities of the past year, and a celebration of the Lodge's 60th anniversary. After the meeting, we traditionally stick around for pictures, usually grouped by decade. **Joel Sheagren** will be our "official photographer." How many staff from the 40's will be there? (Last time, there were four, but we didn't get a picture.) This is also a great time for canoeing. I wonder how many Seligas we can round up? There's also the Voyageur canoe, ready for a run up to Prairie Portage and back.

#### **Celebrate**

The Rendezvous Banquet will be held at the Grand Ely Lodge on the shores of Shagawa Lake. Our guest speaker will be our own **Jackpine Bob Cary** and the Master of Ceremonies will be voyageur

**Cory Kolodji**. Doors open at 6:00 PM and dinner will be served at 7:00 PM. The banquet menu will include Champaign Chicken, wild rice, and other delicious choices. **Joe Seliga** and photographer **Deborah Sussex** plan to be on hand to autograph books.

**Mike Holdgrafer** is coordinating the program, so send any special items to him. We will also be auctioning a Bérard picture titled North Wind at Hegman Lake and drawing for a Wenonah Sundowner canoe. Register soon on the enclosed forms to help us serve you better. Please register by August 5 to save money and insure that your seat is reserved.

#### **Relax**

We tend to rest a bit and catch our breath on Sunday. Church music will be led by **Barb Hall** and various volunteers. Favorite activities include fishing, paddling, shopping, visiting the International Wolf Center, Dorothy Molter Museum, and old hangouts. We will also have an opportunity to tour Sig Olson's Listening Point with **Larry Hanson** and **Don Richard**. Break out your old photos and memorabilia to share.

# Henry's Monster

by Lars

I could start the story with "the night was moist," or "the night was warm with the new evenings dew heavy upon the green stone," or "the forest was damp with the expectation of the new day." But I won't, not me, it's not for me to pass judgments or make such statements.

Nope, this is just a story and nothing more. It's a tale of the great northwoods, a remembrance of a time gone bye. And of a life gone by. When the world was a little newer, the story teller was younger, the air a little fresher, and the water a little clearer. But now I am rambling. And this is a story about boys, boys that became men, and men that became Lords of the North!

Henry Bradlich was one such man, a teacher by trade, but then aren't all men? But this man was a son of the northern woods, born in it, worked in it, he was humble and reverent unto it. Just as his teachings were. And every summer, during the tenure of his life, he would arrive at a place that turned boys into men, and the men into teachers of other young men. This was the largest wilderness canoe base of high adventure in the world. The Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base. Located just 22 miles north

east of Ely, Minn. JL6-3048.

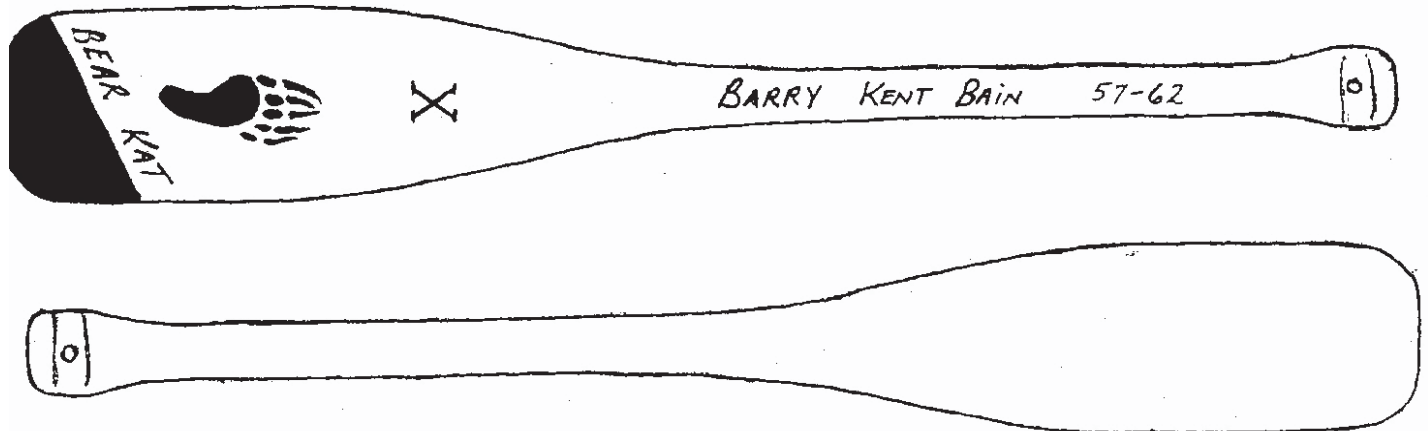
Well now, Henry was a man that was a leader. And while that might make some men stern and hard, but not Henry. Nope, Henry understood that those traits could ruin a young impressionable boy, so his manner was that of an authority figure, yet humble. His daily assignment at that canoe base was to get projects done. One might say with saving grace, the old adage, Idle hands make Idle minds. And those were Henry's thoughts too! So it was his responsibility to

make sure none of the hands that were feasting at the Sommers Table were Idle.

Every morning when the Bell was rung (Or is it rang? Oh well, rang, rung!) to awaken the young men working at the base, it was Henry's job to go down unto skid row, where the guides slept and make sure that all attendants were awake and getting up the hill to breakfast. Then after breakfast he made sure that each was assigned to a project for the day or somehow engaged in what is known as manual labor to improve the appearance of the base. They'd be tasked to build an item, dig a hole, groom a trail, or something to make sure that the base got every cents worth of work out of the men that



## Miniature Paddle Brands



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Red Tip: Yes No                      Region 10x: Yes No

Years Guided \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_

Checks payable to **Sommers Alumni Association**  
Mail to: The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association  
PO Box 428  
Ely, Mn 55731

Remember gazing at the Paddle display case and seeing all of those paddle designs of those by gone days and imagining the faces that went with them? Well here is your chance to leave your mark once again at the Canoe Base and have someone ponder your logo. With the addition of a second paddle display cabinet in the Lodge there is plenty of room to add your brand to the growing collection.

For \$25 **you can have your very own paddle brand** placed on a miniature paddle and put on display. A full size sample is provided above as a template to place your artwork. Sketch your logo on the sample or send in a picture of your artwork and let us do the rest.

When completed your design name and years you served at the base will appear on the paddle to share with a whole new generation of Scouts and Guides. If you didn't have paddle brand but had a special canoe name or logo put it on the paddle too. OKPIK staff — we have room for miniature skis or snow shoes too. Additional instructions, please staple them to the order form.

### Henry's continued...

they had hired. At least until the noon meal, were he could get he hands on them for another project assignment and an assessment of what they'd done so far.

Now knowing groups of men, there are those that are good workers and those that are fair workers, and those that are just down right slow workers, and the few that are always looking for a reason to just get out of work. So this was a never ending job for Henry, making sure that all the able bodies were working in the same direction. And the only time that Henry found to himself was after the evening meal when all work was to end for the day. Unless problems arose in the maintenance of the base (and then all able bodies were on call, anytime and anywhere that hands could be laid on them) then he and they would be called upon for a task to be completed. But one could look upon that in a reverent manner. As Henry said "Gods Work is Never Done".

But as the summer settled in and the crews of young scouts came and went out into the canoe trails, Henry had fewer and fewer workers for projects. And it was only when a guide shift was in for a couple of days, before their new crews arrived, did he have a new crop of participants for work projects. When time for projects was short there was always raking the road, the long and winding dirt (well kind of gravel and dirt) road that brought scouts into the base. There were always ruts and potholes and fissures in that road that had to be raked smooth so as to not give the appearance that the base was an unkempt tenement of lost souls.

It was Henry's job to make sure that all the labor functions within the base ran smoothly. Basic knowledge was, if you wanted a soft job you should try to get on Henry's good side. But he played no favorites. So Work was doled out on a first caught basis. And every good shrugger had his own hiding place or at least a place where Henry was less likely to find him for a project.

Over the years the Mine was the on going project, the task was to remove this huge rock from under the dinning hall. And it had been flailed on by generations of base staff and guides at the base. So when things were slow and the work was short, Henry's work crews would end up in the mine.

Then one day, while working with Henry, I spied this Sears and Roebuck catalog folded up in his back pocket. Every now and then when we took a brake from work, I would see Henry paging through the catalog. There was one page in particular that was dog-eared and I would see Henry in deep thought about an item on that page.

Then one day a large box arrived at the base brought in by a trucking company. On the outside of the box was the word "Craftsman." But not till after lunch that day did Henry open the box and he didn't tell us what was in the box. So it was with great anticipation that we all waited for him to open it. Only a few were allowed to see what the precious cargo was as it was hoisted out of the crate. In pieces and parts, out it came, the long awaited object of Henry's desire. A Big Red Shiny New Wood Chipper, the kind that would grind up logs and branches and turn large objects, into chips and sawdust.

All afternoon Henry and a chosen few worked on assembly of the new item, and all afternoon workers brought in piles of branches and wood debris to feed to the metal monster. Henry was like a child with a new toy, he was engulfed by the presence of the ear piercing growl of the wood chipper and entranced by watching large items go in and seconds later coming out as wood pulp. Late into the night you could hear the chipper growling, grinding and spewing, and then the high pitch of its motor racing when it had nothing to feed upon until the Master fed it more.

Henry became a man possessed with feeding his new pet. And we were the legions that were chosen by its master to bring food. Until one night about 1:00am, while the monster was feasting, the machine ground to an abrupt halt with metal clanging and blades spinning out of control. There was the unmistakable sound of metal grinding on metal and then the only sound was the voice of its master "Oh No, Oh No." Then all was silent and the night was quiet, with only the sound of the loons wailing with rejoice.

We all fell back in our beds with a sigh of relief that the metal monster was finally quite. And Henry went to bed in remorse that his machine was broken, the blades mangled and the motor burned out. The New Machine was destroyed, and only for a few days and nights had it brought him joy.

Henry went back to work with the routine projects and then more projects to keep the base functioning, and yet there was still a sadness that the chipper was gone. But it was just one of those things that had come and left its mark and disappeared, kind of like any of us.

I never did tell Henry what had really happened to his pet, I figured it was just one of those little secrets in life that your better off not knowing. But late that night (after 3 nights of wood chipping and grinding) someone who wasn't too happy with not getting to sleep because of the wood chipper's constant running got out of bed in skid row, and while Henry was busy getting more food for his monster to devour, threw a large rock into the monster for it to feast upon.

No, it wasn't me. For I had too much respect for Henry and his machine. But I can only tell you, that the guy was in the platform tent with me. In the pale light of the night from out of the tent door I watched him leave and pick up a large piece of green stone to feed the machine. And watched him as he came back to his bed, and laid down with his white teeth gleaming through his thick dark beard. It was a Grin of self accomplishment that settled across his face. But that was all most people ever saw from him, his two dark eyes and the pearly white teeth from the smile of Mr. Pickens.

Well Henry, I keep that secret with me all these years. But that's just one of the many that those deep dark woods hold. I know that you're in a far better world than this one now, and I thank you for all you did for Us.

I guess that its true, we all are brothers. It's just down here on earth, sometimes we forget about that, with all the jockeying for are position in life. And I guess its also true, what they say, that the higher the money climbs up the pole, the more you see his ass. But Henry you helped us boys become men, and tried to teach us the good ways. And for that we'll always be thankful.

So Long My Friend! And like the old cowboys said: "If They're Still Talk'en About Ya, You Ain't Dead!"

JL6-3048 Out....

Lodgepole Lar and The Gravler's

### Charlie's Smithy continued...

Many things have to happen for the first project to become a reality and none of it is simple. The canoe base is currently in the final phases of approval for it's overall facilities and development plans, and no building permits will be issued until the process is successfully completed which won't be until mid to late summer. Construction costs for the blacksmith shop have been worked out and so far arrangements have been made for donated use of all the equipment needed for fabrication, and several businesses have donated materials to the project. The Great Lakes Log Crafters Association happily adopted our blacksmith shop for the project at their fall workshop/conference which will be 13-15 September, 2002. That means the log fabrication (cutting the timbers and putting it all together on the foundation) part is taken care of, but if Alumni want to come up and join in the fun they are welcome cause there's lots of instructors so to speak. Plus we hope to raise the structure, provided permits are worked out by that time.

Our efforts to secure additional donations of materials and labor continue and if successful will result in our first project becoming a reality. By the time of the reunion in late August we will have most things worked out. As you may have guessed, we will be looking for the support of individual Alumni in terms of financial or talent/time contributions.

There are many more projects in the future beyond buildings, some of which are only ideas at this point, and one idea builds on another to tie together past, present, and future. Collective knowledge and documentation held by Alumni members will fill a museum, and outdoor knowledge serves to train new generations of guides in support of current canoe base operations. The overall effect is helping the canoe base with their future plans and programs.



**CONTINUING THE LEGACY-NOR'WESTER STAFF TRAINING 2002**  
*continued...*

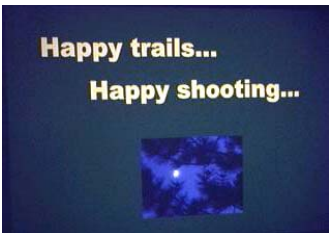
experienced this themselves and in general, the concept remains the same. It is noteworthy; however, that opportunities do exist for SAA members to be a part of this process and to join a swamper trip. It is not hard to imagine the benefits of getting back into the woods and serving as a resource person on a swamper trip.

**Seminar Sessions**

Staff training in 2002 was the second consecutive summer that seminar sessions were held over a two-day period on Monday, June 10<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup>. The Ely staff, joined by the Canadian staff, had the option to elect any number of seminars covering advanced training in a number of topics relevant to personal development as an Interpreter. Many SAA members volunteered their time to instruct sessions. When they were not busy teaching sessions, they sat in on other sessions to pick up new ideas.



Steve Niedorf presented two seminars on "Outdoor Photography" with some professional tips on capturing memorable moments.



His information ranged from the novice point-and-click photographer up to the advanced SLR photographer. From there, he instructed another group of staff during the "Navigation" session. Steve also presented these topics in 2001.

Bob O'Hara pulled into the Base from the Twin Cities on Sunday evening and co-instructed

The Expert's Edge; Professional Tips" with Butch Diesslin. Bob's years of experience negotiating the rivers of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, coupled with Butch's vast knowledge of the program and canoeing in the BWCAW and Quetico, provided a seminar session abounding in professional tips to assist Interpreters in handling crews this summer. While Bob and Butch instructed staff in the Baypost, Pete Popham, an experienced Interpreter and Chief Outfitter this summer, turned the back porch of the Baypost into a hands' on "Advanced Baking" session. Over twenty plus staff were conjured up and baked all sorts of baked goods on Coleman trail stoves and two burner stoves, learning many tricks of baking from Pete that they will carry with them this summer into the woods and stomachs of their crews.

Later that afternoon, Bob O'Hara resurfaced in the Lodge to conduct "Teaching Tips for Interpreters", a course he also taught in 2001, that focuses on the dynamics of interpersonal skills while dealing with groups of people in the wilderness.



Bob only thought he retired from a career in teaching. In the evening, Bob shared his spirit of adventure by showing outstanding slides from his trips to the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Perhaps crews from the Northern Tier will someday regularly ply these far north waters.

The evening before, Steve Piragis of Piragis Northwoods Company in Ely presented a slide presentation about sea kayaking in and around the Uummanaq Fjord region of western Greenland to a packed Dining Hall. Among the



slides shown, there were slides of icebergs drifting by campsites and blowing fin whales. In connection with his adventure presentation,



Steve discussed various ways that Interpreters may enhance and influence each crew's wilderness experience this summer.

Piragis Northwoods Company is again providing a ten percent discount to this year's staff on purchases. Last year, Steve conducted a guided nature seminar. Following this presentation, Butch, assisted by Liz Orman, Dick Shank and Steve Niedorf, dispersed Meany paddles, Kondos guidepacks and Grohmann fillet knives to various years of returning staff, a service that the SAA has provided for a number of years. Butch also recounted how "Holry" and "Red-eye" evolved as a greeting among Charlie Guides on the water (and off).

Butch also taught a session on weather forecasting applicable to the BWCAW and surrounding area.



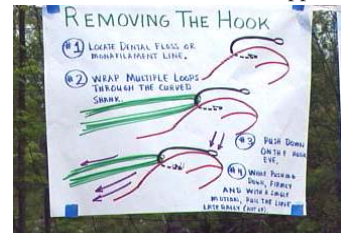
As an aside, Butch is also known as "Professor Science" on WELY, the local radio station. His informative sessions can be heard at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday mornings, and according to a source at WELY, "He does an excellent job and we love him." Go to <http://www.wely.com/live.html> and listen live to WELY.

During both Monday morning and afternoon, Bob Cary found himself at Flash Lake, trying to challenge a few walleyes into cooperating with his fishing demonstration. The catching was tough as Bob noted in his next "Birdshot and Backlashes" column of the Ely Echo, but Bob did manage to share his wealth of fishing expertise to the attentive staff. Hopefully, this will be

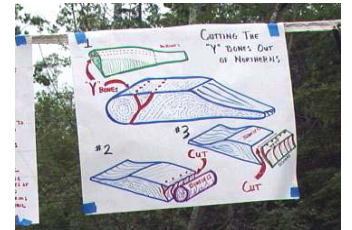


translated into bountiful stringers for crews. Bob also taught fishing in 2001.

Down at the volleyball court, which many alumni still refer to as the old canoe yard, Butch and Mike Holdgrafer demonstrated various ways to clean and cook walleye, lake trout, northern pike and small-mouth bass. Dick Shank also instructed the staff members on how to effectively remove embedded fish hooks from people, as this has been known to happen.



Two walleyes on ice from a trip to Pipestone Bay by Butch, Mike and Dick the prior day were used to demonstrate filleting a fish. A lake trout purchased from Zup's, along with twenty pounds



of walleye fillets, were provided to the attending staff for hands' on cooking during the noon hour seminar. Butch showed the staff how to poach fish, using Uncle Sandy's portage pills (lemon juice candy drops). Butch had also gone up to the Atikokan base before training started in Ely to teach a fishing seminar for the Canadian staff.

Corey Kolodji, a SAA member and training volunteer for many years, stepped into character as a voyageur and presented two sessions about the "History of the Fur Trade Era." As was the case in 2001, Corey's well-versed, professional presentation allowed the staff a glimpse into the life of the voyageur that they may re-tell to



their crews this summer. Each of these two-hour sessions were filled to capacity and allowed the participants hands' on experience, evidenced by the resounding echo



of black powder muskets up and down Moose Lake that they were allowed to fire.

For the past three summers, Eric Maase, a local birch-bark canoe builder, has come to the Base to share his first-hand knowledge of the canoe and how birchbark



canoes are crafted. Carolyn Towler, an experienced ecologist, led two sessions of staff on a canoeing ecology trip on Moose Lake. Another group on Moose Lake was headed by Dave Kruger from We-no-nah Canoe, who had delivered a load of 40 plus Champlain canoes that morning and then taught two seminars on "Advanced Canoeing Skills and Canoe Design."

Doug Ramsey, Accounting Specialist (Controller) for Northern Tier and a Charlie Guide, conducted two sessions of route planning in the BWCAW and Quetico. Doug helped develop the canoe routes found in the Route Planning Guidebook provided to crews before arrival. Given that some staff never attended Northern Tier, his sessions provided valuable insight as to lakes, rock paintings, campsites and other features.

The seminars continued on Tuesday with Butch teaching fishing at Flash Lake, while Dan Durham taught two sessions on CPR in the Lodge. New to this year's seminar was a "Listening Point" tour, conducted by Chuck Wick to the writing shack and Listening Point cabin used by famed outdoor author and environmentalist, Sigurd Olson.

On Tuesday night, June 11<sup>th</sup>, the first wave of staff training came to a conclusion with the traditional closing rendezvous and height of land ceremony conducted by the IMF. The next afternoon, the business of the season was at hand as the first crews arrived and were greeted by their Interpreter.

### Closing Comments

First, and most importantly, thank you to every SAA member who was involved with this year's staff training. Your assistance solidifies the SAA's partnership with the professional management team and the Northern Tier Committee to ensure that the best training possible is being provided to the seasonal staff. Your assistance is, and will always remain, invaluable. Thank you.

Second, to every SAA member who still desires to be involved, consider spending one or more days working with the staff during the ten plus days of training. The schedule for training is essentially the same each year and starts no later than June 1<sup>st</sup>. The staff spends the first four nights on-Base, covering topics that most alumni will recall from their staff experience. Then there are four nights on a swamper trip, returning to the Base for two full days of elective seminars. As a volunteer, you can

spend a day or more serving as an instructor or resource tool, subject to your personal scheduling.

In the future, more emphasis will be placed on coordinating SAA member involvement in training and providing more information for SAA members to plan their schedules. In addition, it is hoped that there will be more scheduled activities among the SAA members. For example, Butch Diesslin had motorized use permits this past June that could have allowed up to four boats to take SAA members up to Basswood for a day trip for fishing. Yet, there were only enough people for one boat. These are the kind of ideas and activities we will try to promote. The intent is to create a resource pool of SAA members and achieve a little more growth in involvement each year. As you can tell when you read this article, there are not as many members involved as you might guess.

In addition, the history of the Base is mainly an oral history passed from one generation to the next. The greater the involvement of the SAA in working directly with each summer's staff, the better the SAA can perpetuate the rich tapestry of history, tradition, experience and knowledge that is the strength of the SAA. When individuals like Butch, whether one-on-one or in front of the entire staff, can explain where the terms

"Holry" and "Red-eye" come from, the next generation is vested with the mantel of responsibility to preserve some element that adds to the legacy of the Base and its program. Without such involvement, these elements are quickly lost and difficult to resurrect, diminishing the legacy for all.

### Finally, a word to this summer's staff.

Anyone who has participated in staff training before can sense early on the pulse of each year's staff. When you first walk in the room, you can immediately sense the energy, enthusiasm and attentiveness that a staff musters as a whole. This is as much a reflection of each individual as it is the leadership. Clearly, between the energy and direction of the IMF, as well as the positive attributes of the many individuals that comprise this summer's staff, the promise of this year's staff is great. Much was expressed to you about expectations. I have little doubt that this year's staff will live up to the promise I sensed when I was a part of training. On behalf of myself and the other SAA members, it was enjoyable being a part of training with such a positive group and getting to know many of you. I hope that we will see many of you next season or in the future. Have a safe and fun summer.

## Who Am I?

A picture is worth a thousand...  
(memories?)

Do you recognize this mystery guide? If you were a guide during the 1983 season, you ought to recognize him...

Have you got a great shot of a long-lost Charlie Guide hidden in a shoebox in your closet? Why not share it with the rest of us, a little reminiscing and fun look at some of the crazy things we use to do. Over the years a lot has happened, but nothing can erase those special moments captured forever on film.

If you do have a pictured buried somewhere you'd like to share with the rest of us, find it, and send it to:

Great Charlie Guide Photos  
The Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association  
PO Box 428  
Ely, Mn 55731

And be sure to include a self-addressed stamped envelope so that we can get your priceless gem back to you. We can't wait to see what you've got! Oh, and did you figure out who this is in this issue's picture? That's our old friend Tim Thome.



# SAA Greeting Card Sale

Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association is taking orders for Greeting Cards. Some cards come with holiday messages, others are blank inside. They can be used year 'round to send greetings as well as a message of commitment to

Northern Tier programs. The 2000 card features Bob Cary's drawing, "Company Coming," a pair of moose at a winter camp. All cards are printed using highest quality thermography on premium cards of recycled paper.

The backs of the cards carry a message saying you are a supporter of Northern Tier High Adventure. This is a distinctive and very handsome greeting card. The cards come 25 per package, including envelopes. A limited number of 1993, 1994,

1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999 cards: "Sled Dogs," "Commissary," "Lodge," "Hanson House," "Canoe Yard," and "Gateway" are available at discounted prices. All orders are subject to availability.

Quantity	Holiday Greeting/Blank inside	
___ 2000 Cards - "Company Coming" moose approaching campsite	___/___	x \$25.00= _____
___ 1999 Cards - Sled dogs pulling Christmas Tree	___/___	x \$20.00= _____
___ 1998 Cards - Commissary	NA/___	x \$20.00= _____
___ 1997 Cards - Portage at Basswood Falls	___/NA	x \$20.00= _____
___ 1996 Cards - Fort Gateway	___/NA	x \$20.00= _____
___ 1995 Cards - Canoe Yard	___/NA	x \$20.00= _____
___ 1994 Cards - Hanson House	___/___	x \$20.00= _____
___ 1993 Cards - Winter Lodge	NA/___	x \$20.00= _____
___ 1993 Cards - Summer Lodge	NA/___	x \$20.00= _____
___ Holiday Sampler - 25 assorted cards		x \$20.00 _____
___ <b>Special</b> , save 40%, off original issue price. 1999-1993 (five boxes, 125 cards) Our choice. Will try to honor requests.		x \$75.00= _____
___ Tax Deductible Gift to the Alumni Association for 2002		

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