





DEDICATION CEREMONY
THE CHARLES L. SOMMERS SCOUT CANOE BASE
REGION TEN (NEAR ELY, MINN.)
3:00 P.M. - SUNDAY - May 17, 1942

DR. RYNEARSON:

Ladies and gentlemen, Scouts, Scouters, Wives and Friends of Scouting:

This is an informal country. This is a rough country and this program is going to be both informal and rough and we are going to do our best not to have any speeches. The best way I know how to insure that is not to have any professional Scouters talk with the possible exception of our Chief. I am glad to see Hal Pote. The last time we had him at the Clinic I put a barometer in his mouth and it read "dry and windy."

What we want to do this afternoon is to keep our discussion above the level of sentimentality. I hope there will not be a wet eye in the house. It would be so extremely easy to make this a sentimental program. All of us love Charlie Sommers. All of us appreciate what he has done. At the drop of a hat we could find ourselves conducting a very sentimental program. We're not going to do it. From time to time we are going to introduce some of the men and women who have had an important part in this, and there are some young men in the kitchen I am going to call in because they have lived here, right on the job and have contributed a great deal to the construction of this building.

Incidentally, I hope none of you will leave without doing something. Out in the office is a register. It would be unfortunate if on this opening day of the Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base, any of you were to leave without signing your name. Please do so. Please do Mr. Sommers the courtesy and honor of leaving your name in the office.

(Dr. Ryneerson introduced Mr. Woverton)

Where's the Jeep? (Young man stood) (Applause)

And his Dad? (Applause)

Cal Chase. (Applause)

These fellows have been up in this country hundreds of times. They know every lake, and the experiences they have had, and the contributions they have made to Scouting, are just indescribable. Before we go any further I want Mr. Levine, of Virginia, to say a word about what his boy did before he went into the Air Force.

MR. LEVINE:

My son has been a guide up here for two or three years and he was called into the Air Force. He and two other boys met up here and went nine days by

foot. They lived on partridge, wild duck and lake trout. I asked them why they did it. They said they wanted to say goodbye to the swellest spot they knew before they went. (Applause.)

DR. RYNEARSON:

Hod Ludlow! And Martha! It isn't often you can find a man who will come up here and live, and it's even nicer when he has a wife who loves it. Come on in. (Applause.)

They lived here at forty below zero. This is the guy who is responsible for this building. More will be said about him later. This base is named for Mr. Sommers. I had a few responsibilities with it, but that guy is the fellow who did it. Come in and sit down Hod. (Applause.)

Just a word about this Canoe Base. For a great many years this Region has sponsored one. Always the trips started out from a resort. The boys had a build-up before they came here. The Scout Executive told them about the northwoods. They kept looking forward to it. When they drove up they had to get behind some buildings, but it just wasn't the place, the proper place, from which to start a canoe trip. We wanted a base. We began on November 3, 1940 to search for a base. On that evening Paul Netland and I started out from Rochester and we met at Kenneth Bentz's home. Kay had a bad cold, but Ben Conger came with us, and we drove all night. We went to Crane Lake, and there was Hod, awake, to greet us. We looked and looked, - from Crane Lake to Campbell's Trading Post. There is a tribe of Chippewa Indians there, about fifty of whom had never seen an automobile. That canoe that hangs above the heads of some of you was made by those Indians and was purchased by us for this camp for the extravagant sum of \$10.00.

There were several difficulties with Crane Lake. It was decided we would look for a spot on a lake where boys could portage from one lake to another. Many trips were made all through this country. This sounds easy and it sounds brief but many months were required. Conger came up. Bentz has been in on it from the start. But Hod, before he went to the National Training School, was sent up into these woods and told not to come out again until he found the right spot. This is the last inch of road that ever will be built from here on up North. This is the end of any possible construction of any road. When you go to Canoe Rock there is a sign which says "Roadless Area".

This fellow Trigg is one of our Federal Forest Rangers who is dedicating his life to living in this country and protecting it for you and me. Trigg is assigned to this district and is going to help us in a great many ways. He is not noted for long talks, but he can at least stand up (Mr. Trigg stood). (Applause.)

He is going to see to it that these boys learn conservation, that these boys know what these forest lands mean. Then how to build a fire, how to cook with it and how to put it out.

Here we are now at the place where we have a spot. What are we going

to do? Shall we build a nice little cabin, twenty by forty, and say, this is going to do? No, we talked all that over. We decided first, it was to bear the name of Charles L. Sommers.

Second, it had to serve a purpose. Because of those two reasons, with the help of our National Office of the Boy Scouts of America, and Ray H. Bryan, Assistant Director of Engineering, the plans were drawn, and you see the results right here.

Who was going to build it? Here is where Mr. and Mrs. Ludlow come in. They have a place over on one of the lakes. I saw it. And anybody who can build himself a home of that sort was just the fellow I would like to have build this Canoe Base Camp. With the cooperation of Kay Bentz and other Regional officers, Hod Ludlow was given this assignment.

Well, look at it. With six Finns and 150 "snoose packages"*they built this base. Those fellows have worked all winter long in the construction of it. I hope you will look at the log work.

We are up here, accessible to the finest canoe country in the world with the possible exception of Finland. I think we have a spot which is going to make Mr. Sommers happy. Ludlow, if I were to give him the chance, would literally talk your arm off. The only way I know how to get Hod to tell us anything is to ask him a few questions. Hod, do you want to lead off with any introductory remarks?

MR. LUDLOW: Go ahead.

DR. RYNEARSON: That's defeat No. 1. I am curious to know where the logs came from?

MR. LUDLOW:

I think it was an unfortunate circumstance for the Forestry Department, but was fortunate for us, that these logs were blown over up in Echo Trail, about forty five miles from here. The logs were, of course, taken down and peeled, and piled up in a C.C.C. Camp. The Camp was pulled out, and the logs had to be used before they sat much longer. They were put up for bid, and we got the logs. I think we were fortunate to haul them out here. Twelve were sixty feet long, and most of them were around 36 and 40 feet. All of our sand for this concrete was hauled from Ely, 22 miles; and the gravel was hauled six miles from the pit..

Dr. Ryneason asked me to tell something that might be of interest. Well, I was here all winter and things that might be interesting to you, I might have overlooked. I asked Woverton what might be interesting, and he said the thing that struck him was he would see us walking home down this road - we lived just a mile from here - and it reminded him of dwarfs. This road was only plowed once, and that was the last big snow towards spring. We were snowed in for two weeks.

* packages of snuff.

DR. RYNEARSON:

What about the wild life?

MR. LUDLOW:

There was lots of it at times. We would take a trip up the lake. When we came back one evening, seven wolves were up here on Twin Island, and six trailed along.* We tried to jump behind the seventh. He just didn't scare. He walked away. The deer were a lot thicker than they are right now.

DR. RYNEARSON:

Anybody have anything they are especially interested in?

DR. WEST:

Where did the hardware come from?

MR. LUDLOW:

Mr. Levine was the instigator of that. It was done in the school at Virginia. One of the classes in metal working did it.

VOICE: How are the logs laid on top?

MR. LUDLOW:

This log is rounded, but the underneath part is concave, with a layer of oakum on top.

DR. RYNEARSON:

I think all of us owe Hod Ludlow, and Mrs. Ludlow, and Martha and Mary a great debt of gratitude. This job has required many months and they have done it to perfection. (Applause.)

There is one man I want to have stand for a second. Bill Brown, our youngest Scout. (Mr. Brown stood). (Applause.)

DR. RYNEARSON:

Bill is past eighty. He has practically never missed a Scouter meeting.

I would like very much to have our Regional Executive Kenneth Bentz come up. He has followed this every step of the way. He with Ben Conger, Harold Alvord and the other members of our Regional Committee has been the moving spirits in this. Kay, come out and take a bow and say anything you have on your chest. (Applause.)

* ran away.

MR. BENTZ:

My mouth is closed, because you said that a professional man couldn't make a speech.

DR. RYNEARSON: I said none but the Chief.

I have talked now about the Wilderness Canoe Base Camp from the standpoint of its selection, and its building. This is being placed here in honor of a man whom Dr. West has known for a good long time. I know everyone in this room, Scouts and Scouters alike, are very thrilled to have the Chief and Mrs. West with us.

DR. WEST:

Before I say anything, I wonder if it would be in order for me to ask a question? Somebody organized the project, and put the building up, but who is paying for it?

DR. RYNEARSON:

That's a good question. In any event this sign answers our Chief — "Built and Dedicated 1942 with funds contributed by the Scouts and Scouters of America." I think that answers the Chief's question.

DR. WEST:

I am very happy with that premise to do my little part. I don't know why there should be any apology for what has preceded. The statement was made that there would be no speech-making, but Dr. Rynearson has proved himself an able speaker, and in a most interesting way have given us a full picture of this whole operation.

We are now at the point where he asks me to say a word about the man in whose honor this lodge will stand for years and years to come. I told one of these youngsters here that it probably would be here for his grandchildren to enjoy. I don't believe he ever thought about grandchildren. But it does dramatize the stability we have just had impressed upon us. That is very fitting, because it is the stability of character in a man that has inspired the leadership of Region Ten to do this very appropriate thing.

We in Scouting are not much given to memorials. In fact, we are not much given to buildings of any kind. I have had quite a tussle over the years on that policy. One of the first things I stood firmly for, we were going to be a Movement. We were going to take advantage of existing agencies. We were not going to become involved in brick and mortar. What a wise policy that has been! We don't have to employ many janitors. We don't have to care for many corps of people to operate buildings. All we have is directed towards the operation of a program for boys.

There has been one exception. Over the years, from the very start, we have encouraged the development of camping. I say encouraged the development

of camping -- we have tried to insist that camping is essential if the boy is actually to be a Scout. How can a boy be a Scout unless he knows how to carry his own pack, cook his own grub, and make his own camp? That was exactly what Baden Powell had in mind in developing the program which he outlined in giving fundamental training to the young men with whom he had to deal in Africa years and years ago. There, it was to him a necessary procedure to overcome the softening effect of civilization -- to develop self reliance and resourcefulness; to develop dependability.

So, we in Scouting, have tried to have as the high peak of achievement, not merely camping in our Council camps, which are really training schools for camping, but to have that opportunity where the expert, the boy who has learned how to camp, the boy who can carry his own pack, will go a little beyond what it is humanly possible to do in the Troop and Council camp. It is true we have tried to do this on a Troop and Patrol basis. Here and there over America there are some outstanding examples. Recently we had given to us a magnificent piece of property in New Mexico, Philturn Scout Ranch. (formerly Philturn Rockymountain Scout Camp.) For three years we have been using it as another expression of this proficiency, this achievement in the skill and art of taking care of yourself, --- making your own bed, cooking your own grub and finding your way about the trails. But we have gone further than that, up here in Region Ten. I guess Pote started this -----

MR. POTE: Cal Chase started it.

DR. WEST: Have Chase stand up. (Mr. Chase stood.) (Applause.)

I am here to say that it gives me great happiness that this is the real thing. But that isn't what I am really here to talk about. I am here to talk about the man in whose honor this project has been dedicated. I am talking about Charles L. Sommers, who, from the very beginning has been the Chairman of this Region and who for thirty one years has been interested in Scouting, who since 1922 has been a member of our National Board. Who has by his own personality attracted men to Scouting. He has been accepted as a leader, and because of his personality and persistence and what he is himself, he has been able to help people out here to make bricks without straw, on many occasions. I do not know anything that would be more appropriate to serve as a lasting memorial for a man of his sterling qualities than this sturdy building, dedicated to a continuance of a program to develop sturdy boys, and sturdy men.

Mark me, I say sturdy boys, because it must not be assumed that every boy who is a Scout could qualify to be allowed to start off in a canoe from this base. He must achieve. He must develop. There must be evidence that he has qualified, and then, as he goes through the added experience which this project will make possible, he will become even more sturdy. He will, through experiences which will be translated into increased power as a man.

After all what is any man, what are any of these young men whose war records we read with so much pride? When we get down to examine and analyze

we find that their conduct is the result of something that has gone before, of experiences and habits and character that are simply expressing themselves when the opportunity comes. So, I say to Region Ten -- thank God for this splendid building, and thank God for Charles L. Sommers! We can all be very proud of him. I thank you. (Applause.)

DR. RYNEARSON:

I suppose single men every now and then accomplish something, but you don't very often hear about it. I think most of the honest married men will be willing to admit, in many instances, what they have accomplished and what they amount to is due, about 90%, to the influence of that man's wife. I do not know whether Mrs. Sommers ever made a speech or not, but I think all of us would like to honor Mrs. Sommers. Will you just take a bow. (Mrs. Sommers stood.) (Applause.)

DR. RYNEARSON:

As we mentioned at the Regional Meeting, at which Mr. Sommers heard for the first time our plans for him, we have attempted in our modest way to create for him a memorial which will live as long as those blue lakes are there, as long as the blue reflects from the sky; live as long as these lakes are rimmed with green, as long as on those lakes there are boys' singing voices and happy hearts. As long as we have that and as long as there is boyhood, just so long will this building remain a memorial to Charles L. Sommers. (APPLAUSE.)

MR. CHARLES L. SOMMERS:

Doctor Rynearson, Friends of Scouting, --- Am I supposed to say something? I don't see how I can possibly talk. At least not and carry out your specific mandate that there should be only dry eyes here. I believe that it was Shakespeare who said, 'The service I owe, in doing pays itself'. That is particularly true, Dr. West, of Scouting. The doing of the job in Scouting, is always its own reward. If I in a small way have contributed anything towards Scouting in this Region and on a wider plane, the doing of it has paid itself. And, having this beautiful structure dedicated to me is like getting unexpected, and unearned overtime.

I am terribly grateful not only for having this building dedicated to me, but having the building itself. I am especially grateful to my good friend here, Doctor Rynearson, through whose interest and enthusiasm and entire disregard of his own comfort has made this dream of years into a reality. And, I am grateful to Frank Bean, the Vice Chairman. I don't know what he had to do in this, but I do suspect that his finger is in this pie. Nothing has ever been done in Region Ten in the last dozen years that he wasn't a helper. And, to Kenneth Bentz and his cohorts because this has involved a mass of detail. And to Hod Ludlow, Mrs. Ludlow, Mary and Martha, and the six Finns and their "snooses," who have been here all the winter, I am deeply grateful. This was a 'mild' winter - forty-six below zero. These people lived in these cabins so that this might come true.

I am grateful to the National Office for the help they gave us in going over these plans, and to every man and every boy (I don't know one of them by name), who contributed towards bringing this plan into fulfillment, and to Doctor West for sacrificing of his time at this particular period when a terrible strain is on him, and for the great responsibility of taking two extra days in traveling all this distance just to be here today, and to Mrs. West for her kindness in coming along, and to everyone of you people who have all come here to witness this dedication of this structure. Is it dedicated?

VOICE: It is!

MR. SOMMERS:

Doctor Rynearson, on behalf of all the boys of Region Ten and all other boys, I accept this grand structure, this memorial for all time, as you said, in the hope and with the full assurance that the use of these facilities and the contacts they will give with the great outdoors will make these boys STRONG FOR AMERICA! (APPLAUSE.)

DR. RYNEARSON: Mr. Bean wants to make a talk.

MR. BEAN:

We have with us Mr. Reginald Parsons, of Region Eleven, who is Chairman of that Region, and Mr. Homer R. Mitchell, Chairman of Region Nine. Mr. Parsons from Seattle, Washington and Mr. Mitchell from Dallas, Texas. If they will at least stand up, and if they don't want to break the law ----- (Mr. Parsons stood - Applause.)

'Mr. Mitchell stood - Applause.)

MR. REGINALD H. PARSONS:

Out in our part of the woods we also have a camp. I have been in on building a lot of log cabins. I am particularly intrigued with the building of this one, and I was glad to hear that description. I think we may honor you, if you want to call it so, by copying it. It is wonderful to be here and to give this tribute to the spirit of Mr. Sommers. I know that when I get back and tell them out there what all this has been, how much it means to you and all Scout men, they will be very appreciative. (Applause)

MR. HOMER R. MITCHELL:

I am afraid all the words at my command have been spoken, but I must not remain silent when I am so thrilled. I, too, will carry a message back to the Southwest. I am perfectly delighted with all this. I am happy to be with you. (Applause.)

MR. BEAN:

These aren't my words. They are the words of Rudyard Kipling written of someone who was dead. Mr. Sommers is still alive:

We scarce have need to doff his pride
Or slough the dross of Earth ---
E'en as he trod that day to God, so walked he
from his birth,
In simpleness and gentleness, and honor and
clean mirth.

DR. RYNEARSON:

I believe you have all seen the motion picture "Sergeant York." I thought you might like to know that the man who produced that and other great motion pictures is now engaged in producing for this country a picture on the Boy Scouts, - what we know is going to be a perfectly fine portrayal of the Boy Scouts of America. You have all heard his name. I nearly dropped, knowing how busy he was, when I discovered that he would still have time to come up here. I am glad he came because I am anxious to have Mr. Jesse Lasky and Mr. James Street, the eminent author, of New York City, here with us today. I have no hesitation in asking each to say a word, because each did at the National Council meeting, and they did it beautifully. Mr. Jesse Lasky, producer, gentleman, friend of Scouting, won't you say a word. (Applause.)

MR. JESSE LASKY:

Thank you so much. I have a feeling today that I am a very fortunate man. I have a feeling that I am taking part in a great historical moment, the planning of this canoe base in the wilderness, on the edge of the forests, running from here to Hudson Bay. What a lucky man to have the honor of participating in this small way in this really important occasion!

Mr. Sommers, I envy more than I can tell. If I could ever earn the right to have my name as honored as yours is today, I would say I was fortunate indeed. When I was a boy we didn't have Boy Scouts. Thank God I had a father who seemed to understand the outdoors. The first thing I remember was following him in a trout stream. He taught me how to find my way on the trail. As I grew older we used canoes and made long voyages such as you make. Then it was, I realized probably the greatest thrill a man can have, and that was to step into a canoe and battle all day under the sun or through the rain, and then to watch for that moment when you make camp. You want the perfect spot. The fellows unpack. If you have had a portage, you have a swim, then a fire, you cook and eat. Then you make a bed of pine and balsam and sleep under God's stars. It does something to you, fellows, something you'll never forget as long as you live. Fate made me work in the city, where we don't have much sun. It's artificial. We don't have too much fresh air. It's the memory of those days in the open that just keep you strong and fine.

So in dedicating this canoe base, as I vision it through the years, the boys that will start out as I did as a boy, what it will do for their character, experience and imagination and for their American manhood, is something which is just priceless. So I say, Mr. Sommers, you ought to be the proudest, happiest man in all America. Thank you. (Applause.)

DR. RYNEARSON:

And now Mr. James Street.

(Mr. Street here told stories of his early life and paid a tribute to Mr. Sommers)

DR. WEST:

I wonder if we don't want to say what is on our hearts about this good man here. I wonder if one of you boys want to lead us in three cheers for Dr. Rynearson.

SCOUT:

Come on, let's give three big cheers!

(Enthusiastic cheers)

THE END

T. Murphy, July 9, 1942

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