

President's Corner Vol. 3  
April 2010

A half century ago, I was privileged to work for one of the biggest Boy Scout Camps on the East Coast of the United States. It had been built around a 30+ acre lake shortly following the end of WW II. At the height of the Scouting movement, it provided camping experiences for 40,000 or so Scouts over an 8 week summer camp season. The 2400 acre camp was divided into three Areas. Each area provided a different type of camping experience. Each area had its own rifle and archery ranges and own waterfront. The Scouts, monitored by life guards on three "H" piers spaced around the Lake, enjoyed rowing, canoeing, swimming and lifesaving. Since the camp was developed in the 40's and 50's all of its buildings were rustic wood with stone chimneys and concrete slab floors.

In 1998 I returned to the Camp for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. It was a wonderful walk down the memory lane of my days as a Scout camper and later as a staff member, Aquatics Director and finally camp director. As my best friend in life and I pushed our canoe and rowboat from the shore we realized the lake that was once 16+ feet deep had silted in to a few inches of the surface. Because of the silting and water quality problems, I knew the camp had built three Olympic sized pools in the 1980's to replace the "H" swim piers we had used to train thousands. As we paddled and rowed our way, I lamented to my friend about the deterioration of the facilities. I complained that I could not row without hitting the mud bottom and stirring up the silt. I complained that the kids who were in boats on the lake with us could not possibly learn the proper strokes and techniques. It was then that he yelled to me from his boat: "Jack. Look at them. They don't know what it was like 30 years ago. They only know they are having the time of their life." My eyes opened and I saw what I had not allowed myself to see. There they were - - the campers - - - paddling, rowing, splashing, laughing and yelling--- yes, and a few even managing a decent stroke.

A few weeks ago our Council Board was in a meeting having a serious discussion concerning the construction of the new Administration Building at Camp Kootaga. There were serious, well articulated and reasoned differences of opinion with respect to the look the building should have --- should it be rustic log or block. The board was wrestling with a vision of what our camps and other facilities should look like as we move forward. In the midst of the discussion, one of the more sage board members spoke up and reminded us that it didn't matter what the facilities looked like. It was the program that really mattered.

As he spoke, my mind raced back to that moment of truth with my best friend on the lake of my old camp.

While Allohak Council will move forward to construct the new administration/health building at Camp Kootaga and we will continue to look with vision toward the appearance of future facilities needed to provide a safe and compliant venue for our Scouts, with each decision, we will be henceforth reminded of the wisdom espoused by our Vice President of Program: It's all about the kids having fun, experiencing the outdoors and learning to be leaders and good citizens.

Thank you Kevin Kearns, Keith Butt, and all of you, the dedicated volunteers, for staying focused on the real reason we do what we do.

Yours in Scouting,  
John S. Kaul