

This is a testimonial from Alan Steinecke (now deceased) about his adventures at WR from 1955 until 1962. He was in Troop 82 and wrote us a long article about what he remembered. Although the spelling and punctuation have been somewhat corrected, everything else is as he wrote it. Please feel free to do the same if you like. We'll always be interested in collecting these vignettes or tales.

In the mid 1950s (1955 was the first summer camp I spent at WR) troop sites, such as Shannon, had metal bunk beds (ex army, I guess) in pavilion style accommodations. A large troop would put two patrols per pavilion. There was a metal flagpole in the center of each of the troop sites and troops would have their own flag raising ceremonies in the morning. The toilet facilities were simple outhouse structures located down the trails from each camp site. Using Shannon as an example, the latrine was to the west of the site on the trail towards the cliffs. In '55 it was a one seater with a pee funnel. Sometime around '58 or '59 it had been remodeled into a two seater. For most kids growing up in the city (or towns) the latrine was a first (I had been raised on my grandparents farm until 9 years so it was not new to me) and they were not very thrilled at looking down at the mess and maggots. I mention this because my first couple years at WR, the staff used this as a threat to make us behave. The story they told us in merit badge class, being guided on hikes, at the dining hall, etc. was that if we got out of line, they would tie a rope around the offender's ankles and lower him headfirst down the hole, leaving him hanging there for a time in relation to the "crime". I don't remember this threat being made much after '59. (Maybe I had grown too big to threaten). If a troop was really big, it would overflow into one of the annexes. Shannon - Shannon Annex.

Some troops would rather stay in the pavilions with the bunks, while others liked the sites with the tent slabs. My troop - 82, used both over the years, as well as "Wilderness Camp".

For camping on the hill, the dining hall procedures have probably remained much the same throughout the years. We took our turns at serving and cleaning up.

But I still remember what some of them were in '55 and '56 - the year is not important. One time the supper was spaghetti with green beans on the side. The sauce was "homemade" with ground beef, but was so watery it ran all over the tray. There was a lettuce salad, bread and butter, and chocolate pudding for dessert. Another supper was chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes, whole kernel corn, bread and butter, and cake for dessert. The cooks did fried chicken one night and I remember it being good. For both lunch and supper, we were served the worst tasting cool aid I have ever had. It came in the standard colors of green, red, orange, and purple. Between the cooks and the mineral water, it was plain nasty.

That leads to the Coke machine story. No one liked the taste of the cool aid or the mineral water and in 1957, a top loading horizontal track (slots) Coke box was put in (as I remember, at the north end of the dining hall under the porch roof, although it could have been under the porch of another building). The Cokes cost 5 cents and the bottles hung down on slotted tracks small enough to hold the bottle under its cap lip. You slid the bottle around the tracks to get the flavor you wanted and moved it to the pick up square. You put your money in the slot and the catch preventing the bottle from being lifted out would release the bottle, at the same time preventing another bottle from being slid in. A standard horizontal Coke machine of the day. Well, it didn't last long because some enterprising boys (I don't know who) would go up during the nights and pop the lids off with bottle opener, lean over and stick straws in the open bottles and drink the soda out, leaving the empty bottles hanging. The last "straw" was, so the story went around camp, when a troop passed thru returning from a night hike and drank about 25 of the sodas at one time. I know that we went up that morning to look at the box and there were all these empty bottles hanging there, some with straws still in them.

In 1958 Troop/Post 82 started camping in the bottoms in Wilderness Camp. Although I never wanted to be a counselor, I would often spend, along with other explorers, a week with the troop on the hill and another week with the post in Wilderness Camp. We liked Wilderness Camp because we really seemed to be on our own. Troop/Post 82 always enjoyed campout cooking, so this was not a challenge to us. I remember the many years

that WR used the green ex Army surplus 3/4 ton Dodge weapons carrier to haul gear up and down to Wilderness Camp. I drove it a number of times. I guess the rules in the early 60s were not the same as in later years (such as now) or maybe the camp did not obey them if they were, because we would load the bed full of gear and then a bunch of boys would climb on top of it and off we would go bouncing down the trail. I liked the freedom and solitude of Wilderness Camp, especially at night without a bunch of Scouts from other troops running thru your campsite. Some of the best stories of WR were told by our leaders around our campfires in Wilderness Camp.

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The minus side of Wilderness Camp was, of course, getting the food and cleaning the pots, dishes, etc. It was a challenge going up and down hernia hill in those days. You never knew when you were going to slip and bust your butt.

The commissary always seemed to give us plenty of food and our chuck boxes were always kept well stocked and when the troop camped in Wilderness Camp, every Scout that did not have the cooking merit badge, earned it. One item of note about the food was the chicken (in Wilderness Camp). It either came cut up from the same place year after year, or the same guys from the council cut it because the first two years that SR2 was open, the chicken was cut the same way. If your daily meal called for chicken, you got raw chicken and you could fix it however you wanted. This was OK, but the way it was cut up made you wonder. The troops were issued whole chickens per "X" number of campers and the chickens were cut into sections (maybe someone thought they were quartering them) with what had to be a band saw. The chickens were cut in half both lengthwise and crosswise with drumsticks, wings and everything cut in half. These were the days before "buffalo wings".

I remember another dining hall story. If your troop was going out on a long day hike, the leader could make arrangements the day before and the cooks would fix up "sack lunches" for everyone. Sandwiches, fruit, cookies. We did this every year, but what I remember about this one particular hike, was that the dining hall was going to serve porkchops. When we ate lunch, all of the sandwiches were pork chop sandwiches, complete with the bones. I guess they fried them up right after breakfast because we left about 10AM on the hike.

Troops like ours taught a lot of our own merit badge classes and there was a lot of time for hikes, exploring, and hunting for arrowheads. Troop 82 was one of many troops in camp that conducted a snipe hunt every summer camp. My first, of course, was 1955. Great pains were taken not to "spill the beans" about the snipe hunt and many of us who did not catch a snipe in '55 were out there doing it again in '56, just as dumb as ever. I had caught on by '57. The older Scouts and Explorers would start talking about the snipe hunt a few months before our trip to camp. Such things as "maybe this will be the year someone catches one"; or "you remember John caught one two years ago".

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Of course there was talk about how smart snipe were, and how fast and how dangerous certain snipe were that time of year. The hunt took place on a Tuesday or Wednesday night. Depending on how large the troop was that year and how many believers there were, the Scouts were either put out as individuals or in pairs. Everyone had a sack or a pillow case (the older boys too, just for show). All flashlights were taken up and we were told we would be placed just off trails that snipe were known to travel (only at night of course). No one ever got a straight answer as to just what a snipe was. You were to sit or lay in your place not talking and hold the sack open to the trail and make clicking/clucking type noises or call softly "snipe, snipe", because the snipe were curious and would come to investigate. It would run into your open bag and you would quickly close it so it could not escape. We were told that whoever caught one of the beasts would be honored at the councilfire. Well, you know the drill, we were led out in all directions and placed along trails and left to figure out for ourselves no snipe were coming tonight and how to find your way back to your campsite. For a first year camper of three days, this was frightening when you finally realized you were alone and nobody was coming to get you. I remember a couple of times groups

of these Scouts ended up spending the night sleeping where they were and the older boys getting them in the morning before breakfast.

I know you have heard these stories from everyone, but I will put mine down as I remember them.

Branding at the councilfire, my first year, 1955. Long before camp week came, the older Scouts/Explorers began talking about being branded. It happened to all first year campers. It was a great honor. Don't worry, it won't hurt much. Yes, it's a real branding iron. None of us new Scouts ever noticed that none of these older boys had a brand on their shoulder or upper arm. This was a special camp thing and you were not supposed to talk to your parents about it before camp. To the best of my knowledge, no one in Troop 82 ever did. On the evening of the councilfire, the guys really began to lay it on about the brand, the smell of burning flesh, etc. Our Scoutmaster brought out a jar of Vaseline before the troop left for the councilfire and told us we could rub a glob on our shoulder to keep it from burning so badly.