

THE HISTORY OF RAVEN KNOB

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Chapter One-Buzzard Rock

Throughout the 1800's and before the area now known as Raven Knob was largely uninhabited. The Saura Indians, centuries before, had had hunting parties that frequented the area from their camp, some fifteen miles east in the Lovell Creek area of Mount Airy. Settlers started arriving in the area in the mid1800's. The town of Mount Airy was founded in 1876 and is based on the old "Hollows" stagecoach stop. The road to Galax, Virginia was carved using the valleys and trails up through the Blue Ridge Mountains. The best way to cross over was through a gap that soon became known as Low Gap. This original road between Mount Airy and Galax came through the intersection of the current Ladonia and Hidden Valley roads. The settlers soon found the Indicott Creek valley as a good place to call home. There were several families that made up this first group of settlers. These included the Mays, Crouse, and Hayes families. Life in the valley continued along for the next thirty years or so without much change. The agrarian lifestyle led to sites that are still frequented today. The Catawba area was home to the Mays family. Further out in the valley the Jim Crouse family lived on the left and there was another family that lived on the right side of the creek. There was also a home on the crest between valley road and ridge road. This area is noted today by the blueberry patch that still grows there. The Lint Hayes place was further out the valley (beyond the wilderness cabin). The families established a cemetery in the area of the present T-dock of Lake Sabotta. Families in the area gradually moved out and the front part of the valley was sold to B. F. Huntley in 1937. According to

Ross Amburn, his Uncle Gene Hayes built the log cabin in the basin of the camp.

The large rock outcropping on the side of the mountain served as the perch for various hawks, buzzards, crows, and ravens. These birds soared the skies looking for rodents and other vermin. The local residents started referring to this area as "Buzzard Rock." Logging and farming provided the main sources of income for the residents. Another source of income was the production of non-taxed whiskey. "Moonshine" was steady throughout the early years and prospered ever more during prohibition. When the Old Hickory Council purchased the acreage in 1953 there were a reported eighteen working stills on the property.

Tobacco was one of the early cash crops found throughout Surry County. This was just as true here in the valley of Buzzard Rock. Cleared land was not abundant here but the folks persevered. There were two tobacco barns built at the front of the valley. The first is the barn that is now the right side of the log cabin in the central part of camp. Gene Hayes used this as his cabin. The Holloways and the Crouses were the reputed still operators of the day. Mrs. Holloway would send word down to the valley that a panther had been spotted in order to keep people out of the woods. Eldridge Amburn was the local deputy sheriff at the time, he spent many afternoons with fellow deputy Pearly Ramey searching out and destroying stills.

The second tobacco barn stood at the site of our present ball field. This second barn was moved by Mr. Gene Hayes and

adjoined with the first barn. This gave him a two-room cabin. Mr. B. F. Huntley of Winston-Salem purchased the land and cabin for a family retreat in 1937. He worked as the president of B&O Furniture Company. Mr. Huntley had a concrete dam built on the Little Indicott Creek. He had hopes of further developing the property but with the outbreak of World War II he decided to sell the property.

After B. F. Huntley moved out of the valley Buster Crouse lived in the cabin as well as Ruben Lowe at one point. When Mr. Huntley decided to sell the property a realtor from Winston-Salem by the name of White was retained. He held the deed to the property during the early 1940's.

During this time logging grew as a major source of income in the area as large tracts of land were sold for their timber rights. The chestnut blight of 1929 led to the demise of most of the valued timber in the areas. Logging provided many of the roads that are still in use today. In the valley off of Coal Creek road there was a horse stable built to keep the horses in. These horses pulled their logs from throughout the area to be milled and carried out to Mount Airy and surrounding communities.

Also of interest in the Coal Creek road area is the pit located on the right side of the road about half way out the road. The story goes that a man was digging ore samples from various sights in the valley hoping to find gold. Every week he would travel to Dobson to have his samples checked. The men who ran the assay office decided to set the miner up. On his next trip in they told him that a previous sample showed "color." The man hustled back to the site off Coal Creek road where he

proceeded to dig and dig. The resulting pit revealed little more ore, and the gentleman returned to Dobson only to be laughed out of the Courthouse. In reality he had only found iron pyrite, commonly referred to as "fool's gold."

Following World War II, Herman Coe of Dobson was intrigued with the prospects of starting a "Blue Collar Country Club." He and his partner Sherman Simpson purchased the property in 1946. Mr. Coe laid his plans for the development. One of the first changes came in his renaming the property, realizing that it would be hard to market "Buzzard Rock" he chose the name "Raven Knob." Stock was offered in the autumn that followed and prospective landowners picked out their building sites. Mr. Coe had the dining room built on the right side of the road below the small lake. The facility had a kitchen and dining area, which was regularly used for fish fries and dances. In front of the dining room and outdoor bowling alley was constructed. Using duckpins and small hand held bowling balls the patrons of Raven Knob Park could roll a few lanes during their stay. Mr. Coe knew that a swimming area was essential and he followed through with a new lake with a beach and bathhouse built at the site of our present aquatics area. The ten-acre lake was bounded by an earthen dam that came across at the point of the now enlarged Lake Sabotta.

Seeing his plans come together Mr. Coe started selling homesites. Two brothers bought adjoining pieces on the right side of the road up towards the valley. The matching cabins that they built are still used today as staff cabins. Another family built their home on the hill across from the dining room. For years this home was known as the executive cabin. It was

in better condition than the two in the valley except that it had no plumbing installed. Further up this same hill another personal home was built. This small frame house was known as the “White House.” It stood across from the Knoll campsite and was eventually torn down in 1975. Perhaps Mr. Coe overestimated the disposable income of potential landowners, then again perhaps he was just ahead of his time in rural retreat development. But for whatever reason, Mr. Coe was not seeing an overwhelming response to Raven Knob Park. He studied his plans and came up with the idea of opening the park to the public. Well the good old boys from around the area started flocking into Raven Knob.

In search of relaxation and a place for friends to gather, folks from Mt. Airy, Galax, Dobson, and Elkin began to visit Raven Knob. There were picnics brought in and dinners served most every weekend. Frequently there were bands that played after dinner with the tables pushed back and the rugs rolled up. On one such evening when the band was playing two men got into an argument over a woman. The argument resulted in one of the men being shot in the dining room. Well, this kind of reputation further stalled the sell of land to private owners. Mr. Coe initiated a series of events intended to draw families in. One such event was the “Motorboat Racing and Skiing” weekend that was advertised in the Mt. Airy News. Realizing the smallish size of the lake it is hard to imagine much of a race, with the 35 horsepower limit that Mr. Coe imposed.

Chapter Two-*The Vision*

Meanwhile in Scouting Mr. Robert Lasater in 1921 was instrumental in providing a piece of property in northeast Forsyth County. The Council operated Camp Lasater until 1954. These were some great years and a host of boys received their Scouting experience under the tutelage of Camp Director/Council Scout Executive Skipper Vaughn-Lloyd. While there was a lot to do at the camp, the actual facility size was limited to just under 100 acres. This included a small lake, dining hall and some ten campsites. In 1946 while Troop 20 of Centenary United Church was camping as Lasater, one of their Scouts was swimming in the lake. He began to struggle and one of their leaders; Tom Holder went to his rescue. In the end the boy made it through, but the leader drowned. This was a dark day at Camp Lasater as then Scoutmaster Zeb Barnhardt recalls. The Chapel at Camp Lasater was built in Tom Holder’s memory.

During the 1951-52 era a group of Scouters began the search for a new piece of property. This resulted in an agreement with Elizabeth Dillard Reynolds about a portion of their Devotion property. The Devotion area is located west of Raven Knob on the Mitchell River. In 1953 there was a concerted effort to develop Camp Devotion. Engineers from the national office came in and worked up the plans for the facility, and a small lake was constructed. While everything seemed to be coming together there were conflicts with the Reynolds family as to exactly how to go about the development, and while the

Council had use of the land it did not have title to it. Thus the full-scale development never really took off.

Along about the same time there were several Scouters trying to organize a Council Camporee. These Scouters approached Herman Coe about utilizing Raven Knob Park for this event. Mr. Coe initially turned down the request, as he really didn't want hundreds of boys running through his park. However, he later reconsidered and agreed to let the Scouts come to Raven Knob for the first time. The plans worked out, and the Liberty Bell Camporee was held at Raven Knob Park in the spring of 1954.

During the Camporee there was a great thunderstorm that sent torrents of rain through Raven Knob. On that Saturday afternoon, Mr. Coe came over to the park to see how things were going. He was more than a little surprised by what he found. Instead of boys running rampant, he saw Scouts building check dams and filling sandbags. Their efforts were all to help preserve and conserve his property. These Scouts had no idea how far reaching their efforts would be.

In the weeks that followed, Mr. Coe and his partner Sherman Simpson offered to sell Raven Knob to the Old Hickory Council. A contingent of Scouters worked diligently to raise the funds to purchase the property. Courtland Baker, W. K. Sturdivant, Vernon Deal, Herb Caudle, Banks Newman, J. Harry White, Harold Hinshaw, Roy Hinshaw, John Sobotta, and Robert Vaughn led those involved. With the funds secured the initial purchase was made. In the summer of 1954 there was a summer camp held at Raven Knob. While this was not a

sanctioned Summer Camp, it was the first long-term encampment on the property. According to Roy Hinshaw's account there was a dedication ceremony held on the first day of camp. It was a grand affair, complete with a 142-piece band under the direction of Dwight Thompson of Stanleyville, N.C.

1954 through 1959 were special years at Raven Knob. The transformation from Private Park to a scout camp was a combination of goodwill, wisdom, leadership, sweat, and a bit of luck. Putting together the funds to make the purchase fell on the shoulders of several leaders whose combined prowess in the scouting community has yet to be equaled. The following is a brief sketch of the early key Scouters.

Robert Vaughn, was an attorney with the Petree Stockton legal firm in Winston-Salem. He was associated with Troop 20. The insight that he gave to the acquisition is still marveled at today. To explain, one must realize that Mr. Vaughn gained his appreciation of scouting from Zeb Barnhardt, Scoutmaster of the Centenary troop. While working to amass the monies to make the purchase a reality Mr. Vaughn realized that a property the size of Raven Knob Park was becoming increasingly difficult to find in the boundaries of the Old Hickory Council. Having spent his youth at Camp Lasater, Mr. Vaughn wanted to insure that Raven Knob would be available to the youth of the area for many, many years to come.

When the deeds were being prepared for the purchase Mr. Vaughn entrusted the actual ownership of Raven Knob to the Winston-Salem Foundation. The reasoning at the time was to safeguard the property in the event however unlikely, that the

Old Hickory Council or even the Boy Scouts of America went defunct. The use of the property was titled to the Old Hickory Council for as long as Scouting existed in northwest North Carolina. While this little known detail may seem insignificant, in an era of council mergers and camp closings, the fact that Raven Knob can't be sold by any means has provided solace to local Scouters.

In the close of the 1950's the chapel at Raven Knob was completed. It was dedicated to Robert Chandler Vauhn in honor of his commitment to the scouting program.

It should also be noted that Raven Knob Scout Reservation was established prior to the civil rights movement. The black troops from across the Council had camped at Camp Chandler where limited facilities were available. Robert Vaughn saw the need for an improved camp. He led the way for the additional acquisition of a piece of property in the Walnut Cove area. In a strange twist of fate, Robert Vaughn passed away before the camp was opened. In recognition of his foresight and commitment to every Scout in the area, the new camp carried his name. Camp Robert Vaughn opened in 1963 and served well until it closed in 1973.

From the Elkin area Herb Caudle rallied support for Raven Knob. Herb was instrumental in virtually every arena of camp development. He worked to raise funds, he enjoyed giving hands-on leadership to a multitude of camp projects and he served on numerous committees. From the mid 50's to the mid 90's Herb was ever present in camp construction projects. He served the Council in many ways including being Council

President, but he is most widely remembered as the first Chairman of the Beaver Club. This club, which Herb led for over fifteen years, was composed of Scouters who offered their time and talent to maintaining and improving the facilities at Raven Knob.

Herb passed away in 1996 leaving the camp far improved for the thousands of boys it serves. The bridge at the dam on Lake Watson was dedicated in 1999 to Herb's leadership.

John Sobotta was a longtime Scouter from the Mt. Airy area. He worked as the Superintendent of National Furniture Company. When the camp was being designed, an enlarged lake was in the plans. Other than clearing the trees, the most strategic part of this development was the building of a new dam. Mr. Sobotta provided this funding and the lake took his name.

G. Kellock Hale Jr. was employed for many years by the N. C. Granite Corporation. His efforts in the 1930's led to the birth of Wahissa Lodge #118. Mr. Hale was very skilled in matters regarding the Order of the Arrow as he had served as Dr. E. Urner Goodman's assistant from 1915 – 1919 at Treasure Island Scout Camp. Kel was Scoutmaster of Troop 38 in Mt. Airy at the First Baptist Church. His leadership and strong Scouting background were instrumental in both program and facilities development. The N. C. Granite Corporation provided the granite to build the front gates to the camp.

Frank Smith also worked at the N. C. Granite Corporation. Mr. Smith's efforts behind the scenes were always appreciated. He

served on the Council Executive Board for many years while the camp was under development. The N. C. Granite Corporation as a memorial to Frank Smith's dedication gave the Visitor's Parking Lot to Scouting and to Raven Knob.

Courtland Baker served as the Scout Executive for the Old Hickory Council from 1954-1956. His commitment to Scouting is seen by the sheer existence of Raven Knob. Without his support and insight, the purchase and development of the property could have easily been derailed.

Roscoe Stevens followed Courtland Baker as Scout executive in 1956. For the next ten years Mr. Stevens led the council in the development of the camp. Through these frugal times he did all that he could with the resources that he had available to him.

Harold Hinshaw was the older brother of Roy Hinshaw. Harold was a trusted Scouter who spent countless hours shaping the O.A. Lodge as well as being involved in numerous projects at Camp Lasater and Raven Knob. He had a strong interest in handicrafts and in the training of adults.

Roy Hinshaw is well remembered for his contributions in every field of Scouting. Roy was born in 1915 and as such was the first person born in the newly formed city of Winston-Salem. Roy had a counted speech pattern that made every conversation with him something special. You see. . . . Roy didn't just spout off in any direction. . . . rather, he planned each sentence. . . . before he spoke it. Those that had the

opportunity to work with Roy soon came to realize that they were working with a master of Scouting, and you never hurry a master.

Roy worked for the City for Winston-Salem for most of his career. His specialty was demographics. He was quite proficient in planning and development trends. In deed the efforts that he put forth are still seen in Forsyth County to this very day. The Old Hickory Council utilized this same insight for decades. It was Roy's guidance that led to the desegregation of the Pine Tree, Chestnut and White Oak Districts of Forsyth County in 1973. This was followed by the unified Daniel Boone District that later became the Piedmont and Salem Districts. Roy was the Vigil Adviser to the Wahissa Lodge for a number of years. His involvement here led to the Vigil Nominating Committee process that we have utilized since 1972. As a member of Ardmore United Methodist Church, Roy was well known for starting new Scout Troops and for getting those Troops to Raven Knob.

In the early days of Raven Knob there were many key players in the development of Raven Knob. But there was one person who became synonymous with Camp and that was Kyle Emory Norman. Kyle served as the first Camp Ranger of Raven Knob, serving from 1954 through 1970. Kyle and his wife Mae were actually living in the valley of Raven Knob Park when the park was sold to the Scouts. Kyle owned the cabin at the far end of the valley. The cabin was originally built in 1928 in the vicinity of the Crouse's cabin. After the Council bought the park they bought the property from Kyle where the cabin stood. Then the cabin was moved to its present location

at the end of the valley. For many years the cabin was known as the "Outpost." It became known as the "Wilderness Cabin" after the Wilderness Camp program started in 1971.

Living in the one-roomed cabin Kyle and Mae were pretty much self sustained. They had lived in the cabin on and off for several years prior to the BSA coming to the valley. Kyle moved over to the cabin to "take a rest," as he would say, from his general store operation on Haystack Road.

While Mae was occupied with the livestock, gardening, and general housekeeping, Kyle was busy with logging and sawmilling operations in the valley and an occasional run of the moonshine still. During one of their stays in the cabin, Mae came up missing one of her dairy cows. She searched and searched finally finding the cow off the side of Coal Creek Road, where she had given birth to a calf. The cow's name was Buttercup, so as to commemorate the calf's birth; Mae planted buttercups down the valley road from the cabin. They still come up every spring.

The Council employed Kyle in 1954. He and Mae moved from their cabin to the log cabin in the central part of the camp. While this was a cabin twice the size of the one out in the valley, there was still no indoor plumbing and only limited electricity. The Normans lived in the cabin for two years until the new Rangers house was constructed just outside the gates of the camp. While he had no children of his own, Kyle served as a mentor to many staff members during his seventeen-year tenure as Camp Ranger.

John Bentley, Ronnie Bean, Doc Bennett, Phillip Thompson and others have recounted many times their experiences with Kyle. In 1975 Camp Staff members Chip Aldridge, duWayne Amen, and myself had the opportunity to conduct an interview with Kyle at his home off of Haystack Road. The transcription of the session is included in the appendix for your review. Kyle was recovering from a recent illness and the session was conducted with Kyle resting in bed. Kyle had a vivid recollection of many of the events and people that had shaped the Camp both before and after the Scouts arrival.

While he was the Ranger, Kyle was on most accounts willing to be of assistance to Scouts and Scouters from throughout the area. He also was known to those outside of Scouting as a firm no-nonsense individual. The Surry County Sheriff's Department deputized him. As a special Deputy, he carried a badge and a pistol at times. His run-ins with deer hunters, motorcycle riders, and vandals are well remembered by those who knew him. On one occasion, District Executive and Camp Director Penn Bernhardt was helping Kyle during deer hunting season. As the story goes Penn came up on a couple of good old boys out on Ridge Road. They refused to leave the Camp and Penn told them that refuse as they might, if Kyle found them, he would make short order of them. Well, later that morning Kyle ran into the same hunters, Kyle told them: "Now boys if you're looking for trouble, you ain't got to look no further, you've found it. So the best thing for y'all to do is to git off this land and don't be coming back." And leave they did, for Kyle wasn't all that sociable when he was ill.

Kyle drove a Dodge Power Wagon, with a six-inch lift. This lift, while ahead of its time, was certainly useful to accessing the backroads of Raven Knob where bridges washed out with each good rain and slick roads were the norm. Kyle retired at the end of 1970. He had built a cabin north of camp that he planned to retire to. However, he had the opportunity to reopen the store on Haystack Road, (south of Camp) and thus sold his cabin north of camp to Fred Parsons.

Since Kyle's retirement there have been four other Camp Rangers. Jack Nixon served in this capacity from the fall of 1971 through the fall of 1973. He was originally from Dobson, where he and his wife returned to after he left his post. Jack was a great person to work with, and he like Kyle had his own very distinct personality. For an individual with no Scouting background, Jack was both readily accepted and respected.

Mike Duval came in as Camp Ranger in the late fall of 1973 and served until the autumn of 1976. Mike was from Winston-Salem where he had worked as a welder. Mike was quite capable as a ranger with technical skills in many areas. Mike worked with Council President, Don Soefker and surveyor Ralph Marsh to do a survey of the property. Through the brambles and the thickets irate property owners whose boundaries were and are in contention often confronted this team. Mike, Don and Ralph were arrested for trespassing at one point and carried off to the jail in Dobson. This was certainly one of the more memorable events of his tenure as Ranger. Mike and his wife Dana had four daughters, they returned to Winston-Salem upon leaving Raven Knob.

Mike Windsor came on board as Camp Ranger in the winter of 1976. He and his wife Sheila had been living in Elkin before coming to Raven Knob. Mike made significant contributions to the camp over a seventeen-year period. Mike's efforts are readily visible in every part of the camp from building construction, to road improvements to major conservation efforts. Mike was a key part of the Camp Staff as well; his attention to detail was ever present. Mike completed his tour of duty in the autumn of 1994 after seventeen years of service.

Dave Whitfield became the Ranger in December of 1994. Dave and his wife Dale had lived in the area for a number of years before starting as Ranger. He had worked for the Council remodeling the Administration Building and the Trading Post prior to becoming the Ranger. Dave's keen eye has helped the Camp in many ways, as long term solutions have been the goal to a host of ongoing camp maintenance needs. In addition to Dave's construction skills, he has enhanced our relationship with many of our neighbors as he is widely respected. Dave has been instrumental in the development of the Old Hickory Council Historical Society's Museum and the Raven Knob Land Preservation Society.

Chapter Three-Building with Dedication

With the funds secured and the deeds signed, Raven Knob Scout Reservation was open to troops on June 1, 1954. Renovations began and the long-term plans were drawn. The Dining Room would serve as the Camp Dining Hall for the first two years. The newly built cabins in the valley were used initially for professional staff housing and the Bowling Alley shelter was put into use as the Camp First Aid hut. The concession stand on the beach of Lake Sabotta served as the Camp Trading Post. Later this building was moved to Iroquois campsite and used as a shelter there for the next thirty years.

Building projects started with the Mary Reynolds Babcock Dining Hall, which opened in 1957. The Health Lodge was a gift in memory of John Alspaugh. The Kiwanis Clubs of the area provided the Administration building. There were other memorial projects built including the David L. Stewart Field Sports Center. David was an outstanding Wahissa Lodge Chief who revitalized the Lodge in 1954. He died in an accident in Panama in 1956. The Nature Lodge was built by Post 722 in memory of Jim Smith who died in an accident in Mexico during an international good-turn trip with his church. There were two water fountains donated, one at the Dining Hall named for O. W. Kochititzky and one at the Aquatics area named for Bubba Smith.

One of the more noted memorials at the camp has always been the flagpole at the Dining Hall.

The inscription reads:

In Memory of
Lt. Richard Clark
Eagle Scout
Supreme Sacrifice

It's the "Supreme Sacrifice" part that always raises the question. The story goes that Lt. Clark was on patrol on an island in the Pacific Theatre during World War II. His platoon came under fire from a Japanese machine gun nest. For several hours his men were pinned down with no means of retreat. With several casualties in the group, Lt. Clark knew that something must be done or the entire patrol would be killed. At this point, he started gathering grenades from the members of the platoon. He placed them in a rucksack and crawled towards the enemy position.

He was able to crawl around to the top of the bunker. Lt. Clark then pulled the pin on one of the grenades in the bag, then tossed the whole thing into the nest. When the explosion went off it killed the enemy soldiers, unfortunately it also mortally wounded Lt. Clark. His men were able to proceed but only after Lt. Clark's "Supreme Sacrifice."

By the way, if you look up at the top of the flagpole you will notice a steel spike on the very top. This originally served to hold in place a large golden ball. Herb Caudle was standing in

the doorway of the Log Cabin in the early 60's. A thunderstorm was taking place from which he saw a bolt of lightning hit the ball, which subsequently exploded.

When the new Dining Hall opened in 1957 the old Dining Room was converted over to the Trading Post. Talk about an increase in floor space, from a picnic shelter to a full-blown building! There was finally room for a Scoutmasters Lounge and living quarters for the Trading Post Staff.

With buildings being built and the camp being developed, there was a growing need for a tractor. The first tractor was donated in 1956. It was a Ford Workhorse, and if ever a vehicle lived up to its name, it was this tractor. Kyle modified the tractor by welding together a full-length skid plate with brush guard. This allowed Kyle to push over small trees and to slide over large rocks. Advantageous as this modification was, it only made matters worse when Cliff Nolan lost control of the tractor and drove it straight into Lake Watson. The engine had to be rebuilt and rewired before it could be put back into use. It was a toss up as to whom was more upset, Kyle or Herb.

The dock at the waterfront was designed to look like an "F." When the dock was ordered though, the "T" design was chosen, as it would allow for a larger swimming area. The "T" Dock and the Raven's Nest were gifts from the Pepsi Cola Bottling Corporation. The Aquatics Building was a gift from Henry Thomas and was built in 1969 while Dr. Robert Sprinkle was serving as Camping Committee Chairman.

Chapter Four-Happy Place

While the 1950's were the formative years for Raven Knob the 1960's and 70's were the golden years. This in part was due to Boy Scout trends across the country and in part because of the quality and strength of the outdoor programs of the Old Hickory Council.

It was during this time that traditions began and legends were made. Traditions are what has helped to keep Raven Knob entrenched in the minds of Scouts both past and present. Probably one of the most memorable activities has been the hike up to Raven Knob. The well used trail throughout the sixties started from the Blue Trail that goes around Lake Sabotta and went pretty much straight up the mountain. Once on top the view was nothing short of majestic. Looking over the camp and onto the Blue Ridge Mountains Scouts were in awe of the grandeur of the wilderness that surrounded them. From this vantage point Scouts using their creative imaginations soon began to note the shape of a raven in the general outline of Lake Sabotta. Troops also started the tradition of hiking to the Knob in the early morning hours, thus to be on the summit for sunrise. Boys went home to tell of their feat on their feet. They had hiked the Knob! It became as such a right of passage. To many it was far more than just the conquest of the mountain, it was an accomplishment of self. The gleam in their eyes indicated the growth in self-confidence. Through the years the trail has changed a couple of times so as to establish a trail that is both usable and built

with erosion controls. The original trail is now referred to as the “suicide trail” and rightly so. Numerous boys and leaders have sprained an ankle or worse over the years, and while the trail is now closed off it’s still well remembered by many.

Ingrained in the memories of many Scouts, Leaders, and guests is the Wednesday night campfire and O. A. ceremony. Campfires date back to the very earliest Scouting ventures and they have been ever present at Raven Knob. It was during the 1960’s that the format was shaped and gelled. One facet of these campfires came about in 1966 with the advent of the “spaghetti westerns.” When film producer Sergio Leone took his cast and crew to Italy to film western movies he needed a character that had a certain mystique and style. He chose a young actor by the name of Clint Eastwood for the role in the series of films. To compliment the films the sound tracks were produced by Neely Plumb. These films included A Fist Full of Dollars, For a Few Dollars More, and The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly. During one of the more poignant scenes of The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly the music comes across with an almost eerie sensation. The name of the score “The Ecstasy of Gold.” Since its release this piece has been used for the opening of the Wahissa Lodge portion of the campfire

I cannot remember a time that upon hearing this score begin that a certain chill doesn’t come across me, particularly on the first Wednesday night of each new summer camp season. The music to say the least is electrifying in its own special way. Hearing the music and then looking up to the Knob one sees a fire on top of the mountain. This fire has always symbolized to me the spirit of Scouts, not only those in the arena that evening,

but in remembrance of all those who led the way at Raven Knob. Scouts like Paul Taylor, Grey Clifton, Billy Dalton, and Brent Hincer, each of whom made their mark at Raven Knob before going to hike a higher trail.

Usually the single biggest campfire of the summer is Vigil night. It is during this evening that Arrowmen are recognized for their leadership and service to Scouting and Raven Knob. During these campfires there were a couple of enhanced features. One was the “snake dance.” It should be noted that the arena performance area was sand for many years. Grass was put in during 1974 and has remained since. Doing the snake dance on Vigil night with LIVE rattlesnakes really got the attention of the audience. While the arena was always full on this evening, seats were plentiful in the first three rows after the snake dance.

Following the Vigil tapout the evening was concluded with a special closing known as the “Death of White Dog.” In this dance an old chief would come out to dance his last dance. He gradually would lie down to die. He was then carried by other dancers down to the shore of the lake. There the body is placed on a canoe and pushed out across Lake Sabotta. Some years there was a funeral pyre out on the O.A. Island, where the body was placed for cremation. In other years the canoe floated down the lake with the body being engulfed in smoke. Either way the effect was dramatic and long lasting. To this day we have people ask if we still do this closing. The last time the dance was done was in the mid 1970’s. It was during this time that Wahissa Lodge strived to make its performances more true to Indian culture. The effects are readily evident with

nationally recognized dancers and drum teams. And when you hear the likes of Drew Armstrong or Clyde Ellis singing from across the lake at the beginning of a Vigil tapout you know you have just witnessed something very special. One final note on “White Dog,” the way we made the effect so dramatic was that a dummy (not a CSD) was made up and placed in the culvert down by the lakeshore. Thus when the chief was carried down from the arena the dummy was actually pulled out for use on the funeral pyre.

In 1937-38 Kel Hale was working to establish an O.A. lodge in the Old Hickory Council. One of the key decisions was the selection of the lodge name. Kel and Scout Executive Skipper Vaughn-Lloyd worked down a list of potential names and finally agreed upon the name Wahissa. The term means “Happy Place” and the totem chosen was the peace pipe. To create a pipe Kel contacted an old friend from his Treasure Island days Uncle Otto. An American Indian, Uncle Otto was well known for his skills with flint and steel as well as woodcarving. He agreed to make the pipe for the new Wahissa Lodge.

The peace pipe was made from hard rock maple. The beads underneath it were made from naturally dyed wooden segments. Uncle Otto also blessed the pipe in the age-old ceremonial way. The original pipe was used each year through 1968. It was at this time that Curt Snow tapped his father Ed Snow for the Vigil Honor. As is the tradition the peace pipe was used more forcefully than it should have been and it cracked with the tap.

Denny Shelton repaired the original pipe and at the same time made a new pipe for the lodge to use. This new pipe was used for the next thirty years for regular taps and Vigil tapouts. In the spring of 1999 Denny presented a new pipe to the lodge and the second was retired. This third pipe was used up through the Vigil tap of 1999 when it too broke. The second pipe was put back into service while the third pipe was returned to Denny for repair. The original Uncle Otto pipe is on display in the Raven Knob Museum.

During the sixties troops began to develop a sense of ownership in Raven Knob. This is still evident with troops having their favorite campsite for summer camp; this is no more evident than with Troop 942 of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. This troop has camped in Buffalo Bill for some forty years. Taking pride in Raven Knob is something that really took hold as leaders camped with Scouts who now come back to camp with their own sons and grandsons. Facility wise the camp did not change a great deal during the sixties. There was the new Cooks Quarters in 1968 and renovations to the Log Cabin in 1969.

The Aquatics area of camp has always been very popular. During the early 60’s the staff had asked for new rowboats, aluminum rowboats to replace the wooden ones that were carry-overs from Camp Lasater. As was usual, there were no funds to buy new boats. As a stroke of Raven Knob ingenuity at the close of the ’63 summer camp season, the staff took the old boats and hid them in the wilderness of Raven Knob. When the time came to open camp in the spring of 1964, there were no boats to be found. Thus new rowboats had to be

ordered. These same boats have been in service on Lake Sobotta ever since. As for the old wooden boats they were left in the woods, the remains of which were visible for many years.

During the summer of '69 Arrowmen continued to use a circus tent down by Scoutcraft to prepare for the Wednesday night program. This "O.A. Compound" was barely sufficient and needed to be more permanent. Thus an idea came up from Mike Fichesser and Wes Morgan to build a new log cabin that would serve this purpose. The idea included a number of challenges, location, money, structure type, money, actual construction, and more money. Realizing that the Council didn't have the funds to build this building, newly elected Lodge Chief, Wes Morgan established an ad-hoc committee to lead the way. The location was no simple matter nor was the structure type. There were several meetings held to set all phases in place and then the effort began. First the site, while looking at various places, the site on top of the hill behind the Waterfront building was selected for its proximity to the O.A. Arena and to be out of the normal path of most Scouts. Thus people who were not in the O.A. would not be encouraged to gain entrance.

The site was cleared during the ordeals of 1970. The road was carved up to the site from the Trading Post. The building began in earnest after the 1971 6A Fellowship that was held at Raven Knob. The structure type changed from a log structure to a custom frame building. With the leadership of Wes, Mike, Marven Poindexter, Harold Johnson, and Don Soefker the focus became clear. The Arrowmen would raise the money

and build the building. In the summer of 1972 the slab was ready to be poured for the floor. A 44'x88' slab required some seventeen loads of concrete. We started on a Saturday morning during summer camp and were so optimistic. Boys armed with smiles and shovels soon turned to boys burdened with grimaces and wheelbarrows. We too late realized that the road up the hill was both too steep and too slick for cement truck access. After the first few trucks made it up the hill the others could only back up about two-thirds of the way. From this point the concrete was poured from the truck into a convoy of wheelbarrows which were then pushed up to the site.

The effort was futile if well founded. As a result a second slab was added a few weeks later after reforming the foundation and contracting with a firm to assist us in spreading the concrete. Later that fall the lumber arrived, and the rafters were built on top of the slab. The building went up one weekend at a time. The roof was put on over the Thanksgiving weekend of 1973. The building was dedicated in the summer of 1974 in memory of Wahissa Lodge founder G. Kellock Hale. Special guest included Mrs. Hale and Dr. and Mrs. E. Urner Goodman. Kel Hale as a youth had worked for Dr. Goodman at Treasure Island Scout Camp during World War I. In 1975 the fireplace was added and a time capsule was set. It should be noted that the mantle above the hearth was made from a pine tree that once stood on the site of the Lodge Building itself. Denny Shelton and James Tillotson carved the mantle and Peace Pipe. Jack Campbell and his family contributed the memorial stone in the fireplace.

In 1971 the concept of a wilderness trek program came about. Spearheaded by Mike Fichesser along with Richard Robertson and Danny Richardson the program evolved into the "Wilderness Camp Program." Based around Kyle Norman's old outpost cabin out in the valley, the plan went from paper to reality in the spring of 1971. Don Powell, President of Dize Tent and Awning made funding possible. This program was used through the mid- seventies and was dropped as interest waned in 1978.

Two Special Forces Sergeants from Ft. Bragg augmented the camp staff of 1971. Gary Walendoff worked with the Wilderness Camp team while Roger Knott served as the Shooting Sports Director.

In 1972 one of the most notable improvements to the camp came in the form of paving the main road from the front gate to the O.A. Arena. This significantly cut down on the dust through camp. The paving lasted until the spring of 1980.

During the sixties and seventies Raven Knob came into its own with dedicated staff members like Arvil Sale, George Troxler, Bud Hennis, Blaine Butner, and Bill Hinman. Also, the Ellis twins Marshall and Clyde, Hank Birdsong, duWayne Amen, and Tom Seaver all made lasting impressions on literally thousands of Scouts. For historical reference one should note that 1973 marked the first year of Raven Knob being racially desegregated. For the previous years Camp Robert Vaughn had served the black troops of the Old Hickory Council. Claude Davis was the first black staff member on the Raven Knob Staff that was in 1974.

All of these individuals made their mark on Raven Knob and likewise the Knob made its mark on them. This is also true for the hundreds of other staff members that have spent their summers on the shores of Lake Sabotta. I was fortunate to have spent seven of my summers as a youth with these groups and will always regard the education of schools and colleges to pale in comparison to the lessons I learned and earned as a member of the Raven Knob Staff.

It should be noted that while quality instruction happened every summer as each person took to task their given role, a lot of growing at Raven Knob took place after sessions ended. It was through the good times of pranks and shenanigans and the solving of seemingly insurmountable problems that staff members grew with each other. There were raucous times of Scott McNeely raising terror and Tony Gaddis making Homogenized Hell (don't ask). There were times of Scout skills as we carried an injured Den leader off the Knob and brought about the '71 6A Fellowship without a Camp Ranger. We all pulled together for the common good, to make sure that every Scout left camp with a certain sense of awe in that one day they too might serve on the Raven Knob Staff.

Staffing the Dining Hall has always presented a challenge. During the sixties Alfred Hiatt and Woodrow Jennings served as the head cooks. Starting in 1974 a team of cooks from North Surry High School took charge of the Dining Hall. Led by Gladys Hopkins these ladies have continued to give leadership to the Dining Hall for over twenty-five years. Through thick and thin, big crowds and short orders, Gladys

has stayed the course. Having served thousands upon thousands of meals over the years these fine folks have always greeted every Scout with a willing smile and a great meal.

Communications at camp was accomplished for years with U.S. Army surplus field phones. These were located in major program areas around the camp. General communications took place via the public address system. With the assistance of Russell Shouse, Andy Webb, and David Haymore these systems have been maintained and improved over the years. Currently we have an automatic dial phone system that has proved quite capable and the P.A. system has been enhanced with remote amplifiers and computer technology.

Chapter Four-*The Vision Grows*

In the late seventies and early eighties we saw another wave of staff members come on the scene. They led to new accomplishments through expanded visions of what could be. Danny Bowman, Andy Hamrick, and Scott Worthington each led in their own special way. There were new facilities added as well, such as the Handicrafts Shelter, the Scoutcraft Shelter and new latrines (thank goodness). Scouts from the Old Hickory Council as did those from other councils enjoyed camp under the leadership of Bruce Gray and Wayne Brown. Both of these men worked tirelessly to keep up the standards of Raven Knobs traditions. Even when faced with a ruptured dam, camp went on. Yes, in 1980 Scouts were bussed to a local reservoir for canoeing and rowing. Twice a day, everyday Scouts loaded up for the ride. Swimming was accomplished in Lake Watson and as for fishing. . . well we won't even go there.

The O.A. conclave returned to Raven Know in April of 1979. The event was well attended and went off without a hitch. . . until it was over. After the guests had left the service team collected mattresses from various campsites and returned them to storage in the Ad. Building. The Arrowmen stacked them ceiling high and left for home. Unfortunately, the lights were left on in the building and the heat built up to the surrounding mattresses. A fire erupted and Camp Ranger Mike Windsor called the Skull Camp Volunteer Fire Department and myself as I had just returned home. We fought fire all night as smoldering mattresses kept flaming up. The next morning, we

were faced with a demolished building and a total loss of mattresses.

In the weeks that followed Scouters came on board to rebuild the structure. Led by Don Soefeker, John Norman, Ed Bell, and Herb Caudle the structure was remarkably back on line by June when camp started. New mattresses were ordered through long time camp supporters Ace Bradley and Jake Barnhardt at North Carolina Foam Inc.

While several attempts at a ropes course had taken place, the support of AT&T made it possible to install a complete Challenging Outdoor Personal Encounter (COPE) Course in 1987. The project was situated on the ridge above the Archery Range off of the Lodge Building Road. At this time there was also an effort to construct a Rappelling Tower. This was made possible through a gift from Derrick Davis of Winston-Salem. In more recent years the COPE Course has been relocated to be adjacent to the Rappelling Tower. High Adventure programs have been an integral part of Scouting at Raven Knob for many years. Following the original Wilderness Camp program there was the Winter Wilderness Hike. This program was offered during the Christmas break in the winters of 1974 – 1976. The Pathfinders program was used in the 1980's and offered a combination of COPE and backpacking. These programs led to the Outback Programs of the nineties.

With the assistance of the North Carolina National Guard we built a new Rifle Range shelter and then we upgraded our showers to have hot water from electrical heaters instead of wood fired boilers. In the mid 80's Raven Knobs facilities

while home to so many memories began to look worn and tired from the constant use by Scouts for 30+ years. Talk of a capital campaign to help camp had long been discussed, but it wasn't until Hal Murray came on board as Council Scout Executive that such a campaign becomes a reality. The focus of the effort was totally centered around camp and as a result the Dining Hall was totally remodeled also upgraded were the Trading Post and the Administration Building. In addition to these, the Zeb Barnhardt Training Center was constructed, a structure that would offer year round access to groups with plush accommodations compared to Raven Knob standards.

In September of 1989 Mother Nature visited Camp in the form of Hurricane Hugo. While going over the mountain the hurricane spawned three twisters. They touched down behind the lodge building, in Deer Valley, and out Ridge Road towards the hunter's cabins. While the damage was significant the results opened up the forest and coincided with the reforestation efforts that had just begun. This provided a new parking lot behind the Lodge Building in addition to creating a loading deck that in turn became Crazy Horse campsite.

The Dining Hall renovation gave us the ability to bring more Scouts to camp. This of course called for more campsites and expanded programs. Outback programs in Mountain Man Rendezvous, Mountain Biking, and River Canoeing were added. We also added the Wrangler program. With ten horses corralled in the large field in the valley we had quite an adventure during the four years that we offered this program. The shelter in the valley was built by duWayne Amen and Roland Trask while Travis and Larry Gentry put in the fencing.

The Zeb Barnhardt Training Center was completed in 1991 through the efforts of Centennary United Methodist Church. This facility gave us a year-round facility for groups to stay in. Renovations of the Administration Building and the Trading Post were welcome additions as well.

In the mid 90's we came to the realization that while we had made a good stroke in renovating the Dining Hall, the kitchen still suffered. Plans were made to upgrade the facility with funds from the second Capital Campaign that was held in 1995. Other upgrades included adding new adirondaks campsites and program equipment. Then as we were making the final plans to renovate the Dining Hall, Richard Vaughn approached the Council with a commitment to build a new Dining Hall altogether. Plans for a stockade were put on hold and the Harry Vaughn Dining Hall took off. The site chosen was the old Kit Carson campsite. The 16,000 square foot building that will seat 800+ people was dedicated on May 20, 2000 and readied for use for summer camp 2000.

With the commitment of the Council Executive Board, and longtime staff members like Robert Sox, Travis Gentry, James Reams, Kevin Cheek, Challie Minton and Craig Head the quality program at Raven Knob has been catapulted to new levels in recent years. In 1996 the summer camp program was extended to seven weeks. The camp attendance rose from 1,400 in the summer of 1989 to over 3400 in 1999. Recognizing that bigger isn't always better there has been a concentrated effort to assure that quality is in check. To assist with this effort we have seen an ever-increasing use of computers in every facet of camp, leading this effort was

Phillip Hansberry, Garrett Mears, Thomas Olsen, and Lee Robertson. From ravenknob.com our web site, to scanning prices in the Trading Post to having interactive camp registrations the focus has been to excel in every arena to keep the camp running as smoothly as possible. As Robert Sox is fond of saying the duck sure looks nice gliding along on the lake, while underneath the surface its feet are paddling like hell.

Probably the best example of this took place in the summer of 1998. On Tuesday of the second week of that week all of the registration materials for the third week were processed. Thomas Olsen the Office Manager called in Craig Head and Robert Sox to inform them that the attendance for the third week would be at 780 people. This was a 140-person increase over any other week we had ever had. While we are always up to a challenge at Raven Knob, this to quote Craig Head was the coming of the great Tsunami.

We started immediately to prepare for the influx. There was a team of staff members led by Phillip Hansberry that spent the rest of the week coordinating all of the logistics and anticipating the problems. Troops were contacted about bringing their own tents for leaders. A split shift dining arrangement was prepared for the Dining Hall. The bugle system had to be overhauled, a task that Thomas Olsen handled with applaud. All of these things happened while those troops presently in camp continued to receive a great week of camp. Come Sunday of third week we were ready, we hoped. This turned out to be a really good week of camp. And so it goes at

Raven Knob, the efforts are all to the purpose of providing first class adventure for every Scout that comes through the gate

One final point that should not be overlooked is that the growth and history of Raven Knob lies in the culmination of efforts from many different Scouting efforts. Those efforts of the many training teams, the Cub Scout programs, Exploring activities, and others have provided the youth of northwest North Carolina the opportunities afforded by Raven Knob. The relationship between Raven Knob and Wahissa Lodge of the Order of the Arrow can not be understated. It has been through the countless hours of Arrowmen that untold numbers of young men have been given their first dose of responsibility and accountability. Lodge Chiefs like Gordon Foster, Wes Morgan, Andy Hamrick, and Robert Rogers have left an indelible impression on their constituents from their leadership and service in efforts to improve the camp and its programs. The name "Wahissa" is translated to mean "Happy Place," and even through strifes and struggles the young men of the "O.A." have worked tirelessly for the camp that they hold so dear.

Conclusion-From Keith

Well, there you have it. That's how this place we know and love came to be. With Scouts from throughout the Old Hickory Council, North Carolina, and indeed throughout the world, Raven Knob has blessed us all with good times spent with good friends. This effort is for those who wish to gain an understanding of how the has camp evolved. I'm sure that you have your own special thoughts of weekend trips, fellowships, and of course summer camp, I encourage you to write them down and share them with others. There is no amount of words or pages that can explain how a boy goes to camp and comes back a man. That is to say if you really want to know Raven Knob, come be a part of it, for it belongs as much to the Scouts of tomorrow as it does to those of yesterday, maybe even more so. There are many names and faces that are mentioned in the foregoing, and there are many, many more that aren't. We all share the same memories of hikes up the Knob and campfires in the arena, I hope to see you all at the Knob.

-Keith