

## 8. THE PEOPLE

Many people have worked very hard over the years to shape Mount Nemo Scout Camp. The first and foremost was Gordon Williams. While it is impossible to list everybody who has influenced Camp Nemo, many of the others follow Gordon's story in alphabetical order.

### GORDON WILLIAMS

Born in Bristol, England in 1903, Gordon became a Scout with the 61st Bristol Scout Group in April, 1915 at the age of 12. A King's Scout, he attended the First World Jamboree at Olympia and the Second World Jamboree at Copenhagen in 1924. He was later a Rover and acted from time to time as Cub, Scout and Rover Leader. He came to Canada in 1929 and immediately was in a leadership role in Montreal. While living in Trail, B.C. from 1930 to 1941, he was involved in a Scout Group and was active in the District. In 1941 he moved to Ottawa, where on November 30, 1945 he was appointed as a Field Commissioner for Canadian Scout Headquarters. He became the Executive Commissioner for Hamilton on February 1, 1946.

Gordon was instrumental in the purchase of the Camp Nemo property and encouraged and supported its early development. During his tenure, Scout House was built through public subscription and the Ragged Falls Canoe Base developed. Gordon was enthusiastic about the outdoors, especially canoeing. Gordon had what our camp needed--boundless energy, outstanding camping skills, a good sense of humour, a charming persuasiveness and an uncanny sense of what a Scout camp should be. There's no question in the mind of his family that Camp Nemo became his second home. For 20 years Gord Williams was the chief architect and driving force behind the development of our District camp.

There are many stories about Gordon's ability to recruit and encourage work parties. He had a never-ending list of camp projects to be undertaken. How would Gordon organize a work party? It could start with a simple telephone call on a Monday, and by the weekend the crew, often Rovers, each with the necessary tools and supplies would assemble at camp. It could take a few hours, or a summer of weekends. Len Brittain recalls that the early years required a great deal of hard work,

especially by the members of the Camp Committee.

"We never minded it though, because working alongside Gord Williams was a rewarding experience. He was very knowledgeable about camping, he understood people, was an interesting philosopher and our greatest camp promoter. Gord had us ripping out fences and clearing the upper field to form larger camping areas, laying out trails, tearing down the barn, planting trees, building shelters, constructing living quarters and K.Y.B.O.'s and we were always painting something".

Len remembers spending one entire summer painting the inside of the Factors Lodge and the inside of all the K.Y.B.O.'s--YELLOW!



*Gordon Williams - date unknown*

Glen Tydd, another member of the first Camp Committee, remembers painting Ram Inn with Gord on a single weekend. "You never slept inside when you camped with Gord", Glen states. "The entire work party would sleep out under the stars!"

Many tell how they would be so tired on Saturday night after working on some task all day that they would swear they would not go back to camp for months. Gord would then cook up a grand dinner, followed by a campfire, with one of his famous ghost stories, and he'd tell them how important they were to camp and as partners in its development they had ownership rights and responsibilities. Sure enough, they would all be back the next weekend. For Gord, Scouting had to be fun and no matter how

gruelling the weekend assignment or how grim the weather he would find a way to introduce some fun-filled diversion at just the right moment to lift the spirits of all. Work crews were organized and in operation almost before the ink was dry on the camp deed in 1946. Since Gord steadfastly refused to ask others do something he himself would not do, he was often a member of the project team.

Hugh Halley and a bricklayer friend of his agreed to build a large stone fireplace in Headquarters Building. They spent weekends throughout the fall and early winter of 1952 at the job. Most of the field stones came from the foundation of the old barn. "It was a tough slugging assignment, carrying field stones and mixing mortar week after week but we finally completed it and enjoyed the first fire in the fireplace on December 24th," recalls Hugh. It was also to be the last fire, because the building was totally destroyed by fire on December 28! The only thing left standing was the fireplace, which gave Hugh and his friend no small amount of comfort.

Gord believed that if at all possible, a Scout Camp should have a swimming hole and he turned to the Bronte Creek. Little did he understand the power that ice jams and spring floods possessed. Damming the Bronte Creek became one of his pet projects according to Peter Walker who was one of the first Scoutmasters to take his Troop to Nemo. "Gord tried everything. Rocks, sandbags, you name it, Gord tried it. Yet every spring was the same, everything washed away with hardly a trace."

Hugh Halley remembers one summer storm washing out the dam! But Gord was undaunted. He called Rolph Barnes, who was in the gravel business. Large stone blocks were placed across the stream and when finished off with rocks and stones, the swimming area was a record 4 feet in depth. It provided a summer of the best swimming ever. In the spring Gord and Tom Rogerson stood surveying the swimming hole. "Where's my dam?", asked Gord.

"Probably at the bottom of Lake Ontario", replied Tom.

It was shortly after this that rafting down the Bronte on camp-made contraptions became our major water sport!

Another project that never met with success was the search for a fresh water well. Regardless of digging locations, every work party came up with the same result--sulphur water. Gord's solution was to call upon

Rolph Barnes who installed 300 gallon water tanks throughout the camp. The tanks had been taken from ships being scrapped at Stelco.

Claire Maitland, who later became Gord's son-in-law, recalls the 1951 Christmas holiday Silver Arrowhead Training Course at Mount Nemo. He was one of 30 Scouts who, in Patrols, set up their campsites in a sub-zero blizzard on a Thursday. At the end of the course three days later they dismantled camp in mud and pouring rain.

Gordon always encouraged Scouts to feel at home at Camp Nemo. The spirit of a "Nemo home away from home" is very much alive today, 50 years later. In the early days it was this spirit and shortage of camp buildings that resulted in camp equipment being stored throughout countless Hamilton basements and garages. In spite of this, Gordon insisted on keeping accurate inventory records, and nothing was wasted at camp. Encouraged by Gord Williams' leadership, "wise in the use of our resources" has always been a part of our Camp Nemo credo. Much of our success at Nemo during our first 50 years can be credited to a quiet, unselfish and totally dedicated Scout, Gordon Williams.

"We had a real fun time," said Claire, "and we didn't leave Nemo until all the camp equipment was stored away in the Training Lodge."

Gordon Williams retired from Scouting in 1968. He subsequently was awarded the Silver Acorn. He returned to the camp he created for the opening of the lodge named after him on December 6, 1970. Gordon passed away October 8, 1986



*Gordon Williams Lodge - 1987*

## **BRIAN BOTTRILL**

A member of the Executive Board during the 1960's and 1970's, Brian was active in camp work parties and various committees which dealt with camp issues.

## **REDVERS D. F. "RED" BOURNE**

Red's contribution to Scouting was through program for almost half a century beginning in 1929. A self taught naturalist, he became known locally as Mr. Nature, and eventually as Mr. Old-time Scouter! He was one of the people with his name on the original camp property deed and acted as one of the Trustees until the property was transferred to the Provincial Corporation, created for holding all Scouting lands in Ontario. He also served a term as District Commissioner. Red was our camp naturalist, and through his instruction locally, and on Part II Courses, thousands of Ontario Scouters became excited junior naturalists. He opened their lives to an outdoor world they had never dreamed of before. Red's wife was also an outstanding naturalist and when instructing on training courses, they would often split groups into 2 sections to give members more personal attention. Everybody enjoyed Red's nature columns in the Scouter's Dispatch. He was also a lay preacher and enjoyed speaking at indoor and outdoor services alike. Red was a gifted story teller and a much sought after speaker at Scout events across the Province. He was also a talented rope specialist and while speaking would delight audiences with his rapid hand constructed rope monkeys climbing rope trees or rope webs complete with rope spiders. Red was real gentleman, a dedicated naturalist, a born instructor and a great promoter of Camp Nemo and outdoor Scouting.



*R.D.F. Bourne - date unknown*

## **WILF DARBY**

A member of the Executive Board during the 1960's and 1970's, Wilf was active in camp work parties and various committees which dealt with camp issues.

## **JOHN HENCHER**

John's contribution to Nemo was indirect, through his influence upon Rovers in the District. John was a Cub, Scout and Rover leader in Hamilton for more than 20 years beginning in 1947. He became known as "Mr. Roving" in Ontario. As A.D.C. Rovers in the 1950's, he encouraged a very strong and active Rover presence at Camp. These Rovers worked on Gordon Williams work parties and established a model that is followed to this day. The Rovers named a den after John, which was destroyed by fire in 1964. A replacement building was finished in September 1965, complete with John's name. John was also active in training both locally and provincially. His use and encouragement of Nemo as a training centre established a pattern which also continues to this day. Hencher Den stands as a proud reminder of John's contribution to Nemo and Scouting.

## **GERRY JOHNSTON**

When Doug Johnston joined Cubs in 1952, his parents Marg and Gerry joined also. During the next 20 years, Cub Leader Marg was actively involved with the Scout Swim Club, served as Division Cubmaster for the old Mohawk Division and became a secretary at Scout House. Gerry, a Scout leader, turned to Mount Nemo and quietly became somewhat of a legend there. He became Chairman of the Camp Committee, and as a friend of Gord Williams, shared Gord's vision of Camp. Gerry was a self taught naturalist and as such introduced hundreds of Scouts to the mysteries of birds and trees on camp nature walks. He showed them how easy it was to be good conservationists and also shared with them his great love of ropes and knots. He started the Sap Tap program. Gerry was a great "maintainer" of camp. He was forever "puttering" on one repair job or another. He personally built the old cedar rail fence around Confederation Lodge. He had a delightful way of encouraging others to take on Camp projects. People liked to work for Gerry because, "he was such a great guy".

## DAVE PEAT

A member of the Executive Board during the 1960's and 1970's, Dave was active in camp work parties and various committees which dealt with camp issues. Dave's company built the water tank, now the only source of water at camp. He also designed and engineered the construction of Confederation Lodge.

## RON PINE

Ron came to Hamilton Wentworth in 1974 with 20 years of Scouting experience in Oshawa. He quickly became A.D.C. Venturers and served a term as District Commissioner. Shortly thereafter, he took over the Camp Development Committee which had been given the job of implementing the Planistics Camp Plan. Eventually this committee merged with the Camp Committee and Ron was in charge. He was a breath of fresh air which gave a fresh start at Camp Nemo. In no time at all, he was drawing people in from all sides and getting them involved in a much needed camp resurgence. He's been described as a whirling dervish, for he had no fewer than 15 projects on the go at all times! The basements were finished in the Panabodes, cedar siding was added to buildings, B. P. Lodge was gutted and completely refurbished, the Stockade was rebuilt after the fire, an addition was added to the barn, the water system was upgraded and the pump moved from the Factor's Lodge. These were but a few of his projects. The most important thing Ron did for Nemo was to promote the concept of individual ownership of the Camp by every Scout in the Council. Like never before he encouraged Scouts to buy into the attitude "This is ours!" Because of Ron, that ownership attitude is today our greatest strength and our guaranty for the future.



*Ron Pine - 1980*

## TOM ROGERSON

Tom Rogerson came to us from Scotland with a strong Scouting background. he and his wife settled locally when Tom was hired by Dofasco as a machinist. He was Assistant Scoutmaster to Bob Gibson at the 40th Hamilton (St. Enoch's) from 1938 to 1941 and Scoutmaster at the 27th Hamilton (Adelaide Hoodless) from 1941 to 1949. By then he was very much involved with District and Provincial Training at Blue Springs. Locally, he became Assistant District Commissioner Training and was a most active member of the Nemo Camp Committee. He was certainly one of its early architects. His Medal of Merit was well deserved. Tom died in 1994.

## HARRY SUMNER

A Division Commissioner in the 1960's, Harry served on many work parties at Camp. It was Harry who constructed 2 gorgeous cedar tables and matching benches for the Panabodes from scraps left over during their roof construction.

## JIMMY WRIGHT

James Wright spent more than 30 years in Scouting in Hamilton. Many remember him as the person in charge of the Eaton's Scout Shop. He served as District Commissioner from 1957 to 1960. Jimmy was the epitome of a Scout, always band-box fresh in his uniform, the model of B.P. He lent a dignity to ceremonies at Camp that truly stirred the heart. He was just the right person to be the Scoutmaster of the Hamilton Troops to the 1953 Coronation and to the 1st Canadian Jamboree.

