

9. VOICES OF NEMO PAST AND PRESENT

EARLY RAM INN

Peter Walker advises that it was early March, 1947 when he and the 42nd Normanhurst Scout Troop with Bob Gretton as Scoutmaster, arrived at Camp Nemo for the weekend. They attempted to drive in the muddy lane (no gravel then) but got stuck about half way and had to lug all their equipment and supplies through the mud to Ram Inn. What a surprise when they opened the door to find 4 metal bunk beds with straw ticks and a rat trap under each.

There was a wood stove for heating and cooking. The walls were still covered with chicken feathers and other remnants of chicken, but these rustic conditions didn't seem to bother the Scouts or their leaders and they had an enjoyable weekend. There wasn't too much left of the near by farm house which had earlier burned to the ground. The field stone lower level was very much intact, but the wooden beams and what was left of the superstructure were all caved in.



JAN. 1947

THE SAGA OF "RAM INN"

PHIL SHARP

DANIEL BOONE WEEKEND

The lack of buildings was no deterrent to Gordon Williams to get camp courses off to an early start. Probably the first was the January 1947 Daniel Boone weekend which qualified Scouts for the Winter Camping Badge. These became annual affairs at Nemo and Len Brittain remembers them well.

"We slept in the open and often woke up covered in snow. If it was really cold there would be an icy body contour under your ground sheet. Fleecy bedrolls were unknown in those days and you were always scrounging around for an extra grey army blanket when the temperature took a nose dive. I remember Gord Williams waking up one morning with a frozen finger. He took quite a kidding because he was the author of the Scouts Canada handbook, "Winter Camping and Survival Skills". Among other things, he loved showing Scouts how to build snow shelters and to bake with the reflector oven."

GOURMET COOKS OF TODAY..."EAT YOUR HEART OUT"

Twenty-five Scout Leaders gathered for a weekend Scoutmaster's Preliminary Training Course in September 1947, the first ever at Mount Nemo. They set their tents up around the only building, Ram Inn, which served as the Headquarters/Cookhouse.

Long time east Hamilton Cub Leader, Bill Corrance, was the cook. After a breakfast of bacon and eggs on Saturday and Sunday he saved the bacon drippings. On Sunday morning Bill picked fresh blueberries from the patches at Camp and using the drippings served up fresh blueberry pie for dessert at lunch. What a surprise!

The members of that course still talk about those great pies, the highlight of the weekend!

NOTES ABOUT CAMP NEMO FROM KEN GOOD

"My first real job was as part time janitor for the then Scout H.Q. The H.Q. was then on James St. N. It was there that I met a great friend, Gordon Williams."

"I did not realize that it has been over 50 years since Gord told me about a farm that had been purchased for

a Scout Camp. I think we camped in Ancaster area before."

"Gord gave me a rough map. A friend, fellow Scout Jim Hardman, and I found our way by bike to the "farm" that became Mount Nemo Camp. A neighbour farmer pointed out the camp site but could not understand why anyone would want such a rundown farm."

"Jim and I first noticed a chicken coup (messy, ugh!). It later became Ram Inn. I went on to many weekends winter and summer camping at Mount Nemo as a youth."

"Time or space will not allow a full listing, but here are some highlights:

- the camp had an artesian well
- the only song I can sing is "By the blazing..."
- we slept on the ground until ugly buildings came
- fun to let the air out of Scouter's air mattress
- Lowville was a fantastic store
- parents and Group Committee were great drivers
- I have many great Mount Nemo memories
- climbing the gap up atop Nemo"

"As I eventually evolved into a Scout Leader, I continued weekends at Nemo. I often remember how the May 24th Camporees at Nemo were so great."

"I eventually met a cute Cub Leader (Jackie) at Mount Nemo. You may not be aware but when your Cubs, Scouts and nosy assistants are sound asleep, the moon whether full or new has the most profound romantic effect, only available at Camp Mount Nemo."

"After I married Jackie, we continued Cub and Scout camping at Nemo. We also were Camp Factors many summers." "Jackie and I eventually left Hamilton and Scouting for other adventures. We never forgot Nemo and I am sure the moon effect helped us enjoy 43 years of

BRIDGING THE MIGHTY NEMO CREEK



Group of Scouts bridging the Nemo Creek - 1971

It was to be the Good Turn of all Good Turns...to permanently bridge the Nemo Creek, to conquer the raging spring floodwaters that turned the summer creek trickle into a solid wall of water which tore trees out by the roots, carved out tons of embankment in minutes and swallowed bridges whole! The year was 1952 and every attempt to span the creek to date had met with failure. Len Brittain was about to change all that. Len had a vision which he shared with his Scouts. As a result, he and 15 boys of the 56th Hamilton Troop, which he founded in 1950 at Hess Street School, decided to make the building of a permanent bridge across the creek their summer project. The necessary trees for the project would be cut from the forested side of Campfire Hill and four weekends were set aside for the task.

Len first gave each Scout careful instruction in the proper use and care of an axe. Then they selected 2 stately trees which they felled and trimmed to form the main supports for the deck of the bridge. Each support was 2 1/2 feet in diameter and 40 feet in length. The first weekend the logs were put in place, 5 feet apart above the creek. Len recalls that it took plenty of ropes and all the Scout power in camp to muscle them 300 yards across the valley and into position. The next 2 weekends were spent laying the bridge decking consisting of 2" x 8" planks. The bridge was completed on the final weekend when the fresh cut pole railings were secured in place. It was a time for celebration.

Unfortunately the celebration had to wait because of a last minute accident. Len himself was the casualty. On the last day his axe slipped and sliced into his leg. He spent the next 10 days in the Hamilton General

Hospital. It was a typical case of, "Do as I say and not as I do!" It was a proud Troop that finally lined up to be honoured by the District for having constructed Camp Nemo's longest bridge.

How long did it last? As Nemo bridges go, it lasted a long time, over 10 years. The eroding creek banks finally claimed this magnificent span which through its lifetime echoed to the boots of thousands of happy campers.

During his years in Scouting, Len Brittain served as a Scout, Scoutmaster, District Commissioner and member of the Camp Committee for Camp Nemo



CAMP NEMO: FOR SO MANY A FAMILY EXPERIENCE

Bob Tice, wife Bev, 5 month old Suzanne, 2 year old Paul and 3 year old Peter were on a 2 week "Factoring" stint at camp in August, 1953, living in Ram Inn. They enjoyed leisurely hours watching the early development of camp, the construction of the Factor's Lodge, the Stockade and B.P. Lodge. The Tice's used coal oil lamps, cooked on a Coleman stove and a wood stove provided heat. The kids loved watching the antics of the field mice. Bob said, "The place was lousy with them! It's a wonder they didn't walk off with Ram Inn." Bev disliked them with a passion and lost a fair amount of sleep because of them.

The kids liked to help their dad with his camp chores. When going off to clean the K.Y.B.O.'s, Bob headed out with the cleaning tools, Peter followed with the T. P. and Paul brought up the rear with a bucket of lime. To the campers, they looked like a patrol on safari.

"Where else could a family have such fun and at the same time give their kids such good training?" asks Bob. Always the leader, that Bob Tice!



All Inn - date unknown

ALL IN ALL INN ALL IN

Does this title make sense to you? It certainly does for Peter Walker, Glen Tydd and 8 or 10 other former Hamilton Scout Leaders. It all happened at our Mount Nemo Camp one September weekend in 1954. In just 2 days they built an Adirondak style log structure in the valley using only the natural materials available at camp. They accomplished this feat by dividing the group into teams of choppers, haulers and builders.

The axe wielding choppers felled and trimmed trees from as far away as the Bird Sanctuary. The haulers then laboriously handled them through the woods, down the steep slope to the valley floor below. There the builders cut and notched the logs and framed the building. Glen recalls being a member of the building crew along with Tom Rogerson, Harry West and Jim Wright.

When the shelter was completed, the weary, but happy participants all piled inside. Someone called out, "Are we all in," to which another replied, "I don't know about you but I'm sure all in!"

A voice from the back then shouted out, "Maybe we should call the place "All Inn". They did and the name stuck. So there they were...all in All Inn all in!

Glen Tydd and Harry West returned to install a complete hardwood floor on Thanksgiving Weekend. Their reward was a canned whole-chicken dinner for two served in the luxury of the Cub Lodge. All Inn was then officially ready for the winter camping season.

By 1990 All Inn was itself "all in" and was torn down and used for firewood. This was a fitting end to this once proud monument of Nemo Scouting.

Today Glen Tydd and Peter Walker are two very active retiree living in East Hamilton. Together they amassed 68 years of Scouting service.

TORNADOES AND HURRICANES

Can a tornado and a hurricane strike the same place on the same day? It did, on Friday, October 15, 1954 at Mount Nemo Scout Camp! The name of the tornado was Jim Carey and the name of the hurricane was Hazel.

Beverly Billings and her Cub Pack had just set their tents up around Apple Day Lodge and were settling in for the weekend. Bev set out across the field to the Factors Lodge decked out in her rain gear because it had started to rain rather heavily. Jim Carey saw her and mistook her for his buddy Jim Quinn who was also at camp that weekend. Carey decided to surprise Quinn. He raced across the field and threw a flying tackle at Bev, flattening her in the mud and grass in one second flat!

Hurricane Hazel, the worst inland storm in our history dumped 2" of water on the countryside in less than 12 hours. It blew over tents, trees, trucks and homes. It took us years to recover from the devastation of this disaster.

The final outcome of tornado Jim Carey tackle took a few years but when the story was completed, Cub Leader Beverly Billings married and now is know to everyone as - Bev Carey

AH, THE MAGIC OF MIST-O-VAN!



Transporting a new K.Y.B.O in front of the Baseball backstop - now the sight of Confederation Lodge - Date - early 60's

Bill Tallman, assistant to Gord Williams from 1956 to 1965, fondly remembers accompanying Gord on his Monday rounds of the camp. Off they would go equipped with tools for minor repairs, cleaning supplies, plenty of rolls of toilet paper, lunch, a notebook and always a goodly supply of Mist-O-Van for the K.Y.B.O.'s. There was a certain air about Gord when he returned to Scout House after his K.Y.B.O. tours. If there was enough snow in winter, they would ski. Gord loved to ski. "It was a working tour," Bill recalls. "Mother Nature and weekends of active campers guaranteed a supply of damage needing repairs. Damages needing a specialist or a work party would be recorded and the telephone calls would start that very same day. Gord felt that if you had worked on a project earlier and it now needed repairing, you would naturally feel honour-bound to offer your services."

Gord's daughter Elsa remembers tagging along behind her father at camp when she was very young. She would help him sweep out cabins, carry supplies and of course spray the K.Y.B.O.'s with Mist-O-Van!



Confederation Lodge K.Y.B.O - wheelchair accessible toilet , 2 urinals and one regular toilet - 1995

In mapping out the camp, Gord discovered 6 major patches of poison ivy. Hugh Halley recalls only too well the bad case of poison ivy he had as a result of working with the group constructing the Colonel DuBurgh Memorial Chapel. Harlie Duncan agreed to be a one-man poison ivy eradicator. On spring and summer weekends for years, Harlie, with a spray can mounted on his back, could be seen attacking the ivy. They were a great team: Harlie with his poison ivy spray and Gord with his Mist-O-Van!

Bill Tallman also remembers escorting Gord on another tour each year. "Gord was very P.R. conscious. During the year the neighbours had occasion to be concerned about our campfires, or unhappy with Scouts taking shortcuts across their fields when hiking, or upset when the Scouts delighted in chasing their cows when they would wander into camp, so each Christmas we would make the rounds of the surrounding farms to distribute chocolates and cigarettes to the families in appreciation for their understanding and support. On Gord's part it was a very sincere gesture and one that was appreciated by all of the Camp Nemo neighbours."

MORNING EXERCISE

Kevin O'Halloran recalls being with his brother Terry on a Scout Foresters Badge Course. They camped in what was left of the old apple orchard in front of B.P. Lodge. The course was put on by Bill Tallman and Harlie Duncan, who had a wonderful sense of humour.

Terry and Kevin were told that the program would start early Saturday morning around 8 a.m., but at 6:30 a.m., they were roused from their sleep by the voice of Harlie Duncan extolling the virtue of early morning exercise of one, two - one, two. Rubbing the sleep from their eyes and dreading the thought of push-ups in the morning as the sun was just appearing over the horizon, they tumbled from their tents to see Harlie, a man of large stature, standing in a stride jump position, with his two hands level with his shoulders, shouting one, two - one, two, as only the index fingers of each hand moved up and down. Needless to say, the joke was on them! They needed no urging to jump back into their warm sleeping bags for an extra hour of blissful sleep.

As Kevin wrote in June, 1996, "I have just turned 48 years old and that memory of 36 years ago is just as fresh in my mind as if it were yesterday. Scouter Harlie, wherever you are, thank you for showing me that a sense of humour is what every Scouter should have."

