

The Saga of



Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch

Denver Area Council
Boy Scouts of America



" . . . Genuine leadership in any cause is rare, beyond price, and always the nucleus of significant achievement."

Harold J. Seymour
Designs For Fund Raising

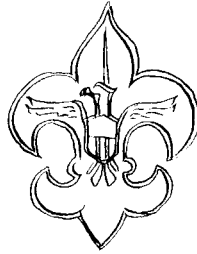
The Peaceful Valley Saga

This combined version of both the original and the updated version of the Saga is dedicated to those who made this Scout haven possible. As we enter into the 5th decade of the Scout Ranch we look forward to the continuing outreach to those youth, both boys and girls, that are our hope for the future world leaders.

One of the driving forces of Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch passed away in 2000. It is with the most profound expression of gratitude that we offer our thanks to our past Scout Executive Bill Kephart.

Part one of this Saga is as originally written by Albert C. Rehmer.

DENVER AREA COUNCIL



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Dedication to Peaceful Valley Saga

The very existence of the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch is a tribute to the leadership qualities of the Denver Area Council Executive Board. The fact that they have taken a dream for the finest Scout camp in the nation, and transformed it into reality, is further testimony to this outstanding collection of Denver's most influential volunteers.

Among the many, we especially want to name Stanley T. Wallbank, Cris Dobbins, Ray Jenkins, Harold Silver, and Berne Hart. Our deepest thanks to these friends of Scouting, and many like them, whose hard work and financial commitment have enriched the lives of thousands of Denver area youth.

In addition, our deepest thanks to the author of this saga, Albert C. Rehmer. His countless hours of research and manuscript preparation, with help and encouragement from his wife Jean, have produced this invaluable chronicle of a place that has come to mean so much to so many. Mr. Rehmer has enabled the past to enrich our future, and we are ever grateful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William R. Kephart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

W. R. Kephart
Scout Executive
Denver Area Council
Boy Scouts of America

We are grateful

to

Albert C. Rehmer

For this

“Saga of Peaceful Valley”

Not only has he spent much time in the preparation of the manuscript but he has given hours, days and Months to the necessary research. And we know that his wife Jean has contributed encouragement and direct help to bring the “saga” to this point. Someday we hope that Al’s efforts will appear in a more picturesque printed booklet.

Executive Board
Denver Area Council
Boy Scouts of America

This re-creation of Mr.’s Rehmer’s Saga has been re-printed in its original format and style. No attempt has been made to edit or correct any of his work. We again offer our thanks for his ground work in continuing the “Saga of Peaceful Valley”. The second phase of the Saga is continued at the end of Mr. Rehmer’s work.

Original graphics and illustrations by Ginger M. Green

The Saga of the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch

- I. **“A prologue to the story...”**
- II. **“In the beginning...”**
- III. **“Son, this here land is Indian country...”**
- IV. **“Pike sat erect in his saddle. In the west he saw a mountain which appeared like a small cloud...”**
- V. **“It’s history is written in the ruts upon the sod...”**
- VI. **“Timber...!”**
- VII. **“The clickety-clack of a railroad track...”**
- VIII. **“The sodbusters and ranchers come to the valley of the Kiowa...”**
- IX. **“Torrential were the rains that fell upon the divide, and the ‘ole Kiowa cut loose with a roar...”**
- X. **“’Twas an ill wind that would bring no good that streaked out of the north on that cold winter morn...”**
- XI. **“Looking at these times through the eyes of a boy...”**
- XII. **“The Boy Scouts come to the valley of the Kiowa...”**
- XIII. **“Say, scout, have you discovered the valley of the Kiowa...?”**
- XIV. **“Only the beginning-Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch Revisited...”**
- XV. **Acknowledgments.**

Preface

The story of the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch will never be told in its entirety--too much has been lost to the passing of the years. In our endeavor here we can only hope that we have been able to capture some on the spirit and the highlights of the times. Perhaps we will have captured just enough to whet your appetite and make you search for more!

This saga is dedicated to all the Boy Scouts and their leaders who will in years to come tread upon the hills of the Ranch and lie upon the land at night to take their rest.

Albert C. Rehmer, author.

The Peaceful Valley song

Tune: "Love me tender"

Sunlit meadows, moonlit trails,
Land of memories.
We have proved our Scouting skills,
Midst your rocks and trees.
Scouting friendships-Welded strong,
In our hearts will be.
We have gained the strength we need,
To live in harmony.
Peaceful Valley-You are ours
And will always be.
Peaceful Valley we'll be true,
Through eternity.

.... words by Gary Schrenk, Eagle Scout, Post 54.
Peaceful Valley Staff member, summer 1966

I. “A prolog to the story...”

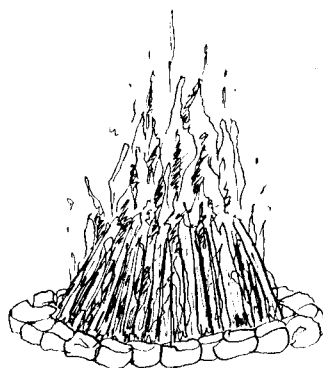
The hills are gentle by the standards of folk accustomed to the towering snow-capped Rockies that lace the face of Colorado. The many ponderosa pine scatter themselves about the slopes in random fashion. The valley of the Kiowa feeds from the divide to the south, winds its way rather aimlessly to the north where it drains into the South Platte basin. The air is crisp and clean. They even say there is air here that no other human being has ever breathed! In the summertime one can watch the mighty thunderstorms as they build to the west, then come tumbling off lofty Pike’s Peak to dump their rains upon the grateful land. But in winter it is a cold northerly wind with a graying sky that may tell you to make haste for snow is on the way.

The bluebirds are as blue as any sky you’ve ever seen, and the blue jay will let you know with a few well-chosen scolding remarks that you have entered his domain. In the still of a quiet night, quite late, one can occasionally hear the forlorn howl of a lonely coyote as he makes his nocturnal rounds. This is indeed a land at peace with itself and in harmony with beauty and nature. This is the valley of the Kiowa as a scout may view it today.

It has been written that, “A boy’s will is the wind’s will, and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.” Surely this could have been written about a scout and a place called the Peaceful valley Scout Ranch, for across the face of these more than twenty-six hundred acres move legions of city boys. It is here that they have the chance to view nature in much of its untouched splendor, walk among its rolling hills, explore the rugged timeworn crevices, and perhaps to sit upon a tall hill to ponder - as anybody should - just who he is in the great scheme of things and what the future may hold for him. On a clear night the heavens abound with a starry array that would fire the imagination of any boy. Add to that an inspiring council campfire with all of its songs and laughter. You then have the ingredients to help a boy feel good about himself and the world around him.

Yes, the hills are gentle, the land is generous and fair. That a boy should walk upon the face of this land is only right, for it is certain that the days spent here will be remembered and cherished all the days of his life. The Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch is all these and more. It is indeed an American dream for an American boy.

But there is a saga to tell about this Ranch! In the passing of time, days and years long gone by, there were those events and stories - filled with sound and fury, fact and fiction, fantasy and folklore - that are just waiting to be told. Perhaps they can best be told around a friendly campfire. So, bring along a friendship log, throw it on the fire, and let the story begin!



II. “In the beginning...”

It would be sheer folly to go back into the history of the valley of the Kiowa too far. We know that most exciting things happened during the last hundred years. But at the same time we feel it would add to our story to briefly recall a few of these things about the Ranch that go a long, long way back into the history of the area.

This area is supposed to be millions of years old. No one really knows but scientists have been studying the various carbon deposits and such, and can guess the age of deposits, give or take a few million years. For some of the interesting stories about fossils, dinosaurs, and the many other creatures that once roamed the area, one should secure Al Look's book entitled "*1000 million years on the Colorado Plateau.*" In this book the author explains the way he thinks this part of the world was formed.

We have been told that the area in which the Ranch lies was once a part of a massive mountain range - much like the Rockies today. They stretched in a southeasterly direction for hundreds of miles. Time and nature have eroded away these once mighty mountains.

But don't let this fool you! Even today the elevation at the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch is seven thousand feet. The divide, some seven miles to the south, is seventy-five hundred feet. It is interesting to note that the elevation of the divide is equal to that of Lookout Mountain, west of Denver. What wonderful country! It is the eastern most part of the Rockies and as one views a relief map it is easy to see the Rockies stretch their piney fingers out into the plains in that Black Forest region.

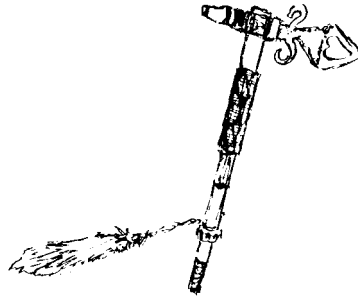
There are numerous signs to give us clues to the kinds of things that happened in the history of the area. For example, petrified wood has been found in abundance on the Ranch. This tells us that great, ancient forests once stood on this land, fell to the earth, were buried in mud and sand. Finally the trees petrified. Of interest is the fossil remains found in the rocks. Also, we know that once upon a time this region was covered by a vast ocean. The characteristic minerals found in this region are petrified wood, agate and jasper - all native to this section of the state. Also, we can find minerals such as rock crystal, smoky quartz, and amazonite. These latter three have been carried by streams from the mountains to the west.

There is evidence that man came to the east slopes of the Rockies about twenty-five thousand years ago. The Folsom and Yuma people did indeed live and hunt on this land. It has been estimated they left about ten thousand years ago. Modern day Indian tribes began coming into this area about twenty-five hundred years ago.

But what about the Indians of the past one hundred years or so? Now here is a story!

III. “Son, this here land is Indian country...”

“Indians! Indians! Indians!” Nothing could have caused greater fear in the hearts of the early pioneers than to hear the cry of a pending Indian attack. And attacks came. Our story has to tell about the red man because he had an important part to play in the drama as it unfolded along the Kiowa an in the region.



It is difficult to say when the first red man came to the valley of the Kiowa. But he certainly did come and the evidence is there. Even today many a scout who has visited the Ranch can claim an arrowhead find. In fact, a few years ago Ranger Sam Jackson found a very good tomahawk!

For many, many years before the white man ventured into what we now call Colorado, roving bands of Indians moved about the mountains and plains. Certainly you have read about the Ute Indians who occupied the Colorado Mountains. The “buffalo Indians”, as they were called in the early times, lived on the plains of eastern Colorado. By the time the first pioneer came to Colorado in the nineteenth century, the Indians had become expert horsemen, had firearms, and used metal tools.

People who have made a real study of the Indians of Colorado say that the area of the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch can claim possibly five or more tribes of red men during the nineteenth century. Of course, it is ever so difficult to pinpoint Indian tribes during these early days. They were nomads, following good pasture for their ponies and ample food supplies for themselves. The Scout Ranch did indeed have these basic needs in abundance. However, it is generally agreed that the part of Colorado including the mountains to the west was the home of the Ute’s. Our story will point up the fact that this tribe was frequently a visitor in the Kiowa valley. The Cheyenne’s and Arapahoe’s could lay claim to that area east of the Front Range and north of the Arkansas River. The Kiowa’s and Comanche’s ranged widely, but generally lived south of the Arkansas in Colorado. The Kiowa’s did spend time in the valley of the Kiowa. How else could the creek have gotten its name? So much for some of the facts.



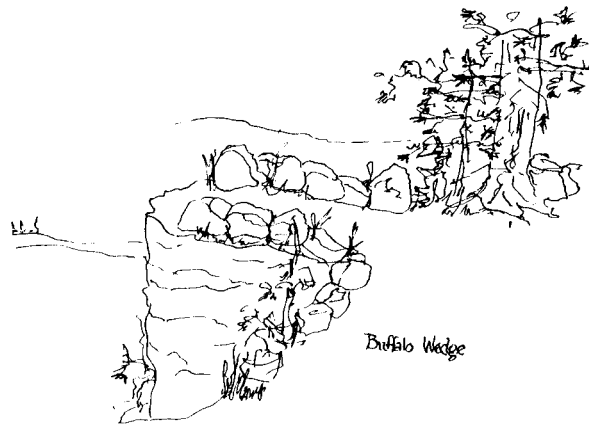
Many grand stories have been passed down about the Indians who lived along the Kiowa or visited the area. One of these stories has to do with old Ute Chief Colorow when he camped along the West Kiowa creek, just a short distance from the present Scout Ranch. The Indian campsite was on the Axel Brazelton Ranch. The old Chief brought with him more than three hundred braves. Mrs. Clara Elsner, daughter of Alex Brazelton, told us the story.

“Chief Colorow ate dinner with my father (Alex Brazelton) often during the more than two weeks he camped in the area. He ate like a wolf, assuring my uncle in between mouthfuls that his braves would not harm him. One day he saw that my uncle had a slab of bacon. Colorow cut a long slice of the bacon and heaped it with sugar and ate it like it was delicious!”

Mrs. Elsner gave us another interesting account of the Indians that went something like this.

“It seemed the Indian braves liked nothing better than to wrestle - we’re sure it must have been Indian wrestling. One day one of the braves chose my father to wrestle. In the match the brave was defeated and didn’t take kindly to it! The brave went for his knife about the time my father took off for the closest hill as fast as his legs would carry him. The other braves thought this was great fun, but finally convinced the defeated brave to let it end there.”

An early pioneer settler told of seeing Indians stampede a herd of buffalo over a bluff to kill them for meat. Unfortunately, he never did tell anyone the whereabouts of the location.



On one of the bluffs on the Ranch, people who have lived there have come upon rocks that apparently have been placed in a very definite arrangement. It would appear that they were laid to form a “V”, and could have been used to herd buffalo over the cliff to their deaths. Crafty Indians long ago figured out how to stampede buffaloes over high cliffs to secure meat and hides. This method often proved more profitable than the mounted hunt.

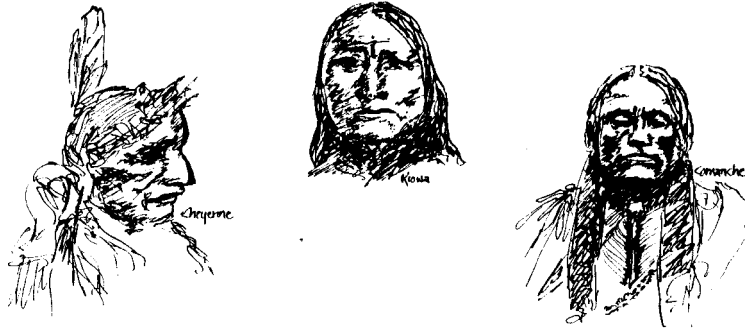
Still another story had to do with the ways of Indians. The unknown settler told it like this.

“One day my father had to go to Denver and there was a neighbor man who came to eat dinner with my mother and us kids. We had just finished. Stealthily in the door stepped a big buck Indian with gun in hand. The neighbor man made him leave his gun outside of the door. The buck took the butter off the dish and rubbed it on his hair. When he had finished eating what was on the table he took the meat platter that had fat on it and rubbed it over his face and hands. Then he left.” (Oil, grease and lard were used by Indians to repel insects, just like our present day repellents.)

Carl F. Mathews wrote of early Indian troubles in his book, *“Early days around the divide”*.

“Affairs ran along smoothly for the homesteaders until 1864 when the restless Arapahoe’s and Cheyenne’s began their forays in retaliation for their lands being invaded and the buffalo herds being killed off, depriving them of their main source of livelihood.....about the last of June, a party of soldiers had been looking for Indians in the vicinity of Colorado City (Colorado Springs) and seeing none, camped for lunch at Jimmy’s camp, about ten miles east; posting a sentry over the horses, they were lying on the grass and ridiculing the reports of the settlers regarding Indians, when suddenly a band of some twenty-five Indians dashed over the hill, and before the men realized what has happened, their horses were gone. It was a shamefaced band of soldiers who hiked into Colorado City and faced the jeers of settlers!”

Despite precautions that settlers took to ward off Indian attacks, they did come. In 1864 just a few miles northwest of the Scout Ranch, the farmhouse of the Hungate family was attacked, and all five members of the family massacred. The band of Indians headed by Roman Nose was guilty of the attack. Within a few months after the Hungate massacre, numerous Indian attacks occurred in the area east of Denver.



More than fifty men, women and children were killed, and stage line stations were burned. Indian leaders by the names of Roman Nose, Black Kettle, Left Hand, Little Raven and White Antelope were leading these raids.

One of the stories about these times has to do with the superstition of Roman Nose. He believed no white man would ever kill him so long as he avoided eating food prepared with iron utensils. His superstition did not hold true for him. He died in the battle of Beecher Island - some distance east of the Scout Ranch on Bijou Creek.

At dusk when the sun starts its tumble behind the hills to the west, it is not too difficult to imagine that there is a Kiowa brave and his horse silhouetted against the dying day. If only this land could yield more of its rich secrets about the days of the Indians along the Kiowa! But "dead men tell no tales", and we are told that Indians are buried all over the valley. So scout, watch your step, for you may be crossing a trail that an Indian once used, or perhaps you will be making your camp where some red man once made his camp, took his sleep.

The red man did walk and hunt on your land. He lived and died along 'ole Kiowa Creek. Son, this here land was Indian country!





IV. “Pike sat erect in his saddle. In the west he saw a mountain which appeared like a small cloud...”

Winter was on its way in 1806 when Lieutenant Pike forged his way across the plains of what is now eastern Colorado. He was on an official mission ordered by the United States Government to inspect the “Shining mountains” and to secure and bring back to the government information about the tremendous area the United States had just purchased from France under the Louisiana Purchase for three cents an acre in 1803. As the mission worked its way up the Arkansas River the official records in the Army journal had this to say.

“Suddenly the bare plains were broken by a clump of cottonwoods lining the stream, red rock cliffs rose about four hundred feet. Then about 2:00 P.M., November 15, 1806, Pike sat erect in his saddle. In the west he saw a mountain which appeared like a small cloud. In half an hour, as the men rose to the west, the mountain appeared in full view. The soldiers rested their horses and gave three cheers to the ‘Mexican Mountain’ - thinking it was the natural boundary between the provinces of Louisiana and New Mexico”.

Although Lieutenant Pike’s first sighting of this majestic mountain came from an area on the Arkansas River - some fifty miles to the south of the Ranch - today a scout on the Peaceful Valley Ranch can feel the same exhilaration Pike must have felt when he saw the mountain for the first time. On the Ranch it is possible to climb any number of hills or bluffs and suddenly have the great peak loom before him in the southwest.

Long before any white man came to this area, this mountain belonged to the Indians. It was revered as the legends handed down suggest. Perhaps the best legend has to do with the origin of Pike’s Peak itself.

“Many years ago, the red man said there dwelt in the west a tribe of Indians to whom god Manitou had given a land so fair that it seemed to be earthly paradise. At first they were very happy, exalting in fishing and hunting, enjoying the rugged mountains and vast plains, delighting in the blue, blue sky and sunshine, admiring the rainbow that came after the summer showers. But presently they became weary of the perfection on earth. They longed for heavenly paradise. God Manitou watched as they gathered bits of rocks, earth and maize to take to heaven. Manitou was troubled for the lack of appreciation of the good life he had given them. Finally he said, ‘Oh, my children. You despise the earth, yet you would take part of it to paradise. I must punish you for your discontent and selfishness’.

“He loosened floodwaters upon them. The waters covered the plains, rose higher and higher. The Indians each fought for his own safety. Still they carried with them sacks of earth, stone and maize. Manitou took pity on them. ‘My children,’ he commanded as they arrived at the gate of heaven, which is at the end of the plains where the sky and mountains meet; ‘drop your burdens to earth. Know that earth is earth and heaven is heaven’. And they dropped their earth and rocks and maize into one vast heap that rose high above the waters to the very threshold of the portal where stood the Great Spirit Manitou. This, say the Indians, is the origin of Pike’s Peak, which is directly under the entrance to heaven and which is made of the earth’s richest possessions”.

On a clear day it is claimed one can see Manitou in the contour lines of the mountains that form the chain to the south of the peak itself. It is said that he rests on his back with his face to the blue, blue sky, guarding the legend of his beautiful majestic mountain.

Climb the highest hill, scout. Look to the southwest and have that feeling come over you that you are Lieutenant Pike viewing this majestic mountain for the first time. Rethink the legend of Manitou and its meaning. Then carefully try to apply its meaning to a tenderfoot scout as he gives the Scout sign and says, “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty...”.

There is another major geographical feature near the Ranch. Though it is less dominating than Pike’s Peak, it is much closer to the Ranch. Just a few miles to the east of Bijou - is a large rocky butte, rising high above the level of the surrounding plain. It has sheer rock walls on all sides, with no way of reaching the top except through one narrow pass. Today it’s known as Fremont’s Fort - and for good reason. It was here that Colonel John C. Fremont, with a complement of scouts, was besieged for days and nights by hostile Indians. The Indians made several attempts to reach the top and massacre Fremont’s scouts, but each time they were turned back with heavy losses. This continued for several days until two scouts made their escape and made their way to the little town of Auraria - now Denver - and secured help which was able to reach the fort to rescue the survivors.



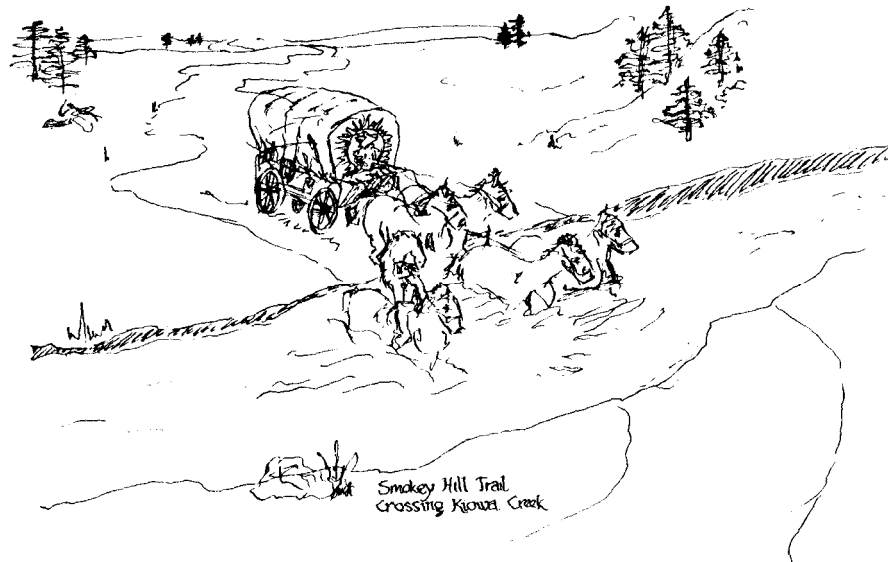
WOW! What a history! Pike sure started something when he first rode over that final hill and got his first look at the peak.

V. “Its history is written in the ruts upon the sod...”

A modern jet streaks across the sky above. Shining, sleek new automobiles roll on ultra-modern highways, seemingly with little effort. Perhaps - just perhaps - an occasional passerby will ask the questions: “What place is this? Where are we now?”

Time has taken its toll in the tracks left by those who trod upon the sod on the plains of eastern Colorado. But after more than a century of passing time, amidst the buffalo grass and clumps of sagebrush, remain faint traces of timeworn ruts forged by the wagons upon the sod. Erased are the simple campfire sites that once gave comfort to these early comers, and gone are the simple grave markers that followed the trails, giving silent testimony to times of sickness, hunger and thirst, terrible storms and Indian troubles.

Have you ever heard of the Smoky Hill trail? Why, it is one of the most famous old trails of the west! In fact, several Denver area scout troops have traveled portions of the trail to qualify for the Historic Trails Award. This trail passed within a few miles to the north of the Scout Ranch. There are old-timers who say that some of the wagons which once upon a time used this trail, crossed the Ranch property. The Smoky started way back in St. Joseph, Missouri - right on the Missouri River - and ended in San Francisco, California. The trail crossed Kiowa Creek at Kiowa, just a scant seven or eight miles north of the Ranch. A few miles further north of the Smoky lies the old Starvation Trail. It was a short cut-off of the Smoky Hill Trail and its name implies exactly what the travelers thought of the trail. Still further north was the northern branch of the Smoky.



The Smoky Hill Trail moved along the Smoky Hill River across Kansas to its headwaters in eastern Colorado, then west to Cherry Creek and on into Denver. It was the shortest road to the newly discovered gold fields in the Rockies.

However, due to the near desert conditions, it was the most difficult. Other well-known trails were the Oregon to the north and the Santa Fe to the south. The scarcity of water made the Smoky the hardest and most dangerous of the great prairie roads from the Missouri River to the gold fields of Colorado. One author claimed that more people died of hunger and thirst on the Smoky than from all the Indian attacks put together. In 1859 the Rocky Mountain News reported the following account.

“Two footmen have just arrived via the Smoky route. They appear to have suffered from hunger and thirst. They reported having passed some ten or fifteen dead bodies, unburied, and many graves. These men say they lived for nine days on prickly pear cactus and hawk”.

A pioneer train arriving in Denver about the same time gave this account.

“We picked up three men who had given out and laid down to die of hunger and thirst, having eaten nothing for four days...We traveled 150 miles without water, except for melting snow, which fortunately for us, snow fell twice during the time”.

Covered wagons and on foot, even pushcarts and wheelbarrows, brought these pioneers to the mountains via the Smoky. The equipment was poor, the food scant. They faced the chilling winds, the snows of the winter and the mud of the early spring. Then there was the scorching sun that beat down upon them, days on end without rain. The Smoky Hill Trail was lined with abandoned property, broken wagons, dead horses and oxen, and the ominous unmarked graves. The trail was often ten miles wide, depending on local conditions. It followed the contours of the countryside, keeping to the ridges rather than the low ground. Grazing areas for the animals or even the highly essential buffalo chips would often change the route the trail took for several miles. The Butterfield Stage line used this route and it is interesting to note that the fare from Kiowa to Denver in 1880 was \$5.15.



Just a little more than one hundred years ago a very famous traveler by the name of General Ulysses S. Grant, campaigning for the presidency of the United States and later to become our eighteenth president, traveled the old Smoky by stagecoach to Denver. This was in 1868. Still standing in Denver is the Four-Mile House, last stop on the Smoky before arriving in Denver. Scouts may view the building at Cherry Creek and South Forest Street



Although the Cherokee Trail and the Jimmy Camp Road did not run directly through the Scout ranch, they were close, and their stories should be told.

The Cherokee Trail ran north out of Colorado Springs (Then known as Colorado City) passing next to the land now owned by the Air Force Academy, followed Plum Creek and then on to Franktown. This trail dates back considerably before that of the Smoky. Fremont and a number of other early explorers followed much of this trail enroute to exploration in the Denver area. The trail to the west coast, crossing the Continental Divide at Fort Bridger, Wyoming, on into Salt Lake City, thence through Nevada and into California. It is interesting to note that the Russell Party (to be remembered is early California gold field history) led a gold-seeking group along portions of the Cherokee and the Jimmy Camp road into Denver just one hundred years ago. They were headed for the California gold fields. The irony of this story is that this party passed right by the mountains that would be yielding to a tremendous gold strike one year later!

The Jimmy Camp road ascended from Jimmy Camp Creek, east of Colorado Springs, moved north across the divide near the Scout Ranch on West Kiowa Creek. This road can still be located about four miles west of the Ranch. Its greatest value to the area had to do with the wagons that used this road to take timber cut along the Kiowa and other creeks to Denver. Many feeder wagon trails, all through the Black Forest area, fed into the Jimmy Camp road. It was the closest way to Denver. The road was named for a Jimmy Daugherty. He was a member of Major Long's Expedition which climbed Pike's Peak in 1820, Later, Jimmy returned to the Pike's Peak region, establishing himself in his lonely cabin on Jimmy Camp Creek. He was visited by an occasional trapper and he obtained furs by trading with the Indians. Once a year he went to St. Louis where he traded his furs for supplies, including whiskey, and weapons and trinkets for the Indians.



Once a year Jimmy went to St. Louis where he traded his furs for supplies, including whiskey, weapons, and trinkets for the Indians. On his return trip to his cabin he would build a huge fire on a nearby hill. The Indians, who were Jimmy's friends, looked for the signal. It is said that Jimmy was murdered in 1833 by eleven men who robbed and killed him for his possessions. Ute Indians found Jimmy's body and buried it beneath the dirt floor of the cabin. They trailed the murderers and avenged his death by hanging them.

On Interstate 25 at Platteville, Colorado one can visit the rebuilt St. Vrain Fort. Traders, who established the very famous Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River east of Pueblo, also established Fort St. Vrain. In the book, "*Rivalry on the River*", considerable mention is made of the fur trade that moved from the St. Vrain Fort to Fort Bent. This author points out the fur trade caravans came up Kiowa Creek, right through the property that is now owned by the Scouts, over the divide to Fort Bent, then on to St. Joseph, Missouri.

When a stranger steps up to you and asks, "What place is this?" Don't hesitate to tell the story as it unfolded. Time will continue to cover the trails with grass. But there is still a good chance to follow the history of the times as it was written in the ruts upon the sod.

VI. "Timber....!"



"In the broken ridges of the divide which separates the valleys of the Platte and Arkansas Rivers, there were camped a band of trappers on a creek called the Bijou. Numerous strips of buffalo were hanging in process of cure - should the party settle themselves here in order to lay in a store of provisions. It was termed in the language of the times, 'Lay in meat.' "

This is the manner in which George Ruxton introduced his book, "*Life in the Far West*". The book was first published in 1847 and became an important source for those who wrote about these times and these places. According to Ruxton, the dry creeks, including Kiowa Creek, in the area that we see today, were live brooks, dotted with beaver dams, when mountain men first came to the area.

E.C. Mathews in his book, "*Twixt here and sundown*", felt moved to tell it like this:

"The last fifty years have brought a great many changes which I notice more than others because I have been away most of the time. When we brothers get together in summer, to walk on the old ranch (on the Kiowa), we scare up a few deer and gather a few flint arrowheads lost by Indian hunters of bygone days. But the flowing springs of yesteryear have gone dry. The soil in the pasture has washed away, exposing bare rocks and gravel pits. Many pine trees have died and wild berries no longer ripen in rich profusion. Where I caught my first fish on a live stream, a few dismal cottonwoods and willows now surround a pile of sand, washed down from the hills.

“Over fifty years ago ‘old man Young’, a white-haired and be-whiskered pioneer remarked, ‘the white man sure raised hell with this country. The grass was belly-deep to a horse when I went through here for the first time’ “.

Thus, we have set the stage for our chapter dealing with the timber industry along the Kiowa. It is at least part of the reason the streams no longer flow, the grass is no longer up to the belly of a horse, and the trees are fewer in number up and down the valley of the Kiowa.

Scouts on the Ranch today can see the remnants of the heavy timber-cutting industry that swept the valley in the ‘60’s and ‘70’s of the last century. Aged and grizzly old stumps, full of the pine pitch that makes a quick, hot campfire, dot the level ground on the mesa just behind campsites one, two and three. In the arroyo where the new chapel has been built, hiking scouts may come upon an old lean-to type structure, almost in complete disrepair. This structure served as a dwelling place for those who cut timber on the Ranch as recently as the 1920’s. But most of the timber cutting took place many decades before this time.

The main lumber mills were located chiefly along the Kiowa, Box Elder and Running Creeks. The lumber was cut on the Ranch and elsewhere, hauled to the mill where it was milled into usable lumber. It was then loaded on wagons and hauled via the Jimmy Camp Road to Denver to build homes and other buildings. It has been said that this area was the chief source of lumber for Denver during these times. The quality of the lumber was generally good. Apparently there were numerous yellow pine trees to be cut at one time. This is no longer true and it is very difficult to find many on the Ranch. A few years ago when several old buildings were torn down in the valley, workmen found pieces of lumber twenty-four inches wide, and two by fours that were nearly forty feet long. This suggests that a large tree was needed to produce this kind of milled lumber. It is interesting to note that the first log cabin on the Ranch was built by John Schimph in 1864 from logs cut on the Ranch property. Unfortunately the cabin fell into such disrepair that it had to be torn down. This was after 1935. It stood just east of the present Ranger’s home.

This early industry was big. A Mary Jones Wright told of counting as many as one hundred “ten teams”, mostly oxen, with some teams of horses and mules, passing her home one day, with loads of lumber on their way to Denver. The driver of such a team controlled the lead animals by a single “jerk line” attached to the lead team, and taught the animals to respond to a “gee” or “haw” signaling the animals to move to either to the right or to the left. This made such teams hard to handle. One old-timer told about the team “that broke and ran” for Kiowa Creek when the thirsty animals saw the water, taking the driver, wagon and lumber into the creek with them! Needless to say, it was necessary to unload the wagon of its lumber, then get additional teams to pull the wagon out.

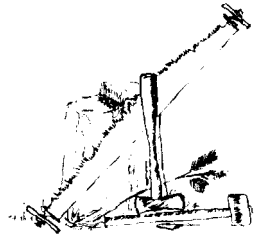
Dr. Long in her book, “*The Smoky Hill Trail*”, tells the story about a band of outlaws on the Kiowa during these logging days.

“It seemed that several cowboy outfits surrounded a robber band at Gomer’s Mill, near the Scout Ranch, and starved them out. When the outlaws surrendered under a white truce flag in order to stand trial, Windlin, the boss of one of the outfits and his men began shooting the robbers down.

Fred Bachman, Sr. of Kiowa, stopped the shooting in time to save half of the band. When the survivors has served their prison terms, they revenged their dead comrades by ‘getting’ members of the outfit who had done the shooting, and killed them one by one as the opportunity offered. Windlin was shot in Trinidad, and his buddy was thrown out of a window, so the story goes”.

Among the first and most well known men to come to the divide area to harvest timber was P.P. Gomer. He established three mills along a number of the creeks, including the Kiowa. Just one mile south of the Scout property was one of Gomer’s mills. Old-timers in the area tell of seeing piles of sawdust larger than houses at this site. The arroyo located at that site is called Wildcat Canyon. Gomer was not the only sawmill operator, however, and trains of oxen, mules, horses and even steer-pulled wagons streamed back and forth to Denver with their loads of lumber. Some of these early sawmills grew into present-day Elbert County towns.

The extent of the timber operation has been spelled out in Carl F. Mathews, “*Early Days Around the Divide*”.



“In 1870, General Palmer advertised for men to haul (railroad) ties from the Pinery for the Kansas Pacific Railroad, offering to pay \$1.00 per tie delivered at Kit Carson and slightly less as the road advanced. It is said that 125,000 ties were then plied at and near the Gomer Mill and altogether some 500,000 were cut and hauled. A good team of six yoke of oxen could haul from 130 to 150 ties”.

The sawmills had their problems with the Indians too. Mrs. Addie Potts, daughter of pioneer Jake Brazelton, remembered her father telling “how the Indians would attack the mills and run off the mules”. This was in 1873.

As a scout walks the Ranch today it is hard to believe that at one time there were many more trees on the Ranch. Many of the stumps are still there. But the ranch is fortunate that much of the beauty of its valley was untouched by these timber cutting days. There is real hope that nature is helping the slopes make a substantial comeback. In a number of places seedling Ponderosa pine trees may be found in patches, holding their bristly little heads barely above the earth.

As you drive on the road leading to the camp office, make the final curve before arriving at your destination, notice the giant Ponderosa pine that stands on a knoll on your right. Paul Kemp, summer staff member in 1968, measured this tree, found it to be forty-eight inches in diameter, and more than twelve feet in circumference! It has one limb that is eighteen inches in diameter. It is believed that this “grand old gent” may well have stood long before a white man set foot in the valley. What stories this tree could tell - if only it could talk! With a little luck and good conservation out huge friend ought to be around for Boy Scouts to enjoy well into the twenty-first century.

You can't hear the cry "timber" in the valley anymore. You can't hear the hum of the buzz saw as it bits into the yellow pine. Nor are you able to hear the chug of the steam engine that was used to power the saws. But it all happened. So, why don't you sit upon one of the grizzly old stumps that dot your Ranch and think about it for a while?



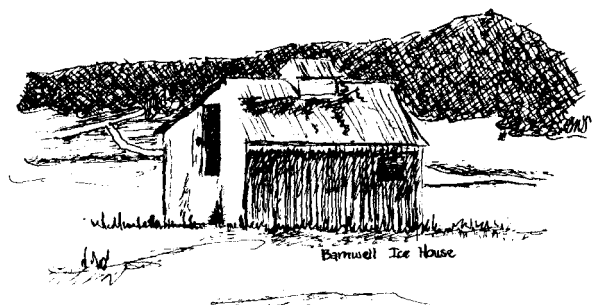
VIII. "The Clickety-Clack of a railroad track..."

Old timers still will tell you that on a cold night, when sounds seem to travel better, if you listen ever so carefully along the valley of the Kiowa, you may be able to hear the shrill whistle of the coal-burning steam engine as it huffs and puffs its way up to the top of the divide. It is true that trains no longer pass up or down the valley - but who can tell? Could it be that the echoes of long-ago train whistles have been trapped in the valley?

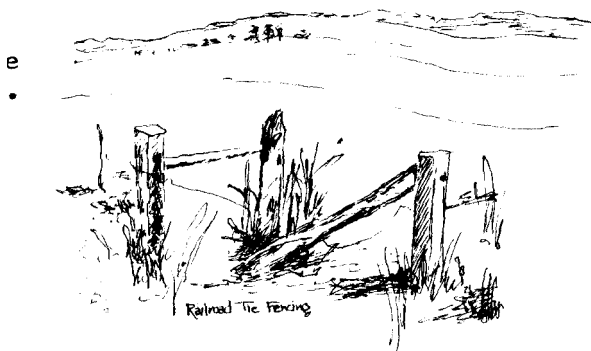
There was a time when a guy could have counted a dozen or more trains daily moving up and down this valley. Why, they even say you could have stepped up to the ticket window in the station at Elbert in 1882, asked for a ticket to Mexico City, paid the man \$48.20, and with a little luck arrive in that city in a little over one hundred hours later!

The right-of-way for the Denver and New Orleans Railroad was purchased from the ranchers who then owned the property that now goes to make up the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch in June 1881. The rail bed was built the same year and the first train ran the following year. The road was laid with 50-pound iron rails at first. Carl Mathews said "It did a heavy freight business and I have seen three trains seesaw at Sidney Switch between Elbert and Eastonville in order to clear the track. In the early days as many as seven passenger trains each way were run between Denver and Colorado Springs or Pueblo. Later, after several changes in ownership, it became the Falcon Line of the Colorado and Southern Railroad. Although the original intent was to have the railroad go all the way to New Orleans, it never did make it.

The railroad right-of-way ran up the Kiowa, right through the length of the present day Scout Ranch. The rail bed is somewhat visible today. Also, the old Barnwell Station, built about 1882 and used by the railroad, was believed to be the small building that still stands next to the south entrance to the Scout Ranch. It is old and weathered, needs repair, and there has been the thought that it might be turned into a museum by the Scouts. There is some doubt if this little house was ever used by the railroad. Mr. and Mrs. Roy Carver, both in their eighties, claim that their family built this house and used it as an ice house. Nevertheless, there it stands and it does look like a little railroad building.



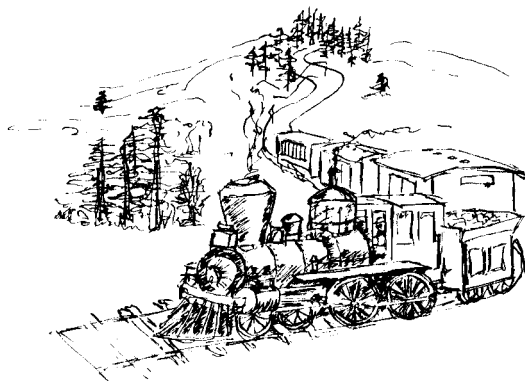
Some of the old roadbed pilings are still to be seen on the Ranch. Some of the old railroad ties are still used as fence posts on the Scout property. Today it's fun for scouts to hike the old railroad bed on Scout property and search for old spikes and other relics and hardware that were used to make a railroad go.



During the fifty-three years between 1882 and 1935 this railroad was a going concern. Then in the spring of 1935 a disastrous flood struck along the Kiowa. Washout of track age was extensive along the right-of-way that passed through the Ranch. People who witnessed the flood tell of seeing several hundred feet of track and railroad ties rolled into a partial circle and deposited just to the south of the Ranger's home. The same thing was true in the city of Elbert. Mr. Ralph Baldwin, resident of Elbert, said trackage was wrapped around trees, homes and the like. After the great flood the Colorado and Southern Railroad obtained permission to abandon this line. The trackage, or what was left of it, was removed in the summer of 1936. In some places research refers to this railroad as the Falcon Line.

Although the story of a lost locomotive has been making the rounds since the scouts came to the Ranch, there is no evidence that one ever went down in the riverbed on the ranch. Just north of the Ranch, on the Kiowa, there is a true story involved with losing a locomotive. The story was told something like this.

“A lost locomotive had Denver agog when the Kansas Pacific’s freight train was lost in the quicksand’s of Kiowa Creek east of Denver on May 21, 1878. It seems that late that afternoon a storm had gathered in the mountains east of Palmer Lake and moved rapidly east along the crest of the divide. For over an hour one of the heaviest rains the old settlers could remember continued along Kiowa Creek. Then with great suddenness the stream gathered a tremendous flood and a wall of water the likes of which had never been seen before in the area, swept down the Kiowa Creek. A few minutes after the first wave descended, the railroad bridge went out. The roaring water awoken a railroad foreman who rushed out just in time to see the section house at Kiowa Crossing give way and disappear downstream. As he was hurrying with a red lantern to warn the night freight, then past due, he saw the engine’s headlight loom through the mist for a moment and then disappear into the torrent with many cars following. The caboose and a few cars remained on the track but the engine and heavy tender and the main section of the train were swallowed up by the swirling water and quicksand. The engineer, fireman and brakeman went down with the train. It was claimed that the engine was never again seen!”



Scout! Let your imagination run away with you for awhile. The midnight freight is due! Can you hear the shrill whistle? Can you catch a faint glint of the searching headlight as it rounds the bend? Do you see the huge clouds of dense smoke the engine belches skyward? There is a clickety-clack in that old railroad track! It happens and it’s written in the lore and legends of your Scout Ranch.

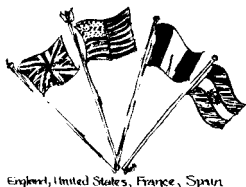
VIII. “The sodbusters and the ranchers came to the valley of the Kiowa...”

Certainly no rip-roaring story of the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch would be complete without some of the stories, both fact and fiction, about the early settlers who came to the valley, and especially to the Ranch itself.

Only in recent times was the more than twenty-six hundred acres of land that go to make the Scout Ranch brought together into one single piece of property. In the beginning the Federal Government surveyed the land, set up a system of grids called townships, ranges, counties, and finally whole states. This was the only way to keep track of the land and who owned it. The land was divided into sections (640 acres), and finally into forty-acre plots. All this meant that different parts of the present-day Ranch were owned by a goodly number of different people at different times in its history. We doubt that it would serve any real practical purpose to include all of these names and dates in to this story. However, we certainly would like to call attention to some of the outstanding features of this history.

In the year 1540 explorer Coronado, in search of the Golden Cities of Cibola, made his long march into New Mexico and Kansas, and returned to Mexico through the southeastern tip of Colorado. After this time the area that now makes up the Scout ranch was considered a Spanish claim, owned by Spain. Throughout the early years of exploration the twenty-six hundred acres that go to make up the present day Ranch were in dispute. Spain first explored the land; then England and France asserted claims. Finally the United States acquired all of eastern Colorado in the famous Louisiana Purchase.

In 1819 the area was known as the Missouri Territory in 1819; then known as the unorganized United States Territory until 1854 when it was officially named the Kansas territory. A few years later, with the advent of Denver and the gold fields, an attempt was made to call the area Jefferson. But this failed. Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States in 1861, signed a law that called the area Colorado Territory. Statehood followed in 1876. The Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch has been under the flags of four different countries - Spain, England, France and the United States.



As we thumb through the legal records of the Ranch property, several names caught our immediate attention. These include William B. palmer, important to the Colorado Springs area - builder of the Rio Grande Railroad; (his statue appears on Nevada Avenue in that City), and the name of David H. Moffat, outstanding pioneer and builder, to be remembered for the tunnel under the Continental Divide bearing his name. At one time both of these men owned some part of the Ranch. Undoubtedly their ownership had something to do with the railroad and timber business.

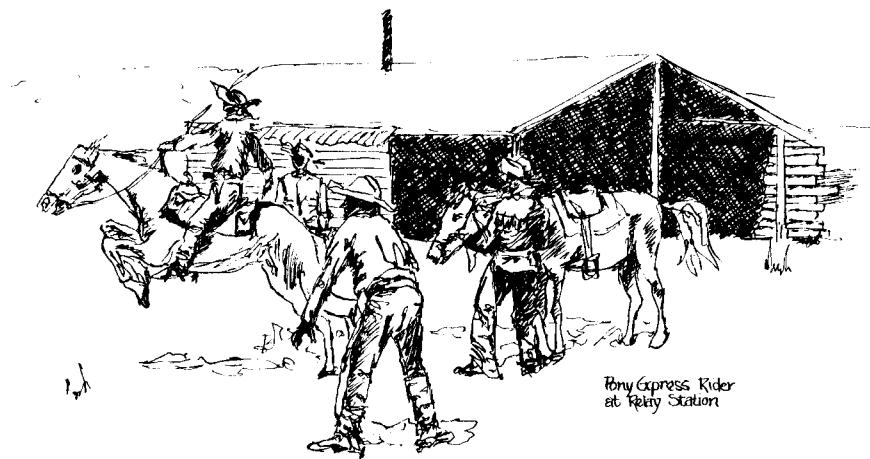
Mr. A. Wilfred Gomer was once an original owner of some of the property. He sold to Palmer and Jake Brazelton. As far as we can determine, the first original owner of the property where the Ranger's Home now stands was John Schimpf. He built the original log cabin.



The south portion of the Ranch has lots of interesting history. Mr. Winfred Cantril, local rancher, told us the following story:

“About 1860 Adam Rinnert bought the place from a man named Duke Benard. There was a big house built for a hotel. It had five bedrooms, big kitchen, dining room and a parlor. A post office was also there. This place was called Elbert until the railroad went through in 1882. Then it was moved to its present location (in the town of Elbert) The post office on the Ranch was a stop for the Pony Express which ran from River Bend through Bijou Basin, on to Elbert Ranch where they changed horses, then on to Parker and Denver. A man by the name of Joe Purden made the trip. He later became the Postmaster of Elbert”.

Mr. Cantril pointed out the site of the old hotel. It stood where the south Ranch gate entrance is today.



Any discussion of the early owners would have to include the names of Jake and Alex Brazelton. We had then opportunity to talk with Mrs. Addie Potts, daughter of Jake Brazelton, now living in Colorado Springs and Mrs. Clara Elsner, daughter of Alex Brazelton. Mrs. Potts is elderly, keen of mind, and has many sweet memories about these bygone days, Mrs. Elsner gave us an account of early days along the divide.

“My father was born in 1843 in Wisconsin. When he was nineteen he drove cattle for a man who was going to Colorado and perhaps on to Oregon. When they reached Denver my father left and went to Central City where he took a job working nights at a stamp mill. He had never been able to attend school for more than a few weeks at a time, so he studied nights while he was at the mill and took his lessons to a teacher by day. He worked at the mill for two years, then decided to leave the mountains and look for land - since he wanted to be a farmer and rancher. He found land he liked about one mile south and west of Elbert, along West Kiowa reek. In 1864 he took up some land and bought more until he had eleven hundred acres.

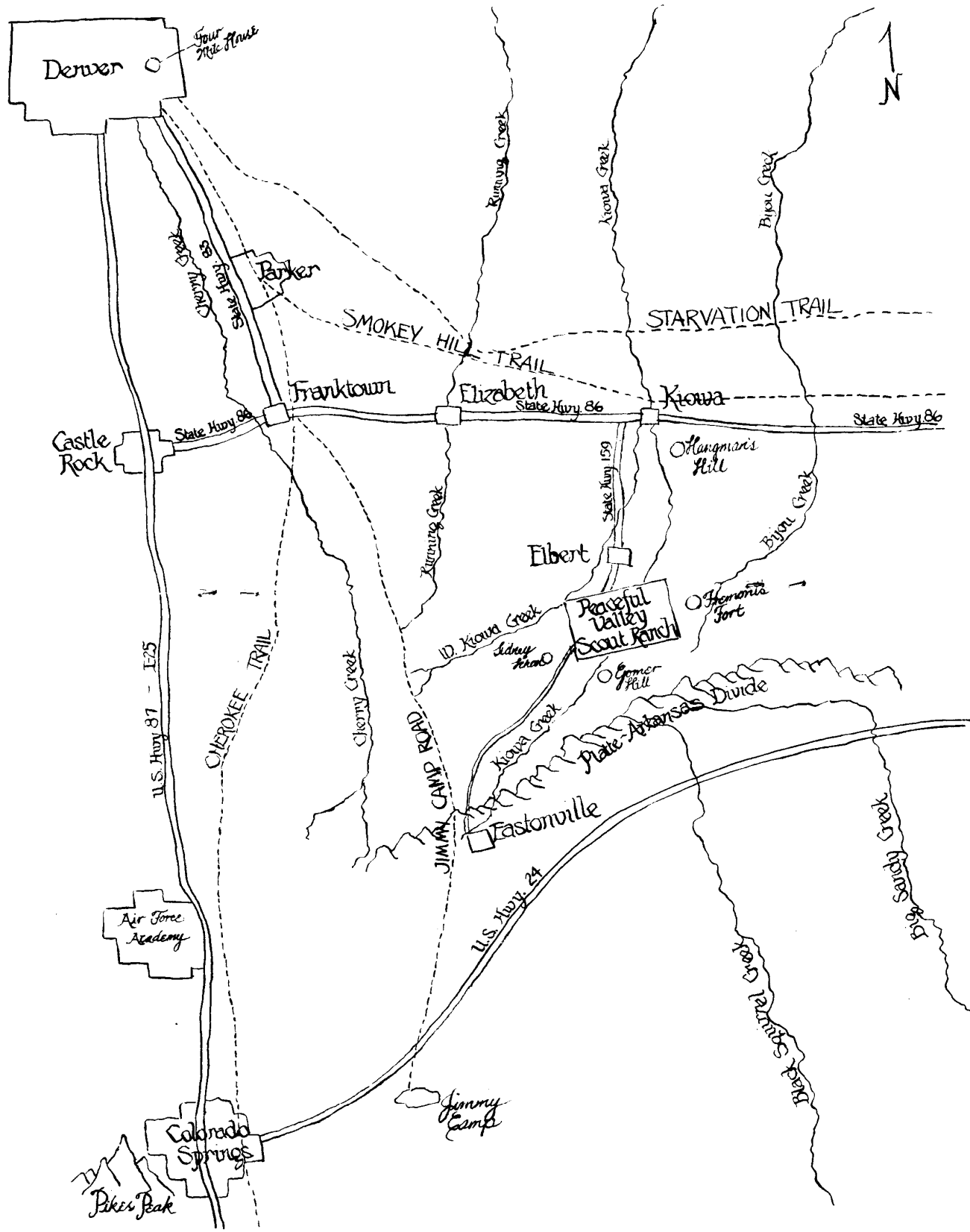
My father married Emme Chairman from Philadelphia, who had come to Colorado to be with her father who had an interest in the Gomer saw mill. The big mill was located about eight miles south of Elbert, between Elbert and Eastonville. That was in the year 1875...My father lived to be ninety-three; he passed away in 1938”.

Abstracts of the Ranch have a liberal sprinkling of the name of Brazelton. At one time a good part of the Ranch was in the hands of the family. Jake Brazelton bought a portion of the Ranch from Mrs. Schimpf in 1906. The Melvin Brazelton family still owns and operates a ranch in Elbert County. Mr. Brazelton gave us this account of his recollections.

“Some thirty-five to forty years ago the Brazelton boys, grandsons of the generation who came while the Indians were still here in this ‘Peaceful; valley’, could still find evidence of Indian teepees on present Scout property. Five distinct rings on the grassy area at the north end of the Ranch suggested that the teepees had been on those spots for a long, long time. Piles of rocks shaped in a wedge or pie shape with the narrow end at the bluff’s edge, and located on the bluffs east of the present Ranger’s home, suggest that the Indians may have driven the buffalo over the edge. Three buffalo wallows can be seen just a little further east of the bluffs described above. Here the animals came to cool off in the warm summer days and to cake themselves with mud so insects couldn’t bother them. They depended on the summer rains to keep the wallows wet and muddy. The abundant grass and the cool summer breezes brought buffalo here in great numbers.



Numbers of foundations from old cabins and dug wells still remain scattered over the Ranch. These were a part of the next phase of the history of the Ranch. A sawmill located northeast of the present-day pond by the Ranger’s home-furnished timber for the beginning of the present buildings as now seen. The timber at that time was good yellow pine... Alex Brazelton claimed to have hauled the first load of timber with oxen to the Denver area.



Arrowheads and buffalo horns were plentiful and easily found as late as the 1920's. But as the timber was cut out and the grass area over-grazed, the floods began. Petrified wood was very common and the floods washed out more. But as the rock hounds came, it has also nearly disappeared.

People still tell stories about the old Sidney School that today stands on the Kiowa, about a mile south of the Ranch, right next to the oiled road. The building is in pretty good shape and it must hold some fond memories for the people in the area. Take the Peterson family for example. There were thirteen kids in the family and they all attended Sidney School. In the family were twelve boys and one girl. The father told people "that his family consisted of all girls except twelve". Sidney School was built around 1890. The kids walked a distance anywhere from one to three miles to attend. Some came in one-horse carts and all brought their own lunches.



The school had but one room, one teacher and up to forty kids, first through grade eight. The school was the center of community activity. Box socials were held to raise money for Christmas time. Such an event would pack the little old school. A good wage for the teacher was \$40.00 per month. The teacher had to do all the janitor work. The school kids put on big programs. Spelling bees were widely used.

School kids played such games as kick the can, deer and dog, and baseball. In the middle of the schoolroom was a big wood/coal stove. Kids would study around the stove until the schoolhouse got warm. Kids in those days had all kinds of chores to do before and after school. Old-timers say that because of the bad weather in the wintertime, three months of summer school was often held.

There is a wealth of legends and lore that has been passed along throughout the history of the valley and surrounding area. One such story has to do with \$140,000 and a box of jewelry that people are still looking for. The stuff has never been recovered and it is claimed that it is still somewhere in the valley. Here is the story:

It all started in an early-day holdup of the Fremont Stage. The story goes on to say that “yellow legs” stationed at the Fort, killed two of the four bandits that robbed the stage, and one of the other two buried the treasure, killed his partner and died without revealing the hiding spot.

So, scout, why don't you have a good look on the Ranch? Who knows?

Still another story deals with a very real attempt to rob the bank at Elbert. Mr. Mayer, former banker, passed this account along:

“In 1920 Frank Green, alias Charles Clinton, was leading a gang of desperadoes on regular bank holdups in the southwest. One morning as Mr. Mayer entered the bank he discovered burglar tools lying around the safe. The gang had been unable to open the safe in one attempt, apparently left with the intention of returning. Mr. Mayer spread the alarm and the town people hired a night watchman. A week later the Green gang returned and the watchman alerted the town. The gang escaped in a stolen car, shooting their way out of town. Authorities from Denver were notified and arrived in cars bristling with guns. More than three hundred farmers and ranchers in the area turned out for the manhunt, gathering up shotguns, rifles and pistols as they came. The gang was finally captured two days later in a shoot-out south of Denver. Green was wounded and one member of the gang was killed.”

E.C. Mathews in his book “*Twixt here and sundown*”, mentioned horse thieves. There weren't too many. He did however remember the time when three thieves cut across their ranch with some stolen horses. As they passed through they cut fences. The sheriff's posse got their trail and overtook them when they took time to camp overnight. The sheriff stayed out of gun range and sent for reinforcements. But the horse thieves built up a big fire and then slipped away in the darkness - a trick that had been used many times before, Frontier justice was something to behold. The idea was to ‘give the man a fair trial, then hang him!’”

A Mrs. Emma Jones Wright recorded an account of the first Sunday Church organized in Elbert. The First Methodist minister was a circuit rider known as Father Dyer. This was in 1882. Father Dyer lived to be nearly 100 years old and at his request was buried on thirteen thousand-foot Mosquito Pass, atop the Continental Divide overlooking Leadville to the west and the plains he loved to the east. Mrs. Wright also spoke of some gold being mined in the area. It was a fine quality gold called “feather gold” and was taken out of the creeks by placer methods.

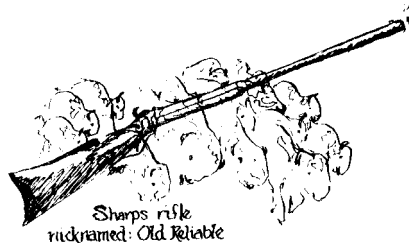
Early settler E.C. Mathews said that during his stay in the valley the only bad man he knew was Evan Hall, a gambler and saloonkeeper around the sawmills. He said Hall was a dead shot with a revolver, having a number of killings to his credit - or discredit! Other men had often shot at Hall and missed, but the gambler seldom missed.

It is reported that Hall married a young girl and once lived near Fremont's Fort. After one killing he galloped home and hid his revolver under a sick baby in the crib. The posse, following close on his heels, searched the cabin but couldn't find the gun. Old-timers said he had practiced pistol shooting in the house - to quiet his wife's nerves! After shooting a judge he was arrested and taken to Denver, but he escaped and came back to hide at the sawmill. His hideout was discovered by a posse, and he came out and surrendered. A deputy, whose father had been a previous victim, started off with the prisoner.

As soon as they were out of sight, he killed Hall and reported the man had tried to escape and he had to shot him. Mathews claimed that most of the bad men pass on this way, or at the end of a rope.

At one time many, many buffalo were on the Scout Ranch. There are still signs of the buffalo wallows in the southeast part of the Ranch. The road around the Ranch goes directly through one of the wallows. In another story Mr. Mathews told about the hunting of buffalo in these early days.

The name of a Colonel Frank Meyer was mentioned. Colonel Meyer hunted buffalo for their hides and killed thousands of them, always having several skinners with him to do that part of the work. Like most of the hide hunters Colonel Meyer did his shooting from “stands” instead of horseback. The hunter would get within about two hundred yards of a herd and hide behind some soap weeds or sagebrush. Then he would shoot them down one by one, usually with a Sharps rifle, which was a very heavy, single shot breechloader and very accurate at two hundred yards or more. The buffalo would usually “mill” around, but not run away, so long as they could not see or smell the hunter. There were many cases when a “stand” hunter would kill more than fifty buffalo in a day. A good experienced skinner could skin ten or more buffalo a day.



Dr. Long in her book, “*The Smoky Hill Trail*”, tells how the Butterfiled Stage came into Kiowa from the east over “Hangman’s Hill”. The spot was once the scene of a hanging of three horse thieves. The victims are buried on top of the Kiowa Creek bluff - just east of the town of Kiowa on a ponderosa-covered knoll. In a written record of the incident a Mr. Bishop gave the following account.

“I thought there may be some doubt about the guilt of these men who had brought horses from the north, somewhere along the North Platte. One brother offered to turn state’s evidence, planning to testify that all were innocent and take the blame himself. Having done so, he escaped. But the citizens of Kiowa hung the other three anyway. I was hauling freight to Kiowa and might have been strung up too if I had arrived on Hangman’s Hill a little earlier. I helped chase the man who escaped, but we failed to overtake him”.

As the area became more settled the game as well as the Indians began to disappear. No longer were the buffalo seen. The coyotes and the wolves began to seek new homes away from people. One of the old-timers who really knew the area said he saw his last gray wolf in 1896.

The times have changed since the first of the ranchers and sodbusters came to the Kiowa. But the stories are going to linger for a long, long time.

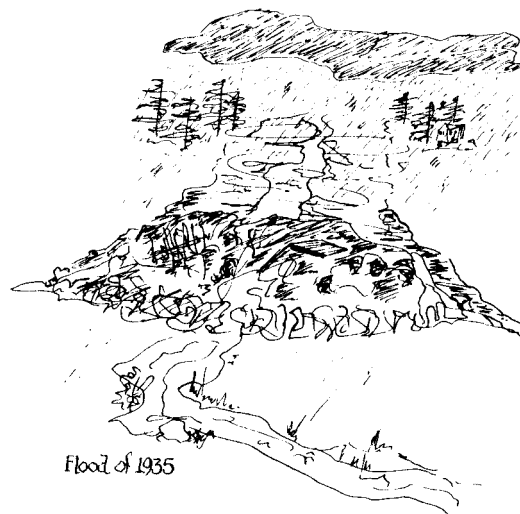


IX. “Torrential were the rains that fell upon the divide - and then ‘Ole Kiowa cut loose with a roar..”

Old-timers will warn that you had better watch out when the Kiowa Creek starts to flow. It means the hills have become saturated and if the rains continue to fall, the water will find its way to the creek bed. All this can spell bad news for the lowlands along the creek. This kind of trouble can spell FLOOD - and it has in the past.

For example, let us consider the year 1878. The flood of that year was most destructive in the town of Elbert and elsewhere caused a great loss of livestock, fences and crops. You will remember in our last chapter we talked about railroading. This was the same flood that swallowed up a Kansas Pacific locomotive north of Elbert.

There have been nearly a dozen floods along the Kiowa in the more than one hundred years of recorded history of the area. Notable ones included years 1878, 1921, 1935 and 1965. But the granddaddy of all them was the one that happened on Memorial Day in 1935!



On this day torrential rains produced floods which took a toll of one hundred ninety-three lives in Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska and Missouri and cost millions of dollars of damage. Newspaper accounts of this flood point up “that the nastiest streams involved in this disaster had their headwaters in Elbert County - creeks such as the Kiowa”.

The 1935 flood was a nightmare for those who lived along the Kiowa. The cloudburst struck in the high ground at the headwaters of the creek. Runoff was instant and unbelievable. Witnesses said the roar of the approaching crest of water could be heard for miles. People ran for their lives to the highest ground that could be found. It is claimed that when the crest of high water hit the town of Elbert it immediately swept away thirty-seven homes and other types of buildings - one-half of the town! Some residents of the valley saved themselves by climbing on to roofs of buildings, or going into high trees. At the town of Elbert, Mr. Baldwin estimated the water was thirty-five feet deep in the center of the creek bed. The final tally showed that eight persons in the path of the Kiowa on that day had drowned.

It is interesting to take note of the effect this flood had on the present Scout Ranch. At the peak of the flood the Kiowa was nearly one-half mile wide near the south entrance. The area where the archery and rifle range are now located was under considerable water. The old log cabin built by Mr. Schimpf in 1864 was all but ripped away and had to be torn down. The present Ranger's home had three to four feet of water in it. Barns on the Ranch were washed away. The farmlands in the bottoms of the Ranch were gutted and massive sand and gravel deposits were strewn across the valley. Needless to say, the crops were completely destroyed. The railroad bed was almost totally swept away, and trackage was strewn throughout the valley in grotesque configurations.

The losses to the area because of this flood were terrible. The ranchers and farmers could not afford to let this happen again. So, to insure that such a flood could never again happen, the United States Soil and Conservation Service, with the cooperation of farmers and ranchers along the Kiowa and elsewhere, early in the 1940's undertook an extensive program aimed at harnessing Kiowa Creek and reducing the conditions which led to a flood like the one of 1935. It was a generous plan, involving the building of sixty-eight massive earthen check dams, fifty sediment basins, and channel improvement of the Kiowa and near creeks. Other projects included ideas like reseeded the ranges, terracing, strip-cropping and the establishment of stock ponds to catch rainwater. As one drives from the town of Kiowa toward Elbert, there area number of these check dams on the right side of the highway. On the Scout Ranch, especially in the eastern section, scouts can view a number of the earthen check dams. One of the largest dams on the Ranch is located just a short distance northwest of the Camp Office. Ranger Sam Jackson tells of seeing one of these dams fill up with water in fifteen minutes during the heavy rains of 1965! Of course, this is exactly the purpose of these dams - to catch and hold as much of this runoff as possible. This huge job of conservation has been completed.

Some Scouts will well remember the flood that hit Denver in the summer of 1965. This is when the South Platte River went on a rampage and flooded the lowlands of the city of Denver. Well, they caught it that summer at the Scout Ranch too. But even then, the flood was in part contained by the conservation projects that had been accomplished and it was impossible to get to the camping area for seven days. This flood came at a bad time because camp construction was going strong.

There have been major floods and there may be minor floods along the Kiowa. But scout, try to remember it like the old-timers tell it! When you see the 'ole Kiowa starting to run water and it continues to rain, you can be sure that high water may be in the making!

X. **“Twas an ill wind that would bring no good that streaked out of the north on that cold winter day...”**

Early settlers found good sport in making jokes about the weather along the divide. Describing the climate some said that the “area had nine months of winter and three months damn late in the fall”. Others kidded when they said it was downright inconvenient to wear snowshoes during the haying season! But nevertheless, the matter of weather has always been a serious business to the people along the Kiowa.



Early settlers in the valley of the Kiowa were proud to tell you that the average annual rainfall amounted to nearly twenty inches. But they were quick to add that a good share of this rainfall might come down as frozen ice - snow! And when it came with a wind of forty miles an hour, and the bottom of the old thermometer started to fall out, you were in for trouble. Even today the people of the eastern slope of the Rockies pay very close attention to their winter weather. A falling barometer and a strong “northerly” blowing down the face of the Rockies should give cause for concern.

Take for example the blizzard of 1913. It bore down upon the valley of the Kiowa and left an estimated four to five feet of snow on the level ground. Animals couldn't find food even if they managed to survive the blizzard itself. People who lived through this one remembered finding stock animals frozen right in their tracks, still standing! During the worst part of this storm, ranchers and farmers tied ropes from their houses to the barns where the stock animals were kept. In this manner they were certain not to get lost in the raging storm when they had to care for the animals. Lamps were always left in the window as a guide to anyone who might have lost the way. After the storm you didn't have to cross fences - you walked over them!

Early pioneer Philip Deter, Sr. had many narrow escapes during his lifetime, but perhaps the worst happened when he was twenty-one years old. He was caught in a terrible snowstorm and wandered around on horseback for three days without food. Finally, in desperation, he let the horse have the lead. The horse brought him safely home! But in many ways the people of the times were ready for storms like these.

Farm and ranch houses always had a good stock of staples to hold them over critical times. Mr. Baldwin of Elbert said of the times, “you didn’t buy ten pounds of sugar; you bought a hundred pounds at a time. It wasn’t unusual to buy five hundred pounds of flour. And you always had a side of beef around”. Mary Larsen, owner and operator of the present-day Elbert Hardware and Lumber business, has several excellent pictures of the great blizzard of 1913. She welcomes scouts to come in and have a look.

Again in 1918 the area received a huge spring snowstorm. In 1944 and again in 1946 massive blizzards raked the area. The 1946 storm kept the back roads closed so long the dairy farmers had to dump their milk for more than three weeks. It was not picked up and there was no way to get it to Elbert. But with modern-day roads, transportation and communications, much of this kind of threat has all but vanished.

A number of Denver scouts and their adult leaders will remember the Klondike Derby held at the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch in January 1963. Three Troops braved a record cold of a minus 46 degrees! And what is more, they stayed under tentage.

Sure, the winters can be rough at times. You must remember that the altitude at the Ranch is nearly two thousand feet above that of Denver. But then again, a scout is prepared!

XI. “Looking at those times through the eyes of a boy...”

Addie Potts remembered well the kinds of fun kids and adults had-especially at Hallowe’en. It Wasn’t unusual to see a wagon on top of a building the morning after Hallowe’en. Also, it was common to tip over the old outhouse. There was the time someone put a horse inside of the old Sidney School Hallowe’en eve, water, hay and all. The animal remained there until the kids found him on Monday morning!

Today city boys come to the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch in droves, they arrive on good modern highways at speeds a boy of one hundred years ago wouldn’t believe. The trip from Denver takes about an hour. One hundred years ago it took two days by wagon. On arrival they find an ultra deluxe swimming pool, good hot food prepared in a thoroughly up-to-date kitchen, hot showers, running water at every campsite, and all those other things we take for granted today. But have you ever thought about what it was like to be a boy more than a hundred years ago along the Kiowa? Very fortunately some records were kept and they can give us some fairly good answers. So, let us look through the eyes of a boy living on the Kiowa many, many years ago.



Eric Mathews grew up as a boy on the Kiowa. His early home was very near the Scout Ranch. His father was among the first to settle the valley. Mr. Mathews later became the Editor of the St. Louis Globe Democrat in St. Louis, Missouri. But he continues to return to the early site of his childhood days for frequent visits. Most fortunately, here was a man capable of strong recollections and the ability to write them down. We thought it would add much to our saga to include some of these stories as he presented them in his book, *"Twixt here and sundown"*.

"When many settlers arrived it was necessary to live in covered wagons until sod or log houses were built. Those who lived in the wagons found it awfully hard. Often times they would wake up in the morning with snow covering their blankets.

"Wells along the creek bed provided water for us and our stock. Meat was put down in wooden kegs in heavy salt brine to preserve it. Fruit was canned by use of a canning compound which had to be soaked out before you could eat the food. We butchered our own hogs and rendered our own lard and quite often-made soap also.

"There was some amusing things that happened in those early days as a boy. I can remember hiding Easter eggs in an extra pair of dad's boots. When he stepped in on the raw eggs a sort of frustrated expression came over his face, but he didn't raise any fuss. After that I noticed he always shook his boots before he put them on.

"Sometimes I borrowed one of dad's pipes, without his permission, to blow soap bubbles with it. You know, he never did quite understand why 'STAR' tobacco was getting such a funny flavor.

"I remember the time I set off about five pounds of loose blasting powder in the springhouse with a cigar I had stolen from dad's supply. I crawled away just before the powder went off and no one saw the cloud of smoke that rolled up the canyon. Later I heard dad tell mother about the strange thing that had happened. He told her lightning had struck the springhouse and had scorched the whole inside of the building. I wasn't talking when I wasn't spoken to!

"Like other countrywomen, mom worked hard from early morning 'till late at night. She did the cooking, including homemade bread. We gathered wild hops and she made her own yeast at times. She canned fruits and jellies from wild chokecherries, wild gooseberries, currants and raspberries which we gathered from the surrounding hills. Canned food from the store was rare.

We raised our own potatoes, corn and vegetables. Mother cut sweet corn from the cob and dried it for winter use. We had coal oil lamps and when we went to visit grandmother she sent us to sleep in deep feather beds with a tallow candle in a tin candlestick, to guide us up the stairs. Mom baked cakes, cookies and pies in an old wood-burning stove. A regular breakfast consisted of ham and eggs, fried potatoes, fruit, oatmeal or fried mush, hot biscuits, butter and maybe honey, besides coffee or milk to drink.

“Once I made the mistake of trying to ride a wild cow in the corral. She proved the old saying, ‘The female of the species is more deadly than the male’ by bucking me into the fence and scraping me off. Then she whirled, with her tail in the air and her head low down, she dove at me with those big horns. Fortunately the lower pole was high enough for me to roll under, her needle-sharp horns just scraped my posterior and I came out of the corral. I never rode another cow!

“Getting thrown off a horse was not very dangerous and riders were seldom hurt that way. When a horse reared up and fell backwards, or stepped into a prairie dog hole and fell down, that was more dangerous. Sometimes your foot hung in the stirrup after a horse fell, and he might kick you, or drag you to death. That was real dangerous. My foot hung in the stirrup several times after horses fell, but I was always lucky enough to have my high-heeled boot pull off before I was badly hurt.



“In my opinion the ‘good old days’ ended when telephones and automobiles became common. Before that you had to saddle or hitch up a team to carry the slightest message, or get anything to or from town. Our nearest trading post was seven miles away, which meant a half-day for the round trip. Denver was sixty-five miles away. We seldom took the wagon there, but when that was done a covered wagon was used, as it was a two-day trip each way. You could put up in a wagon yard and sleep in the wagon to save hotel bills. My first auto ride was about sixty years ago, a round trip from the church to town.

There were no filling stations in our part of the country, and you bought benzene or gasoline from the grocery or drug store. The roads were rutted and sandy. We had to stop once to fill the radiator from a can of water that we carried on the running board. Of course, we had to hand crank the auto to get it going. The headlights were carbide burners. But it was hard enough to drive over the roads in daytime. Very few people ever tried it at night. During the winter months the car was jacked up on blocks and the tires removed until spring.

It is true that times certainly have changed on how a boy grew up then and how he grows up now. We are pleased someone thought enough of boy-hood days along the Kiowa to remember and write down the priceless things we found and have included here.

XII. “The Boy Scouts come to the valley of the Kiowa...”

As early as 1958 the Executive Board of the Denver Area Council, Boy Scouts of America, sensed the serious shortage of Boy Scout camping facilities in the Denver area. Camp Tahosa, with a rated capacity of two hundred campers, had been purchased in 1938 when the Council had a membership of six thousand boys and adults. But times have changed.

Excerpts from the Executive Board minutes of December 22, 1958, told the story like this:

“President Stearns stated that we had 6,000 boys registered when we first acquired Camp Tahosa. Now we have 20,000 boys. Camp Tahosa cannot take care of all the Scouts and Explorers. He then introduced Hudson Moore, Jr., Chairman of the Camp Development Committee...Watson A. Bowes has a committee working on the location of a new camp...a site is needed containing 2,000 acres at about 7,000 feet altitude, wooded, usable the entire year, and with plenty of water. Eugene Waggoner will advise concerning the water supply.”

And so the intensive search began. George Mozealous, Council Executive, recollected that many places were suggested and tours made. He particularly remembered looking at one place west of Denver. When this site was checked out it was found that most of the property was on steep hillsides! The search continued. Literally dozens of areas were offered or searched out as potential campsites - keeping in mind the 7,000-foot altitude and 2,000 acres minimum requirement. Each was examined. Naturally the foothills of the Rockies seemed to be the logical area. But water - potable water in sufficient quantities - was always the problem. Beautiful rushing streams through seemingly ideal properties were “owned” or untouchable. Sub-surface studies proved wells would be dry or insufficient. Finally the area was found. It met the basic requirements. But it turned out to be southeast of Denver in the Black Forrest, near Elbert, Colorado.

Judge George G. Priest, then Council Camping Chairman, and L.L. “Tiny” Lewis, first visited the site. Harold F. Silver, Hudson Moore, Jr., Watson A. Bowes, George Mozealous, Priest and Lewis paid a second visit. It was decided the Peaceful Valley “needed” acquiring. The Executive Board minutes of June 20, 1961, broke the news.

“Chairman Hudson Moore, Jr., Chairman of the Camp Development Committee, stated that the Peaceful Valley Ranch, one and one-half miles south of Elbert, became available on May 1st, the Committee made two trips to the Ranch, visiting every potential campsite. Eugene Waggoner, Water Engineer and advisor, gave a complete recommendation on water sources and supply in that area. F.W. Atkinson, Assistant Director, Engineering Service, Boy Scouts of America, made an inspection of the site and recommended it.

Chairman Moore presented the following facts relative to the Peaceful valley Ranch:

- (1) It contains 2,600 acres,
- (2) The price is \$235,000,
- (3) The mineral rights is one phase that needs discussion
- (4) It would require an option of \$100 to hold it until August 1, 1961, then \$23,000 will be required.
- (5) Mr. Abrahamson, owner, will donate \$10,000 to the Denver Area Council after the Ranch has been purchased.

Mr. Bowes concluded that with Mr. Abrahamson’s \$10,000, the asking price was not out of line, and recommended that the Council proceed with the transaction. President of the Council, Harold Silver, stated that the members of the Executive Board should consider this property and he hoped that all members would be energized into thinking seriously about other available property suitable for a camp”.

Very shortly after this the Peaceful Valley Ranch was purchased. Harold F. Silver, then Council President, gave the initial “push” and was chief solicitor for the \$235,000 needed to purchase the property. The Ken R. White Company made aerial photographs and procured the topographical maps. Alan Peterson was the architect for all the buildings except the Ranger homes. Attorneys completing the legal details of the acquisition were Stanley T. Wallbank, John Tippet and James Voorhees.

The Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch Committee was named as follows: Stanley T. Wallbank, General Chairman; William K. Barr, Liaison; John W. Hall, Site Chairman; Charles E. McDaniel, Comptroller; Nicholas R. Petry, Facility Chairman; George G. Priest, Program Planning Chairman; and John H. Tippet, Legal Chairman.

But that was only the beginning. In March of 1963, under the Council Presidency of Roger D. Knight, Jr., the Council launched a drive for \$850,344 aimed at developing the 2,600 acres for year-round outdoor Scouting. Purpose of the drive was to develop one of the six camping areas available on the Ranch. A site for the first camping area - called “Camp A” - had already been chosen in the southeast corner of the sprawling property. First plans called for the building of a system of roads across the property, then adding a water distribution system and administration building. Eventually camp would be built to include twelve troop sites, complete with tents, general camping equipment, and health and sanitary facilities, Adirondack shelters equipped with fire-places and seven winterized cabins each capable of housing between fourteen and twenty boys. “Camp A” was planned to have a swimming pool to accommodate several hundred boys, a chapel, camp office, activity lodges, doctor’s residence, quartermaster, kitchen, guest lodge, trading post and a health lodge. There is room on the Ranch for six duplicates of the existing facilities.

Cris Dobbins and Palmer Hoyt were co-chairmen of the fund drive. James W. Liddell, King Shwayder, Ray Jenkins, Theron L. Ackerman, Hudson Moore, Jr., Robert L. Stearns, William K. Barr, W.T. Blackburn, Frank J. Johns, Roger D. Knight, Jr., Askel Nielsen, Harold Silver, George E. Smith and Stanley T. Wallbank were members of the campaign organization committee. This was the first major capital funding effort in the Council's fifty-year history.

It's all history now. The community in the metropolitan area rallied to this important cause. The results were quick and almost unbelievable. Scout units, business people, individuals - all pitched in on the drive. Soon the more than \$850,000 was secured. The collections totaled 104 percent of the goal! The dream of the Executive Board way back in 1958 was finally being realized. A new Scout Ranch was in the making.

On June 19, 1966 the official dedication of the Peaceful valley Scout Ranch was held. The dedication program was headed by Governor John. A. Love, arrangements made by Paul A. Yetter said, "The ground that we've met upon today, as you might have guessed, has seen some pretty colorful history pass in its time. There were Indians first, then the trappers, traders and settlers. And so on up to the present time. Some of what those people did - some of the past - will always be a part of this Scout Ranch as we know it today".

The occasion was marked by a pageant depicting the bygone history of the valley. The Elbert High School Band furnished music.

Few individuals were closer to the Scout Ranch in the early days of its development as Denver Area Scout Property than were Ranger Sam Jackson and his wife Edna. Ranger Jackson told us the story of those times.

"I came to the Ranch in April 1962. Prior to the time the scouts purchased the property it had been a working ranch and the home for about two hundred and fifty white-faced cattle. As soon as the scouts acquired the property all cattle and farm equipment were sold at an auction by the former owners. The first year for me was a busy working time. Scouts had not yet started coming on weekends. I had to remove many old fences and open up the land.



“The camp construction for the most part was accomplished by the Sea Bees. These men came to help on weekends at first. There was usually between thirty-five and eighty men for the weekend. They were flown from Kansas to Colorado Springs, then bussed to the Ranch. because there were no buildings on the Ranch to house them, they operated from the present Ranger’s home. Tents were set up and showers were built. It went this way for about two years. In the spring of 1966 the Navy Sea Bees Reserve operation became a full-time one, and lasted all spring and summer. The Sea Bees came in-groups that remained for two weeks at a time. They stayed at the Jewish Community Center (across from the Ranch) during the full time operation. Reserve Mobile Construction Battalion 26 of the Sea Bees rolled men and materials into Elbert County to make the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch a thing of reality. In eight weeks 563 men and 22 officers carved out nearly ten miles of roads, built camp buildings, dug trenches for electric power, sewers, telephone and waterlines so that the material beauty of the area would not be marred. The Scout Camp opened for a ‘trial run’ for a few selected troops in the summer of 1966. This was even before the swimming pool had been completed.

“On the Ranch today are four windmills, three of them operating. Also, there are a number of drilled wells. The biggest and newest well is the one which supplies the water for the swimming pool and the camping areas. It was drilled by Martin Price, has a depth of one thousand and four feet, is cased its entire depth, and has double casing of cement for the last five hundred feet, and yields 136 gallons per minute. There are 9.8 miles of perimeter road. There is reason to believe the water supply is more than adequate.

“The Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch is in part a working ranch. The primary crop is alfalfa and in a good year three cuttings can be harvested. However, if the frost catches you early you may have to settle for two. After frost, cattle are allowed to come on the hay fields to feed. The flood of 1965 damaged much of the farmland. It destroyed the hay crop for that year. Even worse, the flood came during the early construction days and this caused all kinds of problems. In fact, we feel it took nearly two years to recover from the damage of this flood.

“We are proud of the Ranch now. We have about two hundred boys here on weekends, and full summer programs are operated. The Camp facilities are used not only throughout the summer, but fall, winter and spring. There are training courses for adults and Wood Badge Course is offered each summer. The Ranch is now attracting visitors from many Councils as they contemplate camp construction.”

Edna Jackson, wife of the ranger, was also busy from the first day she set foot on the Ranch.

“It was my job to feed the Sea Bees. We remodeled the old chicken house into a dining room, cooked the first meals in the present-day ranch house and carried it to the dining room. The next step was to set up field tents and do the cooking in them. But there was no water and it had to be carried from the house.

“The first scouts to come to the Ranch received food by this arrangement. It was brought to the sites in ‘heater stacks’ - a device to keep the food warm. As a matter of fact this device is still used. the year of the flood caused all of the wells except the new one to be condemned and we had to haul fresh water in a ‘water buffalo’. Finally we moved into the new modern kitchen on the hill”.

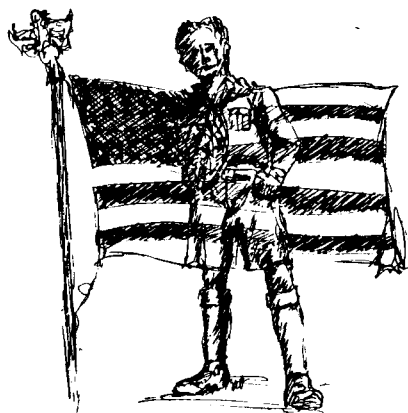
George Mozealous expressed the whole venture in these words, “when those first boy campers have gone to the eternal camping ground, the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch will continue to serve boys - a living tribute to the men who made it possible”.

The Boy Scout organization did come to the valley of the Kiowa. Through the efforts of all kinds of people with all kinds of approaches and solutions the Denver Area Council today has a beautiful modern camping facility.

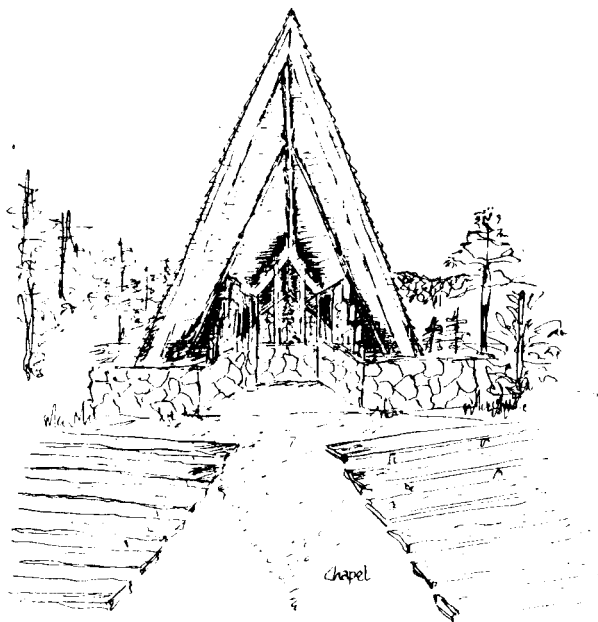
XIII. “Say, scout - Have you discovered the valley of the Kiowa...?”

In our saga of the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch we have let you walk among the tall legends and lore of a wonderful place at a wonderful time. Were you able to hear the clickety-clack of that old, old railroad track? Or perchance, were you able to hear the faint and distant whistle of the ancient engine as it tore down Kiowa Creek? Was a Comanche brave able to sneak upon your camp for a pre-dawn attack? How tall did you sit in the saddle as you rode with Pike and Fremont? Were you able to catch the spirit of this wonderful place, at a wonderful time?

Scout! Come to the valley of the Kiowa. Come to your Scout Ranch. Try your skill on the Archery, rifle, Moskeet ranges. Demonstrate your swimming ability in the Ranch’s fine outdoor pool. Perhaps you might even get a chance to duck your Scoutmaster! Achieve a merit badge or two, move up a Scouting rank. Make every boy scout’s dream come true: Become an Eagle Scout. Hike the Ranch. Discover such hidden treasures as the witch’s broom, the crevasse caverns, the buffalo wallows, the early settlers’ home ruins, and the spot where the Indians pitched their teepees. Visit the life-sized scout statue near the camp office building. While there pay respect to your country’s flag. Then go to the open-air chapel and do your duty to God. Perhaps the chaplain will say, “Be proud that you are you, that there has never been another you, and that there will never be another you. If you waste time wishing you were someone else you will be as small as the smallest tree on this ranch. But if you are proud that you are you and live a good, clean, useful life, you will be able to stand as tall as the tallest tree on your Scout Ranch”.



Scout! Take a healthy chunk of the lore of this valley. Sprinkle it liberally with shadow and pine. Add to it azure blue sky and endow it with sunshine and flower. Stud it with rock - the craggiest of kind. Grace it with wildlife, all sizes and kinds. Then temper it with air, the purest that can be found. Splash it with afternoon showers followed by a rainbow. End the day with the flaming reds of an evening sunset.



Stamp it with “SCOUTING” - an “On my Honor” brand, and flood it with boys eager and clean.

This, scout, is your land. Care for its beauty and revere its legends. Preserve it as a heritage for unnumbered boys yet to come. Scout! This is your land!

Our fire of friendship is at an end. The final few embers glow as the blackness of the night descends about us. Make sure our fire is out. And let our story end!



XIV. “Only the Beginning - Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch Revisited...?”

Much has happened since the Scouts came to the valley on the Kiowa. The 1970's and early 1980's have been marked with constant hum of activities and boys.

“Doc Holliday's Inn”, “Long Branch”, “Fort Garland”, “Fort Laramie”, or “Santa Fe trail”...sound familiar? They should, for these are names and places of the famous old West. There was a time when lodges, camp sites and roads were given number or alphabet designation. But now all that has changed. So, stake your tent in “Dodge” and patronize “Jenkin's Trading Post”. Or mosey on down to the “OK Corral” and saddle up for a ride on the Ranch.

Camp facility and building improvements have continued throughout the years. There is a new Camp Director's lodge. The east side of the Ranch has been fenced for cattle grazing, and a new 700 foot water well has been drilled on the mesa. An ample water supply has now been assured. The swimming pool is now solar heated, and a new saddle shed and corral are in place. All buildings on the Ranch have now been completely finished.

Changes have occurred in programming. Cub Scout Weekend activities were instituted a few years ago, bringing Cub Scouts and parents to the Ranch for overnight camping. The adult Wood Badge group makes extensive use of the facilities, while a new Camp Master concept uses this same Wood badge Organization to improve Scouting.

In 1978 the Ranch hosted 28,000 people in an outdoor setting for the National Camping and Hiking Association. This lasted for one week.

As you can see, the past is prolog to the future at the Ranch. New things are happening. As a result of a study undertaken by the Denver Area Council, Boy Scouts of America, entitled “Land and Facility Report”, January 10, 1983, a number of important recommendations emerged. Some of these ideas have been or are about to be implemented.

A brand new lake for a water front program is now complete. It covers nine acres, taking advantage of an existing basin that was build for flood control. Also, a multi-purpose Building/Dining hall is in the planning stages and should be ready by the 1986 summer season.

As you know there is never enough money in a Scouting program that provides for nearly 41,000 Scouts as well as for thousands of adults who work with the program. In recognition of this fact, the “Land and Facility Report” recommends the creation of a restricted fund to be used only for camp needs. A major event in the sequence of this effort can best be explained by quoting from the minutes of the Executive Board/Advisory Council meeting of December 27, 1983. It was indeed good news.

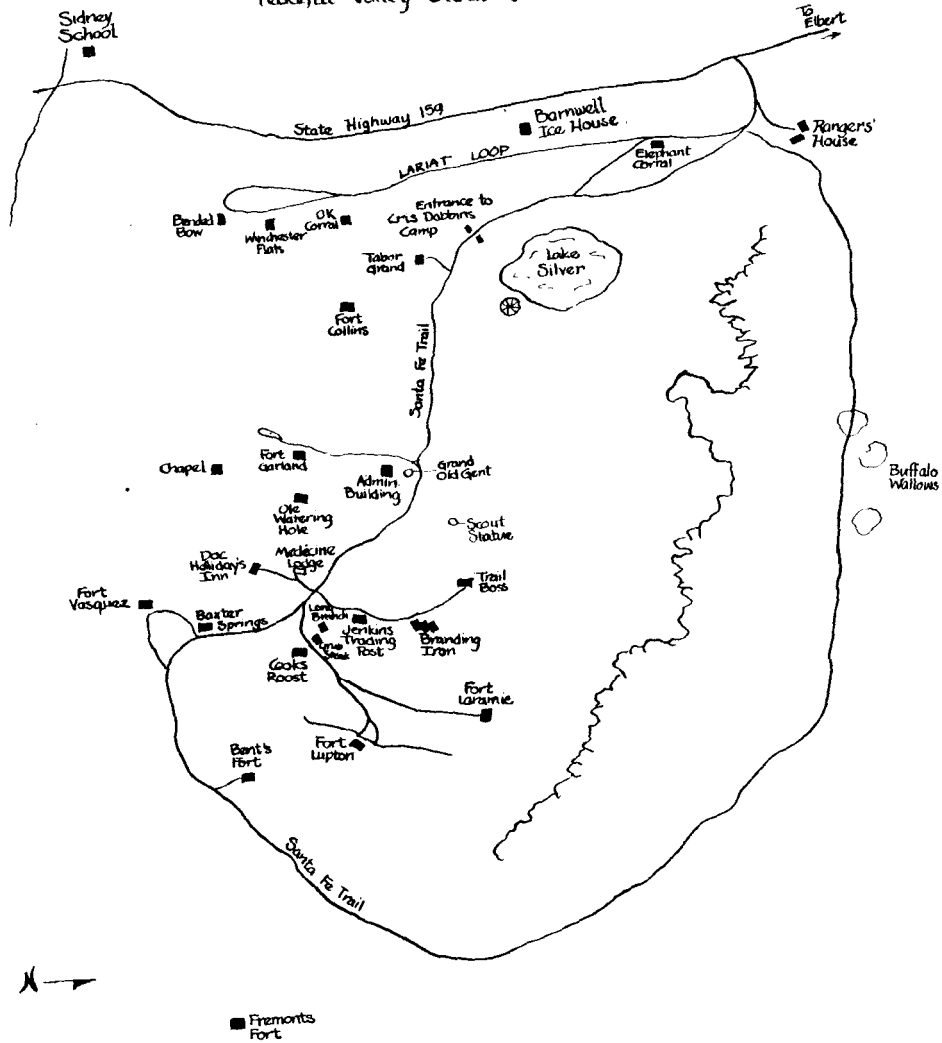
“The Board accepted the challenge grant of \$1,000,000 by the Boettcher Foundation to raise the goal set for endowment through our Capital Campaign. The Council, in order to qualify for the \$1,000,000 gift must raise the remaining \$1,396,000 for endowment in the next four years. The existing structures at Peaceful Valley will now be called the ‘Cris Dobbins Camp’ of the peaceful Valley Scout Ranch”.

The implications of these minutes deserve a note of further explanation. Without the splendid years of dedication work in the Scouting movement by Cris Dobbins, there would not have been a million dollar gift. In his honor and memory it means the gift will draw yearly income that will be utilized at Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch. The Council is deeply grateful to Mr. Dobbins.

Perhaps now you will understand why we chose to call this chapter “Only the beginning- Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch Revisited.” Won’t it be fascinating to see what happens at the Ranch by the time the 21st century rolls around?

CAMP CRIS DOBBINS

on the
Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch



XV. Acknowledgments.

George Mozealous, Scout Executive of the Denver Area Council, provided the original stimulus for the writing of the Peaceful Valley Story. On July 17, 1968, Mr. Mozealous sent a letter to me asking if I would undertake this type of research and writing project. At the time I was Program Director at Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch for the summer. The idea seemed to be a good one and the project started at that time.

In this effort the author had generous and able assistance from many people. Fortunately research revealed an ample amount of rather interesting information. Among those who assisted very directly were Sam Jackson and his wife Edna. Sam is currently the Ranger of the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch. Jack Harper, owner and operator of the Rams Head in Elbert, was also most helpful. His establishment has a wealth of relics of the early pioneer days and it is open to scouts and their leaders for a visit. Of course, George Mozealous went out of his way to supply material and ideas.

Others who have assisted in a very real way are: Mrs. Addie Potts of Colorado Springs, Mr. Ralph Baldwin of Elbert, Mr. Melvin Brazelton who lives on West Plum Creek, and Mr. Winfred Cantril, who lives seven miles southwest of Elbert.

Outstanding help came from Margaret Long's book, "*The Smoky Trail*" and from Eric C. Mathews in his book, "*Twix Here and Sundown*". Of unusual interest and help was the newly published book, "*Early Days Around the Divide*", by Carl and Eric Mathews.

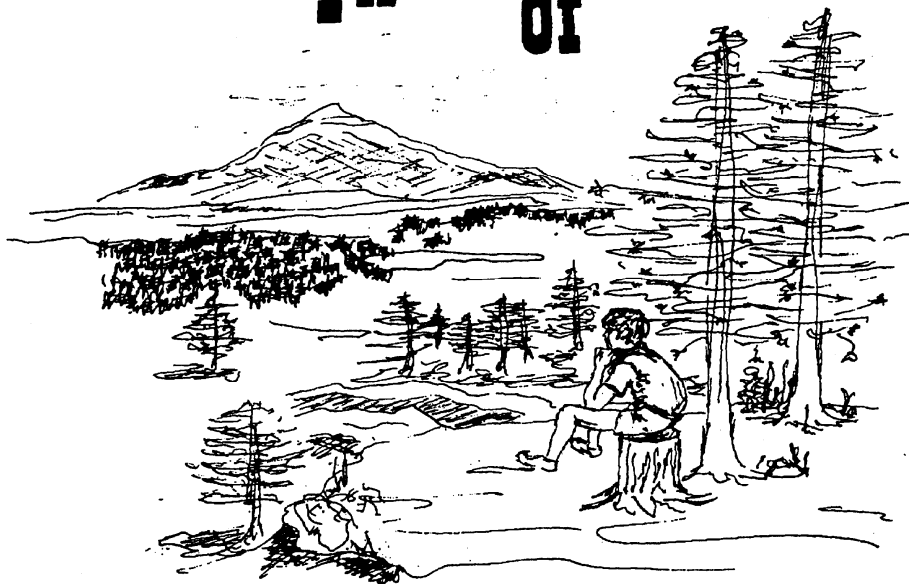
Research facilities of the Western Room of the Denver Public Library and the State Historical Society were extremely beneficial.

Other source material was secured from the following books: Eugene Parsons, "*Guidebook of Colorado*"; Simla High school, "*History of Elbert County*"; Glenn H. Phillips, "*Colorado: Your State and Mine*"; Colorado Historical Association, "*Historical Encyclopedia of Colorado*"; Colorado Press Association, "*Who's Who in Colorado*"; Leroy Hafen, "*Colorado: A Story of the State and its People*"; Amanda Ellis, "*The Strange, Uncertain Years*"; Waddell Smith, "*The Story of the Pony Express*"; Gladys P. Michel, "*The Peaceful Sheriff Of Elbert County*"; Percy Fritz, "*Colorado: The Centennial State*"; and Robert L. Perkin, "*The First Hundred Years*".

The files of the Rocky Mountain News and the Denver Post were used extensively.

Part II

The Saga of



Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch

Denver Area Council
Boy Scouts of America

As Camp Ranger of Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch, I have tried to accurately document all the names, dates and events in the next chapter of this magnificent place. However, after a quarter of a century of service to thousands of youth that have and will enjoy this place, also a countless number of Camp, Program and Ranch Directors, a plethora of Director's of Camping and four Scout Executives, I ask your forgiveness for any possible oversight I might have incurred! As ever, the most important person at this Ranch is the wide eyed youth, eager to learn, perhaps a little apprehensive, certainly looking for a hero. Help make him at home and be his hero.

Remember, *"Be careful of your words and deeds, as you may be the only picture a youth will see"*. I wish I had said that, but Baden Powell did!



Part two. “The Saga continues...”

1. **“One small step for a man...”**
2. **“We have more to offer than history...”**
3. **“Open air dining, at its best?.....”**
4. **“Something old, something new...”**
5. **“Instaurator Ruinea...I rebuild the ruins”**
6. **“Going, going, gone!”**
7. **“Back to basics...”**
8. **“Blue and Gold...”**
9. **“Horses...”**
10. **“A black day at Cris Dobbins...”**
11. **“Three strikes and...”**
12. **“Water, water everywhere...”**
13. **“Dining is style...”**
14. **“Dollars and cents...”**
15. **“Flora and fauna...”**
16. **“For whom the bells toll...”**
17. **“Pull, swish, BANG ! ...”**
18. **“Special Kudos...”**
- 19 **“My best friend left...”**
19. **“So long, it’s been good to know you...”**

Part II The Saga Continues

During the 1970's the Nation's entire boy population began to decrease, partly due to the "baby boomers" babies passing through scout age. The Denver Area Council, as well as all youth program agencies, experienced a gradual decline in the available youth, both boys and girls. As a result, Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch attendance declined drastically. The Ranch continued to barely function. In 1981, the new Scout Executive, Bill Kephart, took command of the Denver Area Council. The Council Executive Board and Mr. Kephart, after a great deal of soul searching, studying and thought decided to close Camp Tahosa for summer camp and focus all summer camp efforts on the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch. To this end, Mr. Kephart selected Mike Sulgrove to be Camp Director, charging him to bring scout camping at Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch to a level equal to the magnificence of the Ranch itself. Mike took charge of a rather lack luster Camp Staff. He began to boost camp attendance by developing the finest camp staff imaginable. His philosophy was "If you can't give me 110 %, then get out!". He led by example, often working long hours, leading work crews by giving his 110 %, which was, quite often 125%. Eventually the camp enrollment began to rise. Soon summer camp was at capacity.

Shortly after the incredible jump in camp attendance, Mr. Cris Dobbins bequeathed an endowment to the Ranch. Mr. Dobbins left the sum of \$1,000,000 (one million dollars), the proceeds of which were to be spent exclusively on the Ranch. Mr. Dobbins was a member of the original Camp Selection Committee. His considerable gift was part of the push to drive the Ranch into the best Scout Camp in the Nation!

While the greatly improved Camp Staff helped develop a solid camper base, there were several key program areas that were required to reach the pinnacle of scout camping. A couple of areas that were missing were a real dining hall and a lake front, capable of encompassing those water skills that the swimming pool alone could not accommodate. Work on "Silver Lake" began in 1983. The lake would allow most aquatic activities, including rowing, canoeing, sailing, snorkeling, mile swimming, fishing, and in an emergency, swimming, life saving, and to just allow playing on a sand beach.



Silver Lake

Upon completion of the lake, it was aptly named after Harold Silver, an early Council President, and a Ranch Selection Committee member.

The dining hall would be completed later.

1. "One small step for a man..."

Around Christmas of 1980, I received a letter from the Camp Ranger, Sam Jackson. Sam stated that the "Lord" had given him a directive. And that was to retire from the Ranger's job and devote his activities in another direction. Sam's letter then stated that the only person he would recommend to replace him was myself.

He also sent a similar letter to the Director of Camping at the Council office.



Sam & Edna Jackson

What an opportunity! I was an engineer at the Martin Co., had a wife, a high school senior age daughter and a high school freshman son. WOW! The first thing we did was to visit the local school where Mike would complete high school. We found the school more than satisfactory. We attended the local "Pancake Day", where I met most of the community of Elbert. After doing a lot of checking and worrying, I got cold feet and told my wife, Betty, I don't think we should move. She said "you'll never get another chance like this. Do it!" I remember her words vividly and I did it. Mike did attend Elbert High School and graduated third in his class (out of a class of eleven students!) Following are some of my recollections about life at Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch from 1981 until 2006.

Due to the smallness of the camp staff and my Scouting involvement, we became an integral part of camp life. My wife delivered the mail, handled a lot of trivial matters, and generally became a camp staffer. She soon became "mom to all". As a part of her "unofficial" duties, she became a rather outstanding wildlife photographer.

A couple of our very good friends (Fritz and Omer Oaks) visited nearly every weekend. Omer became the volunteer Camp ranger. Fritz and my wife became fast friends.

Every Saturday, after the household and camp duties were completed, the pair of them would take-off and explore the surrounding area. When they discovered a new, un-photographed flower or animal, they would return to the Ranch House to categorize the photo. They behaved like young school girls. One of my prized photos of my wife is of her hand feeding a huge buffalo bull, her hand nearly disappearing into the animals giant mouth!



BJ and a buffalo

Fritz and Omer's son, Ron and our son Mike were also good friends and invented numerous games to keep teen-age boys out of trouble... mostly.

What a place to live and work. Sam Jackson had turned the water on to all the buildings and campsites. Everything was ready for the campers. I had little to do during my first summer camp. I was working part time at the Martin Company and part time at the Ranch. I even worked at Martin during summer camp! If a problem arose, my wife would call me and we would diagnose it over the phone. Only once did I have to leave Martin to attend to a Ranch problem. Times have really changed.

At the end of my first summer camp, I turned off all the water and did little else Ranch wise. Remember, there was no Dining Hall, no lake, a so-so pool. All in one camp!

Then came the winter. Winter on the Palmer Divide is sometimes very winter-ery.

Our first winter was very winter-ery!. We got the Christmas blizzard of 1981. The snow was well over the picket fence in the front yard. I had no local contacts and couldn't get anyone to plow us out. The Scout Show was just over and I was waiting for help to unload our big truck that was loaded with Scout show equipment and supplies. It was caught in the blizzard and sat in the driveway until after Easter. I managed to park our car at the top of the hill and walk down to the Ranch House. I continued to walk up and down the hill, as I was still employed at Martin.

The County did plow the highway, but wouldn't come onto private property. The roads were mostly dry from the driveway all the way to Martin. I would stop at a super market and buy what supplies I could carry down hill. I finally purchased a used snow mobile, which eased the trip somewhat. I didn't get to camp until just before staff week.

The next year a similar blizzard hit. It was a little earlier. It happened after Thanksgiving. We were a little better prepared, but we still had the walk and isolation.

2. “We have more to offer than history...”

The Ranch's camping continued to slightly increase for a number of years, relying on its fine facilities and Staff. But during the '70's the ever-expanding boy population suddenly began to decline. More and more boys and adult leaders were torn between the numerous youth activities being offered.

In Denver, Camp Tahosa was as popular as it had ever been, but it was suffering from the decline in boy population also.

As recently as 1981, the camper attendance at Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch was barely more than the Camp Staff.

During one week of summer camp, there were more Staff than Campers!

And the camp season was only four weeks long. For several years, all the program equipment, including the staff, was transported from Peaceful Valley to Tahosa, about 120 miles away, in order to conserve our limited resources. To keep the camp financially afloat, a father and Cub program called “Dad and Lad” was instituted. The Dad and Lad program was a huge success, as it continues now, only now it welcomes either parent, or both, into a Cub Scout sized adventure.

A real problem with holding Dad & Lad during summer camp, and not having a cadre of volunteers to man the program areas, is that the staff must direct both summer camp and the Cub Scout program. The summer work shift was seven days long, with one evening off a week! Summer camp started on Sunday, as usual, lasting until Saturday, ending before lunch. After lunch, the Staff gathered to move tents. The Dad and Lads arrived after noon. The program continued until about noon on Sunday. The Boy Scout Campers then arrived at about 2 p. m., beginning a week of Scout Camping. And so it continued.

Needless to say, the staff soon became exhausted. Morale sank dangerously low. Only the dedication and drive of the Camp Director held the place together. His motto was, “I give 110%, so can you. If you don't like it, there's the road!” He was Mike Sulgrove. He was domineering, always right, and sometimes even a real bully! He developed the staff attitude that prevails today. The idea that the camper is king is still with us. I think that without Mike Sulgrove, or someone like him, this Camp would be closed, for lack of interest!



Camp Director, Mike Sulgrove

The old kitchen was in what is now the Jackson Quartermaster building. It served us for a long time. The walk-in refrigerator was located next to the east wall. Often, when things were especially grim, Mike would disappear into the walk-in. Only years later, I discovered why. He would open a half gallon of milk, chug-a-lug most of it. After he cooled off a bit, he would punch the foam insulation inside the cooler, hard, several times. He vented himself this way. When we tore the old refrigerator down, there were fist prints 1-2 inches deep in the foam.

But Mike never demonstrated this behavior around the campers. And he put this camp on the map! The camper population began to rise. Other facilities were needed, a lake, a central dining hall, a real kitchen. Of course, the missing element was money. The Scout Executive, Bill Kephart's, philosophy was, "Give the boy a memorable program and the money will follow him." Sure enough, it did.

Bill invested himself into promoting Peaceful Valley to the elite of Denver. He courted people that operated large, profitable companies.

He asked some of them to talk to the Camp Staff on how and why their companies were so successful. Service to the customer was the answer. Treat the first year camper as if he were special. In fact he is! Treat the returning campers as extra special.

With the change in attitude, the camp attendance began to grow. It has risen to an unexpected level. The results of Bill's efforts are still in existence today. We camp well over 10,000 youth a year!



Bill & Rose Kephart

With the increase in attendance and the emphasis on program, the next logical addition was the lake. It's not very large; hardly a pond when compared to the Great Lakes, but it's great to us. Silver Lake is about 6-7 acres and is only about 19 feet deep at it's deepest. Most of the aquatic merit badges are taught there. Rowing, canoeing, small boat sailing and the mile swim are but a few of the activities enjoyed by hundreds of Scouts each summer.

The Groth family provided the initial watercraft and other facilities being used at Silver Lake.

The first year of operation, we received about 25 rowboats and canoes. All un-assembled and all in urgent need at the lake. Several members of the staff spent untold hours, well into several nights, building all the watercraft.

The Groth Family Waterfront was dedicated in July, 1985.

Bill Kephart thought the “new” Quartermaster building was the ugliest thing on earth. He thought that if we built a hip roof on the place, it’s looks would be improved.

The Camp was still in the midst of financial need. Bill challenged me to get a crew of volunteers to erect the new roof, if he could fund it. He did and so did I.



Volunteers erecting the hip roof on the Jackson Quartermaster building.

3. “Open air dining, at its best?.....”

Eating was an adventure at Peaceful Valley. An old, smelly, leaky, dark, dirty, military tent was used for a long time for meals. The drinks were kept outside of the tent, several yards away. It seems that the sweet fruit punch was a natural attraction for thousands of bees. They came in swarms, looking for a free meal. We tried a number of tricks to re-route the insects. We filled a sheet pan, from the kitchen, with honey, and placed it away from the punch and the tent.

At times, the pan became so coated with bees, that it took several husky staff members to transport it away.

When it rained, the tent was especially bad. The high humidity, flies and of course the bees made the tent almost unbearable. Any spilled food or punch was instantly ground into the mud that was the floor. By mid-summer, the mud had a real flavor of its own.



The Long Branch

A group of Wood Badge volunteers finally came to the rescue. They built a covered building. Maybe a building is not exactly correct. They built a roof. The Martin Co. of Littleton donated some missile covers, which were draped on the west wall.

They could be rolled up when the weather was fair and let down when it rained.

During one particular bad rainstorm, the Quartermaster and the Ranger decided to dig a drainage ditch along the east side of the structure. Well, they forgot about the sewer line that ran from the kitchen. You never saw such a flurry of activity to cover the sewer line!

The “Long Branch”, as the roof structure was named, became the program center of camp. Song, skits and other activities were held at each meal.

On Wednesday each week, during the *Batman* craze, a special event was staged. “Batman & Robin” climbed onto the roof, before the campers arrived for lunch, and by laying flat on the roof they were not seen. After lunch and during the comment time, some bad guys would “hold-up” the Long Branch and take someone, usually Mike, a prisoner, holding him for ransom. Batman & Robin, accompanied by the appropriate music, would swing off the roof to capture the bad guys, complete with “Biff”, “Blat” and “Bonk” signs!



Batman & Robin

Even several years after the Long Branch was abandoned, you could recognize “old timer” staff members by the way they used their arms and hands to shielded their food from the wind. The Long Branch served Peaceful Valley very well and is a fond memory for a lot of us.

After the Dining Hall was constructed, the Long Branch was razed and re-erected at the Ranch House as the now automotive garage. Two Wood Badge Courses, as a Good Turn project, under took the move and re-establishment of the building.

The camp staff was a very tightly knit group. Working seven days a week, switching from Scouts to Cubs and them back to Scouts developed a real camaraderie among the Staff.

The physical work was very difficult. The mental work was even harder. At breakfast each day, the Camp Director would circulate among the staff, passing out vitamins and cough drops. It was almost a disgrace to get sick and very few did.

At every meal, the entire camp staff gathered in the kitchen, to serve the meals and to sing. The entire camp, about 300 people, could be fed in less than fifteen minutes. All the while the staff would serenade them. Everyone participated. The staff morale was sky high.

One meal I entered the kitchen to do my part and I noticed a refrigeration temperature chart on the wall, very distant from the refrigerators. The entire kitchen became deathly quiet, waiting for my reaction. My curiosity was piqued. I lifted the chart and found a large hole in the wall board. It seems that two of the kitchen staff were wrestling and the larger of the two threw the smaller into the wall. The larger of the two was my son, Mike! This was Mike’s first experience in repairing wall board.

All the staff would eat in the rear of the kitchen in a very small dining room. Of course a small room is all that is necessary with a staff of 40 people.

One summer, the “older Boy” Director and his assistant belayed themselves, complete with pitons, carabineers and rope, from the Quartermaster (now the Trading Post) to the Long Branch.

It took most of the day and completely wore their uniforms out. They were, of course, belaying on the ground and crawled on their stomachs all the way!

Another summer, the medic was a registered nurse and the wife of a District Executive. After a very trying week, near the end of summer, the staff was very tired. Tempers were short and little was going in our favor.

While the staff was gathered at the Long Branch for lunch, I stumbled out of the kitchen, acting faint. The Camp Director rushed to my aid and I stated that I was seeing everything double. I saw two Camp Directors, two Pool Directors, etc.

The Camp Director reassured me that the problem would pass with a little rest. I said, no it won't, I still see double. On that cue, the Medical Director and her twin sister, both dressed in nurses uniforms, appeared from behind the kitchen. That stunt helped ease the staff back into the high enthusiasm they always had.

During a long, hot summer, one of the cooks was named Mohammad. His English was not very good, but he was a good cook. One of his desires was to ride an American horse. We had an especially spirited horse named Rebel. He was an appaloosa and proud of it. He really liked to gallop on the mesa. At a prearranged time, the horse wrangler brought Rebel to the kitchen for Mohammad to ride. Being early for lunch, the wrangler unbridled Rebel and tossed the reins over the saddle. Later Mohammad finished his work and prepared to take a ride. Did he ever! As soon as Mohammad was seated, Rebel bolted and hit the ground at a gallop.

Of course there's no way for a novice to control a rein-less horse. Much later, Rebel returned to the corral and even later Mohammad, dirty and sweaty, walked back to the kitchen. He never asked to ride again.

A native stone sundial still marks the location of the Long Branch.

People say that "if walls could talk". Our Quartermaster building could tell volumes!



The Long Branch Sundial

4. “Something old, something new...”

How do you build the campers and the staff into a team? You can give them a common “enemy”. And who could take all the abuse the common “enemy” received? Why the Camp Director, of course. One of his tricks was to ban root beer. It was a big deal. At each meal, he would berate root beer and condemn drinking it. He, of course, received all kinds of root beer tokens. Lots of necklaces made of empty root beer cans. Almost any apparel that can be imagined were presented to him, earrings, necklaces, shoes, aprons, hats. There was even a root beer can made out of a 55 gallon barrel, that mysteriously appeared on the roof of the kitchen. Strangely, on Thursday evening, while the Camp Director was off camp (he was actually giving his O-A talk to the candidates and then off to the O-A ceremony. A tradition that continues today!), while the Assistant Camp Director hosted a root beer and popcorn party. The campers seemed to never realize that this was a setup, given for their benefit.

Many campers, who had never tasted root beer, became root beer drinkers because of Mike. A couple of Mike's innovations, which were not new to other camps, were a revelation at Peaceful Valley. Mike had an obsession with "his" staff. He wanted to be able to recognize them instantly. His solution, was of course, a very distinctive staff shirt.

His choice was a yellow-gold golf shirt. The first year, this yellow shirt had the Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch brand, in black, over the left chest. Very few are shirts of the quality of ours.

The brand, by the way, is a registered Colorado cattle brand, inherited from the original Ranch owners.

What about something special for the first year campers? They get to be first in line for the Sundown Sundaes. Look around and you can find Mike's touches everywhere at Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch.

Mike could spot a staffer anywhere on the camp. And you had better not be where you didn't belong!

A second innovation was the staff yearbook. Similar to the current version only somewhat smaller. Each Area Director was encouraged to submit an article. The same year a staff photograph was given to each staffer. During the Sunday evening dinner, the entire staff was introduced to the campers. Each Area Director was recognized, he in turn introduced his staff (he is correct, as we hadn't graduated to female staffers, yet.).

At the end of the introductions, Mike would introduce the balance of the overhead staff, including myself and my wife.

We often did small tricks to shake Mike up a little, such as hiding behind him, or wearing different clothing, etc.

One night some of the staff was milling around us and I grabbed one of the staffers and placed him between my wife and myself. John Marsh was the first of our "sons" that was an African American. Mike turned around and without missing a beat said, "I'd like to introduce the Camp Ranger and his wife, Betty, and their son, John Marsh".



Our "son", John Marsh

Another time, we picked the most unlikely pair of staffers to represent us. One was a rather rotund girl, of about 175 pounds, with long dark hair. The other was a skinny guy about 4 feet tall. We put a red haired wig on her and a red hat on him. Mike introduced them as the new, improved Camp Ranger and his wife. It's hard to stay ahead of a guy like Mike.

Mike is a rather large person. He towers over most people and is large enough to play professional football. In fact, his mountain man name is "two blankets", because the making of his capote took two blankets! He is quite an intimidating person. An idea of his was to boost the ego of the smaller campers. The King of the Camp was born! One of the "kings" later became a Camp Director at the "Family Enrichment Center" or as we know it, Magness Adventure Camp. He's also been very active at Camp Tahosa.

The crowning of the "king" was held at the beginning of a camp wide water fight. The staff against the campers.

At lunch once a week, each Troop was encouraged to submit the smallest Scout from their unit to compete as the King of the Camp. The contestants were weighed and measured, the smallest being selected. He was treated as Camp royalty; he received a robe, a special tee shirt, and a crown. He was first in the meal line, was first into the pool, etc. He even got to push the Camp Director into the pool. Imagine a 50-pound Scout pushing a 250-pound Camp Director into the pool! After which, a camp wide water balloon fight took place. The campers against the staff. Mike was usually bombarded by both sides.

If you have visited the Rendezvous campfire ring, perhaps you have noticed the unique totem pole at the entrance. The “no root beer” is obvious, but what about the owl and the buffalo? Both are Wood Badge totems.

The owl is beneath the buffalo because the owl was here only 3 months, while the buffalo was here all year. Mike is the owl and I’m the buffalo!

Look around and you can find Mike’s touches everywhere at Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch.

Each Camp has a series of the photographs that chronicle the growth of the Ranch. Imagine the entire Camp Dietler staff plus the Ranger and his wife standing in a chuck wagon. Of course the total Camp staff was only four people! The Magness Adventure Camp staff has also experienced the same kind of explosive growth.

Probably one of the largest single things that boosted the Ranch into prominence was the gift from Cris Dobbins. Cris was involved with the original purchase of the Ranch.



Rendezvous totem pole

He was a Council Executive Board member and a very, very good friend of Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch. He liked the Ranch so much, that he left the sum of one million dollars for the future of the Ranch. We cannot spend the million, but we spend a lot of the interest that it earns.

That’s why our dining hall camp is named “Camp Cris Dobbins”! Mr. Cortland Dietler has also donated nearly an equal sum to “Camp Dietler”.

Bob and Sharon Magness have also endowed the Magness Adventure Camp! And yes, Mr. Dobbins name was “Cris”.

4. “Instaurator Ruinea...I rebuild the ruins”

NOTE: “Instaurator Ruinea...I rebuild the ruins” is the Forsyth motto, both in Gaelic and English. Some what fitting, huh?

While the camp enrollment was on the increase, the maintenance budget was still lacking. We didn't have a real budget. We just survived on what we had or what we could beg. There was no money for anything but the barest necessities. The camp didn't have any maintenance facilities. There was no garage to repair what vehicles we had. There was no workshop where we could build any required camp furniture. In the early years, any and all work had to be done outside. During my early years, my boss told me that any expense over \$25 had to have an OK from him. And I had to really need a what-ever.

The barnyard was scattered with old, un-used buildings. My predecessor had a rather unique method of storing what supplies and tools he had. He kept an assortment of parts, tools, wire, shovels and lumber in each of about six buildings. Searching out the necessary equipment took several tries before the right part could be located.



The original (1965) Ranch House Complex

The barn was originally used to house milk cows and draft horses. The horses were stabled in the loft of the barn.

There was a long ramp that led from the ground to the loft. There is still a trolley in the loft that was used to transport hay, both new and used, from the ground to the loft. I decided that the barn would make a good workshop, and I began by cleaning 20 year old manure out of the milking parlor. I discovered several items of interest while cleaning.

In the early 1970's, Standard Oil Company had a promotional giveaway, that consisted of several large lithograph pictures. I threw away about 500 sets of these pictures.

Further back in the feed bunker, were two large unopened cardboard boxes. I opened each and found wheel-less lawnmowers. Kind of like a hover-craft. I mixed some gasoline and oil, filled them and.....they both started and ran. I cut quite a bit of grass before I got tired of the novelty and we sold them at the auction. More about the auction later. When I finally got the trash, manure and pictures out of the way, I began to construct the wood shop. The barn was not insulated so I insulated the shop, installed some siding, built work benches and installed a small heater. I organized what maintenance supplies we had in the unheated portion of the barn. Later we spent many winter hours building and repairing a lot of camp furniture.

The barn was a real working milk dairy. One of the stray buildings was the spring house. In the center of the building was a large, bathtub looking thing. A pipe, that was connected to the barn water supply, allowed water to fill the tub. Fresh milk was placed in cream cans and placed in the tub, to cool the milk. The milk was then picked up by a delivery truck and transported to either Denver or Colorado Springs. There were still a couple of old 30 gallon milk cans in the building.

Another building was the tack house, where the draft horses' tack was kept. Unfortunately there was no tack left. It would probably be too large for any of our horses, anyway. Another structure was a grain silo. A steel round structure with a roof that looked like an inverted funnel. There was still some grain in the silo. The last two buildings were the hen and turkey houses. Sam's wife, Edna had raised chickens and some ducks, in the past. I sold all of these buildings for \$50 each. Where is, as is! Some local farmers bought them.

Just uphill from the Ranch House is an abandoned windmill and cistern. They supplied water to the Ranch House complex. Water would be pumped by the windmill and deposited into the cistern. The water then flowed to all the buildings, using the natural force of gravity to propel it. There was not a shower for a long time, as the water pressure was not sufficient for one.

Another building was the "dining hall". Edna used it to feed the SeaBees, who did most of the original construction of Peaceful Valley. She cooked her delicious meals in the Ranch House kitchen, and carried the hot food to the "dining hall."

The "dining hall" was rebuilt to provide a "garage" for vehicle maintenance and parking. The only entrance door was about four feet high, and inside was a sign that read "Low Bridge, Watch your head!" My friend, Omer, tested that low entrance numerous times. To gain a vehicle entrance, the south end of the building was removed and two large sliding doors were installed. This garage satisfied our needs for several winters. Several years later, regular garage doors were installed.

The remaining building, still in use is the Ranch House. The house was constructed in the early 1930's. It came from Sears-Roebuck as a "kit" house.

Everything needed to construct the building was included, except the foundation.

Sears sold many different varieties of homes ranging in price from \$107 dollars to \$3,500 dollars. The records of this house have been lost but a very similar model called the "Vallonia", was sold for \$1,465 to \$2,479, depending on the refinements the owner requested. The Ranch House has been modified several times since it's original construction but remains basically the same as when it was built. The front porch has been enclosed, a mud room has been added to the rear and a breakfast nook has also been added.

The building continues to be housing for the Camp Ranger or the Assistant Ranger families.

Several years ago, three middle aged ladies approached me and asked if they could look around the Ranch House. They stated they were brought up here and were here when the place was constructed. We talked for quite a while and some of the interesting things they told me were:

The original family "house" was a two-room cabin to the east of the Ranch house. The eldest two sisters were born in this place. The youngest was almost born there, but her parents barely made in time to a hospital in the Springs.

Later, after the youngest was a toddler, their parents built the "big" house, now known as the Bunk House. It's hardly a "big" house, but it's much larger than the original cabin.

Sometime later, the Sears kit was purchased and became the Ranch House. What a change in living style. Each girl had their own room.

The basement was decorated in the motif of the '40's and '50's, complete with a soda bar, ping-pong table and a record player. The ladies told me it was the teen hangout while they were in high school.

There is a heat vent in the ceiling of the bedroom hall way. It is supposed to allow heat in to the upstairs. Ha! It is really a sound duct from one floor to the other. The girls, who had bedrooms upstairs, told me they used to lay on the floor and listen to their parents, talking! You bet.

Afterward we toured the Ranch House. They became quite teary at times. As they left, I told them to visit anytime they wanted.



The Ranch House (as originally built)

6. “Going, going, gone!”

During the spring and summer of 1980 and after much soul searching, number crunching, asking, praying and debating, the Denver Area Council decided that 1981 would be the last summer camp at Camp Tahosa. Tahosa was a full camp with all the equipment needed to house and feed about 350 Scouts a week. There was a water front, a health lodge, a handicraft lodge, a nature Lodge, a maintenance building and of course a dining hall and kitchen.

All of this stuff must be disposed of. Most of the program equipment came to Peaceful Valley. All of the kitchen equipment that was movable was also transported to Peaceful Valley.

I had just begun to try some sort of organization of the supplies that I had inherited. Then numerous truck loads of camp equipment began to arrive from Tahosa. I was overwhelmed. The barnyard was littered with equipment from Peaceful Valley, and then additional loads from Tahosa began to arrive. My boss decided we could have a farm auction. We sold almost everything including several kitchen ranges and ovens. Paul, my boss, had a hand full of fishing rods, complete with reels and bait.

He motioned to the auctioneer to sell these. I think the handful went for \$1.

My wife and Fritz set up a hot dog stand and sold weenies, chips and cookies. They grossed way more than the auction. But we cleaned out the barn yard! I don't know what the wives of these farmers thought when they came home with a 300 pound, well used, commercial range!

Near the new south entrance road is the “warming shed”. This building was originally used by the SeaBee's as a construction office.

Several of us decided, that after a really cold Klondike Derby, we could make this building into usable space. A Wood Badge Course, as a good turn project, under took the renovation of the building. They caulked, scraped, insulated, re-glazed the windows and painted the exterior.

They installed a small wood-burning stove to heat the place. It was very welcomed by a large number of Troops. But before they could proceed, I had to remove several tons of donated wood pellets.

I thought, if I soaked the pellets in kerosene, they would burn quickly. HA.

I got an O-A work crew to help load these things onto our truck and we drove across the highway to a burn dump.

We very carefully spread the pellets out and doused them with kerosene. I cautioned the O-A members to stand back. I threw a burning wad of paper onto the mess. The kerosene lit a little, sputtered, then went out! We tried several times to light the things. I finally gave up and the snow and rain gradually dissolved them into the ground. No wonder they were a GIFT!

7. “Back to basics...”

With the growth of Camp Cris Dobbins and the increase of the boy population, another camp was required. Up stepped Bill Eck. His vision was to develop a scout camp that featured Patrol camping, cooking and the other activities that was the heart of the original Scouting Program. A high energy, dedicated, can-do staff was required. He began with a few (three) staff members.

The headquarters and food commissary was located in a donated construction trailer. The staff area was outside, in the mud (mostly), with few amenities.



Camp Dietler “Headquarters trailer”

The staff kitchen sink was next to the trailer and often the dishes were rinsed by rainwater.

The staff catered to the campers and leaders. Hot, fresh coffee was delivered personally by Bill and his staff to each leader, at reveille time. The campers did their own dishes, cooked their own meals, worked as patrols, and succeeded very well.

The growth of Camp Dietler speaks well for the vision that was held by a few equally dedicated staffers. Many of these staffers have developed a career in the Professional Scouting ranks. Camp Dietler has grown from two campsites to six plus the staff camp. Each campsite is equipped with a latrine that includes two hot water showers plus the normal camping equipment needed to survive in the out of doors.

To enter the camp, the campers are required to use map and compass to find their campsite. They are never far from an experienced camp host that is their guide, instructor, helper, confidant and friend. The staff host helps the boys become a patrol. The camp has a fine commissary, a 45-foot high climbing tower, (soon to be replaced with a updated model), shotgun and archery ranges, Silver Lake, two outpost camps and an obstacle course.

Each week the entire camp goes on a backpack trip to the other side of the mesa. The enthusiasm of the campers is explosive. Other than the Sunday and Friday evening meals, all other meals are prepared at the campsites by patrol cooks. The staff host guides them through the rough spots, but he is generally just an observer. At the end of a week of Patrol camping, the entire Scout Troop is strengthened and each vows to return next year. At this writing, due to an unfortunate accident, the climbing tower has been razed and may be rebuilt in the future.



The Dietler Commissary

One afternoon, while the campers were on Outpost, a Dietler staffer was wandering around the back country. Laying on the ground was a piece of bone that resembled half of a dog bone, only larger.

He thought it might be from some extinct animal so he took it home to his father. His father was a curator at the Denver Museum of Natural History. The father immediately recognized the bone from a pre-historic animal called a Brontops.

When they returned to the Ranch, the son showed the father the area where the bone was found. The father started to search for the remainder of the animal and found a portion of its head sticking out of the ground.

After conferring with the Ranch Director, it was decided to have a real paleontological dig to locate and preserve what remained of the animal.

The rest of the summer, the father conducted weekly "digs" with any camper that had an interest in a career in paleontology. At the end of the summer, the portion of the skull was presented to Camp Dietler, where it remains now.



Camp paleontologists encasing the skull of the Brontops

NOTE: Paleontology is the science of dealing with the life of past geological periods as known from fossil remains. (Aren't you glad you asked!)



Partial skull of the Brontops

The Dietler Program is anything but stagnant. Each year new innovations are added to keep the Scouts interest at a high level. The enthusiasm of the Dietler staff is very exciting and quite contagious. The future of Camp Dietler, is all go for the next century, and beyond!

8. “Blue & Gold...”

During the early-1980’s, the Council began a program called “Dad-and-Lad” to help promote Cub camping and to improve the Council’s financial position. The program took off like a rocket. To say it was a success would be an understatement. The weekend programs were full and all enjoyed the camp events.

All except the Camp Staff. The Staff was required to work 7 days a week, with one night off each week. The work and stress load took a heavy toll on the Staff.

At the morning Staff meeting, vitamins were passed out to all and no one had better turn up sick.

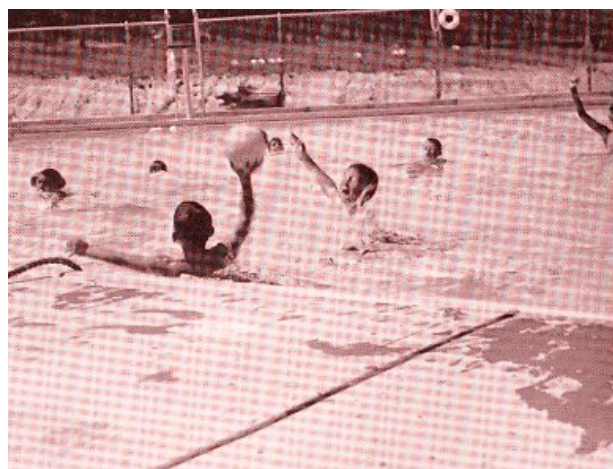
A program similar to the existing Cub Weekend was instituted and was extremely popular, as it continues today. One of the more popular areas was called “cooking”. It consisted of the Cubs and dads wrapping turnovers in foil and warming them over charcoal.

A giant earth ball pushing contest was also popular. The earth ball was about 5 feet in diameter and the Cub teams pushed it between goals, like soccer. The kids really liked the game. The dads did too. Both ages had their own competition. Every weekend, several macho dads required first aid because they weren’t as macho as they thought.

Other events were held to keep the Dad-N-Lads happy. A popular event was a trip to Silver Lake, and the pool. The lake has basically remained unchanged. (The old pool was razed when the new Gates Aquatic Center was built.)

The old pool, the “Ole Watering Hole”, was built around 1965, was coffin shaped and quite modern by the ‘60’s standards. During the 1970’s, the pool boiler exploded and almost killed the Camp Ranger. Another time, he almost died when gassed by chlorine gas, which was stored in the basement of the pool mechanical room.

As an alternative to gas chlorine, he used granulated chlorine powder. It’s very safe and also very costly. When I began work at the pool, the first thing I did was to build a gas chlorine room and moved the gas chlorine system upstairs, behind the boys change room. Later, the cost and availability of gas chlorine forced us to stop its use and look for an alternative.



The Ole Watering Hole

Another problem with the old pool was its lack of a pool water heater. Up stepped an Executive Board member with the “solution”. He used an enlarged copy of the solar heating system that he had used at his home to heat his pool.

A real opportunity arose when we tried to heat 130,000 gallons of water with a system that could heat only 5,000 gallons of water.

If you visit the old pool site, you may notice some remnants of the black plastic underlayment that helped direct the sun's energy into the thousands of feet of black plastic tubing that was connected to the pool's water circulating system.

It did in fact work, sort of. You could feel the warmth of the heated water as it entered the pool. But it never did get very warm.

The then Scout Executive, Dan Gasparo, brought Mr. Charlie Gates to Camp to examine the Ole Watering Hole. After looking at the broken concrete, the missing under-water light fixtures and especially the dead, floating squirrels, Mr. Gates stated "We can't have our name on this place. Take that dedication plaque down!"

(The Gates Foundation helped sponsor the old pool.) After that, numerous meetings and design reviews were held and finally the plan was endorsed and the new "GATES AQUATIC CENTER" was born.



Tim Travis, Mr. Gates and Tom Fitzgibbon at the dedication of the Gates Aquatic Center in 2000.



The Gates Aquatic Center, as envisioned by Mr. Gates.

Several years later, Mr. Gates was again asked to help improve the Ranch. He became a major contributor to the Gates Property. More about this property later.

The Dad and Lad program went along for a long time at Camp Dobbins. Using most of the program areas and staff. After a lot of examining the good and bad points of using our prime summer camp for the Cubs, it was decided to build a real Cub Camp. The first two pavilions were built at the Family Enrichment Camp, during the winter of 1991. Winter seems to be the season of choice to build things here. The construction faced some real weather problems.

It either snowed or was extremely cold. After the exterior portion of the buildings were complete, heavy plastic was draped around the exterior walls. Large space heaters were used to heat the interior. The tradesmen had a difficult time completing their work. Finally the buildings were completed and ready for the Dad and Lads.



The Lizard Head Pavilion at Magness Adventure Camp

During the fall/winter of 1992, the Kiewit Lake, was constructed , adding another facet to the Cub program.

There was not a real office or health lodge. A construction trailer was rented for 5 or 6 summers. Each year, we had to connect water, electricity, sewer and telephone lines. At the end of summer, all the connections were removed.

The program flourished and the two pavilions were almost overwhelmed with campers. In 1999, a third pavilion was completed, as were the Coors Headquarters building and the Magness Commissary. The Headquarters/ Commissary building originally called for a two story structure. Fortunately, that idea was scrapped and the current plan was adopted.



The Coors Headquarters Building at Magness Adventure Camp

Generous donations allowed the timely completion of these buildings.

The Dad and Lad program continued until 2001, when a trial program was started. Cub Scout over-night camping.

The program allowed Cubs and a parent to camp for three days and two nights. This program is still gathering momentum and appears to be the program of the future.

A non-traditional Cub program has been started, with the introduction of no real schedule. There are numerous program areas that have no opening or closing time. They are in operation without stopping. If a parent and son wish to visit the lake all day, that's OK. If they wish to do crafts, that too is OK. During the evening, there is a special Camp Fire host. He may be an astronaut, a scientist, a magician, or some other special guest. It appears that this plan fills a real void in the bonding of Cub and parents.

9. "Horses ..."

During my first Cub weekend, the Camp Director told me that the veterinarian had just put a horse down and I had to remove the dead animal from the Horse Corral, because the Cubs were due within the next hour.

Being the average non-horse person, I didn't have a clue on how to accomplish this feat.

I visited the corral and there lay the dead horse. I checked and it was really dead. I asked our farmer what to do and he said that I should dig a hole nearby and put the animal into the hole.

We had a small tractor and backhoe, neither capable of the task. After many long minutes of worry, suddenly a rendering truck appeared and the dead horse was loaded, along with a previously loaded dead steer.

I think everyone should have the opportunity of watching (and smelling) a rendering truck in operation. ONCE!

Somehow, dead horses have been a plague to me. Actually horses haven't been one of my better success stories. Originally, we had a year round herd of about 8-10 horses ("nags"). Part of our job was to feed and water these animals daily. My son undertook most of the watering duties as the horses grazed in the pasture west of the Ranch House. Part of his job was to ensure that the horses were properly watered. He would shower, in the Bunk House, (since there was no shower in the Ranch House), then walk to the stock tank and break the ice and fill the tank with water. Needless to say, most of the time, his hair was frozen solid before he returned to the house.

One evening, while returning from the Martin Company, as I was driving through Elbert, I noticed several horses milling around town. When I reached home, my wife stated that the horses had broken the fence and had run away.

A winter storm was just beginning, with sleet, rain, thunder and lightning.

I drove into Elbert and began to round up the horses. I easily caught some of them, but with the lightning and thunder, several of them and I played a game of hide and seek for a number of hours.

I wonder if you realize how far it is from downtown Elbert to the Ranch House, pulling several horses, through rain and snow and hail and sleet?

One year, another horse was euthanized. The Camp Director told a good friend of ours and myself to remove the horse and bury it. We loaded the animal into the dump truck and proceeded to transport the horse to the mesa, where we dug a suitable hole and dumped the horse into the hole. By the way, it takes a very large hole to bury a horse.

Meanwhile, the Council Business Manager had called a rendering truck to pick up the horse.

When the truck arrived, they insisted on payment, even though they didn't pick the horse up.

The Business Manager was quite put out when he had to pay for an empty truck for a non-existent horse.

One of our horses belonged to a long time Scouter who lives in Aurora. The horse's name was "Rebel", and for good reason. This horse was an appaloosa. He was very fast and he hated me. Whenever I approached him he waited for a chance to bite or kick me. I cannot remember ever doing any harm to this horse, but we remained enemies. Once, my wife took some apples to the horses and hand fed each horse an apple. Each ate their apples. Except Rebel.

He wouldn't take the apple from her hand. She realized she had my gloves on and the horse thought it was me! She took off the gloves and he ate the apple happily. I would tell Rebel that I would have the last word with him. I did. He's buried in the barn corral.

We also had a pony named "Boots". He was almost a pet. He would nuzzle you whenever you fed him or were just around him. He was larger than a pony but not as large as a full sized horse.

Almost anyone could ride Boots. Ride him with a saddle on, that is. Bare back was another story. He could not be ridden. He became a rodeo horse without a saddle.

He would jump, kick, rear and buck off any rider. Riding Boots bare back became a staff challenge. He's also buried in the barn yard.

Boots was donated by a family from Denver. Their young daughter and Boots were real pals and after the donation, they became "pen pals".

“Boots” and the girl corresponded for a rather long time. She stopped writing to “Boots” a short time before he expired.

I still have some of her letters. I hope she doesn't read this Saga, as both were written by the same author!

One winter, my project was to refurbish the staff bathrooms. We tiled, painted, remodeled and fixed them. We painted the floors, walls and ceilings. Clothes washers and driers were installed. We were quite proud of our accomplishments. During staff week, a staffer decided to ride his horse everywhere.

Including into the staff bathrooms. Needless to say, the horseshoes destroyed the floor finish. The same guy and horse also visited Trail Boss.

Did you know that horses aren't house broken? The horse left several of his “calling cards” on the carpet!

Sometimes, people ask me if I have any horses of my own. I tell them yes I have two. They are very well behaved, eat little and require no veterinarian care. Both are buried in the barn yard!

Another year, there were four horse “escapes” during staff week! The Council Business Manager took matters into his own hands and requested a volunteer to “fix” the horse escaping problem.

He purchased wire, insulators, an electric fence charger and other necessities to build a fence to keep the horses from escaping.

He worked several days building, testing and working on the fence. As he was finishing his work, one of the horse staffers volunteered that he had left the gate open on all the horse escapes. The electric fence was never connected to power!

Still another year, a State Social Services Inspector visited camp. She stated that the horse corral was too great of a walk for the campers.

She requested that the riding arena be moved closer to the center of camp. My job was to move it nearer to the camp office. After several weeks of work, the arena was moved between Lodge A (Ft. Collins) and the office building. Did you realize that horses go to the bathroom about a thousand times a day. The odor was spread all over the center of camp.

The next year the arena was moved nearer to the Guest House (Tabor Grand). The following year it was returned to its present and original location. It appears that the Scouts would rather walk a short distance to the corral than be visited by the barnyard aroma of dozens of horses.

10. “A Black day at Cris Dobbins...”

Scout camps are required to be inspected annually by a National Boy Scout Visitation team. The team consists of volunteers from other Councils. The inspection consists of around 80-100 key items. Such things as the food service, the medical facility and staff, the water system, the waterfront and pool facility and staff. Each item is looked at very critically, by an expert on the team. The safety of the campers is the driving concern of the Visitation.

As you can imagine, everyone is on edge, trying to obtain 100 %. The entire staff is involved and all are doing their best. The inspection is so important that the camp could be closed if significant items fail.

One summer, during the lake portion of the inspection, an inspector, (who was soon replaced after his misinterpreting of the standards), asked the Lake Director how many boats were on the water.

The Director said he didn't know and that's what the Buddy Board is for. The inspector would not let the Director look as the Buddy Board, and gave the lake an unsatisfactory rating.

The same inspector then visited the pool and asked a similar question of the Pool Director. Of course, the Director didn't know the answer to the question. The inspector then reported that we would receive a "non certified rating" for the summer. Boy-o-boy. He just let the air out of our sails. It took a lot of talking to build the staff back up to their positive attitude. While this inspection was not typical, it demonstrates that the inspection teams are indeed human. At the conclusion of the inspection, the camp receives a banner, if they pass. We have only missed two since 1981!



Visitation Banner

11. "Three strikes and..."

As you probably know, one of our chartered aims is to promote physical fitness. We do a lot of hiking, swimming and camping. While some sports are integrated into Scouting, their emphasis is not our strong point. One summer, the Shooting Director was also an avid softball player.

He arranged for a soft ball game to be held between the PV Staff and the Jewish Camp staff. One evening after all the work was done, both teams met at the J-CC's ball field. Probably the reason that you have never heard of this game is that it was called due to darkness. That was a benefit to us, as we lost about 1,000 to 3. Strange, we have never asked for a rematch!

On a positive note, the J-CC Camp's well broke one summer. We provided drinking water and Sabbath showers for their campers for several weeks.

They arranged for a 5,000 gallon milk truck to transport water across the highway. During the same time, our food service manager had a problem getting enough milk for our campers. A new milk truck driver drove to the kitchen, looking for a place to load a truck load of water. Someone yelled to the manager, "Hey, Brian, your milk delivery is here!" Needless to say, Brian did a real double take.

12. "Water, water everywhere..."

Several water related events have occurred over the years. One day, just before the opening of camp, of course, my son, Mike, raced up to me and stated that the well house was "full" of water. Being somewhat of a prankster, I doubted his sincerity. The well house is built mostly beneath ground. Only the very top portion is visible, the rest is about 12 feet under ground. I arrived at the well house, and sure enough, it was full of water. In fact, water was flowing over the top of the foundation. We opened the door and water gushed out.

After a couple of minutes, we realized that the well pump was still pumping out water. And there was no way to shut it off! All the controls were under water, about 12-14 feet deep. The only solution was to have the electric company turn off the entire camp electricity.

I called them and told them of my problem. They sent a crew to open the service. The well pump stopped, but of course we didn't have power for anything else either. I told Mike that our only sump pump was under water at the far end of the well house. He "volunteered" to swim the length of the well house, dive to the bottom and retrieve the pump.

We used a generator to pump the well house dry. As he was swimming, he pushed against the 25,000 gallon tank and dislodged it from its footings. We had to reset the tank before we drained the building. The problem was that lightning apparently struck the well controllers and they were welded in the "fill the tank" position. The next priority was to replace all the controllers and install a safety control that would shut off all pump power in the event of another electrical problem.

13. "Dining is style..."

During the earliest years of the camp, the campers' food was prepared by the Rangers wife and a small staff. While the camp was being constructed, she cooked in a now gone converted chicken coop. It was ok, but just barely. Later the camp kitchen was completed. It was in the now Jackson Quartermaster building. The prepared food was transported to camp sites via a pickup truck. It was served out of military surplus food containers. The food was pretty good, considering the method of transportation. Everyone ate in their campsites. Later the containers were picked up by the support staff. After several years of this method, a different approach was conceived.



"Food Service", early on

The camp erected a large military tent. The "dining tent" was capable of serving over a hundred people. Of course it was hot, dirty, smelly and just not a good place to eat. The next step was to build a "dining shed". It consisted of a roof and a canvas side that could be rolled down when the weather turned bad, which was often!

Mr. Kephart asked what facilities would best enhance the camp. Of course the first item on the list was a decent dining hall, kitchen and training center.

Mr. Kephart and the Council Executive Board began gathering ideas, suggestions, and of course money. After a number of concepts, the existing facility was constructed. Larry Mizel, of Richmond Homes, was a major contributor of the project.

When the Dining Hall was completed, all the old kitchen equipment and supplies were moved in a single Saturday by Mike Sulgrove and the camp staff. The Sunday evening meal was served at the new Kephart Dining Hall!



Kephart Dining Hall

During the dedication of the Dining Hall, Mr. Kephart, who was a very confident public speaker, was at a loss for words when the dedication plaque was unveiled and read.

It says simplify:

**“William R. Kephart
Dining Hall**

**Denver Area Council
Boy Scouts of America**

**Camp Cris Dobbins
Peaceful Valley
Scout Ranch
Elbert County, Colorado**

Dedicated July 5, 1986”

Rumor had it that the Kephart Dining hall was only one of two facilities that were dedicated to living Scout Execs. It was only a rumor, wasn't it?

At the end of the first summer, as I was preparing to winterize the building, I noticed thousands of small flies. They were flying all over the place. After investigating the kitchen, I discovered they were coming out of the janitor's sink drain. I removed the sink from the floor and tried to locate the source.

Shining a flashlight into the hole, I couldn't see the drain trap. I reached my arm into the hole and couldn't touch the trap either! Using a small mirror and a flashlight, I could see a huge hole under the floor.

I called my boss and told him that we had a small problem. Almost instantly, the builder, his boss and his boss were at the kitchen. Apparently, when the soil was being prepared to install the concrete floor, it had a large content of snow mixed in it.

The resulting warm weather caused the snow to melt, the soil settle and the underground drains to become detached.

The entire summer's worth of garbage from the disposal was pumped into the void. Hence, food for the flies!

The contractor hired a number of homeless people from some shelters in Denver. They jack hammered the floor apart and hauled the pieces outside in wheel borrows. They removed the old dirt and garbage, with shovels and wheel borrowed it outside, too. The garbage was spread on the roads, allowing the sun to disinfect it. If you notice some of the rocks that line some trails, you'll notice that they have an epoxy coating on one side. All this work was done by hand, as the floor was not strong enough to support motorized vehicles. After the plumbing was repaired, new fill dirt was placed into the hole, which was over 12 feet deep, and new concrete was poured.

If you look at the kitchen floor, near the ice machine, you can see a difference in the old and new floors.

What's Gilwell Hall?

Long before the Dining Hall was begun, a group of Wood Badge Volunteers decided that we needed a training center for all the training that was held all over Denver. This group of Wood Badgers started to raise enough money to build a real training center. We had made arrangements with the Air Force to purchase an un-used barracks from Lowry Air Force Base. This group raised money in all sorts of ways. We had bake sales, sold car washes, sold and delivered fire wood. All sorts of fund raisers were employed. We raised around \$18,000 in two-three years of effort. We had a location selected to build our center. The Council was of course in agreement with our plans. Some how the funds were spent on other projects.

Mr. Kephart suggested that if he could replace the money, would we allow him to furnish the lower level of the Dining Hall with tables, chairs, and state of the art audio-video equipment. In return, we could call the place "Gilwell Hall". I guess that's what's called a "Win-Win" situation.

Incidentally Gilwell Park is the Scout Training Center in England. And the home of Wood Badge Training.

14. "Dollars and cents..."

How do you get mature, experienced, dedicated and motivated college aged youth to work at Summer Camp, year after year? It's a well known fact, that the wages these kids are paid aren't record breaking. In fact, the pay for working at a fast food restaurant is probably much higher than the same person can earn working at camp. And you don't have to move tents, survive the same menu week after week, live with the same person for eight weeks or longer. No wonder the staff turn-over was so high.

Mr. Kephart started a motivation program, that is still in use. It is called "Wings of Eagles". It is a motivational idea taken from the movie "*Storms Bring Out The Eagles*".

The theory is that if a person is motivated enough, their internal drive will overcome most obstacles.

And to reward one of these high performers, they are elected by the staff to become a "Wings" recipient.

They receive a small eagle statue, their name inscribed on a plaque and a significant cash donation. Each year, at the closing banquet these people are recognized. Since the inception of the "Wings", Camp Dietler and the Magness Adventure Camp have also been involved with this tradition. Camp Dietler's award is called "Claimer's Dream" and Magness is called the "Lion's Pride".

All three names are acromymns for the driving spirit of each Camp.

BUT, only one person is elected from each camp. What about the rest of the staff? Along came John Madden.

Not the football guy, but a local person that is concerned with today's youth and their education.

Mr. Madden originally started with a small scholarship program that benefited several youth, but it wasn't enough to really help out with the college expenses. The improved scholarship is for a lot of money. It is known as the John and Marjorie Madden Merit Scholarship.

Of course, there are several requirements involved in order to receive all this money. You must work at least two years on Camp Staff. You must work in a leadership position. You must maintain a 2.75 PGA.

And you must be recommended by the Camp Director, and receive academic, personal and Scouting recommendations. Plus you must complete at least 10 hours of non-Scouting related community service.

The scholarship is renewable for four years of college. And it's worth \$5,000 a year. That's one way to keep a mature, experienced, dedicated and motivated college aged youth.

Thanks Mr. Madden!



Mr. Madden and a recipient

15. “Flora and fauna...”

During the annual Camp Visitation, one of the inspection elements is the Nature Lodge and the Nature and Conservation Trail. Until recently, we managed to get by with a quickly assembled “trail”. Unfortunately, the Summer Camp staff usually didn't take the time to build a permanent first class trail.

During 1991, one of the projects that the Summer Camp Assistant Ranger took on was to begin to construct such a trail. He laid out the general route the trail would take. He and numerous work parties carved rock outcroppings, cut brush away, cleared layers of debris and constructed concrete stairways, where the slope was too great for only a path.

He was near completion when the summer was over.

In 2003, another Summer Camp Assistant Ranger, decided to complete the trail. He and other work parties, completed the trail work. Not to be satisfied with the existing artwork, they took numerous photographs used to replace the old pencil sketches. They built trail mounted photograph holders that contain a brief description of each species of plant life. They published two versions of the Trail Guide. One for Scouts to use and the second, more detailed for adults to use. They even secured a copy-right on the Guides. Both of these Summer Camp Assistant Rangers knew and worked with Betty Forsyth and their dedication to the Trail is only surpassed by their devotion to her memory.

The Betty Forsyth Conservation Trail is probably one of the finest memorial works that any camp staffer ever constructed. At the trail head, there is a small shelter that covers a brass plaque that reads:

THE BETTY FORSYTH CONSERVATION TRAIL

“I will lift mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” Psalms 121

While never receiving a formal education in nature's beauty, Betty's inquisitive mind sought out the magnificent array of the Ranch's beauty.

Her quest to identify and photograph the vast assortment of flora and fauna is a small token to her dedication to the youth of the future. This trail is but a sample of her commitment to all that follow in her footsteps.

WE LOVE YOU, MOM.

YEARS AT PEACEFUL VALLEY SCOUT RANCH 1981-1998

BETTY FORSYTH 1936-1998

DEDICATED AUGUST 10, 2003

There are also several bricks at the Gates Aquatic Center courtyard dedicated to her memory.

16. “For whom the bells toll...”

What a picturesque setting for the most memorable event in a couple’s life. To be wed to your life’s companion in the Peaceful Valley Chapel! There have been numerous weddings at the Chapel, maybe one of the most memorable to me was Mike and Rhonda Forsyth’s nuptials.

The wedding cake was baked in Colorado Springs. Betty and Fritz Oaks left early to pick it up. The day was quite warm, as was the cake.

As they traveled toward the Ranch, the layers of the cake began to slip and slid, the warm frosting acting as a lubricant! While Fritz drove, Betty attempted to stabilize the leaning tower of yellow cake. When they finally arrived at the Ranch, some quick cake repair covered up all the fingerprints and missing frosting. No one at the wedding was the wiser.

Betty was quite semimetal about the entire event. She borrowed a small table, our family bible and a very old, fancy doily to place under the bible.

It you look at some of the wedding photographs, you can see the fancy doily, still wrapped in plastic wrap, next to the covered bible, off to the side of the wedding party.

Mike moved here in his sophomore year and most of his friends were farmer kids. They were not highly schooled in the finer things of social amenities. Just prior to the ceremony, I thought that I should check on them, just to make sure every thing was OK.

As I entered their dressing room, I heard them giggling, like schoolgirls. One of Mike’s buddies was the size of a football player. His fancy tuxedo shirt was about 2-3 sizes too small.

They had a piece of string holding the collar closed. Another’s pants were about a foot too long. All the cummerbunds were on backwards.

I explained the things were supposed to snap in the back and the pleats were supposed to “catch bread crumbs”. No one laughed at my humor. While I was doing this adjusting, I noticed all the shirts were buttoned and the shirtsleeve cuffs were buttoned also. I asked about the studs and cuff links.....Blank stares... I asked about small plastic bags that came with the tuxes. “O-sure, they’re all in the back bedroom!” After some mad rushing around, and some tuxedo refinements, the men were ready for the wedding.

“Here comes the bride”, Rhonda and the ladies were beautiful, Mike and the guys looked like real dapper gentlemen. Mrs. Royston had placed a paper runner down the aisle of the chapel, to keep the dresses clean. The ladies punctuated each step with a loud pop, as their high heels punctured the paper.

The remainder of the wedding proceeded very smoothly. The reception was held in the Kephart Dining Hall, which was decorated to fit the occasion.

Mike and Rhonda have two great kids. Kelsi, a girl, of course, looks like a small Rhonda. And Justin, looks and acts like a small Mike.

Some time later, I noticed the Chapel bell made a wonderful target for aspiring rock throwers. Over the course of years, the stained glass windows that adorned the windows of the chapel, had been broken out by near misses to the bell. The repair was to install some unattractive yellow plastic panel in place of the stained glass. I reasoned that if we removed the bell, and the yellow plastic, both problems would be solved.

I recruited a friend of ours and his son. Both of these Scouts together probably didn't weigh 200 pounds. We rigged a block and tackle to the top of the bell tower and proceed to lower the bell. I hadn't bothered to figure out the weight of the bell, but once it was free of it's mounting, the heavy bell literally lifted the scout off the ground. It was like an old time movie. He was hanging onto the rope, while being lifted off the ground. Only quick action of his father prevented a disaster.

We managed to lower the bell to the ground without any other trouble. I stored the bell in the barn for years. Always wondering what we would do with it. To put it back up was never in the plans.

Much later, the new Director of Support was touring camp, and asked me why the bell tower was leaning onto the roof of the chapel.

At first, I thought he was kidding, but when I visited the Chapel, the bell tower had rotted off at the ground level and was leaning onto the roof of the chapel.

With a lot of straining, lifting and pulling, we managed to get the bell tower to the Quartermaster building, where repairs were to be made.

Along came Kevin Williams. He stated that since he was going to be wed at the Chapel, he would undertake the restoration of the bell tower.

KW gathered a group of friends and rebuilt the tower. They had the bell sand blasted, powder coated and restored to like new condition. They then proceeded to build a large foundation for the thing, pour about five yards of concrete to form a base. They obtained the services of a welder who spent two full days welding the base attachment to the tower frame work. The next weekend was the big day. After some last minute details, the tower was erected, the bell installed on top of the tower, the bell rope put in place.

After much cheering, a trial toll was rung. It sounded wonderful.

During KW's wedding, the bell was rung, for the first time, for real. I know the chill I felt was shared by all. Nice work, guys!



The "New" Chapel Bell Tower

During a visit to the Chapel, an Executive Board member noted neglected portions of the facility. He suggested some renovations be made and contributed several thousand dollars to the repairs.

Very early in the life of the Chapel, stained glass windows were installed behind the alter portion of the building. Some how stained glass and Scouts just don't mix. When I arrived at Peaceful Valley, the glass was long gone. In it's place was some yellow plastic paneling. It looked terrible! I removed the plastic, allowing the natural beauty of the valley to show thru.

It was decided to replace the stained glass and the yellow plastic panels with something more durable, more "Scout proof"!

Wayne Radford was requested to design new, wooden intarsia "pictures". (Wayne was an illustrator for Walt Disney before he retired.)

The plan evolved into a wooden jigsaw puzzle called intarsia.

Intarsia is kind of like paint by number, except the subjects are cut from wooden panels, painted and returned to the panel. It's very time consuming, but the results are striking!



The Updated Chapel

17. "Pull, Swish, BANG!..."

Early in 1999, an avid shotgun shooter visited camp and was rather disappointed by the shooting range and the lack of first class shotguns and world class ranges.

He contacted the Scout Executive and told him that he would fund a number of high quality shotguns and the construction of Trap, Skeet and Riverside Skeet ranges. Wow. We have never had a world class shotgun program.

We got by using very inexpensive guns and by using make shift throwers. The new "Travis Family Shooting Sports Facility" offers the best of shotgun shooting facilities. The shotguns are near the top of the line and are readily available to any Scouts that qualify.

During the annual Sporting Clays event, the "Travis" ranges are used to prepare the contestants for the field shooting and to satisfy any "grudge" matches that might occur. These facilities only help propel Peaceful Valley higher up the ladder of outstanding Scout Ranches.

Thanks, Tim.



The Travis Family Shooting Ranges

18. “Gates Frontier Camp...”

Currently, the plans of the Gates Frontier Camp are still in the development phase. Mr. Gates, before he passed away, requested the Camp maintain a “wild west” theme.

He suggested maybe a horse camp could be utilized to promote horsemanship and western themes.

One of his suggestions was that when Scouts checked into the “Fort”, they would be issued a horse, complete with tack, and other essentials for the animals upkeep. They would be briefed on elementary horse saddling, riding and safety issues. They would camp the first night at the “Fort” where dinner and an opening campfire would be held.

The following morning they would saddle their horses and travel to the first theme camp.

The details of the theme camps are still rather vague, but they might include a pioneer village, an American Indian village, a western town, a mountain man village, etc. Staffers wearing period clothing, representing their particular environment, would staff each of these camps. Each camp would utilize ancillary equipment, tailored to the Scouts age and experience.

The Scouts would stay at each camp for lunch, supper and breakfast. Each camp would provide an evening entertainment, consistent with its theme. After breakfast, the Scouts would be further instructed in horsemanship by their wrangler, including feeding, watering and horse care.

At the conclusion of the week, the Scouts would be prepared to earn the Horsemanship Merit Badge.

At the last camp, Friday evening, the Scouts would arrive back at the Fort, to enjoy a chuck-wagon dinner with their parents or other guests.

Can you imagine the tails the Scouts would relate to their parents, after a week of adventure on horseback?

19. “Some bits & pieces...”

This is a collection of anecdotes that I have collected over the years.

Some are funny, some not so funny but all are true.

- The Scoutcraft Director thought it would be an addition to their Lodge if they removed the skylight and built a pioneering tower through the hole. I suggested it was probably not a good idea. Later he approached me with a piece of the shattered skylight and stated it probably wasn't a good idea, was it!
- As a help to me, the Trading Post Director thought he would defrost the Trading Post freezer by chipping ice off of the evaporator. Soon the Camp Medic called me and asked if freon gas posed a health problem. It was of course Sunday afternoon and the freezer was just stocked with ice cream.

My rapid repair didn't save much of the ice cream and we gave all of it to the lucky campers.

- The Handicraft Director decided the entrance boot scraper was full of dirt and should be cleaned. She directed a Counselor to remove the steel grating and clean out the dirt. Later I received a call to respond to the Handicraft Lodge. The Counselor is about 6 foot 6 inches tall. He had “cleaned” out the hole and was standing in it. He had dug a hole to deep enough to stand up in. He later filled in the pit to the normal depth.

- When we first moved to Peaceful Valley, my wife decided that the Ranch House should be the show place of the Camp. To that end she cared for the lawn as if it were her own. She mowed, trimmed, watered and fertilized it until it resembled a pool table top. She then transplanted numerous wild flowers from around camp to a space between the driveway and a cement border. The place attracted so much attention that people driving would stop and inquire to the “caretaker” of such a wonderful place.

Mr. Kephart wanted “his” Dining Hall to be the pinnacle of the Camp. During the construct, he obtained the services of various contractors to install sod, move trees, and install a lawn sprinkler system. One day, I inquired of the sprinkler installer what it would cost to install a system at the Ranch House. He quoted a figure and I told my wife to save up and we would have the system installed.

Mr. Kephart said, ” No you won’t. You spend way too much money on this place anyway”.

So I presented a plan to the installer, that his Company donate the system. Much to my amazement, they agreed and said if I furnish the labor, they would provide the hardware. On the appointed day, they showed up with several of their technicians and the Company owner. We worked most of the day, but in the end all three parties were very satisfied. I still get Christmas cards from that Company.

- Several of us traveled to Colorado Springs to pick-up several truck loads of donated plywood. After we had loaded the plywood, a couple of the drivers wanted to visit another store. I decided to return to Camp ahead of them.

Shortly after arriving at camp , I got a call about two of the drivers being in a traffic accident. I immediately returned toward Colorado Springs and located the accident. Apparently a van crossed the center line and ran head on into one of our pickups, causing it to over turn, resting on its top. Neither pickup driver was in sight. I told the Highway Patrolman who I was and he directed me to the over turned pickup. Crouched under the over turned pickup were both drivers. One was trapped under the truck while the other was administering care to him. Soon the rescue medics arrived and took charge of the injured driver. They transported him to the hospital. Fortunately his injuries were not very serious. The care giver was awarded the Boy Scout Medal of Merit.

- Early on, after the Dining Hall was completed, the kitchen KP’s were composed of older Scouts. The camp consisted of a weekly point system, in which each area was awarded points by the visiting Scoutmasters. The Dining Hall was involved in this scoring.

To keep the kitchen KP’s moral up, the Kitchen manager challenged them to score higher than all the other Program Areas. The KP’s were awarded pizza, in town, if they won. It’s very surprising how many weeks they did beat the Program Areas.

- One summer, one of my assistants was directed to take the camp tractor/backhoe to the Magness mesa to obtain some road fill. Unknown to us, the water tank had been overflowing for some time and had created a large area of “quick sand”. Several “expert” backhoe operators tried to extricate the tractor, with no success.

It took a very large front end loader to pull the tractor out.

- The night before an opening of Camp Dietler, two staffers decided that they had run out of some supplies and must make a midnight trip to the store in Parker. On the trip back to camp, they over turned their truck. They walked to a nearby farmhouses to use the telephone. My wife answered the phone at about two o’clock in the night. The quickly told her what had happened but not to wake me or tell me. Fortunately, my fire department pager woke me and I responded to the accident. The only injury either sustained was their pride.
- One year the Scout Executive and the Camp Director decided to visit the mesa in the Executive’s new Ford Bronco. I was working in the garage, when the Exec’s wife drove into the yard and said the new Bronco was stuck on the mesa. I took the tractor and pulled it out. Kiddingly, I cautioned the Exec not to get stuck again. It was only about 30 minutes later when his wife was back to ask for another tow. Luckily for me, he had a big sense of humor.

- After a long, hot summer, a group of staffers challenged each other to a vehicle race. They knew that racing camp trucks was a quick way to be unemployed, so they decided on the next best thing, “Racing” riding lawn mowers. They began at the Quartermaster and proceeded toward the Ranch House. When they reached the Dietler road, they reevaluated the distance and the time it would take, so the half way point was changed to the orange cattle gate.

It still took almost a full day to reach that gate, then the race continued the next day. And the winner was.....no-one. It was declared a 4-way tie.

- No one probably remembers the summer the water front staffer took the floatation bladders out of the kayak. Without the bladders, the thing sank. The next year was it retrieved from the bottom of the lake.
- Very early in our tenure, we noticed that the Camp’s post card displayed the old Camp entrance sign. It presented an almost negative image of Peaceful Valley. We decided to do something about that and we purchased 5,000 postcards of six different images. Our agreement with the Council was that the cards would sell for a quarter and the proceeds would go to the General Fund. The post cards and I both ran out at about the same time.

- The worst event that took place at Peaceful Valley happened when a mother climbed the climbing tower to photograph her son ascending it. Somehow, and she doesn't remember how, she lost her footing and fell about 35 feet to the ground. She broke several bones and her spine. She is in a wheel chair, but still active in Scouting.
- Motor vehicle accidents have happened almost every year. Here are some notable ones.
- A group of staffers were late for check-in and were hurrying on the camp road. This was a time before the south road was completed.
- As they rounded the curve below the lake dam, the soft sand, the speed and the tardiness all resulted in a roll over. No one was injured, except for their pride. The driver later erected a temporary sign, proclaiming it to be his corner.
- A number of drivers challenged the camp roads with their lack of sound vehicle capabilities. One evening, one of these guys knocked off the Ranch House door and asked if I could retrieve his truck from the road behind the House. We traveled to the place he had parked his truck. He had high centered it, with the undercarriage sitting on the ground. All 4 wheels were off the ground. We pulled it out with the tractor the next day. Another time the driver had tried to jump a large pile dirt at the Rifle Range. It too was sitting on the undercarriage.

- In Elbert, next to the Cemetery, is a road called Roller Coaster Road. There are several steep hills and traveling fast enough, a vehicle can get air borne. We have stressed to keep off this road. However, more than 10 drivers have ignored this warning and have numerous ambulance calls. Fortunately, no has been very seriously injured.
- An illustration of Mike Sulgrove's dedication to an old time Scouter. The Scouter was awarded his Eagle Scout rank as a youth, but did not receive the award, due to several circumstances beyond his control. Mike traveled from his home Council in Michigan to present the award in person.

Mike was a District Executive in Denver before continuing his Professional career and had known the Scouter when he was in Denver. After the ceremony, we had a chance to catch up on old times.



Mike & I

- And lastly, during staff week, a young lady was returning from church in Elizabeth. She's not sure if she dozed off or what happened. Her vehicle traveled off the road and hit a buried post.

The sudden impact caused massive injuries to her back and spinal column. It also caused her to lose consciousness.

Fortunately, another staffer was directly behind her and rushed to render aid. Without his quick intervention, she would have expired. He maintained her airway until emergency personnel arrived. She is still in a wheel chair, and attends some camp functions when she can.

20. “A word of gratitude...”

I guess that over the years, we have been extremely successful in promoting Scouting, the Ranch and youth in general. I know that even working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, I, by myself, could not have carried out any thing like what we have.

If you see a turtle on a fence post, you can be sure he didn't get there by himself. He had to have help!.

To that end, there are a bunch of guys (and a couple of girls) that borne the lions share of all the behind the scenes jobs that are involved in getting camp ready and paying attention to the many details necessary to ensure a first class summer camp experience for all the Scouts attending Peaceful Valley.

Often these Staffers return in the off season to help with some of the many summer related tasks.

To them, both youth and adult, **THANK YOU!** I would like to name each of you, but I'm sure to omit someone. So to each of you Red Hats, thanks again guys for a job well done.

21. “My best friend left...”

Betty and I were married in 1958. I was still in the Air Force and instructing at Lowry Air Force Base. We did things that most newly married people do. We toured some of the States' tourist places, we visited some friends, and we visited her family on the farm. We just enjoyed each other. And as most newly married people, we didn't have much money. We did manage to have a couple of dogs. As time passed, two great kids blessed our lives. Michele and Mike joined us. We were very happy and content.

We purchased a home and joined the suburban life style. I was at the Martin Company. She had retired to raise our kids. I was doing my Scouting thing. Being Scoutmaster, O-A Advisor, etc., and suddenly our life was turned upside down.

Sam Jackson sent me a letter about being the Camp Ranger at Peaceful Valley. He stated that he had a call from the Lord to peruse another path. He said I was the only person he would recommend to replace him. What a shock and compliment.

Michele was still in high school and Mike was just completing his freshman year in high school.

We discussed the move a great deal. What type of school would a hick town like Elbert have. What about Michele staying in Aurora to finish school, and on and on. We visited the Elbert School and were quite impressed. If they conducted the school as well as they said they did, we were all set. Sort of. Obviously, we did move.

Michele graduated from high school in Aurora. And later had a son, Christopher. Some time later she divorced Chris's father and married Gregg. I sometimes think some people should begin life with their second marriage! Michele and Gregg are meant for each other. She received a wedding gift of two step daughters. One of them just had a daughter. Good grief, I'm a great-grandfather!

Mike graduated from Elbert High School, and then from Colorado State University. During high school he met, dated, and after college, married his high school sweetheart. They have two great kids, Kelsi and Justin.

Our life continued more or less smoothly until February 2, 1998. Betty and I were watching the 5 o'clock news. Suddenly, she gasped, and passed out. I immediately started CPR. But she was gone. To say the least, that was the worst day of my life.

I don't know how I would have survived without the hundreds of Scouters, Camp Staffers and friends who came to my rescue. Thanks to all of you, my friends.

We started the Betty Forsyth Memorial Scholarship to deserving seniors of Elbert High School, in her honor.

19. "So long, it's been good to know you..."

I decided to call it a day, early in the spring of 2006. The long summer hours, the long winters, the ever increasing amount of paper work required by the State, and having surpassed one of my goals to out tenure Sam Jackson, all contributed to my decision. As I look back to 1981, I realize that together, we have built a Scout Ranch that has no equal. I think we have the finest facility in all of Scoutdom.

The property has only gained more beauty through its use.

Many of the Council's Professional Staff have had an impact on the place. Many of the Camp Directors and Program Directors have left lasting program highlights that are still in use today. The entire spirit of Scouting reverberates everywhere.

During the non-summer camp season, if you let your imagination wonder, you can hear the campers in the Dining Hall. If you listen you can still hear "Moon on the Meadow".

“Moon on the meadow,
 Bugs in our ears.
Smoke in our eyes,
 Wet wood and tears.
On up the meadow,
 Water somewhere.
With you my friend,
 I am there.”

Quite often the tears weren't just from the smoke!

I know this continuation of the PV Saga is only a small addition to the never ending story. Ask yourself “How am I going to add to its continuation? Live and act as if the Scout Oath and Law are really your guiding light. Inspire others to want to be Scouts because you are.



And remember to walk in the Light of the Plan HE has for you.

Chuck Forsyth
Camp Ranger
1981-2006