

THE TRIALS and TRIBULATIONS

of

STARTING A SCOUT CAMP

By:

Oscar Johnson

This little story is written to enlighten those who have come into the Council in the past ten to fifteen years as to the experiences of the Council Camping Program, especially of our summer camp "Housatonic Scout Reservation" in Goshen, Conn. It will give you the trials and frustrations in finding a site and developing the new camp. It is not intended to infringe on any one's opinions and any errors are purely accidental. This story contains only the real highlights. To get a better picture it should start at the founding of Camp Irving on the Housatonic River in Shelton up to and including the year 1962 when the original planned camp was completed.

Camp Irving was established in the 1920's on ten acres of land owned by the state of Connecticut. It was slowly developed as buildings were added by volunteers. Messers Sharratt, Ward and Higgins were the first Executives up to 1932. In 1933 Harry Hanson became the Executive and during his administration the camp was a very busy one. Mr. Hanson was not only a real good Executive, but was a very good business man. He always got a dollars worth for a dollar spent.

Mr. Hanson left the Council in 1940 seeking larger problems to conquer which in turn means a larger salary. Mr. Hanson realized that Housatonic Council was

a small Council and would always be a small council with a limited amount of money.

In 1941 Henry "Sandy" Donohue arrived to be our new Executive. Sandy, as he was known, was a good camping man and like the Executive before him ran a good Camping Program. Both were very popular men.

During Sandy Donohue's tenure there were rumors of a consolidation with the Pomperaug Council of Bridgeport. Mr. Donohue was not very receptive to this idea and he left the Council after a short time.

Murray Cott arrived to be the Council's new Executive in 1945. During Mr. Cott's term the camping program fell apart and Camp Irving was used for the last time due, it was said, to the lack of interest. The buildings were razed in 1948.

Mr. Cott left the Council in 1948 to go to a position in New York State. Having no camp for the Council, a contract was signed with the Tunxis Council of Torrington whose Camp Workcoeman is situated on West Hill Pond in New Hartford.

In 1949 the Council engaged the seventh of its Executives, Mr. Earle Minton, who came from Bridgeport. Mr. Minton made it quite clear when he arrived that he did not approve of the Council having its own camp. Through some well organized camp promotion the Council was able to build up a very good attendance at Camp Workcoeman. But it was different from having your own

camp. Being told what to pay, what to do and not having the say as to how many of our boys could be on the camp staff was indeed novel and as a result our Junior Leadership in the Council suffered.

Housatonic Council was paying \$625 per season for the use of Camp Workcoeman. At a meeting at the White Fence Inn in Thomaston on March 17, 1954, Housatonic Council represented by Bill Rollinson, Collins Dawson, Earle Minton and Oscar Johnson met with the representatives of Tunxis council, Chief Noyes, Paul Hawley and three members of Hawley's Camp Committee. The meeting was called to discuss arrangements for the 1954 camping season.

Tunxis informed our representatives that they were going to increase their capital expenditures at camp for such things as hot showers, new waterfront, boat dock, lean-tos and other improvements and asked for a \$200 increase in the fee which would then to \$825.

Oscar Johnson brought back the report of this meeting to the Executive Board. It was Oscar's opinion that Housatonic should not be required to pay for construction and then be required to pay to use it. It was also brought out at that meeting that Housatonic had only two boys on the staff the past season. Tunxis also informed Housatonic representatives that if their Executive Board rejected the increase Housatonic could still camp at Workcoeman.

At the May 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Board, the increase requested by Tunxis was rejected. It was the feeling of some of the members that if Housatonic was required to help construct someone else's camp why not do it for ourselves. It was also voted at this meeting that Earle Minton, the Executive, work on the staff at camp to help defray the costs.

At the June 21<sup>st</sup> meeting the camping agreement with Tunxis came up again for discussion. After much discussion the Board reversed its former decision and by a 6 to 5 vote approved the \$200 increase. Again the desirability of owning our own camp came up for discussion.

Lawson Van Riper, then President of Housatonic appointed a Campsite Committee consisting of Ed. Strang: Chairman, Bill Bassett, Bill Rollinson Charles Stokesbury, Larry Potter and Oscar Johnson. This committee decided to look for a site that would take care of the Council needs for some years to come. A few sites were looked at during the rest of the year, 1954, but none were of any importance. Ed had sent out letters to about 125 real estate dealers throughout the state. As the year 1955 moved along many miles were traveled by the committee. Sites in Guilford, East Haddam, Eastford, South Armenia, N.Y., Sherman, Kent, Salisbury and Huntington were investigated. It was becoming more apparent as miles were traveled and sites looked at that camp sites that were desirable were a very limited quantity. It seemed that everybody who

owned a piece of land with a brook running through it or a swamp with a lot of stumps sticking up thought they had a potential site.

In December 1955 Housatonic again had a meeting with Tunxis to make arrangements for the summer camp of 1956. Housatonic was now paying \$825 for the privilege of camping with them. At the meeting Tunxis informed Housatonic that they had decided to change the fees considerably. The weekly rate for the boys was raised from \$15.00 to \$17.50. They also requested an additional \$300 per boy week which would make a total of \$1,200 in addition to the \$825 Housatonic was now paying.

This increase was impossible for Housatonic to accept as the budget for the year 1956 had already been approved. This development meant that Housatonic would now have to find another place for the summer camp. It was the opinion of some members of the Board that this sort of situation could happen again and again when camping with another council and eventually Housatonic would be without a place to camp.

On February 29, 1956 a meeting was held with a committee from Pomperaug Council of Bridgeport to see if Housatonic could use their camp. Pomperaug agreed and a contract was formulated which was approved by the Executive Board. The contract called for the payment of \$800 per season on the basis of \$4.00 per boy week which indicated that Housatonic would have 200 boys at

camp. Unfortunately there were not that number at camp and the attendance was decreasing each year that Housatonic camped at Pomperaug.

Ed Strang received a call from an estate just over the line in Massachusetts just north of Norfolk. Ed had just gotten out of the hospital a short time earlier and was convalescing from an operation. He probably should not have gone on a trip like this but Ed did not want to miss any opportunity to get a site if at all possible. Ed called Oscar and made a date for the next day.

When they got to the estate, which was named the Wizard of Oz, the ground was covered with about 6 inches of snow. The lake was quite a distance from the house and we would have to walk or ride, but there were no rides to be seen. The gentleman who was to show us the place got his jeep out of the garage. We got in and started off through the woods dodging trees and stumps, going up and down and in holes and ditches. The site was a beautiful one but in our conversation with the gentleman it came out that a lumber company had a contract to cut some of the timber. That put a damper on that site. Ed did not feel very good after that trip. It sure was a rough day for him.

The procedure followed by the Site Committee was that if any members visited a place and they thought it was good for a camp, the rest of the committee would look at it and then if the committee thought it had potential as a site the members of the Executive Board were to visit it. As it turned out at the end of the

search, the Board was only called on three times to look at sites out of many checked by the committee.

Sites in Middlefield, Bantam, Madison and West Goshen were visited, plus two more in Kent.

Two more sites were still on the list to be examined, one in North Stonington and one in Goshen. Ed and Oscar went to Goshen in the spring of 1956 to look at the site. There was some ice around the pond. Miss Oldenwalder took them on a short tour. What they saw that day impressed them very much and when they got back to the car, Ed exclaimed, "This is it". But this site would have to be visited several times during the year especially in the summer to see that the lake did not fall to too low a level. Ed told Miss Oldenwalder that we would let her know in a short while.

The following weekend Ed and Oscar drove to North Stonington to look over that site. It was a beautiful site and had a lot of possibilities and the Executive Board was invited to go and see it, which it did. There were some drawbacks (which is natural at all places) such as considerable amount of landscaping (bulldozing), the power would have to be strung a long distance and there were a couple of lots that had been sold on a part of the lake which the members thought could result in litigation. Also this site would be about 80 miles from



headquarters. This place was called the Lake of Isles and it was purchased later by the Charter Oak Council of Hartford.

The next thing to do was to go back to Goshen and investigate further the site on West Side Pond. Ed, Oscar, Bill Rollinson and Cliff Sanhein made this trip and made a thorough inspection. This was in the summer of 1956. Also this was the trip that Ed sat on a bees nest while crossing a wall. Some fellows really can move fast when threatened.

The owner of the property assured the committee that there were no restrictions on swimming in the lake. To make sure of that statement Oscar spent a whole day the following weekend interviewing people on both lakes as to whether there were any restrictions on the use of the water in the lakes for swimming. Property owners who had lived on the lakes for some fifty years said they had never heard of such a thing. The Newington Home for Crippled Children who had owned a lot on the opposite side of West Side Pond said they never knew of any restrictions on swimming in the lake.

Bill Rollinson made a full report on this site to the Executive Board at the meeting on Sept. 6, 1956. It was voted that a committee of seven or eight members of the Board visit the site and check on its potential as a place for a Camp for the Council. The committee visited the site on Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> and were very pleased with it.

This site was an area of about 186.2 acres with about 1600 frontage on 75 acre West Side Pond. It had a little more open space than was necessary but it also had weeded areas of big timber and some second growth. There was a small piece of private property jutting into camp area on Route 63 but the committee felt that this would present no problem. There were some buildings on the property including a large house. Of course these were not wanted but it is impossible to find a suitable piece of property for a campsite without some buildings on it.

This house had a dining room which would seat 100 people along with a large kitchen. The water of West Side Pond ran south for about ½ mile and emptied into Tyler Lake and from there down stream for about seven miles to the Shepaug storage reservoir. Around Tyler Lake about 300 homes had been erected over the years. This site the committee inspected is only about 42 miles from headquarters compared to that which was stated earlier in this story, 80 miles to the site in North Stonington.

The Executive Board had previously put a limit of \$50,000 on the purchase of a campsite but the price of the Goshen site was \$55,000 so the Board revised the limit to that sum.

When the Regional Office received word from the Council Office that a campsite had been found and the Council was preparing to purchase it,

President Oscar Johnson received word from the late Hap Clark, Regional Executive that he would like to come to the next Board meeting.

In the meantime nothing would be done until the Engineering Service of the B.S.A. had inspected the site. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1956, Mr. Walter P. Rogers visited the Council and with Ed Strang, Charles Stokesbury and Hap Clark made an inspection of the campsite. In his report of the 26<sup>th</sup> of October, Mr. Rogers, who was the Assistant Director of the Engineering Service, made the following remarks concerning the site. Quote, "In many respects this property would make a good Scout Camp. It is located the right distance from headquarters, the terrain of the property is pleasing and the waterfront possibilities are good. There are some factors however, that are not ideal. The buildings are built for farm use and would be costly to remodel for Scout use. There is more open space than is needed and a minimum of cover where it would be used. Any camp is a costly operation." End of Quote.

At the Board Meeting of Nov.8, 1956, Hap Clark, Regional Executive, was a guest.

Mr. Clark spoke to the Board about the campsite that the Council was contemplating purchasing. In his remarks Mr. Clark related to the members that the operation of a camp is expensive and that the Council should consider getting another man for the Council Staff. Among his remarks he said that the

property was not worth the price and that in all probability West Side Pond would be quite well surrounded by cottages in ten years.

After Mr. Clark had finished with his remarks, President Oscar told the Board members that as he saw it the Council had three courses of action to take at the present: (1) to merge with another Council, (2) to continue our present plan of camping with another Council and (3) the purchase of a campsite for our Council. After much discussion the Board voted to continue investigation of the Goshen site and if found to be satisfactory to negotiate for its purchase.

Having been found satisfactory, Attorney Frank Baut recommended that one of the officers be authorized to carry on negotiations for the Council and that he had prepared a resolution for this purpose. It gave Oscar as Council President the power to carry on all negotiation in this transaction. The resolution was read to the Board and on a motion by Larry Potter and seconded by Earl Beebe it was voted to adopt it.

At the March 7, 1957 Board meeting Oscar told the members that now that a piece of property was available and ready to be purchased it would be necessary to put some money down as a binder so that the property would not be sold to someone else. It was voted to put \$2,000 down as the binder. It was also voted that the Camp Capital Fund be closed and a balance to equal \$2,000 be withdrawn from the Worthy Boys' Fund.

Oscar reported that discussions had been held with two fund raising organizations and the members felt that we should wait until the April meeting to decide when the Fund Raising Campaign should start. It was agreed at the next meeting that the campaign would not start until about Nov. 1, 1957. It was also stated that President Johnson, Bill Fulton and Scout Executive Earle Minton would appear before the Distribution Committee of the New Haven Foundation relative to the money that the Council had requested toward the campaign.

Oscar told the Distribution Committee the reason the Council requested \$50,000 was that in as much as Frank Gates was an Executive Board member of the Housatonic Council for many years and also was the Council's National Representative and that Mr. Gates and his brother established the Gates Fund of the Foundation it was felt that if the Foundation decided to approve our request the Council would name the camp the "Frank Gates Camp". The Committee said they would let the Council know of their decision in due time.

At the May 8, 1957 special meeting, President Johnson asked the members two very important questions: (1) Will you participate actively to make the campaign a success? (2) Will you contribute financially according to your means to make this project a success? These questions were agreed to.

The agreement to purchase the property was ready to be signed. When the title search and survey was completed \$2,000 was to be paid. Money for this

was voted to be taken from the Jamboree Fund and the Worthy Boys' Fund and to be repaid when the Finance Campaign was completed. Other expenses were to the surveyor which was to be about \$1,200. The Sellers were to pay \$500 toward this cost. The Council was to pay for the title search. Ninety days from the signing of the agreement \$6,000 was to be paid.

Executive Earle Minton reversed his former position of not being in favor of the Council having its own camp. Camp attendance for the first year at Pomperaug fell considerably from the previous year at Tunxis going from 343 boy weeks down to 181 boy weeks.

The agreement to purchase was finally signed. President Johnson signed for the Council while Mrs. Molly Oldenwalder signed for the Seller. Others at the signing were Attorney Frank Baut, Earle Minton, Donald Oldenwalder and Attorney Roraback.

Richard Nowokowski of Shelton who was retained to survey the site finished his mission and reported that it was a very interesting assignment. In going over the land records in the Town Clerk's office he found that all the land measurements were in rods, chains and links. Dick also said some of the old markers such as a pyramid of stones used long ago were still in evidence in the woods.

Because of the lateness in the year the Executive Board felt that it would be impossible to prepare for the Fund Campaign this year. A Mr. Marvin R. Kellogg, consultant of the National Fund Raising Services, Inc. was at the Sept. 10, 1957 meeting of the Executive Board to give the members some of the details in connection with the proposed campaign to raise the set amount of \$150,000. The New Haven Foundation advised the Council that if \$100,000 was raised by June 1, 1958 they would contribute \$25,000 to the campaign. It was the expectation of the Foundation that the Valley community was interested enough to support a campaign of this size.

At the Board meeting of October 3, 1957 the members authorized that an agreement be signed with the National Fund Raising Services, Inc. to conduct the Fund Campaign. It was necessary to pay a fee and insurance premium at the signing to the amount of \$3,000. It was voted to borrow this amount on a 90 day note; this note to be signed by the members present at the meeting. It was also agreed to start the campaign Boy Scout Week in February 1958. Mr. L.T. Knotter, the Campaign Director would be in the Council the latter part of November for the purpose of soliciting special gifts.

Ninety days from the signing of the agreement to purchase the property arrived and the payment of \$6,000 was due for the down payment. It must be

borne in mind that the Council had no money whatsoever to embark on this project, just a lot of faith and determination on the part of a lot of people.

President Johnson arranged a meeting with Mr. Franklin Harris of the Kerite Company of Seymour and explained to him the need of the funds for the down payment. Mr. Harris very graciously said he would take care of it.

At the Board meeting of October 3, 1957, Mr. Richard Wales, Deputy Regional Executive, and Mr. Walter P. Rodgers of the Engineering Service of the B.S.A. were guests. They along with Scout Executive Earle Minton had visited the campsite that afternoon. Their visit was for the purpose of laying out some preliminary plans for buildings that would be needed for camp. Mr. Rodgers stated that a topographical map would be needed if the engineering Service was to draw up plans for the camp. Mr. Richard Nowakowski of Shelton was engaged to make the map.

The former owners of the property used the lake water via pipeline to wash dishes etc. A sample was sent to the State Board of Health to be tested as to what the Camp could use it for and being informed that the water came from West Side Pond and that the Boy Scouts were planning to construct a camp. The Council was informed that the water of West Side Pond could not be used for swimming because it was part of a watershed.



A couple of days later Oscar Johnson received word from a Mr. Sherman of the State Department of Health that he would like to meet him at West Side Pond. On arriving there Oscar met Mr. Sherman and Mr. Henry C. Whitlock, City Engineer of the City of Waterbury. Oscar was officially informed that the lake could not be used for swimming. It was a hard blow to accept. The reason given for the ban on swimming was that back in the 1893 the Legislature passed Public Act 632 which gave the City of Waterbury the right to take the waters in Litchfield and New Haven counties.

The City of Waterbury could have purchased the property bordering West Side Pond and Tyler Lake years ago but failed to do so. They do not own one foot of the property up to the present time; yet the property owners who have riparian rights do not have any control of the water.

Oscar reported to the Executive Board the problem that had arisen, at a special meeting Jan. 23, 1958. It was suggested that a swimming pool be built which would take care of the camp swimming while the pond could be used for boating and canoeing. There was a possibility that the pond could be used for swimming in the not too distant future. It was voted at this meeting that the Council should proceed with the plans for the Fund Campaign and install a swimming pool if necessary. In the discussion it was brought out that it would be unusual for a Scout Camp to have a swimming pool although it was said that the

New Bedford, Mass. Council had one. Ed. Strang immediately set to work to get some prices on the construction of swimming pools. He reported later that a pool which would fill our requirements could be built for \$20,000.

After this meeting a letter was received from Richard Wales dated Feb. 3, 1958 concerning the action taken by the Board at its last meeting. Mr. Wales related information he had received from Mr. Rodgers of the Engineering Service. In Mr. Rodger's opinion it would cost a minimum of \$40,000 and could go as high as \$50,000 for a 35 x 75 foot pool which would meet the standards of the State and the National Council of the B.S.A.

Mr. Wales said that in their opinion the Council had three alternatives:

- (1) Cancel the whole project. (a) Cancel the Fund Raising Contract. (b) Return all monies received for the Project. (c) Cancel all pledges received for the project. (d) Consider instituting suit to recover all land payments made plus damages that represent fair costs to the Council.
- (2) Discuss the whole project. (a) Search for, survey and engineer a new site. (b) Place all monies received to date in an escrow account with the consent of the donors. (c) Discuss all pledge payments with the consent of those who pledged.
- (3) As a part of the procedure to be followed if it is voted to go ahead on the present basis, the Executive Board should immediately call a full

Council meeting and present all these facts and call for a vote of the full Council. This will lend strength and support to the Board's position. In addition, if the Council votes to proceed, a meeting of community leaders and prospective major contributors should be called so that all of the facts could be properly presented and the necessary support assured.

The Boy Scouts of America has the clear responsibility to see to it that those who have assumed leadership in any situation operate the program in the best interests of all. The raising and expending of public funds is a public trust and this serious obligation should always be clearly understood and fully accepted.

This analysis of your present situation has been reviewed by M.G. Clark, Regional Executive, the Engineering Service and the Field Operation of the National Council B.S.A.

We would suggest that you have copies of this letter duplicated and sent to the key people in your Council in advance of your Executive Board meeting which is scheduled for Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>. This letter should be a part of the proceeding of that meeting and should also appear in the minutes.

Mr. Wales also said in his letter that though they may have questioned the validity of this project in the past, they have consistently endeavored to give this the most helpful and interested consideration possible. As they review the

situation as it now stands, they are doing so with a real desire to be as helpful as they possibly can.

At the Feb.6, 1958 meeting, Mr. Wales' letter was presented and very thoroughly discussed. On a motion by Mr. Thomas and seconded by Mr. Strang it was voted to proceed with the development of the present campsite, construct a swimming pool and that our Attorney Frank Baut be instructed to proceed with such legal action as he deems wise and necessary to recover damages. It was also voted to postpone the Finance Campaign until May so that Mr. Harris can review the economic conditions of the valley and then decide to proceed or to postpone again to a later date.

Mr. Franklin Harris, Chairman of the Industrial Committee of the Finance Fund Campaign was at this meeting, February 20<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Harris made a lengthy statement in reference to our campaign problem. He felt that donors to the campaign would not consider kindly to a swimming pool constructed in a camp adjacent to a large pond unless they can be assured that no other property is available for a campsite. It was recognized that the Campsite Committee did a great amount of work in looking for a site and that it is unfortunate that this problem should arise. The only solution was for the campsite committee to again search for another site.

It was voted to rescind the actions taken by the Board at the Jan.23 and Feb. 6, 1958 meetings. It was also voted to instruct Attorney Frank Baut to take the necessary action to recover monies invested and to return the property to the sellers if possible. On a motion by Mr. Nickse and seconded by Mr. Strang it was voted (a) to search for and engineer a new campsite, (b) place all monies received to date in an escrow account with the consent of the donors and (c) discuss all pledge payment dates with those who had pledged.

It was brought out at this meeting that another payment of \$5,000 on the principal and \$1,000 interest is due and must be paid before the end of the month. On a motion by Mr. Gunn and seconded by Mr. Whittum, it was voted to have President Oscar Johnson and Treasurer , Ray Darling borrow \$2,500 on a sixty-day note, if there was not enough in the Camp Fund. This was borrowed from the Union and New Haven Trust Co. and the collateral was 100 shares of the B.F.Goodrich Co.

While all this activity was going on in the Council things were happening in Goshen. When the 300 or more resident property owners on the lakes heard of this ban on swimming they were up in arms. The Town of Goshen was very upset as these properties represented 1/3 of the grand list of the town. Representatives Snay and Conlon of Goshen said that they would introduce a bill in the special session of the Legislature, which was then in session, to try and

correct the situation. This bill would exempt West Side Pond and Tyler Lake from the provisions of Public Act No.2 passed by the Legislature in 1893. Oscar Johnson stepped down from the Presidency of the Housatonic Council.

The bill sponsored by Representatives Snay and Conlon was introduced in the Legislature known as the Tyler Lake Bill. It passed both Houses, but was vetoed by the then Governor Ribbicoff. The reason given was that he didn't think it was proper to introduce such a bill in a special session called up for a specific purpose.

Because of the veto, all plans of the Council pertaining to the camp had to be held in abeyance.

When word reached the Council that there was a veto on the bill to allow swimming in West Side Pond, President Phil. Hilbish called a special meeting for July 1<sup>st</sup>. Attorney Frank Baut was present to give legal advice to the Board. After having heard from Attorney Roraback, the attorney for Mrs. Oldenwalder, Mr. Baut indicated there were two courses of action: (1) institute suit for recovery of monies expended on the camp site or (2) reach an agreement with the seller, Mrs. Oldenwalder, that the present situation would remain status quo until the next session of the Legislature in January 1959. Mr. Baut explained that if litigation were started now it would be from one to two years before the case came to trial. Mr. Roraback believes that the problem should be settled by the

Legislature rather than the courts. It was agreed by the Board that Mr. Baut attempt to reach an agreement with Mrs. Oldenwalder.

The agreement was that the seller agreed not to demand principal or interest on the mortgage until a proper bill is passed in the next session of the Legislature and is approved by the Governor. The Council agreed not to institute suit to recover monies paid on the property. Bob Rapp, Vice President, was chosen to execute the agreement.

The Legislature went into session in January, 1959 and Oscar Johnson was appointed to follow the course of the bills with power to act to insure presentation of bills affecting the Council. Oscar got in touch with Senator James J. McCarthy of Derby who was Senator from the local district. Oscar also got in touch with practically all the representatives and senators of the surrounding areas telling them of the Council's problems. On the Goshen end the people and politicians were equally busy.

There was an awful lot of publicity concerning the controversy of swimming in the waters. The City of Waterbury claimed that they would have to construct an eight million dollar infiltration plant and it would cost about \$500,000 a year to maintain it. All the Connecticut newspapers were filled with stories concerning the problem. The Waterbury Republican newspaper had some very tart editorials and even the New York Tribune of April 5<sup>th</sup> had a long story about the

Boy Scouts who couldn't swim in their own pond. This problem had been blown way out of proportion.

There were 15 bills introduced in the Legislature. Of course some were for and some were against the idea of swimming in tributary waters. Senator Buzaid of Danbury introduced Bill #550 which would allow swimming in a tributary to a reservoir within the limits of the town subject to the approval of the local health authorities. Senator Burns was of the opinion there would be a better chance of getting a satisfactory bill through the Legislature if it was made state wide in scope instead of a single locale such as the one the Governor vetoed.

So Senators McCarthy, Burns and Buzaid introduced an amendment to Bill #550 which permits swimming in tributaries at least two miles above a storage reservoir (not a primary reservoir). It would limit swimming to owners of property along the tributaries and their guests on a non-profit basis. Some of the private water companies said they would allow anyone to swim 2 miles above a storage reservoir, but Senators McCarthy, Burns and Buzaid felt that it was best to limit the privilege to the owners of the property and their non-profit guests.

On March 10, 1959 the bill was presented to the Water Resources and the Flood Control Committees. The Water Companies, as could be expected, were against the bill, but there were many people in favor. Oscar attended the hearing and spoke in favor as did Sidney Burns who was then a member of the Executive



Board. Ed Strang had gotten some pictures of people swimming in the waters and Franklin Harris related how the Council had already collected some \$30,000 for the camp. Bill Ablondi felt that because of his position with the Seymour Water Company, he should remain neutral. Earle was present; but did not speak.

The bill, which became Public Act. 632. was approved by both Houses of the Legislature and this time was signed by Governor Ribbicoff on July 1, 1959. The Bill #550 was to become effective October 1, 1959.

Now that this problem had been hurdled it was time to get back to the big job at hand. The New Haven Foundation was notified and they agreed to give the Council the sum of \$25,000 which they previously said they would. As was previously stated in this story, the Council having no money at the start of this operation and not knowing, of course, how much money would be raised in the campaign, it was agreed that the most vital parts of the camp be developed first and then if the money was available, other parts would be added. Hence the sum of \$150,000 was set as the goal of the campaign.

However at one of the Development committee meetings, Mr. Wales, the Deputy Regional Executive, who was present suggested that the camp should have an aquatic lodge, ranger's cabin, a storage building and a few other items

which add to the cost. The goal of the Campaign was therefore reset to the amount of \$200,000.

A Development Committee had been previously set up but by the time the swimming problem was solved the personnel of the committee was changed considerably. The Committee now comprised of the following: Chairman, Oscar Johnson; Co-Chairman, Ed Strange; Water System, Bill Ablondi; Water Front, Bill Rollinson; Surplus Material and Kitchen, Bob Rapp; Parking, Tom Nickse; Trails, Jim Forsythe and Buildings, Al Thayer. Others on the committee were Doug McLeod, Emil Martin, Sigmund Schuster, Mike Healy, Joe Jacobson and Bob Bednarcik.

Mr. Harris of the Kerite Company was asked if the committee could use the services of his Purchasing Agent to screen all prices received on equipment and material. Having received an affirmative answer, Mr. Duane Hetletved, joined the committee. Because of the finance uncertainties, the committee held to the position that anything and everything that could be done by volunteer labor would and should be done that way.

Earle Minton, Council Executive, had been with the Council for the past 10 years. This is longer than any previous Executive in the history of the Council. It was evident that Earle did not want to move on to bigger things in a larger Council, but was satisfied to stay in Housatonic.

It was agreed by the Development committee that the roads should be the first item to be taken care of. Coe and Anderson of the town of Morris were engaged to do this work. Using the topographical map as a guide the road was made except for one section which had to be changed due to terrain problems. Because there was no known source of gravel in the town of Goshen, all gravel was trucked in from the town of Cornwall.

Bill Ablondi requested information from the use of the water of the lake. Mr. Almquist informed him that the well should be at least 50 feet from the shoreline of the lake. The well water need not be chlorinated if found satisfactory on test. This water must be used for kitchen, drinking, hand washing and if supply is adequate should be used for showers and toilets. Water from the lake can be used for toilets and showers in a separate system.

Ed Strang, in charge of the unit sites, started to lay out the sites from the topographical map; but found that some of the sites marked on the map could not be used because of wet ground. Two sites were selected on the higher, drier ground to start with. Quite a lot of brush was cut and burned before the real winter set in.

1960 was a very busy year. The roads were completed and ditches were dug along side of them to protect them from washouts. This work was done with pick and shovel, mostly by the Martin brothers, Dale and Bill who were two of Oscar's

right hand men. These two fellows were in on practically all phases of developing the camp.

The S. B. Church Company of Oxford was engaged to drill the well. Under the direction of Mr. Duncan, the well was drilled to a depth of 180 feet which produced a 3 gallon per minute flow of water. This water was tested and found O.K. Bill Ablondi and Mr. Duncan made arrangements for the installation of the pump and the 500 gallon pressure tank at the highest point of the camp. From there the water will flow by gravity to all points of the camp where water is needed. When the large tank arrived it was temporarily set up on some railroad ties. Later Oscar Johnson and Al Thayer constructed a permanent concrete cradle beneath the tank.

A concrete block pit was constructed around the pump and Zig Schuster and Oscar laid the 2 inch pipe underground from the pump to the dining hall site and then over the ground up the hill to the big tank. Jim Forsythe helped with this.

Ed Strang got started again clearing the brush and burning same and pulling up stumps in the sites. Every troop and post in the Council had some hand in the project. Some came every weekend throughout the whole year. Ed Strang made arrangements to make the tent platforms in the basement of the Derby Methodist church under the direction of Emil Martin.

Excavations for the latrine concrete slabs were dug with pick and shovel by such fellows as the Martin brothers, Jimmy Robinson and others. When the pit sections of the latrines were built, forms were made to the specifications of the B.S.A. In fact the whole latrine was so constructed. The base of the slabs were made of about 24 inches of field stone wheeled in wheelbarrows to the locations in the woods by such men as Russ Koroleyshun Sr. and John Jalowiec.

A generator was borrowed from the Civil Defense of Derby to run the cement mixer. It was carted to camp in a station wagon. The sand and gravel for the cement was left on the road as the trucker could not reach the site in the woods. This had to be wheeled to the site by wheelbarrow with four to six boys pulling on a rope tied to the front of the barrow and one man pushing. It was a sight to see man and boy and sometimes father and son working together so hard to achieve a goal.

It should be said here that most of the tools used to do the work were donated by a member of the Development Committee. The toilets in the latrines were made by Al Thayer who also worked on the wood structure along with Emil Martin and others. Some other men working on this project were Milt Heyse, Peter Rossi, Mike Healey, Jr. and Cliff Sanhein.

Two lean-tos were also constructed, one for each site. All the lumber used was obtained from the lumber companies in the valley and carried to camp in

station wagons. It was not an uncommon sight to see station wagons loaded with lumber and other equipment traveling north on Route 63 every weekend and sometimes during the week. The stainless steel wash stands were made by George Mann & Sons and all the plumbing for the latrines was done by Zig Schuster.

It was a short time later that Bob Rapp in charge of Surplus received word that there was some surplus material available up in Meriden. Bob and a group went to Meriden to see if there was anything worthwhile for the camp. It was a very successful trip because there happened to be a Navy truck in the stock. It looked good to Bob and he made arrangements to take it. Bob himself drove it to the Valley and it is the same one used at camp today. Oscar and Earle Minton went to Rhode Island looking for some surplus that the camp could use, but were not successful in finding anything.

It must be stated here that without the co-operation of the lumber companies of the Valley the cost of this camp project would be greatly increased.

Bill Rollinson in charge of the Waterfront was busy with his group clearing the brush, digging stones and making the base for the guard tower. Weeds were chained out of the swimming area. The dock and the float had been ordered and would be delivered within two weeks. The boats and canoes also had been ordered. Fifteen yards of sand were ordered and trucked to the waterfront.

When the lake freezes over this sand would be wheeled onto the ice and in the Spring when the ice melts the sand will fall to the bottom where it will make a sandy bottom for the swimming area.

The Capital Fund Campaign was started and with Mr. Edmund Worfolk at the head it was assured a real success.

All workers on the different projects helped each other out when help was needed. It worked out like one big happy family. Periodic dinner meetings were held to map out the best economic way to work out ideas and to pep up the construction. The cost of these meetings was taken care of by a member of the Development Committee. It also must be kept in mind that all the men and boys that were working on this camp project always brought their own food.

At the Camp Development Committee meeting on June 14, 1960, plans for the central lodge and dining hall were discussed. Drawings from two other Councils plus drawings prepared by the Engineering Service B.S.A. were available. It was agreed to contact architect Val Carlson to discuss with him plans for the building. Mr. Carlson agreed to draw up plans for a very reasonable fee.

When they were completed and agreed upon by the committee, bids for the construction of the building were sent out. Eight bids were received and at the committee meeting of Sept. 26, 1960 these bids were opened. The bids ranged

from a low of \$28,104 to a high of \$46,300. These prices were for a 48 foot building with one end constructed so that 12 feet more could be added at some future time if necessary.

Mr. James L. Young of Shelton was the lowest bidder for the construction of the building. It was felt that Mr. Young was from the Valley and the members of the committee and Mr. Carlson thought he would do a good job; it was awarded to him. It was voted that red cedar siding be used and that the fireplace be constructed of fieldstone instead of brick. The contract was signed Sept. 26, 1960 by Oscar Johnson and Bill Ablondi. Construction was started shortly after the signing and some progress was made before the winter weather caused a halt. The site of the mess hall was changed from that indicated on the topographical map because Mr. Carlson said it could not be located there because of a rock ledge. The architect dug some test holes and decided on its present location.

A new man was added to the Council Staff. His name was George Chappell and he was to Field Executive of the Council. This is what the Regional Office has been advocating for quite some time.

The Council was still camping with the Pomperaug Council; but the boy weeks of the Housatonic boys was decreasing each year until 1960 when there were



very few. The Council was now paying Pomperaug \$1,000 per season which made it a rather expensive camping experience.

During the winter of 1960 the President of the Council, Sidney Burns asked the Chairman of the Development Committee if there was a possibility of opening the camp in 1961. Oscar replied that that was a hard question to answer with any certainty because bad weather conditions during the spring weekends could make a difference. Having in mind the high cost of camping with Pomperaug, the Chairman said that he was confident that as far as the Development Committee was concerned they would have the major things ready such as the troop sites, waterfront, water system and trading post. If the new dining hall was not completed, the dining hall in the house which seats 100 could be used for the first year. The Committee would try and get as many of the other items that are needed also. The Committee was very busy with its own problems and could not be responsible for the Camp Staff.

As the year 1961 came into being, activity at camp began to pick up. The tent platforms made in the Methodist Church basement were all completed. Clarence Robinson secured a large truck and brought them to camp where the boys painted them with the preservative Cupunol. Tents were ordered through the B.S.A. Service Supply and were on the way.

Cots were required for the units, waterfront and the kitchen. Ed Strang got in touch with Christy Testone who was at one time a member of Troop 3 and now a District Scout Executive of Nassau Council B.S.A. Long Island, N.Y. to find out if they had any surplus tents. Receiving word that they had, Ed asked Oscar to go to Long Island to see what they had. Oscar drove to the Scout Office at Shelter Rock Road, Roslyn, New York and as a result received a promise of some sixty cots and some kitchen equipment such as pans.

Palmer Brothers Truckers of Ansonia employee Ed Palmer also was a member of the Board. He sent a truck to Long Island and brought the cots to camp. The mattresses were obtained from B. F. Goodrich Company through the efforts of Kevin Kelly, a member of the Board.

The waterfront under the direction of Bill Rollinson was taking final shape. The beach had been cleared, a fence was erected along the beach, the guard tower was nearly completed and would be ready for the opening. A canoe rack was also constructed at the waterfront.

Bill Ablondi's water system was nearly completed with pipe lines running to all points of the camp.

The new mess hall was taking shape; but it was doubtful that it would be ready for camp opening in July. Al Thayer and his group razed the old slaughter

house that stood in the upper meadow and saved the timbers to frame the Trading Post.

The C. L. & P. of Litchfield was approached to run a power line from the road to the new mess hall site. They agreed to take care of that at no cost to the Council. Poles were also needed to run a power line to the waterfront. Oscar went to North Torrington to see a namesake of his at the telephone company to see if poles could be obtained. They agreed to let the Council have some and the poles were delivered to camp a few days later at no cost. Emil Martin, Jack Purcell and the Martin boys put up the poles and strung the wires to the waterfront.

The month of July arrived and it was time for the camp opening. The Committee had completed the roads, 2 troop sites including latrines, water system, trading post and the waterfront with all equipment necessary for operation. The new mess hall was not finished so the dining hall in the house was used.

Despite the fact that the Chairman of the Committee spent an average of five days a week at camp from March 1<sup>st</sup> up until camp opened and some men worked from 7 o'clock in the morning until 9 o'clock at night, the Committee was unable to complete some of the important activity areas required by the "Par 100 Plan". Some of these were Pathfinding, Camp Craft, Pioneering, Nature Lore,

Conservation, Archery and Wood Tools. The camp rating would lose about 10 points because of these failures. It was hoped that the Program Director and Staff would be able to help fill in the time with some activity to keep the boys occupied.

On the Administration side, Executive Earle Minton was having his problems. His Assistant, Mr. Chappell did not show up for the camp opening and did not put in an appearance until July 22<sup>nd</sup>, too late to help on the programming. As a consequence some boys were idle part of the day. Other minuses on the Administration side were: no camp records were kept, the camp staff was not adequate, a lack of health coverage such as first aid and no agreement with a hospital in case of need.

203 boys attended camp for a total of 229 boy weeks. This was very good compared to the attendance at Pomperaug the last few years. Mr. Wales, Deputy Regional Executive, visited the camp July 25-26 to make the "Par 100 Plan" inspection of the camp. Mr. Wales, Earle Minton and Oscar made the tour of camp and at the conclusion minced no words in pointing out the deficiencies of the camp, lack of activity areas, lack of camp records, lack of trained personnel and lack of health standards. Mr. Wales gave the camp a rating of D39 which was the lowest rate of any camp that he knew of that was allowed to operate.

Mr. Wales informed Oscar and Earle that camp must be inspected before it opened in 1962.

In his final report on the camp inspection dated July 28<sup>th</sup> Mr. Wales did say that the waterfront area is excellent, well laid out and very well operated, also that the combination latrine and wash stands in the units were the best he had ever seen in a Scout Camp and they were scrupulously clean. Mr. Wales' other remarks were that if the Council can match the driving determination of the Camp Development Committee to open the camp in 1961 with an equal determination to correct the deficiencies before camp opens in 1962, the Council will have achieved a great accomplishment. Also, the Council has the people, the determination and the resources to make the Housatonic Council Reservation a fine Scout Camp in which the Council can take great pride.

At the Executive Board meeting of July 31<sup>st</sup> the status of Field Executive, George Chappell, came up for discussion. It was voted to authorize Executive Earl Minton to ask for Mr. Chappell's resignation to become effective August 1<sup>st</sup> with 30 days severance pay.

Progress on the new mess hall was going very slowly and it was becoming evident that the contractor was in trouble. He had promised to have the building finished by May 1<sup>st</sup> and he had been granted two extensions. At a special Board meeting of October 1961 Frank Baut and Val Carlson were present to discuss

plans to finish the building before winter. The foundation wall had been damaged by frost and it was urgent that this be repaired and back filled and at least the building be closed in. It was Mr. Carlson's opinion that the contract with Mr. Young be terminated.

It was not certain at this time how much money was due the sub-contractors and it was suggested by Mr. Baut that a meeting with the contractor and the sub-contractors be held to get their statements. This meeting was held October 23, 1961 and Mr. Baut said there was \$6,730 available to complete the building. Monies due the sub-contractors amounted to \$8,100. Mr. Baut pointed out that in the event the contractors did not finish the job and another contractor was hired the sub-contractors would lose most of the money due them. It was finally agreed that Oscar Johnson would visit the camp Wednesday, Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> with an inspector from Val Carlson's office and Mr. Gugliomette, the mason, to discuss the repairs to be made to the foundation. Mr. Johnson was also to discuss with Mr. Carlson's inspector the drainage system to be planned before backfilling the foundation.

George Colby, contractor of Goshen, who had done some work at the camp previously was engaged to put in the drainage system and backfill around the foundation after it was repaired. Mr. Colby used 115 feet of 6 inch Orangeburg pipe, 100 cubic yards of bank run gravel and 20 cubic yards washed stone and

salt hay to complete the work. The Development Committee puttied all the nail holes and gave the building its first coat of stain. They also hung the overhead doors in the storage area. All the constructed buildings in the camp had now been stained.

A request was made to the New Haven Foundation for an additional \$10,000 to finish the dining hall and equip the kitchen. This request brought the sum of \$3,000.

Bob Rapp and Oscar Johnson had been obtaining prices on the kitchen equipment and it was estimated this cost would be about \$7,000.

Due to the soil condition, the State Board of Health decreed that the leaching field would have to be built above ground. They also said that a 6 inch drain should be placed above the field five feet below the surface to divert water from said field. On Nov.7, 1961 George Colby was engaged to install the grease trap, septic tanks and the leaching field. Some top soil had been removed from the area before the weather called a halt to the activity. The Development Committee had completed all the items that were required by the "Par 100 Plan" that were not ready for camp the past year.

In the spring of 1962, Mr. Colby finished the leaching field, located the grease trap and located two 1000 gallon septic tanks. To complete the leaching field it

required 1145 lineal feet of tiles, 456 cubic yards of bank run gravel and 185 cubic yards of washed stone. The six inch drain was also installed.

Reports on the progress of camp development had been made to the Executive Board each month since its inception and because of the low rating of the year 1961 it was voted March 8, 1962 that similar reports be made as to the progress of getting leadership for the camp staff.

The Bassett Company of Derby had made a donation of \$5,000 to the Campaign Fund for the specific purpose of construction of a hot and cold shower building. The R. F. Smith Lumber Company of Seymour was awarded the contract. The cost of the building was less than the amount donated for the purpose, but with the permission of Mr. Bassett the balance was used to help pay for the dishwashing machine in the kitchen of the dining hall.

At the Feb. 8, 1962 meeting, Mr. Darling who had been appointed by President Byrnes previously to make a detailed report on the expected income, when it might be received and the expected expenditures that would be necessary to have the camp ready for the summer of 1962, made his report. From this report it indicated that Mr. Johnson should be given the authority to proceed with the work to be done and that the Council would be in a position to meet these bills when they were due.



The Development Committee itself did as much as it possibly could and the rest was done by the sub-contractors who were paid in full. Bob Rapp who had ordered the kitchen equipment did a good job of getting it and it was set up when it arrived.

Everything that had been originally planned for the camp had been finished except for the parking lot. Due to lack of funds, it had to wait until later.

Camp opened July 8, 1962 with everything in place. A total of 220 boys attended for a total of 290 boy weeks. Both seasons were much better than what was experienced at Pomperaug. Mr. Wales, Mr. Minton and Mr. Johnson went on the official "Par 100 Plan" inspection of the camp. The result was a rating of B83. This rating is better than most camps which have been in operation for a period of years.

The Finance Campaign did not meet its goal of \$200,000 which was not expected. It did bring in enough money for the Housatonic Council to own and operate its own camp.

So ended a great drama. A miracle had been accomplished. A lot of credit should go to Attorney Frank Baut who did a marvelous job and to Edmund Worfolk for his work on the campaign. Others besides those already mentioned in this story who helped are:

John Magjar  
Bill Araujo

Leslie Wright  
Fred Carlson

George Horne  
Rand Killengbeck  
Ernest Tuttle  
Richard Harlow  
Edward Purcell  
Fred Tanner  
Stanley Scibee  
John Behuniak

Edwin Sturges  
Russ Korolyshun Jr.  
John Jalowiec Jr.  
William Killian  
John Schwing  
Walter Boucher  
James Marchitto  
Ben Solkofshe