

Interview of Scoutmaster Carl Hertle

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As written by: Bruce Cunningham

Mr. Hertle was the scoutmaster from 1970 – 76. His oldest son, Randy, was Troop 47's third Eagle Scout and the only eagle from the 1970's.

I got involved in the troop with my oldest son, Randy, around 1969. The scoutmaster at that time was Jim Johnson. Jim did a good job with the boys and let me tell you we had a group of boys that were tough as nails back in those days. I never once had any problem with any of the boys, but they were a tough bunch. Most of them had grown up in tough families and most didn't have any money to speak of. Just a bunch of tough country kids.

Of course my boys, Randy and Mark were in the troop. Others that I can remember are: Greg Gilley, Ed Neal, Gary Neal, Jerry Neal, Shawn Smith, Mark Marion, Chris Johnson and his brother, Eddie Weber, Tim Boley, David & Bobby Fink, Roger McAleese, Monty Anderson, Chippy Crawford, Kevin Tuell, Herbie Stewart, Red Minon, and Frankie Royalty. I am sure there are some that I missed, but that was 30 years ago now. Let me tell you that was a tough bunch of kids.

At first we had scout meetings up at the American Legion in the family room. That didn't really work out very well. Some nights a fight would break out in the bar, or a drunk would stumble through the meeting room. We had to get out of there. Then we started meeting up in the old one room school building that was behind the Elizabeth Grade School and that was better. But it didn't have any heat. In the winter I would stop on the way home from work and build a fire in the wood stove on scout meeting nights. Then it was at least bearable by the time we had the meeting.

We camped around Elizabeth a lot in those days. My first campout as scoutmaster was down at the scout camp near Dogwood on the creek near Smith Campground Church. Back then the Boy Scout Council owned that property and we could use it any time we wanted. We rolled in there and the Gilley kid took charge. "Get those tents set up over there. Get Mr. Hertle's

tent set up right here. You two get the fire started and get Mr. Hertle some coffee brewing.” I was really kinda impressed with them. They weren’t bad kids. But man they were tough.

We did a lot of dutch oven cooking back then. We did what we called “bean hole” cooking. The boys would dig a hole, cover the bottom with coals from the fire, put the dutch ovens in, put some coals on top, and cover them up with dirt. Then we would go hiking for the day and when we came back supper would be ready. We learned the hard way that you had to mark the bean hole location with a stick. If we came back after dark, it was hard to find the dutch oven.

We also camped at the Johnson place off of Crawford Road. It seemed that they lived way back in the middle of no where and the boys could roam the woods and river hills. We also camped on the property I owned off of Sandy Branch Road.

We did go to summer camp up at Tunnel Mill a couple times. That was a good time and the boys got to do a lot of activities and earn some merit badges. We usually camped across the bridge in the Pioneer Village section of camp. The boys really liked camping up there.

Because we didn’t have much money, we camped and backpacked a lot. We couldn’t really afford to go too many other places. We would drive down to the Red River Gorge area of Kentucky and backpack in, camp on the trail, and backpack out. We did a lot of primitive camping in the Red River Gorge area.

One time we were going to hike the Indian Staircase trail in the gorge. When we got ready to take off on the hike, one of the tougher kids in the troop had tied his gear to the outside of his backpack with string. I told him that wouldn’t work and he needed to stow the gear inside his pack. He told me that it would be fine. As I followed him up the trail that day, I ended up picking up about half the stuff he had tied onto his pack, including his sleeping bag that I wrapped around my neck so I could carry it. My face was red and I was pretty mad by the time we got to the top. The Indian Staircase ended up being small toe steps carved out of a sheer rock face about 200 feet straight up! It was not an easy climb and a couple of the boys were scared of heights. Then we camped in a cave for the night and one of

the kids had nightmares all night. Boy do I ever remember that trip. None of us really slept much that night.

We went to Natural Bridge State Park in the gorge area one time and hiked. One of the tougher kids was scared of heights and didn't want to walk across the land bridge. It was 25 feet wide, but he sure didn't want to go across there. I stayed behind and talked him into it, but I had to walk beside him. It is funny how the toughest kid in the troop can be scared of something like that.

One time we went and hiked the Misamaugwa Trail in the Cumberland Gap area of Kentucky. That was a real long trail and we hiked up to an old settlement area and spent the night. That was a good time.

The interviewer asked Mr. Hertle if there were any good scout stories he could remember.

Oh yeah, I can remember a few good stories to tell. I guess we ought to leave the boy's names out of it. One boy needed to do some cooking so he could finish his cooking merit badge. He cooked hamburgers until they were black as coal. Then he ate one of them and was up sick all night. Then there was another boy that the older scouts took out on a snipe hunt one night. When he finally came back to camp he said that he had so much fun that night that he wanted to go again the next night. Maybe then he would actually catch a snipe in the bag.

Like I said, they were all good boys. Tough as nails, but all in all a pretty good bunch.