

Sequoyah Memories

Jon Cooner, '69, 74

Wow. How did I find this site? [*campsequoyah.org*] I'm a few months shy of 50, and the memories have just flooded back over the past few minutes.

Tying a bowline one-handed under the falls on the back side of the darn. Trying to make it up that last few feet of rock face beside the trail to Tsali.

Hearing a wildcat scream in the middle of the night on the hill behind the cabins, and subsequently diverting my nocturnal path toward the head and relieving myself instead on a bush beside the cabin porch.

Watching in awe as Ben Abel played soccer. The pleasure I felt during the ride in the bed of the flat bed to Canoe Camp, when I also found out that he was a pretty good guy. Trying to ski on the lake behind a boat with a 50 hp motor when at 14 I was almost 6 feet tall and 200 pounds. Washing out the black frying pan at Nantahala, wondering how the counselors could say it was clean enough even though it still felt greasy to the touch, and thinkin' how neat it was that they used the cold spring there as a refrigerator. The taste of bread dipped in bacon grease and fried on a stick over an open fire.

Trying to keep those darned white clothes clean on Sunday. Mud slides in the main yard on rainy days. Lexol on saddles. Trying to get all that dirty laundry into that little white bag. Feeding so many ring-necked snakes to the king snake that it got sick and threw them all back up.

Steve Longnecker, his banjo, and wondering why that snake wouldn't strike the hot-water balloon on cue. Don Scarboro and his energetic wit. Bruce Capps, and his winter visits to my hometown to do a slide show.

Dog Soldiers. Spending the night alone on the mountain with a pad of paper and a pen.

My memory has faded, but I know I was at Sequoyah for three non-consecutive years during the late 1960s and early 1970s. I know I started as a Cherokee, and I believe it was the next year I was a Catawba in Don Scarboro's cabin. Then, I believe I skipped a few years and returned to spent both the early and late terms that summer as a Tuscarora.

I'm not sure exactly what years I was there, but I believe I'm correct that I experienced several datable events during camp. I believe I'm correct in remembering that I was at camp when I watched the Apollo 11 moon landing, which was in 1969. That must have been my Cherokee summer because the other two events both happened in 1974 – Nixon's resignation, and the release of Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Second Helping" album. As for the former, I am pretty sure I watched that while at camp. I'm much more certain as to the latter, since I remember a counselor driving half way across the state to buy the album, and then bringing it back to camp for us all to ogle.

I don't remember much about my Cherokee year, but I remember the summer in Don's Catawba cabin a bit better. I remember faces, but the only other name I remember from that cabin was Joe Hunter. Even after all these years, a song he made up still comes to mind from time to time. The song was about toilet paper. That was also the year that I finally learned the words to Don's two signature song - "Dem Bones" and "Guess I'll Go Eat Worms." (And I still remember them!) That year, we also had a strange final skit. It involved something to do with me pretending to catch spitballs in a coffee can as they were "pitched" to me, and thumping the bottom of the can with my finger to simulate each catch. I also remember that at the end, the other guys threw a bucket of water in my face (NOT in the script!)

I saw that Harry Lerch signed the book. Harry, I remember you. Want me to prove it? Well, I can name the song most requested of you - "Round Up", by Emerson, Lake and Palmer.

My Tuscarora year was also fun, but for some reason I don't remember it as well. My counselor was a wild man we all loved. His name was Steve Bellamy, and he used to repeat a rhyme often that started with "My name is Buck Bellamy. I've seen goats in the oat fields. . .) That is a loose rendition with omissions, the original not being fit for publication here. He also taught us that when we got sick in the future, we should eat a hot dog for breakfast. That way, when we threw up at night, we'd have something pleasant tasting to enjoy. I remember that our cabin also had had some sort of 50s-ish motorcycle group called the "Screaming Wheels." Why? I dunno. Just seemed like the thing to do at the time, I guess.

I am so disappointed that I only found this site after the 2007 reunion. Hope another will be planned in the future. *[Sequoyah alumni reunions occur every two years. The next one is scheduled for 2025.]*