

Camp Pioneer Reborn: 2000-09

By Peter Collinge

As 1999 closed, the construction of new campsites and buildings in Camp Pioneer was well under way, but there was still much work to do and money to raise. If all went well, 2000 would be a landmark year, with several new programs and with Pioneer replacing Mountaineer as Massawepie's main camp.

A successful scramble: 2000

By January, 2000, four new buildings were finished at Pioneer: Trek, Sports, Econ, and the Scoutmaster/Leader Lounge. The Handicraft Pavilion was 90% complete, and the septic systems for the two new showerhouses were nearly finished. (Due to modern health regulations, those septic systems were actually computer-controlled, which over the years led to occasional issues. When something went wrong, it was often beyond the skill level and equipment of the average local plumber to fix!) The Pioneer dining hall kitchen had been gutted, and the new floor was in place, along with the walk-in cooler and freezer and the commercial stove hood. The new water well had been drilled, though finalizing the installation was waiting for an engineer to determine the appropriate pump size. Similarly, the pad for the large water tank for the camp system was in place, but was waiting for the National Guard to help place the tank. And the new water lines themselves, like the remaining campsites and other finishing touches, would have to wait until the snow melted!

After it had become clear that Pioneer wouldn't be ready to reopen in 1999 as once hoped, 1999-2000 Camp Director Richard McCartney had used that last summer at Mountaineer to "test drive" some programmatic and operational changes that he could use in the "reborn" Camp Pioneer in 2000. The positive changes in 1999 and the ongoing publicity since 1998 about forthcoming Massawepie improvements seems to have worked: by January the dining hall was full for Weeks 3-6 for 2000, in addition to many units already signed up for the patrol cooking option during Weeks 2-5. As usual, McCartney was recruiting staff members, and also CITs for one of two three-week sessions.

McCartney was promoting the many new options for older Scouts in 2000. In addition to existing Adirondack treks and climbing/rappelling program, there would be mountain biking in camp and a full C.O.P.E. (Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience) course including high ropes elements. The newest program (Mountain Fox) would be for youth age 14-17, with a \$240 fee (\$75 more than the normal camp fee of \$165 for 6 nights) that would include a special hat and patch. The Mountain Fox participants would camp with the troop but spend each day doing special activities. The planned program included: COPE on Monday, a 50-mile bike trek on Tuesday, backpacking/hiking in the High Peaks on Wednesday/Thursday, and whitewater rafting on Friday. Mountain Fox was limited to 20 Scouts per week on a first-come, first-served basis. The program proved so popular and successful that it still continues each summer as of this writing.

As spring approached, there was still a lot of work to do to get Pioneer ready. While the major building projects were being done by contractors, smaller projects like building a lifeguard tower remained, along with moving hundreds of items (including dock sections, program equipment, and dining room tables) from Mountaineer to Pioneer. Importantly, the water system needed to be built, and about half of the troop sites still needed to be set up with tent platforms moved from Mountaineer. The Otetiana Council's *Smoke Signals* monthly newsletter included regular calls for volunteer help, and many of the usual camp volunteers scheduled extra days at camp. Camp Director Rich McCartney remembers, "There was so much to do. Ed Caldwell [Director of Support Services], Don DeClerck [Otetiana Camp Properties Superintendent], I [McCartney], and numerous members of the Properties Committee spent many weekends and days setting up the campsites and program areas so that we could be ready in time for National Camping School." (In that era, the National Boy Scouts ran the last session of their National Camping School in mid-June each year at Massawepie, to train last-minute staff hires

from anywhere in the country in addition to staffers from New York and surrounding states.) In addition to the usual Work Weekends like Skills and Beaver Weekends, the Ty-Ohni Lodge of the Order of the Arrow held a Service Weekend (& Brotherhood Ceremony) at Massawepie June 9-11.

During the work to reopen Camp Pioneer, Massawepie Property Superintendent Mike Jackson resigned. Jay Bailey was hired as the replacement camp ranger, and immediately found himself in the midst of the scramble to get everything ready for summer. The rest of Bailey's service through 2007 as Massawepie Ranger probably seemed tame in comparison!

One of the biggest single volunteer projects that year was constructing the Pioneer water distribution system, following an engineer's schematic diagram, which consisted of:

- A 2.5" force main of PVC pipe from the pumphouse near Long campsite across the Catamount Pond Outlet bridge near the waterfront and up to the main storage tank on a hill near the Mountaineer Road,
- A 4" gravity main of PVC pipe back down from the storage tank to the dining hall, and then on to the "valve corral" interconnect to the Gannett system, near the Archery Range, and
- Side water lines, of PVC or flexible black plastic tubing, to various buildings and campsites

While the well and pumphouse were completed by contractors, the "Massawepie Water & Gas" volunteer crew led by Bill Miller built the rest of this system. The PVC pipe came in heavy 20-foot sections, and the first challenge was hauling all of those pipes to where they were needed, often on foot through the woods far from any roads, especially for the main lines to and from the water tank. Once the pipes were on location, then the cutting and gluing began. The crew worked every weekend from early May until just before Staff Week (late June) to finish hooking up every cabin and campsite. Their weekends started on Thursdays and ended late Sunday afternoons, and coincided with the worst of the Adirondack black fly season. The crew swore that purple PVC primer was the best black fly attractant ever, so they had to work wearing bug nets and gloves. Gluing together the main line from the bridge uphill to the tank was done mainly over two long weekends: figuring out the joint angles needed to follow the ground contours, pushing sections of 4" heavy wall pipe into a coupling, and holding them in place till the glue grabbed.

Jay Bailey had started as Ranger just as the water system project got rolling, and he was the backhoe operator and liaison to the town highway department for the two needed road crossings. (Note: the main Massawepie Road through camp is a public, Town of Piercefield road.) When all system connections were made and leak tested, the whole system was sterilized and multiple samples taken for the Health Department. Bill Miller also did the water heater commissioning in the shower houses and dining hall in his capacity as an A.O. Smith warranty service agent. The whole water system was finished and approved just in time for Staff Week and camp opening. The Massawepie Gas and Water Crew, including Bill Miller, Chris Harris, Paul Cote, and Kevin Berl, has continued to open, close, and help maintain the water system for 20+ years since it was built. Gus Gleichauf and Rolly Johnston also helped with much of the original work.

In addition to the physical work on camp, a fundraising effort was ongoing. A combined "*Timeless Values*" capital/endowment campaign was intended both to pay for facility upgrades and to provide ongoing income to help maintain the camp. Before the campaign started, a consultant advised that an attainable goal would be \$3.5-4 million. Instead, the council set a goal of \$6.5 million. While significant gifts were received, they totalled closer to the consultant's original estimate than the goal. A portion of the council's existing Cutler endowment was also used to fund construction of the two new showerhouses, with a portion of that later repaid to the endowment from other donations, and a number of naming gifts for buildings were received. Troop 31 sponsored the Scoutmaster/Leader Lounge, RG&E sponsored the Econ building, David & Janet MacDonald sponsored the Waterfront, Bill and Gail May sponsored the Handicraft Pavilion, and even the bridge over the Catamount Pond Outlet was sponsored, by Burt & Sherry Stokes.

Among other camp improvements in 2000 was the construction of an Air Gun Range, sponsored by the Reidman Foundation, in upper Camp Pioneer almost to the Mountaineer Road. This was mainly for 11-year-old Scouts, since under New York law they were not allowed to use the Rifle Range until they turned 12. Of course, many 11-year-old Scouts were participating in the TrailBlazer program, so the Air Gun Range was less popular than hoped. It ran as a separate program for several years (at least through 2003), but the hours were reduced as time went on and eventually it closed. In 2009, Ranger Ben Geiger demolished it and turned it into a much-needed additional ("Upper") parking lot. Note: The tentative plans for the "Improved Camp Pioneer" in 2000 also included a new Rifle Range, but that didn't get built due to lack of funding. Similarly, a hoped-for OA Lodge also didn't happen.

Another program-related innovation for 2000 was the advent of early merit badge class sign-up. This was designed to reduce the chaos of hundreds of Scouts trying to sign up for merit badge classes on the first day of the camp week, while still enforcing limits on the size of the classes to maintain quality. Once troops had paid their final fees and submitted final rosters by May 15, the leaders could contact volunteer Tom Molinari by mail or email to start signing up Scouts for merit badges. Class slots were filled first-come, first-served, with the Scout's ranks breaking any ties. Last minute changes could still be made on Sundays at camp.

Along with the "new" camp, a new related organization was formed in 2000. The Massawepie Staff Alumni Association (renamed Massawepie Alumni Association as of 2005) held its first meeting at camp during Beaver Weekend in early June. All former staff members were welcome to join. The group's goals were to provide spirit, service, and support to camp. Kathy Elliott was the group's first president and Mark Pulvino was the vice-president. For their first project, they planned to raise funds to name the Camp Pioneer Campfire Circle for the late Loren Hakes, long-time Massawepie Property Superintendent. This "Loren Hakes Campfire Circle" naming did happen after the group raised \$22,000 to support it over the next two years.

As anyone who has worked on a complex facilities project can tell you, there will always be a few last-minute glitches. Camp Director Rich McCartney recalls that when all of the new Pioneer kitchen equipment was being used to prepare a dinner during National Camping School in June, a pole-mounted transformer blew and the lights went out. Don DeClerck scrambled to arrange to pick up a new transformer in Syracuse, and when Don arrived with the transformer, he and the still-new Massawepie Ranger Jay Bailey managed to get it mounted and connected within 24 hours of the outage. Note: One real challenge at Massawepie is that all of the internal (past the camp shop) power lines, poles, and transformers belong to the camp, not to the utility company. That means that Massawepie rangers need to be trained and able to function as electric linemen, and safely use a bucket truck to work on "medium voltage" (much higher than normal household power, but lower than huge transmission lines) power lines in all kinds of weather. It's not a job for the faint of heart!

Rich McCartney also remembers an evening during the successful 2000 summer season when three staff members (two young men and a young woman) were amusing themselves by throwing rocks near the dining hall. The two guys kept escalating, throwing larger rocks, until one of them unintentionally hit and cracked the four-inch PVC water line behind the dining hall. "The result was a 30-foot geyser and a small lake forming immediately." McCartney and Ranger Jay Bailey were called, and a staffer was sent to the water tank on a hill above the Mountaineer Road to shut off the water supply. At that point, they realized that there were no shut-off valves installed along the main water line, so the entire camp's water supply would need to be kept turned off until the pipe by the dining hall could be fixed. Needless to say, the prospect of 500 campers without water was concerning!

McCartney, Bailey, and a handful of other staff members worked in the shin-deep puddle to repair the pipe. When they finished, another staffer reopened the valve at the water tank, and water flowed back down the main line. Unfortunately, the repair didn't hold, and the pipe burst again spraying those

nearby with full force. By then, it was about 10 PM, so the staff helpers were sent to bed while Bailey and McCartney let the area dry out and then repaired the pipe again. They finished about 2 AM. Jay Bailey had a theory that the first repair didn't hold because it didn't have enough time to cure, so they decided to wait until morning to try turning the water on again. At about 6 AM, they sent Steve Levy to open the valve at the water tank. Bailey and McCartney again heard the water flowing down the main pipe, but this time the repair held, and they could announce at the morning flag ceremony that the camp had water again. Afterwards, Jay Bailey made a note to install some intermediary shut-off valves on the main water line when he got a chance.

A successful dedication ceremony for the reopened Camp Pioneer was held at camp on July 27, 2000. A bus brought interested council board members and donors from Rochester to camp for the ceremony. Donors were thanked by new Otetiana Council Scout Executive Larry Pritchard. Pritchard had started his position in March after previous Scout Executive Tom Fitzgibbon, who began the Massawepie Improvement Project in 1997, left to lead the Denver council. A highlight of the dedication was when Burton ("Burt") and Charles ("Chuck") August learned to their surprise that Troop 31 had designated its \$75,000 donation to name the new Scoutmaster/Leader Lounge building for the Augusts.

After a successful summer, 33 volunteers helped get the camp ready for winter at Fall Skills Weekend 9/29-10/1. That fall, the council announced that most camp fees would not increase for 2001, with one week of camp costing \$165 for youth and \$50 for adults, though the cost of a second week for a youth would increase to \$140. Mountain Fox fees would be \$270 per youth and \$155 per adult (\$105 more than the regular camp fees). Trek fees would be \$255-315 depending on the trek, with a \$25 discount if the Scout also attended summer camp. Inquiries about treks picked up after the council ran an ad in the January/February, 2001, *Scouting* magazine promoting Massawepie and especially treks. The same issue also had an ad for treks at Massawepie's ex-partner camp: Sabattis Scout Reservation.

2001: Camp Pioneer thrives; an Alumni Association grows

A pre-camp merit badge sign-up packet was mailed to leaders in December, featuring 47 different merit badges. A Camp Leader Rally was held January 25, 2001, to review evaluations from 2000 and discuss program improvements. By January, the dining hall was full for Weeks 2-4 and 6. Camp Director Tony Phillips was looking for staff and Assistant Camp Director Aaron Buzzell was looking for CITs. A new Massawepie video (VHS) was available to use for camp promotion, for current Scouts and Webelos crossovers. Tom Molinari was running Early Merit Badge sign-up again, with a deadline of June 1 for Weeks 1&2, otherwise June 21. Camping Secretary Lisa Fernandes reminded troops that a second deposit of \$59 per Scouts was due March 1, and full fees were due May 15 to avoid a late fee.

2001 brought two new programs at camp, one for Scouters and the other for Scouts. For leaders, the camp offered a "Scouter's Merit Badge," which required completing any 8 out of 13 requirements. Each was in a different camp area, and most had several options for fulfilling the requirement. For Scouts, Star Village was a weeklong program designed to teach methods and practices of troop leadership while also learning to work on merit badges required for Eagle. The program was primarily aimed at First Class Scouts, and the participants functioned in a patrol setting. They worked on many requirements for Citizenship in the Community, Citizenship in the Nation, Citizenship in the World, Safety, and Communication merit badges. However, all of those badges had requirements that could not be done at camp, so the Scouts either finished prerequisites before camp or went home with partial merit badges completed.

There were still a number of key staff openings by May, 2001, but all buildings were already full for Family Camp Week 2 in late August, and many were full for Week 1. Beaver Weekend 2001 was successful and had a shorter list of "must finish" projects than in 2000. The volunteers did build the

new camp Chapel, sponsored by the Clark family, near the Econ Building. The new Massawepie Staff Alumni Association announced that it would be coordinating the 50th Anniversary Celebration for Massawepie in 2002. (Camp Pioneer, the first camp, opened in 1952.) More former staffers were encouraged to join the association and help with the celebration planning. The association was collecting old staff rosters, to help with recruiting, and published a list in the June/July *Smoke Signals* newsletter of rosters still needed.

As summer started, the council announced that the basic one-week fee for Scouts at summer camp would be increased in 2002, for the first time in three years, to \$175 (\$150 for a 2nd week). Brothers would still get a \$5 discount each, while leaders would pay \$75. Those fees were for Otetiana units or returning out of council units reserving by October 1. Other units would pay \$180/Scout. The late fee if full payment was not received by May 15 was \$15. The Mountain Fox program cost an extra \$105 per person to pay for rafting and transportation to activities. A survey of 2001 camp fees found an average of \$181 for Scout camps and \$284 for non-Scout camps, so Massawepie's fees remained competitive.

Summer camp staff members come and go, but their legacies often outlast them. The summer of 2001 brought a quiet change to the camp's popular waterfront. Brian Ellison, that year's Aquatics Director and a former U.S. Naval Academy student, brought with him a sailor's eye for efficiency. Ellison recognized a longstanding inconvenience in the waterfront's layout: in order to crew a sailboat, scouts had been required to wade or swim out to a raft anchored well offshore — a cumbersome arrangement that ate into precious sailing time and was often uncomfortable on cool Adirondack mornings. Drawing on his Navy training, Ellison redesigned the boat area so that campers could board and launch directly from a newly configured sailboat and rowboat dock. It was a practical, elegant solution, and it transformed the sailing program that summer. Scouts who might have been hesitant about the cold, wet start found themselves more eager to get on the lake “under canvas.”

If Ellison gave the waterfront its soul that summer, then the Dining Hall had its own brand of magic in the form of Javier Santiago—affectionally called “Juice”—the camp's Dining Hall Steward. Camp Director Tony Phillips (who left after Massawepie for Harvard Law School and later became an attorney in Washington, DC) recalls that Santiago was a trained percussionist, and he brought that rhythm with him to every meal. On more than one occasion, Santiago was known to climb up onto the head table in the middle of a meal and launch into an impromptu performance with a pair of large kitchen spoons. The Scouts, leaders, and staff would delight as he played with the natural flair of someone who had been keeping time his whole life. The dining hall clatter of silverware and the roar of young voices would give way to smiles and laughter as Santiago coaxed genuine music out of the humblest of instruments. It was the kind of spontaneous, joyful moment that former campers recount years later with a wide grin.

After a successful summer, the fall was already full of talk about 2002. In addition to planning the big 50th anniversary celebration at camp August 3, 2002, the Massawepie Staff Alumni Association (MSAA) was soliciting donations toward naming the Pioneer Campfire Circle for Loren Hakes. Any donating \$50 or more would have their 2001-02 MSAA dues waived. By late November, the dining hall was full Weeks 2-6 and patrol cooking was full Weeks 2-5 for 2002. Troops were reminded that a fee of \$25 per camper was due by December 17 or they might lose their reservation.

In December, it was announced that Steve Weisenreder would be Camp Director in 2002. He was a CIT in 1994, worked in TrailBlazers 1995-1999 (as director 1996-99) and Program Director 2000-01. Steve was well-rounded, but also needed to recruit a well-rounded staff. Interviews would start over the Christmas school holiday.

2002: Massawepie's 50th Anniversary

A 50th anniversary patch design contest was open to Scouts through December 14. Early in 2002, the co-winners were announced: 15-year-old Brian Trovato from Troop 320 (with a creative design shaped like the number 50) and Brad VanAuken (with a throwback design to the 1952 neckerchief). These designs were incorporated into the camp and Alumni Association patches.

March deposits of \$50/Scout were due by March 1, and Family Camp registration would also open March 1. Tom Molinari was doing early merit badge sign-up again. The Here's How meetings for leaders would be April 16 & 18, and would be the first chance to sign up for 2003 camp slots. Camp space was at a premium: by March the only remaining space for 2002 was 97 patrol cooking slots in Week 1, plus some additional space saved each week for Webelos crossovers.

Also in March, more details came out about the 50th Anniversary Celebration at camp on August 3. Events would include tours, program activities, a camp rededication, patch show and trading, fellowship, and a campfire. A \$15 fee included dinner and a patch. Sunday brunch was \$5 extra. Camping space was available for troops. Visitors were asked to register by May 31. The council was offering round-trip transportation from Rochester for \$27 per person.

Tom Richards, General Chairman of the "*Timeless Values. Your Investment. Their Future*" capital & endowment campaign announced in April that the campaign raised a total of \$5.2 million: \$3.5M in donations & \$1.7M from the New York State easement. The capital gifts were primarily used to fund the new buildings and infrastructure at Pioneer in 2000.

In connection with the camp's 50th anniversary, the council and the Staff Alumni Association began promoting the Massawepie Square Foot Endowment Fund. For \$50, a donor could dedicate a square foot of Massawepie (or a square yard for \$350). The earnings from the Square Foot Fund were permanently designated to support maintenance of and equipment for Massawepie Scout Camps. This fund appeals to donors who want to ensure that their gifts will benefit Massawepie into the future.

The 50th Anniversary Celebration on August 3 was a great success, thanks to organizing by the Massawepie Staff Alumni Association. Special guests included Virginia Sykes Dreby, whose family sold the Massawepie property to the Otetiana Council in 1951. After activities around the camp during the day, the retreat ceremony featured remarks from Council President Dick Leo and Scout Executive Larry Pritchard. Governor Pataki's representative, Joanne Dicob, recognized Berl Thaine, a 50-year veteran of Massawepie. Afterwards, the Campfire Circle was dedicated to Loren Hakes. At the evening campfire, Ray & Addy Meyering were recognized for their many years of dedicated service (over 25 for Ray), and Alumni Association founding Treasurer David Lippitt was awarded the Silver Beaver. The evening concluded with fireworks across Massawepie Lake.

A seventh week of camp was added for 2003 in response to the high demand by troops. By September, 2002, the dining hall was already full for Weeks 2-6 of 2003, though some space was expected to open up after the \$25 per person was due in December. Steve Weisenreder, who would be returning as camp director in 2003, was already recruiting staff and CITs in November. Tom Molinari had again volunteered to run pre-camp merit badge sign-ups, and would hold a Q&A/How-to meeting on February 13, 2003.

2003-05: The Weisenreder Era Continues

The April, 2003, Here's How meetings were again the first chance to register for the following year (2004) of camp. The fact that the dining hall for 2003 was then full for Weeks 1-6 (with only 6 spaces Week 7), and patrol cooking was full for Weeks 3-6, helped encourage troops to register early. One topic at the Here's How meetings was promoting the camp's various programs for older Scouts: Treks,

Mountain Fox (where the additional rafting/transportation fee had been reduced to \$75), Star Village, and the Ropes Course. Troops were also told about a number of open staff positions and asked to help recruit staff.

When Pioneer reopened in 2000, budget constraints prevented constructing a new rifle range, so Scouts had been walking or getting rides to the Mountaineer range. In May, the council announced that plans were underway to build a new range for Pioneer, with 16 (an increase from 8) shooting points, to be named for Ray and Addy Meyering. The cost was estimated at \$90,000. The Massawepie Staff Alumni Association, which raised \$22,000 for the Loren Hakes Campfire Circle in 2002, took on the Rifle Range as their next project, and had already donated \$1000 from their account. Three former staffers had donated \$5000 each, for a total of \$16,000. If a total of \$55K could be raised by the summer for plans and foundation and site work, construction would start in 2003 and the range should be open for 2004. Those donating \$1000 or more would be recognized on a bronze plaque; those of \$250-999 would also be recognized at the range. Chuck Levengood at the Otetiana Council office was coordinating donations.

In May, along with reminders to pay full 2003 fees by May 15, the council announced increased camp fees for 2004. Due to food concerns, the council had hired Sodexo to manage food in 2003, at a 16% cost increase. The 2003 camp fee would not change, but for 2004 the one-week fee for Scouts would be \$195. By comparison, the average for Scout camps in and around NYS was already \$203, and many non-Scouting camps ran \$300-375 per week. Second weeks for Scouts at Massawepie would cost \$175, the leader fee increased to \$95, and the late payment penalty increased to \$25. The leader fee increase was needed because the ratio of adults to Scouts was approaching 1 to 3. The brother discount was increased to \$10 each. As always, camperships were available based on need.

In one complication for summer 2003, a last-minute note from the Health Department said that all youth bringing medications to camp (prescription or over-the-counter) must have both permission from a parent AND an individualized written order from a health care provider. Troops and families scrambled to obtain the needed paperwork.

Over the summer, Father Guido Verbeck III stopped to visit Massawepie. Fr. Verbeck had vacationed at Massawepie with his family in the summers of 1949-51, before the Scouts owned the property. At that time, the old hotel had been taken down but various outbuildings remained. Verbeck's great-grandfather William Verbeck was an early National Scout Commissioner for the BSA, and ran a camp for boys on the Massawepie property in the 1920s. Father Verbeck, who later served several summers as a chaplain at Massawepie, wrote after his 2003 visit that he appreciated the Scouts taking care of the property and enabling thousands of Scouts to learn lifetime skills and values.

At the end of the summer, over \$33,000 had been raised from 45 donors toward the goal of \$90,000 for the new rifle range to be named for Ray & Addy Meyering. Chuck Levengood was asking for members of local hunting/shooting clubs to approach those clubs about helping to sponsor the range. Troops were also encouraged to donate, either from the treasury or by pooling donations from members. Anyone donating \$50 or more received a special Meyering Rifle Range pin. By November, a crew from LeChase Construction had begun preparing the range site, and 13 more donations had been received for a total raised of over \$45,000, half of the campaign goal.

By the time the \$25 per person camp deposits were due on Dec. 16, the dining hall had been full since September for all seven weeks, and patrol cooking was full for Weeks 4-6. Brad VanAuken was working to increase trek attendance, which wasn't as strong. VanAuken had written a new description of the variety of treks available, and pointed out that the Adirondack Park was 50 times larger than Philmont and featured 1500+ miles of trails and 1000+ miles of canoeing.

In January, the 2004 camp management team was announced as: Steve Weisenreder, Camp Director; Kyle Watkins, Program Director; Devin Bedard, Senior Commissioner; and Sean Glenney, Health Director. A few staff positions were still available, including directors for Sports/Mt. Bike, COPE, Star Village, and Mountain Fox. A small number of slots had opened up for dining hall Weeks 2, 4, & 7, and patrol cooking was now only full for Weeks 3 & 5, though Week 4 was almost full. After the additional \$50 per youth was due on March 3, Webelos crossovers could be added by contacting Camping Assistant Lisa Schmidt and paying \$75 per crossover to “catch up” on fees.

By April, the only staff openings remaining were for a Ropes/COPE Director, a Camp Commissioner, one Lifeguard and a few CITs. No doubt Steve Weisenreder and crew were pleased to need minimal last-minute scrambling for staff. Archaeology merit badge was added for 2004, since it was fairly easy to find hotel-era artifacts at Massawepie, but no new staffer was needed for it. Star Village Director Phil Roberts also handled Archaeology merit badge, since he had been one suggesting it. Some Scouts were intrigued by such “ancient artifacts” as paper milk bottle caps and round-bottom bottles.

Rifle range construction was planned to continue after the summer season concluded. By summer, \$61,000 had been raised. Troops 19 and 111 had each donated \$1000+ to be listed on the bronze plaque; Troops 37, 200, and 312 had each donated \$250+ to also be listed at the new range.

Over the summer, 180 Scout leaders and parents availed themselves of Adult Leader Training courses at Massawepie, including New Leader Essentials, Troop Committee Challenge, Boy Scout Leader Specific, Youth Protection, and a special merit badge counselor class. Craig Kaplan helped organize this training by surveying troops on their needs, and 13 other trainers helped run courses.

With hundreds of teenagers and pre-teens in camp each week, doing various outdoor activities, accidents do occasionally happen. Kendall Smith remembers being a 14-year-old on a Cycling merit badge ride on the Carriage Road (which leads from Massawepie toward Mt. Arab) when one of the other Scouts crashed. Since that Scout had landed on his back on a rock, and complained that one leg was numb, the staff member leading the ride (Sports Director Steve Schmidt) decided that spinal injury precautions were warranted. Unfortunately, where the accident happened they had no cell signal nor a signal for the camp’s FM radios, so the group split and half (including other staff members) rode back toward camp to call for help. Kendall remembers waiting in the woods with Steve and many swarming bugs for about an hour, trying to distract and reassure the victim, before a camp vehicle arrived with a backboard. Once back in camp, the victim was transferred to an ambulance and taken to a hospital, where they found no serious injuries and soon released him. Kendall muses that this incident helped eventually lead him to a staff position in later years, because Kendall became known to Steve Schmidt, who later recommended him for a CIT position.

In August, 2004, the council announced that Scouts age 13+ could earn \$100 toward a Massawepie Trek in 2005 (or toward Pioneer if a younger Scout or Webelos crossover) by selling \$500 or more of popcorn, in addition to any other prizes earned. At the same time, Ranger Jay Bailey was looking for volunteers to work on projects during Fall Skills Weekend, September 17-19. One planned project was to remodel the former staff laundry building, replaced several years before by a new laundry shelter near the Health Lodge, into additional staff housing.

In October, the 2005 camp fees were announced. Most fees went up \$10 per week. One change was for out-of-council units. In their third consecutive summer (or after), they would pay the same fees as Otetiana units. Until then, out-of-council units in their 2nd year would pay an extra \$5 per Scout per week, and an extra \$10 in their 1st year. Units registered after Oct. 1 would add \$5 per Scout. There must still be two qualified adults in camp with the troop at all times, one of whom must be 21+.

Construction on the Meyering Rifle Range had been paused in 2003 after uncovering a large bedrock outcrop in the target area, which could have caused dangerous ricochets. In November 2004, large

portions of that rock shelf were removed by blasting. (Souvenir rock remnants were available!) The excavation continued, a berm was created, and concrete foundation piers for the range building were poured. The wooden firing line and storage room would now be constructed in the spring by volunteers, with the goal of opening for the 2005 season. Funding of \$15,000 was still needed, though \$75,000 had now been raised (including a \$10,000 grant from New York State secured by Senator Jim Alesi) toward the \$90,000 goal. Fortunately, Ranger Jay Bailey had clarified with the Adirondack Park Agency that the new range would not be counted as one of the ten new "principal buildings" allowable at Massawepie under the 1998 easement.

The BarkEater honor camper program, new for 2005, was announced in December, 2004. BarkEater is designed to encourage camp attendance and year-to-year retention. It includes five years of unique recognition, memorable ceremonies, and experiences outside normal camp program. Some elements were adopted from the Pipestone program of Seven Ranges Scout Reservation (Ohio) and the Mic-O-Say program of H. Roe Bartle Scout Reservation (Missouri). The BarkEater Committee (including Brad VanAuken, Chair; Peter Collinge, Mark Ferraro, Doug Schmidt, and Steve Weisenreder) had been meeting throughout 2004 to develop the program basics. Other volunteers were added to help flesh out the program, and to keep improving it over the next few years. Kevin Spacher played a key role in developing the ceremonies for all five years, one year at a time, and his wife Diane Spacher took charge of making the costumes for all five years. Gael and Phil Roberts also provided key assistance with the program implementation at camp.

2005: A new Rifle Range, and BarkEater Begins

As Winter 2005 turned to Spring, Steve Weisenreder was looking for some staff as usual, and was also advertising the "life-changing" CIT experience, with two 4-week sessions of 12 CITs age 14 or 15. Ty-Ohni Lodge (Order of the Arrow) Chief Andrew Bestram would be the CIT Director. Meanwhile, Don DeClerck was looking for both Properties Committee members and Work Weekend volunteers. The big project for Beaver Weekend would be construction of the Meyering Rifle Range. The Trading Post porch would also be reconstructed. (Food provided; bring a sleeping bag!) DeClerck was promoted to Camp Operations Director in 2005, which meant that he supervised both the programs and facilities at both Camp Cutler and Massawepie.

During the spring, the council was promoting 2005 as the inaugural year of the BarkEater program. They explained that the program would build for each of five summers, with special recognitions and ceremonies each year. BarkEater elements reinforce the aims and ideals of Scouting, along with a grounding in the history and lore of the Adirondacks and MSC. Before the summer, the Camp Properties volunteers brought electricity to the Campfire Circle for the BarkEater ceremonies (which also enabled stage footlights to make the regular campfire programs more visible after dark). Trading Post Director George Varga made sure that there was special inaugural BarkEater merchandise available for sale to successful candidates, in addition to the token that they received after the ceremony. Volunteers from the camp staff took on the additional duties of conducting the BarkEater ceremony, complete with special effects, after the camp's usual Friday evening campfire.

Also being promoted that spring: leader training would again be available at camp, and a variety of programs would be available for older Scouts. Also, a special note in the June/July issue of *Smoke Signals* newsletter touted the fishing opportunities at both Otetiana Council camps. At Massawepie, fish available included brook trout, lake trout, smallmouth bass, and numerous panfish. A state record brook trout (21", 4 lb. 13 oz.) had previously been taken in the Massawepie area. In 2004, a 15-pound lake trout was taken in Massawepie Lake, and 3-4 pound smallmouth bass were taken there almost every year.

Thanks to tremendous work by Massawepie Staff Alumni and others, the new rifle range opened Monday, July 4. The Independence Day opening was appropriate since being much closer to Pioneer

gave the Scouts "independence" from needing rides. The 16 shooting points doubled the previous capacity and offered more opportunities to shoot. Volunteers, coordinated by Don DeClerck, finished the new range in only 10 working days, mostly over Skills and Beaver Weekends. Completion of the range capped a multi-year effort to fund and build the range, with over \$110K raised, including \$30K from Massawepie staff alumni. That total covered the extra expense of blasting needed when crews hit bedrock. The range is dedicated to Ray and Addy Meyering, long-time staffers, who served as directors of "their" new range in 2005, while grandson Brian Duff was the range assistant. A dedication ceremony was planned for July, 2006.

2006-09: BarkEater Expands, Weisenreder continues

Camp attendance numbers were strong in 2005: 1924 youth at summer camp (including 1301 from Otetiana Council), and 162 youth on treks (including 63 in-council, the highest number in several years). By September, the dining hall was full (max. 212 Scouts per week) for Weeks 1-6 for 2006, with some space in Week 7 and in all weeks of patrol cooking (limited to 188 Scouts per week). Camp fees for 2006 would increase by \$10 per week for youth and \$5 for adults, to \$215 and \$110 for the first week for in-council or returning units that registered and paid by the deadlines.

By January, 2006, a few dining hall slots had opened up after the December payment deadline. Camping Assistant Lisa Schmidt was also advertising winterized lodges at Massawepie available for rental. Weekend rates (Friday noon – Sunday noon) were \$155 for Voyageur Lodge (sleeps 7), \$110 for the Trek Lodge (sleeps 10; now called Keymel Lodge), and \$270 for Gannett Lodge (sleeps 20).

To speed up the Sunday check-in process at camp, some units liked to encourage their Scouts to take swim tests before camp, which was allowed in that era. In February, the council advertised that pre-camp swim tests were available by appointment at Rush-Henrietta High School (\$3/person), Brockport High School (free), Perinton Recreation & Parks (\$2.50-\$5 per person), and Webster Aquatics Center (\$4-\$5/person).

The BarkEater program would be continuing in 2006, with the years renamed for the camps: Year 1: Pioneer BarkEater, Year 2: Mountaineer. The Year 2 theme is recreation in the Adirondacks, including the history of the Childwold Park House resort at Massawepie. The Year 2 ceremony would be new and different, and required additional staff volunteers to make it successful.

At the time of the April Here's How meetings, for Massawepie and Cub Scout Adventure Camp leaders, Director of Support Services Bob Steele explained that in the Camping Department that he supervised there were six full-time and one seasonal employee. Lisa Schmidt was the Assistant to Bob, and supported the entire department. Don DeClerck oversaw both camps. Jay Bailey was the Massawepie ranger; Jeff Emerling and Matt Jensen were the Cutler rangers. Steve Weisenreder was the Massawepie Camp Director (and District Executive for Longhorn District) and Steve Denaker was the Cub Scout Adventure Camp Director. The only Massawepie staff openings remaining in April were for Voyageur Guides and CITs.

Each year, a Campership Dinner was held to raise funds for camp scholarships for deserving scouts, based on need. The 2006 dinner was held June 6. At the dinner, the council honored Beverly LeChase with the Distinguished Citizen Award and Ronald Knight with the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award.

On July 15, 2006, more than 40 friends and family of Ray and Addy Meyering, and current and former Massawepie staff members, gathered to dedicate the new rifle range and to unveil plaques honoring those who made it possible. Ray and Addy had 50+ years combined on Massawepie staff; Ray was on the 1952 staff before he became a New York State trooper! He returned to camp staff in 1980 at Forester after retiring, and his wife Addy joined him, as did both sons (Tom & Don) in different years.

Ray and Addy moved to Mountaineer staff in 1995 after Forester closed. They then staffed the new Pioneer range (that Ray helped to design) after it opened, in 2005 and 2006, before retiring. More than 40 people helped with the rifle range construction, and more than 130 people and organizations helped fund it. Ray Meyering estimated that more than 40,000 young people had been on ranges under his supervision, and more than 1,000,000 rounds have been fired. As a retired state trooper, Ray was particularly aware of the importance of teaching safe gun handling to youth. Doubling the capacity from 8 firing points in Mountaineer to 16 on the new range was a tremendous addition to the camp program, as was having a range closer to the main Camp Pioneer.

After its fundraising for the new Rifle Range concluded in 2005, the Massawepie Staff Alumni Association tackled a new project for 2006. They successfully solicited enough donations to purchase 12 new kayaks for the Pioneer waterfront, to start up the first full-scale kayak program.

Camp fees would increase again for 2007, to \$230 for the first week for Scouts and \$120 for adults, for in-council troops that registered by October 1. But any Boy Scout, 5th grade Webelos, or Venturer who sold at least \$545 of popcorn in 2006 would earn a credit of \$105 toward Camp Pioneer in 2007.

In November, the council announced that Summer Camp Trading Post Bucks, in booklets of 20 coupons worth \$1 each, could be purchased at the Strong Scout Shop. They could be used for purchases at either camp (Massawepie or Cutler) trading post, but not redeemed for cash or credit. They were promoted as convenient for kids and a great holiday present. Also in November, the camp dining hall was full for Weeks 3-6 for 2007, and patrol cooking was full for Week 4. Postcards were being mailed to all Scouts to encourage them to attend Massawepie with their troop or separately as a "provisional" camper.

Over the winter, the Camp Properties folks were calling for volunteers for the Spring Work Weekends as usual, and likewise Steve Weisenreder was looking for staff and CITs. The staff hiring seemed to go more slowly than in 2006; a number of positions were still unfilled in April. Nathan ("Nate") Hill had been hired as the Massawepie Ranger to replace Jay Bailey, who had resigned to join the New York State Parks system. The BarkEater program was gearing up for Year 3: Forester BarkEater, with a theme of Adirondack forestry and logging. In order to conduct the three ceremonies almost simultaneously after the Friday campfire without interfering with each other, a new site was prepared for the Year 3 ceremony at a distance from the Campfire Circle, and more staff volunteers recruited to conduct that ceremony.

Two new Bill Bressler Scholarships would be given starting in 2007 to help cover the Camp Pioneer or High Adventure Trek fees for Otetiana Scouts/Venturers/Explorers. Bill Bressler was an avid camper and hiker, and these are in his memory. The application deadline was April 30, 2007.

Massawepie 2007 had a good summer season. The Massawepie Visitation by a team from the BSA Area on July 12 was a success, with the team saying, "It is always a joy to visit an excellent camping facility that is enthusiastically managed by an experienced Camp Director and high quality staff." Steve Weisenreder, Don DeClerck, and the entire Massawepie staff deserved a lot of credit. Later, a highlight for Weeks 5&6 was a Blackhawk helicopter and crew that landed in the Pioneer field and gave Scouts a chance to sit in the cockpit and crew area.

During Week 7, 18 Scouts, age 12-16, were part of a provisional "Troop 1" at Massawepie. Nic Colasurdo was the Scoutmaster. Some Scouts were at Massawepie for a second week; others were independent campers from troops that didn't go to Massawepie. They ranged from Scout rank to Life. Two were from Long Island, and they assisted and gave first aid on the scene of a motorcycle accident in the Adirondacks on their way to camp. A Scout with Muscular Dystrophy was able to complete Rifle Shooting merit badge, with help from his fellow Scouts, the staff, and Asst. Scoutmaster Betsy Foss. Two others won the camp euchre tournament, another completed the Mile

Swim for the 7th time, two others completed the Eagle Challenge at COPE while in the Mt. Fox program, and another tied for first place in the home run derby! Most didn't know each other at the start of the week but they elected their own Senior Patrol Leader and Patrol Leaders and worked together well as a boy-led unit for the week.

By fall, most of the dining hall weeks were full for 2008. Kathy Karam was handling the camping reservations now in the council office. The council was again selling \$20 booklets of Camp Trading Post Bucks in the Strong Scout Shop. They reminded Scout families that these booklets were convenient for Scouts and made good holiday gifts.

Leader training would again be offered at camp in 2008, coordinated this year by Mary Royce. The BarkEater program was adding Year 4: Voyageur BarkEater, with a theme of Adirondack Voyageur guides, and 4th year Scouts as guides in their own troops. Friday evenings now meant four different BarkEater ceremonies after the camp campfire, keeping many of the camp staff busy into the evening.

Summer 2008 was successful, with Steve Weisenreder's six previous seasons as camp director helping the staff manage the usual ups and downs and minor crises of the summer. Kendall Smith remembers spending several weeks as a volunteer staff member, hoping to help with the Sports/Mt. bike program where he had worked the previous two years. Instead, he was assigned where needed: helping with OA ceremonies (during those years, both Ordeal and Brotherhood ceremonies were offered during summer camp) and driving the old red Ford Explorer (AKA the "Exploder") to help commissioners who were 17 and not allowed to drive. Kendall may be one of the few former staffers who still enjoys doing the garbage runs at camp, towing the garbage "scow" (trailer) full of trash to the dumpsters at the former Massawepie dump site up the narrow Russell Road from the Central Office.

In January, 2009, the Massawepie Program Committee announced that it had completed preliminary planning for an exciting new program at camp in 2009: Eagle Flight. This program would offer all required and some elective merit badges, plus fun activities. It would operate in a provisional Troop and Patrol setting, separate from summer camp. Volunteer merit badge counselors for the week or for a few days were needed.

March brought more Eagle Flight details: The first Eagle Flight at Massawepie would be held August 16-22, 2009. Scouts serious about advancement, or perhaps "running out of time" to complete required merit badges, were encouraged to apply soon. The program was limited to 40 Scouts, First Class or above, age 13-17. Meetings to start completing merit badge prerequisites would be held starting in April. Bob Cooper was coordinating the program.

In May, troops were reminded that all adult leaders in camp must be registered with the BSA and have completed Youth Protection training in the past two years.

In a new wrinkle on recruiting volunteers to come early to Beaver Weekend (June 5-7), the Properties group was offering a special Thursday dinner: "Texas bar-b-que with brisket, seafood gumbo, and all the 'fixens.'" The hope was to have more volunteer-days to get camp ready for the summer!

Also in June, Ben Geiger started as the new camp ranger. Nate Hill had left earlier in the year, and volunteers had sometimes stayed in the Ranger House during the interim in order to keep an eye on the camp. Ben, who had no previous camp maintenance experience, says,

"I was very lucky to have Larry Boeye and CJ Hinchman here when started on June 15th. Both of them had worked for camp a bunch of summers and had gotten things started for the year. Camp School was in operation, and the camp was full of participants, volunteers, and staff when I moved in on June 12th. Things happened fast and there was a lot to do. I felt like I was constantly being tested. There was a day that the main water line broke, the food delivery truck tore down the phone line, and there was a broken steam kettle at the dining hall. I was

told that the kettle needed to be fixed immediately so that the cook crew could make dinner. I can remember grabbing my tool bag and the torch and saying, 'Show me where the Pioneer dining hall is and point me in the direction of the kettle!' Somehow, I was able to fix it to get it running in time for dinner. That was the tone for the summer. It was survival mode! I took it one problem at a time. I made use of the volunteers and experienced employees that I had and was able to make it through."

Apparently Ben did more than just "make it through," since he is still the Massawepie Property Superintendent as of this writing!

Christielee Geiger, Ben's wife, remembers moving to Massawepie in 2009 from a slightly different perspective:

"2009 at Massawepie: I feel that was the rainforest year! Like 3 days of sun only. SO MANY BUGS! Ben and I moved here officially in June. I think Larry Boeye was his saving grace that year. I worked for him as a Ranger and had a lot of odd jobs from painting, to lawn care. Both of us were more in survival mode that first year. Ben at [age] 23 with this massive new responsibility and myself; I was trying to survive the bugs, rain and then snow. I was out of my comfort zone. We rescued Marley [their long-time dog] in August of that summer and she became a well-loved camp staple [and helped save me]."

Perhaps the highlight of the 2009 camp season was the launch of BarkEater Year 5. Scouts, staff, and leaders who had started working on BarkEater requirements with the program's inception in 2005, and had completed all five years, "earned their teeth." These simulated beaver teeth were tied to and hung below the Year 4 token. While the ceremonies for the candidates for the first four BarkEater years all happened on Friday evening after the campfire, the Year 5 ceremony instead happened in a separate location at the same time as the Thursday evening retreat ceremony and dinner. Those successful Year 5 candidates were recognized in front of the entire camp the next day at a flag ceremony.

Another innovation in 2009 was the creation of branding irons for the various outposts. The switch in 1999 from 7-night camp weeks to 6-night "weeks" meant the loss of "Trail Day" in the middle of the week, so fewer units were now hiking on the trails and spending a night at an outpost. The camp staff had tried several approaches since 1999 to promote more use of the trails and outposts, and the latest idea was that offering the option to brand items with the logo of an outpost that a troop visited would encourage more trail & outpost use.

In 2009, camperships totalling over \$22,000 were awarded to Otetiana Council Scouts to help them attend one of the council camps. To help raise these funds, Kip Palmer had designated the council of the Palmer Food Services Golf Outing that year.

While summer camp was happening in 2009, there was much activity behind the scenes. The Otetiana Council was merging with the Finger Lakes Council. In September, the new Seneca Waterways Council emerged, now with three camps: Massawepie Scout Camps in the Adirondacks, the J. Warren Cutler Scout Reservation in the Bristol Hills, and Camp Babcock-Hovey on Seneca Lake. The challenge now would be to keep all three camps busy enough to justify their existence. (Spoiler alert: That did happen for the next decade.)