

# Mattatuck Messenger



Jean, Beth, Tina, and David Horan July 5, 2000

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Mattatuck Volunteers

Fall, 2000

## C.J. Moon to Receive Silver Beaver Award

Thirty years of dedicated service to Scouting and Camp Mattatuck will be recognized when the Connecticut Rivers Council bestows its highest award to Christopher J. Moon of Naugatuck in October.

Chris Moon first attended camp in 1969, worked as a Counselor in Training in 1970, and joined the staff in 1971. The place hasn't been the same since. Combining unending energy, creativity, and a positive "can-do" attitude, Chris has been instrumental (he refuses to take total credit) in establishing the whitewater, climbing, and COPE programs at Camp Mattatuck. He had stints as Waterfront Director and Program Director before becoming Assistant Camp Director.

"C.J." is involved in all maintenance projects at camp, including Tom's Way, the cook's cabin, Mohawk Cabin, and the amphitheater erosion work. When not working at his gymnastics school, USA Gymnastics, he can be found working at camp. A fixture on National Camping School staff, Chris is also on the committee that established the Rock Climbing Merit Badge, helped write the pamphlet, and trains instructors.

Another "Mattastaffer" receiving the Silver Beaver Award is Charles Doback of Troop 102 Naugatuck. Blue Trail District recipients are District Chairman Bill Fitzpatrick and Troop 59 Scoutmaster Blair Albrecht. The public is invited to attend the annual Scouters Recognition Dinner, to be held October 23 at the Aqua Turf Club in Southington. Contact Connecticut Rivers Council for tickets and information. 860-289-6669.



## WorkDay October 7

Your big chance to lend a hand is Saturday, October 7, when Frank, Chris, Alan, and company will have a list of projects to complete at camp. All materials will be provided, but some tools may be helpful. Among the projects will be: roof and other improvements to Barnum Cabin; landscaping in front of the dining hall and in the amphitheater; and installing new pine siding on the Cook's Cabin. A brief business meeting will also be held. Come on up and join the fun!

## The Lorenz File

*Part 3 of a series from Dick Lorenz, Waterfront Staff, and 1968- '69*

Around this time I find out who the tractor driver with the pipe is. Of course, you know it is Tom. This guy is something else. He knows what goes on in camp. Everything! Everywhere! All the time! I don't know how, but there it is. We see him after prayer bell walking to and through the campsites. In the dark. He knows where all the rocks and logs are, and never trips or stubs a toe. We of the mortal world seem to have trouble even with our 6 mega-watt retina-incinerating flashlights. Does he know we have candles in the tents for light at night? He must. But he doesn't say a word. He has a temper as well. In that regard he is a kindred spirit of mine. However he is more controlled in how he vents than I. I blow up uncontrollably with a loud vociferous display. Tom is different. On one occasion he comes down to the boat docks and watches us (I'm never comfortable with this). After some time he sees something he doesn't like. Now I'm sure, that in the distant future, some archeologist will be digging through the ancient sediment from a lakebed. And he will come across a pipe stem, broken at the end. If he looks harder, about 5 feet away, he will run across the matching pipe bowl. He will wonder what the significance of the fracture is. He won't realize that with no verbal exchange, several young counselors were shown the error of their ways through the breaking and throwing of this appendage into the lake. This technique I employ quite effectively myself in later years, substituting old pencils for the pipe. I go through a lot of pencils.

## A Summer to Remember

*Alan T. Colangelo, Camp Director*



The summer of 2000 was a great year indeed for all scouts, parents, and visitors to Camp Mattatuck. As I watch the trucks carting in rolled canvass tents and tarps, boats being stacked on racks, Trading Post inventory being boxed away, I entertain mixed feelings. I sit here both feeling relieved that a long deserved rest is forth coming, but I also think of the many wonderful things which transpired here within the past few months.

As the summer was drawing near, I worried about being short-staffed. I also had at my disposal a mostly young and inexperienced staff. The staff, led by more experienced department directors, soon laid my worries to rest. This team of young men and women demonstrated so much enthusiasm and energy that the season ran perfectly. I am very proud of the 2000 camp staff and all they did for the more than 1300 scouts whom attended camp this summer. Thank you to all of you.

Summer camp is a magical place where lifetime friendships and memories are made. Over the course of seven weeks I saw many old faces returning to camp for a visit. It was a pleasure to see all of them. Sometimes, that childhood spirit calls back to us and urges us to rekindle our past. One such staff member heard that voice and returned to donate two weeks on the waterfront. To Vince Ferri, I thank you for all of your help this summer and for sharing some of your memories with us. This summer also saw the completion of the late Tom Horan's wish; a simple trail meandering through the woods where scouts could learn about the trees and enjoy Nature's peace and beauty. Tom's family was at the dedication of "Tom's Way", and it was wonderful to have them with us as we did not say a final good-bye, but rather remembered a close friend and mentor whose spirit is still very much a part of us and the camp. For every Scoutmaster I had the pleasure of speaking with this summer, a good comment about the camp and its programs was heard.

I am thankful for the hard work of the camp's staff this year. I am also grateful for the continued support of such close associates and friends. To Bob Herbert, Chris Moon, Rob Reed, and Paul Lukens, thank you for time and energies. Without this team I could not have pulled together as wide of a quality program as was. I would also like to extend my thanks to Joe LeClair, Jr., and the team of volunteers that faithfully supervised the parking lot and traffic each week. You gentlemen put in long hours in sometimes very unfavorable conditions, but it is appreciated greatly. A "thank you" also needs to be extended to Kevin Bishop, Mo Roy, and Tom McMahon. These three gentlemen are the council's executive support staff, and they are a source of guidance for me. I appreciate all their efforts.

Once again, the camp has quieted down and equipment has been bedded down for the coming winter. I look around and hear the stark quiet, but the camp does not lie dormant. Now begins the hard work. There are still many projects to undertake, buildings that need attention, development of new programs, brush clearing and tree work. Its time to roll up our sleeves and pitch in. Mattatuck is doing well at sixty-one. Let's keep working to keep her strong. Thank you all for a great season. Let's make 2001 even better!

***Camp ranger Bob Herbert was back on the job this summer after recuperating from a serious accident on the job this spring. Bob lost some toes but bounced back faster than expected, to serve his 34<sup>th</sup> summer on the job.***

Have a story to tell? Have a suggestion for a future article? Your input into this newsletter is most welcome. Contact Joe LeClair, 108 Chipper Road, Waterbury, CT 06704 [ileclair@snet.net](mailto:ileclair@snet.net).

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to support camp and this newsletter. If you haven't sent a check, it's not too late. You can support our work by sending a contribution to:

**Mattatuck Volunteers  
CT Rivers Council, BSA  
127 Scott Road  
Waterbury, CT 06705**

### Our Talented Staff

As the evening meal concluded the Dabkowski brothers stood in the center of the dining hall, Paul with a guitar and Brian with a mandolin. Breaking into a fast-paced tune, they proceed to take turns *singing* the evening announcements! It's fun, it's lively and quick, and it's effective. The Scouts are hanging on every word. At campfires as many as four musicians would accompany a song such as "Charlie and the MTA".

The Mattatuck staff is loaded with talent. Honor students, musicians, athletes, and outdoorsmen bring skills and enthusiasm to their work. The staff includes over two dozen Eagle Scouts! Our troops benefit from the things that are learned and the example that is set.

## The West Side of Camp

By Joe LeClair



Day Camp Director Karen Pizzano

A Cub Scout Day Camp has been operating at Mattatuck for almost 30 years. The current program runs four one-week sessions each summer.

A typical 9AM to 4PM day at the day camp includes archery, handicraft (tie die, leatherwork, sand art, etc.), swimming, "den time" to work on projects, skits, etc., a bag lunch, a different game each day, B-B gun shooting, and nature. A snack is provided each afternoon.

Nine-year Director Karen Pizzano is assisted by Sandy Starbuck and Holly Healy. They are organized, capable, and enthusiastic about their work. They really love the kids and it shows.



During my day at the camp what stood out was how calm and orderly the one hundred or so seven to nine-year-old fireballs were. The program is well organized. The boys are kept busy, but at a reasonable pace. The programs, geared toward the age group, are spaced out on the west side of camp. Enough time is allotted to enjoy each activity and travel to the next

without rushing. Close supervision is provided by at least two adults per den of six to eight boys. Leaders' younger children can participate in the "Pixie" program.

The center of operations is the large pavilion that fills the old 49'ers campsite. Not only does it provide the entire group protection from sun and rain; it houses an office, storage space, and flush toilets. Two nearby cabins serve as a nature center and a trading post.



Karen's greatest challenge is finding staff. Thankfully, she has received great assistance from volunteers who run the various program areas. Some spend a week, some spend all four. Karen also is thankful for the excellent support she receives from Alan Colangelo and the Scout staff. In fact, they work so well together that following her four weeks of Cub Camp Karen served as Boy Scout Camp nurse for the final week.

Mattatuck is indeed a "reservation", with two successful programs running simultaneously. Our Cub Scouts receive a terrific introduction to camp life thanks to Karen Pizzano and her staff.

### Leadership and Understanding

*From Scoutmaster Handbook 1981*

- Use boys for control as much as possible. Get everybody used to the idea they get their cues from boy leaders.
- Use the patrol leaders council for serious infractions. They usually can decide how to handle a problem as well as or better than you. But they will need your guidance.
- Address them as "Scouts" rather than "boys". There's a difference and they need to be reminded.
- Keep your voice down. Try to out-shout them, and you will lose. Use silent signals. Avoid public discipline of individuals. They may welcome the attention they get, or they may be hurt by being made a spectacle. Talk to boys in private when there are problems. *(today this would be reworded to "talk to the individual boy when there are problems, out of earshot of others, but not in private")*
- Give and demand respect for all leaders. Formality is in order for all ceremonies and inspections. Don't keep boys standing in formation any longer than necessary and they will pay attention to what leaders have to say.
- Treat boys equally. Any favoritism you show will be noticed.
- Avoid threats. They are easy to make when you are hot, but not so easy to carryout when you have cooled off. Beware of making threats you do not intend to carry out.
- Don't be afraid of sending someone home who is disrupting the program for others. Let him know he is welcome back when he is better able to cooperate. Call his parents and tell them why you sent him home.
- Recognize that every boy who does something disruptive is in some way trying to meet a need of his own: recognition, acceptance, or something else. Try to find better ways for boys to meet their needs.

## Where is He Now? Vincent Ferri



I have just spent two weeks reliving my life of thirty years ago on the Camp Mattatuck waterfront staff. Chris Moon has asked me to write a little piece about my experience to share with my fellow alumni. I have agreed to do this on the condition that my contribution not be glorified in any way, but rather act as a catalyst for any of you who, upon reading this, may have an inclination to do the same.

When I left the Camp Staff and active Scouting, I always thought that I would repay the debt for my own terrific experience by becoming a Scoutmaster when I had my own children. As the demands of my corporate career increased, I realized that I could never be a Scoutmaster, but convinced myself that I would become an Assistant Scoutmaster or an active Committeeman. I have been blessed with two boys (15 & 16) and a daughter (11) who became very active in sports and never entered Scouting. As a result, even though my strength had been working with the kids, I never did anything on the troop level. Although I made financial contributions to my troop and to Camp, I always carried this burden with me.

In 1988, when I still lived in Connecticut, Tommy Horan asked me to serve as Chairman of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee when Bob Capaldo had to give it up. It was a great group spanning nearly all of the decades of Camp Staff. When this was over, I faded from existence again until I came back for the testimonial dinner for Tom in 1997. That was the last time I saw him. I had drifted so far from Camp and Scouting, I didn't even know he was ill. Another piece of baggage!

When I received my invitation for the 60<sup>th</sup> last year, I decided to go, if only to pay my last respects to Tom. I also wanted to spend some time with my good buddy, Greg Gubitosi, with whom I reunited at Tom's 1997 dinner and, of course, had never spoken to since. Since I knew Greg was a teacher, I asked him what he did in the summer. When he told me he was the Archery Director at Camp and had been so for the last 5 years, he nearly had to pick me up off the ground.

This time, through the magic of e-mail, Greg and I stayed in touch. He invited me to join him on Staff this summer and I accepted. Since I didn't know Camp Director Al Colangelo all that well, I asked Greg to pave the way. I felt that the last thing Al needed or wanted were unknown alumni coming back from Tommy's era while he was establishing himself as the new Camp Director. When Al and I finally spoke, he said he had needs for the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> weeks. I committed for Waterfront for the 5<sup>th</sup> week, as it was familiar territory.

As the day for departure arrived, you'd have thought it was my first year as a camper. Al said I needed the Class A uniform for flag lowering and dinner. Without even looking, I ordered new shorts. I was sure that my shirts would still fit—till I started trying them on. Who was I kidding? Finally, I concluded that with a car, credit cards, and ATM's everywhere, I did not have to be as self-contained as I was years ago. While making the three-hour drive from Long Island, I began to prepare my mindset.

Who was this person returning to Camp and how should he interface with fifty people who had no idea who he was? After all, a whole generation had passed since he stood watch on the old metal T-Dock and ran campfires in the amphitheater. I did not want to be regarded as an "old timer". On the other hand, I accepted that I was no longer twenty-one. I decided that the best role to assume was that of a first-year staff member and to do whatever was asked of me (My own staff and colleagues in the office would later howl in disbelief—but that's another story!). This was the smartest thing I could have done since it forced me to earn the respect of the current Camp Staff, rather than trade on my past accomplishments. I also purged "When I was on Camp Staff, we used to do it this way" from my vocabulary. The expression "Camp is still the same, only different" is very true. If you cannot accept this, you will never have as fulfilling an experience as I had.

Now that I was mentally prepared, I missed the exit off Route 8 for Camp (the Drive-in screens are still there, but Scotty's has changed hands) but arrived just in time for the Sunday morning staff meeting. First wonderful change—Camp closes at 10:30AM on Saturday and the Staff returns at 10:30AM on Sunday. Everybody gets a weekend day off!!!

As we ate lunch following a 1½-hour work detail in pouring rain, Chris Moon said he would introduce me to the staff as part of his announcements. I began to think of something profound to say. Totally unnecessary. With an "I'd like to introduce Vince Ferri who worked here on Camp Staff a number of years ago----actually before Rob Reed was born!!!", Chris broke all of the ice. I stood up for my applause and in a nanosecond, Week 5 had begun and we all scurried to assume our respective responsibilities—in more pouring rain!



(*"Where is He Now? cont'd from Page 4)*

A critical factor in making this experience work was Brian Dabkowski, the current Waterfront Director. Until, including, and after I ran the Waterfront, I always felt that a little ego was necessary to succeed in the position. Therefore, I made it very clear to Brian at the outset that it was his Waterfront and I was only there to help in any way that I could. Mature beyond his 21 years, Brian graciously accepted all the help he could get this summer and successfully integrated more than 30 of us (permanent and part-time) in staffing the Waterfront.

Greg said it would take only 2 days to feel like I was back in Camp. Try one! By Monday's lunch, most of the rust was off. By Tuesday, I had won Brian's confidence and had pretty much assumed responsibility for the Beginners' instructional periods. By Wednesday, Chris was passing on some positive feedback. By Thursday, we had only 7 Beginners left in Camp. On Friday evening before I left, three different 1<sup>st</sup> year Campers came up separately to ask me to join them at their troop campfires. The final tug on my heartstring came as I said good-bye to Brian. "Good-bye??? You're coming back for the 7<sup>th</sup> week, aren't you???"

As I drove home, I kept thinking "the 7<sup>th</sup> week. Hmm. One of the best in Camp." I spoke with my wife, my staff, and my boss-- all of whom thought I looked like I had just returned from the Twilight Zone. I had a really bad case of Camp Mattatuck Fever and, of course, came back for the 7<sup>th</sup>.

Okay, now for some of the changes in no particular order. No Saturday night campfires and no Scotty's. No Campsites on the West side of the lake. A separate and very active Cub Scout beach just beyond the historical swimming area. Nearly six active sailboats (if any of you have one that you would like to donate, contact Chris.) The old metal canoes are still there. However, the real activity is with fun yaks, kayaks, some nice Old Towne ABS Canoes. There is a three-hour whitewater adventure on Friday mornings. The greased watermelon game has given way to water polo. The metal T-dock is gone. Everybody uses PFD's. No staff swim. Lot's more opportunities for hot showers-even in the Campsites.

There are a few Port-a-Potties in camp. No church services on Sunday mornings. "Non-swimmers" are now called "Learners" and I only had one in two weeks. Women on staff in addition to the nurse. Female troop leaders. Not necessary for Beginners to know all four strokes to become a "Swimmer". PC's in the office and a Camp Mattatuck website. CIT's are now called Frontier Scouts. Stereo system in the amphitheater. The amphitheater is the same size and now looks as permanent as it will ever be. Salad bars at every lunch and dinner. Excellent food. Nurses rotate on a weekly basis. Handicraft Lodge is now the Ranger's workshop. There are many more, but they are all subtle and consistent with the evolution of Camp and Scouting over the last thirty years.

I could go on, but let me close by saying that I am renewed in knowing that I was able to give something back and that I can still connect with the kids. As an adult, I can now appreciate how profound an influence the Scouting program has had on our development. I am thankful to many for allowing me to have had this experience. I can only hope that it will become an annual event for me and, perhaps, you. After all, my fellow alumni, we're not that old and we still have plenty to give.



#### **Mattatuck Volunteers Officers**

(elected May 7, 2000)

**Frank Rodrigues, Chairman**

**Paul Lukens, Vice-Chairman/Treasurer**

**Robert Reed, Secretary**

## **Scoutcraft Corner...**

### ***Internal or External?***

When purchasing a new backpack Scouts and Scouters are faced with the question of which style to choose, the traditional external frame pack or the more trendy internal frame pack. The answer, as with most questions, is "it all depends".

The internal frame pack carries the load close to your center of gravity, providing better balance. Most have compression straps so that as you consume food, your pack can get smaller. The internal frame pack is ideal for skiing, climbing, bushwhacking, and canoeing.

The external frame pack provides an air space between you and the backpack, so it is cooler to carry in warm weather. While more cumbersome than the internal frame, it carries a large load more comfortably. In general, external frame packs have more compartments.

The bottom line...if you expect to do a lot of skiing, climbing or bushwhacking, choose the internal frame. If trail hiking is your thing, stick with the traditional frame pack.



After a cold, wet August, the final day of camp was cool, clear, and dry, with almost no wind. It was a perfect evening for the final campfire. Chris Moon led the classic "The Cat Came Back". "The Conquistadors" played guitar and mandolin to back up Brian Dabkowski's leading of "Charlie and the MTA". Elio Gugliotti taught the parents some beautiful songs while the Scouts got in position for the torchlight parade.

The stars overhead competed with the activities that took place on the lake. We even spotted a couple of shooting stars during the program. With the theme from "Robin Hood" providing a fitting backdrop, the Scouts proudly marched in with their torches. I forgot just how long the procession was with over 200 Scouts taking part. The canoe rosettes were flawless. Order of the Arrow Chief Matthew Plourde, playing Chief Tobe, showed guts (and confidence in the paddler) by standing on the center thwart, gunwale high, as he was transported from the island to the diving platform. He then handed the birch log to Ranger Bob Herbert, representing the camp being placed back in his hands.

The final campfire was a fitting conclusion to a very smooth season in a very well-run camp. Congratulations to all who made the seven weeks a huge success.



Climbing Merit Badge

*Printing donated by the Elm Press, Inc. of Thomaston, CT and Mailing Operations donated by Accurate Mailing Services of Waterbury, CT*

**Mattatuck Volunteers  
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*News from Camp Mattatuck for:*

<http://matwreck.org/mattatuck/>