

Mattatuck Messenger



Winter 2004-05

No.16

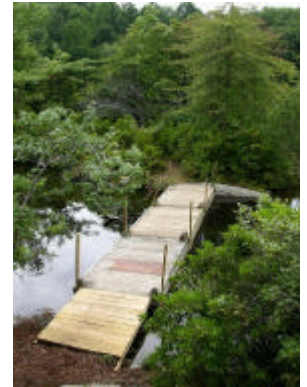
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More Improvements in 2004 !



Camp Director Chris Moon never sits still. With help from a band of dedicated staff members and Mattatuck Volunteers he continues to improve upon the physical amenities at camp without jeopardizing its rustic flavor. The most impressive addition to the camp is the new colossal climbing wall, ideally situated just past the picnic grove overlooking the lake. This five-sided 40' tall structure offers real challenge to our young climbers. It features a chimney, 3 overhangs, a crack climb and 2 helix walls plus secure storage for the equipment. The roof is planned to be installed this spring and summer. Once a Scout reaches the top he can look out over the lake, with the embankment giving extra sense of height. This wall will be available year-round to qualified groups.



As seen on the right Scouts can once again explore the "2nd Island", via a floating bridge installed in 2004.

Last year's "Waterfront Hospitality Center" (foot washing station) was such a hit Jon Andrew, Matt Downey, and company built a similar one for the boating area. Tucked away across the road at the wood's edge, the center does not distract from the view of the lake while offering a very worthy service for our Scouts.

A Scout Salute to Troop 5 of Middlebury who built and installed over 200 signs for camp. The signs direct visitors to the various campsites and cabins around camp. They did a very thorough, professional job! Thank you Troop 5!

During the final week at camp a concrete slab was poured at the Cub Scout Day Camp pavilion. A large heavy-duty charcoal stove will be installed on the slab, similar to those at Mohawk Cabin and the Rotary Dining Lodge.

Storage sheds now stand at Nature, Archery, Rifle, Scoutcraft, and boating areas. Not only do the sheds make storage more organized and closer to the action, it makes some program materials readily available if needed for off-season use. Remember how everything was stuffed under Tuttle Lodge? No more!

For more on projects, turn to page 4

We're back!

The last newsletter published was No.15, October, 2003. It was e-mailed to subscribers of the electronic mailing list, but was not printed in hard copy. Issue No. 15 featured articles on wildlife at Mattatuck, wooden boats and canoes, Camp Tadmor, and the bugle that disappeared in the lake in 1969.

If you would like to receive a copy of No.15, just log on to our website for an instant color copy, or send a Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope to: Joe LeClair, 11 Altair Ave., Plymouth, CT 06782.

Monahan and Reed Honored by Council

Bruce Monahan of Naugatuck and Robert Reed of Terryville received the Silver Beaver Award October 18 at the annual Connecticut Rivers Council Scouters Recognition Dinner. The Silver Beaver Award, first presented in 1930, is the highest honor a local council can bestow on an individual.



Monahan (shown at left climbing a tree he's about to cut) is an Assistant Scoutmaster in Troop 102, Naugatuck. This 35-year veteran was a Webelos Leader, Troop Committee Chairman, Order of the Arrow Chapter Advisor and Takachsin Training staff member. He led six trips to Philmont Scout Ranch, one to the Florida Sea Base, and to the 1981 National Jamboree. Bruce is an active member of the Mattatuck Volunteers.

The last three camp directors credited part of their success to having Rob Reed (right) helping to run the business side of camp. Rob, a leader of Troop 75 Terryville for 20 years, is currently the Scoutmaster, and serves as Treasurer of the Mattatuck Volunteers. He led two treks to Philmont and has served on the national training staff for climbing.



Farewell Blue Trail

In an effort to reduce costs the Connecticut Rivers Council has re-aligned its twelve districts into eight. For instance, the old Blue Trail District has been disbanded, with most towns merging with the old Tunxis District to form the new "Northwest Hills District". The remaining towns, Middlebury and Watertown, moved over to join the old Mattatuck District's towns to form the "Mad River District". Roland Miller is Chairman of the Northwest Hills District and former Mattatuck Volunteers Chairman Frank Rodrigues is Chairman of the Mad River District.

Blue Trail was a small district with the reputation for strong fund raising efforts, excellent activities, and well-trained leaders. It served as training ground for many newly hired executives.

Let's hope the best of what each district had to offer is blended to make Scouting even stronger in Connecticut Rivers Council.

OA Chapter Split

With the re-alignment of the districts it was inevitable that our OA Chapter would be split and organized along district lines. The Mattatuck Chapter is now smaller, having lost most of the troops from the former Blue Trail District. Our Chapter Advisor, Blair Albrecht, moves to the Northwest Hills District. David Talmadge of Wolcott has taken over as Mattatuck Chapter Advisor. Current Chief is Mike Casey of Waterbury.

Trailblazer
Richard Giacin

By Bruce Wayne

While picking mushrooms along a roadside in Florida years ago my buddy Ray said to his family friend Dick Giacin, "Uncle Dick, that sign says 'Private Property'". Peering over the top of his glasses Dick replied, "Sonny boy, those are some of the best places". Perhaps what we liked best about Dick was that he was this saintly old sage with a streak of the devil in him. Like Huckleberry Finn in a Santa Claus suit, he was good at Scouting because he never forgot what it was like to be a boy, perhaps because even at his advanced age he was still a boy at heart. You never knew what was going to come out of his mouth or out the back of his blue van, which was stuffed with gadgets.



To be a construction foreman fifty years ago you had to be tough or smart. Dick was both. Yet this gruff burly man had a soft spot for kids.. Wherever Dick went children called him Santa and were drawn to him. He'd ask, "Did you like the doll I brought you last year?" or "Did you like that truck I brought you?" (of course, every little girl got a doll and every boy got a truck). Dick played Santa at many charity functions, and was even transported to Lake Quassapaug Amusement Park in a helicopter on at least on occasion. He played the part well and loved the attention and the happiness it brought the children.

The summer of 1973 Dick Giacin and Joe George started their volunteer service to the summer camp program. They lived in Pershing Cabin and did everything from make toast in the dining hall to cut grass. After a few years the lawns got looking better and better. (The toast stayed the same.) Dick counseled Fishing Merit Badge in the afternoon. On weekends and Wednesdays the dynamic duo commanded the parking lot. It started out as an Order of the Arrow project but soon evolved into a Giacin-George-LeClair project.

Well into his 60's and 70's Dick could work a teenager into the ground. He was strong, inventive, and efficient. There was rarely a wasted motion when he worked. Did I mention strong? He was powerful.

Nobody generated more laughter in camp, or dried more tears, than Dick Giacin. One of Dick's prime duties was to convert homesick Scouts in to happy Scouts. This was usually done by bringing the boy out fishing in a boat, and getting the kid a good-sized fish. Few Scouts were disappointed, because Dick knew where all the fish lived.

In winter Dick would travel from cabin to cabin, dressed in a bright red plaid wool jacket and inflatable "Mickey Mouse" boots, which he purchased for his winter fishing trips to Lake Champlain. At the cabins Dick would break out a box of games and stunts to fascinate the Scouts. He was at camp almost every weekend.

Back in 1981 it was time to pick a name for the new camp support group we were forming. With tongue in cheek someone suggested "The Sons of Dick Giacin". We all laughed, but it would have been an appropriate name. We all followed him like sons and when the new group, called the Mattatuck Volunteers took on the massive amphitheater project as its first job, Dick was the glue that kept the group together and kept us going. The peninsula between the diving boards and the boat docks, a popular fishing spot, is named "Giacin Point" to honor our dear friend.

At the 2004 Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Rivers Council the Mattatuck Volunteers were thanked and recognized for outstanding service to Scouting and Camp Mattatuck.

In Memoriam Robert Griffin

In the same year that we lose the Blue Trail District, we had to say goodbye to one of its strongest supporters, Mr. Robert Griffin of Woodbury. A tireless fundraiser and leader, Mr. Griffin served as District Chairman and as President of the old Mattatuck Council.

Among his many contributions to Scouting is Griffin Cottage, the camp director's home at Camp Mattatuck. Mr. Griffin passed away in September, 2004.

Projects *(continued from page 1)*

An update from Camp Director Christopher J. Moon...

- In the fall, we installed the two grills at the pavilion in Memory of Paul Lukens, the late Scoutmaster of Troop 5, Middlebury and Order of the Arrow Chapter Advisor.
- The volunteers paid for a heater in the Dining Hall kitchen. Installed by Matt Downey and Ralph Grondin, it will make winter events like Klondike Derbies much easier to serve food and clean up.
- Vin Ferry bought two rowboats for camp and the council bought 4 more, so we will have 6 new Starcraft boats thanks them as well as some generous help from Norman's Marine in West Hartford.
- Members of the Mattatuck Volunteers staffed the Christmas tree farm and took in over \$2000 which will go towards more new trees as well as equipment to further improve the tree farm.

Memories of the Viking Patrol

As a Scout in the 1930's my dad was in the Fox Patrol, and that patrol stayed in existence all the way until 1963, two years before I became a Boy Scout. The Patrol Leader in 1963 was named Nathaniel Ericson, so naturally the boys decided to change the patrol name to "Viking". One of the dads made a beautiful metal spike and had it chrome plated. The spike's hollow end fit perfectly on a rubber bicycle handle that stood at the top of our patrol flag staff. Each week we took that point off the pole, stored it in a special cloth bag, and brought it home for safe keeping. The troop collected 10-cents a week for dues at that time, but the Vikings collected 15-cents. The extra nickel was recorded carefully in a patrol logbook and the coins went in a cloth bag. When the next camping trip came around the weekly dues was used to offset food costs.

We were very competitive; much more than the Scouts I know today. Our chief rival was the Eagle Patrol, and the two groups usually battled for the lead in everything. At the 1967 Mattatuck Council Show at the Bethlehem Fairgrounds our troop demonstrated dutch oven cooking. During the Eagle's watch the charcoal got to it's peak temperature, was fanned by a steady breeze, and melted the bottoms out of our cast aluminum ovens! The molten aluminum flowed like lava, and the Vikings got a good laugh out of it.

Despite our rivalry, the Eagles and Vikings went on two winter hikes together in consecutive winters. We walked from our homes several miles, met at the trailhead, hiked three miles into the woods, ate lunch, played a form of hockey with sticks and cans on a frozen swamp, and returned home sopping wet, cold, and tired. On one of the hikes I fell so many times on the slick trails I broke two thermos bottles. There was no adult supervision and no Tour Permit, but somehow we survived.

**Mattatuck Volunteers
Officers 2003-2005**

**Chairman: Joseph Gannon
Vice Chairman: Jonathan Andrew
Treasurer: Robert Reed
Secretary: Pat Sheridan**

***Membership meeting Election of Officers
Sunday, May 1st
1:30PM Camp Mattatuck***

Contact Nominating Committee Chairman Tim Martin (860-274-1174) if you have any suggestions.

Have a story to tell? Have a suggestion for a future article? Your input into this newsletter is most welcome. Contact Joe LeClair, 11 Altair Avenue, Plymouth, CT 06782 ileclair@snet.net. Visit our website, built and maintained by Marc Moody... <http://matwreck.org/volunteers>

Printing and mailing operations donated by Elm Press, Inc. which recently moved to Plymouth, CT



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News from Camp Mattatuck for: