

“Triumphant Return”

Kia Kima Trek 1952

Umpy Osborn, OLE 97 Eagle Scout 1954

Through all ages man has had his triumphant returns.

This thought brings to mind Kia Kima's triumphant returns of the many treks led by their fearless trek masters. Starting with the first trek masters Jim McWhorter and Dorris Goodman in 1951 and the last trek master Steve Horne in 1958. Many a tale has been told of their strength and stamina such as McWhorter taking a 30 pound cast iron grill strapped to his back pack and Horne hiking 50 miles in one day leaving his crew of marines far behind eating his dust.

My third week at camp in 1952 I turned 14; I was old enough to take a trek. The trek my cousin, Kent Osborn, and I took was led by Gordon “Scotty” Monteath. We would depart camp Monday morning and return on Friday at noon.

Monday after breakfast we loaded our packs into our canoes and were off up river to Slick Rock Outpost. I think there were 4 or 5 canoes in the convoy, two guys in each canoe. Kent and I were the only 97 guys. One of our friends on this trek was David Tillinghast. He was a lot of fun and we stayed close the entire trip. Whenever we saw an interesting place to swim we would take a dip. For the entire trip we saw no houses or other boats on the river. The only other people we saw were two young boys fishing from the river bank. The only sounds were from our paddles and bird calls..

That night we ate with the Slick Rock boys and slept under the stars. Morning came early and we were hiking out of the river valley before the morning mist burned away. Our destination was Humphrey's Ford which was, I think, about 15 miles away. Our route started with Nine- Mile Ridge Road and wound through miles of rough outback gravel roads. I remember seeing only four or five houses the entire day. The intense Arkansas sun had its way with us, and we had to take frequent stops to cool down and rest. The Spring River valley was a welcome site. We set up camp at the edge of the meadow at Humphrey's Ford about one-fourth mile from the Spring River. We spent the rest of the afternoon swimming in the freezing water.

Tuesday night we had a nice campfire, cooked our trail pack food and had a good time together. Scotty told us he heard there was a spring somewhere on White Horse Mountain which he hoped we could locate. We would leave Thursday for White Horse in hopes we could find the spring. We stayed two nights at this campsite at Humphrey's Ford.

Wednesday I awoke at first light. The river mist was thick and you could hear the river flowing over the rapids at the ford. The ford was a one lane concrete road completely covered by about one foot of water. As I walked down the road toward

the river I saw an old rusty hay rake out in the field on the left side of the road. I walked over and climbed into the metal seat and sat there listening to the morning sounds and thinking about how much I had enjoyed being in troop 97 and being at Kia Kima. When the sun was up I looked for arrowheads until it was time to head back to our campsite and help with breakfast.

Late Wednesday afternoon a terrible thunder cloud started forming and we moved all of our camp gear into an old hay barn about one-fourth mile south of our camp. It got darker and the wind started blowing. Scotty was concerned about lightning so we moved to the middle of the meadow and into the lowest spot we could find. We lay on the ground and watched a strong storm with lots of lightening pass near by us. We only had a small amount of rain and by this time it was almost dark. We cooked our trail pack near the barn and stayed the night in the hay loft and had a good nights sleep.

Thursday morning we broke camp and headed for White Horse. We reached the plum thicket before lunch. It was another hot steamy day with temperatures at or above 100. After lunch and another rest Scotty reminded us about the spring. Kent and I checked the woods to the east of the old house site. We went down a little below the ridge and started walking around the valley parallel to the ridge. We soon saw what appeared to be a faint trail coming down the steep slope. We followed the path into a small depression and there was our spring. A rusty pipe was stuck into the ground near some rocks and a steady stream of cold, clear water was splattering on a flat rock below. Now we knew there was a spring on White Horse Mountain. This was something good for trek masters to know.

Friday morning we headed to main camp. It would be nice to be back in camp, to take a shower and most of all have another meal in our old wooden mess hall with the huge wood stove and the steep wooden steps to the wood pile below. No doubt there would be stories told about our trek and be meshed together with thousands of events and ultimately molded into what we call the Sprit of Kia Kima.

Another Kia Kima Trek would have its "triumphant return". Stories would be told and shared. We would proudly declare that White Horse Spring does exist. It was our turn to seize the moment.

Neither Kent nor I ever took another trek. Next summer we would serve on the 1953 Kia Kima staff together.

This story is dedicated to the memory of Dorris Goodman a great Scout! He was the second Eagle Scout in Ole 97 and a decorated med-o-vak helicopter pilot in Vietnam. Dorris died October 1, 1997 after suffering a heart attack at the OKKPA reunion at Hardy, Arkansas, while on a canoe trip down the Spring River. He was my friend and hero.

Audrey "Umpy" Osborn - February 9, 2006