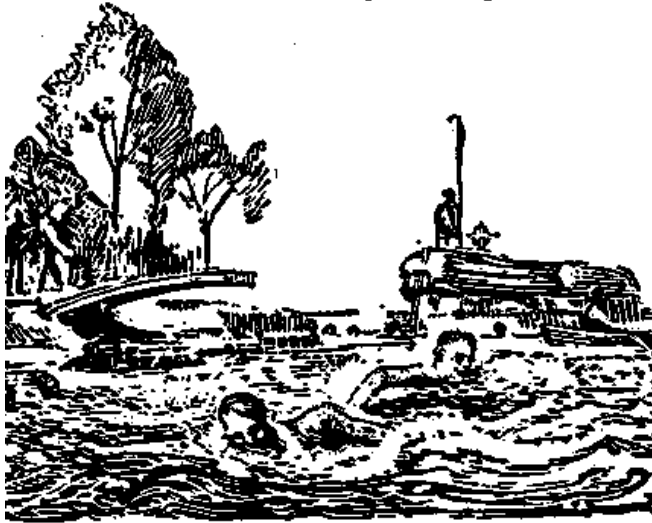


1948 - Kamp Kia Kima

Reopened by George Billingsley, 48-51

At the request of some of you I will attempt to reconstruct some of the beginning phases of the re-opening of Kia Kima in the summer of 1948. As you have already noted in your news letters Kia Kima had been a Memphis Council Camp in the 20's and the 30's and it operated up until 1941. At the start of WW2 it closed. At the urging of many ex-campers, still active in Memphis Scouting, Kia Kima was then re-opened in '48.



the affirmative and looked forward to the '48 season for which I was ill prepared. Mize continued to recruit others to serve and was asking at the same time of anyone that we felt like would serve as counselors. I recommended, and he hired the following; Miles "Bubba

A Scout Executive by the name of Haskell Mize had been selected by the Chief Scout Executive, Gordon Morris, to be that first director of Kia Kima. I had met Mize at Camp Courier in the mid '40's while he was director at Courier and was somewhat surprised and pleased when he contacted me in '47 and asked that I be the waterfront director in the forthcoming '48 camping season. I was 19 years old at that time and a college student but immediately answered in the affirmative and looked forward to the '48 season for which I was ill prepared. Mize continued to recruit others to serve and was asking at the same time of anyone that we felt like would serve as counselors. I recommended, and he hired the following; Miles "Bubba Moose" Erwin, who became my assistant waterfront director even though he was much more qualified than I was; Jack Dallas, an old time friend from Troop 68, to be the Mess Sergeant. And Bubba Erwin referred me to Harold Ellis who I quickly found respect for and recommended him highly. Harold Ellis became a counselor of many faces serving waterfront activities, crafts and was also the camp doctor.

Mize continued to recruit and secured the following that I am sure of - One Pat Bohan from Collierville whom I had known at Courier for many years as an outstanding counselor and had recently returned from service. Harry Ward Estes was asked to serve in activities and be the archery instructor. Dorris Goodman who was also to serve under Pat in activities but proved to be very

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tor. **Dorris Goodman** who was also to serve under Pat in activities but proved to be very versatile in other capacities as well. **Jim McWhorter** was to be the nature counselor and to be very versatile in other capacities as well. McWhorter was to be the nature counselor and to head up outside expeditions. I believe that was a total of 9 counselors and shortly thereafter, for some reason that I am not aware, Mize became disassociated with the Chickasaw Council. In a surprise the Council was able to



acquire from Knoxville, TN Tweed Johnson who in my estimation, became the solid foundation upon which the New Kia Kima was to grow. Tweed and his wife, Kathleen, were what every counselor dreams about when they dream of an ideal camp director. Please understand that at 19 years of age I was one of the younger members of the staff. Several of those mentioned, such as Erwin, Bohan, Ellis and Dallas were all veterans and not desirous of any strict regimented routines for counselors (bed checks, etc.). Tweed understood boy - girl relationships and quickly urged us to develop strong relationships with counselors at Meramichoe and Kiwani. Prior to the opening of camp, Miles Erwin and I were sent to Ponotoc, MS for an Aquatic Training School for future waterfront counselors. This school

was conducted by Captain Fred C. Mills who was a founding father for the underwater demolition units of the U.S. Navy and was a legend in water safety throughout the world. Miles and I were at this camp for a week or so and came away expecting an enormous and fruitful summer.

I had dropped out of college in the spring of '48 to have an eye operation and Miles had dropped school for a semester in order to work on the railroad, so, we were free to attend these training schools as well as to make several inspection trips to Kia Kima in March and April of '48. I note that you think the facilities and cabins at Kia Kima now are in horrible condition. Please be aware that in 1948 the camp had been closed for some 8 seasons and it wasn't exactly ready to step into at that time either. So, consequently, we had our hands full. Gordon Morris, The Chief Executive, and several council members came up on weekends while Miles, Harold Ellis and myself were working full time (with no pay) and had the support of the camp ranger, Edgar Morgan. The full staff reported several weeks before camp opened in an attempt to ready the premises for the arrival of what we thought would be a large group of campers. On opening Saturday the entire staff went to the depot in Hardy to meet the arrivals and were pretty well shocked to find that we had as many staff members as we had campers. If memory serves me right, 9 campers came in for the first week. One or two had parents who brought them up by automobile which was a pretty serious journey from Memphis as there were no hard surfaced roads after you left Imboden. As the camping season grew, we finally began to have an increased interest and enthusiasm in Memphis and Eastern Arkansas for more Scouts to come. The original plan had been that only 14 year and older boys could attend. So consequently, there was very little baby sitting as you were dealing with some fairly mature Scouts. Later on the seasoned Troop 59 under Miller Huckabee and his North Memphis Troop of really tough guys and Buddy Erwin, Scout master of Troop 97 and his South Memphis group of toughies showed up with 30 or 40 boys each and our camp capacity of some 80 or 90 was reached. Those two troops, 97 and 59, proved to be a tremendous boost to our program as well as furnishing many future counselors for Kia Kima. Troop 34 under Alvin Tate also furnished a great many outstanding campers for us during the course of the summer. Several stayed with us for the entire season and were responsible for a "togetherness" that we could build a future on.

Some of the first '48 campers that I recall out of the many are such kids as **Charles "Fat Pat" Patton, Sandy Hayes, Gibby McSpadden, Cohen Oswalt, Bobby Pleasant, Bobby Harriss and Bobby Williams.** These Scouts proved to be a real backbone especially in our waterfront activities and the outreach programs. Many served on the staff in later years. Of course one cannot overlook two outstanding campers of that first season who later on became legends of Kia Kima. They were **Lou Pritchett and Jimmy Boggs.** Those two came up with Buddy Erwin's Troop 97 as campers but were so outstanding as entertainers during campfires and other programs that, at the insistence of the entire staff, Tweed Johnson took the responsibility of providing food and lodging for those two to stay on after their troop had left the camp for the summer. Lou and Boggs became the fire builders and K.P. for the mess hall. The cooking and water heating for that mess hall in those days was all done by wood fire boxes and was really a dirty job. But Lou and Boggs approached it with a cheerful, fun attitude and consequently earned their way into a memory not to be forgotten in Kia Kima Legacy. Later on in '49 & '50 Lou worked for me on the waterfront and Boggs served in other capacities on the years that he could come.

One of the great benefits that we were allowed as staff was to plan our activities without following any strict guidelines. Example - -The Waterfront Staff successfully installed a canoeing instruction period which was so intense that by the end of a

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week's session any camper staying over for the second week would be entitled to join in a trip to Mammoth Springs by canoe, spend the night and paddle back the following day. Today this type of trip I am sure would be considered out of the question being much too strenuous for even older scouts. However, we felt that it was excellent training exercise and certainly brought a much stronger togetherness feeling within our group. Also we often took joint trips with Meramichée and some of those extended as far south as Willford, AR.

I'm sure I have left out a great deal and especially regret the many names that memory does not recall at this time. Hope this has helped straighten out some errors concerning the start up of a new Kia Kima

I note in the July Newsletter a letter from John Ozier where he speaks of *why we hold Kia Kima so dearly*. I have given the subject a great deal of thought for several years. My reasons are very simple. Most of us came from good homes and good parents. However, parents who could not offer or give what today would be considered mandatory. "Too many mouths to feed and too little to do it with." Consequently, KK offered an escape to a different world. A world where we didn't feel "without." But a world where we could excel and be recognized for any small talent we may have possessed. KK was a place where if one gave and shared his gifts and talents with others he was rewarded and recognized beyond all expectations. The more seasons one stayed, the more one grew and believed in himself and his fellow staff members. When you returned to the city and its environment it seemed artificial. Your "old" friends became almost strangers. You were convinced the real people were KK and the real place was Kia Kima. George Billingsley One Chelsea Bella Vista, AR 72714