

“What Goes Around, Comes Around”

By Jim Moore, Ole 97 Eagle Scout

This “*Remember When*” story is about my good friend Mike York from Troop Ole 97, and why he deserves recognition for his quick actions years ago!

The story begins when Mike and I were serving on the Camp Currier “Waterfront Staff” the summer of 1958. We were, in fact, the only “Staff” there, so we were feeling quite “self important”. Our main duties were to insure that the camp swimming pool always had the right chlorine content for health reasons, and was always ready for “free swim use” (under our Lifeguard watchfulness), if a troop was scheduled in camp, (which occurred mainly on the weekends – and, as it turned out, infrequently at that).

Life was good, and as kids would say today, we were “living large”! However, with more “time off” than “time on” we quickly grew bored and frequently rode on Mike’s Vesper style Allstate motor scooter the approximate 50 mile round trip from South Memphis. Our Scout Master Buddy Irwin had helped us get this paying “Lifeguard” job for the summer, and I think that we earned about \$10 per week. We “prepared” (ugh) our own meals, and stayed in one of the many Troop cabins, choosing the one nearest the pool. As I recall, with gas under 25 cents/gallon, Mike’s scooter would get us there and back for about 25 cents! As an aside, during the course of our friendship, I logged many a mile on the buddy seat behind Mike on that magic carpet scooter. With the wind and sun on my face, for me each ride was a metaphor for freedom, producing memories I cherish even today.

I always looked up to Mike, he was a very good friend, and we held in common many miles packed tightly in the back of Buddy’s pickup truck to countless Scouting explorations in Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi, and Western Tennessee. We loved those trips, and when we took the Currier Staff jobs, we knew it meant that we would miss this year’s trip to Hardy and camp Kia Kima – it was almost the reason that we considered backing out on the front end of the job, and the main reason that we looked for and found a “graceful out” on the back end.

The summer program at Currier ended earlier than originally planned (oh happy days) and we suddenly found that we could go to Kia Kima with the Troop after all! After much scrambling to get signed up, packed up, and off to Hardy, we were on our way. As was Buddy’s custom, we had activities planned a few days before we were due in camp. For the older boys, that meant a canoe trip on the Spring River from it’s source at Mammoth Springs in Missouri, down to “Y” Falls near Hardy. I only remember three people who were on that trip, but there were many more. However, I will never forget Kent Osborn (Umpy’s cousin), and my friend Mike York, for they had a date with destiny that I will always remember.

Mike and I were in a canoe together, and he was paddling stern. Kent and his canoe mate were in front of us as they had been for approximately 2/3 of the trip. Neither of us had turned over/gotten wet (a point of pride), and that’s a good thing on the Spring River, for the water is ice cold, having come from deep underground in a huge gush quite aptly named Mammoth Springs. Now a Scout is Truthful, and to keep the record straight, I did jump out once when we were coming out of rapids that carried us too close to a low hanging branch, and a bad tempered Banded Water Snake fell into the canoe as the paddle was knocked from my hand. From the stern, Mike was diligently banging away at the snake in the bottom of the canoe with the flat blade of his wooden paddle, but to no avail, and the snake was escaping in my direction. My yelling was obviously having no effect on the snake, and Mike was clearly holding his ground with our one remaining paddle, so I was out of that canoe in a flash – and that’s the truth, do you blame me! Latter I convinced myself that I bravely jumped out to retrieve my lost paddle, confident that Mike had things under control.

We were on the river somewhere near Humphrey's Ford (either before or after) paddling along at a leisurely rate, and I was beginning to really annoy Mike with my incessant whistling of Dickey Lee's (of Whitehaven High fame) hit song "Dream Boy". Finally, Mike casually said (with a voice that had an edge on it) that he had just recently learned how to smash hissing snakes with a paddle -- if they continue to prove annoying! Then things started to happen fast! We were coming upon what is more accurately described as a waterfall, not a "rapids", and several canoes ahead of Kent's canoe had already capsized in their attempt to "shoot it", and they were quickly (and safely) being swept clear of the falls.

Kent's canoe was next over the falls and we were close behind. He capsized, and quickly, at the same time, we were in the "Chute" with our bow headed over the falls. From that "top of the falls" vantage we saw Kent was out of the canoe, swirling in the fast moving water, and being slammed by the current into a large boulder, He struck his head, and was knocked unconscious, slipping below the surface. Suddenly the rivers fast current had our canoe's bow rushing past him, and we both jumped out of our canoe to save Kent. Jumping in from the stern, Mike got to him first, pulling him up by his arm in shoulder deep water, as I was swept down stream. While he clung to a rock outcropping, Mike held Kent's face above water with a bear hug under his arms and around his chest, It all happened so fast. The river had swept me past Kent, and when I was able to fight the current back to both of them, Kent was regaining consciousness, and began coughing and sputtering water. He was alright, and alive thanks to Mike! Soon, Kent was breathing and acting normal again, and his canoe mate who had also been swept down stream, and unable to assist re-joined us. We all helped retrieve and right our canoes from their capsized locations, and once we were sure that Kent was really OK, and amid his heartfelt thanks, we watched them get back underway.

While we did matter of factly re-tell the rescue story, everyone seemed to take the good outcome for granted, commenting if anything on it being a "scary moment" that "turned out well". The fact is, however, that Mike York saved Kent Osborn's life that day, and if it hadn't been for Mike's quick action, Kent could have been lost under the water and the day would have turned into a tragedy. In an ironic twist, not long after that, Kent was diagnosed with a rare disorder called Marie's Ataxia, and following a brave fight, and eventual confinement to a wheel chair, he finally succumbed to the disease many years latter. It was not until years after Kent's passing that I learned he played the guitar and was good friends with Dickey Lee -- remember that song of his that I whistled almost obsessively just before Kent's rescue? Hmm, makes you wonder if there was something at work tying these two events together and pointing toward Kent -- or was it just coincidence?

And now, as Paul Harvey would say, comes "*The Rest of the Story*". Several years prior to Kent's rescue by Mike, Kent made a lifesaving rescue of his own while on a Troop 97 outing. The Troop was at the edge of the Lake Arkabutla Emergency Spillway, and saw a young man out in the water flailing, and calling for help -- as the story is re-told by Umpy, Buddy turned to Kent, who had served on the 1953 Kia Kima Waterfront Staff, and said "Kent, go get him". Kent did just that using the classic Boy Scout taught cross chest carry and scissor-kick swim to safety.

And now, you know the rest of the story -- in reality Mike deserves a Medal for what he did that day, and so does Kent Osborn for his brave actions several years before, even though both of these 97 Scouts remained modest about any one making a big deal of it. There is, however, a lesson here for all Scouts young and old. As you travel through life, remember, "*Be Prepared!*" -- you may find that the skills and life experiences that are part of that preparation will be needed, sometime when you least expect it. And, perhaps someday in the future someone equally prepared could come along to return the favor! "*What goes around, comes around.*"