

# REFLECTIONS FROM THE APRIL CAMPFIRE

By Jim Moore (4/2005)

*“An Old Kia Kima campfire is something special, oftentimes remembered long after the other memories of camp are fading, a magical coming together at the end of the day. It is an opportunity to enjoy each other's company, to make music, sing, and laugh together, to share a common bond, and to sit huddled up around the leaping flames which cast a warm glow over the circle of faces as they lift little sparks toward the stars. It is also an opportunity to teach young people about ones Responsibilities to self and others, to emphasize the value of Integrity, and how this links with the Achievement of important personal goals, and how all these tie in with the Courage to always do the right thing”.*

As we walk down memory lane reflecting on our experiences at camp, we inevitably find that many of those memories, when retold, are punctuated with an exclamation mark by the Sunday Night Campfire upon arrival at camp, and by the Friday Night Campfire upon departure. As a successive parade of Scout Troops took their place with other Troops seated before the fire in wide eyed anticipation, everyone sensed the greater presence of the *Spirit of Old Kia Kima* hanging like electricity in the air. Then, as the songs and activities started, they began to feel the reassuring tug of an invisible common bond that inevitably links all participants to all Old Kia Kima Campfires, past, present, and future.

So it was then, and so it is even today. This was the unique experience for over 40 OKK and KKSAR alumni participants in the April work weekend that ended on Saturday night with a traditional OKK style campfire. We “modeled the way it used to be,” sang the old songs, participated in and laughed at the skits, and our minds flooded with memories of days of old when Scouts were bold and Kia Kima was where it was happening! Now, like beads strung on an eternal strip of knotted rawhide, at each new OKK campfire, we link the past with the present as we take up positions on the logs to join others in experiencing anew the *Spirit of Old Kia Kima*, It is this enduring “*Spirit*” that stretches along a continuum of time, irrevocably linking our past with our future, and propelling participants along a timeline that began in 1916 and now reaches toward the 100 year mark, and on into perpetuity.

Walking the “hallowed” grounds this April, and joining others on the many work projects needed to ready the camp for another camping season, we shared the same common bond of a love and respect for the role that the Old Kia Kima experience played in our life. During the weekend, we all reflected with amazement on the re-birth of Old Kia Kima, and in doing so, we couldn't help but be struck by the following. It's truly a remarkable story!

**“As the years roll by”, the Traditions, Core Values, and *Spirit of Old Kia Kima* have been preserved and passed on to new generations by word, deed, and example. Now, because of the completion of a near total restoration, we are offering the camp for young people to enjoy and again experience its magic - just like we did!**

In every ending are the seeds for a new beginning, although I confess that I couldn't see through the tears of that poignant last OKK Staff campfire in 1963 to believe that this was so. The truth is that Old Kia Kima's Spirit rose like a Phoenix from the ashes of that “last” campfire to transcend a time and a place, and in doing so, it turned into a Legacy and a Heritage that took on a life of its own. The enduring bridge into preserving this rich heritage was formed at that last OKK closing Campfire in 1963 when the Old camp ended and the new camp, KKSr, began in 1964 under the leadership of the former OKK staff members who attended the last OKK campfire. Their intuitive goal then, although not formally written as such, was much the same as OKKPA's Mission statement today; **“*Preserve the (memory of the) place, honor the vision of all who have shared in the spirit of the South Fork waters, and provide an environment where elders may pass on knowledge and experience, enriching and shaping the lives of young people today*”**. Thus, the traditions and Spirit were preserved and nurtured to live on at KKSr, just as they live on in our hearts today.

The April work weekend was fun working shoulder to shoulder and sharing a common bond with new and old friends alike. Then, as it is today, the **“*Spirit*”** of Old Kia Kima is distilled from the essence of Teamwork and embodies cheerful and unselfish personal contributions to the greater good of the team. It is based on a strong commitment to always do your very best in service to others, with a balance of duty to God and Country. It is observed in a respect for others derived from strength of character and respect for self, and is built upon integrity and demonstrated moral, ethical and spiritual values in the conduct of one's daily life.

The Heritage and traditions of Old Kia Kima are deeply rooted in the rich character building traditions of the Boy Scouts. Programs of outdoor challenge were built around skill development, teaching of leadership principles, and emphasis on the personal growth and development achieved through acquiring the values of ***Integrity, Achievement, Responsibility, and Courage***. Today, our aspirations are driven by the desire for future generations to experience the Spirit of Old Kia Kima, to learn these values of ***Integrity, Achievement, Responsibility, and Courage***, and to utilize the Camp to pass this along to future generations” just like we did - This will be our legacy.

To illustrate the importance of these values, at the April campfire, four former Staff Members shared the Talk Stick topic of **Old Kia Kima Core Values learned long ago – how they impacted my life**. David Logan spoke eloquently on the core value of ***Integrity***. Dan McGuire spoke on how the core value of ***Achievement*** impacted his life. Rick Phillips spoke of the impact and importance of ***Responsibility***, then passing the talk stick to Boyd Billingsley who spoke from the heart on the core value of ***Courage***. We hung on every word, for their story was our story, and we knew the time would also come for us to be called on to speak to the importance of these core values learned long ago - this will be our shared responsibility and Legacy to pass on to the Youth of Tomorrow.

These Youth Leadership Core Values are unique in that they are “outwardly demonstrated leadership character traits” which cannot be bestowed upon someone, for example, as is the case with title, rank or authority. These values of ***Integrity, Achievement, Responsibility, & Courage*** are distinguished by the fact that no one can give them to you. Nor can they be earned in the traditional sense of a certificate or diploma. Yes, they can be taught, learned and acquired, but one must first seek them out as a commitment to make them guiding principles to light the paths and guide decisions as one travels through life. In doing so, we should teach that you will not only find the way for yourself, but also set an outstanding example for others to follow.

**The Board of Directors of the Old Kia Kima Preservation Association, Inc. selected these four values to best represent the essence of the "Spirit of Old Kia Kima" which we seek to preserve, and that will guide the future development of our Youth Leadership Training Initiatives. They will help us to convey the "Spirit" by letting others know that this small set of general guiding principles are OKKPA's essential and enduring tenets for Youth Leadership – a key part of the rich Legacy we want to share and utilize the Camp to pass along to the Youth of Tomorrow.**

**We hope you will join us in this endeavor and encourage others to attend the next event at Old Kia Kima. Come and participate in a wonderful walk down memory lane by attending the always present campfire at the end of the formal gathering of old and new friends alike. You will be glad you did – see you there, and please be sure to bring a friend!**