

# Old Kia Kima News Letter

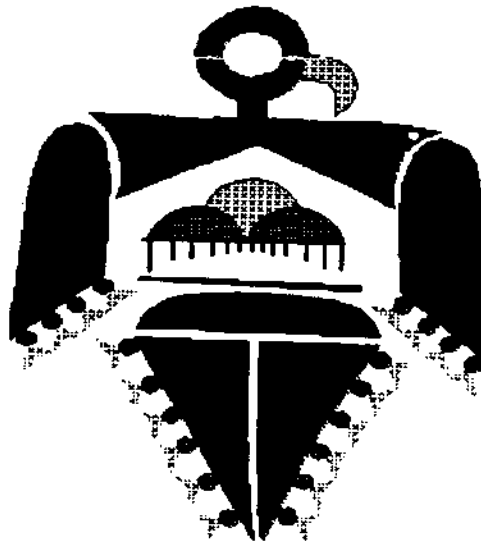
November 1996

Volume 2 issue 4

## We know you are out there!.....Just like Umpy

**F**or some of us the Kia Kima experience was *special*. It was a time for young men to branch out from the comfort, security and protective wings of our families. For most it was our first job. The first time we were ever paid for our employment, if indeed we were paid, and it didn't make any difference. We would have been there anyway, because it was fun, sheer fun and exhilaration. This respite was tucked between the busy years of high school and college, just before entering the sometimes cruel and unforgiving real world.

A few years ago a few of us decided to get together and relive a little of that special experience. It seemed as we contacted each other and talked about getting together that we were the only guys from the old kamp days that had that *special* fond feeling for the Eagle's Nest. We just assumed that there were very few of us that yearned for and cherished those times as we did. The first two years there were four of us that got together for a reunion. The third year there were six of us. We had some really great times reliving those days on the South Fork. As we relived the days on the water front, the ax yard and the mess hall we began to recall the names of the guys that were there with us. It took a while but we began to locate some of our friends. Our efforts in ferreting out our old buddies were rewarded, because we found that they often had that same warm feeling. This year at our reunion we had a dozen of our old KK staffers ranging in staff



years from '48' to '58.' What a remarkably great time!

The first evening the seven or eight of us that had already checked in gathered in Hardy for dinner. We talked of so many things, but one of the things we discussed was the common bond of the

---

**Soon were about to see this demonstrated in an unbelievably vivid manner.**

---

Kia Kima experience. It didn't make any difference that there were several of us from totally different staff years. We didn't even know each other, but, it was as if we had known each other from the old kamp days. There just had to be others out there somewhere, like us, that would enjoy this as much as we did.

(Continued on page 2)

## Going Home

By Cohen "Watusi"  
"Ozzie" Oswalt

**T**homas Wolfe was the one who said you can never go home again. When he said home what was he really talking about? His mother's run down boarding house in Asheville that no longer looked like it did when he was a boy? If so, I know what he meant. I parked my car just feet from the Thunderbird Lodge and didn't know where I was. Even after it was pointed out to me and I walked up to it and put my hand on the crumbling wall some remote part of my brain was saying "No. This is not the T. bird Lodge that I know."

In 1967 as I sat at my workbench with canoe paddles, bottles of paint and brushes and a 15 year old T shirt to guide me, my youngest daughter climbed up beside me. "Whatcha doing Daddy," she asked quietly? "I'm painting a talisman on our canoe paddles." I answered, "Why" she persisted? "This talisman is called a thunderbird and it was painted on all the canoe paddles at a place I used to go when I was a boy and where I learned to canoe. I want to use the same talisman on our paddles." I said.

That little girl, her older sister, and her younger brother all became good canoeists. They all J-stroked, didn't bend their elbows, stayed on their knees and always jumped out before the canoe ran up on the beach. Who taught them to canoe like that? Kia Kima and George Billingsley, through me.

In the summer of 1950 in a swimming merit badge class, Harold Ellis

(Continued on page 5)

inside...

Letters from Roy Riddick and Lou Pritchett  
George Billingsley flies in for OKKPA Reunion  
Articles from Bobby Harriss and Les Crocker

page 3  
page 6  
pages 2 & 6

# Old Kia Kima News Letter



## Reunion Perspective From a Cherokee Village Resident

by Bobby Harriss

It's the first day of fall in the Ozarks —cool, crisp air and there is some indication of things to come already — leaves falling from the sycamore trees and the red buds. The underbrush and sumac is starting to turn red. Not the time of the year to canoe the South Fork or the Spring (Or is it?). I feel very fortunate to see guys that I remembered i.e., Frank Simonton, Watusi Oswald, Phil Adams and George Billingsley (I wonder if I have changed as much as they have?). It was equally exciting to meet new friends i.e., John Hurt, Scotty Monteath, Jerry Gresham and David Fleming. Not to mention the other two natives Jimmy Boggs and Bobby Williams (affectionately known as "The Tennessee Angel" and "Sluggo"). When we are so close to something we tend to take it for granted This is true not only with KKK but with everything else in life.

It was good to see the interest of the guys who traveled a long distance to get here. Although I can drive over the the campground any day of the week, I don't do it. Why not, since there are guys who come from so far to see it. The real value of that little piece of real estate is the intrinsic value it had in shaping our lives. The real significance of any reunion is the people. People sharing memories and experiences with each other. People who have a common bond of brotherhood built around scouting and the influence of scouting on each of us.

Soon the all the leaves will be off the trees. The campground looks so desolate in the winter. Soon the Ozarks will be covered with snow. Things don't look the same during that time of year — beautiful, but not a time for wearing shorts and jumping

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 1)

Soon we were to see this demonstrated in an unbelievably vivid manner. When we left the restaurant we went to Cedar Bluff the site of so many of our campfires and vesper services. As we all walked out to the bluff we noticed a Shelby County, Tn. car parked by the entrance to the bluff. At first we thought it might be Ozzie Oswald, who we were expecting in at anytime. However, Ozzie is from Cookeville, Tn. not Memphis. As we made our way up the trail through the cedars David Fleming led the way walking about twenty or thirty feet in front of us. As we emerged from the cedars to the face of

the bluff we noticed someone sitting on the bluff. We saw him turn and start talking to David. As we caught up to them David turned and said, "Look guys we've found another brother." It was Umpy Osborn, staff of '53. Umpy was on a business trip from Memphis to Northwest AR. He had absolutely no idea that there was a reunion going on. He had stopped, as he sometimes did, when passing through Hardy to come out to the bluff and think about and remember how great the old Kia Kima days were. The only person more surprised than we were, was Umpy. *What an incredible coincidence!* David says it was not a coincidence. Umpy stayed and visited with us until after midnight. As he left he assured us that he would be at the '97 reunion. Guys, we know you are out there, just like Umpy. And you probably know where we can find some other Kia Kima brothers. If the Kia Kima experience was *special* to you, like it was to us, plan to be with us in '97. Share that special experience with those that hold it as special as you do.  
—John Hurt

## Plan Now For The 1997 Reunion

September 1997						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	(2) xx pm	(3) xxx	(4) xxx	(5) xx am	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Please send the reservation below or same info to—

John Hurt, 7791 Fawn Ridge Cv.  
Cordova, Tn. 38018  
901 757 9001 (night)  
800 288 7396 (day)

## Reservation

Help us make plans for a bigger and better reunion in 97! Make plans to attend now. We will again get together the day after Labor Day, Tue. Sept. 2nd. Start will be Tue eve. Activities to be published in advance will be thru Fri. morning. Lodging info to be furnished.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, St, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

- Check—I will be there.
- Check—I'll try my best to come.
- Check—Keep me on the mailer.
- Check—Enclosed are addresses of old
- Check—old staff buddies

Activities will include, Lots of fun and fellowship, Cedar Bluff Vesper, Canoe trip, Tour of the old campgrounds, Campfire, OKKPA meeting and much more. Send this reservation in now.



# Old Kia Kima News Letter

## OLD KIA KIMA PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION



Letter From OKKPA  
President Roy Riddick

OKKPA

LETTER FROM  
LOU PRITCHETT

Roy, unable, at the last minute to attend the reunion, sent the following letter to those attending the Wednesday night dinner at the Pelton Place Inn in Hardy.

Brothers: "What is it about that little piece of land that we hold so dear?" Whatever your answer to John [Ozier], John from Abadon's question, something in your gut brought you back to savor the scenery of the South Fork and reminisce about pine sol and philosophy on four seaters. For those of us who cannot be under the shadow of the *Nido De Aquila* in the flesh you can bet that we will be there in the spirit. And what will bring those memories hurtling back will be that first scent of cedar trees under the hot sun. That gentle assault on your limbic system along with the view from Cedar Bluff while arm in arm I envy you.



And like all of us who are caught up in the day to day grind of whatever we do, I wonder what it is about those few acres that draws us back and makes us feel good. Carol, who back in 1987 accompanied me on my first return to KKK, said she understood for the first time what it was that captured the tone of my voice when I spoke about that rocky hillside - the place is beautiful. (At that time the campground had not deteriorated as it has now.) George Gillispie Burford, who founded Wahpeton Inn felt the same way. Those folks still come back. That early morning view of the water front, clean and crisp, the approach to Y falls and the fresh water flavored with watercress at Raccoon Springs after that hot hike. Early on, part of the magic came from the remoteness and the otherness of the place. The train ride from Memphis with cinders blowing in your face took half a day, making you feel as if you were traveling to outer space. Even the tamales at Hoxie (God Bless you John Hurt) seemed exotic, which, indeed they were. Then we hiked those miles to the meadow, where we were ferried across to the far side of Paradise. Walt Disney did the same with the Magic Kingdom for money; we just did it. And all of us recall those moonless nights when the Milky Way ran just overhead and you just knew you could drink from the Big Dipper. Taps.....

The place is desecrated, defiled now. Had only the ravages of time altered the camp, returning it to nature, we might not feel so strongly about acquiring the property. But humans who never experienced that magic have turned what to most of us is sacred into a dump. Part of the reason you are all there and I am writing this letter is to stop that and restore the place to nature if nothing else. It will take all of us and more to accomplish the task. Last year at this time we dreamed up the name of the organization to help do this - the Old Kia Kima Preservation Association, and David along with Darlene Wilson has spent a good part of the year getting OKKPA incorporated as a non-profit organization. That has just about been completed. Mean while John Hurt has singlehandedly created the news letter and started collecting names of brothers, who literally live around the world. And several of us have approached Evan Dagget about the property. To help solidify the Organization, David in his Round Table fashion democratically selected officers, which will be voted on at this meeting. While on their 15th bottle of wine during the snow storm in Virginia this past January, David and

Also unable to attend the reunion Lou sent the following letter to be read at the Wednesday night dinner.

Aug. 26, 1996

Dear Old Friends,

If this is being read by Perry Gaither, please ask to see the actual hard copy since 'Gatemouth' has always embellished, and deleted at will. I ask that you do this to ensure that you get my message - not his.

My thoughts are with you as you assemble on the banks of the South Fork and attempt to recall for a few hours those golden days, long gone but long remembered.

I wish I were articulate enough to describe in this note what those days meant to me then and how they affect my life today. I attempted to do this in my book but only made a feeble stab at giving Buddy Irwin and Scouting credit for unlimited positive influences.

I discovered the following poem several years ago and I believe it best describes what Scouting and KKK did for me -

"Come to the edge," he said.

They said: "We are afraid."

"Come to the edge," he said.

They came.

He pushed them - - and they flew.

Those who love us may well push us when we are ready to fly.

Scouting and its family of young men and dedicated leaders pushed me and for this I am forever grateful

Best wishes to each of you and may you always - - - - -

keep the faith.

Lou

15 Bear Island Rd. Hilton Head Island,  
SC 29926 BoatRock@aol.com

(Continued on page 4)

# Old Kia Kima News Letter



## SAVE THE WORLD FOR THE BOY



### MONEY MATTERS

*(Continued from page 3 Riddick)*

Scotty called to appoint me president of the OKKPA, which in a moment of comraderie I accepted. As you formally approve the officers who will help realize our dreams, you will undoubtedly ask who has the time, energy and inclination to see this project through to some form of closure during the next few years. In addition to raising money, the officers will have to answer the hard questions about what we shall do with the property if and when we have acquired it and how can we keep it from deteriorating even more. All of you realize that David has

provided the spark and the energy to get this endeavor moving. Lou Pritchett and George Billingsley have played hardball in big arenas. Scotty has commanded from the bridge, and Hurt moved the world. I

still work with maggots. Think about it For the place can be obtained, and cleaned up. We shall never recapture our youth, but we can restore that place which has brought us back and made us feel good to a decent site and know that once more high above the South Fork Waters, our camp proudly stands.

*(Continued from page 2 Harris)*

in the river. But spring is just around the corner and that's the time of year we will be getting ready for another "camping season." That's the time for another reunion — That's the time for people to getting together. That is what makes the difference — not the camp, but the people. Success of OKKPA doesn't lie totally in the acquisition of the site. Success has already been displayed in bringing people together — lets keep it going!

*(Continued from page 6 Crocker)*

because it says that what we did was important. Anyone who believes in the spirit of caring and the goal of service should be part of the OKKPA. It is not just for the professionals of the staff or the campers. It should be for everyone who has been touched by the spirit of what happened in that place. We tried to change

A word of thanks is in order to those who have helped OKKPA financially! Our ultimate game plan is for OKKPA to be financed by grants from government agencies and corporations. Presently we are in a holding pattern while we feel out the possibility of negotiating an option to purchase, possibly with a lease. This will give us the time we need to de-  
**Interests**  
indeed we have the interest, resolve to Kia Kima. In the short term we will need operating funds. Already we have paid our attorney and CPA \$450.00 to set up a tax exempt program that will meet IRS standards. And we have paid the IRS and state agencies \$515.00 for this tax exempt status. Presently our bank balance stands at \$1712.83. This has come from various donations and T shirt sales.



We will soon be getting a bill for a survey we requested of the old campgrounds. This will be approximately \$750.00. Should we actually buy the property we will recoup this money. As you can see after this has been paid the till will be getting low. *Your Fully Tax Deductible* donations will be greatly appreciated. Just make your checks to OKKPA Inc. and send them to John Hurt Treasurer, 7791 Fawn Ridge Cove, Cordova, Tn. 38018.

Questions about OKKPA finances and expenditures are both solicited and invited. The OKKPA account is at The First National Bank of Sharp County, Hardy AR. Charles Wilson whose father owned the Mobil Oil Station in Hardy during camp days is the bank manager.

### WANTED, Names and Addresses

**Brothers! Help us find our Kia Kima staff Brothers.** Almost every one we have found knows where *someone else is*. Make a phone call. Dig and find that old address. Check your high school reunion directories.

Send to John Hurt, 7791 Fawn Ridge Cv, Cordova, Tn 38018 1 800 288 7396 . . . . 901 757 9001

*(Cont. from page 5 Oswalt)*

held in your heart and mind, a place where you were nurtured, cared for, allowed to grow and where you forever afterwards feel connected to the others who were there with you, then he was wrong. You can go home again. I know. I was there the week after Labor Day.

Old Kia Kima, I've told you how I painted your talisman on my canoe paddles. Would you like to know that I also wore your red and black thunderbird patch on the right breast pocket of my adult leader uniform all these many years in two other Boy Scout Councils? I did, old Kia Kima, I did and still do. I guess, in the words of Willie Nelson's song, you were always on my mind—

the world for the better. That is the spirit of Kia Kima and everyone who shares our ideals is welcome among us.

# Old Kia Kima News Letter



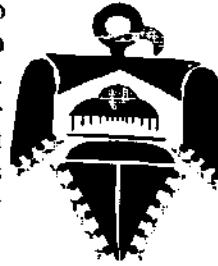
H  
I  
S  
T  
O  
R  
Y  
O  
F  
K  
I  
A  
K  
I  
M  
A  
?

Brothers, there is something we *very much* need to do! We need to write a history of Kia Kima. The first and most immediate reason is because in order to qualify for any type of *historical grant we must have a* history of Kia Kima. Not only that guys. Doesn't this history need to be written? Wouldn't this country be a better place if the men of this country had been through the kind of character building experience we went through at kamp? The world needs to know about Kia Kima. This has gotta be done and it needs to be done by us!

We have guys in our midst that are authors and can do it and do it well. Lou Pritchett is a nationally prominent author and has a great book out right now. Perry Gaither has been Dean of a college English department. Ron Tate is a writer. And I know there are others out there. Step out guys! Take the ole scouting initiative. Take the responsibility, work up a plan and divide up the areas. Buddy Keltner and I will beg the Chicksaw Council for any information and material they might have. We'll be your legs here in Memphis. *In that regard, anyone that has current connections at The Chicksaw Council please step out and help us in that area.* Lou, Perry, Ron and you other authors, us hear from you.

*(Continued from page 1 Oswald)*

suddenly pointed at me and yelled that I was not doing the Trudgeon correctly. I yelled back just as loudly that I was so and Harold promptly ordered me out of the water and off the beach. I sat as close to the beach as I dared and glumly watched the rest of the class. When the class was over Harold looked down at me so aged to say, "Harold, will you rectly?" "Sure," he smiled. minutes I mastered the Trud- years I believe Harold must "Maybe there is hope for this



When I was a scoutmaster month year round at the Naval Scout Reservation near Lexington, Va. I stood on the waterfront and watched 23 of my scouts, including my son, qualify for the Mile Swim Award. It was a camp record for one troop. Who taught them to swim like that? Kia Kima and Harold Ellis, through me.

Craig was my only African-American Eagle, but what an Eagle. One of the best Senior Patrol Leaders that I ever had. Later, one of the best liked and most respected staff members at Goshen Scout Reservation. Also, the only scout, other than my son, that I ever let drive my pick up truck. Craig had a hard time learning to swim because he couldn't float. Standing waist deep in the water I said "Craig, I'm going to teach you how to kiss a duck's butt. Trust me and do what I say and you'll learn to float." Within five minutes after he quit giggling Craig discovered he could float. The night we gave Craig his Eagle Badge his father told me the best thing I had ever done for his son was to teach him to swim. Only it wasn't me. It was Kia Kima and George Billingsley, who taught me how to kiss a duck's butt, who taught Craig how to swim, using me as a medium.

There are countless other examples over the years of how Kia Kima helped Maryland scouts that would never be fortunate enough to spend a summer at Kia Kima. Phil Adams, through me, warned boys about trying to fry an egg on a flat rock. Moose Erwin has taught more scouts than he realizes how to tie a tauntline hitch because he taught me. I used to practice Frank Simonton's quite, direct and, most of all, nonjudgmental gaze. I'm sure I never got it perfect but it was close enough that when I looked at a boy he knew I still approved of him no matter what stupid thing he had just said or done. (Well, there was the time Bobby and Jeff threw a log through the Scout House door when the door was closed. My gaze that time was probably more one of disbelief.)

When you throw a pebble into a body of still water, concentric circles radiate from the point of impact of the pebble. Some theoreticians believe those circles go on forever. We all make some kind of impact in our lives and circles radiate from us like the ripples from the pebble. If we are the sum total of all our life's experiences then some of our ever widening circles came from Kia Kima. I pray God will grant me the years to see how much further my Kia Kima circles will go. I have 5 grandsons, and I will be watching them closely to see if the Kia Kima circles touch the lives of the third generation.

Well, back to Thomas Wolfe. If his "home" was a mere building, then he was right. Buildings like the Thunderbird Lodge decay and fall in. But if "home" is a memory still

*(Continued on page 4)*

11/96

# Old Kia Kima News Letter



## Martha Jane Young Memorial

During our September 1996 reunion we learned through a telephone call from Roy Riddick that Martha Jane Young, beloved wife of Ralph Young, and a dear friend of Old Kia Kima and Scouting had made her transition to the life beyond. Some of us were fortunate enough to have Martha Jane and Ralph join us during the 1994 reunion. We were then pleased to learn from Martha Jane that our singing at Old Kia Kima had made such a favorable impression.

Her history with Scouting and Kia Kima go back to the early 50's when Ralph was Scout Master of Troop 35, Highland Heights Presbyterian Church, and later in 1954 and subsequent years being with Ralph during his many years as the Kia Kima Camp Director. As an integral part of Ralph's life, Martha Jane was a strong supporter of Scouting.

As our hearts and prayers reached out to Ralph and his family, we felt Martha Jane would appreciate our efforts to restore our Old Kia Kima, particularly the Thunderbird Lodge, where she and Ralph lived during many summer months. In this light we are suggesting contributions to the Old Kia Kima Preservation Association in memory and honor of Martha Jane Young. Your memorial gift can be made payable to OKKPA, Inc., and mailed to:

John Hurt Treasurer  
7791 Fawn Ridge Cove  
Cordova, TN 38018.

By David Fleming

## George Billingsley Flies in for 1996 Reunion Visit

By Scotty 'Stick' Monteath

During the 1996 OKKPA reunion this fall, the attending members were treated to a short visit by George "Uncle Dudley" Billingsley, who flew over to Hardy for an afternoon. Regrettably, the reunioneers were on the annual canoe trip down the South Fork that afternoon and only got to talk with George for a short get-acquainted meeting at Cherokee Village after getting off the river.

Very supportive of the OKKPA movement at reuniting the brotherhood and spirit of Kia Kima, George cautioned the attendees against expecting that partial or full restoration of the old cabins and Thunderbird Lodge could result in long term preservation. He indicated that he would be willing to assist OKKPA in achieving the objectives of the membership and has agreed to serve on the Board of Directors. George's close relationship with the head of Cherokee Village Properties, Evan Daggett, can help in property negotiations, and his stature within the community there at Cherokee Village will foster strong community relations for our activities.

George was the Kia Kima waterfront director in the 1948-1951 time frame and probably a mentor and role model for many of us as campers and as staff members. He is still actively in business with Lou Pritchett and enjoys his frequent journeys back to Sharp County and South Fork River country. Each of us that attended this year's reunion appreciated the opportunity to visit with George and enjoyed his candid advice and humorous stories of camp days past. George, as is his lifetime custom, wore no socks to our 1996 rendezvous. Thanks, Uncle Dudley, and come back for a longer stay, next year!

## "The OKKPA Should Be..."

By Les Crocker

The OKKPA should be for everyone. Professionals, staff, scout masters, campers, cooks, bottlewashers, wives, townies, children, and strangers. It's for anyone who was ever there or wished they they had been there. The OKKPA is about a place that touched the lives of thousands of young men and in the years following touched their parents, their wives, their children and their communities. But on a larger level OKKPA isn't just about a place, although the place is important. It's about change. Wether that change was experienced directly by the boys and men or indirectly by the people they touched later is of no consequence. The boys that took another step toward being men and the men who helped them along the trail are the core of that place. The changes that we made in those boys and the changes that they made in us is part of the spirit of the place that lives on, even when the lodge is in ruins and the waterfront has washed away.

The spirit of Old Kia Kima is also about the grab-ass nonsense, the long walk at night along the gravel road from town, the campfires that wouldn't light, and latrines and their full ripeness in that late July sun.

All these memories are part of the spirit that remains with us. Before anyone invented the concept of male bonding we were doing it. How many of us have continued to serve? Teachers, scoutmasters, lawmen, community leaders. How many ways have we continued to serve? We taught, we led, we goofed off too. But our actions and our inactions created a pattern of life that we believed in. A life without accomplishments is empty. A life without fun is grey and sad.

I doubt that many of the staff thought much about what they were doing, at least not in the terms that I am using. But we did serve and we did change the boys that came through our camp. In spite of the goofing off, the shaving cream between the sheets, and the irreverent language we gave of ourselves to help boys become better than what they had been.

The OKKPA is important

(Continued on page 4)