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January 2006



To: All OKKPA Members
From: Steve Demster, Association President
Subject: Communiqué – November/December 2005

Hello All,

This is the time of year when families gather from far and near to share the joy of the season. Often the year flies by, and we've neglected to adequately say to our OKKPA friends how much they mean to us, and how much we appreciate the good work they do for the betterment of all of us. This is a great time to express both the affection and the appreciation we feel. On behalf of myself and the Board of Directors of OKKPA, let me say simply "Thank you for being who you are and sharing yourself with us."

We call this issue of the **Smoke Signal** "our Miramichiee issue". We are sure you'll enjoy hearing about all those 'gals' we knew down the river so long ago. There is currently a very successful effort among former Miramichiee staff and campers to reestablish their communications lines among each other. And, they have done a great job. My wife regularly follows their Internet 'chat room' which was established just before their September 2005 reunion. She tells me they have over 6000 individual 'chats' on the site already. (To all you Miramichiee girls reading this, that is beyond comprehension of the male mind.)

I want to remind everyone to keep finding new members for OKKPA. Our goal this year is to reach 250 members, a formidable task, and impossible if each of us doesn't reach out to one or two others who are really passionate about building character in our youth and who are willing to be an active participant in this great effort.

I stay in regular touch with our OKKPA Core Values Committee. They are working hard to bring us the promised wonderful new youth program for this spring.

I wish each of you the happiest new year,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve'.

Old Kia Kima's Core Values
INTEGRITY - ACHIEVEMENT - RESPONSIBILITY - COURAGE

“As the embers die away, we wish that we could ever stay...”



In 1916 Memphian Sophie Kraus decided that working girls needed a nearby vacation spot that provided outdoor recreation. With the aid of friends, Mrs. Kraus acquired donations from businessmen and purchased 40 acres in the foothills of the Ozarks on the South Fork of Spring River near Hardy, Arkansas. The site was selected because of its proximity to Memphis while still providing a marked change in scenery. Also, transportation to Hardy was easily available by train.

Wooden cottages and a dining hall were constructed, and the camp was in operation. The only stipulation on attendance was that the girls had to be employed. Dressed in camp uniform - middy blouses and bloomers or skirts when they went to town - working women had a place where they could go for fun, fellowship and relaxation. The Camp was first known by two names. “Girls’ Vacation Camp” and “*Miramichee*”. The Indian name *Miramichee* stuck. While some say *Miramichee* means “rustling of the leaves,” and others contend the name means “quiet resting place”, there is no dispute that Camp *Miramichee* stood for decades as a source of inspiration for countless girls of all ages. *Miramichee* was given to the YWCA of Memphis in 1920 believing that the YWCA could reach a larger number of potential campers. According to legend the three original owners were a Protestant, a Catholic, and a Jew, which established a tradition of openness and diversity that continued throughout the camp’s history. For a decade participants continued to be working women with a two-week period designated each summer for use by Girl Reserves (the YWCA

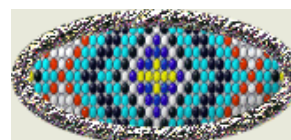
predecessor of Y-Teens). The changeover in age groups was gradual with mixed ages attending for several years. During the years of the Great Depression the camp was open to young women and girls of all ages. Family groups also enjoyed the camp during these years. In the early 1940’s enrollment was limited to girls aged 10 to 18. Miss

Julia Hope Hall, YWCA Youth Director began her long tenure as Camp Director in the late 1930’s. During the war years of World War II, adult camping returned. Gasoline and tire rationing curtailed long trips, so *Miramichee* again became a vacation spot for employed women. Where else could one vacation for a camp fee of \$10.00 per week? Adult camping continued for approximately fifteen years

attracting mainly former campers from Shelby County and their families. In the 1950’s camping reverted to the younger age group. Swimming, canoeing, hiking, singing games, crafts, archery and overnight sleep outs were all part of life at *Miramichee*, which attracted campers not only from Memphis and Shelby County but also west Tennessee, north Mississippi and east Arkansas. Starting in Unit 1, at 10 years old, campers returned year after year until they experienced their rite of passage into the Senior Unit. Enrollment steadily increased from the end of World War II into the mid-1960’s. During these years registration forms were returned as soon as they were received shortly after Christmas in order to insure one’s place at camp. Woody Lodge, sanctum of the Senior Unit, was donated to the camp by the Zonta Club of Memphis and opened in 1950.



Back row, unidentified. Front row: Pam Johnson, Suzanne Hilton, Bobbie Irwin



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Woody's First Year The lodge was named in memory of one of its members, Mary Wood Davis, who also was active in the YWCA for many years. Shortly thereafter a new unit was created, Unit IV, with the building of additional stone cabins. During the 1950's and 1960's truck trips were expanded to explore the surrounding area of northeast Arkansas and southern Missouri. The Senior Unit took three-day trips to Lake Norfolk and Blanchard Springs in Arkansas and Alley Springs in Missouri. The Long Canoe Trip became longer and longer. Canoeists no longer paddled up Spring River to Dam 3, but now set in at Dam 3 and paddled down to Imboden or Black Rock. Annual events such as Olympic Day and Camper/Staff Day thrilled all campers. Commercial development began to encroach more and more on the Camp as John Cooper developed Cherokee Village as a retirement site for Midwesterners and Mid-Southerners. Miss Hall, now Camp Director for over 25 years, began her search for a new camp site. In 1963 the long time Memphis Boy Scout Camp *Kia Kima* relocated further up the South Fork River, the east Arkansas Boy Scout Camp *Cedar Valley* relocated to Viola, Arkansas; the Memphis Girls Scout Camp *Kiawani* relocated to Middleton, Tennessee; and the Memphis YWCA Camp relocated to Pickwick, Tennessee. Miss Hall retired in 1970, and in 1975 the original *Miramichee* campsite was sold. A new site which had been identified by Miss Hall, was acquired. Located up river on South Fork, near the new *Kia Kima*, the site consisted of 138 underdeveloped acres. Peggy Matthews served as Camp Director during the early 1970's and created new traditions during the final years at the "old" camp site. The mid-1970's were a period of planning and fund raising. The Camp Committee was reconstituted; former staff member Betty "Griff" Woodard was hired as camp director; a master camp plan designed by the University Of Arkansas was



approved; and an architectural firm was hired. The new camp opened in June 1979 after operating one summer at the YMCA camp in Mammoth Springs. An extensive building program of 14 cabins, a dining hall, a bunkhouse, and a bath house was nearing completion when a tornado hit in December 1982 ravaging the camp. The building started over, and faith, hope and a lot of hard work raised the camp again. Ann Pool, longtime camper and staff member, served as Camp Director during these difficult years. In October 1983 the new senior lodge and bunkhouse was dedicated to Julia Hope Hall on a glorious Fall Day attended by over a 100 people. However, by the mid-1980's camp enrollment was experiencing a serious decline, and competent staff were difficult to secure. After several years of problems, the YWCA decided to stop operating the camp. Various other uses were considered, but the decision was finally made to sell the property and focus on other programs. When *Camp Miramichee* closed in 1989, it was

the oldest organized camp for girls in continuous operation in the tri-state area. Generation after generation of girls from Memphis and the surrounding areas had been able to gather the rewards of close association with friends and nature at *Miramichee*. Today when former campers gather it is not uncommon to hear someone remark "the happiest days of my childhood were spent at *Miramichee*".

Courtesy of the YWCA of Memphis with amendments and additions by Lila Beth Burke. November 2005



Rec Hall



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“A River Runs Through It”

Why is it proposed that there is the potential for a partnership with OKKPA which would include Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the YWCA? Well, figuratively and literally, the answer is that “A River Runs Through It”. These three National Youth Groups have, in the South Fork River, a common heritage for Old Kia Kima, Old Camp Kiwani, and Old Miramichiee. These three camps experienced the same time frame and shared so much together. We shared camp fires, we shared experiences, we shared a love for the land and river that our Camps were built upon, and most importantly, we share today a deep feeling about the character building values to be learned in these common experiences as young boys and girls grow up to take their places in the world.

Many Kiwani and Miramichiee women married Kia Kima men. Thus, the bond is strong and runs deep, just as the River that runs through it as a metaphorical ribbon ties us together in a common bond that runs deep. As we celebrate the re-birth of the “Spirit” of Old Kia Kima and the opportunity to once again pass on the values that we hold dear, let us insure that we share this legacy with our granddaughters as well as our grandsons as our gift to future generations.

An Excerpt from the OKKPA President’s Banquet Speech, September 2001



The South Fork River



Lifesaving Class



Swimming Class



Canoeing Class

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Tales from Below the Low Water Bridge

By: Anita and Steve Demster

J.R. Tolkien wrote the classic "The Lord of the Rings" and described an incredible fantasy world called 'middle-Earth'. For millions who read this classic, the white bearded, mountain spirit, Gandolph, with his flowing robes and wide brimmed hat became an indelible mental image.

For thousands of Kia Kima boys the word "Miramichee" created a Tolkien-like image in youthful male minds of an almost spiritual place populated by lovely young creatures. These were as different from the rough and tumble boys of Kia Kima as could be imagined with their soft voices and long eyelashes. Their bodies were shaped in wonderful ways, which constantly drew your eyes to them. They had strange powers that made them capable of rendering the hailest hearted male speechless with a single look or coy smile. These enchanting creatures were called females. Even though the young males had encountered many females in other situations, none were so, so, well FEMALE as the ones of Miramichee.

Miramichee was ruled by a powerful wizard named Julia who governed the interaction between the males of the real world (Kia Kima) and the female land of magic called Miramichee. Wizard Julia was known to be in cahoots with Lord Ralph of Kia Kima to keep order in the two alien lands. There were even whispered rumors that there was more than just 'cahoots' between Lord Ralph and Wizard Julia. Every interaction between one of Kia Kima and one of Miramichee was known instantly to Ralph and Julia. The gaze held too long, the casual touch, the voices conspiratorially lowered would each bring the two wardens to attention.

Under the iron hand of Wizard Julia was the keeper of the Gate, the Sorceress Pat. It was her sworn duty to allow no Miramichee woman to leave the sacred gate with any male who had not been thorough inspected and evaluated for purity

of intent. Her mission also was to sense the presence of intoxicants or stimulants (tobacco) on the person of the supplicant male. Also guarding the land of virtue were the dreaded Unit Leaders. Their role was to educate the younger females about the risks to them from the restless males above the Low Water Bridge. They were also assigned the role of scouting out the Kia Kima population for males of particular danger to the sisterhood and advising Wizard Julia of the threat.

Legend tells that on moonless nights the females of Miramichee en-mass would shed their clothes and slide into the river off the Miramichee dock to bathe quietly. Many pitch black nights found youth of Kia Kima silently huddled along the far bank of the river trying to confirm this mythology (for historical accuracy reasons alone, of course.)

It is also told that even now, if you stand on the low water bridge on a moonless night, you can hear splashing, laughing, and the whisper of female voices. And if you are so foolish as to try the path on the south side of the bridge, the ghost of Wizard Julia will get you.



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Miramechee Photo Album



The Creek at Miramechee



L to R, Connie Wright Kingery, Laura Bobbitt Crocker, ChiChi Livaudais, Suzanne Hilton Miller, Anne Kelly, Robbie Dunn



Robbie Johnson Weinberg, Kellye Branson, Charita Martin, Margaret Welsh Kirkland, Rebecca Barbee Kuntzman



Allison Miller, Gayden Denton, Nancy Chandler, Sallie Denman Johnson, Laura Bobbitt Crocker, Connie Wright Kingery, Mary Barton Lea.



: Nancy Chandler, Jan Buchalter, Ann Pool



Old Kia Kima's Core Values

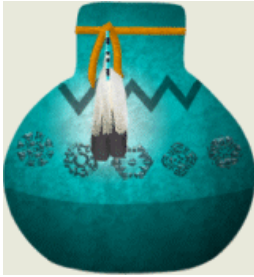
INTEGRITY - ACHIEVEMENT - RESPONSIBILITY - COURAGE



Sarah Ferguson, Laura Bobbitt Crocker, Gayden Denton



Cab Buchalter, Gayden Denton, ChiChi Livaudais, Pam Pigford, Ann Pool, Lyda Phillips, Margaret Welsh Kirkland behind



Sisters Beth Bobbitt Stengel and Laura Bobbitt Crocker outside Beth's home in Memphis Midtown.



Sarah Ferguson, Laura Bobbitt Crocker, Gayden Denton



WEB SITES OF INTEREST

<http://www.miramichee.com/>

http://www.eaac.org/council_history/eastiss.htm

<http://www.oldkiakima.org>



Brothers Who Have Passed On

Ken Humphries - Scoutmaster Troops 43 & 343

Dec. 2005

Len Vandiveer - Staff mid 1950s

Nov. 2005

Larry Cooper- Staff mid 1960s

Dec. 2005

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