

“A SCOUTS TREASURED MEMORIES”

AUGUST, CIRCA 1958: Uncle Al and I are carrying the khaki painted footlocker with TROOP 245 prominently displayed in bright red paint. We load the trunk into the car and after Aunt Martha gives me instructions and a hug and a kiss, off we go. When we get to St. Mary's the entire block on Clearfield Street in front of the school is crawling with boy scouts who all are in short pant uniforms and long green stockings with red garters. What an exciting moment as all of us exchange greetings! Bony is talking to Dominic Triolo and Anthony Picarello about the new penknife that his dad Angelo bought him. Paul Blassetti and Frank Sciarra are talking to our Senior Patrol Leader Bobby Bettacchi who is dressed in his dark green short pant explorers uniform. Assistant Scout Master Lou Leggieri whistles and all of us instantly stop in our tracks and look toward Father O'Malley our spiritual advisor, who recites a prayer to St. Christopher for a safe journey and gives us his blessing. Scout Master, Matty Gregorio, gives us instructions to put our foot lockers on Ape Petrone's truck provided by the Zurnoil Company and which car we will be traveling in. We all get into our assigned cars and off we go. Arriving at the crossing site to Treasure Island just above Delaware Water Gap, Pa., we are instructed to line up in back of Ape's truck and work in teams to load our gear onto the barge. In what seems like no time at all we are saying good-bye to our fathers. All of us are on the crossing boats in front of the barge approaching the landing dock on Treasure Island. After unloading and setting up camp we are all so anxious to get our bathing suits on and head for the water that we forget about eating. Bobby Bettacchi calls all of us to attention and we line up to march to the mess hall. Bobby and the other explorers, Louie Natale, Tommy DiPiero, and Richie Vassallo lead the troop in formation and we march to the Mess Hall. It is huge! It probably holds at least 300

Scouts. The island Master offers a prayer of grace and welcomes us, but gives us some words of caution about snakes. Captain Nemo says, "They should invite Harry Bock here. He would catch all the snakes for them" We all laugh and enjoy our first meal of hot dogs and beans. After lunch we are on our own to do whatever we want to do, as long as we travel in at least pairs. Troop 245 makes its first impression this afternoon when some of us decide to buck bathe in the Delaware River. Later at night we sit around a small campfire reminiscing about our first day and drinking Lou Leggieri's famous "Bug Juice". We didn't have to sing because the beans from lunch provided us with a symphony. The following few days were fantastic. There was never a dull moment. Bony has woven at least a dozen leather belts in craft shop. Denny Natale was champion at "chew the peg". Ralph Loschiavo is unmatched at arm wrestling. Bobby Gatto should get the best-dressed scout award. Paul Blassetti has been trading camping articles with scouts from all the other troops. Richie Vassallo is teaching me first-aid, so I can get my merit badge. Lou Natale has successfully negotiated for us to get the canoes for more time than we are allotted. Frank Sciarra has convinced all of us to use his marching chant for the parade on visitors day this Sunday when we will all be part of scouting history, because for the first time at Treasure Island women will be allowed to visit. The Explorer Scouts conduct an inspection and Rodger Serpico gets extra chores because he is not "Prepared!" He was too busy playing practical jokes on the rest of us. Val Pistilli and Mario Amici constructed a crystal radio set and are listening to the Phillies game. Adrian Hayes as always is "axing" too many questions. The visit by our parents is not only historic, but surprisingly very welcomed by us not so grown up scouts who haven't seen them for a whole week. The highlight of the day turns out to be a

parade of all the Scout Troops present on the assembly field. Troup 245 again makes a fine impression, as we march onto the field using Sciarra's innovating chant. Instead of left, left, left, right, left we use. SHAMBA! SHAMBA! SHAMBA! OBAH! SHAMBA! The days seem to fly by. On the second Tuesday we select two people who will be taking on the task to receive the "Order Of The Arrow". This is an exclusive Order that loosely resembles the "Native American's Rite of Manhood". When Lou Leggieri announces my name along with Matty as Troop 245 representatives, I am surprised, but very happy. Matty and I are met that night by two scouts they blind-fold us and we follow them with nothing but the clothes we have on and a scouting knife. They escort us separately to an unknown destination in the woods. They inform us that we can no longer speak. We must use sign language and our task will be given to us in the morning. They quietly disappear and I remove my blind-fold. I make a bed of leaves and begin to say my prayers. Thankfully! I fall asleep quickly. The next thing I feel is someone tugging at my leg. He instructs me too follow him. He leads me to the riverbank just as the sun is rising. Within a couple of minutes there were twenty other candidates at the riverbank. I follow Matty's lead and begin to wash my face and hands in the Delaware. Fourteen hours later we successfully complete our task of building a set of steps leading to Tea Cup Hill located across from the landing site on the Pa. Side of the river, using only dirt from the Island. We are told to go back to our campsite wash up, dress in full uniform and return within one hour. Matty and I return as instructed. All of us candidates are escorted to a huge campfire on the rivers edge. It is the largest campfire I have ever seen, measuring at least eleven feet high by twenty feet wide. We were told the secret code and instructed only to speak the first word of the

to speak the first word of the code "Weemockendink", (meaning friendship), to non-members. An Order Of The Arrow white sash with a red arrow embroidered on the entire length is placed over our right shoulder diagonally across our chest and snapped at the waist. Simultaneously at least a hundred flaming arrows are shot over the river. The flaming arrows extinguish as they plunge into the river. Twenty canoes can be seen moving down river with their paddles gleaming in the moonlight as they dip into the water. One of the celebrants congratulates us, hands us a Unami Lodge patch and asks us to pledge that we will live our life according to the Orders code of honor.