2015 OAA Spring Work Weekends Abounded with Success, Dozens of Alumni Volunteered

By Gabe Gluck
Camp Wauwepex-OSR-Alder Lake SR
Staff 1969-1971

Was it the beautiful spring weather, or was it going the long winter without an Onteora Scout Reservation fix? Whatever it was, the turnouts to the two Onteora Alumni Association Spring Work Weekends in 2015 were not just spectacular, but the highest turnouts in years.

The help was desperately needed, as OSR welcomed more than 1,400 youth in the summer of 2015!

More than 45 hardy souls turned out for the first work weekend, which was pushed ahead to April 24 to 26 to get camp ready for the Northeast Region of the BSA’s Area 2 Apex, a gathering for Venturing programs in New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

It even snowed that weekend, just in case anyone was forgetting what it takes for winter to release its grip on the Catskills. While the thermometer read 29 degrees Fahrenheit at daybreak Saturday, April 25, the temperature rose to the 50s later that day, said Liane Richardson, who brought her culinary skills to the kitchen to cook for the volunteers on both weekends.

About 300 Venturers attended the Area 2 Venturing Apex weekend from May 1 to 3, and they left with a very good impression of Onteora.

“The weekend went really well,” said Matt Conlon, TRC Program and Camping Services Director. That good impression may cause Venturers to consider returning to OSR for a weekend, he said.

For the work weekend from May 29 to 31, which involved at least 35 volunteers, not only was the weather quite warmer, but the threatened rain that could have put a serious crimp in Saturday’s work details held off until Sunday. In fact, so much work was getting done that OAA Board member-at-large Rick (Continued on page 2)
Balla was starting to get writer’s cramp just keeping his work lists in order.

Some troops, such as Troop 45 of Mineola, N.Y., were at camp during the weekends to focus on building tent platforms for summer camp, and the overall turnouts were a cause for celebration, considering in recent years there were weekends with fewer than 20 volunteers showing up, a quite low number considering that more than 600 people follow the OAA on Facebook.

The Theodore Roosevelt Council key staff welcomed the doubling of the number of Spring Work Weekend volunteers, especially because one of the most important aspects of the work weekends is that they help the OSR summer camp staff acquire more time for training during Staff Week before the start of camp.

“When everything is said and done, we gained a day, and I’ll take a day anytime,” Conlon said.

As BSA councils continue to close camps across the country, if OSR is to be one of the “last camps standing,” actively volunteering during the Spring Work Weekends can help defend Onteora.

Largely because of the work of Onteora alumni, the 2015 summer season’s ATV program had an expanded trail network and paintball joined the activities that Scouts could experience at OSR.

And speaking of summer camp, the 2016 summer camping season of OSR starts July 10, 2016, and all alumni are invited to visit and see for themselves not only the excellent strides OSR has made in recent years, but how all the donations of funds and labor by the OAA have benefited the camp’s resurrection.

Consider marking the weekend of Sept. 16-18, 2016, on the calendar to return to Onteora for the 60th Anniversary Reunion Weekend!

Also, consider coming up to camp next spring during one or both of the 2016 Spring Work Weekends to help out! The 2016 weekends are to be from April 29 to May 1 and from June 17 to 19.
Engert, Ciampo, Davis, Throop, Kempner Inducted As Legends of Onteora for 2015

Five OSR alumni were selected by the Onteora Alumni Association Executive Board in 2015 for recognition as Legends of Onteora. They were honored during the 2015 Fall Reunion Weekend’s closing campfire Sept. 12.

Alumni are recognized as Legends for distinguished service to OSR.

Bill Engert

Engert was an energetic outdoorsman whose service as camp director of Onteora in 1956, its opening year, significantly contributed to Onteora’s success.

From mid-1955 to late 1959, Engert and his cousins coordinated much of the creation of Onteora’s infrastructure, such as opening the Powerline Trail, installing the water tank, creating numerous roadways throughout camp, and opening camp sites (36 by 1960). They also coordinated maintenance of the manor house, caretaker’s home, barn, garages, and pool hall.

Engert was an avid horseman, and his own horses and those from contacts near Onteora were used for starting Onteora’s horsemanship program in 1956. His nickname, the “Wrangler,” is still used by his friends and family.

Salvatore Ciampo

As an extremely proactive president of the Theodore Roosevelt Council from 2012 to 2015 and as camp director of Onteora in 2014, Sal managed and implemented significant strategic improvements for Onteora, including enhanced communications and marketing to troops and augmented outreach to donors who together provided Onteora with tens of thousands of dollars in funding.

Through Sal’s leadership, OSR’s youth attendance doubled from 2012 to 2014, OSR’s program opportunities for Scouts significantly expanded, the Council House at last reopened and now is used as a program area, and numerous other infrastructure improvements were completed.

Doug Davis

From 1978 to 1991, Davis served OSR in many capacities, including as director of Field Sports, director of the COPE (challenging outdoor physical encounter) course, director of the Webelos Woods Bridge Camp and scoutmaster of the Eagle Trail Camp.

Through Doug’s leadership as the scoutmaster of Troop 351 of Merrick, N.Y., the troop has been one of the most ardent supporters of OSR and often has a sizable contingent of Scouts at OSR each summer. Doug has inspired more Scouts to attend OSR’s Path to Eagle Camp than any other scoutmaster.

Doug helps plan service projects for Onteora and has been a member of the OAA Board since 2014.

Bill Throop

Throop worked in OSR’s Administration Building from 1968 to 1970, foreshadowing his service as the OAA Board’s secretary since 1973. In 1973, Bill worked as a member of OSR’s maintenance staff.

Bill helped survey OSR during the time it was closed, and helped to convince the Nassau County Council that the property could be brought back to life.

As one of the early proponents for establishing the OAA, Throop served with Bill Cotter as co-chair of the first alumni reunion at OSR in 2001. He also organized the 55th Anniversary Reunion Weekend in 2011.

Bill Kempner

Kempner had a significant role in reopening Onteora, as he was the director of the waterfront in 1998, the first Volunteer Year, as well as in 1999 and 2002. His charismatic leadership enabled one of the most important program areas in Onteora to be operated with the utmost safety and extreme benefit to Scouts.

Bill was one of the six members of the 1998 OSR staff who, as directors who were pioneers of reopening camp, needed to pay on their own to attend National Camp School at Camp Resolute in Massachusetts so they could acquire certifications necessary for OSR to again operate with an accredited BSA summer camping program.

The Legends of Onteora also include:

2002: Rick Balla, Dave Barkstedt, Ken Heim, Jim Kent, Leland Tuttle
2003: Bill Donaghy Sr., Glenn Gabbit
2004: Les Cox
2005: Al Ehl, Joe Grupp, Dick Horn, Sturges Shields
2007: Ralph Foster, Jim Shields Jr., Ken South
2008: Rev. Ben Bartel, Joe Laratondo, Marc Ryan, Steve Shull, Don Smith, Chris Wieczkowski
2010: Tony Joseponis, Bob Oldmixon Jr., Bob Pearles, Cap Schry, Jim Van Tassell
2011/2012: Grady Aronstamm, S. Ben Barley, Bob Canero, Dick Franz, Tom Haldeman, Dick Hunter Sr., Pete Jacobs, Bob Oldmixon Sr., Paul Plate, Tom Quick, Russ Rensch Sr., Don White
2013: Glenn Greubel Sr., Bishop Robert Guglielmone, Fred Thornley
2014: Walt Bailey, Gabe Gluck, Billy Graham

If you want to nominate an OSR alum to be recognized as a Legend of Onteora in 2016, you can e-mail Bill Cotter (bcotter@socal.rr.com), OAA chair, by Aug. 1, 2016, with details regarding the nominee’s service to OSR. Three to five nominees per year become Legends.
Onteora Honored As ArrowTour Destination in Order of the Arrow’s Centennial Year

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Order of the Arrow, the national honor society of the BSA, Arrowmen from across the U.S. had the opportunity to attend ArrowTour events during the summer of 2015 at a limited number of Scout camps and other Scout locations.

The ArrowTour program involved elite Arrowmen conducting OA history and celebration programs so that fellow Arrowmen could further cherish and become a part of the OA’s legacy and future.

For the Northeast Region of the BSA, only 29 locations were selected as ArrowTour destinations. Onteora was honored as the 16th Northeast Region destination.

As there were only 110 ArrowTour destinations in total, fewer than half of the more than 250 OA lodges were able to host an ArrowTour event, enabling the TRC’s Buckskin Lodge to be especially honored. As there are more than 1,000 BSA camps in operation and fewer than 100 of the ArrowTour destinations were Scout camps, OSR’s selection as an ArrowTour destination was quite noteworthy. ArrowTour visited OSR on July 11, 2015.

Among the members of the Northeast Region’s ArrowTour staff was Chris Boyle, an OSR Staff alumnus who was chief of the OA’s Section NE-2B from 2013 to 2015 and for 2016 is chief of the Northeast Region, one of the top six highest-ranking leadership positions in the OA.

Both chiefs of the Buckskin Lodge during the OA’s centennial, Glenn Peters, who served for the first half of 2015, and Kevin Shea, who served for the second half of 2015, are Onteora Staff alumni and attended ArrowTour.

During Onteora’s ArrowTour event on July 11, numerous Arrowmen wrote letters that were placed into a time capsule that is to be opened by members of the Buckskin Lodge during the OA’s 150th anniversary in 2065. Among the pavilions available at ArrowTour was one that enabled Arrowmen to use official OA centennial and Onteora brands to embellish clothing and other gear.

Buckskin Lodge of the OA Enhanced OSR Programs For Centennial Celebration

By Glenn Peters
OAA Board Member; OSR Staff 2012-2015; immediate past chief of the Buckskin Lodge

In the summer of 2014, the Buckskin Lodge of the Order of the Arrow started a summer-long service project at OSR. This project was to design and construct a new low-COPE challenge course.

The location for the project is the former Johnny Appleseed campsite. Arrowmen worked on the project every Monday, Wednesday and Friday during the campwide hour of service. The hour of service was started by the OA, and participation in the service hour was required to earn OSR’s new Distinguished Camp Arrowman Award.

However, the hour of service was not only for the OA, but for the entire camp. Hundreds of campers participated, including youth and adults.

During the summer of 2015, the hour of service continued and the work of all of our Arrowmen and campers will benefit Onteora for years to come.

Much of the project was completed in 2015, and the new low-COPE course is expected to open in 2016.
OSR has for about 50 years honored James E. West, who was the chief scout executive of the Boy Scouts of America from 1911 to 1943 and the first to serve in that capacity, through conducting programs at its James E. West Shelter, named in recognition of West’s outstanding contributions to the development of future leaders.

During Week Five of Onteora’s 2015 summer camping season, Onteora was honored by West’s grandson, James E. West III, who visited Onteora that week and spoke with numerous Scouts working to become Eagle Scouts while gaining leadership skills through OSR’s programs, in accordance with his grandfather’s vision for the BSA.

In the course of his visit to OSR, West III had meet-and-greet sessions with Scouts, participated in a cowboy event that was part of Onteora’s (coincidentally named) Wild West theme for 2015, and visited the program shelter named in honor of his grandfather.

“It was a delight to have Mr. West come to Onteora,” Steve Grosskopf, president of the Theodore Roosevelt Council, said Dec. 29, 2015, in an interview for The Red Trail. “The stories he told me and the Scouts of the days gone by were inspiring, enlightening, and so much fun. He told me about a letter he possesses from Theodore Roosevelt that was sent to his grandfather, encouraging him to take on the position of chief scout executive.”

After visiting OSR, West III later in 2015 became a member of the Theodore Roosevelt Council Executive Board.

“I love to see our history reconnect and very much appreciate Mr. West joining our board,” Grosskopf said.

The Theodore Roosevelt Council and the Onteora Alumni Association, thanks to Matt Conlon and Steve Shull, vice chair of the OAA, made it possible at the end of the 2015 OAA Reunion Weekend in September to donate and deliver 12 boxes of surplus food items to community relief organizations in Sullivan County, N.Y., the county where Onteora is located.

Within the 12 boxes were items such as juices, pastries, beef frankfurters and dried fruits.

Recipients of the boxes of surplus food were the food pantry of the Archdiocese of New York’s Church of St. Anthony of Padua in Yulan and the New Hope Family Center in Barryville.

The efforts of the TRC, the OAA and fellow organizations devoted to Onteora to help communities around Onteora are acts of fellowship that enhance the degree to which Onteora is an asset to Sullivan County and advance the values of Scouting.
Calling All Alumni! Volunteer to Become Part of the OAA Membership Committee!

By John Brown
OAA Board Member; OSR Staff 1956-1962

The Onteora Alumni Association's membership committee, consisting of Liane Richardson (chair), Vinny Pistone, myself and numerous fellow OAA Board members has established a goal of contacting numerous Onteora alumni throughout 2016 to ask for their assistance.

That assistance will hopefully come in the form of increased participation in a number of ways: attending reunion weekends (the 60th anniversary reunion of Onteora is Sept. 16 to 18, 2016); participating in the Spring Work Weekends and other workdays; visiting summer camp; making an annual gift to Onteora through the OAA; identifying new members/donors; updating contact information; promoting Onteora at troop meetings and other Scouting events; and generally spreading the name and brand of Onteora Scout Reservation.

In one such conversation already with Col. Abe Conn, we may have hit on a classic description of the Onteora experience. He and I agreed that, “even though hundreds of Onteora alumni attended and traveled the same property at far different times over nearly 60 years, the lasting effect is the same … one of great memories, a range of experiences for a better life and strong friendships.”

Overall, the committee is approaching the alumni contacts in three phases:
- Phase 1 - all individuals who have contributed at some point in the past five years but not in 2014 or 2015.
- Phase 2 - all individuals who contributed in 2014 but not in 2015.
- Phase 3 - all individuals who have not contributed in the past five years.

I want to sincerely thank all alumni who donated to Onteora through the OAA in 2015 and all members of the OAA for 2015. If you are interested in volunteering for the OAA Membership Committee or learning more about the efforts of the committee, please feel to e-mail the committee’s chair Liane Richardson (lbr723@aol.com) or me (4lakesjb@gmail.com). You also can contact me via telephone: (386) 736-9376.

To streamline and clarify the process of becoming a member of the Onteora Alumni Association through donating to Onteora through the OAA, the OAA Board voted at its Nov. 18 meeting to standardize the timeframe for applying donations to membership years.

Here’s the update: In each year, if you donate to OSR through the OAA from Jan. 1 to the last day before that year’s Onteora Alumni Reunion Weekend in September, you are a member of the OAA for that year. If you donate during the Reunion Weekend or by Dec. 31, you are a member of the OAA for the next year. For each year when you are a member, you will receive a commemorative patch as a thank you for continuing to support OSR.

The TRC has affirmed that donations to the OAA Endowment Fund of at least $1,000 within two years qualify for James E. West Fellowship Award recognition.

“I support this as a James West recognition,” said TRC Scout Executive Jay Garee. “We are grateful for the support the council receives in advancing our mission for exceptional program and service at OSR via the OAA.”

OAA Membership Process Updated, TRC Affirms West Award for Some Donations

Scouts of the Dan Beard Program, working on their knots for the Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class Scout ranks, at Onteora in July 2015.

On the Long House fireplace in the summer of 2015 were the 2015 OSR jacket patch (right) and its design progenitor, the 1964 OSR jacket patch (left).
The Ken Heim Campfire Ring, which has been Onteora’s main campfire ring since Onteora’s reopening in 1998, gained a significant new component in the summer of 2015: an audiovisual station!

The audiovisual equipment and the lumber and other materials for constructing the station, which together cost $8,000, were donated by Steve Grosskopf, president of the TRC, who the OAA Board recognized as a Life Member of the association in thanks for his generous donation.

The station is west of the campfire ring’s benches, or from the perspective of the ring’s stage, “behind” the right column of benches. The station was first used during the opening campfire of Week One of OSR’s 2015 summer and enhanced campfires throughout the summer.

Onteora Paintball Program, Part of Shooting Sports, Premieres at Rappahannock

A paintball target range designed to enhance Scouts’ marksmanship in an additional fun way premiered at Onteora in 2015 as part of OSR’s overall shooting sports program.

Onteora’s paintball program, in compliance with BSA National standards for paintball, involves aiming the paintball guns at downrange inanimate targets instead of at other individuals.

Paintball guns generally are less dangerous than rifles or shotguns because paintball bullets are designed to cause no more than bruising upon impacting an individual, which has caused paintball arenas where competitors shoot each other with paintballs to become rather popular. However, in respect of overall firearms safety and in recognizing the need to standardize treatment of firearms when educating youth, OSR and the broader BSA require paintball guns, just like rifles, to be aimed at downrange inanimate targets.

Onteora’s paintball range is located in the Rappahannock campsite.

The paintballs that OSR uses are biodegradable, in respect of environmental responsibility.
What I Did During My Summer Vacation: Volunteer Service at the Land in the Sky!

By Ed Paprocki
OSR Staff 1972-1978, 2015

Normally, I spend a week at Horace Moses Scout Reservation with my son’s troop as part of my summer vacation. This year was a bit different because my son was on staff there and I had some business that I needed to attend to during the week the troop was at Moses.

I therefore decided to spend my 2015 “Scout Week” at Onteora to assist wherever needed. Of course, maintenance was where I was asked to help. I was tasked to do three things.

Task #1 was to complete the rebuild of the Cub Cadet lawn mower deck. New spindles with bearings and blade shafts were acquired along with new blades.

Installation was fairly simple, except for the reforming of the blade guide, which was badly bent due to the loss of many bolts.

Finding the needed nuts and bolts took some time, but eventually, after looking in the right places, I found what I needed. The job got done in a day.

Task #2 was to re-roof the Rappahannock campsite latrine. Installing the new roof material was the easy part. Repairing the roof deck was more than a task.

The campsite was being used for the new Paintball Target Range. The site had not been used for more than 20 years, so the “roof” of the latrine was in bad shape. Once Brian Messmer and I got the old roofing off, it was clear there was a lot of work to be done.

The campsite side of the latrine required a complete rebuild, with new boards, new supports, and a few other things. It had been thought the road side would need only minor patching. Little did anyone know, several boards were severely rotted, requiring replacement (this sounds easy, but this is one of the original latrines that was built with rough-cut hemlock, so nothing was a “standard” size!)

In the “ol’ School Onteora Maintenance” tradition, Brian and I got the boards sized, cut and installed to complete the roof deck rebuild and applied a rolled roof.

And as we know, no OSR latrine would be complete without the application of screens to the window areas to keep the flies in.

After two days of work, we held the Grand Re-Opening of the latrine. As Brian put it, “Even though it rained, and we sweated a lot, the bathroom looks like it could rival any found in the Port Authority!”

The last task was to complete the latrine/washstand roof set. On the washstand, we luckily found that only the top two boards were rotted.

Once again, we found some material that fit the bill, hit the task hard, and got it done! The roof on the washstand now has three different styles of shingles – but why, you ask? Well, that was all I could find around the shop, so I made do with what was available. It actually looks good!

The campsite side has architectural style shingles and the road side has common black shingles. While we were putting the roof on, the sky opened up into a downpour. Since I was more than halfway through, I completed the roof in the rain.

All in all, I had a blast giving back to OSR and the Scouts that are filling the camp; there were close to 400 Scouts there when I was there, during Week One.
Searching for Stories About the Trading Post: You Can Help An OSR History Project!

By Mike Kelly
OSR Staff 1965-1970

To kick off what I hope will be a long-term project to preserve memories of Onteora, I'm looking for stories, pictures, and any other items of interest regarding the Trading Post. If you have something to share, please send it to me at OSR-memories@cox.net.

Listening to the stories around the campfire at the September 2015 Reunion Weekend got me thinking about the need to record and preserve the history of Onteora and the stories about what has happened there. So many of the people who played major roles in the birth and early years of the reservation have already gone, and we're now having to rely in many cases on people who are two or three steps removed from these events.

Those who still remain have a wealth of stories and, for the most part, are not shy about sharing them. However, we're not getting any younger; if we don't start collecting and recording this material, we risk losing it forever.

Steve Shull and others have previously written a number of pieces with their personal recollections of earlier days at Onteora, and I have started to accumulate them for posterity.

However, this project is intended to have a broader appeal to a much wider audience: people who may not want to write a long article, but do remember some important parts of the history and heritage of Onteora. Even if it's just an amusing story about the people who made life interesting back then, will you consider sharing that with us?

To get things started, we'll focus first on the Trading Post. Former staff members who worked there will probably possess much of the history, and perhaps even have some photos, but everybody spent some time there and may have something to contribute. Please send what you can to me at OSR-memories@cox.net. I'll give full credit to the contributor, unless of course you would prefer to remain anonymous!

We hope to move on to other areas in the future. If you have suggestions for areas that might be ripe for the harvest, please share those suggestions.

Onteora meant a lot to many of us as we went through those years, and this is our chance to keep those memories from being lost.

Thanks for your support.
OAA Chair's Message: Real Camps Have A Lake, Orchard Lake Makes OSR Great!

I wish I was at Onteora right now! That’s not an unusual wish for me, but on the date of this writing, June 30, 2015, in the week before Onteora’s 2015 summer camping season starts, it hit 103 degrees Fahrenheit here in Los Angeles, so I really wish I was at camp!

A nice dip in Orchard Lake sounds pretty tempting!

Actually, I did get in the pool and it made me think about the waterfront program at camp. I vividly remember my first arrival at camp in 1963, with the stop at the health lodge before we headed off to the waterfront for our swimming tests. Wow, was that confusing!

What were these “Buddy Tags” they kept talking about Man, that water is cold! I hope I pass, I hope I pass … yes! I did! And for the next two weeks of my first summer at Onteora, I was at Orchard Lake as much as possible, swimming and boating. I’m sure that I was in a canoe for the first time during the summer of 1963.

I also remember trying to pass the mile swim test in 1963 and failing. I tried it again in 1965 and failed again. I think I finally passed it in 1969, during my second year on OSR's Staff as part of the Roosevelt program shelter.

Of all the various tests I took in Scouting, the mile swim test had to be one of the hardest. The Lifesaving merit badge almost got in the way of my path to Eagle, but I finally conquered Lifesaving merit badge that year as well. I’m convinced that without the summers at OSR, I never would have made it to Eagle.

Orchard Lake is a wonderful part of camp. Not only is it beautiful, but the activities offered there are far, far better than one could get at a camp without a lake.

For me, summer camp involves a real, honest-to-goodness lake, and not a swimming pool. Yes, you can heat a pool, but I’ll bet that Orchard Lake is warmer now than it was when I was a camper at OSR. Besides global warming, the water isn’t as deep because of years of silt, so it probably warms up faster, although I’ll bet there will be a bunch of 10- and 11-year olds there for their first summer that would disagree with that.

I hope you’ll as well think about Orchard Lake and visit Onteora this summer. And if you get to camp, please put a toe in the water for me.

Quick – where’s your buddy?

Yours in Scouting,

Bill Cotter
Chair, Onteora Alumni Association
Theodore Roosevelt Council

TRC Thanks 2015 OSR Attendees, Releases Promotional Video of 2016 OSR Program

“On behalf of the Theodore Roosevelt Council, and the Onteora Scout Reservation Family, we would like to thank everyone who came to Onteora this summer,” the TRC posted Aug. 25, 2015, to Onteora’s Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/OnteoraTRC/).

“We hope that everyone had an amazing experience, taking part in all of the opportunities offered, and we look forward to seeing you back Home, at ‘The Land in the Sky’ in the summer of 2016!”

The TRC published a 2016 Onteora promotional video on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cc5x6G4sXO8) that features exciting opportunities for Scouts to experience this upcoming summer.

The video, which was released Oct. 29, 2015, and is more than four minutes in duration, was created by Onteora Staff member Ryan Clifford, who earned the Onteora program director’s award in 2014. Sixteen of Onteora’s program areas are featured in the video.