

ECHOES OF CEDARVILLE

FEBRUARY 2013

Cedarville Area Historical Society



12th Historical Society Luncheon Draws Crowd with Big Appetites

Super Bowl Sunday is a big day for football fans. For the Cedarville Area Historical Society that same day represents the winter gathering of members and guests for the annual soup, salad, sandwich and dessert lunch. It was the same this February 3 as it has been in the past.

A lot of people with empty stomachs showed up at the Cedarville Community Center at 11 a.m. and filled themselves with four kinds of soup, sandwiches, and several dozen different desserts. If that wasn't enough, there were pies for sale baked by the Lena 4H Live wires.



*More photos
of the lunch
can be seen
on page 8*

Ho, Ho, Ho A Scouting We Will Go

By Jim Bade

President CAHS

Serendipity (n) The faculty of making fortunate and unexpected discoveries by accident.

Several months ago Todd Cronau, son of the late Ray Cronau of Cedarville, donated his father's Boy Scout scoutmaster shirt to the historical society. It occurred to me the shirt was a wonderful start toward an exhibit on Boy Scouts in the village. That's not going to happen.

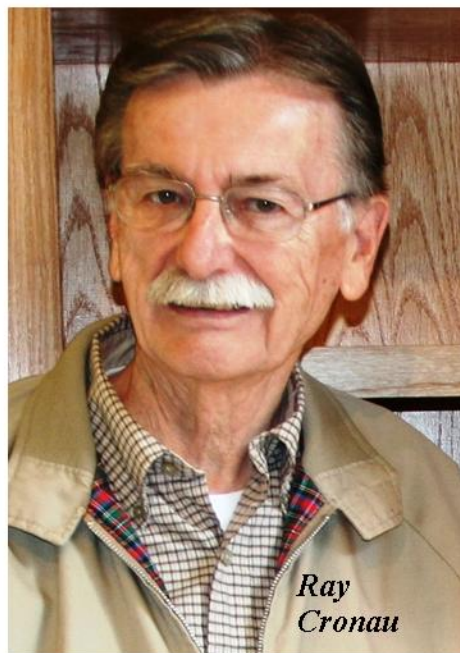
Instead, we have this article and photos that grew from correspondence I had with several current and former Cedarville residents who lived through Ray's activities in the 1950s and 1960s that involved scouting, camping and just plain adult-youth relationships.

The first thing I learned was that the YMCA's Indian Guides — an organization for a boy's pre-scout years — was Ray's real forte. Todd led me to Mrs. Coralyn Fransen, widow of LeRoy "Swede" Fransen, Ray's close friend and partner in his work with kids. Mrs. Fransen, now 90, lives in Freeport.

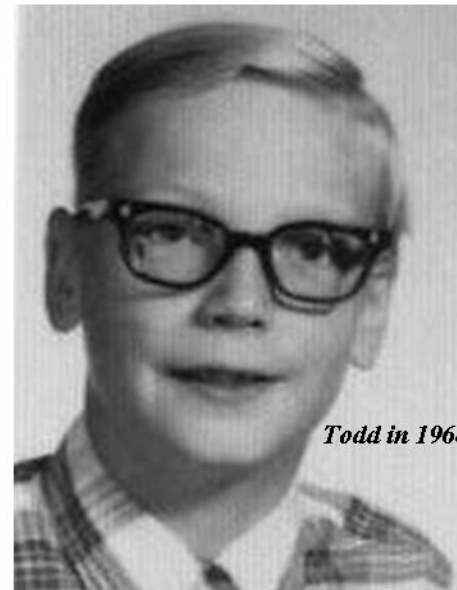
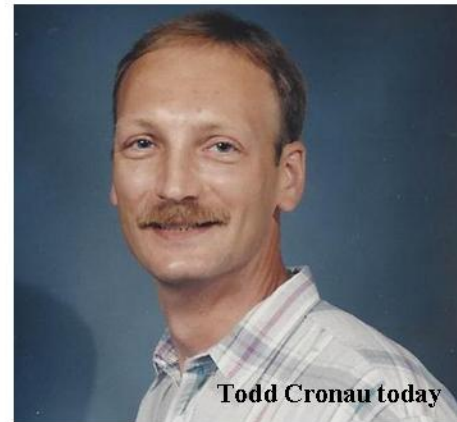
Within days after writing to her, I received a delightful, two page answer written in a firm, legible script such as you do not see too often these days with our reliance on grunt talk and electronic communication.

She agreed Ray and her husband, who died in 2008, did enjoy working with the scouts. She said her son Ron and Ray's son Matt were too young at that time to be in Ray's troop, but they always went along on camp outs and other activities.

She added: "But there was another group before the scouts that both men worked with. That was the Indian Guides. That involved boys from five to eight years of age. We had a good sized group and somehow all of those little boys stuck together all through grade school." She listed Matt Cronau, Ron Fransen, Curt Wilson, Steve Mason, Ricky Giles, Mike



and Rick Noble. Later other persons I contacted added the names of Todd Cronau, Virgil Zunker, Marty Brubaker, Cameron Wilson, Tom and Greg Garman, Fred Wagner, Hooker Holtan and Ernie Warner as those taking part in the various scout and youth programs.



Mrs. Fransen continued in her letter: "The group went on campouts (just overnight) and I don't think they ever had good weather. It usually rained or one time they had freezing rain. We predicted the weather according to their campout dates."

The Fransens were married in 1941 and lived in Cedarville from 1948 until 1967. She lived in Red Oak until the marriage; LeRoy's Cedarville life dated back to 1928.

I sent a copy of Mrs. Fransen's letter to several of the names she mentioned and soon received a response from Curt Wilson, Rick Noble and Virgil Zunker. Zunker also included a group of photographs related to the subject.

Curt Wilson said, "I was a cub scout in Cedarville, but never a boy scout. The cub scouts met at Dean Burriss's house kitty corner from Duane Smith's house. Dean's mom was the den mother and those gatherings occurred after school." (*Duane Smith, art teacher in the Freeport schools, lived on the northwest corner of Mill and Oak streets: Editor*)

"However," Curt continued, "we were ALL in Indian Guides. Indian Guides was a father and son organization that was sponsored by the Freeport YMCA. There was no leader in this group — just six to eight father and son teams that got together once a month or so taking turns in each others homes."

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He added: “We all had Indian names my dad (*LeRoy Wilson*) and I were Big Moose and Little Moose. We wore Indian head bands with single feathers. Each father and son team made a drum and we would start each meeting with a ceremony and the beating of those drums. Every meeting involved a craft activity, a game, food and fun.

“Mrs. Fransen had it right when she said every camp out was a rain out. That’s also my memory, but it was fun spending the night in a wet tent with your dad.”



Curt Wilson in 1963

The day after hearing from Curt I received a letter from Rick Noble. Like Curt he is also living in Wisconsin.

“I really enjoyed reading Mrs. Fransen’s letter though I was a little confused at first since she kept referring to ‘LeRoy’.

I only knew her husband as Mr. Fransen or ‘Swede’, as my dad called him. To me ‘LeRoy’ was Mr. Wilson, (*Curt’s late father who died in 2008*) also known as ‘Pee Wee’. I believe Mr. Wilson gladly left that nickname behind once he left Microswitch. Nicknames were popular back then and it makes me wonder, in retrospect, how many people actually hated them.”

Rick continued: “Anyway, like Curt, I was never a boy scout — just a cub scout and an Indian Guide.

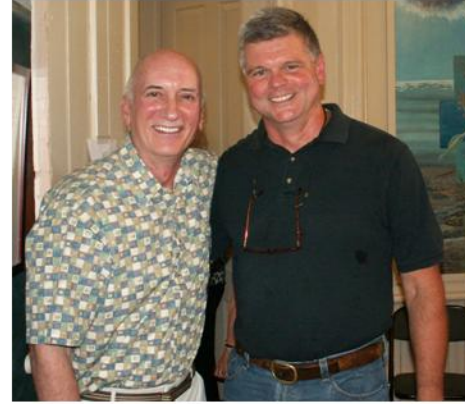
“As Indian Guides, we started each meeting in a big circle with our fathers, beat our drums and pledged, ‘We, father and son, through friendly service to each other, to our family, to this tribe, to our community, seek a world pleasing to the eye of the Great Spirit.’”

Rick added: “Interesting that a Christian organization (*the YMCA*) would promote pleasing the Great Spirit, but we never thought twice about it.

“As Curt said, we wore head bands and wooden arrow-shaped nametags around our necks, strung with a leather shoestring, which had your Indian name burned into it. Dick was Big Bear, Mike was Brown Bear and I was Little Bear. I think Mr. Cronau may have been the one to fabricate those since he was the only one with a band saw.

“We’d borrow my grandpa’s pup tent for the camp outs and the three of us would

squeeze into it for what always promised to be a night of pounding rain and sopping wet sleeping bags. It was a great time.”



Rick Noble, left, and Curt Wilson at the 2011 dedication of the LeRoy Wilson Theater in the Cedarville Museum.

In his comments, Virgil Zunker agreed that most of the boys got started with scouting in the cub scouts.

“The meetings were all held in the Ilgin house on Mill Street. That’s the white brick house where the Monigolds now live,” he said.

Zunker’s placement of the cub scout den meetings disagrees with that of Curt Wilson who put them in the Burris house which was two blocks farther north. Curt later explained that Virgil was older than he and Noble and not in the same cub scout group.

Fortunately, Zunker’s mother took severa

eral pictures at these meetings, including the one on this page where several cubs of pack 204 are roasting hot dogs or marshmallows in the Ilgin fireplace on May 26, 1954.

Zunker relates this story: “Onetime Ray Cronau needed someone to take his car and get something before a meeting at his house. Maybe pop or food. He asked me to do it. I was one of the older scouts and he knew I was a farm boy who had been driving for a little while. There wasn’t much traffic then and I probably only went from his house to the gas station in Cedarville. But it was a big deal driving his car. It had a push button transmission shifter on the left side of the dash. Maybe it was a Dodge or Plymouth. All I had ever driven at this time was my dad’s old stick shift cars and a truck.”

Zunker said the scout meetings were held in Ray’s shop (*at the back of his house on Mill Street*) and that was always very interesting to Zunker because even at that

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age he was interested in tools and building things.

"I had my own table saw at home, but when taking shop classes in junior high, the teacher would not let me use the table saw when building my cedar chest. He had to do the panel sawing after I did all the hand work gluing up, etc.," Zunker added.



Memorial Day, May 30, 1961: Virgil Zunker in uniform with troop flag and Ray Cronau in uniform on right.

Several days before writing this article, I received a letter from Todd with more insights into his family's participation in the Indian Guides and scouting.

"Dad was involved in both the Indian Guides and the boy scouts but not the cub scouts. I recall dad would take us with him to many of the boy scout events

and I recall camping out at least a couple of times even though Matt (*Todd's older brother*) and I were too young to be scouts."

Todd recalled: "I remember the troop camping out in a field adjacent to the Cedarville Cemetery long before there were any homes in the area. We were awakened early in the morning by what we thought was the start of a rain shower. To our surprise, the sound of rain hitting the side of our canvas tent was actually a cow urinating on the tent.

"I also recall the scouts building their dog sled in Dad's shop. They also did some regular sledding down the 'Hogback' (*a spot near the railroad tracks*) just outside of Red Oak. There was also scout events at Apple Canyon State Park where there were ceremonies like 'Order of the Arrow.' I am sure Virgil and Bob Zunker and the other scouts have a much more vivid memory of those events since they were older than Mat and I. I just thought it was great to go along with dad and be around the older boys.

"As far as the Indian Guides: Dad, Tom Garman, LeRoy Wilson and LeRoy Fransen were involved as adults. The kids I remember were Matt and myself, Curt and Cam Wilson, Greg and, I believe, Danny Garman, Ronald Fransen and Mike and Rick Noble. (*Rick Noble concurs in the names.*)

"Our tribe was the 'Mohawks'. Kenneth

Fissell — who worked at Northwestern Telephone Co. with dad and was also an artist — made our Mohawk tribe flag. The flag was white canvas with the side view of a Mohawk Indian.

"I also recall we had a ceremonial homemade drum and a couple of wooden hatchets and maybe a bow and arrows."



The sled the scouts built in Ray Cronau's work shop for the February 4, 1961, Klondike Derby at the Lena golf course. The boys were the dogs.

Todd continued: "The event that stands out in my mind is when we were at Krape Park in Freeport for a pow wow of the Indian Guides tribes. I was involved in a watermelon eating competition. Brother Matt was yelling at me to swallow the watermelon seeds because I was wasting too much time spitting out the seeds. Naturally, I didn't even come close to winning the contest. The prize for gorging yourself with watermelon was an over-sized Snickers candy bar.

"We also had a tug-of-war with the Blackfoot tribe who out numbered us by about five to one. Even with the adults of our tribe (our fathers) being allowed to help us, we lost. It was like trying to hold back the Mongol hordes."

I close this piece with Rick Nobel's abbreviated comments on the making of the tom tom by the five Cedarville Indian Guides, a project that is remembered by most of the boys-now-men.

"Dad and I didn't get around to the project until the afternoon before the meeting. He found a coffee can, chopped out the bottom and cut two circles of rubber from an old truck tire inner tube for the drum heads. We wrapped the can in wood grain shelf paper and threaded the heads on with a yellow bootlace.

"The five families met at the Fransen house and a man from the YMCA came to judge the best tom tom. All the other drums were wooden with authentic deer skin heads, lashed in place with rawhide lacings zigzagged around. Some even had real eagle feathers.

"The man circled the tom toms piled in the center of the room, stroked his chin and said, "This is going to be difficult. I see five fine examples of Indian craftsmanship here"

"I quickly counted the drums and thought FIVE? He included ours? This is my first memory of a grown-up lying in order to be kind"



A before lunch chat. From left: CAHS director Steve Myers, Duane Smith and Rick Sides



CAHS director Carol Meyers serves one of four soups to Mary Reed while Bonnie Bade waits.



Left around the table: Ruth Smith, Harlan and Judy Corrie, Dale Prieve and daughter Sarah, Rick Sides and Bonnie Bade.



Kathleen and Steve Glaze, right, shared table and talk with Gary Hagemann and wife, Diane (hidden) a CAHS director

Everyone Ate Until Full At Society Feb. 3 Lunch



Cedarville caterers Ingrid and Don Heilman said the food was on a par with their best offerings.



CAHS Vice President Narcissa Engle made sure there were plenty of desserts available.