

The year-by-year history of the Buckskin Trail is given below. This history was started by Ken Hutchinson, who wrote the initial version of the history and carried it forward through at least the end of the tenure of Jim Manion as the Scoutmaster, and possibly much later. Single paragraphs concerning the tenure of successive Scoutmasters through Aulay Carlson in 2001 were added to this history, and from 2002 onward, a more complete history for each year on the course was added by the key leadership for each course. The cumulative history through the first weekend of each course is added to the booklet handed out to each participant at the end of the course.

The text that follows is the original text of this ongoing history, edited only by including the headings for each Scoutmaster from Chuck Gardner through Aulay Carlson, and for the individual year histories from 2002 through the first half of 2019. A few minor grammatical and capitalization errors were also corrected.

Historically Speaking

By: Ken Hutchinson

Boy Scout leaders consist of men with many talents, skills, and professions. Generally, two skills are lacking. Number one, knowledge of the great outdoors, and two, and the psychology of “getting through” to boys of scouting age. Without the adventure of scouting as a boy, the scoutmaster is lost. A story I shall relate at another time.

But, help was on the way.

In the spring of 1954 Jim Manion, as Scoutmaster and Tom Zerkle as Senior Patrol Leader launched a leader's training program. Trainers consisted of noteworthy Scouters as Ralph Dennler, Ken Wade, Ed Wise, Bob Wheeler, Lynn Winters, etc. Students taking training in the spring came back in the fall as instructors. The beige neckerchief, with buckskin fringe, was awarded all students upon completion of the course. After completion of the instruction phase, in the fall, a leather neckerchief slide in the shape of a Buckskin was awarded the instructor. At this point, he was considered a full-fledged Thunderbuck. The fall session was discontinued in 1959.

In 1958 a second training course was started. It was known as the Thunderbird Training Course. Ed Wise was the first Scoutmaster, followed by Jim Vance then Darrol Wilson in 1960. The history of this era is a bit sketchy and in the spring of 1963 the manual was rewritten and the Buckskin Trail, as we know it, was born. The 1960 staff consisted of:

James Manion, Scoutmaster, and honorary Chief Thunderbuck, Charles Lay. George Harold, Keeper of the Buckskin. Harold Dane, Scribe, Secretary and Treasurer. Don Schenking, Senior Patrol Leader. Ken Hutchinson, Historian and Photographer.

The first reunion was held in the Kiwanis Lodge at Cricket Holler in 1963.

In the early stages of the Buckskin Trail one would wear many hats. As an example. one year, I was assistant scoutmaster, patrol leader of the “Screw Ball” patrol, knife and ax instructor, and in charge of the final adventure trail. The new era has many more Thunderbucks, a number of which teach and are proficient in one subject.

As the “Trail” picked up momentum, the news media took notice. Marge Heyduck, of Dayton Daily News fame, announced our 1963 reunion. The leisure section of the Dayton Daily News carried two pages of pictures with the front page displaying Tom Dunn cooking on a tin can stove. The News Tribune featured a full page of pictures. Scouter publications also made mention of the project, this being a very rare thing. The “Trail” was tailored for a training level of

First Class Scout. Training of the Scouters of the Northwest District was the original purpose but as the news spread, other areas became involved. To some Scouters, this was a real "life saver". So, the story I promised earlier.

In 1954, Hale United Church of Christ wanted to sponsor a Scout Troop. Miami Valley Council sent Charley Meadows to our meeting with a motion picture on scouting. I was asked to run the projector. After the film, a committee was formed and all but a Scoutmaster had been chosen. At this point no takers; I am sure you have guessed who took the job. Rather than abandon the project, I volunteered to be Scoutmaster until a real one was found. The nine years as Scoutmaster was only possible by the Buckskin Trail Program. As the Scoutmaster of Troop 368, I was chosen as Scoutmaster of Troop 36 for the 1957 National Jamboree.

To get back on course, the years that followed saw many changes and the leather neckerchief slide gave way to a hand carved Thunderbird. The new slide was carved from wood and hand painted by Jim Vance. This hand carved slide became a highly prized item to those having gotten this issue. As enrollment increased, the hand carved bird gave way to a plastic molded one made by John Pierce but was still hand painted.

At the 1964 reunion, Chief Thunderbuck Charles Lay presented Jim Manion a plaque for ten years service as Scoutmaster of Troop 315. This same year Lee Peffley joined the Buckskin and became a super trainer and is still a top leader as of this writing. Every organization must have a theme song and so it is with the Buckskin, in 1966 Dick White wrote, "Hail to the Buckskin". The end of 1967 high point was the presentation of an antique rocking chair by Paul Shearer and George Loney to our esteemed leader. A trio of students, who joined their dads, and became Thunderbucks like dad, marked 1969. The trio was James Manion Jr., Cliff Geier Jr. and Ken Hutchinson Jr. At the campfire Chuck Gardener presented Judge Carl Kessler a neckerchief. Another student, Harry Carroll joined ranks to become another super trainer. He became Senior Patrol Leader in 1974. This year saw many changes in the training course and the start of "Model Camp". In the spring of 1970, Jim Manion retired as Scoutmaster. He was honored by his fellow Thunderbucks and was presented a plaque by Judge Cecil Edwards. Judge Edwards was then presented with the only honorary membership ever given to anyone that did not complete the course. He received a Buckskin neckerchief.

The inside quartermaster corps gained a good and faithful worker as Bud Frantz joined our group.

Chuck Gardner – 1971 to 1977

Chuck Gardner succeeded Jim Manion in the year 1971 as Scoutmaster and Harold Clark served as Chief Thunderbuck. Harold Danes, a long time scribe, resigned and was awarded a trophy for his many years of keeping the books straight. The scribe position was assigned to Jim McCoy. In this new regime (1976) Everett Wood joined the ranks and became Senior Patrol Leader in 1979. In the interim, Ralph Stuart was named Chief Thunderbuck. This position was altered in 1978, when the outgoing Scoutmaster became the Chief. At this time Jackie Howe became scribe. At the 1977 campfire, Dave Goldswig presented Chuck Gardner a plaque. As Tom Spettel took over from Chuck Gardner, Chuck became Chief Thunderbuck.

Tom Spettel – 1978 to 1985

Tom Spettel, as Scoutmaster was the first to witness the most drastic change in the history of Buckskin when five women joined as students. The year 1977 preceded this movement when Maggie Engle joined the ranks. From 1978 forward women were numerous in the years to come. Tom awarded Jim McCoy a trophy for his time as scribe for the Buckskin. Tim Schultz, of class 1980 served as quartermaster through 1986. Since 1980 the average

student count is 65 with a staff of 80. The Thunderbird mold was passed on to Dick Crandall in 1985 and Bill Heckman became scribe for the troop.

Dick Crandall – 1986 to 1991

At the turn of 1986 Dick Crandall became the new Scoutmaster. In 1988, being the thirty-fifth anniversary of Buckskin, a trophy was presented to the Buckskin Trail. The trophy consisted of the neckerchief and belongings of our first Scoutmaster, Jim Manion. Enshrined also is a solid brass belt buckle engraved with a number “1” in honor and memory of the first Scoutmaster of Troop 315.

Dave Sword – 1992 to 1995

Dave Sword was named Scoutmaster in 1992, at which time Dick Crandall became the Chief Thunderbuck. Bill Heckman resigned as scribe in 1991 and was presented a carved Thunderbuck trophy, carved by Harry Carroll and presented by the new Scoutmaster Dave Sword.

Aulay Carlson – 1996 to 2001

In the past two decades many changes took place. Each Scoutmaster and staff contributed many things to the course. The course was revised in 1984, 1987 and 1990. This was possibly more changes than had been made in the history of the Buckskin Trail. Within the two decades, a model camp was initiated which covers every facet of outdoor scouting. Scribes also change and so it is with the present. The responsibilities that Ralph Estridge commanded from 1991 to 1995 are now in the hands of Debbie Gould-Miller. Also, on the subject of change, Aulay Carlson becomes our 1996 Scoutmaster and Dave Sword is our new Chief Thunderbuck.

Aulay Carlson served as the Scoutmaster of the Buckskin Trail with many changes. In 2000, Sharon Brown became the first woman to serve as Senior Patrol Leader. Changes made from the Boy Scouts of America consisted of adding Youth Protection Training and Leave No Trace training to our course. These changes were placed into the program to ensure that Scouters attending the course received the most up to date training. Other changes came along due to updates of the different ranks and the rewriting of the Scout Handbook.

Aulay Carlson, placed many other good Scouters into places to perform the needed tasks to make the Trail what it is, a very excellent outdoor training course for all Scouters, be it Cub Scout, Boy Scout, or Venture Scouters. Aulay, along with scribe Debbie Gould-Miller, served on the Trail until 2001. Dave Sword awarded Aulay a plaque along with a Norman Rockwell print of the “Scoutmaster” at the closing campfire of 2001. Dave Sword retired as Chief Thunderbuck to leave Aulay Carlson the new title of “Chief Thunderbuck”.

2002 Buckskin Trail

Steve Kump was asked to step into the Scoutmaster position for the 2002 Buckskin Trail. John Miller also took the place of Debbie Gould-Miller as the new scribe. Stan Vandiver continued to be in charge of the “Model Camp Area” which all Scouters attending the Trail love.

In 2001 sorrow hit the Buckskin Trail with the loss of Harry Carroll and Lee Peffley, both passing away to be with many other great scout leaders.

As Steve Kump took over the Scoutmaster position, the Boy Scouts of America once again made some training changes. The training ideas that came from the National Office put into place many new training ideas. With these ideas Wood Badge was rewritten to incorporate Cub Scouters, Boy Scouters and Venture Scouters into the same course, which meant that all of the other training courses offered throughout the Miami Valley Council would be changed.

With these changes occurring, the Buckskin Trail became the official "Outdoor Training Course" for the Miami Valley Council.

Dick Dexter as Senior Patrol Leader and Scott Porter as his Assistant will lead the 2002 Buckskin Trail into its new adventures. Larry Hess in charge of the Troop Guides will be in need of patience to deal with his wonderful Troop Guide Patrol. Ken Cornett with his Inside Quartermasters will help to enhance the Trail as well as the Outside Quartermasters under Dave Brewer's leadership. Aulay Carlson was unable to return to the Trail as Chief Thunderbuck, so Dave Sword came back to serve once again with his leadership abilities as the Chief Thunderbuck. At the closing of the 2002 Buckskin Trail, many Buckskinners were happy to see the fun once again back on the Trail. The Quartermaster's helped to supply the fun along with the Troop Guides and the attending participants. Scott Porter became the Senior Patrol Leader for the 2003 course and asked Carolyn Taylor to become his Assistant.

2003 Buckskin Trail

During the 2003 course many interesting things occurred. More Cub Scout Leaders started to attend the Buckskin Trail, hearing about the many areas that could be learned about and added into their pack activities. The new historian of the Buckskin Trail, Dick Dexter, spoke about the first session of the training course, bringing the information up to the present time, gave a special historic lesson. The Scoutmaster, Steve Kump, presented the old Scoutmasters of the training course framed copies of the fiftieth anniversary staff and student council shoulder patches. Dick Dexter, the designer of the anniversary patch, also received framed copies. The Chief Thunderbuck, Dave Sword explained how the Boy Scouts of America had heard of the outstanding course, called The Buckskin Trail, which was being held in the Miami Valley Council. The National office then came to visit during a course in the past and had used, The Buckskin Trail as an example to start the Scoutmaster Fundamental Training course. During the first weekend campfire the Troop Guides retired an American Flag with dignity and showed staff and students the correct way to retire a worn flag.

As the second weekend came to an end, Scott Porter handed over the Senior Patrol Leader responsibilities to Carolyn Taylor. She then announced the new Assistant Senior Patrol Leader as Kevin Fitzharris.

2004 Buckskin Trail

As the beginning of the 2004 Buckskin Trail came nearer, the Great Scoutmaster in the Sky decided to drop heavy dew onto Cricket Holler Scout Camp. The staff took this in stride and the students didn't mind either. Even though the camp was very muddy from the heavy dew, the adjustments were made and the course went on as planned. The Troop Guides brought into the course small rodents along with their Patrol Name, "The Gofers".

The staff and patrol members became very involved with the task of helping each other to learn and improve in the area of helping the boys in their troops and packs, by obtaining new knowledge. The changes that were put into place by the 2004 staffers helped to keep the learning of the Scouting Ideas that Baden Powell instated easier to understand and to follow. Many new ideas as to the presentation of the Aims and Methods of Scouting, the Patrol Method and Youth Protection, were adjusted to help keep the program moving and to assist the Patrols in the learning process. At the first weekend campfire once again each Patrol added an excellent touch by their ideas of skits and songs, along with the Chief Thunderbuck's discovery of the Spirit Log presentation. As the Patrols worked their ideas of the Patrol Meeting on the second Wednesday night meeting, they learned how and why the Patrol Meeting is important, by presenting their ideas. The second weekend came and once again the Quartermasters did a wonderful job of assisting the Patrols with their Patrol Gear. Each Patrol got the added

adventure of visiting the Model Camp area, with the ideas of each of the staff presentations of wonder. With another weekend of learning and doing at the Buckskin Trail another group of Buckskinners was born. Carolyn Taylor handed the job of Senior Patrol Leader over to Kevin Fitzharris and he announced his Assistant as Paula Wathen.

2005 Buckskin Trail

At the beginning of the 2005 course, 35 adults signed up for the Buckskin training course. As the first weekend came around with its wonderful weather, two adults dropped from the course. Dave Brewer was unable return to the Trail due to some health issues so Tim Bailey became the man in charge of the Outside Quartermaster Corps as the Patrol Leader.

The Quartermaster corps became more involved once again and helped by working at Cricket Holler the weekend before on camp improvements. The Quartermasters also helped the Troop Guides, The Gators, by building the campfire for them. New guidelines concerning campfire skits was shared with the patrols, which some were hard to understand, but accepted. At the first weekend campfire all of the skits were brand new to all of the staff. Even the Quartermaster Corps got involved with a new skit of their own, which became the hit of the campfire.

A Venturing presentation was added this year for the many new youth, male and female that has joined together in the Scouting Program.

As the course continued a new location had to be found for the Model Camp presentation. With the Capital Campaign for the improvements of Cricket Holler being sought, the Council Office declared West Camp unusable, and construction was to start soon. The Model Camp Director, Stan Vandiver, Senior Patrol Leader, Kevin Fitzharris and Program Director, Dave Green found another location for the Model Camp presentation and all was well.

At the second weekend campfire the new pewter Thunderbuck Slides were given to the first year staff members. As the Buckskin Trail came to another year's end, Paula Wathen became the Senior Patrol Leader for the next year's course. Paula announced that her Assistant Senior Patrol Leader for the 2006-year would be Kenny Cornett.

2006 Buckskin Trail

With great pleasure the Council Training Committee finally recognized that The Buckskin Trail, with small adjustments, could fulfill the National Training requirements for the Outdoor Training of Scout Leaders for the Miami Valley Council. With this in mind the Senior Buckskin Staff and Council Training Committee prepared for the beginning of the 2006 Buckskin year by placing into the program the few missing pieces that were needed for The Buckskin Trail to meet the National Training Program requirements. With much time spent and the needed items added into the revised Buckskin Program another year arrived for The Buckskin Trail.

Construction of the new training center and the new camping shelters for Cricket Holler was already in swing. Many places throughout camp were being changed due to this construction, which caused more problems with The Buckskin Trail. The roads were worn badly due to the large equipment that was being used on these roads. The parking lot was filled with building materials and the equipment being used at camp for construction, which caused parking problems. Water issues became another problem due to the aging of the water pipes and construction.

But the Buckskin Staff stayed on track to bring another great year of learning to the Scouters attending the Trail for the 2006 session.

Ken Cornett had a job change that conflicted with him becoming the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader for the year. So, Paula chose Steve Pratt to become her assistant for the year.

Stan Vandiver had to resign his position as the Asst. Scoutmaster of Model Camp also due to his job, and Kevin Fitzharris replaced him for the 2006 course.

The staff for the 2006-year worked hard on their presentations and showed that they had learned much from the Buckskin Program. Paula Wathen and Steve Pratt were very impressed with the staff for this year. At the March Staff Meeting, the Scoutmaster, Steve Kump presented limited copies of his Scoutmaster Minutes collected from his five-year period to the staff that asked him where he was getting his stories. Steve Kump decided that he would step down after finishing his five-year commitment to the Miami Valley Council as Scoutmaster, and would replace Dave Sword as Chief Thunderbuck for the next Scoutmaster, Dave Green in 2007. The announcement of Dave Green becoming Scoutmaster would come during the 2006 course at the second weekend campfire.

The next Scoutmaster, Dave Green would become the eighth Scoutmaster for the history of The Buckskin Trail. At the beginning of the 2006 course 24 adults signed up to attend. This number seemed lower due to the new alignment of the training courses by the Miami Valley Council. First year Webelos Leaders were encouraged to attend the Webelos Outdoors Leader Training to be held later in the year. This seemed to cut the number of participants by 10 adults.

With some extra recruiting by the Senior Patrol Leader, Paula Wathen, and some of the other Leaders before the beginning of the first weekend; another patrol was added, making the adult count come to 31 participants.

The Quartermaster Corps once again went to Cricket Holler the weekend prior to the start of the 2006 course to help the Ranger, Dennis Heydinger, do some needed maintenance around the camp. With this extra effort put forward by the Quartermaster Corps, the participants could enjoy The Buckskin Trail even more!

As the first weekend began so did the heavy dew. With the camp roads being in bad shape from the construction equipment and the extra dew, many adjustments had to be made. The round robins normally held in the Miami Sports Field got moved to the K-Lodge Lawn. For the first time in fourteen years the fun campfire was moved indoors to the K-Lodge due to lightning. And the Sunday chapel service was held in the K-Lodge due to the extra water left by the previous night's storm.

Even though many adjustments had to be made, the now five patrols seemed not to mind! They proceeded on with their cheers, songs and yells. All had a great time throughout the weekend, and made ready for their Model Troop meeting to be held at their next Wednesday meeting.

At the end of the weekend the staff, tired and happy, started thinking about what changes may need to be made for the final weekend's program. The Scoutmaster said, "Let's all go home and wait and see what happens, when that time comes."

With such a unique system and the many years of experience, what could be added—it is all there. Yet, I am sure they will think of something!!

One last piece of business that must be addressed is that of the 2007 Senior Patrol Leader and Assistant Senior Patrol Leader. Stephen Pratt stepped up to Senior Patrol Leader and he announced on Sunday that he had chosen Steve Wolcott as his Assistant. Steve and Stephen will work well together as they have for several years as Troop Guides. With Mr. Wolcott's special sense of humor, the coming years promise to be quite entertaining. And, another year on the Trail comes to a close. The busy hands begin the many hours of preparation for next year.

2007 Buckskin Trail

The 2007 Buckskin Trail staff formed early to ensure we were fully prepared to offer all the FUN and wisdom offered in previous courses. Steve Wolcott was unable to fulfill his duties as Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, so Steve Pratt asked Scott Wheeler to step in. Scott has brought his considerable energy and talent to the course.

Dave Green selected his Leadership Team, with Dick Dexter moving from his role as Asst Scoutmaster for Troop Guides to Asst Scoutmaster for Program. Dick tabbed Mike Clinch to serve as his Junior Assistant Scoutmaster. Paula Wathen has graduated from her Senior Patrol Leader role to replace Dick as Asst Scoutmaster for Troop Guides. Ronnda Pagan continues in her role as Asst Scoutmaster for Weekends; John Miller and Vicki Bennethum return as Scribe and Asst Scribe, respectively. Kevin Fitzharris continued as and Asst Scoutmaster of Facilities overseeing the activities of the Quartermasters and Model Camp.

We opened the Trail with four mighty patrols of dedicated scout leaders. The first weekend was extremely cold, and many of our presentations were done indoors to ensure that people were learning, not trying to survive the frigid weather. Weather for the second weekend improved considerably, and the closing campfire was a complete success, featuring a number of newly trained Scout leaders that received their Buckskin neckerchiefs and staffers that received their Thunderbucks. Our total attendance was smaller than hoped having just 21 participants, however, each was full of enthusiasm and scout spirit. The staff continues to be a strong 50, which is consistent with recent years.

In short, the 2007 Trail was memorable, successful, and a great deal of FUN. We look forward to once again holding the Reunion Day in September, and the beginning of staff development next January. Before we parted, Scott Wheeler introduced the new Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, Greg Neff.

2008 Buckskin Trail

The year 2008 started in January with 45 staffers, who gathered at the K-Lodge to begin preparation for the course. Having met on the last Wednesday of January, February, and March the staff was ready to greet the class with open arms. 24 participants arrived on Wednesday, April 2nd ready to begin their walk on the Trail. The Prowling Panthers, Soaring Falcons, Funky Monkeys and Timber Elks fit right in with the troop learning the basics of scouting with the Aims and Methods presented by the Troop Guides. After several years of trying new ways to present the Aims and Methods, the Troop Guides hit a homerun with this one. It was simple, to the point and interactive.

The first weekend was wonderful; not too hot, overcast with very little dew. All activities scheduled outside went off as planned. The steak dinner was wonderful with the meat provided (wholesale) by Tumbleweed Southwest Grill, Kettering, OH.

The Funky Monkeys led the 2nd Troop Meeting with a theme of First Aid/Disaster Preparedness. The Prowling Panthers started things off with a round-robin "what if" Pre-Opening. An Opening by the Timber Elks, a 3-level Skills Instruction was hosted by the Monkeys and then a relay Inter-Patrol Activity by the Soaring Falcons. Lessons were learned and a great experience was had by all.

The 2nd weekend showed promise of some dew, but went off without a hitch; learning continued and spirits were high. Scott Wheeler completed his task as Senior Patrol Leader handed his reins to Greg Neff, who tapped Mike Bradshaw as his Assistant Senior Patrol Leader for the coming 2009 course.

Chief Thunderbuck, Steve "Forest" Kump closed our final staff meeting with a story to awake and encourage us to continue to do our best. Being a personal experience I am unable to quote him, therefore, I will summarize as best I can. Once upon a time a man owned a classic car, which he loved and admired very much. He drove the car regularly and washed and polished it weekly, without fail. The automobile was beautiful and remained in good service for many years. Well, the time came that the gentleman was unable to continue the care and service that the old car needed and soon the car showed the signs of old age and poor maintenance. You see, there was no one who loved the car as much as the man and no one continued to drive and maintain this classic. After some time the car would not run and was not able to tour the streets.

This story challenges each of us to love the Buckskin Trail, continuing the traditions. We need to drive, wash, polish and maintain this course to continue to serve the scouts and program of the Miami Valley Council to the best of our collective abilities.

2009 Buckskin Trail

And polish up the Trail we did. Dick Dexter led a group of 8 Thunderbucks (Dave Green, John Miller, Paula Wathen, Dan Wathen, Greg Neff, Scott Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, and Mike Clinch) to undertake the most significant changes to the course in over 30 years; a complete overhaul of the training with these goals: 1) To ensure that we maintain the highest possible level of fun and training in our course; 2) To update the course to meet or exceed all training requirements established by BSA for Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters to complete their leader-specific training; 3) Gain accreditation from the Council Leadership Development Committee; 4) To help the course better demonstrate how a troop operates both during troop meetings and on campouts; and, 5) Focus on ensuring each participant experienced the course by giving them the opportunity to learn and demonstrate proficiency of each skill.

When January 2009 arrived, we returned to Cricket Holler to begin training our staff on the changes, including incorporating the new Trainer's EDGE course into our staff training requirements. Other changes included eliminating the first outside patrol meeting for the participants and replacing it with a training day (creating two Wednesday meetings prior to the first weekend); moving our Model Camp to the first weekend, breaking it into skill elements to enable each participant to focus on learning one set of skills at a time (cooking, camping, first aid), and then challenging each patrol to demonstrate the outdoor skills they learned on the final weekend.

The Troop also began using the Scoutlander website to assist with communications between staff, patrols, and individuals. Special thanks to Skip Hume for all his hard work and dedication to make this site a reality!

Once our first training day arrived, our Senior Patrol Leader Greg Neff took the reins and proved to be a focused and dedicated leader for the Trail. We started the course with 31 dedicated participants and 5 great patrols: The Goofy Goobers, Gasping Geriatric Geckos, Bling-Bling, Mighty Bucks, and Nutz! Each patrol did a great job of forming together and becoming a team, and by the time we reached the first weekend, they demonstrated their unity with great cheers, fun songs, and unique skits during the opening campfire. They also got to experience their first meal on the trail during the Cooking Model Camp, particularly enjoying the treats that Mike and Dana Hilleary offered them during the Dutch Oven Cooking session. And of course, who could forget our steak dinner al fresco?

The Camping Model Camp featured many of the skills a patrol needs to be prepared for their camping experience on the next weekend. On Sunday, the patrols were treated to a fine

Interfaith Worship Service led by our Chaplain, Scott Wheeler. Later that morning everyone was treated to the First Aid Model Camp.

The Bling-Bling patrol's troop meeting presentation was chosen for our final Wednesday meeting, and Patrol Leader Kevin Klawon stepped into the role of Senior Patrol Leader for the first 90 minutes. We had a great time, and learned that it doesn't have to be raining for moisture to cause us difficulties in starting a fire or two.

On our final weekend, each patrol was given the chance to demonstrate the skills they had learned throughout the course, and they did a fine job of executing the plans they developed during their outside patrol meetings. They also got to try their hand in identifying plants and animals during their nature hike, and finished off the evening with a special patrol dinner.

To cap our day, we finished the evening by proceeding down to the Council Ring to walk the Spirit Trail and commence with our graduation ceremony. Our participants were presented their Buckskin neckerchiefs by their Troop Guides, and our first year staffers received their Thunderbuck in recognition of their efforts as a staff member.

Not only did our course undergo significant changes in 2009, but the final weekend brought us staff changes as well. Dave Green took a position with a company in Georgia, which resulted in his stepping down as Scoutmaster and stepping into the role of our course's new Chief Thunderbuck. Dick Dexter was selected as the 9th Buckskin Scoutmaster. Congratulations to both of these Scouters, and best of luck in your new roles!

To end our campfire, the Staff presented Dave with a large quilt honoring his service to the Trail; the front features a Thunderbuck, with each staff member and participant signing the back in thanks.

On Sunday we brought the course to a close. Our morning featured an Interfaith Worship Service assembled by each patrol's Chaplain's Aide. This service was followed by a round-robin set of skills challenges that gave our participants one more opportunity to test their skills in first aid, map and compass, preparing themselves for a campout, and building a proper fire.

We topped off our day with a beading ceremony for several staff members and participants that had completed their Wood Badge tickets. Following this celebration was the last order of business—the election of the 2010 Senior Patrol Leader by our youth. Mike Bradshaw won election, and named Scott Bennett as his Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, and soon thereafter, Dave Green brought the course to a close.

2010 Buckskin Trail

In June, Dick Dexter led the task of preparing for the next course by bringing together the patrol leaders and key staff members for an evaluation session of the 2009 Trail. We received a great deal of positive feedback and accepted the challenge of making some changes to improve. These changes included adding two more sessions to the 2010 Buckskin Trail, changing the timing of some of the activities to improve the flow of the course, and revising some of the staff development to improve our preparations.

As anticipated, 2010 went off with a bang. Dick Dexter's first year as Scoutmaster was a great success, thanks to a great staff and a fine Senior Patrol Leader in Mike Bradshaw. Mike and his Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, Scott Bennett, demonstrated their leadership skills, keeping the course moving and ensuring everyone had the maximum opportunity to learn.

We started the year with 38 excited participants in 6 patrols; the Canned Dew Clan, Star Bucks, Blind Bats, Knotty Knutz, Misphitz, and Weird Wacky Wild Weasels What?! See what eleven year olds can do when you give them a bit of a challenge?

As the course went on, each team grew in friendship and had a great deal of fun; you never knew what they were going to do next. The patrols worked together, especially enjoying their opportunities to play with the equipment, learn new ways of preparing and cooking their food, hiking the trails, and all the other fun they had.

On the last weekend, these patrols did a great job of demonstrating what they learned. Each one was able to select a campsite and put their personal touch on it. Not only were the individual campsites something each patrol was proud of, but they cooked some of the greatest camping meals ever! Next year's participants are going to have big shoes to fill to compete.

By the end of the final Saturday, each patrol got their chance to walk the Spirit Trail for the first time. The weather was perfect for a campfire, and each participant completing the course was awarded their neckerchief. In addition, ten of our staffers were presented with their Thunderbuck.

As the final day dawned, each patrol worked their way through the different stations to demonstrate how well they learned the skills. Fortunately, each leader showed they had the knowledge to earn their First Class recognition.

We celebrated with several of our Scouting friends by holding a Wood Badge beading ceremony. It was exciting to see how proud everyone was in this great accomplishment. If you have been fortunate to earn yours, keep setting those goals and leading your teams!

All good things must come to an end, and as we reached our closing, the Troop elected Scott Bennett as Senior Patrol Leader for 2011. Scott's first duty was to name Scott Schimmels as his Assistant. With these two on board, 2011 is sure to be a great year!

In September, we held our annual Reunion and Workday. It was a fantastic event; Buckskin received a huge helping hand from our friends on the Cricket Holler Properties Committee and the Order of the Arrow, and together we opened up an underutilized part of camp and made some new campsites. It was a great workday, topped off with our ever-famous steak dinner!

2011 Buckskin Trail

Even though it was the "off-season" for the Trail, we continued to work to improve the course. The Leadership Team reviewed the course evaluations from our 2010 participants and continued to make changes to improve our course. We know that with these changes in place, we look forward to an even better Buckskin Trail for the year to come, and bid welcome our 2011 participants!

Once it was time for the Trail to get started again, we soon discovered that nothing could have prepared us for what we were to encounter. "Heavy dew" was the order of the course, as the Dayton area had nearly record rainfall in both April and May—a Trail of the strangest weather in anyone's memory. Yet, the Staff and our Participants demonstrated that no matter the obstacles, we could have another successful Buckskin Trail.

Scott Bennett took charge of the 2011 Trail, and with Asst Senior Patrol Leader Scott Schimmels at his side, went to work. We met our new scout patrols, the Winning Wabbits, Knot A Day Over 35, Sea Monkeys, Sour Notes, and Crazy Critters. We also introduced the 2011 Troop Guides, the Troll Patrol, our Inside Quartermasters, the Tech-no-Chickens, and our Outside Quartermasters, the Duct Tape Patrol. We had a great first couple of meetings, and then our first weekend arrived. And the "heavy dew." But no matter, we had a great time in the

K-Lodge, found a small place to cook using the Dutch ovens outside under cover, enjoyed a fun opening campfire, followed by our Interfaith Service on Sunday.

Undaunted, Penny Valentini of the Sour Note Patrol became the Senior Patrol Leader for our final Wednesday meeting, and led the Troop in Geocaching. Everyone had a great time outdoors searching for several well-placed caches used in the training. The patrols then began planning for the final weekend.

One of the major changes for 2011 was for the patrols to be the first group to camp in the new primitive campsites in East Camp that had been built during the Buckskin Reunion / Workday. As they arrived on Saturday, each patrol hiked into East Camp to select their place campsite. Each spot had its own challenges, including the Knot A Day Over 35 Patrol wedging themselves into a site that was a wee bit too small for them, and the Winning Wabbits finding a site that didn't exist—until that moment. Fortunately, these things are what make Buckskin fun and unpredictable, while ensuring we have a great learning experience (even for Staff!).

Incredibly, the “heavy dew” made its presence known for this weekend as well. The Closing Campfire and the Participants' Interfaith Service were both moved indoors once again—the first time in course history that both weekend campfires and both weekend Chapel services were forced indoors by the inclement weather. In spite of this, the patrols had a great time learning and in fellowship with each other.

Just before we closed out the Trail, we recognized several of our Wood Badge friends with a beading ceremony and introduced 2011 Wood Badge Course Director Connie Crist to the troop. Several of our staff and participants went on to attend Connie's course; we are proud to be able to help our fellow Scouters continue their growth as Scouting leaders by introducing them to Wood Badge.

As we closed for the final time, the Troop elected Scott Schimmels as the 2012 Senior Patrol Leader; Scott tapped Angie Eberhart as his Asst Senior Patrol Leader. After one final Scoutmaster's Minute, the course was closed for another year.

2012 Buckskin Trail

Of course, closing the Trail doesn't mean we stop working and trying to improve the course. No sooner did the 2011 Buckskin Trail come to a close, it was time to start our preparations for next year. As the Leadership Staff met, looking over the course evaluations, we determined it was time to give the course another big change. Big changes included the addition of the first two Friday night training sessions on the weekends, eliminating the outside patrol meeting, making some training available on the Scoutlander website, and expanding the amount of time available for hands-on training.

In addition and with the help of the OA and Cricket Holler Properties Committee, we set about improving the new primitive campsites, making them larger and adding several new sites that had been marked but remained to be cleared. No doubt our patrols in 2012 will enjoy the improvements.

It was a stretch to make these changes though – could we deliver all the content, add extra time for even more hands on, and still recruit 5-6 or more patrols? As it turned out, 20 brave souls attended the 2012 course – 4 patrol's worth. Small and mighty yes, but they were an extremely enthusiastic bunch. The Flying Squirrels, Pretty Handsome Chefs, Screaming Eagles, and Baden's Comets took on the challenge.

Scott Schimmels, our Senior Patrol Leader, led the band, ably assisted by his Asst Senior Patrol Leader, Angie Eberhart. The patrols came together quickly, took on everything

from the weather to the extra time, overcame the challenges, and completed the Trail successfully.

The capstone of the 2012 Course was our first-ever Court of Honor at the final campfire. It was a great way to recognize the participants completing their First Class rank as well as earning their Neckerchiefs and Thunderbucks. Good luck to these new Buckskinners as they embark on their next Scouting challenges; we trust they are now much better prepared to meet them.

Additionally, the end of this Course meant it was once again time to pass the baton. Dick Dexter ended his leadership as Scoutmaster, passing the role to John Miller – our 10th Scoutmaster. Dave Sword passed the Chief Thunderbuck hat along to Dick.

Just before our final closing, we recognized several Buckskinners that had earned their Wood Badge Beads. The Troop elected Angie Eberhart to be our 2013 Senior Patrol Leader, and Angie selected Russell Gross as her Asst Senior Patrol Leader.

2013 Buckskin Trail

John Miller assembled his leadership team and they set out to prepare for our 60th Trail. Everyone agreed that nine days were simply too many, and the team worked to craft a schedule that delivered all the hands-on and still met the requirements. It was a difficult job, but they eliminated two of the Wednesday meetings and came up with creative ways to challenge our 2013 participants. Unfortunately during these preparations, Angie Eberhart was unable to continue her duty as Senior Patrol Leader, and Russell Gross took charge. He named Paula Wathen as his Assistant. Without missing a beat, the team stepped up and finalized the preparations for 2013.

John Miller and his key staff held several planning meetings during the fall of 2012. They discussed the pros and cons of the program and ways to increase participation. In reviewing the Course schedule, some creative thinking went into how to decrease the number of days the Course is held. Through careful scrutiny two Wednesdays were removed and the program was rearranged for a better flow. It was also decided to bring Venturing into the program. Dan McLaughlin volunteered to take on this task, and the venture patrol was formed as part of the Trail. The Venturers were in charge of the Model Camp and Outdoor Cooking skills demonstrations. They also put together mock disaster demonstrations to better test the participant skills in first aid. Janice Griffin continued to develop the Buckskin advancement program, and started developing Star and Life rank advancements for the “youth” staff with hopeful implementation for the 2014 Course. Mike Clinch developed a new and unique Buckskin Patch and back pack patch to commemorate the 60th anniversary. This project was also designed as a scholarship project with the monies received from the sale to go to directly assisting both participants and staff. By the end of the year the staff felt the Course was ready to go.

Russ and Paula took charge in April, and the Course was off and running. Although this was Russ’ first year in a major leadership role, he handled the pressure flawlessly (with gentle guidance from Paula), and everyone stepped into their roles and positions with precision.

There were five patrols: Miner’s Miners, Little Whittlers, Knot Singers, Stinking Yetis, and Five Blind Mice. Everyone had a great time, learned a lot, and had a whole lot of fun in the process! The weather for the second weekend was terrible. It rained almost continuously, and the temperature was chilly. The “mud factor” in the primitive campsites added to the woes. The staff, sensing a real need, jumped into action to make sure that to the best of their ability, the participants had a safe environment to learn. The quartermasters searched far and wide for bundles of *dry* wood for campfires, the commissary made sure there was coffee and hot

chocolate for warming up, and the Troop Guides provided jocularly to keep the spirits high. Through these efforts the grumbling was kept to a very minimum and the weekend proved to be a success.

On Sunday, the mock disaster was held. The participants were not informed of what was planned, and the drills were set up for the patrols to “come upon” a situation that needed to be taken care of. The three areas were: a vehicular accident in camp, a camp stove explosion, and a rock climbing accident. These stations were staffed by the youth Venturers. Dan McLaughlin and his staff did an awesome job staging and guiding the participants through their first aid skills. The participants were tremendously impressed with the format, and demonstrated that they had learned a lot the weekend before in the First Aid round robin.

At the closing campfire, all the participants had achieved the rank of First Class. Twenty-Six Buckskin Neckerchiefs were presented, and 12 Thunderbucks were earned and given. Scoutmaster John Miller announced his decision to bring Angie Eberhart back as Senior Patrol Leader for the 2014 Course, and she chose Steve Akers as her Assistant Senior Patrol Leader. Shortly after the completion of the Course Russ Gross announced that he was taking a new job and would be relocating to Alaska. He will be sorely missed on the Trail.

The Trail also lost two dedicated members of its family. Pete Livingston, Venture Leader, passed from a freak rock climbing accident the weekend after the completion of the Course. Jason Franz, Buckskin Troop Guide, passed suddenly and unexpectedly from a heart issue. Our hearts were deeply saddened, and the support offered to the families and each other was tremendous. Both of these Scouters will be in our hearts as we plan and conduct future Trails.

And the adventure known as the Buckskin Trail continues...

2014 Buckskin Trail

The Senior Buckskin Staff met in the fall of 2013 to plan the next year's Trail. Angie Eberhart suggested that we look at leadership mentoring to allow staff to grow through their participation in the Course. Some positions were realigned, and the staff was given the opportunity to move to other positions on the Course if they wanted to. Angie also restructured the Patrol Leader Council Meeting scripts to reflect what actually occurs in a Troop setting.

There were 4 patrols (21 participants) attending the 2014 Buckskin Trail. The patrols were: The Maniacal Monkeys, the Speeding Turtles, the Buckskin Spies, and Sham Wow. Once again the Venturers played a key role in training on the Buckskin Trail. The Dutch Oven demonstration yielded a delicious meal that everyone enjoyed the first weekend. First aid presentations were designed to teach and challenge the participants in skills they will use the rest of their lives. Once again there was a simulated Disaster the second weekend, and the patrols were challenged to use the skills they were given. And there was FUN on the Trail with the patrols and staff interacting as kids and adults in any other Troop in the Council. All of the patrols advanced to the rank of First Class by the end of the Course. We also had two staffers achieve the rank of Pathfinder (the highest rank on the Buckskin Trail). Congratulations to Angie Eberhart and Scott Schimmels! At the closing campfire, 21 Buckskin neckerchiefs and 12 Thunderbuck slides were presented.

The Buckskin Trail also lost a dedicated staffer. Gale Bateman lost his courageous battle with cancer. He was an inspiration to all of the staff and participants. Scouting was an integral part of who Gale was, and he clearly demonstrated living the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Gale was unselfish in his service to others and was always there to lend a hand to anyone needing it.

Steve Akers chose Michel Berenson as his Assistant Senior Patrol Leader for the 2015 Buckskin Trail.

And the adventure known as the Buckskin Trail continues...

2015 Buckskin Trail

During the fall of 2014 the senior staff met to look at the 2015 Trail. One of the tasks was to discuss ways to increase attendance. It was decided that the Course needed to be more heavily promoted to the Cub and Webelos leaders as they were the future of the Scout program and had the greatest impact on membership and program. To assist with this new direction, Mike Clinch worked to incorporate The Outdoor Webelos Leader(OWL) training in the Trail. The Trail now offers OWL, and Introduction to Outdoor Leadership Skills(IOLS) training for Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters as part of the Buckskin program.

With Steve Akers at the helm and Mike Berenson as his Assistant, Buckskin 2015 started on Wednesday April 8th. We had 29 participants and 5 patrols. The Patrol names were: Sloppy Pirates, Dancing Sasquatch, Baden's Badgers, Bacon Bunch, and Funky Monkeys! The participants were given a basic schedule for the course which indicated the OWL requirements that were being taught. Dan McLaughlin and Tammy Chelette brought the Venturers who once again did an outstanding job with the cooking demonstrations and the camping basic skills. It is an awesome sight to see youth teaching adults and the cooperation between them. This year Dick Dexter moved to Florida (guess where we're going for staff developments this fall!) and David Sword – Papa Bear stepped in as Chief Thunderbuck. The first campfire was a lot of fun and the spirit log proved a big hit once again. There is always next year John N.

The Venturers came back out the second weekend to lead the First Aid Drill so the participants could practice what they learned the first weekend. The scenarios were very real in appearance and the participants were surprised at what they needed to brush up on to handle an emergency situation - definitely valuable training for all.

Michael Rice was chosen as this year's "Biggest Nut" and presented with the Nut Award.

All the patrols advanced to the rank of first class by the end of the course. At the closing campfire 27 neckerchiefs were presented and 7 Thunderbucks.

On Sunday, Mike Berenson took over as Senior Patrol Leader and announced that his choice for Assistant Senior Patrol Leader was Angie Ketron. The Course will continue its history of great leadership.

2016 Buckskin Trail

The Fall of 2015 found the key staff once again meeting to review the past course and to look at ways to improve. Since there was a large increase in the number of Cub Scout leaders on the course, the question was raised as to the possibility of adding BALOO training, so the Cub leaders could get all their training at once. Mike Clinch was given the task of tweaking the program and determining if this was possible. Once again Mike came through, and by adding 3 hours to the first Sunday BALOO became part of the Buckskin Trail. John Miller announced that his tenure as Scoutmaster would end after the 2016 Course and he named Greg Neff as the next Buckskin Scoutmaster (#11).

With OWL and the addition of BALOO we saw an increase in Cub Scout Leaders, 15 out of 24 participants attending the 2016 Trail. The patrols were: Buck Master, Flannel & Fleece, Ragin Raisins and Super Slinkies. Mike Berenson and Angie Ketron took charge and lead the patrols through the course having to make slight alterations along the way due to weather. Once again the Venturers did a wonderful job with the cooking demonstrations and with additional help from members from Order of the Arrow put on a realistic First Aid Drill the second

weekend. John Miller's last year as Scoutmaster wasn't without some challenges but everything seems to work itself out and the participants had a great time. During the final campfire John Miller took over as Chief Thunderbuck and Greg Neff took on the mantle of Scoutmaster. A special thank you to Dave Sword for all the years he has filled in as the Chief Thunderbuck and guidance given to the course. At the end of the course Angie Ketron was elected as SPL and she named John Numbers as her Assistant.

2017 Buckskin Trail

During the fall pre-planning meetings, we learned that National decided to remove First Aid from the Introduction to Outdoor Leadership Skills (IOLS) training. After some discussion the course was adjusted to remove First Aid specific training and the First Aid simulation drill on the final Sunday. Drew Turner took over the role as youth advisor for the course and gave them more leeway to design how the cooking demonstrations would be presented.

With SPL Angie Ketron leading the way and ASPL John Numbers at her side, the 2017 Buckskin trail got off to a great start. We didn't have the number of participants we were hoping for going into the first Wednesday meeting but that soon changed when we had 8 walk-ins. The 2017 patrols were the Bull Dogs, Egotistical Eagles, Red Monkeys and the Flamin' Hot Chicken Wings.

With the increase in social media, Greg Neff encouraged the staff and participants to take picture and post out on "The Buckskin Trail" and Miami Valley Council's facebook page. He also eliminated the flash drives and CDs and reverted back to printing the patrol pictures and giving each participant a copy.

The youth staff did a fantastic job developing and presenting the outdoor cooking skills and the participants were impressed. The youth had such a great time they are already working on improvements for next year. Unfortunately, the cold and rain brought the first weekend campfire inside. The cold and rain did not prevent everyone from showing their enthusiasm and spirit the first weekend. The weather was perfect for the second weekend and the participants had a great time. The quartermasters did a great job with the final campfire, definitely eliminated any chill in the air. I remember hearing "protect the neckerchiefs" from the burning embers floating everywhere. The course concluded with John Numbers being elected as 2018 SPL with Brian Finnigan as ASPL.

2018 Buckskin Trail

The 2018 course was adjusted to incorporate the changes that combined BALOO and OWL. These changes had a very minor impact to the course and with John Numbers and Brian Finnigan at the helm the course was off to a great start. After stepping down as SPL in 2017, Angie Ketron took on the role of Committee Chair for the 2018 course. 20 participants gathered for the start of the course and formed 4 patrols, Cheez Its, Green Machine, Toxic Jamm and Lost Patrol. We had good weather for the second weekend and a lot of positive feedback on the course. 2018 saw the largest group of pathfinder award recipients with 5 earning the award. Mike Goodson was chosen as this year's "Biggest Nut" and presented with the Nut Award. At the end of the course the troop elected Brian Finnigan as the 2019 SPL and Becky Sorrell as the ASPL.

2019 Buckskin Trail

Brian took the reins with Becky's help and lead us through the first weekend of the 2019 course. We started this year course with small enthusiastic group of only 16 participants, forming four patrols: The Castaways, High Rollers, Quad Heroes and the Nature Scouts. The

first campfire was a lot of fun and the spirit log proved a big hit once again, but unfortunately this year everyone that challenged the mystery of the spirit log were unable to unlock its secret.

And the adventure known as the Buckskin Trail continues...