



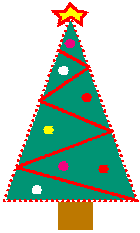
WOMPATUCK NEWS

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Christmas Tree Origins



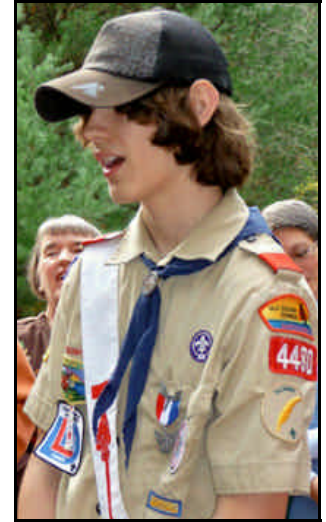
By Jim Rose,
Wompatuck News Editor
and FOW Historian

The hallowed tradition of erecting the Christmas tree can be traced to 16th century Germany. However, no inventor or single town can be identified as the sole origin for the custom. In the Cathedral of Strasbourg in 1539, the church record documents the erection of a Christmas tree. During that period, the guilds started putting up Christmas trees in front of their guild halls.

In Bremen, Germany, a guild chronicle of 1570 describes how a small fir was decorated with apples, nuts, dates, pretzels and paper flowers for the benefit of the guild members' children, who collected delicacies on Christmas day. Another early reference is from Basel, Switzerland, where the tailor apprentices carried around a tree adorned with apples and cheese in 1597.

During the 17th century, the custom found its way to family homes. By the 18th century, the tradition had become common in towns of the upper Rhineland, Germany, but it had not yet reached the rural areas. Wax candles appear from the late 18th century. The Christmas tree remained confined to the upper Rhineland for a relatively long period.

Several cities in the United States with German connections lay claim to the first American Christmas tree. Windsor Locks, Connecticut, claims that a Hessian soldier erected a tree in 1771 while imprisoned at the Noden-Reed House. Other claims for the first Christmas tree were made by German immigrant towns from Pennsylvania and Ohio in the 1800s. ■



Honored Eagle Scouts (left to right): Colby Alves, Tim Benza, and Dan Benza.

History Made at Bunker N9 Open House and Dedication Ceremony



By Andy Mills, FOW Member
Photography by Alma McDermott, FOW Secretary

The hard work was done. The painting, digging, learning, planting, cutting and building ended months ago at the bunker project. This day was to celebrate, remember and learn. The clouds were thick with a threat of rain but, as the time neared the clouds parted, and the sun warmed the memorial garden.

Saturday, November 8th, people of all ages joined at the restored military bunker area to view the completion of three Eagle Scout projects at Wompatuck State Park. About 50 guests mingled around the memorial garden, on the ramp, and inside Bunker N9. The guests read the sign and talked about the past.

The ceremony began with a great rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" led by the lovely voice of Friends of Wompatuck secretary Alma McDermott.

Admiral Jim Gorman (ret.) began the open discussion that followed. The Admiral remarked, "This is a piece of history that some of us just forget." He went on to thank the scouts for preserving the bunker so others can remember. "It is interesting that we preserve this bunker so that people coming after us will know what went on here those many years ago. So, I salute the young men and thank you for your service."

Admiral Gorman continued, later reflecting on his time off the coast of Korea. "It was nice to get a message from home," referring to the box of ammunition from Hingham he had aboard his ship. The Admiral continued, "We turned the message around and delivered it to the bad guys."

Each of the Eagles, Tim Benza, Dan Benza, and Colby Alves, had a chance to discuss the project and thank the guests. Dan summed up the teamwork needed in

Bunker Ceremony continued on page 2

History Made at Bunker N9 Open House and Dedication Ceremony (continued from page one)



Park Director Steve Gammon with FOW secretary and singer, Alma McDermott.



U.S. Navy Admiral Jim Gorman (ret.).



Don Benza, Tim and Dan's father and Scout Troop Committee Chairman T4480.



Park historian Jim Rose.



Ruth Todd, former Annex ammunition depot employee (Administration Department).



Ron Meade, former Annex ammunition depot employee (Transportation Department).



Donald Guilfoyle, former Annex ammunition depot employee (Transportation Department).



George Bartlett, former Annex ammunition depot employee (Ordnance Department).



Fran Kraus, former Annex ammunition depot employee (Ordnance Department).

community service, "To be a leader you need to acquire the materials that other people have to offer and then you can combine them and create something fantastic".

Other distinguished guests included Mike Cunningham, Hingham director of Veteran Services; Scott McMillan, Bare Cove park ranger; Peter Stonis, former Annex employee; Ronald Meade, former Annex employee; Fran Kraus, former Annex employee; Donald Guilfoyle, former Annex employee; George Bartlett, former Annex employee; and Ruth Todd, former Annex employee.

Each of the employees reflected on their service at the bunker and on site at the Hingham Navel Annex. They had memories of trucking missiles to as far away as Virginia, but mostly from Quonset Point, Rhode Island. There was also more precious cargo. Some employees relived fond memories of delivering military children to school. Ruth Todd reflected on her level of security at the depot, "When I got cleared for Top Secret, it was so thrilling. There was just this young girl, but inside she knew quite a bit." Ruth started as a desk clerk at Hingham and ended her career at the Pentagon.

All the guests agreed on the importance of the work the scouts have done to preserve the past memories of Bunker N9. There was resounding applause for their hard work. The ceremony concluded on a group rendition of "God Bless America," again led by Alma McDermott.

After the ceremony, folks mingled at the site then ventured back to the Visitor Center. In the great hall at the center, scouts and guests were treated to a reception in honor of their achievements. The past of Wompatuck was again remembered, and the discussion continued about future good work at Wompatuck. ■