

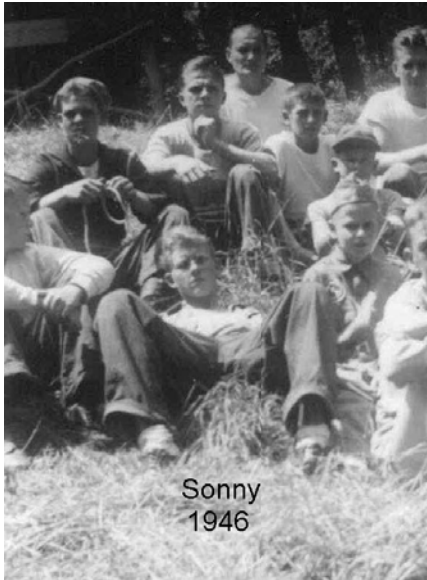
LORRAINE E. “SONNY” LAUFFER

May 23rd, 1930 - August 30th, 1999

In the autumn of 1942, the world was at war. In the Pacific, the battles of Midway and Guadalcanal had turned the tide against the Japanese empire. In Egypt, the battle of El Alamein began the expulsion of the Germans and Italians from North Africa. In Russia, the Axis invasion bogged down in Stalingrad. In Chicago, Enrico Fermi was putting the final touches on history's first nuclear reactor. And in Birdville, Pennsylvania, a 12-year-old sat in his doctor's waiting room reading a Boy's Life magazine. His name was Lorraine, but everyone called him "Sonny". He looked up from the magazine and told his mother he wanted to be a Boy Scout. She explained that there wasn't a troop in their neighborhood, but Sonny wasn't interested in excuses. His parents wisely relented, organized neighbors, sought advice from local Scout leaders, and established Boy Scout Troop 186, Sheldon Park, Pennsylvania, on the 11th of November 1942.

Sonny became a First Class Scout on the 28th of January 1944, a Star Scout on the 7th of June 1944, and a Life Scout on the 12th of February 1946. He became the first Eagle Scout produced by Troop 186 on the 10th of February 1947, and received a Bronze Palm on the 31st of July 1947. He served his troop as Assistant Patrol Leader, Patrol Leader, Senior Patrol Leader, and Junior Assistant Scoutmaster. He served his council as a Swimming and Lifesaving merit badge counselor. He attended summer camp with his troop at Camp Umbstaetter, near Ambridge, walking to camp during the war years when his family's gasoline rations were insufficient for the 40-mile drive. In July of 1948, he attended Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. In 1949, Sonny and his friend Raine Brinker became the first troop 186 alumni to join the adult staff as Assistant Scoutmasters.

Eleven years later, as a parent, he joined Troop 141 of the Puckety United Presbyterian Church in Lower Burrell, where he served as a member of committee from July 13th 1960 through 1961, became Committee Chairman in 1962, then served as Scoutmaster from the 27th of June 1962 through 1966. In 1962, his son, Russell, became the fifth Eagle Scout in the history of Troop 141. He served for one year as Assistant Scoutmaster in 1967, and then left Troop 141 to help establish Troop 868, American Legion Post 868, Lower Burrell, where he also served as Scoutmaster. In 1969, Sonny became the twelfth member of the William D. Boyce District – and the first former youth member of Troop 186 – to receive the Silver Beaver Award.



During Sonny's tenure as a volunteer with Troops 141 and 868, 17 boys became Eagle Scouts. During the 66 years after Sonny's passing brought Troop 186 into existence, his troop delivered the Scouting program to 802 boys, of whom 175 have become Eagle Scouts. Fifty-nine of those Eagle Scouts followed Sonny's example and served as adult leaders with their old troop, including one Committee Chairman and two Scoutmasters. Although it's unknown how many of those 175 Eagle Scouts have volunteered with other units, at least three have served as Scoutmaster, and at least three former Scouts, like Sonny before them, have received the Silver Beaver Award for their efforts as Scouting volunteers.

As reported in the November/December 1999 "Scout's Honor", "Sonny came to the Camp Guyasuta Ranger position in 1978 along with his wife Dot. They were a team, and saw this as an opportunity to make a direct impact on the lives of young people. The role of a Camp Ranger demands an individual with a wide variety of maintenance and construction skills coupled with the ability to inspire others to join in the vision of all that camp must be for Scouts. Sonny fulfilled that role very well. He led by example, and others readily followed.

"Sonny loved Camp Guyasuta, and evidence of his dedication and commitment can be seen throughout the facility. He knew how much it meant to so many Scouts and Scouters, and he also knew that camp is where Scouting comes to life for young people. He poured his heart and soul into making Guyasuta a place where the fun and adventure of Scouting could happen in a safe and imaginative environment.



"On behalf of Scouting and Camp Guyasuta, Sonny also interacted with countless individuals, community leaders and business owners in the area. He served as Scouting's Ambassador, and through him the positive image of Scouting and its impact on young lives was fostered. Many were 'invited' by Sonny to give of themselves and their resources to help make Camp Guyasuta an exciting place for 'his kids'."

Sonny will be missed, and his memory cherished. No more will we be subjected to his gruff humor, his irreverent commentary on the human condition, his raucous and inexhaustible storytelling, his irresistible "call to volunteerism". But his passion for the Scouting program that has enriched us all lives on in the vast legacy he has left behind. The fire that burned in his heart and shot sparks into countless boys and men for over half a century still burns in Camp Guyasuta, in Troop 186, in us. *We are Sonny's legacy*, and now it falls to us to pass on the flame. May we celebrate Sonny's life by living ours as fully.