

BOBBY FORBES

In the 12 years that I attended Athens "Y" Camp as a camper on through the leadership program, one of my favorite people was Bobby Forbes. He is the nephew of camp founder W.T. Forbes. Bobby attended camp from 1933 through 1950 with the exception of 2 years in which he served our country during the War, and in 1946 when he ran Pine Tops Camp, another resident camp operated by the Athens YMCA. He too served in nearly every capacity at camp beginning as a camper, through the leadership program, aquatic director, and assistant director. In 1942, he more or less ran the camp. Bobby Hooks was there through 1941 and he left for the war. W.T. was in terrible shape with serious Spanish-American war injuries. Stogie Davis was listed as the program director but Bobby ran most of the camp. "Pop" came in 1943. This summer Bobby will celebrate his 90th birthday. His health is good and his mind is great. That is all of the history. The rest of this are stories that I remember about Bobby. Remember, he is 12 years older than me so he was an A.D. when I was a boy.

The first thought that enters my mind when I think of Bobby was the trip he took to the Amazon River with Cobern Kelley. Kelley was the youth director at the Athens YMCA so I was under his leadership for 10 months of the year and Bobby's the other 2 months. The stories they told would keep us spellbound for hours. They remembered the names of all of the places. So much so that Bobby was called by all of his peers at "Y" camp KOO-KOO-ROOKOO Forbes. This stuck with him as long as he was at "Y" Camp and he is still called that today by all of his old camp buddies. I believe that it was started by Bill Simpson. I wondered later when he began his career in banking what his bosses thought when someone came in and called him koo-koo-rookoo. I heard Bobby

and Kelley tell stories and they were identical except that that the one that was the goat of the story was the other one.

He was also called nature man at camp. He would pick up any crawling or 4 legged varmint at camp. He handled copperheads, rattle snakes, or anything. I know that Kelley had all kinds of snakes, monkeys, and other things crawling around the basement of the "Y". I understand that the two of them had many other critters but their ship from South America to Miami was diverted to New York, ran into cold weather, and many of the animals were dead when they arrived. Lance Lazonby always said that Bobby passed his legacy on to him.

Bobby was a great story teller. He would keep us mesmerized for hours with his stories of the Amazon and he would tell the Vandiver story and red light story that we had all heard dozens of times and keep our attention. Sometimes he would tell "ghost stories", ones that have no ending, that would nearly make us wet the bed. I remember he told a story about him and Kelley camping in the Gorge with nothing but sleeping bags and one flashlight. They woke up in the middle of the night and heard a rattlesnake rattling. They turned on the quickly dimming flashlight and moved their campsite in another direction. Another rattlesnake. They kept moving, the flashlight getting dimmer, and every direction there was another rattlesnake. This story went on for two and a half hours then Bobby abruptly walked out of the Lodge in the middle of a sentence, with no ending. The next morning I heard one of the younger boys ask him if he was killed.

Around 1950, I tried out for the "master swimmers award". I had passed all of the swimming criteria, including swimming the Tallulah River. The only thing left was doing 5 perfect dives. Bobby was the

A.D. in charge of the waterfront and was the one that had to evaluate me. Our schedules didn't match and we finally got to the last day of camp. In those days camp was 4 or 8 weeks and the only bonfire was the night before the 8 week session was over. It was huge. Someone in Clayton, Georgia told me that they could see the glow in the sky. We all hated the last day. We hauled wood for the bonfire all day and put away all of the equipment. We knew that camp was over and we were depressed any way but to top it off it was one of those days when it was cold, foggy and drizzly and the mists didn't roll away. At breakfast Bobby suggested that we check out the dives after morning assembly. We went out on the tower and worked all morning. We did it again after rest hour. He not only had to check my dives out but he had to teach me how to do them. I don't think the dives were ever very good but considering the atmospheric conditions they passed. Sort of like "the girls get prettier at closing time". I was so grateful to Bobby for spending so much time with me but deep down wondered if he did it just to keep from having to haul those wet trees all day. I know that I was freezing but it was better than closing camp and hauling the wood.

Every summer at Athens Y Camp Alumni Day I hear former campers telling Bobby Forbes stories. He will always be a part of us. HAPPY BIRTHDAY BOBBY. He plans to be at Alumni Day in July so plan to be there to give him your own best wishes.

John Simpson