

Expanded History of Echockotee Lodge

As one of the four official experimental programs in the early years of the Boy Scouts of America, the Order of the Arrow's growth was due to the word-of-mouth advertising between council executives, seeing its successes and bringing the Order into their own programs. This was at a time when each of the experimental programs were to grow at their own natural pace, and it was only through personal contact and observation could the Order grow.

In February of 1937, in Columbia, South Carolina, a meeting of the executives of the old Region Six was held. These leaders, coming from North and South Carolina, Georgia, most of Florida, parts of Alabama, and the Panama Canal Zone, met with members of the National Program staff, including E. Urner Goodman, the founder of the Order of the Arrow. In his capacity of Director of Program, for the BSA, he was in a position to offer his expert advice on the Order and its potential in camp and council activities. In the ten years following that meeting, 34 of the 40 lodges in Region Six were chartered by the National office. Seeds planted in that meeting were tended by nearby executives familiar with the benefits brought by the Order, and from those leaders of nearby lodges came the establishment of other lodges; such was the case with the establishment of Echockotee Lodge 200.

Since 1910, the Boy Scouts of America has maintained a high profile in the Jacksonville, Florida area. First as the Duval County and then the Jacksonville Area Council, the activities of Scouts and their units were prominently displayed in newspapers of the day. Summer camp had been held since 1923 at Camp Echockotee, in nearby Orange Park, and was a focal point of the council program. The council grew larger in the 1930's with the incorporation of the Oklawaha Council in Gainesville and the Osceola Council in St. Augustine. M.G. Boswell was the Council Executive in the 1930's and early 1940's overseeing the growth of Scouting in the area, and the renaming of the council in 1939 to North Florida.

In late 1940, Mr. Boswell asked the Executive from Coastal Empire Council (Savannah, Georgia) if OA members from the lodge there (Tomo Chi-Chi #119) could come to Florida to conduct an Ordeal ceremony. The only available time was the weekend of the annual Scout Circus and Parade, held in downtown Jacksonville, the following May 1941. Boswell created a committee to decide who should be North Florida's first OA members, contrary to induction guidelines. The committee chose 36 Scouts and Scouters, based upon age (at least 15 years old), and distinguished participation at the summer camp. On May 9, the chosen members left the circus performance to take part in North Florida's first Ordeal, conducted by the "first degree" team of Tomo Chi-Chi members Julius Drake, Frank Holt, Drew Bardin, Coastal Empire Council Executive Bill Parks, and lodge Chief Terrell A. Mitchell, acting as Allowat Sakima. The weather for

the rest of the weekend was described as “torrential”, as the camp was set up for summer activities under monsoon conditions, and the Ordeal Ceremony was held under the camp pavilion. Immediately afterward, Morrow Bennett was proclaimed as the first leader of the fledging group.

In the letter Mr. Boswell sent to the National Office (June 28, 1941), asking for acceptance of the original chartering petition, he acknowledged that the origins of the Order in the council were against the set induction rules, and asked for acceptance of the petitions and for copies of ceremony manuals to conduct their own Ordeals.

The petition was accepted, granting the new members of the Order from North Florida #200. On June 28 a meeting was held to elect a chief and to select the name of the camp: Echockotee a Seminole word translated to “we are brothers”. Harry Douglas, a camp staff member was the first elected Chief and the totem of an alligator was chosen. This had never been used by the lodge and was soon replaced by the Scout left-handed hand clasp.

Newspaper reports dealing with the opening of Camp Echockotee for the summer the public was told that “honor campers will be chosen to become members of the Order of the Arrow, a new honor camper society” (*Florida Times-Union*, June 15 1941). Ordeals were to be held weekly at the summer camp, with candidates chosen by a court of honor, with criteria based on age rank, and seniority. The numbers of candidates each week ranged from two to nine; in all over 25 new members were inducted. At the end of camp, on July 29, another meeting was held at the camp, electing a lodge Scribe (George Holden), and a lodge Treasurer (Morrow Bennett). Newspaper stories told of an annual lodge banquet held at the end of summer camp in late July, with other lodge meetings held at the old Seminole Hotel, in downtown Jacksonville. Very quickly the Order gained a foothold in the North Florida area, and the red arrow sash became more and more common among Scouts in the council.

By the year 1945 the number of lodges in the state grew from two to six, with a total of eight lodges in Area J (east and northwest Florida/ South Georgia). Mr. Boswell had been named the first Area J director, or advisor, and he organized a meeting of the lodges on November 2-4, at Camp Echockotee, to discuss various problems and issues of the Order in their lodges, and to conduct Ordeal and Brotherhood ceremonies. This was the first Area J meeting, one of the first Area meetings held in the country. Attending were Arrowmen from Echockotee, Tomo Chi-Chi 119, Aal-Pa-Tah 237 Calusa 219, Kiandashama (later Seminole) 85, Suriarco (later Semialachee) 239, and Chawtaw (later Pilthlako) 229. Four members of the Tipisa Honor Camper Society went through the Ordeal that weekend, and went on to establish Tipisa 326. Six members received their Brotherhood that weekend (Boswell, M.C. McMullen, Francis Johnson E.C. Hogan, Jr., J. Paul Conover, and Harry Braham).

The 1946 Meeting was held again at Echockotee with the highlight of the weekend being the first Vigil ceremony in the State of Florida, one of the honored was Mr. Boswell. Nine members, were conferred Brotherhood, while five went through their Ordeal at the weekend. National Executive Committee member Robert Wolff was in attendance, and he complimented Echockotee "for being instrumental in starting four lodges" and for doubling the number of attendance from the previous year's event.

In 1947 and 1948 the lodge held a "Pilgrimage" at Camp Echockotee. Not much is known about the event, or even when it was held except for the patches that were issued for the activities. The annual Area Meeting was again held at Camp Echockotee, November 7-9, 1947, and a youth leader was chosen for the first time to lead the Area. Lodge Chief Fielding Fry was chosen as the first Area Chief, Mr. Boswell was transferred to the regional staff in 1948, and was later honored with the Distinguished Service Award in 1952. Fielding Fry held the position of Area J Chief for 1948 and 1949.

In the late 1940's, the first lodge patch emblem was made, a three-inch round patch to be worn on the right shirt pocket (rather than today's flap). With the wording "JACKSONVILLE, FLA", this reflected that much of the lodge's membership was still centered in the Jacksonville area. Another item used to show membership in the Order was a neckerchief, with red felt or silk-screened WWW on a white cloth.

Contingents from the lodge attended Area meetings in 1949 and in the newly organized Area 6-D from 1950-1952. Executive Horace Williamson received his Vigil at the 1949 meeting, and three received their Vigils at the 1950 Conference: longtime volunteer and philanthropist Francis Johnson, past Area Chief Fielding Fry, and professional Scouting and future Area staff Advisor J. Paul Conover. James McDonald, lodge chief and future Area Chief, was bestowed the honor in 1952. Also at the 1952 Conference, Echockotee led a discussion group on "Ordeal Orientations" assisted Pilthlako 229 with "Advanced Indian Dances", and Kiondashama 85 in a crafts workshop.

A major portion of the service program for the lodge was camp improvements at Camp Echockotee. After the council harvested pine trees from the property in 1952, the lodge spent the next year planting seedlings.

A Parents' Night program was held on Thursdays during summer camp, and Echockotee would hold tap-out ceremonies there. The candidates would be pulled from the audience, as an Arrowman would stand behind him, holding a sash above his head. A red arrow would be drawn on each candidate's arm with a marker or lipstick, and he would be taken away from the rest of the Scouts to begin his Ordeal. Candidates were blindfolded and put in a canoe with two other Arrowmen, and taken south along the shore of Doctor's Lake and then placed on a spot of dry land to spend the night. The next morning, each candidate would follow the trail back to the middle of the camp, where he was instructed

to carve his arrow and begin his day of arduous labor, in front of the other Scouts in camp. That night the candidates would be taken to the southern end of the camp (no longer part of the council property) for the ceremony. Each of the officers in the lodge usually had a part in the ceremony, with the role of Allowat Sakima reserved for the chief.

The first contingent to the National Conference from Echockotee was in 1952. Among those attending the conference, held at Miami University in Ohio, was lodge Chief Paul Sallas and Dr. F.A. Copp, the camp doctor.

The Order once again re-organized the areas in the Southeast, as growth among the lodges required changes. The Florida lodges, except of Semialachee #239 and Yustaga #385, and the Canal one (Chiriquí #391) were now Area 6-E, starting in 1953. The first meeting of the new Area was hosted by Echockotee. Ordeal and Brotherhood ceremonies were held during the weekend, as was a display competition including "camp pictures, costumes, lodge bulletins and other items of general interest". This later became an annual event, evolving into today's King's Cup competition. The lodge led discussions on ceremonies, and was responsible for the program for the weekend. An attendee at the conference recalled that Aal-Pa-Tah #237's members were the last to arrive at the camp, and was crowded out of the pool at the free swim Friday. They brought out their mascot, a 3 ½ foot alligator, wrapped a leather thong around its snout, and pushed him in the pool. While the pool quickly cleared out, the gator settled to the bottom of the deep end, and Aal-Pa-Tah's members had a clear run of the pool. For the second consecutive year, Echockotee performed its dramatization of the Legend. Members elected to Area office were Area Chief James McDonald and Secretary-Treasurer Vincent Protheroe.

Echockotee put on its Legend Pageant for the fourth consecutive year at the 1955 Area Conference, hosted by Tipisa #326 at Camp La-No-Che. The lodge's discussion group was again "Ordeal Orientation". "Financial" was the topic at the 1956 Conference and they shared the skill demonstration with Aal-Pa-Tah #237 that year with "Automatic Campfires". Also in 1956 was the introduction of a new patch emblem in the shape of a stylized arrowhead, closely resembling a Camp Echockotee patch of that time. This patch is the only design in the lodge's history with a handclasp using the right hands rather than the left. A flap patch was issued the following year, to be in compliance with the new National uniform guidelines.

Lodge Chief Bill Christian was a contingent of one at the 1956 National Conference. He and five others attended the 1958 National Conference, bringing with them a live alligator that was "borrowed" from the Jacksonville Zoo. As Mr. Christian told the story years later, the gator was kept on a rope leash and was brought to the evening shows as a way of getting the best seats. Each night he was watered down and kept in a bathtub. After the conference he was returned to the zoo late in the evening, well fed and unharmed. Christian served three years as Lodge Chief, from 1955 to 1958, and was the Area Vice

Chief in 1956-1957. He became an executive in the Boy Scouts becoming Director on National Events for the BSA in the 1980's.

Echokotee made a motion at the 1957 Area Planning meeting to require delegates at the 1958 Conference to wear full Native American costuming at the business meeting and to have both solo and group dancing competitions. Echokotee was the host of the 1958 Area Conference, providing the original trophy for the "Tradition of the Golden Arrow", an inter-lodge competition including a canoe race, 100 yard dash, cross-country run, archery, tug-of-war, swimming relay, marksmanship, and novelty races. This event later became known as the Quest for the Golden Arrow, an event still run at Section events. Despite official discouragement from the National office, the lodge still put on its dramatization of the Ordeal as the Friday night show. The lodge has a display booth at the conference on bonnet making. Brotherhood and Vigil ceremonies were performed and a few candidates from Echokotee went through an Ordeal at the weekend. Serving as Area offices for 1957-1958 were Area Chief Jim Prosser and Secretary-Treasurer Bryan Winn III.

By the 1950's the lodge established a pattern of gathering at the end of the summer camp session to hold an Annual Meeting for fellowship and electing new officers and a December weekend for Brotherhood and Vigil ceremonies. A requirement for being lodge chief was to serve on summer camp staff for the following year. In December 1955, Chief Chuck Kirkland notified Advisor Bill Baker that he would be unable to fulfill the staff requirement and a special meeting was held to elect Bill Christian as his replacement. After this and for several years, officers were elected at the December weekends.

Starting in the 1950's Echokotee members began an interest in Native American crafts and dancing and soon dominated Area competitions in those areas. Since the development by Larry and Carl Hetrick, both hobbyists in the lodge, of a dance team for the Native American craft and dancing field has enjoyed a great deal of support from both the youths and adults. The team had an elected chief and officers and lodge members were invited to join at weekend activities to show skills to qualify at any one of three levels: papoose, brave and warrior. The efforts paid off, as several awards were earned by lodge members in the 1960's in Indian events. A rivalry was established with O-Shot-Caw #265, who was also very much involved in this area of expertise. The long-standing rivalry between the two lodges, which continues to this day in almost all events, stems from this early time. Many members stayed with the team for several years: George Bothwell, lodge chief in 1960-1961, competed and won at Area competitions through 1966. The team had its own jacket, a blue polyester jacket with the lodge name, a Indian and "DANCE TEAM" embroidered on the back. Echokotee won the group dances at the area level for four consecutive years, from 1964 – 1967, beating along the way an O-Shot-Caw team that won the National competition in 1965. "Chanting", now known as the Singing competition, was won by the lodge team all but twice between 1961 and 1967. Many

members of the lodge in those days look back with pride at the Dance team as a major focus of the lodge program in those years. The lodge constructed the amphitheater seats at Camp Echochotee in 1959-1960, as a place to put on the summer camp pageant "Echochotee". Spotlights for the amphitheater were donated by Naval Air Station Jacksonville. The stockade style stage area was completed for the 1964 Area Conference, held at the camp. In between the stage and the seats ran a creek, fed by springs at the northern end of the camp. The dam at the southern end of the ravine creates a lake in the middle of the amphitheater. Impressive shows were held with principle characters coming downstream in canoes.

By the late 1950's the beginnings of a chapter system was created, with the lines drawn along the same lines as the districts. In a letter sent out to chapter chiefs and advisers from Chief Ronald Jewett, he set notice that a special meeting to be held at the George Washington Hotel on October 28, 1959, would finish all chapter organizing and that "if your chapter is not represented, it will be natural to assume that neither you or your Chapter members want a chapter for themselves so plans will be put in motion to combine your group with an active chapter nearby." (October 23, 1959) By the early 1960's there were seven active chapters, one each for the Gainesville, Ocala, Lake City, Palatka and St. Augustine areas, and two in the Jacksonville area. A newsletter for lodge members was created: "The Feather" has been in print since the late 1950's and continues under that name today. This was first created to spread the word about upcoming lodge and Area events. In the December 1960 "Feather", advertising the 1961 Mid-Year Fellowship and upcoming Area Conference, warned that since only 50 delegates per lodge would be allowed, each attendee "will be asked to participate in the Dance and/or Chanting teams, as well as entering some of the events for the Quest for the Golden Arrow. There will be no 'dead heads' allowed". Cost for the 1961 Conference was \$4.50.

The Mid-Year Fellowship was originally a small event, with Saturday dinner being the only meal provided. A miniature Quest was held, as well as rehearsals for dance and chanting competitions and Brotherhood qualifications. By 1961 there were two weekend activities held a year in January and September. In 1965 the lodge calendar was expanded to include a third activity, the Spring Fellowship was added in June. In the early 1960's the lodge elected four lodge vice chiefs, with the fourth position held by the past chief. Each had their own responsibilities and was a precursor to committee chairmen in today's lodge operations. The 1962 Fall Fellowship was attended by 175 members with 56 new Ordeal members and 28 Brotherhood members inducted. The first "quest for the Wooden Arrow" was won by Alachua Chapter. Officers were elected Sunday morning for both lodge officers and Dance team. Qualifications for the three levels of proficiency were also held.

Yet another lodge flap patch was first issued in 1960. This design featuring the three color background of red, orange and yellow has been used on the service flap since, changing only in meeting National patch guidelines and changes in manufacture.

Due to a condition of disrepair at Camp Echochotee in the mid 1960's, the lodge needed a way to encourage brothers to come give service. A restriction was placed on the flap patch only allowing those that had attended a service day to purchase a flap patch. New lodge rules in 1963 set these rules in stone, as well as, limiting neckerchief purchases one per person, creating committees, setting dues and membership rules, and chapter officer qualifications.