

Old fort was basis for new appreciation

Some years the fading days of August bring to mind an experience that stirs recollections of a person who influenced significantly the life of a teen-ager.

The date was Aug. 30, 1939. The place was just north of Fort Davis, Texas, where Boy Scout Troop 70 had camped overnight. The abandoned military post was to be visited that Wednesday morning as part of a tour to Carlsbad Caverns, N.M.

We broke camp and loaded into the chartered bus that took us to the edge of a historic site. The forlorn remnants of structures that sheltered inhabitants from 1854 to 1891 beckoned our curiosities.

"Charge!" Buddy Couch shouted, stimulating the spirit of attack our youthful imaginations envisioned — the wide nostrils of horses, carbines cracking, the guidon flapping through smoke and dust, sabres slashing, arrows thudding, lances rending, screams, shrieks, whoops.

"Stand to!" commanded the scoutmaster, George Hass, ex-cavalry captain. Around the campfire the previous night he had told us the story of Fort Davis. He knew the rigors of the saddle. He was aware also of the exuberance of youngsters and their tendency to knock down, kick over, and carry off.

"You will not," Scoutmaster Hass stated, "destroy, disfigure, or disturb any of these buildings and grounds. Now, under your Scout oath and law, go and look. Look and think. Think about what it was like to soldier when there was no running water, no electric lights, no telephones, no radios,



As time goes by

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no autos. Think and appreciate."

We stepped into the past. We saw. We thought. We appreciated.

An interest in historic preservation was generated in me. Years later (1966) I founded the Council on Abandoned Military Posts, a non-profit corporation now known as the Council on America's Military Past. CAMP's members, numbering around 1,000 are interested in the identification, location, restoration, preservation, and memorialization of the places where men and women have served the military needs of our country.

Fort Davis became a unit of the National Park Service in 1963 and today is one of the better examples of how the past can be preserved and serve as an educational asset.

Next May CAMP members will assemble in Omaha, Neb., for the 33rd annual conference that will include presentation of papers and tours to the area's abandoned military posts and sites of engagements, and I will recall Scoutmaster Hass's words. I'll see and think and appreciate.

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WHAT'S IN A NAME? Shane Sims clerks at the Hall of Frames in Arrowhead Center on Bell Road. "You have a first name associated with a movie," I commented. "That's right," he replied, "my Mom named me for it." His mother, Donnalee, gave birth to Shane on Aug. 13, 1976. The 1953 film had Alan Ladd in the title role.

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