

“A Hike That Changed History”
Dedicating the Jack Voss Trail
Sunday, July 23, 2017

It was a hike that changed history.

It was *the* hike that changed *your* history.

One morning, probably in the summer of 1936, Otto Link and Wally Hetherington hiked up to Cody Lake. You know their names because Link Lodge is named after our longtime Troop One Committee Chairman. Hetherington Lodge carries the name of Wally Hetherington, our Scoutmaster in the 1930s and 1940s. The Link family owned a cabin at Sciots Tract, down along Highway 50. In the 1920s, the Link family and other members of the Masonic order set up their colony of summer cabins, calling it Sciots Tract. It's where John C. Frémont and Kit Carson camped in February 1844, where Frémont lost his musket in the ice-covered creek.

On that summer morning Mr. Link and Mr. Hetherington hiked up Strawberry Creek, crossed over to Cody Creek, came over that ridge, and reached this spot. I'd like to think that they could see the snowfields on Pyramid Peak, just like you can today. They stood on this same ground, looked at these same trees, and stared that same massive rock wall behind you.

Before then, Troop One went to summer camps at various Sierra Nevada locations: Camp Audrain, Camp Bear, Camp Hante Wazi. But Scoutmaster Hetherington wanted a permanent place for the Troop's summer camps. The Links had hiked, hunted, and fished the area above Sciots Tract. Otto wanted Wally to see this small lake that they liked. And so it was that Troop One found our summer home here at Cody Lake.

Camp Cody started the following summer. In 1937, there was nothing here, just the lake, the trees, and these meadows. No cabins, no flagpoles, no campsites, no water tanks, no cooking facilities. To set up their summer camp, the older Scouts hiked in the tents, supplies, lumber, canoes, and other gear. They called themselves “the Big Brawny Bruisers.” Who were they?

- Bob Brown
- Dana Fuller (we have a sailboat named for him)
- Paul Hoefling
- Kent Link (Otto's son)
- Ty McClintock
- Marv McCollough
- Harold (Bob) McCurry, Jr.
- Robert (Roz) McCurry
- Jack Voss

Who was this Jack Voss? Born in 1922, Jack grew up near Sacramento's Tower Theater. He went to local schools, joined Troop One, earned his Eagle Scout rank in 1937, and served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. As a young dad, Jack raised three sons: J.R., Bill, and Mick. J.R. and Bill are here with us today, while Mick is at another scout camp this week. All three Voss sons are Troop One Eagle Scouts.

Throughout his working life and well into retirement, Jack actively supported Troop One and Camp Cody in particular. I was fortunate to know Jack in his later years when he came up to Camp Cody to deliver fresh meat and groceries. Recognizing his help, we named another one of our sailboats for Jack. Mr. Voss died in 2004.

Today, to celebrate Camp Cody's 80th anniversary, we dedicate the Jack Voss Trail or "J.V.T." so that we can remember Jack's contributions and service. Last year when we named a rowboat after our friend Gene Domek, I told you that we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. That's why we're dedicating the JVT today in Jack Voss's memory.

Where is this JVT? One end starts at Sciots Tract, at the cabin that used to be the community store. It goes through Sciots on the road that they grandly call Masonic Boulevard to Blamey's cabin, then across the paved road, and up Cody Creek along what we call the jeep trail. In the 1930s, Otto Link would lash supply boxes on his motorcycle to haul them higher on the trail. From there, the Scouts backpacked gear and supplies up the rest of the trail, over the ridge where our shooting ranges are now, and then down here into camp. In the 1940s, Troop One adults and Scouts widened the jeep trail with picks and shovels to the wide spot that they called the jeep base. Until the late 1960s, this was our route into Camp Cody,

Heavy winter snows in 1968-69 collapsed the original 1959 Hetherington Lodge, former the camp kitchen and storage building. The Troop decided to salvage the wreckage and build those two smaller buildings right behind us: Silvius Lodge and the "new" Hetherington Lodge. The Troop sent two older Scouts - - - Ray Reynolds and Bill Voss - - - to guard the wreckage from vandals and to haul in more building materials. With his older brother J.R. Voss away in the Air Force, Bill spent the summer of 1969 camping out at Cody Lake. Bill was often alone up here when Ray worked at Camp Sacramento.

While some building supplies came up the jeep trail, Bill knew that it was too far for the younger Scouts to carry the heavier lumber, cement, and hardware. Instead, he built the route that leads that way out of Camp Cody, along the lakeshore, up the rocky hill, and through the heavy timber to the end of the Forest Service road that we now call the parking lot trailhead. A helicopter delivered the heavy materials to "helicopter flat" a little further out that Forest Service road. Bill called this path from the parking lot down to the lake the "high trail" and since then the rest of us have used his route to come in and out of Camp Cody. Bill told me that 1969 was "the best summer of my life."

So the JVT runs up from Sciots Tract, along the jeep trail, over and down the ridge, past Link Lodge and the leatherwork area, through our camp, out the high trail route to the parking lot and helicopter flat. Earlier this year we asked the federal government to formally name this route the Jack Voss Trail on all of their official maps. While we waiting their final approval, today we dedicate the JVT in Jack's memory.

We'll be installing seasonal trail posts with the JVT initials, just like this one. Today we give J.R. and Bill their own JVT trail posts to take home in memory of their father. Here's a third post that we want you to deliver to Mick, your younger brother who can't be with us today.

Every trail boss knows the JVT from delivering supplies and hauling out our garbage. And right over there, at the corner of Hetherington Lodge's porch where the trail bosses and their helpers unload their pack frames to deliver our food and supplies, there's a special JVT trail post. Several Troop One alumni with us here today are former trail bosses. We invite them to sign that trail post so that in future summers, everyone will remember your hard work, just as we remember Jack Voss today.

As a former trail boss, Brian Johnson, recently told us "Jack was always quick with a smile or a Cody memory. It was inspiring to see how much Cody meant to him."

Thank you.

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