

'Leaders for Life'

Girl Scout Troop 20 celebrates lasting friendship at reunion

By HAYLEY KLEIN
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Homecoming Weekend is just that — a homecoming. The Friday night football game was packed with class reunion attendees, decades of AHS graduates — and a few Girl Scouts.

Girl Scout Troop 20 had a reunion of its own, a "Girl Scout Camper's Lunch," celebrating years of friendship and leadership. Troop leader Edna Carper hosted the gathering at her home on Sept. 18.

The gathering started with the typical mingling of old friends finding one another after years have separated them, hugs, laughs and sharing of memories.

When Mrs. Carper gathered her troop together, she provided a song list and asked her girls to join her in singing as she accompanied on the harmonica.

Mrs. Carper, now 95, charmingly welcomed her troop back into her home and, with a deep breath, began on her harmonica as her "girls" — all from the class of 1960 — joined her.

Each song may have been just a campfire song when they sang it together back in 1950, but today the words rang true as metaphors for their lives together as a troop and as life-long friends.

"Girl Scouts Together, happy are we; winding the old trails rocky and long ... faithful to country, loyal to home ...," the Girl Scouts sang.

Most of the troop graduated from Artesia High School in 1960, left Artesia and yet return in loyalty to honor the Girl Scout creed and, most of all, honor troop leaders Carper and Stromberg.

"Make new friends, but keep the old; one is silver and the other's gold ...," they sang.

With a few school girl giggles, the troop sang in round, again as Mrs. Carper played the harmonica.

Most remarkable was the ability of this troop to come together for an afternoon as though they'd never parted.

"The Lord is good to me and so I thank the Lord for giving me the things I need ...," they sang again.

While some sad stories were shared, all of the scouts celebrated the successes of their families and careers, and cherished the opportunity to spend the time with their troop leaders.

Each of them successful women in raising their families and becoming teachers, professors, business owners and more, they all credited Girl Scouts, and particularly their leaders, for contributing significantly to their successes.

Shirley Staggs Caton pointed out, "I developed my strength for life through Girl Scouts."

Martha Dampf Lamkin agreed.

"Our leaders have given me such confidence," she said.

After singing, the troop shared a true camper's lunch of Sloppy Joes, fruit salad and S'mores, while sharing updates on each of their lives. There were jokes, tears and plenty of laughs.

As a gift to her Girl Scouts, Mrs. Stromberg returned to each of her troop members all the notes and cards each of them had written to her over the years.

In return, troop members have made a donation to Camp Tumbleweed for improvements to the camp in honor of troop leaders Edna Carper and June Stromberg.

The two women were given certificates, t-shirts and other gifts to recognize the contribution and the moment.

Most notable during the event was the depth of friendship shared in the room that day.

Troop 20 wasn't celebrating another decade down since graduation. They were celebrating a lifetime of true friendship, loyalty to their troop leaders and to one another.

Having been Girl Scouts together since they were 11-years-old, including ex-officio member and friend Mike Currier, they celebrated their lives together as Girl Scouts in childhood and adulthood.

Carper noted in retrospect of her years as troop leader, "We were making friends for life." She said her girls had become her friends. Judy Hanson Yates, a member of the troop, pointed out to Carper, "You made friends for life for all of us."

Troop 20 consists of Connie Beene Barnett, Shirley Staggs Caton, Lana Garner Daniell, Ellen Denton Gressett, Betti Bullock Hodges, Claire Carper Jessee, Rita Caudle Plattor, Nancy Lamb, Noelle Lamb, Martha Dampf Lamkin, Marlene Conner Lobb, Ann Stromberg and Judy Hanson Yates. And, of course, "Leaders for life," Edna Carper and June Stromberg.