

# A Brief Recounting of the Early Days of Troop 805

## *by George H. Coughlin II*

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### **The Origin of a Dream**

In the late 1970's and early 1980's Vista Grande School was the home of Cub Scout Pack 805. Unfortunately, the pack lacked an affiliated Boy Scout troop. When its large number of Webelos crossed over the bridge into Boy Scouts each year, they headed to Troop 36 at St. Timothy's Church or Troop 236 at the Presbyterian Church.

George Coughlin, an experienced Scouter with a son in Pack 805, sensed the need for a troop closer to home. In 1979, he explored the possibility of creating such a unit with the current District Executive, Lynn Hackala. Although the latter expressed solid support for a new troop at Vista Grande, the idea failed to develop further when Mr. Coughlin's son dropped out of Cub Scouts.

Fortunately, the dream never died. In the Spring of 1983, Mr. Coughlin's son George, then age 12+, was invited to join a friend's patrol in newly formed Troop 888 that was meeting in the Sycamore Clubhouse. Mr. Coughlin joined the unit at the same time as an Assistant Scoutmaster.

In the Fall of 1984, Mr. Coughlin was invited to attend the Wood Badge training course for adult Scouters. During the drive to Camp Lindblad one Friday afternoon with several other adults, Mr. Coughlin overheard the then current Cubmaster of Pack 805 expressed dissatisfaction that his pack lacked a Boy Scout troop close to home that his Webelos could join. Without hesitation, Mr. Coughlin turned to him and asked, "Would you like to help create one?" The Cubmaster, Larry Levin, immediately responded with an emphatic "yes".

While it would be easy to say that "the rest is history", one additional element was needed to make Troop 805 a reality. The two excited adult Scouters stopped at a telephone booth in Boulder Creek that afternoon before completing their journey to camp Lindblad for the second Wood Badge weekend. Mr. Coughlin placed a call to his son George. (Remember, this was long before cell phones became available.) When young George answered the phone, his father asked if he would be interested in leaving Troop 888 in order to help form a new Scout troop at Vista Grande. A nanosecond later an enthusiastic "yes" was heard through the telephone in Boulder Creek.

### **Forming The Troop**

Young George, known throughout his Scouting days as "Jorge" became the first recruit. Another experienced Scout from 888, Patrick May, as well as five young Tenderfoot candidates from Green Valley School joined Jorge as charter members of Troop 805. Our charter was issued on November 30, 1984 to our sponsoring organization, the Vista Grande Parent Teacher Club. The first troop meeting took place in the multipurpose room at Vista Grande before Christmas vacation that same year. Mr. Coughlin served as the first Scoutmaster and Larry Levin took on the duties of Assistant Scoutmaster.

## **The Early Years**

Troop 805's first outing was a day-hike to Rock City from the South Gate of Mt. Diablo State Park in early February of 1985. The following month our initial overnight camping trip took place on Friday and Saturday night at Camp Tamarancho thanks to some tents and cooking gear we borrowed from another troop. In April of 1985, we invited Mr. Jim Price's Webelos den from Pack 805 to join us for a campout at the old Scout property on Mt. Diablo. When those Webelos crossed over the bridge in May, they all joined our troop and effectively doubled our membership. In the meantime, we added four new recruits from Vista Grande School and our two patrols participated in their first District Camporee. During our first summer, fourteen Scouts from our young troop attended Camp Wolfeboro in early August.

Shortly before camp, most of the parents and many of the Scouts spent an entire weekend helping conduct a massive yard sale of the household furnishings and personal items that had belonged to Scout Kenneth Burger's recently deceased grandmother, Helen F. Burger. The Burger Family donated the entire \$2,600 net proceeds from that estate sale to our troop in memory of Mrs. Burger. During our Court of Honor on August 17, 1985, we gratefully acknowledged the overwhelming generosity of their gift by establishing the Helen F. Burger Award to recognize periodically the Troop's outstanding patrol. The ceramic medallion on the face of the plaque emblazoned with the logo of the 1985 National Scout Jamboree was donated by Jorge Coughlin who brought it home from that event.

With the troop on a solid financial footing and the help of a dynamic outdoor program, the young troop continued to attract new recruits and an energetic group of adult volunteers. Although Patrick May's family moved to Virginia and several of the original Scouts dropped out of Scouting, the troop roster listed nineteen Scouts in three patrols when it reregistered on its first anniversary.

## **Assorted Items Worth Noting**

- Troop 805's first 50-miler took place in August of 1986 in the Kaiser Wilderness Area. There were two crews of four each.
- Eight of us made the troop's first excursion to Philmont Scout Ranch in August of 1987.
- Four Scouts and one Scouter from the troop participated in the World Jamboree in Australia during the winter of 1987-88. All four of those young men became Eagle Scouts.
- Approximately 175 parents, Scouts and friends gathered for our first Eagle Scout Court of Honor during September of 1988 inside the Pacific Bell auditorium in San Ramon.
- The Troop 805 Family suffered its first fatality shortly before Easter in 1993 when former Scout Matt Decker died as the result of a skiing accident during his Freshman year of college. Matt was one of the first to earn Skiing Merit Badge in our troop.