

Tennessee Good Sam

From the Director:

It seems like only yesterday that Loretta and I became the Tennessee State Director, but it has actually been almost two years. In that time, we have met many wonderful people and made many new friends. As our first term as State Director draws to a close, we would like to reflect back on 2010 and 2011.

We were very anxious and a little intimidated about our “first” Samboree. Now, we have four under our belts, and we feel each has been a success and better than the one before. That success is not due to Loretta or me, but is due to the tremendous support of our staff, the chapters, and the attendees who have faithfully come to them.

As is always the case, we will always remember our “first” Samboree. The theme, Salute to the Military, was such a wonderful theme to start off our tenure as State Director. The staff and the people really helped to set the theme with their loans of memorabilia. However, our first Samboree had a “few bumps in the road”. State Treasurer, Larry Eikenberry, was in the hospital in Knoxville, and I pulled double duty as both the State Director and the Treasurer. To say that Samboree was a blur is an understatement, but it was wonderful. Most all the staff had never served on a state staff before, but they accepted their responsibilities and took ownership of the Samboree and made it a success. We may not have done everything by the so called book but we “got r done”. I can never thank everyone involved for all they did.

Fall of 2010 was much easier with Larry back. I had a marvelous time getting dressed up as a pirate and making a fool of myself (something I am good at). It appeared to be much easier on the staff too because they had experienced a Samboree and knew what to expect. I felt our attendees had a wonderful time and got involved in the theme – Pirates of the Caribbean. Who can forget the bunch from Florida, led by their State Director, Bob Ward, who captured Loretta and made me walk the plank to get her back?

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2010 was not all fun and games where everything was lovely. As I said before, our treasure Larry was hospitalized during the Spring Samboree. I too was in and out of the hospital's Cath Lab three times that year and got three new stints in the arteries around my heart for my efforts. Again the state staff came to the rescue and took charge making sure everything got done while I was down.

The time I was incapacitated was bad, but that was not near as bad as when we got word that our 10-year old grandson, Cameron, had a brain tumor. Everything in our lives went on hold as we and the rest of the family concentrated our efforts on his care and well being. In addition to the immediate family, our Good Sam family came to our aid. Cameron was put on prayer list, from Florida to Alaska and from California to New York. God was kind and answered those prayers. The doctors were able to successfully remove ALL of the tumor. Cam is still recovering at home and doing most everything he did before. According to the doctors he is about 80% recovered and should, in time, fully recover. Regardless, we thank God for what He did and for allowing us to have Cameron. We also want to thank our Good Sam family for all they did. Their prayers were invaluable and their offers of support were unbelievable. The outpouring of love and compassion to us and to Cameron will never be forgotten.

A new chapter was chartered in 2010 and another was formed. The Grand Ole Sams received their charter and the Sam's Tennessee Veterans applied for their charter. When the Veterans Chapter was formed, there was much discussion on how the chapter could perform for the state. One area of responsibility was to serve as an honor guard to post the colors at our Samborees and another was to "stand" at funerals. Little did we know that their services to stand at a funeral would be requested so early in their existence.

Bill and Molly Stewart were original members of the state staff but left at the end of 2010 to serve as president of the Golden Circle Sams. Shortly after the start of the New Year we got word that Molly was hospitalized and the diagnosis was not good. Molly fought a courageous battle but lost. Bill requested the honor guard stand at her funeral and they did. The honor guard made us proud and did a tremendous job. However, it

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was a real blow to lose Molly. She was a friend and a tremendous asset to the state staff. She will be missed.

The start of 2011 brought some interesting changes to the Good Sam organization when it was announced that the Good Sam Club and Camping World were both under the same leadership and under the new corporate name - Good Sam Enterprises. The move was a surprise to both organizations and their attempt at becoming a "family" was somewhat difficult in the beginning. As the year progressed, both groups became more familiar with the other and made great strides in becoming one.

In May, at the 2011 Spring Samboree, we got to act like a bunch of Mexican jumping beans as we lived up to our theme – South of the Boarder. 253 rigs were registered for the Samboree which made it one of our largest to date. It was the first time Billy and Juanita Jones had been able to come to a Samboree since we became State Director. It was great to have them with us as well as the immediate past State Director - Terry and Betty Minger. It was another first as our Sam's Tennessee Veterans honor guard posted the colors for us at the opening ceremonies. It was a marvelous, moving ceremony.

As is the case of most Samborees, there is some bitterness mixed in with the sweet. The memorial service on Sunday morning was a sad time for many as we remembered the Tennessee Good Sam members who have passed on. One name on the list was Fred Miller. I mention him because Fred and his wife Sue were Loretta and my sponsors when we first joined a chapter. Another bitter moment was seeing Mrs. Verta Lee Oller give her last "official" performance at the Oller Comedy Hour. She has been such an inspiration to so many people for so long. It is sad to think she will not be entertaining us anymore.

On a positive note, two new chapters received their charters and the Good Sams of Tennessee officially got their own state logo. The Sam's Tennessee Veterans and The Tennessee Valley Sams each received their charters at the Spring Samboree and the Fish Fry Sams celebrated their 30th year of being a Good Sam Chapter. The logo submitted by the K-town Sams was chosen as the official Good Sams of Tennessee logo.

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Our numbers were down at the Fall 2011 Samboree, but it will most likely always be remembered as the Wedding Samboree. During the Samboree, I had the privilege of performing a real wedding as I married two members of the State Staff, Jim Lusk and Teresa Head. It was a first for me and a first for Tennessee Samborees.

In addition to the wedding, we had a lot of things happen during the Samboree. Many of us had an opportunity to relive our younger days as we celebrated the Fabulous 50s, which was our theme. It sure seemed a lot easier dancing, etc. in the 50s than it did at the Samboree.

This Samboree may also be remembered as the last Tennessee Fall Samboree. The reason for that is because the state committee voted to have only one Samboree per year starting in 2012. In the future, Tennessee will host one Samboree in the spring, and that Samboree will start on the Monday following Mother's Day. Mark your calendars now so you do not miss the Tennessee Samboree this year and in future years as well.

In all, the past two years have been wonderful, and Loretta and I want to thank everyone for their help and support in making our first term as State Director fun. We also want to take this opportunity to extend an invitation to come to Tennessee and have some fun with us. Until then - be safe and happy trails to you until we meet again.