



Photos by Ernie Lawrence

Stone for the fireplace of the Johnnie Barnes Lodge at the National Royal Rangers Training Center came from the ruins of pre-Civil War homesteads on the property.

By DIANN BROWN

work, he cited impressive statistics of boys saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit that year in our district. He told of families who had begun attending church solely on the basis of their sons' participation in local outposts.

Next the speaker said something like this: "And, wives, we love you. Your support is priceless. You too will share in the eternal rewards of this ministry."

That's all it took. My cheeks burned with embarrassment, but my eyes were finally opened. From that night my husband began receiving the encouragement every commander needs from his wife.

Months later at a sportsorama, Pat first heard about the plans for the National Royal Rangers Training Center. He described for me where the land was and the purposes for the center. When Pat told me he intended to apply for the position of resident camp coordinator, I knew it was a right decision.

Weeks passed. Pat was hired, and a new vista of adventures opened not only for him, but for our two daughters and me as well. Construction on the camp coordinator's cabin had only begun, so we moved to a rented house in Eagle Rock. We spent hours on the Royal Rangers property and found the land teeming with nature lessons and Biblical applications.

One of the first animals our 2-year-old learned to identify was a deer, not through books, but by seeing the real thing in its habitat. Close observation of quail, wild turkeys, walking sticks, black snakes, wildflowers, buckeyes, terrapins, and tarantulas whetted our appetites enough to pull encyclopedias and other books off shelves to learn more.

We harvested gooseberries and persimmons and experimented with new recipes. As these lessons continued, I sensed something deeper unfolding; our family was growing closer to the Lord through a hands-on contact with His creation. Nature verses such as Psalm 50:10,11 and Psalm 42:1 held new meaning for us.

Even for a mother of daughters!

A place of relevance

A line of cars, trucks, vans, and buses lumbered toward the National Royal Rangers Training Center near Eagle Rock, Missouri, one autumn afternoon. They were arriving for a Frontier Camping Fraternity territorial rendezvous, one of the first events scheduled on the property.

Driving out of the center, I saw boys pressing expectant faces against window glass. They seemed eager—as did the adults—to get that first glimpse of the new campgrounds.

I knew they would not be disappointed. The rustic beauty of the Ozarks offers a perfect setting for Royal Rangers adventure and work.

Sensing the boys' exuberance gave me a good feeling. Then I mused, *How far I've come!*

I would like to say that from my husband's first involvement with

Royal Rangers, I shared his enthusiasm and his burden for boys. But that isn't true.

I would at least like to say he's always had my verbal and prayerful support. But he hasn't. As a mother of daughters, I had little interest in Royal Rangers because I felt the program didn't have relevance for me.

At times my indifference turned to resentment when campouts, sportsoramas, leadership training classes, and other activities took Pat from his family or his job.

I persisted in this selfish attitude until Pat finally persuaded me to attend a commanders and wives banquet. The speaker thanked the men for their sacrifices of time and money that often went unnoticed. Reminding them of the eternal implications and rewards of their Royal Rangers