



Remembering the First National Rendezvous

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Planning the first national Powwow was exciting. It would be the first national camping event for the young Royal Rangers ministry. Later to be known as a National Rendezvous, it paved the way for many national events to come.

In 1972 Johnnie Barnes, first national commander who is now deceased, and I made several craft items that would be distributed at the Rendezvous that year. Johnnie was eager to make each item as authentic as possible, so we worked long and hard to achieve this goal.

Evangel College [now Evangel University] in Springfield, Missouri, would be the meeting point for the Rendezvous. The history department of the college had reconstructed an authentic log cabin, which Johnnie had named our symbolic FCF headquarters.

Standing outside the cabin, I gave a long blast on the national horn, and then the fun began. More than 200 FCF members had gathered on that June 14, 1972. It was at that point in Rangers history the most spectacular camping event and was said to rival events and activities of the old-time rendezvous of frontier days.

All the original FCF territorial representatives were there: Elton Bell (Midwest), Paul Johnson (West), Ralph Palmerton (Southeast), and Oliver Dalaba (Northeast).

The Rendezvous lasted two days. It included a tour of the national Assemblies of God Headquarters, swap time, an FCF Olympics, black powder shoot-outs, knife and tomahawk throwing contests, pole climbing, log rolling, frontier singing, squaw calling, pioneer tales, and the selection of the best FCF outfits.

The squaw call will ever linger in my mind. Listening to Oliver Dalaba echoing his now famous "Min-ne-HAHA" was worth the trip alone. No one responded to the call, but the sound of it was tremendous.

Demonstrations included shooting a flintlock rifle, making beef jerky, smoking fish, molding bullets, and making leather craft and Indian beadwork.

The big feed on the final day featured an Ozark razorback pig, Kansas antelope, and two turkeys, which were cooked over an open fire. The menu included Indian corn, wild greens, venison, and quail. There was never a finer frontier meal!

Following the feast, we all headed to Fantastic Caverns near Springfield. There in the auditorium, we conducted the presentation of awards for the various contests, which included the selection of "Mr. Frontiersman" for the Rendezvous. The winner was Keith Weaver of Oklahoma City.

The festivities concluded with an impressive friendship fire on an island in the Sac River. Using my old Martin 17 guitar, I played and sang the *FCF Song*. At the conclusion, guys grabbed brands and logs from the fire as keepsakes.

I remember well that the first ever National Rendezvous was a tremendous success. It paved the way for the first National Camporama in Colorado Springs in 1974. Much has transpired since that day, but one thing will never change—the spirit of FCF.

Rev. John Eller,
First FCF National President