TODAY'S NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THERAPEUTIC WILDERNESS CAMPING (NATWC)

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By: Rick McClintock - Executive Director, NATWC

The scene is post World War II, a different world than today in many ways, but the same world none the less. The place was East Texas. The man, a professional with several degrees in higher education, yet an outdoorsman with the patience of Job, and a knowledge and deep respect for all living things, especially the boys that were campers at Camp Woodland Springs.

Campbell Loughmiller was hired by the Dallas Salesmanship Club to run a camp for underprivileged children in the Dallas area during the summer and on weekends. The magic that occurred by accident, as well as by Campbell's purposeful design, soon led to the first long term Therapeutic Wilderness Camp.

If time is the ultimate test, some 60 years later, through trial and tribulation, Therapeutic Wilderness Camping still exists and is utilized by a variety of organizations and agencies throughout the United States and internationally, to serve special needs groups and their families. Indeed, some programming evolution has transpired since Campbell Loughmiller first authored "*Wilderness Road*" and the subsequent "*Kids in Trouble,*" two priceless gems that address the rationale, mission and story of Therapeutic Wilderness Camping.

In the 1980's, the nation was swirling with need for therapeutic programs and schools to effectively serve the burgeoning swell of youngsters getting caught up in a society's push to have them "grow up" before their time. Many new programs evolved from that original, successful first camp in Texas.

Outdoor programming milieu developed regionally to suit the local environment, whether woodlands or high desert. Philosophies varied, based on personal experiences of the staff empowered to develop those programs; adventure based programs like Outward Bound, as well as short and long term base camps were created and modeled after the original Camp Woodland

Continued: **NATWC/** pg 26

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