

## AKELA WAHINAPAY LODGE GORGET

The Akela Wahinapay Lodge Newsletter, *The Gorget*, was named for an American Indian gorget found at Camp Pioneer during Summer Camp 1949. Gorgets are stones, usually made of river stone, deer stone, or slate stone and usually have notches on them; they are rare to find.

The purpose of the notches is not known for certain, but it is believed by authorities to be a system or recordkeeping of battles, days, years, victories, feasts, honors, or similar events. On most gorgets a hole may be found in the upper half for the purpose of lacing the stone in a necklace.

James O. McKinney, a 1949 junior staff member, found the Camp Pioneer Gorget while on one of the many arrowhead hikes made to the north of camp. The Camp Pioneer Gorget was about 1.25 inches in diameter. On each side were three notches – six in all. A hole was in the center for lacing the stone as the central article in a necklace. The Camp Pioneer Gorget was medium gray in color and was made of river stone.

This American Indian relic was among the rarest artifacts ever found in or around Camp Pioneer. Mr. Pete Mirrier, local representative of the Smithsonian Institution American Ethnology Department, examined and authenticated the Camp Pioneer Gorget.

When searching for a name for the lodge newsletter, the unique story of the Camp Pioneer Gorget offered a good name, legend, and tradition; so the Akela Wahinapay Lodge Newsletter was named *The Gorget*. This name had meaning for the lodge members, and *The Gorget* was the only lodge newsletter in the Order of the Arrow to be so named.

The first edition of *The Gorget* appeared in November 1949. The nameplate for the newsletter consisted of the name, a peace pipe, and three Indian dancers around a fire. Lodge Chief Ken Pearson wrote and edited the early editions. The drawings of the three dancers were taken from Lester Griswold's *Book of Crafts & Indian Lore*.



The idea of the American Indian gorget was incorporated in the Akela Wahinapay Ordeal. Each candidate was given a small block of wood on craft strip, hung around their neck, and called a gorget. A notch was cut into the shoulder of the gorget whenever the candidate broke silence without permission.

The gorget was also used as the design of the 1954 Summer Pow Wow patch. The patch was cut in the shape of a rectangular gorget with a button loop on a gold twill background with a black cut border; simulated black notches were on the upper shoulders; red POW WOW; two black circle thong holes; and black 232, '54, and a water bottle.

In 1959, the lodge developed a Vigil Gorget. Made of slate, the stone gorget approximates the shape of the original Camp Pioneer Gorget. It is engraved with three arrows on the front in the shape of the Vigil triangle. The back is engraved with the recipient's first and last names and the date. This gorget is given to each candidate who completes their Vigil.



### ***THE GORGET***

While hiking o'er fields and Indian grounds,  
T'was found – a pierced, notched stone: a Gorget.

Three notches on the right,  
Three notches on the left:  
Are they for battles, honors, or victories won?

Symbol of power, emblem of record,  
Staunch sentinel of ritual bound,  
What is your meaning: a Gorget.

What Brave of old in days ago  
Did wield the tool that shaped this find?  
Perhaps a Chief, a Mighty Warrior, a Medicine Man,  
Shaped this stone his glory to bind: a Gorget.

Why the stone did lay where t'was found ---  
Yet majestically, silently, serenely, it stays,  
Still powerful though its mysteries untold,  
Its legend unspoken: *The Gorget*.

Kenneth E. Pearson, 1950