

Tales from the Trails

The unofficial accounts of Tom Bedard

Black Bear District Spring Camporee Adventure

Camp Lewis, NJ

May 1-3, 2009

Coming off the Extreme Sports Event the week before, this campout was a much more relaxed outing with only @ 15 Troop 76 Scouts in attendance. The Spring Camporee has been hosted by T76 two of the past 4 years with the well received Battle of the Clans in 2006 and the Indian Lore event in 2008. This year's theme was the Battle of Mafeking, a reference to a 217 day battle fought by Lord Baden Powell, the founder of Scouting, while he served as an officer of the British military in S. Africa. As with other Camporees, Scout skills and friendly competition abounded.

Departing church @ 6:30 on Friday, the convoy was more of a light mountain infantry unit than a full brigade. After a familiar forty minute ride to Camp Lewis, the gang established a campsite again on nice wood flooring for the second time in as many weeks. This time, however, rain and plentiful poison ivy found their way into Troop 76's collective fortune.

Saturday morning after breakfast, I joined acting SPL's Hahn and Leo for an informal tent inspection following a heavy Friday night rain. Two items revealed themselves. First, Mr. Byram's notoriously leaky tent showed its true Swiss character for the fourth time leaving him all wet. He gets no sympathy points as he's old enough to know better. The second find, however, was an instant classic – an upside down rainfly on a Green Bar's tent. A quick snapshot later with a mortified Scout trying to grab the camera and the picture was destined for the year end slide show. (see @ www.troop76nj.org) I want to know the names of his last two patrol leaders who also never caught this on a three year old tent. After a good laugh, we took the opportunity to instruct Scouts on the finer points of tucking ground cloths and bailing improvised bathtubs. We also got to practice a few clove hitches on some hastily constructed clotheslines.



Spring Camporee Adventure



Sunny, clear, warm weather on Saturday afforded a refreshing backdrop for a very enjoyable day. After a brief formal opening and flag raising, our two patrols were off to compete at various Scout stations. Among the events were orienteering, reconaissance, team skills, spider net group activity, tire course, and a timed patrol flag pioneering activity.

The latter was quite interesting to watch as one of our patrols, using a very unorthodox technique and the worst round lashing I have ever witnessed, managed somehow to get their patrol flag to stand in record time. I think the mast snapping in two parts right before planting the base probably contributed to favorable physics. I had to shake my head at that one and hope that I was never stranded on a desert island needing a raft with that group. But points are points and they scored them



Tales from the Trails

after two loose facsimilies of round lashings and hoisting the patrol flag.

Meanwhile down at the fishing derby rematch, Mr. Byram had become *one with the water* after his wet night and was pulling bass out of the lake like a rookie magician practicing for the rabbit in the hat trick. If any had been over 12 inches, I might have been more upset. But I did squeak out a single bass sufficient to preserve my masculine pride. Which was more than I can say for some other derby participants who will remain nameless. It simply wouldn't be Scoutlike to embarrass Mr. Leo like that.



Back at the ranch for lunch we had good quality cold cut sandwiches with a PB&J chaser. The scouts had fun socializing and bouncing tennis balls off the floor frames. You can see four balls going in the picture below and I really think this skill should be added to a rank advancement checklist.

After lunch the scouts finished their remaining stations, then reported to the field for some kind of capture the flag game. Tennis ball points they had earned during the morning somehow factored into the 'spike the cannon' game, but I never did quite understand all the rules. But the

Spring Camporee Adventure



scouts were occupied, happy, and exercising, all of which I understood from my adult leader training to be good things.

A Dutch oven Iron Chef cookoff marked the

arrival of dinner time. The spouse of a real Sicilian our very own 'Italian Stallion Emeril the Chef Cruz' – Bam! - inspired a truly rousing rendition of the *neuvo* Sicilian / Dutch / Bronx oven classic campfire lasagna. The scouts had fun putting their new cooking skills to work complete with garlic bread, peach and apple custard pies. Dessert came complete with an interpatrol pie eating competition in which everyone was a winner.

A somewhat short campfire program proved memorable because of a couple good skits and fires significantly smaller than the twin Brush funeral pyres from the previous year. Attendees will recall actual fire hoses and a real nervous forest ranger at that event. However the most memorable thing about this campfire was the repeated use of lighter fluid by the organizers on a lit fire in front of 60 live scouts. Honorable Mention Darwin Awards



were presented in a private ceremony immediately following the campfire. I understand a Men in Black team was dispatched later to erase scout memories, but nobody recalls if they ever showed up.



Troop 76 armed with only the light mountain infantry unit still managed to capture 3rd place overall at the Camporee. We've said it before and we'll say it again,



hardware at a Scout event is always fashionable. Good job guys.

After an uneventful cleanup Sunday and a brief closing flag ceremony, the Scouts broke camp and returned home armed with a very good looking patch and another set of valuable Scout memories.■

Tom Bedard is an ASM for Troop 76 in Ringwood, NJ where he resides with his wife and three children. His son, Gabe, also participated on this outing.

