

**SCOUTS-L**

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**WAY IT WAS**

On Wed, 28 May 1997 01:28:00 -0400 "Michael F. Bowman"

<mfbowman@CAPACCESS.ORG> writes:

>George,

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>On my first Scout campout, our patrol shoved off from the patrol leader's  
>house under the watchful eye of the wonderful lady who'd been a Den  
>Mother only a year or two before. She smiled choking her emotions with a  
>tear gliding down her cheek, so proud was she of her boy. We hiked  
about

>half a mile away from the scattering of houses that was considered a  
suburb

>back then, though it probably would be viewed as rural now, and gained  
>the treeline of a nearby woods. There we were eight of us on the edge of  
>adventure, our parents left behind with the patrol leader in sole charge.

>

>Well we entered the woods and for most of us, it held no special fears  
>and was as natural as going to school. Most of us had been out in the  
>same woods before with our fathers squirrel or rabbit hunting at one time  
>or another. We kept a good pace with the slowest and stoutest fellow in  
>front (that would be me) and the fastest fellow to the rear. Our patrol  
>leader was going to be danged if anyone got lost on him.

>

>After about five miles or so we found a clearing near an area known to be  
>rich with raspberry bushes, which we hoped would be ripe enough to mix  
>with pancakes the following morning. Camp was set quickly and without  
>much trouble, 'cept for a few green hands that had to sit down and learn  
>knots under the watchful eye of the Assistant Patrol Leader in order to  
>get a tent up - and the handbooks were duly signed for knots later. And  
>these tents were nothing like the kind that just seem to pop up  
>effortlessly today - these were heavy canvas cut from a tarp that had  
>been at one time used on a railroad car and resewn to serve as tents. We  
>didn't have niceties like gromets, no we had to wrap the corner around a  
>rock and put the rope around that.

>

>It was terribly humid and hot, so it seemed the best thing to do was go  
>for a splash in Wildcat Creek, which we did. We each took turns sitting  
>on the beach acting as lookout/lifeguard - mostly lookout and mostly  
>looking upstream to make sure nobody in a canoe might take offense at  
our

>"country bathing suits" as in none.

>

>After an hour or so of splashing about and getting relief from the heat,

>we were formed up and assigned various tasks to improve the camp -  
>digging a latrine with a folding shovel, gathering firewood, etc.  
>  
>Hunger set in and we started our cooking fire. A few minutes later we  
>heard a single loud crack out in the woods. A few more minutes and the  
>Patrol Leader emerged from the woods with the hind legs of an unlucky  
>rabbit in his fist and a big grin. He had been a dead shot with his 22,  
>the kind they advertised back then in Boys Life.  
>  
>Surprisingly we even said grace before eating everything in sight as  
>though we'd never seen food before.  
>  
>Along about ten after many bad jokes and stories, it was determined that  
>three tenderfeet needed to go learn some nature and take a turn at  
>catching snipes. Of course we tenderfeet learned that snipes ate poison  
>ivy and hid among nettles. We had been told to have our long-sleeve  
Scout  
>shirts, jeans, and boots. Unfortunately one of the three hadn't listened  
>too well and suffered for it, but never forgot to bring what was on the  
>packing list after that.  
>  
>The next morning was to be pancakes and berries. And each of us was to  
>use his personal mess kit to prepare the pancakes. Collecting the  
>berries brought a chorus of words inappropriate for Sunday school as one  
>after another we learned about briars. The berries collected, it was  
>time for the newbies to learn some cooking. The Patrol Leader and his  
>assistant demonstrated what was to be done, emphasizing the  
importance  
>of warming the pan just a bit before putting in the batter, we'd mixed in  
>an old number ten can that had served to heat dishwasher the night before.  
>Well I put my kit on the fire and turned around to get some batter. A  
>loud roar of laughter soon ensued and I turned around to see my cooking  
>pan on fire. I learned right then and there that cardboard covered with  
>aluminum foil wasn't much good for cooking - I hadn't had time to earn  
>the money doing chores to buy a proper mess kit and had tried to make  
one  
>of my own that at least looked to an 11 year old like the real article.  
>So berries for breakfast would have to do with hunger as the teacher.  
>  
>We spent the rest of the morning and afternoon doing some tracking,  
>stalking, and tree identification. With our sandwiches gone and  
>provisions low, we packed up and returned to the Patrol Leader's house

>and treated to some homemade pizza and sassafras tea before heading home.

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>I suspect that today such an outing would raise all manner of inquiries, >concerns, and challenges. If we measure it by the rules and customs of >the time, it seemed normal enough and nobody thought twice about it. >Today, the same would not be true.

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>The hazing would be a definite no-no. The gun would not be appropriate. >Swimming without proper supervision and without a Safe Swim Defense plan

>would be unthinkable. And skinny-dipping - absolutely not. Many of the same

>things could be accomplished without the dangers we created. And

>looking back it probably would have been better without them. But then in

>those times in 1960 we didn't know any different.

>

>Because we were trusted and well taught by our Scoutmaster, we did well >in Scouting. He used the patrol method and believed in it. We lived it.

>And in spite of some of the different things we did then, that patrol

>ended up producing seven Eagle Scouts from the eight that went on that

>campout. Troop 13 it turns out was a lucky Troop, because it had good

>leadership and several Scoutmasters that did a good job of teaching boy

>leadership.

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>Speaking only for myself in the Scouting Spirit, Michael F. Bowman

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