

The Bugle



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Hemlock Overlook Ropes Course November 11-12, 2006

Written by Troop Historian (Paul D)

As I had mentioned in the last edition of the Bugle, the Hemlock Overlook Campout was coming up soon. Just two weeks after the Camporee, we were packing up to go on another great campout. Hemlock Overlook, for those who don't know, is a ropes course and environmental educational facility owned by George Mason University. The main focus of this course is to develop two key morals, leadership and teamwork. For those of you who couldn't or didn't want to go, you missed out on a great opportunity to learn how to become a great leader through various activities. Scouts that attended were Alan, Paul, Park (SPL), Zack, Ryan, Brian, Tim, Stephen (ASPL), Spencer, Tyler, and Kurt. Leaders that took time out of their weekend were Mr. Ticer (Scoutmaster), Mr. Davis, and Mark (JASM) and Chris (JASM). We also had a guest come along on the campout as well, Mr. Pruitt, the Youth Group

Director at the Church of the Epiphany, who greatly enjoyed his time with us, and we enjoyed our time with him.

Upon arriving on Saturday morning, we quickly unloaded the cars to our cabin for the night (Pine Cabin). Thirty minutes after getting settled in, we split up into two groups. From about 10:30am-12pm, we worked on teambuilding activities. My group did activities such as crossing the "swamp", where you use 3 boards of your choice to get across, and lose a board if you lose contact with it. Other fun activities included name juggling and the >1 acre wire maze which was done blindfolded. We took a half-hour break for lunch that we brought from home.

After eating our bagged lunches, our troop reunited into one large group for those challenges that required 12+ people, which were more physically and mentally challenging. One of the best activities was the wall. The goal

sounds simple, get everyone over the wall. Think again...the wall was about ~15ft high, and each person could only lift people over the wall twice, and could only pull people to the other side twice. The first person that goes must pull themselves up on their own, and the last person going must be able to jump high enough for only two others on top of the wall to pull him. However, no challenge is too great for us! The most anticipated event for the day was the famous zip-line. I thought that it was high and long when I went here two years ago, but it seemed higher this time. Everyone had to put on a helmet, for safety, and a harness. First, you had to cross over to a platform by walking on a steel rope with your hands firmly on another rope above you. You are suspended 25 feet from the ground at that point, and the wires shook if someone else was sliding down the zip-line. Once on the wobbling zip-line platform (it's supposed to move), a director unhooks you from the first part of the activity and attaches you with a carabineer to the platform. When it was your time to go, the Director attached your harness to the wire, you put your hands inside hand supports, he then puts the retrieval rope over your shoulder, and then you were flying 35-40 feet off the ground. I was more comfortable with riding it this time, but the fun

and thrill stayed the same. The final activity for the day was the Peanut Butter Pit. The objective was to get everyone across the pit by retrieving a rope that was hanging from a tree limb ~ 10ft in the middle of a mud-hole (peanut butter pit) then get all members across the pit by swinging across on the rope. Simple? Not quite. Around the rope was the "Peanut Butter Pit" itself, not filled with peanut butter, but with dirty water, and we had to avoid falling in it. Since, the rope was placed in the middle of the pit, and we had to plan and implement a way to retrieve the rope. Also, we had to work together as a troop to reach for the rope. Still sound easy? Well...the person who grabs the rope, as well as three other people on the team, must be blindfolded when the rope was grabbed. Also, every person must have a least one foot on the edge of the peanut butter pit. Once you reach the rope, all team members must swing over to the other side. Several team members ended up in the pit "WET and COLD". Eventually, with Stephen's long arms, we grabbed the rope! Unfortunately, sunset was well on its way, and our day of activities came to an end. We settled down for a half-hour, but soon we were making preparations for dinner.

Speaking of which, we had a pretty good dinner. We ate

dinner as a troop, having hotdogs and a new recipe, pita bread pizzas, with Oreos for dessert. However, we did have some issues on how much food each person receives. After dinner, we sat around the fire and enjoyed a short discussion with Mr. Pruitt "Robbie" teambuilding and what makes a good leader. He also read a verse or two from his bible about what and who makes a greater leader. Soon after, we played a game called Manhunt. It is similar to hide-and-seek, however, with a few differences. Instead of one person seeking out everyone, an entire team seeks out the ones hiding. Also, you must hide with a buddy. Without flashlights, that game would have lasted on for hours, many of us had perfect hiding spots. Robbie and Chris had to leave soon after the game. It was getting late, so we quickly got settled in, but we had a hard time getting to sleep.

The next day, we woke up and started to pack away our belongings. After packing up, we headed down to the Hemlock Dining Hall for breakfast, which consisted of eggs, bacon, cereals, muffins, and coffee. We also had a chapel service in the dining hall, where Park did a great job of playing his acoustic guitar. Following breakfast, we loaded the cars and prepared for a 5 mile hike (it seemed pretty short). I

guess since it was a lot of fun and not raining too bad and not too cold. Along the hike we passed by what seemed like an old dam, as well as some class 3 rapids (luckily no one fell in them). When we returned from the hike, we cleaned the cabin and had a brief reflection. Everyone liked it, although respect was issue that everyone thought we could still have major improvements with.

Historian's Note

Overall, a great campout with plenty of scout spirit involved. Everyone seemed to get a long, the leaders saw very little problems, and the activities were purely awesome. Teambuilding was a main focus on this campout and I think we pretty much learned to get along. For those of you that missed this campout, you can go to Hemlock for FREE anytime you want. However, it does cost money to have a guide, cook in a fire pit, and spend the night. Anyways, on a scale of 1 to 10, I'd give this campout a 9 because we all seemed to have a relaxed and fun-filled time together. If I learned anything from this campout, it is that everyone in a team is a leader in one way or another, if you know it or not. Hopefully, we can come back there again for a JLT campout.

Brrrr... is it getting cold or what? With winter on its way in a

little over a month, and the holidays approaching soon, everyone probably is busier. And so is Troop 1257. Be sure to sign up for the Blackburn Cabin Campout. I have not been there myself, but I've heard from others that it is a pretty awesome place to be. If you went to Camp Tuckahoe two years ago and enjoyed it, go on Blackburn. See you there!

Upcoming Dates and Events:

PLC-----November 21st

Blackburn Cabin Camping-----

December 8-10

January Campout-----TBD

Ski Trip '07-----February 23-25

The Bugle is published occasionally by Boy Scout Troop 1257, Herndon, Virginia. Submissions are welcome, and should be made to Paul, Troop Historian.
