

## James River Canoe Trip June 9-11, 2006

Written by the Troop Historian (Paul D)

The long awaited James River Canoe Trip finally arrived, and it was worth the wait. If you didn't go on this campout, you missed a real exciting outing, lots of fun, great weather and the water-swimming was awesome. No rain and not hot either. Perfect weather! The Scouts that went on this campout were Justin D. (SPL), Paul D. (Acting ASPL and Spartan PL), Tim S., Ari V., Joey B., Brian B., Brian M., Eric S., Steven E., Steven G., Jonathan V., and Jason V along with a visiting Webelo Scout from Pack 1257, Alan D. Leaders and parents that came were Mr. Davis, Mr. Bumgardner, Mr. Kiel, and Mr. Valenzuela. There were three patrols that were organized for the weekend, the Cobras (new scouts and a Troop Guide), the Spartans (which was a mixed patrol containing Spartan, Green Bean, and Hawk Patrol members), and the OWLs (adults and SPL). Friday, we met at the church to load supplies from the trailer into our cars. Around 5:45pm, we departed from the church straight to Scottsville, VA. The campsites were next to the river. Each Patrol had their own campsite, picnic table, and campfire. The view and the sound of the river were superb. We were really close to an operational railroad line too. Throughout the campout, many trains,

primarily CSX freight trains hauling coal, passed near our campsite and sometimes woke us up during the night. We finished setting up camp around 10:00pm. After setting up camp, many scouts played flashlight tag or just relaxed and enjoyed the evening before bedding down for the night.

Saturday morning was an early rise for most of the scouts. All of the patrols cooked and ate breakfast well before 7:45am. Between 7:30am-9:30am, we readied ourselves for the canoe trip along the James River. At 10:00am, we departed our campsite and boarded an activity bus that took us ~ 10 miles up river to the starting point. Before our departure, the bus driver and guide, Jeff (owner), told us the rules how to perform different stroking patterns and gave us directions-map on where to go. By the time the rules were explained and the 20 minutes bus rides to the starting point, it was 11:00am before we began canoeing. Then, we took off on our journey down the James River, with Mr. Davis's canoe as the head canoe and Mr. Kiel's canoe as the caboose. The first three miles calm water-deep water and the best opportunity to work together with your canoe buddy get use to navigating obstacles and develop a paddling system that worked. After the first three miles (~ 12:30pm), we

stopped at a small island for our lunch break but for some it was more of an opportunity to take a quick dip in the water to cool-off rather than eat. Once we were done with lunch, we readied ourselves and journeyed down the river for the next three miles. This portion of the trip was the toughest, and I believe many others would agree. About 1 mile into the second portion of the trip, there were strong rapids with many huge rocks that has to be carefully navigated, otherwise you were in the water or stuck. My buddy and I dumped our canoe completely over with us submerged underneath—others did the same too! Whereas the leaders and some scout pairs managed to go right through the rapids. Other scouts got their canoes hung up on rocks-downed trees and it took them awhile to get out of the area. During this part of the trip, several scouts lost some of their belongings. However, nobody received any major injuries nor did we lose or damage any canoes (~\$1000.00 each for replacements).

After the class II rapids, we stopped again to eat snack and enjoy the river venue. Most if not all the scouts went swimming for approximately 1 hour in the shallow James River water while others, especially the leaders, took a rest and kept a watchful eye on us. After swimming, canoed for another 3 miles or so and finished up the trip. The last portion of the trip had some class I-II rapids but they weren't as bad as the previous segment. We finished the trip at about 3:30pm.

Unfortunately, we didn't do a good job in upholding the BSA "leave no trace" policy. Many items were taken by the James River, which include a hat, a pair of prescription glasses, a shoe, a water bottle, a James River map, and a waterproof camera.

After the venue, we changed into dry clothes, relaxed a bit and then began dinner cooking preparations at 5:30pm. We were pretty hungry and tired from the voyage.

After dinner, many of the scouts relaxed or played captured the flag and then flashlight tag after dark. We made a campfire and the Cobra Patrol preformed a skit, which turned out to be good. Soon after the campfire, most us went to our tents and it was lights out pretty quickly.

On Sunday, we all worked quite well together as a troop and patrols to serve breakfast, do our KP duties and to breakdown camp before 10:00am. During the campout reflection, all the scouts and leaders indicated that they loved the campout and there were no major problems. Many scouts suggested about coming back next year or in the fall when the water level is possibly higher and the current stronger, or doing a 2-day canoe trip or kayaking at the same venue instead of canoeing. We returned to the Church around 1:00pm after grabbing some fast-food lunch on the road.

### **Historian's Note**

This was a really good campout and it was very enjoyable canoeing down the James River. The only bad things people mentioned were the trains in the middle of the night and the loss of several personal items during the canoe trip. Also, a few scouts refused to help out their patrols with duty assignments. In my opinion, I would give this campout a 9 out of 10 because it was ran well, no one acted up, and everyone seemed to have fun. Swimming in the clear warm was awesome. I feel sorry for those that didn't attend this campout, because you missed a ton of fun. Although the Canoe campout is over, summer camp at Camp Horseshoe is coming up soon. Camp Horseshoe was a blast last year and I expect the same exciting program this year. Trust me the summer will fly by and camp will be here before you know it, and as the Scout Motto says, I am "preparing" to have a great

time then too! Hopefully, I'm not the only one preparing for summer camp!