

April 26th-27th, 2014

Reported by Tommy Garback, Troop Historian

Weekend Backpacking Trip

It has been a long time since the troop has gone on an overnight camping trip (Gettysburg in November), so getting back into the hang of things could be thought of as a challenge. But this weekend trip to the Appalachian Trail was far from exhausting in an unfit manner, whether that was from the spirits of the eight youths and two adults (Mr. Dodel came later on Saturday night) or just the ability of everyone to adjust. We all left Saint Bede's at 7:00 AM on Saturday for Columbian New Jersey. After stopping at Wawa for snacks, we came to the parking lot of the Douglas/Garvey trails to the Appalachian Trail at 8:15.

The first taste of our road was harsh for its steep incline. The scenery in this section was a forested and mulch-like ground, darkened slightly but lacking dense rocks that would come later. At the top of this slope, we neared Sunfish Pond, and made a left in the opposite direction at the intersection of the Appalachian Trail. This lead us right and north along the mountain range. The first part of the new trail brought a few muddy marshes and streams to cross. Next came heavy rocks everywhere and various inclines. The group arrived on higher ground at 12:30 for lunch where the trees fell to a magnificent view of both the Pennsylvanian and New Jersey sides of the mountains, filling us with accomplishment after the long hike

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up. Scouts and adults had packed their own lunches, so there were various trail bars, fruits and sandwiches around. Although small storm clouds passed overhead, there was a lot of sun with a comfortable temperature.

When we continued across the peaks of the mounts, we came to the highest point on the mountain we were climbing. There was a large stone hill topped with a stick to claim the spot and we realized that a greater view from before engulfed us all around. Entire towns, rivers and roads were spread out like a miniature landscape in clear focus. Once we moved on, the ground lowered a bit and we entered a woodsy area with many rocks and twirling paths. A great spot for wonder came after that, because it was the top of the mountain once again and had nice rolling hills filled with green. There was a comforting trail that lightly rolled forward. It wasn't necessarily an open place, for there were trees, but was considerably less dense and the view of the land below us was visible from all directions.

That stage ended, and a thin, rocky trail awaited us. This was the road that brought us to our campsite, which was down a hill to the right of the trail next to the edge of the mountain but sat in trees and grasses. For the next few hours, a few light showers would hit us, but everything would dry up. Many sat down and relaxed for a while; the time neared five o'clock. A

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group of scouts were sent to a store forward down the mountain and into a valley for water. This walk took thirty minutes both ways, though. Once they were back, water was put on a small backpacking stove to boil for dehydrated meals, from rice and chicken, to macaroni and cheese. Everyone ate at 7:00, and at 8:00, we all sat for a campfire program. This was provided by me, Tommy Garback, for the completion of a Communications Merit Badge requirement. There were skits, a song, a funny story, a poem, prayers and lots of laughs. Our “fire” was a candle though, due to the restriction of fires in the area. As soon as this ended, everyone was off to bed.

The next morning around 7:00, scouts were sent out again for water. Back at camp, many explored two small trails that led to the cliffs of the mountain to witness its udder ostentation. It was as if you were on the set of a movie where the real things were the rocks and trees behind you, and the fake was a large panoramic view of what seemed like an entire state, surrounded by mountains on the horizon, viewed upon by one scout as tidal waves. At 8:30, we left to return on our tail to the cars. This went very fast, though everyone was spread out, and ended with a treacherous flight down the steep mountain side. It was like gravity was pulling one’s body, and you were falling, catching your feet on the ground in various places. It was 11:30 when everyone was back to the cars, and we stopped in Buttzville for Hot Dog Johnny’s. Around 2:30, everyone was

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home and exhausted from our return to weekend trips. What a great way to return home; those of our literal houses, and the kinds found on adventurous trails in the embrace of nature.