

Troop 49 – The Pathfinders
Glen Gray Merit Badge Fair
May 14-15-16, 2010

Preparing for the weekend

The Glen Gray Merit Badge fair offered great opportunities for scouts to work on advancement requirements without traveling too far from home. Camp Glen Gray is located on the north end of Oakland, which makes it a very flexible place to go camping for our troop. Over the winter, the troop registered to participate in the fair, and separately, made reservations for the camp's Gilwell lean-to site. Gilwell is located on the far end of the lake, and easily accessible from the road that runs along the south side of the lake, and then cuts up the mountain. Gilwell also serves as the camp's barrier free campsite, featuring wheelchair ramps and easy accessibility to the road.

In the weeks before the campout, scouts had the opportunity to sign up for merit badges, and needed to contact each counselor for the merit badge they wanted to earn. Most badges had pre-requisites, and some classes filled up and were closed to registration. In addition to the merit badges offered, the program featured a First Class track area, where scouts could learn skills that are needed to earn the ranks up to First Class.

One week before the campout, the campmaster called to say that one troop now needed a barrier free site, and asked if we would switch sites with that troop. Without hesitation, the troop agreed to the switch, and we were assigned to the Dormanville lean-to site. This site is a bit more remote, and is situated on the north end of camp.

Arrival and Check-in

Friday arrival and check in went smoothly. We checked in early with the camp. Unfortunately, on that day, the initial Scoutmaster in charge (Mr. Dente) became sick with a fever, but was able to get the troop formally checked in to camp. Having this process done early allowed the other troop members to arrive at different times. Several scouts had other obligations that they could keep as the ride to camp is so short. Some scouts had lacrosse practice, and others wanted to attend the VMS spring social.

Most of the troop arrived by dinner time, and got their gear set up in the sunlight. Dormanville was located off the beaten path, but was well worth finding. The campsite sits on a plateau, offering great drainage as well as suitable lean-to's, a nice campfire circle, and a classic one-seater outhouse.

Friday Evening & Overnight

The middle-school age Scouts had the last VMS social on Friday night. They quickly moved into a couple of lean-to shelters upon arrival, and went back down to the parking lot where Mrs. Cameron drove them to VMS for the social. The fifth-grade scouts practiced fishing in the lake until it got dark. Mr. Burns and Mr. Rosfjord checked in for the Merit Badge fair and got additional details about the opening ceremony and location of different Merit Badges. The scouts then moved back to Dormanville camp site.

As evening approached, scouts who had made their way into the campsite set up their tents, settled in and began gathering wood for a campfire. Many of the scouts participated in gathering fuel, cutting the wood and building the fire. After the campfire was blazing within the rebuilt fire ring, the scouts retired to a couple of picnic tables where the Assistant Scout Masters produced several different types of personal camping stoves. The stoves came in different sizes and shapes and each also required different lighting techniques, which the Assistant Scout masters demonstrated. Each of the scouts were given an opportunity to practice lighting the stoves and to

generally learn how to operate them, as well as to differentiate between the various types of stoves and determine which would work best in different circumstances.

Following the stove demonstration, one stove was used to heat water for hot chocolate. The scouts roasted and enjoyed Pepperoni, cheese, and crackers before settling in for the evening. At 10:15 Mr. Rosfjord went down to the parking lot and met Mr. Cameron with the four middle school age scouts returning from the social. Everyone returned to Dormanville. The weather was perfect for camping with a low of 60 degrees and light winds which kept away the bugs. Three middle school scouts slept in an open lean-to. The group retired for the evening in order to get a good night's sleep and in anticipation of the next day's events. By approximately eleven that evening, the fire was doused and everyone was safely nestled in their sleeping bags.

Saturday Morning

Breakfast was a great opportunity for the scouts to apply the lessons from the previous evening by using the camp stoves to cook breakfast. In the mix were scrambled eggs for breakfast burritos and bagels warmed in the fire served with cream cheese. With a brisk morning wind, the scouts experienced how difficult it can be to cook large quantities of food with a small camp stove. Just the same, a few very handsome omelets were cooked and quickly devoured. Plan B was educational and belly-filling: the boys tried with some success to cook scrambled eggs in zip-lock bags immersed in boiling water heated in a pot on the morning's camp fire. Coupled with pepperoni and cheese from the previous evening's cracker barrel and a soft tortilla shell, the eggs were excellent!

After breakfast, the scouts of Troop 49 hurried down the hill to the dam in front of Lake Vreeland for the opening flag ceremony. Two Troop 49 5th grade scouts had volunteered to help with the opening flag ceremony. They took attendance and Troop 49 let out a proud cheer when called. After the flag ceremony scouts paired off with buddies and went to their chosen Merit Badges. The morning session went well with Scouts working on the Centennial Carpentry badge, older scouts working on the Traffic Safety merit badge, and climbing on the Mahwah ladder truck for the Fire Safety Merit Badge. Some of the 5th grade Scouts visited the First Class Track area and completed Totin' Chit and Fireman Chit.

Saturday Lunch & Between Sessions

After a successful morning pursuing merit badges or advancements toward 1st Class rank, the scouts arrived back at camp hungrily looking forward to a fulfilling lunch. The adults present supervised the scouts as they stoked the fire and got it ready to cook hot dogs. Other scouts were busily setting out buns and condiments, cutting up fruit and preparing other side dishes. After the fire was deemed perfect for producing salivating hot dogs, the scouts brought a pot of water to a boil and promptly popped individual dogs into the water to cook. Following several servings of hot dogs, fruit, pepperoni, cheese and crackers, the scouts were finally sated and ready to attack the second half of the merit badge fair with a zeal that only Troop 49 scouts could muster.

Between sessions, the scouts gathered back at camp to check their books, share stories on progress, and look at possibilities for afternoon sessions. Being prepared and flexible allowed one scout to jump in to the Fire Safety session and earn that merit badge, and another to complete his Citizen in the Nation merit badge. Other scouts came prepared for Coin Collecting merit badge. The counselors were very generous with the scouts, and the fluid nature of the day made doing things on the fly both possible and practical.

After firming plans for the afternoon, the scouts all pitched in to help clean up lunch, and gathering of firewood for the group staying on Saturday evening.

Saturday Afternoon

The 2nd contingent of campers arrived Saturday afternoon in the form of the Folkerts family. After leaving the map at home, and walking past the campsite, the Folkerts lugged our equipment up what seemed like a precipice with the assistance of Mr. Rosfjord, the sole campmate for the evening. This was because his son worked on the Wilderness Survival badge and was sleeping in a self-made shelter that evening in another site.

Some of the younger scouts completed rank requirements at the guidance of an older scout, using the EDGE (Educate, Demonstrate, Guide and Execute) method, and another played the part of an injured scout.

Dinner consisted of burgers, corn and string beans, topped off by S'mores for dessert. The group got a nice fire going and tossed on the remains of a few wreaths from our Wreath Sale in December.

After dinner, the one Troop 49 scout returned to the Ramapo camp site where he met the scouts from Troop 133 that were hosting the Wilderness Survival Merit Badge. The Scout's shelter was set up between a rock and a tree on a slight hill. He joined the Troop 133 Scouts in a game of ultimate frisbee before settling in for a long night in the shelter. We had another clear night with a slight chill.

After a few trips to the bathroom in the parking lot (we avoided the outhouse) and the Trading Post, the Saturday night campers settled in at 11pm.

Sunday Pack up and departure

At 7:00 AM Sunday morning Mr. Rosfjord walked from Dormanville to the Ramapo camp site where the Scouts doing the Wilderness Survival had broken down their wilderness shelters and were playing another game of ultimate Frisbee. After saying goodbye to the new friends in Troop 133, Mr. Rosfjord and the Scout returned to the Dormanville site. The Rosfjord's and Folkert's had a light breakfast of yogurt, bagels and toppings. They patrolled the campsite for litter, and brought the remaining gear down to the parking lot by 9:00 AM. After a quick stop by the camp headquarters, Troop 49 was fully checked out by 9:30, and appreciated the short ride home.

Submitted by Paul Burns, Rob Dente, Jim Folkerts, Tendai Richards, and Ed Rosfjord