

Troop 49 – The Pathfinders
Floodwood Trek
August 8 -14, 2010

Participants for the Trek were:

Will C. aka Shaggy
Brendan D. aka Neon
Chris E. aka Indy
James J. aka RW
Tyler R. aka Moose
Michael Z. aka Zorro
Garret the Voyageur aka Sergio
Mr. Joe C.
Mr. Rob D.
Mr. Paul Z.
Guest Appearance by Kurt V.

The overall wonder of nature can be best experienced by paddling and hiking directly through it. Floodwood provides an amazing opportunity to experience self sufficient camping at its best and observe the wonders of nature. On the wall of the administration building there was a line in a saying painted on a sign “We have been up north and part of us always will be” I didn’t appreciate the saying when we first arrived in camp but when we got back I understood it.

On August 8th 9 members of Troop 49 embarked on a 6 hour drive north to Floodwood Mountain Scout Reservation. All but Mr. D. were rookies and none of us were really sure what the next week would bring but we were all extremely excited with the anticipation of the adventure in front of us. After some stops for food (one was at one of the few remaining Howard Johnsons Restaurants) and a second was at the famous Donnelly’s soft ice cream where your only choice is size as there is one flavor a day.

We finally arrived at Floodwood Road the 7 mile dirt road that leads up to camp. I am still apologizing to Mr. C. who was following me and got the full brunt of the dust storm my truck kicks up!

Upon arrival we checked in and met our Voyageur Garrett who is an Eagle Scout from Troop 369 in Oakland. Before even going to camp we did our medical checks and swim tests. As in full Troop 49 tradition of course it started raining just as we headed down to the waterfront. Luckily there was no lightning and we were able to complete them without issue. We reviewed the menus for the week and general route and planned what time our adventure would begin the next day..... Once we got up to camp, Garrett joined us to do a gear shakedown and to advise us what we really needed for the week. Mr. D. was inspired and became a true minimalist for the week. After a group BBQ and of course the visit to the Trading Post we returned to camp and turned in. It rained pretty much all night and Mr. D.’s tent treated him to a bit of a shower but no essential gear got wet.

6:30 am we all met in the parking lot with gear in hand, ate breakfast, checked and divided up the food for the week and loaded up and headed down to the State Bridge Boat Ramp which was our starting point. We loaded our gear in the canoes and checked in with the ranger. The skies had cleared from the prior night's rain and Garrett brought all of the scouts on the dock and reviewed all of the basic paddling techniques that would be needed for the week. Tyler was selected as the day's navigator and reviewed the route with Garrett. We picked paddling partners and then armed with my trusty camera and with the mist lifting off the pond we were underway.....

Our journey began in Second Pond and transitioned into First Pond. Prior to getting to Lower Saranac Lake we found a great photo opportunity that Brendan and James took advantage of. A rock just below the surface allowed them to appear to be standing on the surface of the water. After a few great poses we were heading into Lower Saranac Lake. As the day began we were all a bit shaky in our paddling skills and we probably doubled the distance covered on the first day with all of the zig zags we were doing. We passed through the Narrows of Lower Saranac, past Loon Bay and into the Saranac River.

The really cool thing about the Saranac River is the lock that allows boat passage from Lower to middle Saranac Lake. In June of 1900, \$6000 was appropriated to build a lock that would allow for boats to pass between the two lakes. The lock is currently operated by a park ranger and the height of the water changes about 6 feet when the system is engaged. The structure is completely manual and a very impressive with ropes along the walls to hold on to as the water rises. We brought all of our canoes in closed the doors behind us and up we went. Once the front gates were open we continued our journey up the river and headed to Middle Saranac Lake.

The skies became a bit dreary as we came out of the river but no rain was falling and we headed to our first camp site of the trip. We were able to get a group site on the north shore of Middle Saranac instead of the two smaller sites we made reservations for thanks to the Park Rangers when we checked in. We unloaded our canoes and Garrett took us through the protocols when arriving at camp. Tarps go up, cooking area secured, bear bags prepared before personal gear is set up. Once we had the first camp set we ate lunch and a mole visited us to take advantage of any crumbs that fell. With Lunch finished, we canoed across Middle Saranac Lake for the climb up Ampersand Mountain. We took fewer canoes for efficiency which turned out to be less efficient than expected especially for the four man crew that was riding pretty low in the water. Once on the beach we started the trek up the mountain. We learned that Kurt had actually carried a canoe at one point to the top of the mountain so he could paddle across the small puddle at the top. We also learned that he had a complete smorgasbord of food in his pack that he shared with the group at the top. Half of the team did about half of the climb and went back to camp to do some fishing and prepare for the evening. The remainder of the group hiked to the top and took some great pictures. As they started back a small thunderstorm rolled through that slowed things down a bit but everyone got back to camp without issue.

Once back in camp it was time to prepare our first gourmet freeze dried meal. The next part of this story falls under the lessons learned category.....

Using a brand new stove that has never been fired up before can be a bit of a challenge. In our case a small T shaped piece kept popping off the top and kept putting out the fire. The question we asked was is this piece needed? The answer should have been yes but we went ahead and tried it anyway as we needed to get the water boiled. Upon lighting the stove without the piece in place we realized that piece was a fuel disburser that pushed the fuel to the side to create a controlled flame. Without it, the stove was a compact flame thrower that proceeded to burn a hole in our overhead tarp. We quickly shut it down and secured the piece in place and the stove performed flawlessly for the remainder of the trip. If in the future you hear a reference to the "F16 Jet Stove" you will know where that came from. Lesson learned test, test, test, before getting in the field.

We ate Turkey Supreme and learned in the process that the bags that the soup comes in are not heat proof as the regular food bags are and we lost one whole bag of soup. Again lesson learned... After eating every spec of food we secured our garbage and our bear bags and we relaxed. After the first day on the water and the big climb everyone hit the rack early in anticipation of Tuesday's paddle. The sheer beauty of this region is just amazing and the miles of paddling we did flowed by quickly with the changing scenery.

Tuesday we woke early to the call of loons and the beautiful site of the mist rising off lake. Ate a granola breakfast, packed up camp (a little slow) and we were off and running across Middle Saranac Lake. I think everyone woke up with slightly stiff shoulders and backs after the first day's activities but we were all fresh and ready to go.

With all paddling partners changed for the day and Tyler as our guide again, we moved across Middle Saranac pretty quickly to the Bartlett Carry. We were in a hurry in the morning because we made arrangements with another troop to meet us there so we could trade canoes and not have to carry. Well.....Best laid plans sometimes don't exactly work out. They were very late and we decided to go back and carry our canoes over rather than wait any longer. So we added a couple of miles of hiking to the day but got on our way. As we passed the other troop on the water we informed them that they had to carry their canoes as we couldn't wait for them. We asked if the Scouts wanted to have an early lunch and the vote was no as they had Donaldson's on the brain and knew that junk food was coming up later in the afternoon. About halfway there they underestimated the distance and everyone was pretty hungry a ways before we arrived at the state beach and Donaldson's. As we passed through the Narrows and into Fish Creek Bay and into the Fish Ponds our target was in sight and a late lunch was a very welcomed activity.

After a visit to Donaldson's for a dose of civilization and junk food, then a quick swim at the State Beach (with lifeguards), we proceeded to backtrack out on Fish Creek Pond then into Follensby Clear Pond where we were to make camp for the second night. We found a great Island site and we were much more efficient getting camp set up and personal gear stowed away. It was a beautiful afternoon and the Scouts gathered at the fire ring with Mr. D. to do the book portion of the Canoeing Merit Badge before heading into the water for the practical section. The Scouts spent the next hours swamping canoes,

performing rescues, and solo paddling their canoes to a distant island and back. All of the scouts did well and wrapped up the badge before dinner.

Dinner tonight was chicken and rice and the preparation went much faster now that we all understood the drill. Garrett had some taco seasoning that we added to some of the dinner pouches which added a nice spice to the otherwise bland chicken. We did well on the cleanup and the preparation of our bear bags and although tired, we spent some time around the campfire before turning in after another great day on the water.

Because of our normal slow pace in the morning we pushed up wakeup ½ hour which worked to get us out on time. Again the call of the Loon was in the air and a family of them was swimming off to the west side of the island. Once our granola and powdered milk breakfast was done we packed our gear switched canoe partners from the day before and headed out. Destination..... Tommy's Rock in the far northern part of Upper Saranac Lake about a 5 mile paddle from our camp. The massiveness of Upper Saranac Lake was great and the larger pleasure craft added the occasional wake to toss us about a bit but all fared well. As we passed Green Island we spotted Dry Island off in the distance and per our Navigator Brendan, Tommy's rock was just beyond. As we turned the corner, there it was and all of the scouts were anticipating a fun afternoon. Once we got the canoes secured, we climbed to the top, set the ground rules and the scouts proceeded to show great style in their jumping technique. As you get older you become much more cautious in what you do, but at the urging of my trek I took the plunge off the rock and it was great fun. No style points, but I can say I took the plunge off Tommy's Rock! We had our very messy peanut butter and jelly lunch on the island and then decided to head out to our next destination of Floodwood Pond where we would spend our last night before returning to base camp.

As spicing up the chicken and rice was a success the night before and since we were passing that way, we decided to pop into Donaldson's to get some bread and sausage to add to our dehydrated spaghetti dinner. The scouts learned the ninja game and became very creative, very quickly in eliminating each other. We topped off our water supply at the state park beach and headed up Fish Creek. This was one of the most scenic parts of our journey with a great winding waterway of about 3 - 4 miles. This dropped us into Little Square Pond where Brendan did a great job in finding the entrance to the very small creek that led up to Floodwood Pond. This creek was very shallow and at times we were walking and pulling our canoes along the water. Once in Floodwood Pond we did a bit of searching for a campsite. We found another great site and got camp up and running and dinner underway. The sausage added to the spaghetti was a great addition and fresh bread was a nice treat. After cleanup some scouts did some fishing and as always..... The big ones got away although there was verification by a number of scouts of a pretty big Large Mouth Bass caught by Michael Z.. As everyone came back into camp there was another spectacular sunset and after milling about camp and talking everyone turned in for the night.

As was the case each day the morning was beautiful and our destination Thursday morning was Rollins Pond for water skiing and water tubing. Garrett's promise on his skill as a boat handler paid off for us as each of us was tossed around on the tube. All scouts, Mr. C. and I got into the act and had a great

time. Mr. D. chose to try water skiing and after a 10 year absence from the sport he looked as if it was just yesterday when he last strapped on the skis and he did a strong victorious lap around the lake. With that we were done at Rollins and we piled in the Camp van for the ride back to base camp. We had lunch and then headed over to the rock climbing area where all the scouts tried their hand at climbing the wall and repelling down the other side. A great time was had by all and it was great to see the scouts participating in so many activities through the week that didn't include a TV or hand held controller!

After a shower.... Yes an actual shower at camp, we settled in to make dinner in camp which was Grilled ham, turkey, and cheese on the sheppard stove. We also had tomato soup and salad. We spent the evening at the activities building playing chess, darts, pool, and watching a movie. Around 11:30 pm we gathered and headed down the waterfront to check out the Perseid Meteor Shower. While the peak activity was after 1am we decided to take our chances at 11:30. The sky was crystal clear and the view of the milky way and the amazing view of the stars was incredible. We laid on the beach and the dock and saw over 20 meteors in about 30 minutes. All sizes from just small flashes of light to major multi color trails across the sky, it something that everyone should check out for sure.

After or cosmic viewing we headed back to camp and turned in for the night.

Friday morning we woke up and ate breakfast in camp wrapped up some items and headed to Lake Placid for a day of touring. Even after 30 years, the Olympic Spirit is still burning strong in town. We walked through the downtown and stopped in many interesting shops, Visited Herb Brooks Arena, the site of the 1980 "Miracle on Ice". The scouts were able to sit on the benches and get down to the ice. We also walked over to the rink where the 1932 Olympics were held. It is great to see buildings with such history. We saw Lake Placid High School where the running track in front was converted to the speed skating venue where Eric Heiden who won 5 gold medals and set 4 Olympic records in the process. After visiting a few more shops downtown, we proceeded back to the cars to head to dinner.

We stopped to play a round of mini golf just prior to dinner and I still don't know who won. Regardless it was lots of fun. We then proceeded to the Tail O' the Pup BBQ restaurant in Ray Brook NY. The food and music were great and with stomachs full we returned to camp in time to see the closing slide show put together by the Floodwood Staff. It was cool to see not only our trek but pictures from other groups as well. Friday evening brought rain but based on the great weather we had a little rain while back in base camp was no big deal.

The rain cleared out by Saturday morning and we packed and headed down to the flag area for the closing ceremonies. Took some pictures, ate breakfast, loaded up the cars and headed back 6 hours to Oakland of course stopping for lunch along the way.....

At dinner at The Tail O' the Pup I asked each member of the trek to give me a few key highlights of their week and here are a few of the comments:

Turtles in Fish Creek, Tommy's Rock, canoeing merit badge, The fish that got away, the 4 man canoe, Ampersand Mountain and the Cannonball, The songs Don't Stop Believing and Afternoon Delight, getting a nickname, peace and quiet, Loons at Follensby Pond, the F-16 flamethrower stove, being with our sons on such an adventure, enjoying nature 100% of the time with no electronic distractions, Teamwork, Saranac River Locks, paddling with different partners each day, and the great Voyageur Garret aka "Sergio".

As far as the nicknames go, Garrett came up with them through the week assigned each scout their names:

Will C. – "Shaggy" just about the hair.

Brendan D. – "Neon" named for his bright neon yellow sunglass holder.

Chris E. – "Indy" because of his wool Indiana Jones hat and sense of adventure

James J. – "RW" red & white because when he took off his shirt the contrast of his red sunburned arms compared to his white shoulders caused Garrett to assign the name.

Tyler R. – "Moose" a strong but gentle animal of the woods.

Mike Z. – "Zorro" because of the Z and probably for all of our zig zag paddling styles.....

While we all knew each other pretty well before this week it's hard not to get to know everyone a lot better when isolated as a team. Everyone pitched in and it was a great adventure. Thanks to all who attended and congratulations to each for completing the trek. This is one of those adventures that every scout should experience as it brings together all of the knowledge learned and puts it to practical use on each day. It's impossible to record all of the great moments of a trip in writing but I have 700 pictures taken that truly tell the story.....

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul Zakrzewski - Scoutmaster