

Troop 49 – The Pathfinders
Northern New Jersey Council Camporee
October 1,2,3, 2010

After a significant amount of rain all week it looked dismal for the Friday night start of the Camporee. The Troop gathered at OLPH and left promptly at 6:30 as planned for the short journey to Campgaw in Mahwah. In total, Troop 49 had 37 attendees to the event.

The registration was a multi stage process and once we got to the field area (ski slopes) we were told that there was not assigned camping areas and we should find a spot. While the high grass was very wet, in true Troop 49 spirit we dropped our tarps and the Troop's site came together quickly and we were all settled in. The skies cleared completely and it looked like the weather was going to cooperate for the remainder of the weekend.

There were no formal activities on Friday night except for the OA cracker barrel and the Scoutmaster and SPL meeting that started at 10pm. Mr Dente, Mr Richards and I ended our evening by making special flags for the signaling merit badge before turning in.

Come Saturday morning, the weather was perfect and after breakfast we headed to the opening ceremonies. The ceremony included all of the troop flags of the attending troops which was quite a sight with them all lined up together. We got a significant amount of information on what was happening for the rest of the day and at the conclusion of the opening, the boys went out with blue cards in hand to get as many badges and participate in as many activities as possible. All 4 centennial badges were offered and many of the scouts finished the day with at least two of them. In all of the time I stopped back at camp there was almost never boys in camp except those looking for additional blue cards. Go Troop 49!

During the day at the stage area there were demonstrations by the New Jersey Search and Rescue Team, Transit Police K-9 unit, a group of medieval knights doing demonstration of fighting skills, the OA Indian Dance Troupe, and the USMA Black Knight precision drill team. In addition to these demonstrations there were displays from the US Merchant Marine Academy, Ramsey Outdoor, Fur Trappers of NJ, Kittatiny Canoe Trips and several others.

The Northern New Jersey Council had a Trading post set up and there were many patches and other items that could be purchased commemorating the Camporee and the National Jamboree. This was in addition to the commemorative patch and t shirt each attendee received as part of the registration.

We had a number of our adult leaders helping out in several places during the day. Mr. Dente and Mr. Burns worked in the Signaling Merit Badge area all day and helped move through a few hundred scouts. Mr. Kozak after finding some confusion on where different activities were found some dry erase pens and adjusted the master Camporee map and stationed himself as the official information center which was much appreciated by our scouts and a significant number of units in attendance.

We had lunch in our site and the boys then went back out to complete more of the activities. Congratulations to several of our scouts are in order as Padraic Burns and Matthew Richards came in first place in the orienteering competition and brought the troop “the coveted silver ribbon”. The Whittles showed true Scottish form at the Highland Games and led Troop 49 to Two 3rd place finishes in the Kaber Toss and heavy stone throw.

After a very full day of activity the troop returned to camp for dinner and some downtime before the evening show and closing ceremony. Many of the boys instead of taking advantage of the downtime decided to climb the ski slopes to get a look at the view from the top and many of them proceeded to roll down the hill. Mr. Folkerts and I walked up the hill to take some pictures and it was quite a view. We chose not to roll back down the hill but got some great pictures of the boys and the overall camp!

After dinner was all cleaned up and put away we lined up to head over to the evening show. A great stage and screen was set up and the show started with slide shows from the summer camps and then we were treated to Eagle Scout Mike Rowe’s (from the TV show Dirty Jobs) Keynote Speech from the recent National Jamboree. That was truly a great story about how a shy kid from Baltimore learned how to overcome that shyness and become willing to try many new things because of the Boy Scouts of America.

Following a performance by the OA Dance team on the stage we were treated to an amazing rock n roll laser light show that both the boys and adults equally enjoyed. It was a great mix of classic rock and modern music that we all enjoyed. The final ceremony of the evening was the lighting of candles from three candles representing the Weboree, The National Jamboree, and the World Jamboree. Once all of the participants candles were lit there was a playing of Taps by three Troop Buglers, one of which was our own Patrick Dente. Congratulations to Patrick for doing a great job in front of 2,000 people. At the conclusion of Taps the candles were extinguished and everyone headed back to camp for the night.

On Sunday morning many members of the Troop stayed for the final closing and then we headed back home. Overall it was a great weekend and the Northern New Jersey Council did a great job on the first ever Camporee. Special thanks to the adults that attended and supported the scouts and a great job to the boys for completing many merit badges and activities during the weekend.

Yours in Scouting,
Paul Zakrzewski and Jim Folkerts - SIC’s