

Sleepless in Camp-land:

Memories from parents and leaders

Beaverree at the Beach

I still remember my first May as a new leader. A Beaverree was taking place at Rath Trevor Beach and as a leadership group we decided to take our colony camping overnight.

Tents and tarps went up quickly, and we proceeded to set up the kitchen. We had our own little campfire sing-a-long and a snack before bedtime. While preparing for the evening snack we realized our kitchen and eating area was becoming rather muddy. In our haste to get the tarps up we chose a low area of the field that was flat and had handy trees. We didn't realize that it was also the place that collected the runoff from the field. A lesson learned.

Crawling into my tent I first put my knee into a puddle of cold snow water that had come through a hole

in the bottom of the tent not covered by the ground sheet. Mopping it up with one of my shirts, I got undressed and went to slip into my sleeping bag. Unfortunately I didn't realize the sleeping bag that my wife

The first thing that was noticeably wrong was that the zipper was no longer there and the bag would not close.

packed me was the same sleeping bag I had used as a child. The first thing that was noticeably wrong was that the zipper was no longer there and the bag would not close. To top it off, the bag now only came up to just over my stomach. Leaning back I

closed my eyes and mumbled a few words to myself only to be interrupted by a drop of water from the roof of our tent.

Grabbing my campfire blanket, I wrapped it around me as best I could and proceeded to get sleep in the 15-minute intervals between the drops.

We struggled with breakfast the following morning. The potatoes took longer than expected to prepare. We soon found out we didn't have enough stoves to keep the hash browns and coffee warm and still have room to cook the eggs. It definitely wasn't a five-star breakfast.

Soon after cleanup, the Beaverree events started and the sun popped out. Thankfully for the well-run events, the weekend was great.

Six years and a few training courses have passed since that unforgettable weekend. I'm still here, ready to put on my own event with help of our group.

– *Dustin Mikus, 1st Nanaimo Scouting Group, Nanaimo, BC.*



Photo: Scouts Canada Archives

Swap and Share

We have just held our end of year camp and I'm really keen to share a great idea we had. The theme of the camp was "sharing, sharing, sharing," so we shared the camp with another Beaver colony. At the planning stage we decided on some cute activities such as T-shirt printing, making binoculars for an evening hike and a treasure hunt with Beavers sharing the loot at the end. However, the best part by far was the swaps/trading activity in the early evening. It was the first time we had included such an activity and we were a bit unsure of its outcome. Our leader in charge, Tic Tac, a former Scout leader, assured us that it would be fun so we went ahead.

For those "not in the know" a swap is an item that the Beaver is willing to trade for other items. We specified

that the items should be inexpensive and that homemade things or stuff from the dollar store were a good idea for the less creative or artistic or for those who couldn't decide what to bring to trade and swap.

Yu-gi-oh or Pokemon cards, marbles, shells, homemade items and fast

trade and that they shook left hands upon completing a trade and said "good trading" to seal the deal.

For those out there thinking that this would end up with some Beavers being ripped off by the more street-wise, let me tell you differently. These children may only be three or four feet high but they can negotiate like bankers and lawyers when it comes to getting a great deal on their swaps. Even the quietest Beavers were wading in to get a good deal. It was excellent to see kids who did not know each other find something in common, such as a love of Pokemon cards. It offered Beavers a means of communicating and negotiating with each other and was an excellent ice-breaker!

I would really recommend this activity to other groups looking for a good idea which will be popular with just about every

Beaver; after all, most kids collect something and they all like a good deal! Not only is it a good activity to encourage communication, it also helps Beavers learn negotiating and compromising skills in a safe environment; things which can help them in their future lives, and wow - what a memory for them to cherish!

- Tracey Bradwell enjoys sharing and swapping with the 2nd Amherstburg Beavers in Ontario.



food restaurant toys were suggested to parents and Beavers as appropriate items, but it really was up to each Beaver what they brought to trade.

At camp, when trading time was announced, it was a real treat to see the faces of the Beavers all racing back to their tents to fetch their swaps. Most laid their items onto their Scout blankets and the bartering began! The only rules were that each Beaver had to be happy with the



Photo: Scouts Canada Archives. Photo: (centre) Peter Lawrie

The Four Worst Sleeps of My Life

I joined the Winnipeg Scouting Organization in the fall of 2002. Much to my surprise, I quickly attained the rank of Hawkeye and found myself in charge of 24 energetic five, six and seven-year-olds. The highlight of that year was definitely my first Beaver Camp.

I organized all the food and supplies and set off with David, my five-year-old son, and Rebecca, my eight-year-old daughter. The first night, after getting our tent set up between downpours, we finally were able to get to bed. It was only then that I discovered that Rebecca's clothing bag and (you guessed it) my sleeping bag, were pushed against the wall of the tent and soaked right through.

Thankfully, the sun arrived with the next morning, and after the worst sleep of my life, we all enjoyed a great day of events at our camp. Of course, both of my kids had a great sleep as their sleeping bags had escaped being soaked by the rain. The second night of camp came with no rain in sight - great!

The overnight low was close to freezing and my lovely 30-year-old sleeping bag was not effective at han-

dling this temperature. Of course, both of my kids had a great sleep covered with all the blankets. I didn't fare quite as well! This turned out to be the second worst sleep of my life.

Day Three arrived with sun and welcome heat. We all had a great final day of camp and returned home with many fond memories.

After another blessed 15 minutes of sleep, I decided that I would have the coffee all ready when everyone woke up, in about three hours.

This brings me to this year's Beaver Camp. Naturally I thought there was no way it could be any worse sleep-wise for me than the previous year. The early weather outlook for Friday, Saturday and Sunday was forecasting nothing but sunshine!

As it turned out, the third worst sleep of my life was Friday night of

Beaver Camp. It rained almost all night and because of the previous year's experience, Rebecca was careful with all her clothes as they were placed in a bag (lined with a big plastic garbage bag) to keep her stuff dry. I, on the other hand, was not quite as lucky. Rebecca accidentally pushed my sleeping bag against the wall of the tent and by the time I discovered this, it was soaking wet. Remember I said that I thought it couldn't get worse: I was wrong. The air mattress I brought deflated slowly and by 4:00 a.m., I was wet, uncomfortable and sleeping on the ground. I quietly blew up the mattress while still laying on it - a bit of a trick but I mastered it. After another blessed 15 minutes of sleep, I decided that I would have the coffee all ready when everyone woke up, in about three hours.

The next day arrived with the sun. Have you noticed any pattern here? After the three worst sleeps of my life, we all enjoyed a fantastic day of visiting eight countries in eight hours. Our camp theme was just like Folklorama, a well-known Winnipeg tourist attraction that features pavilions, food, entertainment and music from countries around the world.

Our little Folklorama had all the kids visiting and learning various things about eight different countries. The day was great and enjoyed by all.

This brings me to the final night of Beaver Camp 2004. Rebecca and



Photo: Bruce Gamage

David went to bed and I noticed that it was starting to cool off but I thought little of it.

The fourth worst sleep of my life ended around 4:00 a.m. when I awoke to an overnight low of four degrees. Of course my air mattress deflated once again leaving me laying on the ground, shivering in my paper-thin sleeping bag that by this time I was ready to throw on the fire! I managed to conk out after re-inflating my air mattress for another hour before deciding to get the coffee ready.

Of course, the kids had a great sleep. I had looked over at David when I awoke so cold in the night to find both my six-year-old and nine-year-old cosy, warm and snoring loudly.

At this point I vowed to wrap the new sleeping bag I'm going to buy for next year's camp, in a plastic garbage bag and buy myself a new air mattress, maybe even that fancy new hi-tech pad! It almost feels strange writing these words but I have to say them - I look forward to the time when I can say that I am ready for Beaver Camp 2005 or what will most likely be "The Six Worst Sleeps of My Life"!

I wouldn't trade even one of those sleeps for all the great memories that went with them.

In closing, I hope I haven't discouraged any of you adults from camping with your children. On the contrary, I hope this encourages any and all Moms and Dads to make the effort to go camping with the kids because you know they will always cherish these memories!

You only go around once and after they're grown up, you may never know what you missed!

- Glen "Hawkeye" Smallwood is looking forward to not getting any sleep at the next Beaver Camp in Winnipeg, MB.

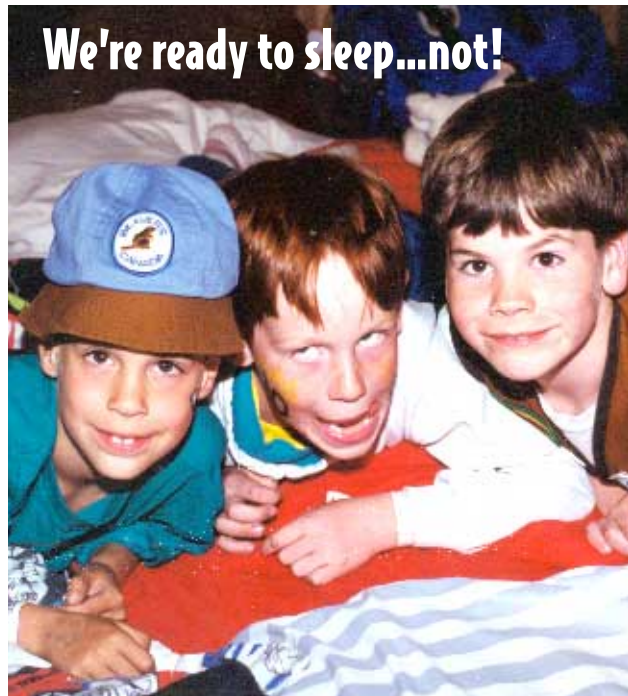
Let Sleeping Children Lie

Our family is a proud supporter of the Scouting Movement.

Proud in that we send our kids to Beavers and Brownies respectively, and then run like heck. Just kidding - I stealthily slip away. Occasionally, though, you have to do your duty.

Every spring, the Halifax Area Beavers have their annual camp (Saturday noon until Sunday noon, or 1,440 minutes, as we parents refer to it). Last year, my son was a first-year (or Brown Tail), so I was expected to accompany him to camp.

As a dedicated father, I tried bribing my son out of it. That didn't work. So, off we went to Beaver camp.



Before I continue, let me explain Beavers. Beavers, the first level of the Scouting Movement, is for five to seven-year-olds. The Girl Guides have a group called Sparks, which are girls only for this age group. The difference between a Sparks meeting and a Beavers meeting is evidence for one of my theories: all five-year-old boys should be sent to a camp in the Yukon where they can't break anything, until they are 12 and can safely be returned to civilization.

The Beavers have a motto. The motto is: try not to get run over by 20 screaming six-year-olds. No, seriously, it is "sharing, sharing, sharing" - I know, I laughed as well. If things get out of hand, the leaders use the Beavers sign for "quiet". They put their right arms in the air, make a peace sign and then curl the fingers down - I think it is supposed to look like a beaver's teeth. This is very effective, especially if you scream "QUIET" at the same time.

Anyway, back to Beaver camp. The first thing I learned about Beaver camp is that they break you into groups and then you have to line up for everything. The most orderly

group goes first. Our group didn't do so well until one of the moms, who is in the military, got us under control. I have never been in the military and, quite frankly, I don't think I would last long.

For my efforts, I received a Beaver camp badge, which shows a little beaver in snorkel and mask frolicking underwater. This is because if he were above water, the blackflies would carry him off. Just joking; they would suck the blood out of him first.

No, the reason is that the theme of this Beaver camp was "under the sea". A big field was set up with stations that had activities related to - you guessed it - "under the sea" (well, at least the parts not reserved for blackflies).

At night, the highlight was the campfire. Scouts go way out with campfires. The campfire was impressive, but I refuse to tell you any more about it. If you want to see a Scout campfire, you have to suffer through camp bonding with your child like I did.

As a rookie camp parent, I had to rely on the experienced parents for advice.

The trick, they told me, is to get a good cabin (defined as one where you get to sleep for at least four hours). The parents in my cabin assured me that we were in luck. For the only time during this outing, luck was on my side.

We slept well until some fool Scout leader woke us all up at 6:30. As a dad, this goes against a key parenting principle I have learned: do not wake sleeping children!

Sunday morning was the highlight for me. Breakfast was bacon and eggs: all the bacon you wanted without my wife (who used to be a cardiac nurse) looking over my shoulder. Bacon is much more enjoyable when you aren't being lectured about your arteries. I am not sure I would have survived without the grease.

The last morning crawled by, but at last it was time to leave. The blackflies were full. As we drove away, my son asked me why we couldn't stay longer. Moments like this perplex you as a parent, but make it all worthwhile. X

- Mike Weagle is a freelance writer who lives in Halifax and doesn't get much sleep at camp, either.