

Troop 128 Stories

1990s

Pankaj Gore (Eagle Scout, Early 1990s):

I was just two hours into a daylong canoe trip, my first with the troop, when I decided this “outdoors” thing wasn’t for me. Sure it was nice outside, the water was clear and cool, the river, whose name I have long since forgotten (the Rapahannock), was lined by looming and lush trees. Trees with shade, I might add. I longed for that shade. What I wouldn’t have given for a moment’s respite, to collapse in the shadow of the sheltering woods. But, alas, it was not to be. I was stuck in the front of this canoe with a paddle that seemed more useful for blistering my hands than making forward progress. Muscles aching, knees hurting from leaning on the metal bottom of the canoe and to top it all off this extremely gruff man in the back yelling for me to... “PUSH!! PANKAJ, PUSH!!” There he was again. “I’m trying,” I responded in my pipsqueak 12 year old voice, though I seriously doubt my effort increased at all. What had possessed me to think this would be fun? Wasn’t the river supposed to be doing the work? I glanced down at the water that was traveling past the banks at a mockingly idyllic speed. Not that I was really doing the work either. With each gruff “STROKE!” from behind me, a dip in the water was passing for my share of the paddling. “PUSH!! PANKAJ, PUSH!!” Now to be fair, Mr. Hannon wasn’t yelling, and he wasn’t even gruff, but his words of encouragement sure sounded like it to my exhausted body. Given that he was propelling the canoe all by himself, I can’t really fault him of course. It is still probably one of the better workouts that he has gotten.

When we stopped for lunch, I was ready to quit. If there had been a car back to camp I would have been the first one in it. And I am thankful that there wasn’t. Mr. White got the job of paddling with me for the second leg of our journey (he must have drawn the short straw). Maybe it was the PBJs in my stomach or that the river was not quite as lethargic or maybe it was the thought of completing this maritime endeavor, but I actually felt like I was getting the hang of canoeing. My muscles had settled into a pleasant burn. The kind that says you may be enjoying this now, but you’re going to pay tomorrow. That’s not to say that there wasn’t the occasional, “PADDLE HARDER PANKAJ!!” from Mr. White, but it didn’t bother me because I was getting the hang of it. When we finally beached our canoes and carried them to the waiting trailers I had this feeling that I would come to associate with so many of the activities of Scouting: a real sense of accomplishment. And perhaps it isn’t just coincidence that the two men who shared in my accomplishment that day are the same two who led and supported me through the ranks of Scouting with encouragement at all times and even a little bit of prodding when necessary. Thanks, Mr. Hannon and Mr. White!! HAPPY 75th Troop 128!!

THE GREAT BACKBOARD CAPER

1) As Told by Neeraj Gore (Eagle Scout, mid-1990s), Len’hok’sin Crew Chief 1992

In summer 1992 we had a crew of eight scouts from 128 on Len'hok'sin Trail at Goshen Scout Camp. I was the crew chief, and Noah Kanter was my assistant. Mr. Hannon was the adult leader, and his son Peter, who was about 21 years old, was the assistant leader. We were pretty "green" at backpacking, and Peter had already been to Philmont twice and "knew the ropes". Every time we did something wrong, which was often, Peter would promptly tell us so by saying "Let's play a little game"....It drove us crazy! Things got even worse when we forgot the trash one morning when we broke camp, and Peter waited until we were a mile away and then made us walk back to pick it up. We decided to "play a little game" ...on Peter! Every night we were on the trail he "slept out" in a backpacking hammock. That evening we were camped at the kayaking center (fun!), and they had a "back board" you could use to transport an injured person. We decided to use it to transport Peter. About 4 o'clock in the morning six of us got up, we got the backboard under Peter, cut his hammock down and tied him to the backboard (without waking him). We planned to carry him to the Camp Olmstead flagpole, about a mile away, where he would wake up in the morning and find everyone there at the flagpole for morning assembly, gawking at him! But he was a big guy and we were kind of small, and we got tired about halfway there, so we left him in the wash-up area of one of those famous Goshen latrines, where he spent the remainder of the night. I understand he was awakened by an adult leader of another troop who'd come down early for a shave, and jumped back when he saw this guy ties to a board in the latrine! It was a VERY funny prank...but it also showed that we had [finally] come together as a team and pulled off a rather difficult task. I will definitely remember that one forever!

2) As Told By Peter Hannon, Crew Advisor

The concept of being a boy-run scout unit and learning from one's mistakes was one that had been instilled in me over time, and although the rate at which the boys did things sometimes approached that of "glacial", the concept was (and is today) that the scouts would learn more by doing something themselves (perhaps several times over) than watching the adult advisors (KEY WORD) do it for them.

At mid-week our Len'hok'sin crew was in our non-staffed camp (our "primitive" night) , and after a night of playing a few heated games of "Miles Borne" we got up and struck camp. The garbage bag, as many know, is one of those items of crew gear that no-one wants. It can't be placed inside one's pack without tempting fate that something will ooze out. After everyone had assembled their equipment, and I believe even "policed the area" for wayward trash, the garbage bag sat on the ground, unclaimed. My Dad, Mr. H, stepped forward to point this out, and I quickly exchanged a few quiet words with him to the effect that we should bide our time and see what developed. The crew put on their packs and headed out, sans garbage. We walked along for about fifteen minutes, then stopped the crew, and played the "What Does Johnny do When Breaking Camp?" game.. (Dad got a fantastic picture of Neeraj slapping himself on the forehead when he realized what had happened!)

I was approached numerous times a few days later and asked "Hey, Pete! How have you been sleeping lately?" Pleased that the Scouts were taking an interest in the well being of their advisors, my reply was "Pretty well, thanks!" After a day of kayaking, I headed off to my hammock in the pine trees. Well before dawn I heard a whispering of pine needles as a dozen or so hiking boots shuffled to where I was. I suspected that something was up, but decided, again, to see what developed. I was lashed to a backboard and descended quickly to the ground when the hammock was untied ("Geez, he's HEAVY!"). With frequent rest stops, I was carried along the jeep trail away from the campsite. At some point the question was asked, "What if someone comes along?" and the reply was "We'll have to leave him and scam!" When the next question was "What if he gets run over?" I thought the jig was up, as I was barely able to stifle a laugh and continue "acting asleep".

My thought through the whole experience? THEY'RE FINALLY WORKING AS A TEAM!

Matt Levy (Eagle Scout, mid-1990s):

The memory that comes to my mind as the most unique in my Troop 128 days was my experiences in New Mexico at Philmont. I am most fond of the time we spent on the trail near Mt. Phillips (11,300 ft.). This was the first time that I was exposed to any type of altitude. The experience of climbing, albeit on a trail, for several hours before cresting out above 11,000 ft. was memorable in and of itself, the sight of snow still remaining in July was unexpected. The sheer vastness of the Philmont wilderness changed the way I thought of the world. It showed me that it was possible to travel out of civilization for long periods of time. The recognition of these possibilities sparked a desire to climb that grew as I decided to go out west to the University of Washington in Seattle. I drew upon my background as a scout and the basics of common sense outdoor travel and survival that I had learned in the troop, adding to this base a passion for technical climbing and glacial travel. The combination has provided me with the tools to deal with some of the most desolate and spectacular environments on earth. To date I have climbed Mt. Hood (11,235ft.) in Oregon, Mt. Baker (10,778 ft.) in winter, Mt. Index (7,800 ft.), Barring Mt. (6,890 ft.), and completed a traverse of the Tatoosh range (6-8,000 ft.). I have made it to the summit of Mt. Rainier (14,441 ft.) twice in summer and to the 12,000 ft. level in winter, then being turned back by weather; hopefully I will finish this winter climb next year. All these trips would never have been possible if I had not been exposed to the opportunities which scouting gave me. The scouting program is one of the best educators and can prepare you to be comfortable and competent in environments ranging from the city to the peak of Mt. Everest. I am indebted to the gifts scouting has given me.

Michael Shashaty (Eagle Scout, mid-1990s):

1. During my first summer at Goshen (mere weeks after I had joined the Troop) I received my first dose of the community love which Scouting commonly pours out upon its members. On the third night of camp, I went to sleep in my tent as usual. I awoke that morning to blue skies and a

Troop full of Scouts crowded around me. I looked to my right, and there was Stuart White, one of the older Scouts, lying in his sleeping bag on his cot, just like I was. Of course, we were in the middle of the field, not in our tents, and our cots were tied together in a knot that I have never encountered in a pioneering manual. After everyone had a good laugh, Stuart went to work on the knot, and I was left to hop back to my tent (about 20 or 30 yards away) in my sleeping bag, attempting to conceal the fact that I was in my underwear and nothing else.

2. One year the Camporee was in Lucketts, Va. When we got there on Friday night, the rain was coming down hard, and the light of the sun was long gone. There must have been 7 or 8 of us who walked to the campsite and tried to set up one 3-man dome tent. Four of us held the poles of a tarp to give the rest cover while setting up the tent (and to give Eric Gault shelter for his diatribe against dome tents). After what seemed like an eternity in the wind and pouring rain, the tent was up and Chris and Jon Chaplin and I crawled inside and attempted to go to sleep. When we woke up the next morning, the tent had shrunk to about half of its original size due to all of the water pooling on it, and Jon was sleeping in a couple of inches of standing water. Not long after we got the news that the Camporee was canceled. I think this event was the genesis of my dislike of dome tents!

3. I have always suffered from a fear of heights. I have also always suffered from being "muscularly challenged." In my first summer at trail camp, one of the outposts we visited was Lumberjack. One of the opportunities at this outpost is to climb a tree using strap-on spikes and a wide belt, which goes around both the climber and the tree. I was the last of my group to go, and they had all made it the 30 feet to the top to ring the bell, which signaled their victory. I was anxious as I strapped on the gear and started up the tree. By the time I was about 10 feet up, I had become paralyzed with fear, and I was also unable to dig the spikes into the tree. I slipped over and over, and despite the encouragement of the whole group, I insisted on coming down without ringing the bell (a fact that was glossed over at the subsequent slide show back home).

I was always angry about my failure, and I was very excited when I went back to trail camp the next year and we decided once again to go to the Lumberjack outpost. Unfortunately, we had a terrible time finding the outpost and it was too late to climb by the time we got there. Our chance to do the activity the next morning was thwarted by one of those famous Goshen flash floods (I can remember Kinney Horn still 25 feet up the tree when the thunder began to roll). Not only did I lose my chance at the tree, our entire group got soaked to the bone in a vain attempt to reach shelter at the nearby Marriott camp.

The guy who ran the Lumberjack outpost, however, must have remembered me from the year before. When we all returned to the Len'hok'sin base camp at the end of the week, he set up the equipment on a tree there, and for the first time I was able to climb the tree, barely hesitating before I got to that bell, which I rang for everyone to hear. I'm certain that very few people were actually focused on me or knew of the accomplishment I was making, but for me it was one of those many moments in which Scouting helped me to believe in myself and not to give up until I succeeded.