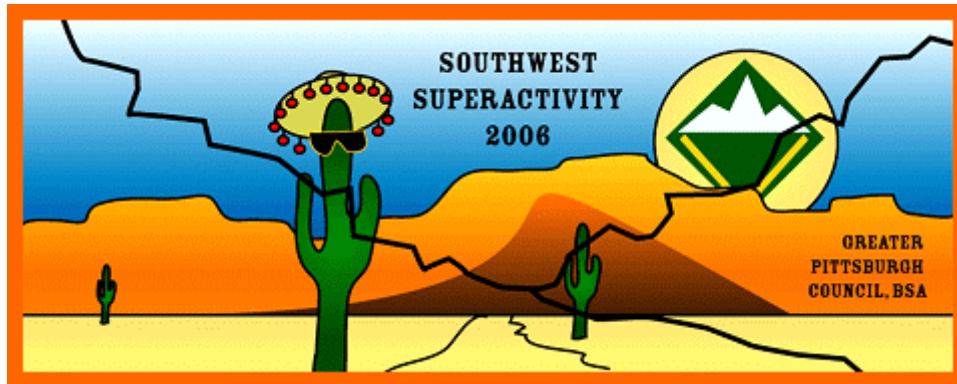


GO (SOUTH) WEST VENTURERS

Greater Pittsburgh Council VOA Superactivity
By M. Robert Marks



The trip out west in the 110-degree heat proved to be a true test of endurance for the Venturers of the Greater Pittsburgh Council Venturing Officers Association (VOA). Fourteen Venturers and six adult leaders took part in a two-week excursion through Nevada, Arizona and Utah.

Over the course of the trip, the group saw the Hoover Dam from the inside, swam in Lake Mead, ascended a more than 8,000-foot peak, climbed Red Rocks National Park, and backpacked and camped in the Grand Canyon. They hiked The Narrows and Zion National Park, rafted the Colorado River, conquered a desert mountain biking trail, went horse-back riding and toured Nellis Air Force Base where the Thunderbirds reside.

Pre-trip

Before we embarked on the journey, the crew gathered on three separate weekends honing our skills backpacking, cooking freeze-dried foods and survival skills in desert climates. We prepared for encounters with wild quail, burros, snakes and jack rabbits.

Day 1

The first night of the trip, the took a plane into Las Vegas and spent the first night at Camp Potosi, a scout camp of the Las Vegas Council.



Day 2

The group awakens to a beautiful desert sunrise and attends an interfaith service before heading to the Hoover Dam.



Day 3

Travel to Red Rock Canyon with the Potosi staff to climb 150 foot rock faces and rappel back down. We head back to camp to cool off with some chicken fights in the pool. Later that evening we head to Las Vegas to check out the town!



Day 3 – cont.

Part of the group climbs Mt Potosi, an 8,627 foot mountain peak and camp out under the stars enjoying the view of Las Vegas. The others at base camp head for Ethel M chocolate factory.



Day 5

We returned to base after a chilly night of wind and rain. Then it was off to the Camp Potosi aquatics tournament. We finished 2nd as a Crew and 2nd in the Scoutmaster event.



Day 6

Our original plan was to visit Sedona and ride down the natural water slides. However due to raging fires, we were off to the Grand Canyon. On the way we visited the old mining town of Chloride, AZ an abandoned jail and checked out some murals painted on the rocks.



Day 7

At the Grand Canyon, we split into two crews with the Bright Angel crew heading for the Phantom Ranch, and the Hermits Rest crew heading for Monument campground. Some members of the group chose to explore the Emerald Pool trails, or took a horseback ride.



Day 8

The Bright Angel crew heads for Indian Gardens to meet up with the Hermit crew coming in on the West Tonto trail. A stop at the creek was welcome refreshment!

The trek down the mountainous dusty trails was grueling. Along the way, we came across abandoned sleeping bags, tents and miscellaneous gear left by people who decided to turn back.

The group put the outdoor skills to the test in the Canyon. Mainly, they had to pull their resources to find water for their daily hike. We consulted hiking maps to find streams -- some were dried up when they got there, so we had to watch for springs and possibly puddles.



Day 9

Everyone heads out of the canyon and into a great hot shower and hit the road for Camp Entrada in Moab, Utah.

Day 10

We take a raft and duckie trip down the Colorado River which was a welcome break from the extreme heat. Upon returning to Camp Entrada we take a spin through the desert sand on mountain bikes.



Day 11

In Moab, Utah the crew visited Arches National Park and spent the Fourth of July in a community park where we watched a fireworks show.



Day 12 & 13

We leave Moab early to head to Zion National Park. At Zion, we take a horse ride through the park, climb the Angels Landing Trail, hike the Narrows, and check out the Emerald Pools. While there, the crew explored the old Mormon ghost town of Grafton, Utah. That night we set up camp under the park's majestic mountains.



Day 14

Capping the trip was a visit to Nellis Air Force Base where they toured the Thunderbirds Headquarters and the Threat Museum. We also visited Freedom Park to check out Soviet tanks, missiles, weapons and aircraft at the threat center that was formally top secret.



Day 15

The final night of our trip was spent under the stars at the Valley of Fire State park. Exhausted from two weeks of adventure, we head home to Pittsburgh.

Epilogue

When being interviewed by a local newspaper after the trip, Larry Jones, one of the crew leaders exclaimed!" "The biggest thing I think about is the teamwork and how everyone meshed together. There were a lot of obstacles. The wildfires, and some transportation issues. Everyone rolled with the punches and everyone worked together."



"Our story will amaze and inspire other youth in the area to set their sights on victorious accomplishment. I know that all of us are better people because of this trip," says James Acklin, former President of the VOA and a crew leader on this trip. "Largely, our trip was a terrific success. We enjoyed ourselves immensely, while at the same time tested our limits of endurance and character."