

VENTURING MAGAZINE

Tarps and Tortillas by Greg Rakauskas

November 2013



Tarps and tortillas, lightning, caroling, and a conga line form the basis of my first Jamboree experience this past summer in wild and wonderful West Virginia.

A dozen youth from my Crew joined with other youth from around Occoneechee Council (central North Carolina) to form a 32 youth, 8

advisor-strong unit. We were among the 2100 Venturers and 325 internationals from 18 countries, attending the first National Scout Jamboree at the Summit Bechtel Reserve and the first Jamboree to allow Venturers as participants.

A big summer storm had just blown through base camp Foxtrot, where all of the Venturers and the international Scouts were camped. In a quadrangle formed by the bath houses, a few tarps were thrown on the ground. Several youths with white, 5-gallon buckets were filling them with water from the utility sink. A crowd was assembling. What was going on?

It was a slip and slide! First, one youth ran and slid belly-down on the blue tarps as peers threw water on him; then a second; and then a third. A line was forming. The crowd was swelling. The

participants started getting more creative. Soon, chants were started for Advisors to join the fun. Uh-oh, the Commissioners have shown up. Everything's fine, as long as folks slide one at a time and not together.



Tortillas and cheese; two of a number of extra foodstuffs left over from various meals at the Jamboree. Our cook area was situated right beside one of the thoroughfares running through camp city. It wasn't long into the Jamboree that one walking past our Crew's camp would hear the refrain, "Welcome to Moe's!" and with that greeting would come the offer of food. "Would you like a quesadilla?" Our Crew definitely found a creative way to cope with the extra food and make friends in the process.

Every afternoon, like clockwork, a thunderstorm would blow past. One evening there was an incredible lightning storm off in the distance. Think of the electrical gizmo in the mad scientist's lab. Another crowd had assembled to watch nature's lightshow. Not unlike a fireworks display, folks were ooo-ing and aaah-ing with each lightning bolt.

July 19th, was the eve of Columbian independence day. So, our Latin American neighbors decided to host a party. It didn't matter that they shared a camp with the Egyptians--everyone loves to dance and sing. The conga line snaked out of the dining tents consisting of youth from Columbia, Egypt, the United States, Scotland, to name a few.

Every night I would hear the dulcet tones of a men's acapella group rehearsing nearby. After a few nights of practicing, they began to make the rounds and sing for each campsite. They came to our camp and sang their repertoire. One or two of our youths joined in. It was wonderful to see strangers singing together.

Jamboree was a great event with some of the finest climbing walls, zip lines, ranges, and canopy walks of a camp anywhere in the world. But what I'll remember most from July 2013 were the simple moments when males and females, Americans and foreigners, young and old shared the common bond of Scouting and had fun.

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