

THE CAMPING TRIP

True stories of roughing it, falling in love and learning the meaning of life in the wilderness

Anyone who really loves camping knows to expect problems and discomfort on every camping trip.

Part of the joy of camping comes in the suffering.

I remember my first camping trip with two of my girlfriends and a crummy, borrowed tent. We camped on Hatteras Island at the KOA campground in Rodanthe. We had nothing. No bug spray, sunscreen, sleeping bags or money. The only thing worse than the head-to-toe mosquito bites was the ouch-red sunburn. We lived off hot dogs and chocolate chip cookies for three days. But then one night we walked out onto the dark beach and found it alive with bonfires. I didn't understand the crowds of people until I gazed upward to see a total lunar eclipse, the first one I'd ever seen. It was an awesome moment.

That's the magic of camping: the possibility of what might happen and what you might see or do. It's the lasting memories that you create with your friends and family when you're all gathered around a campfire instead of a television.

My husband and I have camped countless times since then, all over this fine state. We've gone from a tent, to a pop-up to a large camper that stays at the beach. When our girls get a little older, their dad will dust off the tent, I'll bring the air mattress (and I won't forget the pump), and we'll head out for a family adventure so we can enjoy the magic of camping through their eyes.

*Kim Whorton Tripp
Contributing editor*

MISSING MOMMY

My husband and I had been married about a year in the summer of 1974. We loved camping. We decided to take our nieces on a weekend camping trip to the North Carolina mountains.

The girls had a younger sister about age 4. Because of a bad experience, she refused to go anywhere without her mother. After counseling, her parents were told that she was just spoiled and should be forced to spend time away from her mother. It was decided that she would go on this trip with us.

It was horrible. She cried the entire weekend. We took them to the "Land of Oz." She screamed the whole time. We took them to Tweetsie Railroad. Same screaming. What's more, it rained every night. We woke up each morning lying on the cold, hard, wet ground. Our air mattresses were flat. One night we left a bag of trash outside of our tent. A skunk spent the night in the bag. The next morning we had to wait in the tent until the skunk left.

When we finally started home, my niece stopped crying.

The next time we went camping, we took a pop-up camper and left the girls at home.

*Connie Fortner
Stony Point
EnergyUnited*

CLOSE QUARTERS IN EMERALD ISLE

In April 1968 we took our first camping trip in our new 15-foot Shasta travel trailer. We were an Air Force family new to North Carolina and were anxious to see something of our new home state.

It was quite a chore to gather up our seven children, pack all of the necessary supplies and camping equipment, and hitch up the camper to our 1965 Buick Sportwagon. We headed east. An hour-and-a-half later, we were waiting in line for the ferry to take us across the sound to Emerald Isle.

We found a nice campsite at Camp Ocean Forest next to the Bogue Fishing Pier.

Daytime was fun with swimming and fishing, but bedtime was another story. Packing nine people into the limited space of a 15-foot camper is quite a feat. Each of the children had their own spot—three on the table that converted to a bed, one with my husband and me in our bed, and two on the floor. The baby's bassinet had to be fitted in where there was room. It usually took half an hour for the children to stop laughing and settle down.

That weekend everyone got a Bogue Pier sweatshirt. The shirts were passed down through the family as they were outgrown. Two of our grandchildren even

Thanks to everyone who sent in a story of your most memorable camping trip. See more at our Web site: www.carolinacountry.com
For the rules and themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series, see page 18.

I'LL NEVER FORGET

inherited shirts.

These were hectic but very happy times. We liked the coastal area so much that in 1984 we moved to the coast and now live on that “old ferry road.”

*Evelyn J. Wegman
Swansboro*

Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative

ALMOST OKAY

It was March in North Carolina—you know the time of year when it gets in the 70s and 80s in the daytime and the 30s and 40s when the sun goes down. Brian planned a camping trip for us, and he invited his cousin and his cousin’s girlfriend. He had everything, and he told me “all you have to do is bring your clothes.”

We put up the tent next to a pond in the prettiest place I had ever seen. We were so in love; it was the best day. He didn’t bring any food. But it was okay. No toilet paper—well, it was okay. The sun went down and it was getting colder and colder. Brian built a fire, and it was okay.

When we got in the tent to sleep, I was shivering. We covered up with a thin sheet. I got a little upset and asked Brian why he didn’t bring some covers. He said he did—Greg and Robin had them. I jerked those covers off of them and we all tried to cover up. It was not okay.

I got up and took my blanket out to the fire that was almost out. I stomped around in the woods, breaking limbs and sticks for the fire with no flashlight. The moon was full, so that was okay. I got the fire going and lay down beside it on the ground.

ROMANCE IN CHEROKEE

We had only been dating for a few months when my parents invited him to go with us on our annual family camping trip to Cherokee.

“Are you sure?” I asked, seeing as how they had never allowed us to take dates on family trips before.

“Of course,” they replied. “You’ll marry him one day.”

Unsure of this prediction, I agreed to let him go with us. I thought I could at least enjoy his company—he seemed nice enough.

Somewhere between the verses of the good old gospel songs led by my grandpa on the banjo, I fell in love with the love of my life. The romantic, picturesque views of the Smokies only added to the mood. We began to cherish every moment together.

Our love continued to grow. He proposed to me five months later at that same campsite on Valentine’s Day. We reserved the site for our honeymoon six months later.

Now we’ve been married almost six years and have a precious baby boy. We try to go back annually to relive fond memories of the camping trip nobody in the family will ever forget.

*Sarah Wild
Elkin
Surry-Yadkin EMC*

When I woke up, it was almost daylight. Brian was fishing. He hooked a seven-pound carp that really fought. Brian wanted me to feel it, so he let the fish swim away, and I reeled him in. The fish was jerking and pulling. We laughed so hard when we let him go and he swam back to us.

My hair was standing straight up. I had makeup and ash soot all over my face. I was so dirty from sleeping on the ground. We must have really been in love.

We still laugh about that trip almost 14 years later. Brian has become a good camper, and it’s really okay.

*Jackie Campbell
Bostic*



In 1997, romance bloomed for Stephen and Sarah Wild at the KOA campground in Cherokee.

CAMPING, CITY-GIRL STYLE

This story involves my father and mother who have now been divorced more than 20 years. My father loves the outdoors and many years ago decided to take my mother, a city girl, camping for the weekend.

The weather started to get warmer and warmer and my mother knew the only solution to a hot summer day was air conditioning. To my dad’s surprise, my mother had packed a small window air conditioner. This was very strange to my father, but even stranger was what the other campers saw when they awoke the next morning. Imagine a 1974 station wagon with side paneling, sporting an A/C unit in the rear roll-down

continued on p. 18

Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

JUNE 2004 "Being a Teenager Today"

What are you going through? Or: How does it compare to when you were one?

Deadline: April 15

JULY 2004 "Our Money Pit"

What was the biggest waste of money you remember?

Deadline: May 15

AUGUST 2004 "Was I Wrong!"

Lessons you learned the hard way.

Deadline: June 15

SEPTEMBER 2004 "My Favorite Photo"

North Carolina people and places. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and printable size.

Deadline: July 15

OCTOBER 2004 "If I Were Governor of North Carolina"

What would you do?

Deadline: August 15

NOVEMBER 2004 "Mama's Cooking Was Always the Best"

Send a recipe, if you have one, and photos.

Deadline: Sept. 15

DECEMBER 2004 "Meeting Your Grandparents"

Something you never knew about a grandparent.

Deadline: Oct. 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less. We retain reprint rights.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mail or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616. Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com. Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com

continued from p. 17

window with two pieces of cardboard along its sides. And inside this "luxury" vehicle—a full-size mattress and two frozen young lovers! How's that for roughin' it?

*Mistie Cole
Elizabeth City
Albemarle EMC*

SURPRISE TRIP TO HOT SPRINGS

In August 1988 my husband, Gene, turned 30. I planned a surprise camping trip to Hot Springs for 17 people, and didn't tell him about it until right before we took the trip.

The National Forest Service campsite at Hot Springs in Madison County is beautiful. It is on a jig of the Appalachian Trail, with primitive facilities. We went whitewater rafting on the French Broad River with the Nantahala Outdoor Center and had a great time. Everyone still talks about the thunderstorm that came through on our last night there. It just echoed through those mountains and left everything so clean and sparkly the next morning.

*Elizabeth Chalk
Youngsville
Wake EMC*

HOOKS, BUGS AND BLUE BEARDS

Labor Day weekend, 1959, we took our first camping trip in a black 1951 panel truck to Seneca Park, Md. This truck had only one seat—the driver's—so I rode in a rocking chair. When my husband, Landon, would brake, I rocked forward, and when he took off, I rocked backward. Our three small children thought this was very funny and laughed all the way.

On the way to the park, our daughter got a fishhook caught in her arm. After all of the screaming and crying, we got the hook out and continued on our way.

That night at the park, I asked my husband to keep the windows shut, because of a loud group up the road. During the night, I felt water dropping on me and I woke my husband. He turned the light on and there was condensation dropping from the ceiling. We opened the windows

and went back to sleep only to be awakened by buzzing and biting. Landon turned the light on again to find hundreds of mosquitoes on the ceiling. He took care of this, and we finally slept.

The next morning, as we were eating our breakfast by the river, caterpillars fell on our plates. At this point, we decided to move on to Patapasco State Park which was better equipped for inexperienced campers.

The first night we nearly froze to death. So the next day we went to a shopping center, bought two cheap blue blankets and that night we slept warm and good. Landon had not shaved for several days so he had accumulated a little beard. The next morning, I woke first, then one by one, the children popped up their little heads and started laughing at their father. He had all this blue fuzz in his beard from the blankets. He was a true blue beard, and we continued to laugh as he picked it out.

That night we had grilled pork chops and a wonderful dinner cooked outside. It was dark before our dinner was ready, so Landon climbed a tree over the picnic table and hung a flashlight from it so we could see to eat. Most of the other campers had tents and Coleman lanterns, but I know they didn't enjoy it any more than we did.

*Ona B. Deane
High Point
EnergyUnited*

RIVER BEAR FINDS A HOME

My dad and I wanted to go camping.

After days of planning, we decided to camp out on the riverbank behind our house.

I set up the tent, sleeping bags and some other gear so that we would be ready.

About 10:30 or 11 p.m. that night we went to the campsite to settle in. Just before looking at the back of our eyelids, my dad said, "Wake me up if you hear a bear or a wampus cat or something." Man, was that one long night. It got down to about 55-60 degrees and the dew fell on us. You never fully realize



how cold it is until you go to sleep with no heat.

I woke up cold that morning, walked down to the river and wouldn't you know it. There was a dag gum bear caught in debris smack dab in the middle of the river. The real strange part about it: the bear was stuffed. Who would want to get rid of a stuffed bear?

So I went back to the house to grab a rope so my dad could lasso him. We got him to the bank, and I cleaned all the leaves and mud from his fur. We hung him up in the garage. We tried to find the bear's rightful owner because we thought he might have been stolen.

From this camping trip, I learned two things:

1. Never go camping without your gun, because you never know what you are going to run into. 2. Sleep in your own bed when you get the chance. It's a lot safer and warmer.

Michael Wade

CAMPING WITH DAD AT LINNEY'S MILL

I will never forget when the Cub Scouts went camping at Linney's Mill. We set up our tents, and then we grilled hot dogs for supper. We roasted marshmallows, made s'mores and told ghost stories over a big campfire. The next day, we rode bikes and put our feet in the cold water. Before we left, Mr. Linney showed us around the mill. We learned how the water wheel runs and how they make cornmeal.

The best part about the trip was that I went with my dad who is the Cub Scout leader. His name is Cecil Marlowe.

*Dakota Marlowe, age 9
Union Grove
EnergyUnited*



Cub Scout leader Cecil Marlowe (above) took his son Dakota and fellow Cub Scouts camping at Linney's Mill.

Kasco® Pond Aeration

**Affordable • Dependable
Efficient**



**Three styles: Fountains,
Aerators or Circulators.**
Available in 1/2 hp, 3/4 hp,
1 hp and 2 hp sizes.

Starting at \$764 

KASCO MARINE, INC.
800 Deere Road, Prescott, WI 54021
(715) 262-4488 • FAX (715) 262-4487
www.kascomarine.com
sales@kascomarine.com

It's Not Just A Home...
It's An Adventure!

Renewing The
Spirit Of Adventure
Since 1987

 **LOG CABIN HOMES**

1.800.562.2246
www.logcabinhomes.com

Call Today...
to receive a
FREE 12 page
full color
brochure.

P.O. Drawer 1457 / 513 Keen Street • Rocley Mount, NC 27802
252.454.1500 • Fax 252.454.1550 • Email: Info@logcabinhomes.com