

You know, one of the things I enjoy the most about listening to Scouting folks describe their experiences, especially Jamborees, is that 90% of the description is all the disasters, but the e-posting, or story around the campfire, or whatever, almost always ends with words to the effect of "but overall it was great and I'd do it again." It's usually something like this:

"Well, I sent in my staff app, and then I didn't hear back for like, 10 years, and I got really panicked, because after all, I only have two weeks of vacation per year to spend with my long-suffering wife and kids, and I had decided that even though I work 87 hours per week and only see them for a few hours on alternate Sundays, I just HAD to leave them for the only time off I have over the next two calendar years, so I could go to the Jamboree.

Finally, after calling everybody and his dog, at the last minute I was granted an appointment to be on the staff as night-shift toilet-cleaning specialist.

Yippee! Well, maybe not so yippee. I mean, I hate cleaning toilets and I'm totally allergic to detergents, but hey, it's for the kids, right? So I immediately made flight reservations. Because it was less than 7 days notice, I had to transfer through Mexico, Peru, and Georgia, with Georgia being the only foreign country that asked me for a passport, and it still cost me \$1,486 even though the flight time with layovers was 3 days, 7 hours, and 54 minutes. Plus I had to take a cab from the Podunk County Airport 57 miles just to get to Dulles, where after paying 89 dollars for the cab I had to wait most of the day for the shuttle to the Jamboree.

Fortunately, I only passed out a couple of times sitting on the curb in the 90 degree heat and 132 percent humidity, and I was miraculously awake when the shuttle arrived. Well, the second, shuttle, anyway. The first one wouldn't let me get on because they lost my reservation, and the driver muttered something about not knowing CPR and not wanting the smell of rotting flesh on his bus.

When I finally arrived at the Jamboree, well, what more could you ask? It was so wonderful to be within arm's reach of so very many of my fellow tentmates. At least in theory. Since I had the swing shift, I ended up sleeping while everyone else was out interacting with Scouts and trading patches and eating food and all that nonsense.

But what a thrill! There was no END of the toilets to clean, and knowing how important my task was, I took to it with a fervor unmatched. Alas, I was running a fever of 104+ within a day or two, thanks to the swarming mosquitoes, ticks, and something the doctor described as "his ticket to doctor of the year" for the article he said he was going to publish in the AMA Journal, and he owed it all to me. And my various rashes, inflammations, and such. It made me feel so Scoutlike to be so Helpful. The third point of the Scout Law.

I guess I lost a few days in there somewhere, and I sure feel bad for the shifts I missed, although the tent I slept in seemed to be a lot less crowded since all those tentmates decided to sleep out under the stars in true Scouting tradition, and they thanked me for inspiring them! Gosh! It's good to know that in spite of my contagious illnesses, I was still able to influence others so positively. And they were all

so nice, never once remarking about the seeping pustules, the bloating, the gas emissions, or the stench. Good Scouts, one and all!

Ironically, after all my efforts, I was the one who got caught in a port-a-potty that was out of toilet paper. Alas! Fortunately, I am a problem-solver, so I sort of snuck out and grabbed some leaves. We don't have poison ivy out home in the midwest, and I gotta tell you, that's one tough way to learn that sort of plant identification. Fortunately, the high-carbohydrate meals got me so backed up that I didn't have to repeat that mistake for several days.

Plus, I didn't have to worry too much about the itching, as I was too busy trying to prevent my stuff from floating away. By the time the water roared through, the wind had dropped to less than 170 miles per hour, and the runoff turned in such a way that I was able to divert most of my gear into the slower part of the current, and save the important stuff, like the calamine lotion and my work schedule. My heart medication slipped away, but I'm sure I can make it a few days living with the arrhythmia.

Well, sorry to blather on so long. You know how it goes. One thing leads to another, and next thing you know, it's over! How sad! I had such a great time, I can't wait for next year. I sure hope my boss gave me a good performance review. I'd hate to miss all this fun 4 years from now. I had a GREAT time and I can't wait for the next Jamboree to do it all over again!

YiS,

James Prekeges
Chief Seattle Council