

GOING CAMPING

HAL AMES



Robert did not like camping. He liked his house, his bed and his shower.

When he was eight years old his father had taken him on their first, and last, camping trip together. It was the worst weekend of his life.

The whole weekend it was freezing cold and it rained. He was so cold, and he was so bored, that he did not listen very well when his father tried to teach him about camping.

When his dad tried to teach him how to use a compass, he got confused. His father tried to teach him about north, south, east, and west, but he did not listen very well because he was so cold. His father left him in the woods with the compass and told him to find his way back. Robert went the wrong way and got lost.

He was not lost for very long, but to him it felt like a whole day. He was afraid that it was going to get dark before his dad found him, but there was plenty of daylight left.

The food tasted like dirt, and his sleeve caught on fire when he tried to warm his hands.

His dad would not stop talking about survival and how much fun it was to be camping. Robert did not think so.

“Robert, if you practice these thirty survival rules, you’ll be able to live in the woods for many months,” his dad kept saying.

After the trip was over, the ride in the car was wonderful. He fell asleep and slept the whole way home. When they walked in the door of the house, he was never so happy to be home. He told himself he would never go camping again!

Now Robert was older and married.

Not long ago, Robert’s company moved him to Colorado. He had heard that winters in Colorado were almost as cold as Alaska. He was not very excited about moving there, but it was a better job and more money.

He enjoyed his new job, but his new co-workers were always inviting him to go hiking and camping in the mountains. He kept making excuses because he did not want to tell them the truth. He was afraid they would not like him if he told them he hated camping.

His wife told him he should just tell them the truth.

She said to him, “You need to get over it because you’re not eight years old anymore.”

He thought, “If I don’t go, eventually they will quit asking, but if they quit asking I won’t have any buddies to hang out with.”

He had a problem.

Back where he used to live, his friends played golf every other Saturday. He missed playing golf. He even thought about asking these guys if they wanted to play golf sometime, but it did not take him long to realize that it was a bad idea. They would think he was joking since they had no interest in golf.

They always said, “Wilderness stuff is what people do for fun here in Colorado.”

It was the beginning of autumn so his friends made plans to hike in the mountains. Once again, they asked him to join them, but this time he accidentally

told them he did not have any plans for the weekend.

They said, “We’re glad to hear it. This time you have to go with us. We’ll have a great time, just wait and see.”

Robert thought about it. He did not want to seem like he was a coward. This time he decided to give it a try.

After work that day, he went to the wilderness supply store where he could buy the things he needed for camping.

The salesperson thought Robert had lost his mind. Robert did not know what he needed, so he bought one of almost everything in the store; just in case. He even bought a wilderness book that told him how to eat wild plants and how to find clean water to drink.

He went home and read every manual. He practiced setting up the tent in his backyard. He tried to build a fire, but his wife made him put it out because she was afraid he would burn the house down. He wore his new hiking boots around the house for so long that he got a fat blister on his big toe.

He told his wife he planned to sleep on the floor the rest of the week. He laid out his sleeping bag on the floor and crawled in. When he woke up in the middle of the night he was covered in sweat. He found out the sleeping bag was too warm for sleeping in the house.

On Friday, after packing his car in morning, he could not see out of the back window. Everything he had bought was stuffed inside. There was so much stuff he was not sure how he was going to carry it all.

When work was finished, he met his friends in the parking lot. They looked at his car and peeked into the windows. They could not believe all the stuff he had. They began to laugh and tease him.

“Are you planning to live in the forest for a month?” they teased him.

They decided to take two cars since Robert’s was so full, and then followed

each other to the national park where they would hike up Beaver Meadow Trail toward the valley. His friends had been there before and knew the best fishing spots on the river.

When they got to the national park, they parked their cars and began to unpack the equipment they would need for the hike into the woods.

As they were putting on their backpacks, Robert stood out. His backpack looked spotless. The sales tag was still hanging from the zipper. His backpack had all kinds of gadgets hanging from it. He had everything the boy at the wilderness shop had sold him either inside or hanging from his backpack. His friends stared at him. They could not believe all the equipment he had. Robert was leaning forward to balance the weight of the backpack.

On the way up the trail, he tried to keep calm.

He told himself, "This is no big deal. It's going to be a piece of cake."

He did not really believe it, but he was trying to raise his confidence.

As they began to climb up Beaver Meadow Trail and into the woods, the guys began talking about the perfect camping spot they had used the last time they were there. Robert walked behind the others wondering what he would do if he got lost. He wanted to be cool, so he kept quiet and followed along. He laughed at their jokes and tried to fit in as best he could.

Then it started to rain. He panicked. All he could think about was when he was eight years old, alone in the woods, cold and hungry.

His friends did not seem to be bothered by the rain. In fact, they seemed to enjoy it.

Then the rain started to pour. The skies turned dark, and the wind began to blow. It became cold and harsh. The freezing rain felt like hundreds of little knives poking them in the face.

Robert took the raincoat he had tied around his waist and put it on. One of his

gadgets was a small sturdy umbrella. He pulled it off the hook where it was hanging from his backpack and opened it. He held it in front of his face to block the rain. The waterproof gloves he bought at the store felt toasty warm. He looked around at his macho friends. They were wet and freezing.

He suddenly felt more confident. They looked miserable, and he almost felt sorry for them. When it started to hail, they moved off the trail. A large tree was not big enough to protect the five grown men from the rain and ice.

He removed his backpack. Hanging from the bottom of it, he had a tent. The others were not laughing at him now. It took about five minutes to put the tent together. Robert was thankful he had practiced setting up the tent at home. It was not designed for five people, but somehow, they squeezed inside anyway. They were almost sitting on top of each other.

After a few minutes, someone said, "So what else have you got in that backpack of yours, Robert?"

Robert opened his pack and started to take things out. They spent the next hour joking, laughing, and eating the beef jerky and other snacks Robert had in his backpack.

While they sat waiting for the rain to stop, Robert told them all about his first camping experience. They got a good laugh over it.

He also told them that he missed playing golf. They said they would give it a try sometime.

They spent the weekend fishing and getting to know each other better. Robert decided camping was not so bad after all. He just might try it again in the future.

VOCABULARY (*Match the word to its definition*)

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. shower _____ | a. baffled, bewildered |
| 2. confused _____ | b. part of a shirt for the arms |
| 3. compass _____ | c. walk on hands and knees |
| 4. sleeve _____ | d. stop, not continue |
| 5. survival _____ | e. bath with running water |
| 6. quit _____ | f. frozen rain |
| 7. crawl _____ | g. device for directions |
| 8. panicked _____ | h. forest, mountains |
| 9. hail _____ | i. how to live in the forest |
| 10. wilderness _____ | j. frightened, scared |

TRUE / FALSE

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Robert liked to go camping. | T / F |
| 2. Robert's father liked to go camping. | T / F |
| 3. Robert moved to Colorado. | T / F |
| 4. Robert's wife told him not to go camping. | T / F |
| 5. Robert slept on the floor in his sleeping bag. | T / F |
| 6. They went to the Western trail. | T / F |
| 7. They went fishing. | T / F |
| 8. It rained very hard. | T / F |
| 9. Robert liked to play golf. | T / F |
| 10. Robert's new friends played golf every weekend. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. What did Robert put in front of his face when it rained? ____
 - a) umbrella
 - b) sleeve
 - c) backpack
 - d) tent

2. Where did Robert and his friends go when it rained? ____
 - a) in a cave
 - b) in a tent
 - c) in their cars
 - d) on the trail

3. What happened when Robert first wore his hiking boots? ____
 - a) he broke his foot
 - b) he tripped and fell
 - c) he got a big blister on his toe
 - d) he put them into the closet

4. Where did Robert and his friends go for the trip? ____
 - a) Beaver Meadow Trail
 - b) Mountain Peak Trail
 - c) Fish Mountain
 - d) Beaver Mountain

COMPREHENSION: *(Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)*

1. What did Robert like to do on weekends?

2. Who took Robert on his first camping trip?

3. What did Robert sleep in on his bedroom floor?

4. To what state was Robert transferred for his new job?

5. What did the men eat while waiting for the rain to stop?

6. What day of the week did they leave for the wilderness?

7. Who told Robert to grow up?

8. Where did Robert purchase the things he needed for the trip?

9. What was the name of the place they went to camp?

10. What happened when he tried to warm his hands on his first camping trip?
