

## **T410 Padre Island Beach Campout 5/19/07-5/20/07**

**By Jim Rankin**

The 4-hour trip creates a logistics conundrum whether to drive Friday night and arrive very late in the dark, or start Sat pre-dawn. Troop decision was the latter with the trailer packing & personal gear packing being completed Friday night for a quick Saturday start. Come Saturday 5am, it was obvious that the scouts had packed their bright eyes and bushy tails the night before. With the final personal gear packing and driver's meeting and calling those that didn't show up, we finally got off after 50 minutes, and scouts were soon asleep again.

24 scouts and 9 adults arrived at Nueces County Padre Balli Park after 4 hours of driving. It is within 4 miles of the JFK Causeway bridge over the Intercoastal Canal, right where Mustang Island (Creating Corpus Christi Bay) and Padre Island blend together. We had arranged to camp in their grassy camp area on the land-side of the dunes and the office/bathhouse and dropped our loads there. Once we realized the 75 yards to the beach was hidden from view and a parent would need to guard all belongings 24/7, Mr. Clarke had the tenacity and the salesman skills to persuade the County Ranger to allow our camping on the beach & in the bare dunes.

The beach was like a broad, flat 4-lane boulevard of fine sand with dead seaweed at water's edge and a 14'-tall mountain of dead seaweed/sand on land-side before the plant-covered dunes started. We set up in a linear line of tents, with chuck box kitchens in a sandy dune opening, and our cars parked to protect kids/tents from the passing traffic. The water was pretty clear with the surf at 2'-3' breakers at multiple sand bars quite a ways out and a southward rip current. The wind was a strong 15 mph+ onshore. A constant mantra from each adult was "put on sun lotion, drink plenty of water". Those scouts that didn't heed our advice were glowing by dinnertime.

After setting up camp, and eating lunch, we were all anxious to swim. We installed buoys & traffic cones to designate the swim area and had PFD's on everyone and the buddy system. Then we put two adults in the water with one on beach with our recently-certified City of Austin Lifeguard, Zane Rankin. The big surf was a lot of fun, with the rip current making everyone swims a lot to stay in place or continue to walk to the upstream-side. Several buddy-checks later, we finished with happy, pooped scouts.

Then the Kayaking activity started with 7 sit-on-top kayaks. A minimum level of strength and paddling skills was required to conquer nature's challenging surf. Many tried and half or more (probably 8) made it out past the breakers. We all experienced some capsizing. It was a natural high to get out there. As I'm told, a 5' monster wave ate & spit out Mr. Schmidt, and returned later to claim two pairs of prescription glasses from others.

During and after kayaking, we were discovered.... Not by Hollywood, but by the local Hispanic ice cream cart vendor and his ice cream truck competitor. They started circling those Pits like buzzards on a fresh-dead skunk. 'Course the scouts were flush with

quarters for showers and Sunday's lunch money. Those two musical ditties still ring in my ears. I only heard of 3-4 T410 members using the showers (what a treat on a beach campout).

We started in on dinner preparation, where everyone rose to the Scoutmaster Challenge of cooking over a fire. Two rain gutters worked well as linear grilles for foil-covered meal packs or foil-covered hotdogs and we used tables as wind-breaks for the charcoal grilles. Mr. Arnold Treated the Leadership to some mighty-fine, local cuisine on Kabobs. Shrimp bought within 10 minutes of the campsite were as big as small lobsters, skewered with many veggies and some Coastal Bend chicken breast from the local HEB. Let's hear it for Mr. Arnold keeping that bar high!!

I want to thank the Pits for the camouflage pattern on my van. Instead of the occasional white seagull drops, it was plastered with corn chip yellow and breakfast-cereal brown decorations. We have to be more specific when we tell them to not feed the seagulls near the tents.

There was a break between dinner cleanup and the campfire activities (that free time that scouts keep asking for), and then Brian Evans was the entertaining MC for a varied campfire with many skits, songs, good jokes, and some mighty bad jokes. Low & Behold, there was Mr. Arnold again, who had fought the forces of nature (big wind and blowing sand) and brought forth the TWO Dutch ovens filled with cobbler for everyone to eat. After the strenuous afternoon activities, there wasn't much trouble getting the scouts to go to bed.

6:30am Sunday comes quick (but not before the minimum 8 hours sleep), and everyone got in gear for preparing breakfast, then packing up. The wind was lighter and the surf was smaller with zero rip current.. Our service project was an hour of picking up beach litter in the County Park. Near the end of that we were relieved by two van fulls of County Jail prisoners working to earn good behavior benefits. I like to think that they were learning the ways of the boy scouts, rather than the other way around. Thanks to the effective leadership by our first-campout PLC, Chad Bohls, and the support from the rest of the troop, we now had 1+ hours of free time (what the scouts keep asking for) for recreation. The majority of campouts do not get this leadership cooperation thereby turning Sunday mornings into all work andno play. Swimming and kayaking filled the bill.

Our Super Trooper Mom, Sara Duncan, the only Mom to camp on the beach, muscled out through the surf in the first kayak, conquering what had perplexed her just the day before. Swimmer buddies did a much better job of staying together. After the fun, it was a quick packing up, and we split for Snoopy's Seafood restaurant, just 10-minutes away under the JFK Causeway Bridge on the IC. Great selection and good food.

Back at the church between 4:30-5p as scheduled.

Scout Leadership wants to thank the parents that participated for giving up their weekend and loaning their resources to provide the transportation, equipment, and supervision we

needed to pull off this fun scouting campout. Every scout that wanted to go was able to get a safe, seat-belted ride. We can't do it without your support. We hope that other Troop parents choose to rise to the occasion and join us on future campouts. Seeing these young men in action, interacting, doing what they enjoy, in the ways that they choose, is a whole different scene than those family gatherings that you have experienced. Ask your scout what part he liked best.

Onto Summer Camp, Jim Rankin ASM & Beach Wrangler