

Dispatch From Camp - 4

Greetings from Camp Chris Dobbins campsite Ogallala,

Wednesday at camp is the break. Scouts had made a choice (many weeks ago) to either attend whitewater rafting or remain in camp to do activities. We had 31 choose to engage in rafting. This reporter of deeds was unable to conjure the ability to be in two locations at the same time so this edition mostly concerns rafting which was witnessed directly.

Morning was cool with a very calm sunrise and not a wisp of wind. The day started with our very dedicated Scout off to the pool at 5:40ish to lap swim in preparation for their upcoming competitions this summer. Scouts were woken up by their Senior Patrol leaders at 6:15am. Scouts emerged from warm sleeping bags and donned pants, coats and hats against the coolness and began their routines. As the sun pierced the trees and horizon, warmth hit us and the Scouts shed these items typically where they stood and those belongings remained on the ground in true preteen/teen fashion.

Morning circle and roll was called with many questions flying about what to wear for rafting, where should I go in camp, etc. It was quite dizzying for this leader. One motivated Scout sidled up to my shoulder and passed some advice of "Hey, Mr. Keith if you could cut speeches down and we could hurry this up that would be great." A hungry, tired Scout is no trifling matter, I took his advice hoping to spare my life. Speeches were skipped. Only vital information on which Scouts were to depart flags for the dining hall and Scouts rafting were to assemble at the camp HQ. We exited camp for flags in record time in my opinion, but I inquired if my prompt exit of camp met with his approval. Again this is not a joking matter and with all seriousness the Scout responded "ahh that was pretty good, but I think you can do better." And then returned to his brisk pace to breakfast. I was relieved to have hit the minimum standard.

We were greeted by our dedicated parent drivers for rafting: Jackson Fox, Olivia Lucas, and Thomas Cook. Their cleanliness appeared gleaming to us camp dwellers, so fresh and rested. Flag ceremony delivered the days instructions, ever reliable and supportive ASM J.R. Petrus assured me all will be at camp as we head to rafting, his presence at camp is quite appreciated by all. So, our group now split in two.

Rafters assembled at the HQ. About 90+ Scouts and adults huddled and awaited directions on receiving morning sack breakfast and sack lunches (having made my coffee at camp earlier, murder appeared unnecessary during this process). Here we depart from the camp's earlier displayed competence this week. It was a mess. Where should drivers be? Was there enough food (no). And which sacks met dietary restrictions? (None). Many blank stares and ummms came back to us on this point. SM Laura wasn't having it and leaped into action with Dean (an incredible addition to our camp life). As Laura and Dean began developing a plan for food, I began organizing our group into driving groups in our typical fashion. Scouts and drivers thus organized I turned my attention back to the mess Dean and Laura were dealing with around food. It became

glaringly obvious that the kitchen was not the least diligent in respecting dietary needs - dairy free contained yogurt and vegetarian meals contained meat. They were assured the nut free meals were as labeled. However, all other lunches were "Uncrustables" prepackaged PBJ, which in the hands of kiddos can lead to peanut butter on fingers and insides of cars. All while they worked to inspect the sacks, kids were coming up being issued the meals by staff. A chaotic situation for sure. We took the lead. Designating three of our five vehicles as 100% nut free, the offending Uncrustables were removed from sacks and we felt safe. It quickly became glaringly apparent not all our Scouts would get the breakfast sacks or lunches. We opted to have the nut free drivers purchase meals on the road. Attempted to have the sack lunches distributed to the other cars Scouts. We loaded cars and rolled out.

Here is where the camp's lack of diligence presented a very unfortunate event. A nut allergic Scout ate an item from their "nut-free" meal that is listed as containing nuts. The driver was alerted to this incident immediately by the Scouts, they pulled over not even having driven 100 yards. Our other cars pulled over to assist. Camp medical was on the site quickly. Epi-pens were on the ready. To call it stressful on the Scout and others in the car and the parent of the Scout would be severely understating the situation. We quickly distributed the other Scouts from the car with their gear. Upon being assured by the parent and camp that the situation was being managed as best as possible, the rest proceeded to rafting, very concerned for the Scout and parent. Via text later that day we were notified by the parent that the reaction was not nearly as severe as possible and all is well. They took their time together to recover in Colorado Springs with some good food and air conditioning. This is a very good outcome of a dangerous situation and a good lesson for us adults and the Scouts about the severity of allergies and the respect they are due. A detailed meeting with senior camp management is being held around the lack of focus on this issue by the more junior staff members. And reimbursement for the last rafting day for those individuals.

The rafting crews managed to visit local foody hotspots McDonald's, Wendy's, King Soopers, and Starbucks to supply breakfast and/or lunch for the cars. All were happy with this and many remarks were made "Wow! McDonald's really is quite good!" Or "I've never had a Frosty what is it?" Much debate revolved on this topic and tempers were raised over challenges to how good it is or isn't. Every serving was fully consumed in short order regardless of the position held on said topic.

As for the actual rafting, it was awesome! The company moved our location to more suitable section with the current high flows. Scouts and adults were offered splash tops (sweat boxes), neoprene booties, PFD (mandatory), and helmets (mandatory). Once issued equipment the wait in 85 degree temps began, while you wore it all. The sweating was supreme! No one passed out, but it was a concern. Many disregarded the request to wear them on the bus ride to the river and were rewarded with comfort!

At the river we divided into raft groups met our guides and launched into the high, very swiftly moving river. As we rode the current with gentle waves of four to eight inches the guide ran us through our motions - all forward, all back, all stop and back left forward right and the reverse to turn the boat quickly. Much gentle teasing took place on bravery as the river had yet to display an aggressive posture.

As the youth say, things QUICKLY got REAL. We rounded the bend for the first of four major class III/IV wave train rapids. Rafts bucked! Water came over this side, waves were punched through with strong forward stroke while the crest engulfed the entire crew! The teasing was now over. Having escaped the first rapid without a single boat flipping or person being ejected, much cheering ensued. Under five minutes later we rounded a corner with immense waves of over four to five feet bucking our herd of rafts! Punching through waves we witnessed the team in front of us pitch severely to the right tossing an unfortunate Scout into the water. Safety whistles were sounded by the guides, action taken and the trailing raft picked up the wet but unharmed Scout. The river was unrelenting. A brief respite to the largest rapid called May-Tag, for it will wash and agitate you if you flip. Most raft teams hit the edge, blowing through the wave. One unfortunate crew went to the "meat" or middle of the rapid where the front occupants were tossed to the back and a Scout ejected! Again whistles blew, action taken and Scout safely returned to his team. Another rapid followed this shortly thereafter and passed without incident but much soaking.

The sun was shining and hot, water cold, Scouts smiling and high fiving! It is a high light of the week. We loaded our bus for our return, located cars and either retrieved lunch or headed out to find it. Return to Camp Chris Dobbins was 5:30 pm.

Evening Flag ceremony was held followed by dinner. After dinner we prepared six Scouts for their evening under the Stars. They were either taking the Astronomy or wilderness Survival MBs and they "cowboy" camped out in the open or built shelters to sleep in. They took their Ten Essentials and an optional sleeping bag. We had Scouts choose both. They headed out at 7:30 pm full of mild trepidation but supported by their Scout friends unaware of what awaits them. Time will tell, morning is ten hrs away.

Evening was very relaxed. Many worked on advancement, we had three Scouts advance in Rank and hope to have up to four more before the end of camp Friday night. Evening circle and roll was taken and not a missing Scout found! What improvement!!

Yet again Scouts catch their last few winks of sleep as the sunrise over camp is simply beautiful, peaceful. Coffee is still hot and I plan to enjoy the last remaining minutes of quiet before Scouts rise and the pace increases.

Signing off from Camp Chris Dobbins

Keith Reis

www.sanitassalesgroup.com