



TOM ARNEBERG
Klondike Derby Senior Patrol Leader Jasper Arneberg plays his bugle to start the sled races.

Klondike Derby brings out the best in Scouts



TOM ARNEBERG
Chippewa Falls

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“Bedtime Burrito” last Saturday night. No, it’s not the latest creation at Taco John’s. It’s a roll where the kid is the filling!

He laid out a tarp on the snow, covered it with blankets and coats, and rolled himself up in it, exposing only his face to the elements. The goal? Stay toasty warm for a night’s sleep at L.E. Phillips Scout Reservation.

The mercury only dropped to 4 degrees, so he didn’t earn a coveted “Zero Hero” patch. But that’s OK; he already has that honor from previous campouts.

What would inspire a kid to leave the comfort of a one-room cabin heated by a woodstove and sleep outside? I guess some people just like the challenge.

The Boy Scouts in David’s “platypi patrol” (patrol yell: “I’m not a wuss, I’m a platypus!”) were still reveling in their victory, after beating out 17 different sled teams from 12 different troops at the Klondike Derby, a winter camporee.

One thing I really like about Scouting is that it mixes up the ages. As a 15-year-old patrol leader, David garners a lot of respect from the other eight boys in his patrol. Many of them are 11-year-old first-year Scouts, so it forces David not only to make decisions and lead well, but also to do a lot of teaching.

They got the “bedtime burrito” idea from one of the “towns” along their Klondike route. Adult leaders from a Neillsville troop taught the boys about winter survival techniques. (Did you know that it’s actually better to sleep under a tarp than in a

tarp all the moisture you exhale — a quart in one night!)

Normally, the Boy Scout program is entirely youth-driven. On a typical troop campout, the only real purpose of the adults is to provide transportation and ensure safety. Of course, there’s a lot of subtle coaching and teaching going on, especially for the boys in charge of the troop and patrols, but it’s mostly hands-off for grownups.

For the Klondike Derby, however, the boys are all competing on the sled teams, so adults take on the role of “mayors” of the “towns” along the one-mile route. For this year’s Klondike, there were 13 towns, each with two stations.

The crowd’s favorite station this year (voted on by the boys in the awards ceremony), hosted by our own troop’s Mike Wells, was the “Ravine of Death.” To get points at this station, Scouts

had to inch along a precarious rope over a raging “river,” with only one other rope to hang onto, stop in the middle, and try to scoop some “gold nuggets” out of the river.

Another popular stop was “Nuke Town.” To prevent a nuclear meltdown, Scouts had to use an overhead pulley and four ropes to successfully transfer radioactive uranium rods between vertical PVC tubes.

And they had to do it all without talking!

There was one older Scout not on a sled team — my son Jasper was the SPL (Senior Patrol Leader) for the whole event. At 17.9 years old and over 6 feet tall, this Eagle Scout commanded a lot of

announcements, flag ceremonies, scoring and the sled races at the end.

Watching Jasper at work brought out mixed emotions in me: Pride at the young man he has become, gratefulness at the role Scouting has played in his development as a leader, and a tinge of sadness that this would be his last campout as a Scout.

We were glad this year to have had the full support of two districts in our Boy Scout council: both district executives, Luke McNeese and Amanda Parkinson, were on hand all day.

It’s amazing to watch how a huge event like this all comes together, with all the adults running the towns, patrol leaders corralling their minions for each sled, and a lot of behind-the-scenes work going on.

But the real mastermind behind the whole thing is Dave Linse, Scoutmaster of Lafayette’s Troop 75. Dave has been spearheading the Klondike Derby for six years now and always does a great job.

In fact, despite his only son Zach having graduated three years ago, Dave is still pressing on, leading not only his troop, but also big council-wide events like the Klondike Derby and Webelos Woods, which drew 450 Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts in November. Not to mention his work with Cub Scouts and Order of the Arrow, the honor society of Scouting.

Sometimes this Scouting stuff just gets in your blood.

After getting home Sunday afternoon, unpacking, doing homework, and playing a little indoor soccer, David collapsed into his bed much earlier than normal. No bedtime burrito that night, but I’m sure he drifted off to sleep