

10th National Senior Scout Adventure Cederberg 1992

Jay Heale reports on his fact-finding visit to the Cedarberg Adventure

'Adventure' has to be the keyword. You carefully planned, once-a-week Troop meeting is mere training time, often without the OUT which is such an essential part of SCOUTING.

That's why, every two years, a team of some 120 Scouters (largely drawn from Cape Western) under the planning direction of Colin Inglis at SA Scout Headquarters offers these ten days of tough challenge. And the 500 Scouts (and Scouters) who accept this challenge are guaranteed to return exhausted!



In December 1992, Scouts from all over South Africa and as far afield as Zimbabwe, Germany and the Isle of Man set out on ten days tough hiking around the Cedarberg Mountains, with over twenty bases to visit along the way. Some offered fairly normal Scouting activities: Dutch oven cooking, Pioneering, Bush lore or Handcrafts. Some were physical: Canoeing, Mountaineering, Treasure diving, a Commando assault course. Plenty were exotic: Camel riding, Electronic fox hunting, Mountain biking, or the "Ultimate Challenge".



I managed to visit nine of the twenty-three Activities available. That took me two full days, and I had motorised transport! I talked with many of the participating Scouts. I heard no grouses and plenty of gratitude. They had different favourites: Rock-climbing, Ecology, the mind-opening Handicapped Awareness Trail, or Water Activities with the chance to go water-skiing, wind-surfing or even parasailing in mid air.

Were there too many Activities? It didn't seem so. There was still time to fish peacefully, or lie on your back in camp reading a book,

"How about cutting out the hiking, and just driving you from base to base?" I suggested mischievously to two Scouts as we watched others playing volleyball beside Clanwilliam Dam. "No," they said, "that would be stupid. Hiking's often the best part,"

The old cast-iron Dutch Oven utensils were vital to the early pioneers in the Wild West. In today's Cedarberg, I watched a tasty meal emerge of roast chicken with onions and carrots, herbed potatoes, and apple crumble with the Patrol's initials (1st D) proudly worked into the top crust!

There were doubts from a few Scouters about the advisability of the military nature of the Ultimate Challenge, though to me it seemed no more than good old Flag-raiding with paint guns as weapons. "You're dead!" "I shot you!" reminded me of boyhood games. As I watched, a Scout was accused of using unsuitable language. He went straight over to his opponents and offered a generous apology. That was Scouting, all right.

With many others, I stood, blanket-wrapped, at the Astronomy base watching the stars appear more clearly than most of us get a chance of seeing. (Our night skies are increasingly plagued with 'light pollution'.) As we peered through powerful telescopes at the rings on Saturn, at star clustered Orion, at the bright blue Pleiades, we could hardly escape being aware of man's insignificance.

"What has been the best Activity so far?" I asked one Scout on his first Cedarberg adventure. "Everything!" he answered instantly. He was dripping from his new experience of diving with an air tube, searching in a deep mountain pool for Old Peg leg's treasure chest. There was so much, he explained that he had never done before and might never do again. "But now I've done them!"

He told me how he had been waiting for the chance to come on this Adventure for years and years, ever since he had first heard of it he was the only Scout here from his Troop in Walmer, near Port Elizabeth. "What's it like having to fit in with a Patrol of guys you don't know at all?" "Terrible!" he said, with a huge grin. "Especially him!" as he aimed a playful punch at his new best friend.

There was much to gain in addition to the listed activities. The quiet, stark beauty of an unspoilt mountain area- the appreciation of teamwork specifically working on behalf of the Scouts involved - the meetings with Scouts from other parts of the country. One Patrol was a mixture of Zulus from Natal and Xhosas from Transkei. They had asked to be put together. Perhaps the young have more sense of peaceful coexistence than the old?

Life at the Headquarters camp was efficient without being officious. "What time is breakfast?" "When it happens." It did happen - as did pancakes all round as a night-time bonus. Beyond the bright gateway, there was radio contact with all the outlying bases; a qualified doctor at hand; cool drinks and blanket badges on sale; boxes of food and equipment offering ample proof of the vast planning exercise behind the hole Cedarberg Adventure.

Perhaps the most impressive detail of all: that about 70% of the adults involved must have given up their annual leave in order to do so.