

From Mitch Derrick to Camp 12/08

Fellas,

Very nice to hear from you and it's outstanding to see that Pathfinder lives on...such an incredible place. I do not have any photos, but I have a host of memories that will hang with me forever. I actually attended for two years back in the early 80's. I never made it to CIT status as other activities roped me in so I had to hand the reigns over to my younger brother Brad who also went for a couple of years.

Brad and I often talk about making the trek back up to Algonquin for a reunion tour of some sort. We often reminisce about being buried up to our necks in mung and wondering whether to laugh or cry (neither of which helped any). Bonfield-Dickson certainly got my attention, but I remember walking by what appeared to be bigger/stronger guys who could not handle the mental challenge...only to be later passed by a smaller guy who ate up the trails (but of course they must have been lugging a tent and a couple of sleeping bags....yes, I'm still bitter about always having to carry the food or axe pack).

Probably my greatest trip was my second year when we hit the Western Territory (I think that's what it was called). The park rangers flew in all sorts of gear for us and we spent two weeks trying to take back the trails from the forest. We managed to reclaim some trails and a few campsites, but were never able to rid the region of mosquitoes. It was one night during that trip that we ran into some bad weather and were late getting into camp. One of our guys actually began experiencing early-stage hypothermia. Everybody came together and, thanks to the leadership of our guides, we were able to set up camp and get him stabilized. All in all, the trip was incredibly rewarding and I often reflect back on just how intense things got at times. I found it especially humorous listening to guys talk about their eagle scout status after my second summer at Pathfinder...if I was stranded on an island I'd rather be with those 8 Pathfinder guys than an entire eagle scout troop any day of the week.

Pathfinder was definitely one of the more defining activities of my upbringing and instilled a drive in me that carried over into both athletics and academia. The three and a half weeks always flew by. There were kids from all over thrown together without any fancy electronics gear or any way to differentiate one another based on socio-economic backgrounds. Sadly, with private schools and social pressure to live in the 'right' neighborhood these days, such socialization opportunities are far and few between. Pathfinder instills a real 'can-do' attitude in kids and gives them the confidence to pursue their wildest dreams.

I have referred many to Pathfinder and long for the day to hear the stories as told by my future son(s).

Keep up the good work, fellas!!

Best, Mitch Derrick