

you want to go where-  
**CAMPING?!**

By Mr. Wally W. Erck, Langley AFB, Va.



It had been raining for 2 days, the wind had picked up, and a cold front was predicted. A group of young, inexperienced Boy Scouts wanted to go CAMPING! However, this camping trip was planned for the foothills of southern New Mexico in early December. I was invited on this scouting adventure by a friend who needed help with the trip.

Before I left the office that afternoon, I called the base Weather office and asked about the weather predictions for our proposed camping location. The answer was, "Sir, there is a cold front coming through the middle of New Mexico, and we expect some really harsh, icy and snowy conditions. We've been wrong before, but I wouldn't be taking boys out camping in potential weather like this."

About an hour later, I showed up at the meeting point to find the adult leaders discussing the weather conditions and the fate of the camping trip. All the adults were convinced they did not want to disappoint the boys and cancel the outing. Two previous camping trips had been cancelled due to military deployments and adverse weather conditions. The key adult leader stated: "There is no way we are canceling this trip — we are going."

Two of the 14 young boys were already in tears just discussing the possibility of not being able to go because of the threatening rainstorm.

At that point, some of the adult leaders beckoned me over. They were at odds over the trip because they didn't want to disappoint the boys again and felt a little rain wouldn't hurt them. Some actually thought the weather conditions might help develop character!

I asked if anyone had listened to a weather report on TV or radio or called the local weather service. None of them had, but downplayed the issue because the campsite was only a few hours away in the foothills. They indicated that the camping party could turn around and come home the next morning if the weather got too bad. One of the leaders asked, "Wally, you have a lot of scouting, camping, and back-country experience. What are your thoughts on going?"

I replied that there were always alternatives to every situation. I told them that I had called the Holloman Air Force Base Weather office prior to leaving work, and they indicated a really bad cold front was on its way. They predicted a huge ice storm with possible snow later in the evening. Most of these boys were 11- and 12-year-olds so my recommendation was to plan an alternative camping adventure for that night, see what the weather conditions were the next day, and then make our final decision.

One vocal opponent of my suggestion said, "But some of the boys don't want that!! They want to go camping tonight, not T O M O R R O W MORNING!!!" A second adult concurred. Two parents voiced concern, but were told that their input didn't count since they were not going on the trip.

I clarified that I hadn't said we should cancel the camping trip for that evening. I reiterated that I had just asked everyone to look at all of our options. I suggested going to the Community Center on the

nearby military base and "camping" inside that facility for the night. The boys could play pool, ping-pong, board games, video games and watch movies on the wide-screen television. We

could also set up some patrol competitions in the large ballroom. It would be fun and a different adventure for the boys.

One of the more vocal adults repeated, "Let's just go. Wally, you don't know for sure whether it will hail, ice-over or snow. Let's just go and react to the circumstances as they occur." "That's an option," I said, "However, it's not one I would recommend or participate in. I've been offered the Community Center on base for our use. That's the safe alternative and everybody should be able to live with it." Again, the same adult chattered, "What can possibly happen? So, we get a little snow — so what? Live and deal with it!"

I responded by explaining that New Mexico weather conditions near mountainous areas can change and quickly turn into a "bad and ugly" situation. Two facts greatly concerned me: The campers were young, inexperienced boys and the adults involved had limited back-country skills. I reminded everyone that this was an adult decision that involved the safety of their boys. After an extensive discussion, "everyone" decided it would be best to stay at the military Community Center for that evening.

The next morning we woke up to 8 inches of snow on the ground. The campsite location in the foothills had over 3 feet of snow along with icy conditions. The major highways were closed for 2 days and the 10-mile side road into the campsite was closed for over a week because of the amount of ice.

That morning was a wake-up call for all of the parents, adult leaders, and boys. Everyone was glad we had chosen the safer alternative. The boys had fun and learned a lot over the weekend. They played games most of the night, toured an F-117 aircraft, visited the "space" monkey farm, and cooked their meals outside in the snow. It was an experience they will never forget — and, more importantly, they were all safely returned to the care of their parents!

**Editor's note:** *Wally Erck is a civil service employee who is a retired Air Force officer from the Morale, Welfare, Recreation and Services field. In Boy Scouting, Wally serves as a member of the local Council Executive Board and is a District Chairman and a Scoutmaster of a 70-boy scout troop. He has extensive back-country experience in backpacking, canoeing, and cycling.*

## Weapons Safety Award of Distinction

Several inert munitions assets were delivered to the Conventional Maintenance element for scheduled processing and demilitarization. Upon initial visual inspection, A1C Reich noticed

there was a live FMU-139 fuze among the inert munitions items to be demilitarized. Knowing this was a crucial mistake and the danger involved with such an operation, he immediately brought it to the attention of the shift supervisor. Upon further research, it was determined that a major error in the processing of paperwork was at fault. His strict attention to detail prevented the probability of an individual detonating a 1.2 Hazard Class Division explosive. He prevented any possible chance of serious injury or loss of life to himself and coworkers.

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## Unit Safety Award of Distinction

While performing routine maintenance on T-38 aircraft 64-3206, an egress maintenance team inadvertently fired an M-27 initiator. The M-27 initiator is connected to the forward cockpit internal canopy jettison handle. An investigation conducted by quality assurance and the wing Safety office determined all technical order procedures had been followed. The problem was isolated to the M-27 initiator having a pre-load on the firing sear, which prevented the maintenance safety pin from rendering the initiator safe. TSgt Devereaux, TSgt St Amand, SSgt Tenpenny and SSgt Faulk realized that serious injury, or even death, could occur if any of the four M-27 initiators in the T-38's egress system were inadvertently fired due to a pre-load condition. The team immediately coordinated and performed a local One Time Inspection (OTI),

and identified another T-38 as having the same condition. With explosive safety at the forefront, the four egress technicians coordinated with a team from HQACC and Ogden ALC to meet at Whiteman AFB to investigate the cause of the pre-load condition. The problem was isolated to an out-of-rig canopy jettison cable. No technical data procedures existed for rigging a canopy jettison cable, so the egress technicians worked side-by-side with the team from ACC and Ogden to author an Interim Operational Supplement (IOS) to Technical Order 1T-38A-2-2. The resulting IOS contained procedures on: properly rigging a canopy jettison handle, inspecting an M-27 initiator to identify a pre-load condition, and procedures to follow in order to correct a pre-load condition, if discovered. The egress technicians' efforts resulted in 752 Air Force T-38s being inspected for a pre-load condition, improvement of Technical Order 1T-38A-2-2, and preventing potential injury or death to aircrew and maintenance personnel.



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Photo by A1C Samantha Willner

Several other boys said they would quit Boy Scouts if the trip was canceled. The boys approached me and said: "Mr. Erck, it isn't fair; it's raining and someone said we may not go."