

DEAR READER,

3-10-19

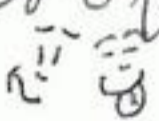
HAY! I HOPE TODAY IS GOING WELL FOR YOU!
I HAVE MORE THAN I COULD TELL YOU OF MY
GROUP HOME & MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPERIENCES BUT I'll
MOVE ON. THROUGHOUT TIME I'm SURE I'll BRING
UP SEVERAL IN REFERENCE THOUGH. FOR NOW, I'll
MOVE INTO A VERY EXCITING YEAR OF MY LIFE.
WILDERNESS CAMP!

I GOT IN TROUBLE IN MY 3RD GROUP HOME
SO MY PROBATION OFFICER GAVE ME A CHOICE.
GO TO TRAINING SCHOOL (JUVENILE PRISON) UNTIL
I WAS 18 YEARS OLD... OR GO TO WILDERNESS CAMP
WHICH I COULD GRADUATE FROM IN AS EARLY AS A
YEAR. I WAS 14 SO... IT WAS AN EASY ANSWER.

THE WILDERNESS CAMP WAS IN THE BLUE RIDGE
MOUNTAINS. JUST NORTH OF MT. ASHLY NORTH CAROLINA.
I THINK IT FELL RIGHT ON THE BORDER OF MT. ASHLY
N.C. AND LOW GAP, VIRGINIA. THERE WERE 6
TRIBES. ¹⁾ WAGAWGA, ²⁾ YUSLAWA, ³⁾ ECHASHUMA, ⁴⁾ FELONIES,
⁵⁾ BACKWOODSMEN AND MY TRIBE, ⁶⁾ NOKASUCHES. MY SPELLING
ON THOSE... I DID THE BEST I COULD. HA! IT WAS FUN.
EVERYDAY WAS STAVOURD. CHOPPING WOOD, CUTTING
DOWN TREES, BUILDING LOG TEMS. HIKING, CANYONING,
CARRYING... GOING TO WAR WITH RACCONS. YUP, THE
GREATEST BATTLE EVER FOUGHT WAS BETWEEN A
HUMAN & A RACCON. I THINK THAT'll BE THE FIRST
STORY I TELL YOU OF THIS YEAR LONG EXPERIENCE.

IT WAS A WEDNESDAY OR A THURSDAY. I KNOW

THIS BECAUSE WE COOKED OUT IN OUR OWN CAMPS ON THOSE DAYS. THAT'S WHEN WE KEPT FOOD IN OUR PREP TENTS & VERY LARGE COOLERS. THE HAND WITH THE DOUBLE LID THAT EACH SNAPPED SHUT. WE WOULD FILL OUR WASH BASINS, 50 GALLON MEAL TUBS, AND PUT ONE ON EACH COOLER. I WOULD SAY TO KEEP THE RACCOONS OUT OF THE COOLERS BUT... THAT NEVER WORKED. IT WAS MORE OF AN ALARM PROTOCOL WHEN THOSE TUBS HIT THE GROUND IT MADE A BOOMING RUCKUS THAT LET US KNOW "THEY" WERE HERE.

WE, MY GROUP, WERE HAVING POW-WOW. SO'S WERE EVERYONE WE MET AROUND A FIRE & DISCUSS OUR GOALS FOR THAT DAY FOR THE NEXT. ONCE AGAIN A LOUD BOOM CAME ECHOING UP THE MOUNTAIN. WE JUMPED UP AND TORE DOWN THE MOUNTAIN. ONLY A FEW OF US WENT. I GRABBED THE MIGHTIEST OF WEAPONS ONE COULD USE AGAINST THESE SLY VILLAIN. A WEAPON, WHEN USED CORRECTLY, HAD SUCH EFFICIENCY AND POWER AGAINST THESE FLUSSEYE BEASTS THAT MY GROUP DUBBED IT "THE EXCALIBUR OF THE BLUE RIDGE".....
 .. THE BROOMSTICK!  I WENT ON THE ATTACK. A RACCOON HAD A BOX OF BISCUITS IN ITS PAWS. WE LOCKED EYES... AND THE BATTLE COMMENCED. WE FOUGHT FOR 2-3 MINUTES AND IT DROPPED THE BISCUITS...? THAT'S ODD... THESE CREATURES "DON'T" GIVE UP. IT SPOOD ON ITS BACK'S LEGS, SHOWED ME ITS STOMACH AND THEN RAN OFF. IT WAS THEN THAT I NOTICED 2 OTHER RACCOONS DRAGGING

BAGS OF FRENCH FRIES INTO THE MOUNTAINS. I LOOKED AT THE COOLER AND IT WAS OPEN AND SOME OF THE FOOD GONE... AND THEN IT ASK ME...

THAT S.O.B. WAS A DISTRACTION! WHILE I FOUGHT WITH IT AND THE OTHER ISLAND WATCHED ME, YUP, EVEN CHEERING ME ON LIKE IT WAS A BOXING MATCH ON SHOWTIME, THE OTHER RACCOONS SOLE AWAY WITH OUR FOOD.

YEAH, RACCOONS ARE "THAT" SMART AND THE "REALLY" HAPPENED, IT WASN'T THE FIRST OR THE LAST TIME IT HAPPENED. AND IT'D BE MY LUNCH, STILL TO THIS DAY, THOSE MASHED BANANAS ARE GOING FAT ON TRIBES FROZEN FRENCH FRIES AND BOXES OF BISCUITS.

RACCOONS AREN'T THE ONLY ANIMALS TO WATCH OUT FOR UP HERE. BOBCATS, BEARS AND MY FAVORITE, ONLY BECAUSE I BITTED ONE, THE EASTERN DIAMONDBACK RATTLE SNAKE. BUT THEY DON'T POSE MUCH DANGER AS THEY'RE JUST AS AFRAID OF US AS WE ARE OF THEM. THEY OPERATE UNDER THE SAME PRINCIPLE, "DON'T START NO TROUBLE, WON'T BE NO TROUBLE".

NEXT BLOG WILL BE ABOUT MY TRAP TO HIDE ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL IN VERMONT. AND MY CONFRONTATION WITH A MOOSE!

UNTILL NEXT TIME.

YOURS TRULY,
DOUG