

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

July 2005

(Originally appeared in the *Herndon Observer*)

“Going Camping Makes Me Too *Tents*”

Each year, we join four other families on our annual camping trip. But it's not “real” camping. Real camping is hiking 10 miles into the woods with everything you need on your back. Then, after eating some wild animal cooked on a homemade fire, you sleep under the stars on a bed of damp leaves only to return home with tick bites and a case of pneumonia. That's real camping.

Our “family friendly” version of camping means cramming half the house into our SUV and driving to a nearby campground where we park our car about 16 inches from where the tent will be. We bring six coolers of food, cooking equipment and 15 tarps to cover anything that might get wet but shouldn't. Even though it's not real camping, it's still pretty rough for those of us (me) who are way too comfortable with our nice suburban existence.

For our first family friendly trip, I made a trek to the outdoor store to buy supplies. I bought a used tent, two mummy style sleeping bags rated for 20 degrees below zero, ground pads and a lantern. I'd mooch off our friends for anything else we needed.

We didn't arrive at the campsite until 9:00 p.m. and everyone else was already there. I turned on the car headlights so I could see to set up our tent but several other campers politely told me to turn my headlights off or they would do it for me. I finished an hour later by the light of my new lantern which, by the way, attracted most of the mosquito population east of the Mississippi.

By 11:00, I was exhausted. We got in our new sleeping bags, zippered the tent and were lulled to sleep by the sounds of crickets, a calming breeze blowing through the trees and 18-wheelers gearing down the long highway grade outside the campground.

At 1:00 a.m. I awoke to a noise. My friend Rick whispered through the tent flap that a naked drunk woman was singing at the next campsite. In the name of Davy Crockett, I felt the need to explore this new territory. I tried to get up but found that I was covered in sweat, had a numbing pain in my lower back and couldn't move my legs. I yelled for help.

After my wife got me out of the bag, killing any chance of requesting a song from the naked woman, I realized these mummy sleeping bags were rated for 50 times the heat retention we needed on that particular night in August; and the design of the bag would

not allow us to move inside the bag. On top of that, the ground pads I bought were so thin, my hipbone had pinched the nerves in my leg. I reluctantly tried to go back to sleep on *top* of the bag.

The next morning, I woke up tired, sore and cranky. All I wanted was a shower to wash the sticky sweat from my body.

The campground showers had a charming locker room decor. The concrete floor and dirty gray cinder block walls were hidden behind a mildew-covered curtain. I inserted the four quarters to start the shower and nothing happened. I cranked the handle both ways and still nothing.

I moved to the next stall and inserted my remaining quarters. It worked! I stood there for what seemed like an eternity under the soothing warm water. Then, just as I lathered up my hair and body with a rich layer of soap, the timer ran out. I was out of water and no quarters left. I dressed and headed back to camp tired, sore, cranky and now sticky with dried soap all over me.

After a full day of hiking and fishing, we collapsed the second night *on* the sleeping bags from Hell. Then, the rain came. It sounded like marbles being poured onto a glass tabletop. I slept all of 1 hour. The next morning, I rolled off my bag to find that our new used tent had leaked in seven different places. We had taken in enough water to irrigate a small village in Africa.

I stormed out of the tent and announced that we were leaving. Within 20 minutes I had stuffed every piece of wet equipment, food and clothing into our car without folding or wrapping any of it. We went straight home where I took a shower and went to bed.

When it comes to camping, I've discovered that I'm just not the "roughing it" type. But in hopes of getting the chance to see a naked woman sing, I'm willing to keep trying.

Until next time, just humor me.

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Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, CPAE is a speaker, humorist, and author of four books including Do it Well. Make it Fun. The Key to Success in Life, Death, and Almost Everything in Between. His mission is to change the workplace culture so that organizations are more productive and staff are more content. He shows people how to have more FUN while preserving the integrity of the work they do and the lives they lead. For more information, visit www.RonCulberson.com.