
blast from the past

Posted by tengu - 01/14/2007 01:59am

A look into the RTC communities cambium layer.

<http://outside.away.com/outside/magazine/200003/200003treeclimbing1.html>

Would love to hear input from those who participated.

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Kilmer Forest Reflections

Posted by TreeTramp - 01/14/2007 10:29pm

Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest Climb October 1999

This was the first trip for Stan and I to join up with other treeclimbers. Abe Winters sure knows how to pick a spot that will draw folks for 1,000's of miles. This park in North Carolina features one of the best old-growth forests east of the Mississippi and being in the Smokey Mountains we knew that we had to go. It was there were we met so many famous climbers and enjoyed great vistas.

Abe told us that he would arriving during the day on Thursday and with a long drive ahead of us Stan and I planned to leave on Thursday morning. We had gathered and staged everything we could think of for a great time and by Wednesday evening we were loaded and ready to go, only too eager to hit the road. We both knew that trying to sleep would be of no use so we cranked up the CD's and got rolling down the river.

The drive went fast as we tried to keep pace with the big rigs and truck stops in the middle of Kentucky rival the bar scene in the cantina from Star Wars. But the best part of the drive was the road north of Kilmer. The mountain roads normally are twisty but this one had more turns in it than a drawing of a pot of spaghetti. Add the dense fog and you have one white knuckle drive. We had to drive with each one of us with our heads out of the windows to see the edge of the road. The road to Hana is tame in comparison.

As dawn broke thru the fog we learned the real meaning of what the native Indians call the area: "the Valley of the Noon time sun". The canopy is so tight that you can not see the sky and you are looking up thru rhododendrons taller than most trees. We set up camp early and soaked in the fresh oxygen and moisture. We took our time but managed to set up everything we brought.

I am a major "gear-head" and Stan is the best cook I know. So what ever Stan needs to cook with I get it. My idea of a camp kitchen has everything including the kitchen sink. To camp in Kansas/Missouri you can use your truck. Compared with backpackers that saw the ends of their toothbrushes off to save weight, we haul cast iron grilles and woks that are fired with space shuttle engines. Stan brought stuff for his fajita burritos and I made up of kettle of navy beans and ham soup.

Later that morning two bus full of middle school kids pulled into the campground for a day outing so our solitude was broken but not without great joy. The group was supervised by a young lady teacher and her grandma who both had Carolina accents that flowed like honey from their lips. We asked all kind of questions just to hear her talk. When her grandma found out that we were there to climb in Kilmer Forest she told us a most amazing story. As a young girl before the Great Depression, her father took her on hikes thru the Poplar Cove valley to visit her grandfather. It seems that he was the hermit that had a cabin built around an old hollow Tulip tree. At the turn of century the loggers were harvesting without concern until he ran them off. I researched why these giants escaped the ax and no one could say for sure. But now we all know the Hermit of the Snow Bird Mountains is to be thanked for his protection of these great trees.

That evening Abe and John Routon arrived and we shared details of our days events waiting for Abe's daughter, Hope to arrive with the Author Frank and Photographer Cameron. They were there to do the article for "Outside" magazine and flew into Atlanta directly. They arrived with cameras and sleeping bags and Hope had her four cans of soup. Apparently she thought that Abe was supplying the provisions for the weekend but Abe and John's dinner menu consisted of Cheese-Wiz, chips and maybe a can of sardines. Not a healthy diet to say the least of feeding your hungry guests that have only had airplane food hours ago. By now the party had grown to a small group sharing stories and first impressions. Stan and I heated up the soup and tripled the amount with a whole bag of cooked rice. We have never been fond of the freeze dried tofu bags of mush while we are in the woods. Our main concern is to eat well and have fun, or have fun eating or something like that.

The next day the small group grew through out the day as more climbers arrived. In the morning we hiked into the forest to climb Ariel. That was the first time I saw a 200 foot rope in a tree with both ends barely touching the ground and still

more tree above the anchor limb. To my dismay I learned that rolling my ropes around in an old golf club bag works well in city climbs but we could have use pack mules to trek thru this forest. I passed around some of my rope sleeves for testing and got nothing but success stories. Even when I bonked Genevieve with one as I was removing my rope. Not the best way to greet someone but she took it in stride. But I will never forget the sound and the look on Abe's face when he was missed by inches of being hit in the helmet-less head by a full liter bottle of water. It wasn't the splash zone but really the strike zone. We all learned a powerful lesson that you should not let any one be under a tree with climbers aloft without your head gear.

By Saturday the party had really gotten started and was a small crowd. My favorite saddles were the ones NewTribe custom made for the Calvin Klein couple from New York. They were engaged and wanted to have matching harness's so they had them made of fake zebra skin and they looked Marvelous!

While I was taking a team of climbers up another old Tulip tree, Stan made a 40 mile drive into the next county for supplies for the big dinner and had to shop out the dry county that we were camped in. A kettle full of chili and burritos were shared and Dale made Dutch oven cornbread. Late that night gathered around the campfire I bought out four foil-wrapped packages and layed them on the hot coals. As I turned them every so often the mystery of the contents was revealed as the Kansas City style pork ribs that I had smoked started to smell. The answer to the question of when can we eat them is when you can't stand the aroma anymore then they are ready. Several of the men that were married to vegetarians were literally drooling at the smell of some good ol' pig meat done right with plenty of rubbed spices and hickory chips.

My climb on Saturday was as a leader and I took responsibility for two novice climbers. We are so glad that nothing dropped out of the tree and we used stopper knots. One man failed to let go and was going down way too quick. He had only one stopper knot that was near the end and that prevented him from a sudden contact with the ground. I used to think that the chain of stopper knots was unmanly but seeing how important they are we all should always error on the side of safety.

This trip is one of the best we have even had. The people that we met were as great as the forest. And if I ever get back there I am going way back over the ridge into the backcountry valley were the Hermits granddaughter told me there were really big trees hidden that are older than the ones on the Kilmer trail. Maybe even find an old cabin next to his hollow tree.

See you at the top,
Dan

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