

Ormand Family Activity

June 2009: Rose Canyon Camp Trip

The Central Baptist youth group didn't go to "Youth Kamp" this year - too expensive. In lieu of that, a couple of the families (well, the Ormands and the Sheehans) planned a group camping trip to Rose Canyon up on Mount Lemmon above Tucson.

Joe Sheehan reserved two group sites via the park service website. Since we didn't really know how many people were going (it was changing right up to the day before), and we didn't really know how many would fit on a campsite, three Sheehans went up on Thursday afternoon to check things out, and the rest of us went up on Friday afternoon. The McDuffie family went up Friday afternoon, but had to return on Saturday. The rest of us stayed through til Sunday afternoon.

Eventually, we all got up there, along with the groceries inside and the camp stuff tied on top of the van. It took a little bit of getting used to the altitude lugging the tents and the sleeping bags and the suitcases to the top of the hill where the second campsite was, and we were ready for dinner when the job was done. Oops! I got the hamburgers and hotdogs... but I forgot the buns! Well, a couple of loaves of bread will do until we can restock tomorrow. A great dinner, and S'mores afterwards.

Some of us hit the sack ("literally") at about 10:00. Others hung around the fire until later. Some, however, sat in one of the cars, drinking our stock of soda and playing cards and wearing down the battery with the radio and talking until 2:00 in the morning. How did I know? Well, in rough terms... I had no pad under my sleeping bag, and the granite rock of the Catalina Mountains is *hard*. I didn't sleep much that night.

But finally the night was over, and after a breakfast of muffins and granola bars, we set off to the lake. Rose Canyon Lake is the destination of choice at this level on the mountain road. It is a dammed up canyon that doesn't appear to have any water flowing out (over the dam spillage), because there doesn't appear to be any water flowing into it. All snowmelt, I guess. There's a nice footpath around the right side of the lake, so we went that way first, then climbed up a big rock, and looked at the dam.

Here's some of the people who went on this hike (left to right): Eli Sheehan, Gage Gerrard, Tristan Kent, Jerri, Faith (behind mom), Josh Kent, Rachael Charvoz, Charity, Kevin Schneider, Corinne Sheehan (her back, anyways), and Sara Sheehan. Joe and Jo Sheehan and their little girl Nellie, and Jeremiah and Stacy McDuffie and Aurora didn't go climbing around the lake.



Here's Corinne from the front. Pretty girl.

Turns out that Arizona Game and Fish was sponsoring a "Free Fishing" day, to promote outdoor sports in Arizona. You could borrow a rod and reel for free, and buy some bait, and try catching the trout with which the lake was stocked. Here's some of the group fishing. You can see some of the other fishermen who jammed the banks of the lake this day!



Here's another view from across the lake. Jeremiah and Stacy caught three trout and a few crawdads (or crayfish, depending on where you come from). Gage, Corinne, and Sara kept at it and came back quite sunburnt!

The others sat up further on the bank and watched.





We didn't see the fish caught, so the most significant sight we had was a family of ducks.

Of course, the little girls were delighted, and dragged Faith along to get pictures. Here's the closest they got.



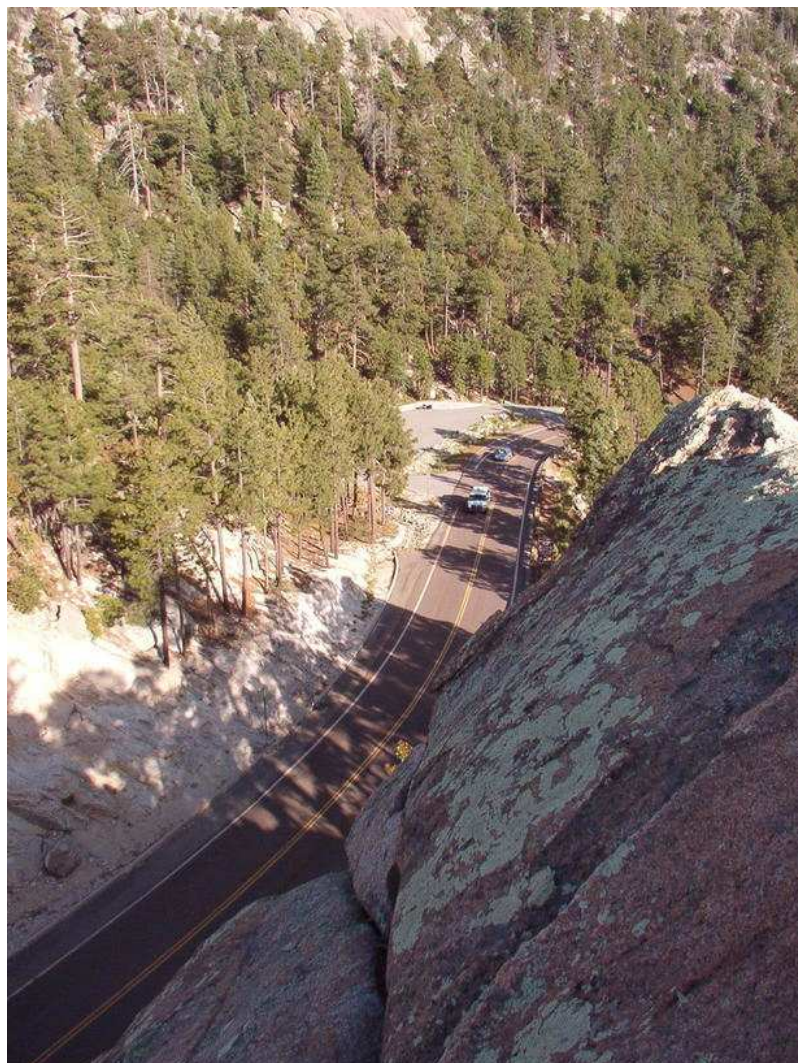
At the lake was a "camp store". I figured there would be one, and hoped to get some more bread. Unfortunately, the "camp store" at Rose Canyon Lake just had day snacks and fishbait. So when we got back to the camp, we took a trip to Summerhaven, which was perhaps fifteen minutes away further up the mountain. At the top of the mountain, in fact. There's a "general store" there, with a few proper grocery supplies, so I picked up some more loaves of bread and some hamburger and hotdog buns. Then we returned to camp and had a bite of lunch. Then, the more adventurous people set out to climb Mount Bigelow.

Mount Bigelow isn't as high as Mount Lemmon, but I guess it commands a better view of the valley, so there are several radio and television relay towers here, and a firespotter tower. In times past, you could climb to the top platform of the firespotter tower. Then they blocked access to the platform. Then they blocked the stairs halfway up. Now - surprise, surprise - they have the foot of the staircase sealed off with a chainlink fence and barbed wire. Oh, well, it's a great view, anyways, and not a terrible exertion - about a 30-minute hike. Uphill. There's also a colony of ladybugs up here; not as many as we've seen at other times, but still quite a few.



After descending again, we return to the camp to rest and play cards. Well, some of us rest and play cards. Others take advantage of the time before dinner to climb Barnum Rock.

Which is a fairly significant granite rock that looms above our campsite. Eli (with his cast), Gage, Kevin, Faith, and I get to the top after sliding around perilously on pine needles and sand. At the top, a ferocious wind is blowing - I have to hang onto my hat; pulling it down tighter isn't working. After looking out and around a bit, we find that just on the other side of the rock is the roadcut. So there is quite a cliff overlooking the Mount Lemmon Highway.



After all the climbing and hiking, I'm thinking I'm going to sleep well tonight, pad or no pad. Dinner is nice (a repeat of last night, but with real buns this time), and more S'mores, and Kevin playing his guitar. But then Eli is found to be suffering from an excruciating migraine - he bumped his head on the rock we were climbing, if that were the trigger for it. It got so bad his mom took him back to Tucson, driving down the curvy windy road in the dark.

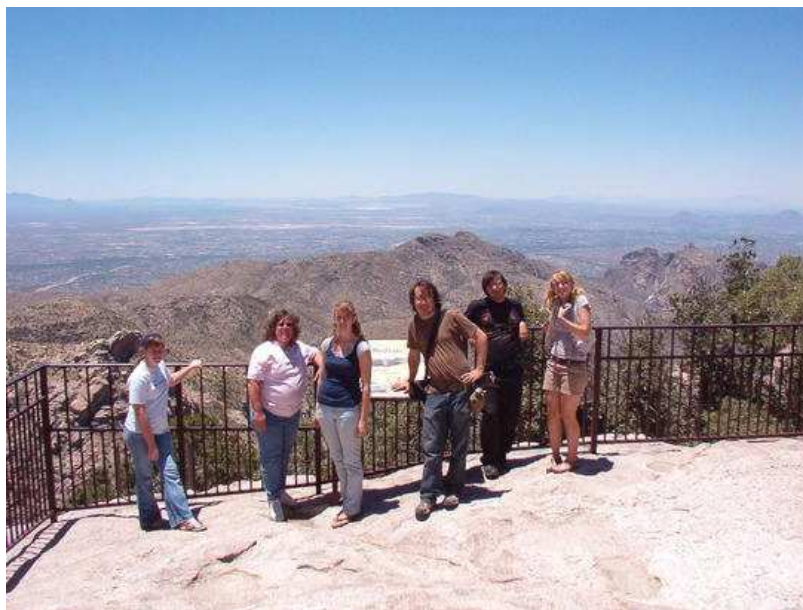
Hmm, I'm tired, and my legs hurt, but it isn't any more comfortable. Another sleepless night.

Next morning, we found that the other Sheehan kids had gone down, too. After a leisurely morning of breakfast and conversation, we broke camp, helped Mr. Sheehan pack up his car, tied all our stuff on the top of the van, and left our Rose Canyon Camp.

But we weren't finished! I wanted to visit the new ranger station bookshop at Palisades Station, maybe 8 miles further up the mountain. As we arrived at the station, another car pulled up behind and informed us that some rolls had fallen off

the top of our car. Sure enough, my "professional" lashup job had started to fail, and some of Kevin's bedroll pads were missing. I went carefully back to Rose Canyon, scanning the sides of the road, and then back to Palisades. Nothing. We got back in the car and went back down. Aha, there's one! We recovered one of the rolls, but didn't find the other one. Rats.

And we're still not done. It wouldn't be a Mount Lemmon trip if we didn't stop at Windy Point.



Here we are at the Windy Point overlook. After looking down in the valley and picking out features like the Air Force base and the old hangars at the airport, the kids haven't had enough climbing, so they cross the road and climb up to the dedication plaque, and stand there waving at us and looking about for a little while.

When they are finally tired of Mount Lemmon, we all get back in the van and finish our descent. All in all, it was a great time; everybody raved about it, and I hope to do it again... maybe as soon as October, to Cochise Stronghold!