

PAM IN PORTLAND

by Pamela Fry

If you read my last column you will remember that I climbed what felt like Mount Everest, where I was to help Dave McGill plant a great number of tiny trees. I have since been told it is a very minor mountain, situated near Pattersons Corners. Nevertheless - what it is - and what I felt like climbing it are two entirely different matters. So, once at the top, done in by heat, aching legs, and total dehydration, I was forced to apologize to Dave and start back. Down to the meadow where we had left the car.

Now Dave had given me a number of explicit instructions, especially emphasizing that I must keep the sun over my right shoulder. Great. Except every time I turned my head to check on the sun my infuriating black-fly bonnet would swivel around in the other direction, immediately blinding me. Dave had also suggested I use certain trees as sign-posts. But my heat-and-bonnet-impaired vision made each tree, upright or fallen, look exactly like any other tree. Very soon I had given up looking for landmarks. As for the sun, all I could be sure of was that it was still behind me. I simply continued to slither and bump my way downwards - down being the operative word. get to level ground and then, surely, I must hit the meadow. After all, it had ended where the trees began. So on I went. One more slither, one more bump and - Eureka! - I'd made it.

But joy was quickly followed by consternation. Facing me was a high, rusty barbed-wire fence, which certainly hadn't been there when Dave and I started our climb. Okay, okay, so don't panic. You've either gone too far to the right or too far to the left. Find out where the fence ends. I looked up and down it. No end in sight. So try left. Left went on and on. Retracing my steps, I tried right. Right went on and on. Stalemate.

I sat down heavily on an uncomfortable rock, feeling a sudden deep affinity with all those people lost in jungles and uncharted forests. Of course this was neither, and I wasn't exactly afraid. A sprained ankle was a more immediate threat than any encounter with Wild Beasts. (Although Dave told me later that wolves are quite common in that area.)

Luckily unaware of this, I was simply concerned with what to do next. I started again at that tiresome fence. If I could get to the other side, perhaps I could sight our meadow. I remembered a saggy bit which had looked like a possible exit. Clutching a tree for support, I got to my feet again and mercifully found the place within a few minutes. With a minimum of grace and a maximum of discomfort I clambered over it. I found myself in a rather soggy meadow with a belt of trees lying on the far side.

Weaving a little, I made for the trees. As I drew nearer I saw - or thought I saw - another meadow beyond. And there was a car - surely that was a car! - glimmering in the bright sunlight. In a sudden burst of energy I plunged toward it, plunge being the operative word, since I suddenly found myself ankle-deep in a marsh. Moving this-away and that-away, I quickly realized there was no point in going backward, forward or even sideways. But ahead of me, thank God, lay a substantial-looking tree-stump. I squelched my way toward it, nearly losing both moccasins in the process.

I reached it, I sat down, and finally admitted defeat. Not only was I incapable of moving another step, I was genuinely afraid of passing out from heat and dehydration. Keeling over, face forward into mud. A pretty thought. My unchanging escort of black flies still buzzed hopefully around me, but I nevertheless tore off my anorak. I remembered Dave had told me to shout if I got into trouble. I made the effort, but all that came out were a few ineffective croaks. Oh well. Nothing more I could do. At least there were several hours of daylight left.

I sat there, in swamp-bound apathy, for what must have been about ten minutes. Or was it ten hours? Time becomes very relative on such occasions. The, marvellously, miraculously, I heard Dave's voice. Sounding very close.

Life and energy returned, and I managed to shout back.

"Where the hell are you?" Dave bellowed.

"In a swamp," I croaked

"How the hell did you get there?"

"I don't know."

Within a few minutes he came crashing through the trees and - literally dragged me onto dry ground.

It seems he had become worried about me shortly after my departure, and had been trying to find me for ages, going all the way back to the meadow and even circling down to the highway. Of course, what I had done was gone too far to the right, landing up on his neighbour's property. If only I had continued to go left along the fence.....

But never mind all that. Now, even with Dave's strong hand to haul me along, I had to make frequent recourse to what he still refers to as "the leaners." Every few yards or so I was forced to prop myself against the nearest vertical object before I could again move on.

Well, I suppose the most rewarding aspect of any tough experience (like going to the dentist) is that it feels so good when it stops. Sitting in the car, divested of my abominable bonnet, and refreshed by large draughts of cold water, I experienced total happiness. Lovely car, lovely world, lovely everything!

Within the hour, all became lovelier. We arrived at Pat and Dick Merrick's Stone Farm Studio, where we had been invited to come after the completion of our (?) tree planting. The Merricks are the kind of people who can take anything in their stride. They did not even comment on my extraordinary appearance. I stepped out of my disgusting moccasins, entered their house, and was instantly provided with large quantities of food, drink, and (amused) sympathy.

There is a postscript to this cautionary tale. ("If you go out in the woods today you're sure of a big surprise!") When I got up the next day I was amazed to discover that I wasn't suffering from any bruises or aching muscles. Nor did I have a single black fly bite.

So my much-hated bonnet had nobly performed its duty after all!

COMING EVENTS OCTOBER '85

- 5 County Fire Prevention Parade begins 2 p.m. Delta FIREFIGHTERS Dance - Delta Music by "Touch of Country"
Temperance Lake Pony Club Benefit Gymkhana for Humane Society at Elizabeth Township Fair Grounds.
Skate & Ski Exchange 10 a.m. - noon. Sweets Corners Public School.
- 7 Rideau Lakes Horticultural Society meet Newboro Municipal Hall at 8 p.m. Special speaker will be Ben Zegger of Hillside Gardens, Perth. Display will be pumpkin and arrangement of dried wild plants. New members welcome.
- 9 R.D.H.S. PARENTS' NIGHT
- 10 Chaffey's Lock WI will be at home of Lola Timpany at 7 p.m. Mrs. Judy Snider will speak on her work as a pharmacist. Members please remember draw items for euchre parties and used postage stamps.
- 12 Seeley's Bay Fire Dept. Harvest Dance Dance to "Smitty's Band and enjoy a Ham Supper at 12 midnight.
- 13 Firefighters Church Service at Delta United Church. Line-up at Fire Hall at 9 a.m.
- 14 **THANKSGIVING**
- 18 St. Barnaby's CWL Dance at the Colonnade Dance Hall
- 21 CLOSING DAY FOR NOMINATIONS FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.
- 23 Public Meeting - Delta Residents re Water Abatement program
- 23 **Lantern Deadline** - We don't mean to be nasty...but NO MATERIAL will be accepted AFTER DEADLINE unless by previous arrangement. If your organization meets close to the deadline, drop us hi-lights for inclusion before the deadline. Our VOLUNTEER typists deserve their week-ends too!
- 25 Elgin Softball Assoc. Halloween Dance at RDHS
- 26 Lyndhurst Arts & Crafts Sale at Conservation Hall
- HALLOWEEN DANCES**
Lyndhurst Legion
Portland Legion
Delta Fire Dept.
- 26 **Last Day of Daylight Saving Time**
- 27 Clocks BACK one hour
- 29 LANTERN GOES TO PRESS
- 31 HALLOWEEN Drive Carefully-watch out for Withches and Hobgoblins!

LATE ENTRY

- Oct. 19 FORFAR YARD & BAKE SALE- Forfar Community Centre: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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