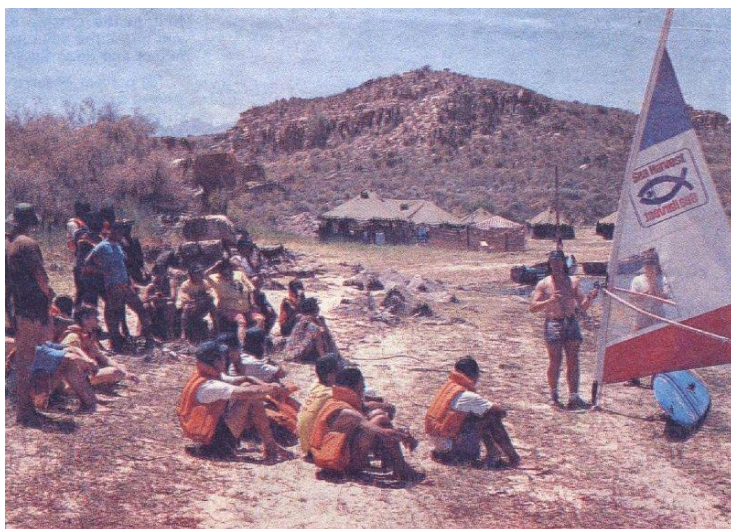
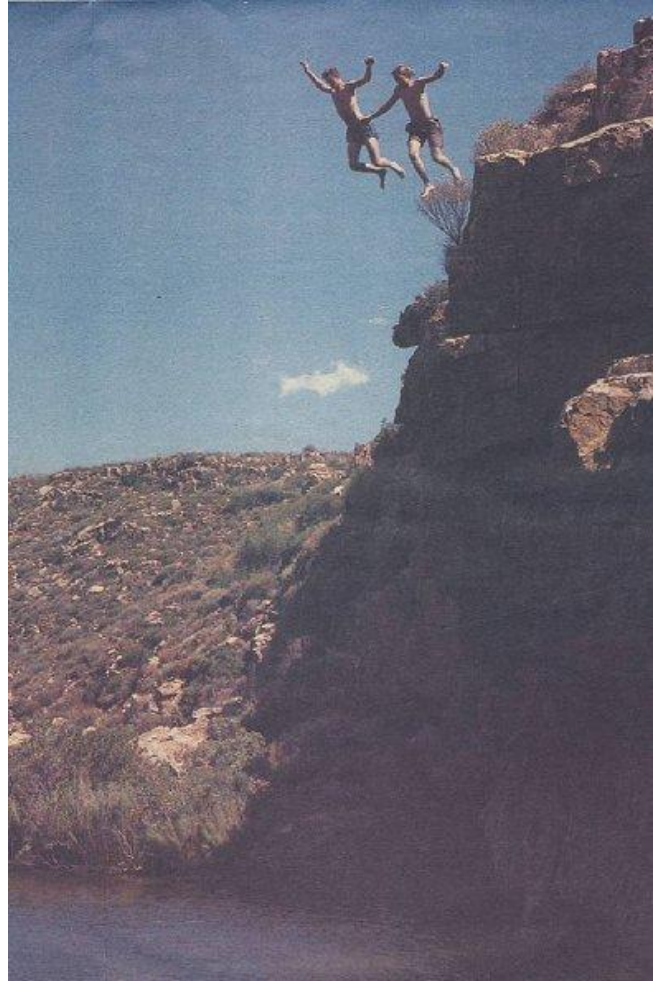


Report on the 11th Senior Scout Adventure 1994

PATROL 34 had just spent their third night in the Cederberg Wilderness, camped at Kromrivier, when Roger woke to find a puffadder making itself comfortable beside him. He leapt up yelling, waking everyone else in the tent. Anyone with a few aches from horse riding for the first time the day before, or from their hikes over the hard-baked Cederberg terrain didn't have much time to lie around ruminating on their woes. They made a hasty retreat, arguing about what to do. They were moving on to a new base that day, but another Patrol would be arriving to stay the next night, and a sleeping snake might prove a bit too much of a surprise to leave for them. After a few lessons in snake psychology they managed to get rid of their unexpected visitor, and start on their way to the next base on their itinerary, Marksmanship. There followed an afternoon shooting handguns at tin gongs, 0,22s at silhouette targets, and shotguns at clay pigeons. Afterwards they made camp at Sanddrif, and went on to an evening talk and slide show on the night sky at the nearby observatory, all in a day's adventuring. Serious adventuring.

Patrol 34, made up from lads from Scout Troops in Brackenfell and Mossel Bay, was one of 48 patrols that took part in the 11th Senior Scout Adventure in December. An event held every two years, it involved nearly 500 Scouts between the ages of 14 and 18 spending 12 days moving around 21 different bases situated all over the Cederberg. At each of the bases, the Scouts had the opportunity to take part in one of a range of activities, which included not only familiar Scouting skills like Dutch oven cooking and survival, sports such as archery and canoeing, but such thrills and spills as paintball games, assault courses, water skiing and flying. That such a dynamic event could have been realised is tribute to the quiet efficiency and bold vision of the Scout organisation. In these days of brazen marketing and survival by competition, the Movement does not seek much publicity or aggressively advertise its aims and beliefs, yet the quality of the opportunities it offers, the breadth of its appeal, and the lasting effect it has on those it touches all speak of a very real value.



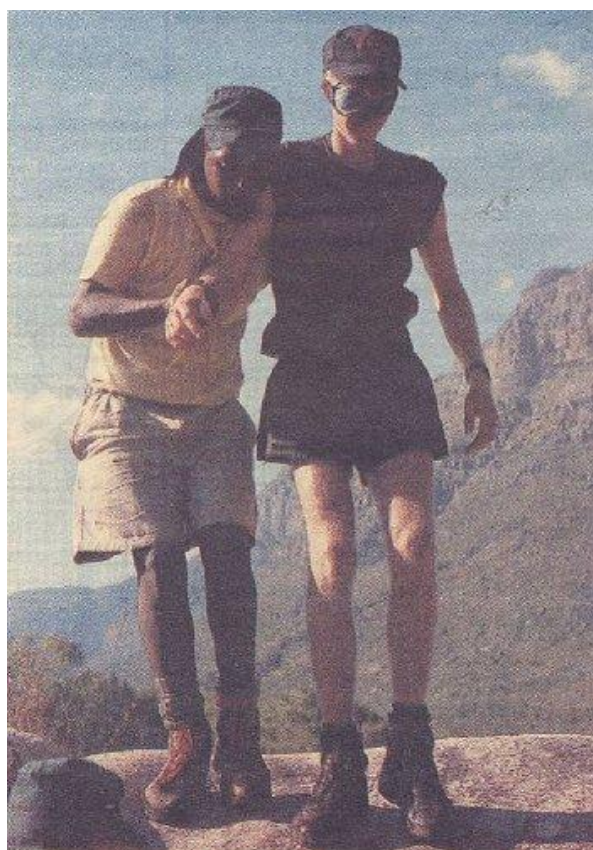
Few can honestly find much to say against Scouting - the most damning criticism one will hear is that "it wasn't for me". With 150 older Scouts and leaders volunteering their time to run the bases or the various components of the adventure, and various sponsorships and trusts giving the event a financial leg-up, the self-perpetuating enthusiasm and inherent worthiness of Scouting prove the catalysts to the adventure's popularity. Standing contemplating the imposing Cederberg mountains, at once so jaggedly harsh and serene, the only movement I could see was a few figures along a track. A Patrol on the move, they came passed smiling through grimy faces, each wearing a battered green

Scout cap at a rakish angle against the sun. "Hi guys, where have you come from?" A couple of browned arms pointed upwards. "Sneeuberg. The mountaineering base. On our way to HQ." "Doing OK?" "Pete

has got blisters. We've only had packet soup to eat all day. But yes." Weary Pete looked up from behind a tilted water bottle and grinned. He put down the water bottle. "We're doing the treasure diving tomorrow," he announced confidently, "and there's a food pick up at HQ on the way through." As we spoke one of the adventure trucks came bouncing along the road followed by a cape of orange dust. The back was full of rucksacks and piled bodies. As they slowed down the same questions I had asked were exchanged. This bunch were on their way up to Clanwilliam to go canoeing. "Having fun?" I asked them as well. Grubby T-shirts being used to shade dozing faces were lifted up. "Too right."

Sticking out one long hike over the hot Cederberg terrain would normally be more than enough to sort out the men from the boys; 12 days together as one patrol, carrying all their own food and equipment, and finding their way from one base to the next, was doing some rigorous examination. Where everyone is sharing in the tough times as well as the thrills, divisions of upbringing and background, which society so readily brings to the fore in other situations their youngsters commonly face, become a lot less apparent. Here were lads from all over the country, cities, farms, townships and rural areas, of different colours, languages and lives, equalised by a mountain, a long walk, or a shared adventure.

Each Patrol followed a careful organised itinerary, ensuring that they were able to get to as wide a selection of activities as possible. After their evening star-gazing Patrol 34 spent the next day diving for cold drink cans with air provided through tubes by a compressor, an experience not dissimilar to scuba diving. Later in the week they were due to go rock-climbing, to a base where they would make a small transistor radio, and to fly in tiny two-seater trainer aircraft from the Clanwilliam airstrip. After a long-anticipated braai at the Water Activities base, the patrol had a day trying parasailing, windsurfing, water skiing and sailing. You began to get the feeling that from all the new experiences to be retold back home, there were going to be some parents just as exhausted as the boys. At the water activities base the bunch from Brackenfell met a patrol of mentally handicapped Scouts from Mitchells Plain.



Accompanied by four leaders, their handicaps were not such as to prevent them from fully taking part in the Adventure programme, and they were obviously having a wonderful time doing it. Some of the organisers had had reservations about their ability to cope, but the Scouts had always shown themselves eager, and even in some moments of anxiousness, like having to spend a night up on the mountains between bases, able to deal with all the challenges they faced.

For Patrol 34, it was an immediate introduction to one of the adventure's more interesting activities, which they were to encounter a couple of days later. Entitled "Handicapped Awareness", it was intended to give the Scouts a chance to realise just what having a handicap can involve. The Scouts were put in pairs, with one "handicapped" by having his leg in a cast and the other blindfolded. They then had to get each other around an obstacle course which involved gates, rivers, and tall rocks.

The switch from what many expected to be a boring lecture into a highly practical problem highlighted not only the difficulties of disabilities, but also the resourcefulness involved, as they discovered that though some tasks seem daunting, they can still be done. It was a message

at the heart of the whole adventure: that behind its appealing itinerary, it allows its participants to find themselves succeeding in the challenges they encounter.

The real, raw enthusiasm of the boys all around the adventure, whether cooking a three-course meal in Dutch ovens, rasping along a jeep track on a mountain bike, or stepping tingling from an aeroplane flight, was hiding little.