

MCM FIRST PERSON

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I joined the MCM in the late 80's or early 90's. At the time, anyone wanting to join had to have a sponsor who would vouch for the new member. Renata Byrd sponsored me. I asked how to join while on her hike at Patapsco Park and she signed me up before we started off. I have been active, off and on, since then. There was a period when I hiked alone. This was due to so many weekend hikes being so fast paced. I like to ramble along; looking around, watching critters and trying to identify plants. This is not possible to do when moving at 3 mph. I have since discovered the Leisure Group and have been hiking with them regularly since last September. It's a great way to socialize and meet people from all walks of life while getting some exercise and fresh air. Nature nurtures too, expelling any bad mood, worry or ill feeling. It's hard to pick out one memorable adventure as there have been so many, but this one really stands out.

Once upon a time there was a brilliant leader named Ted Sanderson. He led both hikes and canoe trips. I signed up for a two-day canoe trip on the Eastern Shore and received a bulky information packet in the mail with all instructions. Ted was very thorough and methodical in planning all his trips. I and my canoe partner arrived late at the campground on Friday, unloaded and set up tents. These were the days of commissary, and meals were provided. There wasn't much else to do but turn in. It promised to be a glorious spring weekend with Saturday starting out clear and pleasant. We all loaded the cars and headed out to the put-in point of the river. I have forgotten the name but it is in the vicinity of Shad's Landing.

It was clear paddling for a while and then we hit an obstruction. Oh well, we just worked around it and soldiered on. Then there was another one, and another one, and another one! We began to portage more than we paddled. There must have been a terrific storm to cause so many blow-downs and strainers. The current was barely there and combined with all the trees, both standing and otherwise, and it was difficult to follow at times. As we continued downriver, walking as much as floating, the sun made its transit across the sky, then began its descent in the west. Still we slogged on, getting wetter, muddier and increasingly more frustrated. As the sun vanished, the moon rose in a clear but dark sky. Still we portaged on in a swamp masquerading as a river. At long last, we spotted a road bridge and one by one the canoes hauled out at a narrow take-out path. We

had finally reached the halfway point and our lunch spot but this turned out to be the end.

We all gathered along the road, wet and muddy, tired and hungry and wondering what now. Unfortunately, not everyone was accounted for. One person was missing. He was kayaking alone and a diabetic. His girlfriend was in a panic that he did not have his supplies with him and he was lying unconscious or dead somewhere in the dark. While she was being reassured and comforted, someone called search and rescue and a truck arrived towing an enormous power boat that just about covered the width of this narrow country road. There was no way something this big was going to get into such a narrow, shallow creek even without the strainers. In addition, a helicopter flew over with an erratic searchlight that was more like a Hollywood gala opening than a methodical sweep of the search area. In the end, Ted and his co-leader took a flashlight and walked upstream calling for the missing kayaker while the search team quietly retreated. They found him safe and well supplied with insulin. He had paddled up a backwater in the dark; decided he was lost and found a dry spot to camp out until daylight.

Meanwhile, the drivers managed to find lifts back to the cars while the rest of us sat on upturned canoes and waited for their return. Back at camp there was a run on the showers and after getting clean and dry, we settled down to a hot meal, conversation and a well deserved sleep. Ted had been his usual thorough self and had checked river conditions with the local ranger who stated that everything was fine. We found out the hard way that they were anything but fine. After breakfast Sunday morning, my partner informed me he had had enough and we were leaving. I was disappointed but was compelled to go along with his decision. I found out later that the Sunday paddle was perfection. Portage free all the way. Oh well, stuff happens. Even though this one day was such a fiasco, no one was hurt and Ted remained a magnificent and dependable leader. He was an interesting character and a great guy.