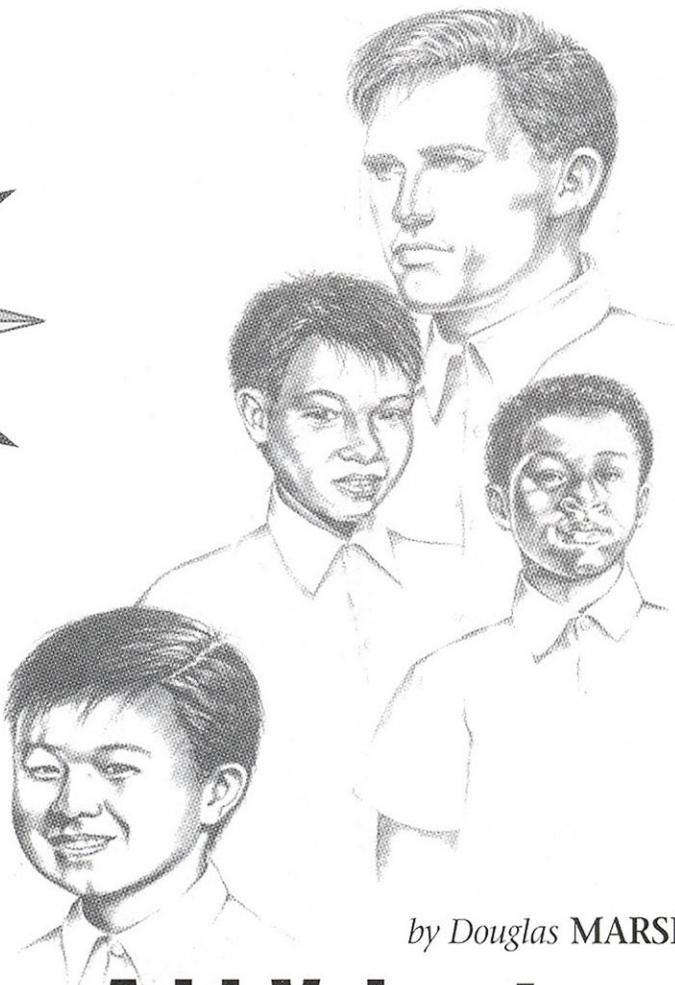


*Camping is a means
to an end —
to separate boys from
their routine so they
can hear from God.*



by Douglas MARSH

Does Camping Add Value to These Boys Lives?

As a Royal Rangers missionary, I get this question. "After all," some reason, "many boys overseas live in houses that are little better than tents. Their moms cook on open fires, they use an outhouse, and they bathe in a pond." How does camping add value to the lives of boys in developing nations?

The heart of the question goes deeper, "Are we evangelizing boys in these conditions with the right methods?" The answer is, "Yes!" Camping is a means to an end. It appeals to skilled and non-skilled campers alike, regardless of how they arrive at that experience. Some learn because their fathers are recreational outdoorsmen, others learn from necessity.

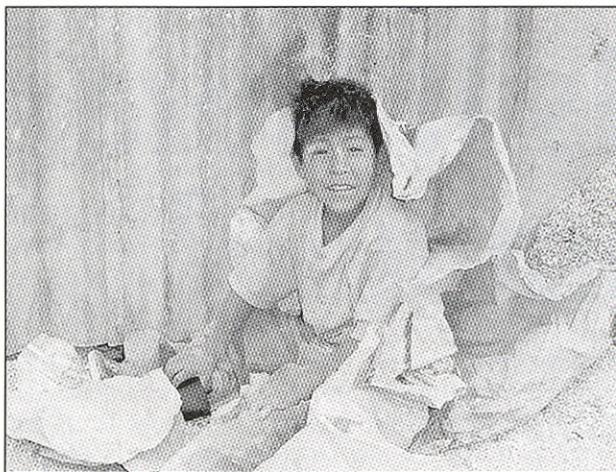
Having been born and raised in third world nations

and having ministered in that context my entire life, I can attest that Royal Rangers camping, with some simple modifications, is an effective evangelism tool. Experiences from Bolivia, South America, where we used Royal Rangers to reach the poorest of the poor, illustrate why camping is attractive to boys.

BOYS EVERYWHERE NEED ADVENTURE

In camps I've led in Bolivia, I've hiked with boys whose parents could only afford to provide their sons with sandals made of old rubber tires. These boys were dressed in holey handspun wool hand-me-downs. Did they enjoy the adventure? Absolutely!

They hustled to reach the top of the mountain first.



Upon arriving, they eagerly collected fuel for the fire, participated in knot-tying relays, and begged to be first to rappel. As night approached, the excitement of sleeping in the army green A-frame tents the military had loaned us was evident. The boys were away from home and thriving on the fun. Camping is a means to an end, and it delivers adventure regardless of mom and dad's credit score (if they have one at all!).

BOYS EVERYWHERE NEED FRIENDS

As I observed the boys working together to set up their patrol sites, they learned to communicate, solve problems, and, yes, resolve arguments. They assumed responsibilities for themselves and helped each other. In the process, I could tell they were becoming good friends.

Some of the boys' homes were in the isolated shadows of the Andes Mountain peaks, where they have few if any Christian friends. Most of their peers are steeped in animism. What these boys most needed at camp is a best friend. That tie will draw them back to future camps. Royal Rangers is a ministry that builds relationships among boys who love God. In a world where men of all economic levels are bankrupt in the friendship department, it is vital that today's boys learn to build relationships.

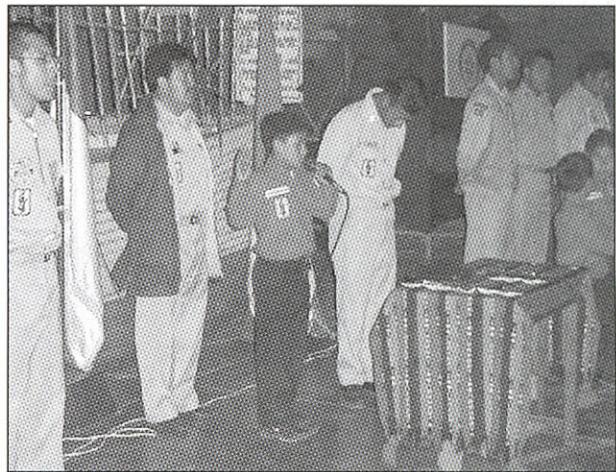
BOYS EVERYWHERE NEED INSTRUCTION

The Bolivian Rangers were sitting in a large circle. Most came from rural homes approximately 13,000 feet above sea level. Since they live above the tree line, all these boys have a common chore at home. They regularly collect cow pies and pile them like we do fire wood. Once dried by the sun, mom can use them to fire up the outdoor mud-dome oven and bake some tasty bread.

Today, however, the fire craft instructor, Octavio Baldivieso, would allow them to use eucalyptus wood, a fuel they rarely got to burn. As the class drew to a close, Octavio related the three ingredients of a fire to the work of the Holy Spirit. "Your life, your body, and your mind

is like this wood" he explained. "You must choose how it is consumed. Either you allow the Holy Spirit to burn away impurities and use you for his good pleasure, or you will burn for eternity in hell. The choice is life or death; choose life!"

It is true. These boys knew how to start fires. But they never paid closer attention to a teaching on the power of God at work in their lives as they did that day! Camping is a means to build boys' moral-spiritual character, regardless whether their mom cooks dinner over cow pies or a gas stove.



BOYS EVERYWHERE NEED GOD

Night had fallen and the campfire was leaping high. The boys sang, laughed, and told stories. Finally, Herman Lima, the evening speaker, delivered a powerful salvation appeal. Hands started to go up as he used his text to "command boys everywhere to repent." They came forward with tear-filled eyes. Before long, everyone was recommitting their lives to Christ.

Men and boys tarried in prayer and sang praises with their arms around each other's shoulders. These are defining moments in boys' lives. They are saved, called to ministry, and baptized in the Holy Spirit. Camping is a means to an end—to separate boys from their routine so they can hear from God. Often the poorest of the population are first to recognize their spiritual poverty and embrace the riches offered in God through Christ.

Truthfully, our poorest churches cannot afford to go without a camping ministry like Royal Rangers. Boys thrive on adventure. When churches ministering in economically depressed areas provide boys an exciting ministry like Royal Rangers, they place themselves at a huge Kingdom advantage. It will draw families, and it will build future leaders. Boys will be saved!

Yes, Rangers camping does add value to *these* boys, and *these* boys add value to the church. Like you, I believe Royal Rangers is the right tool to reach, teach, and keep boys for Jesus Christ—even in developing nations.