



# CAMPFIRE ENCOUNTER

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WITH HATCHETS DRAWN five drunken teenagers headed toward our camp. Through the chilly darkness we could hear them say, "Before we leave, let's cut their tents down."

But what seemed like a tragic ending for an overnight camp of Royal Rangers and commanders was to become a great experience in soul winning.

Earlier that evening the night air was chilled as it whipped off Cheaha Mountain, highest peak in Alabama. We could look up through the huge pines and see the stars twinkling in the sky. In the distance the sparkling waters of a brook tumbled through the rocks.

You could not ask for a more beautiful evening and a more gorgeous setting for the final camp of a section-wide Royal Rangers leadership training course which had been in progress for over four months.

After supper the group hiked to the council fire area. Songs, stunts, and jokes were a part of the council fire service; however, for the final portion District Commander George Walters challenged our hearts with the thought that God calls special people to do a special job.

Then we returned to the campsite, not realizing what was in store for us during the next four hours.

The camp commander yelled, "Lights out," and we all began to settle down for the night. About this time a carload of teenage boys arrived and began to set up their tents about 30 feet from ours. It did not take us long to realize that these boys were already under the influence of alcohol. Boisterous conversation was mixed with raw profanity as they passed their bottles from one to the other. By 1 a.m. we had hoped that their noise would diminish, but instead they became louder and louder.

Eventually we went over and asked if they would be kind enough to quiet down so our camp might get some needed rest; however, they resented this, and their loud, boisterous disturbance continued.

We called the sheriff. The boys were questioned and asked to calm down and retire. While the officers were on the scene, they discovered some beer hidden in the bushes and confiscated it.

As soon as the sheriff left, the boys became very enraged at us. Through the darkness we could hear their angry voices declaring, "We will leave but before we do, we will wreck their camp." As we stood in the shadows we could see five boys approaching our camp with hatchets in hand.

With prayerful hearts, some of the leaders began to talk with them.

After about 15-20 minutes of tense conversation, we invited the boys to join us at our campfire. By this time it was 2:30 a.m. As we served them coffee and soft drinks the tense atmosphere began to break. Then the Holy Spirit whispered to our hearts, "Begin to witness to the boys about their need of a Saviour." With the knowledge of counseling and personal soul winning we had acquired in the Royal Rangers Leadership