

Alligators watched from the banks as Royal Rangers leaders canoed through the Okefenokee.

One night we discovered that not all canoists who venture into the Okefenokee are this careful. We were camped on an island, and the sun had gone down, when a couple of young strangers appeared. They said they had tarried behind the other canoes in their party to do some fishing, and when they tried to catch up they were unable to do so. Eventually they lost their way in the swamp and they felt very fortunate to have found our party on this island.

These boys were hungry, having eaten nothing since breakfast. They had no food or camp supplies and were very grateful for the warm grub and shelter they found among the Royal Rangers.

At 3 a.m. we were awakened by the approach of two men from the National Park Service. They were out searching the dark swamp for two lost boys. Of course, they were relieved to find the boys safe and well in our camp, but gave them a very stern lecture on the importance of following instructions and staying with their party.

The incident seemed to illustrate how important good training is in

Royal Rangers work. Leaders who assume the responsibility of taking a group of boys on a camp-out or a canoe expedition need to be prepared. That's why the national office has organized such events as national training camps, training trails, canoe expeditions, and camporamas. Some things can't be learned from books, but only by doing.

In a national training camp, for example, the men live in tents, cook their own food, and do everything they expect boys to do on a camp-out. They build fires, do patrol duty, keep the campsite clean, etc. It's a rigorous schedule with very strict discipline. The men learn to see the situation through a boy's eyes. They learn how to lead by first learning how to follow.

Daytime classes are held in first aid, ropecraft, compass reading, safety, cooking, and other campcraft subjects. The men have study sessions on winning boys to Christ and counseling boys with problems.

At night there are impressive council fires which always end with an inspirational talk and a time of prayer.

One night a model outpost meet-

ing is presented. Each man is required to complete a Bible lesson and bring it to the session just the way the boys do at the local outpost meetings. Each phase is enacted so the men learn the proper way to conduct a meeting.

Another night they actually go on an overnight backpacking camp-out by patrols.

My Okefenokee experience impressed me with the thorough manner in which Royal Rangers leaders are trained, and reminded me of the importance of proper training in every field of service. Those who wish to be leaders need to get ready. Whether they expect to be preachers, teachers, singers, youth leaders, whatever the field of ministry, they need to prepare themselves.

God's service deserves the best we can offer. Time is too precious to waste on ill-prepared efforts, and the results of poorly planned activities can only be disappointing, if not disastrous.

Each of us will have precious opportunities to serve the Lord. Will we be ready to make the most of them?

—r.c.c.

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WE BELIEVE . . .

. . . the Bible is the inspired and only infallible and authoritative Word of God.

. . . there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

. . . in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, in His personal future return to this earth in power and glory to rule a thousand years.

. . . in the Blessed Hope—the rapture of the Church at Christ's coming.

. . . the only means of being cleansed from sin is through repentance and faith in the precious blood of Christ.

. . . regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for personal salvation.

. . . the redemptive work of Christ on the cross provides healing of the human body in answer to believing prayer.

. . . the baptism of the Holy Spirit, according to Acts 2:4, is given to believers who ask for it.

. . . in the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a holy life.

. . . in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost, the one to everlasting life and the other to everlasting damnation.