

Report by Mark Anderson and his 11-year old son Jonathan, on their attendance at the ALERT Cadet High Adventure Camp – June 2006

Neither rain, nor snow, nor dark of night will keep us from our appointed task. The post office? No, the ALERT Colorado High Adventure Camp held on a private 80,000-acre ranch in San Luis, CO., June 26- July 1. What was the appointed task? For the heart's of the sons to be drawn to their fathers, and each individual to grow in the Lord. Morning wisdom searches from II Timothy 2:19-26 and an evening study in the book Created For Work by Bob Schultz provided us with spiritual nourishment for the day.

Physical nourishment followed our morning wisdom search. Kneeling down next to our cook stove, my son encouraged me to quickly turn our burning sausage. You can imagine his thoughts when he saw the prongs of our plastic fork melt as I attempted to turn the sausage. Rule #3: Carry lightweight metal cooking utensils. Even before we cooked our first meal, Jonathan and I learned Rules 1 and 2 as we struggled to hike following a severe thunderstorm that pelted us with stinging hail and left us and our already overloaded packs completely soaked. Rule #1: Pack light with everything you want to keep dry in zip lock bags. Rule #2: Put your rain gear on before it starts to rain. Of the eight family units represented, four had never backpacked before and were quickly tallying up some rules of their own.

Major Farr and his assistants Bryce Reckner and Michael Butler joined by other experienced packers came to our aid sharing equipment, helping to organize, and giving needed advice. Whatever doubts they had about our group were never verbalized, but instead, we heard words of encouragement. Spirits were lifted on day 2 as we completed a work project at the base camp in the morning and had a less eventful three-mile hike in the afternoon.

A spirit of camaraderie and determination developed as the group grew together as a team and worked to overcome the obstacles of legal blindness, childhood breathing difficulties, altitude sickness, muscle cramps, and sheer exhaustion to complete a grueling climb up to 11,600 feet on day three and a climb to the 14,100 foot summit of Mt. Culebra on day 4. While not everyone made it to the top of Mt. Culebra, both the experienced and inexperienced contributed to individuals reaching their own personal "summit". Whether it was fathers encouraging sons, sons encouraging fathers, experienced hikers the inexperienced or vice versa, everyone contributed to carry out the ALERT motto "Strong to Overcome".

The last day and a half was less strenuous and more relaxed. We said our goodbyes and left with a mountain of memories and another one of Mrs. Farr's delicious meals in the form of a box lunch.

Oh, yes, guess who cooked the sausage for the group at our last meal?