

# Chapter 3

By now it was June and just the right time of year to try our hand at camping. June in the Illinois/Wisconsin area is a very lovely season, but it can be very unpredictable. One day can be hot and sunny; the next day cold and blustery. We figured if we packed enough clothes to cover three seasons of the year - spring, summer and fall, we should be okay. We were pretty sure it wasn't going to snow.

Out of the closet came our boots, medium weight jackets, light weight jackets, shorts, jeans, heavy sox, sneakers, thongs (the shoe kind; thong bathing suits were as yet not heard of - at least not in our circle of friends), tee shirts, sweatshirts and underwear. Being a woman I also needed my make-up, curling iron, hair dryer, perfume, deodorant, hair spray, hair clips and all manner of manicuring paraphernalia. I would not go down in history as a tacky camper! And just to while away our time in case we got bored, we couldn't forget a deck of cards, several board games, books, magazines and my crochet work. I began to wonder if Admiral Byrd had as much equipment with him when he made his way to the South Pole.

Now a true blue, dyed in the wool camper does not use suitcases. Nope. That's just too sissy. We old-timers use cardboard boxes and brown paper bags. This was actually a cop-out because we didn't own any suitcases and it was a perfect way to explain - if any-

## And You Call This a Vacation?

one asked us - why we were using bags and boxes. Besides, they hold more and are easier to pack in a car or trunk. See how good that sounded? Our camping philosophy was working already.

But did we have any cardboard boxes? Uh, no, but these would be a lot easier to get. The supermarkets were giving them away.

### TIME OUT.

We headed for the nearest supermarket but that was okay as we needed provisions anyway. (Provisions = camper talk for groceries.) Into the store we went.

I reminded Hubby that this was supposed to be relaxing for me as well, so there was to be no involved cooking of meals. We would keep it simple - just pancakes and bacon, scrambled eggs and toast, hot dogs, hamburgers, etc. You know, simple.

Of course, once inside the store and moving down the aisles we discovered we would need some syrup for the pancakes, some salt and pepper in those cutesy little throw away containers and maybe a little butter for the toast. Oh yes, we dare not forget the ketchup, mustard, onions and relish for the hot dogs, and buns, and chips, and pork and beans and maybe some cookies and fruit. Then there was lunch. Uh-oh. Don't forget the coffee - have to have coffee cooked over the evening campfire. I know we had a stove, but what's camping without an evening campfire? Oh boy - pack the wood and the matches next. And maybe an axe to chop the firewood. Groannnnnn.

This led us to realize we needed cookware necessary to cook all these simple, plebian meals that were going to make my camping trips so relaxing. One more trip to the camping supply warehouse was needed. My knees were beginning to shake. It was at this point I realized maybe "smart little wifey" should have kept her big mouth shut when camping was suggested as a solution to Hubby's boredom. It would have been simpler to buy him a tiny model car to assemble. Unfortunately, I was at another 'point of no return'. Once a runaway truck starts going downhill without brakes, there is no stopping it. Hubby definitely qualified as a runaway.

So okay. We had the tent to sleep in, the bed to sleep on, clothes

for almost every season and food for every meal. What could we have possibly forgotten? The list went on. A first aid kit, a saw, assorted car tools in case of a breakdown, extra water and on and on and on. Ohhhhhhh. This was starting to get out of hand. Even if we were to get all of this equipment into the car, would there be two seats left for us?

Here is where our first very slight disagreement began. The subject of a first-aid kit came up. Hubby's idea of a first aid kit consisted of a bottle of aspirin and two band-aids. I reminded him of all the other medicines and supplies we might possibly need while on the road (especially since he had just packed an axe and a saw), and he said it would be simpler and faster if he just ripped the medicine chest out of the bathroom wall and mounted it on the side of the car. While this struck me as a rather ingenious idea, it didn't seem too, too practical. In the end, we did manage to compromise and packed a rather modest but complete first aid kit.

Finally, the great 'first camping trip' day dawned; 'ta-da' as they used to say somewhere. Time to pack up the car. We proceeded to put our little bundles of gathered belongings in the trunk and the entire back seat. At last we had loaded up the car and were ready to go. As we slowly let out a sigh of relief and turned, there sat the tent on the grass. Noooooooooo problem. Hubby heaved that big box - (yes it was still in the box and as yet we had not examined it. Were we naive or what?) up onto the top of the car and strapped it down with bungee cords. We were finally ready to leave.

It didn't look like rain so we felt pretty smug about the whole thing. Off we went for two whole days of fun. Yes, this was just going to be a weekend jaunt, sort of a practice run you might say. After all, Hubby might find out he hated camping — I know I was beginning to. Honest, when I was a kid, I didn't remember any of this. All I ever packed back then were my comic books and my bathing suit; my Mom did everything else. When my folks did all the work, I had a much better time. Suddenly, this wasn't a whole lot of fun anymore.

All in all, that first weekend started out pretty good. After packing everything else, we even fit inside the car. However, it began to get more interesting as the weekend progressed.