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Warren's Wigwam
photo provided by Bob Warren



STUDEBAKER SAN ANTONIO

IT'S MAY

– time to think about this year's vacation. Shall it be a cruise, a trip to the mountains, the beach, to Disney World??

Fifty years ago when our five children were young, such elaborate plans were almost out of the question for us. The

word "vacation" usually meant going to visit relatives. Oh, we did manage to stretch our budget one year with a trip to Disneyland, but long drives, eating out and "moteling" with five kids was not much fun. So, around our house, when vacation was mentioned, the cry was, "Let's go camping!"

Camping comes in all forms – from nothing but a campfire in the woods and sleeping under the stars to staying in a deluxe motor home in a fancy RV park. As for us, we started with a tent, and, over the years, worked our way up to a not-too-fancy motor home.

Tenting can be fun, funny or none of the above. One of our "funny" experiences came on a vacation to Possum Kingdom Lake. My in-laws, "Mamma and Granddad Bolin," were in a tent near us. In the wee hours of a bright moonlight night an armadillo found its way into the Bolin

tent, rudely awaking the sleeping couple by rooting around and walking all over them. Now, armadillos are probably harmless, but they do have long, sharp claws. As Granddad tried to shoo this particular animal out of the tent, the armadillo started circling inside the tent, clawing his way over Mamma each time he made a round. Mamma responded each time by thrashing around and screaming at the top of her voice. That excited the animal – and Granddad – even more, and aroused the entire campground. Heads popped out of neighboring tents in time to see the Bolin tent bouncing around, and, finally to see the armadillo escaping as fast as he could. Mamma survived with numerous scratches and a never-to-be-forgotten memory of that tenting vacation.

Then there was the time we were camped near a trout stream in the

mountains of New Mexico. Late one night the rain began coming down so hard it was forming a mist inside our tent. That was bad enough, but about that time a severe case of diarrhea hit all seven of us and the nearest restrooms were about

100 yards up a muddy trail – in the rain. That experience was not a bit funny at the time, but has, in retrospect, become a little humorous. It did, however, help change our vacation habits. We still wanted to camp, but decided to give up on tenting in favor of something on wheels – one we could park near a restroom.

I then got busy and built a pop-up tent camper and painted it red and white to match our new 1955 Ford station wagon. We named the camper "Warren's Wigwam" and were off – looking for good camping spots, mostly in state or national parks.

Setting up camp in our homemade camper was done in military-like precision. As soon as the camper was parked, the kids jumped out of the station wagon and went to their pre-assigned posts. Then we started unfolding the big box until the tent unfolded and popped up. Fellow campers watched in amazement

Ghosts of Vacations Past

By Bob Warren

Have Your Own Vacation Story?

We'd like to hear about your vacation. Let us know about your creative or unusual plans for this summer. Share with us your memories of a long treasured once-in-a-lifetime trip. Maybe, as Bob suggests, as the years go by the travails of a trip that didn't seem very funny at the time have transformed into what could fill-in as a mid-year replacement sitcom.

Send your 150-word synopsis of your tale to editor@stylepublishing.com and if we select your family trip we will highlight it in a future issue of *Frisco STYLE Magazine*.



Camp Warren
photo provided by Bob Warren

as each child snapped and fastened his or her brace into place, checked it and finished setting up camp. They were then free to head for the swimming hole or the camp's concession stand.

Today, when asked about their favorite early-day family vacations, their answers are not, "Our trip to Disneyland or camping in a tent," but "Our trips in Warren's Wigwam." They mention a trip to Roaring River, Missouri where diving into the frigid spring water left us numb and blue. Or, they may recall a 1956 trip to the highly touted Garner State Park. That was the year of a severe drought in Texas, and we drove all the way to the park near Uvalde looking forward to a cool swim in the Frio River. We arrived late in the afternoon of a hot July day, found a good campsite, set up camp, got in our swim suits and ran to the river only to find it reduced to nothing but a stagnant mud puddle. We quickly retreated, put our clothes back on, broke up camp and headed for the nearest motel for the night. The next two days we toured San Antonio, then drove to Inks Lake where we found a suitable site with "swimable" water. So, our vacation was saved.

After all our children had left the nest, we decided to upgrade our camping method, so we bought a fifth wheel trailer. My, what a change from Warren's Wigwam! It was roomy and

air conditioned with comfortable beds. But, it had one drawback – it was not as easy to back into tight spaces as the little pop-up camper. I had all kinds of problems backing that thing – even poked a couple of holes in it when I forgot to raise the pickup's tailgate. Two long vacation trips, one to Arizona

and one to North Carolina convinced me I would never be good at backing that long rig, so we started shopping for a motor home.

We traded that nice fifth wheel trailer for a not-so-good used motor home which I could back with no problem. There were, however, other problems – mechanical ones that took some of the fun out of camping and traveling. I could tell lots of stories about one trip to New Mexico in which we spent more time in repair shops than we did having fun. There were broken water lines, cold showers, flat tires, engine trouble and a few other headaches that prompted us to give up camping and get out of the RV business.

So, today when we start planning a vacation, it's "Shall we go to Branson, to Hawaii, or shall we take a cruise?" I'm told cruise ship beds are soft, the food is good and the restroom is close.

That's the way things are when you get old, but whichever way we go we'll miss the campfire!

Frisco native Bob Warren is a humorist, historian and former Frisco mayor.

