



Mountain Man *Roy Kain*

Rendezvous At Whispering Pines

It always rains at least once a day at Whispering Pines Mountain Man Rendezvous, but this year the twenty-ninth annual camp of the primitives was dry. Furthermore, the cluster of canvas-dwellers was blessed with warm, sunny days and cool nights. The moon was full, enabling camp visits and “walk-arounds” minus the usual carrying of candle lanterns. I found myself quite content to sleep between single blankets.

Welcome to my spot once again. Help yourself to coffee and sit a spell. Autumn is here, and the nights are turning brisk. Soon hills and valleys will be in full color, dazzling all who take time to appreciate it.

Although attendance was down somewhat this year, the doin’s over the hill in Cherry Flats were a fun time for all the living historians camped randomly throughout the site. Old friendships were rekindled with handshakes and hugs, and stories were told while libations manufactured from corn, apples, peaches, and cherries were generously passed around. Everyone did his best to uphold the mountain man tradition of sharing refreshments with like-minded “brothers of the wind.”

A cannon boomed, announcing the start of the shooting contest. For three days the sound of gunfire echoed from the rendezvous site. The acrid odor of spent gunpowder mingled with the smoke of cooking fires. Children with wooden muskets raced from one camp to another as women toured the grounds and shopped for goods and the menfolk traded and discussed guns, hunting, trapping, and the affairs of living the primitive lifestyle. And all the while, of course, sharing libations.

Sutlers, the merchants hawking goods to sell, were sparse but well represented by the Whispering Pines regulars. Chuck Plant, “The Bookman,” provided an ample array of new and used vessels of literature for the history scholars. Dave and Nan’s Clothing & Such from colonial America enjoyed brisk trade. And well it should be—Nan is a master with fabric and thread. I visited with Bob, “The Frenchman,” purveyor of fine trinkets and primitive trappings of all descriptions; Skip Hamaker, consummate scrimshaw artist whose work is always in demand; and, of course, Ron Remy, the Civil War enthusiast, who displayed his goods along the thoroughfare. So, from the amazing selection of goods offered, what did I come home with? Books. I never seem to have enough “mental furniture.” A rare book entitled *Daniel Boone*, staring up at me from The Bookman, Chuck’s muster of publications, stirred my bibliomania and made me reach for my poke bag. It and three others made the trip home with me.

Although the Native American faction has always been noticeable at Rendezvous, this year they too numbered fewer than normal. Nevertheless, I was happy to find Dove’s Angel, a lovely Iroquois maiden and longtime friend, set up nearby with her mate, Jumping John Stronghorse. Dove is a skilled artisan of Indian beadwork, painting, and the intricate craft of porcupine quillwork. The work of her hands is extraordinary. Stronghorse is also a talented expert with the paintbrush. I shared more than a few mugs of coffee with this fine pair of artists.

I believe the highlight at The Pines this year, was the crowning of “Miss Whispering Pines,” the premiere of an event that I hope will be perennial. “Iron

Hands” Jim Page and yours truly, had the honor (and frustration) of judging the female population. So many beautiful ladies prancing by my camp—it was a formidable task to choose just one. Iron Hands and I nevertheless pulled it off and awarded a young lady from upstate New York the coveted Miss Whispering Pines beaded necklace. The ceremony took place Saturday night, when Iron Hands draped the inscribed necklace around her lovely neck. Amanda, the pretty young winner, made no acceptance speech, but did allow a photo-session. I believe she was overwhelmed.

Lest I forget, I should mention another event that took place later—much later—that Saturday night. Saturday night is traditionally the one of revelry. Guitars and banjos come out of hiding, a central camp is chosen, and the singing and “carrying-on” commences. The gathering of merry mountain folk thins out considerably by midnight, the celebrants wander back to their respective camps a mite merrier than they anticipated. Our newly crowned Miss Whispering Pines, in somewhat of a frenzy to show her gratitude to the judges, decided to supply yours truly with an abundance of apples from the several trees near my camp. Along with an unidentified accomplice, she deposited almost a bushel of apples neatly spread beneath my ground cloth! While I was caught up in the revelry, maid Amanda was busy orchestrating a bed of apples in my tent. It wasn’t a pretty picture, folks, when I stumbled numbly into my tent and proceeded to crawl into my bedroll for a sound night’s sleep. I know I invented some words unfamiliar to the human race, and I rattled them off loudly. Iron Hands was on the scene immediately, expecting an Indian attack or worse. Together we discovered the apples. Amanda poked her laughing face in the tent, as if to say, “Gotcha!”

Her chances of winning again next year are a mite slim. All in all, a good time was had by all, and the mischief was in keeping with the mountain man spirit. Whispering Pines is still the best Rendezvous in the East.

You can contact Roy at mountainman@mountainhomemag.com. Someone will walk up into the hills and make sure he gets the message.

