

South African National Jamboree

By Nigel Lewis-Walker

“Since 1910, the Boys Scouts of America has tried to encourage the adventurous spirit in boys, along with an appreciation and love of our country. It has worked for physical and mental fitness through a vigorous program of outdoor activities centering on hiking and camping. ... The rugged road to adventure has always been of more interest to us than the superhighways to boredom.

“Scouts ... include all kinds of outdoor recreation in their activities – camping, swimming, water-skiing, canoeing, sailing, rafting, spelunking, fishing, hunting and you-name-it. They master camping skills to enable them to follow these adventurous pursuits. They find not merely enjoyment but personal fitness and strength of character.”

Thus sayeth my 1967 edition of the Fieldbook of the Boy Scouts of America. It is indeed good to see that these noble objectives are alive and well in today's South Africa.

Every four years the Scout Association runs its National Jamboree (SANJAMB) to allow Scouts and Girl Guides the chance of attending at least one major jamboree – for most, these inspiring events are the climax of their scouting or guiding career.

Starting in 1985, the first SANJAMB was held at the Natal Parks Board site at Albert Falls dam and thereafter at Midmar Dam. In 1997 the event was hosted by Gauteng Province and held at the Vaal Dam. The same site, an unused section of Parks Board ground not far from the wall, was used for the 2001 camp. (Now overseen by the Public Works Department, this site is used by the universities for study purposes.)

About 1000 participants attended SANJAMB 2001 (10–19 December) with contingents from the Netherlands, England, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, Botswana, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Lesotho.

Among the contingents at SANJAMB 2001 was a Zambian team (left) and a team of deaf Scouts (right), which presented a challenge to the range officer. Sign language was used to convey safety information and range instructions.



Johannesburg's 1st Victory View Scouts – Asher, Robert, Michael, Garreth, Clayton and Keldon – at the SAGA-sponsored air rifle range.

One of the SANJAMB aims is to provide a campsite with enough space and facilities to cater for 3000 (or more) Scouts and Guides, in a tented environment and to provide entertainment in the form of up to a hundred different activity bases, either on or off site. These activities range from various handcraft activities, obstacle courses, water activities, abseiling, white-water rafting, through to rocketry, backwoods cookery, nature hikes, haircare and activities run by the SA National Defence Force at the Heidelberg rifle range.

The evenings are taken up with entertainment such as parties, star-gazing, campfires, barn-dancing or an evening with a top band such as the Blarney Brothers, Just Ginger, Wonderboom and Tweak.

SANJAMB 2001 was the first at which an air rifle range was in operation – thanks to sponsorship from SAGA. An off site activity, the range was located at a Scout campsite across the dam and shoot-



ers (and aspirant shooters) were ferried to the activity base by bus. We managed about 50 children in two shifts, with a change-over at lunch time. Other activity bases were also run at 'our' site – mountain bikes, catapults and orienteering. We operated in rotation to allow those taking part about an hour at each base.

The air rifle base was run by myself, assisted by Grant Lucas, another Air Scouter from Gauteng and, during the holiday period, my son Gavin lent a hand. We were also glad to have the help of our medic, 'Danny Boy', who became quite a whizz at reloading the clips.

The routine was to have up ten shooters per detail. Proceedings opened with a safety talk, followed by instruction on how to operate the Crosman air rifle (a generous donation to SAGA by Crosman which was 'motivated' by the late Alan King), aiming and holding the rifle correctly. Only then did the shooting commence – five shoots each of five shots at a distance of 10 metres.

The first shoot was for sighting followed by grouping. Then a deliberate shoot from the prone position and a deliberate from the sitting or kneeling position. The last event was a rapid fun shoot with two teams; each team member had five shots, with a cooldrink can to be knocked over and the remainder of the pellets to be shot onto a single team target. All cans had to be down before the target score counted. There was a time limit of one minute. This event, as usual, sorted those who could keep 'cool' from those who went to pieces under pressure and was the cause of much excited talking afterwards.



Members of a Girl Scout detail take aim.

The shoot was geared up as a qualifying event for the Scout Marksman badge. Unfortunately no one reached the required 80% but we had plenty in the 60% and 70% area who would surely have qualified after a couple more hours of instruction – the talent is there.

During the six days that our base ran over 450 youngsters in 57 details fired over 12000 pellets. We also put through about 50 staff members and visitors – including some from the KwaZulu-Natal Ministry of Education.

My biggest challenge was when a group of deaf Scouts came to shoot – something I had not yet experienced. I first had to instruct their (hearing) adult leader who then passed on the information via sign language. I am pleased to report that all went very well indeed – these youngster thoroughly enjoyed the chance to shoot – they found it to be a lot of fun and shot quite well all things considered. The rapid fire event was a little problematic because the shooters had to look at me instead of down range, for the instruction 'commence fire' and had to be touched on the shoulder when it was time to 'cease fire'.

Each day the 'Shot of the Day' received a small trophy. For the record, these winners were: Keldon (Emmarentia), Daryl Young (Pinepark), Michael Elios (Honeydew), Clayton Warren (Germiston), David Moore (Petervale), and Ronsard Allen (Kimberley).

Well done to all of them.

As for the future, we plan to carry on with more instruction for the Scouts; to train more (interested and suitable) Scouters with regard to range safety, the running of shoots, etc, so that there will be more opportunities for Scouts and Guides to be introduced to the pleasures (and disciplines) of shooting. We then hope to hold inter-district and maybe inter-provincial air rifle championships.

We also hope to be in a position to introduce keen shooters to other shooting disciplines and perhaps get them involved with the appropriate clubs. It is very sad to see talent going to waste – like a rusty, unused rifle. Until then we will keep on with our training and will run shooting bases alongside as many of our Scouting activities as possible. Shooting can be such a great fun sport.

Your local Scout and Girl Guide associations should be in the telephone book. The Durban contact numbers are: SA Scout Association: (031) 305-5084 Girl Guides Association of SA: (031) 708-4280.

Be Smart, Be Safe!

The Parents' Responsibility

The prime responsibility for a child's safety rests squarely of his or her parents. In a home where guns are kept, good parents must be careful to display safe gun-handling, responsible use and good gun manners. Those who have accepted the responsibility of parenthood, whether gun owners or not, automatically accept the responsibility of ensuring their child's safety by teaching them about the dangers which they may encounter – whether from a hot stove, a bottle of paraffin ... or a firearm.

Talking with your Child about Gun Safety

A good time to introduce the subject may be first time he or she shows an interest in firearms, even toy pistols or rifles. Talking openly and honestly about gun safety with your child should prove much more effective than simply ordering him or her to "Stay away from guns". Such statements may just stimulate a child's natural curiosity to investigate further. Explaining the rules and answering a child's questions should promote understanding and respect – the core of safety. Any rules set for your own child should also apply to any visitors to the home – your friends as well as your child's visitors. This will help keep your child from being pressured into showing a gun to a friend.

What Every Child should know about Gun Safety!

Parental responsibility does not end when the child is away from home. Your child could come into contact with a gun at a neighbour's house, in the playground, or almost anywhere else. It is critical for your child to know what to do in such circumstances and, as a parent, you have the responsibility to provide that knowledge. As a first step, teach him or her to follow these simple rules:



STOP!
Don't Touch
Leave the Area
Tell an Adult

Published in the public interest by the SA Gunowner's Association. Direct further enquiries to SAGA, PO Box 11310, Marine Parade 4056.



