

A GOOD TIME HAD BY ALL

Chippokes State Park (April 20-25, 2022)

We had a ball on our first campout of 2022! We were blessed by fabulous weather at Chippokes State Park. Our group of nine arrived early, and we worked up a hearty appetite helping those achieve various strange degrees of levelness who were unfortunate to get uniquely situated sites. Bob and Joanne were particularly challenged, but with members offering equipment and often confusing hand signals, we got them onto their uneven sites. Where there was a will, we found a way! To avoid starvation, we of course had to find the closest eatery and did we find a gem! We enjoyed wonderful seafood dinners (followed by bread pudding to die for) at the *Surry Seafood Company* with live entertainment overlooking the river offering stunning sunsets. We enjoyed it so much, we just had to return the next night to ensure we got it right the first time.

Our group represented folks from Maryland and Virginia and even a National LoWs full-timer who included our campout on her East Coast travels:

Bob Fitzgerald	Beth Hughes	Sherry McNeil
Marsha Miller	Joanne O'Donnell	Wanda Salzer
Kathy Schmidt	Marie-Laure Cunliffe (LoWs National Member)	
Barb Foley (Wagon Master)		

Friday dawned bright and sunny. Some chose to relax at Chippokes. The rest of us opted for a reverse lunch of ice cream and sandwiches at a wonderful ice cream parlor in the nearby town of Smithfield. We relished our ice cream and returned to Chippokes to consume our sandwiches at a picnic overlooking the wide James River. But we were not total slugs we followed our picnic with an invigorating walk on the beach with our canine members, Leila, Pearce, and Maya. (Our feline campers, Sammie and Bella, stayed in the RVs to protect us from perils only they could see.) Beth waded, and Kathy's sharp eyes rewarded her with vicious-looking shark's tooth.

Figuring we worked our ice cream and sandwiches off with our beach trek, of course we had to eat again with our Friday night pot luck. Ours was not the lopsided pot luck with too many desserts, salads, etc. Everyone brought just the right variety of dishes to provide a well-rounded meal which we fell to like starving survivalists, after which we enjoyed a warm campfire before turning in for the night. Bob enriched our experience by bringing an American flag in need of retirement. Only Bob had ever witnessed such a ceremony, so none of us knew what to expect or quite how to behave. Bob made it a very formal, dignified, and meaningful experience for us. We recited the Pledge of Allegiance and, as Bob slowly lowered the old flag into the flames, we sang America, the Beautiful and watched as the flames consumed it. It was an awesome experience I'll not soon forget.

Saturday some of our group opted for the "Afternoon Tea" offered by Chippokes in honor of Garden Week. They figured the fare would include a token cup of tea and a cookie served on the porch of the Chippokes mansion. Beth took it upon herself to show LoWs members knew their etiquette by wearing her floppy camping hat and WOOL gloves! Imagine their surprise to find the "little tea" had a full high tea array of refreshments and served tea in real china cups. They even offered spring-themed sun hats and boas! What a pleasant surprise for them and a regret for we who opted out.

Marsha went kayaking with friends and then rejoined us after a long day on the water.

After the tea, we all piled into cars and helped the economy of Smithfield by visiting the many quaint boutiques lining Main Street, bringing home souvenirs from the pork capital of Virginia. Several of the stores featured timeless items which sadly, at our age, we eagerly identified as mementoes of our childhoods. Main Street and several side streets of Smithfield offer little shops and quaint Victorian homes (one of which we accused Bob of breaking-and-entering despite his protests that it was, in fact, a bona fide little store). Wishing to honor the pork heritage of Smithfield, we enjoyed a tasty dinner at *A Taste of Smithfield*, where even the delicious French fries bore the moniker of "pigs tails."

Again, we ended a fun-filled day with a nice fire and wonderful tales before turning in.

Most of us did not leave until Monday, so we had a relaxing day visiting on Sunday. We enjoyed the shade and more tales of our traveling experiences and exploits. Sporting her cute pig tails and when she held Leila close, we decided that Kathy harkened Dorothy and Toto to our campsite. Not quite Kansas, but it'll do. Bob opted for so long a hike while he geocached that he wore out his shoe! Sometime during our visiting, Sherry mentioned she had never been on a ferry. That's all we needed! We loaded up and headed for the Scotland-Jamestown Ferry to enjoy Sherry's very first ferry ride. Gulls and cormorants darted about, and we even saw several osprey nesting. We lucked out with little wait on either side and even had time for Bob to locate another geocache on the Jamestown side. Then the remnants of our pot luck and leftovers reappeared one last time as we ate our final dinner of the campout. We made a futile effort to have a fire with what leftover firewood we had, but were saved by Marsha Miller's friend, Bobby Clontz, who reconstructed our meager fire so we could enjoy it down to the final, reluctant contribution of our sacred poker stick and the cardboard bellows, signifying the Chippokes campout indeed was coming to a close.

On Monday, one-by-one we headed on down the road to look forward to the next adventure at Pocahontas State Park in May hosted by Marsha Miller.

Barb Foley, April 2022 Wagon Master

Ps. For some reason, though offered, no one opted to visit White Tail Nudist Park!