

## *SABC Family Camping History* by Bob Smith

Pat and I came to South Apalachin Baptist Church in June of 1981. I worked at IBM and had just transferred back from a three year position in Charlotte, NC. We were good friends with Karen and Jerry Mikalonis and we came to SABC at their recommendation. We started attending Pastor Walter's Sunday school class for the "Young Married Couples". Incidentally, Pastor Walter taught that class until his retirement and most of us were 20+ years past being young married couples by then. Also as a side note, I learned more about Biblical truths and practical Biblical living from his teaching than any other Pastor or teacher... Thank you Pastor Walter. Our class had quite a few outside activities... some were just for the class and some were for all of the church. Different ones in the class would volunteer to organize an activity. One of those activities also included the annual roller skating at Bonnin Lake. In 1990, Pastor Walter asked me if I could organize a church camping weekend. That was the early start of our church family campout.

Our first campout was on June 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, 1990. It was at the Forrest Lake Campground in Windsor, NY. We had a very good turnout. Some were seasoned campers and some were trying it for the first time. One couple borrowed a tent and set up just before dusk that Friday evening. They had just gotten set up and a very strong thunder storm came through with very high winds and heavy rain. Their tent was blown down and they were soaked. That Saturday was beautiful and we started out traditional Saturday evening dish to pass supper. Pastor Walter had the Sunday morning service in the Pavilion. Cindy Brougham played the accordion.

Our second campout in 1991 was also at the Forrest Lake Campground. The only incident I remember from this one was that Becky Swackhammer hurt her foot when one of the picnic table benches broke. And I do remember that Pastor Dan Crane and family were there also.

The next couple years we had the campout in the overflow field at Cowanesque Lake. Dennis Corson and Rich Foster brought their boats and gave people rides and pulled a lot of the teens in the back on Ski Tubes.

When my daughter became ill with Hodgkin's disease, I stopped organizing the campouts. A year or so later, Pastor Walter retired and our Young Married Couples Class had changed.

About the year 2001, Nina Jackson came to me after church and asked if I would be interested in organizing a church campout again. I said that I would look into it. I

started calling some camp grounds for information. About the same time, my son Joshua decided to do some Christian summer work at Rock Mountain Bible Camp. It was my first time down at RMBC and I was surprised by the fact that they had a camping area. They said it wasn't used much. I talked to John Goodenough who was very interested in our Church camping idea. That was the renewing our annual Church Family Camping weekend.

Our camping is very much a free style camping. The only organized activities are the Saturday evening dinner and the Sunday morning devotional. It was and is mainly for time to get away and a time to get to know your church family a little better. The evening campfire is always a great time to gather and join the conversation, Becky Swackhammer brought popcorn and Andy and Emily fried donuts. Just watch out for sparks from the campfire . . . one camper jumped up and did an interesting dance for us ... no it wasn't a spirit; it was sparks that set his pants on fire. There are other stories of snipe hunts, very wet canoe landings, big fish contests, catching a snake on a fish hook, lure eating trees, coyote howls in the night and very, very rainy days that the kids loved. These unplanned items certainly make the camping experience memorable and fun. Karlene Sorber, Nina Jackson, and Karen Mikalonis have provided very inventive activities for the kids over the years and numerous others have added their contribution to making the camping weekend fun.



Some of us campers are now a few years beyond being "young married couples" but we still enjoy the SABC Family camping ... especially with the grandkids there.

