

- DogGone Camping-

- The Experiences of a Very Unfortunate Canine-

By Luke Vossler

Hi! I'm Oliver. I thought you might like to hear about one of my recent adventures, so here goes, but don't laugh too hard, you might hurt yourself!

First, you should know that I'm a dog. More specifically, a 45 dog-year old Bassett hound who likes to eat and sleep, (what self-respecting dog doesn't?) and who is—how can I put this gingerly? – rather tubby. Jim is my best friend and owner. Well, that should give you a pretty good picture of me, so let's get on with the story...

It was a quiet Friday afternoon in July, and I was snoozing under the porch when Jim came home, whistled for me, and said, "Here, Oliver, we're going camping!" I barked. This sounded interesting. "I guess I'll go and pack", said Jim. "You can get your Frisbee, Oliver, you might want it."

When we were all packed, we got in Jim's old pickup and pulled out of the driveway. Jim said, "Oliver, we have to stop at the store to get food for the trip, and I'm going to take you inside with me." He gave me a hard look. "So behave yourself, OK?" I barked. "I guess that means yes", chuckled Jim as we pulled into the parking lot of the store.

When we walked into the store, a delicious aroma filled my sensitive nostrils. I started running, tracking the smell, which seemed to be emanating from a large metal box behind a display case of various meats and cheeses. The deli man had left the box open while he prepared a ham for a customer. Taking advantage of the moment, I jumped over the deli case, barely clearing it, and leapt into the box. BAM! I slammed into a cooked

chicken and became firmly wedged inside of what I now realized was a roaster. My whiskers were starting to singe when a mighty yank on my hind legs, administered by Jim, brought me out of my predicament. “How on earth did you manage that, Oliver?” he asked. “I hope you learned a lesson!” Indeed, I had learned my lesson. Large metal boxes, no matter how good they smell, should NOT be messed with. All I wanted was a good nap in the truck. I got exactly that after Jim had apologized to the store manager and finished the shopping, and I had watered the flowers in front of the store.

As I slept, we traveled all the way to the Oklahoma State Park & Campground where we would spend the weekend. I only stirred when Jim picked me up and carried me to the tent for the night. I did not object.

The next morning, we woke up feeling refreshed, and we ate a breakfast of cold cereal (yuck, I ate dog food). Then we went fishing on the Yazoo River, which flowed through the campground. Jim let me go swimming. Life was a dream for a few minutes. Too bad it turned out to be a nightmare.

It was the hottest day of the year as far as I was concerned, but I wanted nothing more to do with water! It seemed that I was in another jam. I was stranded on a big rock in the middle of the rushing river. What’s more, a giant thunderhead was approaching VERY quickly. I had managed to get stuck on the rock when the storm hit, causing the river to rise rapidly. Jim had run off to find a ranger with a boat, and I had decided to SWIM FOR MY LIFE. Without thinking, I plunged into the churning water, which was so cold it took my breath away. The strong current caught me, and I was swept downstream, paddling furiously toward the riverbank. After what seemed like hours, I suddenly felt the rocky bottom under my feet. I scabbled to shore, battling the current all

the way, and hauled my sodden, weary body out of the foaming water at the feet of –Jim? He looked down. “Oliver! Thank God you’re safe!” he said. “C’mon, Oliver, we’re going home. This storm is too big.” A ranger drove us back to the campsite, where he helped Jim pack up the gear.

After thanking the ranger, we climbed into the truck and headed for home. I dozed off to the sound of raindrops hammering on the windshield, and lifted my head just as we pulled into the driveway. We trooped inside, and I trudged straight to my bed, where I immediately fell into a deep sleep.

The warmth of a sunbeam and the buttery smell of Jim’s homemade waffles brought me to consciousness the next morning. All of the adventures from the previous day seemed distant and dreamlike as Jim gave me a golden waffle along with my dog food. It felt SO good to be back home. I might even like to try camping again sometime...