



The USS Buckskin, official Huck Finn raft of the Bayport Boy Scouts, heads downriver to Read's Landing.

Sixteen Scouts Try Hands at Huck Finn Life

By JOHN CONNELLY
Staff Writer

Sixteen boys right now are having one of the greatest experiences of their lives as they camp out at

Read's landing north of Wabasha on the Mississippi river.

Friday evening they completed a 106-river-mile trip from Bayport on a 60-by-20-

foot raft that carries enough food and equipment to keep the boys in the best camping style for five days. Huck Finn never had it so good.

It is the fourth summer that the Bayport Boy Scout troop has made a trip downriver. Only two of the boys have made the trip all four times, along with Scout Leader Howard Richard.

Robert Parent, 15, and Keith Leary, 14, Stillwater high school students, are the veterans.

"The first two years we went through the Red Wing lock and back," said Robert. "Last year we went through the Hastings lock and camped near Newport before returning.

"This year we are leaving the raft at Read's landing. If a troop from St. Paul doesn't bring it back this year, we will next year."

Sunday a delegation of fathers will pick up the boys and three leaders and return them home.

The raft is powered by two 30-hp outboard motors supplied by a local marine store. The 260 gallons of gas required is supplied by local gasoline distributors and stations. Material to build the raft, including telephone poles, was contributed four years ago.

Only other contribution is from a local bakery which

stocks the raft with plenty of bread, rolls and doughnuts.

Other food for the trip is bought by the boys, about \$50 worth. Cooked by Richard, the fare includes spaghetti, chicken, chow mein, stew and bacon and eggs prepared in a 24-inch skil-

let so heavy two scouts hold it over a fire.

Richard is sole boss until two assistants join him downstream. If a mother thinks one boy is a handful to take care of, Richard can tell what it's like to handle as many as 25.

"They're usually pretty good," said Richard. "I've only had one scare. Last year a scout came running up to say his pal was in the tent and couldn't move. 'Can't move? What's wrong?' I asked. 'He just can't move!' said the scout.

"Visions of a seizure ran through my head as I entered the tent. The boy really couldn't move. His partner had him checkmated on the checker board."

A checker tournament is one of several ways the

boys keep occupied. This year a cribbage tournament has been added. Prizes amount to an extra piece of pie or watermelon at dinnertime. The raft stops twice each day for swimming and fishing, as well as for meals, and the boys camp on the shore each night. The scouts also take advancement tests in scouting.

Another pastime, admitted one of the boys, is girl-watching through binoculars. And, of course, the usual horseplay of young boys. "But never while underway," said Parent.

"There's always a goof-off in the crowd," said Richard. "But we have a good cure for that. He gets to clean the frying pan after each meal."



HUGE FRYING PAN is warmed up by Keith Leary, left, 14, and Robert Parent, 15, Bayport Boy Scouts.

—Staff Photos.