

Welcome to the Glenwood Neighborhood Camp
from Mary Barton, Elder and Camp Mom
2003

Follow a winding path in Chela Mela Meadow through flying pins and other juggled items. Pass Reba's Gazebo and children walking a tightrope just inches from the ground. Check your pass at the Mudshark Gate and continue east to the Giant White Oak Meadow. Pay homage at the phallic thirty-foot broken stob which remains of that mighty oak after the 2002 windstorm. Taste the service berries at the base which ripen in time for Fair. Continue to the far northeast corner of the meadow and look for the Glenwood street sign by a tiny trail diving into the blackberry patch. You have found the Glenwood Camp, nestled on a peninsula jutting into the Long Tom. The river flows around here just as the Willamette flows around our namesake Glenwood, between Eugene and Springfield.

This has been my home at the Fair since 1976. Our neighborhood was built initially around people who traveled and planted trees together for years in the Hoedads Co-op. The tradition of a communal kitchen has carried through to the present. We take up a collection before the Fair and a few volunteers do the purchasing in bulk. We have snacks and staples, beverages, and full meals. The first night, before the food booths open, is always a potluck with everyone contributing their specialty. Jake is a chef in his other life; he usually has a great offering. I make my big pot of chili, there are fresh salads and desserts. We live well in our kitchen. I appreciate having our own coffee bar when I run out to a 6 am security shift.

A large wooden box serves as a cooler for our drinks. We have up to 3 canoes and take turns going to Watergate for ice. Since the Long Tom surrounds us on 3 sides, it is much quicker and more fun to make the ice run in a canoe rather than fighting the crowds in the 8. The ice arrives in much better shape too.

As a Security crew camp, we always keep our ears open for "sneakers." These people get into the Long Tom under the Highway 126 bridge and come downstream toward the sounds of the Fair -- wading, swimming, and thrashing through the blackberry bushes and nettles.

They see our steep trail up from the sandy beach and think they have found refuge. We meet them with the greeting, "Surprise. You just broke into Security Camp!"

The bulk of our camp is the Neighbors security crew, working Aero and Chickadee, 6 pm to midnight, as the public leaves the site. Bobby Snodgrass is that crew coordinator now; he was trained and took over from Virgil Courtright. Nancy Courtright grows the flowers for the fair; they have recently left Glenwood to camp in Alice's Wonderland.

My traditional shift has been 6-10 am at the bus entrance gate, so I do evening camp watch and the Neighbors crew covers the morning. We know everyone who camps in our briar patch. Should a group wander in, looking to set up camp, we always politely escort them out to the meadow again saying, "This is a private camp." Yes, we have had problems once in a while with folks taking each other's favorite spots, but these have worked themselves out over the years. Last year the branch tips of the giant white oak fell into my camp spot. I plan to

trim them and weave them back into a shade and privacy screen for the blackberries to grow over once again this year.

We have taken the trailing vines down from the native trees, liberating two Pacific yews, alders, hawthorns, roses, and a Big leaf maple. Some chicken wire screening was necessary a few years ago when the beavers began gnawing at our trees. We lost two to the beavers and one nice shade tree to the river current in one year. Luckily, Brian is on the Tree Crew and can climb up to hang a parachute kitchen shade for us now. The VegManECs have visited our camp and used it as a model. They like what we have done with the place. We also host Admiral Cole of the OCF Navy and his crew; we are a terminus on their river patrol and a provider of cold refreshment. Vernon Torbet, John Stamp, and others who have lived or camped in Glenwood through the years, always stop by for a visit. We have a nice fire barrel, fully approved by the fire crew. I was on the Forest Service Redmond Hotshot Interagency fire crew in my other life. We all make sure things are safe and the proper equipment is at hand. We sure miss that center of our camp evenings when the weather and fire danger preclude it.

We also have a porch swing which sits alone in the trees, overlooking the river and off to the north. Two adults, or one adult and two children, can lazily glide (staying one swing ahead of the mosquitos) of an evening, watching the kingfisher at sunset, telling bedtime stories, and listening to the bustle of the sweep going through.

Now regarding tent tags: we have an unfortunate experience there. A few years ago, when Chela Mela Meadow came into public use, all cars were banned from the giant oak meadow. I must admit it IS nice now to walk home that last lap through huddled tents rather than a sea of metal roof tops. However, we had one camper with us who must use a wheelchair. He used to drive right up to our gate, use his lift to get in and out, and sleep in his special van. The spot where he parked was the first one I ever "made". That is, I spotted a poor yew tree under the blackberries and cleared it out. The yew has doubled in size in the last 20 years, as I pull away the vines again every year. This created a nice shady spot in the corner of the sunny meadow.

When Chela Mela was taken over as a public part of the Fair, Mudshark gate was erected to screen staff camping from public venues. A certain staff member was put in charge of organizing this "new camping space and handing out tent tags. This was also about the time when it was strongly suggested that we all move over to the Far Side. We said, "H- no, we won't go," and stayed where we've always been. Our Security function was even more necessary now that the public area was so much closer for the sneakers.

We were told we could no longer have or use that first spot under the yew tree; that we had enough room already, back in our briar patch. Our spot was given to someone else. We were angry and hurt but bent to the will of the power enforced. That spot had traditionally been a good place for our growing teens to camp and hang out - close enough to the food kitchen, but out of our nest and able to watch everything. There was a huge swing, probably 60 feet long, where the young people liked to gather. Some daring acrobat would climb the giant oak and hang that swing for the kids. It took up about 6-8 campsites because the throw was so long, but boy, it would take your breath away to swing there. Now the giant oak swing is gone, our teen front door camp is gone, and even our teens have grown and gone away, unable to get on a crew. So it goes.

Two dramatic and traumatic events have happened since the new camping situation evolved in this meadow. One was the breaking of the oak tree. The other was the infamous hanging, or the piercing, in the dome along our trail home. I'm not saying anyone was responsible for these happenings; I'm just noting the bad "juju" which has been hanging around since.

We used to have two portable toilets back in our area. Now we (and all the other new campers placed there) must go clear across Chela Mela and use the over-FILLED public toilets by the Hoarse Corrale. This makes the morning ablutions extremely unpleasant. So yes, we have to deal with population issues too, and tent tags haven't solved that problem.

The thing I really miss is that Shumba (the wooden marimba band) used to camp where Chela Mela is now. Every Thursday evening, they would warm up their instruments and play for several hours. This was always the start of the Fair for me. They have been displaced now by a performance tent. I don't think they even come to the Fair anymore.

In spite of these changes, I have not given up or let my love of the land and the Fair be soured.

In 2003 I am going to be one of the Glenwood Camp Hosts: it will be one of my various Elder positions. I've been working with the Elder Committee for almost 3 years as the cyber typer, facilitating the meeting participation for folks from all over the state, and even India, Fiji, and Hawaii this year.

I can't imagine needing a tent tag, way back in the bushes as I am. No one comes to my camp unless I invite them; they couldn't find it anyway. I always tie back the branches and duck under to access my area. I remove the nettles and put my tent down over them. I lay out mats and rugs and make it into a real comfy nest. But nobody "accidentally" gets lost there. The same is true of our whole camp. We know where everyone is; we keep track of our oldsters, our youngsters, our folks who may have partied too hardy.

But we will comply with the numbering and artificial tagging because it is requested. Just like we used to do for the treeplanting inspectors. Just say, "OK" and go on about our business. I trust there won't be anyone from "above" coming to check out our compliance.

Yes, if you come in the spirit of Fair magic and fun, you will always be welcome to visit in Glenwood Camp.