



Friends and Fireballs

A Friend and I were on a two day hiking trip along the ‘Mountain to Sea Trail’ which is the name given to a series of trails in the Great Smoky Mountains. Having research the Topology we were expecting a rough hike but had underestimated just how rough.

After a long hard first day, we finally made camp hungry and tired and with little sunlight left. We got our tent set and were both preparing to cook meals and I was trying to light a fire. Being that it had recently rained, I had run into some trouble getting the damp wood to light. In my frustration I remember my companion had a white fuel stove and thought, “A little of that would really help out!”

Being the avid outdoorsman that I am and having done this many times I was not concerned. He being a life long Boy Scout and an avid outdoorsman he offered up the fuel with no argument. This is where we went wrong.

Immediately upon pouring an ever so small amount of this fuel onto the wood, it found what must have been the only spark in the mess and lit up like fireworks. In my surprise, I sort of just leg go of the container.

In that reflex motion of dropping the container I notice my friend is now running around and his leg is on fire. I am thinking: “Stop drop and roll,” but his thoughts were smack, pat and panic (understandably so).

Another concern that came to mind was that the metal container that was holding the fuel is still burning and needs to be away from us should it explode so I grab it up and toss it. The sight we picked was an open are about the size of a football field. In the middle of the open area was one bush and that is where the Flaming Canister landed.

Now my friend is on fire and the bush is on fire and it is a long way out to be running from a forest fire. I immediately ran to the burning bush, grabbed the burning container and snuffed it out in the dirt (That makes since; I should have done that in the first place). Fortunately the bush fuel that ignited the bush quickly burned away removes any trace that it had happened. After stamping out some stray flames on the ground and assuring my friend is not burning anymore I was able to sit down and reflect on the stupidity we just lived through.

A few minutes past and we both just started laughing. Laughing because “We are experienced hikers” as he put it. And I of course said, “You are a Boy Scout.” But mostly I think we were just glad that the forest didn’t burn down and put us on the front page news. I do know this, he will never hand me his fuel container again.