

## The Great *Explore*

Thomas R. Cuba

0608 2026

I want to tell you a story.

Many of today's youth are living vicariously in their devices and don't really relate to the real world. Perhaps my story will prompt an escape from that castle of confinement, and offer real experiences which may contribute to the formation of character needed in an adult world.

Anyway, back in the 1990s, I was a Boy Scout Leader and, as my guys got a little older, they wanted to form a Venture troop. There isn't much difference between a regular troop and a venture troop, except that the latter is supposed to be more ... edgy. You know. Ad-Venture, meaning 'towards the venture.'

So, one day we decided to try something that I had done with my own kids many times. We were going to go on an "explore."

What's that?

I'll tell you.

I put three 14 year-old scouts in my jeep and off we went. They each had a sleeping bag and some other gear, and I had a tent. From the church parking lot, we headed west along the main street that ran by it. When we arrived at the stoplight, I asked them, "Left, Right or Straight ahead? They took a vote and off we went.

"Where are we going?" they asked.

"We are on an explore. We don't really know where we are going," I replied.

This went on, intersection after intersection. Most of the time, the intersection where I asked for directions was a county or state road. In any event, we were soon outside of the city and driving through the countryside. We, both they and I, were seeing places we had never visited or seen. Sometimes we would stop and look around. Take pictures. Learn a little local history. That sort of thing. We literally wandered aimlessly through south-central Florida for hours, stopping here and there to look at a particularly interesting natural feature or to get a snack at a tourist trap. By late afternoon, without any prior planning, we ended up at a State Nature Park. We camped there for the night, took a night hike and a dawn hike, had breakfast at a tiny local diner, and headed home.

For the entire trip, we had no plan, no place to go, and no expectations. That's what 'exploring' is all about.

Try that on your 'device.'