

tales from

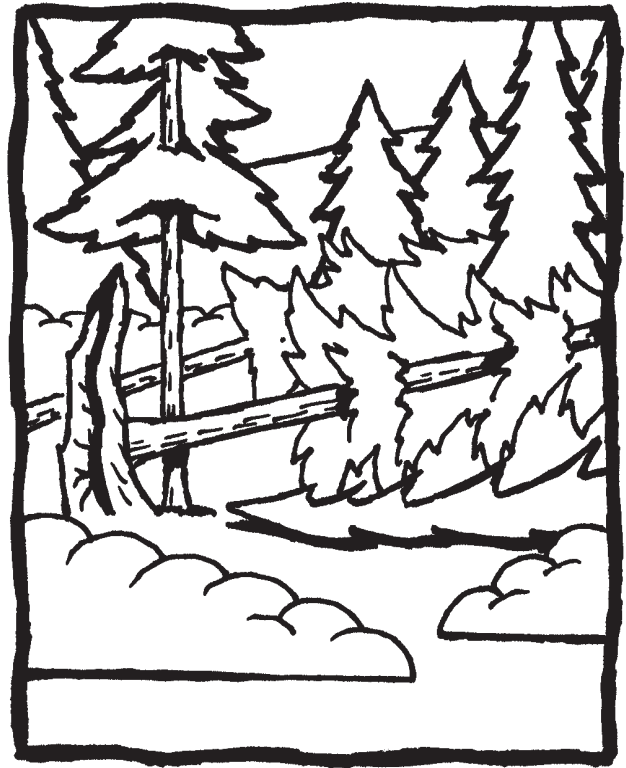
McCurdy's Woods

"Smokey's Burning Message"



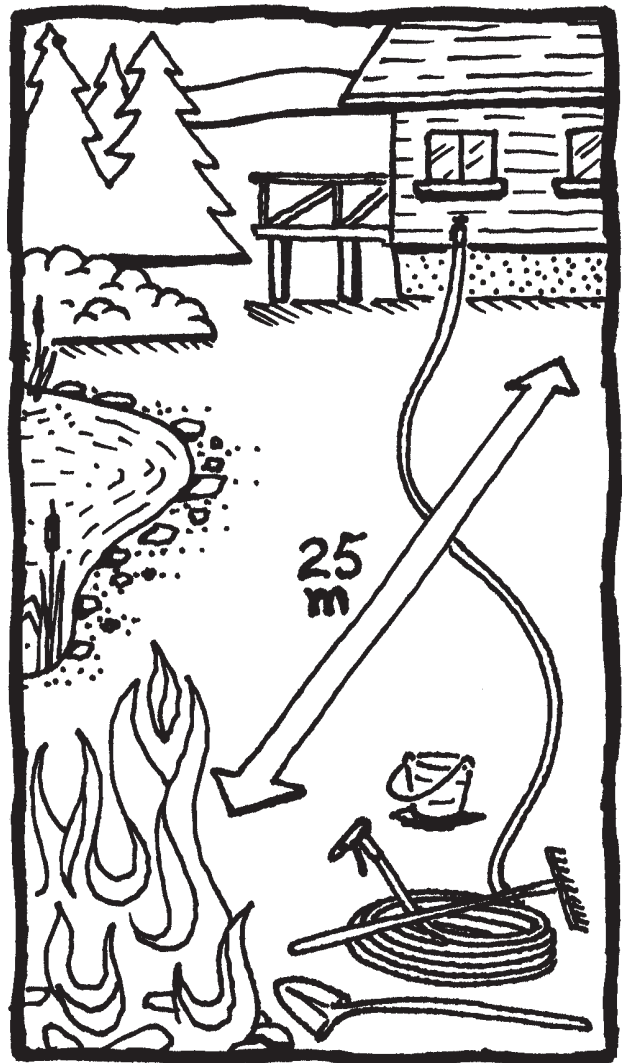
It will soon be time to pack up the car and head to our favorite family vacation spot - Gram and Gramps' cottage on Crescent Lake. This year is going to be special because everyone is going to be there for an entire week. We've spent the entire winter planning and arranging this trip with Uncle Jim and Aunt Becky. It is going to be like a family reunion; Gram and Gramps will be there, as well as lots of cousins to play with. It's almost too exciting to think about...swimming every day, hikes on the woods with Gram, and of course the delicious smores made over the campfire each night. I can just taste them now, and I can't think of anything I would be rather doing!

I hope all of this excitement doesn't make me forget the reason why we have planned this special week. Hurricane Juan really made a mess of things when it came through back in 2003. There are still many fallen trees and branches that need to be cleaned up. Dad says we need to help Gram and Gramps tidy up around the cottage. There will be plenty of brush to burn, and lots to keep us busy.

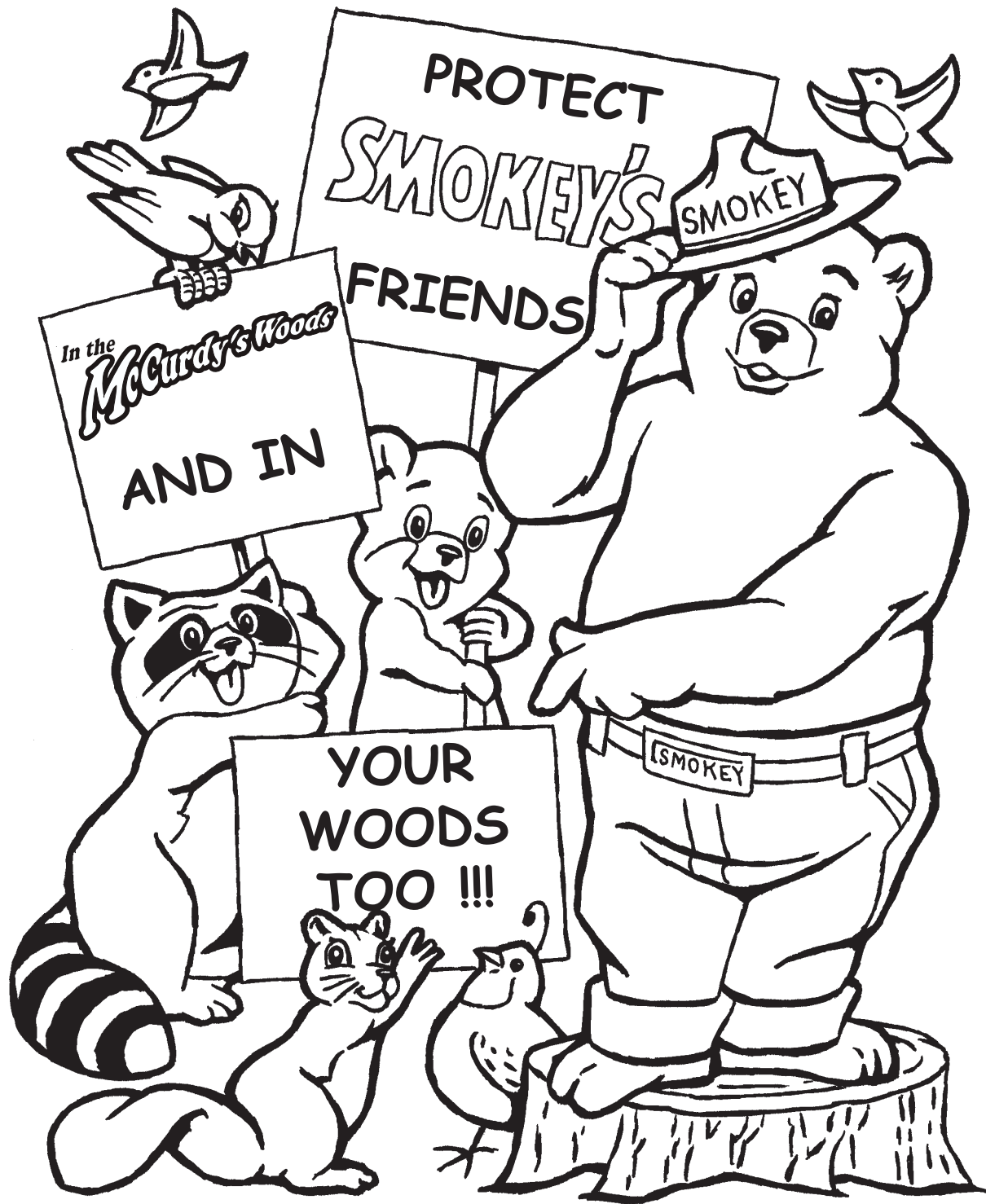


I keep thinking back to that special visit we had during the last week of school. A woman named Amy came to our classroom. She said she was a Forest Technician, and that part of her job was to fight forest fires. I was really surprised by all of the cool things she did, and I keep thinking that maybe that is something I might like to do when I got older. It was really exciting when Smokey joined her that day in our classroom. Since Smokey was a bear, he wasn't able to talk, but Amy said he had a special message for us about burning. I wrote everything down in my journal, so that when we get to the cottage, we'll remember what to do.

There are some important things to do before we start to burn brush. We'll need to get a burning permit from the local Department of Natural Resources office; remove all vegetation within 3 m of where the brush fire is going to be; make sure the fire is located at least 25 m away from the cottage or trees; keep fire fighting tools on hand (a charged garden hose, shovel, rake and bucket); and soak the ashes well with water after the fire is out.



Boy, there sure is a lot to think about, but the forests are worth all the extra planning. I sure hope Mom and Dad don't think I'm being too careful. I know Gram will be on my side; she loves to see the green forests and all the special creatures that live there. We will just have to work together to make sure that everyone remembers what Smokey has been trying to tell us for decades "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires".



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