

LISA  
FINN-  
GRAZNAK



## A tent fit for 5 kings

Camping. Outdoor life. Fresh air. Yeah, right. Camping would be great if it weren't for the part about camping.

How do I know this? Because I am sitting in a tent right now. Why am I sitting? Because standing can only be accomplished by the smallest members of our family. Where are the smallest members of our family? Sitting at my feet playing camp doctor with the first-aid kit. Why aren't they outside running around? Because the fresh air is blowing at about 40 mph and the outdoor life is at 45 degrees.

It all sounded so FUN weeks ago when the kids begged, "Please, can we go? Everybody else is!" "Sure, we'll buy a tent," I said. This from the woman who thought camping meant something more like driving the car right up to the door of a "Little House on the Prairie"-like cabin, only with a bathroom, beds and fridge.

A word about tents: COLD ... CRAMPED ... HOT ... CRAMPED. OK, so that's four words, but it's amazing how these structures are really only inhabitable in absolutely perfect weather on a partly sunny day with a gentle breeze.

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Once inside our "Roomy Five-Man Tent," the crowded conditions must have given us cabin, er, tent fever, because we spent several hours plotting an elaborate plan to kidnap five executives from the tent company and force them to live in this contraption until our demands were met: a hot shower, a plate of food that didn't start out as a little packet of dehydrated noodles, and one of them fancy flushin' toilets.

But first, these men would be required to set up the tent using the handy instructions they presumably endorsed. Step 1: Lay tent on ground. Step 2: Assemble tent frame by gathering up the 30-odd metal pole pieces and spending the next two hours fitting them into every configuration possible. Step 3: Locate five very tiny men.

And just to be helpful to our nice friends from the tent company, we would like to add a few elements from our own tent-raising session — a crying baby in the car, a big black rain cloud above the car, and two hungry children running around and around the car.

We determined "Roomy Five-Man Tent" really meant it took five men and plenty of room to set up the tent. And, while we're not ones to discriminate, we figured five adults of either sex would do, providing one was a geometry professor, two were carpenters, one was a baby-sitter and one a cook with at least the skills to whip up several of those little packets of dehydrated noodles.

Of course, when the tent was in position and the family was fed, we were supposed to be home free (pardon the pun) from that point. This was where the outdoor-living and fresh-air business was supposed to kick in. Actually, it did, once we located the bathrooms associated with outdoor living. Let's just say we were extremely grateful for all of that fresh air.

Anybody want to buy a tent?

*Lisa Finn-Graznak's column runs each Tuesday in the Lifestyle section. Address all correspondence to Lisa in care of the Daily Chronicle, 1586 Barber Greene Road, DeKalb, IL 60115.*