

Eleanor's Vignettes



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Camps of a Different Sort

Camping programs of a different sort appeared as early as 1877, born of a growing social conscience and "concern for the needs and conditions of the poor" in the city slums. A sermon by the Rev. William Parsons in a rural Pennsylvania church opened the hearts and homes of his parishioners. That summer 60 city children spent a fortnight as guests of the church families. There were of course some problems; but they were far outweighed by the joys and learnings of both guests and hosts.

The idea spread like wildfire and programs appeared simultaneously in Boston (modeled after a Copenhagen experiment), in New York City by the *New York Herald Tribune* Fresh Air Fund, and in Chicago by the *Daily News* Fresh Air Fund. An 1897 study done at Columbia University described programs in 24 metropolitan areas; with the staggering statistics of thousands of mothers and children and

boys and girls served in country outings or by two-week tent camps in the suburbs operated by local volunteers. The development of these efforts into established camps is important to camping today.

"One hundred summers, one million kids" read the headline of the Fresh Air Fund (New York) 1975 report. The Friendly Town program continues and in addition the Fund operates an excellent and varied camping program on its 3,000-acre Sharpe Reservation in Dutchess County, NY. Twenty-five hundred boys and girls live in small decentralized units in the seven camps, learning to know the natural world, and to enjoy creative pursuits. One of the seven, Hidden Valley, is planned for handicapped children. On spring and fall weekends family camping is in order, with parents learning more about what their children can do and what they can do together. The slogan "Two weeks of good growing weather" suggests the basic camp philosophy. The environmental center is a resource for all the camps and is available during the rest of the year for school and other groups.

The Young Men's Christian Union of Boston celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1977. In 1887, soon after the Rev. William Gannett introduced the Copenhagen plan to Boston, the YMCU accepted the management of Country Week, adding some of its own resources. In 1927 Waldo Stone became director and developed the extensive Camp Union and Otter Lake Conservation programs. His retirement after 50 years left a strong year-round innovative program of school camping, outdoor education, and staff training, as well as the summer camp with many special features. Its quiet influence has been nationwide.

South End House of Boston cooperated in this program from its inception. Albert Boer, the head resident, recently wrote, "In many ways one can find that camping, which

has become an essential part of the settlement's work, originated from the humble beginnings of Country Week."

Trail Blazer Camps in New Jersey (originally Life Camps) started in 1887 when the publisher of *Life Magazine* borrowed a 14-acre estate and collected \$1,000. The first camp of 250 children was such a success that by 1918 40,000 children had enjoyed a fortnight there. Dr. Lloyd B. Sharp became the executive director in 1925. He put his new theories and philosophy of camping and outdoor education into practice. Lois Goodrich soon joined him. In 1953 the camp programs were consolidated as Trail Blazer Camps at Mashipaconq. Winter programs are now included as the staff continues to work on new concepts and methods in keeping with the problems children face in today's world.

Incarnation Camp, Inc. (Episcopal Camp and Conference Center at Ivoryton, CT) also traces its beginnings to the Fresh Air Fund. This is the oldest camp under religious auspices. One of the clergy of the Church of the Incarnation who worked with the Fund in the late 1870s persuaded the church to start a similar program.

In 1886 a camp for children from the 31st Street Chapel was started. Soon three separate programs were in operation: a home for mothers and children under 10, fathers on weekends (During the Spanish-American War this was winterized as a convalescent facility for veterans.); a cottage for children of the day nursery; and a camp in July for girls and one for boys in August. These early camps concentrated on social services linked with the Chapel in contrast to the present Christian education/outdoor emphasis.

The Young Women's Guild of Trinity Parish (New York City) supported the camps till the 1923 move to Ivoryton. At that time a number of

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parishes consolidated endowment funds to develop, operate, and expand the new 600-acre site. This is a fully accredited multipurpose program with a pioneer village for teenagers, camps for boys and girls (all four-week sessions), a vacation lodge for senior citizens, and a two-week family camp with family campgrounds open fall and spring. An adult center and a youth center are available for conferences, retreats, and group meetings.

Jane Addams once asked at a critical moment, "Who, if not us? When, if not now?" It is important to start working once a need is identified. The way will then open for any skilled and sensitive leader to do what is needed next.

The 1975 centennial report of the Childrens Country Week Association (Philadelphia) comments proudly on the quality of facilities and leadership all due to "voluntary private effort trusting in the quality of human response." This camp grew from Mrs. Eliza Turner's invitation to 12 little girls from the poorer sections of Philadelphia to spend a fortnight on her farm at Chadd's Ford. This "Paradise Special" was so successful that a board was organized to continue and expand the program. Numbers grew from 20 children in 1877 to about 3,000 in 1910. At first board members went from farm to farm, walking or by road cart, to inspect each farm after interviewing prospective hosts. A personal interest was consistently maintained and some evaluation and follow-up were done each year.

With the development of organized camps and changing concepts in child welfare and social services the board abandoned the Country Week plan in favor of a residential camp. An operating farm of 115 acres in Chester County was purchased and Paradise Farm Camp opened in 1913 with a new lodge and bungalow for campers. It is an ACA accredited camp serving 210 boys and girls for each of three 18-day periods. Five hundred additional acres have been purchased and 37 cabins built in addition to the extensive program facilities. Increasing attention has been paid to the quality of staff and program to afford the best possible experience for the camper. The cliché "Big oaks from little acorns grow" is appropriate here.

Appreciation is due the directors of the above camps for data and access to reports. The forthcoming *A Century of Organized Camping* will have a section on "Camps of a Different Sort" with accounts of many other camps of like heritage and repute. □

restricted to those which have the least long-range ecological impact on the camp environment.

Project: Conduct a survey of the camp area and make recommendations about human uses.

Value: Conserve energy in as many ways as possible.

Project: Plan and cook a nutritious meal that wastes as little energy in the food web as possible.

Action learning has been a part of many camps for a long time. Camp leaders should examine the projects that are done now to uncover the underlying values. The list of important values should be expanded and new projects should be implemented to provide opportunities for campers to act on them.

Changing campers' values is not a simple matter. Many of their values are formed before we encounter the campers. Values are sometimes influenced by factual information, but feelings are important, too. For example, just knowing the facts about smoking doesn't always change behavior if smoking is pleasurable.

Sometimes people change a value to make it more consistent with their interests, beliefs, and feelings. For example, if a family values clean air and discovers that their car pollutes the air a great deal, they might trade it in for a more fuel-efficient vehicle. Sometimes people change their values when they participate in activities that are incompatible with some of the values they hold. For example, if a camper participates in a litter cleanup, he might eventually understand that littering behavior is incompatible with a clean environment.

An individual must realize the need to change a particular value. No authority can force a real value change when a person does not want to change. The desire to change must come from within. Our role as camp leaders is to help campers become aware that change toward particular values is important. At the same time, we must convince campers that they are ultimately responsible for developing their own value system. We can provide opportunities for a wide variety of choice as campers arrive at a process for valuing.

Every camp director should make two lists, one labeled, "Desirable values for all" and the other, "Value areas for free choice." Desirable values for all are inculcated by camp objectives, rules, policies, program, staff selection, and other camp structures. They are usually based on

considerations such as health, safety, care of property, camp reputation, and humane treatment of people. Value areas for free choice should allow campers a wide range of acceptable alternatives. Some research has shown that change takes place best when people have a latitude of freedom in choosing, have adequate and valid information, and are committed to the choices made. Allowing campers to clarify their own values in some areas requires trust in them and the confidence that they will make intelligent decisions. We know from personal experience that the values we have decided upon for ourselves are more cherished and long lasting than those imposed upon us against our will. We need to provide campers with many opportunities to draw their own life maps rather than trying to draw the entire maps for them.

As camp leaders, we have a responsibility to provide a well-thought-out values education for every camper. We have a number of approaches available to us to do the job. We must artfully combine them to provide a sound camp program. Before we do that, however, we must be clear about our own values and how we arrived at them. Then we can plan for the values and valuing processes of our campers. □

problems have come to camp with the campers. I am talking about stealing from one another, vandalism, distrust of each other, and violence on certain occasions.

"If we are going to have an impact on society, then we need to talk about our concerns with one another and with our campers and staff. If you don't like stealing, then say so to your campers and staff, and let them know that these types of acts greatly upset you. Our leaders in education, mayors, governors, presidents, and prime ministers need to stand up and say it is wrong to steal. Let's not take for granted that antisocial conduct is tolerated.

"When I was growing up not too many years ago, from the first grade through college I heard the word sportsmanship. This word not only applied to games but also to life. It seems to have disappeared from our vocabulary. I think that it belongs in our everyday conversation. It is as important in how you play the game (fairly) as it is in winning." □