

Eleanor's Vignettes



Juliette Low—a camp with a lasting impression

Dear Eleanor,

As a result of our phone conversation this morning I have been thinking about Camp Juliette Low all day, and I can't tell you how many happy memories have been summoned up after all these years. For me, it was what every camp ought to be, and I now realize what an influential piece it was in my growing-up puzzle. I went there for the summers of 1931 through 1938, the last two as what would now be called a C.I.T. (Counselor in Training), but with more responsibilities involved.

The camp was founded in 1922 by Juliette Low. Supposedly she found the site herself, and climbed up the mountain carrying her black umbrella and her caged parrot. The umbrella and her long black cape hung on pegs in the Great Hall for a long time afterward, as if she would show up any day to reclaim them. She died in 1927, so was not too long gone when I first arrived at camp. To me, a ten-year-old, Juliette Low was like Mary Baker Eddy was to Christian Scientists, and her presence was felt in camp—kept alive by stories told by staff members who had camped with her on this very same hallowed ground. Just think, Juliette Low had sat in this very room in front of this very fireplace, and had sung the songs we were singing.

Camp Juliette Low is near Cloudland, in what was then an almost inaccessible corner of northwest Georgia. It is situated on the back end of the mountain next to Lookout Mountain, about 40 miles south of Chattanooga, Tenn. From Thomasville, Ga., I rode almost 400 miles north on the bus, spending a night in Atlanta with relatives because it was too far for a day's journey. When the bus stopped

in Summerville, Ga., and left me off in the dusty little square, I waited for Tommy and his beloved camp truck. Tommy was a mountain man with truck to match—both sort of put together with baling wire but intrepid beyond belief.

The truck wound up the unpaved road to camp, which was on a rocky knoll at the top. Due to the terrain, the truck had to be left at the gate and the luggage went the last mile on a sledge, pulled by a beautiful ox whose many admirers kept her horns festooned with chains of wild daisies and purple clover. All food and supplies came in the same way, and while I gave it no thought at the time, I now know that it must have been a constant struggle for the staff to keep up the supplies.

The physical setup was very primitive. There were four or five units, widely separated in the woods so one felt very private, and we lived in tents with wooden floors—four cots to each tent. The only buildings in the units were the wooden latrines, which we scrubbed every day with Lysol and refilled the buckets of sand and lime (a scoop of each after usage). Woe betide any unit whose "garden house" developed an odor! Inspections were conducted by the nurse and a rotating senior staff member, and competition for the banner flown by the best unit was very keen. The shower was a wooden platform with a curtain around it, and water was pumped into buckets and carried there by the campers.

The swimming hole was a rock basin into which a cold mountain stream cascaded on one side and ran out on the other. We climbed down into a gully to get there, then got all hot and dirty again scrambling back up. There was a board with tags for each camper on the edge of the pool, and the tag was turned to the red side when you went in and back to the white when you got out. If you forgot to do this, you had to climb back down again and turn your tag, so one only forgot this once. The buddy system was strictly enforced, and when that whistle blew you had better be able to grab your buddy's hand and hold it up. Waterfront standards were rigidly adhered to, and I don't recall any accidents in all those eight summers. There was no boating, as our little creek was solid rock and ran downhill, except for that fortunate basin.

Camp Juliette Low was blessed in the area of staffing. It was the Girl Scout regional camp for the South and to have a staff position there was a great honor.

Eleanor P. Eells is one of the founders of the Fund for Advancement of Camping located in Chicago, IL.

Besides a fine choice of superior young women, they had people from the national staff, such as Kit Hammett, who came periodically to instruct in various skills. One unit was for adult women who were taking training courses offered by national, and their instructors also taught the campers in such areas as nature study. In those days there were wild orchids and wild azaleas in the woods, and flights of as many as eight pileated woodpeckers flew down the valleys below us.

Those in the adult unit were called the Wise Owls, and we saw nothing of them except at meals. They wore Edith Macy uniforms like our staff members, and to own one of those ugly things became my life's ambition. I finally worked up to one which I have in the attic, and it never fails to win at a costume party. We wore middie and bloomer type things in bright blue, with ties identifying our units, and white shorts and shirts on Sundays.

The camp was run strictly according to Minimum Standards for Girl Scout Camps, and "Minnie" was our bible. If Minnie said something should not be done, it was not done and this was never questioned—not by the campers, in any case. Neither did we question the amount of work we did. It was there to be done every day and we checked the caper chart and pitched into it. In addition to the unit work, there were forty or fifty lamps in the Great Hall which had to be filled with kerosene, their wicks trimmed, and the chimneys cleaned and polished with toilet paper. Everything was swept every day, the tables set, dishes washed, fires laid, and centerpieces made as needed with fresh wild flowers for every dinner table. I have since won my share of ribbons at flower shows, but nothing ever seemed quite so pretty as Indian Paint Brush in a pickle jar.

As we advanced in camping skills we were taken on marvelous jaunts called gypsy trips. We went in Tommy's old truck, sitting on our bedrolls in the back singing and praying for dry weather. Some of these lasted a week and took us into the Smokey Mountains, to Clingman's Dome, Cherokee, Gatlinburg, Newfound Gap, and all sorts of beautiful places. We slept out on the ground in pre-arranged camping spots where we could take baths in a river after dark and watch the changing heavens from our bedrolls. We cooked all our food and dug latrines, which had to be filled in and covered over, so the land was left in the original condition when we left. The girls planned all the meals and made requisition lists which were gone over with the dietician. We carried numbered boxes with canned goods for

(continued on page 26)

(continued from page 6)

each day so we didn't have to scramble through Thursday's box for something needed on Tuesday. Lists of the fresh things to be bought each day were taped to the boxes, and it all worked like a charm. I am sure that this was where I learned to organize, and it was good experience to be given responsibility.

There were several camp directors during my tenure, but the two I remember were Katherine Park of the National staff and Lutie Neese from Waycross, Ga. Both were terrific and I remember them fondly. Miss Neese was a frail little woman, quite elderly

(she was probably 50), and we were all very protective of her. She allowed us to do that, while running a very tight ship. She was a master story-teller, an absolute spellbinder at a campfire. She walked with a pronounced limp and was a semi-cripple, so the rocky terrain of Juliette Low must have been very difficult for her. I never heard her complain, however, and all of us were eager to be her legs—she didn't want for errand girls. Both Miss Neese and Miss Park had been good friends of Juliette Low, and maybe this gave them a special aura.

I don't know how many girls were there, perhaps about 125, or what it

cost. Those were lean years, but somehow my mother (a widow with my two older sisters in college) found the money every summer for eight weeks of heaven. It was not until I had a junior staff position (no salary, just free board for working my tail off) that I realized how well run this camp really was. This was the summer of 1938 and I had finished my freshman year at Duke, fallen in love, and felt I was a woman of the world. At Juliette Low I was still a 17-year-old, and was very wisely supervised as such. I don't mind saying that by that time I was a first-class camper with all the skills, but my judgment was never put to the test. Lutie Neese was too smart to let that happen. At the time I thought I was deciding, but her "eye was on the sparrow" so that no disasters befell my charges. I guess the secret of the camp lay in people like that, and I was privileged to know women who gave me some goals for which to shoot.

Now I want to tell you what Juliette Low did for me and therefore, what I think camps ought to do, although I realize that the Age of Innocence is over and things don't work that way any more. I left this camp secure in the knowledge that I could cope with the world and survive. I could chop wood, build a fire in any weather, sleep out of an oil can and a coat hanger and bake a pie in it in a driving rain, and life wasn't going to throw me any curves. Life did, of course, but the very greatest thing in the world is that "I can do it" feeling.

My last night at Juliette Low is very clearly recalled because I knew it would be my last time there. I was now in college and would henceforth have to help support myself, so this beautiful part of my life was over. After my unit was bedded, I went out and sat on the campfire rocks to look at the stars, and with all the fervor of a seventeen-year-old I vowed that I would marry Art and we would love each other forever—a fact with which poor Art was not yet acquainted. In addition to that, I would try for the rest of my life to put back into the Girl Scouts some small measure of what I had taken out. The first one came true, and the second one I am still working on.

Affectionately,
Jo

(Mrs. Arthur Hoffman (Jo) lives in Glen Ellyn, Ill., where she is active in youth work, church, and community affairs. She is a Trustee of George Williams College and has served Girl Scouting in various capacities, among them as president of the Chicago Council. She is still working at it.) □

Buy Misprint Paper Cups Direct —and Save!

Hot or cold beverage cups available direct from manufacturer.

Prices are as follows, and always available.

| | | |
|-------------------|---------|----------------|
| 6 oz. hot or cold | 2000/cs | 16.50 per case |
| 8 oz. hot or cold | 2000/cs | 18.97 per case |
| 9 oz. cold | 2500/cs | 23.73 per case |
| 10 oz. cold | 2400/cs | 30.75 per case |
| 12 oz. cold | 2400/cs | 31.75 per case |

Sanitary; disposable and biodegradable paper cups.

35 cases are delivered, small quantities F.O.B. Kenton, Ohio. Can ship small quantities United Parcel Service.

Outside Ohio, phone toll-free 800-537-4141
In Ohio call collect.



Circle 12 on Reader Inquiry Card
IMPERIAL CUP CORP
808 FOUNTAIN STREET
KENTON, OHIO 43326

Professional skill takes years to build. A professional court takes a weekend. With Ready-to-Use.

Ready-to-Use. The brilliant new concept in athletic surface coating by Tru-Flex®. You do it yourself. Easily.

It's simple. Open the can and spread your surface. No mixing. No measuring, no multiple applications.

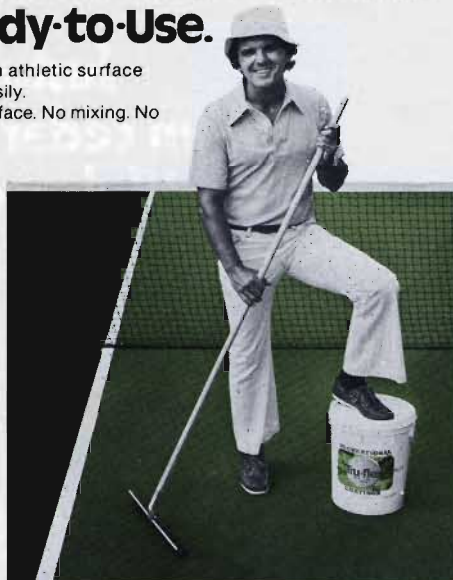
It's economical. Ready-to-Use was conceived with the wallet of the weekend in mind — not the budget of the country club.

And best of all, it works. You create a tough, good looking, durably coated playing surface that's made to play well and last a long time. Ready-to-Use by Tru-Flex®. Your Ready for it.

We also supply tennis nets and posts.



Tru-Flex® RECREATIONAL COATINGS,
Division of Touraine Paints, Inc., 1760-9
Revere Beach Parkway, Everett, MA
02149. (617) 387-4690. Tru-Flex® is
represented in Australia, Canada, France,
Hong Kong, Italy, Saudi Arabia, United
Kingdom and the United States.



Circle 13 on Reader Inquiry Card