

Eleanor's Vignettes



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Hedley Seldon Dimock 1891-1958

A former student, later a colleague, wrote of Hedley Dimock, "People across the country who worked with him in the pioneering days know that he, more than any other single person had a vision and working philosophy that would bind practitioners, administrators, and teachers together in maintaining the highest possible standards." To this I would add my own acknowledgement and gratitude for his contribution to the personal and professional growth of so many of us fortunate enough to have known him. A resolution passed by the ACA Board at his death noted,

He was one of the pioneers in the development of camp Standards. Through his wisdom, understanding, and tactfulness, he provided the foundation for the present Standards program.

His contributions were in many directions. He developed programs for

leadership training and provided methods for thoughtful and skilled supervision. Through his teaching, and through his spiritual guidance, he has developed leaders that will enrich the lives of the hundreds with whom they are associated.

Dr. Dimock challenged unfounded assumptions about the value of the camp experience with a revolutionary impact on camping practice. *The gap between what is known and what is practiced is a sobering fact of life among all institutions. Practice fails to measure up to standards so fluently and eloquently stated by practitioners.* He was tireless in his efforts to interpret standards to camp directors in a way that would incorporate them into the philosophy and everyday practice of the camp. A floor had to be built quickly, but the ceiling was not defined, for any camp director worthy of the name must keep on learning and reaching up for the best he can give his campers.

Born in Nova Scotia in 1891, Dimock's boyhood was spent in Boston and in northern Saskatchewan where the family homesteaded. It must have been a hard life for a 13-year-old boy doing a man's work in clearing and tilling the land and helping build a home in that remote, harsh environment. His references, however, to this period were always in terms of the privilege of his pioneer experience, the beauty of the wilderness, the discipline of work, and the satisfactions of accomplishment.

Two and a half years were spent in Saskatoon to earn a high school diploma and complete a year at the university, while supporting himself by various odd jobs. Here he met Eustace Haydon (then secretary of the YMCA), who became a lifelong friend.

In 1916 he enlisted in the Princess Patricia Light Infantry and was severely wounded in France. During a long hospital stay he rethought his position on war and pondered personal relationships and his future. He reentered the university, graduating in 1920. After two years as secretary for the Saskatchewan YMCA Boys' Work

Board, where he worked with Taylor Statten, he married and moved to Chicago to enter the university. He received his master's in 1925 and his bachelor of divinity and doctorate in 1926. After a year of teaching at Carleton College he became professor of religious education, and later dean, at George Williams College.

The summers of 1924-1929 were spent at Camp Ahmek where he and Charles Hendry completed their work and studies which resulted in the 1929 publication of *Camping and Character*. This book was realistic and practical and led to new views, goals, and methods in camping and religious education as well as in youth agencies concerned with character development. The authors appreciated the importance of intuitive feeling and the ability to relate naturally to campers. They pointed out that a leader is doubly effective when analysis, evaluation, and research can undergird his philosophy and practice. He then "understands better what he is doing and why." Their studies, knowledge, and motivation laid a base for evaluating camp practice.

The following year Dimock and several colleagues offered an institute on "Character Education in the Summer Camp" at the college, to be followed by four more seminars in the thirties. The resulting monographs had a strong influence on camping and group work and helped to close the gap between theory and practice.

Dr. Dimock is best known in the Midwest because of his close association with ACA Sections and camps, in institutes and workshops, through the Standards program, and through camp staff whom he had trained. He became involved in the Chicago agency camp group at the Welfare Council, organized the Chicago Camping Association, and as its first president developed it as a chartered Section when ACA was first incorporated in late 1935. The stimulus of his leadership and the quality of the monthly all-day

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programs quickly attracted a large working membership, with cooperation of private and agency camps. He wrote with passion on democracy for he believed that in camps it was possible to live and experience democracy, not give it lip service.

In 1937 Dimock wrote *Rediscovering the Adolescent*, in 1948 *Administration of the Modern Camp*, and in 1955 *Designing Education in Values—A Case Study in Institutional Change*. Also, there were many monographs and articles in a variety of professional periodicals as well as in *Camp Magazine* and YMCA publications. The YMCA considered Dr. Dimock "our very own" and his influence there as teacher, speaker, author, leader, and "change agent" was felt nationally and internationally. He was an active member of many professional associations and throughout his career built bridges with camping and served as liaison with allied professions.

From 1943 to 1946 he was on leave to serve as coordinator of training, and director of headquarters services for the USO. In 1948 he moved to San Francisco to serve as coordinator of

training for the YMCA and help bring about the change to which he and the association were dedicated.

Hedley Dimock viewed camping as an opportunity, a responsibility, a "sacred trust," and an unexcelled setting in which to affect the lives and attitudes of youth. Only the best would suffice, and the dedicated professional leader would reach out beyond what he then knew to do better. He expected of his students the same best efforts and striving for excellence. Some less professionally motivated students found him too demanding, too theoretical, or too critical, but he was always respected. Most of his students loved him and appreciated all he had to give, as well as his expectations of them.

His sense of humor and at times gaiety were a joy to behold. He could write verses, set them to music, and break into song. He had a remarkable ability to pace himself, to work hard and long, but always to reserve time for rest and recreation, for family and friends. The phrase "What a man he was" was often used to describe him. And what a man he was, from his pioneer days throughout a life of caring, teaching, and learning—giving freely of his best and bringing out the best in others. □

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available in the spring of 1979.

Severely handicapped campers, particularly those in wheelchairs, require some modifications in camp structure and design to allow access and participation in camp programs. Sleeping, eating, and bathroom facilities must be modified to accommodate wheelchairs, and ramps must be installed where stairs are a barrier. Specifications for removing architectural barriers have been established by American National Standards Institute and should be consulted when planning modifications. Camps are often located in naturally rugged terrain and thought must be given to removing environmental barriers so handicapped campers may have access to programs. This does not mean that every trail, water site, or camp facility must be made accessible. The emphasis is on program accessibility and this requirement is met if nonhandicapped children have access to each program offered by the camp. With reasonable and even simple modifications, even a severely handicapped youngster is capable of participating in camp activities. Any additional costs may be offset by increased revenue from organizations supporting camping for handicapped people, increased utilization of camp facilities by elderly or handicapped groups in the off-season, tax deductions, and state and federal grants.

Camps have a great opportunity, as well as an obligation, to assist in the movement to bring handicapped people into the mainstream of life. Camping is a highly valued experience that can prepare handicapped children for mainstreaming in an enjoyable and nonthreatening atmosphere. Equally important, it can enhance every camper's understanding and feeling for people who appear to be different. Careful planning and preparation is essential to successful mainstreaming but this can be accomplished at minimal cost. Furthermore, the return on this personal and financial investment in mainstreaming will be an increase in the scope and value of camping for all children. □

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