

100 Years of YMCA  
Camping

Eugene A. Turner, Jr.



# Foreword

In 1885, The European Young Men's Christian was 41 years old; the American Young Men's Christian Association was just 34 years old.

It was in that year and for 99 consecutive years thereafter organized camping in the YMCA established itself firmly in the roots of American society.

For an institution to celebrate a centennial is indeed a noteworthy event, but to have a single program within that institution commemorate an unbroken chain of 100 years is even more unique. Throughout its enviable history, the YMCA has celebrated many important anniversaries, having originated many program "firsts", but none more important than the one which is recorded within these pages.

Eugene A. Turner, Jr., the author, recently retired, a YMCA professional for his entire career, has gathered and skillfully recorded various YMCA Camp developments that have contributed to the overall history of YMCA Camping. This edition is the longer version of his efforts. The abbreviated history was written and published in time for the Centennial Celebration of Camping at the YMCA of the Rockies in October, 1984.

As Gene later describes in his text, much of the historical information he used resided primarily in the archives of member Associations and only a limited

amount was found in the centralized location of headquarters. Although not all Camps responded to the request for information, the author and I are reasonably satisfied that the following pages adequately capture the essence of our illustrious history.

The time line from 1885 until the present, 1985, is a long one. In 1885 seven boys and a counselor started it all. In all probability, 1.2 million youngsters will be served in our day and resident Camps in 1985. This means that for each year of those 100, mothers, for example, have helped pack bags for campers, many of whom were leaving home for the first time, some for a week's session, many for longer periods of time, some staying close to home, others traveling a longer distance.

Why? To have FUN, of course. But it was soon recognized by campers and parents alike that the experience had greater potential than a good time, as important as that is. In most cases it meant new friends, learning a new skill, being much more aware of the natural world, developing some leadership qualities, making choices and value decisions, coming in contact with new adult role models, and finding some answers to questions that help spiritual growth.

In addition to the traditional influence of the red triangle of spirit, mind, and body one of the early classic Bible verses that still is the cornerstone of many YMCA Camps is Luke 2:52, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." The challenge to campers and staff is to become more "Christ-like."

So today, organized camping of some sort is found in many of the 92

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countries that are part of The World Alliance of YMCAs - a program model that originated here but emulated throughout the world.

If you have been a part of this history, share in its pride but being mindful that it is only by learning from the past that we can better understand our present, and perhaps more accurately predict and influence our future.

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