

#8 Towne C

Disclaimer

Should the ramblings of an old man be taken for fact? Of course not. They are an account of things as they have been mellowed by age and tempered with experiences of a lifetime. Each person perceives the events as they happened from his own biased point of view. As time progresses the memories of the events also may change. Thus these are but fables based on the observations of one who was there and may or may not remember with complete accuracy. Thus historians of Camp Waupaca may find many discrepancies. Truth is of the moment and may be altered by time.

Early Years

1952 - 1965

When Camp Waupaca was being built and the first year that it held campers, the Waupaca County Post and the Picture Post had articles and pictures in several issues. These newspaper clippings were posted in the rec. hall until they weathered away. Along with these clippings was a "*Ripile's Believe it or Not*" that featured Irving Kuklin (Skipper). He had received his high school and college diploma. Using his GI Bill funds, Skipper applied for college and earned his BS. The day before the graduation ceremony a college official asked him for his high school diploma. Skipper had not finished high school as he had to begin earning a living at age 16. To solve the problem, Skipper took a High School Equivalency Test and passed it in the morning received his high school diploma and then graduated with his college class in the afternoon. The dust of these articles must still float around the grounds at Camp Waupaca.

The original cabins and mess hall were WW II barracks from the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. They were disassembled and shipped by rail to Waupaca. At least one more building was purchased than was reconstructed. The spare parts were stored in the red barn by the white house and used for projects up to the building of the canteen. After the canteen all usable materials were gone. The original buildings were fabricated by Forest Paine, Winferd Sterns, the Rosen family and the Kuklin family. The "new" cabins were built by Clifford Johnson, a local contractor. The last construction of the facilities were constructed by the Wanty Brothers, Bill Wanty doing most of the work.

When the "Old Beach" proved to be unsatisfactory because of a cold water spring that kept the water there cold all summer the new beach area was developed. Clifford and Clem Caldwell used marrow digging equipment and dug out the area. Then sand was trucked in over the ice to make a sand beach and swimming area. Although the marrow has moved in over the sand, it has formed a base so that people do not sink in to their knees. The deep trench by the ski dock was also dug out with the marrow digging equipment. Marrow was sold to the local farmers to spread on the fields to make them more fertile. The first use

of the trench was for a high diving raft. The high dive board must have been 10 feet above the water. After a conflict with the insurance company, the raft was abandoned until it became the "Rosemary" nature raft of more modern times.

The "Old Beach" was never entirely abandoned. The pile of sand attracted many counselors and kitchen girls over the years. That is a story in and of itself that is best left to the memories of now aging men and women. During the day, it was also used as a nature lab for the campers. As Bob Mowen can attest it was a great place to catch fish and raccoons.

"Soap Drill Today!" Skipper would announce. This meant the campers and counselors would put on swim suits and report to the beach. Skipper handed out the Ivory soap (99 to 100% pure, it floats). Each boy would lather up with the soap and then dive under to rinse off. "Be sure that you wash the London Bridge." Skipper would repeat several times. The counselors would also do an ear check at that time. No one had any idea that the soap was contaminating the water.

Life on the guard tower was great. Every 10 minutes the guard blew a loud whistle and each swimmer had to find his "buddy" and they would hold their hands up to be counted. A counselor on the end of the dock would check the clip board to make sure the count was accurate. Once I saw a boy go under the dock and blew the whistle. It turned out to be a good thing because the boy had hit his head and panicked. He had gulped some water before he was pulled out. Being afraid for a short time was the only injury. One year the base of the tower poles rotted off and the tower was made shorter. When the poles rotted again, the tower was removed.

One of the jobs of the cabin counselors was to take down two by four braces in their cabins at the start of each season. They also had the job of nailing them back in place before they would get their summer check at the end of the season. The builders and Skipper were afraid without extra bracing the roofs would cave in under the weight of the winter snow.

Pulling the piers and clearing the waterfront was a sign that it was the last few days of camp. This even more than the "Blue and White War" fortold the end was near. After the campers left on the buses that would take them to the train, it was mattress day. All of the mattresses from all of the cabins were taken out to the athletic fields and laid out in the sun. Two hours and turn, then two hours and off to the mattress room in the red barn. Those mattresses that were too soiled for another year went to the dump. There were no pay checks for the men left in camp until all the cabins were cleaned (sweep and mopped), the mattresses put away, and all equipment stored.

The original wells were sand points driven by hand to the depth of 20 to 25 feet by old time plumber, Earl Potter. The pumps were at the bottom of 6 foot pits just large enough for the pumps and a small pressure tank. The reason for the underground pits was to protect the water systems from freezing in the winter. In theory the frost line is 3 feet deep and the pumps should have been protected. As the spring set up people could attest, the pumps would freeze and break if any water was left in them over the winter. This system had to be modified and the pumps moved to above ground for health safety reasons.

Two tall poles supporting a swinging sign stood by Stratten Road announcing "CAMP WAUPACA". The sand road leading to the grounds was always dusty and often rutted. Nothing defined the camp entrance more than the teepee and totem pole. The original tent was in rags by 1958 so a new one was purchased. The job of decorating it fell to an honoree member of the Long House in Chicago, Charles Cooper. Indian craft and lore was a great hobby of his and he taught the Indian children their native crafts at the Long House. He had an Indian name that meant "One Who Smokes a Clay Pipe", in the Iroquois language. The canvas was spread and Cooper laid out the designs. Many campers were involved in the painting. The symbols on the tent depicted a bear for strength, red animal tracks that meant the owner of the teepee was a good hunter, clouds and sun to show the connection to nature's bounty, and a Jewish mystical symbol to protect the users of the teepee.

The totem pole had been carved by the first campers and was a symbol of pride for them for many years. Another pole stood in the "Brave Ring". No one but a "Brave" could walk on this sacred ground. On "Brave Night" (one each four weeks) a magical fire would be started here by the "Littlest Brave". Skipper and his wandering braves would come onto the beach by canoes lit with torches. No one dared to speak during the ceremony except for the major players. Two taps a pledge, three taps a brave. The new braves and pledges were harassed by the old braves for a day. The initiates were dressed as oddly as their sponsor could imagine and they had to make beds and generally act as servants for them. The swearing in ceremony was at the Rural School parking lot and the reward was a trip to the A&W Root Beer Stand in Waupaca.

The first flag pole was near the present basketball courts. Then one night someone tied Gary Heller's underwear to the rope and flew them at the top. To make sure that they would be there in the morning, the rope was tied up beyond Gary's reach. Some how Gary found out about the prank. He found a camp ax and cut down the pole in the dawn's early light. Needless to say shocked campers gathered around the remains. Before the day was over, the pole was set at the present site, although it was several feet shorter. Skipper and a crew found a new pole and erected it so that the flag could fly even higher than before.

Braves were determined by two methods; earning feathers or voting in by the "Braves". Thus outstanding or popular campers could make "Brave" by vote. The earning of feathers was the other way to become a "Brave". Red feathers were earned by attending classes, blue feathers were earned by achievements such as earning a swimmer's badge or rifle award; white feathers were earned by winning or improving in athletic events such as the Sunday Track Meet, or Blue & White War. To many campers earning feathers and becoming a "Brave" was very important.

The first male urinals were installed in 1958 or '59. This added to the capacity of the morning rush hour on the plumbing fixtures. Besides being a convenience they were a point of pride for Skipper. I can still remember him saying, "We are right up to date now, boy."

The sewer system consisted of holding tanks with an overflow dry well. These tanks had the capacity of 1,000 gallons and need to be pumped twice a year. The sinks, commodes, urinals, and showers were sanitized twice a day with bleach. About a half gallon of bleach was used for each bathroom. Four brooms were worn out in a season. At least 10 campers were accidentally hosed down during the cleaning process each season. In 1956 the cabin 1&2 toilets were plugged by a person who had only one bowel movement a week. This indicated that some one was lying when they were asked each day if they had had a movement, (part of a counselor's job then). When a pump failed or the tank filled sooner than anticipated Skipper would announce, "No pee pee in the teepee for cabin 3 & 4 today."

The mess hall was "Kuklin's Kitchen" and the "Horse Shoe" was the Rosin Bowl. The kitchen and mess hall were closed after dinner and no one was allowed in. Camp supplies were kept in a store room off the mess hall. One night the light for the bathroom for Cabin 3 & 4 burned out and as I had worked on maintenance, I knew how to get into the Kitchen when it was locked. So when the counselor came to me to see if I could get a light bulb, I said sure. After getting the bulb, I was leaving the kitchen when who should I run into but Skipper. "I see you found a light bulb," was all he said to me. The next morning Skipper and my mother had a laugh at my expense.

Soda and gum were virtually barred from the camp grounds. What soda there was was kept in a shack where the trip shack was built. There was a soda machine in it and a junior counselor by the first name of Jack had the key and control. Every one loved Jack, especially on a hot day. Some times he would show favoritism by handing out a free soda. He claimed to be sneaking it out. After he moved on I asked Skipper about how much soda was lost a season and he told me not a single bottle was unaccounted for. Jack paid for every soda he had "pilfered." Gum was smuggled into camp in packages of comic books. A

wise counselor would not search the packages of well behaved campers too closely and do a page by page search of the ones who gave him trouble. That was one way a counselor could award good behavior.

Toe nails were clipped by counselors with the one and only set of toenail clippers in camp. These clippers were moved from one cabin to another until the season was over. They were then collected by Skipper and put in safe keeping for the next year. About 1958 the clippers were lost and an award of one trip to the root beer stand established (no questions asked) for the return. No one has been able to collect the reward.

One of the worst times that the camp had was the fire that destroyed old cabin 3 & 4. We were all eating supper when a camper who had gone to the bathroom returned and told us that a cabin was on fire. Thinking it was my cabin that was burning, I ran out and discovered it was the cabin next door. There was a hose near the tap and so I connected it and directed a spray into the blaze. The heat was terrific and the whole front of the cabin in flames. In a short time the electricity was cut off and the water failed. By this time the campers were being sent to the white house and many of the counselors had formed a bucket brigade from the lake. I joined them in a fruitless effort to quench the fire. Shortly after that the fire department from King arrived and began pouring water on cabins 1 & 2 to save them. In a very short time cabin 3 & 4 had become a pile of ash and coals.

The greatest loss by anyone that occupied the cabins was by Chuck Cooper. The flames consumed his buckskin shirt and pants, a collection of authentic scalping knives, a 1700's tomahawk, an 1800's pistol, Indian scalps, and some ancient bead work. That night he sat alone on a bench and calculated his loss of irreplaceable historical items.

It is hard to imagine what the cost to the camp was. The next year most of the boys from that cabin did not return. The small number of campers for the next two years was probably the result of the fire. A "Fire Tank" was made up by a local welder. A fire bell was installed at the flag pole. Newer fire extinguishers were hung on power poles. Night watch was extended until 12:30 and Skipper seemed to always be walking the grounds at night. I have often wondered if Skipper's long hours did not contribute to his heart attack.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

The Towne family and Camp Waupaca started with Wayne working maintenance/counselor. Annie became a cook in 1958. Renee' worked as a cook in the '60's. Alvin worked maintenance one summer and was available for odd jobs for many years. Erle worked maintenance two summers. Dean worked maintenance for three summers. The head of the clan, Hazen, planted many of

the maple trees after the oak wilt disease kill so many of the camp's trees. He supplied the trees and labor, the only cost to the camp was a standing invitation to the annual banquet. Tammie and Cindi each worked for the camp two seasons.

The Wanty family is another local family that has contributed to the well being of Camp Waupaca. They were called upon as the Towne family retired to other occupations.

Among Campers there was the Chavin family, the Ringel family, the Levine family. Of course those who were an only child or had only sisters were not able to create a dynasty of campers.

COUNSELORS & PEOPLE

Roman Danielson of Waupaca was the first head counselor. He worked with Skipper and Joe from 1953 to 1955. He was instrumental in developing a lot of the programs. After he left Skipper and Joe did the job themselves until Bob Kron was hired.

Dan Sorensen was the first swimming instructor. He was from Minnesota and was a divinity student. He was joy riding with a few of his friends after drinking heavily. They drove to an abandoned gravel pit in the dark with out lights to keep from being caught by a police car. After sobering up the next morning, Dan went back to the gravel pit and looked at the tire tracks. At one place the right rear tire had left solid ground and was suspended over a 400 foot drop. That was when Dan decided to make something of his life and become a minister. He was a very quiet person and spend most of his free time reading religious books. His hobby was making unusual lanyards.

Jim Danielson was my maintenance partner in 1956. We had an old Chevy flat bed truck that was used to pick up the trash barrels daily and haul them to the dump. Once a week we would take the laundry to the cleaners in large cardboard barrels. Each Barrel was marked with the cabin number. Each week the laundry would come back mixed so that some of the clothes for cabin 1 were in the cabin 8 barrel. Some of the campers would blame us for mixing up their clothes. We did not do that; however one trip the laundry did not put the covers on the barrels tight and as we were driving up the first hill on County trunk K some popped off. Laundry was spread from the top of the hill to the bottom. After about an hour of picking up clothes, Jim and I were on our way. I don't know if any clothes were lost, but they were well mixed and some were even dirtier than when they were sent. Especially those that were run over by traffic. We never told Skipper.

Mrs. Irene Gutho and Mrs. Forest Grant were the cooks in 1956. Before the arrival of the campers, the mess hall was getting an internal coat of paint. The

container of choice for cleaning the paint brushes was a number 10 can. This was also the container of choice to measure water for cooking. The first evening of "All Staff" day menu called for chili. The huge pot of chili was placed on a serving cart and pushed out to hungry staff. Some noted a strong smell of paint as they took their turns dipping out a bowl. A two or three asked if they could eat at the picnic table outside because of the smell. The first in line were spiting out the chili while others were still in line. The strong smell was the chill that had been made with turpentine instead of water. The next day Mrs. Gutho was greeted with a chorus of "Who put the turpentine in Mrs. Gutho's chili", compliments of Herb Beller and Barry Shanoff.

EVENTS & ITEMS

CIT's were sometimes bored with the usual routine of camp life. Pied Piper Nite had become too blasé' for them and the year before there had been an incident that marred this event for the younger and newer campers. Scheduled for a Thursday evening, it was determined that Charles Cooper and I would take the CIT's in the back of the old truck to a drive-in movie. The movie was the classic "Samson and Delilah". Cooper and I loaded benches from the rec. hall unto the truck and after dinner the CIT's loaded on while the Pied Piper lead the rest of the camp in a huge snake line. The truck approached the drive-in ticket booth in a long line of cars. It was "Buck-A-Car Nite" and many were taking advantage of the sale. A horrified girl at the booth said, "I'll have to call the manager." Because of the line behind us the solution was quickly resolved. We could see the movie, all 15 of us for a buck if we were to park in the very back row. The management also let us use two speakers. That night parked in the back row with the lovers, many of the boys were not watching the action on the screen. Some learned why drive-in's were often referred to as the "Finger Bowl".

Friday afternoon was a time for a special weekly clean-up. All the bedding was aired out, the clothes shelves given a dusting, and the floors mopped. This was in preparation for the Sabbath, when no clean-up was done.

Joe and Mae Rosen conducted services at the evening meal with one or two campers assisting. All of the campers were very respectful of the service and it was mostly likely the only time the mess hall was truly quiet.

Friday evening services at the Rosen Bowl (now Horseshoe) were conducted by various staff and once an honored Rabbi came to speak. The topic was usually about nature and the goodness we enjoyed in our pleasant surroundings. If there had been any kind of altercation the past week, the lesson would be on brotherhood and developing good relations. Although non religious counselors were not mandated to attend, all who were on duty did. The services were a time of good fellowship and togetherness.

Super Sunday was a series of track and field competition. The campers were encouraged to practice events during free time all week long and to see if they could improve their performance. The emphasis was not on winning, but improving. The program began after Sunday clean-up and ended at lunch. The afternoon was the Great Staff Baseball Game, GSBG. The cabins were divided in half and the winner group's campers got an extra canteen that evening. Sunday canteen was usually fruit and the winning cabins got a candy treat as well.

There was never a head counselor like Bob Krohn. Many a night after all was quiet on the camp grounds, he would visit the assembled counselors in the Rec. Hall to see who wanted a cold quart of beer and a pack of hot sticks. This was much appreciated by most counselors and as far as was told Skipper never knew.

Al Hirsh was the Al Hirt of the camp with his recorder. When he was on duty he could be found in the Rec. Hall playing quietly for the entertainment of the counselors. Al played quiet relaxing tunes as well as some traditional Jewish folk songs.

Jim Avery was the philosopher of the counselor meetings. He would sit easily smoking a meerschaum pipe that never burned out. When ever there was an argument, Jim would expound learned advise. Manny and Lil seemed to be in the grip of this young counselor and often called on him for his cool advise. At the end of his first year at camp everyone though that he would surely be invited back for another season. The last night of camp Jim lead a group of CIT's to blockade Manny's house with beds, picnic tables and put Manny's prize buggy on the roof. There was no more talk of Jim's return.

Nate Metsner taught boating and canoeing as no other counselor. He taught me the art of canoeing and row boating so you can imagine his skills. We took an "Early Bird" trip to the Nicolai National Forest near Eagle River on Butternut-Franklin Lake. There was an exclusive girls camp on one end of the lake. One evening Nate and I went canoeing towards it. When we reached about 200 yards from the shore men with shot guns came running out on the piers. President Nixon's daughters were spending the summer there and the men shouting and waving guns at us were Secrete Service Men. That is when I learned the importance of the bow turn and long steady strokes to make speed.

One night at the Butternut-Franklin campsite two young women appeared in distress. They had walked down the road in the evening and forgot to bring flash lights. They were lost and in need of guidance. Two of the counselors asked permission to guide them back to their campsite. As our campers were nestled in their tents, Cooper and I agreed. The boys were gone much longer than they should have been and we began to worry. When at last they

appeared, Cooper asked them where they had been. One replied, "The girls took us to a place and showed us their berry patch." The rest of the trip there were parties out searching for the berry patch.

This was also the trip when Jordan Left met a black bear. Fishing was good and so we had a fish fry for dinner. Jordie loved the fish and got much of the frying oil on his hands and face. The campers had been warned about keeping clean and in fact Cooper and I had a soap drill in the lake after dinner. Some how Jordie was missed. Late that night the encampment was awakened by the sounds of screams. A bear has ripped a hole in Jordie's tent and was licking his face. By the time I emerged from my tent, Cooper and a couple of the boys were chasing a frightened bear from the camp. I don't think Jordan ever took another camping trip although he was a camper for many years after.

Aunt Sarah (Skipper's aunt) usually made an appearance in the camp about mid season. One visit she brought along two friends that had survived the Holocaust. The two elderly women talked to the campers about the horrors of a concentration camp and showed tattoos on their wrists. It was a sobering moment out of a joyous summer for the boys.

Uncle Joe (May have been a relative of Skipper) was at the camp my first year. His wife sold ladies lingerie and Joe had been a vaudeville entertainer. He was at camp while his wife was selling her business in preparation to moving to Israel. When the boys were at swim or at competition, Uncle Joe would sit at the piano in the rec. hall and belt out old vaudeville favorites. The loud refrains of "Do Your Balls Hang Low," "While the Train is in the Station", "The Girl I Got Behind," and many others would drift out onto the grounds. This usually brought off-duty counselors to join the brawdy fun.

Rosie Caudwell was a camp fixture in many ways. She was the White House and Infirmary house keeper. Although she could keep her charges spotless, she was never asked to work in the kitchen because of her unkempt appearance. Of course that changed when she became a bar tender and later did work in the kitchen. If any counselor was in the mood for a "dirty" joke, she was the one to see. Rosie always had a smile for every one and a suggestive comment.

When a counselor did something that was out of line, he was given a ride in Skipper's blue Plymouth. The car would be driven to the old campsite, and most likely the counselor would come back with a red face. At least twice, I recall the counselor came back and packed never to be seen again. So when the blue car came for me, I wondered what was wrong. As we rode to the campsite, Skipper talked in general about the camp and his philosophy. Why he and Joe had founded the camp and other small talk. Then he came to the point, "How would you like to be the assistant rifle instructor next year?" As about that time I had expected a firing squad, there was no way I could turn down the offer.

The first rifle instructor was a man by the name of Dickinson from Waupaca. He had built a backstop of logs and the only guns were Daisy air rifles. The next instructor was NRA Certified, James Hagerty with a lot of medals, patches, and guns. James always carried a loaded pistol on the range and he was not afraid to pull it out and wave it at anyone who disturbed the hallowed area of the rifle range. He brought 22 caliber rifles to the program and his word on the range was law. One day Laurita came to the range for a visit and called out to James while the boys were shooting. He immediately pulled his pistol and called a "Cease Fire". Once the rifles were cleared he turned and gave a performance that a drill sergeant would have been proud of. When it came to safety and the running of the range, James did not care who he had to dress down.

Norman Wienress was the man who I worked as an assistant for. We worked together for two years and when Norm left the camp, I became the rifle instructor. When ever possible, Norm, Renee' and I took our days off together. We were friends and it hurt to take over from him, because we had worked so well together.

The campers at first liked to quote me as a craft shop counselor. "Some one has been sneaking into the Craft Shop and stealing the exato knives." Then as a rifle instructor it was, "You are off the range for the rest of the year." Then it was, (while rubbing my chin), "Well, let me see about that." As my role changed in camp so did the social changes affect the campers. At first a night in a tent or a quiet hike in the woods to view wildlife was the interest of many of the campers. Sports were for fun. Batting averages were for the major leagues. Rewards consisted of an extra canteen or a trip to the root beer stand. The movies were shown in the rec. hall and "Broken Arrow" would be shown at least once a summer. Society changed and my back grew stiff, so when there was nothing more I could offer the campers, I retired from active participation to memories that have been enhanced with time.

Facilities

I think that Camp Waupaca had the only sand greens on a golf course north of the southern deserts. The first holes were large metal cans that were buried in the middle of the "Green". There were three holes at first and three more holes were established behind the infirmary at the "white house". Putting was that were quite a challenge as the ball sunk into the sand and turned on every pebble. The cans were removed and squares of twine were laid out to represent the hole. Ron Lavine added a putting green consisting of a platform covered with outdoor carpeting. Some lucky golfers were taken to the Waupaca Public Golf Course once or twice a year.

When tennis became more popular, the two courts were expanded to three and then to four. Besides being used for tennis the courts also made a place for star gazers to lay on their sleeping bags and watch the meteorite showers. I believe that Bob Mowen moved this activity to the far fields because cars coming into the parking lot disrupted the activity.

Memorable Quotations

Skipper - "Don't pee-pee in the teepee."
Joe Rosen - "It isn't clean until I say it is clean."
Lorreta K. - "Don't sit on the tables. In World War Two the army doctors found that troops sitting on the tables caused dysentery."
Skipper - "Every one must take a no thank you helping."
Nurse Fields - "It only hurts when the needle goes in."
James Hargerty - "If you take one more step towards this rifle range this gun will be pointed at you."
James Avery - "The way I see it"
Ron Levine - "Brush your teeth three times a day."
Ron Levine - "Baseball is the only sport where the participants must use all of their muscle groups."
Chin Chang - "Shut yo' dirty mouf."
Wally Tomcheck - "I would come back next year if you doubled my salary."
Wall Tomcheck (the next year) - "Why didn't Manny ask me back after I've done so much for the camp."
Chuck Cooper - "Make my pizza an extra hot Cooper Special." (At Alex's Pizza Parlor)
Chuck Cooper (the next day) - " Somebody get off the stool fast! My colitis is kicking up."
Ann Towne (cook) - "No seconds on desert. I saw you eating one already."
Dean Becker - "There are no bears in the Sylvinia Park." Later "What's that noise?" Still latter. "I am not tired so I'll keep the fire going all night."
Manny - "You never had it so good."
Mike Euer - "Ya all skin your own skunks."
Bob Mowen - "I'm not married because Julie Andrews is keeping herself for me."
Paul Warshaurer - "This year we will win the Demo Derby."
Erv Kasian - "I have the most powerful craft shop in the world."
Erv Kasian - "Squeaky I brough a little beer for you."
Warren Metzdorf -

My Camp Jobs

1956 - Grounds and Maintenance with Jim Danielson and Winny Sterns
1957 - Craft Shop with Charles Cooper - First area life gaurd - Row boat instructor - Competition refereee - Outing truck driver.