

The Day Camp Ends

(Jowne)
#7

The clear crisp air of early autumn is moved by a gentle breeze. There is a stillness that moves through the empty buildings that seems to echo in my ears. A dog is barking in the distance and somewhere a car is moving down the road. It is time for me to walk through the camp to capture the spirits that linger there.

Yesterday afternoon everyone was frantically packing their summer things into the trunks that were hidden in the "old barn" for the past eight weeks. Sports equipment that had been left on the playing field or in the rec hall had to be located. A baseball mitt turns up in lost-and-found. A shirt is located in the mess hall. Worn out shoes go into the garbage barrel. Towels are left behind so that there is room for a craft project. "Why can't I take the camp sheep home?" The best set of clothes are set aside for the banquet. "What will it be?" Italian with a canoe gondolier. Hawaiian with huge heads. Roman with togas. Under the sea. Space and the new frontier. Indian with feathers and peace pipes. Americana with a beer can collection. Maybe the dinning hall will be filled with trees as a celebration living in the forest.

The last refrains of "This Summer Was Ours" still filled the mess hall as the cabin members sat together for one camp meal as a summer family. Talk is of home and things remembered and what we will do next year and what bus are you on. It is much easier to spill milk when pouring it on the cereal this morning. Somehow the stomach will not allow the full contents of a bowl enter and Capt' Crunch sits there like a log.

A roar. Clouds of dust. The smell of burning diesel fuel. "The buses are here! Attention everyone! The buses are here! Everyone to the Horseshoe! Everyone to the Horseshoe now!"

"Go to your buses by cabin as your cabin number is called off. Cabin #1 to your bus ----- Okay CIT's, its your turn."

A pat on the back. A see you next year. A tear. A pain in the heart. Then they are moving. The buses filled with the children. The boys who came here last spring are on their way. Wave until they are out of the gate. Then turn to each other and with the "We made it" look. **Hip! Hip! Hurray!**

"Counselors make sure that all the trunks are outside the cabin. We'll be picking them up at the cabins; the truck will be here at 11:00. All counselor are to help with the trunks. Make sure that your cabin is cleaned up and your area has been checked. No checks will be issued until all areas have been closed."

"All staff to the waterfront. We are brining up the boats."

"Let the kitchen know if your going to be here for dinner."

The breeze catches a screen door and it bangs shut. The birds are beginning to come into the area again. There is a lonesome call from the nature center. The calf is waiting for its owner and wanting the attention of a camper.

I walk the fields that are still alive with the energy of baseball, football, soccer, flicker ball tennis and volleyball. The trampoline sits still, but if you listen the cords are still humming from the last jump. The dead ring of grass where the teepee sat is giving up the secrets passed by boys who camped out by themselves. The wosh of an arrow fling to its mark is loud now. At the rifle range a cease fire command hangs on the air. It is the time when the spirits of the summer come to rest.