

Dear Paul - Some random thoughts about camp. (#3)

A night in 1949: I was 4 and in my bed. Through the wall I eavesdropped on Skipper as he excitedly described to my dad the property he had found for camp and what the cabins would be like - two together sharing a common washroom. I tried but could not quite picture it.

Me, my brother Bob and Steve Kuklin would go to camp a couple of weeks before the kids arrived to help get the place ready. We raked billions of leaves, carried mattresses and boats, painted, swept cabins, mowed the ball fields and did numerous other chores. I particularly liked when the luggage arrived. It meant the quiet place would be totally transformed in a day or two and teeming with life and adventure for the next 8 weeks.

Too many accidents and injuries happened over the years: A junior counselor thrown over the head of a horse into a tree; a camper running into a beehive during a 'Scalpen' game and rushed into town for penicillin; a camper sideswiping a pier while water skiing; a counselor who almost lost a toe on the metal fin of a slalom water ski; a counselor covered head to toe with poison ivy after an escapade with a kitchen girl in the woods; cabins 1 and 2 burning down during dinner; a boy hit in the head with a horseshoe, another hit in the head with a hard metal rake; me, seeing all my 10 years of life flash before me as my galloping, out of control horse, Goldenrod, leapt the training ring. I lived as did everyone else, somehow. No murders, no drownings, no beyond-repair maimings. No less than miraculous!

Quick takes * Boys peeing off the back of the '46 Chev camp truck coming back from the drive-in movie * The fastidious counselor Dan Mertenson covered in French dressing which he just began to shake up * Everyone sick before camp began because somehow turpentine got into the chili * A camper's mother with her back in the water, her dress over her head, her legs in the boat - all because he son pulled the boat on shore just as she stood up in the stern * Me and Steve almost scaring his aunt to death with a very real looking rubber snake * A camper who refused to drink anything but chocolate milk * Marathon tetherball tournaments * Skipper saying every night just before bedtime, "And remember, no peeper in the teepee."

Right after the buses pulled away just after breakfast on the last day of camp, I loved exploring the cabins to see what had been left behind. I had a field day collecting coins, lures, comic books, hats, brushes, hair tonic, hair wax, stamps, candy, dirty pictures, pens, pencils, flashlights, batteries, bobbers, lanyards, whistles and what have you. Then it was over to the mess hall to raid leftovers from the last supper, usually fried chicken, which I would eat in the astounding quiet all those boys left behind.

Good luck + see you next summer!

Larry Ross