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THE PLACE OF NATURE IN CAMP

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It is the contention at the outset that the camp should be built around nature rather than nature be put into the camp. In most camp environments there are already provided ample opportunities for a wide variety of experiences in nature - hills, lakes, mountains, streams, woods, and an abundance of plant and animal life. We are actually sitting in nature. We do not need to bring it to us. Too often the bigger opportunities are missed and nature is thought of as a separate activity and carried out on a nature study period basis.

In preparation for the opening of the camp season in a camp already established or when beginning a new camp, there is the customary deluge of physical details which almost inundates the director and staff. In all of the rush and confusion there does not seem to be sufficient time to plan the basis upon which the camp should be conducted, and as a result we set up the camp just as it was last year or follow some established plan. Nature, in these instances, as a rule suffers a major defeat and is relegated to its usual morning period of a few nature hikes with a nature counselor, a traditional museum which does not really belong in camp, a few bird houses which do not bird, a bird bath which the birds probably do not need, and the nature trail at the camp's back door with all its labels made in cooperation with the craft department.

What are our goals and the place of nature in camp? Most of us would undoubtedly agree that the camp is primarily interested in bringing about the most personality growth and the best adjustment of each individual camper; to guide and influence his experiences in the varied situations and activities in camp so that he will be more sensitive to the values of cooperation, and to develop within him greater powers of observation and appreciation. We would also perhaps agree that the campers should at the end of the season and each succeeding season have a greater understanding and appreciation of nature and her possessions.

We probably would not all be in agreement as to the best plan of organizing staff and program to accomplish these goals. Whatever plan is followed the goals and the place of nature will depend upon the type of camp operated.

Types of Camps

There are various types of camps and they may have their place. Many of the first camps were of the pioneering type. There was little or no equipment and the groups were small. It was necessary to more or less cut and carve their way into the woods. The program consisted chiefly of caring for themselves, exploring the lakes and streams and woods and engaging in considerable amount of quite vigorous big-muscle activity. Later on the camps became more formal and showed unmistakable earmarks of military and school organization and procedure. The list of different types of camp is very long, the athletic, church, music, dancing, dramatics, riding, et cetera. Many of these would not agree to their classification and would argue that they, too, are primarily interested in the development of the individual camper. Nevertheless, in practically every case the program is built around certain activities or a main feature. The point to

be made here is that in these camps nature is put into the camp rather than camp built around it. If, for example, a camp emphasizes sports, the chief concern of the camp is likely to be in awards, cups, prizes and winning teams. It is not likely that nature will have much of a chance. To a certain extent the same can be said of the other types of camps. In studying the program schedules of these camps it will be noted that for the most part nature study is listed as one of the activities along with many other things which campers may do. This is in reality the nature-by-the-subject-plan rather than by building the camp around its environment. We need to get back to the woods and more pioneer camping.

Any way we look at it we cannot escape drawing a line some place in regard to the set-up and administration of the camp. It is either in one direction or the other. It is not possible to carry on intensive sport competitions and at the same time run the camp in the "nature way". It is a question of which you regard the more important. This same point of view would apply to the various types of camps. It is necessary, therefore, to determine what we mean by camping. It is not the place here to attempt a definition, but it is pertinent to say that each camp should formulate its own goals, interpret its own meaning of camping, and set up the administration of the camp so that with each day and season their goals will come closer to realization. This procedure in most cases will eventually cause a camp to select more carefully the methods by which they will arrive at these goals. Also, I believe camp directors and their staffs will gradually come closer to the "nature way" of camping.

There is also need to resist pressures brought to bear upon camps by parents, individuals and groups concerning what activities shall be offered and how the camp shall be run. The temptation is to include in the camp program almost any request.

In studying the details of the programs in many of these various types of camps, a common fault noted is the unrelatedness of the various activities and departments. With a counselor specialist in charge of each department there is a struggle on the part of the counselor to popularize his activity and an effort on the part of the director to see that the departments all cooperate. Although there are many instances of splendid cooperation the possibilities for realization of the best camp program are quite limited. Something more is needed. Where does the camper get the real experiences of camping? Is it not true that your canoe trips, horseback trips, and vagabonding trips are most interesting and appealing? Also do not these stand out most vividly in the camper's mind?

Nature Off to a Bad Start

The long ago introduction of nature study into the camp program now seems very humorous. To think that it was necessary to introduce this activity into an environment which is all nature now seems unbelievable. Here, I am reminded of instances where groups out on hikes had to hurry back in order to be in camp in time for nature study period.

There followed later the discussion of the nature study versus nature lore with nature lore seeming to win out, but where did this leave us? There are the conflicting points of view and practices of the naturalist versus the scientist. We quickly illuminate the situation by recalling the part that the biologist and the botanist and other scientists played in these closely related fields. These approaches for the most part were too technical and specialized and resulted in a loss of interest on the part of the campers and in many cases a dislike for nature.

When nature study was introduced into the school system as another subject, courses of study were quickly constructed. They followed traditional

patterns of the curricula in other school subjects and required memorizing of facts, and a passing grade necessitated the repetition of these facts. On the sixth grade level, let us say, it was necessary to identify fifteen trees, and on the seventh grade level you would merely increase the number of trees by eight, and so on until the requirements were met. This quickly reminds us also of the herbarium, the long Latin names under the common names, the bottling, labeling and mounting of insects, yes, and the museum and dead collections. This is all a part of the piecemeal and unnatural method. This was all brought into camps along with all the other city things. Other activities, as well as nature, got off to a bad start in camps, and it has taken a long time to bring about much change. It may be that within a decade we will see less and less of the terms nature study and nature lore in camps and will find more camping built around nature.

Personnel

Probably the most important question for us to consider is that of camp personnel in relation to the place of nature in camp. It is quite certain that the campers will be interested in the same things in which the staff is interested. If the staff is nature minded, it is quite certain that the campers will become of the same mind. However, the camp director, in most instances, is the key person. If his vision is that of the camp built around nature, it is quite certain that he will choose staff members who will fit in with this view.

We cannot excuse ourselves by saying that we would like to have nature-trained and more experienced counselors but they cannot be found. An answer to this is that they must be trained in camp. Where the camp is planned and run with an all-encompassing view of nature, including a carefully planned series of camping experiences, it is possible, in due time to develop the type of leadership

needed. In this process of leadership development we should not lose sight of the values in sports, dramatics, crafts, music, et cetera. They should be present and have their proper relationship.

Counselor Training Courses

Counselor training courses generally, as they are conducted throughout the country, undoubtedly contribute much to the camping movement and do give prospective counselors some idea of the different phases of the camping program. It is a question, however, whether it is possible for these courses to succeed in adequately training men and women to meet the demands of the camp in which nature takes its proper place. It is my feeling that most of the training must be done in actual camping situations. This is also true of many of the skills and also of the details in counselorship and guidance. This kind of training requires a long period of time. It seems folly to expect that a person can attend a course an hour a day once or twice a week during a semester, and be adequately trained for real camping counselorship. There is unquestionably a need for facilities and opportunities to train camp personnel in actual camping situations. I am afraid this is a long time off because at the present time camping is thought of in a recreational sense and as an activity for only a short period of the year. The legal school period is nine or ten months of the year and camping comes in the other two known as vacation. Perhaps when camping as a way of education comes into full realization and takes its due place in educational circles, which it rightly deserves, training for camp leadership will be more adequately provided.

Is there a place for the specialist, you ask. Very much so, but the specialist frequently is too far ahead of the general ability of the counselor group. It would seem that the greater need is to raise the total level of the staff in a wider range of camping skills and for the specialist to do more camping.

Oh, how hard it is to find a counselor who can cook!

Role of Method

Method plays an important part in the process of building the camp around nature. We here should pay respects to the Uncle Benny Hydes, the Palmers, the Vinals and the Fay Welches and many others who have tried to show us the natural method in carrying out a nature program in camp. For those who have not been technically trained there is a fear of the subject. The many technical classifications and those terrible Latin names scare us out. Most of the nature knowledge was taught from the scientific point of view and in most cases this squeezes out the possibility of developing a love for nature as a whole and the richer educational values. These apostles of the natural method reversed the situation, giving us courage and confidence that each one of us can be a good nature counselor. We now realize that the first and most important thing is to have an appreciation of the total environment and that at first we need not be so much concerned with scientific details. In camp it is not unacademic to live, work and play on the same level with the campers, an essential point of view in the natural method.

Also if we can acquire the art of not being afraid to say, "I do not know," and learn to describe a phenomenon or object and become interested in its behavior and makeup, leaving the identification until later more progress will be made. This all makes it much simpler and certainly within the grasp of everyone. Perhaps some of you can remember the spellbound attention with which Uncle Benny Hyde could hold a large audience of youngsters or adults with nothing in his hand but a feather - the urge to discover is to be more cherished than the imparting of knowledge.

Whole and Part Methods

To put it another way, we would proceed from the general to the specific rather than from the specific to the general, or using the familiar terminology, the whole versus the part method. We expect the camper to go to the various activity places all around camp, be exposed to each or taught at each place, and then in some magic or miraculous manner expect that he will come out with an all-round ability, understanding and appreciation of camping. In reality we have done little more than what the schools are so frequently criticized for doing, namely, to teach the three R's and other segregated parts without really educating the child.

In following a typical school course of study of trees, it would proceed in order from the identification of certain trees, the parts of the tree and their uses. There would be no place to get the appreciation of trees as a whole. On the other hand, through carefully planned experiences in the natural environment, the camper comes in contact with many trees and in due time his interest invariably centers in some detailed aspect of trees and in individual trees. He sees and feels trees in a more significant relationship to his life - a real appreciation. It is impossible to get this in a classroom.

From the standpoint of proceeding from the general or the whole method, the camp would need to provide more opportunities for a wider range of adventurous experiences, involving more of the total living processes found in trips by the pack, the canoe and horseback, the covered wagon, overnight camping and living in small groups independent of the main camp.

The Contribution of Our Indians

The American Indian had much to offer us in the field of nature. We perhaps took too little of it from him. As the Indian reluctantly took the place

allotted to him he locked up many of his secrets. It is in comparatively recent years that camps have begun to take the early American Indian more seriously. It is not too late to retrieve much of what he left. At the close of the Indian wars the Indian was discredited; he was said to be uncivilized, partly because he could not read our writing and we set out to teach him the White Man's language and ways. We are now beginning to learn something of his ways, and with each discovery much is added to our understanding of his grasp of nature. If one visits the pueblo at Taos and observes their communal way of living in their fifteen hundred year old structure, one cannot help but feel the understanding of nature that these people have. It is especially impressive at sunset when he makes his daily trip to the roof tops just to watch the sun go down - a tribal custom.

Over a period of twelve years in Life Camps we have experimented with various methods of enriching the camp program. It will perhaps be of interest to mention some of the developments. In 1925 the camps were completely reorganized. The attempt was to place them on an educational level rather than conduct them on a welfare or charity basis. The first attempts resulted in the traditional type of programs, and the less said about those the better. The chief problem was that of securing an adequate, professionally interested and well trained staff. This we have discovered is necessarily a rather slow process. Success comes in proportion to the development of camp spirit, an increasing challenge to the staff, redefining goals, and evaluation of results.

The first definite steps to build the camp around nature were taken in 1927 with the establishment of our first outpost camping units. These small groups of campers, each with competent leadership, were placed pretty much upon their own. An intensive program of overnight camping was developed. It took several years to develop adequate techniques and procedures and to get a sufficient number of the staff trained in the camping skills required. In both camps there is an average of from eight to ten campers out every night during the entire summer. Weather conditions alter this activity somewhat but there is a brave and courageous attempt in this phase of camp program to do as in other parts, namely, go ahead regardless of the weather. We attribute much of our progress in unit camping to the overnight, two and three day camping trips.

Other units of different types were added from time to time until now there is a total of twelve, each in a different location isolated from other units and the main camp. They are built around the natural facilities in which they are located. Each unit of seven campers and a counselor spends most of the time at its home and does all or most of its own cooking. We can say with much

satisfaction that these units are built around nature and there is little need to put nature into these places. They are out where more wild life will come to them and they have developed a number of woods pets who know the feeding hours as well as the campers. They are out where they practically live with the animals and there is little need to "bring 'em back alive".

We feel that the total result of the unit camping plan is fundamentally different and better than other ways in which we have conducted the camps. As I pointed out in my paper at the American Camping Convention at Boston in 1936, we have referred to this procedure as Campivities with the quotation marks removed. We feel that there is much justification for this terminology and that it does better denote a total living situation, with less artificiality and a more natural and normal unfolding of life in camp. It is almost impossible to schedule a routine program in this sort of a set-up.

In 1934 our covered wagon camping units were established (see Catch Up! Catch Up! in Camping Magazine, June 1935). In these units the campers live in covered wagons similar to those in which our early pioneers went west. These units were established in no way for privileged groups or as a publicity stunt. They are integral parts of the total program. The Rangers, the Boys' Camp covered wagon unit, consists of a very sturdy covered wagon, a big team of horses, a riding horse, a counselor and counselor-in-training and seven boys, no end of food, gadgets and equipment. They are on the road most of the time. Their wagon is their home. They come into camp once a week for refueling, participation in some camp events, some reorganization and are again off on the trail.

"Every night a campfire

Every night a home."

It is not possible here to go into the details of the units as each merits and would require special explanation. To name them is sufficient to indicate the scope of their interests and activity - tree house, four different types of Indian units, two different types of woods units, a crooked house, and two other covered wagon units (one a Conestoga) which do not move around. This is a combined list of the units in the Boys' Camp and the Girls' Camp.

We feel that better results are secured in these Camptivities where they are built around nature than are secured in the main camp program. These campers have more opportunity to meet problems which arise out of the natural process of caring for themselves, adjusting to the environment and participating in the natural life of the units.

Briefly and tentatively stated, these Camptivities:

1. Stimulate to a greater degree individual and group resourcefulness and provide in a better way worthwhile occupation and recreation.
2. Bring about more intensive group relationships and a richer interdependence among campers and the counselor. The dependence upon others is confined to a smaller group, thus the intensity of those relationships become more favorably increased.
3. Cause a fewer number to share more responsibilities and duties. Thus each plays a greater part in caring for the needs of his group. In a larger camp situation this does not happen nearly so effectively.
4. Make little things take on greater importance, each small item relates itself more clearly to the whole unit. Acknowledgment of these small things well done is more likely to receive due recognition on the part of individual members of the group and the counselor. Campers and counselors know each other far better in these unit situations than in the usual camp program.

5. Confront one with more actual and natural living situations. Each activity takes on more meaning because it is related to the individual and group needs. There are fewer or practically no artificial situations. There is a minimum of rules or regulations and campers can actually individually participate in practically all matters concerning the welfare of the small group. Everyone participates in planning what they do and in group controls.

6. Brings about a greater appreciation for food because they do all or a large part of the planning and cooking of meals. Under these conditions the campers and counselor together work to supply a necessary and much discussed need - food. When their handiwork is finished there is a keener appreciation manifested even for some of the dishes which if eaten in the camp dining room would be frowned upon. Anyone likes his own work. The nutrition requirements are provided for with the help and supervision of the camp dietitian.

The more specific outcomes of the Campativity program have their foundations in some of the larger goals. Briefly summarized, some of these are:

1. Cleanliness of self, equipment, and environment.
2. Selection and preparation of food and the formation of good habits of eating.
3. Importance of sleep and rest.
4. Meeting all weather conditions with comfort and safety.
5. Knowledge and use of natural foods.
6. Acquiring the ability to select and use natural materials to meet personal and group needs - fire, sleeping facilities, and other needs of routine living.
7. Understanding of plant and animal life as it relates to the safety of the camper and the development of his appreciation.

8. Appreciating the beauty and the phenomena of the natural surroundings.

9. Social adjustments necessary in the intimate relationships of camp life. These adjustments create a real concept of social responsibility.

10. Working together for the comfort, self-government, and the happiness of the group as a whole.

11. Individual and group standards of conduct and ethics.

We have found that other phases of the camp program, such as crafts, dramatics, swimming, music, overnight camping, all find their way into the Campativity procedure. They are absorbed as parts of the larger experiences and are not ends in themselves. This is almost a reverse situation from our earlier method of camp administration.

To secure the type of counselor needed to fit in this program it is necessary, as previously mentioned, to train the staff in the camp situation. This plan begins with the camper following through a leadership development program of group assistant, activity assistant, counselor-in-training, assistant counselor, and counselor. However, counselors who come from outside of camp comprise the largest part of our staffs. We would rather have a new member of the staff begin as a counselor-in-training. He should have a good background of experience in various phases of camping and a professional interest.

There is, of course, a place for specialists but we are finding that these specialists prefer working in the units and through the Campativity techniques are better able to stimulate participation in their particular skills. What they do is really related to something. We are attempting to lift the whole level of skills to a high level for all in camp. A counselor who was head of our nature work for one season is now one of the unit counselors, a swimming counselor

is now a unit counselor, and a crafts counselor has become a unit counselor.

An important part of our program is that of the counselor conference which lasts a week before the opening of camp. During this period each department of the camp works out its aims, objectives and details for carrying out its program. A major portion of the time is given to the technique of camper personality development and guidance.

An important part of this conference is the exploration trip of the staff. We feel that there is need for a greater amount of exploration and adventure in camping and this actual exploration trip of the staff seems to give this adventurous-exploratory emphasis throughout the summer. It is not just an overnight camping trip to see if everyone can cook an egg on a rock. The purpose is to explore as scientifically as we can an unknown area in the vicinity of camp, an area of about twenty-five to fifty acres. It is an embryo scientific expedition. The procedure is similar in both camps. The entire staff is organized into groups based upon the knowledge and skills required to explore this area and to discover what is there. The routine of living becomes incidental and takes its proper place. A scientific expedition cannot do its work well if it is not well fed and comfortable, so it is taken for granted that these physical arrangements are adequate and up to a high standard. The staff members have a chance to select the phases of the expedition for which they feel best qualified.

All personal and group equipment (each being responsible for his personal belongings) are loaded into the covered wagon. All the surveying equipment, reference books, picks, shovels, field glasses, levels, et cetera, are not forgotten (we hope). The group is divided into various committees and each has its duties and responsibilities. The expeditionary force hikes along with the

wagon because at places the horse needs help. The gross weight of the wagon is about 4,800 pounds. Upon arrival a camp site has to be located and laid out - a heavy responsibility for someone. There follows in rapid order 101 detail items which have to be cared for. All of these are, however, incidental to the main purpose of the trip. The main committees for last summer in the Boys' Camp were: geology, with two subcommittees; animal life divided into three subcommittees; plant life divided into three subcommittees; search-for-unusual-things; Indian life; mapping; health and sanitation; camp layout and food.

It is not possible here to give the details of the findings of these various committees. All groups, even though they have a special assignment, are urged to bring back reports of items which would be of value to other committees. The map making committee drew a scale map with elevations and locations of various points.

The survey work continued for a day and ample time was given to the committees to formulate their written reports and verify their findings. In a short time a field office and laboratory were set up and an unusually fine exhibit was organized, classified and labeled. The interest on the part of the staff was greatly intensified. The spirit of adventure and discovery was most evident. Pockets and pack sacks came back bulging with sticks, rocks, and all sorts of specimens. The wild life committee reported some exciting adventures in trying to photograph a deer. We got the story but not the photograph. The emergency laboratory was buzzing with interest and excitement. Everyone of the staff members lost himself in the interest of the activity and became a camper.

Around the camp fire is heard the reports from the various committees as they submit their findings. Considerable important and lively discussion follows.

The Indian life committee, for example, reported that: (a) Indians had not lived in this area because they had not found any evidences of it; (b) it would be a suitable place for an Indian habitation and listed some reasons. A challenger from the group asked, "How did you look for evidence? If by digging test holes, how many did you dig, where did you dig, and how wide and deep were they?" The answer was that ten test holes a spade and one-half deep and a spade and one-half wide in various parts of the area had been dug. It was agreed that this was not sufficient evidence to draw the conclusion that Indians had not lived there. It was also agreed that the area was still a fertile field for the discovery of traces of Indian habitation.

The results of this expedition lasted throughout the summer and many of the groups on overnight camping trips selected this area for further exploration and we all can guess the reason - because they knew more about it. The spirit of this sort of adventure and exploration is easily caught by the campers if the staff is interested and knows how to do it.

We do not feel that we have arrived in our effort to build the camp around nature, but our experimentation up to the present time convinces us that the Camptivity procedure is a sound basis upon which to operate the camp. We have gone a long way but we have yet a long way to go.

It is important, finally, to say a word in reference to spiritual growth in relation to the Camptivity procedure. Our camps are non-sectarian and there are campers and counselors of different faiths. Opportunities, in so far as it is possible to provide them, are afforded for these sectarian services. There is in addition in each camp a common camp service held in a specially prepared place in the woods. This program consists of music, thoughts, ideals, and talks conducted

in a spirit of reverence. It is centered in thought and facts of nature. Nature is all around us - in all her beauty, power and mystery. The more that one understands and appreciates nature and her possessions the more sensitive he is to his spiritual convictions whatever they may be.

It may be of interest to present briefly the statement of the nature program. I quote from the Girls' Camp Report 1936 and 1937

Nature

Aims:

1. To enlarge the child's conception of his environment---
an all encompassing environment.
2. To stimulate and increase interest in environment by
encouraging and guiding the child to:
 - a. Observe
 - b. Study
 - c. Interpret her many experiences.
 1. As a result faith in superstitions
and misconceptions will be eliminated as
knowledge increases.
 2. A questioning attitude should be
encouraged.
 3. Child should be helped to reach her
conclusions.
3. To emphasize the need for wild life conservation be-
cause of mans' disruption of Nature's balance.
4. To encourage those with specialized interests by in-
creasing the range and scope of that interest with
richer and more varied experiences.
 - a. A hobby- so important to a person with
leisure time at her disposal-- or a profession
may evolve as a result.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To motivate and vitalize program so that those general conceptions which are essential to intelligent living may begin to be realized in camper's minds, Those conceptions may be stated thus;
 - a. Man's conception of truth changes.
 - b. There is a cause for each effect.
 - c. Much knowledge remains to be discovered.
Origin of fear and superstitions lies in lack of knowledge.
 - d. All life has evolved from simple forms.
 - e. All life comes from life and produces its own kind of organism.
 - f. There is a balance in nature.
 - g. There is a struggle for existence and a survival of the fittest among living things.
 - h. There is a great variety in size, structure and habits of things.
 - i. There is an interrelation and interdependence of plants and animals.

Footnote; Inspiration and suggestions for the building of this program over a period of years have come from many people and from literature in the field, and especially from the "Tentative Course of Study in Elementary Science" by Dr. Gerald S. Craig. Some of his later material has also been helpful.