

## Administrators, Teachers and the Out-of-Doors

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As I go about the country, I think one of the most important angles of Outdoor Education is a sort of misunderstanding as to the concept of what it is. I really got my Ph.D. on the farm out in Kansas, and it took me about four years and a half at Columbia to convince them that I had it. The realism of education is the thing I learned on the farm, and one of the first examples was on the mowing machine. You know if you have been on a mowing machine that the seat is very comfortable and shaped to fit, and then there are some holes around in this mowing machine seat that are for ventilation. But we ran through a bumble-bees' nest, and that was one time I would have liked to close the ventilators. There were seven ventilating holes in this seat, and I don't know what kind of conference the bees had, but they selected seven of their number, and the seven made a rear-end attack. They all hit the mark at the same time, and I left the seat in a hurry. The team ran away, and I was perfectly willing to let them go, with both my hands covering a part of me as best I could. Well, that was a part of a realistic approach to education. I decided to study bees scientifically after that. What you read in a book, you can easily forget, but what I got in the seat I didn't forget very soon, and that is a part of the realism we face in these things.

You don't have to get stung that badly to have a lesson in Outdoor Education take root. But certainly, this is an era, a decade, a time for realism and first-hand experience in education; and that is what we are talking about. If we were to confine American youth to the four-walled room of a school building, that would be the surest way we could devise to keep him from experiencing realistically the things that we try to get from books. Now I might be inferring that we do not learn anything from books. Please do not take it that way. I do mean, however, that there is so much more that we should learn from first-hand experience, and ought to, because the

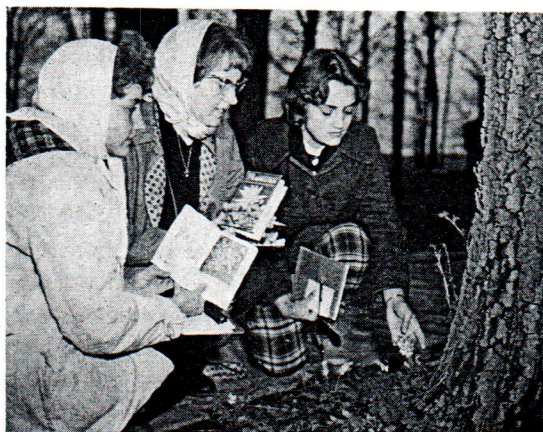
learning is faster, the retention is longer, and there's a greater appreciation and understanding of those things. Why do we wait so long and try so futilely with methods that are less realistic and less effective? The general thesis of realism in education is to increase the amount of first-hand experience whenever it is feasible to do so in any area of learning, at any level. This theory is based upon efficiency in learning. Unless the first-hand experiences under the auspices of education can result in more effective learning, we can hardly justify the expense that we are always talking about. We have wasted a lot of time. We are taking a lot more time in some areas than would be needed if other methods were used, and that is expensive.

The second thesis would be that Outdoor Education involves all areas of all levels in all departments of anything going on under the name of education. So no area is left out; and Outdoor Education is not the possession of any one area. It's a total interrelationship of all kinds of experiences.

The third thesis is that activity and participation must result in a joy of living and learning in the out-of-doors. You need not be tortured in order to learn efficiently. Unless there is a satisfaction and a joy in what you do and how you do it, permanent and satisfying education is not taking place.

Finally, this education must result in a better, fuller understanding of man's relationship to his environment and to his Creator. Unless that happens, and also a better relationship with his fellow men in the world, then we can hardly justify all of the things we are talking about. Needless to say, our country is not the world, and our country is not necessarily first, but here at home and in a time of crisis like this, we should not overlook the relationship of the philosophy of Outdoor Education to the events that are happening throughout the earth, as well as in outer space. Perhaps some of our failure to keep abreast may be because of the way we are





conducting some of our programs in education. Haven't we in the past been preparing a basis of knowledge merely by pouring out facts, telling them to others, and then testing whether they know the answers which are already known? Where are we on the growing edge of the new frontier, of new information, of new discoveries? How can we find that out? Perhaps we need more emphasis on how to ask, rather than on repeating what is already known. Somehow we have got to get the educational ship off into orbit a little more frequently than we have been doing.

I do not want to imply that many fine things have not been a part of education. But we are talking about the future and about the present decade when everything is in motion, and perhaps we have been sitting still too long. Mobility in education should be the keynote of our time. Some time ago on a beautiful star-lit night, I was in a camp-fire circle with a group of adults from many sections of the country, interested in the program of Christian education. Right at the very serious part of the camp-fire, we knew that Echo was due to pass overhead, and when it did, everybody rose and faced Echo, and followed it rapidly across the sky. It was a symbol of mobility, a symbol of world relationship, and a symbol of inquiry! I thought at the time, how can we pose more questions for youth to answer on their own, rather than to pour out things that we already know, and gloat in hearing ourselves tell, and then test them as though to be sure that they heard us aright?

The out-of-doors poses many new situations for more efficient kinds of learning, if we can

but find the method of preparing the teachers to lead. The child and the student, elementary, secondary, and college, are our concern in this program of Outdoor Education. And on this occasion, our concern is to examine the role of the teacher as well.

There is some confusion in terminology, and some think that the word 'camping' is what we are talking about. I think the first article I wrote on school camping was in 1927, and I was upbraided by many people in those days. Later on I thought, "Well, let's get out of the camping field, and relate this to education;" so we began to use the term 'camping education.' Oh my, the number of people who clamped onto that phrase. Every camp in the country began to say, "We are running a 'camping education' program." And I noticed that some camps were operated by bartenders, lawyers, bankers, insurance people, and some school teachers. They were all in 'camping education.' We were saddled with the term. We still are.

I'll try to clarify our position by saying that it is not camping that we are doing. If we could define camping the way I would like to define it and live it, we could use the term, but for all practical purposes, it is not 'camping'—c-a-m-p-i-n-g—that we are promoting. I have told you what I think we ought to promote, and there are any number of people who will totally agree on this. There is a united front on the matter of efficiency in learning and using the out-of-doors as an endless resource that has not been used since the days of original discovery, for original curriculum material. So much of it has been captured and brought indoors and put into books and classified, that seemingly there is not any need for any more. But I think we have run out of material. Now we are going back to the out-of-doors to get refreshed; and so we go back to the role of the teacher.

I would say camping to me is loving to live in the woods and in the open spaces. Note the phrase 'loving to live.' You can end right there. Anyone who is tired of life and doesn't love to live, doesn't have much longer in this world. But if you love to live, and to live in the woods and open spaces, then you have really a big outlook. It doesn't take long to get tired of living inside a building.



We're talking about implementing education and how to improve our total educational system. We want to improve the effect upon the recipient, the child and the student, elementary, secondary, and college. That's where teacher education comes in, and that is why we are considering various ways and measures, and are at the home seat of one of the most effective teacher education programs that I have ever seen. So is this camping? No, it isn't. It could well be. I would say that good camping is educationally sound, but it isn't that. Outdoor Education includes all of the curriculum, all areas of learning at any level. But in most places, the only pupils and the only teachers who are really involved in it are at the sixth grade level. In California, nearly 100,000 school youths go to camp for one week during the school year. That is quite a sizeable participation. But there in California and elsewhere, most of it happens in the sixth grade. Sometimes it is fifth grade. In California and some other places there is some activity on the secondary level, and for the most part, this is pioneer. We will get only token benefits until we can enlist the students—and the teachers—to take part all along the line.

Now, many, many teachers have scant acquaintance with the out-of-doors. They have been prepared to teach in the classroom, by people who were prepared to teach in the classroom, by people who were prepared to teach in the classroom. The record has got to be broken; and what will break it is the kind of approach that is going on here on this campus, and that is taking place in New Jersey. I'll say more about that later. So here it is at the sixth grade level. You are catching some of the teachers who are not prepared to walk through the grass in the out-of-doors. There are things that crawl and run and wiggle and twist on the ground, of which people have tremendous fear. There are things overhead that they fear. And to have children to be responsible for at night. The school teacher who has never been a mother doesn't know what a child is in the night-time. This fatal four o'clock hour when they have to get up, and sometimes they don't, is quite a problem. And some children have nightmares at night. I remember a school teacher at Clear Lake who was supervising some children. She was sleeping in with the

girls. In the middle of the night she came running to say that a child was dying. We went and looked and listened to the groans. Of course it was a nightmare. This teacher simply had no preparation for a pretty natural experience. It hadn't been in any of the books she had read.

Another time, a group from the Trenton State Teachers College came to National Camp with youngsters from their Laboratory School. We had a good drizzle of rain all night, which makes everything harder to do—and more educational—in camp. In the morning, I moccasined my way down the trail and sloshed through the water to see how things were going. And here were four of the teachers out in the rain in their yellow slickers, holding an indignation meeting. Their heads were together like turkey gobblers. When I observed that it was a nice morning, they went after me. One said, "I've always prided myself on being a good teacher, and I never saw anything like this. Now that Julia, for example. Why, that head of hair. Who in the world ever takes care of that hair? She can't even comb her own hair."

"That's nothing," said another one. "She couldn't even put on her own underwear. She couldn't find it. I don't know how these people live at home." Then she said, "We've learned more about these children out here than we've learned all year back at school."

"Whoa, take it easy," I said. "You only got here at two o'clock yesterday afternoon, and here it is only eight o'clock in the morning." You see, they haven't been prepared in the course of the "regular" teacher education program. There is much to learn; so let's take a little longer on some of it. There is surely a better answer to what we are all working for. The answer is Time—time for working with children in the out-of-doors. Time out for learning, if you please. And what we are concerned with today is how this TIME can be arranged and used efficiently. So let us make some clear-cut suggestions.

In the kindergarten, when the teacher takes the children out to play, there is always something of interest in the outside world to be noted and observed, perhaps studied. Suppose some birds are building a nest over here, or an ant-hill is discovered; or suppose there is a plant with an odd-shaped leaf; or that there



are snowflakes with all the marvellous design of mosaics or of stained glass. What is wrong with taking the youngsters out for fifteen or twenty minutes to observe something—if the teacher knows how to lead them in observation? Such an expedition would show a large profit if it were extended to a fourth of the school day. Knowledge gained by direct experience would “integrate” very well with all the indoor lessons of the day.

From the kindergarten up through the third grade, you could extend your fourth of a day to a half. Then a full day, as soon as that can be managed, for the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. Don't be afraid you'll run out of material! Just as you never get through reading all the books in the library, which are only the record of what is out there, so you never exhaust even the neighborhood of the school building. And what you are working toward is the full week—which is now to be had only in the best places, and then is usually reserved for the sixth graders. What you are working toward is the full week for everybody. It will take time. But it will pay off with such benefits that the further extension of the program beyond the full week, will take care of itself. We have to get the teachers ready for it. And our first step is to give every teacher a real taste of the out-of-doors, for an incentive.

Why should it all stop at the sixth grade level? Why? Is there any reason why it should not go on through seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve—all through high school? Of course it should. I'll tell you what stops most of it. You get into departments, in the high school; and people complain that when you had them out looking at the stars, they weren't in, studying their English. But there must be ways to handle that. If administrators are effective, they will find ways to solve this problem of curriculum and administration. So we go on, by classes, by subject matter areas. Why not a class in English in the out-of-doors? Why not combine a lot of these interests into an out-door program with benefits that fall into all parts of the curriculum, so no one will feel deprived, no one will be aggrieved? We have spent a long time building high the artificial walls between school subjects. Experiences in the out-of-doors can carry students and teachers alike, over the walls in all direc-

tions. And what comes of these experiences is something real and natural, and with a value that can scarcely be computed.

Outdoor leadership preparation can take place in the last three years of high school. Is there anything wrong in using the older youth as part of this total program? I think we are wasting an awful lot of young American energy by saying you have to finish high school and you have to finish college before you can be a teacher. That's too long to wait. A lot of them will never make it. A lot of mighty good teachers are stopped before they ever get started. I remember when I was a schoolboy in Carbondale, Kansas, one Friday morning, Mr. Hamlin, the superintendent, said to me, “Miss Hartman is sick today and she can't come.” She was the teacher of the fifth and sixth grade. “So we would like to have you teach her grade.”

I said, “Well, Miss Hartman is a very wonderful teacher, and I couldn't take her place. And gee, I just don't see how I could.” But he persuaded me, and so I did. I went down there, and there were no adults around, just children. I was a Senior, but the gap between me and those youngsters wasn't so far. I went through the English and the spelling. I knew the songs. The routine was on the board; and the same old clock was there. So we went at it, and by the end of the day, gee, it was a thrill. I didn't want to wish Miss Hartman any bad luck, but it would be all right with me if she wasn't able to come back all next week. Poor soul, she didn't come back until the next Friday noon, and I substituted all that week, and we had a wonderful time. There seems to be more inclination nowadays to bring a few “laymen” into the classroom; but I think we haven't gone nearly far enough. A lot of fine ability in boys and girls of senior high school age is just being wasted. They are often bored for something to do that will give them a thrill. If they have been brought up from the kindergarten, using an increasing amount of time in the out-of-doors, they would be of great help in guiding the pupils in the grades. Knowledge gained by experience is useful and practical. Get the program rolling, and it will accelerate, because all students who are touched by it, become useful in furthering it.

Now back to the teacher. When the teacher

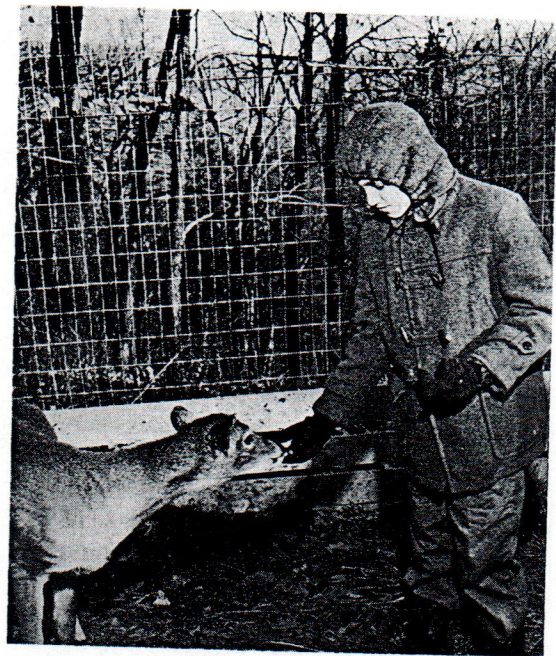


decides to take her group out of doors for half of the morning, to whom is she responsible? Why, to the Principal, the Superintendent, and the Board of Education. So it isn't a camping program, after all. It's a school program. And if she were to ask her class if they would like to go for a longer time, say a week, why, she would find them ready and eager. And if they went to some camp for a week, to live together, to cook their meals together, to learn and enjoy life together, would they be camping? She would still be responsible to the Principal, the Superintendent, and the Board of Education. It would be an education program, a school program: school extended out beyond the building. They are still responsible to the taxpayer. They are still in school. Inside a school building, some classes are held in the basement and some on the third floor. Some are held on the athletic field. So the concept of movable classes is already deeply rooted. What is proposed is that on occasion, some of the school experiences be real ones, with the whole class taking to the woods or to the open fields. This, then, is not camping. It is outdoor education. All of this happens in school time, not as a vacation activity.

Not all teachers, we know, are ready for this, and not all administrators, either. Some teachers are prepared to teach only in the classroom; and some administrators are prepared only to administer in indoor schools, and not in the big out-of-doors. Truly there is need for further preparation on the administrative level. I will only take time to mention the school administrator who came up to National Camp for one of our sessions, bearing a most complete and elaborate—and expensive—burden of equipment for spending a night out of doors. But the one night spent with nature changed him—as the outdoor life always does. In the morning, he turned out to be a pretty natural man.

But I must mention also the class that was asked to write a theme about the sunrise, and how all of them went straight to the library to read up on the subject. Some of them took books home to be read overnight and returned in the morning. And there was another class that was fond of singing

I love thy rocks and rills,  
Thy woods and templed hills,



but not one of them was sure of what a rill is; and they still were puzzled after looking it up in the dictionary, for they didn't know what the definition meant, exactly. We conduct too much of our educational process in ways that fill students' heads with words, and deny them the experience of the things the words stand for. Let the administrator get some important areas of his training by first-hand experience; let the teacher come to know whole segments of the world first-hand; and then the students will readily find all of their living to be a resource-area for knowledge.

Nor will they find it to be departmentalized knowledge. There is an amusing experience of a black-snake engaged in swallowing a robin. The young people who came upon it were fascinated and curious, and they applied to the professors for answers to their questions. The herpetologist could tell them a lot about the snake, but dared not venture any remarks about the bird, for his colleague the ornithologist was standing nearby. And when the young people turned to the bird-man, he was careful to avoid any enlightening remarks about the snake. While the two scientists were maintaining their academic distance, the snake went on swallowing the bird; so perhaps nature is not interested in artificial disciplines and classified departments of knowledge.



I am seeking to point out that in this newer phase of education, from the standpoint of the teacher and the administrator, there are wider ranges of fundamental experience essential to the making of good teachers. If the education of teachers comes only from books; and the education of administrators comes mainly from books, we shall always lack, as a profession, the readiness to engage in outdoor education—wherever it comes into play—all down the line.

Here let me say a word about the New Jersey project. There are six State Colleges in New Jersey, all engaged primarily in the preparation of teachers for the public schools. And there the State Board of Education has decreed that everyone preparing to teach shall spend one week out of his four years living at the state-operated camp for a program of experiences in the out-of-doors, learning for themselves or guiding groups of school children. The camp is operated under the auspices of the Department of Education; the Director and assistants are qualified educators ranking with the pro-

fessors in the colleges. The week each student spends in camp is a week of school time. Professors go along to supervise and to teach—sometimes their regular subjects. The plan, in experimental operation over a period of years, is in full operation in 1960-61. Henceforth, every teacher coming out of one of these colleges will have the basic insight into outdoor education that can come with a single week of outdoor experiences in connection with teacher education.

New Jersey is the first state with such a program. There should soon be many more; for other states are moving in this same direction. The demand for teachers who can conduct outdoor groups of children is growing by leaps and bounds, as more schools enter the program by sending classes into the open, or by operating their own outdoor campus or their own camp. As teachers exhibit some readiness, more schools will be able to take advantage of the very real benefits that are available to supplement the indoor classroom and the indoor curriculum.