

▼ advertisement ▼

PalmBeachPost.com | Accent

advertisement

[▶ JOBS](#)
[▶ AUTOS](#)
[▶ REAL ESTATE](#)
[▶ CLASSIFIEDS](#)
[▶ SHOPPING](#)
[Home](#)
[News](#)
[Sports](#)
[Business](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Accent](#)

 Search Site Yellow Pages

[Entertainment](#)
[Your Town](#)
[Archives](#)
[Site Map](#)
[Help](#)

WE LOVED YOU CAMP TA-GO-LA

CAMP NAH-JEE-WAH...CAMP CHE-NA-WAH...

Thursday, March 30, 2006

The pranks and performances. The bed-wetters and the burning bunks. The flattened chipmunks and the buxom Europeans. We asked for reader memories of summer camp days, and dozens of happy campers responded.

YOU CAN LEAD A GIRL TO CAMP . . .



[enlarge](#)

Mac Krents (back right) with his six charges and a co-counselor.



[enlarge](#)

Jolie in 1949 on the flooded campground where she taught horseback riding. 'The water on the left doesn't belong there,' she said.



[enlarge](#)

Which of these boys went on a forced march to the latrine with counselor Rollin Richards? He won't tell.



[enlarge](#)

Dan Liftman learned an important lesson at camp: *Old Time Rock & Roll* is a long song!

Many years ago I was privileged to be chosen as a counselor and riding instructor at a wonderful camp for girls near Brevard, N.C. ...

Problem 1: It rained the first two weeks of camp session. Have you ever tried to keep 150 homesick little girls entertained and happy for two weeks of rainy days?

Problem 2: The river just beyond the riding ring overflowed and we had canoeing lessons in the riding ring.

Eventually the river returned to its natural boundaries and we got down to the business of teaching little girls to ride horses. We counselors offered help and advice from the center of the ring while the girls practiced their lessons and skills.

One of our

youngest and tiniest campers couldn't keep her mount from periodically coming into the center of the ring. The smart, experienced horse was hoping that she would get off and let him go back to the peace and quiet of his stall.

She finally called out to me, 'Jolie, I just can't drive this horse.'

I will never forget that summer!

—*Jolie Riggs*, West Palm Beach

THEY LIT EACH OTHER'S (CAMP) FIRES

Being a camp counselor 59 years ago changed my life. My co-counselor at Camp Allegro in Pittsfield, Mass., was engaged, and when her fiancé visited her at camp, he met me and arranged a blind date with his cousin. We met, fell in love, and married in 1949 and have three sons (and three daughters-in-law and seven grandchildren).

With 57 years of happy marriage we say how lucky we were that I was a camp counselor!

—*Norma Rosenblum*, Palm Beach

It was the summer of 1950, the year I graduated from high school. I went to Camp H.E.S. (Hebrew Educational Society) as a camp counselor. A male counselor was assigned to each cabin to help carry in the luggage. My fellow noticed I had a portable radio. This interested him greatly because it was during the Korean War and he was waiting for his reserve unit to be called to active duty. He frequently returned to my cabin to listen to the news. It's been 54 years and I'm still telling him the news.

This was a particularly busy summer: Six couples who met later married.

—*Sandy Schneier*, Boynton Beach

'DID YOU WALK THEM? DID THEY GO?'

It was 1949 and I was 15 years old and experiencing my first summer as a counselor at Camp Ta-Go-La, outside Monticello, N.Y.

I was assigned the youngest group of campers, 6- and 7-year-olds. We arrived by bus after a three-hour sweaty, grimy, non-air-conditioned trip from New York City. The kids were so weary and dirty that they slept part way.

My seven campers and I were assigned a cabin which, thank goodness, contained a sink, shower and a commode. I was also assigned a 14-year-old junior counselor to assist. Immediately upon arrival our group leader informed me that I was blessed with two bed-wetters who had to be awakened or their beds would be swamps in the morning. I assigned them bunks side by side and, naturally, did not inform the other campers, nor the J.C.

Even before we unpacked the head counselor called a meeting and instructed the J.C. to help unpack trunks and wait for my return. Some of the campers were friends and the J.C. consented to rearrange the bed assignments so that friends would sleep side by side. He neglected to inform me. Since I was not yet familiar with the names and faces things remained status quo.

That first night after taps, the bone-weary youngsters were fast asleep. I immediately woke Wetter One and walked him groggily to the commode and waited for results, which were not forthcoming. As an inducement I turned on the tap, made hissing sounds between my teeth, implored and eventually tried by example. After 10 minutes he weakly complied and Wetter Two was subjected to the same procedure except that I could no longer induce by example. He too eventually complied.

The next morning at reveille all awakened, with two campers standing in sodden PJs and soaked sheets and mattresses. I had 'walked' the wrong kids.

It never occurred again because I gave the JC the wetter duty and the responsibility to air out the sodden sheets and mattresses, a nasty job. Every night before I slept I asked, 'Did you walk them? Did they go?' I was always assured the task was completed. It was a summer to remember.

—*Rollin Richards*, Lake Worth

TOM CRUISE MADE IT LOOK SO EASY

Back in the '80s I served as counselor at the Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice's summer Peace Camps. One year I decided to do Tom Cruise's dance number from *Risky Business* in the camp talent show. I didn't consider that the movie scene is only 30 seconds long, while Bob Seger's *Old Time Rock & Roll* runs close to five minutes. I played air guitar on a fly-swatter while doing every dance move — break dance, moonwalk, Charleston! — I knew. Halfway through, I was exhausted. Suddenly a group of African-American boys, who had earlier performed a professional-quality dance routine, jumped on stage to help me finish.

After the show, as I was exiting the hall, some of the boys were hanging out, congratulating each other on how well they had done, when one said, 'Wait a minute! We gotta give it up. This man right here had the best act all night!' I was a hit!

—*Dan Liftman*, West Palm Beach

SUMMER IN TREEHOUSE PREPARED HIM FOR FOXHOLE

Camp Raritan in New Jersey was owned by Time/Life magazines and its purpose was to give underprivileged New York kids a camping experience.

I was 20 years old in 1942 and was working as a sales clerk in a photo shop in Grand Central Station. The nation was at war and I knew that I would be drafted, so I applied for a job as a camp counselor. I wanted to get into the open air away from the fumes of New York City.

When I arrived at Camp Raritan, I got my first shock as I would be living in a treehouse with six kids from the New York City slums. I wondered how I would get through the summer.

The campers arrived and they were quiet and seemed bewildered as this was the first time they were in the countryside. All my fears were washed away the first day as they were a great bunch of kids.

There was one boy named Mike who put on a tough-guy act, but it was all an act. Mike was a bed-wetter but the other boys did not tease him because he was a tough guy.

I would awaken Mike at 6:30 and almost every morning his bed was wet. I would have Mike strip his bunk and march him down to the river to make him wash his sheets. After doing this every morning, he finally stopped wetting his bed. One of the campers, Joey, let me know that he did not have a dad but his mother was very pretty. Joey kept talking about his beautiful mother and I realized that one of my campers was a 10-year-old matchmaker!

When I arrived home from camp there was a letter from Uncle Sam. I landed in Normandy at Cherbourg Harbour a few weeks after D-Day. Our division saw action in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

When I was in a foxhole during combat I would think back to that summer of '42. I knew that with the help of six kids from the New York slums, I was a tough infantry sergeant.

That summer at Raritan was one of the highlights of my life.

-*Mac Krents*, Palm Beach

SNEAKING OUT FOR A WONDROUS CINDERELLA EVENING

Favorite among my memories of Camp WaKonDa was the evening I was invited to attend a dance at the local country club by a young man who lived near camp. I had used up my time off and the evening was taken as a "sneak-out."

While most of us did not arrive for the summer equipped with a formal gown, my colleague riding counselor had brought one to go out with her parents. Coincidentally, another counselor had dress shoes that fit, and, after primping in the plywood-scented shower cabin, I met my date at a barbed-wire fence. My escort put a foot on the bottom strand, held the top wire, and I slipped through to his waiting car. The dance was great fun. We did the Twist and the Stroll in the starry, summer moonlight.

When I slipped back through the fence and switched my ball gown for my camp night shirt and sleeping bag, I felt my Fairy Godmother had been kind.

Revielle came too early, but I did report for daily flag raising, breakfast at the big house, and I tutored my charges in the horseback riding ring on schedule. The campers were never aware of my Cinderella evening, but the staff teased me the rest of the summer.

—*Marcia Schneider*, Punta Gorda

AND BABY MAKES THREE, FOR PERFECT MEMORY

As a leader in a Girl Scout troop in 1950, I spent a week in the woods of beautiful northern Wisconsin in Girl Scout Camp.

The buildings were well maintained, trails were well-marked and a stone ring provided an outdoor fire for sing-alongs at the close of the day.

The weather was perfect, the food was excellent, and in attendance were about 40 people, leaders and Scouts. My 8-year-old daughter was a member of my troop.

On the second day during craft class, I glanced up to see my husband carrying my 3-year-old. He explained that she kept him awake all night crying for Mommy and missing her sister.

She was openly welcomed to stay and be a part of the group. She and I shared the bottom bunk while big sister slept in the top bunk.

Now 56 years later, this truly is a favorite memory. I had both of my daughters with me.

My eldest is now making snow angels in heaven. My youngest is reveling in being a first-time grandmother. I've recently celebrated my 85th birthday and am rejoicing in the birth of my first great-grandchild. Sign me Happy Camper.

—*Mae C. Remington*, West Palm Beach

The curse of the Tie-Dyed hand

When I was in college in 1992, I spent part of one summer as a counselor at a sleep-away camp run by Suffolk County, on Long Island, New York.

I had been a summer day camper as a kid, and had suffered through a few summers with mean, nasty counselors who made me wonder, "If they hate kids this much, why be a camp counselor, anyway?"

So when I had an opportunity to be one, I resolved to be a fun one, a nice one, a counselor that my campers would remember fondly, years later.

In my cabin, Cabin Six, I had about eight boys. Two of them, Tommy and John, were my Frisbee protégés — I was teaching them to play and they were doing very well — and they really looked up to me. As campers they were a handful, but lots of fun nonetheless.

One night at dinner, John was laughing and showing off one of his hands, which he evidently had dyed red during arts and crafts while he was learning to tie-dye T-shirts. He was proud of it, and obviously thought it was immensely funny to have a red hand.

When he got around to showing it off to me, I put on a deadpan, dead-serious look. "John," I said, "you didn't tie-dye your hand, did you?!"

"Sure did! Isn't it cool?"

"John, that stuff doesn't come off!" I said.

John wasn't a taker, and challenged my proclamation. He scoffed. He doubted.

"John, look at me." Dead-serious face. "I have friends in college who did that, and their hands are still that way. It doesn't come off!"

I went back to eating my dinner and didn't think much more about the subject of the beet-red hand. I figured I hadn't been straight-faced enough to convince John.

But a few minutes later, Tommy got my attention and signaled to me that something was wrong.

My heart sank. There was John — normally the little smart-alecky tough guy — sobbing away with his face buried in his arms on the dinner table! Evidently, I was a more convincing messenger of bad news than I had given myself credit for.

So since I was not a heartless meanie of a camp counselor, I began consoling John, assuring him that I had been only joking. It took some time but he eventually calmed down. I doubt very seriously if his hand is still red today.

—*Jeffrey Budzynski*, West Palm Beach

A SUPREME HONOR FOR A COUNSELOR

I began my lifelong love affair with children's camps as a 7-year-old at Camp Nah-Jee-Wah in Milford, Pa.

Then, in 1948, I joined the staff at Camp Che-Na-Wah in the Adirondack Mountains of New York State as assistant head waterfront counselor. During that first summer, I taught swimming to a camper named Kiki Bader, who attended Che-Na-Wah for 15 summers. Today, you know her as Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Supreme Court justice.

In 1950, as a newlywed, my husband, Melvin, and I both joined the staff at Che-Na-Wah as head waterfront counselor and head of athletics. We were young teachers in New York City Public Schools at the time.

Each year, we planted deeper roots, both family and professional, on the shores of Balfour Lake in the Adirondack Mountains. Partners in everything — life, love, business and play — we celebrated our first anniversary in 1950 at Che-Na-Wah. This past summer, we celebrated our 56th anniversary at Che-Na-Wah.

I have always been highly aware and deeply appreciative of the special magic the camp experience can bring to a child. Whatever strength I have flourished mainly because of the exposure and nurturing support of camp.

—*Ruth Wortman*, Palm Beach

HEAD COUNSELOR OR HEAD TROUBLEMAKER?

From 1961-65, I was the head counselor at a children's coed summer camp in the Catskill Mountains and was responsible for staff assignments as well as all programming, sports and discipline. However, unbeknownst to all, I was also the leading "troublemaker" in camp.

My favorite trick was to steal the undies — name-tapes intact — of boy-girl couples and run them up the flagpole after dark so they'd be there in the morning for flag raising and salute.

My second and perhaps best trick was a weekly middle-of-the-night attack when I painted a Merthiolate "X" on the forehead of every boy or girl in a bunk. When they awoke, screams of "We've been raided" could be heard throughout camp!

Needless to say these antics caused the owner great dismay and he demanded that I find the perpetrator and send him home immediately! Little did he — or anyone else — suspect that it was the HC doing all the dirty work.

At a recent reunion, more than 40 years later, I confessed, to the amazement and delight of all, that I was the midnight marauder who had kept them

concerned and entertained all summer!

—*Roy Chernock*, West Palm Beach

A CHIPMUNK PAYS THE ULTIMATE PRICE

We counselors had a bad habit of eating snacks that our campers' parents would send to their kids in care packages. Late night would come, the food was bad at the mess hall, we would all be so hungry and temptation would get the better of us.

When our campers would ask why they had no snacks left, we would tell them that the chipmunks (which there was an abundance of) had gotten into their snacks. They actually seemed to be OK with this story.

The campers would always hang out at the door to headquarters to spy on us counselors. One day, one of my fellow counselors was prancing around, showing off her new hiking boots, when we heard a most horrible sound. There on the ground, under her brand new boot, was a squashed chipmunk. She had accidentally stomped on the poor thing while showing off her new shoes!

Well, four campers witnessed this event from the doorway and their little faces were shocked. Then one of the campers pointed at my friend and said, "She killed the chipmunk for eating our snacks!"

The four girls burst into tears and ran away, leaving us all crowded around the tiny lifeless form of the slain chipmunk. It took a good week to convince the campers that my co-counselor had not killed it on purpose, but they always seemed suspicious of her afterwards.

—*Sarah Shepard Pearsal*, Lake Worth

AH, CAMP! MARSHMALLOW TOASTS AND PEEP SHOWS

In 1962, I was an 18-year-old counselor at a prestigious camp in Tyler Hill, Pa. The owners of the camp always hired European specialty counselors for archery, crafts, waterfront, etc. The five females and five males from Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Greece and Ireland were always gorgeous, tall and more "mature" than the 20-year-old Americans, who were also counselors.

I had the privilege of bunking with the five buxom, European beauties in a small cabin at the bottom of a hill, away from the other campers and counselors.

One dark night — the last night of the summer — our tanned and toned young female counselors were invited to stand at the top of a hill about 40 yards from our bunkhouse, which, by the way, did not have any shades. We were told to look directly at our cabin windows.

What a sight we were treated to. All of the male counselors took off their clothes and walked around our bunk with the lights on!

All summer they had been observing us as we entered and exited the showers or lounged around in our undies. We had been their nightly summer entertainment! It didn't bother the European girls at all but I have never forgotten it!

—*Tina Gudin Korn*, Boynton Beach

PESKY RONNY'S REVENGE

We had a camper named Ronny who was considered a pesky Scout. He was always running into the chief counselor's bunk finding fault with most camp activities. One day, the chief was meeting with some of his counselors when Ronny came in, all excited. The chief said, "Ronny, do not open your mouth until I'm finished here." The meeting was soon over and the chief said, "Ronny, what have you got to say now?"

"My bunk is on fire!"

—*Stanley Silken*, Palm Beach

Post Local Ad Links

[Autos](#): Search 19,000+ Local Vehicles; Build Dream Car

[Advertise With Us](#): In print and online

▼ advertisement ▼

Copyright © 2006, The Palm Beach Post. All rights reserved.

By using PalmBeachPost.com, you accept the terms of our visitor agreement. [Please read it.](#)

[Contact PalmBeachPost.com](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Our Partners](#) | [Advertise with The Post](#)

