

# *A* PHILOSOPHY of CAMPING

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Founder  
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*That they may value the  
Unseen and the Intangible-  
for of these  
Reality is Fashioned.*

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# Foreword

Summer camp is a place for fun and good times, for swimming and sports, campfires and hikes, plenty of adventure. These are important to the boys and should be carefully planned features of the camp program. The unusual opportunity at Camp Sequoyah for fun, good times, thrilling adventure and the learning of many skills is portrayed in the Sequoyah catalog.

Infinitely more important, however, are the Intangible values to be derived from the camping experience. No boy ever returns home the same youngster who left for camp. For good or for ill, he has been influenced by his cabin counselor, the camp staff, the campers, and the atmosphere of the camp.

Strong and positive influences do not “just happen”, they are the products of a definite philosophy of camping such as is presented in this monograph. Such a philosophy dictates a child-centered rather than an activity-centered program. Emphasis on the intangible values that remain when the fun and adventures are long over, commends itself to discriminating parents who want a camping experience for their sons to include more than activity skills and entertainment.

Perhaps no one has given more time and thought to the development of a sound philosophy of camping than C. Walton Johnson. Often referred to as the “Dean of Camping” in the South, “Chief” has served as a camp director for 53 years. In 1924, after directing Boy Scout and Y. M. C. A. camps for twelve years, he founded, and has since directed, Camp Sequoyah, which is nationally recognized as one of the outstanding camps for boys.

**WILLARD P. VERDUIN**

# The Summer Camp

*The organized summer camp is an institution designed to provide a growth experience for children and youth, in an outdoors setting in which the resources of nature and human personalities are used to enrich an unregimented program of fun, adventure, education and inspiration.*

ORGANIZED CAMPING has gone through several transitional periods since 1881 when Ernest Balch first conceived of the summer camp as a way of life for boys during the summer. Early camps were nature-oriented and child-centered. The need for an organized program was not apparent. Life in the woods, on a lake, close to nature, under good leadership, was considered program enough when camps were small. The word "camping" originally connoted a simple, unregimented life in the outdoors. Even today, this is the meaning boys equate with the kind of camping they enjoy most.

A rapid increase in the number of camps and campers necessitated greatly expanded physical facilities. Varied and comprehensive programs replaced the informal, nature-oriented program of earlier days. There is today a great variety among summer camps—some are simple and rustic, others have fine buildings and elaborate equipment. Even so, four basic requirements for a good summer camp remain unchanged: a wilderness setting, adequate shelter, good food and **good** leadership.

Camping, a comparatively new movement in the field of education and child guidance, is still in the process of developing a philosophy. Many of the more thoughtful and perceptive leaders of the camping movement agree that the summer camp does have a unique and distinctive mission and the status of an educational service for children and youth.

Over a period of more than forty years, the Sequoyah staff has formulated the philosophy of camping set forth in this monograph. This philosophy is based on the concept that a child's primary need is growth-as-a-person.

The validity of this philosophy of camping has been tested through the years and its effectiveness has been verified by the power of Sequoyah to change the lives of boys and help them become finer men.

A basic tenet in this philosophy is that the summer camp, by virtue of its controlled environment and isolated location, and through its capacity to deal with the whole life of the child under the most favorable conditions, is peculiarly fitted to promote the growth of the camper as a person. This philosophy of camping prescribes for the summer camp a role that transcends providing recreation, amusement, and the teaching of activity skills.

## **Growth-As-A-Person**

When we first set out to implement this growth-as-a-person philosophy at Camp Sequoyah we were confronted with some imperatives among which were:

***The necessity of superior leadership.*** We realized that we could not expect the character growth of campers to transcend the resources of character in counselors and directors.

***Strong emphasis on personal counseling and guidance.*** We were also aware that high quality leadership is a primary requisite for sound counseling and guidance.

***Special attention to the personal interests and needs of the campers.*** Here again superior leadership was indispensable.

Although we were fully cognizant of the importance of activity skills in our counselors, yet, this concept of the mission of the summer camp compelled us to adopt, as our first criterion of leadership, positive, attractive personality and integrity of character.

Then, we had to determine which is more important — the program, or the camper as a person. We asked ourselves: am I thinking primarily in terms of the camper and his needs as a person, or in terms of his needs as an athlete, or a swimmer, or a rider? Should the program and camp life be geared to acquiring activity skills or to the personal growth of the camper? We were encouraged when a discerning, intelligent Sequoyah mother wrote: “It is certainly a real satisfaction to know that my son is in a camp where a boy is more important than the program.”

This philosophy of camping does not imply that the recreational and fun aspects of camping should be neglected, or even de-emphasized, nor should there be less attention given to the teaching of activity skills. Indeed, this “plus quality” of the camping experience could not be achieved without full and adequate provision for a varied activity program under wise guidance and strong, highly skilled leadership.

This philosophy of camping, however, does call for an unregimented camp life. Personal growth is best stimulated by the opportunity to think, to plan, to choose, to make decisions, and by the freedom to exercise initiative, which is not permitted under a regimented program. Conformity leads to the common denominator of mediocrity, regimentation stifles initiative, creativity thrives only in an atmosphere of

freedom. Good organization and definite scheduling of activities, however, are necessary for smooth operation.

It is not the program so much as the way the program is conducted. It is not just having a staff member for every four campers, as much as it is the concern, the commitment and the dedication of the staff. In a word, it is whether a director and his staff can see beyond activities, daily routines and schedules and think in terms of those intangibles that enrich personality and strengthen character. It is evident that such a staff must be composed of superior men and women. Herein lies the crux of the whole matter: this growth-as-a-person objective can be achieved only through the medium of men and women who have already achieved this growth in their own lives.

Growth as a person involves not only physical growth and physical skills, mental growth and intellectual achievements, but growth also in general maturity: i. e. social graces, good attitudes, self-confidence, self-reliance, resourcefulness, emotional stability, sense of values, moral convictions, religious faith and a sound philosophy of life. The true measure, then, of the value of a summer camp experience for a child is: How much has he grown as a person and how much will he continue to grow in the right direction as a result of that experience.

### **Measuring The Growth of the Camper**

The true value of a camp experience is largely determined by the extent to which a camper has had a growth experience in the following areas:

**FRIENDLINESS:** Is he more friendly, more socially acceptable; does he make friends more easily? Is he a better boy in the home, more thoughtful of parents, kinder to brothers and sisters?

**HAPPINESS:** Is he happier? Does he have a brighter outlook on life, more zest for living?

**HABITS:** Are his habits more conducive to his own health and welfare, and to the welfare and pleasure of those with whom he associates?

**SELF-CONFIDENCE** Does he have a clearer sense of his own worth? Does he tackle a job with more self-assurance?

**SELF-RELIANCE:** Is he more self-reliant, more capable of taking care of himself, better able to take things in his stride?

**RESOURCEFULNESS:** Is he more resourceful, more creative, more capable of using his leisure time wisely, less subject to boredom and loneliness?

**SENSE OF MORAL VALUES** Does he have a clearer sense of moral values, of right and wrong? Is he more conscientious?

**RESPONSIVENESS TO RELIGIOUS WORSHIP:** Do things spiritual seem to have more meaning for him; is he more interested in worship services; is he more reverent, more respectful of holy places and sacred things?

One deliberate aim of the Sequoyah program and guidance is to achieve improvement in these qualities of personality and character. There is evidence of our success in this endeavor in the lives of the boys who have attended Sequoyah. A Sequoyah camper, aged 15, writes of his experience on an overnight camp-out:

“My most meaningful experiences have taken place at Camp Sequoyah. On one cabin supper last year my counselor, another boy and I sat around the fire and talked after the others

had gone to bed. I really believe that was the first time I became aware of God. There is no better place, in my opinion, than camp to think and grow and clear the cobwebs out of one's mind."

Let us think of this kind of growth as the great business of youth. Moreover, let us think of this growth, which includes the awakening of spiritual responses, as a maturing process which does not end with adolescence. Growth, so understood, is the essence of a continuing life which increasingly transcends the material aspects of man's existence. Only a program and guidance which embraces the total life of the camper will encourage this kind of growth.

## **Deep Concerns of Youth**

In our concern that youth *must* have a "good time", rate high in athletics and make high grades in school, have we not overlooked the fact that many of our youth, certainly those with the greatest promise, have higher goals for themselves? These young people are earnestly searching for answers to some momentous questions:

- How can I make a wise choice of a vocation?
- How can I plan for a successful marriage?
- Can I be honest in a society that condones dishonesty?
- What shall I do about pre-martial sex relations?
- How can I have a good time and be generally liked without compromising my sense of values?

These are some of the questions which concern youth more deeply than dates, and dances, or even sports. The Sequoyah guidance counselors have had the rare privilege of helping many older boys find the answers to these perplexing questions. Many of these older boys have found a new happiness and a deeper sense of security as they have worked out

a sound philosophy of life with the help of our guidance counselors. The camp setting approximates the ideal for dealing with such questions. One of our former campers who is now an outstanding college student writes of the help he received.

“I want you to know something which, up until now, no one else besides myself has known, and that is the help which Paul Neal was able to give me. I found in Paul an understanding friend and counselor. He gave me such a needed helping hand that even he, I believe, does not realize how badly I needed it or how well he provided it. I am very sorry that I am not able to spend more summers with him. He is a most generous and kind-hearted man, as you know.”

Life in a well run, unregimented summer camp is, for most children, the most natural, the most nearly normal and the most satisfying life they ever have. Such a life is an antidote for nerve tension, frustrations and emotional instability. Happy memories of fun-filled, care-free adventurous days in summer camp are a priceless legacy that adds joy to the younger years and strength and poise when the going gets tough during the adult years. A happy childhood is the birth-right of every child.

Within the frame-work of this philosophy, priority can be given to helping youth acquire skill in the fine **art of living**. What the boy is to become **as a person** is of primary concern. When his life is viewed as a citizen and as a man, his skill as an athlete, swimmer, or rider is of secondary importance.

Parents who are primarily concerned with the acquisition of activity skills through a regimented program are asking less than can and should be expected from a good summer camp. When activity skills are the major concern of either

parent or director there is a limited vision of the full potentialities of a camping experience.

## **Unique Opportunity for Growth**

This interpretation of camping places the summer camp in a category which distinguishes it from all other child-serving agencies. No other institution, except the home, deals so completely with the whole life of the child. The summer camp provides a living situation, even with daily chores and self-care responsibilities. The small living unit, usually seven boys and a counselor, approximates family life in the home more nearly than any other living situation a boy can have. No teacher, scoutmaster or club leader can ever serve in *loco parentis* quite so fully as a cabin counselor who lives in the same cabin, presides at the head of the table, instructs, disciplines, guards health, prays for and with his campers, and serves as leader and guide in their daily life.

The school must be primarily concerned with mental growth and intellectual achievement. The various athletic organizations are primarily concerned with physical development and athletic skills. The church's first concern is with religious training. Even the best of recreational and entertainment programs do not deal with the whole child as a person and these programs have only a very superficial impact on the life of a child. Only the summer camp has the child-body, mind, and soul-twenty-four hours a day over an extended period of time, under conditions which make a child very susceptible to character influences.

For this very reason, the summer camp has not only a superb opportunity for dealing with the total life of the camper, but also an obligation to safeguard and improve every aspect of the camper's life. The summer camp

fore, is strikingly unique in its opportunity to deal with every phase of a child's life. This is a rare and high prerogative. How fortunate are the campers whose director and staff have this conception of the summer camp!

Growth in personality and character is a slow process, but even a small achievement in this realm of a child's life is priceless. The camp director who has a true concept of camping will accept no, less a mission. The truly discriminating parent will settle for no less an achievement.

***We are all blind until we see***

***That in the human plan***

***Nothing is worth the making if***

***It does not make the man.***

**- EDWIN MARKHAM**