

Edmund

THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY OF THE SUMMER CAMP
RALPH D. ROEHM
BOYS' SECRETARY-YMCA - DIRECTOR OF CAMP KERN, THE Y CAMP FOR BOYS

1. The organized summer camp movement is in a stage of transition.
 - a. Change in purpose, methods and leadership personnel are conspicuously evident.
 - (1) Changes have come in response to the newer currents which prevail in the field of educational theory and practice.
 - b. Camp Directors are keenly sensitive to these trends and are conceiving camping as a significant educational enterprise for the achievement of character outcomes.
 - c. The demand that camp be recognized as an important educational agency carries with it many obligations and implications for the future development of the camping movement.
 - (1) Many changes of a fundamental nature must take place if a genuine educational status is to be achieved.
 - (2) A number of tendencies are now present which reveal a distinct drift toward a thorough going educational purpose and the employment of methods consonant with the new character development claims.
2. Shift in emphasis from recreational to an educational function.
 - a. It always has been assumed that the camping experience was rich in character and social outcomes. Courage, resourcefulness, robustness, love of the beautiful in nature, industry, sociability, and cooperation have ever been considered among the fine fruits of the summer camping experience.
 - b. These values were considered only by-products, incidental.
 - c. Today the character outcomes, the development of socially desirable attitudes, ideals and habits have become the primary objectives of the progressive summer camp.
 - d. If the deepest concern of Camp Directors is the development of character, then the most effective means available for the achievement of these results must be employed.
3. A trend now evident in many summer camps is a shift from a confident reliance for results upon a program of "wholesome exposure" to the application of the best available educational procedures to the entire camp enterprise including organization, program, methods and personnel.
4. A rapidly increasing number of camps are drawing upon the resources of the psychological, sociological, and educational sciences in an extensive measure.

SOME FACTS CONCERNING THE PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF
THE SUMMER CAMP

There are over 5,000 camps in the U.S. and Canada.
They enroll a million boys and girls each summer.
Parents probably spend \$100,000,000.00 every year in fees for their children attending camp.
When this amount of money is devoted to educational purposes, commensurate results should legitimately be expected.

"But the summer camp period is so short, how can we expect it to yield large results?", is a frequent remark.

A boy who stays in camp 8 weeks is actually there more hours than he spends in school in a year.

Such facts as the foregoing serve merely as an index of its opportunity.

ASSETS INHERENT IN THE NATURE OF CAMP LIFE

1. The Re-creative Function of Camping.

- a. Naturalness and simplicity of life in the woods in contrast with the complexity and artificiality of civilized city life.
- b. If the camp can demonstrate its effectiveness in developing resources for play and recreation within the person it will doubtless be fulfilling an eminently worthwhile purpose.
- c. Kindling the imagination, releasing fresh impulses, expanding and refining the emotion.

2. Camp as a process for Socializing Behavior.

The most conspicuous contribution of the camp to personality and character growth, in the judgment of many camp leaders and educators, is in the development of desirable social attitudes and more effective social adjustments.

- a. The very nature and demands of camp life with its intimacy of contact and its sharing of common tasks in the camp quickly and concretely reveal to the boy the necessity and value of cooperative behavior.
- b. The influence of the boy's own age-group in providing pressures which make for a more adequate adjustment is of paramount importance. The discipline of the boys own group in bringing him to terms in many cases is notably more effective than all the preachments and commandments of the adult.
- c. The emancipation from parent and adult domination and devotion is often essential for the attainment of the emotional, intellectual and social maturing and independence of the boy. The emotional "weaning" of many a boy from his mother has begun during his first year at a summer camp.
- d. The influence of the larger group represented by camp spirit or group will is an important factor in the boy's adaptive behavior.
- e. A camp which is organized on a thoroughly democratic or cooperative basis possesses an additional opportunity for developing the attitudes and abilities needed in effective citizenship.
- f. The potent influence of attractive and wholesome counselors who evoke attitudes of admiration.
- g. The camp possesses the entire life of the entire boy. There is no gap between school and life to be bridged. The whole boy, body and interests, lives a complete life under conditions which may be largely regulated by the leadership of the camp.

PARENTS' INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES IN CAMP

The basic concern of parents is for the health and safety of their children.

Other interests are:

1. The desire to be free from parental responsibility for the summer.
2. The development or maintenance of habits of good etiquette, tidiness, and politeness in their children.
3. Obedience and discipline.
4. Physical development and improvement in health.
5. Proficiency in the various camp skills.
6. Courage and daring.
7. Socializing effect of camp.
8. Character development.