

My Two Weeks at School Camp

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For the past three years the seventh grade in the Demonstration School of George Peabody College for Teachers has gone camping for two weeks in April. This camping experience has come to be an integral part of the curriculum of this particular grade level. Last year the camp was conducted early in April, and unfortunately, during an extended cold snap. Everything considered, the camp served again to provide for the children vital educational experiences they could not get in the classroom.

The material that follows is the diary of Elena Harap, one of the seventh grade pupils. It was written on her own initiative. Footnotes are furnished by R. T. DeWitt, Associate Professor of Physical Education, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee.

APRIL 10: Yay! We're here! It's true!¹

First, unpack and fix beds. Then all gather together and get bedrolls if you need them. We all get together again and Mr. DeWitt explains rules. (Don't go out on bluff, boys stay away from girls' cabins, vice versa, etc.)

First 'Camp Cruise'

We all roll down our jeans, roll up our socks, and go for a hike. Very pretty, it was mostly to familiarize us with grounds, I suppose.

We relax in our cabins awhile, then to lunch. Soup (vegetable), crackers, salad (fruit), cookies, milk. Afterwards Mr. DeWitt explained the process of each table washing dishes. Then, while the tables washed in turn everyone else sang rounds or songs with motions, the campers teaching songs as well as the counselors.

After the dishes were washed we were told that rest period would last until

2:30. (It was then five of one.) Usually, lunch will be 12:15-1:15—rest 1:15-2:15. We are lying in our room; Carol and Ann keep up a running commentary on everything and anything. Carol decided it was silly to write to her sister the first day so she decided to write in her diary. Then she changed her mind and said she would just rest.

We have just finished Recreation in which we were divided into groups for: archery, horse-shoe pitching, birling and box hockey. The groups played for about 15 or 20 minutes and then moved on to something else. Very good, always busy.

Now we're getting ready for supper. The electricity is off, temporarily (we hope), so we have to be sparing with water. The counselors are making a thing you twirl to make a fire.

Supper, and singing, then a short free period. Next, all gathered to the beat of an Indian drum. Somebody read a prayer to the Great Spirit for fire. Counselors started a fire with drill after a long wait for the first spark. Then

¹ Elena starts her diary at camp. There were many pre-camp activities in the classroom preparatory to the actual camp.

down trail to council ring where they lighted the fire with a torch from first fire. Then Miss Hooten told a legend of how man got fire. Back to cabins to get ready for bed. Now we'll turn in.

Games and Chores

April 11: Woke up early. Very cold. Didn't take the trouble to pull up extra blanket. Finally got up about 7:00 and put on many layers. The boys are already out playing.

Played a few games of box hockey before breakfast. The usual—singing, bacon and eggs, washing dishes. Back to cabins to clear up, etc.

I worked in the kitchen all morning—about the hardest work I've done yet.² We scrubbed out the cupboard and tubs. Also got lunch. I made a guard for my fingers for archery. Lunch was sort of lonesome because quite a few of the counselors and campers have left for a sleep-out. Before we washed the dishes, George Gibbens showed us a blue racer that had been caught and told how to know the three poisonous snakes found around here.³

Back to our cabins after dishwashing. Janice and Carol are having a terrific time trying to put film in Helen's camera.

After rest period we had a thing called Follow-Up. Since I had nothing to follow up as yet I made an arm-guard for archery. We went out and I got a stick for a spear. Then back to the

kitchen and to work on dinner. We had a little free time before dinner for recreation (which the other groups had been having).

Dinner, and it seems like a very small group when some of us are away.⁴ Afterwards, we saw movies and film strips on: adaptability of animals; snakes; archery; and also on Indians making a camp. It is cold tonight and we're all ready to go to bed. Coach Newton became ill so one group couldn't go on the sleep-out planned. Adjustments often have to be made but it doesn't seem to upset anybody.

"And the evening and the morning were the first day!"

Woodcraft and Planning

April 12: Cold again this morning, but it's just a matter of having enough over you. I got up early to help with breakfast.

While we were washing dishes afterwards the sleep-out group got back with the news that one of the boys had become "engaged" to one of the girls because he had given her his identification bracelet.

After cleaning up our cabins, our group had woodcraft. We practiced chopping logs, and hitting in the right place. George Gibbens made a three-legged work-stool as an example of simple wood furniture.

Lunch went by as usual with singing, etc. Then rest period and time to read letters brought by the mothers who were visiting for the day.

Next a meeting to plan our group's sleep-out for the following night. We

²All cooking was done by the campers under the guidance of nutritionists. Each work group, of which there were three composed of both boys and girls, prepared three meals in succession, was off duty for six meals, then again took a turn.

³Part of the health and safety instruction program.

⁴At least one group was on an overnight hike during nine of the twelve days.

were shown how to make our packs, and we planned our food.⁵

Then outside to Recreation Education and we found that some people can throw spears farther than others can. It's funny how skills here are so different from home or school and yet if you're pretty good there you're likely to succeed here. It's hard, too, when you're not so good as the others, the same as at home.

Dinner and two short movies, one on archery and one on seasons. We'll have to get busy tomorrow in preparation for the overnight.

The 'Sleep-Out'

April 13: Up early and right after breakfast we started packing for the sleep-out. It was a lucky pack that didn't get done over two or three times. Finally they were finished, even to the tump-line, the strip around the forehead. We started out.

We walked awhile, then reached our camp-site. The first thing was to set up our tents. Then we went up the bluff

⁵Each one of the camp-outs was planned carefully; consideration was given to packs, chores necessary to comfortable living and meals. The food was planned on the basis of nutritional value, cost and ease of preparation in the outdoors.



*Courtesy, Geo. Peabody Coll. for Tchrs.
Now we're getting ready for supper.*

overlooking the camp to get leaves to put under our sleeping bags for extra warmth and softness. One group dug a slit-trench latrine. Others gathered wood or got water. Unfortunately, most of the work was being done by the two counselors, Miss Margie and Coach.

Lunch came along, and minute steaks were cooked on a grill over the fire. Canned baked beans were heated over one of the individual fires that had been built near the tents. The steaks and beans and bread which we had were pretty good, but then came the cocoa! Ugh! I don't know just what was wrong with it,⁶ mine seemed dirty or maybe too much cocoa, but everybody, even the coach, agreed that it was lousy.

Soon after lunch we had a visit from some of the counselors and my mother who was visiting that day.

In the afternoon everybody seemed to be knocking around with nothing to do. We had forgotten that a table needed to be built while Miss Margie was building it. Again I got that feeling that you have to be good at things or you can't do them. But Coach said that it didn't matter so long as you did *something*, so I helped lash the table and felt much better.

Mr. Shannon came and took us on a nature hike. I saw my first adder's-tongue, Solomon's-seal, and yellow warbler.⁷

Getting back to camp, we sat around and sang for some time. Mr. DeWitt and some other men visited us late in the afternoon.

Finally, about 8:00, supper was ready: roast, corn-on-the-cob, potatoes, halffish-

⁶And we don't either!

⁷Nature sessions were conducted during the camp-out sessions.



Courtesy, Geo. Peabody Coll. for Tchrs.

I saw my first adder's-tongue, Solomon's-seal, and yellow warbler.

done rolls, and candy. Then Coach told us Mr. DeWitt had decided that it was too cold for us to sleep out⁸ so we rolled up our sleeping bags, came home and tumbled into bed.

Scavenger Hunt

April 14: We went back to the camp site after breakfast and packed all the things we had left the night before. I saw a chickadee and knew it was a chickadee!

As soon as we got back to the cabins, we checked in our shelter halves, etc., and went to the kitchen to help with lunch. We were too late, however, for another group was already helping. We

played around and watched Miss Lane work the potter's wheel, using clay which had been dug from the ground and sifted.

At lunch, Mr. DeWitt announced that he was going away and was turning over direction of the camp to George Gibbens.

Then we played box hockey, whittled, birked. Helped with supper. Afterwards, washing and a scavenger hunt—very exciting. Our group didn't win. The prize was a chocolate bar to each group member. One of the things on the list was a number five shoe. About the only reason Group I could win was that it had a member who wore a number five shoe.

⁸Temperature dropped to 25 degrees.

Poison Ivy

April 15: Boy, was it cold getting up this morning. Kitchen duty, too. My hands were colder than they have yet been.

I forgot to say, Carol and I wrote a masterpiece about our camp-out.

We started making a tepee out of a huge piece of what duffle bags are made of. Suddenly Coach said, "How many of you want to take showers?" (By this time we were pretty dirty.) So we went to our cabins and now . . . I'm *clean!*

Two nice things have happened: (1) I hit the red and black in archery; and (2) we square-danced tonight; lots of fun.

Oodles of poison ivy cases have have broken out; I haven't.

When I got to the dining hall this morning Windy gave me a Psalm and asked me to find some people to help read it for the worship service. The service was at 10:00. We sang hymns, read the Psalm, and read paragraphs about honesty, truth, purity, etc.

After the service we were free to do anything we wanted until time for a light lunch which was eaten out-of-doors. The day was beautiful. About 1:45 families began to arrive.⁹ After that everybody was busy showing people around.

We ate early all the food parents had brought: fried chicken, stuffed eggs, sandwiches, cake—traditional picnic fare.

Played around after eating; parents began to leave. When all had left, we

⁹This is the only time when all parents are at the camp. Each day one or two mothers come to camp as observers or messengers, or to serve in any other suitable capacity.

all gathered in the dining hall to play the shoe game, dodge ball, and to sing "Happy Birthday" to one of the campers. About 8:00 we saw a movie on the Tennessee River and one called *The Birth of the Soil*. Then to bed.

Even the Bell Witch

April 17: After breakfast our group started packing for an overnight.¹⁰ This time, instead of putting up tents, we were going to have tepees.

When we got to a place near where we had camped before we divided into groups of two or three to cook lunch. We dug holes in the ground for fires and filled them with sticks. When the fires had burned to coals we laid green sticks across the tops of the holes for a grill. On these we cooked steaks and what steaks! They must have been an inch thick. We also had bread, apples, baked beans, milk and cookies.

When we had washed our dishes Coach told us that it was too late to put up tepees and we would sleep in the tents of the camp that had been set up to show the parents. That night after dinner we sat around the campfire and Coach told a wonderfully scary ghost story. That got us started and we all took turns telling stories. Even the Bell Witch got into it. Finally we turned in.

Story About a Greenhorn

April 18: After a very good sleep, my first on the ground, we got up and cooked bacon and pancake hash for our breakfast. I had sassafras tea, also my first; very good.

¹⁰Since Elena's group missed sleeping out the first time because of cold weather the group wanted to make it up the next week.

Immediately after breakfast we had to start moving out because the group that had built the camp was coming that morning. Soon we were moved out and there was lots to be done on our own camp. Fortunately the weather was warm, so working outside was not hard. Wood was gathered, a table was set up and a shelf was built on which to hang pots, pans, utensils, etc.

Some work had been accomplished by lunch time but more was to be done. It seemed everybody thought that the counselors were doing all the work. We worked better after lunch.

That evening we had a visitor: 'Skipper' Lepich, a good kind of person. He and Mr. Gibbens helped put up the tepee while supper was being prepared. It was to me the best meal yet. Roast, corn, potatoes and bread, with cookies or cake for dessert. After eating, 'Skipper' told a very exciting adventure story and then started a round-robin story about a greenhorn named Stanislaus Ladislaus Petrovich.

Most of the girls slept in the one tepee that had been erected, the boys slept out.

April 19: Now I'm about up to date. Since we are now living continuously in our camp, I probably won't have much chance to write. This morning we came in for baths and clean clothes.

We worked hard in camp today, making benches and erecting tables. We have just seen movies taken of us at the beginning of camp.

Myths About Stars

April 20: Well, I'm back after all. We sleep here tonight because we've got to pack up to go home (Boo Hoo).

While we got our things from camp

this afternoon the other group learned Indian dances.

This morning everybody in our group except a few seemed suddenly to get very tired so they were sent to bed to rest.

At dinner everybody was back again. Afterwards we saw a movie but I didn't see it because five of us were working on telling myths about stars. After the movie we all went out on the recreation field. Mr. Gibbens showed us the Big Dipper, Leo, Sirius, Orion and some others, and our group told stories or interesting things about them.

Later, when we came in for bed Miss Grueter was telling us about nursing. It was interesting.

The Rolleo

April 21: After breakfast and clean-up our group went to our camp, Camp Tepee, for a final cleaning up. When we got back everybody was planning for the contests this afternoon. Each



*Courtesy, Geo. Peabody Coll. for Tchrs.
Wash day at the school camp.*

group will be represented in each event. We decided who would represent us.

Then everybody went up by one of the cabins to watch Mr. Gibbens cut down a tree. Then lunch and rest period.

The rolleo, jamboree, or what-you-call-it, is under way.¹¹ We are having a short break. The games have been good, but we won't know who won 'til everything's over.

It was a *good* rolleo. We entered events as a group or sent a representative of the group. It started off with hiking. In this each group hiked around the recreation area, both for time and form.

Then other events started for individual competition. There were birling, spear throwing for distance, toss and catch, box hockey, hoop-and-spear throwing, sawing, chopping, archery, log skidding, etc. All events were watched with interest and excitement. Other events in which the entire group participated were: nature identification, a shuttle-handkerchief relay and a sack race. Points were awarded according to the number of participants and how they placed.

The rolleo lasted all afternoon and broke up just before dinner with one more event to go: that of a single quartet from each group. These were heard right after dinner, and at last the final scores were announced: First Place,

¹¹The rolleo was a culmination of the recreation, nature and woodcraft programs.

Group I—113 points; Second Place
Group II—107 points; Third Place
Group III—100 points.

After this there was much cheering, then an Indian dance and we ended with the Virginia Reel and the singing of "Rise Up, Oh Flame."

Farm Visit

April 22: I woke up to the sound of rain, thinking of packing. After breakfast (the rain stopped) everybody did just that. About the middle of the morning when most of us were through, or nearly through, we heard 'Assembly.' When everybody had gathered together, we were told that we were going to make a trip to a near-by dairy farm.

To get to the farm we first had to cross the river. (My only boat ride at camp.) Then a fairly long walk through pastures until we came to the buildings. There we got a good look at the cows, bulls and calves, and where they lived. We also saw where the milk was kept. The men or boys working around the farm told us about the animals and equipment.

Then we started back again, getting back a little before lunch. By the time lunch was over some of the parents had already arrived. When all of the parents were there, they were shown the movie of us that we had seen before and served refreshments. Finally all the bags and extra things were loaded in the cars and everyone went home.

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