

Father Foley's Camp for Boys 1945 – 1948

I recently received the *Camp Foley Newsletter* which I thoroughly enjoyed and availed myself of the opportunity to go through all the old photos. I believe I sent you #213 a few years ago that was our group obtaining our Red Cross Life Saving Certificates. The old newsletters brought back many memories. As a camper, who attended the entire summer sessions 1945 – 1948, it was obviously a very different camp in those years, and I thought I might share with you some of my memories of the camp so long ago.

Remember that we came to camp in the last days of WWII with Germany having recently surrendered and Japan surrendering in the final days of the session. We had lived with rationing which was also reflected in our camp diet and especially in what was available at the canteen. Also, with the polio epidemics sweeping the large cities, our parents were influenced to send us to camp.

Father John P. Foley was a warm, short, round, white haired gentleman with a quick smile and easy laugh. He offered mass at 7:20 every morning with an 11:00 mass on Sunday mornings for the general public. It was a privilege to serve his mass. On Sunday mornings the older campers sold the Minneapolis Tribune to the visitors receiving a free copy for their efforts.

Bob Schmid was the head counselor/director who was very reserved. His interaction with the campers was limited to make the necessary announcements following the meals, conduct the cabin inspections daily and meet with each camper on Sundays to arrange their schedules of activities for the following week.

Campers who attended the entire 9 weeks season were given the special rate of \$18 per week plus their canteen and craft charges. I see it's considerably more expensive now.

The cabins were austere being rough shells without any interior finishing with the exception of a bare light bulb hanging at each end of the cabin with no sources of heat. There was a crude sheetrock enclosure at the end of each cabin which served as an office for the two counselors residing in that cabin. I spent two years in Waupacuta and two in Micmac which had been a private cabin originally and was well finished on the inside. The other cabins were Locosippi, Lehetep, Indian Grove and Kildare each capable of housing 12 – 18 campers. Campers ranged in age from 6 – 16 years old and wooden bunk beds were used for the older boys with Micmac having cots.

The Outside Inn housed the toilet facilities and on the outside back wall of it, was a long trough with many cold water faucets constituting our wash facilities. It was required that every camper show up for the Saturday afternoon free swim with a bar of soap. After getting wet, you removed your swim suit placing it on the deck of the crib and soaped up. This was our weekly bath. We never had any hot water for bathing, and the only hot water I knew of was in the kitchen.

In 1945 the counselors were primarily seminarians and high school seniors. In subsequent years they were seminarians, veterans and a few high school seniors. Vince Arimond was a seminarian who had served in the navy on a PT boat and told us thrilling stories about the war in the Pacific. Father Barney Brandes was a seminarian, an excellent canoeist and wilderness leader, who later served at our parish church. Al Morse had an uncle who was a priest with a retirement home and cruiser in the area. Some of the other counselors I remember were Bob Ryan, Ed O'Brien and Bill Merckins. The other veterans had wonderful stories, and they were happy to tell about the good times. Little did I think as I listened to them that 17 years later I would find myself serving my country on a battlefield in Southeast Asia.

Our camp day Monday to Saturday didn't vary and we were able to choose some of our activities.
7:00 AM Reveille

7:20 AM Assembly Flag Raising Exercise
7:30 AM Mass
8:00 AM Breakfast
9:00 AM Inspection
9:15 AM Period 1
10:15 AM Period 2
11:15 AM Period 3
12:15 PM Lunch
1:00 PM Rest
2:00 PM Canteen
2:30 PM Period 4
3:30 PM Period 5
4:30 PM Period 6 Free Swim
5:45 PM Assembly Flag Lowering
6:00 PM Dinner
7:15 PM Evening Activities
9:00 PM Lights Out (Mic Mac 10:00 PM)

Sunday – After Inspection was free time until Lunch. After Canteen there was an afternoon activity followed by a free swim before Assembly and Dinner. This was followed by a Camp Fire and Awards Evening.

The camp activities were much more limited than those of today, but most of the new activities didn't exist then. Our primary activities were marksmanship, swimming (instructional), crafts, canoeing, boating and wilderness activities. Occasional activities were athletics, sail canoeing and outboard motor maintenance. Periodically we had boat trips which consisted of a cabin taking a boat trip usually to the Cross Lake Dam and having a lunch. Occasionally, a 3 day canoe trip was offered to a limited number of older campers.

We didn't have life vest as are required today, the theory was to learn to swim to waterproof yourself. Those that couldn't swim, showing they possessed basic swimming skills, were designated "sinkers" and required to wear a red ribbon with a sinker affixed around their neck. In the event of any emergency, one glance disclosed those that needed help. When they could pass the basic swimming tests, their red sinker ribbon was ceremoniously cut away from their neck at the Sunday evening Awards Program.

Boxing matches were held around July 4th and were a big event. We viewed it as an athletic competition with no sense of malice.

One of the annual events that I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to participate in for two years, was being a member of the Father Foley Rifle Team. We shot two matches against Camp Lincoln, one at our range and one at theirs.

Most of us arrived at camp with all of the recommended clothes. But if you had been at camp before, you knew that there would be only a mid-season opportunity to send clothes to the laundry. And having done that once, you knew the chances of ever seeing your clothes again were slim to none. So we never sent any clothes again, instead we wore what became known as the camp uniform. It consisted of a tee shirt, usually white, a swim suit, usually tan and a pair of moccasins. At Saturday's afternoon bath, you wore your uniform into the water, soaped it up and then rinsed it off. After the swim you put your wet clothes up to dry and put on your dry second one. This is how you got through the summer with two swimsuits and two tee shirts. We were required to wear a Father Foley logo white tee shirt for Sunday lunch being careful not to soil it.

Early one evening in 1945, a US Navy Kingfisher, a moderate size float plane, buzzed the camp several times getting our attention and then proceeded to make a perfect landing in the lake. Taxing up to the crib, the pilot in naval flying gear then secured the aircraft to the dock. And as he came up the stairs, a young camper ran screaming down the stairs crying out, "Daddy, Daddy." It turned out the pilot had just returned to the US from the South Pacific and hadn't seen his son in a few years. Later that evening, the pilot took off to return to the Twin Cities.

One of the major benefits we got from our camping experience was meeting so many wonderful people whose paths would later again cross ours. I first met Jim Roszak when we were Waupacuta cabin mates, and next met when we attended Cretin High School. We became close friends graduating together where upon he went off to become a Christian Brother and I went to St. Thomas College majoring in premed. Brother James J. Roszak F.S.C. ultimately served as principal of Cretin High School and director of the brothers in the 1970's. Almost 70 years later we still remain close friends. Years later, when I had established my medical practice in St. Louis, MO, my path crossed those of three cabin mates from St. Louis who had become distinguished lawyers in St. Louis. We see one another from time to time and reminisce about our camp days.

There are too many memories from camp without going on for days, such as the mail boat and unloading melons from Father Foley's battered old station wagon. And how we came to camp with fireworks. It was a wonderful time and I was fortunate enough to have had the experience.

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