

Letter from an Old Sequoyan

What I would not give ("be careful what you wish for...") to awaken tomorrow at 7:00 AM to the sounds of Pop Hollingsworth playing Reveille on his coronet. Climbing out of that hard canvas bunk on a cool, delicious July morn I would put on my Camp Sequoyah T-shirt, shorts, tennis shoes and head off to the beautiful quiet cathedral-like setting of the hemlock grove for a brief time of contemplation. Running down to the dining hall for a great breakfast I would think about all the choices for the day's activities: woodcraft with Mike Adams or Lee Jackson; tennis with Bob Johns; Indian lore with Uncle Mike, Sam Cunningham, and Walt; riflery; archery; horseback riding with Corbett; etc. Back at the dining hall for lunch followed by the obligatory nap (which I now appreciate more than ever). Fun activities in the afternoon. Maybe a swim in the lake or riding the roller coaster into that frigid water. I still recall Chief diving off the diving board at age 75! Maybe tetherball while waiting for dinner. Chief, Pop, and Dee DeGroat would make their announcements, and of course, introduce visitors like your parents (whom I trust are well.) Maybe going by the store to load up on candy from Irv Ornduff. Evening program in the Council Ring followed by lights out. Lying in bed thinking about which hike tomorrow: Bald Knob, Craggy Gardens (a Mt. Mitchell prep hike), etc. What incredible memories!

It just occurred to me this morning that the physical layout of the camp had so much symbolic meaning. You drove slowly up the Reems Creek Road and turned off to enter the "camp with a purpose." (Brings to mind Robert Frost's "The road not taken.") You left the bright sunshine to enter an extended path of stately hemlocks where all was quiet and serene. (Seems almost like an image of the womb or rebirth.) Interestingly, horseback riding was near the entrance to the camp as if it were still a part of civilization and less important than nature lore or woodcraft. Magically, you exit into the bright sunlight and behold the camp. Chief could have placed his own home high on a hill with a magnificent view, but instead he chose the heart of the camp. Woodcraft was at the top of the hill, and, of course, Camp Tsali was at the pinnacle. I don't know that Chief would have thought in symbolic terms of the location of the various buildings, but he certainly knew instinctively where to place them.

The rest of this is pure stream of consciousness. Herb ("Sonny") Kincey and I stay in constant contact. He was my scout leader in Charlotte. Actually, I first acquainted him with Camp Sequoyah. Herb is a prince of a guy. I have been forever regretful that he did not purchase and run the camp as I think he would have done an outstanding job, albeit the camp would have changed. Jim Miller was an assistant director at the same time as Herb. He married a lady whose family owned and still runs Camp Greystone over west of Hendersonville. I visited Jim at the camp several years ago. I have heard from Tim Tindall over the years. He went to Asheville School for Boys. He lives in the mountains. Bill Lowrance went to UNC-Chapel Hill with me, but I have lost track of him. Al Berkeley (who is my age and first interested me in Sequoyah) is Vice-Chairman of NASDAQ. He and I were at Tsali together. We had dinner several months ago. Trudge Herbert who attended Tsali is a psychiatrist in San Francisco. I saw George Harrell in Jacksonville. He and his brother Bobby were campers at Tsali.

Trying to get several thousand Old Sequoyans to actively support a preservation effort is a formidable task. Interestingly, I believe Camp Merriwoode over in Sapphire Valley was purchased by a group of loyal alumnae. Camp Illahee, I believe is still running. As teenagers,

we assume people never die and institutions like Camp Sequoyah just continue to operate. Your comments last night certainly emphasized the fragility of such a seemingly strong organization as Sequoyah. Obviously, there is no one who could replace Chief. I remember being invited to go with Chief to canoe camp one November. He and I had a delightful weekend. I was struck by his determination to constantly try to improve the Camp Sequoyah experience. Here was a man in his late 70s who really cared about enriching the lives of teenage boys.

I would love to stay in touch and hear about your contacts with other Old Sequoyans. Please remember me to Cabal Philpott. I would love to hear from him as well as other Old Sequoyans.

If you guys get near NYC, please let's try to get together.

Sincerely,

Walter R. Graham, Jr.

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