

SALUTE TO THE SEVENTEEN

Our trip began in August of 1965. There were seventeen of us making the journey. We travelled in two sailboats. In command of one was Richard Cummings, older than the rest. In command of the other was Chip Hubbard, the youngest adult on the trip. We were sailing for Camp Perry, a deserted house three miles upriver. Finally everything was prepared and we cast off. The girls were in one boat, the boys in another. Thus began the most unusual trip the world will ever see.

As the wind caught in the sails and the boat began to glide across the water, I beathed a sigh of relief. Everyone was glad to be off. Our trip had been delayed by strong winds the day before. We had gone no more than 100 yards when the sound of ripping canvas pierced our ears. Our sail flapped helplessly in the wind. We trudged back to shore, as Richard removed the sail. He told Chip to go ahead; we'd get there when we could.

We waited an hour while Richard attempted to mend the sail. Finally, we set off again. Again the sail ripped, and again we were forced to abandon the boat.

When we did arrive at Camp Perry, it was in the back of a pick-up truck. We surveyed the site, and discovered many interesting things about the place--there was a nest of mosquitoes directly above the eating table, the water was 75% sulphur, and there were more than enough snakes around. Camp Perry itself was a deserted two-story house, totally lacking furniture. "Therefore," said our resourceful leader, always quick to find a solution to every problem, "we will sleep on the floor."

We spent two days at Camp Perry. We washed in an all-new GE wash tub; we cooked over a new Frigidaire campfire, and for a garbage disposal we used the Whirlpool hole in the ground.

Our experiences were many, and often unique. There was the time that one of the brainier members of the crew sweetened the Kool Aid with two cups of salt. We

dubbed one boy "Elsie" because of his uncanny ability to get lumps out of government surplus powdered milk. Making our milk involved an intricate process of heating water, and then adding the dehydrated milk to it. Then "Elsie" stepped in. After diligently pounding away at the lumps for about an hour he produced a lukewarm concoction--I can't honestly call it milk--which we then poured on our corn flakes. Breakfast was never too popular on the trip.

The pride and joy of the group, however, was the drink we invented ourselves. It consisted of the juice of a full grown watermelon, flavored with orange, lemon, grapefruit, cherry, and grape juice, and a little sand for good measure. It may not have tasted the best in the world, but it surely was different!

On the third day of the trip we set out for South River, a waterlogged island seven miles across the river. It was a hot day, and one of the passengers on our boat got the brilliant idea of jumping overboard to cool off. Her plan was to hold onto the boat, and climb back onboard when she had cooled off. All went well until her grasp slipped. We sailed away, leaving her stranded in the middle of a jellyfish-infested river. We tacked and started back to pick her up. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't seem to catch hold of the boat. We were about to abandon her as a hopeless case when, with a final plunge, her grasp held, and we hauled her, very ungracefully, aboard.

We arrived at South River in early afternoon. As usual, there had been trouble on our boat. The dagger board, which balanced the boat in proportion to the depth of the water, had broken, and we thought we were stranded. Somehow we fixed it, and arrived at South River in one piece. We trudged through the marsh looking for our campsite. We found it to be two tents and a pump--period. Although we searched until bedtime we could not find the girls' latrine. When we did find it, we almost regretted it. It consisted of two sticks lashed to two trees. Before we left the island, we built a neat system of wooden