

Five-Day Girl Scout Camp: A Mecca Back To Nature

By DALE GADDY

Sands. — Progress, as man knows it, has steadily pushed him farther and farther away from nature. Slowly but surely over the centuries man has found his migration from the cave to the concrete city canyons inevitable.

But every now and then an energetic group or organization or individual makes the much-needed mecca back to nature. And during the warm summer months, their breed can be found along almost any by-way or at roadside camps far and wide.

One such group came to this picturesque village last week and had, in the words of one participant, "The time of our life."

The nature lovers were Watauga County Girl Scouts who took part in a five-day Neighborhood Day Camp. Thirty-four naturally energetic lassies and eight haggard adults camped,

hiked, cooked, ate, studied stars, conservation, health and safety, etc., learned the skills of good camping, sang songs 'til their sterling throats were raspy, and ran and romped over some of Nature's prettiest hillside.

One late afternoon last week, amidst the clamor of young girls preparing the evening meal over charcoal pits, Mrs. John "Hal" McNeely strolled through the campsite, explaining the functions of the five-day event. Clad in casual camp apparel, Mrs. McNeely commented that camping is an integral part of the Girl Scout program. "The day camps provide outdoor opportunities and experiences on a day-to-day basis," she explained. "The five-day campout includes an overnight camping experience for Intermediate and Senior Scouts."

Turning to a make-shift table which had been laced together with bark, she said, "Campercraft Units for older girls with

the required skills and camping experience provide a real challenge for this age group. And they do some nice work," she added with a strong tug at the sturdy structure.

As she proceeded with her explanation of the camp program, the laughter of three dozen gleeful girls continued ringing forth from the camp site. Apparently their fourth and next-to-last day in close harmony with nature had not suppressed their young spirits. "They never get tired," Mrs. McNeely said cheerfully.

Tents dotted the shady lawn at the Clyde Greene farm. Columns of semi-transparent smoke spiraled upward around shining faces bent over cooking hamburger meat.

The camp director stated that song sessions and story telling around open campfires, held after the evening meal has been taken, emphasizes the principle beliefs of Girl Scouting—inspiring girls with the highest ideals

of character, conduct, patriotism and service. "This is a favorite activity with them," she said.

Also rating high on the girls' popularity list is hiking, and the 190-acre farm on the Ray Brown Road provided more than ample room for "galavanting around."

"This is the first year we have had a Girl Scout Camp in Watauga county," Mrs. Zeb Shook, camp nurse (and an R.N. at the ASTC campus), interjected. "Heretofore, we've had to take our girls to Morganton or Lenoir."

"We hope that this can become an annual affair in Watauga county," Mrs. McNeely said.

The scouts participated in the camp activities each day from 2 to 7 p. m. Thursday night they camped out all night. "The girls camp together in small units and operate independently," Mrs. McNeely said. "They use the patrol system form of

government, planning their own activities, learning about and enjoying nature and the outdoors while developing such qualities as self reliance, resourcefulness, and initiative."

Program consultants at last week's camp included Mrs. Russell Brown, representative of the Catawba Valley Girl Scout Council and district advisor for Watauga county; Mrs. G. D. Stroupe, Lenoir consultant; Miss Mary Leach, camping administrator; Mrs. Shook and Mrs. Nina Martin, nurses.

Mrs. Frances Fulmer, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Miller, Mr. and Mrs. Tommie Osborne; Mrs. Ben Bosworth; Mrs. Jennie Greene; Mr. and Mrs. B. G. Ray; and Mrs. McNeely's husband, all volunteer workers.

Some of the volunteers' children also were at the camp, though not as scouts in all cases. In fact, one tent of boys stood majestically on one hill by it-

self, its small beings peering down at the "bathroom" girls.

Water was obtained from a cool mountain spring which had been tapped. A rubber hose fed a continuous stream of the ice-cold liquid into the small spring house a few yards from the campers.

"Camping is a growing thing," Mrs. McNeely said as she walked back to the driveway. Miss Leach added, "In 1962 there were 11 day camps involving 250 volunteer adults and program aides and 1500 Girl Scout campers. This year we will have 12 day camps with 300 volunteer adults and program aides and can provide this outdoor experience for 1800 scout campers."

And here at Sands was the scene of last week's "reacquaintance" with nature—five days of outdoor life.

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Under the direction of Mrs. Ben Bosworth, left background, and Mrs. Jennie Greene, leaning forward, the 'Brownie' Scout campers made terrariums for display. Moss and other plant life were arranged in large gallon jars.



Girls watch with curious eyes as Mrs. Tommie Osborne directs the evening cookout. "It's fun cooking," one scout said. "Even if you can't eat it," another jibed.



Four of the camp directors make use of a crude table as they review plans for the Day Camp. They are (l. to r.): Mrs. John McNeely, director; Miss Mary Leach, camping administrator, Mrs. G. L. Stroupe, Lenoir consultant, and Mrs. Russell Brown, district advisor.



Tommie Osborne instructs a group of girl scouts in campcraft at one of the numerous sites in the tent area.



Washing up and drinking up at the farm spring house is a group of the volunteer workers' children. Either too young to participate in the Day Camp or of the wrong sex, the boys and girls refused to be left out on all the fun.



Ivey Moore, of North Wilkesboro, pictured here with a gun used in the battles of Cowpens and Gullford Court House, is Chief Scout for the Wagon Train, and responsible for its safety.

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The sixteen shoe-halves shown in this display are the required number for shoeing a yoke of oxen.

Barrie Miller drives a team of oxen that will play a role in the re-enactment of Daniel Boone's crossing the gap.

The Ox Wagon trek from Ferguson in Wilkes County to Boone, June 27-28-29, is more than a commemoration of an event in North Carolina's 300 year history. It is more than the re-enactment of a poignant moment in the birthing of our own community. It recognizes man's age-old response to a force that has ever drawn him into the setting sun, as civilization made its westward march.

The British Minister to the United States Will Conduct
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Dewitt Barnett of Boone is Wagon Master in charge of the train during the 3-day journey from Ferguson to Boone.