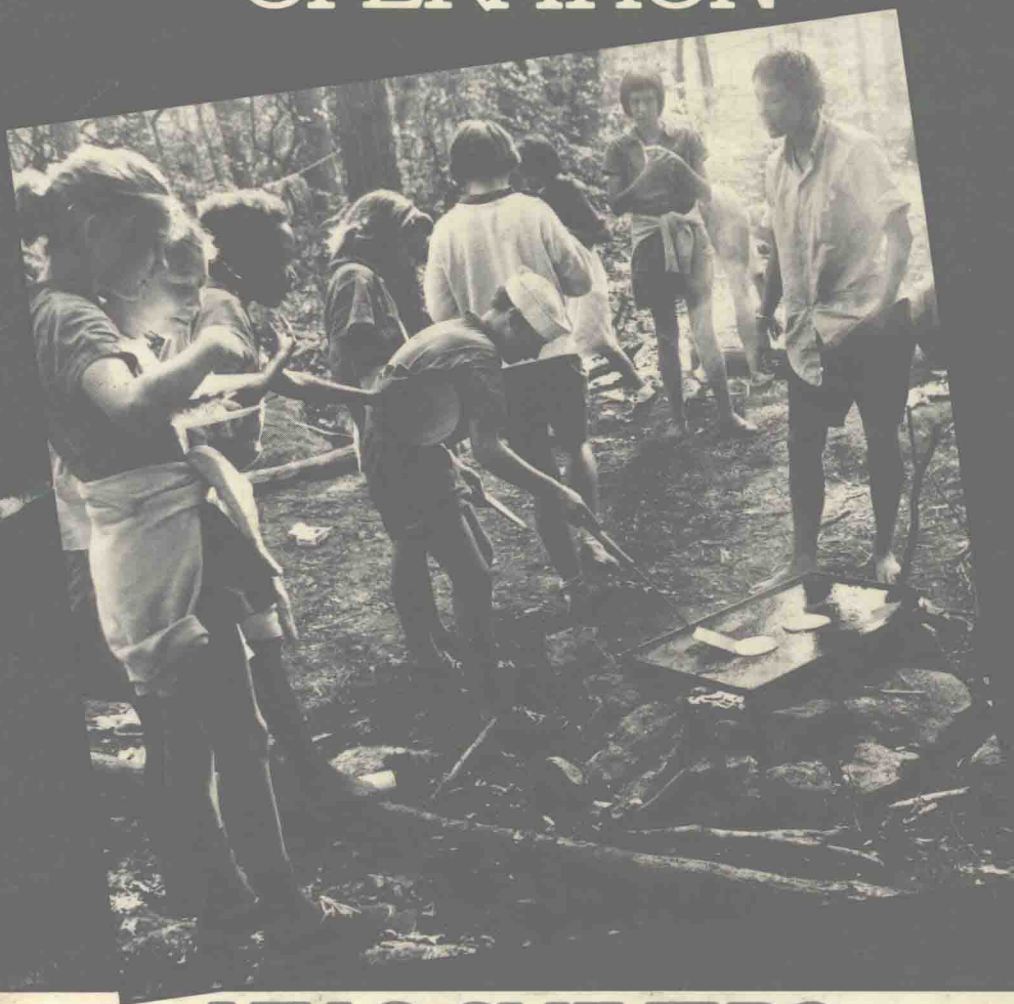


CAMPING

ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION



JAY S. SHIVERS

CAMPING: Organization and Operation

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To RHO

Omnia vincit amor

Preface

Camping has been a part of human experience ever since humans learned to live in a hostile environment. By adapting to the outdoors and learning to obtain food, clothing, and shelter, early people used certain camping skills to sustain themselves. These techniques included trail blazing, water source discovery, and knowledge of animal migratory habits. This accumulation of knowledge contributed to their survival.

Outdoor education, the most ancient form of education, is any nature-oriented experience that involves contact with, appreciation for, or knowledge about natural phenomena. It is concerned with the full spectrum of nature, and includes such interesting topics as insects and plant species. Every science related to the outdoors is part of it. The ancestors of *homo sapiens* who learned to make and control fire, the camper who thrills to the starry night sky, and the spelunker who revels in the underground of a hidden cave—all have been caught up in outdoor education.

The transition from outdoor education to camping techniques, which are familiar to all those who participate in camping, did not occur quickly, nor have all the elements of survival been eliminated. Some of the basic camping skills involve the necessity of finding one's way in the wilderness; applying skills on the trail insofar as marking direction or shelter building is concerned; aquatics; adapting to small groups; and living in harmony with natural surroundings.

Modern camping developed out of the heritage of the pioneering spirit of this country, as well as through efforts of farsighted people who recognized the benefits of outdoor living for participants. Today, camping is an increasingly salient feature of contemporary life wherever it is practiced. Despite its narrow origin as a summer vacation for the young, camping now caters to all age groups, serving those who require special programs as well

as those who can profit from being mainstreamed in spite of physical or mental disabilities. Camping programs are also conducted throughout the year. The camping institution is capable of satisfying the various recreational, social, educational, commercial, and conservation objectives of all campers. Camping is a complex, specialized, and professionally administered enterprise with a nationally recognized association, established by professionals, which maintains rigorous standards for operation of accredited camps.

This book's overall theme is to show both the diversity and the unity of camping. This book has two primary audiences: Camp administrators, and those who work directly with campers (either as counselors or program specialists, or in related services). If they have never been counselors or program specialists but have been employed solely for managerial skills, administrators will benefit generally from awareness of counseling techniques and program planning and implementation. After all, the camp exists to provide opportunities for campers. These opportunities are made available through counseling and programming, and the administrator should be familiar with these elements and understand what the staff is trying to accomplish. Similarly, counselors and program staff will be most effective if they understand the administrative framework within which they operate. Bridging the gap between these sometimes distant groups will contribute to better, more efficient camping operations.

Essentially, this book emphasizes large, residential camps for children and youth, although other examples are offered throughout the text. The content does have broad applications in all or most camp settings, but it is to the organized residential camp that attention is focused and from which experiences are drawn.

In their haste to discuss activities, too many contemporary texts ostensibly dealing with camp counseling neglect the details of everyday camp life and the dynamics of the counselor's role. This book attempts to offset that omission. It also offers a philosophical frame of reference for the values of outdoor education and of ecology, which is a vital concern of every educated person.

This book starts with an account of the history of organized camping in the United States. Part I of the book explores the problems of camp planning, administration, and operation. Differences among various types of camp sponsorship are based upon accountability, legal requirements, and fundamental philosophy, rather than management practices only. Part I explores and summarizes these differences and can serve as an administrator's handbook. More significant than the practices are the principles underlying them. Therefore, the book emphasizes the *why* as well as the *how* of camp administration. Rational action is likely when basic principles are understood and applied.

Part II of the book is an intensive treatment of the counselor's role in the camp. The various chapters discuss the dynamics of group living, counselor selection, orientation, qualifications, responsibilities, and conduct. Camper behavior, peer relationships, problems, and leadership are also emphasized.

Part III deals with nature-oriented and standard camp activities. Using the natural sciences as a point of departure for outdoor camp activities is stressed repeatedly. There is, to be sure, a place for indoor activities, spontaneous games, and team experiences, but primarily the camper must learn to be at home in the outdoor world. Survival techniques, exploration, nature study, camp crafts, and campfire activities are an integral part of the camp program.

Acknowledgments

This book is a labor of love. My personal views about camping, which pervade the book, are the outcome of my own experiences—not only as a camper from the ages of 4 to 13, but also as a counselor-in-training, counselor, waterfront director, and camp administrator. In addition to participating in a wide variety of organized camping situations, both resident and day, public and private, I have had the good fortune to share with my family the experience of tenting extensively throughout the United States and Canada, from Arcadia National Park in Maine to Yosemite National Park in California, from Banff National Park in the Canadian Rockies to Chaparral Park in New Mexico—and many of the wondrous places in between. The days on the trail, the evenings spent stargazing, my son's exuberance at mastering some new skill—all helped make this book possible. Now my grandson, the third generation, is being introduced to the camping experience by his father. I have complete faith in good camping experiences, and firmly believe that all children should be allowed, through camp attendance, to share in the magnificent heritage of the natural world around us.

In a world haunted by potential ecological disaster, among other obvious threats to tranquility, there is some comfort in the knowledge that it remains possible to fortify young children against the forces that tend to dehumanize life. The possibility lies in the intuitive interest of youngsters in nature, in their delight and fascination with the myriad sights and sounds discovered on the land, in the water, and in the sky. With regard to children's perceptive response to nature, Rachel Carson said, "If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, an unflinching antidote

against the boredom and disenchantment of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.”

In the absence of good fairies, to whom may we look to cultivate, protect, and preserve an indestructible sense of wonder in our children? Parents and teachers must, of course, act decisively in its promotion; but experience indicates that they cannot usually effect complete success, particularly where deficiencies exist in the available resources or in the local environment. For the sense of wonder to develop fully, a child must live with nature. The opportunity to do so is now possible in thousands of camps throughout the country.

The kind of camping experience we seek for our children requires guidance by camp counselors who understand children and possess the knowledge and skills to make their experiences in the great outdoors rewarding. Good counselors function best in a well-organized and effectively administered camping situation. This is the responsibility of the camp administrators and, to a lesser degree, of the camp owner or sponsor.

I deeply appreciate those individuals whose assistance in the development of this book has been important: Dr. E. W. Niepoth, professor and graduate advisor, Department of Recreation and Parks Management, California State University at Chico; to camping professionals in Connecticut with whom I have exchanged ideas, anecdotes, and hair-raising stories; to former students who are now successful camp administrators; and to the many public and private camps whose contributions and valuable suggestions helped me achieve an accurate and more comprehensive picture of camping.

A special expression of gratitude goes to my son Jed Mark for his obvious enjoyment of all aspects of camping, which he is now passing along to his son, David Benjamin. Finally and always, particular recognition to my wife, Rhoda, for her continuous support, loyalty, and encouragement.

J.S.S.

Camping:
Organization and
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chapter 1

The Camping Movement

A historical overview of camping in the United States provides a perspective on the initiation of the earliest organized camps. More important, such an overview provides information about the purpose of camping and the early concepts that influence today's camps.

THE CAMPING EXPERIENCE

Camping is living in or as close to nature as possible, in an environment untouched by urban culture, in which campers may have to fend for themselves. Camping need not be limited to one particular area, but may occur in solitude, without any permanent facility or boundary to prevent excursions into the wilderness. Campers may “pack-in”—that is, carry an entire supply of food, water, clothing, and shelter in a backpack. They may “live off the land,” hiking without supplies and making do with whatever can be found or devised. Campers may use any mode of transportation to carry them and their supplies and still have all the fun of camping.

The value of a personal camping experience does not depend upon the method of transportation, nor upon encountering a variety of hazards—although this might make the experience more exciting for some people. Rather, the value derives from planning for, anticipating, and performing during the camping experience. Seeing new places or phenomena, revisiting favorite places, or coming upon memorable, awe-inspiring vistas—these and many other experiences are open to the camper. In whatever way campers attain something of value for efforts exerted, they do so because of the ability to participate in the unique process that, for our ancestors, was absolutely vital for survival. The capacity to live, work, and play in the

natural environment has value for the camper, whether alone on a high ridge in dense snow, as a member of an organized camp in midsummer, or as a participant in the infinite variety of activities to which the camper may be exposed.

CAMPING VALUES

Camping has unique components that, when properly administered, can improve the quality of life for campers. Any well-conducted camp will provide the educational, social, and recreational experiences vital to the growth and development of campers. Moreover, the outdoor setting fosters appreciation for nature-oriented activities. If the camp's organizers are professional, it is likely that campers will come to understand their ecological role in nature and recognize the importance of the outdoors.

Outdoor Education and Camping

Outdoor education through camping attracts more than 120 million people each year. In the past, outdoor education taught people to appreciate and use natural resources; it must now teach them to use such resources wisely, so that they will be available for future generations. Education in conservation must be considered a part of outdoor education, and is one of the values to be instilled in the camper.

The enormous problem confronting those who are concerned with the protection and conservation of natural resources relates to the natural base that is the source of all material wealth. This finite resource is endangered by the increasing demands made upon it. No longer is there an open frontier capable of accommodating expansionist-minded individuals. Scientific management and technical processes must be devised to augment what still remains of our natural resources. Only the process of education oriented toward conservation and its manifold practices can ensure a sound future. One of the concepts that can be readily assimilated by young campers—the future protectors of the national heritage—is the value of conservation.

The major aim of conservation is to attain a balanced status between existing natural resources and potential consumers. It is apparent that the United States has not achieved this adjustment. Excessive consumption of depletable resources and pollution and despoilation of renewable resources is a salient trait of the American system. Unhappily, most American citizens neither understand nor recognize the outcome of such irresponsible behavior. It is thus essential to educate all citizens to realize and act upon the urgency of the need. To be sure, great strides have been made since the 1960s toward alerting citizens about ecological destruction. Even now, however, we suffer the effects of acid rain, strip mining, air pollution, water contamination, and a host of other resource degradations. The consequence of this ignorance has created a quiet crisis of our own making. It comes not with sound and fury, but rather with the slow strangulation engendered by polluted air and water. It is with us constantly, from the carbon