

Farmington LIFE

1-B (in)

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There was some time to spare after morning clean-up, so bunk six brushed up on their cabin song (above) to be presented later that afternoon. The arts and crafts building was only a short stroll down the dirt road as campers cling to their counselor (right).



Part of a counselor's rewards is sharing these special moments with their campers.

Sheryl: camp counselor

By GARY FRIEDMAN

It had been a very long day. The time was just past 9:30 p.m. and all the campers in Bunk Six had been put to bed. It was the first time that day Sheryl Sukenik had the chance to relax and look ahead to the next day.

The life of a camp counselor. It begins each day at 7 a.m. and doesn't end until the crumbs and spills from milk and cookies are all cleaned up some 14 hours later. Camp is not a new experience for the Southfield teenager. Sheryl has been a part of camping life at Camp Tamarack in Ortonville for nine years. This is her second year as a counselor and she finds it a little bit different than being a camper.

Now, she is on the other side of things. It is she who is looked up to by her group of eleven-year-old girls from Southfield, Oak Park, Farmington and other communities in the metropolitan area.

As a counselor, she now experiences the frustrations as well as the rewards of camping life. At times, it becomes very demanding. However, she has found that her past experience as a camper is useful to her now as a counselor.

WEDNESDAY MORNING was the third day of a new camp period. Not everyone's names were known, but new friendships were beginning to form among the campers.

Breakfast began promptly at 8 a.m. with clean-up to follow. Then it was off to the morning activity. A co-counselor replaced Sheryl who had to plan a counselor hunt for that evening. She would rejoin the group at the Arts and Crafts Building at 10:30.

The counselor hunt schedule

completed, it was off to arts and crafts. Even though the time was short, the campers were glad to see her. Already, they had begun to look up to her.

A tuna casserole for lunch, then back to the bunk. Rest hour is a time for a camper to write home to Mom and Dad to say how much fun they are having.

For a counselor, it's a time to play songs on the guitar for the group who gather around to listen. It's close to 2 p.m. and time for the start of afternoon activities. First comes tennis with general swim to follow.

THE SUN SEEMS much hotter than it is on the tennis courts and general swim is well appreciated. For Sheryl it's beach duty.

Now it's free time until dinner for the campers, but for Sheryl, it's time to make sure everything is all set for the evening activity.

A counselor hunt was on the schedule and it took her almost two hours to prepare for it that morning.

The sun had set by the time the hunt was concluded.

Milk and cookies and bedtime preparations were in order and by 9:30 lights were out.

Sheryl's time was now her own with no more campers to look after. It had been a 14-hour day. On an hour-by-hour basis, she would earn about 24 cents an hour. But it really didn't matter.

What did matter was that she had the opportunity to be with kids, to share in their rewards and frustrations and to give back to the campers some of the nice experiences that Sheryl herself had enjoyed for so many years.

A long, long day, but it had its rewards.



At the conclusion of each meal, bunk six and the rest of Fishman Village goes all out in a sing-a-long (above). With all her campers hopefully asleep for the night, Sheryl checks to see what's ahead for the next day (right).



Photographed by Gary Friedman