

The Executive Life/Mary Billard

And No One Mentions The Many Mosquitoes

SLAVING away in the shining towers of commerce, trapped in tailored suits and ties, in stockings and silk blouses, lurk the souls of summer campers. It should be noted, in all fairness, that these business people do not necessarily spend office hours reliving their carefree youth, but the slightest inquiry is rewarded with vivid, often musical, memories.

"Greylock Camp under skies so blue," warbled James Gordon, a Houston businessman who spent three years at Greylock Camp for Boys in Massachusetts in the late 50's. In 1989, Mr. Gordon was part of a family group that sold its jewelry business to the Zale Corporation for \$312 million. But never mind Zale; Mr. Gordon is far more interested in explaining how the Red and Gray Teams competed in the Greylock Olympics. "Now that was a big thing," he said.

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"I was a song leader," said Terry Steiner, a director of Orion Pictures and veteran of Camp Fernwood in Maine. Getting ready for a trip to the Coast, and starting a movie-rights business on her own, Ms. Steiner put her life on hold to talk about having been what is still known, even in these politically correct times, as a Fernwood Girl.

She, too, launched into her camp song — although not exactly in tune — ending with: "... W, Double O, D."

Summer campers learn not only songs but also how to play conventional sports (tennis)

Scratch a business suit
and what unravels?
Like as not, a song
from summer camp.

New Hampshire, where he competed in "color war," a hotly contested series of athletic contests between the Blue and Buff teams.

Color war is hell. And when Mr. Drapkin's side ultimately prevailed in the Revlon takeover, he celebrated his side's victory with an ancient tribal rite: his camp cheer.

"It sounds like gobbledygook," said Mr. Drapkin, now vice chairman at Revlon. Pressed, Mr. Drapkin gives the cheer, gusto clearly heartfelt: "Ooh Gee De Bongeer."

Whether going to the right camp provides network possibilities later in life or even a class code is debatable, because prep school and college, not to mention work, usually eclipse summer camps in terms of both duration and status. Still, at one recent social benefit, two women were overheard struggling to figure out where they had met before: "Cravath? Harvard? Tripp Lake?"

The old, establishment sleep-away camps cost close to \$5,000 for an eight-week session. Even at those hefty prices, they fill up before Thanksgiving. Not surprisingly, Jaguars and



and arcane ones (archery), as well as developing a love of nature. Camp directors hope their charges will learn sportsmanship.

Some campers say the experience helped hone social skills required in business. "It helps you learn how to compete with people and still be friends," said Nancy Baskin, who uses these skills as a matrimonial lawyer in New York. Ms. Baskin spent eight summers at Tripp Lake Camp in Maine in the 70's, the last as team captain of the Tigers. ("I wore black and orange all summer.")

Jim Bergen, 36, a vice president at Entertainment Risk Agency, a movie-industry insurance brokerage, occasionally daydreams of his protected, carefree camping days. "When I'm involved with a major headache, I look back at those times," he said.

Camp can also provide an archetypal framework for grown-up sagas. In 1985, Donald Drapkin, then a partner at the law firm of Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom, was working with Ronald Perelman on his hostile takeover of Revlon Inc. Mr. Drapkin was reminded of his days at Camp Winauke in

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Thanksgiving. Not surprisingly, Jaguars and Range Rovers are parked by the stables on visiting days and small swarms of Gulfstreams fly in to the local airports.

People remember their bunkmates and certain family names are linked in camping circles: Camp Winnebago in Maine had the Lauders; Greylock boasts Walter Hoving of Tiffany, the Sarnoffs of RCA/NBC and a Loews Corporation Tisch; Fernwood's alumnae include Ellin Saltzman, the Bergdorf Goodman fashion maven. Two camps, Greylock and Androscoggin in Maine, claim Alan Jay Lerner, playwright and lyricist.

And there are camp stereotypes. Tripp Lakers are athletic; Walden girls are almost Bohemian. Peter Graham, an investment banker with Ladenburg Thalmann went to Camp Takajo in Maine. He candidly recalls that rival camps nicknamed Takajo the "country club." The parent of a summer camper lodged elsewhere less fondly calls it the "ultimate brat camp."

In any event, Mr. Graham loves his camp. "It was full of 'A' type personalities," he said. "It is the crème de la crème: not just tennis courts, but film labs with enlargers, a radio station, a camp-run newspaper, two floors of arts and crafts. . ."

But even Mr. Graham remembers being taken aback when his father, coming up to visit, circled by the beautiful lake waters in a seaplane. "I was mortified," he said.

Several years ago, Larry Leeds, managing director of Buckingham Research Group, was jogging in Central Park when he recognized a number of business types entering the Loeb Boathouse. A closing dinner? No. He had stumbled upon a Camp Androscoggin reunion he had forgotten about.

Mr. Leeds had attended the island camp in Wayne, Me., in the late 20's and counts among his best friends his bunkmate, Roy Goodman, the New York State Senator. "We were an illustrious bunk," says Mr. Leeds. "We also had Stephen Sondheim."

Cutting his run short, Mr. Leeds eagerly joined the festivities. He was not, however, one of the cocktail-fueled campers who attempted to take out the rowboats on the lake. "I wouldn't let them," said Stanley Hirsch, the camp co-director. "Boys will be boys even if they are 65."