

FOLKWAYS FX 6105

THE SOUNDS OF CAMP

...the picture of a children's camp,
painted in the
voices and sounds
of its children...

Recording and
editing:
Ed Badeaux

Recorded at Camp Killooleet, Hancock, Vermont, 1958

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Descriptive Notes are in the Inside Pocket

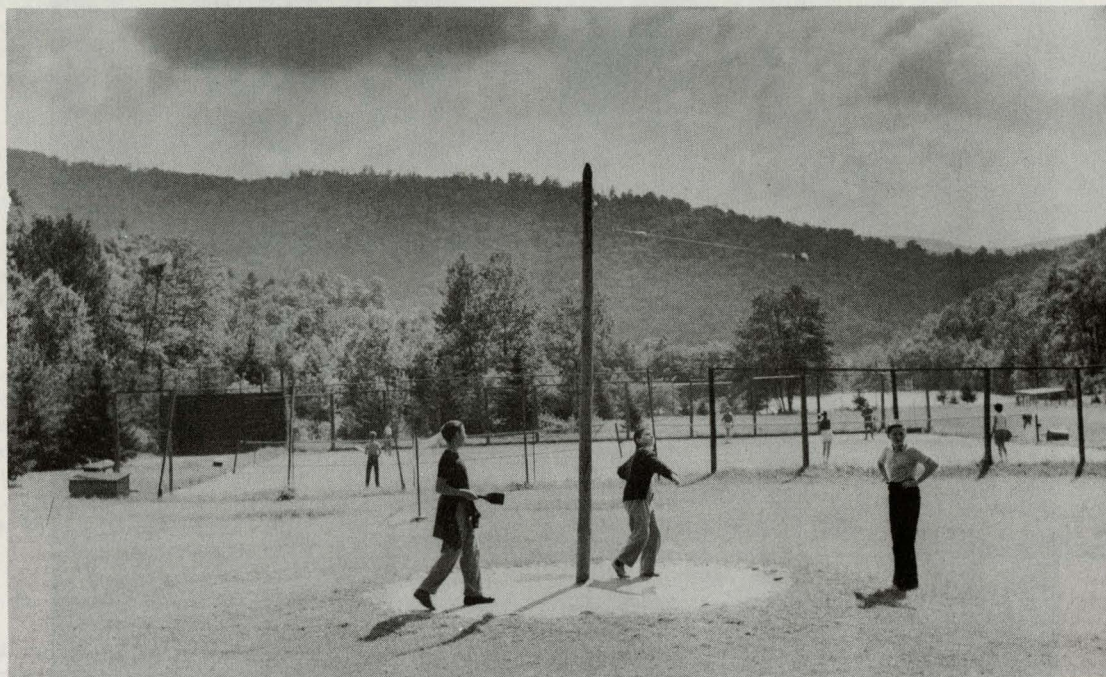
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Riding
Shop
Swimming
Jacks
Dance Class
Singing
Baseball
Hike Meeting
Riftery
Last Campfire

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SOME NOTES ON THE RECORDINGS

by

Ed Badeaux

There are several ways in which one might try to capture so nebulous a thing as a children's summer camp. Just defining it is difficult enough. It isn't only a collection of children with supervision. And it is more than lakes and buildings and cabins. It is a combination of many things----children living, working, and playing together in physical surroundings offering shelter and comfort. It is a feeling and a spirit which effects all the children and the adults which participated in it. To capture and reproduce such a phenomena some might use words, others use brushes and paints or cameras and attempt to say in light and shadow and color what is so elusive in words alone.

One of the most unique characteristics of children is the sound (or rather sounds--plural) they make. And so to capture such a summer camp we used a microphone and a tape recorder, and attempted to freeze for all to hear the real sound of real children at work and at play and in arguments and in games and all of the time being completely and thoroughly themselves.

John Seeger, director of the camp at which we set up our equipment says of camp. . . "it. . . is very much like a fire. It burns and goes out, but it makes a pretty fire while it's burning, and everybody here could feel its warmth."

"Sounds of Camp" does not attempt to be a complete record of any particular summer at any particular camp. No single longplay record could hope to do more than convey but a bit of the warmth, humor

and excitement that goes into a summer. The episodes and sequences herein were selected as representative of a typical summer's experience. Yet a camp, like an individual, is a whole and complete personality unlike any other grouping of its kind anywhere in the world. But like an individual, it has much in common with any other similar collection of children anywhere in the world. As you listen you may hear echoes of your own childhood, as I hear echoes of my own childhood, in the voices and noises of these eighty-seven children busily engaged in the great and wonderful adventure of living and learning together.

SIDE I, Band 1:

Riding is one of the most popular activities in camp, especially among the girls. Charlotte McCartney, the riding counselor here, usually splits the cabin groups in half, so that only three or four children ride at one time. The children have a fairly large fenced-in field to ride in, and learn to trot, canter, and keep control of their mounts.

SIDE I, Band 2:

Possibly the widest variety of noise can be found in the shop. Here energetic children hammer, saw, file, and grind, all the while keeping a running line of conversation going. Children in the shop are in constant need of help (or think they are) and are continually flocking around the shop counselor and demanding immediate attention. Though some projects fall by the wayside, a surprising number are finished.



SIDE I, Band 3:

Camps revolve around their waterfronts. It is usually the favorite activity among children. It is also the area which gives the camp director his greatest worry. Heard here are the one hundred and eighty three children of the University Settlement Camp in Beacon, N.Y. The entire camp goes swimming twice a day together in one pool, with counselors standing watch along the sides. Ever so often Izzy Batinno, the swimming counselor, calls a "buddy check," to make sure all is running smoothly, and to remind both children and counselors that they should not let up their vigilance

SIDE I, Band 4:

Each summer has its expressions and its jingles. This particular summer was the summer of "tough beans," and "rough raisins." In was also the summer of "Great Green Globes of Greasy Grimy Gopher Guts," here sung long after camp was over by Mika Seeger of Beacon, N.Y., a niece of camp's owners.

SIDE I, Band 5:

Before lunch there is usually a period of free time. Children gather around the ping pong tables, or in the living room. There are magazines to read, people to talk to, and frequently one or two of them bang out on the piano the modern day equivalent of chopsticks. Ginnie Berne, Peter Shenck, and Robbie Stein played these two numbers. The first they called "Russian Chopsticks." The second is a more modern rhythm piece. The ringing of the bell cuts the concert short, and everyone begins filing to the tables to begin lunch. At Killooleet there are few traditions, but one of them is the "happy birthday" parade through the dining room. When a child has a birthday Peg Kunitz, the dietician, bakes a birthday cake for the child, and a similar though not so elaborate cake for each table. Then after the main course is finished a parade of waiters goes through the dining room showing the cake and singing "happy birthday."

SIDE I, Band 6:

Waves of jacks playing sweep over the camp each summer. It usually starts with the younger girls, but soon spreads through all age groups of girls, and even engulfs an occasional boy. A good floor and a steady hand are the only requirements for jacks. The jacks fever begins

usually somewhere around the middle of camp, and builds to a climax during the last week of camp.

SIDE I, Band 7:

In modern dance, Joan Lerner's technique for casting a program was simply to give the dance several times, each time with different children in the roles. Here is how she and her children cast this run through.

SIDE I, Band 8:

Certainly one of the most typical sounds in a camp next to swimming is baseball. Boys and girls both love this game, and play it with spirit. Teams are made up from all interested children in camp, and balanced to be more or less even in skill. League games are then scheduled to play out the contest. This is a rather typical league game. It was a rather poorly balanced contest, with one team winning eleven or twelve to nothing. But much of the real excitement projected when one or another of the team charged out to bring in another run is felt here. And with it there's a good argument and some typical comments.

SIDE I, Band 9:

Another exciting time for children is just before they are to put on a play. There is a kind of electricity running through any group scheduled to perform. It is particularly noticeable in children. Added to their nervousness and uncertainty on this occasion was a very real electrical storm going on outside. The song, "Hole in the Ground," proved a good way of quieting down the restless audience to make them receptive to the performance.

SIDE II, Band 1:

Campers and counselors alike approach hikes with mixed feelings. There is a certain element of the unknown connected with leaving camp and striking out for yourself. But there is also a welcome break in the routine. Hikes at Killlooleet leave from the office porch, and it is there that counselors and campers who are through with their cabin duty gather in wait for embarkation. The conversations here discussed the merits of various styles of "hard" hats, particularly in relation to cave exploring, which was one of the favorite pastimes. The children were interested on who was going on what hike. Hikes left by bus, automobile, bicycle, and horseback. A few groups walked.

SIDE II, Band 2:

After supper on the evening of hike day the camp gathers to hear one or two especially appointed persons from each hiking group tell about his experiences of the day. These reports usually run to four minutes, at which time the speakers are gently but firmly removed. The hike report given here, was given by Marny Cherkasky and Kathy Weingarten of a lost iron mine expedition led by counselor Tom Pererra.



SIDE II, Band 3:

The older girls thoughts lightly begin to turn to boys at the age of twelve and thirteen. And after a dance they are very stimulated and excited, and go from person to person telling the same little incident over and over again. They are nervous, too, and can get upset easily, because the social evening was a strain on them. In fact, they are many things. But they are not sleepy. And getting them to bed takes a lot of time and a lot of patience. The very patient counselors to this group were Mary Badeaux (from Texas) and Sylvia Maroni (from Switzerland).

SIDE II, Band 4:

Favorite activity among most of the boys is riflery. The oldest boys group (thirteen, a few fourteens) are most at home at the rifle range, and consequently get into the most mischief. These boys were conscious of the tape machine ("you break the tape," one of them says) only for the first few minutes. After that they forgot about it, and went on their merry way, shooting their targets, baiting their counselor, and generally having good, healthy fun.

SIDE II, Band 5:

Camp is a unique experience. After three days in the camp situation it seems like you've been there always. The outside world is only the haziest of memories. But after eight-weeks, when it's time to pack up and go, you wonder where the time went to. It seems you only arrived yesterday. On the last night at Killlooleet there is a camp birthday. There is a campfire, and people usually drop into it little things representing their summer, and



sometimes tell a little about how they felt. After all have put into it a flame from the fire is used to light candles (there is one for each person in the camp) which are mounted on wooden shingles. These then are sailed out onto the lake, representing of course each person in the camp. There is a lot of singing on the last night, and a lot of crying too. Oddly enough, it is usually the children who had the most difficult time adjusting to camp who cry hardest at the last campfire. But the sight of those candles, slowly parting on the vast blackness of the lake, has been known to leave more than one adult with red eyes.

ALTHOUGH WE ATTEMPTED to capture as many typical aspects of camp as were possible, limitations of equipment placed obstacles in our way. A portable tape machine (Roberts) was used, but no portable power unit was available, and so we were restricted to work within extension chord radius of a 110 outlet. Consequently, several aspects of camp life which form an integral part of a summer's experience, had to be neglected. . . hikes, sleepouts, boating, etc. Another matter hampering mobility, and a major one, was time. When you are deeply involved in a camp program it is difficult to break away from it long enough to objectively record what is going on.

Although virtually all of the material was recorded with the microphone in full view the children soon grew accustomed to it and came to ignore its presence. Only one incident left in the final edited version was directly stimulated by the microphone. In the jacks sequence one girl, suddenly noticing the microphone, begins kidding another girl about her underwear showing. This brought on more teasing, and ended in a laughing fit by a third girl. The whole incident seemed so typical of childhood that it was left in in spite of the original tape consciousness

that brought it on.

I returned from camp with over six hours of noise. Although my original conception leaned closer to a "pure" sounds (sound effects) concept it became clear upon hearing the unedited material that the final result should be in more of a documentary nature. And so conversations took on greater importance, and although some sequences remain primarily sound the bulk are real and typical conversations.

Some episodes were so complete in themselves that they were able to stand almost as they were. Others had to be completely reshaped. Material ranging from ten to twenty minutes had to be boiled down to three or four minutes. Poetic license was taken in shifting material around in some instances to make it more intelligible and give the sequence more dramatic content. Once main topics of conversation were chosen, side conversations often had to be eliminated in order to not detract from the main ones.

All but two short sections were recorded at Camp Killooleet, located at Hancock, Vermont, and owned and operated by John and Eleanor Seeger. About a third of the material was collected on days off, but the bulk was gathered on program time generously allotted me by the Seegers.

There were eighty-seven campers heard on this record. They were divided into nine cabin groups, each containing between eight and ten children and two counselors. They were loosely classified into cabin group by age, but other factors also enter into classification. Their ages range from eight to twelve, with a scattering of thirteens. These, plus twenty eight staff and directors John and Eleanor Seeger and their four year old daughter Kate, made up the cast of this record.