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Radio Talk
No. 2

Broadcasted from WGN
Drake Hotel, Chicago

by

CHARLOTTE V. GULICK

MARCH, 1926
THE time of the year has come when people are seriously thinking about the coming summer for themselves and for their children. A world of new possibilities has sprung up for both parents and children during the last quarter of a century.

The ideal for the family twenty-five years ago was to have a summer home on the seashore or in the mountains, the automobile has been a large factor in changing this ideal. A permanent summer home to be occupied year after year is not satisfying as it used to be. Marvelous hotels with all the comforts imaginable are scattered everywhere throughout the land, on seashores, lakes and mountains. Parents can find comfort, quiet and a complete change without the anxiety and worry of maintaining separate establishments. Besides it is more interesting and educative to spend one’s summers in different parts of our wonderful country.

And what about the children? Are they faring as well as they used to? A world of new possibilities has also arisen for them and has been steadily growing since 1900. A little history may be interesting. The following figures were secured from
the Secretary of the Camp Directors Association:

The first boys' camp was started in 1881; eleven years later the first girls' camp. In 1905 there were fifty-three boys' camps and twelve girls' camps. In 1925 there were over five thousand camps for boys and girls; these include the Boy and Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations. One hundred and ninety-seven camps have sprung up since last April. Hospitals are establishing camps for their patients. There are a number of camps for business women. Large corporations maintain camps for their employees. Then there are the week-end and holiday camps. It is impossible to list all of them. Until 1910 the average age of the boy and girl campers was over fifteen, now almost all are under fifteen years of age. The ideals of these camps have changed most markedly. They were first primarily for health—just to get into the country—then they became athletic in character—now they are educational through work and play and are conducted by specialists in many lines of activities. The chil-
children of all ages used to go to one camp—now they are separated usually into three groups from eight to thirteen, thirteen to eighteen, and adults. The activities are being differentiated. Younger children are having those occupations and activities that belong to the preadolescent period and the adolescent boy and girl those which stress team work and cooperation. After a child has lived through these two periods he knows what to choose and goes to camp to relax and to enter into whatever sport he or she enjoys most. There is besides these three groups another one growing up for even younger children between five and eight years of age.

There are many kinds of camps. No two are alike. There are camps where nature lore is made most fascinating by a director who appreciates and loves nature. These camps are rare. There are horseback riding camps and camps where water sports are the principal activity. There are a number of camps where rhythmic dancing prevails. Craft work, even the fine arts, find a real place in some camps. Many
of the large camps have all of these activities. Camps are situated on the seashore, and on the mountains, but the most practical and popular place is on some inland lake in northern parts of our country, or on places of high elevation in the middle states.

It is estimated that over a million children went to camp last summer. Why should children go to camp? There are two kinds of education—one through learning about things and the other through doing things. Increased urban life has made the doing side very small. Children love to do things; they love to help; they love to make things with their hands. Camp affords ample opportunity along these lines. The main reason for going to camp is that children like it, they have a good time. It appeals to them. These children instinctively know that the things they are learning at camp are always going to be avenues of good times. Parents never visit camp without expressing the thought that they wish there had been camps when they were young. Things learned through the muscles are never forgotten. One never forgets how to swim
and the more one knows of this kind of exercise the more enjoyment there is in it, not only for one’s self but in watching others. One learns to enjoy walking at camp, although it is spoken of as hiking. The automobile is killing this most beneficial and delightful exercise. The more one learns about the birds, the flowers, the ferns, the trees, the stars, the insect life, the more enjoyment there is in walking. Children learn through close contact with nature to appreciate color-light and shade. Patterns of loveliness surround them night and day. They are moved to write songs and poems. Each one absorbs what the group as a whole has produced. Even though the individual boy or girl may not have written a poem, he or she gets the feeling expressed by another. When I am asked how young would you send a child to camp I have to stop and think whether the parents of that particular child are going to surround it with this indefinable atmosphere. Some can, and do, but most parents are too busy now-a-days to give the attention
which the good camps afford. The trend of a boy or girl's life is often turned and strengthened for better things by the making of a new set of friends. Marvelous changes of aspects on life have been made at good camps.

To return to the subject of walking, a noted educator and physician has said:

"That there is no activity which gives so much pleasure to those who understand and love it as walking. In walking we go back to levels of activity that are literally as old as the hills. The nervous processes involved in walking are profoundly established. This is an activity so old that it flows readily along well-worn channels and tends to give strength rather than exhaustion."

One does not need to think while taking this kind of exercise. This same educator says that:

"There is nothing more important to establish in a boy or girl than those habits of action and of thought, those desires and those social relations that make him or her vigorous, able to work hard and joyously, that give quiet nerves, sound sleep, regular habits and the joy of living
— joy of cold water, strong winds, long roads, brown earth, open fires, friends on the hike, swimming, diving, canoeing, the road to the hill and round the lake. It is not enough to take regular exercise. Get all these accomplishments deep down in their loves and in their habits."

This is what camp gives to boys and girls. It is not possible to get these loves and habits imbedded in the child unless one begins when he is young and keeps at it. Then it will belong to him.

At camp there is a joyous instinctive response to the simple elemental things of life. Eighty per cent of so-called amusements are not recreations. They exhaust more rapidly than they refresh. Camp life recuperates and remakes nervous tissue. How this generation needs it!

It is an earnest band of men and women who are giving their summers to educate boys and girls along better lines. Most of the Camp Directors are idealists and are doing this work because they believe it is the happiest and most wholesome way of helping the next generation. There are, however, some people who are starting
camps who are not trained for it, who think all that is necessary is to find a good camp site, secure equipment and announce a camp. Place and equipment are not the most essential parts. The essential part is the director. It used to be said that to sit on a log with Mark Hopkins was a most potent way of securing a good education. So it is with a director. High ideals are most important. Usually parents take time to visit the school to which they plan to send their child, but it is more important to know the kind of camp to which he is being sent. Character is molded more through play than through work. Camps are not so well established as schools. There is a greater difference in them. Booklets can not tell the story. A booklet can be written before the camp has been in existence. I beg those who are interested to take time to investigate.

Most children love camp and dread to have the happy summer time come to an end. There is something the matter with the child or the camp if they do not love it. Many of them
are now counting the days when they will be going back to their dear summer experiences. Indeed, as Mr. Gibson says, the "program of a good camp is a soul saving one." It not only helps this generation but will continue to bless mankind forever.

Last fall after camp closed the speaker received letters from three groups of girls, one from the north shore district of Chicago, one from Shaker Heights in Cleveland, and the third from the Oranges in New Jersey, each group relating that they had camped out on some estate, that belonged to some one of the parents, that they had worn their camp costumes, that they cooked the things which they had learned to cook at camp and sat around their fires singing the dear old camp songs. Nothing shows the usefulness of this work better than these reproductions of the things they learn during the summer. They not only wanted to reproduce those experiences, but they knew how to do it. Think how wholesome such kinds of good times are! And what they are going to be able to give their children when the time comes.

There are other activities—handcrafts and trail craft. In this camp to which
I have referred there is always a waiting list for the looms—a dozen looms are working all day long because when a girl begins a piece she drops her other activities for a few days until she has finished hers so as not to keep other girls waiting. They make beautiful rugs, scarves and bags. Every piece is neatly finished before camp closes. Pottery is a favorite camp craft. To take the clay into one's hands, mold it as one pleases, see it come out of the kiln, first in the biscuit state and then wash it with whatever glaze one may choose and finally of seeing it after it has again been through the fiery furnace, a beautiful object to be prized ever afterwards, is a joy and an educative one. Girls have been known to be up very early in the morning to see the kiln opened. Many have sat throughout the night with the pottery instructor to watch for the little cone to bend over announcing that the required heat has been attained.

Jewelry is carried on in almost all girls' camps and some brass work. It would take a long time to tell about all the crafts. While girls are having these hand crafts, boys are learning to build boats, construct
radio outfits, make kites and many other things. Outdoor sketching belongs to camp life and is a beautiful way to preserve memories of happy times. No one home can provide all these activities.

I have not mentioned the most important things that are happening in a good camp. Every camp is a highly organized little community, a democracy one might say. In this little community team work is learned and appreciated; character building is going on. The process of education has not stopped. What may have been learned through precepts is being put into execution. It gets in under the skin. It is a place for natural growth to develop. One can see "selfish attitudes change to service attitudes." There is no external force but an internal desire being strengthened and cultivated for all that is good and right. One little boy told his mother when he got home that he never heard the word "don't" at camp.

Camp education tends to develop courage and unafraidness. The mind is storing away scenes and experiences that will never be forgotten. Camp education is helping to shape a new race. This move-
ment is only in its infancy. Educators like your Miss Cooke of the Francis Parker School appreciate what the camps are doing and this is what she said after visiting a camp last summer:

"The dominant thing which I carried away with me, aside from the pleasure and profit of the visit was the wish, which dare not voice itself as a hope, that all children—those crowded in the cities, and those who are coerced to fashionable summer resorts—could be gathered into such environment, under such simple educative influence—for the summer—and as the world grows wiser, for all-the-year-round education."

It has been said that "child leisure is far more a problem than child labor." I am sure that when you stop to think that you will agree with this statement.

To children who are listening in I beg you not to miss going to camp if you have the opportunity—if your parents are willing to send you. And parents I ask you to investigate this movement and see that your children get the inheritance which a good camp affords. Whatever work they do at camp is a pleasure and the pleasures are worth while accomplishments.

In April Harper's there is an article on "What shall we educate for?" Four requisites are mentioned: "Vitality, courage,
sensitiveness and intelligence.” Camp is educating in all these four directions. It would take too long a time to expound how it is accomplished, but it has been demonstrated time and again. Children grow intellectually during camp time because their minds are working spontaneously along new glorious natural lines.

I have not dwelt at all on the health side. It is so well known and is so obvious. A noted physician recently said that:

“Two months at a good camp would raise the ‘disability resistance’ to a very high level. If the children will apply what they learn of health, their future will be easier, days of suffering fewer and old age a joy. The possibilities are boundless. The race needs its campers, the nation more of these institutions. Truly they are ‘fountains of youth.’”

Much more can be said for this movement. No mention has been made about the training for leadership which is apparent to every camp director who follows the life history of the children who have had this experience. It has proven to be a great help as a stepping stone between home life and private school or college.

If nothing more than a cheerful mental attitude toward health is developed it is thoroughly worth while.