

**NORTH BELGRADE, MAINE**

**1973**

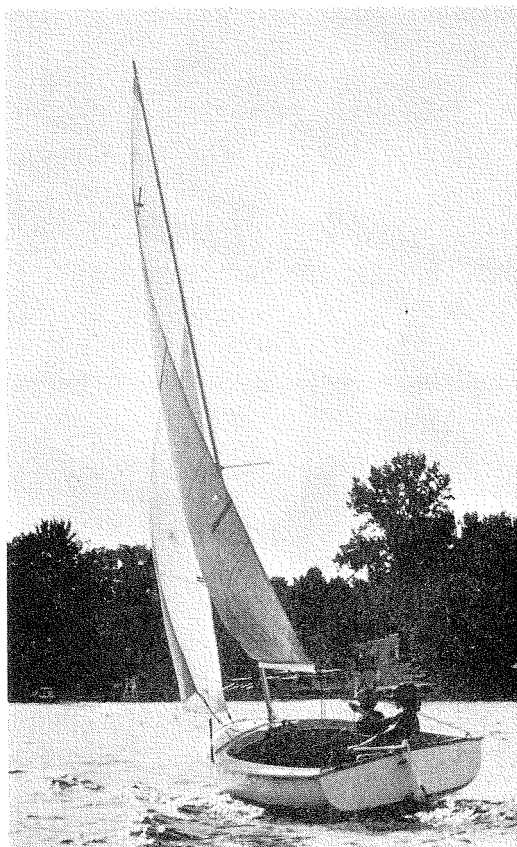
# **THE HISTORY OF CAMP KENNEBEC**






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Frances Fox Sandmel





To Kennebec

the man in every boy  
and the boy in every man

## THE TEAM

The acknowledgments, like the dedication, are to Kennebec itself. My thanks go first of all to those anonymous Kennebec historians, the writers of the logs and the yearbooks. The logs were running accounts, recorded daily by counselors who had the duty for a week at a time. From 1907 until the end of the 30s, these logs captured the spirit, the mood and the personalities, as well as the events of the camp seasons. The yearbooks presented highlights and summaries of the seasons, at least until the time when the written material began progressively to give way to an almost completely pictorial text. One picture, in the long run, is not worth one thousand words, a 1950s' yearbook editorial to the contrary notwithstanding, and along with my thanks to my nameless co-authors I must voice the anxiety that, without a renewal of words such as they provided, any lasting impression of the Kennebec summers, so important while they were happening, will quickly fade away. Most of the unidentified voices which appear in the narrative are quotations from the logs and the yearbooks.

Can one give acknowledgment to the air one breathes? My father's compass pointed always to Kennebec. His intense concern, his enthusiasm, his love for Kennebec, and my mother's matching interest and loyalty to camp, the Kennebec people who

have filled my life, the Kennebec shoreline which has been my summer horizon, all have been fundamental influences, finally making it necessary that this book no longer remain unwritten.

In the actual assembling of the history, many people have helped me in many ways, giving me material and time, encouragement and support. From the careful impartiality of the alphabetical list, I must except a few names for special mention: my mother, Hortense L. Fox, whose recollection of details, and whose patience, have been inexhaustible, my husband, Samuel Sandmel, who has been encouragement and wisdom itself, my sons, Charles, Ben and David Sandmel, and my brother, Charles Edwin Fox Jr., Kennebecers all, who have answered innumerable questions, collated records, and helped solve problems. A friend has devotedly read the manuscript in all its phases.

Because many recollections are caught on the wing, I cannot be certain that I have named each one of the people who were helpful to me, though I can, and do, thank them. My gratitude, then, to Arnold Adelberg, Daniel Alexander, Irvin Bettman, Rex Beach, Frank Barsby, Dr. Frank Block, Frank Binswanger Sr., Irving Bodenheimer, Arthur Clark, Russell Cohen, Malcolm Dawson, Mr. and Mrs. Reggie Ellis, Steven Feinstein, Carl Feustman, Mrs. Louis Fleisher, Lois Pritchard Fisher, Benedict Gimbel Jr., Richard Goldsmith, Florette Hersch, Harry Hoffheimer, Lawrence Johnson, Edwin Joseph, Robert Kaufman, Milton Katzenberg, Lucien Katzenberg, Lester Levy, Roger Lininger, William Loeb, Joel Loeb, David Long, Edgar Mack, Dr. James Mack, Harry Meyers,



Martin Meyers, Mrs. Russell McGrath, Charles Mills Sr., Carl  
Rauh, John Rauh, Gordon Reis, May Friedman Rolle, Daniel  
Rosenberg, Bernard Schachtel, Joseph Stern Jr., Robert Stern,  
Dr. Joseph Sataloff, Lawrence Stix, Hart Stotter, Lyman Suloff,  
Gordon Smith, Paul Tobias, Mr. and Mrs. Alvah Watson, Richard  
Weisman, Julius Westheimer, James Woolner. And Tom Wilson,  
coach, manager, partner, without whom--.

Why write a history of Camp Kennebec? Why climb Mt. Everest, or the Everest of our youth, Katahdin? The same classic answer will do for both, at least for a start: Because it is there. Because it has been there now for so many unbroken years. Because it has touched generations of boys, now numbering into the thousands, and counselors in the hundreds. Because it has lived through seven decades of changing times. As such, it is an institution, and human institutions, which do not erupt like mountains but are built by intent and belief, deserve to be recorded. The organized recording should have begun long ago. Old documents have had to be ferreted out of mice-endangered cubby holes, very old people have had to be spoken to before it is too late. The history of Kennebec needs to be shored up against forgetfulness as the Maine camp itself is battened down against the fierce winters. Because it is there. Because it contains so much of value.

Look back from the present summit of Kennebec to the panorama stretching across nearly three quarters of a century, then surmise how far ahead the view may extend. Begun in the pioneer days of camping with the espousal of the strenuous life which crested in the Theodore Roosevelt era, going forward through calm and turbulent years, through two wars, a depression, the rise of progressive education, the discovery of allergies and oriented upbringing, the progress from Buck Rog-

ers to the Apollo flights, the period of rebellion and dissent, Kennebec has both moved ahead and stood firm. It has grown and changed with the times, and it has remained greatly unchanged.

The quad, with its legs of tents, is larger than it was in the beginning, but it looks much the same, and the flag, which has five more stars now, is still lowered to the salute of the unpredictable cannon. The tree house, the old Shinto gate, the bocci court and the trampoline, all favorites in their day, have disappeared in favor of new structures and new interests. The trees are higher and thicker. But the World Series still involves all of camp, and letters home are still the tickets to supper on Sundays and Wednesdays. The oldest alumnus and the current camper, comparing Kennebec experiences, asking, "Do you still--?", "Did you use to--?" can find that they have much in common. In a group of several Kennebecers, assembled to compile impressions for this history, and representing, by chance, each decade of Kennebec from the first, a question arose about the plot of a story traditionally read at campfire. Each man could contribute some of the details, and the boy who was still a camper tied up the loose ends of information, tying the generations together at the same time. To some extent, all Kennebecers know the same story.

To some extent, of course, they do not. Alumni evaluations run the gamut from "a golden age" to "learning the hard way", with all gradations of idealization or discontent in between. Mature second thoughts either mellow or jaundice youthful mem-

ories. "We were scared to death of him, but how we loved that man!" "You had to be the best athlete or you didn't count." "I learned to ride Roman style. What a feeling of power!" "It meant a lot to those who were chosen, but it was wrong." "By the time I was ready to send my own boys, people were telling us that Kennebec was too competitive. Why shouldn't a camp be competitive?" "Sing of starry nights, when we watched the northern lights--." Thumbs up and thumbs down. But the ever-growing number of active alumni, the animated response of "dormant" alumni to the mention of Kennebec, the second and third generation names in the enrollment, the loyalty and interest that has kept the leadership always in the hands of the alumni, speaks for itself. In the words of a song written for its fortieth anniversary, Kennebec is "more than a camp".

It always was, beginning with the intention of its young founders, who believed in youth, and in the effect on them of "the poetry and practice of woodcraft and athletics", who had seen other camps and wanted to make theirs better than any. Charles Edwin Fox was a man driven by a love for boys and a consuming interest in their welfare: boys as they were at the moment, at play, and boys as they would become through the influence of what they did in their boyhood. Louis M. Fleisher was an accomplished camper and woodsman, a courageous trail-blazer, proudly insistent upon the standards of simplicity and character in camping. Milton Katzenberg brought enthusiasm and determination to the problems of the founding, and a friendly, open approach that inspired trust in the campers.

The three had grown up together in Philadelphia. They had

camped together in Maine and in the Adirondacks. Mr. Fleisher had been a camper in one of the first boys' camps in the country. Mr. Fox had led boys' groups and had done Y work. Mr. Katzenberg had been active in scouting. A camp of their own must have been in the backs of their minds long before the now legendary events that led to Kennebec's beginning.

In the summer of 1906, Charles Fox and Mickey Katzenberg visited Louis Fleisher who was a counselor at a Maine camp attended by friends and relatives of the three young men. On the day of their arrival, an argument between campers and management led to the pouring of a cup of cocoa down the back of the camp director's wife. More serious (and possibly more true) one of the campers, dangerously ill at the close of camp, was permitted to make the long overnight train trip back to Philadelphia without medical care; the three friends nursed as best they could a case which turned out to be diptheria. Incensed at these and other deficiencies in a camp that was supposed to be one of the best among the few then existing, the founders-to-be voiced their opinions so widely that, at a party that autumn, someone joked with them, "Why don't you start your own camp?" And so they did. (An alternate story is that during their visit to the camp several disgruntled boys encouraged them with the promise, "If you start a camp we'll come and bring our cousins. " And so they did.)

By the following summer of 1907, Kennebec was in operation. The boy who had poured the cocoa and the boy who had withstood the diptheris, and the promised cousins were among

the forty-eight first campers. The boys were enrolled from Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Chicago, cities in which one or more of the directors were acquainted. One marvels at the adventurous spirit of the parents who were willing to send their sons off to the wilds of Maine to participate in such an untried venture. The men in charge were twenty-five or under. They were inexperienced in all phases of running a camp and there was little precedent in the field to rely upon. Their combined capital was \$3000. They had no contract of partnership, they were simply joined in an endeavor in which they believed: "To have a good camp from every angle."

For this, they knew they needed a faculty of the highest calibre, men who in their day-to-day living with campers could translate the intention of the camp into reality. Their first headmaster they found by lucky chance in a football line-up. Playing against Penn that fall of 1906 was Eber Kanaga, whom Mr. Fleisher had known and respected as a counselor during his own days as a camper at Marienfeld. He was signed up even before the kick-off, and was later helpful in guiding the all-important selection of other counselors. It has always been the character of its faculty, above all else, that has made possible the strength and quality of Kennebec.

Finding a site proved to be more difficult than assembling a faculty or enrolling the campers who applied beyond the number set for that first summer. The directors had looked for suitable places in Maine and New York, and had even sent

out a prospectus that spoke cautiously of the beauty of an undefined location. But the boys had been signed up, the counselors engaged, and still there was no place to put the new enterprise. It was not until almost spring of 1907 that an open sleigh carrying a discouraged director of a camp without a home pulled into the dooryard of Andrew Watson's house in North Belgrade, and the search was ended. Alvah Watson, who showed his father's property that night, offered snow shoes, but the young man from the city didn't know how to use them, and wallowed in drifts up to his knees. In full moonlight, they crossed an icy grain field, went down to the shore and onto the frozen lake, and the immediate decision for the summer camp site was made in words that must have steamed in the frosty air. Mr. Fox later wrote, "An agreement with that fine old gentleman, Andrew Watson, was signed that night, but there would have been no need for the scratch of the pen. Our dealings with him and his family and all our warm friends in North Belgrade have been a delight all these years." This feeling has proved as permanent as the Kennebec site itself.

Even though there was now a campus, no preparations could be made until the end of the long Maine winter. Mr. Fleisher spent a frantic month in North Belgrade before the opening. During this time, the ball diamond and tennis courts were leveled, one leg of what was to become the quad was laid out with tent platforms (the canvas tents themselves were delayed in shipping and did not arrive until the day the boys did) and the single building was erected, combining assembly hall, of-

fices, storage loft and dining room connected to the kitchen by a covered walk. This building, the playing fields and the roads were constructed by Kennebec's friend, neighbor and practical genius, Alvah Watson, and all future construction in Senior and Junior camps except for the most recent building, the new Watson Hall, were to be done by him. He directed his North Belgrade builders, using pencilled floor plans and word-of-mouth measurements, often on the basis of a last minute phone call from Philadelphia ending with the specification, "Use your own judgment." The present dining hall-kitchen was the only building for which he had blueprints. His own white, elm-guarded house which stands at the edge of the field beyond the baseball diamond was for many years a camper's landmark; you turned off the main road at Watson's and went down Kennebec's own road to the camp that Alvah built. (The camp road now turns off several hundred yards south of the house.) For sixty-five years Mr. and Mrs. Watson were the only ones of the original cast on stage at the beginning who had lived the unbroken span of years on the scene at Kennebec.

What was it like for a camper of that first season to turn in at Watson's, after a three mile walk in city clothes over rutted dirt roads from the station, and find himself at last on the raw new campus with a summer of unknown possibilities ahead? Some, who had been at camp elsewhere, took it in stride. "We felt as if we were really in the woods," say others. Externals are remembered. "The buildings in those days were the kitchen, the main house (the porch of which was the dining hall,



the tables folding against the wall when not in use) and the open-front unmentionable. Light was by kerosine lamps, and bathing facilities were a dip in the lake, soap up, and a dip again to wash off. No running water, hot or cold, except in the kitchen. I remember too the manual training shop under the lake front porch, where, among other things, Dr. Kanaga taught the weaving of reed mats."

Perhaps the reeds were gathered from the lake. Dr. Kanaga, the remarkable head master of the first two years, was well versed in woodcraft and Indian lore. He was, in fact, a member of a Michigan Indian tribe, and the Kennebec maroon and gray, the origins of which have been lost in history, were possibly the colors favored by this tribe. An alumnus remembers that it was said of this head master, "He could do everything with a canoe except make it climb a tree," and even that, in a pinch." (The tall tale began early at Kennebec. Of some other counselors over the years it was said, "He was so tough that if he spit on the floor it would break", "He could dive from the top of the flag pole into a damp towel", "He ate pioneers for breakfast".) On the occasion of Kennebec's thirtieth anniversary, Dr. Kanaga wrote a sober evaluation of what it was like to have been one of those in charge at the beginning: "It is to be remembered that Kennebec was born in the pioneer days of the camp idea. Fields of endeavor then were not well mapped, what is now just a formula was then but a trial and a prayer that it be no error. That no serious mistakes were made, the fact of this an-

niversary attests. The basic idea and the spirit of Kennebec I sincerely commend."

The basic idea and the spirit of Kennebec has been constantly referred to and invoked over the years, either in reverence or mockery, according to the boy or the times, but it has never been satisfactorily defined. "We who have lived it for so long cannot explain it, but we can understand it," one alumnus wrote, echoing many. Whatever it is, it is founded partly on the interpretation of the letters in the word CAMPER (C for Companionship, A for Accuracy, M for Modesty, P for Purity, E for Enthusiasm, R for Reverence), meanings which since the earliest years have been called to mind at the beginning of each season. The spirit is also closely bound to practical principles: the continued simplicity of tent living, insisted upon, according to an early statement, "to offset as much as possible the extreme artificiality of modern city life", the emphasis on proficiency in activities, the importance of trips. Underlying all of this was the straightforward outspoken conviction that a camp (this camp) was a character building institution and could mold a boy for his own good.

Kennebec began its first season on July 2, 1907, at noon, and by two o'clock baseball, tennis and swimming teams had called their first practices. The days proceeded with a full schedule. Reveille was at six, and there was a dip and setting up exercises before breakfast. The mornings were devoted to studies (English Literature, Algebra, History, French, Outdoor Science) until swimming again about eleven. The afternoon swim at five was optional. Pegging in and out must have been a practice from the

beginning. Major sports which took up the afternoons were baseball, swimming, tennis and track, canoeing and war canoeing, wrestling and boxing. (The two war canoes, still in use, were launched in 1908 and christened in maple syrup.) Each boy's rating was recorded in each of about twenty-five events such as foot races, discus throw, half mile swim, four paddle canoe race. There were intramural contests and some games with other camps.

It is hard to imagine how a summer-long program could have been planned and carried out in this hastily assembled camp, isolated in the Maine meadows, if the natural tendency of young boys to compete had not been utilized. Put four boys on a field with a ball and you have two teams; put two boys in water and after some preliminary splashing and ducking you have a race. A necessary expedient of programming by achievement charts and contests worked so well in the first year that it solidified into tradition.

In the evenings there were sometimes tramping parties to Great Pond to see the sunset, or quiet times with music at the lake front. Assembly programs often featured story reading, or boxing exhibitions, or "moving pictures" lit by arc lights. When the pictures were clear, special mention was made of it. There were magic lantern shows, accompanied by appropriate readings. Sometimes evening assemblies were "cut short by the idiosyncrasies of the acetylene gas", an improvement which succeeded the kerosene lamps. On Sunday nights there were inspirational talks or Bible readings, and music by a quartet of counselors. This group also used regularly to gather around the flag pole to "serenade" after taps at nine. One of the verses has been re-

membered for all these years by an early alumnus.

I bought myself a suit of combination underwear,  
I bought it to keep out the cold winter air.  
I wore it for a month and without exaggeration  
I couldn't take it off, I forgot the combination.

Mr. Fox and Mr. Fleisher alternated time at camp with trips back to their respective law offices in Philadelphia. By the third week of the first season, Dr. Kanaga could write with confidence to Mr. Fox, "Things are running more smoothly every day. The discipline is working out beautifully and the rough corners are smoothing off." He adds, "Do you know what a place you have won in the hearts of the boys? Every time you are mentioned, they show their affection. It is up to you, who are away, to do something rotten and mean, so that we who are here may move up a few pegs in their estimation."

Campers, as well as directors, were on the move from the first year onward. Trips were frequent, and increased in length and expertise of planning, which at first was quite casual, as time went on. By the second year, trips included an overnight hike to East Pond, a two day walking trip around Great Pond and Long Pond, and several variations of the Great Circle trip. This trip had been accomplished in 1907 by two masters, Kanaga and McDonough, in six hours and forty minutes. Their route was through Salmon Lake and McGrath Pond, East Pond, North Pond, Great Pond to Belgrade Stream, down Messalonski to North Belgrade Station, and carry back to Salmon Lake. The record was painted on the roof of the canoe house.

A trip traveling the Great Circle in the opposite direc-

tion in 1908 discovered that there was no stream between East Pond and McGrath, and "encountered the Devil with his temptation in the shape of a farmer who offered to put our whole outfit aboard a hayrick. But courage returned and we determined to do the carry. It took all night. But more than strong arms, a stout heart can accomplish it."

By 1912 the trips were going farther afield and included a Great Circle walking trip and a walking trip with full packs to the Rangeley Lakes region, a trip to Indian Island near Orono, and canoe trips to Moosehead, and down the Kennebec to Bath. Some of these were successful, some left to chance, with campsites often requested in fields and barns, and supplies purchased at random farmhouses. The party of the first trip to Moosehead was put off the train at Dead Water, beyond Bingham, because of lack of fare, and hiked five days back into camp.

There were camp pictures taken from the first year on. In the days when campers were photographed in a single group, there was usually someone who ran around the back and appeared at both ends of the picture, though it was not until the late 60s that a member of the faculty, who still were photographed as a unit, was inspired to slip on a gorilla mask instants before the snap of the shutter. ("Due to the stress of the season, Uncle F's physiognomy has undergone a change," the yearbook noted.) Boys do not appear in uniform, with the tent-canoe insignia, until 1909. The accepted dress before that, at least for show, was sleeveless white shirts and knee length white shorts. A log

from one Sunday mentions that "tops were placed upon the nude because a respect for visitors demands the hiding of birthday clothes."

Campers who were titled "orderlies" helped in the office, ran errands, blew the bugle well or badly ("Dissident noise", "Groaning", "--each morning it sounds worse than before", are some of the logs' descriptions of Reveille), and got a few extra privileges, such as two desserts. There was also the job of camp mail boy, "a highly desirable position which excuses you from lessons", according to one eager candidate who petitioned the directors all one winter for the job. Letters to parents, then as now, were used as meal tickets twice a week. Camp Council, then called the Student Committee, began the first year; one of its duties was to regulate camp currency or chits, and run a camp candy store. (The institution of a camp store, long discontinued at Senior Camp, reappeared as "The Pub" in 1970.) Anderson's store, then run by C.J. Anderson Sr., was important to camp from the first. Shoes and mocassins, as well as magazines, used to hang from the ceiling above the candy counters, and for many years ice cream cones were a standard item. Tukey's, the off-bounds restaurant from which campers, if caught, were supposed to have to walk home naked, did not become a North Belgrade attraction until much later.

Mr. Fox's birthday on August 22 was, according to the 1912 log, "a day which for a number of years has been preceded by great anticipation, as Mr. Fox always has something good for

the campers and faculty." On this particular year it was a steamer ride on Great Pond. A later birthday party, memorable to an entire camp, ended up as a castor oil party, due to chicken salad that had been transported in a container somehow contaminated by its use in the outstanding camp play, "The Copper Pot".

More praiseworthy chicken, and ice cream, were the Sunday noon fare from the first. Until camp became too large, parents joined their sons in the dining hall for the midday meal on Visitors' Day, after what had been for them a long morning. The train arrived in Waterville at 7:30, the carriage ride to Kennebec took at least an hour, and the gate was opened to visitors at 10. Special mention was made, in the early days, of those parents who came by "machine". In 1911 one couple was kind enough to drive relays of boys to Waterville and back, as "an auto ride is a treat."

A concentration of major developments marked the sixth season of Kennebec. The diabolical combination of obstacle races, later to be known as the Kennebec Race, was first run on the Fourth of July of that year. The race is still run today, almost unchanged: Swim seventy-five feet without wetting the flag you hold, dry thoroughly and dress, walk backwards fifty yards and drop the flag in a box tied to the flag pole above your head, crawl under two tent flies nailed to the ground, saw a piece of wood, turn three somersaults at home plate, carry a potato on a board to right field and throw it over the fence. Experienced campers enter the race with loosely tied shoes and barely closed belts, but if you didn't win there used to be some prestige attached to coming in last.

For the first time, in 1912, Kennebec had Indians. The youngest boys were divided into two tribes, each under the chieftainship of a master, and camp grounds were established across the lake for them, on the site later occupied by Mr. Friedman's cottage. This camping out by age group marks the beginning of the program which later became the backbone of Junior camp. With it arose the custom of midnight raids on enemy campsites (participated in then even by the directors) and the ingenious reprisals for the raids that have survived over the years as a lively facet of the Kennebec Way.

"A Wonderful Circus with 50 Marvellous Acts" was put on by the entire camp in 1912. Proceeds went for the benefit of the Salmon Lake Grange Library. Here begins Kennebec's long tradition of linking summer privilege with the needs of others, an interest that has been expressed through many different channels. For some years following the circus, Kennebec players went on the road to perform an annual drama at the then fashionable Summit Springs Hotel, for the benefit of the Big Brothers Association. Performances in the Kennebec Theatre have been held for various causes, and in later years projects have been carried on in behalf of the neighboring Pine Tree Camp for handicapped children. The most recent effort in outreach has taken the form of Camperships, first offered in 1971 to two boys from the Waterville- Winslow community, with the intention of initiating one or two scholarships each year and continuing them through the six year Kennebec experience.

The year 1912 found in camp one of the most memorable combinations of counselors ("Masters", as they were then called)



in its history. Each alumnus has his own firm recollection of the man or men who meant most to him at Kennebec in terms of example or guidance or friendship, but among the generations of campers who knew any one of them, the names Moriarity, Bickford, Pritchard and Casey stand out. Alfred Moriarity was head master from 1910 to 1916, when he left to serve in World War I (and to meet Uncle Lou, by chance, in France.) "He was a wonderful fellow who had everything needed for a boys' leader," Mr. Fleisher wrote about him. His enthusiasm for camping must have been persuasive; his wife was for many years also a head counselor, Accomac's beloved Mrs. Mory.

Herman Pritchard came to Kennebec in 1910, just out of Swarthmore where he had won football honors, a distinction never mentioned by him but found out indirectly much later. Of him, Uncle Mory said, "No finer man ever stood in shoe leather." They called him "The Perfect Man" from the beginning. "Few men have had such a perfect physique, with arm, shoulder, leg muscles of iron, and hands that could swallow yours in a handshake," an alumnus from Uncle Pritch's first year wrote, "but as the years went on I realized this was the least, for here was a character whose every act was a model for us to follow." "His booming greeting, 'Hello, Boy!' made a camper hear that he was welcome, and know he must measure up," another old camper remembers. And another, "He was strong as a bull, but gentle as a lamb. When his section wanted some exercise he would take the seven of them on at once. The smaller kids would smother him with punches and affection, and he would shake them off and love it. And on a canoe trip he was superb."

Even more superb on a canoe trip was Harry Bickford, a six-foot-one Maine woodsman. His skill on the white water and in the woods was incomparable, and his love for the North Country he knew so well was very great. Canoeing and camping were his life, and he inspired by the example of the way he could live it. To Uncle Bick, Kennebec owes the system of teaching and tests for competence and safety in canoes that prepares campers for trips, and has won respect for Kennebec trip parties wherever they have been encountered. Through him the Allagash trip came into being.

George Washington Casey was a master at Kennebec for only four years but his unique relationship with the camp lasted and grew for over forty-five years. Everything about him was unique, his energy, his girth, his boundless humor from which he could turn, at the right occasion, to deep seriousness. He could win boys to him, as his life's work with the Big Brothers' Association was to prove. Equally he won the affection and admiration of the alumni, and was present at all the reunions, and manager of most of them. The log of the fiftieth reunion states the ultimate tribute to him, "Mighty Casey's struck us out." One of his concrete contributions to camp was the organization of Indoor baseball into leagues and a World Series.

Casey once cured a camper of acute homesickness by taking charge of him with the excuse, "We've got to stick together, we're the only Jews in camp." The trick worked; that it was believed was not entirely impossible. From the outset, Kennebec's attitude towards its Jewishness has been tangential. The founders' policy of balancing an all Jewish enrollment with

a non-Jewish staff, aimed at enriching everyone's experience, seemed to claim that religious observances, if any, should lean in the direction of neither faith. Thus the Quiet Hour (not a service) has always been held on Sunday (not Friday) night. From this has followed a tacit avoiding of anything Jewish except in the realm of humor or self-satire. Though counselor's sons have for years attended Kennebec, and Jewish counselors in increasing numbers have joined the faculty, bringing about some of the leavening influence originally intended, the distant attitude toward positive religion still persists.

The first summer of Casey's Indoor League was 1913. That year, too, the horses arrived at Kennebec. A horse tent was put up near the shore, and riding, insisted on by Mr. Fleisher as "the mark of a gentleman" was an activity required of all except those with doctor's excuses. There was a horseback trip from 1913 on. The horse tent was eventually replaced by a sizable stable at the north end of camp near the infirmary, which at first had also been a tent. The names and personalities of the horses featured alongside those of the boys in the informal popularity votes recorded in the yearbooks. Though it continued as a major interest into the 50s, the riding program became a victim of progress. The disappearance of unpaved roads, and the increase of traffic in the area finally brought this phase of Kennebec life to an end.

An unusual event of the 1913 season was the attendance of the entire camp at the marriage of one of the counselors. Uncle Bick and Uncle Pritch, in one canoe, met their future brides in another canoe in the middle of Salmon Lake. Uncle

Bick was married at the end of the camp season in the North Belgrade Grange. Uncle Pritch was married later, in New Jersey. Mr. Fox was already married. The sons of these three men would come together later at Kennebec. The two-generation photograph of them together records three of the first father-son combinations that have contributed so much to Kennebec's strength.

During the first years, the pattern of Kennebec's present intercamp competitions was established. "Our nine" played Cobbossee from 1907, but it took them three years to begin "leading the line"; the first victory was won in 1910. That year also saw a victory over Androscoggin, away. "We enjoyed a visit to another camp and returned better satisfied than ever that there's no place like Kennebec," says the log of that year, which also mentions bucket brigades being called out to wet down a dusty field before a game with Kohut.

In 1910 and 1911 there were two spectacular intercamp meets, which, according to local newspapers, "assembled about three hundred boys from five of the great camps of Maine to settle the question of athletic supremacy. These boys are from large cities all over the country, most of them sons of rich parents." The camps competing were Kennebec, Androscoggin, Kohut Kobbossee, Wildmere and Oxford. The first meet was in Lewiston, the second in Augusta, where the boys camped on the Capitol grounds. Closer to home, on a smaller scale, other contests were with Goodwill Farms, a local school, and with the Messalonski and North Belgrade baseball teams. The North Belgrade game was always a neighborhood event, and carriages would line up the length of the camp road.

The Invitation Tennis Meet was first played at Kennebec in 1914 and is still today a high point in the sports season. Over the years it has built up a formal and ceremonious atmosphere unlike that of any other Kennebec competition. The players wear whites, there are line judges and ball boys. The spectators, sitting in the stands that have been moved from the ball field for the occasion, or occupying paid space in the court-side tents, watch in a Wimbledon-like hush; there is polite applause rather than the usual expressive cheering. A wierd counterpoint to this, in recent years, is the blast of the freon horn used in the Sailing Regatta which is taking place at the same time, well within earshot.

In 1916 Uncle Pritch became headmaster, a position in which he would be seen for thirty-six years as "an integral part of camp and a sentinel of the Kennebec spirit." The thrill of my first year's work," Uncle Pritch wrote, "was dampened by Mr. Fox's retiring at the end of the season. But Samuel Friedman, the man Mr. Fox and Mr. Fleisher picked as director, has proved to be a capable and wonderful leader."

Mr. Friedman- Uncle Brod- was that, and much more. A life-long friend of the first directors, an inspired scout leader, a man who evoked trust, he brought his own uncompromising fineness, his enthusiasm and his warmth to developing the standards and ideals of the camp that for many years was to bear the stamp of his warm personality. He had an easily aroused laugh that carried to all corners of the quad, a quiet understanding that reached far into what needed to be understood. His silence could reprove more deeply than any

lecture. Yearbooks repeatedly praise his "imperturbable placidity in the face of any emergency", but also comment on his expert clowning in the parades opening the Indoor season, and in the Fat Man's Race. His Quiet Hour talk on Procrastination is remembered by many generations of campers. He was approachable, and he listened (often, in later years, while thoughtfully plying his electric razor at his office desk), and if he turned down a suggestion with his famous disclaimer, "Good heavens, man, it isn't feasible!" at least a boy knew he had had a friendly hearing. Uncle Brod was the right man to succeed a well-loved leader.

Running accounts of the first ten years of Kennebec, borne out by memories of alumni who knew him, indicate the respect and affection with which Mr. Fox was held as director. "There is one word that always makes me think of him: Magnetism," one camper wrote. "He knows boys from A to Z. When they speak to him they know they are speaking to a man in whom they can have utter confidence." "His talk is interesting, and once he captures you, he draws you closer and closer until you come to look on him almost as a brother." "He was loved in a very unusual way." The key to this, of course, was that the love was reciprocated: the feeling of closeness, like a father or a brother, went both ways. The individual, direct quality of Mr. Fox's relationships with his campers, well begun by the lake or on horseback, extended not only over the winter, in voluminous correspondences, but over the years and decades. He never lost touch with his boys, even when they had boys of their own.

His readings and campfire stories ("The Pig Bristle Slugger",

"Speckledonner", "Lot 249") are mentioned over and over again in the logs, and by men, remembering: "We used to get down from the benches and lie on the floor, and inch closer to him there by the fire as we listened." (In this connection must be mentioned Mr. Fleisher's own special readings to many generations: "The Sinking of the Bismark", "Sledge Patrol", and particularly the terrifying "Wendigo" ("--my feet, my feet!"). Mr. Fox's cherished enthusiasm about books still makes itself felt in camp through the quotation of his belief, above the library window, "I have a firm and abiding faith in the influence of good reading on the mind and heart of a growing boy."

His campfire talks about his city concerns,-- juvenile delinquency, older boys and crime, the Big Brothers' Association, are recalled by many men as their first awakening to the world beyond their circle of privilege, Some have ascribed their own participation in community affairs to this impetus. Some remember helplessly the lawyer's skill exercised in relentless cross-examinations at initiations. He is thought of in the context of good fun and good cooking on the horseback trip, from which he would sometimes lead a noisy midnight return to camp, at the gallop, as a climax. Mr. Fox continued to accompany the horseback trip for years after his retirement. The retirement, in fact, was only official and financial. He never left Kennebec, but remained an intensely personal part of it, on the scene whenever possible, as participant, advisor, philosopher, the lodestone of reunions, finally elder statesman, a continuity of Kennebec between the old boys and the new.

Mr. Friedman's good nature and resourcefulness faced the extra challenge, his first summer, of running a wartime camp. In 1917, Kennebec was set up as a twenty-four hour military post. Two military officers trained the campers in the Manual of Arms. There was practice with wooden guns, drilling, parades with the camp bugle and drum corps, strenuous war games and weekly military examinations for all. Sentries were posted and there was practice at infiltration and defense. Campers planted gardens, helped North Belgrade neighbors with bean picking and haying, and were useful in a near disaster by forming a bucket relay to fight the fire when a neighbor's barn was struck by lightning. (Fifty-odd years later, the grandson of this farmer faced the same emergency and was helped by Kennebec firefighters.)

Rigorous as all this may have been, the program of sports and trips went on. An Allagash trip, a horseback trip, a Cock-anawaggan canoe trip, a Great Circle trip, and a trip of the Indians and White Settlers (younger boys) to Moosehead left the campus entirely deserted for a time. When camp was again full of the sound of voices, says the log, "the Kaiser knew and trembled, knowing the Kennebec army was again preparing for further training."

An internment camp, set up in the manual training shop at the edge of the campus during the 1917 season had nothing to do with war. An epidemic of impetigo caused the doctor, according to the log, "to weed the Imps from the Angels and place them in purgatory." The compound became known as Imp Village, and



one enterprising camper, for the price of a pack of gum per tourist, led healthy campers for a look at "the strange creatures in Ringworm Village." The Imps gave native dances and other performances, and the guide gave instructive lectures. Besides providing entertainment, another good resulting from this ill wind was the installation of hot showers and the improvement of the camp water supply.

At opposite poles from the mock exclusiveness of the Imps was the secret honor society, DV, during the long height of its strength. Its history pre-dates Kennebec; the Kennebec chapter was founded in the 1907 season by boys who had belonged to the fraternity in another camp. As defined in an early Kennebec yearbook, "DV chooses a very limited number. Every camper is eligible, and because a camper is not chosen does not mean that he has been a failure as a camper, only that he has not measured up to the standards of campership, leadership, sportsmanship and personality as defined by those campers and faculty who make up the society." Though this severely candid explanation was provided, everything else about DV, even the meaning of the initials, and where the boys went when they were spirited out of camp for initiation, was kept secret. The Society was no summer's play. DV was a very serious matter and placed its moral obligations upon the chosen. "To those of us who know the meaning of the letters, I say, God bless these words and make them a part of us," a director wrote fervently. Fraternal ties were deeply cherished, and have endured far beyond the camping years. So too, for many, has the disappointment at having been

excluded, and the scruple against an elite society within a small community.

As the Kennebec decades succeeded themselves, such scruples became part of the general thinking of the day. Parents of prospective Kennebecers, as well as some loyal fraternity brothers of long standing, began to voice doubt, and then strenuous objections about the existence of a secret society, objections which were met by sincerely shocked denial within DV. "DV is an honor society, and as such is an ever-present incentive to all Kennebecers to reach the ideals for which it so proudly stands. Its influence is unseen but very real." Straightforward as this defense was, its truth was double-edged. The unseen influence was running counter to the temper of the times. In camp itself, campers who had been tapped arose to challenge the rightness of the fraternity, and the years between 1931 and 1951 saw a gradual change in the nature of the society.

In a revolutionary overhauling in 1940 the mystic name was changed to the Kennebec Honor Society, and the members were elected by the entire camp from a ballot drawn up by a committee of counselors and active members. A former Best Camper responded for many to the change: "With the democritization of DV, I feel that much has been gained and nothing lost. Now the Best Camper award should be discontinued." Many, though, felt that too much of the secrecy and separateness still remained. In 1952 the Society became the present Kennebec Alumni Association and the only eligibility requirement was to have been a Kennebecer. "The feeling is that anyone so interested in the alumni, or camp,

has a right to belong." Constant through all these phases has been the Scholarship Fund, raised annually and administered by the organization, to aid young men in college who are brought to its attention from a variety of sources, including the younger faculty and staff of both Senior and Junior camps.

Camp Kennebec Junior was opened in 1921. It was a camp born out of a national upsurge of interest in camping, a demand from parents for a larger Kennebec with a younger enrollment, and the wisdom of the directors in "dividing to multiply." Kennebec's program had been geared for some time to an enrollment held at one hundred, and had been built on the needs and interests of teen-age boys. Younger boys, the directors felt, should have an entirely different environment and camp life, and their numbers (fifty-eight the first year of Kennebec Junior) should not be added to the Senior population.

A separate camp was the answer. The campsite chosen, almost one mile by water across the southern end of the lake from Kennebec Senior, had once been a girls' camp. One of its buildings was brought across the lake on the ice to Senior and became Watson Hall, where assemblies were held and victory banners were hung. For the new camp, a program "tailored for the pre-adolescent from ten through twelve, imaginative, adventure-some and without outside competition" was developed. "Many who were old and experienced in the camping game looked with skepticism on this new venture," wrote Guerdon Messer, the able headmaster who helped organize Kennebec Junior. "along the lines of the most advanced educational thought". Mr. Fleisher moved across the lake with the new experiment. While his interest

and responsibility always was with Kennebec as a whole, it was the way of life at Junior that became identified with his leadership. It can be said as well that he identified with the Abnaki Nation at Junior Camp. "My braves," he would say to the boys. "Your sachem," he would say of himself as he stood, in full Indian regalia, at the council fire, and through his seriousness, the Indian makebelieve he had carefully devised for the younger boys was made convincing.

"My friends and I really thought Uncle Lou was part Indian," an alumnus remembers, "He never stepped out of character. He was sachem not only at Grand Council but on the ball field and the canoe dock as well." The campers were (and are) Indians too, divided into groups named for the original Maine woodland tribes of the Abnaki Nation, the Penobscot, the Passamaquoddy, the Micmac, the Malecite, and years later, the Norridgewock. (The Micmac tribe was at first composed of younger boys, as the short-lived Wawanock tribe was.) From 1921 on, almost all instruction and activity within camp has been carried on within the Indian framework. The tribes competed by team performance and also on the basis of coups or feathers awarded to individual braves at Grand Council, and tallied up on the Birch Bark Scroll for the end-of-the-season reckoning.

Through the reservations, the specially geared Junior program and the Indian tradition have been most vividly combined. Each tribe has its own territory in the woods along the eastern shore of the lake, a five minute paddle and a world away from camp. (The Malecites have always had the same reservation while the other tribes have made some moves over the years.) Living

on Res for two or three days and nights at a time, in addition to learning the rudiments of sports, camping and water safety at their own level, makes the Juniors excellently equipped for the more mature Senior activities" as the Kennebecamper, the camper-written yearbook begun in 1924, notes. There were enough of these well-trained campers to make a difference. The 1925 yearbook mentions that over half the campers attending Kennebec Junior during its opening season in 1921 were, four years later, at Senior camp, and three quarters of Senior's total 1925 enrollment was composed of former Junior campers.

This early recognition by the older boys of the competence brought from across the lake puts Kennebec Junior in a perspective of importance and relevance that over the years has not always been so generously acknowledged. Campers, once they have crossed to the increased freedom and activity of Senior camp, seem obliged by tradition to underrate the experience in the Land of the Red Man. Is this losing sight of the Silent Forest for the trees? Mr. Fox, writing in satisfaction about the first ten years of Junior camp, saw it fulfilling the purpose for which it was intended: "This program has enabled us to realize a long cherished plan, a progressive developing of each boy in campercraft, woodsmanship, canoeing and swimming, the final school for which is Chesuncook." Difficult as it may be for a boy just grown out of it to recognize for the depth of its worth, Kennebec Junior is the first firm rung of the ladder that leads to the Allagash.

Camp Kennesuncook, an outpost campus one hundred and fifty

north of North Belgrade, on isolated Chesuncook Lake, was added to Kennebec in 1925. It was, in conception, the counterpart of Kennebec Junior, a special domain for the oldest boys, the launching pad for the Allagash. The Allagash trip had always been the crowning experience for a camper lucky enough to be chosen for it. In its first form in 1909, the trip consisted of a train ride to Moosehead, a ride by launch to the upper end of that lake, then a canoe carry to the Allagash River, a day's paddle, an overnight campout and a return to Kennebec. (The Little Allagash trip later taken by younger boys followed this general plan.) By 1914 the Allagash trip had developed to its present proportions, and Uncle Bick led the now classic voyage, "the best canoe trip in the world," as he called it, over the waterways of the North Woods. In those days, there were four boys, or three boys and a master, in a canoe, and the duffle was put where it could fit in. From 1915 until 1925 the seventeen day itinerary remained the same ("We don't travel for speed," Uncle Bick wrote, "We take time to enjoy the beauty of the woods.") but the number in the canoe was wisely reduced.

During most of these years between 1909 and 1925 only eight of the oldest campers were chosen as a First Section. By 1925, however, all boys automatically became First Sectioners at sixteen, or in their fourth year, and the Allagash trip became the expectation of all. For this larger group, Kennesuncook was created. All the careful and exacting training in canoeing and water safety during a boy's camp years eventually led to this, and the seven days spent on the edge of the wilderness was the practice that climaxed all previous practice. The first group

of campers called this third Kennebec "an experiment destined to revolutionize camping for the older fellows at CK." According to their log, the experiment, and its campsite, became tradition immediately. "A few minutes after arrival, dinner was served, the victrola was started, and Camp Kennesuncook was forever initiated into the Great Kennebec Spirit."

The Kennesuncook "campus", bordering on the tiny settlement of Chesuncook, first contained cabins, now replaced by A-frames ("Easier to keep clean, but you can no longer hear the rain on the roof," says Uncle Artie Clark, who built them), and a dining room-kitchen building which can never be replaced because of the generations of names and messages pencilled on the upright posts of its interior. "How could those names and notes still be so clear after fifty years?" one alumnus wonders. "Boys look all over the cabin to find their fathers' names, or their brothers' (the signatures are in no order except on Uncle Rog's own post) and you can remember signing up yourself, and everything that was going on around you. Checkers, maybe, or letter writing or an astronomy lesson you were skipping this time, or non-stop talk."

The outpost activities have been balanced between a relaxed regime of volley ball, baseball, horseshoes and swimming in the copper colored water, ("A strange Shangi-La of rest and new-found fellowship," one yearbook says) and a concentrated conditioning for The River, including a tough side trip to the Horse Race Rapids. The cooking at Kennesuncook has been important enough to receive description of one sort or

another in the yearbooks; Reggie Ellis and Uncle Rog have been the chefs most often praised. For a number of enchanted years the presence of several beautiful girls who lived in Chesuncook village was also praised. Alex Gunn, who used to take the incoming campers the length of Chesuncook Lake in his mail boat, telling tall tales all the way, was a reality who became partly legendary. So was Burt McBurney. In any persistently rainy summer an early nickname is revived; the place is temporarily called Kennecook because there is no sun.

The Allagash trip begins in Umbazooksus Stream, or Caucagomic Stream, and ends some one hundred and fifty miles later at Fort Kent. To each man who has taken part in the adventure, the names that make up the route,- Mud Pond and Mud Pond Outlet, Chamberlain Lake, Lock Dam Carry, Eagle Lake, Round Pond, Churchill Lake, Chase's Carry (the Devil's Elbow), Umsaskis Lake, Allagash River, Rankin Rapids, Connors, St. John River, St. Francis, Fort Kent,- all these conjure up sights, scenes, memories of challenge and trepidation, the ache of effort, the recollection of success and mishap, always in the context of companionship.

And stories. Endless stories. "You can hear Chase's Carry a mile away." "He put in his pole to go over the rapids and his canoe went right on without him." "There were waves in Chesuncook Lake four or five feet high." "We nearly didn't have a trip because there was a fire ban." "Uncle Mac got us all up in the pitch dark to push ahead to the next campsite before the second section could get set up in it. So we paddled for a few



hours until he said we were there, and we made camp again before it was light. But when we woke up we found he'd led us in a circle back to the same campsite we'd left!" "The canoes were named Rock-Ribbed Rosie, Bump-Bottom Bertha--." It was a bull moose!" "We counted our fish and found we had over a hundred brook trout. The others returned with no fish, but twenty-five pairs of frogs' legs." "There is no describing the next hours, just terrifically hard work pulling upstream against rushing water, and by the time we got out we were half dead, except for our comedy pair, who were three-fourths dead."

"What did it mean to me, this Allagash trip?" an anonymous yearbook writer asks for many others. "What will the carry in the rain through Mud Pond seem like in a year or two? How will I remember the muscles strained by paddling thirty miles a day? Will I still be able to hear that crazy cheer that went up when we hit Fort Kent's beach? Why do I feel that these seventeen days on the river were some of the best in my life?" Like the often sought definition of the "Kennebec spirit" or the reason for Kennebec's hold upon counselors and campers, this question too defies precise answer. "Something we know, something we feel--," says a lost verse of the song, "More Than A Camp".

The First Section, automatically set apart from the rest of camp by age, and by the Allagash experience, if not by inspired respect ("We all got up at six to see the First Section off, not that they don't seem off at many other times") have also been set apart in living quarters. In 1907, it was "First Tent". By the time of the early yearbooks, "their own little quadrangle" is mentioned, where the First Section lived in six to eight tents and had their own assemblies. In 1930 they

began to be referred to "the men from the cabins", and lived behind the west end of the quad in what are now the pioneer cabins. In 1946 the Hotel (then called the Grand Hotel) was built, a large cabin on the shore, south of the tennis courts, which housed the whole First Section. Over its door is the legend, not a literary allusion but a serious warning to younger boys, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter."

First Section privileges from the beginning had included staying up after taps, almost unlimited purchases at the store, and permission to smoke, if a boy did so at home. (The Hotel originally had a Smoking Porch, but both the porch and the permission are no more.) There was also the contested privilege of being the only campers ever to dress in white. (As a group they now routinely appear in white at campfire, Quiet Hour, Fourth of July assembly, and in the First Section show.) The White Clothes Fight was begun the first year of camp, as the Faculty Roughhouse", always won by the faculty ("Kennebec is an Uncles' camp!") but in later years it became a contest of the First Section against the rest of the quad. As described in the 1932 log, "The third yearmen appeared in white jerseys, just like waving a red flag in a bull's face. By the time the battle had cleared, one tent was down, and the underwear business was set to declare an extra dividend." On another occasion, the First Section was surprised by the rest of camp, attacking in white clothes at five-thirty in the morning, and the signal to begin the fight was given by the head counselor in his sleep.

"Remember the time our First Section took the initiative,  
and tied together every shoe in camp?"

First Section Day, the next to the last full day of the season, was already a tradition by the time the first yearbook reported activities in 1924. ("One of the greatest things about Kennebec to me," said an alumnus of the mid 30s, "was that so much we did wasn't just an activity, it was tradition.") On First Section Day the Kennesuncookers "assumed the grave duties of the faculty," playing the roles of various counselors and directing the program. ("To be a camper under a pretend Uncle Pritch is a harrowing experience.") This was an extremely practical game as it left the faculty free to take in boats, dismantle the waterfront, and other necessities of closing camp. Bathing Ugly contests, inspection for the sloppiest tent, and elaborate ceremonies at the HOL were features of the day often repeated over the years. (Why, and when first, was it called the House of Lords? The exact answer is lost in history, but has to do with each man having his own rightful seat.) For some years, First Section Day began with Taps, and breakfast was a soup and meat dinner.

The First Section also saw to their own immortality by means of their prophecies, wills and valedictories. The wills typically leave one boy's particular ability to another boy outstanding in the lack of it, or announce that someone leaves in hot pursuit of someone else, just leaves, or doesn't leave because he isn't ready. (A financial note: In 1928, L.K. was left J.K.'s appetite so that he might get his \$450. worth.) The prophecies which in later years provide the briefest predictions for a camper's future ("Hoodlum", "Patcher of canoes") in early years were long narrative poems involving all members of the First Section in their humorous plots. The most amazing of these, written in 1930,

eerily begins, "It was nineteen hundred and forty-four, the second year of the great Jap war." One of the boys prophesied about was to lose his life in that actual war.

War was a fantasy as Kennebec went into its third decade, and the depression itself was not a crippling reality. "It cannot be construed other than as a great achievement that, in this time of great economic strife, one of our camps was over-enrolled, while the other was slightly below its usual enrollment," the directors wrote in the 1931 yearbook. Even a polio epidemic which threatened the 1931 season was successfully averted, though the reunion scheduled for that year had to be cancelled. It was the same kind of good fortune that in 1953 somehow set the calendar so that camp had disbanded the day before a hurricane uprooted trees and blew tent platforms around the empty quad. The stars over Salmon Lake were lucky stars, and confidence and stability were part of the camp atmosphere. Annually, the yearbooks repeat the assertion, "This was the best season on record." At the time of its coming of age, Kennebec seemed to have been there forever. Mention is made of the "grand old campus" and of counselors returning for their "umpteenth" summer. A director reckons in round numbers that over seven hundred boys have worn the camp colors. A history of the 1927 season says, "Despite cold and rain, it went off smoothly. It always does."

The events of the season by the mid-20s had become established into a pattern that has hardly been departed from since. The opening days were ones of necessary organizing, in which sections were drawn up, Maroon and Gray teams chosen, Indoor leagues formed, new campers assigned to First Section Big Brothers. The

Fourth of July began with a patriotic ceremony (which now unfortunately includes a reading of the names of the Kennebec war dead; there was only one name after World War I.) This is followed by a series of special Fourth of July contests (the wheelbarrow race, the elephant race, the faculty relay "run in scintillant and bizarre costumes") and climaxed by the Kennebec Race. The Junior-Senior faculty baseball game was always held at Senior the afternoon of the Fourth. Freshman Night, "which comes only too soon for the first yearmen", put the stunts of the pioneers on trial. The Indoor season opened with elaborate parades ("A chauffeur driven car, carrying the commissioners, and preceded by a noise, drove across the diamond."), and the first ball was thrown by anyone from a director in disguise to (recently) Mrs. Anderson. The first Sunday night Quiet Hour was the occasion of Mr. Fox's Camper Sermon, now called the Traditional Service.

The July days following these landmark events were taken up with classes in sports, campercraft and some school subjects, team practices, trip conditioners, intercamp games and Maroon and Gray contests. There was daily tent inspection, for high stakes: "The awards for a perfect tent were beautiful watch fobs. We all hope next week will bring the other end of the award." On the other hand, "unsatisfactory" meant pick-up duty, sometimes with a basket strapped on one's back. Fishing was an important extra-curricular activity, both for campers and for the chef, who would cook a boy's catch. The chef himself one year was an ardent fisherman with unusual luck; one night, on a long cast in toward shore, he hooked an owl.

The first of two assembly line haircuts was given just before "big" Visitors' Weekend; boys began to get in line at five in the morning. ("D.F. got in a fight with the clippers, and if he won, he is a sorry specimen for a victor.") On this last weekend before the First Section departed, special performances such as a horse show or a water pageant were held for parents, and the Big Show was presented. (In later years, parents have accompanied their sons through a normal morning's activities, and the trick is for a boy to get assigned to shop so he will have time to talk to his visitors.) Trips took up most of August, and even with parties coming and going, camp was emptied completely for a week or more. The final week of the season ("The Last Roundup", a yearbook called it) was one of hectic activity, caught for all time in its rush of events and feelings by the writer of the 1925 log:

"August 24. Everyone is back in camp. Fellows are comparing trips and beards and telling of the deer they saw. Trip logs tonight.

"August 25. World Series begins. Uncles put away mosquito nets, trip equipment. Logs again tonight. (There was a prize for the best log, just as in later years, at the songfest, there was a prize for the best song.

(Remember the year the campers were led to believe the songfest was being nationally broadcast?)

"August 26. The official photographer kept us waiting so long that we changed clothes, then had to get dressed up again. Another Indoor game. The horses are gone and the horse tent stored away. Changes in weight, height and ex-

pansion recorded in the afternoon. After the annual corn roast, with cinnamon buns and milk, a visit to the old Indian tribes at Junior.

"August 27. Maroon and Gray relays. Treasure hunt or wild goose chase, groups running everywhere, paddling and even swimming, though it is so cold that the judges were wrapped in blankets. The last movie.

"August 28. Camping out contest in Alvah's field. The judges ate what was cooked and still maintained their health. During dinner the boys voted for Best Camper, Biggest Grafter, etc. The uncles and Mr. Friedman, in secret session, decide the real prizes.

"August 29. Intercamp contests with Junior. World series chicken dinner. Last day to use checks at Anderson's. (A First Section, on this last day at Anderson's in the mid-60s, returned four hundred pop bottles.)

"August 30. First Section Day. Runways are taken up, tent flies taken down. First Section leads Quiet Hour, gives sermon.

"August 31. Packing trunks and equipment. In the afternoon, a whole table full of prizes. (A pipe and bowl to "The Best Camper in the opinion of the faculty with due regard for the opinion of the campers", a prize for the Best Loser, the Most Unselfish, as well as athletic awards.) Planting of the 1925 tree. Last campfire on the ball diamond. Trombone solo that's not sad but makes you feel that way. Section masters give farewells. Uncle Pritch, Mr. Friedman, Mr. Fox give heart-to-heart talks. Taps are sounded from all parts of camp."

By the end of a season, "all parts of camp" can come to feel like the boundaries of the world. But "there still is a world outside," a log of this period comments after a current events assembly. The motorized age, coming slowly to Kennebec as it had to North Belgrade, where in the 20s kerosine lights still competed with electricity, helped to let the world in.

Uncle Pritch's outboard was the opening wedge. It was given to him in 1928 at a surprise ceremony honoring his twentieth year at Kennebec, and in his speech of thanks he included a warning that soon concrete bathing suits would have to be issued in order to protect "pedestrians". A class in motors was begun the same year, as the result of retrieving an unclaimed sunken inboard motor boat from the lake. This boat, the Iva Leak, became a camp favorite. "The evening game between Boston and Philadelphia was interrupted for an interesting event. After much coaxing, the famous engine of the derelict shop gave a mighty grunt and revolved thirteen times." The Iva Leak was restored to such an extent that the next year she was entered in a race against the few other motor boats in the Kennebec fleet. The motorized canoe, on the other hand, was immediately unpopular when introduced briefly some years later. It was labelled "strictly white man stuff and not at all in the spirit of the Abnaki." Motor classes thrived long after motor boats became routine equipment, patrolling the waterfront and making the short trip between camps. (During World War II the motors class took to land and built a jeep which was run across the ball diamond.) A Cine Club, begun about this time, produced camper-made movies for several years.



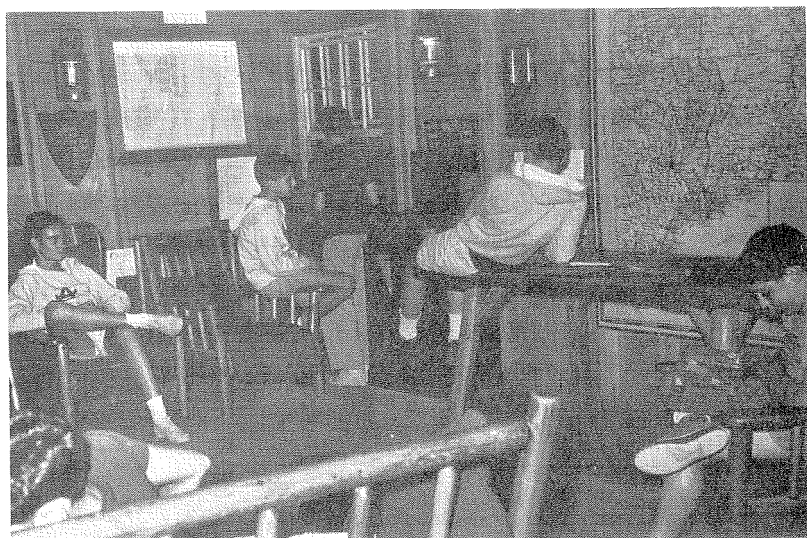
Hollywood movies which were shown at Senior camp for combined Junior and Senior audiences "will be better when the Vitaphone system is put in," a log says hopefully. Special technological arrangements with the air waves were rare enough to rate mention also. "We are grateful to Uncle Ly for installing the radio for the Tunney-Heeney fight."

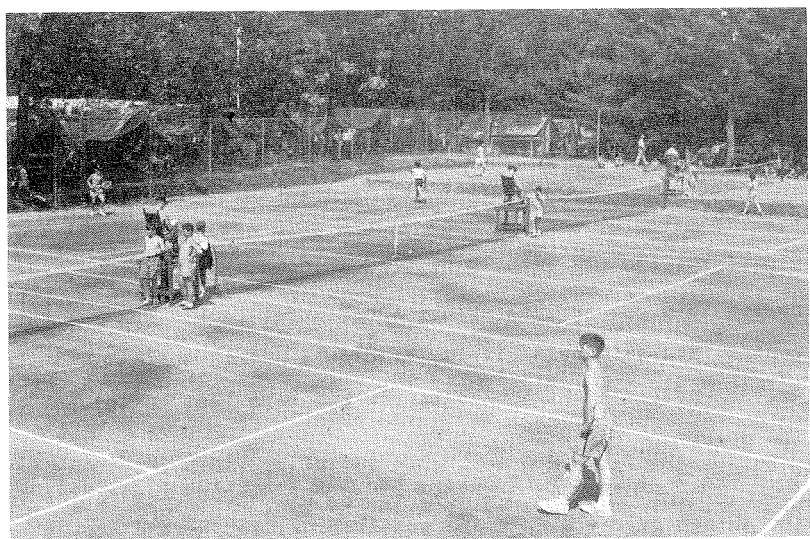
Between this special accomodation and today's taken-for-granted transistor radio or cassette player in every tent stands a watchdog point of view as old as Kennebec. This is the continually restated insistence of "coming to Kennebec to go camping." A play, written by Mr. Fox the first or second year of camp, foresees the need to hold fast, and expresses the vigilance in the form of a nightmare. Kennebec's headmaster, having just welcomed a group of enthusiastic campers back to camp after a rugged hike, falls asleep, and dreams of Kennebec thirty years later, in 1937. In this camp a switchboard operator dispatches ice water and menus on request to tents, reserves polo ponies and golf courses, and fends off invitations for dates. Campers kill neighborhood chickens in the course of compulsory automobile practice, a boy getting in shape for the Androscoggin air meet impales his plane on a Smithfield silo, and a freshman delegation protests against a counselor who expects them to do their own cooking and paddle their own canoes. This final outrage jolts the headmaster awake with the horrified question, "You don't suppose for one moment such changes could come?" and another counselor, wide awake, can only answer, "Well, you know these boys have wealthy parents and it's going to be a hard job to keep out of this camp the thousand and one extravagances to which they are accustomed."

This theme, "The Handicap of the Well-Born Child", thus titled in a magazine article of the day, was a rising concern during the early years of Kennebec, along with a nostalgic back-to-the-country movement that is reflected in material written or quoted by the directors. A camp prospectus carries the words of John Burroughs, "I am a saner, healthier man, with truer standards, for all my loitering in the fields and woods." In a campfire talk there is reference to "the boy as nature's priest." And there is the heartfelt plea, addressed to campers at the last campfire:

"Oh boys! Will glare of noisy streets and theatres blur  
The vision of the meadows green where cattle low  
and songbirds stir?  
Will pleasures that are bought with gold be thought by you  
the greater part,  
Remembering not the simple joys that lie so near  
to nature's heart?  
Or will you be true to all the tests that Kennebec imposed,  
Where naked as at morning dip your faults and virtues  
stood disclosed?"

That these sentiments were either seriously offered or civilly accepted seems inconceivable, particularly today when mention of the letter P in the word Camper is sure to arouse laughter in the first Quiet Hour. ("Why don't they substitute Prurience?" one practical alumnus inquired.) But apparently then it was in the context of what could be accepted. In '70 the rallying words were "ecology" and "environment" and had sociological overtones. In '07 they were "love of nature" and were good for the soul. (The "traditional" Sunday night talk for the first few years used the letters N-A-T-U-R-E instead of C-A-M-P-E-R.) The goal of a good camp was to save a boy, not so much for society's sake, which would be the emphasis today, as for the sake of his own self-contained decency. And the boy was the





willing partner to being saved, particularly since it involved the popular challenge of not being "soft".

But this character training could not always have been easy to communicate, as one of Mr. Fox's wry stories on himself attests. Walking down to the shore one evening, he saw a particularly beautiful sunset at the peak of its glory, and called to a camper passing by, "Come here! Look!" The boy came, looked, and said defensively, "I didn't put it there!" and then Mr. Fox noticed that a wheelbarrow had been left on the end of the dock.

The M in Camper, Modesty, had the intention of stressing the sunset over the material wheelbarrow, and warned against excess baggage, the pride of possessing. "Don't take time to boast that your father has a valet," the Camper Sermon used to say, "Travel light." ("What's a valet?" asks today's camper.) Traveling light was a hopeful suggestion for parents too. Along with the perennial Visitors' Day jibe at the mother who asks her son if he changes his socks (one mother in the early days was said to have come into camp calling, "Freddy, are you safe?"), are the yearbook sketches of obviously dressed-up parents with towering piles of presents and contraband food. Visitors' cars for a while were referred to as "fruit wagons" but the fruit has been known to include beer and lobsters. "The boys retired early, to get rested for next day's stomach ache," one Visitors' Day log concludes.

"Remember the Visitors' Day when someone's family landed in camp in a helicopter, and all got out wearing space suits and tossing Mars Bars to the crowd?"

Traveling light, a camper's term to begin with, was also

used as a yardstick for simple values in actual traveling.

"These Augusta trips used to be real hiking trips and we made the boys walk all eighteen miles without a lift, but they have it figured out now when the ice cream truck is due, and it's a dumb one that has to hoof it many miles," writes a former counselor coming back in the late 20s. "Guzzling stops", shopping at the Five and Ten, and banana splits en route come in for their share of critical mention. Alumni, along with their customary gift of cigars to the faculty, offered unvarying advice to campers of any current season, "Hold on to the old ways. Don't let yourselves get soft." A trip leaving camp by bus just as some alumni are coming in is "given the haha for not walking."

But alumni returning for the Thirtieth Reunion in 1936 found very little to which they could give the haha. Many of them had not been back for a long time. Many others had been coming back over the years as regular visitors ("My car finds its own way," one of them said) and since 1931 had been enjoying the Alumni Cabin, dedicated in that year to their use. However long since they had been there, whatever they may have expected, the re-entry as a reunion group into the Kennebec atmosphere proved to be an encouraging return to a familiar context.

The campus itself kept in 1936, and still does, the same compass points with which it began: the quad, the old shingled main building (later replaced on the same site by Fox Lodge), and Watson Hall. Within this well known setting there were of course new buildings to be discovered. There was the "structure" described lavishly in the 1928 log: "Memories of painful nights and cold feet! What is this imposing edifice to the southwest? Twelve rooms, running water in each, electric lights, a two way

approach. Matters which in the past have been labors are now a pleasure." New also was the present dining porch-kitchen, built in 1930, and the two First Section cabins (now the Pioneer cabins), the Wigwam in Junior camp and the porches on the Junior cabins. But none of these additions disturbed the remembered geography. Archery was being taught at Kennebec Junior in a clearing that had been a wild area behind the ball field. Sailboats, an important part of the camp program since 1931, crossed and recrossed a flag-marked course off the end of the same dock from which Mr. Fox saw the sunset and the wheelbarrow. Across the lake, the wooded shore line and the white length of Passy Beach were, and are, still unmarred.

Most important, the faculty in the 30s maintained a remarkable core of continuity. At the time of the Thirtieth Reunion, Uncle Lou was the same strong, intensely involved director that he had been in the beginning, Mr. Fox was still at the pulse of Kennebec if not at the helm, Uncle Brod was entering his twentieth year, Uncle Pritch his twenty-seventh. (In his twenty-fifth year, with some embarrassment, Uncle Pritch had publicly returned the paddle he had thought was his to keep after a trip in 1911. It was hung over the main fireplace, and he was given a new one as an anniversary present.) During the 30s, one third of the faculty had been at Kennebec for nine years or much longer, and the average years of leadership were seven and a half. No alumnus had yet been included in the capacity of counselor, but former campers had begun to return as waiters. (They were devoted, and maligned. "Blame it on the waiters" became everyone's first line of defense. It is not legend, however, that they once let fall a large bag of

discarded dishes and cutlery behind the kitchen door to impress the director, of another Maine camp who was a guest at Sunday dinner.)

"Remember when the waiters filled all the wash house soap dispensers with beer?"

The alumni, returning in 1936, discovering the ties to the beginning and the recent past, and the changes that grew out of them, declared Kennebec timeless. At this Thirtieth Reunion, now seen as the approximate midpoint of its present history, Kennebec could be likened to a great ship in full sail, progressing in a straight line from a still visible point, keeping a steady course. Eighty alumni came back to camp, twenty-five of them dating from the first five years. Eighteen sons of former Kennebecers had become campers. "What do you mean, we can't turn back the years?" wrote the reunion scribe in a dispute with Father Time. "Kennebec turns back Cobbossee. We can turn back anything. You don't win the Casey Cup with a scythe!"

"The reunion was everything the heart desired," wrote Mr. Fox in this last summer of his life. "It was not a Rotary Club picnic or one of those awful father-son outings. It was a re-capturing of Kennebec routine by mature men as if they had never ceased to be campers. The men who returned to the reunion came back laughing joyously and defiantly at Time." "Kennebec's youth despite its years," he had written at an earlier reunion, "lies in the vitality that has sprung from the devotion of its alumni."

The Thirtieth Reunion was built into camp in the form of a gift from the alumni, the rustic bell tower that stands in front of Fox Lodge. The summer of 1937 it stood in a clearing; the

trees have grown so tall that it is now more heard than seen. (Yet the 1937 campus was far more shaded than the almost treeless site in 1907. The old pines, whose long roots now roughen the ground between the Bell Tower and Watson, the large maples and the poplars, now only a line of stumps between the quad and the tennis courts, were all set in during the first years of camp. The pine grove at the southwest edge of the campus was Uncle Pritch's project and much of the planting and tending was done by him.) Fox Lodge, the present office and library building was erected in memory of Mr. Fox in 1938 on the site of the main building it replaced. The Everyboy Pavilion, for ping-pong, was built the same year. In the ground, to the left of the path leading to the main door of Fox Lodge, is an iron ring, a relic of a container sunken outside of the original 1907 kitchen.

There was something noticeably new in the season of 1938 even before the walking campers "huffed and Puffed" in from the station and saw the new buildings. On the train, everyone had been dressed in camp uniform. Until this time, the boys had traveled in city clothing, which then was stored, subject to mice and moths, in a loft above the offices, and ironed for the journey home by the predecessors of the alumni waiters. Despite the change in garb, the train ride to North Belgrade was the same in 1938 as in the earliest days. Campers met at Grand Central Station in late afternoon, where they were joined by the Western Party who had spent the previous night on the train and the day in New York. A typical night in the "upholstered cattle cars" of the Bar Harbor Express was hinted at in a log: "The usual peace and quiet was preserved. Boys swung from the berths like



monkeys. Uncle Brod and Uncle Pritch want to thank the campers who were so considerate as to give them involuntary gifts of fruit and candy." The train arrived more or less at breakfast time. The trip home began in the early evening after a long day of taking down beds and tents and storing equipment in the dining hall, then picnic supper in the field, and a walk to the station. During World War II, camp traveled by day train. Shortly afterwards, passenger train service in Maine began to phase out. Kennebec took to the air in 1956.

The season of 1938, besides new buildings and traveling outfit, had other claims to fame. Hidden in the yearbook was the first mention of a future director: "Hart Stotter kept continually busy and thin with baseball, swimming and riflery." (Next season he is noted as the only man in camp to brag about being kicked out of the Big Show because of a poor voice.)

1938 was also the year of the famous fist fight in assembly. This was a high point in what a yearbook calls "that combination of tradition and horseplay better known as 'The Kennebec way'". As humor its roots go back to the days when the entire camp would shout "Mop!" when something was spilled in the dining hall, and boys who had not brushed their teeth had to march around the quad chanting, "I love my toothbrush." The same spirit has sent generations of freshman around camp looking for skirmish lines or pails of steam, and has caused bugles to sound at odd hours in the night, canoes to be found launched on flooded tennis courts, sleeping uncles to be dumped in the lake, bed and all. ("Uncle W. took a dip. In entering the water he took a mattress to protect his fall and a few

blankets in preparedness for cold water.") Yet either Kennebecers continue to be credulous or Kennebec jokes are extremely well done. Only a few years before the fist fight, a morning assembly was interrupted by Alvah Watson (a unique event in itself) who reported that John Drew, a Shakespearean actor, had escaped from a nearby (mythical) institution for the dangerously insane, and had been seen in the neighborhood. Camp entered upon a seventy-two hour alert, boys began sleeping with sheath knives under their pillows, and John Drew's body, the straw man he had been all along, had to be discovered on the swimming float to make the end of the game final and convincing.

The fist fight was even more generally believed. It grew out of the Dream Game, a giant baseball ballyhoo involving all campers and faculty. Not only players for the Unbeatables and the Invincibles, but also bat boys, foul ball chasers, and sweepers of home plate were chosen by "gruelling mental competition". The build up for the game was prolonged, the risk was high (lobster dinner for the winners, clearing rocks from the campus for the losers) and there was no middle ground for loyalties. One morning in Watson, the two coaches, on the uncles' bench in view of the whole camp, got into a heated verbal fight and finally came to blows. "I swear I could hear his fist connect," one alumnus remembers in awe over thirty years later. "We couldn't believe it was happening but it's still hard for me to believe it wasn't real." It was so real that the hoax was reincarnated at least once again, in the 60s, when the ninety-five pound piano player, reputed by long repetition to be a black belt karate expert, was seen to flip another counselor twice his size over his shoulder.

Stories like these cluster around many counselors, men become legends, and it is as tempting as it would be impossible to mention them all. The only way to surmount the problem of choosing some without offending others is to mention by name only those within the most visible categories: directors, headmasters and leaders of the Allagash.

Uncle Frank MacGinley, the Invincible captain who stalked out of Watson after the first fight, came to Kennebec in 1924 and was headmaster of the Allagash from 1931-1947. He was a man of great strength and great abilities, a canoeist, a wrestler, a thorough-going sportsman (his hunting dogs were as well known to campers as Uncle Hart's race horse was, later). He often appeared to be scowling ("Uncle Hard-Boiled Mac", they called him, "Black Mac"), but his sense of humor was seldom at rest. He had a keen, steady gaze no boy could forget. He saw everything, and it was rumored that he could be in two places at once. Perhaps the stories clustered around him because it was hard to pin down his qualities and influence in praise. "Uncle Mac again handled the First Section, roughly, to be sure." "Uncle Mac related his half and half stories, half truth, half MacGinley." "Uncle Mac ran out and caught a woodchuck by the tail." "Uncle Mac's birthday party was announced. The boys lined up for candy bars and were hosed by the First Section." "Camp went to bed but not Uncle Mac. The Maine Guide killed time until three o'clock when he awakened every uncle and presented them all with a copy of the 1938 Maine Inland Fish and Game Laws." During all his years at Kennebec no one established for certain whether or not he could swim. He inspired both serious admiration and amazement. He was also the inspiration for The Guide's Hat, the

first in a long line of plays written by campers and counselors, lampooning camp.

"Remember the play, The Great Kennebec Robbery, with the sleuth Elliot Ness from the detective firm of Mitchell and Ness? Remember the song, 'Shoeless Dan from Horace Mann'?"

"I dream of Beanie with the most abundant hair", began a song in another play which for a long time was a camp classic. Uncle Beanie and Uncle Rog must appear here as exceptions to the just stated rule of who shall be mentioned by name. In their years spent at Kennebec- over forty- they outstripped everyone except Uncle Lou, Uncle Pritch and Uncle Brod, and in their various capacities they had, at one time or another, a part in almost the whole range of camp activities. One speaks of them together because in later years, as partners in the much respected Maintenance Crew, they were inseparable. Uncle Beanie, or Uncle Ly (his name, Lyman Suloff, was a well kept secret, and freshmen under his charge were sent around camp to find someone by that name) came to Senior Camp from Kennebec Junior in 1924. He drove the truck, Lizzie (an ancestor of "The Dodge" and the "Kennebus") and taught paddle making. In all the years to follow he was expertly involved in "Keeping the wheels going around and everything working." In his days as a section counselor for the youngest boys he took out the Moosehead trip, where freshmen having their first experience in senior camping found him a firm and patient guide, and a lot of fun.

"Remember Uncle Beanie at the trip campfire, on a high throne, with a robe and crown, making us repeat the ritual, 'O-wah-ta-nass I-yam'?"

There was one of Uncle Beanie's trips, when the group was stranded in the rain at Moosehead without food or duffle, which he salvaged from a near disaster into a marvellous survival adventure. Many campers remember him on the Horseback trip, or as leader of the Motors class. Early in his Kennebec days he began to be mentioned as a "grand pillar in the organization, the dean of the faculty." Uncle Pritch wrote, "He knows where everything is if we have it, where to get it if we do not, how to fix anything, how to make anything, where every black road and every dirt road is. He has hair on his chest, and it's rumored he was in the Russian navy. Stick with us, Uncle Beanie!" He did, for years. "Where's Beanie?" according to another song, was the first question asked around camp in any emergency. "Through the black of night, I've got to know where you are. If the wash house tumbles, or my cabin crumbles, Then I need you most---." And Beanie was always unfailingly there.

Uncle Rog (Roger Lininger) was equally unfailing. He was known as the first man up at CK in the morning; he had coffee ready when the chef came in to make breakfast. A short man, at least in comparison with Uncle Beanie when they stood together, Uncle Rog was "always seen on the run, always with a tool in his hand, sometimes running with a ladder on his shoulder, always helping someone out or making something for camp." Before he joined Uncle Beanie "behind the wooden curtain, in that exclusive and important maintenance department which initially puts camp into operation, keeps it running and pulls it apart," Uncle Rog too had been a counselor at Kennebec Junior, and for many years after that had divided his time between the shop and the Allagash. "He

makes his work and that of others a pleasure," one of his First Sections said of him, "He amazes by his ability to do a real job and then run, not walk, to the next assignment." Anyone who works so much might have been solemn, but Uncle Rog's impish sense of humor was always working too. (An uncle who kept his shoes precisely positioned at the side of his bed found them nailed to the floor one morning when he stepped into them.) Camp tended to take his dependable performance for granted. "Uncle Rog, of course," the yearbooks said when handing out praise for some important effort. It was an understated tribute to his unassuming excellence. His standard was, "I like to see things done right." Uncle Rog retired at the end of the 1971 season, his forty-fifth summer at Kennebec. "He was a newcomer at Kennebec Junior my first year there as a camper," an alumnus recalls, "and his last year at Kennebec was my youngest son's Allagash year."

Generations were beginning to overlap at Kennebec, and the vitality of the alumni, delighted in by Mr. Fox at the Thirtieth Reunion, was even more apparent at the Thirtieth-Fifth, in 1941. By then, fifty-seven former campers had sent sons to Kennebec; the reunion included fourteen father-son pairs. Five counselors that reunion year were alumni, the spearhead after a long-held policy against alumni faculty. A new grandstand was the alumni's gift to camp. "They had to give us one," said the disrespectful younger generation in the yearbook, "They tore down the old one." Sentimentalists that men are, they had used for their final campfire the timbers of the old grandstand which many of them had helped to build during the first decade of Kennebec. But most important in alumni building was the announcement made at this Thirtieth-Fifth

Reunion that H. Leonard Rothschild was to join Mr. Fleisher and Mr. Friedman in the administration, thus becoming the first in a still unbroken line of alumni directors.

Lenny had been a camper from 1908 on, an accurate description of his relationship to Kennebec. He had moved on from his role as the smallest boy in the first section ever led by Uncle Pritch, to that of yearly alumnus visitor, active leader among the alumni, and father of an enthusiastic camper (his son, Mr. Fox's son and Uncle Pritch's son were at camp together.) Some years later he was to see his grandson at Kennebec. Through all of this there never was anything vicarious about his interest. He was always heart and soul a part of the life of the quad and the ball diamond. After Mr. Fox's death, he used to deliver the Camper Sermon, speaking as a disciple, preserving phrases he had known as a camper, apologizing sometimes for the break in his voice, almost literally carrying a torch. Like Harry Meyers, who coined the phrase and used it as a term of highest praise, Lenny "bled maroon and gray". These two men, campers-become-directors, though their leadership was separated by about twenty-five years, had very much the same spirit and the same grass roots involvement. (There never was any doubt about which team Lenny backed, or which tribe Harry belonged to.) They had the same determination to preserve what was good and fine in the Kennebec tradition.

Kennebec Junior in 1941 had quietly achieved its twentieth year, and had built up a tradition that was at once uniquely its own and wholly Kennebec's. It had been blessed from its beginning by a nucleus of faculty whose dedication to camp and

whose friendship to each other was a source of great strength and unity. Young men, all of them, when they began, they grew with Junior camp and made it grow, and they built it with their hands as well as with their pirit. Notably, they designed and themselves constructed the sturdy waterfront with its concrete retaining wall, crib and piers. Before it was there the entire camp had to go to Passy Beach by war canoe once or twice a day to swim. They also organized and put into practice the Nation Projects, through which all the tribes participated in the actual building of camp, an important feature of the educational goals Uncle Lou and "Chief" Messer had carefully set for this younger program. Such landmarks as the road from the tennis courts to the kitchen, the path lined with rocks around the circle, the steps in the hill going down to the docks were the result of Nation Projects, and grand dedication ceremonies were staged by the counselors for everything newly built. Pictures in early yearbooks of these key men, looking stiff and dead serious in the long sleeved dress shirts and ties prescribed for Visitors' Day, give no hint of either their humor or their vitality. It was the precedent of this faculty's whole-hearted carrying out of the program of "Indian ideas and ideals" that gave it life and has kept it effective.

Grand Council was an inspired feature of the Kennebec Junior experience, providing the excitement of anticipation and surprise (on what night would the distant tom-tom sound in accelerating rhythm, summoning the braves to gather in blankets and feathers at the council ring?), solemnity and wonder (the fire, however high, was small in the surrounding night), and even rev-



erence (the unison prayer, "O Thou Great Spirit, as I close my eyes tonight--", was the only direct expression of religion at Kennebec). Through changing faculties and leadership devoted effort has continued to preserve the magic medicine of this ceremony that casts such a spell.

Under the spell, the boys looked eagerly for the flame from Wekonda, even when it might fail to light the Council fire. Much faculty time and ingenuity was always spent inventing spectacular ways for fire to come from heaven, and when it worked it was magnificent. A director remembers a Council fire during his days as a camper when "to our awe the flame, after appropriate chanting from the sachem, appeared from the woods and scurried along the ground, but vanished about ten feet from its destination. Then the sachem announced, 'Tonight we light the fire in the manner of the White Man,' and grandly lit it with a butane lighter." At another Grand Council, the campers, expecting a flaming arrow to shoot out of the treetops, were startled to see a broom trailing boomwad appear instead.

"Remember when one hundred and eight campers crowded into Cabin 4 to surprise the Junior uncles when they came out of faculty meeting?"

Dead Man's Rock, Story Rock, the snipe hunts, the birthday parties at Golupchik house, arrived at through a bird sanctuary, Wigwam, tether ball, Carnival and peanuts, the minstrel show presented by half the faculty to a camp audience that had been bribed by the other half not to applaud, rainy mornings spent playing Battleship, the treasure hunt with clues hidden in ice cream cones, the wild game of Scalp on Cowflop Hill,- such ran-

dom mention of places and activities unique to the Abnaki side of the lake must evoke alumni memories, but the most universal of all must be that of the Nation Race. Alumni who have come back as fathers to watch the contest from the visitors' grandstand have the advantage of seeing the full spectacle of the race as they could not when they were in it, paddling at full strength to the urgent "Stroke- Stroke!" of the counselor-cox-wain. From the shore they can see the restless holding of the five maroon canoes, spaced across the narrow end of the lake, and being lined up by shouted orders from the camp motor boat, the dock, and the opposite shore. They can see the concerted lunge at the starting signal, when one hundred bodies bend forward and one hundred paddles dig the first stroke into the water. The sun flashes on the paddle blades, there is a criss-cross pattern of moving arms as the canoes gain on each other. The short race, from beginning to end, seems to be accomplished in one tremendous burst of speed, tapering to a long glide on the other side of the finish line. The tribes come back past the cheering grandstands raising their paddles upright in salute. Two of the canoes are almost as old as Kennebec itself, the Nation Race is as old as Junior Camp. "Certainly one of Kennebec's great strengths," an alumnus writes, "is that so many of the experiences I had in the 50s were shared by boys in the 20s, and will be in the 80s, and so on--."

The traditional Nations Race, in 1942, found itself being run in a context of more grimly warring nations. The comparison of conflicts, one standing for stability, one for chaos, is found in the dedication of the 1942 yearbook, "To the

men of Kennebec who left the field of the white jersey fight for the field of much bigger battle." Kennebec became again a war-time camp. One alumnus was killed at Pearl Harbor, another distinguished himself there with some sharpshooting which he insisted had its beginning at the Kennebec rifle range. Again there was Victory Gardening, - another war, different campers, but they worked at weeding, vegetable picking and haying on the same farms for the same North Belgrade families who had been neighbors and steadfast friends since before World War I. Campers also maintained a plane observation post on an isolated hilltop ("three miles away, by foot", it was reported plaintively ) but found little to observe, according to their song, "Oh, I've got to hear an engine roaring, if not, this will be too boring--." First Aid courses were introduced as a compulsory activity, with Junior Red Cross certification as the goal. There was again a commando course as in 1917. A special system of swimming was taught by Kennebec counselors to pre-flight cadets who came to camp from Colby College in Waterville.

"In line with our all-out war effort", a staple phrase of the early 40s which the yearbook uses to point out these and other departures from routine procedure, invites a digression. In these informal camp writings, stretching over nearly seventy years, the span of changing vernacular and some of the social attitudes hidden within it, appears in bird's-eye view. Someone's natty outfit is mentioned. The cooking on a trip is likened to that of the Waldorf Astoria. A camper falls off a horse and thus is qualified for the Prince of Wales Club. Unpopular boys, at one period are itches, later, finks. A popular boy is a pip.

"Nertz!" is a snappy retort. Feet are dogs. Someone manages to be nonchalant without lighting a Murad. Logs are written in the style of Dere Mabel, a favorite during World War I, The Rover Boys, Thornton Burgess ("As soon as Mr. Sun had climbed from his bed, the little wood folk took to their canoes"), and Nize Baby, a predecessor of Hyman Kaplan ("Was dees a good treep? Dunt esk!") Black is certainly not beautiful. The First Section chart for some years routinely lists someone's nickname as Nigger and another's future, more subtly, as Hampton Institute. (The context in which Rabbi appears isn't very good either.) The axolotyls and potzrebies of Mad Magazine have their day. An original play has the Beatnik title, Make with the Music, a more recent one is called Campers' Lib, and there is a character named Abey Baby. A trip account mentions boys being bussed upstate.

"The post-war world" was another transient phrase of its time. A generation of boys will remember that peace, or at least the end of World War II, came in the midst of a Kennebec summer. So did Hiroshima. Radios were still not routine personal equipment; the campers gathered in Fox Lodge to keep up with the news. At Kennebec Junior, the camp assembled in the Wigwam to hear President Truman announce the cessation of hostilities. Senior celebrated the official announcement at once by the wild ringing of the bell and a snake dance throughout camp. At Junior, a canoe bearing the Japanese flag was sunk in the lake. Later in the week, at Senior, there was a formal victory ceremony accomodating both hawks and doves: a talk was given applying the key words of the Camper Sermon to world peace, and another talk explained the mechanics of the atomic bomb. Still later that

week camp was buzzed (another phrase) by a fighter plane flying so low that it bent the tree tops. A little sack was dropped on the tennis courts with such precision that a player had simply to lean over and pick it up instead of the ball. In it was a letter from two alumni saying that for years they had wanted to come back. Next day they appeared in camp (by car) on leave from a nearby air base. The post-war world had come but it had not changed the alumni.

Even operating under wartime restrictions, Kennebec "firsts" continued to happen. In 1944 a well-managed surprise banquet for Uncle Pritch was hailed as "the first time anyone has managed to fool him in thirty-five years." In that year also, Senior camp for the first time had a professional secretary, Uncle Abe Benner, who for almost thirty years was to handle with good nature and efficient singlemindedness the increasingly complicated pink paper work of travel reservations, pay rolls and supplies that always before had been undertaken by postgraduate campers. 1944 also brought Kennebec's first mayoralty campaign, and Kennebec Senior's first woman staff member, a nurse who was more than an able replacement for the doctor she "released for active duty." Other war-related acquisitions were Big Bertha and the Queen Mary. Big Bertha, the huge black inflated raft, was bought from Army surplus. The Queen Mary simply appeared. She was a big metal lifeboat, sent to camp by a shipping mistake, and impossible to trace back to her proper destination. She was named by Alvah Watson, who met her at the freight station and overcame the problems of getting her back to camp. Kennebec Junior counselors managed to get her afloat, and she became a valuable

addition to the Junior program. Poled, or propelled by large oars, eight on a side, she was used as a pirate ship, or a mass carrier for trips to the next lake. The very size of Big Bertha and the Queen Mary made an inside job of stealing them a prestige prank, and on many occasions morning would find them in unexpected locations.

For two years during the war, the Kennebecamper was a mimeographed, do-it-yourself production, which each camper had to paste up and assemble. Its return to the usual slick paper publication was marked by three expert issues in the format and style of Life, Newsweek, and Playbill, the New York theatre program.

"Remember when the yearbooks used to have a sentence or two about every boy in both camps?"

The Playbill issue was more than a format gimmick. It came at a time when Kennebec's interest in the theatre had reached a high point, sparked by a combination of several drama-mad counselors who were gifted producers, and a group of talented waiters and older campers who wrote scripts and music for topical shows (and were not above pirating the authorship of a well received song from one to the other as the seasons changed.) Mud in Your Eye, The Kennebec Way, The Duke is on the Job, Stop, Look and Listen, were original plays that clustered around this period. These Big Shows, like the versions of Broadway musicals that are now presented as First Section Shows, dealt directly with Kennebec life and people, and there was once the notable incident of a caricature too well played.

High as the theatre rated from the 40s on, the interest

was part of Kennebec tradition. In the early days, Tobasco Land, a Princeton Triangle show, captivated the camp into singing its songs for years, and after twenty years it was revived during a visit of its original director. Pocohontas McGwiggan McGuire was another favorite of this decade. The Kennebec Review, put on by a group of expert jazz players, the Kennebec Melodians, who had their costumes (dinner jackets) sent up from New York for what visitors and campers declared was the most polished performance to be seen on or off Broadway, was the highlight of the late 20s. For several seasons around this time camp was split between two factions, the Stock Company and the Anti Stock Company. The quarrel was not with the Stock Company's exclusive election of members on the basis of dramatic merit, but with its policy of charging each camper two sticks of gum as admission for each play. Uncle Pritch was finally called in as arbiter, after a protest march, and decided against admission fees. The Theatre Guild succeeded the Stock Company; its feast for members after the final play of the year was an annual event.

A recurring roster of plays have appeared on the Kennebec boards since the 20s. Titles that keep reappearing among more contemporary works are A Night at an Inn, Sir David Wears a Crown, The Drums of Oude, Moonshine, The Trysting Place, The Still Alarm, Death in the Snow. Staging has been consistently impressive, starring such wonders as a fountain that played on stage during an entire performance ("They keep a camper under the platform, blowing water through a hose," a visiting mother was told.) Drama reviews in the yearbooks were once detailed

and earnest, but in later years, if written at all, have been reduced to such capsule comments as "Nobody could explain what happened in this play but the following cast has the most reason to think they can--." Songs from original plays have built themselves into Kennebec. "Sing of a Summer's day" (written in its first form by a camper who was to win a Pulitzer Prize for poetry) was from the 1940 First Section show. "More Than a Camp" was written for the Fortieth Reunion show, "Could I But Speak" was written by a former counselor while in a World War II prison camp.

The first theatre had been one end of the old dining porch, separated from the rest by green curtains made by Mrs. Watson. Then there was a roofless stage, combined with the Green Room building which doubled as the library. This building had been Mr. Fox's boat house and was brought across the lake on the ice. The stage was roofed over in the late 20s. The entire theatre facility was greatly improved and modernized at the end of the 40s. The present benches were installed then, as well as the covering tarp to keep the rain and some of the bugs out ("The slaps of the audience at banqueting mosquitos were hard to distinguish from applause," said a pre-tarp review.) At this time the Kennebec Theatre was renamed the Friedman Theatre in memory of Uncle Brod, whose pleasure in the plays had always been great, and whose booming laughter, even at take-offs of himself, had delighted actors and audiences alike.

Changes in cast have a profound influence upon any play, though the outlines of the work may remain the same. Uncle Brod's



death in 1947, after thirty years in the main role at Senior camp was a personal blow to the Kennebec community, and its effect on camp emphasized the changes that were taking place in the world outside. "He had crystallized the original aims and purposes of Kennebec, and gave heartwarming support to many boys for many seasons," Uncle Mac McGrath wrote of him. Described by his counselors as "a remarkable man to work with and for, because the things he wants done are reasonable and logical", summed up by his campers as "even more than a director, he is a true friend", Uncle Brod left a void that was hard to fill. His recently welcomed alumni associates were not in a position to come up from understudies to assume the full permanent part of director. At Senior camp the interim leadership was carried forward by Lenny Rothschild and by Tom Wiener, a young alumnus whose drive and originality were equalled only by his great love for Kennebec, and who directed camp with the same energy and verve that he did a dramatic performance. Mr. Fleisher, with the headmasters of Senior and Junior camps, Uncle Pritch and Uncle Mac McGrath, were for some years after 1947 the main pillars of Kennebec.

Mr. Fleisher, of course, had always been a pillar since the founding, a "tall tree in the forest", one yearbook described him. He was a short man, actually; his size and strength were in his acumen and ability, his breadth of knowledge, his devotion to the multitude of details that go into the running of a well organized camp. He had a firm hand and a keen eye. He spoke of camping as a "beloved vocation", yet the full, human quality of the man was not easily translatable to his public. He had a clip-

ped manner and a positive frankness that sometimes warded off recognition of his deep interest. In the mid 40s Uncle Lou had participated in the leadership of every camping season but one for forty years. He was to continue as an astute director, or, retired, as a camp presence, for twenty more. No one man knew Kennebec so well.

Except Uncle Pritch. Only three camp years younger than Uncle Lou, he had continually contributed to the shaping of Kennebec, and by his own admission, Kennebec had molded him. (It is this unique, interacting respect between the institution and the faculty that has bound so many counselors to Kennebec with a loyalty as least as firm as that of the boys they guided.) At the close of his first year at camp, Uncle Pritch expressed surprise at finding a place where you could have so much fun and be paid fifty dollars a summer too. Near the end of his camp career, he wrote, "Years ago a boy was a boy, and a trip was a trip but now I view campers not only as their headmaster, but with a sense of the hope of each parent who send us a boy." All during the years between these two statements, he ran everything and missed nothing ("Remember when we had to sit out on Uncle Pritch's Rock?"), he wielded an understated, gruff kind of humor one had to think twice about, he inspired a mixture of admiration and awe which a boy might realize later was lasting affection. An early yearbook, thumbnail sketching him, said, "As usual, Uncle Pritch kept camp from falling over backwards and tripping over its own feet." Boys coming back to see their own boys found him still doing this. Perhaps no one can be indispensable, but Uncle Pritch was.

Across the lake, Russell McGrath was the keystone. He had come to Kennebec Junior its second year, and literally built himself into its life, as it filled and possessed him. Now in the late 40s, as headmaster of a faculty who had become welded together in close friendship, he had helped build confidence and the spirit of fair play in tribe after tribe of little boys away from home for the first time. ("What a marvellous teacher he must have been!" an alumnus said, recalling Uncle Mac's remarkable ability to bring campers out, or help them over humps with just the right word, or get them in a wrestling match at just the right time for them.) Uncle Mac's speech was low voiced, with an underlying smile; it could be noticed that most of the Junior camp counselors came to speak the same way. He was a large man, very gentle, very firm, and with all that, full of mischievous fun. He had a manner of answering a small boy's questions so that the asker knew he was being given the gravest consideration. He knew when to rouse boys up ("Remember Uncle Mac's Indian raids on Res?") and when to quiet them down, and he went around the Circle at night "to make sure everyone was going to bed happy". He was the proverbial tower of strength, but in faculty pictures he used to sit leaning slightly backwards, so that his actual tallness would not tower over the others. "Kennebec was his paramount consideration," a yearbook said of him. "He radiated its spirit and it reflected back to him from his boys."

Kennebec continuity, sustained by these three very different men,- Uncle Lou, Uncle Pritch and Uncle Mac,- in the early 50s was taken into the hands of campers-become-directors. Many

people had courted Kennebec during the interim years, and it is heartening that the leaders came from within, each bringing with him an interest far beyond that written into the partnership. Hart Stotter, who became Mr. Friedman's successor, Harry Meyers, Hart's co-director and eventually Mr. Fleisher's successor, Thomas Wilson who succeeded Hart, and Daniel Alexander, present co-director with Harry, all are alumni. All can be traced in the yearbooks from their youngest pictures, little boys with only the shadow of the present men in their faces, up through their First Section years and their apprenticeship as waiters or counselors, into their present (or immediately past) administrative roles. Each one has brought to the directorship the common experience of having once won coups at Grand Council, climbed Katahdin, lived through a rainy week at camp, both as a camper and an uncle. Each has brought his own innovations and his own conservatism. Each has insisted on preserving what has been good and lasting at Kennebec.

The Forty-Fifth Reunion in 1952 came at the close of a chapter in Kennebec leadership. The 1953 yearbook announced changes across the board. Hart Stotter and Tom Wiener became Uncle Lou's associates in the administration. (Tom would go on to other endeavors in several years.) Uncle Lenny retired to the position of advisor. Uncle Pritch became headmaster emeritus, and was succeeded by Uncle Dick Hopkins, who for some years had been a counselor at Kennebec. "The prospect of following in Uncle Pritch's footsteps created more than a challenge," wrote Uncle Dick in his first year, "but I have an ex-

cellent group of counselors to depend on, an administration to give me every help, and, perhaps most important, campers who would do their utmost to bridge the gap."

Uncle Dick reigned firmly as headmaster. He cared about boys and was insistent upon their being fair to each other's persons and possessions. The Great Trunk Heave, which he executed in the manner of a discus thrower, was a punishment he reserved for boys harassing each other; an eyewitness reports a trunk being thrown over the rowboat docks into the lake. His expression never changed, says the same witness. "He chewed on a matchstick and saw everything and everyone at once. He had a marvellous wit and it was enhanced by the deadpan, because his remarks were so quick and unexpected that one actually had to listen hard to know whether to laugh or quake." He had strong convictions about what a camp should be. "What makes the best season ever?" he wrote. "Since there were one hundred and sixty-seven campers (this year) there were one hundred and sixty-seven seasons to be judged. Did you attempt to do your best? Activities available to you at Kennebec are more than play and good fun." But hard play, and surprising action, were Uncle Dick's trademark.

Bridging the gap, which Uncle Dick had mentioned with justified confidence, had been going on, in the form of extending tradition, even during the period of changing administration. In the late 40s the end-of-the-season treasure hunt was replaced by the formidable obstacle race (--to the stage for make-up, to Passy Beach for a bucket of sand, throw the baseball in one bounce, do a handstand, chew two crackers and whistle "God

Bless America--).

"Remember the year that the obstacle race decided the Ma-roon and Gray competition, and was itself a tie, right down to the final sailing event?"

The Uncles' Ball, annually put in the hands of freshman counselors who made all the plans for it only to discover that it was a non-existent affair ("Won't you come with me to the Uncles', There'll be no one there, nobody at all--" went an old camp song), in 1948 was turned into a real party. Movies began to be shown in the Friedman Theatre instead of being crowded into Watson, and Junior campers saw the film on their side of the lake. A tradition in his own right, Uncle Artie Clark, the present headmaster of the Allagash, joined the Kennebec staff in 1949. "A Stein Song collegiate", he paddled down the Allagash his first year, and was recognized at once as a canoeist, fisherman, camper-out, and all around swell guy". ("Remember Uncle Artie with his pitchfork on Pioneer Night?") The first mention of a future administrator, Dan Alexander, was made in 1949, his First Section year, when he was outstanding for urging "lotsa hustle". (For several years following, he was consistently elected Best Waiter.) The Fourth Yearmen's program and the Pioneer program were inaugurated at the end of the 40s, each setting up special activities for the age group involved, so that in effect Kennebec Senior was running several camps within a camp. The great value of the Pioneer program was that the youngest boys pursued some of the basic activities, such as baseball and tennis separately from the rest of camp, thus permitting them to excel within their own group, and still add their team

points to the general score. The Pioneer program changed not only the organization of camp, but also its appearance, for the present Pioneer baseball field, tennis courts, the PPP and other facilities were built to accomodate it.

Hart Stotter had been the director of the Pioneer program before he became co-director of Kennebec in 1953. A camper in the late 30s, a waiter in the early 40s, he had returned to camp after the war as an instructor in riding, and had spent conditioner years, as Harry Meyers did several years later, "keeping his eyes and ears open both in Senior and Junior camp." This was a practice he continued as director. In his familiar outfit, - bermuda shorts, long sleeved plaid shirt, maroon baseball hat, - carrying a raincoat and a flashlight, he could be found on the scene of every camp activity, interested in its progress and its outcome, talking and listening to every camper. He was famous for his Tuesday night racing news, and his knowledge of other sports was impressive. He believed in playing by the rules, and he expected his opponents to do the same.

Hart ran a tight ship, and he was stubborn, by his own admission, in the pursuit of excellence. He had intense respect for the camp that had trained him, and boys over the years were accustomed to his pointing out the weaknesses of "the others" ("country clubs", he called some of them) in order to instruct and to prove his point. But, equally, he could see and act when there were mistakes in his own camp that needed to be corrected or avoided. He was especially rigorous about the careful pre-panning of trips, and the quality of campership practiced by his trip parties; when letters of commendation some-

times gratifyingly came from organizations that had encountered Kennebec on the road, or granted them use of campsites, it was his delight to share the praise with campers and parents.

"Our program must not only appeal to campers but be beneficial to them," Hart said in a statement that appeared in the Fiftieth Anniversary yearbook, but which might have been made by the founders. "The directors should be people of real integrity, dedicated to do what is best for boys." There was no doubt that Hart measured up to the standard he outlined. He was the embodiment of the A in Camper, strictly accurate and fair. One of the most significant of his contributions to camp was that he did away with distinctions and awards that were impossible to measure with accuracy. The Honor Society, already challenged, became the Alumni Association, other elite group activities were ended, and the traditional "opinion prizes", - Best Camper, Most Unselfish, - quietly disappeared from Awards Day. (The Dip Club remained, elite, to be sure, but optional. Who but a mad volunteer would join a society of those who never missed the morning plunge? "It proves that we're men and not mice. There's not a ripple. No wonder. IT'S ICE!") Hart believed that every boy should be put into an intercamp game even if the win was sacrificed. But he cared also about the win, and it was clear that he always thought about Kennebec as the winner. Small wonder that some alumni friends considered that the best congratulations they could send him on his marriage was a telegram saying simply, "Akalakaleela!", the first word of a camp cheer.

Alumni still familiar with the syllables of Akalakaleela (the cheer was pushed out of first place by the equally old Riprah-rex shortly afterwards) were invited back to camp as guests



of Kennebec for the Golden Anniversary Reunion in 1957. "There are few if any private camps that can boast of fifty years of continued operation under the same management, actually with one of the original directors active," Uncle Lou wrote in anticipation of the event. Uncle George Casey was reunion headmaster and chairman of planning and execution. He was the first person to greet the returning alumni, put them through bizarre and elaborate initiation rites, and rang his own changes on the Kennebec Race. In top hat and tails, he opened the Indoor program he had initiated in 1912. Over one hundred alumni attended, many of them "regulars" at reunions, many others who had reinforced their alumni interest by having returned over the years as waiters, counselors, camp physicians or visiting parents.

Kennebec's future as well as its past was present at the reunion, though that future was still hidden from some of the people who would be involved in it. Dan Alexander, his years as counselor, then headmaster and director, all ahead of him, was at the reunion as a young alumnus. Tom Wilson was a pioneer camper. At Kennebec Junior, Curt Donat, later to be headmaster, was a third year counselor. Hart, at the Fiftieth Anniversary, was an old camper and a new director. Harry Meyers was just ready to assume that double identity. As a preface to taking on the responsibility of camp, he had been foremost in developing and managing the reunion. "For an alumnus not to know whether he had been Maroon or Gray was a cardinal sin to Harry," said the reunion report, "Otherwise he was a wonder, the most generous and faithful giver of time and services."

Uncle Harry's hallmark during his years of leadership has not only been this faithfulness and generosity, but his genuine interest in the importance of Maroon and Gray, Penny and Mally, boy-to-boy relationships, parents' concerns. "He is a man for the ages--his campers' ages," someone has said in appreciation. ("Remember how Uncle Harry always greeted any group of over one person, 'Hullo-o, Men!'"?) He combines to an unusual degree the involvement of a participant in camp with the considered wisdom of a director. A camper during the early 30s, Harry joined the administration in 1958, the first year of Kennebec's second half century. His base has been Kennebec Junior, though, as in the case of all other directors, he is committed to the entirety of Kennebec. Like Hart, he began as a director with a new headmaster. Uncle Don Moon succeeded Russell McGrath, whose death had occurred shortly after the end of the previous season. ("All of us whom Uncle Mac had designated to carry him on his last journey were Kennebec friends," a fellow counselor recalls. It is this kind of bond to Kennebec which, in a happier context, inspired a counselor to have his children and grandchildren baptized in Salmon Lake.)

If Uncle Hart embodied the Campers' A, Uncle Harry exemplifies, even above the other letters, the Campers' E, Enthusiasm. He lives it and he imparts it, but he is not blinded by it. He may bleed Maroon and Gray, but he monitors the heartbeat of Kennebec; its strengths, its progress, the threat of any weakness are all the substance of his constant concern. "I don't think the boys are aware of what camp looks like in the winter," a director wrote, "They think everything stays in place and even

the counselors are rolled up and stored in the rafters." For Harry, no season is ever rolled up in the rafters. Kennebec, for him, has an ongoing life, summer and winter, and he is strongly determined to make constructive application of its past to its present. He has the ability to look both forward and back.

To describe Kennebec today is to describe the result of a constant process of looking forward and back, of creating and preserving. This is visibly true of the physical Kennebec, the two campuses on Salmon Lake, and the one in the north. And beyond the camps' boundaries, for some miles in North Belgrade, Kennebec is surrounded by its own growing history. On the edge of the Senior campus, to the north, is the Watson homestead, still lived in by the family of the young man who showed the property to the first director. Down the road to the south lives the Ellis family, who in the 1920s helped build Kennebec Junior, and later, the newer buildings in Senior camp, and who have worked with Kennebec in many ways ever since, as valued helpers and warm and active friends. Further down the road is the North Belgrade Post Office and Store, where first C.J. Anderson, then his son, Charles, and their respective wives, have handles the complicated business of purchases without money for generations of campers who have swarmed in, seemingly all at one time, for candy, soda, fishing gear, crackers and magazines and pints of ice cream. (The Andersons have recently retired from the candy-selling rush but campers still come in for items that the camp store, across the way, does not carry.) Further south, at the crossroads, lives the Mills family, who for three generations

have been friends of Kennebec, and whose farm has supplied camp with fresh produce from the very beginning. (Milk for camp used to come from Mr. Watson's herd, which could be seen grazing in the next-door field.) Down the shore south of Senior camp are the colonies of cottages provided by the management for counselors' families. Across the lake, extending in both directions from Kennebec Junior are cottages built and owned by an increasing number of directors and counselors who wanted to put down roots in the Kennebec neighborhood. At the far end of the lake are the houses built by Mr. Fox and Mr. Friedman, from which the camp swimming docks and sailboats can be seen, and the singing and cheering heard if the wind is the right way,

Radiating out beyond this center of the July Kennebec is the wider August geography of the trip season. At no time during the summer does Kennebec so completely fulfill its training in skills and its philosophy of simplicity as in this period when every boy is away from camp; at no time do past and present Kennebec so closely identify with each other as when a boy of any generation encounters the Maine wilderness, the water and the weather.

Each age group has a trip to test its own abilities and stretch its strengths. The present itineraries listed in the yearbooks are only the bare branches of the adventure, names which must be leafed out with clustered associations. The six day pioneer trip climbs Mt. Tumbledown and Mt. Cannon, tries to race the last lap to the top of Mt. Lafayette, explores the lost River, sleeps in hikers' huts. The Katahdin trips climb Mt. Sentinel as a conditioner ("an ant hill in comparison"),

then climb Katahdin, which misses the height of a mile by only thirteen feet. They slide down the waterfall at Little Niagra, ("or dive, if they have the guts"), they hike through the Land of Ooze. Most of these second yearmen mountaineers follow this trip by paddling the Great Circle, the oldest itinerary in Kennebec history: Belgrade Stream, Long Pond, Belgrade Lakes Carry, Great Pond, Serpentine, Little Pond, North Pond, Smithfield, East Pond, McGrath Pond (why do some die-hards persist in saying McGraw?) and back to Salmon Lake. The Moose River trip, for third yearmen, paddle Attean Lake, make the long carry to Holeb Pond, climb Mt. Sally, paddle the Moose River, Long Pond and Brassua Lake, brave the waves on Moosehead Lake, climb Kineo on the Chain Trail.

The Allagash itinerary, previously listed, could be recited by fifty years of campers, unrehearsed and in unison, perhaps lapsing into Canadian French just before the end. But the route, though time-hallowed (and now traversed by all too many other camps) is unpredictable none the less. "People who get used to rivers and think of them as a way to get somewhere maybe stop feeling anything about them. But Uncle Artie doesn't. For him it's new every time, because he teaches us, and he gets as much excitement as we do out of seeing how each new fellow handles it." A telling character sketch of the First Section's eminently capable, caring leader, whose "effort is to make each camper's last year a memorable one", and who "leaves no tern unstoned" in his teaching high standards of campership by his own example. ("The campsite must be left

better than we found it!") A sketch, too, of how the leadership inspires and gives life to any trip.

"Remember the date 1967, when Uncle Artie tipped a canoe for the first time in twenty years!"

Tom Wilson, flying over Moosehead Lake in the late 60s, wrote of "feeling that I could look down and see Kennebec trips all around me. To the east Katahdin dominated the horizon. At that moment Katahdin II (must have) begun its climb up the Abol Trail to Baxter Peak. To the west was the mouth of the Moose River where sometime the next day a group of Kennebec canoes would enter Moosehead Lake. In the foreground was Chesuncook Lake and I could see the familiar cabins of Kennesuncook. We flew the Allagash gear over Mud Pond and spotted the First Sectioners who had just come out of the carry. There was a blur of canoes, and of hats and paddles being waved in the air." Only the Tumbledown trip, too far to the southwest, and the Great Circle trip, immediately surrounding Kennebec, were the groups of campers not actually seen. Had Tom's small plane been a kind of time capsule, trips of earlier generations could have been spotted as well: the Little Allagash and the West Branch of the Penobscot (fourth yearmen's trips until the fourth year was dropped in 1960), the Schooner trip, and the deep sea fishing trip of the 30s, the Forks trip which was incorporated into the Moose River, the various expeditions down the Kennebec (what camper who knows that the twisting river bears the Indian name for serpent cannot admit that Kennebec has caught a part of his life in its coils?), the horseback trips to Rangeley and the White Mountains.

And above this overview, past and present, is each camp-

er's own selective panorama of what the trips meant to him, what he still sees 'as he flies over them in recollection. There are visual indications of this in the yearbooks: pictures of a still lake with a far-off single canoe, pictures of deer, captionless shots of boys on summits, rocks and tree-tops around them, far horizons beyond. There are pictures of summits taken from a distance; one of these states the purpose of all trips, to accomplish more than you thought you could. It shows an astonished boy in the foreground, a peak in the background, and the caption, "We climbed that mountain?" There is, at the other end of enthusiasm, a trip picture of obviously chilly campers in hooded sweatshirts gathered around a can marked in large letters, WASTE.

Comments gathered from yearbooks, logs, songs and conversations that include over sixty years of trip memories are as hard to distinguish, one generation from the other, as the faces of the Allagashers glimpsed from the plane; they are part of total Kennebec. "We climbed Cathedral trail on two hands, two knees, two feet and a stomach." "At four thousand feet, we found ourselves to be climbing an open island of mist." Rations of chocolate and raisins and wet cookies. "For lunch we had two slices of track meet with some log jam thrust inside a poncho roll." Patching canoes. The ghost stories, the Jackman Giant. "I'm lying on a rock and it isn't bed rock either!" "We partook of manna and were led farther into the promised land. The wrath of God descended and we did

get wet and sufficient protection was not forthcoming." "We sang to keep dry." "Okay, boys, you're doing swell, you're doing fine- (splash!)- you were supposed to lean to the left!" The stomach-gripping reality of a bear at close quarters, instead of safely roaming the dump. "Have you ever slept on pine needles when you had a sunburn? Have you ever stood up in a canoe to pee and fallen out?" "Moose River, longer than a mile, 'sposed to be worthwhile, they say."

"Millions and millions of vicious, murderous mosquitos." Moose tracks. "At one-thirty the horseback ride back to camp was a real experience. The night was one of the most glorious we have seen." "We climbed Mt. Katahdin in the pre-dawn darkness to be the first people in the United States to see the sunrise." "The rocks and the dirty old socks! Oh, to sleep where the animals creep!" "Shove off, shove off--okay, pull to!" Thirty-six miles paddled in one day. And for the homecoming, "We've washed away a bit of our prized sunburn in the hot shower, and we've changed into clean clothes. It's a fine feeling, but we still feel a little out of place. There are only a few of us here, and the hum of activity is missing."

"We climbed Mt. Sally, and from its summit we looked at all that we had covered by canoe and trail." A factual comment by a hurried log writer, but it sums up what camping has always stood for, at its best, in practice and philosophy: achievement, deliberately sought, hard earned, not always joyful at the moment, ("In the middle of a carry, it's horrible, and you wonder if it's worth it, but then at the end, it's so much fun,



and you've done it!") and then the chance to recognize, within oneself, the achievement.

The Wilderness program, begun at Kennebec in 1972, is a dramatic restatement of these goals in terms of extraordinary effort, accomplishment and self-realization. The trip it offers to third yearmen, as an alternative to the Moose River trip, emphasizes fitness and competence, self sufficiency and the use of survival skills under real conditions. Its standard is "to play for more than you can afford to lose". The pre-trip training is rigorous, demanding extra early morning hours added to the camp day. The trip itself includes mountain climbing, miles of white water, rapelling cliffs, negotiating rope bridges. (Training in some of these "wilderness techniques", offered for its own sake rather than in preparation for a trip, was first introduced in the middle 60s. It was a popular innovation; almost half the camp participated in survival courses and cliff climbing.) The culmination of the Wilderness trip is a time of isolation for each boy at a compass point in the woods, with three matches, a notebook, and whatever food can be found in the terrain. The eight boys and the convinced men who elected, and led this experiment the first year aptly called themselves the Seekers. What they sought, and what is sought by the nationally growing program that they reflect, is the discovery, through trial and will, of lasting inner strengths that can be used in contexts beyond the trip and its exhilaration. Obviously the trip is an option that limits itself to small numbers, but the presence of the Seekers within Kennebec illuminates and gives new perspective to the purpose of the graded, cumulative camp activities.

A camper who attends Kennebec Junior for two or three years, and Senior camp for four, goes through established rites de passage which are adventures rather than routine because they are basic boy-tests, and because of the new life that is brought to them each year. The ten year olds, entering Junior camp, live in closely knit cabin groups. Their greatest challenge is to progress up the swimming ladder out of the sinker class to bass, trout and higher fish. They will get a toe-hold on the technicalities of sports and boating, and will spend time at nature study and crafts. (Every Kennebec family has at least one ceramic ashtray and possibly a birdhouse.) They will learn to unstick mess kits, and cook their own outdoor meals, beginning with boiling water. They will spend several nights on reservation. ("Remember when we dumped the war canoe by all leaning to one side to watch the uncle test the rope swing Tarzan style?") Their second year they will spend nights away at Little Pond, and Otter Island (sometimes pronounced Outer Island, and sometimes seeming that far away.)

Coming across the lake at twelve is like crossing an ocean to a different world. A Senior camper is less scheduled, makes more of his own decisions, leads a more competitive life. ("Remember Night Baseball? Night Track?") The first yearmen will spend a year of transition, living in cabins, engaged in their own pioneer program within a higher paced camp. The second year they will come into the quad and sleep under canvas, learning to put up tent flies to get the breeze, or tighten them down quickly against the rain. They will enter into

team contests ("Guts it! Guts it!") and more demanding water training. Their third year, in the tents again, they will have reached a peak in team play, or made the choice of enjoying the sport without too much stress upon competing. Drama, or the Kennebecamper, or shop, may claim some of their time. They will continue, each at his own pace, working toward top level in canoe proficiency, which must be achieved by their First Section year. They will come back from eight days of lake and river canoeing, upstream paddling, portages and mountain climbing, telling each other that in many ways the Moose was as tough as the Allagash could be. For the experience of this year as every year so far, there will be people ahead of them to advise or discourage, with wisdom or legend; there will be people behind them, to envy or admire them.

The First Sectioners have no boys above them. They move out of the quad into the big cabin. They are team captains, leaders, big brothers. Some are working against time on their tests for the Allagash. An important group activity is rehearsing for the deftly written and expertly produced First Section Show, the most professional and time-consuming performance of the year, in which they impersonate counselors and burlesque the establishment, secure in their position as First Section Men. ("No one can tell us, Watch out, you fellas, for we're on top in every fray.")

They return from the Allagash changed, and they know it. Their valedictories, usually written while they are still on the trip, each year say virtually the same thing, as each year

the experience becomes real to a new group: "We did it. It's awesome to come around the bend and under the bridge to Port Kent and see that we made it on our own. But now we look into the embers of a brighter blaze, and realize that our last truly boyish days of play are coming to a close. We are ending one period of our lives but beginning another, and Kennebec has given us a groundwork for the future. We went into the woods just campers and we've come out men. That's what the Allagash was about."

To read what they say, in composite, is to realize that the test of the Allagash (and lately, the Seekers) is not unlike the ancient Indian rites in which the boy was put out in the wilderness to work through his trial and then was welcomed back into the community as a man. The difference here is that the boy does not go alone on the Allagash but takes his immediate peer community with him. He has solitude without loneliness, in the phrase of one just returned. Each one becomes to the others "the guy who took half the canoe's weight". "No matter where we began, we came off the river together," one valedictory says. "The family that is gathered here tonight at this campfire will never be together in this way again." But they know they will hold on to as much of it as they can. The Campers' C, Companionship, takes on its firmest meaning.

This basic test, and the invariable response to it, is the aspect of Kennebec life that has withstood all changes infiltrated from the outside, or grown up within. A camper, remembering the last year's trip and waiting for the next, describes it

"for ninety-nine percent of the fellows". "There's no feeling like taking a rapid. It's not like getting an A on an exam, or like anything else. Some are long and hard, and some are long and easy, and some are short and hard, and each one's a challenge. If you get through without scraping the canoe, you get such a great feeling. And if you don't make it, you feel kind of angry. You lift up the canoe and carry it out, and you know you have to try again." Whenever heads are shaken over what the world may be coming to, one can look to the joy, sometimes touched with surprise, with which boys, even in an age of dissent, continue to come to this kind of self-discovery, this earned knowledge.

The Kennebec establishment, like all others, has been assailed in the past years of confusion. A superficial indication of change is given in a description of the 1972 First Section Show: "The pianist was a girl. Not a word of protest from the visiting alumni, as in the dark they probably didn't realize it. From the back her hair was shorter than most of the boys' was." ("Down with compulsory haircuts!" says the yearbook back in 1965, but the clippers stopped slowly.) Mr. Fox's fantastic nightmare has become in part routine reality. There are radios in every tent, and they bring in the cross currents of the outside world. The air is the only route to camp. The fruit wagons and the rule breaking are still the plague of Visitors' Day, and conspicuous consumption (now we have a name for it) is more a foe than ever. The original meaning of the letters in the word CAMPER has to be slid over, or veneered with relevance in order to be heard. Cynicism emerges freely from

where no doubt it always was, underground. A balance is poised uneasily between leadership and those unwilling to be led, and leaders at any level find themselves engaged in the seemingly impossible task of holding the line and advancing at the same time. The 1972 yearbook, at the end of his relatively few years of directorship, speaks of Tom Wilson having "bridged the gap between the permissiveness so desired by youth and the structure so essential to their development." An overall description of the decade is caught in this appreciation. "Tom has been present at an important time."

But the particular importance of the time has not lessened, and it demands of Kennebec leaders, Harry Meyers and now Dan Alexander (referred to by his faculty and campers as "a man with whom you know where you stand"), the ongoing wisdom and sure choice needed to get one through white water. It demands too their already demonstrated awareness of the major questions that are no less rocks for showing above the surface: Does the nature of boys really change? Should the institution shape the boy, or the other way around? When does accomodation become capitulation? What is "a good camp from every angle?"

Have the questions ever been any different? They were asked by Mr. Fox in the 1920s, as, from his position then as unofficial observer, he looked at Kennebec and the world around it, and found some cause for consternation. He tallies up the general situation: Boys and girls of the 20s are realists and cynics. They read of political corruption and are cynical of authority, they read of scandal in sports and become poorer sportsmen. Because of radio and movies they have

less imagination. They are creatures of distractions and amusements. A boy is older in his experience, less of a boy, but no more of a man.

How does this affect camp? he asks. Unless a boy goes in to the woods equipped with imagination and good sportsmanship, he will become fed up with what camp offers. The radio will pick up only fifty miles away, the motor boat will pall as he thinks of the flying machine. Camp cannot keep abreast of all the luxuries he has at home ("The easy, unchallenging privileged life," as a director phrased it nearly fifty years later).

His solution is one that could be offered only out of the full courage of his convictions: Simplicity must be preserved in every phase of camp life. The superficial aspects of the times must not be allowed to compete with the basic foundations on which the camp stands firm. We can often best go ahead by turning back.

"Some of us will agree that Kennebec is in reality an escape from the wry sophistication of the modern world we live in." No, this is not a continuation of Mr. Fox's comments, for the yearbook writer goes on to say, "It is hard to imagine that historic events, such as the landing of humans on the moon, have been going on while we have been isolated in the woods of Maine. Our escape (does he really mean perspective?) if handled properly can be one of the best tools we can use when we depart from here not as campers but as men under our own motivation." The writers, many camp generations apart, come together in their statements, the simplicity has held, the river still sends the campers back forever taller. The combination of activities and people and the place that contains them

continue to fuse into something greater than their own sum,- the extra quality of the camp, written in water, in sun, in a song, in a cheer, in the dust of the baseball diamond, the swelling of a sail, the smoke of a campfire, but never definitively in words. Boys apparently do not change. And as they promise, at each "final campfire of our youth", they do not forget. They do not forget, and thinking back ten, twenty, forty years, many of them still tend to think of themselves as "recent alumni".

The combined voices of nearly seventy years drift, or hurtle, over the quad, the circle, the waterfront. They are there even without being heard; they can be sensed, like stars in daytime. "Come all ye loyal campers now--". "Beat An-dro-scog-gin! Beat An-dro-scog-gin!" "Wigwam!" "Perfects, Sections Two, Seven, Eight. Unsatisfactory, Three, Eleven. Clam Club at five." "Wash Up! Off the courts!" "Where's the OD?" "Uniform for the day, quarter sleeve shirts, shorts." "C'mon with your boxes!" "Mexico, Mexico!" "Don't forget to check back in." "Fourscore and seven years ago--". "Compulsory dip!" "I'm eleven years old and I'm a Micmac and I'm proud to be at Kennebec!" "Sing of a summer day that came and passed swiftly by--". "Ay-un-kin-e-os-nay. Noon-way." Uncle Lou: "My braves of the Abnaki nation--". Mr. Fox, beginning his Camper Sermon, "My dear boys--".

"The old names come up frequently and will never be forgotten at Kennebec," writes a director at the beginning of a new season. "But there is a new generation of Kennebec counselors and boys, and I feel certain that in this summer there is



just as much creativity and dedication and spirit as in any summer of the past. That spirit has much to do with the individuality of the members of our community, and the makeup of various groups and the unity they somehow create. That spirit is the casting aside of unnecessary distractions and unwanted pressures. It is the feeling of connecting with the ball, or diving in the water, or watching a chipmunk, or-- Take a moment to find the sentence for yourself."

"Take a moment," says a recent valedictory. "Look around, at the trees, the stars, at your friend sitting beside you--."

Take a moment to multiply two summer months by six seasons, and to realize that all a camper has done, all an alumnus remembers, the Kennebec spirit and the Kennebec experience have been contained within only one collective year.

A Cincinnati Kennebecer who was at camp in the early 20s visited New York recently, and on an impulse called a fellow Kennebecer whom he had not seen since college days. He was enthusiastically greeted and invited to dinner, and soon found himself at the door of a Park Avenue apartment, suffering all the misgivings that older people have when they are about to be reunited with someone from their youth. He need not have worried. His host, when he opened the door, was wearing his 1920 Kennebec uniform.

