



## Camp Ozanam History

On October 18, 1921, the Detroit Vincentians organized Ozanam Boys' Club with the purpose of providing recreation for boys reared in various institutions in the City of Detroit. Then in 1922, an experimental summer camping program was held in Anchor Bay near New Baltimore. Its success led to the adoption of a free camping program for needy children. That same year, the Society purchased a 32 acre site, now known as Camp Ozanam, with 1320 feet of lake frontage on Lake Huron at a cost of \$14,500.

The first camp building was erected in 1923. It provided quarters for staff, a main lobby, and a large multi-purpose assembly room, used for dormitory, dining, chapel, and recreation. That summer 210 campers attended six camping periods, each two weeks long. During the first few years conditions were primitive. Boys slept on straw ticks, turning the assembly room into a large dormitory at night. Cooks prepared meals on a three burner kerosene stove.

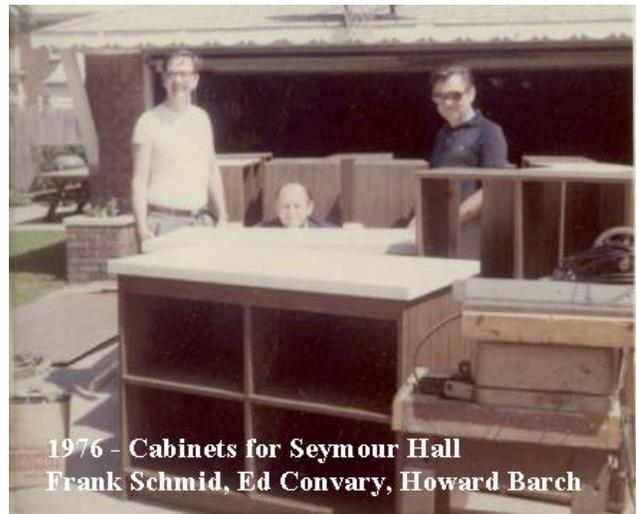
That first building was ultimately turned into the beloved "mess hall." Due to old age, the building was razed and construction for a new building started on October 20, 1975. The building was completed on June 19, 1976 in time for the summer program and was named the B.A. Seymour Hall. The building was named after Bartholomew A. Seymour who was highly active within the Society

including serving as Society Board President and on the Board of the National Council. As the plaque states, that still hangs in the dining hall today, “This hall was erected as a memorial to his name so that all may remember his generous



deeds and his love for the Vincentian Camp Program.” The Seymour family has always held the camping program high on their list of priorities. Both B.A.’s son and grandson served as Society Presidents. Grandson Bat still serves on the Board of Directors in 2013.

At the time the “new mess hall” was constructed, a group of Vincentians from Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Parish built all of the cabinets which were installed in the kitchen for storage. A number of years later those cabinets were relocated to the caretakers garage. In the fall of 2012 the roof and skylights over the dining hall were replaced and through a generous donation we were able to purchase a new industrial stove and walk-in refrigerator in 2013 to replace the aging equipment in Seymour Hall. *This writer was amazed that this equipment had to be replaced so soon – hard to believe that the “new Mess Hall” is now 37 years old.*



In 1923, ninety miles was a long distance. Interstates did not exist and passenger cars were still a luxury. Most roads between cities were still unpaved, so transporting campers was a real challenge. The Tashmo excursion steamer transported campers from Detroit to Port Huron with private cars used for the rest of the journey.



In 1924, a second building was added for sleeping, one large dormitory to house 986 boys. The cost to construct was \$15,000. This building is affectionately known as the “Roundhouse” and still referred to as that to this day. Over the years it has served in a number of capacities including: camper sleeping quarters,

administration wing, as well as a staff lounge with a pop machine where you could buy a bottle of Faygo pop for a dime. In 2013 it serves as the office for the summer program, two wings are dedicated for staff use during the summer (sitting area and game room), and it is the home for the Camps Connect collaborative office.



St. Anne's Chapel (still standing in 2013) was added in 1928. The chapel was purchased as a prefabricated structure from a local lumberyard at a cost of \$15,000. A stained glass window was added later in loving memory of Annie Murphy. Thanks to generous contributions from the Sehn family, St. Anne's underwent a significant renovation in 2003. The long-time wooden pews were removed and multi-purpose chairs were added. The one constant through it all was the beloved bell, which generations of campers have loved to ring!

In 1932, the Great Depression threatened to close Camp Ozanam for the summer, with the Society attempting to serve so many people in other ways. Fr. Harold Markey (*later became a Monsignor*) volunteered to keep the camp open with the assistance of seminarians from Sacred Heart Seminary. Through their efforts Camp Ozanam ran for that full summer at half of the usual cost. (*There is a large rock which used to be submerged at the southern beach that was a destination for other swimmers to reach known as the "Markey" in reference to Fr. Markey who was a legendary swimmer. Due to lower water levels, that rock in the mid 2000's was often visible*). In the 1940's Msgr. Stapleton replaced Fr. Markey at the helm of the camping program.

Auto dealer Hoot McInerney can still sing the Camp Ozanam song he learned back in the 1930's about Camp Ozanam being the "best camp that am." Hoot's other strong memory of Ozanam was about the frigid waters of Lake Huron.

Tom Angott, former CEO of C.F. Burger Creamery Co. says it "was something I never experienced or even expected. It was the most marvelous recreation, and being on Lake Huron was wonderful. It was a real revelation to a city kid who had just grown up on the streets. About all we had even done was to play kick-the-can in the alley." Tom reflects positively about the spiritual aspect of camp with daily Mass and the seminarians on staff – the seminarians helped to "establish your spiritual compass even at a younger age."

One of the staff positions from the late 40's and early 50's was that of a "radio man," a position that no longer exists. Don Walker writes that he "had the task to play over the entire campsite PA system various pieces of recorded bugle music to signal the start or end of some program. It was to summon the kids and counselors to the next activity or to stop what they were doing and to prepare for the next one. The biggest challenge was to be up early enough to play the morning "reveille," then go help roust the kids out of their beds, getting them cleaned up and into the mess hall for chow." Don further recalls, "One of our main assignments when a new crew arrived by bus, was to welcome them, sort them into age groups and get them settled into their tents or cabins. It was important for the first couple of days to look for those who were homesick and often in tears for being away from home for the first time. We would make friends and get them involved in some fun activities." Many subsequent generations of counselors had that same responsibility. Don recalls "one lonely little kid who wouldn't perk up until I took him into the Roundhouse (forbidden to campers) and had him entertain us with playing the piano. That brought him out of himself and set him up to enjoy the rest of his two weeks there." Over 60 years later Don still receives a Christmas card from this former camper and a reminder of the piano incident.

One counselor of note in this era was Bill Kienzle. At the time he was a seminarian. Later in life he became a noted author and wrote several best-selling novels, leading off with The Rosary Murders. All of Bill's novels were set in the metropolitan Detroit area and a few of them made reference to Camp Ozanam; he obviously enjoyed his time there.

Things that John Lesjack remembers from the summer of 1951 is watching his cabin win the softball championship, winning the track championship, winning the talent show and the support of his counselor. John continues, "Hikes in the woods filled me with the scent of evergreen trees for the first time. Where I lived, we had open fields full of weeds. Then I got to sleep in a cabin, to eat three meals a day without anyone complaining about food prep or cost. Plus we had leather craft lessons during the day and campfire stories and songs at night. My ONLY disappointment was that I never found a firefly. I loved fireflies. But who needed fireflies? **I didn't want camp to end.**" John ended his writing for this History with this statement: "Gentle Blessings, Counselor, wherever you are. Your efforts were not wasted." Generations of campers could write the same thing to say to their counselors – what a fitting tribute.

In 1955, St. Philip Neri Parish in Detroit donated their former church building to Camp Ozanam. The building was cut in half and shipped up to the camp to be used as a rec hall. Countless counselors shows, talent shows, floor hockey games,

etc. were performed in that building. The building also housed a counselor shower, sleeping quarters, and a projection booth to show movies such as Davey Crockett. For a time in the 60's and 70's the building was renamed Kennedy Hall to honor the assassinated Kennedy Brothers. Later the name was rightfully returned to the appropriate St. Philip's Hall. *(A little tidbit*



*for this writer, I have been in that building thousands of times. Once I began compiling this history, I realized that my own parents were married in this very building on May 10, 1948 by Fr. Ulenberg. Now, this building is a more important part of camp history to me.)*

Ceiling fans were later added to the roof of St. Philip's Hall, for ventilation purposes, by Frank Schmid and the Vincentians from Queen of Martyrs. Frank recalls, "It was a hot morning and I went up the north side of the roof to cut a hole near the ridge for the fans. When I got up to the top, I looked over the ridge and noticed that the south side of the roof was covered with hornets, I mean covered. After being very careful in cutting the holes and mounting the fans, I had to walk on the trusses inside to do the wiring. I was sort of paranoid the few hornets inside would attack."

In August of 1956, there was an extension added to St. Anne's chapel. The floor space was doubled and new walls were put up. As time went on (probably in the 70's) Mike Thoen (Camp Chairman in 2013) and his buddies laid cement for the newer half of the chapel. Mike grew up in the cement world as his dad was a concrete contractor. At the completion of the project Mike was proud of the fact that their work was so precise that when tile was added to the top of the concrete, it was perfectly flush with the old floor.

In 1957, Evening program was an Abbott and Costello movie. Following the movie, the high school seminarians challenged the college seminarians to a game of baseball. The game was called with a 2-2 tie due to darkness.

In 1958, there was a favored addition to Bosco lounge in the Roundhouse. A pop cooler was added with your choice of five flavors for a dime. There were 232 campers present that June.

In 1962, the priests of the Archdiocese of Detroit constructed a rectory building on the grounds. As younger seminarians, many of the future priests worked as

counselors. Those precious 32 acres meant a lot to them and so, what better place for them to spend their days off from their priestly ministry.

After the construction of the original buildings mentioned above, tents were added as the sleeping quarters for campers. Tents were later replaced by rustic cabins. There was no plumbing at all. Showers were not added until the early 70's. Baths were taken either in the troughs, which still are functioning, or in frigid Lake Huron (*it was camp after all*). In 1968 two new sleeping cabins were added to accommodate even more campers and to replace some rickety buildings. Camp Ozanam now (2013) has five sleeping cabins, four on the north side and one on the south side of camp. Each cabin has two dorm style rooms with a small sleeping room in between for the counselors.



During the war years, the cabins were named: Yankees, Rebels, Knights, Commandos, Raiders, Guerillas, Red Arrows, Legionnaires, Fighting 69<sup>th</sup>, Tigers, and Hurons. Those names were a sign of the times and served generations of campers who were well served by those cabin names. In 1979, it was determined that it would be wise to move away from “fighting names”

and move to names of Indian tribes that frequented the area around the camp. Exhausting research was done at the Port Huron library to ensure the authenticity of the tribes to that area. The cabins each have two Indian tribe names one given to each side of the building. The sleeping cabin names are Huron Erie, Chippewa Ottawa, Shawnee Wyandot, Penobscot Potawatomi, and Yesah Dakota. (*One exception to that research was the Wyandot tribe, which was not located near Lexington, Michigan. However, one of the staff members, who hailed from Wyandotte, was honored by the use of that name on a cabin... wonder if that staff member is the editor?*)

Noting the success of the camping program, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Windsor, Canada approached the Detroit chapter and a collaborative program at Camp Ozanam between the two countries existed for a few summer in the mid-70. Most impressive was the daily morning program of Flag raising, in which the flags of both countries were raised and both national anthems were sung. In fact, a newer rendition of the camp song was written and sung to the melody of “Oh Canada.”

Also in the mid-70's we added a ropes course to our program. The real engineer of the program was the St. Vincent de Paul camping program in Toronto, Canada. They came and worked with our staff (Jim Doyle and Tom Renaud)

and fabricated a ropes course in the wooded area of the ravine. This program featured the beloved zip-line and added some additional physical challenges to all of our campers.

Between 2004 and 2005, Camp Ozanam underwent major renovations on the south side. The Huron Erie cabin got a needed facelift as did the Visitors Lodge. New bunk beds were purchased for the entire camp - many had not been replaced since the 50's. "Blackrobes Wigwam" was gutted and this building became a project of Vincentian Jack Virga, from St. Peter's Conference in Mt. Clemens, who worked over the course of 8 years to seek volunteer labor and financial donations to get this building to code and usable. Blackrobes Wigwam became operational for use with rental groups (particularly for weddings) the spring of 2013.

At this time, the Roundhouse was falling down (*it was over 80 years old*). Its historic significance was recognized by the Camp Committee and Board of Directors and \$250,000 was spent to restore the majesty of the Roundhouse (windows, roof, siding, heating, etc.). The generosity of many donors and the time and effort of the Starbucks Company and its employees brought about the required renovations. Unfortunately some engineering mistakes were made and the floors to the Roundhouse started to rot away by 2008. The foundation to the north and south wings were repaired in 2009, the center area in 2010, the west wing completed in the fall of 2012 and the east wing was finished in the spring of 2013.

Throughout the years, there have been different programs for the older campers to challenge them at a higher level. The "Pioneer program" in the 60's and 70's, with overnight programs off the campgrounds often accomplished this. In 2005, the Adventure Program was added through the efforts of then Camp Services Director, Teresa Jex. An overnight experience with camping and canoeing down by Au sable River was born. In 2006, three new teepees and platforms were installed at Ozanam and so Adventure Camp moved to that area, with a canoe trip down the Black River in Crosswell.

Also in 2006 seminarians from Sacred Heart Major Seminary have returned to be a part of the staff. We have two to three seminarians join us each summer at Camp Ozanam. Nate Harburg, Steve Pullis and Patrick Gonyeau have since been ordained priest and we welcome them back to Camp Ozanam in their new role at camp.

In 2010, the cement stairs that were installed in 1951 were replaced with a treated set of wood stairs with a magnificent viewed deck thanks to the

generosity of yet another donor. Our donors are awesome people and families who recognize the significance of this camping program.

In 2012, during Vincentian and Alumni Saturday, the new Arts and Crafts Building was commissioned as the “Rhein Center”, thanks to the donation of the Rhein family. Plans include transferring some of the interior walls from the former crafter center to this new facility so as to preserve past history (graffiti and all).

## Accept, Share & Develop - Camp Motto



“ACCEPT, SHARE, AND DEVELOP” what a powerful motto; what a great way for all of us to live our lives and it is unfortunate that we do not know who should get the credit for creating and/or authoring the Camp Ozanam motto. It is a motto that has stood for decades. At the beginning of each camping session, the campers receive an explanation as to what the motto means. Many of the awards that the campers receive (even today) have the camp motto emblazoned on the award.

## Camp Ozanam Administration

Fr. Markey was chaplain/director in 1932. At that time the staff was entirely composed of seminarians and their teachers. Subsequent chaplains/directors included, but not limited to: Revs. “Casey Jones” (for whom the bridge was dedicated as “Casey Jones Blvd.” in 1970), Leo Sheltreau, John Wittstock, Mike Kundrat, Joe Szymaszek, Francis Wojcik, Leo Smith, Clem Esper, Ed Baldwin, Tony Lombardini, Frank Reiss, Ted Fujawa, Al Miller, John Sullivan, John Cusmano, Dave West and Gerry Martin.

After his camp experience, Clem Esper became the pastor of St. Hugo of the Hills parish. His days off were spent at Camp Ozanam where he would go into the woods and cut down all the dead trees so that the campers had an unending source of firewood for their sleep-outs on the beach. Clem became so close to Jim Doyle, Camp Caretaker, that Jim named his son, Clem (*quite an honor for Fr. Esper*).

A subsequent pastor of St. Hugo of the Hills was Msgr. Tony Tocco. The weeks he was at camp “were among the happiest memories of my summers while

growing up.” He came from a poor family on the lower Eastside. He helped work on his dad’s produce truck peddling fruit. When the Vincentians asked his parents if Msgr. Tocco could go to camp, he was amazed when his folks said yes and he “instantly fell in love with the camp.” Because of his family commitment, he was not able to work a full summer once he entered the Seminary, but while he was there he treasured those experiences.

Chaplains continued to be assigned to Camp Ozanam and they were assisted by the Head counselor and Unit Leaders who really supervised the daily activities. Some head counselors included, John Stead, Phil Calcaterra, Ed Wojdyla (*the campers used to chant, “Ed is an elephant; rum pum pum” while waiting for Ed to do announcements after meals*), Tim Dombrowski, Rick Allen, John Paddock, and Dennis Sugrue.

In 1970, our first lay director was hired. The first lay director was Andre Poux, a math teacher from Sacred Heart Seminary. Andy and his family came to camp and provided a different style of leadership. Many of the campers adopted his younger kids. The family returned this generous spirit by hosting Saturday morning treats in the Director’s quarters. The youngest campers were invited in to watch Saturday morning cartoons, with the added treat of hot chocolate and freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. (*A sad aside about Andy is that he was later murdered during an invasion of his home.*)

Andy was succeeded by Stan Wegrzynowicz (1972-76), Chuck Piotrowski (1977-79), Tim Dolan (1980), Jerry Lombardo (1981-82), Mike Reece (1983-85), Spencer Rush(1986-1989), Barb Koster (1990), Renee Deroche (1991-98), Mike Levandowski (1999- 2003), Teresa Jex (2004-05), Mike Allen (2006), and Ken “Oak” Pullis (2007-13).

## Cooks & Meals

The heart of any program is the food. Camp Ozanam is no exception. The most famous of all cooks is the legendary, “Clancy”. Clancy was the creation of some of the staff in the 60’s. Clancy was a volatile cook who was easily excited by the campers. Campers would turn up missing. Police investigations would later turn up the fact that campers who upset Clancy were lured into the kitchen after hours, captured, killed, and ground into meat to be served for lunch the next day. *Excuse the gruesomeness of the last few sentences, but that is what camp is all about – scary stories and traditions passed on from one season to the next. Although the stories are always meant to entertain the campers, there have*

*been times when the campers were told the stories were all lies. And other times when scary stories have been outlawed all together.*

As for real cooks, the earliest memory we have is about “Frank”: according to one former staff member, “our camp cook in those days (1950-51) was an ornery foul-mouthed old cuss. But he was a good cook. The counselors were all afraid to face him, except for one, Tom Litka, who was Frank’s favorite and became our liaison if we wanted something from the kitchen.” Midnight snacks were always a challenge. The cook would arrive at the mess hall to begin breakfast to discover half of a pan of brownies missing, that day’s dessert. It was never wise to upset the cook.

The next record of cooks we have is Ma and Pa Weaver. They cooked in the mid to late 60’s. They were a delightful couple. They became attached to the seminarians and when Pa decided to be baptized in the early 70’s, his baptism was actually held at Sacred Heart Seminary. The Weavers were succeeded by other cooks such as: Duane Pennebaker, Ralph Smyth (who introduced the cafeteria line of service), Debbie Moore, Hank Piotrowski (*who also served as Hanko the Clown, Chief Muckleshoot for Indian night, umpired many ball games which included bribing disgruntled players with dollar bills and is the Editor’s father*), Catherine Westbrook, Steve and Marie Steinhaus, Jan Sabin, Mary Messing and many others. Various staff members took their turns helping in the kitchen, including Rick Klapchar who made homemade pizzas and Jim Kiefer copying his mom’s recipe for “baked eggs.”



There are many camp food stories that can be shared and some others that shouldn’t be shared. During one state camp inspection, the inspector (Bill Shipp) was trying to take a little bit of everything. Imagine the look on the cook’s face, when Mr. Shipp mistakenly put the dessert (chocolate pudding) on his mashed potatoes, mistaking it for gravy.



The cook’s day off was traditionally on Wednesday. Some senior staff was responsible for boiling hot dogs and then driving the hot dogs in Jim Doyle’s truck to the North side of camp. Camp tradition included that the head counselor always did the final inspection of the hot dogs and sprinkled the water with some of his cigarette ashes – oh, how times have changed. The tradition of senior staff cooking on the

cook's night off continues in 2013 except the menu consists of hamburgers cooked on the grill outside Seymour Hall, with no cigarette ashes and the Adventure Camp campers assist with serving the meal to the campers and staff.

The amount of milk consumed was amazing, but there was always the refreshing bug juice (Kool aid), that kids always enjoyed. A traditional breakfast menu consisted of a daily rotation between hot meals and cold meals. Hot meals were often OZ Meal (oatmeal) and green eggs. Cold meals were usually the small boxes of cold cereal. There were often competitions over who could eat the most boxes. Two favorites of the campers were Jungle breakfasts (*when special events were happening at camp, campers ate breakfast in their cabins*) less formal and lots of fun. And the highlight for the campers, was the all day hike, which culminated with a meal of burgers or hot dogs cooked on the grill at either Horatio S. Earl State Park, Port Sanilac, or Swallow's Cliff. The food never tasted better than when you were in a small group. And the meal was topped off with a slice of ice cold watermelon. In 2013 both traditions continue. Jungle breakfast takes place weekly and the older campers (*ages 11-12*) go on a hike to Horatio Park where they meet up with the Director who has already begun cooking the hamburger and/or hotdog cookout. Both are still loved today!

Many of the meals were centered on foods that were donated to the camp by the US Dept. of Agriculture – oh how we loved that government cheese, peanut butter, and corn meal. There was even a couple occasions that some of the corn meal was mysteriously used to chalk the foul lines of the baseball fields. Any food left at the end of the summer would be donated to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen to help other folks who were less fortunate. In all cases it was always important to serve a balanced meal to insure that the campers were receiving the proper nutrition, something they may not be receiving at home.

## Runaway Campers

During the 60's, we had more than our shares of runaway campers who wanted to return home, mostly due to homesickness. When a camper was discovered missing, an announcement was made: "Will the head counselor please report to Bosco Lounge!" That was a sign to all available personnel to report to Bosco Lounge and search parties were formed to make sure that campers were safely found. Once their location and safety were obtained an announcement was made, "Will the head counselor please report to the priest cabin?" signifying all was well. In using the coded announcements the normal program went on without letting the campers know somebody was missing.

## Camp Tragedies

Unfortunately, just as there are tragedies every day, the camps were no exception. The two most significant incidents will be retold here. As you read this, pause and say a prayer.

In 1973, a group of counselors were returning from a night in town. They were driving an older car. They were tailed by a semi, hauling sod. The driver of the semi was frustrated by the slow moving car in front of him as the car had slowed down to make a left hand turn into the camp (at issue is whether or not the turn indicator was working). So the semi driver pulled to the left to pass the car at the exact instant the car was turning left. The result was catastrophic. The semi crashed into the car, dragging it for several hundred yards. The driver of the car was Frank Ware – he was later discovered with the engine block on his back. The other deceased staff member was Michael Barbee. He was kept alive for a few hours by various staff members who (just that day) had received CPR training. Unfortunately those efforts proved to be fruitless as it took officials too long to arrive on the scene and then transport him to the nearest hospital. Survivors in the accident included: Steve Colasinski, Joe Fedorczyk, Gary Slappey, and Philip Young.

In 1975, a group of senior campers went on an off-camp hike and sleep-over. The location was a farmers land, complete with a pond. During an orientation and boundary hike, campers were told that they would have an opportunity to swim, under the direction of qualified Water Safety Instructors, but to stay away from the water until then. One camper did not follow those instructions. As the history was later pieced together, Robert Kobe did go into the water as the other campers were getting ready for dinner. It was suggested that he wanted to prove that he was a good swimmer. At dinner when Robert was missing, the original assumption was that he had run away as he was suffering from homesickness. So the staff began searching the back roads for Robert. His parents were notified to be on the watch. An all-night search was unsuccessful. At day break the local sheriff's department began searching the pond and his body was located. A pure tragedy with an innocent victim.

Frank, Michael, and Robert all lost their lives while participating in activities at camp – pray for them and their families.

## Camp Programming in the 1940's

The camp was basically a recreational camp giving the underprivileged of the metropolitan area the chance to get away from home and enjoy the great outdoors. As the staff was manned by seminarians and always a couple of priest chaplains, the day began with Mass in St. Anne's Chapel. The fondest memories of some (submitting their memories from this time frame) were the camp songs. Boxing was extremely popular. One former camper remembers "getting the bejeebes kicked out of him."

Originally the camping sessions or trips were two weeks long, with five camping sessions. During the course of each week, the counselors were given one day off; it was their "Sunshine Day." As time went along the camping trips were shortened every few years and currently (2013) there are four six-day sessions for traditional co-ed camping along with sessions for Loving Arms Camp and Adventure Camp (spoken about elsewhere in this History). In 2013, 83% of the youth attending Camp Ozanam come from families living below the poverty level.

## Camp Programming 1966-1979

The primary job of the counselor was to entertain the kids. Given the varying personalities of the counselors, this could be achieved in various ways. Thank goodness for variety. The common theme in this time period was: **"Camp is for the kiddies!"** It was the job of the counselor to go to any length to achieve this. And they did.

The following is a brief synopsis of the general camping program that was followed in this time frame. Some of the programs preceded 1966 and others still exist in 2012. During this time frame, the camping program housed 200+ campers at both camps and the length of stay was two weeks, with no break in between camping "trips." In fact, on Change Day there were actually more than 400 campers on each campground. It was a way of economizing the use of the buses. When campers arrived, they were divided up into their cabin groups. During the dividing process, the staff tried to balance the cabins. Taking into account was the camper's size, amount of baseball gloves, race, making sure neighbors were not placed in the same cabins and other general principles to make sure the cabins were as balanced as possible. While the new group of kids was being divided up, the old group of kids was eating its last meal of legendary camp chow.

*Daily Program:* The day began with reveille. However it was not unusual to find the campers up much earlier, playing outside, especially around the water troughs. There was time to wash up and proceed to the mess hall for breakfast. Flag raising and a prayer started every day. Breakfast usually rotated daily between hot and cold food. Cold food was cereal and hot food could have been OZ meal (oatmeal), pancakes or scrambled “green” eggs. On occasion, “Jungle Breakfast” was served – having the kids eat cold cereal at their cabins, thus keeping the mess hall clean for special occasions.



Following breakfast was Inspection. Campers had ½ hour to make their beds, clean their cabin, and clean a surrounding designated area. At the end of that time, the cabins were inspected by a Unit Leader or Head Counselor and cabins were awarded points on a 1-5 point basis. Following Inspection, campers went on morning program. The activities were pretty much the same in the morning or afternoon.

Baseball was extremely popular and rivalries happened (usually because of the counselors). Crafts (lace work, painting of plaster craft, making cement molds in the sand, copper craft) all had their followers.

Of course the kids loved to swim. Many of the city kids had never viewed a body of water as large as Lake Huron. Some kids even thought it was the ocean. Many kids never realized that the water could be that cold, but it never stopped them. There was some time for swimming lessons, but free play was most popular. Kids were paired up with a buddy to ensure safety in the water.

Other daily activities included: using the ropes course, volleyball, kick the can in the ravine, dodge ball, chapel period, soccer, trips to Nature Lore, and archery. Going on and off camp hike was always popular. The closest hike was to Sucker’s Creek. The goal of that hike was to get as muddy as possible. Other destinations included: Swallow’s Cliff (which has since eroded away due to water levels), a beach hike, Horatio S. Earl Roadside Park where the kids got to pump their own water by hand, and even Port Sanilac. A sad commentary about the beach hikes was that some of the local cottage owners were intimidated by black campers walking on their “private property.” It was a sign of the times. Rather

than causing an uncomfortable relationship with our neighbors, beach hikes were eliminated.

Many of the other hikes included a cook out with hot dogs or hamburgers with tasty watermelon for dessert. Singing various songs was a part of the hike. Camp songs were fun every day. Whenever kids were idle, there was a possible moment for trouble to break out so when there were a few minutes to kill, singing would take place. The camp theme song was a favorite, followed by many others such as Pink Porpoise Pop, Found a Peanut, The Ants Go Marching, and so on. Singing in general always helped to fill any vacant time.

Another place that singing was important was during grace before and after meals. It is always good to thank God for the gift of food, but singing that praise was always appreciated by the campers. The Barnyard Grace, Glory to God, and Rejoice in the Lord (sung in a round) were loved by the kids.

A filler hike was the ever-present “Snipe Hunt”. Campers were sent out to find the evasive snipe. The tools needed were: to be aware of the sound of the snipe and to have a paper bag to capture the animal. That snipe has managed to elude campers even to this day.

*The Waterfront:* For many campers, being that close to Lake Huron was breathtaking. Being from the city, it was the first time to experience that large of a body of water. Many of that exclaimed,



“Is that the ocean?” Even on the warmest days in the summer, Lake Huron was still cold, but it didn’t bother the kids. They enjoyed swimming and used the “buddy system” for safety precautions. Every other Sunday afternoon was spent on the beach, to allow their counselors an opportunity to visit their families. A long standing camp tradition was to never say the term “Beach Day” otherwise it always seemed to rain. Of course it never rained at Camp Ozanam – it was just “liquid sunshine”.

In the early 70’s, the elective program came into being. The same activities as listed above, but it was a time for more detailed instruction. Other periods could be added depending on the talents of the existing staff. Bill Sirois set up a darkroom and instructed campers how to take black and white pictures and how to develop them. Other campers worked on the camp newsletter (the Oz Gazette). It was also a time to get campers ready for the upcoming track day, later renamed the OZ Olympics. One of the more interesting electives was the

pole vault in 1972. Director, Stan Wegrzynowicz borrowed some of Holy Redeemer High School's equipment. The campers and staff were given the opportunity to try this activity. What a challenge! But challenging the campers is part of what camp is all about. It is not time to sleep in and lie around and watch TV but rather his time to learn some new skills and perfect some of the old ones.

*Nature Lore:* For years, the extent of our Nature program was limited to walking on the beach searching for fossils and Petoskey stones and observing the rare deer that was lost and ran through the camp... In the 70's, under the guidance of Tim Dolan, a phenomenal nature program was hatched. A penned in area was established along the woods nearest CYO. Tim had made arrangements with local farmers and folks he met at auctions to obtain animals for the delight of hundreds of campers. Animals, included: Susie the horse, calves, goats, sheep, puppies, you name it we had it. Campers were given the opportunity to learn about the animals and also to feed them, care for them and clean up after them. It is a program that continues to this day.

The red barn, located in Nature Lore, (seen in photo) was built in memory of Jim Diebold who as killed in a car accident in 1978. Jim, along with his brothers, Jeff and Steve, worked as counselors in the mid 1970's and knowing the importance Camp Ozanam had on the short life of Jim, the family felt this building would help to make a difference for future campers.



*Evening program:* After dinner the campers were awarded the opportunity to have "Free time." Some of them would play their favorite activity, but (more often than not) the kids just loved to run around in the ravine. Many of the kids lined up at the camp store to get their candy fix. They would first have to go to the bank in the Knights cabin to get their dimes to spend at the store. Each kid was given a bankcard when they arrived, to limit losing money or theft. There was an ample supply of candy including the favorite "winner sucker" – they were a nickel, but if you got a sticker on the back of your sucker you got a free one. The same bank cards could be used at the Craft center to buy additional craft supplies. Once free time was over, the kids reassembled at their cabins for evening program. Counselor shows were always popular. Weird Harold and Ackachunkai were always popular as was Beasley Scudder searching the couch. There was never a shortage of scripts. If the counselors need another show they would use Stalag 17, the Wizard of Oz, or any other available idea. Sometimes 16 millimeter movies were rented and shown – a popular one was Davey

Crockett. Capture the Flag was also loved. The Kangaroo court in which counselors had to face a judge and be punished for some trumped up charges.

Find the counselor was also fun. Five counselors would hide. Some were very obvious, but the last counselor was always buried and had to breathe through a snorkel. Needless to say the campers rarely found all five. A popular night was Indian Lore. Campers sat around a huge fire in the track area and watched well-choreographed fights between various “braves”, Indian dances, and the swallowing of fire (often by Tim Dolan). On occasion there was the possibility for a Polar Bear swim, when the water was deemed warm enough – often times the head beach man would have to turn on the heaters to warm up the water.



The final night of the trip was very special. It was the last night the entire camp was together, featuring lots of singing – memories exchanged, and the recognition of outstanding campers expressed by the passing out of the camp emblems. Emblems were patches of honor, usually limited to the three best kids in each cabin. Occasionally, one camper in the entire camp was recognized for being the “Best” camper and he would receive a special white emblem instead of the ordinary green ones. It was not unusual to see lots of tears. It is amazing how often things stay the same. In 2012, the last evening program was still an awards program. Each camper was given an award for something they accomplished during their stay.



Following evening program, campers got ready for bed. The night would end with a prayer and then camp stories. The legendary telling of Thump Drag and Clancy the Cook were both extremely popular. Often around midnight counselors would run a “Murphy Train”. Campers were encouraged to tie a sock around the edge of their beds to be woken up for Murphy Train, which avoided having to deal with wet sheets in the morning. Counselors always wanted to make sure the kids awoke to respond to nature’s call. Kids were asked how many holes were in a sponge (74 or 76), or were asked why cherry trees were not on wheels.

*Special activities* included lots of fun things that the kids enjoyed. One very special thing was a trip to a local farm for horseback riding. A local rancher was kind enough to let the campers ride for 50 cents for an hour. In many cases it was the first and only time a kids got to ride a horse, including this compiler. As

the trips were two weeks long, the counselors were given the opportunity to visit their parents on the middle Sunday of the trip. The morning program was normal. In the afternoon, the campers were treated to “Blank-Blank.” It never rains at Camp Ozanam. To make sure nobody was ever allowed to say Beach day, thus the invention of the term blank-blank. The cook’s night off was on Wednesday. The menu was boiled hot dogs. The head counselor would certify that the hot dogs were done by dumping some cigarette ashes in the hot dog water. The hot dogs were cooked in the mess hall and transported to the north side of camp by Jim Doyle’s truck.

Camp-wide baseball games were fun. These would include: the junior – senior All Star game (much to Rick Klapchar’s dismay the seniors were beaten by the underdog juniors on Rick’s birthday in 1974), the camper – counselor All-star game, the Green slime



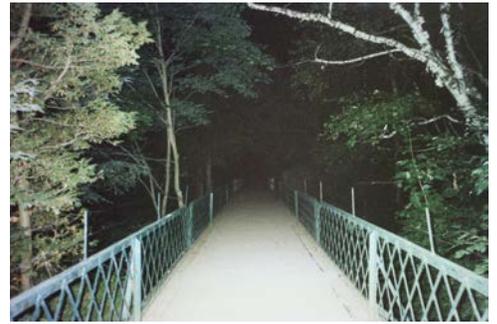
game (in which the second string counselors would play some of the campers. The counselors would arrive to the game in the camp station wagon (which was affectionately named the Green Slime). One time the counselors were led by the camp cook, Debbie Moore. Another rivalry was the kitchen staff opposed by the senior campers. In all of the above games competition was extremely high. One time the kitchen staff, led by Jim Kiefer, protested to the umpire that the senior pitcher was not pitching from the pitching rubber. The umpire corrected that situation by moving the rubber to the spot the kid was pitching from. A good time was had by all.

The Track Day, later renamed Oz Olympics was always a highlight. Due to budget constraints, the field was often lined with cornmeal as the lining chalk was not often available. Originally campers competed in various athletic events to try and gain top honors. The last event of Track Day was the “fat man” race in which the heavier counselors opposed the heavier campers. (This writer often dropped out early due to exhaustion). Later craft projects, photography projects (thank you Bill Sirois) and the Oz Gazette were added so that all kids could compete and not just the athletes.

Theme Days were also fun – such as Davey Crockett Day, complete with “bar grinning” contests and Backwards day that started with flag lowering and hot dogs for breakfast.

Lights out: winding down at the end of an action-filled day could be a challenge. There was always about half an hour to do this. An evening prayer to thank the Lord for the blessings of the day was encouraged. Depending on

the counselors different things could now take place. Some counselors were tired themselves and so everyone went right to bed. Other counselors would play their radio so the campers could follow the heroics of the Detroit Tigers. And many counselors would tell stories. Some of Edgar Allen Poe's books made good subject matter. And then there was the camp legend of Thump drag – a favorite for decades. Following the telling of the story, many campers could be heard walking across the bridge with a *thump* of one leg and the *drag* of another.



On occasion, up to the discretion of the counselors, a cabin could sign up to sleep out on the beach. For many kids this was a highlight of the trip. Camp supplied sleeping bags. A wonderful fire was built around which many a roasted marshmallows or s'mores were consumed. Many stories were told and many songs were sung. Bedtime was whenever each camper fell asleep.

Being a Catholic camp, Sunday liturgy was essential. God was always with us! Originally we had priest chaplains assigned to camp. Later various priests (often former counselors) volunteered to come back to say Mass on a given Sunday. At the start of the Mass, the bell was rung to notify our neighbors that Mass was about to begin, in case they wanted to join us. Most of the time Mass was in the chapel accompanied by lively guitar music. At the conclusion of the Mass, campers always loved to ring that bell, yanking on the rope. On special occasions, Mass would be celebrated outdoors in the grotto next to the chapel or in the amphitheater. Many times, in addition to the homily, the campers would act out the skit of The Giving Tree, something they would practice during elective period.

## Camp Programming 2000-2013

In 2005, three elaborate teepees on platforms were added. They are used to house our Adventure Camp program for campers ages 13 to 14. The teepees are situated on the north-side of camp in the old race track area, away from the normal camping activities. They cook some of their own meals, volunteer in the community, and do an overnight canoe trip down the Blackriver in Croswell. It is indeed an honor for the campers who are selected to attend this camping session. Of course as in the day, there is still no running water and/or electric out at teepees (again, some things do not change)!



In 2011, in collaboration with St. John/Providence Hospital's Open Arms program, a grief camping program was created. The program is for children who experienced some type of grief or trauma in their lives. During the camping day, they receive special support from professional counselors. Otherwise, they enjoy the same camping fun that the other campers do. In 2012, 13 campers were enrolled in this program.

Although continuously working on enhancing our spiritual program throughout the years, as part of the collaborative with CYO, in 2011 the staff began working with the Archdiocese of Detroit Office of Evangelization and Catechetics to create a second staff manual that focused entirely on our Catholic identity at camp. This staff manual/resource would be used daily at camp as it contained the daily theme, challenge for the day, questions to ponder with the cabin and evening reflection all in one binder. This additional staff manual was well received its first summer of 2012 and a second edition, based on the new camp theme was created for 2013.

We look forward to adding more history to this section as we continue to grow spirituality into a stronger, more vibrant camp community. We are history in the making!