

Saginaw Memories

Originally written by April and Suanne Riskin: November 20, 1987. Updated: September 21, 2008 through September, 2014 by Mona Kleinman, Karen Edelson and other alumni. The time period captured is sometime between the early 60's through the early 70's.

As a way to remember Saginaw, let's go back to the first day of camp:

The chartered transit bus is parked at Sak's Fifth Avenue in Chevy Chase, Maryland. As you arrive, you see your Washington camp mates hugging and talking or saying good-bye to their parents as their luggage is being loaded on the bus. Your trunk was sent some time ago and will be waiting for you in your bunk when you arrive at Camp Saginaw, Oxford, PA. After saying good-bye to your parents, you board the bus and talk with everyone you know, in the hope of finding out who will be returning to camp and who will not. The bus departs from the Sak's parking lot.

After two long hours of excitement and anticipation, the transit bus turns down a very narrow dirt road where a sign is hanging that says 'Camp Saginaw'. The bus driver always has trouble with this road, being so narrow and bumpy. You think for a moment that the bus might turn over but with the drivers' great skill, he very gingerly rides over the potholes that remain from the winter snow. At this point, the singing begins: "We're here because we're here..." until the bus finally arrives on upper field and parks next to another transit bus which has already been vacated.

The campers from Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey (and wherever else) are anxiously waiting to see which ones of their friends have returned for another glorious summer at Saginaw. From the window of the bus you can already see some of your best friends and it becomes almost impossible to wait until your bus has come to a full stop. Once you step on to upper field you are moving from one person to the next, hugging and speaking at the same time. You are filled with emotion and excitement.

After everyone is off the bus, the group leaders assemble the campers and begin announcing who is in what bunk. You hope that you will be with all of your friends and are relieved when you are!

Now that you know what bunk you're in, you make a beeline toward it. You walk down the black asphalt road a short way until it merges with the black top sidewalk that narrows around to the front of Russell Hall (also known as Russ Hall). Through the pine trees to your left (and a bit over your shoulder) you can see Girls Lodge. As you hastily continue walking, you start looking at the bunks on your left, H, I, J, K, Etc. On your right are the tennis courts. You hear campers happily screaming and talking in their bunks while screen doors are being opened and slammed shut. You inhale deeply, smelling that glorious pine.

Finally, you arrive at your bunk. You open the door where you see people happily talking and hugging while they unpack their clothes into their cubbies. You look around and see the wood floors, the screens, the shutters tied open with rope, the rafters with bunk plaques created by other campers that stayed in that bunk years ago, the shelved closets (great for climbing up to the rafters), and the bathroom. Each bathroom has two

sinks. Above the sinks are slots that house cups and toothbrushes. You also check out the toilet. Last but not least, there's the gross shower that you have to wear flip-flops in or you'll slide and break your neck from the slime. Enough looking around. You decide to make a claim for your bed and cubby.

Once you have selected your bed and cubby, you become part of the activities. The first thing you decide to do is make your bed. You have a great quilt; it's black, white and red check with diamonds. Other people have navy blue wool blankets with a red 'S' (S for Saginaw) in the center, or their favorite blanket from home.

While unpacking, people are discussing who will donate their candy trunk for care packages and canteen goodies. (My trunk got ruined from all the sticky candy and crumbs and whatever. Did you ever donate yours?) While these discussions are taking place, you hear Mayer Kutler, the assistant director being paged over the loud speaker. "Mayer Kutler, please come to the office, Mayer Kutler, please come to the office." Soon after Mayer is paged, Arthur Dubin, the maintenance man is paged. In later years, the maintenance men were Mark Dubin and some guy named Fred. Mayer Kutler became the director in 1971.

Reveille begins to sound for dinner. The record sounds scratchy from being played over and over throughout the years. The tune is different than the wake-up one (I can't recall what the different sounds were but I know they were different). Everyone begins to head toward the mess hall. You walk down the steps of your bunk to the black top sidewalk and toward the steps next to girl's office. As you descend down the steps you see the tether ball which you punch as you pass. Everyone is chatting wildly. You walk through Inter camp (Bunks G, 12, 11, 10, 9). You notice some kids playing knock hockey and ping pong. As you further your way toward Junior camp, you pass Bunks 8, 7, 6, 5, 4. To your right is the Chinese Pagoda (It has a water fountain in the center and a bench seat that wraps around the inside. The water is always so cold and refreshing, especially on a hot day). While walking, you have your arms around your bunk mates' shoulders and you chant: "one, two three, four, five, six, seven, eight, (you stop and bow and bend your knees) Schlamexel, Schlamazel Hass in Pepper Incorporated" (... and so on. I don't know what the hell the words meant or if I even wrote them correctly, but that is how they sounded). As you continue toward the mess hall, you notice the brown laundry room on your left and to your right, the grove which houses a large charcoal grill made out of stone. White benches surround the grill. You recall cookouts held there. As you continue to near the mess hall, you see on your right the vomit machine and soon after that, the Dell where the Big Show and movies are shown, breaking of color war and fake-outs occur and sometimes mixed services are conducted. You notice rows of white painted benches uniformly placed. Surrounding the stage are perfectly pruned trees. Finally, up the steps to the porch and through the double screen doors, you are in the mess hall. Everyone is either seated or beginning to sit at their new table for the summer. You hear singing and clapping. The songs are division and color war songs. Undoubtedly, you know them and are joining right in.

After everyone is seated, Connie Chalik and Uncle Bill stand up and make a strong effort to quiet everyone. It works. Connie and Uncle Bill welcome everyone to camp. Group leaders make announcements of upcoming events.

It is now time for the Hamotzee (the prayer for bread). It sounds so beautiful when it is sung, especially “amen”.

As you wait for dinner, talking, singing and clapping resume. From the kitchen you see the waiters (C.I.T's from the Hill) coming out carrying trays full of food that Willis prepared. You can't wait to know what's for dinner. You hope dinner will be passed down your side of the table first. To drink is bug juice (of course, because milk and meat are never served together).

When dinner is over, you begin walking back to your bunk. You pass the milk bar on your right and decide to take a different route back. Instead of going straight, you bear to your right, toward the canteen. It's painted red. Approaching it from behind, you look down over the wood retaining wall. The floor is concrete and there is a piano on the left side. You can't see the counter where the BBQ potato chips and candy are sold so you walk around to the front. It's empty inside but there are a few benches against the wall. Looking in from outside, you see where all the goodies are sold on the left side. It's closed right now because there are only certain hours that it's open.

From the front of the canteen looking out, you see the infirmary, (it was a white building and that's all I remember, which means I never got sick) the many steps which lead down to the pool, lower field and the Big Elk. You remember the Big Elk is where you canoe. It winds around to the bottom of Big Rock. The Elk also has a small waterfall that you can't go over. You decide to go back to your bunk a different way, the back way. Positioned directly in front of the canteen and facing in, you turn a bit to the right and notice the administrative office which is an old white house, filled with pictures from the early days of camp (long before you and I were born). Uncle Mike's house is right next to the office. You're now heading toward the road that leads back up to girl's camp (on the right side of the canteen). Once on the road, you notice through the pines that you have a great view of the two pools. As you continue on the road, you pass the back of Junior camp, Girls Lodge, Inter camp, Low Senior Camp and finally to your bunk. As always, the smell is overwhelming.

Now there's free time to do whatever you want, so you do whatever you want and you're having a blast doing it! You might be playing knock hockey, ping pong, tether ball, visiting your big or little sister, sitting at Big Rock, lying on your bed, yapping with friends – who knows, who cares? That's the beauty of it all.

As the sun begins to set, you return to your bunk, if you're not already there. It's time to get ready for the evening activity. A movie may be shown in the Dell or a social (either at the Canteen or Russ Hall), or Greek Dodge in Russ Hall, Counselor hide and seek, Capture the Flag on Upper field, a Scavenger hunt or maybe even a camp fire at Big Rock.

After the evening activity is over, you head back to your bunk where you will get ready for bed – lights out at 9:00 PM. But you and your bunk-mates are not tired. So, feeling a bit rambunctious you participate in a shutter bang until a counselor demands that you stop.

Lights out and everyone is in bed (9:00 PM). There's a counselor or C.I.T on duty (O.D.) and she sits outside on a bench until 11:00. If a bunk gets too wild and refuses to quiet

down and sleep she yells at them and threatens to dock canteen (no, not that!). At first when the lights are turned off, talking is incessant. There are always those campers that talk while others drift off to sleep. You better not stay up too late or you'll be tired when reveille blows. Tomorrow will not be a late morning. (Remember late mornings? That was when you were allowed to sleep an extra hour and have breakfast at boy's mess. You also didn't have to clean your bunk that day).

At 7:30 AM the old crackling record sounds reveille. Time to get up and go to the flagpole. The mornings are usually damp and chilly. Socks are required (I hated wearing socks with my loafers). Everyone is assembled at the flag pole where announcements are made and the "I pledge allegiance to the flag..." is recited. (Odd, I don't remember where the Senior or Inter flagpole was).

Time to walk to breakfast. That darn grass is always cold and wet. Breakfast is almost always the same. Little boxes of damp cereal lined up on the table. Anyone that wants the good cereal better claim dibs – fast! There's always hot cereal (oatmeal or cream of wheat) but you have to ask for it. Breakfast is usually one of the following: cinnamon toast, scrambled eggs, eggs over easy, pancakes or French toast, etc.

With breakfast over, it's time to go back to the bunk and clean for inspection. There's a chart on the wall that has a little dial with everyone's name. There was a name for that chart - The Job Wheel. Every day someone has a different job. For example, right sweep, porch and outside, dustpan and trash-cans, record and candy cubby, shelves and cubby, inner john and shower or inspector.

Once all the cleaning is done and the group leader inspects the bunk, it's time to change into your bathing suit and go down to the pool for an ice cold instructional swim (oh no, not that!). Calvin is the pool man and wow, is he cute! As you walk down the millions of wood steps to the pool, you can see lower field. No one is out there yet because the boys are eating breakfast and cleaning their bunks.

The rest of the day goes as follows: Leagues (AM), lunch followed by rest period (which lasts an hour). After rest period, there are miscellaneous activities such as, arts and crafts, fencing, riflery, archery, track and field, badminton, tennis, golf, miniature golf, etc. Before dinner is an afternoon free swim followed by an hour or so when you can rest, shower and change your clothes.

Enough of the daily stuff. I have listed every bit of trivia that I can remember.

1. Pools were cleaned every Thursday and we took trips on that day to the following places:
 - Hershey Park – Remember the streets with the kisses lampposts? Back in those days, we walked through the factory. Today however, the factory is closed to the public. Instead, a simulated ride is offered. On the way home from Hershey we'd stop at a Pennsylvania Dutch Pantry for dinner. Hershey Park was my favorite trip of all trips.
 - Longwood Gardens – Acres and acres of beautiful gardens with a grand finale water show. A play was also part of the day.

- New Hope, Pennsylvania - All I remember is it looked like Georgetown, Washington DC. Lot's of shopping. Only High Seniors went on this trip.
 - Roller Skating – Saginaw would rent the rink for all of girls camp. Isn't that neat?
 - Bowling - Saginaw would rent the whole facility
 - Lemons stuffed with peppermint sticks. We would stick the peppermint stick in the lemon and suck until the peppermint stick became hollow like a straw. It tasted like lemonade with peppermint.
 - Hickory Hills - We'd walk through the country side, down roads where you never saw a car to the little Hickory Hills General Store in what appeared to be the middle of nowhere. I remember buying candy there.
 - Various amusement parks – One time we went to a park and the roller coaster was closed because rats had chewed the cables.
-
- Penn Supreme Dairy – We took a bus there and had ice cream. Penn Supreme supplied the milk we drank in the mess hall. Do you remember what the milk cartons looked like? They were blue, white and gold.
2. Sealing wax and mold. We used sealing wax to seal our envelopes.
 3. Jeanate' fires on the bunk wood floors! Why didn't the bunks burn down?
 4. Sneaking out of the bunk at night.
 5. Shutter bangs
 6. Red Rose Inn – Our parents stayed there when they came to visit us. Once the camp owners let our parents take us to dinner there
 7. The guard at the entrance of Saginaw was named Paul.
 8. Steve Barnett and Jan Chase managed the horses
 9. The owners of Camp Saginaw were Meyer Heiman and Louis Scherr. Mayer Kutler took over as director in 1971.
 10. The OD. A counselor, CIT or AID was on duty at night to make sure we stayed in our bunks and went to sleep. If we became unruly, we would have something taken away from us such as: Canteen. That was big punishment!
 11. Head counselors and welfare directors were: Herb Cohen, Conrad (Connie) Chalik, Uncle Bill Severn, Marvin Kresloff, Danny and Iris Pevner. The Pevner's took Uncle Bill's place when he retired (I think).
 12. Group leaders through the years: Sharon Korman – High Seniors. Libby (?) in the early 60's and later, Marilyn Skulnick (Skully) – Juniors. Marion Eisman – Inters. Who was the group leader for Low Seniors?
 13. We played a game called end ball – Do you know how it was played? I can't remember although, I think it was primarily played by Juniors.
 14. Big and Little Sisters. My big sisters were: Sharon Reese and Sue Ellen Immerman. My little sister was Beth Gerber. April's little sister was Donna Perlmutter. Who else?
 15. Short sheeting beds and spraying the sheets with Crazy Foam.
 16. Receiving care packages.
 17. Visiting day. The parents brought tons of things for their kids. We always made out well.
 18. Hanging bra's on the flag pole
 19. Over-nights – There were two sites; one near the riding stables and one down a wooded path near Big Rock and behind the standing jump.

20. Friday night and Saturday morning services – Ugh! We had to wear our regulation clothes. Even though services seemed to last forever, they only lasted ½ hour
21. Arts and crafts – In the basement of Girl’s Lodge. That place always gave me the creeps. I remember avoiding cobwebs and spiders.
22. Writing our names all over the bunk (inside and outside)
23. Lightening rods on the roof of the bunks.
24. Spying on people while they were going to the bathroom – how juvenile!
25. Sanford Hall – the hall was named after Sanford Baer. Color War songfest was held here. Other events were held here such as the Big Show (Bye Bye Birdie) in 1971. The boys were the primary users of this facility. I do remember when walking there it always smelled horrible. The grass was fertilized with horse manure.
26. Capture the Flag - In pitch-black darkness on upper field.
27. Scavenger Hunts – Someone always got into trouble for wandering into Boy’s camp.
28. Color War fake outs – I know we had them but I can’t remember any in detail. Color War was usually broken in the Dell where both Girls and Boys camps were present. It was always broken by Herbie, Danny and Connie. They also did the fake outs.
29. Sadie Hawkins Day – I don’t remember it, I just know we had them. Seniors dressed in costume
30. Late Mornings – We got to sleep an extra hour and eat at boy’s mess. We didn’t have to clean our bunks that day.
31. During the 60’s, one night of each summer, we had steak and French fries for dinner and Boston creme pie for dessert. We’d line up in the kitchen where it was served buffet style by Oscar and Willis.
32. Willis was the chef and Oscar was the baker. Those sticky buns and donuts.
33. Saniford Baer was the groundskeeper. He got paged a lot
34. Do you remember those awful sandwiches that accompanied us on our field trips? We’d order them the night before. Our choices: Tongue, peanut butter and jelly, bologna and corned beef. There were always soggy and limp - yuk!
35. The lake (or pond) that was finally constructed was a great place to drive golf balls into.
36. Worst activities – tennis and golf
37. The Pentathlon
38. Socials – Held at Russ Hall, the Canteen or on special occasions, Sanford Hall
39. Camp Saginaw is housed on three hundred acres of land. It really is a big place. It didn’t seem big just because we were small
40. Some of the dinners served at Saginaw: Spaghetti and meatballs, Salisbury steak, Liver and Onions, Veal Cutlet, Fried Chicken
41. Some of the lunches served were: Chicken chow-mein, cold cuts, grilled cheese, macaroni and cheese, bagels and lox
42. Some of the desserts served were: Ice cream (Ice-cream squares were served in a bowl and passed around the table), pies, spice cake, cookies and applesauce, jello.
43. Some of the Canteen foods were: Utz BBQ, plain and sour creme and onion potato chips, M&M’s (plain and peanut), licorice, fudge sickles, pop sickles, ice cream sandwiches, nutty buddies, Hershey bars, Mr. Goodbar, JuJee Fruits.
44. Mr. And Miss Saginaw. Some of the winners: Maxine Hoffberg, Wendy Griner, Donna Perlmutter, Karen Kotloff and who else?
45. The Invitational

46. Hill/IJ games
47. Jim Thorpe and Jessie Owens Day
48. Remember where we hung our towels at the pool? To the left of the steps and behind a red fence. There was a place to shower and use the bathroom. What a detail to remember.
49. Playing over/under. This was more of a Junior game
50. Our trunks were stored under the bunk on a wooden rack.
51. Activities offered: Kickball, Softball, Field Hockey, Soccer, Swimming, Basketball, Volleyball, Tennis, Badminton, Newcomb, Paddle tennis, Miniature golf, Golf, Canoeing, End ball, Archery, Fencing, Horse-back riding, Arts and crafts, Track and field which included: Shot-put, Basketball throw, Javelin, Running and Standing broad jumps, 50,100, and 500 yard dash, Various relay races.
52. Free time activities: Knock hockey (the best game of all time), ping pong, tether ball, badminton, tennis, letter writing, chatting at Big Rock
53. Cabaret – An evening toward the end of the summer held in the mess hall with the boys. We played booth games and won prizes. It was on this night that we were allowed to go down in the Dell and make-out with our boyfriends
54. Hand-held fans
55. The laundry room. What were the names of the women who did the camp laundry?
56. The songs – Red Rubber Ball, Love Potion Number 9
57. Hand games/song – “The spades go tulips together, tie them together, bring back my love to me. What is the meaning of all these flowers ... I can’t remember the rest.
58. Sneaking out of the bunk at night and getting milk from the milk bar. Also, we went to the milk bar after afternoon swim
59. Freezing cold nights and hot days
60. Making hospital corners with our sheets. This had to be done correctly in order to pass morning inspection
61. Color War Banners hanging in Russ Hall-Blue Lady of Victory, Girls Lodge – Red Taurus, Canteen?
62. Color War score boards were hanging in the Canteen and Girls Lodge
63. During Color War where were the score boards? I believe they were in front of the girls camp Chinese Pagoda.
64. The millions of steps leading down to the pool. It was easy getting down but hard getting up.
65. Bunk Games: Mr. Potato head, Cootie, Mystery Date
66. Big Shows:
 - 1964 – Flower Drum Song
 - 1965 – Fiddler on the Roof
 - 1966 – The Sound of Music
 - 1967 – Guys and Dolls
 - 1968 – The Music Man
 - 1969 – West Side Story
 - 1970 – The Pajama Game
 - 1971 – Bye Bye Birdie
 - 1972 – South Pacific
 - 1973 – Fiorello
 - 1974 - Grease

67. Color War Teams
- 1964 - Army Red/Navy Blue
 - 1965 - Red Taurus/Blue Lion
 - 1966 - Red Robin/Blue Batman
 - 1967 - Red Spartan/Blue Trojan
 - 1968 - Red Hatfield/Blue McCoy
 - 1969 - Red Royalists/Blue Patriots
 - 1970 - Red Jetson/Blue Flintstone
 - 1971 - Blue Cops/Red Robbers
68. Writing League songs. Once the leagues were formed, we would get together as a group and write our fight song and cheer. Then we'd present it to our division
69. League themes and teams: In 1966 the theme was desserts. I was on the Hot Fudge Sundaes. Other teams: Parfaits, Pop Sickles, etc. Another year the theme was cereals. Some of the teams were: New Country Corn Flakes, Sugar Pops and Rice Krispies. In 1971, the theme was after-shaves. Some of the teams: Brut, Ambush, Tigris and Old Spice.
70. Whenever we'd arrive somewhere we'd sing, "We're here because we're here because we're here...."
70. In the morning, the tables in the Mess Hall were damp and sticky.
71. Waiters: We had Donald Gettinger and Moe Dweck. Who were some of the other waiters?
72. Color War scores being read over the PA system before dinner.
73. The Color War medley. Did you build a fire? This was the last big event (it was worth a lot of points) that involved the entire team prior to song fest.
74. No Color War in the bunk or at meals.
75. Practicing for songfest. We always had to remove the 'S' from all plural words.
76. Holding hands and feet up when driving over railroad tracks.
77. The song Piccolomeenee. The entire song was one word - Piccolomeenee, just putting the emphasis on different syllables.
78. Rainbow girls. Those chosen were woken up in the middle of the night and hustled off to Girls Lodge in their pajamas.
79. Message to Garcia.
80. Your name tags on all of your belongings
81. Going to Big Rock to think or whatever....
82. Uncle Bill and his orthopedic shoes
83. Standing in line to phone home on Sunday's
84. Playing Murder in the Dark when it rained. We'd turn off all the lights and close the shutters.
85. Magnificent thunder storms – the ground would shake!
86. The Hamotzee.
87. Competing against Camp Shalom, Camp Ramblewood, Camp Greenlane
88. Beads and macramé
89. Watching the first moon walk in Girls lodge.
90. Playing jacks. We'd put baby powder on those wooden floors!
91. Newcomb – forerunner to volleyball. Mostly played by Juniors.
92. Summer plays put on by the juniors and inters – Oliver (1966) and Peter Pan (1967 or 1968). Ellen Packman (Peanut) was Oliver. I was one of the Lost Boys.
93. The vomit machine in the dell
94. Some of the movies shown in the Dell: "Journey to the center of the earth", "That touch of mink".

95. Canoeing on the Big Elk
96. Going down to the Canteen soda machine and buying a 10c 7-up. It was nice and cold.
97. The Chinese Pagoda water fountain was cold and refreshing on those hot summer days.
98. Archery on upper field.
99. The last few days of camp. No activities. Everyone would spend the last days singing (in various pagodas), hugging and crying. We would all promise to return the following year.
100. The last day of camp. Uncontrollable emotion as we said goodbye to our friends.
101. The bus ride home.