

# THE OCOEE STORY

SEVENTY FIVE YEARS OF CHANGING LIVES



COMPILED BY

ROBERT W. MYERS MD



*Glenn "Chick" Ellis - Founder of Camp Ocoee  
July 4, 1893 - December 27, 1992*

## INTRODUCTION

The Ocoee Story is compiled from many sources, including newspaper articles, YMCA reports, Mr. Glenn Ellis's history, personal papers, old pictures and oral accounts. Dates and facts are as accurate as can now be determined. The story's aim is to preserve the early history of Camp Ocoee; therefore the reader may find recent events somewhat compressed.

It is impossible to give credit to all of those who have contributed. It is also impossible to completely assess the tremendous impact that Camp Ocoee has had on the lives of hundreds of campers who have been part of the story. Lives have been changed, Christian commitments made, careers formed, future spouses found, leadership tested and well being and sense of personal worth improved. This story in a great sense reflects the character, wisdom, foresight and Christian commitment of it's founder and long time director, Mr. Glenn Ellis.

Robert W. Myers MD

January, 2002

## Dedication

To the camp directors who have carried out the Ocoee tradition. Their influence has made the world a better place to live as they taught the numerous campers and leaders around them civility and guided their development of body, mind and soul.

Glenn Ellis (founder)	1923-1959
Norman Covington	1959-1960
Ed Rose	1961
Jim Osborne	1962
Jim Ensign	1963-1965
Charles George	1965-1970
Henry Postma	1971-1972
Latta Johnston	1973-1978
Ron Nelson	1979-1984
Bill Severance	1985-1990
Latta Johnson	1991-present

And to the various Camp Ocoee Board Chairmen, but especially the two under who's leadership much of the camp's infrastructure was built.

Hugh Wasson  
Jimmy Hipp

## THE OCOEE NAME AND PLACE

Written by Glenn W. Ellis

Camp Ocoee's name comes from the common maypop, or passion flower (*passiflora incarnata*). The word "Ocoee" in the Cherokee language is "Oco-Hi", the Oco standing for passion flower, and the "Hi" is the ending denoting location. In other words "Ocoee" is the place where passion flowers are commonly found. You have probably seen this flower with the purple fringed petals on the ground in old fields. Later in the fall you may have found the round yellow-green pods that make a popping sound when you step on them. If you will go to your encyclopedia, you will probably find that this flower was named by the Spaniards. They were Catholics and wove around the parts of the flower a fanciful story of the crucifixion. They saw many "types" of the Christ and his passion in the flower.

The town of Ocoee is located along a very famous portage. The road over which the portage traveled, between the Ocoee and the Connasauga Rivers, was originally marked out by the buffaloes, who traveled from the Gulf plains to the lush grasses of our Atlantic seaboard. Later the Indians or more correctly the Indians and the buffaloes, used these same trails.



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## Chapter I Ocoee Country

The Ocoee story had its beginning about 435 million years ago with the first of three collisions of the Earth's North American plate with other plates. This caused a folding of the land which produced the Appalachian Mountains. The last collision with the African plate occurred about 250 million years ago. The mountains thus formed now are the highest east of the Rockies. They rise to a peak of 6,684 feet at Mount Mitchell, 6,642 feet at Clingman's Dome, 6,621 feet at Mount Guyot and 6,593 feet at Mount LeConte. Later they became forested and filled with wild game. These mountains eventually contained the most diversified flora on the North American continent.<sup>1</sup>

Between ten and forty thousand years ago the first human beings arrived in the Appalachian region and found abundant wildlife. The first groups were Indian hunters but later groups were both farmers and hunters. They built houses made of poles, bark and mud; materials which were all readily available.

Indian artifacts can be found in many areas near Camp Ocoee, especially in the fields along the banks of the rivers. Closer to camp however, one can find relics when the water is low on a finger of land projecting into the lake a few yards north east of Wasson lodge.

The first white men into the general area of Ocoee was DeSoto's party which reached the north west tip of North Carolina in 1540, just 47 years after Columbus discovered America. The party turned westward and came to the Hiwassee River at Conasaga Creek in Tennessee, and then preceded to what was later to be Chattanooga, generally by the route taken by U.S. Highway 11. De Soto later died on this same expedition near modern day Memphis.

More than a century later the first white settlers of European decent came into the Appalachian region in several stages. The first were missionaries, fur traders and explorers. Later military outposts were established. The remnants of one of these outposts is preserved in the block house known as Fort Marr which was moved in 1965 to a site on Highway 411 near the Polk County jail in Benton, Tennessee.<sup>2</sup> The original location of the fort was at a point where two prongs of the old federal road met a few miles north of the Tennessee-Georgia line.



*Fort Marr (Circa 1814) Located at Benton, Tennessee*

Various dates have been given for the construction of the fort, but 1814 seems likely. The purpose was to provide protection from any belligerent Cherokees. Some stories indicate it protected Andrew Jackson's supply line while he fought either the Creek wars or in New Orleans. The structure is made of hewn logs. Seventy two portholes allowed riflemen considerable lateral range and a 4 foot projection allowed the occupants to shoot directly down on the heads of attackers. Fort Marr was used as an assembling point for the Cherokee removal before they started west.

<sup>1</sup> Carter Patten, A Tennessee Chronicle

<sup>2</sup> Polk County News, September, 1965

It is remarkable that the structure has survived. In 1858, Ananias Higgins moved Old Fort Marr from its original site in his back yard where it was used as a smoke house. It was later moved to the campus of Polk County High School in 1922 before being moved to its present location.

The last group to arrive were the farmers who cleared the land for small farms and later formed communities with blacksmiths, craft workers, merchants, doctors and teachers. An example in the Ocoee area is what is called the "Old Dutch (Deutch) Settlement".<sup>3</sup> It was located in Sylco valley at the head of Dutch Creek at the foot of Hoghead Mountain. This area was traversed on hikes to Big Frog Mountain. In the 1930's and early 1940 remnants of buildings and a log cord road which ran through the village could still be seen. These structures provided fertile ground for wild speculation and maybe ghost stories for the Ocoee hikers of earlier years.

This was the site of Vineland which has a fascinating history. Sometime in the 1840's some 50,000 acres of land was purchased there. Settlers were recruited from the Baden, Germany area. Some ten families arrived in 1849. The purpose of the settlement is unknown but probably the Germans were intrigued by the prospects of establishing profitable vineyards and collecting natural flora. The owners may also have been interested in planting a catholic colony. In 1857 during the first fair held in Bradley County, Vineland produced prizes for grapes and wine making. The settlers operated their own government and provided their own schools and church. They built a mile or more of good roads and built their houses along the road.

During the civil war several of the young Vineland men joined the confederacy. After the war some of the soldiers did not return and the population decreased. Some of the second generation married Protestants and moved away. The last family left in 1927. The property is now owned by the U.S. Forest Service. After being used by hunters in 1937 the last cabin was razed in 1940.

One of the great dangers of these pioneer families was disease. The most feared was smallpox but there were outbreaks of cholera, typhoid fever, malaria and in some areas yellow fever. Childhood illnesses including measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, diphtheria and infectious diarrhea were common. The only refrigeration were cold water springs or wells. So called "colds", as well as cuts and infections were treated without antibiotics. Childbirth was risky and almost always deadly if complications developed. Children were born at home with the help of neighbor women, a designated midwife, or the husband. Mortality was high.

The pioneers relied on folk cures to treat many illnesses. These were developed through generations of trial and error to discover which plants or methods might have medicinal value. In general the worse a medicine smelled or tasted the better it was.<sup>4</sup> An asafetida (a herb that smelled like garlic) bag around the neck was used to prevent colds. Oil of Valerian was used for dropsy, fever and nervous or neurotic disorders. Stinging nettle was said to be good for chills, colds, poor circulation, anemia, dropsy, gout, sciatica, senility and hemorrhage. Gensing was used as a tonic, promotion of sexual potency and relief from high blood pressure. Rubbing with a raw potato or onion relieved fever. Teeth were cleaned with Sassafras twigs. A few drops of turpentine or kerosene in barley water was used to relieve chest congestion. Basil was used for an upset stomach. Cress was used for scurvy (now known to be due to vitamin C deficiency), dandeline juice was used on warts and for ulcers. Most of these remedies unfortunately had very little value and when a severe illness developed there was no effective medication.

<sup>3</sup> Dutch Settlement, Polk County News

<sup>4</sup> An Encyclopedia of East Tennessee, Stobly & Johnson



Religion was an important part of pioneer life. Most settlers were Christian. Circuit riders on horseback held services and helped set up churches.

Polk County (of which Ocoee is a part) forms the extreme southeastern part of Tennessee. Three fourths of the county lies in the Chilhowee and Unaka mountains which contain rich veins of copper and iron, with smaller amounts of gold and silver.<sup>5</sup> Polk County was formerly part of the Ocoee District. It was mainly settled in the early 1800's. Among the early settlers were the Hildebrands who's home stood along the Ocoee River, two miles north of Highway 64 from the camp road junction. The house was a beautiful four story brick example of 1837 architecture. It provided many Camp Ocoee canoers going down the river a glimpse of what life might have been like along the river more then a hundred years ago. The canal near the house where boats were originally unloaded provided a shelter for canoes to tie up and for campers to eat lunch or explore. Unfortunately, the house has been moved from the river and is now hard to identify.

The Hildebrand house was at a junction for overland transportation to the Conasauga River in the southwest portion of the county belonging to the Gulf system. The Conasauga River Portage was a primary route for connecting upper Tennessee River commerce with seaports in the Gulf of Mexico. Instead of taking the long and dangerous Tennessee-Ohio-Mississippi River route to New Orleans, this 11 mile portage provided a shorter route down the Alabama River drainage to Mobile. The transportation was done by loading keelboats and flatboats on ox-drawn wagons and transporting them from the Hildebrand house on the Ocoee River to McNairs Boatyard on the Conasauga River. Creek Indian interference with this river traffic in Alabama was one of the primary factors which initiated the Creek Indian war of 1812-14. The portage became a federal road and served as a primary communication and supply route for US Forces led by Gen. Andrew Jackson. Fort Marr was built along the portage.<sup>6</sup>

The early settlers according to Goodspeed were remarkable for their great size and strength. Some were conspicuous for the number of free fights that they took part in at militia musters, political speakings and court days.

The new county formed from parts of Bradley and McMinn counties and named for James K. Polk was created on November 28, 1839. Two hundred twenty three new lots were sold in the new town of Benton for an average of fifty one dollars per lot. Other land was offered for five dollars per acre but sold so poorly that it was eventually offered for one cent per acre.

<sup>5</sup> History Of East Tennessee, Goodspeed

<sup>6</sup> Polk County News, 12/12/90, Grayson Newman

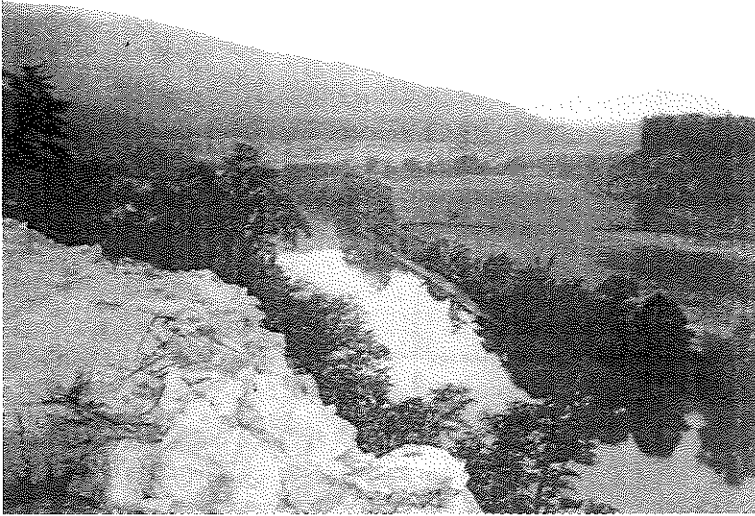


*Old photo shows a Copper Hauler's Wagon used in transporting copper from the Copper Basin to the railroad at Cleveland. (Reproduced from a 1976 Polk County News.)*

Copper was first discovered at Ducktown in 1843 but by 1850 copper in large quantities was discovered in the eastern part of the county and several mines were opened. Initially the ore was hauled to Cleveland, Tennessee in wagons, then shipped by rail to New York. Later smelters were erected. During the civil war operations were suspended but resumed after its close.

Wood was the only fuel. The deforestation and fumes of sulfuric acid in time made the Copper Hill area a vast desolation without trees, grass or living plants. It literally looked like a moon landscape of red clay hills. The operation continued until 1878 when wood became so scarce operation was suspended until transportation improved to the point where other fuels could be used. Since then pollution control and reforestation mainly by TVA has resulted in the planting of over 14 million trees.

The Ocoee River which forms the source of Parkville Lake (on who's shores Camp Ocoee is located) is a rough and rugged river considered as long as a hundred years ago to be an excellent potential source of hydroelectric power. The head of the stream is the Toccoa River which flows out of the mountains. At the line between Tennessee and Georgia it becomes the Ocoee, then runs almost the entire length of Polk County before it meets the Hiwassee River, and thence to the Tennessee River.



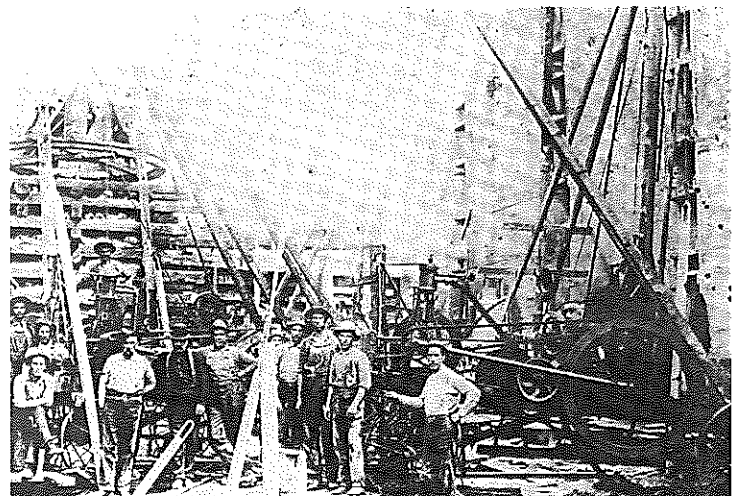
*Old photo provided by Shirley Gates shows the Ocoee River before there was a Parksville Lake/Ocoee No. 1 Dam. Just in front of the tree line, middle right, is what appears to be a farm house. The entire area is now under the lake.*

Ocoee Dam No.1, also called Parksville Dam, built in 1912 by the East Tennessee Power Company was the first hydroelectric generating plant on the Ocoee. It was built on the site of an earlier grist mill run by the Parks brothers. Twelve miles east along US 64 Ocoee Dam No. 2 began production in 1913. This dam featured an unusual four and half mile wooden flume that diverted water from the Ocoee to the power house. The wooden flume was replaced by metal in 1990. It is easily visible on the south side of the gorge as one drives along US 64. The power company built a village adjacent to the dam which was called "Caney Creek". It had bungalows, a small hotel, a school, sidewalks and a tennis court. Employees crossed the river by boat or by way of a 150 foot suspension bridge.<sup>7</sup>

The TVA removed the village in 1939 but Camp Ocoee used the level ground and river landing for the terminus of day long boat trips or stops on over night hikes. In the 1930's and early 1940's Camp director Glenn Ellis scheduled the entire camp to be loaded into canoes or row boats for a day long trip to the site about every two weeks. Because of the energy expended in rowing boats or paddling canoes to get there, lunch at the spot always seemed delicious.

The final hydroelectric complex, Ocoee Dam No. 3 was built by TVA in 1941-43. It helped provide energy for World War II. The Ocoee River is now recognized as a great white water recreation area. It was the site of the 1996 Olympic white water competition and since then several outstanding events.

After leaving Highway 64 and negotiating several curves on the camp road one comes to a beautiful old two story brick home on the left. This is the Cloud home built in 1862. The house is built in a picturesque valley surrounded by Sugar Loaf Mountain and the other ridges in the area.



*Old photo shows workers at Ocoee Dam #1, constructed in 1912-13*

It's first owner was Dr. Warren Copeland. He was conscripted into the confederate army in 1862. He was later captured but was soon released because of his medical expertise. He returned to Cookson Creek and had the house, a small hospital and an office built. The cost of the house was well beyond the means of most of the farmers that lived in Cookson Creek. The hospital and office no longer stand but I have been told that the small white wooden building next to the house served as a pharmacy.

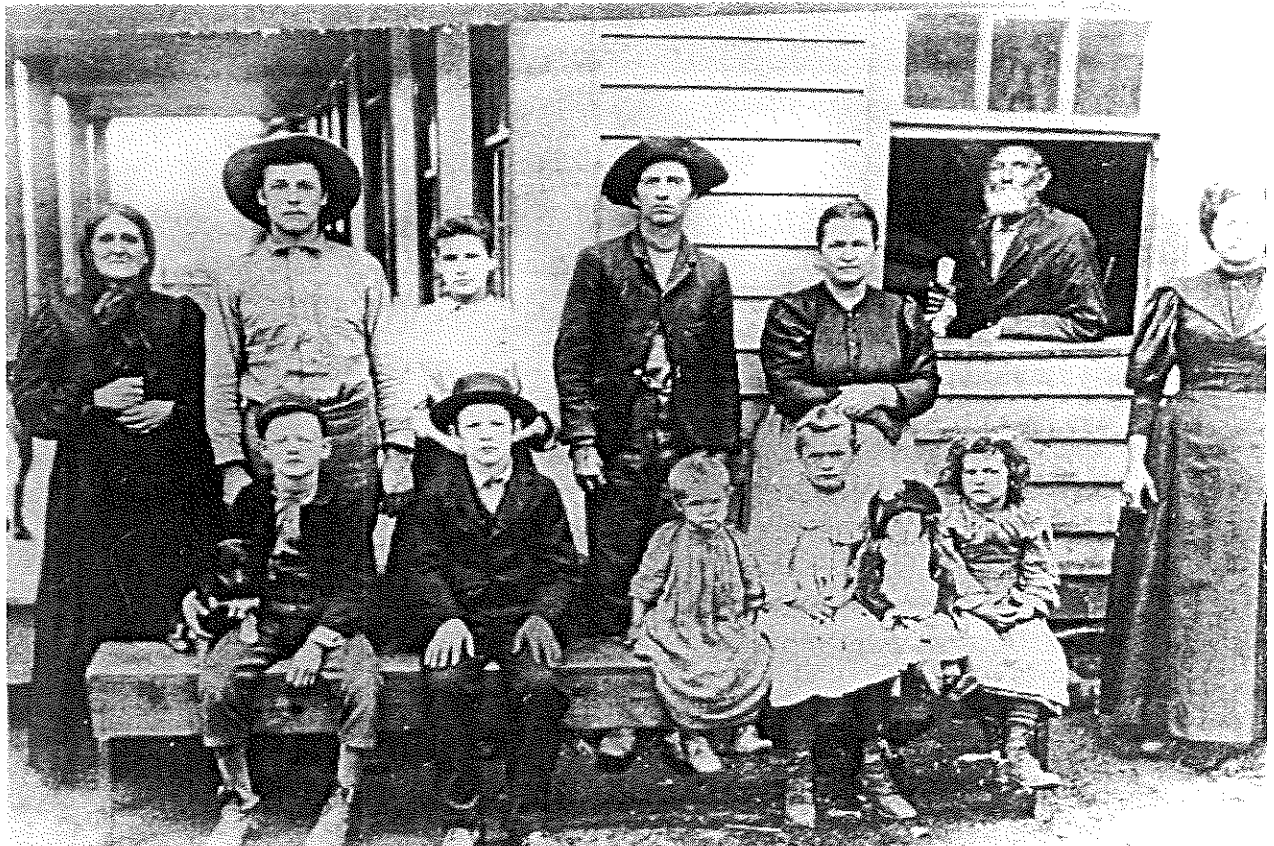


*Dr. Copeland / Cloud House*

The Cloud family bought the house from Dr. Copeland's son in 1935. The Clouds were a true farm family and raised cotton and corn. Mrs Cloud, in a Chattanooga News-Free Press interview on August 18, 1985, recalled the days when the Civilian Conservation Corps was stationed around Ocoee, building roads and trails during the great depression of the 1930's. The Clouds supplied Camp Ocoee with butter, milk, eggs and vegetables. At that time the mail route ended at the Cloud house. A detail of boys was assigned daily to come by to pick up the camp mail and then back to camp to distribute it.

The house was the subject of haunted house stories abetted by the fact that the Clouds actually had to paint one of the ceilings to cover blood stains from the doctors surgery. A skeleton was also found in one of the closets in the house. It was one that Dr. Copeland had found in the woods after the civil war, apparently the remains of a wounded soldier who had crawled there to die.

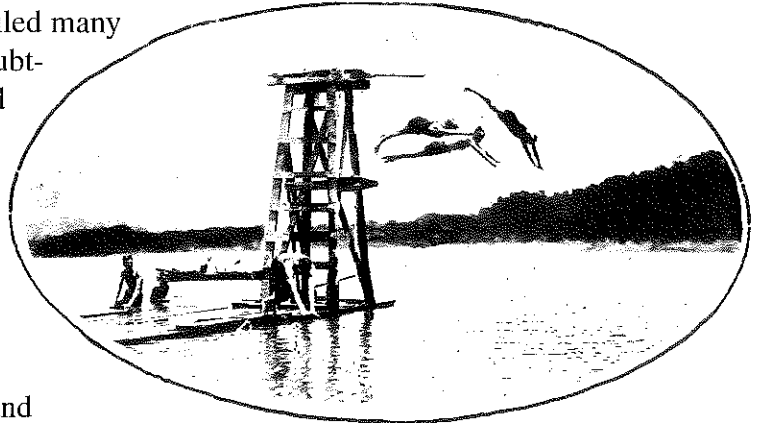
The Clouds were often seen sitting on their front porch under the large trees that dominated their front yard. They always seemed to enjoy greeting and chatting with passers by who stopped to admire the old house and ask questions.



*The Cloud family once lived near the Halfway House in the community known as Bonnie. Among those pictured here in 1896 are Andrew Johnson Cloud, standing fourth from left, and Winston Cloud, seated left front.*

## Chapter II Camp Beginnings

The founding of Camp Ocoee has been detailed many times in various accounts but the beginning undoubtedly was an example of serendipity (another word for God's grace according to Scott Peck<sup>8</sup>). In the summer of 1916 the camp's founder Mr. Glenn Ellis with a friend, M.L. Mulkey of the Chattanooga YMCA staff attended a meeting at the YMCA Summer Conference Center in Blue Ridge, North Carolina. While there "the heavens opened up" and poured tons of water into the Swannona River which ran between Blue Ridge and Asheville. The resulting flood isolated Blue Ridge for awhile. After the railroads to Asheville were reopened, the two men took the first train out, then decided to ship their goods home and hike back to Chattanooga rather than wait for the further reopening of the roads and railroads. They made the two hundred mile trip in eight days, an average of 25 miles per day. They did however have help along the way. On one stretch they rode an electric car, owned by the Tennessee Power Company, down the flume line to Ocoee Dam No. 2. On another stretch they rode on a milk wagon into Cleveland, Tennessee. Mulkey took the train from Cleveland to Chattanooga but Ellis walked the last 30 miles.



**CAMP OCOEE 1922**

For Ellis it was not a great challenge. He had earlier hiked 65 miles from a YMCA camp on Lookout Mountain near Blanche, Alabama back to Chattanooga. He loved hiking and was in excellent physical shape. Roads were bad in those days and walking was an excellent way to get there, if you didn't have a horse. Roads tended to be whatever the country side offered. When it rained one found a farmer to let you spend the night in his barn.

While at Parksville on the shores of the lake the two were struck by the beauty of the area. The idea for a YMCA camp in that location to replace the tent camp on Lookout Mountain was germinated.

World War I temporarily interrupted the plans. Ellis became a member of the 321st machine gun battalion of the 81st division. He took part in several battles, including the battle of the Argonne. The memories of those battles were to haunt him the rest of his life. The writer recalls Ellis reflecting on the senseless shooting of a German pilot described as "small and young", who parachuted into the allied lines from his downed airplane. Ellis' French ethnic background and World War I experience left him with an endearing appreciation for the French people but I do not think he ever returned to France after the war.



<sup>8</sup> The Road Less Traveled, Scott Peck

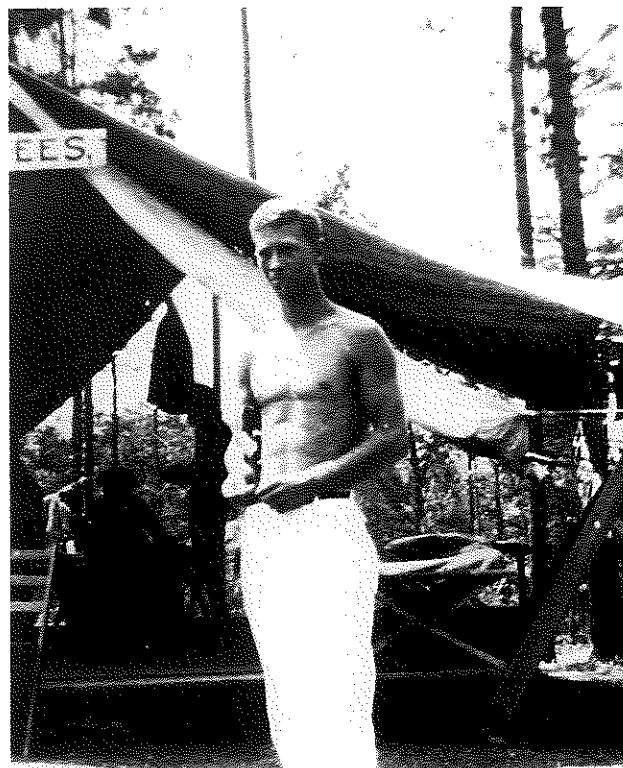
In typical fashion Ellis gave credit for the founding of Camp Ocoee in 1923 to God and to the people around him. On February 15, 1955 he wrote the following about these matters:

“When it comes to the ‘who dunit part’, we get into some very interesting facts and surmises. Was it the dream come true of Harry D. Schrock, our versatile young Boys’ Physical Director as he saw the vision of beautiful waters to canoe on, mountains to explore and nature collections to delight his boys? Or was it the hopes realized by more mature leaders like E.T. Bozenhard, physical director, and Glenn W. Ellis, boys’ work secretary? Did it come about because General Secretary A.M. Pennybacker wanted the ‘Y’ to give our boys the best possible camping experience? Maybe it came about because Jimmy Akers said to Bobby Fair, as they sat by a mountain stream at Y Camp Hill, ‘Gee wouldn’t it be swell to camp on a big lake where you could glide along in a canoe just like the Indians did?’ Was God planning an answer to those prayers when the heavens poured tons of water into the Swannona River between Blue Ridge, N.C. and Ashville, N.C.? This was the summer of 1916. The resulting flood isolated Blue Ridge, the YMCA summer conference grounds and caused ‘Chick’ Ellis and M.L. Mulkey of Chattanooga ‘Y’ staff, to decide to hike back to Chattanooga and not wait for the reopening of the railroads and roads. This led them to the shores of Lake Ocoee in the Cherokee National Forest. A launch ride down this beautiful lake convinced them that this was an ideal spot for our ‘Y’ camp. Several years later, Mr. Pennybacker with Y President Geo. H. Patten, and Boys’ Work Chairman, E.H. Rolston, sold the Tennessee Electric Power Co. On the idea of leasing the ‘Y’ about 65 acres, with a mile of shore line on Lake Ocoee.”

Mr. Ellis then added these interesting paragraphs about the early camp development:

“Since these early days there has been a gradual shift from a completely canvas camp to a cabin type camp with a program that sends its boys (no mention of girls, [edit.]) to explore and camp-out in several National Forest areas in Tennessee, Georgia and North Carolina. The story of the modern Camp Ocoee can be told in the terms of over twenty years of devoted work and generous giving on the part of Hugh P. Wasson, Camp Chairman. He personally supervised the building and upkeep of the two modern camps we now have. His generous gifts of Wasson Camp and cabins in Camp Ocoee have opened camping to additional thousands of young people in the Chattanooga area. Mr. Wasson served as Camp Chairman from September 1931 to January 1, 1955. Associated with Mr. Wasson in the modernization program should be mentioned Harry W. Large, General Secretary, and W. C. Johnson, former President and Chairman of Boys’ Work.

It would not be proper to close this short history of the camp without paying a genuine tribute to the staff of young men, the caretaker, the cooks; all of whom have given untiring devotion to the Christian ideals that have permeated Camp Ocoee from its beginning.”



*Harry Schrock  
About 1922-1924*

Initially the camp including the mess hall, as noted above, consisted entirely of tents. Water was carried from a spring which lies to the left of the road as one comes into camp from the entrance. There was no electricity. Light at night was provided by kerosene lanterns. Cooking was done on a wood/coal stove. The lake had very few visitors and the campers were male. There was no need for swimming trunks for those who could not afford them.

Early rosters of campers have not survived (to my knowledge) but the initial two years included Creed Bates, who was later to become long time principle of Chattanooga High School, and Willard Dye, a long time supporter of the YMCA, who is still alive and both mentally and physically active well into his 90's at this writing.

Mr. Dye was interviewed by Emily McDonald when he was 91 years old and commented that as a teenager in 1923 he helped set up the tents for Camp Ocoee that were the only shelter they had from the elements. "We camped, we carried water, we dug the path to the mess hall, we lived off the land, sometimes catching our own dinner". Mr. Dye grew up near the old YMCA at 8<sup>th</sup> and Georgia Avenue. He became an outstanding gymnast there and was an alternate on the 1932 USA Olympic team in Los Angeles.

In the fifteen years after its founding, Camp Ocoee evolved from a tent camp to one with fixed cabins. Mr. Hugh Wasson, at the time president of the Colonial Baking Company and a future mayor of Chattanooga, took over the chairmanship of the Camp Ocoee Committee. According to an account recorded in the May 6, 1937 Chattanooga News at the dedication of five new cabins, when Mr. Wasson took over the chairmanship, Camp Ocoee had shared in the general "let down" during the depression (i.e. The great U.S. economic depression of the 1930's). It's equipment was inadequate, the country road approaching camp was so bad that "if rain fell before you got to camp you couldn't get to it and if rain fell while you were there you couldn't get out."

Mr. Wasson's first activity was rebuilding the side road to camp from a recently built concrete road between Ocoee Station and the Ocoee River. He then presented camp with two new Colonial Cabins, and under his leadership induced the Chattanooga Rotary Club to give three cabins and the Kiwanis Club to give two.

Mr. Creed Bates, President of the YMCA, accepted the cabins for camp at the dedication ceremony. The Kiwanis cabins bore the names of Don Pegler, Kiwanis president, and Hugh Wasson, Chairman of Boy's Work. The Rotary cabins were named for Cranston Williams, Rotary President; Donald Munson, former President; and S.A. Past, Chairman of the club's Boy's Work. The addition of these cabins effectively doubled the capacity of camp.

At the dedication, Mr. Wasson added an interesting comment. He told of his visits to a number of commercially operated boy's camps, and said "Ocoee gave as much training, better swimming, and above all, finer character training at eight dollars per week than commercial camps gave at thirty five dollars per week."

After the dedication at camp, Mr. Wasson invited all the guests to visit a new facility for his employees south of the camp at what is now Wasson Lodge, a part of the present day Camp Ocoee campus.

## Chapter III The Ellis Years

Mr. Glenn Ellis was a great leader. He had the ability to bring out the best in those around him. Jim Hipp who was camp chairman for many years after Hugh Wasson and who through his connection with Combustion Engineering Company and own hard work was responsible for building a large portion of the infrastructure of camp, including bridges, boat docks, electricity and plumbing, said it well in a communication dated February 3, 1993:

“I found Mr. Ellis had a way of dropping ideas like a good farmer plants corn. Too he had a way of suggesting, like it was yours, and he could support it (sic). He could nudge professionally and guide. I found out that like Mr. Tapp (YMCA physical director), Mr. Ellis had his hands and heart into everything good for our youth and our community. Still he had a continual love affair with friends in other cities and across the seas. Camp Ocoee was his first love and he taught me to love it too, just as he did many, many other kids, youth and adults. I’ve emptied many a bucket of red stain on the old cabins and loved every second of it. He didn’t want just another camp. He wanted a camper to get close enough to nature, it’s beauty, secrets, laws to find something to take home, something to touch the years ahead for good”.

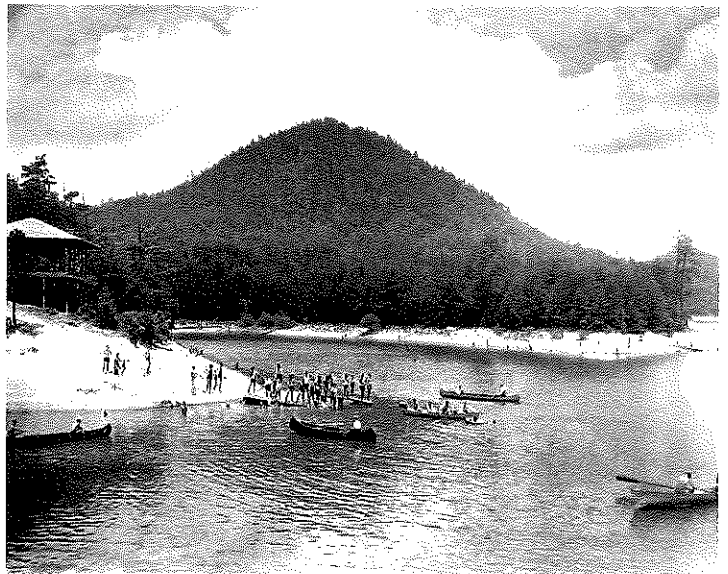
Mr. Hipp went on to describe this personal experience.:

“I remember one of my early days, he pitched to me an acorn (sic). In tossing he said ‘you just caught an 80 ft. tree’. That got my attention and a short sermonette (followed) on the intelligence, wisdom and life within an acorn. To top it off, he wanted to know if I thought such planning and loving care could be within me? That brought on another sermonette. ‘You are a God seed, you know. In one way or the other all life is. You are a God seed you know’.”

The camp program was built around small groups of ten to twelve boys with two leaders in a tent or later a cabin. Each group of campers was made up of roughly the same aged boys. They lived, played, worked, ate, worshiped, slept and went on trips together. The cabins had double deck bunks. For some reason the top beds were most desired. There was little separation between the campers and leaders except age, experience and prestige.

Water for the camp was initially carried from the spring and later was pumped from the lake and chlorinated. The lake water was relatively clean. There were few dwellings around or boats on the lake. Sulfuric acid run off from Copper Hill mines kept vegetation and fish to a minimum. I remember some of the natives drinking directly from the lake water itself.

Most baths were taken by soaping up and jumping into the lake to rinse off. This proved to be a lot more fun to campers than a bath at home. Bathrooms initially consisted of outdoor privies until plumbing and toilets came later. Lighting at night was provided by kerosene lanterns, although some carbide lamps were also used. Flashlights were necessary to get around at night.





The first cooks were Afro-Americans named Elmira and Eunice who cooked for McCallie School in the winter. They used an old wood/coal stove to turn out good nourishing food. Mr. Ellis had a policy of supporting the local people as much as possible. He bought fresh vegetables for the camp's use from the farmers in the area. One of those who made a notable impression was Tom Green who delivered in an old Ford at frequent intervals.

Meals were often supplemented by huckleberry pie made from berries campers picked from the side of Sugar Loaf Mountain on one of the many "berry expeditions". At other times hand cranked ice cream was added to the meals. "Cranking parties" provided the work necessary to freeze the cream. Frog legs were cooked on an individual basis if a night's hunt was successful. Unfortunately, bullfrogs have almost disappeared from the lake probably due to over hunting, but also possibly partly due to the world wide decline in frog populations.



*Eunice & Elmira Reed  
Eunice was the cook in 1920 era*

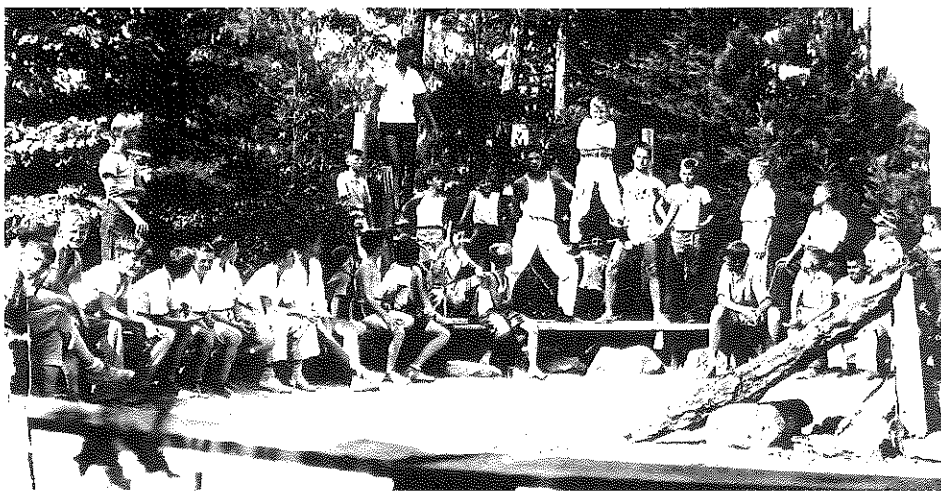


*Mary Johnson - former cook,  
presented plaque in 1973  
by Glenn Ellis*

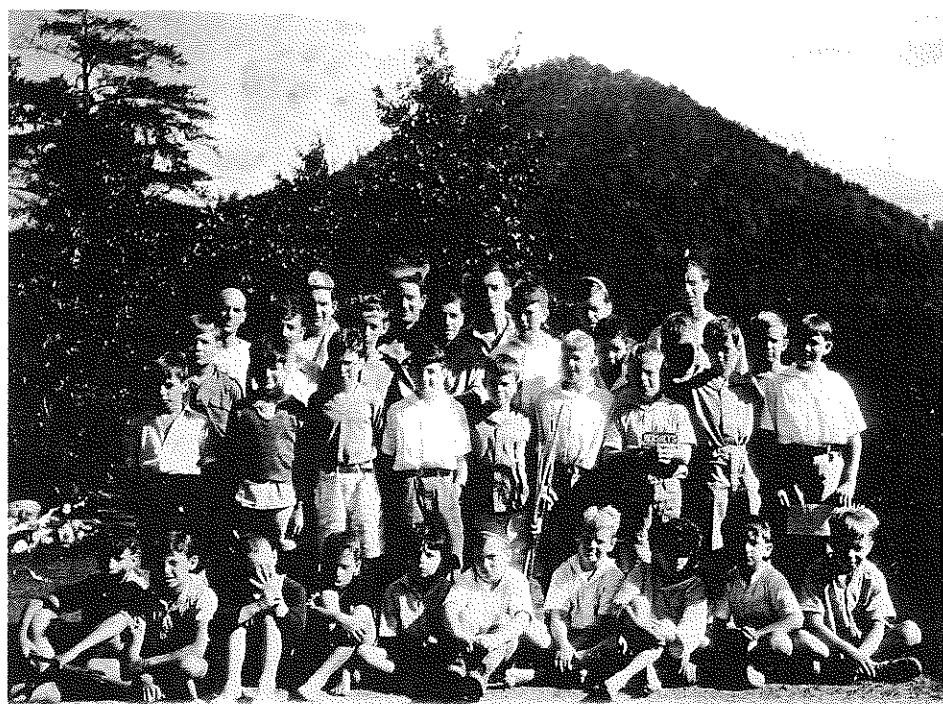
Mail had to be picked up, through the week, by a "mail detail" to the Cloud House. It was always fun to receive a letter or package from home. Sorting the mail was always an exciting time. There were no phones in camp.

Initially medical care was provided by the first aid knowledge of the leaders. Anything serious had to be taken into town, either Cleveland or Chattanooga, Tennessee. In 1937 a bright, young medical student from Emory University Medical School, Charles C. Powell, became the "camp doctor". He had grown up in Chattanooga and Camp Ocoee. His personality, leadership and medical skill were so successful that for several years thereafter Mr. Ellis arranged to have a medical student on staff as "Camp Doctor".





*Campfire Circle - 1930's*



*Group attending Camp  
June 20, 1932*

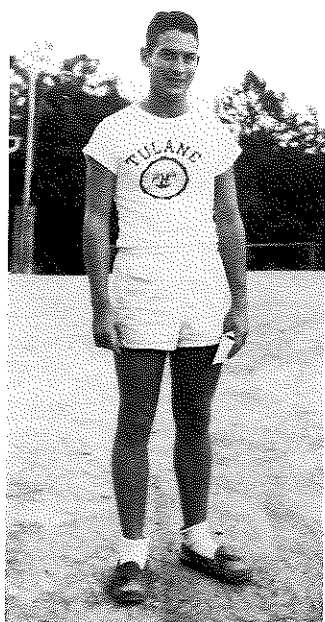


*Leaders training Course - August, 1934*

*Left to right Oliver Goldstein, Russell Damewood, Gus Gothard, Woodrow Wilson, Norvon Clark, Bill Carden, Walter Jenkins, Bill Logan, Jimmie Doyle, Walter Henderson, Sheby Akers, Norman Covington, James Jones, Mickey Ernst, George Carden, Bob Tapp, Earnest Coffelt., Frank Bull In front: R.W. Tapp - Y Physical Director  
Tent in Background was Dining Hall*

After graduation from medical school Charles Powell became a respected and loved pediatrician in Harrisonberg, Virginia. He was followed in 1941-42 by two other students from Emory, Bud Wood and Al Tew.

There was a gap during World War II, but in 1946 the writer, then an upcoming senior medical student at Tulane University School of Medicine became the first of a series of Tulane students that became "Ellis camp doctors". Noel Ice served in 1947-48, Marvin Chernosky 1949 and Everette Schnider in 1950.



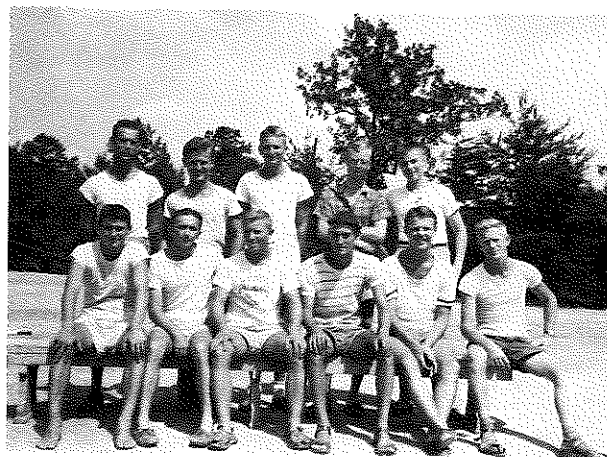
*Robert Myers  
Future Medical Doctor*

The presence of medical personnel at camp was mutually satisfactory. The medical students gained experience in handling many common problems such as heat exhaustion and dehydration (called "campitis"), sun burn, insect bites, poison ivy, upset stomachs, pink eye, infections, lacerations, minor injuries and last but not least "home sickness" especially among the younger campers. The camp gained by having some expertise on site.

As medical education became more and more expensive, medical students had to seek better paying summer jobs. Mr. Ellis then shifted to using "Camp Nurses" for medical care. For several years Mrs. Dean Peterson served as camp

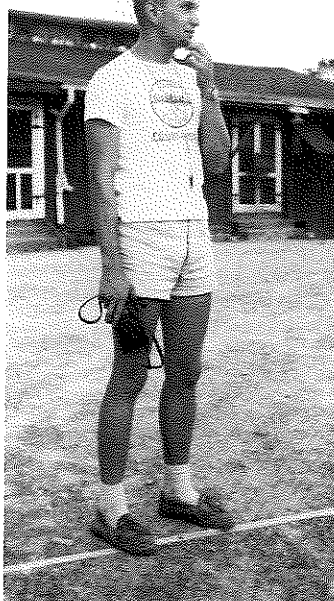
nurse. She was the wife of the highly respected Chattanooga Central High School football coach who later became a Chattanooga City Commissioner. She always provided a loving hand and became sort of a mother figure to the campers.

The camp schedule began early, usually around 6:30, with revile sounded by a bugler. The position of bugler was held for several years by Jimmy Wolfe. A camp bell was substituted when a bugle was not available. This was followed by cabin clean up and cabin inspection. The clean up was through and included sweeping, picking up paper and trash in and around the cabins, putting

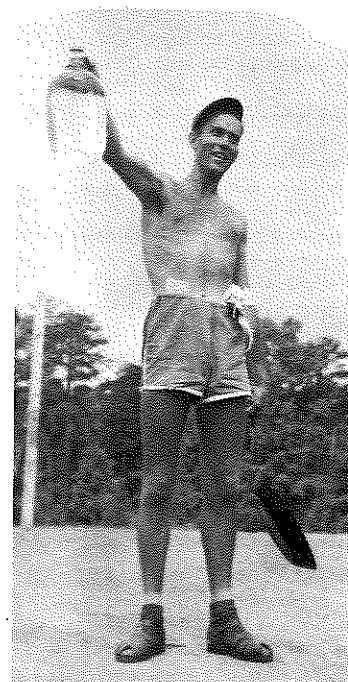


*1946 Camp Ocoee Leaders*

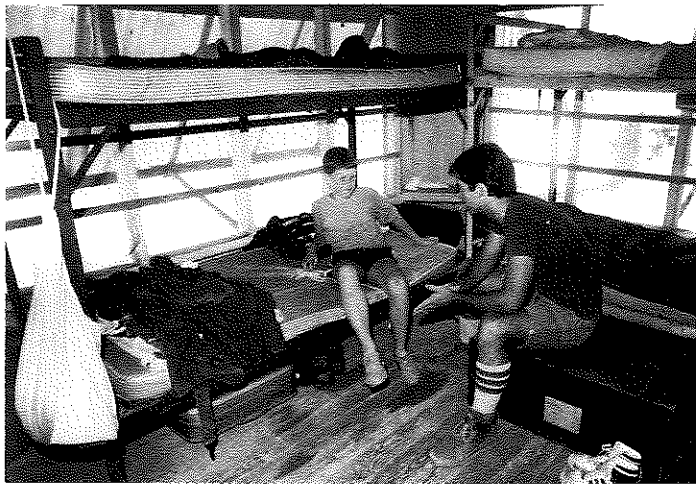
*Front: Jim Ensign, Sam McIntire, Ray Graves, George Ackley, Unknown, Edwin (Pie) Covington  
Back: Norman Covington, Bob Meyers, Jack Benson, "Bugs" Broome, Bill Snapp*



*Morton Taylor  
Future Iraq Missionary*



*Norman Covington  
Future Camp Director*



*Boy's Cabin*

all clothes and personal items away neatly, cleaning lantern globes and making things as spotless as possible. After inspection by a leaders team, winners were announced and at the end of the week the winning cabin was rewarded with "sponduliks" (usually candy bars).

The cabins next assembled for flag raising in front of the mess hall, then prayer, followed by breakfast at the cabin tables. Following breakfast Mr. Ellis would lead a devotion. These always proved provocative and shaped to make campers think about their lives and faith.

The morning program continued with classes that included various crafts, nature study, archery, tennis (on the two courts on the level ground in front of the mess hall) and swimming lessons. There was camp wide swimming period before lunch.

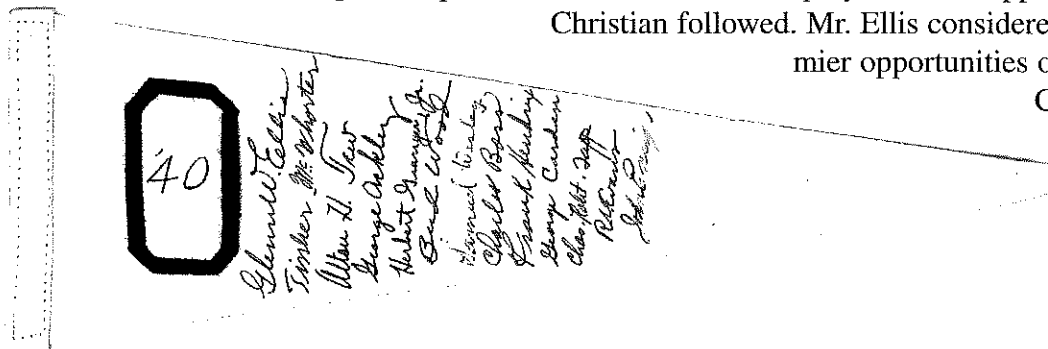
Lunch was followed by a two hour quiet/rest period that was strictly enforced. This gave the busy camper time to nap, read or write letters. The day then continued in the afternoon with some assortment of swimming, canoeing, hiking, ball games, or cabin activities. After supper there was often a camp fire program or some type of game. Snipe hunting was one of these. The imagined creatures were usually embellished by stories of superior quickness, ability to glow in the dark, make unusual sounds or other aptitudes before sending the young hunters out with a sack to hunt them. This became in some sense a "rite of passage".

Once every two weeks a "decision night" was held in the Schrock Chapel, which is located in a beautiful spot overlooking the lake below the camp fire circle. The rock seats originally formed a triangle, facing a triangular shaped rostrum (dedicated to Schrock's memory) and framed in back by two giant pine trees also forming a triangle. The YMCA symbolic triangle representing mind, body and spirit literally leaps out as one enters the site. All campers were asked to enter in silence and remain silent.



One's mind could not help but turn to the holy in such surroundings. A brief devotional emphasizing the importance of life's decisions, prayer and an opportunity to become

Christian followed. Mr. Ellis considered this one of the premier opportunities of The Young Men's Christian Association.



As the camp has matured, the site is still beautiful and full of memories. The pine trees no longer stand, being victims of old age. The rock seats have given way to benches probably a function of water erosion, our utilitarian society, our softer "bottoms", and the needs of older adults. The general configuration, rostrum, and sense of the holy remain. Near the entrance is a plaque with the words of the old leaders club pledge inscribed.



Other important activities which took place every two weeks included overnight trips and camp outs. The younger campers went to places close to camp such as Sugar Loaf Mountain or Baker's Creek. The older campers took longer hikes to Sylco, Big



*Dathyne Brown*

*First Girl's Camp Director & Future Mrs. Covington*

Frog Mountain or over that mountain to Copperhill. On the latter hike one night was spent on the mountain and another night at the old YMCA building in Copper Hill before being picked up by a camp vehicle. Bob Tapp, son of the Chattanooga YMCA physical director, was one of several avid long hike leaders as well as being in charge of the mess hall and a cabin leader. He later became a Presbyterian minister and founded several church related retirement homes in South Carolina.

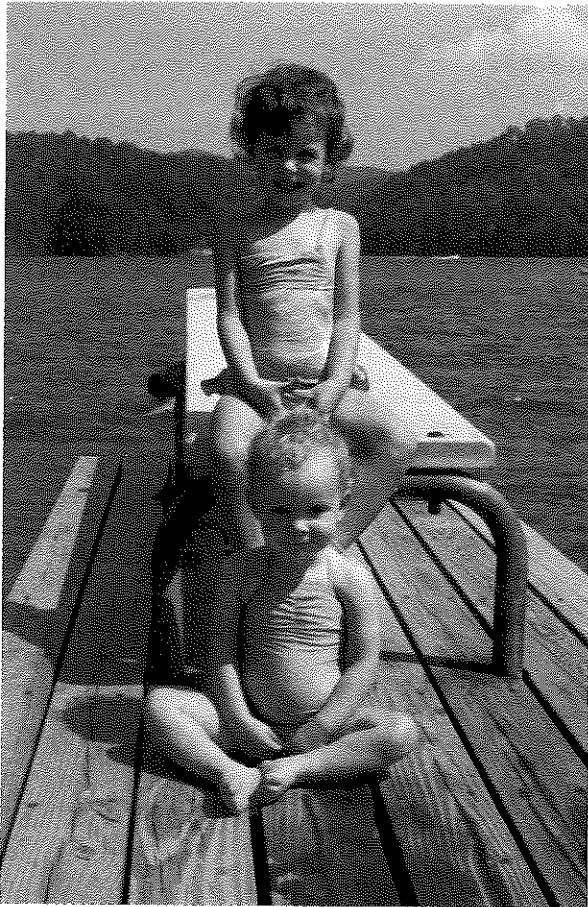
Mr. Ellis added visits to camp by native Americans from Cherokee, North Carolina. This allowed campers and Indians to get to know each other. He also added a week of girls camp, crafted not to conflict with boys camp. The final boys session each year evolved into a week devoted to sponsored campers. These were boys who could not afford the camp tuition and without help would not have had a camping experience. They were called by the staff "under privileged children", a judgment related to economics. Some however were from broken homes and required close attention to interpersonal skills. Many gained lasting positive influences and became outstanding citizens, probably influenced at least in some part by their camp experience.

The passage of time saw programs change and new ones emerge. Always attuned to diversity,

Integration was encouraged. The Afro-American cooks' son was included in the evening camp games. Because of his dark skin he was always a team favorite in hide and seek type games at night.



## Chapter IV Group Camps And Retreats



One facet of the Camp Ocoee program that was very successful in broadening the camp's use, especially among adults were the various group camps and retreats that developed over the years. The participants formed a pool for financial support, leadership and promotion of the camp. Among these groups, the succession of family camps were most notable. At the Camp's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary at least a fifth of the camp board members had been "family campers".

The initial family camp at Ocoee appears to have been started by the YMCA General Secretary, Mr. A.M. Pennybacker. It was heavily weighted by his church friends from First Christian Church in Chattanooga. The group seems to have had such a great time that they returned with their families and friends year after year. Sometime in the late 1930's, after Mr. Pennybacker's retirement, Clarence and Frances Sweets took over the leadership of the camp. It continued very successfully for many more seasons.

The structure of the two week program was based on each family being assigned to a single cabin. This allowed children quality time with their parents and other adults. Each family, as a general rule, was assigned the same

cabin each year. They thereby formed an attachment to it. Camp activities were numerous with a lot of "fun poking" especially at meal time. A "late comer" was required to "sing for his supper". Outside cooks were brought in to supply plenty of food which always seemed to taste better after a physically active day. The camp activities included water sports, boating, canoeing, soft ball, hikes, stunt nights, games, bull sessions and Sunday religious services.

The complete roster of the Pennybacker and Sweets led family camp groups could not be found by this writer, but was known to have included some of Chattanooga's best families including the following listed by husbands: Doug Beville Jr, Walter Bishop, C.L. Buchanan, John Carriger, Dr. Edward Chobot, Ernest Cushman, Dr. Dorschied, Robert C. Evans, W.C. Haley, Bill Healy, Lyman Hodge, Dr. Pope Holliday, Ted Hutcheson, Walter Johnson, Jim McDowell, George McMillan, Bill McKenzie, David Parks, Dean Peterson, Charlie Robinson, Pat Ryan, Dr. Charles Scott, Paul Shepherd, Clarence Sweets, Jim West, Riley Westbrook and Bert Wills.

A few of the summer camp leaders were kept over to supply staff for family camp. Their duties included life guarding, taking care of boats and canoes, manning the water front, K.P. service, cranking ice cream freezers, etc. It was considered an honor to be picked for the job. No pay was involved but room, board and a great time was provided. Being near the pretty girls was a further inducement.

## About People

By W. G. FOSTER

### Young America O. K.

Somebody, in fact lots of people have been lying to me about young America.

At my time of life, it is necessary that in order to be strong enough to work tomorrow I go home this afternoon and rest without venturing out into "night life." Since the lookouts started night games, baseball has become a strange game to me.

Now these croakers, old folks like myself with varicose-vein dispositions, and some young fellows who pride themselves on their sophistication, knowing that I can't see for myself, have been painting me a lurid word picture of drinking, "cussing," riotous conduct and such that, they allege, go on night after night among the "younger set."

Well, I'm willing to make affidavit that the charges are not true as to some of the younger set because out at Camp Ocoee last week, family camp as it is called, I watched a group of boys and girls closely for a week. They romped, they laughed, they swam, they boated, they played pranks, they enjoyed life. There was some indication of a little biffing and cooing, but I have learned long since not to "look" and it would be impossible, unnatural and hideous to prohibit it. Never in my young days did I ever see a group of boys and girls so healthful, so natural, so clean of speech and conduct, so free from all taint of vulgarity, so unselfishly considerate of other people. I was so puzzled, I appealed to one of them, and said:

"I came up here expecting to be shocked by you boys and girls. I have been told that you teen-agers are 'just awful' but I never saw better behaved youngsters. Are you typical—or just exceptional? Is this your regular style or are you on camp manners and know that maw and paw are looking?"

She answered, if not with words of wisdom, at least with words of fine filial appreciation: "Well, you've heard that it's

not juvenile delinquency that is raging but adult delinquency. Our parents are not delinquent. We have fine parents, that's all."

### PENNYBACKER FOUNDER

The family camp idea was originated by the late A. M. Pennybacker 12 years ago. It has grown into a unique and enjoyable annual event over which the spirit of its founder still presides. At first, it was a two-family affair, the Pennybackers and the Russell Martins. The YMCA camp at Ocoee was "adopted" for the camp home, the families going after the "boys" had finished their season. After two years, the Bert Wills were added to the group. After a year more, other men who were active in YMCA work began to ask that their families be allowed to share in the annual outing.

Eight years ago, Mr. Pennybacker gave over the management to Clarence Sweets and Dr. E. J. Dorscheid and they have continued since to manage it. John Carriger now is treasurer making it a sort of triumvirate. The principal burden of the active management falls on Mr. Sweets who stays on the job from early morn until he watches the last party come in from the lake at night, in addition to presiding over each of the three meals—and some meals they were this year under the direction of Mrs. S. H. Colston, cafeteria manager of Brainerd Junior High.

The camp "atmosphere" centers in the outdoor chapel where vespers are held each evening with church and Sunday School services on Sunday. Quiet reigns in the little nook. No one ever thinks of speaking a word there other than those spoken or sung in conducting the service. The teen-agers conduct vespers each evening. The Pennybacker class of the First Christian Church, now taught by Supt. Lawrence Derthick, has always held the Sunday School service on the first Sunday of the two-week camp. Devotionals are led by

the women each morning after breakfast.

The camp is a demonstration that it is possible to enjoy life in its fullest without liquor, swearing, gambling or riotous conduct. Everybody is happy and the fellowship is simply great. A "new" family is welcomed and made to feel at home at once.

Day after day the old, the middle-aged, the young and the very young, eat, swim, row, play tennis, badminton and ping-pong, and pitch horseshoes together at "family camp." There is a minimum of discipline because each family disciplines itself. The life guards who this year were Seth Sizer and Clarence Sweets Jr., have little to do except to join in the fun. Seldom has anyone ever had to be rescued from the water, though the boats run from the head of the lake past Baker's Creek all the way down to Parksville. Swimmers occasionally get bold, but in the main caution and moderation prevail and not one serious accident has ever marred the camp record.

### FAMILIAR FACE MISSING

One face which has scattered sunshine for years was missing this year. Bert Wills died since the 1945 camp. Three of his daughters came this year, but the mother and son were absent, Mrs. Wills being busy adjusting her husband's business.

Some of the old-timers recalled the camp's gloomiest day, in the fall of 1942, when Mr. Pennybacker received news that his son had gone down on the Lexington, the first aircraft carrier to be sunk during the war. Mr. Pennybacker himself died last year before camp time.

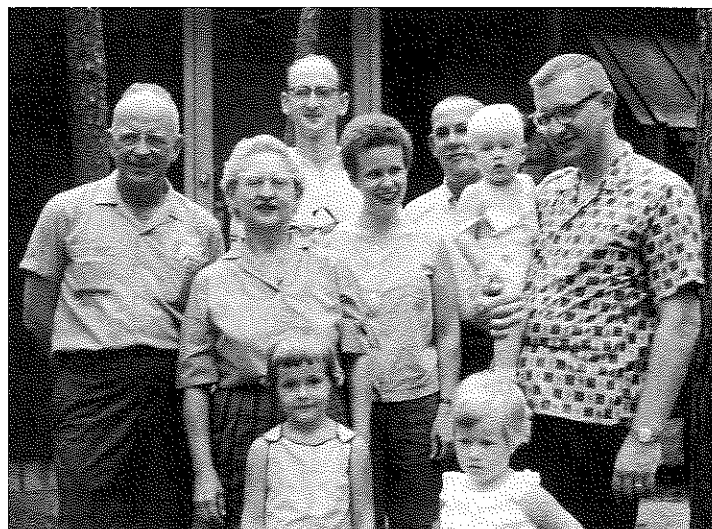
In addition to the three "directing" families, the Dorscheids, Sweets and Carrigers, this year, the guest list included the C. L. Buchanans, the Hale Hollands, the Ed Oehmigs, the Ed Cornes, the "Scrappy" Moores, the Roy Austins, the Harper Bradys, the Derthicks, the HARRISES, the Joe Mitchells, the W. G. Davies Jrs., the Roy Gilberts from Birmingham and a large number of other specially invited guests and some who came for a day or two. The Myers family came from Atlanta in the first week and their son, Dr. Myers, medical student at Tulane, stayed all the way as camp doctor.

Young Albert Pennybacker greeted us when we arrived and his brother came late in the week. They served with the "kitchen crew," which contained some especially interesting figures.

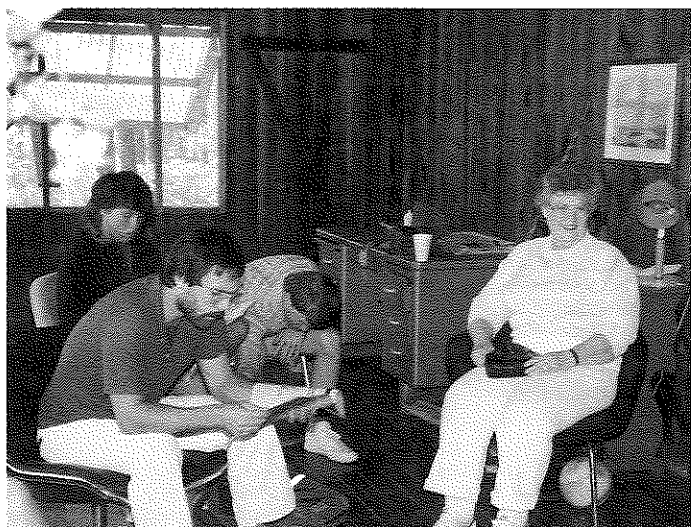
AUGUST 20, 1946.

During the mid 1960's there was pressure from the camp executive to extend the regular camp season and to use the camp cooks for all groups. This could not be worked out satisfactorily and the "Sweets Family Camp" gave up their time slot at Ocoee. A two week long family camp has never been revived.

In the early 1980's a new family camp was started by the then camp director, Ron Nelson. It was scheduled over the Labor Day weekend and proved a great success. Several members of the earlier family camps plus many new comers signed up. They have returned year after year for the fellowship and fun. A 1984 roster includes



*Sweets Family at Dedication of Sweets Cabin, 1961*



the following family groups, some of whom shared cabins: Fran Archer, Dr. Coleman Arnold, Doug Beville, Barbara Beville, Matt Biddle, Dr. Hugh Brown, Lloyd Brown, Lucy Brown, Marion Burris, David Carmichaels, Norman Covington, Larry Cundiff, Glenn Donahue, Don Durant, Eric Elder, R.C. (Bob) Evans, Joan Gaffner, Eddie Graham, Ed Groves, Byron Hall, Don Harris, Edwin Harris, Gene Harris, Ronnie Hickey, Chuck Houston, Tim King, Todd Lawson, Gordon Lowe, Carl Morgan, Steve Ross, Dr. Linda K. Myers, Dr. Robert Myers, Steve Pala, Jim Reed, James Rush, Jim Sasse, Bill Smith, Rankin Sneed and Charles Theriot.

The camp make up was very diverse and came from as far away as Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Virginia Beach, Virginia; Irving, Texas as well as various Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee locations. This camp has continued at full capacity every year. New families have been added as space becomes available. One of these was Pat Conroy who has taken a leadership role in planning the camp from year to year.





An example of the camp schedule for the weekend follows:

Friday:

7:00 Dinner  
8:00 Fun & Games

Saturday:

8:00 Breakfast  
9:00 Ski-Swim-Hydro Slide-Horses-Day Trip to Beach Bottom  
12:30 Lunch  
2:00 Ski-Swim-Hydro Slide-Horses  
5:30 Dinner  
8:00 Campfire ( Each cabin unit does a skit or song )

Sunday:

8:30 Breakfast  
10:00 Church  
11:00 Family Softball Game  
12:30 Lunch  
2:00 Trip to Lower Ocoee-Ski-Swim  
5:00 Steak Cookout  
8:00 Party Night

Monday:

8:00 Breakfast  
9:00 Canoe to Baker's Creek  
12:00 Lunch  
1:00 Home until next year!

In addition to the family camps, various church groups and school organizations used Camp Ocoee for retreats and outings. One of the longest running was Trinity United Methodist Church which was then located on McCallie Avenue. The church reserved the camp on Memorial Day weekend for many years until 1972. The camp was always filled and had a full blown program including crafts, water sports, games, bridge tournaments and softball contests pitting the boys against the men and the girls against the women. A church service was held each Sunday in Schrock Chapel. Food was prepared by the women of that church but Mrs. Margueritte Fisher developed a reputation for hard work and quality of meals.

In the 1940's and beyond many high school groups used Wasson Lodge and at times the main camp for outings. Other churches used the same facilities. This increased the camps patron base and many Chattanoogaans still have fond memories of the good times experienced at Camp Ocoee in one of these groups.

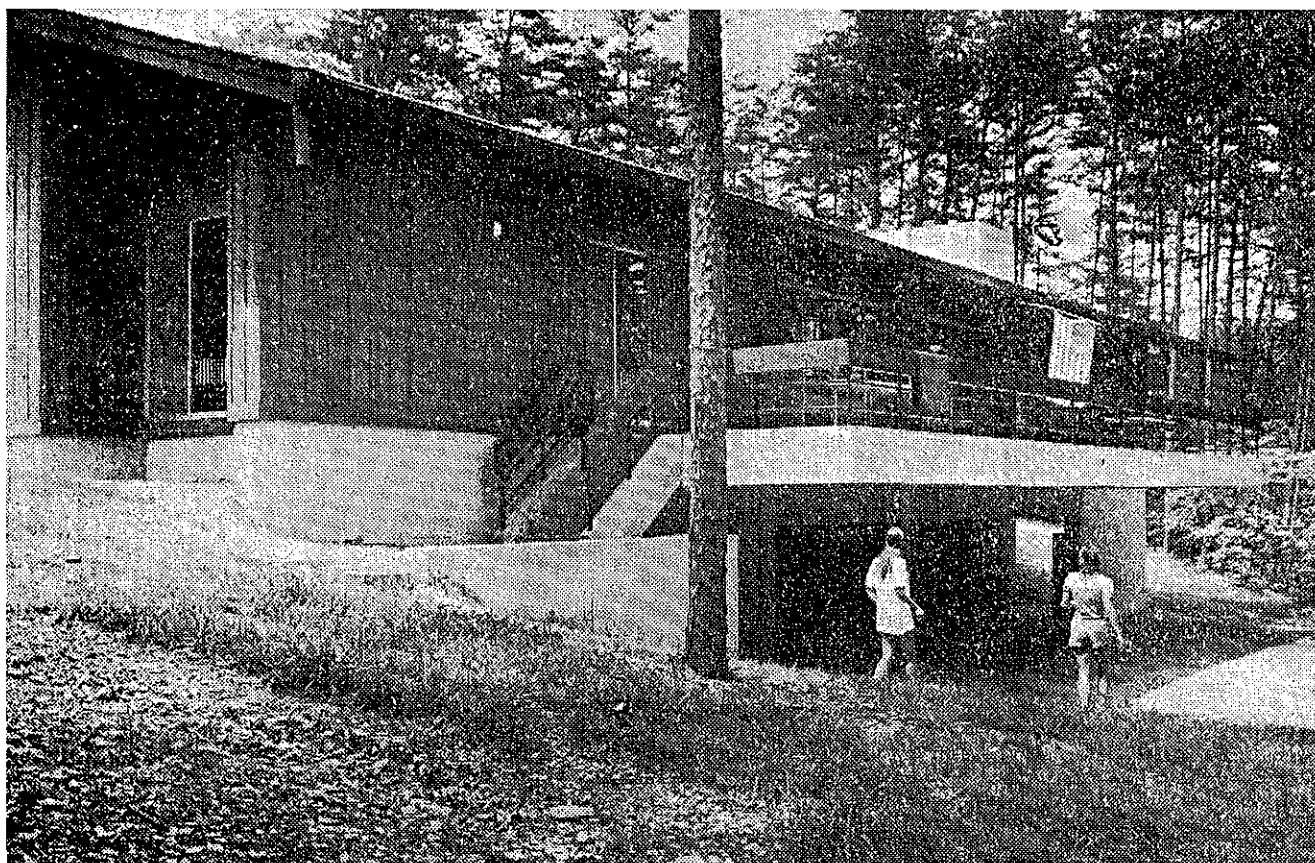
## Chapter V After Ellis

In 1959 after thirty six years of leading Camp Ocoee and forty four years in the YMCA, Mr. Glenn Ellis retired as camp director. He was at the time sixty six years old. More than 250 citizens attended a testimonial dinner on the occasion.

Camp and a deep Christian faith were his twin passions, but he had also developed a prodigious knowledge of botany and nature lore. Most of his wisdom in natural science was self taught. For many years following his retirement, he returned to camp periodically to lead nature hikes. He could enmesh youngsters into the wonders of creation and the natural world with facts they would never forget.

This love of nature led him eventually to live in a Christian community near Bradenton, Florida where he continued to lead nature walks until his final months. Except for impaired hearing caused by Menier's disease, he remained vigorous and a pleasure to be around. He continued to write notes to old friends and camp leaders. His disdain of material possessions led him to give almost everything he possessed away, including a large portion of his retirement checks.

He died on December 27, 1992 approximately six months before his one hundredth birthday. As he requested his ashes were scattered in Lake Ocoee in front of Shady Beach by family, friends and old camp leaders. Among other things he had been the oldest surviving member of his World War I machine gun company.



*The New Glenn W. Ellis Dining Hall at Camp Ocoee*

# Glenn Ellis Cited At Party For Camp Ocoee's 50 Years



**FORMER DIRECTORS HONOR MR. ELLIS** — Some of the former directors of Camp Ocoee are seen at last Wednesday's outing which observed the 50th anniversary of the camp and also honored the camp founder, Glenn W. Ellis.

From left, Henry Postman, John Ensign, Mr. Ellis, Latta Johnston, the present director; Norman Covington and Jim Ensign. (Staff photo by Bradley Burns)

On the Fourth of July, a host of former campers and counselors at the YMCA's Camp Ocoee celebrated the 50th anniversary of the famed outdoor retreat and at the same time honored Glenn "Chick" Ellis.

He is the one man said to be the most responsible for the founding and growth of one of the finest camps in the nation.

It was Glenn W. Ellis Day at Camp Ocoee and they turned out in droves to shake hands and reminisce with the friendly and outgoing octogenarian

whose life has influenced and enhanced the lives of so many others.

Just to make it official, they dedicated the sprawling new dining hall at Camp Ocoee to Mr. Ellis. It's officially called the Glenn W. Ellis Dining Hall now.

#### REP. BAKER JOINS

Congressman LaMar Baker was there to honor Mr. Ellis, as were Dr. Jim Henry, superintendent of city schools, a former camper, and Col. Creed Bates, beloved educator.

It's been a long, long time

since 1923 and the opening of Camp Ocoee. Literally thousands of boys have had their lives enriched for having been associated with Mr. Ellis and those who worked with him at the camp.

The Nova Scotia native, who came to Chattanooga at an early age, has seen the cabins, dining halls and other facilities evolve from almost nothing to something which all can be proud of.

There was swimming, boating, food, and best of all, the re-

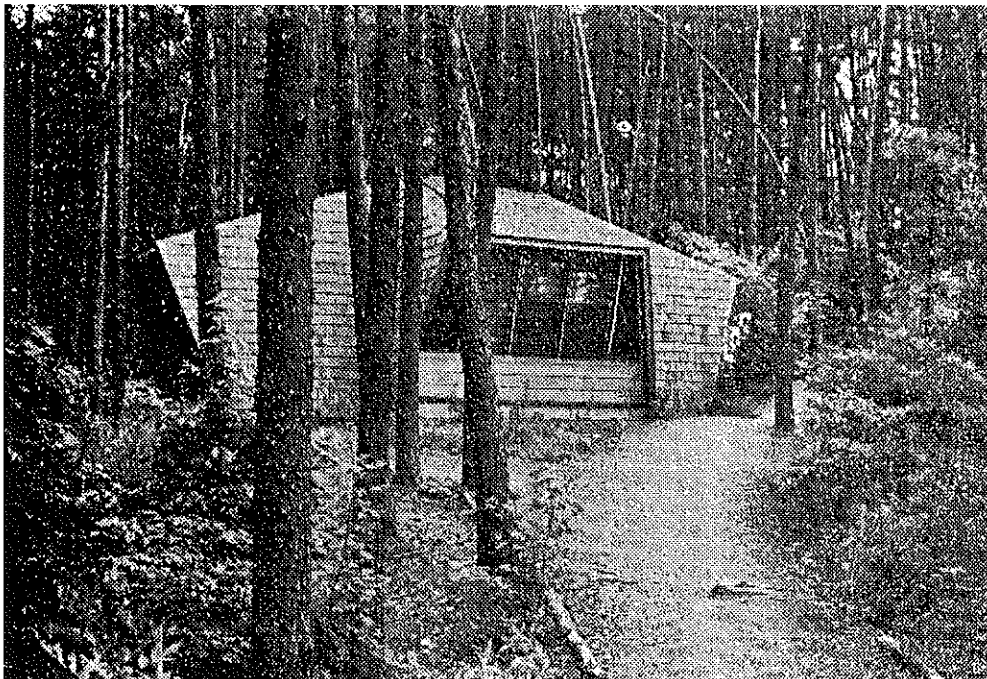
newing of old acquaintances.

A good time was had by all at Camp Ocoee last Wednesday; and much of it can be attributed to the presence for 50 years of Glenn W. "Chick" Ellis, a man who really cares about people.

Following the Ellis retirement, Camp Ocoee was left in the capable hands of Norman Covington as camp director for the next two years. Norman was a protégé of Mr. Ellis. He had grown up as a camper and staff member under Ellis. He was a natural leader and had great organizational ability. Norman had graduated from George Williams College, Chicago and then went into full time YMCA work after serving as a naval officer in World War II. He was an inherent replacement for Mr. Ellis and organized the camp along similar lines.

A little known anecdote about Norman, during his days as a leader in the 1930's, was the fact that he was one of the first persons in Chattanooga to be treated for pneumonia with Sulfanilamide, the first effective medication for this often fatal disease before penicillin. He had become ill after sleeping out wet on a Big Frog Mountain hike. He was rushed from camp by Charles C. Powell, the first of the medical student camp doctors, with a high fever and hospitalized in Chattanooga.

Although coed camping was not a part of the Ocoee program at that time, a separate girls week was worked out. Dathyne Brown was the first girls camp director. This became a very popular endeavor. Of interest is the fact that Dathyne later became Mrs. Norman Covington.



*One of the new cabins for campers at Lake Ocoee*

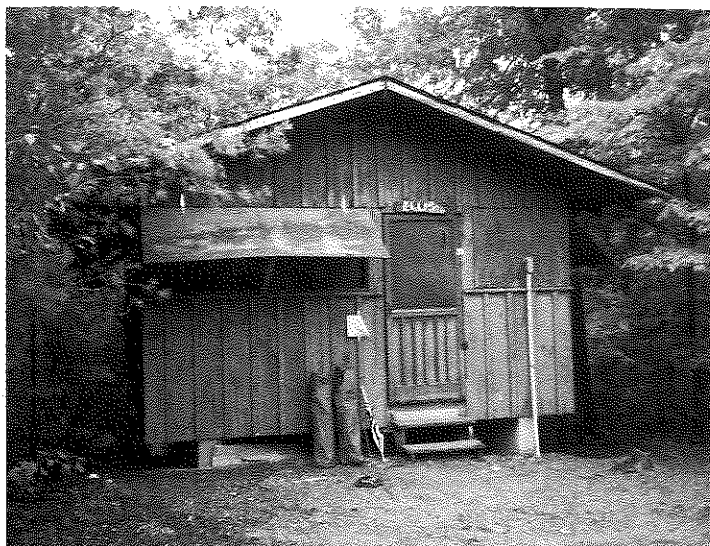
A change to coed camping became possible later with the addition of four new cabins on the long finger of land across from Shady Beach known as Powell's Point. At this location in 1969 the Sequoyah, Cherokee, Chickasaw and Apache cabins were constructed. These cabins were of a different, more round design and contained bathrooms and showers. They were designed by Alan Derthick, a local architect and camp supporter. In addition, the area contained the Dilingham outdoor

chapel, named for a former camper who left his estate to Camp Ocoee, after being killed in the Korean war. The area was relatively isolated from boys camp, but a trail and bridges made it easily accessible to Shady Beach and other areas. With those improvements girls camping became more and more a part of the Ocoee program, both in total numbers and leadership.

Following Norman Covington, Ed Rose and Jim Osborne each directed the camp for one year. Then Jimmy Ensign, a former Ocoee camper and graduate of George Williams YMCA College, was brought in from Oklahoma to lead Camp Ocoee. During his three years as director he brought in several new ideas and innovations. At the end of three years, he resigned to take over the North River Branch of The Chattanooga YMCA.

Charlie George, a former City High School industrial arts teacher and Ocoee camper, became the sixth Ocoee director. His mechanical expertise was of tremendous benefit during the next six years. Vehicles, canoes and equipment with working parts received expert attention, without the necessity of farming them out for outside help. This was a great benefit to the Ocoee budget.

During Mr. George's directorship, not only were the new cabins built at Powell's point but a new mess hall was started above Shady Beach. The old mess hall could consequently be used especially on rainy days as a recreation area. The funds for this construction were part of a capital funds campaign that resulted in the relocation of the down town YMCA to the Golden Gateway area of West 6th Street. The old YMCA property on Georgia Avenue was later sold.



The location of the new mess hall was not without controversy. A move to Shady Beach meant that much of the camp's activities would no longer be centrally located in its traditional site. A long range study and the camp board had actually called for rebuilding on the old site rather than moving. An anecdotal account states that one day Moss Causey, the

General Director of the Metropolitan YMCA, walked over the camp property and determined that the new mess hall would be built "here", meaning Shady Beach.



The move of the YMCA offices from Georgia Avenue to West 6th Street resulted in the loss of some valuable Camp Ocoee records. Early rosters of campers and staff have never been found.

Henry Postma, Latta Johnson (who would return later), Ron Nelson and Bill Severance followed as Directors. A horse program, ropes course and climbing tower were added to the activities. The horses added a new dimension but liability, winter care, riding paths and other issues became increasing problems. The horse program was eventually discontinued.

As Lake Ocoee became more and more popular with outside boaters and campers, the water program had to adjust and become innovative. For example: kayaks, water skiing, motor boats attached to rafts or the so called banana and a long water slide were added.

Many traditional hikes, like the one to Sugar Loaf Mountain for younger children, were continued, but longer hikes on the Appalachian Trail and Joyce Kilmer area



became very popular additions. The quality of camping equipment used on the trail evolved from heavy, bulky material to lighter, more easily carried items.

Latta Johnson and his wife Janice returned to direct the camp in 1991. Under this team the camp thrived. Many new ideas and programs became successful. His campfire stories, ballads, songs and stunt nights added new dimensions. The summer sessions filled and by 1998 each session had a waiting list.

The camp staff leaders took on an international flavor. Each year a number of the staff were recruited from foreign countries such as England, European countries, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia among others. This added to the richness of the camp experience.

Because an increasing larger percentage of campers came from outside the Chattanooga area, the Camp Ocoee Board of Directors under Latta's guidance was reorganized to include directors from Atlanta and Nashville. The Directors now meet quarterly in one of the three cities.

An Alumni reunion was started and is now an annual event on Memorial Day weekend. Many of the former camp leaders and staff come back each year for as the invitation reads: "to renew old friendships and memories, drink a tall glass of 'slew juice', and to become a camper again".

On the 1998 Memorial Day weekend Ocoee celebrated it's 75th anniversary with a special Birthday Alumni Reunion. Activities were scheduled from 10:00 A.M. Saturday to 12:30 Sunday. A large number attended. Each person received an alumni T shirt In addition a special video was produced depicting the history of Ocoee.

That summer proved to be a real winner according to the Ocoee news letter, OCOEE THERE: "In addition to filled sessions, explorer groups were on the Appalachian Trail all the way from Springer Mountain to Wesser, North Carolina; kayakers challenged the waters of the Hiwassee and Nantahala; climbers conquered the rocks of Starr Mountain and Rock Tower. Excaliber, Witches and Warlocks, Clue, and Let's Make A Deal were once again popular evening programs. The water slide and rope swing could have been used twenty four hours a day. The 'Bean Song' rose to the top of the camp song chart."

In addition to the regular camp sessions, as the Camp Ocoee brochure explains, "Camp Ocoee is a world of excitement and challenge, self-development, friendships and Christian values". In the early spring and fall Ocoee becomes a gathering place for family reunions, youth leadership groups and retreats for businesses, civic organizations and church groups. That number is somewhere in the neighborhood of 2,400 people that catch the "Camp Spirit".



*1997 Staff:*

*Al Little, Lindsay Boegner, Lizma Herbelman, Latta Johnston III,  
Standing: Heather Erickson, Gordie Webb*

Patty Coker  
M. Roser

Elaine McCarty  
Latta Johnson  
Nellie Taylor  
Henry Pugh  
Janice Johnston  
Doris Lorne  
Harriet Dishin  
Katy Estabrook

Bill Coste  
Lorna Adams  
Gavin Tate  
Van McDonald  
Gabea Melton

Linda  
Denton  
Linda  
Denton  
Linda  
Denton



Don Moss

CAMP OCOEE STAFF — SUMMER '71

Head  
Wood

Map Pastura

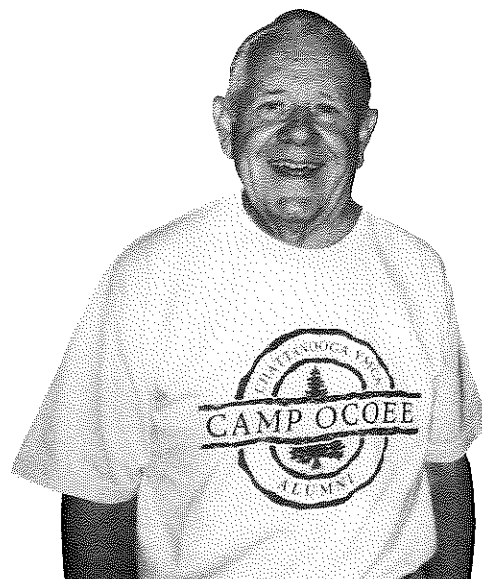
Nancy McCallum  
Dae Cernand

## Epilogue / The Future

As the 1990's came to a close it became increasingly evident that Camp Ocoee's infrastructure was showing the effects of advanced age. Although the cabins and other buildings had been repaired and refurbished over the years, many were fifty to sixty years old. Fortunately, the camp now had "city water" piped in, and no longer had to depend on springs or the lake for its supply. The disposal system however remained antiquated.

After studying the current needs; reviewing previous consultants recommendations; analyzing site plans; getting input from friends, alumni and professionals; and conducting a feasibility study, it was decided that "Camp Ocoee's facilities have withstood the test of time, but that time has taken its toll. It was therefore necessary to upgrade and rebuild the camp so that facilities matched the quality of its programs". The needs included a program center, new cabins, new Wasson lodge, Wasson cabin renovation, kitchen improvements, new climbing tower and a waste management system.

In late 2000 and early 2001 a capital campaign was conducted to fund these projects. In round figures two million dollars was raised, enabling the start of this much needed work. The broad support of the community gave testimony to the value placed on Camp Ocoee by those who had seen its fruits and wanted to make sure that its work would be carried on for future generations.



*Alumni week-end is fun*



*1997 Appalachian Trail*



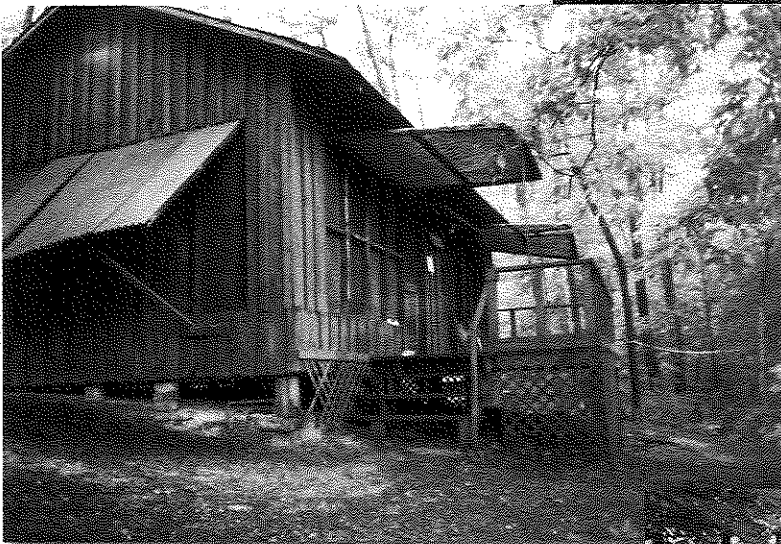
Camp Ocoee  
Summer 2001



*Office  
Bath House Below*



*Nature Hut  
Y-Men Cabin*



*Colonial Cabin*



*Williams Cabin*



*Longhouse*



*Infirmary  
Former Directors Cabin*



*Jones recreation Hall  
Old Dining Hall*



*Campp Fire Circle*

*Sequoyah Cabin*



*Foot Bridge*



*Lake Scene*



*Back of Ellis Mess Hall*



*Sandy Beach*

