



OCAsional News

The Newsletter of the Ontario Camping Association

November 2000

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It could be worse!

by Catherine Ross

In preparation for this article, I asked every camp director I encountered over the past few weeks the question: what was your biggest challenge (headache, nightmare) last summer? I assured them that no names would appear, but nevertheless, I was surprised at how willing these folk were to share their problems in detail. Maybe the cathartic effect of venting to an impartial listener explains it.

Granted the results of my informal survey would not pass the scrutiny of statistical analysis, but I was intrigued, despite the limited sample, of several recurring themes. Here's what I learned.

If you experienced an increase in staff problems last season, you are not alone. Several camps were challenged to hire and retain a complete staff. Qualified nurses, skilled cooks and competent maintenance personnel were even more difficult to find than in former years. One camp that would normally receive 2,000 applications for 300 positions received 600 this year. Although they hired the best of the group, the director admitted that the resulting staff was considerably less qualified.

Repeatedly, staff would sign a contract, continue looking and if something better turned up, break the initial contract.

A further disappointment was the sudden, group resignation of four senior staff two weeks before the end of camp. They explained that they were burned out. Afterwards, some of the group apologized to the director admitting that they had jumped on the bandwagon without thinking.

Several camps shared stories of staff that had signed contracts but simply did not arrive to honour them. One director travelled to Nova Scotia and hired ten university students and graduates with qualifications to work with learning disabled children. Eight quit before the season started! Another camp reported that seven of a staff of forty-seven never showed. One director received a call one hour before the beginning of pre-camp from a staff person who had decided to attend summer school. Elsewhere, a staff person/teacher participated in the first

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Jack Pearse receives OCA award

by Jeff Bradshaw

At the Fifth International Camping Congress in Tokyo, Japan, Jack Pearse,

current President of the International Camping Fellowship, received the OCA's International Development Award.

The award has been presented only once before, in 1995, to Jane McCutcheon following Kumbayah (the Third International Camping Congress). Jane was the Chair of Kumbayah.

Jack Pearse has been a true leader in international camping. In 1988, Jack, as a founding member of ICF, organized and hosted the very first ICF Steering Committee meeting in Canada, and covered the costs of a number of steering committee members.

From 1987-1994, Jack was the Canadian Representative for ICF and since 1995, he has been the President of ICF. Jack continues to be a much sought-after and acclaimed speaker at camping conferences and gatherings around the world.

During his time with ICF, Jack has played an integral part in the formation of national and regional camping associations in Russia, Ukraine,

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The official newsletter of the Ontario Camping Association, the *OCA'sional News* is published monthly from October to June of each year. The newsletter helps to keep the OCA membership informed about developments both in and out of the Association pertaining to children's, youth, and special needs camping.

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Ontario Camping Association.

Queries regarding submissions and letters to the editor are welcome. Please direct correspondence to:

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by Ellen Nash
OCA President

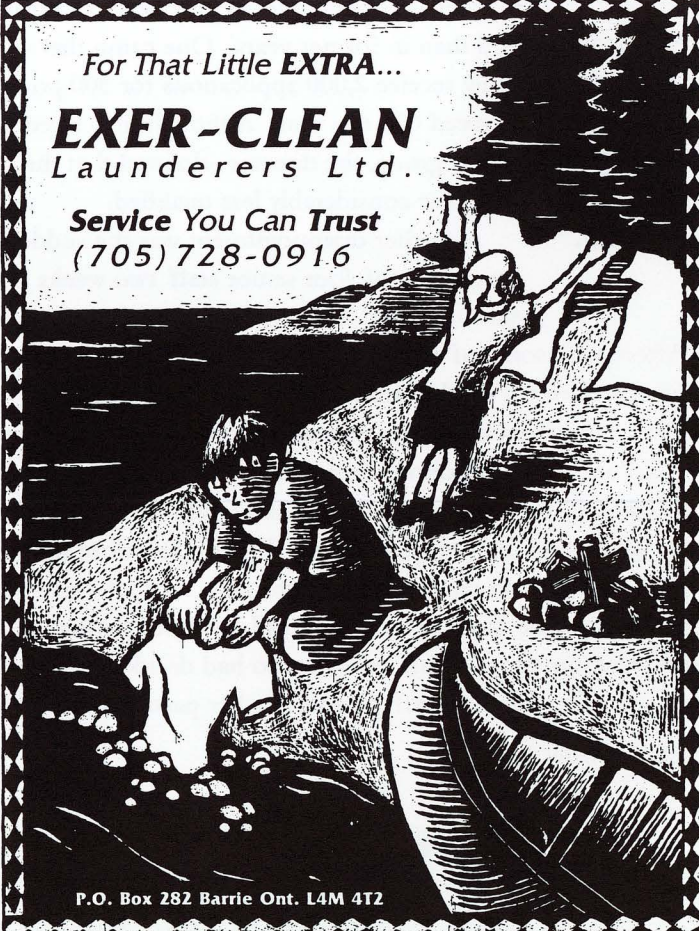
October has been a very eventful month for the OCA; some of the events have been positive, while others present us with new challenges. First, the positives:

1. After an extensive search for a new Membership Secretary, on

October 24th we were pleased to welcome Kim Mitchell to our OCA Membership desk. Kim is well known to many of us, from her staff positions at both Doe Lake Girl Guide Camp and Robin Hood Day Camps, as well as her assistance as a volunteer at Directors' Conferences and Counsellor Conferences. Kim understands our Association and is poised to assist us with our needs. Please say "welcome" to Kim the next time you phone our office.

2. At the closing event of the International Camping Congress, past OCA Presidents and Board members who attended the event in Japan presented the OCA International Development Award (for only the second time in its history) to Jack Pearse. Those who know of Jack's work in establishing camping ties around the world will recognize that it is a well-deserved award, and we look forward to repeating the presentation to Jack in March at our own Directors' Conference, so that we can all share in honouring him.

3. I recently represented Ontario at the CCA/ACC Presidents' Council meeting in Moncton, N.B. We were treated to superb Maritime hospi-



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tality (complete with a delicious lobster dinner), and a very productive and collegial meeting. I am happy to report that OCA will benefit from two grants from the CCA/ACC Project Development Fund. The first, an updating of our Health Care Video, will be completed by spring of 2001, and will be helpful for our representatives making presentations to nursing schools and associations to secure camp nurses for the summer of 2001. It will also assist individual camps in examining their own health centres and making changes wherever necessary. The second, a survey of camps, parents, and demographic statistics, to be led by Ontario and completed across Canada, will help us determine why parents send children to camp, expectations when at camp, and the impact the camping industry has on the local and national economies. This study will be invaluable in marketing efforts by both individual camps and provincial associations, as well as in lobbying efforts with governments at all levels. Timelines for this project are not yet firm, but will be developed shortly.

Now, the challenges:

1. As reported last month, we faced a new challenge in the provision of drinking water at our camps. Thanks to all who attended the October meetings with the Ministry of the Environment, who made presentations, and who sent letters, etc. We will keep you informed as we receive any new information.

2. With a great deal of regret, I must announce that this is the last edition of the *OCA'sional News* to be edited by Fiora Hawryluk. Due to personal circumstances, Fiora has resigned from her involvements with the OCA. Her thoughtful and willing contribution, as well as her calm manner and quick smile, have affected so many facets of OCA life, that she will be greatly

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Correction:

The artist who painted *Chapel Point - Kilcoo Camp* was incorrectly identified in the October OCA News as Ken Bolt. His name is, in fact, Ron Bolt. The OCA News regrets the error.

missed and difficult to replace. Thank you for all that you have done, Fiora, and we hope that circumstances in the future will allow you to join us again.

Fifth International Camping Congress

by Jeff Bradshaw,
International
Camping Fellowship

and programs across Japan.

Our Canadian delegation was the fourth largest after Japan, Russia and the United States. Canadians participating included Madeline & Robin Allen, Gillian Baker, Diane Blair, Peter Bloom, Jeff & Renata Bradshaw, Jessica Breski, Jan Clarke, Dave & Anne Graham, Steve Heming, Barb Hnatiak, Barb Janicek, John Jorgenson, Jane McCutcheon, Mary McCutcheon, Joyce McDonald, Mark McMaster, Frank McNeill, Margo Millette, Sally Moore, Jocelyn Palm, Anne Parris, Jack Pearse, Mike Pearse, the Raills (Jacqui & Don, Gabrielle, Chad & Morgan), Jim & Bonnie Schmidt, Megan Snape and Tim Walker.

There were many highlights including:

- 650 delegates from 22 countries (Japan, Russia, USA, Canada, Greece, Australia, Mexico, Mongolia, Ukraine, Venezuela, Finland, Columbia, Cyprus, Ireland, Italy, South

The Fifth International Camping Congress, held in Tokyo, Japan, in early October, was a tremendous experience for all concerned.

The National Camping Association of Japan provided four days of learning and cultural exchange, followed by three days of optional tours

Korea, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of China, Sweden, Thailand and Hong Kong)

- a spectacular Opening Ceremony featuring the Prince and Princess of Japan
 - dozens of general sessions, workshops, seminars and demonstrations
 - a private tour of the Canadian Embassy and reception at the Ambassador's residence for the Canadian delegation
 - Jack Pearse being presented, at the ICF Annual Gathering, with the OCA's International Development Award
- Special thanks, on behalf of all the Canadians to:
- Jocelyn Palm (Glen Bernard Camp) for her orchestration of the unforgettable Embassy tour and reception
 - Dave Graham (Camp Kandalore) for organizing the Air Canada flight package for Canadians travelling to Japan
 - Jim Schmidt (Glen Bernard Camp) for bringing samples of his maple syrup for Canadians to share with our friends from other countries

SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CAMPING CONGRESS
During the Congress in Japan, plans were unveiled for the next Congress.

The Camping Association of Victoria, the Australian Camping Association and ICF invite camp leaders to assemble in January 2003 in Melbourne, Australia for the Sixth International Camping Congress.

"Beneath the Southern Cross" will surely provide another wonderful opportunity for interaction and exchange.

Watch for more details in future issues of the *OCA'sional News*. If you would like to receive regular correspondence about the event, please contact me at 905-631-2849 or by e-mail at jb-wenonah@sympatico.ca.

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It could be worse!
continued from page 1

weekend of pre-camp then returned to the city to finish the last few days of the school year. During this time, her

principal persuaded her to spend her summer writing curriculum for special education so she too broke her contract.

Most directors who were plagued with hiring problems concluded that in our current healthy economy, jobs are plentiful; hence, hiring and holding summer staff is more difficult. Repeatedly, staff would sign a contract, continue looking and if something better turned up, break the initial contract.

A second recurring theme was dealing with difficult parents. One director was ready to throttle a camp father who insisted that his daughter was not to share a cabin with the friend of her choice because they had had a disagreement at school. Therefore, he deemed it best that they were separated at camp. He refused to discuss the matter with his daughter, her friend, her friend's parents or the camp director. His word was law!

Equally frustrating for another director were the parents who insisted on removing their mildly homesick daughter from camp a week before her scheduled departure because camp was not proving to be the perfect experience for their child. They were not prepared to let her cope and grow with the challenge of being away from them for the first time.

We can learn from some of our fellow directors' mishaps. To his dismay, a director learned that his new 9.9 four-stroke engine was not only bigger but also considerably heavier than the old 9.9 two-stroke model he was replacing on his crash boat. Returning to the dock, he discovered that the rescue boat had sunk. After bailing the boat and servicing the engine, his solution was to place a cement block in the bow to counter balance the weight in the stern. This worked until a well-meaning staff person, unaware of the purpose of the cement block, removed it. The boat sank a second time involving more loss of time and expense until the marina returned again to salvage and repair the engine.

One camp was relieved that only six children arrived this summer with head lice - a considerable reduction from 1999. Pre-camp training in 2000 included a video, *Head Lice to Dead Lice*, an educational and entertaining review of this recurring problem. The director recommends this as a valuable staff-training tool which is available from distributor, Brian Banks, 905-473-5679 for \$43.95.

In August, a Mexican camper was taken to the local hospital after a fall during a basketball game. After a five-hour wait, x-rays were taken. At four a.m. the camper, suffering considerable pain, returned to camp and the x-rays were sent

to a major hospital to be read. The radiologist confirmed two fractures. Three days later, the child was in surgery ready for an operation when the anesthetist realized her nationality. He told her mother, who had arrived from Mexico, through a translator, that he expected payment in cash before proceeding. At this point, the feisty camp nurse dug in her heels and demanded that he proceed immediately. Lesson learned: if you take a foreign camper to hospital carry your chequebook!

And finally, what would you do in this situation?

Mid-summer, while walking from his office to his cabin at rest hour, a director looked out over the lake. He spotted five heads bobbing in the water at a considerable distance from shore. No lifeguard or safety boat was in view. He immediately went out to question the swimmers. He discovered that his Leadership, Out-tripping, Arts and Crafts and Waterfront Directors and his Camp Nurse had decided to go for a long distance swim across the lake and back, about a kilometre in total. As no one wanted to guard from an accompanying boat (mandatory standard PW11), without much thought or discussion, they decided to swim without one. They were all senior, experienced staff who had been performing well in their jobs. After discussing the situation with the five staff, the director called several colleagues seeking their advice.

What would your advice have been? Email your response to the OCA at oca@ontcamp.on.ca and we will publish your advice as well as the director's action in the December issue.

Would you:

- a) dismiss none
- b) dismiss one
- c) dismiss some
- d) dismiss all five staff?

Ever wonder if camp directing is worth the hassle? Of course it is! Just close your eyes and envision the happy smiles on your campers' faces!



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Special Needs Update

by Pat Daley
Playability Co-ordinator
Ontario Parks Association

The great outdoors isn't so great for children or parents with disabilities if a trip to the playground presents an unwelcome challenge because of things like:

- uneven, bumpy ground, heaving flagstones, or other surfaces that cause tripping and stumbling
- broad expanses of grass or wooden structures that are diffi-

cult for a person with a visual impairment to distinguish from their surroundings

- wooden or concrete curbs surrounding the play area
- play structures where all the fun is up on a platform, accessible only by stairs or ladders

The Ontario Parks Association (OPA) is working with the Government of Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation to produce a Playability Tool Kit for improving playground accessibility.

Play is an essential part of a child's development. Playgrounds are also important places for family members to spend relaxed, fun time together. Playability is based on a concept known as "universal design." Instead of making facilities for the "average" person, universal design tries to consider all the possible users. When the Playability Tool Kit is published, it will include an audit form to help you assess your playspace.

Whether your budget is big or small, there are easy changes that can improve the accessibility of your playspace, including:

- paved or boardwalk paths leading to play area

- replacing soft surfaces like sand and pea gravel with wood chips, rubber or other more accessible materials
- applying yellow paint to gates, curbs or other potential obstructions
- locating more play activities at ground level
- adding activities like scented gardens, nature areas, chimes, or board games to stimulate the imagination and the senses

If you would like more information about Playability, please contact the Ontario Parks Association at 416-657-2980 or email opa@opassoc.on.ca.

*Jack Pearse,
continued from page 1*

Venezuela, Mexico, Columbia, Greece, Cyprus, Australia and Malaysia. In 1991, Jack was in the first official group of camping

leaders invited to tour camps and offer support to the Russian camping community.

Jack's good works can also be felt here at home. He has played a pivotal role in the growth in the number of international campers and staff at Ontario camps; he has personally welcomed international groups to Camp Tawingo on many occasions and has paved the way for international delegates to attend the OCA Conference for many years.

For anyone who has participated in international camping events over the years, it is not just Jack's words and music that have endeared him to thousands around the world; his passionate commitment to enhancing our world of camping have made him truly a beloved figure.

The Award was presented to Jack by Jocelyn Palm, Jeff Bradshaw, Jane McCutcheon and John Jorgenson, representing the OCA.

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Health Care Committee Q & A

Q. Who made a recent announcement about Ontario's continued commitment for anti-tobacco initiatives?

A. Health and Long-Term Care Minister Elizabeth Witmer

Minister Witmer announced on September 22, 2000 that Ontario will continue its \$10 million commitment to the Ontario Lung Association's *Lungs are for Life* project. "We are working with leading health organizations and local groups to reduce tobacco use in Ontario, especially among young people and women." *Lungs are for Life* is a comprehensive school-based program which aims to help students from kindergarten to grade 12 explore their own ideas about smoking and making informed decisions. "Preventing young people from taking up smoking is one of the most important aspects of the Ontario Tobacco Strategy," said Ross Reid, President and CEO of the Ontario Lung Association. For more information, see the Ministry of Health website: <http://www.gov.on.ca/health/>.

submitted by Wendy A. Mackenzie, R.N.
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Please Note!

The next OCA Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 28th, from 4 to 6 p.m., at the Girl Guides Ontario office at 14 Birch Ave., in Toronto.

The Ontario Camping Association's

Annual General Meeting

will take place on
December 12, 2000
starting at 5:00 p.m.,

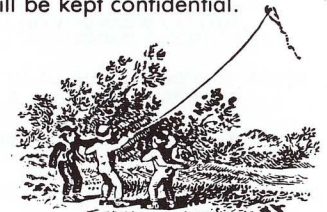
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