

Community News

Red Pine camp alums return to Minocqua area for 75th reunion

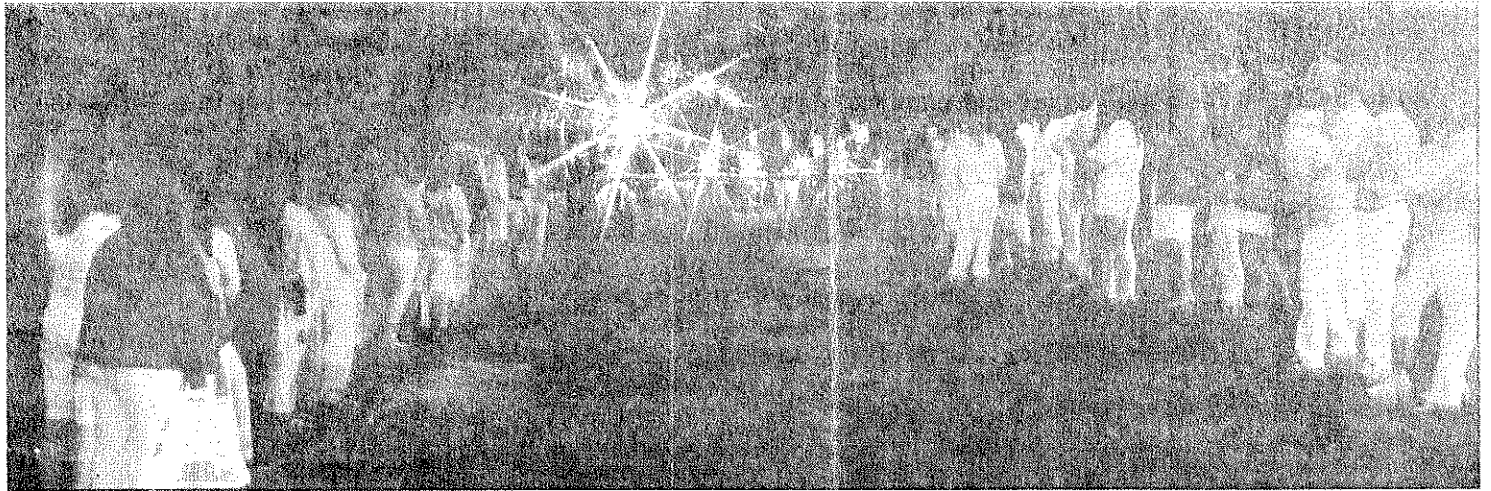
Camp holds a special place in their hearts

By Brian Jopek
of The Lakeland Times

To the person, all had nothing but good things to say about their experiences as campers, counselors or both at Red Pine Camp For Girls.

The camp, just a few miles northeast of Minocqua on the shores of Clear Lake, was opened in 1938 on the grounds of what had been a fishing resort.

The camp recently held its 75th reunion, which brought about 120 former Red Pine campers from as far away as Mexico, to the Minocqua area.



Dean Hall photograph

Campers and counselors past and present at the Red Pine Camp gather for a candlelight ceremony during the recent reunion of camp alumni marking the camp's 75th year.

Memories

One of those campers with fond memories of her summers camping at Red Pine was Linda Castner, a high school secretary from Princeton, Ill.

"Red Pine was my home away from home," Castner said. "We were just one big happy family."

Castner's first four-week summer session at Red Pine was in 1964. She was a camper until the summer of 1971, when she did her first stint as a counselor. She continued as a counselor through the 1973 camping season at Red Pine.

"We could be our own person, were treated like ladies, and we had choices," Castner said.

Sheila McNulty is a federal judge in Chicago who did her first camping season at Red Pine in 1972. She also now serves on the camp's board of directors.

"My friends back home would ask me why I wanted to come back here every summer," McNulty said.

"There's just something about coming up here to a nice environment for kids," she said. "You could do all kinds of things and you could be competitive or not."

One of the things McNulty said she

liked about her 13 years as a camper and counselor was the one-on-one instruction, whether it was in activities like archery or sailboating or horseback riding.

"I came from a large family and to be able to have that one-on-one time was nice," she said. "I love that I learned how to clean toilets!" she exclaimed.

Her daughter is one of the latest in the family to attend Red Pine.

Sheila's sister, Mary Grossman (known to everyone there as Mary Fran), was the first from the McNulty family to attend the camp and also did 13 years as a camper and counselor.

Mary and Sheila and their family lived in a suburb of Chicago when they were kids and their parents were always busy.

"Someone from our town had gone and loved it, so I wanted to go," she said.

Mary, who works as a personal trainer, now lives in Massachusetts, but she remembers what she really loved about Red Pine and what brought her back all those summers.

"I just loved the Northwoods, the clear water," she said. "We could do all these activities we couldn't do at home."

"One of my years as a counselor, I had

Sheila in my cabin as a camper," she said. "We won't go into the pranks we played on each other."

Physical connection for one

Pam Wells is a pediatrician from San Diego, Calif., who was a Red Pine camper from 1972-78.

Her ties to the camp aren't just personal but physical as well.

"My great grandfather leased a cabin across the lake and my family had a place up here," she said.

"My dad was a yardboy here when he was younger and when I was a kid, in the winter, we'd come up and go snowmobiling."

Wells was asked if the proximity of her family to the camp during the time she was here was a problem.

"I loved camp," she said. "When I would be here my mom would actually look through her binoculars from across the lake trying to see me."

Her shyness was something she said her years at camp helped her get over.

"When I started here, I was pathologically shy," Wells said. "This place went a long way toward helping me get over that and build my self-confidence, my self-esteem."

Wells said she'd like to see the camp do a reunion every year and while her eight-year-old daughter didn't camp this year, she will be a Red Pine camper in 2013.

She said she didn't think she'd be looking through binoculars for her daughter, however.

Camp traditions

The camp's traditions were another item mentioned by the former campers as a reason for its appeal.

Kim Hackman, a third grade teacher from St. Louis, Mo., who spent 19 summers at Red Pine starting with the 1971 camping season, said the experience never changes.

"Everything they do today, whether it's the activities or the ceremonies, mimics what we did when I was here," she said.

One thing Hackman felt was important was how those girls who maybe didn't start at Red Pine until later weren't left out by those who had been going since they were younger.

"They were made to feel as though they were part of the whole thing," she said.

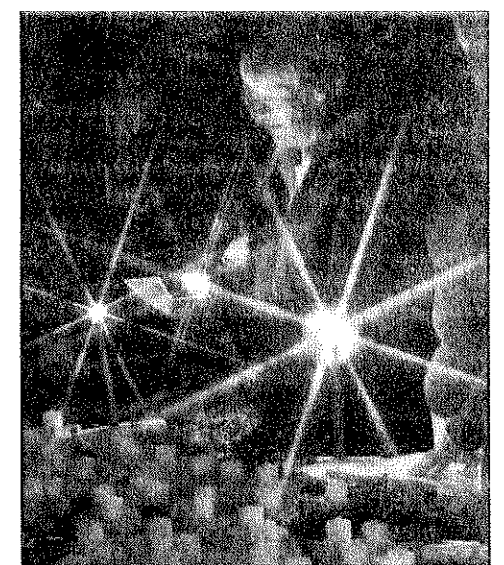
Connie Schofield, who became the camp's director after Red Pine alum and American Girl founder Pleasant Rowland bought the property from a developer in 2007, said the camp's structure is something young girls and young women need today.

Grossman agreed.

"There are no phones, no personal iPods, nothing electronic, unless it's something for a project they may be working on," she said. "The whole idea is to get the girls time to disconnect and to go outside and enjoy the world."

"They may whine a little when they get here," Grossman said, "but they love it when they leave."

Brian Jopek may be reached at bjopek@lakelandtimes.com.



Dean Hall photograph

Red Pine camp alum and current camp director Connie Schofield reads at the candlelight ceremony held during a recent reunion of camp alumni to mark the camp's 75th anniversary.

A wash to help the cause



Dean Hall photograph

The Boulder Junction Chamber of Commerce and area lakes associations held their third and final boat wash of the season Saturday, Aug. 18, in front of the Guide's Inn in Boulder Junction to help raise awareness about the importance of cleaning boats to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. In addition to boats, volunteers washed cars and trucks for the same \$5 donation to raise money for the Boulder Junction Area Boat Landing Improvement Fund. Helping out on Saturday were volunteers (from the left) Bob Bertch, Chris and Dennis Reuss, Dick Nelson, John Zelm and Jim Naylor. Jim Tait (far right) is next in line to get his truck washed.

Annual steak feed fundraiser in Mercer to be held tomorrow

The Mercer Area Ambulance will be holding the annual steak feed fundraiser at the Mercer Community Center tomorrow, Saturday, Aug. 25, 5-9 p.m., Margaret Street, Mercer. Dine on Iowa T-bone steak grilled

to perfection along with fresh Iowa sweet corn, baked potatoes and dessert for \$20 per person. Beer and soda may be purchased separately. There will be raffles and door prizes.