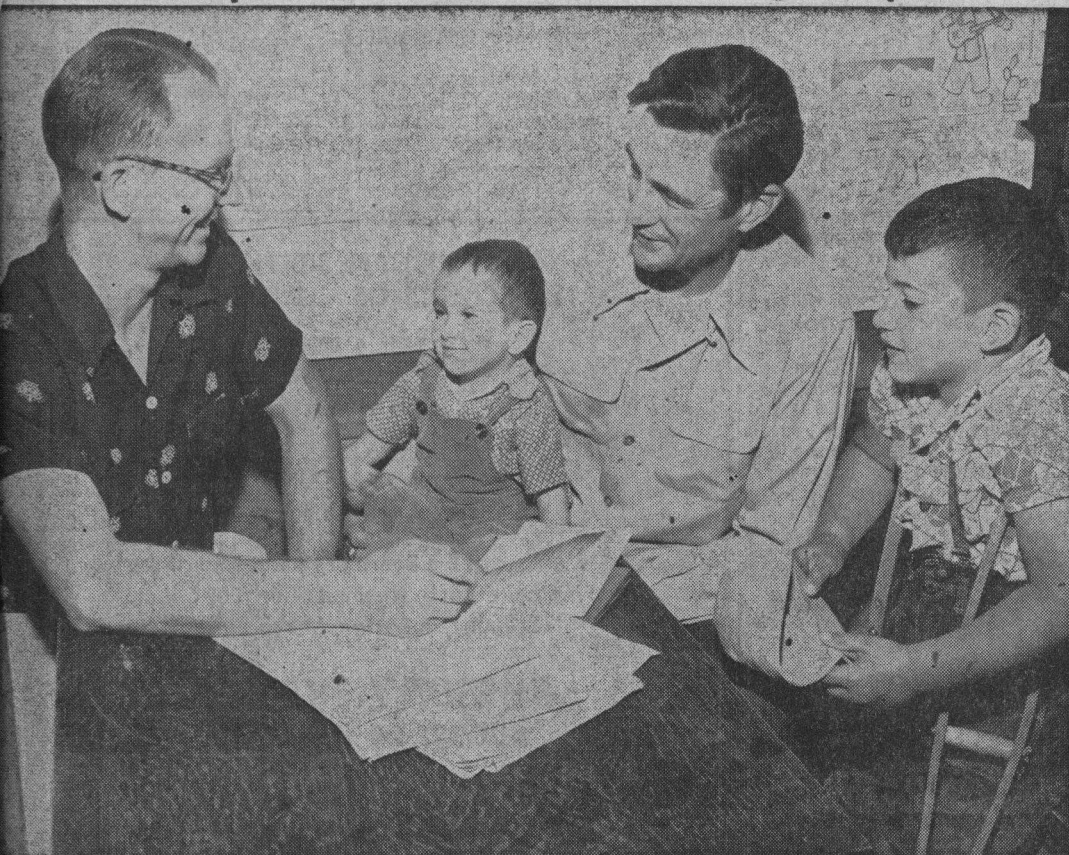


Camp Director Is Real Pal To Young Campers



Vernon Brown, Easter Seal camp director, and bosom pal of all the youngsters, talks with

Jimmy Morgan as he sits on the lap of Counselor Hugh Hinman.

Paul Imperial (on crutches) is attending camp from San Francisco.

A Good Book Gets Even Better In The Woods



Counselors Joan Bedell, Sharon Bellangero and Barbara Tobey of the Easter Seal camp,

take these seven and eight-year-olds to a quiet spot in the woods for some story telling. The counselors are with the children

night and day and close friendships are built up during the two week camping session.

3-Santa Cruz Sentinel-News

Sunday, August 22, 1954

Crippled Children Find Life Begins In Easter Seal Camp

By Wally Trabing

For the first four hours you go around with a lump in your throat. More than 100 youngsters whose twisted, paralyzed or deformed bodies keep them from taking the faster pace of regular camp life are now vacationing at the Easter Seals camp for crippled children three miles above Boulder Creek in the Santa Cruz mountains.

One hundred and eighteen youngsters from five to ten years ended a two week's session Friday. A group of older youths, almost as large, began another two weeks at the leased YMCA camp today. In its fourth year now the camp draws children from 27 northern California counties.

What you see at first hits you hard.

A blond so pretty she makes your heart jump—with legs shriveled to toothpick size from polio; a 7-year-old, without arms or fully-developed legs fishing in the camp pool for trout; another kid trying to express himself to his counselor, but nearly speechless from polio; a handsome tot enclosed in braces, and wearing a football helmet because he takes so many spills, making his way haltingly with crutches, refusing help.

But after a few trips around the camp it slowly comes to you that these are the same dirt-loving, energetic kids you see around your neighborhood—only they have a physical handicap and need a little help.

That's what the Easter Seal camp is giving. It is sponsored by the Santa Cruz Society for Crippled Children from Easter Seal funds, and funds from the Marri-Eds YWCA club annual benefit dance.

For two weeks the youngsters live in this forest world slowed down to their limitations. The atmosphere is one of unforced gaiety and helpfulness.

Six are assigned to an open-air cabin. With them 24 hours a day are three counselors and one or two junior counselors assigned to each cabin.

About 40 of the children are completely helpless and require constant care from the counselors.

Some only limp, others struggle along awkwardly in braces and on crutches, and still others are towed about in bright red wagons or pushed in wheel-chairs.

The campers for the most part are victims of cerebral palsy and polio. But many are limbless, have a bad heart condition, or are deaf. Others are suffering from rarer diseases. A few, according to Director Vernon Brown, will not live long.

Each morning the whole camp assembles around the flag pole in a great circle. They flock to the flag raising ceremony by slow mi-

gration in wagons, wheel-chairs and on crutches. Here each cabin presents a song as its number is shouted out by Brown.

As the circle breaks the counselors hustle their kids off to morning activities. There's swimming, archery, fishing, hiking, boating, crafts, story telling, and in some afternoons a wheel-chair softball game.

Counselors are high school seniors and college students having past experience with children. Others, called junior counselors, and counselors-in-training, wait on tables and help with small jobs with an eye toward a counselor's job next year.

Brown, director of the camp for the last four years, is the spark plug. He is everywhere—at the swimming pool, over at the craft shop complimenting some youngster's work; suddenly around the cabins, ruffling this one's hair or giving a cheery "hello"; then at the recreation hall supervising meals or greeting visitors.

Registration fee is \$80 which usually is furnished by service organizations or social clubs, according to Brown. The youngsters' parents are laborers, business executives, machinists, airline pilots, painters and of all races and creeds. Very few, however, can afford to send their child to camp, for a crippled child creates a constant financial drain on a family's income.

"Doctors have told us," said Brown, "that two weeks in camp has a special therapy all of its own. It is also a vacation of sorts for the parents, for a crippled child demands a great deal of attention."

About 35 to 40 per cent of the campers return each year, according to Brown. This year more than 200 are being accommodated.

The young men and women counseling at camp have no easy touch. From morning to night they are constantly with their campers. Many youngsters require attention throughout the night. Some must wear special sleeping braces.

During a brief breather away from the campers, many of the counselors make up "letters from home" for those forgotten by their parents.

Becoming a counselor has a way of changing the proposed careers of many.

"Many a girl and boy has decided to take up therapy work after spending a couple of summers with these children here," said Brown. "The camp is also helping to change parent's attitude that a

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