Articles by Earl R. Clark

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First published in Food for the Flock (Food for the Flock, Inc., Ontario, Canada).

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Guidance in Children’s work (Aug 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 8, Aug 1963.

Camp Li-Lo-Li

In the meautiful rolling mountains of New York State’s Allegany Park is a spot known to the Park Commission merely as Camp No. 11. But by many older brethren in Western New York, and by a few hundred others now in their early twenties, birthplace of Camp Li-Lo-Li (pronounced Lye-Low-Lye). Names for “Life, Love, and Light,” it was the forerunner of a permanent all-summer camp of the same name which the brethren of the area now operate just across the Allegany River from the State Park.

This summer camp effort originated in the minds of some of the Rochester, New York, brethren as the next step to follow a successful craft club program which year by year was bringing over a hundred neighbourhood children to Congress Avenue Gospel Chapel during the winter months. After a year of exploring, they found a real opportunity in September of 1952. A state campsite in Allegany Park, normally booked up year after year by the same groups, became available through a cancellation. The exploring party acted at once. They made the reservation, then began checking with others to see if there was supporting interest.

There was, indeed! In a joint meeting, brethren from Rochester and Jamestown, New York, explained the need and the opportunity to representatives of the assemblies

in Rochester, Jamestown, Niagara Falls, Buffalo (two meetings), Blasdell, and Erie. The plan was fully endorsed, and an administrative committee of three delegates from each of the seven assemblies was formed. They chose Mel Northrop and Colin Caldwell from Rochester as administrative director and assistant director, M.C. Allison of Jamestown, treasurer, and Oscar Strong of Erie, secretary. A corporation was formed to handle funds, and gifts from the assemblies provided an operating fund of about $1,000.

For three years (1953-1955), a two-week camp was operated at the State Park campsite. It was filled to its capacity of 100 to 120 boys and girls and a staff of 30 to 35. In 1955, camper applications exceeded the capacity by early springtime, and many applicants were regretfully turned away. It seemed another step should be taken to provide increased facilities, not merely because of the popularity of the venture, but because the Lord’s blessing had been seen in the three years in Allegany Park. A large number of boys and girls had professed to be saved, many came back year after year witnessing a good confession, and spiritual growth and benefit was observed in many already saved. The board, therefore, concluded that a permanent campsite was needed which could be operated longer than the two weeks which the state allows in the park. After much scouting over many counties, a 295-acre farm was found in Sunfish Valley, only a few miles from the Allegany Park site! Recommended by the State Conservation Department as one of the best campsites in Western New York, this land lies 1,500 feet above sea level with nearby mountain peaks rising to 2,400 feet. Beautiful in situation, it consists of level meadowland running more

than a half a mile along Sunfish Run valley, bordered by wooded slopes leading up to mountain peaks on either side, nearly a mile apart.

Through the Lord's goodness, this property was acquired in 1955, and has been developed to provide a spacious main lodge with kitchen, dining, and meeting facilities, a boys' camp and a girls' camp each with its own group of cabins and central washroom, medical, administrative, and staff housing facilities, a snug "bunny camp" for children of workers, and a year-around caretakers house. A swimming lake, tennis court, baseball diamond, and areas for archery, volleyball, badminton, shuffleboard, riflery, and other outdoor sports were also built. Later, riding horses and trail facilities were added. Operations began with a two-week camp session in 1956, and have gradually expanded to eight weeks in July and August, plus a Labour Day week-end family Bible conference. It houses 120 campers and 35 to 45 counselors and staff, and nearly all of the camp sessions are filled to the limit year after year. More important, a large percentage of the boys and girls (ages 9 to 13) who come to camp during the four July weeks find Christ as their Saviour while at camp. Teen camp, the first two weeks in August, contains a higher proportion of Christians, yet each year there are many teeners who find the joy of salvation at Camp Li-Lo-Li. The Young People's camp during the last two weeks of August is the newest of the three types of camp session and usually the onlyone which is not completely filled. Spanning the ages of 16 to 25, it consists mainly of Christian young people. While the Gospel witness is steadily maintained, there is a greater emphasis on teaching and on the challenge of living for Christ. Even

here, as well as in relation to the younger groups, directors and counselors can tell you of many joyful occasions when the glorious light of Christ dawned upon darkened souls.

Now in its eleventh season, the camp has received several thousand boys, girls, and young people from New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and southern Ontario. Many assemblies other than the original seven participate directly or through individuals in their fellowship in administrative and staff capacities. It is of particular interest to note that workers as well as campers need no prodding to speak with gratitude to the Lord of the spiritual blessings personally received at camp.

All campers attend morning and evening Bible meetings in addition to cabin devotions before breakfast and at bedtime. Counselors work closely with their campers and are able to give individual attention and help on spiritual matters. An atmosphere of Christian love and behaviour is maintained in all phases of camp life, so that the impact of Christ-centred living and Spirit-taught Bible lessons is felt by every camper. A lively program of sports and recreation fills the remaining time. Handcrafts and camp craft, overnight hikes, treasure hunts, talent times, and similar activities are scheduled for younger campers, while teen campers and young people find both profit and pleasure in choral singing, discussion and seminar groups on Bible topics, debates, and a banquet night. Swimming and horseback riding instruction are provided along with a full sports program for all sessions. Young people’s camp and the Labour Day conference feature special speakers from among our missionary and preaching brethren. Each year, in

March, a Camp Rally is held to which both former and prospective new campers are invited. It is a gala occasion as happy times, camp jokes and the joys of fellowship are all recalled and blended with plans for the coming season. Food for both body and soul and hearty singing of choruses and hymns from camp songbooks add to the enjoyment.

Many ask whether the spiritual experiences of camp are of lasting benefit and the camp-time conversions genuine. To take the second point first, nearly any assembly in the area can point with joy to some in their fellowship who found Christ at camp. Many had no connection with the assembly except an interested school chum or neighbour. Others had come to Craft Club or to Sunday School, but only after the steady impact of several consecutive days under the influence of the Gospel proclaimed by word and deed did they come to Christ in the deep need of the soul face to face with the sin question.

The benefits to Christian campers are somewhat harder to assess. Yet elders have seen marked changes, and campers themselves can tell one, even years later, of how much more Christ has meant to them since their time at camp. Many former campers may be found among the present staff of counselors and other camp workers, as well as among those engaged in spiritual services at home.

It would not be facing the facts if it were not recognized that not every former camper has progressed spiritually. Some seed has fallen by the wayside, some on stony ground, some among thorns. In the mercy of God, some has fallen on good ground, and there is fruit for the

Master of the Harvest. He only knows the extent to which His interests have been truly served.

Yet among counselors and directors, cooks and maintenance workers, construction crews and administrative workers, and a host of the Lord's people who pray for and give to Camp Li-Lo-Li, there is a consistent, substantial, sincere belief that this summer camp work with children and young people is the most worthwhile, out-reaching, spiritual work among the assemblies in our area. As for former campers—well, ask a few of them, in October, or at the next Spring rally. Ask them, "Are you going back next summer?" and enjoy the response: "I sure am! I'm all signed up, and there are only a hundred and nineteen more days before it starts!"

Hope to see you there, sonny!