

Seat Sale

Camp Walt Whitman, New Hampshire

by Krista LAWRENCE

At 7:30 a.m. on June 17th, I left the Charlotetown Airport, filled with feelings of unease, wondering, "What the hell did I get myself into?"

This past summer I had the unique experience of working as a camp counselor. Okay, maybe that's not so "unique," but the job was at Camp Walt Whitman in New Hampshire. Walt Witman was an eight-week, co-ed, sleep-away camp where kids were involved with both athletic and artistic activities.

Arriving in Logan Airport was my first of many culture shocks. Going through customs was not a problem, other than finding the correct booth to go to. After overcoming that hurdle, I dragged my huge suitcase, duffle bag, and carry-on to the main reception area. I was to be picked up at the US air baggage claim area at three o'clock. I was so proud of myself for getting this far, but I was quickly shot down. Since I didn't know where the US air baggage claim was, I decided to go to what looked like an information desk and kindly ask for some assistance. "Excuse me, could you tell me where the US Air Baggage claim is?" The lady looked at me, rolled her eyes, and said, "Terminal B, of course." Okay, there is more than one terminal I can handle that.

"Which terminal am I in?" I asked.

At this she gave me a look of total frustration, "You're in Terminal E. You take the 180 Bus to Terminal

D, then walk across the walkway. Then catch the 150 Bus to Terminal B." As I walked away dragging my luggage behind me, I kept telling myself, "I can do this, I can do this." So I caught the 180 bus, struggling to get my massive luggage on and off the bus. Soon I arrive at the right terminal, but I don't see anyone who could be going to the same place as I am. I call home to tell my family that I haven't been killed yet and try to hide the fact that I am having a total panic attack.

After studying a group of students who look to be about my age, I finally get up the courage to go over and introduce myself. Luckily enough, they are from Camp Walt Whitman, too. Although late, our ride turns up and we set out for the White Mountains. What should have been a two-hour drive to the Camp ended up being four and a half hours long, which included one of the vans breaking down and getting stuck in a motorcycle convoy.

As we approach Piermont, I notice that the camp is situated smack dab in the middle of the White Mountains. Mountains are a thing that I had never seen before. So I spent most of my time staring out the window.

As we pulled through the gates, everyone cheered. As soon as we stepped of the van, people rushed toward us. Hustling us inside the Dining Hall we were immediately greeted with a loud, "Hello," from about 150 staff members who arrived before us. While we quickly sat down to inhale our supper, they began the long process of introducing everyone individually. When it finally came to our turn, over a hundred and fifty people were watching me. When it comes to my turn I jumped up and said, "MynameisKristaLawrenceandIamfromPrinceEdwardIslandCanadaI'mgoingtobeacabin counselor." I don't think I have ever or since spoke that fast in my life. (By the end of the summer I

was telling everyone I was simply from Canada because no one knew where Prince Edward Island was. They would usually ask, "Is that near Toronto or Montreal?")

Over the next week I was subjected to endless meetings. Even one about what to do if you run into a moose, "Aim for the head or the ass and you just might live." I found myself counting the minutes until the kids arrived. But until then, I was almost to the point of bashing my head against a wall in boredom. Over the next two days we ran around trying to get beds for our cabin because there was none. But by the time our girls arrived, we "believed" we were as ready as we could be. After five minutes, we realized that we were terribly wrong. At this point the girls were screaming and swinging from the rafters.

The opening campfire was a total success, with over six hundred human bodies crowded in a very small clearing and around one tiny fire. Most of these kids had been together for more than five years, and the summers are the only time they get to see each other. Energy was running high and we barely got our kids to bed by 11:00 pm.

The next day our girls decided that they want to wake up early. At 4:30 am, one of their alarm clocks went off full-blast (after that day, alarm clocks were banned). The bugle was played at 7:15, an aspect of camp I would soon come to detest. Camp Days would run pretty regularly: we would have a couple of sports activities, swimming, and some kind of Art class. Sometimes we would mix it up with a Gymnastic or Dance class. Every Friday we would go hike a mountain.

My naive thought was that they wouldn't make these "city" kids hike big mountains. Oh, was I wrong. All the way up our kids would complain, and back down it was a repeat of



the way up. Our kids once asked me what the difference was between campers and a Counsellor. My simple answer was, "Counsellors aren't allowed to complain. We might want to scream and throw a tantrum, but we have to squish those feelings and seem as if we actually love what we are doing."

I did receive great satisfaction from conquering those mountains, though. We once hiked up into a cloud, and when we reached the top, the view slowly appeared as the cloud passed over. Finally, after about a half an hour, you could see for miles.

There were two things I discovered about myself at camp: one was that I can't play tennis, and the second was I have no coordination. The latter I discovered at the weekly square dance. Camp was also filled with other special activities, which would occur once a summer. Did you know Halloween is actually held in the summer in Piermont, New Hampshire? We also had a carnival that involved everything from the classic bobbing for apples to sumo-

