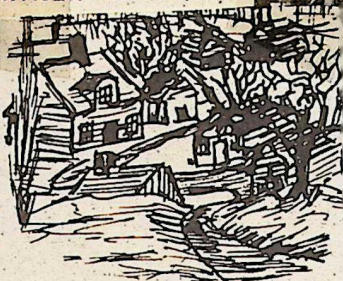


Village View

by Andrea
Leonard



This time of year our thoughts turn naturally to the beach, swimming, boating, fishing; and soon the Cape will be housing seasonal visitors aiming to reach the water's edge for play and relaxation in or on it.

Each year there are reports of people whose play turned to tragedy because they over-estimated themselves or underestimated the water's dangers.

People who haven't learned respect for the ocean, who take chances in our lakes and ponds, are apt to pay dearly -- perhaps with their lives -- for a moment's carelessness or their own ignorance.

Recently I learned of the Aquatic and First Aid School at Camp Kiwanee in Hanson, Mass., and set out to see first hand what it's all about.

We arrived at Camp Kiwanee, a Camp Fire Girls summer camp, early in the day, but early as we were, the students were half-way through their first class.

Under the towering pines we found a couple dozen young people crawling around, practicing first aid techniques on "injured" comrades. They glanced up as we passed and went on with their work.

Their attention was concentrated, their conversations low and earnest, their movements as gentle as though their patients were actually seriously hurt.

Stopping at the Lodge, we met the Director of the Aquatic School, Dutch Holland, as well as his liver-and-white springer spaniel, "Splash" -- a dog with soul.

Dutch, a Red Cross field representative who's been running the Aquatic School since the mid-30s and who will retire next spring, owns a house over at the end of Sandy Neck. Meeting him was like meeting another native Cape Codder.

When he learned our errand he picked up his bull horn and called for Mr. Harry Lehmann, our escort, who answered our hundred-and-one questions and showed us the Aquatic School in action.

A long flight of stairs down to the waterfront brought us into the action immediately. In one section of the lake a group were practicing rescues; further along the beach life preservers were thrown far out into the water over and over again; beyond them a class was doing warm-up calisthenics. A large group engaged in synchronized swimming far along the lake's edge.

Out on the water one green and three red canoes slipped by noiselessly. There was no shouting, no yelling, no horseplay. The people around us, instructors and students, were serious and working. Everyone had time for a friendly smile though.

An instructor's voice came clearly, "Back into the water"; with small splashes the class dove into the lake. Joe White came by, his white sweatshirt bearing his title, "Water Safety Instructor." He took time to stop

and say hello.

The faculty at the school come from all walks of life and all parts of the country. Most are college professors. There's Larry Uchmanowicz from Falmouth. His daughter, Mary is a student this year.

There's Mary Mahan, originally from Weymouth, now of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida; she teaches synchronized swimming. There's Eric James who hails from St. Louis, Missouri. He teaches there in a ghetto school.

Instructors return year after year to this school. They receive no pay for the ten days they spend at Camp Kiwanee. Students come from many states as well as from other countries. This year there's one each from Japan, Sweden and Norway.

Morning classes run from 8 to 10 and 10 to noon, and from 2 to 4 in the afternoon; each class has between 16 and 18 people. For classes in lifesaving of handicapped person, youngsters from schools for handicapped are actually bussed to Camp Kiwanee. Here, in addition to being "rescued", they receive swimming lessons.

When not attending class, students study theory. After light-out at 10:30 at night students are often found reading by flashlight. Their days are too full of practice to permit the studying they feel they need.

A class was now working with paddleboards. Used for rescue, similar to surf boards, paddleboards are light, easily handled and faster than skiffs.

Evening seminars specialize in Camp Leadership, Community Leadership and Administration. Students bring their problems, or ones they anticipate, to the seminars for discussion.

This Aquatic School is the largest in the country. The program started 52 years ago at Lake Minnetonka in Minnesota and is sponsored by the American Red Cross. Others are located at Richmond, Va., Honesdale, Pa., and Brookline, N.H., as well as three National Small Crafts Schools.

The Red Cross operates the Aquatic Schools to train people in swimming and supervision of swimming. The aim is to "drown-proof the whole country".

Standing on the dock, we noticed several shallow depressions in the lake's sandy bottom. Swishing fish tails had swept the sand from the underlying small stones. The fish had deposited their eggs and now we watched them cruise protectively over each "nest", driving away other predating species.

Back at the Lodge, after climbing the stairs from the beach, I was grateful for the hickory chair with its splint seat. Nearby stood a huge cardboard carton labelled "Lost and Found". Simple, when you make it so, isn't it.

Minimum age for attendance at the school is 17; there's no maximum. A medical examination is required, and candidates must be able to tread water, surface dive, swim under water, do a standing front dive and, during a continuous 440-yard swim demonstrate effective front crawl, side and elementary back strokes.

These qualifications must be met to qualify for Standard First Aid and Personal Safety classes. Other classes require more advanced capacities.

The cost for ten days is \$90, most of which goes for food. Students who pass qualify as water safety instructors.

Application to the Aquatic School may be made through the Cape Cod Chapter of the Red Cross, a member-agency of the Cape Cod United Fund. Camp Fire Girls is also a member-agency of the Fund.

Over steaming coffee cups in the dining-assembly hall, we talked about the people involved with the school.

The doctor, a former student who received his M.D. this year, and two nurses are in residence full time. Professor Sidney Hazelton, better known as Poppa Sid, a retired professor from Dartmouth, was for many years an in-

structor. At 87, he's back again this year, still full of enthusiasm.

Through the open archways to the kitchen, preparations are underway for lunch. A giant basin of lettuce, heads piled two feet high, became salads. Rolls are shaped in tray-sized pans. A bushel of potatoes were scrubbed for baking.

Competing with 17-year-olds isn't really my bag, but if I were a little younger, I'd think about spending ten days next June at the Aquatic School at Camp Kiwanee in Hanson.

Any youngster with basic swimming skills will find this experience richly rewarding and may possibly make life-time friends here while acquiring useful and valuable life-saving skills.

In the future when you send him off to the beach you'll feel a lot easier in your mind, for you'll be certain he can handle himself safely in or on the water.