

1980 — A YEAR OF TRANSITIONS



*Lois Goodrich and President Alan Bain
at June dinner.*

The year 1980 was Lois Goodrich's last at Trail Blazer Camps. She has retired after fifty years with the organization, which until 1952 was called Life Camps. In June, 1980, three hundred and fifty former campers and staff came from all over the country to honor her at a dinner. In July, Lois received the Northern University Larado Taft award for her personal contribution to outdoor education and camping. Lois' influence has been immeasurable and it has made our camp unique and outstanding.

Considering that Trail Blazer Camps are over ninety years old, it is not surprising that the purpose, the physical location and the administration have known changes. Lois Goodrich has participated in all this.

Lois leaves an immense heritage. This means that the Camps can continue to be as useful under new leadership as it has been in the past. When asked, recently, what she considered the most important thing for the Camps to continue to do, Lois replied, "I hope that it will never come to pass that numbers of children seem more important than one child. Let everything be child-centered and related to the environment. Let us think of the whole child intensively, teaching each one to rely on his or her ingenuity and inventiveness, without gadgets and pushbuttons!"

Lois, herself, grew up to be self-reliant in a pioneer family on the frontier in Texas. When she was five, her family "went west" across Texas, making a nine-day journey in covered wagons through almost uninhabited territory. Men from the farms neighboring the one the Goodrich family was leaving, rode their horses in the caravan, helping to drive the milk cattle and other livestock. Most crucial of all, the neighbors helped to move the wagons, one by one, with all horses pulling, up the Caprock canyon face, along narrow trails and over precarious bridges without side barriers.



*We, too, are pioneers
with our beloved donkeys.*

While Lois' mother was in the chuck wagon cooking for the crew of fifteen, using supplies — cooked, canned and smoked during the entire preceding year, Lois was in charge of her two younger siblings. When, finally, the Goodrich caravan arrived at its destination on the high plains, there was no wood to burn. There were no trees. But an alternative was soon found in the desiccated droppings of the cattle which had been grazing there. The children were soon sent out to gather these chips for the cooking fire. Thus, very early, Lois took responsibility and learned to solve problems through initiative.

Arrival at this new home was only the beginning for Lois of living with and from the earth. The family ranch lay far from even the most primitive civilization. Yet, life was not without intellectual stimulation. Lois recalls that there was a great deal of reading aloud. When gathered together doing chores or taking baths (one at a time in the big tub before the stove), there would be reading aloud from the few precious books which had been brought to this new western home. Elsewhere, in later years, at the supper table each child was expected to tell what he had learned that day in school, how that knowledge related to his life, and the way he could use it in the future.

Over the years, there were several more moves designed to obtain an education for the children, who eventually numbered nine. Lois was in high school when her mother died. Her father, for reasons of health, had to go to California and she was left in charge of five younger children. Funds were inadequate and there was often not enough to eat. Despite this, determined to go to college, Lois sometimes studied most of the night in order to become valedictorian of her class as the only way to get a scholarship. When she succeeded, against tough competition, relatives and friends took her charges and Lois went off to complete her education.

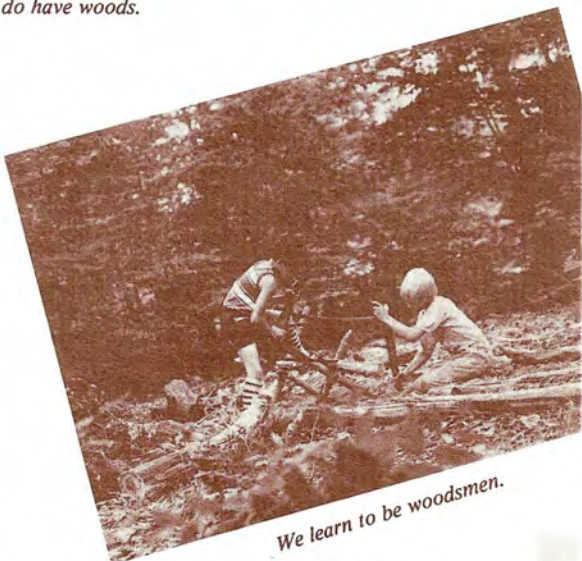
During her college years, beginning in 1931, Lois became a counsellor at Life Camp. At Branchville, Connecticut, where the girl's camp was located, the seeds of what Camp was to become were already present. There was an "outpost" camp called Sherwood where the oldest girls, as a matter of convenience, lived. They cooked their breakfast and supper but otherwise participated in the regular organized program. The enormous implications for individual development inherent in small group



We do have woods.

living, "decentralized camping", had not yet been perceived.

Soon, however, it became apparent to Lois, as well as to others with whom she was working, that girls living at Sherwood appeared to mature faster and were more responsible than those in the organized program. Therefore, as an experiment, the group was allowed to plan its own activities. This undertaking was so successful that others wanted to do it too. More small groups were formed, with the children choosing their own campsites and building their own shelters. Meanwhile, through L.B. Sharpe, similar experiments were taking place at the two boys' camps in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Out of these trials, the family group of eight or nine children of the same age, with two counsellors, evolved. The principle of decentralized camping as a learning experience for life came into being.



We learn to be woodsmen.

Reading aloud continues.



Lois, who had been shuttling back and forth between Camp and college and then a teaching job in Texas, began to devote herself full-time to Camp. That was 1939. In 1937, however, she had taken time out to obtain her M.A. in guidance and counselling at Columbia University.

The big change of place occurred for Camp in 1939 when there were no new campsites available on the fourteen acre plot at Branchville. With the generous help of Doris Duke, the beautiful high, wooded area in New Jersey where the camps are now located, was acquired for the girls. Mashipacong, as it is called, lent itself perfectly to the small camp concept. Winter camping had already begun on a small scale in Connecticut but it now blossomed, as did the follow-up program. Then, in 1952, the boys joined the girls at Mashipacong, under the new name of Trail Blazer Camps. Here, Lois completed and put into full practice her philosophy of the "whole child", of learning by doing in a small family group — responsible for every aspect of its own living. Surely, this remarkable woman developed this concept as a result of her early experience.



Lois & Betty confer.

Betty Faust came to Camp in 1939, intrigued by an article about Trail Blazer Camps in Time Magazine. She has been working faithfully and efficiently with Lois ever since. She, too, is retiring this year, as is Nita Baumgardner who has spent forty-three summers on the staff, many of them as Lois' right-hand aide.

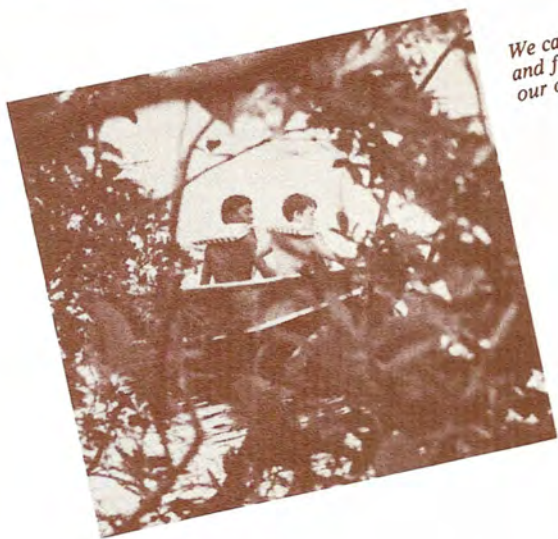
For Trail Blazer Camps this year, 1981, marks a big transition! Jane Brokaw, our new, experienced Executive Director, takes over with competence and enthusiasm. Jane will carry Trail Blazer's philosophy forward to meet the challenges which our changed society presents. Trail Blazer Camps will continue to help its campers grow!



We even grow some of our own food.



*We can swim
and fish in
our own lake.*



*We "purchase"
supplies at
the "store."*



A special fund in appreciation of Lois Goodrich's inspiring leadership over the past fifty years was established at the dinner given in her honor in June 1980. It is called "The Lois Goodrich Fund" and is to be used for pre-camp staff training, the all-important ingredient of a truly successful summer of decentralized camping, Trail Blazer style. Anyone wishing to contribute is asked to indicate this when sending a donation.