Reflections on Camp Waupaca

It is amazing how many things occur in your life by happentance. We drift down the river of life and while we may change some direction by our efforts it seems to be controlled by a greater force. This force pushed me through 10 summers at Camp Waupaca beginning in the year 1951. We had just moved from an apartment to a house in West Rogers Park. I was an only child(age 9) whose concept of the out of doors was encompassed by infreguent visits to Lincoln Park Zoo. My new best friends on the street Mike and Joe Seldess had just informed me they were going to Camp. What was I going to do all summer without them? I immediately lobbied my parents to go with them to Camp. I had no idea what that meant.
We left on a train and seemed to travel forever. I envisioned going back to the "old Country" where my grandpartents had immigrated from less than a generation before. If the interminable train ride was not enough. We then had to take a bus. We were finally there. Wherever there was. At that time "there" wasn't much. It was little more than a dream of Joe Rosen and Skipper Kuklin. There only 6 cabins and a small portion of the current mess hall. There was a ball diamond(had to be careful to avoid the holes and other remainders of the cow field it had been less than 6 months before). The swimming hole was about 2 blocks away and even in the hottest days the cold springs that fed Stratton Lake could provide a real jolt. On cold days blue became your natural color. I was assigned to cabin two. That was a real bummer Mike being younger was in cabin one and Joe being older was in cabin 3. I didn't know anyone. I was going to be there 8 weeks(back then every one stayed the full term). This seemed a lifetime. I could have been miserable but it turned out to be heaven. There were many rough spots. Young kids can be cruel and I didn't make braves until my third year. Being able to be so close to nature, playing ball, swimming, canoeing,was wonderful. The comradery was the glue that made it great.

I am not sure that we appreciated until much later the time spent, the maturation that occured and the positive experience that we had. I recently reflected that the true sign of age is knowing that not only are you to old to go back to camp but so are your children

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