

Marstons Mills Historical Society
Interview with Joanne Budd Cunningham
(David Martin)
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Joanne Budd Cunningham is the daughter of Mark and Lillian Budd, who operated Camp Alpine on Alpine Way, off of Route 149, for many years. She provided numerous recollections of the Camp and Marstons Mills from the viewpoint of a person who spent many summers in the Mills. Mark first met Lillian when he was playing in the WPA Orchestra in Boston at the Gardner Museum.

Mark and Lillian, who lived in Newton (MA) during the off-season, had worked at a camp in Maine in the 1930's, followed by operating a day camp in Nantasket Beach. In 1938 they wanted to start an overnight camp, and the property between Middle Pond and Route 149 became available because of a mortgage foreclosure. The price for that significant acreage was only \$7000. At that time, there was a barn and an old farmhouse on the property, overgrown with plants. The kindly real estate agent arranged for tractors from Otis to clear the land for a ballfield and a campfire circle. Numerous Indian arrowheads were found on the property when this clearing took place. The camp began in 1939 only as a boys' camp, although girls were added in later years. Milton Gage, a local carpenter, built a different cabin every year for several years until the camp was complete. A local tradition says that the site had been one stopping point on the Underground Railroad, but there is no verification of this point.

The camp, like many other camps, had its share of interesting incidents. One of those, recalled by the interviewer, was the afternoon in the summer of 1960 when a woman parachuted from a plane that had taken off from the Marstons Mills airfield, and her parachute failed to open; she plummeted into the lake, but survived. The camp was all abuzz about the incident for the rest of the day; the survivor passed away in about 2006. The camp also had its usual share of pranks found in overnight camps; examples include the morning that all the camp dining room's silverware somehow mysteriously ended up in a rowboat on the lake, and the morning that the camp director found several of the camp's ducks underneath his bed!

On the east side of Route 149, opposite the driveway that is Alpine Way, was a house in which Lillian Budd's mother lived; Joanne lived there in summers as a child until she was older and began work at the camp as one of the counselors. In the 1940's the house had no running water, and there was a basin on the kitchen floor for water drawn from the pump in back of the house.

After the camp was closed in about 1970, the Budds continued to summer there; Ken and Ainsley Snell, who live on Main Street next to the Library, were good friends; Ken cared for the camp facilities in the summers during that time. Ken refinished some furniture and Ainsley did some cleaning at the camp. The Budds finally took down some of the camp buildings in later summers so as to save on taxes.

Joanne recalls some of the well-known Marstons Mills figures. She recalls going to what is now called the Cash Market, where "Jonesey" served all the customers faithfully. She also recalls Al Fuller and his wife, whose house still stands at the corner of Route 149 and Alpine Way; they were friendly neighbors to the Budds, and Lillian's mother was friends with "Old Man Fuller", who could be seen regularly

milking cows and operating his tractor. Al frequently chewed on a piece of grass. Crawford Hollidge's house backed up to the ballfield of the camp; he owned department stores in Hyannis and Boston. Mark and Crawford did target practice on Crawford's property with handguns. The cranberry bog just to the south of the camp on Route 149 belonged to John Shields. Art Thifault is fondly remembered as the faithful postman who every day delivered mail and picked up letters from campers written to home, from a round drum-shaped mail box; his wife Gertrude did some cleaning at the camp. The Budds also met Art in the winter time in Sarasota, Florida.

An amusing incident happened one summer after the season was over, but the Budds were still living at the camp. It was a very hot and humid day, and Mark was working hard on some landscaping work down near the lake. He was so hot that he wanted to cool off in the lake, but he had left his bathing suit at the house. So he simply stripped off his clothes and went in the lake, and luxuriated in the cool water. However, apparently someone in the house owned by the Burgess family on the hillside on the opposite side of the lake had seen him. In a few moments, a police motorboat came along the lakeside from the south and told Mark that he had been reported for nude bathing!

Another happy recollection was early evening trips for ice cream with the campers to the 4 C's Ice Cream store in Osterville.

Mark passed away in 1990 at the age of 85, and Lillian passed away in 2006 at the age of 99. They are remembered for their contributions to life in the Mills for many years.

