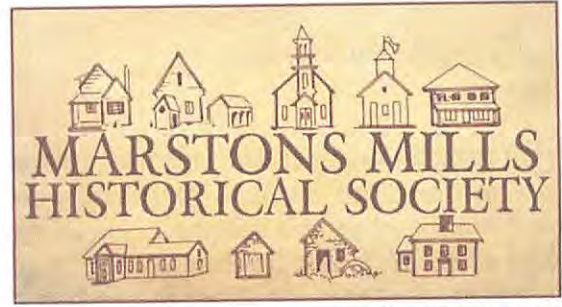


Marstons Mills Historical Society
Interview with Maryjo Boden
(by David Martin)
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Recalling her memories as a camper at Marstons Mills' Camp Alpine in the latter 1940's and early 1950's, Maryjo (O'Donnell) Boden of Cotuit provided much valuable information about daily life in this well-regarded overnight camp on Alpine Way off of Route 149.

As the daughter of the Head Counselor at the camp, she and her family knew well Lillian and Mark Budd, Camp Directors. Her brother, Tom, 4 years older, was also a camper there. She began to go to the camp as a small child around 1947 and continued each summer until 1955, leaving the camp at age 9 or 10. At first the O'Donnell family lived in a house directly opposite the Fuller Farm on Route 149, across from Alpine Way. There was a water pump for fresh water in back of the house. Then the family moved to the regular campus of the camp, living in a cabin built especially for the Head Counselor, on the left side of Alpine Way. Her father was a teacher of history at Dedham High School, and hence included much history in his work as a counselor.

She recalls the weekly cleaned laundry being returned to camp, wrapped in brown paper and tied with string; the clean laundry was placed in the family's cedar trunk, giving the clothes a wonderful scent. Maryjo was active in activities related to theater, the arts, and nature, and regards the Alpine experience as wonderful. Although she lived with her family in the Head Counselor's cabin, she did spend the daily rest hour in the cabin of the girls of her age. One day, not being able to sleep, she was looking out the open screened window and saw a snake outside who had just begun to devour a toad; she immediately told everyone in the cabin, and the cabin counselor took the girls outside to watch the slow process of the toad moving down the body of the snake after its jaws snapped open wide enough to take it in!

She also recalls a traveling Nature Teacher who came to the camp each summer with a wonderful display of animals, including an owl which silently flew to catch its prey. The Nature Teacher explained the silent flight was how an owl captured its prey. This information made a big impression upon her.

One of the advantages of being a daughter of the Head Counselor was that the family came to the camp before the season began and stayed on for several days after the season; while her father was carrying out duties at that time, it afforded Maryjo the chance to go roaming around the entire site to explore, especially in the lagoon near the lake which had wildlife such as turtles and frogs.

Although Alpine was primarily a Jewish camp, not all of the staff were Jewish, including the O'Donnells. She attended the regular Friday evening sabbath services, which occasionally had a rabbi; she recalls that her grandmother told her to pay attention to one particular rabbi because he was a learned man.

She also fondly recalls the campers visiting the Melody Tent in Hyannis each season, watching performances of musicals, including Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. A "woody"(wooden station wagon) was sent to pick up and deliver campers arriving by train at the West Barnstable Railway Station. An

annual feature was the “Unbirthday Party”, where campers sat at dining hall tables designated for the respective months in which their birthdays occurred. Participating in dramatic performances was a highlight, including the time when Maryjo played Charlie Chaplin. Campfire singing by the totem pole was another vivid memory; her father sat at the base of the totem pole and told Native American stories and led the campfire singing. And nearly every alumnus/a of the camp recalls the trips to the Centerville 4 Seas place to have evening ice cream! A very high aluminum slide and very high swings also gave campers a thrill.

Occasionally campers would camp overnight on the little peninsula which separates Middle Pond (where the camp was located) and Mystic Lake. She was too young for this adventure and only heard about it from the “big kids.” However, it was something she wanted to do. A particularly fun time was the occasion each summer when all the girls went for a nude swim; the boys did their nude swim at a different time.

Swimming competitions were big. Campers trained most of the summer for the big races.

The camp nurse was recalled as having a brown soap used to take care of poison ivy, although her main business, or at least for Maryjo, was probably in bandaids! As a pastime during the boring rest hours, some girls scratched and then played tic-tac-toe on their browned skins.

On one occasion in the Fall, her father provided a lengthy bus tour for Camp Alpine campers of many of the historical sites in the greater Boston area.

In all, many happy childhood memories!

