

# Four 'City Girls' Build, Run New Summer Camp in State

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Once upon a time there were four young ladies — all with masters' degrees — teaching education in Wichita, Kan. Eight years ago, they took a vacation to Northern Minnesota, and that marked the beginning of a most unusual story.

These young ladies fell in love with the country and bought 40 acres of land including one-fourth mile of lakeshore on Island Lake, near Akeley, 4 miles south of Nevis, Minn.

**EACH SUMMER** they came up to their lovely piece of land and worked on it, making it ever more beautiful. In 1965 they decided that upon their wild land they would bring into fruition their long-time dream of owning and operating a girls' camp. They all quit their jobs in Wichita and moved to the land.

"It was a bit rough that first winter," one of them said. "We had planned to winterize our cabin but, coming from Kansas, we were a bit surprised when the first snow arrived in September."

The snow got deep. Throughout much of the winter they had to walk three-quarters of a mile to the road. This problem was solved in a most amusing way.

The four of them went into town to buy a bulldozer. The

man who sells bulldozers wouldn't even take them seriously. But the mechanic was a courteous, helpful fellow, and he showed them how to start and run the machine.

**HIS HELPFULNESS** paid off. The girls said, "We'll take it."

Even more amazed than pleased with his sale, he asked, "What do you girls want with a bulldozer?"

Wide-eyed, one of them replied, "Oh, isn't that a snowmobile?"

But the bulldozer was all part of the plan. With it they were no longer snowbound and, as they gained proficiency in its operation, they rebuilt their road, leveled land and dug the basement for the main lodge of their girls' camp.

**CITY GIRLS** they may have been, but once they decided to build a camp they learned to use their hands. Lois Haskin, the designer, drew up the plans for each building. During the school year, the other three go back to teaching physical education in Minnesota to maintain a balance in the treasury. Jane Besler teaches in Park Rapids, Shirley Malcolm at Concordia College in Moorhead and Donella Palmer at Moorhead State College.

First, they built a cabin for the campers. It is a good-sized cabin with room for six girls in each end and a counselor in the center. Then, because the five horses they had ordered arrived ahead of schedule, they built a barn, and it is one of the cutest, storybook red barns I have ever seen.

When I say the girls built these, I don't mean they had them built. They had the lumber hauled in and, with Lois's designs, they actually did the building. Lois said, "Oh, they are all ours all right — mistakes and all." But I didn't even notice any bent nails.

Next came the main lodge, which is 40 feet by 44 feet, and which in the near future will be enlarged to 70 feet by 44 feet. After digging the basement with their bulldozer, they did hire someone to lay the cement blocks and frame the building. But most of the carpentry work, including building in the kitchen, offices and dining room, was done by the girls.

**THEY HAD NOT** planned to open their camp until 1970, but work went ahead of schedule. So they decided on a small trial run this year. When I visited Tamahay, which is the name of the camp, 12 well-tanned girls, ages 10 through 16, seemed to be having a great time. And well they might because

activities at Tamahay include swimming, archery, canoeing, hiking, horseback riding, sailing, fencing, camp craft and outdoor living in addition to gymnastics on a full set of equipment including a trampoline.

But summer fun is only one of the objectives of the four girls who are experienced teachers in the field of recreation. They believe that age 10 through 16 is the time for girls to acquire the fundamentals for personal happiness. They believe that summer camp is one of the greatest happenings in a girl's life, and they do not consider camping a personality, athletic or endurance contest. Rather, it encourages self-confidence in each girl for what she is as an individual. Teaching the girls to live in the woods close to nature and to enjoy it is the major objective. They are convinced that girls taught to love the out-of-doors and to appreciate and protect their natural resources will seek and enjoy outdoor experiences the rest of their lives.

**IF THE FOUR** young ladies project their own appreciation of nature to the girls, they will achieve their objective.

Lois said, "Since coming up here, we have worked harder than we ever worked in our lives. And yet things here move at a slower pace, particularly in the winter.

There is nothing to do about it so you learn to relax and enjoy it. And once you have accomplished this, you realize there is much more to life than the hurry and flurry of the big city. You suddenly discover you are really enjoying life. Next, you want other people to enjoy it as you do. Most of all, you want to teach children how pleasant and relaxed life can be."

As we walked over the land, I commented on the abundance of Christmas tree-sized spruce and Lois said, "Once we decided to cut our own Christmas tree. But each time we found a pretty one we couldn't stand to cut it. So ended up with a very scrawny, poor Christmas tree. Now we go out and buy one that someone else has cut."

As I was leaving, thinking I had learned everything about the amazing things young women can accomplish if they set out to do it, I met the new fifth member of the group, who joined up last spring — Kathryn Bunnell, also a physical education teacher. She isn't teaching this year but is earning money with her more unusual talent. She is, believe it or not, a flight instructor and commercial pilot to Red Baron Airlines at Park Rapids, Minn.