

CAMP GREYSTONE—

STILL STANDING STRONG FOR CHRIST



Libby Miller, poised and articulate at 78 years old, spoke last spring at a women's day conference at her home-away-from home, Camp Greystone. Founded by her grandfather, the late Dr. Joseph Sevier, the Christian summer camp for girls tucked snugly into the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains has been in existence since 1920. The camp gained international attention when *Life* magazine published a lengthy photography essay in the August 25, 1941 issue.

Now approaching its 100th birthday, Camp Greystone has not only weathered more than half a century of modernistic societal alterations, it's more committed than ever to pointing the next generation of young women to the truths of Jesus Christ.

In an era when girls ages 7 - 17 are bombarded by a barrage of instant messages, news, photos, and videos, Camp Greystone is an oasis where water, horses, sports, and drama provide the sen-

sory overload. The 150-acre campus, situated just outside of Asheville, N.C., consists of cabins, an equestrian center, pools, a dance studio, a gymnasium, an archery range, tennis courts, a fitness center, a lake, and a high ropes course. Boredom is seldom an issue during the four, varying-time-frame sessions that begin on Memorial Day weekend and end sometime in August.

Although fun activities abound, the camp's greatest priority is its campers' spiri-

tual wellbeing. While Libby Miller knows Camp Greystone has impacted countless numbers of girls for eternity, she has no idea the number of mustard seeds planted at the camp that have grown and flourished. During her years of teaching, she always required girls to learn at least three Scripture verses to receive an award. Many learned more, and years later women share how those verses were and continue to be life affirming.

A Gospel thread runs consistently through the camp, as is touted on its website: “In our morning assembly devotions, Bible classes, and nightly devotions with a cabin counselor, campers learn that their worth is secured in scripture. They are loved, accepted, cherished, beautiful, and delighted in because they are God’s precious daughters in whom He is well pleased. Everything we do stems from this knowledge—we love because He first loved us.”

Libby, along with her husband Jim (Jimdaddy), were the third-generation owners. Jimdaddy passed away in 2010, but Libby, even as a septuagenarian, continued to teach Bible at the camp until two years ago.

Today she spends as much time as possible with campers, talking to them one-on-one. For years, she instructed upwards of 1,900 girls each summer. Many of those who attend camp are from Columbia. Some are granddaughters and great-granddaughters of

former Greystone campers. Although most are from the Southeastern states, others have come from all over the US and six foreign countries.

Multiple generations of Libby’s family are also involved in the camp. Most live in homes adjacent to the camp. One of Libby’s sons, Jim IV, “Jimboy,” is the fourth generation owner with his wife, Margaret, a pediatrician and the camp’s Health Director.

Jimboy’s brother, Stuart, operates the camp store, while sister Katie Gran directs a one-week junior camp. It was Jimdaddy’s wish that any successor interested in running Camp Greystone must first experience employment outside the family business. Jimboy worked as a horse farm and chocolate shop manager and a car salesman before returning home. Jimboy acknowledges his father’s succession wisdom.

Jimboy and Margaret’s five children, the oldest aged 23, are all involved in some way. His daughters have attended Camp Greystone, by choice, each year.

Countered by the Culture

It was easy to be a Christian prior to the 1950s, Jimboy’s mother said. Everyone was assumed to be a Christian. Running a Christian camp was not frowned upon. Then the Vietnam War, Woodstock, and Kennedy’s assassination happened. Suddenly America was in rapid moral decline.

“Through the 1960s, my grandparents still felt it was a Christian camp, but some of the counselors were beginning to disagree,” Jimboy says. “There was no real statement of faith in place.”

In the early 1970s, Libby said she felt God’s strong mandate that Camp Greystone needed to either remain steadfast or close its doors. Her husband was worried about the bottom line. Were camps, especially Christ-centered camps, still viable, profitable ventures?

Jimboy explains: “Camps in general were not filling, and some feared we were becoming cultish ‘Jesus Freaks.’ They were often mocking and angry. We ran the risk that we would go bankrupt by offending those who said they would not come to such a camp. The name of Jesus is offensive and some people took offense.” His father, more of a marketer, was worried about the financial bottom line.

“Mom’s faithfulness rose him up,” he says. “Both got to the point where they were on the same page. This episode increased his faith; he became a stronger believer. And he was encouraged in his faith, because it turned out that everyone connected to the camp recognized the validity of the decision not to go the way of the world, but to stay close to Christ. All would say one of the reasons the camp is the way it is because of that bold move.”



By Deena C. Bouknight

Deena C. Bouknight writes for newspapers and magazines. Her book, Broken Shells, was published in 2013. Playing Guy is awaiting publication. She teaches at Covenant Classical Christian School, is a director at Prosperity Project, and serves on the board of Haiti Under God (HUG).



Jimboy adds that instead of avoiding a solely Christian camp, people respected the decision. It took only one summer to see the positive impact. Campers and counselors alike experienced deep spiritual growth, and the word spread quickly. “We’ve been blessed ever since. We have not had a period of famine since that move.”

Jimboy says that today’s Camp Greystone is “a great camp that happens to be Christian—boldly Christian. We do have campers who come that are not believers, but it’s a minority, because there’s such a statement of faith on our marketing materials. Nominal Christians, atheists, Jews might come, but they are willing to have that message be part of their experience.”

He adds that it is common for campers to call, write, or express in person how they made commitments to Christ because of their experience at Camp Greystone. This is why Jimboy says his great grand-

father gambled on opening a Christian camp in the first place—he understood that a summer camp setting is “a superior way of sharing the Gospel.”

Countless pastors’ wives and Sunday school teachers attended Camp Greystone over the years. Christian authors spent summers there. Famed Holocaust survivor and author Corrie Ten Boom once spoke and stayed, as did Elisabeth Elliot, author, speaker, and the wife of slain missionary Jim Elliot.

Providentially Poised

The camp has dodged stones hurled by Satan, yet the post-Christian culture closes in. Modernity seems to embrace a new term and/or ideology daily. Neither Jimboy nor his mother are worried. It is only a matter of time, points out Jimboy, that Camp Greystone becomes fodder for those seeking to penetrate its Christian resolve.

Currently, the 70-plus counselors are asked about their

stance on such issues as homosexuality and gender fluidity and encouraged to be aware of what girls are struggling with. “We all keep a Biblical perspective—loving, gracious, and yet mindful of sin,” he says, “and we pray.”

Jimboy says that part of Camp Greystone’s survivability is to always hire “a cohesive team of counselors who want to work at a camp for the right reason—to serve Christ by loving the campers.” He says the staff of about 450 total, for all summer sessions, involves only those who demonstrate a willingness to adhere to the camp’s mission mindedness.

“Our purpose is to glorify God in a camp setting,” he says. “We’re cut off from the world in a lot of ways. Not to say the storms won’t be here, but we have such a strong foundation, we are prepared.”

Libby Miller agrees “It’s wonderful to go through life and watch God design what he desires.” **ROC**

For more information on Camp Greystone, visit www.campgreystone.com/.

