

# VINTAGE CAMP

AN INTERVIEW SERIES



MARYJANE  
HENSLEY

CAMP NORTHWARD IS FOCUSED ON FINDING THE STORIES OF SOME OF OUR ORIGINAL CAMPERS. MARY JANE HENSLEY GRACIOUSLY AGREED TO TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT HER EXPERIENCES THAT ARE PURE, VINTAGE CAMP NORTHWARD.



# WHAT IF...

You had gone to Camp Northward while it was still at Odor Farm? MaryJane did.

## **Tell us a little bit about yourself.**

My name is MaryJane Hensley. For those reading this who might have known me, my maiden name is Howard and I go by Jackie. I am blessed to be from a very loving, happy Christian family. Christianity is generational in my family, spanning from my great-grandparents to my grandparents, to my parents and now to my own children. I am married, have two daughters, four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

This legacy of faith provides a lot of strength. My parents regularly reached out to their surrounding community. They were also very active in the Christian church and missions which in turn instilled these values in their children. I am trying to do that with my family now.

We are very close. Everyone lives within ten minutes of each other except one daughter, and she only lives about an hour away. Aside from COVID-19, we always attend church together. Now, I spend a lot of time working on programs for church and other various organizations I am in. Another blessing in my life is that I am a retired science teacher. I had a wonderful career, during which I taught at several colleges as well as Lexington Christian School. I have been a consultant with the Kentucky Department of Education and NASA.

## **Did you grow up going to church? What are some of your favorite memories of church growing up?**

Yes, I did. I grew up in Christian churches: I am a past member of Elsmere Christian Church and Southland Christian Church. Currently, I am a member of Bridgeport Christian Church.

Some favorite memories of church were all the different services and get-togethers throughout the week. Church was not just a sermon in the morning, but so much more than that. We attended on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights. On Saturdays we had church softball – I played in high school and college. The youth groups were so much fun! We learned to give brief devotions with our friends, and that's part of a lifestyle that is still important (regular devotions).

Sunday School was for studying the books of the Bible, learning how important it is, and reading about the promises in Scripture that encourage us. After we were married, my husband and I led Junior High Sunday School and youth groups. One fun memory is that we had Bible verse memorization contests. One contest was derby-themed: when students memorized a verse, their horse got to move ahead. In the summer, we did the same kind of thing with a baseball theme.

A final good memory is the Worship and Church music. The pipe organ is my favorite instrument. The sermons were more meaningful when the bulletins included a sermon outline for note-taking.

## **How did you first hear about Camp Northward? Did someone invite you to attend?**

Around the time it opened, a large portion of my family went to Corinth Christian Church in Grant County. They supported Camp Northward from the beginning, especially my grandparents. My Grandpa Rogers paid half of my tuition and the church paid the other half of the tuition.

I attended Camp Northward from 1951 to 1958, first at the Oder farm and then later at Falmouth. Bob Shannon and Wayne Smith were camp counselors of mine while they were also students at Cincinnati Bible college.

## **What are some of your most treasured Camp Northward memories?**

There are so many to choose from. My most treasured memory there would have to be when I was baptized in the Creek by Bob and Wayne. Those two enjoyed playing pranks on each other. Another special memory was the visiting missionaries.

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Other treasured camp memories include singing in the dining room and lining up (and having to get in a straight line) before every meal! There were Bible classes in the mornings and recreation in the afternoons. I especially enjoyed the softball games. You might be interested to know that back then, the girls played in skirts because shorts were not allowed. We liked when it rained because we could play on the mudslide leading into the creek. Each evening, a special program was planned such as skits, talent show, and Bible drama. There were triple bunk beds which were fun. Wayne Smith's mother was Dean of Women. She was no-nonsense. Lights out at bedtime also meant silence.

When we transitioned to Falmouth, it was a wonderful setting for Bible classes. We sat on benches overlooking the Licking River. The staff made everyone feel like they were special and important.

### **Do you think that church camps are still important today? Why?**

Oh, absolutely. First, they are so much fun. My friends who attended with me always have good memories when I bring it up.

More importantly, church camps are absolutely important for Christian growth. The consecrated presence of God provides an impact on teaching of the Bible by leading through example. Going to a Christian camp is essential. It encourages young people to love God and to be active in their churches.

## **"I WANT TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO FALL IN LOVE WITH GOD."**

The kindness that was shown to each of us when we attended was remarkable. You don't want anyone to miss out on these experiences. All the activities and experiences made us feel warm and accepted. Camp is like Bible school. It teaches you how to continue to be a Christian after camp – how to be a servant, how to show gratitude, and more.

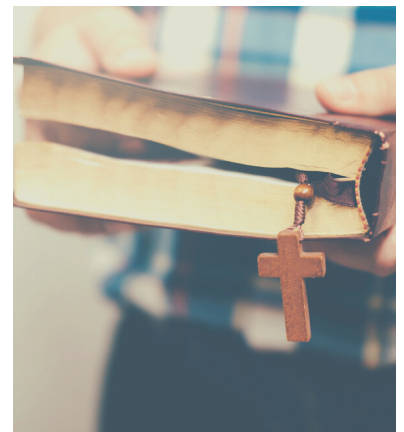
### **Tell us about your hopes for Camp Northward in the future. What are you excited to see happen in the future?**

I'm excited for future campers' experiences and how the sessions will change their lives. I hope that Camp Northward continues to grow in finding new ways to embed God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit into all the weekly participation. I hope that the campers bring their knowledge and experiences to their churches, family, friends and others throughout their lives as they learn to be God's servants.

One change I would love to see is that service be a regular part of future camp sessions. Christians should be serving in their communities.

### **Finally, what would you tell young people who are thinking about attending Camp Northward, some for the first time?**

I want to encourage young people to fall in love with God. By attending places like Camp Northward, Sunday School, and youth group, you will learn more about the Bible and its relevance in your life. Meaningful Bible classes will give you a desire to learn more. It fills you and sets your expectations for life beyond camp.



Besides attending camp, I encourage young people to reach out to older generations who are living alone or in nursing homes. COVID-19 has made me especially aware of this since there are so many who are shut in and unable to connect with their churches, friends or family. If you can, send notes to these populations. Notes are a wonderful way of connecting because that person who receives an encouraging note can read it over and over.

In summary, church camp is too much fun to miss. The experiences and activities will help you have a closer relationship with God. Looking back to 70 years ago, what stands out most vividly to me is the genuine love the staff had for all of us. They wanted the campers to love God and for us to be God's own. It is the thing I remember most after all this time.

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# LOOK WHAT WE FOUND

WHILE DIGGING THROUGH SOME OLD FILES.

DO YOU KNOW ANYONE HERE? TELL US; WE WOULD  
LOVE TO KNOW FOR OUR RECORDS.

*Back in the  
day...*