

Cacapon, 19 August 1970

Dearest family:

The Gordons have arrived at these lovely mountains for the third consecutive year. I don't think it is so much the natural surroundings that beckon us back, as it is the recurrent opportunity to gather together as a family. This year we are 15 strong. Alma, the 6 girls and I left Charleston mid-afternoon Saturday, and driving over new super-highways (no mountains roads this time) for some eight hours, arrived at Gary & Doris'. We went to their church (Presbyterian) on Sunday to hear a gust preacher speak about "living waters", both from Isaiah and from the Gospels. The main point was that the holy spirit not only satisfies our need, but makes us fountains of water overflowing for others. We not only derive power from Christ, but we become sources of power. He really knew his Bible well. We spent the afternoon together at Gary's, then left Sylvia and Donald in charge of the eleven, rather, ten, and the adults and Carol Sue went to the Church of Christ for their evening service, a slide talk on their recent missionary campaign (3-weeks-duration) in Northern Ireland.

Monday morning we got ready to come to Cacapon, a trip of under 2 hours now, even with Gary's car trouble. We went to the beach, then got settled in our adjoining large cabins, each one easily accomodating eight persons. Simone is keeping Carol Sue company in Gary's cabin, so that he now has the larger family! Selma has a room all to herself for the first time in her life. She is now an accomplished swimmer, so that the 9 older kids can go to the beach by themselves anytime.

In the evening we played games and talked. Gary and I both have chess clocks now, and we allow ourselves 5 minutes each for a complete game. This is playing under pressure, and more mistakes are made, but you can really get the games in. Other games being playing regularly are chinese checkers, Pit, Old maid. I haven't seen the Monopoly used yet. Both Carol Sue and Susan play a bonafide game of dominoes with picture cards, by themselves, buying from the store, declaring winners and all.

Tuesday morning Alma and Gary drove two cars into town (Berkeley Springs), Gary's car to the shop to test for loss of power. Then they went to Hancock to buy groceries for one week. The bill was \$100.08, so that you can see that not only is the family consuming more food, but inflation has set in as well. In the afternoon, after lunch at the lodge and the games downstairs thereafter (most everything that used to be a dime is now a quarter, including our bowling game), we went to the beach. I played two sets of tennis, both singles and doubles. Earlier Donald, Peter, Alan, Norman, Sylvia, Sonia, Sandra set out on a hike, and I mean WHAT a hike. They planned to go on all three trails here, a good many miles up and down mountains. Four hours later, thirsty, hungry and exhausted they staggered down the mountainside. Norman got a blister, Sonia some severe thigh and hip pains, and all of them sore muscles. I haven't heard any mention of hikes since!!

We love you, wishe you were here with us, and will write more.

Love,

*Alan*

Cacapon, 22 August 1970

Hi folks,

This morning I took Donald, Alan, Carol, Simone, and Selma on a hike around the green trail. We found lots of blueberries and huckleberries. Carol's Comment: "Mother like to go. Mommy likes blueberries -- I think." Yesterday Carol fell and cut her lip. Anyone who has had a swollen lip will appreciate her comment: "I want to take my mouth off!" And for one more gem from the mouths of babes we have:

Alma to Susan: "Do you want vanilla or chocolate?"

Susan to Carol: "Do you want vanilla or chocolate?"

Carol to Susan: "Chocolate."

Susan to Alma: "That will be two chocolates."

Yesterday Alan and Alma took care of the tribe while Doris and I took off on a "mini-safari" down the Cacapon river. This was a conducted tour that started off at Coolfont (a few miles from here) with a truck and 4 boats, 2 cars, Mr. Seifert, 3 assistants, and 11 guests. We drove to one spot on the Cacapon (where we would end), left one car, and then drove to the start, 3 miles up the river. We started at Coolfont about 9:30 am, and got back around 4:00 pm. There was one paddler for each boat, and Doris and I were alone in the smaller boat, with one paddler behind us, actually Mr. Seibert's son - Jeff. There was another paddle, and I paddled a little at the rough spots, but most of the time I just relaxed and let Jeff furnish the motive power. The boats were long john boats, flat bottom aluminum boats, and very stable. The Cacapon river was quite low, and consisted of long stretches of relatively deep, quiet, water, and separated by stretches of rapids that were only about 6 inches deep on the average -- so you could get out and walk.

After the first stretch of river, we stopped at a flat rock in the middle of the river. With shallow water on the upstream side, and deep water on the other side, it was ideal for ~~waters~~ swimming; the Cacapon river is unusual in having clean water. After swimming we ate our bag lunches, and then went for another swim. Further down the river we stopped for a little, while Mr. Seibert and his 3 fellows cleaned out the rocks from one channel, to make future trips easier. We went on, and stopped for swimming again at a place where a dozen young fellows were already swimming and diving. They dove from a cliff 20 feet off the river, but I didn't try that dive. Then we came to a hydroelectric dam, and Mr. Seibert and his fellows showed considerable expertise as they lowered the boats and party down the 15 foot dam. One more short stretch, and we came to the end of the trip.

Mr. Seibert is a high school physical education instructor, and loves to fish, hunt, and do things outdoors. He started these trips last year, and you can see it's a way of combining business and pleasure. He has everything well organized, from the safety precautions along the way to the iced, insulated containers for our cool drinks. By ignoring all weather maps and weather reports, we happened to hit on a beautiful day, so we didn't need the raincoats we brought along. The 3 miles isn't much, compared to what distance you can cover in a day's trip, but it makes for a very relaxed pace, which is just right for this kind of trip. I was sort of wanting to do this last year, and I'm thankful that Alan and Alma made it possible.

Cacapon, 22 AUG 70 (cont.)

Perhaps now I'll try to describe some of the events of our "average" day at Cacapon, knowing of course, that no day has really been average.

In the morning, the children get their own breakfast, while the adults sleep late - if they wish. Breakfast is usually cold cereal and juice. When the adults get up, they may have eggs or waffles. Morning activities varied quite a bit, with errands, and odds and ends; about half the time we went to the beach in the morning. Lunch at the Lodge was no longer a daily activity; in fact we only went there once. This was partly because prices rose so much, and partly because ~~the~~ Doris and Alma preferred to prepare a noon meal, and eat out at night. Allemonde's restaurant was a satisfactory alternate, costing about \$16 (compared to \$26 at the Lodge) for a hot dog or hamburger, drink, and ice cream; Allemonde's is located right outside the gate and down the road a quarter of a mile. They only have 2 waitresses there, and after getting over the shock of "15!" they served us quite well; I noticed that both times we came in one would turn to the other and say: "You'll help me?".

The afternoons were almost always spent partly at the beach. Supervision there was very easy, since Carol and Susan showed no great desires to go into deep water, and all others know how to swim; (other children, that is). On most days, 6 or 8 children would head for the beach by themselves, on foot, and others would follow later. The parents often had a nap, and Alan got in some tennis most days; I played some with him, but couldn't quite satisfy all his tennis desires, so he found a number of others to play with. At the beach, there was diving, swimming, ball playing, games, and snacks. The "one dime for snacks" continued to be a popular pastime. This was sometimes stretched to 11¢ to cover the tax. A number of times many of us enjoyed throwing a ball around, with each ~~the~~ team trying to keep the ball. We had our beach umbrella, which served both for shade and as a convenient landmark. A few times we got a meal at the snack bar at the beach; hot dogs and hamburgers may not be the most appetizing meal for parents, but it's cheap and satisfactory for the children.

During some evenings we made use of the Park recreational program, led by Joe Frescoln; this was more for the children than for us. Monday night's slide show about Cacapon had too much repetition from previous years to maintain interest. But Wednesday's movie "Water Birds and Reptiles" ~~X~~, and Saturday's movie "Masterson of Kansas" (western) were well received. We attended the campfire on Tuesday night, but left when the little ones got sleepy. They have a new location for the campfire, a circle with benches located on the far side of the main picnic area. It's quite nice, although I think for singing the benches should have been placed closer together. Another evening we fed the children at the cabin, and then the four parents went to the Lodge restaurant and had dinner, while the children played downstairs. We still had our gametime every day at the Lodge basement; many games, including bowling, went up to 25¢, so the children some days received a quarter, and sometimes a dime.

Well, that's it. On Monday the 24th we packed up and drove to Washington Grove, after a very enjoyable and relaxing vacation.

*Gary*

Washington Grove, 27 August 1970

Hi folks,

Alan started off the vacation with a statement that we should take turns writing letters to you all, and he started it off with writing a letter last Wednesday, which I imagine you have received. Alma just wrote from Brazil that Alan's next letter will go into Scrapbook 18, with a border of red stars; she didn't state where she files my letters. I'm afraid the mothers have been too busy getting meals and tending youngsters to contribute to much letter writing.

Monday morning, the 24th, we all packed up and left Casapon. It was considerably simpler than packing to go there, but it still took three hours from getting up at 7 pm to our departure at 10:00. The drive was less than two hours, and after a little unpacking we drove over to Hot Shoppes, Jr. for lunch. In the evening we went to see the movie "On a Clear Day You Can See Forever" with Barbra Streisand and Yves Montand. It's a good movie, with some good music and some excellent lines; one I remember is about academic freedom -- this means you're free to leave if you don't follow the administration line. We tried something new this evening -- a first for the Gordons -- we left all the children under the care of Sylvia and Donald. Things seemed to work out fairly well, the only trouble they had was that Donald didn't know the garbage disposal hasn't worked for a year, and tried to get it to work.

On Tuesday we all went to the zoo, and had quite a time looking at the animals. We mainly split up into two groups: Sylvia, Sandra, and 4 boys headed for the reptile house, while the rest of us concentrated on the birds. The Washington zoo has two very nice bird places, where you can walk in with the birds; one is a building and the other is an outdoor "cage". We all got a ride on the train that covers the zoo grounds, and we ate lunch at the zoo restaurant. We came home in the afternoon, stopping for an hour or so in Rock Creek Park to give the children a chance to climb the rocks in the creek. Donald and Sylvia took off their shoes and socks to wade, but each in turn slipped into the water, and both ended up soaking wet; they thought it was a great joke.

Tuesday evening we drove over to Cabin John Park, and heard an outdoor concert by the Army Band from Edgewood Arsenal. Alan and Alma got some Charleston friends that had just moved here, and after the concert we were invited to their house for some refreshments. The 15 of us were quite a crowd, but we had a good time. Their boy had a little electric train, and we enjoyed playing with it; Alan and I enjoyed getting it to work.

Wednesday Alan went over to the airport to brush up on his flying, which he hasn't done for a while. I drove over with him, and watched him take off. He reported that he was quite rusty, and returned on Thursday afternoon for another hour of instruction. Alan and I also played tennis this week, and found the Washington Grove tennis court a vast improvement over the ones at Casapon. Alan is considerably better than I, and some sets were 6-0, but the last set we played was more interesting, and I finally called it quits at 5-5 because I was exhausted.

Thursday evening the children had an early supper, and we again left Donald and Sylvia in charge -- after carefully deciding the bedtime schedule and the TV schedule. The bedtime schedule was our summer schedule, plus 1/2 an hour, with the corresponding girls at the same time. This put most of them in bed between 9 and 9:30. The four of us went to Normandy Farms and had a hang-up dinner, leaving here at 6 and returning at 10; the majority had shish kebab and lemon meringue pie. Friday Alan et al packed up and left for home, and I went to Comsat to see how they were doing without me -- quite well!

Love,

Gary