

Dedicated to the Ridgecrest Staff, Summer 1966

RIDGECREST IS AN EXPERIENCE

by Grady L. Nutt

Walt Kelly has found his place in American humor with the comic strip POGO. In one of the books which is a compilation of many individual strips, Kelly draws on the imagery of the track runner coming down the home stretch. His comment is appropriate for your present status as staffers: "Too soon we breast the tape, and too late we realize that the joy lay in the running."

By Wednesday of this week you will be coming out of the back stretch; the tape will be in plain sight across the finish line which is September 1. For some of you this will be the longest six weeks in the world. For others of you the time will fly.

Each of you walked into Pritchell in June with your particular treasure wrapped in the napkin of your previous experience. A few of you came with five talents; some brought two; others of you came with just one--afraid to use it, afraid to lose it. Now the summer is half gone. Some of you have already seen your five talents grow to seven-plus. A few who brought two already have three. The typical one-talented souls are now scurrying about trying to remember where they buried the one they brought.

Ridgecrest is full of surprises and joys for the staffer--imagine my talking to YOU about that! Working on the staff here is:

- ... serving the mob in the Nibble Nook;
- ... chocolate milk on your best white sneakers;
- ... walking again for the first time in years;
- ... mailing your weight in post cards and waiting
patiently for your one letter
per week;
- ... lugging easels and chalk;
- ... dipping crushed ice;
- ... never wanting to smell scented soap again;
- ... being shocked to learn that important people
mess their rooms up as badly
as us common folks;
- ... learning a few guitar chords for the first time;
- ... being snowed by the staff Don Juan;
- ... NOT holding hands on the dorm porch;
- ... defending rules you didn't make
but sometimes wish you could change;
- ... rocking;
- ... a repeating menu;
- ... singing "Joy to the World" in July;
- ... getting a salary advance for two weeks
so you can get your laundry
out of hock;
- ... smiling 'til your jaws ache
when you'd like to get
in a quiet corner and cry.

Some of you have seen mountains for the first time, never to see one again without remembering this summer. You have restlessly gone about these grounds serving others while trying to find yourself. You could learn a lesson from this Assembly which lies quietly in the lap of these hills: be still, the only way to learn that He is God.

Let me look ahead with you to these next few weeks. I see the typical staffer now riding away from here at the end of the summer without enough saved for cab fare across a county seat town. You will have a trunkful of luggage, damp cheeks, a lump in your throat, and a wordless joy in your heart. You will, only if you have worked at it, have become more of what you ought to be and less of what you were when you came.

And as a staffer, as for no guest who ever comes here, you know a deep truth that is etched on the fleshy tablets of your heart: Ridgecrest is not just a place--IT IS AN EXPERIENCE. You will never be the same--and neither will some of us who have been privileged to know you.