

Dad Has a Lot to be Proud of

I heard a really darling story from Trojan/Spartan initiation today.

One of our younger campers found that he was a Spartan. At the announcement, his eyes started to water and he looked dejected. His Division Leader saw his response and approached him after the ceremony.

"What is wrong buddy?"

"My dad was a Trojan. All I ever wanted is to be just like my dad."

"OK. I understand why you are sad. You know what, I bet your dad is fine with you being a Spartan. In fact, I think he would be so proud if you were the best Spartan that you can be."

"I guess. I will try."

This morning, we saw him strolling across the field with a red (Spartan) bandana proudly over his brow. He has since donned his Spartan shirt and he is ready to go.

Camp helps develop resilience - I think this is a pretty good example.

Vespers

Tonight and next Sunday, the girls and the boys have separate Vespers around campfires next to the lake. The campers were white (often a t-shirt inside-out) and we gather for some reflective time. These gatherings are an opportunity to talk about what we value and how fortunate we all are.

Tonight, Susie Ma'am plans to talk about optimism and adapting to unforeseen circumstances (like our little Spartan above). She will share the story of how she was ready to run hospitals in New England, but instead found herself a Texan running a summer camp. She will encourage other girls to share stories about how they faced an unexpected situation, but used optimism to adapt and thrive. I have heard wonderful things about the atmosphere that Susie creates for the girls. Since I am always at boys vespers, I have missed the pleasure of seeing her connect with the girls.

One the boys side, we will talk about appreciation and "choosing our faces". For appreciation, we ask the campers to think about everything that makes

their life special - their families, their country, their counselors, their cabinmates, nature, etc. We ask them to remain silent for 1 minute while looking at the stars, listening to the water lap against the shore and watching the campfire. OK, I know that 1 minute does not sound like a lot, but for some campers, that is more silence at one time than they will experience in months.

We will also share a Russian folk tale about a scoundrel that put on the mask of a virtuous man for a full year to woo an honorable woman. Before their wedding, this cad is stricken with unexpected guilt at his deception and chooses to confess his deception to her. He declares "I have been wearing a mask, I will now show my true face." He then removes the mask and the face beneath it is still the face of a virtuous man. The lesson is that we can choose who we want to be and are not defined by what we have been. Each camper can choose who he wants to be for the remainder of camp - the good listener, the helpful cabinmate, the enthusiastic participant.

After vespers, we have Sunday Sundaes where they get some ice cream. I guess they will end up wearing a dairy mask after that.

Sunday Sundaes

At Sunday Sundaes, we give each camper a cup of ice cream (vanilla with chocolate swirl) and then let them choose their toppings: caramel, chocolate, strawberry, chocolate sprinkles and rainbow sprinkles.

Our Letterman Division Leader conducted a brief sociological experiment. As the campers came by, he asked them what they wanted (even though everyone would be getting the same type of ice cream). The 8-10 youngest had to think briefly. Thereafter, all the boys could answer instantly: "chocolate!", "vanilla!", "ice cream!". This certainty lasted until we got to the 8th-10th graders. Oddly enough, they started to hesitate, almost as if it were a trick question. Some of them clearly knew that all the cups were the same, but others simply seemed dazzled by the difficulty of the question. At least one senior camper looked like a deer in the headlights when face with the question: "Chocolate or Strawberry syrup".

I am not sure I can glean any conclusions from this other than the fact that it amused us.