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CAMP SKITS: THE CHILD'S FOLK DRAMA*

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INTRODUCTION

In the United States of America many children attend summer camps to which they develop a fierce loyalty - returning year after year. At these camps they are, as often as not, expected to present skits - usually on the final evening. For many of the children involved this proves the highlight of their week and supplies material for stories to be told time and time again for years afterwards, reminding them of their days at camp and passing on to others their memories of those days.

Drama among folk groups, children in particular, has been studied relatively little by folklorists. According to Roger D. Abrahams, "Folk drama exists on a village or small group level. The performers are members of the community and therefore known to most of the audience. The dramas are given on special occasions only ... and can be performed anywhere" (Abrahams, p.354). I chose to collect children's skits, especially those that are performed at summer camps, on the assumption that children are richly supplied with a large repertoire of folk drama. Camp skits are the epitome of folk drama, as it is defined by Abrahams, in that the performers are members of a temporary "community" of children that is formed at summer camps. In such instances audience participation is a very important element in the skits because there is "... a responsiveness between listener and actor" (Durland, p.131). This interrelationship is made possible because the two groups are drawn from the same "community".

Most of the skits I recorded were performed during talent shows or special skit nights. My sources are all presently residents of Goshen, Indiana, and all attended Mennonite church affiliated camps: Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, Divide, Colorado; Camp Menno Haven, Tiskilwa, Illinois; Camp Friedenswald, Cassopolis, Michigan; Camp Amigo, Sturgis, Michigan; Little Eden Camp, Onkama, Michigan and Laurelville Church Centre, Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania. Such camps all have a religious dimension to their programs, although this is by no means heavy handed. I spoke with five young people (ages 5-14) and eight adults (five under age 25 and three over 25). A number of the adults were themselves campers as children, as well as becoming counselors in later years - this provided two perspectives. All items were collected on tape and then transcribed.

I asked most of my sources where the skits came from and their responses indicated that the majority of the skits were thought of by the kids rather than by the counselors. Beth Landis Weaver, who was at Menno Haven as a camper and a counselor, said that they actually had an understood rule that the kids were supposed to come up with their own

* This article is a condensed revision of a project originally submitted as part of the Undergraduate Course in Interdisciplinary Literature: Folklore, conducted by Professor Ervin Beck at Goshen College, Indiana in 1982. The editors would like to take the opportunity of thanking Paula Kuhns for allowing us to use this project and Ervin Beck for bringing it to our attention and providing copies of the relevant materials.

skit for the show. Danny Thut had an interesting interpretation of that rule. He was a camper at Camp Amigo in the summer of 1982 and said, "In our cabin we did it when it was rest time. Our counselor was too tired to help."

Due to time limitations I have collected only thirty skits. An enormous quantity of skits are still left to be collected and analysed. Through the course of my collection I was able to do two things. One was to identify a couple of general trends as to how skits are changing. These changes seem to directly reflect the roles children are finding for themselves within our constantly changing society. The second was to analyse what functions such skits play in the children's world. Considering the limited number of sources it would be presumptuous to predict the structure and function of skits in other camps.

SOCIAL CHANGES REFLECTED IN SKITS

I was a counselor at Laurelville Church Center during the summers of 1977, 1978 and 1979. Looking retrospectively over those years and comparing the many talent shows with the present ones, I think television has played a substantial role in the new types of drama being passed on. For example, there has been a big increase in dramatised commercials being presented between skits. Lynda Nyce has been at Camp Amigo three of the past four summers.

"When I went a number of times, the main thing to do is commercials. A lot of people do commercials."

One type would be a sales commercial. Gretchen Nyce, Lynda's sister, described this type of commercial in the following way:

"There are regular commercials like for flashlight batteries and stuff. [She took on a salesperson's voice]. You can get these at the camp office!"

Another type of commercial would be an old skit that is taken apart and inserted, in pieces between skits. For example, "The Vipers are Coming" was told to me by a number of adults as a regular skit but it was dissected at Camp Amigo last summer and used as a commercial. This is Lynda's version:

"This is just sort of between skits. People run through the front and say ... one guy runs through and says, 'The vipers are coming! The vipers are coming!' And the next guy, after another few more skits, runs through and says, 'The vipers are coming! The vipers are coming!' They do that about four times. Then near the end of the show they come out with a roll of toilet paper. 'Anyone want a vipe?'"

Television, therefore, appears to be remodelling the traditional pattern of performance from "skit-pause-skit" to skit-commercial-skit", creating a constant action program.

In addition television seems to have had a degenerative effect on at least one skit. The once popular melodramatic skit, "Pay the rent", which has been documented by Norris Yates (p.60), I recorded only once from Margaret Thut, who could only remember bits and pieces of it. One possible reason for the decrease of this traditionally widespread litany is that the exploitation received by the television media has lessened its popularity. For example, the children's show, The Electric Company, has used "Pay the rent" a number of times and the act appears to have since declined in oral circulation.

Both Landis Weaver discussed briefly how she as a counselor saw our technological society affecting the campers. She could not remember which skit it was but she remembers some of her girl campers getting their curling irons and blow driers rounded up for a skit. "When I was a camper we never brought those things to camp, let alone need them for a skit." So the times are changing our "needs" and all this is carrying over into the skits that are being performed.

THE FUNCTION OF SKITS

Social compensation is one of the most easily identifiable functions of camp skits. The skits reveal children's "...frustrations and attempts to escape in fantasy from repression imposed upon [them] ... by society" (Bascom, p.343). For one evening these fantasies actually come alive through the use of what I call the "inverted" skit. The "inverted" skit is one in which there is a surprise ending where someone, often a counselor, "gets it" and the kids triumph as the smart ones. These skit nights can be viewed as festivals which, according to Richard Dorson, "seem to do their best to deny reality, by turning the world and its hierarchies upside down...." (Dorson, p.354). This type of festival is also described as one in which the campers are "...imaginatively, in control while the player is 'helpless' ... The rank of counselor, and counselors in general, is temporarily reduced, and the campers' responsibilities within the community correspondingly become more important" (Ellis, p.499). Almost fifty percent of the skits that I collected have some sort of inversion of wits. One third of them set up some unsuspecting person who got water dumped or thrown on them. Another third belittled someone by calling them a name and the last third took delight in leading a person into doing some embarrassing act. ("Inverted" skits in my collection are indicated by an asterisk against the title). An example of an "inverted" skit is "Painting a Spring Picture" as told by Lynda Nyce. This exemplifies the last category - an embarrassing act.

"You have one person introduce everybody and people from the cabin ... they pick the part they're going to play. Somebody's a bird. Somebody's a chicken. And then they call out people from the audience to be the same thing, trees and stuff ... Then you have somebody call on somebody, somebody you really want to get back at for something. And you have them run around through the trees and all of the different animals. And then you say something like, 'Spring is here and the sap is running!'"

The second easily recognizable function of camp skits is the pure enjoyment they bring. Laughter is an inevitable part of a skit night. Along with the audience's enjoyment also comes the personal pleasure felt by each of the performers after their skit has been successfully presented. All of the skits that I collected were meant to be funny, although there were varying levels of humor. This was even recognized by Becky Thut as she introduced one of the skits by saying, "This is one that's not that funny."

In this study I have separated the humorous nature of skits into three categories. The first is skits that are funny but have no real climax. This group is exemplified "Shadow surgery", as described by Beth Landis Weaver:

"You set up a screen, set up a sheet and got the lights positioned right so that all your actions came across as shadows and that's all the people saw. The skits that were usually done in that form were surgeries where you got a huge tinsnips, and you get a butcher knife, and you get a bowl of spaghetti. And you perform surgery. And you'd use a hammer to knock them out. And that was all done by shadow."

The second category is skits that are not inherently funny until the punch line. About forty percent of the collection belong to this category. The very popular "J. C. Penny" skit, as told by Amy Thut, is part of this group:

"There was this guy, he was sitting there drinking pop. And this guy comes in and he says, 'Hey, where'd you get your new shoes?' 'J. C. Penney', and then he walks away. And this other guy comes and says, 'Hey, where'd you get your clothes?' 'J. C. Penney.' And this other guy comes in ... he just has a towel around him ... and he goes, 'Hey, who are you?' And he says, 'J. C. Penney.'

More than half of the skits fall into the third category where they are funny all the way through and also have an added punch at the end. "The Dr.'s Office", as told by Rhonda Nussbaum Yoder, is a good example of this type:

My cabin did one once. I don't know what they called it but it was the Dr.'s office. The Dr. has to be a person that doesn't laugh or giggle very easily. And each person from the cabin had a different symptom. And one person came in and would sit down and the Dr. would ask if he could help her. And she'd say she had, oh, I don't remember what we all used. That person itched and she couldn't stop scratching. She was scratching all over the place. And the Dr. would give his answer to whatever her problem was but then as soon as she left he'd start itching and he couldn't stop. He'd just keep itching. The next patient would come in and the next patient had a twitch. Her eye kept twitching and the Dr. would tell her how to get rid of that. And she'd leave. Then his eye would start twitching and he'd be scratching at the same time and it would go on and on like that for as many symptoms as you could think of. Until the last person ... this Dr. would keep doing each of them. As a new symptom would come up he'd catch that one too. And the last person to come in was a pregnant woman, a very pregnant woman. We must have stuffed at least two or three pillows up under her skirt. Anyway, she walked in the door and said, 'Are you the Dr.?' And he just took one look at her and he fainted."

This categorisation as defined above, is the method I subsequently adopted when setting out the skits I collected.

CONCLUSION

This brief survey has shown that skits are alive and well. They are, however, slowly changing as their performers' needs change and their functions differ from "community" to "community" and from child to child.

In the process of collecting them my eyes have been opened to the breadth of this subject and there seems to be no end to the potential for further research. I hope sometime to gather further material on them as others accept the challenge they offer. At that point, I hope I will be able to truly test my analysis of the trends of change and the functions of children's folk drama, and assess whether this small collection is a valid basis for this type of study.

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EXAMPLES OF CAMP SKITSNON CLIMATIC SKITSA. Little People

1. Source: Becky Thut. Performed: Camp Amigo, 1982

"Our cabin made little people. You know, like one person sits behind and puts its arm out and the other person sits in front of them and does the feet with the shoes. We sang this song that we sang in music at camp: 'I like Bananas, Coconuts, and Grapes'. And we also used different instruments. So it looked funny...We had three little people. There were seven in the cabin but one was the director".

These little people creations were also talked about by Roger Yoder and Beth Landis Weaver. To Roger they are known as "Little Nimos" and to Beth they are known as "Mr. Stubbs".

2. Source: Lynda Nyce. Performed: Camp Amigo, c.1978-81

"There's one where you have a table and one person sits on the table with their legs crossed. And the other person is behind them and sticks their legs out in front and then you put a blanket over the first persons legs. So it looks like they're really short. The person from the back uses their arms for the other persons face and then they try to brush their teeth...and wash their face...and brush their hair. It's funny to see other people try to do..."

B. Shadow Surgery

1. Source: Beth Landis Weaver. Performed: Camp Menno Haven

"...you set up a screen, set up a sheet, and got the light positioned right so that all your actions came across as shadows and that's all the people saw. The skits that were usually done in that form were surgeries, where you got a huge tinsnips and you got a bowl of spaghetti. And you performed surgery. And you'd use a hammer to knock them out. And that was all done by shadow".

Beth described this type of skit as belonging to a group of not so funny skits. "They were just acting without a punch line".

2. Source: Gretchen Nyce. Performed: Camp Amigo, c.1979-82

"There was this thing...There was like this Dr. and these people would go back behind. And there was something like a ? in their throat. And the Dr. would say, 'Oh a tooth brush', and you'd hear...It was behind a curtain. And you could see the people moving around. And he threw a toothbrush over the top...And he'd dig in again, 'Oh, here's a paper bag'. And he kept on doing stuff like that. And people would come out and say, 'I feel much better'. And then somebody else would go in".

SKITS NOT INHERENTLY FUNNY UNTIL THE PUNCHLINEA. Candy Store

1. Source: Roger Yoder. Performed: Laurelville Church Center, 1978.

"I remember one about the candy store where you have...one person that really know what's going on and he picks volunteers out of the audience. And the first two become the door to the candy store. They stand there with their arms out and when people walk through they go 'ding'. And then...the next person comes up and he's one side of the candy counter and the next person is the other side. There are about three or four more people. I forget what all they do, but they come up and then customers start coming into the store. The first customer comes up and he asks for some sort of candy and the store owner says they don't have any. He asks for about three or four more different kinds and they don't have any. And the customer says, 'Well what do you have?'. And then the store owner says, 'Well we have a bunch of suckers standing around'

And then you can do the same. I've seen the same thing done with the meat market. And then the whole same set up only you have a bunch of hams hanging around".

B. Echo

1. Source: Beth Landis Weaver. Performed: Camp Menno Haven

"How about the Echo one where you call up...This, many times...a group of boys do it. They space themselves quite a ways, maybe twenty feet apart from each other, way out into the woods. Then they call up a person from the audience and say, 'I'd just like to demonstrate to you...'. Okay, let's say the first person they call up is Paul. 'We just want to demonstrate to you what a great echo this place has'. And they shout back, 'Hello' and each camper repeats it, 'Hello', 'Hello', 'Hello', all the way back. And he says, 'Let's try something else. 'We had meat for supper'.

'We had meat for supper', and it keeps going all the way back. Well let's try something else, 'Bologna', and they shout 'Bologna' all the way back except you miss one. Like there's always been seven echoes and this time there wasn't. 'Oh well, we'll try something else. 'Paul's a great swimming instructor'. 'Paul's a great swimming instructor'. It goes about half way back and then you hear 'Bologna' coming back. Usually a bunch of boys want to do it on a counselor".

C. Is it Time yet?

1. Source: Beth Landis Weaver. Performed: Camp Menno Haven

"Another one is the...'Is it time yet?'. Where everyone sits in a long line. 'Is it time yet?', 'Is it time yet?'. And eventually they all cross their legs or whatever they do".

Beth told this skit as if she knew I had heard it before so there wasn't much detail. I found it interesting to compare with the same skit collected from Becky Thut.

2. Source: Becky Thut. Performed: Camp Amigo, 1982

"This is one that's not that funny. Okay, these guys, a whole row of them are standing there like that. [Becky leans on Danny and positions Danny so he is leaning on Amy]. Okay, the one guy goes, [Becky to Danny] 'Is it time yet?' [Amy answers] 'No it's not time yet'. [Danny repeats to Becky] 'No it's not time yet'. [Pause, and Becky asks Danny again] 'Is it time yet?' [Repeated down the row as before. Finally Amy says] 'It's time' [This is then passed back to Becky via Danny and they all switch directions of leaning]. See, the whole cabin group is lined up like that and they kept doing it: 'Is it time yet? Is it time yet?' and they passed it down, 'No, it's not time yet. No, it's not time yet' ".

As Becky related this story she had Danny and Amy help her but had to work really hard to get them leaning the right directions at the right times.

D. Is there a train?

1. Source: Beth Landis Weaver. Performed: Camp Menno Haven, 1967

"This one I saw when I was...the first year as a camper. That would've been in 1967. I don't think I've seen it since...It was a group of girls that did it. And they all stood in a row and one person was sitting in a chair. And the first person standing up in the row tapped the person sitting in the chair and said, 'Is there a train coming from the North?'. And the person said, 'No, there's no train coming from the North'. So she turned and told the person behind her, 'No, there's no train coming from the North'. And she turned and told the person behind her, 'There's no train coming from the North'. And on...it was one of these repetitive ones...on down the row. Okay, then after it got all to the end of the row, the person tapped the person in the chair again, 'Is there a train coming from the South?', 'No, there's no train coming from the South'. And on down the row, then, 'Is there a train coming from the East?', 'Is there a train coming from the West?'. Fine, and then they all, oh, that's the other thing, they each had a piece of luggage with them...they all picked up their piece of luggage and said, 'Well I guess it's safe to cross the railroad tracks then'. They all walked off. That's again one of those dumb ones, when I think about it. It wasn't really funny but we all...4th grade mentality, or something".

E. J.C.Penney

1. Source: Lynda and Gretchen Nyce. Performed: Camp Amigo and Camp Friedenswald, 1982
Lynda & Gretchen knew that I had seen this skit at the Assembly Church retreat so their description was brief.

"You know at Assembly Retreat? [Yea]...That J.C.Penney skit they do at camp. [Was it done just like that?]. Yea, except nobody came out with a bag and stuff...See they didn't have a bag over their face. They just had a towel around. [What type of kid would the J.C.Penney person be?], Just anybody in the cabin who is daring enough to do it".

2. Source: Rhonda Nussbaum Yoder. Performed: Laurelville Church Center, 1978

"It was called the 'J.C.Penney Skit'. This was entirely new to me this time. I've seen it done since then. First of all I think the counselor was the one who introduced it. He was standing down below in the main area and pretty soon one of his campers walked by and he said, 'Hey, I really like that shirt that you have on. Where'd you get it?'. And he said, 'I got it from J.C.Penney' and he said, 'Oh'. And the camper walked on. And pretty soon another camper came down the stairs and the counselor said, 'Nice belt. Where'd you get it?', 'Got it from J.C.Penney'. And the camper walked on. And the next guy came on down and the counselor said, 'Hey, I like those jeans. Where'd you get them?'. And of course the answer again was 'J.C.Penney'. He went through as many campers as they could get involved in this, coming up with all kinds of things that he really liked that they had on: their watch, or their shoes, or their socks, or whatever. Finally this one camper, and this was my favorite camper out of the bunch, right? The guy I thought was so terribly shy. This camper came running down the stairs with absolutely nothing on except his underwear. He came streaking by and the

counselor was just really shook. He was looking around and he asked one of the campers, 'Who was that?'. And he said, 'That was J.C.Penney'.

Rhonda had some interesting background information to add about the 'J.C.Penney' skit:

"Each cabin was responsible for some kind of skit or talent, at least one, and most of the kids wanted to do something funny. And I remember especially this one cabin of boys. Right now I'm not even sure who the counselor was. But the thing that I remember about the skit was that the counselor wasn't really involved in organizing it. It was mostly the kids taking off on their own. This was the younger, well like each of the cabins was divided into like seven and eight year olds and nine and ten year olds, and this was the younger of the groups.

About my favorite camper during that camp was involved in this skit. His name was Max Bentz. I guess that's why I remember it most". Max played the part of J.C.Penney and Rhonda thought that it was his own doing, stripping down to his underwear. According to Rhonda, Max was a bit shy at the beginning of the week but had most definitely come out of it by skit night when he added his performer's flair.

3. Source: Amy Thut. Performed: Little Eden, 1982; Camp Friedenswald, 1982

"There was this guy. He was sitting there drinking pop and this guy comes in and he says, 'Hey, where'd you get your new shoes?', 'J.C.Penney', and then he walks away. And this other guy comes and he says, 'Hey, where'd you get your clothes?', 'J.C.Penney'. And this other guy comes in and he goes, 'Hey, who are you?'. And he says, 'J.C.Penney!'. He just has a towel round him".

All three children agreed that usually three people walk across although sometimes they have more, depending on how many kids there are to be included. At the Assembly Church retreat, at Camp Friedenswald, I was able to see Amy, Danny, and Becky perform this skit. The J.C.Penney person there was an adult who not only wore a towel but also a bag on his head so the people wouldn't know who he was. I asked the Thut children if the J.C.Penney character usually wore a bag and they said, 'No'.

F. Just a Russian

1. Source: Beth Landis Weaver. Performed: Camp Menno Haven

"I think we called it 'Just a Russian'. What it was, was one person, usually boys did this skit. A boy would walk across the stage and he would be...He'd make a statement, repeating it several times, 'I'm a Lieutenant in the Russian Army'. The next person would go across, 'I'm a Corporal in the Russian Army. I'm a Corporal in the Russian Army'....It would go in the order of ranks so the last person says 'I'm the General in the Russian Army!'. And then the last person would come across with a roll of toilet paper and they'd just run across the stage and they would shout, 'I'm just a rushin'. That was a favorite with the boys".

G. Let 'er fly

1. Source: Kevin Miller. Performed: Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, 1972

"You have about five or six persons standing up in front of the audience. And they all have their hands behind their back, covering a glass with their hand - just like a drinking glass. And what the group does is introduce the Fly Family. And these are all supposedly flies that, that they have caught and tamed or done something with. So the first people in the line - you start at one end and work down, and the first one pulls the glass out in front of him and shows them an imaginary fly in the glass and says, 'This is Billy Fly'. And then the next one pulls out his, and, 'This one is Sally Fly', or whatever names you want to put on them. And you keep on going down the list like that until you get to the very last person. And when they pull out their glass it has water in it. And they say, 'And this is Letter [Let 'er] Fly'. And they throw water all over the audience".

2. Source: Les Zook. Performed: Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, 1966

"You have about four people come onstage with their hands behind their back and you introduce them to the audience. You introduce the first one being 'Papa Fly'. And he nods his head in acknowledgement. And you, you introduce the second one as 'Mama Fly'. And she kind of curtsies as acknowledgement of the introduction. The third one is 'Baby Fly'. And he kind of waves and - whatever. And then the fourth one you introduce as 'Letter [Let 'er] Fly'. And Letter - all these flies have their hands behind their back, but Letter Fly has in his hand a cup of water. And he just throws the water all over the audience".

H. Measuring for a coffin

1. Source: Kevin Miller. Performed: Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, 1969

"You ask for a volunteer - the person that you want to play a trick on. And they come forward and lie out on the floor. Then you use a, a yardstick or some type of measuring tape and you measure their arms and - you could measure some dumb stuff like the length

of their head or the width of their face - things that aren't really necessary. Anyway, you get down to the legs and you start measuring the legs. But you lift it up so you can get it measured easier. And while it's lifted up, someone else pours a cup of water down the pantleg. And so they end up with wet pants".

2. Source: Carol Rempel. Performed: at her home in Walsenburg, Colorado, 1976.

"This skit takes two performers and one volunteer. One of the performers has the volunteer lay down on the ground and tells the volunteer that they are going to be measuring her for a coffin. First, they measure her arms, one at a time. Then the length of her body. And then finally the length of their legs. And then on the second leg, the other volunteer sneaks up. And when you lift up their leg to measure it, the other person pours water down their leg".

I. Patience, Jackass

1. Source: Kevin Miller. Performed: Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, 1970

"And it has to do with the story of the Israelites in the Old Testament. And the scene is Moses and maybe a [laughs], some other people that are part of the Israelite clan. But you also have one person down on their hands and knees that's a, a donkey or a jackass, and maybe some other animals, too. And before - the scene starts with a person walking across the stage with a card that says, 'Day 1'. And the, a, after the card goes by, then Moses and his clan start moving across the stage. And the donkey says, 'When will we ever get there? I'm so tired of being out in the desert'. And Moses says, 'Patience, Jackass, patience'. Then from the reverse side of the stage another person, the same person goes by with a card that says, 'Day 2'. And the same thing happens again. They walk by and Moses and the clan walks by in front of the crowd and the donkey asks when they're, when they're going to get there. He's tired of wandering around out in the desert. And Moses says, 'Patience, Jackass, patience'. Then the next scene is just like the previous ones, except that instead of carrying across the card that says 'Day 3', it's 'Day 4'. And they begin across the stage. But before they get across, either someone will spontaneously interrupt the flow and say, 'What happened to Day 3?' Or else you should have someone planted in the audience to yell that in case no one does. But as soon as they yell, 'What happened to Day 3?', then Moses answers back, 'Patience, Jackass, patience' ".

J. Vipers are coming

1. Source: Lynda Nyce. Performed: Camp Amigo, c.1978-81

"This is just sort of between skits. People run through the front and say...one guy runs through and says, 'The vipers are coming! The vipers are coming!'. And the next guy, after another few more skits, runs through and says, 'The vipers are coming! The vipers are coming!'. They do that about four times. Then near the end of the show they come out with a roll of toilet paper, 'Anyone want a vipe?' ".

2. Source: Les Zook. Performed: Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, 1969

"You have a couple of kids come running through, yelling, 'The viper's coming! The viper's coming! Get out of here!'. And they come, one by one, and, and try and get the audience all excited by yelling, 'The viper's coming!'. And then finally the last kid comes walking in and onstage and says, 'I'm the viper. You want your windows viped?'. And he has with him a rag and a bucket and, and one of those, a, window-wiping squeegee things. And so he's the 'Viper' ".

FUNNY SKITS WITH AN ADDED PUNCH LINE

A. Painting a Spring Picture

1. Source: Lynda Nyce. Performed: Music Camp at Valparaiso, 1982

"You have one person introduce everybody and people from the cabin...they pick the part they're going to play. Somebody's a bird. Somebody's a chicken. And then they call out people from the audience to be the same thing, trees and stuff...Then you have somebody call on somebody, somebody you really want to get back at for something. And you have them run around through the trees and all of the different animals. And then you say something like, 'Spring is here and the sap is running!'".

This was performed at a Music Camp in Valparaiso, Indiana. The director was chosen to be the 'sap'.

B. Apply for a Job

1. Source: Danny Thut. Performed: Parkside Elementary School, Goshen, 1982

"There's these two guys sitting at a desk. One is sitting at one desk and the other is sitting at another desk. This guy walks in and goes to the one desk. 'I would like to apply for a job', spoken with mouth wide open and words drawn out. He goes, 'What's your name?'. And the guy...starts counting his fingers. [Imitates counting for about five seconds and then responds], and then he goes, 'Stanley'. And he goes 'Where do you live?'

And he goes, 'I don't think I know'. And he goes, 'Go over to the next desk'. And he goes... 'I would like to apply for a job'. And he goes, 'What's your name?'. And he goes, [Imitates counting on fingers again] 'Stanley'. And then he goes, 'Where do you live?', and he goes, 'I don't know'.... And then he goes, 'Well, what's your phone number?' And he goes, 'I don't think I have a phone'. And he goes, 'What's your last name?' And he goes, 'I don't think I have a last name'. And he goes, 'Well then how do you know your first name?' And he goes, 'Oh, that's easy. All you have to do is this. Singing and counting the rhythm with fingers as done before. 'Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday dear STANLEY!' ".

C. Bigger and better machine

1. Source: Becky Thut. Performed: Camp Amigo, 1982

"Okay, they had this big blanket up and it said, 'Bigger and Better Machine'. This person comes along with this string and the man there, he goes, 'Would you like me to make the string bigger and better?' And so he takes the string and puts it in the 'Bigger and Better Machine' and they throw out a rope. And then this girl comes along with this doll. And he goes, 'Would you like me to make that bigger and better?'. So they put it in the machine and this guy comes out with diapers on. And they go away. And then the man accidentally sneezes into the machine and then they throw out a bucket of water".

Danny and Becky both thought that there was more to this skit but they couldn't remember.

D. Brushing Teeth

1. Bruce Kuhns. Performed: Hesston College, Hesston, Kansas. 1977

I realise that this skit was not performed at a children's camp and it was not even performed by children but it was so closely connected to the 'Combing Hair' skit (see 'G' below) that I include it for interest sake.

E. Car Trouble

1. Source: Roger Yoder. Performed: Laurelville Church Center, 1978

"I think my cabin made the one with the car...You get one person who's to be the body of the car and he comes up and gets down on his hands and knees. [Rhonda adds, 'and that's a person that doesn't know the skit'] Yea, and then you get other volunteers and they come up to be the tires. But the car won't run...it won't start for some reason. And they check everything and then finally the driver decides that what's wrong is the car needs water in the radiator. And at that point as you're saying it you throw water on the body's face. [Then Rhonda adds, 'It's a get-back-at-your-counselor skit']".

F. Cleaning out ears

1. Source: Beth Landis Weaver. Performed: Camp Menno Haven

"A camp director usually did it with the staff and she would...get up and line up all the staff, all the counselors and she said she just has problems every morning keeping this group in line. And she usually like to wash out their ears and clean them up and get them ready for the day...She said she cleans their ears like this. She took a drink of water swished it round in her mouth real good and turned and blew it into the ear of the next person. And they blow it in each others ears down to the end and it just happens the last person has had a mouth full of water all along. And he spits it out. It gives them the illusion though, that it's gone all the way down".

I once saw this skit performed at Laurelville Church Center by a group of kids. Instead of having water in the end person's mouth they had a chewed up Oreo cookie, which made the audience really react!

G. Combing Hair

1. Source: Bruce Kuhns. Performed: Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp

"The next skit is very similar to the first one ['Brushing Teeth', see above] except it's just done with a, a, a comb. And the people dip the, a, their comb in a glass of water and then comb their hair and pass it on to the next person. Then the same way, and the last person then drinks the, the glass of water".

H. Crying

1. Source: Beth Landis Weaver. Performed: Camp Menno Haven, 1968, 1970

"This one I had seen a couple of times. I think as a fifth grader and then again as a seventh grader. The first person goes out, and this was a girls' cabin that always did this. The first person goes out. Just stands there and cries and cries...One person comes out and says, 'Well, what's the matter with you?' And so she whispers in her ear what the problem was and the two of them just stood there and bawled their eyes out, just sobbing. The third person walked out and pretty soon you've got the whole row of girls...this is one of the repetitive ones...the whole row of girls standing up there sobbing. And the last person comes out and goes, 'What's the matter? What's everybody crying about?', and they all said together, 'We don't have any skit for skit night' ".

I. Dentist's Office

1. Source: Rhonda Nussbaum Yoder. Performed: Laurelville Church Center, 1978

"There's a dentist's office...and this one kid is chosen and he thinks he's going to really be able to get this counselor, whoever is supposed to be the dentist. This kid is told he is supposed to hold flour in his mouth and when the dentist comes over to check his teeth then he is supposed to puff this flour out into the Dentist's face and you're really supposed to play this up so that this kid thinks this is really going to be great. He's really going to get his counselor.

But while the cabin is out of the room getting ready for the skit, everybody else is told what's going on and...which kid is the one with the flour in his mouth and to watch him. And actually the skit back-fires and it's a joke on the kid with the flour in his mouth because as the dentist comes out and checks the teeth of all the other patients he just avoids that kid. So the kid just has to hold the flour in his mouth and it gets gummier and gummier, tastes more like paste. [How does it end?] Got me! [Roger added, 'The guy with the flour in his mouth usually dashes out. He usually figures out what's going on when the guy never gets to him!']".

J. Doctor's Office

1. Source: Rhonda Nussbaum Yoder. Performed: Laurelville Church Center, 1978

"My cabin did one once. I don't know what they called it but it was the Dr.'s office. The Dr. has to be a person that doesn't laugh or giggle very easily. And each person from the cabin had a different symptom. And one person came in and would sit down and the Dr. would ask if he could help her. And she'd say she had, oh, I don't remember what all we used. That person itched and she couldn't stop scratching. She was scratching all over the place. And the Dr. would give him the answer to whatever her problem was but then as soon as she left he'd start itching and he couldn't stop. He'd just keep itching. The next patient would come in and the next patient had a twitch. Her eye kept twitching and the Dr. would tell her how to get rid of that. And she'd leave. Then his eye would start twitching and he'd be scratching at the same time. And it would go on and on like that for as many symptoms as you could think of. Until the last person...this Dr. would keep doing each of them. As a new symptom would up, he'd catch that one too. And the last person to come in was a pregnant woman. We must have stuffed at least two or three pillows up under her shirt. Anyway, she walked in the door and said, 'Are you the Dr.?' And he just took one look at her and he fainted".

K. Pet Caterpillar - Eating

1. Source: Paula Brunk Kuhns. Performed: Laurelville Church Center, 1966-70

"A number of children are on their hands and knees. I remember doing this at Laurelville Church Center when I went as a child for Music Week with my family. A bunch of us would get on the floor on our hands and knees and then we would be covered up with a sheet or a blanket or whatever. And someone would lead us out with a rope, out in front of the audience, and tell the audience that we were the pet caterpillar and that we could eat things. And so he would feed us something and we would - to show that we were swallowing it, you would hump your back. And so every, when the person in front of you humped, then you would hump and then the person behind you would hump their shoulders, and it would look sort of like you're swallowing. And then you could follow - well, let's say, they fed you a whole can of beans, and you could follow the caterpillar swallowing all the way down to the end of the caterpillar. And then they'd throw out the empty can. Or they fed him a shoe and you could follow it, swallowing it the whole way down, and then they'd throw out a shoestring. And there were, oh, a lot of different things that we did with that - like feeding him a piece of wood and then throwing out some sawdust. And the, the last one then would be getting a volunteer from the audience to be eaten by the pet caterpillar. And he would swallow it. And then you'd throw out a pair of underwear. And that was always real cute.

After that one got old, though, the next version came in where, a, you would feed the caterpillar lots of things, and then you'd follow it down to the end. But it wouldn't throw out anything. It wouldn't discard anything. And the owner would be very puzzled. He didn't know why this happened. He'd feed quite a number of things and go down to the end and nothing would come out. And finally he decides to feed him some prune juice. And so he gives him some prune juice and it goes all the way down to the end. And then, in one mad rush, everything is thrown out the end of the caterpillar - extremely fast. That's the second version".

L. Pet Caterpillar - Doing Tricks

1. Source: Danny Thut. Performed: Camp Amigo, 1982

"There's this pet caterpillar...There are about three guys who have a blanket over them and then he goes, 'This is my pet caterpillar and he can do some tricks'. They have him, he rolls over and shakes your hand and he says, 'There's one more trick he can do. He can walk over somebody. Anybody from the audience want to come up?' So she chooses

somebody to come up and lie down and the caterpillar walks over them. And when the end of it walks over there's, they pour some water over them, and she says, 'I never said he was potty trained'.

M. Pay the Rent

1. Source: Margaret Thut. Performed: Camp Luz, 1968 [?]

I spoke with Margaret Thut over the phone and asked her if she knew any skits from camps when she was younger. She very vaguely remembered one about rent. She couldn't put together more than the basic phrases of 'you have to pay the rent' and 'I can't pay the rent'. She tried to figure out what its meaning was but drew a blank on that too.

For a complete account of this skit, see 'Children's Folk Plays in Western Oregon' by Norris Yates.

N. Singing off beat

1. Source: Danny Thut. Performed: Camp Amigo, 1982

"There was this group of kids singing and then there was a camp counselor that was like leading them. And then they started singing. But one kid was really off beat and so he, the counselor takes him outside and starts pounding on the wall...so you think he's hurting him. So he comes in and starts...keeps on doing it, removing bad singers, one by one till there is one guy left. And he goes, 'Please sing right', hands clasped as if pleading. And then he starts singing real bad and stuff. So he takes him out there and all of a sudden you hear this big banging. All of those guys are beating up this big guy". [Becky adds the ending, "And then the last guy comes in like this" - She imitates someone dusting their hands off as if having accomplished something].

O. Stuck in the Desert

1. Source: Becky Thut. Performed: Camp Amigo, 1982

"These people come along. They are riding in their car and they got stuck in the desert... It got hotter and hotter and hotter and they both fall down dead. This other guy came riding along on his bicycle and...he got stuck and it got hotter and hotter. They needed water. And they fell down dead. And a girl came riding along on her motorcycle and she got hotter and hotter and hotter. She needed water. She needed more water. She saw all of the dead people. And then she saw some water and so she took a comb out of her pocket. Stuck it in the water and combed her hair".

According to Becky this skit is usually told with a narrator telling the story.

2. Source: Bruce Kuhns. Performed: Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, 1968

"This skit is done just one person with another person - doesn't say anything, but just brings in a prop. The one person comes stumbling on to the stage. And their clothes are all ragged and they look very distraught. And they're gasping. They have a real hoarse voice and they say, 'Water! Water!' They're pretending like they're out on a desert and haven't had water for days and days. And they fall to the floor and kind of crawl along on their hands and knees. 'Water! Water!'. And finally they fall down on their stomach. And they're just kind of inching along, inching along. Finally, someone brings in a glass of water and sets it down in front of them. And they say, 'Water!'. And they pull out a comb from their pocket, dip it in, and comb their hair with it".

P. There's a bear / Thar's a bar

1. Source: Paula Brunk Kuhns. Performed: Laurelville Church Center, 1974

"One person is in charge and calls a whole bunch of people out of the audience. And they all come up and line up at the front. The first person says to the second person, 'Thar's a bar', and points with his arm. The second person's supposed to repeat, or, finish the dialogue by saying, 'Whar [Where]?'. And he says, 'Over thar [there]'. And then the second person does the same to the third person: 'Thar's a bar', pointing. 'Whar?'. 'Over thar'. And they pass that dialogue all the way down to the end. When everyone has their - well, let's say - left arm pointing out, then the first person starts over again, says, 'Thar's a bar', 'Whar?', 'Over thar'. And he points with his other arm, so both arms are out. And the second person does that with the third person, and so on down the line. When they, everyone has both arms out, having completed that, they start over again and the first person said, 'Thar's a bar', 'Whar?', 'Over thar'. And he squats down, so he has both arms out and he's squatting. The second person does it to the third person and so on down the line, until everyone has both arms out and they're squatting. It goes back to the first person and the first person says, 'There's a bar', 'Whar?', 'Over thar'. And he pushes the second person over, who falls into the third person, and it's sort of a domino effect where everyone falls on top of everyone, because with both arms out and in a squatting position there's very little way of redeeming yourself from falling'.

Q. Ugliest Man in the World

1. Source: Rhonda Nussbaum Yoder. Performed: Laurelville Church Center, 1978

"This skit the campers came up with. They chose one person out of the cabin to be underneath a sheet at the front of the room. And another person, that introduces the skit, says they really have something to see here. This is the ugliest person in the world. The absolutely ugliest person. There's nothing...nobody who can stand to look at it. There's not one person that has tried to look at this ugly person and has lived to tell anybody about it. It's just been really terrible. But they'd like volunteers to come up and see if they can look at this thing. And so kids from the cabin are sitting out in the audience and a couple of them volunteer and they go up one at a time. And they just take a peek under the sheet and terrible groans and yells come out. And all at once you just see the person..they back away from the sheet and fall over. They're supposedly dead. And each person that looks at this ugly person never survives. And that happens for, you can have as many volunteers as you want. Then you choose one person...and that person goes up to the front. Usually a counselor or somebody the kids have chosen, and he goes up to the front and looks under the sheet and the ugly person throws the sheet back off him and he falls back dead".

2. Source: Beth Landis Weaver. Performed: Camp Menno Haven

"The next one I could think of...a bunch of campers would ask for a volunteer out of the audience and they would usually pick somebody to come up...They had somebody, something, underneath a blanket and each person would walk up to the blanket and look under and say, 'Oh, how ugly' and drop it. And each person would look up and say, 'Oh how ugly'. And they'd all turn and go away, so finally the person that was called out of the audience would go and look underneath it. And the blanket, the person, underneath the blanket would fall over, and he'd say, 'Oh, how ugly!' "

3. Source: Danny Thut. Performed: Camp Amigo, 1982

"There's this guy who's standing there with a blanket on and there's a guy beside him... And he goes, 'This is the ugliest man in the world!'. And then he says, 'Anybody want to come up and see him?' And then he has somebody come see him. And then he takes a peek under the blanket and falls down dead, because he's so ugly. [Becky added, 'Those people should be in on the skit'] Yea. And so he drags him off with his feet. And then he says, 'Anybody else want to see him?' And about two or three other people come to see him. And the last guy who comes to see him, the guy under the blanket sees him and falls down".

Danny was the narrator for this skit this past summer. He said that there were a few problems, such as when the person under the blanket fell down for some reason he couldn't get back up. Danny did say the people laughed at that too so it all seemed to work out in the end,

R. Undressing under a blanket

1. Source: Beth Landis Weaver. Performed: Camp Menno Haven, 1967

"This one...was kind of a unique one. Our cabin had done it the first time I was a camper. One person was, she went up front. She was the M.C. for the group. And she said, 'We just need a volunteer from the audience. Just a volunteer'. And one of the girls from our cabin volunteered. And they went and threw a blanket over her, and asked her to start taking her clothes off. 'Just throw out a piece of clothing'. So she threw off her skirt. 'Throw off another piece of clothing', and she threw off her shorts. 'Throw off another piece'. Pretty soon she had given about everything, pantys and socks and all this. And of course by now the guys who were sitting up in front were all on the edge of their chairs. Then they pull off the blanket.

Well it turns out this person is an identical twin and she had double clothed herself. So she had thrown off all of this clothing. We pulled off the blanket and she looked exactly the same as when she had started, which gave you kind of a funny feeling. At least it kind of threw you for a minute because you weren't expecting that".

2. Source: Kevin Miller. Performed: Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, 1969

"A person is called from the audience and a blanket is put over them and then they are asked, they're told that they're out in the middle of a hot desert and they're asked what they would remove first. And the trick is that they should remove the blanket first because they wouldn't need a blanket while they're out in the desert. But they will probably think that it's supposed to be some article of clothing. So the trick is that they would begin removing articles of clothing while they are under the blanket. That's the way the skit originated but when I was at camp it had gone around so often that they decided to change it a little bit to fool the audience, which probably knew what the skit was like. So the person that we had be under the blanket knew what was going on and they had a double set of clothing with them, so that in the presence of the questioners' asking them what they would take off if they were out in the desert, they started throwing out their pants and their shoes and, and shirt and [laughs] eventually their underwear. And the audience then was the one that was fooled this time because they expect, suspected that the person under the blanket was removing all of their clothing while, in actuality, they had it all on still".

- KUHNS, Bruce. Born January 26 1958, at Clearwater, Kansas. Now a self-employed carpenter living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp for numerous children's camps from 1968 on. Also counseled in 1978.
- KUHNS, Paula Brunk. Born August 8 1959, at Washington, D.C. Now a part-time student and child-care worker living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Laurelville Church Center from 1962-1977. Also counseled 1977-1979.
- MILLER, Kevin. Born August 18 1958 at LaJunta, Colorado. Now a student and part-time nurse's aid living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp for numerous summers beginning with 1967.
- NYCE, Gretchen. Born July 22 1971 at Goshen, Indiana. Now a student at Parkside Elementary living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Camp Amigo 1979-1982.
- NYCE, Lynda. Born October 29 1968, at Goshen, Indiana. Now a student at Whiteman Jr. High living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Camp Amigo 1978-1981.
- REMPEL, Carol. Born March 22 1960 at Ulysees, Kansas. Now a cook at Walnut Hill Kindergarten living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, 1971-1976.
- THUT, Amy. Born April 1977, at South Bend, Indiana. Now a student at Parkside Elementary living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Little Eden, 1982.
- THUT, Becky. Born May 1973, at Washington, D.C. Now a student at Parkside Elementary living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Little Eden, 1982, and Camp Amigo, 1982.
- THUT, Danny. Born April 1972, at Washington, D.C. Now a student at Parkside Elementary living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Little Eden, 1982, and Camp Amigo, 1982.
- THUT, Margaret. Born April 1946 at Elida, Ohio. Now a mother living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Camp Luz, 1968, and Little Eden, 1982.
- WEAVER, Beth Landis. Born May 1957, at Sterling, Illinois. Now a nurse at Goshen General Hospital living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Camp Menno Haven as a camper from 1967-1974, also as a counselor in 1975, 1976, and 1979.
- YODER, Rhonda Nussbaum. Born April 1959, at Orrville, Ohio. Now a student living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Laurelville Church Center as a counselor in 1978 and 1979.
- YODER, Roger. Born July 1959, in Meyersdale, Pennsylvania. Now a pilot for private company living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Laurelville Church Center as a counselor in 1977 and 1979.
- ZOOK, Les. Born May 22 1957 at Scottdale, Pennsylvania. Now a self-employed carpenter living in Goshen, Indiana. Attended Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, 1966-1973.

RECORD NOTES

Caribbean Island Music: Songs and Dances of Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica

Recorded in the Islands by John Storm Roberts (Explorer Series H-72042 (stereo), Nonesuch Records, 665 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10022, U.S.A.)

Side 2 - Track 9

"Mummies" (7:07) Theophilus Chiverton, with homemade fife, 2 drums, triangle. Recorded in San Pedro de Marcoris, Dominican Republic.

This recording, though made in the Dominican Republic, presents a phenomenon native to the small islands of St. Kitts and Nevis, from which there are many settlers in San Pedro. The "Mummies" perform in the streets at Christmas and Easter, reciting, playing, and dancing in colorful costumes. The tradition descends closely from British medieval mumming, and the recitative style heard here was retained in British mumming plays until early in this century. Some of the actual words hark back to these early roots: the first "verse," for example, is a slightly garbled version of a medieval English mumming play; the beginning of the next stanza will be an old friend to followers of Elizabethan drama; and the subsequent references to the Turkish knight Saladdin (the leader of the Saracens against King Richard I of England) and St. David are all from medieval English mumming plays. The San Pedro "mummies" are of particular interest for the manner in which they play their home-made imitations of European military drums. The style is essentially a blend of Old World military and fife-and-tabor drumming, but its thoroughgoing infusion of African-derived rhythmic attitudes points to the origin of jazz drumming."

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Lecturer in Renaissance Drama, Glasgow University

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