

'A Beautiful County' Says YCC Head

BY BETSY BAKER

"It's a beautiful county we live in," says Philip Giardino of Star Lake. He and his crews of Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) workers are spending this summer on outdoor projects they hope will make St. Lawrence County even more beautiful.

Giardino is project director for the county's YCC non-resident program. He has an office within the 4-H office in Canton, but he spends much of his time on the road, traveling around the county to oversee work crews, check on the progress of YCC's various projects and offer encouragement to the youthful workers.

"We do things nobody else does," Giardino said, "and without us they probably wouldn't get done at all." So far this summer his crews have built a 40-foot long, 20-foot high bird watching platform at the Indian Creek National Center in Rensselaer Falls; trapped and banded Canadian geese at Wilson Hill State Park near Massena for release at Indian Creek; cleaned roadside picnic areas, thinned red pine forests and cleared trails for hikers, snowmobilers and hunters.

Recently, in one morning, the Massena-Potsdam crew cleared more than 52 bags of rubbish from an area near Postwood Park in Hannawa Falls. That land, purchased by 4-H nearly 40 years ago, has been used by hikers, trail bike riders and snowmobilers, but over the years bottles, cans and other rubbish had accumulated. The work crews also cleared brush and dead limbs from the area.

YCC projects are suggested by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Giardino said, and the work is closely supervised by the DEC. A recent DEC inspection resulted in an "A" rating for the YCC's projects and operation, according to Giardino. He also noted that he expects a federal inspection as well. St. Lawrence County employs 18 youths 16 boys and two girls, in the YCC non-resident program. They are between 15-18 years old; there are no family income restrictions on their employment. Job slots are filled by random selection through a computer. The youths work from July 5-Aug. 29, seven hours a day, for minimum wage. Each six person

crew has a crew leader. The work is hard, Giardino said. Crews this summer have braved heat, rains and insects, but only two left the program, one to seek other employment and one because of an asthmatic condition made worse by dust and pollen.

Next year Giardino hopes to have 36 slots, double the present number, in order to expand the program. "I love putting people to work," Giardino said. "Kids in this county have a rough time finding jobs."

Giardino also pointed out that the two YCC resident camps, located at Star Lake and Fine, are not open to residents of St. Lawrence County. The non-resident program employs only youths from this county.

"Other YCC resident camps in the state are open to St. Lawrence County residents," Giardino said, "but because of the computer, our kids are at a disadvantage statistically."

YCC funding is 80 percent federal and 18 percent state, with St. Lawrence picking up the remaining two percent through in-kind payments for medical examinations, insurance and payroll handling. The state share of the funds is appropriated through the DEC, which determines how many job slots each county receives.

Giardino's project is sponsored by the county 4-H, through Floyd Morter, head of Cooperative Extension. Giardino stated that he has received "much encouragement" from Morter and from James Jackson, who was instrumental in getting a YCC grant for the county. Giardino, who teaches social studies at Clifton-Fine Central School, speaks with enthusiasm about his program. "We teach the work ethic," he said. "We need to make our children aware of the environment, to make them think about it," he continued. "We need to help our children appreciate what is around them."



CLEAN-UP-A work crew from the St. Lawrence County Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) clears bottles, cans and other rubbish from land near Postwood Park in Hannawa Falls. The crew, based in the Potsdam-Massena area, consists of Bob Honan, crew leader and Tim LaDus, Larry LaComb, Clayton Thomas, Lloyd Arceet, Mike LaPage and Kim Thrasher. (Betsy Baker photo).

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IN ACTION—Youth Conservation Corps worker Bill Day of State University College at Potsdam's Star Lake Camp Lodge for a week on the trails in the Adirondack Park. Beth Page, L.I., and other YCC participants prepare to leave.

Youth Crews Groom Adirondack Trails

If you're on an Adirondack Mountain trail and find yourself surrounded by a group of young people wearing dirty jeans, hiking boots, and luminous yellow hard hats, you've probably just met the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC).

Eighteen youths, aged 15 through 18 years, from throughout New York State are participating this summer in an eight-week outdoor work program sponsored by the State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Along with the DEC, William Conolly, the director of the State University College at Potsdam's Star Lake Campus, submitted an application to the DEC to obtain federal funding to launch the Youth Conservation Corps Program from the Star Lake campus.

Part of the money outlined in the DEC proposal for Star Lake is matched by the Star Lake Campus supplying housing for the YCC participants. Although the Federal Government requires the YCC members to still pay for their own food, the camp also provides counselors and food for the wilderness adventurers.

In the short span of only a week's preparation and training the YCC workers began to tackle the outdoors, building bridges, clearing trails, and pruning trees on the Adirondack trails eight hours a day, Monday through

Friday. One YCC participant, 17-year-old Stephanie Bang of Queens, recalling an incident of a family hiking through the trails in sneakers, said, "If it hadn't been for us, they would have been up to their knees in mud." She was referring to a new, dry, tread bridge built by YCC. "The first week I didn't think we could survive," said one YCC participant.

Constructing a stringer, corduroy, or dry tread bridge is not a simple task for the forest workers due to the infinite number of black flies, mosquitoes, and various other outdoor insects and obstacles. "If you can stand bugs you can stand anything," said Ms. Bang. Stephanie confessed that even "talking to the bugs" doesn't get rid of them. She now wears a green screen mosquito net over her head and shoulders to withstand the pests.

Youth Conservation Corps workers, before constructing a bridge, carefully choose trees with soft wood (usually pine). A bridge such as the corduroy is built to lessen the muddiness. A ditch is dug first and then usually three or four logs are placed parallel to each other along the muddy tract.

A stringer bridge is constructed along streams or trails to prevent hikers from slipping or sinking into layers of mud. Three logs are placed above two or

three supporting log strips. The most complex bridge, the dry tread bridge is built with a four-log frame with the inside filled with dry mineral soil (preferably clay) and bark remains. More than 20 large trays of dirt are needed to fill the entire frame. While dirt is being poured in, two or three YCC workers stomp the dirt into place.

Some of the YCC participants said they "didn't know what to expect" upon their arrival in the leaf green forest frontier.

"I was hesitant to come," said 16-year-old YCC worker Tim Zaboron of Conklin, N.Y. He recalled vividly his first night of camping in the timberland with his YCC cohorts and being confronted by a porcupine.

Ms. Bang feels that working this summer with the YCC has been a "whole new experience" for her. She added that she has "taken off inches" from hiking throughout the mountain trails.

But the eight-hour day for the YCC workers does not end back indoors as it does for most of us. For five to six days the YCC group continues living in the Adirondack wilderness.

Granola, raisins, oatmeal, peaches, dry milk, noodles, canned tuna, cheese and a variety of other foods are

carefully packaged in crates and sent by canoe to the YCC campsite.

With no radio or tv set, the group manages to create its own entertainment. Either by sitting a campfire or performing skits or songs on rocks lit by flashlights, the YCC members find ways to enjoy themselves.

In fact, the YCC group has become so acclimated to their outdoor lifestyle that it might take something like the green plastic frisbee lying near a bush to convince a visitor that these young people have ever lived anywhere else.

'Run To River' This Saturday

The Annual Review and "run to the river" of the Potsdam Volunteer Fire Department will take place this Saturday.

The event, enjoyed by many Potsdam citizens each year, is staged to acquaint the community with the fire department.

Events will begin at 6 p.m. Aug. 12, with a parade going up Leroy Street and down Market Street. The exciting "run to the river" should start about 7 p.m.,

Two Viewpoints Of Potsdam From The Arab Countries

Said Obeedi From Kuwait

BY ANNE SERABIAN

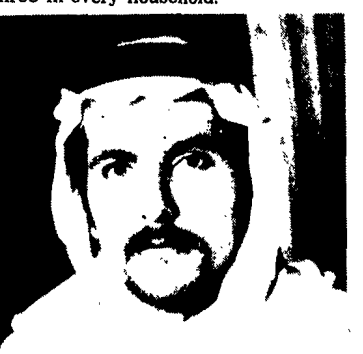
"I like big cities, the bustle of cities. I'm not used to small villages." Said Obeedi, a native of Kuwait who is in Potsdam with the Institute of American Studies, is very positive about his feelings.

I can well understand his frustration. Potsdam is centrally isolated, as everyone in the North country knows, and Said was feeling the isolation. "I am used to the metropolitan area. Please understand, I like your people. They listen and let me express my opinion. Different opinions are alright, that is good."

Obeedi is a student of medicine in his country. When it was announced that the U.S. was offering the Institute program, he was interested in coming to the U.S. again. He had visited New York City once, and has traveled extensively through much of Europe and Asia.

"I thought I would be going to New York City, so I am disappointed." Kuwait is a small Arabic country situated on the Arabian Sea. "We have no rivers, and no grass. We have hired some Japanese engineers to build a waterway for us which will go through your country. We are all Arabians first—then Kuwaitees."

"My country is the richest country in the world," he said. "Everything that you have...we have it first. Our dollar is worth 3.6 of your American dollars. Our poorest people have at least two cars and every room has a tv—at least two or three in every household."



SAID OBEEDI

He recalled that he lost some money in a New York City taxi on his previous trip to the U.S., so he has a fear of being without money again. "If I need \$2,000, then I will be sure I have \$4,000 with me; I must double my need." He said that none of the people in his country are poor in our sense of the word. The government provides for their needs, even providing a home for them when they get married; taking care of their children when they have families.

Obeedi feels that in his country, families are closer to each other than they are in the U.S. "Fathers are the ruling masters of their household, but mothers are important, too. Of 100 marriages in Kuwait, only five end in divorce and divorced persons are accepted as members of society." Mothers are usually awarded custody of the children, he said, and most fathers are required to support them.

"If I have a son, if I have a daughter, it does not matter. They are both important." If families have room, the young people come to live with them when they are married, he said. "If I am living away from my family, I MUST see them two or three times a week. If I did not, my religion would make me," he said. He said he misses his family and calls them weekly from Potsdam. Sometimes, he added, his family misses him and calls him.

Talking about his country, Obeedi said that men are not allowed to go to a Kuwait nightclub in shorts, although women may, if the shorts are dressy. "Not jeans. My people are required to dress for the occasion." In Kuwait, people go out for the evening to eat, talk, dance, but they are not allowed to drink alcohol. "Sometimes when people drink, they get rude," he said. "In my country, we do not drink, then we cannot get rude."

"Women are half-liberated," he remarked. "They wear the most expensive gowns from Paris." However, the laws about women and men do vary. For example, if a woman in Kuwait is having an affair, she can be put in prison for up to six years; at least one year is customary. The man, on the other hand, could be put in jail for six months, Obeedi said. Asked whether this seemed unfair, he replied, "Women are more important in my country, so it is a greater crime."

Friday is the religious holiday. Many Moslems take this opportunity to go to the Mosque to pray. Their religion is an individual thing, he said. "We can pray anywhere, as long as it is clean. If we wish to pray in a garden, we must put a cloth or mat down on the dirt floor."



WAFAA BADAWY

On the subject of his religion: "Even before I am a Kuwaitee, I am a Moslem...that is before anything else. First, you must want to be a Moslem, then you must give 2.5 percent of your yearly savings to the poor; you must pray five times a day facing Mecca; fast one month each year from sunset to sunset; and make a pilgrimage to Mecca once in your lifetime." He was quick to point out that someone else could make the trip for you if you found it impossible to do so. All Moslems are bound by the laws of their Koran, he said.

In Kuwait the people vote for their congressman, once of 50 adult males, but the president (Ameer) comes to his

office by heritage. "We do not vote for our president; his family has a meeting and they will decide who will rule."

It is a fond wish of many Arabs that someday they will have a United Arab nation, sort of like the United States of America. "It is long-range—but it will happen."

"When people visit Kuwait," he explained, "they tell us they like the bustle of our cities because it reminds them of the great cities, like New York. They also tell us they like the kinship of our people, because it reminds them of their small towns."

Has Kuwait captured the best of both worlds? Said Obeedi thinks that it has.

Wafaa Badawy From Egypt

BY ANNE SERABIAN

"American politics give me a headache and a heartache. We in the Arab countries believe that your country is run by Jews. And, we make jokes about Americans sending the Arabs wheat and the Israelis guns so the Americans can fatten up the Arabs before the Jews kill them."

So stated Wafaa Badawy, a young Egyptian, here for the Institute of American Studies. "You seem to be more against us, than with us," she said. Wafaa feels that all of the information given to the American people is slanted to favor the Jewish people. "For instance," she asked, "How do you think Israel got its land? Arab families were forced out of their homes; their homes were burned; their families destroyed." Wafaa feels that the Arabs have not been permitted to get accurate information to the U.S. people, and that Americans should be informed of what is really happening. "I wish you could understand us more," she said.

As I talked with this beautiful 19-year-old Egyptian woman, I was struck by her unusual upbringing: born in Egypt, schooled in an Irish convent "...and I have the sore knuckles to prove it!", she is now living in Kuwait. Strict discipline has been part of her life in all three phases. Comparing Egypt to Kuwait, she confessed to having a preference for Egypt. "In Egypt, one can go outdoors, take part in sports, outdoor life and have indoor activities too; however, in Kuwait, you have to like indoor things."

Her banker father brought his family to live in Kuwait nine years ago. Her mother, a lawyer, does not practice law because she feels that she can best help her children by staying home and using her education to help them. Wafaa feels that her mother does not need to go to work; feels that many young women work because they think it is the fashionable thing to do.

Her mother and father are powerful role models for Wafaa and she would not do anything to make them unhappy. She accepts their word and their guidance because she trusts their judgment. When she wanted to come to the Institute, it was a family decision that she be permitted to come. However, since it was "not allowed" that she come by herself, the whole family decided to come with her. Wafaa accepts this as the way things are.

Wafaa commented on the bumper sticker on my car: "A Woman's Place Is Every Place." "In Egypt, women have always known that." She believes that

in her country, women are powerful members of the family and control the important decisions made by the family. She feels that women can do as they want to; could become whatever they want to. She herself would like to go into banking...feels that if she wanted to, she could become bank president.

Wafaa's faith in her religion is very strong. "When my 11-year-old brother was killed in a car accident near my home, I wondered how my mother and father would handle this tragic thing that had happened to us. My mother truly believes that we are God's and to God we shall return, and although she misses my brother very much, she is certain that he has returned to God. This has helped my mother (and me) accept my brother's death. Knowing how my mother's faith has helped her in time of trouble has strengthened my own faith." Since that time, Wafaa has been even more devout in her Moslem faith.

Religion is a very important part of the lives of most Arabs. "Women socialize in my country by gathering at someone's home during the day; sewing, perhaps even cooking their main meal together and then bringing it home to be eaten by their families. But the conversation is mostly about religious matters. Also, many things you believe, we believe. We celebrate Christmas and Jesus is revered as a great prophet. We do not believe that God would permit his prophet to be crucified, but we believe that Judas was crucified. Everything that we need to know to live a good life is written for us in the Koran. For example, we do not drink alcohol because it is written that if drinking a lot of something will make you drunk, then drinking a little of that something is not allowed."

Wafaa always has her hair covered with some kind of head covering. "Is it true," I asked, "that your hair is considered sensuous and that you must always cover it?" She admitted that it was true; that a woman is expected to cover her beauty and her body; that men are more attentive to their women and appreciate their wives more when they cannot compare one woman to another. "Besides," Wafaa said, "When something is precious, you should keep it to yourself."

The complex threads of her life have woven together to make Wafaa a most unusual young woman: a woman with strong feelings about her family, her country, and her religion. One thing was certain: for her family or for the Moslem; for the Egyptian or for the Kuwaiti, Wafaa served as a compassionate ambassador for them all.