



THE YOUNGSTERS who wait at the town hall every morning are YMCA Campers who board the bus and head for Camp

Sargent in Merrimack for a day of swimming, crafts, and sports.

A day at Camp Sargent -- from town hall steps, to Nashua and then back

By Betsy Kosheff

If you drive around the oval in Milford any weekday morning, you cannot help but notice the group of rambunctious youngsters in red and white tee-shirts waiting on the Town Hall steps.

At least they're supposed to be waiting on the steps, but more than likely, they have tired of sitting and are pulling the crab apples off the trees by the police station or running up and down Middle Street.

If you've driven by on your way to work and seen them playing there, you probably cracked your first smile of the morning.

I was smiling too, as I sat on the steps and talked with eight-year-old Jon Hall of Milford. Jon seemed to know just about everything about everything, so I prodded him for information.

The red and white tee-shirts told me that he was a camper at Nashua Y Camp.

Jon explained that a bus would arrive at eight o'clock, and after a number of stops, would deposit its riders at Camp Sargent, a YMCA sponsored day camp on Naticook Road near Pennichuck Square in Merrimack.

As we boarded the bus, I noticed that nearly everyone but myself was armed with a handful of crab apples, so that by the time we reached the camp, I was no longer smiling.

Between cracks on the head by well-aimed apples, I managed to gather that the bus picks up kids between the ages of seven and 13 from Amherst, Milford, Nashua and Merrimack -- there are about 200-250 youngsters per day attending the camp.

Although this summer is Jon Hall's first time at Camp Sargent, he seemed to know a lot about the activities.

Boys and Girls

He explained that the camp is divided into two sections, the

boys' side and the girls' side. Each section is then further divided into cabins or "tribes".

Each member of a tribe is allowed to choose one special activity per week, perhaps the sport or craft he or she most enjoys.

Daily swimming lessons are

required by all campers, as are sports and most of the recreational activities.

At the beginning of each day, the tribes are given a schedule. After the morning meeting, the campers head for their assigned cabins for meetings with tribe leaders.

I followed Jon and the "Simoneau" tribe to swimming lessons and canoeing at the waterfront, soccer on the playing fields, basketball, arts and crafts, archery, and even riflery. Each activity was supervised by a counselor or counselor-in-training. The camp hires kids from all over the Nashua and Milford area who specialize in a particular sport or craft.

The camp attempts to provide a full schedule, and the campers never sat down for a minute, except for lunch.

Although the YMCA-sponsored camp is a day camp, plans are under way for a number of overnight excursions.

Sessions began June 25 and will continue until August 17. All eight weeks are full at this time, but information can be obtained by calling 882-0303.



Lake Naticook in the Fall

Autumn-touched trees reflect in the quiet waters of Lake Naticook in Merrimack, part of the site to be improved with funds being collected by the local Veterans of Foreign Wars post. Facilities on far shore are part of Camp Sargent.

(Telegraphphoto — Andrade)