



*PROBLEMS ARE more easily solved if you can talk about them with others, as these young people (who at this point are denied conversation) are finding.*

# Some Other Kind of Camp!

By David Hoyt\*

How many camps can you think of where:

- 1) The campers decide what sort of program they want well before they arrive and find it waiting.
- 2) Every camper takes a leadership role of some kind before the camp is over.
- 3) If something interesting turns up, the planned agenda may be abandoned, and lunch or dinner put off, because the campers want to.
- 4) Where those attending not only hike, camp out overnight, swim, take target practice with rifle or bow, and the other usuals of camp life, but almost invariably grow enormously as young men and women.
- 5) Where there are no discipline problems in the traditional sense of the term.

Such a camp was begun in 1975 by Pinal County 4-H agents, was adopted as a statewide camp last year, and is now known as the State 4-H Leadership Camp.

It is a place where young people go to examine themselves, to observe and participate with others, and to grow into a cohesive unit 80 strong.

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The whole thing began when agents Woody Winans and Sue Wells heard their junior leaders asking for a camp designed for kids 13 and over, one that would provide leadership training specifically for young people.

Wells and Winans gave them what they asked for, as best they could that first year, and listened to the critique that followed the next February from those who had attended, and made changes accordingly. Wells and Winans are always listening.

This is a camp that flows—rather than marches—from activity to activity. Things get done, but nobody seems to be in charge because everybody is in charge.

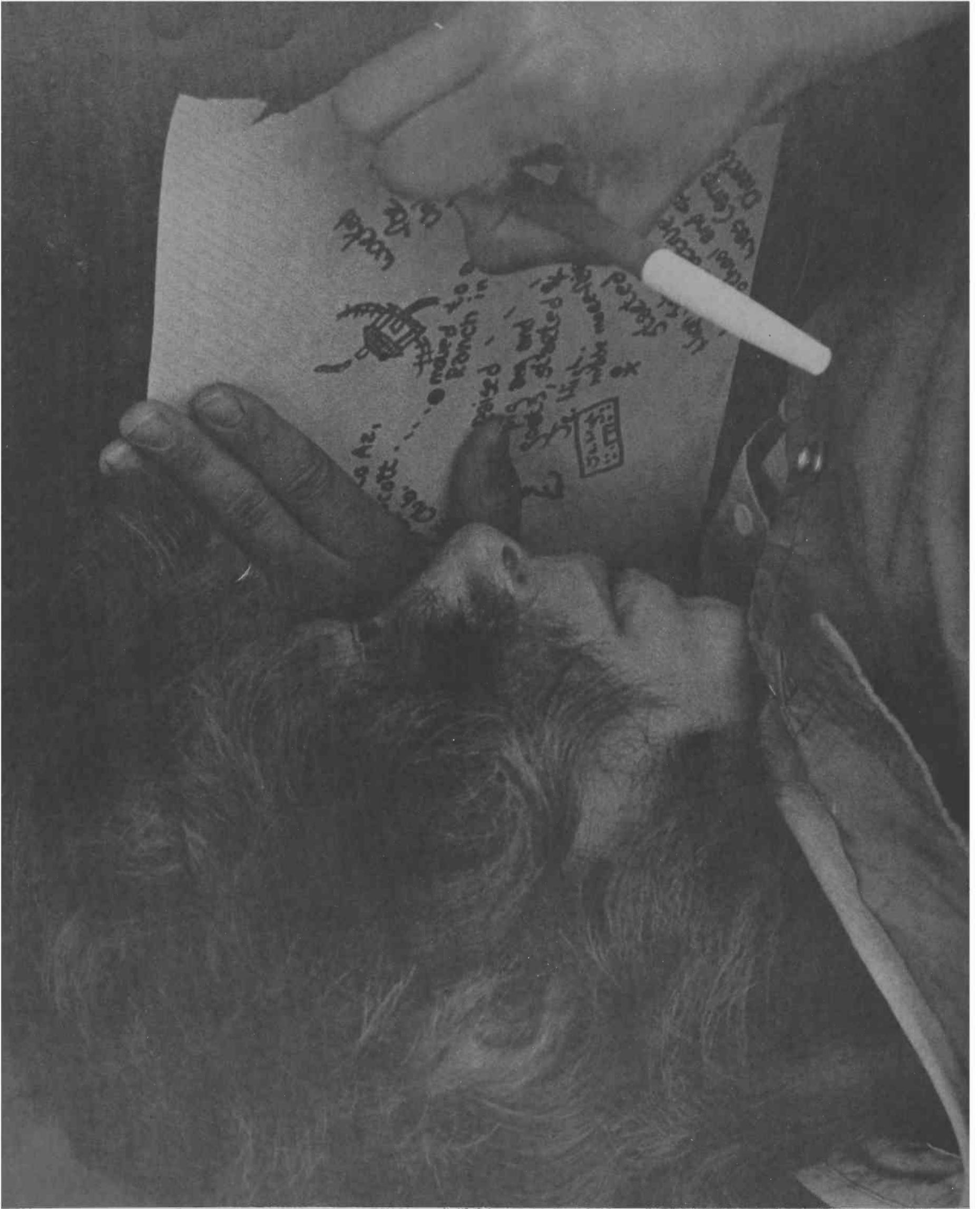
Much more than at most camps, these campers gain to the degree that they participate, but since they've designed the program, they are more apt to take part.

They explore, with the help of adult specialists, the way they think about others, they explore how communication works, how communication between people can help solve problems.

They look back on their lives to date, investigate what led them to make various decisions and if those decisions were really good ones.

They arrive at camp in the tall pines near Williams just a bunch of folks with sleeping bags and suitcases under their arms, and leave almost always with new and close friends and with a profound appreciation of what it is to lead and be led in any number of circumstances.

"Every kid in camp at sometime assumes a leadership role," says Wells, "It may be chief in charge of cleaning the johns, but that's important too."



*WHAT'S TO a life? Things you haven't thought about for a long time may have a profound effect on the way you do things today. A road of life is one way of remembering important events.*

"And if there's no follow through, they hear about it," adds Winans, "and they hear about it from the other kids."

To ensure a maximum number of leadership roles, the campers are divided into families with whom they eat, cabin groups with whom they sleep, and tribes with whom they attend the various camp activities. Bonds are formed quickly by shared labor, by planning programs of evening entertainment, twilight vespers, assemblies, and workshops in recreation and crafts. Somebody new is always in charge, so boredom is utterly absent.

Now if all this sounds like an impossibly angelic and serious bunch of young people, it isn't. There are the troublemakers, but before they get too troublesome one young leader or another has stepped in and read the riot act. Because these kids are learning not only the importance of good leading, but the importance of good following.

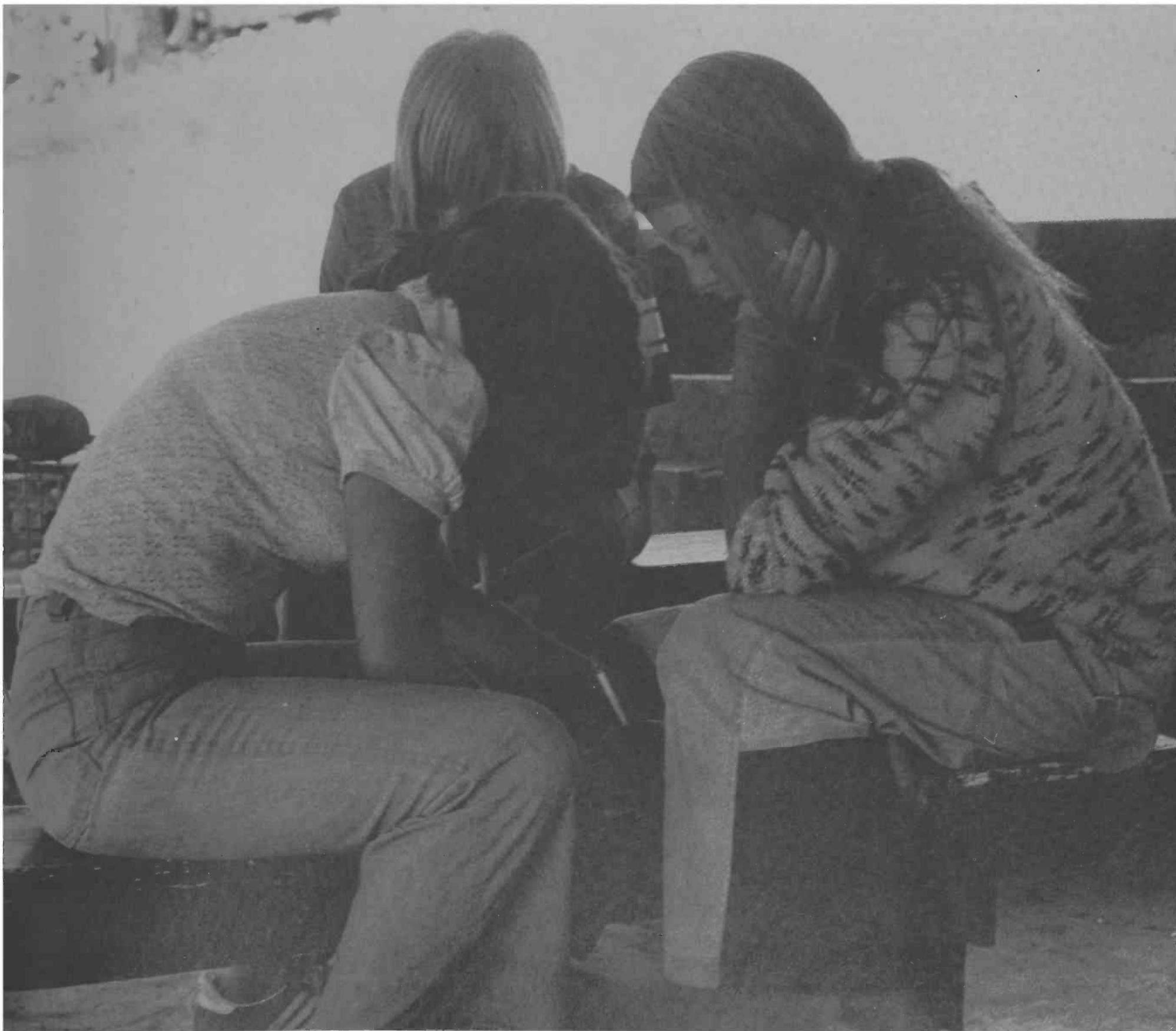
One of the mottos for this year's camp, says Wells reads, "Lead, follow, or get out of the way."

"Kids are quick to see the ones in their group who are muddling things up with their attitudes and the kids themselves work to change those attitudes," says Wells.

You can almost see the cut-ups being brought around. It's not at all unusual for the joker, the whiner, the showoff to find himself the object of the most studied discussion in one of the sessions on role playing. The experience can be unsettling, but there is no escaping the remorseless examination of, say, "Why John is always so loud." For John this is a surer more permanent silencer than any amount of being told to shut up or pipe down. And the permanence comes from the insight he has quite likely gained into the reasons for his behavior.

The focus of the camp this year—as decided by the kids—is career planning, with the idea that "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably wind up somewhere else."

The campers will mull over the lifestyle they enjoy most, and find out how that might affect the occupation



*FINDING OUT the way others live and think is a part of things discussed on head-bent discussions.*

they choose, explains Winans. "If you prefer being out of doors and in a secluded setting, that might have a bearing on the type of career that is best for you," he adds.

The freedom the campers enjoy in actually running things means that Wells and Winans and the other adults, including nurse and cook, who inevitably show up to help, are free to think themselves, to solve problems the kids cannot, and to drink a lot of coffee.

"They know we expect them to use their heads and to be the best people they know how to be," says Wells. "They know we trust them and they don't want to jeopardize that."

A better feeling for the whole thing comes from a day at camp:

Sometime around six o'clock you waken in the pine woods to the tolling of a bell and a moosish voice bellowing "Getttt-up, waaaaaake-up, gett-up, waaaaaakke-up. Come on Cabin 1, waaaaake-up." This is Winans, who has by that time probably consumed two of the numberless cups of shepherders coffee he drinks each day. That is the way every day in camp begins, unless someone has stolen the bell during the night and hidden it for Winans to find. He has never failed to find the bell.

This reveille is followed by another like it a while later, and after a bit the campers begin stumbling sleepily to showers and cabin cleaning, to the flag raising ceremony which one of them has planned and at which some appropriate inspirational passage is read.

From there Winans may run them through some calisthenics, the only activity in camp not participated in wholeheartedly by every camper. Winans is loathesomely cheerful during this ordeal.

Then to chow, and each table may be responsible for cooking its own food, except for certain large staples like hot cereal, or biscuits that are done in advance. Camp cook is Gloria Jordan, a woman who matches Winans smile for smile and who can outlaugh the whole camp even when she's choking on smoke from the outdoor grill.

That's something else about the camp: it isn't fancy. A health inspector from Phoenix blew in one day this year and demanded to be shown the kitchen.

"You're standing in it," he was told.

"Geez, this place is really primitive," he announced, inspecting the outdoor wash area, food storage shed, and walk-in cooler. His verdict—zero defects.

After breakfast the campers gather in their tribal activity units, and assemble on a bunch of logs in a small amphitheatre formed by what was once a stock pond, to get the word on the day's activities. They also get the word on which of the aluminum-framed cabins has been judged the neatest and which the messiest, and those cabin leaders then wear a badge of achievement or disgrace for the day.

One group troops over to the large ramada, seats itself and is soon at work charting the road of their lives to date. They know how because Sue Wells has drawn the road of her life and told people very candidly about what has happened to her, why she thinks those things have happened, what she hopes will happen next, and how she feels about it all.

In the covered dining area another bunch is finding that various problems requiring mental agility to solve can be done far more quickly (and they are being timed) if

there can be communication between all engaged in solving the problem.

Yet another group is assembled in piney shade on a hillside nearby where Sarah Harmon, state 4-H specialist, is assigning roles for different kids to assume, and then to analyze why each role player reacts to the other as he or she does. If somebody takes offense, was offense given or merely suspected? If somebody says, "I don't care," when given a choice of things to do, does it mean they don't really care? Is there a way to elicit a choice from such persons without offending them? And so the pondering goes.

Until—with a roar—a yellow, military style jet turbine helicopter shatters the silence, mutters off over a ridge and then settles back into the field near the lower portion of the camp.

Winans stops everything with much bell ringing and bellowing. The heli-attack crew from the Forest Service has arrived, having promised Winans they would come whenever they could spare the time. The campers swoop down on the craft for a 40-minute session on the role of helicopters in forest fire suppression, a tour of the aircraft, and some talk on careers.

"Okay," Winans yells as the helicopter disappears in the direction of the towering San Francisco Peaks (sometimes snowcapped even in summer), "let's get back and finish the workshops."

Everything gets put back by the unexpected visit, but most agree it's worth it.

At the "kitchen" the gals have fantastic fixings for burros. The Fascio recipe:

Ground meat chopped fine and browned  
Garlic to taste, drain grease  
Add:  
Diced green chiles  
Chopped onions  
Tomatoes sliced  
Add water to level of food and simmer 40 minutes  
Salt and Pepper to Taste

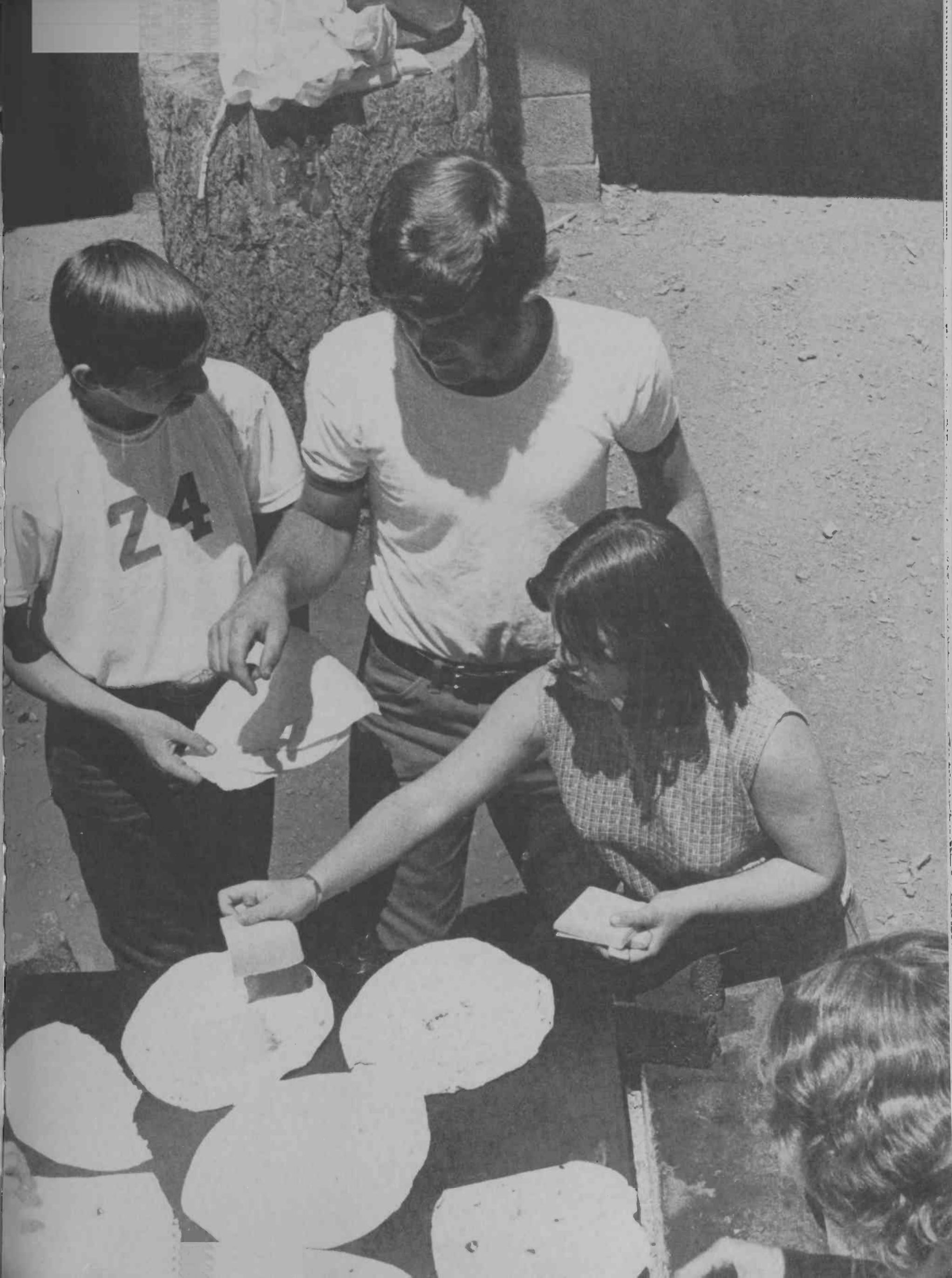
Soon a chow line is snaking around the ramada, and the adults have gone off to their own table to visit and introduce themselves to any newcomers who may have arrived to teach or just to watch.

After an hour-long siesta the campers divide again, having rotated through the morning sessions. One group may be due for an inventory of all the natural resources in camp, led by a grizzled veteran of the Soil Conservation Service.

Another group is instructed in surveying the area for the water storage pond everyone hopes will one day relieve the camp's dependence on daily delivery of water. Still another tribe is engaged in leathercraft. And the three tribes rotate during the afternoon.

In the early afternoon, Winans takes some of the junior leaders in a pickup to forage for oak, returning piled high in about an hour. He has caused a pit to be dug and this he fills with oak which he burns to coals, piles these over two large dutch ovens filled with dough. Covering the whole schmear with corrugated metal and earth, he waits.

*EVERYBODY, but everybody, pitches in to help with meals (right), and chow at this camp is ample and excellent.*





*Young people come to leadership camp to grow—to understand themselves, to deal with stress, to listen effectively to others, and to become just a little wiser than they were when they arrived.*

Hours pass and Winans uncovers the ovens and pulls out superb sourdough bread for the evening meal.

Later in the afternoon another bunch of campers begin setting out ponderosa seedling in the lower meadow, one of many conservation projects Winans has the kids help with each year.

Ribsticking food is the rule for dinner. Then it is time for vespers, a non-denominational period of spiritual talk and song on the hill overlooking camp.

“There are things of life and living that come out there that you cannot duplicate anywhere else,” says Winans of the brief, twilight ceremony.

Shortly thereafter a cabin that has decided to take an overnight hike tramps off with sleeping bags and packs for a nearby ridge. At the ramada the program of evening entertainment is getting started, a program that may include social or square dancing, movies and skits.

The adults sit in the gathering dusk, listening to Sarah Harman, an expert on camps and camping discussing her philosophy on one or another aspect of this camp. She is sure, she is kind, she is a rock, and she has become one of the key planners for the leadership camp.

Some drift up to watch the kids dance...and suddenly the rain begins, gently at first, no sweat. Steadily it comes and things get put away, and then it is pouring, the wind whipping rain everywhere, thunder and lightning blasting, and the whole place takes on a sodden aspect.

The overnights come sluicing back in, their equipment and bags soaked through.

In no time at all the kitchen gals are at the kitchen, dough is kneaded into doughnuts and sizzling in grease, tossed into paper bags, and sugared. Vats of hot cocoa appear and are whisked up to the ramada. There the fire is roaring, and Winans has all sleeping bags systematically dried before the blaze. In no time, the mood is completely reversed, kids singing, adults jitterbugging with the kids, everybody warm and dry.

And, finally, tired.

The Wells/Winans philosophy: “Ya get wet and cold, ya gotta get warm and dry.” Simple.

After a few pranks at the cabins, the whole place is quiet and sleep comes even more quickly than the moosish roaring in the dawn—“Waaake-up, getttt-up.” ●