

Grostenquin, France

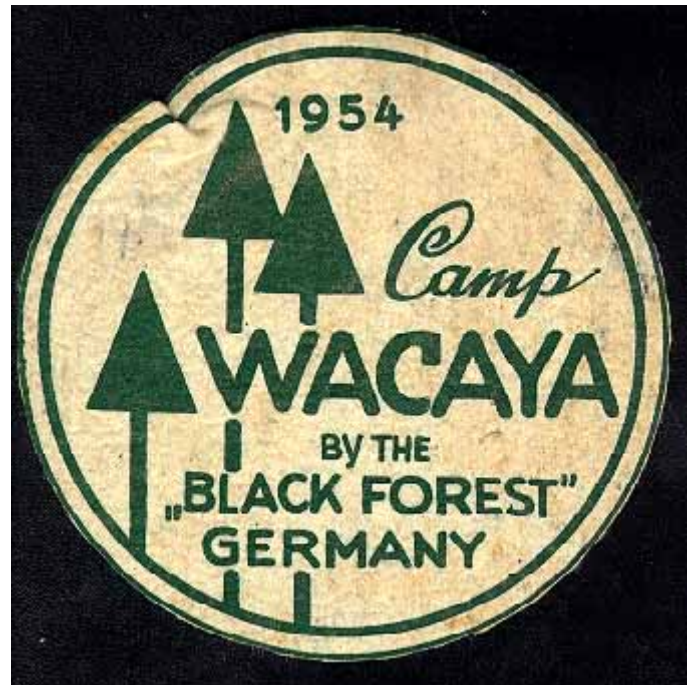
Camp Wacaya - 1954-1961

www.grostenquin.org/brats/wacaya.html

Camp WACAYA

Dahn, Germany, way back in the Fifties

It was a long bus ride from Grostenquin to Pirmasens. Then more of a bus ride - another hour anyway - from Pirmasens east to the little town of Hinterweidenthal ("Far Meadowdale") to the still smaller town of Dahn.



The official Camp WACAYA patch

Then off on a dirt road into the Black Forest, to a clearing with a mess hall on one side, and about fifteen ancient pyramidal tents on wooden platforms on the other side, across a flat grassy meadow about the size of a football field. A stream (probably called the Kranzwoog or "Garland Branch"), mostly culverted, ran through the middle of the meadow. Woods and hillsides on all four sides of the clearing. On the hillside back of the tents were the old Army eight seat latrines. A craft shop. That was Camp WACAYA.



Girls' tents at Camp WACAYA. Hey, guys, you're supposed to look at the TENTS! (Diane Beitzel-Marsh '59)



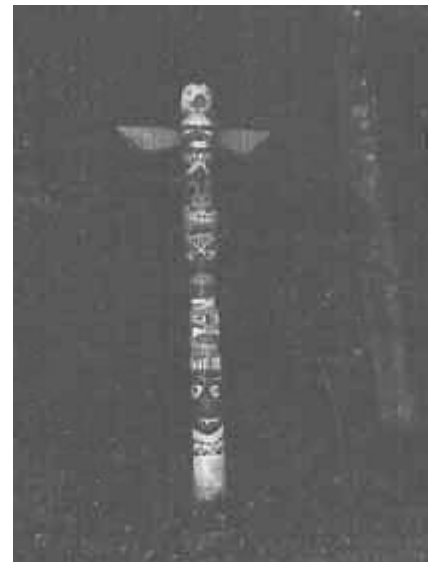
Three counselors at Camp WACAYA, 1954: Peggy Delesdernier, unidentified, Bob Ahlstrom.

Down in the next clearing beyond the tent area, at a campfire by the Totem Pole. Bob Ahlstrom was the chief senior counselor, active duty military, about 25 years old. We had awesome campfires, lit from afar with an incendiary mixture of glycerol and potassium permanganate, and scary ghost stories, sometimes bilingual. And at the end of the evening, we always sang "Tell Me Why".



The Totem Pole. Touch the Totem Pole and it rains. Don't touch the Totem Pole, and it rains anyway. I don't even wanna THINK about what happened when somebody CLIMBED the Totem Pole.

The Totem Pole was in place during the 1954 season, and may have been made by Bob Ahlstrom. The color photo (by Diane Beitzel-Marsh '59) is from about 1958.



The area abounded in wild animals. We used to go out at night and look for owls in the trees, illuminating their reflecting eyes with flashlights. Wild boar were more talked about than seen, except by the camp perimeter guard. Sgt. Osciowski ("Ossie" - I wish I remembered his first name), a Polish immigrant stationed in Germany, used to go out with a 60 lb bow (much admired by the counselors, though none of us could draw it) in addition to the requisite carbine. One night he encountered a mama boar with two shoats. He scooped up the piggies and headed up the nearest pine tree and sat there, a piggie under each arm, until mama boar gave up and went home. We had the two shoats in a pen in the camp for the rest of the summer.



This lovely outdoor swimming pool, the Pirmasenser Stadtbad, was photographed by Diane Beitzel-Marsh around 1958, and must have been built after 1954. In 1954 we rode buses into Pirmasens to an indoor Schwimmbad every weekday morning, about an hour each way. On the bus we sang at the top of our lungs for most of the trip - "Alouette", "The Deacon Went Down", "Ham and Eggs", "Old King Cole"...to say nothing of the songs the counselors sang at the BACK of the bus...and of course "Oompah



WACAYA".

WACAYA actually was an acronym for **Western Area Command American Youth Association**.

But in the Camp WACAYA song it went:

Willingness, Alertness, Cleanliness, Ambition, Youth, Athletics

OOMP! WACAYA!

Willingness, Alertness, Cleanliness, Ambition, Youth, Athletics

OOMP! WACAYA!

Oompah WACAYA! Oompah WACAYA! Oompah WACAYA!

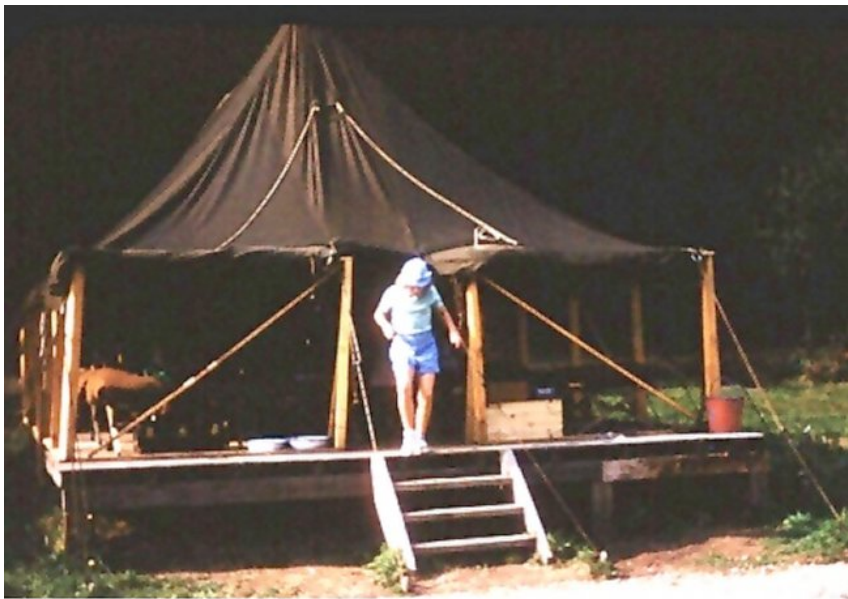
WACAYA oompah oompah oompah oompah!

Note: Camp Wacaya served as a summer camp for military dependent youth in France and Germany. While mainly established for American military dependents, we have confirmation of RCAF dependents from 1 Wing, Marville, France and 2 Wing, Grostenquin, France spending time at this facility.

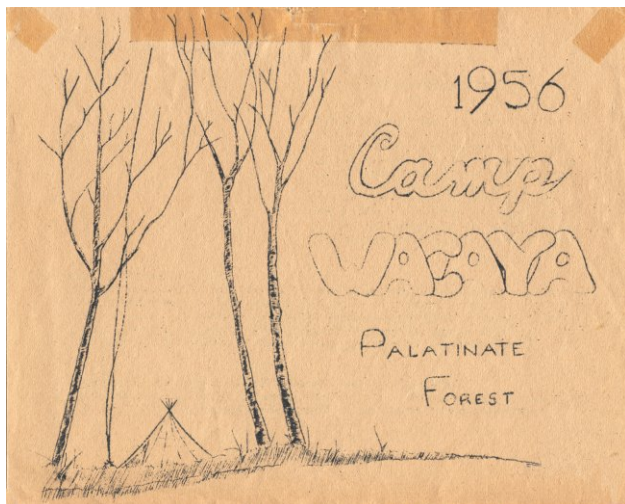
www.grostenquin.org/brats/pbrats2/brats-1695.jpg



CAMP WACAYA - PARENTS' DAY - 1955



CAMP WACAYA - JOAN BURFORD - 1955



Deep in the heart of the Rhineland-Pfalz, in the center of the Palatinete Forest and near the medieval town of Dahn, lies the campsite of the Western Area Command American Youth Activities Summer Camp, "Camp WACAYA".

This is the country of age-old and weathered rock formations, where King Richard the Lion Hearted was once imprisoned during the Middle Ages. The ever present forces of nature have gradually suppressed the scars of this ancient battleground and once again the WACAYA valley has returned to peace and solitude. Today the inhabitants till the soil with slow moving oxen as their ancestors have done in centuries past.

It is in this setting that American youths have the opportunity of attending a summer camp similar to those in the United States. Campers from years past recall memories of singing around the campfire at the Indian Village, with a star-filled sky overhead; the fun of preparing and performing their own stunts; of hiking in the woods, camping overnight and eating "out"; and of camping with children of other nations.

!! COME CAMPING WITH US !!

WHO MAY COME:

Children who are dependents of military or civilian personnel entitled to logistical support, and who meet the following requirements:

Must be at least 6 years old on 1 June 1956

Must be less than 16 years old on 1 June 1956

The first four camp periods are reserved for American children. However, Canadian children are permitted to attend these periods on a space available basis.

CAMP FEE: \$16.00 per camper

This fee includes all craft supplies, programming materials, swimming fees, and three good meals per day, plus refreshments.

INTERNATIONAL PERIODS:

The last two periods (11-20 Aug and 23 Aug-1 Sep) are International periods. During these periods, American, Canadian, German and French children attend camp together.

VISITING HOURS:

Parents may visit the camp on Sundays from 1300-1600 hours. However, we encourage parents not to visit since the children become emotionally upset (homesick) as a result of such visits, and are difficult to manage for the remainder of the camp period.

INFORMATION

Staff members are selected volunteers with experience in camp work with children. All members of the staff are military personnel stationed in Western Area Command, Twelfth Air Force, and Advance Section, Com Z.

The ~~team~~ counselors are selected from high school juniors and seniors. All counselors receive special training in camping techniques for children.

Waterfront activities are scheduled in USAREUR approved water facilities located near Firmasens and the campsite. All members of the swimming staff are registered in Red Cross lifesaving methods and are under the supervision of a qualified Red Cross Water Safety Instructor.

Heap big thanks for much help in make-up WACAYA registration go smooth like birch-bark canoe on sleepy lagoon. Soon maybe we make-up "How" sign together in camp.

NOT FORGET, REGISTRATION DEADLINE - 10 June 1956