

## WHERE DID IT ALL START....

Camp Alexandra was founded in 1918 as a summer camp for children from the Alexandra Orphanage in Vancouver. Although this was its primary function, from the very beginning the Camp also hosted groups of needy mothers and children from Vancouver, who would otherwise have had little chance of getting away from the city.

The Camp itself dates from 1918, but its parent organization, the Alexandra Orphanage, goes back to the very early days of Vancouver. The Orphanage was opened by members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and associated churches who, on Thanksgiving Day in 1892, undertook the care of three motherless children by placing them in a Mrs. Priestly's home, in Mt. Pleasant. Shortly after, others applied for care and the ladies saw the immediate need for a "Children's Home" run under their own protective wing. The first building occupied was a house on the corner of Homer and Dunsmuir, and the first annual meeting was held February 9th 1893. A constitution and by-laws were formulated and adopted and a Board of Management chosen. The Board consisted of two representatives from the Women's Christian Temperance Union, two from local churches, one from the city of Vancouver and one from the Ministerial Association. Mr. J. T. Brown was elected president, Mrs. Clements, recording secretary and Mr. Jas. England, treasurer. Subsequently, a "Ladies Board" was formed to look after the daily needs of the home, with Mrs. Browning as president. Visiting and purchasing committees were also established.

During this first year of operation the matrons were Miss Fawcett, Miss Bowes and Mrs. Schenk, and the number of children in care rose to nineteen. In 1893 Miss Penhale was appointed matron and as the number of children continued to increase, they moved to larger premises on Hornby Street, eventually ending up in 1894 at the Alexandra Hospital for Women and Children. This ornate wooden Victorian structure at 1727 West 7th Avenue was built in 1891 and occupied until 1894 when the directors of the Hospital offered to hand over the land, building and equipment to the Children's Home as soon as the necessary legislation could be passed. The building was deep in the woods, far from the main settlement in Vancouver and was subject to invasion by marauding bears and other large animals. These factors made it less than ideal as a hospital for women and children, but were not felt to be a deterrent to housing orphans!

Accordingly, the Society incorporated on December 12th 1894 and the Hospital handed over

*“this fine building and grounds, valued at \$12,000, entirely free of debt; the only stipulation being that we call the institution the Alexandra Non-Sectarian Orphanage and Children's Home of Vancouver”.*

Just after the turn of the century, a report from the Board of Management recalled the gift.

*“Just at the time of its greatest need, not knowing which way to secure funds for a larger home, for an ever-increasing family, kind Providence recognized our helplessness and put into the hearts of the heroic, devoted and laborious ladies, who originated, sustained and secured the payment for what was known as the Alexandra Hospital for Women and Children to present to us such a noble and generous gift.”*

In 1895 the orphanage received its first annual grant of \$500 from the city of Vancouver. In 1900 it was necessary to increase the accommodation due to the constantly increasing number of children needing shelter, and a large addition was made to the building at a cost of \$3,000. For \$1,200 five lots adjoining the property were also purchased, making the total ground area 250 X 240 ft.

By 1914 both the Orphanage and the city had changed greatly. Eighty children were in residence; grants from the city and province totaled \$6,000 and total income was just short of \$7,000. West 7th was no longer in the bush and the children needed some relief from the Home. In 1916 they were given a month at camp. This was so successful that the Board of Management decided to acquire a permanent site.

For Camp Alexandra, the seminal year was 1917, for this was the first year of the "Fresh Air Fund" raised by public subscription, to send city children, and particularly orphanage children, for a holiday. In March, the Orphanage Board decided to send the children to camp for two weeks with the money available. Ocean Park, where Camp Kwomais was already a

going concern, was considered a possibility and in June, after a visit to Ocean Park and Crescent Beach, a committee was struck to "investigate, decide and act." It is presumed that the first camp was in Ocean Park, with the children using tents provided at no charge by the Ocean Park Board.

Also in 1917, through the vision and efforts of Mr. Percy Gomery, camp services were extended to forty mothers and children, who were taken to camp at the expense of the Fresh Air Fund. In a very few years, these mothers and children became the dominant element, outnumbering the Orphanage children ten to one.

Campers boarded the train in Vancouver at the Great Northern Station at 9:30am for the trip to Crescent Beach, paying \$1.50 for a round trip ticket.

Staffing at camp was a problem as staff were only needed three to four months of the year. In an attempt to have the sponsoring agencies take responsibility for running their own camps, the Board agreed that "independent parties conduct summer camp this year." Management was turned over for portions of the summer to organizations such as the City Crèche, Vancouver General Hospital, the Victorian Order of Nurses, the Soldiers Civil Re-establishment, the Child Hygiene Association and the Community House, operated by First United Church until 1932, when it was abandoned due to the depression. It did not work out well, as none of these organizations had any expertise in camping. In 1921, the board conceded that this arrangement was impractical, and all future camps were directed by camp personnel.

Prior to 1920, Crescent Beach was barely a village and on three sides, the camp was bounded by open space. It was an ideal spot for disadvantaged mothers and orphaned children to rest, relax and gain health and strength. The success of the first camp may be deduced by the subsequent purchase, on May 9, 1918, of the Crescent Beach property from Mr. Agar for \$800. Approval for the construction of a building at a cost not to exceed \$2,000 swiftly followed the purchase of the land.

The contract for the building was awarded to Mr. Senkler and construction took place in June, July and August of 1918 (a bath was not to be added until 1922) however, the children's holiday was delayed - not by any holdup in construction, but by an epidemic of measles. This was obviously a hectic summer for everyone involved, but in spite of the

difficulties, approximately 120 campers attended. On December 11th, 1918, Mrs. Lester Brooks donated \$2,000 to buy a plot of land approximately 125 ft X 240 ft. for a playground, and in 1920, donated another \$2,000 for further expansion. This field was officially opened and dedicated on June 30th 1920 by Major Owen in memory of his son Harold, who was killed in the First World War.

Communication between Crescent Beach and Vancouver at that time depended on the railway, which was much faster and more convenient than the new-fangled motor, while telephones were a luxury restricted to the city. There are few details available on the first camp in 1918, but the emphasis during this early period was on fresh air and three good meals a day. The set-up was institutional and activities were regimented in accordance with practices of the time. Success was measured by the numbers accommodated. As a result, overcrowding was rampant. Camping standards were unformulated, and licensing, with its attendant inspections by municipal fire marshalls and sanitation officials, did not exist. As a new concept of social work developed, attitudes changed and new growth and sounder development of the Alexandra Fresh Air Camp resulted.

During the first year of camp, a Reception Day was held and Vancouver residents were encouraged to attend.

*“For those who cannot arrange to make the trip by automobile, there is a train leaving the GN Station at 9:30 in the morning, giving the full day at Crescent, and returning at 10pm. The weekend adult rate is \$1.30.”*

The children benefited from a large list of prizes donated by Vancouver merchants, which were awarded for singing, flag exercises and folk dancing in which the little ones were schooled by Miss Beatrice Cave-Browne-Cave, who celebrated her 100th birthday on August 17th, 1918. Her kind offer to teach the children was accepted in a letter from the Summer Camp Committee dated August 3, 1918 :

*“Mrs. Van Munster, (who has special training of folk dancing)...was away from the city and would not return until the middle of August so that her assistance was impossible for our own Alexandra Home children this year.” The writer adds “as you are so kind as to interest yourself in our work, might I*

*mention as well that we are in need of some grown up girl or boy who would consent to go in bathing with the children. The matron refuses to allow them to bathe unattended and it seems a great shame that they should be so limited to about one or two frolics of this kind per week.”*

From a Board Report, August 1918:

*“On Monday, August 19th, a large party of hard working mothers and their children, organized by Mrs. Nelson, Superintendent of the Creche, and Miss Isobel Smith, of the Social Service Association, will remain until September 2nd, after which the Camp will be offered for the use of returning soldiers.*

*According to the Tag Day Pledges of the Alexandra Orphanage Board, some \$1,500 was to have been spent on the children’s camp scheme, but already buildings and tents costing \$1,700, equipment \$300 and land \$800, have been expended aside from the maintenance expense, which is calculated to be about \$7 per fortnight per child, including railway fare from Vancouver.*

*...it is...quite time to point out that the Orphanage Board, in its guidance of the scheme and in response to pronounced public opinion has expended quite twice the sum agreed upon. It is therefore, reasonable that believers in this work should interest themselves both actively by visiting the camp, and financially on its behalf.”*

At the August board meeting, the Camp Committee directors were invited to camp to attend the Field Sports Day. With the departure of the last campers on September 2nd, 1918, the facility was made available for the use of returning soldiers.

The best record of this first camp is financial:

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Building, water connection, drainage, etc   | \$1,831.02 |
| Furniture and equipment                     | 344.60     |
| Expenses of Orphanage Children              | 195.59     |
| Expenses of Social Service and Crèche Party | 315.00     |
| Price of Land                               | 800.00     |

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\$3,486.21

On August 29th, a grateful mother wrote to Mrs. Nelson, Matron of the Crèche:

*“After returning from the Crescent Beach Camp and saw (sic) how well equipped the camp is for the entertainment of the children...one cannot help but feel a sense of gratitude to those in charge. When it was intimated to me about going down to the camp, I felt somewhat reluctant, knowing that the general mode of camping...seems unsanitary, rough and rugged, and was quite sure that we could not adapt to that style of camping for a single day. But I assure you that the whole aspect, to me, was changed, after I beheld how comfortable they are down there...abundance of everything to eat and drink whenever they feel so disposed. When Miss Morrison and Mrs. Smith would come out to the camp, the little ones would flock around, holding on to their dress, even though so small seems to realize their sense of gratitude to their ‘providers’. Again, I must thank you...”*

A. DeVarz

In May 1919 two more buildings were added. The Nursery and the Wigwam (now the Stagehouse) were barged around from English Bay and over the summer, 270 mothers and children came to camp in addition to the 70 to 80 Orphanage children.

In 1920 the new two-storey building (the Dining Hall) with a sleeping porch and staff quarters upstairs, and kitchen and dining area downstairs, was completed. In 1921 another two storey building was erected with quarters upstairs, and downstairs, a hospital area with nurse's room and a large recreation hall with fireplace and moveable curtains for a stage. A total of 800 campers attended in 1921. At the end of this season it was agreed that a permanent camp staff and supervisor were required. In March 1922 Mrs. Irving, the Orphanage Matron, was appointed camp supervisor. Mrs. Dorothy Beckett was appointed secretary to the Orphanage Board and her influence was to be felt for many years. In 1929 she was appointed to a full time position with the Board and administered 'this seaside camp for poor children and tired mothers' from 1921 to 1946. In her report to the board in 1940 Mrs. Beckett concluded:

*"It has been said that better conditions for the world today must come about by a right attitude from within each*

*person. For young and old alike, no better place can this lesson of give and take be learned, than in the community living of camp."*

In 1923 seventy-five mattresses were burnt, 3 buildings were fumigated and a new ice-box was installed in the kitchen. Roll-up mattresses filled with excelsior, (fine, curled wood shavings) were purchased. Spenser's filled these mattresses each year at a charge of 65 cents, until 1940 when they suddenly raised the price to 80 cents. The difference in price was enough to keep six children at camp for two weeks, so the solution was to buy one ton of excelsior for \$40, freight it to camp, and have the staff fill the mattresses!

Captain Trigg took on the job of caretaker in 1923; Mr. Wickham stained the fences for \$84, also mending windows and the fire escape; Mr. Tulloch did some plumbing repairs, installed mosquito netting on the Dining Hall windows, mended the swings and installed an incinerator.

The first boys camp for "underprivileged and pre-delinquent" boys was held in 1925 under the direction of Gordie Stevens, a probation officer loaned to the Camp by Juvenile Court. He and Mr. McCabe, the other boy's worker at court, alternated the camp position each year. Age of the boys was initially 9 to 12 and 60% of them were repeat offenders. A senior boys camp was also started in 1925, under the leadership of the Phi Alpha Phi Fraternity. Mr. S. Hood directed and Mr. Keyworth was in charge of the boys, aged 12 to 15, for the two week period.

A grateful mother who attended camp in 1925 wrote a letter to *The Province*, published July 6th:

*"Sir, as a member of Group Four, just returned from Alexandra Fresh Air Camp, I would like to say we had a glorious two week holiday. The staff is worthy of praise in handling such a large party of mothers and children and the conditions are wonderful. The children and mothers received plenty of food and good wholesome meals...On behalf of all the mothers I say, 'Thank You.' "*

*Mother of Four*

And in 1925, Queen Alexandra, after whom the hospital, the Orphanage and the camp were named, died.

In 1928 a plea for funds for the Fresh Air Fund, which had been established in 1918 to enable the underprivileged to attend camp, lauded the benefits of a holiday by the sea where

*“in the warm sun at Crescent Beach and within a few hundred yards of the shimmering ocean, these mothers and their children who have been subjected to harshness and poverty all winter, will be revived...a complete rest will be theirs, on the sands of the beach and among the wavy grasses of the camp estate, and they will return to the city re-invigorated. Camp frees tired women from the maddening monotony of city cares and gives them a breath of fresh air.”*

In 1928 the camp consisted of the present day Dining Hall, two dorms called the Teepee and the Wigwam (now the Nursery and the Stagehouse) and the Rec Hall. "Plenty of sleep and plenty to eat" was the rule at camp for mothers

*"worn by their struggle with adversity. All winter they have worked ceaselessly with no prospect of...rest...(now) all their wants are attended to by a competent staff...there are porches on the buildings...and snug cots in the open for the children...tents will be erected for beds for the larger children...the camp is a refuge to them...the children are healthy and browned and the mothers have fresh vigor now. The holiday, the sleep and the sunshine have rested their tired bodies and given them a renewed fortitude with which to bear another year of toil in the city."*

The newspapers were shameless in their efforts to pull at both the heart and purse strings of Vancouver's more affluent citizens.

From *The Province*, May 30, 1928:

*“...it takes a child from the hot and dusty city streets and places him near the sea for 14 days. It means rest and quiet and peace”.*

June 6, 1928: *“...all wants are attended to by competent staff...”*

Aug 10, 1930: *“Camp is taking care of 164 guests including 40 working mothers and 124 children, the largest attendance on record in the history of the institution. The conditions among the poor are more distressing this summer than ever before. The three meals a day provided at the camp means a great deal to many families, and scores are clamoring to take the two weeks holiday. We can keep the big home at the beach packed to capacity until the end of the hot weather if we can rake up the money to pay the bills.”*

#### A typical day at camp

*“would start at 7am, with 'physical jerks', then ready for breakfast... all take part in the impressive ceremony around the flagpole as the day begins with saluting the flag and the singing of the national anthem. After breakfast there is the usual race down to the leader's shack to see who gets the brooms or rakes first, for all the tents must be spick and span for inspection at 9am, and the tent which has the highest number of points at the end of two weeks gets a watermelon....after tent inspection the program for the day begins, and thus the days pass quickly by with swimming and hikes and treasure hunts and picnics and sports days and baseball games and all the things which develop body and mind and help to build up health as well as ideals of sportsmanship and true friendship. Perhaps one of the most impressive ceremonies is at the close of the day. The sun has set, its soft crimson colors painting sky and clouds and hills. The campers stand silently around the flagpole and salute as the flag is lowered... then, as the interested onlookers of Crescent Beach linger awhile, they hear the voices of the campers over the soft twilight breeze as they sing 'Day is done'.... And thus ends each day of play and fellowship.”*

The telephone was put in at Crescent Beach early in 1929, and Mrs. Parkinson was Matron in charge for the summer. Camp opened May 30th and was attended by 930 women and children, more than in any previous year. This was due in large part to the concerted effort that was made to solicit donations to the

Fresh Air Fund. It cost only \$7 to send a child or mother to camp for two weeks and during July and August of 1929, articles on the camp appeared almost daily in Vancouver newspapers, designed to tug at the heartstrings of those upon whom good fortune had smiled. From an article which appeared on July 25, 1929:

*“There was a party of children and mothers which left the city last Friday... by the Great Northern to Crescent Beach... for a two week holiday down by the sea, where there is a kindness and a welcome and a chance to play for the kiddies and a chance to rest for the mothers and where the straitened days and hard times which working mothers know can be forgotten for a little while.”*

And from August 25th:

*“If I could only take people with me to the homes of the poor ... they would realize what a two week holiday to the Alexandra Fresh Air Camp.. means to the children... like little flowers they are trying to grow up on rocky soil away from the sun and they are not doing very well. From the moment we get them down to the beach they seem to just blossom out.”*

*“...there are still scores of little children and their mothers from the closely packed tenement districts of the city, who will never have the chance of a holiday unless the citizens of Vancouver lend their help... right now there are over 140 little tots and their mothers spending happy hours at camp. Tired women are being strengthened and invigorated to carry on their struggle for another year, and boys and girls (who arrived) with white faces and unnourished bodies are putting on a coat of tan, and incidentally putting on weight. It's a far cry from the grime and smoke of the manufacturing section of Granville Island to the sea breezes of Crescent Beach.”*

Letters from recipients of the Fund were also printed regularly.

*“My girl friends and I go in swimming three times a day. We also go to church every morning at 10 o'clock... every night we go to bed at 9 o'clock and we get up at 7am. We get very good meals. In the playgrounds we have three see-saws and three*

*swings.... the boys sleep in tents on the other side of the grounds. The Matron is very good to the children and women."*

From July 7, 1929:

*"It was pretty good times at Alexandra Camp because people were kind and there was lots to eat, and Matron gave you candy every day at 3 and wasn't always saying 'don't' and 'mustn't".*

On August 3rd Sylvia wrote

*"Sunday we had roast beef, potatoes and green peas for dinner, and jelly with bananas for tea. Oh boy, we get two plates of all if we want, my little brother got three helpings of porridge and we got a bathing suit from the matron and we are in the water all day and there's bonfires on the beach at night and I like this better than Christmas".*

Jay Kay wrote

*"Sir - the point at Crescent was very beautiful in its calm, with the sky still reflecting the glory of the setting sun and the tide in full. Heaven seemed very close to earth and earth to heaven in that quiet hour of beauty. Then through the stillness came the sound of sweet childish voices singing old hymn tunes and soon, silhouetted against the sky, came a band of little children, each holding high on a slender stick, a gay Chinese lantern. Slowly they moved along the promenade, singing as they went, some lighting the path before them, others raising their little light high, to catch the gleam on the water. On they went, a joyous crowd of little ones casting all around a light of beauty which caught at our hearts as we watched them out of sight."*

In 1930 electricity was installed and wiring at the camp was completed by July 1st. The 1930's marked the beginning of a new and sad era and was also the start of major changes in the relationship between the Orphanage and the camp. The Depression had now begun, though nobody knew then how severe it would be, nor how long it would last. The role of the Orphanage was changing, and the numbers of children were shrinking. Government was undertaking a number of responsibilities previously handled by independent organizations and the financial support for both the Alexandra Orphanage and the Fresh Air Fund was more difficult to obtain.

In the fall of 1930, the Orphanage and Fresh Air fund elected to join the Vancouver Welfare Federation, the predecessor of the United Way.

Mrs. Parkinson, who had been Matron in 1929 was re-engaged for the summer of 1931 and this was the first year that campers topped 1,000. A library was started with books from the Carnegie Library and a grounds supervisor, responsible for organizing activities amongst the campers, was hired. In 1932, the new Matron, Miss Roy, who continued in that position 'til 1939, introduced craftwork, and the numbers of campers kept growing, peaking at 1,377 in 1934. The cost per camper was 43 cents per day.

Between 1894 and 1931 the average number of children in care at the Orphanage was 70. In 1932, the Doukhobor situation caused a temporary increase, but by the summer of 1933, there were only 37 children in care. As early as 1931, the Orphanage board was beginning to recognize the advantage of foster home care and in the first budget from the Vancouver Welfare Federation, a small appropriation was made for its initiation.

In the early 1930's, as foster homes began to replace orphanages, the Orphanage became a home for emotionally disturbed children. At the suggestion of the new School of Social Work at UBC, it was used as a temporary receiving home by Children's Aid from November 1933 to April 1938 when they were able to implement their plan of subsidized homes. During this time, the Orphanage directors had been studying how the Alexandra Children's Home could best serve the community, and with the removal of the children in 1938, they were able to develop their long considered project of a neighbourhood community centre. Mr. W.A. Morrison was engaged as superintendent on September 1st, 1938 and Alexandra Neighbourhood House officially opened its doors on October 1st. A description of the building, which by this time was nearly 50 years old, follows:

*“It was a large, rambling structure, with many chimneys and fireplaces, attractive front lawn, comfortable though old. There are 15 rooms, some large, some small. On the main floor there is a large entrance hall, a large social room with fireplace, gymnasium, boys club room, check room, office, comfortably furnished reception room, kindergarten and a large kitchen. On the second floor is the auditorium with stage, girls club room, dressing rooms, washrooms, superintendents office, womens club room, music room, mens club room, superintendents*

*apartment, library and three craft rooms, one of which is very large and is used for large meetings and lectures on occasion. Altogether there are six fireplaces which add a cheery warmth to the building on cool evenings. There are separate playgrounds for boys and girls. There is another smaller building, formerly a small schoolhouse, which is used for woodworking classes and is financed by the Kitsilano Lions Club..”*

*“In 1938, the Board of 38 members, many of whom had served for more than 20 years, were unanimous in agreeing to move our children from the old building, placing still more in foster homes and the remainder in a house purchased by the Board, in a good locality about six miles from the centre of the city, and there to undertake the observation of certain problem children needing special care. The home is known as Alexandra Cottage, (located on 59th Ave) with a house mother, an assistant and a maid.”*

*Board of Management Report, February 7th, 1940*

Alexandra Cottage was a pioneer treatment center run with the help of the Provincial Child Guidance Clinic. It was established to provide facilities for observation and treatment of behavior difficulties for a few children selected by the Clinic and in the first year, 21 children were cared for, nine of them for more than the anticipated 12 month maximum stay. Five had previously been in residence at the Orphanage. This reorganization benefited the camp, as equipment and furniture from the Orphanage were transferred to Crescent Beach, and the Women's Auxiliary, which had been providing the Orphanage with clothing and 5 cents/wk per child, turned its energies to the camp. By 1939, the home had three major activities: the Fresh Air Camp in Crescent Beach, the Alexandra Cottage where *“much valuable children’s work is being done”* and the Alexandra Neighbourhood House with *“its many activities and through whose doors pass an average of 300 men, women and children daily.”*

In the summer of 1934, the Family Welfare Bureau of Greater Vancouver recommended 34 families be sent to Crescent Beach. Thirteen were on public relief and 21 had small incomes. The families were selected on the basis of ill health, marital difficulties and mothers and/or children needing a holiday or a rest. Social workers obtained information regarding

behaviour through observation of the children. Decisions on who to send to camp were based entirely on whether the holiday would be of benefit, not on whether or not the family was on relief. Detailed reports on each camper were compiled after each camping session and forwarded to the Family Welfare Bureau of Greater Vancouver. By 1941, many fathers were overseas and camp staff noted an increased number of children with behaviour problems, which they attributed to the absence of father. They also noted that many of the mothers experienced a marked improvement in their health.

Boys camps began on July 13th 1934 under the direction of W.A. Rundle and on July 27th, the orphanage and underprivileged children arrived.

Prior to the opening of camps, an article appeared in *The Province*, March 17th 1934, stipulating the focus of camp for that year which would target *“those families weakened by sickness during the past winter and those who have been, many of them, upon relief for a number of years - where the strain of daily living has long been acute - are the ones in greatest need of what the camp could give them.”*

Appreciation of the work of the Welfare Federation was expressed by one of the directors at the concluding spring meeting of the Alexandra Orphanage, and was printed in *The Province*, June 16, 1934:

*“While in the past our financing was not so difficult as that of some agencies we still have reason for satisfaction at having joined the Welfare Federation. The present business-like methods and economical administration far surpass the old “hit and miss” methods. We feel that general public response to Welfare’s Annual Appeal may well be regarded not as an individual burden but a privilege of citizenship.”*

By the end of the 1930's, camp routines were well established. It was not in any sense a "holiday" camp, but an important and necessary service for the needy. It was producing results far greater than anybody had expected when they first proposed a month by the sea for the orphanage children. In 1934 the sign at the camp that had previously read 'Alexandra Orphanage Camp' was repainted to read 'Alexandra Fresh Air Camp'. In 1937, only about 50% of the applicants could be accepted. No charge was made to campers and they often left the camp with clothing and toys, provided by the Women's Auxiliary.

From a newspaper clipping dated September 19, 1938:

*“To every one of these youngsters, going to Crescent Beach has meant two weeks of being well fed, comfortably housed and bedded, efficiently cared for by a resident public health nurse; two weeks of romping or resting....of swimming, sunning, building castles in the sand....laughing, joyous all day long; gathering around a roaring campfire at night for stories and sing-songs and a twilight benediction; then off to bed for a long unbroken night of happy dreams! Such is life at the Alexandra Fresh Air Camp. For the tired mothers, camp is a respite from the sometimes seemingly hopeless struggle against life's odds. Many of them are brave, and grow braver after two weeks at Crescent Beach. Many of them are broken, and find new courage in the camp experience.”*

Much of the Camp's organization, structure and routines were intended to help mothers cope when they returned home. Food was simple and economical yet wholesome and satisfying, and the menus could be easily duplicated in the home. Cleanliness, order and discipline were demanded of the campers and their children. In spite of this, an obvious 'us and them' attitude existed in Crescent Beach right from the beginning, between the summer residents and the campers. The prosperous Crescent Beach cottagers did not look favorably on their children mixing with the poor and the orphans who came to camp. This attitude was based on a still prevalent class prejudice, one of the original targets of the Settlement and Neighbourhood House movement, which believed that bringing the classes into contact with each other, as neighbours, would enable each to learn from the other.

In 1939, 1,244 campers attended, with much progress being made around the boy's and girl's camps, *“for it is with this younger group that it is felt that a definite good may be done beyond the benefit of a holiday.”*

Classes were held for volunteer camp leaders in May of 1939, preparing ten junior leaders to supervise each group of 100 campers. 1939 was the second year for the camp of 100 girls, under the directorship of Miss Hutchinson, a UBC student. Every detail of the day's activities was considered and planned in advance. The girls this year had a chapel in the woods, similar to the one established in 1925 by the senior boys in 1923. Services were held Sundays and one night in the week, with a special candlelight service on the last evening. Singing was a prominent part of the girls' program, with singing after each meal and before leaving the table

being part of the daily routine. In 1941 the Boy's Chapel was lost when the property on which it was located was bought and cleared.

1940 saw the arrival of Mrs. Moll (later to become Mrs. Judge) who was associated with the Camp almost as long as Mrs. Beckett, whose position she filled upon Mrs. Beckett's retirement. 312 women and 918 children attended camp that year and the staff included a matron, kitchen help, a public health nurse and a program director. What Mrs. Moll tried to do is set out clearly in her report to the Board:

*“almost without exception, every camper benefited from a change of environment, rest, nourishing food and the more intangible things camp had to offer - learning to live together as a group, a way out of long-accustomed ruts of negative and harmful thinking, the laying of a foundation for cultural beginnings and learning to appreciate the simple beauties and joys of living that are available to everyone regardless of circumstances.”*

Camps ran from May 3rd to September 5th that year with 1,129 campers. There were six women's and children's camps during May, June and part of July and August, designed to develop a spirit of co-operation and self-discipline among the women.

*“The women have an established standard of living at camp very much higher than that of 20 years ago and greater effort was made to stimulate and widen their interests through music, reading and recreation. Health this summer was generally good, although in the early parties some children had to be returned for suspected whooping cough and one or two cases of German Measles. The inadequate shoes of all the campers caused discomfort and many sores which needed attention. The Auxiliary to the Alexandra Children's Home again were of great assistance in supplying materials for sewing, and fruit for special groups. Many of the girls in the special camp had no nightgowns and the Auxiliary kindly donated 25. The Order of the Royal Purple sent 80 new garments which were very much appreciated. Four new tent houses were built to replace the old tents; also a hospital room was added which had long been needed.”*

The Board report of October 9th 1940 showed a balance of \$500 on hand after camps and recommended that it be used to repaint the interior of the Nursery and Dorm A and to construct three new tent houses.

By 1941 the effects of the war were being felt financially. With agencies concentrating on war work, camp was on the back burner until the end of May. The war had also greatly improved the financial position of many of the people who had previously come to camp. In her 1941 report, Mrs. Beckett said *“this does not mean there are not a great number who need our care, but there should be a greater effort made to reach these people.”*

Many repairs were needed in 1941 - interior painting, repairs to swings, awnings, play shed, lattice gate and laundry traps; repairs to the tents and shingles on the oldest bungalow, painting the verandahs, oiling the kitchen floor and repairs to the electric lights. Electric lighting was finally installed in the tent houses. For the three previous years, electric lights had been obtained in the tents by stringing telephone wire from the main building, *“which is not a very practical thing to do and last year caused fuses to burn out.”*

In the 1940's camp was financed through the Vancouver Welfare Federation and from the income of the Alexandra Children's Home. Until 1941, no fees had been charged to the campers. Owing to the increased need for war services the sum of \$406.15 required for insurance, taxes, escalating railway fares for the campers, and provisions, was not granted. The options were to curtail the number of camps or to charge each camper a small fee. Neither option appeared attractive, but camp staff were adamant in their desire to maintain the number and length of camps so, in 1942, camp fees were established. Each camper paid a fee according to his ability, but no one was turned away because of inability to pay. Confidentiality was maintained and no one at camp, including staff, knew who had paid and who had not. Having the campers contribute financially was thought to improve rather than injure the tone of the camp.

The summer of 1942 was rife with complaints and dissension on the part of some volunteers and staff. Seven or eight young women left the camp complaining that they were unfairly treated and grossly overworked, resulting in two of them returning home ill and requiring a doctor's care for two to three weeks. They felt they were unduly criticized and were expected to carry too large a load for volunteers.

All was not well in the kitchen either. The rice and porridge both contained weevils for a considerable time and when this was pointed out, the justification offered was that the budget was limited and any items

purchased must be used. On at least one occasion, due to lack of refrigeration, tainted meat was served and all the leaders were ill as a result.

Camp superintendent Dorothy Beckett responded to the complaints, explaining that two of the girls, aged 16, were unable to get along at home or at school and were sent to camp in the hope that they would reap some benefit from the experience. In a letter dated December 12th, 1942 Mrs. Beckett felt that both girls had “*made a big story to justify...going home*” and “*I am extremely surprised (the parents) took (them) seriously.*”

She also explained that Mrs. Brown, the original cook, had left due to illness and her replacement, though highly recommended, was obviously not up to camp standards. “*The rice was not used a second time and was given to the chicken woman, and Spencers refunded the amount without question.*” In closing, Mrs. Beckett confirmed that some of the leaders were immature and uninterested in working with the underprivileged.

In the spring of 1942, Mrs. Moll became Mrs. Selwyn Judge. When the complaints were brought to her attention, she said she was “*astounded at the charges made.*” She wondered why the girls delayed so long in making their complaints and felt the grievances were petty, based on misunderstanding and misconception of the responsibilities involved. She denied that the leaders were subjected to fault finding. She felt that the scornful, superior attitude some of the leaders displayed towards the underprivileged children could certainly have provoked some criticism, but was not aware of any instance where it was given.

She acknowledged the shortcomings of the replacement cook and said “*...during the period in which she was adjusting herself to camp, the food was perhaps not quite up to standard...however, nothing remotely resembling the charges laid by the girls ever occurred.*”

During the 1940's the values of a camp experience for the underprivileged were to provide rest and change to mothers who would not otherwise have a holiday, to teach lessons in the value of routine, good food and sufficient rest, to improve methods of caring for children, to provide health supervision, and through observation of behaviour, assist social workers to give mothers and children some goal to plan and work for.

Social workers provided the Family Welfare Bureau with copious notes on each camper, some certainly less than flattering. Comments included

*“...somewhat demanding...no discipline whatever with children....a satisfactory camper...self-pitying and fond of attention...rather dull mentally, but pleasant and cooperative...a sensible, capable woman with a nice, family of*

*children....nervous and irritable....polite, excellent health, poor manners...poor mixer....stout and tidy, fights with other children...poor posture, flat feet, clothes ragged, eats everything, manners good....eats an enormous amount for such a small girl, very sweet and unspoilt, splendid athlete...contributes greatly...very dirty and untidy about hair and clothes...sucks hair and wears bathing suit under dress to meals, manners disgusting...neat and clean, liked by all, lovely personality...feet are always dirty, good sport...tired and rundown...not very intelligent, children very badly behaved...morbidly retrospective almost to the point of being mental.”*

During the war years, due to gas restrictions, the usual summer visits by social workers from the city were severely curtailed.

*"I would say unhesitatingly" asserted Mrs. Judge, Ex Director of the Camp in a 1951 interview with the Semiahmoo Sun and White Rock Weekly*

*“that our most important function is that of providing for the mother, harassed by the ever-pressing problems of a meager existence. We undertake to provide for her an oasis to which she can turn from the drudgery and often squalor, that hems her in and where, through rest, relaxation and recreation suited to her needs, her warped or lost perspective is restored to her so that living can again become a meaningful and creative experience. Since the mother is the centre around which the fabric of family life is woven and the character shaping of our future citizens is so intrinsically her major task, it is of the greatest importance that camp should not fail her when her need is greatest.”*

The Fresh Air Committee recommended that further consideration should be given to obtaining a larger piece of property.

*“A great deal of annoyance was experienced this year by disturbances during the night by young people in Crescent, to the extent of getting the police from White Rock over several times. Also the programming had to be curtailed to suit the Crescent Beach people. The playground is inadequate and we are far too crowded in the sleeping quarters....the new paved road now finished is undoubtedly going to*

*make a great deal of difference to Crescent and while the present time would hardly seem appropriate, this spring, 21 acres of the ground behind us have been sold and we ask your consideration of this matter. The price asked for 10 acres is \$6,500 and our property, or \$4,500 for seven acres. An additional three acres of dike property is included in these figures.”*

One of the outstanding features of 1940 was the working out of a committee system of self-government for the women, giving them

*“a more personal interest and pride in keeping up the standards of the camp and protecting property. A tremendous amount of thought and painstaking care ... had gone into every detail of camp organization. Everything in connection with its outward running had a planned transference value that could be carried over into the lives of the campers. .... and so it was with everything... results carefully thought out to show the campers how to improve conditions in their own lives. Camp served a much wider and greater purpose than merely supplying under-privileged women and children with two weeks of physical rest and well-being. It was a school where all the untaught lessons in overcoming lack might in a certain measure be acquired. Poverty was the 'lack' they all had in common, but there were other, more vital lacks springing out of poverty perhaps, but which helped root them in it---lack of knowledge of how to make the most of what they had, lack of hope, lack of adequate philosophy of living, lack of cultural advantages.”*

It was commonplace in Crescent Beach that each new party stepping off the train looked dejected and down-at-the-heel, but left looking fit and hopeful.

In 1941, acting on a recommendation made the previous year by Mrs. Beckett, the Board purchased an additional acre of land across the road. With only 1 1/4 acres of grounds, activities and programs often had to be curtailed to suit the local residents or were handicapped by having an audience hanging over the fence. The new paved road was also going to

bring some changes and although earlier in the year, 21 acres behind the Camp had been available, the additional acre was an improvement.

By 1943 the cost per day per camper had risen to 65 cents, and fees were collected from those campers that could afford them to help offset the cost. The liaison between the camp and sponsoring social agencies was close and in spite of charging fees, the camp made every effort to accommodate those who most needed it.

Following the depression and the war years came groups of people who needed much more than fresh air and sunshine, and it was realized that camp must attempt to fill these needs rather than to dispense charity. Symbolic of this thinking was the change in name from the Alexandra Fresh Air Camp to Camp Alexandra. A greater emphasis was placed on the social and recreational needs of the camper. Special periods were set aside for elderly campers and new standards of programming began to evolve. Camping season was extended from the beginning of June to the middle of September. In 1945, it was extended again and opened May 11th with 26 boys and girls from Gordon House. Because of the earlier opening date the first parties were very small as the school principals protested against any children being out of school early.

There were eight 13 day camps and nine staff changes were made. Staff continued to be a problem and it was necessary to take children with nearly all the employees. When the matron that summer, Miss Constance Waterman, took ill, Mrs. Judge stepped in rather than trying to rehire.

The wilderness property known as Five Acres, which was used by the older children for overnight hikes was upgraded in 1954 and the Elks put up an unfurnished supply cabin which enabled many out trips in spite of the weather. According to Mrs. Judge's report to the Board, the British Empire Games and the weather played a major role in 1954 in keeping camp enrollment down. Staffing was also a problem. Initially, everyone who might have done a good job as counselor could not be torn away from Vancouver, and once the Games were over and the promised fine weather failed to materialize, many campers canceled.

The Lions Club installed a wash house at camp which, during the wet weather and before the plumbing was installed, was used as a craft headquarters. The Vancouver Kinsmen had the roof of the Teepee repaired

and no longer was it necessary to shuffle beds back and forth to avoid the drips. Doreen Stickney was employed as caretaker for the winter, taking up residence in Anderson Cottage which was named after Mrs. Anderson, who procured a piano for the camp in 1935. The piano was donated by the Kaslo Concert Society and was freighted in at the camp's expense. The cottage was completed in 1951 and was used as a dormitory for elderly women in the first camps, then housed the director, a counsellor and small boys at later camps. Today, the cottage still houses the camp caretaker.

In 1959, staffing continued to be a major problem. In her report to the Board Mrs. Judge said

*“...by the time staff begin to see the overall picture of a pretty complex set-up with varying programs and timetables to cover needs from pre-school, to teen-ager to mother, camp is over for another year, and by the time the next year rolls around the best people have usually found themselves permanent jobs”.*

The close proximity of neighbours made life very difficult for camp staff by

*“making constant shush-shushing necessary, the interference from outsiders, such as boys hanging around the girls' cabins and girls hanging over the boys' fence, the complete inability to create a good camping atmosphere or any type of program for active children with cars parked bumper to bumper around the fences on weekends and holidays and the increasing lack of opportunities for overnights and out-camping which is the only antidote to too much city living. With more and more Crescent property blocked off into lots and buildings erected on the trails of yesterday, Five Acres offers the sole escape, and unfortunately it can be used by only a limited number at a time, because civilization encroaches on its boundaries too.”*

Camp programming was as excellent as the physical surroundings were limited. Circuses, sea festivals, breakfast hikes, camp newspapers, archery, horseback riding, campfires and overnight trips made a rich and varied holiday diet. Dee Sihota was program director in 1957, Mrs. Dolsen and Mrs. Roach, both back for their fourth summer, led the handicraft and waterfront personnel; Mrs. Pat Chadwick, Mrs. Farnsworth and Mrs. Battin were camp nurses. One of the most important people, Mrs. Flo Bell, the camp cook, began her four year tenure in 1957, ensuring that campers were well fed. Counselors were trained by Isobel North and Mrs. Jewell.

Caretaker for the summer was "an out-of-work steam fitter and construction worker... named Reg Romaro. His wife, Anne worked in the kitchen and ... with their three young children they spent the winter in Burrard cottage (later used as the admin office until 1995.)

The budget took a beating in 1958. Taxes were up more than \$200 from the previous year and drainage from septic tanks ate a large hole in the plumbing budget. Problems encountered that year included the continuing staffing predicament and the lack of continuity, with few core staff returning each summer. Most could not afford to work in the summer only and once they had grasped the overall picture of a complex set-up, camp was over for another year. Other difficulties encountered included the proximity of neighbours and interference from outsiders, the complete inability to create a good camping atmosphere with cars parked bumper to bumper around the fences on weekends and holidays and the increasing lack of opportunity for overnights and out-camping, which were felt to be the antidote to too much city living.

In 1958 the first rental group, the Society for the Preservation of Scottish Country Dances made use of the facilities, returning each year and starting what was to become one of the camps major functions and sources of income forty years later.

Camp Alexandra became a member agency of the Vancouver Community Chest in 1958 and a sliding scale for camp fees was introduced.

Handicraft worker Mrs. Dolsen was back for her fourth year in the summer of 1959, as was Mrs. Roach, as waterfront director. Flo Bell continued as cook. The campers of 1959 made an impression on Mrs. Judge.

*“Perhaps it was a reflection of the times, but I don't think camp has ever served a needier group of people. Strikes and resultant unemployment had pinched family incomes, changing times and concepts of human society have left people near the bottom of the economic stockpile with little or no inward or outward security. Not only do they suffer from economic ills but that greater malady of our times - soul sickness. Tense, depressed, disturbed, with family foundations cracked or shattered, both adults and children needed relaxation from tensions, play therapy, the wholesomeness of camp living and understanding human relationships.... while the camping program is recreational in structure, ... it is thoughtfully planned to*

*meet the underlying unmet needs of its clientele -- the bewildered lonely old person, the tension-ridden, hard-pressed mother, the boys and girls from poor (and this does not always imply income) homes, the younger school-age children, the preschool child and the toddlers."*

On February 16 1959, A.F. Cotton of Pete Cotton Realty in Crescent Beach valued the two pieces of camp property held by Alexandra Community Activities at \$18,500.

By 1960, the camp had served more than 45,000 people, providing for most the only holiday they could ever have. Mrs. Amy Harris was head cook in 1960, providing 29,748 ample, nutritious meals with lots of fresh vegetables bought from local farmers. The approximate cost per person was 20 cents per meal. Mrs. Harris estimated ...

*"that the Boys camp eats at least a third more than the Senior Citizens camps. At the end of each meal, the boys would stand and sing a brief grace. Then the dinner bell would ring again for the next seating - the girls and married women. One of the boys favorite foods for camp out, was 'dough-boys.' They would put a ball of dough on a stick and cook it over a fire, filling it with jam or peanut butter."*

D. Sihota was camp director in 1960, having worked summer camps since 1948. His wife Joyce, a social worker and daughter of ex director Myrtle Judge, who pioneered the work at the camp when it began from the Alexandra Orphanage, also joined the camp staff. They took up residence at the camp at Easter.

In 1960 72% of the children at Camp were from broken homes or low income families. The need for an additional site was becoming pressing. The camp owned 2 1/2 acres of grounds around the camp, 1 acre across Sullivan street and five acres "high on the hill on the south side of Stokes Rd.", two and a half miles from the camp. This area, which is the present day 20th Ave. between 128th and King George Highway, was still in 1960, very sparsely populated and was uncleared except for a small area around the supply cabin which had two sleeping porches used for overnight camping. The Board continued pressing the Department of Recreation and conservation for a lease of Crown Lands, commending them on their program of setting aside public lands and developing camp sites

*“for families and individuals who are able to traverse the highways and byways of this province. However, we would like to draw to your attention the fact that there are many hundreds of children...whose parents do not own transportation and ... have but limited access to this province’s wealth and woodlands and waterways. It is these children who are of particular concern,...from congested and often impoverished living areas who, with expanding urbanization of areas adjacent to our cities, have to depend solely on the summer camps for needed contact with nature....growing up in an era of automation and materialism, subjected to tensions and strain that many adults break under, need more than any generation of the past, some place to turn where mankind's age-old covenant with Mother Nature can be renewed.”*

Many recommendations were cited as a result of a 1960 survey including: continuity of camp directorship and the importance of acquiring a more rugged campsite as

*“Crescent Beach no longer offers scopes for the type of camping experience these children should receive. The bulldozer has obliterated old woodland trails, residences have been erected in favorite picnic spots of yesterday and the last outdoor chapel is now only a memory. Camp activities must of necessity be confined largely to the camp grounds in the heart of Crescent Beach with interested spectators lining the fences and robbing the occasions of all sense of privacy.”*

By 1960 Camp Alexandra was a branch of the Alexandra Community Activities and a financially participating member of the Community Chest and Council. The annual report for 1960 stated:

*“There is a feeling in all of our minds that Camp Alexandra, at the end of 40 years service, stands at a cross-roads.”* The physical plant was described this way:

*...the main body of the camp is made up of two plots of land, a triangular-shaped piece of two acres and across a paved road, another acre block. The camp ground is flat and grassy and the safe, sandy beach 100 yards distant may be reached along a paved lane. With the exception of weekends and public holidays, Crescent is a quiet, summer resort...however, since the war years, many new streets lined*

*with houses have come into being, until the campsite is completely surrounded by summer and permanent residences.*

*The main building, the Dining Hall, is two storeys with a sleeping porch. In the early days, the upstairs was one big room where campers were domiciled. Later, semi-partitions were put in and the rooms are now used as staff quarters. Two bungalows of six rooms each house campers. The Rec Hall is a two storey building which has sleeping quarters upstairs for student nurses and some program staff downstairs, an adult campers Lounge with dispensary, and a hospital at the back.*

*The aim of camp programs may be summed up in a section taken from the counselor's manual: Each minute in our lives is a learning process and our goal is to learn those things which are going to make our lives useful and happy. A camp has one primary duty and that is to see that every camper learns to become a better person by being at camp... our camp should be dedicated to the ideal that people come to know and respect one another by living and working together."*

In 1961 the last Senior's Camp was combined with a group of 35 adults from Woodlands School and "*...although the..... programs were conducted separately, there was a wholesome interaction between the two groups*".

When Mrs. Judge became ill in 1961, Miss S. Lord, who was the intake supervisor for camp, took over as Acting Executive Director.

G.W. Neufeld, Camp Director in 1961, returned in 1962 when wet, cold weather posed the greatest problem. During the last camp on August 27th

*"we entertained a mixed group of senior citizens along with 80 retarded boys from Woodland School. This was the only camp throughout the summer during which we enjoyed favorable weather. We have found that our senior citizens relate easily with retarded children and retarded children in turn respond very readily to the attention that the senior citizens give them.....the Woodlands School pupils were granted a greater degree of freedom than they usually enjoy...had occasion to interact with normal people, were placed in a new setting where the value of nature and the out of doors was stressed, learned new skills and most of the routines of institutional*

*life were set aside for twelve days....everyone who attended this camp left with a better understanding of the retarded child....I only wish that more people could come into contact with this group in order that our society as a whole might learn to better understand and accept these children."*

Although the weather was the biggest problem in 1962, there were challenges in other areas. The overall budget was sharply curtailed, then food costs, began to soar.

*"Prices climbed to even a higher level than they had reached in 1951....and we faced the prospects of feeding even larger camps than we fed last year.....we served our campers for less than twenty-five cents per meal."* Finding a cook was also a problem. *"Fortunately we secured the most capable cook that I have ever observed in a camp setting. The way Mrs. Harris managed staff, her thrifty measures, her health-conscious procedures and her ability to prepare tasty food made it a pleasure to have her at camp."*

Mr. Henry Wyborne was hired as caretaker and Mrs. Wyburn was the capable instructress in all phases of handicrafts. Beryl Tennant, Thelma Roach and Barry Whaites were unit leaders and waterfront directors; Paul Thiel ran the craft shop. Miss Lord, Executive Director and Mrs. Scaife, camp registrar gave the camp continuity and stability and got the operation underway in the spring. By 1963, thirty counselors were required to keep the campers busy with sports, archery, games, swimming and fishing.

From the 'Crescent Caper', camp newsletter in 1963:

*"No more lining up for porridge, no waiting for a share spoon so you can eat, no going to bed in the dark, no washing clothes in the rain, no waiting till it rains to have a bath, no more running to the outdoor toilet with a child under one arm and a newspaper in the other.... gone are the days when we scrubbed bare floors and washed, cleaned and scrubbed the windows. Gone is the old cook stove. We see now the lovely Rec Hall with its... floor which is so easy to keep clean with the new brushes and vacuum cleaners, and washrooms with toilets and showers...to the Service Clubs and Red Feather, we extend a hearty note of thanks."*

*Mrs. Ellen Meikle  
Mrs. Myrtle Holtlander*

In 1963 land was leased from the Provincial Government and Imperial Oil at Lake Sasamat, and Camp Wallace, later to become Camp Sasamat, was established. This wilderness setting was to be used for older age groups of children, leaving Camp Alexandra for mothers with young children and senior citizens.

Wet weather was once again the biggest aggravation in 1964. In spite of it, many out-trips were organized. Difficulties were experienced here because of

*“lack of adequate out-trip equipment, inadequate out-trip food storage places, not enough in-camp training in out-trip skills and poorly equipped campers for out-tripping.”*

Despite these difficulties, trips to Five Acres, Crescent Park Point, Blackie’s Spit, the Oyster Beds and Camp Wallace challenged the skills of both campers and counselors. Trips to Peace Arch Park, Semiahmoo Park and Redwood Park were the highlight for most campers.

Ted Roach prepared a detailed report of a typical out-trip.

*“Leaving Camp after breakfast we proceeded to Redwood Park, a distance of nine miles....We would arrive about 3pm; supper was started on arrival and while food was cooking a tour around the Park was organized. After the evening meal games were played and a campfire and singsong were held. In the morning we had breakfast and cleaned up...at 11am the group left for Peace Arch Park, a distance of four miles. Usually we stopped on the way and ate sandwiches...arriving at the Peace Arch we went swimming and played ball. Supper was prepared and games were played after the meal. We held a campfire and singsong and bedded down for the night. Breakfast in the morning, cleaned up area and proceeded to camp, stopping on the way for a swim at White Rock. Usually, three boys groups and two girls groups went on these three day out-trips.....the two units passing each other between the Peace Arch and Redwood Park. Each hike constituted 20 1/2 miles.....During that time Five Acres was used only three times and only by the 5-7 year olds.....due to vandalism any group going to Five Acres had extensive repairs to make before preparing for cooking or sleeping.”*

Health Department representatives visited the Camp in 1964, rating it *"the best Camp in British Columbia, health and sanitation-wise."*

In their report to the Board, Ted and Thelma Roach concluded...

*"my memory reflects the past 2 1/2 months; the happy singing faces of our senior citizens around the fireplace...the unexpected screams and sound of splashing as campers and counselors...enjoy an afternoon at the waterfront; the synchronized snoring of eight contented campers and their counselor, resting after a hard day of fun; the agonized cry preceded by the clank of a hammer as an industrious camper... misses again; the off- key, out-of-tune voices of campers and staff singing 'O Canada' to the lowering of the flag; the crackling of a fire and sizzling of bacon as the mothers attempt to cook breakfast on the beach and the tears in the eyes and the facial expressions of the campers during the closing ceremony ... each in his own way saying 'thank-you for the wonderful time and I'm going to miss you'"*

In 1965, Ron Neufeld continued in his position as camp director as did Thelma Roach, who had been program director since 1953.

In 1973 the original Alexandra Orphanage, which since 1969 had been used as a hostel for transient youth, burned to the ground. In 1976 the property was sold and with the proceeds of the sale, the Alexandra Foundation was established

Camp Alexandra today is an extension of the Alexandra Fresh Air Camp, which in essence, is an extension of that remarkable woman, Mrs. Dorothy Beckett.

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Residents of Crescent Beach demonstrated the strong desire to have a community center and in December 1972 the Crescent Beach Community Services Board of Management was established. In 1973, after 15 years working with Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver, Joyce Mason took over as Director of CBCS and with the aid of a Local Initiatives Program grant, began winterizing the major Camp buildings. The first program offered was a crafts class run by Mieke Coddington. Over the next 14 years, Mason turned the Camp into a viable social and recreational centre, serving not just

the immediate neighbourhood, but all residents of the Semiahmoo Peninsula. The long-standing summer camping tradition continued uninterrupted.

Ongoing year-round funding was secured when in January 1974 Crescent Beach Community Services was granted the status of a Neighbourhood House in the Neighbourhood Services Association which was the current evolution of the original Alexandra Orphanage. NSA is now the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC.

In 1975, Dorm C was raised and a lower story added, the Alexandra Children's Center was incorporated and the full time daycare began. The first annual Alexandra Festival was held in 1975 and Dunsmuir Farm allotment gardening also began that year.

In 1978 the upper floor of the Dining Hall was prohibited for sleeping accommodation by the Fire Marshall and in 1980, the electrical service for the whole camp was upgraded. In 1981, the Longhouse was built at a cost of \$300,000 and in 1982 the Crescent Beach Property Owners Association turned over the administration of Beecher Place to the camp. The upper floor of the Dining Hall was gutted and construction began on a Games Room for youth in the old sleeping quarters. In 1983, reconstruction of the aging Dining Hall began, including the installation of an elevator.

In 1985, a Canada Works Grant was received for renovations to the Rec Hall and in 1986, the camp was opened as a bed and breakfast for Expo 86.

Today, Alexandra Neighbourhood House (formerly Crescent Beach Community Services) provides social and recreational programs, services and events for the community on the Semiahmoo Peninsula. The demand for social services has continued to increase proportionally with residential development, and upgrading of the facilities and expansion of programs and services has been ongoing. In 1996, in an attempt to accommodate ever increasing numbers of physically disabled campers, construction was completed on a building which houses wheelchair accessible washrooms, showers and administration offices. In 2006, a satellite office was established in White Rock for the provision of Youth and Family Services. In 2011 Alexandra Childrens' Centre opened in Grandview corners.

The summer camping program has continued uninterrupted since those early years at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.