

CAMPER PROFILE
JANE DETWILER LEVAN
HAGAN 1937-1943

Written by Molly LeVan
Hagan 1959-1970



Molly and her mom, Jane (2017)

"Hagan Campers from Alpha to Omega"

June 23, 1937, the Reading Eagle ran a story captioned "Lutheran Camps to Open July 3d Located Along Delaware Near Shawnee." The article reported that the camps would be under the "personal supervision of LeRoi E. Snyder of this city, director of youth activities at Camp Ministerium." That summer Camp Miller was entering its sixteenth season and planning to host 700 boys. The new Camp Hagan was expecting 274 girls. Approximately 150 girls and boys from the Reading area (Berks County) were to spend time on the Delaware that year. {1}

Jane Detwiler, my mom, was one of the inaugural Hagan campers when she checked into Junior 1 and spent two weeks enjoying the new camp. She enjoyed it so much that she returned for the next six summers as a season camper. She spent her last summer in Senior 6. Jane recalls that the name of the first director was Dusty. Sis (Esther) Wenrich was the Director in the following summers. Jane mentioned Sis from time-to-time and saw her at Hagan reunions. Jane also remembers Marigold's (Mary Goldsmith Westhuis) mom Skipper, who was the Aquatics DP back in the day.

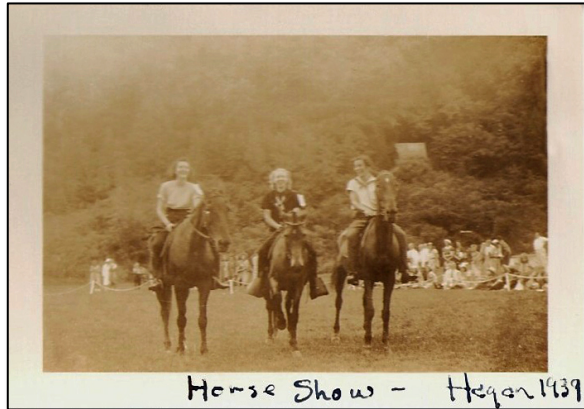
Photo right: Alice Royer, Carolyn McGonigle, Janie Endres, Jane Detwile LeVan, Robin Fidler, Phyl Wiest, Sis Wenrich (sitting)



As a camper, Jane was active and goal oriented. She earned her red, blue and yellow ties. Earning a tie in the "old" days was different from my experience. Jane was able to earn credit for activities she participated in during scheduled classes. She was surprised to learn that to earn a tie when I was a camper, I had to complete the requirements during optional periods. Jane participated in everything that Hagan had to offer. There was no activity that she did not like. She is competitive so athletics appealed to her. She is also artistic and creative and especially enjoyed wood burning in arts and crafts. She proudly earned her junior life saving badge in the Delaware River.

According to Jane, when she and her fellow campers came up from swimming, they each had to carry a river stone. Those stones were used to build the altar in the outdoor chapel. Martie Davis, author of "Nature Nuggets," will be happy to know that Jane liked nature walks and continued her interest in bird watching throughout her life. Jane was recognized for her decades of service as a devoted volunteer at Hawk Mountain, Kempton, PA.

During its early years, Hagan offered horseback riding as an activity. The horses were stabled at Mini and taken care of by Tom Strichtmeyer. The

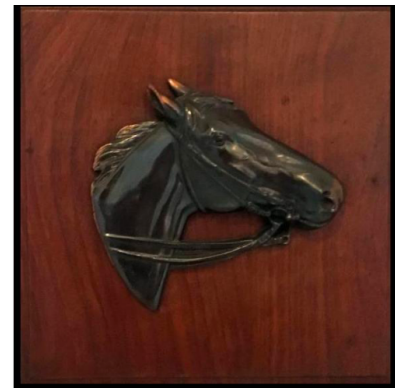


riding counselor, Becky, was older than other counselors. In the morning, the more experienced riders, such as Jane, were taken to Mini to ride the fresh horses to Hagan. The least experienced campers rode the horses in a make-shift ring during instruction periods. When it was time for the horses to return to Mini, the intermediate riders rode them home. In 1940, Jane won first place in the Hagan horse show. Her trophy, a bass relief of a horse's head, hung

on the living room wall of our home.

(On the reverse of the horse plaque, it read: "Camp Hagan 1940 1st Prize Horse Show")

Jane did not return to Hagan after her year in Senior 6. How could she give up Hagan, you may ask. Well, Jane loved horses, and by then she had a horse of her own, Jesse. Her father was a veterinarian and acquired the horse from a man who was going off to fight in the war. So, Jane opted to ride the fields of Berks County rather than River Road.



Jane made many lasting friendships at Hagan. Her counselor in Junior 1 was Mack, but that year she met a JC named Marie Helman. Marie became famous after Fred Waring, then owner of the Shawnee Inn, visited Hagan and arranged for Marie to go New York. In 1939, Marie's photograph appeared on the front cover of Life magazine. Jane and Marie exchanged Christmas cards until just a couple of years ago. Jane attended Hagan reunions with campers from her era. Sara Beth Overbay Quinn and I joined them for lunch at the Shawnee Inn once back in the 1980's.

Jane got to know Carolyn McGonigle Holleran, through her church, I believe. Carolyn has been a devoted friend and regularly visits Jane, now 90, at the health center of Phoebe Berks in Wernersville. I was delighted to meet

Carolyn, who was a Hagan camper in the late 1940s and early 1950s, on one of my visits with Jane. The three of us spent an afternoon reminiscing about our Hagan experiences and all of the Hags we know. Together Jane, Carolyn, and I encompass almost thirty years of Hagan, Shawnee-on-the-Delaware.

Nicknames seem to have been popular at Hagan since its beginning. One camper Jane knew was called "Oscar." After she was graduated from Reading High School, Jane enrolled in the fine arts program at Syracuse University. Greek life appealed to her, so she rushed. At one particular sorority tea, sisters informed her that Helen Weil was looking for her. Jane did not know a Helen Weil. During the gathering, however, Jane recognized a coed across the room and called out loudly, "Oscar." You guessed it. Helen Weil was Oscar, but no one at SU knew her by that name. Needless to say, Jane did not get a bid from that sorority. She did, however, pledge Alpha Chi Omega where she became the president of the sisterhood and was given a nickname of her own: Nikki, because she gave others nicknames. I remember Jane's SU friends and some professors calling her Nikki in the Christmas cards they sent. Jane continued her sorority affiliation as a member of the Reading Panhellenic Council for many years.

Jane recounted Hagan activities that are familiar to all of us. While I was interviewing her for this piece, she remembered an unfortunate incident that took place on a scrub day. One of her cabin mates had brought her 78 rpm record collection to Hagan. The record collection was removed from the cabin along with everything else while the floor was scrubbed. The records, however, were left out in the sun too long and melted. While she was telling me this story, I bragged that to the best of my recollection that when I was a counselor my cabin was usually Honor Cabin. I knew for sure, however, that they were never the scrub cabin. I reminded Jane that scrub cabin had to scrub not only its own cabin but the porches of Great Hall, the Korn Kribbe, or inside Great Hall as a "punishment" for not keeping a tidy cabin. That prompted Jane to recollect a punishment she received as a camper: pulling weeds on the tennis court. I asked her what she had done to warrant the punishment. "After taps" was her response. (I didn't ask for details, but "really, Mom," Unit Duty is hard enough without having to deal with unruly campers.)

Jane recalled other Hagan traditions such as Bloody Mary's tomb, Hagan Christmas, and floating wish boats on the river. For the years I was at Hagan for Christmas, Jane always sent me a present. Charm bracelets were popular in the 1960s, so she put her creative talents to work to design charms that reflected Hagan, e.g., an acorn, an oak leaf. Her favorite Hagan songs are Follow the Gleam and Witchcraft. I asked her if there were dances with the Miller boys, and if so, what did she remember about them. She gave a simple answer: "We were wallflowers." (Somethings never change, do they?)

Jane received her bachelor of fine arts degree from Syracuse in 1949. Soon thereafter, she married Raymond LeVan and in quick succession they had four children: me, Stephen, Peter,



The LeVan Family 1968

and David. (She now has four grandchildren and two step-grandchildren.) Camp Miller was familiar to Jane's family, too. Although they did not know each other at the time, Ray spent a number of summers at Miller. Each of "the boys" went to Miller for a couple of summers, before they joined the Boy Scouts. All of them became Eagle scouts. Stephen became the fourth generation of veterinarians in the Detwiler family. Animals played a role in the lives of Peter and David, too. Peter became head of the beef research farm at Penn State, and David was a farrier for many years.



Jane and her four grandchildren

In 1955, Jane's family moved to the Oley Valley (Berks County, 10 miles east of Reading, PA) where Ray's ancestors settled in the late 1700s; the horse Jesse came, too. Over the years, one could find horses, donkeys, sheep, goats, steers, turkeys, cats, rabbits, raccoons, snakes, turtles, toads and many dogs on the "farm." Jane was the leader of the local 4-H horse and pony club. She loved the Oley Valley and lived there for more than 50 years.

She was a volunteer par excellence and was an active member of the Berks County Historical Society, a docent of the Reading Museum and Art Gallery, a library volunteer, Oley Valley Heritage Association member, and head of the art department of the Oley Fair for more than a quarter century, in addition to many, many other activities. Jane was a life-long member of Trinity Lutheran Church.

Jane continued her interest in watercolor and oil painting for many years and enjoyed crafts. She liked to bake dozens of varieties of Christmas cookies that she delivered to family and

friends in containers that she had decorated for the season. She knit and made clothes for herself and me. After Ray died, Jane found comfort and friendship in Friends of Gladys Tabor. As to her competitive spirit, it lives on. Jane likes board games and was still playing bridge until a year ago. Some would call her a card shark. She encouraged all four of her kids to be active in sports in the community, high school, and college.

For a time, Jane worked a substitute teacher in the Oley Valley school system; not something her kids appreciated. She ate lunch with the teachers and knew way too much about her kids and their friends. Later she became a manager for a senior center that provided recreational activities and a warm, midday meal for the elderly citizens of Reading.

I don't know when I first heard of Hagan, but I do remember Jane wearing baggy tan shorts to work around the house when I was a little kid.



She didn't peg them with diaper pins, although she had many of those. I realized that they were part of the Hagan uniform when I got my own uniforms in 1959. I fell in love with Hagan the moment my father turned the car into the tree-lined drive to the Rat Trap. I couldn't have imagined anything more beautiful than the leafy trees and wide lawns spread before the cabins. I so enjoyed myself that first year that at the end of my two weeks in Junior 3, Jane and Ray signed me up for another two weeks the next year.

Photo left: Molly at Hagan
Was that a May Day Court outfit?

Before I returned in to Hagan in 1960, I was standing in the kitchen of my grandparents' home and overheard Jane and my grandmother talking about the Tocks Island Dam project and what it would mean for Hagan. I was terrified! What would I do if there were no more Camp Hagan? Luckily, as we know, the project went nowhere fast, except for the federal government's buying up the land along the river. Therefore, I was able to return to Hagan for the next five years as a two-week camper. Jane had earned her junior life saving badge at Hagan and wondered if I couldn't do the same. I told her I had to stay for a month to do that. I got lucky and in 1965, I was a month camper in Senior 8 and earned my junior life saving certificate.

Finances were tight for my parents, and they discouraged my applying to become a CIT. After hearing about my month in Senior 8 and the recognition I received, they let me apply. I have my grandfather to thank for enabling me to go to Hagan for the whole summer; just as he had done for Jane decades before. During my CIT year, I passed the senior life saving test, which led in part to my becoming a member of the aquatics staff following my JC year. I was a happy "camper" counselor of Intermediate 9, Senior 5, and Senior 7. By the summer of 1970, life at Hagan was changing. Miller was spending more time at Hagan and "taking charge." Hagan

and Miller were to be united as one camp the next year, and I knew that it was time for me to say good-bye to the banks of the Delaware, but not to the people who made Hagan for Jane and for me.

So there you have it, the story of a girl who was one of Hagan's first campers who became the mother of one of Hagan's last counselors. Jane and I share many wonderful memories of the years in between.

Right Photo: 1947 Jane's brother, Dick (yes Dick & Jane) Jane's mom, dad and Jane. Both men were veterinarians



Molly, her brothers and her mom

{1} Berks County was a source of many Hagan and Miller campers, and counselors. Other campers from the area who come to mind include Martha Conboy, Linda Berry, Cathy Gerber, Jean Gerlach, Kathy Kerschner, Brianna Kramer, Anita Zimmerly (my 7th grade home economics teacher), the sisters and brothers Seffranko and Jay. A quick review of my memory books from 1959 through 1970 reveals that approximately nineteen members of the staff, and Hagan Co-Directors Phyl and Ed Gilbert, came from Berks County.