



### *Moments of Brilliance*

*By Olivia Bartel*



Back in the days when I was a counselor at Camp Mennoscah, I remember leading a group of campers in putting on a skit, maybe for one of the Bible sessions. Skits can be painful, lifeless things, and I did not have great hope for this skit.

The skit was awful. Campers read their parts in monotones and moved about the “stage” with stilted movements. Turn stiffly to face audience. Oh no. Insert exaggerated “woe is me” gesture. It has been raining forever and it does not look like it will stop. If only we had listened to Noah. Insert noisy, exaggerated drowning here.

I’d like to take this opportunity to point out that I did not write the skit.

Noah—his part, not his name—took the stage to gather up his 2 by 2 domestic and wildlife critters and herd them onto the boat. We had sort of walked through the skit and planned stage directions before doing an actual run-through, so what he did was not a huge surprise. How he did it was the surprise.

He was a hoot. The rest of us were self-conscious about being in this horrible skit, but he took that lousy script and made it great. I watched and grinned at his ad-libs when campers forgot which animals they were playing or where they were to go.

Clearly, he was a talented actor. But part of what floored me was his willingness to throw himself into something that we were embarrassed about. It occurred to me later that I was seeing what he would be like as an adult. Not a charmer, but someone with a generous spirit and kindness when interacting with others. It was a moment of realization and brilliance.

Some of my favorite things about camp are the moments of brilliance, when you see something amazing in someone or when they show themselves in a way you hadn’t seen before. And that’s why you send your kids to camp, what you hope for, right? For those flashes of understanding and those seconds of the amazing adults they will be, which you hope will grow into a lifetime of durable faith and goodness.

Sometimes I see these moments of brilliance in the camper who makes a craft for a specific person they love. These amazing moments are in the staff person who sheepishly admits to being wrong and apologizes, the counselor who expends extra energy doing special activities with their cabin, and in the campers who accept those of us who are oddballs and misfits without hesitation. Watching a camper focus on sweeping the floor or wiping a table, demanding of herself that she work hard, that is a moment of brilliance.

Learning that a college student skipped classes to mow grass at Camp Mennoscah, that’s...well...a moment.



Camp now has online registration for the summer camping season!

Visit us at [campmennoscah.org](http://campmennoscah.org) for more information.



We are very happy to welcome the newest member of the Camp Mennoscah staff. Deborah Dimmick is the Office Assistant. Most weeks she works 10 am - 4 PM Monday through Friday. She brings experience with computers, databases, and she is an accomplished artist! Her previous job was at Exploration Place in Wichita. Since she lives in Murdock, she and her husband are very pleased that she is working close to home.



## Baby Vultures

By Don Troyer



If one listened closely in the summer of 2014, in the old barn at Bluestem, one could hear the pitter-patter of little feet and strange hissing noises. Yes, a pair of turkey vultures had chosen Camp Mennoscah as their summer home, a suitable place far from nowhere, where they could raise their come-ly young in the stillness of the Kansas prairie.

Baby vultures are white, pure as the driven snow, except for their featherless heads, which are black at first, later changing to red. The bald heads allow the birds to keep relatively clean while feeding with their heads inside a decomposing corpse. I know it works for me.

Vultures have gone south for the winter, but next summer they'll be back, soaring effortlessly on updrafts above our camp. These scavengers hunt for their deceased prey by sight, so if you are outdoors, it is best to keep moving and show signs of life. They also hunt using their sense of smell (rare among birds), so we encourage campers to occasionally shower and change clothes.

Although sometimes the butt of deprecating remarks about their appearance and odor, they should be appreciated for their role as groundskeepers. Without them and other scavengers we would all be up to our knees in rotting road kill.

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### Bathroom Update



Mennonite  
Camping  
Association

Even though we're moving on the project, mother nature has had different ideas. We had a cold snap that set the project back a few weeks, but it looks like we should be past that now, and as the weather warms up, the plans over the next months are to finish the floor, build the remainder of the block walls, and then install the trusses. At that point, we should have something that very closely resembles a bathroom! The current plan is to have them ready for camping season.

If you would like to donate to the project, with a donation of money, you can do that at the camp's website, [www.campmennoscah.org](http://www.campmennoscah.org), under the New Bathhouses link on the right side of the page, or mail them directly to camp at Camp Mennoscah, PO Box 65, Murdock, KS 67111. If you would like to donate your time and volunteer, please contact Jim Yoder at [jdyoder@cox.net](mailto:jdyoder@cox.net) with details of when you could help, and what type of things you would like to help with. There will be many opportunities over the next several months for volunteering. Please watch your church bulletin or announcement board for future details.

The camp board and staff would like to extend our thanks for your support of the bathroom project so far, and we look forward to your continued support!



[www.campmennoscah.org](http://www.campmennoscah.org)

