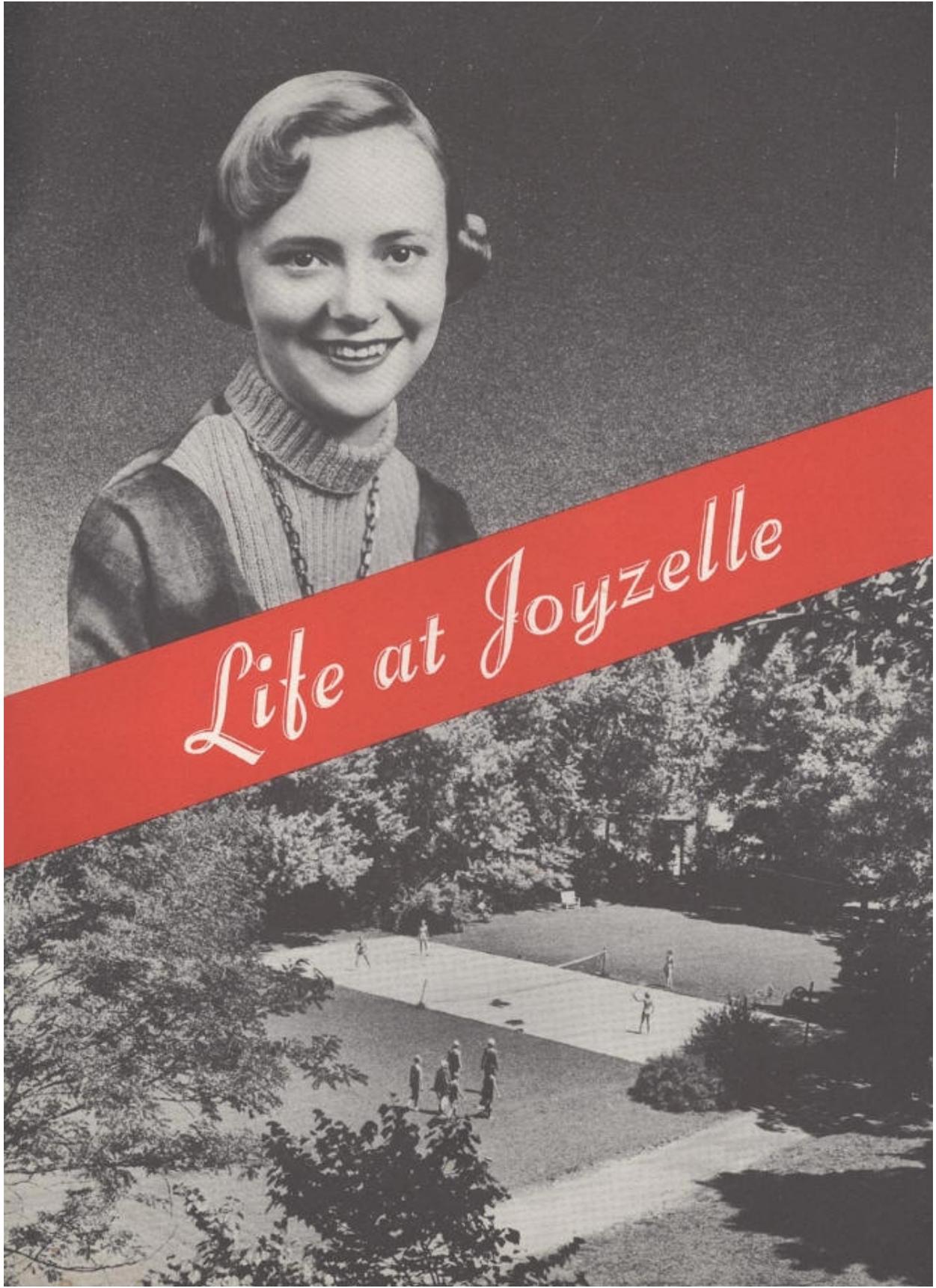


Donation of the Month

Camp Joyzelle Booklet

2004.71.3

Donor: Vivien Hobart



Life at Joyzelle

In the waning years of the Monte Ne resort, Iris Armstrong of Little Rock leased about 100 acres of land at Big Springs Lake, near the resort. She opened an all-girls summer camp. Summer camps for girls were common in the East, but not in Arkansas. Named Camp Joyzelle after the poet/playwright Maurice Maeterlinck's heroine in his play of the same name, the camp lasted into the 1960s.

One booklet noted the aim of Joyzelle "to spend a summer with wholesome campers, in a group, with worthwhile traditions and associated with councilors of culture and idealism...". From 1923, when the camp began operation, to 1936 Coin Harvey participated in the raising of the tents at the beginning of the summer and arranged social outings for the campers. In addition to outings the girls days were filled with activities such as swimming, canoeing, hiking, horseback riding, games and tennis. There were tutors also available for study help in just about any subject. Campers often used the amphitheater and hotel grounds for programs and activities. Many of the first activities centered on drama and dance, instructed by Ms. Armstrong's sister Helen.

Every week was ended with a torch lighting ceremony. Starting at the top of the hill an Indian call ("Wa-tah-ho-tah-ho!") would be sung and then echoed by others. The girls slowly made their way to a natural theater area, where they gathered to sing, talk of friendship and happiness, and honor those who had received special recognition throughout the week. Each girl whose name was called was handed the torch and they held it high. At the end of the gathering, as the girls left they threw a twig into the fire to honor each girl she wished to remember.

The Armstrong sisters retired from Joyzelle and handed the reins to Mary Powell in 1956. By this time, the camp had grown to two summer sessions of over 200 campers from 33 different states, and a large staff including a nurse, cooks, and bookkeeper. Well qualified instructors were recruited such as Dr. John Lascovitch, champion Olympic swimmer and Mrs. Anna Hamilton March Rhinehart a circus rider with the Ringling Brothers. New activities such as archery, badminton, ping pong, basketball, volleyball, and a once-a-week movie, were added.

The camp continued to draw girls to Northwest Arkansas for a summer of fun, friendship and outdoor activities until the 1960s. As the Army Corps of Engineers began construction on Beaver Dam the Land Acquisition Office bought up land that would eventually be flooded by Beaver Lake. This included several acres of the camp, unable to continue the remaining camp grounds were sold. Today, like most of Monte Ne, much of Camp Joyzelle lies under Beaver Lake.