

Jack & Jill
A Love Story

A Romance Novel

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Chapter 1

We Met

My wife and I met, fell in love, got married, had children, and lived happily ever after, but not in that exact order. We didn't even like each other much, at first. We didn't exactly hate each other, but almost. My name is Jack Benton.

We met in 1968. I was a 12-year-old farm boy. My Grandpa and Grandma Benton suggested to my parents that they send me to a Summer Camp because I was quite shy. Mom and Dad were aware of my shyness, of course, but they hadn't come up with very many ideas to approach the issue. They were concerned, but they were also very busy. It wasn't a major issue in their minds. They discussed the idea of sending me to camp, found the money for it, and offered the idea to me. I was always interested in new adventures, so I jumped at the chance. A week away from the farm sounded like a fun change of pace. I did help Dad quite a bit on the farm, but Grandpa offered to help more than usual for that week. He thought that it was quite important for me to break out of my shell. My parents agreed.

I was given a brochure about the camp. It included a list of items that they recommend I take along. Recreation activities were numerous, and choices could be made. I had no interest in golf or water polo, but fishing and swimming caught my interest. Reading and Science are actually my biggest interests, but there weren't very many activities listed in the brochure for those. I did take my fishing pole, because the camp has a large lake with good bass fishing.

Perhaps Grandpa Benton had more fun looking at the brochure than I did. He has taken me fishing many times, so he enjoyed looking at pictures of the camp's lake. He was also excited about the fact that rowboats were available for fishing. He talked to me about hiking, camping out, horseback riding, and several other activities on the list. He doesn't have any interest in golf or water polo either. He did suggest that I try tennis and a couple others, but I really had no interest. "Try something new once in a while, Jack," he said. "I'll think about it," was as far as I would commit.

The day came for the trip to camp. Dad was very busy on the farm, so Grandma Benton made the trip with Mom and I. Grandpa spent that day at the farm helping Dad. Mom and Grandma talked the entire 3-hour drive to the camp. I sat quietly in the back seat reading a book. It almost seemed at times that they had forgotten that I was there. They did stop chattering a few times to make sure I was still there.

“Jack,” called Grandma, “What are you doing?” “Reading,” I replied. After a few minutes it was Mom’s turn. “Jack,” she called, “I’m really going to miss you this week. Maybe we should have a good chat before we drop you off.” “About what?” I asked. She apparently hadn’t thought this through much because she paused for a minute before answering my question. “Have you made any plans for this week at camp?” she asked. I answered with, “a few.”

She seemed somewhat irritated at my 2-word answer. That happens occasionally at home too, and she’s always trying to pull more words out of me like it’s a matter of life and death. “Tell me about your plans for the week,” she said with obvious effort to get me talking. “Fishing, swimming, and reading,” I answered. “Wouldn’t you like to make some good friends?” she asked. “Maybe,” I replied.

Mom was driving, so Grandma jumped in to give her a chance to concentrate better on driving. “Maybe you should try some activities at camp with larger groups of kids your age. You just can’t have too many friends,” she said. “Maybe,” was my answer. Now I was getting somewhat irritated because they wouldn’t let me concentrate on my reading. So, I gave them an answer that might satisfy them, at least for a bit. “Maybe I can make a friend that likes to fish,” I said. They looked at each other like they could see right through me. They could tell that I wanted to read more than I wanted to talk. They left me alone and went back to some conversation that they had going, at least for a few minutes.

Several minutes later, Grandma said, “Jack! Look at that beautiful deer running across the field.” “Cool,” I said. I immediately went back to my reading, but Grandma was not finished. “Do you think you’ll see some deer and other wildlife at camp?” “Probably,” I answered. “You really need to try to give answers that are longer than one or two words, Jack,” she said. “Why?” I asked. “It’s good practice for making friends and having conversations with them,” she answered. “When I have something to say, I’ll talk,” I added. “Tell me something about the wildlife that you might see at camp,” she said. “I read about that area. They have very much the same animals that we have near home,” I said, “They have more deer and good bass fishing.”

With that I went back to my reading, hoping to read peacefully. They shrugged at each other, like they had failed again. They tried a couple more times, but never did get that many words out of me again. They eventually gave up and went back to their conversation. I believe those two could talk all day every day if given the chance.

We got to the “*Camp Dayton*” sign, and Mom said, “Look Jack! Isn’t this place gorgeous?” I looked up and said, “Nice.” Grandma added, “Look at all the new friends you can make, Jack!” “Cool,” I said. The place was actually very gorgeous, with Oak trees and grass and native flowers everywhere. I put my book away because I really do enjoy nature. I didn’t say anything, but my eyes absorbed everything. Any good man of Science should

have well established observation skills. That's one of the reasons that I packed some books when nobody was looking. I had books on birds, animals, and fish of this region. Identifying some through my own observations was something I looked forward to for this week.

The *Camp Office* was easy to find. A great big sign made it nearly impossible to miss. The line to check in didn't seem very long, so our timing appears to have been good. We had hit the road by 7 a.m. We got out of the car, and I saw Mom and Grandma whispering about something. They're obviously up to something, but who knows what. I'm sure I'll find out soon because they have focused on me all day.

Mom told me to leave my stuff in the car until after we sign in. She and I got in line, but Grandma walked off like she was on a mission. I saw Grandma talking to a couple people, they pointed in a specific direction, and Grandma would talk to someone else. She can talk to any stranger that she meets, but I don't have a large desire to do so. She apparently found the person that she was looking for, because they sat on a bench and had a lengthy conversation. They kept looking at me, while I tried to look like I hadn't noticed. They were still talking when Mom and I had our turn to sign in.

The man that checked us in looked like a professional athlete or body builder. He had muscles popping out on top of muscles. He wore a shirt that was apparently designed for showing off muscles, and he had a lot of them to display. His name was Randy, but he said I could call him "Coach." When he heard my name he said, "You're in my cabin. Cool! We're going to become great friends this week. Maybe we'll arm wrestle or something!" "I'll pass," was my answer. "You're not afraid of little ole me, are you?" he asked. "I don't want to hurt you," I said. Significant laughter came from several people nearby, including Coach and myself. We finished the check-in procedure and he pointed to a red pickup truck to put my bags in.

As Mom and I left the line, I noticed that the girl just getting into the back of the line was perhaps the most gorgeous girl near my age that I've ever seen. She didn't wear much makeup, but she didn't need to. Her complexion was flawless, her hair was simply styled, but definitely styled. She was the shapeliest girl that I've ever seen near my age. I said, "Hi," and she ignored me completely. She was rather busy trying to shake off some other guys that were trying to be suave and debonair with their come-on lines. Her mother was also a beautiful woman, and she seemed to be accustomed to getting frequent attention.

Meanwhile, Mom was nearly flabbergasted that I had said the first word in an attempt to talk to someone, especially a girl. We walked away from the line toward our car to get my bags. She asked me, "Do you think that she might have talked to you if you had more than one word to offer? She seems like a nice girl. Try to make friends with her." "Who knows," I answered. Grandma had been hovering in the distance for a while, and I

had been watching discretely. She caught Coach Randy for a short chat and appeared convinced that she could chat with him behind a tree without me noticing. She got to the car just minutes after Mom and I did, and Mom told her the story of my one-word chat with a girl like it was *National news* of great importance! Then they stepped a short distance away and whispered between themselves again. I'm quite sure that I'll find out what that's all about before long.

Mom and Grandma have another 3-hour drive to get home, so I suggested that they head out. "I'm just interested in your safety," I said. Grandma walked away to have another "secret" chat with Coach Randy while Mom gave me a long hug and made sure that I was facing the other direction. Mom almost started crying as we walked to the car, but I told her not to embarrass me. Grandma agreed with my sentiment, so she controlled the urge. They each hugged me, got into the car, and carefully backed out of their parking spot and left. I sat down, leaned against a tree, and started reading my book.

I was able to read in peace for well over 30 minutes, then Coach tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Let's head for the cabin." With that he blew his coach's whistle and about a dozen young guys joined us. "You guys have all met me, but you haven't all met each other. I'm going to drive that red pickup to the cabin with all of your luggage. Follow me, and we can all get settled into the cabin and make some official introductions." Coach got into the pickup and started slowly driving to the cabin. The group of guys all seemed to have made a friend or two already, except me. I'm used to it. I am wondering why Coach tapped me on the shoulder, but no one else.

Part way to the cabin, Coach stopped the truck and spoke quietly to a couple of the guys. I don't know what they said, but I have a pretty good idea. Those two guys immediately came to me and said, "Hi." They talked to me all the way to the cabin and were obviously trying to pull me into the conversation. It was nice, and I opened up to them a bit. Bill and Tim became good friends that week, and I was very pleased to make friends that seemed to be sincere about being good friends. I've just never had much luck at making friends who didn't turn out to be two-faced in one way or another.

We got to the cabin and everyone grabbed their bags from the truck. Coach told us that his area was already claimed and his stuff sitting around would make that rather obvious. All other bunks are open territory. "You might want to join up with specific guys to be close to. Be nice, and go pick a bunk," he said. Bill and Tim waved me over, and we all got bunks close together. The guys in my cabin all seem to be pretty nice, with a couple of minor exceptions. Allen seems to like to dominate all interactions, but there doesn't seem to be anything real major to worry about. He hangs out mostly with Loren, and Loren is bigger and taller than everyone else in the cabin. He acts like a bully, but Coach appears to already have his eye on him. I'm getting to like Coach more with time.

Coach gave us a comfortable amount of time to make our bunks and generally settle in. Then he started with some official introductions, but he did it in a rather creative way. The cabin had 12 guys plus Coach in it. He randomly picked me, or perhaps not so randomly, to start with on the introductions. He asked me to stand up. Then he asked a question that surprised me, "Raise your hand if you know this guy's name!" Every single guy in the room raised their hand, so Coach pointed to one guy. "Let's hear his name," Coach said. "Jack," was his reply. "What's his last name," Coach asked. The kid didn't know. "Raise your hand if you know his last name," Coach said. 4 hands went up, and Coach pointed to Allen. Allen said, "Benton." "Correct," said Coach. "Now let's continue this procedure with everybody else. We'll see how many know the first name, followed by how many know the last name." I was quite surprised that everyone had known my first name. I smiled and sat down.

Coach then went bunk by bunk around the cabin. Bill was next, and then Tim. There was not one other single guy in the cabin whose first name was known by everyone. Hardly anybody knew any last names. The introductions were finished in a few minutes, and Coach was about to start talking about something else. I raised my hand, and Coach called my name. "Simple question," I said. "I know that I'm quite shy. I don't talk to people easily. I watched today as my Grandma talked to Coach, and I'm pretty sure that she talked to him about my shyness. Right Coach?" He smiled and nodded in the affirmative. "Here's my question," I continued, "How in the world did everyone know my first name, since I didn't tell but 3 people in this room?"

"I can answer that," blurted Allen. He's got another chance to dominate conversation, so here he goes. "We all thought you were weird, so we all talked about you," he said.

Coach stepped in rather quickly, "Perhaps 'weird' isn't the word you were looking for. Is 'unique' a better word, Allen?" Coach lowered his head and raised his eyebrows at Allen, with an expression that Allen could read like a book. "Sure," was all Allen had to say. "It's a good thing to be unique," Coach continued, "Who wants to be just like everyone else? That could get very boring very quickly. That's one thing we need to concentrate on this week – getting to know your *Cabin Brothers* and how they are each unique. Let's find out what each of our Brothers has to offer that can help our Cabin Group thrive for the week, having a better time than if we each do our own thing!"

"Our next little activity," started Coach, "is to talk to as many guys as you can for the next 15 minutes. We have one goal in mind at the moment. Find out what each guy enjoys doing with his spare time." Coach sat down, put his feet up on his bed, and started reading a book. The guys looked around for a few seconds, and Coach motioned to us with an arm. "Get after it," he said, "You aren't all afraid to talk to your Brothers, are you? This isn't rocket science!"

With that the conversations started rather quickly. I found out that Bill likes science a lot. With that, Tim and I both said, “Cool.” Tim doesn’t like any school subjects so much, but he enjoys working with wood to build bookshelves, picture frames, and other similar items. With that, Bill and I both said, “Cool.” The three of us laughed and agreed that we appear to have a favorite word. I told them that besides Science I’m really into reading, swimming, and fishing. Bill likes to read, but Tim only reads for school assignments. They do both like to go swimming and fishing. “How cool is it that we have some things in common?” I asked. They both agreed and we did a *three-way high five*. We decided to travel around the cabin as a group and talk to our other Brothers.

Before we had a chance to go anywhere, Coach spoke up to get everybody’s attention. “Did you guys see what Bill, Tim, and Jack just did?” he asked. Some had seen it but not many. “Do that *three-way high five* again for us, will you?” Coach asked. We repeated it, and everybody in the cabin loved it. “Should we adopt that as our cabin handshake?” Coach asked the group. The shouting indicated that they liked the idea. “Perhaps we can expand on that idea. Let’s do a *thirteen-way high five*,” Coach shouted. With great enthusiasm, all of our Cabin Brothers enjoyed a *thirteen-way high five*. “Now gentlemen, we can do that in whatever number of guys happen to be together at any time you feel like it. Capeesh?” he said. Again, the shouting and clapping made it seem like they liked the idea.

Coach continued, “Did you notice that it can be difficult to get the timing right with that many people, though?” Everybody laughed. Coach continued, “Whoever initiates a *multiple-way high five* can just raise both hands, holler ‘high five,’ and wait a few seconds for participants to raise their hands and form a circle. That same person can then shout ‘one, two, three,’ and everyone makes contact on the silent count of four. Does that sound good?” All the Cabin Brothers appeared to love it. Allen shouted out, “Let’s do a *thirteen-way high five* again. Maybe we can get our timing down perfect.” “Lead away,” said Coach. Allen nodded and shouted, “High five,” with both hands in the air. We all raised our hands and formed a circle. Allen continued, “one, two, three.” On the silent count of four we all did a *high five* with nearly perfect timing. The laughter and shouting was loud, and the smiles were louder. Perhaps Coach, Bill, Tim, and I had the widest smiles in the room.

We found out that Bill, Tim, and I were just about the only guys in the room that weren’t heavily involved in baseball, football, and every other sport known to mankind in the United States. A few of the guys like fishing, but they didn’t seem as enthused about it as Bill, Tim, and I. Many of the guys reacted to reading like it was a disease. A couple shrugged their shoulders but made it plain that they would rather not read unless they had to. That nearly covers all of the expressed interests in the room, except for some occasional games of pool and watching movies once in a while. Most of them would rather shoot some hoops, play baseball, or watch whatever game is on TV.

“Well gents,” said Coach, “I think we’re off to a good start, but it is time to go to the Cafeteria. I also see that everybody brought a cap. That was on the list of recommended items for camp, because we have a lot of trees around here and ticks can easily land on your hair. Please help each other to always remember to wear your cap.” The Cabin Brothers grabbed their caps and headed for the door. The guys at the front of the group waited outside for the rest to leave the cabin. Coach smiled and said, “They did that without me even suggesting it. This is a good group of guys!” Allen saw another good opportunity and shouted, “High five!” The group circled up with hands in the air. Allen shouted, “One, two, three!” On the silent count of four our hands hit with a clap so loud that another cabin group walking by stopped and looked at us like they had been startled. Both groups laughed, and we headed toward the Cafeteria.

The two cabin groups stayed pretty much within their groups, but a few conversations started up between guys of the different cabins. Part way toward the Chow Hall, a girls cabin group left their cabin and were walking rather near to us. I saw the same girl that I had said “Hi” to in the check-in line. I started walking in her direction, but Loren pushed me out of the way. “You’re too small to like a girl like her,” he said. I shrugged it off, but I noticed that Coach had watched the entire exchange. Coach put his finger up to his lips to shush me and smiled. I read Coaches lips as he silently said, “Watch this.”

Loren walked up beside that gorgeous girl and tried to talk to her. I couldn’t hear what they were saying. The conversation lasted about 20 seconds, then Loren came back to our group with a red face that showed definite displeasure. Coach appeared to be fighting a smile as he winked at me.

We got to the Chow Hall, and each Cabin Counselor directed their group to a specific table. The tables were already set for supper. We sat down in random chairs at our assigned table, and I noticed that the gorgeous girl was nearly back-to-back with me. I smiled at her as we were finding our chairs. Her expression was indifferent.

The Camp Director introduced himself as Henry Salinas. “Just call me Henry,” he said. He told us that we didn’t have much day left after we had our evening meal, so we would be free to lounge in the recreation room. He did have three announcements, though. “After supper, I need all counselors from Cabins 1-9 to meet with me for a few minutes while the other counselors keep an eye on all campers. When those counselors come out of the meeting, I need to meet with all counselors from Cabins 10-18 while the other counselors keep an eye on all campers. These meetings will be quite short, and then the Counselors can gather their troops and go back to the cabin at will. Announcement #2! Does any cabin choose to volunteer to clean down the tables tonight and put all dirty dishes in the proper area in the kitchen?”

Nobody volunteered, and several seconds went by. Again, Henry said, "Any volunteers." With that I raised my hand. My Cabin Brothers didn't seem very happy about that at first, until Coach whispered to the group, "This could work in our favor. I'll explain later." With that, the rest of my Brothers all raised their hands. Henry applauded us, and the rest of the room gave half-hearted applause as well. Coach then whispered, "That explanation can wait until we get back to the cabin." We all nodded in understanding.

"Announcement #3," Henry shouted. "For tonight, Cabin #1 can walk through the line to get their food first. Cabin #2 can follow them, and so forth." Of course, Cabin #18 started to moan at that, as did some of the other cabins with high numbers. "However," Henry added loudly with a wide smile, "Do you see those numbers above the IN door to the kitchen? They'll be different for every meal. They will indicate whose turn it is for the following meal!" We hadn't noticed yet, but the numbers above that door did currently indicate #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7, #8, #9, #10, #11, #12, #13, #14, #15, #16, #17, #18. "With that said," Henry announced, "Cabin #1 may proceed to the serving line." "Mr. Henry!" a camper shouted. Henry put his hand up to motion for Cabin #1 to wait. "Yes," he replied. "What order will we have for breakfast tomorrow morning?" the camper asked. "That is the topic of our short meetings that the counselors and I will have after supper," he answered. And half the room responded with, "Aaaaaaaaah!"

We are in Cabin #5, so we started talking about how long it would take to get our food. We then noticed how quickly the line was moving. It was almost our turn to go to the line already. In no time at all it was our turn. I put myself last in line, and Coach followed me. I then noticed that "Miss Gorgeous" was first in line for Cabin #6, so I winked at Coach and gave him a nod with my head. He took the hint and we switched places. I turned and said, "Hi." This time she actually answered with, "Hi." "Is this your first time at Summer Camp?" I asked. She said, "Yes." "Mine too," I said. Not another word was said. We got our meals and followed other campers to our tables. I smiled at her before she sat, and she actually smiled back. That's when I noticed Loren scowling at me. Coach appeared to be biting his lip to avoid laughing. I'm not sure if anybody else noticed the exchange.

The meal was decent. It was nowhere near Mom's cooking, but it was okay. Coach asked that we all stay at the table until our Cabin Brothers had all finished. That seemed like a small request, and nobody took very long to finish. Coach gave the thumbs up sign, and we started clearing tables as people finished their meals. Allen suggested that we all get napkins and place them over our left forearms, pretending to be high-class waiters. With a chuckle, we all followed his lead. Mr. Henry and some counselors saw what we were doing, and they got a good laugh. Some of us even lifted our noses into the air and pretended to be snooty high-class snobs.

The dishes were cleared and moved to the kitchen in minutes. The cooks had big plastic tubs to make the job easier, and they showed us the proper place to put them in the

kitchen. They had buckets of water and small towels ready for us to wipe down the tables. They even had squeegees and dry towels to finish the job nicely. "The twelve of you are moving like a finely tuned Ferrari," said Coach. We all silently gave him the thumbs up. A few minutes later he informed us that we were done and could proceed to the Recreation Room until he called us to give further instructions. I stayed behind and asked Coach when I could get a boat to go fishing. "It's got to be at least 2 in a boat, and not until tomorrow," he said. My one-word answer was, "Cool."

As I walked away toward the Recreation Room, Coach asked me, "What's that in your fanny pack?" "A book," I said. "Wouldn't you rather hang out with some friends," he asked. "Maybe," I answered. He smiled. He always smiles!

I walked into the Rec Room, and saw Foosball tables, Air Hockey tables, Pool tables, Ping Pong tables, and some other games that I couldn't identify. There were people everywhere, and they were all laughing and having a good time. The room was quite large, but it was still rather full of human activity. I was really interested in doing some reading, and my decision was finalized when I noticed that the only chair available in the entire room was a soft, cozy armchair with "Miss Gorgeous" reading in the adjacent chair.

I headed straight for that chair and sat down with book in hand. She looked up for a second, and she actually smiled briefly. I nodded and smiled, but not a word was spoken. Bill hollered at me from across the room, but Tim slapped his shoulder and whispered to him. Bill smiled and turned away.

About 15 minutes later, Miss Gorgeous asked me, "What are you reading?" I held the book up to show her and she nearly shouted, "I just read that book a few weeks ago! I loved it!" I followed her lead with, "What are you reading?" She held up her book and I responded with, "No way! I just finished that book 2 days ago! It was awesome! I can't believe that we both like Science Fiction!" That short conversation didn't last very long, but it did open the gate for many conversations to come in the next week. I did get to tell her my name, and I found out that she is Jill Meyer.

I got in nearly 1 full hour of good reading time. Without my noticing, the Cabin Counselors had all completed their short meetings with Mr. Henry. Coach and the other counselors came into the Rec Room and got their campers. In a semi-orderly fashion, over 200 campers headed to the cabins with counselors telling them that we would have a short meeting at the cabin.

Inside the cabin, Coach shouted, "Gentlemen! Will this meeting please come to order." We all chuckled at his changing mannerisms, and each grabbed a chair. "I'll make this quick," he started. "I have the schedule for which meals each cabin will set tables before and clean up after. And, as I stated earlier, our following Jack's lead to volunteer tonight did indeed serve in our favor. We will serve for fewer times than any other cabin."

A bunch of happy shouts erupted, and Coach let them go for a while. Then Coach continued, "There are 18 cabins in this camp, and there will be a total of 18 meals served this week. We just did our duty, and we don't have to do it again!" The shouts of joy erupted again, but Coach raised his hand and the guys got quiet. "There's more," he said, "This isn't my first rodeo! The other cabins must set tables before the meals *and* clean up afterwards for every other meal this week. Maybe we should listen to Jack more often!" With that I got several slaps on the shoulder, thumbs-ups, etc. Coach smiled at me and winked. I like this guy more and more with time.

One of my Cabin Brothers raised his hand, and Coach called on Jonathan. "How many times have you been a counselor," he asked. "This is my fourth and last time. I've worked at this camp all summer following my Freshman year of college, my Sophomore year of college, my Junior year of college, and I just finished my Senior year of college a couple weeks ago. I will be starting a new job within my degree area in early September." Jonathan followed up with, "What was your degree in?" "My major was designed to prepare me for the CPA exam," said Coach. What's that, several people asked. Coach answered with, "CPA is short for Certified Public Accountant." "They make lots of money, don't they?" asked Bill. "Not bad," Coach answered. "Have you passed your CPA exam?" asked Alen. Coach gave a proud, "You bet your sweet bippy I passed it!" The whole cabin roared with shouts of congratulations.

During that conversation amongst the Cabin Brothers, Loren calmly walked over to me and whispered, "Leave that girl alone. You're too small to like her anyway." I replied with, "Don't worry about it. We've hardly even talked." He then shoved me and added, "I'm serious! Leave her alone!" I gave him a stare that expressed the fact that I wasn't afraid of him. Coach had obviously been watching Loren closely, because he had already gotten to his feet and had his hands separating Loren and me. Within seconds, several guys were standing behind Loren and several guys were standing behind me. They all looked like they were ready for action.

About 2 seconds later, Coach came up with a brilliant idea. "Since you guys look to be ready to demonstrate large amounts of testosterone, let's turn this into a real tournament," he said. Twelve faces expressed bewilderment, so Coach continued. "Let's have an arm-wrestling tournament. You guys have already divided yourselves into two groups of 6. You 5 standing behind Loren can go organize your challenges and present a champion from your group. You 5 standing behind Jack can go organize your challenges and present a champion from your group. We'll then have a final match of the 2 champions. If anyone wants to challenge our 2nd place winner, those challenges can happen tomorrow. Capeesh?" Everyone agreed.

Bill organized the competition on one end of the cabin, and Allen organized the competition on the other end. Some of the matches were quite close, and some were not so

close. It took about 15 minutes for Bill to announce that I was the champion from our end of the cabin. About 2 minutes later, Allen announced that Loren was the champion from the other end. Loren spoke up with, "How did Jack win?" My response was, "I live on a farm." "So what?" he asked. "I build fences, roll big rocks out of fields, scoop and pitch every kind of animal manure you can imagine, or throw bales of hay nearly all day every day. I might be stronger than I look," I answered.

Coach then asked us if we needed a few minutes before the final match. I said, "I'm ready when he is." "Bring it, little man," was his answer. Coach stepped in and suggested that we make this match more official. "I'll hold the hands in the start position. When I release them, the match has begun," said Coach.

As expected, 5 guys stood behind Loren and 5 guys stood behind me. Coach held our hands in the start position and gave a good loud "Go" when he released the hands. I gave Loren a bit of a surprise at the beginning because I've done arm-wrestling a few times before. I gave a good loud yell at the start and threw everything I had into popping his wrist backwards. The spectators made lots of noise, but I focused on my task at hand. This match lasted much longer than any of the earlier matches. We both huffed and puffed, and he gained some distance on me, and I gained some distance back. He got his wrist back into neutral position after a few minutes, and I was starting to lose some steam. Loren's size eventually wore me down, and I lost the match, but I did give him more of a run for it than he had expected. We were both sweating immensely at the end. I offered him my hand and congratulated him. He smiled and shook my hand. Loren and I never did become the best of friends, but he didn't try to push me around anymore.

"Gentlemen," Coach started, "It's time to get ready for bed." We all got our toiletry bags and headed for the common bathrooms. We walked over as a group. Several showers and sinks were available, so we got back to the cabin within short order. Just as the last of our Cabin Brothers got back to the cabin, Allen made a suggestion to the group. "Coach," Allen said, "Maybe we could turn this into a camp-wide Arm-wrestling Tournament." "That sounds like a good plan," Coach said, "How does that sound to the rest of you?" A loud response sounded almost unanimous. Loren and I each gave a thumbs-up and a mile. Coach continued, "I'll suggest it to Mr. Henry and the other counselors tomorrow. Meanwhile, who wants to challenge Jack tomorrow for second place in Cabin #5?" Nobody said a word. "Going once," said Coach. "Going twice," said Coach. He looked around for a few more seconds. "Sold," he said, "I guess Loren and Jack will be our representatives at the Camp Wrist-wrestling Tournament, if they go for the idea."

Loren and I looked at each other and smiled. We exchanged thumbs-up signs, and never did say a lot to each other after that. Coach smiled at us both and gave us each a thumbs-up.

“Lights out in 10 minutes,” said Coach. A few conversations filled those minutes, but it was obvious that the first day at camp had tired most of us out. Bill, Tim, and I chatted for a few minutes. Perhaps we were the first ones asleep.