A Day of Outing for 30 Blind Girls at the Holiday Camp Built by the 108-Man Hong Kong Rotary Club in 1951

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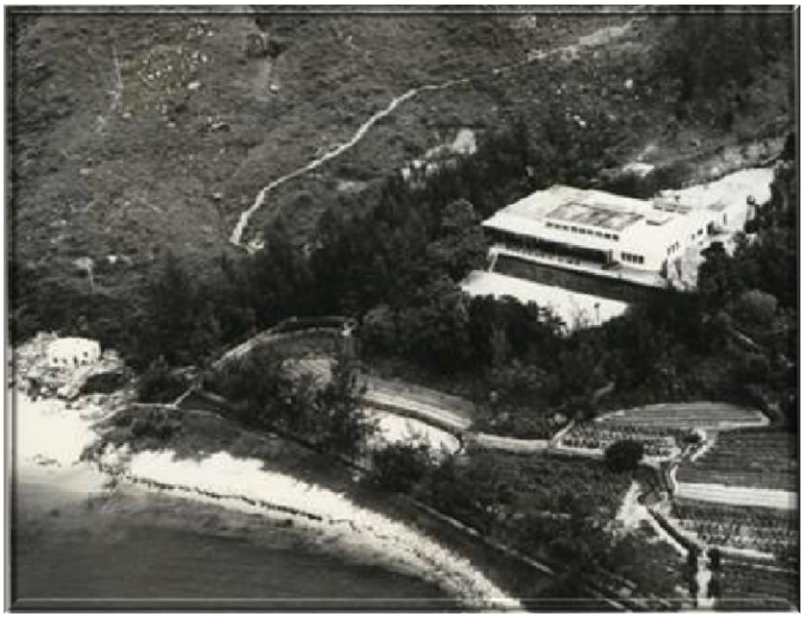
In 1951, seeing the post-war refugee stream in the British Crown Colony Hong Kong, and striving to help assimilate them, the Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社) took a special interest in the children---huddled in rude homes and rarely eating all they want---and looked for ways to help them. The way soon appeared. Raising some money of HK$200,000 (roughly rated US$34,000 at the time: US$1 = 16 bottles of Coca Cola), the Club acquired some land at Silvermine Bay (銀礦灣) on Lantau Island (大嶼山) (now the southeast side over the hill of The Hong Kong International Airport), and on it built holiday camp as gift for the Hong Kong children---there in the dining hall, play rooms, and dormitories, and on sunny sea-fresh playgrounds, on the beach and in the water. Many donors have given money for equipment, and each year the Hong Kong Government subvented HK$5,000 (US$850) to help partial running costs. The daily operation of the Camp was run by the Hong Kong Conference of Youth Organizations (香港青年協會), according to the Government Information Service.

Each year several thousand of Hong Kong's poorest children had a holiday by the sea. The children, most of whom lived in squatter huts or in Government resettlement estates, went to Silvermine Bay, a mile-long crescent of silvery beach on Lantau Island, by one hour voyage of Yaumati Ferry (油蔴地小輪) from the Hong Kong Island. Most of them have never had a holiday before and the week at Silvermine Bay proved to be an experience they never forget. The cost was very little---only HK$12 (US$2.25). Many families could not afford even this amount, however, and the children were paid by the charity organizations where they belonged to, or individuals who wanted to give them a treat.

During their vacation in the Camp, children took part in organized activities, such as swimming, hiking, and visit to places of interest conducted by professional recreation instructors. In their free time, they may have reading in the library or games of their own. Highlight of the one-week-camping would be the camp-fires night with songs, self-organized dramatic performances, dancing and talent shows. Children were requested to observe certain disciplines in the Camp. Personal care, such as clothes laundry was strictly self-hands-on. The Camp would provide three meals per day plus light refreshment before sleeping. Most of the children put on about three pounds in weight while leaving the Camp. Thousands of youngsters gained healthy pounds and a new belief in tomorrow.

On the 3rd anniversary of the Camp in 1955, the 108-man Hong Kong Rotary Club invited 30 blind girls for an outing and spent a holiday in this Camp. The 4-page reprint from《The Rotarian》magazine May 1956 tells the story. After this project was reported, the interest in aiding the Chinese refugees was drawn to the Seattle Rotary Club in Washington, U.S.A. Very soon in the next spring of 1957, the Club contributed US$1,500, which had made possible the shipment of 33,000 lb (15,000 kg) of powdered-milk, rice, and sugar. The shipment was made through CARE (Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe) (國際關懷協會), since that was the only method whereby Rotary clubs could send food to The Rotary Club of Hong Kong for distribution to their special aid projects.

The Camp had a large-scale reconstruction work in 2011. In 2014, the Hong Kong Jockey Club funded a major refurbishment. Currently the Camp is run by the Hong Kong Playground Association and is named as HKPA Jockey Club Silvermine Bay Camp (香港遊樂場協會賽馬會銀礦灣營).

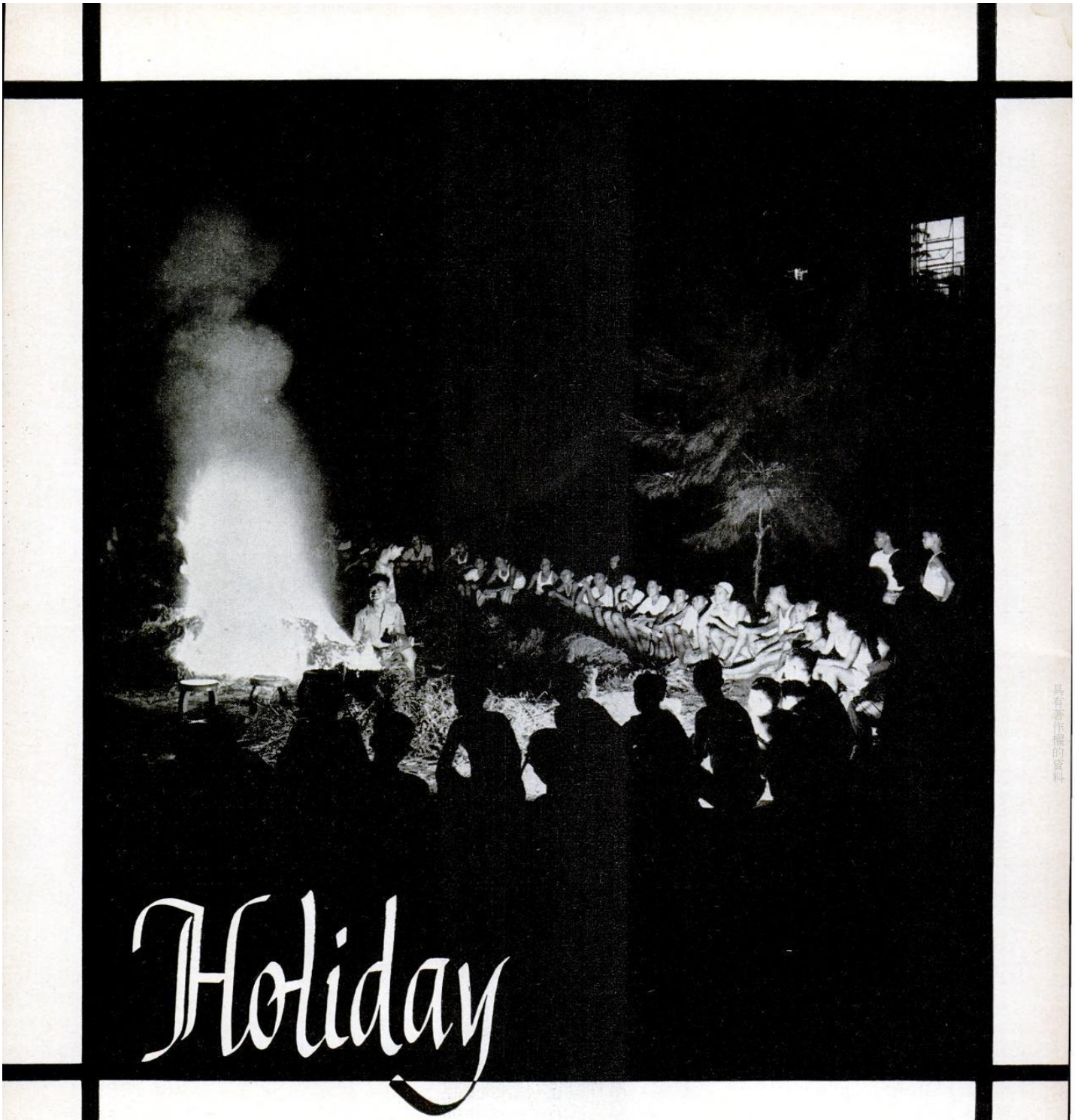


Aerial view in 1962 of the entire Camp complex which was opened in 1952, set on a pine-shaded hillock overlooking the Silvermine Bay beach on Lantau Island. (Photo courtesy: The National Archives, United Kingdom)

Campers in the dormitory

Campers enjoy their leisure games

Scheduled Yaumati Ferry to Hong Kong Island – sailing time one hour



Holiday at Silvermine Bay

Located on sloping ground that rises steeply in the background, Holiday Camp lies off the Hong Kong mainland. Its terrain is fine for hiking, gardening, exploring, and camp fires at night.

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In this mountain setting of lofty peaks and green valleys, campers find the air invigorating, the view one to remember. The camp site is seen at the right, with Silvermine Bay before it.

On the third anniversary of the camp, Rotarians of Hong Kong invited 30 blind girls for an outing. In center photo they are being escorted across a bridge by camp aides assigned to them.

As boys do the world around, the lads in bottom photo are reacting typically to outdoor play and fresh air: they eat and eat. At the camp a boy often eats four bowls of rice at a meal.

THE British Crown Colony of Hong Kong is small, beautiful, busy—and crowded. Up to 1947 only 1½ million people lived on its 391 square miles of brown hills and white-edged bays. Now 2½ million live there, the added million having poured in mainly from old China as its freedoms fell.

Seeing the refugees stream in and striving to help assimilate them, the 108 Rotarians of Hong Kong took a special interest in the children—huddled in rude homes and rarely eating all they want—and looked for ways to help them. The way soon appeared. Raising some HK-$200,000 (that's about $34,000 U. S.) they acquired some land at Silvermine Bay on Lantau Island one hour from the city by ferry and on it built Holiday Camp for Hong Kong's children. There each Summer in fine dining rooms, play rooms, and dormitories, and on sunny sea-fresh playgrounds hundreds of youngsters gain healthy pounds and a new belief in tomorrow. The pictures tell the story.

Interesting, isn't it, that something a young lawyer started in Chicago, Illinois, 51 years ago should have this effect so far from there in time and space?

Dancing in bare feet to a tune played by a camp counsellor on a mouth organ, these girls hold hands and twirl—and laugh for the joy of it. Holiday Camp has sessions for girls, others for boys. Often campers come from institutions, such as orphanages and schools.

Photos: (pp. 6-9) Three Lions

Keeping young hands busy doing rewarding work is part of the camp's program. Here two girls help a worker select pretty sea shells for handicraft classes.

After play time comes lunch time, and all gather in the canopied dining room for ample quantities of nourishing food. If a little miss wants a second helping, she can have it.

Hong Kong Rotarians spend a day at the camp as this group picture records. In rear (second right) is Father P. J. Howatson, who devotes much time to the management of Holiday Camp

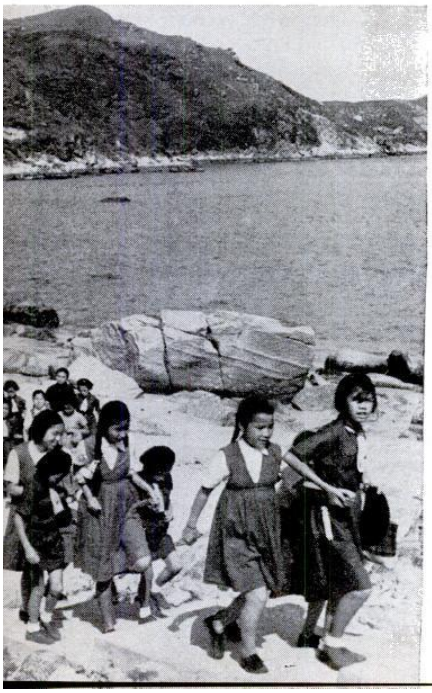
THE boys and girls shown on these pages are living in a world far different from the one they know on the other side of Silvermine Bay. This world is one of outdoor play, good food, fresh air, cleanliness, and daily chores designed to make better citizens of all who come to Holiday Camp. Some stay for only a day, some for a week or more, but no matter how short or how long their visit, they all leave a little happier, a little healthier for having had an outing at this mountainside spot. The men who make it all possible—some citizens of Hong Kong who wear in their lapels the emblem you wear in yours—keep this big enterprise going for many reasons. But they all add up to one that Rotarians everywhere have for taking on the jobs they do: service to others.

These girls are walking in pairs because some are blind, and the others are serving as their escorts. The sightless campers did everything, including a swim in Silvermine Bay—with their aides never leaving their

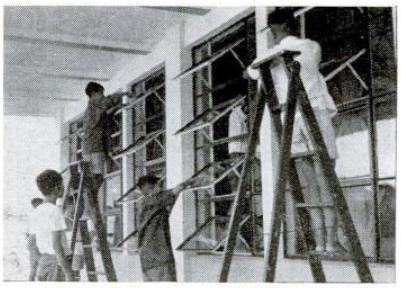
fter crossing the bay on Rotarian Lee Shu Fan's uiser, the Rotary group is met on shore by a elcoming party of campers. These visits make e campers happy, and enable Rotarians to keep formed about the camp's program and needs.

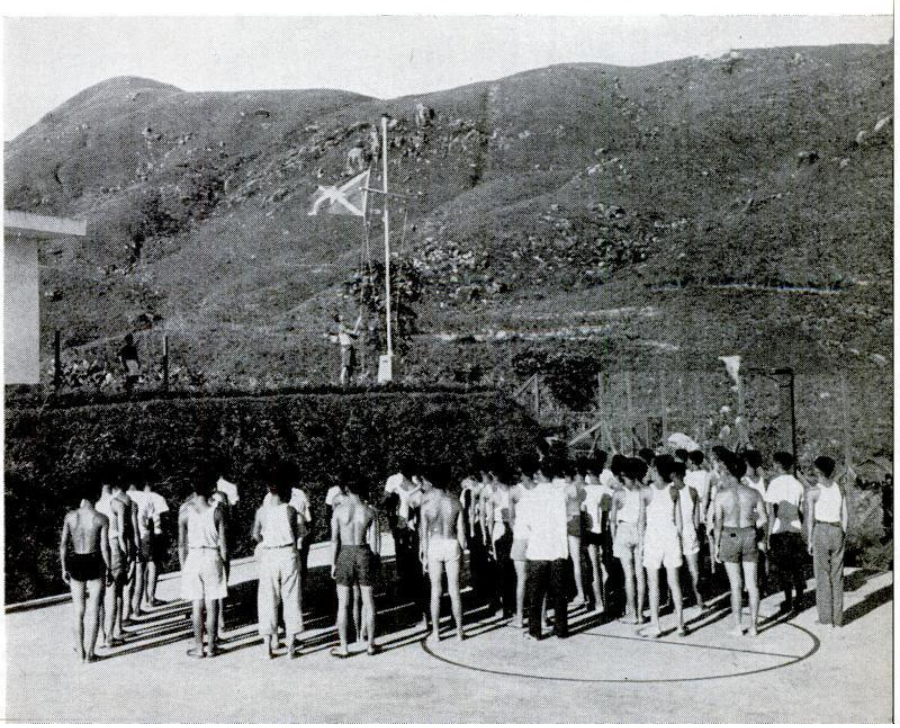
he 108-man Rotary Club of Hong Kong was rganized in 1930. Here J. G. O'Donnell, Club resident, leads members in a toast. The Club's iembership represents 17 different nationalities.

sides. During one six-month period, more than 1,200 boys and girls stayed at this sea-side resort for varying lengths of time. Advance arrangements are made with homes, orphanages, and schools for visits to Holiday.



Healthy bodies are important, but so are healthy minds. So, Holiday Camp sets aside periods for counselling with adult leaders. Here a counsellor (back to camera at right) meets with "his boys" to discuss good citizenship, good scholarship, and other matters.



It's not all play and no work at Silvermine Bay, as these busy window washers show. Campers must help keep the camp clean. . . . (Left) Weights are watched—and usually they go up after a few days.

A day begins in this valley camp with a flag-raising ceremony attended by campers and counsellors, all standing at attention. At sundown the flag is lowered and lights soon go out.