

Lake Storey Campground: tourism at its best

July 8, 2004

Monday morning after the 4th of July, I sauntered up to the office window of the Lake Storey Campground and introduced myself — as a neighbor who lives across the street. With a friendly smile Sandy Simpson called to a man who was just leaving, “Don, would you wait just a minute?” Mrs. Simpson was afraid I had a complaint, which I did not. Far from it. My husband and I enjoy watching campers come and go and like to see the campground full, as it was this last weekend and most of the summer.

What I wanted to do, I told her, was take some photos and find out how many campers had been there over the weekend and where they were from for a newspaper story. At that point city employee Don Miles, who supervises campground managers Paul and Sandy Simpson, left.

The Simpsons are from Elmwood and arrived in early April to manage the campground after the former managers had been there for 18 years. That’s a hard act to follow. I’ve always been impressed with how well the campground is run and we’ve never noticed any noise or problems there. This is certainly a credit to the former managers and the Simpsons.

Mrs. Simpson estimates that Fourth of July weekend there were easily 100 tents on the campground and the slots for campers and motor homes were full. There were 62 reservations for those locations, so with 3 or 4 to a family, there could have been 600 or so campers. It’s amusing to see them all piled up together, considering that camping is often viewed as a way to “get away from it all.” At the least the campers are cozying up to a new group of people, and strangers at that.

Mrs. Simpson says some campers like to

meet new people and this is certainly the way to do it. When we talk about tourism, we don’t think about our city recreational facilities, which are superb. There were campers from Iowa, Florida, Virginia, Wisconsin, Colorado and many parts of Illinois. Not only do they have access to fishing, boating, swimming and hiking at Lake Storey, the water park and indoor tennis facilities are within walking distance. Golfing is right across Route 150. Campers get lists of local events occurring while they are here and in fact, we can count on the campground filling up during Railroad Days, Balloon Races, the Cardboard Boat Regatta, the Stearman Fly-in and other summer local and area festivals.

As a new resident of the area across from

South Lake Storey, I appreciate the beauty of the Lake and surroundings. The foliage in the fall is spectacular. Even though I don’t camp at this point in my life, I vicariously enjoy the campers’ family reunions and activities.

And you know what else I enjoy? The occasional whiff of the smoke of campfires. There’s nothing quite like it. Some day I may startle a group around a campfire when I arrive with my hot dog on a stick, ready for roasting.

Caroline Porter is a freelance writer from Galesburg who can be reached at cporter@galesburg.net. Other columns are online at www.thezephyr.com.



Tents at the Lake Storey Campground this weekend