

Camp Reeta

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Camp Reeta:

This page discusses Camp Reeta.

Dina:

I attended an End-of-Summer retreat for several years in a row. Josh and Adam Culton, Dustin Bergey, Jose Ormeño, and Jeremy Garber also went, some years.

It was called Camp Reeta. Sessions ran from the Thursday before Labor Day, or possibly earlier, to Labor Day.

The retreat was run and sponsored by Cheltenham Baptist Church but they had to abide by Kosher rules in the kitchen as a precondition for using the Jewish retreat center.

Camp Reeta featured stained mattresses, screen windows with loose shutters, and “required” Contemporary Christian Music and sermons. The music was adult contemporary and gospel styles.

Naturally, my group of friends skipped the music performances and either played pool or went to restricted areas of the camp featuring a rec center with broken glass everywhere next to a defunct mini water park.

When I was about 13, I remember that there was a older girl, Dina Mattner, at the camp. Dina was about 14 and in foster care. She had a foster sister named Naomi who was sometimes there at the same time.

Dina was carrying around a condom and playing with it. She asked her friends and us for advice on how to give it to a boy her age in a way that would request sex respectfully on his birthday that weekend.

Dina and her friends taught Dustin, me, and other friends there “the choking game” (inducing headlock-related unconsciousness). I later taught more friends from school the game. After High School, I learned that someone from another school had died from it.

The next year, I was at the camp with Josh and Dustin, and we asked Naomi where Dina was. Naomi said Dina had often left the house through the bedroom window at night and had eventually got pregnant. She was removed from the home and sent to an all-girls school in Florida.

Charlie:

I knew a boy named Charlie at Camp Reeta from ages 11 to 13. I think that he was Polish.

If Charlie sees this story somehow, I want him to know I'm deeply sorry for the way that I treated him. I provoked Dustin Bergey, Josh Culton, and others to bully him in more than one year.

Charlie was always smiling. I thought that everyone's life was horrible like mine was and that anyone who was always smiling must be insincere. This worked against me making friends with emotionally healthy people in High School and, to some extent, throughout the 2000s.

The year at Camp Reeta when I was 13, I said to my friends, “Let's go pretend to be friends with Charlie and then run away and ditch him.”

I'd done similar things like this to Charlie by myself at ages 11 and 12. The pattern was that I'd say something mean and run away.

It took me a while to convince them to be mean to such a nice boy. I told them he was dumb and always smiling until the slightest thing made him cry. They agreed. So, we ditched him and he cried.

We befriended him later in the session. However, I don't think that I ever really apologized or admitted doing something wrong. Charlie, I'm sorry.

Camp Reeta circa 1992



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