

The Chief Counselor Waltz

[c] 1989 by Howard L. Kaplan



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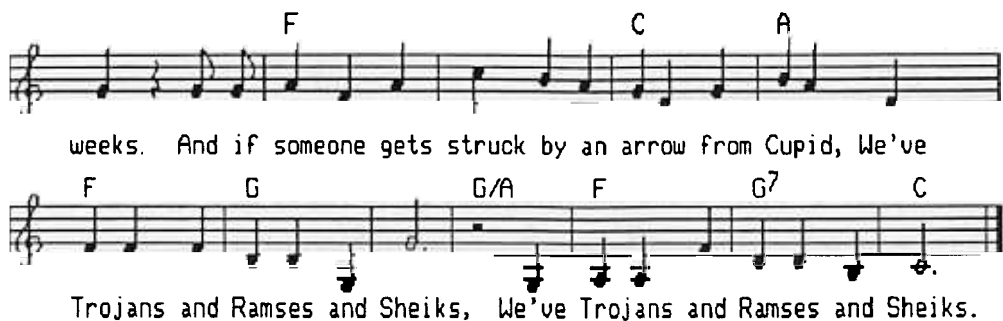
don't keep our clothes on, We've gauze and we've Band-Aids to

keep dirt a- way. If hot July sun isn't stopped by the ozone, We've

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someone's been stupid, We've ointment to hasten the healing by

.....Chief Counselor Waltz



I was a counselor at camp this past year,
Up where the air and the water are clean.
Waiting for five dozen kids to appear,
Half of each sex, ages twelve to fifteen.
It was a place where the rules were quite few --
When to do dishes, when not to make noise.
Kids of that age were a problem, we knew --
Not yet adults, not still girls, not still boys.
John, the chief counselor, said "Give them their freedom
Kids bounce back well from a fall or a hit.
We've got repair supplies if we should need 'em",
And opened the lid of the camp first aid kit.

If bodies get scraped where we don't have our clothes on,
We've gauze and we've Band-Aids to keep dirt away.
If hot July sun isn't stopped by the ozone,
We've bottles of lotion with PABA.
If fingers get burned because someone's been stupid,
We've ointment to hasten the healing by weeks.
And if someone gets struck by an arrow from Cupid,
We've Trojans and Ramses and Sheiks,
We've Trojans and Ramses and Sheiks.

It was a metaphor we could support:
Falling in love is like climbing on rocks.
Both have the dangers of any hard sport,
Both made more safe by a well-supplied box.
Someone asked how we'd be making it known --
Yelling "Free condoms!" is just a bit blunt.
John said, "We'll let them find out on their own,
During a game like a scavenger hunt:
Count all the buckets we use to stop fires.
Find where we toss things that biodegrade.
Name our five uses for old, worn-out tires.
List what we keep in the box marked 'First aid'."

I spend my time in the city these days,
Down where the air and the water both stink.
"Hunting for Love" is what everyone plays,
Getting good exercise lifting a drink.
Sometimes we satisfy hunger for skin
Though there are questions we haven't asked yet.
We may be playing the fools who rush in;
We do not need to play rush in roulette.
When I've a dinner guest I'd like to linger
And share the next sunrise at seven o'clock,
It's not too painful to nick my third finger
And yell for a Band-Aid to show off my stock.

The events recounted in "The Chief Counselor Waltz" occurred, more or less as depicted in the song, in Ontario in the summer of 1988. The composer was not present, but he had been at the same camp grounds on previous occasions and heard this story from usually reliable sources. The song is now part of a short program called "Seven Songs of Safe Sex and Selected Supplementary Subjects" that was created for AIDS Education Week in October 1989. You can write to Howard at 172 Howland Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5R 3B6.

The old piano played a big part in their lives. No matter how hard times were they could always forget their trials when they gathered round it to sing three and four part harmony. Often it was loaded up and hauled to the school for a Sunday service or a community concert. Many and memorable were the concerts and plays put on by homesteaders who had brought with them remarkable talents.

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