

In the process of growing up and developing into manhood, a boy is faced with many kinds and types of tests. Some of the tests which he inevitably must face include tests of social adaptation, to check on his ability to live with and cooperate with others; test of physical endurance, to measure his natural growth and body development; tests of mental skills, to discover the amount of practical knowledge that he has learned throughout his daily life; and spiritual tests, which measure the extent of his relationship with Jesus Christ.

Tonight, you young men who are gathered here are about to embark on yet another kind of test. You are all candidates for the rank of Little Chief in the Ridgecrest Nation, and soon you will start on the second phase of the Little Chief Test.

I said the second phase because you have already passed the first, most important, and the hardest phase of the test. For the hardest, most difficult part of becoming a Little Chief is being chosen by your own tribal staff as well as being approved by the Camp's Director and the Little Chiefs themselves. You young men have all been carefully discussed and evaluated in meetings of these groups, and you have been found by them, on the basis of Leadership, Attitude, Sense of Responsibility, Cooperation, Skill Progress, and Spiritual Growth, to stand out with superiority over all the other campers here at Camp Ridgecrest. We have all recognized your abilities, and have placed our faith in you.

The second phase of the Little Chief test will consist of several very rigorous sections, all of which you must successfully complete in order for you to pass the test as a whole and change your status from that of candidate to that of Little Chief. It will be a physical test of skill, endurance, and self-discipline.

The first task will test your ability to do tedious work under pressure. You will be given two matches, and with these matches you must build a fire using only wood. No paper, leaves, straw, or any other artificial material may be used in building your fire. You will be allowed one hour to gather wood and construct your fire. At the end of the hour, you must strike your first match. If your fire does not light with the first match, you will be given an additional half-hour to gather more wood and reconstruct your fire. When the half-hour is up, the second match must be lit. If your fire fails to light with the second match, you have failed the Little Chief Test. If you light your fire with the first match and it burns for less than one-half hour, you may use the second match. If the fire burns for more than 30 minutes, however, and goes out, you have failed the Little Chief test and must return to your cabin.

You must continue to feed your fire and keep it burning all night. If at any point during the fire section of the test there is not a visible flame, you have failed the Little Chief Test. At 6:00 A.M. you will be instructed to extinguish your fire. Having successfully completed the fire section, you will proceed to the endurance part of

the test.

You will be taken to the base of Mt. Kitazuma at approximately 6:30 A.M. and you will be instructed to run up the mountain at the pace which a Little Chief will set. You will all run in single file between the Little Chief in the lead and the Little Chief in the rear. Passing is permitted as a means of overtaking a slowing candidate but is not encouraged as an action merely for the sake of being in front of another candidate. The breaking of the pace, either by slowing down, walking around corners, or stopping, will constitute a failure of the test. The taking of any shortcuts along the path is prohibited.

If you fall, you must get up immediately and begin running again to remain in competition.

The run up Mt. Kitazuma is designed to test both your physical and mental endurance and fortitude. It is a difficult run and would be beyond the capabilities of most ordinary campers. You Little Chief candidates, however, are not ordinary campers, and your stamina should prove sufficient.

Upon reaching the top of Mt. Kitazuma, you will be led in a devotion which will give you the opportunity to focus your thoughts on the One who will continue to be with you in your journey. Then, you will walk back down the mountain and be taken back to camp, arriving at approximately 7:30 A.M. You will then have an opportunity to take a shower and change clothes before breakfast.

After breakfast, you will be instructed to write a 1500 word essay entitled "What Camp Ridgecrest Means To Me." The theme, which must be turned into a Little Chief before lunch, will measure your ability to express your true relationship with Camp Ridgecrest. It will offer you an opportunity to put your thoughts and memories of many weeks of camping experiences into words. Your essay will be judged by the Little Chiefs and by the Camp's Director. It must be coherent, relative to the subject, and 1500 words in length.

After lunch, you will do strenuous work—hard physical labor—related to preparation for Tribal Fires, Council Ring, and clean-up. You do this work to prepare yourself for the work you will do every week on Council Ring when you are a Little Chief. Your work may consist of carrying logs, pumping kerosene, clearing the general site of Council Ring, making smudge pots and torches, building Tribal Fires, clearing Catawba Trail, building the Council Ring Fire, and clean-up. Your physical work will continue up until the time for retreat, at which time the testing period will officially be ended by the Camp Director.

For the sake of clarity, one of the hardest parts of the Little Chief Test has been left unexplained until now—the silence ban. Upon the conclusion of this meeting, as you step off the porch of Roger’s Retreat, you will be placed under a silence ban. The silence ban will remain in effect throughout the entire Little Chief testing period. It will be lifted approximately 18 hours from now at retreat by the Camp Director. If you make any audible sound during any portion of the Little Chief Test, you will fail the test. You may write notes of communication only to Little Chiefs and to members of the central staff. You will receive no special treatment during meals. You may not have objects protruding from your mouth. The silence ban is a very important part of the Little Chief test, for it tests your own self-control.

Because of the very nature of the Little Chief Test and its candidates, there will be times when you will be without the surveillance of a Little Chief. Therefore, you will constantly be on your honor to inform the Little Chiefs if you have failed any part of the test.

Now that you know what will be expected of you during the Little Chief testing period while you are a candidate, it is fitting that you should know exactly what a Little Chief is and what is expected of a Little Chief after he has passed the test. A Little Chief is a person who is always willing to do a little bit of extra work without ever receiving any credit for it. He is one who volunteers for duties that are not particularly desirable, such as cleaning out the Egypt or putting in his pack two tarps that someone else has left behind on a campout.

A Little Chief is the one who, when the rest of the tribe is griping about the rain on a hike or campout, begins singing “Further Along” or “Mountain Dew.” He is the one who accentuates the positive and eliminates the negative. If the hot chocolate on a campout is thin and watery, a Little Chief comments on how good it is to have something hot to drink.

A Little Chief is one who walks around camp with a cheerful outlook and a smile for those he passes. He knows how to hold his temper. He is a person who, even though his tribe has played dodgeball for eight Organized Activities in a row, still plays with enthusiasm and spirit.

A Little Chief knows that there is a time and a place for everything. He knows how not to carry a joke too far, and he knows how to have a good time without making another camper or staffer feel bad. A Little Chief is someone who, after he finishes his work, will help someone else with their work instead of just sitting around. A Little Chief has priorities. He knows that four-square and Frisbee golf have their places, but only after the work is done.

A Little Chief serves as an example to other campers and even to other staffers. For although he doesn't realize it, a Little Chief is constantly being watched, and his actions and attitudes are copied by others. A Little Chief is one who takes his Christian responsibilities seriously. He is not pious or haughty, but strives to fill his life (and as a result, the lives of others) with Christian influence in everyday living. He especially strives to follow Christ's example as the ultimate servant leader.

Above all, however, a Little Chief is a person who realizes that he is a person – he is human. And just like all humans, Little Chiefs make mistakes. But the sign of a Little Chief is that he admits his mistakes, accepts responsibility for them, and works hard not to make the same mistake twice. Little Chief is a state of mind.

To have been tapped out for Little Chief is a genuine honor and is beyond the reach of most campers. This indicates the support that you have received and will continue to receive from the staff.

An immense challenge has been placed before you. Our Camp Motto states, "God, give us hills to climb, and strength to climb them." The challenge of the Little Chief Test is a hill that has been given to you tonight. II Timothy 2:7 reads, "The Spirit that God has given us does not make us afraid; instead, His Spirit fills us with power, love, and self-control." We all pray that you will have the strength, power, and self-control to climb that hill which God has given you and pass all the phases of the Little Chief Test.

Henry David Thoreau once said, ". . . if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavors to live the life that he imagine, he will meet a success . . . ." He also said, "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundation under them."

Go now, and put the foundations under your dreams. Do your very best to become a Little Chief. May God be with you in this, the greatest endeavor a camper at Camp Ridgecrest can attempt. The going will be rough at times. But as you carefully place the wood on your fire, and as you become so tired as you near the top of Mt. Kitazuma that you think you can't run anymore, just think back on the simple, yet mighty and inspiring words of Sir Winston Churchill: "Never give in! Never give in! Never! Never! Never! Never!"

Written by John Cooke (LC Ambitious Gopher) and Steve Little (LC Tiny Turkey) in 1971

Revised by Hal Unwin (LC Determined Deer) in 1982

Revised by Jeff Davis (LC Mocking Raven) in 1990

Revised by Kenny Byrd (LC Confident Crow) in 1991

Restored by Trey Davis (LC Reticent Rabbit) in 2002  
Revised by Chris Maslin (LC Rumbling River) in 2004