It was summer. School was over.
“Bad news,” I said. “There’s nothing to do.”
“Good news, Ronald Morgan,” said Michael.
“We can go to camp.”
“Good,” said Jan.
“Great,” said Rosemary. “Maybe we can win some medals.”
“Yes,” said Michael. “You just have to be good at something.”
I thought for a minute. I wasn’t good at anything. “I don’t think I’ll go,” I said.
But Billy shook his head. “Then you’ll really have nothing to do.”
Billy was right. My father brought up my suitcase, and my mother sewed on name tags. At the last minute, I filled my pockets with my old green sunglasses, the harmonica Aunt Ruth gave me, two plaid Band-Aids just in case, a cracker, and a box of raisins that I found under my socks.
Everyone came to the station, even Lucky.
My father yelled, “Good-bye!” My mother threw a kiss. And Aunt Ruth called, “Don’t forget to write.”
“Uh oh,” I said. “I think I forgot to pack a pencil.”

Inside the bus we sang:
Friends we make
At Camp Echo Lake…

But Rosemary didn’t sing. “I’m going to win a pile of medals,” she was telling the bus driver. “For swimming, and diving, and running and …”

I didn’t sing either. I was trying to think of something I was good at.

And Jan didn’t sing. “I always get sick on the bus,” she said. I reached into my pocket. I gave her some raisins.

“Try these,” I said. “Maybe you’ll feel better.”

“They have dust on them,” she said.

“But they’re really good.”

Then Jimmy yelled, “Hey! We’re here! It’s Camp Echo Lake.”

Ms. Conrad our counselor, was waiting. “Call me Connie,” she said. She walked us back and forth to see the lake, the hill, and the pine trees.

“Look,” said Michael. We slid down to watch a green frog, and then a duck with a bunch of brown feathers, who was quacking at us.

“What a great swimmer,” Michael said. I broke up a cracker for the duck.
“Do you think I’m good at anything?” I asked. Michael raised his shoulders in the air. “Sure,” he said. “I guess so.”

We quacked as we ran to catch up with everyone. Tom was saying, “I think that’s a poisonous bug.”

I looked closer. “I think it’s only a daddy-long-legs.”

On Tuesday, we had bug juice and bananas for snack. Jan had another raisin, too. Then I sat up on Lookout Rock and practiced my song. In out, in out…on the harmonica. It almost sounded like

Friends we make
At Camp Echo Lake…

“Look out, rock!” Michael yelled. “I’m climbing up.” But he slipped.

I dived to catch him, and we rolled down the hill together. It was kind of fun.

And then it was time to swim. Maybe I was good at that. Connie called out, “Ready…set…jump!”

Rosemary was the first one in. “Look, she said. “A little snake.”

And I said, “I think I’ll call him Snakey.”

But Tom yelled, “That snake is after me!”
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I took giant steps across the rocks to pull him out, but I splashed into the water.
“Quack,” said Michael.
“Quack,” I said back.
On Wednesday, Connie said, “It’s time for hide-and-seek.”
Billy counted: “Two four six…” Michael ran one way, Jan ran the other. “Raisins make me go fast,” she called back.
Tom and I crashed through the bushes.
“Hey,” Tom said, “we’re lost in a mosquito nest.” I played my harmonica as loud as I could, so someone could find us.
“You’re IT, Ronald Morgan,” Billy said. But first I pulled out the Band-Aids to cover the bites. One for Tom and one for me.
Thursday night was camp-out. I wore my sweats with the muddy knees. At the campfire, we toasted marshmallows on sticks. We told stories, too.
Michael told about a dog, and Alice told about a GREAT GRAY SCARY –
“Stop!” said Jim, with hands over her ears.
I’m not so good at stories, so instead I played my harmonica, and everyone sang:
Friends we make
At Camp Echo Lake…
On Friday, we made I Missed You cards for our mothers and fathers. I drew one for Lucky, too.

“Nice work,” Connie told everyone.

But Jimmy said, “I really miss my mother. I miss my TV, too.”

“Wait,” I said. I lent him my old green sunglasses so no one would know his eyes were red.

And then it was Saturday. Medal Day. First we drew pictures. Then we stuck tiny stones on the paper with glue.

“Work hard,” said Connie. “We’ll show them to everyone,”

We spent a long time looking for stones. Then we rushed to clean and pack and make lemonade, because people were coming up the drive. My mother and father, Aunt Ruth, and even Lucky in a picnic basket.

“It’s medal time,” said Connie. “Everyone was good at something.”

I shook my head. “Not me.”

Rosemary’s medal was for swimming, and Jan’s was for running. Billy’s was for hide-and-seek, and Michael’s was for telling stories.

At last it was my turn. “Ronald…” said Connie. I held my breath. “You get a medal for…being a good friend.”
“She’s right,” said Michael.
“Yes,” said Jan. And everybody **cheered**.
Then I played the harmonica one last time, while everybody sang:

Friends we make
At Camp Echo Lake…

THINK ABOUT IT

1. How does Ronald show that he is a good friend?
2. How do the things that Ronald takes to camp turn out to be important?
3. Do you think Ronald is happy that he decided to go to camp? Tell why you think as you do.

VOCABULARY

- **medals** – small, flat awards given to people for doing something well
- **harmonica** – a small musical instrument that makes sounds when air is blown or sucked through it
- **counselor** – a person who helps children at a summer camp
- **poisonous** – able to harm or kill by poisoning
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*practiced* – did something over and over in order to do it well

*cheered* – showed that something or someone was good by shouting