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THE GULL ROCK GAZETTE

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A KILCOO WAR STORY

A great many Kilcoo campers took up arms for Canada in World War II. Ian Wallace Johnston was one of them.

Ian was born in 1916 in Lindsay, Ontario, not too far south of Gull Lake. His father ran a dairy business there. During the Great Depression of the 1930's, times were tough. Harry Johnston wanted each of his three children to go to summer camp, but he could only afford to send each of them once. So, for one month each, Ian's older brother Bruce went to Ahmek in Algonquin Park, his little sister Gladys went to Camp Onawaw near Huntsville, and at the age of sixteen, Ian went to Charles Plewman's Kilcoo Camp.

It was the camp's second year. Ian's name is on the roster in the dining hall for 1933. If memory serves, Mr. Plewman used to drum up business in those early days by criss-crossing small-town Ontario. He would show slides of camp life to parents and boys in their homes. It's likely that he stopped in Lindsay and saw Ian's parents there.

Six years after Ian's one summer at camp, Canada declared war on Germany. It's a bit unclear, but it appears that Ian had taken a year or more off school after graduating from Lindsay Collegiate, trying to figure out what to do with his life. But shortly after the war began, he found himself enrolled in Engineering at Queens University. It was from Queens that he enlisted in the Canadian Army in April, 1941, to undergo training at Peterborough and then Camp Petawawa.

Eventually Ian was shipped out to Britain by sea, via Halifax. He had a last visit with his whole family in late October, 1941 ('Home among the grandest people in the world,' according to his Military Diary). Ian had already attended his little sister's wedding while on leave earlier that same month. There was also time to say goodbye by telephone as he travelled on to Halifax. His ship sailed out of Halifax Harbour early on the morning of November 13, 1941 ('Last sight of Canada.')

Two days later in his convoy at sea, Ian wrote, 'This aft. was the loveliest in my life. Marvellous clouds, sparkling water, brisk air, everyone amazingly happy. . . . Ship is steady. This is just one holiday.' On November 22, 1941, he wrote 'Piloted into Liverpool Harbour past three sunken ships, many tethered balloons.' With the port having been bombed the night before, they were unable to disembark for another two days.

Ian then spent almost three years with the Royal Canadian Artillery in England, waiting for the invasion of France. His Military Diary is full of brief but intriguing references to his exploits in the UK, with lots of pub outings (which would have shocked his Temperance parents) and dances at which he seems invariably to have met some 'swell girl'.



Sometime in the late 1990's, while writing his book Maker of Men, John Latimer came across two letters from the camp files. The first was dated July 11, 1942, written by Ian (with the 'Canadian Army Overseas') to Charles Plewman. Mr. Plewman had somehow tracked Ian down in England (along with many other Kilcoo boys), and arranged for some kind of care packages to be sent. Ian's letter tells us all we really know about his time at camp:

Dear Mr. Plewman,
It was surely grand to hear right from the Kilcoo Reunion. I can just picture all the good fellows there eating, singing and having a good time.

This summer will be your tenth year, if I remember correctly and nine years since I was there. That month in '33 was surely the happiest summer I ever spent. Since then the extensive improvements have made Kilcoo the perfect camp for young fellows.

I can still picture that sandy crescent, the dark blue waters of Gull Lake, the pines and tower on the point. I'm looking forward to the day when I can again visit old Kilcoo and have a swim in that cool, clear water.

Please remember me to your wife and family and to old Ed Devitt.

With kindest regards to yourself,
Ian Johnston

Almost exactly two years after that letter, not long after D-Day, Ian was finally sent over from England to Normandy. On August 3, 1944, Ian wrote to his mother from Normandy, describing his daily life:

"We are now getting down to a routine and the work is becoming somewhat matter of fact. Life has been rather quiet the past few days. We come on our shift, work or put in time depending upon visibility [being in the artillery], go off, and sleep, or try to, until the next shift."

¬Five days after that letter, Ian found himself engaged in the fierce

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EDITOR'S MUSINGS

Two days ago before writing this column I participated in a celebration of life ceremony for a good Kilcoo alumnus friend, John Stone, who passed away on March 9th after a year long battle with cancer. John's passing led me to reflect on the value that the Kilcoo experience has had on my life. To my way of thinking "Stoney" as he was called by friends was a model for many of the character attributes that most alumni develop with Kilcoo's help as they approach adulthood: self confidence, independence, the capability to lead, a commitment to whatever is important, a caring for others and humility. John was all of those. What also comes to mind is the fact that page after page of these Gazette issues have been filled with articles and stories from you the readers that reflect the important role that Kilcoo has had in the lives of so many people. Above them all is the importance of friendship, real enduring friendship, and I will always be thankful for my many Kilcoo friends and for the close bond I shared with John. My thoughts and best wishes are now focused on his wife Allison, who met John through her work at camp, and his close knit wonderful family.

As is always the case with the spring issue of the Gazette I can report that camp is full, most of the staff are in place and by the end of April the first advance camp staff will be on site preparing for the summer. As David reports in his Fireside Chat, two buildings have been replaced: the staff cabin known as The Pub, and the ceramics building. Visiting last week to take pictures I spoke with Brian Hamilton, the camp maintenance guru, who seems to enjoy the solitude that allows him to complete everything without distractions. The ice on the lake is beginning to erupt in thunder like "booms" that herald the early stages of the spring melt and while there is lots of snow in the shady areas, Mohawk Park and Apache Park are almost bare.



Once again this year I will participate in Amici's Canoe Heads event and I do hope alumni will find ways to offer their support to Amici's campership program in 2018 whether it is through supporting a friend who participates in Canoe Heads or donating to the charity in your own way. Amici is now in its 53rd year and whoever thought when we gave birth to this "creature" during an August staff meeting that it would become so successful.

As David often mentions in his "Fireside Chat" we hope alumni will feel free to drop by Kilcoo if you are travelling Highway 35 this summer to see how much Kilcoo still stands for the same values as it did when you were there.

PAUL CHAMBERLAIN
1956-67

REFLECTIONS ON CABIN 24

Memories of a particular cabin from our Kilcoo days often evokes sweet memories. For me it was my 1st year in 1956 in Cabin 8 of Kilcare shared with Jamie McAlpine, Paul Setterington and our counsellor Paul Turner. The account below followed from the 2017 Kilcoo Christmas card.



From: Timothy Ernst
To: David Latimer Cc: John Carruthers
Subject: Kilcoo Camp holiday card

Dear David,

Every year, I look forward to receiving the Kilcoo Camp holiday card. This year's card with Peter Taylor's drawing of Cabin 24 certainly ranks among the finest. For those of us who spent more than one August in Cabin 24, it brings back wonderful memories of canoe trips to Temagami and Kipawa with guys like Wally Oakes, Mike Sherwood, Grant Wardlaw, Mark Dennys, Jean Laperiere, Doug MacDonald, Bruce Charlap and others. It also reminds me of our good friend Dave Graham, who spent a few summers in the cabin on top of the hill.

Thanks for the day, comrades!
Tim Ernst (1972-83)

On Dec 21, 2017, John Carruthers (1969-1983) wrote:

Good morning, Tim and David...I second the motion from the Honourable Member from our southern neighbour...what a great card...what a great drawing...I was lucky enough to spend 1 month as a camper in '75 (with cabin mates like Phil Sherwood, Ian Currie, Vince Reid (the first counsellor of Cabin 13 when it opened in '78) and Counsellor Terry Love, one month as a CIT in '77 (with Red as a camper), 2 months in '79 as a counsellor, and 2 months in '81 as a counsellor...so many great memories of Cabin 24 (Cabin 23 back when Tents A&B + C&D were still around)...all the best to you and your families...and onward and upward in season 34 for Lub in the Director's Chair.

Rip ram, John

WANTED

Interested alumnus with good paddling skills and whitewater paddling experience to lead a 12 day Voyageur camper (15 yr. olds) trip on the Missinaibi River in northern Ontario in July. Exact dates can be worked out. Please contact Pat or David at the camp office: 416-486-5264

FIRESIDE CHAT

From Lub and the entire Latimer Fami



We have recently sent out the camper mailing to the families coming to Kilcoo in 2018! Now that March is well into the rear-view mirror, and my own family settles back into the school routine after a busy skiing season, I am looking forward to another wonderful summer on Gull Lake. It is now my 34th year as Director and each year I appreciate, a little bit more, how blessed we are be a part of this amazing community. Everywhere I go: school, ski races, hockey games, airports, movies, restaurants, and alike, I meet someone connected to Kilcoo and hear a wonderful anecdote of a special time, person or event from our little world! I speak to Paul Chamberlain (our Alumni guru) quite often about the little stories that alumni reminisce about; a canoe trip, a sing-song, a polar bear dip or how they first met a lifelong friend on the shores of Gull Lake. I really love our newsletter, as all of the articles in the Gazette resonate so well, because in all of them, we can see ourselves, even if "our time" at Kilcoo was in a completely different generation.

The summer of 2018 is fast approaching and we have re-built the Ceramics building and the Pub. We have bought a new Hobie-Cat and added to our fleet of Paddleboards. We also purchased the "Plewman Cottage" next door and have put a great deal of effort into "sprucing it up". Thanks to Brian, Kent, Advance Camp & Post Camp and Beth for your efforts in 2017, it looks amazing and has some brilliant sunset views of Gull Lake. If you are interested in renting the cottage, please get in touch with me; as some quality time on Gull Lake is good for us all. Charlie Plewman's vision of Kilcoo Camp remains as strong as ever, and now so does the little cottage next door. As always, if you are ever in the neighbourhood driving by please come in and say hello. We love having alumni come back to share your own experiences with all of us; you are a still a "Maker of Men".

TJ & Charlie, my second year LIT sons, finish up grade 11 at North Toronto this spring and Brooke will finish grade 9 and head to Tanamakoon on July. I cannot tell you how excited Beth and I are about their experiences. They all, along with Mrs. Chief and my brothers, Mike and Jeff, and Kim, George and Tingles in the office, join me in wishing you all the very best this upcoming spring and summer. I want to say thanks to everyone for being a part of our community.

RIP RAM RAZZLE SCRAM
DAVID "LUB" LATIMER

"COMING TO KILCOO IS LIKE RETURNING HOME"

During the chapel service during last September's reunion Scott Russell made the above comment which would probably be an appropriate emotion felt by many alumni returning after an absence. Peter Armstrong expresses this so well in reflecting on his arrival for the reunion in an e-mail sent to Lub four months later.

I write from the laziest days of winter. That emotional sweet spot between the decadence of Christmas and the resolutions of New Years. I have been meaning to write for ages. Indeed have been penning this in my head since I pulled my rental car past the tuck shop, turned right on the highway and floated home. I am floating still. I cannot tell you how much it meant to get back there. I guess I needed it more than I knew. And man, did it ever deliver.

I was nervous coming back after all those years. I wondered if I had turned Kilcoo into something it wasn't. Maybe the nostalgia and years had piled up to turn camp into something impossible. Built up in absence and fondness into a fire of sheer sentimentality. Kilcoo had become like a token or a symbol of what I wanted to do, the kind of person I aspired to be. I'd spent years hoping I'd lived up to this ideal engrained in me as a kid and as a young man. Was I making Kilcoo proud? I learned how to shake someone's hand there. I learned about leadership and I learned about failure too. And I carried those lessons on my sleeve as I traveled the world and climbed an improbable career that took me to extraordinary places to meet extraordinary people. I've covered wars and Olympics, met princes and presidents, drank endless cups of tea in small villages in far away lands. As far as I went, Kilcoo was never far from mind.

So I pulled through the gate with equal measure excitement and trepidation. Maybe camp had changed in the 25 years since I'd been there last, altered somehow (reasonably) by time and fate. Or worse, maybe it was never how I'd remembered. Maybe I'd constructed this ideal as a standard to forge a good life. And so as I crested the hill up toward your cabin and camp spilled out in front of me, I caught my breath. It looked precisely as I'd left it all those so many years ago. Then, as if to drive the point home, one of the post camp crew, wandering to his cabin saw me, veered off his intended path to approach me, hand extended, smile on his face, saying hi and welcome. Camp hadn't changed. That spirit was wonderfully alive, breathing through another whole generation.

The weekend was just wave after wave driving that point home. Old friends and new friends and soaking in comforting waters. It was something special to be a part of. I was a bit player in Kilcoo's story. I wasn't there as long as others or contribute as much as some. But it had no less a profound impact on me. It shaped me, it held onto me for all these years. It's like that old Tom Wolfe quote about New York; one belongs to Kilcoo instantly. One belongs to it as much in five minutes as five years.

And now I sing my boys Maker of Men at night before bed and regale them in stories of a magical place on a lake north of here that's captured time by the tail and turns everyone young again. I can't wait to drop them at the bus when their time comes.

So, thanks for having me back and welcoming me back into the fold. It's an incredible thing you've built and yet more incredible that you've managed to sustain it over all these years.

All my very best,

PETER ARMSTRONG
1985-1991

... continued from cover

push, known as Operation Totalize, against the Germans on the plain south of Caën and north of Falaise. There it was, in the fog of war, that an American bomber flight dropped their bombs short of the intended target, hitting their Canadian and Polish allies. And so it was, on that dreadful August 8th of 1944, that Ian Johnston and 64 other Allied soldiers were killed in a single blow. Ian was twenty-seven years old.

The second letter from the camp files was written by Charles Plewman to Ian's father in Lindsay, on August 20, 1944:

Dear Mr. Johnston,

We were greatly shocked today in noticing in the Globe & Mail that Ian had been killed in action. As the war has progressed in intensity, the number of our former campers who have made the supreme sacrifice has grown to considerable proportions.

Everyone liked Ian at camp, because of his fine disposition, and the fact that he seemed to be incapable of doing anything that was unkind. We have sent him rosters and packages of candy, etc. along with our other boys, and only this spring he wrote back to say how happy he was to receive these things and to learn of our continued interest in the Kilcoo boys who are overseas.

Our main purpose, however, in writing this letter is to express to you and Mrs. Johnston and the other members of the family our very great sympathy in the great loss you have sustained. I can assure you that Kilcoo Camp shall always cherish his memory.

Sincerely yours,
Charles F. Plewman, Director

Ian Johnston's little sister was my mother, Gladys. I was born seven years after Ian was killed. My parents named me after him, giving me 'Ian Wallace' as my middle names.

When I turned eight, my parents sent me to Kilcoo, no doubt because Ian had loved it so much. There followed fifteen summers of some of the happiest summers of my life, all because of Harry Johnston having sent one of his sons to camp for one summer twenty-seven years earlier.

When I was a boy, my parents never told me why my middle names were Ian and Wallace. It was only as a young adult that I found out. Ian wasn't spoken of much around my Mum or my grandparents. His loss had been shattering for his whole family. But in later years, Ian's older brother, my Uncle Bruce, made sure I knew all about him.

When I was quite a young camper, Charles Plewman would stroll through camp every so often, to and from his cottage around Chapel Point. On occasion, he would stop to chat with a group of us in Mohawk Park. I like to imagine that when he spoke to me, he knew exactly who I was, and why I was there. When, years later, John Latimer gave me Ian's letter to Mr. Plewman and his to my grandfather, I realized how much of an impact the deaths of those fourteen young Kilcoo campers must have had. It seems to me that in that context, Mr. Plewman's slogan, 'once a Kilcoo camper, always a Kilcoo camper' takes on a special meaning.

I've been to Ian's grave twice, quite close to where he was killed. He lies at Bretteville-sur-Laize together with about 2800 other Canadians. It's a lovely, peaceful place, row upon row of identical white gravestones,





surrounded by rows of Canadian maples. The cemetery is set in rolling farmland not unlike the countryside around Lindsay where Ian was born. When I was first there, several French gardeners were at work, carefully tending the grounds. When they saw me standing alone before Ian's grave, they stopped their work, and quietly disappeared behind a distant hedge.

Many of us know the bronze plaque that hangs in the tripping room in the basement of the Lodge. It memorializes the fourteen Kilcoo boys, including Ian, who did not return from that war. Recently, Paul Chamberlain took the time to refurbish the plaque, and now it looks like this.

I seldom go to camp without taking a minute to have a look. Of the thirteen other boys listed besides Ian, I know nothing. It would be great if their stories could also be passed along to all of us. Apart from the fourteen who died, there must be many more Kilcoo boys who served their country in war and, thank God, came home afterwards. Many of those will no longer be with us, but there are some still who either lived through the experience, or heard tell of it. We who came after owe an enormous debt to those who served. We should tell their stories and remember all of them.

DAVID IAN WALLACE HAMER
1960-74

MARKERS FROM THE 2017 ALUMNI REUNION



In an effort to maintain the excellent Kilcoo programming each summer as well as covering the costs for a future Long House addition, the addition of a Sports Book started at the end of last summer. Though it's still in its infancy, there are a variety of "prop bets" put out for the enjoyment of Kilcoo alumni. Here is a bunch from the most recent Kilcco Alumni weekend.

O/U – Over/Under NL – No line

• Total number of sunglasses lost in the lake: O/U 3
Recap: Thanks to spectacular weather, the final tally was 12. It has become clear that the goal for pre-camp evac training exercises is to rescue and then refurbish and later sell lost glasses from previous years. This has been a profitable alternative to the "fuel surcharge" the camp no longer charges the staff. When a door closes, a window opens as they say at chapel……..

• Total number of swimmers estimated to want to swim the triangle at some point that weekend: O/U 7.5
Recap: OVER - Friday night's cocktail party was full of ambitious 'former' swimmers claiming they were excited to take on the triangle as they had 20, 30, 40 years ago. I lost count after 10.

• Total number of actual swimmers to attempt triangle: O/U 1.5
Recap: Under – the only substantiated swimmer to attempt and complete the triangle swim was Kevin Stewart. To be clear, swimming from the A dock to the trampoline on 3 occasions to bring beer, though greatly appreciated, is not the triangle.

• Dave Purdy attending: NL
Recap: Due to massive inconsistency and various rumours the line was scrapped. There were, however, several Purdy sightings out on the Free Swim dock around 2am Saturday night. Some say they saw him try to jump from the swim dock to the sail dock. Other say they saw him scurrying up Bob's Blvd. holding his genitals screaming like a "banshee." Another great Kilcoo mystery.

• Scott Russell crying during his chapel speech 1 to 5 odds: O/U set at 2.5.
Recap: The most popular bet on the weekend was for Scott to break down during his chapel speech. Even he confesses to getting "rather emotional" talking about his second home. The line was removed completely, however, when Scott himself put $5,000 on himself to breakdown. The over/under was set at 2.5 times he'd break down while he was speaking. The final count was 2 and many who had bet on the OVER claimed they saw a third "waiver." This was unsubstantiated later on video review as it was determined that the third breakdown occurred while someone else was talking.

• Tim and Rob Hester attending chapel: 4 to 1.
Recap: This long shot actually paid off. Both were in attendance! Rob was later heard saying, "So this is where everyone goes Sunday morning. Cool." In a cruel twist of fate, however, Tim lost $200 betting the OVER on Scott Russell's break downs and thus the odds of him attending another chapel in his lifetime has exploded to 8 to 1.

• Scott McBurney hears waterfront siren: 4 to 1 odds.
Recap: Apparently Scott heard the siren on 3 occasions prompting several alumni to request to, "get some of whatever he's drinking."

• Scott McBurney response time to water siren: O/U 9.5 minutes
Recap: OVER. Scott was able to get down to the waterfront in just over 10 minutes. Curiously, this is 2 minutes faster than when he was staff. I guess he's found a quicker route down.

• Scott McBurney finishes the Globe and Mail before responding to waterfront siren: 2 to 1
Recap: this was the second most popular bet and let's just say the house lost money on it……..

• Mike Roland references "Memory Hat": O/U 12.5
Recap: OVER. Mouse got off to a slow start and we didn't hear of the fabled hat the first night, however, he went to work Saturday afternoon and hit his numbers without any trouble by the banquet dessert time.

• Total number of nights Kevin Devine slept safely in his own bunk: O/U 0.5
Recap: Under. If safely finding his own bunk means sprawled on a desk in the staff quarters of cabin 8 and later using it as a urinal, then job well done. Special thanks to Huggy for patiently sorting the situation out while misdirecting all the various paparazzi.

• Total number of times Tim Magwood broke into song: O/U 36.5
Recap: PUSH This is a particularly difficult bet to substantiate as Tim breaks in and out of song so frequently. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to make it. Thus we just gave everyone their money back. If I could sing like Tim, this article would be in audio form to the theme song of Phantom of the Opera….

• Total number of John Carruthers softball calls needing a video review: O/U 7.5
Recap: Under. The total number of calls needing replay was only 7; not necessarily because John was on his game but more that teams on mass were hungover along with the lovely weather which created a much more apathetic crew. There were no bench clearing brawls either which disappointed some.

• Total number of times the smile left Jeff Lloyd's face: O/U 2.5
Recap: Under. Jeff's smile left only twice, coincidentally both after terrible calls by John Carruthers. Though his cheerful demeanor was contagious Friday and Saturday night, it became somewhat irritating and even painful for some 'late night warriors' early Sunday morning. Fortunately, there were no incidents of anyone trying to "wipe that smile off his face."

• Odd of someone needed stitches: 2 to 1
Recap: This bet surprisingly did not pay off but with Devine being chaperoned by Huggy. Brent Knightly not in attendance and only one Dempster to cause trouble, the weekend came and went without incident. As they say, a broken clock is right twice a day.

Going forward, we hope to have more lines for alumni to participate during these glorious weekends. Hope to see you all there again in 2020.

KEVIN DEVINE
1981-1992

KILCOO'S ALMOST CATASTROPHIC FIRE

To paraphrase Dickens' first line in his, Tale of Two Cities, it was the best of years, it was the worst of years. It was 1957, John Latimer's second year as director. I was his assistant director. The summer had started with a flood after 4 days of rain and the buses had not been able to get off the highway so everyone's luggage was portaged through the mud. One of my jobs that year was to make sure that food distribution at meal times did not leave a surplus on the Bantam's (youngest) tables while the Seniors (oldest) got shortchanged. This meant that I moved around the tables and kitchen keeping an eye on things.

On July 4th at lunch the camp was beginning to dry out when I heard a hissing sound coming from behind the kitchen. I went out to explore and saw a young man who had been changing the propane tanks with his arm frozen to a tank about 5 feet long with the valve blown off releasing propane like a jet engine the force of which kept his body spinning around. It is funny how time perception changes in an emergency. I recognized that the gas being released sooner or later would explode as some of it got into the kitchen near the open flames of the ovens. I had time to reflect on a physics class where we learned that an expanding gas consumes heat which causes freezing- it is the way refrigerators work. As time stretched out I seem to have had lots of time to shout at the young man frozen to the propane tank to get into the lake as quickly as possible. I then went into the kitchen and told the kitchen staff to turn off the stoves and get out of the kitchen.

I walked into the dining room, rang the bell which was attached to one of the posts, carved as a totem pole which held up the roof. (This was the old lodge, then about 25 years old which had been built by assembling 6 or 8 used highway construction shacks in the early 1930s). As the hubbub quietened down I announced that everyone had to leave the lodge by the main entrance. I had explained to John what was going on and Bev Stainton went to the piano and played an exit march until everyone was out. I do not remember hearing any explosion but I learned later that all the kitchen staff had singed eyelashes and eyebrows. Apparently the explosion had been heard some distance away and flames had evidently been about 40 feet high judging by burned leaves on the trees nearby. The staff quickly organized a bucket brigade and the fire on the roof above the kitchen was extinguished. Perhaps a half hour after the fire was out the volunteer fire truck from Minden arrived, much to everyone's amusement. I do not recall knowing how the young man whose arms were frozen to the propane tank fared – he must have had severe frostbite burns on his arms.

I can remember reflecting on how a crisis brings the best out in people and can be very good for morale as long as things work out in the end. Certainly the entire staff rose to the challenge magnificently. Although there were further crises that summer such as 2 campers being run over in their sleeping bags by a truck in the Beaverton fairground, staff morale stayed high throughout the summer. Some summers are remarkable for the high level of camaraderie among the staff and throughout the camp as a whole. The summer of 1957 was certainly a severe test of Chief's poise under fire and equanimity. This was 60 years ago, and I can still smell the burning roof.

CLIVE CHAMBERLAIN
1954-60



THE END OF THE WAGON WHEEL

The Wagon Wheel Restaurant and Motel was a favourite of many staff in the 1950's and 60's when it was operated by Art and Rita Hodgkinson. A fire in the motel and subsequent development of full service lodges in the area led to an end of the business. It has not been in operation for many years and while different people bought it up to operate as a restaurant, hair-dressing salon or foster home etc., none was successful, and it has been virtually unused for at least the last three years. Today the Wheel is no more. Sadly most of it was destroyed by fire in December.





Barry Reynolds recalls, "The camp truck made almost daily stops for coffee and conversations. Not nearly so familiar with the "Cliffe" as Chief and I had a special agreement about drinking truck drivers. Dave Linton offered, "The Wheel' was where we would escape to," and Bob Dameron's summary was, "If those burned out walls could talk.....oh what stories they could tell!"

EDITOR

RECOLLECTIONS FROM THE REC HUT AND 'OUTER A'

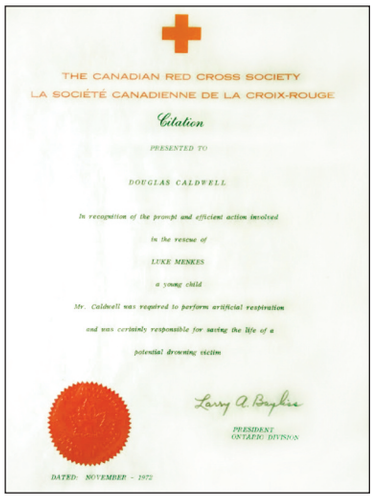
I remember vividly those incredible summers after becoming a staff member in 1967. In the following recollection specifically, I think of an annual dramatic session towards the end of pre-camp before the campers arrived; flag lowering had been completed, Chief was holding his final talk with staff in the Rec Hut, the lights seem dimmed. Chief took on a somber tone, asking us to imagine a situation where we were up at his cabin listening as he is just completing a painful call to a camper's parent informing them of some tragic event involving their son. The phone is passed to one of us to explain to the parent what transpired leading up to the event.

It was of course hypothetical, but he held us in the palm of his hand and we shuddered as his imaginary scenario unfolded. We damn well knew as we walked out of that unsettling meeting that we must always be judicious and exhibit the greatest care and leadership as we took charge of these campers entrusted to us for the summer. This yearly experience was one more powerful reason to take Kilcoo's first aid and lifesaving training with profound seriousness. Like father, like son…another tradition continues.

The spring of '72 following university graduation found me working again for a swimming pool maintenance company back home to offset the costs of keeping my little TR4A on the road while paying for tuition and looking forward to yet another fabulous summer at Kilcoo…this time as a CIT Director.

Later in May my assistant and I rolled up to a suburban driveway to deliver a few buckets of chlorine for the coming summer's use. The following 30 minutes have been imprinted in my memory as if it had occurred yesterday. The lady of the house emerged from the backyard and swept by the front of our van clutching what appeared to be a soaking wet doll. She stumbled her way towards the front door of her home. I realized that this "doll" was a child. Racing into the house behind her, I saw that she had laid her little son on the carpet of the den as she knelt to pray in the opposite corner. I directed my assistant to call an ambulance, as 5 years of Kilcoo pre-camp lifesaving drills in the Rec Hut and on the "outer A" came flooding back instantly in rote clarity. The shouted directions from the likes of Bob Kerr, Paul Stewart, Tom Reed, Gary Kline, Dave Minnes and others, earnest swim instructors standing over us, delivering encouragement and nuggets of wisdom - "If it's a baby or small child, big breaths could rupture the lungs…be gentle!"

Diving to the floor, I began to administer AR (CPR will be introduced in lifesaving a few years later). Hyperextending the child's neck and giving him gentle mouth-to-mouth puffs, I watched his tiny chest rise and fall accordingly while following through on the procedure I'd been taught so thoroughly. Between prayers, the child's mother cried and shared that he may have been in the cold pool for as long as 10 or more minutes after he had wandered out from the kitchen. He was unbelievably cold, wet, clammy and somewhat purple. I felt for a pulse, I coiuldn't find one, and I realized, that he was likely dead. Once again, more echoes from the tower - "Never stop AR until a lifesaving professional takes over."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Citation

PRESENTED TO

DOUGLAS CALDWELL

In recognition of the prompt and efficient action involved

in the rescue of

LUKE MENKES

a young child

Mr. Caldwell was required to perform artificial respiration

and was certainly responsible for saving the life of a

potential drowning victim

Larry A. Bayliss

PRESIDENT
ONTARIO DIVISION

DATED: NOVEMBER - 1972

Seconds turned into minutes…then a faint splutter from his mouth. I continued administering mouth-to-mouth. Then, wonderfully, there was another cough/gasp and the presence of peanut butter in my mouth… a taste of hope? I tipped his head once again to the side as I cleared his mouth, which was then followed by more coughing up and gasping. I was feeling this amazed sense of gratitude after which I heard multiple sirens converging on the house. I watched as this wondrous little boy continued to gasp and splutter independently and I cradled his head facilitating these responses. Bursting through the front door, a fireman lunged towards him and placed a small oxygen mask over his tiny face. His mother was crying emotionally and trying to answer questions from the emergency personnel who had overtaken her house. Subsequently, a police officer took my details, smiled, and told me that they would be in touch before charging off to the hospital.

Later in the week, I learned that he (Luke) was released from hospital and following cognitive tests, they concluded, incredulously, that there was no brain damage whatsoever. I could hardly believe it since he was immersed for so long. Back then, it was not common knowledge that in cold water a small child especially, would have his whole metabolism slowed down to such an extent that life and brain function could be extended.

Chief's absolute, uncompromised insistence that we all know precisely how to react in an emergency situation in order to avert tragedy was so ingrained in all of us that my reaction was simply second nature. There was no panic...just confidence in commanding whatever situation we came upon without doubt or even the remotest hesitation.

Proud?...Sure!... My lifesaving skills awarded me with a Citation from the Red Cross, a newspaper article, some very grateful parents and the knowledge that I saved this young child's life; however, I was but the conduit, and the real heroics remain as a testament to the greatness of Kilcoo's staff and its Chief who was so inspirational in bringing about the best in our collective character and competence.



DOUG CALDWELL
1959-1976

GROWING UP AT KILCOO = EXPERIENCING CANOE TRIPS

As important as Kilcoo and the in camp program is to every camper's and staff member's character development, this article by Paul Romano points to the experiences one has on canoe trips over several years at camp as being integral in the formation of the kind of person you become. The campers in the picture are quite unrecognizable, perhaps deliberately, for they could be anyone of us. The carbon blackened pot, however, is universal.

I have pleasant recollections of my first canoe trip. I was in Cabin 6, and my counsellor was Dave Hadden. We paddled across Gull Lake and set up camp far out of sight of Kilcoo and the regular daily routine. We slept in smelly canvas tents, in sleeping bags which we had carefully protected for the trip by wrapping them in ground sheets and tying them tightly with string (to keep out the water if our canoes dumped). I remember we found a great place to swim and jumped off high rocks into the lake below. We cooked meals over the fire, and cooked bannock wrapped around a stick. It was like a vacation from camp and I loved it.

Over the next few years, my camp summers always involved a canoe trip. Similar experiences were realized each time we ventured out to Kennisis, Opeongo, and Redstone. Each trip was an adventure that allowed us to escape the routine and predictability of camp and test our mettle against the wilds of the Canadian Shield.

I remember one long trip back to camp, the eight campers lounging in the back of a covered pick-up truck on old mattresses that smelled like mildew and dried sweat. We could see very little out the side windows, and spent time sleeping, talking, and looking out at a tall trailer loaded with packs, life jackets, paddles, and topped by four green and orange canoes. We suddenly braked, veered to the side of the road, and came to a screeching halt. We were let out of the truck, briefly, to see that we had stopped just short of a deep ditch in order to avoid hitting an old woman in the middle of the road. I remember the driver saying "Thank God we stopped in time, I would have had to hit her in order to avoid going into the ditch". Canoe trips always seemed to provide a sense of life or death drama, where the outcome wasn't predictable.

When Chief provided me the opportunity to go on my first two-week canoe trip in 1977, I was only 13, turning 14 in August , but I jumped at the opportunity. It was a fantastic adventure, travelling across lake Temagami, up the Obabika River, and climbing the Lady Evelyn staircase. We lived in a tent for two weeks, eating what we carried in our packs and wanigan, paddling for hours every day, and challenging our strength and perseverance over long portages. On our one rest day, we climbed Maple Mountain, and made it to the top of the ranger tower where we could see forever and were buffeted by a stiff wind. It was a challenging, intense, and difficult journey that helped us discover our inner strength and bond with our mates sharing the experience.

This was not the only two week trip I was lucky enough to participate in. I went again the next year to Kipawa in Quebec and two years later, I went back to Temagami as an LIT, sharing responsibility for a group of 10 young men, off on our own, far from the support of Kilcoo. Each and every one of these trips were an adventure. On one we had 11 days of rain out of 13. We were wet, our tents were wet, our food was soggy, and we struggled to light a fire using soaking wood; but our spirits never dampened. It seemed we always found a way to overcome adversity and pull together to make it over the longest portage, and paddle across the windiest lake.



As a brand new counsellor, on my first canoe trip on my own with Cabin 7, my LIT twisted his ankle on the first portage. I had to make a decision: would we shorten the trip and avoid the four portages planned for the next three days, or go forward knowing it would be a struggle to get four canoes and all our gear around the circuit. Hoping the cabin would come together as we faced the challenge of completing the full trip, I decided we would continue. It was the right decision. For me, this was the magic of canoe trips during my time at Kilcoo. The bond between campers and leaders, thrown together for a month over the summer, grew stronger the more difficult the task. We learned to believe in ourselves, to depend on our cabin mates, and to trust our leaders.

This has been a life-long lesson. I joined the Canadian Army in search of the same comradeship we had at camp, the opportunity to bond with my colleagues as we faced hardships and challenges. The lessons I learned on canoe trips: working together, staying positive, trusting others and finding your inner strength served me well in training and on operations as a soldier and team leader. They continue to serve me now working in my second career as I face the challenges of owning my own business and working with my partners to win new contracts and meet customer demands.

Thank you Kilcoo and all of those who I grew up with during my years at camp. My life has been the better for it.

PAUL ROMANO
1975-81

MORE KILCOO ALUMNI LOST

Over the past 6 months we have lost 3 more camp alumni. I wrote of John Stone in my editor's column. To close friends of Dave Lawr, his last year was a very difficult one. Dave first attended Kilcoo back in 1937. John Murray, who was at Kilcoo from 1938 until 1947, passed away during the winter. Paul attended Kilcoo with his older brother John and collaborated with me in 2008 on the article about polio at Kilcoo. We offer our condolences to their families and friends

IDEAS ALWAYS WELCOME!

If you have ideas for articles of interest for future issues of the Gazette please contact us at gazetteeditor@kilcoo.com. If you have a good topic idea, we will do the follow up research; if you want to write an article please put on your creative hat, and if you have some photos to accompany your piece, please send those along as well!