THE GULL ROCK GAZETTE

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KILCOO'S CONNECTION TO DANGEROUS PLACES

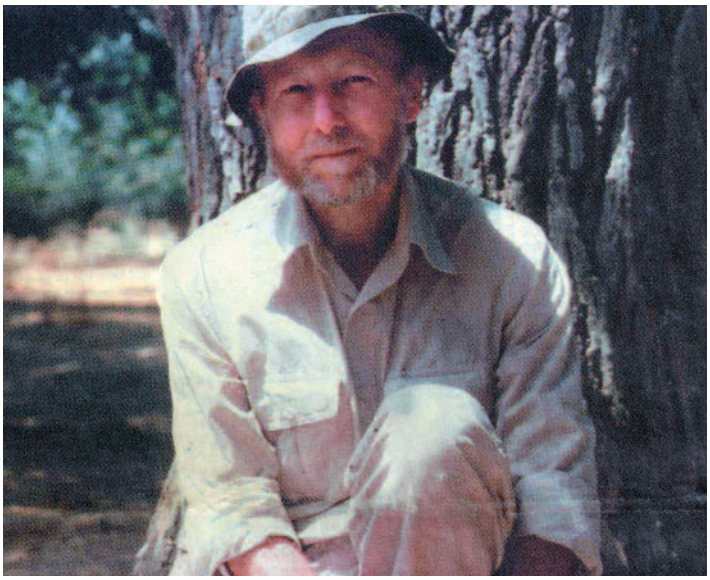
This journey began in 1948 when Rudolph Frastacky was able to gain sponsorship to live in Canada after escaping from the Communist dictatorship in his homeland of Czechoslovakia. We can pick it up again when his 13 year old son Fedor and his 10 year old son Michael first arrived as campers at Kilcoo in July, 1960. They continued to attend camp for four years after which Fedor joined the kitchen staff. Jay Haddad recalls both brothers as personable and friendly.

However, Michael, from a young age was an idealist "driven" to fight against corruption and deceit in the world and it was this trait that eventually led him to northeastern Afghanistan. Michael left De La Salle College after grade 10 and began training himself as a carpenter. He worked briefly for the Lakefield Canoe Company before it went out of business and then moved to Vancouver where he apprenticed as a fine carpenter.

Jobs that he had allowed him to use his carpentry skills while taking time off to travel to remote places in the world and after his mother passed away in 1993 he decided to combine his inheritance with his own income to use in working to help needy communities. In the mid 1980's he found himself in Madagascar where he helped to build a school. Before turning to Afghanistan he helped renovate an orphanage in Pakistan.

After meeting with an Afghan guide while in Pakistan he found out about the Nahrin Valley and through several visits came to love the area and its people. Around the year 2002 he created his plan to build a school just outside the village of Turk Sayad. To complete the construction he would spend months at a time in Afghanistan and then return to Vancouver for a similar length of time to raise more funds. It took a few years to complete and Michael spent about $80,000 of his own money to bring it to fruition. He even considered adding a medical clinic to the school as well. When the school was completed it provided for both girls and boys up to Grade 6 and the plan was to add a grade every year after that. By 2006 the school had more than 600 students and 20 teachers.





During 2005 and 2006 as security in the area became more of a problem Michael ignored friends who cautioned him about returning each time and while he did have a bodyguard, he put off purchasing a gun for his own safety. During the night of July 23rd, 2006 several masked men invaded his home and killed him. The crime was never solved, but it was believed the killers may have been Taliban militia.

A good Canadian friend of Michael's, commenting on the type of person he was stated, "Afghanistan gave a deeper sense of meaning to Michael's life and a focus for his energies. He felt that he had been blessed with the means to be helpful. When asked if he had any children of his own he would often say the 600 boys and girls in the school were his children."

Michael Frastacky's legacy is his Hazrat-i-Usman School and many of the villagers remember "Mr. Mike" with fondness and perhaps a touch of shame because of his death. Many of us are aware of the continuing mission of the Taliban to prevent schools from operating especially denying girls an opportunity to learn to read and write. We are hopeful though that Mr. Mike's school might survive as Afghanistan's independent press reported in March of 2018 that the Taliban were becoming increasingly co-operative in allowing the schools in the Nahrin Valley to operate.

We often talk about heroes at Kilcoo when we reflect on alumni who have had an impact on our lives. For a completely different reason and in a different context Michael must be considered a Kilcoo hero.

PAUL CHAMBERLAIN
1956-67

EDITOR'S MUSINGS

At about the time most of you are reading this issue of the Gazette, Kilcoo is a hive of activity. The Advance Camp staff are splitting their duties between working with a large school group and managing the many tasks to prepare the camp property for the summer onslaught of kids. The rest of the staff and LIT's arrive for their precamp training program on June 21st and 22nd (approximately 125 in all) and one week later the July campers arrive in buses and cars.

I am sure camp will be full again this year which is a testament to the quality of each year's staff group which through the years has developed and then maintained Kilcoo's fine reputation.

I always enjoy having Marc Russell report on the work he is doing for his Gull Lake Boatworks. While he continues to repair and refresh canoes that are part of the Kilcoo "fleet," you will see from his article in this issue that his client base has expanded a little.

The lead article in this issue takes us to a violent and far off land where former Kilcoo camper Michael Frastacky did his best to serve the youth of Afghanistan. His experience and his death point out how lucky we are to be in a safe environment and brings to my mind the fact that during World War II Charlie Plewman was quite mindful of the fact that Kilcoo provided a safe haven for many campers and staff.

Over the past few issues several alumni have written about canoe trips they took while at Kilcoo, and in most of them the writers recounted "close calls" and moments of worry. This prompted me to write about the increasing risk we as staff took over the years as canoe trips ventured further and further from the camp, often into new territory. Only recently have trippers been outfitted with satellite phones to ensure a greater degree of safety. I certainly remember a trip or two where such a device would have provided me with more security.

Speaking of high risk I will once again be participating in Amici's Canoe Heads event on the Toronto waterfront on June 1st this year. By the time you read this I hope I have recovered somewhat from the event. The goal this year is $200,000 which, if reached, will provide great support for the 300 children Amici plans to send to camp. I consider myself fortunate to have been accepted onto Team Algonquin this year and last to join together with Stu Snyder, Willie MacRae, John Dempster, Ben Baldwin, George Wright and several others.

Previously I have mentioned the plans for the Kilcoo historical Museum and David is calling on alumni for support for the project in his Fireside Chat. Please note on the last page of this Gazette that I am calling on many of you to think hard about contributing an article. This issue has used up much of the material I have left and a fall issue will only be possible with your help.

Over the years as I have maintained my contact with Kilcoo, Amici and so many alumni who continue to place a high value on their Kilcoo experience I have become aware that each "generation" has lost good camp friends prematurely through diseases and accidents. However, the passing of good friend **Bob Slingerland** on April 6th touched a great many more of us because Bob served on staff for 21 years, most of them as Chief John Latimer's assistant director, and then continued to maintain close connections with many individuals and groups after his camp days were over. Many of us tried to share somewhat in the family's vigil that took Bob after only 11 weeks. Our heartfelt sympathy and warm wishes go to Bob's wonderful wife Deb and his three daughters Amanda, Laura and Dayna. Each member of this family mirror the wonderful qualities that made Bob such an important person in our lives.

PAUL CHAMBERLAIN
1956-67

THE STORY OF "BUGSY"

In the summer of 1964 The Senior Section (Now the Voyageur Section) developed the theme of the Chicago mob of the 1920's. Led by Section Director John Dewan portraying the mobster Al Capone, the section paraded into the lodge for many a meal replete with their leaders clothed in black, hair parted down the middle and the attendant machine guns.

In 1965 the theme was picked up by a group of staff who created several skits for the weekly musicales (Kilabaloos now), which were probably enjoyed as much, or more by staff as campers. I assumed the mantle of "Big Al" and was ably assisted by Peter Oyler (Limey), Bill Oliver(Mouse) and Don Story(Bugsy). This auspicious group even extended their roles after



camp in visits to the Imperial Room of the Royal York Hotel and the main dining room at the Inn on The Park Hotel in Toronto with the addition of part timers Derek Allen and Peter Sharpe.

The laugh inducing memories of these two summers were not to be forgotten. Don Story went on to a career as a history professor at the University of Saskatchewan and while more recently serving as a consultant with the Canadian Amateur Soccer Association his occasional visits to Toronto renewed his contact with his fearless leader.

Befitting any responsible limousine driver/host I arrived early at Toronto's Pearson Airport to greet my fellow mobster where Don, alias Bugsy, was able to spot me most easily. This continuing camaraderie only underlines that there are many good stories from Kilcoo told and enjoyed over and over again and laughed about over and over again long after those summers have passed.

FIRESIDE CHAT

From Lub and the entire Latimer Family

It was the last week of August in my last year as a camper… I was in cabin 23 with Craig Beggs and Ian "Easy" Currie, and we had had a great month. The cabin group was fondly (or as I found out from Easy much later, not so fondly) known as "The Sweat Hogs". The legendary Assistant Director, Bob "Smoothie" Slingerland, asked if he could meet with me to "have a chat". We met in the Playpen that afternoon, and to my shock and dismay, Bob very gently told me that if I had any thoughts of maybe "following my dad's footsteps" as Director, I should think about going to another camp where I was not "Chief's son." I of course, took this to mean that I was not being asked back to Kilcoo (which was essentially true, and I blame Scott McBurney) and did he tell my Mom?

So the next summer I went to Camp Mazinaw, a tripping camp run by my Dad's great friend Brian Blackstock, and spent a number of fun, fulfilling and formative summers at this much smaller tripping camp. I returned to Kilcoo in 1984 to be the Nor'Wester Section Director and join the Advance Camp crew, and my boss was Ian "Easy" Currie. 1984 was also the summer that Scott Russell gave me the nickname "Lub". The next year, 1985, I was lucky enough to take over as Director of Kilcoo Camp; fast forward to now and the summer of 2019 will be my 35th summer as Director!

I saw Bob Slingerland for the last time in March (see the photo). Dave Minnes was also along for the visit and we had a wonderful time… full of laughs and smiles. Bob and I recalled that day in August when Bob "volunteered" to tell me the news of my upcoming sabbatical from Kilcoo; he was the only guy who would face my mother and tell her too! It was a path that would change my life forever.



Since the day Bob and his family (his wife Deb, his children, Amanda, Dayna and Laura) got the horrible news about his cancer, they have showed us all how to appreciate life, and to approach the end of life with true grace, compassion and courage. It is truly a sad day when a man like Bob Slingerland leaves this world, but the outpouring of support for Bob and his family has been unbelievable; and it should come as no surprise after the amazing impact that Bob had on so many people. I am reminded, once again, of the very special relationships we share with our Kilcoo friends & family; the connection we share with our little spot on Gull Lake and the friends we made is remarkable. My next trip down "Bob's Boulevard" will be even more special. Thanks Smoothie.

2019 will be our 88th summer on Gull Lake and there is much for the Alumni to be excited about, and to be involved in… Please join us for Alumni/Daughter Weekend; all ages are welcome, so please see the attached info. We are starting to "ramp up" our Historical Museum campaign; we welcome any exhibit donations of stories, photos, and mementos. We certainly appreciate those who are also making a financial contribution to the project, and we continue to see interest in folks helping out. It is also important to remember that the next reunion is about 18 months away on September 25th to 27th of 2020!

I am very excited for the upcoming summer. On April 15th the Primordial Crew went north to camp to get things set up for Advance Camp. George Hendrie, our full-time outdoor education and spring/fall coordinator, along with Tyler Pace and Zach Warne will get things set up for the arrival of the AC Crew on April 29th. They have a busy spring ahead with multiple school groups, paddling groups, social groups and so on. I am very excited that my boys, TJ & Charlie, are now on staff as Nor'Wester counsellors and they will graduate from North Toronto Collegiate Institute in June. So on behalf of the boys, Brooke & Beth, Jeff, Larry & Maddy, Mike & Candy (who are getting married in October), and of course Mrs. Chief, we all wish you the best for this spring and summer. A big thanks to our amazing editor, Paul Chamberlain for another awesome Gazette, we hope you all enjoy it. Be well, everyone… this issue is for Smoothie!

RIP RAM RAZZLE SCRAM
DAVID "LUB" LATIMER

COMING EVENTS

Alumni/daughter weekend September 27-29, 2019
Any interested alumni should contact the Kilcoo office.

Alumni reunion September 25-27, 2007
Look for information and registration details in the next issue.

CONNECTIONS: KILCOO-MAZINAW; LATIMERS-PARTRIDGES

This story began when it was decided that it would be more comfortable for David Latimer to move on after his summers as a camper over to Camp Mazinaw in eastern Ontario to continue his personal growth in preparation for becoming Kilcoo's director.

So in 1979, David(known by many of you as Lub) took on the role of CIT and was later a counsellor and tripper at Mazinaw where he met and developed a friendship with Peter Partridge and gained Brian Blackstock as a mentor. What has brought this story to light was the untimely passing of Peter's father, Peter Partridge Sr. in 2017. Mr. Partridge grew up in Kingston, Ontario where his love of music led to a performance in Westminster Abbey with his local choir and later in his teenage years when he served as an assistant to the Westminster Abbey organist . Since then he continued to support the Abbey and more recently donated a practice organ to Westminster. In July 2017 he was invited for a recital and luncheon with Prince Charles at Westminster where the room in which the organ was located was dedicated to him as "The Partridge Room"

Returning to the connection between the Partridge family and the Latimers, Peter Partridge Sr. also attended Camp Mazinaw for ten years where he was close friends with Brian Blackstock who was closely connected with John Latimer through their work with the Ontario Camping Association. David then became friends with Peter. David returned to Kilcoo in 1983 later in the season to take over as counsellor in





Peter and his wife Poppy with two children, Chase and Daxx

Cabin 13. Then in 1984 David was the Nor' Wester Section Director.

Lub's 34 year tenure as Kilcoo's director began the following year. After Camp Mazinaw closed in 1986 Brian Blackstock joined David by serving as an LIT director and Peter Partridge Jr. switched to Kilcoo along with his younger brother John and two cousins. Peter spent 9 summers at Kilcoo starting out as a camper in Cabin 17 with cabin mate John Bellamy. After two years as a counsellor he teamed up with Matt Shoom-Kirsch to take charge of sailing while his cousin David served as canoeing instructor.

With this family "history" at Kilcoo it should not be surprising that Peter's nephew, Toby Partridge followed the family pattern as a camper in 2006 and following the past three years on staff will be the program director in 2019. And it doesn't stop there. Peter's son Chase will be at camp for his third summer in 2019 while his younger son Daxx will be at Kilcoo for his first summer. This long time connection that began with John Latimer and Peter Partridge Sr. is only one of many similar relationships among families with ties to Kilcoo.

PETER PARTRIDGE
1987-95
PAUL CHAMBERLAIN
1956-67

CANOEING LONG AFTER KILCOO

While I spent one year at Kilcoo as a camper, the canoeing experience learned during that summer has carried me to many memorable trips over the years. Tripping in Algonquin Park with my son Kent was very special, as well as with others. Just quietly canoeing in the morning mist in cottage country is so peaceful and therapeutic. When I retired in 2004 after a 43-year career with the TD bank, I was most fortunate to join the Ancient Mariner Canoe Club here in Cambridge. From the early days at Kilcoo to the additional skills learned with the Club I have canoed white water rivers in Ontario and Quebec. Never in my wildest dreams did I think this would happen.



Married now for 49 years to Joyce, we have traveled to many places around the globe. Our daughter Erin, prefers kayaking, and has worked on the water for many years at Ryde Lake.



In 2018, I started an annual (hopefully) canoe outing with Kent (son Noah-3, daughter Mackenzie-6) and Erin (son Carter-2), and we canoed on the Grand River. All six of us had a wonderful time so the planting of the seed back in 1952 with that canoe trip with Bruce Haines at Kilcoo has allowed me to give back to others the value of canoeing and nature.

I play lots of golf and am still actively playing friendly hockey from October to March.

BOB FRASER
1951

GULL LAKE BOATWORKS – AN UPDATE

There are very few camps that can lay claim to having their own in house designated vendor when it comes to the manufacturing and repair of canoes for the camp's use. Through Marc Russell, Kilcoo can make that claim. Marc began his association with Kilcoo as a camper in 1993 and after rising through the ranks as a CIT, he served on the camp staff until 2010 first as Arts & Crafts instructor and later as the Land staff director. Marc was also instrumental in the set up of displays for the camp's 75th anniversary gala. The details below serve as evidence of just how lucky we are to have Marc's dedication and expertise. Alumni would do well to contact Marc when purchasing or repairing their own canoes.

Writing this article I am reminded how fast spring comes, and I can't wait. So comes another report from the canoe shop. This will be the tenth (!) summer for a few of the canoes in Kilcoo's "new" fleet, and they are certainly being used well! Apart from some cosmetic damage and general wear to the gunwales and keels all the canoes are still in excellent shape. There are a few cases of heavy damage to a few new boats and two of the vintage Chestnuts, but nothing dire. *GLBW*'s advances in traditional methods are paired with modern materials to form very resilient and infinitely repairable canoes.

In 2016 two new "Kilcoo Specials" were added to the fleet in 2016, as was an unique 16.5' Keiser canoe (donated to *Gull Lake Boat Works* by the Carroll family, subsequently repaired and refinished for Kilcoo Camp). The Kilcoo fleet now consists of 25 cedar/canvas "Kilcoo" canoes, twelve vintage wood canoes (10 cedar/canvas, and two cedarstrippers), and 34 fiberglass/plastic for river/heavy trip use. While last year's addition of four new Kevlar canoes to the plastic fleet more or less signals the end of Kilcoo's wooden fleet rebuild, *GLBW* will continue to repair and support both wood and plastic fleets. As a final project we hope to generate enough interest to start restoring Kilcoo's last all-wood sailboat, a 12' *Peterborough* cedarstrip hull dubbed the "Sinbad," which is currently slumbering in the Rec Hut rafters and will hopefully one day be transported to our Toronto shop for a full restoration.

The older portion of the fleet consists of a random assortment of our last five original Minto Marine canoes, some *Nominingues*, and a few unknown others. These twelve canoes are either beyond restoration or not worth the cost, and we lose about two per year to "natural" causes. Brian Hamilton and Kent Taylor repair them as possible but more often repurpose them as the half-canoe shelves that grace the rooms of many alumni. However, in 2017 Paul Chamberlain donated his well kept 1973 *Minto* canoe: a great addition to the vintage fleet. (Thanks Paul)

In addition to rebuilding and maintaining Kilcoo's canoe fleet, *GLBW* continues to operate independently, having repaired or restored well over 100 canoes, kayaks, and motor/sail/row boats for private owners and for other camps, like Kandalore, Mi-A-Kon-Da,







YMCA Camp Queen Elizabeth, and the Taylor Statten camps. A few Kilcoo families are also lucky owners of some of the fifteen custom canoes that we've built. Last year we made more connections with Toronto's various yacht clubs, and in 2019 we will continue to prototype paddle designs and manufacturing while maybe squeezing out a paddleboard or two; and some more canoes, of course! Currently we have complete and for sale two "show-boat" Kilcoo 15'7" canoes; a circa-1960's *Chestnut Canoe Co*. 17' "Prospector"; and an astoundingly well-preserved, hundred-year-old *Peterborough* 16' "Canadienne" strip canoe (which I would happily keep for myself had I the means).

Kilcoo's spring repairs will begin very soon. There certainly is a lot to keeping a fleet of wooden boats in top condition… far too much for one person. So, I'll leave you with this: any interested LiTs (soon-to-be Ts, or young staff) with aptitude and interest, and who may wish to further themselves by way of honest hard work on usefully beautiful objects, may certainly inquire about an internship.

Thanks to the Gull Rock Gazette, and everyone who has shown support and interest in *Gull Lake Boat Works* and the rebuilt Kilcoo Fleet!

Okay – back to work. Thanks for reading!

MARC RUSSELL
1993-PRESENT

MY KILCOO CAMP INITIATION

It is exciting to reconnect with my Kilcoo Camp extended family after so many years, now that I'm well into my geezer-hood. Maybe it will be impossible to verbally make sense of how important my limited experience of serving as a counsellor for only one summer was to my initiation into adulthood. Forgive my lack of brevity, as it's difficult to explain what a "wild child" I was at that time of my life. Many moons ago, in the rugged Metis community of Sault Ste. Marie in northern Ontario, I was born to mixed-blood parents. My father, a local lad, was an intriguing mix of Ojibwa / Scots / Norwegian / French, while my mother, originally from Vancouver Island, BC, was a similar mix of Haida / Scots / Norwegian / French. Even though both my parents were educated, my father an electrical engineer and my mother a nurse, God fearing church-goers, and both from hard working middle-class families, sadly, they suffered a major spiritual dysfunction. My father was very much in touch with his "Indigenous soul." Like his father and grandfather before him, he spoke four languages: English, French, Gaelic and Anishinaabemowin. and he maintained his childhood passion for nature, his ancestors and the pre-history of megalithic cultures. Sadly, for whatever reason, my mother rejected all things "Indian" and embraced modernity and urban scientific materialist culture. She saw no benefit in having her children grow up recognizing they had some small amount of Native American ancestry. Mum was determined we would only speak English and identify as "British." Though my father loved my mother dearly and did not fight her on this, it created a subtle rift, seemingly oblivious to everyone but me. My two siblings got with the program and orbited around our mother. However, circumstances drove me closer to may father and my "Indigenous soul".

Being carried by my mother through a stressful pregnancy, I was born with various congenital problems: celiac, autism and a defect in my bottom two vertebrae, where the two sections did not properly fuse together around my spinal column. Being colicky for years, sickly and slow to speak, as a "problem child," I drove my poor parents around the bend. Though these medical conditions are better understood now, at the time, it took many years just to be properly diagnosed. When it became obvious that modern medicine had no "magic pill," my father approached an Ojibwa elder and relative at the nearby "Garden River First Nations" about performing a healing ceremony. It was not until years later, that I learned this was a dangerous proposition. It was then against the law for Native people to practice their spiritual traditions, let alone speak their own language. So, it's impressive that, relative or not, these good people put themselves in harms way for the sake of someone not even a tribal member. It wasn't until years later, that I recalled being in a secret "sweat lodge", where a group of four chanting large bear-like Native men, one beating a small drum, invoked the ancestors to have mercy on this fragile boy. Within twenty-four hours, my celiac and autistic symptoms disappeared, though the congenital defect in my spine was left as a gift. I have since learned that the blessing of celiac, a pre-diabetic condition, is to force one to recognize the dangers of an "acidic diet": too much sugar, alcohol, meat, starches and processed grains. In a modern world, it's a struggle for most people to evolve a healthy diet without junk food, cigarettes, caffeine, alcohol and pharmaceuticals, let alone a nutritious one, based on a variety of organic fruit, vegetables, wild grains, wild meat and wild sea food. Only now is it becoming understood that an acidic blood ph is the environment where disease develops. "Autism," now becoming a familiar word, like "Celiac," is still a mystery for most doctors, let alone the average schmo. For a child to bridge the completely connected intuitive world with the lonely analytical one, demands a major act of faith and trust in the scary world one's been born into. If one does not arrive into the warm and loving bosom of affectionate parents, this normal process of learning language and finding one's place can be delayed. Fortunately, I had a father who read me bedtime stories and regularly took me on long walks by the water or in the bush, which immediately calmed me. As a baby, my dad took me into the water swimming or canoeing with him, inspiring me to become a "water baby" for the rest of my life. It proved to be a blessing, that I was not properly diagnosed "autistic," until after I'd been cured, or I probably would have grown up being branded a "retard."

Practically overnight, my shyness fell away and I began to pack muscle onto my scrawny frame. Inspired by my athletic father, I embraced all sports. This, of course, led me to became "popular." However, my new "gift for the gab" was coupled with an insatiable curiosity and determination to challenge my teachers and the assumptions of this alien culture of modernity. After only a year or two, when I'd once been ready to piss myself for being challenged to "speak up" in front of the class, I embraced playing the guitar and would happily stand in front of a crowded room full of strangers regaling them with popular folk and country tunes. Though I loved swimming, hockey, tennis and baseball, my favourite was skiing. It wasn't sufficient for me to hurl myself down ski slopes at breakneck speeds, but that I had to challenge myself by joining the "Soo Ski Club" and race. At the age of sixteen, while taking part in National competition at a resort in Whistler, BC, after a personal best, I once again charged down a downhill course with a major death-wish. Whereupon, I proceeded to overshoot a turn at about eighty miles an hour, fly off a large mound, bounce off a giant boulder into the arms of a large immovable tree. Fortunately, part of me accepted my doom and I relaxed. Like the cliche, "everything went slow-mo and my life passed before my eyes." Instead of breaking every bone in my body and dying, the impact focused on my bottom two vertebrae, that had not properly fused due to my congenital defect.

A few days later, after being flown to Toronto to be operated on by a brilliant surgeon at the Toronto General Hospital, I came to in a striker frame, immobilized to help my new spinal fusion heal properly. Unfortunately, for the first two weeks after this operation, I remained paralyzed from the waist down. There was a long list of patients with similar issues, who were waiting to see if this doctor's innovative approach to spinal fusion was going to work, as I was the first guinea pig. Fortunately, one day a sweet elderly lady was walking by the open door of my private room, when on a whim she decided to chat me up. Without small talk, she immediately began explaining that ever since she was a child, she could see "auras," the magnetic field around our bodies, that reflected our awareness and state of mind. She was shocked that I should be so in pain, on so many different levels. Out of the blue, she enquired if I liked comic books! What sixteen year old didn't? Focusing on the Marvel character, "Green Lantern", she

suggested I imagine I had Green Lantern's "power ring." This is a piece of mystical jewelry that grants the wearer incredible and incomprehensible powers and abilities, by harnessing one's subconscious willpower, or "intent". (Considered by authorities on the subject to be the most powerful weapon in the known universe.) She encouraged me to imagine projecting a miniature version of myself armed with this ring into my body. To gravitate towards the area where tissue was damaged or diseased. Depending on my powers of concentration, it could be possible to actually visualize the cellular reconstruction, as I zapped the area with a green laser beam of healing energy. Farfetched as this all seemed, it seduced my volatile teenage imagination. After the kind lady wished me well and headed off to visit an old friend, I began to try out this zany and obviously flaky idea. Within twenty-four hours, my doctor was both shocked and delighted to discover that the feeling had come back into my legs.

After two more weeks of physiotherapy in a pool, I was equipped with a back brace and sent home. After six more months, I was full of piss and vinegar and happily water-skiing. Shortly thereafter, my parents decided to move to Toronto. They settled on a lovely home in Willowdale, near the Don River, for the then outrageous price of $65,000. The first neighbours my family bonded with was the Latimer family across the street and a few doors down. After stumbling through my grade thirteen, at the nearby "York Mills Collegiate", I happily spent a summer as a canoe-tripping counsellor at the Latimer's summer camp on Gull Lake, near the sleepy rural community of Minden. Have since learned that traditional tribal spiritual culture recognized five stages in the life of humans, as well as the life of mankind, that they explain through the metaphor of the cycles of the sun in the course of a day: dawn – from being born to childhood, noon – from adolescence into teenage child-rearers, early afternoon – child-rearing into grandchild rearers and evening to night – mature adult to death, or rebirth, as they saw it. Each of these layers or stages had an intact ritual initiation, that consolidated one's passage over the threshold into the next part of the journey. One did not discard any of the previous eras one passed through, but each new layer was added onto the previous one. When a teenager experienced their vision quest, it was so much more ample than childhood, that they assumed they were seeing everything there was to see. Youth would need to be pushed into the next stage by adults or external events, to keep them safe from living out their lives with too short a spiritual vision. This is what happens to most modern uninitiated teenagers, as they would never volunteer for initiation. These rituals were never performed for the benefit of the initiate, but to keep the universe alive and flowering



for all of us, by feeding the collective consciousness with delicious words of ceremony. Have always been intrigued by this ancient notion that God needs to be fed with our sincere poetic gratitude.

So, it is nothing short of miraculous, that someone like John Latimer, "the Chief," may the blessings of the "Great Spirit" be upon him, should have acted on his own "vision quest": to transform a conventional "summer camp" into an opportunity to corral the chaotic and undisciplined minds of emotionally crippled and deprived "modern" urban children. To ritually initiate them into a mystery school of nature, exercise and camaraderie, through the bonding magic of shared adventure. Though still healing from a traumatic childhood, I was honoured with the responsibility of looking after and inspiring a handful of children, all real characters in their own unique way. Though I operated with a crazed confidence, the truth was that I still had been making it up as I went, stumbling along my own private crooked path. So, it was nothing short of amazing and healing on a deep soul level, to realize such a wonderful positive affirmation, of being connected with this microcosmic tribal spiritual community. My apology for being so long-winded, but hope you get the gist of my story, my love and admiration for the Latimer family, who continue to carry on this important "Kilcoo tradition" for coming generations. As so elegantly expressed by my old friend and mentor, "Neil Young": "Don't let it bring you down, It's only castles burning... Find someone who's turning, And you will come around…"

DEREK STEPHEN
1968

KILCOO BUILDINGS OLD AND NEW

With the exception of the Sail Cabin (may it last forever) just about all of Kilcoo's buildings have been replaced over the years, in some cases twice. Even the admin building/tuck shop is being demolished and rebuilt in 2019-20. Pictured here are two renditions of Cabin 4 - The Hatchapoogoos Cabin from 1949, and the newer present cabin 4. It goes without much comment that building codes have changed in the past 70 years.





THE ADDED RISK OF CANOE TRIPS

I think over the several summers I worked at Kilcoo the most notable message I heard in pre-camp from Chief John Latimer concerned a counsellor's responsibility while on canoe trips and I am sure the same message was given every year by Chief Plewman, Hal Hannaford and Lub. Chief, in stressing the need for careful judgment diligent supervision would ask us to imagine if we had to be the ones to phone a parent to let them know a child of theirs had died during a trip under our leadership. I am positive this message resonated in all of us and it had impact. The reality is that the risk level for campers(and staff) increased significantly when we led our groups off camp property.

Kilcoo's tripping program grew slowly at first. Until the first canoes were purchased in the late 30's, "outtrips" were taken by rowboat to such exotic locations as Trout Rock, Long Island, and for the adventurous, as far as Little Bob or Big Bob Lake. Doug McLeod and Alan Smith were among the first counsellors to lead the way. In the 1940's Buttermilk Falls at the north end of Boshkung Lake became a common destination and under new staff member C.B. Davis the extra "step" was soon taken to Kennisis and Redstone and eventually Kawagama.

The first canoe trips to Algonquin Park in the late 1940's were a significant move forward in that campers had to be taken by truck with their canoes to access points like Canoe Lake. These six and nine day trips were later modified in the 1960's when groups of campers made their way from the Park all the way back to camp. Until 1957 these longer trips were reserved for only the oldest Senior campers but in August of that year Chief must have been somewhat wary of the added risk when he entrusted counsellors Bruce McCaffrey and Bill MacRae to lead a group of Intermediate(now Norwester) campers on a six day trip which they completed in four. What made Chief's willingness to take this risk rather surprising was the fact that in July of the same year two campers, Peter Benson and John Green, were run over by a drunk driver in a Beaverton park. Counsellor Bill Phipps had taken all the required precautions by arranging a permit to sleep in a designated campground, but it was an indicator that things can go wrong in spite of all efforts. Fortunately because the ground was very soft neither boy was seriously injured. I might mention at this point that Chief probably was never told that the Intermediate Algonquin trip he had sent out encountered several bears in one of their campsites that necessitated an all night fire, constant banging of pots and pans, and a hurried departure from the campsite at 6am. the following morning.

As tripping destinations expanded in the late 50's many trips set out southward from the camp to favourite campsites near Coboconk. However, after both John Dewan and I became quite sick from drinking the lake water during a trip to Bobcaygeon in 1959 it became apparent that the use of the camp truck to convey campers to more remote trip routes further north would be necessary and in the more recent era that transportation has been provided by bus.



With some sense of trepidation Chief initiated plans for Kilcoo campers to participate during 1965 and 1967 in a centennial project of the Canadian Camping Association which led to trips beyond Thunder Bay(Fort William then) and imagine the fear that went through him when, during the second of those trips, he received a call from the group that one of the campers was in hospital with a suspected ruptured appendix.

Nevertheless, tripping continued to evolve and in 1972 one group of CITs' were lost for two days in the Dumoine River area of Quebec before being found unharmed during airborne searches. In our fall, 2018 issue of the Gazette, Jim Cook related the almost mishap with attendant worrying from his trip to Lake Kipawa in 1983 and in our fall 2012 issue Jeff Lloyd recounted a trip where canoes were caught and separated during a thunderstorm. These recollections lead me to believe that many of our readers who led canoe trips during their camping days can probably recall almost accidents of a serious nature. Fortunately Kilcoo has not had to face such a disaster while some other camps have.

The 21st century has seen Kilcoo trips to the Nahanni in the arctic, trips to the coast of British Columbia and recent hiking trips, one of which in Lake Superior Provincial Park was cut short on orders from park officials because of the danger of a rogue bear. Yet, despite all of the risks and the worries they cause, tripping has always been a mainstay of Kilcoo's summer program and for many has been the reason for returning year after year. As the many skills required for leading these trips is passed on from one generation of staff to the next it is to be hoped that long repeated pre-camp message is never forgotten.

PAUL CHAMBERLAIN
1956-67



IDEAS ALWAYS WELCOME!

The Gull Rock Gazette is in trouble. Simply put, not enough articles are being submitted by alumni, and we may not be able to publish a regular issue in the fall.

If you need help to develop your ideas, please contact us by email at gazetteeditor@kilcoo.com and we will help you.