THE GULL ROCK GAZETTE

Volume 28 Issue 2 - Published by Kilcoo Camp - Autumn 2021
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MINDEN HILLS IS BEAR COUNTRY

I had so many remarkable experiences in my years at Kilcoo, but the theme here is bears, so bear with me. These animals long had a place in my childhood imagination after I was awakened one night as a Trailblazer camper in Cabin 4, under wonderful counsellor Larry Kerr, and taken to the Minden dump where we spotted a bear, or Larry dressed as one.

Minden Hills is bear country, black bear country (ursus americanus), where lurk creatures that weigh up to 600 pounds and measure 8 feet from nose to tail. Yet I never had any other encounter with a bear in my time at Kilcoo Camp, not even during my two summers as a trip guide in wilderness places like Kipawa (Algonquin for "at the narrows beyond which more water opens out") and Temagami ("deep waters by the shore").

Recently I drove across western Ontario by myself, and for two whole days I saw no wildlife at all. As I was nearing Thunder Bay, I thought back to that night at the Minden dump. It occurred to me that if I found a garbage dump, I'd likely find bears. It was not long after that I saw a sign for a local dump and drove my car part way up a gravel road until it was blocked by a chain fence with a small sign saying, "Closed. No trespassing." I ignored the warning, got out of the car and walked a hundred metres farther up the road's steep incline under the dark shade of towering deciduous trees. After cresting a small hill, I found myself on the unsightly and foul outskirts of a mundane-looking dump, but I did not see any bears.

I stood disappointed for a few minutes before realizing I was frightfully close to a very big black bear, which began to rise up and make visual and oral sense of a large new morsel in its adopted habitat. I quickly assessed my perilous situation. Nobody was around, but there was an old, rickety shack nearby, and I backed toward it as the bear lumbered toward me. Thankfully the door was unlocked and inside was a big axe. The axe gave me Trumpian confidence, for after seizing it I walked back outside to intimidate the bear before running for my life. Suddenly a conservation officer appeared out of nowhere, having raced up the road after seeing my parked car. He did not believe me when I told him that I had simply wanted to see a bear. He barked, "Nobody is that stupid!"

Yet there are many people that stupid. I was at a chairlift in Whistler in the summer and a big bear sprang out of a wooden area and toward a crowd of people. Instead of moving away from the bear, all sorts of tourists went right up to it to take a photo. This is never a good idea, to say the "bear" minimum.

There are lots of black bears near where I live in Surrey, B.C. and one went up to my portable classroom door to the astonishment of students. Fortunately, there are no grizzly bears near Vancouver, only drizzly bears in



the wet winter. My son spent a week in Wells, a village near the restored goldrush town of Barkerville in the barren middle of the province. He was told that he should not go on a walk outside the village as there were bears, wolves and cougars. This is the astonishing thing about Canada: its wilderness, its open spaces, its many lakes – more than all other countries combined.

Kilcoo has long prided itself on instilling a love of the outdoors, and in a time of human encroachment, climate change and species extinction, the canoe trips offer a valuable lesson on a natural world billions of years old. Indeed, the green shades of Kilcoo presaged the colour green as a symbol for environmental consciousness.

JIM MCMURTRY
1968-80

KILCOO OUTFLANKED COVID - AND WON

Just as Jay Haddad and his Camp Nokomis did, Grayson Burke and his Camp Cedar Ridge did, Melissa Millward's Trails Youth Initiative did, and Geoff Park's Camp Summit did (report in the spring Gazette), so too did Kilcoo devise and execute a plan that led to a successful summer with no outbreak of the virus.

There were many camps that did not open and a few that had to close due to outbreaks, but Kilcoo's plan worked. All staff and LIT's were tested upon their arrival and again 72 hours later. Parents arrived with their children and left immediately. Campers were tested upon arrival and whenever typical colds etc. appeared. Masks were worn except when eating at meal time, and there were two sittings which reduced the numbers in the lodge. An event tent was erected to allow for groups to be more spread out especially in rainy weather and cabin groups moved about in cohorts to reduce the close contact with other campers. There were 3 isolation cabins just in case, staff and LIT's were restricted during time off, and there was no Visitor's Day this summer.

The end result was a very successful summer.

EDITOR'S MUSINGS

In the fall, 2020 issue of the Gazette I wrote about the disappointment associated with camps not being opened, and this was echoed in articles from our alumni who have been directing their own camps.

How things have changed in 2021! We are certainly not yet back to "normal" and we may never return to what we always thought was "normal", but at least the horizon looks a lot better. After not being able to bring myself to pass through the camp gate in 2020, this past summer I was in camp on five different occasions and what a pleasure it was to see active, happy campers enjoying the activities. I am sure you will also see a big difference in the recounting of 2021 by Lub and the other 3 camp directors among us in this issue.

I must direct full accolades to David Latimer, Pat Tingley and their camp staff for the wonderful job they did in making sure Kilcoo was safe. When I arrived for the first time during precamp I was immediately directed to the infirmary to receive a Covid test and had I stayed for 72 hours I would have needed a second one. There is no question that camp was different this year, but like in all summers past the waterfront was busy, canoe trips went without a hitch, and Japan won the Kilcoo Olympics. Because of the missed year in 2020, Precamp became much more important in providing the necessary training for staff and LITs' and it worked.

Despite Kilcoo's summer success I am confident that we made the right decision to postpone the 2020 alumni reunion to next September, and the weekend we are planning will be better than ever I am sure.

It was strange this summer to see first year LIT's who had lost their last summer as campers in 2020 and 2nd year LIT's and 1st year counsellors who lost one year of the training they would have received to better prepare them for becoming Kilcoo's leaders. However, in saying this I despair for the number of camps that did not open their doors to campers in 2021 who have lost two years in developing their staff. For some camps, even survival as a business may yet be insurmountable.

For the tenth consecutive year I participated in Amici's Canoe Heads fund raising event and from my alumni supporters who were at Kilcoo when Amici was created or very soon after I was able to raise over $12,300. The event as a whole raised over $250,000 again while Amici's program in 2021 took on a different form. Coming out of my participation which involved paddling in Algonquin Park I embarked on an interesting exploration of the history of the Canoe Lake area as it related to Kilcoo's founder Charlie Plewman.

To those who have already read about the mysterious death of Group of Seven painter, Tom Thomson, you may have been aware that Charlie Plewman was one of the pall bearers at Tom Thomson's funeral. This was in 1917, fifteen years before Kilcoo began its operation.

It seems that Charlie arrived by train at Canoe Lake in July, 1917 to stay at Mowatt Lodge to help in his recovery from illness. At the time Algonquin was promoted by the Ontario government as being a refuge from illnesses that were widespread among city dwellers, and Mowatt was one lodge that accepted people suffering from tuberculosis though that may not have been Charlie's case. Once there, Charlie became familiar with Tom Thomson and his artwork, and while he did not immediately appreciate the quality of Tom's work, it may have sparked an interest in painting which became his main hobby much later in life. That summer at Canoe Lake may also have planted the seed that led to Charlie's creation of Kilcoo.

Both he and Taylor Statten had worked with the YMCA and Charlie had succeeded Taylor as the Boys' Work secretary. Taylor was the one who had arranged for Charlie to come to Canoe Lake and I have no doubt they talked about Taylor's plans to start his own camp (Ahmek) which he did in 1921. While Charlie had directed two different camps in Ontario earlier, Kilcoo became his life's mission when he began renting the camp property in the winter of 1931.

So much for Kilcoo's ancient history. Looking ahead to 2022, registration of campers is well underway, it looks like most of the 2021 staff will return still wanting to make up for the lost summer and hopefully Kilcoo will be just as safe as it was this past July and August. We also anticipate a great return to the shores of Gull Lake for many alumni on the 4th Friday in September (the 23rd). More details are provided elsewhere in this issue.

In the meantime please be safe everyone and stay healthy. We're not totally free of this virus yet!

PAUL CHAMBERLAIN
1956-67

FINALLY!!

We are confident that the 2020 alumni reunion will be held the weekend of September 23rd to 25th, 2022 - that is in 10 months. Please join us to celebrate 91 years of Kilcoo Camp. Many of you registered and paid prior to the summer of 2020, and we hope you will still be part of a great return to the shores of Gull Lake.

For those who have not registered please send your application (attached) with payment to the camp office. More information will be included in the May, 2022 issue of the Gazette and e-mails will be sent to those attending.

As we postponed in 2020 and then again in 2021, many of you commented that when the time came that the reunion would go ahead, it would have to be quite a celebration - and it will be!





FIRESIDE CHAT

From Lub and the entire Latimer Family

Hello, Alumni. I hope you have all had a wonderful fall season; and although we did not have the Staff Reunion, we are all looking forward to September 23rd to 25th, 2022, when we can be together again on the shores of Gull Lake. We will have so much to celebrate!



It is October 24th as I write this note, and I have just finished my final Polar Bear dip of the season. The morning was a bit of a chilly one, so I was glad to be joined by Scott Russell on this beautiful day to enjoy one of our great (albeit not for everyone!) Kilcoo traditions. To me, this is the "official" end to the camping season, and I have to say, what a remarkable summer we had at Kilcoo. The summer was one that many people thought was never going to happen, and now here we are, two months since the August final banquet. The summer was a special time, two months of true Kilcoo Magic. I must say that the support of our Alumni has been amazing, and I appreciate you all more than you know.



Now, to explain a little better how we all felt about the summer, I thought I would include a couple of excerpts from the beginning and end of my final banquet speech in August. All of you have been to these banquets and I am sure you remember listening to me, or to Hal, to Chief, to Charlie Plewman all reflecting on your summer's past… what remarkable moments.

The beginning: ***We did it, boys and girls . . . we did it! I have so much going through my head tonight, but I know when people ask about this summer, the words, "We did it!" have never proved more appropriate for me. To get to this point after so much doubt, so many "non Kilcoo" nay-sayers and so many hurdles; I literally could finish with the "I did it" words, sing Maker of Men, shed many tears of joy and then call it a final speech and call it a summer, but I would like to add a few things and to share with you how I feel tonight.***

I have always felt fortunate to have this opportunity to speak to you all. It is my 37th final banquet speech in August and I have to believe my most important. It is also Kilcoo's 90th Final Banquet speech in August, and I would never say that it was the most important summer ever, but one that is very fitting for Kilcoo and all that came before and all that will come after. I will say that I have never felt prouder to be at Kilcoo and I have never felt prouder of all of you around me. Please never underestimate what we all did and what we all did together in this, the craziest of times, and I think we all have so much we can take away from our adventure here. And you know what, Covid did not define us, it did not change our spirit, it did not change our soul. In fact, it has made us better and stronger and closer than ever before. I also believe it has made us appreciate what we have that much more, and if we don't realize it now, I know you will all realize it later at some point.

The End: ***As you listen to Kermit singing the Rainbow Connection (a tradition since my first year as Director), I hope you will think of those moments you will miss; those people you will miss and those people you love – old and new – friends of all ages. I hope you will think of what you have accomplished and what you are going to do to make the world around us . . . well, maybe more like Kilcoo. This moment now . . . right here . . . it is ours; we own it; we did it and we are all part of the 90th year of Kilcoo Camp, perhaps our best year ever.***

Be proud of yourselves everyone. We did it! I love you all, I am very sad to say this is the end, but I feel good knowing we did it together.

So, that was some of my speech, and as you can imagine it was quite emotional. Thank you to all of you Alumni once again for your support. Please enjoy this issue of the Gazette and please reach out to all of your friends from this special place on Gull Lake.

RIP RAM RAZZLE SCRAM
DAVID "LUB" LATIMER

MISADVENTURES AT KILCOO

I was Trip Director in 2004 and 2005. Trip Director is one of the few jobs at camp that truly involves the outside world. Whereas 99% of staff are focused on internal camp matters (e.g. cabin clean up, kayaking, etc), the tripping department toils in a vineyard beyond the confines of the Kilcoo Bubble. This creates all kinds of potential for amusing interactions, and I enjoyed more than my fair share of them in my two years on the job. There are two standout memories (both involving federal authorities!) that I'll describe below for your entertainment.

In 2004, I sent three cabins (22, 23, and Sail) to the Adirondacks without proper permits. Oops. My bad! Specifically, the group sizes were too large for "overnight camping" (maximum 10), but not too large for "hiking" (maximum 15). These cabins, of course, wanted to both hike and camp. My error (I blame the proctological specificity of the park admin staff who told me that it was fine if I sent a group of 13 to "hike the Adirondacks") ultimately subjected the counsellors to rather inhumane treatment by the Adirondack park rangers, who apparently have difficulty seeing the park, I mean forest, for the trees. The counsellors were threatened with arrest and told that the "crime" (walking around a big forest with a couple too many people and improper paperwork) they had committed was a grave federal offence.



After several hours of waterboard-style intimidation, the official penalty was handed down in all its severity: there would be a small fine, and a polite request to "follow the damn rules next time, or else!!" As an apologetic gesture of good faith to the Federal Authorities, the Kilcoo boys not only paid the fine promptly and in full, but also offered to spend an hour or so cleaning up a nearby campsite that had been recently littered with beer cans and fireworks by a mob of local college students. It was the Adirondacks equivalent of the scene from Alice's Restaurant. The three affected counsellors happened to include two of my closest friends (Steve Hull and Dan Krausz), and my brother (Rob Mackay), so we get to sit around and have a good laugh about it quite regularly.

Summer 2005, for me, was the summer of the EPIRB. Ever heard of an EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon)? I sure hadn't. But apparently Kilcoo has one, and it (usually) is located on a top shelf of the trip den innocuously collecting dust. I can't explain much about EPIRBs, but I do know two things: first, they make terrific props in Kilabaloo skits; secondly, they work. And indeed, on an otherwise forgettable Sunday night in August 2005 Paddy Scace and his Sail Cabin found the EPIRB and cleverly incorporated it into a highly amusing Kilabaloo skit. What nobody (sic) could have ever predicted was that, after the skit, some camper would get hold of the device, and turn it ON.

I guess that's around about when it all started to happen. With the EPIRB in the ON position (it's little red light shining like a beacon), the signal was sent. A military search and rescue plane swooped in (several days later by the way) and started dropping flares onto Apache Park in the middle of the night in response to the signal. I thought it was game over for all of us at Kilcoo. Marc Russell was awake at the time and said he was convinced he was witnessing WW3. After a few harrowing hours, the flares subsided (the army finally came to the realization that the signal was initiated in error).



A representative from the Army came by in the morning; Lub and I explained the situation and apologized for the error. Lub also managed to talk the authorities out of the typical $50,000 fine in one of the most entertaining negotiations I have ever witnessed in my life, let alone at camp!

SANDY MACKAY
1995-2005

REST HOUR WAS ANYTHING BUT

As a Trailblazer, I was first introduced to the completely foreign concept of sitting around for a full hour after lunch. This didn't go over very well. The Hulk and Richie Rich comics were okay for a while, but soon I became restless and found myself outside running around more than once.

As LITs, we were too 'smart' to just sit around during rest hour. We raced down to the Tower after lunch for the "best sun" – an opportunity to work on our tans (hey, this was the 80s!). Vuarnet sunglasses on and sunblock for the nose. When we weren't jumping off the tower through inner tubes, we lay on the dock, cursing every cloud that blocked the sun for even a minute. John Turnbull borrowed the rescue board and seemed to paddle around "arms only" every day for the entire hour!

It was also a time for lifting weights under the Lodge. My goal was to bulk up enough to get some respect from my older brother Gord (1976-87) and to handle carrying a canoe over portages. I had also heard that's how Blanny (Dave Blandford) became ridiculously strong, so I figured if it was good enough for him, it might be good enough for me!

During my last summer at Kilcoo, most Rest Hours were spent playing basketball behind the tennis courts. Lub and Peter Currie were formidable opponents and sometimes knocked me around under the basket – they were waaaay too sweaty to guard! I had no choice but to learn to shoot the 3 that summer!

I never seemed to understand Rest Hour. I still don't!

PAUL DAVIDSON
1977-85

THE KILCOO MUSEUM

Clearly, the Covid pandemic caused the brakes to be applied to our plans for the museum. The permits were in place, but prices for materials such as wood had skyrocketed and the "supply chain" for many of the required materials had become a problem. However, we are preparing for construction to begin in the fall of 2022. We will provide many more details in the Gazette's spring issue, but please don't forget we need any artifacts you may have that you are willing to donate.

2021: WHAT A BOUNCEBACK FOR CAMP NOKOMIS

We all know that 2020 was a horrible year due to Covid-19: for families, schools, camps, travel, restaurants – all businesses! We didn't know what to expect for 2021 but we were hopeful. The Premier of Ontario said in May (2021) to "plan for overnight summer camps" to take place! My son Zak, our Camp Director, is a physical education teacher in the private school system, and his co-director, Alexa Skinner, is also a physical education teacher in Toronto – so they were both very familiar with Covid protocols: masking, distancing, disinfecting, Zoom teaching, rapid testing etc. They both worked diligently with our Public Health Unit (Wellington-Dufferin) on a camp-wide safety plan: for entry to camp, the Dining Hall, the cabin groups (each cabin was now a cohort), activities, washrooms – it was as exhausting as it was comprehensive! In June, the Health Ministry announced free Abbott Covid-19 Nasal Rapid Tests were available to camps for the cost of shipping. Zak called our pharmacist in Fergus, Ontario, and she didn't know what he was talking about, but she told him to go ahead and order the first 200 tests through the government portal. She called him ten minutes later to say, "Wow, this is all new to us but you're our first camp in – your tests will arrive next Monday."

Campers had been registering for Nokomis throughout May and June and we had a contingency plan for our Leader-in-Training program even if camps were cancelled (a four-week co-ed leadership camp for all 40 LITs). Two other events really helped us in June: a police biker gang rented the camp (imagine 60 Harleys on our basketball court!) and a Netflix movie came in for four days of filming, which ended as our pre-camp training started. This kick-started our income as we were about to issue scores of 2020 refunds!

It kind of felt like a foregone conclusion but the province announced on June 30 that overnight camps could officially open on July 3 – our first day of boys camp.

GAME ON – no buses, but all campers arrived in two waves. The cars parked between numbered pylons, greeted by a senior taff member who performed the screening and administered the 15-minute Rapid Antigen Test. During the wait, our nurse approached each car and took medications and answered any questions.

Once all the campers were in camp with their leaders, everything began to feel more normal. We employed more program staff as each cabin (cohort) had their own full daily schedule. The Dining Hall WAS different: meal graces were sung outside, hands were disinfected upon entry and masks worn to the tables (then removed). Food service was all "family style" with platters of food on each table; only the leaders could get up to get more food or clear the tables; after Zak and Alexa did announcements, masks came back on and tables departed the Dining Hall one at a time.

One could feel the parental excitement at drop-off: seeing their kids back to summer camp after a year and a half of cooped-up isolation! Of course, many moms yelled for me, "Jay, can I get out of the car to go make his bed?" "No," I would say, "not this year – but I will make sure he's all tucked in and his pillow is fluffed!"

The campers were thrilled to be back – we all were, really, and every week was filled to capacity. I had daily phone calls with requests for our availability with surges coming when other camps closed due to Covid outbreaks! At the end of August we even squeezed in a week-long rental of an LGBTQ camp. We hosted two weddings in September and we have 5 already booked for 2022, with couples walking through Nokomis every weekend looking for available dates.

The campers had a great 2021, the LITs are unbelievably strong, and we are back – and ready for 2022 and more!

JAY HADDAD
1959-73, 1980-82



TRAILS YOUTH INITIATIVE - BACK IN 2021

Melissa Millward joined the Kilcoo staff in 2009 and following her time at Kilcoo became director of Trails Youth Initiative in 2016. Youth Trails "recruits" students from the greatest at risk neighbourhoods in Toronto and provides a summer and winter program as she describes below, one that certainly has proven to have a great impact on those children's lives. In Melissa's description of her program we can see again the influence of Kilcoo on the lives of young people.

Kilcoo completely changed my life. As an Advance Camp Williams Parkway school kid, I stepped off the bus and would forever be known as Brown Eyes. Other than watching Parent Trap, I had never experienced the 'camp community' and quickly fell in love with the Kilcoo magic. I viscerally remember Marc 'Lonewolf' Russell guiding me through the high ropes commando crawl. "Look straight down (60 ft by the way)...balance on one leg, arms in front and just slide." Not a chance. But, when I got to the other side and finished wiping away my tears, a smile of pride came over my face. I would later learn from Chissy, and eventually I would be that person guiding campers to achieve whatever they set their mind to.



That's it - the simple camp recipe we all got hooked on. Camp provides an opportunity for challenge and growth buffered by a consistent, caring person who is there for you no matter what. Lub has exemplified this love and friendship to me since I was 12. He and Beth are the reason I learned about Trails Youth Initiatives and I have been the president since 2016.

Trails was founded in 1992 by Kilcoo alum (1982-89) Jim Hayhurst Jr. (known to us at Trails as "Jimmy") and his dad Jim Sr. ("Hurst"). Hurst passed away in February 2020, right before we were to be hit by the pandemic. The man I turned to for guidance was gone, but as he had planned, others stepped in to support - and not surprisingly, many of them have Kilcoo connections.

Jimmy serves on Trails' Board of Governors and supports me as a personal advisor, bringing both his Kilcoo values and his experience as Trails' founding Executive Director. Other Kilcoo folk – notably Tim Wilson, Jimmy's early Trails right-hand man – have continued the Trails/Gull Lake connection to this day: Dave Spindler with Rally Beer for events, Jon Purdy with New Balance shoes, Joey Lyons with memorabilia for our fundraising auctions, Brad Moyle as a facilitator, Marblehead as a sounding board... and of course Lub for anything and everything.

Our mission - which Lub was instrumental in helping craft as an original Trails board member - is to challenge and equip vulnerable youth to become contributing members of the community. We recruit forty 12 year olds each year from Toronto's highest risk neighborhoods who come for two weeks in the summer and one weekend a month, for at least four years. Funded entirely through private donations ($1.5 million a year), the 4 Seasons, 4 Years, 4 Life program has changed the lives of 1000s of people. Recognized as one of Maclean's Best Canadian Charities for our deep impact, a staggering 99% of Trails youth graduate highschool (compared to a 50% drop out rate of peers) and currently 41 students are pursuing post-secondary school, paid for by Trails.

Though his mother's side of the family ran the Taylor Statten Camps - and Hurst had been chairman of Outward Bound - Jimmy meshed the best of those worlds but brought mostly Kilcoo traditions to Trails, like clapping out of a meal, nightly Taps and lonely vigils. More than just a summer camp, Trails' year-round, long term program has a multitude of added elements like behavioural interventions, coaching non-violent communication and the debriefing of activities to ensure transference of camp learnings to street life.

Trails' is often our participants' only chance to change the trajectory of their lives. This is true for alumnus Collin Caleb who says, "Trails saved my life. I believe this with everything in me. Without Trails, I would be either dead or in jail." Collin is a far cry from the troubled boy he once was, now managing a successful music studio.

The relevance of – and need for – Trails throughout Covid has never been greater. It was never a matter of IF we would continue to support our youth, but simply HOW we could do it best. Our youth depend on us and Trails, like a family, to always be there for them. We created Virtual Trails, Family Camps, Trails Saturdays (day camp at Trails) and Summer City Day Camps where we explored Toronto's urban wild, hiking,

Continued on next page...







canoeing and even garnering the attention of a police marine rescue unit while practising canoe-over-canoe rescues on Lake Ontario.

And that brings us to summer 2021. Things we never thought about in the past - like creating Covid-protocols, performing rapid tests, and no mixing of cabin groups were now part of our operations. We had heightened awareness of the increased struggles for our families with food scarcity, lack of access to outdoor space, increased exposure to violence, drugs and crime. Unexpected challenges included lower physical stamina and mental exhaustion as seen when one of our LITs fell asleep sterning a canoe in Algonquin Park. Where we would normally create challenges to overcome, we had to opt for a gentler approach.

Covid has taught us many lessons in flexibility, creativity, failing forward and focusing on what is right vs what is difficult, that we will carry into our uncertain future. One thing remains certain, by deeply impacting one life at a time, Trails youth succeed, pay it forward and lead by example, so that they, as well as those they inspire, have a chance at a successful and meaningful future.

MELISSA MILLWARD
2009-2013

A SUMMER WE WILL NEVER FORGET





Three months ago, during the season's final candlelight ceremony on the beach at Cedar Ridge Camp, our campers and staff discussed their summers. We talked about making new friends, overcoming home sickness, learning how to shoot an arrow, and so much more. Camp is different for everyone. But this year, one common theme emerged: a shared appreciation for how lucky we were to be back in a place we all love, and to experience it together. From the day the campers rolled in through to that night on the beach and beyond, that feeling never faded. We were lucky and we knew it.

Back in April, there was little optimism that camp would run as many of our peers began to close or pivot to family camps. Then, on a Sunday afternoon in late May, Doug Ford made the unexpected announcement that we had the green light. The news spurred equal parts joy and anxiety about the prospect of operating during a pandemic. Throughout it all, our belief in the importance of summer camp for kids never wavered, so we accepted the challenge with as much gusto – albeit, much more thought and rigor – as we would a lunchtime dare in the lodge.

Three months later, as I sat listening to our campers share their experiences at that candlelight ceremony, there was no question that all the effort was worth it. This summer we had the pleasure of hosting 327 amazing campers and 47 dedicated staff members who all returned home happy, healthy, and with near-countless stories to share. During that time, it was incredible to see the laughter, new friendships, high-fives, triumphs, and challenges return to camp.

Every summer is memorable, but this one will stick with us forever. And we're so grateful for it and excited for the next one.

GRAYSON BURKE
1998-2005

AN APPEAL TO ALL ALUMNI

With this issue of the Gazette I have now used up all the articles that have been submitted. The Gull Rock Gazette has been part of the alumni for 28 years and going forward I will need you, a lot of you, to unharness your creative skills to provide me with material.

I hope for many of you, thinking of things to write about will be easy, in fact some of you have been repeat contributors to the Gazette, but now I have to plan the spring, 2022 issue. Recall a favourite time or event at camp, favourite people who influenced you, get togethers you have been having with other alumni, or what you are doing now either in your career or using your own family or holiday time and how Kilcoo might have influenced your choices.

But please, I need material. If you can offer something please let me know at pchamp@sympatico.ca. If you are not sure what to write about, I can help.

ANOTHER CANOE BUILDER AT KILCOO

In the spring of 2020, I was looking forward to big plans of adventure for the coming summer. I had finished high school that January and had spent the ski season working at Blue Mountain and living at my cottage in Collingwood. Once the resort closed, I was planning on hiking the Bruce Trail, from Niagara Falls to Tobermory, and then after that I was set to spend the rest of my summer as a first-year staff member at Kilcoo as a tripper. These plans all changed when Covid-19 started appearing on the news. First some events at the ski hill got cancelled, then the whole resort closed, and then a few weeks later I had to make the decision that the Bruce Trail hike wasn't going to happen, but through those first few months of staying at home I was always hopefully looking forward towards getting to spend my summer in a canoe at Kilcoo.





Sometime that May we all got the letter from Lub explaining that camp would be cancelled. This was a huge disappointment for me as I'm sure it was for all staff and campers; however I realized that I had an opportunity. I was going to have the next several months with no school, job, or anything else to eat up my time, and I decided that I needed some sort of project to work on. Soon after that I came across a YouTube video of a guy building a cedar strip canoe, and my mind was made up. I decided that if I couldn't be at camp in a canoe, then building one at home would be the perfect way to keep the camp spirit alive.

I started out by buying the book Canoecraft by Ted Moores which became my guide for most of the process. From there I needed to decide on a shape and initially wanted to build a Kilcoo Minto as I liked the connection it would have to camp. I emailed Kilcoo's master canoe builder Marc Russell, and he gave me a lot of great information, but also explained that moulds only exist for cedar canvas Kilcoo Mintos and drafting plans for a cedar strip one would be a lot of extra work. Instead, I ordered plans for a 15' Chestnut Prospector Ranger from Bear Mountain Boat Works in Westport Ontario. From there I was ready to start.

I convinced my parents to let me take over our garage, drove down to Chatham to borrow a router table and a few other tools from my grandpa's shop, and then bought some cedar board and started milling them into ¼" x ¾" strips. The next step was the most enjoyable: one by one I glued and stapled the strips onto a form and slowly the shape of the canoe came to life. After that I did a lot of planing, sanding, and scraping to make the whole hull smooth and then it was time to apply the fiberglass by stretching it over the hull and wetting it out with epoxy. This was the most stressful part as I had no idea how to work with epoxy, and there was no easy way to fix things if I messed up. Luckily, the fiberglass turned out reasonably well, and I was then on to milling the gunwales out of a piece of ash. By the time I finished the gunwales and attached them to the canoe it was almost the end of August, and I had to put a pause on the project to move out west and start university and UBC Okanagan.

That winter when I came home for Christmas I got back to work and made decks, seats, and a thwart out of a piece of teak that my grandpa gave me. When I flew back out west for the second semester all I had left to do was to install these parts and then give the boat a few coats of varnish. In the spring, we finally got the good news that camp would run. I was set to be a tripper again, but at the last minute got switched to being Handicraft instructor (I think Lub had heard about my project). I knew that bringing the canoe to camp for its maiden voyage would be the perfect way to finish the project, but I didn't fly back until the end of June and only had about 4 days to put on 6 coats of varnish – 3 on the inside and 3 on the outside. I put on the last coat at about midnight of my last day home and then the next morning it was just about done and ready to drive to camp, all it needed was a name.

I decided on Maryward after the street it was built on which got its name from a boat that sank in Georgian Bay in 1872. At camp I spent as much time as I could paddling my canoe in Gull Lake. I also spent a lot of free time in the Handicraft building and continued to teach myself a lot about woodworking. At the start of July, I bought some cherry wood from a Minden local and made myself a paddle. I then soloed my canoe with the paddle I made which was one of the coolest feeling experiences of my life. I don't think I ever would have built a canoe if it hadn't been for the pandemic and the year off camp. Of course, the lockdown was difficult for everyone, but it also gave me an opportunity to develop a passion for canoeing and woodworking that I will carry through my life.

As I write this, I am back out west at school, but I have a super cool trip planned with my canoe for when I go back to Ontario in the spring. I also can't wait to get back to Gull Lake and spend another summer at Kilcoo; I think I might actually be a tripper this time.

STU MCGORMAN
HANDICRAFT INSTRUCTOR
2021