# THE GULL ROCK GAZETTE

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## KILCOO'S MUSICAL MEMORIES FROM 1946-1954

*The following article by Jim Wyse in fact provides an historical view of Kilcoo in the late 40's. It will trigger some good memories among alumni who were at camp during the last 10 years under Charlie Plewman's leadership and offer a glimpse of what camp was like for alumni whose years extend up to the present day. Jim has contributed some of the photos and I have also taken from photos taken by MacLangford and Paul Cragg. For alumni at camp in 1960, the figures in the Senior Section tent are camper Bob Batson and counsellor Kyle Spitzer.*

Today is my 83rd (Oct 27th, 2021) birthday. Looking back more than 75 years to 7 summers spent at Kilcoo Camp is enjoyable, but it's also a real challenge. To be hon-est, I am finding it very difficult to recall many of the details from those wonderful sum-mers, largely because we were having so much fun. Everything about those two months every summer has become a blur of activities, of canoe trips, of laughter, of friendships, of mosquitoes, and even of poison ivy! In my case my 'camper' years last-ed for five years from age 7 to age 11 in 1950. And then, after a 3-year hiatus, I re-turned as a 15-year-old in 1954 for two more summers as a Counsellor In Training (CIT).

Many, many years later, I asked my parents what led them to send me off to Kilcoo Camp? As it happened, my father and Chief Charlie Plewman were members and friends at the old Toronto Curling Club. The war had just ended and our family did not have a summer cottage at that time, so my father felt that I would be better served be-ing away from Toronto's sweltering summer heat. I would be learning important life-long skills, but also giving him more freedom to play golf! So, in 1946, off to Kilcoo I went, for two full months, and I loved it!

My first 2 summers at Kilcoo Camp were spent in the Prep Camp located in the first bay south of the main camp.(Braeside Bay). The Prep Camp had approximately 8 to 10 cabins sprinkled along the waterfront and each cabin had about 6-8 kids in it. I don't remember too much of the specifics but I do recall that we had all our meals in an enormous circus-like tent located up towards the highway. During one particularly windy thunderstorm, that huge tent blew down, which caused tremendous confusion for the food service for the next few days: the time that it took to get it back up again.

For important occasions we would hike over to the main camp, passing by the horse stables and riding ring. There was a large teepee located by the stables and one of our really big thrills was to have a sleepover in the teepee with the real indigenous Chief, listening to his stories. John Latimer was a Prep Camp CIT in my first year, and by the time I graduated to the Junior Section of the main camp in 1948, John had become a really energetic counsellor who led the camp cheer: "Rip, Ram, Razzle, Scram. . ." bounding from table to table in the lodge with the kind of zeal that would put the "Ener-gizer" bunny to shame.

One song that sticks in my mind from my Prep Camp days, was "Abdulah Bulbul Amir". My mental image is of a group of us little guys sitting 'round a campfire, and program director Ed Devitt pulling out his guitar and performing all 10-verses of that wonderful ditty.

*The sons of the Prophet were hardy and bold*
*And quite unaccustomed to fear,*
*But the bravest of all, at least so I am told,*
*Was Abdulah Bul Bul Ameer.*

*There were heroes in plenty and men known to fame*
*In the army then led by the Czar,*
*But none of more fame than a man by the name*
*Of Ivan Skavinski Skavar...*

In 1948 at age 9, I graduated to the main camp as a Junior and was assigned to the Long House on the main campus. The following year, still a Junior, I graduated to the Hatchapoogoo Tribe cabin tucked away in the woods.



Some of the highlights from that period included my passion for canoe trips. I also enjoyed the wood-working shop, and of course swimming and diving. I recall successfully completing the Island swim, followed by the infamous Triangle swim as a Junior. I had earned a number of life-saving badges as well as the Red Cross swimming

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# EDITOR'S MUSINGS

It is the last weekend in March, it is snowing outside, and the temperature in the Kilcoo area is -10° Celsius. With all this it is hard to believe that some of the camp staff will be arriving in just over 5 weeks to begin preparation for the 2022 summer. I still feel badly for the large number of staff who have become alumni prematurely because camp did not operate in 2020, and yet I have been hearing from many of them and am quite impressed about the career paths or educational pursuits they are following. Whereas in the 1960's when I was at camp a majority of staff attended the University of Western Ontario, it seems now the favoured one is Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

This issue of the Gazette presents an interesting view of Kilcoo's history during the 1940's and 50's with articles by Jim Wyse and Warren Castle. I was saddened by not being able to talk with Warren about his writing before he passed away in December, but his daughter, Kelley, was able to follow through for him. Jim was rather lucky because his winery was at considerable risk from the many forest fires in southern British Columbia last year-a close call.

Many friends were upset to hear of the unexpected passing of Trevor Pedlar late last fall and three other alumni from earlier times also passed away. Joan Boydell, cousin and close friend of Charlie Plewman's youngest daughter Betty-Anne past away in December, I just received word that Stewart Coxford (1943) passed away February 12th, and alumnus Paul Bredin (1978) has confirmed that his father, Peter Bredin (1943) passed away on June 25th, 2021. After the text of the Gazette was finalized John Carruthers and Richard Bendera advised me that Murray Stranks (1968) had passed away and I found out from brother Dean that Bill Phipps (1955) had died. Too many losses for sure.

I think many of you will be able to identify with Scott Labbett's recollection of a first visit to The Rocklciffe and Jeff Fisher's account of how a very difficult camper became not so difficult.

I hope all of you are staying safe and as healthy as can be. With all the precautions being taken at Kilcoo, I expect the summer of 2022 to be the best.

***PAUL CHAMBERLAIN***

## 2020 Alumni Reunion (2 years late)

The Covid numbers are dropping and vaccination numbers are going up so we are hopeful that the 2020 reunion, 2022 version, will work - and it should be quite a celebration - 90 years of Kilcoo's operation.

If you have not yet sent in your application (see the last page of this Gazette) or payment, please do as soon as you can to reserve your place. Details are on the application form.

**PLEASE NOTE:** YOU MUST BE FULLY VACCINATED TO ATTEND THE REUNION OR GOLF ON THE FRIDAY AFTERNOON. FULL VACCINATIONS MEAN 2 VACCINATIONS PLUS A BOOSTER.

# FIRST OUTING AT THE ROCKCLIFFE

It was the summer of 1972 when Chief (John Latimer) took a chance on me. The opportunity, to be a first year CIT (LIT), as an 18 yr old Kilcoo rookie. Since it was soon after a near fatal car accident I had been in, it presented a huge challenge to see if I could keep up and handle the demands and responsibilities of the position.

Naturally, pre-camp was my introduction. It proved to be a fun, demanding, and a learning experience for most, if not all of us 'first years.'

The culmination of the week of training was of course, a night off. At the time the dominant time-off hot spot was THE WORLD FAMOUS ROCKCLIFFE HOTEL (bar).




Eighteen was the legal drinking age then, so that was no worry. But the prospect of getting a little tipsy with a new bunch of friends, in my recov-ering situation, was probably not the best circumstance for my introduction to 'The Cliff".

Fortunately, Larry Gill, '72 Swim Staff, had similar reservations about getting rowdy at the bar. And to make it even better, Larry had wheels!

Our plan was to turn it down a few notches. Get a 6 pack, go up to the Minden Look-out, enjoy a couple of brewskies in a more relaxed setting, then responsibly head back to camp.

Now, me being 18 and unaware, stupid, or ignoring the law was pretty standard behaviour. Larry, was American where drinking in public spaces is much more the norm. We were pleasantly enjoying our beer and chips/burgers or whatever (it was 49 years ago), and the view from our picnic table perch when,... who should drive up to the deserted park, non other than your local constable.

Drinking in a park without a permit or whatever one needs is illegal, and after hearing our explanation the officer was more than happy to take possession of the remaining beers, take our names, and send us on our way.

Wanting to be honest and responsible, Larry and I returned to Kilcoo a little ashamed, but not charged. The first thing to be done was tell Chief, hopefully before the attending officer got his ear.

Our explanation/apology to Chief was brief and kind of funny, as his response was understandably serious, but at the same time he was enjoying a huge chuckle from our blunder.

***SCOTT LABBETT***
***1972-1980***

# FIRESIDE CHAT

*From Lub and the entire Latimer Family*

Hello Alumni,

I am honoured once again to be able to add my thoughts and well wishes to the spring addition of the Gull Rock Gazette. As always, I have to say a huge Thank You to Paul for his continued and stellar work as the editor, and for playing such an important role in all things Kilcoo… helping to share stories of the past years at camp, while continuing to work with our LITs and sharing his insights with our entire group in pre-camp, helping to craft the present moments on Gull Lake.

As I write this message, our "real world" outside the bubble of camp is not in a good place. The terrible situation in Ukraine continues, and the pandemic still lingers. The sometimes overwhelming issues of hardship in the real world certainly make one appreciate the simple life and positive leadership that our camp provides. I feel we are moving in the right direction with regards to the pandemic, with a return to "normal life" being a huge benefit to the kids in our communities. The stories of hope, caring, hard work and empathy on the fringes of the war and the pandemic are inspiring. They reminded us of the amazing qualities in many people who are always trying to help and to fix even the worst of situations.

We have all said it at some point while on the shores of Gull Lake, and I think it has never been more important: that "the world needs camp". The world needs the lessons of summer camp; it needs more empathy, compassion and understanding. The world needs more kindness, co-operation and hard work. The world needs the values we talk about every Sunday at Chapel Point and I hope you are all still living those values today.



*Typical late winter waterfront*

I am so happy that many of us can all be together again on Gull Lake for the September 23rd weekend. The reunion will follow our 91st summer, which begins when the Advance Camp crew goes up to camp on May 2nd. We have a full slate of summer campers, and a full season of school groups and weekend social groups returning this spring. We are returning to the Nahanni River in July and we have four separate adventure trips going to BC! Kent & Rick have been looking after camp, and it looks awesome.

I did my first Advance Camp FORTY years ago, in 1982, with Ian "Easy' Currie leading Tim Ernst, Dave "Red" Graham, Scott "McB" McBurney, Mike Newediuk, Mike Peever, and Mike "Woody" Sherwood… and now my twin boys, TJ & Charlie, will be up at camp with their buddies this spring. It is pretty cool. TJ & Charlie, and a number of their crew of friends are now part of the Senior Staff at Kilcoo. Charlie is Waterfront Director and TJ is an LIT Director, I can't quite believe it, where have the years gone… wow!

So, there you have it. I feel so honoured to be able to lead and run Kilcoo. My wife, Beth (who was happy to get back to work as an Art Therapist this spring) and my daughter, Brooke (a DAL student and a Tanamakoon Senior Staff member, which is awesome!) join the boys and me in our passion for Kilcoo and summer camping. My Mom says hello from her Leaside retirement home where she is doing well. She encourages you all to eat your oatmeal; and along with my brothers, Jeff & Mike, hope you all have a great spring and summer.

So, please enjoy the Gazette and I always hope it takes you back to your wonderful days on Gull Lake. Please visit anytime! Rip Ram Razzle Scram!
David "Lub" Latimer

***RIP RAM RAZZLE SCRAM***
***DAVID "LUB" LATIMER***

## Kilcoo Museum Update

The dream of the Kilcoo historical Museum is still alive but the Covid 19 pandemic has set us back considerably. Since we received approval of building permits in January 2020, costs of materials have skyrocketed and the supply chain problems which have been so much talked about certainly got in the way. Adjustments to the original building specifications have been made and we are still actively looking at potential start dates. We hope to be able to give you definite plans and timelines in the fall issue of the Gazette. In the meantime, those of you who think you have artifacts that would add value to the finished museum, please let us know by e-mailing David at lub@kilcoo.ca or me at pchamp@sympatico.ca.

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badges too. On a really windy day sailing in the dinghies was a blast, but I thought the little Frost-Bights were a challenge too. All those activities were fabulous. I loved those jam-packed summers.

Our cabin would sometimes participate as a group, acting out a skit, in the Sunday night "Musicale" performances. Kilcoo always had good pianists on staff who could play anything, and I can remember most of them. When I first came to the main camp in 1948, Bill Lea was the "staff" piano player and ultimately, I was so impressed with him that for a time, he became my piano teacher back in Toronto




*Bill Lea-1948*

The following year Bob Godson, a former student of Bill Lea's took on the piano-playing task. Later on, I remember Barry Gosse, who was a very short person with small hands, but he somehow could reach the octaves necessary for playing the clas-sics and other dif-ficult tunes that he performed at lunchtime. Bob Godson returned several years later for a second tour of duty, during my stint as a CIT.

We also had great sing-songs following lunch. Can we ever forget the cloth flip charts hanging in the Lodge, that had all the lyrics for those fabulous old 'camp-fire' songs? Following lunch there was



often a sing-song, once again led by John Latimer with gus-to as we flew through quite a number of those great tunes before our af-ternoon rest-hour.

By the time I came back as a CIT in 1954, I had been learning to play the trumpet which translated into being the camp bugler for the next two summers. The bugler had to play at sun-up, "You Gotta Get Up". "Come to the Cookhouse Door Boys" was toot-ed out three times a day before each meal; and the bugler played "Taps" at the flag lowering at sunset. That was quite a lot of bugling during the course of a single day, and to be honest, I did not do all of those performances. In my second year as a CIT, I was posted in the sen-ior section in a 4-person tent located way out behind the Sail Cabin near Chapel Point, and playing "You Gotta Get Up" from way out there was pret-ty funny. As teenagers might do, I would stay in my cot and simply lift the tent flap and stick the horn out through the loose flap pointing in the general direction of the main camp pop-ulation and blast away with an inspired version of "You Gotta Get Up". Then I would fall back to sleep for another 40-winks or 15-




minutes whichever came first!

There were a couple of other musical characters of note. During the late 1940's, Colin Mason was the fellow in charge of canoe-trips. I remember that he performed two real-ly humorous songs regularly at the Sunday evening Musicales. Dressed as the con-summate camper, complete with a full back-pack, a fishing pole and a paddle, he would mournfully sing – "You'll Get Used to It". The original lyrics were:

*You'll get used to it, you'll get used to it,*
*The firster is the worster, you'll get used to it,*
*If you're feelin' kinda blue, and you don't know what to do,*
*You pack your troubles on the shelf,*
*Forget your cares and tell yourself,*
*It's wonderful, it's marvelous, etc.*

However, Colin had modified all the original words for a young Kilcoo Camp audience. I can't remember any of these, but to my 10-year-old mind, I thought he was so very clever and really funny.

Then, a week later at the subsequent Musicale, Colin would roll out his other big hit- "Life Gets Tee-jus, Don't It?", and the crowd ate it up. Since I was always at Kilcoo for 2-months, I heard both those tunes repeated again for the August campers, and I nev-er tired of them.

*Hound dog howlin' so forlorn*
*Laziest dog that was ever born*
*He's a-howlin' 'cause he's a-settin' on a thorn*
*An' just too tired to move over*

*The sun comes up and the sun goes down*
*The hands on the clock keep a-goin' 'round*
*I just get up and it's time to lay down*
*Life gets tee-jus, don't it?*

When I returned to Kilcoo as a C.I.T. in 1954, I had talked my good friend Rand Simp-son into joining me. I think we were paid just tuck money. At 15, Rand was already an excellent young jazz drummer, so when we both returned in 1955, he brought his drum kit along to camp. Together we put together a little jazz band comprised of myself on trumpet, Rand on drums, Counsellor Alan Setterington on trombone, Adrian Steeves from the kitchen crew also played trombone, and Counsellor Don Cochrane played the "gut bucket" (bass). As I recall our little band managed to cobble together at least one new song for every Sunday night Musicale for that whole summer.

Our most successful tune was our version of "Rock Around the Clock" which was very popular during the summer of 1955. The campers loved it! In fact, it was so popular that one evening our little quintet was packed off in the Kilcoo camp truck to give a rousing "special guest" performance at one of Camp Gay Venture's weekly musical ex-travaganzas! Entertaining all those young ladies was great fun!

Bob Godson had returned as the camp pianist during that period, and he was a truly fabulous musician. Following our Kilcoo years, Rand and I kept in touch with Bob through university while he got his law degree and moved off to the Orient to work in some very secret and mysterious enterprise. During his irregular visits back in Canada, he would tell us tales of having his own jazz piano TV show in either Singapore or Hong Kong. Eventually, we lost track of Bob altogether until about 5-years ago we re-ceived word that sadly he had been very ill, and was brought home to die in Gravenhurst, his sister's home town.



*Jim with Beaker*

My career started in Engineering, but has culminated in the creation of our family win-ery here in the south Okanagan Valley (Burrowing Owl Estate Winery).

Of the Kilcoo band members, Rand and I still keep in touch regularly at long distance. Rand is a semi-retired Ophthalmologist and lives in Gravenhurst. Don Cochrane be-came a successful geologist living in Vancouver, where we reconnected briefly in the 1970's. Adrian Steeves and I played together in several Toronto bands before I moved to Ottawa and ultimately Vancouver. As often happens, I lost track of Adrian and Leamington's Al Setterington is now living in London, Ontario.

There are so many other people from those years that I ask myself "What ever hap-pened to so and so?". We all had so many summer friends at Kilcoo so many years ago, that I expect that is a common question amongst all alumni.



Here's a good example in another old photo – I know Clive Chamberlain is in Toronto and just found out that Dave Frohman died tragically in a house fire in 1985.

Lopez Island is in northern Washington state, and by American standards is quite a remote place. But we have some very close friends living there. Somehow our friends met Mac Langdon (Kilcoo mid '50's), and by some fluke they in turn re-connected us by email about 3-years ago. Mac and I have 'chatted' over the internet during recent years, but we have yet to meet in person.

That's enough nostalgia for one day...

Cheers everyone,

***JIM WYSE***
***OLIVER, BC***
***OCTOBER 2022***

# ODE TO JOHN LATIMER: WAY TOO MUCH…WAY TOO SOON

Let me start with some context here. The year was 1974. After attending several other camps, my parents finally convinced me to go to Kilcoo. My parents adored Dave Hadden, and wanted me to be just like him. I failed entry exams to U.C.C., so Kilcoo became the target. I arrived in '72, in the Sail Cabin with Jeff Kelk. Two years later at seventeen I was a first year counsellor in Cabin 4 under the leadership of the mighty Bob Slingerland.

Remember this was 1974, the era of Led Zepplin, Alice Cooper, David Bowie, Elton John. Also, of Speedo bathing suits and bleaching your hair with Sunlight Laundry Soap – thank God for Don Wiggins (also non-stop trays of 25 cent drafts at the Rockcliffe).

My Cabin 4 campers in July 1975 arrived on the bus. I was really excited and very nervous, committed to making each camper's experience "ideal."



*Jeff with campers and CIT Tim Stanley*

Here is where the plot thickens. One of my campers was extremely violent. He would haul kids off the top bunk, jump on them and start beating them. This did not just happen once, but 3-4 times. I knew I had to do something...because someone was going to get hurt. I sat the kid down and asked him about his actions. He said his father had told him, "It was okay to pick fights with people, as long as you just don't lose!" Hence the foundation of our "Rock-em-Sock-em Robot" problem.

I was only 17! With Bob Slingerland I went see Chief and explained the situation, thinking I was handing over this problem to the "higher authorities" (Phew, off my plate!).

And then the "other shoe dropped." John said, "So Jeff, what are you going to do about this?" At that moment I knew the ending was not going to be the one I envisioned (i.e. Chief and Bob contacting the parents. Blah, blah, blah...). You know like a real "adult-to-adult" conversation... I was just a kid!

It did not go that way at all.

Chief handed me a piece of paper with the father's work phone number (in Detroit) and told me to call him and explain the problem, including the "message" around picking fights (i.e. what is acceptable ... what is not). I almost shit myself. John told me to use the phone in the staff lounge. I was literally shaking!

I am thinking, "Why me? I am just 17 and have been on the job for one week! This is way too much responsibility ... way too soon!" What on earth could Chief be thinking?"

Needless to say I made the call, and I explained the situation. The Dad was in shock and really upset. He said he did not tell him that ever; what he told him was, "If someone picks a fight with you, stand your ground, defend yourself, and don't back down!"

Wow, talk about mixed messaging. This proves that sometimes what people say and what people hear can be two very different things altogether. He was very appreciative for getting my call.

The Dad rented a seaplane the very next day and flew from Detroit to Kilcoo, park-ing at the water ski dock. I sat with him in the Adirondack chairs by the flag pole and explained everything that had transpired. He spent an hour and a half with his son, and flew into the horizon back to Detroit

It was a miracle! This kid did a 180° degree turnabout, stopped fighting, and be-came a great "model" camper for the rest of the month.

***John Latimer had a great leadership model: Give people too much responsibility ... too soon, and those people will rise to the challenge.***

I have been thinking about writing this article for the last 10 years. As an engineer, writing is not my strong suit. I thought it was going to be much harder than it really was. John Latimer had a great leadership model: Give people too much respon-sibility ... too soon, and those people will rise to the challenge. Believe me, I was not the only Kilcoo recipient of Chief's strategy for developing young people early in life.

Since then I have adopted John's "too much ... too soon" strategy when raising my two sons and developing my staff at work. It has never failed!

John Latimer, on one special day with my uncertainty and lack of confidence at 17, changed my life!

Thank you, John. Thank you, Chief!

***JEFF FISHER***
***1972-75***



# PLAYING TAPS FOR THREE MORE ALUMNI

## Day is done...safely rest, God is nigh

*The passing of three more alumni evokes very fond memories.*

### Warren Castle

*Tribute provided by Warren's daughters, Kelley Meghan and Shauna Castle*

Warren passed away peacefully after a short illness surrounded by his family. Kilcoo was a formative and special place for Warren. He grew up at Kilcoo, and made lifelong friends there. Some of those friends helped to shape his professional life. To his students and colleagues in orthopaedics, he was a surgeon with great skill and presence. The family has received many fond recollections of his jokes, songs, antics, and lessons over the years. To his family, he was a fun, sentimental and protective father and husband who loved their traditions. His most cherished memories were with his wife of 50 years, Marion, who passed away eight years earlier.

Warren spent a decade of summers at Kilcoo, leading up to being a seasoned canoe tripper taking groups of campers on exciting adventures in Algonquin Park. His memories of camp remained vivid even into his old age. He visited a couple of years ago and was surprised and happy that the Kilcoo spirit had stayed so strong.

### Joan Boydell

*Tribute provided by Bob Fraser who was Joan's 2nd cousin.*

December 21, 2021 marked the sad passing of Eleanor "Joan" Boydell (nee Cronyn), age 93. As a teenager, Joan, as she preferred to be called, spent many an idyllic summer at Kilcoo with her first cousin Betty-Anne Brohm (nee Plewman). Joan's Aunt Ethel and Uncle Charlie Plewman had founded Kilcoo during that time.

Betty-Anne was the Plewman's youngest daughter and close to Joan in age, and they were also good friends. So, the two of them served as counsellors in the Prep Section in the mid 40's. In her older years, Joan fondly reminisced about her summers spent at Kilcoo Camp as a teenager and about a young camper friend by the name of John Latimer, who told her that when he grew up, he was going to purchase Kilcoo Camp.

Of course, John did, in fact, go on to purchase Kilcoo from Joan's Uncle Charlie in 1955.

### Trevor Pedler

*Lindsay Ko has provided this tribute to Trevor on behalf of his many Kilcoo friends. Trevor passed away unexpectedly on November 22nd, 2021.*

Trevor arrived in Canada from England at age 10. Always the brightest guy in every room, he figured out every tough problem and had an opinion on everything — especially politics. He travelled extensively to interesting places. He read several newspapers a day. Following his summers at Kilcoo, Trevor had a long and illustrious career in advertising and marketing. He was President of Canada's Number 1 ranked advertising agency after which he "built" his own agency. He was a superb teacher and after he retired he mentored young entrepreneurs. He was a giver. He was also a saver. As in lives. A woman was poised to jump off the Glen Road bridge in Toronto — Trevor talked her down. He received a Toronto Police Bravery Award. Trevor and his wife Shelagh Stoneham, were soulmates. Trevor leaves behind his wife Shelagh, his son, Michael, and daughter, Christine. He is missed terribly by his friends.







## IDEAS ALWAYS WELCOME & NEEDED!

The Gull Rock Gazette is always looking for your favourite Kilcoo memories and stories. If you need help to develop your ideas, please contact us by email at pchamp@sympatico.ca, and we will help you.

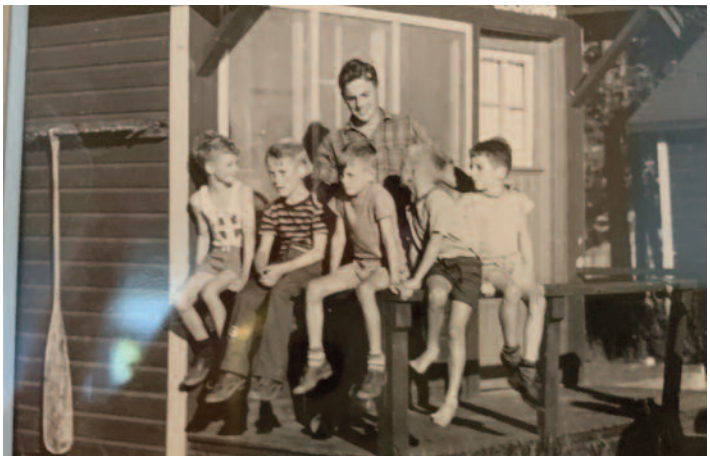
# THE KILCOO YEARS BACK THEN

*Warren Castle passed away December 13th, 2021. Before he passed away he wrote an article for the Gazette in which he reminisced about his years at Kilcoo. To the many campers and staff who were trucked to Algonquin Park to join him for a 6 or 10 day trip he was remembered for his leadership, his expertise, AND his love of ketchup to be used in most meals.*

On August 1st, 1946, I found myself at a bus depot in midtown Toronto with a large duffel bag full of Kilcoo paraphernalia headed for the highlands of Haliburton. My father had passed away the previous year. I was six years old. My mother had met Charlie Plewman at a meet & greet at Pears Park near his home at Eglington & Avenue Road in North Toronto. She felt it was time to get me away from street hockey for a month and experience the woods. The $125/month fee would be well worth it.

The bus was full of strangers of all ages (campers & staff) as we headed for Highway 35 and Minden.

We passed by the 2 totem poles that led the way into camp. It wasn't really the main camp but the "Prep Camp", a smaller version with a row of 5 or 6 cabins by the shore of Gull Lake with a large white dining or eating hall near the road. A large barren grass field separated the dining hall from the cabins and was full of grazing horses (which terrified me). The Prep Camp area eventually became Braeside. This area was separated from the main camp by a riding ring and several large teepees (the home of Chief Skye who taught leather crafts).



*Warren 2nd from the left*

Meals were a main event in Prep Camp, served in the white dining hall with a dozen or so yellow shellac covered tables. Every table had campers' thumbnail-scratched initials on the sides. Toast, Red River cereal, brown sugar, metal jugs of milk and scrambled eggs. Lunch was Kraft dinner, hamburgers, hot dogs etc. Dinner was meat and potatoes and large pans of cake with canned peaches.

I went back every August (fewer bugs, colder water and returning friends). We learned to swim, played with the punts at the beach, were threatened with a "paddling" if we misbehaved (a formidable deterrent involving lying over the edge of the bunk bed). We brushed our teeth in the lake and had campfires at the beach at night. We brought home crafts from Chief Skye and postcards from the tuck shop.

Eventually, I graduated to the main camp and went up the road, past the riding ring, the tennis court and horseshoe pit and to the main camp experience with mostly new friends. Many Kilcoo friends had come from what to me were exotic places: Mexico, Venezuela, Aruba, Buffalo, Jamaica, Leamington etc.

Camp was swimming, canoeing, sailing (which I tried to avoid). I looked forward to the command "Prepare to return to dock!" However, I still think of Kilcoo every time I tie a "bowline" - up the hole in front of the tree, around the tree and back down again. John Latimer, who it seemed was there all along, came into my life as the main swimming instructor. I got my Bronze Cross and Bronze medallion and still have those medals (treading water for 10 minutes was an eternity).

In the later years, I met and hung out with the Chamberlain brothers. Clive was the absolute craziest person and the most interesting, likeable guy I met at Kilcoo. Clive came to Kilcoo via Camp Glenokawa. We went on several canoe trips at Kilcoo and on one trip he covered himself in some purple salve concoction, then wore a yellow heavy tartan jacket and paddled stern although his eyes were swollen shut and he couldn't see anything but shadows. It was poison ivy. We did visit Glenokawa by going through a portage from Lake of Bays to Penn Lake with the Portage Flyer (train) carrying the canoes, but I always wondered if it was worth it.



*L. to R. Mo Bent, Clive, Warren*

Clive went on to be the section director of the senior camp and ran special events (i.e. The Olympics), gave sermons at the chapel, and eventually led me into a professional life (along with his brother Dean) of medicine at the University of Toronto. He was a fraternity brother and I joined him for some crazy Toronto adventures. A visit to Casa Loma and the "Brotherhood of Faithists" was memorable in which we completely fabricated a story of seeing UFOs in Algonquin Park (the story was broadcast on CBC radio).

Dean Chamberlain was the best canoeist I ever saw. On one occasion on a post camp trip on the Petawawa River, he saved Stan Litch (who was clowning around and tipped my canoe) from being strangled by me. Dean was also a classmate in pre-meds and medicine at the University of Toronto and went on to a distinguished career in pathology.



Canoe Trips in those early years consisted of easy trips to Bob Falls, Miners Bay, Moore Falls, the Minden Power Dam and Buttermilk Falls, but eventually canoe tripping graduated into Algonquin Park (still scarcely populated in the 50's). We moved to 10 day trips and two 6-day trips per month and covered most of the Northwest & Southwest portions of the park.

John Latimer in my later years took over the camp. My only tripping experience with John was a day trip to the Minden Power Dam. He brought with him steaks & bacon - a treat he later regretted as they became a staple for the first day of all my Algonquin trips. The Algonquin trips were also memorable for other reasons. Starting points at South River, several long portages into Cedar Lake, visiting Brent and the railway station, climbing the log chutes, waterlogged tents and heavy packs loaded with Gumperts, Kraft dinner, ketchup, canned tomatoes, dried milk, Prem, canned corn, peas and pears. In those years most campsites had piles of rusty cans stacked high behind the site. There were no rules on packing our refuse.

Sailing down Lake Opeongo by moonlight was routine as was sleeping in canoe shelters or jungle hammocks.

Names come back to me: C.B. Smith, Dan Yarmey, Bruce Lumsden, Bruce McCaffrey, Chris Chapman, Phil Harris, Bill MacNutt, the Reynolds Brothers, John and Ted, John Dewan, and the Atkins brothers, Darcy and Gary, Ed Devitt - who started his own camp on Lake St. Nora. He offered me a job for $50 more a summer (a sum that Charlie Plewman matched and swore me to secrecy about).

Karen Mathiason, a kitchen worker from Aruba became a summer friend never to be seen again. Warren Beasley also left an impression on me. He was the outdoor crafts instructor who could actually start a fire by rubbing two sticks together. He helped a number of friends find jobs at the CNE in his father's midway concession stands. We gave away many stuffed animals and kewpie dolls.

I remember the letters received from John Latimer at the end of the camping season thanking us for our efforts in promoting Kilcoo and offering best wishes for the coming school year. I still have one of those letters.

Pre camp was also fun and lots of work. We planted dozens of pine trees in front of the main entrance closer to the highway. We had great meals and worked 12 hour days moving mattresses, levelling the tennis courts, carrying canoes from the lodge to the canoe docks.

And so it went! Random memories keep coming back about people and events. Hundreds of stories could be told:

A truck driving over sleeping campers in a park in Beaverton (no one was hurt!), Ruth's Island always looming big in Kilcoo lore and singing - we were always singing whether on canoe trips or at the lodge. We even had huge song sheets printed on bed sheets that hung over a pole in the main dining hall.

Every year a music director,I remember Barry Gosse, played for the singsongs, but also impressed us with concert interpretations of the Kilcoo Blues by Mozart or Beethoven or Bach - Or John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt.

I remember the rusty first aid kits we took on canoe trips - mainly with mercurochrome and bandages and water purification pills. We never opened the kits.

Taps played on the bugle by someone we never saw (Bill Parish on the diving tower).

Chapel talks were always inspirational even for a 10 year old (the rocks were super hard). The talks went on forever.

The infirmary was a place I never got into although I often thought of faking illness to try it out! In all those months and years at Kilcoo, I never was sick. I must have been afraid of nurses then. Funny, because soon after leaving Kilcoo I married one and spent 50 fantastic years with her.

Closing ceremonies at camp and the canoe torch parades and the floating fire (raft) which invariably sank.

Kerosine lamps used in the Senior Section tents had a certain smell that you never forget.

Night time spraying with DDT for mosquitoes.

Camp trucks hauling garbage one day and the next taking a group to a starting point of a canoe trip. The truck drivers became our friends.

Once a month dances in the lodge - Calumet girls were trucked into Kilcoo and we spent most of the evening shyly lining the walls. I met someone from Leaside (Toronto). We vowed to meet again but forgot to exchange addresses or phone numbers.

The monthly Indian Council with the game - Are you there Pat? I'm here Mike! Chief's leather costumes were amazing.

I also remember John Kennedy borrowed a robin's egg blue sweater from me and admitted to me years later that he never planned on returning it!

Remember trying to smoke "Bummies" - pine needles wrapped tightly in toilet paper - harsh!

It all seems like yesterday more or less. Time passes, decades pass, but the memories remain. Kilcoo has meant so much to everyone connected to it!

Thanks for the day comrades!

***WARREN CASTLE***
***1946-1959***

# 2020/22 KILCOO STAFF REUNION APPLICATION

## September 23rd - 25th, 2022

1. Desired camp activities for the weekend. _____ _____
2. Could you contribute to a future issue of the Gull Rock Gazette? YES NO *(Circle one)*
3. Name your top 3 favourite camp songs.

_____

_____

_____

4. Any dietary restrictions? _____
5. Do you wish to play golf on the Friday? YES NO (Circle one) If yes, please see next page.
6. Anyone you want to share a cabin with? Any particular cabin? _____

_____

_____

_____

The fee for the reunion is $210 Cdn. Please make your payment to Kilcoo Camp Limited and send it to Kilcoo Camp, 150 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite #403, Toronto, Ontario M4P 1E8

NAME:_____ YEARS at KILCOO: _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

## PLEASE HELP US FIND OUR FRIENDS

*Over time we lose contact with a certain number of alumni as people's lives change and they move around. If you know the whereabouts of any of the alumni named below, please tell them to contact me at pchamp@sympatico.ca or send me their contact information.*

| 1950's-1970's | 1980's-1990's | 2000's | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bill Braithwaite | Scott Burnham | Jeff Bradley | Dylan Kane |
| Bill Coleman | Laura Blew | Don Barber | Blake Kingston |
| Jim Esplen | Jamie Campbell | Andrew Binet | Will Lepage |
| Stephen Howe | John Clarke (Calgary) | Kristen Campbell | Reid McGregor |
| Brett Ledger | Rob Coleman | Colin Deeks | Mitch McLean |
| Fred McCutcheon | Doug Dittmer | Eric Dillane | T.K. McNair |
| John McIntyre | Bryan Bean | Craig Eaton | Robert Millman |
| Ted Oakes | Charlie Gooding | Wes Fissell | Cary Molinaro |
| Geoff Richardson | Bill Keating | Calvin Reid | Ben Pitfield |
| Michael Sarin | Mike & Steve Harrop | Christie Roberts | James Sharpe |
| George Stratton | Doug MacIntosh | Stoyan Ruh | Zac Warren |
| Richard Adamson | Jeff Magwood | Mike Stinson | Jamie Vallance |
| Reid Bowlby | Mike Merry | Luc Greenwood | Mike Tomlinson |
| Russell Fleming | Andy Muir | Brock Hamilton | Nick Wernham |

# KILCOO STAFF REUNION GOLF TOURNAMENT 2022




**DATE:** Friday September 23,2022.
**TIME:** Noon onward….tee times TBA via email

**LOCATION:** Gull River Golf Club (formerly Beaverbrook in Minden along the Gull River)
Under new ownership 2021.

**FORMAT:** While only a nine hole course, players will play the same nine twice using a different format for each nine.

**COST:** TBA Plan on $85-90. (Please do not send money until fee is confirmed.)

**REGISTRATION:** Players must register NO LATER THAN WED. JUNE 15
**PAYMENT:** Players must have fees in NO LATER THAN WED. JUNE 29
Cheque (payable to Peter Oyler) or by e-transfer to Peter
Remit cheques to: Peter Oyler, 4 William James Court, Haliburton, K0M 1S0
Peter's email address: peterecoyler@gmail.com

To register, please complete the following and send to Peter Oyler no later than above dates.

**NAME:** _____

**EMAIL:** _____

**OTHERS IN FOURSOME** (if applicable) Every effort will be made to pair players up or in foursomes if requested.

_____

☐ I hereby certify that that I have received two COVID-19 vaccination shots plus booster. (Please check the box to confirm.)

_____
Signature

If you have any questions about the tournament, please email Peter Oyler at email listed above.