THE GULL ROCK GAZETTE

Volume 29 Issue 2 - Published by Kilcoo Camp - Autumn 2022
Visit us on the web at www.kilcoo.com

AFTER A FIVE-YEAR WAIT, A REAL STAFF REUNION



Some events seem like a long time ago.

Some events, even though they were a long time ago, seem as fresh today as they were then.

On Saturday August 29, 1981, I sat in the lodge at the Closing Banquet with my back to the 1946 rosters. 1946 was my Dad's first year at Kilcoo. I always liked having that particular table. The setting in the lodge for the Closing Banquet looked like it always did. A Head Table had been set up in front of the fireplace for Chief, Mrs. Chief, Bob Slingerland, and the Section Directors which meant that the spacing between tables and benches was as narrow as possible. A hot August night was made warmer by how closely we were all packed in.

The day before, my Section Director, Jay Haddad, had taken me out for lunch to the Schnitzel House on Highway 35 in Minden. He shared with me that the August 1981 Closing Banquet would be one for the ages. The Chief was going to announce his retirement as Kilcoo's 2nd Camp Director. Hal Hannaford would be taking over. It was an electric evening. The Lodge was very quiet as the Chief spoke for the last time. It was his 50th and final Closing Banquet speech. I was grateful that I had been given the heads-up in terms of what to expect.

It was more than 41 years ago.

After a wait of more than 1,800 days between reunions and two adjournments, Kilcoo's long-awaited 2022 Staff Reunion took place from September 23 to 25, 2022. Highlighted by beautiful weather on Friday and Saturday, terrific attendance, good food and fellowship, many stories, lots of laughter, old friends and new friends, it was a reunion to remember for the more than 150 past and present staff who participated.



Some Saturday Frisbee golf with friends

After 41 years, Kilcoo seemed as strong or better than ever as David Latimer completed his 38th year as Kilcoo's 4th Director. He had survived something that his Dad and Charlie Plewman never experienced: the "Closed for Covid-19" Summer of 2020.

After more than 4 decades, the camp looked perfect. The new cabins, the new tennis courts, and particularly the newly refurbished baseball diamond (which still includes that short right field porch, a few obstacles in left field, and a home run fence in centre field which is actually 8-feet higher than Rogers Centre's centre field wall) were all well-enjoyed.

The post-camp staff were amazing. All of the activities were open, the paddles and life jackets were plentiful, and their (without a "duties spinning-wheel") clean-up abilities (where the shift did not end until 5 a.m. each night) made the lodge look as fresh each morning as the Murray Hewitt-constructed Kildoon

or the Rob MacKinnon-designed Long House did when they opened in 1979 and 1981 respectively.

So much has changed in the world since 1981.

Yet so little seemed to have changed at Kilcoo.

When making an announcement, forget the microphone. Just yell.

When looking for a song on the song sheets, assume that it will take the sing-song leader much longer to find the song than it will take to sing 4 verses of Gunderbeck (because the song sheets will never be alphabetized).

When picking up food for your table, always thank the Kitchen Staff.

When asked to park your cars in the parking lot, be sure no cars are in the parking lot.

When looking for your cabin sign in the Lodge, hope that it will still be there. And, if it is, make sure that you add at least another 50 nails so that it never is taken down during the Advance Camp "Spring Cleaning" day.

As one would expect, the order of proceedings for the 2 days were time-tested and familiar to everyone. There was the Friday golf day organized by Peter Oyler, the Friday night social and welcome from Lub, the camp activities on Saturday, a moving memorial to the late Peter Maybury near the tennis courts on Saturday afternoon attended by his wife Barb, the afternoon "Old v. Young" baseball game with the obligatory 8 infielders and 16 outfielders, the beachfront BBQ at dusk on Saturday (which even included a renovation update from the new owner of the Rockcliffe), a wonderful AMICI update from Michael Latimer, a terrific dinner on Saturday night, a sing-song, more story-telling, Sunday morning Chapel, and then a drive back home after a stop at the Kawartha Dairy.

The Saturday night has always been a favourite. I simply like to look around the lodge and the people. I do not take it for granted that the incomparable Ken Jones is still at the keyboard just as he has been since 1964. I always enjoy seeing Tom Reed. Tom (whose first year was 1954) was the only attendee and likely the only person ever to have been either a camper or staff member under each of Charlie Plewman, Hal Hannaford, and John Latimer. It is great to see the number of fathers and sons. It was a pleasure to have dinner with Jeff Martin. I even like looking inside the podium at the front of the lodge to see what type of treasure trove has been collecting dust there. This time, I found an 8-track of John Denver's greatest hits. It is delightful to see many brothers there like Bill and Mike Jack, Patrick, Cam, and Chris Graham, and, Larry, Rob, Mark, and Peter Dennys. Other than Peter, Tom, Jim, and Andy Dixon, I am unable to recall any other family with 4 brothers on staff. I can look at the camp logs for hours. It was a pleasure to see all of the decades so well and evenly represented. How nice it was to have staff like Chris Sainthill come back for a first reunion ever.



Together again

Speaking of nice, John Kennedy, Clive Chamberlain, and Peter Armstrong all spoke eloquently at Chapel, Grayson Burke played and sang, and Jim Cook's acoustic tribute to Bob Slingerland through One More Mountain to Climb was a gem. Bob was truly one of Kilcoo's finest and he was missed.

Before the Sunday morning departure, Wally Oakes, Scott McBurney, Will Carruthers, Jamie Gerson, Tim Ernst, John Grant and I concluded the weekend by doing a walk through the camp to remember those who are no longer with us including a long stop at the memorial stumps in the Voyageur campfire area. Their absence reminds us that, in fact, it has been 41 years since August of 1981 and how much their friendship meant to all of us during our time at Kilcoo. From Dave Graham to Jean Laperriere, from Bob Strauss to Scott Merrick, from Craig Smillie to David Mack, from Gary Kline to David Nelles, we recalled fondly and honoured our Kilcoo brothers who are no longer able to join us in person.

A big thank you is in order to Paul Chamberlain for all that he has done for more than 20 years to keep our alumni together and for his tireless work in planning and ensuring that each staff reunion is better than the one before. When the new office and tuck shop is constructed next year, Paul should be given a master key.

A big hope is that by September of 2025, COVID-19 will be a distant memory and that a number of our planned attendees (who for COVID-19 reasons) like Craig Beggs, Ken Mason, Kyle Morris, Dave Linton and Scott Kennedy will be able to join us once again.

A big wish is that the next staff reunion will see the return of Dean Rutty, Jeff McDonald, Mike McDonald, Jeffrey Latimer, Jeff Lloyd, John Sherratt, Mark Ross, Mike Newediuk, Randy Kline, Mo Bent, Dave Campbell and Ian Currie.



Saturday night sing song



Four Strong Winds

A big tip of the hat is offered to four of Kilcoo's Assistant Directors (Scott Russell, Murray Wickwire, Scott Elmhirst, and Kevin Way) who were able to join us. Kilcoo's Assistant Directors have been a huge part of its past success.

A big expression of gratitude is in place for all of our friends from south of the border among whom are Scott Harrison, Tim Ernst, and Phil Sherwood who signed up when ArriveCan was still a part of our lives and still made the trip to Canada.

Finally, the biggest thank you is offered to David and Beth Latimer and the entire Latimer family for continuing to make Kilcoo as welcoming, fun, exciting, and successful as it was 41 years ago. We appreciate the fact that they continue to make all of us feel that their home is our home and their camp is our camp.

To paraphrase Kilcoo's founding father, Charlie Plewman, "Once a Kilcoo staff member, always a Kilcoo staff member."

Thanks for the weekend, comrades.

JOHN CARRUTHERS
1969-1983

EDITOR'S MUSINGS

From what we have observed through the first 10 months of 2022, it is clear that the Covid pandemic is still with us. While Kilcoo Camp did not enact the same cautionary measures as they had in 2021, they did approach this past summer in a smart, careful manner. Consequently the summer was a very successful one and only a very few campers or staff had to miss any camp time due to the virus. As with any other summer, camp was a very busy place and at one point in August canoe trips left almost no canoes on the dock and some tripping equipment had to be purchased locally to fulfill the needs of those who were out of camp.



Night time at the reunion

For many alumni the fall season highlight was the reunion held on the last weekend of September. The weather was not as warm as it was in 2017 when we last collected at camp, but it was still comfortable and the weekend was every bit as tiring for the post camp staff who served tirelessly to make the event a memorable one for the 150 alumni who were able to attend. In fact, had it not been for conflicting dates for a number of alumni who had signed up for the originally planned weekend in 2020, we could have had 190 alumni crowding into the lodge on the Friday evening. There was concern voiced by a very small number of alumni concerning our policy requiring that everyone be thrice vaccinated for Covid, but I was satisfied that it was the right thing to do and in the end there were only 3 cases reported after alumni returned home. John Carruthers has kindly provided his usual reunion report headlining this Gazette issue and in the following pages you will see comments by Peter Armstrong and John Kennedy's chapel address.

This issue of the Gazette features articles of reminiscence from alumni from two different decades: Taylor Sharpe from the 90's and Barry Reynolds and Dave Hamer from the 60's. Dave's article reprises a story from 1966 which was retold from a slightly different perspective while during the reunion a bench was dedicated in memory of alumnus Peter Maybury who passed away last year.

Barry Reynolds recounts his hiring as camp truck driver and a few of his recollections during his four years at camp and this issue concludes with a visit from our own Santa Claus, a fixture with the Bayview-Sheppard Ave. community in Toronto for the past 12 years.

For this issue of the Gazette I endeavored to contact all our alumni by e-mail to confirm the addresses on my data base are correct and consequently it is being sent to almost 1,000 alumni. However, there are still quite a few with whom the camp has lost contact. You may have Kilcoo friends or even relatives who went to Kilcoo. Please check with them and if they have not been receiving the Gazette or other alumni communications and want to be on the list, tell them to e-mail me at alumnicamper@gmail.com



Olympics tug of war...guess who!

PAUL CHAMBERLAIN
1956-1967

FIRESIDE CHAT

From Lub and the entire Latimer Family



It is an absolute pleasure to write this note for the fall Gazette. It was an extraordinary year all around for Kilcoo, capped by a truly amazing staff reunion up at camp. I would like to begin by thanking Paul Chamberlain for all he does for Kilcoo and for you, the alumni – it is remarkable! My family and I are truly grateful, Paul…thank you.

For those of you who were at the reunion, I think you can agree it was an amazing experience and so special to reunite with our camp friends, old and new. There was a wide range of generations represented, and the highlights for me were, as always, the boisterous singsong (thanks, Ken Jones) and the chapel, held inside this year because of the weather.

As alumni, even if you weren't there, I think it is safe to say that our bond with Kilcoo really transcends time. As Paul always says when he speaks in pre-camp, he loves that even though some things are different at camp in the present day, the feel and spirit always remain the same.

The summer of 2022 was an amazing two months that pretty much ran as normal, which was awesome. The energy was off the charts, with big events like the Bushpede and Olympics being particular highlights, but everything from our tripping program (highlighted by our one-month trip to the Nahanni River and four trips to British Columbia) to Kilabaloo to being back in a packed lodge with lots of songs was so special and bursting with that Kilcoo magic.

It was also nice to have my sons and their crew on the Senior Staff at camp, and I love how much they love Kilcoo. As we write this, interest in camp has literally never been higher, and we are already full for next summer. We have second and third generation Kilcoo families, and that is also very special. You, the alumni, are one of the main reasons that Kilcoo continues to thrive, and I can't thank you enough. As I go into my 39th year as director in 2023, I am forever humbled and honoured to be the director of this special place.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Gull Rock Gazette, and I hope it will inspire you to connect with your friends who made your time at Kilcoo so special.

RIP RAM RAZZLE SCRAM
DAVID "LUB" LATIMER

ONE MEMORY OF PETER MAYBURY

Kilcoo lore is full of stories about the late, great Peter Maybury. This is just one, and a small one at that.

I like to think that Peter and I had a hand in saving one another's futures at camp, all because of something that happened late one night in the summer of 1966. If memory serves, Peter was a relatively new member of staff, perhaps in his first year. He'd arrived from outside, not having first been a camper or Counsellor in Training (as they were then called). I was then in my seventh year as a camper in what was called the Senior Section (now Voyageurs). The late Bob Slingerland was my section director, and someone who'd been very good to me for many summers.

On the night in question, Slingerland had sent me along to help out on a canoe trip with a Bantam (now Trailblazer) cabin group. Mike Hatton was the cabin counsellor; the CIT's name is now lost in the sands of time.

At the time, my counsellor in the Senior section and I were not getting along at all. He was also new to camp, and proved to be quite unpopular with our cabin group. I was less than tactful in my dealings with him, and he responded in kind. At one point he upset me so much that I went to Bob and related my grievances. In candor, there were some tactics here. I desperately wanted to be asked back the next year as a CIT, and I knew my chances would be nil if all depended on this counsellor's reports, as indeed it would in the ordinary course.

It was against this background that my secondment to the Bantam's canoe trip played out. In reality, it wasn't much of a 'trip'. It was an overnight. We just paddled across to a barely cleared sort of campsite on the west shore of Gull Lake, a bit south of what was then still called Rackety Ranch. Nowadays it will be occupied by a million dollar cottage. We reached the campsite sometime during the afternoon, set up the tents, made dinner for the kids, and sent them off to sleep not long after sunset.

The counsellor, Mike Hatton, the CIT and I then sat around the campfire talking amidst the deepening darkness. At some point, we started hearing noises in the bush, not far off. Someone or something was crashing around out there. In those days, there was nothing but uninhabited bush for miles and miles west of Gull Lake, and it was well known that bears were common in the area.



Staff 1966 Peter back row, 4th from left

We quickly reached a consensus that we indeed had a bear nearby, and it was circling closer. In those days, the standard practice was to get the biggest billy cans available and start pounding the bottoms with sticks, loud enough to scare the animal off. We agreed, though, that we couldn't justify leaving our eight very young campers exposed to any risk of the animal returning during the night, even if we did manage to drive it off for now.

As a result, Hatton and the CIT set about making as much noise as possible. Someone had the bright idea that I should go down to the water's edge with the biggest flashlight available, and start flashing an 'SOS' across the lake in the hope that someone would see it (it was too far just to yell). So down I went and crouched amidst the rocks on the shoreline, and started clicking the flashlight: three shorts, three longs, three shorts, over and over again.

The next part of the story involves elements that I only learned about years later. I forget from whom, but I've checked with others who know, and I'm told they're all true. While I was busy with the SOS signal, and Hatton and his CIT were banging pots and pans, Maybury and Chief were back in camp, sitting in the dark at the end of what was then called the Ski Dock, where the big motorboats were moored. This was to be a turning point for Peter: Chief had decided he had to give him the 'Algar' talk. Algar Coach Lines was the local outfit that ran one bus a day to and from Toronto. On the rare occasion that a staff member, CIT or camper had to be dismissed, they would be given, at least notionally, a one-way Algar ticket back to Toronto. The expectation was that they'd be on the bus within the next 24 hours, and the word would go round camp that they had gotten 'Algared' (as opposed to 'fired').

So here were Chief and Maybury on the dock, with the latter about to receive 'Algar' from the former. I still have no idea what Maybury's alleged transgressions may have been, but this is the story I was told much later.

In any event, before their talk got very far, both Chief and Maybury spotted my signal across the lake. The Kilcoo emergency training kicked in, and they jumped into one of the motorboats and roared across the lake to rescue us. When they arrived, it was quickly decided we would pack the entire campsite up, leaving the camper tent until last, and move everyone to another campsite. And that's exactly what we did, with eight sleepy and bewildered little guys and their sleeping bags being loaded into the motorboat by Chief and Maybury (they must have made two trips) and ferried over to Long Island. There we set up a new campsite in the dark and put the kids back to bed. We older guys slept out on the rocky face of Long Island under a sky full of a million brilliant stars (as memory has it).

Chief and Maybury then motored back to camp. As I learned later, Chief at that point managed to forget all about Algar for Maybury, who had probably impressed him with his critical role in the great bear rescue. So, the bus ticket was never produced and Maybury was never sent home.

The bear escapade was a godsend for me too. A few days after the Bantams were safely back in camp, I was summoned to Slingerland's cabin. He had a report in his hands, presumably from Mike Hatton, on my performance on the 'trip'. It was good. Without putting it in so many words, or telling me that I would be a CIT after all, he made me to understand that I needn't worry about my own counsellor. I believe now that the canny Slingerland had set the whole



Visiting in 2017 Peter 3rd from left

'trip helper' thing up for me to get around my adversary. The bear was just a lucky break.

Maybury went on, as everyone knows, to become one of the greatest Kilcoo staff members and Section Directors of all time. Best of all, several years later he brought the extraordinarily charming and beautiful Barb to camp as his bride. She was a pioneer as one of the first women in camp apart from the Latimer family and the kitchen staff. Barb held us all in awe, and from that point on, Peter was able to get on just through basking in her reflected glory.

There's a postscript. A year after the bear rescue, 1967, I was indeed back as a CIT. Maybury was back as a counsellor. My own, difficult counsellor was not. It was either that summer, or the next, that I happened to be assigned to Maybury as his CIT. We hadn't really gotten to know one another since the bear, but we did now. We couldn't have been two more different people. Here was Maybury, still with the slicked back hair and the whiff of a motorcycle jacket about him, telling crazy stories about playing serious hockey in Toronto and other wild stuff, mostly women (this was long pre-Barb). Here was nerdy little me from small town Ontario, already with longish hair, pretending to be a budding hippie, and hoping to grow up to be a world-saving socialist revolutionary.

Somehow we got on like a house on fire. Peter knew how to handle me with invisible guidance, standing back to let me take the lead at times, and at others letting me know, in the kindest possible way, how full of baloney I could be. He was so uproariously and outrageously funny, the kids loved him, and so did I.

At the end of the summer, I left a note for him in his staff quarters. It was a sloppy piece of sentimentality, talking grandly about how there must be hope for the world if two people like us could get along so well together.

The last time I saw Peter was during the camp reunion in 2017 when a huge cavalcade of his old friends drove over in multiple vehicles to see him and Barb at their then home on Lake Kashagawigamog. His health had already started to fail, but everyone agreed he had loved the visit. At some point during our time there, he told me that he still had the note I'd left in his staff quarters.

We all love him, and will miss him deeply.

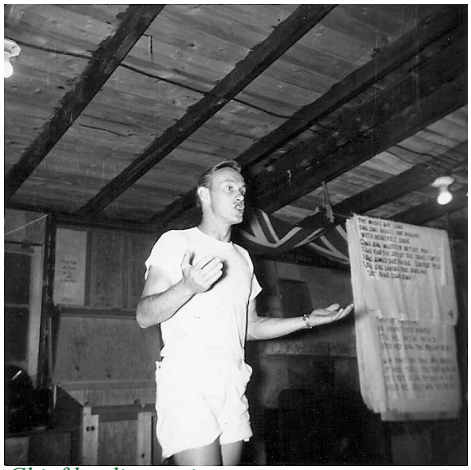
DAVE HAMER
1960-1974

KILCOO AND ITS MUSIC LIVES ON

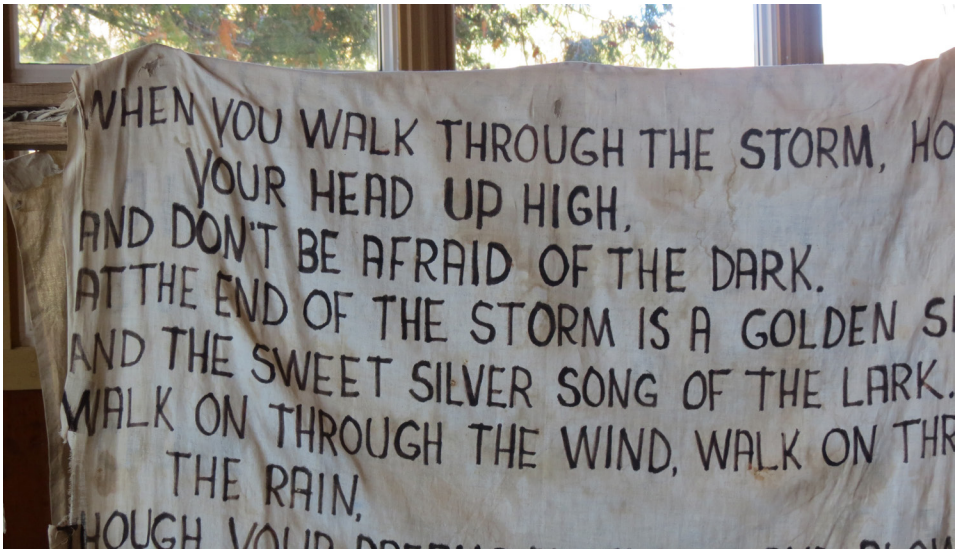
I went to Kilcoo for 9 years; as a camper for 7; from Cabin 1 to Cabin 23, and as an LIT for 2. Like all of you I'm sure, I still find the impressions and lessons from camp cropping up all over the place in my everyday life. One thing that surprised me though when it happened, was that the songs of camp would find new life through my son, even before the time came for him to head off to camp.

Though I grew up in Toronto, cottaged around Georgian Bay, and went to camp on Gull Lake, I've since moved west to Vancouver, and now on to Squamish where the forests, rivers and Pacific Ocean sate that long-held need for a closeness to nature: another vestige of Kilcoo Camp no doubt. My wife and I adopted our son from northern BC at birth, and we feel privileged to welcome his Dene heritage into our home. We knew it would be an interesting adventure, and one that would bring us closer to a side of our country's history, and to our own history as settlers that we both felt we needed to embrace, learn about, and sew into the new tapestry that our country is really only starting to knit with the help of our Indigenous teachers.

Without descending into one of those, 'my son's the most incredible dude on the planet' type 'dadsplanations,' the kid knows more names of plants and birds than Skippy (Rob Savage) could ever hope to have taught me at woodcraft or on a Ruth's Island overnight. Suffice to say, he's got a pretty incredible memory. One of the things that I long figured, but never knew, until awe struck me square in the face, is that the oral history of Indigenous peoples predisposes them to have excellent auditory memory.



Chief leading a sing song



Enter our bedtime routine. First the wash, brush, potty, etc. followed by a story, and then the inevitable request for, "just a little chat". Once we've exhausted the many meandering topics, as I rise to leave, the final request, "Dad, can you sing Hiawatha?" It's his favourite, and as I reflect, was and is mine too. The song that was only sung once per month in the summer at each Grand Council, marking the journey of Hiawatha from this life into the next as his voice booms and then fades into the darkness of a still, full moon night…pure magic. The song is a special one, but not just for Kilcoo campers, it is for anyone who learns about Hiawatha and the five Iroquois tribes he helped turn away from war and then unite. My son was rapt by that story. After hearing my renditions of Hiawatha's verse, and that of the three young braves who respond back as he disappears further into the next life with each refrain, he needed to know more. So we went to the library and found a number of books about Hiawatha and we learned about his legend.

These days, for a change, we're kind of stuck on the Titanic. He gets a kick out of the crowd participation portions, "Oh it was sad (SO SAD!), oh it was sad (SO SAD!)" and making both of us a little sad each time I try and sneak out of the room after riling him up with lively songs about sinking ships and husbands, wives and little children losing their lives. Great bedtime choice, Dad.

But for me, the miracle of these songs isn't really that he can remember most of the words at age 3, it's that for so long I thought they held a special magic only in a specific time and place. As it turns out, they carry meaning and purpose outside the booming walls of the Lodge and the craze of the Rec Hut. They're actually kind of an incredible tool that I think we've all lost a little bit in our modern world. There's a connection made when people sing together or tell stories together. Different neural pathways are formed when you hear things and build the images in your mind instead of having them thrust through your eyeballs via monthly subscriptions. It's this, that my son is teaching us about the most I think. I mean, I love knowing that I'm walking next to rose spirea and forsythia (how the heck does he know this stuff!?) but hearing how he sponges up what we say, folds it into his own perspective and plays it back to us in wild and new contexts is powerful stuff.

I think singing to him at night has helped nurture his inherited gift of storytelling and learning through sound. For me it rekindled so many potent memories of sing-alongs with Chief in the Lodge and linking arms and swaying to Maker of Men after dinner or Kilabaloo.

It's for this reason that this note is part story, and part request. I would love to keep the memories alive and pass on many more of the songs that I just can't seem to remember the words to. If you have the lyrics, recordings, or anything to pass along, I would be forever grateful. Feel free to email me at sharpe.taylor@gmail.com and we can trade verses and the stories that reverberate through them.

Rip Ram, lads.

TAYLOR SHARPE
1994-2003

KILCOO MEMORIES OF AN 80-YEAR-OLD

Hiring

I asked myself, how did a person with no camp experience get a job at Kilcoo in 1960? I had never met this mysterious "Chief" person who I came to know as John. However, I did have a connection with two staff members: Larry Godfrey and Jim Paulucci through school at Chatham Collegiate Institute.

One day in April of 1960, I was told by the Chatham Hydro, for whom I had worked in 1959, that because of the economy, they were not able to hire any summer students for the next year. In June, John Latimer sent an urgent need letter to his staff indicating that Kilcoo had lost its previous truck driver to Summer School and could they refer any of their friends for the job.

I had the required licensing and truck driving experience from my summer with the hydro. My parents encouraged me to take any job that would get me out of the house! So, I called John Latimer, had a telephone interview and was hired without even meeting John in person. No Zoom in those days.

To make the longer story short, I was to be paid $200 plus room and board; signed a 'no-drinking' contract to work from pre-camp in June to the day after campers left in August.

It was the beginning of a four-summer adventure.

The Job

The job description was simple. Do everything that required the truck, and, if time allowed, some general administration duties such as grass cutting and shower cleaning.

This involved doing a garbage run to the Dump every day, trips to town for pick-ups and deliveries, driving campers to trip starts (or finishes) and picking up girls from other camps for dances.

Remember, it was the early 1960's. One green pick-up truck. No seat belts. Passengers in the back. Removable canoe racks. One hard bench seat in the front.

The Arrival of "Mrs. Chief"

In 1961, I was in university and thus available for "Advance Camp". It was the era of "If it doesn't move, paint it. If it moves, tie it down and then paint it". In reality, there was a long list of chores to be done to get ready for staff and campers.

In late May of 1961, Dave Milne and I arrived at Kilcoo as the first two staff for Advance Camp. We were greeted by John and his very new bride – Peggy. I believe we arrived on a Wednesday. John and Peg were married the previous Saturday; spent their honeymoon in New York, and arrived at the Camp on Tuesday.

For the first few days, while the kitchen was being readied for the camp to start, we ate our meals in Chief's Cabin or at the Dominion Hotel in Minden. Each night, Peg was teaching Dave and I how to play Bridge. But we always had to stop by 10:00 pm and were sent to our cabin so that John and Peg could have their private time. David Latimer was born in February, 1962.



Demolishing the Old Lodge

In 1961. It was decided to build a new Lodge during the winter. First however, we (the Post Camp crew) had to get rid of the old lodge.

It's always fun to destroy something every once in a while. I remember two significant incidents from that time. Once, we all stopped to watch Morley Johnston saw through the main beam while he sat on it. One end was already loose and the inevitable happened. The other end gave way and Morley fell ten feet or so to the floor. It was almost like a cartoon.

On a second occasion, on a misty rainy day, we had some trouble keeping our debris disposal fire burning. So, we asked Norm (last name omitted to protect the innocent) to throw a cup of gas on the fire to get it going. There is a difference between "throwing" and "pouring" gas on a fire. As Norm poured the gas on the fire, the flames ran up the stream of gas and a small explosion occurred. Norm suffered some small burns on his hand and lost his eyebrows.



The New Lodge

By the time Advance Camp started in 1962, the building had been constructed. But we needed to finish it inside and out. Lots of painting and floor sanding and finishing included.

One day, when John and Peg had gone to Toronto, we chose to forego our normal daily list of projects for the afternoon. We could then enjoy the camp facilities and the ski boat. We knew that we could make up the project list that evening. John and Peg were not due back until next morning. But….they arrived early that evening and found us still working. John was impressed with our work ethic but only for a short time until he realized that we had played all afternoon.

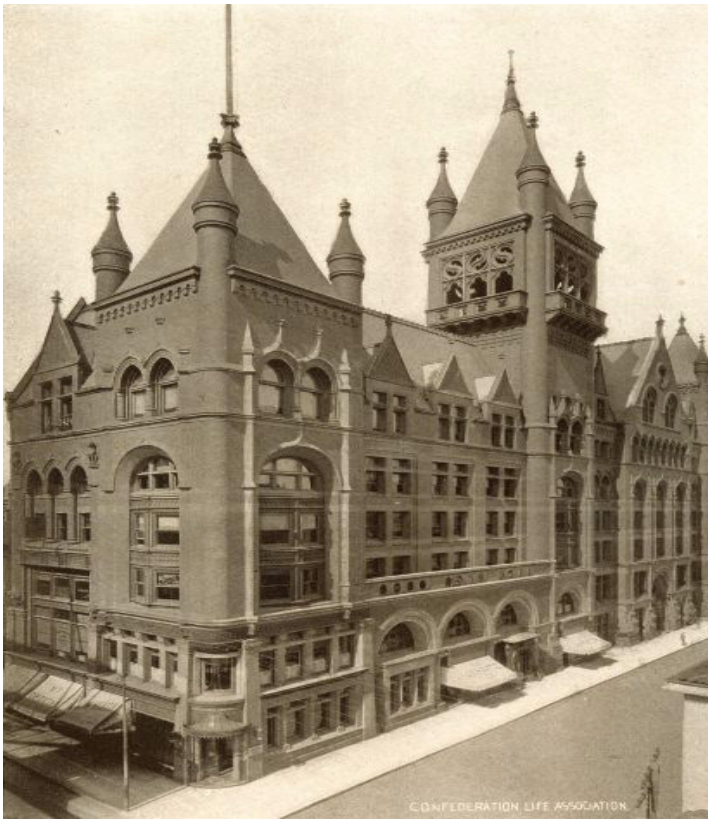
I particularly remember staining the main rafters by sitting on them and doing about three feet at a time and then sliding along to the next section.

Also, while we were working on the lodge, the stone mason was building the fireplace. In case Lub does not know, there is a Time Capsule imbedded in the chimney. I think I know approximately where.

Post Kilcoo

In the Fall of 1963, back at Queen's University, I had to start planning for a permanent job. In those days, job recruiters came to university campuses to interview potential new hires. If a company showed interest in you, they would usually pay half the cost of train fare to Toronto for further discussions. The idea was to get two interviews to get the entire train fare covered.

The Kilcoo connection came in again. One of my two interviews was with Confederation Life. Peggy's father was the president of the company then. I purposely did not tell John or Peggy about the interviews, even though I was staying with them for the week-end.



At the interview, I guess I presented myself well enough to be a finalist for a Management Trainee position. After the interview, I was taken on a "tour" of the offices. The main attraction was a top floor gallery of Canadian Historical paintings, used in the company's annual calendar.

While on the tour, my guide arranged for me to meet "The President". As I was introduced to him, Mr. MacDonald said that he needed no introduction as he already knew me from Kilcoo Camp. I had previously met "Mr. Mac" on several occasions when he visited John and Peg during Advance Camp.

He wanted to know what I was doing at Confed. The interviewer/tour guide said that I was applying for the Management Trainee job. In the end, I got the job.

These are some of my recollections for now.

I have always retained my connection to camping and Kilcoo through Amici and camp friends. In recognition of the influence that my time at Kilcoo Camp had on my life, I am proud to say that my wife Sandy and I have arranged to continue our support of camping through the John R. Latimer Legacy Society with a donation to Amici Camping Charity in my will.

BARRY REYNOLDS
1960-1963

A POST-REUNION EMAIL FROM ALUMNUS PETER ARMSTRONG



Fellas

I'm still floating around the city with just a whisper of Four Strong Winds playing in the back of my head.

I've been convinced for years that the waters of Gull Lake have some curative properties. A sort of Dead Sea on the Kawarthas. And once again, camp proved it's mettle.

What a goddam hoot to see you all and relive so many good times. As a testament to just how little things have changed, I tracked down some old videos after I got home. A few years back, my mother had me digitize some of our old family videos. Most of them are football games or my sister's high school musicals. But as fate would have it, two of them are from Kilcoo in the summer of 1987. There's a Geoff Browne reading at Chapel point, a Tim Magwood song, a final night farewell from Lub and a rendition of Maker of Men in the lodge.

But mostly, it's what the kids today call a Vibe Check. The place just feels the same. The tenor in the voices conveys the same mystical affection. The walls remain as they ever were. I guess that's why we can all fall back into old rhythms and cadence when we step back over the threshold in spite of the years and the miles.

Anyhow, I'm on deadline (which is surely why I'm taking time to send this along finally) so I really must away. But I thought our little gang of lunatics would enjoy these videos from all those days so many years ago. Take care and stay in touch.

Chapel Point
https://youtu.be/9d5VNATR_1o
Closing Ceremonies
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZz5y-cihsA

PETER ARMSTRONG
1985-1991

REUNION CHAPEL COMMENTS FROM JOHN KENNEDY

"Good morning…and thank you Lub for the introduction.

I've been thinking about this talk for some time…since Friday afternoon when Clive Chamberlain and I arrived at Kilcoo to find Lub cutting the lawn near the basketball court. His first words were… "You're doing Chapel."

Friday night most of you arrived and it was noisy and packed with energy here in the lodge…and I got to chatting with Peter (Armstrong)…a CBC guy who I had never had the opportunity to meet during my time with CBC many years ago. And at one point the conversation turned to the public discourse in these days when anger, fear, hate, distress and dismay seem to be taking over the conversation. Indeed, meaningful "conversation" is sometimes difficult.

So, I woke up in the middle of the night and started thinking. And decided to use the intensifying-temperature of the changing public discourse and what, if anything, I might try to do about it… as the centerpiece of today's talk.

And I'll come back to that in a moment.

As I look around today, I would say that all of us gathered here this morning are, individually and collectively, people of great privilege. And with privilege comes responsibility.

We have feasted on all that Kilcoo has to offer, and I would suggest, have walked back to our day to day lives better people. And those strong handshakes, those eye-contact habits, those social skills that we learned here followed us in our daily lives. We have lived the privilege…. and we have accepted much responsibility.



When I came here in 1954…almost 70 years ago…my middle-class parents had managed to find the money to make that happen. I came as a 16-year old camper in July and I stayed through August as a CIT at the invitation of Charlie Plewman. CIT's had obligations…responsibilities…and I think it was at about that time that I started to think a bit more seriously about those responsibilities and obligations than I had only weeks before. Kilcoo had begun to change my outlook on life.

So back to the public discourse. Do I…do we... have any responsibility to use our privilege, our skills, our opinions…to address situations in which anger, hatred, fear, distress and dismay show signs of taking over the public conversation…and to try to change the temperature of that conversation? Perhaps we do. But I'm not sure I know how one old guy can make any difference. But maybe I can. Maybe you can. Maybe, as occasions arise, we'll have opportunities to offer up the other side of ugly arguments… or intolerant arguments…or even hateful arguments.

Perhaps we can individually think about ways to use our privilege and our strengths to change the conversation one discussion at a time. It will not always be possible. It may never be possible…but it sure is worth a try.

And just to wrap this talk and the subject of privilege among this mainly male crowd, I am reminded of the thoughtful observation of Maryon Pearson when her husband, Lester Pearson became Canada's prime minister in 1963:… "behind every successful man, there's a surprised woman."

JOHN KENNEDY
1954-1960

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.

PLAYING TAPS FOR THREE MORE ALUMNI

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

The passing of three more alumni evokes very fond memories.

JACK PEMBERTON

Written by Paul Chamberlain

Former Kilcoo staff member Jack Pemberton passed away on August 16th, 2022 at the age of 99. Jack was one of those people who through their entire life possessed boundless energy. Charlie Plewman's niece Joan Boydell once told me Jack often led the camp yell while hopping from table to table in the lodge. Jack first attended Kilcoo in 1937 and his years as horseback riding instructor were only a preliminary to his life long involvement in the equine community. He served in many capacities with the Canadian Equestrian Federation and was made an honorary life member in 1980. Then in 2007 he was presented with the Equine Canada Lifetime Achievement award. As a staff member at Kilcoo his energy and enthusiasm were no less distinguished.



RICHARD CLARKE

Written by Paul Chamberlain

In July, 1938 John Latimer and his best friend Richard Clarke came to Kilcoo for the first time and theirs was a friendship that lasted through the years even as Richard moved to the United States to complete his education in chemical engineering. What followed was a long career in leadership of a variety of public and private companies. His wife of 56 years, Jacqueline, predeceased him by four years. In 2018 Richard approached the camp to offer a large donation in memory of his childhood friend and following much discussion it was decided to direct the funds to the building of the Kilcoo Historical Museum. Although Richard will not live to see the completion of this project, his spirit will be very much present when it comes to fruition.





Pictured is Kilcoo's first camp truck which was used to transport campers and canoes to starting points for trips. Today the camp uses a bus. In his article, Barry Reynolds mentioned he was properly licensed, but in 1939 when offered the truck driver's job, John Hurst explained he had no driver's license. In response, Charlie Plewman gave him the keys to his car, told him to drive to Toronto to take the test, and then he could have the job.

SHANE MCCARTHY

Written by George Wright, 1987-2002

On October 23rd, we gathered at Chapel Point to remember our buddy Shane McCarthy. Shane was a camper at Kilcoo in the late '80s, was later a swim instructor, and finished up in 2002 as an LIT director. He returned later for "cameo" appearances as Trailblazer Section Director and again as an LIT director. Camp was a huge part of his life. At this celebration of life, it was easy to tell how much he loved camp. Many of the 150 who attended knew Shane through camp. It was where he was his happiest. My memories of Shane are all camp-related and were nearly always ridiculous; whether it was about throwing a drink on himself after telling an off-colour joke that didn't go over very well, or when he would grab the mic in the lodge and do stand-up comedy routines while the LITs were cleaning up after the final banquet the night before. So many laughs with this guy. Personally, I'll remember Shane forever as he was indirectly responsible for me meeting my wife. Because he was in the U.S. at the time of our wedding, we for some reason didn't think to invite him. He indeed took it personally, but didn't forget to send us a lovely wedding card, complete with a cheque payable to Mr. & Mrs. George Wright, in the amount of $0. That was Shane!



THE STORY BEHIND A SHOPPING MALL SANTA - KILCOO STYLE

Kilcoo has always been a place of magic for me. From the majesty and drama of the Olympics, to the stories around the campfire, the desire to make a young person's imagination soar was born in me. Thus, in 2010, I took on the role of Santa Claus, Father Christmas, Pere Noel and continue to do so to this day. And how does this magic reveal itself each December? Well, let me delve into my bag of goodies and share a few with you.

But first, the beard! What is it about the beard that is so important? For the first two years I wore a phony, face-covering beard which showed no facial expression. The third year my employer, Bayview Village Mall asked if I could grow my own beard, as a way of becoming more 'haute' for the mall clients. (It's their marketing theme). To support this new facial growth, BV commissioned one of Canada's top fur designers to create a full-length Father Christmas coat with green brocade underneath and all of the decorative bells and whistles. Since my wife has never been a fan of beards, I decided to start growing it one day after our anniversary each year (September 5th) so it could 'sprout' to a good length by the third week in November when Santa arrives at the mall. Needless to say, it disappears Christmas Eve! Strangely enough, no child has ever tugged at it unless invited to do so by me. It's in their eyes as I speak to them and their gaze drops to my chin. "Yes, it's real," I say. "Would you like to give it a tug?" Usually they decline with embarrassment, but the point is made that this guy could be the real deal!



One last point about the beard…for the last four years at the end of August I have had the immense pleasure of camping on the shores of Lake Opeongo with dear Kilcoo friends...your esteemed editor being one of them. The rule of no shaving in the park has trumped the Anniversary rule, and I am happy to say my marriage has survived!

So other than the importance of the beard, how do I convince the young 'uns that I am the REAL Santa? The answer to the question is another question which seems to disarm the doubter. "Real?, of course I am real! Would you like to pinch my arm?!" The train has been derailed and other distracting topics are set upon… such as, "And what is on your WISH LIST this year?"

You see, Santa never promises! There are so many criteria…naughty, nice, helpful, polite, mannerly, relationships with family, school work, toys put away etc. etc. The advantage to doing Santa virtually last year brought a new source of magic. Because parents booked appointments, Santa knew the child's name, age, what he/she was asking for and quite often, under the topic, "What would you like Santa to know?" I could make supportive comments that the parents appreciated. Of course, there is nothing more fun than seeing a 5 year old's eyes bugging out when being told that the goldfish, Fred, should not be fed vegetables that remained on the plate at the end of meals. (A Santa testimony that he and Mrs. Claus have lived a long healthy life because we eat our vegetables always helps)

And then there are the questions!

"How old are you?" (Much older than you),

"Where are the reindeer?" (Glance toward the skylight and let the child know that the wrist bells let the reindeer know that I am near)

"We don't have a chimney, how do you get in?" (I have a small gold key which is one of a kind. It will open any door but only once a year on Christmas Eve)

"How many elves do you have?" (A variable/arbitrary number between 600 and 3000)

"How many buildings are at the North Pole?" (The main house, a barn for the reindeer, and a very large workshop. The shop is divided into three areas…manufacturing/assembly, packing/wrapping, and shipping, which is basically to put the presents into the big sack on the sleigh)

"What do you do if there is no snow on Christmas Eve?" (Flying is not a problem because of the magic dust on the reindeer's hooves, but LANDING is another matter! Actually, the sleigh has retractable wheels in the runners that I can activate if necessary.

There will always be a new question, one that has not been thought of. The magic of 'thinking like Santa' has usually saved me, but sometimes the best and most honest answer is, "Let me ask Mrs. Claus about that!"

And then there are 'the clients': the children who see, or don't see, the magic in my representation.

The babies: Often dressed in little elf suits for their first picture with Santa. Sometimes, if it's not busy, the photographer will have me lie down on the three-seater white leather sofa and put the newborn on my soft padded belly. It's a very special photo. One very special gift that I receive is when the 11-year-old comes up to speak to me as he/she has done every year since lying on my belly when 6 months old!

The two-year olds: In preparation for the big visit, Mom and Dad have read books, made 'ho-ho-ho' voices from morning to night, bought a stuffed Santa doll, plastered the toddler's room with Santa pictures, bought Santa colouring books, read a Santa story each night for two weeks before etc. etc. And then THE BIG DAY. Best dress, coat, shoes polished…off to the mall…stand in line for 30 minutes or so, with the obligatory bathroom visits (no peeing on Santa!)…front of the line. Mommy will put you on Santa's knee. It will only be for a short time. AT THIS POINT THE CHILD"'S INNER VOICE SAYS…" Hold on here…Mommy is giving me away. This big fat guy with a face full of hair is going to eat me. I don't see any presents! Time to bring out my fight or flight reflex!



Santa's options are twofold….

1. Quickly put the child in the 'TRS= Toddler Restraint System. This system allows me to keep the child on my knee for 10 seconds without holding him/her down while the photographer snaps the most horrified expression from the child. Santa maintains his pasted-on smile at all times.

2. Santa allows the child to escape from him, usually due to the potential of being smacked with flailing arms or legs or head butted in the chin and watches as Mom and Dad chase after the child who has just done the 50-yard dash to the end of the mall at Olympic speed.

The Doubting 'Tweens: About 10-12 years of age. This category depends on a number of factors such as the influence of peers at school, the 'coolness' factor, and older siblings. When faced with a tween who turns towards me and says with a scowl,' You're an imposter. You're just dressed up to look like Santa Claus. (Which must mean that somewhere in his/her mind, there is a real Santa.) My response is to look him/her right in the eye and say, "I represent doing nice things and bringing joy and happiness to people. The oldest person who came to see me was 92 years old. He knew that chatting with Santa had brought a smile to his face every Christmas for the last 90 years.

Adults and families: It is such fun to have the same families come back year after year. Some dress up in finery, others buy ugly Christmas sweaters, and some wear elf onesies. It's a family tradition. The university students always get a picture for Mom's Christmas present. I have seen albums with the yearly pictures of the family…kids getting bigger, and the smiles are always there. It's a wonderful time of year to take stock of who we are and who we care about.

So believe in who and what this iconic character represents and be a Santa this Christmas. You will find out that giving of yourself will bring you extra joy this holiday season. Merry Christmas to all, and to all a Rip Ram.

KEN JONES
1964-1978