THE GULL ROCK GAZETTE

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KILCOO STAFF REUNION: WASN'T THAT A PARTY

"Could have been the whisky.
It might have been the gin."

But it wasn't;
It was the people,
The memories,
The stories,
The singsong,
The new and resumed.
Friendships.

I find myself reflecting on the meeting of both old and new friends, the embellished stories from decades past, the banquet and singsong, group activities and the camaraderie shared by 185 strong, young and old alike at the place we call Kilcoo. I found the messages at Chapel particularly introspective as they crossed the alumni eras of 95 years on Gull Lake. May Kilcoo over the next generations through the alumni, Dave Spindler, "Tingles" and those who follow, continue to provide experiences and so much more to campers of the future, to build character and personal bonds which will remain with them for the rest of their lives.

PETER OYLER (1960-1966)

Kilcoo is such an amazing place and truly a second home to me. Over the last few years, I've sometimes wondered whether it would still feel that way, but being back up there with my best friends, enjoying a true Kilcoo weekend on the shores of Gull Lake, reminded me just how much it means to me.

CHRIS GRAHAM (2009-2023)

The people I connected with were so uplifting. There was a special warmth and bond in every handshake; young people without hesitation helping we old fellas in challenging terrain. An immediate connection. I guess that's a bit funny because just about everyone is younger than many of the old fellas I was so happy to see again.

The old fellas chatting with younger accomplished and dedicated people. I have never felt so proud of being a part of something so big, important and meaningful.

It was quite intriguing to me the presence of young women mixing so easily with everyone. In chatting with several the gender was immaterial. Their devotion to the spirit of Kilcoo was the same as mine and the passion they sang with at the singsong Saturday night brought big smiles. They too are the important leaders of Kilcoo. Thank you to all who attended. You are a special people making this world a better place.

JAMIE MCALPINE (1953-1969)

I know I was not the only one who was looking forward to this reunion for a long time, and it far surpassed all our expectations. It was so special to be back at camp, and also to meet some of the older alumni, hear some of their experiences, and learn more about how camp has changed over the years while so many traditions have stayed the same.

NATALIE STEWART (2021-2024)









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It was amazing to see friends that I don't get to see that often. I was also happy to have chats with people I had never met before. This is a very special place to me, and I am very happy that it is still thriving.

I was impressed by how many people from different generations came to the reunion to relive some great memories, and to see how much has stayed the same.

Finally, apart from the stunning weather, seeing that Kilcoo is in great hands was such a wonderful experience. Kilcoo Forever!

MIKE ADAMSON (1979-1997)

There was a lot of energy I experienced from staff(past and present) and from Dave Spindler and Pat Tingley…. Kilcoo will succeed because of their commitment to keeping the traditions and values of 95 years moving forward. You're correct….it is a unique community that is hard to explain…and I was only at camp for 2 years! We should all be thankful that we have experienced the Kilcoo life.

BARB MAYBURY (1972-1973)

I can't express how special this weekend was, and I can't wait for the next one. Kilcoo is such a special place, filled with even more special people, and I am forever grateful for this community.

CLAIRE MACDONELL (2021-2024)

This weekend shows us that the Kilcoo Magic is alive and well. Seeing all the old guys, meeting some new ones, and gathering together in a place we all call home can only be described as special. We are fortunate to have experienced it and ensuring future generations can have this experience feels nothing short of our responsibility. Dave & Tingles & Team plus alumni: we have always relied on each other and this is no different.

Weekends like this make me feel like I can jump right back into Kilcoo life like I never left. Such a special place.

BLAKE MORTON (2010-2019)

This was my first reunion and my first time meeting many alumni, and it was such a pleasure to see such a diverse age range telling stories and recalling their Kilcoo days as if everybody were old friends.

THOMAS BEGIC (2011-2024)









EDITOR'S MUSINGS

There is no doubt in my mind that 2026 will be remembered by many of us as a very notable year: 'The beginning of the next chapter'?, 'A great leap forward'?, 'A continued ascendance to greatness'? I'm not sure, but there were two events that stood out for me and speak to the great value of the Kilcoo spirit.

Amidst the rain and wind on the Toronto waterfront on Saturday, May 23rd, approximately 175 camping enthusiasts convened for the 20th annual Canoe Heads fund raising event. Despite the fact that the weather derailed our plans for the paddling portion of the day, the event still raised $364,768, the largest amount ever, and this contributed to Amici sponsoring 423 campers to attend 50 different partner camps this summer. What made it so satisfying from a Kilcoo perspective is the fact that Kilcoo staff members gave birth to this organisation (in 1964) and so many years later, by far the largest contingent of participants, 62 of us, represented Kilcoo at this year's event. To me that speaks to the ascendant greatness of the Kilcoo spirit.

The second event was the alumni reunion held the weekend of September 25-27, which offered a look at the beginning of Kilcoo's next chapter. Attended by the largest number ever (185 registered), there was an energy that was undeniable. It was clear that the demographics are changing as I note that 89 of the alumni registered attended Kilcoo in the 21st century, 37 of them in the last 5 summers. From the Friday night with a lodge full of noisy revellers, through the stirring rendition of "You'll Never Walk Alone" sung by all on Saturday evening, to Todd Houston's, Steve Reble's and Calvin Miller's messages during Sunday's chapel that resonated in all of us, it was a weekend that everyone who participated will remember with great fondness, and for many, the return by car or airplane to the reality of their own lives will take some effort.

And so, the month of October will see the fall programs come to an end, and Kilcoo will close its doors on another year. What about 'a great leap forward'? The business of children's residential camps is currently faced with serious challenges, but if the efforts of Dave Spindler and the KCA ownership group have anything to do with it I am confident when we convene for the next alumni reunion (in three years?) we will be excited to measure more successes and more excellence in Kilcoo's journey towards 100 years.

PAUL CHAMBERLAIN
1956-67

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

A message from the directors

With Kilcoo's historic 95th Season in the rearview, we couldn't be more grateful for everyone who helped us get here, or more excited for what's to come.

2026 was a year of change, challenge and learning, and above all, it was a year that showed us the enduring strength, resilience and enthusiasm of the Kilcoo community. Nowhere was that clearer than in late September when Kilcoo's 95th Anniversary Alumni Reunion became the biggest on record, and one of the most joyful and optimistic in our camp's great history. Alumni from 24 to 91 years young came home to Gull Lake, and within minutes, the years fell away and we all settled into camp as though we'd never left.

On Saturday evening, as the sun set over Chapel Point during our beach reception, we toasted to the past and future of Kilcoo, presented Paul Chamberlain with a custom "Kilcoo Forever" paddle, provided by alumnus Mark Russell of Revival Canoe Company to commemorate Paul's years of service to our community. Just as the sky turned a brilliant golden hue, Matt "Homer" Simpson played a stunning rendition of Taps from the top of the tower. The whole beach was still in quiet contemplation .It was Kilcoo Magic, pure and simple.

We also had the thrill of celebrating three birthdays on Reunion Weekend for Geoff Seaborn, Stewie Baldwin, and Clive Chamberlain. It gave us a reason to kick off a joyous sing-song, capped off in Kilcoo fashion with a lively rendition of All For One, Never Walk Alone, and a spontaneous Oh Canada - all of which were beautifully performed on the keyboard by the great Ken Jones.

Our Post Camp crew, led by Stu Armstrong, had an incredible fall season welcoming several school groups, Mother/Son Weekend, Family Camp and, of course, all of you for the Reunion. Camp is now tucked in for its long winter nap, and we are grateful for the crew for doing such a great job. Aside from a handful of alumni weekends, the grounds will rest and recharge until spring.

That doesn't mean we're slowing down. We're working through our Capital Plan, starting with some high impact infrastructure projects. We're also in the process of overhauling our website, Kilcoo.com, with the help of Alumnus Paolo Campisi and his team. We'll soon release a refreshed Alumni Portal, so stay tuned for new features to keep us all connected.

Registration for summer 2027 is in full swing, and we're thrilled to see familiar and new families already counting down the days. As we said at the banquet, there is tremendous strength in having so many hands on the rope. You are our best way to help new families discover the magic of Kilcoo. If you know a family with camp-aged boys, send them our way! Inquiries@kilcoo.com is a reliable way to get in touch with our office, and we'd really appreciate your support.



To all of you, thank you for being part of Kilcoo's past, present and future. Rip Ram!

Kilcoo Forever,

DAVE SPINDLER &
PATRICK "TINGLES" TINGLEY

CHANGING OF THE GUARD AT THE 2026 ALUMNI REUNION

Those of us nearly 200 Kilcoo staff alumni at the reunion witnessed the change of the guard in real time.

The new guard, led by Dave Spindler, revealed itself to the generations, older and younger. Dave made his presence known, flanked by his tight knit group from his 13 year tenure at Kilcoo. The depth of the bench of Kilcoo LITs, staff, senior staff and administration, nurtured by Co-Director Pat Tingles, made it "easy" for Dave to step in as Executive Director for his first half year and full summer.

Easy it was not. 2026 brought challenges that were among the toughest of any Kilcoo summer and everyone pulled together due in no small part to Kilcoo alumni and friends showing up on site and pitching in to help the LITs and staff to deliver a seamless camper experience.

Dave is gifted, multidimensional and knows the value of relationships built at camp. He joins a continuation of a line of directors and leaders that we have admired and respected: Charles Plewman, John Latimer, Hal Hannaford, Dave Latimer and Pat Tingley (aided by a committee led by Tim Currie).

At the reunion, a point was made to give a special acknowledgement of the influence and contributions of the Latimers in our lives. This was celebrated by all.

Dave, Pat and their team need all of our support in spreading the word about Kilcoo, especially in a time when boys can benefit from getting out into the real world to compete, play and grow. Judging from the stars on the rosters in the dining hall, many of us have been



responsible already for encouraging the next generation of campers and leaders.

This off-season, Dave and the team will be visiting schools and community groups. They are bringing back kitchen table conversations with parents. Every little bit helps when we get the word out. Let's pump the tires of Kilcoo Camp. Kilcoo Forever.

JOHN GRANT
1968-1980

REFLECTIONS ON A VERY SPECIAL WEEKEND

My first experience of camp was going to Kilcoo for the first time as an 11 year-old in 1949. My most recent experience was the Kilcoo alumni reunion September 25 to September 27. As always, returning to camp is a little like returning home after a long vacation, it is familiar and comforting.

Needless to say, many aspects have changed significantly since 1949, but the ethos of Kilcoo remains, and that was reassuring to see. It was



fun to reconnect with guys who were campers when I was "staff". It is always great to renew friendships and hear the many stories of canoe trips that went awry and pranks that were successful. The Saturday night "banquet" and sing song were particularly memorable for me. It was cool to see the song sheets are still in use and that many of the songs were the old familiar ones that I remember from my time as a camper and staff . It was nostalgic to again participate in flag raising and lowering.

The most important was the singing of "Maker of Men "and to again hear the music of Jan Sibelius so familiar to anyone who has been a part of Kilcoo. Sunday morning at Chapel Point was inspirational. The weather was perfect, a bright blue sky, and a light cool breeze. I climbed up the rocks much more carefully than I had the first time, 77 years ago. Little has changed at Chapel Point from the time I first saw it as a camper. There is a permanent lectern and a microphone, and the trees are much bigger. There were three alumni who spoke and all were moving and memorable in their own way. It reminded me of why Kilcoo has made such a huge contribution to the making of men from young boys.

We are blessed to have had the opportunity to come to Kilcoo. As alumni, it is great to have the chance to come together again as adults and to appreciate the leadership that created Kilcoo, and that now continues it.

MAURICE (MO) BENT
(1949-1956)

A STORY WORTH RETELLING

The incident on which this story is based occurred shortly after Visitor's Weekend in July, 1975 and the reason it comes to light now is that two of the principles involved happened to have had a chance to talk during this September's alumni reunion.

As my brother Clive and I drove up to camp on the Friday of the reunion, he was telling me about his experience at camp while serving as the camp doctor in July, 1975. At the time, he was faced with a camper being returned to the camp from his canoe trip with a serious, deep cut on his foot that required immediate attention and in the end, dozens of stitches.



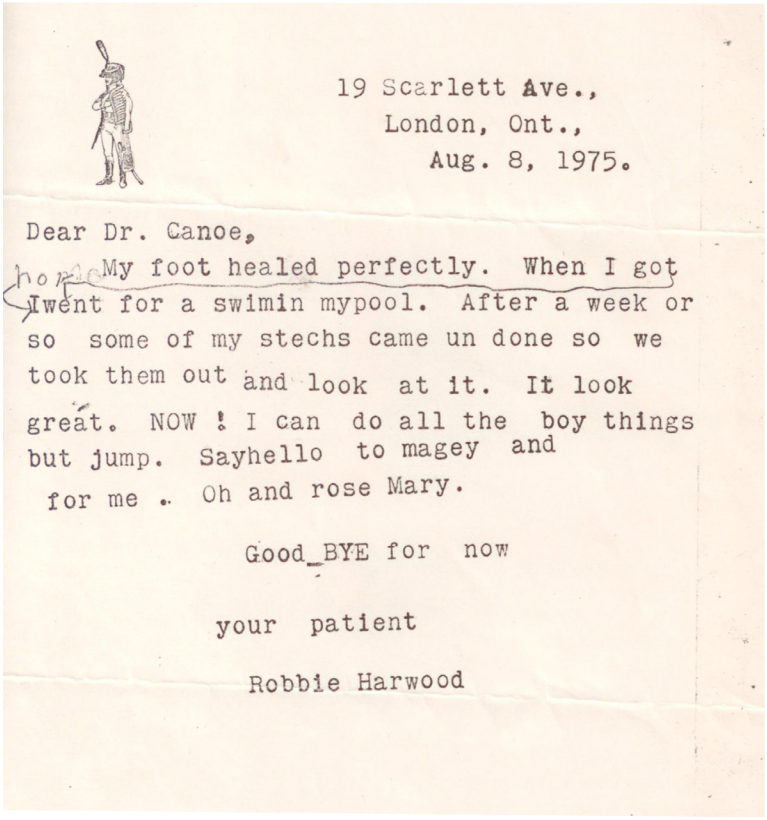
Clive and Ian "story retelling" alongside Mo Bent

As Clive recalled, the cut was deep and the area around it was quite dirty. He found that in order to deal with it he had to "freeze" the foot several times while he thoroughly cleaned out all the dirt and then applied the stitches. Fortunately, while attending medical school Clive had had many opportunities to stitch up injuries and went ahead in this case after obtaining permission from the camper's father.

On the other side of the story there was counsellor Ian Campbell with CIT Cameron Binkley and tripper John Muise taking his Trailblazer cabin group on their first canoe trip and among his campers was Robbie Harwood. As Ian relates, the group had arrived at a campsite on Red Pine Lake and the campers were playing while waiting for the staff to get ready for swimming. The boys were climbing onto a sizeable rock and jumping off when Robbie landed on a pile of debris in which there was a rusty torn tin can which opened a long cut on the bottom of his foot. After stopping the bleeding as best they could Ian and John paddled Robbie up the lake and with the help of some cottagers were able to contact the camp and arrange for Robbie to be returned to camp. As the 1975 Kilcoo log told it, "Dr. Canoe got his first chance at stitches… with a fairly bad cut on Robbie Harwood's foot."

Unfortunately Robbie was unable to finish out July at camp, but there were two good outcomes from this accident.

For the first, see Robbie's letter below:



19 Scarlett Ave.,
London, Ont.,
Aug. 8, 1975.

Dear Dr. Canoe,

My foot healed perfectly. When I got home I went for a swimin mypool. After a week or so some of my stechs came un done so we took them out and look at it. It look great. NOW ! I can do all the boy things but jump. Sayhello to magey and for me . Oh and rose Mary.

Good_BYE for now

your patient

Robbie Harwood

For the second, the postscript to the story: Robbie did return in July 1976 where he was in Bill McIlroy's cabin, Trailblazer Cabin 5.

PAUL CHAMBERLAIN
1956-67

USE YOUR KILCOO CONNECTION

One of the messages during the alumni reunion chapel service was encouragement to alumni not to wait until the next reunion to outreach to Kilcoo friends.

In that vein I will be meeting alumni friends Ken Jones, Peter Oyler and Don Wilson for lunch in mid November before Don returns to Ecuador where he works with a rural community. As Peter lives in Haliburton, we will be meeting at a mid point between our homes.

It is also my hope to organise a visit to the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough, Ontario next May or June and if any readers are interested and would like more details please send me an e-mail at pchamp@sympatico.ca.

I am also thinking of planning a lunch get together for interested alumni in the Burlington area next fall and will put out an invite in the spring 2027 Gazette.

So as I said above, I encourage you to use your Kilcoo network, don't wait for the next reunion, make the effort to keep in touch.

PAUL CHAMBERLAIN
1956-67

Author's note: You might notice that Paul has written a lot. It would be great to hear from you!

COMING HOME AGAIN

The feeling of driving into Kilcoo is difficult to describe. There is something about turning down that road, pulling through those gates and seeing that familiar shoreline that immediately feels like coming home. It doesn't seem to matter whether you spent one summer at Kilcoo or thirty. The sense of comfort and camaraderie is immediate.

You notice it right away. Every person you pass offers a "hi" and a handshake. Conversations begin easily, even between people meeting for the first time. Somehow, it feels as though you already know one another. Over the reunion weekend, I was continually struck by the number of people and generations connected by this place. I have never experienced a community quite like it.

I am honoured to write this reflection representing the more recent staff, and particularly the staff of 2023. Returning for Kilcoo's 95th year celebration gave us the opportunity to hear stories from generations of campers and staff who came long before us, while also sharing some of our own. What struck me most was how beautifully those stories connected. So much has changed at Kilcoo, and yet, in many ways, nothing has changed at all.

The activities may look different, and new traditions have been added, but the heart of Kilcoo remains remarkably constant. Whether you are up at the aerial park, down at the docks, in ceramics, around a campfire, or sitting in Chapel, there is an unmistakable sense that you are part of something larger than yourself.

As an elementary teacher, I see every day how different the world is for young people. They are growing up surrounded by technology, constant information, and pressures that previous generations could not have imagined. Because of that, I find an enormous amount of comfort in knowing that Kilcoo exists. There is still a place where kids can put their phones away, get muddy, challenge themselves, make real friendships, learn to be uncomfortable, and discover what they are capable of. A place that values connection, responsibility, courage, kindness, and simply being present.

The reunion made the impact of that place particularly clear. Hearing stories from so many different decades, it was evident that Kilcoo stays with people long after they leave its shores. The strength of the alumni network is remarkable. When explaining the size and reach of the reunion to people outside of Kilcoo, their surprise said a lot. Whether someone was here for one summer or thirty years, the connection remains.

What I loved most was that the weekend was not only about remembering the past. People were just as interested in where one another had landed, what they were doing now, and what had happened since their time at camp. Stories and "war stories" from years gone by were shared alongside genuine curiosity about the present. That continuity says something powerful about the kind of relationships Kilcoo creates.

One of the most meaningful parts of the 95th anniversary was realizing that we are now one small part of a much longer story. I loved hearing about traditions from years past and sharing some of the traditions that have developed since those alumni were here. Each generation adds something of its own, but the foundation remains. The stories we heard often sounded remarkably similar to our own. The world may be different, but the lessons, friendships, struggles, and triumphs remain familiar.



This was especially evident in Chapel, where we heard stories of both struggle and success. Kilcoo seems to make space for both in equal parts. Listening to people speak honestly about what camp had meant to them - difficult moments included - was incredibly moving. The confidence, thoughtfulness, and well-roundedness evident in so many of the people I met made the impact of this place impossible to miss.

The rocky shores of Gull Lake will always be part of that feeling, but Kilcoo is ultimately more than a place. It is the people, the traditions, and the belief that young people are capable of more than they sometimes realize. It is the knowledge that you can return years later and still feel at home.

I know, undoubtedly, that Kilcoo will be part of my life forever. I know that, no matter how far into the future it may be, I will continue to return to these familiar shores, shake hands with people I have never met, catch up with people I haven't seen in years, and feel that same sense of belonging.

We are Kilcoo people. We will always be Kilcoo people. And we are incredibly lucky to have a place to return to.

Being part of Kilcoo's 95th year celebration is something I know we are all deeply grateful for. I am particularly grateful to Paul for bringing so many generations together and creating a weekend that reminded us just how strong this place is.

I look forward to seeing where Kilcoo goes from here, watching the next generation of campers grow, and seeing its traditions continue. And, of course, I look forward to the next reunion!

Until then, the rocky shores of Gull Lake will remain what they have always been: Home.

Rip Ram.

SINCERELY,
SARAH, AND THE STAFF OF 2023

EDITOR'S MUSINGS PART 2

There is a reason for my editor's column being divided into two parts. The first part fits with the major subject matter being presented, namely reflections on the 2026 reunion which attracted the largest crowd ever and was filled with bristling energy and positive outlooks to Kilcoo's future.

However, I have found the need to report on the passing of five alumni over the past few months. My brother Clive and I have written about our brother Dean who passed away on September 21st, Scott Kennedy has written a tribute to his brother John who passed away August 14th, and I have written about Paul Turner who also passed away in August, Gord Petch (October 7th) and Sean Fitzmartin (August). From this group of five alumni there must be a very large number of alumni who will feel a sense of sadness.

Gord Petch

I am saddened to report the passing of a good Kilcoo friend, Gord Petch on October 7th of this year. Gord first appeared at Kilcoo in 1965 as the handicraft instructor where he first demonstrated a multitude of skills which he parlayed years later into using his love of architecture by designing and constructing cottages in the Kawartha region on Buckhorn and Stony Lakes. At camp, Gord's strong leadership skills were appreciated by campers and other staff and he made time to contribute as an executive member of Amici in its early years. Following his camping days, Gord graduated from law school and practised first in Peterborough and then later in Toronto and eventually Oakville. Gord battled illness in the last three years of his life during which he never lost his sense of humour and positive outlook.



Sean Fitzmartin

It is with sadness that we report the passing of Sean Fitzmartin on August 26th as a result of a traffic accident. Sean attended Kilcoo, first as a camper in 2009, and later as a counsellor from 2014 to 2016. Sean was loved by his many friends at Kilcoo for his happy, positive and very giving personality. Comments from friends mentioned he always had a smile on his face and as a counsellor, brought out the best in his campers. In 2016 Sean described his affection for Kilcoo when he wrote, "I am so lucky to have one of two cabins overlooking the lake, the sound of waves and the shimmering of the sun are beautiful. I wish my school friends could be here to see this, my favourite place in the world, Kilcoo Camp." Although Sean was born in Edmonton, Alberta, he enjoyed a very close relationship with his parents and enjoyed time canoe tripping with them in Algonquin Park for many years. All of his camp friends will remember him as a friend who was true to himself.



Paul Turner

It is with sadness that I report on the passing of Paul Turner. Paul first came to Kilcoo in 1954 and finished his time on staff in 1956 where he was my counsellor in July. His very calm demeanour and caring leadership were important in starting me on to a long term connection with camp. Through the years following both our camping days Paul kept in touch and for several years donated to Amici through my involvement in the Canoe Heads event. When I look at the type of young man Paul was, he was to me the type of person I would hope every camper would have as their counsellor.



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IDEAS ALWAYS WELCOME & NEEDED!

32 alumni at the reunion said they were willing to write an article for The Gazette. To them and any others, let me hear from you. Let me know at pchamp@sympatico.ca if you want help with ideas. The Gazette cannot continue without your help.

Dean Chamberlain

It is with a measure of sadness that I report the passing of my "big brother" Dean on September 21st. Dean was a "larger than life" member of the Kilcoo staff from 1956 to 1963 who will be remembered by many for his 10 second canoe shakeouts and the booming voice calling out, "Good morning Mohawk Park" at the end of Peter Segworth's and later Peter Oyler's trumpeting wake up revelle each day.

But Dean was much more than that. A world renowned lung pathologist and medical school professor, he was above all a great brother who guided me in sports endeavours and always supported me at camp. I miss him, but will always have wonderful memories of sharing my life with him.

From Clive's perspective: my younger brother Dean followed me to Kilcoo two years after I got there, but I recall when I was 10 years old and we were at Camp Glenokawa I would go to Dean's cabin every morning to tie his shoelaces for him. Dean was 7 at the time and we had been sent to camp because youngest brother Paul was due to be born. I too shared many good memories with Dean as we both went through medical school and on to long careers as we shared a warm brotherly relationship.

Clive Chamberlain (1954-1960) and Paul Chamberlain (1956-1967)





Kilcoo 2026 being "put to bed" for the winter.

John Kennedy

Nov 25, 1937 - Aug 14, 2026
Day is done
Gone the sun
From the lake, from the hills, from the sky,
All is well, safely rest,
God is nigh.

I wanted to let you know that my oldest brother, John Kennedy, was taken from his family, friends and Kilcoo on Aug 14, 2026.

John was a passionate Kilcoo counsellor, canoeing instructor and leader at camp from 1954 to 1960. He and his family became very close friends of John Latimer, his wife Peggy and their kids from his working days in Kilcoo, a friendship that has remained to this very day and will continue for ever. John was very well respected at Kilcoo by campers and staff alike as they enjoyed and appreciated his humour, his respect for those he interacted with and the many relationships he developed over his years at Camp.

Beyond Kilcoo, John had an extensive career and life that reached out to the many, many friends, co-workers and professionals that he maintained deep and positive relationships with. He developed respected leadership roles within CBC over an extensive career of success. Additionally, John developed many significant roles within many volunteer Boards. His final transformation occurred as he took on the challenge as the regional Director's position for the CBC in British Columbia.
After his retirement, John continued his many volunteer efforts that displayed his strong interest in enhancing his charitable connections.

As a former Kilcoo camper, counsellor and leader for a number of years myself I feel nothing but pride and love for my dear brother.

Rip Ram!
Scott Kennedy
(1960-1969)

