

# THE CLOCK TOWER TIMES

## Alumni Newsletter

*Echoes of the Chimes of our Times*

Spring 2009

### Camp Billings Board of Directors

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*John Freitas, Newton, MA*

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## A Sad Day For Camp Billings

By Bob Green, Director



Because Camp Billings is our home, and a place where our present and our future are so connected to our past, today is a very sad day for all the Billings family.

Ralph Lawrence, who served as Director for 38 summers from 1958 - 1996, passed away early on February 19, peacefully and without pain.

For those of you who knew Uncle Ralph, met him, or had family members who were at Billings during his tenure, his influence as a teacher, mentor and friend are unsurpassed. He was singularly responsible for keeping Camp Billings afloat during tough economic times in the 1960's. There are thousands of young people who have been touched by his kindness and his spirit. We are better spouses, parents, citizens, and human beings as a result of having this great man in our lives. Today is a day when we should all reflect upon some of the memorable stories and unforgettable experiences we have shared with, and because of, Uncle Ralph. For many of us he *IS* Camp Billings, and always will be.

#### *To send alumni updates:*

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#### *To send address changes:*

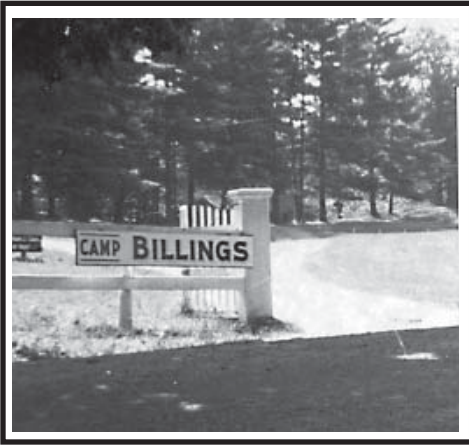
Marti Warren  
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## Greetings from the Board . . .

By Don Carmichael, Board President

### FAREWELL TO OUR DEAR UNCLE RALPH LAWRENCE

Camp Billings' favorite uncle, Uncle Ralph, passed away peacefully on February 19, 2009. Larry Drew tells us that at the final stage of Ralph's hospitalization he elected to follow the natural course of things – he chose to forego further intrusive life support provisions, talked with a minister, and was then composed and resting peacefully when he passed away.



With Ralph's passing, so too passes the second generation of Camp Billings leadership. Dad and Mother Hurd created the camp, building it from scratch from 1906 through 1957, a span of 52 years. Ralph started on the staff in 1950, then served as the camp director from 1958 to 1995, and finally remained active on the camp's board of directors until his death – a continuous span of 60 years. The wonderfully nurturing traditions and close family feelings at Camp Billings were due initially to the spirit of the camp that Dad and Mother Hurd created. Uncle Ralph then sustained and increased these traditions by his uniquely caring personality and his devotion to the camp, its campers, and its staff over many decades. Our task on the board of directors is now to perpetuate, foster and enhance these traditions for the benefit of the future generations of campers.

The funeral service for Ralph on February 28, 2009, at the Bradford VT Congregational Church was attended by well over two hundred people - Ralph's friends from Bradford as well as many members of the Camp Billings family from the U.S. and Canada. The social hour after the service went from noon well into mid-afternoon – you know what it's like when members of the Billings family get together. We know that many of you couldn't attend the funeral on short notice but do want to celebrate and honor Uncle Ralph's life and his contributions to your life. We will hold a special ceremony at camp early this summer to remember and pay tribute to the gifts of nurture, development and friendship that Ralph made to thousands of us during the 60 years he served Camp Billings. We will also be creating a special fund to celebrate Ralph's career at Camp Billings, and expect to devote it to the camp's crafts and arts programs that were so close to Ralph's heart.

I expect all of you will join me in a deep, personal gratitude that Ralph Lawrence was a part of our lives. He truly exemplifies the spirit of Camp Billings.

Dear Billings Alumni,

The passing of Ralph Lawrence is a huge loss for the Billings family. Generations of campers and staff were welcomed back to Billings year after year by Uncle Ralph, who offered them guidance and direction. His memory was outstanding, and there were few people he did not remember, even years later. Many remained in contact with him since their camp days. I want to thank all of you who have shared thoughts and memories online with your camp friends over the past few months.

I would like to invite you all to come back to Billings on Saturday, June 20th for a celebration of Uncle Ralph's life. We hope to make it a day for shared memories of our friend, mentor, past director, and board member. Please check the insert in the newsletter and RSVP with your plans as soon as possible, so that we can plan for the luncheon following the celebration. Please contact me or Marti Warren if you have any questions.

Come back, visit with friends, walk the campus, and view our plans for the arts at Billings, a memorial to Uncle Ralph. This was an area dear to him, as he got his start at Billings in the Craft Shop, and spent his life teaching shop at a school in New York City.

Hoping to see you all soon!

Carolyn Sylvester Churchill,  
Camp Billings Alumni Association  
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(603) 988-9397



Alumni News will be back in the next issue of the Clock Tower Times.  
Send your news!

# The Uncle Ralph Memorial Fund

To expand the craft shop and support the arts at Camp Billings

The Camp Billings Board of Trustees is establishing a fund in Ralph's honor to expand the craft shop and support arts programs at Camp Billings. If you would like to donate money to camp in honor of Ralph, please consider specifying the Uncle Ralph Memorial Fund.

## *The expansion of the craft shop will include:*

- Photography studio
- Pottery and woodworking center
- Easel painting work area
- Outdoor deck

## *Support of the Billings arts program includes:*

- Annual camp musical production, staging, scenery, lights, etc.
- Drama program
- Musical instruments and instruction
- Dance classes
- Equipment and supplies for crafts projects



The craft shop and arts were dear to Ralph. In his earlier years at camp, he was the Craft Counselor and loved this position, teaching campers a wide range of craft projects. The Board of Trustees greatly appreciates your support and is so pleased to honor Ralph's life and contributions to camp in this way.

To donate, please use the remittance envelope included with the newsletter or mail your contribution to:

Ted Rossi  
PO Box 3539  
Stowe, VT 05672 USA

Please indicate if you would like your donation to go to the Uncle Ralph Memorial Fund, either on the memo line of the check or on the envelope. Thank you for your support!

# Born To Polka: Larry Drew Celebrating 40 Years at Camp Billings

By Tyler Gardner  
Camper & Staff  
1992-2009



In 2008, Larry Drew celebrated his 40th summer at Camp Billings. He has worn many hats at camp: head of athletics, assistant director, program director, and most recently, head of maintenance. Anyone who has met Larry knows of his wit, vigor, love of square dancing, and keen desire to poke fun at anyone who takes themselves a little too seriously.

Literary giant Samuel Johnson once said, “Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information on it.” Luckily, I feel as if I have lived into the latter part of Johnson’s quote by finding a source of such profound, enlightened, and almost oracular knowledge in Larry Drew.

Because of Larry Drew and his ability to provide wisdom and practical knowledge for so many of us, I have often wondered where we would be today without him in our lives. What type of dystopia would we live in if Larry Drew had not graced Camp Billings with his booming presence forty years ago?

Young lasses would enter high school without knowing how to properly conduct themselves when asked to Polka; young lads unaware of how to flush a toilet without Larry’s dining room instructional announcements; all of the songs in the Camp Billings dining hall would be sung in a monotonous tone because we had lost all sense of tune (especially “Little Brown Jug”); four decades of campers would not have given it their all during country fair or color wars; aspiring tennis players, such as Patti Green King, wouldn’t know the experience of being beaten on the court; hundreds of runners wouldn’t know what it’s like to run around Lake Fairlee; and young Vermonters would have no idea how to solve the problem of porcupines in their yards at night. (The solution involves a pitchfork and a general lack of sensitivity for spiny, nocturnal animals.)

Some of you may be thinking that such things are of a trivial nature, but I assure you, Larry’s advice continues to provide me, and many others, with such direction that I would surely be lost without him.



Where would any of us be if we did not know Uncle Larry’s philosophy of life (and sports)...”be a good sport, give it your best shot, and have fun trying”?

Special thanks to those who contributed memories & stories about Larry:  
Uncle Ralph, Anne Freitas, Megan Tanzi (Larry’s daughter), and Carol Reddekopp.

Camp Billings, Inc.  
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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Ralph sporting a lovely headdress.



Ralph and Canac.



Ralph and Jasmine St. Laurent spending time on the green bench.

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**THANK YOU, UNCLE RALPH!**