

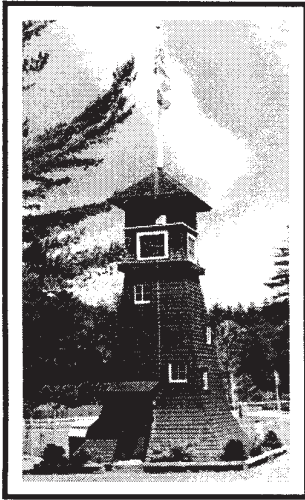
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Here's a postcard I bought on E-bay. It's pre-clocktower! I love these historic photographs of Billings. If you have any you'd like to see in the newsletter, let me know. There are many photos and other memorabilia in the Alumni Room in Dartt Hall. Stop by next summer and check it out!



THE CLOCK TOWER TIMES

Alumni Newsletter

Echoes of the Chimes of our Times Fall 2007/Winter 2008

Dear Billings Alumni,

Our alumni continue to do amazing things for Billings. Jay Lance has been working very hard to get the new Billings website up and full of information for all. Check it out and let us know how you like it. What can we do to make it better for you, or write Jay and tell him how much you appreciate his hard work.

Marti Sylvester Warren is handing over The Clock Tower Times to Elissa Malcolm after ten years of amazing work. Both Elissa and Marti were campers and counselors at Billings.

If you have something you would like to share with Billings just let me know and give us a gift of your time.

Happy Holidays,
Carolyn Sylvester Churchill
Alumni Co-Chairman

Introducing Elissa Malcolm... Newsletter Editor

Billings is very pleased to be introducing Elissa Malcolm, who many of you already know. She was a camper and/or staff member in the 80's and 90's and in 2003. Elissa is very excited to take over the editor position for our Clock Tower Times Alumni Newsletter, because as she says, "I am so pleased to be able to give back to camp . . . being involved and giving my time is a great way for me to contribute to a place that has given me so much."

Elissa lives in Lyme, New Hampshire, not very far from camp. She works as a Quality Measurement Analyst at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. She has the interest and ability to learn our desktop publishing software called Indesign. Elissa is also interested in working to connect the newsletter to the Billings web site, making it more available to all Billings alumni.

The newsletter will continue to look the same for the time being. There will still be the Alumni Update section. Updates may be emailed to Elissa at campbillings@gmail.com or by snail mail at 6 Isaac Perkins Road, Lyme, NH 03768. There will be reports from the Board of Directors and Camps Director Bob Green as well as input from Ann Freitas and Uncle Ralph.

The Clock Tower Times has been around for many years and serves as a wonderful way to keep connected to all of our alumni. Since

1998 Marti Warren has been producing the newsletter twice a year. She has also kept a database with alumni names and addresses. She will continue with the database for another year and then hand it over to Elissa. Please let us know if you have any address changes. They may be sent to martiwarren@comcast.net.





Camp Billings Goes “Old School” in 2007

By Emperor Bob

(a.k.a. Bob Green, Camp Director)

While much of life at Camp Billings remains constant from year to year, and decade to decade, the summer of 2007 took a deliberate step back in time, and program areas felt a lot like they did in 1967... and did it feel good!

Our new Program Director, Ryan Burhans, a 15 year veteran of life at CB, came in to his new job with a plan. (Note: in 2006 Ryan was our cook, and set a new standard there, too.) His goal was for many program areas to revert to teaching skills, building self-esteem through development of expertise, and then rewarding individual successes. After all, it's what our swimming program has done successfully for a century of summers, so why not expand the concept?

At first, the staff met this idea during pre-camp orientation with a healthy dose of skepticism. For many summers now, the focus had been primarily on the kids being safe in their activities and having fun. With most of our staff having been campers at Billings they were used to daily program that was big on entertainment and providing just enough teaching to ensure the campers would be secure in their activities, and knowledge enough to enjoy it without worry.

But not in 2007...Program Director Ryan Van Burhans wanted skill development. He wanted levels of proficiency. He wanted reward and recognition. He wanted sailing, boating, canoeing, waterskiing, tennis, windsurfing, and any other program area that wanted to join in, to embrace the concept of “teaching” their campers more than just the basics, and celebrate their successes as they progressed. At the end of each session there would be a closing campfire where program areas would present awards and certificates to all those campers who had climbed the ladder of talent development.

It started slowly with a sailing “Yacht Club” and awards in boating and tennis. But as the summer moved from session to session, the staff bought into the idea that getting better at what you do make it actually more fun, as well. By the end of the summer there were awards and certificates for most every program, from gymnastics to drama, to the advent of fishing awards. The kids loved them, parents saw something tangible from their children's time at Billings, and our staff felt like they truly accomplished something within their program areas.

Sounds pretty “old school” doesn't it? Perhaps all those counselors who gave out music awards in the 1920's and 30's had something we could learn from. They did... and Camp Billings 2007 was a better summer thanks to the lessons they left behind.

www.campbillings.org

Jay Lance has recently given the Billings website a whole new look!

Did you know that Jay's cds are available in iTunes?

If you've been hankering for the Cheerio Song, you should check it out.



Corner

Alumni news is one of the sections of our newsletter that appeals to our readers. We need to hear from you with a bit of information about you for the newsletter. Please help. You can send it by mail or by e-mail. If you have a longer story to share about camp send it along and we will try to feature it in an upcoming newsletter. You can email Elissa at campbillings@gmail.com or contact Ralph.

*Ralph Lawrence
PO Box 247, Bradford, Vermont 05033-0247*

Uncle Ralph's

In early November I drove up to Bradford, VT to visit Ralph. He welcomed me into his home and we spent several hours catching up and talking about his youth and his connection to Billings. Ralph told me about growing up in Bradford (across the street from his current home). He was an only child and was good friends with Leonard Drew, Larry's older brother. After high school, Ralph joined the navy and was stationed in Seattle. He first went to college in VT and transferred to Springfield College and majored in Group Work & Community Organization with a minor in Education. His dream was to follow in the footsteps of an uncle and pursue YMCA work.

It was during college that Ralph began his lifelong connection to Camp Billings. He had gotten to know Dad Hurd during winters, when Dad Hurd was a YMCA Guidance Counselor. After his first year at college, in 1950, Ralph became a counselor at Billings. In the late 50's camp went through a rough spot. Attendance declined and in 1957 there were only 31 campers. Dad Hurd became ill that summer and John Freitas (senior), known as "Uncle John", ran camp for most of the summer. Uncle John suggested to the board of directors that Ralph become director. Ralph joked that his mother was concerned about his taking directorship of the camp at the age of 28, but we know how successful he was. It took about a decade for Ralph rebuild camp and the core programs, and fill all the sessions. It was a lot of work to make camp a place that kids wanted to go - one that was safe and fun. Ralph's training, the support of Uncle John, and their great working relationship were key to this success. Thanks to Ralph and his colleagues for shepherding camp for so many years!

Give Back to Billings!

There are many projects at Camp Billings underway that could use your support. Here is a short list:

- Tree & bush planting or tree removal
- Shoreline preservation
- De-mudification of Rainshadow
- Restoration of Sunnyside & other older buildings
- Ropes course (under development for Summer '09)

You can also donate to the general fund and the board will designate the funds to a worthy cause. There is an envelope enclosed in the newsletter for donations, and you can always send them to:

Ted Rossi
P.O. Box 3539
Stowe, VT 05672

Marti Hands Over The Reins

Marti Sylvester Warren has worked very hard over the last ten years putting together a great Newsletter and continually updating our database. Because of her hard work we are able to keep in touch with our alumni and were able to contact so many for our 100th reunion, which made it a huge success. Marti will continue with our database for a year and then hand it over to Elissa Malcolm. THANK YOU Marti for all you have done and continue to do for Billings!!

It is with sadness that we report the loss of the following members of the Billings family...

T. Chubb Condit died November 6, 2007 at his home in Post Mills. He was 90 years old. He spent many summers at Billings and was on the board of directors. His family donated the property for Camp Billings, enabling it to become the special place it is today.

Marion Hobbs passed away on July 4, 2006. She was a longtime resident of Lyme, NH. She and her husband attended Billings in the 1930's. Her daughters also were campers at Billings.

Judy Bender Markle passed away on November 5, 2006 after a long illness. She and her sister were campers in the 1950's. Cabin #5 is named after their grandfather.

Camp Billings Celebrates Centennial: Introduction to a Parallel Universe

By Jamie Drysdale

(Editor's note: This originally appeared in The Herald of Randolph, VT on 7/20/06. Reprinted with permission.)

I could feel my heartbeat accelerate, and butterflies the size of pterodactyls were forming in my stomach as the first views of Lake Fairlee began to stretch across my windshield.

But of course, these effects are to be expected of someone being transmitted to a parallel universe.

I attended Camp Billings as both a camper and a counselor for eight consecutive summers starting as a 10-year-old in 1993. It didn't take long before I began referring to my summer haven as the "parallel universe."

For 11 months of the year I didn't give camp a thought. My two lives were completely different; I had different friends and different needs. For 11 months I had parents and school, for one summer month I had counselors and non-stop activities.

At camp the only memories of the past were from past years at camp; the only future plans addressed our goals for life at Billings. At camp there was almost zero contact with the outside world. There were no television broadcasts or newspapers telling us about Israeli and Palestinian battles, or about who the Red Sox had lost to.

The only news we got and the only news we wanted to hear involved information about how a staff member managed to hide under the waterski dock with a snorkel for two hours during the staff hunt. Or who had been chosen this time as "biffers" (people with face paint running wild across camp trying to hit kids with socks full of flour) during the annual "biffers and medics" evening program.

There was and is no other way to describe it, Camp Billings is a parallel universe, and in June I headed back there for the first time in five years to celebrate its centennial. Thus the butterflies.

First Familiar Face

The nervous feeling continued to heighten, as it always does, until I saw one familiar face, and as soon as I did all the tension in my body and all my cares from outside life evaporated. After five long years I was home.

More than 150 alumni of all ages from numerous states and countries (including the usual big French-Canadian contingency) descended on the camp for the anniversary. Friday night the current camp counselors and staff provided us all with a great barbecue, and a night of drinks and reminiscing.

As I talked I watched the trivial but familiar gaps between us, created by generation, culture, and class, become effortlessly closed in the parallel universe.

After a night in Tent Two on boys' senior row (which I had stayed in both as camper and counselor), I followed the call of the bugle to breakfast. Saturday morning was run like a normal day at camp. There were announcements at breakfast informing us of the offerings in all the morning program areas—ultimate Frisbee, street hockey, waterskiing, crafts, orienteering...

It was so much harder to pick when I only had one morning (three

periods) to work with.

As the ultimate Frisbee game began to wind down and we again headed for the dining hall, the camp began to fill up with reportedly more than 400 friends of Billings attending Saturday afternoon's centennial program. Several speakers turned in terrific speeches about the camp's 100 years of life.

Life without Billings?

The current camp director, Bob Green, told a chilling story about a theoretical life in a universe in which Camp Billings had never been founded. He acknowledged many well-known camp faces and speculated with grim humor about how their lives would've ended up without camp. Gov. Jim Douglas then took the podium and was forced to admit that he'd never attended Camp Billings, adding that "I now understand the depth of my deprivation."

He showed appreciation for Camp Billings, which has earned state and national historical site status, by declaring June 17th to be "Camp Billings Day" throughout the state of Vermont.

Though Douglas was termed the "keynote speaker," the man everyone longed to hear was the final speaker, Ralph Lawrence. "Uncle Ralph," is a six and a half foot octogenarian with Santa-like proportions who for many is the true and timeless symbol of Camp Billings. For over half a century Ralph worked at camp, including nearly four decades as the director. With dedication, ability—and a heart even more impressive than his physical presence—Ralph is one of those larger than life figures whom few are lucky enough to meet at any time in any universe.

Stepping up to the microphone Ralph paused and then stated softly, "I'll never know why they chose me, the driest speaker here, to speak two and a half hours into an 'hour-long program.'" He spoke modestly and briefly, spending most of his time thanking people individually for the work they have done through the decades to keep the camp alive.

When Ralph finished, the head of Camp Billings board of directors asked those in attendance to stand up while the decade they were at camp was announced. Here was revealed the full scope of the Billings family. I proudly stood for the "90s" and then sat and watched as the other decades took their turn. I watched in awe as the participants' hair became more and more grey, their faces more weathered. I was humbled by those long-tenured camp servants who remained standing for two, three, four, five, and even six decades in a row. Finally the speaker reached the 1920's, elevating a handful of elderly ladies, their proud smiles greeted by a long standing ovation.

With Sunday came one last breakfast followed by the emotional goodbyes on the clocktower lawn that we all knew so well. Many will be back soon, as Billings, like any high school or college, holds a reunion weekend once every five years.

But this was the big one. Camp Billings has graced the placid shores of Lake Fairlee for 100 years and counting. By scientific standards a century is but a blink of an eye, but during this blink this parallel universe has generated for many of us as much camaraderie, fellowship, meaning, and joy as five billion years of evolution in this "real" universe could provide.