



# The Clocktower Times

## Alumni Newsletter

*Echoes of the chimes of our time.*  
Spring 2015

### The First Day of Camp

Although I had started going to camps from the time I was eight years old, I first came to Billings as a fifteen-year-old CIT (I know... that's unheard of now). It had been a typical terrible teenage year. My so-called friends at school had told me I was out of the group one morning, and my big worry was where I would eat lunch. I passed a note to Chloé Deraiche during class asking if I could eat at her table with her friends. She said yes, we became friends and a few weeks later she convinced me to write to Ralph about being a CIT at Billings. Now my first day at Camp Billings had come and I was nervous. I remember meeting Jay Lance, my CIT director. He had a huge smile, long curly hair and a Ben and Jerry's tie dye t-shirt. He greeted me warmly and brought me to cabin 6 where I set up my staff bed corner. While waiting to enter the dining hall for dinner, I met Paul Behar who spoke French to Philippe Canac-Marquis and I. They both made me feel welcomed at camp, as did Beth Freitas Crocker. She showed me how to put a stick in the shower chain to keep the water going. She also gave me a spare shower bucket. I remember these random scenes very vividly, perhaps because this was the first day of the rest of my life. I had found a place where I belonged - and still do.

By the time my sister Marianne had her first day as a camper two years later (see p.7), Billings had transformed my life. The confidence, joy, leadership, work ethic and friendships I experienced at Billings spilled into the school year and shaped who I became as an adult. More than twenty-three years later, my friends from Billings are my second family and when I drove by camp last month, I still got butterflies as I got closer and finally caught a glimpse of the upper ball field, the white gates and all that lies beyond them.

Thank you to all who wrote to share your memories of your first day at camp. I also invite you to **plan to attend the 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion at Camp Billings on June 17-19 2016** so you can reconnect with your dear old camp.

Best Regards,  
Jasmine St-Laurent  
Alumni Committee Chairperson

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#### To send donations:

[tedrossi@msn.com](mailto:tedrossi@msn.com)

Theodore Rossi

PO Box 3539 Stowe, VT

05672 USA

**or visit:**

[www.campbillings.org](http://www.campbillings.org)

#### To send alumni updates, write to

[jasminestlaurent@yahoo.com](mailto:jasminestlaurent@yahoo.com)

or: Clocktower Times Camp

Billings Newsletter

c/o Marianne St-Laurent

311 Rte 244

Fairlee, VT 05045 USA

#### To send any address changes

[elissa.malcolm@gmail.com](mailto:elissa.malcolm@gmail.com)

Elissa Malcolm

24 Wheatley Street

Lebanon, NH 03766 USA

# Greetings from the Board

By Mike Lemme,  
President of the Board of Directors of Camp Billings

When asked to write an article about my 1st day at camp I cringed. I would have preferred to write about something else that people always like to talk about, like “How did you end up at Billings?” Now that is a nice peaceful story, and that was because of my mother, Virginia Nelson. She went to Billings the summers of 1937 to 1940 and she always talked about what a great time she had at camp. She eventually convinced 2 of her 4 kids —me and my sister Sue —and off we went for a 2 week session in the summer of 1968. I was 7 years old.

When my mom was a camper, her parents used to rent Chubb Condict’s Lincoln Cottage which is just around the corner from camp heading towards Post Mills. All she had to do was walk across the street to go to camp! For us though, it was a long drive from Cedar Grove NJ, and since I-91 hadn’t yet reached Vermont we stayed overnight at the Howard Johnson’s in Springfield Mass. and took Route 5 up the next day. I had all night to start getting worried and afraid, but my fear was also mixed with excitement.

But that 1st day’s excitement quickly turned to sheer panic when I entered Cabin 6 (now Cabin 7) and saw bunk beds that had no mattresses but were strung with old looking gray canvas, sort of like bunk hammocks. To me it looked like a military barrack and I immediately wanted nothing to do with the place. I was literally screaming and crying as my parents drove off through the gates while my CIT Mark Powers held onto my shirt preventing my escape. My parents told me, much later on in life, that as soon as they left camp they noticed that my toothbrush somehow got left in the station wagon but they decided not to turn around. They knew if I saw the car back on campus it would not be pretty. I clearly remember Mark Powers spending the entire day with me, giving me the tour of camp and bringing me to all the program areas trying to help me get over my home sickness.

Still not being able to leave his side, I sat next to him in the dining hall and then the next crisis happened. Ok, in my defense, what young kid isn’t picky about food? So when the raviolis were brought to the table I broke out in tears in fear they were stuffed with cheese and not meat. Mark, being the nice guy he was took the 1st bite, and thank god they were the meat ones. I was homesick for 2 solid days. I remember my cabin mates trying to console me. One of them was Steve Connors, who to this day, 47 years later, is still my best friend. So as you can see this unhappy 1st day story does eventually have a happy ending.

I ended up having a great 2 weeks, and when my parents came to pick me up I remember how proud I was telling them I had a great time and that I wanted to come back. But as the year wore on and camp registration came closer, I chickened out. It wasn’t until 5 years later in 1973 that I eventually came back, and I give thanks to my sister Sue because she was the one that convinced me I was missing out on a great time. And she was right! Of course camp hadn’t changed much. I felt right at home with Steve Connors in Cabin Annex and Mark Powers, along with Bobby Green, was my Sr. Counselor the next summer in Cabin 15. I went back to Billings every summer until 1980, my sophomore year in college. In reality though, I still haven’t left camp, as I have now been on the Board for 11 years, and the last 5 as the Board President. I can only hope that I will be like my mother, who at 89, is one of the oldest alumni at camp!



Mike Lemme & Steve Connors: best friends since 1968

# The Very First Day of Camp..... Mine and A Much More Important One by Emperor Bob

A lot of people already know the story of my first day at Billings. It really wasn't that big a deal. I was from Freeport, New York and in the mid-60's about half of Camp Billings was from Freeport. Like Summit used to be a decade ago. Or Burlington and Newton are today. My cousin Jon was already at Billings. So were friends from home: Jeff Cohen and Bobby Harrison. So while it was a new and different place, it was really very familiar before I even got there.

How I got there is my story.....sad but true. My parents owned a big, white Cadillac, a behemoth of a car. As they pulled around the curve, and we got the first view of the Clock Tower (as ugly back then as it is today), they started to slow down. As we neared the white gates, they pulled up along side and stopped the car. Throwing open the door they grabbed my duffle bag by its handles and tossed it out onto the dirt driveway heading into camp. As I got out, expecting to be escorted up to the old office inside the dining hall, they started to rev up the engine on the Caddy and said as they started to pull away, "don't forget to write...see you in eight weeks." And that's how it was that Camp Billings became my second home.

• • •

But the very best story about the first day of Camp has a tradition that started eight summers ago, and sadly, came to an end last summer. Devon Garber started coming to camp at age nine all the way from Los Angeles. He didn't know anyone at Billings. But he was always very excited to be at camp and from his very first day found something about the place he loved. When he was on junior row he was one of the "diggers", the boys who built roads and tunnels and waterways and paths back behind cabin 9 and 9A and down the path to the archery range. In fact I think it was the diggers who built the path from junior row to the archery range. As a senior, Devon became interested in stagecraft and particularly lighting for the musical. Last summer, when he was in Cabin 15, Devon constructed the lighting plan for "Frozen".

It was Devon's arrival every summer that solidified him as the one person who always had the BEST first day of camp each season. I am an early riser, and get to the office at camp each morning by 6:30. Back in 2008, Devon's first year, I was walking to the office at that early hour on the first day of the first session, when I saw a young boy and his father sitting on the green benches, quietly talking and looking particularly patient. "Can I help you with something?" I inquired. "We're here from LA to register Devon for camp", exclaimed the dad. When I suggested that early registration didn't start for another three and a half hours, Devon piped in, "That's okay.....I just want to be the first one here at camp this summer." And so they sat quite intently, without a care in the world, enjoying the early morning fog of the first day of Camp Billings. With that, the legend of Devon Garber was born.

Because the first day of EVERY summer began the exact same way for the next seven years, just like it did on that Sunday morning in June, 2008. I would walk to the office at 6:30am, and there waiting patiently, chatting quietly and enjoying the solitude were Devon and his dad. I knew that Billings was officially open for business each year when I turned the corner and saw the Garbers waiting to be the first ones to register for the season, four hours or so before registration began.

Devon and his dad won't be sitting on the green benches this summer. Last year was his final one as a camper, and he didn't apply to be a CIT. Devon has bigger things planned for his future. He attends a Mountain School in Northern California, where he spends half his day on academics and the other half training in downhill ski racing. I wouldn't be surprised to see Devon on the podium accepting his Olympic medal in the not too distant future. Just like I was never surprised to see him on the first Sunday of every summer comfortably perched on the green benches as the sun was rising on Lake Fairlee, ready to ask me whether we were going to have "Chaos" this summer. Because he always brought his hazmat suit to camp just in case.



## OFFICIAL LAUNCH:

### **Launch of \$200,000 “Dear John” Capital Campaign** *Over \$90,000 Already Raised*

Dear camp family,

We have officially launched our first capital campaign in over a decade – which we have named the “Dear John” campaign – to fund the renovation of the boys’ and girls’ bathrooms and showers which we are estimating will cost more than \$500,000.

It will be challenging for us to pay for the full cost of this project while also covering the annual expenses we incur to operate camp. So, while we plan to allocate existing funds to cover the majority of this expense, we are aiming to raise \$200,000 through this capital campaign which will last through the end of the summer of 2016. We are thrilled to announce that we have already raised \$90,000; in particular, Jim Gately, a long-time Billings supporter and alumnus, made a \$50,000 gift which jump started our fundraising efforts. Thank you to Jim as well as other camp supporters who have already made generous contributions!

We will soon be unveiling our “Dear John” campaign – in the form of post cards that you will receive – to help Billings say “so long” to our old “Johns”. As most of you know, the term, “John”, is used widely at camp in referring to our facilities; for those of you interested in the origins of the term, “John”, Sir John Harrington invented the original flush toilet in 1596. Please be on the lookout for your first “Dear John” post card!

We deeply appreciate the financial support that many of you have provided to us in the past, and we hope that even more of you will choose to support us during this capital campaign. Please complete and mail back the enclosed envelope or go to camp’s website ([www.campbillings.org](http://www.campbillings.org)) to make an online donation. If you have any questions about this capital campaign, please feel free to contact camp alumnus, board member and fundraising committee chair, Yutaka Tamura, at 617-877-5091 or at [yutakatamura@gmail.com](mailto:yutakatamura@gmail.com).

On behalf of our current and future campers, families, and staff, thank you for your continued commitment to camp!



## CAMP BILLINGS 110th ANNIVERSARY REUNION

### JUNE 17-19 2016

Bank your vacation days, save your points, mark your calendars!!!! Plan to come home to Billings for a weekend next summer; you're not too old for camp! Look for your registration information in the next issue of the Clock Tower Times!

**Kevin Clunie (90s)** writes that his kids Skye and Callum loved visiting camp last summer. He started trying to run a half or full marathon in every state last year. "At the rate of 6 or so per year I aim to be done by the time I am 50. If any alumni want to recommend local races for me to consider I'd love to hear from them. I am trying to find unique races where possible rather than just the big ones. So far I have OH, IN, IL, NV, FL, NY, AZ and GA covered... long way to go but would be great to see some familiar faces along the way." **Alice Anderson (00s)** shared "My husband Miles and I moved to Queensland for work. Miles works for Qantas airlines and I'm working as an account executive for a cosmetics company. Saving our money for another overseas trip soon. Caught up with **Brad Annakin (00s)** and Renata (who's a resident Queenslander ;) ) Send hi to everyone, and our door is always open to Billings visitors!!" **Kelly Granger ('03-'08)** graduated from Davidson College and is currently living in Washington, D.C.. She is applying to dental school. Good luck Kelly! **Liz Freeman ('98-'12)** graduated from Beloit College in 2012 and has been working as a Behavior Interventionist since. She is currently getting her Master's degree for Dance/Movement Therapy. She lives in central Vermont. **Abbie Burge ('03-'04)** lives in "Almost Heaven" Parkersburg, WV. She is currently teaching art at Parkersburg South High School and coaching volleyball. She spends her summers teaching at art camps and boating on the Little Kanawha and Ohio Rivers. She is also an art professor at Ohio Valley University and recently began raising chickens. **Andy Schneider (90s-00s)** wife Jessica welcomed a healthy baby boy, Caleb Harrison, on March 14th, 2015. **Anna Golden-Dukes (00s)** graduated from Ithaca College in 2013. She then took some time to travel before moving back to NYC. Anna is currently working for a start up fashion and bridal jewelry company called AMY O. Jewelry (fashion) and AMY O. Bridal (bridal) as the head of marketing and sales and LOVING IT. She sometimes even gets to make the jewelry and accessories with the designer. She is considering a move out west sometime next May.



Caleb Harrison Schneider

If you have any updates write to:  
The Clocktower Times  
c/o Marianne St-Laurent  
311 VT-RT 244  
Fairlee, Vt 05045  
or email us at:  
[jasminestlaurent@yahoo.com](mailto:jasminestlaurent@yahoo.com)

# Remembering the First Day of Camp

I hadn't yet gotten used to the two weeks in the summer when my two older brothers would disappear and come back reeking of lake water and pine needles, though it had been happening for four years. I did not regard those days as a time of freedom from brotherly dead arms and towel whips, but as two weeks of lonely isolation where I, wishing I too were at summer camp, roamed the yard making up songs and stories. In the summer of 1997 on a hot Sunday in July, I was having difficulty choking down my oatmeal as my anxiety settled into my stomach and radiated throughout my body. I had turned seven only a few months before, and was finally the age of acceptance at Camp Billings. The previous year, when we dropped off my brothers, I had begged my mother to beg the office to let me stay, a fact that would be particularly amusing to me eighteen years later, when I would be running the office and letting down six year-olds everywhere.

I hadn't slept well for two weeks—my anticipation and excitement keeping me awake until the early hours of the morning when I would finally fall asleep, having nightmares about evil counselors and Great White Sharks in the lake. My oatmeal was growing less and less appetizing as I thought about the tiny tin of candy my aunt had given me the night before. I had stuffed it into three different socks and shoved it to the very bottom of the trunk. I knew there was no candy allowed at Camp Billings, and I was certainly not going to be caught dead with lemon drops in my luggage. My mom and dad loaded up the car and my brothers and I stuffed ourselves into the backseat. The twenty minutes it took to arrive at camp from our summer home in Orford, New Hampshire, might as well have lasted three hours. My stomach twisted and turned into knots with the rope of an entire fleet of ships. My brother pointed out the camp from across Lake Fairlee before we arrived at the white gates. It was only 10:30 in the morning and I noticed there weren't many kids around. Evidently it was unusual to arrive before lunch, but my parents were headed to Austria and had to catch a flight, so the Hartmans found their ways to their respective cabins and picked their bunks.

I chose a top bunk—it looked far more exciting than a bottom one. The bunks didn't have boards on the side like they do now, so the element of danger in possibly falling off the bed in your sleep attracted me.

I met my counselors, **Kate** and **Mini**, I have to admit the names of my CITs escape me, and I settled onto my bed, pulling out my journal. My counselors giggled in the corner, so I went outside and found my brothers at a picnic table. I joined them for a game of hearts and we played in silence.

At 12:30 I heard the bugle for the first time and followed my brothers to the dining hall. We were served pineapple chicken of which I barely took two bites. I was nervous and knew I'd be meeting my co-campers soon. The girls poured in, one from California, three from Vermont, one from Long Island, one from Spain, and so on. The rest of the day was a blur of learning names and showing off our stationary. At dinner we stuffed our faces and my anxiety vanished. When two counselors came rushing through the dining hall doors and screamed like nut jobs about Capture the Flag, I knew I was where I wanted to be.

I was on team blue, so I outfitted up monochromatically and headed outside. The entire camp was split into two teams and two sides. Someone had magically turned the camp into a giant capture the flag board game with lime indicating free zones, jail, no man's land, and of course where the flags were. I ran all over that place, hiding behind cabins, and exploring every inch of the rocks, behind the archery tarp, down to girls' senior row. Whenever I passed a brother or cabin mate we would beam and yell "hey," both clearly on a mission to score a flag. It was thrilling and dangerous, trying to outrun the fifteen year-old boys and the long limbed girls, listening to the inappropriate smack thrown between counselors and older campers in the flag rings, and sneaking around what was clearly the out of bounds area.

I can't remember if my team won or not, I just remember that Capture the Flag became my favorite thing in the world. We got to go in the lake afterward, to cool off, but only the shallow end which was murky and black in the night. When I got out I was covered in dirt and milfoil. I crawled into my sleeping bag, refreshed and content, and passed out before taps even went, Annie's "I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here," playing over and over in my head.

Anne Hartman

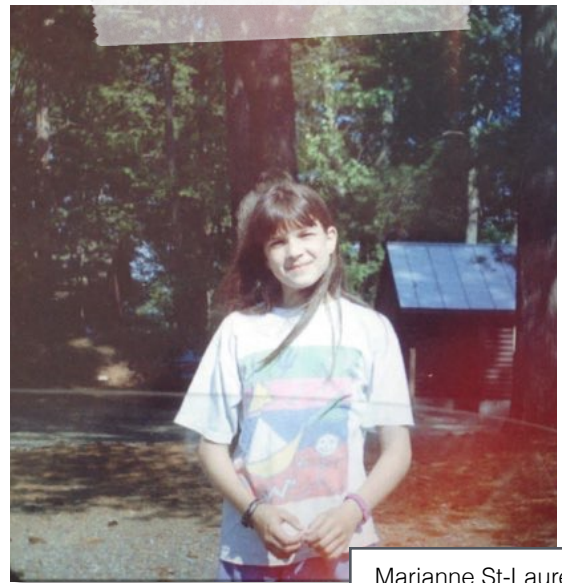
Dear Camp Billings,

I remember being so excited that after years of dropping Ted off, I was finally there on my own! Counselors would get to know me! Ted would be there. I'd get my own bunk. It'd be great! I still have a stuffed animal that **Ralph** gave me (and maybe the rest of the Cabin 5 girls) after cleaning the office. It was blue velour unicorn. I remember meeting other girls in the dark cabin that would be my bunk mates for years. **Sarah Bove. Jamie Hudson. Kate Freitas.**

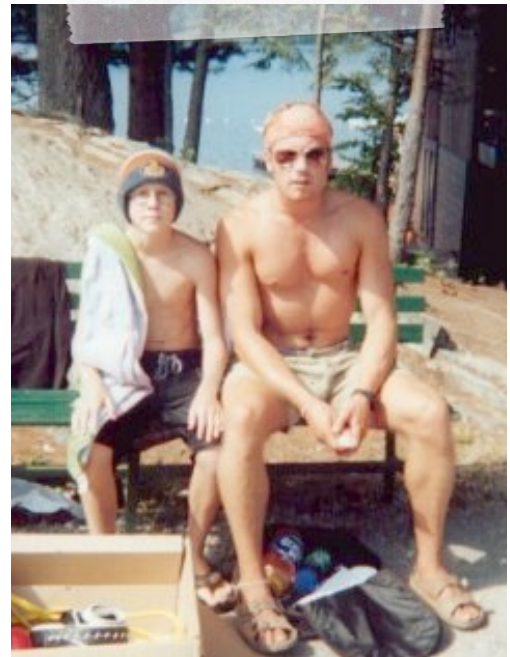
What I do remember from the following first days of camp is the sheer excitement. It'd start about a week, maybe even two before the start of third session. I'd drag my trunk up and start packing using a yellow sheet we got in the mail in the winter. I'd pack and repack until Sunday came. The wait to make the 30 minutes drive was unbearable. We'd travel up and over the hill from Strafford, through Vershire, past crossroads...and then magic came around the bend, the high dive, the pontoon, the docks. The brown of the office and the clocktower. And the slight colors of the plastic bunting **Larry** had put up to guide drivers in parking. To this day, I'm still jealous of the kids from NJ, NY, Quebec that had the pleasure of leaving early in the morning on Sundays because their wait to get started on the travel wasn't as long!

Two of the most visceral memories: 1992, moving to senior row, into Cabin 4 and realizing that **Babbie Macomb**, who had been my CIT in 6A the year before, would be my CIT in 4, along with newly arrived **Wendy Phillips (Lance!)** After a rough year losing my father, camp was, (and still is), a constant, a touchstone in my life. I was just happy to have my awesome CIT again and then boom we had Wendy, who just turned out to be one of the best, ever.

Kate Willis (80s,90s,00s)



Marianne St-Laurent



Jack Campbell; Jaye Macumber



Ryan Burhans; David Peskin





Ralph Lawrence, Art Yando,  
Jim Gately, Carl Couture,  
Arlington Farnham on cabin  
15 lake front porch, 1955

(Are you or someone you know  
in this picture? Let us know!)

Dear Camp Billings,  
I arrived at Camp not knowing anything of what to expect. There is no such thing as a true summer camp in Scotland and my friend **Alan Duncan** and I only had some brief highlights from one of his relatives to draw upon before deciding to spend our summer on the shores of Lake Fairlee. Once we had survived the re-heated Chop Suey that Ralph greeted us with we very quickly realized that we may have overestimated the need for sports coats and ties for the much hyped "end of session dances!" I became a CIT in **Paul Strode's** cabin and soon learnt the ropes from him, **Jay Lance** and **Jasen Boyd**. Somehow we had been persuaded to sign up for a session of dish room duty and under the watchful eye of Jasen we soon became experts in stacking cups and avoiding the scolding hot steam of the old manual dishwasher.

The highlight of the summer was the junior canoe trip with **Darren "Macca" Mackenzie**. Again not knowing what to expect, we set off for the "wilds" of the Connecticut river and camped overnight on the side of a golf course in Bradford! When the van returned to pick us up driven by **Robin Pettingell**, you would have thought we had endured a week long backwater adventure; but we all had great fun and came back with many stories to tell...

Kevin Clunie (90s)

Dear Camp Billings,

I really don't remember specifically what my first day was like. I don't remember what I did. I remember images, colors, sounds and smells. I remember a tightening in my stomach that began in Hanover... I was so nervous to come and experience something I'd never done before. Would I make friends? Would I like the food? Would I pass the boat test? (My older sister **Molly** and her best friend **Beth** had been coming to camp for years before I arrived, so I knew all about the boat test.) Would I become homesick? Would I be able to hit a tennis ball? (The answers to both of those questions was 'no', as it turned out...)

I was shown to cabin 6A by Molly and I think Beth. **Kate Huling** was there, all set up, wearing a gray sweatshirt with some name of a school on it. She looked so immediately at home that I was comforted somewhat. The what ifs and would Is faded throughout the course of the day. I found out that I would pass the boat test. I would (kind of) like the food, but always be hungry when mealtimes came. I would make friends, some of whom I'd connect with years later. I would sing in the musical, I would fall in love, and most of all, I would learn: about how to braid a number of strings together, how to shoot an arrow, how to say grace, and how to become the person I am today, whom I would never have begun to discover had it not been for the experience of camp.

Thanks again!

Kate gross



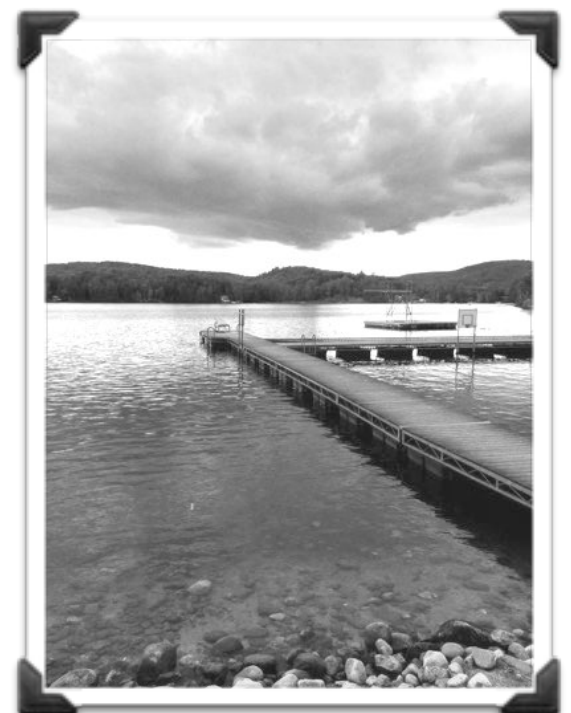
Dear Camp Billings!

If I remember crossing the white gates for the first time? Of course I do. I remember every single moment from arriving to the airport until my depart! I've been always dreaming about visiting USA, but it was only a dream, as all European kids dream about it. But then suddenly my uncle **Vincent Roy** told me he wanted me to get better in English and he would take me to the best camp ever where he'd learnt English too. I was worried because I've never been so far away from home and for so long time, I was excited and I couldn't wait until the day of our flight arrived ! OMG and then we landed-->from that moment I felt like I'm in the movie! Skyscrapers, yellow taxi, yellow road lines, moose crossing, black stairs on the outside of buildings, nice people smiling everywhere around me! So my American trip started as a romantic fantasy and continued ... And finally the awesome welcoming from my future friends as we were passing the white gates next morning. What a beautiful place! That day my feelings were so mixed. On one side I was looking forward the amazing experience but on the other side I had to say goodbye at the same time to my aunt and uncle for a month ! And to my mum and dad and sisters who stayed in Slovakia ! I also had to switch the language in my head, no one would understand Slovak .. And so I hug my aunt, uncle, smiled at them through tears and let the new adventure began. Introducing new friends, playing games, exploring and getting used to the camp system, trying doing new things (such as canoeing and canoe trip♥, eating typical American sandwiches and roasted marshmallows! Waterskiing, jumping from the high dive, taking the yellow school bus like in the movie. Any of the days wasn't same. I had so much fun as never before! Oh and singing in the dining hall and dancing your country dance ! This camp is an independent chapter of my life and I'll never forget it. I want to say Thank You very much for giving me this incredible opportunity and experiences!

I miss you Camp Billings!

Wishing you the best in the New Year!

Lucy (at CB in 2012)



# Thank you again.

Thank you very much to those of you who made a donation to camp in 2014.

• Daniela **Alvarez-Bradley**; Maggie & Jack **Amaral**; David M **Anderson**; Bill & Betty  
• Ann **Aldrich** *in memory of Maurice Aldrich*; Connie **Ward Anderson** *in memory of Earl*  
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• Paul **Behar**; Wendie **Biddle Bendle**; Marie **Bernatchez** *in memory of Anne Freitas*;  
• Paul **Bikoff** *in memory of June Kanet Bikoff*; Daniel **Bikoff**; Mark J. **Bird**; Dale **Vogel**  
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Every dollar counts, especially as we continue to move forward with the shower and bathroom renovation project. In fact, we are still in serious need of additional financial support, and so if you are interested in making a donation, please use the enclosed donation envelope or make an online donation at our web site ([www.campbillings.org](http://www.campbillings.org))

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