

Alumni Newsletter



Welcome to our first alumni newsletter!

Since 1954 when the first campers started experiencing the magic of YMCA John Island Camp, it is estimated that over 1,500 staff members and 20,000 campers have attended JIC.

Over the past few years we've been collecting names, searching through the archives and speaking with many of our alumni. We've asked some alumni from various generations at camp to recount some of their memories, we've added some news of current happenings at camp, and we've dug up some pictures of the past. The result is our first JIC alumni newsletter. We hope that you enjoy the product!

The JIC alumni is an opportunity for those who would like to maintain or renew their association with the camp and the friends they met there.

With this newsletter we've included contact information we have on file for you. Please take a moment to check our information and pass along any other names and addresses you may have, and we'll make sure to include them on the list.



AN AMAZING LEGACY

I think YMCA camping is the most powerful program offered by the YMCA. There is no program that more profoundly affects a person's life than YMCA camping. My personal bias comes from a lifetime of experiences at 7 YMCA summer camps including John Island Camp.

I first attended Camp Wabanaki Family Camp at the age of 2 months. I attended summer camp and completed a leadership program at Camp Wabanaki. My first paid job was as a teen-aged counsellor at Camp Ki-Wa-Y. I met my wife Laura while directing Camp Wa-Sa-Ah-Bun, and we were married when I was directing Camp Belwood. Our son Michael was born while Laura and I were directing Camp Wabanaki, and our first exposure to John Island was the summer Michael attended John Island Camp. While dropping Michael off at John Island, Laura and I first considered the opportunity that led to my position at the YMCA in Sudbury. Every significant event in my life has a connection with camping, and after reading some of the recollections in this newsletter I realize that my experience is not unique. John Island has filled countless lives with treasured memories and experiences.

The upcoming years will be exciting ones for John Island. We will be celebrating the first 50 years. I am proud to be a small part of YMCA Sudbury's camping legacy.



John Schmitt
CEO



Al McCann—1957 camp staff

CAMP PARTNERSHIPS

John Island Partnerships Span the World. In the last decade, YMCA John Island Camp has developed strong partnerships with the YMCA in Christchurch, New Zealand (and their Camp Wainui) and the YMCA in Egypt.

With 14 JIC staff traveling to New Zealand to work with the Camp Wainui since 1991 and 11 JIC staff having visited the YMCA in Egypt over the past eight years, the international awareness of our staff has increased by leaps and bounds. As part of the exchange programs, staff from both Camp Wainui in New Zealand and from Egypt have joined the John Island staff to round out the exchange.

Jose Ogden, one of our New Zealand visitors in the mid 1990's, has gone on to become the director of Camp Wainui. In that position, Jose has the responsibility for their summer camping programs as well as the development of all camping programs, including their new \$2 million multi-season lodge.

Beside the partnerships with the YMCAs in Christchurch and Egypt, staff at John Island are beginning to emanate from many countries due to the wide exposure of the camp on the internet.

Wow, what a history. Before I began to write an article for this newsletter, I took out my calculator to try to figure out just how many campers have been through the sand of John Island. My best calculations are that we are about to top the 20,000 camper mark! If you add in all of the school groups that have come since Grant Pilkey brought the first class from Sudbury High School, we are close to double that. The camp has had a lot of impact on a lot of lives over the years.

Since 1954 a lot of things have changed at YMCA John Island Camp; we now have composting toilets; we travel throughout Northern Ontario and Manitoba by canoe ending on Hudson's Bay; we've new boats, new vans, and as of 2001 two new camper cabins.

But the best part about John Island is the more things change the more things stay the same. There's still the highest concentration of sand anywhere that I've been, we still use Ole Ironsides to transport campers to and from the mainland, there's still campfires full of songs, games and laughter, and campers still make friends that last an entire lifetime. It's a magical island indeed.

We're working hard to prepare for the upcoming 50th camp anniversary in 2004. Watch your mailbox for more exciting details over the next year.

Until then — NHOJ PMAC



Dave Ward, Director Camping Services
(Staff 1992-2003, Camp Director 1995-2002)



1954 1st Boy's Camp Counselors

YMCA JOHN ISLAND SISTER CAMP - YMCA CAMP FALCONA

In the summer of 1998, YMCA Sudbury was approached by management of Falconbridge Ltd. to consider operating their resident camp for children - Camp Falcona.

Since that time, the YMCA has operated Camp Falcona as a YMCA camp, specializing in first time campers and basic camping skills. Having completed its fourth year of operation, YMCA Camp Falcona has become an important part of the YMCA Camping program. The camp, situated about 40 minutes north of Sudbury on Nelson Lake, accommodates 100 campers. Registrations for summer 2003 are already starting!



More information about YMCA Camp Falcona can be found on the web-www.falcona.ymca.ca

50TH ANNIVERSARY 2004

As many of us have expressed over the years, YMCA John Island Camp is one of the constants in our life at a time when so many other aspects of our life are continually changing. Whether it is the camp friendships that still mean so much in our lives . . . the memories of special places on John Island that linger in our minds . . . the fun or the adventure . . . the tears and smiles - John Island Camp remains in our hearts as a very special place.

After 48 years of caring, sharing and daring; YMCA John Island Camp is preparing for its 50th anniversary. It will be a very special celebration indeed. As we prepare for that special occurrence in 2004, we want to insure that every staff member and every camper has the opportunity to join in the celebration. We are starting now to update and complete our contact list of staff and campers.

We are also planning for at least one or two lead up events to the big 50th Celebration. Once we can make our alumni list more comprehensive, we will get information and requests for ideas out for everyone to look at.

With your help, we will make the 50th Anniversary an important and exciting celebration and a good jump off point for the second half of YMCA John Island Camp's first century of camping.

The 50th anniversary of YMCA John Island Camp will be celebrated in 2004. Fifty years of boat trips across the channel, campfire songs, Capture the Flag, Skit nights, hikes to Lost Lake, polar bear swims and canoe trips are just a few of the memories that come to mind when one simply says "John Island."

Thousands of young people have such wonderful memories of their times spent at John Island, the "Magical Island" that it just would not do to have the 50th Anniversary year come and go without the attention it deserves.

So, what do we need to do to celebrate? Well, just like we all learned at JIC, first you need a plan! The first step is to recruit as many JIC Alumni as possible to participate in this celebration planning. If you would like to help in any of the planning, in any way, we would love to hear from you.

Please call the Camping Services office, 674-6171 or email to camp@sudbury.ymca.ca. You really don't want to miss out on any of the fun.

Who knows, maybe you'll find yourself pulling that old guitar out of the closet and heading out to the island of magic!

MEMORIES OF YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP



FROM: BILL PIGOTT

Memories of John Island are easy to recall because they were the start of a YMCA experience that has been on going in my life for the past 45 years!!!

Significant YMCA people who were part of John Island in the 50's and 60's and made an impact on me would stand out as my major memory...Al McCann, Mac and Jim Sinclair, Jimmy Wilkinson, Mr.B, the Mitchells, the Glens, George Koski and Gary Gray are people I recall, who made my first YMCA-John Island experience such a positive one.

Of course, there are many other colours in the picture!!

- ▽ Mrs. Miner's chelsea buns
- ▽ Ron Mahood's piano playing
- ▽ George Koski's canoe trips

- ▽ the beaches
- ▽ the Kismet
- ▽ Jack Smith's sing songs
- ▽ Brent Pigott getting his lifelong nickname "Moose" from a campfire skit wearing Eldon Mitchell's hunting jacket and boots!!
- ▽ TUCK!!
- ▽ raising the flag every morning outside the dining hall and the thought for the day.

And finally the setting at John Island that we all experienced whether day or night was and still is the most beautiful of any YMCA Camp in Canada. It will remain as a stirring reminder for all our John Island memories that have enriched all of us.

MEMORIES OF YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP



FROM: DON FARQUHAR

What I remember most....."Ticker Boulton" and I hiked to Lost Lake (our "day off" from being counsellors). We caught a turtle and carried it back to camp, where we painted our names on it and

released it in Back Bay. I also remember an evening when the campfire was ignited via a torch which seemed to appear from the sky - actually slid down a cable attached to a tree - very impressive. Ping pong on the dining hall veranda, polar bear swims, coleman lanterns, tuck shop, gumperts drink, the Kismet.....what an adventure!

MEMORIES OF YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP



FROM: DON & MARY MITCHELL

My earliest recollection of John Island was to go with my dad, Earl, and my brothers and recruits to Blind River with gas boats and scows, load them with lumber from McFaddens Lumber Mill for several hours and then tow them all night to the island on a Friday night so that the Sudbury Y's Men's Club could have a work party starting on Saturday morning. I worked for several summers as the only maintenance man. Maintenance included transporting all the people, food, fuel and supplies from Spanish to the camp daily and some days multiple trips were made - round trip 3 hours.

The first summer Mary and I were married (1960) we both worked at the camp along with Gary and Marguerite Mitchell. The ladies did all the dishwashing by hand and Gary and I were the total maintenance crew until Gary got fired for putting up the following sign in the men's outhouse:

We aim to please. You aim too, please!

MEMORIES OF YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP



FROM: JEAN WICKSTROM
(20 YEARS AS KITCHEN MANAGER)

What I remember most

I thought after being on John Island for more than 20 years I would just give one-liners

- ▽ Jean, Jean the Javex queen
- ▽ Bears not letting us out of our washroom
- ▽ The outhouses that I would like to dynamite
- ▽ The flaming arrow to burn the garbage
- ▽ My birthday parties
- ▽ Who took our stuffed baby?
- ▽ The mock weddings
- ▽ The motors we kept losing in the lake (it wasn't always Jeff)
- ▽ The generator I had to kick to start when we had one
- ▽ The water pump that needed my special touch
- ▽ The raccoons in the kitchen
- ▽ When all the kitchen dishes and equipment had to be taken back to the Y every year
- ▽ Ray the maintenance man we called Magnum

- ▽ The love and respect of all staff at John Island
- ▽ The three Davids
- ▽ Not another director-oh well, we will whip him into shape
- ▽ The first family camp and the first co-end camp
- ▽ All my kitchen staff who worked so hard for me



Heather Smith and Vicki MacCallum

MEMORIES OF YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP



FROM: BILL GRACE

My first memory of John Island is riding the Kismet all the way from Mitchell's dock in Spanish, to family camp in the mid 1950's. The distant blue blobs of land floating on the mirage of the Whalesback Channel gradually revealed their shapes, shorelines and positions during the long trip. As a camper in the 1960's some of my most vivid early memories involve hikes to Lost Lake. One of these was on a rainy, or at least damp, day. Dave TenEycke fell over a small cliff and sustained a bad gash in his leg. He was carried the rest of the way in and hobbled around on a makeshift crutch for quite a while afterwards. Another time we were exploring the south side of the lake and up near the narrows at the far end, we came upon a

part from an airplane! Well, this was quite a find and caused quite a buzz. It was big enough to be both recognizable (a wing flap, I think it was) and cumbersome to carry but I thought it was important enough that I dragged that rusty shard all the way back to camp the next day. As I was to learn later, a bush plane had actually crashed up there in the winter time several years before. When I was in Cabin 9 I was privileged to be a member of George Koski's canoe trip from John Island to Sudbury. Up the Spanish River we laboured, over the dam at Espanola, across Kelly Lake and finally running out of water in Lily Creek. A trip to remember.



What do I remember most about my years at YMCA John Island Camp? What a loaded question! I don't know where to begin because I consider my years at JIC to be the most valuable experience of my life! My memories are a bit muddled now 20+ years later, but I'll give it a shot.

I was a CIT (counsellor-in-training) in 1974 after having been a camper for 4 or 5 years previously. Of course, back then it was Boy's Camp or Girl's Camp but our CIT program was co-ed and during this time the camp began to have Co-Ed Camps as well as Boy's and Girl's camps. I always thought it very unfair that I could only go to JIC for 2 weeks while my brothers could go for a month. I also thought that Co-Ed Camp was a big mistake because I loved Girl's Camp so much. My fondest memories of camp were always about tripping. The female CITs paddled from John Island to Killarney under the supervision of our fearless leader, Edith Meltz. She presented each of us with a map of our trip, which she had painted on birchbark. I had the opportunity to paddle the Serpent and Mississauga Rivers as a camper and the Spanish River as a



1955—Elwood Mitchell, Lance Bailey,
Donny Mitchell

counsellor. In the years that followed my CIT summer, I was counsellor, waterfront director and program director at John Island under the guidance of directors Al Will, Bob Robitaille, Don Waddell and Ron Mulholland. My last summer at JIC was 1981 so I had been there a total of 13 summers including my years as a camper.

Camp life was a series of special times and events: mail call was a great to-do if the envelope had kisses on it; regatta days, Yukon Gold Hunts, Snipe Hunts, Pink Elephant Hunts, Capture the Flag, throwing people in the lake on their birthdays, singsongs at every meal, skit nights, square dancing, getting cleaned up for final banquet, making the table centerpiece and seeing all the dignitaries from Sudbury that were invited (eg. Millie Facca, Lionel Burgess)

My most vivid memories are of final campfire. Everyone was crying and of course girls love to sing those tear-jerker songs like Mandy, Leaving on a Jet Plane, Today, Four Strong Winds. It was a real treat to have someone playing the guitar at campfire and if I recall correctly we had performances by camp directors, Al Will and Bob Robitaille. Bob was a wonderful singer and guitarist and I remember the procession leading from the dining hall to chapel on a Sunday morning with Bob serenading us en route to and from chapel singing songs like If I Had A Hammer. I also believe that Bob was the first one to sing and teach us French songs and a favourite was Katrinette Veux Se Marier. There was nothing more beautiful than chapel on Chapel Point on a sunny Sunday morning and the sound of quiet female voices singing together. (With a few male ones thrown in too).

The ride on Ol' Ironsides is also a fond memory. Great excitement to get to the island at the start of the summer and profound sadness that last ride to Walkhouse to go home. Yet, all the while I was very aware of the natural beauty all around me.

I met and worked cooperatively with people from all walks of life all those summers at JIC an experience that was invaluable. It was a fun, safe environment that fostered acceptance and it taught us about being part of a community. I also learned to value the natural environment and to treat it with care.

JOHN ISLAND PRINTS

BRING BACK MEMORIES IN AN INSTANT

On a cold snowy morning, when adult life is stressing you out, wouldn't it be great to look up at a painting and immediately recall the memories of your youth spent at YMCA John Island Camp?

We have made it possible for you to do just that! We have available prints of the beautiful painting that well-known artist Bernard Poulin captured of the Dining Hall at John Island. You can almost feel the breeze blowing through the pines and warmth of the sand on your toes!

The unframed prints would also make a wonderful gift for anyone who has spent time on the island. "The Dining Hall at YMCA John Island Camp" is available for only \$250 and can be purchased by calling Darlene Palmer, 688-7302.



MEMORIES OF YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP



FROM: MARIE LOUGHEED (HEWSON)

She shared her Smarties with me and now we are best friends forever!

I am looking at a snapshot taken in the summer of 1995. It shows a bewildered little girl as she boards the school bus bound for her first trip to Walkhouse Bay where she will embark on an experience that will last a lifetime. As I gaze upon this photo a flood of memories and emotions, spanning many years, come to view. Guided by counsellors who consoled us with smiles, laughter and rounds of repeat-after-me songs, trepidation began flirting with wondrous anticipation as we pulled away from the parking lot of the Sudbury downtown Y. I was only eight years old. The same age as this little girl in the photo.

*Land of the silver birch, home of the beaver,
Where still the mighty moose wanders at will.*

Tout la meme bateau as we chugged and chopped our way across the channel to the calmer waters of Moiles Harbour and our final destination, John Island. The old sawmill road that leads us to the main site of camp is a passage through time. Berry bushes and brambles amongst rustling shrubs and colourful wildflowers entwine their bodies around the old sawmill foundations, which are blanketed by moss and lichen. Numerous relics, antiquated by time and exposed to the northern wilderness serve as a reminder of a



Leaving Spring Camp 70's

bygone era. As we clamor across the boards of the Kwai Bridge, we are allowed only a glimpse of a sanctuary where generations of species, sheltered in fragrant tall grasses and reeds are protected from the open waters of the North Channel. The ballfield that follows will be the focus of many camp games, such as red rover, capture the flag and yes-even baseball. The laughter and cheers created from play will drown out the dull but reassuring drone of the nearby generator which is heard as we approach the first buildings of our own safe haven on the site proper. The dining hall embedded in white dunes amidst a forest of pine is happily situated. Its expansive porch offers a fine prospect of sunny skies and blue waters on the south shore. Like so many before me, I have arrived.

For several years I returned as a camper to JIC. Friendships were established and renewed. Sharing and caring based out of honesty and respect, for this place and the people and things that were in it, were a given. Our leaders designed a program that was F-U-N. It also helped me to learn more about myself, my abilities, and my ability to give back. In 1971, my final year as a camper culminated with our first ever JIC all girls wilderness expedition. We dubbed ourselves the Pioneers.

Blue lake and rocky shore, I will return once more.

I have been fortunate enough to return to JIC for five of the last six years. The site, although older, remains unchanged. Through the commitment and dedication of our leadership, a JIC experience continues to be enjoyed by campers of all ages. Whether it be the Sudbury Y or YMCA John Island Camp both carry for me a spirit that has helped build me. Human characteristics that are timeless, basic but true. Whenever I leave this place, I take with it a sense of belonging and of acceptance, which is carried over to my family and to those I meet in everyday life.

This summer that bewildered little girl in the photo is returning for her eighth season at camp. I turn to my daughter and ask her if she remembers what it was like the moment this picture was taken and she lights up, "Yeah. I was so scared but I wanted to go because you had gone there." Then I got on the bus and sat down beside this girl and she shared her Smarties with me and now we are best friends forever!

SUMMER FUN STILL GOING STRONG AT JOHN ISLAND

After 49 years, the summer programs at YMCA John Island Camp are still going strong. This summer over 700 young people will enjoy a magical adventure on John Island.


Amongst the campers of today are many children (and some grandchildren) of John Island Alumni. If you're interested in sending your child (or grandchild) to camp this summer, you can find out more about our programs on the web at: www.johnisland.ymca.ca or by calling the Camp Office at: (705) 674-6171.

HELP A CHILD ATTEND CAMP

Each year generous donors in partnership with the YMCA help over 80 children from financially disadvantaged backgrounds attend camp. If you'd like to make a donation to help a child attend camp this summer, please contact the Camp Office at (705) 674-6171 or camp@sudbury.ymca.ca. All donations are tax deductible.

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

As we prepare for our 50th anniversary in 2004, we have put together a list of Camp Directors 1954-2002. John Island Camp operated separate boys and girls sessions until 1972 when co-ed camping was introduced.

BOYS' CAMP		GIRLS' CAMP		CO-ED CAMP	
1954	Cec Woods	1954	Mildred Jeremaz (Aitkenhead)	1972	Bill Taylor
1955	John Mawdsley	1955	Min Elliot	1973	Stan Sykes
1956	Al McCann	1956	Sue Tate (Cook)	1974	Al Will
1957	Al McCann	1957	Sue Tate (Cook)	1975	Al Will
1958	Al McCann	1958	Sue Tate (Cook)	1976	Al Will
1959	Doug Aitken	1959	Grace McCann (Evans)	1977	Don Waddell
1960	Doug Aitken	1960	Grace McCann (Evans)	1978	Don Waddell
1961	Doug Aitken	1961	Marg Glover	1979	Don Waddell
1962	Fred Ruemper	1962	Marg Glover	1980	Ron Mulholland
1963	Fred Ruemper	1963	Diane Soule (Godfrey)	1981	Ron Mulholland
1964	John Linde	1964	Diane Soule (Godfrey)	1982	Ron Mulholland
1965	John Linde	1965	Mary Fereday (Madison)	1983	Ron Mulholland/Sue McCrae
1966	John Linde	1966	Patti Travers	1984	Don Priebe
1967	John Linde	1967	Barb Grainger	1985	Don Priebe
1968	Bill Taylor	1968	Barb Grainger	1986	Rick Wise
1969	Bill Taylor	1969	Barb Grainger	1987	Rick Wise
1970	Bill Taylor	1970	Penny Gibb	1988	Rick Wise
1971	Bill Taylor	1971	Mary Waddell (Mather)	1989	Rick Wise
				1990	Rick Wise
				1991	Rick Wise
				1992	Jim Blake
				1993	Jim Blake
				1994	Rick Wise
				1995	Dave Ward
				1996	Dave Ward
				1997	Dave Ward
				1998	Dave Ward
				1999	Dave Ward
				2000	Andrew Lockie
				2001	Dave Ward
2002	Dave Ward				

THE SEARCH IS ON...WE NEED NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PAST JIC STAFF

We are asking you to send us the names of as many past John Island Camp staff, that you can. If you know how we can contact them, we need that information as well. Even if you think we have someone's name and/or their contact information, we might not, and would rather have duplicate information than miss someone.

Send names to:
YMCA John Island Camp
140 Durham Street
Sudbury, ON P3E 3M7
or email: camp@sudbury.ymca.ca



1954-55 can you find yourself in this picture? Let us know

WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Share your memories - if you have a story from your days at John Island or memories that you'd like to share that we could put in our next newsletter our newsletter editor Gary Gray would like to hear from you!

In our next newsletter we'd like to start a new (and hopefully ongoing) feature with updates from our alumni about the goings on in their lives. If you'd like to share a recent birth, marriage, job or other milestone in your life with fellow alumni, let us know and we'll add it to our 'Alumni Updates' section.

Contact us at:
JIC Alumni Newsletter
140 Durham Street
Sudbury, ON P3E 3M7
or by email to: camp@sudbury.ymca.ca