



WINTER 2004

Alumni Newsletter

THE MAGIC CONTINUES

John Island Camp today is a busy hub of activities. This coming summer, over 700 campers will join us on the rocky shores to revel in our far away island's lores (as the song goes).

Campers arriving at camp are grouped into 'cabin groups' of 8 or 9 campers of similar age and gender. Two counsellors work with each cabin group that is core focus of the campers' experience at camp. At the beginning of each session, cabin groups sit down with their counsellors and a 'program consultant' who is a member of the senior camp staff and devise their program. Within the camp program we've worked hard at giving campers lots of opportunity to input into their experience at camp.

Cabin groups participate in activities around the camp such as the high and low ropes course, sailing, canoeing, swimming, arts and crafts, archery, and rock climbing.

In addition to their cabin group activities, campers choose two 'skill areas' for instruction. Skill areas include sailing, camp craft, drama, canoeing, kayaking, windsurfing, and the ropes course. Each morning campers receive instruction in their chosen skill area

and achieve JIC levels.

After dinner campers enjoy 'happy hour' where they can take a canoe or kayak out for a paddle, or work at completing a craft project.

Campfires still play a large part in camp life. Each session opens with a traditional campfire where cabin groups prepare 'Wish Sticks' on which they write their hopes and plans for the session. The Wish Sticks provide the fuel for the campfire and in return the campfire puts in motion the magic for the session.

Over the years, there have been improvements at the camp: new high tech sailboats, new buildings, new composting toilets. However, the core of John Island remains the same: friends daring, caring and sharing on a magical island in the North Channel.

Our Mission

YMCA John Island Camp is...

Children and Children at Heart Daring, Caring and Sharing to provide a lasting and positive effect on values and attitudes with a magical island as a common point.



The magic continues at YMCA John Island Camp



WORKING WITH HUGHIE

THE BUILDING OF THE DINING HALL FIREPLACE



GLEN GRAY

JIC '54-55 (WORK PARTIES '52, '53, '56)

The first time you entered the John Island dining hall, I bet you spent a minute or two looking at that fireplace. It goes down through the floor to the ground, where it sits on a concrete pad that goes down another six feet.

One little old man selected every one of those stones from the thousands left by the last glacier, then cut each one with his hammer and assorted chisels. He could "read the grain" in a stone as a good axeman does with a piece of firewood, and split it just where he wanted. (He said it was nothing special - "I just figure out where the stone wants to be split, and hit it there"). Then he lifted that cut stone carefully onto the pad of fresh mortar, put it into the exact position he wanted, then stepped back to measure with one eye, adjusted it again, and finally pronounced it OK.

That little old man - he was well into his seventies then - was Hughie Bailey from Manitoulin Island. Hughie Bailey: stonemason, artist, and good friend. I was lucky to be that assistant, and spent four weeks helping him build the big

fireplace. Hughie cut, lifted and placed every single stone.

We lived in camp the whole time. From Sunday evening until Friday evening. Since we were only two, and since he was the artist, guess who did the cooking and dishwashing? The first morning on our own, I made potato cakes in the oven to go with the mass of bacon he loved, and they turned out! That's what got me accepted, I think - he loved those potato cakes and asked for them every second day. He wanted his tea "strong enough to float an axe", and the closest I ever got was, "that's a little better".

On our third or fourth morning alone, he announced casually that he had diabetes. "Yep, I have diabetes and need my insulin almost every day." Well now, that was just great. We were alone, no radio or telephone, and just a little cedar strip boat with a Johnson 10, a mere 12 miles up the North Channel from Spanish. I'd never heard of Walkhouse, or even Cutler. From long experience, Hughie knew his body well, and knew exactly when to let swinging that hammer take

over from man-made medicine. He was always right on, and we never had an incident.

He never rushed; each stone received all the care and attention possible, until his eagle eye was satisfied. I've watched him take a full minute or more pushing this way, and then that way, on a stone, and darned if I could see it move even a fraction. But finally he'd back off, take one last look, and say, "That's it." And so the fireplace rose, stone by stone.

Hughie and I enjoyed our own company, but we looked forward to Friday when the weekend work party returned. Friday and Saturday evenings I learned a lot about cutthroat cribbage from Gerry Smith and Al Bell. Then on Sunday afternoon, they all left, and Hughie and I had the island to ourselves again.

Finally the chimney rose through the roof and was capped. Then the pointing and beading - the artist's signature on the work - and it was done.

Here's to Hughie Bailey - stonemason, artist, and friend!



The fireplace still commands the centre of attention in the dining hall today as it did many years ago



MEMORIES BUILT OVER GENERATIONS



LIE MACRAE
JIC '81-83

So many memories...a few short paragraphs! What can I say?

JIC's physical setting will always be etched in my mind: the beautiful pines; views from the Lost Lake trail; spectacular northern lights; the dining hall, waterfront and the warm sand - the quintessential souvenir of any visit to JIC!

Memorable moments include: training camp canoe trips; all-camp games; water regattas & John Island Days; dress-up & utensil dinners; initiative tasks & trust falls; Lisa paddling her canoe through camp after a huge torrential downfall; my office relocated to the dining hall roof; "car washes" & final banquets; campfires & memorable singongs; Randy & his invisible

dog! special "Little Guys 'n Gals"; family camp skit nights & so much more.

These memorable moments wouldn't exist were it not for the great people - staff, counsellors, campers, I was fortunate to meet, work with and learn from. To Ron, Jean, Jeff, Al, Mary, Fran, Bilbo, Lisa, Tim, Craig, Mark & "Magnum", Heidi, Millie, Heather, Kerry and all the rest (there's just not enough room here)...thanks for the memories and the lessons!

Each time campers or staff returned or visited JIC, on their own or with their families, the impact JIC had on their lives was underscored in their stories, experiences and words of wisdom. For me, besides

memories, JIC gave me a heightened appreciation for nature, people and all the unique contributions that each of us has to offer. It reaffirmed that a full life includes being open to opportunities, taking risks, doing your best, acknowledging your mistakes, learning from experience; and endeavouring to grow and share with your community, whatever or wherever it may be.

When I picked up my daughter, niece and nephew from Walkhouse Bay this past July, and listened to them laugh and share their JIC tales, I couldn't help but smile. It's been fun to share our JIC experiences and I am thrilled that they have the opportunity to grow

THE BOATS THAT SPAN THE CHANNEL

One of the magical aspects of John Island Camp is its location – a beautiful island in Northern Ontario's North Channel of Lake Huron. Every camper, staff, and guest that has set foot on John Island has travelled the waters of the Whalesback Channel in one or more of a number of boats. These boats in themselves have become an integral part of the John Island experience. They have become the subject matter of camp songs and many a tale of adventure.

We travel back to the late 1940's and early '50s when Earl Mitchell would bring work parties across to the island from Spanish – oft times pulling a barge full of lumber and construction materials. Most of those workhorse trips were dependent upon the KISMET – a wooden boat that now

lies upon the shore of the back bay of John Island as a memory of those early days of camp. Both the Maxie "M" (another Mitchell boat) and the Flora "B" (owned by Oscar Byers) helped transport campers from Spanish to John Island regularly. In the mid 1960's, the camp started using the landing at Walkhouse Bay near Cutler as its mainland base, cutting the travel distance by one third.

Those of more recent times will recall trips made to camp in 'Ole Ironsides once owned by the Mitchells but sold to the camp in the late 1980's. 'Ole Ironsides is still used as one of the main sources of transportation today. It has been joined by the Earl "M" (bought by the camp in the late 1980's) which was christened and re-named after the patriarch of all John

Island travel, Earl Mitchell. Another boat owned by the Mitchells and used to help transport campers in the late 1980's and early 1990's is the Mohawk Maiden.

Most recently, the camp has acquired a new and more speedy aluminum inboard with cabin (the "Garoo") that has cut the travel time from the mainland to camp from 1 ½ hours to roughly 8 minutes and can hold about 12 people. Other boats that have helped fill the gap until the acquisition of the "Garoo" include such names as the Science North Boat and the Sea Ray – both fast boats that could hold about 8 – 10 people.

Visit the John Island website for more pictures of the camp boats over the years.



'The Kismet awaits its next journey at the low water docks



Laughter rings out from the high ropes course next to Millie's Grove

MILLIE'S GROVE – A TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND OF THE CAMP

Millie Facca probably registered more campers for John Island Camp from 1954 until her retirement in 1993 than anyone else. She probably typed up more “bed sheets” for the camp director than anyone. She certainly was, and still is, one of the camp’s staunchest supporters.

In the fall of 1995, a ceremony was conducted at John Island Camp to dedicate “Millie’s Grove” as a celebration of the years dedicated and unending work in support of the camp. The grove, where campers and staff can find a quiet space to talk or find some quiet time, is adjacent to the high ropes course. A plaque was unveiled and the following poem, written by JIC Alumni Grant Pilkey, was read and dedicated to Millie.

Millie's Grove

Hey little white pine, you look so tiny and wee
But you're going to grow up to be a big strong tree.
You'll spread your limbs and cast your shade
And occupy a space in this magic glade
Where campers and staff can come to find
Growth in their body, spirit and mind;
Where we all can gather to take the dare
With best ever friends who care and share.
So to a special lady we've all learned to love
We dedicate this space – its Millie's Grove

Grant Pilkey, a retired secondary school teacher in Sudbury, brought the first school group to YMCA John Island Camp in the early 1970's to start the ever popular John Island Spring Outdoor Education Program.

FUN AND LAUGHTER



MARRET (LUND) MCCULLOUGH
JIC '77-'87

I was fortunate enough to spend 11 summers at John Island. I made amazing friends, some of which are still my closest to this day. When I think about John Island it automatically brings a smile to my face. When I meet someone who went to JIC, instantly stories and laughter come flowing out. Whether it's the crazy canoe trips, the pranks; like moving sleeping

individuals or beds to strategically placed spots in camp, saran wrapping others to beds or "chicken hawking". Or the little things like how far you can blow bits and bites out of your nose, gunnel bobbing races or the sing along in the dining hall. Each memory involves much laughter and great friends. Whatever generation of people

went to camp, it seems the friendships, out trips, pranks, songs and the beauty of the island never change. I have so many memories of camp it is impossible to put them on paper. I do know I look forward to seeing my old JIC friends and sharing the memories and laughter all over again



GROWING UP AT CAMP

THE EARLY YEARS AT JOHN ISLAND



IAN GLENN
JIC '57-'63

It was 1957, I was 9 yrs old, and I got off the Kismet at the old dock and ran with my twin brother Rod along the sandy road leading to somewhere special and new for us both. We ran and ran up the road, past many buildings and out to the most beautiful beach in the world. It was like looking out across the ocean. You could see forever. Our camping experience at John Island had now begun.

I wish I could say it was entirely great, but I soon became a rather pathetic sole, desperately homesick. My brothers, Rod and David, were with me, but it didn't help. The remedy was the Camp Nurse, Jo, my Mother. Many overnights at the health centre got me through the month, joined by Ticker Bolton who needed the same medicine.

Jack Darraugh, my counsellor in Cabin 4 tried his best to teach me to swim, but the North Channel was more than a skinny little me could

handle, and the best I could do was get my teeth to chatter constantly as I struggled in that cold, clear water. The following year my best counsellor ever, Gary Gray, taught me to swim, and within two weeks I was working on my 5th Star. Life was great from that time on as I progressed through canoeing, sailing, water skiing behind the 25 hp boat and then taking those wonderful canoe trips out around Aird Island or up into the lakes and rivers above Elliot Lake and paddling back to camp.

And my camp experiences always involved friendships and contact with such good people. Names like Al McCann, my first Camp Director, Gary Gray, the Douglas brothers, the Sinclairs, Burgesses, Pigotts, Savages, Doug Fraser, Ticker and Ron Bolton, Peter Rennick (who got a sunburn on his behind and had to go to Espanola Hospital for treatment) Doug Fosten; George Koski, Lance

Armstrong, the Mitchells; so many names, so many memories.

My brothers and I went from campers to counsellors at John Island over a period of 7 years. Our time there and the YMCA teachings truly shaped us for the years that followed. In our respective careers in university administration, secondary school teaching, and for myself, law and then public administration, the Y foundations of Spirit, Mind and Body became such a part of how we lived our lives. I am pleased to now serve on the Board of Directors for the National Capital YMCA-YWCA here in Ottawa.

Since my years at John Island I have enjoyed canoe trips and hikes in many remote areas of Canada. Yet, it all started at that most beautiful beach in the world.

Ian is now the Chairperson of the Parole Board of Canada



Some of Ian's pictures from his days as a counsellor.

REGISTRATION FOR 2004 CAMP SESSIONS IS NOW AVAILABLE



Each year children and grandchildren of John Island alumni discover the magic for themselves.

Registration is now available for all sessions for the summer of 2004. We have a range of sessions for campers aged 6 to 14, special leadership programs for 15 and 16 year olds, and even a one week long family camp at the end of the summer.

Information about any of our sessions is available on the web at:
www.johnisland.ymca.ca or by calling the camp office at: (705) 674-6171.



YMCA Sudbury

WE'RE LOOKING FOR PICTURES

We're building a special multimedia program and memorabilia displays for the 50th Anniversary Celebration!

In order to build our program, we need photographs and memorabilia from the various generations at camp. We understand that your pictures and memorabilia are treasures and promise to carefully catalogue and return them to you.

Please send your pictures labeled with your name to:
Gary Gray—Alumni Celebration Photographs
YMCA Sudbury
140 Durham Street
Sudbury, ON P3E 3M7

Contact Gary at ggray@sudbury.ymca.ca for more information.