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Reflections On My First Summer

The path in outdoor and environmental education I began 36 years ago was initiated solely by chance when challenged by a high school administrator friend to take some students out in the woods and try to instill in them self-confidence, clarify their personal values and improve their performance in school. From this baptism by fire, I learned the power of helping others learn through experience, and I've never seen a better example of it than the Center for Environmental and Outdoor Education at SUNY Cortland College.

Arriving over Memorial Day Weekend, I was ushered into my new quarters at Camp Huntington by our caretaker, maintenance chief, and several of his sons and nephews. As I sat amidst the possessions I had selected as essential from our home in New Hampshire, I wondered what in the world I had gotten myself into. Here I was in a totally new institution, cut off from the mainland by a mile-long boat ride, separated from my family, yet wildly excited about this new adventure. Looking back from the advantage of five months on the job, it has been an amazing start.

The first group I encountered here at Camp Huntington was a two-week course required of all physical education majors, PED 308: Outdoor Adventure Education for Teachers. I soon learned through the many alumni who came to Raquette Lake over the summer that this course has changed little since Harlan Metcalf established the camp in 1948. Tom Fuchs '83, lecturer IV, physical education, was in charge of this session, and he and his staff immediately made me feel welcome. I was asked to say a few words to the departing students, and upon giving this some thought, I decided to speak to them about three things – risk, community and knowledge. These must have been the earliest impressions I had about the type of learning I saw going on here, so they will stay at the foundation of my Camp Huntington philosophy from that point forward.

Of course, the controversy over the sale of Antlers was thrust upon me almost immediately, and I tried to come up to speed quickly with all sides of the issue. Not having the background to really express an informed decision, I instead tried to listen to those who had already formed one, some of whom were very passionate. I look forward, now that President Bitterbaum has requested more time to study the options, to finding a lasting solution to enable SUNY Cortland to keep this important resource as part of our center. (See article on Antlers in this issue.)

My predecessor, Jack Sheltmire M'73, was honored for his 10 years of service at the dedication of the Sheltmire Cabin at the end of July. In his remarks, he stated that the position of director isn't really a job; it's more of a lifestyle. I couldn't agree more. Every waking hour of the operating season is spent here at Camp Huntington, Antlers or on the water in between. There are things to do before breakfast and things needing attention long after dinner. Weekends are busier than weekdays, and the weeks run into one another, with groups coming and going. You make new friends of alumni, faculty, students and other guests quickly,



Photo courtesy of Dorothy Kreutzer '53



and just as quickly they leave to go back to their other lives. Only the staff here at Camp Huntington remain. I have yet to experience the shoulder season on Long Point, when only staff are here, but I look forward to using it to catch up on many conversations begun and reflect upon the value of what people have taken away from their time with us.

Speaking of staff, I am fortunate enough to have inherited a great one. This has made the transition as new director eminently easier, and I wish to thank all of them for their unbelievable dedication to SUNY Cortland as well as their skill and hard work that make this place thrive. Richard Fey, caretaker, Bob DeShaw, master of maintenance, and Rob Beimer and Debbie Mattoon, head cooks, provide for the care and feeding of both people and the facilities that make Raquette Lake such a magical place to visit. Mary Jo Carey keeps us all organized and handles the majority of the communication and billing duties from her desk in Cortland. Will Limer maintains a watchful eye on the property at the Brauer Education Center and lets us know when things need our attention. Finally, Rhonda Jacobs does virtually everything needed to keep Antlers running smoothly, as well as issues trip food and manages the program equipment at Camp Huntington. Without everyone's support and patience with my newness to the job, I would probably have jumped in the lake long ago!

I would also like to thank all the alumni who have warmly welcomed me to this position. The enthusiasm and support you provide to your alma mater is truly inspirational and reinforces my belief that SUNY Cortland is going to be a rewarding place to work. The center at Raquette Lake, including Antlers and Camp Huntington, belongs to everyone who has been touched by its beauty and power to transform lives over the years, and it is an honor to be asked to serve in the capacity of director. I look forward to many years of leadership and the challenges that lie ahead.

Service Learning Puts Theory Into Practice

Partnership seems to be a consistent theme with the Center for Environmental and Outdoor Education. This isn't surprising, given the limited number of staff and broad mission of the center. To provide quality educational experiences for our participants, we draw on multiple talents from across the campus and beyond, while providing students with opportunities to try out their classroom theory in a practical setting.

One of the partnerships that has a longstanding tradition is the joining together of an adapted physical education course, Introduction to Inclusive Outdoor Education, and a very popular weekend outing offered to residents of Wildwood Program, Inc. from Schenectady. Wildwood was established in 1967 to serve first children and later people of all ages with complex mental disabilities. This year, for the first time, Diane Craft '72, professor, physical education, and SUNY Cortland students had the opportunity to be with the Wildwood crew at Camp Huntington. There were games of all sorts: canoeing, fishing, kayaking, and the highlight of the weekend – the low ropes course. Access to the low ropes course on a beautiful sunny September day was icing on the cake.

Diane says of the course, "It is the opportunity for Wildwood adults and SUNY Cortland students to live and play together, share meals together and meet challenges together that I credit with fostering among students a deepening appreciation of each individual's unique value as a human being. It is not unusual for at least one student each year to later describe the weekend as a life changing experience, during which the person made the personal decision to spend his or her life working with and advocating on behalf of individuals with disabilities."

One student, Kelsey Allen, reflected on her course evaluation, "I will never forget this outdoor education weekend experience, as it helped me grow as an individual and allowed me to see the 'person' not the disability."

Dennis Lake '73, heads up the Wildwood staff team and has been coming to Raquette Lake for more than twelve years.



According to Dennis, many of the residents choose this as their one vacation choice over Florida, Hawaii and even international destinations. The smiles and laughter that rang out over the weekend were a testament to the deep satisfaction that both students and adults with disabilities were enjoying. This program is

one of the many examples of engaged learning and partnership that define our center.



Photo Courtesy of Jane Abrams '71

Theta Phi Celebrates and Commemorates

On a beautiful October weekend, the sisters of Theta Phi descended on Camp Huntington in full force for their annual fall gathering. Part of their agenda was to welcome and shake up the new director with their enthusiastic antics, and believe me, they did a grand job! Over the years, this group of sorority sisters has raised and contributed substantial money to projects that have benefited Camp Huntington, including Syracuse China plates in the Fuge Dining Room and the renovation of the Moseley Glass Dining Room. The weekend also included work projects such as clearing the trails for ski season and raking.

Two special events were planned that are worthy of special mention. Since the group had not been together since the passing away of George Fuge, '49, director from 1962-85, they planned a touching memorial ceremony in the Fuge Dining Room. George's wife, Marguerite "Mugsy" Hart Fuge '51, came over from her cabin on the mainland join the women who fondly remembered their physical education days with "Huge Fuge" at the helm of Camp Huntington. After a few short readings and songs, flowers were placed individually by the participants around camp in places they felt especially close to George. A section of the dining room was adorned with photographs, snowshoes, a new table donated by the New York State Outdoor Education Association, and a plaque honoring the former director.

Later that same night, the dining room was again transformed into a banquet hall reminiscent of the early days of Camp Pine Knot, much in the way the Durants or Huntingtons might have entertained. Guests came in full costume, including Collis P. Huntington and his two wives, William West Durant, his sister Heloise, Annie Oakley, Wyatt Earp, numerous local trappers, guides and Native Americans among others. It was a wild time, and more than one fight threatened to break out among the overly enthusiastic and eclectic crowd.

A sumptuous dinner was prepared and served by Chef Kelly Davis and her assistants, much to the delight of Camp Huntington's kitchen staff. Rob Biemer, cook, couldn't help but join in the fun, though, preparing a delicious crême brulee for dessert. The feast began with brie en croute with raspberry preserve, sage stuffed mushrooms, and caramelized sweet onion tarts all served by costumed wait staff. The soup course was a roasted

squash and tart apple consume. Chicken Veronique, double cream roasted potatoes, and a mixed field green salad garnished with wedge of fresh pear wrapped with Brie and Prosciutto served with champagne balsamic vinaigrette comprised the main courses. After the meal, featured historical characters presented short monologues about their roles, highlighted by a hilarious dressing down of her brother, Willie, played by Rob Rubendall, by Heloise Durant, played by "Toni" Tiburzi, associate provost, enrollment management; professor emeritus, physical education. Thank you, Theta Phi, for providing one of the most entertaining evenings Camp Huntington has seen in some time.

Alumni Sessions Scheduled For 2011

Dates for all alumni sessions at Antlers and Camp Huntington have been set for the upcoming year, and there is a greater variety of options available than ever before. The Winter Alumni Camp will be held Jan. 23-27 at Camp Huntington. The magic of the winter skies and snow-covered lake beckons those who appreciate winter scenery as only the Adirondacks can provide.

Antlers will offer five separate alumni sessions in July and August ranging from three to seven days long. Many of you have been unable to attend a full week in the past, so we're making it easier to schedule the right length of stay for each family. Antlers offers a variety of boating activities, a swimming beach, and easy access to cars for jaunts into the surrounding area. Thursday night concerts at historic St. Williams on Long Point are a popular tradition, along with campfires. To better reflect the true cost of operation, Auxiliary Services Corporation (ASC) has increased the rates significantly, and we hope this signals a willingness to continue alumni activity at this historic site for many years to come. Check the website for more details, rates and registration instructions.

Camp Huntington will actually offer three different alumni camp sessions during the week of the 4th of July. A full seven-day session will take place from July 2-8. Two four-day sessions also are being offered July 2-5 and July 5-8. Participants will arrive at 2 p.m. for boat transportation from Antlers on the first day of each session and leave after breakfast on the last day. Alumni should plan to spend the majority of their time at Camp Huntington; however, there will be several opportunities provided throughout the week to go to the mainland.

Kirby Camp is opening for the season the week of June 12 and will remain open through the week of Sept. 11. This charming two bedroom cabin that sleeps a maximum of eight is in a remote location on Long Point, about one mile east of Camp Huntington. It features gas lighting, stove and refrigerator, running cold water, solar-heated shower, and composting toilet facility. The view from the front porch and the tranquil setting are worth the price of admission. A small outboard runabout can be rented for an additional fee. Transportation to and from the cabin with all your gear is provided from the Antlers dock.

Registration forms for all camp sessions can be found at our website. Please note the deadlines for registration. If there are more registrations than we have space for in any session, we will try to accommodate your second choice. In some cases, a lottery system will be used to determine acceptance, and we will notify everyone shortly thereafter of the results.

Learn To Lead – Massena High School

In the business of resident outdoor education, high school groups can be both challenging and inspirational to manage. At the inspirational end of the scale are the students in the Learn to Lead program from Massena High School. Arriving in a cold, driving rain, their spirit and enthusiasm soon overcame the gloom of a raw autumn day in the Adirondacks as they set about to create a positive community around the fireplace in Metcalf Hall. Teachers came prepared with creative music and art activities, and the students reflected on the powerful “Rachel’s Challenge” assembly they attended at their school earlier that morning. Many had been moved by the story of one of Columbine High School’s student victims and needed time to explore their emotions.

The rain continued throughout the afternoon and night, but spirits remained high at breakfast, when the students set off into the woods under the direction of their art teachers, who led them in a session on nature art. Using dead, downed or plentifully abundant green materials found in the woods along the Red Trail, they built a series of artistic representations of the Learn to Lead program of which they were all part. The materials will eventually decay or return to their natural state, so they learned about Leave No Trace® principles in addition to the art they created.

Learn to Lead is the four-year-old brainchild of Mary Arcadi '77, physical education. When she started the program, it consisted of a one-day hike involving student athletes and students with disabilities. Immediately realizing this wasn't enough, Mary went to her principal and requested support for a year-long intervention that would match highly performing upperclassmen with freshmen and sophomores identified by their teachers and counselors as “at risk.” The three-day



Photo courtesy of Mary Arcadi '77

program in October at Camp Huntington is the kick-off to the year, where the mentors meet their matches and begin a trusting relationship that will help the younger students better integrate into the school community, take more responsibility for

their future, and weather the inevitable storms of adolescence in a large high school. Mary says, “The benefits of the program are at least as great if not greater for the peer mentors, who spend most of their time pursuing advanced academic courses in the International Baccalaureate program at Massena. They really don't have any idea about the other kids in their own high school, some of whom have to overcome challenges daily like learning or emotional problems. They come away from the three days at Raquette Lake with their eyes wide open, and this will help them accept the responsibility of citizenship throughout the coming

year and the rest of their lives.” It is gratifying as director to see SUNY Cortland alumni who continue to contribute immensely to their communities through programs like Learn to Lead after years of teaching. We can take pride in the fact that some of that foundation for giving back was laid during their formative college years on trips of their own to Raquette Lake.

The Lights Are Still On at Antlers

For much of the summer, the focus of conversation



Photo Courtesy of Jenna Slade '07

among SUNY Cortland alumni and faculty who enjoy Raquette Lake was the proposed sale of the Antlers property. In February, President Bitterbaum issued a memo defending the proposed sale by outlining the financial opportunities for the College and the challenges facing Auxiliary Services Corporation (ASC) in continuing to operate and upgrade the historic property. Declining usage and pending infrastructure projects were cited as the driving impetus for the sale. Prerequisites for any sales agreement to preserve access to Camp Huntington were outlined in the memo.

Over the summer, there was a great deal of response from alumni and faculty about the importance of Antlers and concern about jeopardizing the center's operations on Raquette Lake. In addition, alumni who use Antlers as a way to return annually to Raquette Lake and share their love of the Adirondacks with family were concerned about losing this valuable resource. After listening to many voices and inviting input from all sides, the president asked the ASC board to postpone any consideration of sale for a year, while a committee of users from across the College community considers all options available to address the challenges and opportunities at Antlers.

The first meeting of the task force on the Center for Environmental and Outdoor Education Facilities met on campus in early November. Members include alumni, alumni affairs, ASC, biology, childhood/early childhood education, geology, physical education, and recreation, parks and leisure studies. The committee is chaired by Center for Environmental and Outdoor Education Director, Rob Rubendall, and a full report is due to Provost Mark Prus in April.

Meanwhile, Antlers will open on schedule in May 2011 and offer its usual contingent of alumni, school and SUNY Cortland programs as before. There are plans to stay open later into September to accommodate a number of programs that were displaced or moved to Camp Huntington last year. Alumni and outside groups will see a significant increase in rates to better reflect the true costs of operation, signaling a commitment on the part of ASC and SUNY Cortland to work out a solution to the Antlers question that works for everyone.

Exploring Body, Mind and Spirit

In early October, Camp Huntington hosted a women's wellness retreat sponsored by the Center for Gender and Intercultural Studies (CGIS). The weekend was organized by Mecke Nagel, professor, philosophy, and Colleen Kattau, associate professor, modern languages, and was open to students and alumni alike.



The group had a full schedule that included beginning crocheting, chi meditation, informational sessions, kayaking, the low ropes course, meditation, nature walks, poetry and song writing, and yoga in addition to the ever popular evening sauna. A range of topics about the earth, history, personal wellness paths, and women and leadership among others were discussed.

With the sun shining down and the lake calm, the women easily learned how to maneuver kayaks and paddle. Some quietly watched the scenery while others enjoyed talking. Kirby Camp informally became the destination where dialogue about the cabin's unique architecture and past ensued.

Laughter and constructive suggestions filled the air while the women took on the ropes course revealing some of their hidden talents. Under the leadership of Renee Clarke, course facilitator, Clarke Tours, the group made its way through various challenges. The photo above depicts one of the elements in which they had taken off most of their sweatshirts and some shoes to complete the task.

The pilot program was a success with all having a fabulous time. They plan to return next fall with a new topic to explore. If you are interested in joining them, keep an eye on our upcoming events Web page.

Partnering Makes Teaching Science Richer

Each fall and winter, students in childhood/early childhood education come to Camp Huntington as part of EDU 374: Teaching Elementary School Science. The purpose of the retreat is to provide hands-on experience teaching science in the outdoors to increase student interest and motivation for learning. As a secondary goal, the experience is intended to help pre-service teachers feel more comfortable themselves in an outside-the-classroom environment, so they will be more likely to include these when they begin to teach.

Thanks to two partnerships, one well-established and one recently revived, SUNY Cortland students achieved both goals and took away a bagful of teaching tools as well as increased confidence in their own ability to work in a natural environment. Over the past few years, professional educational staff from Rogers Environmental Center, located in Sherburne, has led programs in Project Wet and Project Wild. They also present countless teaching ideas on nature hikes along the trails of Long Point, use of songs, stories and other non-traditional ways of teaching science. One of the highlights of the retreat are the night hikes,

where the students call owls, explore phosphorescence using wintergreen Lifesavers and learn about predator/prey activity in the dark. Just being out in the woods, without light or street noise, is a valuable experience for our students.

After meeting with Susan Stratton, assistant professor, childhood/early childhood education, and Beth Klein, associate professor, childhood/early childhood education, earlier this summer, it became clear that to achieve the second goal of acclimatizing their education students to working in an outdoor environment, the faculty needed help in offering a quality introductory canoe and kayak experience. Noticing the talents and enthusiasm of biology students and recreation, parks and leisure studies students who spent two weeks at Antlers and Camp Huntington developing both personal and teaching skills, Rob approached Sharon Todd, chair, recreation, parks and leisure studies, to recruit volunteers.

Four students stepped up on very short notice to lend a hand, taking time off from a busy class schedule and driving the six hours round-trip to provide an outstanding introduction to paddling that nearly every education student took full advantage of. Many of them remarked that they were initially very intimidated to get into a canoe or kayak, but after some dry land instruction and practice, they had a breakthrough experience and would consider using these activities in an outdoor learning setting with their future students.



Platt, Banker, Campbell

We would like to take time to thank all the Rogers Environmental Center staff, Laura Carey, Chris DeCesare, Marsha Guzewich, and Fred von Mechow, for lending their expertise once again, as well as the students, Ben Banker, Adam Campbell, Laura Platt and Tom Szevin. It is through the sharing of your time and talents that we were able to enrich Teaching Elementary School Science to a level that will have a lasting impact on the way our future teachers view sharing the natural world with their classrooms for years to come.

Field Biology

Over the years, the field biology course content has changed a bit, yet one thing that has not changed is how busy the two week course is. Students spend a good portion of each day hiking, paddling canoes, recording images and sounds, sampling water, tromping through bogs and learning every step of the way. This intense course is taught by two very dedicated individuals Steve Broyles, professor, biological sciences, and Larry Klotz, distinguished teaching



Photo courtesy of Steve Broyles

professor, biological sciences.

One highlight of the course is a trip to the high peaks region of the Adirondacks. Students stop to study each biome starting at the base of Ampersand Mountain. Humidity, temperature, tree height and diameter are just some of the data recorded at each stop. The group then drives to the base of Whiteface Mountain to make another entry. As the vans wind up the curvy road, several stops are made noting the change in vegetation and weather from tall to short and warm to cool. Data collected is taken back to the Antlers lab and analyzed the following day.

Previous years' students often stop in to recount their astounding Field Biology adventures. We are thrilled to be a part of this journey!

Nature Nook

The melodic echoes of the common loon can be heard in the early morning and evenings on Raquette Lake throughout the warm months. The birds can grow to be 2-3 feet long and weigh up to 12 pounds. It is believed that their name comes from the clumsy way they look while walking on land. Common loons are migratory birds that can be found on lakes and ponds throughout Canada and parts of the northern United States.

The common loon's summer plumage reveals black feathers on their heads, dotted with prominent red eyes. Black and white variegated patterned feathers on their lower neck and torso along with white underbellies complete their look. Webbed

feet, located quite far back on the torso, make loons excellent swimmers; however, they have a difficult time moving around on land and tend to do so only during the mating season. Male and female loons look alike with no distinguishing patterns.



Photo courtesy of Rob Biemer

Once food is spotted, loons can dive as deep as 200 feet. Their favorite food is fish though they also eat crayfish, frogs, leeches, salamanders and snails. Food caught during a dive is snagged on a hook-like mechanism on the roof of the mouth making it easy to secure slippery prey. Common loons have a somewhat elastic throat and swallow prey whole.

Both parents aid in nest building, incubating eggs and feeding their young. Nests are made from grasses, mounded masses of plant materials and mud. A clutch can be two to four olive brown colored eggs with dark brown splotches that are laid in June. Incubation lasts around a month. After hatching, loons can swim right away; however, diving takes a few days. Babies will often ride on their parent's back to conserve heat, rest and avoid predators. By 12 weeks the youngsters can fly.

Predators include large fish, humans, raccoons, skunks and weasels. The birds may ingest lead pellets or sinkers used in fishing that can cause lead poisoning. Habitat reduction and pollution are other worries. Common loons can live up to 30 years and can fly over 100 mph.

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