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The Cold Doesn't Faze Alumni

How many people willingly pay for a winter vacation to travel to a place where they wake up the first morning to minus 36 degrees? That's how hearty our SUNY Cortland alumni are! Crossing the ice road, Jan. 23, in relatively mild weather, the largest group in recent years came ready to play in the snow. Although no big storms had hit Raquette Lake by then, the steady lake effect snow left our ski and snowshoe trails in the best condition they had seen in years. Everyone hit the trail before dinner to take in the winter splendor.

After dinner, we held our traditional orientation, where volunteer leaders posted times for various activities throughout the week, including board games, circus arts, dancing, historical tour, ice fishing, pond hockey, a ski lesson, Tai Chi, and more. It didn't seem like we could get everything into just four days, and indeed the fun never stopped. With the clear skies and low temperatures, the night sky on the ice road was worth taking in before we broke up for the evening. Little did we know that those clear skies would produce radiational cooling down to 36 below when we awoke the next morning.

The proposed ski lesson and tour for the morning was postponed in favor of some indoor



Photo credit Mary Miller '76

activities, but by lunch the sun was out and the temperature had warmed to 10 above. Everyone was fitted for skis, boots and poles and went out on the lake to practice. After a short lesson for those new to skiing, the group headed down the Blue Trail towards Camp Marion. As one by one skiers returned to camp, they discovered an enthusiastic group led by seven-year-old William Reicherter playing hockey on the ice road. The game continued on and off whenever William could find anyone willing to play.

Lynn Peffley '70, led a session in circus arts one evening, and everyone enjoyed juggling scarves, balancing spinning plates and stacking cups. It was obvious no one was a Barnum and Bailey graduate, but there sure were lots of laughs. The next day at lunch, Mary Miller '76, performed some more polished juggling of oranges for the group.

The highlight of the week, other than outstanding skiing, was an ice fishing exhibition followed by group ice cutting for the sauna. I say ice fishing exhibition, because there was a lot more show than there was production. In fact, not one nibble was detected, but everyone got a shot at drilling holes, baiting hooks and telling fish stories while standing around the tip-ups. When we cut the ice for the polar bear dip with a chain saw, the blocks came out in long, thin pieces. Our intrepid and imaginative friends from Georgia, Roger Daniels and Ray Stedwell '80, couldn't resist using the pieces to construct an ice throne, which came in handy during the sauna dip itself.

It was hard to say goodbye after such a great time; everyone promised to try to return next year. The record-breaking temperature will stay alive in the group's memory for many months, I'm sure, as we move into the dog days of summer. The ice throne would feel pretty good in Atlanta long about July, wouldn't it Ray and Roger?



Photo credit Mary Miller '76



Photo credit Ray Stedwell '80

Winter Wonders

One of the benefits of living year round in the Adirondacks is the number of amazing things one can experience during the long winter. Many New Yorkers consider this area only habitable in the summer and flee to warmer climes in winter or make occasional visits to ski or snowmobile on weekends. But doing so limits the time one has to truly take in the splendors of a northern winter.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, we mentioned waking to 36 below one mid-January morning. At that temperature, it seems like all life stops in its tracks and waits in anticipation for the warming power of the sun. Breathing has to be shallow to warm the air slowly as it moves from nose to lungs. The nose and any other exposed skin tingles. Any facial hair immediately forms a frozen barrier to protect the skin beneath. Long hair peeking out from beneath a ski cap turns white as snow from frosty breath, even if it started out brunette or black. And amazingly, if the sun is out and the temperature rises to even zero, it feels like a heat wave!

At Camp Huntington, there's a long-standing tradition of cutting a large rectangular hole in the lake near the sauna for the polar bear plunge. Most groups wouldn't hear of spending time on the point without taking at least one dip after heating up in the sauna. When you've taken the time to heat your skin to close to 200 degrees, hitting the 32 degree water isn't really that bad. However, the impact with the water induces the immediate clamping shut of every pore in the body and a tingling sensation that is unlike any other. This creates a rather comical panic in most first-timers who either claw their way up the ladder in record time or leap from the waist-deep water onto the surrounding ice. In actuality, simply stepping out of the water and letting the body's core warmth work its way back to the skin provides sufficient recovery. Some bathers can't wait that long and make a mad dash back to the comfort of the sauna.

Over the winter, I heard an NPR story about the 300 degree club that meets only on special days at the South Pole. Club members are scientists and support staff who winter over in the research station at the very pole, where occasionally the temperature dips to 100 degrees below zero. Since saunas can be fired up to around 200 degrees above, the difference between inside and outside is 300 degrees. The scientists rush to the sauna on these days, heat themselves to the maximum, then run like crazy, wearing only snow boots the hundred yards or so to the pole and return as quickly as possible. Normally, exposing any flesh at that temperature would be risking frostbite, but the superheated body can sustain its warmth just a bit longer after the soak in the sauna. Sure sounds like fun, doesn't it?

Another great experience is to walk on the ice road on a cold, clear night and watch the amazing star show overhead, while listening to the ice play a symphony of low rumbles and pops, as it expands and cracks. Many warm weather dwellers notice this almost immediately and wonder if the ice is breaking up. It isn't actually breaking; it's just trying to adjust itself to the greater mass the expansion of water creates as it freezes.

Finally, the tilt of the earth on its axis prevents the sun from ever rising very high over the southern horizon as it moves from

east to west. This is what shortens our days and weakens the strength of the sun's rays, causing the lower average temperatures. Observing this gradual seasonal change from Pine Knot

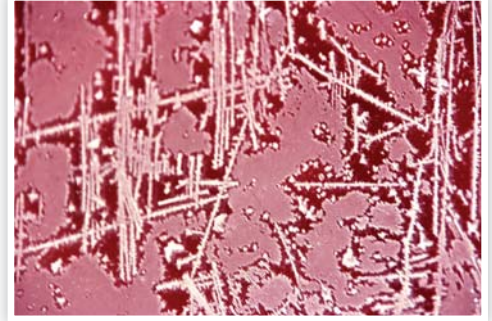


Photo credit Ray Stedwell '80

is fascinating, as the sunrise and sunset points change dramatically towards the winter solstice (greatest amount of tilt away from the sun). At the summer solstice, June 20, the sun appears to set over West Mountain, while at the winter solstice, Dec. 20, it sets to the south of Big Island, a distance of about 23 degrees on the horizon. With the winter sunrise low over South Bay, the sun's rays light up the ice crystals on the Glass Dining Room and create a beautiful rosy patina that is always a pleasure to see.

I try to point out some of these unique winter observations to groups as they pass through, but having day after day to explore and note the ever-changing landscape on Raquette Lake is a gift. When I think about the early trappers and guides who wintered over in the Adirondacks, I both envy and admire them for their attachment to this magical world and their ability to sustain themselves in it.

**Spaces available for:
Alumni camps at both Antlers and Camp Huntington
Week-long stays at Kirby Camp and
an Alumni Picnic, July 30 at Antlers**

Wilderness First Responders

In alternate years, the Recreation, Parks and Leisure Studies Department at SUNY Cortland offers a Wilderness First Responder (WFR) course. The course and its accompanying certification are the gold standard for guides, instructors, and program managers of backcountry activities that may be more than eight hours from definitive health care. Many recreation majors find this an essential component of their undergraduate portfolio.

This year, the twenty-nine students and their coordinator, Dale Anderson, emeritis lecturer, arrived in camp on Jan. 14 for the nine-day course. The curriculum takes eighty hours to complete, so each day was packed from dawn to dusk with classroom study and practical application. Since WFR's must be able to manage virtually any kind of injury or illness in the backcountry for days at a time, the course covers everything from bleeding, breathing, diseases, fractures, head injuries, heat and cold injury, to evacuation procedures. Thanks to the patient and professional instruction of the Wilderness Medical Institute Instructors, Larry DeNucci and Joy Sather, every student was able to master the skills and acquire the knowledge necessary to pass both the written and practical exams on the last day.

There were several components of the course that made Camp Huntington an ideal location. During the hypothermia

section, two students were recruited to don bathing suits under their clothing, then stand in the shower until soaked. They were told to wait in the dorm until the instructor summoned them, but somehow they misunderstood and went out to lie in the snow for close to ten minutes. By the time anyone realized this, and the class was sent out to rescue them, they were in the early stages of hypothermia! We all scrambled to get them out of their wet clothing and into sleeping bags wrapped in plastic sheeting and warmed with hot water bottles. That was quite the real life survival situation.

One afternoon, about six of us became mock victims of a plane crash and had to wait for rescue with various levels of injury. An imaginary helicopter landing pad was used to stage our flight for life. Finally, on the last night, we all set out along a trail and broke off into small groups to search for a mock victim. Unbeknownst to us, one of our team was instructed to act as if they had a leg fracture, and we stopped to treat it and make them comfortable for hours in the snow. Part way into the rescue, another team member was instructed to simulate a seizure,



Photo credit Dale Anderson

and the group had to handle that as well. In the end, our team made each victim comfortable, managed their vital signs and sat them by a warm campfire to keep their spirits up until rescued. Since not every group who comes to Camp Huntington has someone with formal first aid training, and emergency medical services often take time to arrive, I decided as director to take the course. Thanks to Dale's recruiting of a full class, the tuition was waived, and Camp Huntington now has a certified WFR on staff. Keeping up with the usual camp business and communication during the course was a challenge, given the long days in class, but having the training and working with this talented group of Cortland students was well worth it. We hope to begin offering the course every year by expanding our promotion to outdoor professionals in the Adirondacks as well as other colleges and universities in upstate New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. There are few places that can offer the isolated location that Camp Huntington does, with comfortable lodging, dining and meeting space to boot.

New Hartford Students Take Extended Trek

New Hartford High School is one of the longest-standing non-Cortland groups that use Camp Huntington. In fact, the Feb. 6-9 trip marked 40 consecutive years. Jamie McNair teaches ecology and requires the students to choose between fall and winter trips that include team building, outdoor adventure, natural science and history of the Adirondacks.

Wanting to see how high school groups such as New Hartford are supervised on extended trips in the field, I ac-

companied them on skis to Death Brook Falls on their last day in camp. The night before, the students were well briefed on cold injury, dressing in layers and trail techniques. Their equipment was inspected by the teachers, and they hit the sack early to rest up for the expedition. We set out after breakfast the next day with the students divided into patrols finding their own route.



Making their way down the Blue Trail, they met little challenge, as it had been well groomed by our staff. However, when they reached the end of the trail at Silver Beach, it was a different story. The students were cautioned about going out on the ice due to the slush that can build up on the ski bottoms, so they bushpushed through the swamp, which with long skis and poles took quite a bit of time and energy. In addition, the single degree temperatures and strong westerly winds made for cold feet, hands and faces.

Once in the shelter of the peninsula between the two beaches, the group stopped to have a snack and warm up. It was here that the teachers gave the students an option to turn back or continue on to Death Brook Falls, another mile or so through deep, unbroken snow. Although there were a few who were inclined to turn back, majority won out, and they pressed ahead.

After making it through Golden Beach State Park and across Route 28, there was only a short uphill climb left to the falls, where we broke for lunch. The food and relatively warm sheltered spot rejuvenated any lagging spirits. The return trip began with a thrilling ski down a short, steep hill, which provided a number of comical spills and laughs. The rest of the trip on broken trail was uneventful, and the group made it back in time to change, pack and have supper after the traditional awards ceremony in the Knox Classroom.

New Hartford takes full advantage of the time and resources available in the Adirondacks both fall and winter. They arrive just after breakfast on the first day and leave after dinner on the last. Each day is well organized and packed with adventures the students remember for the rest of their lives. Let's hope there continue to be dedicated teachers like McNair and his staff who will bring students to Camp Huntington for 40 more years.

AARCH Study Tour

Sept. 11-15

Tour a variety of architecturally interesting rustic camps dating back to the late 1800s with experts in the field.

Information can be found at

www.cortland.edu/outdoor under Raquette Lake and upcoming events or by calling (607) 753-5488

Tree Thinning Program Initiated

Camp Pine Knot was carefully laid out on a small, forested peninsula on Long Point by William West Durant, beginning in 1876. Trees were used to provide privacy among closely spaced cabins and lodges. Many of the white pines, birches, spruces and hemlocks have reached and surpassed maturity over the past 135 years, posing a threat to buildings, shading smaller trees, and dropping branches on roofs. Several 300-year-old plus pines have fallen recently, including two of the “three sisters” at the start of the Red Trail and one that smashed the roof of the Back Bay boathouse. The time has come to start thinning the forest stand to improve its health and protect the historic buildings.

Olympic Tree and Land Management, Inc. of Saranac Lake was contracted to take down nine of the most critical trees on the point. One of the large white pines was growing into the corner of the Durant Cabin, and a hemlock was cabled together to prevent its falling on the Chalet. Dan Groves, owner of Olympic Tree, and his crew came over the ice road originally by truck and began taking the trees down at the beginning of March. Unfortunately, the truck and chipper had to be taken out due to the deteriorating conditions on the ice road later that week. The crew continued to cross over by snowmobile, and the takedown work was completed in about two weeks.

The removal of the trunk wood was handled by our own crack crew and a bulldozer, while the brush will have to wait for the lake to open so the chipper can be barged over. Now that the trees are down, we will be able to sleep a bit easier when the Raquette Lake winds blow. Over the next five-to-ten years, we will continue to cut selectively to open up the canopy and encourage the growth of younger, more stable trees.

Task Force Meets Over The Winter

At the request of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Mark Prus, a task force on the Center for Environmental and Outdoor Education (CEOE) was formed in the fall to look at the past, current and future operation of the four facilities under the center’s management as well as the mission of CEOE itself. The group met five times over the winter on campus and submitted a final report to the provost. Members of the committee included Bud Ames, community member; Michelle Brackin, assistant executive director of ASC; Peter Dady ’74, alumni; alumnus Bob Darling; professor and chair of geology; Doug DeRancy, ’75, assistant to the vice president for institutional advancement; Tom Fuchs, lecturer, physical education; Rhonda Jacobs, assistant director; Beth Klein, professor, childhood/early childhood education; Larry Klotz, distinguished teaching professor, biological sciences; Sharon Todd, associate professor and chair, recreation, parks and leisure studies; and Rob Rubendall, director and committee chair.

Part of the charge was to uncover and consider all previous task force reports and mission statements of CEOE, which started in 1991 as a result of a task force recommendation and retreat in October at Camp Huntington. By-laws were created and an advisory council was appointed by then Provost David Pollick. Within a few years, the center had created the Coalition for Education in the Outdoors and was publishing a journal

called Taproot, helped launch the Lime Hollow Nature Center, hosted a number of national conferences, and created a minor in environmental and outdoor education. In addition, the CEOE oversaw operations at Antlers, Brauer Education Center, Camp Huntington and Hoxie Gorge Nature Preserve. By 2002, the CEOE had disappeared as an organizational entity on campus. The final report included a brief history, current operations, concerns and recommendations for the center and its facilities. The President’s Council and ASC are expected to use it to help guide major decisions about restructuring the advisory board and charter, investing in the renovation of facilities and setting the direction for environmental and outdoor education at Cortland for the future. As chair of the task force, I would like to thank the committee for their dedicated work above and beyond their normal responsibilities, as well as the provost for the opportunity to conduct this thorough investigation.

Spotlight on History: Camp Marion

Paul Tibbitts, circa 1890, owned and lived on the property known as Camp Marion on Long Point.



Photo credit Kevin L. Williams

Tibbitts was a shake shingle maker for W.W. Durant. He fell ill and did not have the money or supplies needed to travel to the nearest hospital in Saratoga. The store owner, John McLaughlin, accepted the deed to Tibbitts property as payment for the supplies. Tibbitts died and McLoughlin acquired the property.

In 1892 Joseph Grenon inquired about property at the store. He was shown Camp Marion. Grenon purchased the 160 acre parcel for \$45. A small bark-covered two-room cabin, complete with utensils and furniture, sat on the half-acre clearing.

In 1897 Joseph married Maggie and enlarged the camp, with a larger bedroom, kitchen and outhouse. Grenon worked as a guide, harvested and sold firewood, and was a game warden while continuing to alter and improve his holdings.

The garden, almost an acre, was surrounded by a barbed wire fence in 1900. The garden had apple trees, beets, cabbage, carrots, corn, cucumbers, and potatoes. A variety of farm animals were also on site providing eggs, milk and meats as needed.

The camp included a barn, boathouse, ice-house, main residence, laundry, seven cottages, open camps (lean-tos) and wharf, among others. The combined investments were worth \$20,000 in 1914. The camp was advertised as a hotel in the Utica and New York papers for summer parties and hunters.

Two honeymooners, William and Lydia Yeaple, stayed at Camp Marion. Soon after, the Grenons put the camp up for auction with the Yeaples winning the bid in 1923. The Yeaple family enjoyed the camp for a number of years before selling its then 204 acres to the Faculty Staff Association, now known as Auxiliary Services Corporation, for \$15,000 in 1963. The camp was rented to faculty and staff of the college for a number of years before it fell into disrepair. In May of 1986, a controlled fire was set to remove the attractive nuisances. Remaining bricks and foundation were buried in 1994. A lone lean-to remains on site.

Improvements Scheduled

Thanks to the generous contributions of many of our alumni and friends, we are able to continually improve the facilities and equipment at Camp Huntington. Although large projects like the recent renovation of the Coolidge Cabin require special fundraising as well as state support, others go on quietly behind the scenes to make sure everything is well maintained, safe and comfortable for our students and guests.

This spring, we will be upgrading the high ropes course by replacing several belay cable systems and adding a 50-foot utility pole for use as a zipline station. The large hemlock that previously served this purpose has lived its useable lifespan and is in need of retirement. John Lazarus of Northeast Adventures has been contracted to do the work this spring.

In addition to the work on the high course, we will be replacing ropes and some hardware used for safety systems. Storm damage has taken down one of the low ropes activities, and we hope to replace that and add some new ones as well for the upcoming summer. A blindfold maze was added last summer and proved very successful with a number of groups.

With the long and excellent cross-country ski season, our aged equipment is in serious need of replacement. Most centers have moved to an integrated boot and binding system, such as the New Nordic Norm (NNN) or Salomon Nordic System (SNS), which provides a more secure and easier step-in experience for skiers. It's time to retire the older 75 mm three-pin binding system we have been using until now. Those of you who come up next winter will benefit from a new inventory and find skiing at Camp Huntington even better than before.

With the recent completion of the Coolidge Cabin renovation, we will be rebuilding the foundation, steps and railing on the front porch. Since this is an historic building, we will be using the same materials as the original and keeping the look faithful to the William West Durant design from 1877. This distinctive entryway will lead to the marvelously restored interior that consists of a sitting room, two small bedrooms, and a private, accessible bathroom.

Associated PE Majors

For the first time in its history, the Associated Physical Education Majors (APEM) club, held a winter retreat at Camp Huntington. The trip was open to all members of the club with about twenty making the trek.

The unpredictable winter weather took a turn on their arrival day, cancelling campus classes, impairing travel. It did not stop this ambitious group of students. They awoke and were on the road to Raquette Lake by 4:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning!

As soon as they arrived, they walked to camp, set their packs down and started their activities. A full day was had with broom ball, skiing, snowshoeing Blue Mountain, star gazing, the sauna and more skiing. They were an enthusiastic group that we look forward to hosting again.



Photo credit Katy Heil

Two Schools Make Ideal Campmates

Every winter since 2001, two Cortland-area schools have chosen to come to Camp Huntington together, and the partnership seems to work just great for everyone. Tim Sandstrom is the lead teacher and coordinator of the OCM BOCES New Visions Environmental Science Careers program, an advanced science class for college-bound high school seniors. They meet regularly for two-and-a-half hours each day at Tunison Laboratory of Aquatic Science, earning credits in English, economics, government, and science. There is a strong emphasis throughout the curriculum on outdoor education.

Jim Barry heads up the science club at Homer Junior High School. As part of the club activities, seventh and eighth graders have the opportunity to come to Camp Huntington every other May, and the eighth graders return each January. Normally, camp directors are leery about mixing junior and senior high groups, but in this case the older students provide very appropriate role modeling for the younger ones. The trip actually begins before they arrive at Raquette Lake, when both groups stop to climb to the fire tower on Bald Mountain together.

From there, the two schools have separate schedules, but share many common goals for the trip. Tim says his New Visions students are here for team building, winter outdoor recreation, ecology of the Adirondacks, Great Camp history, the sauna, and a service experience. Homer students' goals are similar – an introduction to winter outdoor sports, getting away from the electronic world, enhancing their social studies curriculum by studying the Robber Baron era, winter ecology, animal tracking, and astronomy. Since the groups have been coming together, they are adept at sharing the needed space and equipment.

Part of what makes any trip work are the chaperones who keep the kids engaged while at camp. In both Homer's and OCM's case, the teachers are knowledgeable, attentive and creative. Homer's team consists of Jim Barry, Kevin Douglass, Donna Farkas, Chris Kabat, Jeff Lener, Billi MacNeill, and Josh Martin, who are mostly Cortland graduates. Two have family connections to either Camp Huntington (Donna's grandmother was the first cook) or Cortland (Billi's cousin Dan is the head football coach). Tim is joined by Len Foster, Ray Kneer and Katie Rawluk. The connections with SUNY Cortland are important in the decision many of the students from both schools make about attending college. Tim's specialized senior-year program attracts a number of the junior high kids from Homer who have a chance to learn about the curriculum while at Camp Huntington.

One aspect of programs at Camp Huntington that leaves a positive mark from each group that takes it on is the service project. Many groups ask to have something ready for their students to do during their stay. This year, the New Visions students shoveled the roof of the houseboat, helped clean and restock the sauna, and organized all the skis and boots. Those kinds of opportunities to give back to a place you have enjoyed for several days teach an important lesson in civic responsibility and are one of the main goals for both schools.

Seeing these two schools work so well together and share their unique educational experiences quickly convinced me this is one partnership that is destined to last a long time.

Nature Nook

After one of the early snowfalls when the lake was frozen enough to walk on, I decided to take a stroll down to the village, passing between Big Island and Antlers Point. The ice was very smooth, and the three inches or so of freshly fallen snow was light and fluffy. There hadn't been any wind overnight through the morning hours which found me on the lake, so all was quite still.

I had my camera with me and took a number of photos of animal tracks along the way. A very common track one sees in the snow is the river otter, which runs a step or two, then slides on its belly to save energy. This distinctive trough-shaped track is often seen around Pine Knot, where otters are looking for breaks along the shoreline to enter the water. I saw a number of these on my jaunt.

There was one, however, that looked very different. It appeared on the ice off the shoreline near the Raquette Lake Girls Camp and made a relatively straight line to Big Island. I walked back and forth across it a little way to study it, took a couple pictures, and moved on. Later, I looked at the pictures on my computer and wondered what had created them? In retrospect, I wish I would have spent more time studying them on the ice than I did.

Whatever the animal was, it was tall enough to leave only footprints, but there were some curious horizontal drag marks every now and then that puzzled me. Could it be a coyote

that had some prey in its mouth large enough to drag? Was it a bird whose wing brushed the snow every few steps? I just couldn't decide. So I took the photo to a lecture I attended at the Adirondack Museum given by a naturalist acquaintance, Ed Kanze. I had met Ed during a speaking engagement at one of our education classes earlier in the year and was impressed by his knowledge of local wildlife and reputation as a tracker. He was also puzzled and fascinated by the tracks and asked to keep the photo.

A couple weeks went by without hearing from him, when I received an email saying he was now certain that it was a white-tail deer that was slipping on the ice. The definitive horizontal slashes were one of its hind legs kicking out on the smooth ice as it tried to keep its balance. I posted the photo on the Fuge Dining Room bulletin board with a caption saying, "Do you know what animal made these tracks?" No one all winter was able to guess. Sometimes there is more to interpreting a track than just knowing what the footprint itself looks like. In this case, Ed had to put himself in the place of the animal and think about what unusual conditions might alter the normal track of a common whitetail deer.



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