

A few days ago the 2014 Pasquaney council came together and prepared breakfast for camp. On Tuesday three teams were formed – Team Berry Salad, Team Cinnamon Bun, and of course, Team Tater-Tot Casserole. The primary goal was simple – to provide an exciting and tasty meal for camp. The secondary goal was not so simple – to do it as efficiently as possible. The council holds sleep in high regard, so we didn't want to spend all of Tuesday night preparing. After taps blew, we gathered in our beautiful new kitchen and bent to the task at hand. Based on the amount of seconds and thirds we dished out on Wednesday morning, I feel we achieved our first goal. The breakfast struck a balance between sweet and savory, nutritious and delicious. And as far as that secondary goal of efficiency – we were out of the kitchen by 10:45 Tuesday night – far exceeding my time expectations. All that was left to do was to load the ovens with the trays of cinnamon buns and casserole dishes, pour pitchers of hot cocoa, and watch the sun peek its way into Mem Hall on Wednesday morning. But when I look back on that experience now, I know I shouldn't have been surprised that we worked so quickly and smoothly. After all, I was working with Pasquaney Men.

Perhaps my favorite attribute of the Pasquaney Man is his ability to see a task and complete it. See a need and fill it. Hometown and college friends hardly ever match the pace of Pasquaney friends, who see what needs doing and do it efficiently. Traveling with Camp people is much preferable – they seem to have an extra gear to shift into when things aren't going well and there is still work to be done. There are two key factors that influence our ability to complete tasks. The first is care. There is little chance I will be able to properly complete a task if I don't care. Where does our investment in a task come from? That's a complicated question, but I have a simple

answer for you. You should care about the task at hand, because you have better things to do. You have better things to do than spend all day (or all night) working. If you value your time, you'll take an active role in searching for the best way to work. Efficient teams are flush with individuals doing just that. On Tuesday night, Team Berry Salad was the first to finish. Instead of slowing down and watching the other teams work, Harrison, Christian, and Aidan fired up the dishwasher and set to work scrubbing trays, dishes, and countertops. The result? As the other two teams were finishing their work, "kitchen duty" was crushing the little sub-tasks around them. The moment we loaded the last tray of cinnamon buns into the warming rack to rise, we were finished with our preparation. Lazy man works the hardest... efficiency is easier.

The second factor that influences our ability to complete tasks is competence. Think for a moment about your first summer at camp. Whether that was decades ago, or you're experiencing it right now, I'm sure you remember some of the feelings I'm about to describe. As a 12 year old, I was a terrible sweeper. I had no plan, was easily distracted by friends, and I had a weak sweeping stroke. That went on for a long time, one inefficient duty period after another until I was 13. That was when I met a Pasquaney Man named Ben Schramm. I arrived at the nature center after breakfast one day, planning to hurry through it and hustle down the hill to go sailing. I grabbed a broom, swept for maybe eight minutes, and yelled for a check. I had no idea what I was in for. Ben carried himself tall and had a piercing gaze, a special intensity that I'm sure serves him well in his new job as U.S. Marine. He turned that gaze first to me, then to the floor of the Nature center, then back to me. Needless to say I kept sweeping for a long time after that. He reinforced the lesson he had already taught with his sternness

by taking the time to show me how the duty should be done. He taught me the system of sweeping nail-to-nail, and how to keep my strokes short and efficient, using only the bristles of the broom. Make a plan, sweep hard, and you'll be out on the lake doing something you *want to do* in no time at all.

The two key ingredients of efficiency are investment and competence. A word that joins the two together perfectly is Gumption – a clunky old Scottish word that you won't hear used much these days. The Greeks called it *enthousiasmos*, the root of enthusiasm. Gumption is defined as “shrewd or spirited initiative or resourcefulness.” A perfect word for Camp. Gumption is shrewd or spirited initiative or resourcefulness. In his book, *Zen and the art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Robert Pirsig says Gumption is the “psychic gasoline that keeps the whole thing going.” The psychic gasoline that keeps the whole thing going. The Pasquaney man has a full tank of gumption. It's the fuel that keeps this whole place humming along from 7am to 9pm and sometimes beyond, every day.

At camp, it seems like we've got an infinite supply of Gumption. We manufacture it together, inspiring one another to seek out better ways of operating, by creating new systems of efficiency – like the wood storage in the theater, or the new traffic flow in the kitchen. 130 people living closely together, striving for a smooth, cohesive, fun summer, are bound to come up with some new ideas about the way things should be done. Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying here. I am not saying that the work you have to do can always get easier. But gumption will actually help you accept the difficulty in a task, and bend to with shrewd or spirited initiative or resourcefulness.

Where does it go? Why does it seem like when I leave here, my gumption reserves seem to get burned up so quickly? What is it about this place that maximizes my investment and nurtures my competence? I often hear us talking about camp and the world beyond in terms of reality. Out there, is the real world. Camp is something different, the feeling I have here – gumption meter full – is impossible to recreate. Is that true? Are you telling me that this isn't real? That when I leave here and head back out to Colorado, all of this will be impossible? No. Because here's the good news. Gumption is something way healthier and more sustainable than gasoline. Gumption is muscle.

This past winter in school, I was procrastinating, avoiding the difficult task of writing a paper, browsing around on YouTube. I stumbled upon a documentary about a bodybuilder named Kai Greene, one of those guys whose job is to have a borderline disgusting amount of muscle. Kai grew up in an extremely tough neighborhood in Brooklyn, rising to be one of the world's premiere bodybuilders. Watching his interviews and hearing his soft, measured voice, I was amazed at how composed, thoughtful, and disciplined he was. After winning the 2010 Arnold Classic, Mr. Schwarzenegger asked Kai how it felt. He held the trophy a little tighter and replied, "It feels amazing, and I encourage anyone out there who ever had an idea, a thought about something that they'd like to accomplish, but they know that it would demand the best of their efforts, the most of their concentration, and everything they had inside of them in order to get there and make it happen, I encourage you to do it. And when you do, you'll know exactly how I feel right now." His nickname is "Mr. Get It Done," and he helped me do just that this spring.

When he was asked about his path to success, Kai said he made it by “stringing together days of efficient action.” In order to obtain that kind of muscle, Kai needs work out and eat all day. He needs to maximize energy in and energy out, keeping his body in an anabolic state. His response to the question of “How do you do that?” He said he does it by “... [applying] basic fundamentals over and over and over and over again: getting up at certain time, doing [the right] things, cooking your meals, going to do your cardio, walking through the disciplines, keeping the checklist, and staying on top of [it]. When you string [those things] together you start to create a day of efficient action. The more you string those days of efficient action together, the more likely it will be that you can set up your own success.” In my dorm room at Colorado College, I pulled out a pen and paper, wrote down the phrase “string together days of efficient action,” taped it to my door, and went to the library to write the paper I had been putting off all day. That reminder, taped to my door this spring, helped me strengthen my gumption muscles. I did my laundry more, cleaned my room, and finished papers on time. I started going to sleep earlier, getting extra reps in the weight room, and eating better. My freshman year I had lost about 8 pounds during the course of the lacrosse season – it’s very hard to keep weight on when you’re running like that every day and not working hard to find extra calories. But this past spring, I kept the weight on better. Because my reserves of gumption were so much better developed my sophomore year than they were my freshman year, I was able to rehab a groin injury and finish the season stronger than I started it.

Days of efficient action flow together easily here at camp. Is it more difficult to string them together when you’re away from here? Maybe. But think of camp as a

“gumption gym” – you’ve been working out your gumption muscles for the past 6 weeks, and they are so much stronger than when you first arrived here. Now take them home with you and flex them. I’ll close with a poem by Marge Piercy, called “To Be of Use.”

To Be of Use

The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.