

## Pasquaney *archives*

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Standing on the Northern Presidential ridge last Wednesday with the Short Walk, I had a moment. Gazing from Mount Jefferson over to Washington, something clicked in my head that had been lingering there for some time. There is something about the scale of those mountains that makes a man feel small. Standing there on Wednesday I felt like a man who was in his own place in the world. I was exactly where I needed to be at that moment. I felt small. But are we not small creatures? I felt insignificant. But is humanity not but a blip on the geological time line? Those mountains had been standing there for roughly 500 million years before I ever set foot on them. They had been slowly eroding, sculpted by the wind and rain, those great and subtle architects. As a man I felt tiny, but as a member of the human race, I felt, more keenly than ever, humanity's impact on our planet.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking "Oh great, now Will's going to spout some hippie rhetoric about pollution and global warming, and how we should all recycle and wear tie-dye." Well, I do enjoy rocking tie-dye occasionally, but it's far from my place to lecture you on the virtues of sustainability. Rather, what I want to do is discuss how the lifestyle and virtues we uphold here at camp tie into practices that help the environment, either intentionally or not.

Two years ago I gave a tree talk that had a similar theme to what I'm talking about now. In it I conducted a thought experiment that I think is a very effective one. First, think about how much stuff you throw away every day when you're at home. All the food wrappers, excess packaging, leftovers, soda bottles, etc. Now, think about how much stuff you throw away every day at camp. The difference should be obvious.

Here at Pasquaney we have the unique opportunity to live a simple, honest life. In a time when most summer camps allow their campers to have laptops, mp3 players and gameboys, we eschew these modern distractions in favor of real conversations, real music, and real activities. Our community reaps the benefit of this lifestyle in a million different ways. One of these ways is that we use less electricity. Plain and simple. Less gadgets equals less power usage equals less greenhouse gases being emitted into the atmosphere. It is an unintentional dividend of maintaining a way of life that is hearty and true. The same can be said of cold showers. By consciously removing ourselves from the distractions of the modern world, we not only foster a community of earnest relationships with each other but with our environment.

"We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles." That quote is from former president Jimmy Carter, but it might as well have been said by Mr. Charlie or Mr. Gem-John. While in office, Carter installed solar panels on the roof of the White House. A bold move in a time when environmentalism as we know it was in its infancy. Carter knew this, but thought that it was important to set the example of stewardship and responsibility in a time when America was at a turning point. Again we find ourselves at a turning point in American history, and indeed in the world as a whole. Climate Change is a reality, and politicians and scientists alike are struggling to find solutions that are practical and effective. I think that much can be gained by studying communities like ours. We manage to remain more or less in harmony with the natural world (skunks not included) while at the same time enjoying a healthy and fulfilling way of life. "We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles."

One of the principles that camp has always held to is the importance of being outside. From day hikes, to

expeditions, to the long and short walks, camp provides ample opportunity to get outside and enjoy some of the most scenic and pristine wilderness this country has to offer. Being in the out of doors is beneficial for several reasons. There are the physical benefits of being active while hiking and doing trail work, as well as the mental benefits like the sense of accomplishment after a tough hike or a long day digging drainage ditches. For me, being out in the woods makes me feel like I'm really alive. I find a connection with the land and the mountains that forms a link between my ancestors and me. It is increasingly rare for young men such as yourselves to have the kind of exposure to nature that you get on a daily basis here at camp. We spend the majority of our day outside. If it rains, we get wet. If it's hot, we will sweat. I can only hope that this daily experience at camp does for you what it has done for me. Being at the mercy of the elements on a day-to-day basis instills a sense of responsibility and awareness that you just can't get spending your days inside playing video games or watching TV. You are responsible for being prepared for whatever weather we might experience. Whether that means bringing a raincoat and fleece on hikes, or making sure you have sun block on a hot day down at the waterfront. You must be aware of what is going on around you, and base your actions on your environment. Making the decision to not pet the porcupine that is waking you up in the morning, not picking all the Indian cucumbers at one time, or simply being conscious of where you put your feet on this treacherous hillside.

For me Camp has always been a compass, both morally and practically. I have had a few false starts in my college career, and have made some poor personal decisions. Pasquaney has always been there for me. It has always been a place where I feel at home. I truly treasure the friendships I've made here and take satisfaction and interest in my work. The appreciation of nature I got here at camp at a young age has come to inform my course of study, and the trajectory I have chosen for my young life. I have gone on many hikes and different trips since my time as a camper. Hiking the Fifty with Will Kryder last summer stands as one of my proudest accomplishments, but the hike that I will always remember the most is going up Welsh and Dickey my first summer and looking out over the Whites for the first time. I can recall that moment more clearly than any from my first summer, and possibly my entire camp career. I felt as though I was opening my eyes for the first time. I was blown away that I could hike as far and as high as I had, and was not expecting the view to be as grand or as powerful. Even as a twelve year old I knew that I had just had a life changing experience. Looking over to Mount Washington on Wednesday, I felt that same sort of pang that I did when I was twelve. A man, humble in his place in the world, but at home.

I hope that at some point in your lives you will have a similar moment as the one I experienced on top of Jefferson the other day. Humbled as a man, but empowered as a member of the human race. Here at camp we have a lot of incredible opportunities, and I hope that you won't take these for granted. Enjoy the out of doors. Appreciate the natural beauty that abounds all around us. Live deliberately. Hold to unchanging principles while living in this changing time. We are all citizens of this planet, and as such we have a responsibility to preserve it for our children and our children's children. I will leave you with a passage from Henry Thoreau's *Walden*, one of the classic books on living with nature.

“Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails. Let us rise early and fast, or break fast, gently and without perturbation; let company come and let company go, let the bells ring and the children cry — determined to make a day of it. Why should we knock under and go with the stream? Let us not be upset and overwhelmed in that terrible rapid and whirlpool called a dinner, situated in the meridian shallows. Weather this danger and you are safe, for the rest of the way is down hill. With unrelaxed nerves, with morning vigor, sail by it, looking

another way, tied to the mast like Ulysses. If the engine whistles, let it whistle till it is hoarse for its pains. If the bell rings, why should we run? We will consider what kind of music they are like. Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through Church and State, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call reality.”