

Chuck Platt
Tree Talk
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In early April a certain Assistant Director sent me an e-mail informing me of news I expected but nonetheless did not want to hear. ‘Baseball is full’ read the e-mail from Mike Hanrahan. And so with a little prodding from a certain Camp Treasurer, I became a Shop’s counsellor. Thanks, James.

Phil Hooper may be all about the box—but the same cannot be said of me. Anyone who knew me as a camper knows that I practically lived on Hobbs Field. If I wasn’t on the ball field I was out on a crew shell. It’s not that I didn’t do Shop; I made my box, turned a bat my fourth year, and was a faithful apprentice under Alden Cadwell in his construction of the Hobbs Field scoreboard in 2001 and of the current dinghy fleet in 2003. But as much as I loved my time in the Shop, it was at baseball that I felt the most at home. For me, Hobbs Field was—and still is—a total comfort zone. So it should come as no surprise that last Saturday after closing up the Shop with Phil I bolted down Jacob’s Ladder to catch the last few innings of Senior League action.

As you may have inferred, returning to Pasquaney as a Shop counsellor was something that I was not comfortable with at first. It was something that pushed me outside of my comfort zone.

Comfort zones. Everyone’s got them. What’s inside of your comfort zone? Stuff that makes you happy, things you know how do to, things with which you’re familiar. We all tend to stay inside of our comfort zones as we live our lives. I mean, why else would they be called comfort zones? But reaching outside of one’s comfort zones—whether by choice or out of necessity—is a vital component of character development. Pasquaney forces us, at some point or another, to reach outside of our comfort zones and test ourselves, mentally, physically, and emotionally. Life beyond Pasquaney will do this to an even greater extent. The biggest difference between the “comfort zone-curveballs” that Pasquaney throws at you and those you have to face outside of camp is that, as Bill mentioned on Monday, here at Pasquaney you all are blessed to be members of perhaps the most compassionate and supportive community that you will ever know. I know that it’s hard for that not to sound cliché because it is said so often, but it’s the truth. If I had to choose one place in the world to take a risk, be vulnerable, and reach outside of my various comfort zones, Pasquaney would be it.

With that understanding, I want to challenge every single one of you to reach outside of your comfort zones this summer. As Briggs Anderson said here on Tree Talk six years ago, we all need to experience life outside of our “bubbles”, our areas of security, our blankets of protection. Why push our comfort zones? Why do things with which you don’t feel sure of yourself? We do these things because complacency in our comfort zones prevents us from fully growing as individuals. I’m challenging you all to test your comfort zones for your own benefit. Pasquaney offers itself as the ideal environment to do this. It’s all about trust—in yourself, in the people around you, and in what this community is trying to achieve. At Pasquaney, we have the optimal conditions for

pushing our comfort zones. Do it, test yourselves. Take a leadership role in a Kitchen duty. Give those activities you have never been to a shot. At circles, say what you've been wanting to say all summer but haven't had the guts to. That's what this community is for—it's for growing, maturing, learning more about yourself. Pushing our comfort-zones. Take one of Bobby Kennedy's more famous quotes: "Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly." Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly. Let that settle in your mind.

A big part of why I'm giving a Tree Talk on pushing one's comfort zones is because daring to fail was something I did little of as a camper. I still struggle with it. I believe it's a difficult thing for all of us, but I, in understanding myself, know am the kind of person that likes familiarity. I feel that at times I am satisfied with not necessarily achieving greatly. Mediocrity cuts it for me. And accordingly, when I want to step it up and give it that extra effort, trust me, it can take a lot of willpower. Looking back on my time as camper, I could probably count on one hand the number of unscheduled activity periods I spent doing something besides baseball, crew, or Shop. Furthermore, I feel like I could have pushed myself more both at activities and with regard to intangibles. Coming back this year on the council has been invigorating. Being back here at Pasquaney, I feel an emotional sense of well-being that can be difficult to achieve beyond the Hillside. I have had my comfort zones pushed, whether or not I wanted them to be. While I would love to have been down on Hobb's Field this summer as a baseball counsellor, I have enjoyed the challenges thrown at me as a Shop counsellor. Everyone's first year as a camper here is a major period of growth, learning and yes, even uncomfortable moments as you struggle to learn and understand a foreign community and a different way of living. Rich touched upon that in his Tree Talk. So far, my first year on the *council* has had plenty of those same moments of frustration but also of great satisfaction as I learn my new role here at Pasquaney. Maybe reaching outside of our comfort zones isn't so bad after all.

What's funny though, or a least maybe a little bit ironic, is that in the long run, Pasquaney is one big comfort zone for me. Yes, I have taken my risks here and had my moments of discouragement and anger, but overall, this is a place I understand. It's a place where I feel at home. The biggest thing I take away from my Pasquaney summers is a renewed confidence in myself and of the power and strength of community. That feeling strengthens my drive to push my comfort zones and fully live life. Taking risks and pushing the limits of your comfort zone will happen almost subconsciously here at Pasquaney. The same cannot be said of the rest of life. Enjoy the comfort and security of Pasquaney, but be willing to push yourself daily to become a better person. It's easy to become complacent—fight that urge, and the benefits you as individual will reap will amaze you.