

Bill MacInnis
“Struggling To Become Independent”
Tree Talk 07/09/07
Camp Pasquaney

I first came to this hillside when I was twelve. I was very excited and ready to go play. I was looking forward to baseball and all the fun activities. After awhile I realized there was more than just playing. I had to do duties and keep my stuff organized for inspections. I had to learn how to sweep and I had to do table duty. I hated this, it was too hard. I started getting mad, and questioning why we couldn't get vacuum cleaners, or janitors, or use weed killer on the baseball field. That year I was given the title of slowest table boy. It was a frustrating summer and I was not sure if I was ever going to return.

When I returned home things got even worse. My dad had started putting me to work on our cattle ranch. On weekends while my friends were home sleeping in until twelve and playing video games the rest of the day, I was woken up early to fix fences, herd cattle, and repair plumbing that had been frozen over night. When my dad asked me to go do something I'd ask for help. His response would be to go figure it out for myself. This usually resulted in me throwing a temper tantrum and storming off to go figure out what he wanted done. If he asked me to go find a tool it took five minutes instead of one. If he asked me to get the cows up to another pasture it took twice as long. If hay bails needed to be moved I was told to do it by myself, and often the strings would break and cause a huge mess. As the years progressed I began to conquer my dad's difficult tasks with great ease. Each time my dad would present me with new challenges. Work that used to be as simple as handing him tools, turned into me being the one to run the tractor. I learned to take on tasks without any fear. After being left to figure things out on my own, I began to memorize better the wrong way to do things and the right way to do them. As an old Chinese proverb goes, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime (Chinese proverb).” My dad realized that he could have babied me through the hard things, and I most likely would have zoned out or forgotten within a few minutes. By leaving me to do it by myself I learned how to fall, and pick myself up again. It was through multiple accounts of failure that I was able to develop a strategy for doing everything the right way. In my Pasquaney duties I slowly learned how to get the job done. I learned all the secrets to doing a quick and efficient duty. By my last year I was one of the fastest table boys. On my ranch I knew where every tool was kept, I learned how to work with livestock, and I built the muscles to throw hay bails. While my friends were home playing video games, I was out chasing cows. I was learning important life skills that would help me when I would have to approach the world on my own. I have come to learn that from every challenge that I have faced it has helped me grow stronger mentally and physically.

When I was younger and my dad left me to do ranch work by myself I'd get really mad. I messed a lot of things up and when he'd come in to see what I'd done I'd would start complaining and pointing out that I could use his help. His usual reply would be “what are you going to do when I'm not around?”

“What are you going to do when I'm not around?” Well, to be honest, I had never imagined a life without my parents. As far as I was concerned as much as he made me angry for working, I needed him and my mom every second. Same is true for every mentor in my life. As a camper I

couldn't begin to imagine walking up Jacob's ladder by myself, that's what I had Jack around for so I could be carried up. This concept came as a real shocker to me as I realized that I had to soon learn to do things on my own for the rest of my life. The same can be said about Pasquaney duties. They really do serve a purpose in giving us practice for picking up simple tasks such as sweeping. Inspection prep puts us on a good path in keeping a manageable living space. It is an unfortunate fact that some day our parents will no longer be around to pick up after us, or do the things in life that we take for granted.

I hope that by now some of you have realized the purposes of this camp. We come here every summer and hopefully have a great time. We have all these fun activities but that is not the big picture, that is not what has kept this place alive for one hundred and thirteen years. There is a purpose for duties, notchpost expeditions, and hikes days. We as councilors hope that by the end of this summer you are able to leave here with some new ways of approaching the outside world. We push you and make you do things you may not want to do. In some expeditions we make you the campers do all the work, and it may seem like we are not doing anything. However, much like my dad did for me I hope that you know that we are here for you. We will be there to catch you when you fall and pick you back up. It is much like lifting weights. We will spot you, but if you want to get stronger, you have to lift the weight yourself.

So every time you think that you are facing some difficult task, just think about how good it will be for your own benefit. It is through failure that we are able to learn, we have to continue to keep picking ourselves up. While at camp you will break down many times. Things may not always be fun. But I hope that you come to appreciate that this is a safe environment to practice falling, because we have the love and support from friends and councilors.

Finally do not be afraid to pick others up. I still face many struggles today. I wish that I could say that I have grown independent. But none of us will ever be perfect. I've received so much support from this council and community. When things are going well for you, do not forget those times when you struggled, and help those who are following in your footsteps.