



THE CONISTON CHRONICLE

THE NEWSLETTER FOR CAMP CONISTON CAMPERS, STAFF AND ALUMNI • SPRING 2006

DONOR FOCUS:

The Hortons— Coniston is a Family Affair

Judy Horton and son Sherm are two people whose lives are woven into the Coniston Experience—three generations of family who have enriched Camp Coniston, and whose active support continues today.

Sherm Horton:
Camper, Staff, Parent,
Webmaster, www.coniston.org



The Horton family's Coniston story goes back to 1963, to the purchase of our current location from the Dudley family. Judy Horton's brother-in-law was involved in that purchase, and he sent his young daughter to Camp; that daughter is Catherine Johnson Abetti, Coniston board member!

Judy says that "Catherine took to camp like a fish to water", and soon after, Judy's own son Sherm joined his cousin at camp followed by Horton siblings Andrew, Sally and Thomas. Like many Coniston staff Sherm made his way through the ranks, starting as a camper in 1972, CIT in '77, and Senior Counselor in '80. Sherm describes his summers as a

Coniston counselor as the best job you could have at that age! In 1984 Sherm was asked to become CIT Director, a position he still cherishes.

Lifelong relationships also began for Sherm when he met Lynn Hunter, a fellow staff member at Coniston; ten years later in September 1990, they were married.

Together they are raising their own family of campers—Bradford, a four-year Coniston camper, and Walker and Hayley, soon to be summer campers at Coniston.



ONE CAMPING FAMILY! SHERM, LYNN, HAYLEY AND BRADFORD HORTON RELAXING ON THE PORCH

Today Sherm is responsible for design and maintenance of the Coniston website, www.coniston.org, a donation that John Tilley describes as an enormous contribution. Sherm's investment of time and expertise keep the Coniston Experience in the thoughts of campers year round, and he views the website as a key connection between Camp and its community. The website is constructed so JD can change pictures almost daily from the office, even during winter. Along with the "camper forum" this daily update keeps alumni and campers hanging out at Coniston.org to see what's coming next.

"Coniston is a family experience" Sherm says, "that sense of family, like the first time your parents drive you into camp and leave ... that sense that you're in a place where you have the ability to take risks, but in a safe atmosphere ... risks like getting up on stage and doing a

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A Publication of
YMCA CAMP CONISTON
for Campers, Alumni
and Staff

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Director's 2¢



I've learned a lot since coming to Coniston, and managing a great YMCA summer camp is not what I once thought it was.

For the past three decades camp management professionals looked at camps and thought they needed to be

open year-round—if it's good for eight weeks, think how great it'll be for 52! Camps around the country spent a large amount of money tearing down structures steeped in tradition, and building winterized facilities usually out of cinderblock with no traditional camp feeling.

New Hampshire's cold winters and relatively small population kept Coniston from going this route. When I first visited camp I couldn't believe it was not winterized. I now realize that Coniston is incredibly fortunate to have not demolished our traditional buildings to make way for the 'cinder-blockhouse' look.

There were many major structures in the camp, many of which were icons, which were allowed to slip into disrepair over 50 years, even before our Y bought the camp. Some were in such disrepair it was difficult to envision them once again serving the camp population in a useful manner.

Now we're in the process of saving one of the most important of those classic buildings at Camp—the old Dining Hall. After we moved the Maintenance Shop and opened up the front, we knew the next project would be to transform a building in neglected shape into a centerpiece—a showplace that Camp will use and be proud of for generations.

I've learned how important it is to preserve those icons at Camp ... and how valuable the support of an engaged board of directors and a committed camp community is to keeping our structure intact and growing. We're asking for your support ... and we hope you'll make Coniston a priority this year. —J

Land Purchase Update ...

We're very thankful to have received strong interest in our Winter 05-06 *Coniston Chronicle* article concerning the developable property overlooking camp. We are still actively seeking to purchase the property, and many concerned Coniston community members have contacted us asking, "How can we help?" Soon we will be asking people to help both organize and purchase the property.

Those who have contacted us understand the need to protect Camp's boundaries and security. But some have asked about possible uses if the land is purchased.

This parcel has an incredible 360-degree view of the surrounding lakes and mountains—one of the very few in the region—which would make an outstanding site for overnights, retreats and campouts. But beyond that, there are many uses for which this ideal location would be potentially suited:

- A site to establish a day camp (a valuable addition which, in this location, would not impact on the operation of resident camp.)
- A site to establish a second resident camp.
- A year-round conference center.
- An expansion of our Adventure Camp program into a larger-scale operation.

Two things that seem contradictory generated these program possibilities—the regular presence of our wait list, and the general belief

DONOR FOCUS:

... continued from page 1

skit ... it teaches you how to take creative chances, not to limit yourself to the 'rules' of what you're asked to do. If I didn't have those experiences at Camp, I probably would never have had them."

Sherm says his "take-aways" from Coniston are "a community, a relationship with an impact on my entire life ... if I had to order the associations I've had, beginning with the best, Camp would be first on the list."

Judy Horton: Parent, Board Member, Donor



Judy describes herself as an "independent traveler—I have a map of the world with pins in it!" ... markers for her many trips around the globe. But between journeys she's been a steady presence at Camp over the past 34 years, with more than twenty years of service on Coniston's board of directors.

She says her role on the board was "to present ideas, concepts, critiques, things to try ... to get people thinking", and she has been recognized for her long service in the naming of the Horton Memorial Pavilion.

Judy has seen countless kids, including her own, come up through the ranks at Coniston, and she values the satisfaction they've gained through the process. "I've watched them mature, gain new confidence, really come out of their shells. Sherm's passion for camp has grown through the years, and Thomas has nurtured a love for kids through much of his career."

She also credits Family Camp as an important part of the Coniston experience, an after-season program where

families stay for a week in their own cabin, with all meals provided by Camp. "It's a wonderful vacation with all Camp activities included ... a wonderful way to introduce kids to camp in a totally non-threatening way, very safe and secure with your own family." Judy



A QUIET SUMMER MOMENT FOR JUDY AND GRANDSON WALKER

still comes back to Family Camp to "touch base with Camp again ... Coniston is a kind of revisiting of that nostalgic experience — and also an education to me in how a good, successful camp is run."

Judy "wants to forward this experience to other kids," and as in the past, she sponsors two CIT Camperships to Coniston, this year as a fifteenth anniversary wedding gift to Sherm and Lynn — "a gesture to their happy marriage, and to having connected here at Coniston."

Judy's gift of two CIT camperships carries on the Coniston Experience to every camper. Our incredible summer staff is what makes camp magical, and most staff are trained in the CIT program. Judy's gift in her family's name ensures the CIT program is available to all, and continues our enjoyment of the entire summer experience. —

THE HORTON PAVILION:

A Well-Deserved Recognition



JUDY WITH HUSBAND SHERM JR. AT THE DEDICATION OF THE HORTON PAVILION

After serving the needs of YMCA Camp Coniston as a parent, supporter and longtime Board member, the Horton Pavilion was dedicated in Judy's honor in the summer of 2001.

Over three decades and three Directors, Judy's vision of what Coniston should be impacted the lives of thousands of youth at Camp. Judy was instrumental in bringing Nancy Larue to direct the Camp from 1991 to 1999. Under Nancy, the camp's programs became even more productive, and entered a phase that directly led to today's success.



We're happy to report that Camp is in very healthy condition, and our financial audit for the year 2005 demonstrates both financial and organizational health for Coniston. As a non-profit, money above and beyond our operating costs is turned back into camp for facilities and program improvements. For 2005, Camp Coniston had gross revenues exceeding \$1.6 million (fees and donations included), with all funds returned directly to camp support.

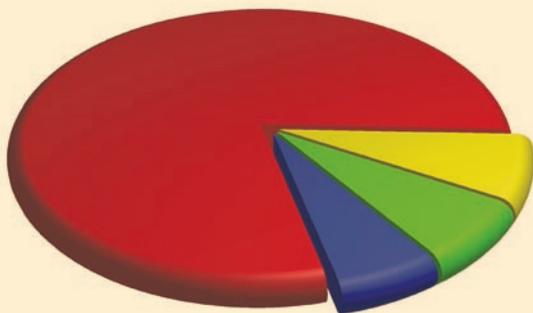
One of our most important and meaningful sources of revenue are donations from individuals, businesses and alumni. Coniston has demonstrated a steady increase in charitable donations, growing from approximately \$3,000 in 1999 to almost \$116,000 in 2005.

Because Coniston is program fee based, the number of special programs and Camperships we can provide is a direct reflection on the amount of money we are able to raise. Programs such as Camp Winning Spirit, our camp for children with cancer and their families, can only expand through an increase in donations. Also, the improvements to our facilities and programs directly reflect gifts made to camp. —

2005 Revenues

(fees & donations included)

Total \$1,648,000



- **Summer Programs \$1,309,000**
- **After-School Programs \$125,000**
- **Gifts and Donations \$116,000**
- **Other Programs Pre/Post \$98,000**

FIGURES ROUNDED TO NEAREST \$1000

2005 Capital & Facilities Highlights

- *Infirmery*—The central section was completely renovated to provide a more comfortable work area and a more presentable space for parents. Interior also painted.
- *Office Porch*—Possibly the most noticeable improvement, this was added to the office and provides places to gather and wait for program changes.
- *Loon*—Complete interior and structural renovation providing a winterized location for staff and summer housing. Without immediate attention this building would have continued to deteriorate and have to be demolished.
- *Old Kitchen/Lodge*—Covered dish-return windows with pine boards, removed old stove and vents, new floor in old kitchen. Provided inspiration for 2006 major project.
- *Robin's Nest Chimney*—the next in a continuing line of masonry projects; four existing chimneys remaining.
- *Darkroom*—removed from Robin's Nest and bathroom/shower put in place.
- *Signage*—New hand-made signs around camp, including sailing board, canoeing, office signs, directional signs from I-89, entrance signs, and numerous quotes.
- *New docks*—for use on overnights in conjunction with the war canoes. Put in place at Flume, Loon, Trigger, Gazebo, and an extension for the water ski dock.
- *Sidewalks* leading from the parking area to the office and to the entrance of the Dining Hall were installed.
- *Landscaping*—tree replacement continued along the driveway into camp, and a lawn service was hired to increase the field quality in camp and on the A field.
- *Frisbee Golf*—a new nine-hole Frisbee Golf course was designed by alumni Gordy Adell and built by summer staff and Catherine Johnson-Abetti.
- *Sound Tiles* for Dining Hall were installed to cut the reverb, making meals more tolerable.
- *Laundry Porch* was constructed to continue the X theme from the front of the Lodge and office.
- *Basketball Courts and Goals* were refinished and upgraded for use by summer program. The goals had not been upgraded in several decades.
- *Cardboard Compactor* was purchased to use at the dining hall. Cardboard pickup is available free of charge from Sysco. Trash disposal is a cost that has risen in recent years and cardboard represents more than half of the volume of disposed items from the kitchen. We will realize significant savings via reduced fees in the upcoming years.
- Painting Contracted painting was performed on Robin's Nest, Loon, Office front, Girl's College, and Girl's Vespers ring.
- *Other projects and purchases from 2005*: CIT Project/Horse trail; Stage Curtain; War Canoes; Planet Walk and Sundial; Bleachers; Started Girl's College; Demolish "Scary House".

The Lodge is a cherished structure but the adjacent Old Dining Hall has slowly fallen into disrepair, leaving us all to wonder about its fate. When the maintenance shop was moved to the new location and its site transformed into green play space, the Old Dining Hall became even more visible ... but how could we use it best?

After examining this rambling building, originally built in the 1920's, we realized the basic structure and space was sound ... but the interior needed massive work. Interior walls had to be moved and relocated, finish floors installed, new wiring completed, two different levels inside the building made to work together ... an enormous task.



The Spokes Living Room and Stage-Dance Lounge
(191)

At first it looked like the building would have to be torn down, but through a deeper understanding of what we wanted to happen here at Camp,

the Old Dining Hall has been saved, transformed into a showplace for the arts.

Over the past few summers Coniston's drama program has experienced a renaissance. These staff direct campers in elaborate plays, complete with multiple scenes, set changes and lighting. In part of the former kitchen, drama now has a dedicated construction shop where theater sets can be planned and built. We've also removed unused kitchen appliances to create an arts and crafts facility, and a darkroom for photography. The oldest part of the old dining hall has been transformed into a room with spaces for dance and singers' rehearsals as well as a lounge. There are now "barn doors" that separate the main area of the structure into smaller rooms, or open up the center room into a massive hall that could hold the Camp's entire summer population. This is a true arts center for Coniston!

The Old Dining Hall will be completed by this summer. —*RS*

"A Showplace for the Arts!"

Saving The Old Dining Hall



WORK IN THE OLD KITCHEN (THAT WAS SERVING AS ARTS AND CRAFTS SPACE) JUST BEFORE THE RENOVATION BEGAN.



AN EVENING ACTIVITY IN THE PAVILION WITH THE ENTIRE CAMP IN ATTENDANCE ... LOOK HOW CROWDED IT WAS! THE 'NEW' OLD DINING HALL WILL BE MUCH MORE SPACIOUS.



AN ALMOST-COMPLETE SECTION OF THE OLD DINING HALL WHICH WILL BE USED FOR DANCE CLASSES.

Land Purchase Update ... *cont'd from pg 3*

that Camp shouldn't be much larger. (In other words, there are always campers waiting to get in, but most people don't want Camp bigger than it is.) If Camp decides to serve more children and families, this property would be ideally suited and would not impact our current programs. Due to this pressure we are looking to further the mission

of Camp—"creating experiences that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all."

We have been presented with the opportunity to make this move, and we're now in the process of negotiation. In the meantime, we're compiling a list of people who are interested in the project. Please join the many Conistonians who have already contacted us; we'll keep you up to date!

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→ **Coniston** A CONTINUING SERIES
History: ~~~~~

In This Issue:

**"How the Loon
Became Coniston's
Symbol"**

Many of us at Coniston have heard the cry of the loons across the lake, that wavering call over the water during summer mornings and evenings. Loons have become a fairly common sight on the lakes and ponds of New Hampshire — but it wasn't so long ago that the loons we see so frequently now were almost driven out of our region.



GAVIA IMMER, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE COMMON LOON, SHOWING JUST ONE OF THEIR MANY DISTINCTIVE FEATURES — THEIR RED EYES

Each summer the same pair returns to the same safe and secluded lake to build their nest close to the water's edge. Loons are very loyal and are thought to mate for life. The adult birds stay close to the young, often carrying them on their backs as they swim around the lake.

At the low point during the 1970's, the 900 lakes and ponds in New Hampshire hosted as few as 10 pairs of

Loons. Throughout these low years, Loons continued to nest on Lake Coniston. The generations of those birds flew out of our valley to repopulate not only the Northeast but also the entire continent.

All Loons require one thing to stay healthy and thrive—clean water. But during the 1970s it was a different story. Lakes and rivers in the United States were badly polluted — so polluted that a few actually caught on fire. At one point the EPA stated two-thirds of the country's lakes, rivers and coastal waters had become unsafe for fishing or swimming.

In response to this, in 1972, the Clean Water Act was enacted into law, requiring cities, towns and industries to “clean up their act’.” And it worked—water quality steadily improved, and many species that were close to extinction have come back and flourished. The loon is one of them and the Bald Eagle and the Osprey are others.

All of these factors led to staff and campers having increased awareness of just how incredibly special the Loons on Lake Coniston were.

These characteristics make Loons the perfect symbol of our loyalty to each other, and the beauty of our camp.

Through the 1980's the Loon slowly came to symbolize camp and was used in the formal logo in 1994. →



LOONS ARE EXCELLENT SWIMMERS — THEY CAN DIVE UP TO 90 FEET DEEP AND STAY SUBMERGED FOR MANY MINUTES WHILE HUNTING FOR FISH.

In The Next Issue:

How Coniston Became One of the Largest Camps in the US

A Link to the Past ...

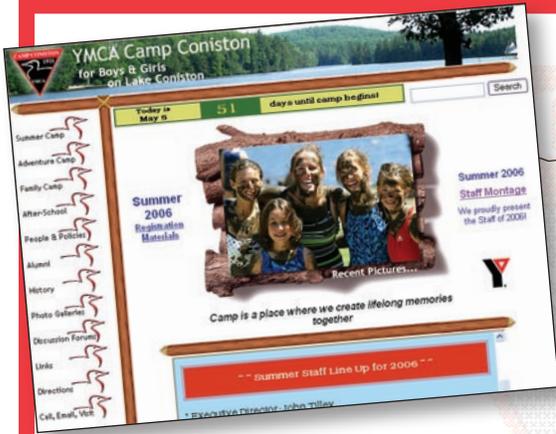
The New Camp Coniston "On-Line Family Tree"

Announcing the newest way to connect everyone together in the Coniston community ... our "On-Line Family Tree"! We're building this exciting project right now — an electronic connection of old and new friends at Camp Coniston, in preparation for our 100th Anniversary coming up soon.

Our On-Line Family Tree will start with an email to the Coniston community, asking you when you were here, where you lived, what jobs you worked at for the summer, and what you did while you were at Camp. Those answers will be sent back to our website, www.Coniston.org, which will link them all together and build a Coniston Family Tree showing all the connections!

Together, our community members will be able to 'rebuild' past staffs and cabin groups, and find old friends. And you might get to make some new friends as well — our On-Line Family Tree will also link high school and college graduates together, so you can see how you're connected there too.

We're hard at work completing this exciting project, and we hope to have it ready as summer begins. Be sure to check in frequently at www.Coniston.org ... find out how you can "join the Family"! —



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