



camp
the

coniston chronicle



THE NEWSLETTER FOR YMCA CAMP CONISTON CAMPERS, STAFF, ALUMNI AND FRIENDS • WINTER 2010



Berta Sinclair — Coming Home

Meet our Centennial Coordinator

When Berta was approached about the Centennial Coordinator position, she knew immediately this was the opportunity for her. "I just couldn't say no! To be a part of this historic event and to come 'home' is truly special for me."

In her role as Centennial Coordinator, one of her primary responsibilities is planning a weekend-long celebration in June of 2011 to honor our 100 years of camp and celebrate our future; and she has lots on tap for 2011!

What's in store

The celebration kicks off on Friday, June 17th with a

Centennial Gala that includes dinner and a live auction. Saturday brings plenty of camp activities as you once

knew them (including vespers, fireworks, and campfire!), as well as tours, dedications, and live performances. Sunday will bring a peaceful end to the weekend at a traditional chapel with our alumni and friends.

Berta's role will continue throughout the summer as she will work with our Program Directors to link special anniversary themes into each camp session.

"There will be over 1000 alumni and friends in and out of camp during the course of the celebration weekend, and we'll carry the celebration on throughout the year. There are so many elements and pieces to put in place in a short amount of time... but it's exciting! I can't wait to see it all come together!"

CONT'D ON PG 3



1995 – second year at Camp ... Berta and her buds!

CHANGING · LIVES · FOR · A · CENTURY



YMCA CAMP CONISTON
ANNOUNCES OUR
CENTENNIAL
CELEBRATION

JUNE 17, 18
& 19, 2011

SAVE THE DATES!



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT • FOR HEALTHY LIVING • FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



THE CONISTON CHRONICLE

A Publication of
YMCA CAMP CONISTON

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Our Past, Our Children's Future

I've been spending lots of time "in the dust" lately ... ! Along with JD, Berta and other Camp staff, I've been reviewing the huge volume of records from Camp's founding to the present.

There is a lot of dusty stuff to go through, but also some real gems of Coniston history ... an incredible book of early photographs that we're restoring (some showing bears and elephants visiting Camp — wait till you see *these!*), and a wonderful old brochure with a wealth of detail.

But we don't have very much material from 1911 to 1932 — the formative history of Coniston — and we've done a lot of research to develop an account of those early years (*see the pg7 History article.*)

One thing that came through to me so clearly was the *vision* of our founders — a diverse group of the country's most important individuals, bound together by a shared belief ... the **social good** of the youth of our country.

This was a hugely important part of our national thinking ... that people from all walks of life — industrialists, artists, philanthropists and politicians alike — had a *responsibility* to improve the social well-being of our nation. So much real good

Director's 2¢

came from that movement that's still at work today.

But, after all the research, here's the image that stays with me — our nation's most important persons, leading a small group of kids out into a newly-formed bird sanctuary in the woods of NH ... sleeping in canvas tents, doing nature study, canoeing, hiking — an unheard-of concept at the time!

But they were all focused on a single goal ... the *social good* of those local kids, for the betterment of their future lives.

We are proud to be a part of that impressive Coniston history, where caring, respect, honesty, and responsibility are traits that become a part of every camper who passes through our doors. Together we honor the vision of our founding history, so we can bring you more ... for the next 100 years.



ConistonHistory:

"So it was there, under the tall white pines in Meriden, in the first bird sanctuary in the world, led by some of the most well-known artists of the time, that our Camp came to be."

FROM THE "CONISTON HISTORY"
ARTICLE ON PG 7

more

independence learning
self-reliance caring

togetherness SELF-ESTEEM confidence acceptance

giving faith kindness determination

laughter responsibility growth honesty

honor skill awareness community strength

insight love respect courage maturity leadership

PATIENCE friendship FUN!

... for the next 100 years!



YMCA CAMP CONISTON • CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
JUNE 17TH - 19TH 2011 • PLEASE JOIN US!

Berta Sinclair ...

CONT'D FROM PG 1

Why come back to Coniston?

Berta started as a camper in 1994 and instantly felt connected. She became a respected staff member (for 8 years!), West Coast CIT



1999 — Abby and Berta on staff together

Director and Program Director; and also returns every Labor Day weekend to be a part of Camp Winning Spirit, a Coniston program that has special significance to her.

“Coniston has been a catalyst for so many things in my life. Not only did I find a welcoming community and lifelong friendships, I also found my passion for working with youth.”

Berta continued to work with youth throughout her career, having worked as an AmeriCorps volunteer, Physical Education Director, and most recently as the Day Camp Director at the MetroWest YMCA in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. The experiences she had and skills she learned at Coniston proved to be invaluable in her position there, managing a program that serves over 700 children a day.

“I am a product of Coniston, and that is something I am proud of and have carried with me both personally and professionally. Coming back just feels right.”



2010 — Beth, Berta and JD in fine form at Camp Winning Spirit

We are thrilled to have Berta return to Coniston. We hope that her story inspires you to reacquaint yourself with Camp. Please join us in welcoming her and supporting her efforts to bring us all together again in June.



WE INVITE YOU TO CELEBRATE WITH US!

YMCA Camp Coniston Centennial Celebration *June 17th, 18th & 19th, 2011*

Friday June 17th: Centennial Gala

- ▼ Dinner and Live Auction — Tickets on sale in early 2011

Saturday June 18th: Open House and Reunion

- ▼ Open Activities — sailing, tennis, arts and crafts, archery, swimming, canoeing, hikes around the lake, s'mores, climbing tower, bog walk, kayaking and much more!
- ▼ Camp Tours and Photo Slide Shows
- ▼ Silent Auction and Live Performances (including Nancy Tucker!)
- ▼ Awards and Dedications
- ▼ Vespers, Campfire, and Fireworks

Sunday June 19th: Traditional Chapel Service

Ways You Can Help and Stay Informed:

- ▼ Contact other Camp alumni (campers and staff) and spread the word!
- ▼ Check the Camp website regularly for up to date information. www.coniston.org.
- ▼ Send an email to Centennial Coordinator, Berta Sinclair with your address and contact information for Centennial mailings and information. (berta@coniston.org).
- ▼ Become a “Friend” of YMCA Camp Coniston on Facebook. (www.facebook.com)
- ▼ **Slide Show Pictures!** Please email attached Camp photos to Jen Deasy (JD) or mail us a CD. We have plenty of pictures from the 2000's but we're really looking for pictures from the 90's, 80's, 70's, 60's or earlier, from Coniston, Interlaken or Soangetaha eras. Limit 5 pictures per person. (jen@coniston.org)
- ▼ **Donate Archive Items!** We are hoping to expand our Camp archives and need your help. If you are willing to part with any camp memorabilia, artifacts, etc. we would love to preserve them as a part of Camp history. Items from Soangetaha, Interlaken and the early Coniston years are most desirable. If you have an item to donate, please contact Berta Sinclair (berta@coniston.org).

We are expecting over 1000 alumni, friends and guests over the course of the Celebration weekend. Registration and lodging information will be made available in January 2011.



summer 2010!

Reminiscing about hot & sunny 2010!

Campers arrived with excitement... unloading their cars on the A-field, getting cabin assignments ... Hey wait, B-13??? Yep, Boys Camp discovered that the cabins were renumbered because the dilapidated B-7 & B-8 cabin that was attached in the middle was now gone ... and 3 new cabins existed! We have a new B-1 over by the Boys Director Cabin, and 2 new cabins up by the boys' college for the youngest campers (B-9 & B-8).

The traditions we love!

Every summer we share special traditions, no matter what session we attend ... like flag raising, dancing in the dining hall, ringing the bell, check-in boating tests, overnights, talent shows, vespers, chapel, Sweet T-shirt Day, cabin clean up, ice cream socials ... and to wrap

everything up, campfires, candlelight, fireworks and CABIN PARTIES! These events tie every camper and staffer from every session together.

We also have unique events during our own session that we remember vividly and love telling stories about! Let's reminisce on some of those amazing events that we fondly remember and will continue to tell stories about 10 years down the road! Some of our favorites were the **Nancy Tucker concert** on main lawn, **Friday Fun Day Dance Party** in front of the Program Office, and great programs like **Toy Story**, **Alice in Wonderland** and **National Treasure!** We enjoyed the hot, sunny weather with lots of sprinklers and slip & slides!

A new special guest!

In Arts & Crafts we had a guest artist, **Annie Bailin**, who led us in making 3 new murals which campers had a hand in creating! We have amazing talent in our





campers, and we hope they continue to explore all their creativity at home.

Our Chapel themes this year were **Dreams, Life/New Beginnings, Family** and **Friendship**. The **Coniston Singers** did amazing songs each session. The Session 3 audience got teary and sentimental when **Will Short & John Tilley** sang "Father and Daughter" by Paul Simon.

We fondly remember the many campers who spoke from the heart in front of everyone, like **Ryan Hall, Jonathan Kirshenbaum, Jacques Klapisch, Katie Marsh** and **Maddie Michaud**. There were so many more unlisted brave participants — thank you all for making chapel extraordinary!

We all know it ... you're the best!

Special thanks to all of the summer staff — what an amazing year. You don't think it can get better than this, yet each year we prove that statement wrong!

You were a team that worked hard, loved each other, and loved the campers. Your excitement was

contagious and it was easy to see how much you loved your jobs.

On the surface, people think that being a camp counselor means playing all day and getting a great tan ... but Coniston Staff know differently. The job is fun, yet serious ... where everything we do is intentional and purposeful.

Our goal is to create a community of energy, acceptance, growth and fun. Sometimes that means being a friend, a parent ... or even a nurse! There are many roles that staff take on and grow from. Why do we do it? Because caring for people, working to help children build confidence, and creating a camp family is inexplicably rewarding.

Can't wait till next year!

Thanks everyone for a great 2010! Next year we'll be part of history ... celebrating our 100-Year-Anniversary! See you then!

JD





How Camp Was Founded

Coniston's archives are stored in a small room filled with dusty papers and books — packed on shelves and shoved into boxes. They document the combined experiences of thousands of Campers over the past 100 years. Amongst the dust, many of our own names can be found.

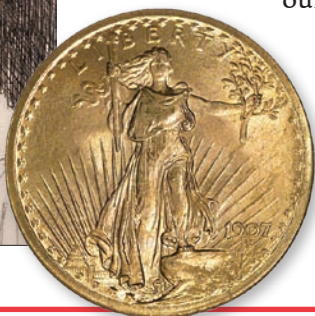
But who was first? Who made Camp possible for you and me ... and why? Most of the records from 1911 and the first years of Camp are lost. Piecing together the parts is like working on a jigsaw puzzle. But the pieces we have provide a vivid picture of that first year.

If you look, the answers to many questions are here — Who made Camp happen? Where did Camp start? And most importantly ... Why did Camp begin?

Who? It all began with a group very important artists — among them painter Maxfield Parish; sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens who created the Liberty Dollar coin; and author Winston Churchill, who wrote the book *Coniston*, for which our Camp was named. They were all involved in a local artist colony which was visited by several US Presidents, but they were also interested in **social good** — an important concept at the time.



Sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens, and his famous "Liberty Dollar" coin



But they weren't alone. In neighboring Newport and Claremont, large cotton mills were built to take advantage of the waterfalls on the Sugar River, and they relied upon local farm girls as their primary source of labor.

The parents of the local farm girls were convinced to allow daughters to work in the mills because mill owners promised to assist in the moral development of their employees. With these thoughts in mind, the mill owners supported the formation of a YMCA.

Where? There is a central figure who connects the artists and the mill owners with the rural youngsters — Charles Alden Tracy, Principal of Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, NH.



Charles Alden Tracy, at Kimball Union Academy

Tracy was a very busy man in 1911. During that year, he helped to found a Bird Sanctuary adjacent to the Academy ... the very

first in the world. Additionally, his work as Principal of KUA led him to become a pioneer in working for "civic and rural betterment" with the boys working on the farms. Combining his knowledge of people with his enthusiasm for "community education", Tracy lent his name and efforts to founding our YMCA on February 8, 1911.

It will come as no surprise that, within six months, the Young Men's Christian Association (now YMCA Camp Coniston) and Kimball Union Academy would

lead groups of boys to the Bird Sanctuary for what was described as a "week of real inspiration."

So it was there under the tall white pines in Meriden, in the first bird sanctuary in the world, led by some of the most well-known artists of the time, that our Camp came to be.

Why? The reason Camp came to be was due to the concept of **social good**. Here is what our founders wrote in the 1919 brochure: "In the heart of every normal growing boy and girl there is an irrepressible desire for life in the open, where they may sleep in tents, row, fish, swim, hike it over the hills to their hearts' content. These are days in which we must take more than the usual good care of our young people. Theirs will be a big and important work to do in the future and we must help to make them ready. Life at Soangetaha is more than a pleasant vacation — it is a school of good citizenship."



The original brochure for Camp Soangetaha, from the year 1919



Governor Lynch Honors Rolf Gesen

Congratulations to **Rolf Gesen**, who received a Commendation from New Hampshire Governor John Lynch in honor of three decades of dedication and service to Camp Coniston! Rolf was a camper and staff member in the 1970s and 80s; currently serves on our Board of Directors; and was Chairman of the Board from 2002 thru July 2010. Rolf's leadership has been instrumental in broadening our fundraising efforts, and our facilities and programs have benefited tremendously from his support and enthusiasm.

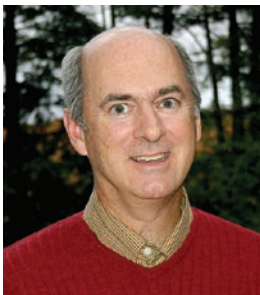


The Gesen Family proudly shows off Rolf's award ... left to right, Hollis, Hannah, Rolf, Stuart, Izzy, and Clark

Rolf passed on his love of Camp to his entire family, as his wife Stuart has been a camp nurse for

two years, and his four children have attended as campers and as counselors. They live in Hopkinton, NH, which is lucky for us because we get to see them in the off season! Thank you, Rolf!!

New Coniston Board Chair Elected



John Calcutt of Fairfield, CT has been elected as Chairman of the Board of YMCA Camp Coniston, effective in August of this year. John has been connected to Coniston for over ten years, as his four children have been long-term

campers and staff. Having attended summer camp in West Virginia, John knew he wanted his own children to one day share the experience; and it was because of their positive experiences here at Camp that he decided to join our Board. As a partner with Ernst and Young, he looks forward to bringing his financial skills and working with year round staff, to help keep camp affordable, keep our facilities up to date, and maintain enriching, enjoyable program-

ming for campers. We are happy to have him in this new role on the Board, and look forward to years of success under his leadership.

Conistonians Head to the Rockies

Several of our year-round staff, and John Calcutt, Board Chair, attended a week-long conference in Estes



Park, Colorado, in celebration of 125 years of YMCA camping. John Tilley served on the National Planning Committee, and gave three successful seminars on aspects of camp management. Our gang also networked with other camps across the country, bringing home lots of great information and ideas ... the group even managed to fit in some fun on the trip!

Hypertherm of Hanover Builds "Bridges for Kids" at Camp

We are so grateful to Hypertherm of Hanover, NH, who sent twenty employees to volunteer and help spruce up Camp! New planks were laid on the Bog Walk; bridges were replaced on the trail around the lake; and the Boys' Overnight campsite was spruced up and repaired.

Located in Hanover NH, Hypertherm designs and manufactures advanced plasma cutting systems for a variety of industries. The company has a strong core value of social responsibility — employees are provided with paid time-off to volunteer for local organizations, to create and model positive change. Thank you Hypertherm ... we'll be walking our trails with confidence this summer!



Pictured here are some of Hypertherm's employees (one of whom is a camper parent!) who made our Camp improvements happen.



the happiest of holidays!!



FROM ALL OF
YOUR FRIENDS AT
YMCA CAMP CONISTON
See You at the Centennial in June!

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