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American Camping Association®

# THE BIRCH BARK

P.O. Box 148, Waterford, Maine 04088

Winter: (207) 741-2930 Summer: (207) 583-4478

[birchrock@birchrock.org](mailto:birchrock@birchrock.org) [www.birchrock.org](http://www.birchrock.org)

Rich Deering '73, Alumni Director • Michael Mattson '83, Camp Director

## THE ALUMNI NEWS LETTER OF BIRCH ROCK CAMP

### UP CLOSE WITH JOHN EATON, 1936 -38 by Rich Deering



John and Martha Eaton

If you are a veteran Birch Rocker and have spent any time in Waterford, Maine, you will get to know John Eaton. He's everywhere. One can find him at the Post Office, leading the war veterans at the town's annual July 4th Parade or you can just find him with his beloved wife of 57 years, Martha Stockwell Eaton on Johnston Rd. John Eaton is a gentleman who is proud of his family, community, and country. He and I had a chance to capture his BRC experience at the 85th Reunion in August and this fall:

#### Q: How did you discover Birch Rock Camp?

*I grew up in Winchester, MA. The Stones were our neighbors and friends and they introduced me to Birch Rock Camp and the Brewster Family from their association with the Country Day School and Dartmouth College. They were wonderful people who helped pay my way. We went to Portland by train where the camp met us at Union Station.*

#### Q: What do you remember the most about your time at BRC?

*We had some wonderful trips. We went to Richardson Lake, camping out where we had back packs and the counselors did some great cooking. We loved fishing and going into the woods to find things. It was a very desolate place. Canoeing was a challenging and fun experience.*

*At camp, we did riflery, archery, swimming but we didn't play baseball because Chief said "we could do that at home." Campfire we sang songs and did skits. We walked up and down the hills and could sign-up daily to do different activities each day. My brother and I used to ride horses up the road by Springer Farm.*

#### Q: What about the people of Birch Rock in the 1930s?

*Chef Albert was wonderful. He was always feeding some samples he had just made from the kitchen – especially his popovers. Onie was a very sweet lady. Miss Sheehy was the nurse. Buck Hard ran the trips and he was a great guy. Chief Brewster was so powerful and "in charge." The Brewsters were just great camp people. It was an impressive group of individuals. Many went on to do great things for others.*

#### Q: How did you come back to Waterford, Maine?

*I met my wife Martha in 1953. Her family had a summer home here on Keoka Lake. When I found that she had a place in Waterford I said to myself "that's the girl for me...." so I was in sense returning to another camp. We married in 1954 and retired here full-time in 1988. My family and our children just love it here.*

**Q: What would you tell future generations about BRC?** It is a great place, one of the greatest experiences of my lifetime. We've had some of our dearest friends from BRC: George Brett, Jean Hard & Dan Queale, the Stone Family and so many others. It was a wonderful experience for me and my brother.....and it doesn't change when you go back to visit!



John Eaton



# REFLECTIONS FROM THE ROCK



By Rich Deering, Alumni Director '73 –

Each morning post our breakfast meal in the Main Lodge, the staff briefly “huddles-up” to review the highlights of the forthcoming day and address any community concerns. Together, we capture the prevailing moments of team mentoring in making a daily difference. We listen. We learn. We reach out to help each other strive to be the best for each other

and the community at large.....and we collectively close circling and in unison by saying: I AM IN!

The 85th Celebration of Birch Rock Camp was a historic and fun celebration of reuniting campers, staff, families of yesteryear with today’s extraordinary community stewards. There were some great surprise returns of veterans from the Mid-Atlantic, the Carolinas and beyond the Mississippi. We also had a number of new Birch Rock families join us for the birthday celebration and learn more about the unique history of the camp. Thanks to all who made the trip back to East Waterford, and to those who wrote, called, emailed and just kept the kindred spirits of BRC within their hearts.

In this fall edition of the **BIRCH BARK**, we are sharing one local alumnus’ fond recollections of the camp’s past and also one of our current camper’s most recent experiences on Lake McWain. Additionally, we have another BRC historical story by Donna Jarvis about Charles & Dorothy Downs, who were both counselors in the 1930s . Donna was a lifelong friend and employee of the Downs and was inspired to share her piece of character history after hearing about BRC for decades. Finally, we are also sharing a piece from our Parent Council on the value of 7 Weeks at the Rock. In the age of technology, instant gratification and frenetic change.....what could be more valuable for a young child? Birch Rock Camp is IN! The community welcomes the opportunity to hear and share your irreplaceable moments. We need your help in making sure we are reaching you. PLEASE REGISTER ON-LINE on [www.birchrock.org/alumni](http://www.birchrock.org/alumni) We have a new internal means of sharing your contact information (with your permission) with others.

It is your connection, your own community and your commitment that perpetuates the core values and ideals of Birch Rock Camp with others. We hope you continue to remain IN with us!



## BIRCH BRIEFS

### Decade Club plus 2

Counselors **Bob Donahue** and **Sam Deeran** were honored with the official Birch Rock Decade Club this summer.



Bob Donahue



Sam Deeran

Both Bob & Sam have been long-term Birch Rock campers, MWA graduates, lifeguards, CITS and now camp leaders. Director Rich Deering quipped: “They represent the very best qualities of character, talent and faithful fellowship in our community today.”

Bob is from Geneva, IL. He is our camp’s certified archery instructor and resides in the Upper Camp. Bob is currently attending the University of Illinois majoring in Engineering. Sam is from Falmouth, ME. He is one of the camp’s primary certified trip leaders. Sam is a senior at Colby College and will be graduating in the spring of 2012.

### Birch Rock’s Newest Whales

Three amazing swimmers preserved around the Lake McWain perimeter this season: **Spaulding Goetze**, **Dylan Sullivan** and **Nick Cogswell**! Nick broke the camp’s Whale record in under two hours! Congratulations to all three!

### American Archery Association’s highest honor achieved

Robin Hood watch out.....Birch Rock has two of the very best! **Jake Perkins** and **Brett Libby** earned their 15th and most coveted archery badge this season. In the history of BRC, there have been only ten young men who have accomplished this outstanding skilled achievement. Congratulations!

### Eight Complete Counselor –In-Training Season

Under the leadership of **Mike “Mystro” Davis** and **Erik Joelsson**, eight outstanding Birch Rock gentleman completed leadership training and apprenticeships this past summer: **Eli Brewster** of Concord, NH; **Peter Burke** of Naples, FL; **Ben Foley** of Bowdoinham, ME; **Alex McLaughlin** of Skillman, NJ; **Jimmy Scanlon** of Cumberland, ME; **Bobby Stafford** of Belmont, MA; **Henry Smith** of Belmont, MA; **Curtis Whiting** of Brooklyn, NY. These gentlemen also earned their American Red Cross Lifeguarding Certification.



## RECORDING YOUR HISTORY:

by Camper John Reisert -BRC Journal Entries



Note: In 2010, John spent 3.5 weeks at BRC and in 2011, he spent seven glorious weeks at BRC. For each day he has spent at Birch Rock, John has written a journal entry. When asked why he does not keep a journal during the rest of the year, he reported that BRC is the highlight of his year and is so exciting that he wants to keep a record of everything he’s done there.

### Entry #1

Dear Journal,

Today was normal, sadly. Just kidding!!

Breakfast was really filling and good. First period and second period I went Horse Back Riding off campus! We cleaned stalls, which wasn’t exciting but a new experience. Then Max and I groomed two horses, Mac and Chuck.

I groomed Mac. He is blind. Then I got a lesson on mounting, which was easy. Then we learned how to ride a horse when it’s walking, then trotting. I caught on quickly. It’s usually not taught to a first-time rider.

Then we learned dismounting. The horse I rode was named Muffin. We left shortly after the dismounting lesson.

First general swim was normal. First rest was also normal.

Lunch was very tasty Taco Tuesday!

Third period at instructional swim I learned that was in Matt Clifford’s group (yes!) with Liam, Eliot, and Nick and we became the chucking narwhals. We are going to have a great time.

Snack was really good.

Fourth period I was at soccer!

I haven’t been there since like, last year! We played world cup the whole time. My partner-in-crime was Matt Burke, my CIT’s little brother.

Second general, another 10-athon. I am now at 0 points. Also, I stamped the Birch Rock Library stamp on the new book they got, which was the third Maximum Ride book (Saving the World and Other Extreme Sports).

Second rest was not normal because at lunch I got a package with two Frisbees. I tossed one around with Max.

Dinner was very tasty. Yummmmmmm.

Then, we sang songs as the evening activity, which was my least favorite activity of the day.

### Entry #2:

Dear Journal,

Today was AWESOME.

Breakfast was also awesome. First period I got my fifth and sixth archery badges at, not surprisingly, archery.

Even though there was no wind, I went to sailing. Peter, my CIT, was the instructor. Peter and I just went around the lake, finding small gusts of wind. On the way back to camp, I fell asleep in the front while Peter was sailing.

First general was normal.

First rest was also, sadly, normal.

Lunch was awesome. I loved it.

Third period at instructional swim, we—all the Bobcats—played ultimate Frisbee in the water for awhile. But then, that didn’t work, so we played an awesome game of Marco Polo in the cradle. Snack was okay.

Fourth period at art I made a hemp bracelet.

Second general we played a 10-athalon event. I am still at 0 points.

Second rest was normal.

Dinner was tasty.

For the evening activities, we played “The Hunt.” Out of the 2 rounds we played, I only made it once and that was on the second round.

### Entry #3

Dear Journal,

Today was never experienced before. It was exciting and not normal.

Breakfast was very tasty. I loved it.

First period at Campcraft was exciting especially because I earned (surprisingly) my fire rights!!

Second period at sailing I fell asleep again on a sunfish, so I earned the nickname Sailboat Sleeper. Otherwise, it was a fun sail boating experience.

First general swimming was normal.

First rest was normal, but I did make excellent progress on my book.

Lunch was very tasty, like normal.

Third period at instructional swim we only swam for like four minutes then got out because of lightning. But after we got changed, we sang the Lumberjack song from Monty Python and talked about Monty Python and I became the minister of silly walks, so everyone had to do a silly walk. The highest camper score was an A-.

Snack was okay.

Fourth period I just hung out at tennis and had a wonderful time practicing.

Second general we did code-breaking with Mastermind.

For the 10-athalon, I now have six points!

Second rest was normal.

Dinner was tasty and so was dessert. Through dinner, dessert and announcements, I drove Gabe crazy with my New Yorker accent which was hilarious.

After dinner, we argued on what to do in the cabin, so we had a very fun, loud, epic training session.



# 7 WEEKS AT BIRCH ROCK – A GIFT OF TIME

By Francie Campbell & Joan Koffman, BRC Council

Any deeply satisfying project takes energy, creativity, skill....and most importantly TIME. For campers at Birch Rock, summers are a gift of TIME – days and weeks to immerse themselves in the activities, rituals and traditions of this private world. Our seven-week program is the most liberating experience of all. Nearly two months for a boy to unplug and live with the rhythm of natural light in the woods is pure magic.

For 85 years, we’ve offered a safe, nurturing and exciting place for boys to do the hard work of growing up. Birch Rock becomes a way of life. Campers and their families who return to the rock summer after summer experience the wondrous change from young boys to confident, capable and industrious young men.



**“Mom, there are 365 days in a year, what’s another 21 days?”  
-Matt S. 2011**

“At 10, I came to Birch Rock and spent the first session in Hilton dreading the last day,” said Gabe Dreyer, 17, who just spent his 8th summer at Birch Rock as a counselor. “The plan was for me to get a taste of camp and then go on a family vacation. But, as the last days arrived, I couldn’t imagine leaving. I pleaded with my parents and the head counselor to let me stay. I just wanted more time at camp. There were no free beds for the second session that summer so I did leave. But, I vowed that never again would I come to camp and leave early for any reason!”

Gabe kept the promise. That summer he discovered a basic truth: Birch Rock gives boys a chance to take time out of their busy school-year lives....to kick back, learn skills in the woods and on the waterfront at their own pace, and make friends for a lifetime.

But, not every boy is ready for the full camp experience at 10 years old. For this reason, Birch Rock sets up a smart trajectory for maturing boys, offering the youngest kids a Cubs Camp for 10 days to start the process gently. As campers become more comfortable being away from home, they can choose between the first and second sessions, and continue building skills and self-confidence.

When campers then graduate to the seven week camp schedule, they are ready for the full experience. The rhythm of life set in the early weeks feels more comfortable as time goes on. When a camper feels totally “in the swing” after 3 weeks, it’s not time to pack his trunk for home – it’s time for more swims, more hikes, more games of cross-camp capture the flag, more art projects, more reading, more campfires, and more skits.

In short, the end of the first camp session may just be the beginning of a camper’s difficult summer goals. Training to swim a Whale (five miles around Lake McWain) takes time and lots of hard work. Advanced camp craft badges are earned by boys who untie knots while floating blindfolded in the lake. Boys flourish with a full summer spent in the company of their friends and mentors, our dedicated staff of Birch Rock “lifers.”

As boys grow into young men, they thrive on greater challenges. The more we expect of them, the more they can achieve. Seven weeks at Birch Rock pushes a camper to hike further, participate in more Tree Talks, ride more mountain trails, and become a more patient role model of our motto: “Help the Other Fellow”.

Time is all it takes. Seven weeks at Birch Rock is a gift of time.

## BOYS CAMP 2012

Our residential boys’ camp program encourages cooperation, confidence and a willingness to try new things. We challenge campers to take responsibility for their own lives and help the them appreciate the needs of others in emphasizing our camp motto: HELP THE OTHER FELLOW.

The 2012 Boys’ Camp offerings are as follows:

Full Season	June 24 – August 11	48 days
First Session	June 24 – July 21	27 days
Cubs Camp I	June 24 – July 7	14 days
Cubs Camp II	July 8 – July 21	14 days
Cubs Camp III	July 22 – Aug 4	14 days
Second Session	July 22 – August 11	20 days

For more information: [www.birchrock.org](http://www.birchrock.org) or 207 741 2930

# LEGENDS OF OUR TIME: CHARLES & DOROTHY DOWNS – A SLICE OF BRC HISTORY

By Donna Janis

Charlie Downs was born on January 15, 1898 in Ashburnham, Mass. He enlisted in the Marines in 1918 during WWI at the age of 20 and served until the end of the war one year later. His commanding officer wrote that Charlie’s character was “excellent.”

Charles found the love of his life when they were both students at Tufts College. On campus one day, Dorothy Hilton was in her dorm room and heard music in the air. She went outside and saw that the boys from the fraternity across the street had carried their piano onto the lawn--an annual tradition, she learned, each First Day of Spring. The boys gathered around the piano and sang to welcome the season. The piano player that day (and for each First Day of Spring during his college career) was Charlie Downs, and that is how he and Dorothy met.



Charlie Downs



Dorothy Downs

Charlie’s nickname was “Feather” Downs. During college he was a chemistry major until his interest turned to education--most fortunately for thousands of girls and boys. After graduating, Charles found work as a teacher and athletic coach at Laconia High School in New Hampshire where he remained for one year. He returned to Tufts for a higher degree. Dorothy taught elementary school in Weymouth, MA, but when Charles and Dorothy married on June 22, 1928, she had to retire because married women at that time were not allowed to teach.

Charles was a camp counselor from the early days of Birch Rock Camp in the 1930s. Joined by his wife Dorothy, they both spent many summers working for Chief & Onie Brewster on Lake McWain. She sometimes spoke about Birch Rock Camp and the wonderful summers she and Charles had there as she lived to the age of 98, passing in 2001. Among the items she left me is a Birch Rock treasure. It is a shaved wood branch nearly 8” in diameter and 32” long. It has a round metal piece screwed into one end (for hanging). The other end is knobby. (It resembles a short shillelagh.) It has been signed by many Birch Rock campers. Some signatures are hard to read, but most are still quite clear.

At the knobby end is nicely printed: Birch Rock -- 1931. L.W. Brewster, “Chief” Brewster, Betty Sheehy. Other names are: Uncle George, Chuck Benson, Norman Jamieson, Bob Carton, Peter Flinterman, “Squeak” Brown, Morton Smith-Peterson, Robert Shaw, Laurence A. Carten, D. Clarke, R. C. “Arcy” DeLong, Edward G. Dreyfus, Richard V. Kemper, Bob Fisher, William M. Croft, Thomas Metcalf, Bill DeLong, Andy Headley, M. Brown, Herby Fletcher, James Beatty, Terry Marvin, Hale Veasey. Hugh H. Morton, Buck Hard...

In 1927, Charles began teaching history at Arlington High School in Arlington, Massachusetts. He also served as a coach of hockey, baseball and football in his early years at AHS. In the 1950’s, Dorothy and Charles (now living in Weymouth, Mass.) became part of a small group of community volunteers who saved the Abigail Adams birthplace from destruction. That little house remains a landmark historical attraction in Weymouth.

When WWII began, Charles re-enlisted and served from January 1943 until the end of the war as a flight instructor in the U.S. Army Air Corps, rising to the rank of 1st Lieutenant.

As Charlie was serving our country, Dorothy reentered the classroom as a teacher, where the welcome mat was now out for married women. Born in 1902 in Maine, Dorothy and her family now resided in her childhood home of Weymouth, MA. Standing by her parents, husband and family, Dorothy lead a distinguished career of her own as an educator in her own right.

Back in private life, Charlie eventually became assistant principal and then principal of Arlington High School and remained such until his retirement in 1963. There is a building at Arlington High School named the Downs Building in honor of his 36 years of service. Former students and teachers remember him as firm but flexible, witty but dignified, and above all, kind.

After leaving Arlington High School, Mr. Downs took on what he referred to as his “retirement job” as executive director of the Massachusetts Secondary School Principals Association. It was here that I met him when I was 18 years old. He hired me to be his junior secretary. My first week on the job, I saw the front door open down the hall and a gentleman’s felt hat--the quintessential fedora--sailed in and landed on the floor near my desk, but nobody came in. I said to the senior secretary, “Someone just threw a hat into our office.” She said, “Oh, that’s our boss.” A moment later, the door opened and Charlie Downs walked in, stopping to pick up his hat. He saw my puzzled look and said, “Haven’t you ever heard that old saying? If you’re not sure you’re welcome, throw your hat in first. If no one throws it back, it’s safe to come in!” Sadly, Charlie Downs passed away later that year in 1968. I have kept his old felt fedora all these years since. It sits on top of a cabinet in my dining room where I see it every day--it still makes me smile!

A month before his death, Charlie and Dorothy had an opportunity to take a trip to Nantucket. It would be their last outing together. Dorothy recalled to me that they almost didn’t go, but Charlie said to her, “Life doesn’t go on forever--let’s have some fun.” That spirit and attitude were the key to his personality and the reason why, so many years later, we remember him so fondly.

Dorothy Downs lived 33 years beyond her husband, passing away at the age of 98 in 2001. She continued to enjoy life and learning by enjoying travel to Russia, reading the daily news briefs and enjoying the Boston Bruin games via the radio. She was fun loving and curious to her last days.



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY BRC: 1926 – 2011

2011 Summer marked the 85th Season of Birch Rock Camp for Boys on Lake McWain. Thanks to all the campers, staff, friends, families and Waterford Community who made this an extraordinary celebration.



Mike Nordblom, Sam Deeran & Mark Sutherland

The Weeks Family

For more information on the reunion and pictures, please visit us on Facebook/Birch Rock Camp & Please don't forget to register your name and contact information on [www.birchrock.org](http://www.birchrock.org)

## MAINE WILDERNESS ADVENTURE 2012



### An extraordinary adventure and challenge in the grand state of Maine

Birch Rock Camp's Maine Wilderness Adventure (MWA) program combines challenge, teamwork, and a genuine appreciation for the natural world in which we live. Most of all, this program provides a special opportunity to expand upon one's overall camping experience and develop skills in outdoor living and survival.

The various venues explored during this 24 day exploration include: six days of backpacking and exploring the lakes and mountains of Baxter State Park before summiting spectacular Mount Katahdin, the highest peak in Maine; five days on the St. Croix River, one of the most remote waterways of the state; followed by three days and nights you will kayak among the islands and inlets of "Downeast" Maine from Cobscook base camp; and the adventure continues for two days of climbing at Acadia National Park to ramp around the coastal hills and take a trip to the beach. The last stop is the mighty Kennebec River for a wet, wild day of laughter and screams of exhilaration as we raft through sharp turns, dramatic drops and standing waves.

The MWA Program is for boys who have completed grade 8 and have demonstrated exemplary character in their community. All applicants will be considered on a first-come basis and review of application. There is a limited enrollment of 8 boys for this outstanding adventure so act now.

For more information: [www.birchrock.org](http://www.birchrock.org)



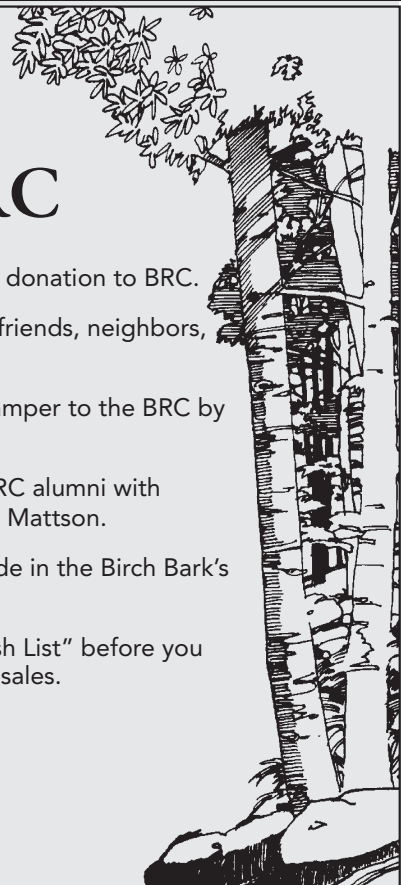
# Mark Your Calendars for 2012!



Spring Clean-up Day	Saturday, May 19, 2012
BRC Summer Office Opens	Tuesday, June 4, 2012
BRC Staff Orientation	Friday, June 15, 2012
C.I.T. Orientation	Wednesday, June 20, 2012
BRC Opening 1st Session	Sunday, June 24, 2012
Cubs' Camp I	Sunday, June 24, 2012
Cubs' Camp I ends	Saturday, July 7, 2012
Visitation Day	Sunday, July 8, 2012
Cubs' Camp II	Sunday, July 8, 2012
BRC 1st Session Ends	Saturday, July 21, 2012
Cubs' Camp II Ends	Saturday, July 21, 2012
BRC Opening 2nd Session	Sunday, July 22, 2012
Cubs' Camp III	Sunday, July 22, 2012
Maine Wilderness Adventure	Sunday, July 22, 2012
Cubs' Camp III Ends	Saturday, August 4, 2012
Alumni Day/Trustee Mtg	Saturday, August 4, 2012
BRC for Boys & MWA ends	Saturday, August 11, 2012

# It's Easy to Help BRC

- Send a tax-deductible donation to BRC.
- Promote BRC among friends, neighbors, family and colleagues.
- Refer a prospective camper to the BRC by phone or email.
- Host a gathering of BRC alumni with Directors Deering and Mattson.
- Send us news to include in the Birch Bark's Alumni News column.
- Ask us about our "Wish List" before you have your spring yard sales.



**BIRCH ROCK CAMP**

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED