



A nonprofit corporation

THE BIRCH BARK

Fall 2013

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

THE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER OF BIRCH ROCK CAMP

REFLECTIONS FROM THE ROCK

By Rich Deering
Alumni & Community Director
'73 -

It's October here on Lake McWain. The docks have been stained and stacked. The water pipes have been drained. The mattresses are stored. The cabins are buttoned up for winter. The office has moved to Portland. The 2013 season has finally come to a close....

And yet, the loons continue to call out... with messages, notes, emails and phone calls from families, staff, vendors, neighbors and BRC friends reigniting the spirit of our camp community. This incredible and energetic momentum of memories, magic and the Maine camp experience underscore the core mission of what we all do at BRC: facilitate fun, self-reliance, support each other, role-model, build character and make a difference! Wow!

In this edition of the *Birch Bark*, we share a profile on veteran **Thomas Joyce**. He is Mr. BRC teaching abroad and making his mark globally for our camp community. Also, Senior Camper **Noah Keates** shares his personal narrative of his recent Junior Maine Guide experience with Counselor Gabe Dreyer and his fellow Birch Rockers. What an accomplishment for him and for all those JMG candidates representing our camp! Well-done, gentlemen!

Finally, as the leaves turn this fall, let us remember to thank those who have helped us be part of our camp. Our faithful families, supporters and partners who make Birch Rock the colorful community of characters, positive spirit and human strength. Thank you!

Rich



ALUMNUS NEWSMAKER: THOMAS JOYCE IN HIS OWN WORDS...



Thomas Joyce has been a Camper, Counselor, Head Counselor, CIT Director, Senior Counselor and a "Jack-of-all-Trades" @ Birch Rock Camp. For over twenty-five seasons, Thomas has been one of the "core

characters" in building the foundation and development of the BRC Community. His loyalty, passion and eternal commitment to childhood education and lifelong learning is exemplary. In 2012, Thomas earned his Master's in Education at Columbia University in New York and formally began a new journey of "Camp Counselor At Large" beyond the hills of Lake McWain.

This past summer at Family Camp, Thomas returned to Birch Rock to spend some time with campers and staff of yesteryear. He shared his journey with the camp community in his own words:

This fall, I began my second year of teaching at The American School in Switzerland. Here, I teach middle school math and I am a high school dorm head. Since moving here last year, I have had some chances to explore and travel a bit. This last summer, instead of BRC, I travelled to Tanzania and climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa. In the past year I have also had the chance to travel to Turkey, Germany, Belgium, Italy, France, Spain, Iceland, and a little bit in the US.

My first summer at BRC was 1989. The camp was small, only 30 or so campers. There were only a handful of staff members. Peter Herzig picked me up from the Portland Jetport on opening day as I arrived from Baltimore, MD with my fellow camper Jonas.

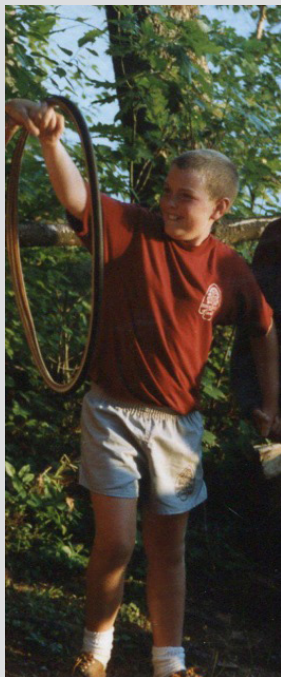
I know there were tough times my first year as a ten year old. I was homesick. I didn't want to follow the rules. I was probably a pain in the butt for the staff. I don't remember those things. I remember playing Cross-Camp Capture-the-Flag, Camper Counselor Hunt, swimming my Duck, sailing, Sunday Letter Writing, and a number of the other activities.

The one event that really stands out from my first summer is "The Eclipse." In 20+ years at camp, 9 years at boarding schools, 4 years in college, and countless other prime locales for pranks, The Eclipse is still my favorite. I have since learned a bit of the backstory, but some of the staff from '89 might be able to provide a bit more insight into the whole set up..... We were told about the rarity of the event and how lucky we were to be able to see it. We were told the Eclipse would be happening at 7:15 in the morning.

That morning, when we were woken up to the bell, it was totally dark out. No moon, no stars, no sun, no light. We lined up for flagpole and Bob Van Dyke (the Head Counselor) went through the regular morning routine. Days off, kitchen help, somebody needed to help Don with something, etc. Eventually, it was only Bob and all of the campers at the flag pole. Bob said he needed to check with Janice in the kitchen if breakfast was ready. When Bob left, all of the campers stood at the flagpole, admiring the darkness of the full eclipse. After a couple of minutes one of the older (and smarter) campers, probably Chris Kilburn-Peterson started making comments about what should happen during an eclipse and that we should see the outline of the sun around the moon.

When the campers started questioning what was happening, we realized that none of the counselors were there anymore. They had all hidden in the lower shop, just behind where we were all lined up for flagpole. Anyway, we chased the counselors around for a minute before heading back to our cabins to go back to sleep. It was only 2:45 in the morning!

Continued on Page 2



One lesson I took from my various role models at camp is that I can try and fail, and that is okay. I am supported and I will be able to try again. Once I realized that the biggest obstacle in many challenges was myself, it became a lot easier to tackle challenges.

My transition from camper to counselor happened at an exciting time for camp. As a camper, camp was never full, we made do with what we had, and ended up having a blast. In 1994, my last year as a camper, it was a big deal because we used most of, if not all of, the cabins in lower camp. When I returned for my CIT summer in 1995, the Lodge had been rebuilt and that was a clear message of stability and projected growth for camp. There were a lot of opportunities at camp to challenge myself and to make positive contributions to camp. Some things needed to get done and being quick to volunteer and willing to take on a challenge were great ways to learn. People were always there to help and guide me, and I knew that if something didn't go as well as I had hoped, it was still better than it had been. There were also a lot of challenges. I had a lot of energy and a lot of interest, but I often still looked at things through my own eyes and with my own ego. It took me a long time to develop a better ability to see things from other perspectives. One definite challenge was getting enough sleep, but that seems like it will always be a challenge for counselors.

In a formal sense, I became the Head Counselor in 1999. I was the Head Counselor for 4 years. During my time as Head Counselor, the position morphed a bit and I ended up doing the program, working with Mike and Rich for some staffing things, announcements, and other things

that have now been separated out into roles by various people around camp. While I was Head Counselor, I was also CIT Director for 2 summers. After being Head Counselor, I served as an assistant director for a summer and I have since been a senior staff member for a number of seasons.

The most exciting part of any job I ever had was running announcements after meals in the lodge. There is something about the energy of a full camp coursing through the building and how it could always make me feel awesome. Sometimes if I am having a tough day and need a little boost, I think of the pulse-pounding excitement that came after slamming the kitchen door shut and yelling "Good Evening, Birch Rock Camp."

I have spent more of my life at BRC than at any other place. I started there as a 10-year old and I was last there for a full summer as a 32 year-old. I have been in and out for the last decade or so, but I have spent a lot of time there. I grew up at Birch Rock. I've learned a lot, but mostly it boils down to a couple of things. First, "Help the Other Fellow" is important. Not only in reminding me to be more giving and caring of others, but that sometimes I need help. Second, friends matter. Although I travel often and live far away from many friends, they are there for me. I am there for them. Friendship is not bound by age or location, but our mutual trust and respect. Third, I can succeed. At camp I took on long-term challenges that seemed near impossible when I started but were doable by the time I was ready for them – the Whale, getting perfect "4s" for daily inspection, advanced badges, etc.

I am fortunate to have access to BRC in ways that most other adults do not. Part of the magic of camp is that there are not many "grown ups" around. No parents to make you follow in their footsteps, no teacher to remind you of how important good grades are, no principal's office to be sent to because your cell phone went off in class even though it was a message from your parents. The strength of relationships between campers and counselors is the mutual admiration for each other and the respect of a huge variety of interest. Although parents may glean that from a Sunday letter, they don't get to see those relationships very often. The level of mutual respect and trust is why campers learn so much at camp. I see some classroom teachers that struggle to keep students' attention in a room with almost no distractions and a camp counselor have 80 kids glued to their every movement despite the cawing birds, blowing trees, beautiful setting, and 79 other kids in the space. The difference is that the camp counselor has developed a re-

lationship with the campers and the campers know they are cared for. Camp is education at its finest - relationships, trust, honesty, integrity, love, optimism. Those are the lessons we need for life. (As a math teacher I should add that reading, writing, math, science, history, languages, art, music and others are pretty important too).

Going to camp can be a scary experience for some people, especially for parents. Birch Rock gives campers a chance to develop friendships they would never develop if they stayed at home. Birch Rockers are distinct. They sit up straighter, they make eye contact when they shake hands, they find joy more often, they are more confident, they are more humble. Going to Birch Rock, for a Cubs Camp session or a lifetime, will have a positive and meaningful impact on who you are. No matter how hard it may be when the parents pull out of the driveway and head home, you will have a great time and make some awesome friends along the way.

BIRCH ROCK TRUSTEES

Lindsay Alexander
Geoffrey Alexander
Ryck Birch
Seth Brewster
Toby Brewster
Becca Brewster
Francie Campbell
Nancy Dreyer
Peter Herzig
Michael Herzig
Jojo Herzig
Fred Howard
Michele Howard
Alesia Klein
Hoddy Klein
Joan Koffman
Julie McLaughlin
Mark McLaughlin
Alison Smith
Win Smith
Bev Stone
Bob Stone
Maria Tringale
Paul Tringale
Bob Tuffy
Gerry Tuffy
David Weeks
Arlene Whichard
Bruce Whichard
Libby Whittier
Steve Whittier
Amy Young
Peter Young



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MY JUNIOR MAINE GUIDE EXPERIENCE

By Senior Camper Noah Keates



The most important, and certainly the most challenging event that I've taken part in recently was attending Junior Maine Guide testing camp in Oquossoc, Maine. Before this summer, I had never even considered the program. I remembered hearing about JMG in 2009 when Gabe and Ben went, but I had never really thought of myself as a "camp-craft" guy, and so had never really found out what JMG was all about. On the

first day of camp this year, when Gabe presented the idea to anyone who had been on MWA in 2012, I was really torn because I knew that I would have to dedicate my whole first session to JMG training. Though, when I sat down to think about the opportunity of taking on such a prestigious challenge, the answer seemed pretty clear. I committed to the JMG training before I really knew what the actual testing entailed. I had assumed that most people passed JMG and it was a pretty relaxed program, so when I found out that there were twenty-one total tests, and only a 30% pass rate, I was certainly daunted by the task at hand. Before this summer, I had never picked up an axe before, never soloed a canoe before, and had certainly never planned and prepared a weeklong menu of food that could be cooked in the woods. Everyday for three weeks, I signed up for JMG period 2, followed by Camp-Craft period 3, and Nature period 4. During the JMG period, Gabe instructed me in map-making, map reading, and shelter building skills, while in Camp-Craft I honed my axe and fire-building technique. In fourth period Nature, I poured over animal and tree identification books, as well as various handouts covering Maine Wilderness Regulations, Weather Patterns, and Leave No Trace Principles.

Three weeks later, on Sunday afternoon, as the new second session campers settled in to their cabins, the four JMGs - Walker, Gordon, Lance, and I - spent the better part of four hours prepping for the trip. I finished packing up my dry bag, excited, worried, and extremely stressed out for the week to come. I had exhausted my brain with millions of tiny facts that would all be crucial at some-point in the next five days. Though, even after having studied and practiced as much as I possibly could, I still went to sleep Sunday night with a pit in my stomach, not knowing what was ahead of me.

On Monday morning, after about a two-hour drive, we turned onto a long dirt road that eventually led into a large, open area, where several vans were already parked and people were bustling every which way. We had arrived at JMG testing camp. After checking in and finding our campsite, we quickly began moving into our home for the week, stringing up our huge group tarp over the provided picnic table, and whipping up a makeshift kitchen area. After all that was done, it was just an hour until dinner, so we quickly set to our work on our first meal: jalapeno burgers.

At 6:00 sharp, as we raced to set the table with cloth napkins and candles, our evaluator for the meal arrived. It was Gard, the infamous canoeing evaluator, who had been known to fail about 95% of the candidates he tested. Fortunately, he was a bit kinder when it came to judging food and he gave us a passing grade on the meal. On Tuesday morning, after frying up some French toast for breakfast, I headed to the river to take my first test of the day, canoeing. After stepping down onto the bank, I turned around to find none other than Gard sitting in his canoe at the front of the cue of instructors, waiting for candidates. My stomach went to my throat. "Well, I'll just have to pass the other twenty tests," I told myself. The test didn't go too badly, but I knew I wasn't a master rower, and therefore most likely would not receive a passing grade from Gard. I shook it off pretty quickly, and went on to what I thought would be the second hardest test of the week, tree identification, in which thirty branches are tied on to a rope, and you have to identify each species of tree. However, after making my way down the line I found that my studying had paid off, and I had a full sheet of answers. That was definitely the confidence boost I needed, and as the day continued, I started quickly accumulating checkmarks on my list of tests. For the next two days, the schedule remained the same. I would wake up at about 6 to prepare breakfast, then test all morning, come back to the campsite for lunch, then test all afternoon before returning for dinner. Every night though, there was a chance to take a breath and relax a bit, and meet some people from other camps. Late on Thursday afternoon, I had only one test left, first aid. I had received a bit of first aid training and read the Red-Cross first aid chapter of the lifeguarding book, but I was facing a hundred-question test in which I needed to answer at least 80 of the questions correctly. About forty-five minutes later, I handed in the test, with honestly no idea how I had done, then returned to the campsite where I immediately passed out in my tent for the majority of the afternoon. The next morning, we packed everything up, loaded it into the van, and returned to camp. For the next week, I certainly had a few restless nights trying to determine whether I had passed or failed, recounting every question on each test. After a few days though, I was back in the woods on my cabin's Presidentials trip, and then right back into the swing of camp. By the time Gabe told me he had the JMG results, I had convinced myself that I probably hadn't quite passed this year, and that I could go back to finish up the program next summer. That way, I wouldn't be too disappointed, and passing would be a happy surprise. However, I think "happy surprise" might be a bit of an understatement in describing how I felt when I received a certificate from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, recommending me as a Junior Maine Guide. This program certainly dominated my senior camper year, but also made the 2013 summer one that I will never forget.



Lance Napier-Kane, Walker Grimes, Gabe Dreyer, Gordan Hargraves, Noah Keates

FROM THE SHORES OF LAKE MCWAIN

By Erik "Captain Nemo" Joelsson '99-



It was an absolute pleasure to spend another summer on the shores and in the waters of Lake McWain. Watching the campers swimming and all the watercraft activities is the highlight of my summer every year. So much personal growth is seen every season. For some it is conquering their fear of deep water, for others it is the challenge of swimming first across the lake during their Duck and eventually completing their Whale. For others yet, it is harnessing the power of the wind on twenty knot days or attempting to portage a canoe up to the field and back. We are also very lucky to have such wonderful facilities and equipment to help us get the most out of the camp experience. In the thirteen years I have worked on the waterfront the transformation of the facilities has been astounding. This summer we particularly enjoyed the beautiful new swim tents and boating docks. These facility upgrades in both quality and size, made a huge difference in our growing summer community. Thank you so much parents and alumni for all the contributions over the years to keep our slice of the Maine woods beautiful and bountiful.



LIKE US ON



Birch Rock Camp

WISH LIST

BRC appreciates your contributions to the camp community. Some items we wish for are:

- Framed Backpacks (\$100 each)
- Art Supplies & Equipment (\$500)
- Tennis & Baseballs (\$100)
- 3 to 4 Man Tents (\$200)
- Row Boat Oars (\$100 per pair)
- Kayak Paddles (\$50 per)
- Industrial Convection Oven (\$5000)
- Commercial Gas Grill (\$2000)
- Refrigerator Compressor (\$1000)

Birch Rock Camp is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation. All donations received are tax-deductible.

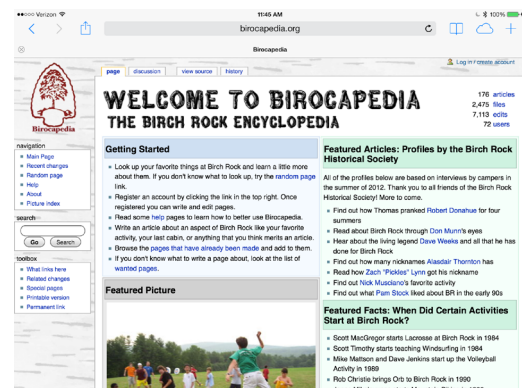
Please contact us at birchrock@birchrock.org if you might be able to accommodate any of those wishes.

**BIRCH ROCK CAMP NOW ACCEPTS
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Thank you!

WWW.BIROCAPEDIA.ORG

Did you know that Birch Rock has its own encyclopedia? Created and facilitated by **Harry Netzer** '00 six years ago, **BIROCAPEDIA.ORG** is our digital wiki style reference for all that is Birch Rock. On **BIROCAPEDIA.ORG** you can find articles ranging from the history of Chief Brewster to the story of the Midnight Phantom. All the articles on **BIROCAPEDIA.ORG** are user submitted. We invite you to create an account and share your Birch Rock history with us. Creating a page is simple. Go to **BIROCAPEDIA.ORG** and search for a topic and if there is no current page you can simply click a create page now icon. Help with formatting can be found by clicking the "Help" icon on the left hand side menu. There you will find detailed instructions on how to create tables, insert pictures and much more. We thank **Harry Netzer** for creating this invaluable resource for archiving Birch Rock History. Now we want you to share your history!



BIRCH BRIEFS 2013

Birch Rock's Newest Whales

This season saw a record ELEVEN swimmers completed the daunting perimeter swim of Lake McWain. Congratulations to **Philip Kessler, Louis Hurtado, Christian Hurtado, Gordon Hargraves, Peter Brewster, Trevor McLaughlin, Jared Whichard, Noah Keates, Ben Wagner, Toby Young and Gabe Kolbert**. Stupendous effort all around, gentlemen!

Decade Club



Joe Cohen



Gabe Dreyer

We welcomed two more Birch Rockers to the Decade Club this summer. **Joe Cohen** and **Gabe Dreyer** both came to Birch Rock as young campers, CIT's, Counselors. Gabe teaches campcraft and sailing, as well as guiding eager campers through the Maine Junior Guide program. He is currently attending New York University. Joe headed up the Trip Program this past summer. He is a graduate of Whitman College and is currently pursuing a career in outdoor education. We honor and thank these two Birch Rock gentleman for their dedication to our community.

Four Birch Rockers complete Counselor-In-Training

Under the leadership of **Mike "Mystro" Davis** and **Ryan "Ryno" Massey** four new CIT's completed a stellar summer of leadership training: **Patrick McLaughlin** of Princeton NJ, **Walker Grimes** of Cape Elizabeth ME, **Zach Bamberger** of Haifa Israel, and **Talla Babou** of New York NY. These four additionally completed Red Cross Lifeguard Training and Walker also completed the Junior Maine Guide Program.

Thirteen Compete in Triathlon

Thirteen campers participated in this year's test of endurance, the BRC Triathlon. The race consists of swimming a Duck, followed by riding a bike down Passaconaway Rd, around the southern end of Lake McWain, up McWain Hill road past camp and down to Pride Farm, then running back to camp for the final finish at the basketball court. Congratulations to **Trevor McLaughlin, Noah Keates, Peter Brewster and Peter Klein** as the top finishers.

Donald Munn and Janice Walker Honored & New Cabin Dedicated

The Birch Rock community honored two living legends with the dedication of the new **Walker/Munn Cabin** located in Lower Camp for housing 8 campers. The dedication was attended by close friends, alumni, and the campers and staff. Special tributes were delivered by Directors Emeriti **Toby Brewster, Dave Weeks and Seth Brewster** and by Camp Directors **Mike Mattson and Rich Deering**. The campers celebrated with a Walker/Munn themed day, cook-out, and reception.



Doug Dickey, Don Munn, Seth Brewster, Janice Walker, Toby Brewster

Election of New Trustees

Chairman Seth Brewster welcomed **Paul and Maria Tringale** of Medford, MA (parents of Sebastian, Gus and Theo) and **Hoddy and Alesia Klein** of Skillman, NJ (parents of Peter and Chris) to the Board of Trustees. Welcome.

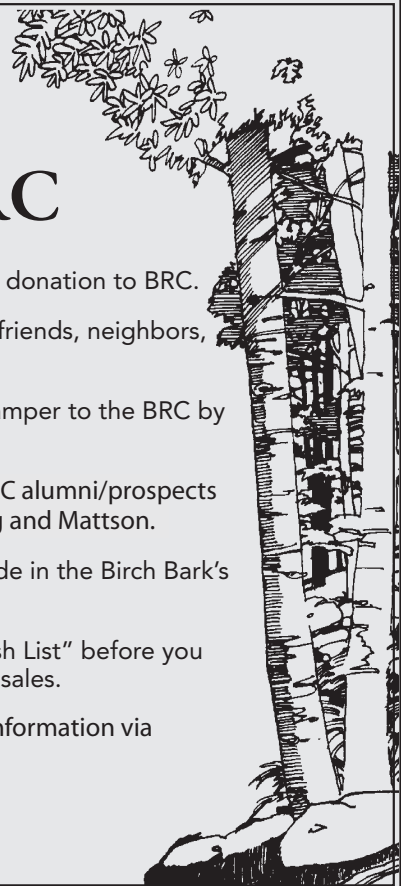
Mark Your Calendars for 2014!



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| BRC Summer Office Opens | June 2, 2014 |
| BRC Staff Orientation | June 13 |
| C.I.T. Orientation | June 18 |
| BRC Opening 1st Session | June 22 |
| Cubs Camp I | June 22 |
| Cubs Camp I ends | July 5 |
| Cubs Camp II begins | July 6 |
| BRC 1st Session Ends | July 19 |
| Cubs Camp II ends | July 19 |
| Opening 2nd Session | July 20 |
| Maine Wilderness Adventure Cubs Camp III begins | July 20 |
| Alumni Day | July 26 |
| Cubs Camp III ends | August 2 |
| BRC for Boys ends | August 9 |
| MWA ends | August 9 |
| BRC Family Camp | August 15 |
| BRC Family Camp ends | August 19 |

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/prospects 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.
- Update your contact information via www.birchrock.org



BIRCH ROCK CAMP

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