

Pemigewassett Newsletter

Summer 2011 Number Three

We are currently enjoying one of the most spectacular days of the summer – cloudless blue skies without a trace of humidity, mercury in the mid seventies, and a mild zephyr whisking down the pond with just enough gusto to raise four-inch wavelets. Perfect weather for being anything other than a duck. In extolling today's conditions, I suppose we're running the risk of suggesting the other weather we've encountered hasn't been particularly good. *Au contraire!* If every first session were blessed with the days we've been having, we'd count ourselves very lucky indeed. If the ratio of sunscreen applied to firewood consumed is an indication of a great year, 2011 is truly a great one.

The past week has been a busy one, as some of you have no doubt been informed by your boys. Last weekend saw a very successful day of athletics with Camp Kingswood, our friends and rivals just over the hill. We fared very well in the Win-Loss columns, but more importantly everyone who chose to compete did so with heart and commitment, and they displayed the kind of sportsmanship that we extol and treasure. Occupations continue to be inventive and remarkably varied (more on this from Program Head Kenny Moore in two weeks). Rehearsals for this year's Gilbert and Sullivan show, *The Mikado*, are beginning to promise some truly stellar performances come August. And the trip program is running flat out. Today, we have Lovers 5 and 7 up Mt. Cube for a day hike, Upper 1 continuing a four-day that began at Greenleaf Hut and is continuing over Garfield and the Twins, Upper 2 crossing the Franconia Range after spending the night themselves at Greenleaf, a group of Lovers wrapping up a three-day on Mt. Potash, Junior Tent and Senior 2 heading off across the lake by canoe this evening for some sylvan dining, and Junior 4 hiking up to the Pemi shelter for the night. As for our bid to traverse the whole of the Appalachian Trail within New Hampshire, by week's end nearly 100 walkers will have logged roughly 100 miles of the 189 we're aiming for. Several boys have over twenty miles under their belts (boots?), with Pierce Haley holding on to a slight lead over Crawford Jones. All very exciting.

The bulk of this newsletter, though, will cover two topics, one of them treating a broad component of the program, the other something relatively minor. We're

extremely proud of the both, however, and expect that you'll appreciate hearing a little more.

First, a survey of the Music Program at Pemi, coming from its very heart and soul, Ian Axness, whom we've been lucky enough to have at the piano and podium for five years now.

Greetings, listeners and music-makers! The first half of Pemi 2011 has already yielded a tremendous creative output from all sides of the visual and performing arts, and music is no exception. We may not have the knitted hats or 8x10 prints or Adirondack chairs to prove it, but the harmonies drifting out over Lower Baker Pond have been top-notch. Vocal rehearsals for The Mikado, this summer's Gilbert & Sullivan production, are in full swing, and dozens of campers have already participated in music occupations, including Silver Cornet Band, A Cappella, and Soundpainting, a method of instrumental improvisation. (Think sign language mixed with orchestral conducting, with a splash of free jazz.)



The A Cappella group has flourished under the direction of Zach Barnard and Dorin Dehls, and they performed a fantastic new arrangement of Doc Reed's "Clam Shell Song" at Vaudeville, to the delight of all. Hear it for yourself on YouTube:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYAQFWj_s6U

Some boys— and even some counselors— decide to start learning piano at Pemi, and they may very well be playing Mozart or Coldplay or "Don't Stop Believing" by the end of the summer. In short, Pemi's climate of musical enthusiasm and curiosity is alive and well.

At the most recent Saturday campfire, the Pemi community heard a poignant Modest Mouse cover from senior Dan Fulham and an original song by counselor (and M.A. candidate in poetry) Dwight Dunston, in addition to the latest ditty from the A Cappella group. Counselor and Bean Soup editor Peter Siegenthaler also performed a song on guitar, accompanied by Bridgid Ruf on viola, and junior Eli Brennan led a rousing sing-along of Mess Hall favorite “Are You From Wooster?” Counselors Sean Munck and Henry Eisenhart rounded out the music for the evening with instrumental solos on guitar and tenor saxophone, respectively. The variety and quality of music at the campfire circle never fails to astound and inspire. And speaking of astounding and inspiring, last Monday’s Bean Soup featured one of the best song rewrites in recent memory: “Teach Me How to Dottie,” re-written by Jeremy Keys and Dwight Dunston. The accompanying dance moves will undoubtedly be remembered in Junior Camp for weeks to come.

As for my own playing, I can’t decide which venue I prefer: the Mess Hall (accompanying college fight songs and Pemi originals, sung with abandon by the entire camp) or Sunday Meeting (classical music, usually Beethoven, to ease the masses towards contemplation). Fortunately, both are equally important in keeping alive the musical spirit of Pemi.



I can think of few spaces dearer to my musical soul than the main dining room of the Pemi Mess Hall. My knowledge of the connections between music and health is limited, but I can say without a doubt that spirits (and, certainly, vocal cords) are

strengthened as a result of Mess Hall singing. In this way, music exists as a living record of tradition, just like the plaques and trophies that hang on the walls. The unwritten call-outs, the pauses and ritardandi learned by rote and repetition, the Jones Junior High song—these are all a part of our shared Pemi musical foundation. And this foundation, like the root system of a huge tree, is always growing slowly: a few weeks ago, on the first game day for the “Flagship” 15s Baseball team, Coach (and Director) Danny Kerr led an exciting double chorus of “Take Me Out to the Ballgame.” Just a few days ago, Tom Reed, Jr. added a

second part to the end of perennial favorite “Mabel” which segues into the old American war song, “Over There.” A startling contrast of styles and subject matter, but cohesive and exuberant nonetheless.

Sunday meetings, on the other hand, are an opportunity for the Pemi family to gather together in the Lodge and listen to words and music that speak to our collective spirit of personal integrity. (Also a good excuse to wash up and wear a collared shirt!) I’m always glad for this opportunity to expose campers to short pieces from the classical canon, be they Beethoven piano sonatas or Mozart flute quartets or Khatchaturian flute transcriptions. This Sunday’s meeting will be all about music, in fact, as I attempt to illustrate the unusual creative merits of slow movements, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Adagio. I’m hoping for a good audience jolt from Haydn’s Surprise Symphony. The Sunday evening convocations are a wonderful time to experience the wordless, mystical imagination of the great composers.

Music is everywhere at Pemi, and it always has been: even now, as I write this article for the newsletter, I hear Taps being played out on bugle over the Intermediate Hill. And then, seconds later, Taps in Junior Camp. Played by a real person, not a loud-speaker. This is unique—and it’s particularly special in today’s age of electronic music players and limitless digital sound manipulation. Music at Pemi communicates feelings of joy and sincerity, performed and heard in a fresh, natural context. And I’m glad to say that our central musical motivator is curiosity—the simple (and simultaneous) act of playing and discovering.

Many thanks to Ian for that richly descriptive piece. By the way, it has to be said that Maestro Axness is one of the most dynamic and inspiring music heads we’ve ever had at Pemi. It’s now hard to imagine a summer without Ian’s manifold contributions to the culture and joy of the community, given his dual role as musician-in-chief and *Bean Soup* editor. If any of you can give us a lead on a “winter job” that would leave him free to return to Pemi for decades to come, please, please, please do so! Seriously!

Now a word or two from another of our infectious and talented staff members, Deb Kure – Associate Head of the Nature Program. Nobody brings more energy, knowledge, and enthusiasm to the task of

teaching at Pemi, and Deb augments her contributions with her oversight of our Recycling Program. Here she describes a recent – and recurrent – initiative that she oversees.

5 A.M. on Saturday, July 9th, found 12 campers being awakened by Assistant Counselor Wes Eifler and Nature Staffer Deb Kure to volunteer with the 30th annual Prouty fundraiser. “The Prouty” typically involves 1,000 volunteers, 4,500 bicyclists, and \$4.5 million raised for Cancer Research and Patient Services through Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, a good neighbor in Hanover, NH. Pemi boys host a SAG stop at nearby Mt. Cube Farm, providing food, water, and shouts of encouragement to riders 28 miles into the 100-mile route option.

Nick Gordon and Nathaniel Kaplan fulfilled the Community Service portion of their quests to become Pemi Braves, as Ezra Nugiel did for the start of his efforts towards being a Pemi Chief. Thompson Bain, Daniel Bivona, Harry Cooke, Rodrigo Juarez, Luke Maxwell, Sam Papel, James Richardson, Matt Sherman, and Ridley Wills volunteered for the sheer enjoyment of being involved with a local community event known for its team spirit, athleticism, and life-giving research value.



Our campers were in full production slicing fruit, mixing Gatorade, keeping water jugs filled, and making specialty sandwiches for hundreds of riders – for four hours non-stop. Nick Gordon “yelled” every rider up the ascent to the SAG station, shouting sincere encouragement and



“Welcome to the Best Party on the Prouty!” for hours on end. Riders commented repeatedly that our stop is their annual favorite, and that Pemi campers make the best sandwiches on the Prouty!

We’re extremely glad to be able to involve our campers with such a spirited and worthwhile community event,

planting the seeds of volunteerism for their years to come.

Amen. And thanks again to Deb for spearheading the effort. By the way, this editor drove Matt Sherman up to Mt. Cube Farm shortly after 8 AM, after Matt had graciously agreed to accompany a Junior cabin up Pemi Hill as a “big brother” for the night and had just come down the trail. As we approached the SAG stop, against a steady flow of very buff riders, the early morning sun lit the scene with magical clarity and sharpness. Off to the right stood the lushly forested ridge of Mt. Cube itself, on an apron of which stands the farm. As I parked the van, I could see distant Mt. Moosilauke off to the north as clearly as though it were riding shotgun. I opened the door, and the chatter of the riders, milling here and there in their tight and bright attire, filled the air, punctuated by Nick yelling his greetings. There must have been 200 participants there at the time, and one could absolutely feel the force of their will and determination and collective spirit sweeping up everyone in their draft. To see Deb and Wes and the Pemi boys there, so clearly sensing the human nobility of the effort and equally clearly being appreciated by the athletes brought some moistness to the eye. We wish you could have been there. If your boy was, ask him to share. It was a rich experience.

With that we will close for the week. We look forward to seeing many parents of full-session boys tomorrow, in the first of our annual visiting days. Please, if you would, take a moment to review the Parents’ Handbook on “the drill.” Others of you we will see on Tuesday as you come to pick up your campers. We’ll be happy to see you but sad to lose your sons. They have been part of a wonderful first session and, while we wish them all the best for the rest of the summer, we hope equally to see them back soon. *A bientot.*

■ Tom and Danny