

YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP ALUMNINEWSLETTER



YMCA JOHN ISLAND

Spring 2015

GORE MUTUAL INSURANCE CELEBRATES THEIR 175 ANNIVERSARY

INSURANCE COMPANY DONATES TO JOHN ISLAND

To celebrate their 175th anniversary, Gore Mutual Insurance (head office in Cambridge Ontario) donated funds to YMCA camps in Ontario and B.C. for the purchase of watercraft and related equipment. Both John Island Camp and YMCA Camp Falcona were amongst the camps fortunate to receive part of this generous donation .

Gore Insurance has a history of supporting community groups in both Ontario and B.C. where they have their greatest presence. This has included the YMCA.

The donation to John Island will allow for the purchase of additional tripping canoes, tandem kayaks, lifejackets, and paddles. These purchases will allow for the quality of the camp equipment to remain high and ensure good equipment for both in camp and trip use.

A number of YMCA camps that received part of the Gore donation were included in a video that was made to thank the company for their donation.



John Island campers hold a thank you poster to thank Gore Mutual for their gift.

NEW WATERFRONT SHELTER

Renovations will continue at YMCA John Island Camp this spring thanks to another generous donation of \$15,000 from a donor to put toward a new structure on the waterfront. This structure will be replacing the old windsurf storage shack but will be large enough to also provide a program space for campers looking to get out of the rain or find some shade on a hot summer day!



Proposed new shelter model

The project will be undertaken by Lasalle

Secondary School Apprenticeship Students, a partnership that has been spending the last 9 springs on John Island aiding in the latest rebuild. John Island is happy to once again welcome back Amatol to help out with the project and for the second time the Rotary Club of Sudbury will be returning for a Fellowship weekend to lend their support. It is community and alumni partnerships that have been an integral part in shaping John Island into the place we love today.

The new design of structure will be modeled off of shelter already existing at another YMCA camp in the Haliburton area Camp Wanakita.



Existing shelter

WORK WEEKEND
May 8 - 10 (see page 2)

ITS BEEN QUITE A
JOURNEY (see page 4)

AMATOL - A JIC
PARTNER (see page 3)

CONNECTION WITH
DUBAI - (see pg 6)

CAMP JOHN ISLAND - by Tate Barnett (age 9)

Tate Barnett, a 3 year veteran camper at John Island, wrote the following speech which he delivered at his school as part of a public speaking contest.

Have you ever been to camp on John Island? I have and I can't wait to go back this summer. Today, I am going to tell you why it is the best camp! Before I tell you all about camp, I will give you a bit of the history of John Island. In the late 1800's, there was a mill on the island and almost 200 people lived there year round. When the mill burned down, everyone left the island. In 1954, John Island Camp opened for the firsts summer - that was 20 years before my parents were born! Ever since then, the camp has been a place for great adventures. The adventure begins as soon as your parents drop you off because you have to take a boat to get to the island that is almost 4 kms. Away. The best part is n o parents are allowed!

When you get to the island, we have to first find our counsellors who take us to our cabins. Then, we have to pick a bed. There are 12 bunk beds in one big room. I usually pick a bottom bunk. The person on the top bunk usually drops their smelly sweaty socks on top of me!

Very early every morning, a cabin yells "Polar Bear!" We have to quickly put on our bathing suits and run to the beach for a swim in the very cold water. After the swim, we go to breakfast. I like the oatmeal because I can put as much brown sugar on it as I want - woo hoo!. My mom and dad can't tell me not to.

While at camp, we get to go on an out trip. On the out trip, we hike to a beach on a different part of the island and we pitch tents. Then we go into the forest and collect wood for the fire. We need a fire so that our counsellors can make us dinner. They made us homemade pizza pockets cooked on the fire. Dinner was delicious except for all of the sand! We then went to sleep in the tent. Out tent was on a hill. Our tent rolled down the hill while we were still in it! When it stopped rolling, we tried to get out but we couldn't find the door. The mosquitoes found a way in though and we called for help! Our counsellors came running and fixed our tent. We got back into our sleeping bags and not five minutes later, our tent rolled down the hill again!

When we got back to camp the next day, I went windsurfing. The wind was quite strong that day and all of a sudden I found myself very far from the beach. The counsellors had to come and rezcue me in a boat!

These are just some of the fun activities at camp. I will be back there in 163 days, but who is counting? Maybe this summer my parents will remember to send me a care package.



Tate at the YMCA discussing his speech with camp staff. (Mother present)



Tate at camp singing the 'frog song' with his cabin (Mother not present)

WORK WEEKEND - ARE YOU READY? - MAY 8—10

It could be referred to as the social event of the year as alumni and friends of the camp gather at the camp to work together to help get the camp ready for a new year of activity. Boats leave from our Walkhouse dock on Friday, May 8th at 6:00 pm and we will return you to the dock right after lunch on Sunday, May 10th.

We will provide you with a bunk and lots of food. All you need bring is a sleeping bag, work clothes and a lot of energy for a full day of work on Saturday and a bit more on Sunday morning. Friday and Saturday evening will be a time to renew friendships, have a bit of fun, and wander the camp grounds to get your John Island fix for another year.

There will be cleaning of downed branches and trees, painting, a bit of light carpentry, tent platforms to put up, and other similar work to do—something for all ages and capabilities. We will provide the required tools.

If you are interested, contact Scott Thomas, Camp Director at scott.thomas@sudbury.ymca.ca



COMMUNITY PARTNERS - AMATOL

Our partners in camping at John Island enrich the camp experience for staff and campers. We have enjoyed working with various groups across Ontario for years, and amongst those we have developed partnerships along the North Shore in many areas— Rona Hardware, LaSalle Secondary School, Amatol and Sudbury Manitoulin Childrens’ Foundation to mention a few. We will highlight one of our partners in each of the next few newsletters as they are helping make John Island a better camp.

Amatol - Camp Friendships that Lasted

By John Schmitt - An Amatol Volunteer

It says a lot about your camp when alumni from another camp adopt it as a second home. Since 2003 a group of alumni from the Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA camps (Wabanaki, Belwood, and Ki-Wa-Y) have come to John Island every spring to volunteer their building/construction skills. These volunteers are members of a group called Amatol that have volunteered their time and skills to 5 different YMCA camps over the past 40 years. Amatol is a group of 30 guys who met at camp as campers or staff and continue 4 decades later to pay back the impact YMCA camping has had on their lives.



John Schmitt

The first Amatol project on a beautiful weekend in early June 2002 was the renovation of the Woods and Beach Leadership cabins. This was also the first project in the 10 year redevelopment of John Island Camp. Since then eight to ten Amatol brothers show up to tackle a new project every spring. The Amatol group has worked on two of the three Rub-A-Dubs, the leadership tent platforms, all the new cabins, all the renovated cabins, Cabin-On-The-Hill, and the Dining Hall. Amatol has often followed the Lasalle High School group and finished projects in time to be used at the Ladies Spa Weekend. Amatol has worked on beautiful sunny days, in snow storms, in clouds of bugs, and on cold rainy days. Yet every year another group shows up to enjoy the solitude, the vistas and the fellowship of being together.

Special thanks to John, John, Jon, James, Jim, Barry, Phil, Scott, Pat, Brad, Scott, Shane, Mark, Cam, Paul, Peter, and especially Bob and John. A 2015 group will be back in late May - possibly to work on a new waterfront equipment storage shelter. It’s always a labour of love at one of the most beautiful places on earth.



2014 Amatol group with a complete renovation of Shickluna cabin - the only original cabin rebuilt in its original size



2012 project - Complete renovation of Eagle-Talon (Sr. Cabin) despite the rain! A joint project of Lasalle Secondary, Amatol and Rotary



2012 Amatol group as they complete their project for the year

TRANSPORTATION OVER THE YEARS

Over the years, moving people and goods has been made difficult because of the amount of soft sand that comprises much of the island. Here is how the problem has been dealt with since 1885.



Residents of John Island during the days of the lumber mill in 1915



"Leapin' Lena" was used to transport building supplies during the construction of the camp



An old Co-op Dairy wagon from Sudbury was pulled by the first tractor to transport supplies



Bill Bavington , Maintenance Director in the late 1950's, and the Allis-Chalmers

When the five Moiles brothers were setting up their lumber mill on John Island in 1885, horses were the only transportation used to carry supplies and people around the island. They pulled wagons of various description most of the year and sleighs in the winter. This was the first recorded mode of transportation on John Island.

Some of the early photographs of the town site and lumber mill show horse drawn carriages and flatbeds doing the majority of transportation of supplies, mail from the incoming steamers, and materials required for the building of everything from dock structures to houses and the mill itself.

A tie to modern day camping at John Island Camp is the area that many campers refer to as the "witch's grave" which was actually the location of the blacksmith's shop. All of the work with shoeing the many horses would be done right on the island, causing a deep supply of black ash from the hot fires required by the blacksmith. Over the years at camp, a number of old and well used horseshoes have been found.

When the Sudbury Y's Men's Club started building John Island Camp back in 1948, horses were not practical as construction was only carried on during the summer months. The club members were very ingenious and managed to salvage an old motorized vehicle despite it being in a major state of disrepair. The old coverless gasoline motor, tireless wheels and, non-upholstered seat frames were put in perfect running order and "Leapin' Lena" became a camp fixture during the many years of camp construction. It was fixed up to carry most of the heavier supplies that were needed to build everything from the first outhouse to the dining hall. Not only was it a real work horse, but a source of much fun amongst the members of the Y's Men's Club as they laboured to build the camp. Today it sits in a place of honour in a special spot beside the Leadership Training Centre/Craft Shop and the newly renovated camp museum.

"Leapin' Lena" was supported by another John Island Specialty -an old Co-operative Dairy wagon pulled by the first tractor of John Island (an Allis Chalmers). This combination also transported the building supplies from the boats in bay to the campsite. Leapin' Lena, the dairy wagon and the Allis-Chalmers tractor were invaluable throughout the construction stage of the camp.

Once the camp opened in 1954, the original Allis Chalmers tractor remained active and pulled trailers full of camp luggage from the back dock to the camp. Generator fuel, food supplies, etc. were also transported to the main camp by the trusty tractor and a trailer. In order to keep the tractor functioning, it was occasionally taken into Sudbury for an overhaul and servicing. A few young camp staff were quite surprised one

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ON JOHN ISLAND - 1885 - 2014

afternoon when returning to school downtown and they saw the JIC tractor being driven on downtown streets after servicing. "John Island Camp" was beautifully painted on each side of the tractor, but no one seemed to know who painted it there.

For several years the Allis-Chalmers survived hauling luggage for thousands of campers, hundreds of propane tanks, barrels and barrels of diesel fuel for the generator, tons of food and equipment for the kitchen, building supplies and program equipment as well as individuals requiring assistance from the dock to the main camp.

Despite the driving skills of most staff who drove the Allis-Chalmers, getting stuck in the soft John Island sand seemed to be a regular occurrence. There are plenty of us recall digging out the tractor which had become securely stuck with sand up to the rear axle.

Eventually, the lifeline of the camp that many staff and campers had gotten to know as their friend took the fateful trip down the trail of antiquity and was removed from service at the camp. Before long, a brand new (but used) Belarus tractor was purchased to take over the role of camp workhorse. Like the Allis Chalmers tractor before it, it suffered its share of getting stuck, flat tires, and broken trailer hitches. It was soon joined by a second Belarus tractor which was brought on the island to help out where needed, but it was a tractor with a much maligned background.

Thanks to the ingenuity of the camp maintenance director at the time, Jody Waddell, this second Belarus was outfitted with a new homemade cover for the engine, lights, and other essentials to become a functioning tractor. But the need for the big tractors for getting around the campsite was doomed and they were soon to be saved for special "heavy duty" use.

Thanks to the generous gift to the camp in the 1990's of 2 slightly used Yamaha quads, the entire transportation system on the island and the impact on the environment was changed. There had always been doubt as to whether a quad could survive the many uses it would be put to at the camp, but any doubts were soon put to rest.

The quads have been found to be a safer, more economical and more efficient way to transport goods as required on the island. They can pull the same trailers whether empty or full of propane tanks, food or luggage. They are versatile enough to slip into places not possible with the larger tractors on site. And, with the ability to move faster than the tractors, moving luggage back and forth between the boats and dining hall is considerably faster. As with the tractors, even the quads can not handle every need without occasional difficulty, but most would agree that returning to only tractors is no longer an option.

What will come next as the quads get ready to pass on the baton? We have had some ride their bicycles and some have visited camp in the winter on snow machines. But what will be the next major change in camp transportation?

What about a special camp friendly type of monorail system from the camp dock to the dining hall? Preposterous? What do you think the mill workers would have said in 1885 if you suggested quads would be used by 2000?



One of two Belarus tractors (the Love Bug) used when required on site today.



Taylor Murdock, Site Manager 2012-13 and one of the 2 quads used today



All camp vehicles have their own particular disadvantages



Could this be the next stage of transportation on John Island?

Do you have photos from previous John Island Camp years? We would like to share them either in the newsletter or on the camp Facebook page. Please send electronic copies of any photos you think others would be interested in reviewing to gary.gray@sudbury.ymca.ca.

LIVING IN DUBAI - WORKING AT JOHN ISLAND

by Angie Bischoff

My mother asked me a question recently: “Since when was it that living in the Middle East seemed normal to you?” which made me realized that yes, yes it is normal. I moved to Dubai 5 years ago because of my mom’s job as an airline pilot and we have lived here ever since.

Dubai has a very diverse culture as 85% of the population are expatriates from countries all over the world and just 15% are the local Emiratis. This rich international culture has resulted in Dubai being a very liberal Middle Eastern city as it is often referred to as the ‘Las Vegas’ of the Middle East. It is a luxurious city, catering to the rich and famous, with its unique architecture and expensive cars (which do not seem to improve the driving!)

As a Canadian youth in Dubai, I have found that there are just a handful of us who live in the city and at my British curriculum school I seem to be just one of a few Canadians. There seems to be every other nationally here but my own! Some of my best friends come from countries such as Australia, Scotland, Palestine, South Africa and India. A typical Dubai school classroom is as cultured as the United Nations summit. As well as having an international culture, living in such a central geographical location has allowed lots of travel opportunities, such as visiting fellow John Islander Inés in Barcelona last November!



Angie Bischoff

When I talk about John Island in Dubai, no one really understands the concept of a YMCA summer camp. Of course they all know that iconic “YMCA” song sung by the Village People, so I have to explain that camp is not really like that. The concept of living on an island, with no electricity, minimal showering, and communal eating – ironically - is very foreign to the Dubai ‘expat brats’.

In contrast, John Island has been a large part of my life for ten years now. I am a third generation John Islander following in the footsteps of my father, who was a camper in 1978 and my grandfather in 1954, the first year John Island opened. I look forward to my long summers at camp to avoid the hot desert temperatures that can soar past 50 degrees Celsius. Believe it or not, a polar bear dip in 15 degrees is more enjoyable than those fiery temperatures. However, a similarity is the camp zip line tree (which is about 815m less than the Burj Khalifa) that can seem just as high to some timid campers!



Angie with fellow JIC counsellor Ines in Barcelona

Since I moved to Dubai, John Island has truly become my Canadian “home away from home” where I can just be a stereotypical teenager. The first year that I lived in Dubai I went to John Island camp as a senior camper and since then I have progressed through Greenway, Norquay and the first year of staff all while living abroad. Now that I am starting my second year as camp counsellor, I get to spend my entire summer on the Island - as I hope to for many years to come.

John Island has been my main connection to my Canadian roots and so it is very close to my heart, and I have made lifelong friends there that I will keep far after I move out of Dubai.



Angie in Dubai— the beach could be John Island

JOHN ISLAND MEMORIES—25 years later

by Fraser Mount

My first few camper years all blur together so I don't distinctly remember events from my first time at camp. What I do recall however is getting on the bus at Walkhouse and realizing it was finished. The best two weeks of my life were over and I started crying like a baby! Little did I know just how many times I'd hop on that bus over the next decade or so.

John Island Camp didn't change me... it formed me. I'd be hard pressed to say what most made me who I am today. Parents, schooling and friends or JIC? The answer probably depends on who's asking the question. What I do know is that JIC provided countless Firsts during the my life.

First time being away from home for two weeks. First time making eight great friends in two minutes. First time eating dinner with a spatula. First time using the same three pairs of underwear for two weeks. First time winning a Regatta. First summer crush. First time having a job interview. Last time being a CIT.* First time being responsible for someone's care. First time getting a paycheque. First time having to perform real first aid. First time hiking in the middle of nowhere for a week and savoring the taste of mold encrusted bagels. First time losing a friend. First time getting a MEC mail order delivery. First time climbing. First time being fired. First time getting a job overseas. First time away from Canada for two years. First time I realized that I wouldn't be back the next summer.

A U-haul and two friends brought me out to BC to start my adult life in the fall of 1997. There was no crying like a baby at that point, but there should have been, since it would mark the end of my summers at JIC. We all swore at one point or another that we would never sell out, but that's what JIC was preparing us for.



I wish I could have made it to the 60th reunion! It would have been so much fun to see how we've all gotten old outside, but how young we all still feel inside. Last week I became an Uncle and now I can look forward to sending a Mount kid to NHOJ PMAC in a few years!

*In 1987 John Island tried to start making Leaders in Training instead of Counsellors in Training. We fought the change tooth and nail all summer and ultimately won on account of a lack of updated stationary. I still have the certificate to prove it!



Fraser Mount

Space still available in most sessions

Children and grandchildren of alumni are already registered for many of this coming summer's sessions at John Island. John Island Camp has become a tradition for many families and we invite you to check us out and keep the tradition alive in your family.

WELCOME ROB GROCCIA

We wish to welcome Rob Groccia as the new Interim Manager of Camping Services at the Sudbury YMCA. Rob has responsibility for both YMCA John Island Camp and YMCA Camp Falcona. Rob comes to the job with a myriad of experience in camping. Most recently, Rob has been the Director of YMCA Camp Falcona for the past 3 years. Prior to that, he was on staff at Falcona and John Island for 5 years. He has camp staff experience at YMCA Camp Wanakita, ALIVE Outdoors and other camps in Ontario. Rob graduated from Nippissing University degrees in Education and Environmental Geography.



Rob Groccia

COLIN BOYD SHAFER

We congratulate John Island alumni Colin Boyd Shafer (Staff—2000) On his recent success with two projects in photography— an album entitled “Resilience in a changing Cuba—2015” and his popular photographic project in which he photographed the whole world in Toronto. Colin is a high school teacher in Toronto but has gained much international recognition for his project photographing residents of Toronto from virtually every cultural background. Colin attended our recent 60th anniversary reunion last October.



Colin Boyd Shafer

ALLAN MILES

Allan has been in contact with us recalling his adventures at John Island as part of the Wilderness Program that was centered on Aitken Island in the mid 1960's. Pictured here is one of the groups that paddled to Sudbury from John Island (Allan is bottom right). Since 1967, Allan called the Georgian Bay area his home while he has travelled throughout Canada as an electrical superintendent. Allan moved to Espanola in 1988



The John Island Camp Alumni Newsletter is available 3 ways:

1. On the internet
2. By e-mail
3. Printed and mailed

WE NEED TO KNOW YOUR PREFERENCE(S)

Send us an e-mail to: gary.gray@sudbury.ymca.ca

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We all know that camp friendships last a lifetime.

However, time can separate us and send us to unknown addresses and even distant countries.

Send us an e-mail about yourself—where you live and what you are doing and whatever else you would like to share with those who you may have lost touch with. We have an active mailing list of over 750 alumni and hundreds more check us out on the John Island website.

You can contact us at: gary.gray@sudbury.ymca.ca



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For past newsletters - visit the Alumni section of the John Island website.