



Fall 2003

Alumni Newsletter

WE'RE ALMOST 50!

Over 50 years ago, a group of dedicated people in the Sudbury Y's Men club decided that they'd like to construct a summer camp for the young people of Sudbury. They spent time researching other YMCA camps to find the best program designs, the best cabin designs, and the best way to lay out the site.

After negotiating with Mrs. Bell of Sudbury who owned the Spanish Lumber Company, they agreed to purchase the camp for \$10,000, a large sum of money in the late 1940's. After they completed the purchase, Mrs. Bell then unexpectedly donated the money back to the Y's Men to assist with the construction of the camp.

Construction began in earnest and volunteers traveled to the camp for many weekends of construction. In 1954 the camp opened to the first eager campers.

Since 1954 many thousands of campers have experienced the 'magic' of John Island and many counsellors, cooks, boat drivers, maintenance staff, program staff and directors have worked hard to keep the magic alive. Grandchildren of our first campers and great-grandchildren of our first staff members now attend the camp.



**DAVE WARD—DIRECTOR, YMCA CAMPING SERVICES
JIC '92-'03**

This coming year will be our 50th anniversary and the time has come to celebrate!

A steering committee of alumni has formed and is already planning our special events for the spring of 2004. Make sure to put aside the weekend of June 12 and 13, 2004 in your calendar and plan to be in Sudbury for a Saturday night Gala evening of catching up with old friends and celebrating the past 50 years. We'll also have special visits on both the Saturday and Sunday to John Island to help bring back even more memories.

If you would like to help out with the planning or help in tracking down all of our alumni, we would sure be happy to have you. Please get in touch with us at the camp office (705) 674-8315 or by email at camp@sudbury.ymca.ca.

You can also keep an eye on our special website <http://www.johnisland.ymca.ca/50years/> for more details about the event and tasks with which we can use a hand.

We really hope to see you next spring!



The 1907 JIC Baseball Team



THE NEXT 50 YEARS

As you will read in this newsletter, next June we will celebrate 50 years of John Island camping. This is a tremendous accomplishment, and it staggers the mind to think of the thousands of girls and boys that have enjoyed summer camping – John Island style. But as we celebrate the past, we must continue to plan for the future and the next 50 years of John Island campers.

As part of the strategic plan of the YMCA, the Board of Directors will be examining options for reinvesting into John Island Camp. The plan will examine future markets, program streams and current trends, the site and its

components, and the potential for fundraising. The possibilities for replacement and refurbishing of buildings, facilities, program sites and infrastructure will be examined. The past 50 years have left their marks on our cabins, the crowded dining hall and kitchen, the kybos and showers, and our strained electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems. It will be a big task requiring vision and energy – but no bigger than the task that was accomplished 50 years ago.

We want our Alumni to be involved in this exciting redevelopment planning. The Board of Directors is looking for interested Alumni that



JOHN SCHMITT—CEO, YMCA SUDBURY
JIC '02-'03

would be willing to be part of a planning task group to prepare a proposal for the future of John Island Camp.

If you are interested in volunteering your time for this important task, please contact David Ward or John Schmitt at 673-9136, or through our email at dward@sudbury.ymca.ca or jschmitt@sudbury.ymca.ca.

Our commitment to John Island Camp is stronger than it was 50 years ago because we have a new energy in our Alumni. Look for more information on the future of John Island in the coming months!

FROM JIC TO THE BAY!

This year will mark the tenth year of YMCA John Island Camp's River Norquay Leadership development program. This program has been one of John Island Camp's most popular programs and has given the opportunity to many leaders and staff to visit some of the most remote places in Ontario and Manitoba. YMCA John Island Camp has long held the belief that campers can learn and be challenged through outtripping programs and the River Norquay option takes this notion to the extreme. Participants are responsible for leading portions of the trip and challenge themselves physically, mentally, and socially while completing these journeys. The beautiful scenery, incredible flora and fauna as well as the isolation and the distance covered combine to make these trips very unique, but it is the people who make the experience unforgettable.

It is difficult to describe the bonds that are forged during the trip, even though the group may not agree all the time in the end there is always a sense of teamwork and reliance on others that strengthen the friendships created on these endeavours.

The Norquay program has grown in popularity over the years and now John Island selects 20 youths from a pool of forty applicants to participate on one of two trips each summer. The program has even been the subject of an award winning documentary which Christine Persaud, one of the leaders, filmed and produced while leading a group down the Seal River in 2000. Her film entitled "Surfing the Seal" won the Waterwalker Film Festival in 2003.

I will always have fond memories of all of the four trips that I was fortunate enough to lead and one of



COLIN VEEVERS—CAMP DIRECTOR 2003
JIC '93-'03



Cabin 3 of Junior section: Girls called this their intermediate section one year.

the greatest rewards for me from these programs is to watch the development of the people who participated on trips with me. The success of these leaders helps to cement in my mind the value of the program in delivering on the John Island mission statement of developing a lasting and positive effect on values and attitudes.

WOODS LIT CABIN GETS A FACE LIFT!

It was originally at Y Land on Lake Ramsey and made it's way to John Island when Y Land closed down. The Wood's LIT cabin has served many Leadership Participants at camp over the years. Our Greenway program, the first year of leadership development at John Island has grown over the years to now accommodate over 60 campers each summer in 5 different groups. The cabin's had a lot of wear and tear.

This spring a talented group of volunteers made their way to John Island to breath new life into the cabin. Over the course of a weekend a new roof and new siding was put on the cabin (yes, unfortunately the many tributes professing love of Dez Hann on the

inside were lost in the process). The cabin was sub-divided and can now accommodate two groups at a time.

We now have a great cabin that should last another 50 years!



MEMORIES OF YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP



BRIAN JONES
JIC '77-'79, '95-'03

"How did your experience at John Island Camp effect you?"

When this question was posed to me this year, I thought for a moment and decided that mostly it created great memories; memories upon which I have built belief systems that I use in my daily life. Although it was twenty six years ago that I first spent a summer at JIC as a counsellor, these memories are vivid.

Memories of the beauty of the North Channel and all the areas around and including John Island reminds me to appreciate the fragile environment that must be preserved.

Memories of the people who shared the experiences each summer on the Island taught me the value of working together and sharing in common goals.

The many and varied camping experiences provided confidence to lead and to take chances. The magic of PMAC NHOJ is evident each and every time I return to the Island and observe the staff.

Many of the friendships that were created have endured time and others have faded. The question of "where are they now?" comes to mind often.

Memories of tragedy taught me to appreciate that life is short and we

must value our time and our influence on others.

Memories of youthful adventure as a teenager helped me to find an identity as I moved into post secondary school and on with life.

So valuable were these memories that I have returned for eight consecutive "family camps" with my wife Sandy and children Jason and Kristen. They have had the opportunity to create their own memories and to have fun.

Thank you John Island and congratulations on this anniversary!

MEMORIES OF YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP

 JANE (WEBSTER) DAVEY
JIC 50'S & 60'S

When Gary asked me to write a few words about my fondest memories of John Island, my daughter Katy had just returned from her Norquay trip on the Winisk River. Katy, like me, can never get enough of the John Island. She wanted desperately to be back on the Island or better still, back "on trip". I knew exactly how she felt. She really didn't have to say a word. I know how hard it is to say good-bye to friends with whom you have shared a cabin, a tent, a canoe, a few laughs... even a few tears.

John Island has played a very important part of my life and it was important to me that my kids share the "John Island magic" too. Jamie, Taylor and Katy began their "JIC" careers with Little Guys and Gals. The boys later became part of the maintenance team while Katy's goal is to be a camp counsellor next summer.

My camping years took place in the late 50's and early 60's. In those days the boys went to camp in July and the girls went in August. None of this boys and girls together stuff!

It always seemed to me that the boys were there longer! Two of my dearest friends went to camp with me... Janet Thomson (Bolton-Evans now) and Jane Edgar (Earle-Wilcox). From the minute we stepped off the "Kismet" the island had a calming effect on me... the smell of the pines, the sound of the water lapping against the shore and the feel of the sand scrunching against my toes as I waded through it... all of these things made me feel so very welcome.

I called Janet the other night and we began to reminisce. We talked about Scotty (Ralph Erskine) who patiently taught us how to canoe and to sail in those old wooden

dingys. We remembered campfires where she would play her guitar and we would sing under an umbrella of stars and dazzling northern lights. We remembered practising our "duck dives" in the Back Bay so that we could get our Junior Lifesaving badge. We remembered how we walked in single file and without a word to Chapel Point every Sunday wearing our "whites". We remembered singing "There is an island far away" as we entered the dining hall for lunch, 'tuck' after lunch and ... the dreaded rest hour. Somehow we were never able to be still and often were caught climbing the rafters by our frustrated counsellor! We remembered giggling so hard that we'd have to make a mad dash for the "john" late at night. We remembered winning the clean cabin award and hour cabin and me winning the honour camper award. One of our most memorable times was our canoe trip to Oak Bay with Marg Glover and Judy Church. That C.I.T. summer was the best.

Judy was our counsellor and what a summer that was. Our last night that summer was a night to remember. The moon was full and we were restless. We got a little crazy and did some silly things. The funniest one was lifting several canoes up to the staff cabin porch and pushing them against the door so that no one could get out in the morning. If they could not get out our hope was to stay just a little longer at camp.

I have watched my children come home from camp over the years and have listened to them tell me about their best times at camp. The songs have changed over the years and some of the games and ghost stories, but the friendships that they have made and the feelings that they have are the same.

I feel so very blessed to have had those wonderful summers on an island far away... that still calls to me each summer.



Learning and fun at the dining hall fireplace in the 50's.

JOHN ISLAND ROMANCES—ENDURING RELATIONSHIPS

We have tried to count the number of marriages that have resulted from friendships that were initiated at JIC, but lose count every time. We can all recall at least a few JIC romances that ended up in

marriage - or some friendships that were created at camp that developed after camp.

We would like to honour those couples that had their beginnings at

John Island. If you know of any, please e-mail camp@sudbury.ymca.ca and make sure we get them on our list.

MEMORIES OF YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP



REV. DR. JIM SINCLAIR
JIC 50'

Sudbury, the 1950's. After school, Saturday morning. A Millie Fitzgerald greeting, the electric buzzer letting Mac and I downstairs. Ron Mahood razzing us in the locker room, and then Ralph Erskine leading us in the gym.

That's the way it was. It seemed we were at the "Y" 25 hours a day, eight days a week. Fall, Winter and Spring.

In the summer, though, we were at John Island. The island is still in my bones. For many reasons. The memories are only part of it; they should be enough in themselves.

My brother and I sometimes had the privilege of going along with Mr. Burgess and other volunteers on the work party weekends before camp opened. I vividly remember

unwrapping the straw and burlap from the first 17 foot Chestnut canoes on one of those trips. Egg Island was always an exciting venture in the Kismet with the Mitchell boys. On one especially memorable trip to that island we experienced high seas I'd never encountered before. The result was I have never suffered from motion sickness since!

Did I mention Mrs. Miner's cooking? I discovered one time that no crusts were served in the dining hall with the toast. Thinking no one liked them she kept them for stuffing... and as a result stuffed me exclusively with crusts, my favourite part of the loaf, for several summers.

The memories were one thing. The meanings have been as lasting, and

even more influential. Several years ago, as my wife Donna and I retraced some of the local canoe routes, camping on those sandy stretches sprinkled around the islands in both the North and Walesback channels, I was aware of how much my love of creation came from those John Island summers. The importance, too, of early community-building experiences for children and young people is a direct learning from those "Y" days, whether in town or on Georgian Bay.

I cherish wonderful friendships from those summers, and valuable learnings at a formative time, about leadership and service.

**Jim is now the General Secretary, General Council The United Church of Canada.*

THE JOHN ISLAND CRUISER MAKES ITS FIRST VOGAGE

Many of our staff members from the last 15 years will know Mark Robinson camp volunteer, camp parent and teacher from Elliot Lake. Over the past summer, Mark spent many hours constructing an incredible 24 foot cedar strip canoe for the camp which saw it's first voyage this fall. Designed to be able to carry an entire cabin group at once, it's a great addition to the fleet! Thanks Mark!



MEMORIES OF YMCA JOHN ISLAND CAMP



FRAZER MOUNT
JIC 80'S, 90'S

Without a doubt YMCA John Island Camp shaped me into the person I am more than any other place or experience I have had. While most of the details from my first camp session are shrouded in the blending of summer after summer, I clearly remember my very first boarding and then departure on Ironsides. I GET TO RIDE IN THAT! COOL! Leaving was another story. I am sure it was the first time in my life where I publicly bawled my eyes out with unabashed grief. For me, riding that boat was a fundamental JIC warm fuzzy that carried me through the years. (Especially hanging out on

the bow or roof where being scalded on the exhaust pipe was an initiation rite you took part in only once.)

Sometimes I cringe at the proverbial "what if my parents had not sent me to JIC?" How I make decisions, the way I treat others and myself, my rarely understood wacky ingenuity (that leaks out at the most inopportune times), what deep friendship and support means to me, an IALAC* that just won't quit and finally my MEC fetish & absolute aversion to peach juice... The root of my life skills and core values you will find embedded in

the golden grains of John Island sand.

I am now out on the coast in Beautiful British Columbia, enjoying the calm and serenity of a 9-5 office job in a well respected insurance company owned by a major bank. I can't remember the last time I cleaned a double seater, sorted my lunch leftovers into liquid and solid waste buckets, hauled more luggage (and garbage) than is humanly possible, or chanted "We have no use...FOR YOUR BULL NOW!"

Well... there is always next weeks

CAMP SONGS ARE MUSIC TO OUR EARS

In 1954, those of us who were around at John Island will remember that we had a Music Director as a staff position. In 2003, for those of us who were still around, just about every staff member considered themselves a music director and songs abounded.

Many of those camp tunes never leave us. We just keep singing or humming them throughout our life.

Through the years new songs are added to the mythical song book of John Island. Amongst those tunes

are songs written about the camp itself and which are sung by teary-eyed campers and staff every closing campfire. Here are a couple of those camp songs which will certainly bring back a few memories of camp to most of us.

Leavin' on Ole' Ironsides

*Pack your bags, get ready to go
Make your centrepieces for the show
Put on your whites, tradition's here to stay*

*Chorus: To sniff, and cry a tear
Tell me you'll be back next year
Make new friends, I know they'll never end*

*Cause we're leavin' on Ole' Ironsides
Bus is waiting on the other side
Say goodbye and we'll be on our way*

*Here we sit upon the beach
There's no one left for us to teach
There's always sun, but the kids they make the fun. . .(Chorus)*

*We'll think about it, now and then
We know the camp will never end
We've done a lot, but there's always more to do. . .(Chorus)*

*Then the counsellors they'll be leaving
They'll be crying, they'll be grieving
They'll cry a tear, but they'll be back next year. . .(Chorus)*

John Island is the Best

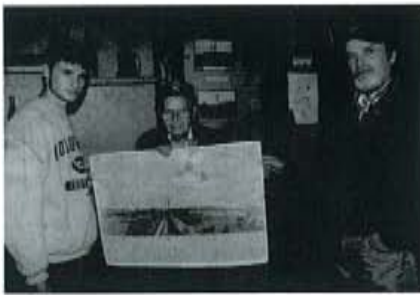
(Chorus)

*John Island is the best
When I'm here I forget the rest
When I leave I start to cry
And I know why . . . its the place I want to be.
When the mist rolls away
Georgian Bay seems to say
Get out of bed and have some fun
And soon we'll see the rising sun
Na na na na na na na
Na na na na na na na (Chorus)*

*When the skies are dark and grey
All my hopes don't fade away
I have my friends to help me through
And with their love they will turn to blue
Na na na na na na na
Na na na na na na na (Chorus)*

*On a cold winter's day
I think of the memories of the way
We first met on those island shores
And I met the friend the I adore
. . .and will forever more
Na na na na na na na (Chorus)*

THE MOILES LEGEND COMES TO LIFE



We have all heard the story of the "Stolen Mill" and the Moiles brothers. Moiles Harbour still bears the name of that infamous family. Historical legends emanating from that mystical mill have made interesting camp stories for decades.

Visitors have walked on the John Island sand during camping sessions and many of those legends have come alive as those who were here in person spun their tales – often with a bit of extra spice.

None has been as fascinating as the story told by J.C. Moiles who visited the camp in 1995 and told us the story of how the mill was relocated from Detour Michigan to John Island (after all, how could John Moiles steal a mill he already owned?) J.C. is the grandson of John Moiles himself and stepped foot on John Island for the first time

in 1995 to see for himself what he had heard so much about from his grandfather.

As part of the John Island archives being built, a taped interview with J.C. Moiles in his 82nd year reveals the "truth" about the movement of the mill. It is more interesting and captivating than some of the yarns we have been told over the years.

We are hoping to have portions of the taped discussion with J.C. Moiles available for listening at the 50th Anniversary Celebration in June, 2004.

MEMORIES OF JOHN ISLAND CAMP



KATY DAVEY
JIC '95-'03

I have been a John Island camper for as long as I can remember. I have gone for eleven years now and every year has brought new memories and new friendships that last a lifetime.

This summer I was lucky enough to be chosen, out of many people, to be able to go on the Norquay River trip. Many people apply for the Norquay program because it is a once in a lifetime chance to do something that not many people can say they have ever done. Also you meet the greatest people ever. I will never forget the sun kissed faces of everyone on the trip. Brian O'neill and Nikki Thomson were our trip leaders and then Anders Whist, Alan Samarau, Cooper Robinson, Nigel Rodde, Dylan Fowler, Kim McKone, April Martin, Lauren Andersen, Emily Grace and me, Katy Davey were the rest of the Norquays. I still keep in touch with everyone from my Norquay group; we were more of a family than a group. We loved everyone and we never had any real arguments. We were constantly in tears from

laughing at Nigel and Alan cawing at each other or at Anders dancing while Cooper played some Weezer on his guitar. We spent our days paddling down the Pipestone River, the Labyrinth and the Winisk River. Even on the toughest days we had a good laugh either at Nigel sprawled out along the rocks after falling because he wanted to be the first to get gorp or at Alan's ridiculous postcard selections. At the campsites you could always find the usual Uecker boys in the middle of a game and Kim and April and I making muffins for lunch the next day and Brian, Nikki and Lauren with their noses in a book and Alan and Emily writing in their journals. We had fun no matter what we were doing and where we were. We always picked the best campsites too. We would pick them only if there was a prime Ultimate Frisbee area or enough room to play little Buddha. We were always doing something active. When we stopped for lunch we always played games whether it was everyone's it or just wrestling with Brian. I think the part of trip I'll remember as one of

the best times was when we were in Webequie. Just playing Ultimate Frisbee and soccer with those kids was something I'll always cherish just getting to know the people there and seeing a different culture. It is something a lot of people will never get to experience and a lot of people don't understand these cultures. I will also never ever forget the day Nigel pulled his oversized purple raincoat out of the raincoat bag.

John Island has defiantly helped me with my people skills. I would not be the person I am today if I had never gone to John island. I have the best memories in the world from John Island and the best part is I will always have those memories and all the pictures are there to help me remember too. I have never had a bad experience at John Island and I hope it remains that way forever.

**Katy was one of 20 participants who in two groups, traveled the Winisk River from Pickle Lake to Peawanuk with John Island Camp this summer.*

JOHN ISLAND CAMP 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION JUNE 12 & 13, 2004



ISLAND OPEN HOUSES

Saturday 9:00 am to 2:00 pm

Sunday 11:00 am to 5:00 pm

Tours and Activities For All Ages

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Saturday June 12th, 6:00 pm—1:00 am

Location: T.B.A.

Reception, Supper, Celebration, Dancing

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR:

Anniversary Steering Committee

Open House Committee

50th Anniversary Celebration Committee

Marketing & Communication Committee

TO HELP PLEASE CALL

705-674-6171



YMCA Sudbury



1997 Greenways