



# THE BIRCH BARK

P.O. Box 148, Waterford, Maine 04088

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

## THE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER OF BIRCH ROCK CAMP

### MARK “THE WEAZ” SUTHERLAND

Head Counselor Mark “The Weaz” Sutherland ’99 bolted his breakfast and ducked out of the Lodge that morning, summer of ’08. He had stayed up till the wee hours the night before, plugging away at his big tech project. In the morning, the Weaz figured he’d hop back on his computer in Omar’s while the camp enjoyed a hearty breakfast. When it was time for him to do morning announcements, he hightailed it back to the Lodge. He yanked the screen door open and rushed inside as the door smacked shut. To the Weaz’s astonishment, the Lodge was silent and utterly empty.

The Weaz’s huge project that summer was totally self-directed; he was building his *Programatron*, computer software for keeping track of all Birch Rock records, files and tasks. According to Matt Clifford ’05, the Weaz was “hyper-logistical” — always looking for better ways to organize people, schedules and records. Harry Netzer ’01 praised the Weaz for creating an “inspection matrix” to bring fair, objective analysis to the daily Best Bed and Best Cabin selection.

So, what happened that infamous morning, when the Weaz lost track of everyone, while absorbed in keeping track of everything? Thomas Joyce ’89, the master prankster, is what. Thomas had observed how the Weaz frequently slipped away during meals to work on the Programatron. This was unusual head counselor behavior, thought Thomas, and it presented an opportunity for some joking around. When the Weaz disappeared, Thomas quieted the rowdy

breakfast crowd and directed them to file noiselessly down the inner staircase and out the Lodge’s lower door. The whole camp tiptoed down the paths and hid on the far side of Lower Camp.



*Circa 2007*

The Weaz’s reaction to the prank surely was a good laugh (his actual reaction is lost to the mists of time). He had loved being a camper, and wanted every Birch Rocker to have just as much fun under his watch. But here’s the thing: the Weaz was and is a brainy, serious-minded introvert — who can nonetheless bust loose in a Sponge Bob Square Pants costume and, famously, as a very pretty Hermione in Harry Potter skits at Campfire.

Fast forward to 2021, and the Weaz, now Dr. Mark Sutherland, is an attending physician and assistant professor at the

University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore. In 2014, after Duke undergrad and Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, he threw himself into a triple residency in Emergency Medicine/Internal Medicine/Critical Care at UMMC for six years.

Now Dr. Sutherland divides his time between the emergency room and the ICU, treating patients in myriad crises. He is, in fact, one of America’s vaunted frontline workers treating COVID-19 patients from the very beginning. His wife Ellie (aka Dr. Danielle Sutherland, a scholar of Urban Education and Teacher Preparation) describes him as an introvert who is revered for the compassionate way he puts himself out to the nth degree for patients, their loved ones, and medical students under his tutelage. “*Help the Other Fellow* governs so much of who he is,” Ellie explained; “He got those formative experiences at camp.” Mark himself credits Birch Rock for helping him understand the primacy of human connection at camp and now at the bedside of critically ill patients.

How does Mark cope with the stress of caring for patients in life-or-death situations, in the midst of a pandemic? “By doing,” says Ellie. And by balancing his clinical work with his other passion — medical IT and logistics. Mark serves in three additional roles at the hospital: Informatics/Health Information Technology, Medical Director of his physician group, and Associate Program Director for the triple

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MARK "THE WEAZ" SUTHERLAND  
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residencies that he had completed. Most summers, the Weaz, Ellie and their two Labrador Retrievers head up to Maine to spend time with his parents on Norway Lake, and to visit his BRC mentor **Rich Deering** and old buddies on the shores of Lake McWain.

The Weaz's Programatron lived on until a year ago, when all camp record-keeping was switched over to CampMinder. Till the final switch, the Programatron maintained Birch Rock's definitive list of all campers and their badges earned. What a legacy!

By Francie Campbell P'00 with reporting by Thomas Joyce.



## REFLECTIONS FROM THE ROCK

By Rich Deering  
Alumni & Community Director '73

Everyone wants to know if Birch Rock is really opening for all campers this summer. My answer is simple: "We are indeed!"

We're in excellent shape for the 2021 season because our staff knows how to do this. Birch Rock was one of the few camps that operated last year. We tested the waters with COVID-safe programs: a small, short-term Leadership Camp for the senior cohort, and a modified Maine Wilderness Adventure for 15 to 17 year olds. Now we're ready to welcome back all ages to the Hillside. Birch Rock is grateful to our state and national camp associations, public health advisors and government officials who've guided us on mitigating risk and developing best safety practices. We're looking at another summer of masked, hand sanitized and socially-distanced communal living — luckily it's second nature to all of us by now. And our stalwart Leadership Campers and staffers from last summer tell us they had an awesome experience, even with the safety rigamarole. What better place to be locked down than BRC?!

2021 is Birch Rock's proud 95th season on the shores of Lake McWain. For nearly a century we've followed our inspiring slogan, hanging prominently over the *Allen Kearns Library*: **Look-up, Laugh, Love and Lift!** That's helped us weather some difficult times. If there is one thing we've learned from this pandemic, it's that while we cherish our venerable traditions and rituals, our camp is also able to adapt nimbly to changing times and new demands.

So what's ahead for 2021? The eager return of veteran campers and counselors, and the introduction of about 50 new campers. The Cubs, Maine Wilderness Adventure and Family Camp programs are full steam ahead. For the community-at-large, we'll maintain virtual connections with notable alumni talks and Decade Gatherings via our various social media platforms. When the official 2021 State of Maine and CDC protocols for camps are released, we'll fine-tune our program to ensure a second COVID-free camp season. Birch Rock is ever stronger, with the loyal support of families, alumni, trustees and dedicated friends who believe in our mission: to help boys build self-confidence, character and supportive friendships in the Maine woods.

Good health to you and our entire Birch Rock family!  
Rich



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## MATT'S WHALE

By Matt Straut '10



“Swim, Matt, Swim!” You may be wondering where I’m swimming and why people are cheering me on. It’s the summer before my sophomore year, and I have attended a traditional boys camp called Birch Rock in Waterford, Maine for the past eight summers. Here at Birch

Rock, I have learned the traits of a gentleman and many other life lessons which I hold “near and dear.”

I arrive for the summer with one significant goal, to swim my “Whale.” The Whale is a 5.8 mile swim around the perimeter of Lake McWain. Each day, I train for two hours trying to develop endurance and improve my swim strokes. Through cramps, cold water, and other aches and pains, I push myself through all the training. After five long weeks, the day finally arrives! Before dawn, my favorite counselor Jake wakes me up. I know what he’s here for, and I’m ready. As the rest of camp is still fast asleep, we head to the kitchen, where I anxiously choke down some breakfast. Fuel for the journey...

We make our way down to the waterfront. I don’t have time for cold feet, so I dive right in. As I start this marathon swim, I overhear a counselor on the dock remark, “This may be the windiest day Lake McWain has ever seen.” Sort of appropriate I suppose, as nothing has ever come very easy for me. However, I’m not letting this stop me! Determination and hard work are the virtues that I carry with me always.

I push myself through the first leg going against a strong wind. I become hopeful that turning the first corner will put the wind at my back allowing me to save some energy. I’m wrong! As the wind actually gets stronger, I come to the realization that it will be in my face for the next two miles. Once again, nothing is going to stop me. Another mile... my obliques are burning. My legs are so cramped and locked up that I’m swimming with just my arms. The wind is starting to get the best of me, but I’m not going to let it. Failure is not an option.

At the four-mile mark, I somehow regain the use of my legs and I find another gear. The camp dock comes into sight, and there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Through the wailing of the wind and my swallowing of a LOT of lake water, I hear it... I know exactly what the bell is for - to alert the entire camp that I’m

nearing the dock. Eighty-five boys pour down the hill to the waterfront to “bring me in.” “Swim, Matt, Swim,” they cry. Everyone who has spent the last five weeks with me is on the catwalks. My family is there too. Every part of me is sore. The wind and waves have been beating me up for the last 3 hours and 48 minutes, but I’m almost there. The cheers get louder as the dock gets closer. Ten feet... everything hurts... five feet... almost there... 3, 2, 1... I did it! My counselor and my best friend are waiting at the docks to cover me with towels and pull me out of the water. My legs instantly lock up again, and I can barely walk. They guide me through the crowd of campers and counselors congratulating me for finishing my Whale.

After a very long 3 hours and 50 minutes, I have achieved my goal. All the hard work and determination finally pays off. I allow myself to be proud. I have earned this. In a way, this swim demonstrates the kind of person that I am – a determined, hard-working young man who perseveres despite the difficulties of the task at hand. I take these virtues with me everywhere I go. Failure is a choice, not an option!

*Matt is currently a freshman at Providence College in RI majoring in Business Management.*

### WISH LIST

- Framed Backpacks (\$100 per)
- Tennis & Baseballs (\$100)
- Outdoor Basketballs (\$25 per)
- 3 to 4 Man Tents (\$250)
- Bike Tools and Repair (\$200)
- Art & Nature Supplies
- Used Pick-Up Truck
- New 2-Way Radio (\$300 each)
- 2 Nova Rig Pack Windsurfers (\$1000 each)
- 2 Techno 148 Windsurfers (\$2500 each)
- Camp Generator (\$5000)
- New 500 Gallon Commercial Ice Maker (\$3500)

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

Please contact us at [birchrock@birchrock.org](mailto:birchrock@birchrock.org) if you might be able to accommodate any of those wishes.

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## CAMP DURING THE PANDEMIC

By Noah Protas '14



It was May and my mom told me that the 2020 camp season had been canceled. Birch Rock always propels me through the hurdles of the school year, and knowing that I'd be unable to go because of the pandemic was crushing. But soon after this my mom received word that

there *would* be a camp session for the oldest campers. I began to count down the days until I'd be at Birch Rock again.

Early on, it was clear that Leadership Camp would be a big change from prior summers. Initially it was hard to stay in a small cohort restricted from interacting closely with other campers; however, I was lucky enough to be surrounded by the people who had helped to make camp so important to me. Playing basketball up on the court or building roaring fires in bushcraft with my closest friends added to the value of the activities. Mealtimes, which in a normal year allow for friendships outside your age group, worked to solidify the bonds among my cabin-mates.

Last summer was significant in another way. It was our last year as campers, and our Whales weighed heavily on our minds. In a normal season campers would have over four weeks to prepare for the swim; this year, it was under three. On top of this, I'd be the first to tell you that swimming has never been something that I excelled at; waterfront activities only became routine in my sign-ups in my last two years as a camper. Needless to say, the Whale was daunting to my peers and me. Roughly a week and a half into the session, the Whales began to go with such frequency that it seemed almost every day at the crack of dawn a groggy counselor asked a camper, "Want to go for a swim?" Soon enough, the day to swim came up for me. It was a beautiful day on Lake McWain; the sunlight cast spiraling shapes onto the sand in the shallow areas. At first I worried about having to get pulled out of the water, but soon that anxiety faded away. It is safe to say that finishing the Whale is one of my proudest accomplishments (not to mention narrowly beating my brother's time) and the group of people who swam it with me I will not soon forget.

Leadership Camp was one of my favorite summers at the Rock, and proved a fitting way to finish my experience as a camper. As my counselor Jack Duggan said, it embodied "the essence of camp" — a statement that proved only more true as time passed.

## COMMUNITY

By Abe Tolkoff '14



Three words come to mind when defining any strong community: passion, dedication, and resilience. And when I think of the word *community*, Birch Rock Camp comes to mind as a place that embodies the word to the fullest extent. My first summer at camp, I

came two weeks after my three cabinmates and found myself surrounded by a whirlwind of activities, meals, and general swims. However, within a few days, my confidence within this group grew, and I found myself exceedingly comfortable walking up the hill, playing camp-wide games in the evenings, and sailing on the lake. Returning to the same place, summer after summer, my connection and appreciation for the larger camp community grew. I met kids from my own hometown, adults who had been campers themselves, and staff members who proudly wore their decades of summers spent on that hill. I looked to each of these role models with reverence. Not only were they incredibly funny and caring, but they woke up each morning with a renewed energy and sense of purpose that was palpable as the camp made its groggy way to the flagpole before breakfast. Every moment at camp was spent intentionally, and each group activity geared towards building relationships with the people around me.

The truest test of our camp community was not during one of these summers, but rather in the void that COVID-19 provided in 2020. In the weeks leading up to the eventual decision to suspend the typical camp operations for the summer, my nights were spent messaging friends who were also planning to be counselors for the first time. We organized social media posts, group campfire Zooms, and other creative ways to keep the camp spirit alive during lockdown. Even after camp was cancelled, we all stayed in touch, and the camp spirit remained strong even without our typical summer reunification. Needless to say, for the camp to have remained just as connected after two years apart is the most compelling evidence for the strength of the community. As I look ahead to this summer, my (delayed) first as a counselor, I see myself jumping into the excitement that is a day at camp. I look forward to witnessing the passion of my peers as we collectively keep that magic alive for a new generation of young campers. Being at camp is a chance for me to shed my serious school-year persona and to take up the mantle of doing things just for the sake of having fun. It is my escape from the world and it is always there to welcome me back, year after year, summer after summer.

## LETTERS HOME

By Eric Traub '14



It's been a busy July afternoon and now the familiar sounds of second rest period ring in my ears. I lie back in my hammock outside my cabin and open the latest letter to arrive from home. As I start reading, the noise fades away and suddenly I'm home, sitting by my dining room table where my mom is writing

to me. Hunched over a piece of paper composing my response, I'm struck by my liminal state of being. I am here, at camp, but also at home — yet not fully in either place, but rather somewhere in between. Growing older every summer, being away, and having new experiences, one thing has stayed constant — my dedication to writing daily letters home.

Letters have always been a way to reflect on my experiences, express myself, and in doing so, connect with my family at home while I venture away. Reading through the dozens of letters I have sent home over the past six years, I smile at descriptions of camp traditions, unforgettable days, amazing (and less amazing) counselors, and new friends. My letters are evocative, describing a “party-themed” shower day: “There was a giant strobe light in the showers so it was really hard to see. They were blasting rap music and when I came in they were playing ‘Lose Yourself.’” The pages are filled with observations of people: “He’s smart, inquisitive, eager, kind, polite, reverent, you name it!”

Here’s 16-year-old me as a CIT: “This whole parenting thing brings us together,” I write of my relationship with my co-cabin-counselor. The letters are full of child-like wonder and descriptions of new experiences. “I watched it flop so ferociously. I thought it was going to go off the dock. I held it in my hands (it was slimy) and carefully removed the hook from its mouth, then set it free.” They are satirical, hilarious, and performative, just like our dinner-time conversations at home. Letters allow me to better understand my experiences and satisfy my natural desire to perform, to narrate, to be creative and funny.

Two summers ago, when I was 16, I was accepted to be a CIT at Birch Rock, completing my evolution as a camper and finally putting me in charge of campers instead of being one. My new perspective was reflected in my letters that summer; letters full of the same passion, humor, and delight as in years past, but including new responsibilities, observations, and insights gained through my entry into the staff ranks and into the beginning of adulthood. 11-year-old me jubilantly describes being led on a crosscamp adventure by an older counselor, while 16-year-old me describes leading some of the youngest kids on a rainy day puddle jumping adventure across camp. But even after so many years, my letters were still questioning, wondering, sometimes vulnerable, and as descriptive as ever. “Is this what it’s like to

have kids?” reads an exasperated letter from my first week as a C.I.T. “Do you think they look up to me?” a more somber letter wonders soon after. That summer, writing letters allowed me to reflect on my transition from one side of camp to the other, and similarly on my transition from childhood into at least the beginning of adulthood.

Through six years of letters, I have documented an evolution: a journey from an ecstatic participant to a proud facilitator, from an excitable pre-teen to a budding adult. But although so much has changed along the way, my motivation to write never has. The same desire to observe, describe, criticize, question, entertain, and stay connected with the people I love has remained.

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- Toby Brewster, '60s, S'80s, P'10s, Concord, NH
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- Win Smith, '70s, P'00s, Scarborough, ME
- Bob Tuffy, GP'00s, Hanover, MA
- David Weeks, S'70-90s, P'00s, Ellicott City, MD
- Libby Whitter, P'00s, Cape Elizabeth, ME

# BIRCH ROCK CAMP CUISINE

By Chef Dave Barrette '98-'05



**Chef David Barrette** graduated from *Kimball Union Academy* in New Hampshire in 2005, and earned a BA in Culinary Arts at *Johnson and Wales University* in Rhode Island in '10. Chef Dave then worked for *James Beard Award-Winning Chef Michael Schlow* in Boston and later with *Chef Champ Speidel* in Providence where he honed his skills in *Contemporary American Cuisine*. Dave worked as a Chef at the *Grand Floridian Resort and Spa* in Orlando for seven years. He and his wife Kaitlyn, who also grew up in NH's Upper Valley, moved back home in 2017 to raise daughter **Zoey**. Today, **Chef Dave** and **Kaitlyn Barrette** own and operate **Main Street Kitchens**, the iconic home goods shop in Hanover, NH. Support their fine small company by shopping at [main-street-kitchens.com](http://main-street-kitchens.com)!

## Georges Banks Scallop Crudo with Serrano Aguachile, Cucumber, and Florida Citrus

### AGUACHILE RECIPE:

- ½ cup fresh lime juice (2–3 limes)
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 cup cilantro (half of a large bunch)
- ½ a jalapeño, sliced in half lengthwise - seeds removed
- 1 serrano chili, sliced in half lengthwise (optional for extra spicy)
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

### MAKE THE AGUACHILE MARINADE:

Place the ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth, for a full minute, scraping down sides as necessary. Pass through a chinois.

Slice the scallops thinly and marinate with extra virgin olive and lime juice and a touch of kosher salt.

Slice cucumbers very thin and supreme the oranges.

Plate all together and reserve the Aguachile to pour tableside.



## Panna Cotta Smores

### PANNA COTTA RECIPE::

- 1 cup heavy cream
- .5 cup of sugar
- 1 vanilla bean - scraped
- 8 oz Valrhona chocolate - or any dark chocolate
- 3 sheets of silver gelatin - powder works too!
- ½ pint of mascarpone
- ½ pint of whole plain yogurt
- 1 tbsp coffee liquor
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt

### PLATING:

- 2 graham crackers crumbled and toasted in oven
- 1 marshmallow

### DIRECTIONS:

Put heavy cream, vanilla bean, and sugar into a saucepan and bring up over low to medium heat making sure to stir. Once

incorporated and hot - cover for 1 hour and let it steep.

In a mixing bowl - whip the mascarpone and yogurt together and whip aggressively.

Add bloomed gelatin to the warm cream and sugar mixture and incorporate. Pass through a chinois into the a bowl with just the chocolate and let it melt the chocolate while whisking.

Mix the chocolate cream mixture slowly into the yogurt and mascarpone bowl and whisk to incorporate.

Pass it all through a chinois into silicone molds or glass verrines.

Freeze or chill to activate the gelatin.

Garnish with bruleed marshmallow and graham cracker crumbs.



## 2020 Birch Rock Fund Donors

### THANK YOU! THANK YOU!! THANK YOU!!!

Your generous contribution and support have helped us to sustain and enhance Birch Rock's incomparable summer camp experience. We gratefully acknowledge the following 2020 COVID-Relief, Capital, Endowment, Scholarship and In-kind gifts to the Birch Rock Camp Community.

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## Mark Your Calendars for 2021!



Clean & Pick Up Saturday	May 22
BRC Summer Office Opens	June 1
BRC Staff Orientation	June 16
C.I.T. Orientation	June 20
Opening - First Session / Cubs I	June 27
Cubs Camp I - End	July 10
First Session - End	July 24
Opening 2nd Session	July 25
Maine Wilderness Adventure	
Cubs Camp III	
Cubs Camp III - End	August 7
BRC for Boys & MWA - End	August 14
BRC Family Camp	August 19
BRC Family Camp - End	August 23

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- Send a tax-deductible donation to BRC.
- Promote BRC among friends, neighbors, family and colleagues.
- Refer a prospective camper to 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](http://www.birchrock.org).

