



A nonprofit corporation

# THE BIRCH BARK

Spring 2017

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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 –*

The Birch Rock Community lost a giant on November 18, 2016 – Donald Munn. For over thirty seasons, Don served as the “the human glue” of our physical plant, primary caretaker of our hillside campus, and local community advocate of our camp. Don Munn was Birch Rock Camp. He loved and valued his relationship with generations of Birch Rockers. Most of all, Don treasured the core values of hard work, dedication and helping others. Together with his beloved companion Janice Walker, they built not only a beautiful residential summer camp, but also a legacy of faithful friendships and family for us all.

For me, it is like losing my camp father and lifelong mentor. Don's keen wit, wisdom and blunt responses were always direct and heart-felt. You knew where you stood with Don about anything and everything. Don was loyal. He had immense pride about being a Birch Rock leader and facilitator. If there was ever a maintenance crisis — day or night — Don would be the very first on the scene, ready to deal with the problem and guide us through to a positive resolution. Don's common sense and Yankee ingenuity always found the way to get the job done!

We dedicate this spring edition of the Birch Bark to Donald Munn. We'll miss seeing him rolling down the hillside prior to the first morning bell, sampling the baked goods from the kitchen ladies, roaming the campus with a golden plunger and being the Almighty Mender of Birch Rock Camp.



**DONALD MUNN**  
1935-2016

Birch Rockers have always guided boys toward self-reliance, responsibility and openness to new challenges. But no one at the Rock knew how a boy could tackle responsibility like our late, great Don Munn. If he asked you to do something, he knew you could do it. Not because he knew you to be mechanically gifted, but because he knew that Birch Rockers are a determined bunch with a penchant for hard work. Or at least he made us that way. But Don was not a drill sergeant. He was a cheerful “friend to all,” quick to joke with an infectious laugh. Don was a mentor and role model for all Birch Rockers, and his 30-year relationship with the camp was as natural and deeply-rooted as the towering pines that green the hillside.

Born in the middle of the Depression and growing up on a Massachusetts farm during the Second World War, Don learned the value of work out of necessity. With rationing in effect, his father, Richard, purchased a cow and broiler chickens and raised them on their 25-acre farm to sell milk, cream, butter and meat in the local market. Before and after going to his full-time job as an electrician, his father would milk the cow, which soon became a half-dozen cows, and young Don would tag along

in the car to help deliver on the milk route.

When the war ended, his father, now busier at work, sold the chickens and was about to sell the cows when Don convinced him to keep them and let Don and his younger brothers take over the operation. His brothers weren't as enthusiastic about it, so at the improbable age of ten Don got his real independent start in the dairy business. Don raised and milked cows for the next 37 years.

It wasn't all work growing up. There was still time to “raise the devil” with his neighbor friends and play “Bogeyman” down in the barn cellar, and, later, as a teenager, go on dates and movies and cruise around town in his Ford station wagon.

But he still worked plenty. In addition to going to school (the best part of which, he later said, was getting out at 12:30 every day), he held down an afternoon job at the local First National store, milked the cows when he got home in the evening, and on the weekends picked strawberries, mowed fields, or baled hay with the baler he purchased. And he would make an extra buck now and again by driving one of his younger brothers on his newspaper route when it was raining out.

Don graduated high school, but he wasn't interested going on to college. “If you aren't willing to work, then you aren't going to get anywhere, no matter what kind of education you've got,” he was fond of saying. He kept working, and it wasn't long before he made the acquaintance of a young lady named Judy at the snack bar in town. A ride home became a steady relationship, and, a couple of years later, they married.

Don soon enlisted in the National Guard, which took him more than 50 miles from home for the first time in his life – first to Ft. Dix, New Jersey, and then even farther south to Ft. Jackson, South Carolina. It was a valuable education in itself “as long as you kept your mouth shut and played their silly

*Continued on Page 2*

**Donald Munn...**

*Continued from Page 1*

games," he joked. While he enjoyed the experience, he was never called up to active duty, and was eager to get back home to his now-pregnant wife and the farm up in Massachusetts.

His son, Kerry, was born six months after he returned home, and his daughter, Dawn, came soon after. By the mid-1960s, Don wanted to expand his dairy operation, but land was too expensive. He found that he could buy an entire farm up in Maine for the price of a lot in Massachusetts, so, in 1967, he moved the family up to Waterford, "150 miles from civilization" his friends told him.



*Don with grandson*

Don worked hard on the farm while Judy drove the local school bus. He also got involved in community service, joining the local Masons, Shriner's, Waterford World's Fair Association and raising money for the burn unit at Boston Children's Hospital (who cared for their son when he was injured as an infant). "I wanted everything for my kids that I didn't have," he said. After eight years in Maine, however, he and his wife separated.

In search of companionship, Don met Janice Walker at a dance, and the friendship that clicked that night would grow and remain until his passing four decades and many adventures later. When a debilitating accident forced Don into early retirement at 50, the pair bought a camper and hit the road in the winters, determined to explore every corner of America and meet as many people as they could. "I wish I could hit the camper and just go and go and go," he said.

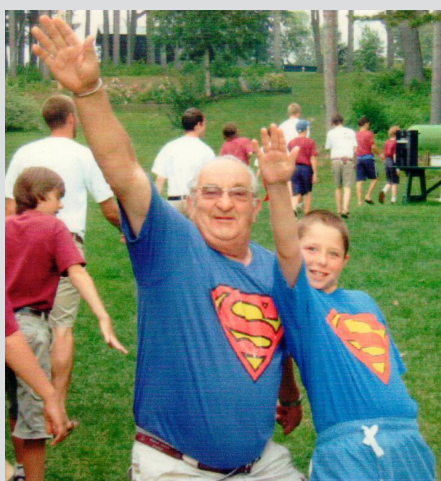
Though they never married – no matter how old he got, he always insisted he wasn't old enough – they were inseparable.



When they weren't on the road, Don loved "dubbing around," doing odd plumbing and carpentry work mostly for his own satisfaction. In the mid-1980s, he started doing it for Birch Rock in the summers, and together he and Janice grew into camp legends in their own right. Getting to meet so many campers was a thrill, and he wasn't afraid to ham it up for hilarious skits that are still talked about years later. "I guess I won't call it working," he joked, and it kept him coming back all the way up to his final year. In 2013, he and Janice received the highest of honors at Birch Rock when a new cabin, Walker-Munn, was dedicated to them.

Although Don was humble enough to admit he wasn't perfect, he made it clear that he wouldn't have changed a thing. "I have no regrets, and the hell with the rest of them," he said, and all who knew him can imagine the laugh that would have followed.

**All are invited to a celebration of Don's life on Father's Day, June 18 at Birch Rock Camp.**



*Donald and Ryan Boothby*

## WISH LIST

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

Framed Backpacks (\$100 each)  
Pottery Wheel (\$500)  
Tennis & Baseballs (\$100)  
Outdoor Basketballs (\$25 each)  
Tennis Racquets (\$50 each)  
3 to 4 Man Tents (\$250)  
Kayak Paddles (\$50 per)  
Bike Tools and Repair (\$100)  
Art & Nature Supplies  
Used Pick-Up Truck  
Commercial Food Mixer  
Gator Motor Car  
Sunfish Sailboat (\$4000)

***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.

**BIRCH ROCK CAMP ACCEPTS  
VISA/MASTERCARD**

Thank you!

**SPRING CLEAN-UP  
Saturday, May 20**

Come join us in  
Raking and Rolling the  
BRC campus open for 2017.  
Lunch will be served!

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# I GUESS I'D BE A HERO

By Ed Stafford



*Question: Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.*

Some days I was a fighter pilot, soaring through

the sky, flipping and rolling at twice the speed of sound, defeating the “villains,” and bringing peace and freedom to the land. Other days I was a Greek warrior with the bravery of Achilles, or a knight with the compassion and chivalry of Sir Gawain. My dreams of heroism carried right through high school, when I performed a song for Cabaret night – “Who I’d Be” -- that begins with the words, “I guess I’d be a hero.” For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to be a person whose life matters to people because I changed the world for the better. It wasn’t until last summer that I realized what being a hero might mean – how as a storyteller, I could help another person when I didn’t expect to, someone I didn’t even know well.

His name was Andrew, a timid, blond haired boy from New York City, and although I didn’t know it at first, helping him proved to be one of the defining experiences of my first year as a camp counselor.

The first night, Andrew woke me because he felt homesick and couldn’t sleep. We walked across the lawn towards the main lodge, and things went pretty well, until he threw up in the trash can. I spent the next hour sitting with him, getting him water, and telling him about all of my favorite things about camp when I was his age. Eventually I managed to get him back to the cabin and asleep in bed.

And so the cycle began. Every night, while the other counselors were hanging out in the lodge after a long day, Matt, my CIT and I told Andrew stories on the hill below, transporting him out of his own head. First I told him about a hiking trip I went on at camp when I was about his age. After one long, rainy day of hiking, the other campers and I set up our tents and fell quickly to sleep. Later, we woke up to find the rain was letting up, so we got up and started getting ready for breakfast, until, to our surprise, one of the counselors told us to go back to bed. We’d only been asleep for an hour or so; it was the same night, not the next morning. Like Andrew, we were out of sorts, out of our normal spheres, but in the end it turned out fine.

After a few more stories, Andrew went back to the cabin

and slept through the night.

Andrew didn’t solve his insomnia in one night. It took many nights of storytelling, and days of chatting to help him break out of his shell. But he adjusted. He began falling asleep on his own, smiling and laughing, playing games with his cabin mates, slowly transforming from an introverted kid into a member of the community.

Being a hero is a tricky thing. As a kid I thought that being a hero meant going out to fight the dragons. But it can be simpler than that. The stories we tell show who we are, who we were, and who we hope to become. By sharing our stories with people, we help them realize that they can dream too, that they can make a difference in the world. Some heroes solve world hunger or build a better battery; but some simply inspire hope in one small child, and a little hope goes a long way. Sometimes being a hero means giving someone the first page, then letting them write the rest.

## BREAK THE TRANCE AT BIRCH ROCK

By Francie Campbell, Parent & Trustee

Moms and Dads: getting weary of the battle royale over screen time with your young techies? Feel like chucking the devices out, and hollering, “For goodness sake! Go outside and play!” Now’s the time to plan your sons’ summer break from Snapchat and Minecraft... Let Birch Rock Camp for Boys help them discover that outdoor adventures far surpass the virtual kind.

One of New England’s oldest traditional camps, Birch Rock is all about simple pleasures and nurturing friendships. Campers leave their gadgets behind (usually with relief!) and sample our array of classic, exhilarating camp activities. Archery, camp craft, canoeing, swimming in our secluded lake — boys build confidence and character while honing skills in our supportive community.

Best of all, campers learn to connect with other boys and counselors and senior staff — face to face, with no distracting devices. Birch Rock is a place where kids look at each other when they speak, shake hands, and drape their arms around one another. Cooperation is key in our small cabins. Everyone pitches in before cabin inspection. Meals are served family-style in our historic lodge, and the lost art of dinner conversation can be found at each trestle table.

Birch Rock prides itself on partnering with parents to provide relief from tech overload and stress and social pressures. Boys need a place where boyhood can be fun, plain and simple.

Birch Rock Camp, in the Maine woods since 1926. The antidote to today’s screen addiction epidemic. Sign your son up for his best summer ever!

## THE SHAPING & SUPPORT OF BRC

By Peter Brewster



Birch Rock Camp is an all boys camp situated in the woods of western Maine. I've spent my childhood summers here, learning the values of kindness, good manners, self-care and community. Birch Rock has taught me critical life lessons, such as leading by example, being the best person you can be, giving back to your

community and the camp motto, 'Help the Other Fellow.' Birch Rock is my second family.

Every morning the whole community wakes up at 7:15, and after breakfast everyone participates in inspection, when campers and counselors make military-style beds that are graded by the head counselor. The whole camp eats every meal together, with emphasis being placed upon table manners and good conversation. Every Sunday night, the community walks to the Birch Rock, where a birch tree grows from a rock, the namesake and sacred area at the camp. At the Birch Rock, we discuss what it means to be a Birch Rocker and the importance of the camp's values. These weekly meetings, called 'Tree Talks,' have always been extremely worthwhile to me.

Three summers ago, I transitioned to working as a counselor in training, and became a counselor the following summer. I've had the opportunity over the past couple of summers to give the lessons of "leading by example" and "helping the other fellow" back to my campers. While teaching my campers the significance of these camp values, I've learned some of the most meaningful lessons.. I owe it to Birch Rock for shaping me into the person I am today, and I will forever be grateful for that.

At the final Tree Talk of each summer, we discuss the importance of taking the lessons we learn at the Birch Rock out into the real world. This final Tree Talk is powerful, as it encourages you to be the best person you can be once you leave Birch Rock Camp. After my first summer as a counselor, teaching my campers the lessons that shaped me into who I am today, I brought these same values of family, self-discipline and kindness to my school community.

Returning to St. Paul's for my junior year, I felt rejuvenated from my summer experience and ready to turn over a new leaf. I worked harder in the classroom and made healthy changes outside of the classroom. I kept to my camp schedule, woke up at 7:15 to go to breakfast every morning, stayed disciplined in my work and kept my Birch Rock values with me throughout the school year.

From the values I gained as a camper, to the lessons learned as a counselor, Birch Rock has taught me to give back to my community, and it's taught me about responsibility. I credit Birch Rock for helping me mature and grow, as a student and community member. I will return to Birch Rock this summer, teaching my campers the camp values and most importantly, "Helping the Other Fellow," while continuing to learn lessons myself that I will bring with me wherever I go to college next year.

## BIRCH ROCK CAMP TRUSTEES

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**Ryck Birch**, '70s, S'80s, P'10s, *Natick, MA*  
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**Becca Brewster**, S'90s, P'10s, *Concord, NH*  
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**Steve Whittier**, P'10s, *Cape Elizabeth, ME*

## BIRCH ROCK PROGRAMS

Which exciting Birch Rock program might work for your son and his friends? Also, please let us know of a potential Birch Rocker in your area...

### BOYS CAMP

Our residential boys camp program encourages cooperation, self-confidence and a willingness to try new things. We challenge campers to take responsibility for their own lives, and help them appreciate the needs of others in emphasizing our camp motto: HELP THE OTHER FELLOW.

#### The 2017 Boys Camp offerings:

Full Session	\$8,500	June 25	August 12	49 days
First Session	\$6,700	June 25	July 22	28 days
Second Session	\$5,500	July 23	August 12	21 days

#### Cubs Camp Programs for NEW campers ages 7-12

Cubs Camp I	\$4,000	June 25	July 8	14 days
Cubs Camp II	\$4,000	July 9	July 22	14 days
Cubs Camp III	\$4,000	July 23	August 5	14 days

### FAMILY CAMP

Birch Rock's Family Camp gives busy families the chance to have fun in the Maine woods on McWain Pond. This program can be a first exposure for a boy to Birch Rock, in preparation for attending the Boys Camp the following summer. It's also a time for parents to relive their fond experiences as campers, and rediscover their enthusiasm for lifelong learning. Most of all, Birch Rock Family Camp is a time to relax and enjoy!

Family Camp is perfect for all ages to enjoy old-fashioned camp life in group activities or just do one's own thing! Each family member may sign up for daily activities which are facilitated by Birch Rock's talented staff. This program is offered in **August 17th – 21st**, with flexible days of attendance.

For more information on these programs, please visit our website: [www.birchrock.org](http://www.birchrock.org) or contact the winter office @ (207) 741-2930.

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

Your donation is an acknowledgment of the value of Birch Rock in character and community development. Your contribution and support have helped us enhance and sustain Birch Rock's unique summer camp experience. We gratefully acknowledge the following 2016 Capital, Endowment, Annual, Scholarship and In-Kind gifts to Birch Rock Camp... and a big thanks to all the Birch Rock parents, as well!

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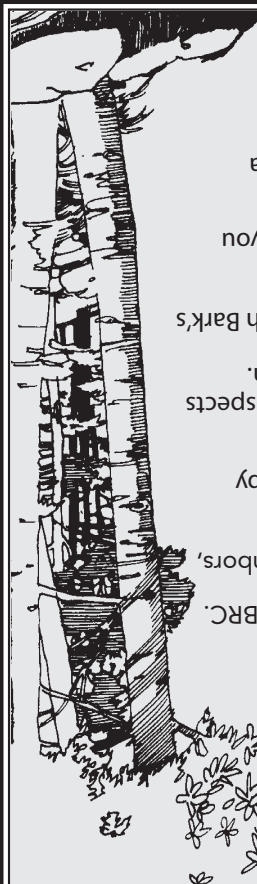
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It's  
Easy to  
Help BRC

- Send a tax-deductible donation to BRC.
- Promote BRC among friends, neighbors, family and colleagues.
- Refer a prospective camper to 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).

Clean & Pick Up Saturday	May 20
BRC Summer Office Opens	June 1
BRC Staff Orientation	June 16
C.I.T. Orientation	June 21
Opening - First Session / Cubs I	June 25
Cubs Camp I - End	July 8
Cubs Camp II	July 9
First Session & Cubs II End	July 22
Opening 2nd Session	July 23
Maine Wilderness Adventure	
Cubs Camp III	
Cubs Camp III - End	August 5
BRC for Boys & MWA - End	August 12
BRC Family Camp	August 17
BRC Family Camp End	August 21



Mark Your Calendars  
for 2017!