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A TRADITION ENDS: A STUDENTS STORY

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1981 - University of Minnesota Camp at Cloquet, Minnesota: Frederick Hopkins*, Richard Hall, Floyd Manwiller, Carl Mize

1982 - Lubrecht Forest, Montana: David Countryman*, Mon-lin Kuo, Richard Schultz, Laura Schilling (cook)


1984 - US Forest Service (Girl Scout Camp), Cass Lake, Minnesota: Joe Colletti*, Carl Mize, Richard Schultz, Laura Schilling (cook)

1985 - US Forest Service (Girl Scout Camp), Cass Lake, Minnesota: Floyd Manwiller*, Richard Hall, Steven Jungst, Laura Schilling (cook)

1986 - University of Minnesota Camp at Cloquet, Minnesota: David Countryman*, Richard Meilan, Dean Prestemon

1987 - Lubrecht Forest, Montana: Joe Colletti*, Mon-lin Kuo, Richard Schultz, Laura Schilling (cook)

1988 - Lubrecht Forest, Montana: Floyd Manwiller*, Richard Hall, Carl Mize, Donna Zimmerman (cook)

1989 - University of Minnesota Camp at Cloquet, Minnesota: David Countryman*, Richard Faltonson, Dean Prestemon

1990 - Lubrecht Forest, Montana: Joe Colletti*, Mon-lin Kuo, Richard Schultz, Doris Richter (cook)

1993 - University of Minnesota Camp at Cloquet, Minnesota: David Countryman*, Chris Ball, David Hansen, Woody Hart, Floyd Manwiller, Sande McNabb

The green boxes are stored, and an era ends. We now turn our attention and enthusiasm to the future and the promise of improvement, as Forestry Summer Camp is replaced with a set of Forestry courses in the Fall of the sophomore year.

Dave Countryman

A TRADITION ENDS:
A STUDENTS STORY

Yeah, we’re going out west, where I belong. Where the girls are pretty and the nights are long…” Ahh yes, summer camp. Forestry summer camp 1993, the camp to end all camps. Seven credits of lip smacking, hoe down, intellectual fun. It was the summer of the great flood, the big brown one, el agua mucho grande, the rains. It was the summer where Dubuque’s dike building would payoff and more southerly cities would suffer for their pettiness. It was the summer that I would spend in Cloquet, Minnesota, getting to know a herd of funky foresters. It was a summer I would not soon forget.

THE JOURNEY

School was out for the summer—for everybody else. But, we campers had a mere week off before we were required to head north. It was either that or go to some new crappy fall camp, with 50 thousand screaming freshmen foresters, who wouldn’t know an increment bore from a ... well you get the point. So we figured, what the hey, let’s go for it, let’s take the plunge, let’s go to summer camp. That and we wanted to graduate on time. So what the heck, we were goin’.

I am mostly speaking for myself here, but I suppose the other campers had similar points of view.

Seeing as how I don’t have a car, and the nearest mobile that I had to take my gear to Minnesota was a Greyhound, I decided to try to hitch a ride to the land of sky blue water. The closest driver heading that way was a man by the name of Birch. Hmm, that’s good, I thought. Birch, hey, that’s a tree, isn’t it? You betcha, a tree. What the heck, some guy with the last name of a tree is gonna give me a ride to Forestry Camp.

So we’re drivin’ up there, up to Cloquet. And what’s with that name anyway, Cloquet. For the longest time, I thought it was Klo-kett, kinda like briquette. Klo-kett. Needless to say, my French is poor. OK, Cloquet. So we’re driving up there. The scenery is real pretty. Slowly the landscape melts from field to forest. Beautiful forest. The woods, the big Wood, the darkness, the insane place, Alone. —Oops, I’ll save that for later.

We have come so far, so far from where we really want to be. Think about it. Who wants to spend the summer with a bunch of college geeks? Tree geeks, none the less, myself included. No, not me. I’d rather be back home, sippin’ lemonade, mowin’ the grass, and spittin’ in the river. But what the heck, if I must, I must. And we did.
FAIR WARNING

For the longest time, I had been concerned with the schematics of the whole deal. Are we gonna be sleeping in tents out in the woods with nothing but the heat of our bodies to keep us warm?? Who are the instructors gonna be? And what’s with this Countryman guy? I’d heard stories about him. What are we gonna eat? What happens if we run out of gruel? Are the bugs really that bad? What’s a wood tick? What’s a deer tick? What’s popple? Can you really eat it? And so on...

We heard all of the rumors about everything. The bugs are gonna eat you alive. The instructors are gonna eat you alive. Your roommate is gonna eat you alive. That bug spray is gonna melt your skin and then slugs are gonna eat you alive. This is what ran through my mind day and night from the moment I knew I was going to attend summer camp. After a day or two, it really wasn’t that bad. I found out that I didn’t mind being eaten alive, by anything.

THE WEATHER AND THE BUGS:
CHUMS THROUGH THICK & THIN

“Hello, aint nothin’ wrong with Minnesoter weather, it’s just cooler and better than Iowa weather,” YEAH, WHATEVER BUDDY!! The first week or so, the weather was cooler and better. Real gooder. Mmm GOODER. But then it reared it’s ugly head. (African rain dance drum rhythms)—rain-rain-rain-rain, beautiful rain.

The rain became our pal. If it rained real bad, we knew there was a good chance that activities would be canceled for the day. “Well, see its time to do that there traverse, ya see” I don’t think so sir, its pouring down rain. “You all got yer rain gear, let’s go!” Gulp!

Sometimes the rain was our friend, canceling field maneuvers for the day, sending us indoors for the relaxing boredom that the shelters in camp provided, or the tense boredom that a good five hour lecture provided. And when the weather became hot and sticky, the rain was the holy stuff of the heavens, cooling our bodies, and driving the bugs into the dirt!

The bugs were bad. Early on it was just the skeeters. Even when the temperature was cool, the skeeters buzzed on. “You know what the Minnesota state bird is?? The mosquito. Heh, heh, heh!” Yeah, real funny, buddy, real funny. Its true. They would either hide, waiting for any blood pumping beast to roam by their sucking needles and then attack, or they would just hang there, like Michael Jordon when he used to play basketball. They would just hang there at about BH, right by the big red muscle between the oxygen tanks, and that would be it. It’d be all over. And the sad thing of it all was that nothing could hold them at bay. Not the 100% DEET, nor Birch’s baby-so-soft lotion, nor my ninja netting. Nothing. “These things are not human. You can’t reason with them. They can’t be stopped. They will never die. They will never die!!” The first wave of mosquitoes was to remove the defensive barriers we put up against them. The kamikaze dive bombers. Heartless and cruel, they would slurp the bug spray and clothing off of you, trading their lives so that the other skeeters may live.

Towards the end of our stay in the North woods, something horrible happened. Far off in the distance, one could hear the buzzing, the low frequency hum of an approaching frenzy. “Hey, where did all of the mosquitoes go?” Gulp. And gulp again. And gulp once more for good measure. The skeeters had fled in fear. They knew of the swift, mean fury that approached—HIDE THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN!! Yes, that’s right, deer flies! REET REET REET!! Huge black bodies the size of your shoe with psychedelic eyes that tempted you to look into them beckoning you, calling you, mocking you. And they bit. Man, oh, man, the mother of all bites. These suckers would rip the flesh off your body, and return for the marrow—they were just that nasty!

THE FOREST

Whether it be the “popple popple” of the Populus variety, the “pine pine” of the red, white, and jack pine forests, or the “here I come in the darkness” of the balsam fir woods, I loved them all. Every last needle and root sprout.

I think I might have rediscovered the old religion of the Celts. The power in the trees. The spirits of the wood. The wood nymphs and tree fairies. The dark, foreboding call of the forest. From the moment I drove into camp, I became enchanted by the forest.

Roaming the Iowa landscape from Ames to Dubuque every month or so, one becomes accustomed to seeing the flatness. The bland monocultures of calorie-baring grasses. Here, man is larger than the weeds that grow underfoot. We are the masters and only the scattered bull mastiff bur oak and cottonwood are left to indicate otherwise. But in the wood, all is grand. The towering pines stand so sublime. A speck be me in the litter of the trees, disappearing into the shadows and understory. But that’s fine with me, I love it.

In the forest surrounding the camp was a fire tower. The top of the tower peeked just over the tips of the trees, a periscope above the darkness. Every time I was up there, I had the strongest urge to leap into the forest. To dive into the trees and swim through the canopy, to be delivered unto the ground, unscathed, but by the tickle marks of the leaf tips. One evening as the sun began to sink into the horizon, I saw a wave of fog, drifting over the treetops. It passed right through me, I sucked it in. It was the most awesome sight I have ever seen. And I am changed because of it.
Ames Forester

There's something almost sensual about being in the forest. Just you alone, naked to the dark eyes of the trees, wandering with no real direction. Who knows what lusty adventure lies beyond the shadows? And how did I get here? What curvaceous siren has called me to her domain? The only thing I regret that I didn't do while I was in Minnesota was sprint, naked and screaming like a mad person through an early summer rain storm in the forest. That woulda been cool. But then, of course, the skeeters would have gotten me for sure, but what the heck.

The wet wind
blows the wood scent through
my nose
And this sense of
life in these
trees, it grows.
What, I wonder, do these giant beasts scant
see?
Do they joke and
laugh, or do they think I flea?
And I wonder at their knowledge and I wonder at
their notions
Aloft, assail, in these Big Green Oceans.
thank you, Dark Woods, for the moments in this
dream
I will think fondly, And warmly shall I beam.

To be in the woods is pure poetry. You can't just walk in and feel nothing. The fear, the awe, the joy, the mystery; it sweeps you away.

THE MILLS

OK, I'm back.
Ahh, yes, the mills. The bloody machines of tree carnage. The evil grinding things. The mills were about the only proof that there was harvesting going on somewhere in northern Minnesota. The logs just kept coming and coming. Where did they come from? In our many travels, I only saw one small patch of clear-cut that looked as nasty as the media portrays them to be. These loggers are tricky people. Either that or they are as magical as the forest itself. Pulling logs from the belly of the forest, and leaving not a trace of devastation.

The mills were indeed amazing places. Some were so high-tech that they look like scenes from Star Wars. People strapped into hovering pods, with laser sighted saws—just an awesome sight! It was interesting to see the whole process, too. They went from log to finished product in about 15 minutes to half an hour. It's unbelievable the many things that can be made from a tree. They waste nothing.

Cellulose: gift from the gods!!! Seriously, think about it. Wood, cotton, other cool stuff that I don't even know about, all made primarily of cellulose (Dr. Manwiller says other wise, and of course he's right, but for the sake of my oversimplified contemplation, please play along.) I mean, who thought all of this stuff up? Who are the ad wizards that came up with that one?? Forestry is certainly a fascinating field!

THE CREW

Throughout the whole thing, we all knew we were in it together. Like it or not, we were stuck together. In the process of being stuck, we got to know each other pretty well. And we got sick of each other pretty quick too, but what the heck. That's something that will be with us forever. You guys are a good bunch of Joes and Josephenas.

I remember; popple, the northern lights (albeit sparingly), lucky lager (chunky style—Yuck!), a raccoon eating from someone's hand every night, a coyote (I swear it wasn't a dog, guys), deer, meeses, little frogs, Black Bear Casino, a black bear crossing the highway, the traverse, Mudman, Ballman, Sandy, Woody, Floyd dog, The Bear, Benny Ha Ha, that crazy cook lady, KKH, a sawmill here and there, Smokenut, Tamarack and Sumac, Flagmandoo, highfalls on the Canadian Border, and some other stuff.

Thinking back, it was pretty awesome. We got a lot of hands on experience and we got to see the northern country. It was a real beautiful time, despite the weather and the bugs and the fact that this was my summer. But I guess it still was my summer. Summer camp was good. A good experience. Its weird to say, but I feel kinda proud being part of ISU Forestry's last summer camp. To the dirty dozen; they saved the best for last! WHOOEEE!!

Brian Brown