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EDITORIAL

(From the summer's first Tree Talk, by Tom Valk)

This summer we have the opportunity to put aside what we might call our immediate selves — that part of each of us which constantly clamors after the tangible, material reward; after superficial popularity; after the immediate satisfaction of every physical need: more candy, cold drinks on the Desolation Trail, the chance to goof off when there is hard work to be done; after the easy going along with the crowd, which avoids all moral responsibility.

In place of this immediate self we have the opportunity this summer to try to develop a better self, which can look beyond the tangible and the immediate toward the achievement of some more worthwhile, long-range goal. “But how,” you may ask, “do I recognize and develop my better self?”

To start with, one surely can't just wake up one morning and decide to turn on his better self like a light or a spigot. It will take self-discipline continuously applied — the determination to deny all the petty things that our immediate selves are always demanding. But, of course, we can't merely deny ourselves such things without replacing those things with something more meaningful and lasting.

Hence we must all set goals for ourselves — something to work for, and I stress the work, since that which comes too quickly or easily is of little ultimate value. We must work to acquire disciplined skills — both physical and mental. Only in such goals will we find ultimate self-respect and the means to express our best selves.

“So what?” you may ask. “What good is it to try to develop this better self in today's world where nobody else seems to try and where people make fun of anyone who does?” First, it seems that the more you appease your immediate self, the more it asks for in a never-ending circle. One can see in the lives of many who have turned to drugs the results of treading in this constant circle. Such people have despaired of life itself because, I think, they can see nothing of worth or permanence within easy grasp. Your better self asks honest achievement and seeks more distant and worthwhile goals — goals which lead to a more richly fulfilling life and a much-sought-for peace of mind.

The choice, of course, is ours: whether or not to start working now to master our immediate selves in the pursuit of honest achievement. But whatever our choice, the opportunity to develop our better selves will abound here at Pasquaney this summer.