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(Rick Crevoiserat's Tree Talk Delivered on Trustees' Weekend)

For the two weeks prior to the start of camp this summer, I was in Connecticut looking for an apartment for September when I start my new job. One afternoon I decided to drive into the country to visit a farmhouse which I used to visit when I was little. When I first knew it, fourteen years ago, there was a single house there — an old farm, with a pair of pretty arches of rustic brick, and a weathered, solid, brick garden wall that ran along the road which was enclosed by a fine row of elms. This place meant a lot to me when I was younger and so I was excited about being able to see it again. However, when I got there this spring I was shocked at what I saw. On one side of the farm stood a row of condominiums and on the other side there was a long row of yellow-brick houses. The beautiful elms were gone, the wall was half down and even the farmhouse itself was marked and condemned for destruction. This sight made me perhaps a little unreasonably sad. I know that population will increase and that people want to live in convenient houses near their work, but I could not help feeling the loss of a simple and beautiful thing. It also brought home to me an even deeper and darker thing – the sad change and vicissitude of things, the absence of any permanence in this life of ours. We enter it so gaily and as a child we feel that this gaiety will last forever. Then life begins to move on and we become gradually, very gradually, conscious of the swift rush of things. People around us begin to die, and drop out of their places. We leave old homes that we had loved. We hurry on ourselves from school to college; we enter the real world. It seems like such a short time ago that our current group of COIs were new boys struggling through the first year adjustments in Jackson and Wilson and, before they realize it, they will be entering the business world themselves.

What is one to hold on to in such a swift flux of things? The pleasures that we enjoyed at first fade; we settle down by comfortable firesides; we pile the tables and desks with good books; friends come and go; we become set in our ways; we find out our real tastes; we learn the measure of our powers. And yet, however simple and clear our routine becomes, we are warned every now and then that we will not stay young forever and we begin to see, some later, some earlier, that we must find something to hold on to, something eternal and everlasting in which we can believe in and rest. There must be some anchor for the soul. This anchor cannot be a material one, for there is no security there and it cannot be purely intellectual, for that is a shifting thing also. Our spirit is like a well which gradually runs dry every now and then; and we must find out what the spring is that can fill it up. To me there are but two things that can fill up this well of spirit. The first is the strongest and deepest of human things; the power of love —

not I think the more vehement and selfish forms of love, the desire of youth for beauty or the physical love prevalent in today's society — for these have some physical aspect in them. But the tranquil and purer manifestations of the spirit — the love of a father for a son, of a friend for a friend; that type of love that can smile in the very throes of pain. That seems to be one of the only things that can defy change, suffering, and death.

The second thing that can fill up this well of our spirit is a belief in God. Maybe I don't mean God. I guess I mean a belief in the ideals that Jesus taught; to be true, humble, unselfish, forgiving and tender-hearted like him. You may ask, "Why strive after a thing you can never reach?" Let me answer that question with an example: If you were to try to throw a baseball over Memorial Hall from here, you would probably not make it, but I'm sure that you would throw a great deal further than if you only aimed at the parking lot. You must aim high, but to aim high you must look high. You must see clearly before you the highest point of aim. You must have ideals; an ideal of conduct, of character, of the vision of perfect life. The question is: what are you aiming at in your life? What is the vision before you that you would like to reach? You may want to be a great tennis player, baseball player or oarsman and you may succeed in becoming one, but these are all temporary things. What happens after you lose some of your ability due to age? You have to have something more permanent to aim for, something more meaningful and less tangible. You need something that can continuously fill up the well of your spirit. By living your life to the fullest, and by constantly aiming for those bright ideals which we try to emphasize here at Pasquaney, you can be at peace with yourself and bring happiness to others. Love and ideals are very important to fill up our wells and carry us through this ever-changing life.

Why is it so hard to act like we know we should when we are not at camp; or to put it another way — why do our best selves come out here at Pasquaney more than they do at home? I know that I myself am much closer to attaining the ideals we talk about in sermons and tree talks here at Pasquaney than I am during the winter months; and I always wonder why I submit to peer pressure, try to attain that superficial popularity, cut corners, and over-indulge more often during the winter than here during the summer months. I wonder why I get more depressed at times during the winter than I do at camp. Why do you think that campers come here for four, five, or even six years then become counselors and stay another four or five years making a bare minimum of money for the two months? Think about it. What causes alumni to keep coming back for visits well into their seventies and eighties, and when they come why do they seem to gain energy and spirit as their stay progresses? What causes all of this to happen? Why do parents keep sending their sons here and why do they always feel that their sons have grown up and feel more at ease after a summer at Pasquaney? Why does all this happen? I think that the reason for all of this is simple. Pasquaney has the capability of filling our wells of spirit in both of the ways that I mentioned earlier, and this helps us in getting through another year in the outside world. The practice of the ideals that we learned about in Sunday school and from our parents seem to be the exception rather than the rule in the outside world whereas they are the main emphasis and practice here at Pasquaney. Deep down inside I know that I want to be honest, tolerant, considerate and generous but it is so hard to practice all of this when you know that you will get grief at times from your peers for doing it. How many times have you picked on someone because everyone else was, while knowing it was the wrong thing to do. It is very, very hard to do something which may dampen your so-called "popularity." People, in public, seem to want to show their worst side, to be ashamed of being supposed to be good, or interested, or thoughtful or tender-hearted. As I go into the business world this year, there is one thing that I desire — sincerity. The dullest person becomes interesting if you feel that he is really himself, that he is not holding up some absurd

shield so that he is popular. And yet how hard it is to say what one really thinks, without reference to what one supposes the person one is talking to would like to or expect one to say – and to do it, too, without brusqueness or rudeness of self-assertion. People are generally ashamed of saying anything that is good about anyone else; and yet they are as a rule intensely anxious to be popular, and pathetically unaware that the shortest cut to popularity is to see the good points in everyone and not to shrink from mentioning them.

I wonder myself, how can I be expected to act the way I know I should when people seem to firmly believe in sayings like “Get quick or beat it” and “Look out for Number 1.” You know as well as I do that there is a bare minimum of support most of the time from your peers when you do practice your ideals. But just think how good you feel inside when you go against the crowd and go the way your heart tells you. This is one way that I really get enjoyment and feel new energy burning through me. Setting these ideals and really aiming for them is so important because every time that you do something that moves you a step forward towards that perfect life you really feel invigorated and it helps to fill that well of your spirit. This is one reason why camp is so important to me. It is so hard to be a small minority throughout the winter and that is what you are when you practice your ideals. You will get very little support and sometimes you will even doubt yourself whether it is worth it or not to keep aiming for that perfect life. But then the summer comes and camp begins, and you find support for the way that you feel. The practice and belief in ideals are encouraged at Pasquaney. Tree talks and sermons teach us and encourage us in practicing what we know is right and through this support we gain strength for the winter months ahead. We make close friends which hopefully will last into the winter months and even years ahead. We reinforce in our own minds that it is possible to live a life full of ideals and that you are not as small a minority as you thought when you do; and all of this time your well of your spirit builds and builds until you are psyched for the challenges of the winter months ahead. This is exactly how it has been for me over the past few years. Camp to me has been that place of refuge where I can build my inner strength and fill that spirit well so that I can face the outside world.

However, camp also fills the well of our spirit in another way. You can make new friends here. Not just those superficial friends; but those close and everlasting friends — those kinds of friends which you can actually say that you love as a brother. Because camp makes it so easy to remove all of those absurd shields which people put up so as to protect themselves and gain that superficial popularity, many good friends are made. But you have to keep these friends for the support that you need to get you through those tough winter months. Don't let your friends down. Picture in your mind a time when you have had a real heart to heart talk with a close friend or helped a close friend out when he needed you. Doesn't it lift up your spirit and make you feel great? Just knowing that you have someone there to talk to if you need to and will support you when you need him can give you a tremendous lift. There have been numerous times during the winter when I have felt depressed and called a friend from camp just to talk and then hung up feeling refreshed and invigorated and ready to continue the struggle ahead. I don't mean those superficial friends, I mean those close and real friends. Picture in your mind a person who never opens up and keeps putting up those absurd shields. Why do you think that he feels it hard to make those close friends or even hard to get someone to talk to him when he needs someone to talk to. Remember what Mr. Gem-John said in his sermon on Friendship, “If you want a friend, be one.”

Now to sum it all up I guess what I am saying is that it is very hard and rare to gain much support for having high ideals but it is possible to practice them and still be successful in the world. Pasquaney is a

place to gain support for your beliefs and get psyched for the outside world. You can make friends who can help you through those distressing times; and all the time — your spirit will grow and grow. What does all this mean?

It means value camp when you're here and get the most out of it. Make friends, close friends, and keep them forever. You will not be able to return to Pasquaney forever so you must learn to carry what Pasquaney stands for with you forever. Not only will this bring happiness to yourself but you will be surprised how much happiness you will bring others at the same time. Believe in your ideals and don't compromise on them. Aim high and don't settle for your second best effort. You all know that no matter how hard it gets during the winter months, that a belief and practice of ideals is the right thing to do. Deep down inside, you know this to be true. If it was easy, it wouldn't be worth aiming at. Pasquaney should be a place where you can gain new strength through support and reinforcement. So value Pasquaney and what it stands for. Value the friends that you make here and don't ever let them down. Keep aiming for that perfect life; you won't ever get there but you'd be surprised how much fun that you will have trying.