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ANNUAL EDITORIAL — 1980

(Chris Granger's Tree Talk, delivered on July 25)

I want to start off this afternoon by telling you all of an experience that happened to me and the nine other backpackers this summer. On the first day of our expedition, we set off from Franconia Notch with heavy packs and fifty tough miles ahead of us. Some, I am sure, were really wondering why they had not signed up for Squam or Ragged Island. No one was terribly confident about his ability to keep up with Nordy. We packed up Liberty at a moderate pace, and several people had to slow down. It was a good hiking group, but not a great one. On the third day, we came to perhaps the toughest mile on the trip — the ascent of South Twin from Galehead Hut. By now, the group was more comfortable in the mountains and generally high in spirit, and we had gotten incredibly psyched for making a record time up South Twin. We were going to try to do it as a group. It was a group effort, and we all encouraged one another and very much felt like members of a team. The AMC guidebook estimates that the ascent takes one hour 15 minutes. We had on heavy packs. Nordy led the group up in a record 28 minutes, an astonishingly fast time. People were hurting, but we felt great when we reached the top. I doubt that any one of us alone could have made it up as fast with the same individual effort. As a group, we accomplished something, which if each of us had been working alone, we could not have done. But we had gotten psyched, we had a great mental attitude, and we were striving to achieve a goal as a group. It was a cooperative spirit which pushed us to the top of South Twin in a record time.

It is this cooperative spirit in the Pasquaney community about which I want to speak this afternoon. At the end of a good season, and especially the last night of camp, when we all think about leaving each other, there can be a terrific, wonderful feeling of well-being, almost a euphoria, as we know that we have worked together to develop a community in which we care about one another, depend on one another, trust each other, and make sacrifices for each other. For me, with this comes a sense of deep security and a restored faith in people.

Man, being a social animal, is fundamentally dependent on other men. As John Donne so eloquently wrote, "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." In today's world, more than ever, we are dependent on one another, for food, for energy, for conservation of the environment, and for the preservation of world peace. It follows that today, more than ever, it is essential that we learn how to depend on each other in a responsible, caring way. I have never seen a better place than Pasquaney to learn these skills. We have a

have never seen a better place than Pasquaney to learn these skills. We have a unique and infinitely valuable opportunity, being members of this community, to take advantage of generations of accumulated knowledge and experience in how to best develop a community. As Denny and Kirk pointed out in their Tree Talk, to get the most out of our time at camp, we must have a good mental attitude, we have got to be psyched, and we have to work hard.

I think I have talked for long enough on a purely philosophical level. When our community at Pasquaney is infused with a cooperative spirit, the result is a terrific educational atmosphere. But how, on a more practical level, can we take advantage of the Pasquaney community, and develop and nurture this cooperative spirit?

We all come to camp, on one level, to have a good time, to enjoy ourselves in good healthy activities. But if this is all we come for, we are missing the most important thing Pasquaney has to offer — the satisfaction and the education involved in being a contributing member in a close-knit, loving, caring community. To do this, we will not be able to have fun all the time. We sometimes have to make sacrifices and give up personal comfort for the group. How can we become more responsible members of this community? First of all, we have to not only think of the values and ideas we hear about in Tree Talks and sermons, but we also have to apply these ideas in practical ways. To do this, we have to start with the little things — duties, keeping track of gear, Memorial Hall conduct, picking up papers on paths, and so on. Until we concentrate on and control these little things, we will not be able to develop the cooperative spirit necessary to accomplish the larger goals. If an older boy swims out beyond the patrol boats during soak, because, after all, he is a good swimmer and considers himself in no danger, he is not thinking very deeply about how his actions affect the group. As a leader, it is fundamental that he set an example for the younger campers, and setting a bad example in this case may tempt others into a dangerous situation. In duties, we set high standards so that we may learn to be satisfied in a job well done. In boat duty, if you have finished hanging up bathing suits, rather than sitting around until being told what else to do, help someone else sweep the bathhouse or police the grounds, and this will help create a cooperative spirit. In inspections, fix up your own bunk, and then go out of your way to help the person next to you or work on the grounds. A good inspection is an indication that members of a dorm are not only conscientious about their own responsibilities, but are also willing to help others. During rest and after taps, if you set a good example and try to keep others quiet, you will be learning how to relax, and how to be considerate of those who want and need sleep, and you will be achieving this goal as a dorm effort, something of which your dorm should be proud.

These examples may have seemed simple and insignificant, but it is so important that we concentrate and work together on them, as well as understand why they are important. When people show enough interest and concern to work on these little things, and accomplish something as a group, a cooperative spirit will develop, and then we will all find it much easier to be tolerant of each other's mistakes, to trust one another, and to be honest with the person whose tennis racquet we borrowed without permission and then lost. In short, life on the hillside will be much more pleasant, and caring for each other will come naturally.

The Pasquaney community's small size, relative to most schools or towns, gives each one of us added responsibility and added opportunity, in that each one of us can make a significant difference in the way this season goes, either for better or for worse. You will be able to see and to feel the results of your efforts. worse. You will be able to see and to feel the results of your efforts.

If we do take the right mental attitude, and become willing to concentrate on the little things and to make sacrifices for the group, we will develop a community cooperative spirit, like the one we had on South Twin, and then the last few weeks of the camp season — and especially the last few days — can be a tremendous experience. As Bumpson described it a few years ago, it is like screaming down on a broad reach in a 4.45 humming up onto a plane.

Finally, try not to get discouraged when you are trying to do your best and things do not work out. Both here at camp and especially back at school, you will, at times, feel helplessly alone as you try to pursue the values we discuss here. Peer pressure, for example, will often be to take advantage of and manipulate an unpopular person, rather than to help him. Robert Frost, the great New England poet who spent time on this very hillside, wrote a poem called “The Tuft of Flowers,” which relates to this problem of feeling alone. The narrator is raking hay which has been recently cut by a man with a scythe. He looks around the field for the man who has cut the hay, but he is nowhere to be seen. The narrator realizes that he is all alone, and he thinks that maybe even when he is working with other people, he is alone at heart. Then he sees a bewildered butterfly, which lands on a beautiful tuft of flowers, a “leaping tongue of bloom.” He realizes with delight that the man who cut the hay had purposely spared this patch of flowers. The narrator found this to be a wonderful message from the dawn, and he writes,

“That message made me hear the wakening birds around,
And hear his long scythe whispering to the ground,

And feel a spirit kindred to my own;
So that henceforth I worked no more alone;

But glad with him, I worked as with his aid,
And weary, sought at noon with him the shade;

And dreaming, as it were, held brotherly speech
With one whose thought I had not hoped to reach.

‘Men work together,’ I told him from the heart,
‘Whether they work together or apart.’”

Even though the man who cut the hay was not actually there with him, the narrator now knew that they both thought the same way, that they both cared about and valued the same things, and so he was really working together with the man, in spirit.

So when things are not going well this winter, as will inevitably be the case at one time or another for each of us, and you feel helplessly alone, think of a tuft of flowers, of anything you value dearly, of a sermon, of a good experience you have had this summer, or pick up an Annual and look at the smiling face of a friend, and remember,

“Men work together,” I told him from the heart,
“Whether they work together or apart.”