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### ANNUAL EDITORIAL — 1985

(This Tree Talk was given by Chan Hardwick on August 9th.)

Probably all of you are familiar with Jonathan Swift's satire *Gulliver's Travels*. In it, Gulliver is first shipwrecked on the island of Lilliput, a land of little people — no bigger than a “splacknuck” in Swiftean terms. Swift uses the Lilliputians to illustrate the littleness, the shortsightedness in all of us. For instance, the Lilliputians simply assumed that, given the opportunity, all of us would steal the candy left openly in our bunkmate's box. They couldn't think of a good reason why anyone would leave unattended candy or tennis balls or whatever alone. Therefore, to prevent stealing, the Lilliputians rewarded people who did not. Their statue of justice held a sword in one hand and a bag of gold in the other, indicating their willingness to reward as well as punish.

On the surface, such a system may strike you as fairly reasonable, but with more thought we ought to see the cynicism inherent in such a philosophy. Can we think of no reason why we should not steal? Is there not another “reward” other than a bag of gold? At camp we think there is. We believe that giving in to taking that candy is an assault upon our best selves, that we develop self-discipline in overcoming temptation — and not just overcoming the temptation to steal, but to lie, to mock others in a hurtful way, or to avoid the fundamental tasks which hold the fabric of our society together.

In Lilliput the people are shortsighted and weak. They are the victims of their worst selves because they cannot overcome their littleness. Thus, they are forced to create a world which cynically accepts the worst motivations they possess. We, too, can fall prey to “littleness,” particularly when we are tired, under pressure, or uncomfortable; but if we have made a daily practice of taking care of the little temptations we face, then we can be bigger people in our practice of honesty, consideration, and duty.

A Lilliputian might say to this: “So what? What does it matter if I happen to lie and you tell the truth? One is no better than the other; it's just your opinion versus mine.” To that I say: look at the egg. The humble egg, as an American philosopher

mine.” To that I say: look at the egg. The humble egg, as an American philosopher has pointed out, suggests the difference between disorder and order, destruction and creation. One can easily break an egg, but it is literally impossible to construct one. The order of construction in the egg is a finite but almost immeasurable system of tiny steps creating a rich and interesting unity. A broken egg, by virtue of the ease with which destruction occurs, is a common enough picture of disorder. Similarly, our world has far more petty thieves, lazy complainers, and liars than it does virtuous men and women. Why? Because the former characters take no effort to develop, while the integrity and thoughtfulness of the latter consist of close attention to details and a close check on the “littleness” in our characters. But, oh, the strength of these virtuous among us. They are the ones who gain respect, authority, and gratitude from their peers. The rest of us, fallen prey to the Lilliputian side of human behavior, are victims of our least attractive impulses. We cannot resist the slightest temptations; we make ourselves look foolish trying to gain popularity; and we cannot organize ourselves with enough determination to get the important tasks done. And at some level we are deeply unhappy about our lack of self-discipline.

At camp we have the opportunity to practice working on the little things so that we can develop that big character. Not just in chapel or in Tree Talks, but daily we are urged to practice, practice, practice honesty, service, and thoughtfulness. I hope that by now all of us stop and think before throwing that paper on the ground, before saying that cutting remark, before cutting some corner on a duty. If we are making that progress, then we are building self-discipline, a self-discipline we shall need for the big problems and challenges we shall inevitably face.

At my school, there is a boy — a Pasquaney boy — who faced a big problem. He appeared at my door one day and said, “Chan, I have a Pasquaney kind of problem.” It seems that he knew of a boy on his corridor who was being bullied by his roommate and who was, therefore, quite unhappy. Now, the Pasquaney boy had a single room and thought he might be able to help by offering his single to the bully and move in with the unhappy boy. Still, he really enjoyed his single room and felt it might be easier not to worry about the unhappy boy. “But you do?” I asked. “Yes. What should I do?” I told him that he knew the answer and that he had given me the answer when he said it was a Pasquaney kind of problem. Of course, the right decision was made. While I quietly dealt with the bully on another level, the Pasquaney boy moved into the double room, effectively solving the problem. The unhappy boy became happy and the bully will not be back at my school this fall.

While all big problems are not so clear-cut or have such happy conclusions, you can be prepared for them if you practice the little things here, develop self-discipline and follow your Pasquaney instincts when the big problems arise.

Before I close, I want to shift gears for a minute and talk about another way that our common Pasquaney experience works in our lives. For me, returning after six years away, I can tell you that during those years away Pasquaney remained close to me through the memories of my summers here. While the feeling of looking at the lake during Tree Talk, the sea of heads over the white shirts in Chapel, and the moon off Dana Porch at Taps is indelible, I also recall specific moments as a boy and counsellor. My stander in the quoit pits, the rich make-up smells in the theatre, and the long talks with Vinnie or Howie or Tim or whoever late into the summer nights. Strangely, I recall sleeping on the side of Mt. Bemiss and seeing a full moon and — instead of being moved by the beauty of it — worrying that the guy next to me might be a werewolf. But mostly I remember the laughter, the long rich, deep laughter in  
be a werewolf. But mostly I remember the laughter, the long rich, deep laughter in the dorms, the showers,

and the Council office.

I want to close by praising the Council, but I don't know how really. There is wonderful fellowship among us and deep commitment to ideals and Pasquaney, but most of all to you. I know now that the counsellors cared for me in a way that other adults — except I suppose my parents — could not. And I shall tell you that no matter how demanding we may at times be, at some level, boys, the counsellors here care deeply for each of you. To understand that fully you may have to join us. If you ever do get that invitation — and it is a rare opportunity to enjoy duty, fellowship, and learning — then do not hesitate. Do it.