

Christian Griffin
“The Power of a Moment“
Tree Talk 8/03/07
Camp Pasquaney

Today is Friday the third of August 2007 AD. It is the 42nd full day of the 113th season of Camp Pasquaney. It is 10 minutes past the hour of 6 in the evening. Reveille blew about 11 hours and 10 minutes ago. Taps will blow in about 3 hours. You can mark this moment in time extremely specifically. But even as we take the split second to do so, the moment is gone. This past semester at Yale I took a course about basic metaphysical philosophy. At the beginning of our discussions of time, my professor, Troy Cross, asked us “What is the rate of time?” The artsy philosophy/theatre double major sitting in front of me raised her hand and said “One second per second”. Troy, appreciating her paradoxical answer, chuckled and responded by saying that *this* is the rate of time. Can you feel it? This is the rate of time. We very easily forget the temporal nature of time. It seems to be a redundant term: the temporality of time, but we are running out of time at an alarming rate: in fact, at exactly this rate. It is really easy to let time run away from us during the year, and at camp it is almost inevitable. On opening day you are sitting above flagpole rock watching the youngest camper unfurling the flag and before you know it, it is trustees weekend and you are giving a tree talk.

Every moment of this summer is important. We spend less than two months at this place every year, yet look at how much we accomplish: I have thought for a long time that we squeeze more worthwhile things into these seven weeks than is humanly possible. On a concrete level, we are busy from 7 am to 9 pm every day: activities, free time, inspections, meals, rehearsals, and campfires. On a much less concrete level, however, all of the things that we do at camp at all times of the day contribute to some intangible personal growth and the growth of the community as a whole. We push ourselves to become more physically and mentally tough. We learn the power of vocal leadership and more quiet leadership by example. We learn how to be polite and kind to each other. We learn how to be a good friend and a good person. You are developing as a person every moment that you spend on this hillside. The problem is that the vast majority of the moments that we have this summer are gone; they are in the past. If you think about it, we really only have this moment. One second later it is gone, never to be had again. This moment now is the most important: it is imbued with a great power and gives us great control over our destiny. Without the present, without now, we would have nothing but memories of the past and expectations for the future, which are thereby rendered useless and static by the loss of this moment.

Every moment we are faced with choices, whether we are aware of them or not. The choices that we make define the person that we become and the things that we can accomplish. We can choose at any moment to do something kind for someone else. We can choose at any moment to make a conscious effort to become a better friend, leader, or person, but, often, we drift through life not realizing the choices that we are missing. That’s not the right word. One does not miss a choice; one ends up choosing inaction, apathy, or gross unawareness instead.

Earlier this summer, I very abruptly realised the power that every moment holds and how much attention each moment demands. As many of you know, the week before Long Walk I got in to a car accident. I had been hiking with 1st Walk all day and was very tired. I had decided to drive up to Bar Harbor, Maine to see my family for my day off. About three hours into the six-hour drive I fell asleep at the wheel and when I woke up I found myself crashing through the woods. I wrapped the car around a tree wrecking it beyond repair. At the time, I thought very little of the fact that I was mostly unhurt: I got out of the car and walked away with nothing but a scrape and some very minor whiplash. I walked down the road to a house where I called the sheriff who took me to a motel for the night. The next day, my mother came to pick me up and we drove to a nearby town to inspect the car. As we were looking at the damage, which was formidable, a man from the garage said, "Wow, whoever was driving that car must have gotten really badly hurt." It was in that moment that I realised that I was lucky still to be alive and even luckier not to have been grievously injured. Only in retrospect could I appreciate the danger that I had put myself in by choosing to drive that evening. When I made it, it did not seem like a choice. I did not feel as if I had chosen to drive while I was obviously too tired to do so, but I had let that one moment pass without fully considering the consequences of my choices and it almost cost me my life. I realised that I had been going through my summer not fully considering each moment: going through the motions, as they say. When I returned to camp the next day I possessed a renewed vigor and a newfound appreciation for the power of every moment. I have tried from then on to live and experience each second to my greatest ability. I have always prized the time that I spend here, but now the moments I have on this hillside seem more precious and special than they ever have. I hope that you all realise the power that you have to grow and develop here at Pasquaney.

I want everybody to take 20 seconds right now and think about what you have done thus far this summer. What were your goals? What have you accomplished? What are you particularly proud of? < 20 seconds. > Are you poised to achieve all of your goals for this summer? Have you finished your shop project, gotten your Basic Sailor, improved your groundstrokes or memorized all of your lines? Have you kept a positive attitude even when you were tired or stressed? Have you thought of others before thinking of yourself? Have you made closer friends? Have you learned about what it means to be a leader? Do you feel as if the moments that you have spent here this summer have been used well or have they been wasted? I would be supremely surprised if the answers to all of these questions were 'yes', but I know that each of you have worked hard toward your goals this summer both tangible and intangible.

Now for a second forget everything that you have done this summer. Start with a clean slate. We all have a choice to make. In this moment, in this place, you have to decide what you are going to do with the time that remains for this community. It does not matter whether you have accomplished everything that you wanted to this summer or whether you have failed to attain your goals, we cannot control our past. It is gone: never to be changed. We can, however, control our future. We must choose to make these next nine days the best that we can make them: focusing on every moment and figuring out how we can make that moment the best and most worthwhile it can be. How do we do that? For some things it is very simple. If you have a concrete goal that you have not

achieved, take the time to accomplish it. Even if the goal seems to be out of reach, striving toward it will improve your chances of achieving it next year. For less tangible goals start working by sowing thoughts and acts. It is never too late to sow an act. That act and the next and the next will translate into a habit and then a character and then a destiny. This week, choose to do something nice for someone else. Choose to take a more proactive role leading your peers. Choose to make a new friend. Choose to live the best life that you can live. We all have an opportunity here: lets take it.

This summer has been wonderful so far, and even though we have but one more week, it is nowhere near finished: we still have crew races, plays, shop projects, baseball games, and water sports competitions to finish. We also have a community that is continuously growing stronger. The power of the community that we are building this summer is astounding and we have one more week to make it closer, more caring, and more devoted to the ideals of Pasquaney than ever. I call on every one of you to understand and realise the power that we are holding in our hands at this very moment. We have the potential to accomplish great things. Do not let the fast pace of time overwhelm your last week: savor each moment. Lets take the little time that is left to us and finish this spectacular summer spectacularly. Thank you for listening for these past <eleven> minutes and thank you for this, the 113th season of Camp Pasquaney.