

The Pasquaney Spirit
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Chapel Talk 07/29/07

Fuzzy Kneeland, guardian of the Pasquaney spirit. What does that mean? Fuzzy Kneeland, an original camper who became a chemist at MIT, dedicated his life to the preservation of Pasquaney, keeping it and the spirit that lies within alive for future generations, for us in fact. And we, in turn, keep the Pasquaney spirit alive for those who will follow us. The Pasquaney spirit is both grand and sweeping and is also grounded in the minutiae of our daily lives:

The firm grip and look in the eye when camper and Mr. Vinnie affirm the brushing of teeth and say “good morning” and “good night”. The handshake after an obstacle race. The volunteering on opening day to be a table boy. Picking up a tennis racket so it will not be rained on and finding its owner. In our dealings with one another, cooperating rather than hindering; grace and forbearance rather than bickering. Good duties, sharp inspections, picking up trash, being on time. Not griping over a tough hike or hard duty. Winning or losing gracefully in a competition. The hospitality borne witness to on Watersports Day by campers waiting in line to get food for our guests. The courtesy shown to the bus drivers on our hikes. Honest, open, decent and respectful relations with others. And on a larger scale: The years of service of Gil Bovaird who was bookkeeper and business manager for 52 years and kept unwise counselors from spending their salary while still at Camp. Mr. Charlie who gave up the opportunity for Headmasterships at several top secondary schools to serve Camp as Director. Ambassador Bill Bullitt convincing the President of Dartmouth to free Pop Watson from his duties there to run Camp during the war.

The Pasquaney spirit is about love, service and devotion, not to Camp so much as to one’s fellow campers and counselors, and as time progresses in adult life, to man in general. These are qualities that keep marriages and families healthy. Pasquaney teaches us to serve and makes service an attractive mode of living. It is what will make our lives useful to our jobs and to our communities.

The Pasquaney spirit infuses Camp; it is what makes it so dear and special to us all. A decade ago a father who did not know Pasquaney before his son went here remarked after twenty-four hours visiting that he had not realized how “soulful” Pasquaney is. We are forgiving rather than cynical. There is a deep and abiding pride of place; a love and respect for our buildings, land and traditions, and a desire to have camp run the very best it can. As both campers and counselors, we take great pride in doing our jobs to the very best of our abilities. We talk here about the values that underlie and create our Camp culture: Friendship, thoughtfulness and consideration of others, respect, honesty, loyalty. These are abstractions that would mean little if they were not brought into life by our daily actions. My first year at Camp, I left with a very heavy suitcase the last car of a long train in South Station in Boston to walk several hundred yards to the bus that took us to our night stay in the North Station before arriving the next day by train in Plymouth. I was in great pain, and a second year camper my age took that bag and carried it for me. I

knew then what Pasquaney was all about. Or my first police duty when a kindly Dave Reed asked an older camper, Dave Hughes, to show the way to sweeping lower Tradition—the audience part of the original theatre, which was in front of what is now Adams. Kind, thoughtful, considerate, they remain close to me today, enduring as the type of friendships that we talk about here.

The Pasquaney spirit is different from the rah –rah of school or college loyalty. It tends to be deeper and broader than what we experience elsewhere. It combines peace, tranquility and reflection with an active exuberance, a deep sense of joy in life, and a mellow appreciation of the subtler displays of commitment, trust and service. We see an atmosphere where individuals transcend their selves and reach out to serve others. The Pasquaney spirit asks for our best and brings it out in a way that is fresh and rewarding.

At Pasquaney, the values we treasure are clearly articulated in our Chapel talks and Tree Talks, and exemplified by the daily practice of our ethic of trust, service, and acceptance. Here, we have learned that the truths we hold dear are timeless and not of a fashion or a period, that what is good and right has not changed over time. One of the things that makes Pasquaney so special is that we live here guided by these truths, growing in harmony with what is good for the soul. What we learn here shapes our future and governs our decisions about ethical conduct, our occupations and careers, and how we treat our family, friends, and colleagues, and a host of other matters that make up the fabric of our lives.

In the 60's Marshall Bartholomew, "Barty," who directed the Yale Glee Club for 30 years and guided such musical greats as Cole Porter, led the campfire singing with the same songs we have today and had 100 years ago when he was fresh out of Yale. Barty often remarked that if the world could be taught to sing, there would be peace across the land. The Watersports campfire singing here meant more to him than leading a group before the King of Denmark several weeks later. As the Whiffenpoofs, which Barty helped to found say," the magic of their singing casts a spell." Such a spell as the deep feelings we transmit at the final campfire every year as the camp sings to the parents and listens to taps descending the hillside; a gift to others from our collective hearts.

After Pop Watson, the founder of both Pasquaney and Dartmouth's theatre programs, had long retired from teaching at Dartmouth, he started a second career teaching English to over 100 freshman at an impoverished all-Black college in Virginia, and he delighted in the hard work and rewards at a time he was well aware that he was dying of cancer. The Pasquaney spirit, which Pop had much to do with in his 60-year association with Camp, had led him to give once more to others. His bright-eyed enthusiasm was indelible in the memories of those of us who saw it, and his passion to help and serve was infectious.

Yesterday when we celebrated the reunion of Camp as the Long Walk returned, we had an especially deep spiritual and emotional moment of renewed bonds and friendships. Their vibrant enthusiasm and shared experiences are given to us to energize our growing commitment to camp and its values. The best long walks have wonderful moments of quiet conversation on the trail or around the dinner at Nancy Brook as well as uplifting

moments of transcendent joy when tough trails are conquered and summits allow our spirits to soar. For some, the Long Walk becomes a unique time of belonging, of an affirmation of the goodness of community and man himself.

When the length of the school year necessitated shortening the Camp summer by four days, we retained the eight chapels and decided to conclude the summer with the last one. This does not make Pasquaney a religious place, but it makes it one that acknowledges the importance and centrality of the spiritual in life.

The Pasquaney spirit refers to an attitude and a culture of support, respect, tolerance, and giving, but it runs deeper than those important aspects of our daily life. It is respectful of the soul of man and the soul of the community. It is not by accident that at five of the six or seven times we get together each day, we acknowledge that we are not the center of the universe, that something greater than us helps to shape our lives. We pray to start and end the day and we have a blessing or grace to start each meal. Our community's health, its very well being, is supported and sustained by such reflection.

The lesson talks of the lilies of the field and how the needs of the natural world are taken care of and it suggests that man's primary business on earth is to take a spiritual path, to seek a treasure that is not material. We have a very full life here and very real in the sense that the human spirit is real and growth is real, and caring is real. The so-called real world is absent—no money, no dressy clothes, and few 20th or 21st C trappings. In the woods, at the lake, in the mountains and here in Chapel, we gain a sense of awe and appreciation of others and of our natural world. Our uniforms, economic equality, freedom from the popular culture of this time and relative simplicity of our life here enable us to develop a more spiritually focused existence where the natural instincts to serve, share, and care for others can thrive. These instincts are not crowded out at Pasquaney, but are respected and encouraged to flourish under the protection of the Pasquaney spirit. Our hearts and souls are being filled with the qualities that will sustain us throughout our lives. By losing ourselves in service to others, we find ourselves. The thought becomes the act, then habit, character, and finally destiny. The Pasquaney spirit then resides within and governs our lives.

I shall close with the remarks I made at the last reunion: "Wherein lies the magic of Pasquaney? Why after 53 summers is opening day still thrilling and the closing after chapel so deeply caring and emotional? Why are we willing to work hard every day to do our best, to be our best, to make the lives of others better? Other institutions have claimed us as their own, but none have we embraced so dearly as Pasquaney.

There can never be a complete answer for Pasquaney is a symbol rich in meaning and one, which expands and deepens for each of us over the years. Symbols are never fully defined; they are by definition open ended and undefined. But still we try to unravel the mysterious and see the unknown. This attempt at understanding is an intellectual and personal journey.

Pasquaney is a touchstone by which we measure worth and give meaning to life's events. It is a certainty, a fixity-- something constant and permanent. At Mr. Charlie's retirement 32 years ago Seymour St. John quoted Robert Frost's poem that reads "take something like a star To stay our minds on and be staid." "staid", something fixed, supportive and certain, also proper and upright.

Common values, strong ideals, firm convictions and durable traditions underlie the Pasquaney spirit. It is an underpinning of great strength and it becomes the underpinning for our lives. Couple that foundation with shared laughter, joy, friendships and fellowship, respect for one another, deep thoughtfulness and consideration, and a bedrock of honesty and you have an elixir that once tasted is never forgotten. Pasquaney becomes the measurer of all things, a yardstick rarely rivaled in life, and I dare say rarely if ever surpassed. Many of us have committed a large share of our lives to it with great reward and satisfaction. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."