

What governs our decisions, our choices. It is largely our values. They establish our priorities, focus our lives, guide our way.

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." What do we treasure? Is it our gadgets, cars, or wealth, or is it such matters as our friends, integrity, service to others, and our family? Often, the treasure is a combination of material goods and spiritual and personal qualities. Reflecting upon their values, some give up wealth and even fame for what, to them, are more important things such as helping others, teaching, healing, and family. Today, we shall look to how Henry David Thoreau and Robert Frost's words urge us to pursue authentic lives, true to our own individuality, to live our own life and not to miss it traveling someone else's path.

Over 60 years ago, Pop Watson spoke in Chapel about Frost's "Road Not Taken." Robert Frost knew this hillside, spending time with Pop watching the sunset from Tree Talk Ridge and later in the evening talking at Kef Y Ali about what was important in life. Pop shared Pasquaney, his special treasure, with his fellow author and teacher. Frost's eloquent poem about life's choices reads:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear:  
Though as for that, the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I --  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

The road we choose in life will be guided by our values, and for many of us, those are the values that have been fostered in this Chapel and nurtured in our lives at Camp.

Our most important decisions reveal best what we truly treasure. The fleeces we wear have an instructive story behind them. Aaron Fuerstein, the company owner who was well beyond retirement age, lost the entire factory to fire in 1995. He could have collected the insurance money and retired or relocated to a place where the labor costs were less; instead, he paid the health insurance of the employees for the year it took to rebuild the factory in the same city, saving the jobs for them when it reopened its doors, rescuing Methuen, Mass. from disaster. Fuerstein said, “His inspiration came from his strong Jewish faith—and he believed most people long for the opportunity to do the right thing.” He said in his factories there is “good will, determination, teamwork, and hope. Its a healthy company.” Such is true of any healthy community.

At Pasquaney, values are clearly articulated in our Chapel talks and Tree Talks, and exemplified through the daily practice of our culture of trust, service, responsibility and tolerance. Here, we have learned that these truths are timeless and not of a fashion or period, that what is good and right does not change over time. What makes Pasquaney so special is that we see these truths in action and grow with their soulful nourishment. Here we form our attitudes 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 and communities.

As we age, our values will inevitably change starting with a need for the material (the "It's mine" of the child), and then slowly on to the social of the adolescent (“They are my best friends.”), then to the abstract and intellectual in the young adult (who says, “I'll devote my life to social justice”), to the personal of adult life (“My family is the most important thing.”) and finally often in later life, to the spiritual in a search for meaning in life and nourishment of the soul.

The lesson spoke about how man's essential task is to cultivate the spirit and to let the material world take care of itself. ("Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.") The prescription for the good life does not vary much from culture to culture.

The values we cherish at Pasquaney have been inherited from the rich Western tradition of both the Judeo-Christian ethic and the Hellenic appreciation of the intellect and the arts. Tree Talks and sermons over the years have focused on topics such as the camp motto, “Stop and Think,” honesty, thoughtfulness and consideration of others, love and tolerance, friendship, tough-mindedness, service, respect, dedication, and courage. Our nation has achieved greatness whenever it has adhered to a set of time-tested values: Freedom, equality, justice, industry, self-sacrifice, courage, and respect for women and for the rights of others. President Obama said in his inaugural address: “But those values upon which our success depends — honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism — these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history. What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility — a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task.”

The writer and philosopher Henry David Thoreau wrote in *Walden* that, after we had enough heat, clothing, food, and shelter, we did not need more of the same, but we should then be free to cultivate the spiritual. He said, “Most of the luxuries and many of the so-called comforts of life are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind.” Over 150 years ago, he saw that man had become enslaved by material things and the same might well be said of our culture today. Rather, he espoused a life of “Simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust.” Similarly, at Pasquaney we trade our electronic lives for conversation, games, friendship, and service. We learn how real and rewarding this essential life is. Financial security is important, but seeking wealth for its own sake has never led to happiness. “Cupiditas radix malorum est,” as the warning goes in Chaucer. “Greed is the root of all evil.” We learn here we can comfortably and happily shed the excess baggage that can encumber our journey through life.

At Pasquaney, we learn to make choices with the free spirit Thoreau suggested, leading us perhaps to a road less travelled. We can strive to become our best selves and to bring ourselves

in tune with the timeless wisdom of the ages. Here, the messages of love, caring, thoughtfulness and service are taken into our minds and hearts. It is an opportunity that seldom occurs elsewhere.

In as much as Pasquaney has stayed true to these ethical, moral, and personal principles, it has been strong and true to its purpose. As these values become real, no longer abstract, we come to believe in their worth. All of this is rather easy here in our consciously simplified, uncluttered lives at Camp. But at home, the choices are much more difficult in part because they are more numerous. Do we watch TV or do we engage in conversation or read a book? Do we take drugs or do we play sports or work in a soup kitchen? In later years, will we focus our lives on earning money or on raising a family? Will we serve others? If we listen to what we have felt here, our choices should be good for both ourselves and for society at large. We may well choose the path that was "grassy and wanted wear," to be an individual who seeks what he knows in his heart to be his real treasure.

Mr. Charlie spent most of thirty years teaching and coaching at Choate, and he turned down a number of prestigious headmasterships to stay at Pasquaney as Director. He celebrated education and embodied it at its very best. For many of us, including some of us here in Chapel today, his values were infectious, and he led us into careers in education. In fact, many of the campers and counsellors who were outstanding leaders at Camp in the 1950's and 1960's chose to be educators, with careers in both schools and colleges. This was a national trend, too, and now that the "locks on our temples our white," there is a crying need for a new influx of leaders to fill roles in schools and colleges. Service, dedication, loyalty, belief in the best in young people, and faith in their growth are qualities and values that are once again in high demand and camper and counsellor alike might well consider a career in education. It was a choice I have never regretted and has made for a rich and interesting life. The excitement of Opening Day never dulls, the deep feeling of the reunion of camp after the Long Walk will never fade, and the joy of seeing a camper confront the Lemon Squeezer on Cardigan is forever rich.

In summary, here at Pasquaney, we have a priceless opportunity to experience the richest and most meaningful values in our daily lives, to come to believe in them deeply, and to start to

incorporate them into our characters. “Sew an act, reap a habit; sew a habit, reap a character; sew a character, reap a destiny.” Perhaps the one less traveled by. We can put material things into a healthy perspective and remember our particular way of looking at things here when we are distracted by a more complex world outside of Camp. These values are the ones that will set us free. Remember the words of the lesson, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”