

HISTORY OF KAWANHEE

A remarkable story unfolds in the search to construct a brief history of Camp Kawanhee. Born near Portland, Maine, two brothers, George R. Frank, a teacher in Columbus, Ohio, and Raymond C. Frank, a church youth worker in Englewood, New Jersey, returned to summer in their home state, and discovering the beautiful Lake Webb area were inspired to establish a camp as a character-building force for young boys. Three times they rowed around the lake, returning each time to the beautiful cove beach now claimed by Kawanhee Waterfront Departments.

Upwards of 5,000 men have experienced that same beauty in the sixty years of Kawanhee's existence, and the ripples have spread to the far corners of the world. It has been claimed that the call, "Oh, Kawanheeeeeeeee!" has been answered in the Harvard Yard, in airports, on board wartime ships, in English Commons, and wherever very special men have met to renew their memories of summers spent around Ceremonial Campfires.

George started coming to the Mt. Blue area in 1909 to seek respite from his bothersome hay fever condition. During a visit to his cousin's home, a large buck was shot when it invaded Burt Mitchell's garden. "G.R.", as his Kawanhee friends came to call George, joined in the climb to the top of Mt. Blue for a venison feed hosted by his family, and there saw Lake Webb for the first time. "It was a breathtaking sight, don't you know, with two sailboats breezing along near the Dummer brother's place, and that beautiful blue water. I made up my mind then if I ever married I would return there, and in 1912 I did just that!" And so, George began his long summer residency until his unfortunate death on July 20, 1977, in the fire which destroyed the original Dining Hall, and Eagle, Falcon and Birch Lodges.

Raymond C. Frank, actively engaged in Boy Scout work, accepted his brother's invitation to come for a visit in 1917. Impressed by the natural setting also, he joined the plan to build a boys' camp. With the successful purchase of the choice sixty acres their hearts were set on, their endeavor was inevitably launched.

Construction of the first buildings began with the Main Dining Hall, and Eagle and Falcon Lodges in 1918, made possible with borrowed funds. The Herbert L. Berry Rec Hall memorialized a friend's \$5,000 loan made in the early years when seed money was difficult to obtain.

Raymond and George got up some literature describing the benefits of Lake Webb, guaranteeing a summer free from hay fever with a money-back offer if boys were uncomfortable. They passed it around to some of their friends, and in 1921 opened Camp Kawanhee with 16 hayfever boys, 4 from the East and 12 from Columbus. The Dining Hall was not yet completed so they ate their July meals in Deer Lodge, the present smaller wing, and moved into the new building in August.

The present Athletic Field, first seen planted with potatoes, was immediately recognized as a perfect spot for all kinds of athletics. In the early days, baseball was enjoyed by campers and counselors playing together to make a team.

The brothers' division of responsibilities seems to have centered around Raymond's physical limitations which began with a boyhood bout with rheumatic fever, and the different interests each man wished to pursue. Raymond handled

the indoor work of bookkeeping and Camp management as well as Basketball, Tennis, General Athletics, Sunday Services, Vespers, Music, Campfires, and Lodge Skit Nights - a feature invented by "R.C.". George handled all Aquatics, Shop, Sailing, Range, and supervised all aspects of the outside operation. His study of architectural drawings led him to design and to oversee the construction of all Camp buildings.

Not only the beauty of Kawanhee's setting, and the excellent food featured at meals, but the brothers' talents in seeking and enlisting outstanding men for staff leaders drew immediate success to Kawanhee's program. Harry C. Marshall, the first Head Counselor, and Max Seville, who had been Raymond's friend at Springfield College in Massachusetts, were principals who lent the greatest assistance in the first ten years.

"G.R." remembers that Max originated the idea of Chief Kawanhee, and his genius led the way in developing the ceremonies surrounding the Chief. Indian artifacts found on Webb shores confirmed the belief that the Indians who camped around the Rangeley Lakes may have used the Webb Lake and River on their way to the coast. Choosing an Indian name seemed appropriate for the purpose.

Harry Marshall brought a deep idealism, and many good contacts for potential campers as a prominent member of a large Columbus church. He also believed in firm, fair discipline and established a working squad for boys who cut activities. Nobody ever packed their trunk to leave early because of his system, and parents appreciated the sincere efforts taken to teach respect and responsible action to their boys.

The list of outstanding staff men, who broke ground in the 30's, 40's and 50's, establishing many of the traditions which are today closely woven into Kawanhee, is very long. A selected few names, repeatedly mentioned in discussions about those times, are cited here. The names of Rev. Sidney Sweet, Dean Miller, Dr. Carl Elmore and Rev. Stan McCleave represent the inspiration provided in their service as Camp Chaplains.

Rafe Marshall, the first and perhaps only Head of Riding, who maintained the green barn stable of six horses, soon found himself without a department as the boys expressed less and less interest in riding. The curious fact was that boys who took riding found themselves leaving the camp where so many interesting things were happening to their friends.

Mike Peppe brought from O.S.U. one of the best Aquatics records in the world. Cam Scarlett, with thirty stripes on his paddle, offered writing talents as author of the Wigwam and creator of The Log. His parents, Judge and Mrs. Scarlett, were early supporters of the Franks' camp, and returned for over forty summers to vacation at the Kawanhee Inn.

Art Kiefer shared his musical talents and sang in the memorable Kawanhee Quartet with the equally talented Raymond, George and Mr. Harold Myers, Sr. Chuck Wendall worked in Range, as did Roy Nickerson, to build the popularity of that department. Mr. Alquire directed some memorable Dramatics presentations; Carl Spangler developed Fishing.

"Bates" staked out an enviable record in Tripping. It was during the early Camp-sponsored Windjammer Cruises that Bates discovered Monhegan Island, and as a result the priveleged Monhegan Trip for Kawanhee campers continues today. Gold-panning, another interest Clarence F. Bateman shared with Kawanhee at his Swift River site, became an outpost for young boys. Admired by the Franks for his intense interest, "Bates" can be credited with building the addition to the Office so the brothers could have some privacy and wouldn't have to transact their business out on the steps. The new Camp road, designed 24 feet wide to let in light and enhance the visitors approach to the grounds was laid out by one of Maine's best road and tree men, our own "Bates".

Forrest Dexter brought his talents and training in gems and minerals to the Nature Department's Lapidary program, and continues to share tales of his professional travels in evening programs and to help with Sunday Service as a favorite guest speaker.

Herb Birch, now 35 years with Kawanhee, began as a Lodge Counselor, worked in Campcraft and at the Swift River Outpost, and continues to set high standards for the boys' performance in Shop. At other times Herb can be found baiting fishing hooks for Eagles, or managing the Polar Bear Swimming Club affairs, recruiting boys from the East, or helping with the myriad details as Assistant Camp Director and member of the Board of Directors of Kawanhee, Inc.

Women have held impressive positions in the development of Kawanhee, starting with Ma Frank as the first Camp Mother, a job she created to help homesick boys adjust to Camp life. Mrs. Raymond Frank, known to the boys as Frannie, carried on that role in admirable style. Mrs. George Frank, or Florence, competently performed the duties of Camp Dietician and Resident Manager for the Kawanhee Inn. Mrs. Mary Frank, the second wife of George, worked for many years as Director of Nature contributing her many artistic and sensitive touches to that department.

Both Raymond and George took a deep, personal interest in each of their campers, often quietly sponsoring several boys with scholarships who would not otherwise have been able to attend Kawanhee. The unique combination of men and boys joined in a lodge family, with membership in a larger team family, as well as the opportunity to observe and work with skilled men in many fields, provided the boy steady support while he tested himself and passed through many skill levels.

Through the leaner depression years, and especially the later war years of the 40's, the Franks were sensitive to the needs of their clientele. This quotation, taken from the frontispiece of the 1944 Brochure illustrates their concern and dedication to what camping could offer the individual:

"The democratic way of life is America's heritage. As far as possible it should be guarded and maintained for our children in a quiet, normal atmosphere. The present world conflict was not of their making and should not be allowed to interfere with their physical, mental and spiritual growth...For the coming season, perhaps, more than any other in the last two decades, a summer in camp will prove invaluable to them. They will benefit by getting away from radio broadcasts, with its overdose of battle news and bloodshed. These things do not build courage or poise, but leave an indelible mark on the plastic soul of children."

A carefully balanced program aimed at developing our campers into the new leaders on Staff was another Frank innovation which worked, and continues to produce for Kawanhee. "A good many camps have gone on the rocks because they can't get their staff. That's why the trouble comes in. So we do try to train our boys, and so they'll have some of the same ideas that we've had --to start with. And it works, don't you know!" George's claim can be substantiated with the catalog of names still gracing staff lists and including Estabrook, Marble, Myers, Wambaugh, Yardley, Tulloss, Miller, Blau, Fawcett, Hadley, O'Neill Duncan, Taylor, Birch, Hamblin, Sengelmann, Detrick and many others, as sons follow fathers through Kawanhee.

The central objectives shaped in those formative years, the character-building which included emphasis on physical fitness, independence, doing hard things well, learning to give-AND-take, serving others --continue to meet the test of time with flying Maroon and Grey colors. "Fun with a purpose" still conveys meaning to campers in the 80's who are given the freedom to explore and make discoveries, encouraged to expand goals once basics are mastered, and praised through the decision-making process.

After Raymond's death about 1965, George and Frannie carried on for three years until the decision to sell the Camp became a necessity out of considerations of age. In 1968 discussions began which shaped the formation of the Kawanhee, Inc. Walter Estabrook became Managing Director with George at a companion desk as the Associate Director -- age 81, still going strong, helping out by designing the brochure.

The present group of stockholders who continue to perpetuate the organization include Kawanhee supporters "Bates", John Detrick, Mary Green, Lydia Hadley, Jane and Walter Estabrook, Richard Miller, Rev. Harold Myers, William Myers, Betty Frank Smith and Janet Tulloss.

Governing decisions regarding long range planning and promotion of Kawanhee presently occupies the attention of C.F. Bateman, Herb Birch, Henry Blau, John Detrick, Jane and Walter Estabrook, Dr. Richard Miller, Rev. Harold Myers, Robert Pacios, Dr. Henry Sengelmann and Betty Frank Smith.

The intention was never to go over 60 boys which would allow the "comraderie of the better camp with its close contacts of men and boys" to be one of its greatest assets. But the momentum couldn't be slowed and as "G.R." puts it best in a taped interview with Ed and John Hamblin, in April 1977: "The parents took it right out of our hands. We didn't have to do anything; the parents did it all for us. 'been that way ever since we owned this Camp. It's a place they wanted their sons to be, and it's been going that way every year."

MAY THERE ALWAYS BE A KAWANHEE