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Thanks To: Hillary Lobenstein

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NEWSLETTER

Ah, Spring. Spring is busting out all over here in Wisconsin. The ice has been off the lakes since March, but isn't until now that the leaves all come out on the trees. April was rainy and cool for us, and if I never hear "April showers bring May flowers" again I won't be disappointed. These early flowers have now made their appearances, as well as ticks and mosquitoes. Warmer, longer days mean more outside activities. For most of us, it also means thoughts of the upcoming summer and Minikani.

I don't know who first said it, but I saw this quote online: "*Spring – a lovely reminder of how beautiful change can truly be.*" We've all

changed since our time at camp, yet somehow Minikani seems timeless. It continues to provide great summertime experiences and memories for thousands of kids and staff every year.

I guess that's what the MAC is all about – being able to keep all of us connected to a camp that has made changes since we were there, and yet doesn't change. A true example of a paradox.

Please enjoy this edition of the MAC Newsletter. Don't forget that your comments and contributions are always welcome. Email us anytime at minikanistaffodge@gmail.com.





St. Louis



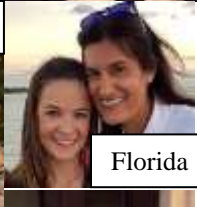
Chicago



Oconomowoc



New York Breakfast



Florida



While we didn't quite make it Around the World this year, we did manage to cover from Seattle to New York and Minnesota to Florida! Saturday, March 4th was this year's designated date, and alumni from all over took advantage of the opportunity to get together in the Spirit of Minikani. These pictures were taken from the Minikani Alumni Community's Facebook group, and it's hard to find a face that isn't smiling. It's great to share a bond with old and new friends and celebrate our Minikani experience. 🌲



Minneapolis



Third Space / Milwaukee



Minikani / Hubertus

Staff Training 1981*

I remember it oh so well. That year we had our Staff Training camping at Glacial Hills Park on Friess Lake. Minikani had been rented out to another camp group, so for 4 days we sat on picnic benches at a beautiful county park for our training. Although we had a campfire every night, that final night we had a special dedication campfire. We had songs by The Band – “Will the Circle Be Unbroken”, “Sweet Chariot” and “Amazing Grace”.



After that we each had a short candle to light and a chance to share our feelings with the group about the upcoming summer. Thinking I might be able to use some of the quotes later that summer at Staff Banquet, I jotted down what people shared. Emotions were high and so many feelings came out from the group. Here are a few of the comments:



Rich M. “I think both the campers and us are lucky to be at Minikani this summer.” Bill O. “I feel truly comfortable in this large group – my best friends are here.” Laurie S. “I remember a Unit Activity last year when I had a camper with learning disabilities. We all had to write our names, but she couldn’t. We give so much love to kids.”

Bill P. “I was going to work in a factory this summer. But I took a chance, and I acted on my love.” Lotte “I’m so happy the way everyone has helped me. I care about everyone here.” Cheryl D. “When you’re at camp, you’re with people who show their love. They take care of each other.” Rich M. “This is the most united group I’ve ever seen. We can laugh and have fun, yet be serious the next moment.”

Lori M. “Last year I taught a skill to a camper who was a real jerk. I really didn’t care. Then he came to me and said, ‘I love you’. We have so much to give, and we do it because we want to.” Jan V. “It feels good to be back.” Nick H. “We call them kids, and they’re 8-15 years old. But really I’m just a kid. We all are.” Jon L. “I always wear my bandana to remind me of camp. Even at school. God, I love this place.”

My hope is that this year’s Staff Training and summer sessions continues to include these feelings and friendships that we all experienced in 1981. I think (and hope) it’s part of the Minikani Spirit.

(* Sorting through some old camp papers getting ready for my upcoming move, I came across a faded notebook sheet from 1981.)



Fires at Camp

Have you ever noticed the little icon that shows up at the top of your screen when you access the MAC website? It even shows up next to the URL in your Bookmarks or Favorite Places.



It’s called a “favicon” and is only 16 X 16 pixels. Here is an enlarged view the favicon the Alumni Community uses. You probably never noticed the “M” in the flames before.

What would camp be without flames? No campfires, including cabin campfires, unit campfires, and opening and closing campfires. No cooking fires on camp outs. No matches to light cabin candles for vespers. No torches for parades. Ragger ceremonies just wouldn’t be the same.



Somehow, flames and fires remind us of being at Minikani. Your membership and participation with the Alumni Community helps to keep you close to those flames and insure that the flames never go out.



Service Day '17 And BBQ

May 12th was a beautiful day to spend at Minikani. About a dozen alumni and just about as many LT's gathered outside the maintenance shop right at 9:30 a.m. for the 'swearing in' ceremony. Yes, that's right, we were sworn to secrecy about the service project we were about to do. I think I can tell you this much – it involves a brand new skill to be offered this summer.

All the materials we needed were already at the 'site', and we spent most of the day working on this project. Sure, there were also wheelbarrows of wood chips to spread around camp, some shovel work and a picnic lunch, but the main project kept most of us busy helping to create this new skill for campers. A cookout followed the clean-up, and we all went home tired and happy. What a great way to give back to Minikani. Thanks to everyone who helped out with Service Day 2017.



Editor's Note: I was at Minikani helping with Service Day, but before I left camp I wanted to walk the trails and see my old friends, the Spring Wildflowers. A trip on the boardwalk to Mud Lake provided me with Skunk Cabbage and Fern fronds just unfolding. In the wooded areas behind the Pioneer Unit and Explorer Hill were May Apple umbrellas, Jack in the Pulpit, Wood Anemone, Trillium, Shooting Stars, Wild Geranium, and, of course, the Wood Violet. Since I'm moving out West soon, I'll have to keep pictures of these Minikani Spring flowers in my memory bank for a while.

Summer Camps

Below is a quote from Ross Turner, the board chair for the American Camping Association Board of Directors:

“Camps will not endure by just staying with the status quo. We must all continue to evaluate and make changes to our camp operations. It is a changing world, and the camp experience has the opportunity not only to reflect, but to influence the direction of these changes”

“The nature of campers and the camp experience have changed over the years. We serve a more diverse group of kids. What has not changed is the campers' excitement, anticipation, and expectations for attending camp next summer. Camp offers a safe, fun, exciting, and meaningful experience for youth and staff each year. This is an awesome responsibility and opportunity to make a difference in each and every person who goes through our camps.”



Where did you learn to feel part of a group whose main task was to have fun, learn new skills, and help others? Where did you learn to sing songs at the top of your lungs, act silly performing a skit before 100's of people, and accept challenges to improve your life? Where did you learn to appreciate nature, your family, and yourself? Chances are, it was at Minikani.



Where did you learn?

Where did you learn to swim, shoot an arrow, paddle a canoe, sharpen a knife, and ride a horse? Where did you learn to work together with a group, clean up after yourself, and think about your personal goals? Where did you meet friends-for-life, kids from other cultures, and adults who listened to you?

Do you have a favorite camp memory? “Do you know an Alumnus who we can ‘Spotlight’ in a future edition?” “Do you have questions about camp that we can research?” “Can you suggest a future topic for the Newsletter?”

You get the idea. This is your Newsletter – feel free to make a contribution. The next Newsletter will come out in July. Please give it some thought. Send your email to minikanistafflodge@gmail.com.

“We didn’t realize we were making memories, we were just having fun.”
Winnie the Pooh



Sharing Minikani

By Hillary Lobenstein

One of the greatest aspects of being a parent is sharing your favorite childhood activities, memories, and places with your children. I have loved sharing Camp Minikani with my own children. We have attended spring work days and alumni camp multiple times. We have planted gardens, painted the scoreboard for Norris Field softball games, hiked to Pine Forest and built forts in winter. We have seen Myles hug the tree at Council Bluff. We have slept over at Halquist Lodge after a Minikani Alumni dinner; by the way, I still can't figure out where all of the light switches are in that Lodge.

Grady and Audra have attended multiple Alumni Weekends at the end of August when the summer is drawing to a close. They always want to sleep on the top bunk, go swimming in the pool and lake, and play ga-ga ball (which I always need to be reminded of the rules because ga-ga wasn't part of my camp experience).

We are now in the month of May which means end of school year choir concerts, dance recitals, baseball games (and for my son, spring flag football season), Mother's Day celebrations, and usually, a Brewers game. For me, it means endless papers to grade for my high school students and end of year committee meetings. It also means I can't keep it all together as a mom in May. May also means looking ahead to the greatest season of the year: summer. And with summer, comes memories of Camp Minikani--the greatest place to be in summer!

With a lack of ideas (and those same student papers that still need to be assessed calling out their siren song), I decided to interview Grady and Audra about their camp experiences for this newsletter article. Grady is currently eight years old and finishing second grade; he attended the three day camp session last July on his own. Grady is loud and boisterous with lots of energy. Audra is currently six (almost seven) and finishing first grade; she isn't ready to attend camp just yet on her own. Audra is more timid and likes the reassurance of her parents (so an overnight session at Minikani may become a reality for Audra in a few years).

What is your favorite place at camp?
Audra: The swimming pool and the lake because you get to swim in it.

Grady: The woods because you can build forts and play fun games like post-apocalyptic semi-dystopian zombie survival. (You may all know this as Wilderness Survival Skills.)

What is your favorite song at camp?
Audra: Little Bunny Foo Foo
Grady: Titanic

What is your favorite activity at camp?
Audra: Crafts and especially shrinky dinks
Grady: Swimming in the pool and then crafts

What is your favorite memory at camp?
Audra: Jon McLaren teasing me not to smile.

Grady: Pictures with my cabin on the first day

What are you most excited to do this summer at camp?

Audra: Swimming and crafts. Sleeping there on alumni weekend with mom.
Grady: See new friends.

Tell me about your first year at camp.
Audra: Maybe I'll be ready to go to overnight camp when I'm eight or nine years old. Maybe for the three day session or for day camp.
Grady: It was pretty exciting. All of my cabin mates were nice to me, and I was nice to them. We made a pretty good team.

What skills are you going to take?
Audra: Swimming, crafts, and BB guns. But I will need someone to help me find my way to the BB gun place.
Grady: Archery, swimming, crafts.

Wilderness Survival Skills and POOP (which according to Grady stands for something, but I'm not sure what.)

Anything else?
Audra: I like doggies.
Grady: I thought we were going to paint and draw in crafts, but I was wrong. And for my counselor this summer, I'm nice, and I work really hard. And I'm going to be nice to my cabin mates.

Grady is looking forward to attending session 3A this summer in July. I'm certain he will have a wonderful experience again. We are planning to attend Alumni Weekend August 26th and 27th, and we hope to see all of you there!



Grady and Audra at Alumni Weekend 2013



Nature Notes

By Bruce

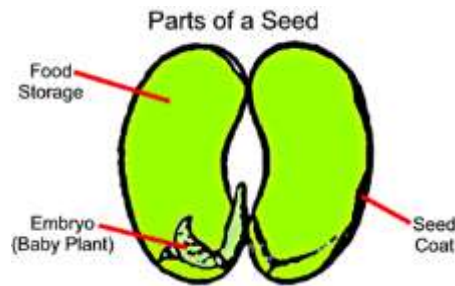
HAVE YOU EVER... Had to pull burrs and stick-tights off your clothes after a camper/counselor hunt? Enjoyed eating black raspberries fresh from Hueniker Hill? Made a wish and blown away dandelion seeds? Watched maple 'helicopters' twirl to the ground as you sat at the MiniKamp story tree (RIP)? Competed in a watermelon seed spitting contest at a Unit Activity? Made acorn-cap whistles at Nature Skill?



Enjoyed Jiffy Pop popcorn contraband at your overnight campout? Glued various seeds to cardboard for that 'perfect' craft project?

What do all these activities have in common? They all involve seeds, of course. From a plant's point of view, seeds serve several functions. Key among these functions are nourishment of the embryo, dispersal to a new location, and dormancy during unfavorable conditions. Seeds fundamentally are means of reproduction for the plant. Inside every seed is a little baby plant just waiting for the right opportunity to grow.

That's right – every seed has a tiny embryo inside it, along with a supply of food to tide the baby plant over until it can make its own by photosynthesis.



Most seeds come complete with a covering around the seed to protect the embryo inside from harmful conditions. Have you ever split a peanut in half and seen the miniature root and leaves of the embryo inside? The thought of actually eating a baby plant may turn some vegetarians into carnivores, but without seeds as a food source, life on earth as we know it would be very different.

When a seed finds the right conditions to germinate, the root part starts to grow downward, responding to the pull of gravity, and the stem part grows upward with a negative response to gravity. This simple fact makes planting seeds so easy. No matter how they fall into the ground, they will always grow in the right direction. Imagine what a hassle it would be if a farmer had plant each seed carefully in the ground so the leaves wouldn't grow down instead of up! Luckily, nature has made the process very simple.



Some of the smallest seeds come from orchid plants and the largest from palm trees. Many of the seeds in between have some special way of spreading themselves around to

disperse the tiny plants inside. The mother plant wouldn't want to compete with all of her offspring on a daily basis for water and light. Some acorns and nuts can roll, some seeds will take off with a gust of wind, and others can float on the water to a new location. Plants even get animals to help with their dispersal, like the nuisance burrs we've all helped.

Some seeds are inside fruits, a tasty treat given by the mother plant as a bribe to an animal to help spread her seeds. The slippery apple seed easily passes through a deer's digestive system and is later deposited with its own supply of fertilizer.



Strawberries are the only fruit that wear their seeds on the outside. The average berry is adorned with some 200 of them. But the "seeds" you see on the outside of a strawberry are actually the plant's ovaries and are called "achenes." Each "seed" is technically a separate fruit that has a seed inside of it. Despite all this confusion about strawberry seeds, most strawberries are not actually grown from seeds, but from runners that grow from the parent plant!



Don't Forget: **Alumni Weekend** August 26 & 27. Watch your email for all the information.