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NEWSLETTER

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Thanks To: Jon McLaren, John Bolger, Joan Tompsett, Julie Hoesly, and Jim Flint

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Welcome to 2019. As the MAC celebrates their 10th year, we're very excited to also celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Camp Minikani.

Thank you, the reader, for supporting the MAC and what it does – “Maintain your connection with your Summer Homeland.” As a Community we come from different backgrounds and experiences, but we all feel a similar connection with Minikani that brings us together.

August 24th and 25th are the dates for the 100th Celebration at Minikani. Plans are still in the making, but you can bet it will involve a chance to re-connect with camp and former staff as well. You can check our website for the latest information we have to share. (Also see the article on page 2.)

Official registration for the weekend will open later this spring through the Minikani website. If you are interested in receiving updates on registration, event details and/or volunteering for the weekend, please [share your information here](#).

In this Newsletter we hope to give you information about what's happening at camp, with the MAC, and with future events. We also have stories of great camp memories, great people and great events.

One word seems to be used a lot in the following articles – “Change”. As the early Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, “Embrace Change: It is the only constant in life.”



CAMP NEWS

Minikani 100th



From Jon McLaren, Executive Director

The 100th Anniversary is going to be HUGE!!!! It is Saturday, August 24 and Sunday, August 25. Both days are open to everyone, but we are strongly encouraging all staff alumni to come on Saturday.

On Saturday camp will be open to explore and enjoy. Day activities will wind down around 4ish, then beginning at 5:30 there will be a big party with bands, beers and bonfires!!!

Sunday camp will be open to enjoy for all. There will be an enormous pancake breakfast buffet and all skill areas will be open for everyone to enjoy.

We are expecting over 2,000 over the two days.

Camp is spending a lot of money on the event, so there will be a cost associated with attending. There will be a "ticket" price and a suggested donation level.



Camp's Big News

By Jon McLaren, Executive Director

The really big news for 2019 is Camp Minikani's first-ever comprehensive capital campaign that will launch in 2019. The Association has approved raising funds for a new dining hall, all three new KYBOs, and numerous land improvements (Council Bluff, sport courts, Explorer cabins, ropes course, etc.).

This comprehensive capital campaign has been in the works for literally decades, but our staff has made it a reality over the last three years. None of this would be possible without the strong leadership of Eli Fyksen, Peter Drews and the rest of our full-time staff.



For those interested, now is NOT the time to donate for the capital projects. These will be announced later this year. Our current goal is to double the amount of annual campaign dollars raised each year. We have guaranteed scholarship dollars for individual campers for as long as they come to

camp; including LTs. This is a first and I believe it will make a long-lasting impact on the lives of many children.

For this to happen, we will need donations each year. Some alumni have been incredibly generous, donating thousands of dollars a year, others are able to afford \$25 a year. Both are greatly appreciated. My personal goal is for all alumni on the Facebook group to donate, on average, \$100 per year. We'd be able to raise 50k if that happens. You can easily donate, and pay quarterly, at www.minikani.org/donate



A Reminder

Most alumni know that for the past 3 years we have NOT accepted any donations to the MAC. Instead, we've asked our members to consider giving directly to Minikani. That allows us to focus on planning great activities to keep you connected to Minikani, and gives camp the opportunity to accept your donations. If you want to make a gift to Minikani right now, use the link given in the article above. This will ensure your gift goes directly to Minikani.

Wavelength Connection

By Jon McLaren

(Editor's Note: Jon has made a new app available to all alumni. It's called Wavelength, and it will help you get on the same "frequency" with other alumni.)

Here is some information about the app to get you started. I'm very excited about Wavelength. Here is the link:

[WAVELENGTH](#)

•The app was developed by Wavelength, a company at the forefront of building and maintaining alumni relationships. We are the first summer camp to be part of their portfolio.

•Anyone can join wavelength - tell all your alumni friends.



•What Wavelength is: a place to connect, primarily for careers, but also socially. If you are thinking about law school, just search "lawyers" - you'll find anyone on the site who is a lawyer. Want to connect with alumni in Boston while visiting for work - just search "Boston". The possibilities are endless.



•What it is not: It's not a social media site. I won't be posting a ton of stuff on there. No need to check often. Use it as a tool. It was developed purely for connecting alumni. I strongly encourage alumni, especially younger alumni, to reach out to alums in their profession, or cities you might be moving to. Age doesn't matter when we are all Minikani alums. I'm 46 and have loved meeting alumni in their 20's and 70's with the help of Wavelength.



50 Years Ago 1969

Carter Wells was chairman of the Camp Minikani Reunion Committee in 1969. With the help of Al Clark, who was a member of the Camp Committee, he put together an evening of guitar music, awards, a special look at the past, present, and future of Minikani, and a campfire.

From the director's report after the event, "As the sun moved westward across Amy Belle, everyone gathered at the chapel on the shore where two young counselors were singing as the formal proceedings were called to order with silent prayer and retreat."

Ken Coffman, Chairman of the Minikani Branch Board of Managers presented Ken Findley with a plaque for his 25 years of service and for his father's service, prior to the establishment of Minikani.

Howard Kustermann, Camp Director in the thirties and early forties, spoke of Minikani's early years and was thrilled to see the growth of Pine Forest, which he had helped plant 27 years earlier. Skits were performed by campers in the fire light at Council Bluff, songs were sung, and the evening ended with a display of fireworks.

This excerpt is taken from "Camp Minikani – Growing and Changing: The First Seventy-five Years" by John Bolger.



Keeping in Touch with the MAC

Email
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Website
www.minikanistafflodge.com

Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/28911858611>



Changes at Camp

By Bruce

In my 22 years on staff at Minikani, I had lots of opportunities to give a morning password. There's one I remember even after all these years. I made large poster-size letters that spelled out the word C-H-A-N-C-E. I gave one letter to six campers who I got to help me. Then I talked about taking a CHANCE while here at camp. Examples were things like taking a new skill, jumping off the tower, making a new friend, eating a new food, etc. Then I asked the kid holding the second "C" poster to flip it over, and it had the letter "G" on the back. CHANCE turned into CHANGE.

I think our passwords always reflected where we were at the time. I wanted the campers to make a change in their lives by taking a chance. I was considering a change in my life back then, and I wanted to show everyone just how easy it was to do.



As I look back at what Minikani was like when I started in 1970, I think of all the changes for the better that have occurred in the past 50 years. A lot of chances were taken, and many changes followed.

Here is a partial list I can think of – maybe you can remember others.

1970 Minikani had

- No Dining Hall with a Pool
- No Locker Rooms
- No Bathroom near the Waterfront
- No Challenge/Ropes Course
- No Campers in 18 & 19
- No Leadership Program
- No Bear Claws
- No Camper Reports
- No In-camp campouts
- No Yurts
- No Mud Lake Boardwalk
- No Kossow Lodge
- No Halquist Lodge
- No Girl's Explorers
- No Winter Camp
- No Mini-Camp
- No Day Camp

What a wonderful opportunity we've all had being a part of Minikani. Although so much changes, so much more stays the same. Kids still have a great summer camp experience, and we get a chance to grow and change along with them.



Richfield Truck Stop

By Bruce

For those who haven't heard yet, Richfield Truck Stop is no more. It closed its doors after 50 years on December 20, 2018. Developers plan to change it into another Kwik Trip gas station. I remember when it was originally built as a Skelly's Truck Stop in 1970. I was working at Minikani during the off season developing Indian Guides for camp, and the new leader had moved to Hubertus to oversee the building of this brand new Truck Stop.

When this news hit the Alumni Facebook page, there were lots of comments. Here are a few:

Ryan Costello: "T&T provided late night grub for hundreds of camp counselors in the summer. This place will be missed!"

Amanda Hendrickson: "NOOOOOOOO"

Jason Horowitz: "How will Explorer counselors know who they are paired with?"

Theresa Lex: (A Richfield Resident) "Thank God that crap hole will finally be gone and the lot cleaned up! Hopefully KT will take better care of the grounds and not make Richfield look like a dump to interstate drivers stopping through."

Andrew J Matranga: "So many nights."

Calie Joy Herbst: "Oh my god."

Lars A Gingery: "Change - the constant."



A Look Back...

By Joan (Purdy) Tompsett and Julie (Richards) Hoesly

(Editor's Note: Joan and Julie were among the very first girl campers at Minikani. They went on to be part of the first LT's at camp. Along the way, they became best friends. Here is their story.)

Julie knew from the first steps she took onto Norris Field on that hot Sunday afternoon in 1969 that she would love Camp Minikani. She was adventuresome that first year and came to camp all alone – coincidentally the first (or second?) year they allowed female campers.

Girls stayed in Cabins 10 -17, and there were no boys allowed for that first week of summer. It rained the entire week so mudding down hills on dinner trays was pretty much the main activity. The next summer at camp was even better, familiar faces and less rain! It was fabulous, but little did she know how much better it could be when she met her best friend at camp in 1971.

Julie and Joan met in Cabin 9, Girl's Unit, as Explorers. Rearranging the cabin was the first order of business, and resulted in Joan dropping a cabinet on Julie's foot. The relationship bloomed from that point on, and we were inseparable.



The highlight of the session was the first co-ed Explorer trip to canoe the Peshtigo River. We stayed at Goodman Park, with instructions to keep boys' and girls' tents at a *reasonable* distance.



We managed to “pick a boyfriend/girlfriend for the trip,” which was a tradition maintained throughout Leadership Training and beyond. Having special boys to help with gear and tents was great!



Not being exactly the most outdoorsy, we bonded over digging pit toilets, carrying pots and pans to the river for cleaning, and canoeing and hiking for miles. The Baker Tents were canvas and floor-less with no water-proofing. We found out just how bad they were when it rained hard one night. We had to laugh or we would have cried.

Looking back, we loved every minute of it.

HHHHHHHH

We're not sure we even realized the significance of being the only two girls in the very first session of the first LT program. We picked Session One, and stayed together in Cabin 1 with zero supervision. Glen Kowski, the sole LT Director, stayed in the cabins on the lake with the boys. At night we had vespers in the boy's cabin, which meant walking back and forth in the dark, through the old corral to the Indian Unit. We were always certain that we would be stampeded by the horses.



It was such a blast! Since we had such a small LT group, we had to do all of the dishes every day in the old dining hall (Fireside Lodge). On syrup days, we would finish up just in time to start helping with lunch set-up. One year, the LTs stayed together in Robertson (Staff Lodge); we were on the right and the boys were on the left.



ROBERTSON LODGE 1975

Continued on next page

2018 Holiday Party

The 2018 MAC Holiday Party was once again held at Third Space Brewing in Milwaukee, a great place for alumni to gather. Over 70 people enjoyed their beverages, lots of Kompali food, and a chance to talk with old friends and new. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. "It was nice to see some old friends again" said one person. Another observed "It was probably the biggest age spread we've had at one of our Holiday Parties." Thanks to everyone who was there, and we hope to see you and many more at next year's Holiday Party.



CAMP FRIENDS
ARE THE
BEST FRIENDS

We have known each other for 47 years! We were in each other's weddings, Julie is the godparent of Joan and John's two sons; our children grew up together. We can't imagine life without one another — and it all started at Minikani. Our favorite vesper 'go to' was Winnie the Pooh, especially:

"If you live to be a hundred, I want to be a hundred minus one day so I never have to live without you."

Wise old bear.



The LT program, as small as it was, made us well-prepared and excited to be great counselors together, which we were for a couple of summers.

Despite going to college in different states, our relationship continued throughout the year and flourished in the summers. Joan was the Craft Director for two years and lived in that gross, small cabin in the girls unit over the sewer near the KYBO. In 1978, Joan became the first Girl's Explorer Unit Director.



The girl explorers lived in two platform tents near the girls unit. Unfortunately, this was Joan's last year as she had to complete a college internship. Julie had a sabbatical year (very regretful) to attend summer school, but returned as the Girl's Leadership Director in '78 and '79. (Coincidentally, with Joan's now-husband, John).

Camp was much simpler then, not as many concerns and worries — no technology, walk-talkies, phones, etc. We could go on and on about what it was like when we were there but... we won't. What hasn't changed is the magic and the life-long relationships that develop while at camp.



Doug Otopalik, Eileen Melnikov, Dave Glocke, John Tompsett, Joan Purdy, Julie Richards, Lloyd LaRoque

1978 Softball Friends



By Jim Flint

Jim first came to Minikani as a 10 year old. He was an LT I in 1986, a counselor in the 90's and then camp's Nature Director. He was also the first director at Camp Matawa for one summer before they hired an Executive Director.

Since leaving Minikani he started two camp programs for underserved youth and families, one in New York and one in Milwaukee. He has worked with REDgen, a non-profit organization providing events and resources in the Milwaukee area to advocate for the mental health of youth. He recently launched a coaching practice for people who have been diagnosed with or are facing a significant health challenge.

◆ **Have a favorite job at camp?**

Although I really enjoyed leading the Nature program, my first year as a counselor is my most memorable. It was so exiting to have the responsibility of having my own cabin. I really loved the connection with the boys in my cabin. I remember feeling bummed my first night as Nature Director because cabins were off to their cabin campfires. I missed that connection.



◆ **Do you have any special memories from camp?**

There are so many. I really loved spending time in "new" Pine Forest with Nature classes. It felt like our secret spot because it really wasn't used that much. Also the year when we hosted a number of counselors from Senegal. They were all talented drummers and we had a spontaneous drum circle/dance in Pine Forest after a ceremony of some kind. Sounds kind of silly saying it now but it was super fun and creative.

◆ **Were there any special skills you learned while at camp?**

Problem solving and leading by example come to mind. Planning an afternoon of cabin activities or a series of nature classes was difficult at that age. I learned to have back up plans if things didn't go as planned and to "quit while they are having fun". I learned a ton about camp operations that served me well in my career.

◆ **You're also a life coach?**

Yes - in addition to my day job I am also launching a coaching practice to help people who are facing a significant health challenge. I have been a life coach for two years and now am focusing my attention on this group of people. I had a kidney transplant in 2004 and

lost my sister to cancer so I have a significant amount of experience with health challenges. It can be difficult to face even if you have a loving and supportive family. I think it is a gap in services I hope to fill. For more information, check out my website at

topbranchcoaching.com.

◆ **What motivates you career decisions, and what advice do you have for others who might be interested in a similar career?**

If I had any advice for others developing a career I would say look for ways to serve. What talents do you have that will improve the lives of others? Service to others has always been the most gratifying experience for me. I would also say do something that aligns with your values. If we are out of alignment then work is just that...work.

◆ **Favorite place at camp?**

Pine Forest!



◆ **Anything else to share?**

Just to keep bringing the Minikani Spirit into the world. We need it pretty badly right now.



Nature Notes

By Bruce

Skunks

The striped skunk is very common in Wisconsin. They're not very aggressive and typically plod along minding their own business. Found in both North and South America, these nocturnal mammals live in farmlands, woodland edges and brushy areas along streambanks and ditches. They like to create dens in late fall in warm, cozy places under porches or sheds, rock openings, wood piles, hollow stumps or a fallen log.

But the skunk's scientific name says it all: (*Mephitis mephitis*), which translates to *Bad Smelling, bad smelling*. They can emit a chemical from their anal glands that may reach up to 15 feet away – with incredible precision. It's their only real protection from predators. Unlike most animals, skunks do not want to blend in with their environments. Instead, they wear their bright black and white markings as a warning – Keep Away.

Even skunks don't like the odor of their spray. Before using it they will lift their tail and stamp their paws to get your attention. If you or a pet gets a spraying, the conventional wisdom is a bath of tomato juice. But experts say a combination of hydrogen peroxide, baking soda, and dish soap will work much better.



They like to eat mice, insects, grubs, carrion, eggs, reptiles and amphibians. They are preyed on by few predators. About the only animal that's immune to a skunk's spray is the great horned owl, which has a poor sense of smell. Most skunks do not live very long in the wild. They only tend to live for about two to three years, mostly falling prey to cars on the road.



Skunks don't hibernate, but slow down in a state scientists call 'torpor'. They sleep most of the time, living off stored fat, and will lose about 30% of their body weight by the end of winter. Even so, they may leave their dens on a warm winter's evening to look for a meal. Because they have poor eyesight, you might accidentally surprise one, and the event become a memory you wish had never happened.

Baby skunks are usually born in May, with 3-8 in a litter. They begin to raise their tails when frightened in a matter of days. They can spray at about 3 or 4 weeks old - right about the time their eyes open. Babies stay close to their mother for about three months until they are weaned. You'll sometimes see the babies in a line following their mother hunting for food.



Felix the Skunk

Did you know we had a pet skunk at Minikani in the 1970's? His name was 'Felix' and, yes, he was descended. (Always the first question.) He was only a couple months old when we got him from someone who had bought him from a pet store for \$25.

He stayed outside the Nature Lodge in a large wooden cage. That same year we also got a baby raccoon (Rocky) by answering an ad. To legally keep these two furry mammals, Minikani became a licensed Fur Farm, and you can still see the old sign posted outside the Nature Lodge.

Both of them came to Council Bluff for Skill Sign-up Skits on opening days and campers loved to visit them at free time. After camp we moved their cages to the house I rented on Bark Lake, and brought them back the next summer. Rocky escaped that 2nd summer, but Felix made the round trip 6 more times and finally died of old age at 7 years.

Because he had been descended, Felix could never be released back to his natural habitat. Without his powerful scent glands, he still produced a musky odor, much like a ferret. He brought smiles to lots of kids (and parents on closing days) and always ate like a king from the kitchen's left overs.

Would I do it all over again? Probably not. But having lots of animals at the Nature Lodge (guinea pigs, hamsters, mice, rats, gerbils, ducks, frogs, toads, turtles, etc.) made it a fun place for kids to connect with animals while they were at camp.

