

SpotLight

On Alumni

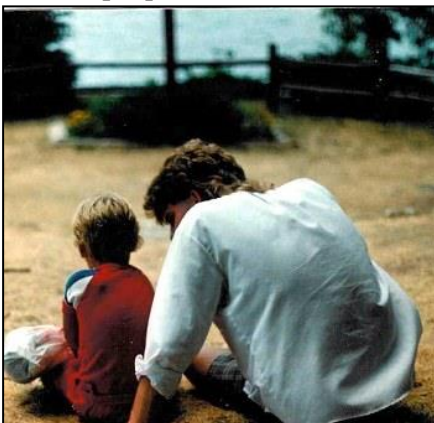
Jim Frohna and I share a bond – we were never Minikani campers, but came to camp later in our lives. Jim was on the staff from 1986-89, two years as a counselor and two years as crafts director.

◆ **Do you have any particularly ‘fond’ memories of camp?**

I have a long list of vivid and fond memories, including but not limited to: Disco Night, the hike to the apple orchard, cabin talks after lights out, hanging out in the staff lodge, Ethel and her beautiful, fiery spirit, Lloyd’s hat and smile, singing songs at the top of our lungs in the dining hall, Password, singing “Taps at the end of campfires, and watching the candlelit cross float out across placid Lake Amy Belle.

◆ **Did you develop any special skills while at camp?**

I learned so much about myself, how to work as a team, the value of commitment to a shared purpose, the joy of working with kids, in the great outdoors, with a group of like-minded, goofy, hard-working, big-hearted people.



◆ **While you were at camp one of your friends used part of the Pioneer Unit to film a movie. What ever happened to it?**

Over winter break in 1987, my best friend Kris Kachikis and I shot a 40 min “period piece” romantic comedy called “The Twelfth Stroke of Midnight” and needed a cabin in the woods for a scene in which two dim but kind hunters advise a lowly stable boy on how to woo a lady. I’m sure I have a DVD of it somewhere. It’s cheesy and silly and mostly shows how ambitious we were. By the way, Kris also moved on to Los Angeles and we both ended up becoming cinematographers.

◆ **How did you make the transition from camp to the “real” world?**

I remember it was a very tough decision to not return to Minikani after graduating college from NYU. But I also knew it was time to move into my post-collegiate life. I made up for my withdrawal by visiting whenever I was in Wisconsin.



Ten years after leaving Minikani, I returned to camping life working for two summers as “Poppa Fuzz”, the Program Director for Camp Heartland. The camp, serving children impacted and affected by HIV/AIDS was founded, single-handedly by former Boys Counselor

(and an LT of mine), Neil Willenson. The training and experience Neil and I had at Minikani was essential in our ability to lead the Heartland staff (including several Minikani alum) and we modeled much of the structure and spirit of the new camp after Minikani.



◆ **Tell us about your family.**

I am coming up on 18 years of marriage to an amazing woman named Diana Kunce, who is an artist, designer and incredible mother to our two daughters Sofia, 17, and Zoe 13. Sofia loves theatre and music, has an indie folk band and just starred as Maria in her school production of West Side Story. Zoe loves writing, doing improv comedy and challenging the status quo and plans to be a novelist.

◆ **Please tell us about your career successes.**

After graduating NYU Film School, I moved out to Los Angeles to pursue a life in the movies. My first credit upon moving to LA was as an electrician on *The Usual Suspects*. I worked on hundreds of commercials and a few movies as a Gaffer (head of the lighting department) before I moved into the camera department and became a Cinematographer.

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After years in commercials and shooting such projects as music videos for The Red Hot Chili Peppers and John Mayer, I started pursuing features and TV. This past year has marked a career high, working as cinematographer on what has been the most personally and creatively satisfying project: a new episodic series called *Transparent*. The show, which is part of the new wave of TV and can be streamed at Amazon Prime, just won two Golden Globes. We will shoot the 2nd season this summer and I'm really looking forward to it.



◆ **How often do thoughts of camp and Minikani people ‘pop’ into your head?**

I think about Minikani and old friends often. I have told many a camp story to my daughters over the years as well as taught them many camp songs. One of the people I think of a great deal is Mary Miner, former Girls Unit Director, who was the one who introduced me to Minikani. I had never heard of the place nor gone to camp as a kid and owe Mary a huge debt of gratitude for bringing me into the Minikani family and providing me with one of the most significant and influential experiences of my life.

◆ **Anything else you’d like to share?**

Thanks so much for the memories and for giving me this chance to share a little bit about my life in the 26 years since I last sang “Taps” at closing campfire at summer’s end.

