

The Walt Street Journal

Fall Edition 2020



CAMP
WALT WHITMAN
EST. 1948

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4 New King Street
White Plains, NY 10604

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS

Dear Whitmanites,

This past summer certainly was not the summer that any of us were hoping for! Covid-19 turned so much of our world upside down, and not being able to bring our community together for the summer, while a small misfortune in the big picture of things, was a HUGE disappointment to everyone who knows what a summer at Camp Walt Whitman is like. While we were fortunate enough to spend most of our summer up at camp, there was nothing about the summer that felt right. Without our camp family on-site, our beautiful land in Piermont felt like anything but a camp. There was no joy, no excitement, no singing, no laughing, no hugs, and frankly just no fun! That's the bad news. The good news is that while we don't know for sure what the world will look like in Summer 2021, we do know that Camp Walt Whitman is going to safely open next summer!

Our hope and goal is for camp to return to normal next summer, but our shared definition of "normal" will likely change a bit between then and now. We are using this year to inform our protocols so that we can safely operate camp in a way that allows our campers to once again thrive at CWW in 2021. We are actively speaking with schools and universities to find out what really works and what it takes to keep a campus healthy, thus allowing our campers to reconnect with friends and enjoy all the aspects of our incredible community.

We are also using our own personal and professional experiences as camp directors to

inform our plan for Summer 2021. We know first-hand that camps can operate safely, as we sent our own children to sleepaway camp this past summer for five weeks. Their camp followed every safety protocol and was able to form their own safe bubble in the middle of the woods. The feelings of joy and accomplishment they experienced last year is what we are committed to providing this summer for all of our CWW campers

Hopefully Covid-19 will no longer be a health threat in Summer 2021, but if it does remain a concern, we will have had over a year to gain the shared knowledge and best practices to keep our campers safe and healthy.

One thing is clear, kids need camp more than ever. Covid and its many restrictions have taken a toll on our children's emotional well-being and the enriching experience of summer camp will help replenish the social connections, outdoor adventures and physical fun that they have sorely missed. We have missed your campers too—and we can't wait to see them again in Summer 2021.

With love,

Carolyn & Ted



The Dorfman Family

Welcome to the Family!

We are excited to welcome the newest member of the Camp Walt Whitman family, Cooper Jackowitz, who was born on Sunday, September 27th at 11:32 am. Cooper and Ashleigh are both doing great and the entire hospital could hear Matt yelling, "Woouoo" as he ran up and down the hallways. Ashleigh and Matt can't wait to introduce Cooper to camp this summer.



Ashleigh, Matt & Cooper Jackowitz

REMEMBERING ANN SOLOWAY

When Carolyn and Jed asked me to write about my Aunt Ann, I was flattered then somewhat perplexed as to how to go about talking about such an extraordinary woman? On the surface, Whitmanites knew her in three very different ways. In the early years, she was my Uncle Chick's strong supportive wife (Chick being one of 2 founding bothers of camp along with my Uncle Arnie.) For 30 years, she was Waterfront Director. And, thereafter, around 1988, she took on a completely new role as the grande dame of Camp Walt Whitman.

Those early years, starting in 1948 (I arrived on the scene as a 6 year old camper in 1949), Ann was a rather quiet presence with the full-time task of caring for her 3 young children. At the same time, she was supporting her young director husband and offering much thoughtful advice to 2 brothers in their late twenties who had just returned from the war. Chick and Arnie were now embarked on an enormously challenging dream with a small budget but an exciting philosophy. As any mother knows, caring for their children is a full-time task in itself, but Ann managed both roles with a steadiness and equanimity which would become the hallmark of her ensuing years at camp.

Once her children were campers, Ann was ready and excited to take over as camp's Waterfront Director, one of the most important and critical jobs at camp. A new side of Ann began to develop. Ann emerged as a demanding director who set standards of excellence and rules not only for her staff but campers as well. Those of us who were at camp in those years will remember the total silence required on hearing the 3 whistle blasts of a buddy check and treading water until the buddy count had been successfully verified. Swim instruction was no nonsense and you got into the lake no matter how chilly the day. The standard joke at camp involved no one ever having seen Ann in the water. "Could

she really swim?" To this day no one really knows!



Ann & Rob at the Base of Piermont Trail

Shortly after my Uncle Chick died in 1984, Ann retired as Waterfront Director and so began the third and final chapter of Ann's "new" life at camp. We were all concerned as to what would happen to CWW's beloved Saturday night square dance tradition. Ann, who had for years assisted Chick in teaching, stepped into the void and along with her new assistant, Rob Sherry, kept the dance alive and flourishing. She built an art studio where on Hobby Night and elective times she taught campers and staff whittling and sculpture, a craft she studied and practiced in the off-season. She hiked and played tennis with campers. She never missed attending a camper play. Her home on the lake became a center for camper and staff gatherings. Campers loved hot chocolate at Ann's on a rainy day. Counselors loved going to Ann's after their kids were in bed for a snack, laughter and conversation. People of all ages stopped by to visit with her to just chat and feast on her wit and wisdom. Her graciousness and warmth permeated all corners of camp.



Ann & Chick Soloway in the early years of CWW

So I close the 3 chapters of my Aunt Ann Soloway's life at camp, Ann was planning on being at camp this past summer despite her doctor's advice. But while neither we, nor she, had a chance to say goodbye, she knew we loved her for the remarkable woman she was, a woman who left an indelible irreplaceable mark on camp having taught all of us about the meaning of personal strength, overcoming challenges, caring about others, compassion and love. She loved the North Woods. She loved Lake Armington. She loved Camp Walt Whitman and all it gave to each

of us. She loved all of the campers, counselors and staff who crossed her path every summer.

We will miss her but forever remember her as we walk the paths of camp.



CWW – A Family Legacy

Written by Bill Dorfman - Jed's father, CWW's Director Emeritus who ran camp with his wife Jancy from 1984-2007.

CWW FAMILY CAMP...

CWW's Family Camp has always been highlight of the summer - a 5-day vacation hosted at CWW during the third week of August, after our regular 7-week camper program comes to a close. It is never just a standard vacation. It is unique in its ability to provide shared and individual experiences through the magic of camp that helps families create memories to last a lifetime. While Family Camp would have to look different this past summer, we knew that if we were able to pull it off, bringing this camp magic to our families would be more important than ever.

In a summer when we couldn't run Walt Whitman, it was important to us to keep the Walt Whitman spirit strong. The NH COVID guidelines made it too onerous for us to run our Family Camp in Piermont. However, we were confident we could bring the CWW values, fun, energy, excitement, and good

"We all loved family camp. It was a wonderful break from our routine at home. We felt safe the entire time and this was so remarkable considering what was going on in our country at the time. The activities were great, and got us dancing, waterskiing and playing sports. It felt good to be so active and to see our daughters being so active too. We tried new things and felt great pride when we ourselves succeeded or our girls succeeded. It was a wonderful oasis away from worry, stress and boredom." - Deborah Vineberg

feelings on the road and set out to find a beautiful camp setting that would be convenient for our families to travel to. We know Britton and



Drew Bitterman at Camp Watitoh very well as Britton used to work at CWW full time and they have become two of our closest friends in the camp industry. When Carolyn called and asked if we could host CWW Family Camp at Watitoh, Drew and

Britton were excited about the idea and we knew they would do everything in their power to provide our families with a safe, unforgettable experience.

We immediately began planning what this new Family Camp experience would look like. We were able to offer 2 different weeks, July 15th – 19th and August 5th – 9th, and had 25 families join us over the course of the two weeks. Each family had their own cabin and temperatures were taken before breakfast and dinner each day. Programming was primarily outside but everyone wore masks when indoors or doing activities alongside other families when social distancing was more challenging. Our families reported feeling very comfortable with the safety measures taken and were able to settle into a daily schedule and enjoy the fun that each day offered.

Each morning opened in typical Walt Whitman fashion, by jumping in the lake! Rob Sherry was there to lead the way and our morning Polar Bear swim was the perfect way to wake up. For those who wanted an early morning activity before breakfast, they could do yoga, go fishing or



Coming Together in Trying Times

play tennis to jumpstart their day. After breakfast there were 3 activities that were scheduled by the family based on their personal preferences. Lunch was followed by a much needed rest hour and then 2 more activities. When the heat of the afternoon reached its peak, open swim was offered in addition to a daily hobby. Some of the most loved hobbies were tennis, friendship bracelet making, candy sushi and pickleball! After shower hour and dinner, the day was capped off by a different evening activity each night. Campfires with s'mores, cabin family feud and even square dancing! What would camp be without a little square dance!?

Arin & Wendy Wolfson reflected that: *"Family Camp in August was a fun combo of planned activities for our family as a unit and some (socially distanced) interactions with other families. With all the organized events in pre-Covid life, and limited interactions during Covid, it was also super refreshing for kids (and their parents) to have some unstructured playtime and a large campus to explore and improvise fun."*

The week kicked off with a traditional opening campfire that got everyone in the proper CWW spirit. It was truly

"I like the activities and the counselors, even though it wasn't CWW – it was still really fun. It was a great way to see my camp friends."

- Mia Jacob

special to see so many kids and parents step out of their comfort zones – zip lining, trying to waterski, getting up in front of a crowd at family feud. And no week at camp would be complete without an Olympics to wrap up the week which included a rope burn for the ages.

Daniella Jacob was a fire captain and got to lead her team in one of the most unforgettable CWW traditions that exists!

Overall, it was amazing to see campers and parents have the opportunity to be outside, to play, to relax and to be in a safe environment. Watching kids just play (even with masks), was such a needed break for everyone. There was a freedom to the week and a sense of normalcy in such a challenging and difficult time, that we will not soon forget. For us it was a highlight to interact with campers, to sit with them and make friendship bracelets and to sing our camp songs. It was also great to get to know the families on a more personal level and spend time with the parents in a way that we don't get to during a regular summer.



SAVE THE DATE FOR CWW FAMILY CAMP 2021: Monday, August 16 – Friday, August 20

Family Camp will be back at CWW in 2021 and we know that it will be better than ever! Make sure to sign up early to share in this incredible experience with your family. We can't wait to host you! More information can be found on our website.

The Sherry Family Summits Summer

Rob Sherry has spent over 45 years of his life at CWW. From camper to counselor, and now as one of our most senior leadership staff members, Rob plays an integral role on the residential side of camp. He has overseen a multitude of age groups, and most recently has loved working with Middle Camp. He is also our fearless square dance instructor, polar bear enthusiast, camp song-leader and guitarist. He is a man of many talents! In the off-season, Rob is a 10th grade teacher of Mathematics and Economics at The Commonwealth School in Boston, Massachusetts. He is also the father to 13-year twins and current CWW campers, Dylan & Ella.

When the decision was made that CWW would not operate this summer, it was the first time in Rob's nearly 50 years at camp that he wouldn't be leading campers joyfully through CWW's most treasured traditions. However, Rob is a man of much optimism and was determined to make the best out of the less-than-ideal circumstances. Although he had already hiked all of the 4,000 foot mountains in New Hampshire, he knew there would be a great deal of unstructured time this summer, and having a goal to work towards as a family would be a fun endeavor. So the goal was set, Rob, Ella & Dylan would try to hike all 48 of the 4,000 footers in New Hampshire in one summer.



One highlight of the adventure was when Rob, Dylan, Ella, Carolyn & Cole all did a version of the Twins and Bonds Traverse with an extra peak (Zealand) thrown in. It was Cole and Carolyn's first-ever overnight hike and the group



set out in the early hours of the morning for their adventure. Rob reflected, *"It was a really tough first morning climbing up North Twin, and then a lot of ridge walking, which is not only easier, but provided beautiful views for most of the day. We went really fast, arriving at Guyot Campsite before*



4 PM. That evening we climbed West Bond to watch the sun set over Franconia Ridge, it was the perfect way to end a long day of hiking." Rob joked about descending Bondcliff the next day. Carolyn missed her footing and had a great faceplant on the trail. *"Luckily she was just fine and we all got to have a good laugh. Sitting at the bottom of that trail, we sat and had a delightful lunch of sliced pepperoni and cheddar cheese with Grey Poupon on crackers. We also stopped at Franconia Falls which was a beautiful and refreshing end to our trip."* Just like any good traverse, the group returned tired, a little scraped up and with some unforgettable memories.

At the end of the summer, when the Sherry's had summited their 48th and final 4,000 ft mountain, Rob decided to see how many total feet of elevation gain they had climbed. It equaled out to just about 95,000 feet. That is truly amazing in and of itself! However, being so close to 100,000 feet was too hard to resist! So, the family decided to do a few more small hikes, including Websters Slide, the whaleback looking mountain across the lake from camp. They ended with what is rumored to be the first Piermont Loop Trail. They climbed Piermont from a back access road and came down the trail into camp. This hike got them over the cumulative 100,000 feet of elevation gain, which is the equivalent of summiting over three Everests! While nothing beats a summer at CWW with our camp community, Rob, Ella and Dylan still found a way to inject some CWW into summer 2020.

Rob's Favorites:

Best 4,000 ft mountains in the Whites: Franconia Ridge, Mt. Garfield and West Bond

Favorite trail snack: Gummy Bears!

Favorite post-hike meal: Chinese takeout

BEA & MICHAEL: A CWW Love Story

One of the most magical moments of Summer 2019 actually happened after all of the campers and staff had departed CWW. In late August, two long time staff members, Bea Phillips and Michael Brett, who met at camp, made the trip to visit their favorite place. Bea thought Michael had a weekend at a B&B planned as a quick vacation before her first year of teaching began. On their way, Michael told Bea that they needed to drop off a camera at camp for Carolyn before a relaxing weekend in New Hampshire. Little did she know, Michael had more in mind. For the two of them, camp not only represented where their relationship began but also a two month reprieve from winters spent in a long distance relationship. They arrived on camp and made their way to the front lawn. Michael started reminiscing about all of the memories they had at camp with Bea listening but also oblivious. One more memory was in store as he got down on one knee and asked Bea to marry him. Luckily, despite a flood of emotion, Bea managed to get the words "yes" out of her mouth.

For as magical as their journey has been, it started pretty uneventfully. Michael and Beatrice spent the summer of 2013, his 1st and her 3rd, as staff members in brother/sister cabins. However, while they knew of each

other, they rarely, if ever, spoke to one another. They ended up in the same car for their first day off of the summer, and then spent the whole trip chatting and ignoring everyone else in the car. They spent more days off together that summer and their friendship grew. By the end of the summer they both had an idea there might be more to their relationship and at the very end of the summer decided to see if they could make a relationship work.

They overcame several years of long distance dating with summer as their nirvana. Time apart for several years made them appreciate being able to be together for two months in their favorite place.



Front Lawn Engagement

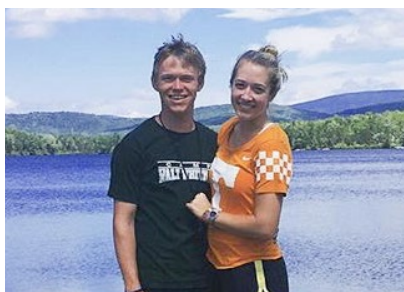
Their relationship grew exponentially during their summers together. They would both end their time as staff as members in 2017 as part of the CWW leadership team with Bea as a Unit Leader and Michael as Athletic Director. Even though they have spent the past 3 summers away from camp, it remains a huge part of their lives. They both express that camp allowed them to be the best version of themselves which helped them find each other and build a strong and loving foundation. It was in this nurturing community with so many great role



Picking Apples in Connecticut this Fall

models that their relationship was able to flourish. For them, CWW promotes a culture of speaking your feelings and sharing with one another. Both have been strong components of their bond to this day. Camp also gave them a fairytale type story for them to look back on.

Today, Michael is a Global Onboarding Specialist at Indeed while Bea is a Kindergarten Teacher at the Country School in Madison, CT. In many ways, it feels to them like they already lead a married life. They are excited for it to be official and have so much they are looking forward to in their journey together, including building a family. They hope one day to be able to send their kids to CWW so they can have the same fulfilling experience that they did. Bea and Michael are currently planning their wedding for next summer. It will be held in San Francisco and they are hoping to have many family and friends there in attendance. Whenever it happens, the wedding of Bea and Michael will be an unbelievable celebration of one of CWW's truly epic love stories.



Our Final Summer at CWW

CWW PLAY DAY

At the tail-end of a long summer in which we could not spend time in our favorite place we were still able to have a little dose of camp. We saw it as the first step in our journey to turn the page on Summer 2020 as we prepare for our best summer yet in 2021. On Saturday, August 20th, members of the Camp Walt Whitman community got together at Breezemont Day Camp in Armonk, NY for some much needed time in the sun. Roughly 60 campers from all over the tri-state area joined 20 CITs along with Carolyn, Jed, Ashleigh, Jacko and Steph for a play day that included activities, pizza and a CWW singalong. Some of the activities included sand volleyball, gaga, tie-dye and various fun lawn games. Creating multiple stations allowed us to keep groups small while still allowing age groups to spend time with each other.

The temperature checks and mask wearing precautions that were in place did not get in the way of us sharing the things that makes our community so important. It was clear that this two-hour jolt of camp gave all of us a small taste of what we missed so much this summer. We owe a very special thanks to the CITs who joined us as staff and whose hard work made the event a huge success. In the coming months, we will be letting you know all different ways our community will be able to come together as the hype for next summer builds.

