

## **August 2013 Vacation to the White Mountains and Lake Winnepesaukee**

I was due for a trip to New Hampshire, one of my favorite vacation spots. I hadn't been there since about 1999, when Maria and I stayed at Weirs Beach with my son Michael. A previous family vacation in 1984 with both Mike and Anne in my pickup truck equipped with a camper insert, had us staying at various campgrounds including Greentops, just above Camp DeWitt. Greentops had always been a problem to the Camp and I thought I could see more from within. Nothing earth-shaking though.

In my youth, I spent 11 summers at Camp DeWitt (1954 through 1964) I continued to take a week's vacation and visit every year for 6 or so more years, staying in Wolfeboro at "The Yellow Door".

One more note, before I get into our recent vacation, Maria and I was married in 1973 and went to Wolfeboro (Brook and Bridle Inn) for our Honeymoon. That is why she also likes the area so well.

We had previously decided what we wanted to do for this trip, and everything went as planned. We stayed in Lincoln, NH, at Blue Green's South Mountain Resort, right on Rt112, better known as the Kancamangus Hwy, a 34 mile stretch through the White Mountains.

Our first day, we drove East on the Kancamangus Hwy. Just a few miles up the road from our resort, we found where the Pemigewasset River crossed, and there was a Trailhead and Ranger Station there. I engaged one of the Park Rangers in a conversation about that particular area and he confirmed a theory of mine. That was exactly where one of the camp's hiking trips started from. The Pemi trip was one of my favorite hikes. One of the side trips from the Pemi trip, was a day trip up Mt Bond, which was nearby. It had been over 50 years since I had done this hike and trip, and it still had deep meaning to me. The trip consisted of several miles hiking along the Pemi where another stream came into it. There was a railroad trestle there, and a short distance up the stream was a shelter and campground. I especially remember "the shoots", just above the campground where you would drop-sit into them and drop to the pond below. It was better than any water park slide.

After the trail-head, we continued our drive through the beautiful mountains, winding our way East. When we reached Rt 302, we headed North and around the upper areas, finally reaching Rt 93 South and returning to our resort.

Another note: one of my favorite activities at camp was the hiking and mountain climbing. I believe there were about 25 different mountain trips that I participated in. The Mount Washington trip was also another favorite. I climbed it at least 4 times on foot, at least 2 in the car with my parents, and in later years went up the Cog Railroad with Maria 3 times.

I was even part of a group of campers and councilors that carried a sailboat up Mt Washington to the Lake of the Clouds in 1963, I believe. That climb originated from the base where the Cog RR was located. The only documentation of that climb with the sailboat was an article in the Philadelphia Suburban "Main Line Times". That event was arranged by Dave Elliott, a special breed of councilor, who was in charge of the trip program at Camp DeWitt during my years there.

Maria and I rode the Cog Railroad on this trip, again, and this time, we had a beautiful view for miles in almost every direction, although in was in the low 40's.

We also took the boat trip on the Mount Washington, from Weirs Beach to Wolfeboro and back. If I remember right, our last trip in the 90's also took us down Alton Bay. That part of the excursion was reserved for Sundays only now, probably in a cost cutting move.

We drove completely around Lake Winnepesaukee with a long stop in Wolfeboro. There were loads of memories there. We had lunch at the former Baileys Restaurant, now called the Front Porch. It looked the same inside. The food was quite good. (I remember someone had to drive to town from the camp to pick up the mail every day. I was with Mrs Boyer on one of those occasions.) Blacks still looks the same, just more junk. Yes, we bought some souvenirs while there. There was no sign of the movie theatre. By the way, the old town hall, that big red tall structure, used to house the original movie theatre in the back. Then, Paul Hatch, who I became good friends with, built a new small theatre near by. Paul was a ham radio operator, and we talked on the radio from camp to town many times, as well as from Wolfeboro to my home in Pa. I later found out he owned the radio station in town, which never came out in any of our conversations. I understand he passed away many years ago.

Anyway, we continued our drive toward the camp. Last time up, I didn't feel like driving down through the former camp. This time, I decided to take the plunge. It was so sad. The only remaining signs of the camp included the Beach by the junior circle and the road to the point. All those expensive homes dotted both sides of DeWitt drive. There was no sign of the old camp entrance, which I thought I saw last time in the area. Wonder whose home or homes resided on the former "lemon lake"? I didn't see how to get to the area of the lodge or dining room, so I didn't try. I believe that building is no longer there.

This trip also included a Gondola ride up Loon Mountain. It was a great view, but the place was almost deserted. When I indicated that I wanted to ride the zip-line, Maria could hardly believe it. She was scared for me, so I didn't.

This trip triggered many memories. Mind if I ramble a bit? I attended while Clinton DeWitt Park still owned the camp He was the founder and designer. I was good friends with him. He was a great man. I was also there when Don Boyer bought the camp. I had worked for both of them. The Boyer's were just as important to me, first, because he recruited me. Second, for all the things he did for me and the camp. I really missed some staff that were let go when Don took over. I had become close to Fred Allen, the former director, Bill McClellan, in charge of the Junior Circle (and musician that played the piano for us to sing by every morning), and Mel King, head of the senior circle. Being a business person, I fully understood why they were let go. Fred Allen and I kept in touch for many long years after, using ham radio. Yes, he was part of the radio club at the camp and got his ham license while there.

One other thing comes to mind: the changes over the years in staff, where things moved to (the shop/nature house), and also the change from the lake to the well for the water supply. Then there was Frank Munroe. He was the person that cared for the camp year round, including shoveling the snow off the buildings and fixing everything around the camp.

Another interesting tidbit just came to mind. On one of the mountain climbs up Mt Major, we carried a UHF 2-way radio (then on the old Class B Citizens Band at 465 Mhz) and battery and made contact with the camp from the mountain top.

Other tidbits have flashed into my mind too. The big old truck that drive the kids on trips or to town. The 2 station wagons. Then the fleet of comet sailboats, 3, I think. They were lost 1 year when the roof collapsed over the shelter that they were stored in, due to snow. I remember the old motorboat, the Chris Craft called the Griffin, later replaced by the Mistywitt (hope I have that right). I was there the year that cabins G, H. and I were built. I was there the year hot showers were added. Before that, it was just Soap-Soap Rock. I remember when the dining room and lodge were exchanged. I never liked that idea. Then there was the new baseball field, way up behind the beach that was added while I was there. So many changes. There were things we experienced that newer generations didn't and things newer generations experienced that we didn't. Many never knew that an intruder visited the camp one year and threw the PA

system into the lake near the dock. It was suspected that people from across the lake did it, trying to silence the bugle calls. That didn't work because I connected the dining room system back up to the outside speakers and the bugles started blowing again the same day..

I noted that about 80% or more of the summer camps have disappeared from the area. (Probably because of rising costs, liability insurance, and other activities to divert kids)

I also had visions of what camp would be like if it was still operating today. Internet access, yes! Cable TV, No! Computer Games, No! Cell phones (they still wouldn't work there) So much of this would detract from what the camp gave us.

How much of all this did you know, or remember? Gene Mitchell