



## BROWN LEDGE CAMP

### Mission Statement

Brown Ledge is a non-profit camp that exists to develop community, self-discipline, responsibility and achievement in girls and young women, through self-directed participation in varied activities in a high quality summer program.

SUMMER  
2019



Images from our  
2018 Production  
of Peter Pan.

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# BROWN LEDGE

## MAGAZINE



SUMMER 2019



# Just Be Grateful

These 3 words are written in my great grandmother’s handwriting on a small chalkboard at my grandmother’s house in Vermont. She wrote this after her husband of

45 years passed away. They were meant to be a daily reminder to pause and remain positive during a season of change. I have found myself over my life returning to this statement again and again. When life gets stressful or sad or I just need to put things into perspective, I take a moment to stop and think... Just be grateful. Packing up our house in Nashville allowed me time to stop and reflect on what I am grateful for. It has been a very busy season of change for my family and me, but I am excited to get settled back in my home state of Vermont and begin the next chapter of life.

I am grateful for this opportunity to be the new leader of Brown Ledge Camp. I am grateful to Bill and Kathy for their incredible leadership, integrity, and dedication to the camp we love. I am grateful to the Board of Directors for the time they put into the director search. I am grateful to my mom, Rosi—the original Mama Skunk, who worked at camp so my sister and I could go for so many years... and to my dad for being OK with his girls being gone all summer, every summer. I am grateful to my husband, who is taking a leap of faith with me to a new state, with nothing but love, trust, and support. Finally, I am grateful to the Brown Ledge community, who has loudly and clearly said: We support you and mirror your excitement for this new chapter of our camp.

2-0-1-9 at Brown Ledge will definitely be no other year the same.



*Abby Lovshin-Smith*

Abby Lovshin-Smith  
Director, Brown Ledge Camp

# This is a Big Summer of Firsts



With excitement and gratitude,

*Katy Robbins Ritz*

Katy Robbins Ritz  
President, Brown Ledge  
Board of Directors

This will be the summer that a group of counselors will live in a new and improved Roadside. It is Kim and Abby’s first summer as Co-Directors. It is my first summer as the Brown Ledge Foundation Board President. And, for many of us, it is our first summer at camp without Bill and Kathy at the helm.

This is a big summer of firsts for my family as well. My daughter Rose is finally old enough to be a camper! Although firsts can be very scary, I am approaching my first summer as a BLC parent with excitement. As a board member, I get the opportunity to see first-hand that Kim and Abby make an incredible team. The more time I spend with these two, the more I realize that our new directors are quintessential Brown Ledgers: they grew up having the freedom to explore, learn, fail, and succeed, and as a result, they have grown to be true leaders.

Brown Ledge has an incredible foundation, started by HEB, continued with Barbara, and kept strong with Bill and Kathy. I am so thankful that Bill and Kathy have nurtured camp’s “unique program” over the past 36 years, while keeping camp’s core mission intact. I am eternally grateful to them for providing an environment for me to grow, and for their guidance and support to help me thrive.

Similar to my experience as a camper, I know that Rose will learn new skills, meet her life-long friends, and find her home away from home. Brown Ledge has seen many changes throughout its nearly 100-year history, yet somehow it remains the same for so many generations of young girls who seek to find their voice, their independence, and their strength to endure a lifetime of firsts.

I know during this summer of firsts, I will sleep with the knowledge that—far and near—all is well with the camp I love!



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## Thirty-six years leading Brown Ledge Camp!

by Jeff Buckman

**How do we wrap our heads around summarizing that experience? Nurturing, mentoring, and organizing generations of girls and staffers for three and a half decades – where to start?**

What to focus on? And does everyone know that the Neilsens are our longest running camp directors? Harry E. Brown started BLC in 1926 and ran camp with his wife Marjorie until his death in 1957. Their daughter, Barbara Brown Winslow, took over camp ownership and management and ran camp until her retirement in 1983 when she sold camp to the BL Perpetuators and turned the Director position over to Bill and Kathy.

**THE BROWNS = 32 YEARS. BARBARA = 25 YEARS. AND THE NEILSENS = 36 YEARS.**

The summer of 2018 was a season full of bittersweet “lasts” for Bill and Kathy. Their final opening day, final switchover, and final “final events.” They won’t miss the worry and exhaustion of monitoring the health and well-being of 180 girls and 80 plus staff members, but they will miss seeing what theatre has thrown together for Preview Time, the pride-filled faces of the Drill Team Riders, and the ridiculous outfits that emerge on Extravaganza Day. They’ve heard their last soupy and taps, their last “Hello Mama letter,” their last goodnight song, and their last “This is the Last.” They’ve launched their final candle from the swimming dock, and they’ve packed up camp for the winter one last time.

While it will take years to fully appreciate the impact that their care and leadership has had on Brown Ledge, we can, at the very least, begin to reflect on their legacy. Bill and Kathy may have signed up for the Director role wanting to fulfill the mission of BL Perpetuators—to perpetuate camp—but along the way, and through the years, their job became their life, and as they grew and evolved as individuals, and as a couple, so did camp. As the years clicked by, preserving camp was no longer enough. They wanted their years of stewardship to result in camp being philosophically the same, but better in every other way.

To fully appreciate their epic run as directors, we need to go back to the beginning of their BLC story.

### BECOMING B & K

Before Kathy was a clipboard-wielding camp director, she was Kathy Watson, arriving at Brown Ledge in 1966 as a fourteen-year-old camper assigned to live in Funny Farm. Kathy’s mother thought camp “would be good for her.” (Wouldn’t we all love to know that backstory?) Kathy was supposed to attend Camp Mohawk in Litchfield, CT, but it was full—lucky us! Kathy loved BLC from the get-go. To get up every morning and do whatever she wanted? She was the proverbial kid in the candy store, racing around dabbling in all the activities. But as her first summer progressed, she figured out that she liked to ride and that she loved the waterfront (except sailing, she thought it was too slow!). She enjoyed riflery, tennis, and lazing about at archery. She adored the theatre, every aspect of it, as an audience member.

Kathy felt the thrill of finally getting up on waterskis her first summer, setting her on a path to become a skiing JC, senior counselor, and eventually Head of waterskiing. But what Kathy remembers most about her first summer is that her bunkies, all returning Brown Ledgers, included her from day one. She was immediately folded into the fabric of camp. And as she has witnessed on countless closing days, Kathy wept when her parents picked her up at the end of the month!

Kathy completed the JC program and enrolled at the University of Denver. Fortunately for BLC, she transferred to the University of Vermont her sophomore year. It was at UVM that she re-connected with Bill Neilsen, a boy she had met when she had visited UVM on a college tour her senior year of high school. Bill did

not waste any time asking Kathy out on a date. In the summer of 1974, Kathy was heading back to camp to head the skiing department. At the last minute, camp needed a boat driver. Kathy introduced Bill to Barbara, and the rest, as they say, is history. Bill became the trip boat driver and later would drive the ski boat. Barbara quickly realized that Bill was a counselor that she could depend on, and he became her go-to guy for getting jobs done.

Bill drove out to camp his first summer not knowing what to expect. How could he possibly know as he drove up the camp road, rounded the golf field, passed archery, then the tennis courts and barn, the vista and theater, and parked across from Arts and Crafts that the trajectory of his life had been forever altered. Bill moved into his cabin, Lower Alps, met his bunkies—Jeff Buckman, Tim Roe, Marty Brown, Bob Morgan, and Gary Thornburg—not knowing that this would be the first of 39 summers spent on Mallets Bay.

Bill returned the following summer, while Kathy took the summer off to work on her master’s degree. Bill and Kathy were both back on staff in 1976 but now as a married couple. They were wed before camp started on June 19th in Stowe, a gala event attended by many Brown Ledgers. After the summer of 1975, Bill and Kathy settled into adult life in Burlington—buying and renovating a home and working “real jobs.” Their first child, Emily, was born in 1981.

### BECOMING DIRECTORS

In the summer of 1982, Bill and Kathy visited camp with little Emily in tow to visit friends. They had both remained close with Fred and Twylla and enjoyed visiting when they could get out to camp. Fred is the one who suggested that Bill

apply for the director position. Bill and Kathy were both surprised at the suggestion, having never considered doing such a thing; they had settled into a nice routine, a nice life in Burlington—why upset the apple cart? But then they thought about it and decided it might be a fun change of pace, a bit of a lark for a few years, only considering it as a three-year gig, max! Bill and Kathy recall that Barbara played an important part in convincing Bill to roll the dice on this major life change. Barbara had a unique method of telling, and convincing, people to believe in themselves. And she was pretty much able to talk anybody into doing anything.

The Perpetuators Board offered Bill the directorship in the spring of 1983. Bill and Kathy accepted and committed to BLC for 3 years. Bill recalls that first summer got off to a bumpy start. “Barbara went into the hospital about 10 days before camp

started, and we weren’t sure she would survive, but she recovered fairly quickly.” The art of scrambling through pre-camp was apparently learned in summer

number one. During their first summer, Barbara was present, as was Fred and Twylla, Mr. Mac, Toddy, Richard Currie, Heather McCollum, Randy Neale, Ed Cunningham, and Lori Angstadt. Kathy and two-year-old Emily lived in Caboose. Bill worked closely with Barbara, while Kathy began her career of putting out social and relational fires, helping campers and staff solve their problems.

After their summer co-directing with Barbara, Bill set-up his office in the family home and visited Barbara regularly. As spring approached, Barbara stepped back completely. It was during that time that she told Bill and Kathy about a dream she’d once had. After a couple of years of directing camp, she dreamt that her father appeared and wanted his camp back. Barbara, who adored her father, laughed in the telling. “I told him he couldn’t have it. I told him, ‘I’ve worked too hard for this and it’s mine now.’” Kathy and Bill believe that Barbara told them about that dream for a reason: She wanted them to know she would not interfere, that they too would work and make camp their own. Kathy adds, “Barbara was wise about human nature and very classy in the way she handled the whole transition. We know we made mistakes and missed things, but she never once called us on it. She showed us nothing but confidence and support.” Barbara’s actions matched her words. In Bill and Kathy’s first solo summer, Barbara managed to be away on various travels and never came to camp to visit.

Bill and Kathy’s co-director roles ebbed and flowed during their first few years. Initially, Bill was the man out front, while Kathy worked the behind-the-scenes relational issues and took over the JC program when Toddy retired. Kathy jokes that from the beginning she was the director that said “no”... a lot. Over time, as their children—Emily and Ben, born in 1986—needed less of their time, Bill and Kathy took on equal roles in the summer-time. And while the division of duties evolved to what suited each person best, both were involved in all the big decisions whether it

was deciding to send a camper home, to hire a counselor, or to take on a big building project. When a counselor or camper heard one of them say “well, I need to talk to Kathy (or Bill) that,” they meant it. Though the “co” in co-director was sometimes stressful—imagine talking about your job all the time with your spouse—they saw their directorship as a true partnership, both valuing what they each brought to the team individually and collectively.





# “Thank you for being keepers of the magic!!”

Stephanie Lane-Kerman



“I don't think it occurred to us how fortunate we were to have Fred and Twylla with us during the early years. They were so much a part of what made things work, what made the transition easier, through all the ups and downs. They were kind of the parents of camp, and then they became the grandparents of camp, a solid and steady force.”

Kathy Neilsen



“You have generously created and nurtured a space in which so many of us—young and old—have grown friendships, found voices and strengths of all kinds, laughed hard and loved deeply. BLC remains a home base for so many of us thanks to your continued loving care for this place.”

Leslie Buxbaum Danzig



“They've done a great job keeping the good counselors coming back, developing the JC program, and maintaining all the buildings in camp. Their willingness to listen to suggestions, and consider your ideas made us feel good.”

Hans and Eva Nilsson

“Thousands have been able to experience a freedom and happiness like no other because of your service.”

Meredith Grieff Smith

“Kathy's poems on awards night, summarizing all that was special about the summer, just amazing!”

“When your bosses have known you since you were fourteen-years-old, you get away with nothing! They know me more than I like sometimes! But how lucky am I that worked side-by-side, full-time, for eleven years with two of my most favorite people on the planet.”

Kim McManus



“My lasting memory of camp will always be both of you hugging me and my family at the beginning and end of each summer.”

Hilary Strimple



PHotoshop out date

“Kathy was always accessible, and so patient with all of the kids at camp. It allowed the campers to be who they wanted to be. Both she and Bill always had such trust in the staff to make decisions on their own, which builds confidence in young adults. They were very open to letting the staff try new ideas – it was one of their great leadership skills. They carried on the Brown Ledge philosophy so well it will carry on for many years.”

Liz Bell



“While we all always loved Brown Ledge for its natural beauty, Bill and Kathy really made it gorgeous in new ways. Barbara didn't do flowers (we have Twylla to thank for the marigolds in the window boxes of the old dining room) but Kathy had both the inspiration and energy to create a new landscape that was beautiful and natural without being prissy. Bill & Kathy always made you feel welcome at Brown Ledge, and I for one took advantage of that often. It really added to the sense of being 'home' when you get there.”

Heather McCullom



“Their dedication to camp for all these years is a huge positive influence. It provided consistency and gave Brown Ledgers reassurance that the camp that they loved was in the good hands of people who were dedicated to camp for generations. I think Bill and Kathy will be missed because people counted on them and knew what to expect from them. Yet in the end, there will be future campers who never know them and will still come to be true Brown Ledgers. Their legacy will be that they ensured that the Patterns of Brown Ledge will continue.”

Lori Angstadt

“Why did Barbara like Bill so much? Other than the fact that he absolutely reeked of responsibility!”

Heather McCollum



“We love you more than BLC Bars and Oreo Mush, combined, at the same time.”

Hanna Bliska, Grace Orben, and Tess Tarantino.





## IT IS EASY TO SEE THE PHYSICAL IMPACT THAT BILL AND KATHY HAVE HAD ON CAMP.

Kathy spent quite a bit of time on landscaping. In the '60s, the grove was a grove, with pines and pine needles. Then in the '70s, there were fewer pines and more deciduous trees. Kathy never met a tree that she did not want to plant somewhere around camp! The gardens have all taken shape under Kathy's eye.

As far as the buildings go, things that looked OK and were acceptable in the '70s were not ok in the '90s. "In the early years, we were always putting money into the programs, like a new ski boat, new sailboats, whatever things were needed for the activities. More recently we've been able to put time and money into the buildings at camp." They took on the biggest, most ambitious building project

first – building the new dining room. The old dining room was one of the original buildings from the boys camp, Camp Champlain, that had existed at our location in the late 1890s. While the dining room had its charms by the 1990s, it was showing its 100 years of use and could no longer comfortably sit camp's population. Bill and Kathy, with the support of the BLF's Board of Directors, set out to raise the funds to build a new dining room. During the winter of 2000-2001, the old dining room was torn down and the new building went up. Bill worked closely with the architect and met weekly with the builders, solving problems large and small as they arose. Bill was part of every detail and he loved it!

After the dining room, Bill and Kathy lined up, and checked off, a dizzying array of projects. Not willing to coast toward their retirement, the Neilsens renovated Beehive last year and set their

sights on one more building this past fall. "The final project we want to complete before we retire is to renovate Roadside."

If you take a short walk around camp with Bill, you quickly realize that he knows every cabin roof and every cement block propping up a building. As Bill explained, "Some of the cabins on the point are left over from when Brown Ledge was a boys camp in 1892 so they are now 125 years old! They have been repaired as needed, but many are largely original." Bill's knowledge of the BLC property goes beyond the buildings themselves: he knows how the water comes in and how the sewage goes out, where the power lines are buried and when the electricity trips in a cabin, he knows precisely which breaker to switch in which electrical panel.

Planning and financing major renovations reveal a lot about the leadership of an organization but nothing is more revealing than an emergency. Over 36 years, with 260 people on the property, horses, boats, and a philosophy that encourages risk-taking, Bill and Kathy have had their share of emergencies. Anyone who has witnessed them in action knows that their measured, okay-let's deal-with-this manner has repeatedly minimized damage, supported individuals involved, and averted future catastrophes. In 2012, the physical plant was challenged in the most remarkable manner. Bill and Kathy received a call on a sunny December morning: there was a fire at camp and 911 had been called. The weather had been unseasonably dry that fall, a flare was dropped in the dry leaves by two teenagers, and within minutes the fire went up a few trees, crossed the tree canopy and the Grove area of camp was ablaze. When the last flame was extinguished, ten cabins in the Grove area were gone and so was every tree and bush. Rebuilding the ten cabins, in addition to completing the new JC cabin project, by opening day required a massive amount of work. Little did campers and parents know on the first day of camp that our construction team was at camp right up until the night before, working by flashlight well into the night.

But the more profound impact of their directorship has been the human one. Bill and Kathy have always known that the facilities of camp, and the activities and equipment, are important but only as the conduits for camp's mission—to give girls and young women a safe place to try new things, to practice making choices (sometimes the right choice, sometimes wrong one), to live with the consequences of their decisions within a supportive community and, as a result, to find their truest selves.

Bill and Kathy knew from the beginning that camp was about the people, community and family. (Fortunately, both Bill and Kathy genuinely like people!) They truly enjoy human nature and the art and science of figuring out what makes people tick. When Kathy asks, "how are you?" she always puts an emphasis on "you." The intended effect, whether meant or not, is that the recipient of the question starts pouring his/her heart out. And no one can settle in and listen to a person's woes better than Kathy. And, any staff member knows that the person with all the latest gossip at camp is... Bill. He knew every story, every liaison, every newsy bit before breakfast. Apparently, you see and hear a lot when you get up at 4:30 AM. Bill was not a gossip himself, but he did relish hearing all the triumphs, trials, and tribulations that his friends and staff members managed to get themselves in and out of over the course of a summer!

"One of the things that I love is the human puzzle of it all – people are ridiculous in the problems they get themselves into."

*Kathy*

Working and living with your staff and campers brings its own unique manage-



ment challenges. Every year, Kathy thinks "well, I have surely seen it all" and every summer brings a fresh new discovery into the human psyche and group development. For all the personal crises, large and small, that develop in a small, intense community, Bill and Kathy's strength has always been that they see the joy in the struggle and the accomplishment. "Seeing our campers achieve, change, and accomplish things brings so much joy. Living in an environment of joy has been a great gift." One of the things that Kathy will miss next summer? The problem-solving—guiding campers and staff toward solving their own problems.

As seen on pages 4 and 5, Bill and Kathy have touched so many lives—with humor, with love, with compassion. And like camp, campers and staff have benefited and improved because of Bill and Kathy's care and attention toward them.

## WHERE WILL BILL AND KATHY GO NEXT?

Well, the short answer is nowhere... and potentially anywhere. They have no plans to leave their home in Burlington, but they will enjoy having more time to travel. Bill, the man who has not stopped moving in 43 years, is a little worried about the extra time on his hands, but he's ready for a change of pace. "Running camp is like Groundhog's Day: you do the same thing every year! It's really the kids and the staff that make it exciting and fun. I won't miss checking the sewer every day and worrying about thunderstorms, but I will miss the people."

People are likely wondering if camp will see Bill and Kathy at theatre or special events this summer. Maybe, but probably not. B and K want to give Abby Lovshin-Smith, BLC's new camp director, plenty of space to find her way in her new role. But can they really stay away completely? While the

## QUICK STATS:

- Hiring roughly 50 new staff members per summer (to go with the 30 returning ones), or 1,800 total staff hires.
- Meeting 100 new campers each summer (to go with the 80 returning campers and JC's), or 3,600 total new campers.
- Hosting 18 Alumnae Camp sessions, hosting 2,700 alumnae for a fun-filled weekend.
- Attending 3 Brown Ledge Foundation meetings (formerly BL Perpetuators) per year, or 144 board meetings.
- Overseeing 19 building projects and the renovation of every camper cabin.
- Kathy sitting with a homesick camper, mopping up tears – countless.
- Bill checking the sewer...again – countless.



temptation to kayak by Mosquito Island with a set of binoculars will be strong, Bill and Kathy will resist it. They recall how good it felt when Barbara showed her trust in them by physically staying away their first summer solo—her complete absence signaling to Bill and Kathy and to all of camp: "you've got this." Bill and Kathy feel strongly about working till their last day, setting up Abby for her best success, and then getting out of her way so that she can make the director job her own.

"2-0-1-9 at Brown Ledge Camp, no other year the same"... and it certainly won't be the same without two of camp's favorite people for almost four decades. With Bill and Kathy's leadership, the traditions at Brown Ledge are strong, they will carry on, and even with a big change like this, deep down we know that "all is well with the camp you love."

# Call me a “Camp Person”

by Abby Loushin-Smith

“I just ran into our neighbor,” my husband Mitchell told me after returning from his daily walk with our dog. “I told her about your new job as the next director of Brown Ledge and our adventure ahead. She got so excited and said ‘Wow! I grew up going to camp too!’ Doesn’t she seem like a camp person? I feel like I can always tell when I’ve met a camp person.” Curious to know what he meant, I asked: “What makes someone a ‘camp person’ to you?”

My mind raced before he could answer. Was it his exposure to Brown Ledge ladies that caused him to relate other loud, happy, excited, cheerful, outgoing, chatty people to being camp people? Or was it that camp people tend to bring up their camp or camp friends in conversation any time there’s a sliver of an opportunity to do so? Or had he noticed camp people write their names

on everything they own? Or that they burst into song at random times? (Not to be confused with Theater people.) Was being a camp person a good thing or a bad thing?

I will never forget his reply: “They are always personable, confident, and passionate,” he said. “Like you!” (Cue hearts coming out of my eyes... aw shucks, thanks.)

The whole notion of seeing someone as a “camp person” really struck a chord. Are there notable character differences of people who went to camp and people who didn’t? There is a lot of support from the camp community about this, but very little from non-camp people. There is an endless supply of positive camp rhetoric: “10 reasons why summer camp is great for children,” “11 reasons why you should send your kids to

summer camp,” and “5 reasons why great parents send their kids to camp.” Of course camps are going to write about the importance of what camp does for children, their growth and their futures. Was there anyone out there who didn’t go to camp, but understood the impact it has on so many people? Or did you have to become a “camp person” to be interested in writing or talking about it?

Laura Clydesdale is a Girls Leadership Champion, Writer, TED Organizer, and Co-Chair of Rock Benefit Series for UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospitals. Her personal website features free resources for raising girls today: <http://www.lauraclydesdale.com/> (Plus, from reading her bio, I can’t find that she herself went to camp... win!) She wrote an article for the Washington Post titled “I send my kids to sleep-away camp to give them a competitive advantage in life.”



Waterskier: Kate Seiter  
Theatre scene: Zabette Kerman  
and Sarah McCallister



Dream catchers: Amaya Torres-Rahman  
and Ophelia Warghusen-Usher.

Besides being a funny well-written piece, she mentions three key things summer camp does for kids:

1. Builds creativity
2. Helps kids develop broadly as human beings
3. Gives them “not-living-in-parents-basement-as-an-adult-independence”\*



The ability to think creatively will give a competitive edge to anyone growing up in the age of technology. Mark Cuban, American businessman, investor, owner of the Dallas Mavericks, billionaire, and lead investor on ABC’s Shark Tank stated: “It’s time for people to start viewing creativity and flexible thinking as a valuable skill. I personally think there’s going to be a greater demand in 10 years for liberal arts majors than there were for programming.” Flexible thinking is something machines may never figure out. Only the human brain will be able to think outside the hard wires and computer algorithms. Exercising that creative muscle from a young age will be essential as technology continues to evolve and dominate our lives. And camp presents moments every day to flex those muscles.

Laura Clydesdale’s other two key points are both tangible and true. Where else can you learn to shoot archery, master the basics of a sewing machine, and understand how to sail all in the same day besides camp? And it’s not just about the skills you learn; it’s also about adjusting your communication throughout the day. You can’t learn to play tennis by talking about horses. And you won’t find success in diving if you only recite lines for your next role in the BLT. Communication and tone of voice are extremely important skills for all areas of life, and they take practice. Camp offers a perfect environment to practice these skills. Brown Ledge specifically allows girls to practice communication by living with their peers without an adult. Often bunkies learn to work through differences before their counselor has to be involved. These skills create well-rounded individuals and help girls develop broadly as humans, as opposed to being achievement machines.

Not having an adult direct your every move allows for independence to grow and flourish. Although not all camps provide this freedom, Brown Ledge builds the “not living in my parent’s basement” type of independence. Coert Visser, Dutch psychologist and author of The Progress-Focused Approach, writes on his blog: “As research into self-determination theory has shown, there is a strong connection between people’s autonomous functioning and their wellness, their open, engaged and healthy functioning. One of the things we share with each other is that we want to experience autonomy. As individuals we prefer to choose for ourselves as much as possible what we initiate and we want to control as much as possible what we do and don’t. The satisfaction of our need

for autonomy can contribute importantly to the degree to which we are engaged in what we do, how well we learn, how creative we are, how well we adjust and mentally healthy we are.” In other words, the freedom to choose your interests + taking initiative = better learning. Better learning creates confidence, which leads to less need for parents to act as a prop to their children.

Camp taught me how to be part of a community, and I now search for that feeling wherever I go. When we move to a new place, I make an effort to meet all my neighbors. Some people call it being nosy, but I prefer to think of it as being friendly, observant, aware of my surroundings, and supportive of the neighborhood. (For the record, “being a good neighbor” is what I called it when I was a 15-year-old in Point knowing everyone’s business.)

Today, many people are glued to their hand-held devices opting to write faceless comments on message boards, instead talking to someone in real time. The ability to have a productive, in person discussion brings people together. Camp provides an environment for learning how to communicate with one another, practice tolerance, work through differences, make decisions for yourself, support neighbors, and be a positive member of a group.

Call me a “camp person,” I take it as a compliment.

\* Now, I’m going to get really honest with you.

I am currently breaking Laura’s third key point because I just moved back in with my parents as a married 36-year-old with a 6-month-old baby. But let me defend myself for a moment. Moving 1,000 miles across country for a new job involves a lot of logistics. So when my parents offered to let us move home temporarily, we jumped at the opportunity. I’m happy to say I have a great relationship with them, and I was able to ask them for help. I attribute this partially to having had space and independence from them every summer. Even though my mom worked at Brown Ledge, I would see her on the camp road as a kid and say “hi mom!” and high five her like a friend instead of my mother. From her perspective, she says to be a fly on the wall to watch her children grow up and become well-rounded individuals without parental interference was a true gift.





# How Ledger Helped Me Become a Writer

by Annik LaFarge

Niki LaFarge is surrounded by her bunkies in 1975



Annik (aka) Niki LaFarge attended camp from 1969 to 1980. She's the author of *On the High Line: Exploring America's Most Original Urban Park* and is currently working on a book for Simon & Schuster about Frédéric Chopin. She writes a blog, *LiveInTheHighLine.com*, and lives in West Chelsea, New York.

In the 1960s, my dad had a fishing license from the state of Rhode Island that displayed not just his name but also his profession. He scribbled, on the line provided, “Writer.” When I was growing up this always intrigued me.

My friends had fathers who were lawyers, surgeons, historians, architects. But my dad was *a writer*. He built himself a little cabin in the woods and went there every morning to work. From the kitchen, we could just make out the glow of his desk lamp through the window and across the yard. Unlike other dads, he had a job that was, somehow, off to the side and out of the mainstream—unless it was a fishing

stream, in which case he was right there, his license proudly pinned to his vest.

What turns a person into a writer? Despite all my years in the book business, from publicist to editor, it was a question I never put to myself because it seemed so remote, so magical. That was for brilliant people who had cabins in the woods. But then, after a lifetime of helping others to write, it happened to me. Sometime around ten years ago, I became a writer.

I started thinking about all this when Kathy asked if I would contribute an article to *BLC Magazine*. When her

email arrived, saying “we want a piece by someone who has chosen writing as a career,” I was standing in a densely forested garden in the tiny hamlet of Nohant-Vic, about 300 kilometers south of Paris. In the 19th century, it belonged to George Sand, one of the most prolific writers in history. During her lifetime, Sand wrote 70 novels, 50 shorter works, a 600,000 word memoir, and 26 volumes of correspondence. For her, writing was a path to independence: a way to earn her own living and liberate herself from a bad marriage at a time when women were considered the property of their husbands. I was in France doing research for a book about Frédéric Chopin, Sand’s

lover, who completed the sonata I’m writing about in Nohant. I wanted to walk through the old chateau, wander in her garden, and get a sense of this little universe Sand called her Eden.

It was a pretty good place to think about being a writer, and it wasn’t long before memories of Ledger started coming back to me. Nowadays, Ledger is more performance-based than it was in my era, with dancing, singing, skits, and even video. When I was a camper, it was a simpler affair with one abiding rule: everything had to be original. While Barbara was willing to read pieces for those who felt shy about public speaking, for the most

part it was us, the authors, who took turns reading our work aloud. Forty years later I still have vivid memories of the setting—the theater, illuminated by its lowly house lights and totally quiet except for that one voice—and even some of the content, like Rachel Trumper’s weekly installment chronicling the life and misadventures of a fictional fellow named Herkimer. Some people read poetry, others told stories about events at camp. And always, at the end, was Barbara’s marvelous letter home to Mama, with its call-and-response (*Hello? Hello mama? Is that youuuuuuuu?*) that invited every voice in the room to come together and bring her story, and the evening, to a close.

Ledger has a long history, probably as old as camp itself. Alums from as far back as the 1940s remember gathering every Sunday evening in the Point, sitting against a tree trunk or atop their favorite root, to hear HEB recount the news of the week, followed by contributions from fellow campers. At some point Ledger moved indoors, but the spirit was the same: rapt attention as someone read her work to the entire community.

It was a powerful moment in the weekly camp cycle: an act of creative sharing and collective listening.

Barbara Winslow understood that storytelling—not just the delivery in front an audience but the work of it, the *writing* you did in those random spare moments between singing at the breakfast table and standing quietly for *Taps*—had a valuable role to play in the project of independence, which is what I’ve always believed Brown Ledge is about. At least it was for me. You are at liberty at BLC to do whatever you like during the day, so long as you remain part of the community. You are free to compete—at a basic level or to be in the vanguard—or not, so long as you contribute to the spirit of the place. That’s what Ledger reminded us of, every Sunday night. What you brought didn’t need to be funny or uplifting, it didn’t even have to be good. It just had to be *yours*: your idea, your words, your voice. All this got into my bones at a very young age, and when the opportunity for change presented itself—when I left my last publishing job in 2008—the muscle still worked. Ledger, I now realize, made us *all* writers, at least for the summer.

So nowadays you might be a lawyer, a surgeon, an historian, an architect. But I’m guessing it’s still in there, somewhere, for you too.

# What Takes You Back to BLC?

by Maria Moore

Brown Ledge can deliver our primary senses quite a feast on any given summer day. Driving up the camp road, you're immediately surrounded by the sights, sounds, and smells that signal your arrival.

When we asked what sensory memories have stayed with you after your time at camp, we were delighted with the collection of responses that shared a common thread among many (the pine trees, the sun on the water, the bugle before meals) and were also unique to an individual's experience. As a collection, there are bound to be some that resonate with each of you, too. If only we could provide a scratch-n-sniff version!

- I smell the fresh hay in the hay barn, the fresh shavings in the shavings bin and, of course, horse manure!  
– Liz Bell 1979-82, 86-87, 97-13



- I see the archery range from every angle. I crane my neck to see it on the drive into camp: The view opens up over the riding rings, the tennis courts, down to the lake. But on the other side, the range - five targets standing proudly yellow-red-blue against a sea of green grass.  
– anonymous



- I feel the calluses on the tips of my fingers, almost to this day, remind me of time spent on the archery range. How awesome it felt when you knew that you finally were in a good position to shoot that good score at the rifle range. A feeling of accomplishment when you worked hard to meet a goal.  
– Ann Hunt 1969-73



- I feel the cold morning air and the heat of the sun compete to assert themselves against the fabric of my sleeping bag.  
– Nick Mockridge



- I hear mainly just girls being girls... and happiness.  
– Kate Richard 1987-93

- I first tasted shepherd's pie at camp, which turned out to be a favorite dish of mine (and my daughter!)  
– Anne Barton Wütke 1969-71



- I smell an awful odor that wouldn't stop - when several of us tried to pet baby skunks.  
– Sally Hill Cooper 1941-58

-12-

- I feel the mats at the riflery range.  
– Ellie McElroy 2004-07



- I feel power tools in stagecraft, applying foundation makeup before Saturday Night at Brown Ledge, stones in my Birkenstocks, the sun on my skin.  
– Julia Proctor 1996-04, 17-18



- I see a long, sagging clothesline full of freshly dripping tie-dyed t-shirts and pillow cases.  
– anonymous 80s-90s



- I see the sun rise over the mountains and across the bay after sleeping on the sailing dock. I hear the water gently lapping against the rocks; otherwise silence.



- I feel the vibration of the sewing machine as I make a costume.  
– Jeanne Kramer-Smyth 1982-86



- I feel tired, I feel happy and busy and comfortable and safe.  
– Marjorie Isaacs 2002-09, 11-14, 17



- I taste hot chocolate on a cold, rainy day.  
– Jeanne Kramer-Smyth

- I feel the mud between my toes as I rescue a stray canoe.  
– Charlotte McCorkel 1995-2001, 03



- I hear the crunch of pine needles and tree roots walking down the point (we didn't have wood chips back then!) and the rain falling softly on our cabin roof.  
– Bobbi Collins Degnan Atz 1958-63, 64, 84

- I hear the slam of screen doors on the cabins as rest hour ends or as people enter and exit the dining room.  
– Lisa Buxbaum 1977-83

- I taste combos (pretzel snack) because we didn't have them in Canada!  
– Jamie Ouellet 1983-88, 96



- I hear singing "Do Your Ears Hang Low" at mealtime.  
– Nancy May 1969-71

-13-

- I see the bright colored names written inside the bunks that made me feel connected to all the girls past and want girls in the future to see my name too.  
– Jennie Dunham 1982

- I taste an ice cold lemonade from the camp store when it's 88° and humid.  
– Paul Maher

- I smell calamine lotion - infirmary stay due to bad poison ivy encounter (but way over-balanced by thoughtful, caring infirmary staff)





Jude Dry  
(C 96-02, JC 03-04,  
S 07-08, 10)

When word traveled that I had landed a full-time writing gig at a reputable entertainment website, a friend of my aunt (of whom I have always been fond) told me: “You know, they say we end up doing what we’re second-best at.”

by Jude Dry

I had been in New York for more than a few years at that point, putting in minimal effort (and had the results to match it) towards what had always been my childhood dream—or what I was best at. What I was best at was singing, with acting a close second. (Choreography was never my strong suit, but I kill at a wedding.) As a kid and young adult, I was certain I was bound for Broadway, a dream that was reinforced by the applause, accolades, and even tears of adults and peers alike. And Brown Ledge, as we all know, sparked and fed those dreams in that way that only Brown Ledge can. I still wish I could put on my resume “two-time

Barbara winner and member of the Brown Ledge Stock Company”! By the time I was a second-year JC, I knew I was destined for greatness.

But, it’s a heavy burden to bear, all that ego. Through years of therapy (I’ve always wanted to say that), I learned that my doting parents’ fevered adulation wasn’t actually all that good for my sense of self, nor for my work ethic.

When you’re accustomed to being told you’re the absolute best, there’s not much room for just okay.

If I was destined to be the next Barbra Streisand, or Ethel Merman, or even Lea Delaria, why wasn’t I headlining productions, selling out cabarets, getting cast in quirky indy movies? Why, after several years of being in New York to pursue theatre, was I doing children’s theatre with a bunch of college dropouts? (Not the kids, of course. My fellow teachers.)

One day, while meeting an ex-girlfriend for a cup of coffee, she struck up a conversation with a nerdy-looking guy at a nearby table. Waiting for our drinks at the counter, I observed them, trying to stay cool, but actually feeling a swelling tide of jealousy. Who was this bespectacled guy? And what was he to my ex-girlfriend? As I walked back towards them, she motioned to introduce us. “Jude, this is Charlie,” she said, before I could roll my eyes. “He runs a film website; I told him you’re a great writer.” I was not expecting that. Taken aback though I was, Charlie and I exchanged emails, and within a week I was reviewing my first film.

That segue wasn’t as strange or random as it might appear at first. As a struggling actor, I had plenty of time on my hands, and it probably goes without saying how much I appreciated free movie tickets.

And I wasn’t stressed about it—I didn’t invest all that ego in it—because I wasn’t getting paid, and (in my mind) no one was reading Charlie’s blog, so the pressure was off. This meant I could write with abandon. I wasn’t really a writer, so what if I was just okay? Charlie didn’t even seem to mind that I knew nothing about real cinema.

One of the first movies I reviewed was Abbas Kiarostami’s “Like Someone in Love.” There is a scene in that film that is so arresting in its heartbreaking simplicity, I remember thinking I didn’t know film could make me feel so deeply, the way theater always had. At the time, I had no idea I was reviewing a film by the Jean-Luc Godard of Iranian cinema. Kiarostami remains one of my favorite filmmakers, though I’ve only seen the one film. In other words, I was hooked. In the time since, I’ve come to embrace my role as reluctant cinephile, and I’ve accepted my ignorance of auteur filmmakers. Given the choice of having dinner with Stephen Sondheim or Paul Thomas Anderson, well—does anyone still wear a hat? (Okay, so I’m still a theatre nerd. For those who don’t get the reference, ask the most earnest teenage theatre fangirl you know. She’ll set you straight!)

Turns out, theater isn’t the only thing I learned at Brown Ledge (though you wouldn’t know it from looking at my basic patches). Now that I look back with a slightly different lens, I see that privately, and without noticing it, I was honing my second-best talent the whole time. When I was a young camper and had hours to wile away, I used to sit and write in the Grove, back when it was still a bustling social hub. In my Looney Tunes spiral mini-notebook, (chosen painstakingly on a pre-camp trip to Office Max), I wrote emotionally fraught rhyming verse, in which I pined over whatever diving or theater JC had caught my very discerning ten-year-old eye that summer.

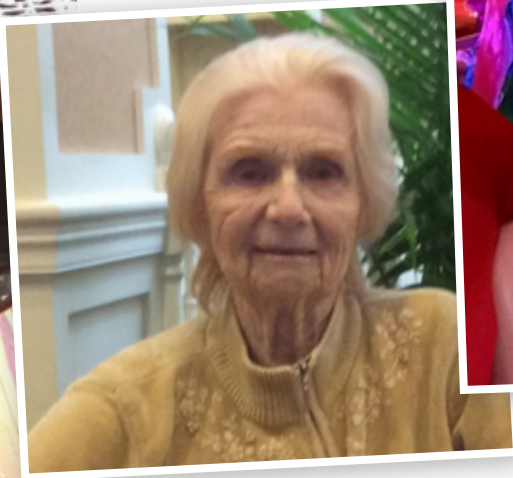
Another way I honed my craft at camp was through my rigorous practice of the art of letter writing. Sending postcards home became a cherished routine; receiving them was even better. My homesick missives to my mother resulted in one of my proudest lines, recounted at family gatherings to this day: “By the time you read this letter, the tears will have dried.”

I still feel that letters bring out my best writing; ironically, it’s the only kind of writing you never get to read again. More ironic still, everything I publish online will last forever, easily searchable for anyone to read, should they so choose. Between rushing to meet deadlines, the pressure to always have a hot take, and my still-evolving film knowledge, it can sometimes feel like I’m always giving my second-best. The most important thing I’ve learned? My second-best isn’t so bad after all. In fact, it’s pretty darn good.



Jude Dry in Once on this Island in 2001





Marion Steadman Palm, Lynn Benoliel Jacobson, Berta Bryan Bocock, Jane Parke Batten



## Volunteer Appreciation

# The Spirit of Philanthropy

by Kathy Neilsen

When asked about her philanthropic spirit, Lynn "Banana" Benoliel Jacobson (BLC 1943-53) responds with powerful memories. When she was very young, Lynn remembers dropping pennies into three small boxes that were given to her by her family and kept in her bureau drawer. One box was for spending, one for saving, and the third for charity. Later there was the red feather campaign (the precursor to the United Way); Lynn recalls stuffing red feathers into envelopes and while most were mailed, some were hand delivered by Lynn and her brother to neighbors. As a child, Lynn saw the dining room table



strewn with papers and adults gathered around. The grown-ups were making decisions about how to support important causes with their donations.

Getting to know BLC donors over the past three and a half decades has led us to a crucial question about the roots of altruism. Simply put, what is it that makes a person want to give back?

We decided to take our question to the four Brown Ledge women from the 1940s and '50s who are pictured above. Lynn Jacobsen is not alone in recognizing that early experiences contributed to the growth of

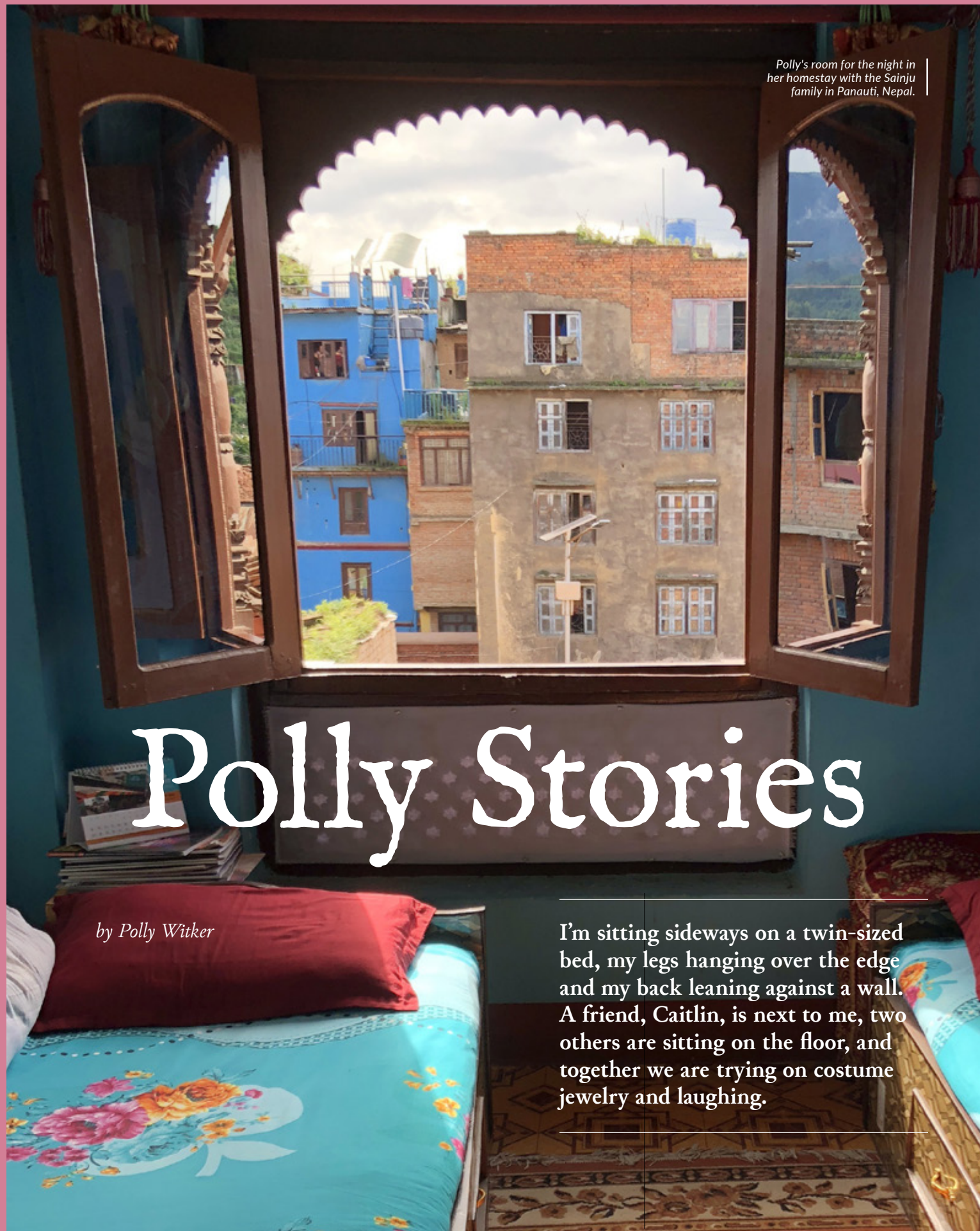
a philanthropic heart. Marion "Freckles" Steadman Palm (BLC 1940-56) remembers her grandfather, John, whom she describes as both warm and generous. He lived next door and his home was a refuge for Marion. ("Plus," says a smiling and impish Marion, "we had no children so the money had to go somewhere!") The no-nonsense response from Berta Bryan Bocock (BLC 1950-54) to the question about the origins of her philanthropy was, "I was raised by my family to support the causes that made a difference in your life... and that includes Brown Ledge." And Jane Parke Batten (BLC 1949-52) credits not only family values but also her late husband, Frank. "He was a successful civic leader, encouraging others to give, but (he also) believed that successful businesses and their families should put back into their communities what they take out."

It is important to note that these four women—Lynn, Marion, Berta and

Jane—are all reluctant to talk about their generosity... they would rather talk about Brown Ledge! For Marion Palm, Brown Ledge represented a sense of ease and freedom, a second home, and a place to "truly be myself." And if that wasn't enough to seal Brown Ledge in her heart, Marion met her future husband, Bill, at camp. They were fellow waterfront counselors—she in swimming and he in sailing—and he (finally!) proposed after their seventh summer at BLC. Berta Bocock remembers feeling lost as a first-time 12-year-old camper until HEB helped her create a schedule to get her started. It didn't take Berta long to fall in love with riding, the sport that stayed with her through her Brown Ledge career and to this day. Berta says that the counselors in all the activities became not just instructors but friends, and she fondly recalls both their support and eagerness to teach. Jane Batten, like Marion, was drawn to the waterfront though Jane found her home on the sailing dock. She

tells us that Brown Ledge taught her to be independent and focused and to appreciate nature and adds, "I wish every young woman could have that experience!" It is not surprising that education and environmental issues remain deeply important to Jane.

As for Lynn Jacobson, riding was her first love, and now horses and animals of all kinds play a central role in her life. She is passionate about supporting the use of animals, especially horses, to treat veterans with PTSD. And Brown Ledge? Even though 66 years have passed since her last year at camp, her love for Brown Ledge is unwavering. Lynn has revealed in having her granddaughters attend camp and of her own BLC career she says, "these were the happiest memories I had growing up... I still get emotional and teary-eyed when I think of Brown Ledge, all of my experiences there, and especially the extraordinary people."



Polly's room for the night in her homestay with the Sainju family in Panauti, Nepal.

# Polly Stories

by Polly Witker

I'm sitting sideways on a twin-sized bed, my legs hanging over the edge and my back leaning against a wall. A friend, Caitlin, is next to me, two others are sitting on the floor, and together we are trying on costume jewelry and laughing.



A walk around the village of Panauti with mother & daughter hosts.



Trying to put on the bangle bracelets given as gifts by the family to Polly and her colleague Caitlin.



We've only met today, but—even in the absence of many words—the bond of friendship has begun to form. I've lost track of time, but telltale late afternoon sunlight streams through a square-shaped window and my stomach rumbles, the only indications I have that it must almost be dinnertime. Soon the call comes, and together we go, sit, and eat a delicious family-style meal around a table. Later, we'll get dressed up, pass around a single tube of lipstick, and walk arm in arm down a dirt road to gather with the rest of the community for a performance.

Maybe surprisingly, I am not describing an evening at Brown Ledge. In fact, I am in a small village called Panauti in Nepal's greater Kathmandu Valley. Caitlin is a colleague, and our new friends in the room are three generations of women in the Sainju family who are hosting us for the night in their three-story home. The aforementioned costume jewelry consists of bunches of delicate glass bangle bracelets, carefully wrapped in newspaper, pulled out from a small cabinet where they have been stored, and offered to us as gifts. Only, there is a small problem: the delicate bangles won't fit over our not-so-delicate hands. The Sainju ladies speak softly to one another for a few minutes as they do their best to squeeze our hands into different squished shapes, until one of them finally says "get the cream." Out comes a jar of Vaseline, and next thing I know, my hands are greased up until the bangles finally slide on smoothly. Lots of giggling ensues. Later, when we dress up for the evening festivities, Sabrina expertly wraps us up in the family's own brightly colored saris. Sabrina's grandmother, whose English is very limited, pours us some homemade

rice wine, pointing to the liquid courage and saying "Dancing! Dancing!" This is when we realize we're not just the audience for the evening's performance, we're also the performers.

When we arrived in Panauti earlier in the day, the Sainjus were part of a group of a dozen local women who greeted us by placing flower garlands on our shoulders and pressing red powder tikas to our foreheads. We spent the afternoon exploring Panauti on foot with Parvati, our host mother, and then her daughter Sabrina painted intricate henna tattoos on our hands and told us stories about getting ready for her wedding. We learned that the tika is only placed directly between the eyes if a woman is married. When Caitlin and I told them neither of us are married, they clucked, "Lucky lucky!" and we all laughed together for the first of many times during our stay in the Sainju home.

I was lucky to be in Nepal this past summer for work—even luckier that my job is basically to go on adventures and turn the stories of my experiences into interesting content. More specifically, I am here to check out a community-based tourism initiative where travelers are connected to women-run homestays in villages across Nepal that aren't on the typical tourist track. Community homestays empower women in rural villages to build their own businesses, providing a source of income for both the women and their families in areas where job opportunities can be slim. In turn, curious travelers are able to have a more immersive experience and make real connections with local people that they wouldn't have if they were staying at a regular hotel. Staying

with a family for a night (or longer), is a more meaningful experience for the traveler, while also funneling critical funds into the local economy.

When traveling, whether for work or for pleasure, I find I am drawn to experiences that remind me of camp.

In Nepal, the connection felt more clear than ever—cultural immersion, learning, forging friendships, community building, female empowerment, days filled to the brim with memorable experiences... At some point during my years at Brown Ledge, I became known for telling long, drawn out, rambling, often (hopefully?) entertaining stories that my peers at the time affectionately called—and still call—"Polly Stories." It's not surprising I've made a career out of going on adventures and writing about them.

A few days after my night in Panauti, I'm at another community homestay in a village called Baurali, just adjacent to Nepal's Chitwan National Park, where rhinos and Bengal tigers roam. My home for the night is one of several traditional Tharu mud huts that lie under a jungle canopy at the edge of a dirt road. Tonight there will be a lunar eclipse, so after eating dinner in a communal dining hall gathered around a long wooden table, we walk together down the road to a clearing near a field and look up at a sky full of stars. It's a place I've never been, but it feels pretty familiar.

Thank you!

Brown Ledge Foundation 2018 Review of Giving

The Brown Ledge Foundation provides a sense of community with the alums, families, and friends of BLC who give back to camp through philanthropic gifts and donations of time and energy. We're grateful for this giving spirit shared by the 469 donors, listed on the following pages, who supported the Foundation in 2018. Because of you, we're

able to respond to requests for camper scholarships, and maintain, improve camp facilities and equipment, and work toward building our endowment. The unique experience that the girls and young women of Brown Ledge have each summer is directly impacted by your generosity. **Every gift makes a difference.**

With sincere appreciation for the alumnae, parents, grandparents and friends of BLC who have helped to make this celebration of our 92nd year possible,

Maria Moore

Maria Moore  
Director of Development



**2018/19 Board Members:**  
Back row L-R: Kris Stone, Mary Barton, Catherine Harrison, Ginny Sharp Williams, Katy Robbins Ritz; Front row L-R: Tim Harkness, Rachel Lincoln Grindrod, Carol Blanton, Tara Francis, Marjorie Isaacs. Not pictured: Annie Solberg Sarnblad.

Brown Ledge Foundation

Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors is dedicated group of volunteers who give time, energy, and resources all year in support of Brown Ledge! They are charged with the following mission: **The Brown Ledge Foundation oversees the operation, perpetuation, and educational mission of Brown Ledge Camp. The Foundation exists to support Camp's current and future programs and preserve its natural setting on Lake Champlain.**

The board members come together three times per year and work consistently throughout the year on governance, fund-raising, and various committees to ensure that camp is well positioned for the future. They had the added opportunity in 2017-18 to identify and hire our fourth camp director in 93 years. This task involved outreach and input, via conversations and surveys, with well over 100 people connected to Brown Ledge and thousands of hours of discussion, interviews, travel, and effort by the search committee.

We are so grateful for the time, energy and support that all board members—current and past—have given this and past years. Thank you!

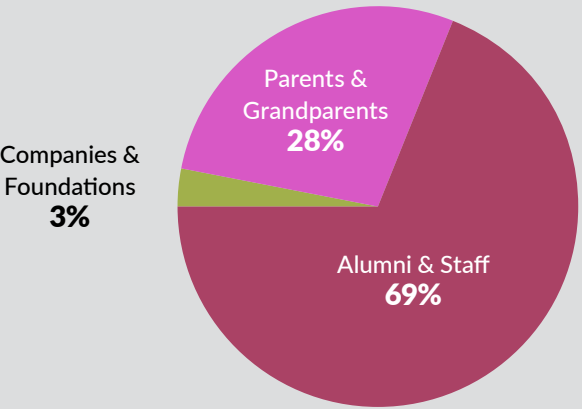
Board membership is a wonderful way to stay connected, help BLC thrive, and learn about what goes into running camp. If you have questions for the board or would like information about joining, please send an email to [foundation@brownledge.org](mailto:foundation@brownledge.org). Read each board member's bio on the Brown Ledge website, [www.brownledge.org](http://www.brownledge.org).

2018 Giving to Brown Ledge Foundation:  **\$305,547** to the BLF Annual Campaign & Endowment

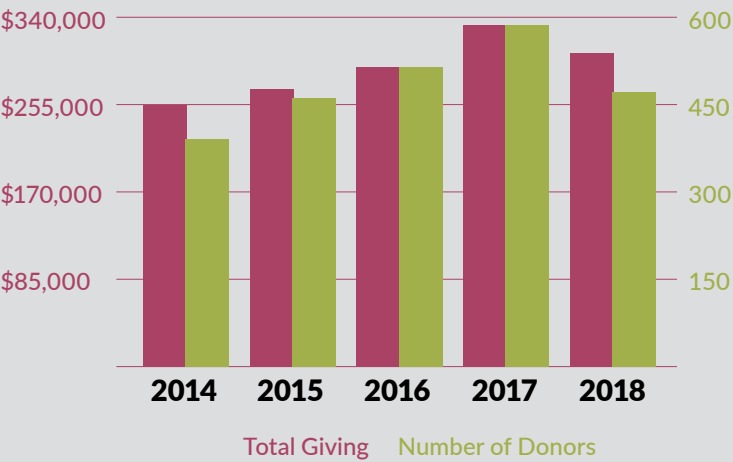
“Thank you for all the joy! The lifelong learning and friends from BLC shape the lives of young women.”

— Jessica Jekkel (Camper & JC 92-00)

Who Supported BLF in 2018?



BLF 5 Years of Giving 2014-18



“Thank you Brown Ledge, and Brown Ledgers, for inspiring the best in girls and young women for generations.”

— Gretchen Ratcliff Lipari (Camper & JC 78-82)

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**KEY:**  - ANNEX CLUB The Annex Club recognizes those donors who consistently support the Brown Ledge Foundation Annual Campaign. Members have made a gift to the foundation for the past five consecutive years or more.

M - IN MEMORY OF  
H - IN HONOR OF

# A Legacy

for Future Generations of Brown Ledgers

We would like to recognize and thank the following Brown Ledgers of the Planned Giving Circle who are helping to ensure that we'll be a thriving, stable organization well into the future.

Because Brown Ledge has been an important part of each of their lives, they have included BLC in their will or long-term estate plans with a charitable bequest or other planned gift. The alums and parents listed here are providing a legacy for the future of Brown Ledge Camp. We're honored to have their support in such a wonderful and lasting way. Their enduring commitment to provide the incredible experiences of Brown Ledge to future generations is a testament to the impact that BLC has had on thousands of girls and young women.



## THANK YOU FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP, GENEROSITY, AND THOUGHTFUL SUPPORT:

Lori Angstadt  
Elena Barr Baum  
Elizabeth Baydush Milewski  
Liz Bell  
Cindy Billington Bauch  
Janet Blakeman Martin  
Mary Brust  
Karen Byerly Nicholson  
Ashley Deeks  
Marilen Hartnett  
Janet Koppelman  
Becky Kidder Smith  
Marcia McCabe  
Susie McKallor Holic  
Lisa & David Murphy  
Randy & Murray Neale  
Phyllis Perkins Adams  
Edie Plimpton Fleeman  
Beany Richter  
Annie Solberg Sarnblad  
Elaine Tack  
Marcy Tompkins Stanton  
Martha Tuttle Shannon  
Amelia Weir  
Joan Weiterer Butcher

If Brown Ledge has been an important part of your life, you can extend your love and support of BLC beyond your own lifetime with a gift in your will or estate. If you have named BLC in your plans or would like more information, contact Maria Moore, Director of Development, Brown Ledge Foundation, Inc. at (802)862-2442, maria@brownledge.org or BLF, 1 Mill Street, Suite 216, Burlington, VT 05401. Thank you!

- Liz Bell
- Jeff & Meera Buckman
- Emily & Chris Burns
- Page & Jack Carter
- Michael and Maureen Champa
- Margie Cohen
- Glen and Kim Davis
- Ashley Deeks
- Elizabeth DeOreo
- Mr. and Mrs. Bruce W. Fleming
- H **Adeline Fleming**
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- Katie Frank
- Rachel Greene-Lowell & James Lowell III
- Rachel Lincoln Grindrod
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- H **Bill & Kathy Neilsen**
- Kris Stone
- Robin Weaver
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# Jill Schropp

## 2ND Year JC Scholarship Evolves to Honor Mimi and Jack Williams



When Jill Schropp returned to BLC in 1989 for the first time since her summer as a second year JC in 1962, a seed was planted that has continued to blossom as a key part of BLC's scholarship program. Today she is joined by family and friends of Mimi and Jack Williams, who purchased Camp Kiniya from BLC's co-founder, Harry Brown, in 1951.



Above: Marilyn 'Mimi' Pomerene on left as part of BLC riding staff in the late '40s

Right: Sharon with Mimi and Jack Williams at Camp Kiniya, 1952

# Remembering Mimi & Jack

by Mary Williams



In 1950, when Harry Brown drove Jack Williams across Lake Champlain (in a snappy Chris Craft) to view the shoreline of beautiful Camp Kiniya, he could hardly have known he was about to change countless lives forever. Certainly, the lives of the Williams' family took a magical detour that day, but so did the lives of thousands of campers, counselors, and staff that followed. Camp Kiniya, across the bay from BLC, was owned and operated by the Browns in the late 1940s, then sold to Marilyn (Mimi) Pomerene Williams and Jack Williams, pictured

here with daughter Sharon in 1952. Most Brown Ledgers do not know this story, but Mimi, a natural athlete with a truly fun-loving personality, taught both riding and diving at BLC in her early 20s. Later, when she and Jack purchased Kiniya from the Browns, they adopted Harry Brown's signature philosophy of freedom of choice (along with other BLC traditions) and steadfastly maintained it for their 55-year ownership of the camp.

With far more of this story to tell than space here permits, I would simply like

to say that, in honor of Mimi and Jack Williams, and in a nod to the shared history and ethos of these two wonderful girls' summer camps, it is my pleasure to announce that a group of Camp Kiniya alumni will be joining forces with BLC alumna Jill Schropp to ensure the continuation of the long-standing Second Year JC scholarship that Jill created years ago. Thanks to Jill, Kathy, Bill, Maria and all Brown Ledgers for permitting us to be a part of your wonderful community.

- ❑ Sarah Bell  
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Michael Cohen & Erin Bell  
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Renee De Lyon Peiser  
    **M Christie Graves Heiberg, Lois Ruby deLyon, & Helen Ruby Tompkins**  
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Katie Waddell Green  
❑ Bonnie Shepherd Yocum  
Janet Fuller & Andrew Young

# Stay Connected

## to the Brown Ledge Community



## Alumnae Camp

### August 23-26, 2019

Alumnae Camp occurs over one August weekend every other year and lasts from Friday evening through Monday morning. We look forward to welcoming many alums back this summer! Bunkies will reunite and family members will finally have the chance to experience this place they've been hearing SO MUCH about. The benefit that many don't anticipate is the connections you'll make with Brown Ledgers from other eras. You'll love the similarities in stories shared by an alumna who was at camp 20 years before or after you! There's nothing quite like having so much in common with people you've just met. If you can't join us for 2019, stay tuned for details about Alumnae Camp 2021.

## Regional Reunions

We enjoyed connecting with Brown Ledgers in a variety of places in the past year, including Atlanta, New York City, and Philadelphia. We look forward to more opportunities in the coming year! Please share your photos when you have a Brown Ledge reunion in your neck of the woods.

## Foundation, Corporate, Donor Advised and Matching Gifts

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Amazon Smile Foundation  
The American Online Giving Foundation  
Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc.  
❑ The Barr Foundation  
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❑ Hawk Rock Foundation  
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❑ Kidder Smith Fund of The Boston Foundation

## Work Weekend May 30-31, 2020

Don't miss this opportunity to connect with Brown Ledge—not just the people, but the place. This is when we **rake, sweep, paint, clean, wash, and fix** our way through the buildings and grounds after they've endured another winter. It's a great opportunity to be here and help us get camp ready to welcome campers and counselors.

There are tasks for all ages and abilities and meals are provided from Saturday breakfast through Sunday lunch. You can sleep in a cabin (extra satisfying because you cleaned it yourself :) **We welcome any alumnae, campers, family, and friends who would like to help.** If you'll be new to BLC in 2020 it's a chance to get to know camp and if you have a potential future camper, it's a great introduction.

## E-News & Mailings

Stay up on all the Brown Ledge news! You won't miss a thing as long as we can connect with you. We send occasional mailings, a monthly e-newsletter, and this annual printed publication, *Brown Ledge Magazine*. If you don't already receive them and would like to, please send your email and mailing address to [foundation@brownledge.org](mailto:foundation@brownledge.org).

- Louise and Fritz Knabe Fund of Vanguard Charitable  
❑ Match Point Fund of Fidelity Charitable  
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- ❑ Lori Angstadt  
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❑ Martia Patrick Gordon  
Randall Thropp



# BULLETIN board



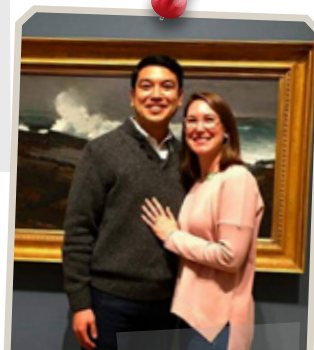
**Declan McDaid** (S 03-10) and **Rini Lovshin-Smith** (C 95-00, JC 01-02, S 04-05) welcomed Morris "Mo" McDaid on June 10th, 2018.



A New Years reunion at Stratton Mountain in Vermont included **Katie Harkness**, **Emma Gross**, **Melissa Browne**, **Emily Weintraub**, and **Caroline Gilman**.



*Compiled by Lyda Blank*



The Portland Museum of Art (ME) was the site of **Hilary Strimple** (C 00-05, JC 06-07, S 09-12) and **Alex Chiang**'s engagement on December 30th, 2018.



**Liz Bell** (C 7-80, JC 81-82, S 86-87, 7, 99-00, Admin 97-13) and **Marty Elgison** announced their engagement in October; a May 2020 wedding in Atlanta is planned.



Leave it to **Catherine Alston** and **Rose Lovshin** to arrange a Middlebury (VT) reunion to introduce a new generation of Brown Ledge babies. Back row: **Kathy Neilsen**, **Rose Loveshin**, **Catherine Alston**, **Kim McManus**. Front row: **Rini Lovshin-Smith** and **Mo**, **Christy Lynn** and **Woody**, **Julia Proctor** and **Orli**, and **Abby Lovshin-Smith** and **Dottie**.



**Holly Stevens** (C 02-05) married **Matthew Lockhoff** on September 14, 2018 in Valley Forge Park, PA. The wedding party included Brown Ledgers **Janie Willis Stevens** (mother of the bride) and her sisters **Beth Willis Swaintek**, **Diane Willis Alford** and their children **Sarah Swaintek**, **Katie**, **Kerry**, and **Chrissy Alford**, and **Holly**, **Ally**, and **Karly Stevens**.



**Emiko Bennett** (S 07-08, 10-11) married **Andrew Chrusciel** on September 8, 2018 at their home in Monkton, Vermont.



**Rosemary Tandoi** and **Andre and Howie Dorne** coincidentally found themselves at The Rustler in Alta, Utah and Howie snapped this picture.



**Ali Donnermeyer** (C 01-06, JC 07-08) and **Adam Henry Whitman** were in Vail, Colorado when they became engaged, doing what they most love - skiing!



This just in! **Anne Domit** (C 78-82, JC 83-84, S 85-86) wed **Jim Richter** on July 22, 2012 in Wakefield, MA. **Bunkie Kristine Dahlquist** was the maid of honor and **Paul and Charlene Dahlquist** ("My Hanai parents") also attended.



New BLC Director **Abby Lovshin-Smith** (C 95-98, JC 99-00, S 02-06) and **Mitchell Watson** welcomed **Dottie Watson** on July 1st, 2018, just 3 weeks behind cousin **Mo**!



Third generation BLer **Ali Buckman Cross** (C 91-96, JC 97-98, S 00-01) welcomed **Bowen** on October 17, 2018, pictured here with big sister **Maylin**.



**Steve Bednasz** (aka "Musical Steve") (S 09-11) became engaged to **Pete Kondatowicz** on New Year's Eve while visiting family in Buffalo, New York.



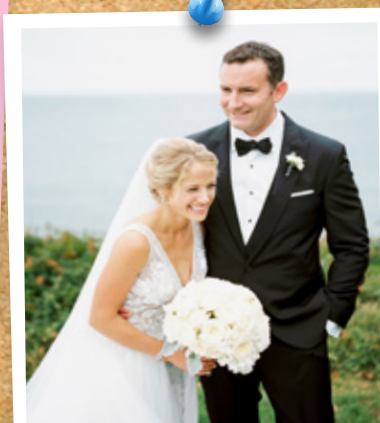
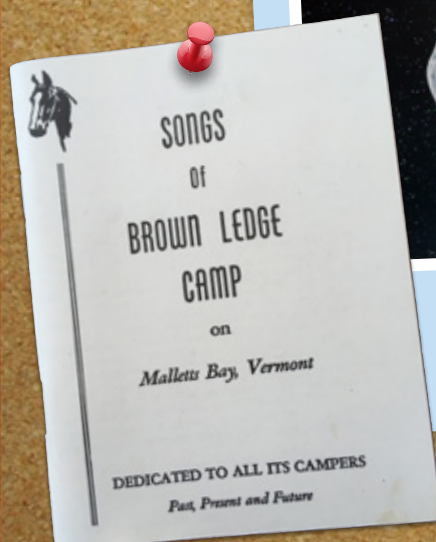
**Teves Brighton** (C 97-98, JC 99, S 02-03, 05) married **Nick Breul** on September 2nd, 2018, a wedding date shared by four generations in her family. Pup **Birdie** was a gracious guest.



**Erica Amster Krappol** (C 91-95) has two "future Brown Ledgers," **Dina** age 3 and **Talia** age 8 months.



**Amy Keiser** (C 99-02, JC 03-04, S 06-08) married **Jackson Wright** on April 28th, 2018 in Chittenden, Vermont. "We were so happy to tie the knot in a state that means so much to both of us."



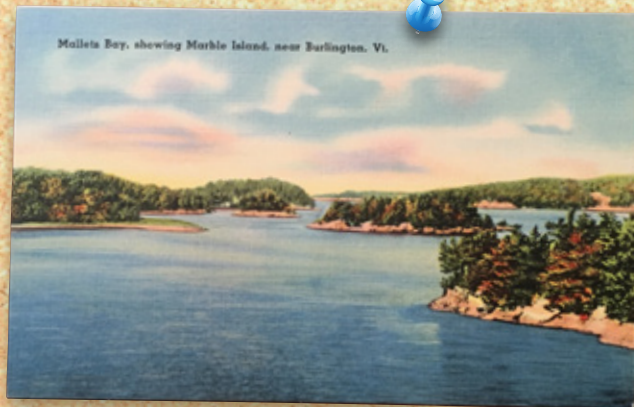
**Ashley Globerman** (C 97-01, S 06) married **Jonathan Longabaugh** on Cape Cod (MA) in October, 2018. They love to travel from their base in London where they live and work.



**Eliza Murawski** (C 99-00, JC 01-02, S 04) and **Andrew McAvoy** wed on 8/18/18! Helping them celebrate are Brown Ledgers **Meghan O'Brien**, **Annie Murawski**, **Sam Ostrow**, **Declan McDaid**, **Rose Loveshin**, **Christy Lynn**, and **Rini Lovshin-Smith** holding baby Mo.



**Bill "Soupy" Reynolds** (S 03-08) and wife **Jenn** hold **Theodore Dillon Reynolds**, born October 30, 2018.



Mallets Bay, showing Marble Island, near Burlington, VT.



**Noel Keck** (S 06-08) and **Dirk Porter** chose Jackson Hole, Wyoming, their "favorite place on earth," to wed in June, 2018.



Waterfront staff of 2018, **Shannon Elford** (S 18) and **Sam Newbery** (S 16-18) are engaged! A 2020 fall wedding is planned.



**Chisty Lynn** (C 97, 99-00, S 04-05, 08) and **Sam Ostrow** (S 97, 99-08) announced the birth of Elwood "Woody" Ostrow-Lynn on November 12, 2018.



**Krista Irmisher's** travels have taken her far and wide. She is pictured here with **Jessica Higgins Palden** in Sri Lanka, standing in front of Jessica's beach house and inn that features her hand painted design.



**Caroline Murphy** (C 98-04, S 13-14) is engaged to **Whitney Rauschenbach**. They have camp in common; Whitney grew up at Cape Cod Sea Camps. The couple is planning a fall 2020 wedding.



**Meghan Donoghue Bustmantes** (C 92-97, JC 98-99, S 02-10+) and husband **Mike** announce the arrival of **Nolan James** on January 30, 2019. Holding **Nolan** is cousin **Maddie Donoghue** who is entering her second BLC summer.



**Hayley Doner** hosted the #BunksTakeAfrica tour! Pictured are **Alyx McClure**, **Alex Meltzer**, **Hayley Doner**, **Abby Hall**, and **Sari Meltzer**.



**Lyda Blank's** trip to Australia included many Brown Ledge reunions, including the one pictured here with **Rob** and **Kate Pugh**.



No one thought about a Brown Ledge photo until someone yelled "Quick, grab a camera!" Captured are **Marion Steadman Palm** and **Nina Russell** in front, with **Betsy Russell**, **Robin Title**, and **Sarah Title** behind. Missing but not forgotten is **Rebecca Emme**.



A post-camp reunion in London included **Jule Mueller**, **Jessica Broddle**, **Evan Olson**, **Emily Knickerbocker**, **Mark Gawronski**, **Sebastian Zepeda**, **Kari Stevermer Olson**, and **Alejandro Zepeda**

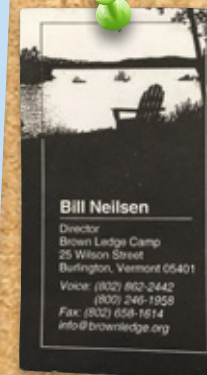
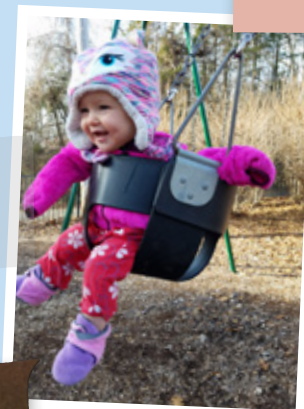


**Kari and Evan Olson** found the perfect venue for both their 2017 engagement and the 2018 wedding. **Kari Stevermer** (S 12-14, 16, 18) and **Evan Olson** (S 12-13) tied the knot on September 8, 2018 in Colchester, Vermont!

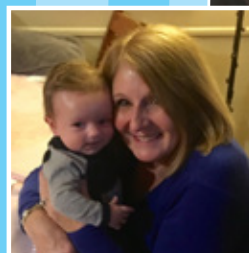


Sisters **Kelsey** (C 02-06, JC 07), **Taylor**, and **Haley McCruden** celebrate the birth of Kelsey's son **Maddox**.

**Molly Donelan Leitao** (C 96-98, JC 99-00) announced the March 2018 arrival of **Marian Joyce** who joined siblings **Cecilia**, **Eloise**, and **Charles**



**Hunter McCorkel** (C 98-02, JC 03-04) and her wife **Sasha Smolen** announced the arrival of **Ruth Smolen**, born September 1, 2018



Adoring grandmas **Mona McCruden** and **Edie Fleeman** hold their grandsons **Maddox** and **Theo**.



Brown Ledgers surround **Natasha Knorr** (C 99-05, JC 06-07, S 09, 11-12, 14-16) and **Charlie Smith** (S 15-16) at the rehearsal dinner prior to their wedding on May 12, 2018. Pictured are **Isabel Fenn**, **Aliyana Gewirtzman**, **Greg Smith**, **Natalie Meltzer**, **Clarion Heard**, **Hilary Strimple**, **Kylie Mullins**, and **Alex Meltzer**.



**Brittany Seraphin** (Admin 16-19) wed **Christopher Carter** on September 2, 2018 at **Kamp Kill Kare State Park** in **St. Albans, Vermont**.





Send us your achievements to be featured in an e-newsletter or magazine to [maria@brownledge.org](mailto:maria@brownledge.org)



Equity actor, **Eileen "Beany" Richter** has traveled the world as a solo cabaret/jazz singer. For the past five years she has been singing with MasterVoices under the musical direction of Ted Sperling as a happy Alto I. The latest sold-out production (and NYT City Pick of the Week) was a revival of *Lady in the Dark*.

After five years in book publishing, **Ally Bruschi** began running PR campaigns for mission-driven companies at Daly, a modern, community-based PR agency. Ally writes, "I've really enjoyed putting my PR skills to good use for companies that are focused on social impact, whether that's through up-cycled clothing and bags, sustainable baking products, or a more inclusive fitness & wellness model."



**Chris Nee**, the award winning creator and executive producer of *Doc McStuffins* and *Vampirina*, has signed a multi-year contract with Netflix. "My mission is to create work that reflects the world we live in and lend voice to the storytellers who haven't always had access."



**Grace Rumford** works on BP's low carbon strategy in London and she was recently named deputy chief of staff for BP's chief scientist. She is pictured here with visiting bunkie and friend, **Katie Heller**.



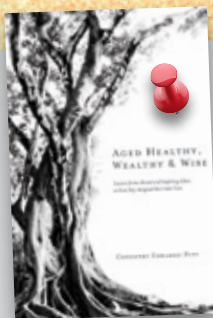
It may be a recital room but it's still Carnegie Hall! **Jaden Baum** performed in a fund raiser here with her all female comedy troupe, The Bloomers.



As part of her ongoing recovery following a 1998 car accident and resulting TBI (traumatic brain injury), **Liz Bell** volunteers at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta to provide support, guidance, and hope to TBI survivors and their families and caretakers.



**Lisa Buxbaum** is currently stage managing *King Lear* on Broadway at the Cort Theatre starring Glenda Jackson as King Lear. Earlier this year, she worked on *The Waverly Gallery* starring Elaine May. Lisa writes, "How inspiring to work with such amazing women!"



**Covey Edwards-Pitt's** work advising families on the ramifications of family resources has led her to write two books: *Raised Healthy, Wealthy & Wise* and *Aged Healthy, Wealthy & Wise*.

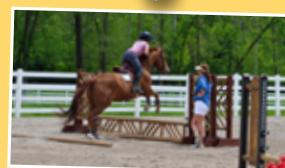
**Lyda Blank** was first assistant director on Second Unit for *Escape at Dannemora*, a Showtime Limited series. The Director Ben Stiller along with his AD team won Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Movies for Television and Limited Series from the Directors Guild of America.



**Sam Wilmott** tells us that when the shooting started at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, 65 students were rehearsing *Yo, Vikings*, a musical that he co-wrote. The students came back to school determined to continue with the production and the HBO Documentary *Song of Parkland* is the story of their courageous journey.



**Chris Nee** and **Krista Irmischer** celebrate Chris' BAFTA award nomination and Krista's MSc psychology degree from the University of East London and, most importantly, their 42 year friendship.



**Macy Wesson** moved to Nashville, TN in 2010 to start Cornerstone Equestrian and grew it into a full service hunter-jumper show barn with 25 horses and riders that travel throughout the Southeast. Numerous Cornerstone riders have qualified for and ribboned in national competitions over the years, including the National Horse Show, formerly at Madison Square Garden!



**Paris** and **Cesca Sullivan McNeil** teamed up with their brother and mother to create Capulus & Co in 2018, a hole-in-the-wall espresso cafe operating from their living room window. This year they added a pop-up at a local University. They juggle making coffee and home-baked goods and everything else, describing the experience as "a crazy and exciting roller coaster experience so far!"



Preview Time JCs and counselors, 2018



by Kathy Neilsen

Clarifying the Mission:  
Catherine Alston, Kim McManus,  
Emily Knickerbocker, Evan Olson, Kari  
Stevermer Olson, Caroline Gilman

## Tradition and Change

Before campers arrive in June, Brown Ledge counselors spend a week together to get to know Brown Ledge and each other.

An exhausting (and what must seem endless to new counselors) series of meetings is punctuated by hiking one of Vermont's tall peaks, Preview Time theatre rehearsals, and scrubbing a year's worth of dirt off of practically everything.

The meetings are designed to cover the nuts and bolts of being a camp counselor—everything from camp philosophy to dining room traditions to how to operate a fire extinguisher. In addition to the more pragmatic aspects of the job, each year the BLC admin team chooses a broader topic for investigation.

Last summer we chose to delve into what some are calling an epidemic that has profound medical, social, and even political ramifications. A former U.S. Surgeon

General has warned about its far-reaching health complications, and a government minister has been named in Britain to combat its insidious effects. The epidemic? Loneliness.

You may be wondering why, in an environment so filled with connection and community, we chose to focus on the opposite. Our discussions reminded us that although campers may arrive with what appears to be a wealth of social advantages, growing up is hard and in our fast-paced, media-driven world, isolation and social poverty are often hidden secrets. We talked about the challenge of combating loneliness, especially in a world where technology makes communication easier and personal connection more difficult. And we decided that there is no better place to take up the challenge

of inclusion than here, where we all share in the responsibility for creating a welcoming environment and where counselors are uniquely able to support each girl in finding her place at Brown Ledge.

What will Brown Ledge directors focus on in future years? The precise topics are unknown, but there is no doubt that counselors will continue to be challenged to look beneath the surface and to think about issues that affect our campers and our society as a whole. It has been a privilege to be a part of these deeper conversations. **They energize us and remind us that the work we do is about so much more than sport and fun: we are helping to raise the next generation of young women.**



## Alumnae Obituaries



### Barbara Brewster Howard

died in her home in Williston, Florida in January 2018. Barbara was born in a farmhouse in Cambridge, Vermont and grew up there among three generations of family working a small herd of Jersey cows and sugaring. Following her graduation from the University of Vermont in 1942, she taught in several different one-room school houses in Colchester. Barbara never forgot the years she spent at Brown Ledge, working as the trips counselor and in the kitchen. On the occasion of BLC's 90th birthday, Barbara, then 96 years old, wrote to let us know how much she had enjoyed working at camp all those years ago. Barbara's family writes, "Barb was that perfect paradox: The giver of down-on-the-farm Yankee wisdom, but also whimsical as a schoolchild. She was direct and deep... strict with her children and grandchildren when warranted yet full of love, laughter and ceaseless wonder." Barbara is survived by her five children, many grand—and great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.



### Cynthia Schoen McNaughten

of Fairhaven, Massachusetts and Rockville, Maryland died on March 9, 2018. Cynthia was a devoted alumna who attended Brown Ledge from 1941 to 1943 and went on to become a counselor at Camp Kiniya and Tripp Lake Camp. She graduated from Smith College and had a variety of careers: She was a teacher, a book editor, and an advertising production supervisor. Cynthia was also active in the Episcopal church. She was an avid genealogy and local history researcher, and she pursued a wide variety of environmental, educational, and cultural interests. In a letter to Brown Ledge, Cynthia's daughter, Julia Kerr, wrote about the "camp legacy" that was passed to her by her mother, who so loved her time at Brown Ledge that she made sure that all five of her children attended camp... and most of them became counselors as well. (As a counselor, her daughter Julia met and married another camp counselor who is now a camp director!) Cynthia attended alumnae camp in the early 2000s with her bunkie and delighted in falling asleep while listening to the sound of lapping water. Julia concludes her letter by saying, "we all owe a lot to my mother's love of Brown Ledge Camp!"



### Mary J. "Jo" Sibley Cressy

of Fryeburg, Maine passed away peacefully on Friday, July 13, 2018 at Bridgton Health Care at the age of 106. She was born in Boston on March 19, 1912 and graduated from Boston University in 1934 with a degree in physical education. Jo had many jobs throughout her long life, including Women and Girls Director of the Beverly, Mass YMCA, teaching children with learning disabilities at Fryeburg Academy, and running the family store, Cressy's 5 and Dime. Known as "Jo-Jo" at camp, she attended Brown Ledge from 1928 to 1935. When her family interviewed her in 2016 for the BLC magazine, she recalled that while she reveled in doing headstands on the aquaplane, her favorite sports were swimming and archery and she taught both activities as a senior counselor. Jo recalled the Browns (Harry and Marjorie) with great affection, declaring, "they were a big part of what made my time at camp so special." Jo's long list of survivors include children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and five great-great-grandchildren.



Delta was one of those ponies who comes along once in a lifetime.



She was born "Delta Dawn" in 1985 and was at Brown Ledge for 17 years, beginning in 1990.

Delta was a mainstay of the stable when Liz Bell arrived to head the BLC riding department in 1997. Liz wrote, "Delta was the kindest, most patient and gentle pony. She had a unique look about her (both in markings and bone structure) but that made you love her even more.

She probably had more Adopt-a-Horse moms than all the other horses combined because every camper who ever had the joy of meeting her would fall instantly in love. If any pony could make fear disappear, it was Delta." Kiley Boland wrote, "I have so many distinct memories of her, including the time she stepped over to catch me after a leg-up gone wrong." Kiley, who rode Delta in her first Drill Team in 2006, adds, "She gave me confidence, she corrected

my mistakes in 5:45 AM practice and she was the most trusted and patient horse in the ring... always." Long time Brown Ledge Lisl Donaldson had Delta in the winter months and full time beginning in 2007. Since that time Delta lived out at pasture with various other horses while fulfilling duties as a beloved beginner's pony and therapy horse. Lisl writes, "thank you for letting her be a part of my life and the lives of so many people."