

# The Afterglow

## The 101st Issue – The Reunion Edition

## FALL 2022

### ***Follow the Gleam... AMY WINGFIELD CLARK***

- by Emily Montgomery

All of us who have the fortune of attending or being involved with Nature Camp make it better for our presence. But few of us have been as instrumental in the survival and legacy of Camp as Amy Wingfield Clark, who recently ended her 16 years of service on the Nature Camp Foundation's (NCF) Board of Directors.

Amy joined the Board as Chair of the Finance Committee at a crucial time: right before the surprise announcement of the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs (VFGC) to split with Nature Camp in 2006. She served in that role until taking the Treasurer's position in 2013. Her perseverance, dedication, and expertise has helped NCF thrive in the years since Nature

Camp's acquisition from the VFGC with the development of policies, processes, and systems that provide a solid and consistent source of financial support to Camp.

But Amy's time at Nature Camp began decades earlier as a camper. She first attended Camp in the late 1960s. She and her twin sister, Terry (who tragically passed away in 2016 in a drowning accident), became campers after their older sister, Mary, went to Camp, and they wished to follow in her footsteps. "It was the beauty and peacefulness of its location that hooked me," Amy says. And as a teenager, she added, it didn't hurt that it was co-ed.

She transitioned from camper to counselor and instructor in 1970. With the tumult of the Vietnam War and mounting civil unrest, Amy says, "Being at Camp during the late 60's and early 70's, a time of chaos and uncertainty, provided a sense of stability and respite." She added that it also was a place for her to explore who she was outside of her big family and "it was just so much fun!" Amy also added that working at Camp gave her her first experience of being a leader. "The model of kindness, support, and encouragement of my counselors and instructors at Camp and the experience of being a mentor and teacher during my time on staff were instrumental in my professional success as a manager and executive in business," she says.



After working as a counselor, Amy had a successful corporate career working as a human resources executive. In 2006, Amy was asked to join the NCF Board of Directors, as the Chairman of the Finance Committee. While the Foundation is not involved in the daily operation of Camp, it is tasked with providing financial, material, and service support to Nature Camp through the focused efforts of Camp alumni and friends. Amy became involved with the Board during a critical financial time, right before the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs announced they could no longer support Camp.

“Christine Stinson, a friend when I was a camper and counselor, approached me about taking her place as Finance Chair after I attended an NCF strategic planning meeting in Charlottesville led by Powell Hutton,” Amy says. “Boy, were we all surprised by the turn of events in 2007.”

Along with the other members of the Board, Amy worked tirelessly to accomplish what felt like an impossible task: to raise enough money for Camp to do the necessary work to stay open. While it was a scary and challenging time, Amy says it was also incredibly affirming. “The response was passionate, immediate, well-supported, and unified,” she says. “The generosity of the Camp community in giving of their talents, time, and money was inspirational. We were blessed by the leadership of Philip Coulling and Powell Hutton (then president of NCF) in planning the acquisition of Nature Camp and Anne Balto leading the Capital Campaign for funding needed to ensure that Nature Camp continued. So many folks gave so much during that time to ensure that Camp kept running. What we accomplished as volunteers in such a short amount of time is really remarkable.”

Amy remained on the Board and served as its treasurer until last year, keeping NCF’s finances intact and working on countless other Foundation efforts and campaigns, such as helping with the implementation of our constituent database (eTapestry) initiated by then Development Chair, Joe Irby. “That initiative put structure and resources behind our ability to connect with, grow, and know the Camp community better,” she says.

Amy says that in addition to her time as a camper, counselor, and Board member, Nature Camp has profoundly impacted her life. “It has enabled me to see and experience my connection to nature as a respite and sanctuary,” she says. Her most memorable experiences at Camp are those moments of being outside at times no one else was out, like nighttime stargazing with Terry Richardson or early morning bird walks with Peter Mehring. “We would get up in the dark, meet in the LS for a snack – cold milk and saltine crackers – and head out as the sun was rising,” Amy says. “It was so quiet and peaceful. It gave me a deep appreciation for listening to nature.”

“The gifts of Nature Camp in my life have gone well beyond the environmental education I received. It has had a positive influence on so many aspects of my life.” She says she now finds that joy and peace with time spent kayaking, hiking, and in her gardens and with her bees. Amy says of the Nature Camp community, “You won’t find a more warm, welcoming, and fun group of folks.” And we feel the same way about her.





# ***NATURE CAMP REUNION 2020 turned 2022***

- by Adam Rotche

Close your eyes and smell the smoky, spiced aroma of slow-grilling pork butts waft through the screen windows of the LS and listen closely to tales told from the hearth of Colonel Reeves' bushy eye-brows and tough love, of hikes gone splendidly awry, and of counselor hijinks that probably should have been laid to rest. A covey of cooks flock to the kitchen to fill our bellies with tasty treats baked, fried, grilled, and sauteed to perfection. After a rejuvenating rest period you wander through oak, maple, hickory, and hemlock trees to Table Rock. The water is cold on your skin and reminds you of how you felt as a fourth session camper; after a few slides down the chute you squelch back into Camp, nimbly hopping over the dry bed of Christmas Creek, mud between your toes and pine needles in your hair. The scent of spicebush is slowly overpowered by that smoking pork. Dinner delivers on the promises of the day; the meat is served on homemade buns and you're squished between your prodigal friends and your childhood role models, smiling. Night encroaches, teasing not just whippoorwills and hopping toads but musical revelry and drinks on the stoop. You are home!

After two postponements, the 2020 Nature Camp Reunion finally gave us the opportunity to catch up on all the hugs we've been missing for the last few years! Our cozy valley welcomed about a hundred former campers and counselors this Labor Day Weekend to laugh, sing, eat, hike, play games, tell stories, and reconnect with one another in our favorite place. To commemorate the occasion and to celebrate Camp's 80th year, Lindsey Rotche designed a cartographically inspired shirt showing the topography of Nature Camp and aptly titled it Welcome Home. It felt so good to be back!





Between meals and stories we also got to enjoy nature's playground. Bird walks turned up a lovely pair of yellow-billed cuckoos and a gregarious barred owl, seining in Big Mary's confirmed the health of our beloved creek, and an evening of flipping rocks and logs rewarded us with a small but uncompromisingly cool northern slimy salamander. Third Lookout and the top of McClung were both ascended by sweaty hikers looking to prove who knows what, and as far as we know everyone made it back in time for dinner! If you missed out on this momentous event, don't worry - there are only three years left before we reunite once again in 2025!



### ***Celebrating the Completion of the Education Building Renovation!***

By Amy Gonzalez

Yes, we know that the Education Building was essentially complete last year, but it seemed like a better alignment of stars and critical mass to celebrate that completion in conjunction with the twice-postponed Nature Camp Reunion, where we would be guaranteed a built-in audience. We were fortunate to see some people who have figured strongly in the history of Nature Camp, but who aren't often able to join us for other celebrations. We welcomed former Camp Directors, family members of former Directors, former Caretakers, Team Leads for the Education Building Renovation, and Major Donors to the Education Building Capital Campaign.

We were pleasantly surprised when Brent Heath, who was Director during my time as a camper in the early 70s, opted to make the trek from Gloucester, VA, where he and his wife run Brent & Becky's Bulbs. He even brought fresh cut flowers! In addition, we were thrilled to see Linda Magnuson and Nancy Hahn from the nearby Green Hills Garden Club and to thank them in person for their generosity. Jerry Wine, woodworker extraordinaire, came from Leesburg with his daughter Carolyn. Jerry garnered many compliments on the beautiful new tables that he designed and crafted especially for the Mary Jane Gannaway Layne Museum. Most importantly, members of Mary Jane's family were in attendance. Their gift several years ago provided the impetus for our renovation project.





Though they weren't able to join us for the celebration, we noted the talent of Gibson Worsham and the team from Glavé and Holmes, the architectural firm that helped us work together to come up with our collective vision for the building. We also thanked Andy Flint in absentia. Andy is a Nature Camp alum and was our General Contractor for the renovation project. Andy not only took our vision and made it manifest in the new spaces, but he and his team from L.G. Flint Construction worked right through the pandemic and came in under budget!



Many hands pitched in to prepare for the celebration. Nell Fredericksen ensured we had plenty of savory noshes and libations. Carolyn Wine, dubbed the Cookie Goddess, brought 3 kinds of cookies, more than enough for everyone to have their fill. Folks swept the floors and cleaned the surfaces, chairs were brought up from the LS, and the refreshments were laid out. We totally lucked out by having Reunion attendees Libbey Hodges Oliver and Judith Sydnor McNeel jump in to prepare flower arrangements for the refreshment table in the lab and astounding floral swags gracing the posts at each side of the porch steps. The arrangements that they made, using materials brought by Brent, Nell, and myself, were just the right adornment.

Our host for the event was Dr. Katie Hoffman, recent President of Nature Camp, Inc. and the coordinator of the Education Building Renovation Project. Katie welcomed the honored guests and thanked all who had contributed their time, labor, and resources, including Claire Lant, Jerry Trammell, and Ryan Garvin, who were the team leads for clearing out the building in preparation for construction. She made special mention of Flip Coulling, Nature Camp Executive Director, and caretaker Ventry Smith, who were on hand for much of the construction work and provided most of the ancillary support. Following Katie's remarks, Flip shared his views regarding the impact of the newly refurbished, more useable spaces in the Education Building. He noted that even with the changes, it



still feels familiar. He expressed his own thanks and lauded Katie's efforts. Nell Fredericksen and I spoke for the Nature Camp Foundation and celebrated the generosity of our Nature Camp Family.

The members of the Layne family brought the program to a close by stepping up to cut the ceremonial ribbon at the top of the porch steps. Nell had forgotten to bring ribbon, so the hastily improvised ribbon was composed of donated tulle netting from Theta Miller's camper van and a string of origami cranes left from the last wedding held at Camp. It was perfect!



Katie closed the ceremony by handing a check to Nell as a donation to our new fundraising project – renovation of the Swimming Pool. Everyone went in to tour the newly refurbished building and enjoy the refreshments served in the lab—including Carolyn's magical cookies. We all laughed, cried, visited, hugged, and ate, not necessarily in that order. A wonderful celebration!





## Spring Service Weekend

- Theta Miller



After Covid 19 provoked cancellation of four straight Service Weekends in 2020 and 2021, we were finally able to hold the Spring 2022 Service Weekend in May as scheduled and it felt like a gift! 57 volunteers braved shared bunkhouse accommodations and communal dining to get their fix of Camp.

Coming to Service Weekend is free and open to all comers as always, but there are new requirements for online registration to help us with planning meals and such and, for the foreseeable future, Covid testing. As folks crossed the bridge in May, they were met by a sign reminding them to check in at the office porch before unloading or visiting with anyone. At check in, Covid test results were reported, and current contact info was confirmed, waivers were signed and then attendees received a festival type wristband as a marker of checked-in, waiver-completed, Covid-tested status.

After two years with no typical Service Weekends and atypical facility use, there were lots of maintenance and improvement projects! All those eternal cleaning and maintenance tasks! AGAIN! (hysterical laughter) Toilets and showers and ceiling fans, freezer racks and grills... The projection screen was even cleared of bug bodies. Bunks were moved and reassembled. Drainage ditches were cleared of debris, grass was cut, leaves were raked away from buildings. Autumn olive was (at least temporarily and locally) eradicated. Screens for windows and doors were repaired or rescreened. Roofs were sprayed for moss. The path to Table Rock was cleared of a windstorm tangle of downed trees and graffiti was cleaned away. The horseshoe pit was rehabilitated. Dead or dangerous trees were dropped and, as possible, converted into benches.

Walter brought additional enormous logs in his little red truck. When I imagine how he might have gotten them INTO the truck, my brain freezes up. With those logs and others from trees down on site, MANY benches were made and we have logs remaining for next time.

The van parking area was expanded to provide an additional spot, the new girls t-house septic field was "decorated" with rock cairns identifying the location of the three distribution boxes and two septic tanks before we lose track of those locations, pavers were added to elevate the wash pad near the kitchen, handrails were added to porches at the caretaker's house and the director's quarters, the girls bunk house porch was reinforced. There were tweaks to the cabinets and benches and displays in the Ed building. The counselor's mail cubbies were relocated to the counselor's lounge and a new bookshelf was built and hung in the office. The old satellite dish support structure was removed. The door to the Assistant Director's quarters got an aesthetic upgrade.

Perhaps most fascinatingly, Annie, Katie, Ventry, and Dave (and maybe as many as 20 others), "cooperatively" worked to design and construct a new roof for the Camp mailbox. You had to be there!





THANK YOU to Amy, Ann, Annie, Art, Bennie, Bo, Carolyn, Carroll, Carter, Charley, Christian, Chuck, Dave, Emma, Eric, Evan, Flip, Frances, James, Jamil, Jeff, Jerry, Jerry, Jess, Joe, Joel, Justin, Katie, Kim, Leia, Leo, Lily, Louise, Lucy, Luke, Luke, Mack, Maggie, Marion, Marwood, Matthew, Max, Mia, Mia, Mike, Mike, Molly, Neil, Nell, Paul, Penny, Rob, Ryan, Sarah, Simon, Theta, Ventry, Walter, Zoe!

That list of names seems short when I consider how much was accomplished and all that work, from cleaning the toilets to that little mailbox roof, saves money that would have to be spent if there was not the committed volunteer labor of those who love Camp. Not only Camp, but also the volunteers benefitted in many ways! The food was delicious, and the evenings were filled with music and camaraderie. We felt, freshly, the simple pleasure of being with others as we contributed to Camp.

Come join us next time. Everyone is welcome at Service Weekends regardless of prior experience or status as a camper, staffer, or camper parent and all skill levels can be put to use. We welcome families and the rec field and surrounding national forest provide an excellent opportunity for those who wish to camp. Single sex bunk houses are available for those wishing the ease of just throwing a sleeping bag on a bunk.

Spring Service Weekends are always the third full weekend in May and Fall Service Weekends are the third full weekend in September. Mark your calendars and join the fun!!

## ***Photographs & Memories!***

Many thanks to Caroline Wine for creating photographs from the slides in the office. Enjoy!...



## ***News from Nature Camp***

- Phillip Coulling, NCI Executive Director

Nature Camp's 80th anniversary summer began with Adult Session, which was held in June for the first time since 2018. More than 90 people participated, and by all accounts it was one the most enjoyable and stimulating sessions ever. Attendees simulated erosion and deposition in Big Mary's Creek using the stream table newly built by geology instructor Carter Boyd and residential caretaker Ventry Smith (think an elevated sand box for adults, complete with running water and a drain hole); discussed gardening with native plants; learned new nature activities to do with kids; engaged in art journaling, nature journaling, nature writing, and nature photography; made resin coasters and walnut walking sticks; and finally got a clear night for stargazing with Terry Richardson's amazing telescope. On Sunday afternoon Chuck Bailey welcomed folks to his place in Nelson County for a botanical, geological, and hydrological exploration, and that evening's Appalachian stringband concert was a hit as always. There was the usual assortment of hikes and nature-themed walks, and a few lucky folks even caught a glimpse of river otters enjoying Table Rock! The weather, the fellowship, and the food were all spectacular. Many thanks go to Shirley Napps for organizing the weekend, several members of the summer staff for setting tables and washing dishes and doing so many other things behind the scenes, and our amazing cooks for feeding us so well! Next year's session will take place August 18-22, 2023.

The youth sessions that followed saw the return to our usual schedule and operating capacity, and while not every session was full, we were delighted to welcome a total of 319 campers representing 21 states plus the District of Columbia (and one from Italy!). First Session included a record 22 campers who had recently completed high school, and they received NCF CD's as graduation presents during Closing Ceremony.

It was also a pleasure to welcome back outside speakers for evening programs, and we were edified by presentations on a youth-led land trust in Ecuador, the International Space Station, caves and karst, island conservation, and wildlife rehabilitation (which was the first ever evening program made possible through Zoom!).

The new gender-inclusive housing space in the Staff House (redubbed the Blue Ridge Bunkhouse) provided a safe, affirming, and welcoming space for campers of all genders, and every evening ended with a new song as we held hands in the Friendship Circle, "To Love and to Care." (A recording made at Adult Session is available here: <https://bit.ly/3BgNRyp>.) The summer was not without its hurdles, however. Unfortunately, we had to make the difficult decision to end Second Session a few days early because of a COVID-19 outbreak (despite our best efforts to keep the virus out of Camp), but parents and other caregivers, campers, and staff were wonderfully cooperative, understanding, and supportive, and we even livestreamed Closing Ceremony from the chapel on Friday evening. Fortunately, we were able to obtain many rapid tests from the Virginia Department of Health, and the rest of the summer was COVID-free!

Registration for the 2023 sessions will begin in January. Thanks to the upcoming generosity of so many NCF members, we look forward to a newly refurbished swimming pool next summer, and let us all hope that the pandemic will finally be over by then!



## ***In Memory of Thomas Scott Fairburn***

Thomas Scott Fairburn, 62, of Collierstown passed away peacefully with his family by his side Saturday, July 16, 2022.

Scott graduated from the Virginia Military Institute and served in the United States Marine Corps. After leaving the service, he was an Agent for the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Agency until his retirement.

Scott attended Nature Camp in the late 70's and became a counselor in 1980 where he taught Wildlife Management.



## ***In Memory of Ann Beyer***

Elizabeth Ann Owen Beyer died on Saturday, August 13, 2022 at Sovah Health Danville. Born August 16, 1937 in Danville, Va. Daughter of the late Goldie Thomas Owen and Gladys Dooley Owen. She grew up in the Danville area. She was a graduate of Dan River High School and attended Stratford College. She retired from Glen-More Clothing and worked part time at West Main Baptist Church, where she was a member.

Ann had served as a past President for the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs. Another former President, Mary Dixon stated, "Ann was VFGC President from 1995 till 1997. She continued to visit Camp even after she was no longer President and felt a real love for Camp and its purpose."



## ***In Memory of Barbara Ohmsen***

Barbara Shafer Ohmsen passed away surrounded by her loving family on Wednesday, September 29, 2021. Barbara was a native of Roanoke, VA. Barbara was very active in the Garden Clubs holding many roles. She was charter member of the Green Meadow Point Garden Club and served as president several times. She served as president of the Portsmouth Area Council of Garden Clubs, the Tidewater District, and the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs. She was an honorary president of the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs and served on the boards for the South Atlantic Region and the National Garden Clubs. Barbara was also a Nature Camp trustee for many years.





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