

The Afterglow

The 102nd Issue

FALL 2023

Follow the Gleam... BRENT HEATH He Lived the Camp Tales We Tell!

- by Nell Fredericksen

Brent Heath came to Nature Camp for the first time the summer of 1956 at the age of "11ish", sponsored by the Garden Club of Gloucester. He was delivered to Camp by his godfather and wife, with a stop at Crabtree Falls for lunch. It was all good and exciting until they left, and then Brent was hit with a bout of homesickness and wanted to call his mother to come get him, but there were no phones at Camp. So he walked all the way to Cash's store in Vesuvius to call home. His mother told him to go back to Camp and stick it out a bit. Sadly, the homesickness continued and his mother came and picked him up after only one week.

Even so, He went back the next year! "I loved it! That was when Dr. Grayson, head of the Entomology Department at Virginia Tech, was there teaching. He really gave me the bug for bugs! I particularly got interested in Lepidopterans and Coleopterans", but Brent was also intrigued by most of the subjects at Camp.

There were also lots of field trips to places like Cranberry Bog where they would pile into the back of Mrs. Graves' pickup truck. At times even the Forest Service would come and take the kids on an outing. "I came to love Camp, but I never won Best Notebook. I did win Best All-round Camper (BAC) one year. Also during that time, Mrs. Schilling was never keen on us boys being sweet on the girls, but I was sure sweet on Susan Wright, the female BAC."

Before becoming a counselor, Brent was hired on as a "worker" at Camp and that job had him working with Mr. Groah to help build the Chapel. "Mr. Groah would point to rocks which we would load and haul to the chapel site, and Mr. Groah would figure out where to place them."

When Brent was in the 9th or 10th grade, he became a counselor, and Mrs. Schilling asked him to teach Entomology (which he co-taught with fellow staff member Ken Karb). Brent recalls using a black light on the back of the Museum (pre-BTM days). Other things counselors did included getting bales of hay to stuff the mattresses and since there were no lights in the bunk houses, they had to get lanterns at night to lead campers to the bunkhouses and t-houses (which only had cold water).

Brent then served one year as Assistant Director with Lillian Schilling, and at the ripe old age of 23, he assumed the mantle of Director the following year. He served as Director for 2 years until 1971. You all may recognize some of the names of the folks he had on staff. Peter Mehring was Assistant Director, Tom Wieboldt was the Director of Instruction, Mrs. Judkins, who was on the NC board, agreed to be Head Counselor of Girls, her husband Dr. Judkins (professor in the horticulture department of VA Tech was Head Counselor for Boys and their daughter Ann was the Camp Secretary. They made a great





team and enabled Brent to do his job.

But Brent also had to work with the board of the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs (VFGC) which was made up of ladies from various regions and one or more would always be at Camp. “This one year I had Tom Hicks and Peter Mehrling, and we had Mrs. Lloyd, the most difficult of the board members. She liked to call me ‘boy’. At the first board meeting when I met with them, they referred to me as ‘boy’, and that annoyed the hell out of me. I had grown a beard for the Kappa Alpha fraternity events at school, so I thought that would make me look older and I kept it. Their first order of business was asking me to leave the room. When I was called back in, I was told that no Director of Nature Camp would look like a hippie.”

Oh, the stories he told about his time as Director....

The Story of Sandy the Cook:

“Doc Strain was the head cook at that time, and Sandy was the Assistant Cook along with another fellow. So, when I was Assistant Director, and living back behind the office, I heard the dangedest clanging and banging. I came out and Doc was on the LS porch just a-bangin’ pots together. I asked him what he was doing – and he said I’m trying to scare off that BAAR (bear) standing right behind you!

After I became Director in 1970, Sandy stayed on (Doc died.....) along with a couple other guys.

Sandy’s helpers would, when Camp sessions were over on Saturday, go into town and come back skunk drunk. I tried to get them in a truck to take them back down the road to sober up, and one of them pulled a gun on me! So, they got hauled off by the Sheriff, leaving Sandy all alone to do the cooking.



That morning Sandy was cooking bacon, and someone else was filling in to help him, and that person bumped into him and knocked over the tray spilling the hot grease all on his arm. Sandy didn’t even drop the bacon – we doused his arm with cold water, and then he just kept on going to get the meal done.”

And “Baar” stories:

“There were no dumps so all our trash was either burned, or buried, in an area right when you get out of Camp. So when you had Ranger G, you took the garbage down there and buried the garbage (topped with hydrated lime). There was a baar sow and her young’un that would come and dig all that up! Mr. Groah would say ‘Brent, we are gonna get them Baars’ and they drove down to the garbage area and sure enough those Baars came down and Mr. Groah, who actually built this whole place, took the bears and ate them. I got the hides and tanned them.

One of the Garden Club ladies had a son named Russell, and she wanted me to hire him. I couldn’t hire him as a counselor so I took him on as a helper. The Forest Service had created a wildlife area, and so we thought this would be a good place to give the campers some camping experience. Campers were warned not to take candy with them because Baars had a really good sense of smell. So they went and built a campfire, and Russell went into the woods and started shaking trees and grunting like a Baar and then would run along the edge. This caused a mass throwing of candy bars into the campfire!!”



Sam Lavender stories:

“So, Sam Lavender was hired as Caretaker. He had never been out of this area, and he was a good





ole boy. One evening he came to me and asked if I wanted to go 'sangin'. I said singing? What? He said well y'all pay me okay to work here but I get all my money from 'sangin' (meaning he would cultivate and harvest ginseng to make most of his money). Sam was a mountain man. So, I thought he ought to get out and maybe see the ocean. I took him home with me and, when we got past Charlottesville, Sam just started tapping his foot and getting anxious. I asked him what was wrong. He was looking all around and asked 'How the hell do you know where you are??' (there were no mountains.....)"



And then there was Hurricane Camille:

In 1969 Hurricane Camille came through. "We had heavy rain all day long but we knew nothing about a major storm coming. All the barrels we had around camp to collect water were full by the time we went to bed. We all went to bed, even though there was water in the road. I slept in the bedroom behind the office and woke to something crashing into the building and it shook. What woke me up was a great big rock that had rolled down and hit the building. I thought I might need to get a light and take a look around. There was only about a foot of water in the road, but as the storm got worse it was like giants bowling – boulders were crashing down Big Mary's. We all woke up but Tom Hicks was still sleeping..... Peter and I went down to wake him up (he was a heavy sleeper). We did and he stepped off the boy's bunkhouse porch into two feet of water – if you could have seen his face!!!

There used to be a bridge upstream that was taken out completely. We walked out and got to Cash's. His wife, his car, his truck, and his horse were all gone. The railroad track was completely washed out. There were houses floating by, cars floating by, and cattle floating by. The sheriff landed a helicopter on the play field asking if we wanted to be evacuated. We thought 'we still have electricity, food etc.' so we decided we would be fine. At Camp were Tom Hicks, Mrs. Loyd, Peter Mehring, and Pam Browning. Luckily campers were not here. We were stuck here for two weeks after the storm." (And this is the famous part of the Percy story where Peter Mehring sees Percy rolling down Big Mary's on a mat of broken trees and limbs.)

Today....

Brent purchased the family flower bulb business from his mother in 1972, and then with funds left by his aunt, he was able to purchase two other bulb businesses. He has been doing this ever since. He also started a boys camp, called Heath Trails, which he ran for several summers. During this time he says he then "got a starter wife and we had a child, but she didn't work out." Becky was a school teacher for one of his kids, and she caught his eye right off. It didn't take him long to convince her to help with the bulb business and after that, it didn't take him long realize he did not need to be in charge! Brent and Becky's Bulbs is a wonderful place for all your spring, summer, and fall bulbs! Check it out:

www.brentandbeckysbulbs.com.

In a nutshell Brent says " It took what was a natural interest spurred by my father and god-father, both men of nature, and instilled in me the desire to look at things and be inquisitive about the world around me. I came to Nature Camp and was exposed to the "ologies". There was even a fern instructor! They taught me to use ALL my senses to see the world that we are part of. Camp was the impetus for Heath Trails and this is what I want to pass along".

*Editors note: If you would like to order flower bulbs from Brent and Becky's Bulbs AND support the Nature Camp Foundation as well, go to **www.bloominbucks.com** and select Nature Camp Foundation from the drop down list. The NCF will receive 25% of your purchase price!!! Thank you Brent!!*





News From Nature Camp

- Phillip Couling

For the first time since before the pandemic began, Nature Camp held four, two-week sessions (without interruption) in 2023! Following a relatively dry May, wet weather became the persistent, and not altogether welcome, theme for the first half of the summer, with at least some rain 19 out of 30 days in one stretch. Hence, the newly refurbished swimming pool (freshly painted with several coats of deck stain in a color known as—wait for it—Afterglow) did not receive a great deal of use in First and Second Sessions, but almost everyone who visited Camp this summer took notice of the improvements, and no one appreciated them more than caretaker Ventry Smith. (We did not manage, however, to capture a photo or video of the new robotic vacuum cleaner creating a disco effect when it would suddenly spring into action in the middle of the night.)



In addition to rain, there were several noticeably hazy days, but our deep, narrow valley largely sheltered us from the smoke from Canadian wildfires. The nearly 320 campers this year represented 17 states and the District of Columbia—and came from as far away as Paris, Tokyo, and Bangkok.

Class activities included snorkeling in Big Mary's Creek to observe first-hand the variety of fish that congregate around spawning mounds built by bluehead chub, creating mental maps of Nature Camp, and predicting the weather on the last day of each session.

Evening programs from staff members provided vicarious trips to Costa Rica, Croatia, Taiwan, and the Galapagos Islands, and thanks to NCF we were able to replace several of the less than satisfactory chairs in the Lillian Schilling Building.

Adult Session in August drew a record crowd of participants who explored the theme of "Color in Nature." Classes and other activities included color-based writing and journaling sessions, making safe solar viewers for upcoming eclipses, an overview of stone tools of the first Virginians, making eco prints on silk fabric, a deep dive into the structure of color and change, pondering the evolution of insect mimicry, examining the hidden colors in rocks, discussing the botanical palette of early fall, and transforming bamboo into atlatls (and using them to throw spears at Little Bunny Foo Foo). In addition, attendees learned experientially about wine comparison tasting, made music in the Appalachian string band workshop, and enjoyed some exceptionally delicious food. Former Nature Camp director (and bulb grower extraordinaire) Brent Heath presented a session on using bulbs as companion plants (richly illustrated with photos from his own gardens in Gloucester). Due to excessive heat, the scheduled field trip to Cowbane Wet Prairie outside Stuarts Draft was cancelled in favor of a hike to the lower falls along St. Mary's River.

Many thanks to all the NCF members whose support allows us to continue to enrich, inspire, and transform lives.

Registration for next summer's youth sessions will begin in mid-January and for Adult Session (June 6-10) in March.





Spring Service Weekend

- Theta Miller

For Spring Service Weekend 2023, the weather was lovely and 70! volunteers came together to support this precious place and one another. As folks crossed the bridge in May of 2023, 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, registration and current contact info were confirmed. Waivers were signed and then attendees received a festival type wristband as a marker of checked-in, waiver-completed, Covid-tested status.

Nell Fredericksen, our Nature Camp Foundation President who has consistently headed up the kitchen magic for Service Weekends, was lured away this time by a teaching opportunity with the perk of a free trip to Costa Rica, but she arranged for a cohort of our Camp family, who just happen to be professional chefs, to take her place. Ryan Garvin and Emma Jones, assisted by Quinn Bonney, took the reins, and provided delicious food! Penny Bollhorst manned the Champion and provided all the clean kitchenware. Many thanks to them for filling these critical roles.

In addition to the routine but important work of vegetation management, bench construction, repairs and cleaning, there were noteworthy building projects. The porch of the boy's bunk house (BBH) was demolished and reconstructed, and the compost structure, which was recently demolished by a tree, was rebuilt to an impressive standard! We now have a Cadillac (or is that a Tesla?) of a compost structure! The girls' clothesline was finally finished after two service weekend's worth of effort digging into our rocky ground deeply enough to hold the posts firm against the tension of the lines, and the new pool deck now sports two fancy, custom lifeguard stands.



The new housing option, "Blue Ridge", received a spiffy designation sign matching those for the other areas, a clothesline, and even a path to the clothesline! Ah! The simple things!

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, again, the simple pleasure of being together as we contributed to Camp.





Come join us next time! Remember to register online (from the Nature Camp Foundation webpage) and look for updated procedures and anticipated projects. Everyone is welcome at Service Weekends regardless of prior experience or status as a camper or staffer, and all skill levels can be put to use. We welcome families. The recreation 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!!

Thank you Adam, Alexandra, Ally, Amy G., Ann, Annie, Bain, Barak, Bill, Caroline, Carolyn, Celie, Chip, Chuck, Crunchy, Emily, Emma, Emma, Eric, Faith, Flip, Heather, Jake, James, Jen, Jerry, Joe, Joseph, June, Karen, Kasper, Keith, Kenzie, Kim, Kurt, Kyle, Leda, Lock, Lucy, Luke, Luke, Mack, Maggie, Marlene, Max, Meghan, Meghan, Meredith, Mia, Mike, Molly, Naomi, Niamh, Nick, Nora, Paul G., Penny, Preston, Quinn, Rae, Rob, Ryan, Sandra, Sarah, Simon, Susie, Theta, Tim, Tom, Tony,



News from the Development Committee

- Amy Gonzalez

Just came home from the 2023 Nature Camp Adult Session. Man, oh man did we have fun! Adult Session is shorter than the youth sessions – sort of a long weekend, but there are still birdwalks, salamander walks, astronomy, nature journaling classes, and lots of other fun classes. Folks who are former campers come and reconnect with the essence of who they were as kids, and new people find us and experience the joy of Nature Camp for the first time.

The one key difference between Adult Session and youth sessions is COFFEE!!! We need it (or tea) in large quantities, all at once, every morning. Our old coffee urns just can't keep up with the demand. They only get used for Adult Session, and Service Weekends, and then they return to storage. When they come back out, there is almost always a part missing. It has become clear we need to invest in equipment that makes coffee in large volumes. These systems would also provide hot water on demand for those who just want to dunk a teabag.

After some research, there are some workable candidates that would run about \$3,500. We would have to do some ancillary plumbing and electrical work to get this set up properly, but it is doable. Does anyone want to pitch in to make COFFEE more accessible at Camp when we need it? Feel free to annotate your donations to earmark them for this fund. If you give more than we need, we'll put it to good use somewhere in the kitchen. All the twitchy uncaffeinated Adult Campers and Service Weekend volunteers will thank you and then thank you again. Hit the website for options on how to donate: <https://www.naturecampfoundation.org/give/>

One special way to donate that is a win-win; check out the Follow the Gleam article on Brent Heath. We are now Bloomin' Bucks partners with Brent and Becky's Bulbs. Thank you Brent!!!!



The Nelson County Garden Club: The First Fifty Years, 1935-1985 by Frederick Wilbur

The Nelson County Historical Society announces the publication of *The Nelson County Garden Club: The First Fifty Years, 1935-1985* by Frederick Wilbur (paperback, 304 pages; color and black and white photographs).

Derived from materials in the Society's archives which were donated by the Club, this book is a thorough study of the organization and the important work of the women.

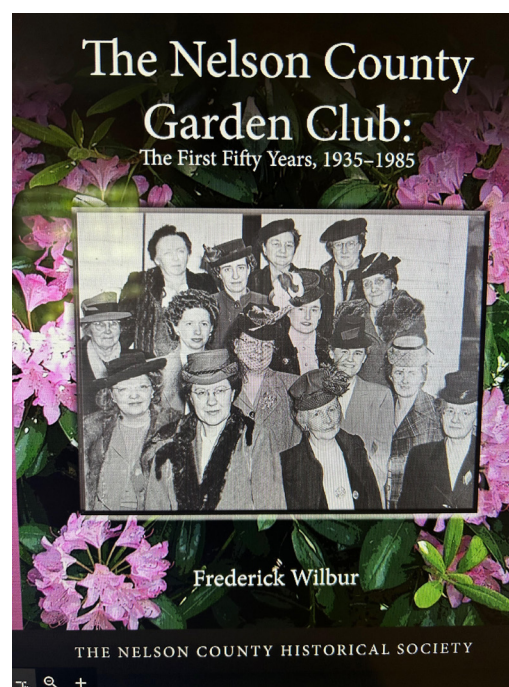
"The Nelson County Garden Club rightly claims pride in several accomplishments not usually associated with your garden variety garden club: the sponsorship of a community celebration known as Nelson County Day, the inception of a public library, and the creation of a unique educational experience for young people in Nature Camp. Some readers may quibble and qualify; but these activities undeniably influenced the character of Nelson County and the character of hundreds of campers who experienced Nature Camp."

But the women were involved with many other civic activities, particularly the "War Work" during World War II by sewing numerous items for recuperating soldiers at the Woodrow Wilson Hospital in Fishersville, Virginia, collecting salvage metal, paper, and grease, holding bond and blood drives as well as sponsoring the memorial plaque which is mounted on the Nelson County Courthouse portico wall. Early on, the women were concerned with health and nutrition in the public schools and contributed many cans of food, held inoculation clinics, and purchased equipment for the school kitchens.

Numerous flower shows were a social event attracting dozens of admirers. They were sometimes fund raisers with many of those funds going to support charitable organizations such as the American Red Cross, the Children's Home Society of Virginia, the American Cancer Society. Beautification of the county by community plantings was one constant concern along with litter control and cleaning up the "eyesores" of junk cars. Conservation of natural resources was always part of the Club's activities, particularly manifested in their unstinting support for Nature Camp whose mission was youth education about the wonders of the natural world.

Purchase from:
www.nelsonhistorical.org

Nelson County Historical Society
P.O. Box 474
Lovingston, VA 22949
or
Oakland Museum
5365 Thomas Nelson Highway
Arrington, Virginia 22922



Elections

- Sarah Hulcher

Nature Camp Foundation Board elections are coming! Please keep an eye out on your post or electronic mail before the end of the year for this year's Nature Camp Foundation ballot. Anyone who receives a paper ballot (who would prefer to receive an electronic ballot) can update their preference on the Nature Camp Foundation website under the *Update Your Info* tab (<https://www.naturecampfoundation.org/update-your-profile/>).

The elected position on the ballot this year is Vice President. The Nature Camp Foundation Board additionally has a number of appointed positions. This year, the Board will be appointing a new chair of the Finance Committee.

If anyone has interest in learning more about this position or putting forth their name as candidate, please contact Sarah Hulcher at hulchers@gmail.com.

Fall Hike Day

- Barak Brashear

It's Almost Here!!! - Come Rain or Shine!

When: October 21, 2023

What: Traditional Sunday Hikes (yes, it's on a Saturday)

Who: All friends of Nature Camp

Cost: \$20 per person age 10 and up; \$50 max per family

Fall Hike Day is an almost-annual fundraiser to help support Nature Camp and the Nature Camp Foundation. It was originally the brainchild of former camper, counselor, and director Paul Cabe and his wife Leigh Ann Beavers, who have generously donated and cooked food for the hikers over the years. Enjoy a day of hiking, friends, and a delicious dinner. Hikes will leave promptly at 10:30, so make sure you arrive and check in before then and are ready to go. All minors must be accompanied and supervised by an adult who can sign the waiver on behalf of the minor.

Please sign and submit the online registration and waiver forms beforehand.

<https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/NatureCampFoundation/HikeDay2.html>

<https://waiver.smartwaiver.com/w/3asnvfqbxtjcg76cg3phar/web/>

Spring Art Day - 2024

- Barak Brasher

When: April 20, 2024 (date subject to change)

Cost: TBD

What: Enjoy a day of arts and crafts classes at Nature Camp provided by expert artists and professionals.

Please stay tuned for more info!

Find Us on Facebook!!

You can connect with the Nature Camp Foundation at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nature-Camp-Foundations/107552817467>

You can stay in touch with Nature Camp, Inc. at

https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nature-Camp/324806714283350?ref=br_tf

Visit the Nature Camp Virtual Canteen Today!

You can now order T-shirts, sweatshirts, onesies, kids wear, mugs etc from our new online “canteen” We have 10 of the most requested designs available in our shop or you can purchase the designs for use on a a huge variety of items.

Please visit our SpreadShirt shop at <https://www.spreadshirt.com/shop/clothing/t-shirts/nature+camp/>

The \$2.50 we earn from each sale goes to support our scholarship fund!!!



Calendar of Events

Fall Hike Day	October 21, 2023
Spring Art Day	April 20, 2024
Spring Service Weekend	May 17-19, 2024
Adult Session	June 6-10
Prospective Camper Day	July 20, 2024
Fall Service Weekend	September 20-22, 2024
Open Membership Meeting	September 21 , 2024



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