



CAMP ALTON

On Lake Winnepesaukee

Wolfeboro, New Hampshire 03894

Winter Address:

West Newbury, Massachusetts 01985

Peter Marson Guralnick, Director

November 4, 1992

To All Our Friends at Camp:

This is a very difficult letter to write--in fact virtually an impossible one.

I know this will come as a terrible shock to many of you, and it is a decision that Alexandra and I have reached only with great emotional turmoil on our own part and concern for the camp community, but we are going to close camp.

Let me briefly explain why.

When we first started running camp in 1971, we made a commitment both to ourselves and to camp. Our commitment to camp was that we would always give 100%, we would not stint in any way on our full-scale dedication to the actual running of camp. Our commitment to ourselves was that our role would be just that: we would be educators, we would be administrators, we would do everything we could to make camp run to the very highest degree of which we were capable--but we would not become salesmen, we would not spend our lives (the eight or nine months outside of the extended camp season) struggling to perpetuate camp in one way or another.

This has changed in a number of ways. Camp has changed to an enormous degree in the last 22 years--I think, experientially, in the most heartening of ways. But in terms of the actual complexity of running and sustaining camp, there have been almost exponential changes and burdens. I would merely be touching on some if I were to cite concerns about enrollment, the increasing burden, necessary though it may be, of regulatory red tape, skyrocketing costs, practical concerns like the conscientious maintenance of an aging plant, as some of the issues--but what it came down to in the end was that I was neither prepared to devote more time, and I didn't have more energy, for these vexing problems on the horizon, nor was I willing to steward camp through a time of declining standards, to see camp simply fade away.

I feel that we went out on a great note. Our enrollment in 1992 was good, our staff was terrific (last year's staff merely climaxed a decade of great counselors, with 1992's junior staff the best I can ever remember), the seniors in Bunk I--all 25 of them!--provided stronger leadership, and enjoyed an experience of greater closeness and camaraderie, than we could ever have envisioned when we first began. It was a summer of many successes, one that can take its place with the very best, and while

that makes it all the more difficult to let go, I believe that is the only time you can ever make the proper determination to let go.

I wish I could have given you--all of you collectively and each of you as individuals--more warning and preparation. I wish I could have given myself more emotional preparation! It has been the greatest experience for Alexandra, Jacob, Nina, and me--and indeed for the whole Camp Alton family. This is what we will miss most of all, the sense of an ongoing community, the opportunity to watch yet another generation grow up and move on. This is a sad letter--there's no disguising that. It has not been a decision that was made without tears (many) or regrets. But it's a decision which had to be made. It's a decision which I could not avoid, unless I were to be dishonest with you and myself. I know the experience of camp will not die--for some it will remain one of the shaping experiences of their lives, and for many the community will certainly go on, even in the absence of a geographical locus. Alexandra and I want to thank all of you for all you have meant to us--this has been an unduplicatable experience in our lives, and we will miss it deeply and cherish its memory always. I know that camp will always live in our hearts, and I trust in yours.

Sincerely,

Peter

Peter Guralnick



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Winter Address:

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Peter Marson Guralnick, Director

November 9, 1992

To the Camp Community:

I wanted to get back to all of you on an interim basis for two reasons. First, to thank you for your outpourings of support and sympathy, and to apologize for not being able to respond to each one of you individually. It has been a very emotional few days, and while we knew that there would be a great deal of reaction, I don't think we could ever have predicted either its depth or intensity.

The other reason for writing was to let you know what many of you may already have heard, that there is at this moment a great deal of activity on the part of a number of committed members of the Camp Alton community to enable camp to continue. I wouldn't be writing to you if I didn't think this was a serious possibility, and while Alexandra and I would not be directing camp under this new arrangement, we are totally supportive and encouraging of the effort and would offer all help and assistance that we could to make it work.

We will be back in touch with you as soon as we possibly can, and by the end of the month at the latest, to let you know what has developed -- but I am very hopeful of a salutary result.

Thanks again for all your expressions of support.

Sincerely,

Peter

Peter Guralnick