



SKOOKUMEE

POST-CAMP 2026

Letters from Home

Long before email's, phone calls from the camp mom's cabin, and even zip codes - boys have been writing letters home from Weld. Little slices of life at camp that may leave parents with more questions than answers. Campers used to be required to write a letter home every week. The 1931 camp catalog says of the matter, "Following the noon meal of chicken and all the 'fixings,' the usual rest hour is observed. The Sunday letter is written and plans are made for short trips—mountain climbing, canoeing, sailing, motorboating, tennis or riding."

In this issue, We look back at the 2026 camp season and reflect upon another summer on the shores of Lake Webb. We also share one of the letters that Neil Gest wrote home to his family in 1947. Perhaps it will inspire you to tuck away the letters from your son, or pull out letters that you wrote your own parents.

THIS ISSUE:

Letters from Home
PAGE 01-03

Looking Back on 2026
PAGE 04-07

Keeping the Log Alive
PAGE 08-09

Life Updates
PAGE 10



Dear Mother and Dad,

Scarlet fever has broken out in the Crows Nest Lodge and the lodge is quarantined. I got a candy bar for working hard in the lodge. Then the whole lodge got a candy bar for a perfect inspection.

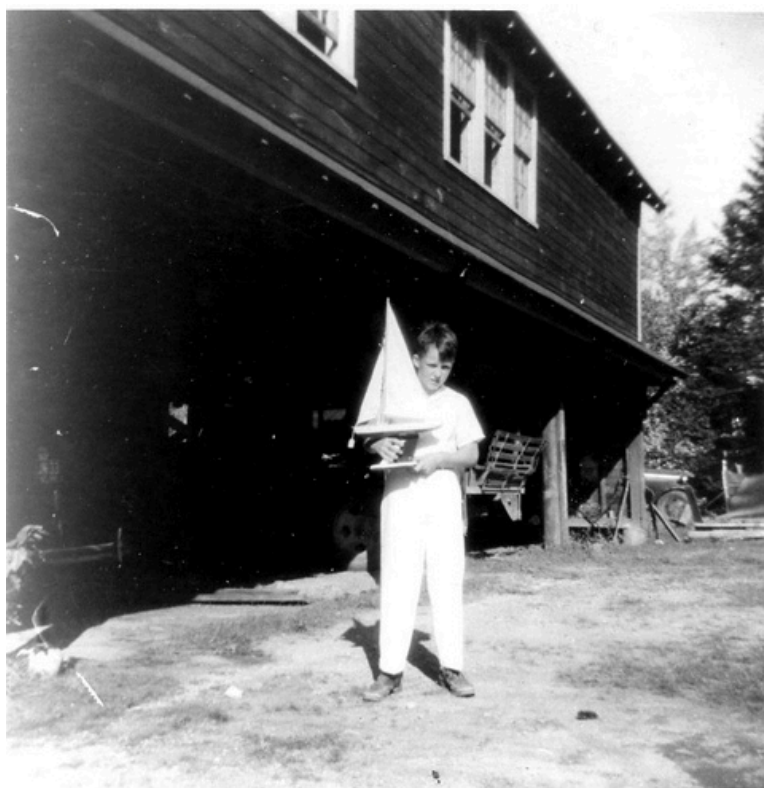
I haven't been out in the water very much because the water been kinda gold. How's Joe getting along. I miss him a lot. I'm on the Maroons and Jimmy is on the Grey team. I decided to make a sail boat instead of a birdhouse. Because a sail boat will pass you on all 3 levels.



Jimmy making a sail boat
too. In range I got 23/29 on
an two targets. You have to
get a score of 50 to get a
markmanship badge. Do you
know Charlie Wilson. I haven't
had time to take any pictures.

Love

Neely



NEIL GEST WITH SAILBOAT 1947

Looking Back on 2026

KENLEY PERRY

What just happened? How did an entire summer fly by in the blink of an eye?

As I sit in a coffee shop in the Chicago suburbs, reflecting on Kawanhee 2026, I'm still taken aback by how quickly those seven precious weeks disappeared. Camp time is an odd thing. A day feels like a week and a week like a month, but then suddenly it's over.

I believe this time dilation is due to how much we pack into a day all summer long. Each day is filled with a new activity, challenge, or adventure, all set within an amazing community of people. Campers are away from screens and other distractions, making the most of each day, knowing the end of camp is coming all too quickly. Yet, it never feels hurried or rushed. Camp doesn't have the harried and haggard pace of life the rest of the year does. Squeezing school, sports practices, extracurriculars, family dinners, weekend events, and holidays into the ten months away from Kawanhee is exhausting. How in the world do I feel "busier" during those months than I do during the summer?

Maybe it's because at camp, despite everything happening around us, we are present. Meals are shared around a table. Conversations happen face-to-face. A walk across camp inevitably includes a few stops along the way. There is time to sit on your lodge porch, lounge in a hammock, play a game of tetherball, or simply talk. We may accomplish an incredible amount in seven weeks, but we do it together and with purpose. And what a summer 2026 was.

There are far too many moments to capture in one article. The night hike up Tumbledown, taking first place in a rival camp's soccer tournament, the return of overnights, Friday night campfires, open mic nights, or one of the countless beautiful Kawanhee sunsets are just a few of the highlights that come to mind. Those are the moments that make Kawanhee special. The activities and traditions in the most beautiful setting within an incredible community of people we call family.



CAMP MAY BE OVER BUT KAWANHEE DOESN'T STOP

One of the things I've learned working in camping for more than two decades is that the end of the summer isn't really an ending. As soon as the last camper leaves the dining hall after the final songs & goodbyes, our attention turns toward the next summer.

There is an incredible amount of work that happens during Kawanhee's offseason, and this fall and winter will be especially busy as we continue investing in the camp experience and preparing for 2027.

One of the most visible projects will be in the Dining Hall, where we will be replacing and updating the floor. The Dining Hall is one of the centers of Kawanhee life. It is where we gather three times a day, celebrate birthdays, make announcements, chant loudly, and share countless memories. Giving this important space some much-needed attention will help ensure that it continues to serve generations of Kawanhee campers.

We are also undertaking an exciting renovation of the space below the Woodshop. That area is being transformed to include a new program space for campers beginning in summer 2027. And that's about all I'm going to tell you—for now.

We have something exciting planned for the space, but we're going to keep a little mystery around this one. Campers will get to discover what we've been working on when they return to Kawanhee next summer. Consider this your first teaser for Kawanhee 2027.

These projects are part of a larger effort to continue caring for the facilities and traditions that make Kawanhee feel timeless while also finding thoughtful ways to improve the experience for today's campers. We never want change simply for the sake of change. Our goal is to preserve what generations of Kawanhee campers have loved while making sure the camp remains strong, welcoming, and ready for the next generation.



A NEW REGISTRATION EXPERIENCE

Another big offseason project has already launched. This year, Kawanhee has transitioned to Campfront, our new registration and camp management system. Families will use Campfront for registration and many of the forms and information needed to prepare for camp.

Most importantly, registration for summer 2027 is already open!

Families who register before November 1 can take advantage of our Early Bird discount. If Kawanhee is already part of your family's plans for next summer, we encourage you to register early. There is something particularly exciting about watching those registrations arrive. Every camper name that appears on the list makes summer 2027 feel a little closer.



BRINGING KAWANHEE TO YOU

While Weld, Maine, may be Kawanhee's home, our community stretches far beyond the shores of Webb Lake. In the coming months, we will be taking Kawanhee on the road with recruitment events and gatherings in communities around the country. These events are a wonderful opportunity for current families, alumni, prospective families, and friends of Kawanhee to get together and introduce new people to camp. Some of the best ambassadors for Kawanhee have always been the people who have experienced it themselves.

If you would be interested in hosting a Kawanhee gathering or recruitment event in your area, please reach out to me directly. Whether it is a larger open house or simply an informal gathering of a few families, I would love to work with you to bring Kawanhee to your community. And if you know a family with a boy who would thrive at Kawanhee, please introduce us. A personal invitation from someone who knows and loves camp remains one of the most meaningful ways a new family can discover this place.



THE COUNTDOWN HAS BEGUN

I'm preparing for a quick trip to Kawanhee at the end of September. It will be eerily quiet. I'll be missing the pop-pop-pop of the range, the bang-bang of the woodshop, the cacophony of chants & laughter emanating from the dining hall, and the playing of taps marking the end of another day. Before we know it, the docks will go back in. The dining hall will once again be filled with voices. Campers will be playing tetherball. Old friends will reunite, new friendships will begin, and another Kawanhee summer will be underway. For now, though, we have some work to do.

Thank you to our campers, parents, staff, alumni, trustees, and friends who made Kawanhee 2026 such a memorable summer. Thank you for believing in what happens here and for helping us preserve a place where boys can unplug, explore, build friendships, take healthy risks, gain independence, and learn to do by doing. Seven weeks went by far too quickly. Fortunately, we're already working on the next seven.

See you in 2027.

Keeping the Log Alive

ROBBY RAY

Long before the summer of 2026, The Log was a recording of life at Kawanhee—not necessarily exactly as it happened, but often as it deserved to be remembered.

For many years, Michael Altmaier carried that tradition forward with wit, affection, and an unmistakable understanding of camp. His writing found the comedy hidden inside an ordinary week and transformed small moments into stories that could outlast the summer. Mike showed us that The Log could tease the people and peculiarities of Kawanhee while still celebrating the community behind them.

Over the last few years I have had the opportunity to write and present the log each week at camp fire. It has allowed me to see and hear about happenings in camp I might have otherwise missed. Each week I hear stories from 7-year-olds to 70-year-olds, all of whom feel like they have the most important thing to tell me. They are usually right.

Fortunately, the 2026 season provided plenty of material.

Our new Perry Weather station arrived to help us understand the conditions around camp. It soon became part weather instrument and part supporting character, reliably confirming that rain, wind, and other forms of Maine weather were indeed happening.

Trout Lodge and Bear Lodge had a conflict over a couch that required the intervention of directors, therapists, carpenters, and upholsterers. The couch's whereabouts remain unknown.

Athletics also kept The Log busy. A baseball tryout produced an injury before the season had properly begun. Our new athletics director taught the boys a new offensive tactic called the American bomba. The jury is still out on its effectiveness but boy is it done with vigor!

The JCs contributed admirably to the log. One trip returned with a damaged canoe, proving that “Finish What You Start” sometimes includes finding a way home with equipment in a substantially different condition than when it left. Outing to Gifford’s became memorable for reasons extending beyond the ice cream.

Our new DOA crushed his inaugural season in countless ways: including a whole new overnight program, and the worlds first shrek film festival.

Kawanhee took a full camp outing to Portland to watch the Seadogs play a game and to compete in a game of our own. The Seadogs host a spirit competition for the parks and rec day and shockingly to no one we blew them out of the park with our chants and unwavering spirit.

Keeping the Log Alive

Taken separately, these were small moments. Together, they became the texture of the summer. That has always been the gift of The Log. It reminds us that camp is not remembered only through ceremonies, competitions, or major accomplishments. It is remembered through the canoe that did not quite survive,, the ice cream stop that became a trip to the infirmary, and the joke repeated until it belonged to everyone. Mike understood that. Because of his years of writing and the example he left behind, The Log remains part of how Kawanhee remembers itself—with warmth, exaggeration, and just enough truth to make everyone laugh.



Parent Survey

Dear Camp Kawanhee Parents,

Thank you for being a part of our Camp Kawanhee community! We'd love to hear about your child's experience at camp.

Your feedback helps us improve and better support our campers and families. Please take a few minutes to complete our brief parent survey and share your honest thoughts.

Survey deadline: Friday, October 23
[Survey Link Here](#)

Connect on LinkedIn

Please consider joining
Kawanhee Connect on LinkedIn!

If others in your CK circle have yet to join, consider promoting it. Our aim is to attract anyone with a connection to Camp Kawanhee & build this community. Our hope is this community can pair alumni mentors with current staff, facilitate college introductions & promote job & internship opportunities. If you're interested in any of those things, join today and let us know!

KAWANHEE LIFE UPDATES

Deaths

Carlos Del Valle

July 9, 2026

Carlos Del Valle passed away peacefully on July 9, 2026 surrounded by family including his loving wife Tere “Teru”. He was born July 28, 1947 in Puerto Rico. He attended medical school in Spain, where he graduated with honors. He practiced ophthalmology in Dorado, Puerto Rico for more than 50 years. The mayor of Dorado wrote of Carlos following his death: “His office was not merely a vision care center; it was a place of kindness, where every patient was welcomed with a warm smile, treated with dignity, and shown a genuine compassion that soothed the soul even before the eyes.”

Carlos, along with his brother Diego, first attended Kawanhee in the summer of 1959. They began quite a tradition in that they were the first of many boys from Puerto Rico to attend Kawanhee over subsequent decades. Carlos and Diego along with their younger brother Jorge each attended Kawanhee a number of years. Carlos spent 5 summers at Kawanhee.

The legacy begun by Carlos and Diego extended also to the family. His son Carlos Del Valle II attended Kawanhee for three summers beginning in 1987 followed by his grandson, Carlos Del Valle III. Unfortunately, Carlos II died at the young age of 49 on October 9, 2025. We hope the family finds comfort in the love and support of those around them. Our deepest condolences to the Del Valle Family.

Births

Ben and Colleen Smith welcomed Maggie on June 9, 2026

Marriages

Max Zambito and Theresa Greco
September 19, 2026

Other News

Kate Estabrook Schoedinger’s debut novel *Death by Molasses* releases on October 6, 2026. Order your copy wherever books are sold.

SHARE NEWS WITH US!

Share your life updates (or the life updates of your friends & family members!) with the camp community by emailing us at skookumee@gmail.com and we'll include them in a future issue of Skookumee. Jobs, births, deaths, graduations, publications, and more. We want to hear it all and share it! If you send your address along with your birth announcement we'll send you a Kawanhee onesie for your new arrival!

