



By Danielle Elon Feigenbaum

I didn't have much choice when looking at overnight camps at the age of nine. My mother, aunt, and cousin all went to camp in Maine, and that's where I was going as well; it was tradition. So the first time I drove down the pine tree lined road into camp, it felt like home. My overnight camp experience in Maine helped me to become the woman I am today. Over twenty years after leaving camp, I still yearn for the sounds of the loon, the invigorating swims in the lake, the mountain climbing adventures and so much more.

Lucky for me I have been able to travel back to Maine many times since leaving camp. A few of my favorite trips were when my family and I spent a week at the incredible resort, Quisisana on Lake Kezar. Another was when my husband and I went with three other couples to Kennebunkport for July 4th weekend and watched the fireworks from the beach while eating the best lobster rolls in the country! There is no comparison when you hear me talk about my camp experience in Maine versus my friends who went to camp elsewhere. My face lights up and a huge smile takes over because the time I spent in the most peaceful, beautiful state in the country was some of the best time of my life.

Here are some Maine Camp alumni who share in my sentiments.

Lisa recalls: Camp in Maine... some of the fondest memories of my life. There was no question I would send my daughter to the Promised Land! The natural beauty, the clear lake, sailing a sunfish, tipping your canoe, learning to water ski for the first time...I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. My mother, sister and 11 year old daughter in her 4th year wouldn't have it any other way!

Carla says: I am alumni of a Maine camp and a parent of a current camper. I attended three camps in Maine during my childhood, all of which offered me the opportunity to "find myself". Having the freedom to experience the summer away from my parents and away from the academic and social pressures of the school year always afforded me the chance to meet people I would not have otherwise met and in doing so, to define for myself what was important to me in a friendship and in myself.

Alex says: I spent 18 summers at Camp in Maine.

Seven of those years were as a camper and 11 were as a counselor and head counselor, all at the same boy's camp. My memories are of friendships that are still alive and well today. Furthermore, I spent time in one of the most beautiful places in the U.S. Camp for me was a place where all of my everyday concerns were put on hold and time was well spent learning and teaching. I look forward to the day when my two girls can have the same experiences at a Maine girl's camp and when my son can attend the camp I went to. Hopefully their camps will give to them what camp in Maine has given and continues to give me.

Victor reminisces: For 34 years, Maine has made an indelible impression on my family's heart; so many positive experiences and happy memories that we cherish for the rest of our lives. Having the privilege of calling my Maine camp my home for eight summers still remains the greatest experience. Now, nothing gives me greater joy than watching both of my sons share the same camp experience. Nowhere else but Maine can you compete on the athletic fields in the morning, swim in the crystal clear waters of a glacier lake in the afternoon, whitewater raft down the Kennebec River the next day and watch moose graze on your way to the summit of Mt. Katahdin. As a parent, the highlight of

A Lifetime of Memories

my summer every year is visiting my kids at camp in Maine. Starting off our trip in the coastal town of Kennebunkport on our way through Portland to the Sebago Lakes region, brings back all of the happiest memories of my childhood. These camps build more than just muscle. They are founded on rock solid principles that build character, self-esteem and relationships that will last a lifetime. The greatest gift anyone can give to their child is the experience of attending a Maine camp.

Lesley remembers: From a very young age I learned the special scents of Maine. The clean air, crystal lakes and aroma of pine always brings me back to thoughts of Maine. I feel fortunate enough to have spent almost every summer of my childhood in Maine. First with my family and then; as a camper. As a parent I know now what a beautiful gift



my parents gave to me by sending me to camp in Maine. They allowed me to experience a summer camp where I gained independence and confidence... not to mention the lifelong friends and a love for summers in Maine. So how has Maine impacted my life? Here are a few ways... I spend my birthday every year in Maine having a lobster or lobster roll at Barnacle Billy's in Ogunquit. I can get lobster in Boston; it's just not the same. It always tastes better in Maine. When we started to look at camps for our daughter, one of the most important things was the location; it had to be in Maine. Each summer I have to get my Maine fix. Including visiting day, we try to get to Maine at least three or four times just to live the experience. As a camper in Maine I cried twice a summer. Once

when my parents arrived, I was so happy to see them. The second time was when I left camp. As a matter of fact, just thinking of leaving camp brings tears to my eyes today.

Going to camp in Maine was an experience I will hold close to my heart, forever. To this day, Maine remains one of my favorite places to travel. I plan on making many trips back and look forward to the day when my daughter can have the same experience at overnight camp as I did.

For more information and to read heartfelt testimonials from former campers, current camp parents and staff, please visit www.MaineCampExperience.com. The Maine Camp Experience is an informational-based resource and website to help parents explore the culture and offerings in Maine, as well as learn more about the best sleep-away camps in what is touted as the "most peaceful state" in the country.

In addition, the Maine Youth Camping Foundation's website, www.maine camps.org is a resource for campers and their parents.

Photos. Courtesy of Maine Camp Experience.



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