

# THE BIRCH BARK



P.O. Box 148, Waterford, Maine 04088  
 Winter: (207) 741-2930 • Summer: (207) 583-4478  
 birchrock@birchrock.org • www.birchrock.org

Rich Deering '73, Alumni & Community Director • Michael Mattson '83, Camp Director

## THE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER OF BIRCH ROCK CAMP

It's spring at last, Birch Rockers, and Opening Day is approaching fast! This edition of *The Birch Bark* is devoted to three of our finest gentlemen. We pay tribute to the one and only Rich Deering '73, who celebrates 50 years at BRC this season. We honor Erik Joelsson '99, newly appointed Assistant Director, for his 25 stellar years at Birch Rock. And with deep sorrow, we announce the passing of our beloved Toby Brewster, '60s, S'80s, P'10s, at his home in Concord, NH after a long illness.

*Edited by Francie Campbell, P'00s and Kim Rubin, P'10s*

### IN CHIEF & ONIE'S FOOTSTEPS

*By Seth Brewster, '60s, S'80s, P'00s*



It was the summer of 1973, and Birch Rock Camp was just three years shy of its half-century milestone.

That summer, there was a nine-year old boy from Falmouth, Maine who showed up at Camp for his first season. It was the beginning of a lifelong passion and a dedication to the motto *Help the Other Fellow*.

In the first week of Camp in 1973, Chief Brewster was not feeling well and he went to the Bridgton Hospital to get checked out. He died in his sleep that night. Just a few days earlier, however, Chief had planted a seed in that nine-year old boy. By the end of the season, that seed had begun to sprout and put down roots on the East Waterford Hillside.

Over the next few years, tended by Onie and others on the Camp staff (and fortified by Albert's meals and Onie's fudge) Rich Deering's love for all things Birch Rock continued to grow.

My first year on the Birch Rock staff was 1979. That year, at the age of 15, Rich was a junior counselor. I believe he set the Birch Rock record for the youngest person on the counseling staff. That season, Rich taught swimming and tennis and, like generations of staff members before and after him, he plugged into anywhere else on campus he might be needed.

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### CREATOR OF CAMP MAGIC

*By Rich Deering '73*

It was the evening before Opening Day at Birch Rock, June 1999. Erik Joelsson arrived at camp with his best hometown friend Mark "The Weaz" Sutherland. Erik got out of the car and immediately joined the all-counselor soccer game on Sanderson's Field. From that first night, Erik showed himself to be a quick and strategic player who fit right into the Birch Rock way of life.

Erik is the man behind the curtain, just like the great and powerful Wizard of Oz. He empowers others to be front and center stage. Meanwhile, he does all the complicated, labor-intensive logistical work of creating camp magic so that everyone can have fun and his fellow leaders can shine.

I am continually amazed by Erik's passionate commitment to enhancing our safety protocols and to training BRC staff. For the past 15 years, Erik has led our advanced first aid training, Basic Life Support, our lifeguard certification and skill review process, and has taken charge of reporting protocols and partnerships with various state, local and health partners. If there is a new safety initiative at camp, Erik is the man who makes sure every staff member is confident, ready and able to implement it. Erik is a rock: loyal, faithful, quietly strong and utterly dedicated to our community.



## SIDE BY SIDE FOR 30 YEARS

By Mike Mattson '83

I've been working side by side with Rich for three decades. And I know who has propelled Birch Rock from a 40-camper camp in the mid-90s to the 150-camper enterprise we are today. We have Rich to thank, with his far-reaching friendships and connections and his uncanny ability to draw wonderful people to Birch Rock. Because this camp means everything to Rich, he's inspired countless people to dedicate themselves as well — including me.

Each summer, Rich has a remarkable way of helping new staff settle into camp and understand their roles quickly. He's the first to jump in to help anyone who's struggling. He mentors staff members, new and old, as they mature and develop in their roles. On the waterfront, Rich's happiest spot, he has been helping campers become more confident and skilled in the water his entire career.

Rich teaches us all critical lessons about hospitality, gratitude, good manners and true friendship. I will be forever grateful for what I've learned at his side.



## SHAKE A HAND, MAKE A FRIEND

By Seth Wheeler, '70s, S'80s, P'00s

An institution like Birch Rock Camp needs human institutions to preserve and propel it. In this era of Birch Rock history, Richard Deering is one of those human institutions.

I wasn't there to see Rich roll down the Hill as a 9-year-old in 1973, but knowing his parents, I suspect he already had his hand out, ready to *Shake a Hand, Make a Friend*. Jack

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## FACILITATOR OF FUN

By Nick Musciano, '90s, S'00s

"My name is Erik Joelsson and I love this place," was Erik's whole speech after being honored for his 20th summer at Birch Rock. It was classic Erik: concise, meaningful and with an old, funny camp reference.

I have known Erik for a long time. We were campers together for one season and he's been on staff ever since. I watched him work his way up the ranks from cabin staff to camp administration. Erik was my senior camper counselor and now we have become great friends while working together.

I look up to Erik like an older brother. He always does what's best for the kids and Birch Rock. Every summer Erik's mission is to make sure the kids are having as much fun as possible. He never wants any credit. Having been his roommate for five years, I can attest to all the time he spends making camp amazing. He always helps set up camp-wide games and never wants to be in the spotlight. During rest periods, Erik is making sure that lifeguards, trips and our American Camp Association requirements are all good to go — after 20 minutes of reading, of course.

I admire Erik's unmatched dedication — he hasn't ever missed a summer or even a session in 25 years. Everyone can always count on Erik. His humble leadership is inspiring and his influence helps us all be the best versions of ourselves.



## SHAKE A HAND, MAKE A FRIEND

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and Ann Deering instilled in Rich a love of community and the responsibility to nurture it. Even better, they equipped him with the how-to manual. It's called "being complete" and it boils down to this:

- Engage everyone
- Keep learning
- Write a thank you note

That simple sauce, and his incomparable ability to connect, has energized Birch Rock and every community to which he's devoted his considerable energy. Birch Rock Camp, Maine Camping, Colby College and the State of Maine are better because of his advocacy.

Passing a summer at Birch Rock can feel like "time out of mind," that peculiar recognition that your internal clock has been reset to the rhythms of the bell. But Birch Rock doesn't exist for two months alone. It's easy to forget that year-round, it needs the people and resources of rural Oxford County. Improbably, this is where Rich shines. He may not know a pick from a pike but he knows the people working the machines and, as always, he finds common ground. I'd give a lot to have seen the first meeting of Richard Deering and Don Munn...

Opening Day 1973 was a fortunate day for Birch Rock. Congratulations, Dickie, on 50 years of devotion to *Help the Other Fellow!*

## COOL UNDER PRESSURE

By Brian Farley, S'10s

In 2020 Erik and I moved up to Birch Rock in April. I was still working as a high school guidance counselor, but everything was being done remotely due to COVID. For years, I had wanted to learn to sail, and had always hoped that Erik would teach me. After a few days at camp, we decided to give it a shot. Even though it was the end of April, the docks weren't in yet, and the ice had just gone out, we decided to give it a try. What could possibly go wrong?

We made our way down to the boat house and dug out an FJ. I helped where I could, but mostly watched as Erik got it rigged and ready to go.

Anyone who knows Erik knows that he only likes to sail on the windiest of days and only if there are whitecaps on Lake McWain. What a great way to learn how to sail, right?

We got the FJ into the lake and the sails up. I sat quietly and did exactly as I was told. I believe I said to him, "Just treat me like a camper." We made our way across the lake (which didn't take long given the wind behind us) and when we were about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the way Erik began teaching me about tacking. It seemed simple enough, but clearly I missed something important in his explanation. We came to the edge of the lake, Erik yelled "tacking" and before I knew it, I was in the water, he was in the water, and the boat had tipped over. Looking back, we still don't know exactly what happened, but I can guarantee you it was 100% my fault.

After surfacing in the frigid waters, I made eye contact with Erik and immediately said, "Tell me what you need me to do." I had no idea how to right the boat, but I knew that Erik did. In what could have very easily been a dangerous situation, Erik gave me clear instructions, got us righted and back to camp in no time. He let me out first and dealt with the boat while I ran up the hill to get us towels and dry clothes.

I have not been in an FJ since, but I know that when I do again, it will be with Erik.



## LIKE FAMILY

By Maria Tringale, P'10s



When I was growing up, my family lived across the street from the Deerings in Falmouth. Rich might have been five years old, and I was six when we met. We would play school in his basement, and Rich was always the principal. I was the oldest of five, and between the Goves and all of the neighbors, we could fill a small classroom. Along the way, Rich and I went away to summer camp — he went to Birch Rock, and I went to Waukeela in New Hampshire. We had similarly wonderful experiences, though I learned early on that girls camps sing a lot more!

After I had my third son, Rich's dad Jack came to see the boys and brought a set of BRC mugs. I was a little overwhelmed as at least two were still in diapers, and I couldn't imagine they would ever be old enough to go to overnight camp!

Rich has excellent timing. He called out of the blue a few years later on a snow day, the latest in a long winter of snow days, and said, "Hi Maria, how are we going to make this work and get the boys to camp?" He got me when I was vulnerable. But my husband grew up in the city and did not go camping. This was going to be a major hurdle.

I had never been to Birch Rock, but through all the years of knowing Rich, it felt familiar, and it had a mission and values very much like my camp. Rich is part of our family — an uncle of sorts — I am sure many other BRC parents feel that way. I grew up with Rich visiting my family home with his Birch Rock banner and camp spirit. But he had his work cut out for him because beyond convincing the boys to go, he had to win over my husband Paul, a very tough sell.

Fast forward twelve years, and our sons Sebastian, Gus and Theo have each been in Waterford for at least ten summers

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## CAPTAIN NEMO

By Catherine "Wonder Woman" Roland, PhD, CPNP, S'00s, P'00s

My first year as camp nurse at Birch Rock, Erik was either a senior camper or a CIT. I want to say he was brought to camp by his friend Nordy. They were just boys! Anyway, boys come and go from BRC and sometimes they come back. Erik never left. His love of all things Birch Rock kept him coming back and working his way up through every camp position. When Erik, aka Captain Nemo, became waterfront director he kept everyone safe and sunburn-free on his watch. He became a Wilderness First Aid Responder and my medical backup when I was away, taking charge of the health lodge, including camp dogs Jinx and Crystal and Shadow the cat. He managed the daily medications and first aid incidents. Erik perfected many medical skills as waterfront director, such as the perfect application of liquid bandage, splinter removal, and leading mandatory comb-outs when needed. All the while, he also assisted the Midnight Phantom with many shenanigans over the years.



Cap'n Nemo was my guardian and swimming buddy during rest periods, rain or shine, unless thunder closed the waterfront. He swam with me or stood guard while I slowly made my way down to the raft and back. Erik became our IT expert with the intricate system that connected the internet to all the necessary places on campus; he staged movie nights on the tennis courts, and he served as backstage manager of many Campfire skits.

I miss all things Birch Rock and my memories are clear and fresh of Christmas dinners, bowling nights, pre-season, opening days, turnover days, BRC triathlons, Whales, MWA departure and returns, closing days, and closing up camp. I think with great fondness of the blood, sweat and tears of 16 summers at Camp, full of people who came and went. But mostly I remember Erik and all of us who returned year after year to bring summer fun and safety to the boys of BRC.

## PUT YOUR HEAD WHERE YOUR FEET ARE

By Sam Deeran, '00s, S'00s

For years, jokes have flowed from the slant rhyme that is our two last names: Deeran and Deering. Furthering the joke's strange fidelity, my dad's name is Richard. Those not in on the joke often mistake me for Rich Deering's son. The exception is a ten year old Matt Straut who once replied to my introduction with total surety: "Ahh yeah, Rich's brother." Our similarities go beyond the last names. I, Deeran, grew up in the Falmouth Flats. He, Deering, grew up in the Falmouth Foreside. We came to Birch Rock as young campers and it got into our blood. We both went to Colby College.

A slant rhyme is a type of rhyme with words that have a similar but not identical sound. And to me, Rich is similar to but not identical to a father. I won't venture a definition of fatherhood but I will say that since I was 12 years old — and likely sooner, as I know Rich has a genius for developing prospective campers — Rich has nurtured my growth. From McWain Hill where he was a mentor; to Mayflower Hill where he showed up to watch me graduate from college; to meals in Portland as I began to navigate adult life. I know he has been there, with his "put your head where your feet are" attitude, for so many other young men. And, Oui, might I add that he's put his heart where his feet are. Rich is an embodiment of *Help the Other Fellow*. From Deeran to Deering and on behalf of so many other fellows, thank you, Rich. You are beloved.



## A REASONABLE ADULT

By Thomas Joyce, '80s, S'90s



I first met Erik when he and the Weaz showed up to camp on the Saturday night before Opening Day. We (the staff) were playing Speedball for evening activity and Erik and the Weaz joined in the game. Erik had some good moves, as he was a soccer and ice hockey player at home. I think he juked David Jenkins at some point, taking advantage of his age and agility, as well as not having worked through the entirety of staff week. That was my first introduction to Erik. Later that summer, I tried to level the playing field one evening. We were having strawberry shortcake for dessert, and Erik was my waiter (at the time, the waiters sat at tables and ate with the table). I knew we were playing Quorum that night. I allowed Erik to eat as many strawberry shortcakes as he could. I think he had 3 or 4. I thought his loaded stomach would give me an advantage on the field at evening activity. Even with a full stomach, Erik outplayed me at Quorum.

After that first summer, I got to know Erik in many different capacities. As he started out as a counselor and moved into the position of Waterfront Director, I moved from the position of Head Counselor to an occasional Senior Staff member. No matter what my relationship with Camp was for any given summer, Erik was a constant. He was a consistent presence, quietly leading by example. He always maintained a positive attitude and was willing to do anything to make a summer a success.

In the fall of 2019, Erik and I met up one afternoon in Washington, DC. He was in town visiting his sister, and I had just moved back to the US after living overseas. While hanging out, Erik mentioned that he would be leading the MWA program the following summer, and he was looking for a second trip leader. It didn't take much to convince me to agree to be Erik's co-leader on the MWA trip.

Soon after agreeing to co-lead the MWA trip, COVID struck and our reality changed. Camp ran in a highly

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## A GENIUS FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY

By David Weeks, S'70s, P'90s



In the summer of 1973, I was Chief Brewster's 21-year-old head counselor and Rich arrived at Birch Rock as a 9-year-old camper. Rich has the distinction of experiencing Birch Rock when its founder Chief Brewster was Director. Rich became a model camper and with his maturity, he was elevated to be a counselor at the age of 15 in the same year I was being primed by Director Mike Deneault to be the next BRC Director. Rich joined my counseling staff in 1980. He demonstrated a love for Birch Rock and took the initiative to do what needed to be done to promote community spirit with his can-do attitude, compassion and competence.

Both of Rich's parents, Jack and Ann Deering, helped Rich recognize the importance of taking responsibility and caring for others. "Warm fuzzies" were in Jack's DNA as a salesman. Rich embraced these "warm fuzzies" in his own endearing correspondence with Birch Rock campers, counselors, staff, alums and friends. Even with twelve years difference between us, I consider Rich to be among my closest friends.

When Rich became Director of Birch Rock in the 1990s he worked hard to earn us American Camp Association (ACA) accreditation. This elevation of Birch Rock as a certified quality camping experience enhanced our reputation in the Maine camp community. Rich boosted our reputation even higher when he assumed the presidency of the Maine Summer Camps Association.

Rich recognized how Chief, Albert Bryant, Mike Deneault and I valued the tradition of hospitality that Birch Rock demonstrated to the Waterford community stakeholders. Rich has maintained that hospitality and leadership in the community by hosting McWain Pond Association meetings and in welcoming neighbors and the Birch Rock community partners on campus. His love of Birch Rock

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## BRIGHT AND EARLY

By Bob Donahue, '00s, S'10s

My first memories of Erik are from when I was an 11-year-old camper. Chris Cogswell and I used to sign up for sailing every day and repeatedly (through no fault of our own, in our opinion) managed to break the Sunfish while we were sailing, which resulted in Erik imposing on us several short bans from sailing.

When I really became close with Erik was during the three summers when I was Head Counselor and he was Program Director. For three summers (2015-2017), we met up in the office every morning at 6:30 to plan the day. By happenstance it was almost always the case that one of us was tired and crabby, and the other was particularly well rested and chipper. We took turns without ever planning it, which made for a morning routine that was usually moderately irritating for one of us, but always resulted in a good laugh. Of all of the people I have worked with at Birch Rock, Erik is far and away the most dedicated to giving every camper a great day, every single day. Erik is extremely selfless and is one of the best people I know.



## A GALE FORCE

By Jared Whichard, '00s, S'10s

Imagine growing up on a lake, rigging up Sunfish every year for your summer guests, with a father whose career was sailing all over the world, and still being scared to get on a Sunfish?! That was my reality when I first showed up at Birch Rock. But my love for the waterfront and the happy coincidence that the really cool waterfront director taught sailing was just enough motivation to make me give sailing another shot. Of course, the first time I signed up, it seemed like gale force winds were gusting on McWain, and for some reason, that just seemed to excite Captain Nemo! Joelsson told me I could ride on the light and nimble Laser

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## TRUE NORTH

By Win Smith, '70s, P'00s

I'm glad to have this chance to recognize Rich and his 50 years at BRC. What an amazing accomplishment in any industry, let alone summer camps with all the volatility and changing demographics that have impacted this space. One of the unique things about Rich, besides his mischievous sense of humor, is that he connects with Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z and even to today's Gen Alpha.

Rich is the true north of the compass that is the Birch Rock family. He is the one constant that every one of us has been able to rely on throughout the years. He is a trusted friend to all, a respected spokesman for the industry, and an unwavering champion of Birch Rock and everything it stands for.



## THE LUCKIEST GUY

By Fred Howard, '70s, P'00s

I have known Rich for all fifty of his Birch Rock years. We first met at camp when we were both young boys. I am sure I didn't know what I wanted to do in life. But Rich must have always known he was going to be involved with Birch Rock and/or the hospitality industry because together we hosted the first, and only, BRC Bar and Grill in Upper Camp. Those were great times, where lifelong

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## A GALE FORCE

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with him. It would be a perfect recipe for an adrenaline-pumping introduction to the activity. While part of me thought it might be far more pleasant to spend the period reading a book in the calm comforts of the library, everything about Joelsson's demeanor assured me that I would be safe on what was bound to be a crazy ride.

As I earned badges from Deckhand to Skipper, Joelsson taught me to love sailing. During my CIT summer, he further taught me how to help protect people as a lifeguard. Throughout the off-seasons, since I became a part of the Birch Rock community, I probably get the chance to see Joelsson more than most Birch Rockers, as he works year-round to keep the place we love pulled together. Whether he is applying a fresh coat of paint on the cabins, hosting events for the Waterford Historical Society, or showing us the best trails on the ski mountains, EJ is always helping. With his kind and responsible demeanor, EJ assists others to think about their choices and seize exciting opportunities. Thanks for all you do, Joelsson, I can't imagine my time at the Rock without you. We are incredibly lucky to have a brother like you.



## ***THE LUCKIEST GUY***

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friendships were made oh so long ago, but what feels like only yesterday. Everyone should have the chance to have the life-changing friendships created on the Hillside in Waterford, Maine.

Rich is one of the luckiest individuals I know. Most kids dream of going to camp forever — Rich made that dream come true. The Birch Rock community is lucky he chose us because, once Rich got to the Hillside, he saw the value of BRC and all it stood for through the eyes of a camper and he has never lost that vision. We and the world are better for it. Congratulations and a great big “B-I-R-C-H R-O-C-K Rock, Rock, Go Birch Rock!” cheer for Rich and his great gift to our camp community. I personally look forward to the decades ahead. Knowing Rich as I do, I am sure there is still much more to come.



## **BEST TOUR GUIDE OF ALL**

*By Josh Rubin, '10s, S'20s*

Last summer, during Staff Orientation week, there was a day in which my fellow CITs and I finished our lifeguarding and work projects miraculously early. We were thrilled at the prospect of a free afternoon. Instead, Musc got on his radio and asked if the CITs were needed anywhere. After a few moments of silence, enough to get our hopes up, Rich requested that we meet him by the Health Lodge. Initially, our task was to move some heavy furniture. Afterwards, however, with hours still left in the afternoon, Rich gave us a tour of Birch Rock. As veterans of Birch Rock with decades of experience between us, we questioned the necessity of

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## ***A REASONABLE ADULT***

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modified version that summer of 2020, and my 3 week commitment to be a part of the MWA program morphed into a 7 week commitment to ensure quarantine time and that we were running the safest program we could. The seven weeks at/with Camp that summer were great. We modified the MWA itinerary so we minimized the chances of seeing anyone outside of our “bubble.” We began the trip by hiking the 100 Mile Wilderness. This is a “bucket-list” hike for many in the US, as it is a 100 mile stretch of hiking uninterrupted by modern conveniences and distractions. That solitude also means that you are on your own. For us, it meant that we had to rely on each other. We had six boys with us, and we needed to act as “two reasonable adults” to ensure their safety and the success of the trip. Although Erik and I are both pretty avid outdoorsmen, both of us were under-prepared for some aspects of that hike. Erik’s shoes seemed to punish him with each step, and I was out of shape. Despite our limitations, we had to be the reasonable adults in charge. Due to illness, we had to evacuate one group member. Erik hiked out, despite pained feet, to find a working telephone. There was no mobile signal for us to rely on. He returned to our campsite to make camp, eat, and to continue to monitor the health of our sick hiker. The following morning we packed up, rested until the ride came for our sick hiker, and we made the decision to “leapfrog” a small section of the trail by catching a ride with our evacuation drivers. After a successful evacuation, we continued our hike. Each morning, Erik bandaged his feet and continued to lead.

Erik is a bit of a “needed calories” guy when leading a trip. Not so much a gourmet, but an “eat cheese and pepperoni until you aren’t hungry” guy. My approach to food when leading a trip is different - if you eat well, you will eat enough. Combined, we had some pretty good meals when co-leading. Erik always made sure there were plenty of calories, I tried to make sure things were palatable. I think he did a better job of ensuring there were enough calories than I did in ensuring things tasted good.

It was a pleasure to co-lead two MWA trips with Erik, but the real pleasure has been my time just hanging out with him. Sometimes on the trail, sometimes in Semanas, or at Salty Snacks during Family Camp, Erik is always a pleasure to be around.

Congratulations on 25 years at Birch Rock!



## BEST TOUR GUIDE OF ALL

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this tour. Rich wasn't just giving us a tour, though. He was teaching us how to give a tour.

At the beginning of this lesson, I am certain a few eye rolls may have occurred, some of which I was definitely responsible for. I thought I knew everything there was to know about Birch Rock, and didn't know why I needed a recap of this. However, with each cabin and landmark and activity that Rich showed us, I found myself realizing that at least one thing he told us was entirely new to me. More than that, he showed us the smaller things that went into a tour, like knowing where to take prospective campers inside, such as the Library or the Lodge, and where to just walk past something and describe it. Rich also established the order of which places should be shown, to minimize walking and to arrive at the Tiki Bar for a Gatorade break at just the right time.

As he talked, it became clear to me how much of a difference there was between Rich and myself when it came to being a Birch Rocker. I consider myself to be a die-hard Birch Rocker, with a passion for camp that few could match. Yet somehow Rich Deering surpasses this, and it's really not even close. In our tour lesson, it was obvious that Rich lives and breathes Birch Rock, that he thinks about camp in a way no one else does, and most of all, he cares about Birch Rock's future. Not only was our tour lesson meant to enrich our camp experience, but it also allowed for prospective campers and families to see the best of the Hillside, even without Rich showing them around. In my mind, nothing could be more persuasive for Birch Rock campers of the future than a Rich Deering-style tour.



## THE WEAZ'S LEGACY

*By Mark "The Weaz" Sutherland, '90s, S'00s*



There are very few people who have made as big or meaningful a contribution to Birch Rock and what is it today as Erik. It would be hard to overestimate his profound impact: the number of campers who will look back

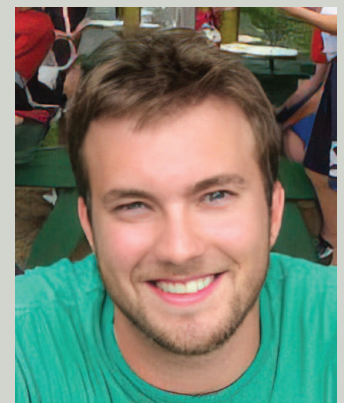
fondly on their time at camp, staff who have felt welcomed and supported by Erik's leadership, and the degree to which camp and the world at large are better places. He is the very embodiment of *Help the Other Fellow*.

I think more than anything, after 6 years as a camper, a decade on staff, and serving as Head Counselor, my greatest BRC legacy will still be having brought Erik Joelsson to camp. That is a legacy of which I am immeasurably proud, and it speaks to Erik's commitment and meaning to Birch Rock. Recommending BRC to him was the best decision I ever made.

## LEADER IN THE MAKING

*By Dave Jenkins, '80s, S'80s*

In 1999 the counselor-in-training program included only three participants. Such a small group had to work hard to establish a presence at camp that summer, and one CIT stood out immediately. Whether working on a makeshift lean-to behind the Fish Hatchery, helping lead field activities on the Hill, or exemplifying Birch Rock values for his fellow CITs, Erik Joelsson consistently modeled how to be a young leader in the camp community. Throughout that summer it became increasingly evident that this young man held the potential to be an impactful mentor for future Birch Rock boys. It's been the community's good fortune to have Erik choose Birch Rock as his second home and commit to its mission for 25 years. Cheers to you, Erik. We all thank you.



## ***IN CHIEF & ONIE'S FOOTSTEPS***

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Over the next 15 years, through good years and the very lean years of the late 1980s, Rich helped keep Birch Rock alive until he became Director in 1995. By that time, Rich had grown into a formidable young man who was capable of leading Birch Rock through the next thirty years and beyond. The seed that Chief had planted so many years before had reached towering maturity.

The Brewster Family is profoundly grateful for Rich's friendship and his devotion to Birch Rock over the past 50 years, as he has guided us to the cusp of our second century. Under Rich's leadership, Chief and Onie's vision has flourished into the incomparable BRC we know today.

## ***LIKE FAMILY***

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as campers, CITs and staff. Paul and I are longtime trustees. We're devoted Birch Rockers because of Rich's colossal heart, leadership, and trustworthiness. He is truly a man for others. I'm not sure we would have ever made this kind of investment as a family if it were not for him. This world can be unsettling, and it isn't easy to let your children go, but Rich helped us find the strength and confidence to do just that. Each of us Tringales has grown from our time at BRC, and we have had some of our best times as a family under the tall pines on the Disco Deck with the waves lapping the shores.

## ***A GENIUS FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY***

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traditions and his expertise in the hospitality industry have helped Rich to be so successful. Rich has maintained the strength of the Birch Rock community and has helped Birch Rock to be among the best summer camps for boys in Maine. With 50 years of Birch Rock experience, Rich has a genius for building friendships and cultivating a strong sense of community.

With their dedication and love for Birch Rock, both Rich and Erik have successfully pushed the BRC "wheel" forward to a bright future. I am ever grateful for all they have accomplished in their combined 75 years of commitment to *Help the Other Fellow*, the hallmark of true Birch Rock gentlemen.

## ***A WILDER WAY***

*By Sebastian Tringale, '10s, S'10s*

It was my first day of camp. Erik was one of the first people to greet my family and me. And he remained that person year after year, a smiling face each time I arrived at camp who was happy to have me back.

When I first met Erik I could tell he was an important staff person and that was a little intimidating. But from the beginning he spoke with me on a very human level, and that defines Erik. He put me at ease when I was ten years old, and he made me feel that we had a peer-to-peer friendship from the beginning.

Erik is very conscious that our time spent at camp is fleeting. That's what makes him live deeply in the moment. His friendships with people of all ages are so intentional. He shares his love of knowledge with everyone, especially if it sparks a broader conversation. Erik is at the center of the pre-lunch Reading Club — an ad hoc group that waits out the lunch line in the shade, enjoying twenty minutes with their books. His magnetism brings people together. He has cultivated a camp-wide frenzy around crossword puzzles; he prints out a dozen copies of the New York Times' daily crossword, tacks them up on the bulletin board, gets campers of all ages to play, and encourages a group effort for the harder puzzles. He's even invented a full-camp puzzle-based game called Espionage, a spinoff of Capture the Flag that has something for everyone. The more kinetic campers run around and the more studious boys enjoy trying to crack the code.

It was the afternoon following my Whale, and I was resting on my laurels, sprawled on a couch. Suddenly, Erik walked in and was shocked someone was kicking their feet up on a beautiful day at Birch Rock. I was exhausted, but he saw I was exploiting my achievement to enjoy relaxing in the air conditioning. He sternly kicked me off of the couch and sent me back to my cabin. This story shows Erik's commitment to Birch Rock's core message and values. Camp is not about creature comforts. Erik believes in pushing us out of our comfort zones and into a wilder way of life. Thank you, Erik, for making me a believer, too.



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**THANK YOU!** Your generous support has helped us to sustain and enhance Birch Rock's incomparable summer camp experience. We gratefully acknowledge the following 2022 Capital, Endowment, Scholarship and In-kind gifts to the Birch Rock Camp Community:

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## Mark Your Calendars for 2023!



Clean & Pick Up Saturday	May 20
BRC Summer Office Opens	June 1
BRC Staff Orientation	June 14
C.I.T. Orientation	June 18
Opening - First Session / Cubs I	June 25
Cubs Camp I - End	July 8
Cubs Camp II	July 9
First Session & Cubs II - End	July 22
Opening 2nd Session	July 23
Maine Wilderness Adventure	
Cubs Camp III	
Cubs Camp III - End	August 5
BRC for Boys & MWA - End	August 12
BRC Family Camp	August 17
BRC Family Camp - End	August 21

## It's Easy to Help BRC

- Send a tax-deductible donation to BRC.
- Promote BRC among friends, neighbors, family and colleagues.
- Refer a prospective camper to BRC by phone or email.
- Host a gathering of BRC alumni/prospects with Directors Deering and Mattson.
- Ask us about our 'Wish List' before you have your spring yard sales.
- Send us your news and update your contact information via [www.birchrock.org](http://www.birchrock.org).

