

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES AND CLICHÉS

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Every now and then, life seems like a cliché. . . you know, those old one liners your parents and grandparents used to throw around. But in them, I have found much wisdom and subsequently, comfort from their lessons. As you go through life, childhood memories will pop up in your head and a cliché seems to be the subtitle.

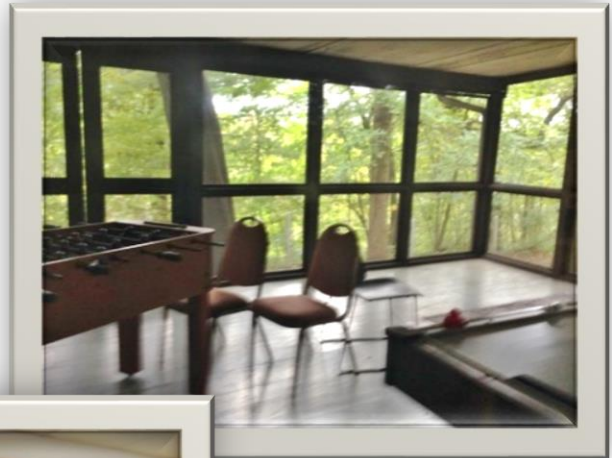
On our recent MD/DE/DC Moose Association Bus Trip for Homecoming Weekend at Mooseheart, I saw many clichés in action. Some broke my heart, some filled me hope, and some filled me with pride and the resolve to work even harder on our fraternal mission. Things that happened, sights and smells had many childhood memories dancing through my head.

The special stop added to this year's bus trip was a visit to Camp Ross, a wonderful facility supported by The Moose Legion. Rustic buildings brought my memories of Girl Scout camp flooding back. Complete with a director's cabin, Chapel, Mess Hall, Pool, Ball fields, Cabins, sledding hill, Picnic Pavilion and pond. Come take a virtual tour of Camp Ross. The Chapel was built by Students of Mooseheart!



Walking through the pine trees on a dirt road we visited the Chapel, then the Picnic Pavilion, and then the newly refurbished Mess Hall. The food prep area has all new equipment and most of the building had been updated the fireplace and seating area remain original. There's lovely screened in deck overlooking the river. The surroundings had my Girl Scout days flooding through my head, but when I stepped through the door and got the first whiff of the Mess Hall . . . "Holy Cow! It even smells like Girl Scout Camp!"

Except that those bags and boxes on the tables contained donuts, chips, and fresh bananas for Camp Ross visitors to snack on. . . all we got at Girl Scout camp were old Girl Scout cookies that hadn't been sold the previous March (hopefully from the same year!) that were frozen then thawed out . . . well ... sometimes not so thawed. :-/

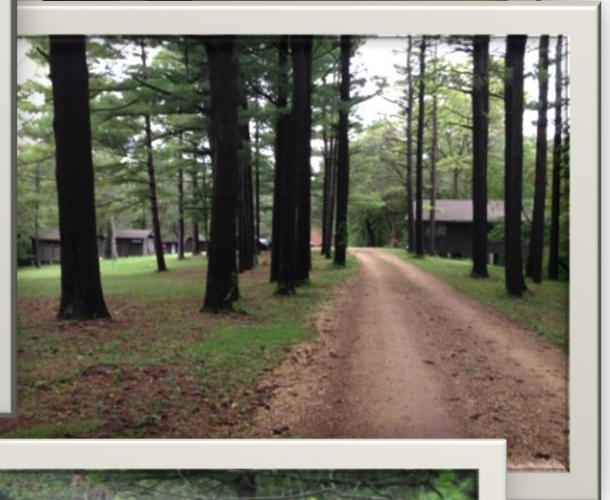
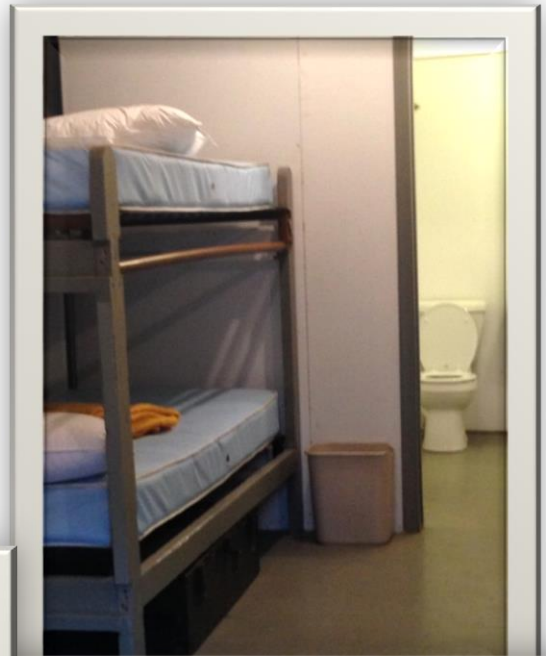


Across from the Mess Hall was a beautiful in ground pool complete with solar cover to keep the water warm. At Girl Scout Camp, we had a lake with icky things in it and it was COLD! Further down the path, there was an artfully carved horse with a saddle . . . of course we had horses at Girl Scout camp, but they pooped and we had to muck the stalls. . . (I think I like this one better!) There's also a ball field at the bottom of the sledding hill . . . Word to the wise: If you get as far as the backstop when you're sledding, roll off the sled, because the next thing is the river!



Camp Ross cabins sleep eight and are equipped with 6 inch high mattresses on each bunkbed. Well ... Girl Scout camp leaves much to be desired . . . (feel free to insert the voice of Dr. Evil from Austin Powers on any of the following quotes) our "upgraded" campsite was equipped with a wooden platform with army surplus cots if you were lucky you got ones with springs – if not – you got the bunk beds with the wooden slats, but both models came with 1.5 inches of cotton batting with ticking on which to place your sleeping bags and all that "luxury" was surrounded by canvas walls that leaked profusely during rain storms or heavy dew provided on a nightly basis! But that's okay . . . we were "roughing" it! Oh – Did I mention that each Camp Ross cabin is equipped with TWO FULL BATHROOMS with, flushable toilets and hot and cold running water in the showers and sinks that you don't even need a flashlight to find during the night! *Yeaaaaahhhhh*. . . Girls Scout camp had the lovely quad of latrines equipped with spiders, an occasional snake, lots of Pine Sol for a daily scrub to ward off the odiferous emanations and hopefully kill the natural inhabitants of said "comfort station".

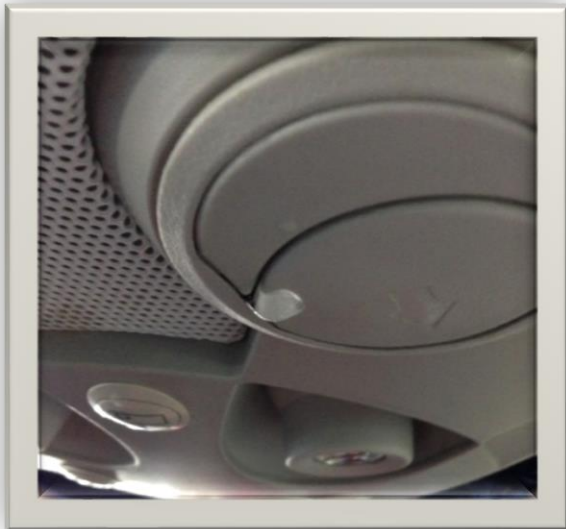
At least we know our Children at Mooseheart will have great (at least cleaner) memories of their childhood camping experience! ;-/



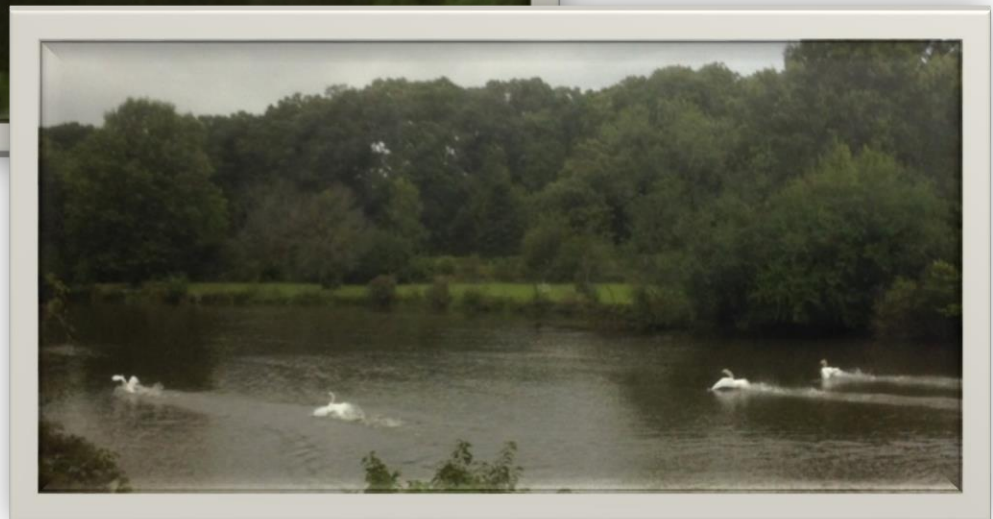
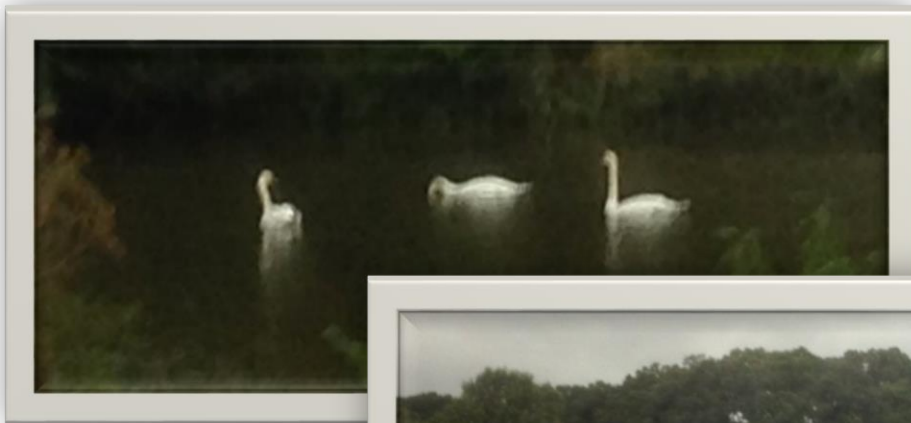
*Mooseheart Alumnus,
David Telp from New
Castle Lodge provides history
and shared his experiences as a
camper at Camp Ross.*



On to Mooseheart. . . unfortunately we were too late for the Pep Rally and the bon fire was cancelled because it rained (But it's okay cause it rained in the bus too – made me feel right at home in that old time camping spirit and gave me a chance to use my Girl Scout ingenuity!) and thus the first cliché . . . ***"Into every life, some rain must fall."*** Or. . . ***"This wasn't in the brochure!"***



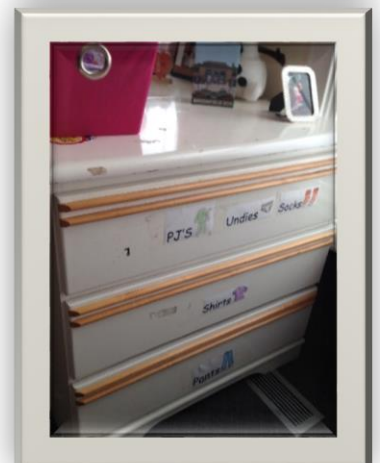
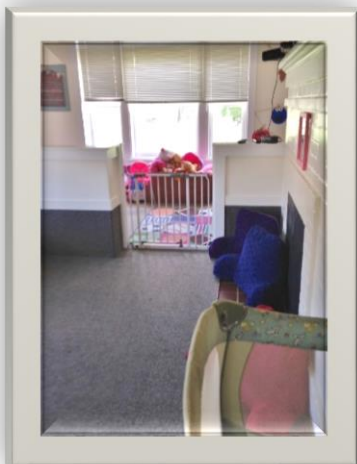
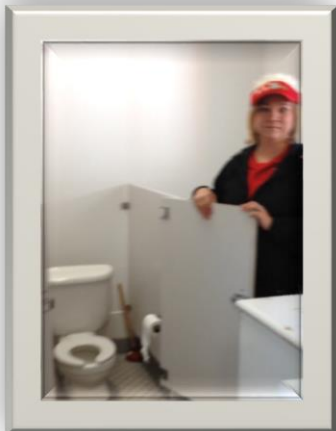
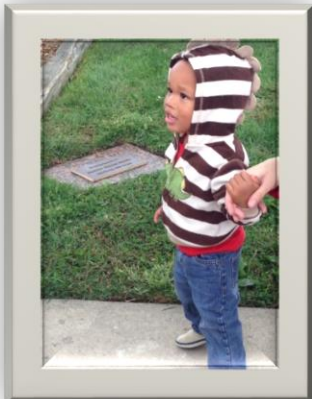
This visit was probably my fourth to Mooseheart. The campus is gorgeous complete with boat lake and lovely swans. A pair of which was gifted to Mooseheart on the occasion of Dave and Claire Greenaway's wedding. (Dave refers to them as coyote kibble – but it's okay they're insured!)



This was my very first to Baby Village! We found our munchkin charges on the central playground. They were excited to have visitors and brand new playmates with whom they could share the finer points of bouncing and dancing skills! But the best part was when the young man, who taught Larry Dean how to dance to “Zippity Do Dah”, introduced himself to each visitor by saying a bright “Hi! What’s your name?” shaking hands and then telling them his name. (Look for the videos on our website.)



We were invited to tour Juniata (*pronounced: Juney at ah*) Home where our youngest residents live. The home abounds with learning opportunities and homey touches that make for wonderful childhood memories. Throughout the hallways are family pictures of the kids doing normal childhood things and playtime activities caught on film! Able, who was decked out in his Dinosaur hoodie, is the youngest at 2 ½ years old. Arianna, showed us her room that she shares with four of her 'princess' sisters. The bathroom is equipped with teeny tiny toidies, child friendly height sinks and a back friendly height baby/toddler bathtub. Each bed has a dresser nearby that is labeled with words and pictures of where they can find their clothing items. On top is a very important picture of the child with their mom or family. It is tradition for visitors to leave a "gift of love" (\$1 bills) on each child's bed so they can buy a treat or something special later on. Isn't that one of your favorite childhood memories of your grandparents? They'd always slip you some extra coins or couple bucks so you knew when the ice cream truck came through the neighborhood, you were assured of a treat!



Outside, of the homes is a heart shaped wading pool and tiny tot parking lots, with a full array of colorful Ollie Trollie Cars, scooters, tricycles, big wheels and bicycles. In between each home is a “McMansion” where the children can slip into their magical world of “*Make Believe*”.





Time to get over to the MD/DE/DC Home where Danny Williams presented the checks in support of "OUR HOUSE!" and funding from the Moose Legion in support of Camp Ross. That went great. . . the game. . . not so much.

Our own, Derrek Graser was Captain of the Color Guard. He was benched for the game because he is still recovering from shoulder surgery. They probably could have used his skills, we lost, but they made some great plays and our kids showed wonderful sportsmanship!

Enter the second cliché . . . ***"You can't win them all!"*** or #3 ***"Better luck next time!"*** or #4 ***"It ain't over 'til the fat lady sings!"***
HEY! WHO YOU CALLIN' FAT?!



Our rooting section was second to none! We were hoarse by the end of the game, but our throats were in fine shape for the chow at "OUR HOUSE!"



Mike, Linda, Sue and the boys were great hosts and wonderful cooks. The food was GREAT! It's delightful to be able to meet the boys we work so hard to help and even better when they remember you and make a point to sit and chat during lunch!



While we and the staff at Mooseheart work diligently to provide educational and life opportunities to the children, they're not always open to receiving the gifts of love, safety, education, and discipline. Which leads me to more clichés ***"You can learn the easy way or the hard way."*** Or ***"You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink."*** Or one of my own, ***"In failure, hides success."*** Very much like the Bible, clichés are age old lessons that can be applied to modern day situations. We all have our paths to walk and lessons of life to learn. Just as a horse thirsts or may have a need to drink water, a child has the thirst and need for these all important gifts. We, as parents and members of this wonderful fraternity, make sure these are abundantly provided in the loving well of Mooseheart. Perhaps one of our greatest gifts to any child is that regardless of the reason, is the sobering reality that there can be and are serious repercussions to their selfish or carelessly thought out acts.

Unfortunately, one of our young charges has chosen to 'learn the hard way'. After repeated offenses and despite Mike and Linda working diligently with him, one of our kids made a decision that caused him to be 'invited to leave' Mooseheart. He was at Homecoming, and I had the opportunity to talk with him at the cookout. He would have graduated with the class of 2016. I asked him did he realize what he's missed and what he threw away with both hands. While my heart ached about his situation and for him personally, I was genuinely glad to see that he felt regret. I saw embarrassment flicker in his eyes and that he hung his head in shame as he answered me. He was respectful and didn't mumble or try to avoid my questions. A mark of maturity and character development and I know that was the work of Mike and Linda Worden and all the staff at Mooseheart. "I've missed my ring ceremony. I miss my friends and my home. My phone has been taken away." I said, "Those are but small things and minor in the grand scheme of your life. You have thrown away the completion of a good education, a possibility of a college education which could have led to a remarkable life. You had it all in your hands, here! Right here! I'm not saying that you won't eventually get those things, but now, they may come to you the hard way and you'll have to work for them when you already had them at your fingertips. I will give you 18 months and within the next 18 months you will realize the gravity of what you've done. But know this . . . You are greatly loved and you do have family here that wants to see you succeed. You have chosen to walk your life's path away from their guidance; I'll ask you to remember the lessons you've learned here and apply them in your thoughts and actions. Think about what you're going to do and what will be the results before you act. You've already had a very hard lesson in this. Are you going to school?" He said, "Yes, I'm in school and I'm doing well." I told him I was glad to hear it, and then a few of his 'brothers' came to sit at our table and talk with us. Who knows, maybe they recognized a brother uncomfortable talking to a senior citizen and came to rescue him from further scrutiny of an adult! But, what I got from the conversation was, he exhibited values

and mores taught to him from our staff at Mooseheart. We can only hope he employs these as he navigates his life in the future and I pray that in his failure, he finds success. Which leads me to my final cliché or saying. . . ***“No man ever stands so straight or so tall as when he stoops to lift up a child.”***



Group picture of Bus Trip Members from MD/DE/DC in front of our home with our boys and Family Teachers - taken September 19, 2015 in front of

Mike Worden, MD/DE/DC Family Teacher, commented: “Truly a Family here...”

“Who’s House? Our House! Why? Because we care!”