

# *The So Post- it's Practically Pre-* **GENEVA GEMS**

## **New Year's Greetings, Old Year's News**

It's late January. The driveway is covered in ice. The sun sets before 5. All that remains of Christmas are the dregs of the 5-gallon can of caramel corn you bought off your local Boy Scout and the stray needles that still turn up when you run the vacuum through the living room. The winter doldrums threaten. Then, just when things are slowing down to a midwinter crawl, the GEMS arrives to make things duller still. Greetings, Winni folk, from your GEMS editors. We bring you old news, new news, and the usual sprinkling of typos. Enjoy!

## **It's Official!**

### **Winni Begins July 31st**

*Dean Changes Starting Date!  
Also Changes Christmas to May 23rd!  
And Your Birthday Was Last Week!*

In flexing muscle from his bully pulpit nestled in College Row, Dean Tom Weston cut a deal with the "playahs" at Geneva Point Center to moving the beginning date of NNESRE to the unprecedented time of the end of the month of July. **This year's camp will be from Saturday, July 31st to Saturday, August 7th.**

It took editors at the Geneva GEMS office literally hours to be able to find the J key on their computer as word *July* has nary been found in the GEMS lexicon.

The move to the 31<sup>st</sup> enables NNESRE to remain in the spirit of the "first week of August" without pushing back all of the campers' summer plans for the month. Without this adjustment, NNESRE campers would have been looking at an August 7th through 14th calendar week. For those living south of the Mason-Dixon line, their kids would have likely already missed a week of fall classes at that point.

In spinning the move in the brightest light possible, Dean Weston noted "the food at dinner will be a week fresher, the lake will be a week wetter, and contrary to having to watch those stars fall all the time, for once they will be stable and stay put."

Other date changes that the Dean is considering:

- 4th of July on October 3rd just because it seemed better to do fireworks in "cooler weather."
- Labor Day is being moved to his birthday to honor his mother.
- The summer solstice is being moved to Wednesday, August 4th because everybody knows that when you are sitting through the Hoot, it is the longest day of the year!
- The winter solstice is being moved to Friday, August 6th as everybody knows that the last full day of Winni is the shortest day of the year – it flies by!

## Happy New Year and Warm Greetings from your Dean

It has been almost six months since we left Winni. I hope this special edition of the GEMS finds you well. GPC is presently under a full blanket of snow and ice. In a few more months, when it all melts, we can go swim in it!

So.....what's been going on? Well, several of our NNESRE folks attended a fall work party in which Kate Fioravanti brought a host of eager workers and exceptionally good singing volunteers to augment our ranks. Much was accomplished on that very full and fun weekend. The GPC 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration was held on October 3<sup>rd</sup> and, despite the heavy rain, a good time was had by all. It was particularly exciting to finally view the completed Staff cabins. After the meetings, an excellent luncheon, the viewing of exhibits by GPC groups and a fun round of singing, Barb led a small but enthusiastic group in folk dancing.

Much is happening as we prepare for the coming 94<sup>th</sup> session of NNESRE. Cynthia Wilcox organized a most successful program committee meeting last fall and courses have been chosen for 2010. Be on the lookout for your brochure! Ron Offutt has been hitting the books to assess our financial position. Our trustees, under President Doug Hawthorne, and the Business Committee under the leadership of Robert Campbell have been busy discussing the many issues we face in keeping our conference viable. Chaplain Bob Fellows is already sharing ideas about our spiritual leadership and no doubt the Nissons have a plan or two for our evenings together. Joann Milford did an exceptional job in compiling our course and general evaluation data, and she is preparing for another exciting year for our Ed School leaders and participants. And the GEMS, as evidenced here, just keep on rolling. Thanks to Bill and Din for all the updates you provide by keeping us in community, even when apart.

Looking back, I found the week went exceptionally well. Thank you for all your hard work that makes it possible.

One highlight was for us to have 12 Deans, past and present, representing the years from 1967 to the present, attend our conference this year. (Robert LaCamara, Dave Ebert, Lelly Smith, Jim and Jean Peters, Dennis Courtney, Robert and Cynthia Campbell, Beth Lebar, Jon Arnold, Ginny Houghtaling, and myself) There were many other highlights that I attempted to capture in a poetic assessment of the week and shared with you at our closing. If I may, let me recap the week again.

The weather, the water, the singing and dancing  
The classes and courses, the Hoot and the GEMS  
The labyrinth and campfires, the swimmi and softball  
The concert and coffee house, prayers and amens  
Openings and closings, birthdays, anniversaries  
Receptions, reunions, skunks and wild loons  
Scoops, hoops, morning watches and Vespers  
Conversations, memorials, sunrises, full moons

So let's start thinking about Winni 2010! Wouldn't it be wonderful to grow our conference to over 300 again? Please invite family and friends to join us this year as we gather on July 31 to share what for me is the best week of the year. Please note that financial assistance is available. It is our desire to make it possible for all who wish, to attend. Find your way back to Winni! I hope to see you all soon.

Bless you and keep you.

*Dean Tom*

## A Final Chat from Chaplain Jim

The first thing I'd like to say is that it has been both a great honor and a tremendous learning opportunity for me to have served as Chaplain these last three summers. I fully believe in the proposition that what you get out of an experience is largely determined by what you put in. In retrospect, I have to say that camp never felt more alive and present in my thoughts and actions than it has while being Chaplain – during the week, of course, but also during the intervening years. There was a sense, really quite palpable, of participating with many others to hold the community in thought and heart all year round. There was something very sustaining, very grounding, very comforting in proceeding through the year with an open "Ideas for Vespers" file in my mind. It kept Winni in my heart in a unique and treasured way.

The next thing I'd like to share is that being Chaplain afforded me numerous opportunities to make, renew and deepen friendships with many fellow campers who took time to visit during Vespers planning meetings after lunch, who read or sang or danced during worship, or who waited after a service to share a thought or a reaction.

Those connections meant, and mean, the world to me. Two people I'd like especially to thank in this regard are Jen Hanrahan and Cynthia Campbell, who every year volunteered with enthusiasm and grace and greatly enhanced our worship through their participation. I also am deeply grateful to the clergy who participated in the candlelight Communion services, each year a real highlight of the week for me – Abby and Lelly Smith, Amy Bruch and Bob Fellows. I'd like

also to thank Charlie Soper for his steady, cheerful support – I'm sure I will never forget jogging briskly over to the Barn with Charlie on Friday after dinner in 2008 as we realized there were no chairs set up for the final service.

Dean Tom Weston was always a cheerful, encouraging presence during my tenure as Chaplain, and I am so grateful to him for his leadership. And of course, I am thankful to my morning coffee companions at the GEMS office, Bill Milford and Din Stevens, whose camaraderie and humor and friendship kept me whole and steady each morning as that night's service began gradually to come into sharper focus.

Somehow, every Vespers came together, thanks to the collective effort of many, many campers. Which leads me to my final thought: I feel excited indeed about the prospect of participating in worship under the leadership of the 2010 Chaplain, Bob Fellows. Bob and I have been friends since the early 1970's, and I know him to be a person of great integrity and depth, with a passion for community-building in general and for the NNESRE conference in particular.

I know he'll make a terrific Chaplain, and I urge everyone to be as generous with his or her time and talents when Bob calls as you were whenever I asked for assistance. I believe you will discover as I have that participating actively in worship at Winni brings with it many benefits – not the least of which is the chance to spend time with some wonderful people like Chaplain Bob.

And so, filled with the gifts and memories that these last three years have brought, I wish you all a blessed year. May God, and God's infinite and renewing Spirit, be present with each of us and among all of us until we meet again.

Love always,

Jim Peters

## News from Cynthia Wilcox-Smith and The Program and Evaluation Committee

The Fall Program & Evaluation Committee was held on 26 Sep. We reviewed teacher evaluations and the general evaluations from NNESRE 2009. It was a lively discussion with many good ideas to pass on to the Dean, Evening Coordinators, Trustees, and so on. We enjoyed a fabulous potluck lunch. Courses for NNESRE 2010 were selected and alternates named. We've come to the conclusion that a month and a half may not be enough time to recruit some people. We're asking the Winni community to help us so that we might be able to have a Rabbi or an Imam with us for NNESRE 2011.

One course that is frequently requested is an art course. We received one proposal this year. It would be nice to have more than one proposal in this area and it would be great if the folks who are requesting this kind of course could come to the Fall meeting to champion it when a vote is taken. *(Well, make that the fall meeting next year – Ec.P*

## Business Manager Retires

...Greetings Friends! Due to work commitments, Debbie and I were unable to be with you all this past year. We were there in spirit dancing to Alleluia, Montego Bay, and Shadows on the Wall in our dreams!

Some of you know that Winni 2009 was my final year as your Business manager. I've had a great time being your B.M. for 9 years. Thank you all for your support and help throughout the years!

I'm very happy to be turning the reins over to Ron Offutt. Ron has worked with me during the past year so you will find him very capable. I hope you didn't give the new guy too hard a time his first week! We want him to keep the job for while!

I hope you all had a wonderful week renewing

old friendships, making new ones and enjoying the beauty of God's magnificent creation.

My Love & prayers to all,  
*Jonathan Rowe*

## Letter from your New Business Manager

Hello Winni.

Ron Offutt here, your new Business Manager. My family and I have attended Winni for five years, so I've met many of you, but you may appreciate knowing a bit more about the new financial guy. Some may be comforted in knowing that my higher education degree was in accounting, but more importantly I've filled a number of volunteer financial roles for non-profits where the duties have been very similar to those of the Winni Business Manager. An interesting, yet confusing, sidebar: I sing/act as a chorister with the Yale Opera and I sing/play Bluegrass music (diversity, the spice of life).

There, having covered me, let's talk about Winni. Last summer we had 276 attendees and we have a current Operations Balance of about \$26,000. That's only about \$3,000 less than previous years which is very encouraging given a 10% reduction in attendance last summer and a \$10,000 donation made to GPC to support their Staff Cabin Building Fund. Our average Operations Balance of \$25,000 is necessary to weather the ride of monthly cash flow variations. Also, you'll be glad to hear that our second and only other account, our Endowment Fund, has a current balance of \$44,500. Due to market fluctuations, it had fallen to \$32,000 just eight months ago. ( This Fund is the foundation of Winni's stability and has been the source of GPC capital campaign donations in the past. Winni Twenty Ten . . . sounds good!!

Back soon with the brochure.

Yours, Ron.

## Teens and 'Tweens Triumph in 2009 Spit-Off

*Elders cede seed supremacy to younger generation*

Tensions rose throughout Friday dinner of Winni 2009 as competitors in all age brackets anticipated the Official 2009 Watermelon Seed Spitting Contest. Or maybe they just worried that the Evening Coordinators would turn up again with a seedless melon. (Sort of like showing up at a luau with a meatless pig.) But never fear, the Nisams learned that lesson a few years back and now follow melon markets closely. Explains Sue: "Seeded melons are now available only through an obscure order of monks in the remote hills of Azerbaijan who have taken a solemn vow not to mess with the reproductive wherewithal of fruits. And for \$10.95 extra they'll emblazon the "Catch The Spirit Logo" on a melon for you. I'm taking orders now."

As Sue rolled out the official tarp and distributed ponchos to the crowd of onlookers, eager contestants swarmed the melon table seeking the perfect projectile. Inter-generational rivalry simmered: wisdom and years of high pressure spit-off experience vs young, highly elastic lungs and brimming hormones. One by one, seasoned veterans like Wes Gundersen, Bob Ganley, and Tom Weston stepped up the line. Each delivered the seed-spitting equivalent of a girly throw. Seeds arced and splatted weakly to the ground a few paces down the mat. Meanwhile the young bucks and does, having trained all winter on Wii Seed Spit Smackdown, sent seeds whizzing by at just slightly subsonic speeds. In the end, Kyle McNeil took top honors in the over 18 category. Jaime Terrazino successfully defended her under-18 title with a *tour-de-force* spit that had some whispering "dynasty." (Others, "steroids.") The youthful champs were gracious in victory and the older folks were philosophical in defeat: "I spit therefore I am," ventured Gundersen. "The sun was in my eyes," said Ganley. Dean Tom Weston added, "Whippersnappers!"

## Closing Service Rounds Off Week

Having spit the good spit, campers moved on to the Barn for our closing service. It included a fond farewell from Chaplain Jim as he recalled how his position of being chaplain to others during the week gave him a new sense of relationship with the camp. With great music, communion, and our incredible parade of candlelight out of the barn (with it amazingly not burning at the same time), we moved into our final circle and sang a little more, laughed a little, cried a little, and wished each other "shalom" till next year.

## Winni Joke-off 2009:

*Same Time, Same Place, Same Jokes*

After the sacred annual experience of dancing our final dance with lights dimmed in the Barn, a large crowd of campers gathered around the Dock Road fire for the profane and now apparently annual Winni Joke-off. Once again the event hinged on the premise that any joke is funnier if delivered in a Scottish accent:

- Knock, knock, laddie
- *Who's there?*
- MacGuyver.
- *MacGuyver who?*
- Knock, knock, laddie
- *Who's there?*
- MacGuyver.
- *MacGuyver who?*
- Knock, knock, laddie
- *Who's there?*
- Orange.
- *Orange who?*
- Orange ye glad I dinna say "MacGuyver?"

Highlights of this year's event were an over-before-you-knew it quip regarding the chicken and egg controversy and the annual telling of the Brown Pants joke. (If you missed it, don't worry. It'll be told again.)

So, campers, start collecting your A list material now, polish those accents, and plan to get your joke on at the 2010 Winni Joke-Off. See you there!