

Sam Blumenfeld

2014 Vespers

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When I was four, I whacked on my pots and pillows with chopsticks and my family labeled me “a drummer.” When I slid across the kitchen floor to my dad’s music, I was called “a dancer.” And when I released my best Ace Ventura yelp on top of the couch, I was named “an actor.” At the time, these labels were nothing more than names for what I loved to do. I was content with the sense of identity these terms created because I felt they helped me discover where I belonged in my world.

I rejected football helmets for dancing shoes and signed up for theater camps instead of little league. I took an immediate shining to creativity and entertaining. As far as I knew, there was nothing weird about being a boy performer -- in fact, I was proud to be the only male dancer and actor at my school. However, when I was in second grade, my once impenetrable shell of self approval experienced its first crack after an incident on the playground.

My elementary school jungle gym had the same hierarchy as its natural jungle counterpart. Featuring a prototypical, dominant alpha male at the top of the pyramid. Let’s call him, “Neil.” I first met Neil when he demonstrated his physical prowess during a school recess football game. The game was Neil versus everybody else. I felt confident, on team “everybody else,” that we would walk away with an easy victory. That was before he threw the ball up into the air, ran into the end zone and caught his own pass, again and again.

My next encounter with Neil was on the jungle gym. I rocked side-to-side behind my classmates, eagerly waiting for a turn on the zip line. I knew there were only a few minutes left of recess and it was my last chance to try to make it all the way across the zip line. When my turn finally arrived, I saw Neil approaching the jungle gym. I took a deep breath, held on tightly, and attempted to push off before he entered my pathway. Like a tiny spider monkey on a vine, swinging into the mouth of a lion, I was horrified to realize I was on a collision course with Neil. Needless to say I didn’t

make it to the other side. As I lay on my back with a mouthful of woodchips Neil's instinctive words to me were, "You're so gay."

Although the ridiculous nature of this statement is almost funny in hindsight, at the time those insults really stung. I felt my heart sink into my Velcro sneakers as the bell rang and Neil went on with his royal duties. His words roared through my brain as I tried to make some sense of being branded "gay." First of all, I'm not gay; even at the time I already liked girls a lot and had already professed my love for my second grade girlfriend Caroline. Secondly, I had been around gay people and didn't consider being gay insult worthy. But what really struck me was how different this label felt. My other labels gave me a sense of identity and a place in society while Neil's "insult" seemed intended to leave me clutching onto the bottom rung of the jungle hierarchy and to change what I thought about myself.

Calling me "gay" did in fact change what I thought about myself, but not in the way he had hoped. After considering his words, I realized that in Neil's mind there was him and his group of friends, and there was me. But that degree of separation wasn't enough for him; he needed to create a cavernous distance between me and his minions. To him, pointing out my differences and shortcomings, such as the inability to say, successfully traverse a zip line, strengthened his status.

At my young age I had learned to accept the labels I was given; I embraced and even flaunted them. I was happy to dance at school social events and bask in my second grade limelight. Neil, however, was happy to use name-calling to block the spotlight. His insults led me to question all the titles I had adopted. Were the labels my family offered -- drummer, dancer, actor -- any more legitimate than Neil's? They were all attempts to classify me. However, the incredibly prejudiced and inaccurate label from Neil made me realize that all labels were simply other people's projections. Instead of changing my self-identity, Neil changed what I thought about the concept of identity in general.

I have come to believe we are not born with an established identity; rather, we enter the universe with an instinctive connection to the world

and an eagerness to explore. As we develop through our explorations, discovering what drives us to act, dance, play soccer, or hey even play football, people begin to categorize our actions and assign us labels. In reality, we aren't "theater geeks" or "jocks" or "incompetent zip liners." We are simply people who may enjoy acting, playing sports, or pretending to fly across the playground. Defensively, I had made Neil just as much of an outsider as he had made me, but now I think about it differently. To some, like Neil, life requires the labeling of others. I simply want to live and let live regardless of stereotypes, and maybe, just maybe to make it across the zip line.

My Name is Sam Blumenfeld, I'm an LIT in the Middler Division and this is my 7th summer at camp

Kevin and Mike Lubelczyk

2014 Vespers

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**Kevin:** 8 Harriet Circle and 172 Governor Wentworth Highway. Both of these addresses are places I call home. For the past two years I have spent a majority of my time at Bates College, and observed my time at 8 Harriet grow shorter and shorter. Being home for me these days is a rarity, so each time I pull into the driveway it is treated as a special occasion. I turn right onto Tapley drive with one of my favorite songs blaring from the malibu's outdated speaker system. I summit the hill that I rip stuck down countless times with my friends and family. I drive past my neighbors homes hoping that they have finally forgiven me for the multiple ding-dong-ditch episodes from my rambunctious middle school years. At last I pull into my driveway. I'm welcomed by the smell of fresh cut grass and flowers blooming. My yellow lab Mia springs up from her perch under her favorite bush and gallops to the car. Not far behind her, come my parents jogging over from whatever they were doing, ready for a hug and to catch up. I am home and I couldn't be happier.

**Mikey:** There has always been a warmth to that house at 8 Harriet Circle – every room is marked by the memories our family has shared there. The broken leg of the Ottoman causes me to recall the 2010 World Cup when our pig-pile celebration after Landon Donovan's goal caused the new piece of furniture to crumple under our weight. The red mark on one of the chairs surrounding the kitchen table brings back memories of when 5 year old me thought it was vitally important to get to the table early and claim the coveted "Red Chair" before my brothers arrived at the table for dinner. The "American League" sticker in our basement reminds me of my sweet victory over Kevin in a particularly intense game of ping pong, for I know that the sticker hides the hole in the wall left by the paddle he threw upon his defeat. We had placed the sticker there to hide it from my parents, of course, only telling them of the damage years later.

I love walking around the house and remembering these things. They make me feel safe, comfortable and completely at ease. They make me feel home.

Over the years, Kevin and I have come to feel at home not only at 8 Harriet Circle, but at Chase Point Road as well.

**Kevin:** Turn left onto Chase Point road states the GPS as me and “the boys” return from another eventful day off. We pull the Malibu into the Cadet parking lot and Sam and I take a final minute to yuck and prepare ourselves for the jungle that is Cadetica. When the clock strikes 5:08 we open the doors to find Brad walking shirtless in his stained shorts with a huge grin across his face welcoming us back. As we pass the knight, a swarm of 8-12 year olds engulfs us and we are bombarded with questions about the last 25 hours. I step into the cabin and get my kids psyched for cabin night. I am home and I couldn’t be happier.

**Mikey:** Giggi and I call to the boys to hop out of the water and line up along the dock. It’s the middle of second session and the sun is preparing to set, leaving streaks of red and orange on the clouds. It’s a sunset you only see at Belknap. Giggi and I instruct the boys to hold hands and prepare to honor an age-old tradition. We count down from 3 before all jumping in together and shouting “Summer ’14.” It’s stupid and hilarious, something 12 year old boys would probably refuse to do outside of camp. We rise from the water laughing before sitting back on the dock, dialing up Rivers and Roads on the speakers, and enjoying the timeless sunset. In that moment, I feel completely at peace. There’s nowhere in the world I would rather be. I feel home.

**Kevin:** A couple of weeks ago, I talked with my parents on the phone. They told me that my dad had gotten offered a new job and, since my brothers and I were now all out of high school, my parents had decided that it was best for him to take it. We’re moving.

**Mikey:** We are coming to realize that homes come and go. We will probably only have our home at 8 Harriet Circle for perhaps one week more. And the time will soon come when we must leave our home under the pines as well. But we are also coming to realize that we won’t be homeless. We will always feel at home as long as we are surrounded by the people we love. I feel at home when I’m ripping through the air toward

the ground from 14,000 feet because I know that David Dick is just feet away, enjoying the same experience.

**Kevin:** I feel at home chanting in the NYMCAH surrounded by my brothers after a hard earned victory in leaders soccer.

**Mikey:** I feel at home when I am sleeping in a closet in Sammy Donnelly's crowded UNH apartment because I can hear all my Belknap brothers snoring away in the next room.

**Kevin:** I feel at home on dancing on top of the ping-pong tables in cadet lodge, performing as DJ kevy kev.

**Mikey:** And I know I will feel at home in the next house my parents move to because even though there won't be that Ottoman missing a leg, that red mark on the chair, or that hole in the wall, I will be surrounded by my family. And that is what makes a home a home.

My name is Michael Lubelczyk. I am a leader in the Junior Division.

My name is Kevin Lubelczyk. I am a leader in the Cadet Division.

And this is our 8<sup>th</sup> summer at home.

Dave Irwin

2014 Chapel

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*Daedalus, the renowned Athenian craftsman, was stranded in exile on the island of Crete with his young son, Icarus. Longing to regain his freedom, Daedalus constructed two sets of wings one for him and one for Icarus, so that father and son could take flight in order to escape the troubled kingdom. With the wings finished, it was important for Daedalus to get Icarus's attention and to explain to him how to fly safely. The father's rules seemed simple enough. When they were flying, it was essential that the boy stay close to his father. In addition there were two essential principles to be observed. First, Icarus was told to fly high enough above the waves so that the water wouldn't damage his wings. Even more crucially, he was told not to fly too close to the sun, because the sun's heat would melt the wax holding his wings together.*

*Daedalus carefully explained these guidelines, but Icarus who was excited to take flight with his new wings, may not have taken it all in.*

*As they began their ascent, the feeling of flight was so exhilarating that Icarus wanted to fly even higher, and so up he went- to his father's horror. He had quickly forgotten his father's warning to keep to the middle course. Just as Daedalus had feared, the hot rays of the sun melted the wax and Icarus began falling fast, eventually falling to his death in the sea below.*

This account, borrowed loosely from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, is familiar to many of us. After reading the myth of Daedalus and Icarus, we are likely to come away with an understanding that by not listening to the sound advice of his father, Icarus flew too high and paid the ultimate price. It is easy for us to interpret the story as an instructive tale of sorts, one that warns against youthful rebellion. After all, as early as elementary school, we are attuned to the notion that myths are generally embedded with some kind of life lesson or moral teaching. But, in his essay entitled "Icarus in Our Midst," author and long-time headmaster of an all-boys school, Richard Hawley, offers an abrupt, yet wise analysis. Hawley writes, "The story of Icarus lacks power as a cautionary tale. Icarus's headstrong daring is actually more thrilling than dreadful. We tend not to ponder whether Icarus

was careless or defiant. “The essential truth about Icarus, Hawley continues, “is not that he is headstrong or reckless or disobedient. The essential truth is that he is a boy.”

So what exactly does Hawley mean? *Icarus is a boy*. Well, my best guess is that after more than forty years dedicated to boys education, Dr. Hawley observed some general patterns of behavior that he might categorize as “boyish;” not to place judgment or lay blame, but simply acknowledging certain actions or tendencies can be appropriately filed under the heading “boys being boys.” Overanalyzing the character of Icarus, Hawley might argue, robs us of appreciating an essential reality about boys that was as true for the ancients as it is for us today: **boys are enthusiastic by nature.**

So now, a brief disclaimer... I believe that gender exists on a spectrum and that there is no way to truly define the highly nuanced, subjective terms: male or female. I also believe that to a certain extent, the concept of gender is a socially constructed idea, meaning that over time, society has defined roles, behaviors, and ideals that we have come to associate with being male or female, respectively. Many of these traits that we categorize as masculine or feminine have negative impacts on boys and girls who are less able to define their own identities, especially when they don't see themselves in the masculine or feminine image that society projects onto them.

On the other hand, it is also absolutely true that boys and girls are, for lack of a better term, ‘wired differently.’ Testosterone is real, boys are generally more aggressive than girls, they hit more, they have more, or certainly, different energy. Boys tend to struggle with impulse control at a higher rate than girls. And we know that the male brain develops differently and at a different rate than the female brain. These are not value judgments or social constructs; they are biological facts.

So what does all of this mean for us? For this chapel talk?

Well, while I lack Dr. Hawley's depth of experience in boys education, I *have* spent the past ten years working with boys in various educational settings and the past 21 summers being a boy and being dedicated to our own brand of boy's education under the pines here at Belknap. Surely this counts for something, right?



When comparing my observations of boys in these two settings (camp and school), I've found that on the whole, similar patterns of behavior certainly emerge that support a general claim that whether at home, in school, or at camp, boys often demonstrate some universal, even predictable traits..

But, what I have found to be more interesting than these similarities are the ways in which boys at camp and boys at school can be so different. Now, this is not new territory for many of us. Here at camp, and in fact, behind this rock, we often hear about how boys and young men feel that they can be their truest selves at Belknap. We hear that Belknap frees boys from the social pressures they feel at school. As boys ascend the ranks at Belknap, they often grapple with why their camp selves can sometimes contrast so sharply with their actions outside of camp. We could probably all come up with our own lists of behaviors and dispositions that we find to be different between boys at camp and boys at school, but the most powerful disparity for me is the contrast between reluctance (meaning a general lack of eagerness) and enthusiasm (the spirit that Emerson tells us nothing great can be achieved without). So, here is what I've learned.

### **1. I've learned that in school, boys follow a different social code than they do at camp.**

Somewhere between the ages of 13-16 boys attempt to cast off what they regard as childish and chose to embrace an identity that's a better fit with their new emergent adolescent selves. What often results in school is an internal battle of sorts where boys curb their outward enthusiasm for all things 'boyish' and project a reluctance to even dip their toes back into the waters of their less developed selves. What I find interesting is to note how pervasive and obvious this struggle is on display in the hallways of schools, yet how rarely we see the same dynamic emerge at camp. In fact, Belknap has succeeded in turning this developmental norm on its head to such a degree that enthusiasm (or joy) as we have come to define it is an essential tenant of a productive, happy, and healthy camp stay. Imagine for a minute that your 8<sup>th</sup> grade art teacher tells the class that their task for the period is to grab all of the percussion instruments in the band room, create a song, and spend 30 minutes parading around the school performing their composition with zestful, uplifting energy. I picture my 8th grade self

sheepishly tapping on a cowbell, slowly, lifelessly, loafing through the halls of my middle school, embarrassed by the prospect of being seen by my friends, or even worse, my crush. My friends and I might mock how stupid and childish the assignment was as we snicker sarcastically in a common unwillingness to fully engage.

Now, imagine that you are at a Middler/Besserer/Senior arts period on a sunny Friday afternoon at Camp Belknap. Two leaders that you have looked up to and admired for the past five years offer up a similar task: grab an assortment of noise making gadgets, create a song, and then march around camp to entertain campers and leaders at every period. The contrast would be striking. In fact, just two days ago, I witnessed about twelve of you who are seated in this very chapel boisterously and proudly parading around Messer Field, jamming, improvising, smiling, and embracing this very assignment- boyish enthusiasm on full display and loving every minute of it. Your joyful energy was infectious and uplifting. Would you have responded the same way, with the same energy, had this been an assignment at school.

## **2. I've learned that boys engage differently in discussions at school than they do at camp.**

A scene from your 9<sup>th</sup> grade English class. ...

Teacher: "Today we will be starting our study of Thoreau's Walden. Before we begin, though, I have a question for the class. What does "a life well lived" mean to you?" The boys sit around the oval table, eying each other. It's a standoff to see who might be the first to give in; to be willing to open up; to be vulnerable in front of the entire class. The boys sit for a moment with the awkward silence that follow the teacher's prompt, palms now sweating at the thought of being called on when a dutiful, effusive, and articulate girl opens up the discussion- the boys offering a collective, silent, sigh of relief, shoulders eased by the opportunity to sink back into anonymity, at least for now. Surely this is an exaggerated and not necessarily fair portrayal of boy's in an English class, but as a generalist statement, it's pretty accurate. More often than not, I've found that girls are more willing to jump in and get the ball rolling around a discussion table,

more willing to assume the vulnerability that comes with putting one's ideas and feelings out for public consumption or scrutiny. The boys, too, have their own equally insightful contributions to offer, but it can take more work from the teacher to draw them out.

Now Imagine that you are with your cabin on cabin night. You are sitting around a campfire at Outpost Beach on a perfect late June evening and your leader asks you the same question. What does a life well lived mean to you? Would you be a little more eager to contribute?

During my years at camp, I've learned that boys crave dialogue with people who are serious about listening to them. In a camp conversation setting, boys tend to be more open and willing to listen to one another. They like to explore important life questions when they know others won't judge them or tell them what or how to think. Sure, our all male environment fosters a certain intimacy and comfort, and the glow of a campfire is a more conducive environment than the four bulletin-boarded walls of a classroom for reflective conversation, but I've found it to be true that boys just have an easier time engaging in dialogue here at camp. Moreover, at camp, boys don't seem as hesitant to present bold ideas, sharing their own truths, and emerging views on the world around them. They are eager to be heard and eager to listen.

### **3. I've learned that boys react differently to a call to service at school than they do at camp.**

A rainy spring day in your school suddenly takes a turn for the worse. A devastating storm moves through resulting in down trees and big branches strewn about the campus. Once the storm passes, your principal gets on the loud speaker and announces that she is asking all students and teachers to stay after school to help with the clean-up effort. The students sit and contemplate what they might have to give up: a baseball game, play practice, a bike ride through town with friends. Sure, many would be willing to lend a hand, but the initial thought is one of hesitation, maybe even frustration that such a messy, difficult chore is being assigned.

Now, imagine a similar event here at Belknap. The director and maintenance team announce a plan at dinner that will involve our entire

Belknap community to pitch in and clear camp of the storm debris. There is a buzz around the dining hall as directions are being clearly communicated. Leaders, campers, and staff are eager and excited to do their share of the work. The work will be done with determination and spirit, each boy taking pride in being called for a common purpose and collective action.

While a storm is a severe example, there are likely many, more frequent times in a boy's school experience when he is asked to take action and actively participate in his community. Volunteer and service opportunities are abundant in schools these days, but how often do you feel a visceral pull to pitch in, to bring a positive attitude and joyful energy to the enterprise? At camp, I've watched boys captivated and eager to lend a hand whether it be honoring the camp motto to help the other fellow, or to serve the needs of camp especially when the job is rough, dirty, and leaves you totally exhausted.

I've offered these 3 vignettes, not to make you feel guilty or ashamed by my general and certainly exaggerated interpretations of boys' behavior in schools, but simply to offer commentary on the contrast between the theme I introduced earlier: reluctance vs. enthusiasm. It was through the virtue of enthusiasm that the boys excitingly shared their music at the arts period on Friday, enthusiasm for genuine conversation that allowed boys to listen and learn from one another around the campfire at Outpost, and enthusiasm for being called to a purpose greater than ourselves that manifests through all of the big and small ways we energetically do our share of the work here at camp. So, why limit this noble virtue of enthusiasm to the 2 or 4 weeks spent here at Belknap. Why not allow enthusiasm to be a virtue in your life outside of camp too? Remember the story of Icarus not for its warning against youthful rebellion, but for the essential truth that boys are enthusiastic by nature; that you are enthusiastic by nature. Reluctance, complacency, and cynicism: these are the enemies of enthusiasm. Do your best to combat them, even when they seem to represent the default culture of your peer group. Instead, why not follow Emerson's instruction that asserts, "When you do a thing, do it with all your might. Put your whole soul into it. Stamp it with your own

personality.” So, be active, be energetic, be enthusiastic.” Or as we say here at Belknap, “Seek the Joy of being alive.”

My name is Dave Irwin. I am the Assistant Director slash Leadership Director, and this is my 23<sup>rd</sup> summer at camp.

David Dick

2014 Vespers

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Once upon a time, there was a longstanding igloo in midst of cold and weather-beaten terrain. Inside the igloo were a few good men and a spirited fire at the heart of the thick shelter. The men sat around this flickering fire. They played games, reminisced, and learned from one another as the time passed.

Their ancestors had built the igloo from the ice and snow around them. Beginning with a sturdy foundation, they pieced together a perfect home. The igloo, having been built so intentionally, and by such careful, forward-looking men, was passed down from generation to generation, and would continue to be passed down for the generations to come.

The good men felt safe inside the igloo. However, with the coming of each new year, the men were forced to leave the igloo and travel their separate ways. The men faced burdensome journeys during the seasons away from home. The weather was cold, perilous, and unforgiving, so, too, were the people the men encountered. The men were forced to combat the cold using dense layers of clothing, shielding them from the terrors of the outside world. Similarly, the men showed only their toughest faces, their mightiest masks, to the strangers beyond the igloo.

Yet even after the most taxing and grueling months, the men were always drawn back to their enduring home, fostered in the sturdy igloo, where they could show their true faces and be their true selves once again.

The fire was the most consistent comfort and joy to return to. Even if one man did not come back, he would always remember the fire, and he would still feel the effects of its warmth beyond the igloo. The warmth of the fire brought the men together. It kept them close physically, and it kept them close in spirit. The blaze would nourish and strengthen the men as the men would do the same for it, and it would always be there for them, to warm, revitalize, and prepare them for their next long journey outside the

igloo. It could never be extinguished. The men loved the fire, and they loved each other too.

My name is David Dick, I'm a Besserer leader, and this is my 9<sup>th</sup> summer feeling at home in the igloo.

James Bender

2014 Vespers

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Now here we go... "Do you want to fly or drive?" This is a question that Henry and I face every trip to or from school, out in Colorado. First off, I feel incredibly fortunate to be able to even have both options of driving and flying. It is also a blessing that I attend college with one of my best friends, my adventure buddy, and Belknap Brother; Henry Knutzen. Now going back to the opening question, Henry and I almost always choose to drive. Not only do we get the quality time of 28 hours in the car together, but we also get to see every place we pass between Boston, Massachusetts and Boulder, Colorado.

The first time Henry and I drove out to Colorado together, we were not alone. We were graced with the presence of Sammy 'Sails' Stewart and Gabe 'Rocco' Maggiotto. Just 4 Belknappers in a moving box traveling a quick 1800 miles. It is safe to say that we kept ourselves entertained, and loved every minute of the adventure through previously untraveled planes. (We even stopped in Chicago at the Burlingame residence for some of Illinois' best jambalaya made personally for weary travellers by Mrs. Burlingame.

During our first two years together out in Colorado, Henry and I have been on countless adventures together, with Sam Stewart joining us when he could. We have camped out at Rainbow Lakes in Roosevelt National Forest, seen Canyonlands and Arches National Parks in the desert in Utah, and even stood atop the tallest sand dune in North America together, in Great Sand Dunes National Park in Southern Colorado. After peaking organically, we both came to the realization that no one was higher up than us on sand in all of North America. Henry, Sam, and I have climbed a 14,000-foot snow-capped mountain called Gray's peak. On the way down, our progress was halted because there was a family of beautiful white mountain goats on the trail about 20 feet ahead of us. We hung out there for about an hour and simply observed. It was like a live episode of National Geographic!



For spring break this year, a few friends and I landed a beach house rental in Sunny San Diego. Knowing that my favorite adventures occur when I am surrounded by other Belknappers, I reached out to Brad Goldsberry, Bryan Kift, and Matthew Clifford Hadley who were all residing in the Los Angeles area at the time. After sharing my plans with them, they decided they would make the three-hour drive south for a night. I was ecstatic when I saw Bryan and Brad pull up to the house. Brad had also brought his dog Mila with him, so I then knew an adventure would have to be on the agenda, now that we have a scout dog. Not too long after that, Hadley pulls up in his rental Prius, which greatly resembles a large go cart. Despite Matt's unexpected arrival, we were all thrilled to see him. We watched the sunset on the roof of the house, overlooking the Pacific Ocean and a skyline of palm trees. I distinctly remember what a cool feeling that was...being with my brothers in a totally new and different environment. When it was time to head back to the mountains in Boulder, again the question arose whether we should drive or fly. This time I chose to fly, except I fell asleep at the gate and missed my flight. I made it back to the house only to be welcomed by the smiling, giggling faces of Matt and Brad, who immediately realized my mistake. I ended up driving back to Boulder and seeing awesome parts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado along the way. Again, although it was by accident, driving was much better than flying.

With all of these adventures already under our belts, Henry and I decided on our drive back to Massachusetts this year, we were going to mix it up a bit. We decided to drive north to South Dakota to see Mount Rushmore. We figured that the Black Hills of South Dakota would be more enjoyable than the familiar drive through the endless farmlands of Nebraska and Iowa. So we drove north six hours out of the way and spent the night at a campsite near Mount Rushmore. The next morning, we saw the national monument and the sculpting is extraordinary! The only other stop we made in South Dakota was at a Ma and Pa country store, where Henry made it out with a pound of butterfinger fudge... and a samurai sword.

I love these drives because we are able to see our Belknap Brothers along the way. Whether its seeing Brigham in Chicago for a brief hour, waiting in Conor's house at Hartwick College in New York to see him after a school event, or canoe trips in Winchester with Doyle, Jeb, Spry, and Katkavich, it is always worth it to reach out and connect with the network of Belknappers across the country. An aspect of being Belknapper that is often overlooked, is the time spent away from this beautiful place. I encourage all of you, from the front rows, all the way to the back, to connect with Belknappers during the offseason. The Belknap network is a larger community than you would think, and a lot of you live in areas where that network is strong. It is the times that I am with my Belknap Brothers the happiest, so I strive to make that time as often as possible.

My name is James Bender, I am a leader in the Junior Division, and this is my 11<sup>th</sup> summer striving to be with the boys all year.