

Sam Blumenfeld

2015 Vespers

I submitted my experimental film project on a Monday. It was due at 9 A.M. that Wednesday.

It was 10 P.M. on Tuesday and my best friend I had made at NYU, Chase, still hadn't started, or even thought of an idea, for his experimental film. If you crunched the numbers, you would realize, he had a mere eleven hours to think of a concept, get the shots, edit them together, export the film, and if he was lucky, sleep. As we stood on 3rd and 11th in the freezing January weather discussing Chases ideas for the project, I couldn't help but feel anxiety for his lack of a plan. How could he allow this much time to pass before starting his assignment and be able to function without being paralyzed by stress? The contrast between my way of doing things, getting my work done early with time to relax, and his way of doing things, waiting until the last second to get started, is obvious. However, the moral of the story to come is not that Chase can throw something together if he has to, it is that Chase thinks differently than Sam, and surprisingly to Sam, that's okay. In fact it's better. A good friend should challenge your way of thinking and stimulate thought. Making this type of friend is coincidently not unlike making a good film, but more of that later.

With eleven hours to go it became obvious that Chase had to start soon, and like all of our projects, it was understood that the film would be done collaboratively. And in a moment of off the cuff creativity, Chase suggested, "How about I just film you walking around the city narrating our conversation?" Now, I know what you're thinking, "Sam you're such an excellent conversationalist, that sounds like the best idea ever." And while you may be 100 percent correct, I was still apprehensive about essentially winging a school project. But, flaws and all, I had to put my trust in Chase (this stories protagonist). In movies, a flawed protagonist is more compelling than

a perfect one. Friends are no different. Beware the error free main character or hero. Don't hang with or write about somebody whose perfect, it gets old. So I trusted my flawed hero Chase and said "Hey it's your movie, why not? Lets wing it" What ensued was a downright silly walk around the city in which I talked at the camera and added commentary on whatever Chase chose to take a picture of. The video featured conversations with our friends from the Caribbean about jerk chicken, the very different descriptions of New York storefronts by yours truly, and of course the indistinguishable off-camera commentary by the low voiced wit-master Chase. Naturally, the diverse mix of material and cast of characters made for an entertaining walk. We had to ensure that our city walk passed the anonymity test. If a reading of the dialogue of those speaking isn't unique and varied enough for the reader to easily determine who is saying what, then you've got a boring conversation on your hands. This anonymity test should carry over into real life too. Don't spend time with a bunch of people who act the same, its boring. Be a group of Avengers, not Gru's minions.

After we were done shooting at around midnight, Chase went on his merry way, edited all night long, exported at around 8 in the morning, and walked into class at 9:30 with a bags-under- eyes smile that can only be described as "post all nighter hipster", a classic NYU look. But don't let Chase's sleepy appearance phase you, like in a film, one must never cast their actors solely by looks. Who would have thought that Adam Sandler would have been the perfect fit for the classic piece of cinema Jack and Jill? Perhaps that was a bad example. But the point remains; don't judge a book by its cover. Chase and I showed our project to the class and it was excellently received. Our peers commented on how it really captured our relationship. Being that we are best buds, I was pretty stoked.

When you break it down, Chase's style of doing things is okay, and so is mine. One of the most important rules of filmmaking is to have a plan, but enjoy the detours. Make your storyboards, but always get that extra shot of the lake if the time is right. It is in those spur of the

moment spaces between our plans and ideas that our personalities can shine in their truest spontaneity. These glimpses of ourselves end up making movies, memories, and time spent with friends, better. In the spaces between plans we can figure out who's an Avenger, and who's Adam Sandler. Chances are that if you know someone who would make for a great protagonist in a movie, they would make for an even better friend.

My name is Sam Blumenfeld I'm a Leader in the Middler Division,
And this is my 8th summer at camp.

Jack Colligan

2015 Welcome Vespers

As is tradition, I shall begin this vespers with a gratuitous welcome to each and every one of you —welcome. Timi-Hi and welcome back to the leaders and campers who are returning for another summer below some pine trees. I know you are excited to get first session underway, so I aim to be brief.

Please raise your hand if this is your first summer at camp – don't worry you're not alone. Wow! Welcome, bienvenue, wilkommen, and welcome! I am privileged and jealous to witness your entry to the Belknap brotherhood this summer. I hope your camp experience is as positive for you as it was for those have come before you.

Every evening we assemble here, in the grove, and listen to different Leaders talk about topics of their choosing. This is a time for reflection, unity, and occasionally zoning out after a busy day. I've decided to use my minutes behind the rock to reflect on the reasons why I believe summer camp is more important in 2015 than ever before. It is important to know why summer camps exist and why Belknappers specifically love coming back for more.

* Firstly, camp develops independence. Each time we arrive at camp for a new summer we

feel a nervous excitement for what lies ahead. This feeling comes from the anticipation of new experiences and the challenge of making each summer the best one yet.

When we spend time away from the routine of home life — away from our parents, teachers, coaches, and schoolmates— we grow. We leave our comfort zones behind and rely on internal fortitude for guidance and protection. This exercise teaches us things about the men we are becoming. We find answers to previously unasked questions. Like, what do we look for in a friend? What personality

traits do we admire in others? What do we take for granted at home that we now miss with a new found appreciation?

At camp, we get to wake up every morning and ask ourselves – “how do *I* want to spend today?” Camp gives us the freedom to answer this question by engaging in all manner of fun activities that we could never do at home.

If we open ourselves to the joy of this community and say YES we will not waste these weeks. This, however, is easier said than done especially if you’ve had a tough school year. Fortunately, many of my best, most formative summers here came after a particularly hard off-season. In this way you camp can serve as your spring board, helping you start school in the fall with positivity and momentum. By the end of camp, you won’t find yourself a “new man”– instead I think you’ll find that you are more yourself than ever before. Belknap helps you be your best self.

* Secondly, camp teaches us about community building and interdependence. Just as we do in

the dining hall, we sit in this chapel with our cabin. Your cabin mates will define your session just as much as you define theirs. You will quite literally grow up with the boys in your division. This makes for an incredibly supportive community that knows you, cares about you, and – most importantly - will stay with you long after your time at camp comes to a close.

Through the beauties of camp duties we witness the positive impact of doing our share of the work. Camp traditions remind us that a community is larger than the individual. Our traditions were here long before we arrived and will persist through time, passing on the same values, humility, and joy to others. Camp is a community of kindness, trust, and exuberance. So be with the boys.

* Finally, camp teaches you a respect and reverence for the natural world. Just ask Chip or

young Radagast Germain and they'll show you the way. Today, if aliens landed on earth and observed humans they would report that we live in large, crowded cities, have a rampant addiction to technology, and exhibit an irrational fear of nature. As humans, we work hard to control the natural world. Constantly minimizing its impact on our daily lives and harnessing its resources with little regard for negative consequences. Even the expanding effort to reduce environmental degradation focuses on how humans can engineer nature to solve its own problems. Very few decision makers recognize that any natural equilibrium is one of constant change.

In our "real" lives our technology is constantly bombarding us for attention and is quite literally changing the way our brains process information. I recently saw a funny cartoon where a man looms over a smart phone yelling: "send this photo! play that song! Fetch me the news!" then, in the following picture, the situation is reversed and a giant smartphone looms over the man yelling: "read this message! Find me wifi! Charge my battery!" Camp liberates our thumbs and teaches us that life's best moments can occur when technology is left inside. Get back to basics.

Today, we hear that the environment is hurting and hurting us along with it. We need to fill up the world with children, parents, teachers, and policy makers who have experienced how miraculous and delicate the natural world is. For the environment, and at camp, Less is more. More is better.

* Advice I've received from teachers, college counselors, career servicers, and even some of my best

friends make me concerned that summer camp is under attack. But, their advice originates from a society that salutes individual achievement and craves applause. Just look at what it takes to get into a top school or to land a decent job interview.

This type of competition is very negative and completely different from what I see at camp. Competition at camp strengthens our

community and encourages us to strive to be our best self. Competition in the outside world is often selfish and creates zero sum situations where one person's achievement comes at the expense of a runner up.

We lucky few Belknappers have a responsibility to defend the great American camping tradition against this threat through the leadership of our example. By building up others and sharing camp values, we teach people in the "real" world to love themselves, their community, and even nature. In the mean time... **welcome** to camp and know that we're going to make 2015 the best summer yet.

My name is Jack Colligan And this is my 14th summer at camp.

Brad Goldsberry

2015 Vespers

The last two weeks you have been completely present, at general swims, Adams cup games, and on cabin nights. You've enjoyed family style dining with your Belknap brothers who you have known for years and additional friends you just met for the first time. You sat at a table with your friends and actually asked each other about their day and figured out what one super power they wish they could have. You have gotten back to basics by writing letters to friends and family who would have otherwise received a text, call, or a crowd pleasing snap chat. You have risen every morning to brush your teeth, make your bed, and clean your cabin, you have experienced independence yet interdependence while trying to truly be your best self. We have practiced less is more by enjoying amazing sunsets and summer campfires accompanied by memorable conversations with our old and new brothers. These experiences are not tainted in anyway by excessive technology or the other common distractions we all face outside this sacred place. Your time at this camp has been nothing short of beautiful. Saying goodbye to such an unbelievable place is not an easy task and it is one that everyone struggles with. Find solace in the way you have lived your life the last two weeks as well as the time you have spent here in previous summers, you are what makes this camp so special. We are all extremely fortunate to have found a place where we can be with boy's summer after summer. Every single one of you has played a part in Belknap's development, take comfort in this idea as you head back home tomorrow. You have participated in a place that prides itself on making good boys better. You have helped develop a culture here that will forever safeguard boyhood. You have put god first, the other fellow second, and yourself last. Always be proud of yourself, you have all done it. We all have heard that you should not say goodbye, because saying goodbye means going away, and going away means forgetting, but I disagree. You will never forget this place or

the people that you met here for as long as you live. So tomorrow, enjoy the goodbye boys, smile and say goodbye proudly, for you have sought the joy each and every day that you have spent here and it has been truly incredible.

My name is Brad Goldsberry, I'm a leader in the cadet division, and this is my 14th summer at camp.

Jack Lucey

2015 Vespers

Growing up, I was surrounded by what seemed like a constant chorus of adults telling me to remember my please's and thank you's. Whether I was in the classroom, out to dinner, or at camp, I was reminded time and time again of these basic manners. And, dutifully, I would always say these words whenever I got something from someone else. However, for a very long time, they were only that – words. Little meaning stood behind my please's and thank you's because I didn't understand what they really meant. For me, as the young kid that I was, there was no knowledge of what I was truly thanking people for.

In elementary school, my mom always had snacks for my brothers and me. Whether it was a Caprisun, goldfish, cheezits, or any variety of chips, there was always something on the table for me when I got home from school at the end of the day. And, as customary, I would extend a quick “thanks mom” before diving into the food. But again, this thank you was a very quick phrase, one said almost entirely due to the fact that it would allow me to start eating immediately as I walked in the backdoor. All I was thinking about was the food on the table when I said “thank you” – it was simply a means to get what I wanted. What I should've been thinking about was the person who put the food there.

When I was a freshman in high school, I learned that my mom had had cancer while I was in elementary school. Fortunately, she never required chemotherapy, and therefore was able to keep her hair. She made the conscious decision to never tell me or my brothers, not wanting us to worry. She just wanted us to be carefree boys. It was at this time that I realized what I should've been saying thank you for for all those years. Her unending compassion, effort, and love were hidden behind small gestures that took more strength than I've ever been able to muster myself. The thank you's shouldn't have been for

the snacks – they should've been for everything she had to go through to put those snacks on the table in front of me, for all the effort she put into making my life as carefree as possible.

A lot of the time, please's and thank you's are pleasantries. They are a part of normal conversation, a small piece of the puzzle. They can be simple gestures. But other times, they can mean something much, much more. Never forget your please's and thank you's, and always remember why you say them.

My name is Jack Lucey, I am a Leader in the Cadet Division, and this is my 9th summer under the pines.

Andrew Lull

2015 Vespers

It was the second Thursday of the 3rd session my first year in the Besserer division. Coming out of breakfast I had heard some of my cabin mates talking about going sailing together, which made me attracted to the idea as well. I really wanted to go sailing, although I had a few problems. First, that I don't know how to sail, and my second was that I didn't have anyone to sail with. I began asking my friends if they knew how to sail, and would want to teach me how to sail. After talking to many people who didn't know how to sail or were unable to go sailing, I asked someone whom I had never talked to before. We were in the same division and we knew who each other were, but we had never really had interacted. My five years at camp had made me comfortable trying new things and meeting new people, therefore, I was willing to go spend an hour on a boat with someone I had never talked to before. I felt good while I was doing my camp duties because I knew that I was in for a great morning of sailing. That all changed when I actually got in the boat and wonder, "What are we suppose to talk about for a full hour?" It was my oh no moment, when I actually had to act on my imagination that this would be a great bonding experience for us and we would end up becoming very close. He agreed to sail the full time and I would just sit in the boat and paddle if necessary. During the hour the conversation flowed well and we did end up bonding. We talked about how our sessions were going, what our lives at home were like, and basically anything that came to our mind. We were open to any topic and felt comfortable telling each other whatever popped into our head. That was the first time I ever talked to Asher Abrahams, who was an LIT here last summer.

But what do I care, I have gone sailing many times since and I still don't know what I am doing when I get out on the boat. I have made many friends and have only talked to Asher twice since. This outing

was special to me because I proved to myself that I could try something new and try to meet new people. Camp has put me in a lot of situations like that since; all have had a positive effect on me as a person. I am able to have truly deep conversations with basically strangers, a thought which would have scared me 8 years ago. I learned that exploring is the key to life; you have to try new things in order to find what you truly like. For me sitting on a boat, even if I have no control over what happens, is a calming experience. You are out on the water with only your crewmates, there are no races to be won or place you have to be, you are free to just bond and enjoy life. This is a big switch from my normal pure competition life style. I play 5 seasons of sports each year, but I have always found that I refrain from getting too competitive at Belknap, even during Adam's cup. To me Camp is a place to relax and get away from your normal life style. That is the reason we don't use technology and offer activities that most kids don't get to do every day. Being out on the boat with Asher taught me to cherish the yuck, the friends you make and the people you interact with will stay with you longer than any final score of a sports game. I always like to slow my life down and hangout when I am at camp, because I never feel that there is time to do that at home. These are all things I wouldn't have learned about myself without that day.

Early in my camp career I would only chose sports periods that I was comfortable with, I would attend basketball, baseball, football, and street hockey periods only. However, since then I have been able to try all that camp can offer because I was willing to. The best advice I can give to all of you sitting in this chapel, from Seth down to the front rows is to try something new every day, you may hate it and never want to do that thing again, but at least you tried and experienced a new part of life. But there is also the chance that you may love it and never look back and if that happens you will be forever thankful that you listened to this vespers.

So now be the first one to slide into second base on a rainy day at kick ball, try an Arts period if you have never gone before, or talk to

someone you have never met. Who knows, it may pay off in the same way Sailing did for me.

My name is Andrew Lull, I am a LIT in the senior division, and this is my 8th summer at camp.

Evan Sayles

2015 Vespers

Many millennia ago, the Continent was divided into seven warring nation-states. They fought for thousands of years, with no side claiming victory. An endless battle, locked in eternal stalemate. Over time, some of these nation-states fell, lost to history forever, until only four remained: the warlike people of Orth, the defensive nation of Strathsylvania, the futuristic citizens of New Valdecia, and Qatara. Instruments of war were developed, gaining each side an advantage over the others. **AS A RESULT, AN UNEASY TRUCE SETTLED OVER THE FOUR LANDS.**

NOW, THIS TRUCE IS COMING TO AN END. IN ORTH, NEW LEADERS ARE COMING TO POWER, MORE WARLIKE THAN BEFORE. STRATHSYLVANIA, FORMALLY CONTENT TO STAY WITHIN ITS OWN BORDERS, HAS BEGUN TO MAKE RAIDS ON THE OTHER NATION-STATES. NEW VALDECIA'S DEVELOPMENT THREATENS TO DEplete ITS RESOURCES UNLESS IT EXPANDS SOON. QATARA GROWS TIRED OF THE INCOMPETENCE IT HAS SUFFERED FOR ETERNITY.

THIS IS THE WORLD YOU ARE THRUST INTO. YOU MUST CONQUER OR BE CONQUERED, FIGHT FOR YOUR LIVES OR BE OVERRUN. THIS IS THE GAME, AND THIS IS WHAT SHAPED THE PERSON YOU SEE STANDING BEFORE YOU.

8:30 a.m., Friday July 31, 2009. A boy sits silently at his Middler table in the dining hall. He flips his bowl cut absent-mindedly, waiting for announcements to end so he can get on with his riflery sign-up. He likes riflery – there's plenty of time to read while sitting on the bench, which is good. He's more of a thinker than a doer. He doesn't go to athletic periods, nor does he try very hard in Adams Cup: he doesn't want to be judged for making a mistake on the field, so he chooses to do nothing on the field instead.

Aggressive drum noises

His wandering attention is suddenly brought back to the dining hall as Jimmy DiStasio stands up and makes drumming noises, intensified as they echo in the rafters. Chris Lash, in a booming voice, recounts a fantastic tale—of a foreign land engulfed in eternal war, of four armies in need of brave men in a grand conquest for eternal glory. It sounds like a trailer for an action-fantasy movie the likes of which the world has never seen. The boy at his Middler table needs to be a part of it.

9:30 a.m. Clark Field looks amazing. There are cones all around, soccer balls in each corner, and an incredible pile of red Voit balls in the circle in the middle of the field. Our protagonist and nearly ninety other players gather around the circle and listen for nearly twenty minutes to what may be the most complicated rules in camp. At the end, the boy winds up inside a soccer net in a corner of the field. The boys in this corner, which is named New Valdecia, fall silent. The field, also known as The Continent, had been bustling with activity thirty seconds ago. Now, every person stands perfectly still inside his respective soccer net, letting the tension build, waiting for the start. Suddenly, the bell chimes a golden tone across the field, and The Game has begun. Everything is madness for the next half hour, with all kinds of strangely-named balls flying in every direction, each serving a different purpose. Young warriors dash this way and that, aiding the defense of his nation-state or teaming up to conquer another. Time passes and some warriors turn politician, arranging safe passage through foreign lands or discussing a strategy for sabotage against an overlord nation-state. It's all so complicated; it's all

so perfect! The Middler boy runs alongside athletes, thinking of different ways to win while his bowl cut flies behind him. He's found something worth running for – a game equal parts mental and physical.

9:30 a.m., Friday, July 20, 2012. Clark Field looks amazing. There are cones all around, soccer balls in each corner, an incredible pile of red Voit balls in the circle in the middle of the field, and the boy surveys

the nearly ninety players gathered around the circle. He and three friends who he'd met on the Continent have worked to keep The Game alive after its inventors moved on. They've gone to every possible Clark Field Special since the first Game. They've spent weeks creating a twelve-page rulebook. They've made flags. And now, they've been given the opportunity to run their own Game. For our protagonist, nothing could be better. He'd grown tremendously from his former Middler self three years ago. He lost the bowl cut, and he found confidence. He found a place he could fit in as a non-athlete among athletes. He found a way make a lasting impression. And on this field, he finds himself reading the same rules that were once read to him.

A great silence has fallen over the Continent. The warlike people of Orth, the defensive nation of Strathsylvania, the futuristic citizens of New Valdecia, and Qatara all prepare for war. The warriors of each nation-state grow tense as they await their chance for glory. With a flick of the boy's wrist, the bell chimes a golden tone over the field. The Game has begun.

People call me lots of names, and one of them is Evan Sayles. I'm a Senior LIT and in a few days I'm getting a corny green jacket.