



# From The Heart

News For The Strong of Heart

Summer 2021

## On Whose Shoulders Do I Stand?

By Ellen M. Flight

At Grandmothers' Garden on the Songadeewin campus, there is a brass plaque that says "We stand on the shoulders of the women who came before us." The garden was given to Songa by my parents in honor of my grandmothers. During this time of reentry from a year of global pandemic, it reminded me to think about the women, other than family members, on whose shoulders I stand. Who were the early influencers who got me to where I am today? So, I made a list of non-family members and how I see their influence in my life.



Grandmothers Garden plaque

I was a late reader and one of my all-time favorite books from childhood, and now, is *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White. In the story both Fern and Charlotte show ways to support others and keep the bonds of friendship. From the first day of his life, Fern,



Grandmothers Garden, between the Harter Lodge and the Fraser Dining Hall at Songadeewin

who was up early that day, saved Wilbur, the runt of his litter. Two lessons here: get up early to start your day and speak up when something needs saving, whether for yourself or another. And from Charlotte, a lesson in friendship and how to manage even ornery folks like Templeton. Both Fern and Charlotte showed their friendship to Wilbur by showing up and being a steady supportive presence in his life.

I attended the University of Chicago Laboratory School when I was in elementary school. The principles on which the school was founded came from John Dewey and his progressive educational thought. There were a variety of innovative programs at the school, and when I was in fourth grade our teachers organized camping trips for our combined 4th and 5th

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## The Power and Impact of an Eight-week Summer at Songa

Every year I have conversations with parents trying to decide if their daughters should move from spending four weeks to eight weeks at Songa. A few years ago I asked some former campers about their experiences as eight-week campers and received remarkable responses to my query. In addition, a former camper parent (soon to be staff parent) also

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## Shoulders

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grade class. My teachers, Mrs. Marx and Mrs. Wheeler, didn't do all the planning themselves. There was a student organizing committee. Even though I struggled academically and was repeating the fourth grade, they allowed me to be on the organizing committee. We had to collect and organize all the equipment we'd need by borrowing it from families and faculty. We had to plan menus, shop and then divide the food and equipment into campsite groups. I felt really proud to be on the committee and I learned that I could be good at the work of the committee even if I struggled to read and do math. Their belief in me allowed me to see that success in school (and life) isn't necessarily just about academic achievement. (And I went on to run the Wangan Room at Keewaydin for nine years and now I run a summer camp...early training!)

When I was in the fifth grade we had to do a report on a famous person. I chose Jane Addams of Hull House. We lived in Chicago where she founded her settlement house, adding to my interest in learning more about her. I was greatly intrigued by her commitment to those who were clearly less advantaged than herself, and that she used her education to help make life better for many. Settlement Houses, created mostly by women in immigrant communities, supported the working poor with education, childcare and medical attention. In addition, Jane Addams worked to end child labor. She was only the second woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize before World War I.

As many of you know, I attended Songadeewin on Lake Willoughby starting when I was nine and finishing

on staff when I was 17. Songadeewin gave me many opportunities to see women and girls in leadership positions, from team captains to team song leaders and staff who were running activities of all sorts. Along with her husband and brother-in-law, Aline Harter ran the camp for most of my years there. I was never sure of the inner workings of the camp administration, but in my mind, Aline was in charge. Her voice seemed equal to her male counterparts and I could see that she did a lot of the work that made the camp run. She showed a commitment and belief in the camp, campers and the staff. Even if there were times when I thought she was a bit scary, I knew she always had the best interest of the camp and the people there in the forefront. In addition, she was my favorite nature teacher, one of my favorite activities at camp.



*Jack and Aline Harter with Jack's parents Peg and Doc Harter – Songa on Willoughby Directors*

When I got to college I was very fortunate to have Dr. Johanna Zangrando as the section leader for my freshman course in American Studies. It was her first year on the

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## Shoulders

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faculty at Skidmore. Soon after the first semester I decided to major in American Studies and she became my advisor. She and I have remained in touch throughout the years and I even stayed with her when I recently attended my 40th college reunion. In the classroom and in conversations in her office she opened my eyes to the social history of the U.S., feminism in various eras of history, and inequality issues related to race, class, and gender well before white privilege was a term or was really understood. She also showed me how to be an independent woman pursuing her passions as a teacher, researcher and community member. She modeled how having a tight group of women friends and colleagues can enhance one's work and personal life. Her commitment to the college involved doing the committee work and deep thinking that makes an institution better for everyone. She really cared about her students, and one year she even drove me from Skidmore to Keewaydin because I didn't have a ride.

My first teaching job was at Georgetown Day School in Washington, DC. As I was finishing up my third year of teaching, a woman I had met at the coffee pot in the business office took me aside and shared some important advice. She told me that in the coming year I would be eligible to have money matched by the school for a retirement account with TIAA/CREF. Retirement was something I hadn't really thought about, but Arlene Gilbert was really clear that as a woman, one needed to look out for one's own financial future, whether married or single. She explained compound savings and how my 5% raise would cover my

part of the contribution, and when matched by the school would result in a 10% raise. Her advice showed me that we need to look out for our younger colleagues and be upfront about financial issues when they will help someone else. Her advice put me ahead of the retirement saving curve. Ultimately that allowed me to transfer my retirement savings as I changed jobs within the independent school network and now here at Keewaydin. I credit her intervention with helping me get on the path to saving for retirement and planning for my financial future.

After five years of teaching in Washington, DC, I moved to the Boston area to teach at Charles River School. Here the school head, Anna Jones, taught my twenty-something-self many lessons. She modeled for me how to speak directly and compassionately with parents. I believe she was the person who told me that even though I wasn't a parent, I knew more about seventh and eighth graders than most parents, and therefore had an important and valuable perspective to share with them. Combining that with their knowledge of their child, we could work together in the best interest of that student. The other thing I learned from her was that adults, even those who seem stuck, continue to grow and evolve, and it's important to be patient with them, just as she was with me.

In 1988 I had been working at Keewaydin Dunmore for about nine summers when I learned that Dan Patch would be retiring as the head of Annwi. I had been teaching for several years and being the director of Annwi seemed like a logical next step in my work at Keewaydin. My father had been the director of Annwi when I was a very small child and so

this was a job I was very interested in doing. At the time there were not many women working at Keewaydin and certainly none in leadership roles. What I did remember was a picture of the Wigwam Directors from the 1950s which included a woman named "Mrs. Duke." She and her husband, Duke Reilly, had been running Annwi when he became a school superintendent and could no longer come to camp for the full season. So, for a year or two she had been in charge of Annwi. This provided me with some precedence when I reached out to Waboos Hare and asked to be considered for the position. Seeing a woman in a leadership position provided just the role model I needed.



*Keewaydin Wigwam Directors during the late 1950s including David S. Flight, Jim Fullerton, Waboos Hare, Mrs. Duke and Abby Fenn*

After serving on the Leadership Team at Keewaydin as the Director of Annwi for almost ten years, Keewaydin purchased the old Camp Dunmore property and decided it was time to open a girls' camp – what would become the Songadeewin of today. A board committee was established about 18 months before we were to open in 1999. Anne Adler was the chair of the committee. Julie Stauffer, along with some wonderful and committed men from the board, were also on the Girls' Camp

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## Shoulders

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Committee. Once again entering my life were some strong and smart women serving in leadership positions who helped me see the possibilities of what I could do as Songadeewin's first director on Lake Dunmore. The support and belief in Songadeewin on Lake Dunmore by the entire committee was invaluable.



*Julie Stauffer and Anne Adler, Keewaydin Board Members from the Girls Camp Committee*

In the summer of 1998 it was suggested by the aforementioned committee that I should go on a trip to visit some exemplary girls' camps that had been operating for a long time. Carol Sudduth was serving on the Board at that time and was the director/owner of Wyonegonic Camp for Girls in Maine. She invited me to come spend a few days at her camp and called upon her friends in the area who also ran venerable girls' camps. During my time in Maine, I visited five girls' camps and met with some wonderful women directors who had been leading girls' camps for a combined total of more than 200 years. I was impressed by their welcoming nature, the wisdom they were willing to share, and their commitment to developing strong girls and young women. I was also struck by the stories they told of how they supported one another in their

work, their sense of comradery with one another, and giving back to the camping industry. Indeed, as I became more involved in the American Camp Association New England (ACANE) section and the Vermont Camp Association (VCA), some of these women continued to mentor me. I believe the example they set for me all those years ago contributed to my commitment to new young leaders of camps through my work with the ACANE's New Camp Director Workshop and my leadership of the VCA.

A bit closer to home I found enthusiasm and support in my leadership of Songadeewin on Lake Dunmore from three wise and welcoming older Songa women. They were Lolly McPhee Burton, Dorothy Ann Negus Gentil and Peggy Breed Marsh. All three had parents who worked at Keewaydin and they had grown up at one or more of the camps. From before we opened, their belief in Songadeewin on Lake Dunmore was steady and strong. They continued with that support unabated until they died in their 90s, or in Peggy's case when she was 100 years old. In the early years I would get a letter each June from Lolly where she offered her support and belief in what I was doing and the enthusiasm she felt for her "grands" who would be campers that season. Dottie Ann visited her granddaughter Claire Gentil regularly



*Ellen with Peggy Breed at the launch of Expedition 2012*



*Emily and Lolly Burton when Lolly was given the Strong of Heart Award*

while Claire was a camper and staff. After our first summer she brought framed photographs of Songa on Willoughby for us to hang in the Manor House. She also attended the first Old Timers' Circle and shared stories from her time at camp. Peggy visited us almost every summer since 1999 and took part in special events. She had a keen interest as new buildings and facilities were built. She paid a special visit to see the new Arts Village and attended our 20th reunion in 2018. Their love and support of Songadeewin and me made all the difference in the first 20 years of Songadeewin on Lake Dunmore. I feel blessed to have known all these women upon whose shoulders I stand today.



*Ellen with Dorothy Ann Negus Gentil at her home in Richmond, Virginia*



# ~ THE KEEWAYDIN ANNUAL FUND ~

**Each time we overcome an obstacle,  
we grow in ways we never dreamed possible.**

At camp each summer, our campers learn to stand strong when faced with obstacles and challenges. With grit and determination, through teamwork and hard work, with a sense of humor and belief in oneself, obstacles are overcome.



We continue to face challenges in 2021, from the closure of camp at Temagami to Covid-preparedness measures requiring reduced enrollment at Dunmore and Songadeewin. Your support of the 2021 Annual Fund will help us stand strong in the face of these obstacles, while we continue to offer our kids the best camp experiences ever.

Please give today at [Keewaydin.org/give](https://www.keewaydin.org/give)

## Eight Weeks

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*agreed to write about the eight-week experience from the parent perspective. In asking the former campers to respond, I did agree to keep their identities minimal as you'll see below. I am honoring my agreement by using only their initials and a bit of information about each.*

I spent my first summer at Songadeewin in 2007 when I was nine-years-old and had just finished the fourth grade. I signed up for eight weeks and it turned out to be the best decision I ever made. Going into the third week of my first year, I had not passed my swim test and was still getting to know the other girls in my cabin. However, by midseason my confidence skyrocketed, I became more outgoing, completed my swim test, and could not wait for the second month to start because I would be able to go on my first canoeing trip. If I had gone home after four weeks, I would not have been able to lay the foundation I needed, which would have prevented me from progressing and thriving on future trips. I found that eight weeks allowed me to reach my maximum potential because there were more opportunities to do so. Eventually it allowed me to have the best possible



2018 Eight Weekers

Verendrye trip that I could have asked for. While I may not be going on camping trips every summer now, going to Songadeewin for eight weeks allowed me to build skills needed to be successful outside of camp; skills such as communication, dedication, collaboration, motivation, and independence. Additionally, I became close with girls from both months, who I am still friends with today. We get together as often as possible and reminisce about our favorite memories. All of us recall how we loved celebrating Fourth of July and Valentine's Day in the first month at camp and competing in the Songathon and Canoe and Kayak races in the second month. One of our biggest topics of conversation is which month we preferred and

each time we come to the same conclusion: we can't decide. While it can be scary spending a long time away from home at a young age, I would encourage anyone to spend the full summer at Songadeewin because the positive impact will stay with you for the rest of your life.

*A.H. 2007-2013, seven eight-week summers, 23-years-old when writing this reflection*



My first summer as an eight-weeker was when I was 11-years-old and was only my second year at Songa. Going to camp longer allowed me to experience more of camp and grow more. It tested my limits and gave me the option to see how strong I could be, both mentally and physically. Going to camp for a longer amount of time was a challenge at first, but I learned and discovered that what does not challenge you, does not change you. I always felt the most confident in myself and the happiest at camp, and an extra four weeks a year of feeling that way helped me continue to be my truest self at school. I got to meet more people and experience all the camp events (4th of July, Valentine's Day, Halloween,



2015 Eight Weekers

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## Eight Weeks

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Songathon, Verendrye sendoff) and discover which was my favorite. When it came to my Verendrye year I already knew everyone in my age group which made me feel more comfortable as I got ready and completed an almost three-week canoe trip. Being an eight-weeker allowed me to challenge myself more, gain more self-confidence, and enjoy time with my camp friends longer. I'm so glad I started going to camp longer at a young age.

*A.F. 2002–2013, five eight-week summers, currently 22-years-old*



I was a Songadeewin camper who benefitted greatly from not only the camp experience but the cumulative amount of time I got to spend at camp. I spent four weeks during my first summer at Songa. It was a good introduction to sleepaway camp as I had never been to camp before. Plus, I was coming all the way from Virginia to Vermont. I left that summer wishing I could stay longer and counting down the days until the next summer. I had the opportunity to stay longer the next year and I did.



2019 Eight Weekers

I benefitted greatly as I became more independent away from my parents and family, made deeper bonds with other campers and staff, and overall had an awesome, fun-filled summer. I am still friends with campers and staff to this day (seventeen years later). I consider these people some of my closest friends. I learned more about other people who came from other places and those relationships grew stronger due to the amount of time I got to spend with them each summer. I became more responsible for myself and my actions at camp. Getting to go on not only one trip, but two trips each summer reinforced my tripping skills and the sense of ownership for my work ethic, actions, and “helping the other fellow.” I can wholeheartedly say that the experiences I had at camp and on trips didn't happen at the local soccer/lacrosse/day camp or on a family vacation. I also believe that eight weeks of camp gave me the appropriate amount time away from my parents and family so that I would have the space and the time to grow independently. The values I learned at camp and the experiences I had at camp are still with me today. I work in the healthcare field, and not a day goes by that I don't use the interpersonal soft skills I learned at camp to interact with patients and their families. It



*Close up of 2013 Eight-weeker t-shirt*

was on a second month trip when I was canoeing across a big open lake that I said to my boat partner that I wanted to become a nurse. I knew I could make that decision because of the amount of introspection I had at camp to truly think and discover things about myself. It was also because of the trust I had in my trip mates that I felt confident in declaring that I wanted to be a nurse. Four years later I enrolled in nursing school and today, after earning a master's degree, I am a nurse practitioner. I feel very blessed to have had the amount of time I had at camp and I would highly recommend it to any other girl who has the chance!

*C.G. 1999–2003, four eight-week summers, 32-years-old when writing this reflection*



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## Eight Weeks

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I started going to camp for the full session when I was 10-years-old and one of my biggest regrets was not starting to attend for eight-weeks sooner. A camper spends the first week of camp adjusting to being there; the new environment, new (and old) friends, and a new schedule takes anyone some time to adjust. As a camper, I found that once the first session acclimation period ended, it felt like first month was already almost over. When I started going eight weeks, I was able to really sink in and enjoy the full experience of camp.



*2017 Eight Weekers*

I got a chance to try new things, to grow as an individual from one month to the next, and to become a better leader as I welcomed the second month campers and helped them to experience their own camp transitions. Not to mention, the two month break from technology was really nice, and now I find myself just slightly less dependent on my phone than some of my peers. Obviously, eight weeks is a long time, and I certainly remember my mother struggling to let her first child temporarily dip out of the nest, but my full sessions at camp gifted me independence and confidence that

have carried me through my adult life. Plus, it's fun. It's so, so fun. As a kid, there is no better place, and I can say with certainty that some of the happiest kids I've encountered are the youngest Songa eight-weekers.

*O.B. 2007-2013, five eight-week summers, 22-years-old when writing this reflection*



First month at Songadeewin is when you shake off the cobwebs of the school year and settle into the groove of camp. Reentering the wonderful world of Songa where what you

wear doesn't matter at all, where you can be smart, loud, silly, and strong. That first week you reconnect with the girls you missed and make friends with the new girls. You practice canoe strokes and remember how to tie a tarp. Then you head out on your first month trip and, while you are nervous, you quickly remember how much fun it is to be in the woods. To realize you don't need your phone or a TV and reading a good book with a headlamp is just as exciting. You experience the struggle of putting up a tent and the joy of making your own dinner. Staff show you

how to make a campfire and you learn how nothing beats swimming in a clear lake on a hot day. Maybe you even sleep out under the stars on a clear night. You bond with the other girls on the trip knowing only this small group will have the awesome memories and experiences. (I can tell you these will last a lifetime. I still talk with camp friends about portages, dinners we made, animals we saw, crazy headwinds we battled and beautiful sunsets we got to watch.) Then you get to come back and share your trip stories with the girls in your cabin and hear theirs. You work on getting coups and finally figure out your favorite salad bar sandwich. Then before you know it the four weeks are done. Midseason comes and it is hard to say goodbye to your friends. But you are excited to know you have four more weeks of Songa.

Second month starts and it is different, because you are different. You have a self-confidence built over the past month. You know the ropes and help the new girls arriving get settled into the cabin, teach them how to clean for inspection and what all the lyrics to camp songs are. You try some activities you never thought you would first month - like riflery or kayaking! The second month trip is always more exciting because you want to push yourself. The first month trip builds up your confidence. The second month trip is when you get to see what you can do. Maybe this means you try stern for the first time or carry the heavier wangan. You realize you are stronger and tougher than you ever thought; that a little dirt doesn't bother you and there is a smile on your face even through a day of paddling in the rain because you are out in the woods with your friends. And then you come back and

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## Eight Weeks

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get to soak up those last two weeks of camp. Events like Corn Roast and Songathon bring everyone together. You get more activities to try and get the coups for your S. Maybe you finally work up the courage to be in a *Saturday Spectacular* skit. You watch Verendrye and Wilderness paddle back in and you think - that will be me someday. Then suddenly it is the very last campfire where you sit surrounded by all these amazing friends you make and think nothing can ever be as fun as this past summer was. But you also find yourself talking about next summer. The trips you want to go on; the new activities you want to try. Before you know it you are excited and wishing the next 10 months would fly by so you can be back on Lake Dunmore, with all your Songa Sisters.

*K.W. 2000-2005, four eight-week summers, 32-years-old when writing this reflection*



I spent nine summers as a camper at Songa and six summers on staff. I started when I was eight-years-old in Wabasso. The first year that I stayed eight weeks was when I was 10-years-old and I continued to stay for eight weeks every summer since. It was a while ago but it is actually the first summer that I really remember. I think what is special about staying eight weeks is the ownership that the girls feel about the camp. The entire way one conceptualizes camp changes. The first month is a time where one can try different things, meet new people, and get comfortable with her own tripping skills. Midseason for the eight-weekers becomes a time where they get to show their parents their



*2012 Eight weekers*

summer home, rather than in a quick visit when they get picked up. After the first month kids leave and then before the second month kids arrive is a really cool time for the girls because they get to help the staff get ready for the next group. I think here is where a big change happens because the eight-weekers really get to dig their heels into the welcoming process. Not only are they campers themselves, but they are the welcome party for the second month girls! They get to show the new kids around and help them get a lay of the land. No matter what the age of the camper, this really lets the eight-week girls become leaders. For years I have seen how excited the girls are to really step up. On top of that they are able to form really special relationships with the staff, the girls from both months, their fellow eight-week campers, in addition to the camp itself. Over my many years as an eight week camper I definitely think that I had more opportunities to grow my camping skills and independence compared to four-week campers.

*O.P. 2004-2011, seven eight-week summers, 24-years-old when writing this reflection*



Spending five summers at Songa was easily one of the experiences that has had the greatest impact on my

life. Even now, 15 years later, I reflect often and fondly of my summers in Vermont, and wish that I could go back to that time. I still vividly remember how nervous I was before my first summer. I had signed up for eight weeks, thinking that if I enjoyed camp as much as I thought I would, I would never want to leave. I was right. I thrived at camp in a way that was unique and different from my life at home - becoming stronger mentally and physically, transforming into a leader, and making lifelong friends who I'm still in touch with today. Since camp, I've gone on to college and medical school, where I led organizations big and small. Of course there are many factors and experiences that shape a person, but I credit Songa with giving me a safe space to learn and practice confidence and leadership without fear of failure. I think I internalized this message so well because I was lucky enough to maximize my time there. The two months goes by so fast, and as a kid, all I wanted was to make sure I didn't miss a moment!

*J.B. 2001-2005, five eight-week summers, 30-years-old when writing this reflection*



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## Eight Weeks

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I went to camp for eight weeks for the first time when I had finished 4th grade, and it was a really positive decision for me. I had already attended Songa for a couple summers, so I knew that I would be comfortable there, but I think there is a significant difference in the feeling of going for eight versus four weeks.

First, I do want to acknowledge the harder parts of a full summer; it can feel like you're missing other opportunities if you usually do another activity for the rest of the summer, and the goodbye to your parents at Midseason is definitely a hard moment emotionally.

However, going eight weeks gave me a huge confidence boost in a way that four weeks didn't. It can often feel like you need a week or two to adjust to the rhythm of camp again, so eight weeks gives you much more time to branch out and try new things once you have adjusted. You are also an "expert" on camp and know all the staff when the second-month campers arrive.

Going eight weeks also let me meet girls I hadn't before because we had always attended different sessions. A group of these girls ended up becoming my best friends at camp, and one of them actually remains my best friend to this day!

Finally, eight weeks feels a lot longer mentally than four, and the plus side of this is that it gave me confidence that I could handle long periods away from home. Eventually, this confidence helped me spend an incredible year abroad in high school, and then attend a college across the country that I loved.

For me, fourth grade was a time when school became more difficult and stressful because I had just moved to a new town. In contrast, Songa became a special, safe, and happy place for me, especially when I chose to go eight weeks and felt like I was most at ease there. If your daughter thrived at Songa and is interested in staying for eight weeks next summer, I would absolutely recommend it!!

*E.V. 2005- 2013, six eight-week summers, 22-years-old when writing this reflection*



I started going to camp at eight-years-old, eight weeks all the way until Wilderness. With the amount of time I spent at camp, I became very comfortable away from my parents at my home away from home. As each session has its unique traditions, I felt steeped in camp life. My confidence grew as I practiced new skills and progressed through trips and coups that were important milestones to me. As I got older, camp also offered me my first leadership roles, helping to organize events that I had participated in for years. Going to camp is a highlight of my childhood and I was never ready for the summer to end, even after eight weeks!

*A.G. 2001-2009, nine eight-week summers, 27-years-old when writing this reflection*



Spending eight weeks each summer at Songa, instead of four, was hugely impactful for me. After just four weeks as a camper, you are just starting to settle into the groove of camp and, more importantly, the groove of being apart from your parents and living independently. In

that second month, you can really begin to grow and change as your own person, away from your parents. You can immediately apply lessons you learned from your first month: hard skills like how to cook food on a trip or skipper a sailboat, and soft skills, like how to say goodbye to people you love and make new friends. These lessons are not forgotten and then relearned eleven months later, as they would be for a four four-weeker, rather they are immediately reinforced and therefore much more permanent. The reinforcement of these lessons gives campers key qualities that they will carry through life: confidence and resilience. Sure, you'll get these to a certain extent by coming for four weeks—but I believe that being an eight-week camper was what really allowed me to truly develop these qualities.

*A.H. 1999-2009, eight eight-week summers, 31-years-old when writing this reflection*



My daughter is who she is today thanks to her many summers at Songa. The community living with girls from all over the country and the world and being held by a strong staff and deeply rooted traditions allowed her to explore activities and friendships. Each of the eight-week sessions that she spent at camp were building blocks. Each season brought new activities, new experiences amongst friends and staff who became dear friends. I believe what my daughter gained in the eight weeks each summer she was at camp complemented what she learned in Waldorf school. The eight-week sessions gave her the time, the space and the friendships to reset her tempo. Although there is plenty of

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## Eight Weeks

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structure at camp, the time there was completely for her. No set agendas, no siblings, camp time was her time. She thrived in the variety of activities offered, challenged by the opportunity to learn new skills and flourished knowing that camp time was her time. I know firsthand that there is no greater gift to give a child than time at summer camp. (I attended Songadeewin on Lake Willoughby.) Songa is the place where the outside world goes still and the aliveness of childhood is expanded. As that camper, a former school teacher and now a mom, there were two things I wanted my children to have. One was long, full summers at camp and the other was to learn how to downhill ski. I have been fortunate enough to have each of those wishes fulfilled. My daughter continues to hold camp memories close to her heart and her truest friends are from camp. It has been my privilege to watch the transformation of these young girls grow up to be spectacular individuals. My daughter and her camp friends are Strong of Heart. Thank you Songadeewin for giving them that.

*J.H. parent of a camper from 2011 – 2016, with four summers as an eight-week camper*

*Reading these reflections on lessons learned and the growth these former campers have shared about their time at Songadeewin makes me proud that Songa continues to provide the experiences we do for young girls and women. Thank you to each of you who shared here.*



## TIME TO GET SOME SONGA SWAG!

Looking for a Songa T-Shirt? How about a mask, or a sweatshirt, or quarter zip? Maybe a Songa knit cap! It's time to go shopping at the Keewaydin Store! There's so much you can find there! Go to our website ([www.keewaydin.org](http://www.keewaydin.org)) and look for the "Camp Store."



*Songa Bucket Hat*



*Songa Quarter Zip*



*Songa Cap*

Visit our website at [www.keewaydin.org](http://www.keewaydin.org) and click on Camp Store! [Or click here!](#)



# Alumni-Family Weekend

~ August 26-29, 2021 ~



Alumni-Family Weekend will be back in business in 2021! This is a wonderful opportunity for alumni to reconnect with Keewaydin and Songadeewin. Swim in Lake Dunmore, paddle a beautiful green canoe, and hike on majestic Moosalamoo! It's also a great way to introduce young boys and girls to camp!

This summer we will celebrate the opening of the "The Lolly," the new Songadeewin trip packout building dedicated to Songa alumna Lolly Burton S'37. On Sunday, August 29 at 11:00 a.m. there will be a memorial ceremony for Peggy Breed Marsh S'34, who passed away on February 15, 2021.



For more information on Alumni-Family Weekend, email Mary Welz at [mary@keewaydin.org](mailto:mary@keewaydin.org)



## Remembering Songa's Most Senior Camper: *Peggy Breed Marsh* June 21, 1920 – February 15, 2021

This winter we learned that, at the age of 100, Peggy Breed Marsh died peacefully at home with her family by her side. Peggy was Songa's Most Senior Camper and her connection to Keewaydin was deep and abiding.

In this edition of *From the Heart*, you'll find an article that I wrote after visiting with Peggy at her home in 2010. The article *Peggy Breed Marsh – a Lifetime at Keewaydin* contains just a few of Peggy's favorite stories from a cherished treasure chest of memories.

Peggy regularly attended the post season reunions at Dunmore. Once Songadeewin opened on Lake Dunmore she kept up with all that was new and happening for the campers at Songa. Her beloved grandson George Marsh credited Songa's 20th reunion as an event that inspired Peggy to "stay alive long enough so she could attend." She was right there at the head of the line in the Reunion P-rade in 2018. I will miss her cheery greetings and genuine interest in how Songadeewin developed over its first 20 years on Lake Dunmore. She will be missed by many.

We will hold a celebration of Peggy's Life at 11 am on Sunday, August 29. If you are able to attend, please register at <https://keewaydin.org/2021-alumni-family-weekend-special-celebrations/>.



*Peggy with one of her beloved Scotties on the Waramaug dock during a post-season reunion*

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## Peggy Breed Marsh – A Lifetime at Keewaydin



*In the fall of 2010, I had the pleasure of visiting Peggy Breed Marsh at her home in Lincoln, Massachusetts to interview her for the archives and for the article which appears below. It was a great opportunity to learn some details of the early years of Dunmore and of her experiences there, at Songadeewin on Lake Willoughby and at Keewaydin's Girls' Ranch in Montana. Here is some of what I learned ~ Ellen*

Peggy Breed Marsh's connection to the Keewaydin Camps began the first year of her life. She was the only child of Stephen "General" Breed who, at the time of her birth, was the associate director of Keewaydin Dunmore. In her early years she did not spend the full summer at camp, as in those days (the 1920s) camp was "not designed for babies or ladies." However, she and her mother would come with the General, as soon as he could get away from his teaching responsibilities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to open the facilities for the season. His other motivation for their early arrival was to enjoy the wild, painted azaleas, which still bloom near the lagoon on the Dunmore campus in the spring. Peggy and her mother would enjoy a month or so at camp during the setting-up process, and leave on the day camp opened. In those days, with roads what they were and the speed limited to 40 miles per hour, they didn't return to camp until the season was over. They'd then stay until mid-September when they needed to return home for the start of school.

As a young girl, Peggy spent the summer in Weston, Massachusetts at her grandfather's farm where



*Peggy proudly holding her paddle at the 100-year reunion P-rade at Keewaydin Dunmore*

her mother kept house for him. The summer she was 14 was her first as a Songadeewin camper on Lake Willoughby. Many of her first impressions of Songadeewin revolved around the idea that "it was different from Dunmore." This was not an uncommon theme for girls at Songadeewin who spent their early years on Lake Dunmore as the children of staff. At Songa, Peggy especially enjoyed horseback riding – something that remained a passion of hers well into her 80s. She actually brought her horse from home to camp with her. Canoeing was another favorite activity and she appreciated the natural beauty and mountains surrounding the Songadeewin campus. She also enjoyed dramatics: campers and staff did one or two plays each summer and also prepared the "Saturday Night Fun" performances each week – a precursor to today's

Saturday Spectacular. In those days the show consisted mainly of "tried and true skits," and sometimes a solo performance. Each unit (today called a longhouse) took turns putting on the weekly show and some weeks the Glee Club would perform.

Tripping in those days was somewhat optional, although it took Peggy three summers to realize that each time a hike was announced she didn't need to raise her hand to go. That meant she did a fair amount of hiking including trips to Mt. Pisgah, in view from the camp, and Baldy and Wheeler mountains to name a few. Overnight trips at the time were mostly run by "the trip man," a fellow called "Pop" Fields. The Sherburne Trip was considered a huge adventure and was four or five days long. They used wood and canvas canoes and traveled from the south end of Lake Memphremagog, crossing the Canadian border as they headed north from Newport, Vermont. The other kind of trips Peggy participated in at Songadeewin were horseback riding overnights. They'd pack up the gear and carry it on their horses and head out on the trail. She remembered one trip in particular where the overnight pasture for both horses and campers was on a hill. Even though they set up their sleeping bags and campsite at the top of the hill, by morning everyone was asleep down at the bottom of the hill.

Charles and Eleanor Harter ran Songadeewin in the years Peggy was both a camper and staff. They were known by one and all as Doc and Mrs. Harter. Like Peggy's father, Doc did

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## Peggy Breed Marsh

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all the purchasing, including food, and organized the kitchen. He took care to ensure that the buildings, canoes, and waterfront were in good repair and in working order for the summer. Peggy remembers the year Doc oversaw the building of the “Senior Rec”— a building that was modeled after the lodge at Temagami, which was the camp where the Harters began their long tenure at Keewaydin. During the summer Mrs. Harter did all the personnel work and presided over all ceremonies, gave speeches and presented awards. Peggy recalled that Mrs. Harter commanded absolute respect and people were really devoted to her, especially the staff. At the weekly campfires it was Mrs. Harter who read off the coups that were earned that week and she stamped everyone’s ciniba. Campfires ended then as they do today with the singing of “Sitting ‘Round the Campfire.”



*Peggy, foreground, listening to the Sunday Circle talk during the 100th Celebration, Vera Flight sits in the background*



*Peggy Breed Marsh with her family at Keewaydin Dunmore’s 100th celebration; from left, son Alan, Peggy, her husband Paul and grandsons, Ben and George Marsh*

Each summer there was one trip down to Keewaydin Dunmore, mostly a chance for brothers and sisters to get together, but others sometimes made the trip as well. With both her parents then at camp, Peggy went on the trip all three summers she was a camper at Songadeewin. It took most of the day to travel between the camps and they’d arrive in time for a swim before supper. According to Peggy, everyone had “high hopes of being a social success” and looking forward to the evening dance with a live band for ballroom-style dancing. Everyone had to wear their “whites” for supper and the dance and their “greens and whites” at other times during the trip.

The summer Peggy was 17 she and her parents traveled west for the summer as the General took a rare summer away from Dunmore. They went in a “new to them, second-hand” 1938 Plymouth sedan, taking along a cousin who would attend the Keewaydin ranch camp with Peggy. It took four days to drive to Missoula, Montana where they met the group that would

travel out to Holland Lake where the girls’ ranch was located. There were about 12 campers and a couple of staff. Gertrude Clarkson, originally of Songadeewin, was the camp director. In addition to a couple of staff, there were also a few wranglers who helped take care of the horses. Each camper was assigned a horse for the summer and Peggy didn’t really care for this different kind of riding, which was Western – she’d grown up riding English style. She did find the cowboy boots very comfortable; however, as she explained, one of their purposes was to help avoid being bitten by a rattlesnake. They wore dungarees for riding and cowboy hats to ward off the sun. The big trip for the summer was a journey of several days, over a mountain pass to the Keewaydin Ranch camp for boys. They crossed paths with the boys who were traveling by horseback to the girls’ camp.

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## Peggy Breed Marsh

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After that summer's success, in order to give her some perspective on Dunmore and Songadeewin, the General had Peggy go work at a different camp also in Vermont. It featured riding as its main activity and Peggy recalls this being a very smart move on the part of her father, because after that summer she had a whole new respect and admiration for "the Keewaydin Way." The next summer she joined the Songadeewin staff where she ran dramatics and "had a grand time." She recalls becoming an expert at stage make-up using the only make-up they employed – an eyebrow pencil. She said one can do a lot with such a simple item – make people look old, add mustaches, create animal faces, etc. She thoroughly enjoyed herself.

One staff person she particularly remembered from her Songa years was "Miss Applebee." She was an Irish woman who had come to the U.S. to introduce women's field hockey to colleges and was one of the foremost women hockey players at the time.



*Peggy, at the Songa's new Arts Village, pictured with Caitlyn Wu, Nyna Cole, Ava Witt and Fatmata Sesay*

In the winter Miss Applebee coached at Smith College where she got 500 students to agree to play the game. (This was reported in the *New York Times* in 1906.) This early connection to the growing sport meant that Songadeewin attracted some All-American field hockey players to the staff. Miss Applebee was Peggy's coach when she attended Smith College.

After two years on the staff and graduating from college, Peggy joined the U.S. Army in 1943, when "everyone joined." After basic training and being commissioned to the Women's Army Corps, she found herself in the 8th Service Command, in the Classification Section stationed in the southern United States. As part of her job she interviewed hundreds of women coming into the army from the southern U.S. in order to determine what job they should have once they joined. She became a corporal and then a company officer before being reassigned to the base in Plattsburgh, New York, not too far from Lake Dunmore. One of her most vivid memories from that time was a day-off from her army duties when she visited Keewaydin. She first had to take a ferry across Lake Champlain, and then a bus to Middlebury where she met an old friend who at the time was a second grade teacher in Middlebury. Her generous friend not only lent Peggy her car, but also gave her her gas rations – a generous gift indeed. Over all those years of being at camp in the pre- and post-season, Peggy had gotten to know all the area



*Peggy Breed Marsh, Allyan Watson Rivera and Anne Adler at Songa's 20th Reunion celebration*

people who helped make Dunmore tick. As she traveled across the beautiful countryside ablaze with fall colors, she visited with the Whitney family and the man whose team of horses had cleared the Big Ballfield for a playing field, and the side of Moosalamoo for the construction of the Infirmary. Peggy cherished her memories from that day.

From her earliest years at Dunmore Peggy remained in close contact with Keewaydin. Two of her sons are former Dunmore campers and several grandchildren also attended camp. She was one of the founding members of the Keewaydin Foundation and remained on the Keewaydin Board for many years. She regularly attended the after season reunion at Dunmore. Each year she wrote a new verse for the reunion song sung to the tune of "Oh, Susannah." This song is now so long only a sampling of verses is sung each year in the equivalent of the "Saturday Night Fun" of her youth.



## KEEWAYDIN TEMAGAMI CLOSED IN 2021



For the second summer in a row, Keewaydin Temagami is closed. Director Emily Schoelzel made the decision in late April in consultation with Executive Director, Pete Hare, and the Executive Committee of the Keewaydin Foundation Board. With the border to Canada closed and Ontario in a lockdown due to the pandemic, it was clear the chances of being able to open were remote.

Some Temagami campers have been able to switch to Dunmore and Songa. Others will have to wait until next summer before they head back to their beloved camp on beautiful Lake Temagami.

After the decision was made, Schoelzel said: “We know the loss of another summer is difficult for our campers and staff, who were gearing up for a summer of canoe trips. We also know we will be back, and we’ll be ready to immerse ourselves into the wilds of Canada again.”

Though summer camp will not be operating on Devils Island, The Ojibway Family Lodge will be up and running. Canadian residents will be able to enjoy the beauty and rustic comfort of Ojibway, swimming, paddling and soaking up the beauty of the northern wilderness.

## ~ LAUGHTER ~

*By An Anonymous Songa camper*

The night was cool and the stars were bright. The beaming fire flickering on smiling faces. It was a beautiful night to be outside surrounded by the glow of smiling girls. Some faces long and thin, some short and stout, some perfectly round, and others boxy and defined, but nonetheless the same, all smiling and happy, circled around the fire, letting the flames lick their toes. That was the remarkable aspect of camp Songadeewin. We were all different, but we were all happy. Camp was my escape. I could be myself. I could be happy. At camp, all my troubles and fears disappeared, the only thing I was worried about was getting the biggest brownie in the box.

Sitting on the benches still slightly damp from the previous night's rainfall, surrounded by people who loved me, it just felt right. I looked to my left and there sat my friend gazing into the fire with the same look in her eyes. The look that didn't mean anything, yet was so full of emotion. Her eyes were full of hope and glee but also aware that one sorrowful day we would have to pack everything up and leave. We knew we had found a special place. A safe place. A place hidden away at the foot of a great big mountain, at the edge of a glimmering lake.



I shook myself and brought my gaze to two small thin girls whose hoodies were consuming them. Their squeaky voices sounded like they needed oiling. They walked to the center and spread out around the fire. "DRUM ROLL PLEASE," they said surprisingly loudly given how tiny they were. We began to beat our cold hands on our legs, getting louder and louder. It was the youngest cabin's night to lead the campfire and they always chose the same games, "THE SONG GAME!" We all clapped. A hush went over the crowd as they explained how to play for the millionth time. It was funny. Despite playing that game every time, it was always just as fun. The giggles and squeals of the young girls were the only thing that could be heard for miles.

It is these nights that I will never forget. The nights where we all sat around the comfort of the fire playing games and laughing together. It was this place, my summer home that put a smile on my face in the depths of winter. When everything was dark, the laughter ringing in my head was what kept me going. I had found the place where lasting friendships were born, where we were taught to be strong and to love one another. I had found a place where I belonged. Where I could be myself and be loved for it. Just at the foot of our mountain, Mt. Moosalamoo, the place we call home.