



The Mountain Matters

Celebrating Our 15th Year!

the mountain • Highlands Camp & Conference Center, Inc.

Change - and "Changelessness"

What a busy time we are in at **the mountain**, as we **change** gears from our summer programs to our fall and winter schedules! And, as you will read in this **The Mountain Matters**, we are experiencing lots of changes in our staff, too. But with all of this change, we are still **the mountain**, that wonderfully exciting place and "state of mind" that we know so well.

Accompanying this issue of **The Mountain Matters** is a special report on our summer '94 youth camp. I am sure that, as you read it, you will delight in all that happens here with our youth. And it should reinforce the "changelessness" of our core programming at **the mountain**. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed gathering all the stories.

Change and **changelessness** are both important elements of **the mountain**. This past spring, Laird Parry, grandson of the Judge Parry who purchased this property in 1905, returned to **the mountain** for the first time in 37 years. After Laird's visit, he wrote us a letter, excerpts of which I'd like to share with you as we talk about change and changelessness. I've put my own comments in italics.

"Thanks for helping to make my return to The Mountain so memorable. There is just something about that place that never lets you go.... (*Changelessness.*) [W]hen I arrived in front of the Tower, I could almost feel Little Scaly shaking me by my shoulders and saying: 'Where have you Parry's been for the last 37 years! You never visit! You never even write!'... Thank you all for... letting me wander around and re-energize long-dormant memory cells.... (*How many of you members have been away too long? How do we get you here to "re-energize long-dormant memory cells?"*)

"Judge Parry (my grandfather) purchased the land from the Talley family in 1905. My Mother is 99% certain that when he purchased it there were no buildings on it. That would mean that he built the first tower, not the Forest Service.... Ebby Talley was the son or grandson of the original land owner and is probably the father or grandfather of Raymond Talley (*the mountain's current neighbor*). Ebby had his still on the creek at the base of the mountain and was known to consume his own product with some regularity.... (*We now call it "Abe's Creek."*)



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Goodbyes and Hellos

Throughout **the mountain's** 15-year history, one of the distinctive elements of our identity has been the unique personal contributions of staff members. In contrast to many camp & conference centers, **the mountain** retains a year-round staff of multi-talented people who create a rapport with guests. This personal involvement has given us the reputation of a "business with HEART." **the mountain** approaches staff hiring with the intention of defining individual circumstances in relation to the needs of the institution: Is a prospective staff person one who has a goal of serving for a limited time (one to three years), or is this person ready to commit to a career change and approach **the mountain** as her or his life work? Whichever the timeline, staff are encouraged to contribute existing skills, develop new ones, and to grow personally from the experience of working at **the mountain**.



Nina Benedetto



Lee Knight (above) & Dick White (below)



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Kathleen Andrew

Nina Benedetto

Laura Black

Glenn Guffey

Ben King

Dan King

Eden King

Lee Knight

Floyd Livers

Shannon McNally

Dick White

Sally Bellamy Wigginton



Robert E. Smith

Chi Cabe

Bruce Dills

Bill Fisher

Judith Galdon

Bill Harouff

Shannon Hession

Brad Hogsed

Dave Kotinsley

Karen Lynn-Willhide

Galen McGee

Shane McGee

David Parker

Robert E. Smith

Chuck Willhide

Of course, as the institutional needs change, there will be a natural shift in personnel, and as staff grow and change, they will eventually pursue new paths that take them away from **the mountain**. At that point, we find ourselves in the positive but often very painful position of saying goodbye to staff who have become very important to the institution, to colleagues, and to guests. It is difficult for the staff who decide it's time to move on, and it's difficult for those of us who remain. We find ourselves needing to grieve and face the personal and institutional loss. We may deny the impending departure for a while; we may feel angry that they've chosen to leave us; we may struggle with the transition period between decision and departure. Finally, we accept and move forward, knowing that change is never easy.

There is, however, a wonderful opportunity in change; it allows us to bring in the new energy and gifts of staff whose hiring would not be possible if everyone stayed forever! Welcoming these people, getting to know them, and being enriched by their talents, are all joyful rewards of the "turning of the staff wheel." Included is a directory of staff goodbyes and hellos since January of 1994. We say farewell with deep appreciation for the contributions made by each individual; we say hello with great hope and expectation. The remarkable journey of **the mountain** continues: honoring our past, celebrating the present, and moving with strength and commitment into the future.

Jude Galdon (left) with Jenny King



"Judge Parry married my grandmother on December 29, 1908 and for several years they came to the mountain during the summer on horseback. My grandmother... taught at Girl's High School in Atlanta and also at The Outdoor School. The idea for a summer camp probably came from her experience at The Outdoor School. My mother is not really certain when Camp Parrydis began as a summer camp for girls, but thinks it was in operation by the early 20's.... She believes that the camp continued on until the mid to late 30's. Judge Parry died at Parrydis in the summer of 1931.... If the camp did indeed continue on until the late 30's, it would mean that my grandmother ran it for quite a few years without his help. After my grandmother stopped using Parrydis as a camp, it became her summer home. My parents and my sister and I spent several weeks each summer enjoying the mountain from 1951 through 1957. In 1957 my grandmother finally decided to sell the place.... She sold it to Mr. Ben Wax, who created Camp Highlander.... As my mother remembers it, the selling price in 1957 was (are you all sitting down?) \$36,000.... (Change - one new building, our lodge, cost \$440,000 to rebuild in 1990.)

"Some additional bits and pieces.... Ken (Kortemeier) was interested in the purpose of the stone cookstove out on Billy Goat Cliffs. (We know it as "Monkey Face.") My mother remembered it well. Believe it or not, it was used for group cookouts and marshmallow roasts. I reminded her that it literally hangs off the cliff and seems a bit dangerous for cookouts. She remembered keeping a close eye on my sister and I when we were out there, but I guess people were just a bit more casual (or careful) about heights back then. It must have been before liability insurance was invented. (Change!)

"We've already discussed a possible Parry family reunion at The Mountain (his first use of capital letters since the opening sentence) and my mother is quite excited about the idea.... Thank you again for your hospitality and for helping to preserve a very special place--a place to come home to." (Changelessness!)

One final note about Laird's visit. When he first arrived on top, he quickly got out of his car, introduced himself to a few of us and said, "I can't believe how **wide** and **straight** the road to the top is."

Change, and **changelessness** - both are elements of who we are; both are elements of the **mountain** property, the **mountain** community, the **mountain** spirit. This year the Board of Trustees has challenged us (staff, trustees, and members) to develop a **5-year business plan** that will lay out a "roadmap" for the future - a plan that will allow us to **change** as we grow, while at the same time ensuring that we honor and protect the very heart, the very core of this special mountain - **changelessness**!

The staff and Trustees will be working together over the next nine months to develop this plan with special emphasis in four fundamental areas: Programs and Markets, Land and Facilities, Organization and Staff, and Finance. We hope to have a plan for member review at the Memorial Day weekend, May 26 through May 29, 1995. Make your reservations early to attend this most important event!

We encourage your participation. Please call **the mountain** and ask for me if you'd like more details.

Tom

Your staff at **the mountain** has spent the better part of 1994 focusing our energies toward completing successive stages of our REC Hall and accommodating the activities of large groups.

In the meantime, we've not kept up the message urging you, the members of **the mountain**, to keep up your pledge commitments and to initiate or increase them as your situation permits.

Together we can create **the mountain's** future.
Please continue to be a part of building **the mountain**!

