

Ptarmigan Tracks

Vol. XXXVII, December 2012

The Newsletter of Camp Denali & North Face Lodge



Camp Denali Celebrates 60 Years

By Jenna Hamm

This summer marked Camp Denali's 60th season. While 60 years is hardly considered history in many parts of the country, here in the Last Frontier, it is. We kicked off this anniversary by luring 28 former staff and friends to join our first session's guests for a reunion and celebration. Former staff delighted in being able to pack their sack lunches after breakfast and be out hiking in the park until dinnertime, eating delicious dinners and not having to wash the dishes! But most of all the reunion highlighted how the lifestyle at Camp Denali and North Face Lodge is just as meaningful as the opportunity to live in this incredible place.



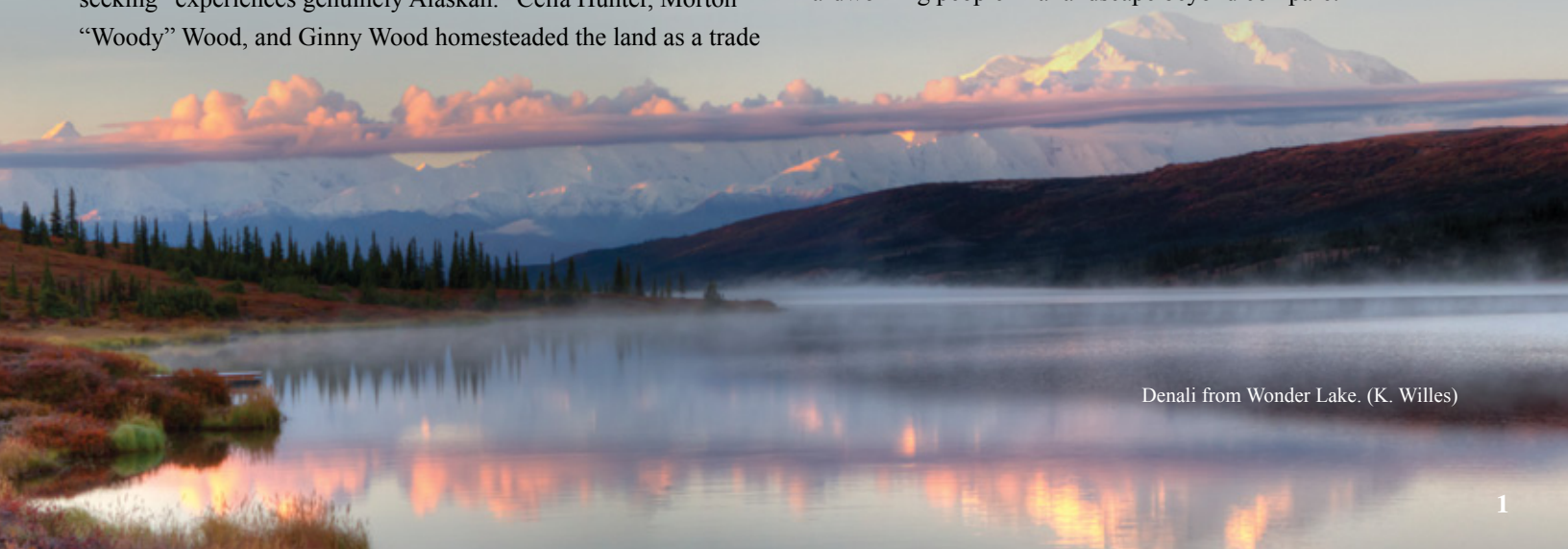
Reunion of former staff and friends at Camp Denali. (R. Karpilo)

Camp Denali was founded in 1952 by three friends with adventurous spirits and the idea that some visitors to Alaska were seeking "experiences genuinely Alaskan." Celia Hunter, Morton "Woody" Wood, and Ginny Wood homesteaded the land as a trade

and manufacturing site in 1951 and opened their doors to the first guests the following June. Their success over the next 23 years proved Ginny's speculation that indeed visitors to Alaska wished to "become 'sourdoughs' and catch the spirit of the bush country"—even if it meant "living without running water and electric lights, and taking the mosquitoes with the scenery."

Ginny and Celia purposefully kept Camp Denali small. The fragile tundra put real, practical limitations on infrastructure. "The land told us what we should be," Ginny is fond of saying. Guests and staff encouraged them to buck tourism's trend towards biggering and remain intimate and personal. In the process, they soon realized that they had developed not just a business, but had "created a way of life."

When Ginny and Celia sold Camp Denali to Wally and Jer-rhne Cole in the fall of 1975, Camp had grown from an original four tent cabins to 12 log and frame guest cabins and a full-service lodge complete with homemade meals, hot showers, and naturalist-led hiking. Under Wally's and Jerri's 33-year tenure, Camp evolved into a 50-person seasonal enterprise, encompassing Camp Denali, North Face Lodge and Parkside Guest House. The scope of our current operation would have been hard for our founders to imagine as they hacked Camp's driveway out of the tundra with hand tools in 1951! However, our lodges have remained small, and the "way of life" we continue to foster is an opportunity to live apart from the mainstream in a small community of dedicated, hardworking people in a landscape beyond compare.



Denali from Wonder Lake. (K. Willes)



2012 Highlights

Project Roundup

Everyone knows that milestone birthdays beget more and more, er, *inquisitive* medical screenings, but who knew that the same goes for wilderness lodges? On our 60th the facilities were poked, prodded and made to turn and cough by everyone from OSHA to the fire marshal to the drinking water folks! Fortunately we emerged with a good bill of health and, hopefully, a reprieve until the next major birthday!



Moving the historic Camp Lodge. (C. Fowlkes)

Not that we allowed those goings on to take up all of our project attention—in the meantime we kept busy renovating, repairing and building. Staff rooms, Annex rooms, bus seats and greenhouse cold frames all got makeovers, and our '64 International crew cab had new life breathed into it by Charlie Fowlkes and Chris Noel. Tim Reap returned to lead the construction of a new staff cabin, and Tom McCarran replaced the old North Face Lodge generators with two new, 36K units. In June Wally and Jerryne drove up the Alcan highway in a new-to-us Land Rover 110, which now makes each lake run with canoeists feel like an East African safari. And in the season's final push, we jacked up Camp's log lodge and staged it 15' north of

where it has sat for 56 years. Next spring we will move it back south onto new underpinnings.

Staff Transitions

This year was the final full season for two longtime staff members. **Brian McCormick** began at the lodges in 1995. During his tenure he worked as a naturalist guide, driver, host, and bus trainer. Days not with guests saw him wielding pulaskis, crowbars, pickaxes and loppers to improve our local trails. Brian tied the knot with Megan Meyer on August 10th in Kentucky. Thanks to master seamstress Carley Dunn, the newlyweds received a beautiful quilt with contributions from many of their Camp Denali and North Face Lodge friends.



Brian's and Megan's wedding quilt. (C. Dunn)

Anne Beaulaurier began in 2002 as a naturalist guide, joining the year-round staff as our Program Coordinator. During her 10 years in Denali she was the backbone of our winter office and wore many hats in the summers including bus driver, naturalist guide, host, and supervisor. We wish her the best of luck in her collaboration with neighbor, Donna Gates, at Tonglen Lake Resort.

Ptarmigan Tracks Newsletter

Edited by Jan Tomsen and
Simon and Jenna Hamm

Denali National Park Wilderness Centers Ltd.

P.O. Box 67

Denali National Park, AK 99755

(907) 683-2290

info@campdenali.com

www.campdenali.com

Top: Denali & Wonder Lake. (M. Ambros)
Adjacent: Tim Reap lifts lumber for the new staff
cabin. (M. Ambros). At Far Right: Wally Cole
and the new Land Rover (J. Cole)



From the Special Sightings Notebook

5/13 With a skim of ice still on Nugget Pond, spring's first chorus of wood frogs is heard croaking.

6/24 Grizzly bear chased a moose calf near Lake Creek staff cabin.

6/25 Wolverine, followed by a lynx, walked in front of our buses in Igloo canyon!

7/8 Two peregrine falcons dispatched a harlequin duck near Mile 88 right in front of our bus.

8/9 First sandhill cranes of autumn (two weeks earlier than last year).

8/18 Four wolves walked partway up Camp Denali's driveway, then filtered through the spruce trees and headed up the ridge.

9/6 Thousands of cranes fly out from the mists of the Wonder Lake valley.

9/12 Juvenile brown-headed cowbird near North Face Lodge.

9/22 After a week of rain, the Nenana River at the park entrance reached its highest recorded water level.



A Winter Adventure to the Lodges

“What is it like here in the winter?” ask many summer visitors to Camp Denali and North Face Lodge. I was able to find out for myself this past March when Simon and Jenna sprang us from our winter office at the park entrance for a week at our lodges in the heart of the park. With Simon and friend, Dan MacGregor, as our pilots, we flew over the park road, which in places was completely obliterated by wind-drifted snow.

Upon arrival, I discovered a familiar landscape transformed by snow and ice, offering new perspectives and possibilities. Summertime routes, like the trail up Camp Ridge, proved a challenge as we slogged on snowshoes in thigh-deep crystalline snow. Swimming and fishing destinations at Moose Creek and Wonder Lake were frozen, eminently ski-able expanses. Anne, Jan, and Martha spent three days skiing to McGonagall Pass, overlooking the Muldrow Glacier at 5,600 feet. There was plenty of sledding, snow-fort building, reading by the fire, and enjoying the splendid silence and solitude of winter. At the end of each day, just as in summer, we gathered for communal meals and shared our day's adventures.

By the time the week was over, I didn't want to leave. I learned that the cabins stand proudly in the midst of a cold and harsh winter, that the Mountain still evokes marvel, and that wildlife as small as a ptarmigan and as big as a moose roam at ease in the winter landscape. No matter the season, Denali is a magical place.

—Sarah Bierschwale



Denali is what America was; it's the old and new, the real and ideal, the wild earth working itself into us on days stormy and calm, brutal and beautiful, unforgiving and blessed. It's where we came from, long before agriculture, television and designer coffee, before our goofball ideas of having dominion over all living things, before our modern, paradoxical definitions of progress and prosperity, and too much stuff; it's the lean, mean, primal place buried in our bones no matter how much we might deny it, no matter how fancy our homes, how busy our routines, how cherished our myths. Denali resides in each of us as the deep quiet, the profound moment, the childhood lost and found again, the open space and rare chance to be observant, truly alive.



Excerpted with permission from the forthcoming memoir, *Denali Heart*, by Kim Heacox

Image credits:

Top: Visitors pause at the top of Stony Hill on the Park Road. (1955)

Upper Left: Camp Denali lodge in a blanket of snow. (S. Bierschwale)

2013 Special Emphasis Series



Bird Migration and Conservation Stan Senner, Director of Conservation Science, Ocean Conservancy

June 3-6 at Camp Denali & June 7-9 at North Face Lodge

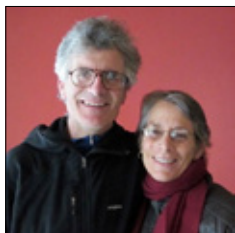
In his career Stan has worked for the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, served as Alaska's Science Coordinator for the Exxon Valdez oil spill, was the Executive Director of Audubon Alaska (1999-2009), and now focuses on energy development in the Arctic and restoration following the oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. Stan will offer presentations on bird migration and conservation in the Arctic.



Wildflowers of Denali Staff Naturalists and Guest Lecturers

June 10-13 at Camp Denali & June 14-16 at North Face Lodge

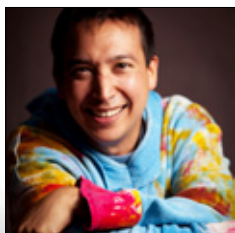
Naturalist staff and guest lecturers will lead trips for botanizing and wildflower photography. We'll explore the park's vegetation zones-- boreal forest, shrub tundra and alpine tundra-- looking for spring flowers and discussing the many ecological adaptations of these cold-hardy plants.



Alaska Range Mountaineering: Past & Present Brian & Diane Okonek, Alaska-Denali Guiding

June 24-27 at Camp Denali & June 28-30 at North Face Lodge

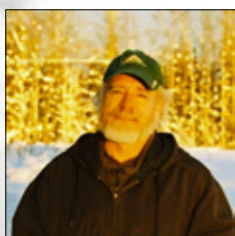
Brian and Diane will be sharing stories and photos from their life based in Talkeetna, Alaska, and their experience of organizing more than 75 expeditions on Denali. They will discuss the historic and present effects of tourism, flightseeing, climbing and hiking in the park and will follow the footsteps of explorers from 100 years ago. Brian will discuss how the desire to experience wilderness in many different ways has created the park we see today.



Stories and People of the Land Jack Dalton, Storyteller

July 8-11 at Camp Denali & July 12-14 at North Face Lodge

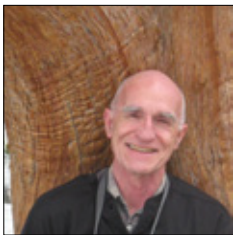
Rooted in Naparyarmiut (Hooper Bay), born in Bethel and raised in Anchorage, Jack Dalton has grown up an ambassador between two worlds: his Yup'ik Inuit and European heritages. Jack is a mentor with the Alaska Native Playwrights Project. Jack will share stories from a variety of Alaska's indigenous cultures and take guests on an engaging journey through the history of 11 Native cultures of Alaska, drawing upon his gift of captivating storytelling.



Presenting Alaska History, Politics, and Science as Literary Art Dan O'Neill, Author

July 22-25 at Camp Denali & July 26-28 at North Face Lodge

Dan O'Neill is the author of *The Firecracker Boys: The Story of Project Chariot and the roots of Environmentalism*. and *A Land Gone Lonesome*. His first program will be about Project Chariot. When Edward Teller, father of the H-bomb, unveiled his plan to use nuclear bombs to create a harbor on the northwest coast of Alaska. In his second presentation, Dan will discuss subsistence life along the Yukon River, examining the difficulties of managing wilderness lands that have, for thousands of years, included people.



Writing About the Far North Scott Russell Sanders, Ph.D., Author

August 5-8 at Camp Denali & August 9-11 at North Face Lodge

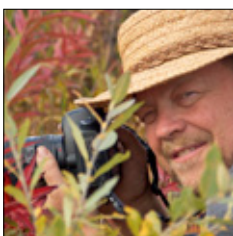
Scott Sanders is an author and teacher with an interest in ways of imagining and writing about nature. He is fascinated by literature that explores human encounters with wilderness. Evening programs will feature a sampling of work from writers who have written about the Arctic and passages from Alaskan Native literature. He will discuss the opportunities offered to writers by this varied landscape, and will offer suggestions for writing about experiences in Denali.



Coevolution, Self-organization, and a Sustainable Future Tom Wessels, Author and Professor Emeritus

August 19-22 at Camp Denali & August 23-25 at North Face Lodge

Tom Wessels is an ecologist and founding director of the master's program in Conservation Biology at Antioch University New England. He is the chair of The Center for Whole Communities that fosters inclusive communities strongly rooted in place and where all people have a relationship with land. Tom will explore some of the foundational principles of natural systems and how our adherence to these principles can help human economies become sustainable. Even though his topics sound technical, Tom promises to engage people without strong science backgrounds.



Autumn Nature Photography Workshop* Ralph Lee Hopkins, Nature Photographer

August 26-29 & August 30-September 1 at Camp Denali only

Ralph Lee Hopkins is founder and director of the Expedition Photography program for the Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic alliance. Evening programs will discuss tips and techniques for improving your images with examples from the world's wild places. Field trips will explore the wonders of Denali, from the grand landscape to wildlife encounters and intimate details. The focus will be on exploring artistic elements of composition and creative vision.

**The Photography Workshop has a fee of \$225 for three night stays and \$300 for four night stays. Space is limited to 10 participants.*



Curtains of Light: The Aurora Borealis Neal Brown, Former Director of Alaska Space Grant Program and Poker Flat Research Range

September 2-5 at Camp Denali & September 6-8 at North Face Lodge

Neal Brown's evening lectures will explore the aurora, its myths and science, sun dogs, noctilucent clouds, and other atmospheric phenomena. Hands-on instructional aids and displays will illustrate many of the scientific concepts discussed. By early September, clear nights are finally dark enough to view the aurora. Join Neal in his enthusiasm for the north country's mystical night skies!

Read more about our 2013 lineup on our website, www.campdenali.com.



Photos clockwise from top left: Silas Hamm shows off his gardening hands (H. Niedertscheider). The vibrant color of mid summer moss. (S. Bierschwale). A cow and two calf moose near Nugget Pond (S. Kertys). Jan Tomsen and Sarah Bierschwale jump for winter joy (S. Bierschwale).

Denali Park Loses a Beloved Elder

Sixty-four-year Denali resident and one who was instrumental in enabling Camp Denali's founders, William "Bill" Nancarrow passed away April 15th at the age of 91 at his homestead near the park entrance. Bill began his career with the National Park Service as Denali's first naturalist in 1951 and he retired as the Buildings & Utilities Foreman in 1981. Bill crafted two homes and several outbuildings with logs he felled and lumber he made at his own sawmill at his homestead. He met his wife, Ree, while building the Nunatak cabin at Camp Denali. Ree, a nationally-known fiber artist, created the quilt, Seasons of Denali, which hangs at the Eielson Visitor Center. Bill was an anchor in the Denali community, always generous with his time, wisdom, and good humor. He will be dearly missed and always remembered.



Bill Nancarrow at Camp Denali, 1964.

Denali Vehicle Management Plan Approved

On October 5th, a plan was approved that will guide vehicle use on the park road for the next 20 years. Four years in the making and 800 public comments later, the new plan dispensed with the longstanding vehicle cap of 10, 512 trips per year. Instead, a daily limit of 160 vehicles was created which represents a significant increase from current levels. Park managers will control the number, timing and behavior of vehicles in order to maintain

standards for visitor experience and to protect wildlife. We remain concerned about how the park service will fund the monitoring efforts required by the plan and how increased bus traffic in the core of the park will affect wildlife.

Denali Welcomes New Superintendent Don Striker

Denali National Park will be welcoming a new superintendent in January. Don Striker and his wife, Gretchen, will be arriving from West Virginia where Striker has spent the last five years as superintendent of New River Gorge National River. He brings a background in parks, business and resource management, and youth and community outreach. He replaces outgoing Superintendent Paul Anderson.

Just for Fun....

On September 7th the National Park Service unveiled a larger-than-life grizzly bear statue at the park visitor center.

The bronze sculpture is an enlargement of an original casting by artist

Bill Berry, who with his wife Liz worked at Camp Denali in the '50s and '60s. The project was funded by the estate of Liz Berry, and was spearheaded by Wally Cole. Hannah Berry, granddaughter of Bill and Liz Berry and herself a third generation Camp Denali employee, spoke at the ceremony after helping to unveil the new installation.



The bear reclines in winter (W. Cole).

Camp Denali & North Face Lodge Staff

ALEX AMBROS '06-'08, '11, '12
Hartland, VT
MARSHALL AMBROS '01, '02, '05-'08, '11, '12
Hartland, VT
BOB AUSTIN '10-'12
Northampton, MA
ANNE BEAULAUER '02-'12
Denali National Park, AK
LAURA BEEBE '12
Craftsbury Common, VT
MARIA BERGER & MAGGIE WHITAKER '97-'12
Fairbanks, AK
HANNAH BERRY '10-'12
Gustavus, AK
SARAH BIRSCHWALE '11-'12
Denali National Park, AK
PIERRE-LUC BOUCHER '11-'12
Québec City, Québec
DUKE BRADY '12
Olympia, WA
SARAH BUSH '11-'12
Knoxville, TN
MATT CAHILL '09-'12
Amherst, NH
ANDREW CARHUFF '11-'12
Tucson, AZ
WALLACE & JERRYNE COLE
Denali National Park, AK
SPIDER DAVILA '12
Austin, TX
LEE DRURY '10-'12
Milwaukee, WI
JACK FITCH '11-'12
Ester, AK
CHARLES FOWLKES '12
Albany, OR

CHRIS GOCHENOUR '06, '09-'12
Overland Park, KS
RUSSELL GRIGGS '07-'10, '12
Bozeman, MT
SIMON, JENNA, DANIKA, & SILAS HAMM Denali National Park, AK
JANET HUDDLESTON '11-'12
Takaka, New Zealand
MATT IVERSON '12
Denali National Park, AK
AMY JACOBS '11-'12
Louisville, KY
JEFF KLA KOVICH '11-'12
Santa Cruz, CA
JO KOCH '12
Lincoln, VT
SADIE MACQUARRIE '12
Duxbury, MA
TOM McCARRAN '11-'12
Amherst, MA
DREW McCARTHY '07-'12
Anchorage, AK
BRIAN McCORMICK '95-'12
Seattle, WA
MARTHA McPHEETERS '06-'12
Denali National Park, AK
MAX MILLER '11-'12
Indian River, MI
MATT MILLS '04-'07, '10-'12
Walpole, NH
SARA MOLINARO '06-'07, '11-'12
Evanston, IL
MEGAN MULCAHY '11-'12
Grafton, WI
CHRIS NOEL '12
Indianapolis, IN
JOHN NORDSTROM & EVAMARIA SCHARNOW '10-'12
Rockport, MA

SHAWN & KELLY PUMMILL '11-'12
Koloa, HI
KATHERINE SCHAKE '05-'09, '11-'12
Denali National Park, AK
ANYA SCHWARTZ '08-'12
Huntington, VT
LAUREN SIMAS '08-'12
Berkeley, CA
JULIA SMITH '04-'12
Sarasota, FL
JONATHAN STARKES '10-'12
New Haven, CT
JAN TOMSEN '03, '04, '06-'12
Denali National Park, AK
NICK TOURLOUKIS '12
Amherst, MA
KRISTEN VAWTER '10-'12
San Francisco, CA
HANNAH WAGENAAR '10-'12
Maxwell, IA
FRITZ WITTWER '96-'12
Denali National Park, AK

Short Term

Staff & Volunteers
JEANNE BERRY
STEPHANIE DOTSON
NAN EAGLESON
JIM HORBETT
CHARLENE LOCKE
MARCIA MUNSON
STEPHANIE NEILSON
TIM REAP

Parkside Guest House Staff

CARLEY DUNN '96-'12
Anchorage, AK



J. Huddleston.

Interested in Working with Us?

The enthusiasm of our staff is often what makes the guest experience so memorable.

General staff positions are available for the 2013 season, as well as the following professional seasonal positions:

- Dinner Chefs
- Skilled Maintenance Workers
- Naturalist Guides

**Registered Nurses are encouraged to apply for any of our positions.*

If you know of someone who would be a good fit for our organization, encourage him or her to view the employment pages of our website: www.campdenali.com.





Denali National Park Wilderness Centers Ltd.
Camp Denali, North Face Lodge, & Parkside Guest House
P.O. Box 67
Denali National Park, AK 99755

*Help us update our mailing list.
Tell us if your contact information has
changed, if you wish to unsubscribe,
or receive the newsletter by email only.
Thank you!
907-683-2290 info@campdenali.com*



www.campdenali.com

Looking Back...Reflections on the 25th Anniversary of Operating North Face Lodge

When we purchased Camp Denali from its founders, we bought more than a business. We inherited a trust to live lightly with the land, so that park visitors could experience simple living without destroying the wilderness setting they had come to explore. So, when we acquired North Face Lodge, it was not because we wanted to expand.

By 1987, business opportunities within the new parkland established by the Alaska Lands Act of 1980 had caught the imaginations of a few entrepreneurs. The idea of a major resort in the Wonder Lake region in view of Denali, which had been blocked in the 1960s, reared its head once more. Trouble was that this time the most desirable plot of land didn't belong to the National Park Service; it was for sale—a private inholding in the park's new geographic heart. The land's development was clearly a threat to the park's

wilderness legacy, and it lay directly below Camp Denali.

We tried to find a way to return the broken business and crumbling infrastructure to tundra. In the end, with the support of many former Camp Denali guests, North Face Lodge became ours to nurture back to health, beginning with a renovation that retained its capacity and footprint on the land. Twenty-five years later, the fellowship and values that staff and guests alike have contributed and received at this small north country inn have generated a unique following. Most significantly, the North Face Lodge story has contributed to the legacy of stewardship we inherited at Camp Denali over sixty years ago.

-Wallace and Jerryne Cole, Fall 2012

