Pine Island Camp
BENJAMIN B. SWAN, *Director*

Est. 1902

BELGRADE LAKES, MAINE 04918

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Dear Pine Island Alumni and Friends,

During the off-season, I often ask campers, "What do you like most about camp?" The War Game is almost always in their top three. That makes sense. The game is physically and mentally intense, it occurs near the end of camp, and it's tangible enough to dispose of an old alum's question.

But the War Game conjures memories that are as vivid for 70-year-olds as for 10-year-olds, so the reason for its popularity must be more nuanced. In 2012, Pine Island will play its 100th War Game, and the approaching milestone prompts me to speculate on why it resonates so viscerally with veterans. I've come up with three reasons.

First, the game's byzantine rituals put the Illuminati to shame. A line of boys wearing washers around their necks stomps the ground chanting "ready, ready, ready, go, one, two, step" while a gate leader calls his squadron over the incessant banging of a caller and motions his red flag scout to get on the pole. This *lingua kababa* unites generations around an experience that others 'just wouldn't understand.'

If *ritual* gives psychic structure to the War Game, *lore* provides its color and texture. Every Pine Islander knows the story of the campers who sparked a hundred-year rivalry by pelting their peers with rotten apples from behind a stone wall. The antic-filled talent shows put on by the camp for residents of Dunn's Corners—whose (two) streets we used to commandeer to play the War Game—have similarly passed into legend. Stories beget stories beget stories.

Equally important is the indelible sense of *place* that the Norridgewock site evokes. For just three days each summer, 100+ combatants descend on 200 acres of sandy pine forest to fight over an imaginary town demarked by string. That's pretty hard to forget (or to explain).

Ritual, lore, venue—these attributes partly explain how the game has embedded itself in the DNA of participants. Of course, these attributes equally characterize Pine Island itself. What's different about the War Game, though, is competition. After a season of harmony, we lock horns in combat to prove to ourselves that we have, once again, built a community stronger than our differences. Immediately after the final score is announced, a camp-wide chorus of "Akka Lakka Ching!" affirms that Pine Island always wins.

In short, the War Game helps us appreciate the summer more. And I believe that Pine Island serves a similar role in our lives outside camp. Perhaps that's why alumni often remark that the impact of their camp experience is out of proportion to their time spent on Great Pond.

I hope you will reflect on the impact Pine Island has had on your life and make a year-end contribution to PIC. We've got a number of projects underway to keep camp just as you remember it—upgraded tent platforms, new roofs, a beautiful new dory with Shaw & Tenney spruce oars, and road renovations to keep silt runoff out of the lake. We're also working strenuously to retire land debt and to continue building our scholarship fund to help pay the tuition of boys who could not otherwise afford a Pine Island summer. All of these improvements are intended to ensure that Pine Island's impact endures for a lifetime, not just a summer.

Many thanks for your support of our community.

Akka Lakka,

Pope Ward, PIC Board Chairman

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