



All Roads Lead Back to Camp John Marc

By Former CJM Staff Member: Steve Spurgin

My interview at UT Southwestern Medical School took place during a Saturday morning downpour in early September. I found the office where my first interview was to take place, nervously straightened my tie, and knocked on the door. Upon entering, I was faced with a damp-looking doctor who had sacrificed his Saturday morning to see if I had the characteristics of a future physician. Seated behind a large desk, he looked down at my file and said, “So...Steve. I’m going to interview six people this morning, all with good grades and good test scores, what makes you any different from them?” Three words immediately came to mind: Camp John Marc (CJM).

As I began my first summer as a CJM Staff Member, I distinctly remember being terrified of small children, as I had literally never worked with kids before. The solitude of the county roads gave me time to think, and as the Dallas radio stations faded into static, I became more and more afraid. Afraid that I wouldn’t know how to talk with the campers, wouldn’t know how to keep them in line, wouldn’t know how to make them laugh or teach them how to climb the rock wall or catch a fish. I felt that it was going to be a long, slow, incompetent summer.

Driving through Rio Vista, I thought about my past times at Camp John Marc with my family. I loved the Camper Scamper. I loved going to Work Day every year to lay bricks and paint fences and wash windows. I loved the camp and the people who worked there, but I had never met the campers. I was reasonably good at fishing, but would I be any good at teaching kids to fish?

Campers came and I found new confidence. My first lesson was, as Vance put it: “you gotta sell it!” Each time the rainy day plan came into effect, campers hurried into the dining hall for yet another round of board games or Weird Science. It was there that I learned how enthusiasm was essential, infectious, and how raw energy made the activities fun. I learned how children look for leaders, and how they mirror the attitudes of those they see around them.

The second lesson was never put into words, but was clearly evident from day one: you will work hard. From the moment your eyes open in the morning to the last thought that goes through your head at night, you are on duty. As a CJM staff member or volunteer, the job is never really done until the bus leaves the camp gates—and then the next job begins. For each activity, there was planning, setting up, coordinating, leading, cleaning up, debriefing, troubleshooting. Only with a deeper passion for a cause can you find the ability to do your best in all these things. Only with heart can you weather the heat.

When dressed up as Theodore Roosevelt for the *Night at the Museum* theme night, I quickly learned a new lesson: you have to relax, be a little ridiculous, and have fun. My fellow staffers did the same, and I learned from their example. I could watch Karl Kurz speak fluent “ancient Egyptian” as he, the Pharaoh Akmenrah, rallied a crowd of children to help him find his mystical golden tablet. Charlton Heston would have been proud of his performance. Meanwhile, in the corner of the barn,

Continued on Page 5

Miller's Musings:

A Note from Board Chairman Scott A. Miller

I learned this Summer that sometimes it takes tragedy to see the best in ourselves and in others. This is certainly true of the recent tragedy in Houston with Hurricane Harvey and its aftermath. I watched in awe as our fellow Texans showed their true grit and helped to rescue their fellow citizens from catastrophic situations. I still am inspired by these heroes' actions and their tireless service as they helped their fellow Houstonians while also putting themselves in harm's way. These survivors and their rescuers showed tremendous empathy and love for those that they call neighbors.



Scott side-walking at Camp TLC

Empathy: it is a feeling that improves and even saves lives. The same empathy that the heroes of Harvey displayed was on full display at Camp John Marc this summer. The theme of camp this summer was showing empathy for others, whether it be a camper, volunteer counselor, side-walker for the horse arena, medical staff or permanent year-round staff. I witnessed empathetic acts small and large, trivial and powerful, while I was at camp this summer side-walking for Camp TLC - our camp for children with spina bifida. It reinforced what I have seen over and over at other summer camps and weekend camps: Camp John Marc is a place where folks come to put other's interests and needs ahead of their own. They focus all of their energy on one mission: giving campers an experience that allows them to find confidence and love that will fuel them for a lifetime.

Last year, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of Camp John Marc and what an incredible celebration it was! We have now embarked on the next chapter of our journey, and I am excited and anxious to see what great things are in store for us. Last year, we completed the transition of our new leadership team: our Executive Director Kevin Randles, our Camp Director Megan White and our two Assistant Camp Directors, Bre Loveless and Kyle Lamb. With this

passionate and dedicated leadership team, the support of our incredible hospital partners, and our capable and passionate Board of Directors, the future of Camp John Marc is bright. I am confident that we are up for any challenges we may face.

Camp has seen some additions this year that I would like to highlight, the most notable of which is Boo's Treehouse, a labor of love for Vance Gilmore, who has been planning this site for many years. The treehouse, named after the character of the same name in To Kill a Mockingbird, is a peaceful location on the camp property; it is a great space for cook-outs and overnight campouts. Like all spaces at Camp John Marc, Boo's Treehouse is accessible by all and has facilities to allow all campers and staff to visit a fantastic new venue. We also have a new frisbee golf course on the camp property thanks to Camp TLC camper Benjamin Waggoner and his boy scout troop from Lake Highlands.

In closing, I want to thank all the dedicated volunteers, medical staff, facilities staff and summer staff that show great empathy and put forth incredible efforts each and every summer to make camp a fun and safe place for our campers. I also want to thank our donors and hospital partners that have blessed us with the resources to make Camp John Marc the most magical place on earth.



Camper Benjamin Waggoner (right), and his scout troop hard at work

— Scott A. Miller

Did You Know?

1,068 campers were served at Camp John Marc's eleven week-long camps during the summer of 2017!



A Tale of Friendship, Guns & A Generous Estate Gift to Camp John Marc

By CJM Board Member: Jeff Sears

In January 2017, the estate of William Travis Clarke, Jr. made an incredibly generous gift to Camp John Marc (CJM) from the sale of land in Bosque County. The donation was largely orchestrated by Clarke's long-time friend Leo Bradshaw. It's a story that could only happen in Texas, with a cast full of colorful characters, gun dealers, close friendships and generosity that will benefit thousands of campers.

William Travis Clarke, Jr. (1918-2015)

To begin, we take you back to 1941 when William Travis Clarke, Jr. was drafted into the Army. In 1942, he was honorably discharged as a Corporal, and by that time he had developed a reputation in the ranks as a man who could get things done. If you had a logistics problem, Bill Clarke could find a solution.

Clarke enjoyed post-Army life for exactly one day, and then General George S. Patton personally sought out Clarke to become his logistics officer. Clarke re-enlisted in the U.S. Army as a Warrant Officer, and for the remainder of World War II in the Atlantic theater, Clarke was responsible for getting oil in Patton's tanks. On more than one occasion, Clarke and his colleagues would sneak behind enemy lines to steal oil from German Panzer tanks to fuel Patton's fleet.

After the war, Clarke received a degree from the University of Texas School of Pharmacy in Austin, and he worked the remainder of his career as a pharmacist at the VA Hospital in Waco. He amassed considerable wealth from oil and gas investments. By the accounts of his friends, Clarke liked to have a good time too. A handsome and charismatic man, he was usually accompanied by a pretty woman and was an avid outdoorsman. He also had a side hobby: he enjoyed collecting nice shotguns.



Bill Clarke (left) was a very distinguished soldier, pharmacist, and all around gentleman

Leo Bradshaw (1934 - Present)

Leo Bradshaw and Clarke met in the late 1950s. Bradshaw has been collecting and selling guns in Waco since 1954, and he remains co-owner of Bradshaw/Cogdell's in Waco to this day. The store sells new and antique guns and ammunition, and it has a loyal following of outdoor enthusiasts and gun collectors in the region.

When Bradshaw speaks of his friend Bill Clarke, he always has a smile on his face. "He was one of the most articulate, smartest, most common-sense guys you ever met...he was just something else." They were friends for over 50 years.

In the autumn of Clarke's life, his friend Bradshaw helped take care of him. Since Clarke had no heirs and was in poor health, Bradshaw asked him one day, "What's going to happen to all your wealth when you're gone?" Clarke responded, "I don't know" and admitted that he did not have a will. Bradshaw then went to work on helping his friend get his affairs in order.

Billy and Jackie Hodge

Bradshaw learned about CJM from another gun dealer named Billy Hodge (1930-2013). Hodge was the second-generation owner of a gun shop called Buckhorn Trading Post in Dallas, which eventually became Buckhorn Quality Firearms. As his obituary from 2013 states, "Buckhorn was one of the finest high-quality firearms businesses in the world, serving distinguished customers globally."

Over the years, Bradshaw and Billy Hodge became friends and trading partners, in spite of the fact that they competed for much of their lives as premier gun dealers and collectors in the region. Late in his life, Hodge sold several guns to Bradshaw and mentioned that he was giving most of his remaining estate to CJM. Hodge spoke passionately about the camp and its history, and it made an impression on Bradshaw.

Billy and Jackie Hodge are among the most generous estate donors in CJM's history, and their connection to the camp can be traced to – of all places – Mary Olejnik (1950-2016), a Slovakian immigrant and the long-time friend and chef for the Beecherl family at the Flat Top Ranch. The Beecherl family is among the oldest and largest in the Park Cities, and their connections to charities and CJM board members are extensive. Among those connections is Julie Beecherl's friendship with CJM board member Carol Touchstone.

Mary Olejnik was catching up with her good friend Jackie Hodge one day, and Jackie mentioned that she and her husband were trying to decide where they should donate their estate. Olejnik asked Julie Beecherl what charities she would recommend, and soon thereafter Julie Beecherl connected the Hodges with Carol Touchstone and Marc Myers.

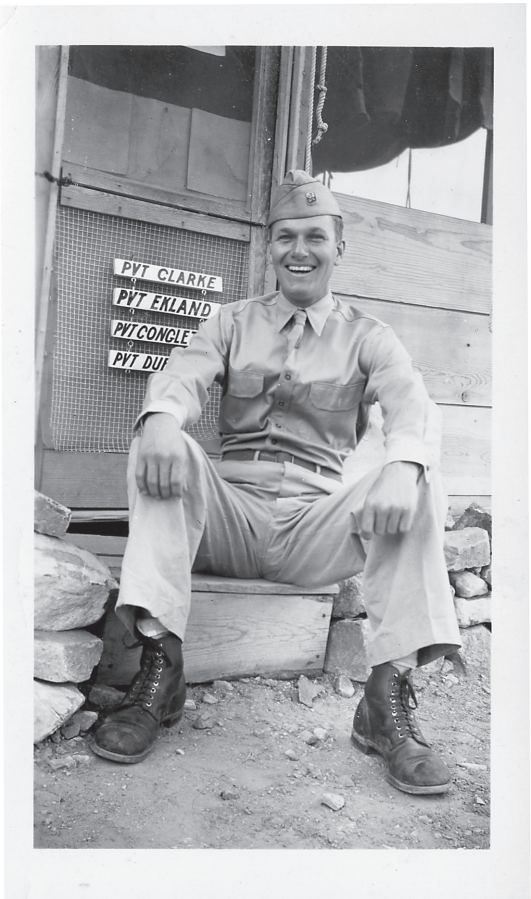
The Clarke Estate and CJM

In 2014, Bradshaw discovered that his friend Clarke had 50% ownership interest in acreage along the Sommervale/Bosque County line. Bradshaw, recalling his recent conversation with the Hodges about CJM, suggested giving that 50% interest in the land to CJM. Clarke agreed to bequeath the land to the camp, sight unseen.

A few months later, both Clarke and Bradshaw traveled together to see CJM for the first time. They were both impressed by what they saw, and Clarke passed away soon thereafter in March 2015. Bradshaw served as the executor of Clarke's will.

Upon hearing the news, board members of CJM used their expertise and key contacts to make the sale of the land possible. In January 2017, the sale was completed & CJM became the beneficiary of proceeds from the Clarke estate totaling \$500,000.

Thank you Bill Clarke, Leo Bradshaw, Billy and Jackie Hodge, Julie Beecherl, Mary Olejnik, Marc and Jan Myers, Gifford and Carol Touchstone, Karl Rathjen and everyone else who played a vital role in making this wonderful gift happen. Many are smiling!



Bill Clarke and his terrific smile

If you are interested in learning more about including Camp John Marc in your estate plans, please contact the Dallas Office at mail@campjohnmarc.org or 214-360-0056.

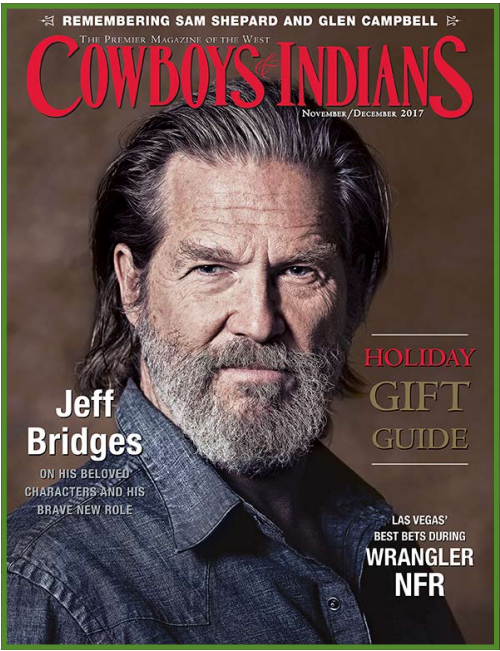
Memorials

Micah Ahern (Camp Sanguinity)	Victoria Marsh
Dr. Allen	Bruce Martindale
Zachary Alvarez (Camp Esperanza)	Kaylen McBroom (Camp Esperanza)
Larry Barlow	Lynda Menn
Alcadio Barron (Camp Sanguinity)	John F. Meyers
Dan Beaird	Sparky Moore
Renea Beckmayer	Dr. Hitoshi Christopher Nikaidoh, MD
Stephen Browne	Susana Olvera (Camp Esperanza)
Noelle Brunk (Camp Sanguinity)	Dax Pass
William Travis Clarke Jr.	Barbara Sandy Patton
Julieta Coronado (Camp Esperanza)	Pat Peale
Patrick Ellis	Walter Lweis Perryman III
Kent Garrett	Geoff Pomella (Camp Esperanza)
Diego Garza (Camp Esperanza)	Mavis Powell
Mrs. Ben Gates	Kathy Quinten
Eunice Goodin	Dewey Ratliff
Ruffin Gray	Mary Kate Richards
Julie Green (Long-time CJM Cook)	Rita Shamp
Randy Gutierrez (Camp Sanguinity)	Dorothy Spurgin
Page Hagemann	Iris Tipton
Tom Hairston	William Travis Twiford
Ron Hampton	Jose Ugalde (Camp Esperanza)
Julie Hewett	Anna Van Guisen (Camp Sanguinity)
Otto Hokamp	Dr. John Vorhies, Jr.
Don Houseman	James Walker
Dana Ingram	Brenden Ward (Camp Moss)
Harry H. Johnson, Jr.	Marion Palmer Wehrauch
Reginald “Stan” Kay (Camp Jubilee Counselor)	Author White
John Kebble	Larry Wilson
Rose Mary Kennedy	Kris “Rhinestone” Wilson (CJM Staff 1997)
Jack Little	Vivian Worlein (Camp Esperanza)
Norman Lockett	

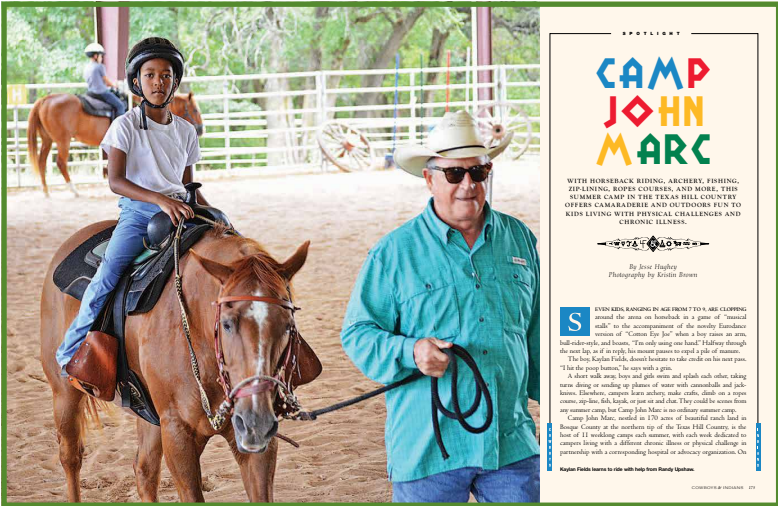
Honorariums

Carter Bohm	Rose Ann Littlepage
Leo Bradshaw	Al Lubran
George Branblett	Jeff Martinez
Jim Broche	Maggie Mathis
Clare Card	Stan Mayfield
Jaxon Colby	John and Ellen McStay
Dr. Morgan Coleman	Jim Meadows
Bobby Sue De Rossett	Tia Metzger
Matt “Bubba” Dumas	Gaye Morrison
Chris and Christina Durovich	Marc and Jan Myers
Rob Farrell	Lloyd and Michal Powell
Paul Gilmore	Claude Prestidge, MD
Randall Goodwin	The Life After Cancer Program
Rick Harvey	Molly Ray
John and Dianne Hawkins	Dean Renkes
Bill Heard	Darrel Rice
Ralph Heins	Gavin Rosado
Ron Henderson	Courtney Rutland
Celeste Hernandez	Scott Schwob
Bill Hickey Family	Zachary Shapiro
Mark and Barb Hokamp	Joel Sullivan
Blake and Charlie Howard	Mr. and Mrs. John Tanner
Kendall Keane	Donna Tanner
Jonathan Kocks	Jennifer Tourje
Corey Ladd	Ley and Jan Waggoner
Ken Leatherwood	Chip Waggoner
Mrs. Phyllis Leonhardt	Ms. Soja Wood
Mr. and Mrs. Dale Leonhardt	

Camp John Marc in the News



Camp John Marc is featured in the November/December edition of Cowboys & Indians Magazine, (a national publication). Inside, you'll find a great article about Camp John Marc's horse program and the power of camp.



Rider Kaylan Fields with sidewalker Randy Upshaw

In February, Camp John Marc was awarded the Eleanor P. Eells Award for Program Excellence for Camp Cornstarch Kids by our accrediting body, the American Camp Association. Camp Cornstarch Kids is the first camp in the world to serve children with glycogen storage disease.



The Sargent Family having fun at the 3rd Annual Camp Cornstarch Kids



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continued from page 1

Bethany Richards communicated as a cavewoman, grunting and gesturing with the giggling group around the giant Easter Island Head, “Dum Dum.” Whether the job demanded being the center of attention, and coordinating an activity for the group, or whether it required the sideline approach, helping a camper find the courage to get up and participate, I got better and better as the weeks flew by.

And as I learned the ropes from the more senior staff members, I realized that no part of my growth as a staffer happened apart from my team—you have to be a team player. When the staff functioned as a unit, each member working and supporting the others, the whole outcome of the week could be transformed.



Steve as Theodore Roosevelt during theme night

Each relationship that I forged, whether with my campers or my friends on staff, helped me become who I am today. The transformative nature of camp has been written about ad nauseam, but for good reason—it is a supremely powerful truth. At a different medical school interview, I was so excited to talk about CJM that one of the interviewers interrupted my story to say, with a laugh, “Hang on—was this a camp for them or for you?”

That question has crossed my mind more than once. But no one at camp ever forgot why we were really there: we were there for the kids. We were there because we knew they had bright futures and we wanted them to know it too. We wanted them to feel their future and believe in it. We wanted them to have fun. We wanted not to normalize their pain, but to normalize their illness, by teaching these children that they were not alone. We wanted them to learn that they were more; more than a disease, more than their complications, more than a chronically sick child. More than the long hospital stays where I now wake them up in the morning, day after day, to listen to their hearts and talk to their parents, until they can finally get back to their normal selves. As CJM staff

members, we came to give our time and energy to the kids, but the kids—and the camp—gave it all back, and more.

I will never forget Vance’s reminder one day at a staff meeting before Camp Broncho—the last week of the summer. “This is your last week,” he said, “but do not forget that it is their first.” You have to run all the way to the finish line. Every camper deserves the same attention, energy, and care the others before them have received. The same goes for patients in the hospital, who may meet me at the end of a long day, at the end of a longer week. It is a hard rule to follow, but it is so important.

Because as you have figured out by now, I did make it to medical school—and despite my former fears, I made it to UT Southwestern. And I have even made it to my second year of residency at Children’s Medical Center, here in Dallas. One morning, I had the pleasure of reuniting with former staffers now in the medical field: Karl, as my own chief resident at Children’s Medical Center, and Bethany as one of our medical students. They look different now not dressed as an Egyptian pharaoh or a cavewoman, but as Teddy Roosevelt said at the end of *Night at the Museum*, “it’s time for their next adventure.”

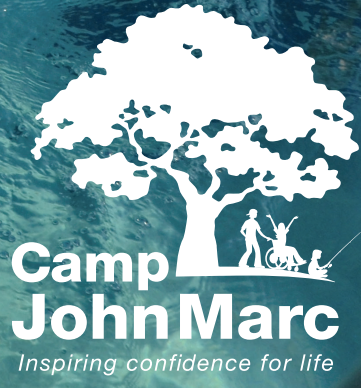
I am so thankful for my time at Camp John Marc. It taught me important lessons of endurance, energy, empathy, work ethic, leadership, and teamwork. These qualities are all part of what makes a good doctor—a title that I hope to one day attain. But while these attributes make good doctors, they also make good lawyers, child life specialists, police officers, nurses, physical therapists, camp directors, and business people. So many camp staffers have experienced what I did, and we will never be the same. Camp may not have given us a calling, but it certainly prepared us for when the calling came.



Steve sidewalking at Camp Moss



Former staff members Bethany Richards, Karl Kurz, and Steve Spurgin



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