“The Ceremony”
by Dan Streit

LPC Heggnes began in 1966.... Buochs, Switzerland, my first camp as a counselor, Barthold Vonen's first camp as a camper. We were in the same family, I was his Dad and we became good friends. On one sunny afternoon walk we were talking about LPC and where the camps were and how they were found. A light went on in Barthold's brain. He told me, “You know, Dan, my grandmother owns a big old house on the edge of the fjord back home. Some day I'm going to turn that into an LPC!” And I responded, “Sounds great! I'll direct it....”

Fast forward 16 years. I'm somewhere in the middle of Norway (Dale, to be exact), staying with Karette's amazing mom, Regi, and soon we're in a small boat puttering a half hour down the most beautiful fjord.... Fortunately, it's high tide when we arrive and we're able to get ourselves and our luggage out onto the rickety pier. I look up the hill and in the distance, at the edge of the woods, yes, there is a structure that could very well be a house! The snaky path up seems to take forever, though in just a matter of days the climb will feel as natural as walking upstairs. We have arrived at Hegnes.

The house is old and, by LPC standards, small. But magical, just as I expected. We would indeed be a small camp – 11 campers and 6 staff. And our #1 priority would be building. It was to be one of those Older Kids Work Camps. And two of our counselors, our saviors, Susan and Dave Smith, were carpenters. The attic needed to be turned into bedrooms, the basement needed to become our wash/shower area, and the barn needed to be completely taken down and rebuilt into something useful. And of course the kids had to make their beds, not just every morning but the day they arrived, if they wanted a place to sleep that night. Here are some boards, here are a hammer and nails.... Sweet dreams!

And then there was the “Do”. Barthold had already seen to it that a lot had been done to prepare for this camp. He organized friends, volunteers, contractors and charitable organizations to do a ton of work before we even arrived. And so it happened that we found the Do ready for our convenience, constructed by, I believe, the local Lions Club. Such luxury!

Ok, the Do was basically a two-seater outhouse, though mostly only one seat was used at a time as there was no divider between the two. All of the “deposits” were collected in a large pot below each seat, and if you went behind the Do, below it you had access to the pots and could pull them out. Now emptying the pots would be necessary every day, but who would want to do that job? We needed a plan. “The Ceremony” was born....

Early on, articles of old clothing were found around the Hegnes site, presumably belonging to its last resident whom we first referred to as The Old Man and, shortly thereafter, respectfully named “Olav.” Dave, Karette, and Dan found suitable suits among Olav's clothing, and Dave constructed a brilliant pot-carrying implement which allowed for hands-free retrieval and transportation of the Do pots. And so, our first morning of camp, right after Morgensport, the whole camp assembled behind the Do, some suspicious, some sleepy, all curious.... Then the costumed pallbearers (Dave and Karette) appeared and, in silence, proceeded to manipulate the pot-carrier until their cargo was securely loaded. Then, in sacred silence, Dan led the astonished procession down the track not far away, where a large hole appeared to have been dug in the ground overnight. At this point all gathered around, appropriate words were spoken - “ashes to ashes, dust to dust, poop to poop...” - and, with a simple flick of the wrists, Dave and Karette deposited their cargo into the bowels of the earth. The onlookers stepped forward, one at a time, took a handful of dirt and gently strewed it over the site, adding their own silent words. It was over, and it was good. We walked with silence back to the house.

There were many, many Putz jobs to be done at that first Hegnes; sometimes it seemed we just didn't ever have enough hands to get everything done. But somehow The Ceremony never lacked for volunteers. If you hadn't done The Ceremony, you really hadn't done Hegnes, right? We learned how to rinse the pots and, eventually, with all the wood sawing we did, we added a bucket of sawdust to the

recipe – a handful sprinkled into your pot after you had left your deposit would absorb many of the odors associated with the task, making the whole Do experience that much more delightful....

That was over 40 years ago. Time changes things. Already in the second Hegnes camp we installed a divider in the Do, creating a semblance of privacy. I haven't been back to Heggnes in 30 years, I doubt that indoor plumbing has been installed, but I do know someone threw another “g” into “Hegnes” making it “Heggnes”. If anyone knows how it came about, I'd love to hear that story!

A note from the Editors—

As it happens, we have the answer to Dan’s question, so here it is straight from the mouth of Barthold himself:

"Spelling of Heggnes. I noticed you spelled Heg(g)es this way in your info on camps this summer. I realize that the spelling is with only one "g" in early documents. ***It is now the official spelling and family name for those who trace their root to this area.*** *Although also other more "ancient" spelling like Hegrenes, Hegeræs or Hegranes can be found also in current maps. Still I suggest that we use HEGGNES."*

Barthold Vonen in an email to the LPC Central Office, Jan. 10th, 2024.