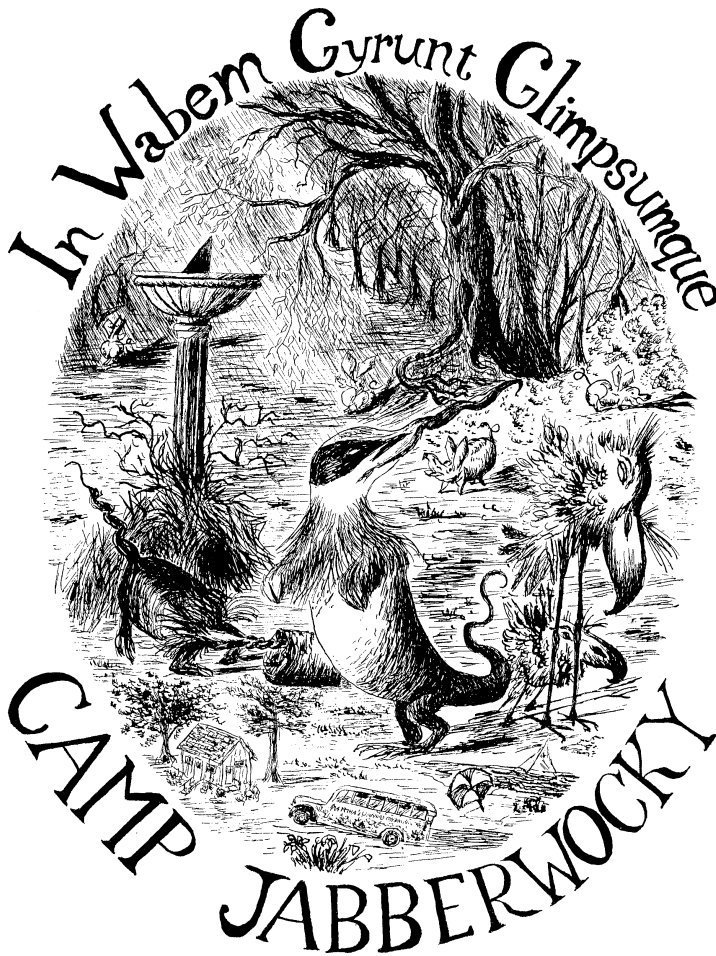


Jabberwocky

A Brief History of
The Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp



Clark Hanjian

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Polyspire
Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts

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Published by
Polyspire
PO Box 4594
Vineyard Haven, MA 02568

First edition (1989) and anniversary edition (2003) published by Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp, Inc. This PDF edition (2014), published by Polyspire, is a reproduction of the anniversary edition. All proceeds from the sale of this book are used to support the Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp, a nonprofit corporation.

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The seal of Camp Jabberwocky was drawn by John Lamb and is adapted from an illustration by John Tenniel. The inscription is a questionable Latin rendering of “Did Gyre and Gimble in the Wabe.”



The author became involved with Jabberwocky in 1974, at age 12. He was part of a church group, led by his parents, which came to the camp each summer to provide a few days of assistance. He worked at the camp as a counsellor during the summers of 1981-1992. He also worked as the caretaker of the camp's buildings and grounds during the years 1985-1990 and 1995-1999.

Note Regarding this Anniversary Edition

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Camp Jabberwocky, I have attempted to make some improvements to the look and feel of this small history. These include refinements in the layout and design, and some minor corrections. Please note, however, that I have made no substantive changes to the original text and, thus, this printing does not constitute a true “second edition.” Jabberwocky has continued to evolve during the many years since this history was written. I trust that the more recent adventures of this community will provide good fodder for historians to come.

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Preface

In a moment of insight, Napoleon Bonaparte once remarked that history is nothing more than “a set of lies agreed upon.”

Thus begins the story of Jabberwocky.

Although the following account hopefully bears more resemblance to reality than a set of lies, one can be certain that all the details presented here are not totally agreed upon. At best, this history is a collection of primary anecdotes and noteworthy moments—a potpourri of memories, comments, and news accounts which have been gradually accumulated and occasionally embellished over the years. The sources for this story include: the camp archives, interviews with Helen Lamb, a substantial collection of newspaper articles, and an unstable body of oral history which has been transmitted over the years via Helen’s children and a handful of veteran campers and counsellors. At worst, the reader may end up agreeing with Oscar Wilde that, “History is merely gossip.”

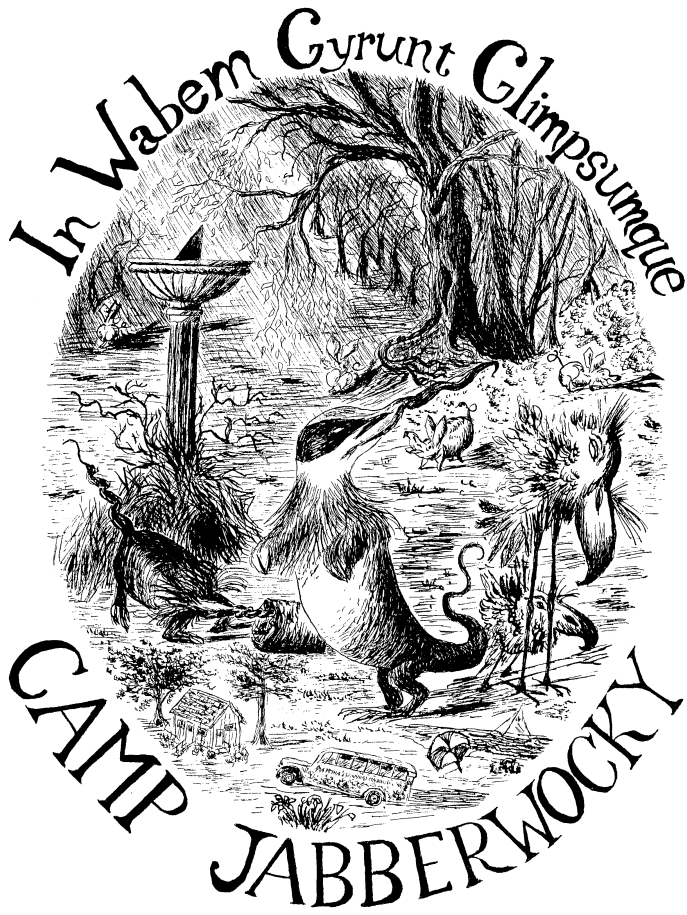
A complete history of Jabberwocky would include thousands of characters and a breathtaking array of generous acts. This little book, though, cannot begin to list all the amazing people, gifts, and miracles. At this point, an author might typically apologize to all the people that he or she omitted. Instead, I want to remind the reader that Jabberwocky is a group effort: the place would fall apart without the incredible commitment and

generosity of so many, many people. Please, therefore, remember this multitude as you read between the lines.

I would like to acknowledge the *Vineyard Gazette* for permission to reprint numerous excerpts from its paper, and the Tisbury Printer and Educomp for their gracious assistance in producing this first edition.

Lies, gossip, and embellishment notwithstanding, the reader may find some smattering of hope in these pages. If such is the case, the aim of this book will be met.

C.H.



Jabberwocky

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
 Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
 All mimsy were the borogoves,
 And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
 The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
 Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
 The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
 Long time the manxome foe he sought—
 So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
 And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,
 The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
 Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
 And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
 The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
 He left it dead, and with its head
 He went galumphing back.

“And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
 Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
 O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”
 He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
 Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
 All mimsy were the borogoves,
 And the mome raths outgrabe.

Lewis Carroll
Through the Looking Glass

Humpty Dumpty Explains “Jabberwocky” to Alice

“You seem very clever at explaining words, sir,” said Alice. “Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called ‘Jabberwocky’?”

“Let’s hear it,” said Humpty Dumpty. “I can explain all the poems that were ever invented—and a good many that haven’t been invented just yet.”

This sounded very hopeful, so Alice repeated the first verse . . .

“That’s enough to begin with,” Humpty Dumpty interrupted; “there are plenty of hard words there. ‘Brillig’ means four o’clock in the afternoon—the time when you begin broiling things for dinner.”

“That’ll do very well,” said Alice. “And ‘slithy’?”

“Well, ‘slithy’ means ‘lithe and slimy.’ ‘Lithe’ is the same as ‘active.’ You see, it’s like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up in one word.”

“I see it now,” Alice remarked thoughtfully. “And what are ‘toves’?”

“Well, ‘toves’ are something like badgers—they’re something like lizards—and they’re something like corkscrews.”

“They must be very curious creatures.”

“They are that,” said Humpty Dumpty, “also they make their nests under sundials—also they live on cheese.”

“And what’s to ‘gyre’ and to ‘gimble’?”

“To ‘gyre’ is to go round and round like a gyroscope. To ‘gimble’ is to make holes like a gimlet.”

“And ‘the wabe’ is the grass-plot round a sundial, I suppose?” said Alice, surprised at her own ingenuity.

“Of course it is. It’s called ‘wabe,’ you know, because it goes a long way before it, and a long way behind it.”

“And a long way beyond it on each side,” Alice added.

“Exactly so. Well, then, ‘mimsy’ is flimsy and miserable (there’s another portmanteau for you). And a ‘borogove’ is a thin, shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round—something like a live mop.”

“And then ‘mome raths’?” said Alice. “I’m afraid I’m giving you a great deal of trouble.”

“Well, a ‘rath’ is a sort of green pig: but ‘mome’ I’m not certain about. I think it’s short for ‘from home’—meaning that they’d lost their way, you know.”

“And what does ‘outgrabe’ mean?”

“Well, ‘outgribing’ is something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle; however, you’ll hear it done, maybe—down in the wood yonder—and when you’ve once heard it you’ll be quite content.

Lewis Carroll

Through the Looking Glass



Jabberwocky is a large world, a nonsense world, perhaps, but then not many people can agree where nonsense begins and sense leaves off, or whether, at anytime, they do anything of the kind. Camp Jabberwocky is a child's world, overpopulated with adults at times, but they don't upset things too much, except when they try, always in vain, to create order out of chaos . . .

So the poem Jabberwocky describes the camp in the best possible language. The language of nonsense that ends in making more sense than we normally care to admit. It is a language that describes a world free from care, but not from fear; a world that has its tears, but laughter and joy are the prevailing nonsense. It is a happy world of pretending and doing, maybe it's nonsense, but it doesn't matter.

*Counsellor Hank Montandon
Vineyard Gazette, ca. 1967*



1 - Introduction

The Place

On a small island in the North Atlantic, off the southern shore of Massachusetts, there is a place where hope flourishes. The island is Martha's Vineyard—a glacial moraine settled by the Wampanoag Indians, “discovered” by seventeenth century Europeans, and now inundated by a thriving tourist industry. The island consists of six towns, a full range of public and private services, and a seasonal population that fluctuates between 15,000 and 70,000. The place is Camp Jabberwocky—a small summer camp for the disabled, situated in the northern woods of the island, not too far from Lake Tashmoo.

Jabberwocky emerged in the early 1950's. It began in a time when public sentiment regarding the role of disabled people in society was dismal. Services for the disabled were still at a minimum. Rights for the disabled were not an issue. Nonetheless, Jabberwocky sprang forth.

The camp started as a small experiment: a handful of children with cerebral palsy, a tiny summer cottage, a director, and a young assistant. From there, the camp has grown to a fourteen acre site, seventeen buildings, and a volunteer staff of well over forty people. It now serves about one hundred disabled children and adults every summer.

But this is only the beginning. Jabberwocky lives well beyond the borders and definitions of a camp. It may have all the outward appearances and necessities of any summer camp, but

when one steps into this curious microcosm, the images of a camp quickly fade.

Jabberwocky is a community. It has families, and extended families, and grandparents, and children. It has births, and deaths, and marriages. It has oral history, traditions, myths, and legends. It has people with a full range of abilities, skills, and interests. And these people work, play, eat, and create together. They argue and dance together. They write and cry together. And, like people in other communities, they are here year after year. A few come and go each season, but the majority are here living together every summer.

The Story

Jabberwocky is a story that needs to be told.

It is a record of experiments and risks. A portrait of cooperation. Jabberwocky is a tale of bountiful harvest from a few scattered seeds. It is an epic of generosity and thanksgiving. Stories like this are crucial to the existence of humanity. They remind us of what great things are possible in our limited days. And so, we need to keep telling them.

For almost forty years now, Jabberwocky has been alive. There have been many articles, presentations, portrayals, and descriptions about the life of the camp, but none seem complete. The best we can hope to do, therefore, is tell the story one more time. Thousands of people have shared in the life of Jabberwocky, and thousands more have been touched by its far-reaching tentacles. For all the people who have come and gone from this community, and for all the people still to arrive, this story needs to be told again to remind us of our roots.

Most importantly, we need to upgrade the historical record. People with disabilities rarely achieve more than footnote status in the pages of history. They have been left out of the ac-

count because they have been left out of the culture. Jabberwocky, though, is a different culture. It is a place where disabled folks are at the center of a community rather than at the periphery. Jabberwocky is not the same old story.

And so we begin . . .

2 - Hælgæn Lamb

In the Beginning

One would normally expect the tale of Jabberwocky to begin with Alice—a curious young girl in fairy tale England. With all due respect to Lewis Carroll, our story begins in a similar way.

The Alice of our story is Alice Mary Maude Hammond—a curious young woman of Barrow-in-Furness, England. In the late 1800's, when Victorian roles were flourishing, Alice Hammond was looking the other way. Alice was a strong-willed woman, a bit unorthodox, a bit eccentric, and a bit impolite. (She was the first woman in the county to ride a bicycle in public!) Perhaps the most telling aspect of Alice's life is that she spent her leisure time organizing and producing amateur variety shows. All in all, Alice was a bit unconventional, but that is a fine way to start.

Alice chose to marry a modest fellow named Josiah Southworth. Josiah was a respected member of the local business community. He owned several stores which dealt primarily in hardware and lumber. He was an average sort, much like any other businessman of the day. Despite their rather distinct per-

sonalities, Alice and Josiah fared well together, and so they set out to raise a family.

The couple settled on the old Southworth homestead in Lancashire, England, and there they bore their four children. Hubert (b.1898) lived to be eighteen years old and then died of meningitis. May (b.1899) is still alive as of this writing and is the obvious inheritor of her mother's affinity for the stage. At age 90, she is still doing skits, magic, and comedy routines. Jack (b.1907) lived for only nine months and then died of meningitis. Helen (b.1914) would become the founder of Jabberwocky.

Helen Southworth was born in Lancashire on August 27, 1914. She was a delicate child and very ill throughout most of her early years. At age four, she exhibited many symptoms of tuberculosis, and doctors indicated that she would probably not live much longer. To everyone's surprise, Helen recovered. Thus began her unique career of exceeding reasonable expectations and making the best out of difficult situations.

Martha's Vineyard

Josiah's parents, siblings, and other relatives, as one might expect, settled predominantly in England. Most of Alice's family, though, moved to the United States. Given Alice's predisposition for fun times and adventure, she made frequent voyages to visit her relatives across the Atlantic—about seventeen round trips in all.

One of Alice's frequent destinations was Martha's Vineyard—a small island off the southern shore of Massachusetts. Aside from the island being an attractive vacation resort, it also happened to be the home of Alice's older sister, Miriam. (A convenient coincidence for Alice, no doubt.) Miriam and her husband, Rubin Phillips, had honeymooned on the island and, being so delighted with the place, decided to settle there. They

moved to the town of Oak Bluffs, opened a successful butcher shop, and made their home on New York Avenue. Consequently, trips to Martha's Vineyard became a regular part of Alice's adventures.

For quite a while, Alice was the only one in the Southworth family to do any traveling. Josiah had no particular interest in going overseas, and the children were busy in school. In 1919, however, things changed. Since May was now twenty years old and still living at home, Alice felt that this would be a good time for May to head out and broaden her experience. Consequently, Alice put May on a boat and shipped her off to America. Although May did not particularly appreciate this unilateral gesture, she did end up with the opportunity to travel. After a brief stint in New Bedford, Massachusetts, May eventually joined Miriam and Rubin on the island of Martha's Vineyard.

The rest of the family was not far behind. In 1920, Alice convinced Josiah to leave the business for a while so they could go visit their distant daughter. Since Helen, age six, was now old enough to travel, the three decided to set sail for America.

Alice, Josiah, and Helen ended up living on Martha's Vineyard for about one year. During this time, Helen enrolled in the Oak Bluffs school and Alice and Josiah dabbled in real estate.

The couple purchased a fair-sized house on the northwest corner at the intersection of Lawrence and Simpson Avenues in Oak Bluffs. It suited them well during their brief residency, and then they maintained it for several years as a summer home. During the depression, though, they were forced to sell the place. At Alice's urging, they held onto the small shack behind the house. She figured that someday they could turn the building into a small cottage so they could still come to the island for vacations. Her foresight was expedient, and to this day "the shack" provides a summer refuge for the family.

At that time, Alice and Josiah also invested in a small gingerbread cottage on Commonwealth Avenue in Oak Bluffs. The tiny building was part of the Methodist Camp Meeting Association and, like many other cottages which circled the tabernacle grounds, it bore a cheerful name—"Happy Days." The family never lived in Happy Days, but they did manage to hold onto it. Eventually, the cottage was passed on to May, and she continues to live there to this day.

Back in England

After a year on the Vineyard, Alice, Josiah, and Helen returned to the homestead in England. Helen finished her primary studies in a private school. She then enrolled in London College and eventually in the Royal College of Manchester, where she specialized in speech therapy for disabled children.

When Helen set out for Manchester, she boarded a train and sat down across from an interesting gentleman who looked amazingly like the popular actor, Leslie Howard. The likeness was so striking that people would stop him due to a mistaken identity. His name was John Maurice Lamb of Bloomfield, England. He was an ardent socialist, a political activist, and an accomplished violinist with the BBC Orchestra. He was thirteen years Helen's senior, but that did not hinder their interest in each other.

Helen ran off with John. On August 30, 1935, three days after Helen's twenty-first birthday, they were married.

Not long after their marriage, World War II broke out. Helen worked with children who required speech therapy due to the shock they suffered from mental and physical traumas. John, who also happened to be a math whiz, sought employment in a military research agency affiliated with the air ministry.

During these years, the couple also managed to raise a family of their own. They brought three children into the world: Gillian (b.1940), Janet (b.1943), and John, Jr. (b.1945).

After the birth of their last child, John, Sr. started to ail. He persevered for several years but was eventually overcome with tuberculosis of the kidneys. In July of 1950, at the age of 49, he died.

Helen was 36 years old. She was a single mother of three children, ages 5, 7, and 10. And she was now on her own. But the journey was just beginning, for she had inherited a spark from Alice.

3 - An Idæa (1952)

By Christmas of 1950, Helen was ready to leave England. Despite some misgivings from the children (especially Gillian), the family sold their house and belongings and boarded the S.S. America to set sail for the United States.

Fortunately, house hunting on the other side of the ocean did not present a problem. By this point in time, Alice had already moved to the U.S. and was living in a two-family house in New Bedford. Coincidentally, the apartment above Alice's was vacant, so Helen and her children moved in.

The Clinic

Soon after settling in, Helen began her search for a job. By March of 1951, she found employment as a speech therapist at the Fall River Cerebral Palsy Training Center. The Training

Center, commonly referred to as “the clinic,” was a day program for disabled children in southeastern Massachusetts. Most of the participants had cerebral palsy, a physical disability resulting from brain damage and manifested by speech disturbances and limited muscular coordination. Even as late as the 1950’s, such children were still kept from participating in the public schools. Consequently, the clinic was formed to provide some minimal health care, therapy, and education for these children who would otherwise be kept at home. In its peak years, the clinic had a case load of about 100 children, and, like most operations of this kind, the program was perpetually in financial crisis.

Helen worked with the clinic for about six years, and during this time she also developed speech therapy programs in the public schools of Middleboro, Dighton, Somerset, and Swansea.

Sitting on the Beach

Summertime brought the Lamb family to Martha’s Vineyard. Thanks to Grandma Alice, the shack behind the old house had been converted to a small summer cottage. Once school was out, Alice, Gillian, Janet, and John moved to the island and took up residence there for the summer season.

While the children were with their grandmother, Helen remained in Fall River working at the cerebral palsy clinic. On weekends and vacations, however, she ferried over to the island to join her family.

On one of these summer jaunts to the island, Helen had an idea. The first weekend of July 1952, Helen and the children went to play on the town beach in Oak Bluffs. She recalls:

. . . as I sat on the Oak Bluffs beach during a two-week vacation from the cerebral palsy clinic in Fall River thinking about our handicapped children still in Fall River and perhaps feeling a little guilty that I sat on the beach with my own three children and the clinic children were left behind in that hot city under bad conditions with no vacation in view and no rest at all for the parents—then it was that our Martha’s Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp was started and the wheels began to turn.

After many insurmountable difficulties—one big one being no money—another, nowhere for the youngsters to stay and the third one, no one to help me, I managed.

*Helen Lamb
Vineyard Gazette, July 9, 1971*

After her vacation, Helen returned to the cerebral palsy clinic and explained the idea to the clinic director. All Helen wanted was to set up a small camp-like vacation experience for some of the children at the clinic. She would do all the necessary work, and all she asked for was the clinic’s support.

The clinic director was “horrified.” The institution was already struggling to meet expenses, so he couldn’t imagine embarking on such a risky and unknown venture. Helen persisted, though. The lack of money was no concern to her. She merely commented, “We’re not going to need any money!” and with a characteristic flip of her head, she set off to start the camp.

4 - The First Summer: Happy Days (1953)

Exactly one year after the vision of a cerebral palsy camp appeared to Helen Lamb, the idea stumbled into reality. During the first week of July 1953, the Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp opened its doors.

Helen, now age 39, with her assistant, Ursula Dittami, a sixteen year old high school student from Swansea, gathered together six disabled children from the cerebral palsy clinic. The group met at the ferry wharf in New Bedford and they boarded the S.S. Martha's Vineyard. Thus the adventure began.

When the band arrived in Oak Bluffs, they collected their gear together and headed directly for the "camp." Since Helen had no car, the group had to walk from the ferry to their destination. Those who could walk pushed those who were in wheelchairs, and everyone helped with the luggage, braces, and other paraphernalia. Helen recalls, "We looked like a gang of refugees."

The "camp" to where this group was headed was none other than "Happy Days," the tiny gingerbread cottage which belonged to Helen's sister, May. May happened to be away on vacation during this first summer, so Helen managed to raise the \$145 necessary to rent the place for the camp.

Happy Days was no gem, but it was available. At that time, it had no conveniences. There was a toilet and a kitchen sink, but no tub or shower. (Since the children went swimming every day, they just bathed at the beach!) There was electricity and an old oil stove which didn't work very well. The cottage was so small that the children had to sleep on the second floor. This meant, of course, that Helen and Ursula had to carry many

of the children up and down the narrow staircase. Happy Days was difficult, crowded, and inadequate . . . but it worked.

Helen ran a one month program during the four weeks of July. She hosted a total of sixteen children that first year with ages ranging from four to fifteen years old. Since the children at the clinic represented a broad range of disabilities, the criteria used to determine who would come was based on who would be most likely to benefit from and enjoy a brief summer vacation. Helen requested a \$10 per week registration fee, but that was flexible depending on the ability of the family to pay. Once again, Helen had no intention of letting money matters interfere with what needed to be done.

The children came to the camp in groups of five or six for one week at a time, and some individuals were permitted to come for more than one session. Helen and Ursula would spend the week with the kids living in Happy Days. Then, every Monday, the two women would escort the group home on the ferry and take an evening for themselves. Ursula's mother would put the two up for the night, provide dinner, a weekly bath, and a big pot of spaghetti to send back for the kids. Come Tuesday morning, Helen and Ursula were off to pick up the next bunch of children and leave on the ferry for another week on Martha's Vineyard.

Since the children were kept busy throughout their week-long stay, homesickness was rarely a problem. Several of the children had difficulty when they realized that they weren't going to receive the same coddling which they were used to at home. As one might expect, parents had a harder time with separation anxiety than the children did. While the kids were out busily tasting the fruits of freedom and community, the parents were home anxiously wondering about homesickness, colds, and other calamities. Despite their worries, the parents had no doubts about Helen's ability to take good care of their children. Not only had she proven her skills during the school year, she had es-

tablished personal relationships with most of the families as well.

With no time for homesickness, the camp pressed on through its week of joy and activity: long afternoons at the beach, sightseeing, shopping trips in town, free rides on the Flying Horses (the local carousel), and even occasional field trips. A favorite journey was the weekly trip up-island to visit with the Wampanoag Indians of Gay Head. The potters and craftspeople of this community were always happy to meet with the children and share some quality time together.

In general, the camp was well received by the island community. The local children mixed well with the children from the camp, and quite often they would be seen playing and talking together. Helen recalls only one incident when someone was disturbed by such interaction. An island child passing by Happy Days stopped to chat with a young camper who was sitting on the porch in her wheelchair. The child innocently asked, "Why can't you walk?" And the girl, having had her fill of curiosity that week, responded quickly, "Oh, go home!" So the child left. This incident aside, the campers seemed to mix in the island community with ease.

All in all, this first summer was considered a clear success. Not only was the vacation experience a treat for the disabled children, but Helen found that the relationships developed in the summer were invaluable for her work during the rest of the year. She found that in living, working, and playing with the children for an extended period of time, she was able to observe and understand aspects about particular children that she hadn't realized before. Also, because the children had become much closer to Helen (some even began calling her "Mama"), they were much more open to trying new things with her back in the clinic. The short-term and long-term benefits of the summer experience were greater than expected and appreciated by all.

The first summer did not pass without some problems as well. A couple of wandering campers always made for some excitement, as did a local peeping tom. Housing, as mentioned earlier, was rather cramped and uncomfortable due to the accommodations at Happy Days. Transportation was limited due to lack of a vehicle. And the presence of three meals a day was always uncertain due to a lack of money.

Perhaps the most noteworthy and somewhat ominous tribulation of the summer occurred on the final night of the camp season. On the evening of July 27, 1953, one of the worst storms in island history hit Martha's Vineyard. The news account of the next morning read:

The Vineyard was swept by one of its most thunderous storms last night, beginning shortly after midnight and reaching a climax sometime after 1. The dreadful night was a real calamity in Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs, which suffered a horrendous, and so far as memory goes, unprecedented hail storm which did untold damage to houses . . .

Panic reigned for a time in both towns, with the crashing of glass and the plummeting of hail, and police were driven nearly mad by the calls which swamped the stations. In some cases fear drove people from their houses into the street, but despite all this only one report of injury to a person, except for loss of sleep and shattered nerves, has been made.

Vineyard Gazette, July 28, 1953

Hailstones the size of golf balls were reported, and lightning flashed almost continuously for two hours. Many buildings were damaged, and Happy Days was not spared. The storm actually broke through the flimsy roof of the cottage, allowing hailstones to come flying in on the children's beds. Amidst fear and crying, Helen and Ursula managed to carry all the children (and their bedding) down the narrow stairs. The women attempted to get the children back to sleep, but water and hailstones managed to sneak through to the first floor as well. Eventually, they resorted to balancing pans over the children's heads to protect them from the intruding elements. All survived.

One week after the storm, and after all the campers had gone for the summer, Helen was interviewed about the prospects of continuing the camp and perhaps serving more children the next year. Weighing the pros and cons, Helen responded, "We'll have to have a larger number of youngsters, even if it does mean more Happy Days and sleepless nights."

By all measures, the experiment at Happy Days was a success. Helen was satisfied with the achievements of the summer, but she was anxious to move on with greater possibilities. So the experiment continued.

5 - The Second Summer: 4-H Clubhouse (1954)

A Gracious Offer

Helen's top priority in preparing for the second summer of camp was to find a more suitable place to house the children.

After exhausting several personal contacts, Helen decided to make a public appeal in the island newspaper.

On March 26, 1954, the *Vineyard Gazette* published a brief appeal, an article only several paragraphs long. The appeal simply described Helen's work with the children from the cerebral palsy clinic, and it noted that the camp would require some local assistance in order to continue the summer program. Helen had nothing to lose, so she unreservedly asked if anyone on the island had a larger and better equipped cottage which they could loan to the camp for the coming July.

Within several days, Helen received a positive response. Edith F. Morris, the 4-H Club Agent on Martha's Vineyard, had noticed the appeal in the paper and contacted Helen immediately. She then spoke to the 4-H Clubhouse Association and the Trustees for County Aid to Agriculture about offering their clubhouse for the camp's use. Mrs. Morris easily convinced the trustees to host the camp, free of charge, for the coming season. Within several days, the president of the trustees had made a formal offer, and Helen was preparing to come inspect the site.

On April 7, 1954, Helen set out for the island in order to look over the clubhouse. She was met at the ferry terminal in Oak Bluffs by the president of the 4-H trustees and his dog. Helen greeted William W. Pinney (and the dog) and they all jumped in his truck to head for the clubhouse on New York Avenue. Upon arriving, they were joined by Mrs. Morris, and the small group toured the grounds considering the possibilities.

The building was actually an old Quonset hut. The Clover Blossom 4-H Club of Oak Bluffs purchased the hut in 1948 for \$100 and erected it on a piece of land which they bought next door to Mrs. Morris. (The hut was one of four which a local fellow had purchased from the island air base.) The upstairs was suitable for sleeping and small group activities, and the basement was equipped with a kitchen, running water, and a shower. Directly below the basement was the cesspool (which tended to

seep up regularly), but this appeared to be no major concern. Out back were plenty of woods and a cleared playground area.

Although the clubhouse was a little rustic, Helen proclaimed that the offer was “ideal” and a marked improvement over the previous year’s accommodations—especially since the new site was offered for free! Mr. Morris recalled, “I can still remember how apologetic we all were in showing Mrs. Lamb our clubhouse, and how gratefully she accepted it to the point where we all went home with lumps in our throats.” All in all, both parties were delighted with the prospects, so it was agreed that Helen would run the cerebral palsy camp at the 4-H clubhouse that coming July.



When Helen returned from her encouraging visit at the 4-H clubhouse on Martha’s Vineyard, she was inspired to begin pursuing a wide range of support from generous donors. Helen recalls. . .

As soon as I got back to the mainland, I started making inquiries for free transportation over that small strip of water—at that time, we sailed all the way from New Bedford . . . Every week I would go down to the New Bedford Wharf and try to persuade them to let us have free transportation. At first, it was “No. No. No.” Towards the end of nine months I had been pestering them—on this particular Friday night the gentleman I had been bothering every week must have had a very good day or a very bad one—because as soon as he saw me he put his hands over his eyes and said, “Good Heavens, Woman! How many tickets do you want?!” And we have had free transportation to and from the island ever since.



The 4-H Club Gets Ready

Everyone at the 4-H Club was looking forward to hosting the camp that summer, and the 4-H kids were particularly excited. They expressed great interest in working with the children from the clinic and they were anxious to volunteer their assistance in any way. Mr. Pinney also took a special liking to the project. He immediately began pursuing donations of goods and services, and he commented that he wanted all the campers to have a wonderful summer and all to go home “fat, brown, and healthy.”

By the end of April, William Pinney had taken a clear lead in preparing for Helen’s arrival with the disabled children. He arranged for the donation of many supplies, including milk from the Martha’s Vineyard Cooperative Dairy, bread from Cronig Brothers Market, a supply of potatoes from a local farmer, a tent and bedrolls from the Edgartown Boy Scouts, and a collection of canned food to stock the kitchen with basic supplies for the summer. Within one brief month from the time of Helen’s appeal, the cerebral palsy camp been “adopted” by the 4-H Club and, due to the work of Mr. Pinney, brought to the attention of many generous islanders. As July drew near, it became very clear that this summer’s experience would be much more pleasant for the children than that of the previous summer.



CP Children Due on Island Monday

Mrs. Helen Lamb and a group of five children from the Cerebral Palsy Clinic in Fall River, will arrive on the Vineyard on Monday, and due to the well known Vineyard hospitality will find

a sincere welcome awaiting them. Manuel S. Duarte and his men are rushing the installation of the new heating system in case of cold nights or rainy weather. The Cooperative Dairy milkman is ready to leave their daily supply of milk on the doorstep, Cronig Brothers will deliver the daily bread and generous market garden farmers will contribute fresh vegetables.

Cupboard shelves are overflowing with canned goods donated by 4-H Club members and supplemented with about sixty-five additional cans and jars of vegetables, fruits, jellies, jams, chocolate syrup and peanut butter donated by members of the St. John's Holy Ghost Society of Vineyard Haven.

Cots loaned by Mrs. Alfred Churchill, Mrs. Perley Hilliard, Mrs. Dorothy Carr, and Mrs. Gordon Cameron, and pillows given by Miss Margaret Love, are ready, and the equipment used for the children's therapy has been brought to the island by Rogers' Freight & Trucking Service. In addition, there are funds available for electricity and fuel and other services to be designated by Mrs. Lamb, through cash donations from individuals and organizations.

A long list of people willing to help entertain the children, furnish transportation, or help in other ways, is also in readiness. Folding screens and four or five pillows are needed and anyone caring to lend either of these articles may get in touch with the Extension Service office, Vineyard Haven 694, between 1 and 5 p.m

Vineyard Gazette, June 25, 1954



A Wonderful Summer

In July of 1954, the Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp began its second season. Twenty children arrived from the Fall River clinic this summer. Two of the children stayed for the entire month of July, while the others arrived so that five or six children were at the camp each week.

Ursula Dittami eagerly returned to assist with the children, and she was now preparing to enter the Boston School of Occupational Therapy at Tufts University in the fall. Several 4-H children also volunteered their services for the summer and found the experience to be most rewarding.

Visitors to the camp reported that the campers seemed "unusually happy" and that they were obviously benefitting immensely from their stay. In addition to the regular beach outings, field trips, and amusements, this year's schedule also included visits to a local farm and entertainment from the folks at the School of Creative Arts in Vineyard Haven.

Despite the wealth of donations which were arranged for ahead of time, the camp was still operating with a very limited budget. Additional calls for food donations were still being made well into the camp season. Financial matters aside (once again!), the camp was an immense success. Everyone was pleased with the quality of the summer program, especially the children, so the 4-H Club invited Helen and her crew back for another summer.



An Open Letter of Appreciation

Editors,

When at camp for the first time last year, we were struggling to run through the summer with very little room, very little help, and sometimes hardly enough food because of limited funds. At times, I wouldn't tell the children, when we didn't have something we really needed. "Well, never mind, next year, we will have a larger camp with swings and see-saws. We'll have plenty of room to play and plenty of food to eat." They would all ask where this was going to be and I would reply, "Oh, here in Oak Bluffs." They would laugh and so would I.

But, here we are with almost all we could wish for. The greatest relief to me is that we have plenty of food. The swings, see-saws, plenty of room: they're all here. As one of the older children said, "We have only to wish for something and in the morning, it is here."

On behalf of the Fall River Cerebral Palsy Clinic and the cerebral palsy children, I would like to thank all the people who have helped to make this summer's camp such a success. I have never in all my life come across such generous and helpful people. I just can't put down on paper my gratitude for your enormous help in what we are trying to do. This sort of atmosphere is just what our children need and get so little of.

To people who have donated money, clothing, and food, we wish to extend our sincerest thanks. We thank the Vineyard Gazette for its

kind cooperation. Also to the 4-H Club members and trustees who are making this all possible this summer, we wish to express our deepest appreciation.

*Helen Lamb
Vineyard Gazette, July 27, 1954*



6 - The Camp Blossoms

Over the next four summers (1955-58), the cerebral palsy camp blossomed. The number of disabled children who came to the island increased steadily from 24 in 1955, to 35 in 1956, to 50 in 1957, to over 60 in 1958! And still, Helen had to turn many children away. The previous ranks of two staff people and six campers per week had expanded by 1958 to a director, a staff of seven full-time counsellors, a nurse, a cook, a crew of 4-H volunteers, and 22 campers per week!

The list of camp activities grew to include lawn parties, fishing trips (Pinney would charter the old Chappaquidick ferry), rowboating, farm visits, movies, swimming at the country club pool, horseback riding (which, though almost unheard of for disabled people, turned out to be very successful), and an arts and crafts program.

The facilities at the 4-H clubhouse were also greatly improved over these years. Several additions were made to the Quonset hut such that it didn't even look like a hut anymore! The cesspool was relocated, and the kitchen was refurbished with a new electric stove, dishwasher, refrigerator, steam table,

and hot water heater. The sleeping quarters were improved, a new bathroom was installed, and additional playground equipment was set up in the back yard.

This amazing growth in the size and content of the summer program for disabled children was completely due to a significant increase in local support for the venture. Island residents and visitors alike were generous and enthusiastic about helping the camp do its work. By 1958, the camp was not only receiving free accommodations, but also donated entertainment, medical services, clothing, toys, furnishings, money, and even a station wagon. The Steamship Authority was donating free ferry passage, the fish market was sending in fish, the local farms were supplying milk and chickens, and the grocers were offering meats, vegetables, and cereals. Island churches had even taken on the task of providing baked goods every evening for dessert.

The outpouring of generosity was overwhelming. Although the camp was still operating on a shoestring budget, all the expenses were being paid and a small balance was left over each year to help start the following season. Mrs. Morris, reflecting on all that had transpired in the few short years commented, "So many wonderful happenings . . . a miracle unfolded that is hard to record."



As Though It Were All A Dream

When the island of Martha's Vineyard began responding to the needs of the cerebral palsy children, Helen could barely keep up with all the "thank you's." (Even to this day, the task of offering personal notes of thanks still occupies much of her time!) Every summer, Helen would send at least one public note of thanks to the

Vineyard Gazette. Over the next few pages are some excerpts from these letters.

The cerebral palsy children from the Fall River center have once more returned to their homes on the mainland, some of them to three story tenements with not a tree in sight. Under such conditions is it any wonder these children love their month's vacation on this island? If nothing else took place during the month other than to be able to see the grass, trees, water and wild life, what a change in program it would be, but they had more than that. The wonderful island people saw to it that they all had the happiest time of their lives . . . It is so difficult to be able to only say "thank you," but in all sincerity, if it wasn't for these very fine island people, there would be no cerebral palsy camp on the island . . . To all again who have helped in any way I wish to say thank you.

Helen Lamb, August 5, 1955

To the people on this island who have made this camp possible, each year finds me more and more lost for words to thank you. Your cooperation and help make me feel as though it is all a dream. I always like to feel these children belong not only to their parents, but to all of us . . .

Helen Lamb, August 28, 1956

How is this camp supported? This is the miracle that makes this camp so very special. No large bank account or budget exists at the beginning of the camping season, but from the first day the children leave their homes, there begins such a spirit of giving from so many sources that it

would take a whole issue of the Gazette to list them all.

Free transportation from the Steamship Authority, a station wagon from George Dodson of Swansea, free rent of the 4-H clubhouse and its facilities, beds from the Martha's Vineyard Airport, blankets and pillows from Miss Kathleen Hinni and the Red Cross, playground equipment from the 4-H Club members, a movie camera from the Fall River Rotary Club, and tricycles, carts, etc., from parents and friends are a few of the things that go toward making this a very "special" camp . . .

What about the feeding problem? This, too, is a miracle comparable to that of the Bible story of the "five loaves of bread and the two fishes." At the end of the month, the records show that an average of twenty-eight to thirty people per day were fed at the camp, with every mouthful donated either by goods or money to pay for the goods. Here, too, it would be impossible to list all who donated, but a letter of appreciation will be sent to each one.

Suffice it to say that there is probably no other camp in existence that can boast of its food to the extent that the Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp can—menus include milk and eggs from the Martha's Vineyard Cooperative Dairy, chicken once a week from Heathland Farm, fresh fish from Eldridge's Fish Market, ice cream several times a week from the Frosty Cottage and H.P. Hood's, and bread from Sunbeam Bread Company and Guisti's, meat and produce from Connors' Market and Cronig's, fruit juice from Whiting Milk Company, etc., etc. These are daily or weekly deliveries. In addi-

tion, the quantities of home baked cakes, pies, muffins, and cookies brought in each day by different members of the women's auxiliaries of the Episcopal churches are responsible for the oh's, ah's, and mm's, that are heard each day at mealtimes . . .

Helen Lamb, August 9, 1957



The CP Camp Committee

The cerebral palsy camp venture had blossomed to such a degree that, in 1958, the Martha's Vineyard 4-H Clubhouse Association established a Cerebral Palsy Camp Committee to work with Helen in the running of the camp. The 4-H had thus far been quite pleased with the project, and they were reaping great benefits by having this work opportunity to offer their children. Due to the expansion of the camp program, all involved felt it was a good idea to have a more organized group overseeing the summer activities at the clubhouse. Helen was delighted, of course, since the 4-H folks were obviously very committed to the project and very effective in attaining donated goods and services. Hence, in 1958, the Cerebral Palsy Camp Committee was established with William Pinney as its chairperson, Helen Lamb as the camp director, and a group of seven other members committed to seeing that the needs of the camp were met.

After the 1958 camp season, the Cerebral Palsy Camp Committee decided officially to assume full responsibility for the operation of the camp. Since the Fall River clinic was now wanting to absolve itself from all responsibilities for the camp, and Helen was eager to have someone other than herself tending to the bookkeeping and money handling, the administrative transition over to the Cerebral Palsy Camp Committee was appreci-

ated by all. By autumn, the committee had established its own bank account, elected a treasurer, and was ready to embark on some new ventures.

More Growth

With Helen and the CP Camp Committee now overseeing the entire operation, the group decided to establish the camp more firmly by expanding the physical plant. As of 1958, the camp was doing all of its programs and housing 30 people per day inside the renovated Quonset hut. To ease the strain, cooking was done in the basement, most meals were eaten outside in the back yard, and counsellors (and sometimes campers!) would sleep in tents outside the clubhouse. Without a doubt, things were tight.

Over the next several years (1959-62), a total of five dormitory cabins were constructed in the wooded area behind the clubhouse. Each cabin was equipped with a sink, toilet, electricity, and room to sleep six comfortably. The first cabin was ready for the summer of 1959, and was financed by a \$1,000 gift from a summer visitor to the island. The second cabin, ready for occupation by the summer of 1960, was financed by another \$1,000 gift from one of the CP Camp Committee members. The third, fourth, and fifth cabins were ready by the summer of 1962, and were financed and constructed by the Martha's Vineyard Lion's Club. Furnishings for all the cabins were supplied by many other generous donors. By the time all this construction was completed, the place was finally starting to look like a true summer camp.



Perhaps the thing I am most grateful for is that the people of Martha's Vineyard do not offer us pity, as that is not the help these children need. Rather it is the giving of concrete things that makes it possible for these children to participate in normal and happy childhood experiences that make us grateful to the people of Martha's Vineyard and make our cerebral palsy camp the living miracle it has become.

Far too many have contributed to the success of the camp to mention each one at this time, but collectively we—the children who attend camp, their parents, the staff and myself say “thank you” as gratefully and as sincerely as it is possible to say it.

Helen Lamb, August 15, 1958

Here at the cerebral palsy camp we are all agreed that the art of giving has been well mastered by the people of Martha's Vineyard. Many times a day evidence of this is found at our camp.

One night last week we needed a banana for a little patient. It was rather late, so the stores which were still open were limited in number. At the last store that was open, the gentleman said, “I'm very sorry we can't help you, but take this,” “this” being a \$10 bill. Luckily on returning to camp, Peter, the patient, had finally fallen asleep and the need for the banana was over, but we could find many uses for the \$10.

Watermelons—a favorite with all the campers—just seem to appear on the doorstep, as do luscious homemade desserts, orange juice, and other good food.

One little girl has walked so much this year at camp she wore the soles of her shoes off and the Oak Bluffs shoemaker fortunately was able to repair them very quickly and already the bill is taken care of and so it goes—every problem is solved before it hardly becomes a problem . . .

Helen Lamb, July 20, 1962



7 - Camp Freedom

During this time of physical expansion, several folks on the Cerebral Palsy Camp Committee began dreaming of ways in which the camp could serve an even greater portion of people with disabilities. Mr. Pinney, in particular, envisioned expanding the summer program to serve adults as well as children. The current program generally served children from the ages of 4 to 17 during the month of July. Mr. Pinney was very aware, though, that the need to provide such recreation and therapy did not end when a disabled person turned 18 years old. In fact, disabled adults often had a more difficult time getting proper attention than the children did. Hence, Pinney thought it was crucial that the CP Camp Committee look into operating an adult camp as well. Since the clubhouse was sitting vacant during the month of

August each year, he could see no reason why such a program couldn't easily be integrated into the current operation.

About this time, Helen was doing all she could do in running the camp for the children. Consequently, she was not particularly interested in directing an adult camp in August as well. She had no objections, though, to Mr. Pinney pursuing the idea. Well . . . almost no objections.

United Cerebral Palsy

Since Helen did not want to take on the project of running a camp for disabled adults, Mr. Pinney decided to be in touch with the folks at United Cerebral Palsy to see if they had an interest. United Cerebral Palsy is a national foundation with chapters across the country devoted to assisting both children and adults who have the disability. This was the first time in the seven years of the camp's existence that any such communication was made with a national organization or group beyond the immediate area.

At the invitation of Mr. Pinney, Arthur Ciampa, the executive director of United Cerebral Palsy of the South Shore Area, came to visit the camp on July 28, 1959. Pinney invited the director down to the island for an informal visit, to meet Helen Lamb, and to see how the camp ran. Judging from Mr. Ciampa's follow-up letter to Helen, he was quite impressed.

I was exceedingly thrilled with the spirit of co-operation, interest, and enthusiasm displayed by the entire group. Furthermore, to know that this group is able to solicit funds, material, supplies, food, etc. for the cause of the camp, is the most stimulating thing I've heard about in years. It is my belief that you have captured the true spirit

of social work which is charity in giving in this project. That you have been able to harness the volunteers to assist in the capacity of counselors and administrators is most refreshing in these days of self-smugness.

Arthur Ciampa

Letter to Helen Lamb, August 4, 1959

Unfortunately, Helen's response to United Cerebral Palsy was not as favorable. Helen had never been very interested in the ways of large organizations, especially those that attempted to work with the disabled. She simply had no tolerance for the bureaucracies of government and institutional agencies. When Mr. Pinney had suggested finding someone else to direct the adult camp, Helen did not realize that he would invite a national organization to step in. Despite her dismay, Helen didn't want to rock the boat too much, so she just avoided the proceedings. She did not want to have anything to do with the new program.

Adult Camp

Over the next two years, while Helen continued to develop her children's camp, Mr. Pinney and the folks from United Cerebral Palsy arranged for the establishment of an adult camp at the 4-H clubhouse during August. In August of 1961, the first of such camps took place.

United Cerebral Palsy recruited their own camp director, nurse, cook, and counsellors—a staff of eight all together. UCP also drew from their own clientele a total of 19 adults who would enjoy the camp over the month long session. The adult campers actually shared in many of the same programs as the children did, and, of course, they ventured out on more evening

activities as well—even a day trip to Nantucket. The camp established its own name, Camp Freedom, and even a motto, “Flexibility and Maximum Independence.” According to their first year report, the program was quite successful, and they anticipated making many improvements for the following summer.

Even though Camp Freedom was wholly operated by United Cerebral Palsy (they were responsible for staff, campers, program, transportation, etc.), the Cerebral Palsy Camp Committee offered the use of the site at no cost. The committee gave full use of the camp and provided gas, electric, phone service, a bus, and even insurance coverage for free. Most importantly, the CP Camp Committee served as the lifeline to the many island individuals and businesses who donated so many goods and services to keep the camp in operation. As far as the island public was concerned, and even as far as the CP Camp Committee was concerned, the children’s camp and the adult camp were two aspects of but one program.

As far as Helen was concerned, though, United Cerebral Palsy was infringing. Helen didn’t like the business of underwriting UCP’s program with all the groundwork laid for her camp. And furthermore, she didn’t want to be subsidizing the work of a national organization. She was a bit worried that such a large operation might eventually attempt to take her camp in under its auspices and bureaucracy. Such was Helen’s skepticism and suspicion of UCP that she went so far as to send her own counsellors over to visit the adult camp and “spy” on what the organization was up to. Then her counsellors would return to “the shack” where she was staying and report on what they had seen.

Nonetheless, Camp Freedom seemed to proceed successfully, and it remained in operation as an adult camp in August for several years.

8 - Hellcat

At this point in the story, we should probably pause and say a word or two about Helen Lamb's personality.

In the late 1950's, a young counsellor named Arthur Beneventi had the experience of riding as a passenger in a car driven by Helen Lamb. In recounting his experience to others, Arthur apparently referred to Helen as "Hellcat." (The dictionary suggests a denotation of a witch or one given to tormenting.) The nickname bore so much resemblance to reality that few people could refrain from adopting it. Even to this day, almost no one around the camp refers to this woman as Helen. She is Hellcat—and a brief encounter with her will reveal why.

Hellcat is compassionate, selfless, and committed to a life of service. She is also stubborn, blunt, and has questionable manners. She is demanding of everyone, including herself. And her opinions often do not follow the status quo.

A poignant example of Hellcat's character is her somewhat Malthusian approach to children born with severe disabilities—such as cerebral palsy. Without a flinch, she will say, "All these youngsters should be eliminated at birth." She openly speaks of the social and economic strains on society and the many personal sufferings which these children endure. She recounts her experience of so many parents and siblings who have no skills, tolerance, compassion, or support for raising disabled children. She speaks of a society not prepared to provide adequate care for people with disabilities. Nonetheless, she reminds us, as long as our society chooses to do what is necessary to keep these children alive, it is imperative that each of us take some responsibility in caring for them. We are obliged to help each child grow to live as full and meaningful a life as possible. To this end, Hellcat has devoted her days.

Hellcat is not always believable. She is a ball of energy, quick with the tongue, and always prepared to utter a word of wit. She is independent, self-sufficient, and loves to be waited on with a cup of piping hot tea. Her unbending commitment to the camp, her staunch British accent, and her short tolerance for social niceties give Hellcat the air of some wild matriarch. But one needs to see only a few glimpses of her interactions with a disabled child or adult to understand the compassion at her core.

One afternoon at the Flying Horses carousel, sometime during the early years of camp, Hellcat was standing by the door to the merry-go-round watching the children ride around. As she was waiting, a gentleman passing by stopped and commented to her, “It’s a pity about these kids . . . You know, there’s a place up the hill where they take all these sort of kids . . . It’s run by an old crackpot of a woman, but she must have a good heart.”

9 - Reaching the Limits

A Peak Year

1963, the eleventh season of the Martha’s Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp, marked a peak year in the growth of the children’s camp and also the beginning tremors of a new era.

In July of 1963, a total of 75 children attended the cerebral palsy camp. Counsellors’ applications were being received from around the country, and this year the camp was even graced with a counsellor from Korea. Fifteen different counsellors worked at the camp this summer, and the place was bursting at the seams with about 40 residents per week. Island support was

as strong as ever, and this summer included several benefit events as well. It was an excellent season.

By the end of the summer, the Cerebral Palsy Camp Committee had made an offer to their parent, the 4-H Clubhouse Association, in order to address the growing needs. The committee did not want to expand any further in regard to the number of children they were serving, but they did want to expand the facilities to meet the current demand. The committee offered to purchase fifteen lots directly behind the 4-H clubhouse, with the intent of building three more cabins.

Apparently, the swelling proportions of the summer, coupled with this very significant request from the CP Camp Committee, made the 4-H Clubhouse Association feel a little uneasy—as if the venture was getting out of hand and much larger than they had originally imagined. Hence, on November 18, 1963, the 4-H Clubhouse Association decided to set some limits for the camp, including:

- (1) There would be no more than 30 people total (including campers and staff) at the camp at one time.
- (2) No one would be allowed to sleep in the clubhouse building itself anymore, due to restrictions set by state health laws.
- (3) “Further expansion of any kind is out of the question.”

Despite the CP Camp Committee’s desire to expand and the 4-H Club’s desire to limit, each party appeared to understand the position of the other. Everyone was interested in finding a mutually satisfying arrangement, so discussions continued through the winter.

Nonetheless, the 4-H restrictions ended up being a major stumbling block for the children’s camp during the summer of

1964. The CP Camp Committee had to rent a house some distance from the camp in order to accommodate the overflow of about one dozen people. They found this “satellite” idea to be unsatisfactory, and were not sure about how they should continue.

Leaving the Nest

By the summer of 1964, the CP Camp Committee was realizing that the camp had grown to such an extent that it would now be wise to adopt an organizational structure which could serve the campers well for years to come. Given the impetus of the current strains within the 4-H Clubhouse Association, the CP Camp Committee decided to become its own organization. Hence, on July 13, 1964, the committee met and unanimously proceeded to adopt a simple set of bylaws, execute the necessary papers for incorporation, and elect their board of trustees and officers. Thus was formed the Martha’s Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp, Incorporated, a nonprofit organization with a board of fifteen trustees and William Pinney as its president.

The 4-H Clubhouse Association and the Martha’s Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp were now two distinct organizations. The camp recognized its great debt to the 4-H Club for their hospitality and the trustees were clearly appreciative of such generosity. However, the trustees also felt that it was now necessary to begin taking steps to provide for the health of the camp in years to come. With the housing issue pressing as a top priority, the camp returned to the 4-H folks once again requesting permission to add new cabins.

The 4-H Clubhouse Association, understanding the camp’s predicament, but feeling unable to accommodate, decided to reject the camp’s request for expansion. Upon receiving the 4-H verdict, the camp trustees met on August 28, 1964 to deter-

mine their course of action. In order to continue the current summer programs, the trustees decided that it would be necessary to consider establishing a new camp site independent of the 4-H clubhouse. Since the camp clearly needed more room to operate, and since the trustees were feeling that the corporation should own and operate its own facility, they decided immediately to look into the feasibility of establishing a new location.

On that same day, the camp trustees were notified of two offers of land on which they might locate the new camp. One offer came from the Drs. Strock—a small parcel of land near Felix Neck which they were willing to loan to the camp at no charge. The other offer came from the Episcopal Parish on Martha's Vineyard—an outright donation of eight acres of land in the Tashmoo woods near West Chop.

With these options in hand, the trustees began their deliberations. Although the 4-H club had graciously extended an invitation for the camp to return in the 1965 season, the trustees had their hopes set on a new home by that time.

10 - A New Home: Jabberwocky (1965)

After one summer at Happy Days and eleven summers at the 4-H clubhouse, the Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp finally moved into its own home in the spring of 1965. The camp trustees agreed to accept the offer of land from the Episcopal Parish, and they proceeded immediately with plans to open the new facility that summer.

Construction began on the Greenwood Avenue site during the second week of March 1965. The main cabin, 30 x 72

feet, would house a kitchen, a dining/recreation hall, two bathrooms, and three bedrooms which could sleep eight people each. A mortgage was taken out to finance the construction, with the faith that the island community who had been so generous thus far would once again come through for the disabled.

The camp planned to provide the remaining housing by simply moving their five dormitory cabins from the 4-H site in Oak Bluffs to the new site in Vineyard Haven. Unfortunately, this undertaking was more difficult than anyone expected. (The camp archives indicate a rather extensive drama around this matter, but the reader will be spared the many details.) In a nutshell, the CP Camp believed that the five cabins belonged to the camp, and the 4-H Clubhouse Association believed that the cabins belonged to the association. The camp argued that the cabins were constructed with labor and money all raised by and specifically donated for the cerebral palsy camp. The 4-H Club argued that, as landowners and parent organization of the camp at the time the cabins were constructed, the buildings were rightfully theirs. The struggle which arose around this issue exhibited a wealth of symptoms indicating serious separation anxieties on both parts. Despite the possibility of a favorable court decision, the camp backed down for fear of detrimental publicity. The camp abandoned its claim on the cabins and decided to make do without them. (As of this writing, the five cabins still stand behind the old clubhouse on New York Avenue. The site is now home to the Dukes County Cooperative Extension Service.)

After several months of hectic preparations, the main cabin was completed, a smaller “double cabin” had been constructed, the grounds were ready, and a handful of tents were raised for temporary housing. The cerebral palsy camp began its thirteenth season by welcoming all the children to a new home—a spacious and peaceful spot tucked in the woods near Lake Tashmoo.

The 1965 season went as wonderfully as did previous seasons. Helen maintained her full contingent of children and staff, and the wide range of activities and adventures remained intact. As one of the counsellors recollected at the conclusion of the season,

This year has been a successful one by all standards: no one has been irreparably injured; no one has been lost for more than a few minutes; everyone has had fun of one sort or another; the burden of some families has been eased.

Vineyard Gazette, July 20, 1965

Jabberwocky

The camp not only acquired a new home this year, it also acquired a new name. Although the corporate name would remain unchanged, everyone felt it was now time to christen the camp with a more memorable and provocative title. Hence, the trustees commissioned young John Lamb, now a college student, to come up with some suggestions. In light of the Lamb family interest in the works of Lewis Carroll and illustrator John Tenniel, John devised a camp seal with the mythical dragon-like Jabberwock and the name “Camp Jabberwocky” affixed below. Although many folks liked the idea, there was some sentiment that the monster might be a bit outrageous as an emblem for a children’s camp. John’s second suggestion depicting slithy toves, borogoves, and mome raths was much more tolerable and acceptable to all. The name Camp Jabberwocky was tossed around for a while and everyone agreed that it was fitting as well. Thus, the Martha’s Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp became known as Camp Jabberwocky.



It is hard to realize . . . that this is a beginning much more than an end. In the midst of the fine buildings and spacious grounds, all so solid and permanent, the precarious growth and development of the camp to its present state amount only to a beginning. The vision which founded the camp has not ceased, but rather grown. It is as if the children, so much older and more mature than years ago, held in their minds an enlarged vision, as if they, in giving life to the camp in their increased numbers and development, have given much to the vision and have nurtured it by their presence . . .

From an article by a counsellor, inviting the public to an open house at the new camp, Vineyard Gazette, July 9, 1965



11 - Camp Freedom Reconsidered

When the Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp moved to its new site in 1965, both the children's and the adult programs were maintained. Since Helen Lamb was still running Camp Jabberwocky only during the month of July, the camp trustees were happy to continue hosting United Cerebral Palsy's Camp Freedom during the month of August. Camp Freedom was

now in its fifth summer under the patronage of the Cerebral Palsy Camp, and the program had grown to serve about 35 adults.

The summer of 1966 was the sixth and final season for Camp Freedom. Although United Cerebral Palsy was most delighted with the arrangements it had with the CP Camp, Helen and several other trustees were not content with the scenario.

First, it was becoming apparent that hosting two separate camps under one organization was not satisfactory. The Martha's Vineyard CP Camp was essentially underwriting the entire United Cerebral Palsy program, but they had, in effect, no involvement in its operation. This matter was disturbing to some of the camp trustees and confusing to much of the island community and many of the camp's generous donors. In general, people weren't certain if the two camps were actually part of the same organization.

Second, and perhaps more significantly, Helen was running out of space. Many of her long-time children campers were getting older now, but Helen did not feel that she could just close the doors on them. On the other hand, many new children were hoping to be a part of the camp, but few places were opening up. In a nutshell, Helen was looking for more opportunities to serve both the children and adults. She needed more space.

In light of these factors (not to mention Helen's continuing skepticism of the August camp), Helen proposed that the United Cerebral Palsy program be dropped. Furthermore, she offered to begin running an adult camp as well as a children's camp that next summer. On December 3, 1966, the CP Camp trustees approved this plan, even though some thought Helen might be taking on a bit too much. (One trustee said she was simply "crazy.") Hence, beginning with the summer of 1967, Helen would run a four week program for children in July, take a one week break, and then run a three week program for adults in August. Both programs would be known as Camp Jaberwocky,

and all operations would now be under the auspices of the CP Camp board of trustees.

The task of informing United Cerebral Palsy of this decision was difficult. UCP was not expecting such an abrupt shift in arrangements, nor did they have any recourse in the matter. In order to maintain some cordial relations, though, the CP Camp trustees stipulated that Helen must still accept a limited number of referrals from UCP each year in addition to the applicants of her own choosing. To this day, the relationship between the two organizations is essentially unchanged.

12 - Settling In for the Long Run

The Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp now had its own land, building, corporation, staff, programs, and support network. The experiment had finally come to stand on its own, and the whole venture was known as Camp Jabberwocky.

After the first summer on Greenwood Avenue, with only the main cabin, the double cabin, and a smattering of tents, the camp compound began to take shape. In 1966, an additional dormitory cabin was built. Since space was still tight that year, the trustees also agreed to rent the house across the street in order to help ease the summer crunch.

By 1968, four more dormitory cabins were constructed, and in 1971 yet another three. By 1972, the camp consisted of the main cabin, the double cabin (which had now been converted into an arts and crafts building), eight residential cabins, and a tool shed. In keeping with the Jabberwocky motif, the cabins were all dubbed with names such as Bandersnatch, Momeraths, Slithy Toves, Gyre & Gimble, and Uffish.

A Transition in Leadership

During this time of physical improvement, the camp also experienced a gradual transition in leadership.

In the early years at the 4-H clubhouse, Helen's three children, Gillian, Janet, and John, were regular visitors to the camp. Helen would not let her children actually live at the camp, since she had no extra energy for any of their troubles or complaining, but she was more than happy to have them visit and play with the other children. (During these years, the young Lambs lived at the shack under the care of Grandma Alice.)

As the children grew into adolescence, John ended up helping around camp more, while Gillian and Janet pursued other interests. As more years passed, both John and Gillian eventually assumed significant roles in the day-to-day operation of the camp.

In 1968, Helen, after one summer of directing single-handedly both the children's and adult camps, decided to recruit Gillian as an assistant director. Within the next couple of years, John assumed a similar position, and both Gillian and John were elected to the camp board of trustees. (Janet, by this time, had moved south to Georgia, although she still made occasional visits back to the island and to the camp itself.)

This several-year transition in leadership culminated in 1974 when Gillian and John became the primary directors of the adult and children's camps respectively. Helen, now age 60, after 21 years of directing the camp, decided to step back a little from the day-to-day operations and let her children take a stronger lead.

The Directors Today

Fortunately, the shift in leadership from Helen to her children was a smooth one. This transition set the stage for new energy, talent, vision, and skill in the camp's future.

Today, Gillian Butchman (who practices physical therapy in the Washington, DC area) brings spontaneity, drama, and fearlessness to the Jabberwocky community. She is always on the lookout for new possibilities and is always ready to take the first step into an unknown situation. John Lamb (who teaches exceptional children in Brookline, MA) brings a fine blend of wit, intelligence, aesthetics, and family spirit into the life of the camp. Kathleen Lamb, who has been a part of Jabberwocky since the late 1960's and married to John since 1971, has become, in effect, a director as well. Kathleen (a social worker in the Brookline school system) brings optimism, sensitivity, and a bit of organization (thank heavens!) into the life of this diverse community.

Although Helen stepped off the front line, she has not stopped for a rest. To this day, she still continues to do as much as anyone for the livelihood of the cerebral palsy camp. Helen is the organization's chief fundraiser and general advocate. She still visits the camp daily to meet with her extended family. And all would agree that she still deserves her alias, Hellcat.

13 - William Pinney

Countless individuals have played significant roles in the establishment and growth of the cerebral palsy camp. If there is one person, though, other than Helen Lamb, who stands as a key figure in the early history of the camp, it would be William W. Pinney.

Mr. Pinney, known to his friends as Peter, was the chairperson of the county 4-H program which offered a home to the cerebral palsy camp. He was also the chairperson of the CP Camp Committee throughout its years at the 4-H clubhouse. As the camp grew and developed its own identity, Pinney relinquished his responsibilities with 4-H in order to spend more energy providing for the disabled children. When the camp incorporated in 1964, Pinney served as president of the corporation for the first year and then as a trustee until he died in the summer of 1983.

Helen recalls that she and Mr. Pinney didn't always see eye to eye on matters, but that didn't interfere with their keen ability to work as a team. Several years before his death, Helen presented Pinney with a service award noting his many years of "providing everything," to which Pinney candidly responded, "You don't say no to Helen." Most of all, Helen remembers Peter's unending encouragement to carry on. His simple words of advice remain with her today, "If you think it's right, do it!"

All told, Peter Pinney was the prime mover in bringing the needs of the children to the awareness of the island, and the resources of the island to the lives of the children. From the day he met Helen at the ferry to show her the new site, to the day he died, Mr. Pinney served the camp for almost thirty years.

14 - The Camp Today

The Facilities

After the summer of 1978, the CP Camp purchased some adjoining land which increased the property to its current size of almost fourteen acres. Additional construction over the years has enlarged the physical plant to seventeen buildings. These buildings include:

- 8 Dormitory Cabins (Momeraths, Bandersnatch, Slithy Toves, Jubjub, Gyre & Gimble, Galumphing, Mimsy, and Tulgey Wood)
- The Main Cabin (Including the kitchen, dining hall, infirmary and lounge)
- 2 Staff Cabins (Uffish and 'Twas)
- The Craft Cabin (Including the laundry room)
- The Computer Cabin (Outgrave)
- The Studio (A large performance and dance hall)
- The Yurt
- A Garage and a Garden Shed

Thoughtful planning has left over half of the property still untouched, so there is a pleasant buffer of woods around the camp proper.

During the winter months, the camp is closed. The main cabin is winterized, though, so someone is on the premises year round. In 1966, the year after the main cabin was built, the trustees agreed that the facility should not lie dormant for most of the year. Consequently, they agreed to rent the space to the Island Youth Center. The youth center used this space until 1972, at which time the Martha's Vineyard Committee for the Special

Needs of Children moved in and initiated a school program for island children with special needs. To this day, the main cabin has been used for that purpose during the winter, with the public school system currently operating a special needs pre-school at the site.

The Red Bus

If Camp Jabberwocky had a trademark, it would be its big red school bus. Most people on the island, even summer visitors, know something about the camp. But if they know nothing else, they know the big red bus, Napoleon. Napoleon is the transporter of wheelchairs, walkers, beach tubes, sandy towels, laughter, songs, and smiles—it is unavoidable, even at a distance. Even if someone is completely unfamiliar with Camp Jabberwocky, it is still likely that they have encountered the red bus.



The bright red bus with the colorful drawings that carries the campers of Camp Jabberwocky . . . is a familiar mark of another Vineyard summer in progress . . . The Vineyard community takes pride in seeing the bus roll past, because it is primarily due to the generosity of the island community that the camp continues, and grows.

Vineyard Gazette, June 21, 1983



The first bus that the camp owned was not red to begin with—but it was noticeable. In 1960, the Vineyard Gazette reported:

The island has familiarized itself by this time, with the somewhat antiquated panel body bus used by the cerebral palsy camp in Oak Bluffs. Actually, this vehicle was purchased by the camp for \$25, and it is hardly strange that it lacked paint, the roof leaked and there were other complications.

Vineyard Gazette, August 16, 1960

Upon seeing the monster, an island vacationer decided to remedy the problem. Leo Silverstein, then vice-president of the Moore Paint Company, saw to it that the bus was brought into good repair and then finished off with a bright coat of fire-engine red paint. (Little did Leo know that this was but the first step in his fourteen years of service to the camp!)

Since those days, the red bus has been replaced several times. As of this writing, the lineage is approaching Napoleon V.



Napoleon

It is difficult to say when exactly Napoleon became cleverly disguised as a big red bus. Back in the early years of camp, before the red paint, before the flowers, when we got our first bus and Arthur went driving down Main Street, and the stuffing was coming out of the roof, the paint had peeled, the engine sounded as though it was attempting to imitate a recent performance of

the Anvil Chorus, and the people gaped and stared and Arthur, by way of explanation, shouted that it was last year's model, someone came up with the name of Napoleon.

"Why?" someone asked. "Why not?" was the reply.

Napoleon III is our newest bus. This year it has a coat of red paint and flowers, painted by the counsellors, which were added with unrestrained subtlety. The lettering was done by Rick, and Barry painted a little kid peeking over the edge of the back window. And it is still not finished. More flowers and insects and animals will be added later with more on the inside too.

Napoleon takes us everywhere, standing out in any crowd. Everyone sings and yells, and we talk of putting chairs on the roof and flying people from kites strung to the back door . . .

So Napoleon runs around, going places, delivering and taking, hardly having any time to himself or time to rest. He does get the winter, though, but it's lonely then. Lonely and cold. But summer is full of this big red bus with flowers on it and people in it.

*Article by an Anonymous Counsellor
Vineyard Gazette, ca. 1968*



15 - The Jabberwocky Community

The community at Camp Jabberwocky, in many ways, is like any other community. It has a core circle, a peripheral circle, a support network, and an extended community. It has leaders, followers, troublemakers, and peacemakers. At moments, it is a dreamy wonderland. Often, it is a mixture of stress, high emotions, and firm convictions all brewing in a stew of conflict. And most of the time, it is just a home for the living out of life together. It is a place where people eat and sleep and work and play. If you take a moment to step back and watch this community from a still point, you will be moved to laugh, and to cry, and simply to enjoy the very stuff of life—human interaction.

Campers

The core circle of the Jabberwocky community is comprised, of course, of the campers. There are usually about 30 to 35 campers present in the community at any given week during the summer. Both the adult and children's camps now run for four weeks each. Some campers will come for just a week or two, and others will stay for the whole session. Campers range from about seven years old to some who are in their 50's, with the line between the two camps being around age 20 (though this is not firm).

The balance between male and female campers is about equal, and although they represent the full range of socioeconomic strata, there is an obvious absence of racial minorities. Most of the campers come from New England, with the predominance from southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island. It is interesting to note that there have never been many campers

from the island itself. Helen indicates that, from the very first years, any disabled child on the island who wanted to participate in the camp was more than welcome (although overnight space was reserved for off-islanders). Since the people of Martha's Vineyard had always given so much support for the camp, she never had a thought of turning away island children. Nonetheless, only a handful of island children have joined in the camp over the years.

The process of enrolling in the camp is somewhat fluid. Due to the attractive setting, program, and low fee requirements, there are, of course, many people who would like to participate. Most people learn about the camp through the grapevine. There is no particular application form or procedure and there is no formal set of criteria for determining who will come each year. The decision ultimately rests in the hands of the camp directors. In practice, their decisions are informed by a wide range of factors, including: their experience with the camper, the particular needs of the camper, the particular needs of the camper's family, how likely it is that the camper will benefit from and enjoy the summer program, and particularly, how the camper will contribute to the life of the community.

Although the official name of the camp is the Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp and the camp had its roots at the Fall River Cerebral Palsy Training Center, cerebral palsy is not the only disability present at the camp. The camp serves many people with cerebral palsy, but it also serves people with spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, Down syndrome, mental retardation, and a variety of other diagnoses. Each camp session has a full range of mental, emotional, and physical disabilities represented, and many campers are multiply-disabled. Typically, about one third of the campers use wheelchairs and require moderate to extensive assistance.

Every year, a handful of new campers joins the community. In general, though, there is a very high return rate. Some

people will come for one summer and then move on. But most campers will come back to the island year after year. One fellow, a Mr. Larry Perry, has been a part of this community since the first year back at Happy Days! Several others, including Skipper Brooks, Bruce Dodson, and Dana Solmon, have been a part of the community for all but the first year or so. After an individual has tried a summer at the camp, and the situation seems mutually beneficial, she or he is generally welcomed back in following years. After almost forty years now, the fruit of this process is a wonderfully extended community of people with disabilities. This community is the core of Jabberwocky today.

Counsellors

The next layer of the Jabberwocky community is the assembly of counsellors. This group actually includes the counsellors proper as well as the directors, cooks, nurses, and anyone else who stops by to lend a hand.

The counsellors are a diverse crew. The assemblage is not like a staff for a church camp, or a scout camp, or any other camp where people from a common vantage point come together to propagate their species. The only common denominator among the counsellors here is their interest in serving the disabled. After that, similarities are sparse.

Counsellor ages run from early teens to late fifties (with occasional exceptions on both ends!) On the average, most are young adults. Educational experience ranges from grade school through post-doctoral studies. Political and religious perspectives run from extreme conservatism through severe middle-of-the-roadism to extreme liberalism. (And it is not uncommon to observe someone shift on the spectrum while they are here!) Many counsellors are interested in special needs work, and some

are employed in that field. Many others have no particular calling to do such work except for what they do at the camp.

One of the secrets to the camp's vitality is that all the counsellors and directors are volunteers. They receive no wage for their efforts. The cook and nurse receive small honoraria, and the counsellors traditionally receive a \$25 "thank you" to help with personal expenses while they are working. Since the camp's inception, the feeling has been that the camp could never afford to pay anyone enough for all that is expected, so why pay anyone at all? As many counsellors have come to realize, they probably wouldn't work nearly as hard if they were being paid!

And the counsellors do work hard—sometimes to near exhaustion. Most counsellors will work for four weeks of adult camp or four weeks of children's camp. A few will do both. An average day involves rising around 7:30 a.m., spending the entire day taking care of people, teaching classes, cleaning cabins, doing other chores necessary to keep the camp functioning, and then in the evening (after putting everyone to bed), doing laundry, making cabin checks, and occasionally taking a shower. Every few nights, one can take an evening off, and sometime during the four-week stretch one can take a whole day off. All this for no pay—but no one complains. Most counsellors know that they are still getting a good deal: fine food, a place to sleep, a community of friends, unequalled experience, and a chance to experiment with serving others.

Since the labor at Jabberwocky is all volunteer, the "hiring" of counsellors has always been a curious matter. In the early years, there were many times when Helen would have her whole staff set by January and she would have to turn away subsequent applicants. More recently, help has been harder to find. Some summers arrive with the threat of being short-staffed, but things always work out. In addition to the live-in counsellors, there is also a regular contingent of "day counsellors" who help as they

are able, and even a few religious and secular groups that offer their time as a service to the community.

In regard to qualifications, previous experience has little weight in the matter. Many of the best counsellors have had little or no experience with disabled people prior to their time at Jabberwocky. Helen recalls that her primary criterion for choosing a counsellor was not the resume but the photograph, “I’d pick anyone who’s pretty, since I have to look at them all month!” On a more serious note, she states simply that a good counsellor would be “anyone who can forget themselves completely for the time they’re here.” Although counsellors participate in a basic orientation and they receive specific guidance concerning the needs of their particular campers, most would agree that their real training happens on the job. At Jabberwocky, the primary task is living together. If someone has skills in that area, they can learn the rest along the way.

Jabberwocky counsellors, like Jabberwocky campers, return year after year. From one year to the next, about 75% of the counsellors return. This phenomenon started during the early years of the camp and continues to this day. It is not uncommon to find counsellors who have been around for five or ten years, and occasionally longer. (For example, Jamie German—a high school chemistry teacher from Providence, RI—has been counselling, cooking, and recruiting help for well over twenty years! Likewise, Jeff Caruthers—a program administrator for gifted and exceptional children in Florida’s public schools—has been counselling, coordinating the adult camp, and generally “keeping the works oiled” for about twenty years as well.) The community at Jabberwocky is attractive. It is fertile ground for deep friendships and significant relationships. It is a place where long days, common work, and frequent celebration transform strangers into brothers and sisters. Indeed, for many counsellors, Jabberwocky is not just a good place to work, it is home.



It is impossible to praise these young people enough for the work they are doing. To see them donating their time and energy all hours of the day, never demanding for themselves but always willing to give, is something young people are not supposed to be interested in doing these days, and the counsellors at the camp do not fit into the orthodox category. It is a great pleasure to have an opportunity to be with these young people.

Helen Lamb

Vineyard Gazette, July 10, 1962



Extended Community

Beyond the sphere of campers and counsellors who live at Jabberwocky during the summer, there is yet a wider circle of support which plays a crucial role in the life of the community. This circle of support includes:

- The CP Camp board of trustees, who oversee the fund-raising and corporate needs of the community.
- The many generous donors who come through each year to support the work of the camp.
- All the parents, relatives, and friends of both campers and counsellors who regularly stop by to work and visit.
- The island community, comprised of a multitude of individuals, businesses, and organizations who supply the lifeblood to the camp through their many gifts.

Perhaps the widest circle around the community of Jabberwocky is made up of all the folks who take a moment to watch, listen, and laugh with the family. Only through this wider network of friends can the small, but crucial, work of the camp continue.

16 - Life at Jabberwocky

An Average Day

Camp Jabberwocky thrives for two sessions every summer: one month with adults and one month with children. An average day in the course of a summer is a rare occurrence, but when such a day comes along, it goes something like this:

The initial activity of any morning is the ritual brewing of coffee. (The reason for this observance will be clear by the end of this account.) The cook is usually in the kitchen by 6:00 a.m., and within the hour several other counsellors are up and about doing their laundry or enjoying the last bit of quiet they'll have until later that night. Around 7:30, the cast iron bell is rung and people in various stages of interest and excitement begin rising for the new day. Noise begins to filter through the trees as campers alert their counsellors to wake up and get them out of bed. Bathrooms become crowded with wheelchairs, odd pieces of clothing, tired bodies, and live wires who have been waiting to get up since 5:00. Occasionally a cabin remains quiet, but that is only because its residents were up and out at an earlier hour to start the day with a special activity.

Breakfast is usually served by 8:30, followed immediately by a review of the day's activities. After breakfast, all the

campers head to the studio for an hour of singing, drama, and preparation for their musical production at the end of the season. During this time, counsellors have a moment to clean cabins, do camp chores, run errands, and prepare for classes.

By mid-morning, classes begin. The curriculum includes offerings such as dance, drama, music, pottery, crafts, sewing, cooking, photography, computers, sports, aerobics, writing, special discussion groups, and the camp newspaper. Whatever the campers are interested in doing becomes a possibility for a class—sometimes a one-time offering, and sometimes a daily course for the duration of the summer. Curiously enough, there always seems to be at least one counsellor who is excited about heading up each class. Occasionally, one or two campers will lead classes as well.

At noontime, lunch is served, along with various presentations and reports from the morning classes. (Lunch at the beach, and occasionally breakfast or dinner as well, is a favorite variation on the day's schedule!) After lunch, a brief rest period is usually in order and then things start rolling again.

If the day is reasonably nice (and sometimes even when it's not), everybody heads to the beach for the afternoon. And for those who don't feel like swimming, small groups often arrange to take walks downtown, work on special projects, go fishing, sightseeing, clamming, horseback riding, and the like. By late afternoon, everyone returns to camp to bathe and have a few moments to sit and chat before dinner.

After dinner, the excitement begins again with one or more activities including dances, concerts, plays, movies, sunsets, basketball, baseball, community sings, rides on the Flying Horses, games, camp talent shows, and the list goes on. On a quiet night, which is rare, most of the campers are in bed by 9:00 and the counsellors by midnight.

Every day is a full day at Jabberwocky, and even during the hectic moments of preparing for the Fourth of July parade or

the Open House, little is omitted. In the end, a few people get sick, a few get silly, a few get irritable, most get exhausted, but no one gets bored. With 50 to 60 people, there always seems to be enough energy around to keep the entire community on the move. Not only is this the most stimulating and exciting time of the whole year for the campers, but the same is true for most counsellors as well.



A Typical Summer

The Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp closed officially on Friday, July 26, amid tearful goodbyes and garbled promises for next summer. Now that the dust has settled, it is time to evaluate, as coldly and objectively as possible, the accomplishments of the summer. This may be done numerically:

Seventy-five children were made happy during the four and one-half weeks of camp.

Fifteen fish were caught by four different youngsters.

Sixty-six gold rings were grabbed at the hobby horses, and only three were dropped.

Two cases of sore throat and high fever were cared for and cured.

One youngster was started on therapy which will one day enable him to walk.

One red-haired girl camper walked, nearly by herself, across the stage at the Grace Church parish house.

Eighty-four strings were bowled by twenty-three assorted young people.

A total of 2,347 marshmallows was consumed.

Three Mongoloids [sic] were filmed while taking a bath in one bathtub . . .

*From an article by Counsellor Hank
Montandon, Vineyard Gazette,
August 16, 1963*



Therapy

Amidst the daily whirlwind of activity at Jabberwocky, few people would stop to acknowledge that what is really happening here is therapy—that is, healing.

When Helen Lamb first began the camp, she knew quite well the regimen of clinical therapy that each of the campers experienced during the year. Her goal, therefore, was to create an experience that would be entirely different from such institutional ways, yet still maintain the therapeutic principles which would continue the children's progress.

She recalls one young boy saying, "This isn't like camp, it's like Mrs. Lamb's home with a lot of kids!" Helen responded, "That is just the atmosphere I want."

Therapy happens in many ways and, over the years at Jabberwocky, it has occurred on many fronts. When people hear the word "therapy" in reference to a program for the disabled,

the first thought that usually comes to mind is physical healing. Without a doubt, such healing has been a part of Jabberwocky since its inception. In the early years especially, there were many reports and news articles dotted with “miracle stories”—campers learning to walk, talk, move, swim, eat, etc. Mr. Pinney reported in 1960:

You get these very happy little crippled [sic] children down on the beach or out fishing or riding a pony and things are accomplished that seem impossible in the very necessary but dry therapy in a clinic. We have seen a little boy who had been trying to use his hands all winter, get so excited at seeing a fish on his line, that the fish was miraculously pulled in. We have seen a very lovely little child with a speech block who while playing with other happy children on a beach, somehow or other got talking. Now you can't keep her quiet. We have seen the gradual evolution in a child who could barely crawl, then put into braces, and now can go up three flights of stairs in her tenement home . . . These cases and many, many others are all known. The individual children are known as they come back year after year.

Excerpt from President's Report, 1960

Almost twenty years later, Gillian Butchman reported:

This past summer, because of the movement exercises taught in the Studio, adult campers did something they had never done before. Without aid of wheelchairs, crutches, braces, or shoes, they discovered kinds of self-movement which surprised everyone, themselves most of all. An exciting carry-over from the experience was noticed when, instead of waiting in their wheel-

chairs at the beach, campers asked that they be placed right on the sand so they could experiment with their new found mobility—often crawling or rolling—to get close to friends or make their way to the water. Their excitement with their own movement also had an effect in the horseback riding program. This is no mere pony riding experience—even the most handicapped adults lying on their backs in the saddle are encouraged to develop control, in any number of creative and unusual methods, over the horse's movements. All the campers, children and adults alike, enjoy to their fullest possible potential all the activities of camp.

Excerpt from Appeal Letter, 1979

Year after year, stories such as these are told of personal achievements in the lives of campers. Such examples of healing are not the result of any structured physical therapy program or clinical regimen. This healing is merely the fruit of a community where people are free to play, experiment, and take chances with others who are in the same condition.

At Jabberwocky, disabilities don't really limit what people can do, they just make the process a little more interesting. The primary principle of therapy here is that the counsellors be present to encourage, challenge, and (by whatever means they can come up with) enable campers to do what they want. Almost every activity or event during the summer requires some adaptation so that everyone can take part in a meaningful way. This effort to be inclusive is not viewed as peripheral but central to the life of the community.

For example, a favorite Jabberwocky pastime is the challenge of overcoming physically inaccessible buildings, thoroughfares, and activities. People will go to great lengths to maneuver wheelchairs, give piggy-back rides, and devise special equipment or gimmicks so that campers can go places and do

things they would otherwise be excluded from sharing in. Such adventures are not without risk, but the benefits of joy, adventure, and simply feeling like a part of the community far outweigh the occasional bumps and bruises. Rarely does a summer go by without at least a couple of trips to the hospital, a few stitches, a little blood, and a smattering of tears. Nonetheless, people continue to step out and try new things.

Even back in the first years of camp, a little risk was always thought to have some therapeutic value. Helen recalls:

As one youngster said, "Mrs. Lamb, every day we do something new at camp." Feeling puzzled, I said, "Well, that is nice, what did we do today that was new?" She replied, "Why sitting on those stools that go around and around in the drug store. I have always wanted to sit on one like other children do, but my mother never lets me. I guess she's afraid I would fall off." Such a little thing and yet it means so much to these children.

Helen Lamb

Vineyard Gazette, August 28, 1956

Perhaps the bottom line of therapy at Camp Jabberwocky is encouraging people to heal themselves. If someone is happy, feeling adventuresome, and is in the company of a supportive community, the possibility for such healing is not far away. To be sure, therapy at Jabberwocky goes far beyond the physical realm—it touches the social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of life as well. In fact, anyone who has ever been a part of the camp will be likely to attest that the most powerful healing that goes on in this little community is the healing of the spirit.

Drama

In recent years, drama and the performing arts have become widely acknowledged as vital forms of therapy for people with disabilities. At Jabberwocky, however, such activities have always been part of the offering. In fact, camp performances have grown to such an extent that now they have become the centerpiece of the summer program.

When Helen was still working with disabled children back in England, one of her most successful group activities was the “rhythm band.” The idea was actually quite simple. Helen first collected a variety of percussion instruments: bells, drums, blocks, triangles, maracas, cymbals, xylophones, and the like. She then gave each child an instrument according to his or her abilities. Every child was capable of shaking, striking, or banging in some way or another, even if it meant just kicking a drum. As Helen performed a variety of works on the piano, the children would accompany her with appropriate rhythms, sounds, and occasional unexpected variations. Everyone participated, everyone performed, and everyone had the satisfaction of sharing in a group effort to entertain others.

The idea worked so well that when Helen began working at the Fall River clinic, she initiated a rhythm band there, too. The success of the venture even led to some performances on local television.

By the time Helen was setting up the cerebral palsy camp on Martha’s Vineyard, no one was surprised that a rhythm band was in the works there, as well. Happy Days was too small to accommodate such an operation, but by the time the camp was settled in at the 4-H clubhouse, the rhythm band moved into full swing.

In 1956 (the third season of the camp), Helen had arranged for a public performance by the rhythm band. Every week during the summer, The Martha’s Vineyard Camp Meeting

Association sponsored a “community sing” at the tabernacle. Since these informal sing-a-long events were rooted in the tradition of community-based music, the notion of having the children from the local camp perform seemed most appropriate. Hence, at the end of camp that year, after many hours of rehearsal, the cerebral palsy camp rhythm band came to the stage of the tabernacle and offered its music. The brief performance (approximately 20 minutes) was well received, and the children were invited to return again the following summer. This annual performance eventually became much anticipated by both campers and the community alike.

Apparently, though, not everyone was touched by the children’s music. In fact, some people who were rather disconcerted by seeing disabled people perform in public saw to it that, by 1963, the rhythm band would not return to the tabernacle stage. Nonetheless, the show went on.

1963 actually marked a new phase in the history of Jaberwocky performances. Since the camp could no longer have a spot in the community sing, Helen decided to set off and have a show of her own. When Grace Episcopal Church in Vineyard Haven heard of the opportunity, they were quick to welcome the rhythm band to the parish house stage. The offer was ideal, for it freed Helen and the campers from their previous space, time, and content restraints. The camp performance could now take any shape it desired.

The *Vineyard Gazette* ran a substantial, detailed, and highly enthusiastic review of the 1963 cerebral palsy camp performance. The evening was hosted by Helen, who warned the audience to “expect anything.” The traditional performance of music was augmented by several pieces of modern dance. Although the entire program still lasted only about 15 minutes, the reference to “vigorous and spontaneous outbursts of applause” indicate that the show was quite a success. From this time for-

ward, the camp has performed its show annually and to the great pleasure of the general public.

By the mid 1960's, the performance venue of the camp show had moved from the church hall to the larger stage of the Tisbury (Vineyard Haven) Town Hall. The program had expanded to include music, dance, and drama, and the reputation for an exciting evening of entertainment had flourished. One announcement in the newspaper read:

Camp Jabberwocky in concert is a rare opportunity, and this year one will be allowed to receive the shock on Friday, July 19, at 7:30 p.m. in the Vineyard Haven town hall. About this rare delight much has been written, but words are at best stumbling blocks when it comes to a viable description of what goes on.

Even when one talks to a veteran of many concerts, if he doesn't turn pale at the thought, he is still not sure whether the entire performance is not an hallucination . . .

Excerpt from an article by a counsellor, inviting the public to come see the performance, Vineyard Gazette, 1968

By the mid 1970's, Camp Jabberwocky's investment and interest in the therapeutic value of drama had grown to such an extent that preparations were begun to build a dance and performance hall on camp's own property. In the autumn of 1977, a group of U.S. Navy Sea Bees contributed their labor to build what is now known as "The Studio." This large hall not only provided generous space for classes in movement and dance but it also provided, finally, a stage-in-residence for the popular Jabberwocky performances.

Over the years, the small fifteen-minute rhythm band concerts at the tabernacle have grown to full-length two-hour productions with singing, dancing, comedy, and drama. Recent productions have included the likes of Camelot, Oliver, Peter Pan, Oklahoma, The Yellow Submarine, The History of Camp, and, of course, Jabberwocky. Granted, the performances are rather liberal in interpretation and execution, they are nothing short of miraculous. When fifty curious people, representing the full range of the physical, mental, and emotional spectra come together to create a performance, anything can happen.

In recent years, even though the therapeutic value of this work is still greatly acknowledged, people have come to realize that these performances serve a second and equally significant function. Twice a summer, now, the island community is invited to an “Open House” performance at the camp. On these evenings, the Jabberwocky community has an occasion to share, through, entertainment, its deep gratitude for the gracious support of the island community. The circle of giving is thus made complete, and spirits are healed in the process.



The Meek Shall Inherit the Yurt

In 1983, Jabberwocky constructed a yurt to provide additional space for drama and music. Originally, yurts were moveable dwellings used by various Mongol nomads in Siberia. The circular tents with domed roofs were constructed with animal skins or felt stretched over collapsible lattice frameworks.

The yurt at Jabberwocky is a somewhat more permanent structure, described as, “simple and

elegant in design. The roof is a parasol of pine boards. At the point, a skylight opens to spread a soft, even light throughout the circular room beneath. The roof is held up by a ring of beams made of Douglas fir. There are windows all around.” (Vineyard Gazette, June 21, 1983)

The yurt is simple, airy, light, quiet, and round. It is home to music, dance, laughter, song, and quiet conversation. It is often just a pleasant circle in the woods, and that is nice, too.



Chilmark Chocolates

One program development which has emerged recently deserves particular attention. Actually, it deserves a book to itself, for it is a full story with a life of its own which has grown out of the Jabberwocky community.

A perennial topic of discussion at Jabberwocky is what campers' lives are like during the winter months. What does it mean for these folks to be disabled back in their home communities? Given all the excitement and potential which is evidenced during the summer, one would imagine that large strides could be made over the rest of the year. Unfortunately, many of these folks return to a year of work, activity, and social interaction which holds little interest or challenge.

Over the years, many dreams and ideas have been tossed about regarding the possibilities of a year-round camp or some other community-based venture for disabled people—something that might go beyond the parameters of life in a “group home” or work in a “sheltered workshop.” The pressing question always returns: How can the vitality, freedom, and spirit of Jabber-

wocky be a part of these campers' lives for more than just a few weeks every summer?

In the summer of 1985, three women who were counselors at Camp Jabberwocky decided to bring some of this talk into reality. Their vision was to run a small business which would be a professional, self-supporting enterprise and a place where disabled people could join in an ongoing team effort. At the time, Jan Campbell owned a small up-island cottage industry called Chilmark Chocolates. Mary Beth Grady, a nutritionist, and Allison Burger, an occupational therapist, were working full-time at the camp. At the end of the summer, these three women decided to experiment with running the handmade chocolate store with campers from Jabberwocky. Jan and her family would provide the store and housing. Mary Beth and Allison would take charge of running the business and incorporating a broad range of people with disabilities into the life of the little store.

The first year was hectic, but it worked. Throughout the winter, Allison and Mary Beth both lived and worked in Boston. Every weekend, as soon as work was out, the two would begin their commute to the island—picking up “campers” along the way. They would all arrive at the island on Friday evening, work together at the chocolate store for the weekend, and then commute back to the mainland Sunday night so everyone could be back to work or school by Monday morning. The schedule was a constant strain, but the rewards were plentiful.

Now, after several years of hard work, experience, and commitment, the business stands as a model for others. Allison and Mary Beth live on the island year-round now. Every week, a handful of disabled people from the camp community comes to live and work at the store. The experiment has also expanded to include many island residents who have disabilities. And, of course, there is the regular contingent of friends and relatives who pitch in as they are able. If the summer congestion and long

lines in the storefront are any indication of the success of the business, then all is going quite well.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of this experiment is the commitment to a team effort in the workplace. The workers take part in all aspects of the store's business. They wait on customers, operate the cash register, do shopping, banking, bookkeeping, groundskeeping, and correspondence. They package mail orders, place advertisements, order raw materials, and, of course, make chocolates. A meaningful and appropriate job is found for everyone, no matter what the disability. Everyone is paid a reasonable wage, and no one has to do the same job all the time.

Since everyone in the business also lives, eats, and plays together, community life becomes a team effort as well. For example, cooking, cleaning, problem solving, and decision making are not tasks reserved for any particular individuals. Rather, they are responsibilities entrusted to the entire group.

The success of this venture, both as a quality business and as a meaningful opportunity for people with disabilities, has resulted in relentless suggestions to expand the operation. Nonetheless, the crew has chosen to remain small in order to continue as a private, self-sufficient, and personal operation, committed to addressing the needs and interests of the disabled folks who work there.

The future of Chilmark Chocolates is determined annually by the women who run the business. Although they may not choose to expand or develop a long-term operation, they have succeeded in modelling how the "Jabberwocky spirit" might come alive in the workplace.



We feel that it is important that people be given a chance to reach their potential. One way of doing this is by using a team approach. People with disabilities work side by side with others as team members. Each member does what he or she is able.

People from Camp Jabberwocky and the island are working at Chilmark Chocolates. As a team we are handling all aspects of the business . . . making, selling, and sampling chocolate. Also doing bookkeeping and mail orders on computers.

We are excited by this opportunity and hope that you will share your thoughts.

Sign at Chilmark Chocolates



17 - The Economics of Jabberwocky

The economic stability of Camp Jabberwocky can be summed up in one phrase. In a thank you letter to a generous donor who came through in a time of need, William Pinney wrote, “. . . as usual we live on faith, not cash.”

Jabberwocky has managed to survive over these many years because of its faith in people rather than in money. Ever since the camp opened at Happy Days, Helen and the camp trustees have believed that if they could just (1) show to the local

people a concrete need, (2) ask these people for a specific service or donation to help meet this need, and (3) invite everyone to come see the concrete results and benefits of their donations, then the camp would receive everything it needed to do its work. A brief glance at the camp today will show that this faith has not failed.

Jabberwocky has no steady or guaranteed supply of money. The camp operates solely on annual donations from interested businesses, organizations, and individuals. People have donated money, labor, land, food, buildings, transportation, equipment, supplies, entertainment, and so on. There are only a few donors who contribute large amounts, but there are many donors who contribute small amounts. With all the gifts, goods, and services taken together, the camp manages to press on year after year. As noted previously, a list of donors and donations would be impossible to compile. The multitude of spontaneous and generous gestures toward Jabberwocky would lead one to believe that the camp is hardly considered a “good cause,” but simply a living organism which breathes in harmony with the community around it.

Jabberwocky is committed to keeping its registration fee low. A summer camp for a disabled person is no benefit if the financial requirements are burdensome. During the first year at Happy Days, only \$10 per week was asked of each child. Since that time (almost 40 years later), the fee has barely risen. No one has ever been turned away for inability to pay the fee. In fact, many people choose to contribute much more than what is asked of them. For those who can't cover the cost, funds are raised to underwrite their stay.

Most of the money raised for the camp is brought in by a simple, one page, annual appeal letter, which is mailed to everyone who has helped out in the past. The letter is actually more of a reminder than an appeal. It usually notes a project that the

camp is currently involved with and it suggests ways in which people might help. This always seems to be sufficient.

In the early years, the annual appeal was supplemented by donation canisters which were distributed around the island to local businesses. One summer, over 900 cans were distributed and, of course, the response was quite generous. More recently, benefit concerts, dances, horse shows, performances, and other events have offered additional support to the general appeal.

Over the years, the second most effective fundraiser has been Hellcat. Her feisty, convincing, straightforward, and somewhat brash manner has enabled her to get most everything she asks for. She says, "I could never ask for anything for myself. But I can ask for anything for the children." Hellcat does ask for anything—and everything. And people respond generously. She reflects, "I think the secret was that as long as I was willing to donate my service, other people would donate theirs and come help. But if I were ever to receive a salary, forget it."



As I was riding with the youngsters in the bus during the parade, I noticed tears in the eyes of many of the spectators. I do hope all our kind friends realize that tears of pity will do nothing for either the children or their parents. Most of the parents of these children cannot afford the usual high rates per week to send their own handicapped children to camp, and if it were not for the Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp here on the island, where we only have to charge a very nominal rate because of your generous sponsorships, gifts and donations, neither these children nor their parents would ever get a break from their third floor city apart-

*ments. So let us all please remember, interest
will help much more than tears.*

Helen Lamb

Vineyard Gazette, July 9, 1963



One place that Jabberwocky does not depend on for money is federal, state, or institutional funding. The camp has no affiliation with any foundations, trusts, or other major benefactors. In fact, historically, the camp has taken pride in its independence from institutional support and its interdependence with community support. William Pinney commented, in response to the overwhelming amount of donations that the camp had received over the years, “And it is due, thank God, without recourse to government bureaucracy, but just people helping people because they want to.”

The bottom line of economics at Camp Jabberwocky is generosity and commitment. The following anecdote indicates the level of these qualities which keeps the camp thriving. Helen recalls:

*. . . a time, not so long ago, when the cook
didn't know what was for supper until the after-
noon donations came in. Some people came eve-
ry day. Once, a lady came in after 3. She was
out of breath and apologetic. “Sorry I'm late,”
she said, panting, “But my husband had a heart
attack and I had to take him to the hospital.”*

The Standard Times (New Bedford)

August 19, 1984



Mrs. Lamb and the new trustees who ran the camp never had the slightest idea that there was any risk in not being able to obtain what was necessary if we could get the people to visit the camp. The people did come and once they saw what was being done, the response was always amazing. We found that people were tired of giving a check to a community fund or a church, being told they could take this off their income taxes. The gift of a roast beef or a couple of turkeys that they saw eaten did something for the well [sic] people just as for the handicapped . . .

What we are trying to say is we never had the slightest doubt about raising money for this camp. We contracted for a \$1,500 addition with exactly \$18 in the bank. We never have any surplus and we don't want any trust fund. These particular trustees believe that in such organizations "to be rich is a mark of failure." This psychology of personal giving without thought of income tax favor and without overhead and constant forms and reports is so unique as to bring smiles of joy to the average man and woman who receives reams of paper through the mail and who is sloganized to death.

*William Pinney
President's Report, 1960*



18 - Conclusion

Much more can be said about Jabberwocky, but after a certain point, words no longer do justice to the experience. There are a multitude of perspectives regarding what happens at the camp each summer, and these perspectives fluctuate as broadly as the life of the community itself. Jabberwocky evolves. It is never the same from year to year. People, ideas, concerns, and circumstances shift regularly. And the community moves on.

No one who lives in the camp community believes that it is ideal—or even close. But most everyone agrees that it works. And in this age, when cultural and individual sense of belonging is waning, a community that works is a light of hope.

Jabberwocky, if nothing else, brings a little refreshment to some difficult lives. For most of the year, disabled people are in the minority. They are stared at, singled out for special treatment, and generally viewed as outside the mainstream of normal life. For a couple of months each year, the camp provides a break from this routine. At Jabberwocky, people with disabilities form the majority in the community. Their experience becomes the dominant experience. Their needs become the priority needs. Their concerns become common concerns. For a short while, their lives become central to a community rather than peripheral. And in those occasional, wondrous moments, the whole community becomes as family.



We are all tired now, but when the children are gone and the camp is quiet, when there is no more Skipper wandering off and calling everyone he meets a pigeon, and when there is no more Kevin yelling in the Mad Hatter's ear in the very early morning, "Move over, my bed's broke," when we no longer hear any more off-key singing in the condemned looking red bus, when all this is gone, then we will miss it all very much, and only then will we realize that we have to wait an entire year for the magic to begin again. But the magic never wears off.

*Counsellor Linda Yenkin
Vineyard Gazette, July 22, 1966*

