



The Pinewoods Post

Pinewoods Camp Inc.

80 Cornish Field Road ♦ Plymouth, MA 02360 ♦ www.pinewoods.org ♦ 508-224-4858

Spring 2016

Eight Decades: Moments In The Life Of PCI Employee #1

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Program Providers

Boston Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society

c/o Folk Arts Center
10 Franklin St.,
Stoneham, MA 02180-1862
www.rscdsboston.org

Country Dance Society, Boston Centre

P.O. Box 3055
Acton MA 01720
781.591.2372
www.cds-boston.org

Country Dance and Song Society

116 Pleasant Street,
Suite 345
Easthampton, MA
01027-2759

Steve Howe
Director of Programs
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413.203.5467
www.cdss.org

Folk Arts Center of New England

10 Franklin St., Stoneham, MA
02180-1862

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fac@facone.org
781.438.4387
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In February's Special Edition of the Post we recognized the passing of Gerda Conant (1931-2016), former Camp Manager and matriarch of the Conant family which has been intertwined with Pinewoods for 4 generations. Here Gerda's son David (lifelong camper, PCI treasurer and Pinewoods Morris Man) provides a window into the long and productive life of our uniquely beloved friend and supporter. For more information on the history of Pinewoods and the Conants' involvement, visit: <http://www.pinewoods.org/about/history/>

1930s: Gerda Ruden Conant was born in 1931 in Krefeld, Germany, into a world that was under stress and rapidly changing. Her grandfather had already seen storm clouds growing and sold his remaining interest in a silk mill hurt by economic turbulence. In 1935, her family fled for safety. This first picture shows her with her older sister Ellinore shortly before the family left Germany.

Gerda's mother's New York birth certificate made the move to America possible, but her father had to expend many of his assets to escape the tyrannical regime. His young daughters waited for him at a bleak Swiss refugee center for children, and a winter Atlantic crossing brought them to New York City. There Gerda became very ill and spent months with limited parental contact in a charity hospital. In this picture from 1940 we see a girl who at age 9 has had more experiences with the world than many others will have in a lifetime.



Gerda (L) and I



Gerda Age 9



Wedding Day



L to R: Rick, Ellen, Su
Gerda, David, I

1940s: After a brief stay in Brooklyn, the family moved to a converted summer cottage in Smithtown, NY where they kept chickens, grew gardens, and improvised a happy lifestyle in what was then a rural environment. She learned much from her father's ability as a resourceful mechanic, tinkerer, and builder. She told stories of helping him move a garage across the yard by hand, using levers and rollers. That improvisational skill stayed with her throughout her life.

1950s: In 1952 Gerda attended Hiram College in Ohio, training to be a teacher. Her childhood experiences made her keenly aware of social injustice and led her to participate in a range of social assistance activities.

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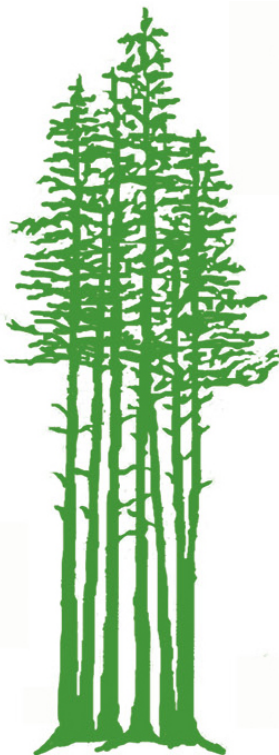
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work camp trip to Iowa she encountered an attractive young man demonstrating how to milk a cow. He Massachusetts and shared her deep social concerns. Soon he invited her to visit his parents at their s camp in Plymouth. It was quite a "fish out of water" experience for Gerda, meeting the relatively affluer sophisticated Pinewoods crowd of the early '50s. Nonetheless, she did her best to keep up with the da managed to survive the shock. Perhaps there was a bit of "sneaking off to the woods" as well. Within t Gerda and Rick were married and living in a cold water flat in Cambridge.

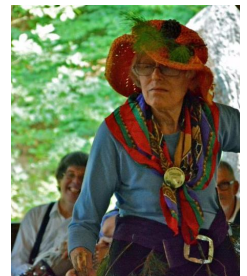
1960s: By 1964 the family had moved to CT and grown from 2 to 7. While Rick worked as an underpa social worker and Gerda devoted her efforts to managing a home and 5 children, both parents found ti their passionate interests in peace and social activism. Between cooking, school meetings, endless lai gardening, and other domestic management. Gerda seemed to be always off to some meeting. We kic renamed some of them to express our amusement: The League of Women Odors, The American Frier Committee, etc.

When the youngest, Ellen, was born, we grew out of the tiny ranch house in suburban Rocky Hill and i what seemed like a giant 3 story house in Hartford. Each summer, the family packed up and moved to for 3-4 weeks. Here, Gerda would enjoy relief from full time parenting as her brood ran with the Pinew kids and took part in camp activities. She seemed to particularly enjoy the less full sessions, as we we eat at the dining hall -- or as we called it, The Big Kitchen.

1970s: Once all the kids were in school, Gerda went back to teaching. After getting her MA, she taught special education in West Hartford. She also helped to found Shanti, an alternative high school in Hartford. I was among the first group of students, and it was an experience that has influenced me to this day. She continued her activism in other ways as well. At every election, the house was filled with campaign material and family would be recruited to stuff envelopes, hand out flyers, or hold signs. She and Rick were instrumental in Eugene McCarthy's 1968 presidential campaign. Anti-war events were constant during the Vietnam War era, and I remember young men appearing at our house for dinner, to be put on a Greyhound bus to Montreal in the morning.

Meanwhile, there was Pinewoods Camp to look after. Upon Helen Storrow's death in 1944, the property had passed to Gerda's mother-in-law Lily Roberts Conant, one of the two teachers originally sent by Cecil Sharp at Storrow's request to foster English traditional dance in America. When Lily died in 1974, Rick's father at age 89 \ to manage the camp on his own. Although some movement had been started to transfer the camp to (some other grouping of users, the process was not complete. With very little notice, there was a need to take over.

If ever the camp needed a savior, this was the moment. Gerda's teaching schedule made her the only member available to step in. She had no background in running a major institution (unless one consid of 7 to be a major institution). The camp was deteriorating, as funds for maintenance had been limited years. Staff had to be hired, suppliers contacted, etc. Gerda rose to the challenge and held the operati until the following year, when PCI was formed. For the next 6 years she continued her role as camp m PCI employee #1. She organized and motivated the camp's loyal constituencies to give PCI a solid sta limited resources. Without her work, it is quite possible that the camp would not exist.



Celebrating at Camp

Old Mother Pine

1980s: With their children grown, Gerda and Rick were now living in Milton MA. Soon she was able to responsibility of managing Pinewoods on to new hands. Her experience had set her up for a series of managing senior housing facilities in Newton and Boston. As empty nesters, she and Rick had more ti and continued political activism. She took the opportunity to reconnect with her past, visiting relatives i Zealand and returning to Fribourg Germany for a gathering of surviving refugees. By the end of the de first grandchildren had arrived.

1990s: Gerda retired from full time work to focus on her longtime interests. At Pinewoods, she maintai an active role in environmental stewardship. The first Iraq war reinvigorated her campaigning for peac supported affordable housing in Milton, and she and Rick enjoyed entertaining their grandchildren. Hc joy was interrupted too soon, when in 1994 Rick, age 65, passed away only 6 months after being diag

cancer. After his death Gerda began to downsize, selling her home and purchasing a two-family house provide both a smaller living space and a steady income.

2000s: The new millennium saw little reduction in Gerda's active life. She continued her interest in peace and social justice, particularly as the country became more militarized after 9/11. Her background made her particularly sensitive to the spreading xenophobia and intolerance. Meanwhile, at Pinewoods, many witnessed her joyful participation in Family and Campers Weeks with one or more of her 6 grandchildren. Whether working the crafts on the Camphouse porch or acting as "Old Mother Pinewoods" in a mummer's play, she was always to be part of the action.

2010s: By age 80, Gerda had begun to match her responsibilities to her available energy. She moved from her home to a smaller apartment nearby, passing landlord's duties to her daughter Peggy. She also transferred management of the family property adjoining Pinewoods to her five children. She did not downsize her interests or concerns, however. In 2013, at age 82, she walked Boston's five mile Saint Patrick's Day parade route with three children and a grandchild to support Milton for Peace. She continued to attend Pinewoods with her grandchildren. And she was an active member of the Cambridge Chorus, appearing in several of their annual concerts. Finally, at 84, age took its toll. After being diagnosed with leukemia in the spring of 2015, Gerda decided to fill her remaining time with joy and connection to friends and family. Over the summer, she recovered from debilitating treatment amid the beauty of Long Pond and Pinewoods. She rallied strongly in the fall and enjoyed holiday gatherings at the homes of her nearby children. On Boxing Day she attended a Christmas Revels in which my two sons and I performed together. When she fell ill with pneumonia a week later, she spent her last days home surrounded by children and grandchildren. All we have now are the memories, but such rich and strong memories they are.



With David, Donal
and David's son

David Conant

Notes from the Executive Director

We are excited to announce three new sessions happening at camp this summer, in addition to all our regular programs. There will be a Cape Breton Music and Dance Weekend June 3-5, sponsored by the Center of New England. It will be celebrating the music and dance from Cape Breton and will feature c fiddle, piano, step dancing and social dance. Our very first Greenwood Fest will be from June 10-12, and together some of the world's best greenwood workers for two and a half days of demonstrations and workshops. Sessions include ash basket making, steam-bending, clog-making, bowl making, joinery and carving. Running concurrently with CDSS's Early Music Week, the Sierra Club will be conducting a service outing with a local conservation group, Wildlands Trust. Participants will lodge at camp, taking guided nature walks and engaging in conservation projects outside of camp during the day. And we will once again have two new sessions for folks looking for both English and American dancing: ESCAPE and TradMaD.

You asked and we listened. Look for lots of new and helpful signs throughout camp. We hope it will make cabins and other essential spaces -- dance pavilions, Dining Hall, showers -- easier. There are also a few roofs, better lighting inside a couple of our buildings, and a bit of a facelift on C#'s rafter tails.

We are also rerouting and re-landscaping several well-used paths around camp for this summer. Erosion has taken its toll and we want to protect the surrounding tree roots (as well as better protect our campers from tripping).

We welcome Cecile Huttenhower as our new Head Cook, and Thom Howe as our new Grounds Crew. Cecile will be joined by Ariel Shapiro and Chelsea Laughlin as our Assistant Cooks, Sam Howe as Pot, Alice Flanagan as Dishwasher, and Shannon Paton, Jessica Emery and Ellie Camp as Kitchen Aides. Grounds Crew will include Sam Conant and Kim Frisch, supported by volunteers. We have a number of new faces, but also are happy to see many folks returning.

While many of the upcoming summer sessions at Pinewoods are full, there are still openings at several very popular weeks, including Harmony of Song and Dance, American Dance and Music Week, Early and Family Week. For a complete listing and description of all the 2016 sessions, and their sponsoring organizations, go to <http://www.pinewoods.org/camp-sessions/session-schedule>.

Sophie and I look forward to a wonderful season. We hope to see you at camp this summer!

Judy Savage, Executive Director

Executive Director Position

As mentioned in the last Post, Judy Savage will be retiring in January 2017. Pinewoods Camp, Inc. is making the call for an experienced Executive Director. The Executive Director is the only full-time year-round employee.

Pinewoods Camp, Inc. and reports to the Board of Directors. Responsibilities include management of operations and summer crew as well as seasonal volunteers, long-term facilities planning and maintenance, financial planning, environmental stewardship of the grounds, and cultivation of relationships with Program Providers, neighbors and the extended community of camp supporters. Salary is commensurate with experience. For more information and application details, go to job posting: <http://www.pinewoods.org/jobs/executive-director-position>.

NGI Youth Scholarship Expansion

We are pleased to announce the expansion of our youth scholarship program, New Generation Initiative. In addition to scholarships for youth who are completely new to Pinewoods, we are offering tuition assistance for returning young campers and emerging leaders who are in financial need. We recognize the importance of supporting these young "old friends" as well. If you are interested in applying, or know someone who would be a perfect fit for an NGI scholarship to a particular session, please contact the Program Provider for that session. More information is available on our website, under Programs & Sessions.

Six Ponds Annual Meeting and Community Dance

Pinewoods Camp will host its Community Dance and Concert and the Six Ponds Annual Meeting & Potluck Supper on Saturday, June 12th. The Annual Meeting and Potluck Supper for members of the Six Ponds Association will be held at the Pinewoods Camp Dining Hall from 5:00-7:30 PM, followed by a dance at the Ampleforth dance pavilion from 7:30 - 10:30 PM. No dancing experience is required. Newcomers are welcome!

In addition to this special event in June, we invite our neighbors to join our Sunday evening dances throughout the summer. If you are a neighbor and are curious about the laughter, bagpipes, or the steady rhythmic sounds of clogging that you hear during the summer, please come and share the joy.



Spring Work Weekends



We are opening camp earlier this spring! Spring Weekends are scheduled for May 20-22 and May 30, Memorial Day Weekend: two great opportunities to spend time with old friends, make new friends, contribute your loving labor to Pinewoods in preparation for the new season. Folks new to camp are welcome! Activities include opening the Camphouse, camp kitchen, raking the grounds, painting, and more. Evening activities depend on the talent and initiative of the volunteers attending each weekend; they may include dancing, jamming, games, or just schmoozing. Register now by going on our website www.pinewoods.org, 508.224.4858. Please make sure to register before arriving. Work Weekends fill up quickly!



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