

Bluenose Boatyard

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Director:
Martin R. Haase
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Mr. Robert Sunley
464 Main Street
Port Washington, NY 11050

Dear Mr. Sunley:

Here is my belated commentary on Black Mountain College, in case you are still interested. I saw Nan Oldenburg Stoller's copy of your good publication and I would appreciate being able to buy a copy. Please let me know the cost.

My mother read Louis Adamic's MY AMERICA, and his chapter on Black Mountain College convinced her this would be a good place for me, especially since her older brother, Carl Haessler, had been a fellow Rhodes scholar at Oxford with John Rice. Carl volunteered to drive me to North Carolina in the spring of 1939, and as I liked the physical environment and didn't have strong academic opinions at that time, in the fall I was on my way by train from Milwaukee to Black Mountain station: "The Southern Serves the South" (and as John Rice quipped, "It serves it right").

I had the good fortune to have a wonderful roommate - Len Billing - my first year, and we have remained friends for sixty years. Long term friendships also developed with several other students and with my five favorite faculty members: Larry Kocher, Jack French, Ted Dreier, Gerry Barnes and Bob Babcock. I kept in touch with all of them, except Babcock, until their deaths, and am still close to family members.

My favorite teacher was Larry Kocher, not only because I aspired to be an architect (I eventually graduated in naval architecture from the University of Michigan), but because of his personality and his enthusiasm for Thoreau.

Jack French, who taught psychology, actually had the greatest impact on my later life, not because of his profession, but because he recommended me to his mother who ran a water-oriented summer camp on an island in Maine. I was a counsellor at Alamoosook Island Camp for several years, and eventually became skipper of their ocean cruising schooner. This resulted in my love affair with the Maine coast and the estab-

lishment later of a sailing business and the founding of Friends of Nature. This was initially to preserve my favorite island from being clear-cut for pulpwood. Jack's brother, Nat, a "charter" BMC student, married Mickie and me aboard the schooner ALAMAR. The marriage is still afloat and the boat is still sailing 49 years later. We would still be living on the Maine coast except that the Vietnam war caused us to emigrate to Canada and live in a similar environment on the coast of Nova Scotia.

There is no question in my mind that BMC was a well-rounded small liberal arts college and not an "art school" during the three years I was there, despite the fact that Josef Albers was popular and influential, and I took two valuable courses with him.

Ken Kurtz - my English literature teacher - and I planted a long row of small white pines (collected from the woods) along the road perimeter of the college property at Lake Eden. When I returned years later for a visit, these now magnificent trees formed a green wall to block out the sand and gravel quarry that had expanded to destroy the woodland across the road.

My favorite activity at BMC was the work program. I especially enjoyed becoming an accomplished field stone mason while working on the foundation of the studies building. Because of my skill, I was chosen to work exclusively on the entrance wall, and it was a thrill on returning to see the stones I had selected and cut, with an eye to beauty and function, looking unchanged after decades.

I enjoyed all the organized social activities and liked the family-like atmosphere and community dining, but I was not involved in any outside pursuits, and didn't miss this. The view from Lee Hall was always magnificent, and I took many walks up the hill. At Lake Eden, the farm and woodland was also wonderful. I can't picture myself being happy in a city-located college environment.

That there were "no grades" at BMC was a real plus, as I had always hated exams in high school. But when I transferred to U of M in 1942 I was shocked to discover what "transfer grades" were on my record. The ecology teacher, Carpenter, with whom I had a disagreement over a study room assignment, got back at me behind my back by giving me a flunking mark in a course in which I thought I was doing well. In hindsight, I would rather have known what grades I was receiving at the time.

Overall, I would say that Black Mountain College played a very major role in my future, not only in my development and outlook and values, but in the directions I eventually took after the interruption of the war. I look back on my three years at BMC as the most memorable period of my life.

Sincerely,

Rudy Haase
Rudy Haase

