



# *Wild* **TRADITIONS**

Family, friends and love  
of the land—inside three  
Adirondack hunting camps

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
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## TWITCHELL CREEK CLUB

EST. 1930s

**M**y grandfather Dewey Rudd built the original log camp back in the 1930s using draft horses to skid the logs. It was a half-mile from the railroad tracks and two-and-a-half miles from Big Moose Station. Supplies were packed in on a three-wheel railroad cart. During deer season my grandfather guided politicians who would take the train from Albany; it would stop just after the Twitchell Creek trestle and let them off. He did that until the late 1950s, when he sold the camp to a group of guys from Inlet, though my family stayed involved.

My brothers and I grew up in Inlet and heard hundreds of stories about the hunting parties, card games and other incidents at camp. As kids we helped take care of the place and about two decades ago I became an official member. Today there are 20 camp members. We have about 2,000 acres that we lease. We maintain the camp and take pride in it. It takes a lot of work to do what we do.

Many hunting camps are dying out and members are older, but my children are grown up and a part of it, and I'd like to see it keep going as long as it can. It's more of a family camp now and gets used more out of deer season than in it. Members snowmobile, cross-country ski, or go up in summer to hike and fish and ATV. At 28, my daughter had never been trout fishing. We went fishing at our pond on the lease and she reeled in a 14-inch brook trout. I told her, "If you ever want to go deer hunting ..."

There are just a couple of rules at camp: What happens at camp stays at camp. And you're never lost until the next day—we aren't looking for you at night. Where we hunt you have to work to get lost since we're bordered between the railroad and Stillwater Road. Of course, you might have a heck of a walk. —Greg Rudd



FACING PAGE: Twitchell Creek camp scenes and hunting club member Roger Skinner. BOTTOM RIGHT: Greg Rudd, whose grandfather Dewey built the camp more than 80 years ago. Dewey ran the Red & White grocery store (site of today's Pedals & Petals) in Inlet. PAGES 34-35: Greg and Toni Rudd, Mike Bartolotti, Rick Horner, Maggie White and John Bartolotti.







John Henningson at camp with *Adirondack Cabin Stories*, his book of short stories based on more than 50 years of family adventures. Henningson says that hanging onto a hunting camp, generation after generation, is “part of growing up, keeping family together and a commitment you have to have.”



# HENNINGSON CAMP

EST. 1950s

**W**hen my brothers and I were in our early teens I think my father realized he didn't have much time to spend with us, so out of the blue he and my mother went up to North River from where we lived in Watervliet and found this place. It was uninsulated, just four walls, about a 20 x 20 square. Gradually, as a family, we made it a place where you could stay overnight, even in winter. My father worked very hard, six days a week running a warehouse for Grand Union. Still he found a way to make the time.

It became a focal point, particularly for my brother Arthur and me. My father would drop us off there and we'd stay a couple of days to hike and fish. We'd go to Thirteenth Lake or up to Indian River below the dam to fish for trout. We'd sleep under the stars, bring just a plastic tablecloth if it rained. We hunted rabbits and partridges and then deer. Later, we brought our friends from college.

I came back from Vietnam without any pieces taken out of me—my son was born when I was there. It brought me back to thinking about family. After my father died, I sat down with my four siblings and told them I wanted to keep this place going. But we didn't have the same financial resources as each other, so I set up a corporation. We were eventually able to go forward by subdividing the property among us. It's all about family, and you have to work together for a balance—sweat equity and financial.

Now I go in summer with my son and grandchildren and back in the fall to hunt with my brothers, though I don't particularly care about shooting deer anymore. I love to walk in the woods. It's nice to see the third generation at camp, and that there is still a love of place and desire to keep it. For me, just to have somewhere that I can sit under a tree and, except for the rustling wind, have absolute quiet. It brings you back to life. —John Henningson







## CAMP EMERSON

EST. 1971

**I**n 1971 we bought land near Lassellville, in Fulton County, on the edge of the Adirondack Park. Soon after, we started building, and Camp Emerson was born. The honor of naming our beloved camp was given to the “master of the hunt,” our family patriarch, Emerson.

The camp is off-the-grid on an abandoned dirt road—no electricity or running water. At first we used Coleman lanterns for light and retrieved water from a nearby stream, but as time went on we added a small generator and a hand-dug well operated by a pitcher pump. On cold days, pails of hot water are lugged out to thaw the pump.

At first it was strictly a guy’s hunting camp, but in 1974 we decided to have an old-fashioned Thanksgiving there. Fifteen family members gathered—some gasping at the thought of using an outhouse. That November day was a busy one as the men geared up for the big hunt and the women prepared the camp for our afternoon meal. A tradition had begun. We’ve now had more than 40 Thanksgivings at Camp Emerson.

A small pond adorns the property, providing a haven for wildlife. On winter days the kids shovel the snow off the pond and play ice hockey while a campfire burns to warm frozen fingers and toes during hot chocolate breaks.

We have so much fun at camp that someone suggested an old-fashioned Christmas. The kids trudged through the snow to cut the perfect Camp Emerson Christmas tree. Snowy evenings brought card games while the day’s frozen clothing hung dripping near the wood stove.

At bedtime there are still last calls for outhouse runs, finding flashlights, and stoking the stove. Everyone crawls into their sleeping bags and the snores drown out the “good-nights” passed around. —*The Miles family*



Ron Miles, facing page, built the off-the-grid hunting camp with his wife, Cathy. Forty-plus years later their southern Adirondack cabin has become a family institution where they play and celebrate holidays. BELOW: Rob Fisher, Rich Miles and Melissa Miles.

