

Henry “Bud” Cox

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

It’s difficult to think of Frost Valley and Camp Wawayanda and not to think of Henry “Bud” Cox. Bud himself, modest and humble as ever, prefers that we think of other instances of extraordinary continuity and influence—Charles R. Scott, D. Halbe Brown, Carl and Marie Hess, the Kremers, et alia. Yet that Bud is a glorious constant, a reminder of our core ideas, programs, and values, cannot be denied, even by Bud himself. Tom Fewel, a summer camp counselor from the early 1960s, happened to be in the Catskills and visited the valley a few years ago, finding few present reminders of his former camp days, concerned that he would not feel a magical connection to his own foundational Frost Valley experience. But a minute or two after arriving back at his beloved camp after many decades away, upon hearing that Bud Cox was still a member of the staff, Tom lit up with joy and smiles at fondest memories: yes, there still was the Big Tree standing tall, and Cabin 25, and Lake Cole, and Devil’s Hole...but there was also Bud Cox! Bud instantly remembered Tom and they caught up deeply, and Tom became one of dozens, hundreds, who felt seen and heard upon returning to the site of their development as people. Unlike Cabin 25 or Big Tree, Bud can and will tell you, if you’re interested, the whole remarkable history and tradition of our venture: its status as the oldest summer camp in the U.S. (dating to the mid-1880s), the life-changing experience of camping out under the stars, the importance for young people in the role of counselor (as Bud recently put it) “of doing good things for others.”



His very first summer at Wawayanda—readers encountering this note in 2023 will perhaps feel awe to know it—was 1954. He was 10, initially homesick, bought to camp by his parents from Westfield, New Jersey, and found himself sitting at a meal in the bustling dining hall. In an instance of almost purely symbolic history, almost too good a coincidence to be true (but it is true), Bud in that first moment was present in the dining hall, just a few feet from where legendary camp director Charles R. Scott (director starting in 1901, now a quite elderly honorific visitor) was eating with staff. It happened that Scott took ill suddenly, and then or soon after sadly passed—such that one can now draw a single continuous line from 1901 to the present day, 123 years of Wawayanda, with the timeline of just two individuals, Charles Scott and Bud Cox. The story of their convergence is both legendary and true!

What Bud has done for Frost Valley YMCA is legendary and true. In the job of "V.C."—the leader of a village-style cluster of cabins of campers and a decentralized staff group, with its own activity schedules—he served for five successive summers, to this day still an all-time record of continuity. That service was only finally interrupted in the summer of 1968, when Bud invented the "Catskills Explorers" program and began leading hiking trips outside camp that led, directly and indirectly, to not fewer than four crucial innovations: the Adventure Camp program and department (trips entirely out of camp), Adventure Village (both in camp and out); the extended multi-day hiking trip experience of FCCs (Future Camp Counselors) and CITs as part of their training, and the central place of the Out-Trip or Trip Center as a facility, staging area for all out-tripping. Our Trip Center, of course, is named for Bud. Soon he became the very first director, succeeded by many over the decades, of our Adventure Program. With Halbe Brown (Executive Director, 1966-2001), Bud helped develop and grow an astonishing roster of adventure trips to include canoeing, backpacking, and cycling journey, to the point where nearly one third of all meals served to campers and staff by Frost Valley were outside of camp property, in Quebec, Vermont, Cape Cod, Maine's coast, Nova Scotia, on the slopes of Mount Rainier, and—most beloved to Bud personally—in every part of the Adirondacks.

As we induct Bud into the Hall of Fame, there are numerous legacies to consider. Perhaps the one he himself most cherishes is that symbolized by all the past and present Frost Valley-sponsored journeys into the Adirondacks. Bud has always believed that when one has intrepidly ventured that far into the wilderness, one crosses over into a new sort of human appreciation for the still pristine earth around us, sensing the power and beauty of which we can learn to adapt, small things developing later into great ones. "Bud told me," John Giannotti recently recalled, "that he took his ADK campers to one of the headwater streams of the Hudson. He'd have them jump over this little stream, and only then would he tell them they had jumped across the Hudson River."

For his historic engagement with every level of program and project at Camp Wawayanda and Frost Valley across eight decades; for his brilliant and persistent vision leading to the creation and sustenance of our Adventure Program; for his unwavering belief in the life-changing power and possibility of a child's experience pushing hard up a mountain and sleeping under the stars; for the uniquely positive influence he has had on the lives of thousands of people who have hiked with him, sung with him, been joyously led by him—Bud Cox is hereby inducted into the Frost Valley YMCA Hall of Fame.