

## MCCONNELL CONQOURS ENGLISH CHANNEL ONCE AND BUCK ISLAND SWIM FIVE TIMES

Anyone with access to Chicago television in mid-August could not have missed news clips of former camper and current Camp Board member Doug McConnell being interviewed before or after his successful 21 mile swim across the English Channel. The 14 hour swim was completed at 3:00 a.m. on August 22. Congratulations to Doug on a wonderful accomplishment!



*Doug and boat traffic crossing the English Channel.*

Fewer people know of Doug's swims this summer in Lake Beulah. As part of his mental preparations for the swim across the English Channel, Doug decided to "give back" to the summer camp where his swimming ambitions were born. He drove to Camp Edwards each Thursday evening during the six summer camp sessions starting in mid-June in order to meet with the campers that were to participate in the half-mile swim to Buck Island

early the following morning. "I clearly remember swimming to Buck Island when I was a nine year old camper in the '60's and the swim was part of passing a test required to be able to use Camp Edwards' sailboats," reflected the 53 year old father of four campers. He went on to become a champion swimmer at the University of Illinois and an open water swim hobbyist.

"Having an opportunity to share with today's campers my early swimming experiences on Lake Beulah as well as some of the challenges I would face crossing the English Channel was a real joy for me," said Doug. "So much of summer camp is experiencing things that you've never experienced before. It's working through the excitement, eliminating the fear, and enabling yourself to try new things," he repeatedly told swimmers in each session.

His wife, Susan, a regular summer Family Camper, who watched several of the early morning swims, observed a real bonding with the young swimmers. "Doug would always swim with the slowest group, talking to the kids, and, on several occasions, appeared to provide the inspiration for that group to reach the Island," said Susan. "It's a huge accomplishment for a little kid with a huge lesson behind it."



*Doug swims Lake Beulah with young camper.*



*Session 6 swimmers before taking the plunge, with Doug McConnell (back row right).*

The English Channel swim is considered one of the few elite endurance athletic events in the world. "More people climb to the top of Mount Everest in a year than have swum the Channel since 1875," Doug told the gathered campers one Thursday night. "I will not be allowed to wear a wet suit or flippers or have any physical contact with my guide boat during the swim. But I will be thinking of you and our Buck Island swim together when I am alone crossing the English Channel."

The young and the old clearly were an inspiration for each other this summer.

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\* *New Banner Level donor.*



*Summer camper Bryan Girard starts up the new "vertical playpen" on the climbing tower.*