Mike Euer Eulogy – by Mike Lurie, May 1, 2023

My parents taught me to be kind and polite to everyone. Common sense perhaps, but as an 11 and a half year old boy in 1970, I did not yet know the full meaning and purpose and ramifications of following the golden rule. This will become relevant in just a few moments. 1970 was my first summer at Camp Waupaca For Boys in Waupaca, Wisconsin. I was sent to overnight sleep away for 8 weeks for the first time in my life, and I was homesick. I met a man their who was cheery, approachable, and very kind. That man's name was Mike Euer.

Mike was hired in 1969 as the waterfront director. He impressed the camp director so much with his leadership and administrative skills, that Mike was promoted to assistant camp director in 1970 and held that post until camp closed after the summer of 1988.

Mike took that homesick 11-and-a-half-year-old boy under his wing. He gave me a sense of purpose, and was a safe haven for me. Having an adult male friend at camp was important to me individually. Mike saw something in me that I did not see in myself in 1970. I am forever grateful to Mike for his guidance in those early years of my life.

For 125 spoiled boys from the northern suburbs of Chicago, anyone with a southern accent could be the target of what spoiled boys do. But not Mike Euer. Mike was respected. He earned that respect by not being judgmental. Mike earned that respect by respecting others. He earned that respect by being very kind, patient, polite and cheery. And like I said a few moments ago, if you were kind and polite to Mike Euer, or anyone in the Euer family, that kindness and respect was returned 10-fold.

Mike's southern accent and southern ways were definitely fodder for the kids at camp. You could often hear campers and counselors using a southern drawl across camp. It was not done as a put down or to make fun, but the Euer family accent had become part of the fabric of camp over the years. Mike had some catch phrases that boys from the north shore of Chicago had never heard. When announcing an upcoming meal over the public address system, he would say "Attention! Attention please! Warsh up for dinner". When a staff member would come to him with a problem, Mike would tell the counselor to "skin your own skunks". After meals in the mess hall, during the announcements, Mike would sometimes recognize someone for a notable achievement with something called "the watermelon clap". If it was not necessarily a noteworthy achievement but still worth recognizing, he would offer up the smaller "cantaloupe clap". There was one boy, Donnie Schwartz, and Mike had a terrible time pronouncing that last name! It would come out as "Swartz", and we would all laugh. We would try to help Mike pronounce it properly, but it would always end up as "Swartz", not "Schwartz". To some, it may have appeared that we were making fun of Mike. This was not true – we were celebrating our differences in the spirit of mutual respect, and he understood this. Mike Euer was a good sport.

One of Mike's duties that he shared along with the camp director was to wake up the campers each morning by walking through the cabins. He made it interesting through the years. Sometimes he would offer a headline in the news, other times he would offer a sports score for the Chicago Cubs or the Chicago White Sox. One day, he hit the trifecta. It was the perfect confluence of events, just like the

confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. He said, and I quote: "Good morning men! Today is parent's visiting day, the Shah of Iran is dead, and we have bagels for breakfast!" Needless to say, we were all stunned and impressed, and left speechless on this particular morning!

As the 11-and-a-half-year-old boy grew into a young man, I became a staff member at Camp Waupaca. That meant I had nights off to go into town. On occasion, Mike would invite me to join him and a couple of other staff members at his favorite supper club, Peck's Plantation, in Wild Rose, Wisconsin. In many ways, Mike was more like a father to me than my own father, and for that I am eternally grateful.

Over the course of 12 straight summers, I grew close to Mike and Georgia and David and Elizabeth. So close in fact, that I visited them in their home in East Prairie on a few occasions. Their hospitality was warm and inviting. After my last summer at camp in 1981, I continued to stay in contact with the Euer family until this very day.

When Georgia, may she rest in peace, was on her farewell tour in 1996, she and Elizabeth ended up in Minnesota where I now reside. When they contacted me and said they were passing through town, there was no doubt in my mind that I had to return the hospitality favor in the only way I knew how – we invited them to spend the night at our home.

We met Georgia and Elizabeth at the Mall of America in Bloomington, spent several hours shopping, and then we returned to our house for a home cooked dinner and warm conversation. Georgia was quite the conversationalist! The next morning, we bade them farewell to continue on their journey.

I continued to correspond with Mike up until 3 weeks ago. We would share details of our lives, and he would share recipes. I will have to print them out and try some of them, while drinking a toast to my dear friend, Mike Euer.

If you will indulge me for just another moment or two, I would like to close with a poem and a prayer. The following poem was suggested by another Camp Waupaca alum, Warren Metzdorff. It is called "Requiem" by Robert Louis Stevenson:

> Under the wide and starry sky,
> Dig the grave and let me lie.
> Glad did I live and gladly die,
> And I laid me down with a will.
>
> This be the verse you grave for me:
> *Here he lies where he longed to be;*
> *Home is the sailor, home from sea,*
> *And the hunter home from the hill.*

Lastly, the following prayer you will recognize from scripture. I offer it to all of you today who are mourning and grieving the passing of Mike Euer. It is The Lord's Blessing from the Book of Numbers, chapter 6, verses 24-26. To all of you I say:

> May the Lord bless you and keep you.
> May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
> May the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.

Rest in peace, Mike.