

Popular camp director Robert Brismaster is remembered

By Jean Rein

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Robert Brismaster, 79, who died earlier this month in Oshkosh, touched many lives as a professor at UW-Oshkosh and by establishing and leading the Town and Gown music series and Broadway 41, which brought high quality entertainment to the Oshkosh area.

Perhaps even a greater number of lives he influenced were the campers and staff at the YCC (Youth Conservation Corps) Camp on Statehouse Lake in Manitowish Waters. This is the site of the North Lakeland Discovery Center.

Brismaster was director of this camp, which housed two five-week groups of 100 teenagers to work at conservation-related assignments. Dan Wohlleber, former camper and counselor recalls Brismaster as a fair man, but one who demanded respect and received it. Sean Davison, a camper, recalls Mr. B. (as everyone called him) introduced discipline to him as a 15-year-old, a time he needed it most. He says, "Much of the integrity that I possess today can be traced to my experience at Statehouse Lake."

Wohlleber shares the same feeling. "Mr. B. got done what needed to be

done; he took great pride in his camp," he said. Wohlleber remained close to Mr. B. for many years, visiting him in Oshkosh and at his tree farm in the Adams area. In fact, he said a group of his buddies are planning to meet at this farm in the very near future to pay their respects to this man who meant so much to them as they were growing up.

Discovery Center staff have enjoyed meeting many of the former campers and staff who have stopped in to visit the place that played a big role in their maturing years.

Wohlleber and Davison now live in this area, and believe there may be many other alumni of the camp here also, who would appreciate knowing of Brismaster's death. He is survived by a sister and four nieces. He never married, and the campers were truly a family to him, with many remaining in contact with him over the years.

Brismaster's obituary mentioned that memorials may be given to the Oshkosh Area Humane Society in his honor.

Davison regrets that the YCC experience is no longer available. "This was a life-defining experience for me, and I've benefited from it in my personal and professional life since then," he said.