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# Camp Woodland Memories

## Inspire A Poem

BY MICKEY VANDOW

[Mickey Vandow grew up in New York City where Charity Bailey and Pete Seeger introduced him to folk music. He studied guitar with Laura Rosenblatt and Bob Claiborne and banjo with Pete Seeger. At the age of nine, he performed with his closest friend, Eric Weissberg, on WNYC's "Oscar Brand Show" and later on NBC-TV's "Charity Bailey Show" and WABD-TV's "Wonderama." He performed with Eric at the New York Academy of Music, at St. Nicholas Arena, at New York's Washington Square, and on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera. He spent five summers at Camp Woodland, where he learned and performed the songs collected by Norman Cazden and Herbert Haufrecht. Each year there, he performed in the annual Folk Festival of the Catskills.]

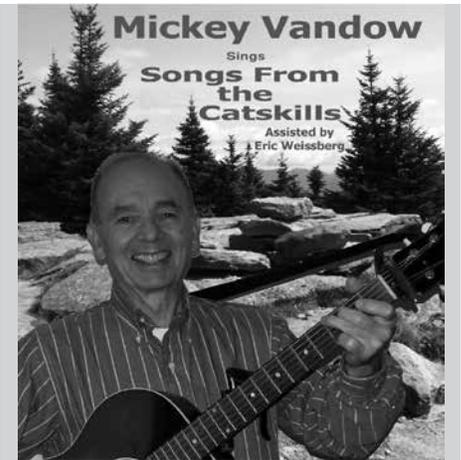
In the middle of the 20th century, I was lucky enough to spend several summers as a camper, work camper, and junior counselor at Camp Woodland in Phoenicia, NY. The camp was started and run by Norman Studer, an educator who believed that city children of all races, creeds, and religions needed to spend time in the country to learn about the rural culture of the Catskill Mountains. He was able to bring us city children not only to the country, but also to the homes of Catskill people: woodsmen, farmers, and artisans who were musicians, dancers, and storytellers. They shared their songs and stories with us.

Norman hired two musicologists/composers, Norman Cazden and Herbert Haufrecht, as music counselors at the camp. They were able to notate and later record the music that the campers heard, while the campers wrote down the words to the songs. These collected songs were

later published in *Folk Songs of the Catskills* (Cazden, Haufrecht and Studer, State University of New York Press, 1982). Norman collected many of the stories and wrote articles about the folklore that he discovered in the Catskills. Many of these articles may be found in back issues of the *New York Folklore Quarterly*.

Although the campers enjoyed many of the usual camping activities—hiking, swimming, playing sports—it was the cultural component that distinguished the camp. We were visited at camp by many of the artists and artisans who shared with us their many skills. We in turn became docents in a small museum in Phoenicia that displayed implements used in various Catskill industries, including lumbering, hoop-making, scoop-making, farming, and blue stone quarrying. We also joined the local performers at the annual Folk Festival of the Catskills sponsored by the camp. Together we sang, played, and danced the songs and dances collected during the summers.

Norman Studer's papers are archived at the Library of the State University of New York in Albany, so former campers held a reunion there in the summer of 2013, where we once again sang the songs and did the dances that we had learned at Camp Woodland—in many cases, more than 60 years before. Seeing how many lives, including my own, were changed as a result of their Camp Woodland experiences, I felt the need to express my feelings of gratitude to Norman and encapsulate in a song some of the experiences that we campers had. My words and music are printed here.



Mickey earned a BA in English from the University of Rochester, an MA and PhD in theater from New York University and a MS in radio/television/film from Syracuse University. After a 30-year hiatus when he taught Theater and Video Production as a professor at the State University of New York in Cobleskill, Mickey returned in 2002 to performing folk music with Eric Weissberg on *Herbert Haufrecht Memorial Project: Folk Songs of the Catskills*. He also recorded, again with Eric, *Songs We Used to Sing*. Mickey has performed at two Eisteddfod Festivals, on two WJFF Radio programs, and at two programs celebrating the music of the Catskills collected at Camp Woodland. Mickey's most recent disc is *Mickey Vandow Sings Songs of the Catskills*.

Mickey was founder and artistic director of Depot Repertory Players, a theater company in Schoharie, NY. He also founded and was first president of the Schoharie County Arts Council. He was the founder, first president and now the current president of Schoepge Access, Inc., providing public, educational, and governmental access programming in the Schoharie County region. He is, additionally, the chair of the Regional Municipal Consortium's Cable Television negotiating team. He is also a past president of the Cobleskill Rotary Club. Mickey lives with his wife, Annette, in Cobleskill, NY. They have two daughters and six grandchildren. Photo of CD cover courtesy of the author. CD cover designed by Kathryn Haley.

# "Woodland Memories" By Mickey Vandow

1  
On the way to Woodland Valley, go  
Cross the creek and round the ben',  
Up the road of Garfield Mountain,  
To the place where we have been.

**Chorus:**

Norman's<sup>1</sup> children come together  
To sing and dance, to work and play  
It may be gone and lost forever,  
But in our memories it'll stay.

2  
Hiking through the Catskill Mountains,  
Woodchuck Lodge<sup>2</sup> for overnights,  
We were city kids in Nature's classroom,  
City kids in a country life.

3  
We sang the songs of Edwards<sup>3</sup> and Avery<sup>4</sup>  
Collected by both Herb<sup>5</sup> and Norm.<sup>6</sup>  
We learned many more from Catskill artists  
That at Catskill Festivals, we'd perform.

4  
We listened to Mike Todd's<sup>7</sup> woodsman's stories,  
Saw him water-witch and play the bones.  
Then we watched him lure the honeybees  
To show him the way to their hollow-tree  
homes.

5  
We went swimming in Ushy-Gushy,<sup>8</sup>  
With local teams, we played ball;  
Then we learned about our worldwide  
neighbors,  
So in Camp Olympics, we'd play our all.

6  
We sang about building New York's reservoirs;  
Sang about Boney Quillen's<sup>9</sup> pranks;  
Sang about Sojourner Truth<sup>10</sup> and;  
To Haufrecht<sup>11</sup> and DeCormier,<sup>12</sup> we owe  
thanks.

7  
We danced each week to Van Kleeck's<sup>13</sup>  
calling,  
Red, black, yellow, tan, and white,  
Vanguard of our rainbow nation,  
Dancing together each Saturday night.

8  
Sitting in Takashi's<sup>14</sup> amphitheater,  
Joining in Pete Seeger's songs,  
We sang about world peace and brotherhood,  
And working together to right world wrongs.

9  
As we travel lifetime's highways,  
Let us pass this lore along,  
So that future generations will  
Know Camp Woodland in story and song.

**Notes:**

1. Norman Studer: educator, Camp Woodland founder and director.
2. The name of the lean-to on the south side of the Camp Woodland property.
3. George Edwards: Scoop-maker and lumberman of Sundown, NY.
4. Mary Avery [Every]: Farm wife of Olivebridge, NY.
5. Herbert Haufrecht: Camp counselor, musicologist, and composer.
6. Norman Cazden: Camp counselor, musicologist, and composer.
7. Mike Todd: Woodsman, lumberman, conservationist of Dry Brook, NY.
8. The muddy lake on camp grounds that was given its name by campers.

9. Boney Quillen: Catskill lumberman, hired hand, and prankster.
10. Sojourner Truth: Former slave, a leader for black freedom and civil rights.
11. Herbert Haufrecht: Composer of "We've Come From the City" and "Boney Quillen."
12. Robert DeCormier: Music counselor and composer of "Sojourner Truth."
13. George Van Kleeck: Farmer, blacksmith, and square dance caller from Samsonville, NY.
14. Pete Seeger's father-in-law who directed campers in the building of a stone amphitheater at the camp.

**Song: Woodland Memories**  
Homage to Norman Studer

Mickey Vandow Mickey Vandow

**Andante**

Baritone *1* On the way to wood-land vall - ey Cross the creek and round the ben'

Bar. *3* Up the road on Gar-field Mountain to the place where we have been

Bar. *5* **Chorus** Norman's child ren come ro geth er To sing and dance, to work and play

Bar. *7* It may be gone and lost for - eve r but in our mem'ries it' ll stay

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