

ICE Legacy – My Ramblings – Aaron Critchlow

Two things come to mind when I hear the word *legacy*, the car I drive, a Subaru Legacy - and my favorite baseball player and larger than life sports figure Derek Jeter. That is to say a *high performance* yet *utilitarian* vehicle and an individual with a desire to play the game, and approach life itself, *the right way* and not be afraid to *work hard* to get to the top of his profession.

Numerous connections can be drawn between myself and Ingalls Creek's (ICE) "legacy" in my own life. What has been my inheritance from ICE? What gifts has it given me? Have I ever realized those gifts as just that, something I inherited from people of grand vision and an even greater ability to accomplish that vision?

I first visited ICE even before my parents or anyone else from my family. I begged my way into a Paul Family (Bob and Suzi etc.) camping trip at around the age of 9. I don't recall doing much camping before that with my own family. We maybe went to the cabin with my grandparents a couple times before that and maybe a camping trip to Mt. Rainier, but nothing really stands out until I first saw Ingalls Creek. Here was a place so free of rules you could (and had too) drink directly from the stream. Where there were no marked sites or clear parking areas. There was an outhouse and a volleyball court and an old half-rusted wood stove to cook on. That was it. There may have been running water by I honestly don't remember using it, I could drink straight from the stream, I put my young lips straight into the frigid rushing waters and drank until my stomach sloshed both with water but also with the joy of freedom. This was camping, real, often dirty, no rules, camping. I wanted more of this.

When I got back to Richland it was all I could do to not accuse my parents of neglect for having not previously being part of such an experience. So, of course, my parents took me seriously. And if you know my father you know we didn't wade slowly into the camping experience we jumped straight into the deep end. Later that summer there were Anna and Alan on the back porch of our house in West Richland. They had brought a rough-hewn baked-clay topographic terrain map of "Waltar's Property" with marker lines of what the future might hold: helicopter landing pads, ball fields, cabins and the like. It was like a virtual Narnia of dreams. My parents signed on to the dream. They would ride shotgun and see what skills and assistance they could offer. There was nothing, so there could be anything.... Maybe that's my thesis. Dream so big no one will believe it when it becomes real. So big nobody can dare to question. So I guess this is all really my fault.

That next summer I think we were at ICE every weekend. I camped that summer more than I had ever camped in my life to that point. There were grand plans for things like sewer lines and electricity and numbered campsites... But those were only the adults - my brother and I had found the scrap wood... We were off to build the biggest tree house you had ever seen. It had a library as I recall. Well let's just say adult plans changed. Kids plans took precedent... because who was this place for anyway?

So I guess that's the first legacy: Who is it for? Are you doing what you are doing for the next group of people, the next generation? Tomorrow? Because if you're not it's not going to last. That was a sea change for all the adults of ICE and I think for the kids. The kids were all of a sudden listened to and valued, the idea of a tree house made sense. If for no other reason than to keep the little ones out of the way of the backhoe. The tree house got built, and the adults found a little piece of their childhood... They started to dream. It's still the biggest tree house I know of, even without the library and it proved the concept. There is no dream we can't achieve. So start dreaming.

Boy, what dreams did come - the gazebo, two flush toilets, running water throughout, the amphitheater, trails, and electricity. I lived for those summer weekends living out of a duffel bag, an old canvas tent and my mother's pancakes over a Coleman stove. I operated a backhoe for the first time at like age 13. We were digging out the innumerable rocks to put in waterlines. I pulled out more by hand, I am sure, than I ever did by backhoe, over the even more innumerable hours of free labor I gave. But I learned something that maybe is the second *legacy* – Hard work.

I always went to bed tired at ICE, because no matter what there was always work to be done. After the hikes and water fights and huge meals and sing-alongs and campfires there was always a job to be done. I may have grumbled and bickered my way through digging or nailing or shoveling or whatever other grueling task I was put on that day, however I learned that hard work creates results. Real results. I took a hot shower after building a solar shower from nothing but irrigation line, 2x4s and blue tarp. I learned how things worked in a real way while welding two pieces of metal by applying electricity in the right way. I learned that you had to deal with bureaucracy and neighbors and state and local governments by checking the right boxes and saying the right things and then following through with those statements. You had to have gumption and follow through. If it was worth doing it was worth doing twice and sometimes three times to get it right. So no one could question it.

I proceeded to camp in a tent or a trailer at ICE for something like the next 10 to 15 summers. The lessons and legacy ICE has left on my life is almost incomprehensibly large. There were the times I worked side by side with P.H.D. holding engineers and scientists and they listened to my solutions for things. Times I talked to pastors and leaders of great theology and was respected and valued for my questioning and confusion. There were also times the lessons I learned were painful or not understood in the moment.

Why should I have to look respectable and not like a paramilitary? Why can't we shoot at each other with slingshots? Why do we need to wear helmets on the 4-wheeler? Hard lessons for sure as a 10 or 12 or 15 year-old, here was this place of great freedom and leniency called ICE, why did there need to be so many rules? This I guess is the third legacy – suspension of selfishness for the greater good. I learned that if I wanted to see the formation of the greater thing, to be taken seriously I had to take myself seriously. I couldn't shoot my brother with a camouflaged squirt gun one minute and asked to be treated as an adult the next. I couldn't be the responsible one on the 4-

wheeler with a young child but not wear a helmet myself. I began to understand the definition of consistency and its enemy paradox. Act like who you say you want to be, or who you think you are. That accountability is derived from lots of hard lessons and long talks under the shade of the pines or the countless Ingalls Creek stars. You don't get respect by asking for it or saying you deserve it, you get it by earning it, by being who you say you are.

Ingalls Creek's legacy in my own life is almost impossible to put a finger on. Not because it's so small or so faint as to not be obvious or measurable, but quite the opposite. It's so pervasive in who I am that no matter what part of me or my life you examine you can't differentiate it from any other part of me. It is running in my veins. Convulsing in my muscles. The lessons and legacy run in my life like blood, they fuel my drive for the next dream. I would never be willing or able to do the job I do today working 15+ hours a day 80+ hours a week without the ICE legacy in my life. I meet people and I see their dreams, and I know how to achieve dreams because I have ICE running in my veins. I take pride in making dreams reality. Don't tell me it's too hard, or God forbid, impossible, for then you shall see that it is absolutely possible and maybe even much larger and more beautiful than ever imagined. Don't say, "someday we should" because of ICE I will say "when? Let's pick a day and make that someday into a today."

I lead a practical life. I like to make things real. I like to perform at my highest. I like to be utilized in a beneficial and important way. I like to do things the right way and know that often takes hard work. That is life. That is ICE and it's legacy. So go be useful, ask questions out of your depth, don't be afraid to consider yourself a peer of great minds. In so doing you shall become what I learned at ICE and continue to learn in all endeavors. If you want to dream you better be ready to do. Especially at ICE.

Aaron Critchlow