

Restigouche River Lodge

New Brunswick, Canada

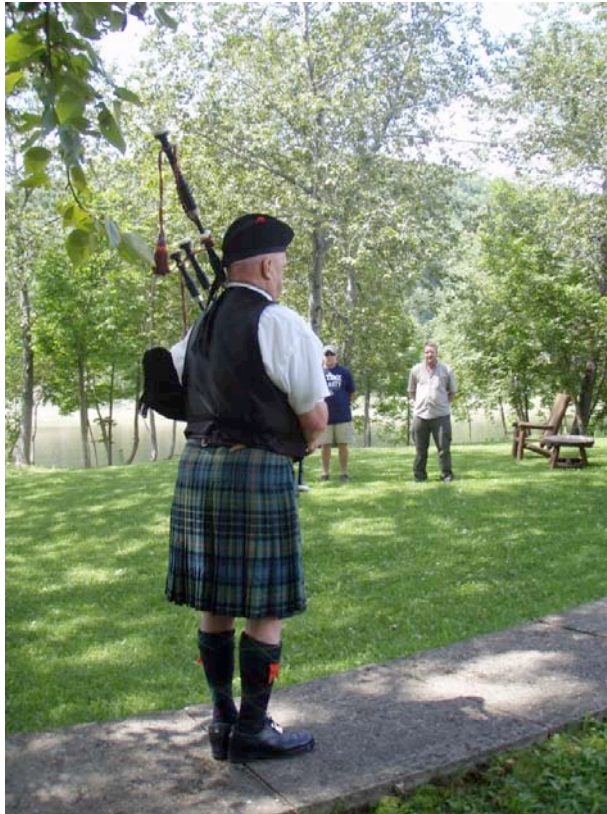
July 2010



The Restigouche River Lodge, located in Mann Mountain, hosted SSG Harold "Butch" Freeman, Jr., from Gorham, ME and Sgt. David Walker from Brewer ME, both Iraq War Veterans, for a week of fly fishing, fly casting, and fly tying, during the week of July 17. Bill Hartnett organized the week on behalf of all the partners of the Restigouche River Lodge.

Both men were wounded in action by separate IED attacks: SSG Butch Freeman on December 21, 2004, and Sgt. Dave Walker in August of 2007. Unbeknownst to them at the time, it was the attack that SSG Butch was injured in that inspired Sgt. David Walker to enlist. He enrolled shortly afterwards, having seen pictures in the Maine newspapers that SSG Butch was not only injured, but actually being attended to medically in the pictures. This interesting twist was uncovered by the two vets during their stay at the camp.

During the week at Restigouche River Lodge, a neighbor on the river, Archie Babcock from Mann Mountain, played patriotic tunes on his bagpipes for the two war heroes. *Amazing Grace* was the grand finale; there was not a single dry eye at the event.



Following the ceremony, Archie joined the staff and guests for a picnic-style lunch at the lodge and shared many war stories about the history of his bagpipes that were actually played in WWI, the "War to end all Wars!" He also shared stories of WWII, which had been shared and passed on by his father.



Other highlights of the week included Sgt. Dave's release of two Salmon, weighing 16 and 18 pounds! SSG Butch battled a Salmon of approximately 25 pounds for twenty minutes, before his "long distance release." He also hooked and released many grilse during his week.



All in attendance felt privileged to be a part of this inspiring week. Despite the physical and mental difficulties that both veterans deal with on a daily basis, SSG Butch and Sgt. Dave carry themselves with an optimistic and upbeat demeanor.



The Restigouche River Lodge partners hope to expand this event and to make it an annual one. The goal is to bring in 8-10 wounded vets from Canada and the U.S. to the camp for at least one week (and hopefully more) each year.

Keith Vanacore and Bill Hartnett have begun a campaign to find organizations and/or individuals that would like to help sponsor more weeks

like this for wounded veterans from both of our great countries. An added benefit, as far as the owners are concerned, would be an increase of staffing required, which would help the employment situation for the surrounding community. When hosting events like this each year, the camp will need to be operating for additional weeks. Also, as Keith says, the extra weeks the camp is open would also help the local vendors that have been so great to us, extending us credit when we needed their help the most!

If anyone is interested in helping the partners at Restigouche River Lodge achieve their efforts, please contact Kathy Irvine, assistant camp manager, at 506-759-8112. You can also visit:

Restigouche River Lodge or email **info@restigouchelodge.com**

Submitted by Erica Ann Vanacore, Friend of Restigouche River Lodge and Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc.