

Russell
Sherman
and David
Benjamin
from 1981...



...and 21
years
later at
the 75th
celebra-
tion.

FALL/WINTER 2002

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Avoda Alumnus

THE BIENNIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMP AVODA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

75th Celebration



by Russell Sherman

I was pretty certain I had staked out a good place and I was quickly proven right. The registration area on the street hockey court was the ideal place to catch the many legendary names and faces that made up Avoda history as they arrived for the 75th anniversary celebration. In fact, it was akin to being on the red carpet at the Academy Awards, only instead of Melissa and Joan Rivers greeting the stars, Avodians had to settle for me and Sam "Mamu" Mirkin.

They came in all shapes and sizes - former counselors and former campers - guys who I had known since I was eight and guys who were my campers when I was 21. I spent a huge portion of my formative years at Avoda and in the span of one amazing afternoon it was all being relived before my eyes. There was Arthur Mendelson, who for an eight year old, was the toughest OD around; tall Eric Yaffe, who's still tall but isn't as tall as he was when I was nine; Stuie Bram, who went 8-0 after he led my first Color War team to victory in 1977; Gary and Jay Epstein, always the life of the party, now multiplied by two thanks to the additional Epsteins (Randy and Jonny) by their side. Then there was Cory Margolis, who I remember used to bulk up with an exercise product called the "Bullworker;" he's now an antique dealer in New York City. And Robbie Coppel, who rumor had it hit a bunko and won All-Around Athlete in Bunk 8. One by one they arrived. They came off the buses, some with their wives, some with kids; and they were all wearing the same thing on their face - a grin from ear to ear.

Then there were those who were on the other end of my Avoda spectrum, kids who I had as campers and who I watched grow up at Avoda. Jeff and Rich Vetstein, Ken "Bubblehead" Freeman, Jason "Starsky" Starr, Larry Rubin, Miles Block, Steve Peters, and a few others arrived straight from Jeff Vet's weekend bachelor party, which they had brilliantly planned around the 75th anniversary.

And then there were those who fell somewhere in between: my contemporaries, whom I still see often and make up my closest group of friends; and my former counselors, like Mike "Morty" Roth, Nat Phillips, Harold Poverman, and of course, David "Benjga" Benjamin - individuals who went from being my guardians, to my mentors, and now my friends.

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President's Letter *by Michael Ross*

Avoda's 75th anniversary celebration was a tremendous success. Avodians emerged from near and far, anxious to join the celebration. They visited the place of their idyllic youth and relived wonderful memories. Most, if not all, created wonderful new memories on the shores of Lake Tispaquin amongst the whispering pines.

As I walked the grounds that day, I heard people talking about the wonderful new Archives and I caught up with friends and acquaintances I had not seen for years. It was a very special day.

All too soon, the formal proceedings that included recollections of wonderful people and events past and present had come and gone. The day quickly approached its conclusion. I was holding on to that same euphoric feeling I experience every time I set foot on what to me are sacred grounds, when a thought occurred to me: what now? The Archives has officially been launched. The 75th anniversary celebration was a great success. My belief in this wonderful place that produces men of excellent stature and grace has been confirmed yet again. What is the next step?

Fortunately, the answer appeared suddenly and quite clearly: continue the tradition. Tinker here and there, add a little of this and a little of that so Avoda remains contemporary and pleasing to current campers and prospective new members of the Avoda family. But remember always that this camp is unique, special to each and every one of us. Honor the traditions of the past. Create new traditions. Carry the torch. Maintain this place so that the 100th anniversary celebration can be as great as the 75th and the 50th. Keep this idyllic place intact.

Ruth Kumin Remembered

by Paul Davis

It is with deep sorrow that I inform the Avoda community of the death of Ruth Kumin, former Camp Avoda registrar and color photographer for 22 years. Ruth passed away on Monday, October 14, 2002. Her funeral was held on Thursday, October 17, 2002, at Temple Beth Emunah in Brockton. Ruth was the wife of the late Manny Kumin and the mother of Jonathan and Jesse, both alumni of Camp Avoda, and the late Frances Kumin Wiley. She also had four grandchildren, one of whom, Max, currently attends Camp Avoda.

She and her husband Manny were among the 19

founding families of Temple Beth Emunah 50 years ago. Ruth was a pillar of her temple and served as its bookkeeper for many years. She also handled the finances for the temple's bingo and was a volunteer teacher in the Hebrew school.

Ruth's last visit to Camp Avoda was on August 4, 2002, when she helped all of us dedicate the newly established Avoda Archives and celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the camp.

After retiring from her roles as camp registrar and color photographer, Ruth would still make frequent visits to the camp for Shabbat meals on



Ruth Kumin and Gary Epstein at the 75th Celebration

Friday night and to the final banquets at the end of each season. She was truly a dear friend to all of us.

In 1992, her son Jon made a substantial contribution to the Rec Hall building fund. This contribution was used to outfit the professional darkroom located on the lower level of the new Rec Hall. The photo lab was subsequently named in honor of Ruth and Manny Kumin.

Those who wish may make a donation in Ruth's memory to Temple Beth Emunah, 479 Torrey Street, Brockton, MA 02301.

Avoda Aliyah

by Jason M. Rubin

The Hebrew word *aliyah* means to go up, as in being called up to the bimah to recite the blessings before and after the Torah reading. It also means to go to live in Israel, which is what some Avodians have chosen to do. Jon Rabinowitz, who was at camp from 1976-81, has been living in Israel for 12 years. Joshua Chadajo, who was at camp from 1983-89, did not actually make aliyah but studied in Israel for a year, returning to the US last May.

In the long, sad history of violence and bloodshed in *Eretz Yisrael*, there has never been a period filled with such tragedy like what we have seen the last couple of years. It is so difficult to watch and read news accounts about what has been going on in Israel. How much harder, then, must it be to live there? We asked Jon and Josh to share their insights.

AA: Tell us about what you've been doing in Israel since you got there.

Jon: When I first came to Israel, I spent time on a kibbutz. After that I lived in Jerusalem, where I received my Master's degree in International Relations from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I then worked at the guest house for the city of Jerusalem, served a compulsory six months in the army, then worked at the Chamber of Commerce and at a financial

investment firm. Currently, I am a senior marketing communications manager for a high-tech firm headquartered in Tel Aviv.

Josh: I was at Hebrew University for six weeks last summer, taking a Hebrew language course. I lived in the dorms on Mount Scopus and had an Israeli roommate. From the end of August through the end of May, I was living in Jerusalem and studying at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies. It's an institution that teaches Bible, Talmud, Jewish Law, etc. from the *halachik* perspective, although it is not affiliated with any movement. It's unique in that men and women study together; usually when these subjects are studied, it's men only – kind of like Camp Avoda.

AA: What is it like living there day to day with the threat of violence so prevalent?

Jon: For the most part, my daily routine is very normal. I wake up, take my daughter to preschool, and drive to work. I go out to lunch, to the gym, the beach, and I travel abroad frequently. And yet you can't help this gnawing in the back of your mind that you or someone you know may be blown up, or witness a suicide bombing. It has become a part of life.

Josh: Despite what is shown on

CNN, life in Israel is not one big war zone. In fact, because of Palestinian terror, Israelis celebrate life even more than they would otherwise. People still go out to eat, go to the movies, hang out in parks, go shopping, go hiking, play basketball, etc. People still live. It can be scary at times, but life goes on. Israelis are a very resilient people. That said, after I returned to the US this summer, there was a bombing at the Hebrew University cafeteria that killed five Americans. I had studied with two of them at Pardes: Marla Bennet and Ben Blutstein. I went to their funerals.

AA: If you could address the campers and staff at Avoda, what kinds of things would you tell them about what it's like to be in Israel these days?

Jon: I guess I would start by saying that I don't know if a solution is possible. It's a depressing thought, but one that constantly crosses my mind. I believe that Israel must get out of the territories, either as part of a political settlement or unilaterally. In my opinion, there is no justification for the Israeli settlements in Gaza and most of the West Bank. The problem with a unilateral withdrawal is that much of the Arab world will view it as a sign of weakness on Israel's part. But we must take the chance. The incessant fighting and killing must stop.

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Alumni Weekend 2002: Banquet Night

by Sam Mirkin

At the end of yet another great Alumni Weekend (held June 21-23, 2002), we had our virtual banquet. It was there (here?) that we hand out this year's achievement certificates to all the alumni who attended and excelled during the weekend:

- 1. Russell Sherman** – Excels at organizing alumni events and writing team cheers.
- 2. Sam Mirkin** – Excels at rumbling around the hoop court, and a good Blizzard.
- 3. Hondo Katz** – Excels at being Hondo, and setting a high bar for those who follow him.
- 4. Adam Becker** – Excels at sarcastic humor and skiing with old friends Tony & Glovo.
- 5. Bryan Malamut** – Excels at being Mutta, and beating Hondo's High Water Mark.
- 6. Larry Rubin** – Excels at beating brother's 3-on-3 team and being the greatest - just ask him.
- 7. Josh Kaswell** – Excels at being most jacked alumnus not nicknamed Goodie.
- 8. Aaron Kaswell** – Excels at telling off-color stories with Mrs. Davis present.
- 9. Andy Rubin** – Excels at being Larry's brother and having "Flobie" hair cut.
- 10. Evan Yampolsky** – Excels at being Dr. Schmed, foremost expert on black hole phenomena.
- 11. Stu Glasser** – Excels at being a great sport despite debilitating injury. Sorely missed in competition on Avoda's fields and courts.
- 12. David Wolbarst** – Excels at being the inventor of the "Wobble-head" doll.
- 13. Jason Snelgrove** – Excels at growing up since the last time I saw him 10 years ago.
- 14. Steve Peters** – Excels at being Pokey and serving only the freshest in seafood.
- 15. Andy Stone** – Excels at being this year's biggest surprise attendee, and hanging with long time pals Glovo and Peasley. The Age is lit.
- 16. David Benjamin** – Excels at nature, fishing, bunko robbing, and rousing renditions of the berchat hamazon (post-meal prayer).
- 17. Peasly Poverman** – Excels at being the inspector who made sure my bunk won Kosher Kabin (1984 Bunk 12 – the shield and swords).
- 18. Dave Charton** – Excels at being faster than the rest of us and winning three-on-three tournament.
- 19. Doug Charton** – Excels at being Dave's brother, and bumping into the author at Ratdog concert.
- 20. Eric Shaff** – Excels at being tall, playing physical hoops, and going off to Ithaca to pursue his MBA at Cornell (the darned brainiac).
- 21. Seth Peter** - Excels at being Billy, surprising with his speed on the hoop court, and enjoying the author's unending stream of sarcasm.
- 22. Jeff Vetstein** – Excels at quarterback, smooth jumpers, and clean guitar licks. Also excels at getting married this fall – congratulations Vetter.
- 23. Scott Brockman** – Excels at returning to Avoda after a long hiatus, and would have been a force in the Zooball game had there been one.
- 24. Jamie Sasson** – Excels at being a nice guy, and playing mean on the hoop court.
- 25. Mike Roth** – Excels at serving on the alumni board, and having a son named Sam (great name!!)
- 26. Alex Sherman** – Excels at playing scumbag townie, and early morning skiing.
- 27. Peter Glovin** – Excels at the art of the one-liner and under-the-breath jokes.
- 28. Jeff Keselman** – Excels at working tirelessly on alumni board and having a baby – Joshua (Bunk 14 2017) – way to go KESS!!
- 29. Jason Kaplan** – Excels at determined play on field and court.
- 30. Bones Wertheim** - Excels at being everyone's favorite retired camper beater, charlie hustle on the hoops court, and best guy to sit next to during poker.

- 31. Ken Shifman** – Excels at being Ethan Shifman’s dad (Bunk 14 of 2016), and having the loudest scream while turning ankle on hoops court.
- 32. Mike Ross** – Excels at being Alumni Association President, injuring fellow hoop players, and being one hairy mofo.
- 33. Jason Rubin** – Excels at heading up Alumni Association Archives project – kudos to Jason for a job extremely well done!!
- 34. Jerry Hill** – Excels at being father of an Avodian force, alumni board member, and all-around nice guy.
- 35. Stix Crasnick** – Excels at being The Stick Man and hackey sack.
- 36. Mark Sokoloff** – Excels at winning three-on-three tournament, and disliking former idiot campers.
- 37. Bobby Zuker** – Excels at just about everything – hoops tourney, Alumni Association board member and Archives project force, owner of Fenway (the chocolate lab), and being a nice guy.
- 38. Aaron Agulnek** – Excels at joining the dark side (started law school this fall).
- 39. Scott Brown** – Excels at hockey and inventing the Zamboni. (That was his maiden name.)
- 40. Brett Smith** – Excels at returning to Avoda after long lay-off in classic form with doberman requiring electric shock collar. Not sure if Brett also has collar.
- 41. David Shaff** – Excels at medicine, interning at Mass General and jogging to and from the hospital, training in hopes to someday avenge color war loss in cross country way back when.
- 42. Harold Poverman** – Excels at being huxey, davening at Temple Emeth.
- 43. Lou Dennis** – Excels as alumni board social chairman, general contribution to alumni spirit.
- 44. Jeff Davis** – Excels at making old LP’s into cool bowls and getting written up in *The New York Times*, and *The Boston Globe Calendar*, and sarcastic humor.
- 45. Jim Singer** – Excels at devastating inside hoop game, serving on Camp’s Board of Directors.
- 46. Myles Block** – Excels at concealing his real thoughts in that damn smile.
- 47. Josh Fox** – Excels at teaching little kids and looking a lot like Jesus.
- 48. Andy Geller** – Excels at pushing and shoving author during hoops tourney, fatherhood.
- 49. Tim Cohen** – Excels at tough-nosed athletic play, dodging downtown traffic.
- 50. Matt Nannis** – Excels at solid football play on the field and wild hair award.
- 51. Matt Bridges** – Excels at being Camp Avoda’s first pioneer webmaster.
- 52. Gary Epstein** – Excels at being Choobes. If you need to ask....
- 53. Jay Yampolsky** – Excels at crafty hoops play, long-distance running, Bam-Lou, Sam-Moo, 7-27, Chicago....
- 54. Adam Jacobs** – Excels at all athletic contests, will be missed now that he has gone to Carolina to start alumni chapter with Pee Wee.
- 55. Steve Gladstone** – Excels at smooth jump shots and deadly jukes, and, thus, winning the three-on-three tournament.
- 56. Rich Vetstein** – Excels at gritty under-the-basket play, and tight eye for opposing team’s fouls.



What, who, and how



Jason, cooler, and Jerry



Stix, Morty, and Rollo

Archives Appreciation

by Lee "Fossil" Kaiser

years at Avoda: 1980-1991, 1995-1997

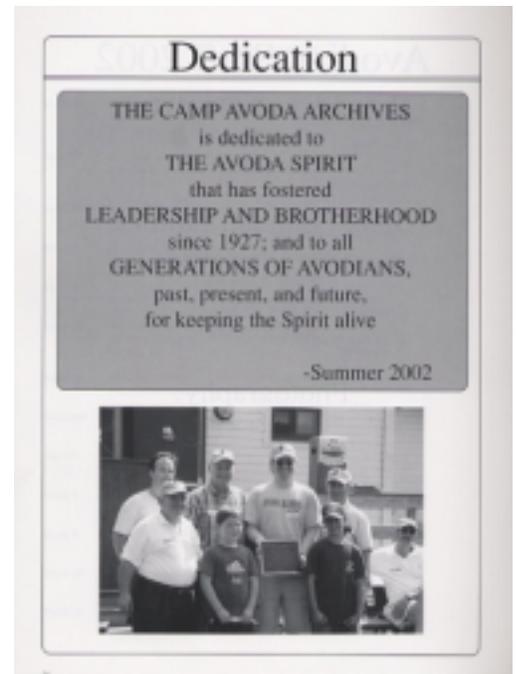
Mazel tov. I can't begin to express how excited I am that the Camp Avoda Archives has arrived. What began as a fleeting thought and progressed to a passion shared by many, has confirmed that dreams can come true. Is the Archives necessary? Absolutely! Avoda's past needs to part of the present and future. The majority of Avodians would probably agree that the most common word to describe our summer home is tradition. Without knowing what the past was like, how can we be certain that it is, in fact, tradition that keeps the Avoda spirit alive and well?

Upon entering the archives this past August, I was overwhelmed with the wealth of history that has been donated and presented. While the stories of Avoda past are part of the allure and mystique of this place, seeing the past is amazing. If you haven't seen the 1927-1960s video, you're missing out. Each piece of memorabilia that is on display has a voice. Every picture, color and black and white, tells a story, or certainly conjures one up among old bunkmates. Reading the *Avodian* issues of decades past affirms that, indeed, we have each shared similar experiences and were able to create a piece of history.

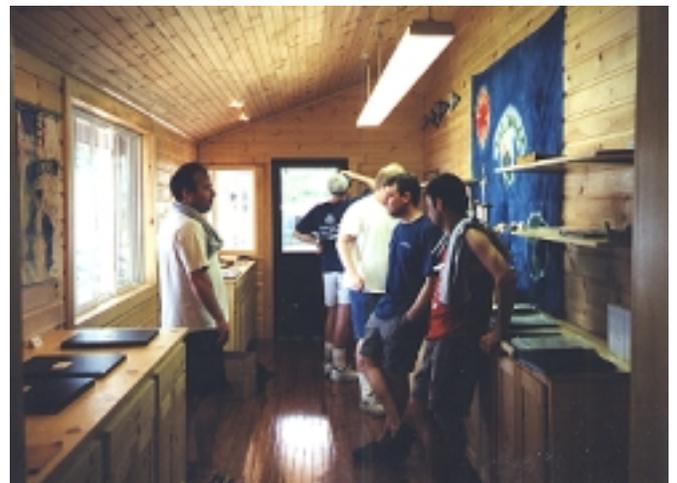
While perusing the Archives, I took the opportunity to ask the current staff what they thought of it. One counselor felt that it was necessary to share with the present campers what made Avoda the camp it is today. Another counselor was amazed that "things that we do today were done back then, like flagrush, zooball, showering on the field." A CIT thought the old camp shirts and other clothing were "really cool!" Later in the day, I asked some campers what they thought. Their eyes immediately widened and their smiles grew. They love going through "that old stuff." By and large, the overwhelming response was one of excitement and amazement. Many current staff had the opportunity to read some of the names in old *Avodian* issues and gaze at the names on some trophies, and were looking forward to meeting them in person on one glorious Sunday afternoon at Avoda.

With great effort, time, and money, the Avoda Archives is here! Still, it will forever be an ongoing project. Dig deep in your basement and pull out those old camp boxes. Take those photo albums off your shelf and send some photos in. Get your Bunk 14 buddies together and make a contribution in your year's name. Most importantly, find the time to stop by Lake Tispaquin next summer and open the door to the past. Avoda's past is what fosters its present and future.

Many, many thanks to Archivist Jason Rubin, the Alumni Association, and the Avoda Board of Directors.



The 2002 Avodian was dedicated to the Archives



A look inside the Archives

75th Celebration

continued from front page

It was a flood of emotions - so many people to see at once, so much catching up to do - of course there wasn't enough time, there never is.

Also on the red carpet were those who deserve Avoda lifetime achievement awards, the elder statesmen who helped build the place and continue to guide it. People like Kurt Kleinmann, Herb Bamel, Marty Wolf, Mel Hyman, Tom Leavitt, and of course, the "Avoda constant," the one person who has probably impacted more people throughout the 75-year history of Avoda than any other, Paul Davis.

And there were many others, some I knew, some I did not and some who were simply what I would call "rafter people" - people who, for me, were only names written on the bunk rafters and lockers. It was nice to know they really existed.

The rest of the day was somewhat of a blur; so many great people, so little time.

During the official ceremony, people like Kurt, Herb, Marty, Gary, and Lee Kaiser guided us through the history of Avoda, decade by decade. The Avoda Archives, an amazing tribute to the camp's history, was dedicated.

As the day wound down, we joined arms, right over left, and sang the alma mater. As I looked around the circle I had joined, it was hard not to smile. It was a perfect microcosm of the entire day. There were representatives from all different eras; former counselors and former campers - different people, living in different places, leading different lives sharing one common denominator - all touched in some way by a little place on the shores of Lake Tispaquin - values, memories, and friendships that will last a lifetime - and at the end of the day, the words in the song seem to sum it all up pretty well: "Of all the camps passing by there is none that can compare...."

3 on 3 Hoop Tourney 2002 *by Sam Mirkin*

Gladdy to Be Here

As usual the Avoda Sports Guy has delivered the goods (OK, not the kosher bacon during this tourney) and we couldn't edit it down to fit in this three by four inch square. So to view the rest of the article, log on to <http://www.campavoda.org> and look at the Alumni page for the rest of the story.

In keeping with Alumni Weekend Tradition, the weekend concluded in style with the annual 3-on-3 hoop tournament. Unlike the 2001 version, when rain forced the semifinals and championship round into the Rec Hall, the entire tournament was held outdoors on the famed Avoda hard court. In this reporter's opinion, much of the vitality and excitement detailed in this column last year was lost in the "not-so-great" outdoors, but I guess that's another story for another day.

Once again, the draw was conducted on Saturday night, with Las Vegas showing early

Article continued at <http://www.campavoda.org>



Mark Sokolov, David Wetheim and Steve Gladstone win it all at this year's 3 on 3 tourney



Spencer Kimball tries to get by Seth Peters

Avoda Aliyah

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Josh: At Avoda, you learn to take in everything around you, to take in the big picture, whether it's during flagrush or on the basketball court. You do this so often that it becomes second nature. In Israel, you always need to survey the situation to make sure nothing seems out of sorts and make sure there aren't any "suspicious objects" on the road. These kinds of questions are always running through your mind. At the same time, however, I respectfully disagree with Jon's viewpoints.

AA: Is there anything that Avodians and other American Jews can do to help?

Jon: Support Israel in any way you can. This tiny piece of land in the Middle East is so important for Jews worldwide. Its existence is crucial to every Jew. As much as I disagree with the current government's policies, the biased portrayal of Israel on CNN, BBC, and Sky News is absurd.

Josh: First, educate yourself about Israel, both its history and

what's happening today. Second, educate family and friends. Monitor the media for balanced reporting. Write opinion articles for your local paper. Contact your government representatives. Third, buy Israeli products to help their economy. Fourth, give *tzedakah* to help the victims of terrorism. Last, and most important, go to Israel! Whether it's a week or a lifetime, nothing beats being in Israel.

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