

Avoda Alumni Bugle

Meet the New Boss

By Sam Mirkin and Andy Bramson

For those of you who don't know, our own Ken Shifman was recently hired as the new Director of Dear Old A-V-O-D-A. The Bugle caught up with Ken to ask him about his new role and place in Avoda history.

What prompted the decision to become Director of Avoda? Like many people, I have thought about it since I left camp. Then, I had an epiphany that I should run my own sports business for kids, about six years ago. While starting my own thing, this Camp Avoda opportunity presented itself – what better sports business is there? Also, after working for strong leadership teams and companies for several years, it became evident that I could apply that knowledge to camp if the opportunity ever arose.

What are you most excited about? I am most excited to work and interact with staff, campers, parents and alumni.

How is recruiting going? I am starting to reach out to parents who are inquiring about Avoda, working with Lou Dennis and Paul Davis. The enrollment is above last year's numbers which is a real tribute to the current administration, Paul, Micah Fleisig and Adam Miller, and the job they did last summer.

Is your family excited? My boys are excited about it, but it's hard for them to "get it." Jill is excited and nervous, to be honest. It's a big "life change" for us all. Jill has been extremely supportive, and without her support, I would not be able to pursue this great opportunity. I, for one, feel like she'll do great there.

How is the transition going? I am so lucky to be working with Paul who is continuing on with Avoda. He is so nice, supportive and generous. I am in the best possible position learning from a man who has been in the summer camp business for over FORTY years. He created the program, culture & community that had such a great impact on all of us. I don't think he could ever get enough credit for everything he's accomplished.



Alex, Jill, Ken and Ethan Shifman

Are you buying a supply of short tennis shorts to wear around campus? I have several training sessions I will be attending:

Paul Davis: Short Shorts 101— An Introduction

Sam Lobar: Banana Hammocks — Traps and Pitfalls

Bob Stone & Jay Yampolsky: Hair and Now (with Guest Lecturer Mike Ross)

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Meet the New Boss...Continued

What should alumni who haven't been to Camp in a while know about what's going on now? The program, place, tradition and heart is very much the same as when "we were there." I would urge them to come to camp and see the place in action. Alumni Weekend is one of the best weekends of the year, but watching a camper talent show or a meet with Bournedale or attending the banquet will bring you back in no time. I love the place.

Where will you be living? The Little Brown/Gray Cabin? I spent some time there last summer. Now I will be at the intersection of PGD Path and the Athletic Field, across from the OD Shack. Micah lived there last year and has graciously let my family take that cabin. I am trying to set up an office in the OD shack – thus setting a record for the shortest commute in history. "Bye honey – I'll call when I am at the office...OK, already there!"

Who is returning from a Senior Staff perspective? Micah Fleisig as Assistant Director, Adam Miller as Program Director, and we are still hiring the head counselors. With Adam and Micah – we are well-equipped for another fantastic summer.

Any new program changes you want to tell us about? Israeli Scouts at Pembroke. Yes – "Boom Chicka Boom." We also got solicited to hire "Y love", a black, Chasidic, Jewish rapper.

I have sent out emails to parents about "The Rookie/All-Star" Program where we pair up new campers (Rookies) with

returning campers (All-Stars) for a get-together BEFORE camp so the rookies have a familiar face upon arrival and easier transition. We'll see how it goes!

Any truth to the rumor that Bengja is being brought into revitalize the nature program? It's just an internet rumor as far as you know.

Will you bring back Desert War Classic? Night at the Races? Midevil Manor? No, Maybe, Yes.

Are you: a) Looking Forward, b) Somewhat Concerned, or c) Petrified about your portrayal in the Color War Plays? Well I am hoping not to be too self-conscious throughout the summer. I do have lots of ideas for plays actually – but need to be impartial and keep my mouth shut. After your comment about the kitchen staff needing to stock up on Brillo Pads for my hair and beard – I am sure they will have plenty of material. So I would say somewhere between a and b.

A few questions from roving reporter Andy Bramson, member of the 1988 Bunk 14 and walking vault of 1980's Color War lyrics:

I can only assume that as one of your first acts as Director you will convene a Color War Truth and Reconciliation Committee that will immediately launch a forensic audit assessing scoring and judging protocols used in the 1989 White Raiders vs. Blue Storm color war? I still wonder where it all went wrong.

Ken or Mr. Shifman? Yes.

When they introduce the starting line-up for the Avoda hoops tourney, will they say "coming out the director's grove" the same way they say "coming out of the kitchen!!"? Do you think I could pass for a hairy 12 year old?

What sort meal selection oversight will you have in the mess hall? A lot. So far the chef of 13 years is not coming back. Coincidence?

What's your stance on trash bag liners? I am with Paul. Solidarity...

Will there be a "First Ladies of Camp Avoda" luncheon or any other type of showcase event? I am actually thinking about a wives group. Good thought.

Can you only swim in the first area now, or do you still have 2nd and 3rd area privileges? Rock all the way.

I had a son earlier this year, Jonah, who is already thinking about Bunk 1. He'll have gink-gonk status that always eluded his dad. Awesome!

Anything else you want to add? I really am excited in my new role and can't wait to focus on it. What better way to spend my time? I have attended several camp conferences already and have dozens of ideas. On several occasions camp professionals got up to speak and proclaimed how lucky "we" are to be dedicating our time and careers to "serving children." That is where my passion lies; I am truly lucky.

President's Letter

SHIFFFF!!! If you have not heard yet, one of our own has come home to “roast”...I mean roost. Our fellow Avoda alum, Ken Shifman, will begin his inaugural season as the new Director of Camp Avoda this summer. Shout it from the rooftops, Mr. Shifman is in the house!

The Avoda Board could not have made a better choice to succeed our illustrious leader, Paul G. Davis (PGD), for the day-to-day director position. PGD has been the glue for so many of us over the years, and it's great to know that he will continue to be at camp serving as Executive Director. I am confident that Shif will work with Paul to seamlessly weave his way back into the Avoda fabric and, yet again, maintain our connection to Avoda

The beautiful thing about this change is that the Avoda “culture” will be preserved. I don't know about you, but that's important to me. I love the timelessness of Avoda, and I know this resonates with Shif as well. For many of us who have entered those years when our kids, or those of our friends, are starting to spend their summers at Avoda this is truly important. Things may be modified with the transition, but Camp will not be changed in the greater sense.

On a personal note, my sincere thanks and the thanks of the Alumni Association go out to PGD for the career he has put in at Avoda in the director's chair. It is truly amazing how many of us interacted with Mr. Davis, eventually “Paul”, over the years. He personifies love and loyalty to Avoda, and of course has done an enviable job of keeping the Avoda gossip loop alive for anyone who, “wants to know”. Hey, 35 plus years of families coming and going (and coming back again) definitely makes Paul an expert at Jewish Geography.

Elie Wiesel once said, “Our obligation is to give meaning to life and in doing so to overcome the passive, indifferent life.” This may be the common thread between Paul Davis and Ken Shifman. Paul has never been indifferent about Avoda, because it has provided so much meaning to his life. Knowing Ken Shifman as I do, it is not a stretch for me to say that Avoda has and will continue to do the same for him. They both have such strong ties to Avoda and share that same sense of obligation.

Paul, enjoy this stage in your Avoda career. We greatly appreciate your tireless work and incredible contributions over the years, and we are glad you will continue on as the mentor to “The Rookie”. Shif, I think I speak for most of us when I say enjoy your new post, and rest assured most of us will live vicariously through you for many summers to come. You are a lucky man, and Avoda is lucky to have you in the driver's seat.

Mike “Morty” Roth

Heard it Through the Grapevine — Avoda Happenings

Births

David Wertheim—baby girl
(Rose Isabelle), April 1, 2008

Brian (Baruch) Plotkin—baby girl
(Nava Bella), March 29, 2008



David Wertheim and Rose

Send us your Avoda Happening: campavodaalumniassociation@hotmail.com.

Avoda is Everywhere

By Sam Mirkin

As a recent transplant to Manhattan, one of the biggest challenges has been leaving behind my friends and family. Since many of my best friends are Avodians, I have felt particularly disconnected from the scene that has been at the core of my life for the past decade.

Luckily, Manhattan is a popular destination, and I have received visits from many members of the Avoda fraternity. Paul Simon was in town for a trade show, and we spent the afternoon watching the Pats demolish San Diego in the AFC Championship game. Scott Brockman was in here for a charity walk, and we had a great time hitting the Garden for a fun event. Jay Yampolsky has been in New York a few times for business. We had a big dinner with Russell Sherman and watched the World Series Champion Boston Red Sox defeat the local team up in the Bronx (Manny belted two dingers, much to our delight and the consternation of the defeated Yankee fans sitting near us).

One of the most fun and also most unexpected visits came when Rich Vetstein was in the city for a work conference. Rich and I have been friendly over the years, but most of our contact came at formal alumni events and we would hardly be considered regular “penpals”. We met for a couple drinks, then managed to take ourselves to one of the 8,247 steak houses in Manhattan to treat ourselves like gentlemen. Actually, Rich treated—thanks again, Rich! We had a terrific time talking about camp days, the practice of law (in which we are both engaged), Boston sports and the usual stuff.

Rich’s visit made me realize that one of the things that makes Avoda great is the “instant connectivity” we have with each other. Sure, we’ve rehashed the 1984 Color War and Schmed pulling Avoda off the field at Bournedale about 400 times, but these common touchstones unite us in a way that few other shared experiences can.

The motto of Camp Avoda is “Building Friendships that Last a Lifetime”, and our alumni prove that adage true on a daily basis. Avoda Alumni compete in fantasy football leagues against each other, meet for regular card games, throw Thanksgiving weekend parties, play football games, and have other impromptu alumni get-togethers all the time. It has long been the goal of the Alumni Association to promote these types of events, and they serve to strengthen our bonds and maintain the relevancy of Avoda to each of us.

With that in mind, I would strongly urge you to register and use the new Alumni Portal (details below). The Alumni Portal is a social networking site that will allow each alumnus to post his own profile, telling others about his life and sharing pictures. It will also allow regular internet chatter with the rest of the Avoda community (just don’t blame us for your drop in work productivity). Reach out to Avoda friends you haven’t spoken to in a while, and, if you are traveling, look up alumni living there and make your visit to D.C. or Chicago or New York that much better.

Remember, Avoda happens whenever alumni get together.

AVODA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES NEW ONLINE PORTAL

The new Camp Avoda Alumni Portal online community will allow you to:

- Communicate with old friends and new friends
- Donate securely to Camp Avoda
- Network with other Avodians
- Get frequent updates on Alumni events and happenings
- Communicate via our message boards
- So Much More



Update your profile and use the site. Expand the Avoda Experience for everyone.

Please visit us at http://www.campavoda.org/alumni_portal.html

Blast From the Past



At the Bar Mitzvah of David “Lepus” Goldberg (10/2/1982):

Back Row: David Shindler, Adam Becker, David Wertheim, Peter Glovin, Nat Phillips, Mike Cashton, Mike Roth, Mike Yanover

Front Row: Andy Aronson, David Benjamin, Stephen Aronson, Mark Glovin, Paul Simon, Ken Shifman

Note From the Editor:

Blast From the Past is a new Bugle feature. We would like to include old, funny, embarrassing, poignant or otherwise notable photos of Avodians through the years. So break out your bellbottoms, lamb-chop sideburns, rattails, flattops, tie-dyes, sweater vests and ruffle tuxedo shirt photos, scan and email them to: campavodaalumniassociation@hotmail.com.



The Bar Mitzvah Boy Himself

Avoda Alumni Bugle

Good Idea Jeans...Avoda Style

By Jeff Vetstein & Sam Mirkin

In rebuttal to the “Avoda Bad Idea Jeans” article, it seems only proper to include a few truly awe-inspiring ideas. Here, then, are some great ones, Avoda Jeans Style:

An anonymous Avodian building a Dairy Queen on Rt. 28 in Middleboro, paving the way for many, MANY blizzard warnings. Brrrrrr.

The first counselor who thought of having his campers bring him donuts and OJ on lazy mornings.

The guy who thought up lazy mornings – delightful.

Eliminating the lunch line-up – I mean why endure that time wasting display of “ass-draggery”?

Ceiling fans in the bunks – you mean it’s a good idea to move the air around a little in the stifling, sweaty room we all share for living quarters? (Ed. - I am ashamed I did not think of this.)

Playing “Stairway to Heaven” for the last song to every Pembroke Social, giving the campers 8 long minutes to make their move. Shady, and totally brilliant.

The counselor who thought up the whole Kosher Kabin idea. Genius on so many levels. A related great idea was sending the CIT to take care of work detail while the counselors “supervise” bunk clean-up.

The Canoe Trip. A whitewater canoeing adventure in New Hampshire that had just the right mix of danger, hypothermia, and s’mores. The Avoda trinity.

Whatever Bunk 14 started throwing counselors in the lake. Don’t mess with Bunk 14!!! (even though it ain’t what it used to be....)

Dockball – A little known activity which fused the games of Water polo, Volleyball, and American Gladiators.

Dead Zone (Mickey Lopatin)....the flagrusher/zooball combination that would shake the world in 1987. Never before had camp seen an event of such organized chaos and unimaginable glee mixed with just the right amount of terror.

Survivor/Golddrush – An evening activity banned for unknown reasons. Campers had to collect gold, silver, and bronze painted sticks in the woods and around camp and bring them back into a circle in the middle of the field. This circle was guarded by the staff, which would use all sorts of homeland defense tactics to protect their ‘hood. The campers had help from the mighty CIT’s who would act as “escorts” to the campers. Conflict ensued. High risk game of fetch - Glorious idea.

Counselors receiving money to purchase lunch on trip days – we get paid to go to the Red Sox game, and money for lunch on top of it? Genius idea – thank you Hondo Katz!

Building the Counselor’s Lounge next to the canteen.....mmm, frozen candy bars.

Color War Plays – nothing like the combustible mix of wiseass counselors, all-night writing sessions and inside jokes/retribution.

Late-night Trips to The Golden Gate, Boston, MA . Beef and shrimp, pea pods, black bean sauce, soft noodle in a bowl. Amen. Especially nice when chauffeured in Bruce Silverlieb’s Town Car® with the windows down and AC blasting.

The structure of pre-Color War. The formation of each team’s staffs, writing songs/plays, negotiating picks, the draft, the all important coin flips, the color war break.

Days off at Bobby Zuker’s house – pool, hot tub, steam room, table Ms. Pac Man, delicious grillables from Salette’s and Brigham’s in the freezer. Heaven on earth.

The “Anything Goes” elective – birthplace of shoe golf (a great Avoda idea in its own right). Lee Kaiser modified a pair of sneakers especially for shoe golf...really.

The Pink Flamingos – Pink always wins...by getting an extra week “off”. (Ed. – as a C.I.T., I was a line judge for Freshman Newcomb, the lowest of possible officiating jobs. Good times).

And the best for last—Alumni Weekend, but only if you like two days of no commitments, re-connecting with your camp buddies, playing softball and hoops, playing cards, tailgating...

The Sports Page—Alumni Bowling Night

By Jeff Vetstein

Jamaica Plain, MA

“Ma nish ta nah, ha lie la ha zeh?” one inquisitive Avodian said to another. Why was this year different from any other?

Two words: Bowling Night, Baby!!! Ok, that was 3 words, but that’s not important right now.

The good powers that be at the Avoda Alumni Association decided to try a new activity this year instead of the regular “Billiards Night”. Bowling was and still is a huge part of our Avodian ancestry. Many Avodians fondly remember jumping on the buses and heading out to Taunton Ten Pin for a Saturday’s worth of Senior Bowling. Not only did we all get to compete in the Avoda fashion, but we were able to breathe the nice cool fresh air conditioning for a few hours.

The event took place on January 31st, at the Milky Way Bar in Jamaica Plain, MA. We had 4 lanes reserved, a private food/seating area, and we pretty much had the place to ourselves. All told, about 40 alumni showed up for the event. Hi-jinx ensued.

Teams were picked for our tournament, and rules were quickly made up and solidified by Commissioner Ken Freeman. One of the teams, called the Pterodactyls, made up of 3 original members of that 1988 team; Al Goldman, Ethan Sobol, and Stu Glass, picked up Andrew Bramson as



The Champs: Mike Roth, Mark Solomon and Adam Becker



The Not-Champs: Seth Peters, Adam Miller, Tim Cohen, Spencer Kimball, Todd Miller and Derek Weiner

a much needed fourth member of their squad. They were early favorites in the tournament, but were derailed by their lack of skill.

The format was Candlepin Bowling, where every team’s total score was summed up for one team score. The top 4 teams would face each other in a Final Four. It looked as though a team made up of Seth Peters, Larry Rubin, Scott Brockman and Dave Zablatsky would coast to the championship, but then something totally unforeseen took place.

In a scene reminiscent of *Wrestlemania* and *Airplane!* the movie, a record player scratched to a stop giving way to the theme song from “Staying Alive”. Mike Roth, Mark Solomon, and Adam Becker came walking through the doors, with disco music blaring!!

The trio took the lanes by storm and proceeded to knock down pin after pin on their way to the championship. Asked how he felt after winning the first annual Bowling Night Open, sponsored by Tinactin, Mark Solomon replied, “That’s M. Sol being M. Sol, that’s how I roll!”

Steve Peters summed up the evening perfectly, “I’m just glad my wife let me out of the house and I didn’t break any bones.” Our sentiments exactly.

If you would like to make a pledge to the Alumni Association Annual Fund to support scholarship and infrastructure improvements, please see below.

Mail to: Camp Avoda Alumni Association, PO Box 465, Needham Heights, MA 02494

Name _____

Address _____

Bunk 14 Year _____

Phone (Home) (Work) _____

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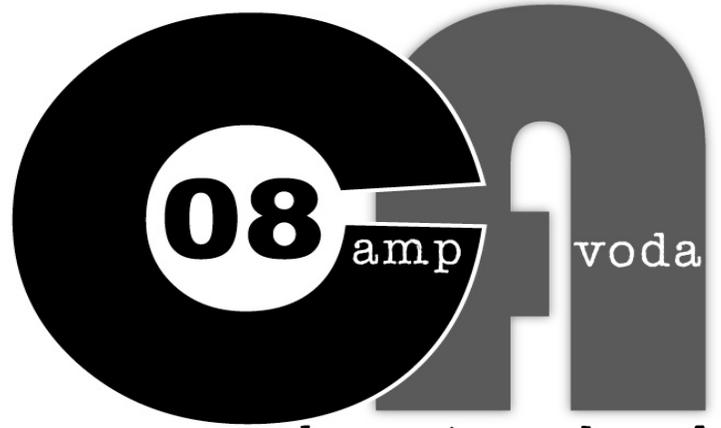
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alumni weekend
6.20-6.22

To Sign Up, log in to the Alumni portal...

http://www.campavoda.org/alumni_portal.html

If you have any questions, feel free to contact:

ken@creativepromo.net or
jeff@atlanticfoodsbrokerage.com

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PO Box 465
Needham Heights, MA, 02494
www.campavoda.org