

Editor's Note:

The Alumni Board wishes the best of luck to Michael Ross in his new endeavor as a member of the Camp Avoda Board of Directors. We look forward to the Board including such an enthusiastic, passionate new member. The Board could not have chosen a better man for the job. We also congratulate Bobby Zuker who is joining the camp's Board of Directors. Bobby has repeatedly shown us that he is a guy who can get things done, and he will contribute to a strong and healthy Avoda for years to come. Good luck Michael and Bobby!

Fall 2003

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Avoda Alumnus

THE BIENNIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMP AVODA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Avoda, Now More than Ever

by Sam Mirkin

In the past couple of years, many of my friends have begun to have children. With so many potential future Avodians around, I have begun to wonder what Avoda is like for the current generation of campers. Do they get the same feelings from the place as we did, or as our fathers did (for those upcoming third-generation Avodians)? In short, is Avoda still the greatest place in the world to be a growing Jewish kid?

As a member of the Camp's alumni board, I have had the privilege of maintaining an ongoing relationship with Avoda even as my own tenure there recedes into the realm of memory. This has afforded me a new perspective on the place. I have come to realize, as one only can with the benefit of years, that the institution of Avoda is so much more than just the sum of its parts. Athletics and swimming, watercrafts and wood shop, Flagrush and Zooball, Desert War and Color War, hoops and softball teams, and bunk alumni songs are all swatches in the Avoda tapestry. The big picture, however, is so much more vivid than just those parts might suggest. Indeed, the time-tested traditions of Avoda are woven into a fabric both intricate and spellbinding.

My old friend, Jeff Davis, once wrote that he was surprised when the sun didn't rise and set by our bugles. I always thought that was a terrifically eloquent statement of the wonderful insulation that envelops boys at Avoda. Kids today have many more challenges than you and I did 10, or 20, or 50 years ago. The world is instantly accessible, and the innocence that we knew as children is largely an anachronism.

In a way, I suppose Avoda is an anachronism too, only the rare kind that feels like home. The feeling of Avoda is kind of like listening to a ballgame with your grandfather on the radio, or hearing a favorite song from years ago. In today's ever more chaotic world, it is reassuring to know that there is a place where the only thing that matters is, "What's for lunch?" and "Who are we playing in League Competition?" In terms of finding a haven for Jewish boys to grow into thriving young men, I can't imagine a better environment than our beloved camp on Lake Tispaquin.

Avoda is still a link to a past where your character was more important than the brand name on your sneakers, or size of your "Game Boy" disc collection. It is the kind of place where quiet, shy boys can become respected leaders. Most important (to me), Avoda is the kind of place where lifelong friendships are born.

When my friends debate the question of sending their sons to Avoda, I never hesitate to say that my boys (if I am so blessed) will go there. I would want them to become men of character and accountability, and I know firsthand that Avoda teaches these lessons. In fact, I learned more about myself as a person at Avoda than through my involvement in any other institution. The things you and I treasured are still part of the place, and the strong feelings we have still abound. Avoda is still the greatest place in the world to be a growing Jewish boy, but I'm sure you already knew that.

President's Letter

by Michael Ross

While I am staying within the Avoda family as a member of the Board of Directors, it is not without some sadness that I write my last article as president of the Camp Avoda Alumni Association Board. I consider it a high honor to have served for six years as the leader of such a dedicated group of individuals, and know it is an experience I will always cherish.

The Camp Avoda Alumni Association Board has been in existence since 1985. Conceptually launched by Tom Leavitt as an advisory board to Avoda – and formerly known as the Camp Avoda Advisory Board – the group's first meeting was held in 1987. I was there from the very beginning. How can the years have passed so quickly? What was once a very small group has now become an organization. Alumni names scrawled on pieces of paper have been replaced by a database. Phone calls have been augmented by email distributions and mass mailings. A Web site now details activities and events.

Through the years, however, the cause has essentially remained the same:

- To promote good will for and about Camp Avoda
- To serve as a resource group to the Camp Avoda Board of Directors
- To provide regular alumni activities and programs
- To reconnect disenfranchised alumni
- To recruit for Camp Avoda
- To develop and maintain a scholarship program with the goal of sending underprivileged boys to camp
- To be a body in which current campers and staff can participate once they are no longer a camper or a staff member

The accomplishments of Avoda's alumni have been many, but without the Alumni Board they would be few. Some of the highlights: The Scholarship Program that now regularly sends 3-4 boys to Avoda each summer; The Archives – thank you, Jason; the Camp Avoda Web site; the Alumni Weekend that now regularly draws 50-70 Alumni – and is the largest fundraiser for the Alumni Association. I remember when we hoped to one day draw 30.

With these satisfying thoughts and the drive to continue contributing to Avoda and its wonderful ideals, I thank the CAAA Board members: Jeff Blocker, Lou Dennis, Paul Hantman, Jerry Hill, Jeff Keselman, Sam Mirkin, Michael Roth, Jason Rubin, Alex Sherman, Russell Sherman, Ken Shifman, Bobby Zuker. Gentlemen, it has truly been a

privilege. Thank you for your faith and trust.

I believe you are well positioned to take the CAAA to even greater heights: expanding membership well beyond New England – an event is already in the making in Washington, DC; enhancing our relationship with the Jewish Big Brother Association; promoting Avoda principles and ideals in order to drive enrollment initiatives.

The philosopher and father of Taoism, Lao Tzu, wrote: "A leader is best when people barely know he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worse when they despise him.... But of a good leader who talks little when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, 'We did it ourselves.'"



Post-Modern Trip Day

by Andrew Bramson

With my boss on vacation this week and the Pawtucket Red Sox playing an afternoon game on Thursday, there was little debate about the outcome. Move over working world, trip day has arrived. But what should have just been an enjoyable day of mid-summer minor league baseball, became so much more.

I arrived at McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket 10 minutes before the opening pitch. Just enough time to get myself a ticket and get settled. As I approached the box office, I saw a kid with a white collared shirt and collar-length hair with a few extra tickets to unload. As he turned and faced me, my eyes were drawn to the logo on his left front pocket — the timeless Camp Avoda logo with the all-important word “Staff” written on it.

“Of course,” I said to myself while grinning ear to ear. “Why should this be any different?” It’s a Thursday in August.

I asked the counselor where Avoda was sitting, and he told me Section Five. Within minutes I was sitting among the senior staff talking about this year’s triple-overtime Desert War and the upcoming Color War, scheduled to start the

following day.

The kids got \$10 from canteen for the PawSox game. Not bad. I remember when we got \$6 for the 1985 trip to Martha’s Vineyard.

Now, I know that alumni often say that camp is not like it used to be, and that customs and rituals are being lost. Alumni, please know that most (but not all) trip day traditions are securely intact.

By the end of the first inning, dozens of campers had walked past me with enough pizza, french fries, and nachos that you might have thought that someone was filming the “before” group for a Richard Simmons video. As expected, counselor’s ably advised the campers on the best eating methods.

I laughed out loud in the fourth when I heard some CITs express their anger about Mr. Davis’s canteen prices and smirked in the sixth as many campers pulled out decks of cards to play pitch.

During the seventh-inning stretch, I wondered what my wife would say if I called her from the payphone at the O.D. shack to tell her that I rode the bus back to Avoda and

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You Say It s Your Birthday...

by Ken Shifman

This is my thirteenth year as an Avoda alumnus (and even though I’d rather still be at camp), I like it very much and the 1984 Bunk 14 is still number one!

I am part of an elite club – those of us who have summer birthdays. The school people never understood that this was a good thing. I was even part of a more elite club – those of us who had Color War birthdays. My Color War team obviously would go nuts when, in a silent Mess Hall, I would say stuff like (thanks Evan Yampolsky) “This is my fifth year at Avoda, I like it very much and the Blue Express will be in that lake Friday night!”

We aren’t exactly sure where or when this tradition started – but Paul Davis believes he came up with the creative but time-worthy template for the speech. So it has been around for 35 years, at least, and they still use it!

Usually, I would go up to the podium and follow this formula to recite my speech. Some people would be glad if they were mentioned in the speech, always an honor. Some people would razz me. Our table would get cake for dessert – not a bad thing for my market value with my friends. Then

after lunch, I would listen for Paul Davis over the intercom tell me I had a package. (Often more!) Overall it was always an event. I even share my birthday with a fellow Avodian, Louis Dennis. We still think of each other and wish each other happy birthday around that time.

Now I am the ripe old (young? depends which alumni you ask!) age of 34. (Seems like it was literally yesterday that I turned 33 and declared “This is my Larry Bird year!”) Unfortunately, no one at work called me up to give a speech. “This is my fourth year with the company, I hope it doesn’t fold and the Java code is number one!” Furthermore, there was no cake.

Most of my well wishes were from Avoda Alumni. Lee Kaiser declared “Wow, time really flies, I can’t believe you are 35!” It doesn’t – I am only 34.

Another email from Russell Sherman wrote:

“Do you still get the urge to say, “This is my 34th year of life, I like it very much. Ethan, Alex & Jilly are all number one and the Blue Lost-A-Steps will be in the lake tonight?” (The inspiration for this article.)

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Alumni Weekend 2003



Birds of a Feather (Left)



Dave and Friendly Fenway



Photographs by Aaron Agulnek



Fencing at Avoda (Above)



*Andy, Larry, Mutta, Josh and Andy (Above)
Stu, Brimma and Ethan (Below)*



Vet Ortiz connects (Left)



I wouldn't want to be on the (Left)



1968 Bunk 14: Jerry Hill, Ken Brier, Peter Hurvitz, Alan Singer, Steve Matfis

Billiards Night 2002



Alumni Announcements

Starting... NOW... we would like to keep the Avoda grapevine up to date with comings and goings and other news about alumni. Please send any news about yourself or other alumni to campavodaalumniassociation@hotmail.com.

Birth Announcements:

- Ken Shifman** – '84 14 – Alex - Born April of 2003
Dan Reiser – '85 14 – Gabrielle – Born November of 2002 (and her mom went to Pembroke!)
Jeff Keselman – '84 14 – Joshua – Born September of 2002
Peter Glovin – '81 14 – Courtney – Born Spring of 2003
Mike Alter – '86 14 – Abigail - Born June of 2003 and Adam born about ten minutes later
Steve Gladstone – '89 14 – Alexis - Born October 2002
Ken "Bubblehead" Freeman – '90 14 – Elie - Born May 2003
Russell Sherman – '84 14 – Owen - Born May 2003
Lee Kaiser – '84 14 – Carson Nicole - Born December 2002

Weddings:

- Larry "Stix" Crasnick** – '77 14 – Married Donna Mason 08/2003
 The ceremony was officiated by Jason Rubin ('78 14*) due to a special dispensation from Governor Romney. The editors cannot verify reports that Jason has entered the Yeshiva to become a Rabbi.
David "Bones" Wertheim – '82 14 – Married Jodie Lapin 06/2003

* Honorary Bunk 14 in 1980

Boston Billiards Night 2003

Friday, November 21, 2003
 8:00 PM - 12:00 AM

Boston Billiards in Kenmore Square
 For directions visit <http://www.bostonbilliardclub.com>

As always the night will feature food, friends, fun and the annual 8-Ball Tournament!

The cost....only \$25.00 (Late night trip for Chinese food not included.)

Please RSVP to Lou "The Shark" Dennis at loudennis@comcast.net.

**Think Globally,
 Act Avoda-ly**

Maryland, DC, Virginia Social Night 2003

Friday, November 21, 2003
 Starting at 6:00 PM

Size does matter; we are expanding! Join Camp Avoda Alumni's newest chapter!

Location: Whitlow's on Wilson (2854 Wilson Blvd, Arlington, VA 22201). For directions visit <http://www.whitlows.com/wow/home.asp>

Ask for AVODA at the door!

Please RSVP to Lee "Fossil" Kaiser
 703-856-1360 (cell – night of gathering)
 703-266-2678 (home)
lrkaiser@erols.com (email)

From the Shelves of the Avoda Archives

by Jason M. Rubin

In operation for just two summers, the Avoda Archives is well-established as a landmark attraction on campus. A highlight of camp tours and a must-see part of Alumni Weekend, the campers all clamor to view the impressive number of Avoda artifacts on display. Starting in summer '04, there will be regularly scheduled bunk visits to the Archives, and it is our hope that various exhibits will be incorporated into scavenger hunts, Declamation, and other camp activities.

As archivist, I have spent countless hours poring over *Avodian* issues, old photographs, and other memorabilia from t-shirts and trophies to Color War flags, songs, and scripts. It is fun to be able to tell alumni which year's 14 they were in, especially when they can no longer remember themselves. It is touching to see an alumnus look at a photo of his old bunk and identify faces he hasn't seen in decades. It is amazing to hear how anecdote leads to anecdote as these seemingly inanimate items unleash torrents of memories from long-locked areas of alumni minds.

There is great power in what we have collected. These things are alive; they have stories to tell. Check out the softballs within their display cases. They tell of impressive feats – such as lake-o's and most-consecutive bunk-o's – that continue to prompt exclamations of “You shoulda seen it,” “That was incredible,” and “No one will ever top that.” Look at photos from the 1940s and 1950s. Different haircuts, different clothes, but the same Avoda soil in the background as what you stood on, and in the eyes the same love of camp – of traditions, friendships, and bonds being formed that, like Avoda itself, stand the test of time.

Now that we have the Archives, it is hard to conceive of a time without it.

Where was Avoda's history preserved? Where was it revisited, shared, and taught to younger generations? The answer is that it wasn't. Each alumnus had – and has – a personal mini-museum of his own knowledge and experiences in his mind. Therefore, what once was fragmented and piecemeal, and viewable only through the subjective lens of memory, now is centralized, extensive, and marvelously tangible.

It's one thing, for example, to tell someone that Jonny Bamel “hit for the cycle” by winning all four All Around [Division] Camper awards (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior); but when campers see the trophies lined up, they never fail to be amazed. Similarly, you can boast that your Color War team had the all-time coolest t-shirts, but in the Archives you can actually compare them through the ages (or at least since 1970). The Archives makes things accessible, and real.

I'll close with my favorite Archives memory. It was last year, summer '02. I had gone down to Avoda to work on the Archives, and invited the Administration to send kids in during rest hour. I think Bunk 2 was in the Archives at the time. Two buddies were looking at stuff together, and they made their way toward the racks of *Avodian* issues. One kid was looking a little hesitant and embarrassed, but his friend spoke up for him and asked me for help.

“He wants to see his grandfather's name,” said his friend.

I leaned down to the kid and asked him pleasantly, “OK, what's your grandfather's name?”

“Stanley Miller,” he replied.

I was literally dumbstruck for a moment. Here I was, just about 30 years removed from the start of my Avoda career (summer '03, in fact, was my 30th anniversary as an Avodian), and one of

the few constants in that time was Stanley Miller. He was a familiar figure during my active camper and staff years; he was a role model and accepting advisor during my early years on the Alumni Board, and my years as Alumni Association president; and he continues to be an inspiration to many who knew him for his integrity and long years of service to the camp. And here was an eight- or nine-year-old boy standing in front of me, his grandson, asking me to show him his grandfather's name.

“I knew your grandfather,” I said to the kid, his eyes growing wide. And I reached for one of the several dozen *Avodian* issues that feature the name of Stanley Miller. After all, where else are you going to find that many?

More Alumni Weekend Photos:



Micah and Aaron

Post-Modern Trip Day *Birthday*

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would be back after Color War. Although she never went to camp as a child, she probably would have understood.

As the PawSox made the final out in the tenth, the staff uttered that ageless four-word phrase, "Avoda to the buses." I pondered and watched as campers met up with their counselors and headed for the exits. I sat back and watched.

How much I would have liked to board the school bus with those 40 kids - all who demonstrated that end-of-the summer look...long hair, mosquito bites, and the ace bandage that was necessary for today, but would be off as soon as Color War started tomorrow.

Looking back, I think that one of the most underrated experiences at Camp Avoda are those evenings after Trip Day. Some of my most memorable times as a camper weren't during flagrushes or Dead Zones (I was the fat kid always guarding a flag), but during that free time when you could field bunkos, play rafter-ball in the cabin, shoot hoops, play tennis, or eat sweaty cold cuts on white bread during optional dinner.

I told the PawSox story to my mom over the weekend. She laughed, but couldn't resist in asking, "Did you come home with someone's socks and Allen Goldman's mattress cover?"

"Not exactly," I replied. "I came home with something much more valuable."

Birthday

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I answered that; actually, I was on the White Get-Faster-Each-Years!

The day at work could literally not have been busier. Later, I got home late from work, had very little time for my sons Alex and Ethan, showed our place to a prospective buyer (we are trying to sell our condo), rushed out to pick up the baby sitter, and came home to answer a few phone calls about plans for the night. Where were we going? To Chinatown with, who else but - camp friends.

Chinatown with camp friends is always a simple recipe for a fun night. We had a good camp crew, thrown together with Alex Sherman coincidentally in town on business. (OK - seriously, who arranged that for my birthday?) We ate ravs, ribs and rice. What a night. Even though I still didn't give my speech, there was nowhere I'd rather have been. It couldn't have worked out any better in the end.

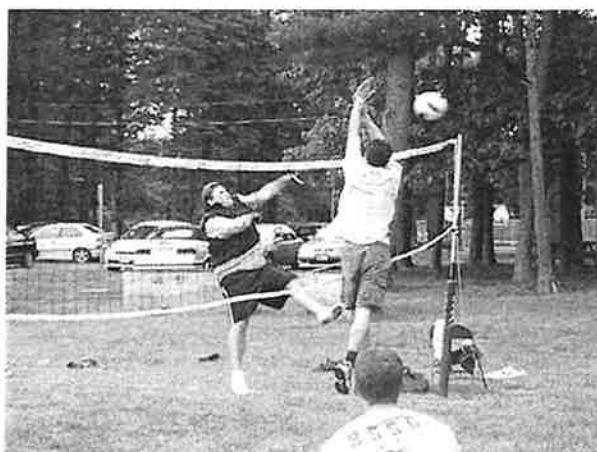
Things are a lot different - that's for sure. Instead of worrying about which sport to play during seventh period - really might have been my only worry at camp - I am now knee-deep in diapers, baby sitters, real estate transactions and work.

Things are still very similar - I love having a summer birthday and I love spending it with my summer camp friends.

We are number one!



Pee Wee waits for the "funny one" from Larry



Bump, Vet, Spike!

Where Have You Gone Joe DiMaggio

by Jeff Keselman

Have you ever attempted to do a jigsaw puzzle but halfway through, you just knew that you were missing pieces? Even worse, ever try doing an old puzzle and finding pieces from other puzzles mixed in, making your task all the more difficult? That is the task the Alumni Association has faced in trying to clean up its database. It's taken a while but we are making tremendous inroads in this initiative

At present, we have information for more than 1,000 Avodians and that list continues to grow with each passing year. We have recently begun capturing e-mail information, which has proven invaluable in communicating timely alumni updates and providing announcements of upcoming alumni events. It has also been integral in staying in touch

with a very nomadic group of Avodians. Lastly, it's a more cost-effective means of communicating, which has meant that we have been able to put more money aside for things like Scholarship and the Camp Avoda Archives, which was opened last summer.

The main hurdle that we continue to face is the knowledge that much of our information is simply inaccurate. Alumni move, they no longer live at home with parents, etc. and we have no solid way to know this unless you keep us in the loop. With that in mind, I am hoping you can assist us in our quest to clean up and build up the database.

If you are an alumnus reading this, please take the time to send us in writing or via e-mail any updates to

your address while also providing us with an e-mail address. You can mail us at PO Box 465, Needham MA 02494 or via e-mail to:

campavodaalumniassociation@hotmail.com. If you are a parent of an alumnus, please contact us and let us know the best way to reach your son(s). Additionally, we have posted a list of Avodians for whom we have no information at all on the alumni section of the Avoda Web site (www.campavoda.org). If you could take a moment to scan this list you might find a name or two you are still in contact with. If so, we would love to hear from you so that we could add them back onto our mailing list.

This is a huge initiative for the Alumni Association and I thank you in advance for all of your help!

Camp Avoda Alumni Association

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