

# The Avoda Alumnus

THE BIENNIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMP AVODA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## FALL/WINTER 1998

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[www.campavoda.org](http://www.campavoda.org)

## Avoda Goes Online

*by Jason M. Rubin*

Cyberspace. The final frontier. This is the story of Camp Avoda Online. Its mission: to offer current Avodians and alumni an Avoda experience with no rain, no tuition, and no tuna or egg salad. To boldly go where most of the rest of the world has already gone or is going. To the 'net.

Yes, it's true. Camp Avoda has a new address. No, the actual campus hasn't moved; it's still where it belongs, at 23 Gibbs Road in Middleboro, MA. But now Avoda also exists in cyberspace, at <http://www.campavoda.org> (note that it's "org" as in Borg, not "com"). And it's open and available 12 months a year.

Camp Avoda Online, the official Camp Avoda Web site, was launched this past summer. Alumni Association President Mike Ross has been overseeing the project (making it so, as it were), working with Avoda counselor and resident Webmaster Matt Bridges (in the role of Number One).

The logo for Camp Avoda Online features the words "Camp Avoda" in a large, bold, white serif font, with "Online" in a smaller, white, cursive script font positioned below and to the right of "Avoda". The entire logo is set against a dark, rectangular background.

While some parts of the site remain under construction - and the entire site itself will continue to evolve over time - there is enough content online now to make it well worth checking out and bookmarking for frequent return visits.

The site consists of an e-mail database, which at last count included the self-submitted e-mail addresses of 142 current Avodians and alumni; a message board for posting and responding to brief communiqués; a calendar, articles section, and photo gallery documenting the current (last) summer; a place to send feedback; and, last but not least only in content, an alumni section that is currently under construction (actually, under consideration for construction). An Alumni Association committee is being formed to decide how best to realize an alumni area on the Avoda Web site, but it could feature an online version of this newsletter, photos from alumni events and/or then-and-now pics, and maybe even a means of networking on a professional level as well as on a social level.

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# President's Letter

By Michael Ross

As I take over the reins of the Camp Avoda Alumni Association, I am filled with enthusiasm. There are many achievable goals within our reach, many contributions that we as an organization can make to the Avoda family. I view our present position as a launching point for greater accomplishments. But first, I wish to acknowledge those who led us to where we are today.

Were it not for the vision of Tom Leavitt, the steady guidance of Mel Hyman and Jason Rubin, the participation of Paul Davis and far too many Avodians to mention in this space, the Avoda Alumni Association simply would not be. Many hours of hard work go on behind the scenes of this production. Many hours are devoted to a cause that sometimes offers little in return. But the players in this production ask for little if anything at all. They know the meaning of Avoda.

Let us take a look at some results: This past year we held our eighth Alumni Weekend. The donations that have been collected at these eight gatherings have enabled us to open the arms of the Avoda family to many boys who otherwise would not have been able to afford the Avoda experience. The trophy case in the mess hall displays the athletic achievements of the camp and stands as a physical example of the contributions of the Avoda Alumni. Go online at [campavoda.org](http://campavoda.org) and view a Web site that was launched by alumni and has the potential to extend the Avoda spirit across the planet. Perhaps I am getting carried away. But I did see a message over the summer that was

posted by a former kitchen boy of British descent; he was not typing on a keyboard in the US! The newsletter that you are reading goes out to roughly 1,000 past, present, and hopefully future Avodians. But enough with our accomplishments: What does the future hold?

The future holds promise. We are working to establish a permanent archives on the Avoda campus, a place where one and all can go and reminisce, gain a sense of the history of the camp. We hope to take our growing database and add to it the occupations of many of its members. A business network could truly be beneficial to many, perhaps even provide a mentor to those who are making the leap from the college ranks into the professional world. We want to help maintain the current ranks of the camp by helping with recruiting efforts. But the promise of these goals must be reached for and grasped before they fade away.

I have been involved with this organization since its inception. I have seen many changes, discussed many ideas, focused upon many goals. I realize that we can only be as good as our members want us to be. It all hinges upon desire: a desire to participate, a desire to make something better. Who out there wants to take on a bigger role? Who out there wants to share some new ideas, create some new events? Who wants to be able to sit back on occasion and think, "I gave back to a place that has given me so much more."

I can be reached at (617) 437-0399 or at [rossco@ziplink.net](mailto:rossco@ziplink.net). I hope my phone rings off the hook. I hope my in-box is always full. I hope that Avodians want to participate.

# Web, cont.

Mike has presented a Web site funding proposal to the Board of Directors in the hope that the camp will support the maintenance and upkeep that is necessary to keeping a Web site interesting and effective. One goal of the site would be to support recruitment efforts through the use of online application forms and information about the camp, including tuition, activities, dates, etc. There are a number of Jewish summer camps on the Internet these days and - without sounding too much like Spock - it seems logical to conclude that an increasing number of prospective campers and their parents will be using the Web to research camps. Thanks to Mike's efforts, if you look up "Avoda" or "camps" or "Jewish camps" in Yahoo, Avoda Online is one of the sites you'll see listed.

If you have access to the Web, check out the site. The more hits the site receives, the easier it will be to justify its further development. And if you have an e-mail address, by all means enter it into the site's e-mail database (if you have an e-mail address but don't have access to the Web, you can e-mail your address to [avoda@tiac.net](mailto:avoda@tiac.net)). The database is searchable, so you can also look up the e-mail addresses of former bunkmates and friends. To coin a phrase, the more, the merrier. And to paraphrase another: surf long and prosper.

# Russell Bueller's Day Off

By Ken Shifman

October 29, 1998

6:00 PM: I'm not sure if this was a movie or a color war play. All I know is that when I talked to Russell Sherman about his visit to Camp Avoda this summer, he sounded like he was 12 again. Sure we have our Alumni Weekend. We also held another successful Family Day Campaign. But sometimes you need to visit camp on your own terms and take care of business.

August 6, 1998

3:00 PM: Like any good star in a movie, Russell picked up his co-star, Michael "Quay" Cohen on his way to camp. The two arrived that Thursday night for an action-packed Avoda getaway, each with his own agenda.

6:30 PM, Waiters Call:

Russell heads toward the mess hall to get a good seat for dinner. The senior staff and Quay inform Russell that they are going out for dinner. They say, "Who wants camp food?" Russell eats the Avoda grub and then they all go out. Russell eats again.

9:15 PM, Taps: Russell and

Quay are OD. Certain bunks get pizza. They get slices from kids to "protect them from the Tispaquin Loonie."

11:30 PM: Russell sleeps in the old Athletic Shack (now called "home" by the two senior staffers living there). According to Russell, "It made up for lost time. When I was a kid we weren't even allowed in the Athletic Shack."

August 7, 1998

7:59 AM, one minute prior to Reveille: Quay's internal clock wakes him up to greet the day.

10:00 AM, First Period Bugle:

Russell goes out on the motor boat and instructs innocent children how

to water ski. He then gets his chance and schools the kids in the finer points, like holding the rope in his teeth.

12:00 PM, Third Period

Bugle: League competition. Russell ump's behind the plate. He does his best Lieutenant Drebbin imitation but still manages to call a clean game. Pink always wins. Quay scouts in case he gets the nod for CW.

1:00 PM, Line-up: Russell dreams of a Friday tradition that will never disappear: tuna and egg salad!

1:09 PM: The waiters bring fish and french fries... "When I was a kid...."

1:40 PM, Head Table: Paul Davis asks Quay to pass the Onion Rings. Membership has its privileges.

1:45 PM Quiet Please: "From the halls of Camp Avo-o-da, to the shores of Tispaquin. We will fight for Betty Gra-a-ble..."

1:48 PM: Kichen staff scrapes youth off of wall with spatulas after long-standing tradition of pig-pile.

1:50 PM, high-pitched Quiet Please: "Gink gonk went the little green frog...." (Editorial note: I don't know the rest since I wasn't in Bunk One and never received honorary membership... but I'm not bitter!)

1:55 PM, Quiet Please: "We don't like sardines, but lemon cake's all right, but when we see run-on sentences..."

2:15 PM, Rest Period (for some): Russell McGwire and Quay Sosa hit bunkos in an attempt to set a camp record.

2:40 PM Fourth Period: Quay challenges camp tennis pro to a game. There is considerable marketing and hype. After all, Quay used to be the Resident Tennis Pro. (Where was Hondo?) They sweated it out and the honors went to Quay. "If there's one thing I learned at camp it was how to be competitive."

3:15 PM, Fifth Period: Russell and Quay cameo in "He Got Game" and play a little fifth period hoops. It

was good to get out and run.

3:30 PM: Bob Costas notes how Russell plays a lot like the Worm. Quay? Like Ed Pinckney, lunch pail in hand. Jay Yampolsky was just hairy.

5:00 PM, Seventh Period Bugle, Free Play, Team Practices: Russell organizes a football game. No role-playing here. Just an old fashioned grid-iron grinding. Mano a mano. Kill or be killed. Us vs. Them. Dallas facing San Fran...

7:00 PM, Services, Please Rise: Russell goes down and checks out services at the Chapel Site.

7:30 PM, Cherry Bim: Russell tries his hand at song leading. He remembers Cupcake leading services. He remembers Jay Epstein leading the songs. He remembers - actually he forgets the words! We don't call him Rusty for nothing.

October 29, 1998

6:45 PM: So you see, Russell and Quay were everywhere. I think I even saw them on TV catching that famous foul ball. Or was it Back to the Future? I know the feeling. I visited over the summer as well. There's something to be said for camp in session. There is a certain buzz and energy from camp actually being in motion. Sure it's great to be there pre-camp when the camp is ours. But when I walked across the field and saw kids and staff (still kids) living the life - and you know what I mean by "the life," I just felt a natural high. Those were special days. To go back and share that feeling again is truly special.

6:50 PM: Yep, Camp Avoda is simply the best.

# Family Day 1998

By Ken Shifman

What a day! Who wasn't there? Why weren't you there?

This past summer The Avoda Alumni Association held a Family Day. We decided to choose the most beautiful day of the summer - weather-wise. After our Noah's Ark theme for the Alumni Weekend, we decided to do a Sunny-Side-Up type of thing.

The day was a success. We had a great turnout, activities, and fun reminiscing and socializing. It was a chance to bring spouses and children to Avoda to see where it all happens, where it happened and will happen for our children in the future.

A lot of the day was spent in the Grove area. We ate a great lunch of steak tips, chicken, burgers, and brownies. (And isn't it really about the food anyway?) There were activities for the campers and alumni's children. Director Jay Yampolsky wisely planned to have a circus performer train the children in juggling and other assorted skills that will enable the kids to run away from home and join the... I mean allow kids to amaze their friends back home.

We had some free play (some of us wished for rest period) and we spent a lot of that at the waterfront since it was so nice out. Some of the children looked like they didn't ever want to leave the water. Some of us (Nat Philips, his cousin, Adam Becker, Jill Shifman, Kenny Freeman, and me) swam out to the raft and shot the breeze.

We watched a fun activity on the far raft. It was a game called Chubba where all the kids ordinarily run in all directions until the person whose number is called catches the ball thrown straight up. When he catches it he yells "Chubba" and everyone has to freeze. He then has three steps and tries to hit a person with the ball without the person catching it. Now imagine it in the water. It was a perfectly creative activity that in my opinion defines the camp experience. An excuse to jump in the water. Get back onto the dock, laugh, and jump back in. Yeah there's



*The whole mispacha!*

a game going on, but nothing too heavy. Sure it's exciting when your number gets called, but just being out there with all your friends and counselors is really what it's about.

Lisa Weitzman Sherman noted how the water color was a little red. Maybe even a little scummy. Scummy - this is nothing! We explained that when we were young and aquatic, we would slip out of the water and be able to spell "Kick me" in the muck on each other's back. We've come a long way.

Mark Solomon held clinics in Kayaking for alumni, staff, and campers alike.

During the day, I saw many covered baby wagons (Avoda always did have a good swim team!). It was nice to see everyone in their own elements. I have this excellent life that I spend with Jill, my wife. I know other alumni have the same pride and happiness from their families. So it is a nice idea to share our most important entities with each other.

For example, I like other people to meet Jill because to know me, you need to know my wife. Or to know Paul Simon, you need to know that he runs his own "camp" consisting of his co-counselor Cynie and their two adorable campers Jonah and Tori. (Those lucky enough got to see Paul encourage Jonah to be the superhero Naked Boy!) Conversely, it is important for Jill to be at camp. For her to be able to picture Bunk 14 or the waterfront is important to me. I know that she understands that and was excited to go back to camp with me and see me excited.

Jay Yampolsky noted that I tend to include Jill in my articles often. Similarly, I talk about camp all the time with Jill. The two just need to get to know each other.



*Steve Camiel and son*

All in all it was a great day. Mike and Susan Roth did a great job organizing the day. Thank you! (Did anyone else see Morty walking around with a clipboard like he was General again?) Thanks also to Paul and Jay for hooking us up from the camp-side of things!



*Louis Dennis and family*



*Jason Rubin and family*



*David Morse, Paul "Moose" Hantman...  
and a little Morse and a little Moose*



*Alex Sherman and family*

# *Alumni Weekend 1998*

*By Michael Ross*

Perhaps we were behind the 8-ball from the start.

It was the eighth Avoda Alumni Weekend. It was 1998. It had been 80 years since the Sox last won The World Series.

From June 12 to June 14, the skies over Avoda opened and it rained. It rained from above, from below, from the side – apologies to the producers of *Forrest Gump* – it rained from everywhere. The fields were flooded and the courts were slick. What were 18 – there goes that 8 again – hearty Avodians to do? How about gather among the whispering pines and experience the true meaning of Avoda spirit.

We did not play bingo. We did not watch Three Stooges reruns.

What we did was make the best of the situation. And in doing so, we firmly reestablished what makes Avoda special in all of our hearts. Camp Avoda is about camaraderie. It is about the feelings we have for the many friends we made at camp. The memories surrounding those friends, the mutual experiences that forever stay in our minds and in our hearts, serve as a platform for meaningful life-long relationships. Those relationships may ebb and flow. But Camp Avoda forever remains as a common bond to many of the special people and special experiences in our lives.

So we talked, and talked some more. New experiences were shared. Old experiences were revisited. Friendships were rekindled. Of course we played some basketball indoors at the Rec Hall. Of course we played some cards. Of course we snuck in a barbecue, albeit for only 15 minutes as that was all that the weather permitted. But what we really did was catch up with some old friends, make some new friends, and truly realized the spirit of our common bond.

# Labeling Avoda Memories

By Jason M. Rubin

For the better part of 10 years, I have performed the often mind-numbing task of affixing mailing labels onto Alumni Association mailings, including the *Avoda Alumnus*. There have been a few times when I have enlisted the support of others but for some reason that I could never seem to articulate, I have always preferred to do this task, which can easily take 2-3 hours, alone. Most recently, I applied the labels and tabs for the yellow flyer that went out in May announcing our summer events. And while in the act of this thankless task, I finally realized why I hoard it.

It was a weekend night. The baby was asleep. The wife was on her way. I lugged the box of flyers, the sheaf of labels, and a bottle of single-malt scotch into the den. Into the VCR I popped the first of two parts of Ken Burns' epic documentary *The Civil War* that I would watch that night and began the process. As the scotch simmered in my consciousness and I saw the images on the TV screen of people whose hopes and dreams would be forever altered by the conflagration into which they were about to be thrust, I began to be transfixed by what Lincoln would later term "the mystic chords of memory:" this feeling that the past is alive within us, that we can revisit it in our hearts whenever we choose.

All the while, I was dutifully placing the labels on the flyers and stacking them neatly in the box. I became adept at looking at the labels, making sure I put them on right side up, and watching the video simultaneously. I noticed each name as I lifted the label off the sheet and stuck it on the flyer, smoothing it down

with my thumb. I came to the realization that just as each person involved in the Civil War had stories to tell, so too did every name I saw have stories and memories of Avoda. Stories that live inside each and every one of them.

There were, of course, many names I knew and I flashed back to various shared memories I have with them. There was my street hockey coach and I recalled a physical game against Clark. There was a guy who, as a CIT, would come into Bunk 12 and play records on my counselor's stereo. He turned me on to some great music and though I saw him twice at concerts about five or six years ago, I wonder why I don't call him up and get together more often. There are bunkmates, friends, counselors - even my primary care physician - all on these white, sticky rectangles.

Most of the names are not familiar to me at all. For all I know, they could be 18 or 80 years old, people who came before me and after me. I don't know their adventures but I know they must have had lots of them that they still think about. And even though many of their activities and memories of camp are particular to the time they went to Avoda, we all swam in the same lake, ran on the same field, slept in the same bunks, wore the same beanies, and look back with fondness at the summers we spent in Middleboro.

Occasionally, when I would be drawn deeply into the mystic chords of Avoda memory, the sounds of cannon blasts and rebel yells from the television would stir me from my reverie and remind me of the task at hand. After all, the purpose of the flyer was to announce events going on in the present. This year. This summer. The past is a wonderful place to visit but only in the present can you actually smell the pine trees, swim in the waters of Tispaquin, or take aim at a bunko. At the Family Day, a number of young boys looked over the land their fathers consider their spiritual home and tried to imagine themselves doing the same things someday. The future.

And as the credits rolled, and the strains of "Ashokan Farewell" filled the den, and the last labeled flyer was placed in the box, I sat back and took a last swig of whisky. Glad to be finished, but proud to be part of stringing together the past, present, and future, I gained a deeper appreciation for what the Alumni Association is all about. It's not 1,000 names in a database. It's about people, about family, about keeping in touch, staying together. The Civil War pitted brother against brother; the Alumni Association makes all of us brothers.

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# Blizzard Billiards

By Adam "Bakes" Becker

November 14, 1997. It had been a long and exhausting week at work and I couldn't wait to get home. Thankfully, my office closed up early because of the snowstorm and I was going to get home a bit earlier than I usually do. The only question remaining was, "Is the Avoda Billiards Night still on?" Figuring that the weather was so bad that no one was going to attempt to venture out, I stopped on my way home to pick up a flick and a sandwich, ready to hunker in for the evening. I had originally planned to meet up with Paul "Guffa" Simon and Eddie Klayman at J.C. Hillary's in Dedham, where we could leave our cars and all go into town together. When I got

home I figured that it would only be a matter of time before I heard from Guffa saying that he was bagging because of the weather. Well, I did get the call but he was still going. In addition, Guffa told me that Andy "A-Brain" Aronson was going to be joining us. Having not seen Andy for years, I told him to count me in.

I barely made it to J.C. Hillary's. The streets in Westwood were so icy I nearly got into an accident about half a dozen times. No jokes about my driving, please. But I did make it, and Guffa, A-Brain, Eddie and I all piled into Guffa's Jeep and drove into town. We made it to Boston Billiards with no problems.

Working our way through the "regular" tables in the main room, we found our way into the

private party room. Upon entering I could not have been more surprised. Not only did people brave the weather to show up, but there was a great showing. There had to have been 25 -30 guys who made the effort. Many of the regulars showed, including Louis Dennis, Jason Rubin, Larry "Stix" Crasnick, Scott Brown, David "Bones" Wertheim, Ken Shifman, Mark "Pee Wee" Glovin, and Russell "Hondo" Katz.

Gary "Chubba" Epstein was also there and if you talked to him I'll bet money that you left with his business card: "Timeless Antiques, Cambridge MA." Good luck Chubes! There were also a few faces seen less often at the get-togethers and reunions. These included the aforementioned (lawyer word) A-Brain

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***Join fellow alumni at Boston Billiards for an evening of pool, food, and drink! Friday, November 20 from 8pm-12 midnight. \$20 cover (to us, not the club). Boston Billiards is located at 126 Brookline Avenue, around the corner from Yawkey Way and deserted Fenway Park. Call the club at 617-536-7665 for directions or for more information, call Louis Dennis at 781-784-9686.***

Please accept the enclosed donation for:

- Scholarship fund
- Newsletter fund

My correct address is:

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Please add the following alumnus/alumni to your mailing list.

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Please print my business card in the next issue. My \$25 is enclosed.

Please remove my name from your mailing list.

**Make checks payable to Camp Avoda Alumni Association  
 Mail to 258 Harvard Street, #218, Brookline, MA 02446**

## Billiards, continued

and Steve Rosenberg, who was less than shy about making his appearance known. Let's just say that Rosey was feeling the holiday "spirit" and it was great to see.

In addition, some of the younger generation, Larry Rubin, Myles Block, Mark Goldberg and Steve Peters, showed up, but unfortunately, it was not until after most of the guys had left. Apparently they had been playing pool and hanging out in the main room for a couple of hours not realizing that the main group was in the back. Hey, give them a break, they're young.

In general it was a really fun night filled with great beers, some tasty apps and shooting stick. Seeing all the people that showed up really goes to show how important these nights are to keep the great Avoda Spirit alive through alumni events. To those of you who didn't make it, well, I guess that you can blame the weather - but remember, that excuse only works in the winter. For my part, it was great seeing everyone. Avoda continues to be a big part of my life, having made life-long friends whom I always look forward to seeing at both Avoda and non-Avoda get-togethers. I hope to see everyone, and hopefully some new faces, at the next event.

## We want you!

The Camp Avoda Alumni Association is looking to collect business information from its members in order to make it available as a means of networking and providing younger alumni with friendly contacts in various industries.

If you are interested in being listed, please send a letter to the Alumni Association or e-mail Ken Shifman ([kshifman@epsilon.com](mailto:kshifman@epsilon.com)) or Mike Ross ([rossco@ziplink.net](mailto:rossco@ziplink.net)) with the following information:

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