



AVODA ALUMNUS

THE BIENNIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMP AVODA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2004

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Building Friendships That Last a Lifetime

By Lou Dennis

"Of all the camps passing by, there's none that can compare."

The opening words of the Camp Avoda alma mater say it all. My first experience at Camp Avoda was in 1969, and it was one I'll never forget. As a nine-year-old, I was with my parents to drop my brother Barry off at camp for his 4th summer. I saw my friend Phil Lukoff there, and I wanted to go to camp, too. My parents wouldn't let me, and I cried the entire way home. The following summer I was able to go, and I cried all the way home again. This time, however, it was because I loved camp so much I did not want to leave. Today, 30 years later, I still love Camp Avoda.

I have so many fond memories of camp, and I'd like to share a few. I remember my first year in Bunk 4 and being on what was probably the best Junior Softball team ever at camp. I remember being led by our coaches, Jerry Hill and Irv Horowitz, to win the Ted Williams Tournament. I remember my first Color War as a Blue Invader, under the leadership of our Captain, Tom Leavitt. I remember that fight song word for word. I remember the Horblatt brothers and Zoo Ball. I remember the Flag Rush in which Cory Margolis was unstop-

pable. I remember Robby Coppel, arguably the greatest athlete to ever grace the fields of Avoda. I remember Red Sox games, the beach, fish delivered by Mrs. Boom Boom on Wednesdays, chicken dinner on Fridays, my Red Sox beanie, Chubie's Celtics beanie, Fireside Restaurant, late night card games, Benjga, Goody's lake-o's, the rumors of Herbie Bamel's lake-o, robbing Johnny Bamel of a beach-o, Jay Epstein, my Bunk 14, the two years I was Bunk 14 counselor with Chubes, the Tispaquin Loonie, and all the many friends I still have. Morté, Rollo, Chubie, Rosey, Eddie, Shiffa, Mel, Nat, Cousin Stogie, Phil -- thanks for the memories.

The next chapter in my life brings me to my son Jake. He attended camp for the first time this past summer, and took over where I left off. When I dropped him off the first day, I truly wanted to stay. Jake wouldn't let me. I knew my son would like camp, but I was thrilled when, just like me, he loved it. It took Jake all of one day to fall into Camp Avoda life and begin to build memories of his own. On the second night of camp, I picked Jake up for his 15th Travel Baseball game of the season.

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President's Letter

This past December I had the great pleasure of assuming the role of president of the Alumni Association. Avoda has been a large part of my life ever since I first entered Bunk 1 in 1977, and continuing through my time as a camper, staff member, and now alumnus. Taking over as president is the next step in my Avoda journey and one that I look forward to with great enthusiasm.

The Alumni Association is a tremendous organization and one that I am proud to be a part of. From its start more than 18 years ago, the Alumni Association has provided a way for alumni to reconnect with Avoda and to give back to a place that has given each of us so much. The Alumni Association's impact can be felt in numerous ways, from the construction of the brilliant Avoda Archives which provide a portal into Avoda's rich tradition, to our successful scholarship effort that sends underprivileged boys to camp each summer. This year we have undertaken one of our most important initiatives to date: a recruiting effort impressively led by Louis Dennis (please see the story on page 1). Annual events like Alumni Weekend, Billiards Night, and Hoops Night remain a cornerstone of our organization. These events allow alumni a chance to reminisce about the past while also reconnecting with the lives of those we may have lost touch with.

Moving forward, there are many opportunities for us to expand the scope and reach of the Alumni Association and I look forward to working with all of you to make that happen. I am confident that camp recruiting will continue to be a priority for our group, as will our successful scholarship initiative. By utilizing technology, specifically our website and our e-mail list, and by providing great social events, we can continue to grow our alumni community. Avoda is an amazing place and the Alumni Association is an amazing organization. I urge you all to get involved in any way possible. At the very least, stop by camp this summer and visit; I promise you will enjoy a wave of emotion and feel fully refreshed just from stepping on the grounds.

Finally, I want to thank Mike Ross, who did such a great job leading this organization over the past six years, and Bobby Zuker, who in a relatively short time made a significant impact on the Alumni Board. Mike and Bobby have left our board and they, along with Jonny Bamel, have joined the camp's Board of Directors. I know they will all be excellent additions to that group and I know the Alumni Association looks forward to working with them on a regular basis going forward.

Here's hoping I see you all on the shores of Lake Tispaquin this June – remember, Alumni Weekend is just a few weeks away!

Sincerely,

Russell Sherman

“Avoda is an amazing place, and the Alumni Association is an amazing organization. I urge you all to get involved in any way possible.”



Building Friendships That Last a Lifetime . . . Continued

He informed me he didn't want to come home for the playoffs as we had planned, because he didn't want to miss anything at camp. As the coach of his team, I was disappointed; as his dad, I knew he was "at home." As Lew Satloff would say (but not on Friday night), "the claw has got him."

When Karen and I picked Jake up on the last day of camp, we could see the light in his eyes when he talked about camp. He talked all the way home. When he began to sing Color War songs so naturally, Karen had tears in her eyes. He left with e-mail addresses, new friends, and a little bounce in his step. As my wife said, he had an air about him – a stronger self-confidence. We knew he was at the right place.

Today, there are so many choices for kids – basketball, baseball, soccer camps; computer, science, and adventure camps – more options than I can name. Camp Avoda, I have always believed, is the kind of place where you open the doors in June and the camp will be full. For the last few years, that has not been the case. After my son's wonderful experience, I wanted every kid to enjoy the same experience. I asked Paul Davis and Tom Leavitt if I could help in recruiting. With their blessing, I undertook the seemingly straightforward task of recruiting. Along with other dedicated alumni, we have sent out post-

cards, attended open houses, called all prospective campers who have shown an interest since 2001, mailed over 125 videos (newly produced by the Alumni Association), placed ads in temple newsletters, and more. So far, we have over 40 new campers for this summer, and could end up with as many as 60. Many thanks to Mike Roth, Ken Shifman, Jerry Hill, Andy Spear, Micah Fleisig, EJ (does he even have a last name?), Moose Lite, Jason Rubin, Russell Sherman, Paul Davis, Tom Leavitt, and the rest of the Board of Directors for supporting us in this critical effort.

We all need to realize it is all about the kids. Our best form of advertising is word of mouth. In your community, in your organizations, with your friends – promote Camp Avoda. If anyone needs a video, an *Avodian* or a camp packet, please e-mail myself or Paul Davis, and the information will be sent immediately. We need your help.

The slogan for our recruiting drive has been "Building Friendships that Last a Lifetime." Can anything be more true or more valuable than that? As I said to the parent of a prospective camper, "Your son will like whatever camp he chooses, but he will love Camp Avoda."

There truly is "*none that can compare.*"

**"As my wife said,
he had an air
about him—a
stronger self-
confidence. We
knew he was at
the right place."**

HALLOWEEN GATHERING HOSTED BY JAY YAMPOLSKY & ANNE FELL



**EVAN YAMPOLSKY IN
THE MOST FRIGHTENING
COSTUME EVER**

THE KITCHEN STAFF PREPARES EGG SALAD FOR LUNCH



**GEEKY GRAYSON KIMBALL &
JAG-TOOTHED JAY YAMPOLSKY**



**THE CREW IN
FULL GETUP**

Avodians gathered from far and near to celebrate All-Hallow's eve. Attendees included Mark "Disco-Fabulous" Glovin, Grayson "The Geek" Kimball, host Jag-Toothed Jay Yampolsky, Kenny "Art Garfunkel's Evil Twin" Shifman, Hondo "Nice Udders" Katz, Paul "Schmed's Date" Simon, Sam "Juan Valdez" Mirkin, and assorted ghouls, goblins, and cheap movie character rip-offs. The buzz of the night clearly belonged to Evan Yampolsky, who donned a cheerleader costume that scared the daylight out of everyone. The other buzz of the night belonged to Hondo "Moo-Moo" Katz. The success of the evening was thanks in large part to the hard work of evil hostess Anne Fell, soon to star in a remake of *The Bride of Frankenstein* called *The Bride of Yampolsky*.



**KEN "ART GARFUNKEL'S
EVIL TWIN" SHIFMAN**



PAUL SIMON & DATE



We Are Family—The Next Generation at Avoda

By Jeff Keselman

In 1978, I stepped onto Avoda's athletic field for the very first time, my softball glove about eight sizes too big for my eight-year-old hands. I took the first of literally thousands of jump shots on a now replaced set of basketball courts. I took my first laps in what was then a much more murky Lake Tispaquin. And I ate the first of maybe 1,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches courtesy of Sysco. Twenty six years, far more pounds, and far fewer hairs later, I look at Avoda through not just my own eyes but those of my 18-month-old son, Joshua. Not once as a camper or staff member did I ever stop to think about my own children, and those of my fellow Avodians, repopulating the place that was and is so dear to my heart. Now that I am a parent, it is a concept that seems to occupy more and more of my thoughts.

In just the past year, so many of my Avoda contemporaries have had children that it does make for some pretty humorous daydreams. Just thinking



Proud Papa Jeff Keselman & Joshua

about a 2011 Bunk One roster of Owen Sherman, Charlie Zuker, Alex Shifman, Adam Alter, Jacob Vetstein, Benjamin Rothschild, and Tyler Davis all running around as Gink Gonkers and I cannot help but laugh. Fast forward that same group a few years



**Alumnus
Kenny &
Future
Alumnus
Ethan
Shifman**

later and its possible they could spend an evening or two each summer dancing with the Pembroke ladies who could include Gabrielle Reiser, Courtney Glovin, Alexis Gladstone, Elie Freeman, Carson Kaiser, Abigail Sobol, Rachel Leibowitz, Rebecca Shaff, Ellie Agulnek, Sabrina Smith, and Hannah Keselman (play nice boys, Papa Keselman owns a shotgun and he knows how to use it!). I think it's pretty safe to say that there will be plenty of adult supervision in place for those socials!

So what's the point you ask? Just this; I always thought of Avoda in terms of 'our place' and never really thought about its long-term future. I just assumed that it would always be there, for what young man WOULD^N'T want to spend his summers with his best friends? These thoughts only seemed to extend to those lucky few who were sent there by their parents when I was a camper. Now many of us ARE the parents and we have choices to make in regard to where and how our children spend their time. I have no idea where I will be financially when Joshua is ready for an overnight camp experience. I only know that I hope to give him the same wonderful opportunity that my parents gave me so many years ago.

Heard it Through the Grapevine—Alumni Happenings

Birth Announcements

Bobby Zuker — 1990 Bunk 14 — Charlie Linden — Born 12/16/2003
 Peter “Spider” Leibowitz — Counselor Extraordinaire — Rachel Belle — Born 11/3/2003
 Rich Vetstein — 1987 Bunk 14 — Jacob Micah — Born 10/7/2003
 Adam Rothschild — 1988 Bunk 14 — Benjamin — Born 5/7/2003
 Ethan Sobol — 1988 Bunk 14 — Abigail Caroline — Born 9/19/2003
 Jeff Kesleman — 1984 Bunk 14 — Hannah Morgan — Born 3/1/2004
 Jeff Davis — 1988 Bunk 14 — Tyler Benjamin—Born 3/13/2004
 Dave Shaff — 1987 Bunk 14 — Rebecca Hannah — Born 11/18/2003
 Jim Feldman — 1984 Bunk 14 — Nicolas James — Born 11/15/2003
 Jeremy Agulnek — 1989 Bunk 14 — Ellie Brie — Born 11/16/2003
 Russell Kane — 1984 Bunk 14 — Robin Naomi — 12/19/2003
 Greg Smith — 1984 Bunk 14 — Sabrina — Born 01/2004



Tyler Benjamin Davis

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Charlie Linden Zuker

Weddings

Josh Kaswell — 1991 Bunk 14 — Married Erica Nathanson — 9/20/2003
 Paul Hantman — Hon. Bunk 14 1977 — Married Carolyn LaBossiere — October 12, 2003

Passings

We are sorry to report that Brett Fain has passed away. Our condolences to his loved ones.

Share your news with us: campavodaalumniassociation@hotmail.com



Avoda Daydream Continued

Why, in the middle of an October afternoon, did I spontaneously regress 16 years? Was I reflecting on the pinnacle of my athletic achievement? Was this the defining moment of my life when I realized that I was a loser? I hope not. Believe it or not, I emerged from my daydream with a smile on my face. Maybe this mental detour was part of the healing process that all of Red Sox Nation must begin. Perhaps juxtaposing this relatively minor setback with one of the most colossal disasters in Red Sox history was just what the doctor ordered. Maybe, with the sacking of the manager even my grandmother could outwit, it is time to focus attentions from that fateful eighth inning to next February when pitchers and catchers report.

“A bad day at
Avoda is better
than a good day
anywhere else.”

I'm not sure that I'm mentally prepared to forgive the Sox for ruining my October. I'm not even sure I am ready to forgive my father for bringing me up a Red Sox fan! Although it's nice to think that my mind was trying to repair the severe emotional trauma incurred on account of the Bosox, I don't think I'm ready. No, I believe my subconscious was trying to remind me that a bad day at Avoda is better than a good day anywhere else.

No Place Like Home: Alumni Homecoming 2004

By Sam Mirkin

Every June, alumni from such exotic locales as Connecticut, New York, and Sharon gather on the Shores of “Beautiful Lake Tispaquin – The Gateway to Cape Cod” for the annual Alumni Weekend. I, for one, have been counting the days since mid-March, and cannot wait to pull onto Gibbs Road and begin the bumpy ride down memory lane. With a smile on my face (which admittedly could be from the DQ™ Blizzard I just inhaled), I coast past the neighbors holding Welcome Back signs and into paradise.

What is it that makes Alumni Weekend so enjoyable? Is it the ultra-firm, tempur-pedic, NASA foam mattresses? Doubtful. Perhaps the luxurious cabins replete with plasma screen TV's and state of the art wireless internet portals. Nope. The refreshing waters of the lake, compared by many to the finest natural spas in Europe? Probably not. What is it then? What makes Alumni Weekend such a good time?

For me, it's the chance to hang out with my best friends for a couple of days with no schedules or meetings or obligations. I must admit to an unidentifiable glee when I hear Dan Reiser tell me that he's headed to the hoop court, and will meet me at the Mess Hall for lunch. I wish there were a mess hall in Needham, so I could meet Dan there for grilled cheese and tomato soup on a rainy day.

Avoda is a vacation in the truest sense of the word. When I get there, the rest of the world slips away. There is no place like it that I know.

If you have not been to Alumni Weekend, or haven't been in a while, we would really like to see you. From the moment you check in with Paul Davis (who will need to collect your canteen fee) and he says, “Welcome Home,” that's really where you are.

**Sam Says: “Come to
Alumni Weekend
June 25, 26 & 27”**

Elsewhere in this newsletter, Lou Dennis highlights the recruiting effort now being spearheaded by The Alumni Association. I want to echo Lou's sentiment, and remind each of you that Avoda is a magical place that forges lifelong bonds. Perhaps it's time to renew those bonds yourself.

If you make a trip back to camp, you may just rediscover why your nephew or son or grandson should spend the summer at camp.

Come home to Avoda this June. You'll be happy you did.

Avoda Daydream

By Dave Shaff

Memories of Avoda recur in the most unusual of times. There I was, sitting in the grand ballroom of the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, listening to cardiologists argue about the best way to treat heart failure (*very* riveting). It was right after a carbohydrate-laden lunch, so my head was bobbing as I was losing the fight to keep my eyes open. The speaker interjects a joke – the audience's laughter causes my head to snap to attention... temporarily. Five minutes later, I'm losing the same fight to stay awake. Only bits and pieces of the lecture permeate my slumber. The speaker goes on: "Randomized, double-blinded clinical studies have shown that...SHAFF'S GOT THE DESI!!!!"

Did he just say that *out loud*? Obviously not, since the 500+ attendees at the conference didn't spring from their chairs, chase me around the amphitheater, and attempt to remove the sock emanating from the waistband of my sweatpants. I must have been dreaming. Temporarily, I was not sitting in a

medical conference, learning about the latest methods of treating cardiac disease. It was 1987, and I was back at Avoda during my Bunk 14 year Desert War. I was streaking across the longitudinally divided field, carrying the Designated Flag located between Bunk 3 and the basketball court. I had been unsuccessfully rushing that flag all afternoon, shuttling between the flag and jail. This time, however, I had evaded the first line of the defense, and I was making my way to the home side of the field. Stu Glasser, a more nimble and faster adversary, seeks to intercept. Twenty feet away from victory, he catches me by the legs and wraps me up just short of the line. In a last burst of desperation, I fling the 3-inch by ½-inch dowel adorned with a piece of towel towards the dividing line. My nearest teammate, an eight-year-old Gink-Gonker, is standing all alone, ready to receive the flag. It flips end-over-end in slow motion, hits the Bunk 1 teammate in the hands, and continues its gravity-driven path to the ground. Needless to say, I didn't spend a well-deserved afternoon in the lake. With a final head bob, a brief snort, and a slight hint of drool, the dream ends.

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Alumni Weekend - June 25, 26 & 27

Camp Avoda Alumni Association

P.O. Box 465

Needham, MA 02492

<http://www.campavoda.org>