



WINTER 1998

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Avoda Alumnus

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMP AVODA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Class of '84 produces another Asst. Director

by Ken Shifman

Many people go to camp and think, "I am going to be here forever! I'll go from Bunk 14 to CIT, then a counselor for like 10 years, then I'll probably be Assistant Director and eventually Director." That's what I thought and I know I wasn't alone. By the time I reached Bunk 14 in 1984 – and the previous year's Bunks 11, 12, and 13 had all combined to make a triple Bunk 14 – we felt like we were a special breed, the best 14 of all time (of course, they all should and do think that). Needless to say, I unfortunately finished my tenure at Avoda. I never made it to Assistant Director and "forever" suddenly became a finite amount of time relegated to the vaults of yesterday.

But three years ago I heard the news that Lee Kaiser was going back to camp to help run the show. I couldn't believe it! How exciting! How incredible! How unbelievable! How jealous was I? After the initial bitterness of realizing that it was not me who would be leading the camp into the next millennium, I felt proud to be part of the same foundation. Lee and I and 25 other campers all made each other what we were and I was psyched to have Lee, a proud member of the 1984 Bunk 14 leading the way. Lee did a fantastic job, according to the administration, the Board of Directors, the campers, the staff, and the campers' parents. But Lee's "forever" also ended and after last summer he stepped down. (See "President's Letter" for excerpts from his speech.)

Now what? Will another member of the 1984 Bunk 14 please stand up?
Jay Yampolsky, COME ON DOWN!

Yes, Jay Yampolsky will be the Assistant Director of Camp Avoda for the summer of 1998. Jay is a great positive force, like Lee, who also will bring leadership, responsibility, fresh ideas, traditions, values, common sense, and spirit to camp. The whole Avoda family, from alumni to campers, are excited to have someone we know at the helm.

According to Director Paul Davis, "We are thrilled to have one of our own step up to Assistant Director. I am looking forward to working with him and I know that the staff is, too. And it's interesting to have the youngest Leadership Trophy winner come back and help run the camp." (Jay had won Leadership in 1983, as a member of Bunk 13, and holds the distinction of being the youngest camper to win the award.)

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President's letter

by Jason M. Rubin

Do you remember your last year at camp? Did you know going into it that it would be your last year at camp? I didn't. I suspected it, but I wasn't sure. And so I don't think I took the time to acknowledge certain parts of that summer as being the last time I'd do this or that. It's an important thing to do and I wish I had done it at the time. My wife bought a book for our daughter called *The Goodbye Walk* that is all about taking the time to say goodbye to the little – but meaningful – things about a particular place before you leave it. Performing such a ritual helps you feel better about leaving; it helps you come to terms with it, especially if you're leaving in spite of your deepest wishes.

I was fortunate enough to observe Lee Kaiser perform such a ritual last summer. He had decided that he could no longer return to Avoda as an administrator. I know that he knew that his last summer as a counselor would be his last, and in his staff notes in the *Avodian* that year he eloquently took a "goodbye walk" of sorts through the places and people at Avoda that meant a lot to him. I also know that he knew – or at least hoped – that he'd be back as an administrator someday. He made that dream come true for three summers. But once again, the end had come.

He confided this to me just before the banquet last August. He was going to announce it to the camp during his speech at the annual bittersweet last-night event. I think he confided in me because Lee has an extraordinary respect for history and I, as president of the Camp Avoda Alumni Association, represent the lengthening cord of Avoda memory. I know few people who are as cognizant and appreciative of being an Avoda alumnus – and what that means both on a spiritual and emotional level. Because of that, there are few Avoda alumni I respect more than Lee.

Lee told me he wanted to remain active in the camp in some capacity; most likely on the Archives project, which he and I have been developing the last couple of years. I told him he can do whatever he wants, whenever he wants, and that we'd support him. Then we went into the Mess Hall and the banquet began. When he rose to speak, his voice was shaky from the start. By the time he finished, there was not a dry eye in the place. Here are some excerpts of what he said:

I came to Avoda as a 10-year-old boy who had recently lost his sister and father. I made my journey around the field setting goals and working hard to achieve them.

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From the editor

by Ken Shifman

This edition of the *Avoda Alumnus* has been a long time coming. A few editions ago, I was appointed editor of this prestigious publication. We got the issue together and we each got a rough draft to go over. Two weeks later we met to finish it up. I pulled out my copy. I had maybe three corrections. I thought everything was perfect. My biggest beef was the tone for a certain article. But former-editor-cum-president Jason Rubin pulled his copy out and I have never seen so many red marks! (I didn't even use red!)

Some day I'll really earn the title. For now, it's just an excuse to write more. I get to write this column where I try to tie-in one of the main themes of the issue. One of the themes of this particular edition is "Connections." Unfortunately, the following true story has no connection to that, but it's a good story.

I was only at the Alumni Weekend for Friday and Friday night this past year. But I feel like I missed a great happening. With a little help from Mike Ross, I will relate a true story.

From what I hear, Herb Bamel was the last (only) person to hit a lake-o. I have only heard this through legend and have yet to find any witnesses. (If a tree falls in

the woods and no one is around to hear it....) So this very debate arose the Friday night at the weekend. One thing led to another and the leading candidate to hit one in the present era, Eric Goodman, was challenged.

The challenger? His name is David Jaye. I don't have much skinny on him other than he challenged Goody with the charitable intent of contributing a significant sum of money to the Avoda Alumni Association's Scholarship Fund. The challenge? To hit a lake-o.

Eric Goodman is a big man. He is a power hitter. I think I saw him on ESPN2 on the lumberjack championships. Eric Goodman is a big man. So that Saturday, while the afternoon hoop game was going on, Jerry "Pedro" Hill took the mound. Goody did not hit a lake-o. He hit *two* lake-o's. There were plenty of witnesses, and I for one am bummed that I couldn't see such a feat. He was challenged, and he hit TWO! Unbelievable.

Thank you to David Jaye for the donation. And thank you to Eric Goodman for the big stick.

Makin' Avoda Bacon

by Ken Shifman

I'm sure everyone has heard about the whole Kevin Bacon connection game. It's supposedly big in California. For those of you who live under a rock, a bunk, or whatever, I'll elaborate. The whole theory is that if you name a movie star, or even a low profile actor who has been in a movie, you can establish a "link" to Kevin Bacon in six or fewer steps. It's actually a challenge to beyond three. For example, you name Elvis Presley. Well Elvis was in a movie called King Creole in 1958 with Walter Matthau. Walter Matthau and Kevin Bacon were in JFK together in 1991. That leaves us with a "Bacon Number" of two. (This isn't off the top of my head. There is a Web site located at <http://www.cs.virginia.edu/~bct7m/bacon.html> and it calculates for you. It's pretty neat.)

So what's the point, you ask? Was Paul Davis in a movie with Kevin Bacon? No, but I'd certainly go see it if there was. It's just that lately I've been feeling like the same phenomenon exists from our beloved A-V-O-D-A. How many times do you go out for the night and bump into an Avoda person? Whether I'm out at a restaurant or a Celtics game I always seem to see someone from camp.

Jill and I moved into a new apartment about two months ago. We live right near Kupel's Bakery in Brookline. We park our cars and walk right by on the way home every night. Well three weeks ago, or so I went in and got our usual cookie. I went out and knew that I knew the kid behind the counter. So I went in and it turned out to be an alumnus of course, Jeremy Pildis. He was a camper when I was a counselor. (Now I even get dessert deals once in a while. Membership has its privileges.)

Alex Sherman was at work one day and called a representative from an Internet company he had business with. He knew the man's

name, Mike Newman, but never thought twice about it, since it is not an unoriginal name. But as the conversation continued, they quickly found out the link. Mike Newman was the head of photography for years at Avoda.

While I was writing this article, I had dinner with fellow Avodians. No news there. But we sit down and within minutes, Jay brings a woman over to the table who turns out to be Greg and Brett Smith's mom.



An Avoda Mom. The next best thing to an Avodian. We all have many surrogate Avoda parents. It turns out that our parents run into each other as well. In fact when my parents met David "Bones" Wertheim's parents, they introduced themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Bones. Not too much of a camp influence. There's a special bond between each of us and our friends' parents. We treat them like our own, only with a little more mischief.

And what would a Phish, Radiators, or Grateful Dead show have been like without bumping into Dave Benjamin? Needless to say, there are a lot of Avoda People out there.

One week before the Avoda Alumni Billiards Night last November,

I was eating in a restaurant and got tapped on the shoulder. It was Harold Poverman. We are everywhere!

Even up in New Hampshire, there is an Avoda minyan. People find each other and Avoda undercurrents seem to prevail. I went to Mark Glovin's and I saw a "long lost" camper of mine, Josh Lawton. At first it seems random. But then I stop and think and realize that the connections just keep coming. And these examples are just my life. Multiply these by a zillion and you get....

It's a small world. But it's a big Avoda world. I can't think of a game we could play, or how you could check the connections, but I'm sure someone can. Maybe we could create a drinking game. Maybe someone could put it on the Internet. It would be all the rage.

Probably not in California, but maybe in Middleboro, MA.

**AVODA
RULES!**

What's your e-mail?

If you're on e-mail and want to be included in occasional Avoda alumni updates, send your e-mail address to Mike Ross at: rossco@ziplink.net

The Boys Are Back In Town: AW '97

by Jason M. Rubin

The seventh annual Camp Avoda Alumni Weekend overcame some unusual challenges in 1997. Because the camp started on a Sunday rather than a Monday, we were not able to use the camp the weekend just before camp opened. Instead, the event was held the weekend of the previous week. This meant that no staff would be present, which meant that the bunks would not have been cleaned out and set up and the kitchen would be closed. Also, the last day of the Weekend fell on Father's Day, so those among us who have sired offspring were presented with a bit of an ethical dilemma.

But we're Avodians, not wusses, so more than two dozen alumni showed up and had a great time, highlighted by two lake-o's hit

by Eric Goodman (the first of which earned \$500 for the Alumni Association's Scholarship Fund, thanks to a bet placed by alumnus David Jaye). If anything, the lack of camp staff (except, of course, for PGD) was liberating. No one was in our way, using equipment we wanted to use, taking up all the hot water in the showers. With no meals provided, alumni got to form small groups of buddies to go out on their own and explore the town.

I arrived early on Friday afternoon to sweep out a few bunks and arrange beds and bureaus. Meanwhile, a bunch of our guys got together for the second annual Pre-Alumni Weekend Golf Outing (PAWGO), aka the Moose Lite Classic, named for Paul "Moose" Hantman,

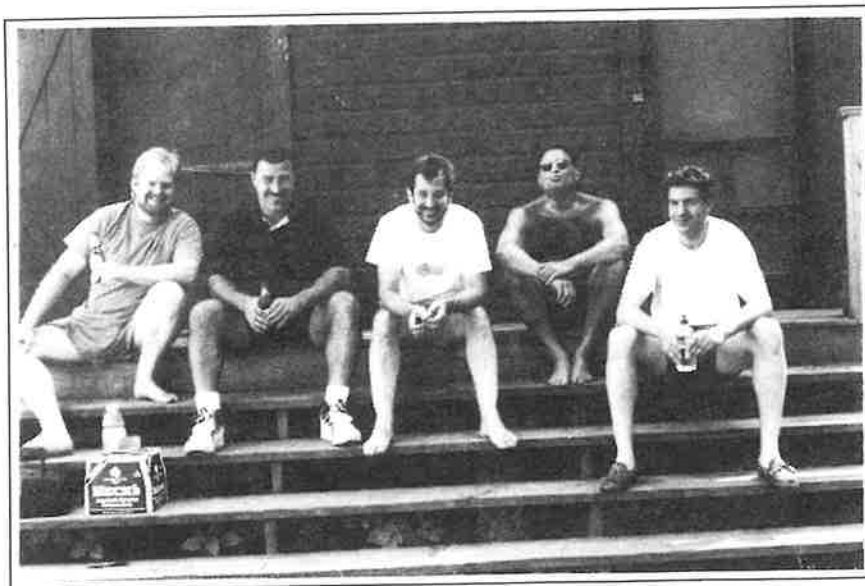
whose yeoman efforts have made this enjoyable event possible.

As usual, we played softball and basketball, swam and boated, and soaked in the incomparable Avoda ambience. If you stayed away last year because you thought you wouldn't be in a clean, set-up bunk or were concerned that food would not be provided, you missed a good time that was far from roughing it.

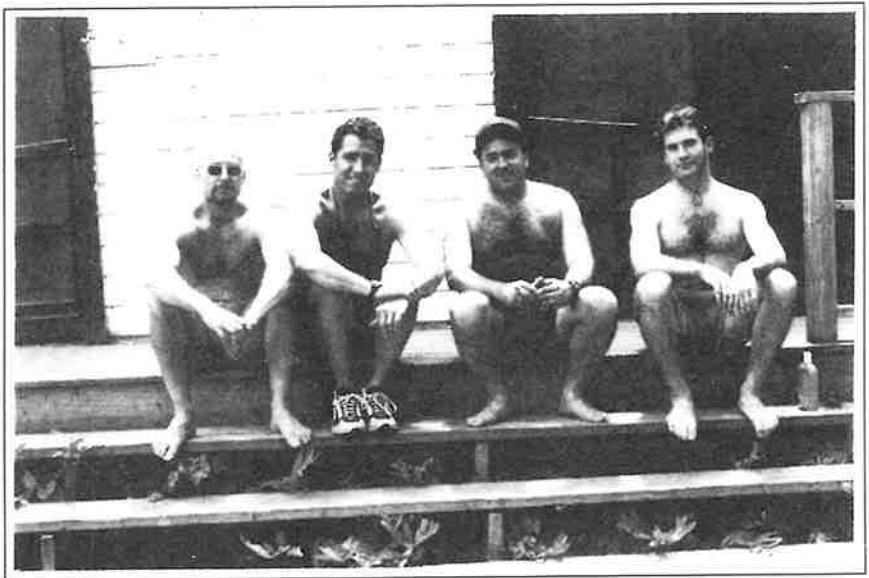
It may be that in 1998 the same situation will occur; we'll have more details in the next issue (we're also planning a Family Day one Sunday over the summer; again, more details to come). If so, I hope all alumni will realize that the three most important things are location, location, location! The Alumni Weekend is held at Avoda. That's all you need to know.

Scenes from last year's Alumni Weekend

Photographs by Jay Epstein and Jason Rubin



L-R: Jason Rubin, Eric Goodman, Jerry Hill, Gary Epstein, and Larry Crasnick.



L-R: David Wertheim, Jay Yampolsky, Peter Glovin, and Alex Sherman.



The swing that lake-o's are made of (actually, Eric hit both batting righty); David Jaye, who had to pay, looks on.

Guess which one came straight from Simon and Sons?



"No, that can't be right."



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President's letter, continued

Avoda became my role model, Avoda became my father. Avoda has nurtured, encouraged, influenced, and directed me. It may also do the same for you.

As you become senior staff, it is your responsibility to be the leaders of camp. You are at the height of your Avoda career. Every dream and goal that you had as a camper is in your hands. As much as you know that camp is cyclical and you are just a part of a time in its long history, that doesn't mean your energy, devotion, and influence goes unnoticed. Each of you provides the energy that Avoda's history needs to continue its motion forward.

I share these words of reflection on 18 years with you tonight because I believe that this may be my last summer. For weeks, I have been trying to put into words why I have come to this decision. For weeks, I have agonized over how to share my thoughts and feelings. As I stand before you tonight, I still have not found the words but my gut tells me that now is the time to move on. But I need each and every person in this room to know that even if I am not physically here, my heart and soul always will be. To this point, I have lived as full an Avoda life as anyone could ever ask for. To that I say thank you Camp Avoda. I love you!

When he came back to his seat (right next to mine), I gave him a hug and told him he should be proud of what he had accomplished – not only what he had done physically over the years but also the message he had sent out that history matters and that it can be kept alive in our hearts if only we continue to stoke its flames. Lee had once again taken his goodbye walk with pride, grace, and courage.

I hope I can do the same.

Yes, I, too, am taking my goodbye walk. I was a camper from 1973-1977. I was a staff member from 1978-1981. I have served as an Alumni Association officer since 1989. I have been president since 1993. But now I must say goodbye. Not because I necessarily want to, but because there are things going on in my life that are taking up more of my time and other efforts and activities I need and want to take on, which will require even more time and mental energy.

So I am planning to resign from the Alumni Association board, effective at the end of my term this fall. Why announce it now? Because I want to be fully conscious, aware, and appreciative of my last few months of service before I say goodbye.

I love Camp Avoda. I can't say it any clearer than that. I can't even define what it is about the camp that I love. It's just an atmosphere that you breathe in and before long you find you can't live without it. In 1978, I was faced with a choice. Come back in the "lowly" position of kitchen

boy or don't come back at all. Like anyone, my dream had been to go from Bunk 14 to CIT to counselor. But now I was being told that there was no room left in Bunk 14, despite the fact that I had more camper years under my belt than some of the others who got in. I was devastated. (Younger alumni, please understand that in those days, there were only about 10 kids in 14, not the dozens who get in today.)

Tom Leavitt, who knows what Avoda means to me, encouraged me to go back. It was important to be there, he said, and even if I had no ambition to be a kitchen boy it was better than spending the summer in Oak Hill Park. So I went back and while I never did realize my dream of becoming a counselor, I've always cherished my four post-camper years at Avoda.

When the Alumni Association began, I knew I had to be part of it. Again, I sought out Tom and again, he was my doorway to remaining connected to Avoda. I've worked on every issue of the *Avoda Alumnus* save for the first. I've always taken on the task of trying to inspire alumni to get involved. Sadly, only a small percentage of our overall mailing list ever has responded to the newsletter or our activities. Some people haven't the time, some haven't the passion. Tom told me once not to get discouraged. "Not a lot of people are into it the way you and I are," he said. "That's just the way it is." It seemed hard to believe but I know now that it's true.

After several years in the Alumni Association, I began growing frustrated with the lack of progress we were making. I was going to resign then, but instead I became president and began trying to institute a number of new ideas: a gift to the camp (the trophy case), the Archives, the Visiting Alumnus Program, a Web site, a new logo for the camp. Not all of these came to pass – or have yet – but I tried to get things done and I tried to get people to help me get them done.

Over the past two years, I again have felt frustrated. But I no longer have the time to work through it. I left things unfinished in 1981 and I do so now again. But I can accept that, because I gave it my best shot for a number

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Gary Epstein

We'd like to know a little bit about you for our files

Wanted: Alumni Information! About two months ago, I had a geek party at my house. I'm not saying that my guests were geeks, but it was a geek party. I had Mike Roth and Mike Ross over to my apartment. (Bones showed up later. He wanted to know what all the hootin' and a-hollerin' was all about.) The objective was simple: to convert the Alumni Association database from its old format to a more usable, more current technology.

We grabbed a few beers and sat around the computer. We actually had two computers cranking, as Morty had his laptop. It took maybe an hour, but we imported the data into Microsoft Access. We all toasted and put our pocket protectors away.

What's the point you ask? There are two parts to the answer. The Alumni Association is looking for updated address information. We also are looking for business information.

When the Alumni Association was formed seven years ago, one of the charters was to use the Association as a job/professional network. It makes sense. We have a large number of successful alumni. We could help younger

alumni with information regarding careers and industries. We could support each other's independent businesses. There are many possibilities.

How we use the data will be established during phase two. Right now we are focusing on phase one, our primary goal, where we collect everyone's data.

So please take some time and fill in the following questions. Mail it back. You could e-mail me the information as well to kshifman@epsilon.com or to Mike Ross at Rossco@ziplink.net.

- Industry:
- Company:
- Company Address:
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- Please accept this contribution for:**
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My address has changed (note changes on label on reverse side).

I am interested in participating in the Visiting Alumni Program. Please contact me:
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Please remove my name from your mailing list.

Make checks payable to
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Please add the following to your mailing list:

President's letter, continued

of years. I took on as much responsibility and accountability as I could. And I did it out of my love for Camp Avoda and my appreciation for what it's done for me and meant to me for a quarter of a century.

I would like to acknowledge some people who played important parts in my Avoda life. Though I never was at Avoda at the same time as my cousin David Rubin, his winning the 1972 Leadership Trophy was the impetus for me to go in the first place. Though I never had the chance to win it myself, I've always been proud that it's in my family. Glenn French was the first and best friend I ever made at camp. Mike Ross I've known since my first year but in the last several years he's become one of my best friends in the world. Jay Epstein was the best counselor I ever had and the warmest,

funniest human being I may ever see naked. Gregg Sulkin and David Kaplan made being a kitchen staffer seem like the best gig you could ever want. Bruce Silverlieb trusted me. Tom Leavitt guided me. Phil Klinger made me feel special. And of all the alumni who left camp before I arrived, Jerry Hill is the one I most wish I'd had as a bunkmate.

That's my goodbye walk. There are many people I did not mention but about whom I think and care a great deal. I hope they know who they are. I thank them all for helping the Avoda Spirit glow so brightly in my heart. Most of all, I want to thank you for reading me all these years. I hope some of what I've said means something to some of you.

God bless Camp Avoda and the Camp Avoda Alumni Association.

New AD, cont.

Jay will be free for the summer, as he takes a break from his Masters program where he studies Social Work. Says Paul, "His summer responsibilities will fit nicely with his Masters studies."

Jay sees a challenging, fun summer ahead. "I feel like Rick Pitino coming back to Boston to coach the Celtics," he says. Not that the camp is coming off a losing season, not by any stretch. But like the Celtics, Avoda's tradition of winning and competitive pride will continue to shine. Good luck and have fun Jay!

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