

INTERLAKEN BRIDGE

THE STEVE & SHARI SADEK FAMILY CAMP INTERLAKEN JCC **ALUMNI NEWSLETTER**



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Assistant Director
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Tova Blasberg

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Judy Young	1995-1999
Jon Levin	1992-1995
Kevin Bukatman	1990-1991
David Friedman	1985-1989
Paul Chase*	1983-1984
Judy Siegel	1979-1982
Ateret Cohn*	1978
Steve Mirowitz	1977
Ateret Cohn*	1971-1976
Jack Weiner*	1968-1970
Shel Goldstein	1967
Jack Weiner*	1966

**of blessed memory*

Winter 2019

TONI'S BAT MITZVAH 2.0!

Message from our Camp Director, Toni Davison Levenberg

In 2006, I moved to Milwaukee from Chicago to be the Assistant Director of Camp Interlaken. I was unsure of how long I would work for Camp Interlaken; would this be just a stop along the way in my search for my dream job to be a Jewish Camp Director?

When Howard Wagan, my mentor, retired as the Camp Director, I served as Camp's Interim Director while we searched for the right candidate to replace him. After six months as Interim Director, I was named Camp Director in February 2008. Thirteen summers later, I am blessed to be at the helm of our beautiful Camp with two years as Assistant Director and 11 years as Camp Director behind me.



Every summer, Interlaken's Camp Committee spends a Shabbat weekend at Camp. During their visit, they celebrate Shabbat; tour Camp to see newly completed projects and help prioritize future projects; and hold a Camp Committee meeting to measure successes, work through challenges, and lay out plans for the upcoming off-season. Summer 2018 Camp Committee weekend kicked off as the others have, with cheese and crackers under the shade of the *Mirpesset* (porch), our



Camp Committee Chair Mitch Moser, Toni, and former Chairs, Sheryl Rubin & Sylvia Winter

covered picnic pavilion that stands in the location of the old office. From there, we dedicated Cabin Reuben to the 777 Marathon's team, "Hold The Plane," by having 777 teammate Mitch Moser place a *Mezuzah* on its doorpost.

During Saturday morning services, three committee members approached the bima. It seemed a little bit out of the ordinary that two past committee chairs, Sylvia Winter and Sheryl Rubin, and our current committee chair, Mitch Moser, would address all of Camp. Sheryl began speaking first, sharing the definition of b'nai mitzvah and then declaring that we were celebrating my bat mitzvah—my bat mitzvah summer at Camp! Through my tears, I figured out what was going on, and I was so surprised! Sylvia, Sheryl and Mitch presented me with a beautiful talis, created by an artist who captured the essence of Camp. The talis has Camp's menorah with 36 leaves, as well as huge pine trees and the bridge. It even has the lyrics to "Bless This House," on each corner!

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K'FAR ALUMNI INITIATION LEADERS

K'far Noar Alumni Initiation is a special program that marks the transition from Interlaken camper to Interlaken alumn. Every summer, we invite Interlaken alumni to help facilitate this transition while sharing their own Camp story. The campers then volunteer to share their Camp stories if they'd like to, and it is often a night filled with tears, laughter and songs. Campers and staff are reminded that wherever life takes them, Camp will always be in their hearts and they should strive to make Camp a part of their lives forever.

Joel and I were honored to be asked to lead the K'Far Alumni Initiation program. Joel and I met at camp in 1981 when we were 14 years old. Ten years later, Joel drove me to camp to propose. On our 15th wedding anniversary, during family camp, we renewed our vows. Our kids Josh and Sarah have been going to camp for 13 years, including family camp. It was thrilling for us to share this story with the K'Far campers and show them, if they so choose, that their Camp Interlaken experience is far from over.

Jill (Stein) & Joel Bootzin



Bootzin Family, Josh, Jill, Joel & Sarah



Joey & Ashley Barnett standing in front of the Kennedy Barnett Judaic Resource Center.

It was incredible to be back at Interlaken, celebrate Shabbat, and get into Lake Finley again. We were lucky enough to tell our Camp stories with the K'farnicks and to share how, as alumni, Camp has lived on within us and impacted who we are today. It was wonderful to see the campers experience what we were so blessed to have experienced. It was meaningful to get to hear their Camp stories, too. We could all see how, even with years between us, we share a bond. Our camp experiences are similar in so many ways.

Ashley (Reuven) & Joey Barnett



Judy Stein Edelstein with her grandchildren Josh & Sarah Bootzin, embodying "from generation to generation"



Joey & Ashley Barnett

Would you be interested in leading a future K'far Noar Alumni Initiation?

Please contact Tova Blasberg at tblasberg@jccmilwaukee.org



Tova Blasberg

The last time I wrote an article for the alumni newsletter, I was saying goodbye. I thought the curtain was closing on my perfect camp story, but it turns out, it was just a short intermission.

At the end of summer 2015, all my loose ends were tied up in a neat bow. Camp served as the final internship to my recreation degree at the University of Florida, I was

able to participate in Interlaken's 50th Best Summer Ever anniversary, and I celebrated my own "Sweet 16th" summer at Interlaken. Most significantly, I was Mama Ozo to my incredible OZO XV – the group of campers I had followed since they were Shoreshim. As exciting as it all was, it was sad to think I wouldn't be creating any new memories at Interlaken when I said by goodbyes at the end of summer.

But every single one of my next steps had the flavor of Camp Interlaken. Even when I stopped spending summers at Interlaken, I took with me the enthusiasm, confidence, and community it instilled in me. I've spent the last three summers serving as the Director of Camp Sunny, a sports day camp located in Gainesville, Florida. Leading with humor and love, I sought to create a meaningful, inclusive camp culture like the one I experienced at Interlaken. To me, camp has always been like a haven—a place that is forever hopeful, celebrating children as individuals while building a strong sense of positive community.

When the opportunity came to join the Interlaken team full-time, I didn't think twice. I've built my career by honoring the Interlaken experience. It feels bashert (meant to be) to be coming back to the *machaneh* for a 17th summer. So here I am, coming full circle, and I can confidently say



Tova (bottom left) with a group of 2015 Ozrim.

that I will never say goodbye. And I feel kind of silly, because I should have known that back in 2015. After all, we sang it at every campfire: "come along, sing our song," and we'll never say goodbye.

I'm now in the position to help others say hello, and I'm looking forward to welcoming in new campers to the Interlaken family. There's something so special about that first connection to Camp.

I am also looking forward to saying hello to our alumni. It's important to me that Camp continues to be a part of everyone's story—not just "A summer of fun, a lifetime of memories," but a summer of fun, a lifetime of family.

I can't wait to connect with you all! I won't say goodbye anymore. This time it's *l'hitra'ot* (until next time).

Tova Blasberg attended Camp as a Camper from 1999-2005 and as Staff from 2007-2015.

Toni's Bat Mitzvah, continued

Thank you, Sylvia, Sheryl, and Mitch, for your thoughtfulness in your words—and to all the Camp Interlaken Camp Committee for this meaningful gift.

It takes a lot to surprise me; it also takes a lot for me to have no words. I was truly speechless, so overwhelmed with emotion. Each week that I attend Shabbat services in my community, I am proud to wear my exquisite talis. We are lucky to have this beautiful camp to call our home, and I am grateful that I get to preserve it for all of you, your children, and their children. It is an important job to ensure that we are changing appropriately with the times without losing the essence of Camp. I know that we have captured the neshama of our past while infusing Camp and its traditions with the ruach of today. Thank you for trusting me with your Camp; I hope to leave it a better version of itself at the end of each summer.



Mitch Moser,
Toni,
Sheryl Rubin &
Sylvia Winter

As a teacher researcher, a big part of my job entails writing and researching. I love the feeling of sitting down at my computer and letting the words flow through me as I draw comparisons, analyze, and defend theory as it takes shape in my classroom. As honored as I was to share my experience about Camp, sitting down to write this article about the most beloved place in my life seemed more daunting than anything I could ever write. Despite my love of writing, it feels impossible to write about the place that I think about the most, that has seen my truest and purest self, and that has introduced me to some of the most amazing people in my life. What words could I possibly share to reveal its importance to me, let alone its effect on my life? After weeks of procrastination, which I never do, I was lucky enough to spend a weekend with camp friends and my unfortunate writer's block was resolved.

It was a Shabbat morning at camp when I arrived for my first visit back since I led the Israel trip in 2015. The familiar sound of song session filled the warm, humid air and lured me in. Peering through the finger smeared window, I can see all of camp piled in the *Chadar*. I see campers and staff dancing and cheering. "Cheery Bim," a beloved Shabbat classic, was bursting through the doors. It comforted me to know that camp life is the same despite the changes it has made since I left. I feel it; the energy, the presence, and the deep love of camp and commitment to making every summer magical is still so palpable.

For some reason, I am moved to continue walking through Camp while everyone is in the Chadar. I walk lakeside, down boys' cabin row, over the bridge, and onto the girls' side. These treasured spaces I regularly travel to in my mind surround me. I allow myself to relish in its beauty, surrendering to my need to be fully present and soak it in. I wander towards ski point, and I can still hear the faint voices of song session echoing through camp. Walking through the space is visceral and emotional. I pause to breathe it in, and my gaze lands on the fire pit. I notice the ash piled up.

Memories of sitting here as a camper, ankles eaten alive by mosquitos, cuddling up with friends and fellow campers...16 years of memories.

It is hard not to get emotional thinking about the time I have spent in this special place. Standing there, breathing in the past and present of this beautiful place, a deep sense of connection washes over me. Camp has been here through the highest highs and the lowest lows of my life. It waits for me, seemingly no matter what. Every time I return to it, it has something new to reveal to me. It is as if from here, this beautiful place nestled in the woods, I can see everything more clearly: my life, the people in it, and the decisions that have led me to be where I am. While I have lived in different cities and countries, made new friends and started anew, Camp has been and will always be my place to return to. My forever home.

Sarah Loeb

Camper 2000 - 2009 • Staff 2010 - 2015



Alumni, L-R: Shifra Rothnberg, Sarah Loeb, Abi Sellman, Shari Sandler

FUTURE CAMPERS



Max



Oliver



Sullivan

Tali (Jubelirer) & Michael Arbus: **Max**

Dan & Cassandra Klein: **Abram**

Meghan Gottlieb Morgan (Alumni) & Kerri Morgan: **Oliver & Sullivan**

Randi (Komisar) & Eric Schachter: **Sloan**

If you have happy news you'd like to share with your fellow Interlaken alumni—engagements, weddings, babies—please send your information, along with a photo if available, to Beth Alling, balling@jccmilwaukee.org. We'd love to help you spread the word!

Over the last ten years, we have run an amazing Staff Orientation week, training staff to provide the safest and best experience for our campers. We put a lot of thought into our program. We use data from our staff surveys to make sure we are teaching the staff what they think they need to learn. We research national and regional trends to gather information to share. We bring in professionals to deliver certifications to our staff.

Before summer 2018, we were fortunate to be a part of a training about the iGen, or Gen Z, to learn how to best appeal to their needs and interests. As we learned more about this new generation of staff we discovered that they do not respond to the same training that the Millennials responded to over the last ten years. We realized that we needed to deliver a different form of training.

We revamped our entire staff training schedule to match the needs of this new generation. We started with listing non-negotiable topics, like Emergency Procedures, Behavior Management, Judaism at Camp, Ages & Stages, Group Management, and CPR. We then looked at ways to deliver the training sessions differently, considering options such as TED Talk format, staff choice, hands-on learning, and outside experts. The ideas kept coming!

We decided to start with choice by giving staff the opportunity to self-select into levels (e.g., Judaism 101, 102, 201). Rabbi Shari Shamah from our JCC in Milwaukee came up to Camp to lead Judaism 101, with members of our camp staff team leading 102 and 201. Each had productive, meaningful discussions and learning. We offered another block of choice around programming. In each session, staff worked on a set deliverable—whether it was learning the components of a program, creating rainy day programs, or working on creating programs that reflect our Jewish values. Our staff loved the opportunity to choose where they belonged based on what they wanted to do and what they needed to learn.

Our Cornerstone Fellows (five counselors who attend a weeklong professional development training by the Foundation for Jewish Camp) delivered five amazing sessions to staff, all taken from the Cornerstone conference they attended. Together, the staff learned about difficult conversations and how we talk about sex and relationships in today's world. The others focused on working with our youngest campers, making something out of nothing, and self-care. Our staff loved learning from their peers.

We also brought in appropriate experts to cover the topics that were on the minds of our staff. RedGen, a Milwaukee organization that advocates for the mental health and wellbeing of all youth, delivered mental health and suicide prevention training with a QPR certificate for each participant. Keshet, an organization that works for the full equality and inclusion of LGBTJews, addressed gender sensitivity. True to Life Training brought their theater troupe to role play various camper behavior management scenarios so staff could learn "on the job." We also had some of the JCC's experts deliver training. Stacy Synold, Director of the JCC Gan Ami Early Childhood program, delivered a session about "Ages & Stages" of our campers. Jesse Rosen, our Chief Operating Officer, worked with staff to magnify our emergency procedures and create an incident command team within our leadership team. JCC President and CEO Mark Shapiro talked with staff about why they are called counselors instead of caretakers or teachers or babysitters. We were intentional about varying the voices during staff orientation week.

If you have a skill or area of expertise that you want to share with our staff or our campers, please let me know by emailing tdavison@jccmilwaukee.org.

Toni





We gratefully acknowledge our visionary and generous donors who have promised to fulfill the commitment of leaving a Legacy to the Steve & Shari Sadek Family Camp Interlaken JCC.

Anonymous (2)
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 Beth Alling
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 Samantha Bear
 Deborah & Aaron Bernstein
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 Tracey Wool
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 James* & Eve Joan Zucker

**of blessed memory*

To discuss how you can help Camp's future, contact Elyse Cohn, Chief Development Officer, 414-967-8188 or ecohn@jccmilwaukee.org

CAMP INTERLAKE JCC ENDOWMENT FUNDS

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Would you like to support Camp Interlaken with a family endowment fund? For as little as \$2,500, your family fund can help support the camp we hold dear. For further information, please call Mark Shapiro at 414-967-8224 or contact Harriet Rothman at hrothman@jccmilwaukee.org or 414-967-8239.

What does two weeks as a pro bono Camp employee look like?

Two hundred cups of milk poured, one box of sweatpants folded, one office calendar created, one unit leader helped to come up with a witty campfire wish—all on day one.

I haven't held a real paying gig at Camp since 2002 but given the opportunity to be back and help out is something I could never pass up. Pretending to be a receptionist, working the phones and learning to use something other than an Apple computer—check. Getting to talk to lots of camp parents and solve a few problems—check. I can now forward calls, check voicemail, and even open the gate. I stamped 200 first day camper postcards, helped get our campers into *chugim*, opened dozens of packages in search of that dreaded *traif*, done a few minutes of babysitting, and procured a replacement 5-year T-shirt for my niece. I had the opportunity to welcome many guests and give several camp tours to alumni and families, which brought me great joy.



Brad Pivar, Sheryl & Rod Escobedo

I had the kind of smile plastered across my face for two weeks that you can only ever have at Camp. I played late-night post-staff meeting chef for staff, cooked many, many, many gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches on an electric skillet in the *ulam*. I got to help with one special project director's girlfriend surprise. I was here at the perfect time to spend the best night ever with my favorite camp person of all time and his crazy amazing husband. I pilfered a few Twix bars from the canteen and took a bunch of people to eat out in the great Northwoods. (There's only so much camp food I feel the need to eat.) I was a fly on the wall during the most fun rainy-day camp election program ever, and I sat at week two staff meeting, and witnessed a 20-minute rendition of the announcement song! I even had fun hanging at staff oneg on a chilly Friday night, untangling the kite string of an Ozo.

The most special part of any Camp visit lately has been watching my daughter. This place makes her so incredibly happy, and I am very aware that her time here could



Zander Steichen, Sheryl & Aviva Glassman

soon be over. I got to hang with her cabin during *menucha*, sharing funny stories with her adorable campers. Carly is a song leader—part of an amazing group of talented staff who make music for camp every day of the summer. On Friday nights, after Shabbat song session, while all of camp is Israeli dancing, the song leaders retreat to the KBJ porch for their own private concert. There, by only the light of a disco ball, all 17 of them belt out soulful music for each other. Not too many people ever get to hear them. It gives me chills.

Wish I could stay forever. There were a few special people here it was hard to say goodbye to. It was the best two weeks ever. L'hitraot Camp!



Sheryl, Carly & Jon Rubin



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MILWAUKEE
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PLEASE REMEMBER CAMP IN YOUR YEAR-END GIVING

We hope you've already found Camp Interlaken's annual B'nai He Atid appeal in your mailbox.

Camp Interlaken makes meaningful Jewish connections for hundreds of young people each summer. Driven by Jewish values, we share Shabbats, Havdalahs, campfires and loads of *ruach* on the shores of beautiful Lake Finley.

Each year, we rely on generous contributions from camper families and alumni to support enhancements for current and future campers, as well as to make camp available to all. Your donation to B'nai He Atid will help support:

- **Needed scholarship funds** for those families with financial constraints, for whom camp is cost-prohibitive.
- **Capital improvements** to our buildings and equipment.
- **Fun program additions** that make each summer experience feel vibrant and new.

There are many reasons to support Camp Interlaken; perhaps the most important reason is that we impact how young people will live Jewish lives as they become adults and have children of their own. **Think for a moment about what Camp Interlaken means to you and your family, and please contribute to Camp Interlaken's B'nai He Atid (children of the future) campaign, to ensure Interlaken's impact on children now and for years to come.**

You may make your donation online at campinterlaken.org. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

