

INTERLAKEN BRIDGE

THE STEVE & SHARI SADEK FAMILY CAMP INTERLAKEN JCC ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Fall 2016



END OF SUMMER

by Sheryl Selby Rubin

Dear alumni, camp families and friends,

I've just handed over the leadership reins of the Camp Committee to my dear friend, Mitch Moser, and I wanted to share with you my end of summer letter to the staff. Thank you all for supporting Camp and me. I'm proud of what we have done over the past six years, and I know that our love and commitment will see Camp thrive far into the future.

The 51st Best Summer Ever!

All of you helped to make that happen.

I wish more than anything that I was there with you for these last waning days. Although I'm sad to be ending my time as chair of the camp committee, Monday brings a bigger milestone for me – it will be the last bus ride home for our very last camper. It has been one of my greatest joys as a parent to give Interlaken to our children. Being a part of the committee has given me a coveted front row seat to watch them grow and thrive here. Although they haven't always welcomed my presence, it has filled me with such pride to watch Micah dote on his now 9th grade boys and this summer to watch Carly become an enthusiastic song leader. As hard as it is to make peace with the fact that our family's camper stories have ended, our camp story is far from over.

For those of you spending your first or second summer at camp – thank you so much for helping continue to make Interlaken more amazing every year. You bring great skills and new perspective, and make camp your own.

For those of you I have had the privilege to watch grow up here, thank you for carrying on all of the most sacred traditions. Thank you for being the mentors, bunkmates, friends and Cos that Carly and Micah love so much. Thank you for being role models for the kids today who hope to one day be the counselors who love their campers as much as you do.

I hope you will find your way back here next summer. I have many friends who still have campers and potential campers who will be jumping out of the buses for the 52nd Best Summer Ever, and on and on. They will be counting on you to make their summers incredible.

Toni, Jonah, Sas, Sharon, Michelle, Diane, Emily, Zander – I love you all and it's been my great honor to support you. I am humbled by how hard you work and how much you care. Thank you for being the most dedicated caretakers of my most beloved place.

Don't worry. I'm not going very far. I will continue to give back to camp and get back to camp. It's not summer without a Wolf Pack hamburger, a trip to Cathy's and a lakeside Havdallah.

Laila Tov, Shabbat Shalom, L'hitraot,

Carly and Micah's mom



Micah & Carly Rubin

CIL Committee

- Mitch Moser, Chair
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- Aaron Bernstein
- Nathan Bernstein
- Karee Bilsky
- Randie Collier
- Ari Domnitz
- Andy Enders
- Melissa Feldmesser
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- Graham Hoffman
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- Dean Ellis
- Jordan Fink
- Art Grossman
- Linda Hay*
- Leonard Loeb*
- Fran & Ron Meyers
- Irv Peckarsky*
- Marilyn Pelz
- Jerold Perlstein*
- Sheryl Selby Rubin
- James Sweet
- Sylvia Winter
- Jim Zucker*

Camp Director

- Toni Davison Levenberg

Assistant Director

- Sharon Cohen

Past Camp Directors:

- Howard Wagan 2000-2007
- 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

Like many Interlaken alumni, I have a hard time letting go of camp. I spent a good portion of the '70s and '80s as camper, counselor and Ad Staff. I have visited many times since. I met the woman I married at camp and our three kids are now campers. Even so, I still hunger for more. I can still see myself on boys' cabin row. The truth is we can never really go back. It is somebody else's turn to be a star.



Our time as campers may be over, but our participation in Camp Interlaken does not have to end with that last bus ride home. I was presented with a great way to participate this summer. Friends of mine from synagogue planned a bicycle trip from Madison to Eagle River to raise money for Camp Ramah scholarships. My work schedule suddenly opened up and I joined the peloton. My trip was coined "Ride to Interlaken" or "R2I" for those into brevity. The next challenge was to turn this effort into a fundraiser in less than three weeks.

It turned out that inspiration was not farther away than my mailbox. I opened a letter from Danny O. seeking support to replenish the Ateret Cohen Scholar-in-Residence

Endowment Fund. That paired perfectly with solicitation for the Tracy Sweet Scholarship Endowment Fund. I began running down my email contact list of friends, relatives and, most importantly, camp alumni. I asked that people join my effort to support Camp Interlaken and honor two women who gave so much to make camp what it is today. As it turns out, there is a name for this type of solicitation—"peer to peer fundraising."

I was excited to collect my first few checks. JCC Chief Development Officer Harriet Rothman enhanced the effort by creating a special R2I donation category on the Interlaken website. Suddenly, a goal of \$1,800 was in reach. I sent a second email solicitation as I tuned my bike and packed my bags. It quickly became clear that we needed to set a loftier goal. We rolled out of Madison with almost \$5,000 pledged.

The ride itself was fantastic. The first day rolled north through Amish country to Wautoma. The second day took us on remote country roads through the canning company fields of peas and sweet corn on the way to Wausau. Facebook proved a useful tool for updating people about the ride and pushing for more contributions. On the third day we climbed out of Wausau and reached the North Woods on our way to Rhinelander. I emailed Harriet before we rode out past the Hodag. I was thrilled to read that pledges continued to arrive. Day 4 was a magnificent ride through the woods. We rode north on Highway O and everything

began to look familiar. As we rode past Planting Road and over the Wisconsin River, I reminisced about the great overnights spent in that area. We crossed Highway 70 onto Old 70 and rode past the Twilight; Camp was now in our sights. We rounded the last curve past Pinehaven and were met by Jonah Wagan at the Interlaken gate. It is always heartwarming to see the Interlaken sign; I cannot describe the sense of accomplishment having reached it by bike. *Im tirtzu, en zo agada* never felt more relevant.

I posted photos from the ride and continued to describe the experience to friends. With the last pedal stroke, we rode 300 miles to support Jewish summer camping. The enthusiasm must have been contagious because the contributions continued to arrive. When all was said and done, R2I raised more than \$11,000 for scholarships and Jewish Enrichment programming.



Jordy & Sharon Cohen

R2I was a great experience on so many levels—the camaraderie, the scenery and the sense of personal accomplishment. I also discovered a new way to connect with camp. Rather than try to recreate my Interlaken past, R2I was pointed at the future. The campaign was a great opportunity to connect with my camp friends, counselors and others who support Jewish camping, and return to camp. For many of us, it was also a way to connect with Ateret and Tracy and get another distant glimpse of their warm smiles. Planning is underway for R2I.2 next summer.



You never know when it's going to be your last summer. As we get older on staff, our futures at camp become less clear. Jobs, internships, and other opportunities come around that may impede the ability to return to the magical place that we've called home since we were little Shosh campers. Life happens, and sometimes it becomes tough to fit camp into our plans. With all of the uncertainty that naturally arises at this stage of camp life, one thing remains constant: we will always want to be at camp until we feel that our job is done. We don't want to leave camp thinking that we have something left to give.

This past summer, as camp began to fill up with campers, ozrim, and staff, we looked around and saw camp in a different way. We realized that we had done a lot as staff already, and we kept looking around to see what else we had left to contribute. We were entering our fifth year as staff, and we had been counselors for so many different groups of kids that it was hard to keep track of who was or wasn't a camper of ours. While it made us feel a little old, it made us feel thankful for all of the times and memories we had been a part of in past years.

One thing that changed as we got older on staff was our perspectives of camp. The two of us each grew up as campers for many years. When we were young staff – fresh from the days when our counselors were making the magic for us – we had a vision for camp to be exactly the same as it had been when we were campers. Like most staff, all we wanted was to emulate our former counselors and pass on those exact same magical experiences to our campers. For this reason, even the most miniscule changes may have driven us crazy, and a feeling of "camp isn't what it used to be" would come on. That feeling continued when we were 2nd and 3rd year staff and our closest friends stopped coming back. It took us some time to realize that if the magic seems to be different or lacking, it's because it



Aaron & Ari

is our job to make it happen. As older staff we have learned to embrace the inevitable changes at camp and make them our own. That is how you make your mark on camp.

This past summer, the two of us spent a great deal of time with the Ozrim (one of us being Papa Ozo and the other a longtime counselor for them). One of the main points we often tried to hammer home was that they were now in charge of making the magic, and while you may want to emulate your former counselors, it is also time to make camp your own. The two of us continued coming back as long as we felt we could make our mark on camp and the campers.

The future of Interlaken is strong. We know that camp is in good hands moving forward. We have confidence in the staff who will be taking the lead from here on out and that they will be as strong as any staff has ever been. While we may not be there in person to witness it, we know that the magic will continue to flow for generations of staff to come.



2016 Ozrim

This past summer my family attended Family Camp for the first time and I had the chance to finally show my kids my "happy place." My husband and I both went to camp as kids and I attended Family Camp for years with my parents and brother. Camp Interlaken has always had a special place in my heart and I had been wanting the opportunity to go back to camp for years. I was beyond excited when my husband and I decided to make it our August family vacation destination.

In the month leading up to Family Camp I started to get a bit worried that the week may not be all I was hoping for. Perhaps some of the "magic" wouldn't be there as an adult, or some of the traditions that were so fun as a kid would seem silly and be lost on me at 35 years old. If anything my time at Family Camp was just the opposite; getting to see my own kids experience the joy of camp for the first time combined with my own nostalgia and love for camp made our week together extremely special.

The week was filled with nonstop activities — water skiing, stargazing, an insane Shabbat song session and beautiful campfires were a few of our family's favorite memories.

Interlaken has the unique ability to make everyone feel loved and special in some sort of way. As a parent, one of

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Klein Family, clockwise from upper left: Neil, Rachel, Avital & Evan

OUR CHANCE TO GIVE BACK

by Aaron Bernstein



Bernstein Family, Debbie, Aaron, Noah & Max

Over the last few years, Interlaken has asked Alumni to come up and speak with K'far about their experiences, their camp story. This helps the K'farniks begin to think about their place in the camp community once they are no longer campers. My wife Debbie (Weigler) Bernstein and I had the privilege of speaking with the 2016 First Session K'far about our story and our relationship with Interlaken.

A week away from transitioning from campers, some of the 1st Session K'farniks were shocked to hear that Debbie and I had not seen or spoken to some of our camp friends in the 25 years since the two of us met in the Bayit. We were quick to add the caveat that this was pre-social media, but we felt it was important to emphasize that their relationship with camp was about to change, and that they should give some consideration to what that means for them moving forward. Amid the tears, we explained that whatever path they or their friends will take, there is always a way back to Interlaken — whether as an Ozo, Staff and parent of two campers like Debbie, or like me, who did not return to Interlaken after K'far until Debbie and I brought our kids to Family Camp five years ago.

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Thank you, Aaron & Debbie, for sharing your experience and for leaving your Legacy Promise as you rode out of Camp.

On Saturday night, August 6th, well after Havdalah, I had the honor of joining this session's K'farniks for a campfire and their alumni initiation program. I had not been at a K'far campfire since 1980. The moon bright as it reflected off of Lake Finley. The moon, the lake, and the crisp breeze had not changed, and the smell of pine was as strong and sweet as ever. Initiation to being a Camp Interlaken alum is a relatively new program so I did not know what to expect.

I spoke second, after a counselor set the tone. These K'farniks were special, as I was a counselor for 31 of the 45 campers' and counselors' parents. Furthermore, my son, Jake, was their Ozo last summer. Jake and I had played a small practical joke on this very same weekend last year. We told them that Jake needed to leave camp early with me and even staged a little "dad scolding son" act to make the *kuntz* that much more realistic. This year I told them that there was a terrible rumor going around Camp that I was Jake's father when indeed I am his identical twin brother. I told them that I look a little older because I was born 10 minutes earlier and I spent much more time in the sun. I am not sure if as many campers bought this story as they did last year's, but the lesson from these *kuntzim* was that at camp, nothing is as it seems and nothing is permanent — everything changes, everything is fleeting — except for three things:

- the love that the counselors and staff have for their campers,
- their dedication to helping their campers have fun and grow in a Jewish environment, and
- the lifetime bonds they have created with friends they will rely on for the rest of their lives.

My Camp Interlaken story started in July 1977 when I was 12 years old, and it still is being written. When I first came to Camp I thought the place smelled and the people were weird — I was so scared. By the end of my three-week session in the old Manessah-Ephraim, I had met the funniest person in the world (the late uncle of two current K'farniks) and a counselor who had such a profound impact on me that he was the first person I called when I was diagnosed with cancer 17 years later. That counselor — Joel Cornfield — was an incredible storyteller. He also had a fast temper that made Camp fun as we enjoyed getting him angry. He was a great swimmer who I idolized and tried to emulate for years to come. He gave me my Camp Interlaken "aha moment" on the last Sunday of Camp that summer, when he woke me up early and took me to the staff lounge for a red crème soda to congratulate me for breaking the record for "50 Mile Swim" chug. Red crème was his favorite flavor so it instantly became mine, too. I cried for a week after

coming home and dreamt about Camp almost every night of my life until my 30s. I still dream about Camp Interlaken regularly.

I wrapped up my talk by telling the story of Benaiah and King Solomon's ring that had a magical power to make a happy man sad and a sad man happy. It was engraved with "Gimel-Zayin-Yud," which stood for "Gam Zeh Ya'avov," which means, "this too shall pass."

I reminded the K'farniks that this too shall pass: the joy of this session, the way they feel today, their inside jokes, their stories, and their unique Camp Interlaken experiences. They all are impermanent and not really as they seemed. But the most important parts were very real and will stick with them, deep inside, forever: The community. Their friends. Their counselors. Knowing everyone and knowing everyone cares about them. The smells and sounds of their campfires.

Though recognizing that "this too shall pass" may reduce their joy that night and even make them feel sad, I reassured them that they will draw on their experiences as campers at Camp Interlaken for strength in times of need and as they continue the tradition of campers becoming counselors and their kids becoming campers and counselors again. And that will make them joyful, even in the most challenging times. Their camp stories are not ending — they still are being written and will be written for years to come.

I reminded these bright (and in some cases) teary-eyed K'farniks that from now on, everywhere they go, they will represent Camp Interlaken JCC, its values, and the tremendous effect it has on Jewish youth. Congratulations to them and to all alumni on being part of this incredible family.

James Stein, MD
CIL 1977-87 (Papa Ozo 1986 & Jake Stein's "older brother")



Jim, pictured with his son, Jake

Thanks for making your Legacy Promise — Summer 2016

Think back to when you were at Camp, and you had one of those exceptional, better-than-any-other summer before, kind of summers. I know every summer was great, but there have to be the standouts for you for one reason or another.

The summer of 2016 truly was one of those magical, exceptional, standout summers for us. Of course, there are always various factors that go into this kind of outcome, but I can tell you that it was the staff who made the greatest impact on our amazing summer. It was the kind of staff that I wish I could replicate every summer; they were a group of conscientious young adults who care so deeply about their campers, about each other, and about Camp. Thanks to the impact that they made on Camp last summer, we are well on our way to a successful summer 2017. Our priority registration ended a few weeks ago, and with Camp eighty percent full, we could open today!

Gratitude is my personal theme for the offseason; I am extremely grateful to our phenomenal camp staff, I am grateful to our alumni who both advocate for Camp and send their children to Camp, and I am grateful for the opportunity that I have to assure that our camp continues to impact the lives and future of our Jewish community.



Sharon, Toni & Michelle

'HAPPY PLACE' continued

my favorite things about the week was seeing this impact my own kids and the others kids there. I was reminded of this when I watched my five year-old daughter, Avital, shine on stage during her talent show performance. Or when I saw the way my son Evan's face lit up when the staff surprised him with a round of *Eze Yofi* at lunch for losing a tooth.

Many of the happiest times in my life were at Camp Interlaken, and I have camp to thank for my closest lifelong friends. After being there this summer, I was reassured that camp continues to play the same important role in its current campers' lives that it did in mine. While there have been so many new additions (a beautiful pool, new cabins, washhouses and more), the essence and spirit of camp is still the same. Toni and her staff have made camp as strong as ever while infusing new traditions and continuing to carry on the old ones. Our family can't wait to go back next summer and continue to build on our memories.

CHANCE TO GIVE BACK continued

We shared our individual Interlaken stories with the K'farniks, and how Debbie and I first met each other in K'far. We explained how even if they continue as Staff, colleges, careers, and starting a family might keep them away from Camp, but that its impact is lasting, and ongoing. We hope that this notion became clearer to them as the night continued. For example, I told them how at Shabbat services that very morning I met the son of my very first and best camp friend — someone whom I have not seen since or spoken with in more than 30 years — thus opening a new chapter in that part of my Story (my old friend and I have since been in contact). We related how the mother of one of the K'farniks sitting there had set up Debbie and me on our first date — 15 years after we last saw each other leaving K'far . . . how we grew up with the mother of another . . . how we were in camp with his parents, or hers, her uncle, and his aunt . . . how one of our K'far friends has sons in each of our kids' cabins, or . . . You get the point, and we think they did too.

What started in tears of sadness at the thought of no longer being campers at Interlaken, ended in tears of hope and excitement about what paths they might choose, and what their future Interlaken stories might say.



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.

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As of November 1, 2016

**of blessed memory*

To talk to Camp about your Legacy Promise call Harriet Rothman at 414-967-8239

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FUTURE CAMPER

Oscar, son of Sarah Kornhauser and Adam Buchler

