

INTERLAKEN BRIDGE

THE STEVE & SHARI SADEK FAMILY CAMP INTERLAKEN JCC ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Fall 2017



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*of blessed memory

LOOKING BACK ON SUMMER ONE

Mark Gutman, Assistant Director



Now that the team has returned to Milwaukee, I have finished my first summer at Interlaken, and I feel just like a camper who just got home from their first summer at camp. The number one question that I have been asked is, "So, how was it?!" If you remember your first year at camp, or if you have had a first-time camper recently, it is a hard question to answer! The short answer is, "it was amazing!"; but let's be honest, we all know that camp is incredible. So, here's a stab at writing down my top take-aways as a first-timer at Camp Interlaken.

- The community at Interlaken is unlike any I have seen before; there is a deep love for camp from every staff, camper, parent, visitor, and alum. I got to witness some examples of the amazing Interlaken community throughout the summer: K'far Noar campers teaching Shoresh campers traditions, staff encouraging their campers to try something new, an alum walking camp for the first time in 30 years. I experienced this firsthand by being welcomed into this community with open arms; by the end of the first week of camp it felt as if Interlaken had always been my summer home.

Continued, page 4

MY FIRST SUMMER

Stephanie Wezelman, Program Director

When I reflect on this past summer, only one word comes to mind: unbelievable. Summer 2017 has come and gone, and with that came an opportunity to work with some of the most amazing staff and campers I've ever met. The days that felt like weeks, weeks that felt like months, and months that felt like years were over in a flash, as had been the case with my 12 summers of camp prior to Interlaken.

I spent most of my life wanting to be nothing but a camp director, knowing that one day I would want to give back the same experience that I loved with all my heart while growing up to other children. Each of us knows that going to camp as a camper is priceless, and continuing to work at camp throughout the years is rewarding in its own way. Year after year, as I made my way through the varying "levels" of camp, I realized more and more that I had to pursue this dream.

In November of 2016, when I found out that I would be joining the team at Interlaken, I visualized what my first summer at camp would be like. A trip up North to Lake Finley in February 2017 solidified the reality that camp was happening and I was to be a part

Continued, page 4



After a beautiful and warm lakeside Havdalah service on Saturday night, my daughter Ellee and I had the privilege of leading an emotional and heartfelt discussion with the K'farniks about individual camp stories and becoming camp alumni. As Camp Interlaken alumni, we shared how both of our journeys at camp began, and where they are at the current moment.

I am lucky enough to have started my Camp Interlaken story 40 years ago, when my dad was the camp doctor for a fun-filled week. I continued on through my camp years, loving the tradition-filled summers with all of my camp friends. When my summers as a camper came to a close, my camp story was put on hold. Still, the memories and friendships from my years at camp stayed close to my heart. My dearest and closest camp friends were always with me—either a phone call away, standing next to me at my wedding, or at a Bris or baby naming for my children. I feel very lucky to have started all four of my children on their own individual camp journeys to begin their own stories. It is as if I have handed off the baton to them as they began their own camp adventures.

My daughter Ellee truly loved speaking with the K'farniks about her camp story, because the majority of them are part of it. Ellee was an Ozo and counselor for most of these

campers; she still refers to them as, “her kids.” Ellee’s camper story started 12 years ago when she stepped into Camp Interlaken for the first time, not knowing a soul. Her camp story quickly began, continuing on to being a K'far Noar camper, joining her camp friends and newfound Israeli friends in Israel as a Mifgash, and as an Ozo as well as a counselor. Ellee even went on Young Judea’s Year Course with her camp friends. Her camp journey has been a huge and important part of her life and she was eager to share this with the K'farniks. Both Ellee’s and my own camp story did not come to an end when our camping years ended. Our stories are still being written. Even though we might not be physically at camp, the connections we have made remain strong as ever.



FAMILY CAMP: THE MAGIC CONTINUES...

by Megan Conrad (Strulowitz)

Ever since my kiddos were babies, I’ve been singing them camp songs at bedtime, hoping that they would one day experience the joy and celebration of singing these songs for themselves at Camp Interlaken JCC. What better way to test the waters than to experience Family Camp?

I wanted to leave things for them to discover on their own, so I didn’t go into details of what was to come. What was surprising was to see their genuine excitement as we arrived at the entrance to camp. They truly understood what this magical place has meant to me all these years!

My husband Drew has the natural gift of wit, so I threw him the task of writing our opening night’s shtick. I absolutely adored how he jumped right in—and seeing how our children, Ellis and London, took to it was a trip! They practiced



it for days. That first night, they could hardly contain their eagerness to sing it for the gang. As I sat looking around the Floval, seeing faces from the past, I was literally kicking my feet from all of the excitement. The end to our first night—watching our kids climb up into their bunks and click on their reading lights to enjoy a few minutes with their books—was like stepping back in time for me. I was looking at my younger self, as well as their future selves, and it was AWESOME!

Seeing our kids find their groove in camp life, comfortably roam the Machaneh, and connect with the other kids and their families, only magnified all of my experiences and memories. The incredible thing about memories, is that it’s not simply the stories and experiences, but also the muscle memory, the memory of our senses. To bring back all of those senses—from the smells in the air, to the sounds of the gravel under my feet and the cabin door slamming, to of course that unforgettable morning wake up of the Rom Call.

Coming in for the day as a visitor is a wonderful experience; but to participate at Family Camp, living the life there, was an ideal way for us to drink in all that camp, the staff, and friends there had to offer. Family Camp was the perfect way to give our family the flavor of what will come in future years, even more so than I had anticipated. I cannot say thank you enough to Toni, Stephanie, Beth, and all of the other amazing staff who made it possible.

My 5th grade year was my first summer at camp, but my first camp experience came even earlier. I was seven years old, and my parents took my sisters and me up north for a weekend in May. We stayed at a family friend's cabin and enjoyed all the fun that the northern Wisconsin woods had to offer. That fun obviously included breakfast at the famous Wolfpack Café. It was at this restaurant, between bites of chocolate chip pancakes and sips of hot chocolate, that our conversation turned toward Camp Interlaken—a summer camp my older sister had been interested in since seeing a presentation at our temple. We talked about how fun it would be to go, and how going for a month wouldn't feel so long if you're having tons of fun.

There's a song we sing at camp called, "Wherever You Go (There's Always Someone Jewish)." It's a silly song but it has rung true many times in my life, including in this moment:

During our discussion a friendly man named Howard from a neighboring table turned his head, assured us that Interlaken really was the greatest place on earth, and invited us to come take a look! Howard Wagan had been at camp, getting it ready for campers and staff, and he took my family on a tour. This tour started my lifelong connection to camp.

I continued coming to camp year after year. Every summer felt more exciting and meaningful than the previous. I cultivated a connection to campers, staff, and the physical place that tied me to Interlaken on a deeper level than just some summer camp I attended. It became a second home, and quickly morphed into my primary home. Madison was just a city I spent my time in when it wasn't summer. As a camper I came back for the friends. They continue to be some of the closest and most important people in my life. My parents kept sending me back because they saw that I would return a better human being every year. I learned about kindness, understanding, friendship, and independence in a way that I didn't learn from a playground or a classroom.

I left camp in 2011 knowing that everything would be different because I would no longer be a camper. I went on my Mifgash trip and made amazing memories in Israel with

new friends. On our bus ride home from the end of our visit at camp we began to apply for the new chapter in our camp lives: Ozo summer. And when the time came for us to finally be Ozrim a switch flipped. Camp was no longer about spending time with my friends; it was completely and entirely about my campers. I spent the second half of my Ozo summer figuring out how to create magic for 3rd and 4th grade mini-session campers. I poured my heart and soul into making their first summer as magical and memorable as mine. My first summer as a counselor, I was again with mini-session campers, as well as with the four-week Shoresh cabin. I realize now that for all the work I put in to ensuring that my campers were having the most spectacular summer, they actually gave me the best summers of my camp life.

I've continued to work with these initial campers every summer. They are the next generation of camp. I realize that one day they will replace me—they will plan the programs, do the Shabbat shticks, attend late-night staff meetings, and maybe one day welcome my kids to the Chadar on Friday nights. It is so wonderful to watch them flourish and see them become these wonderful camp leaders in their own right.

My camp life started in the 5th grade, but I don't believe it will ever come to an end. Our community stretches far beyond the Northwoods and continues to welcome back old friends year after year. When my time working at camp is over, I know that Interlaken will always be there for me, and that I will always be there for Interlaken.



Holly (2nd from right), surrounded by leadership team, 2017

FUTURE CAMPERS



Isaac Firer (pictured)
Parent: Nathan Firer

Gabi (Gabriel)
Parents: Shira & Yoni Macagon

- We have some of the best summer staff in the camping world. Within minutes of meeting the staff, it was clear that they were at camp for all the right reasons. They wanted to provide the same incredible camp experience that they received when they were growing up at camp. They always came up with creative programming ideas for their cabins, and they constantly created a safe and nurturing environment for their campers.

- Camp Interlaken is an immersive environment for campers and staff to explore and define their own Jewish identity. From celebrating Shabbat, to leading services, discussing Jewish values with their cabin, or learning songs to prepare for song session, there was always a Jewish theme running throughout all of camp. With support and guidance from the staff, our campers were able to learn more about who they are as a person and the role that Judaism plays in their life. One of my favorite memories from the summer was when I took a group of 6th grade girls canoeing in Bragonier Lake for the first time in at least 15 years (but probably more like 30). Before the trip we talked about how they were going to be the first group to do this in many years. At the end of the trip, we gathered as a group to sing the Shehecheyanu, a prayer said to celebrate special occasions.

Finally, I have to mention how beautiful camp is. From the green trees, watching the sun set over Lake Finley, smiling faces around a campfire, to our beautiful facilities; Interlaken is stunning at every turn. Every morning I started my day by walking down the hill into camp, and it was one of my favorite parts of the day. The air was quiet, and camp was calm as everyone was getting ready to start the day. As the day continued, the beauty of Interlaken continued to shine. Walking through camp, I had the opportunity to take in all the sights and sounds Interlaken has to offer. That's when I was able to experience the amazing community, witness our staff in action, and be a part of Jewish moments with our campers.

With all that in mind, it's clear that my first summer at Camp was amazing! I am excited to begin working on summer 2018 and to continue to build on the success of 2017. I am so proud and thankful to be part of this community and to now call Interlaken my home, too.

of it, even with many feet of snow present at the time. I spent the next six months working with the year-round team, meeting my seasonal team, recruiting prospective camp families, attending camp fairs, interviewing Ozrim, and much more. Every day brought forth a new experience that pushed me closer to making Summer 2017 a reality.

Then, it happened. In a blink of an eye, we were in Eagle River and camp had begun. Even more quickly than summer had started, the summer came to a close. Here are some of the top highlights that I took away from my first summer at Interlaken:

The staff. Above anything else, the staff arrived on the "Mach" on day one with the most incredible energy and love of camp, all of which closely rivaled my own. I've never seen such an energetic, lively and passionate bunch of people wanting to make a difference and show the campers all of the magic that we know camp can be. I couldn't have succeeded this summer without them, as they helped me to see the beauty that is their summer home, and openly shared it with me.

The community. Through every conversation, moment of laughter, and learning opportunity with campers, staff, and alumni, I quickly realized just how welcoming the Interlaken community was. The community made it so easy to integrate into the camp culture and learn the traditions. You can feel it as soon as you walk into camp; there is a deeply rooted community here just waiting for you to join.

Values. I spent so many moments this summer realizing just how much Interlaken's values reflected my own from my previous camp experiences; I wanted to dive in with everything I had and embrace it. From the prayers to the Shabbat Walk, from the way there are bedtime traditions and "moments of WOW," it's apparent that the Camp Interlaken values are deeply rooted in the core of the camp.

I stood at each opening and closing campfire and talked about the meaning of camp and how there is no place in the world like it. I asked the group to look up at the starlit sky and take a minute to appreciate where we were. It is a moment that I look forward to sharing with the camp community for years to come. Through planning evening programs, watching campers try a new chug for the first time, and every relationship I built on the shores of Lake Finley, my time at Interlaken during this first summer was unimaginable. I can't wait to get back there and do it all over again with our returning campers and all of our new campers who will be seeing this incredible place through the lens of a first-timer like I was this year. In the wise words of a beloved song, "It's so good and wonderful to be here."

Brought together by a shared passion for music (particularly playing guitar and listening to the Red Hot Chili Peppers), Kenny Lyons and I met at camp in 2008 and became fast friends. Ever since that amazing Sha’ar summer, we have been co-conspirators (musical and otherwise). Music has always been what has tied us, not only to each other, but also to camp—first as campers, and then as staff members. As counselors we spent our time trying to find extra ways to incorporate music into daily camp life through things like music-related chugim, singing cabins to sleep, and live music at evening programs. While music became both of our college majors and eventual careers, we stopped returning to camp...until this summer.

Our most recent musical project has been a set of contemporary prayers written for Congregation Sukkat Shalom in Wilmette, Illinois, where Kenny is the cantorial soloist. Having shared some of our most formative musical experiences at camp, we thought it would be the perfect place to spend a few days rehearsing the music before going into a studio to record it.

Like with so many of the ideas we had while we were staff, we were lucky to find a willing partner in Toni. In exchange for a place to sleep, to practice, and access to the coffee machine in the office, we would be active around camp, participating in programs and generally contributing to the ruach in any way we could. We picked some dates, roped our good friend and fellow musician Luke into the plan, and set off for an address that we already knew by heart.

We wasted no time diving into camp life in the way that we knew best: through song! A return to camp deserved a special song, so we set about resurrecting a classic camp song we had learned in our younger days. It’s a bit of a formula, a tune that can be adapted to fit almost any circumstance, from shticks to song session. It goes like this:

(noun), put the hammer down,
 (same noun), put the hammer down,
 You’re the best darn (describe your chosen noun) in the
 whole darn town,
 (noun), put the hammer down.
 For example:
 Interlaken, put the hammer down,
 Interlaken, put the hammer down,
 It’s the best darn camp in the whole darn town,
 Interlaken, put the hammer down.

Pretty soon, the tune could be heard all around camp, due in no small part to the fact that the three of us sang it (in three part harmony) about everyone and everything we encountered: Finley was the best darn lake, archery the best darn chug, Toni the best darn director, and so on and so forth. We think it represents a little bit of the special attitude at camp’s core: a willingness to let go of rhyme or reason and to share some silliness and love (through song, no less!) for their own sake. Camp seemed to agree; check out 2nd session 2017 signboard in the Chadar Ochel.

After several years away, it was a real blessing to be able to return to camp and find it filled with the same love and laughter that it always had, even if the hands being held on the Shabbat walk or the jokes being laughed at were different. It is a testament to the power of both the place and the community that our friend Luke, never having been to camp in his life, left feeling a member of our beloved Kehilah B’yar (community in the woods). As the old song goes, “It’s the best darn camp in the whole darn town...”

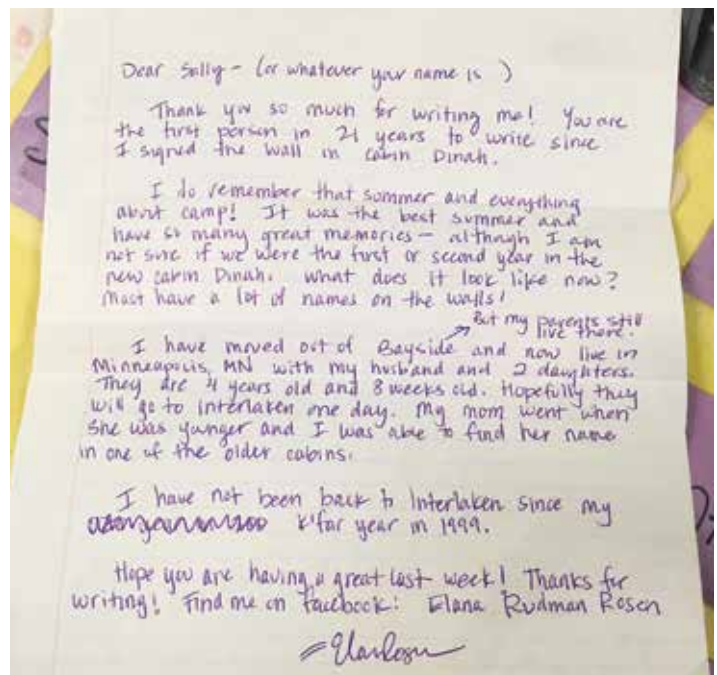


INTERLAKEN’S PAST & PRESENT

by Toni Davison Levenberg

It’s been 21 years since Elana Rudman Rosen lived in Cabin Dinah. She was either part of the first or second cabin group to live in Dinah, and as you can imagine, the beds and walls at the time were free of graffiti. Instead of writing something like “Elana slept here” on her bunk or signing her name along with the year she was in Cabin Dinah, she wrote “Please write me”... and then she proceeded to write down her home address where her parents still live.

Continued, page 6





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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**of blessed memory*

To discuss how you can help Camp's future, please contact Harriet Rothman, Chief Development Officer, at 414-967-8239 or hrothman@jccmilwaukee.org

Past & Present, continued

Fast forward to second session, summer of 2017, and Cabin Dinah was inhabited by seventh grade girls (one of two seventh grade girls' cabins). Bradyn Price, who called herself "Sally" in a letter, decided that she was going to write a letter to the elusive E. Rudman's address on the rail of her bunk bed. Bradyn dropped the letter into the Letter Lotto box, and it ended up in the mailbox of Elana Rudman Rosen's parents.

A week or so later, Bradyn (aka Sally), was shocked to receive a letter back from Elana! Bradyn, her counselors and her friends were blown away to receive this letter, which talked so fondly about camp. Elana now lives in the Minneapolis area with her husband and her two daughters, who are future Interlaken campers, obviously!

This is truly an awesome story about Camp Interlaken's past and future colliding and sharing what they would both describe as the same magic of Interlaken 21 years apart. Elana, thank you for responding to Bradyn; she will never forget being your pen pal! Perhaps she will be your daughter's counselor when she's in Shores!





On Saturday, August 5, our entire extended Camp Interlaken family joined together to share Havdalah, through the magic of social media. Whether you were sitting side by side on the shores of Lake Finley, or huddled around your laptop with friends and family, we all felt like we were one big camp community that evening.

From the opening "Welcome to Havdalah" song to the closing with "Day is Done," the spirit of Havdalah at Camp has not changed much in our 50+ years—except for the faces, of course. But so many of those faces are familiar, as many are children of our camp alumni.

It warms our collective heart to know that more than 9,200 people who love Camp Interlaken have viewed our Facebook Live Havdalah. Here are some of the comments from campers past and present, posted on the event page:

"Havdalah has always been my favorite part of the week! So many great memories of it from camp! ♥ this idea!! Thanks for sharing with everyone!! I can almost hear Lake Finley lapping at the shore." - Allison Jennings

"So happy my kids can experience this beautiful place." - Linda Cayle

"♥ Interlaken will always be deep in my heart." - Jill Rosen Stark

"Can't believe we can 'check in' to lakeside Havdalah! Shavua Tov!" - Cara Sodos

"I love and miss camp and havdalah so much. Even from over 1000 miles away I felt part of the 54521 community.♥♥♥"
- Meredith Wagner

"You never forget that wonderfully amazing feeling of being at camp." - Danielle Sectzer-Wagner

"Grateful my children had the same experience as my brothers and me!" - Adam Resnick

"So many amazing memories – love that my kids are there making many of their own!!!!" - Lauren Jasculca Oxman

"Thank you a million times over for all that you do and for how much you enrich your campers' lives as people and as Jews. Forever grateful.♥♥♥" - Lissa Silver

"Haven't been to camp in 19 years, but this made it feel like yesterday. Can't wait till my kids are old enough to go. Thank you for sharing this sacred space with the rest of us!" - Stefanie Nelson George

"I think back on the first three summers of Camp Interlaken JCC. How proud Jack would be -- as the founding and first director of Interlaken JCC-- it would have truly been a dream to have imagined camp 50 years later. And Ateret Cohn, the first Program Director and legacy Milwaukee Jewish Educator and former Interlaken JCC -- she would be crying from the beauty of your original and creative Havdalah. As the composer of 'B'nai Atid,' with words written by Ateret, camp continues stronger than ever. So proud of the legacy. Just a beautiful evening at Lake Finley." - Robert David Fisher

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B'NAI HE ATID

CHILDREN OF THE FUTURE

בני העתיד



Please remember Camp in Your Year-End Giving

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

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

- **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.

Think back on how Camp Interlaken impacted you or your children. Don't we all want that experience for our kids?

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to Camp Interlaken when you are planning your year-end giving.

We've enclosed a reply envelope, or make a gift online at www.campinterlaken.org.

Thank you in advance for your generosity!