

Camp Harlam Alumni Newsletter

Winter 2009/2010

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Greetings!

Shalom!

Welcome to another edition of the CHAI newsletter! We hope that everyone had a very happy Chanukah and will have a happy and healthy new year.

There are many exciting things highlighted in this newsletter including alumni happy hours in Philadelphia and New York. We also take time to interview some of the artists that attended Harlam.

We are always looking for people to become involved in CHAI. No matter your age or number of summers at camp, if you would like to join us and help plan an event, help with the newsletter, or anything else you can think of, please email us at harlamalumni@yahoo.com. This is your organization, so we encourage everyone's participation.

Don't forget to check out our website (<http://harlam.urjcamps.org/alumni/>) so that you can browse alumni day photos, purchase Harlam alumni merchandise, update your profile in the alumni gateway, and much much more! You can also become a fan of ours on Facebook by clicking [here](#).

During this cold weather in the northeast, just remember, only six more months until camp starts and only about seven months until alumni day 2010, taking place on August 7, 2010!

Warm Regards,

CHAI

Philly Alumni Happy Hour - January 13, 2010!

We are thrilled to announce our next URJ Camp Harlam and CHAI Happy Hour!

What: CHAI and Camp Harlam are hosting an opportunity for you to reminisce about camp, celebrate our connection to one another and just relax after a long day of work.

When: January 13, 2010 from 5pm to 7pm

Where: M restaurant at the Morris House Hotel

Cost: **FREE** to all Camp Harlam Alumni

RSVP: Please RSVP at <http://www.facebook.com/#/event.php?eid=215181554328&ref=mf> so we're able to order enough food and drinks for each and every one of you!

Please stay tuned for more details on our New York happy hour taking place on Wednesday, February 10, 2010. We look forward to seeing you in Philadelphia and/or New York!

* You must be 21+ to attend this event.

Camp Photos From the Early Days

In the early 1960s Rabbi David Spitz was an integral part of shaping the Jewish content of camp. The ark in the woods was mosaiced under his tutelage (1961) as was the model of Solomon's Temple (1964) which ended up on display in the lobby of the UAHC House of Living Judaism (Fifth ave and 65th street) for three months. Rabbi Spitz's other main role at camp was arts and crafts director from 1961 to 1964. Besides directing that program and serving on the Harlam faculty, Rabbi Spitz used to take photographs of camp activities, some of which were published in *American Judaism* (now *Reform Judaism*) magazine and in *Keeping Posted*. Below, you will find his story along with a link to his photographs from his time at camp. The photographs were taken in the early 1960s.

In 1961, shortly after URJ Camp Harlam had begun, there was a strong desire to recruit faculty and staff that would serve as role models and shape the future of Reform Jewish camping. I was twenty-two years old then, a Hebrew and religious school teacher, a youth group advisor, and a first year rabbinical student. I was exactly what the URJ was seeking to give the new camp direction. I had had no formal training in art, but as a teacher, I knew the value of its use for recreation and for influencing young minds. The daily routine called for four cabins to come each day, one pair for the first morning sheor, the other for the second. Then, at the end of the week, a fresh set of cabins would arrive. Each week there was a different theme. I would introduce it, usually with a dramatic story, then the cabins would split, one with me, the other with my assistant (who had had art training). The campers used craft media to express the weekly sheor, and at the end of their camp session, they took their work home. The campers worked with gravel mosaic, copper tooling, oil painting, water colors, clay, copper enameling, papier mache, glass or ceramic tile, plaster molding, etc. to produce their copper or mosaic plaques, puppets, ceramics, paintings, dioramas, and collages. The afternoons were a time for Hebrew instruction. I taught, and I studied. Rabbinical school had provided me with a summer assignment. As arts and crafts director, I was always "on call" providing assistance, materials, and a space to create posters, bunk banners, flyers, stage props, charts for Hebrew instruction, etc. I promoted enduring projects, such as a Shabbat ritual tray and a havdallah set, the outdoor ark, and the rec. hall ark door. I was one of the first Camp Harlam arts and crafts directors. I served for four summers, 1961-1964, forging a path for future generations.

Rabbi David Spitz

[David's photographs can be found by clicking this sentence.](#)

What Year Was It?

Camp

- Camp Harlam was featured on the front page of the Jewish Exponent, a Philadelphia area Jewish newspaper.
- *We are all Joe and Betty's Children* was the Gold team's Alma Mater
- Wally Ball was a sport played in camp
- *Fiddler on the Roof* was the camp play
- The Ulam was dedicated
- Bunks were numbered 1 through 10. The only named bunks were in Chavurah
- Allon Prat was the Drama Director, Michael Hirsch ran the radio show and John Lyons was the CIT director

World Events

- South African activist Steve Biko died in police custody
- The nuclear-proliferation pact, curbing the spread of nuclear weapons, was signed by 15 countries, including the US and USSR
- Deng Xiaoping, purged Chinese leader, was restored to power as Gang of Four was expelled from the Communist Party

U.S. Events

- Scientists identified a previously unknown bacterium as the cause of the mysterious "legionnaire's disease"
- The first woman Episcopal priest was ordained
- Jimmy Carter pardoned Vietnam war draft evaders
- The Supreme Court ruled that states are not required to spend Medicaid funds on elective abortions

Sports

- The Oakland Raiders defeated the Minnesota Vikings in the Super Bowl.
- The New York Yankees defeated the LA Dodgers in the World Series
- The Montreal Canadiens defeated the Boston Bruins in the Stanley Cup
- The Portland Trailblazers defeated the Philadelphia 76ers in the NBA Championship
- Bjorn Borg defeated Jimmy Connors to win Men's Wimbledon
- Virginia Wade defeated Bety Stove to win Women's Wimbledon
- Seattle Slew won the Kentucky Derby
- Marquette defeated North Carolina to win the NCAA Basketball Championship and Notre Dame won the National Championship in NCAA Football

Entertainment

- The TV miniseries *Roots* drew an audience of 130 million
- *Star Wars* hit theaters--for the first time--and went on to be the second highest-grossing film of all time
- Elvis Presley died at Graceland

- The Academy Award for best picture was won by *Rocky*, produced by Irwin Winkler and Robert Chartoff
- Vicente Aleixandre won the Pulitzer Prize in Literature
- The Grammy for Record of the Year went to *This Masquerade* by George Benson
- The Grammy for the Album of the Year went to Stevie Wonder for *Songs in the Key of Life*
- The Grammy for the Song of the Year went to Bruce Johnston for *I Write the Songs*

Science

- The neutron bomb was developed
- The space shuttle Enterprise made its first test glide, from the back of a 747
- Paul MacCready developed the Gossamer Condor, the first successful human-powered aircraft
- Lasers were first used to initiate a fusion reaction

[And The Year Was...](#)

Alumni News

Weddings and Engagements

CHAI board member Lyndsay Chauveau and former Harlam Machon director and now URJ Eisner Camp Associate Director Jon Lev were married in Philadelphia on Sunday, October 25, 2009.

Former athletic director Roy Masuri married Heidi Silverman in Israel on September 24, 2009. They also celebrated in the United States on Sunday, October 18, 2009.

Ben Cooper married Georgiana Carteleanu on August 30, 2009.

Becca Elias and Ari Forman got married on December 12, 2009.

Cara Berk and Rob Levy got engaged. The wedding is being planned for October 2, 2010.

Alumni Spotlight: Artists of Harlam



Top row left to right: Sharon Zeisel; Steven Silberg; Phil Klein, Hope Levin, Steven Silberg (circa 1988).
Bottom row left to right: Matt Stamm (circa 2002); Steve Alten promoting his book; Avi Wisnia.

Steve Alten

When were you at camp and in what capacity?

I was the Athletics Director/Supervisor from 1981 through 1985.

How did you get into writing?

In the summer of 1995, while struggling to support my family, I set a goal to write a novel about a 70 foot prehistoric great white shark called a Megalodon, the nastiest predator ever to have existed. A year later, MEG

became a best-seller. I just completed my tenth novel, three of which have now been optioned as movies.

At what point did you realize you could make a career out of writing?

When I received my first book deal at Bantam Doubleday in 1996.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of writing?

Besides the paycheck? Receiving e-mail from readers who have been inspired by my work. Visiting high schools as part of my Adopt-An-Author program.

What has been the most difficult?

The stress of living deal to deal.

Were there any experiences at camp which you have infused into what you do?

[To continue reading Steve's interview, please click this sentence.](#)

Matt Stamm

When were you at camp and in what capacity?

1988 - 1993: Camper (Sharon - Chavurah)

1995: CIT

1996: Counselor (Carmel)

1997: Roller Hockey Specialist living in Carmel

1998: Assistant Athletic Director living in K'far Noar

2001: Chavurah Assistant Unit Head

2002: Chavurah Unit Head

How did you get into music?

When I was really young I would walk around the house making up songs about random things. I could actually sing you the first song I ever wrote (I was 5, I think). I have no idea how I remember it, but I do. I started piano lessons when I was 7 or so, but that didn't last too long because I was bored with the music they were teaching me. I kept on playing without lessons, though. I played saxophone from 5th grade into high school. The first time I picked up a guitar was actually at camp during chugim. We learned "Knocking On Heaven's Door" and "Horse With No Name". Really started writing songs in high school, had a few bands in college and beyond, and now here we are.

At what point did you realize you could make a career out of your music?

Wait - you mean I could do that? I think after I made it through the summer of '97 as Roller Hockey Specialist with no real knowledge of rollerblading OR hockey, I realized that anything is possible if you convince yourself you know what you're doing.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of music? What has been the most difficult?

The most rewarding is when people contact me and tell me that a song I've written has had a positive influence on their lives. I like when people tell me what it means to them, even though it might have had a completely different meaning when I wrote it. I think that's one sign of a well-written song - a universal message - and it's rewarding to feel that I can accomplish that every now and then. The most difficult has been staying focused and determined despite the rollercoaster ride of this industry. I'd been plugging away for about 12 years before a

record deal came my way. Then before I knew it we were dropped from the label, and it was back to the drawing board. It took a while for me to get my feet back under me and figure out what was next. Things are looking up again now, but you never know!

Were there any experiences at camp which you have infused into what you do?

[To continue reading Matt's interview, please click this sentence and then scroll down.](#)

Steven Silberg

When were you at camp and in what capacity?

I started as a camper in Carmel B in 1984 and was a first session camper through 1989 (Chavurah). In 1990 I went to Israel on NFTY Harlam Safari #5. In 1992 I returned to Camp as a counselor for 3 years and in 94 was a first session color war general.

How did you get into photography?

I had a camera of some sort from a very young age. I can remember carrying them around. But it wasn't until my first summer at camp that I stepped into a darkroom - the darkroom in the basement of the Hilton (the Art Mecca was just a dream). Somewhere I think I still have the first photograms and first pinhole images from that summer. My photographic practice changed considerably when I returned to graduate school. I had become more and more of traditionalist between the time I left undergrad and pursued graduate school. During grad school, I started by rejecting digital work and exploring the degradation of digital medial. Through that exploration, I became interested in the structure of the digital image and my work transformed from Photography to New Media, allowing me to explore software-based imaging, code-based imaging, and installation-based imaging.

At what point did you realize you could make a career out of photography?

I'm still not sure I can make a career out of it (but I'll keep trying). More than 5 years into my new artistic practice, I still feel like an emerging artist, looking for any and every venue in which to exhibit my artwork. The career I currently have (or rather what supports my career) is sharing my artistic passion with students. For as long as I can remember, I have been teaching a passion in one method or another. Teaching Photography and New Media has allowed me to stay tapped into the artistic process and occasionally make new work.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of photography? What has been the most difficult?

Ooh, this is a tough question to answer. Part of me wants to say that the most rewarding part of any artistic process, in my opinion, is seeing an idea come to fruition. Another part of me wants to suggest that the work taking on a life of its own (like a child growing up) is the most rewarding. But my most successful works are the ones that have surprised me in their results - whether in watching people's reaction to and interaction with them, or when one of the processes that I've constructed creates something completely unexpected.

Perhaps those answers are a bit too romantic. On a purely self-indulgent note, though, the experiences that sometimes come with the artwork can be truly amazing. In 2006, I was invited to exhibit my work in Beijing. Not only did I get to travel to China to install my work, but I was able to spend time with both my mentor and some of the contemporary greats in the realm of Media Art.

The most difficult aspect to being an artist is time management. I am horrible at it. Creativity happens 24/7 but the

life often gets in the way. I put 100% of myself into everything I do; but how do you put 100% into creativity, 100% into the business of art, and offer 100% to my students? Most often the art gets left behind, and that's painful. But, I wouldn't ever think of giving less than my all in everything I do.

Were there any experiences at camp which you have infused into what you do?

[To continue reading Steven's interview, please click this sentence and then scroll down.](#)

Sharon Zeisel

When were you at camp and in what capacity?

I was a two session camper from 1986-1992, and went to Israel in 1993

How did you get into art?

Art really was something that found its way inside of me. But I do remember being very young, writing and illustrating pages that I stapled into books, enjoying colors and pencils more than dolls. This feeling helped to fuel my fire to never stop.

At what point did you realize you could make a career out of your art?

Having been friends with working artists made me realize how difficult it can be to make a career out of creating visual art if you plan on surviving on your work alone...so I thought about what I could do professionally, and decided to become an art teacher, which was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of art?

Being afforded the opportunity to express myself creatively, having a built in outlet. I also love being able to experience the art of others, both old and new.

What has been the most difficult?

Criticism and deadlines.

Were there any experiences at camp in which you have infused into what you do?

[To continue reading Sharon's interview, please click this sentence and then scroll down.](#)

Avi Wisnia

When were you at camp and in what capacity?

When *wasn't* I at camp? Being a Rabbi's Kid, I was up at Harlam whenever my parents went, which was every year. I was a pretty experienced camper, since being in the womb all the way up to Chavurah (I think I was also in Carmel for about 6 years). Basically, I have been a Harlamite all my life.

How did you get into music?

I've been playing piano since I was around 5, but it wasn't until I discovered Bossa Nova that I really had any direction. I now bounce between NYC and Philly, playing everything from rock venues to listening rooms to jazz clubs. Although I've been performing now for a few years, I'm about to release my first full-length studio album and I'm pretty excited about it.

At what point did you realize you could make a career out of music?

I never wanted to do anything else but make music for a living.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of music?

I just finished my first album - and that process has been immensely rewarding. I love being able to be creative for a living, to perform for an audience and connect with people through music, to collaborate with incredible talents on strange projects, and to get to perform with other Harlam alumni like Family Junction, Julie Gold, Matt Stamm, Elana Arian.

What has been the most difficult?


I think trying to make for yourself a stable life with such an unstable thing as art can be pretty challenging. At the same time, that instability is pretty rewarding, too.

Were there any experiences at camp in which you have infused into what you do?

[To continue reading Avi's interview, please click this sentence and then scroll down.](#)

Thank you Steve, Matt, Steven, Sharon, and Avi! We appreciate you all taking the time to catch us up on your lives and looking forward to seeing you soon! You all have incredible talent; I hope our readers will take the time to see you in action!

[You can read all the interviews in full by clicking this sentence.](#)



As always, we hope you enjoyed this newsletter, and again have a happy and healthy new year!

Warm Regards,

Camp Harlam Alumni International

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