

POCONOS

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[Miriam Kraemer Gray, Aviva Israelitan Shigon, Ellen Weinstein Pazornik, Helen Bartfeld Wolkow, and Sara Rubinow Simon, who were in Machon bunks 18 and 20 together at Camp Ramah in the Poconos in the early 1950s, got together on August 5–8, 2007, in Rehoboth, Delaware.]

The years melted away as we reconnected.

Two of us were widowed and remarried. Two of us are rabbinic spouses. We had fifteen children, and we have nineteen grandchildren thus far. Most of our grandchildren attend Jewish camps, and one of our grandchildren is a fourth-generation Ramah camper.

We agreed that the Ramah experience was a significant influence on our lives. We are all comfortable with Hebrew and actively involved in Jewish life through Jewish education, cultural arts, and synagogue and community organizational life. We have all made multiple visits to, or have lived in, Israel.

There was lots of laughing and playing of Jewish geography as we tried to identify people from the piles of old photographs we had brought with us.

We especially remembered Tish'ah Be'av and the flaming *eichab* on the lake, the somber mood, the reading of *Eichab* by flashlight, and the meaningful discussions during the day.

Shabbat was always a highlight, and we still wish we could recreate in our own lives the haunting beauty of services under the tree with everyone wearing white clothing, the Torah and ark in the tree, the delicious dinner, the lusty singing of *zemiroth*, *havdalah* around the baseball diamond—the special feeling of *kedushah*.

We recalled *nikkayon* and the *tafkid* wheel with *ya'eh*, *metatei*, *kiyyor*, and so on—all words that don't generally appear in everyday conversation but that we still remember.

We lived in the era of polio epidemics, and we remembered Sara's father's heroic efforts to quickly locate enough gamma globulin to inoculate the whole camp. We are grateful that polio is not a worry now.

We talked about the Ramah directors, Levi Soshuk, *z"l*, and Aryeh Rohn, *z"l*, and about sitting outside for *kittot*, the sports, *ommanut*, music, the Maccabiah, our plays like *The Wizard of Oz*, the *rikkudiyah* and, of course, the banquet and our tears when we left camp.

During our days together at the beach, we sang *birkat hamazon* and lots of Israeli and old camp songs—and even tried to do a few of the Israeli dances we had loved.

The days together passed too quickly and we felt that we had just begun to reminisce.

We are already planning our next get-together and hope that additional bunkmates from those years will join us.

[Sara Rubinow Simon is married to Rabbi Matthew Simon. It was Rabbi Simon's father, Rabbi Ralph Simon, z"l, of Congregation Rodfei Zedek in Chicago, Illinois, who in 1947 convinced the Chicago Council of United Synagogue to purchase a former fishing lodge in Conover, Wisconsin for use as a summer camp. According to the family, he was motivated to create a Jewish camp in the Midwest so his young son Matthew would not have to travel to the East Coast for a Jewish camping experience. Thus began Camp Ramah. —MORTON M. STEINBERG]