

BARBRA WALTERS

## Sidney Zweig, ז"ל (1921–1992)

You are not required to complete the work, but you are not free to abandon it.  
*Pirkei Avot 2:16*

**T**his quotation from *Pirkei Avot* is helpful in understanding how Sidney Zweig, ז"ל, lived his life. Even though Sid's profession was accountancy, Camp Ramah was his "job," and Sidney Zweig was determined to do the best job he could. Sid served as chairman of Camp Ramah in Canada from 1968 to 1989. During his tenure as chairman, he worked with seven directors: M. Donald Adelman, ז"ל; Lenny Berkowitz; Walter Ackerman, ז"ל; David Zisenwine; Seymour Epstein; Neil Cooper; and Judy Markose.

I became a member of the Ramah Canada board in 1978. I served on many board committees for Ramah and stayed on the personnel committee for the last few years of Sid's chairmanship. During this time, I was always impressed with Sid's ability to focus on the ideals of Camp Ramah. He never became overwhelmed by the problems that running a camp presented. He knew we had to find the "right" camp director, or make repairs to the physical plant, or eventually solve our ongoing sewage problems—huge obstacles! But Sid never lost sight of the hundreds of Jewish children who would come to Ramah to celebrate eight *Shabbatot*, eat kosher food, sing and learn Hebrew, and enjoy the total experience provided by a Ramah summer. Mostly, he wanted our Jewish young people to be influenced by Ramah.

When he invited the *hanbalab* to his home for his annual pre-camp barbecue, he was always thrilled at the quality of these remarkable young people who would be making the Ramah experience come alive. His eyes would sparkle as he would tell me of their many talents, and how proud he was of each one who would give their time and energy to make our camp program as excellent as it could be.

Sid was a smart man. He was a logical thinker, a good listener, and he was not afraid to make decisions—Jewish decisions! He was a man of strong convictions. He was a man who said what he meant in a few words—a man who kept his word.

Sid always did his research. He consulted with people whom he respected and who respected him, particularly Gloria Silverman, ז"ל. Over the years of her dedicated service to Camp Ramah in Canada and throughout Sid's

chairmanship, among all her other roles, she acted as his mentor and confidant. It was Gloria who first encouraged, and then convinced, Sid to interview and then to employ our first female camp director, Judy Markose.

Sid and his wife Lorna became loyal friends of mine and of my husband Manley. We laughed and cried together. Sid would be very happy and joyful to see not only my own grandchildren soaking up Ramah, but also the grandchildren of many others of our generation. Given his infectious youthful spirit, he would be delighted to see a board with many young and “not so young” parents of Ramahniks. To quote the philosopher William James, “The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.” Sidney Zweig used his life well, and I believe his legacy continues to inspire future generations.

There were, of course, others who worked closely with Sid and were touched by this great man. Sid Zweig’s Ramah story would not be complete without some reminiscences from a few of these people. I chose to include the following five, in alphabetical order:

In thirty-three summers at Camp Ramah in Canada, I have been truly blessed to have studied with great rabbis and to have learned from generations of inspiring campers. I have been fortunate to have my life influenced by many impressive individuals. One such individual was Sidney Zweig. There is no one who surpasses the commitment and dedication of Sid Zweig to his beloved camp. Sid was a friend and a mentor who encouraged me to pursue a career in the rabbinate and always supported me in my long Ramah career. Sid was a straight-shooter, had a dry sense of humor, and a true love for Ramah in Canada. I was lucky to know him as well as I did, and his memory still serves me as a blessing!

*Rabbi Chuck Diamond  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

Sid Zweig loved Camp Ramah in Canada and worked tirelessly to promote and protect it. I had known Sid for many years as the father of one of my classmates, Netta, and then in his role as the “man in charge” at camp. When I was *rosh agam* in the late 1970s, we needed a new ski boat. Sid told me to do my research and present him with my findings. We researched the least expensive option (assuming that was the way we would have to go), but also wanted to move our program to the next level—a step that would involve a more expensive specialized ski boat and a more powerful engine. I expected Sid to insist on the cheaper option, but he accepted our recommendation and permitted us to make the more expensive purchase—and more importantly, encouraged us to move our program forward. In this decision, not only did Sid encourage and support us as senior staff, but he showed vision and understanding of the camp program. I’m sure that this is just one small example of how Sid helped to build Camp Ramah in Canada.

My career as a member of the lay leadership of Camp Ramah began with the encouragement and support of Sid Zweig. A number of years after

my time as a staff member at camp, Sid encouraged me to become involved with the lay leadership of Camp Ramah in Canada. I was made a member of various committees of the board, a board member, and eventually the president of the camp. Camp Ramah in Canada has been the focus of my community involvement for many years, and today I sit as the senior vice president of the National Ramah Commission—the first Canadian to serve in this position. I owe Sid a huge debt of gratitude for mentoring me and believing in a strong Canadian Camp Ramah.

*Sheldon L. Disenhouse*

*Senior Vice President, National Ramah Commission*

When I was the director of Camp Ramah in Canada from 1978 to 1980, Sid Zweig was chairman. He had already been connected to the lay governance of the camp for many years. While we had our differences from time to time, the most impressive thing about Sid was his complete devotion to Ramah, the campers, and the staff. Always foremost in his mind was the fact that Ramah was a great source of fun and sound Jewish education for the kids. His volunteer time and energy was totally given to the camp. Even when his views differed from those of the camp board, the staff, or JTS, it was his deep concern for the camp and its viability that motivated him. His was a special kind of leadership that brought his attention to every micro detail of the camp administration, always challenging us to find the most efficient and effective ways to run the camp. Because Sid was an accountant, I learned a great deal about pre-computer accounting techniques—skills that I value to this day. Sid Zweig cared deeply for Ramah and gave the camp a big part of his life.

*Seymour “Epi” Epstein, Ed.D.*

*Former Director, Camp Ramah in Canada*

I first met Sid Zweig when he was an accountant for our group of drug stores over fifty years ago. He later took over as chairman for Camp Ramah in Canada from Barney Goldhar, the camp’s founding chairman and benefactor. Sid was a brilliant professional who convinced me of the virtues of Camp Ramah for my young family. This began a great love affair with Ramah that has lasted for close to forty years, for our children, and then our grandchildren.

Sid was very passionate about Ramah and remained [as the] chairman for approximately two decades. He kept the camp cohesive throughout its formative years. He surrounded himself with a young group of committee members who are still very active with the Ramah Camping Movement, both locally and at the national level. I was fortunate to be the beneficiary of Sid’s wisdom when I assumed the chairmanship of the camp shortly before Sid passed away. He was a “great guy,” my mentor and friend.

*Ab Flatt*

*Past Chairman, Camp Ramah in Canada*

My father passed on to me his love and dedication for Camp Ramah in Canada, where he had a long tenure as Chairman of the Board. I still

return to camp on staff each summer! In addition, my father was my role model when I became the Chair of the Board of my daughter's school. On many occasions, I found myself thinking about what my father would have done. Until I became the Chair, I was not even aware of how much I had absorbed, as if by osmosis, of my father's leadership style. The legacy he left for the present Camp Ramah in Canada Board has been mentioned to me as recently as in the last few years, when a current Board member said that someone had stood up at a meeting, saying "Sid Zweig would never have let this happen!" Every summer, when I come up to camp, I always go to the staff lounge, to check on the sign that notes that the building is dedicated to his memory.

*Netta Zweig*

*Administrative Director, Camp Ramah in Canada*

**BARBRA WALTERS** of Toronto, Canada, served as a member of the Board of Directors of Camp Ramah in Canada for more than twenty years.

