

## Summer Camp

*By Chris Hirschhorn*

The summer of 1949 was difficult for students who needed summer jobs. Usually, I got a job at a hotel's front office. This summer the Biltmore Hotel, the Essex House and the Waldorf Astoria didn't need my services. I usually had a summer job at one or the other. What to do?

I decided to check summer camps. I'd never been to a camp although most of my friends spent summers at camps and had many fun experiences. My parents had five children and no money to send any of us to summer camps. I found an ad for a tennis teacher at a Jewish summer camp for girls in the Berkshires.

I had attended a tennis class at my college, Barnard, and decided that I could teach tennis to children. So I went for an interview at an apartment at 179th St and Broadway in Manhattan. I was accepted. No one knew that I'd never played tennis. The fact that I was Catholic didn't faze them. However when I told my folks that I was going to be a counselor at a Jewish camp, they were up in arms. My uncle said as a Catholic at a Jewish Camp, I'd be cleaning toilets. Nothing that my family said could deter me from my summer camp job. So, knowing that summers in the Berkshires provided hot days and cold nights, I packed accordingly.

Counselors slept two to a tent with six campers. Ellie Nemeroff and I slept in our tent with our six campers. Since I'd never been to a camp, I didn't know how to capture a bat flying in our tent. I didn't know how to gunnel a canoe to cross the lake, which we did to disturb the boys' camp, but Ellie taught me everything.

On one of our days off, Ellie took me to her parents' summer cottage. We thumbed our way there and back. Usually the men who drove those expensive vehicles took us to dinner before leaving us at the road outside our camp.

Ellie's folks were orthodox Jews. I didn't know what that meant. I learned quickly enough. By mistake, I desecrated the sink in Ellie's parents' summer home. I placed a plate that had had a meat sandwich on it in the sink meant for non-meat plates. It was then that I understood orthodox as opposed to non-orthodox Jews. Ellie was very upset. What to do? Then she came out of her thought process with the answer. Never tell her folks. Problem solved.

I had a different problem. One day another counselor asked to play tennis with me. I begged off by saying it was my time of the month and I was in pain. She never asked me again. I, the tennis coach, never played tennis that summer.

I don't know about the kids at the camp but we counselors surly learned lot.