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Memories of Camp  
by Gene Bluestein

In 1945 Blackie Davidman and I quit our Brooklyn "cellar club" and took jobs at Camp Kinderland. We had done every illegal thing you could do without a gun, but the boys had decided that summer to buy guns. And we thought, "M'ken geharget veren."

Camp was a new world. We ran into an astonishing group of young men and women, intellectuals, readers, progressives. In short order we became Yackels and inherited another group of remarkable young men who influenced us greatly--Marvin Karpatkin (he became my mentor at Brooklyn College), Marx Wartofsky (I dedicated a recent book to his memory), Herb Gutman, Harvey Schreiber and many others. In camp I developed my interest in folk tradition through the influence of Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and Paul Robeson. We danced Edith Segal's incomparable dances, sang with Mendy Shain, and discovered through Nathaniel Buchwald the world of Yiddish literature and general culture. He encouraged me to join The Yiddish Theater Ensemble. All this was very far from the Brooklyn world we had known.

The next year I met Ellie Bisberg, the love of my life. I don't know how we made it, working with the campers until nine, then dancing until midnight, then partying until two, and making love until five in the morning. By the last week of camp we were all in the infirmary.

Ellie and I married in 1949 and celebrated our wedding in camp. Dudel Bernstein performed and so did my cousin Fraydele Oysher and her husband. As Rubin Youkelson wrote in the *Freiheit*, quoting Itzik Feffer, "Oy iz dos a khasene geven. . ." We invited all our friends and relatives for a weekend in camp and I think we cemented 50 marriages by carefully arranging living quarters. Camp was full of music and dancing and the world of Yiddish. It will always remain as the time of our lives.

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