

Ramah Reflections Night

Machon (10th Grade) Ramah CA

***Tell the kids to bring something small for a time capsule**

I. Intro

- a. (projector set up in front of building A so the kids are sitting on the steps watching the video) Kids walk in to a video/ slide show playing with old ramah music to old pictures
 - i. To get: **projector**
- b. Introduction to the night by molly, yael and sam (**put into video**)
 - i. Explain purpose of having this program. The machonies are ending their time at camp as campers and we want to reflect on their experience and put it into perspective of the entire camp ramah community.
 - ii. From foothills to fairveiw
 - from sitting on the hill in dirt after tzadah, to mud hug entrances
 - from a two year machon/ tzophim aged program, to a power house machon edah
 - from a silly improv game called eggs, to a ridiculous "bus driver" styled skit
 - from an innocent edah of 10 year olds to a ruach filled, side pouring, shocker throwing edah of 15 year olds
 - (but more importantly)
 - from an innocent, curious, energetic group of children to a mature, caring and passionate group of jewish leaders
 - from days of research, understanding, and collecting stories about this place's history to a program that will ask you to reflect on not only your own experience but the experiences of generations before us
 - you hear people say my dad this, my grandpas campers son is your uncle that...
 - but what does that really mean?
 - Camp is about generations, legacies, traditions
 - Its about keeping them, and creating them
 - Machon lines
 - Mudd hugs
 - Eggs
 - Shabbat mincha
 - As the list continues so do the memories
 - Tonight we are going to explore why camp is the way it is, why we do the sometimes silly yet _____ things we do
 - Ramah is kept alive because of these traditions
 - Ramah is kept alive because of these friendships

Ramah is kept alive because of people like you guys

- c. Panel of 4 people, ask them one question and they need to give a brief yet meaningful response→ **prompts:** Why do you keep coming back to camp, Whats the difference between now and when you were a camper? what camp tradition have you seen evolve/ created? What camp traditions were here when you were campers that are no longer here?
 - i. Zach Lasker (Dizzle), Camp Director
 - ii. Hillary Gardenswartz, Yoetzet
 - iii. Benji Davis, Rosh Edah
 - iv. Miriam Wolf, Yoetzet
- d. Sam, molly, and yael explain the next part of the program which is the museum. The museum will be set up inside the whizin building
- e. Split the edah into 5 groups, rotate in a 1-5 order
 - i. Micah + Emily
 - ii. David + Moogie
 - iii. Alana + Baskin
 - iv. April + Jacob
 - v. Danny + Or
- f. Museum style set up where they walk through a maze type thing one by one
 1. **poster of camp directors**
 - a. Rabbi Pressman and Miriam Wise- 1955
 - b. Dr. David Lieber- 1956-1957
 - c. Chaim Potok- 1958-1959
 - d. Walter Ackerman- 1960-1969, 1973
 - e. Ron Levine- 1970
 - f. Stuart Kellman- 1971-1972
 - g. Dr. Asher Meltzer- 1974-1975
 - h. Dr. Israel Spiegler – 1976
 - i. Sheldon Dorff- 1977
 - j. Dr. Alvin Mars- 1978-1984
 - k. Rabbi Glenn Karonsky- 1985-1989
 - l. Rabbi Eddie Feinstein- 1990-1993
 - m. Brian Greene- 1994-2001
 - n. Rabbi Daniel Greyber- 2002-2010
 2. **Pictures→take poster boards of pictures and put them around the whizn**
 3. **Book- set up on a table with information about Orchid Town**
 4. **The testimonials should be printed and placed on the wall as well as handed out for them to read**
 5. **wax character—Dizzle (wear your oldest camp shirt)**
 - a. first camp memories

- b. what camp tradition have you seen evolve/ created
- c. what camp traditions aren't around any more
- d. what camp traditions are around now that weren't before

II. Stations- 10 minutes each

- a. History of camp traditions- Niku
 - i. *Table on the whizin field*
 - ii. Have kids enter the praying place and sit in a circle quietly with niku holding a flash light to his face
 - iii. Niku will be telling " stories"/ explaining camp traditions
 - 1. First Tza'adah/Mud Hugs
 - 2. Charman Story: <http://kcharman.tripod.com/thechar-man.htm>
 - 3. First Chill 500
 - 4. Machon lines: the roshim were having trouble gathering every one to kabbalat shabbat, so Andrew polsky (ari's daddy) and his friends decided to make these lines as a way to funnel campers, so that they could all go
 - 5. How the Machon Edah song was created
- b. Music- Danielle natelson
 - i. *Building A*
 - ii. To get: **speakers, old camp music**
 - iii. Reflections on camp while listening to music
- c. Your history- Laura Belinfante and Erika Resnick
 - i. *Area next to the cage*
 - ii. torah scroll, large butcher paper of memories for them to free write on...put this paper in the time capsule) Favorite moments from each year- Gesher 2005, Nitzanim 2006, Giborei 2007, Adat Shalom 2008, Sollelim 2009, Tzophim 2010, MACHONCE
 - iii. to get: **butcher paper, pens**
- d. Letters to future selves- Gaby Grossman
 - i. *cage*
 - ii. Start by reading kids a sample mini letter...
 - iii. Then have them write letter to Gesher 2012, Machon 2012, Mador 2013/ "when you're a counselor"
 - iv. To get: **paper, pens, make a sample letter**
- e. Time capsule- Talia and Naomi
 - i. *Back side of whizin field, by the white thing*
 - ii. Have them put their objects in the time capsule and open the circle up to them, they can choose to share what they put and why, they can say a thanks, a quick memory, reflections etc. don't let it go on for a while because its similar to what we do the last night
 - iii. To get: **time capsule box**

III. *Conclusion*—gather around the edah wide time capsule

- a. Edah cheer reflections—go through each year singing one cheer from each edah
 - i. Nitzanim- Danielle,
 - ii. giborei- laura and Erika,
 - iii. adat shalom- tamir, Alana, danny, Jacob, Niku, Naomie
 - iv. Sollelim- Gaby, Jacob, Talia
 - v. Tzophim- Jacob, Baskin
 - vi. Machon- do our entrance/ cheers

TRADITIONS

THE FIRST TSA'ADAH

The first tsa'ada was second session, 1963. "Ackie" (Walter Ackerman, may his righteous memory be for an everlasting blessing) my Rosh Machaneh, was very skeptical that American kids would be able to march the 15 miles from Foster Park (site of the first tsa'adah) to camp.

Accordingly, we took lunch with us, figuring we'd get to camp sometime around dinner. We began marching at 7:00 a.m., after t'filot and breakfast. K'vutstat Ramah (our version of Madgredah), made it to camp by 10:30 a.m. The last shlepper tent, as we called them, arrived in camp at 1:00 p.m. The rest of the camp was in the dining room. Since we had brought our lunches, we settled down on the grass in front of the main building (called the Ulam, in the "Old Camp") to eat lunch. Of course, I use the word grass advisedly. The Old Camp wasn't landscaped like the "New Camp". Hot from marching 15 miles in over 100 degree heat, the Machon noticed that the pool was to their left. Of course, they all ran to it, jumping in fully clothed. When they returned, they sat down on the "grass" (read dirt) to eat. Well, when you mix dirt and water you get mud. Then someone had the idea to march into the Hadar Ochel, singing the Ts'adah song---after all, we are the Machon. And so we did----with mud dripping everywhere. Ackie was less than pleased, but he understood the excitement of the Machon in completing the first tsa'adah. And that's how the mud hugs began. By the way--it's amazing.

This summer, second session is the 48th anniversary of the tsa'ada. It seems like you guys liked it.

-Ron Levine (Camp Director 1970)

THE FIRST MACHON LINES

In summer, 1964, Ackie expressed concern about the freewheeling way all the bunks and tents came to Shabbat services. He felt it should be more orderly. So he created the idea, of having the Machon line up, creating a path for the rest of the camp to walk through, singing Shabbat melodies. It worked beautifully, and so, like the tsa'ada, continues to this day.

-Ron Levine (Camp Director 1970)

THE MACHON EDAH SONG

It was the summer of 1960----my closest friend, Rabbi Moshe Rothblum had already written the Edah songs for nitzanim and giborei. That summer, he was a counselor in Adat Shalom (called Edah gimmel in those days) and he wrote the original Adat Shalom song. I was a counselor in the Machon. The Machon did not have a song. So as not to be outdone by my dear friend, I wrote the Machon song. The Machon was already called Adat N'vi'im, hence

those words in the song. I did write the melody---the words were a collaboration between myself and a wonderful Israeli Machon counselor, Rina Neuman. She deserves a lot of credit for the words.

-Ron Levine (Camp Director 1970)

THE ORIGINAL CHARMAN STORY

The "Char-Man": A Local Legend of the Ojai Valley

By Charlie Seemann

The legend of the "Char Man" was in wide circulation when I was a high school student in the Ojai Valley, a small, quiet, mountain-ringed community about fourteen miles inland from Ventura, California. I have heard the story many times from my peers, and my version seems to be very typical. Here is the story as far as I remember it from high school days in 1963 or 1964.

Back in 1948 there was a big brush fire in the Ojai Valley, which burned a good part of the valley and destroyed many homes. It was several days after the fire before anyone could get around to all the burned homes in the surrounding foothills to see if everyone was all right. There was a man living with his son in an isolated cabin in the hills south of town. Their house was burned in the fire, the father was killed in the fire, and the son was badly burned. When someone finally got out to the remains of the cabin, they found that apparently, the son had gone crazy from the experience, for he had hung the body of his father from what was left of a nearby tree and had stripped all the burned skin from it. After skinning his father, he fled into the hills down on Old Creek Road, where he has lived in his "charred" condition ever since. Every once in a while he comes close enough to town to encounter someone, occasionally chasing people and such. The police have been sent out to look for him, and although they have caught glimpses of him, and found traces of him, they have never been able to catch him.

Charman Story in Camp

"First session, I was an ozer for Edah Alef. I had the youngest campers in the camp. One night, I told them a ghost story about "Charman," which is a ghost story I had heard from a friend a few years before. To my knowledge, no one at Camp had ever told the Charman story before. I set it up in two parts: first, I said it only happened on a full moon, and second, I said it was probably just a false legend. About a week later it was noticed by a camper that it was a full moon. That set the stage for us to carry out part two, which was, after the kids went to sleep, to spread ashes from the fire pits around the bunk, and have a friend of mine come in shake all the bunks and make a lot of scary noises and run off. There were doors to the counselor rooms back then, so when we came out and noticed the ashes, I said "This must be a prank. We're going to

go out and look for who did this." And all 3 of the counselors left to look for who was pulling this prank, but in doing so, we left the kids in the bunk entirely by themselves, shaking in terror. Of course, while we are out, our friend comes back and pounds on the doors making a lot of terrifying noise, and then we return, the kids are absolutely terrified. One of them opens the door and sees my "Charman" actor-friend in the distance waiving his arms in a Charman costume and he screams "Look! It's real! There he is!" Well, that was it for any of them getting any sleep that night!

I repeated this a few years later (in 1978) for an Eidah Alef girls bunk. I got into a lot of trouble for it. The counselor said that the girls were terrified and didn't sleep all night. But, a few weeks later, when they met their parents, I was told that all they talked about was Charman and how that was the best thing of the summer. Years later, the some of girls still came up to me and told me that this was the highlight of their summer. I guess this explains the popularity of scary movies. (By the way, that summer, the hit movie of the summer was "American Graffiti," George Lucas' first movie, pre-Star Wars.)

Second session I was moved to Edah Gimmel (now: Shalom). I was in the tents, and my campers included Drew Mayer ("Coach") and Andy Spitzer ("Dr. Andrew Spitzer"). I was the counselor for that group for 3 consecutive years."

--Jeff Rabin

CHILL 500

The Chill 500 started back in the summer of 99. The original crew was myself, David Kasirer, Max Bemis, Michael Auerbach, Josh Sultan, Jonathan Aires, Ariel Friedman and a handful of other pretty chill bros. We didn't do much that summer, except sit around, and we wanted a way to memorialize this summer of relaxation. We wanted to push the limits of chilling, see how far we could take it, and Kasirer had a peripheral interest in Nascar, so we figured, 'hey, 500 minutes, that seems like a pretty good amount of time.'

And it was. It was 8 hours and 20 minutes. Longer than anyone before us had chilled. But we knew that if we were going to be able to chill this long without interruption, it would have to be at night, when the camp was at its most silent state, its most chill state. So we started on the baseball field, where counselors might not look. And then when staff curfew passed us, we marched our chairs to the hill. To the place where we most enjoyed chilling, and spent the night where we'd spent most of the summer, under the middle of the hill. And Max Bemis played us songs, and we laughed and talked, and peed occasionally in the BKR.

Just a bunch of kids chilling and staying up late. Doing what we loved on our last weekend as campers.

- Theodore Bressman (Machon Camper 1999)

TESTIMONIALS

This Summer, thousands of youngsters will depart the comforts of home and family to share the experience of Jewish summer camps. A month or so from now, those same kids will tumble off busses, sleepy and soiled and transformed. They will carry home crafts and new friends, and a profound sense of having touched the core of Jewish life. They will bear vivid memories of Friday night sunsets, *havdallah* beneath the stars, new Hebrew songs, and a sense of belonging. They will learn little *about* Judaism. They will have lived Judaism personally and intensely

Centuries from now, when the definitive history of American Judaism is written, scholars will note the contribution of synagogues and seminaries to American Jewish life. But they will single out the summer camp as the most unique American Jewish institution. No institution changes young lives as powerfully as does camp. No other institution offers the chance to come so close to the core of holiness and feel the joy of carrying Judaism oneself. *Ba-katef ye-sa-u.*

Years ago I began working at Ramah. Each summer we opened the camp for a visitors' day, which was inevitably the hottest day of the summer. Late in the afternoon, I trudged back to my cabin for a cold drink. On the way, I encountered an elderly man, sitting alone, and obviously upset. I stopped to see if I could help him, but he waved me away.

"Can I help you find your family?"

"Leave me alone, young man, I'm fine."

"How about a cold drink?"

"I'm fine, don't bother."

"Well, you're obviously upset, so let me sit with you," I persisted.

We sat a few moments, and finally he turned to me and I saw the tears in his eyes.

"I'm a survivor. Do you know what that means?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I'm a survivor, and an old man, and I didn't want to shlep up here today. But my daughter made me come because my granddaughter is here. She's one of your campers. When I left Europe, years ago, I never thought I'd ever see Jewish children happy again. How can Jewish children be happy, being Jewish, after what Hitler did. But I look here and I see young people dancing, singing, with yarmulkes, speaking Hebrew. Young man, you, your friends, this place, have given me back something Hitler took away."

So the two of us sat on the bench and cried together.

-Rabbi Eddie Feinstein (Director 1990-1993)

My favorite memories of Ramah are of Shabbat afternoons. I remember telling stories to edot every week. As long as there were popsicles the stories were always a hit. And Shabbat limud. We tried to get every group to sit on the hill at the same time for limud - because it just felt so good to see the whole camp engaged in Jewish learning at the same time. Two great camp traditions - stories with popsicles and limud on the hill - images I will never forget.

-Brian Greene (Director 1994-2001)

"It is the lessons that I learned in Machon that have carried me to this day:

In Machon, you must listen and know the times to act right away and when to let things happen on their own. The daily routine (or drama?) of camp and the sheer exhaustion of one full day after another can magnify issues for everyone—the art of patience carries you far.

You can't hide at camp—your friends see you for who you really are. Your campers immediately recognize when you are not present or are being fake. Your coworkers will know when you aren't pulling your weight. Being comfortable with who you are, extending yourself for the good of the group and finding the good in people and situations prepare you for your journey back home.

When you leave Machon and return home, you are changed. You see the world differently from your friends at school. You see beauty in the ordinary. You see great potential in people and groups but you realize that your own potential is far greater than you knew. And no matter how much you paid attention (or not) in T'filot, you do see the holiness that is always around you.

Machon doesn't just happen in Ojai and it doesn't just last a summer. Machon lasts a lifetime and you are now fully in the club. Thirty years after I was first in Machon, I still think of these lessons. I still see friends I made those summers—several of them are at camp with you now! I am still in touch with many of my campers and I see their children when I am up at camp. Two of my kids have made it to the Machon club so far with Molly returning again as a counselor. My other two tell me that they can't wait.

Congratulations Machonce on a job well done—just remember the job (and the joy) is just beginning."
-Dr. Lee Rosen (Rosh Machon 1984)

"Serving as Rosh Edah for Machon in 1980 and 1981 was the most important leadership experience of my life. I was attending NYU Law School at the time, and while I did become a lawyer for a few years, the experience of being Rosh Machon led me to seek a career in Jewish education and return to rabbinical school. 30 years later I still get to go to Camp Ramah every summer! Machon, as a leadership experience, has essentially remained the same."

-Rabbi Mitch Cohen (Rosh Machon 1980-1981, Current National Ramah Director)

"Camp has always been this alternate universe for me. News travels faster. Gossip stings more. Time passes more slowly. The days drag on and on right up till the very end where suddenly they don't drag on, they speed up. Your entire body is sweating and your hair's a mess but you just don't care. It's 109 degrees outside and you're wearing a black t-shirt. You wear sandals all day every day and your feet turn black. Your skin darkens. Your hair lightens. Your allergies flare. Breathing slows down. Everyone walks slower and runs faster. You laugh harder, smile bigger.

And slowly, you disconnect from the "real world". Suddenly you don't talk to your family as often. Your friends at home go about their lives even if YOU have no recollection of what's going on. What's going on in the world, in our country, aren't talked about, or even mentioned briefly. Lance Armstrong won his 7th Tour De France? Wait, the Tour De France was going on?! You think you know what day it is but you're wrong. the weekdays are dictated by what you're having for breakfast. For lunch. "Yay Burritos for lunch! Omigod is it Friday already?!"

Coming home is even weirder. Your eyes aren't used to NOT Camp. The glare off the concrete jungles of Los Angeles burns. It burns! Your nose isn't used to NOT Camp. The air suddenly doesn't smell as fresh. You're not used to waking up in a silent and still bedroom. You have trouble falling asleep due to an absence of the sound of other people snoring. It's almost depressing to NOT eat your breakfast with 400 people. You find yourself at a loss.

It becomes difficult to disconnect and then reconnect a few days later. Like what I'm going through now. It's tough. All you can do is look backwards. At all you've done. All you've accomplished as an individual AND as a group. So look back at every photo. Reread each letter. Unpack your suitcase with a smile. Like I do. Welcome back to Camp Ramah.

Walk out that door with a grin on your face and an adventurous glint in your eyes. It always worked for me."

-Max Muller (Machon Counselor 2006)