

## **Camp Waupaca For Boys Obituary for Dave Weiner**

(written by Mike Lurie on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, one day after Dave passed away)

I would venture to guess that most of you had never met Dave Weiner, let alone heard of Dave Weiner and his time at Camp Waupaca For Boys. Dave would have been considered an “old timer”, having been at camp from the opening in 1951 until he left after the summer of 1953. Dave wasn’t just a staff member at camp. He left a truly lasting legacy, in 2 ways, which I will explain.

Dave met Irving “Skipper” Kuklin in 1943 at the age of 11. Skipper had been named as director of Camp Briar Lodge near Oconomowoc, WI. He came to the apartment where Dave lived with his parents, Harry and Bessie Weiner, on the south side of Chicago and gave the family a presentation on the virtues of Camp Briar Lodge. Dave spent 3 summers at Briar Lodge under the watch of Skipper Kuklin. David noticed the emphasis on sportsmanship that Skip Kuklin fostered at camp. Kuklin had established a “Sportsmanship Award” for the camper who lived and breathed sportsmanship while at camp. Dave was not in the running in his first summer at camp. By the second year, Dave was runner-up. And in his 3<sup>rd</sup> summer at camp Briar Lodge, David won the coveted Sportsmanship Award. This award came with a trophy that the winner was allowed to bring home for the winter. It sat proudly on the mantle in the Weiner living room. Dave’s father Harry was among the greatest sports David had ever known. He was very proud of little David’s accomplishment. Win or lose in whatever endeavor, Harry was always cheerful, positive and full of good humor.

David took a break from summer camps for a time, but jumped back into summer camp life at the request of Skip Kuklin who was the new director at a new camp, Camp Arrowhead near Rice Lake, WI. David would become a CIT, or Counsellor In Training, and spent 3 years at Camp Arrowhead under the watchful eye and guiding hand of Skip Kuklin. It was at Camp Arrowhead that David was exposed to another staff member, Joe Rosen.

In the Fall of 1950, as a Freshman at University of Wisconsin – Madison, Skipper Kuklin came calling to Dave Weiner yet again. Skip had built his own camp with partner Joe Rosen in Waupaca, WI. At this new camp – Camp Waupaca For Boys, Kuklin brought many of the same programs from Briar Lodge and Arrowhead, including a Braves program, Gold Rush Day, and a Color War culminating in a decisive Super Duper Relay. Skipper also brought the same ideology from these previous camps with an emphasis on the Sportsmanship Award that David had won years earlier.

David was captain of the camp’s first Blue & White War’s White Team, going against fellow counselor and captain of the Blue team, Wally Gembica. They threw down the gauntlet in front of the entire camp in the mess hall, with an impassioned yet staged argument after the dinner meal was completed. Once again, sportsmanship was the hallmark of all activities during the Blue & White War. By example, camp owner and director Skipper Kuklin continued to display the characteristics of humility, modesty, fairness, decency, grace and good humor.

By 1953, David was moving on with his life and was spending his last summer at camp. David’s parents Harry and Bessie visited Waupaca every summer Dave was at camp, despite him being a staff member

and not a camper. It was during this summer that Harry Weiner entered into an agreement with Director Kuklin to sponsor the coveted Sportsmanship Award for many years after. The award was renamed to the "Dave Weiner Sportsmanship Award". This award would eventually be renamed the "Camper of the Year" award, and eventually this award was dropped completely from the program at Camp Waupaca.

I bet you did not know that Dave Weiner was the writer of the Camp Waupaca song! Dave wrote the words, and he "borrowed" the melodies from 2 university fight songs. The first verse is from "The Washington and Lee Swing" and the second verse is from the Stanford fight song "Come Join the Band".

In Dave Weiner's memory, and to honor the legacy he left at Camp Waupaca, sing the camp song out loud today!