



### **Hip-Hip Harand**

**Half a century of creative summer camp breeds artists and achievers alike.**

**By Rosemary Zurlo-Cuva, 2004**

For 50 years Harand Camp of the Theatre Arts in Beaver Dam has provided thousands of children with summers of acting, singing and dance instruction. As the camp enters its golden anniversary season, the list of alums now working successfully in television, film and theater is impressive. A very short list includes actors Jeremy Piven and Billy Zane, director Andrew Davis and playwright David Rush. But by all accounts, it is the non-competitive, family-like atmosphere that makes this camp unique and brings campers back year after year.

"We emphasize an environment where each child is a star and 'no man is an island,'" says Harand Camp co-founder Sulie Harand. "Through communal participation in theater and sports we strive to instill the importance of diversity and help the children grow as well-rounded adults."

Lindsay Feitlinger positively glows when she describes her summers at Harand Camp. A 1996 East High graduate who now lives in Chicago and works as part of Oprah Winfrey's production team, Feitlinger spent nine summers at Harand and credits her camp experiences with shaping the confident and creative person she has become.

"Every year you have the challenge of a new play," she says, speaking of the musical productions staged during each session in which every child has a part and the major roles are shared by a number of children. She took her first video production class at camp and learned how much she liked working behind the scenes, putting together the composition of a program.

"After camp," she says, "going to college was easy. I'd learned to be outgoing, to take risks and meet all sorts of new people."

Most important to Feitlinger was the atmosphere of caring. During her first year at camp, when she was most homesick, Pearl Harand, the camp co-founder who passed away in 1999, took Feitlinger under her wing. "She would invite me for walks, ask me how I was doing and really listen to me. She encouraged me and became like another grandmother."

Joe Michaelis recently graduated from UW-Madison and credits his three summers working as a counselor at Harand with his decision to become a teacher.

"Working there has been the most amazing and most difficult thing I've ever done. It really tests your limits," Joe says of the camp workday, which starts at 7 a.m. and doesn't end until 10:30 p.m. or later. He was never much interested in theater, he admits, but it has been Sulie and Pearl's "no man is an island" philosophy that has impressed him most. "You feel that we're all working together, sharing. All the kids get to feel special, get to feel part of things."

Harand Camp was established in Elkart Lake, Wisconsin, in 1955 by sisters Sulie and Pearl Harand, along with their husbands, Byron Friedman and Sam Gaffin. The sisters were both performers from early childhood, but their real gift, it seems, is to have passed on their enthusiasm for musical theater to generations of young people. Also, sports and recreational activities have always been half of the camp equation, emphasizing the values of teamwork, poise and self-esteem.

In 1990 the camp moved to the Wayland Academy in Beaver Dam, taking advantage of its well-maintained facilities on 55 acres. Acting, singing and dance classes take up half of each day, in preparation for the musical production that ends each session. The second half of each day is filled with sports and electives like video, stage technology and management, arts and crafts, photography and chorus. Evenings and Sundays include trips to go bowling or to Madison for a baseball game, talent shows, sports tournaments and dances.

Counselors and instructors come from all over the world, but clearly, it is the family thing that makes all the difference. The next generation of the Harand family -- Janice Gaffin Lovell, Judy Friedman Mooney and Nora Gaffin Shore -- has taken up management of Harand Camp now, and the atmosphere of personal involvement remains intact.

When asked what keeps him coming back to work at Harand, Joe Michaelis says, "Every time I leave I feel like I'm leaving family. When I come back, I feel like I'm coming home."

*Rosemary Zurlo-Cuva is a contributing writer to Madison Magazine.*