

PIONEER PRESS

Creativity Camp Pioneer Press, Diversions By Dan Pearson March 11, 2004

For nearly 50 years, the Sulie and Pearl Harand Camp has offered thousands of Chicago-area youngsters a golden opportunity each summer to learn how to sing, dance and act in the classics of American musical theater.

Former alumni include actors Jeremy Piven and Billy Zane, filmmaker Andrew Davis, movie producer Bruce Block, Slate editor-in-chief Jacob Weisberg, Lyric Opera lighting designer Duane Schuler, mystery author Laura Lippman, playwright David Rush and theater critics Todd London and Albert Williams.

For the last five decades Harand Camp has successfully co-starred the camaraderie and activities of traditional summer camp life with a character-building course of self-esteem through professionally taught classes in stage performance skills. The Harand family believes the combination of the theatre arts and sports ultimately helps each camper become a well-rounded individual.

“My sister and I were both performers around Chicago for a long time and people would ask us where their kids could study what we do,” said Sulie Harand, an Evanston resident since 1950. As president and camp director, the still very active Harand shares the running of the camp with her daughter, Judy Friedman Mooney, and her nieces, Pearl’s daughters, Nora Gaffin Shore and Janice Gaffin Lovell.

In the 1960s, Harand Camp hosted up to 375 campers during a four to eight week season. Currently, it offers three and six week sessions for boys and girls aged 8 to 17. Each session includes productions and campers stay in dorms/cabins named after such classic Broadway hits as *Carousel*, *Brigadoon*, *South Pacific*, *Mame*, and *My Fair Lady*.

“Our kids may come singing rock tunes in their heads, but they go home asking for Gershwin and Berlin and knowing all the musicals, said Harand, who got her start studying opera. We emphasize a non-competitive and caring family environment. It is for this reason that all roles are shared, so every child has a chance to be in the spotlight and also perform in the ensemble. If we are doing *The Wizard of Oz*, there may be six Dorothy, three Scarecrows, Lions, and Tinmen. The kids become a soloist whether they are the greatest talent or not,” Sulie said. “We give them the parts we think will do them the most good personally. Often we go against type. If a kid is shy, we may give them the loudest and most boisterous songs. If someone is all over the stage and might need to be toned down, we might give them a quiet song.”

Harand believes this gives her campers the confidence and poise which carries them through the rest of their lives, no matter what they are going to do. Evanston native Jeremy Piven, who attended the camp in the early 1980s, has described his experiences at Harand as “the ultimate fantasy camp. Harand was like living the dream for me. Acting and sports together,” he said. “The love of that place from Pearl and Sulie radiated everywhere. ‘No man is an island,’ indeed. I will never ever forget that magical place.”