

Rekindling memories of past summers

Those who stayed at Camp Waupaca pay a return visit

By Dan Wilson
Post-Crescent staff writer

WAUPACA — Two generations of "boys" are in Waupaca this weekend to recapture their lost youth at the camp which provided them with so many fond memories.

On the shore of Waupaca's Stratton Lake, former campers who spent their summers at Camp Waupaca will be holding a reunion marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of the camp.

Among those here for the weekend is Dick Garb, a Chicago accountant. Garb is bringing his son and daughter. His son, 10, is the same age Garb was when he spent eight weeks at Camp Waupaca about 40 years ago.

"No, I am not going to be a kid again, but I am going to see the people with whom I shared so many experiences and memories," said Garb.

About 100 former summer campers are expected to attend.

Camp Waupaca was founded on an 80-acre parcel on Stratton Lake as a private boys summer camp in 1951.

It was sold to Manny Desnet and two silent partners in 1966 who operated it until 1988 when it was sold again and is now operated as Camp Young Judaea, a private camp.

Unlike today's camps, however, Camp Waupaca campers attended for either four- or eight-week sessions, which, according to Camp Waupaca



Post-Crescent photo by Dan Powers

A STAIRWAY LEADS to a large beach on Stratton Lake at Camp Young Judaea in Waupaca County. A reunion of former campers is being held there this weekend.

attendees, formed a strong bond among the boys.

"And, it was also the magic Joe Rosen and Manny Desnet brought to the camp," said Paul Warshauer, a former camper and camp counselor who serves as the reunion coordinator.

Warshauer, 47, credits his camp experience with inspiring him to become a teacher.

"I think I speak for I don't know how many thousands of boys turned into men who went to Camp Waupaca which gave them the best memories of their lives," said Warshauer.

The idea for a reunion began five years ago with the first alumni gathering in 1996.

"Friends of mine visited the camp over the years so we thought why not formalize this and rent the camp for a weekend?" he said. "So we invited about 100 people and started the reunions."

"I think it gives us all this great warm and fuzzy feeling," said Warshauer. "And, it was a period in our lives when we were independent from our parents and we were creative and competitive and we made life-long friends."

"By walking this property you get more than a sense of deja vu. Some people never really said goodbye to camp," he said.

When the original owners

retired, according to Warshauer, they could have had a comfortable retirement by selling the camp property for residential development.

"But no, Manny Desnet chose to sell it to another camp," he said.

Warshauer recalled that Desnet attended the 1996 reunion.

"He was pretty frail, and like a lot of older business people he wondered if it was all worth it, but at that reunion he got a standing ovation around the camp fire. He died the next year."

Dan Wilson can be reached at 920-993-1000, ext. 304, or by e-mail at dwilson@smgpo.gannett.com.