

## Reminiscence From A Son's-In-Law Perspective

by Hershel Weber

In last week's issue of the Bulletin, we had the pleasure to read Saul Feder's perspective of the beginnings of Beaver Lake Estates. I was so moved by the letter, that I sought an opportunity to submit my own unique perspective of Beaver Lake as a son-in-law and permanent guest of Menachem and Susan Gottlieb for the past sixteen years. I, along with many others who are perhaps ashamed to admit it, found Mr. Feder's story to be accurate although most will sheepishly deny it. Yet it is part of the long, but incomplete story of Beaver Lake Estates. I can also testify to being unsure, and perhaps petrified to hear the shrill of foreign languages spoken during disagreements, only for these matters to be settled moments later at kiddushim, and then resurrected at the Shareholder's meeting.

My own experience in Beaver Lake started when I married my level headed and wonderful wife, Mimi. As newlyweds, and preparing for our first Shabbos in Beaver Lake, she had laid out some of the ground rules I had to abide by before stepping foot onto the premises:

- 1) Don't EVER call the homes "Bungalows".
- 2) Sons-in-Law are guests.
- 3) Be on your best behavior, as not everyone will understand your humor\*. I arrived with trepidation and was immediately shocked. It was like watching the seminal movie, "Caddyshack," but with Orthodox Jews as the cast of characters. I was struck by the incredible beauty of the grounds, rustic and manicured homes with bicycles and vehicles parked together, and residents with a dress code of Kangol\*\* hats, Member's Only jackets, and other forms of Miami Beach, retiree attire. I also took note of the Residents engaged in various forms of physical activity such as basketball, tennis, jogging, and assorted athletic activities. Others not engaged in athletics were busy fixing their homes, carrying bags of groceries and building supplies, and attempting to use power saws. The common denominator facial expressions showed much distress, that these activities were spontaneous and perhaps against their physician's orders. I was subsequently greeted warmly by my in-laws and shown to our room, and the sudden combination of mustiness, pine, and

“Catskills” over powered me. I was taken back to my youth in the Bungalows, but I was compliant about not using the B word lest I be punished. I was also approached by Mimi to address many of the home’s issues such as flooding in the basement and a problematic septic tank pump. (Little did I realize that I was being set up for failure. I was not allowed to leave the home for next fifteen years.)

For the next number of years, I became involved in Beaver Lake Administration. I helped with Day Camp Administration and served as Health Director for Beaver Lake. Work started after Chanukah, and did not end till after the summer. I worked for Beaver Lake and for Tomi Karkunkel. Tomi and I developed an incredible bond. He taught me many things, and I would use his style of diplomacy in my professional life, and it has served me well. My favorite time was my Sunday routine with Tomi. I would be invited to his home for breakfast and our trip around Beaver Lake would begin. I would be taken around Beaver Lake as an observer to see how Beaver Lake was managed and to correct facility issues for homeowners. Needless to say, it was impressive. My in-laws were not able to reconcile how a non-shareholder was able to travel in such circles. Years later I am still astonished as to its operation, (and yet I am still a guest). Much acknowledgement goes to my close friends and mentors Tomi Karfunkel, Saul Feder, and Harry Bram who helped build Beaver Lake, served in various administrative capacities, and helped me assimilate into Beaver Lake culture among other things.

In sum, Beaver Lake was built by the audacity, tenacity, and a few choice Hungarian words of Jews, who believed in creating a summer development that met their residential and requisite Epicurean needs. It has been an incredible place for my family, not only for wonderful summers spent here in bucolic surroundings, but for the opportunity to find comedy and light hearted moments. Despite the fact that no one here could agree to the correct way of making stuffed cabbage (sweet versus sour), the correct Nusach for the 9AM Shabbos Minyan, one can agree it is a place for a child to grow up, and develop independence. It is a place where lifelong friends can get together for lazy summer days. It is a place where one can learn Hungarian and become “Dangerous” (Thanks Mrs. Mandel). Classrooms and family can only teach so much. Beaver Lake teaches you how to negotiate for space, becoming an

architect overnight, learning parameters and diplomacy, identifying the types of herring that could be eaten on a cracker, the utility of paprika in all dishes, and to bring a bag of popcorn to the General Membership meeting.

\*N.B. I am happy to note that I am only compliant with one rule that was laid out to me sixteen years ago. Which one, remains a mystery to the reader.

\*\*Editor's note: Kangol is an English clothing company famous for its head wear. Founded in the 1920's, by Jewish Polish World War I veteran Jacques Spreiregen, Kangol produced hats for workers, golfers, and especially soldiers.