

FAMILY TIME

Jews don't icefish — or do they?

A grandson's question about the beloved Minnesota tradition leads to a great story

By TED WEINBERG

(Editor's Note: In 2011, the author's 10-year-old grandson, Nate, who lives in Chicago, asked his grandfather if he icefished. The author initially said no, but after reconsidering the question, he penned this e-mail to his grandson.)

Dear Nate: You had asked me if I icefished and I replied, "Our people do not icefish." Well, I got to thinking last week that it might be interesting to learn more about the sport, so I dressed up warm and walked down to Cedar Lake to check things out.

There was a man who had just finished chopping a 16-inch hole in the ice, which was about six inches thick. He was an old man, about 80 years old, and was having trouble putting a seven-inch sucker minnow on his hook. I offered to help and soon we began to lower the minnow into the dark, ice-cold water.

The man's name, he told me, was Abe and he had been fishing for this monster northern for the last 10 years. He had hooked him several times and lost the battle each time due to exhaustion, or a broken line or rod.

It was about five minutes and the seven-inch minnow started to shake nervously. Soon the shaking stopped and the line began to pull. Abe told me to grab the line because of the leather gloves I was wearing and to tighten my grip to set the hook. I jerked on the line and it felt like I had hooked something on the bottom.

The thing on the bottom began moving and shaking violently

rapidly so I tightened my grip as the line began to cut into my leather gloves. We were almost out of line when the pulling stopped and I thought the line had snapped. Sadly, I began to retrieve the line only to find it had something heavy still there and I was excited again.

Abe was instructing me and kept saying that he was a monster and if we had any chance of landing



Ted Weinberg created an imagined icefishing experience on Cedar Lake in St. Louis Park for his 10-year-old grandson.

him, it would take a long time to really tire him out. Well, 45 minutes later, he began to pull less and I was able to retrieve most of the line. Abe kept saying, "Take your time, he's not ready yet."

It was 4 p.m. and the wind had picked up. It was really getting cold. I began to pull the fish up toward the opening of the hole, which had begun to freeze up when I looked down and

"Wow!" I said to Abe. "What a monster!"

I asked Abe to pull off my gloves as I switched hands in order to keep pressure on the line. Then, I reached into the icy water to grab the monster's gills with both hands. I pulled harder than I ever thought my frozen hands and arms were capable, and I slid the 45-inch monster onto the ice.

Abe and I both agreed that the fish must be returned to the water immediately if it was to survive and Abe offered to take a photo of me holding the monster, which he

did. I slid the fish back into the water and began to revive it until he gave a snap of his tail and dove into the depths again.

I was freezing, as was Abe, and I offered to treat him to some hot coffee. But Abe said to me, "It's Friday and I must get home for Shabbat dinner before sunset." I told him I understood.

Atlanta Jewish camp welcomes children with autism spectrum disorders

Children ages 12 to 17 throughout the Southeast United States who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) now have a special Jewish summer camp with a supportive environment that encourages social interaction and personal growth.

Beginning this summer, Camp Ramah Darom in Clayton, Ga., will offer a new Tikvah program with two four-week summer experiences designed specifically for ASD campers.



Courtesy of Camp Ramah Darom
Camp Ramah Darom in Clayton, Ga., will offer a new Tikvah program designed specifically for campers with autism spectrum disorder.

Jewish Disability Awareness Month

Camp Ramah Darom's Tikvah Program will be the first program in the Southeast focused on providing a traditional, immersive, Jewish summer-camping experience to teenagers with autism spectrum disorder. The program will be "fully integrated into a community that is steeped in Jewish celebration, learning and ritual," according to a press release.

"The Tikvah program will enhance the entire camp, enabling us to teach our campers by experience what a truly inclusive Jewish community can look like and inspire them to bring that model home to their schools and synagogues," said Camp Ramah Darom Director Geoffrey Menkowitz.

Dr. Audra Kaplan, a clinical psychologist, is director of the new program. Campers will benefit from the small group focus and counselors who come from a variety of disci-

plines, including college students majoring in special education and language therapy.

"When campers can participate within their own atmosphere, it creates a powerful experience for them and they return home with a new level of maturity," Kaplan said.

With the new program, Ramah Darom will build upon its nationally recognized Camp Yofi, a five-day camp for families of children with ASD. Ramah Darom is also expanding the reach of the national Ramah Tikvah Network of programs that serve Jewish children, teens and young adults with a variety of disabilities — including Camp Ramah in Wisconsin.

For information, visit: www.campramahdarom.org.