**The Tamiment Performers**

In the Summer of 1941, when I was 18, I and several other college students had jobs in a popular adult camp in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. Camp Tamiment, for this was its name, had all the usual facilities of an up-market resort for several hundred guests. There were cabins, dining hall, dance floor, tennis court, golf course, bar, and also a considerable theater in which revues were tried out several times a week.

My job was working behind the counter in the Tavern, selling ice cream, cigarettes, ping pong balls, etc. In the middle of the afternoons when the guests were busy swimming, rowing, golfing, shuffleboarding, and customers few, I was busy behind the counter studying Frederick Woods’ *Advanced Calculus.*

In the evening, under the supervision of the Head Bartender Pete Pietri and Assistant Bartender Louis Cerutti, I would pitch in making set ups for Cuba libres (rum and Coca Cola) , Martinis, Manhattans, Daiquiris, etc. I took a shine to Pete and he to me, and under his tutelage, I compiled a list of popular cocktail recipes and learned how to shake a cocktail with a certain fancy motion though the air that made simple up and down shaking an indication of a crude, uneducated bartender. The professional cocktail shaker consisted simply of a glass bottom and a metal top. If Pete had an order for, say, three daiquiris, long experience taught him exactly how much liquid and ice to put into the glass , shake it, and strain it out with a flair. His was artistic mastery.

Pete was a patriotic Cuban and sang the praises of Bacardi Rum. Rum, he told me, no matter how much of it one drinks, never results in a hangover. Alas, I proved him wrong, but that episode is best forgotten.

The revues drew on young talent: composers, actors, singers, comedians, dancers all of whom were hoping to make it into the big time. And many had that luck and talent. The revues were impressario-ed by Max Liebman and by Sylvia Fine, lyricist and Danny Kaye’s wife,

The list of the performers I met includes Imogene Coca, Danny Kaye, Jerome Robbins, Carol Channing, Betty Garrett, Jules Munshin. When I say “met,”I mean that I knew who each was, I said “Hello,” and when they bought something “on the cuff” I remembered to mark down the amount in a special book.



**Coca : Some Years after Camp Tamiment**

The entertainment staff including the jazz band, the waiters, the golf and tennis pros each constituted its own social group but there was plenty of interchanges and no house rule kept the guests from mixing with the various employees. I struck up a friendship with Coca’s husband, Bob Burton, who was a writer of skits, a musical arranger, and a straight man. And I recall saying to him one afternoon that I’d like to collaborate with him writing a skit. He said “sure, let’s do it,” but nothing came of it.

The performing alumni of Tamiment went on in later years to great éclat on Broadway; are not their achievements to be found in the *Chronicles of American Entertainment* ? I have read that the Tamiment alumni include Woody Allen and Carol Burnett, but these stars had not yet risen in 1941.

Camp Tamiment started in 1921 as a vacation spot for socialists and this liberal orientation lasted throughout its lifetime. The Tamiment Playhouse was not only the location for revues and movies. but also the stage for political addresses. I recall “Bundles for Britain” with a bagpiper in kilts. (Would Roosevelt lead the country into the European War ?)

I recall a talk by Alexander Kerensky, the liberal, short term Premier of post-Tsarist pre-Leninist Russia. Before his talk, Kerensky came up to my counter and I sold him a Primadora cigar (17 cents).



Alexander Kerensky

Tamiment was about a half mile from Unity House, a summer camp for the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) Occasionally, of an evening, we might walk over and see what was going on there. A few years prior, the ILGWU had a great Broadway success with its production of the musical *Pins and Needles.*

The Summer ended; back to Junior Year at Harvard for advanced calculus with George Birkhoff, mathematical logic with W.V.O. Quine and a couple of “distribution” courses. That Fall, I met Hadassah when we were both picketing an American First meeting in Boston at which Charles Lindbergh was the attraction. Within a month America was in WWII and a new chapter began.