

Chai~Lights



April 2009

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Keys Jewish Community Center

P.O. Box 1332 • Tavernier, FL 33070 • 305-852-5235 • keysjewishcenter.com

April 2009

7 Nisan - 6 Iyar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Names denote leaders of Friday services. <i>Italicized names are Oneg sponsors.</i></p>			<p>1 Women's Seder 5:30 p.m.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3 Joyce Peckman <i>Judy & Larry Weber</i></p>	<p>4</p>
<p>5 Adult Education Film On Breast Cancer <i>In The Family</i> 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8 Erev Pesach </p>	<p>9 First Day of Passover KJCC Second Seder 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>10 Stuart & Lauren Sax <i>Geri & Stuart Smith Lauren & Stuart Sax Gene & Mort Silverman</i></p>	<p>11</p>
<p>12 KJCC Board Meeting Blood Drive 9:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17 Steve Friedman <i>Franne & Barry Alter Stephanie & Larry Gilderman Gene & Mort Silverman</i></p>	<p>18</p>
<p>19 Movie: "The Life and Legacy of Simon Wiesenthal" 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 Yom HaShoah</p>	<p>22 Earth Day </p>	<p>23 Holocaust Presentation by Steve Smith "Never Again?" Part 1</p>	<p>24 Jim Boruszak & Gloria Avner 6:30 Service <i>Toby & David Goldfinger</i></p>	<p>25</p>
<p>26 Holocaust Presentation by Steve Smith, Part 2</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29 Israel Independence Day (Yom HaAtzma'ut)</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>1 Service Led by Yardena, Dedicated to Yom HaAtzma'ut</p>	

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CHAI-LIGHTS is the
monthly newsletter of the
Keys Jewish Community Center
P.O. Box 1332
Tavernier, Florida 33070
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President's Message Alan Beth



I look forward to working with our new officers and board of directors and also with all of our members. I am pleased to say that the leaders of most of our committees will remain in their current positions. I am also pleased to announce the following new appointments:

- Gloria Avner -
Ritual Committee
- Stan Margulies -
Membership Committee
- Sam Vinicur -
Communication Committee

I encourage everyone, not just officers and committee chairs, to actively participate in the life of our KJCC. We need fresh ideas and we need involvement. Seriously, I encourage an open-door policy.

We should be very proud of our recent accomplishments and activities at our KJCC: Bernie Ginsberg led an excellent discussion on Jewish archaeological evidence. Joyce Peckman led a reading of the Purim *Megillah*, which attracted more than 25 people. This was immediately followed by a buffet dinner. (Our thanks to Joyce and Sisterhood for providing the delicious food and of course nourishing our sense of community.) Then came the Purim play, acted by our children (young and not so young!), with thanks to our teachers Gloria (who wrote *and* directed the play) and Yardena.

We had our Annual Fund-raiser for the synagogue. Jules Seder played some wonder-

ful music and kept us dancing till the wee hours (well, 9:30 p.m.!) This elegant Sisterhood event was held at Coral Harbour Club House; our thanks to Jim and Joan for providing this facility. As I write, Yardena is preparing for an Adult Education discussion on Biblical Jewish leaders. I am delighted that Joel and Linda kindly agreed to host a late March *havdalah* service at their home. (Gloria is actively looking for volunteers to host the next one.) This is a wonderful example of how we, as Jews, can celebrate our traditions outside of the boundaries of the KJCC building.

We look forward to the coming month. Our April events start with the Women's Seder at the KJCC. Stuart and Lauren will be hosting a movie and a talk on a serious subject, ovarian cancer. (See Nosh for details.) As part of Yardena's annual Holocaust commemoration, Steve Smith is preparing a two-part lecture to be given at KJCC at the end of April.

Spring has arrived. *Pesach* is coming, the celebration of our freedom. Our seder on the second night has become a beloved tradition. Our community is strong, and I am excited to see our dedication to always making it better. I wish you a healthy and happy *Chag Sameach*.

Alan

Give Blood on April 12th

The Bloodmobile is again coming to KJCC. It will be stationed in the parking lot on Sunday, April 12, from 9:45 a.m. until 2:45 p.m. This is the perfect time, as there is a board meeting that day, plus we have all the parents at Sunday School. Please plan to donate, because whole blood is always in demand. Also, because some of the rules have changed, many who think they cannot donate might well be able to. For questions contact DeeDee Ellis, Area Manager of Community Blood Centers of South Florida, at 305-307-7240, or visit cbcsf.org. And here's the clincher: they give away free cookies.

Yom Ha'atzma'ut Service

Yom Ha'atzma'ut, Israel's Independence Day, falls on April 29th in 2009. The following Friday, May 1st, the KJCC service will be dedicated to celebrating Israel's 61st birthday. Yardena Kamely will be leading services. Instead of a *parsha* there will be Israeli songs and possibly even a little dancing. Watch your e-mail for further details and any updates.

Oneg Sponsors for April 2009

April 3rd — Judy and Larry Weber for Larry's birthday.

April 10th — Geri and Stuart Smith for their anniversary, Lauren and Stuart Sax in honor of the birthday of Kathy Sax, and Gene and Mort Silverman for Gene's Birthday.

April 17th — Franne and Barry Alter for Franne's birthday, Stephanie and Larry Gilderman in honor of Ella's birthday, and Gene and Mort Silverman in honor of Robin's birthday.

April 24th — Toby and David Goldfinger in honor of David's birthday.

Scholarship Info

If you are interested in learning more about a KJCC scholarship, contact Kurt Kluger at kurtkluger@bellsouth.net or by phone at 305-852-4353. The KJCC has implemented two types of financial awards available to children of KJCC members who are full time Monroe County residents, upon their graduation from high school or secondary school. They are the Pauline and Al Roller Merit award and The KJCC Scholarship award. If you or someone you know would be interested, contact Kurt for more info. Applications must be in by April 15.

Gloria Avner to Head Ritual Committee

With his ascension (or demotion, he hasn't decided which) to president, Alan Beth relinquished his long-held position as head of the KJCC religious (or ritual) committee. But, as his first executive act, he's found a most capable replacement: Gloria Avner. No one loves all things Jewish—spiritual, prosaic and educational—more than our Gittel, and she's sure to bring her boundless energy and ethic of inclusiveness to the task. Notes with ideas, congratulations or expressions of sympathy are always welcome at Gloria's e-mail: geetavner@gmail.com.

KJCC Holocaust Programs for 2009

The KJCC Holocaust Committee, chaired by Yardena Kamely, has prepared a varied program for the days before and after Yom HaShoah—Holocaust Remembrance Day—on April 21st. On Sunday, April 19th, from 7-9 p.m. at KJCC, they will host a movie, "The Life and Legacy of Simon Wiesenthal," narrated by Nicole Kidman. On Thursday, April 23, at 7 p.m. at KJCC, Steve Smith will present part I of "Never Again?," a PowerPoint presentation he wrote and produced; the opportunity to attend this will be offered not only to KJCC members but also to the overall Keys community. Part II, the continuation and final segment, will be presented at KJCC on Sunday, April 26th, also at 7 p.m. Please note the Chai-Lights calendar and also watch your e-mail for reminders and possible program changes.

Last Chance for Second Seder

By the time you receive this, KJCC will be opening reservations to our annual Second Seder to the outside community. So to all you straggler members who've been waiting until the last second to make reservations; it is now the last second. Call as soon as you finish reading this. The seder will be held Thursday, April 9th, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. at the Islamorada Fishing Club. Tickets are \$40 for adults, kids 12 and under free. Contact Leslie Dillon at 852-3654 for reservations or with any questions.

Men's Club SunCruz Casino Boat Outing

Will be on Wednesday, May 6th, at 7:30 p.m. The cost is \$25. Each person will receive a Fun Book which includes a \$10 fun coupon, \$10 casino cash, a mixed drink, a "lucky ace" for Black Jack, and more. For more information and reservations call Joan Boruszak at 852-0833.

Chart of Jewish Populations

Linda Pollack unearthed an amazing e-mail that lists each country of the world and the total of their Jewish population. Even more fascinating, if you click on an individual country name, you can read about the history of Jews in that country, plus there are links to other related articles. It's a rare and wonderful trove of information. Unfortunately, there's no link for us to publish for you, but if you're interested, send an e-mail to Chai-Lights and we'll forward the e-mail to you.

The KJCC extends deepest condolences to

John and Arlene Line

on the death of John's father

Irving Line

Ongoing Projects

General Donations - can be earmarked to our various ongoing funds; e.g. Holocaust Education Fund, Scholarship Fund, Sara Cohen Memorial Tzedukah Fund, or General Fund. Honorarium and memorial cards can also be requested. Call Linda Pollack 852-8575.

Gift Shop - We have many lovely gift and holiday items on hand and can special order for you as well. Contact Joan Boruszak 852-0833.

Jewish Youth Enrichment Program - will assist in involving our children in Jewish activities. Call Neal Rakov 852-9400.

Sunshine Committee - If you know of any member who should receive a get-well, congratulations or condolence card from the Center, call Rene Rose, 852-3959.

Cemetery Information - If you wish to plan for the very distant future, you can reserve space at the Kendall Mt. Nebo Cemetery in the KJCC section. Call Bea Graham, 852-0214.

Picture Postcards - We have beautiful picture postcards bearing the Millard Wells representation of the KJCC, which was commissioned by Sisterhood. Quantities can be packaged to fit your needs and mailed to you or your gift recipient. The price is \$36 per hundred but we will sell lesser quantities. Contact Joan Boruszak, 852-0833.

Oneg Shabbat Sponsor - To schedule your special date with Sisterhood, call Joyce Peckman, 451-0665. **KJCC Tree of Life Leaves and Rocks, Sanctuary Seat Plates, Yartzeit Memorial Plaques, Bookplates for Siddurim.** Call Linda Pollack to arrange your donation, 852-8575.

JNF Trees in Israel - A gift of a tree, or two or more, makes a long-remembered way to honor a loved one, a relative, a friend or an occasion. Both Israel and the KJCC benefit. Call Bea Graham, 852-0214.

Chai-Lights Mitzvah - Place a greeting or notice in Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 852-8575, to make your donation.

Advertisement in Chai-Lights - Your business ad will appear in every issue of Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 852-8575, for the low annual rates.

Call the names listed above for assistance or send your request and check to the KJCC, P.O. Box 1332, Tavernier, FL 33070. Recipients of your gifts will be notified by card and listings will appear in Chai-Lights as well.

April Anniversaries

		Years
3rd	Michael & Marcia Goldberg.....	15
3rd	Jules & Nettie Seder.....	43
7th	Salomon & Mary Turner.....	16
10th	Stuart & Geri Smith.....	44
15th	Sheldon & Carole Weiss.....	58
18th	Rick & Roberta McNew.....	28
30th	Morton & Gene Silverman.....	54

View from a Different Chair

My new duties as head of the religious committee started almost immediately. The call came Thursday afternoon from a woman who was not a member and never came to services. She needed seven men to complete a *minyán* for her visiting Orthodox son-in-law who had just lost his mother. Being Orthodox, it had to be men.

Of the first ten men I called, the only ones who refused were the ones who were out of town. The seven who were in town had other ways to spend their Thursday night. But all seven showed up at our sanctuary at 7:30.

We did it again, at their request, on Sunday night. I am proud of us not only because “we showed up,” but because for many of us there was a conflict in belief system. You want men? We got ‘em. Good ones. *Menschen* by the *minyán*. Thank you to all. -Gloria Avner

Breast Cancer Movie at KJCC

At age 31, filmmaker Joanna Rudnick faced an impossible decision; remove her breasts and ovaries or risk incredible odds of developing cancer.

Her documentary “In The Family” will be presented on Sunday, April 5 at 7 p.m. at KJCC for the benefit of those who are interested in learning more about the genetic markers that indicate cancer risk in your family. Did you know that there is a greater risk of ovarian cancer in the Jewish community?

This presentation is part of our ongoing Adult Education Program and is sponsored by Stuart and Lauren Sax. Light refreshments will be served.

April Birthdays

Claire Cooper.....	3rd
Lauren Abrams.....	3rd
Larry Weber.....	4th
Lauren Lane.....	4th
Faychesca Graham.....	6th
Harvey Schwaid.....	7th
David Feder.....	9th
Gene Silverman.....	9th
Ilese Vorcheimer.....	10th
Max Logan Gershowitz.....	11th
Richard Knowles.....	12th
Moira Knowles.....	13th
Samantha Grossinger.....	13th
Dave VanArtsdalen.....	16th
Ella Gilderman.....	16th
Franne Alter.....	17th
Katie Greenman.....	17th
Jennifer Garrett.....	18th
Lauren Sax.....	18th
Jonathan Nobil.....	20th
Larry Gilderman.....	20th
Susan Temkin.....	21st
Robin S. Denker.....	22nd
Lynn Nobil.....	24th
Randolph Green.....	24th
Susan Gordon.....	24th
Tiffany McNew.....	24th
Jared Scott Gershowitz.....	25th
Aaron Schmidt.....	27th
Beverly Robins.....	27th
Elinor Grossman.....	27th
David Goldfinger.....	29th
Jordan Neidenberg.....	29th
Linda Pollack.....	29th
Rachel Barrett.....	30th

“Birchat HaChama”

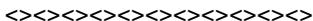
A rare event is about to happen that last happened 28 years ago. The morning of April 8th will bring the “Blessing of the Sun.” Who will celebrate with me? I would meet with anyone interested in hosting this blessing event at any time that morning before 11 a.m. Our children may carry on this tradition and remember what we did. Call me at 619-0216 for info or if you would like to host. -Gloria

In Memoriam April 2009

In Memory Of

NAT FELDBLUM

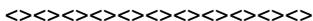
By Marc & Ellen Bloom



In Memory Of

MARK HITZIG

By Wes & Rita Conklin



In Memory Of

DAVID BERNSTEIN

By Laurence & Renee Green



In Memory Of

NATHAN KLEIN

By Harvey & Judith Klein



In Memory Of

DANIEL SEROTT

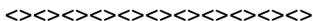
By David & Shifra Kossman



In Memory Of

ERWIN MOSS

By Joel & Linda Pollack



In Memory Of

SAM SAX

By Stuart & Lauren Sax



In Memory Of

BARUCH EPSTEIN

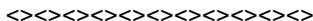
By James & Joan Boruszak



In Memory Of

FRANCES WOLFE

By Michael & Suzanne Gilson



In Memory Of

STELLA HARTZ

By Steven Hartz



In Memory Of

MARILYN JANET BARR

By Michael Klimpl



In Memory Of

MINNIE BIRNBAUM

By Mario & Linda LaGrotte



In Memory Of

BENJAMIN A. SAVAGE

By Marjorie Present



In Memory Of

DOLORES FELDMAN

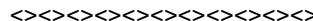
By Jeffrey & Patty Schocket



In Memory Of

JOSEPH T. CLINE

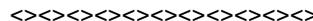
By Meredith A. Cline



In Memory Of

MARTY GRAHAM

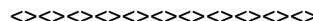
By Bea Graham



In Memory Of

CHARLES KARRON

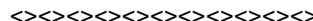
By Richard Karron



In Memory Of

FRED KLIMPL

By Michael Klimpl



In Memory Of

GEORGE NOBIL

By Jim & Lynn Nobil



In Memory Of

RABBI MILTON GREENWALD

By Paul & Susan Roberts



In Memory Of

MORRIS SMITH

By Stuart & Geri Smith



In Memoriam April 2009

In Memory Of

CLAIRE SMITH

By Stuart & Geri Smith



In Memory Of

CANTOR ALEX CHAPIN

By Steven & Barbara Smith



In Memory Of

LOUIS S. SMITH

By Steven & Barbara Smith



In Memory Of

BENJAMIN TERNER

By Salomon & Mary Turner



In Memory Of

LUIS TERNER

By Salomon & Mary Turner



In Memory Of

IRWIN CUTLER

By Donald & Nancy Zinner



In Memory Of

DAVID WERNICOFF

By Donald & Nancy Zinner



Thanks, Irv

I was deeply saddened to hear the other day of the death in California of Irv Line, John's father. You'll all see the KJCC condolences to John and Arlene, and all of you will likely silently repeat them as you read them. But I doubt whether many of you actually knew Irv. I did, very well. I hadn't seen or spoken to him for years, but he played a colorful and memorable role in my young adulthood, creating one of those indelible memories we all have, in this case one that always makes me smile.

Irv may have spent his last years in the California desert, but like me he was from Washington, D.C. I met him because he bowled in the same Wednesday night league as my parents did. For many years, as in other cities, the Jewish community of Washington tended to stick together, going to the same schools and the same dances and even, after beginning to marry off, to the same vacation spots. This bowling league was a vestige of that old network, and a way for old friends to stay in touch as well as stay active.

Like most bowling leagues, someone was always away or sick or just too tired to go out that night. So they often called me to substitute. I can't remember why it happened, but one night Irv and I and several others went out after bowling to have coffee and eat what everyone at the time thought was food. Irv was one of those larger-than-life personalities who always managed to stand out in a crowd. He was flamboyant, and funny. I'll never forget his laugh, a cross between a cackle and a bray.

Irv's great talent was in upscale women's clothing. He just knew what would be hot the next year, and knew what looked good on women. He stayed closely in touch with the fashion houses, and this led directly to the first great adventure of my life: one day Irv asked if I'd like to go with him on one of his buying trips, and I jumped at the chance. It was my first exposure to the sounds and chaos and visual smorgasbord that is New York.

Those of you who've been to New York's Garment District know it isn't itself very glamorous, actually quite the contrary. You go careening from one showroom to another, listening to one audacious spiel after another, and you never stop for hours on end. Days last sixteen hours. It was the first time my ears had ever popped in an elevator. But I was, I think, 22, and the day made a huge impression on me for another reason: I'd never seen so many beautiful women in my life, and as we tore madly from showroom to showroom we usually had to traverse each designer's working floor and back rooms I saw more women, with very nice body parts, in various stages of undress than I'd ever seen before.

So thanks, Irv. You lived a long, productive life, and I hear you went quickly. That's a blessing. Thanks for the memory, and the laughs, and the good company, and offering a young, provincial fellow his first taste of the big time and first true understanding of some of life's possibilities and how to learn to function under utter sensory overload.

-Sam Vinicur

YEDA VE'TORASHA
Yardena Kamely



Literary Holocaust Commemoration

Yom Ha'shoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, is April 21, 2009. Ceremonies are designed to highlight human reactions of people trapped in the inhuman conditions that were forced on vast populations during World War II. We remember the world of the ghettos, where hundreds of thousands of Jews were imprisoned before deportation to their deaths in extermination camps. We remember the life and death in the concentration camps. On the basis of diary entries written during this period, and from first-hand survivor testimonies, we show various ways in which Jews countered the mounting threats with special attempts to maintain their humanity in the face of unprecedented inhumanity. It is important to understand through this that the human spirit has the potential to be greater than anything that can be done to it.

Last year, I read an interesting article in the Jerusalem Report: "Finding the Words to Say It," why more Holocaust survivors are now writing their memoirs, by Netty C. Gross (2008). I learned how historians have come to appreciate personal narratives as valid history and a valuable addition to the Holocaust's historical record.

Thousands of non-fiction Holocaust memoirs have already been published. And as the survivors' generation dies out, a growing number want to bring out their own account. Many children and grandchildren of those who have died want to publish manuscripts left behind. Survivors have been motivated to write for various reasons: to ensure that their story of suffering is told "for

posterity, often as a bulwark against Holocaust deniers"; so that family members would know of their ordeal; or as a form of self-healing. The Belgian-born survivor Lea Ressler-Klein writes, "We owe it to those who suffered atrociously to make sure that what happened will always be remembered."

Prof. Sara Horowitz of Toronto explains that women, in particular, have been contributing to the genre, reflecting their longer life span and interest in their unique suffering, caused by various factors such as responsibilities as daughters to elderly parents and mothers of young children.

Another perspective is the religious one; some orthodox survivors write about their physical and spiritual survival in camps and ghettos. Auschwitz survivor David Weiss Halivni, Israel Prize winner in Talmud Studies for 2008, writes that it is a "duty for any survivor who can hold a pen to write down his or her memoirs, since the intent of the Nazis was to wipe the victims and his people off the human register." Remembering, he adds, "is an act of defiance."

"Literary Holocaust commemoration" has been taking place since the 1940s. Most of the thousands of Holocaust remembrances have been self-published or put out by *Yad Vashem* and other commemoration institutions. The Holocaust memoirs genre got a boost with the Random House grant to Second Generation activist Menahem Rosensaft. Thousands of digitized survivor testimonies are archived at *Yad Vashem*, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Memorial de la Shoah/Centre de Documentation Juive Con-

temporaire in Paris, the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and YIVO, the New York-based center for the study of East European Jewry and Yiddish.

In addition to the written memoirs, intensive efforts have been made to capture as many survivors' testimonies as possible on videotape as well. The Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies was established at Yale University in 1982. By its 25th anniversary, the archive had collected 4,400 testimonies from survivors in 37 countries. In the 1990s, Steven Spielberg's international Visual Shoah project videotaped some 50,000 survivors.

Oskar Strawczynski, a survivor of Treblinka Concentration Camp, escaped after ten

months in the camp and provided the first eyewitness account of the August 2, 1943 uprising in Treblinka, of which only about 60 Jews survived. Jewish partisans, originally from the Jewish Combat Organization in Warsaw, whom Oskar met in the forests, urged him to write his memoirs. Written in Yiddish in the spring and summer of 1944, a copy reached YIVO in New York. Strawczynski emigrated to Montreal; dedicating his work to his "unforgettable" late wife Hannah (Anka), nee Sandberg, he writes, "I wish this bundle of memories, soaked in blood and tears, will serve as a perpetual tombstone for you, my dearest, and for our children, parents, brother and sisters and millionswho were murdered together with you." ◇

Recommended Reading for Literary Holocaust Commemoration

We asked KJCC members to suggest books dealing with the Holocaust that they would recommend to others. Here are a few of their choices.:

From George Swartz

The Brigade: An Epic Story of Vengeance, Salvation, and WWII, by Howard Blum. In November of 1944, 5000 Jewish volunteers from Palestine arrive in Europe to fight the German army. Blum tells the story of a small group of them as they engage with the Germans and triumph. The men witness the horrors of the concentration camps and set out to take revenge by locating and killing any Nazi officers in hiding. Through fortuitous circumstance their mission changes and they end up rescuing Jewish war orphans and transporting them to Palestine.

From Muriel Swartz

The Inextinguishable Symphony: A True Story of Music & Love in Nazi Germany, Martin Goldsmith. This book tells the story of the *Kulturbund*, an all-Jewish performing arts ensemble maintained by the Nazis between 1933 and 1941, a group that included Mr. Goldsmith's parents.

From Gloria Avner

The Amazing Adventures of Cavalier and Klay, Michael Chabon. It may seem only tangentially to be about the Holocaust, but this funny, tender, historical fact-and-rage-filled love note to early comics is totally informed by the powerlessness of two Jewish cousins, one American, one Czech, as the Nazis take over Europe. If you enjoy shimmering prose, great Jewish characters, and insight into the Holocaust via Jewish boys with ink-stained hands, you will love this book.

From Sam Vinicur

The Zookeeper's Wife: A War Story, Diane Ackerman. An elegantly written true account of Jan and Antonina Zabinski, Polish Christian zookeepers who managed to save over 300 Jews, many smuggled from the Warsaw Ghetto, within the confines of their beloved but decimated zoo. Ackerman uses the "zookeeper's wife's" own diary and other historical sources to re-create their story. Her background as a naturalist allows her to create such incredibly vivid imagery you experience the book as much as read it.

Sisterhood Joyce Peckman



In the Keys, March winds are actually the whirlwind of activities taking place. Along with attending marvelous concerts and plays, welcoming visitors, and traveling around the country and all over the world, our members found time to organize a Purim dinner, throw a cocktail party, travel to Miami to see *Les Miserables* and plan a Women's Seder.

The Purim festivities, although celebrated a few days early, were just as they should be. While the ancient story was being read in the classroom, tables were arranged and delicious food was being laid out in the social hall. Thanks to Freda and Bill for catering the fish, borekas, hummous, tabouli and *hamentashen*. In addition we had homemade *hamentashen*, salad, tuna, vegetable lasagna, macaroni & cheese, bean salad, and Rene's famous jello mold. Wine and Slivovitz completed the requirement for Purim festivities, which continued into the evening with birthday cake and ice cream!

The raffle/cocktail party was an all-around success! The food was varied and delicious. The music, provided by the Jules Seder Group, was perfect for background enjoyment as well as a few energetic dances. How great to see Beth doing a hora! Thank you, Joan and Jim, for enabling us to use that lovely facility. To Elaine, for all the amazing canapes (especially the herring mini sandwiches, which flew off the plate), Linda Perloff for the exotic meatballs, the Pollacks for an impressive sushi boat, Lee for the BBQ, Gloria for yummy veggies, Nettie and Judy for dessert, Nancy and Joan for invaluable assistance as well as wine, Linda R. and Roberta for hours of work, and especially to Sofy, who cooked, decorated, organized and encouraged - The night was a tribute to what we can all do together. To everyone who bought raffle tickets - thank you! Kurt Kluger won the grand prize, and then

promptly turned the proceeds back to KJCC!

Forty people traveled to the Miracle Theatre in Coral Gables for the performance of *Les Miserables*. Some had never seen this musical masterpiece before. Others had viewed performances in Miami, Boston, Chicago, London or Broadway. Everyone I spoke to, from Pauline, who had never seen it, to the Boruszaks, who've seen it eight times, agreed it was unexpectedly wonderful and the best performance they had seen. The voices were marvelous, the sets magnificent, and the renditions of "Master of the House" and "Bring him home" brought down the house. Our gratitude to Bea for arranging this unforgettable event.

Monthly Book Club will begin again in a new format. Each person will speak briefly about a book they'd like to recommend. We may also start a book exchange, and see how the club evolves from there. Men are invited to join, too. The first meeting will be on Wednesday, April 22, at 2:30, at my home, 235 Lee Avenue, Key Largo. Please call 451-0665 to RSVP or get directions.

The box to collect for the Domestic Abuse Shelter will remain in the KJCC through May. Remember it when you clean out your closets. They always need soaps, shampoos and other sanitary items, twin-size bedding, forks, spoons, and pots & pans. Joan Stark will take your donations to the shelter.

If you have not sent in your check to Leslie Dillon for the April 9th Second Seder, it may already be too late! Contact her at 852-3654 for information.

The Sisterhood Gift Shop has new items each month, and Joan Boruszak will happily order anything you may need. Please keep it in mind when you shop for Passover or special events. ♦

KJCC GIFT SHOP



NEED CARDS? NEED GIFTS?

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CHALLAH PLATES, CHALLAH KNIVES AND MORE

If you do not see what you want, we can order it for you.

Call Joan Boruszak 852-0833.

World Jewish Report

Medina Roy



Queen Esther's Favorite Drink?

An Egyptian Muslim cleric has called on the Muslim and Arab worlds to boycott Starbucks. He claims that the company's logo, a female with a crown topped by a five-pointed star on her head, is actually Queen Esther, the heroine of the story of Purim. The cleric, Safwat Higazi, pointed out that Starbucks coffee shops are located in Mecca and al-Medina, Islam's two holiest cities. He recently said on Egyptian TV, "...The girl you see is Esther, the queen of the Jews of Persia." He went on to state that the crown on her head is the crown of the Kingdom of Xerxes. "We want Starbucks to be shut down throughout the Arab and Islamic world... Can you believe that in Mecca, al-Medina, Cairo, Damascus, Kuwait and all over the Islamic world there hangs the picture of beautiful Queen Esther...and we buy her products?" (*Middle East Media Research Institute, www.memri.org, 3-10-09*)

Leonard Abess

During his address to the joint session of Congress on February 24th, 2009, President Obama lauded the action taken by Jewish philanthropist Leonard Abess. Abess recently gave away his \$60 million bonus to 399 employees and another 72 who used to work for him. In November, 2008, Abess sold a majority stake in the Miami-based bank City National Bancshares, the bank founded by his father; he took the proceeds, \$60 million, and turned it over to his tellers, bookkeepers, clerks -- everyone on the payroll. The bonus was based on years of service, with some employees getting tens of thousands of dollars. Abess didn't tell anyone what he was about to do, but when a local newspaper heard about it and contacted him, Abess said, "I knew some of

these people since I was seven years old. I didn't feel right getting the money myself." Abess had long dreamed of a way to reward employees. "Those people who joined me and stayed with me at the bank with no promise of equity -- I always thought someday I'm going to surprise them," he said. "I sure as heck don't need [the money]."

Abess started his career in the bank's print shop, making forms and documents. Working his way up the ladder, he developed an appreciation for the role that employees play in the success of any business. "I saw that if the president doesn't come to work, it's not a big deal," he said. "But if the tellers don't show up, it's a serious problem." Jacob Solomon, executive vice president of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, had this to say about Leonard Abess and his wife Jayne: "They really bring to life what we mean when we say the Jews should be *ohr la-goyim* [a light unto the nations]... They take Jewish values and bring them to life." (*Miami Herald, 2-14-09*)

Dubai Tennis Championships

In late February, the Sony Ericsson World Tennis Association Tour levied an unprecedented series of fines, penalties and warnings against the Barclays Championship held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). Shahar Peer of Israel, the world's 45th-ranked player, was denied an entry visa by the UAE to compete in the women's tournament.

At an emergency post-tournament meeting of the tour's board, it was decided that Peer will receive \$44,245, her average prize money for events in which she competed last year; the tournament was fined a record \$300,000 for a breach of tour rules; and the

tournament will have to post a \$2 million financial performance guarantee for a number of conditions it must meet in order to host the event in 2010, including the guarantee of a wild card for Peer if her ranking is not high enough for a place in the main draw. Larry Scott, the tour's CEO said, "These actions send a clear message that we will not tolerate discrimination and we will not allow this situation to happen again." The UAE ended up paying an even larger price when both Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, the world number one and two men, respectively, withdrew from the tournament due to injury. The defending champion, Andy Roddick of the United States, also pulled out, claiming that he disagreed with the UAE's decision to deny Peer a visa. To protest the action taken by the UAE, The Wall Street Journal Europe revoked its sponsorship of the WTA Dubai Open women's tennis tournament and the Tennis Channel chose not to televise the event stating, "Preventing an otherwise qualified athlete from competing on the basis of anything other than merit has no place in tennis or any other sport, and has the unfortunate result of undermining the credibility of the very nature of competition itself. (www.timesonline.co.uk, 2-23-09, and Associated Press, 2-21-09)

Happy 100th Birthday!

On February 15th, Miep Gies, the last surviving member of the group that aided Anne Frank and her family while they hid from the Nazis in Amsterdam for two years, celebrated her 100th birthday. Gies has always felt that she did not deserve all the attention and accolades for helping the Frank family, saying, "This is very unfair. So many others have done the same or even far more dangerous work." Instead, she paid tribute to her husband Jan, who died in 1993, and the other "unnamed heroes" for their courageous resistance against the Nazis by helping Dutch Jews during the five-year occupation of Holland. Gies worked for Anne's father, Otto. She kept the Frank family and six others stocked with food during the two

years they spent hiding in a concealed attic until they were discovered in 1944 and sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where Anne died of typhus seven months after her arrest. It was Gies who found Anne's papers and notebooks and gave them to Otto, the only survivor among the eight people who had hidden in the attic. Otto published his daughter's diary in 1947. It was released in English in 1952 and has since sold tens of millions of copies in dozens of languages. (*Associated Press, 2-12-09*)

Four precious gifts

In mid-January, in spite of efforts by doctors to save his life, Anwar, an eight-year-old Arab boy from an Israeli-Arab town east of Netanya, was hit by a car and killed. His father was asked if he would agree to donate the boy's organs, and as a result, the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys were transplanted into four Jewish children in Schneider Children's Hospital in Petach Tikvah. "If my son can save another child, it's as if he is still living. I was happy that he was able to save four children," his father said. In 2008, 256 organ transplants occurred in Israel, eleven more than two years before. Customarily, organ transplantation has been forbidden for Jews in Israel as a violation of *halacha* (the Talmudic interpretation of Jewish law), which prohibits mistreatment or mutilation of the body of any deceased (in Hebrew, *nivul hamet*). Today, however, in some modern Orthodox circles, authorities agree that transplants are permissible when they are likely to save a life, adding glory and honor to the dead (*kavod hamet*). The Talmudic principle applied here is *zeh ne'heneh vezeh lo chaser* -- one party is helped and another is not harmed. There are still many in the Orthodox community who oppose organ transplant surgery, stating that it is a violation of Jewish law because all parts of the deceased must be buried. (*www.israelnationalnews.com, 1-28-09*)

Stimulus Bill To Aid Jewish Institutions

According to the United Jewish Communities (UJC) Federation, President Obama's economic stimulus bill will provide one billion

dollars (of the 87 billion that the legislation allots for Medicaid programs) to Jewish nursing homes and social service agencies. Jewish groups pushed for a variety of forms of assistance to what it called "vulnerable populations." William Daroff, vice president for public policy and director of UJC's Washington office said, "The legislation signed into law...will hopefully not only shorten the duration of the economic recession, but will also blunt its impact on those who have been devastatingly impacted by providing needed funds to social service agencies." (*World Jewish Congress, 2-18-09*)

No Jews Left in Denmark?

If Denmark passes a proposed ban on male circumcision, 7,000 Jews could be indicted criminally for allowing a *bris* for male newborn babies. Five years ago, Denmark outlawed female circumcision and the National Council for Children is now considering doing the same for boys under the age of fifteen, arguing that "irreversible damage is done to a non-consenting child." Denmark's Chief Rabbi, himself a *mohel*, said, "The comparison between circumcision and the intentional mutilation of the female sex organ in certain societies is simply complete nonsense." He added that should Denmark pass the proposed legislation, Denmark's Jews would have to leave the country and find a new place to live. (*Dateline: World Jewry, March 2009*)

It's Never Too Late

In mid-February, France's highest judicial body formally recognized the French government's responsibility for deporting Jews to the Nazi death camps during World War II. This is the first time the country's role in the Holocaust has been formally acknowledged. The Council of State's decision stated that, nearly 70 years ago, anti-Semitic persecution was carried out willingly, and the wartime Vichy government helped to deport 76,000 people, including 11,000 children, from Nazi-occupied France to concentration camps elsewhere in Europe. Fewer than 3,000 returned alive. In addition, the Coun-

cil ruled out any further compensation for the survivors or their heirs, stating that since 1945 compensations had been given for the deportations. The council called for a "solemn recognition of the state's responsibility and of collective prejudice suffered" by the deportees. Today, France has Western Europe's largest Jewish community, numbering approximately 600,000. (*Associated Press, 2-16-09*)

Did you Know...

-The 2009 Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition features Israeli model Bar Refaeli on the cover. Also featured in this issue is Esti Ginzburg, 19 and a native of Tel Aviv, making her first appearance in the Swimsuit issue. Unlike some other young Israelis with burgeoning international modeling careers, Esti Ginzburg will soon be joining the Israeli army. (*Sports Illustrated, March 2009*)

-According to figures released by the Rabbinical Court Administration, the annual number of divorces in Israel in 2008 passed 10,000 for the first time. Coming in at 10,225, the number of divorces increased five percent over the previous year. Tel Aviv had the most divorces, 817, a seven-percent increase over the previous year. (www.jta.org, 1-26-09)

-Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley has nominated Susie Turnbull, a prominent Jewish Democrat, to lead the Maryland Democratic Party. Turnbull was named a Jewish Women's International "Woman to Watch" in 2005. She also serves on the board of several Jewish organizations. (www.jta.org, 2-12-09)

-Rabbi Joel Schwartzman of Congregation B'nai Chaim in Morrison, Colorado delivered the invocation at the Denver ceremony at which President Obama signed the economic stimulus bill. It was the second time the retired military chaplain had delivered an invocation at a presidential event. In 1997, while in the Air Force, Schwartzman presented the invocation at the Memorial Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. (www.jta.org, 2-18-09) ◇

Photo Gallery



Friday, March 6th was very busy at KJCC. Joyce led the Megillah reading, top center. The candles were lit and the bread blessed prior to our Purim dinner. Then we filed into the sanctuary for the play by our Sunday School students. Gloria wrote an original play in verse. (There's a sample to the left.)



Excerpts from Gloria Avner's original Purim play, Copyright 2009.



We're going to tell you a very old story. It's slightly confusing, and gets rather gory!

In it, our history nearly is done. We Jews would not be here, not even one,

No Salk and no Einstein, No Hamlich, no Feinstein, No Spielberg, no me, And no KJCC!!!!

That which was hidden is no longer concealed! QUEEN Esther is Jewish!!! THE TRUTH IS REVEALED!!!



At the KJCC Board Meeting, March 8, 2009, the following plaque was presented to our previous president. It reads:

*To Stephen Steinbock
President 2007 - 2009
For Generously Sharing Your Precious
Time And Successfully Leading Our
Mishpocha, and For Creating "Green
Thumb" Beautification For All Who
Enter To Enjoy.*



Zoe and Cammie in a memorable pose at their going-away-but-not-forever party. At right Linda Rutkin, Erica Garrett, Gloria Avner and Joyce Peckman at the Miami Spice Park for AsianFest.





Mission Statement

The mission of the Cathy Kaplan Sisterhood of the Keys Jewish Community Center is to continue the tradition of support for the KJCC by providing financial assistance and social, spiritual and service oriented events. We are committed to continuing the lead of our past members, while encouraging the insight and ideas of our new members.

CATHY KAPLAN SISTERHOOD
2008

Newly placed on the wall in the foyer, just before the entrance to the social hall, are three items: A picture of Past President of Sisterhood, Cathy Kaplan, for whom Sisterhood is named, a picture of former Member Ruth Richardson, who endowed the Social Hall and for whom the Social Hall is named, and the new Sisterhood Mission Statement, shown at left, which has been written and stated by Sisterhood.



Yardena's Hebrew talmidim, plus assorted special guests, gathered to toast her newly official green card status, at Candy and Alan's home in Key Largo.

Gloria Wins First Prize

The Purple Isles Art Guild is one of the oldest and most venerable collections of fine artists in the Upper Keys. Each year they present a show at the Key Largo library, one of the high points of the art scene during high season. Entrants are juried, which means a committee sits in judgment of each submitted piece to decide whether to include it. Then the accepted pieces are judged, with winners in several categories. The winner of the blue ribbon—first place—for mixed media was our own, *molto*-talented Gloria Avner.





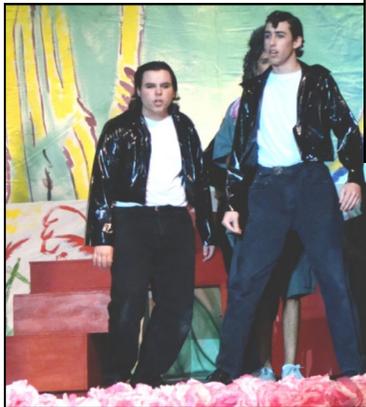
Saturday, February 21st was uber-guitar night in

the Keys. Both Leo Kottke (above) and Pierre Bensusan (top left with the SFCA board), Dave Feder's favorite guitarist, played the same night. Many KJCC members are SFCA and ICE volunteers (Dave, of course, is ICE's prez), and also comprise a healthy percentage of each arts audience. The Coral Shores band kids, center bottom, sell intermission refreshments to fund their activities. Perhaps a first, there was even a Havdalah service that night, performed by Gloria's pal Chaim Schaffer after the performance, bottom right.





As part of the Adult Education series, Bernie Ginsberg spoke about the earliest archeological evidence of Jewish existence, above and right. The Cypress String Quartet, shown with SFCA board members Linda Lloyd and Gloria Avner, performed here through the sponsorship of Jerry and Elaine Hirsch; one of the musicians is a relative. (They also boasted a Strad and two Amatis among their instruments.) At bottom, Cory Wasser was a featured performer in Coral Shores' performance of "Seussical: the Musical."





Saturday, March 14th
saw the 2009 KJCC
Annual Fundraiser.
The Boruszaks hosted
at the Coral Harbour
Club . Jules Seder
and his combo jazzed

up the evening beautifully;
When they cranked up the
hora the tables emptied and
the dance floor came alive.
The raffle was won by Kurt
Kluger, who immediately
donated the money back to
Sisterhood.



Adventures in Peru

The Trials and Tribulations of Travel to Machu Picchu

by Gene Silverman

What started out as a journey of exploration turned into a journey of frustration. We departed the Princess (the cruise ship we were on with Linda and Joel Pollack) just south of Lima, Peru, and proceeded up the coast to Lima, where we boarded a jet and flew southeast to Cuzco, Peru, located in the heart of the Andes. That took a little less than three hours. We were met in Cuzco by a driver and Arturo, our guide.

Cuzco is at an elevation of about 12,000 feet *above* sea level. The night was cold and rain had started, so with our new elevation awareness we were not exactly feeling terrific. We went to dinner at a really neat place called MAP café, located near the Plaza de Armas, which is both the modern and ancient center of

Cuzco. It is built next to a monastery and the walls are made entirely of glass. After a delicious meal, and an introduction to a Pisco Sour cocktail, we were ready for bed and to prepare for our next day's adventure.

At 5 a.m. we woke up in a freezing cold room and hopped into our clothes. We had a fast breakfast and were picked up to start our adventure to Machu Picchu. First we had to drive an hour and half to a train station, where we boarded our Vistadome train. After saying goodbye to our driver, but still with our guide Arturo, we started walking through this very small town (with a very long

name). We were suddenly stopped by six policemen (all without guns) and the mayor. It seems that the mayor and council the night before had decided to charge everyone walking on this street--which was the only way to or from the train--a dollar U.S. per person and 50 cents for Peruvians. Arturo was protesting, very forcefully, and Mort finally had to tell him we would be happy to pay the \$2.50 and get on our way.

Not being happy, Arturo got on his cell phone and notified Lima Television that an "outrage" had just happened and to come film the situation. It turns out that Arturo's mother is also a guide, and she was about to bring another 65 people from the Princess, our ship, in a guided group. On this same street were local vendors, and lo and behold, Mort saw a cowboy hat that sparked his interest. After a

little bit of negotiating we boarded the train with him wearing his new green leather cowboy hat.

The trip down to Machu Picchu took another hour and half, but the scenery was magnificent. The train tracks run along a very fast-moving river that even has rapids. Alongside the tracks, sporadically, were small log huts that evidently housed families, with neither electricity nor running water other than the rapidly moving river. But there were towers placed on the nearby mountains for telephones and cellular service.

After this fascinating train trip we arrived



Off the train, across the bridge, onto the bus.

at Aguas Calientes, a town complete with a flea market. Then, we walked over a bridge and down some steps to board a bus, about the size of a Greyhound Tour Bus, for the breathtaking 20-minute ride up to the Park. When I say breathtaking I do not mean because of beauty. I mean because you are going up a mountain, with switch-backs and no guard rails and other traffic is coming back down right towards you, hence you hold your breath. It is not for the faint of heart! Then, you finally arrive at the entrance to the famed city of the Incas. You go thru the turnstile and finally can appreciate what transpired here so many hundreds of years ago.

This Inca citadel is suspended between two prominent mountain peaks. Built at 2,492 meters (about 8,200 feet), this Old or



Local vendors offer beautiful handiwork.

Ancient Mountain--for that is what Machu Picchu translates to--was the summer home for these people. Even though it is more than a 1000 meters below Cuzco, it certainly feels that you are on the top of the earth. Rediscovered in July, 1911 by Hiram Bingham, it is considered the best-preserved example of mid-fifteenth century life.

It is difficult for the mind to comprehend the life that was constructed here -- in the middle of the Andes Mountains. Wherever you stand in the ruins, spectacular terraces can be seen slicing across ridiculously steep cliffs. The Temple of The Sun, Royal Tomb, Funerary Rock, Guardian's hut, Three-Windowed Temple, Sacred Plaza, and Temple of The Moon are just a few of the sites, and

way too much for the mind to envelop in just one day.

Back at our hotel, we started out, in the rain, for a light dinner. Then we crashed into bed, because we had to rise at 6 a.m. for our driver to take us to Cuzco Airport for our plane trip back to Lima to meet the Tahitian Princess.

After leaving us off, the Princess had proceeded up the coast to Lima, and stayed there overnight, and the next day. The following day the ship was to leave Lima for Manta, Ecuador. That meant we had no time to waste getting back to Lima. But here's where things got -- interesting. The evening's rains became a storm, the pilots could see virtually nothing, and all the people (about 1,000) in this small, small airport were now not going anywhere.

Then Arturo disappeared and we were left standing in line, with no cell phone, no computer and no fluency in the language. And a thousand other people were in the same situation. And there were only two planes scheduled to leave. And only if the weather cleared.

After spending the entire day in the airport, we knew we had lost the chance to meet the ship in Lima, so spent the remaining hours trying to figure out how to get to Manta, the ship's next stop. We left the airport and went to the same hotel where the Princess group was staying. It seemed that Princess Cruises had sent in a chartered plane that afternoon, but it was too small to take all of their clients back to the ship. It had to leave eight people behind and they were staying at this hotel. After a nerve-wracking night -- Mort didn't sleep because he was waiting for a return telephone call from the agent in Lima, who never did call -- we were up at 5 and in the airport by 5:30.

Oh, I forgot to tell you. We know a person who is the president of a Peruvian airline, and we had contacted him that night. He wasn't able to help us but said his secretary could, so we called her at her home in Lima. She wasn't home but her sister and I conversed, she in pidgin English and I in pidgin Spanish. It seems that the secretary was out in the



Gene at Machu Picchu.

countryside, with her mother and aunt, but had forgotten her cell phone at home. There was no way to get in touch with her until the morning.

Of course, at 6 a.m. the only people inside the airport were the cleaners and the two of us. Then we spotted one of the tour guides and immediately asked for his cell phone and started calling the secretary. We had already put our name, first on the list, for standby but wanted her to confirm that we could board this jet. There was only one other plane leaving that morning and we were in front of both desks and our names were on both standby lists. After finally reaching her, she just told us what we already knew -- that she couldn't promise us seats. The plane was overbooked, but not by too much. Which meant they usually overbook by 20, and that day were only 10 over, but we still had to wait until everyone had boarded. By this time, 7 a.m., the airport was jammed with the 1,000 people from the day before.

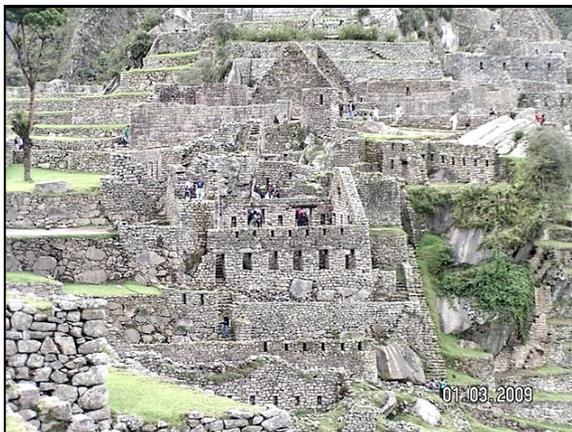
Mort now went to the tourist guide, took \$100 and gave it to him with the instructions that he should give it to his "friend" at the other counter. He refused and said it wasn't necessary because he was sure we would board Sun Airlines.

At 7:10, guess what? Sun closed their doors without us. Now we were stuck waiting to see if we could board the last plane that would be leaving Cuzco that day. The only

other choice was to hire a private plane to take us to Lima. We had already found out that could be done -- for a mere \$ 5,000 to \$ 6,000 -- but it was the last option available. So we waited, and waited. Then, at 7:25 a.m. our names were called and we got the last two seats for our flight back to Lima. *But the ship had already left Lima for Ecuador.*

When we landed in Lima, Mort went directly to the travel agency that had booked our trip (and was the same one that Princess used) and was told that a private jet was coming in that afternoon at 2:30 to pick up the people (over 65) that had booked through them and Princess and we could get on this charter for an extra \$1,400. Done, he said.

Now, do you think that the chartered plane arrived or took off at 2:30? Please. We spent the entire day inside Lima's airport and learned every nook and cranny, every bathroom and every restaurant there. Finally, at 11:30 p.m., we boarded and left for Manta, Ecuador, a flight of 2½ hours. The next morning



A panorama of Machu Picchu terraces.

ing we were taken to the port -- and lo and behold we could see the Princess in the distance. After a short time berthing we were allowed to board into the waiting arms of Linda and Joel.

If you are ever on an independent trip away from your cruise line, here are some things to remember:

1. Always have a cell phone with you with international capability, or purchase a throw-away cell phone.

2. Always bring all the papers regarding your independent travel trip with you - no matter how seemingly insignificant.

3. Keep a sense of humor; if all else fails at least you can laugh.

4. Pack for an extra few days; at least bring extra underwear, otherwise you'll be washing them out and drying them with the hotel hair dryer. ◇

-This Month in Jewish History-

Founding a Jerusalem University

by Yardena Kamely

The dream of establishing a "university of the Jewish People" in the Land of Israel formed an integral part of the early Zionist vision. With the acquisition of the Gray Hill estate atop Mount Scopus, and the laying of the cornerstone for the university-to-be in 1918, the realization of the dream was on its way. This historic and highly symbolic event had been preceded by numerous meetings and discussions within the various institutions of the Zionist Movement. By the eve of the First World War (which began in 1914), a deal had already been closed to purchase land for a national educational institution on Mount Scopus. All waited to see the vision fulfilled.

In the wake of the British conquest of Palestine in December 1917, before the formal end of the war a year later, Dr. Chaim Weizmann headed a Zionist Commission delegation to Eretz Israel and Jerusalem. Weizmann, one of the main advocates for establishing the university, went into action immediately, determined to convince the British

authorities that Zionist Movement and *Yishuv* representatives should be allowed to make the idea of a university into reality.

On July, 1918, twelve foundation stones--to represent the twelve tribes of Israel--were laid on Mount Scopus. Masses gathered



Inauguration ceremony, 1925, The Founding Of The Hebrew University Of Jerusalem

alongside a narrow path leading from the Gray Hill Estate (named for the British family that had owned the site) to the ceremonial site where soldiers of the Jewish Legion battalions (mostly Palestinian Jews, but also American Jews and others who fought with the British against the Germans and Ottoman Turks during World War I) paraded before the guests. Representatives from the *Yishuv* and the Diaspora were invited to lay the stones and sign the foundation scroll beneath a decorative canopy that had been created and designed by artists of the Betzalel (the designer and builder of the *Mishkan*, the first Tabernacle, in the

Book of Exodus) School of Arts and Crafts.

Going first was Chaim Weizmann, who laid a stone and signed the foundation scroll on behalf of the Zionist Movement; last to lay a stone and sign the scroll were four children



Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Ouziel signs the foundation scroll of the University.

representing the next generation. Dr. Weizmann was then invited to place the signed foundation scroll into an earthenware tube and bury it in the keystone.

After burying the stones in a pit, Weizmann

spoke: "...Here, out of the misery and desolation of war, is being created the first germ of a new life ... But from this day the Hebrew University is a reality. Our university, formed by Jewish learning and Jewish energy, will mould itself into an integral part of our national structure, which is in the process of erection." Following his speech, a letter of congratulations from Lord Balfour and messages from the French Government and King Faisal were read out. The ceremony concluded with the singing of the national anthem, "Hatikva."

Seven years later, on April 1, 1925, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was opened at a festive ceremony attended, among others, by leaders of world Jewry including the University's founding father, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, distinguished academics and communal leaders of the *Yishuv*, and British dignitaries including Lord Balfour, Viscount Allenby and Sir Herbert Samuel. Also in attendance were Chief Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacohen Kook, the poet Haim Nahman Bialik and many others. There were representatives of 41 universities from all over the world, of 20 academies, of 10 governments, and of the Hebrew University itself.

The First Board of Governors of the University, chaired by Dr. Weizmann, included

such luminaries as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Martin Buber, Haim Nahman Bialik, Asher Ginsberg (Ahad Ha'am), Dr. Judah Leib Magnes, James Rothschild, Sir Alfred Mond, Nahum Sokolov, Harry Sacher and Felix M. Warburg.

At the conclusion of the ceremony the crowd chanted: "And a highway there shall be and a way....and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs."

I had the privilege to have studied at the Hebrew University and to have graduated in Education. Our School of Education was one of the first new buildings built on Mount Scopus after the Six-Day War. I loved the new campus and would go many times to the hillside at the very end of the campus, to the amphitheatre where the ceremony of April 1925 took place. The sight from the mountaintop looking down at the Judean Desert and the Dead Sea is



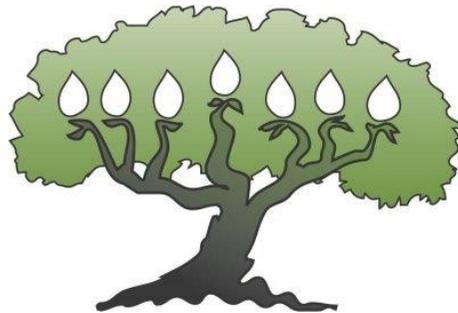
Lineup of Jewish Legion soldiers in preparation for the ceremony.

breathtaking.

The University's campus on Mount Scopus has an additional, special significance for me; you can see there one of the oldest buildings, conserved as a monument. It was the place where the Haganah would send its soldiers to stay for day and night watches, guarding the campus during the times of war. My mother was one of those *shomrim*, (guardians), on Mount Scopus at the Hebrew University. ◇

Earth Day

A Jewish Holiday



As we approach both Passover (April 9th) and Earth Day (April 22nd), Jews are reminded that an essential part of pursuing *tikkun olam* is protecting the miraculous work of creation. As we prepare to celebrate Passover, we are especially mindful of the fragility of our environment and the interconnectedness of humanity's well-being with the earth's. At the Passover Seder, we will remember the ten plagues. The environmental plagues we face today are of our own making, caused by the hardening of *our* hearts to the evidence of destruction we are causing. As we look around at our polluted rivers, contaminated land and unbreathable air, we find that we have enslaved ourselves in a world that will not be indefinitely habitable. Just as the Egyptians faced the plagues of lice and boils, we face changing eco-systems, endangered species, and--especially here on the coast--rising sea levels. Earth Day, then, is a time to appreciate the many gifts we receive from the Earth, from clean air and water to the many plants, animals and other organisms that fill our world. But Earth Day is also a time to mark our personal connections to the world's many environmental challenges. So, this Earth Day, make a commitment to act on that connection -- at least for one year. A good place to start is to commit to buying specific products with sound environmental and social records. If Earth Day has a message beyond the celebration of nature, it is that we all need to be more attuned to what our damaged natural environment is telling us about our world's spiritual and ethical health and to commit ourselves to becoming part of the cure.

It's not only part of the Jewish tradition; it's a global human imperative.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. That's all well and good. But even the most waste-conscious among us can feel overwhelmed by the amount of household waste that goes beyond what municipal recyclers and compost bins can handle. That's why we put this list together for you, with some ideas for things you may not have known how to recycle, and, to hopefully help you divert more waste away from landfills.

Appliances: Goodwill accepts working appliances, www.goodwill.org, or you can contact the Steel Recycling Institute to recycle them. 800/YES-1-CAN, www.recycle-steel.org.

Batteries: Rechargeables and single-use: Battery Solutions, 734-467-9110, www.batteryrecycling.com.

Cardboard boxes: Contact local nonprofits and women's shelters to see if they can use them. Or, offer up used cardboard boxes at your local Freecycle.org or on Craigslist.org for others who may need them for moving or storage.

CDs/DVDs/Game Disks: Send scratched music or computer CDs, DVDs, and PlayStation or Nintendo video game disks to AuralTech for refinishing, and they'll work like new: 888-454-3223, www.auraltech.com.

Computers and electronics: Find the most responsible recyclers, local and national, at www.ban.org/pledge/Locations.html.

Clothes: Wearable clothes are being collected by Sisterhood at KJCC through May for the Domestic Abuse shelter. Or your gently used clothing can go to your local Salvation Army or Goodwill outlet. Donate wearable

women's business clothing to Dress for Success, which gives them to low-income women as they search for jobs, 212-532-1922, www.dressforsuccess.org. Offer unwearable clothes, towels and blankets to our local Humane Animal Care Coalition (MM 106) and animal shelter facilities, which often use them as pet bedding. Consider holding a clothes swap at your office or school. Swap clothes with friends and colleagues, and save money on a new wardrobe or back-to-school clothes.

Exercise videos: Swap them with others at www.videofitness.com.

Eyeglasses: Your local Lion's Club or eye care professional may collect these. Lenses are reground and given to people in need.

Foam packing: Several of our local pack-and-ship stores accept foam peanuts for reuse. Or, call the Plastic Loose Fill Producers Council to find a drop-off site: 800-828-2214. For places to drop off foam blocks for recycling, contact the Alliance of Foam Packaging Recyclers, 410-451-8340, www.epspackaging.org/info.

Ink/toner cartridges: Recycleplace.com pays \$1 each.

Phones: Donate cell phones: Call to Protect (a national organization) reprograms cell phones to dial 911 and gives them to domestic violence victims: www.donateaphone.com. Recycle single-line phones: Reclamere, 814-386-2927, www.reclamere.com.

Sports equipment: Resell or trade it at your local Play It Again Sports outlet, 800-476-9249, www.playitagainsports.com.

"Technotrash": Project KOPEG offers an e-waste recycling program that can help you raise funds for your organization. Use Project KOPEG to recycle iPods, MP3 players, cell phones and chargers, digital cameras, PDAs, palm pilots, and more. Also, easily recycle all of your CDs, jewel cases, DVDs, audio and video tapes, pagers, rechargeable and single-use batteries, PDAs, and ink/toner cartridges

with GreenDisk's Technotrash program. For \$30, GreenDisk will send you a cardboard box in which you can ship them up to 70 pounds of any of the above. Your fee covers the box as well as shipping and recycling fees. 800-305-GREENDISK, www.greendisk.com.

Tennis shoes: Nike's Reuse-a-Shoe program turns old shoes into playground and athletic flooring. www.nikereuseashoe.com. One World Running will send still-wearable shoes to athletes in need in Africa, Latin America, and Haiti. Click on www.oneworldrunning.com.

Toothbrushes and razors: Buy a recycled plastic toothbrush or razor from Recycline, and the company will take it back to be recycled again into plastic lumber. Recycline products are made from used Stonyfield Farms' yogurt cups. (A good reason to buy Stonyfield Farms products too! Available at Publix and Winn-Dixie.) 888-354-7296, www.recycline.com.

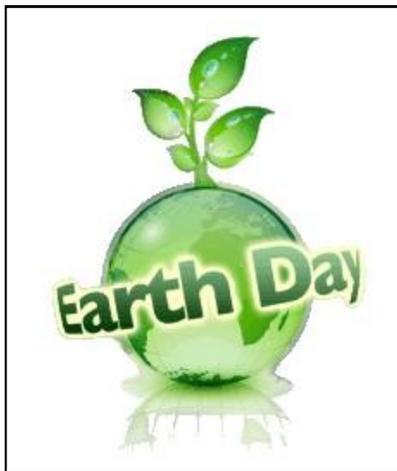
Tyvek envelopes: Quantities less than 25: Send to Shirley Cimburke, Tyvek Recycling Specialist, 5401 Jef-

erson Davis Hwy., Spot 197, Room 231, Richmond, VA 23234. **Quantities larger than 25,** call 866-33-TYVEK.

Oil: Find Used Motor Oil Hotlines: 202-682-8000, www.recycleoil.org.

Miscellaneous: Get your unwanted items into the hands of people who can use them. Offer them up on Freecycle.org or Craigslist.org, or try giving them away at Throwplace.com or giving or selling them at iReuse.com. iReuse.com will also help you find a recycler, if possible, when your items have reached the end of their useful lifecycle.

Stuff you just can't recycle: When practical, send such items back to the manufacturer and tell them they need to manufacture products that close the waste loop responsibly. ♦





Spring Cleaning- Jewish Style



by Joyce Peckman

For thousands of years, Jewish women have taken “You shall put away all leaven from your homes” in earnest. We used to start thinking about it before Purim, when we stopped buying pasta and cookies and focused on using up the stockpiles in the pantry. Now was a good time to utilize the flour to make *hamentashen*.

Cleaning started in earnest about two weeks before Passover. No more snacking in the living room or upstairs. Everything would be thoroughly dusted, cushions removed and sofas vacuumed, furniture moved and carpets cleaned. Next we would attack the big chest freezer in the laundry. Who knew what was in the bottom of it? So once a year it was emptied, defrosted, and old cake crumbs cleaned out. That’s when we finally threw away the fish we’d caught and frozen last summer, the freezer-burnt chicken, old bagels, and leftovers of delicious meals we’d had six months previously. Once the freezer was plugged in and cold again, we could use it to hold the meat we’d bought before the butcher cleaned for Pesach, as well as frozen vegetables which might contain corn or beans. Next, on to the side-by-side freezer, which was totally emptied into the chest freezer, cleaned and made ready for the procurements from a very expensive trip to the butcher.

In the kitchen was a large pantry. Now, the law of kitchen space is that where there is space, it will be filled. We never lacked for canned or packaged food. So, before Passover, boxes were obtained, and all the pasta, crackers and cereals were removed. Anything

open was tossed. Anything sealed could be given to the food bank or sealed in a box, which was put away (more about that later.) Cans were taken out, wiped down (here’s where we noticed which ones were bulging or outdated) and replaced on the lowest shelves, which had been wiped clean of the stray corn meal. Spices were examined, wiped down, and some discarded, before joining the cans down below. New seasonings would be bought for the holiday. So

the top shelves were now clean and empty, ready for Passover purchases, and the bottom shelves were sealed off with taped plastic. The last to be scrubbed down was the fridge, some of its contents going into the back freezer, but much of it to the neighbors, the cleaning lady or the garbage. A few slices of bread or some crackers were saved in a bag, to be placed around the house in the *bedikat hametz* ceremony just before the holiday.

So, once the house was clean, and open or old food discarded,

what happened to the pasta in the boxes, the canned corn and beans and, oh yes, the whiskey? They were “sold” to a non-Jew. We’d give our address to the rabbi, who would write up a bill of sale including this long list of addresses, and, for the week of Passover, those things were no longer ours. In theory, this unknown gentile could have come to our home and removed them (he never did). An hour after Passover was done, the rabbi would ransom them back, and they would be ours again.

Exhausting? Absolutely. *Mishegas*? Maybe. But if done in the right spirit, there is a feeling of accomplishment, cleansing and renewal that cannot be explained, only experienced. ◇

***The law of
kitchen
space is that
where there
is space, it
will be filled.***

From The Mouths Of "Talmidim"

When I asked our KJCC students (our "talmidim") a few Sundays ago what the most important, or their "most favorite," part of Passover was, there were definite trends among the answers. While all agreed that freedom from slavery was significant, much higher on the visceral tip of the tongue scale was appreciation of matzoh ball soup. In fact, the soup came to a nearly dead heat with searching for (sic) offycomen and family togetherness. Here are some of our children's comments on these issues in their own words and spellings, along with a few surprises: (Chai-Lights thanks Gloria Avner for collecting these little gems for us.)

Moira: "I like when my family comes together for the seder. And the matzoh ball soup. I can make matzoh balls. So fast!!!"

Lili: "I like Matzohball soup because my Dad makes it. My Dad puts chicken and other stuff in. I like finding the Afikomen because you can get a prize.

Hannah: "I like when the whole family comes together. Even if you don't know some of the people, they are still family."

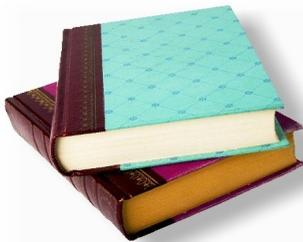
Cammie: "I like when the family gets together and the matza-ball-soup, when we help to find the Motza, and asking the four questions."

Max: "I like to find the offycomin." (Max also thinks we should do a Passover play.)

Zach: (dictated to *Morah Gloria*): "My first favorite thing about Passover is matzah ball soup. And my second favorite thing is when my mom and dad hide the bunch of pieces of bread and Max and I have to find it all. My Mom and Dad do "hot" and "cold" with us. After Max and I are done finding all the bread, we take the bag outside and twist it and set it on rocks and put it on fire. I also like to find the afikomen at grandma's house because she always hides it in the same place."

Jeri: "I like the opening of the Red Sea."

Harry: "My favorite is when Jews were free from slavery. That's when the Jews went through the Sea and drowned the Egyptians." ◇



KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

BOOK CLUB

Meeting

DATE:

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2009

TIME: 2:30 PM

**PLACE: 235 LEE AVE
KEY LARGO**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT JOYCE PECKMAN**

**451-0665;
JOYCE@ADOCTORSBAG.COM**



“Avadim Hayinu, Hayinu. Ata Ata b’nei Chorin, b’nei Chorin!”

Insecurity and Faith on the Road to Freedom

by Gloria Avner

In a matter of days we, and nearly every other Jew in the world, will be sitting around a table, singing the words which are at the heart of the Passover seder: “Once we were slaves. Now we are free people.” We celebrate in intimate settings, our homes. We invite strangers to share our bounty, our pleasure, and recollection of our pain. Even the poorest man on Passover is commanded to relish the symbols of freedom, to recline on pillows, a free man as he dines, and to partake of four cups of wine.

More important than the symbols though, we are commanded both to tell the story of our journey to freedom and to feel as if we are inside the story at this very moment.

Are we to “act as if?” Maybe it is not even a question of “acting.” Maybe we are being encouraged to look at our lives today and see in what ways we are still enslaved. Maybe we are being encouraged to model our lives after our ancestors and take that very leap, fraught with fear of the unknown that they faced, and have the faith that our lives will be the better for the leaping.

There is an understanding that not every Jew heeded God’s word through Moses. In fact, some rabbis say that only twenty percent of the Jewish slaves in Egypt packed up and left when the going was good. And if the understanding is that as many as 600,000 Jews did leave Egypt, it would mean that nearly as many Jews as were killed in the holocaust may have died in Egypt. Do we say, “What was wrong with them? Why didn’t they go when they had a chance?” Or do we look within and understand the temptation of the known, the knowledge that you and your children will at least be fed, that you will be familiar with your abuse and abuser, rather

than face the unknown perils of a harsh desert.

Could they have known God would provide manna? Only if they had faith. Even among the Jews who fled and followed Moses, there were many, weak of mind and spirit, who time and again would complain (dare I say kvetch?), longing for secure life under the Pharaoh again, or who would willingly revert to putting faith in a golden calf, the ultimate symbol of all things material.

An old poem says: “Stone walls do not a prison make. Nor iron bars a cage.” We were enslaved in *mitzrayim*, a word that in Hebrew literally means a narrow, hemmed-in place. In English, when we are in a difficult situation, we say we’re in a “tight spot.” How do we get out of our tight spots? How do we break out of the iron bars we make for ourselves and enable ourselves to work not just for our own freedom but also for the freedom of others, for *tikkun olam*?

Jews are very blessed. We not only have access to the wisdom of our ancestors and the support of HaShem, we have the energy of the Passover season, the Pesach moment, to engage for our own redemption. We can use this energy as a booster shot. It will support us in inner growth, in our resolve to change old habits, our commitment to let that which does not serve us drop away.

Looking inward more than outward, we can take on new challenges, go beyond our need for the known and the secure. We can squirm through those tight places and reach for true freedom. We can be grateful to those who left Egypt. We can tell their story to our children, and honor their bravery in the face of insecurity and the unknown by being brave ourselves, with honesty, faith, and resolution to improve ourselves and the world. ◇

-Righteous Among the Nations-

Two Families, One Wall, One Story

Since April 21st is Holocaust Remembrance Day, which is celebrated on the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, this month's Righteous Among Nations installment features a story that deals largely with the most famous and iconic of all ghettos.

During the lead-up to World War Two, Wladyslawa Konstanska was a single mother living in Warsaw with her fifteen-year-old son Jan and her two daughters. In 1940, Wladyslawa and her family moved to a new apartment complex within Warsaw. There, the young family became friends with another family across the way. Aizik Wierzbicki lived in the complex with his two children, Noach and Necha. The children of the two families were close in age and would play in the courtyard between the two wings of the apartment house.

Later that same year, the wall that would define the Warsaw Ghetto--a literal, physical barrier between Jews and non-Jews in Warsaw--also became part of the apartment complex. That barrier separated the wing the Konstanskas lived in from the wing the Wierzbickis' lived in. The Wierzbickis were Jewish, and the wall that sealed the Warsaw Ghetto enclosed their home. The ghetto wall ran right through the courtyard between the two apart-

ments. Just that small amount of space made all the difference between two worlds. When the ghetto was sealed in November of 1940, the Wierzbicki family was cut off from the life they knew, and the friends they had in the Konstanska family.

Confined inside the ghetto walls, the Wierzbickis were subject to the hardship and slow starvation brought on by German rationing. But a wall isn't much of a

deterrent for a fifteen-year-old boy, especially if he has friends on the other side. Jan, with the help of his mother, began smuggling food and supplies over the wall to the Wierzbicki family, giving them a lifeline within the ghetto.

Along with the food and basic necessities Jan would smuggle in, he would also bring news to the inhabitants of the ghetto, and above all continue his family's friendship and connection to Aizik Wierzbicki and his family. Some may have been able to pass by the ghetto wall in their daily business and not pay much mind to those who were living behind it.

Jan Kostanski (left) and Jakob Wierzbicki ride in a rickshaw in the Warsaw Ghetto.



Jan Kostanski (left) and Aizik Wierzbicki pose on opposite sides of the barbed wire fence on Krochmalna Street.



just helping out his friends; he had developed a crush on Necha Wierzbicki. Jan even risked sneaking Necha out of the ghetto to attend a movie. This wasn't just a cute teenage prank, however. Crossing the wall into the ghetto and helping out the Jews confined there was a serious offense; it was particularly dangerous if you tried to sneak a Jew *out*. In 1941 Jan was caught inside the wall and arrested. The Jews he was with were executed on the spot. Jan was imprisoned. He was interrogated and beaten for five days until his mother was able to raise the money for a bribe to get him out.

Jan's near-fatal experience inside the walls did not deter him and his mother from helping. They continued to cross over the wall in the courtyard and provide whatever food and help they could. When they heard in the summer of 1942 that deportations were to begin from Warsaw, Jan crossed the wall and brought out Aizik and both his children. His mother's brother had been arrested—we couldn't unearth the reason—and was in jail. So Wladyslawa and Jan hid the Wierzbicki family in his empty apartment outside the ghetto for four weeks until they could smuggle them into the Otwock ghetto, which they thought would be safer. When the roundups destined for Treblinka began in Otwock, a small suburb southeast of Warsaw where Jews had once summered in relaxed, pastoral settings, the Wierzbicki family managed to escape and make their way back to Warsaw. Since the deportations had temporarily stopped in the Warsaw ghetto, the family crossed back into it until Wladyslawa and Jan could find them another hiding spot in the Polish sector.

In March of 1943, Jan once again crossed into the ghetto and smuggled out the Wierzbicki family, plus a



The Wierzbicki and Kostanski families.



Aizik and Jakob Wierzbicki climbing the ladder at the ghetto wall overlooking Mirowski Square.

friend of theirs, Walter Cykiert. One month later, the German liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto began, and the uprising broke out. For six weeks the Wierzbickis, Cykiert and the Konstanskas huddled in their new apartment, which contained a secret room, and watched as house after house was burned down and the remaining Jews were taken away.

The families continued to live together, the Wierzbickis in hiding, the Konstanskas providing for and protecting them, until October of 1944 when, the Russian army approaching, all Warsaw residents were ordered to leave the city. Wladyslawa and her daughters fled. Jan stayed behind with the Wierzbickis to await liberation. It finally came on January 17, 1945.

To say the least, enduring such trying times can create strong friendships and lasting bonds. After the war, Wladyslawa married Aizik Wierzbicki. And Jan of course married Necha, the Jewish girl he nurtured and smuggled food to and for whom he'd repeatedly risked his life. They all decided to move to Australia—one can only imagine the scenario where they all studied a map, looking for sanctuary as far away from Poland and Germany and old European prejudices as possible—and settled there.

On February 10th, 1983, *Yad Vashem* in Jerusalem recognized Wladyslawa Wierzbicka-Konstanska and her son, Jan Konstanski, as Righteous Among the Nations. ◇

MY “DEFIANT” UNCLES

by David Herschthal, M.D.

The following is adapted from an address Dr. Herschthal gave in Boca Raton on January 21st prior to a screening of the movie “Defiance,” which has now fully publicized the story of the largest and most successful Jewish partisan group in Europe during World War II. The leaders of the group, the Bielski brothers, were family, his mother’s brothers.

The largest documented armed resistance and rescue of Jews, by Jews, during the Holocaust totaled 1,200 people. Their descendants number an estimated 20,000 today. But for me the story is personal.

By 1957, my mother, Estelle Bielski Herschthal, and all of the other Bielski brothers and sisters who survived the Holocaust, had moved directly from Europe to America and had been living in Brooklyn with their families for ten years. The Bielski brothers who led the resistance, however, went directly to Palestine after surviving the Holocaust, and went to war again, to help establish the State of Israel.

In 1957, when I was six, my mother told me that her brother Tuvia, a great war hero, would be moving from Israel to America. He’d be our guest for a few weeks. I’d have to give my bed to him, and now share a bed with my younger brother, all three of us crowded into one small bedroom. I was not pleased at this inconvenience and thought, how big a hero can he be if he has to share a room with us

kids? My brother and I were fast asleep when he arrived late that night, as he was when we left for school early the next morning. To register my dissatisfaction, I poured baby powder all over the head of my sleeping hero uncle. As I started to go, I was firmly yet gently stopped and lifted by two steel-like arms. I was temporarily paralyzed with fear and was turned around to face a giant, white with powder, laughing face, which then gave me a big, warm, welcoming hug. We became fast friends.

Tuvia’s family, and the other remaining brothers and their families, arrived from Israel soon afterward. Now all the Bielskis, and many of the other wartime partisan families, lived within minutes of each other in Brooklyn as one large, mostly happy family. We did everything together, including observing and celebrating birthdays, holidays, bar mitzvahs, graduations, and, of course, funerals.

At all these events there was a certain protocol. At a significant moment, typically after the blessing of bread and wine, came the equivalent of a blessing, an acknowledgement, of Tuvia and the other Bielski brothers for mak-



The brothers and other partisans at the height of their fight against the Nazis.

ing it possible for all of us to be there. No matter the event, there was always this moment of gratitude and respect. This practice continued well into the second, and now third, generation. Tuvia, though, could not have cared less about these accolades. He derived his satisfaction from merely observing the thriving and increasingly numerous descendants of those he saved.

The uncles were quite humble, and hardly ever spoke of the military aspects of their struggle. They only spoke of saving Jewish lives. It was their kids or the people they saved who freely supplied us with the graphic details of various battles, missions, raids, acts of retribution, and even summary executions. Tuvia would never have any part of these conversations. My uncle Zus, on the other hand, was all too glad to demonstrate to us kids some of his lethal hand-to-hand combat techniques.

I was amazed, while growing up, how many people told me, over and over again, how they owed their existence to my uncles' saving them and their families. Nevertheless, it still felt more like a local than global story. Yes, there were articles and even books written about the Bielskis, but they weren't widely read or known. As time went on, and Holocaust scholarship became better and better known, I must confess that some of us, though never doubting the essence of the story, assumed that some of the more implausible aspects of the Bielski story might have been slightly embellished or exaggerated. But we were wrong.

Several years after the last of the Bielski commanders had died, Peter Duffy, an Irish Catholic reporter for the New York Times, wrote a popular and thoroughly researched book on my uncles and their accomplishments, documenting their accomplishments and putting them in their proper historical context. It was published in 2003. Mr. Duffy had gone to the newly opened archives of the Soviet Union and uncovered detailed records of the Bielski Partisans' achievements. The Soviet military had supplied some arms and intelligence to the Bielskis, and also provided a liaison officer who kept records and even took some wartime photographs.

The story turned out to be much bigger than previously reported. Academicians and historians began paying closer attention. The press picked up on it, and so did Hollywood.

To really understand how this act of defiance—the name came from a book other than Peter Duffy's—you have to appreciate the pre-war Bielski family background. The Bielskis

were multi-generational, redneck, hillbilly Jewish farmers who lived on a poor plot of land at the edge of a forest in the middle of rural Poland, surrounded by a populace for whom anti-Semitic is probably too mild a word. Mix in the Bielskis, a little bit of Robin Hood and a lot more Tony Soprano, and you can begin



Tuvia during the war.

to appreciate their temperament. A recent New York Times article described the brothers as “casually violent, sexually predacious and occasionally murderous.” I sincerely hope these traits are not hereditary. They were hard-drinking and hard-living men who were not likely candidates for heroism. Yet, at the same time, they valued honor, family and a full love of life.

History forced them to defend themselves and their property, as no local laws or officials protected them. Their acts of retribution were legendary, thus they were feared. Once the Nazis controlled their territory, it would have been relatively easy for them to save only themselves, by simply hiding deep in the forest where they grew up. They were expert horsemen, outdoorsmen and survivalists. They were not accountants. But Tuvia and his brothers also risked their own lives by saving those Jews, mostly strangers, who could not save themselves. At the same time they created a community, often referred to as a “Jerusalem in the Woods,” that saved their cultural identity. And that's what makes this story one-of-a-kind.

The brothers showed us that real heroes are flawed human beings. They provided a glimmer of light and hope in a time when there was otherwise none. Future genocides can only be stopped by international cooperation. But as we pressure governments to act, there are still times when individuals must ultimately summon....defiance. ♦

We are grateful to David Goldfinger for providing this timely story to Chai-Lights.

Yom Ha'atzma'ut

Israel's Independence Day is celebrated this year on March 29th. Each year it seems a miracle that the Jewish homeland endures. We have two very different takes on the holiday this year, one by our KJCC member named for the state and another by our resident KJCC Sabra.

A Personal Story - A Medina By Any Other Name

by Medina Roy

My name would have been Sarah. Sarah Beilya to be exact.....

May 14th, 1948. It was a joyous day for the world-wide Jewish community. Israel was proclaimed an independent nation. The Jewish people finally had a legitimate, recognized homeland of their own.

In a small apartment on Hawthorne Street in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, New York, my mom and dad were awaiting the birth of their first child. (That would be me). After my dad finished his service in the U. S. Army, where he served as assistant to the chaplain (he was stationed stateside), apartments were hard to come by and so they lived with my maternal grandparents. For six months of her pregnancy, my mother was ordered to total bed rest if she wanted a successful delivery. This was because of a number of previous miscarriages. My maternal grandmother, Bubby Malka, (she died when I was three years old and so I don't remember her) took care of my mother during those months so that my dad could go to work. He was a self-employed zipper and leather-goods

repairman and he had a store on Sutter Avenue in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn.

Tante Rifka, my paternal grandfather's sister, lived in Haifa and was visiting the family in New York at the time when, on Friday night, *erev Shabbat*, at 10:33 p.m., the fifth day of the Hebrew month of Iyar, in the year 5708 -- May 14th, 1948 -- I was born, the same day as the official birth of the state of Israel. Needless to say, there was jubilation.



An early portrait of Leon and Bianka Kirschenbaum, Medina's parents.

The news about the new state of Israel was all over the newspapers and radio -- the family did not have a TV yet -- and there had been much excitement and anticipation throughout the neighborhood and in the shul the family attended, particularly when David Ben-Gurion, the new Prime Minister, read in Hebrew the proclamation declaring Israel's independence.

My mother, who had been praying to G-d daily for a healthy baby, was overjoyed and so very proud that I chose that particular day in Jewish history to make my appearance. (Which, by the way, was in the posterior or breech position, making my debut *tuchas* and legs first! That probably explains why I was such a difficult teenager.)

My dad was thrilled because soon my mom would be able to return to work with him. For six months during her bed rest, he was without her and he honestly doesn't know how he managed. He, too, was over-

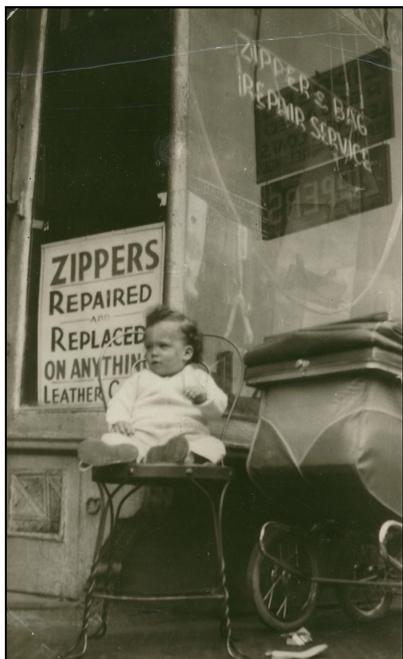
joyed that he finally had a healthy child after several unsuccessful attempts.

The "Thank G-ds" were numerous that day, both for my successful entrance to the world and also for the establishment of the Jewish state. Tante Rifka was probably more excited than anyone. She suggested that I be given a name to honor the new state of Israel, "Medinat Yisrael," and so Medina I became.

And then within just twenty-four hours, war breaks out when five of Israel's neighbors -- Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon and Iraq -- attack the newly created state. My dad looks at the map of Israel, and focuses on the area near Netanya, just about the narrowest part of Israel. There's maybe 20 miles between the Mediterranean Sea and Israel's enemies to the east. It seemed as if the Arabs would easily be able to cut through and separate Israel in two. To him, the fact that Israel held fast was a miracle. The war lasted fifteen months. Six thousand Israelis, one percent of the Jewish population, lost their lives defending the new homeland.

I tried to extract from my parents what it must have been like that day. They were so absorbed in my upcoming arrival that the rest of the days' events seem to be a blur. If I try to imagine what their reaction was, almost 61

**Medina
outside
hawking
for Dad's
Leather
Repair
shop in
Brooklyn.**



years ago, I can see my mom, tears rolling down her cheeks, quietly overcome with joy. My dad, on the other hand, must have been quite animated, with a huge smile on his face, bursting with laughter and maybe even dancing a *hora* with whoever was around (or even by himself).

And so, had I been born on any other day, you'd be calling me Sarah. But I was born on a very special day, the exact day when, after almost two thousand years, the Jewish people once again had a true homeland. So my name is Medina.

Yom Ha'atzmaut - 2009

by Yardena Kamely

On April 29 Israel will be sixty-one years old. Whatever the difficulties and challenges of the moment, and they are not inconsiderable, this is an occasion for Israel, the Jewish people and its friends to celebrate with joy and pride.

It's a time to step back, if just for a moment, from the daily events -- terror attacks against Israeli towns, peace negotiations with Palestinians, political discussions between the different parties -- and reflect on the larger picture.

As an Israeli, a Sabra, I'm not dispassionate when it comes to Israel. I believe that the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the fulfillment of its envisioned role as home and haven for Jews from around the world, Israel's democracy and the rule of law, including an independent judiciary, free and fair, and the many achievements of Israel, are accomplishments beyond our wildest imagination. American teachers I am working with in Miami are sharing their feelings about Israel with me, telling how grateful they are to witness this most extraordinary period in Jewish history and Jewish sovereignty.

And when we are reminded that all this was accomplished not in the Middle West but in the Middle East, where Israel's neighbors were determined from the very beginning to

destroy it and were prepared to use any means available to them -- from full-scale wars to wars of attrition; from diplomatic isolation, attempts at international delegitimization; to economic boycotts; from terrorism to the spread of anti-Semitism, often veiled as anti-Zionism -- the story of Israel's first sixty-one years becomes all the more remarkable.

No other country has been subjected to such a constant challenge to its existence, to its very legitimacy, though the old Biblical, spiritual, and physical connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel is quite unique in history. Yet throughout, Israelis have never abandoned their deep yearning for peace or willingness to take big risks to achieve that peace, and never flinched from their determination to build a thriving state.

To understand the essence of Israel's meaning, it is enough to ask how the history of the Jewish people might have been different had there been a Jewish state in 1933, in 1938, even in 1941. If Israel had controlled its borders and the right of entry instead of Britain, if Israel had had embassies and consulates throughout Europe, how many more Jews might have escaped and found sanctuary?

The *Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel* was approved at a festive session of the Peoples Council, comprised of representatives of the *yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine) and the Zionist movement, on Friday, May 14, 1948, several hours before the British Mandate for Palestine came to an end. The fifth section of the Declaration is the most important of all in terms of its domestic educational and informational function. In but a few words, it gives expression to the basic principles and guidelines of the Israeli polity. As the Supreme Court subsequently ruled, this section expresses the vision and the credo of the people regarding the character, the goals and values of Israeli society and its state: Israel is to be a state of

Jewish immigration *aliya* and of "the ingathering of the exiles."

I have witnessed what Israeli embassies and consulates mean to Jews drawn to Israel by Zionism or the push of hatred. I remember the stories about the Israeli embassy in Moscow that our Israeli friends were telling, where every day thousands of Jews were seeking exit from a Soviet Union that was unsafe for them because of renewed anti-Semitism. Working as a volunteer with the Jewish Agency in the 1990s, I helped Israel in transporting Soviet Jews to the Jewish homeland, and in teaching the new immigrants,

olim, Hebrew and Israeli culture, so that their absorption and adaptation in Israel would be easier. It says a lot about the conditions they were leaving behind that these Jews continued to board planes for Tel Aviv while missiles were exploding in Israeli population centers. And equally, it says a lot about Israel that, amidst all the pressing security concerns, it managed without missing a beat to continue to welcome the new immigrants.

I have seen Israel rescue the Ethiopian Jews, giving them the dignity and freedom they never

knew. And how can we ever forget the surge of pride we felt on hearing the astonishing news of Israel's daring rescue of the 106 Jewish hostages held by Arab and German terrorists in Entebbe, Uganda, over 2,000 miles from Israel's border? The unmistakable message of the Jewish State: Jews in danger will never again be alone and helpless.

Israel is a democracy. Its people yearn for peace. I pray for the peace of Israel, pray for the people of Israel, that they will live in hope and that they will know how to protect the democracy of the State of Israel; pray that God will protect them from war and from terrorist attacks; pray for the Israeli government, that it will have wisdom in leading the nation and that it will use the Israeli army with wisdom and care. ◇

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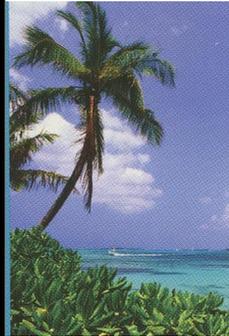
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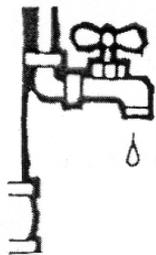
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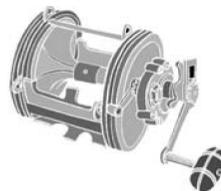
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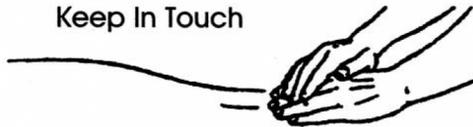


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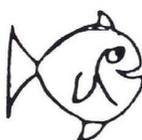
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