

# Chai~Lights



May 2008

26 Nisan - 26 Iyar

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**Keys Jewish Community Center**

P.O. Box 1332 • Tavernier, FL 33070 • 305-852-5235 • [keysjewishcenter.com](http://keysjewishcenter.com)

# May 2008

26 Nisan—26 Iyar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Names denote leaders of Friday services.  <i>Italicized names are Oneg sponsors.</i></p>				1 KJCC Holocaust Display Official Opening 7 p.m.	2 Yom Ha'Shoah  Steve & Yardena  <i>Medina Roy</i>	3
4	5	6	7	8 Israel Independence Day  Yom Ha'Atzma'ut	9 George & Yardena <i>Medina &amp; Bernie</i> <b>6:30 Dinner</b> Yom Ha'Atzma'ut	10 Nyan Feder Bar Mitzvah 4:00 p.m. Nosh 5:00 p.m. Service
11 Mother's Day	12	13	14	15	16 Joel & Linda Pollack  <i>Linda Rutkin</i>	17
18	19	20	21	22	23 Jim Boruszak & Gloria Avner	24
25	26 Memorial Day Observed	27	28	29	30 Joyce & Yardena 6:30 p.m. Service  <i>Joyce Peckman</i>	31

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**CHAI-LIGHTS** is the  
monthly newsletter of the  
**Keys Jewish Community Center**  
P.O. Box 1332  
Tavernier, Florida 33070  
chailights@keysjewishcenter.com

## President's Message Steve Steinbock



**O**ur Purim celebration was a great success, thanks to Joyce Peckman's hard work. She led the Megillah reading and organized a delicious dinner. Sunday School's Purim play, performed by our children (plus Cory and a few brave parents) was terrific. Thanks to Gloria (playwright, musical director, stage manager and dialogue coach), Susan, and Yardena.

We all love the beautiful new tile floor installed in the social hall in time for the Purim party. Thanks to Mark Wasser for making it happen.

Forty-eight women attended the 5th Annual Women's Seder on April 14th with Elaine Hirsch as this year's honoree. Thanks to Meredith for all your hard work and Muriel for orchestrating the delicious food, which I got to sample (Carol brought some home for me) and to Gloria for leading the service. Special thanks to Beth Kaminstein, our own artist/potter, who helped everyone fashion their own clay Seder plates, wine cups and dishes for the event, as she has since its inception.

The KJCC Second Night Seder was sold out as usual, with over 100 people, and better than ever. Led by Jim and Joel, we shared more good Passover food and a shorter service! And once again these two old pros suc-

cessfully got us out of Egypt.

Mazel Tov to Gerri Weisberg and her new husband Frank Emkey on their recent wedding, led by our own Cantor Mark in a beautiful ceremony on the bay in Key Largo.

Yardena's Holocaust display opens on May 1st in our lobby. That night, at 7 p.m., Steve Smith will lecture on the liberation of Dachau, from a personal perspective: his father was there. The Holocaust display will be in place through May and again open to the public on Friday evening and Sunday mornings as well as by appointment. Don't miss this moving and informative display.

Sisterhood will sponsor a celebration for Israel's 60th birthday at KJCC on Friday, May 9th. There will be a 6:30 buffet of Israeli food, plus music and dancing. We can all then plotz in the sanctuary for the 8:00 service.

My sister Rosemary, Carol and I are looking forward to our first trip to Israel in mid-May. I am sure we will have much to share on our return.

Speaking for the entire KJCC family, Carol and I deeply grieve the sudden passing of Marty Graham. Our hearts are with you, Bea.

Steve

# Nosh

## Havdalah, Will Travel

Gloria Avner and Joyce Peckman would like to offer a new service to our KJCC mishpochah, a kind of sweet dessert to Shabbat. Over the past year we have been meeting, very occasionally, at Tarpon Basin Dock, watching the sunset, schmoozing, waiting for three medium-sized stars to appear, and having our very own "Havdalah" service. We would like to share this experience with more of you. We know many of us have docks or wonderful places from which to view the setting sun. If anyone would like to host, we would be happy to provide all accoutrements. Have candle, spice box, and books; will travel. So far, we have three takers and we'll be celebrating in May at Susan's, Alan's, and Linda and Joel's. We may call a hiatus in June until snowbirds return in the fall. If you want to be on the e-mail list for notification of time and place, please write Gloria at [geetavner@gmail.com](mailto:geetavner@gmail.com). You are also welcome to call Gloria (619-0216) or Joyce (240-1000) for more information. Sharing "Havdalah by the Sea" is a lovely way to bid goodbye to Shabbat and hello to a brand new week.

## Shabbatoness In Need Of Tones

If someone has a portable electronic piano keyboard they would like to donate, (looking for a simple one with 66 keys, preferably with speakers built in) for the use of our KJCC Religious School and the Shabbatoness (our KJCC Choir), we would be very grateful. Call or e-mail.

## A Mitzvah From Medina

Medina Roy will be sponsoring two Onegs this month, for two special reasons. On May 2nd she will be honoring the 88th birthdays of her parents Leon and Bianca Kirschenbaum. And on May 9th, she will be cosponsoring with Bernie Ginsberg in honor of both their birthdays, which shares a day with the original Israeli Independence Day. Whew, busy day. Mazel Tov to you all.

## May Anniversaries

Date	Years
4th Susan & Alan Cooper.....	22
14th Chely & Alan Markowitz.....	17
30th Shelley & Harold Schenker.....	15
29th Judith & Larry Weber.....	46

## Men's Club Picnic Rescheduled

The Men's Club Picnic, which had to be postponed due to weather, has been rescheduled for June. A barbeque is being planned for Father's Day, June 15th, at Bahia Honda Beach. We'll have more details in next month's issue.

## To Contact Chai-Lights

Use the new e-mail our webmaster Alan has added to the KJCC web site. It's [chailights@keysjewishcenter.com](mailto:chailights@keysjewishcenter.com). Please send all ideas, comments, and questions there, as well as all submissions. ◇

## BOOK PLATES

In Honor Of Fanny Kluger  
FOR 100 GOOD YEARS  
*By Pauline Roller*

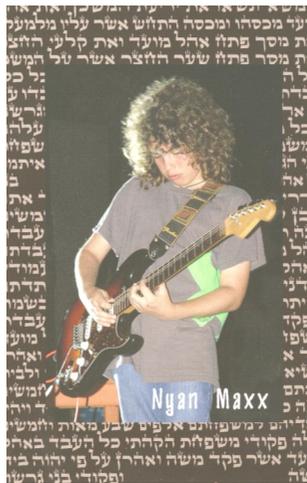
To Honor Fanny Kluger  
ON HER 100<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY  
*By Joan and Jim Boruszak*

In Fond Memory of Sam Sax  
*The Sax Family*

## From the KJCC Historian

The KJCC Bimah was designed by David DeHaas-Grosbeck of DeHaas Consulting & Design, who was KJCC Vice President under Mike Rubin. The Bimah is multifunctional. If you look closely, you will see hinges on the stairs which open up and provide storage space beneath. The side rooms allow entrance for the Rabbi or Leader as an alternative to walking through the congregation. The side rooms also function as theatre wings where entrances and exits and costume changes may be made by the Purim Players and, of course, as storage rooms. The ark which holds the Torah was designed to be mobile and it was moved from what is now The Ruth Richardson Social Hall. The back wall of the ark was removed and the stone on which the Torahs lean gives the impression of the Wailing Wall.

-Meredith



## Andy Tobin Nuptials

KJCC heartily congratulates Andy Tobin on his recent marriage. We'd love to also congratulate his new bride, but we aren't sure of her first name. We think it's Deborah, though no one can tell us the correct spelling. So, Mrs. Tobin, we all wish you and Andy many years of health and happiness.

## Nyan Feder's Bar Mitzvah

**Date: May 10 at KJCC**

**Time: 4 p.m. Nosh for any KJCC members**

**5 p.m. short Mincha service, open to all**

## Ongoing Committees and Activities

**Sunshine Committee** - If you know of any member who should receive a get-well, congratulations or condolence card from KJCC, 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. They 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.

**Advertising in Chai-Lights** - Your business ad will appear in every issue of Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 852-8575, for 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. Honorarium and memorial cards can also be requested. Donations can be earmarked to our various ongoing funds: e.g. Holocaust Education Fund, Scholarship Fund, Sara Cohen Memorial Tzedukah Fund, or General Fund.*

## A Letter of Thanks

This letter is to thank my "sisters" who produced our remarkable Women's Seder last night.

I am so grateful to have had that experience with my daughters the last few years. And I particularly enjoyed how our service has blended our Jewish traditions with a modern celebration of our womanhood.

How often have our elders been appreciated for just being the amazing women that they are?

Thank you to those of you who copied Haggadahs, prepared the service, set up, cleaned up, and those who spent hours so lovingly making homemade gefilte fish, matzah balls, charoset, desserts and matzah! (My daughters would never have known that we could make homemade matzah if not for our KJCC Woman's Seder!!)

I am intentionally not starting with names cuz you all know who you are and I would inevitably leave someone out. But none the less...thank you to our head table and all the passionate, capable women who created such a memorable event last night. With much love and gratitude...

- Judy Greenman

## For The Gittel Glory

The KJCC's own Gittel (Gloria Avner) has brought "nachas" to our community, winning First Prize in the Adult International Poetry Competition, held as part of the week-long, 14th annual, Key West "Robert Frost Poetry Festival." The prize was announced April 13th. Of the two contests, with twelve prizes offered, Gloria was the only winner from the state of Florida. Two were from the Midwest, one from Australia, and one from New Zealand. And the winner is:

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## Help

*I took a bit of branch from someone else's frangipani tree and pushed its bottom into my own garden. I watered it for weeks.*

## TREE OF LIFE

**CONGRATULATIONS TO  
FANNY KLUGER  
ON HER 100TH BIRTHDAY  
From the KJCC**

**TO HONOR  
FANNY KLUGER  
ON HER 100<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY  
FROM RENE AND SKIP ROSE**

**IN HONOR OF  
JOAN AND JIM BORUSZAK'S  
55TH ANNIVERSARY.  
May we all be blessed to have such a  
beautiful relationship.  
Love, Beth, Fred, Nicci And Alex**

**IN HONOR OF FANNY KLUGER  
ON HER 100TH BIRTHDAY  
FROM MICHAL KAMELY**

*Have you ever noticed how erotic  
frangipani branch tips look, once the roots  
take hold and baby leaves approach full length?*

*I am forced to touch to see if that new  
and vibrant green is wet. But it is not.  
That slick look comes from fresh stretched  
chlorophyll-drenched tissue, shiny verdancy  
of unused, unexposed, unoxidized youth.*

*Still, it makes my mouth go dry in wonder,  
as if the branch tip were a pulsing member  
of some brand new wild as yet undiscovered  
species, just unsheathed for the very first time.*

*If I am so undone by this revealed young stem  
and leaves, where will I go for help when and if  
tight fragrant buds, then dazzling flowers, appear?*

## May Memoriam

By Estelle Incociati  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**DOROTHY BIDERMAN**  
*Eternal Rest*

---

By the Blumberg Family  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**ANNA GAPPELBERG**  
*Always In Our Memory*

---

By Erica Garrett  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**BILLIE KORNBLUM**  
*Never Forgotten, Always Loved*

---

By Estelle Incociati  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**LOUIS M. BIDERMAN**  
*Forever In Our Hearts And Memory*

---

By Milton & Claire Geller  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**JENNIE GELLER**  
*In Our Memory Always*

---

By Lillian Lippman  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**MILTON LIPPMAN**  
*Always Loved and Missed*

---

By Shirley Boxer  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**STANLEY BOXER**  
*Eternal Peace*

---

By Janice Gorson  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**JULIE GORSON-MARROW**  
*With Loving Remembrance*

---

By the Cohen Family  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**MILTON LIPPMAN**  
*Eternal Rest*

---

By Shirley Burnett  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**HAL BURNETT**  
*Forever In Our Hearts*

---

By Joan Waldman  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**BEN GROSS**  
*Sleep In Peace*

---

By Salomon & Mary Terner  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**ITKA RAIJ**  
*Forever In Our Hearts And Memory*

---

By Stephen & Carol Steinbock  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**SUSAN CIMKOWSKI**  
*In Our Heart And Memory*

---

By Margaret Gross  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**ANNA HABER**  
*Forever Remembered With Love*

---

By Robert & Sylvia Berman  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**ROSE ROAZEN**  
*Eternal Peace*

---

By David M. & Nancy L. Cohn  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**CHARLES S. COHN**  
*Always In My Memory*

---

By Lawrence & Pearl Jacobs  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**ESTHER JACOBS**  
*Always Remembered*

---

By Marjorie Present  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**FLORENCE SAVAGE**  
*Forever In Our Hearts*

---

By Donald & Nancy Zinner  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**NORMA CUTLER**  
*Rest In Peace*

---

By Erwin & Barbara Kantor  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**JACK KANTOR**  
*Always Remembered With Love*

---

By Stuart & Lauren Sax  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**LILYAN SAX**  
*In Our Heart And Memory*

---

By Edward & Sherry Turney  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**HERMAN FOSTER**  
*Rest In Eternal Peace*

---

By Marilyn Greenbaum  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**BELLE KIRSCHENBAUM**  
*Rest in Blessed Peace*

---

By Mary Lee Singer  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**ROBERT W. SINGER**  
*Always In My Memory*

---

**By Robert & Susan Temkin**  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**PHILLIP TEMKIN**  
*Rest In Peace*

**By Salomon & Mary Terner**  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**ETIA TERNER**  
*Rest In Eternal Peace*

**By Stuart Grossman**  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**MORRIS MOSHE GROSSMAN**  
*Remembered With Love*

**By Joseph & Susan W. Goldberg**  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**HYMAN GOLDBERG**  
*We Remember Always*

**By Larry & Stephanie Gilderman**  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**ALBERT GILDERMAN**  
*Long Blessed Sleep*

**By the Cohen Family**  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**ROSE WAINER**  
*Always In Our Memory*

**By the Cohen Family**  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**SAM WAINER**  
*In Our Memory Always*

**By Larry & Judith Weber**  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**BENJAMIN WEBER**  
*Long Blessed Sleep*

**By Gerri Weisberg**  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**GERTRUDE WEISBERG**  
*We Remember Always*

**By Sheldon & Carole Weiss**  
*In Blessed Memory of*  
**STUART WEISS**  
*With Loving Remembrance*

## May Birthdays

Alan Beth.....	27
Matthew Birnbaum.....	25
Jaime Boruszak.....	18
Joan Boruszak.....	27
Sidney Boruszak.....	8
Julie Burnett.....	30
Mark Burnett.....	14
Nyan Feder.....	12
Robin Forman.....	29
Bernie Ginsberg .....	14
Rose Marie Gordon.....	13
Tracey Greemberg.....	21
Robert Greenbaum.....	25
Kelley Greenman.....	8
Jonathon Hodgson.....	19
Nicole Karron .....	11
Carolyn Kaufman.....	25
Bianka Kirschenbaum.....	23
Leon Kirschenbaum.....	4
David Lang.....	2
Jenny Margulies.....	23
Pamela G. Marmar.....	4
Liati Mayk.....	29
Stanley Nason.....	5
Richard Palacino.....	5
Jeffrey Pollack.....	27
Madelyn Ruby Pollack.....	12
Sharon Repua.....	22
Randy Robins.....	26
Sheila Rodin-Novak.....	7
Medina Roy.....	14
Jonathan Schenker.....	1
Paul R. Schur.....	15
Reid Schur.....	9
Susan Schwid.....	25

Jules Seder.....	23
Nettie Seder.....	23
Robert Sherman.....	31
Andrea P. Silverman.....	18
Mark E. Silverman.....	31
Michael Solomon.....	3
Sheila R. Steinberg.....	11
Shelby Strean.....	19
John Temkin.....	14
Rita Williams.....	20
Nancy Zinner.....	29

**The KJCC has lost one of its greatest contributors and staunchest supporters. Marty Graham, "Mr. Synagogue," has passed and has left behind many devoted friends and fellow congregants who will remember him as the person who took care of so many tasks for us. Whether it was the building, the electric system, the air conditioning, the signs, the many plaques and trees and rocks, Marty was The Man. His background in computers enabled him to maintain our important data base. In his own quiet way he facilitated much of the mechanics of the Center, serving on the Board of Directors for many years and on many committees, and for twenty years he was the editor of our excellent publication, Chai-Lights. Marty always had a smile and a word of encouragement for all. Words alone cannot express what Marty has meant to the KJCC and he will be remembered by all of us with great affection.**

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# World Jewish Report

## Medina Roy



### Computers in Israel

According to the World Economic Forum's yearly report released in early April, Israel is ranked number one in the world in regards to computers per capita, with seven computers for every 100 people. Canada is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>. The U.K. and the U.S. are ranked 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, respectively. (*www.haaretz.com, 4-10-08*)

### Shalom TV

Comcast, along with Time Warner of New York and New Jersey, and Blue Ridge Communications is now broadcasting Shalom TV, the Jewish-themed network, to all of its service areas. The network, which debuted in 2006, features Jewish films – most are in Hebrew with English subtitles – children's programs, lectures and breaking news out of Israel. Jewish authors, poets, artists and celebrities and Israeli TV series are also featured. For Comcast subscribers, go to channel 1 (on demand), then to "TV Entertainment," then to Shalom TV. (*www.jta.org, 1-29-08*)

### NASDAQ & the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange

70 Israeli companies are listed on the tech-heavy NASDAQ Stock Market. That's more than any other country outside the U.S., followed by China with 60 and Canada with 51. In late 2007, NASDAQ and the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange signed an agreement to formalize communications and facilitate trading of company shares admitted on both markets. (*San Jose Mercury News, 3-15-08*)

### Insurers Deny Travelers to Israel

Insurers across America have been denying life insurance to people traveling to Israel. Industry sources say the policy is prac-

ticed by companies in nearly every state. They receive monthly lists of countries cited by the State Department as "dangerous or unstable." The controversial practice has outraged at least one member of Congress, Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL). She was denied life insurance by AIG just because she checked a box on an application stating that she "might" visit Israel someday." She got legislation passed in the House last fall, but it failed to pass in the Senate. People who already have insurance could face a denial of payment in the event of a death claim, depending on the insurer's fine print. A spokesman for Schultz said that the restrictions on non-war zone areas are based on "intentional death rates" from bombings or murders in the trouble spots. According to industry data, Israel's intentional death rate is 11 per 1,000 people, while the US rate is 54% higher, at 17 per 1,000. "On that basis, Israel is safer than America," the spokesman said. (*New York Post, 4-1-08*)

### Actress Heckled at Fund Raising Dinner

In Glasgow, Scotland, actress Goldie Hawn was heckled by about 150 pro-Palestinian demonstrators outside a fund-raising dinner attended by some 500 guests and hosted by the JNF (Jewish National Fund). The protest was organized by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, which objects to the JNF policy of renting Israeli land that it owns only to Jews. The JNF was founded in 1901 and has branches throughout the world. (*World Jewish Congress, 3-12-08*)

### World Matzah Ball Eating Contest

Back in March, Kenny & Ziggy's New York

Deli, located in Houston, hosted the Inaugural World Matzah Ball Eating Contest. The event was publicized nationally and sanctioned by the International Federation of Competitive Eaters. The contest, "Matzah Balls for Marvin," honored the late broadcast journalist Marvin Zindler, with proceeds from the event going to pancreatic cancer research. More than 1,000 matzah balls were prepared, each weighing exactly 3 ½ ounces. Two world eating champions, Joey Chestnut & Patrick Bertoletti, wanted to add matzah balls to their resumes. (In world competition, these guys are known as two of the "four horseman of the esophagus"). Chestnut won, having eaten 78 balls while Bertoletti ate 76. No one else came even close. (*Jewish-Herald Voice*, 3-21-08)

### **HBO's "In Treatment" Born in Israel**

Used to be that Israel's most famous exports were Jaffa oranges and Uzis but now, that title belongs to HBO's "In Treatment," a show about a psychotherapist and his assortment of troubled patients. "Betipul" was a low-budget, high-quality show widely regarded as one of the best programs ever created in Israel. The show's creator, Hagai Levi, 45, devised an original format: for four days each week, the therapist would meet with a different patient, with the same one appearing every week on the same evening. On the fifth day, he would pour his heart out to his own therapist. To play the therapist, the producers chose Assi Dayan, son of the late Moshe Dayan, the famous Israeli general. Levi grew up in a religious home where he studied the Talmud and he believes "Betipul" did indeed have Jewish undertones. "There is certainly something Talmudic about the back-and-forth, question-and-answer format of the show," he said. Generally remaining faithful to its parent, "In Treatment" premiered in 2005 and according to HBO, each episode averages 2 million viewers. (*Press of Atlantic City*, 3-19-08)

### **Do Not Pass Jerusalem; Do Not Collect \$200**

Jerusalem will be included in the new global version of the Monopoly board game. The Hasbro Company organized an internet

vote and Jerusalem ranked #5 in the final list of 20 cities selected. The Israeli consulate in New York had launched a campaign for Jerusalem to be included in the new World Edition of the game. (*Jerusalem Post*, 3-18-08)

### **Israel's Population in the Year 2030**

In the year 2030, according to data released by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 24% of Israelis will be Arab Muslims or Arab Christians. Another 4.2% will be non-Arab gentiles. The remaining 71.8% will be Jews. Jews now comprise nearly 80% of Israel's population and many demographers have been warning that Israel's Jewish majority is at risk given the higher birthrates of the Arab minority. In addition, if Israel does not succeed in disengaging from the West Bank (as it did from Gaza), that number could go even higher. Israel's population in 2030 will be about 10.1 million, up from the current 7 million. ([www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org), 3-25-08)

### **Honoring Stuart Eizenstat**

A professorship in Jewish Studies at the University of North Carolina will be named in honor of UNC alumnus Stuart Eizenstat. It will be endowed with \$1.5 million per year. Eizenstat served as the lead U.S. negotiator for Holocaust compensation and restitution agreements and was deputy secretary of the Treasury during the Clinton administration. Eizenstat negotiated more than \$8 billion in compensation from European companies for victims of the Holocaust. (*World Jewish Congress*, 3-21-08)

### **A Solar Powered Israel**

In a nation of 7.1 million people, more than 1 million households in Israel have solar panels that produce hot water. This simple technology grew after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war when oil prices soared. As of the early 1990s, all new residential buildings were required by the government to install solar heating systems. Although Israel captured this early lead in solar heating, it has been slow to adopt more sophisticated solar technologies. Now, with oil prices hovering near \$100 a barrel, a local start up, Zenith Solar, is

pioneering in a concentrated solar power method that is up to five times more efficient than standard technology. The opportunity is compelling. With this new technology, this could be a big boost for a country totally dependent on imported energy, supplying more than 16% of Israel's total energy demand. (*Business Week*, 3-26-08)

### **Congress Recognizes Displaced Jews**

In a non-binding resolution adopted April 1<sup>st</sup>, the U.S. House of Representatives recognized the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab lands – believed to be approximately 850,000 in number - in any final Middle East peace deal. In response to criticism from pro-Palestinian groups, who claim that the legislation undermines the claims of Palestinian refugees, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, the lead sponsor of the bipartisan resolution, said, "It is important to raise the question of Jewish refugees and the property left behind in Arab countries. It does not in any way say that the rights of Palestinian refugees should not be handled." Stanley Urman, the executive director of Justice for Jews from Arab countries, the Jewish group that pushed for the resolution, said the vote, "restored truth to the Middle East narrative." This resolution is the first time ever that the issue of Jewish refugees has been addressed by the US Congress.

(*World Jewish Congress*, 4-2-08)

### **Elie Wiesel and the Dalai Lama**

Elie Wiesel has recruited 25 of his fellow Nobel laureates to sign a letter condemning the Chinese government's "violent crackdown" on protesters in Tibet. Released March 20<sup>th</sup>, the letter urges the Chinese government to exercise restraint and resume talks with Tibet's exiled leader, the Dalai Lama, himself a Nobel Peace prize winner in 1989. "We protest the unwarranted campaign waged by the Chinese government against our fellow Nobel laureate, His Holiness the Dalai Lama," the letter reads. "Contrary to the repeated claims of Chinese authorities, the Dalai Lama does not seek separation from China, but religious and

cultural autonomy. This autonomy is fundamental to the preservation of the ancient Tibetan heritage." In recent weeks, China's foreign policy and human rights record have come under increasing scrutiny, in particular its role in aiding in the mass murder in the Darfur region of Sudan. "One thing is clear," states Wiesel. "What I say to my fellow Nobel laureates, it is our duty to speak up on moral issues." (*www.jta.org*, 3-24-08)

### **"People of the Book" Project**

To mark Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a series of 24 books is being released that includes the most important Jewish and Hebrew books of all time. Over the course of a year, beginning in November 2008, the books will be distributed individually every two weeks in a single format. The editions include the Bible, the Mishna, the Babylonian Talmud, compilations by Maimonides, and the Zohar, along with works by Shalom Aleichem, Bialik, and S.Y. Agnon. Each edition is accompanied by an introduction that puts the work in historical, cultural, Jewish and Israeli contexts. The books are being released in their original versions, except for those that were not originally written in Hebrew. The books are being released by the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot and Bank Hapoalim.

(*Jerusalem Post*, 1-23-08)

### **German Leader In Historic Address**

Angela Merkel has become the first German chancellor to address the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. Israel rolled out the red carpet for Merkel, who was greeted with an honor guard and a crowd including many of the country's top religious and political leaders. Merkel spoke of the "historical responsibility" that her country bears toward Israel, saying that Germans feel great "shame" over the Nazi Holocaust, which killed some six million Jews during World War II. Most Israelis welcomed her sentiments, but a few Knesset members said her decision to speak in German was inappropriate, because it evoked upsetting memories. About 250,000 Holocaust survivors live in Israel. (*The Week*, 3-28-08) ◇

# KJCC GIFT SHOP



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## Sisterhood Joan Stark



Can it be another season coming to an end? Sunday, May 4 brings us to our Annual Sisterhood Brunch/lunch, open to all. We meet up at a chosen local restaurant (not yet determined at press time) where the only agenda is having fun together...Please contact me if you plan to come : joanstark@bellsouth.net or 394-2417.

The Women's Seder was on April 14. We were proud to have Elaine Hirsch as this year's honoree. A special toast was also given in honor of Fanny Kluger celebrating her 100th birthday. The Sisterhood has established a "Tikkan Olum Fund" with our first donations coming from the Women's Seder. We truly aim to repair the world in whatever way we are able. Also, we're attempting to produce a cookbook from these seders...

Second Seder at the Islamorada Fishing club was again a sold out event. Thanks,

Jim and Joel for a great job.

Joyce continues her diligence by heading up the Oneg Shabbats. We always need sponsors, especially over the quieter summer months, so please contact Joyce if you would like to contribute.

Don't forget Joan B. is always available if you need an item in the Gift Shop.

May is a special month. Holocaust Memorial Day is May 1 and Dr. Steve Smith will conduct a lecture. May 8 is the 60th anniversary of the birth of Israel and its' independence. We will have a special Shabbat Dinner on Friday, May 9 with Israeli dishes and events by the Hebrew School, as well as our usual Shabbat service.

Have a wonderful summer wherever you may be! ♦

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### On Sponsoring an Oneg

There is no time of the week quite like Friday evening. Time seems to slow down as we look forward to unwinding and relaxing, doing our own thing. Our time belongs to us, not to our work. We seldom stop to ponder the value of this gift.

Here in the Keys, many of us--members of the KJCC--celebrate that gift by coming together for Shabbat services. We take part in the hour-long service, which varies somewhat, depending on who leads that particular week. Then we retire to the social hall, sing Kiddush (and then drink minis of wine), make "ha motzi," and sit around shmoozing with friends for another hour. It is said, "Jews don't keep the Sabbath - Sabbath keeps the Jews." This easy camaraderie

is part of the glue that keeps us together. If you haven't made time in your life recently to join us on a Friday night, whether at the regular 8 p.m. time or at 6:30 p.m. on the last Friday of the month, why not come this week?

That said, we have to give a big "thank you" to our many sponsors, whose donations pay for the wine, challah, coffee, soda, cake and paper goods, not to mention the able assistance of Angela in setting up and cleaning up. If you would like to honor a loved one or share a celebration, a basic sponsorship is only \$50. I would be happy to arrange it. My e-mail is Joyce@adoctorsbag.com, my phone number is (305) 451-0665. You, too, can be a part of who we are and what we do.

-Joyce Peckman

# The Native Tourist

The Native Tourist is *Chai-Lights'* series of articles featuring off-beat activities or attractions in South Florida.

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## This Month's Excursion:

**Big Cat Rescue**  
12802 Easy Street  
Tampa FL 33625  
(813)920-4130  
[BigCatRescue.org](http://BigCatRescue.org)

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This edition of Native Tourist is going a bit further away than usual. But it's a destination and an experience that is well worth the trip.

In the middle of Tampa, just off a busy expressway, you can turn down a nearly hidden driveway and follow a gravel road to a wild and amazing world.

Big Cat Rescue (BCR) is located just off Veterans Expressway in Tampa. And it's something you would never expect to encounter there. It is a sanctuary for abused and abandoned big cats: lions, tigers, leopards, cougars. In fact, they have 16 of the 35 species of wild cats at their sanctuary.

I made the drive on a Saturday morning to be able to get to Big Cat Rescue for my "safari" that afternoon. I am a big cat fanatic. To me they are beautiful and awe-inspiring. But seeing them in zoos, (even the good ones) makes me sad, and I would of course never patronize a circus or roadside attraction. I did some research and satisfied myself that BCR was doing it right. I knew that even though I was paying a fee for the special tour I was taking, the money would help the cats, not the owner of the park. Having an interest in the care of the big cats, I arranged

to go on the Keeper Tour. I wanted to learn more about and participate in making enrichments for the cats, and their operant training.

It was well worth the drive and the fee. The enclosures (or Cat-a-tats, as they like to call them) at BCR are large and as natural as they can make them. They have grass underfoot, lots of vegetation and rocky cliffs or caves. Some even have ponds (like the tigers) or waterfalls (like the fishing cats), if they would normally use them in the wild. Sher Khan, one of the biggest and most beautiful tigers at BCR, has a LAKE. And he uses it! He loves to swim, and it's a rare treat to see a big, beautiful tiger swimming across a lake towards you.

Most of these cats came from cages of concrete and steel, just big enough for them to stand up, turn around and lie down in (disgustingly, that is all that is required by the laws of most states as an enclosure), and now they have grass and trees and room to run and pounce. And one of the highlights of my visit was getting to see a snow leopard do just that. Chloe, the snow leopard, has an 1,800-square-foot Cat-a-tat that, although it cannot mimic her natural home in the Himalayas, does have rock ledges to climb and a "cave" den that is fully air conditioned year round. Despite their being large, wild, hard to care for and extremely endangered, a man was able to purchase Chloe as a birthday gift for his wife. Obviously, they couldn't handle keeping an animal like Chloe, and she was one of the few who was lucky enough to come to BCR. And I was lucky enough to



**One of the leopards of BCR, enjoying a lush and roomy "cat-a-tat."**



**The beautiful Chloe, having treed her prey (me), allows photographs.**

have her stalk me! While visiting with three orphaned cougar cubs in a nearby enclosure, I noticed some movement in the habitat across the path. When I looked over, I could just make out two eyes watching me from the foliage. Chloe was on the prowl. It was thrilling to not only see Chloe actively stalking (while remaining safely out of her reach) but to even to see her at all. Snow Leopards are extremely shy, even in captivity.

It was amazing to see not only Chloe and the magnificent Sher Khan, but cougars, bobcats, ocelots, lynx, cervals...all of them out and active, hunting, displaying natural behaviors. It is such a big difference from seeing them in a zoo. There is wire fencing around the Cat-a-tats (of course) but it doesn't interfere with the viewing of these beautiful cats, and photos come out quite well. This type of enclosure also allows a closer look at these animals than you would normally get in any other type of setting.

The 150+ big cats at Big Cat Rescue came from performing acts, roadside circuses, fur farms, and unscrupulous breeders trying to get the abnormal "white tigers" (which creates a surplus of homeless, normal tigers who are then abused, neglected or sold to "canned hunts"). But maybe, most surprisingly, they also come from

**Our guide demonstrates how to get a tiger to stretch for an exam. Notice the size of those paws!**



the pet trade. Believe it or not, it is legal in most states, including Florida, to own, breed and sell big cats as pets. In fact, BCR was started in 1992 when its founder, Carole Baskin, was told that bobcats actually made good pets. She and her husband Don went looking to buy some kittens. They inadvertently wound up at a fur farm, and bought all 56 kittens there to keep them from being slaughtered for coats. They soon did their own research and learned that NO wild cat ever makes a good pet, and that purchasing them just leads to more breeding and abuse. That is why no true sanctuary will ever buy an animal. Carole and her husband learned more and more about the abuse of big cats by the pet and circus trade, and spent more and more of their own money buying land and building the sanctuary. BCR now is a 40-acre 501K, and home to more than 200 animals. Yet even at this size, they have to turn away more than 100 big cats every year in need of rescue.

Big Cat Rescue is a very well done and well run rescue and sanctuary, and although I could obviously write an entire article about every one of the magnificent cats there, I'll spare you. I'll just urge you to go see them for yourself. Remember, though that BCR is

NOT a zoo, and the only way to see it is through an arranged tour. BCR offers several different tours; call or go online to see what would be best for you and your interests. If you just find yourself in the neighborhood and would like to stop in, Day Tours are offered throughout the week and on Saturday, at scheduled times. -Lisa

#### **IF YOU GO:**

Various tours are offered Mon.-Sat. Some tours and programs are by appointment only, so call ahead. Kids tours (10 and under) are on Saturdays only.

# Photo Gallery

**Parents Ruth and Eric pose with Max as he's awarded his black belt in Karate. (Yes, he had to break boards with his bare hands.)**



made by all the children with Morah Gloria's help. Assisted by Morah Yardena, Bernie Ginsberg ably reprised his role as "Zaydie," with his delightful explanations at the head of the



table. Explaining to our kids that this storytelling is all for them, he made sincere, meaningful con-



tact, and the seder was enjoyed by all--children, teachers, parents, and board members alike. Thanks to all the parents who brought the great chicken soup, matzo balls, kugel and ceremonial foods. The children continue to deepen their understanding and sense of being part of a community. Which is, after all, one of our most important jobs. ♦

Once again, the KJCC Religious School put on its own model seder one week before the holiday. The table was beautifully decorated by Linda Rutkin and crew, enhanced by Max, Zach and Harry's flower arrangements and the hand-decorated, colorful Elijah's cups



**Top right and middle, scenes from the Children's seder. Lower left, one of the many full tables at the Fifth Annual KJCC Women's Seder on May 14th. Elaine Hirsch, below right, was this year's honoree.**



**Top left: Joan Boruszak, Pauline Roller and honoree Elaine Hirsch at the Women's Seder. At right, Katie and Judy Greenman.**



Elaine Hirsch. Not only did she delight the group with the highlights of her life story, but she continues to inspire us in her practice of *Tikkun Olam*, repairing the world.

We, the women who plan, create, and attend the women's seder, have just established a "Women's Seder Philanthropic Fund." Donations

### On the Women's Seder...

Forty-eight women, Jewish and non-Jewish, sit around a beautifully set, sacred-feeling, circular arrangement of tables. They introduce themselves, each women giving her first name and then the name of the mother and grandmothers from whom she came. It is a night of traditional and non-traditional questions and answers, of ancient but not-very-well-known stories of Miriam and the prophecies that led to protecting Moses and Jewish family life. It is a night of song and drumming and celebration of the freeing of the Jews from *Mitzraim*, acknowledging that the word refers both to Egypt and all "narrow places" that restrict our freedom.

This year the group's honoree was



**It all began five years ago with a few rebels. But the Women's Seder is now a major event and a bond for all generations. Above center, guests Patty Murphy and her mom Marianne flank Carol Steinbock. At left are Roberta McNew and Sofy Wasser. Above, possibly after the four cups of wine, are Ruth Schrader-Grace, Marcia Goldberg and Teresa Kwalick.**



can be sent to this fund now and at any time of year.

The evening was moving and inspirational as well as funny, fun, and filling. Special kudos to Meredith Cline and Muriel Swartz for the fine organizational work on food and set-up. I loved leading the seder this year and appreciated all the kind feedback. Once again, the tables were graced with striking

seder plates, goblets, and other pieces of pottery from previous years, for all of which we owe thanks to Beth Kaminstein's generosity, both with materials and guidance. This creative play we do



together has become as much a part of what we look forward to as the seder itself. May all our seders be as *zeeseh*, warm, and meaningful as this one.

-Gloria

Two final scenes from the **Women's Seder**. (Erica, stop looking at the camera; we want to take the picture.) Always there to help, Linda Rutkin, above right, works the kitchen. Left and below are scenes from the party celebrating Fanny Kluger's 100th birthday. Any of you ever

seen a cake saying happy 100th before? The photo below was taken by Steve Steinbock, passionate gardener and horticulturist. Notice that of the three lovely blossoms in the picture, the one in the center is the one in focus.



# COLLEGE DIARY

## Suzie

Life is still in full swing here at MIT. I am currently writing from the main floor of our Student Center, selling tickets for a male beauty pageant. (All proceeds are going to benefit cardiac care; it's not all about watching boys walk around in bathing suits.) :D



On that same note, *The Full Monty* (the musical I'm in) is in full swing with opening night next week. We have rehearsal every night, touching up dances, harmonies, and desperately trying to remember lines. I have never worked with such a pleasant and talented cast. This show is going to be absolutely amazing. Two of our leads (one of them an MIT graduate) are actual professional actors and I'm learning so much just being on stage with them. It's really so much fun.

Fortunately for me I'm coming home this weekend to celebrate Passover with my family!!!!!! I'm so excited. It will be a great, and already much-needed, break from school. Spring Break already seems so long ago. Since then we've had our second and are starting our third round of midterms. I just got out of a Psych exam with an Organic Chemistry exam tomorrow morning.

On a lighter note, last weekend was CPW, a weekend where we invite all accepted students to come check out campus. It was absolutely amazing, 900+ kids flooding campus, all as excited to be there as we were to have them. I hosted a student from Michigan, showing her around and providing a mattress to sleep on. The entire weekend was a huge carnival designed to convince them to come. All of the organizations hosted events to help students

get a feel for campus. I spent all weekend going from one event to another, trying to convince students that it really is amazing here. Last CPW, I came to campus not sure at all that I wanted to come here in the fall. But my first night here, when the Logs, an *a capello* group, jumped on stage welcoming us all, I fell in love with the place.

So between CPW, exams, and theater, I've been keeping super busy. I hope you all had a very happy Passover.

## Joe

Hello, everyone. I am currently in the middle of a bunch of final exams which have officially swamped me in homework and last-minute cramming. Although this week is full of finals and end-of-the-year-work that needs doing, I did take time to help out with the Relay for Life last Friday night, which went from 6 p.m. till noon the next day. Along with PTK (Phi Theta Kappa), I was in charge of making balloon animals, face painting and helping the kids out with the Wii system and Guitar Hero game console. All members were given the opportunity to participate in the walk, where I met some very interesting people who overcame cancer in its many forms. And even though I was near exhaustion from the walking and all the activities going on throughout the night, I must say that I was amazed at how everyone throughout the community came together and supported each other through the hard times.

I am looking forward to this summer's Alaskan cruise in June that I'm taking with my parents and other family. It should be a fun trip. ◇



# KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

## YOM HA'SHOAH HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

On Thursday, May 1, 2008, we will officially open our KJCC Holocaust Remembrance display. All are welcome.

6:30 pm - Viewing

7:00 pm - Dr. Steve Smith will be our keynote speaker.

*The Friday night 8 pm Service will be dedicated to the Yom Ha'shoah.*



# Why I LOVE being Jewish

*A slightly longer version of this was sent to us by Fanny Kluger. We thought you might like to see what KJCC's resident centenarian is thinking. (And how impressive is it that she's still this intellectually active? Think you'll still be capable of abstract thought when you're 100 years old?) This means we now have had contributions from our Religious School students all the way up to our oldest active member. We think that's pretty....inclusive. Many thanks, Fanny.*

We have never been better off!

Only 65 years ago Jews were still being systematically killed, in a warped and twisted attempt to destroy us as a people. We had no country, no army.

Only 60 years ago seven Arab countries declared war on the newly declared Jewish state of Israel, then only a few hours old. We were but 650,000 ragged Jews against the entire Arab world! We had no IDF, no mighty air force. Just tough and resolute people with nowhere else to go.

The nations of Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq, and Lebanon all attacked at once, from every direction. Volunteer corps from Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Libya joined in.

The country the U.N. "gave" us was 65 percent desert. We started a country from scratch.

Just over 41 years ago we fought the three strongest armies in the Middle East, once again determined to destroy us. We wiped them out in six days.

Almost 35 years ago we had to fight again, this time against different coalitions of Arab countries, with modern armies and masses of Soviet (remember them?) weapons. We were hurt badly this time, and almost lost, but we rallied and won.

Today we have a country, an army, a strong air force, a high-tech economy that exports ideas and innovations and millions of products both industrial and agricultural. Intel, Microsoft and IBM all develop their

products here.

Our doctors win world prizes for medical developments.

We made the desert flourish, and now we sell oranges and vegetables to the world.

Israel has sent its own satellites into space, actually three all together. The few million Israelis are in a small club to have (successfully, at least) shot something into space, along with the Americans, with 275 million people; the Russians, with over 200 million people; the Chinese, with over one billion people; and the combined European Community, with over 350 million people.

We're by far the world's smallest nuclear power. (We don't admit it, but everybody knows.)

We're one of the most durable, long-lasting tribes in history. We overcame Pharaoh. We overcame the Greeks. We overcame the Romans. We overcame the Spanish Inquisition. We overcame the pogroms in Europe. We overcame the Holocaust. We overcame the combined military might of seven Arab countries.

So take it easy, folks. We'll overcome our current predicaments, too. We're still here. Has anyone heard from Pharaoh's army lately? Or the Greek empire post-Alexander? Or a Roman provincial governor since the Vandals first made a social call on Rome? The Third Reich was supposed to last a thousand years, but it seems as though they came up a little short.

But look at us, the bedraggled little nation from the Bible. From slavery in Egypt, we're still here. And, thanks to a few determined, visionary people, still speaking the same language!

Right here, right now.

So, sorry for not worrying. Or not bitching. Or not crying. Or not being scared. Things are okay here. Yes, they can surely be better.

But as long as we keep our identity, we are eternal. ◇

# In Honor of Yom Ha'Shoah

**Holocaust Remembrance Day this year is on May 8. This article, and the following one, tell two stories you may not have heard.**

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**I**n two nights of horror, November 9-10, 1938, in an event now known as *Kristallnacht*, synagogues and Jewish businesses throughout Germany were destroyed. Thirty thousand people were deported to Dachau and Buchenwald. For the first time, state-sponsored illegal violence against Jews was

## *The Holocaust in Hungary: A Personal Remembrance*

By John H. Merey, M.D.

fully exposed to the German and international public.

The increase in the level of anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish violence was quickly noticed by Germany's neighbors. One of these neighbors, bordering the new and expanded Germany, was Hungary.

By the turn of the twentieth century, a high proportion of Hungary's doctors, lawyers, journalists, playwrights, factory owners and business entrepreneurs were Jewish. This rapid economic and social advance was accompanied by assimilation. Identifying themselves completely with the Hungarian nation and language, they adopted Hungarian names. So it was with my grandfather, a teacher. When he arrived in Budapest in 1905 he was told: "if you want to teach in the capital city of Hungary, you must have a Hungarian name." That's how Marmorstein became Merei or Merey.

Alas, all this was soon to change. In 1920, the Hungarian Parliament passed a "numerous clausus" law whose intent was to limit Jewish

university students. This was the first anti-Semitic law passed in post-World-War-I Europe and was in complete violation of the Treaties of Versailles and Trianon. In rapid succession, starting in 1938, came three Jewish Laws: the first two restricted Jewish participation in the professional and financial sectors, and the third, modeled after the Nuremberg laws, defined Jews as a separate race and a Jew as someone who had two Jewish grandparents.

By March, 1944, the 750,000 Jews of Hungary were the last major Jewish population in Europe. In my childhood photograph album is a picture of Hanukkah, 1943. Despite restrictions, we were still essentially leading normal lives – observing our holidays, having parties, taking photographs. You would never have known that the Jews in the rest of Europe had by now perished; that the Warsaw ghetto uprising, only 400 miles away, had been crushed almost a year before; that the Allies had already landed in Italy and that the Russian Army was moving westward and was now within 300 miles of the Hungarian border. It looked like somehow we, the Jews of Hungary, would have a different fate.

This attitude suddenly changed when, in the morning of March 19, 1944, our maid received a phone call from her husband that the German Army was streaming into Hungary. Within a day, Hungary had changed from a German-allied country to a German-occupied country. The following day, March 20<sup>th</sup>, Adolf Eichmann entered Hungary. He was now a very experienced man. He had overseen the destruction of European Jewry and it was now Hungary's turn. Only this time he had to work very fast, as the German military situation was deteriorating rapidly. The Germans might lose the war to the Allies, but the war against the Jews had to be won.

Eichmann divided Hungary into six depor-

tation zones, leaving Budapest, the capital, to the end. Within the course of six weeks, from May 15 to July 1, 1944, the entire Jewish population of provincial Hungary was deported to Auschwitz. The methods had all been perfected: marking Jews with the yellow star, ghettoization in a brick factory near a railroad station and finally deportation by cattle car to Auschwitz. There were only 200 SS in all of Hungary. The deportation was accomplished by Hungarian surrogates. The entire Hungarian internal security force willingly mobilized to accomplish one goal: the total deportation of Hungary's Jews.

Were there any gentiles who resisted the German/Hungarian deportations? Yes, there were, but very few. One of these was the police chief of the small Hungarian town of Gyomron where the grandparents of my wife, Daisy, lived. One afternoon he appeared at their house and told the elderly couple: "I want you to leave your home and immediately take the train to Budapest. Don't ask me any questions. One day you will be grateful for this advice." They left for Budapest immediately and survived the Holocaust. The next day the Jews of Gyomron were rounded up.

One group in Budapest took a more active and resistant posture towards the Germans, and these were the Hungarian Zionists. For several years they had been smuggling Slovak and Polish refugees into the relative safety of Hungary. They had supported Oskar Schindler and his workshop in Krakow. They had, at times with success, resorted to bribery to attain some modification in the deportation schedules in Slovakia. Our connection to the Zionists was through my uncle Dr. Nison Kahan, who had previously been president of the Zionist Federation.

Among the Zionists was a lawyer by the name of Dr. Rudolph Kasztner. Kasztner was a man of great self-confidence and chutzpah. In May, 1944, Eichmann approached the Zionists, particularly Dr. Kasztner, and made an incredible offer. He was prepared to sell the

Jews one million of their own people. But he wanted goods in return, not money. He gave Dr. Kasztner and the Zionists two days to decide.

Kasztner seized upon this incredible offer and started to work. He would raise money from the Jews in Budapest and would get in touch with international Jewish organizations. Kasztner asked the Germans to prove their good faith by allowing a group of Jews to leave Hungary with an eventual destination of Palestine. This would show the world that the Nazis were serious and would keep their

word. Should my family join this group? My uncle, Dr. Kahan, told the family: "if we stay in Hungary, we will perish 100 percent; if we go on this transport we will perish only 90 percent."

And so on June 30, 1944, a group of 1,684 Hungarian Jews, including fourteen members of my family, left in cattle cars, destination Palestine. How we would get there, no one knew. Eleven days later we arrived at a camp in northern Germany named Bergen Belsen, a name

that meant nothing to us. We were kept separate from the other Jewish inmates and treated a little better as we were to be used for "exchange."

Dr. Kasztner was continuing to negotiate with the Germans - not that he had too much to negotiate with. He had raised some money, but war materiel was totally out of the question. Still, his perseverance paid off. After six weeks in Bergen Belsen, a group of 320 was allowed to go to Switzerland. In this group was all of our family with the exception of my parents and me. My mother, normally a shy person, mustered up all her courage and approached the commandant of Bergen Belsen, asking that since our entire family was leaving, couldn't we just join them? The commandant was outraged at such a request and shouted at my mother "Sind Sie wahnsinnig!?" Are you insane to question the German authority? The rest of our family left; only the

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***Had we  
remained in  
Bergen-Belsen  
another few  
weeks we  
would have  
perished.***

---

three of us stayed behind. The summer of 1944 became winter. We wondered whether we would survive.

Then, at last, we heard the news. The remainder of the transport would be allowed to go to Switzerland. My parents packed their few belongings and started the long walk

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***We didn't know  
it, but our fate  
continued to  
hang in the  
balance.***

---

from the camp to the railroad station at Bergen Belsen. The train stopped at the Swiss border and waited for hours and hours. We didn't know it, but our fate continued to hang in the balance. Unbeknownst to us, to the last minute, Dr. Kasztner was negotiating with the Germans, promising additional money that would be put up by the Joint Rescue Committee in a frozen bank account in Switzerland.

On Chanukah, 1944, we arrived in Switzerland. The winter of '44-'45 was brutal. Had we remained in Bergen Belsen another few weeks, we would have perished from the elements, the dwindling food supplies and the epidemic of typhus. Dr. Kasztner, with nothing to offer the Germans except bluff, had skillfully negotiated our release.

Meanwhile, in Budapest, another story was unfolding. All of provincial Jewry had already been deported. What was left were the Jews of Budapest.

It was during this time that a young Swedish diplomat, Raoul Wallenberg, went into action. He established apartment buildings that were nominally under Swedish protection. He printed "schutzpasse," passes that declared their holders to be under the protection of the Swedish Crown. This strategy was copied, to a lesser extent, by the Swiss and Spanish embassies. The Germans and their

Hungarian accomplices were eager to achieve recognition from the neutral powers and, to some extent, recognized these protective passes and safe houses. As the Russian army entered Budapest, over 100,000 Jews were liberated from the ghetto, from the safe houses and the many hiding places. The work of Raoul Wallenberg is a prime example of the difference one highly motivated individual can make under absolutely impossible circumstances.

By March of 1945, all of Hungary had been liberated by the Russian Army. Hungarian Jewry had lost three-fourths of its population. Due to the efforts of Wallenberg and others, and the rapid entry of the Russian Red Army, half of Budapest Jewry survived. The efforts of Dr. Kasztner resulted in the rescue of 1,600 Hungarian Jews. My family of fourteen persons survived. Was mine the largest family in eastern Europe to survive intact? Perhaps.

Some of the teenage survivors of the Holocaust in Hungary would later make fabulous careers in North America and contributions to the world. These include, in business and

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***Hungarian  
Jewry had lost  
three-quarters  
of its  
population.***

---

philanthropy, Andrew Grove (founder and CEO of Intel), George Soros (head of the Quantum Group of Funds), my cousin Peter Munk (founder and Chairman of the Board of Barrick Gold Corp.) and in literature and human affairs, Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel. We can only speculate on the catastrophic loss of talent that went up in smoke at Auschwitz. ♦

*Dr. Merer first presented this story in a lecture to Temple Beth El in West Palm Beach. We are grateful to Stan Margulies for sending it to us.*

## The Leica Freedom Train

The Leica is the pioneer 35mm camera. It is a German product - precise, minimalist, and utterly efficient. Behind its worldwide acceptance as a creative tool was a family-owned, socially oriented firm that, during the Nazi era, acted with uncommon grace, generosity and modesty. E. Leitz Inc., designer and manufacturer of Germany's most famous photographic product, saved its Jews. And Ernst Leitz II, the steely-eyed Protestant patriarch who headed the closely held firm as the Holocaust loomed across Europe, acted in such a way as to earn the title, "the photography industry's Schindler."

As soon as Adolf Hitler was named chancellor of Germany in 1933, Ernst Leitz II began receiving frantic calls from Jewish associates, asking for his help in getting them and their families out of the country. As Christians, Leitz and his family were immune to Nazi Germany's Nuremberg laws.

To help his Jewish workers and colleagues, Leitz quietly established what has become known among historians of the Holocaust as "the Leica Freedom Train," a covert means of allowing Jews to leave Germany in the guise of Leitz employees being assigned overseas. Employees, retailers, family members, even friends of family members were "assigned" to Leitz sales offices in France, Britain, Hong Kong and the United States. Leitz's activities intensified after the *Kristallnacht* of November, 1938, during which synagogues and Jewish shops were vandalized and burned throughout Germany.

Before long, Leitz's German "employees" were disembarking from the ocean liner Bremen at a New York pier and making their way to the Manhattan office of Leitz Inc., where executives quickly found them jobs in the photographic industry. Each new arrival had around his or her neck the symbol of freedom - a new Leica. The refugees were paid a stipend until they could find work. Out of this migration came designers, repair technicians, salespeople, marketers and writers for the photographic press.

The "Leica Freedom Train" was at its height in 1938 and early 1939, delivering groups of refugees to New York every few weeks. Then, with their invasion of Poland on Sept. 1, 1939, Germany closed its borders. By that time, hundreds of endangered Jews had escaped to America, thanks to the Leitz family's efforts.

How did Ernst Leitz II and his staff get away with it? Leitz Inc. was an internationally recognized brand that reflected credit on the resurgent Reich. The company produced range-finders and other optical systems for the German military. Also, the Nazi government desperately needed hard currency from abroad, and Leitz's single biggest market for optical goods was the United States. Even so, members of the Leitz family and firm suffered for their good works. A top executive, Alfred Turk, was jailed for working to help Jews and freed only after the payment of a large bribe. Leitz's daughter, Elsie Kuhn-Leitz, was imprisoned by the Gestapo after she was caught at the border helping Jewish women cross into Switzerland. She eventually was freed but endured rough treatment in the course of questioning. She also fell under suspicion when she attempted to improve the living conditions of 700 to 800 Ukrainian slave laborers, all of them women, who had been assigned to work in the Leitz plant during the 1940s. (After the war, Kuhn-Leitz received numerous honors for her humanitarian efforts, among them the Officier d'honneur des Palms Academic from France in 1965 and the Aristide Briand Medal from the European Academy in the 1970s.)

Why has no one told this story until now? According to the late Norman Lipton, a freelance writer and editor, the Leitz family wanted no publicity for its heroic efforts. Only after the last member of the Leitz family was dead did the "Leica Freedom Train" finally come to light. It is now the subject of a book, "The Greatest Invention of the Leitz Family: The Leica Freedom Train," by Frank Dabba Smith, a California-born rabbi currently living in England. ◇

*Our thanks to Yardena Kamely for sending this in.*

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**INDEPENDENCE DAY**

**Date: Friday, May 9, 2008**

**6:30 pm Buffet dinner of Israeli food followed by dancing  
and singing for all and games for the children**

**8:00 pm Services**



# Israel at 60

## A Yom Ha'Atzma'ut Special Section

Several of your fellow KJCC members share their stories of Israel—both of visiting and living there.

### My Three Years in Israel

*by Joyce Peckman*

**W**e boarded the small El Al workhorse of a plane on July 8, 1967, almost 100 *Sherut La'am* volunteers aged about 18-38, along with a few black-coated religious men, on one of the first flights out of New York to Israel after the Six-Day War. We had just spent about a week on a Jewish Agency farm in Hightstown, New Jersey, getting to know each other. It was, for some of us, our first time seeing a farm with actual cows and chickens, and for others the chance to get quietly weeded out and sent home. This was a varied group from across the United States. A few, like me, had been planning this year of service as a first step after college graduation; others had signed up during or immediately after the war.

The flight lasted forever. We stopped in Zurich, finally arriving emotional and exhausted at Lod Airport, where we were split up and then whisked away in open transport buses to assorted ulpans. I ended up at Kibbutz Yod Mordechai, just south of Ashkelon, on the border of Gaza. We were immediately told not to go near certain sunflower fields

until the mines were removed. Then we were assigned bunks in a "Tzriff," which I can only describe as a bunkhouse: a long, wooden building with about five rooms opening onto a narrow stoop, four beds per room. When I woke up the next morning, I realized that I had somehow missed my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

There were about 30 of us, mixed with newcomers from places like Morocco, South Africa and India. We were divided into two classes, those who could decipher the alphabet and had some minimal familiarity with the language, like me, and those who had no clue, like the young man from the mountains of India, the born-again couple from Iowa and the fiery Irish revolutionary from Philadelphia. Those who had morning class worked in the afternoon, and vice versa. Some were assigned to the kitchen and dining room, some to cleaning the nursery school, a few unfortunately to the hen-house, and many, me included, to assorted agricultural tasks. Many of our supervisors were the founders of the kibbutz - men and women who had escaped from the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto, found their way to Israel, fought in the War of

Independence and created a kibbutz in the memory of Mordechai Anilewich, organizer of the Warsaw resistance. This was the first time in memory they were not worried about mortar fire from Gaza.

They taught us how to harvest sunflowers, watermelon, apples and pears. Question: What does a 21-year-old girl with a fear of heights do when a 60-year-old survivor of three wars tells her to climb a ladder to the top of a tree? Answer: she climbs the ladder.

The Jewish Agency arranged for several tours during that time. They piled us into open buses and took us into the barren desert of Gaza in the west, where we saw hundreds of burned-out tanks and jeeps. We camped out at *Ein Gedi* in the east and saw the Dead Sea, where one small concession provided a place to shower and change. We drove south through the Negev to Eilat, and saw the rusty-colored mountains reflecting into the Red Sea. There was one lovely hotel there. We weren't in it, but our small hostel had access to the wonderful sandy beach. We stayed in sleeping bags in a school cafeteria in the north in Tiberius, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, and I will never forget the drive past empty mountains, with Safed gleaming like a jewel in the distance.

After three months we were sent out to our volunteer placements. I ended up with two young women from my group (some of you have met Barbara) in the new port city of Ashdod, not too far north on the coast. We shared a third-floor walk-up apartment in a brand new housing development opened to accept the immigrants pouring out of North Africa. It very quickly developed a "tenement" quality. We had a basic couch, cots, a couple of pots, tableware, a kitchen table with three chairs, a hot plate and a kerosene heater. Not much else. No TV. No fridge. Our stipend was 150 lira each month. (Think poverty.) We had

a small market across the street where we could buy fresh bread, dairy and seasonal vegetables each day. The bread was wonderful, and cheap. We lived on bread, eggs, leben (yogurt) and cheese. You always knew what was in season. I will never forget the piles of incredibly cheap and delicious apricots that appeared, and disappeared three weeks later.

Our neighbors across the hall were a young family, with four children aged nine to two, who had immigrated a few years ago

from Morocco. The husband was 40, the wife 25 years old. She often invited us over for coffee and conversation in French and very basic Hebrew. Her younger brother was a paratrooper on active duty, who visited on his days off. He soon decided it was pleasant and more relaxing to spend some of his precious hours of liberty in the company of the American girls across the hall. From him we learned about the joy of liberating Jerusalem, the bravery of both the Is-

raeli and Jordanian soldiers, and the pain of having to look in another man's eyes and pull the trigger.

My volunteer job was in assisting in a bare-bones special-education class filled with young new immigrants. We taught them math, civics, Israeli culture, Hebrew and hygiene. I was a valuable asset, because my very basic spoken Hebrew vocabulary was similar to theirs; they often had no clue what the Sabra teacher was saying to them. We had Friday afternoon and Saturday off. You don't appreciate a two-day weekend until you are forced to do all shopping in one afternoon. There wasn't much shopping to do in Ashdod anyway. There was one very small central market where you could buy vegetables, fruit, chicken or fish, (the meat wasn't worth buying), basic cheap clothing, housewares, eyeglasses and jewelry. Restaurants? There was

***What does a 21-year-old girl with a fear of heights do when a 60-year-old survivor of three wars tells her to climb a ladder to the top of a tree? Answer: she climbs the ladder.***

one tiny hole-in-the-wall where you had a choice of falafel, schwarma or schnitzel, and we couldn't afford to eat out much anyway. Everything was closed on Saturday, and we worked Sunday. But we had the Mediterranean less than a mile from our front door, and it had the bluest water I had ever seen.

The Friday afternoon buses were filled with people traveling to spend *Shabbat* with friends. Sometimes people came to us, sleeping on the couch or floor. I had made friends with a young Iraqi "Chayellet" (female soldier) who had been assigned to my school, and she often asked me to spend *Shabbat* in her family home in Rehovot. I think one of the things I love about parts of Key Largo is that it has some of the flavor of 1967 Rehovot: small, quiet stucco homes, no sidewalks, gated yards with cactus and citrus trees. But they also had goats, chickens and hives of honeybees.

Sometimes, in the afternoon, we would head north to Tel Aviv. We would join the groups of soldiers and workers hitch-hiking at the crossroad near the bus stop. We would almost always get a ride, although soldiers generally got priority. If the hourly *Eged* bus came first, we could always jump on. As the bus drove by fields of thistle, we realized that even gray and purple weeds can be beautiful. Then came the groves of orange and grapefruit trees, and finally the small farms on the outskirts of the city. The central bus station was outdoors, surrounded by vendors selling wonderful juices, falafel and shwarma. Tel Aviv then had only one "skyscraper"-- the Sha-

lom Tower, housing the only department store, but Ben Yehuda and Dizengoff Streets were full of wonderful small shops and cafes. Occasionally we took a Saturday taxi to Jerusalem. Winding through the foothills, it was easy to see the border where 1948 Israel ended and the territories began. One side was covered with lush green trees, the product of 20 years of *Keren Kayemet* efforts. The other hills were stony gray. On Saturday, West



**Joyce and Lilo, the young paratrooper she came to know during her time in Israel.**

Jerusalem was quiet, but the Old City bustled with magic and eager Arab merchants, who invited us into their shops to drink tea and buy sheepskin, hand-sewn garments, colorful cloth and fake amber. The Western Wall was a small area then, with only a narrow screen to separate the men and women. We walked out from between centuries-old buildings and there it was, a small space filled with the emotion of those who had waited so many years to touch its stones.

Israel that first year was exploding with pride and optimism.

By the second year realism and fear began to return. My father asked me to return home. That year the young paratrooper returned wounded one weekend. It was nothing, he said, not even serious enough to be counted in the statistics. But mortality became real to me. I understood and felt that commitment that says, "Death is a possibility, and this cause is worth it, and I accept that possibility."

In the end it was not fear, but the realities of cultural and language differences, and the frustrations of mundane bureaucracy, that caused me to leave. When I return, it will be to a country far different than the one I left. ◇

# Traveling to Israel Over the Years

## On smiley faces...and stone walls

by Joan Boruszak

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Our first visit to Israel was in 1970. In many ways the country was still in its infancy. We have been there approximately fourteen times, and have watched this wonderful country come into its own as a thriving nation! We have also been observers of many changes, some rather humorous.

Early on, the people in the tourist industry had a lot to learn. On our first trip, our son was staying at *Pardess Hanah*. He came to Jerusalem on Friday to be with us until Sunday. We Americans were not used to our 13-year-olds traveling across countries by themselves, so very early on Friday we started checking bus schedules for Sunday, his day of return to *Pardess Hanah*. Jim called several times to be sure we understood the bus schedule and things like total transit time. We even had the transplanted American girl from the hotel call the bus company for us. Maybe it was overkill, but we needed the security. She made it very clear that "You Americans worry too much about your children!" To make a long story short, Jim took Bruce to the bus station early Sunday and proceeded to buy a ticket. The conversation was as follows:

Bus company agent: "Do you have a reservation?"

Jim: "I talked to you several times and you didn't tell me I needed one."

Agent: "Oh, you are the American I talked to."

Jim: "Yes, and you never told me I needed one."

Bus company agent: "You never asked!"

Bruce stood all the way back to *Pardess Hanah*, and that was our first of many experiences with "You never asked!"

On the following Friday we went to Eilat. It was a real pioneering town. There were stone walls to keep the dusty winds away from the houses. Israeli families were paid by the government to settle in Eilat, because living there was not easy. Typical Israeli genius allowed them to settle there because the Israelis invented air conditioners that took the dry air out and brought moisture into the homes. For those of you that have been there, you know what a beautiful, thriving tourist destination it has become.

Back in Tel Aviv, Jim had planned to rent a car after the visit to Eilat, so he had our bus driver let him off at the rental office. I returned to the hotel and waited and waited and waited! I finally decided to call the rental car company, which was no easy feat! Jim answered the phone with a hearty "Shalom!" The car he was getting had problems, so the owner went to get it fixed and left Jim in charge. He returned after not being able to repair the car and told Jim we could use *his* car if we dropped him, his wife, and his child off at his in-laws for Shabbat dinner. Needless to say, we did, and had his car for the weekend. By the way, that car had problems, too. It did not like to go in reverse.

We had many experiences like this on that visit and others to follow, but along with the humorous ones there were the unpleasant times dealing with people in the tourist industry. They had no patience for tourists - airlines included! - and made it clear we were

a pain in the neck.

Over the years, there was a subtle change in the Israeli style of handling tourists. Little by little they have softened and realized the importance of people leaving with a good feeling. Probably the last people to soften have been the security people at the airport. We always understood the importance of their work, but felt they would be happier if we had never come in the first place. Their favorite question was, "WHY DO YOU KEEP COMING HERE?" It was always asked with a tone that said *only a terrorist wants to do that and we know you are one!* That has definitely changed. They seemed to learn that a little bit of honey goes a long way!

I took my mother to Israel in 1981. On the El Al plane she needed to take a pill. When I asked the flight attendant for water, her answer was, "I don't have time for that!" El Al has learned, too, and though it is hard to deal with them on the phone, they have become nicer.

At the airport in Lod last year, I saw a booth with a big smiley face poster. This was a pleasant surprise. On the other hand, I also saw a sign I couldn't understand and, being Yardena's student, I wanted to know what it said. I walked up to a desk and asked the girl seated there what it meant in English. She made it obvious that she had no time for me, and I never got my answer. In five minutes I had experienced both sides of the Israeli personality—smiley and the other one.

I cannot close this without telling you one of our most memorable experiences. When we went to Israel, we would very often go to Sharm El Sheik to scuba dive. One year United Air Lines lost Jim's luggage. There he was in another country, not knowing where to find clothes in his XXL size. In the Blue and White Art gallery in the Cardo in the Old City, we told the owner of our predicament and asked where we should

go shopping. When we returned to the hotel that night we were surprised to find a whole wardrobe of clothing lying on the bed. The next day we went back and asked what we owed him. The answer was, "Nothing! If I were in Chicago and needed help, you would be there for me."

Somehow, no matter what their attitude, our trips and our love for Israel have flourished. It is an incredible country. It makes us proud to be Jews, and we always feel that it is our second home. We realize that life there has not been easy, and these wonderful people have more to think and worry about than we "spoiled Americans." As long as we are able, we will return and return. ◇

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## *Yardena on Israel's 60th:*

### *KJCC's Resident Sabra Reflects on What It Means to Be an Israeli*

*By Yardena Kamely*

Writing about Israel on its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday brings so many memories, feelings and thoughts to me. I was born in Israel. I am a Sabra. Israel is for me my first home. Hebrew is my mother language. My family has been deeply connected to the land of Israel since the 1920s when my grandfather, a Zionist, bought land in Palestine and then made *Aliyah* and built the family house in Jerusalem. My father was a pioneer, had been in the *Haganah*, and fought in the War of Independence. My mother graduated from the Teacher's Seminar of Jerusalem very young, and never stopped teaching Judaic Studies, educating generations of Jewish children to live according to our Jewish values, tradition and most of all to love Israel.

I grew up in an Israel that was struggling for peace with its Arab neighbors, building the young nation and absorbing many new *Olim*, Jewish immigrants, from many different countries--Latin America, North Africa, South Africa, and Russia. I became a teacher, too, teaching Hebrew to the new immigrants, so that their adaptation and integration into Israeli society would be easier.

Life in Israel is very challenging: the absorption and integration of the diverse melting pot on one hand, the wars with the Arab world on the other, make life very dynamic. The pace of life in Israel is so intense, it is impossible to live in today if you are not going to try and understand yesterday and tomorrow. As Israelis we have learned to live with existential anxiety the way other people live with smog. For me, the toughest experience was the Yom Kippur War (1973), when for the first time I lost friends and fellow students in the war. We were studying at the Hebrew University, full of dreams to become academics, scientists, researchers, doctors, and professors; they went to war to join their military units, to defend Israel; they never came back to classes.

Years later I had to leave Israel and move to South America. My connection to Israel was to continue teaching Hebrew and working with Jewish Youth Movements and other Jewish Institutions. I loved to work together with teams of Israeli educators from the Jewish Agency; they are so creative, so dynamic, and do such an effective job building Jewish identity and solidarity.

My Israeli friends from the Jewish Agency are back in Israel, living in Tel Aviv, others in their Kibbutz or in development towns in the Negev. They continue with their work at the Jewish Agency. Zeev is a history teacher, an idealist. In his opinion Israel of today needs to remember that it is a meaningful place, seeking Jewish and Zionist fulfillment, not just a shopper's paradise. We share the same thought: as Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary approaches, it is time to revive faith in Is-

*Israel  
is a  
source of  
awe.*

rael's founding fathers, the Zionist thinkers. A Zionist revival would not solve all the state's problems, but renewed idealism could bring new meanings to our Jewish life.

In a lecture for teachers in Miami, Rabbi Salkin spoke about reflections of American Jews on why Israel matters to them. Is it a connection, an identity, a heritage? For Rabbi Salkin, "the State of Israel is the greatest Jewish enterprise of modernity; 60 years of its existence and achievements, despite internal and external conflicts, is a source of awe."

For Matthew Brooks (Jewish Policy Center), Israel is a necessity; it is a refuge, a religious homeland, a bastion of democracy. "We need Israel to be there always, and so we carry a responsibility to support Israel and to keep her strong. As Americans and Jews, we are eternally connected to that tiny piece of land..... where amid all the diversity, we find ourselves at home."

For David M. Suissa (editor of *Olam* magazine), Israel is different from other countries. "But somehow Israel's different. It tastes different, it feels different, it sounds different. Why?.... In Israel, everyone talks to each other as if they're family."

For Peninnah Schram (storyteller, drama teacher), Israel is like your mother: "there are countries that have more beautiful museums than Israel. There are countries that have older universities than Israel. There are countries that have much more magnificent architecture and art than Israel. But Israel is like your mother."

Reflecting on life in Israel, an American journalist had the thought that looking at Israel is like going to an exhibition of Expressionistic painters. "If you look too close, all you see are the daubs of paint. Take a few steps back and you see the picture - and that is what Israel deserves, from its lovers and critics alike, as it turns 60."

Born, raised and educated in Israel, it is an essential part of my identity. I cannot imagine my life without Israel.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ISRAEL. ◇

# Shaloma Shawmut-Lessner

## Tales of a Young American and Her Experiences During Israel's War of Independence.

It will soon be the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Israel's Independence Day, "Yom Ha'Atzma'ut." There will be reams of print and hours of speeches. But we, here in our small island community, get a special gift, the opportunity to hear an untold story.

It is the true story of "MACHAL" (a Hebrew acronym for *Mitnadvei Chutz L'Aretz*--Volunteers from Abroad), a relatively unknown slice of history. Those who participated were sworn to secrecy, and took their oaths seriously. Most of them are now dead. We are fortunate to know one of these rare living veterans well and to count her as part of our KJCC *mish-pochah*.

Fifteen years ago I began talking with Shaloma Shawmut-Lessner (who with her husband, Dr. Howard, is among our longest-standing members). We met at my gallery. Bit by bit she revealed that she was a Zionist, a flight instructor in the Israeli Air Force (before Israel had an air force or was even officially Israel), and a young woman who knew how

to use her beauty and brains to advantage, to ferry important papers quietly in and out of Europe, doing her part to aid in the formation of a Jewish state and to rescue hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees. I knew that she was a great fundraiser for Israel and a close friend of Bella Abzug. She was chosen as our



**A young Shaloma Shawmut in her days as a Zionist volunteer during the struggle for Israel's independence.**

first Women's Seder honoree five years ago and spoke to us of some of her experiences. Still, this word "Machal" was new to me until days ago.

The "Machalniks," as they were called by Israelis, were assigned to virtually every unit in the Israeli army, navy and air force. "It should be remembered," Shaloma says, "that between 1947 and 1949 some 3,000 "Machal" poured into Israel and fought alongside Israel's finest, first in the *Palmach* and *Haganah* and, after the state was declared, in the Israel Defense Force.

"About 1,500 came from the United States, another 400 from Canada. There were 700 volunteers from South Africa, 600 from Great Britain, and the rest mainly from France and Belgium. There were also small contingents from Australia,

the Belgian Congo, Rhodesia, Finland, Russia, Argentina, Ireland, Mexico and Cuba--and one Native American, Jake Slade. All told, volunteers, both Jews and non-Jews, men and women, came from 29 different countries to support the Jewish homeland in her hour of greatest need.

"Many of the volunteers were weary and worn from the battles fought in World War II. They had served in the air corps, navy, infantry, tank, artillery, radar and medical corps. Those volunteers formed the nucleus of the new Air Force, providing battle-hardened combat pilots for the first fighter and bomber wings. It was North American pilots, air and ground crews who created the Air Transport Command that ferried the Messerschmitts and weapons from an air base near Prague to an air base in Israel. The operational language out of necessity had to be English.

"The facts are that the first naval commanders, the first radar technicians, the first artillery gunners, the first tank commanders, the first senior infantry commanders, the first bomber pilots, the first surgeons for eye wounds and burns were all "Machal" volunteers. And "Machalniks" manned ten *Aliyah Bet* ships that brought 35,000 Holocaust survivors to Mandate Palestine under the very noses of the British occupiers. That was half of all the illegal

immigrants who arrived through *Aliyah Bet*. My sister Esther Shawmut Friedman, a U.S. Navy veteran, served as a nurse on the *Pan York*--later renamed the *Independence*--which she described, in Jason Fenton's book

*Volunteers of the War of Independence* as the "Ship from Hell." On her arrival she was sent to the Negev where she fought in the 8th Battalion.

"Our Zionist-leader mother, a Miami Beach attorney, had encouraged both of us to go! Her motto was: 'If something has to be done, do it yourself.'

"Many, like myself, had never served in the armed forces, but came because of their desire to help secure a homeland for the Jews. Besides fighting bravely against overwhelming odds with vastly inferior, inadequate armaments, many of the volunteers also risked their lives and citizenship doing undercover work in Europe and Arabic countries to locate and rescue endangered Jews.

"I have vivid memories of many such surreptitious crossings and flights into and from mostly unfriendly countries with frightened and bewildered

Jews, mostly screaming in languages that few of us understood. More than once our escapes were made under fire.

"In those days there were scarce rations of food, no housing, and only endless rows of

*Thinking back on her time in Israel in 1949, Shaloma Shawmut-Lessner composed this poem about a young country's beginnings in passion and idealism:*

### **The Flight from Aden**

**Just before daylight arrives  
between rotting slats of shutters  
that cover shattered windows  
of our clandestine quarters  
in an old British Quonset.**

**An apocalyptic design  
appears across the scarred ceiling.**

**No need to sound the hour.**

**My heartbeat warns, time to hurry.**

**In half darkness on this cold desert morn  
I harness myself into harsh clothing,  
pull a heavy sweater over my head;  
Tangled hair and wool nag at my finger-  
tips,**

**blood before danger has begun,  
to pack my gear, run to my post  
at the edge of the runway. Ready to roll.**

**The flight is simple, just routine.**

**We land, refugees wait.**

**The desert sun is unforgiving.**

**Not one moment for water or kindness.**

**We persist, we push, say: move on.**

**The cabin full, we do not linger**

**We head for home and safety!**



**Shaloma today in her studio in the Upper Keys.**

tents that baked under the hot *hamsin* sun and collapsed in the mud during the rains. There were no medications, no sanitation, little organization, and lots of turmoil. There was not enough time for adequate planning and certainly not enough resources. Nurturing and kindness were in short supply. We accomplished whatever we could through our ingenuity, adaptability and a sense of desperation.”

After the war most of the volunteers returned to their home countries, but about 500 stayed or returned soon after and decided to make Israel their home.

Shaloma stayed and continued to assist in the rescue of tens of thousands of Jewish refugees from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen, including in the famous “Operation Magic Carpet” in 1949-1950.

No one among the “Machalniks” ever knew anyone else’s real name or the exact num-

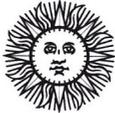
bers of people being airlifted. No one knew the exact roles that others were playing. What you did not know, you could not tell. The Operation’s code name, “Magic Carpet,” was a fabrication invented long after all was over.

I wish I could share 18-year-old Shaloma’s code name with you. It is so perfect, for her, the time, and the myriad stories she has to share. I am sworn to secrecy. I guess we will all have to wait for the book. ♦

*This article was told by Shaloma to her friend and fellow artist Gloria Avner. To you we say a collective and heartfelt thank you, Shaloma. We honor you, your spirit, your commitment and your courage. Israel only exists because there are heroes like you. It is a privilege to call you a fellow member of KJCC and a friend. And thank you, Gloria.*

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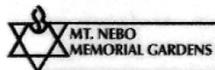
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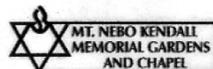
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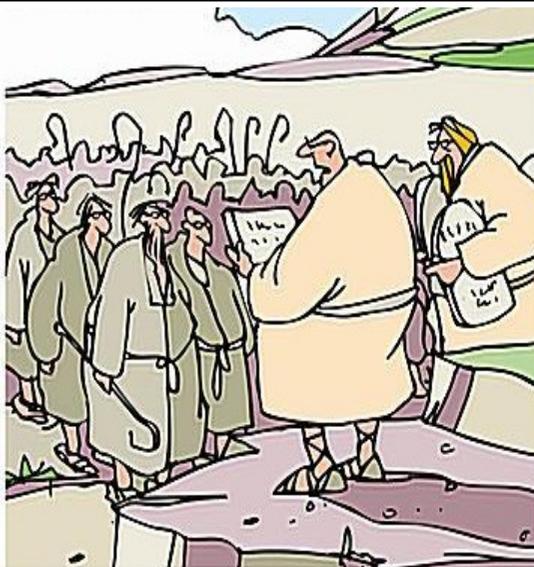
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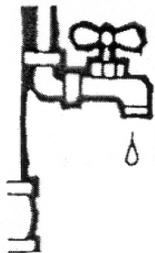
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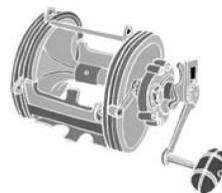
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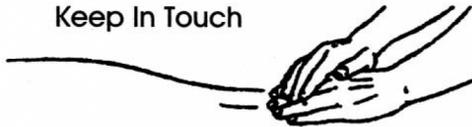
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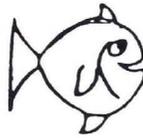
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