

CHAI-LIGHTS

October 2007

19 Tishrei - 19 Cheshvan



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**Keys Jewish
Community Center**

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

October 2007

19 Tishrei—19 Cheshvan

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7	8 Columbus Day	9	10	11	12 <i>Gene and Mort Silverman</i>	13
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21	22	23	24	25	26 <i>Joyce Peckman</i> 6:30 p.m. service	27
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CHAI-LIGHTS is the
monthly newsletter of the
Keys Jewish Community Center
P.O. Box 1332
Tavernier, Florida 33070

President's Message Steve Steinbock



As I write this message, the High Holy Days are but a week away. Yardena and I will be doing services this Friday night (9/7/07) and S'lichot is this Saturday night with pizza, movie and prayer.

The first of many Chai-Lights under the new editorship was a big success. Contributions and ideas are encouraged and welcome. The deadline is the 10th of each month for the next month's issue. Contributions should be sent to chailights@keysjewishcenter.com.

As this edition goes to press, the religious school will have begun on September 9th. (The calendar for the religious school was printed in last month's issue.)

At the last board meeting, the Executive VP, Mark Wasser, informed us that he was able to place our insurance in a way that we are saving a bundle on our premiums and are getting more coverage than we had before. (By the way, you won't want to miss Mark's article about his father's incredible story, in this issue on page 15.) Linda Pollack, our treasurer, reported that we are in great shape financially. We discussed the problem of our children being penalized for absences from school for the

High Holy Days (a situation that has been going on for some years). Drs. Stan Margulies and Barry Alter volunteered to contact the Monroe County School Superintendent and discuss the problem. IN LESS THAN ONE WEEK, the situation was corrected - our children will have excused absences without penalty. Jim Boruszak got new carpet installed in the sanctuary. Marty Graham had the Eternal Light restored beautifully and Bea Graham obtained a white torah cover for the Ocean Reef torah (which we keep while they are away), all of which were accomplished in time for us to appreciate during the holidays.

With a board as great as this, the KJCC is well represented and my job is an easy one. They all deserve our thanks for their continued hard work.

I hope you all had a Happy Rosh Hashanah and an easy fast on Yom Kippur. Carol and I wish you a healthy & prosperous 5768. I look forward to seeing each and every one of you at services this year.

L'Chaim
Steve

Thanks, Alan

The High Holy Days are over for another year. Seats were filled, and all the many services flowed seamlessly from beginning to end. (Hour after hour.) There are, as always, many people to thank for all the work that gets done. But organization and management of High Holy Days services falls mainly on Alan Beth, chairman of KJCC's religious committee. So a collective, heartfelt and public "thank you" goes to you, Alan. We all deeply appreciate what you do on our behalf, and sort of understand how much work and time it must take.

Andrea Needs Letters

In a freshman ritual even most of us remember, Andrea Kluger is going through sorority rush at Vanderbilt in Nashville. Sororities there require letters of recommendation. Andrea has asked that as many sorority veterans as possible send letters on her behalf. (Those ought to be pretty easy to write.) Send the letters to her Vandy e-mail: andrea.r.kluger@vanderbilt.edu. She thanks you for helping.

New e-mail for Joel Cohen

For those of you so inclined, Joel Cohen, one of the KJCC founders, has a new e-mail address: jsc93@yahoo.com. Though battling inoperable cancer, Joel is said to be in good spirits and would welcome any contact from KJCC members.

More New Members

Once again this month, KJCC is delighted to publicly welcome new members: Dr. Les

Safer of Islamorada, Arthur Lee and Johanna Willner of Ft. Myers, and Nissan and Israel Mayk of Eatontown, NJ. Now that you're all *mishpocha*, we look forward to seeing all of you often.

October Anniversaries

	Years
2nd Barbara & Paul Bernstein.....	13
23rd Suzanne & Michael Gilson.....	6
15th Toby R. & David A. Goldfinger.....	48
28th Lois & David Kaufman.....	28
31st Judith & Harvey Klein.....	53
2nd Arlene & Jonathan Line.....	31
12th Susan & Harvey Schwaid.....	55

A KJCC Book Exchange?

Several members have asked if we could have a book exchange—not exactly a club, but a forum where we tell each other about worthy Jewish-themed books we've read and recommend them to everyone else, all within the pages of Chai-Lights. Since KJCC is comprised of "People of the Book," let's give the idea a try.

Gloria submits, in her own words, "a wonderful book titled *Kavalier and Clay*. It's spectacular, generous, endlessly inventive, and moving. It's set mostly in Eastern Europe and New York City, before, during and after the Holocaust. I think [everyone] would love his sentences, in addition to all the richness of plot, settings, humanity, and terrific characters."

Staff will ante with two more. First, *Jews, God and History*, by Max I. Dimont. This book is, simply, the most engaging, broad-ranging and most beautifully written history of the stiff-necked people you'll see. It's history

with the eye and touch of a novelist. You won't want to put it down. Second, *Thieves in the Night*, a novel by Arthur Koestler, one of the great Jewish men of letters in the 20th century. (He's more famous for *Darkness at Noon*, the first anti-communist tract to emerge, in the 50s, from an ardent early socialist and Soviet supporter.) *Thieves* takes place in Palestine in the 30s, under the British Mandate. Not too many people know this period, which was easily as unsettled and dangerous as the years just after World War II. It's a better book, by a better writer, than *Exodus*. Please send comments, on books listed here or your own recommendations (with a brief summation), to chailights@keysjewishcenter.com.

Have ad prospects for Chai-Lights?

Please have them contact Linda Pollack or us. Linda's e-mail is lindap4000@earthlink.net; her phone is 852-8575. Yearly advertising is very inexpensive and reaches a small but elite demographic.

Have you shopped

At Sisterhood's gift display recently? You might be surprised at the quality and selection available there. It's located in the lobby.

My family and I would like to thank all our friends of the KJCC for all the expressions of sympathy extended to us during this time of loss. The hole in my heart left with my mother's passing was filled with so much support and love.

**Fondly,
Roberta McNew**

Explore the KJCC library

It's full of quality tomes, about history and biography and general Judaic studies, plus a wonderful selection of novels from the likes of Chaim Potok, Bashevis Singer, Leon Uris and Saul Bellow. Yarden and Medina Roy (a professional librarian, if you didn't know) spent weeks reorganizing and rearranging. All books are available to check out. The library lives on donated books, by the way, so let someone know if you wish to help nourish our little intellectual nook, which is located directly across from the sanctuary in the lobby.

To contact Chai-Lights

Use the new e-mail our webmaster Alan has added to the KJCC web site. It's chailights@keysjewishcenter.com. Please send all ideas, comments, and questions there, as well as all submissions. The single, easy-to-remember address should also make it easier for anyone to contact us.

To make KJCC database changes

Such as your name (hey, they change sometimes), or to add or remove people from your list, or change your address or phone, or to correct a listing that despite our sincere efforts still manages to be wrong, please send your e-mail to president@keysjewishcenter.com. Steve or Carol will forward your request to the right member of our large, highly proficient and organizationally complex staff.

About the KJCC Website

For those of you who prefer to read online (which means you must be under 30), each complete issue of Chai-Lights, with the photos usually in color, is posted online.

BOOK PLATES

IN MEMORY OF MILLIE PROBER

By The KJCC

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MURIEL JACOBSON

By Her Husband, Children and Grandchildren (x4)

IN MEMORY OF OUR PARENTS, THE COHNS AND OWENS

By Nancy and David Cohn

IN MEMORY OF HOWARD SHUTAN

From Lauren and Stuart Sax

IN MEMORY OF GISELLA REIFF

By Toby and David Goldfinger

Other aspects of KJCC's operations and history are also available, courtesy of Alan Beth's technical wizardry. Many back issues of Chai-Lights are already posted, with others being added regularly. The website is keysjewishcenter.com. (If you bookmark it your computer will remember the web site name for you.)

Chai-Lights Deadlines

At least for now, the deadline for Chai-Lights will be the 10th of the month preceding. Other than that, Marty's old invitations still stand: send us your photos, your *mitzvot*, your news, your ideas, your comments. (No huddled masses, please.) Again, where possible please use the new e-mail, chailights@keysjewishcenter.com.

Oneg Sponsorships

For the upcoming season are being scheduled now. To reserve your preferred dates, please contact Joyce Peckman, Sisterhood VP, at Joyce@adoctorsbag.com or on her cell at 305/240-1000. Why sponsor an oneg? To celebrate an occasion or people you love and share the *simcha* with others.

Professor Ginsberg

For those of you who missed it, Bernie Ginsberg has been appointed Associate Professor in Family Practice on the medical faculty at Florida State University. But not to worry, neither he nor his stirring renditions of *kiddush* prayers will be leaving us. Students will be sent to Bernie's medical office in Tavernier as part of their education about and exposure to a real-world practice. His channeling of the Borscht Belt will be thrown into the mix at no additional charge, just as it is for all his patients. ◇

TREE OF LIFE

DEDICATED IN MILLIE PROBER'S HONOR

2007

By her Mah Jongg friends

IN HONOR OF MARC BLOOM'S

RECOVERY – 2007

By the KJCC

IN CELEBRATION OF CAPTAIN MORT SILVERMAN'S

70th BIRTHDAY

Linda and Joel Pollack



What a GREAT start to a fabulous new year! We had a wonderful turnout for the first class of the 2007-2008 KJCC school year on Sunday, September 9th. The students arrived at 10 a.m., and were enthusiastically greeted by their teacher, Yardena, who had a spectacular class planned for the morning.

We are happy to welcome back our students: Nyan, Joshua, Max, Hanna, Lily, Cammie, and Danielle. We also welcome two new students this year: Moira and Zach. Our two teenaged tutors, Molly and Cory, have returned to assist the teachers, and we greatly appreciate them for volunteering their time and talents to the younger students.

Since the first class of the school year was the week of Rosh Hashanah, we decided to have a “new (school) year/ New (calendar) Year” family celebration. Parents and board members were invited to join the students at 11:30 a.m. for the festivities. The children

were beautifully prepared for our “New Year” seder, and read all of the prayers in Hebrew for the group. There were over two dozen people in attendance, and we all enjoyed partaking of the ritual foods to welcome in the New Year—apples dipped in honey, sweet grape juice, delicious fresh-baked round challah (thanks to Suzi Feder), dates, pomegranates, banana bread, carrots, kidney beans, beets, almonds, and a fish head symbolizing the “Head” (or *Rosh*) of the year. (Thank you, Roberta, for providing the Dolphin fish head.)

Thanks for sharing with us to Dave & Suzi, Paul & Barbara, Ruth, Robert, Richard, Don, Marc and Zoe. We have two dedicated and talented religious school teachers in Yardena and Gloria, and I look forward to a wonderful year of fun and learning!

Shalom to all,
Susan Gordon

October Memoriam

By Robert & Sylvia Berman

In Blessed Memory of
STEPHEN BERMAN
Eternal Rest

By Alvan & Carol Field

In Blessed Memory of
NATALIE FIELD
Rest In Eternal Peace

By Linda Rutkin

In Blessed Memory of
BERTHA KAUFMAN
Remembered With Love

By Shirley Boxer

In Blessed Memory of
MILTON BOXER
Forever In Our Hearts And Memory

By Joel & Linda Pollack

In Blessed Memory of
DAVID FRANK
Always In Our Memory

By Harvey & Judith Klein

In Blessed Memory of
ESTHER M. KLEIN
Forever Remembered With Love

By Mel & Blanche Taks

In Blessed Memory of
EVA BUCHMAN
Eternal Peace

By Marty & Bea Graham

In Blessed Memory of
LILIAN GOLDENBERG
In Our Memory Always

By Michal Kamely

In Blessed Memory of
REBEKAH LEVY
Always Remembered

By Joel Cohen

In Blessed Memory of
SANDERS G. COHEN
Forever In Our Hearts

By Melvin Jacobson

In Blessed Memory of
PEARL W. HUROWITZ
Long, Blessed Sleep

By Lillian Lippman

In Blessed Memory of
JACK LIPPMAN
Always Remembered With Love

By Marty & Bea Graham

In Blessed Memory of
FANNY ELSON
In Our Hearts And Memory

By Melvin Jacobson

In Blessed Memory of
MURIEL JACOBSON
Remembered Always

By Skip & Rene Rose

In Blessed Memory of
ROSALYN ROSE
Rest in Blessed Peace

By Marty & Bea Graham

In Blessed Memory of
JOSEPH ELSON
Always In My Memory

By Melvin Jacobson

In Blessed Memory of
STANLEY W. JACOBSON
With Loving Remembrance

By David & Shifra Kossman

In Blessed Memory of
FANNIE SEROTT
Never Forgotten, Always Loved

By Stuart & Geri Smith

In Blessed Memory of
SOLOMON FELDER
Rest In Peace

By Michal Kamely

In Blessed Memory of
LEAH KAMELY
Sleep In Peace

By the Sherman Family

In Blessed Memory of
HELEN SHERMAN
Always Loved and Missed

By the Blumberg Family
In Blessed Memory of
LEE SIBEN
Eternal Rest

By Robert & Lee Schur
In Blessed Memory of
MAURICE SINGER
Forever In Our Hearts And Memory

By Mary Lee Singer
In Blessed Memory of
MORTON I. SINGER
Eternal Peace

By Sid Samuels
In Blessed Memory of
DAVID C. STARK
Forever In Our Hearts

By Alfred & Sue Ann Weihl
In Blessed Memory of
HERBERT S. WEIHL
In Our Hearts And Memory

By Donald & Nancy Zinner
In Blessed Memory of
SARAH WERNICOFF
Always In My Memory

By Norbert Birnbaum
In Blessed Memory of
GERTRUDE WIDLAN
Rest In Peace

By Joseph & Susan Goldberg
In Blessed Memory of
ARNOLD WIDRICH
Rest In Eternal Peace

By Edward & Sherry Turney
In Blessed Memory of
ROBERT WOLF
Always In Our Memory

By Donald & Nancy Zinner
In Blessed Memory of
DORAN DAVID ZINNER
In Our Memory Always

October Birthdays

Cynthia Arsenault.....11
Joel Bernard.....6
Alexander L. Burnett.....21
Jacqlyn L. Burnett.....16
Susan Cooper.....31
Alan Field.....15
Marnie Gershowitz.....24
Michael Gilson.....2
Ronald Kaplan.....16
Matthew Kaufman.....9
Barbara Knowles.....20
Sammy Knowles.....21
Benay Krissel.....12
Michael Krissel.....4
Jane B. Kwalick.....29
Laura L'Heureux.....20
Dan LaGrotte.....7
Olivia Landes.....11
Shyella Mayk.....29
Lester Neiman.....17
Kiersten Persoff.....16
Eric Pollack.....5

Susan Roberts.....22
Brittany Schur.....31
Katie J. Schur.....30
Stacey W. Seewald.....17
Adriana Sherman.....29
Patricia Silver.....29
Matthew A. Silverman.....15
Jerry Spero.....3
Michael J. Sundheim.....21
Stacy Temkin.....24
Salomon Turner.....13

Mishebeyrach List

For those of you not regularly at services, each week we read aloud the names of those we know to be ailing so that we may include their names in a special supplication to G-d to heal them. Our printed list is read, and then the leader asks if anyone in the congregation has names to add. If you can't be at services, and would like someone you care about to be included in the *mishebeyrach* prayer, call or e-mail and let us know. We'll happily include any name (or names) you tell us about. The main KJCC number is 852-5235. The web site, which accepts e-mail, is keysjewishcenter.com.



Impressions of KJCC's Holocaust Exhibit

Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum are national institutions for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serve as memorials for the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust. They also provide teachers with special outreach projects for "Holocaust Education for the Community."

These museums and documentary centers of the Holocaust have a primary mission: to inform us about this unprecedented tragedy; to commemorate those who suffered; and to inspire visitors to contemplate the moral implications of civic responsibilities.

These were also our objectives when we decided to include the exhibition "Children of the Holocaust" in our Adult Education program at the KJCC. We hoped to broaden public understanding of the history of the Holocaust, and to motivate visitors, from young to old, to want to learn about the Holocaust and its very real lessons and significance for our lives today. As you will see, the exhibit's impact was not merely on KJCC members. Several others were very affected by our exhibit, and it is their stories that I wish to tell here.

I was moved by the reaction of one of our members—Marty Graham—when he saw the picture of the liberation of Dachau by the American Army. With tears in his eyes, and shaken by emotion, he told our students: "I was there. As young soldiers we didn't know how horrific the inhuman conditions of the survivors were...the images come back, and the horror with them..." It is still difficult for an eyewitness like Marty to deal

with the horror.

Eddie Murphy, from Michigan, now a resident of Tavernier, saw the notice of our exhibit in the local papers. After viewing the entire exhibit, reading every detail of the stories and documentations presented, I asked him what his impressions and feelings were. He told me that he had been there when the war ended. A young American soldier, he was assigned as a photographer for the Nuremberg Trials. With his own eyes he saw the major surviving Nazi leaders accused by the world of war crimes. "I was standing so close to them," he said. "I have an original picture of Hermann Goering."

After the Holocaust, Eddie was left with questions. Like many non-Jews at the time, Eddie heard about atrocities committed during the war, but he wants to understand how prejudice and bigotry could actually result in large-scale human destruction. Through his visit to our KJCC exhibit, and the conversations he and I had, Eddie is now very motivated to attend any other event or lecture about the Holocaust and continue his search for answers. Eddie has also motivated me to continue my teaching of the Holocaust, and the Nuremberg Trials are a subject I am considering for the next Holocaust exhibition and lecture series.

Larry Barr, from Tavernier, came to see the Holocaust exhibit because of his interest in his family's history. "It is about heritage," he says. The Holocaust is part of his family's history on his father's side. He began to research his family tree, and found the names of several relatives of his grandmother, the Reibel family, who survived the Holocaust. There were two brothers, who joined the par-

tisans, and their two sisters, who were hidden by a Polish woman. Larry's story about his father's family's connection to Holocaust survivors is even more impressive after hearing about his trip to Ukraine three years ago. He went on a "return to one's roots" trip with three Reibel cousins to Monasterzyska, western Ukraine. They met people who remembered some members of the Reibel family. They went to old Jewish cemeteries, searching for more Jewish names. The memory of the cemetery in Monasterzyska disturbs him. I understood why after reading his notes in his trip journal: "went and found cemetery...corn, beets, carrots growing there. Tombstones were used for building materials. There was one tombstone still standing. There were a few strewn on the edges of the field. Jack [Larry's cousin] said kaddish. Went back to mayor's office to see if we could get some kind of plaque erected to mark the graveyard..

"We visited another cemetery, which is now a veterinary hospital...the cemetery destroyed. The Russians didn't have much respect for Jewish cemeteries....Koropiec [the cousins are looking for family]...we visited another cemetery, up steep hill, which was another road to death. The Nazis marched everyone up the hill and shot them. They were buried in a mass grave."

Other visitors to our KJCC exhibit were Isabel and Horacio Vallejo, an elderly couple from Mexico, who live and work in the Keys. Isabel and Horacio knew about the Holocaust, knew that something horrible happened to the Jews in Europe, but didn't understand how all this hatred and discrimination could lead to such inhumanity. They were shocked and affected by the pictures they saw. They sat down, reflecting on their feelings of profound sadness, and in a humble way asked questions in their attempt to understand. I had no simple answers, but they listened and thanked me for helping them to learn more about this grim history, and for sharing with them the hope that by remembering the Holocaust we will become sensitized to inhumanity and suffering whenever they occur. I thanked them for

their interest and feelings expressed.

Facing the history is extraordinarily difficult, but it is necessary for one simple reason: the Holocaust happened. That in itself is a fact that we can neither erase nor evade. That is what brought our visitors to come and see our KJCC "Children of the Holocaust" exhibit. There is no expiration date on the need to bear witness. There is always another generation, or another heart or mind, that needs to learn. ◇

2007-2008 Hebrew Lesson Schedule

Here's Yardena's schedule for this year's Hebrew classes, which began September 27th and 28th.

- Hebrew II: Ulpan medium level, Thurs. 6:00 – 7:15 p.m.
- Hebrew III: Ulpan advanced level, Thurs. 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.
- Intensive 2-month course for basic recognition of Hebrew letters/words, Friday 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.
- Hebrew reading from the Siddur, Friday 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

If there are *at least* five people interested, she'll add another beginners' class to the schedule, time to be determined. Contact Yardena to sign up: 393-1768 or ykameli@hotmail.com.

Also, her Adult Education program will continue with its lecture series on the Jewish World, Israel, Judaic Studies and the Holocaust. Lectures will be on Wednesdays, once a month beginning in November, from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

World Jewish Report

Medina Roy



This month we bring you the first edition of a new monthly column. There's a lot going on in the Jewish world—some serious, some not so serious—that we thought you'd enjoy reading about. If you have short items for Medina to include, please send them to chailights@keysjewishcenter.com. Make sure to include a source for your article. All entries are subject to editing.

Circumcision case to Oregon High Court

The highest-level case in American history involving the right to circumcision is to be heard this fall. The Oregon Supreme Court will rule whether a father can compel his 12-year-old son to undergo the procedure. The case is bound up with a bitter custody dispute between a divorced couple. (*The Forward*, 8/15/07)

Hartford celebrates risqué singer

When Sophie Tucker (nee Sonia Kalish) made her first return visit to her hometown of Hartford, CT, in 1908, she wasn't exactly greeted with a hero's welcome. When she'd left, some two years earlier, the story was that she'd gone to New Haven for two weeks, possibly to patch things up with her estranged husband. Instead, she went directly to Tin Pan Alley, leaving an infant son in her parents' care. This past June, the Jewish Historical Society of Hartford launched a loving exhibition on the bawdy, brassy entertainer

featuring a zaftig, bejeweled Sophie Tucker impersonator. (*The Forward*, 8/3/07)

Deadwood, S.D. Jews

Wild Bill Hickok bought his groceries from Jacob Goldberg on Main Street, and chances are that he and Calamity Jane bought their boots from Sol Bloom, flour from the Wertheimers, tobacco from Nathan Colman, a chamber pot from Sol Star and whiskey from Harris Franklin (formerly Finkelstein). Pioneering Jewish entrepreneurs were integral to creating and sustaining this isolated gold rush boomtown beginning in 1876, when the first Jewish-owned business was established. "On Main Street, there are 78 buildings," said the director of the Adams Museum. "20 of those were built or had businesses that were owned by the Jewish community." Deadwood Jews numbered around 200 in the late 1800s, according to a volunteer historian of the Black Hills' Jewry. There are some 60 Deadwood Jews buried on Hebrew Hill, as the Jewish section of Mount Moriah cemetery is known. (*The Forward*, 7/16/07)

Holocaust Memorial crumbling

Only two years old, Berlin's controversial Holocaust memorial is already in need of restoration. Cracks, some several yards long, have already appeared in the concrete slab memorial located in the heart of Berlin near the Brandenburg Gate. According to the memorial director, the cracks do not threaten the memorial's stability and the site will re-

main open during the repair work. Designed by American architect Peter Eisenman, the \$38 million memorial opened to the public in May 2005. (*International Herald Tribune*, 8/7/07)

Neo-Nazis in Israel

Meir Sheerit, Israeli Interior Minister, will consider revoking the citizenship of seven residents of *Petach Tikva* arrested on suspicion of belonging to a neo-Nazi ring. "Anyone holding with the Nazi ideology has no place in the State of Israel," Sheerit said. The group, who emigrated to Israel under the Law of Return as children from the former Soviet Union, are suspected in a number of attacks, including synagogue desecrations and brutal beatings. (*Jerusalem Post*, 9/9/07)

Surfing for Peace in the Middle East

Dorian "Doc" Paskowitz, 86, a California surfing legend, calls himself the first Jewish surfer. He read about the crowded beaches of the Gaza strip and about young Palestinians trying to surf but not having enough surfboards. Since June, when Hamas seized control of Gaza, Israel has kept the strip sealed off. When Paskowitz and his helpers rolled 15 surfboards to the fortified crossing, the guards wouldn't let him in. Paskowitz wouldn't take no for answer and finally the gates were opened. (*CBS News*, 8/26/07)

The Jewish almost-Pope

Jean-Marie Lustiger, a French cardinal and former archbishop of Paris, died August 5th at the age of 80. For years, Cardinal Lustiger was mentioned by Vatican-watchers as "papabile"--a possible Pope. The possibility was an intriguing one, for Cardinal Lustiger was born in Paris in 1926 to Polish Jews. His parents ran a dress shop, and when the German army marched in they sent him and his sister into hiding with a Catholic family in Orleans. At 13 Lustiger converted to Catholicism. After he was named bishop of Orleans and later elevated to archbishop of Paris, he

wrote the pope and suggested it might be a mistake to elevate a parish priest with Jewish heritage to the head of a diocese, a heritage he had for his lifetime been quite open about. (*NPR radio*, 8/11/07)

Shofar seized in Chile

A shofar purchased in Israel by a member of the Chilean Jewish community was seized at the Santiago de Chile airport. The authorities believed the shofar lacked the appropriate sanitary pest control documents, in addition to belonging to an "endangered animal species." The shofar was safely returned after an appeal was lodged and evidence provided showing it was a religious implement and could not spread any diseases. (*World Jewish Congress*, 9/07)

Israeli retailer in Dubai

The Israeli clothing chain MI is planning to open four stores in the Persian Gulf emirate of Dubai, making it the first Israeli store with a presence in the small and economically booming Arab kingdom. (*World Jewish Congress*, 8/07)

CNN's "God's Warriors" not factual

A day prior to the airing of Christiane Amanpour's six-hour documentary, Rabbi Marvin Heir, founder and dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and three other clergymen were guests on "Larry King Live" to discuss the issue of fundamentalism in today's world. None of the participants had yet seen the CNN documentary because it was still being edited. Now that it has aired, Rabbi Heir has sent a critique to the producers correcting blatant errors and major omissions in the piece. (*Simon Wiesenthal Center*, 8/31/07)

Kasztner archives to Israel

The archives of Rudolf "Israel" Kasztner, a Hungarian Jew credited with saving thousands of Jewish lives during WWII but reviled by some for negotiating with the Nazis, were

recently given to *Yad Vashem*. Kasztner exchanged money, gold and other goods to secure the safe passage in 1944 of nearly 1,700 Hungarian Jews to Switzerland, in addition to negotiating the transfer of 20,000 Hungarian Jews from extermination camps to labor camps. Charges of collaboration with the Nazis pursued Kasztner to Israel after the war, where he was killed in 1957 by a Holocaust survivor. The handover of the archives is intended to clear Kasztner's name. (*World Jewish Congress*, 9/07)

Israeli growth

According to recently released statistics, Israel's economy grew by 8% in the last quarter of 2006, making it the fastest growing economy of any western country. Despite the second Lebanon war and several misguided boycott initiatives, foreign investment for last year totaled \$13 billion, according to the Manufacturers Assoc. of Israel. (*World Jewish Congress*, 9/07)

New cellphone device

Researchers at Israel's Haifa *Technion* have developed a groundbreaking device that eliminates unwanted background noises from cellphones. The new technology identifies the voice of the caller and filters out the background noise. The three Israeli researchers have applied for patents on the device. (*World Jewish Congress*, 9/07)

Global Jewish TV

Plans are in the works for a global Jewish TV network that, if implemented, could rival Al-Jazeera. The prospective venture is the brainchild of Vladimir Sloutsker, a Russian banker, senator and former president of the Russian Jewish Congress. (*World Jewish Congress*, 9/07)

Einstein letter acquired

A copy of a letter sent by Albert Einstein in 1933 to the prime minister of Turkey has

recently been acquired by the Brussels-based European Jewish Library. Einstein implored the Turkish government to accept forty German professors and doctors seeking refuge from Nazi persecution. "In granting this request your government will not only perform an act of high humanity but also bring profit to your own country," Einstein wrote. Turkey ultimately granted the group asylum. (*World Jewish Congress*, 8/07)

Eichmann passport found

The fake passport of war criminal Adolf Eichmann was found accidentally in Argentina by a judge conducting archival research. The passport was issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, and bears the alias "Ricardo Klement." Using the forged documentation, Eichmann was able to escape to Argentina in 1950. He was subsequently kidnapped by Israeli intelligence in 1961 and brought to Israel for trial. The passport is currently on display at the Buenos Aires Holocaust Museum. (*World Jewish Congress*, 8/07)

Attachment to Israel Declines in the Young

A new study suggests that American Jews' emotional connection to Israel drops off with each succeeding generation. The study, however, chose to exclude the responses of Orthodox Jews, who tend to have the strongest connection to the Jewish State. The study also found that attachment levels increase dramatically, particularly among young Jews, after a trip to Israel. (*The Forward*, 9/5/07)

Lithuanian Torah at sea

A Torah, which once served an unknown Jewish community in Lithuania prior to the Holocaust, was dedicated aboard the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Harry Truman. The scroll, which was recovered after WWII, will reside aboard ship inside the Leroy Hoffberger Ark, named for a U.S. Naval officer and Jewish philanthropist. (*World Jewish Congress*, 9/07) ♦

COLLEGE DIARY

This is the first of what we hope will be an ongoing feature. Several of KJCC's immediate or extended family are in their first or second years in college, either locally or away. We asked, and they've agreed, to share their college experiences with all of us through Chai-Lights. We begin with Andrea Kluger, who's at Vanderbilt in Nashville, TN, and Suzie Greenman, who's at M.I.T. in Cambridge, MA., both in their first years.



Andrea

College is incredible. I had been told that I would hate it for the first few weeks and then I'd love it. Well, I loved it from

the second I moved in. I love my roommate, and although we are in

dorms the rooms are a decent size and nicely furnished. My classes are great but very overwhelming. The first football game was last weekend. (We won. GO VANDY.)

I am going to try out for club soccer next week, which I am looking forward to, and I am also going to rush in January. Sororities and fraternities dominate the social scene here at Vandy, which is a lot of fun. As part of my rush process I need letters of recommendation from people in my community that were in the sororities I am rushing. (Feel free

to shoot me an e-mail if that happens to be you.)

My favorite class so far is my intro to education class. We learn all about the politics of education and what the system looks like on the inside (no I am not planning on being a teacher...) I have only been downtown a few times since I have been here, but I absolutely love Nashville. The food here is to die for. We can use the meal plan at really nice places, where at most schools students have to go to the cafeteria. I miss the water a lot, and fishing primarily, but I wouldn't trade it. I love it here!



Suzie

So my college experience so far has definitely been that: an experience. Since I have been here, life has been speeding by nonstop. My first couple of days were spent in a pre-orientation program designed to teach us about Boston, the surrounding areas and their history. As I walked the streets of the North End, I knew that this was my town. I have never felt so awed by a city. There is so much culture and so many things to do here. I have been to the theatre, to the movies, out to eat at numerous different restaurants and never once repeated my steps. As Orientation started, I was already overwhelmed by the huge amounts of new freshmen rolling onto campus. I never realized just how small Marathon really was. I walk down the streets now and can walk all the way to campus without seeing someone I know.

Speaking of walking: my dorm. So, the

way the dorm system works here, we get a temporary dorm/dorm room and roommate and then there is a readjustment lottery. You can move between dorms, assuming you don't have residence-based advising, which occurs in Next House and in McCormick. So, of course, I land in Next House, which means no opportunity to switch out. It also happens to be the last house on dorm row. Walking, my dorm is literally a good ten-to-twenty-minute walk from the entrance hall to East Campus, where all our classes are. I'm not saying it's bad, though. Aside from the long walk, and I got myself a bike, the dorm is awesome. I ended up meeting this awesome girl, remarkably like me, whom I chose to room with. We have a great room with a river view and some really excellent people in our dorm. So I'm certainly not complaining.

The last two weeks have been so exciting, though. I have met hundreds of new people, names going in one ear and out the other. So many organizations and living communities have put on events that I have only had to pay for food twice in the past two-and-a-half

weeks. It is so much fun. We've been dancing and mingling with new people, meeting and making friends and it is just awesome. Although I must admit that I feel completely overwhelmed by everything. It's all happening so fast.

All of the activities are starting up, too, so in the past three days, I've tried out for a *capella* groups and talked to the mock trial and debate teams. I've tried to find ways to integrate myself on campus. I am even doing recruitment for a sorority. I am actually about to head out to a meeting of the Musical Theatre Guild of MIT. I am so excited. I really am just thrusting myself out there and seeing what and who comes my way. College could not be more invigorating. I start classes tomorrow. The prospect of that challenge is what will get me up early enough to get there on time. :) Even the names of my classes are impressive: Solid State Chem, Accelerated Calculus, Physics, and Writing about Literature. I really feel in my element here and can't wait to see what tomorrow brings. So I'm off for now. ♦



Andrea and Brieze Levy attended a fund-raiser in Miami for a certain well-known woman who happens to be a presidential candidate. If you look carefully over Andrea's shoulder you'll see Brieze's father Ron.

G-d Saw It All*

By Mark Wasser

Where to begin? How do you begin to recount the story of a man who has seen and lived the unimaginable? I suppose that not unlike the story of many people who have experienced extraordinary events in their lives, my father's story began in quite an ordinary fashion. My dad, Joseph Wasser, was born March 1, 1927 in Keltz (Kielce), a modest town in rural Poland. His father was the proprietor of a shoe factory and his mother a homemaker. They had three daughters and one son. Life was simple and life was good for the Wassers in Keltz. My grandfather, as a business proprietor, was well established and respected in town. No one in Keltz, especially the Wasser family, ever believed that the revolution taking place across the border in Germany would ever affect them.

It was a sunny morning in the spring of 1940. My dad, then thirteen years old, was in his eighth-grade classroom. Without notice and in the blink of an eye, the world my father had known would forevermore be lost. Nazi soldiers barged into the school and ordered all Jewish children and teachers to come forward. Amid crying and panic, the Jewish children and teachers were quickly escorted out of their school and delivered to a central gathering area where they were reunited with other family members. There was a stray moment of comfort when my Dad rejoined his parents, but it would be just a moment. The Nazis advised the people that they were being relocated. They were allowed to bring a small suitcase and the clothing on their backs. It was not long before most of the people would have their last glance of their beloved town of Keltz.

Nothing could have prepared my father and his family for the transition from life in Keltz to life in the ghetto. The comforts of a

caring and nurturing home had instantly been replaced by a life of survival of the fittest. In the ghetto, which the Germans had set up on the outskirts of Keltz, my father learned the ways of the jungle: how to find food when there was none to be had, how to find the staples his family needed to survive. His role in the family changed from child to provider. In an instance....innocence wrenched away, lost....forever. Then one day things got worse.

*My father
was a hero.*

On a cold winter morning, sounds of Nazi soldiers and machine-gun fire rang out in the streets of the ghetto. Women and children were crying. The relative calm of the ghetto was shattered as the Nazis began systematically rounding up Jewish families. They were quickly and efficiently (it was Germans, after all) loaded onto trains to begin what was, for most, the final journey of their lives. The next stop....Treblinka.

Upon arrival at the "camp" the Nazis quickly began separating families: mothers with young children; healthy, able-bodied men and women and, of course, the elderly and the ill. They were immediately relieved of their belongings, the ones they'd been allowed to bring to sell them the relocation lie.

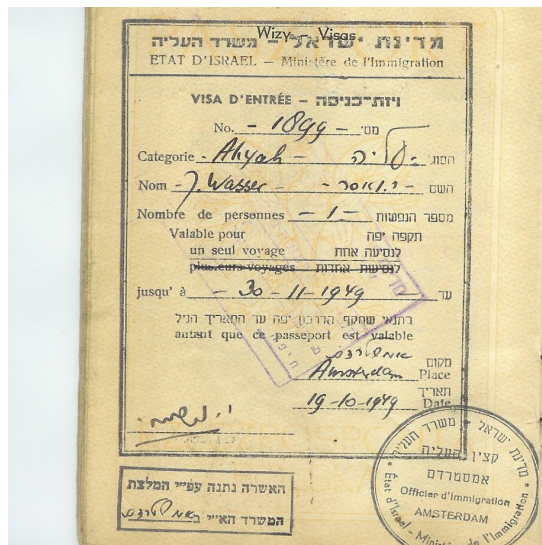
Life in the ghetto had taken a thirteen-year-old pampered boy and transformed him into a survivor. Upon arrival at Treblinka, my father was selected to serve on a work detail. He knew instantly that this was neither

the ghetto nor a relocation camp. He saw bodies being incinerated by the hundreds. When it must have appeared to him that he had reached the deepest, darkest depths of hell, the inconceivable occurred. While on a work detail by the ovens, my father was forced to throw the bodies of two girls into a burning trench, and then that of his eight-month-old baby sister. My God, I can not even conceive of the horror. Can you? What words can be used to convey such an experience? The words do not exist.

Although my father had told me of his experiences many times, it is difficult to adequately relay his horror even as he recounted this experience many years later. I still cannot conceive how, at this tender age of (now) fourteen, he had had the wisdom, bravery and maturity to do what came next. Perhaps with the help of G-d, my father escaped Treblinka. He'd hidden himself in a truck transporting confiscated Jewish clothing; had he been caught he'd surely have been executed on the spot. What did he do next? Did he, as anyone would expect, run for safety, wherever that might be? Did he try to save only himself? Who would have blamed him if he did?

What my father did was *return to the ghetto* to warn everyone that they were *not* about to be "relocated." He told them the horrible truth. I, through my first-hand conversations with survivors, have learned that even with all that the Jews in the ghetto had experienced, they could not, they would not, accept that their fate was to be gassed to death and then disposed of in a burning oven. My father persisted and his pleas ultimately took hold when rumors of horror tales similar to his began circulating. He did not know how many lives he may have saved, but if it was only one his efforts would have been worthwhile. My father was a hero. Not just my hero, but a hero to many he warned of the impending doom. Survivors have told me.

The horror experienced at Treblinka was but the opening chapter in a nightmare that would last five years. After returning to the ghetto to tell what he had seen, my father



Dad's Visa to enter Israel—1949.

fled into the Polish countryside, alone. But his freedom was short-lived. While sleeping in an abandoned barn, he again was captured, this time by Nazi sympathizers in the form of Polish police. He was certain that his whereabouts had been revealed to police by locals with whom he had come in contact. The police turned him over to the Nazis. His next stop....Auschwitz.

My father's home for the remainder of the war was a place where humanity ceased to exist. It was a place where the noon sun was all but blocked out by clouds of ash, the remains of what once was a thriving culture: God's chosen people. At the time of his liberation by Allied forces, my dad was eighteen years old and weighed 59 pounds. He was alive, but barely so. How did he survive? What horrors did he experience? What did he do to maintain his will to live when so many others perished? Even though he told me of his experiences in Auschwitz, I find it difficult to find words that could adequately recount the experiences that he relayed to me between the tears and the nightmares.

After the liberation of the camps and the end of the war, my father spent the next eight months in a Red Cross hospital in Swe-

den recuperating from the physical deterioration of his body. He would spend the rest of his life trying to recuperate and deal with the physiological and emotional scars.

My father, as did most survivors, began searching for remnants of his past life. He was, amazingly, reunited with his father and two older sisters. As that goes, my father was much more fortunate than many other survivors; he had some family that also survived. Most survivors emerged from the nightmare only to find that their entire families had perished in the camps.

*At the time of his
liberation, my Dad
was eighteen years
old and weighed
59 pounds.*

Where do you go? What do you do when everything that you have ever known is gone? Who wanted the Jews? What country on earth was willing to accept these pathetic people, who had just endured the most horrific organized atrocity ever inflicted by man on his fellow man? Who would allow these battered (but not defeated) people an opportunity to recapture some dignity of life. The answer was simple.....no one! No country was willing to provide a home to these refugees who were once the pillars of their communities, people who were, not so long ago but in a different world doctors, teachers, bankers, mothers and fathers. Once my father was well enough, he became involved in a covert underground movement to relocate Jews to Israel. The thinking was that if enough Jews could be settled there it would put sufficient pressure on the world community to officially establish the sovereign state of Israel.

From Sweden my father, his father and two sisters migrated to Cyprus where they

awaited legal permission to settle in Israel. They waited in Cyprus about one year before being granted passage.

After the establishment of the State of Israel and his family's settlement in Tel Aviv, my father joined the Merchant Marines. I unfortunately never asked him why he chose to leave Israel for a life at sea. My dad sailed the world for about two years, until 1950, when his ship docked in New York. He jumped ship there with the clothes on his back and a few cents in his pocket. He sought out and found a fellow survivor from Keltz that had settled in New York. Although there wasn't a prior relationship with this family, they had known of my father and how he returned to the ghetto. They took my father in and helped him get started. In New York, in 1953, he met and married my mom. My grandfather, a house painter, taught him the trade. My dad took that experience and parlayed it into a contracting business.

With little more than hard work and long hours my father built a substantial real estate portfolio. He ultimately became the most requested interior contractor and wall-



**Dad and
Aunt
Lola,
who
both
made it
to
Israel.**

paper hanger in New York City. I recall his customers waiting six months to get an appointment for Dad to work in their homes. Business was booming and our family prospered.

My father was active in the Keltzer Society of New York, a group of survivors from his hometown. Memories of the years of horror, and the nightmares, were never far away. As I got older I recall other Keltz survivors recounting stories of my father's escape from Treblinka and his return to Keltz. I can safely say that Dad was a sort of "folk



Dad, lower left, with his fellow merchant mariners.

hero" among his fellow Keltzer survivors.

The fragile balance maintained between Dad's memories of the past and his new life in the U.S. came undone one evening in 1965. He was reading the newspaper after coming home from work. Shortly thereafter I recall my father and mother having a very emotional conversation. For several days my parents would have the same emotionally charged discussion. I ultimately learned that the source of all this was an article in that particular night's paper, a plea by the United

Jewish Appeal searching for those having knowledge of certain individuals accused of being Nazi war criminals, individuals that my father unfortunately knew all too well. The discussion between my parents was whether or not my father would or should come forward. The fears that had haunted my father's dreams now haunted his life. Would he return as he did once before to face the horror or should he take the safe path and ignore the pleas for witnesses? I don't believe that there was ever a question in my father's mind as to what he was going to do. I am certain that my father knew his destiny was to do his part to avenge the murder of his mother and baby sister and millions of other Jews. My father promptly contacted the UJA and agreed to testify in Germany at a war crimes trial that would commence later that year.

During the months following his initial contact with the United Jewish Appeal, the nightmares and headaches—which never ceased—became more frequent and intense as my father began to relive his life in the camps. Finally, my Mom and Dad left for Germany. Communication was difficult, as my father was under intense security while in Germany. We did not hear from my parents once the trial began until articles concerning the trial began appearing in the local newspapers. The articles reported that my father had suffered a heart attack while testifying. My grandparents struggled to contact my parents in Germany, and from the UJA they learned that my father did not suffer a heart attack but an emotional breakdown. The trial had been stopped for 48 hours while my father regained his strength and composure and could resume his testimony, which he did. The eleven accused Nazi war criminals were all found guilty, based upon my father's eyewitness testimony, and sentenced to life in prison.

Approximately two weeks after they left for Germany, my parents returned home. We all breathed a sigh of relief that this chapter in my father's life was behind him, but the relief was short-lived. It was only a matter of hours before we received the first call. Some



**My Dad
and me in
1955.**

people were not happy with my father's testimony in Germany. We began receiving violent and threatening phone calls and mail from members of the American Nazi Party and other Neo-Nazi groups in the U.S. The calls came at all hours of the day and night and pledged revenge for my father's testimony. Dad immediately contacted the police and UJA. It was only a matter of hours before we were under FBI protection. I recall FBI agents in front of our home and at times as I walked to school. We lived like this for over a year until the threats ceased.

In 1973 my family moved to Miami. In 1978 my mother and father divorced. In some ways I believe that the Nazis, who had robbed my father of much of his teenage years, were responsible for the divorce. In 1980 I moved to San Francisco for a job and lived there for five years. During that time my father and I, even though separated by thousands of miles, grew closer and closer. As a child, even though I loved my dad very much, the scars left on his psyche seemed to form a shell around his heart. It wasn't until the last years of his life that the shell which shielded his emotions would slowly

disappear. Shortly after I moved back to Miami from San Francisco my father became ill, and after an eight-month battle with his illness, on August 7th, 1985, at the age of 57, my dad, Joseph Wasser, passed away.

Since my father's passing I have felt his life's story was one which needed to be told, that his story and his experiences should not be allowed to die with his body. His heroic sacrifices both during the war and after warrant remembering. He is, to me, an important part of the complex fabric that comprises the singular Jewish experience. Dad's story will live forever in my heart and memory. Perhaps this article will help him live on in your heart, too. ◇

** Our headline is from actual testimony by Joseph Wasser at a 1965 Nazi war crimes trial in Germany. May you rest forever in true peace, Joe. No one deserves that blessing more.*

Mark Wasser is KJCC's Executive VP.

My Life-Changing Trip to Africa

By Katie Greenman



**Katie with
HOH Board
Member
Ashley
Evenrud,
left, and stu-
dents at the
Akiba
School in
Nairobi,
Kenya.**

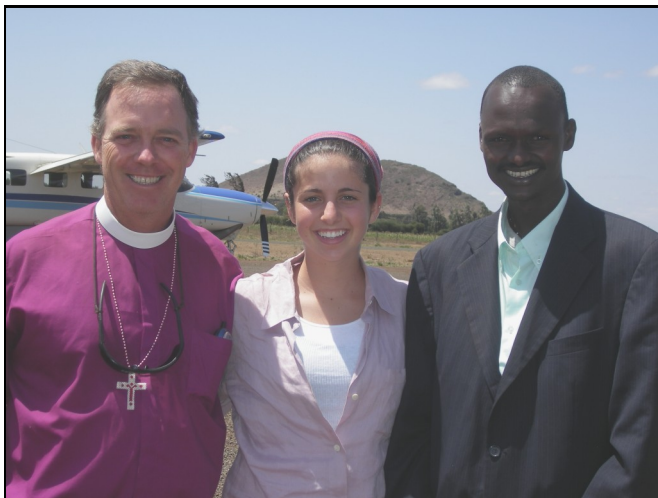
There was a team of six people (ages 13, 16, 17, 18, 24, 37) led by me and a local adult (Shane Wiebe). We spent 18 days throughout Southern and Northern Kenya. The first week we spent working and teaching at the Akiba School (where "Education is a Treasure"). The school had asked us to paint murals on their outer walls, so for the majority of our time we were painting maps of Kenya and Africa, the human heart, a bumble bee, flowers, fish, and lions. Every so often we had to take breaks from the paint fumes, so I would go and teach math or English to Standard Class (STD) 6 & 7.

During our first weekend, we drove out to the *Light & Power Centre*, (a place operated by Anne and Amber, our temporary American hosts from Falls Church, Virginia), where local boy students would come and decorate bags to sell for extra income. We had brought seven duffel bags of American goods (bubbles, jump ropes, candy, etc.) to distribute, so we spent the morning playing with the children of that local village and giving out gifts. Of the ten English phrases they knew, "Give Me A Ball!" became their favorite. We then drove five miles to the famous Kibera Slum (Africa's largest slum where *The Constant Gardener* was filmed). The overwhelm

wasn't so much from the level of poverty, but the abundance of it. The slum is home to over a million people! It was incredible considering that bordering the slum was Africa's "Beverly Hills."

The following day, we went to the Mother Mercy Orphan Home, one of the schools that sparked the founding of Hands on Hands! It looked nearly the same as it did four years ago. When we arrived, I introduced myself and reminded the school master of my previous visit; she immediately remembered and thanked me for the shoes that Hands on Hands had sent over to every student. The shoes were four years old now, but still in use.

The following Tuesday, our hosts, the McGregors, escorted us to the Northern Kenyan village of Komboe, where we spent the next week. Every day we had an hour commute on a rollercoaster-like road, on which we had to go under 20kph (12 mph) for a majority of the trip in order to avoid big bumps and pot holes.....we loved it! The village is literally out in the middle of nowhere. It is one small hill surrounded by 50 cow-dung huts, a concrete school, and a concrete



Katie with Bishop McGregor, left, and Gabriel, the Komboe Primary School headmaster.

chapel. It was rare for them to be visited or to have financial benefactors, so they were extremely excited to have us there. They actually met us at the "airport" to confirm we had arrived, because they had seen an airplane fly over their hill, which was also a rare phe-



Katie, standing center, is surrounded by the 25 students in the 8th grade graduating class of the Komboe Primary School. Bishop McGregor is at lower left. These are the students Hands on Hands might sponsor into their version of high school.

nomenon. When we arrived that afternoon, all the students were lined up clapping and chanting, "Welcome, Welcome, Welcome!" Then they performed an hour-long song ceremony that they had prepared just for us! The Kombae Primary School was where we spent all seven days building the dormitory that Hands on Hands is funding.

We would arrive at nine a.m. and watch the contractor set stones for two hours and then fill them in with concrete. When we were actually building it was hard labor and good construction lessons, but we weren't able to do very much because of the lack of supplies. So with the majority of our time, we taught in the school and really got to explore the people and culture. When we weren't building or teaching we were in the existing girls' "dormitory" (a tiny 12 x 20 tin shack lined with mattresses and hanging backpacks for the 26 girls) talking, playing, learning, and taking pictures with the girls. These students were ages 9-15 and they were so loving and devoted to their studies, their faith, and each other.

After the intense, long week in Kombae, we returned to Nairobi and spent the rest of our days recuperating, reflecting, connecting, revisiting the other schools...and then a little tourism (a day safari at Lake Nakuru National Park). The entire trip felt like forever, probably because I was really able to embrace the "present moment" and, when you pay attention to those, there are a lot of them! I learned so much about this world and myself, and realize just how blessed I am to be me, with my family, in this nation and this world!

Most exciting, I discovered and confirmed that my personal passion lies with children, the neediest of the needy, and (my new one) education. Whether I will become a teacher, start a school, raise awareness to sponsor those in need, or travel internationally to educate on levels outside the books, I hope to make a difference and am very excited and grateful for life, and the opportunity you all gave me! ♦

Katie Greenman is a senior at Marathon H.S.

About Hands On Hands

In 2003, during two weeks in Kenya, my family spent four days at three different schools. We were overwhelmed and inspired to help. By January of 2004 we founded Hands on Hands and began presenting our campaign to schools, clubs, groups, churches, temples, and organizations throughout the country. By that summer we raised and sent over \$3,020, which purchased 18 bunks beds, 84 pairs of shoes, a camera, school supplies, two toilets, and various small items.

Hands on Hands partnered with Marathon High School's Rotary Interact Club and hosted a home-cooked Thanksgiving-style dinner fundraiser on January 30, 2006, after months of preparation (and delays due to Wilma). From the community and various sponsors we raised \$10,000 and set the new goal to return to Kenya. (We = Myself and Ashley Evenrud, an HOH board member...my sisters were in Germany or college at this point). We sent the money over in the fall of 2006 to fund the entire construction of a girls dormitory in a rural village of northern Kenya. For the next year, we talked, planned, reconsidered, and then finally began fundraising for our Hands on Hands "Trip With A Mission," to actually assist in the schools and help build the dormitory. We were able to charter an adult chaperone, Shane Wiebe, and recruited three other students who were up for the challenge. The photos you see were taken then. It was an AMAZING, SUCCESSFUL LIFE-CHANGING JOURNEY. - Katie

Shlomo Ben Adret – synagogue of old Barcelona

After traveling throughout several European sites and being told that “the Jews are all gone,” Linda and I hit pay dirt in Barcelona. The clerk at the front desk of our hotel lit up when we asked about a synagogue, and so we headed out for an adventure with only the word *Marlet* in hand. Our tour bus guide went through three atlases looking for this street to no avail. Eventually we happened upon a policeman who pointed us in the general direction. We saw much of the

city by foot as the streets wound around. But no one was familiar with this street, much less any synagogue on it. At the same moment that we found the street sign and synagogue plaques indicating that we were getting close, we came upon two young men with a guide book

who also appeared lost. When asked, they responded that they were looking for the synagogue. As it happened, we were not far at that point, although, interestingly, none of the storekeepers who we asked in the immediate vicinity knew about the building. We knew we had found the spot when we came upon several Israeli men standing halfway in a low doorway, all *davening* right there, inside and outside. We entered through a tiny door at street level, bowing our heads to honor the memory of a

devastated community. Our immediate reaction was that we were “home,” much as we feel when we enter the KJCC on a Friday evening. Here was our history, here were familiar artifacts, and here was *mishpoche*.

The young man who gave us the tour of the building was from Argentina. He showed us the two rooms, one dating back to Roman times, and invited us to stand on a glass floor which showed the archeological digs from the Roman forum underneath. In the next room

were a large menorah and an ancient torah. Jewish presence in Barcelona dates back to ancient times. Though difficult to say precisely when it began, written statements going back to the 8th century C.E. bear witness to Jewish settlement. After 1391, Barcelona’s Jewish community technically ceased to exist and its members



At the end of one room of the synagogue, past the glass floor over the Roman ruins, stand the huge menorah and holy scrolls.

were dispersed. Yet the majority of the community’s buildings, including this *Sinagoga Mayor*, remained standing.

Ownership of the premises passed through many hands over the centuries, including those of the Inquisition when they acquired it in 1487. In 1678, permission was granted to build the upper apartments of the building on 5 Marlet Street. In 1996 the restoration of the *Sinagoga Mayor*, what they call a “recuperation,” was undertaken.

-Joel Pollack

Photo Gallery



Saturday, September 8th was a busy night for Joel Pollack. First he acted as primo root-beer-float maker, prior to the KJCC showing of the indie movie "Everything Is Illuminated." Then, after the movie, he led the thirty or so who attended in S'lichot services. Oh, and he and Linda also served hot popcorn.

To all KJCC *Mespucha*,

Many thanks for the heartfelt words sent on behalf of our Dad, Joel Cohen. He remains, as always, amazingly positive. As with all issues in his life, he has gone forward, facing all that awaits him. I'm not surprised...simply in awe....so grateful to call him "my Dad." All prayers are welcomed.

His kid, Sheila Steinberg

P.S. the photo at right is PaPaJoJo with his latest great-grandchild, Laura Molly Friedman.



A Trip Home To Jerusalem

When I travel to Israel, the feeling is that I'm going home.

—Michal Kamely

Some time in the late 1920s, near the city of Mashhad in far northeast Iran, close by the borders of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan (then the Soviet Union), a Muslim family named Chabibolayov was preparing itself for the arduous journey that is the sometime duty of all practicing Muslims—a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Only the family didn't really intend to travel to Mecca. Its name wasn't really Chabibolayov. And they weren't really Muslims.

The family's real name was Levi, though that had been a closely guarded secret for generations. To reveal that they were a large, extended family of Jews would have been dangerous. So they lived as Muslims, and conducted business and social relations as Muslims, and went to school as Muslims. The secret, and how to keep it in order to protect the family, was taught to every child. They learned this just as they learned to walk and talk and play and identify the trees and animals that surrounded them and the foods that were available for them to eat. The ruse was so elaborate that one of Michal's uncles—her mother's sister's husband, in his true and secret life an extremely pious Jew—had actually himself made the pilgrimage to Mecca. He wore the yellow turban around Mashhad he'd received in Mecca to prove he'd been there, and daily acted the dutiful Muslim. He was thus a respected and



Michal and son Uri in Jerusalem at the beginning of their recent trip to Israel. When Michal was a young girl, the Kotel was on a narrow alley, not a large plaza.

honored and trusted man. Michal herself remembers that her father, also a prominent man locally, often would be invited to people's homes and public events. At each place, to be properly hospitable, he would have to eat. So he did, of course, and then would come home later, put his finger down his throat and force himself to throw up all the un-Kosher food he had just swallowed.

We've all read books and seen movies about people living double lives. But how many of us truly would have the wit and cool self-control, while in constant tension and danger, to do it, not for a week but for lifetimes? It would have been far easier to just give in and renounce the family Judaism. They already knew precisely how to live as Muslims. Why stick with a culture and tradi-



Michal's extended family in the courtyard of the "Fortress," the house her uncle built in Jerusalem. Michal is the young girl in light-colored clothing leaning on the railing. Her mother is behind her, her sister Miriam second from left in back row. Her father, with long white beard, is seated second from right. Her brother Yehuda, in tie, stands directly behind.

tion that could cost you your life with the smallest slip-up? It's one of the enduring questions of Jewish history. The British historian Toynbee is said to have hated the Jews precisely because they are the sole group whose path through history defied his formula for the inevitable demise of a culture.

Michal's family had once been in the fur business. Through it they became wealthy enough to be able to buy land around Mashhad. They eventually accumulated enough to encompass several villages. This land provided them an income. Somehow, amidst the strains of maintaining a family and his elaborate deceptions and his livelihood, Michal's father had become a Zionist. So the father

Michal had always heard called by his Persian name of Chabib Chabibolayov and his brother, whose Muslim name was Abdelrachman Chabibolayov, hatched a plan whereby they would leave Mashhad and emigrate to Jerusalem, a dusty and mostly ignored ancient dream that had only recently been freed from the medieval feudalism of Ottoman rule, was not at all a modern city and had but the faintest pulse of Jewish life. But due to Herzl and Weizmann and the Balfour Declaration the Jewish soul was stirring and seeking its wholeness, like a ball of sacred mercury that had been temporarily shattered into pieces by a relentless and blind hammer. So Jerusalem it was. They would be pioneers, and life

would be difficult, but at least they could live there openly as Jews.

The uncle left Mashhad first, went to Jerusalem and built the large stone house that would become the center of the family's life for many years, and the place where all the family first came to stay upon arriving. The house was large, and sturdy, and secure, so much so that it became known as "The Fortress." But Muslims still controlled Jerusalem, despite the British Mandate, and there was a large family to be protected, most of whom would eventually make *aliyah*.

The house built, it was time for Michal's family and her uncle's family to leave. Under normal circumstances any journey to Jerusalem would have been difficult. But they couldn't travel directly, because they couldn't travel as Jews. The only way they would be allowed to even leave Iran was as Muslims making a family pilgrimage to Mecca. And that ruse probably allowed so many to leave together only because Michal's father and uncle were prominent and respected and wealthy, and because two other brothers stayed behind to manage the family's properties, which a generation later were lost when expropriated by the Shah.

The first leg of the journey was about 800 miles to Karachi on the Arabian Gulf, a city now in Pakistan but then controlled by India. They stayed there some three months. From there they took a ship to Basra in Iraq, then overland to Baghdad, and from there in a convoy to Damascus. They had to hire an armed escort for the overland trip from Baghdad to Damascus, because no travelers on that road could pass safely, even supposed Muslims. From Damascus they made their way to Transjordan, and from there to the famous bridge at Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. Lacking papers, or permission, or any legal premise whatsoever, they crossed illegally into Palestine.

Landing in Israel with my son Uri, the first place I wanted to go, as always, was to the Kotel, the Wailing Wall. Now I'm standing in



Michal, seated center, on an outing at Kibbutz Bet Hashitah with childhood friends and fellow Haganah members, 1942.

front of it and just looking at it for hours. So many memories come back to me. It's just something you feel. The stones say something.

The plan had worked. They were all safely in Jerusalem, living within the thick stone walls of The Fortress. Soon Michal's father began to build his own house, in G'oolah, one of first neighborhoods outside Jerusalem's walls, just to the west, and abutting the ultra-orthodox neighborhood of Meahsherim, which is still there today. It was in that house, in G'oolah, that Michal grew up and lived, until she met and married a fellow

member of the then-secret Haganah, David Kamely.

As a small child, Michal's parents would take her to the *Kotel*. She remembers that each time it felt like a festive day—an outing with her parents!—but as she got older also

abs. Unlike today, where there is a fairly large plaza that greets visitors to the *Kotel*, at that time it stood on one side of what, in essence, was but an alley, perhaps fifteen feet wide. On the other side, directly across, were the walls of Arab homes. There were no ven-



Michal in her first years of teaching school in Jerusalem - 1945.

one of sadness, because it was a holy site that had, in essence, been taken away from the Jews, and though there was always a stream of visitors until the area was closed off by the Jordanians after the War of Independence, they were never made to feel welcome there. The only available route had them walk through the narrow streets of the Arab quarter, then through the Jaffa Gate. British troops always lined the streets, and they could only go during daylight hours. There was always a fear, legitimized by painful experience, of being attacked by the Ar-

dors and no welcomes. But there was always at least a trickle of visitors coming to open their hearts and pray. Michal remembers even then the notes being left in crevices along the wall, the pious in the belief and the desperate in the hope that the God of Israel is there and listening.

Every year at Tisha B'av, until 1948, Michal and her friends would mount the walls of Jerusalem and walk completely around the city. As there were no barriers or neighborhood divisions in G'oolah, the Jewish children played with the Arab children, as Michal well

remembers doing. But Arab resistance to the influx of Jews into Palestine began in the 1930s to express itself with more organization and more violence, and after the massacre of the synagogue in Hebron, Michal's neighborhood was separated into Jewish and Arab sections and she never played with Arab children again.

Michal's mother never learned to speak Hebrew, and her father, the one with the strength to uproot his family and take them on an arduous and circuitous journey to the Holy Land, facing a future of no guarantees, and who each evening would gather his family in the courtyard of The Fortress to study, died three years after arriving. But Michal did grow up speaking Hebrew, a language that had only recently been resurrected to full life. Among the first and most important things the Zionists did was establish their own schools, which were taught only in Hebrew. Her childhood school, in the Buchara quarter, had once been the Governor's house. She attended that school until going to university, the teacher's seminary, which was the first of its kind in Israel.

Most of the teachers came from eastern Europe. Michal remembers that, while in seminary during World War II, world-renowned scholars, refugees from Hitler's Europe, were among her teachers. One teacher, a woman named Leibowitz, was her favorite, and gave Michal a life-long love of Rashi. Anyone who has ever attempted Rashi will understand immediately what a wonderful, literate, and inspiring woman this must have been. A sad memory of Michal's seminary days was when a group of professors, all European refugees, was headed by bus to the university on Mt. Scopus. The bus was attacked by Arabs and all were killed.

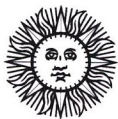
At 16, Michal joined the Haganah because, well, everyone joined the Haganah. Everyone knew everyone else was in, but because the organization was banned by the British, yet functioned right under its nose, no one knew anything about anyone else's role or who, other than their immediate contacts, the leaders were. Everyone learned first aid and how to handle a rifle. Once, when standing guard

outside a meeting, a man asked entry but didn't know the password. So Michal brandished her rifle and would not let him in. He asked her to consult the man she knew to be the highest officer in the meeting, who quickly ushered him in and later told Michal he was in the high command of Haganah. (No, she wasn't punished.) But Michal's main job was as an observer. She was trained in Morse code, and would sit up at night at assigned posts, to read and relay flashing lights as to whether anything was going on militarily. Haganah training was, no exceptions, three times a week. Everyone was on permanent call, every day, no off days. If you were called, no matter what time of the day or night, you went. Her last experience in Haganah was during the 1948 war. Her house in Haifa stood directly across the street from the Arab sector. So the Haganah used it as a guard post. There was occasional shooting, at Arabs trying to infiltrate and from Arabs across the way. When one bullet came very near her infant daughter Dafna, that was the end of that, and from then on she left any Haganah work to her husband.

Michal Kamely has now lived in the United States for 25 years. Before that she lived in Europe. She has raised three children and has six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Before coming to the Keys, she lived in the northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., just down the road from Hickory Hill, Robert Kennedy's estate. All her children live here, and she knows she will never reside in Israel again. But ask her where *home* is and the answer will come quickly and firmly: Jerusalem. Each time she travels to Israel, she insists—no one can deny her this—on going immediately to the *Kotel*. It is, symbolically, the essence of Jerusalem: the place her parents sacrificed to get to, the focal point of her childhood memories, the place she bore a rifle to defend, the place she saw so many of her young colleagues die defending, the place where she married. Is there a place that has that much meaning and quite so passionately defines *home* to most of us? ◇

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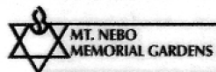
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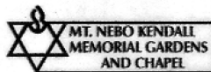
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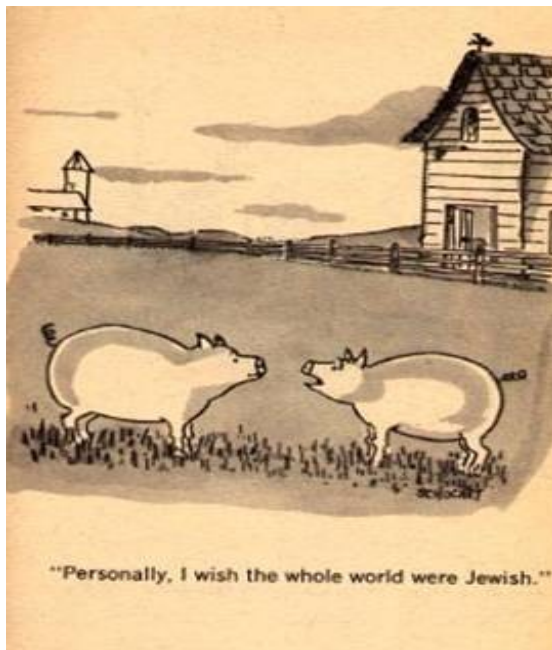


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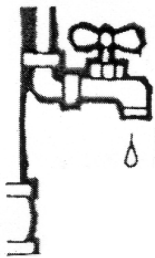
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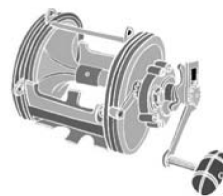
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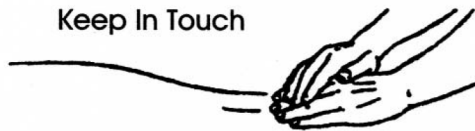
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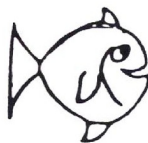
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