

A First Time Visit To Wildacres

by Merle Prior

It was already dark on Thursday evening, June 14, when my husband Bob, our two children, Lania and Heath, and I made our way up the mountain to join the Temple Beth El Wildacres Weekend Retreat. It may have been dark and chilly outside, but inside and with the group there was a brightness and warmth that never faded. We settled into our room quickly, joined the tail-end of the "welcome" session and relaxed with everyone in the canteen.

After the late night sing-along led by Murray Rosen, morning and the breakfast bell came too early. But the meal was really worth getting up for. The food was great the entire weekend and the service couldn't have been better. No matter how many times we asked for another platter of this or that, it was always delivered quickly and with a big smile.

Mealtime was a good opportunity to get acquainted with many different people. We shared our table with someone new each time we sat down to eat. We had a chance to dine with and get to know some of the Asheville delegation* in the dining hall.

Of course the discussion groups and exercises provided the best opportunity to really get to know other people and what makes them tick. We really had to look inside ourselves to discover what was most important to us — our roles as men or women, our Judaism, our American nationality, our place in the family or our humanism.

The exercise Friday evening, fantasizing complete role reversals of men and women, certainly ruffled some feathers. It made us wonder how much of the way we behave in our roles is instinctive and natural and how much has routinely been drilled into our psyches for centuries. How do we deal with this new awareness when it comes to religious and Temple life?

The third question we dealt with concerned accepting converts to Judaism. We carried it a step beyond to the idea of actually seeking to convert unchurched individuals interested in our faith and what it offers. There seemed to be whole-hearted agreement about accepting converts (especially when intermarriage is involved) but many of us balked at the thought of proselytizing.

Having Shabbat services in the relaxed atmosphere (children running in and out) was a different yet thoroughly enjoyable experience. I did miss the organ music and the soloist, but the sight outside the window of the sun setting in a coral-colored sky over the mountain-tops portrayed the Sabbath in a most spectacular way.

The camaraderie of Wildacres overcame the cold and rain of Saturday. Even the children were so busy they didn't mind being inside. There were crafts to make, games to play, and the all important "Big Show" rehearsals. Naturally, the show was a huge success (how could all that talent miss?) and everyone "enjoyed".

Sunday morning's farewells came all too quickly, but the drive home was filled with beautiful memories. Kim Schrader and the other teens did a great job keeping all the kids busy and happy. Much thanks to Rabbi Paul Kaplan for thought-provoking discussions and to Gail and Marvin Bienstock for all their efforts. Sally Schrader did a super job at organizing everything. Very, very special thanks to Rabbi Krantzler for creating the mood of Wildacres. We now feel much



"The Big Show" - one of the acts was the "Short People". They sure could gyrate.



L. to rt. - Shara and Lorin Silverman, Rabbi Krantzler, Marvin Bienstock.



Mary Baikin and Sally Schrader. Candle holders were made by the children in craft shop.



Mark Rothman and Bob Conn patiently waiting for Estelle Rosen to open up the bar at the cocktail party. There were great "eats" too. More pictures on page 12. Wildacre photos by Rita Mond

closer to a wonderful group of people and look forward to spending more precious Wildacre Weekends in the years to come. (*Ed. note - 85 adults and

children, including Rabbi Kaplan and his family and 5 couples from his Temple in Asheville, attended the Retreat. —R.M.)

Let Us Reason Together

Right before our very eyes — it is happening again! The Vietnamese — the erstwhile darlings of our "liberals" — are engaged in genocide — a holocaust of terrible proportions.

Cynically extorting millions of dollars from the ethnic Chinese in their midst, and their relatives abroad, the Vietnamese are "allowing" these unfortunates to escape Vietnam on boats in such condition as to virtually make it certain that hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children will drown. Turned away from Malaysia and other lands, numberless have already found watery graves.

The reason for this genocide: these are Chinese, "different from us", indeed referred to as "rubbish".

Shades of Hitler!

What is the UN doing? Thinking about it carefully. In the meantime, innocents are drowning. Sadly, President Carter is mumbling about "human rights" — and begging Congress to admit more refugees.

Our "liberals" are strangely silent when a communist country engages in genocide, even while they are beating their breasts over the terrorism of Samoja, and other fascist dictatorships.

As Jews — who remember the Holocaust — we dare not remain silent in the face of mass murder.

I have written my protests to President Carter and our legislators. Won't you do the same — now? Urge them to open America's doors to the unfortunates, and to persuade other free countries to do likewise.

Can any Jew, and American do less?

Shalom,
Rabbi Harold Krantzler

Books In Review

WANDERINGS. By Chaim Potok. Alfred A. Knopf. 431 pages. \$17.95.

"Wanderings" is also an attempt to place the history of the Jews within the greater framework of the history of Western civilization, to remove our story from the "zone of timelessness" that exists in the Bible. In part because it attempts too much, it only partially succeeds.

This is a beautifully produced book, with ample full-page color illustrations that have been thoughtfully gathered from some of the great art collections of the world. It is a book one wants to pick up and leaf through, but its text is often confusing.

As a novelist, Potok has many times woven a beautiful story. In "Wanderings" he is at his best when he is captured by a particular detail or event and relays his impressions in storyteller fashion. But often events which are important in

terms of world history are minimized, as the relatively insignificant is magnified. Although he proceeds through several thousand years of history, for the most part in a dogged linear narrative, he sometimes, in trying to interweave specifically Jewish events with the history that surrounds them, skips back and forth in time to the extent that the reader is too easily lost.

Potok's style is often eloquent and lyrical, yet it vacillates between a scholarly, objective post and a more personal viewpoint. At one point, for example, we are told that the Roman King Agrippa I reigned over what has been called by some historians the last golden age of the Jews in antiquity, but, says Potok, "We have had such few good periods that we label almost any time of tranquillity and creativity as golden."

The book has its moments, but as its title indicates, it wanders.

Tisha b'Av

Tisha b'Av - the Ninth of Av - marks the end of a three-week period of semimourning beginning with the 17th day of Tamuz, also a fast day. The nine days from the beginning of Av to Tisha b'Av mark an intensified mourning period. Many people abstain from meat and wine, refrain from shaving, from buying new clothes, and from various forms of entertainment.

Tisha b'Av is a fast day in commemoration of the various disasters and tragedies which have befallen the Jewish people throughout history. The central mourning is over the destruction of the Temple — an event which marked the initiation of the exile. This has both physical as well as spiritual dimensions. As Israel was divided from the land, so too was the Shekhinah (the Divine Presence). To the kabbalists the day represented the nature of the world's incompleteness and the great need for tikkun (repair) — returning the Shekhinah to her place. Although there is a temptation to concentrate on the Holocaust, this should be resisted, so as not to blur distinctions or lose sight of the essence of the day.

Aspects of the Day

In observance of Tisha b'Av the fast begins at sundown (this year on August 1). No leather is worn on this day. The Book of Lamentations is read by candlelight at night while sitting on the floor or on low stools. After the chanting, kinot (a form of dirge) are said. These are also recited in the morning.

It is noted that tallit and tefillin are not worn for Shabbat but are put on at Minhah and there is a Torah reading. In both services there is an addition to the Amidah that makes special reference to Tisha b'Av. On this day one is supposed to study only those sections of the Torah which deal with the destruction of the Temple.

—R.M.