

## THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS

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Marvin Bienstock, Director

Charlotte Hebrew Academy  
Rabbi Sanford Tucker, Director

Editors .....Ann Langman  
Rita Mond

Club Editors.....Rose Massachi  
& Mary Gordon

Feature Writers ..... Estelle Hoffman  
Muriel Levitt & Michael Shapiro

International News.....Marta Garelik

Copy Reader .....Fran Burg

Photographer ..... Sam Wallace

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### Editorial

#### "The Fanatics Are Closing In"

As we are going to press the most devastating stories in the news are the Americans being held hostage in the Iranian Embassy by a fanatical group of students and the resurgence of the KKK and the Neo-Nazi party predominantly in Lincolnton and Greensboro, N.C. Iran is thousands of miles away; Lincolnton and Greensboro are but a stone's throw from Charlotte. The impact upon our lives is equally as great and as threatening. Ours is supposedly a society of law and order. Where was the law in Greensboro? Will there ever be order in Iran?

Both pose a threat to the American way of life and are run by "crazed" people who in their own warped sense want to control the world and society around them. Their acts of violence, for no matter what reasons, cannot be condoned.

We, our government and the officials who represent us must take stock of what is happening around us and positive action to see that these terroristic fanatics do not take over the world. It's time we, the American people, stop being blackmailed and harassed.

Hopefully some positive action will have already occurred by the time you read this editorial. But if not, what will be our and our children's future? There is at this time a feeling of "anger and frustration" among the American people. It seems that instead of going forward our world is going backwards. Is Sodom and Gomorah just around the corner?



#### Across The Editors' Desks

Dear Editors:

I received the November issue of *The Jewish News* today and I must say it was very, very good. See you around the town.

Rozanne Sklar  
Past President  
Ha Lailah BBW

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Dear Editors:

I just wanted you to know what a fabulous job I think you are doing with this paper. It is very informative and well done.

Charlene Scharf

Editor's note: Charlene is co-owner along with Judy Pera of the Party Shop, one of our advertisers.

## We're A Winner — All Of Us

by Marvin Bienstock

Each year delegates from almost 300 Federations around the U.S. and Canada meet at the General Assembly (GA), the single most important annual Jewish gathering. Much time is spent in grappling with crucial issues; no time is devoted to unessential ceremony. There are few awards and little recognition given. Therefore, those recipients of honors have the right to feel all the more proud. *The Charlotte Jewish News* is such a recipient this year. Just 14 among hundreds of papers were singled out for excellence. *The News* stood in that proud company.

What a very special thing to have happen within the first year of publication, especially when we realize how close our paper came to never being started. *The News* survived its birth pangs and became a beautiful example of a unique entity — a non-profit community paper cosponsored by a cross section of organizations and serving all Jewish organizations and institutions.

The factor which turns idealized dreams to reality is hard work. Just as the GA has recognized *The News* it is appropriate that we should recognize those who make *The News* possible. The least read thing in any paper is the box above the editorials listing the names of the editors and staff. Take a minute right now and read it....

Now you know who does the work. The other papers who were winners have paid staff. We don't, except for the few dollars Ann Langman gets to barely cover her out-of-pocket expenses. These volunteers put in hour after hour each month tracking down facts, details and stories.

The backbone of the staff are the co-editors, Ann Langman and Rita Mond. You need to know what it takes for them to make the paper happen. The issue you are now reading, for example, began the same day the November issue reached your mailbox. Rita and Ann met to discuss the key stories and potential articles. They divided the task of contacting the reporters and the various organizations. Within days they were speaking about necessary space allocation. They were on the phones reminding people like me of the November 8 deadline and they were coping politely but firmly with my usual lame excuses. Even more important, they were helping me figure out how to get stories printed about events scheduled after the deadline.

All that was just the beginning. Next came the evenings and evenings of pulling things together, of last minute changes and revisions and additions, of endless trips to a printer near the airport, of proofreading and even of picking up the printed paper and delivering it to the Federation-JCC for mailing.

It's the same for them every month, and I wonder often why they do it. This past month's recognition at the GA isn't the reason. It's the icing on the cake. The cake is made of their devotion to our Jewish community and their commitment to seeing that it has the best quality newspaper they can produce. The GA honored that quality and made them winners. Having Ann, Rita and all their staff makes us winners, too.

## AFSC And The PLO

In the alphabet soup of organizations, AFSC stands for the American Friends Service Committee, an organization under the sponsorship of the Quakers. Ever since my college days the AFSC represented a high quality form of the Peace Corp conducting humanitarian projects around the world. For almost 100 years one such project has been a school near Ramallah in what is now called Judea-Samaria or the West Bank.

In recent years the AFSC — not the Quakers but the organization they sponsor — has been an outspoken and at times vehement critic of Israel. When I was recently invited to attend a private evening at the home of a prominent media personality I accepted because the director of the AFSC program in Jerusalem was to be the main speaker. My experience was a mixture of the appalling and the exciting.

Along with some 20 people, mostly from the media, I listened to a brilliantly presented talk which claimed to be even handed but, to even the minimally knowledgeable person, was totally pro-PLO. That's correct, not just pro-Palestinian but pro-PLO. The man spoke of the "democratic-secular" state the PLO wants to establish while referring to Israel, in counter-distinction, as a "Jewish" state. He detailed the plight of the Palestinians in the West Bank under, as one regional worker for AFSC who was also present put it, Israel's "oppression." He counseled those present to pressure the U.S. to speak with the PLO as a pre-condition to any possible PLO recognition of Israel.

He talked for almost an hour before questions began. It wasn't what he said so much as what he didn't say. He underscored the threat of Israeli settlements citing 50-55 such settlements and listing the Arab population as 800,000. He didn't bother to mention that less than 12,000 men, women and children occupy those settlements. He omitted discussing the role of the PLO in the once democratic-secular nation of Lebanon, and didn't mention such problematic terms as terrorism or the PLO-USSR relationship. In all fairness to him, when I did raise these issues and questions he answered them honestly, but I have to wonder how many times on his national tour he will permit people like myself to be present — especially in the more intimate settings to which media and opinion makers are carefully invited.

I've shared the appalling aspect. Two things were exciting. First, I was pleased to learn that most AFSC employees, including all those present at the meeting, are not Quakers. There just are not enough indigenous Quakers to occupy these jobs. As the Quakers become more and more aware that their basic and fundamental stand against violence has been infiltrated and violated I would hope they would purge themselves. Incidentally, the only actual Quaker present that evening spoke out strongly and completely positive for Israel.

The other exciting aspect began that evening and has been continued in several personal meetings I have held since. Many of those present were not "taken in" and, in an effort to come to a real understanding of the issues in the Middle East, a small group is planning to meet, to share information from all points of view and to study together. In that kind of setting the basic human rights of Israelis and Palestinians can be examined. Justice and peace are not served in the kind of prejudicial propaganda caucus I attended.

— Marvin Bienstock

## Mutual Respect

"Mommy, can we have Christmas this year? Can't we be like everyone else?" Have you been hearing questions like this recently (especially from preschoolers and children in primary grades)? The closer Christmas approaches, the greater the pressures on the Jewish child.

What are the nature of these pressures? Some of them are apparent and some are subtle. When a child is asked, "What are you getting for Christmas?", what should the Jewish child answer? The answer often given is — "nothing." The reaction of the questioner is one of great concern for the welfare of the child. Often there is a critical scowl at the parent accompanying the child. Or the child will respond, "We don't have Christmas." This comment, by itself, will also probably elicit sympathy for the child and a scowl for the parent. These questions, well intentioned as they are, seem to come from every corner. Schoolmates ask the question, so do clerks in banks, secretaries in offices and check-out clerks in supermarkets. So much for the obvious pressures.

Some of the pressures are more subtle. For example, on the radio we hear beautiful music all dedicated to Christmas. In stores we see displays about the message of Christmas. In the front of almost every home are lights or a nativity scene making the home beautiful and reminding every onlooker of the approaching holiday. Even commercials on television remind us to participate in the Christmas spirit of "Peace on Earth, good will toward men." To a child these pressures can be enormous.

In fact, it is not just the Jewish child who has a problem at Christmas time. The Jewish adult has one as well. We are inundated with songs, decorations, television shows and advertisements, all with the spirit and message of Christmas. Do we Jews participate in this at all? What should we as Jewish adults, many of us parents of young children, do for ourselves and our offspring as Christmas approaches? I would like to propose a few guidelines.

First, Christmas is a beautiful, meaningful, religious holiday. It deserves our respect, much as we expect respect for our holidays and customs. Second, it is not appropriate for Jews to celebrate Christmas. The customs and ceremonies surrounding the holiday are religious in nature. Third, we should emphasize our Jewish identity for ourselves and our children by doing things which are inherently Jewish and which demonstrate typically Jewish values. Chanukah, which occurs about the same time as Christmas, should be used to intensify our Jewish values and identity.

Fourth, sharing is important. By this I mean sharing Chanukah with our Christian neighbors, and sharing our neighbor's joy in Christmas. Specifically, when your child is invited to see the neighbor's Christmas tree — let them do so. Why not invite the neighbor's children to see you light the Chanukah lights. Each person should be proud and secure in one's own religious identification while still sharing the joy of someone else's holiday.

May this season of religious holidays be an occasion for all of us to strengthen our pride and security in our Jewish tradition and identity.

As many of you know, this

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