

Random Thoughts...

by Muriel Levitt

Come with me back to a bygone age, the world of the 1930's and early 40's. New York City was a vastly different place in those times. There were no street gangs, no muggings, no graffiti, no heavy traffic, no overcrowding, no fear, and no money. We had lots of people, plenty of togetherness, and the family unit represented strength and security. We were in a devastating depression era but since everyone was in the same boat, a closeness and a caring for others seemed to prevail. It was the scene of my childhood and I'd like to share some memories with you.

Although strictly middle class, we were considered "all-rightnicks" because my father owned a business as well as a car. After six long, hard days in a retail store, it was his pleasure to drive us around the city on Sunday. Today such a trip would be virtually impossible with cars double and triple parked wherever you go. But in those days the pace was easier, the streets were emptier and gas was 19¢ a gallon. Sundays became my favorite day of the week.

Daddy knew our city intimately and drove us through side streets and short cuts that most people never knew about. We had a 1935 Chrysler, big, black, and built like a tank, which demanded respect wherever we went. To me it represented sheer luxury. I did not know until many years later that it had been bought nearly new for only \$300.

Since my father was Roumanian by birth, he naturally gravitated towards the lower East Side. In addition to open stalls, there were stores that sold items of Judaica, wholesale linen shops (closed on Saturday and open on Sunday) and many Roumanian restaurants. Our favorites were Joe's, the Old Roumanian, and the very popular Moscowitz and Lupowitz. These were more like

social clubs than eating establishments and patrons would remain for many hours just to converse in their native tongue. If we happened to stay very late, I have vague recollections of being put to sleep on two chairs pushed together seat to seat. I never minded, just being there was a rare treat.

Those gala dinners are as vivid as though they happened yesterday. Appetizers of ikra (fish roe with lemon juice) and potlejellah with maslinehs (egg-plant salad and wrinkled black olives) were openers. Then came mushk steak (strip tenderloin) and carnotzlach (sausages made of ground beef and fresh garlic). The only green vegetable in evidence was a sour pickle but fried potatoes were always served. Each table boasted several blue glass bottles of seltzer. What fun we kids had with those shpritzer handles!

When we were at Joe's, the most exciting part of our visit was the presence of a swarthy gypsy who played the piano rather badly but plenty loud. He wore one earring which caused all kinds of comment in those days. That gypsy piano player represented mystery, intrigue and the unknown. Who could ever forget him!

If we went for an early Sunday dinner, everyone piled into the car and rode uptown afterwards. We drove across the Grand Concourse, east on 170th Street and onto Claremont Parkway. Then a sharp left to Bathgate Avenue and there it was ... pushcart heaven.

It boggles the mind to recall those endless rows of pushcarts. Block after block was covered with small hand-drawn carts that were full to overflowing with every kind of merchandise. Heavy crockery and delicate china, thick boots and dainty party slippers, inexpensive pictures and original oil paintings, heavy duty hardware and cut glass bowls, beautiful

leather bound books and second hand magazines, dented canned goods and imported delicacies, small fur pieces and used clothing, imported linens and carpet remnants, unlimited groceries and a garden variety of fruits and vegetables. All of this and much more was offered for sale by hawking vendors who bargained over prices and tried to cajole the customer into buying more than originally intended.

These vendors were not above a bit of trickery either. On one visit my mother decided to buy some seedless grapes (10 cents per pound or three pounds for a quarter). When the seller picked up a paper bag and started to fill it, Daddy interrupted by saying he wanted to fill a bag himself. Apparently it was common practice to have about a half pound of loose, undesirable grapes stashed away in the bottom. You would pay for three pounds but actually only two and one half pounds were edible. Trust my father to know the ropes!

We walked from street to street, from stall to stall, from pushcart to pushcart. It was a dream world of abundance. The voices still ring in my ears ... Yiddish, Russian, Polish and German. It's all part of the past and a long ago that will never return.

Since then I have visited many cities, eaten in countless restaurants and shopped in many stores; but nowhere, no place can ever bring back the nostalgia I cherish of those Sunday family outings throughout the neighborhoods of New York City.

You can keep your bargain outlet stores, your glitzy shopping malls and your cut-rate merchandise marts. Me, I'll take those good old-fashioned pushcarts with the noise and the smells and the crowds. Just one thing, please. Can anyone tell me how and where I can ever find them again?

WORLD BEAT

Edited by Marta Garelik

Israel-N.Y. Charter Service Pondered

TEL AVIV (JTA) — One of Israel's leading hotel operators has announced plans to establish a twice-weekly charter service from New York starting in March. Chaim Shiff, whose Shiff Hotels contain some 1800 rooms throughout Israel, told a press conference he expects the new service to bring some 60,000 tourists to Israel in the spring tourist season.

Shiff said he decided to invest in the company in order to halt a drop in the number of tourists. Efforts to increase tourism as well as foreign investment and exports are part of Israel's needs

to find new avenues for foreign currency income. This has become more acute with the announcement that Israel will only receive \$200 million in additional military sales credits rather than the large increase in U.S. aid it had sought.

Athlete of the Decade

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Maariv named Tal Brodie, the American-born basketball player, as the Israeli athlete of the 1970s. Brodie, from Trenton, N.J., immigrated to Israel after participating on the U.S. basketball team in the 1965

Maccabiah Games. He was an all-American at the University of Illinois. Maariv said the athlete of the world for the decade was heavyweight boxing champion Muhammed Ali.

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Jewish National Fund announced that it will plant some 4500 acres of new forests throughout the country this winter, about 2000 acres of which will represent "political afforestation," the aim of which is to assert the State's claim to ownership of the land. This is necessary, the JNF noted, in areas where Arabs have begun building homes on State land without obtaining the required permits.

Books In Review

ONE SUMMER IN ISRAEL. By Patti O'Connor and Catherine Cole, Academy Press, Ltd., Chicago, Ill., 1978, 229 p., \$19.95.

When a Jew visits Israel he sees what he has been programmed over the past few millenia to see ... his ancient homeland, steeped in a rich tradition and heritage. He sees the many well known biblical sites, and if he is anything but an "am ha'aretz," he can remember the biblical implications of many places ... Jerusalem, Hebron, Shechem, Beer Shevah, and the many others. But when a pair of non-Jews go to Israel, what do they see? Do they only relate to the places well known to them from their "new testament"? Are all the old ancient Hebrew sites foreign to them? Do they fail to "see" the country built by the Jewish people on the foundations of our ancient civilization?

We have the opportunity to find the answers to these questions. Patti O'Connor and Catherine Cole, two young non-Jewish American women, were invited in 1976 to join the Lahav archaeological explorations because of their special talents: Patti as a photographer to record the field work and finds, and Catherine as a publicist and manager of camp operations. They did not restrict their activities or interests only to the "dig." Finding themselves in a strange and fascinating country they reached out beyond the camp and began exploring this strange new country.

At the end of that first summer they conspired to return, this time to explore not an ancient civilization but rather the contemporary Israel which fascinated them so much. In 1977 they returned and travelled together throughout the length and breadth of the country recording their impressions in photographic images and in beautiful flowing words. The result of this effort is a journal, richly illustrated in black and white magnificent photographs; their impressions are often those most tourists and very few immigrants "see" even though they may have passed the same spot as these two did many times.

Their scenes, literary and photographic, are a balance of the Jewish and Arab presence, done with great sensitivity. They went into the rural areas tourists seldom get to, and recorded the intimate daily routines of the people. Thus we see the slaughter house, the pushkes in a small rural synagogue, Bedouim watering their flocks, the "yeshiva bochorim" avoiding the sight of immodestly dressed young women, and the anti-Zionist graffiti in the Mea Shearim.

If you have ever been in Israel, here is your opportunity to fill in those unusual sights you may have and almost certainly did miss. And if you have never been to Israel, reading this book and seeing the photographic masterpieces can serve, almost, as a vicarious tour of this ancient land without leaving the comfort of your living room. But it is not a substitute ... only a supplement to actually being there.

For the Record

by Norman Olshansky
Regional Director, ADL

It was of little surprise on two radio call-in talk programs on which I was a guest, that several callers displayed blatant anti-Semitism. Some of the comments had a very familiar ring. It was as if the callers were reading directly from the "Spotlight" publication of the Liberty Lobby.

The "Spotlight" publication has as part of its creed that it will provide "the other side of the news." It appeals to the extreme right wing political perspective and is part of one of the best financed of all American anti-Semitic movements. In addition to the "Spotlight" publication, Liberty Lobby has a regular radio program called "This Is Liberty Lobby" and is carried on several hundred radio stations, several of which are in our region.

It should come as no surprise that the founder and guiding force behind Liberty Lobby is an outspoken anti-Semite who has professed an abiding admiration for Hitler and Nazi Germany. Willis Carto has had a long history of involvement with right wing and anti-Semitic publications.

The "Spotlight" publication continues to peddle such diatribes as:

1. That there is an invisible government and Zionist control of the press.
2. The promotion of revisionist historians and coverage to those who claim that "Jews were not systematically gassed at Auschwitz."
3. That current American oil shortages are due to "secret" deals between President Carter and Israel.

It should come as no surprise that in the Klan publication, "Fiery Cross," that acknowledgement was given to the "Spotlight" publication for contributing materials to the Klan publication. The "Fiery Cross" also gave information on how to subscribe to "Spotlight." The Liberty Lobby also has the view that there is a "giant conspiracy spearheaded by the Rockefeller-CIA-Carter axis which is out to take over the world."

For more information on this well-financed organization, contact your regional office of the Anti-Defamation League at 3311 West Broad Street, Richmond, Va. 23230, (804) 355-2884.

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The Jewish Calendar

CANDLELIGHTING

Feb. 1 — 5:49 p.m.
Feb. 8 — 5:55 p.m.
Feb. 15 — 6:02 p.m.
Feb. 22 — 6:08 p.m.
Feb. 29 — 6:14 p.m.