

Charlotteans' Impressions of Israel

My Third UJA Mission: Still Exciting

By Simon Estroff

I would like to share with you some of the excitement I felt when I made my third visit to Israel this past March 9 on the Southern Regional Mission. I am already eagerly looking forward to my fourth UJA Mission. In a moment you will understand why I say that. Let me tell you first of all that I had planned to take one of my children on this trip but at the last minute something came up and I had to go "alone." Well, I was never alone as there were 81 beautiful people on this mission. To me, one of the best aspects of a UJA Mission is the type of people that you meet on the trip. They are not your average tourist; they are people who know who they are, where they are, and where they are going. They have enthusiasm, interest, concern and a thirst for knowledge. Let me tell you that this may sound like a commercial for UJA Missions but it's how I feel.

On the first day the highlight was actually arriving in Israel, and then immediately going to plant a tree in Modiin. This was the first time I had ever physically planted a tree and I felt very good and proud of this small feat. The symbolism was very powerful. We now had roots in Israel. On our second day we met a most beautiful man, Yossi Netanya, a survivor of the Holocaust, and now a tireless worker on behalf of the JDC-Malbem Home for the Aged. We then went to a Youth Aliyah Village, had a briefing on their programs, visited many laboratories, watching the kids at work, studying chemistry, computer science, auto mechanics and more.

We then visited a former Jordanian gun position. From



L to R: Edith Steindler, Mission Director; Simon Estroff; Shoshanna, the guide; Berry Zander, (S.C.); Miriam Mendell (Houston); Todd Serbin (Columbia); the driver; the Israeli Major/Liaison; Vicky Serbin (Columbia).

here one could see the Mediterranean as well as Jerusalem, and this pointed out to us very graphically why Israel can never return to its June 1967 borders.

We also visited the Museum of the Diaspora. There I saw a brief but wonderful message: "Live in the present, but love the past and trust in the future." This museum is so very special. It is all about us, wherever we have been.

On the third day, a small group of us left the main group and drove to Netavim Air Base, near Beersheba, Israel's newest air base. We spent several hours there with the base commander, who charmed us completely. We again had the opportunity to plant trees (I've become a real expert at this). While at the base we saw the IDF in action, a fly-by, a demonstration of putting out a fire, and a tour of the various ordinances they use. When we left Netavim we caught up with the main group at our sister city, Nazarit Ellit. This place has changed drastically in the past three years. The people are so warm, vibrant, full of life, and so appreciative of what we in Charlotte have done for them. This is a must stop and is only on the UJA itinerary. Our third night ended in Tiberius.

Our fourth day began in

Savat, a lovely old city, rich in so many ways. The emphasis was on our visit to the old Sephardit Synagogues, and a new program of restoration by American Jewish Youth, as well as some insights in Kaballah. Our guide, Lori, was special. We left Savat and visited an Army base for lunch and a briefing on the security situation with Syria. From there we went to an ancient synagogue at Katzrim, where the building faced South, toward Jerusalem. After a too brief visit to a kibbutz on the Lebanese border and home hospitality, we returned to Tiberius and ate dinner on a boat, cruising the Sea of Galilee. It was very special and lovely.

We made our way to Jerusalem on the fifth day. We made several stops on the way but arriving in Jerusalem in time for Shabbat dinner makes the other stops seem insignificant. We had dinner with Cantor Arye Brown, and this was, for me, very special.

On the sixth day, Shabbat, we all took advantage of a day of leisure.

Our seventh day we "did" Masada. I see and hear new things each time I go there. This trip was no exception. We also ate lunch on the shore of the Dead Sea and many people took the opportunity to swim (or float is a better word) there. It was a weird feeling.

(Cont'd on next page)

A First Timer's Reflections On Israel

By Faye P. Seigel

At 7 p.m. with 80 people from the Southeast, our El Al jet departed Kennedy International Airport for a 10 day UJA Mission to Israel. For me, this journey was the realization of a lifelong desire to visit the country of my heritage. Although I tried to sleep, the anticipation of what was ahead kept my mind and body reeling. My excitement was overwhelming as the captain announced first in Hebrew and then in English, "Ladies and gentlemen, we will soon be arriving in Tel Aviv." When the wheels of the jet touched down at Ben-Gurion Airport, I knew at last I was in the homeland of the Jewish people.

life. Here intermingle old and new, religious and secular, desert and civilization, tradition and culture, reality and vision. By American standards, the life is difficult socially, economically and politically. Taxation is high, inflation is out of control, and no one knows when a hostile neighboring country will strike. Yet these people have found refuge from persecution and oppression and to them Israel is truly the "land of milk and honey." Memories and hopes fuse into one as a testimony to the pain and ordeals suffered for the creation of the State of Israel as a homeland for all Jews.

As we tour the country, we are able to see how our financial commitment to Israel



The Charlotte Contingent: (L to R) Gail Dreher, Richard Klein, Bob and Faye Seigel, Simon Estroff, Steve and Barbara Freeman, Nettie and Ralph Smith, Loretta Pettus (the Smiths' daughter).

I was immediately impressed with the many striking contrasts in this tiny struggling country. I saw new settlements and modern apartment complexes and nearby the black tents of the Bedouins, living the same pastoral life as the Patriarchs of thousands of years ago. Driving along the highway in our large comfortable bus, we pass a caravan of camels and a donkey laden with wares. We see rocky barren land alongside fertile fields. The land of Israel is a nation of remnants; people gathered from all parts of the world and restored to a new

lives of 650,000 Israelis. We see how these funds help absorb, educate and settle new immigrants; build villages and farms; support innovative programs for troubled and disadvantaged youth, and promote the revitalization of distressed neighborhoods. Our first mission upon arriving is to plant a tree at Modiin, birthplace of the Maccabees. The planting of a tree is symbolic. Not only does it help in the reforestation of the country, but it allows each of us to put down roots and reconfirm our covenant with this Holy Land.

The heart of Israel is its people and the commitment to caring for its own. We visit a home for the aged, one of 11 homes in the country. Six hundred residents from 22 countries reside here with the average age of 86. We visit an absorption center for Ethiopian Jews airlifted out of the Sudan during Operation Moses in 1985. At the center, these people who have been isolated from their Jewish brethren for hundreds of years

(Cont'd on next page)

"Personal Care" can mean a lot of things...

Has illness changed your life? Do you need some assistance with your own care or that of a loved one or friend?



Professional Health Services, Inc. has the "Personal Touch" and the professional services. We provide nursing help to hospitals, nursing facilities, and private patients in their homes (short term or long term).

We specialize in the care of the elderly and offer a SENIOR CITIZENS DISCOUNT. Mention this ad and receive a FREE HOME VISIT to discuss the ways to make it easier to provide care in the home.

For Information
Call (704) 372-7438
24 Hours A Day

Professional Health Services, Inc.
Hawthorne Medical Center
Charlotte, North Carolina



7822 Fairview Rd.
366-6871

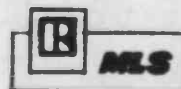
Monday: 11:30 - 2:30 p.m. only Organ Music Open for
Tues. - Sat.: 11:30 - 2:30 p.m. Fri. & Sat. Sunday Brunch
6:00 - 10:30 p.m. 11-3:00 p.m.



ANN LANGMAN

"Serving your real estate needs since 1972"

Mary Ryder Realty
Office 364-3300 • Home 364-1691/1693



For Information
On UJA Missions
Call Federation Office
366-5007