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Go east, yo

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Juno 14-94

See the sights—and the sites. Better yet, meet the folks—the prime minister, the tank commander, the kibbutz dweller, the just-arrived immigrant. That's the real difference.

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| June 14-24     | FAMILI MISSION              |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| June 28-July 7 | FAMILY MISSION              |
| July 1-15      | SINGLES MISSION             |
| Aug. 5-19      | SINGLES MISSION             |
| Aug. 9-19      | FAMILY MISSION              |
| Sept. 9-17     | UJA PRESIDENT'S MISSION (1) |
| Sept. 13-21    | UJA PRESIDENT'S MISSION (1  |
| Oct. 18-26     | UJA PRESIDENT'S MISSION (1  |
| Nov. 2-11      | FALL STUDY MISSION (2)      |
| Dec. 20-30     | FAMILY MISSION              |
| Feb. 1988      | SE SINGLES MISSION (3)      |
| Mar. 1988      | SE REGIONAL MISSION (4)     |
|                | D                           |

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## A Docent For All Seasons

By Betty S. Silver

Just as we at the Mint try to give our visitors a taste of the museum, so do the guides on the private buses in Israel share the same intention. The difference is they are portraying a taste of a country, small as it is — the size of New Jersey with a population of 4,000,000. Charlotte's population is 350,500.

Alex Fleisher, a penetratingeyed, leather-faced John Wayne type of man, was the guide on Bus #6 March 1-10, 1987. He was born in Israel and has been a guide there for 18 years having completed an intensive two year training course. He is married to an Israeli and has three children. The eldest child is a daughter who will become 18 this summer which means she will go into the army, having first passed entrance exams for that service.

As a painter sizes a canvas preparatory to spreading color on it, so Alex deftly stretches his listeners' attention. He is a story teller with a cantorial lilt in his voice that sometimes mesmerizes his listeners. He frequently intercedes a Yiddish phrase or joke to emphasize his point. Anthropology is his hobby and sometimes the rocks, rills and valleys seem to speak to him. An acute observer of nature with a deep respect and love of his fellow man, this guide can teach you more than you think you want to know. To hear Alex tell about the invention of the tank is to hear a man show his love of his fellow man.

In his low, slow voice he begins, "You start with four men. He demonstrates with

his grouped fingers. Then he portrays in a silhouette how the perimeter is spread to safeguard the lives of the occupants inside the tank. The Israeli tank is the only one extant with a trough beneath to shield the occupants against land mines and the only one with a  $360^{\circ}$  swivel. It can also shoot in all directions while in motion. Throughout the telling, Alex is stressing the importance of each life sadly engaged in war.

Alex is a graduate of the Royal College of Art in London where he was a full-time student. He supported himself there by washing cars, dishes and bodies, the latter in a mortician shop. He has continued to paint and still enjoys charcoal, oil, pencil as well as watercolors. He is also a printmaker. But I believe he feels his real and first profession is "painting" Israel's present and past to the passengers on his bus. He has fought in all of Israel's wars, speaks Spanish fluently and interjects Yiddish in his pungent jokes. As long as people of Alex's calibre are in the forefront, "There'll Always Be an Israel".

Editor's Note: Betty Silver was one of a group of Charlotteans who went on the Federation SE Regional Mission to Israel led by Richard A. Klein.

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