

**THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS**

P.O. Box 13369, Charlotte, N.C. 28211

Published monthly by:

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Copy deadline the 10th of each month

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**Editorial****Thank You for Being You**

By Mike Minkin  
 CJB Executive Director

"Tzedakah" is the Hebrew word which is translated as "charity, righteousness, and justice." All of these words have equal validity and are aspects of a single concept basic to Judaism and to the Federation: to be charitable, to be righteous and to be just. In some ways, the history of "tzedakah" parallels the history of the spirit of the Jewish people. **What counts in Jewish life is not so much what we profess to believe, but what we do about those beliefs.**

I thank the Federation leadership for doing what they do with their beliefs. We are a fortunate community. Fortunate to have leaders who believe strongly in developing a strong and vibrant Jewish community in Charlotte and Israel. It would be so easy for people to say "Let Joe do it. My involvement is really not important since my neighbor does all that is needed." This phenomenon of "thinking Joe will take care of it" does happen. Yet, it happens in diminishing numbers for the leadership of our community step to the line and lead. They make things happen.

I, again, say "thank you" to all the men and women who participate on our Board of Directors and in our Campaign effort for making Charlotte a strong and responsive community an example for the rest of the country to emulate.

**Wishing a Speedy Recovery**

*Rita Mond, our Editor, is at home recuperating from a heart attack. We are thankful Rita is doing well and hope she will soon be well enough to resume her duties as Editor. I, for one, will be especially thankful, not just because Rita has been my friend for over two decades, but that I will be relieved of filling in for her on the paper!*

*My apologies if anyone's copy, pictures, etc. have been omitted from this issue. I had to step in suddenly and hope that all of you will be understanding.*

— Ann Langman

**Thank You**

My special thanks to Ann Langman for so willingly assuming the responsibility of getting this issue out. Ann, as many of you know, edited this paper with me from its humble beginnings until four years ago when her professional responsibilities could no longer afford her the "luxury" of the hours of commitment this publication requires. If it were not for Ann this issue would not have been possible.

— Rita Mond

**A Portrait of Benjamin Linder**

By Patricia Golan

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Benjamin Linder, the youngest of three children, grew up in a secular Jewish family that was involved in a variety of social and political causes: anti-Vietnam war demonstrations, civil rights campaigns, environmental issues and advocacy for the poor.

His father, David, is a medical doctor working in cancer research. His mother, Elizabeth Linder, fled her native Czechoslovakia from the Nazis in 1939, settling with the family in Mexico.

Linder and two Nicaraguan companions were at-

tacked and killed in April 1987 by a Contra patrol in a northern rural region near the Honduras border.

Linder, the only U.S. citizen to have been killed by the Contras, was there supervising the construction of a hydroelectric plant. He was first immobilized by gunshot wounds to his arms and legs, then shot in the temple at point-blank range.

His family has filed a \$50 million law suit against Contra leaders, charging them with the murder of their son, a 27-year-old electrical engineer from Portland, Ore.

Charged in the suit — to be heard in Feb. 7 in U.S. District Court in Miami — are four individual Contra

leaders, including military commander Enrique Bermudez, and three Nicaraguan opposition groups based in Florida.

The Linders, represented by the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights, say that the ambush and killing of Linder was part of a "deliberate Contra policy to murder civilians working in education, health and development programs," and to "dissuade foreigners from working in Nicaragua."

The suit holds the Contra leaders responsible for the policy and planning that led to the attack on Linder.

According to the center's Joel Lefkowitz, the Contra leaders do not deny that they planned Linder's death, but have moved for dismissal saying the case is "a non-justiciable political question."

Approximately 75,000 Americans have gone to work in Nicaragua since the 1979 Sandinista revolution — most of them for short-term volunteer stints.

Linder had been working in Nicaragua for four years on a government job, helping to set up hydroelectric plants in impoverished rural communities.

As a skilled juggler, clown and unicyclist, he was also famous in the region as an entertainer. Shortly before his death, dressed in his clown suit and riding his unicycle, he led a parade of village children to the local clinic to get measles inoculation shots.

Honored as a national martyr in Nicaragua, Linder is variously regarded in the United States as a naive dupe, a heroic humanitarian or even a traitor, depending on the point of view.

An article in the fall issue of the Jewish periodical Present Tense calls Linder a "gadget-loving technocrat and a gentle humanitarian, deeply committed politically yet little interested in ideology, driven by his work, but indifferent to material success."

Linder, the article says, "found a final calling and commitment in an adversary land."

Did the Linder children understand their family's political activism in any sense as being part of a Jewish social heritage?

"Not consciously," says Elizabeth Linder. "Certainly my children were aware that I came out of the Holocaust, but this was just the way we lived. Ben knew, for example, that racism was not acceptable to us, and he was influenced by this," she said.

Although the family was secular, Ben Linder seems to have had some feelings of religious identification: he was the only one in the family, for example, to attend Hebrew school, at his own request. He also led the family in seders.

Recently, during a visit to Nicaragua, Rabbi Joseph

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**President George Bush And the Jews**

By Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum  
 (JTA)

President George Bush's inaugural address was a moving appeal for a "kinder, gentler" America and world society. All Americans, I am sure, pray for his strength and moral stamina to lead our nation in realizing his compassionate goals for overcoming poverty, homelessness, drugs and crime and for advancing world peace.

American Jews, in particular, have added reasons for believing his words will be more than political rhetoric. When Bush was U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, I appealed to him on three separate occasions to intervene with the Soviet Union in order to free hardship cases of Russian Jews.

He responded at once with obvious caring. He made immediate inquiries to preglasnost Moscow that resulted in the early emigration of these sorely-trying families.

Another instance was his little-known but decisive role in negotiating the historic departure of some 12,000 black Jews of Ethiopia to Israel.

We hope that as president, Bush will now try to rescue the remaining 15,000 Ethiopian Jews who desperately seek to be reunited with their families.

As vice president, Bush chaired a U.S. government task force against international terrorism. He was totally committed to combating terrorism, and, I believe, that conviction will be an important factor in his efforts to promote peace in the Middle East.

He has said he opposed a Palestinian state as "a non-starter," and supported a "confederation between Israel and Jordan."

President Bush has called for "a new engagement" to build a more just and humane society. His record thus far with the Jewish people, among others, provides an encouraging basis for a constructive relationship with him during the next four years.

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international consultant for the American Jewish Committee.

**Letter to the Editor****Concern over City Council Invocations**

Charlotte Chapter B'nai B'rith Women has made repeated requests to the Mayor and City Council in an attempt to ensure that invocations at all City Council meetings are nonsectarian. A letter was sent by Jack Bullard, director of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee, to the Clergy informing them that members of different faiths would be present at City Council invocations. In spite of this, there have been frequent occasions where Clergy have accepted the invitation, yet concluded their prayer "in the name of Jesus." At civic functions there is no place for a prayer which excludes some of the community. To continue in this manner is an affront to other beliefs and a violation of separation of church and state.

On Dec. 20, 1988, a petition sponsored by BBW was sent to the Mayor and City Council members requesting that all prayer at City Council meetings be nonsectarian. The last communication from the Mayor, dated Jan. 9, 1989, reveals that she is still not

hearing our concerns. In her letter she states that the invocation is not meant to offend anyone and that in most instances the clergy is sensitive to varying religious beliefs. She adds that the clergy express their pleasure in attending. She claims that precautions are being taken to encourage nonsectarian invocations. We sense that if Sue Myrick were truly taking precautions she would bring the following twofold issue to a vote (a letter dated Feb. 2 was sent in regards to this):

1. To endorse nonsectarian prayers at every City Council meeting.

2. To authorize Jack Bullard to convey this to visiting clergy and to give those who are reluctant to offer general prayer the option of declining the invitation.

Copies of all correspondence and the petition were sent to the Area Clergy Association and The National Conference of Christians and Jews enlisting their active support.

CCBBW

—Jody Pinion, president

—Linda Karacaova

We encourage our readers' viewpoints. Letters should be submitted typewritten and double-spaced and signed. Please include your address and phone number. We reserve the right to edit.