

# Travel Talk

By Maxine Silverman



## Solid As A Rock

The "Solid As A Rock" ad campaign for a national insurance company has made the Rock of Gibraltar familiar to millions of people. This summer, Gary and I took a cruise from Lisbon to Barcelona where the first port-of-call, Gibraltar, is home to that famous rock. We were expecting to disembark, climb the rock, shop and

Main Street were owned by Jews. Today, the Jewish population numbers between 600 and 700.

While Jews are not a majority, their presence in Gibraltar is well received. In the last 20 years, Jews have held two of the highest public official positions- mayor and chief minister. The conservative community honors the Sabbath, and Mr.



I'm standing inside the elegant mahogany and marble synagogue, Shaar Hashamayim. Built in 1768, it is the oldest synagogues in Gibraltar.



Mr. A.M. Silverstein and I are standing in front of the Torahs in Shaar Hashamayim. One of the Torahs is more than 250 years old.

return to the ship. Instead, what we uncovered was a lively Jewish community that is just as firmly embedded in Gibraltar as the rock itself

After climbing the Rock, which is a tourist must-do, Gary and I wandered along Main Street downtown where we noticed Stars of David on many of the buildings' walls. When a gentleman wearing a kipot came out of one of the buildings, I introduced myself to him.

His name was Mr. A.M. Israel, and his was one of the very first Jewish families to settle in Gibraltar after leaving Spain in the 1700s. Delighted by our interest, Mr. Israel asked us to meet him at one of the city's four synagogues, Shaar Hashamayim, in a half-hour to see the inside and talk about Gibraltar's Jewish community.

Mr. Israel explained that most of the city's Jews are Sephardic and conservative in their beliefs. Their families fled Spain and settled as merchants in Gibraltar. At one point, more than half of the stores along

Israel estimates that better than 80% observe kashrut.

Gibraltar is supported by four synagogues, including the oldest, Shaar Hashamayim, which Gary and I toured with Mr. Israel. Founded in 1768, it is a beautiful building with mahogany pews and marble floors. It also houses several of the city's 18 Torahs, including one that is more than 250 years old.

In addition to the synagogues, Gibraltar has a Jewish day school and 3 Kosher markets. (Kosher food is imported from Britain and the Netherlands.) For the American Jew, Gibraltar is an easy place to visit as English is widely spoken.

Because of Gibraltar's size (barely two square miles), one can see all of the sights in a day, leaving no stone unturned. It is a perfect day trip to take from Southern Spain. Better yet, several cruise ships call on Gibraltar as they ply the Mediterranean allowing the traveler the day to explore before moving along the southern coast of Spain.

JCC's "Celebrate The Children" Presents

## Tom Chapin In Concert

The Jewish Community Center is proud to announce the "Celebrate the Children" inaugural event: popular family entertainer Tom Chapin in Concert at Spirit Square on Sunday, January 7, 1996.

Tom Chapin is best known for his warm style and creative performances geared toward children from age 3-12, and his appeal with adults as well. Chapin, whose best selling tapes include *Family Tree*, *Zag Zig* and *Mother Earth*, makes music that emphasize family, a positive self image and taking care of the environment. Although often full of ideas and messages, his overall tone is light, funny and engaging. According to Parents Magazine "nobody today is writing and performing better kids' songs than Tom Chapin, the Pied Piper of children's music."

Chapin's tapes, CDs and video entitled *This Pretty Planet*, *Tom Chapin Live in Concert*, will soon be available for sale at the JCC front desk. All of his recordings are perfect for birthday and Chanukah gifts!

"Celebrate the Children," chaired by Jane Weaver Sobel, is a project designed to raise funds for the JCC's Children and Family programs and services, which benefit the entire Charlotte community. "The possibilities are exciting," explains Sobel "for expansion in our Children and Family Department. We hope to increase the kinds of opportunities we can offer while maintaining the current standard of programs. The money we raise will also go toward our scholarship program, insuring that everyone who wants to participate can."

"Celebrate the Children" boasts a strong team of subcommittee chairs including Vicki Derderian for Publicity, Larry Farber and Robin Heiden for Performance and Hospitality, Lisa Platock for Sales and Melissa Raphael for Sponsorships.

Advance tickets are now on sale through Family Sponsorships. Borrowing the name of one of Chapin's signature tunes...the Family Tree sponsors will support the event in a special way. For \$ 100, Family Tree supporters will receive four tickets, an invitation to a pre-concert reception in honor of all our family and corporate sponsors and special recognition in all material regarding the event. The committee is hoping to encourage families to support "Celebrate the Children" in this significant way. After all, Jane Sobel reminds us "our children are definitely worth celebrating!"

Lisa Platock, chairing the Sales subcommittee, also explains another special feature of the Family Tree sponsorship program. "Those without children can also participate," she says "by joining the Family Tree and donating the tickets back to the JCC. We will then give those tickets to families that could not otherwise afford to attend. We really expect the whole community will want to get involved."

For more information on purchasing a Family Tree sponsorship, or getting involved in the "Celebrate the Children" committee, call Roni Fishkin at the JCC - 366-5007.

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