

**Community News**

**Refugees Reunited**

By Karen Brodsky

People are fearful all over the world — for their lives, their children, and their futures. We look at the past — at the horrible injustices done to our people. We know that similar injustices continue across the globe. It seems that very little has changed.

The Holocaust, as evil as it was, produced small miracles: a concentration camp survivor who was told she could never have children had three; husband and wife reconnecting after the war, each thinking the other was dead; families never expecting to see one another reuniting; the stories are many.

Each refugee settled by HIAS NC has a story: a dramatic rescue; fleeing with military police on their heels; days spent in the jungle with no food or water; imprisonment; years in refugee camps; and a husband and wife reuniting in Charlotte, against all odds.

Ruled by a military junta for almost 50 years, Burma (also known as Myanmar) is widely recognized as having one of the world's most repressive and abusive regimes.

It is against this backdrop that a love story began. Tha Nei Kung, a young musician living in Chin State in Burma, was called by the military government to do forced labor. A member of a small Christian ethnic minority, Kung refused. The local bible college took up a collection to help him escape. He left with the clothes on his back and traveled with the help of "agents," who charged him ridiculous fees. He rode in the trunk of a car to Rangoon. From there Kung fled to the Thai-Burma border and made his way through the jungle into Malaysia. Once in Kuala Lumpur, he stopped running.

However, it was just as dangerous being an undocumented Chin

refugee in Malaysia. There was no legal employment; lodging was scarce. The Malay police often raided places that harbored Chin refugees.

There were still good times, though, especially when Kung met Rebecca at a Christmas celebration in a church.

Rebecca has a harrowing story, too. When Rebecca studied in bible college and taught Sunday school, a Burmese Buddhist family moved to her village. The family's young daughter and Rebecca developed a friendship, but the father accused Rebecca of trying to convert the child. He reported Rebecca to the police, and they hunted her.

She, too, had to pay astronomical fees to a string of "agents" who arranged for her flight in car trunks to Kuala Lumpur. Often she shared the long, hot ride with two other people she didn't know. Once in Malaysia, Rebecca was industrious, finding different jobs to stay alive. She spoke some English, so she waitressed at places tourists frequented. Most fortuitous was the job she landed as a translator for the United Nations High Command for Refugees (UNHCR).

She went to a Christmas celebration in a church, where she met Kung. After two years, they married. In the interim, Rebecca's younger brothers arrived in Malaysia. She now had family to take care of also. Kung was lucky to be recruited to record back up guitar for a band.

Rebecca worked in the daytime; Kung in the evening. Rebecca miscarried. There was no time to mourn; less than five months after they wed, Rebecca and her brothers were approved to resettle in the US — without her husband. He encouraged her to go.

She came to Charlotte and was



*Happier times; Kung and Rebecca wed.*

settled by HIAS NC. She often worked two jobs to support her brothers. She learned to roll sushi and joined Dean & Deluca. With no car, she relied on the buses. Many times, she had to walk from her apartment on Idlewild and Monroe Roads to Phillips Place to work. She worked also as an interpreter.

Three years after applying for Kung to join her, she heard that he would arrive sometime in 2010. Now a case aide for HIAS NC, Rebecca prepared to renew their vows in Charlotte and have the wedding she never had in Malaysia.

It was as if they had never been apart, they said. Kung said Rebecca has not changed; she was just as independent and self-sufficient as she was when he met her. She says, with a big smile, "I forget to need him."

HIAS NC helps to create small miracles. In addition to volunteering to help or to adopt a refugee family, HIAS asks that you consider a cash donation to support its work. HIAS NC is always in need of furniture and housewares donations. Phone 704-535-8803 or e-mail [Ellen.dubin@hias.org](mailto:Ellen.dubin@hias.org) to schedule a pick up for larger items or to make a donation. ☆

**Shalom Lake Norman Festival**

Shalom Lake Norman returns for a second year, Sunday, August 29, from noon-5 PM, at Ramsey Creek Park in Cornelius. The crowd of last year has been anxiously awaiting a repeat of the festival sponsored by the Jewish Council of Lake Norman. Much more has been added to this year's festival. More entertainment for both adults and children, which will require that you come early and stay till the end. More vendors and more food.

Featured entertainers are: Steven Weintraub who has taught Jewish dancing and is recognized for his traditional version of the Bottle Dance. A trained Alvin Ailey dancer, he has been a Yiddish dance instructor at KlexKamp since 1997. Steven will be entertaining as well as teaching Jewish ethnic dancing.

Freylach Time, a Klezmer Dance Band, will get your feet stomping and your hands clapping. They are North Carolina's most popular Klezmer band. Their recordings of traditional Klezmer

music are sold and enjoyed nationwide. Klezmer music has been described as having a laugh in it and a tear in it. The sound of the wailing clarinet and the acoustics of the accordion, are staple instruments for good Klezmer. Add to this combo other instruments and a singer, too, and you have a fantastic concert that you must attend.

In addition to music and dance there will be activities for children to enjoy, such as a bounce house and a giant slide. For the shopper, you must stroll through the shuk area. Vendors will be selling Judaica from specialty food to art.

Come hungry, because the food will be mouth watering! The caterer promises a Jewish gastronomic experience.

If you can't park at the park, off sight parking is available with bus transportation provided.

Follow the signs and hosts will be there to guide you.

**Sunday, August 29, 2010  
Noon to 5 PM  
Ramsey Creek Park, Cornelius**

*Support Local Business*  
**CAROLINA MARKING DEVICES, INC.**  
*Over 50 Years Serving Charlotte*

3405 S. Tryon St.  
Charlotte, NC 28232  
Tel: 704-525-7600 Fax: 704-525-7187

**PERMA STAMPS, RUBBER STAMPS,  
NOTARY & CORPORATE SEALS,  
SIGNS, BANNERS, MAGNETIC SIGNS,  
and more...**

*Ada Shapiro* *Jeffrey Shapiro*

*Your connection to the*  
**Jewish**  
*Community...*

[www.mattimovescharlotte.com](http://www.mattimovescharlotte.com)

Whether cross town or across the country, let me be the Real Estate, agent to help you move into the home of your dreams.

I have a proven record of results since 1985 in assisting people buy and sell their homes.

**Matti**  
**Ordan Reider**  
Specializing In  
Service Since 1985!

**704.849.6654 Office**  
**704.904.7250 Mobile**

*Call for a personal relocation package!*

**ellen late Realtors**

*Experience • Knowledge • Service*

**ARE YOU PREPARED FOR LONG TERM CARE?**

**Find Out**

- ◆ What long term care is and why you and your loved ones are at high risk for needing care at home or in a facility.
- ◆ Why the limited benefits from Government (Medicare or Medicaid) are not a good choice for your long term care needs.
- ◆ At what age should you consider buying long term care insurance. You will be surprised to know why and how buying at a younger age is better for you.

***If you don't want to put the burden of long term care on your family then contact me for alternative solutions.***

**Milton Goldstein, CLTC**  
**Certified Long Term Care Specialist**

Charlotte, NC: (704) 442-5618  
Birmingham, AL: (205) 907-0670  
E-mail: [miltgold@bellsouth.net](mailto:miltgold@bellsouth.net)

**Visit my Web Site: [www.goldsteintlc.com](http://www.goldsteintlc.com)**