

Charlotteans Tour Israel

Mayor Knox's Trip - The story behind the News

For a week in May more than one million people in the Charlotte Metropolitan area were treated to the sites and sounds of modern Israel portrayed in an understanding and sympathetic way. Each night, almost 20 minutes of prime news time focused on Mayor Eddie Knox as he toured the country and participated with 19 other Mayors from around the world in a conference called together by Mayor Teddy Kolleck of Jerusalem.

The story behind this top news story began more than two years ago with a phone call to the Charlotte Jewish Federation from the American Jewish Congress (AJC). Would Mayor Knox be interested in participating in the annual Mayor's Conference in Jerusalem? The Community Relations Committee of the Federation, chaired by Dr. Jared Schwartz, considered the idea and, though people closely involved with the Mayor, found that he was interested but for a later date. The AJC, a nationwide organization concerned with building bridges of understanding between the Jewish community and the general community, was asked to wait a year. And, they did, with the result that in the late winter, Mayor Knox received a personal invitation from Mayor Kolleck.

The Mayor was as good as his word. He reviewed the purposes of the conference and saw they dealt with problems of change and growth in cities. He recognized that Jerusalem and Charlotte were of a similar size and shared growth problems. He also recognized that over the past 5 years the AJC has made it possible for more than 100 Mayors from around the world to see Jerusalem and Israel first hand.

Even with his extremely pressing schedule as both Mayor and Gubernatorial candidate, his personal religious convictions and desire to visit Jerusalem caused him to accept the invitation. Furthermore, he decided to take with him his college freshman son.

The Federation was well aware of the costliness of such a trip, especially for two, and especially in the face of the costs of running for governor. It offered to raise funds to assist the Mayor by paying his portion and he gratefully accepted. More than 15 individuals and the Federation itself combined to raise the necessary \$2000 with the clear understanding that Mayor Knox was under no obligation and was free to make his own observations and to form his own opinions. Far from being the culmination of the Federation and its CRC's effort, that was just the beginning.

By working closely with the TV stations Richard A. Klein, Rabbi Richard Rocklin and the CRC were able to offer to provide for them the kind of supplementary stories which made the trip logical for them to cover. Both WSOC and WBTB sent crews to scour the country from one end to another. Between them they were helped to talk with Charlotteans living and/or working in Israel. They were taken to West Bank settlements and to meet Major Saad Haddad of the Lebanese Christian militia. They enjoyed home hospitality and interviews with the heads of state. Of the 20 mayors attending only one other TV station, one from Orlando, Florida, went. As a result, the news stories produced by our stations were picked up for national

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"A Time To Stand Together"

By Michael Schreiberman



Mike and Sara Schreiberman enjoying the sights of Israel along with other members of the "Yachad" mission.

Sara and I journeyed to Israel in April as part of the United Jewish Appeal's Young Leadership Mission, YACHAD, "A Time To Stand Together." Approximately 1000 young people from all over the country participated in the mission.

The trip was planned not only to see historic and modern Israel but also to see the many ways UJA money contributes to the social and human needs of the people there.

The first evening the group was greeted by Tel Aviv's mayor, Shlomo Lahat, and after dinner we participated in singing and Israeli dancing. The next day the group separated into approximately 30 busses and began the visits and tour of the country. During the trip emphasis was placed on meeting and talking with the Israeli people to better understand their daily needs and concerns.

We visited the Lod Absorption Center, east of Tel Aviv, where immigrants live while learning Hebrew, and finding jobs and homes. We helped plant shrubs at Kibbutz Hilot near the Egyptian border. We spent an evening with Israeli Air Force officers and their families at Palmachim Air Force Base. At Ben Shemen Youth Village we lunched with young boys and girls who come from disadvantaged or broken homes. Each group visited their project renewal cities (since we were the only people on the trip from the

Carolinas we did not get to visit our city of Nazareth Elite) and we went with the Birmingham group to visit the Yemenite town of Rosh Haayin.

The entire group was treated to a demonstration by one of the Israeli Defense Force armor units in the Golan Heights. We spent one evening on beautiful Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) and worked half a day in the banana fields of Kibbutz Deganya the next morning.

Other highlights of the trip included visits to Jericho, Shabbat at the Western Wall, tours of Jerusalem and the Old City, Yad Vashem (Memorial to the Six Million), Mt. Herzl Military Cemetery and one full day at Masada and the Dead Sea.

While there we were addressed by many of Israel's leaders such as: Shimon Peres, leader of the Parliamentary Opposition; Yitshak Navon, former President of the State of Israel; Rafael Eitan, Chief of Staff of the IDF; Yehuda Ben Meir, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs; Uriel Lynn, Minister of Energy; General Matan Vilnai, Commander of Armor units in the Golan Heights; Akiva Lewinsky, treasurer of the Jewish Agency. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Menachem Begin was forced to cancel his address to the group due to emergency meetings resulting from the bombing of the American Embassy in Beirut.

A Remarkable Country

Editors note:

Jessica Schorr, a member of the Charlotte community visited Israel in May. The following is her observation of the country and its people.

By Jessica Schorr

Striking contrasts, even paradoxes, appear everywhere in Israel. In Jerusalem, the city holy to three religions, noisy buses swoop down streets as people oblivious to the significance of the city shove each other on the narrow sidewalks. Throughout this ancient city, views of old stone buildings are obscured by wheelbarrows and cranes and rubble, as construction goes heartily and noisily on. The warmth with which Israelis welcome distant family into their homes seems a contrast to the rudeness with which they trample each other when boarding buses.

The sense of peace about the country almost seems to belie the fact that this had been a country at war. The sun shines brightly in the clear blue sky as the land blossoms with the fruits of years of careful cultivation. The highways are lined with citrus groves, the dark green leaves dotted with oranges. Between them lie sleepy villages in which children play in schoolyards as their parents go about their daily work.

Beneath this sense of peace is another layer. Major issues trouble many Israelis. Besides the ever-present question of security, many are now disturbed about the character of the Jewish state. They recognize the paradox of having a democratic state in which 1.3 million people (the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza) cannot vote; yet they see the impossibility of maintaining a Jewish state with an Arab majority. They shudder when comparisons are made to the apartheid system of South Africa. They worry about laws that blatantly discriminate, such as the recent one which allots allowances to large families in which someone has been either in the army or to yeshiva (effectively excluding only Arabs).

A young Israeli lawyer initially tried to explain that anti-Arab sentiment is not racist and then concluded that when the Army Chief of Staff refers to Arabs as "drugged cockroaches," it is difficult to label that anything other than racism. And an Israeli professor reflected, "It is terrible to hear a Jewish mother threaten her child by telling him an Arab is going to get him."

Israel is a remarkable country. In a land that contained little development 35 years ago, busy cities thrive,

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COUNTLESS MARA TIES

for

Father's Day - June 19

at

PAUL
SIMON

Myers Park Center
1027 Providence Rd.

Sharon Shopping Center
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