

My Voice . . .

By Susan Kramer

What's an editor to do? I got a call last week — and at first, I was sure the caller had mistaken me for one of the many other Susans that work at Shalom Park. After all, she simply asked for Susan, adding that she thought perhaps I could help her with a problem. She went on to describe a situation definitely not related to the editorial duties at *The CJN*, and I quickly stopped her and tried to explain that maybe she was trying to reach Susan Estroff or Susie DeSarno or Sue Brodsky or Suzanne Cannon . . . well, you get the idea.

But no, it turned out that it was me she wanted — or more exactly, my position as caretaker of the Jewish community's ink vat. In short, she wasn't looking to me for a solution to her problem, but for an "airing" of her woes.

Gulp! Woodard and Bernstien I'm not, and the mere thought of becoming embroiled in anything the least bit controversial gave me

considerable pause. It also gave me food for thought about just what is the role of *The Charlotte Jewish News* in our community.

The obvious answers are easy. *The CJN* spreads the news about people, places and events in our community. We try to enlighten you about local, national and international happenings. There's some education, some schmoozing and maybe even occasionally some humor, but there is rarely anything that remotely resembles controversy . . . and that's not an oversight. *The CJN* is owned and funded by the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte. The JFGC is funded directly by the generosity of members of our community that come from all the streams of Judaism. Taking a stand that might offend a partner, a congregation or an organization brings the cliché about "biting the hand that feeds you" to mind.

On the other hand, we want to be responsive to our readers, and I

immediately did what any good editor would do — I turned the issue over to my Editorial Board. Too make a long column short, here is their good advice, which I heartily endorse:

1. We will publish letters to the editor on topics of general communal concern.

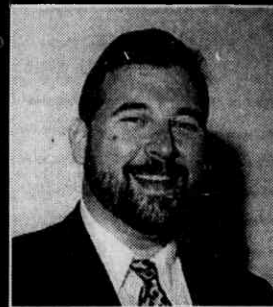
2. Letters must be signed by the author in order to be considered for publication.

3. Editing of letters for length is at the prerogative of the editor.

4. Final authority to publish any letter resides with the Editorial Board of *The Charlotte Jewish News*.

We invite your input and welcome your participation in *The Charlotte Jewish News*. You are, after all, the reason we are here. ☆

Susan Kramer



Point of View

Each issue of the *CJN* features an article written by one of three rabbis active in the Charlotte Community.

This Month:
Rabbi James M. Bennett
of Temple Beth El

The relative tranquility of the summer was destroyed for Jews throughout the world by the shocking suicide bomb attack at Machaneh Yehudah in Jerusalem. As we in America watched the carnage and the news reports, we were shaken from the foundation of our comfortable view that all is right with the world. All is far from right, as long as terrorist bombers are willing to blow themselves and innocent victims up in the name of religious or political fundamentalism and extremism.

The lessons from this latest chapter in the horrors of the struggle for peace in the Middle East remind us of how much work remains to be done. The government of Israel must find a way to emerge from the reactionary politics of the Netanyahu regime and restore hope as well as security to all the people who dwell within her borders. This must include a full recognition of the civil and religious rights of people of every race and nation who call Israel home or homeland. The Palestinian people must do their part as well. Arafat must take absolute measures to condemn terrorism with action as well as words. Only when terrorism is entirely unacceptable to the Palestinian leadership and only when the culture of the Palestinian people is focused upon an acceptance of the permanent existence of the Israel will peace be allowed to exist.

The struggle for peace is a daunting challenge. The people who live the days and nights of their lives in the shadow of this challenge must continue to have hope.

And what are we to do? We who live in the Diaspora find it so easy to ignore the reality of life in Israel. Until CNN brings the latest tragedy to our television screens, so many of us almost forget the struggle that continues daily.

A day or two after the bombing at Machaneh Yehudah, a prominent rabbi living in Jerusalem wrote via email to his colleagues in the United States. He harshly condemned the American Jewish community for its lack of concern and attention given to Israel on a daily basis, not to mention in the face of tragedy. His point was that he seldom hears words of concern or support from Jews outside of Israel, even when great tragedy strikes. He wondered in writing whether Jews in the Diaspora are beginning not to care about Israel.

There are times, living right here in Charlotte, that I wonder the same thing. So few members of our Jewish community have traveled to Israel, and fewer still say that they plan to. While we sent a wonderful group of 14 teens to Israel on various summer programs this summer, and while there are group missions or tours occasionally from our community to Israel, our general level of knowledge about and concern for Israel is lacking. The first thing we can do is educate ourselves, stay current on what is happening in Israel, speak out when the media wrongly condemns Israel, and dedicate ourselves to supporting Israel with our words, our dollars and our physical visits.

Our local Federation campaign in part benefits many worthy causes in Israel. Both the Reform and Conservative movements also have organizations at work in Israel which are worthy recipients of our tzedakah dollars.

But even more than our money, Israel needs our knowledge and commitment, our visits and our love. Many Israelis today wonder whether American Jews would care if Israel ceased to exist. We must demonstrate that Israel matters to us.

This year Israel will celebrate her 50th Anniversary of Statehood with a yearlong celebration. We will have many opportunities to participate in this celebration here in Charlotte as well. We must all dedicate ourselves to making this celebration an affirmation of our commitment to the future of Israel, the land and the people.

Peace may remain a distant dream, but it remains our dream nonetheless. It was the vision of this peace which led Theodor Herzl to remind us a century ago that "If you will it, it is no dream." This is the same vision of which we sing in "Hatikvah," (The Hope), the National Anthem of Israel, "To be a free people, in our land, in the Land of Zion, in Jerusalem." ☆

Letter to the Editor:

This letter recently arrived at The Jewish Day School of Charlotte. The Financial Policy Committee felt it was worth sharing with the entire Jewish community as it explains a phenomena happening throughout the country in Jewish communities like our own.

Sincerely, The Jewish Day School Financial Policy Committee Lauren Stark, Lane Ostrow, Fred Shporer, Jodi Molinari, Tracy Brown, Nancy Kipnis, Gale Osborne, Janice Cantor, Karen Ransenberg, Sandy Rosenberg, Beth van Amerongen

Dear Day School President:

We are Presidents and representatives of Jewish day schools from around the United States who are concerned with a growing challenge, a challenge that is on the verge of becoming a crisis. Who will finance the day school tuitions of the growing number of children whose parents can't afford to pay? Will Jewish day schools only be available for the rich?

The survival of the Jewish Community is based upon

educating our young. Numerous studies have shown that the Jewish day school experience is the most effective vehicle in delivering that education and in combating assimilation. Yet, the cost of day school education is a very difficult challenge for most families. As the day schools continue to maintain educational excellence, the costs are outstripping the resources. Almost every day school in the country is running on an operating deficit. Invariably the schools are borrowing to pay the previous year's bills. This is an analogous to paying the monthly Visa bill with a MasterCard.

There is a crisis in the day school movement that is not receiving the recognition it merits. The national Jewish agenda must acknowledge this crisis and answer the following urgent question. Will a Jewish day school education only be available for the rich and the upper middle-class? If the obvious answer is no, then who is responsible to pay for those families that cannot afford it? Should it be the individual

institution that is already often operating under a deficit? Or should it be the larger Jewish Community which has a vested survival interest in providing a proper Jewish education for its youth? How should community resources be allocated for the Jewish day school movement? These are problems of herculean proportions with far reaching implications for the future of the Jewish Community. We dare not bury our heads in the sand and hope that the issue goes away. History will be the harsh judge of communities that do not provide adequate resources to Jewishly educate their youth.

It is now necessary to bring together the leadership of the day school movement from around the country to discuss and lobby on behalf of our continued existence. It is only through a united effort that a solution will be found. We have formed the National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee whose sole purpose is to address the urgent need of funding day school scholarships. We are hopeful that the coordinated voice of this Committee, representing over 200,000 children, will be heard and gain a slot among the highest priorities of the national philanthropic agenda.

We have scheduled a forum on Sunday, September 21, 1997 to be held in Chicago. We are pleased that Rabbi Nathan Laufer, President of the Wexner Heritage Foundation, will serve as moderator for the scheduled forum. Among the various speakers, representatives of Brandeis University's Center for Modern Jewish Studies and representatives of the Samis Foundation in Seattle will present the results of their innovative scholarship program in Seattle where day school enrollment has been substantially increased.

We are sending this letter to the Presidents of the 600 day schools around the country. This is truly a grass roots effort by the people who are most involved in the process and most knowledgeable of the problem. We urge you to send a representative to this

forum. Enclosed is a response card. Please return same at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions, please call George Hanus at (312) 332-4172.

Yours truly,

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The Charlotte Jewish News

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