

My Voice . . .

By Susan Kramer

There's a well-kept secret in our community that needs to be exposed. Since no one else has stepped forward, I take it as my duty to tell the world what only a few now know and whisper about.

Did you have any idea that, in our own fair Jewish community, behind closed doors and drawn blinds, there are any number of persons who consistently-dare we say it-take pen in hand (or computer as the case may be) and actually put their thoughts and feelings on paper. Yes — it's true, though they would deny it. We have writers in our community! Some of these people actually have talent-why, some have even been published (although sadly not in *the CJN*.) You know who you are-and your jig is up! Its a scandal, and as an editor, I'll not rest until every last one of you closet writers has been exposed — and published — in the pages of *the Charlotte Jewish News*.

Actually, all banter aside-it is a shame that there is so much talent out there and we haven't found a way to tap into it. Each month, I

receive unsolicited articles, columns and opinion pieces from writers all over the country who would like space in our newspaper. (Some would also like to be paid for their work, but that's another story.) I can't help but think each time I read one that surely there is someone in our community who could have done the piece equally as well — if not better, and as an added bonus, the article would have had a local slant.

In fact, in the last several months, we have been privileged to print several articles by local authors, and the feedback I have received from readers has been tremendous. The readers of the *CJN* appreciate the time and effort that these authors have taken to share their stories with the community. There is a certain hunger for connection in our society today, and seeing a familiar name on an article is one small way of making that connection.

The topics have been varied — travel to exotic places; an insider's look at an interfaith marriage; a

teen's story of his encounter with three very brave, talented and oh-by-the-way — wheelchair bound athletes; touching accounts of homecomings and closure. This month, I feel especially privileged that Phylliss Schultz agreed to share the story of her journey to Poland in search of her roots in our pages. (There is still a river, page 2.)

The Charlotte Jewish News is interested in hearing from all the others out there who have stories to tell. If you have information, an opinion, a story or a poem that you would like to share, please let us help. Although we can't pay you for your writing, we can help you connect with your community.

As I said, I know who you are, and if you don't surrender on your own, next time, I'm gong to name names!

Susan Kramer

There is still a river

By Phyllis Schultz

Four years ago, I made an astonishing discovery in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Visiting the museum for the first time, I came face to face with my father's boyhood picture in an exhibit called the "Tower of Life." Eager to learn more about the exhibit, I then found out that the Tower featured photographs of the people who had lived in Eishishok, his childhood home. The town's Jewish residents had been annihilated by the Nazis in 1941, about fourteen years after my father had emigrated to the United States.

The historian who created this exhibit, Yaffa Eliach, now a professor at Brooklyn College, was one of a handful of Eishishok residents who had survived the massacre on Rosh Hashanah, 1941. After my discovery in the museum, my family and I met with Yaffa in New York. Because she had ties to the town and had studied it extensively, she knew all about our background — more than we knew ourselves. She described the lives of my father and his sister: who their friends were, what clubs they were in, which soccer team my father played on. Yaffa's uncle and my father, it turned out, were best friends. My father had died two years before my discovery in the museum, but now Yaffa could identify people in our family

Thanks to Yaffa's description, this distant village took shape in my mind's eye: It was a commercially thriving, forward-thinking shtetl (Jewish village) which proudly traced its Jewish roots back 900 years. What our father had chosen not to tell us about his past we were now learning from this dedicated historian with a quest to make the town's story live on. In my thank you letter to her I wrote, "Your Tower gave me my past. But what did I get? A glimpse of a 900-year-old world



Phyllis and brother, Ed Schultz, at the river for which their family was named centuries ago. The river's Polish name is Soltzka.

that vanished overnight. This is the closest I will ever get to what once was."

Now, four years later, I have gotten closer — geographically, at least. This September my brother and I had the opportunity to accompany Yaffa and a PBS crew as they filmed a documentary about the town, located in eastern Lithuania, a Baltic country which has been free of Soviet control since 1991. In our group were people from the United States, Canada and Israel who had lived in Eishishok or who had roots there, as my brother and I did. Those who had lived here we called "survivors," not "natives." After hearing their stories about how they outlived the Nazi hell, I concluded that this was the only appropriate term for them. Because these eye witnesses are now elderly, and as this is not an



Phyllis and Ed at the monument at the men's massacre site in Eishishok.

photo collection and explain the significance of the events depicted. Yaffa even told us that our family name was not originally Schultz, but Soltz; we were named for a river near the town.

easy destination to visit, it was essential for Yaffa to work with the filmmakers now to shoot this on-location documentary.

Our excitement grew as the bus approached Eishishok, about 35

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The Future of the Kibbutz

(Continued from page 1)

The practice not only thwarted the economic efficiency of the work, but also fostered indifference among members towards their work. Now, the emphasis is on livelihood--on the economic value of the work. Many kibbutzim have abolished the work committee and formed a 'human resources' body, one of whose functions is to assist the member to plan his professional future."

As a result, more kibbutzim are allowing members to choose to work off the kibbutz if they can bring a reasonable salary to the community. At the same time, more hired workers are being accepted into the kibbutzim to substitute for the gap in the labor force.

"When I came to kibbutz eight years ago, I was sent to work in the chicken coop," relates Sara Idelson from Kibbutz Palmachim. "This was in spite of the fact that I had a degree in communications and a professional background in film." Today, Idelson directs films for

the kibbutz video production house she helped found four years ago.

Entrepreneurial ventures of this type have sprung up on kibbutzim across the country in recent years. Most of the businesses deal with crafts or services: pottery, weaving, tourism and software production.

A Return to Socialist Values?

There is no doubt that social problems are surfacing in the wake of recent changes that challenge the fundamentals of the traditional kibbutz life. Kibbutz HaSolalim, a small community in northern Israel, created a system of taxation and a "mutual aid" fund to help members who earn less than the "minimum wage." Members of Kibbutz HaSolalim voted to implement changes in all areas of kibbutz life: economic, services, social security, organizational structure, constitution and kibbutz assets.

The changes include separation of the management of the eco-

nomie activities that work according to market principles from the management of the community activities that work according to egalitarian and democratic principles. At HaSolalim, most of the public budgets have been privatized and salaries distributed according to the value of the work done. At the same time a system of taxation was implemented whereby members are charged for the collective communal services such as culture, education, health. Those members who don't earn a minimum salary may supplement their incomes from a mutual aid fund that is financed by taxing members who earn more. "This is the ultimate form of collectivism," claims kibbutz secretary Mchael Mensky.

Ultimately, each kibbutz must find solutions that are suitable to their particular community, even though this may change the definition of what a kibbutz is and result in the emergence of a new form of community. ☆

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