



# AMERICAN VETERANS OF ISRAEL

VOLUNTEERS IN ISRAEL'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE  
UNITED STATES & CANADIAN VOLUNTEERS  
136 East 39th St., New York, N.Y. 10016

## Newsletter Index Now Available

A precursor organization appeared in New York in 1951. No written record of its activities between then and the early sixties remains. Around 1963, the group seems to have been reconstituted but, again, left no record before the appearance of the AVI Newsletter in 1966. Since then the vicissitudes of the organization, now designated as the American Veterans of Israel, may be followed in the AVI Newsletters. It was possible to collect 145 Newsletters between that date and the Winter of 2003. This may not exhaust the number published. Newsletter editors have included Sidney Rabinovich, Samuel Alexander and Samuel Z. Klausner, among others.

Now, for the first time, an Index to articles and photographs published in the Newsletter is available. The index was created using a software program entitled wIndex, which allowed for three levels of classification. The work of indexing was done by Andrew Hochberg, of the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies of the University of Pennsylvania, under the guidance of the present editor. In two-column format the Index runs 19 pages and so is too lengthy for publication in the Newsletter. It has though been made available in PDF format through a link on the AVI website ([www.sas.upenn.edu/~sklausne/aviweb.html](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~sklausne/aviweb.html)). The Newsletters themselves are catalogued in the library of the University of Florida as part of the AVI Archives managed by Ralph Lowenstein. Newsletter copies may be obtained, for the cost of photocopying by addressing Carl Van Ness, Aliya Bet and Machal Archives, Special Collections, POB 117007, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville, FL 32611-7007 ([carvann@smathersnt2.uflib.ufl.edu](mailto:carvann@smathersnt2.uflib.ufl.edu)). Thus, under the heading of AVI Board Policy Decisions there is an entry "Letter

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*Ambassador Alon Pinkas addresses awardees on the Intrepid*

## Israel Consulate in New York Pays Homage to Machalniks: 300 at Ceremony Aboard the Intrepid

Following the Salute to Israel parade on June 1, 2003, with thousands marching up New York's Fifth Avenue, a special tribute was paid to Machalniks on the U.S. Aircraft carrier, Intrepid. The event organized by the Israel Consulate General of New York honored sixty Machal and Aliyah Bet Veterans in the presence of Alon Pinkas, Consul General, Major General Moshe Sukenik of the IDF General Staff, and Mr. William Bryan White, President, Intrepid Museum Foundation.

The event was organized by a Consulate team consisting of Yahel Vilan and Michal Rachlevsky and headed by Ido Aharoni, Consul for Media and Public Relations in New York.

Some 300 family members and guests attended the ceremony as each Veteran was awarded a proclamation, expressing the State of Israel's recognition for "service beyond the call of duty." Spouses and children of deceased veterans received the awards on their behalf. Ambassador Pinkas said he seldom was moved as he

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## *Arab "Machal"*

*We have been aware of Arab military volunteers recruited to fight alongside the several regular Arab armies in Palestine in 1948. They have not enjoyed the same historical, journalistic and fictional treatment accorded the volunteers who fought alongside the Israeli forces. In response to reports of volunteers from Arab countries who came to the support of Saddam Hussein, an article appeared in the Qatar publication Al-Jazeera on April 14, 2003. The author, Mahmud Abd-al-'Ati, takes the occasion to review the role of Arab volunteers in various conflicts from Palestine 1948 to Iraq 2003. He draws upon material assembled by the Office of Research of Al-Jazeera. I thought the article might be of interest to readers of the AVI Newsletter so I translated it for publication here. Similarities and differences between the Arab and Israeli volunteers will be apparent. The editor*

## **Arab Volunteers in Iraq... what does the Future Hold for Them?**

An unknown fate awaits Arab volunteers in Iraq. Now that American and British forces dominate the country, no one knows what the future holds for them. On the one hand not much is known about their personal decisions. On the other

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[www.sas.upenn.edu/~sklausne/aviweb.html](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~sklausne/aviweb.html)



*Cadets Bergman and Moosey  
light memorial candle*

## West Point, May 4, 2003: Recalling the Fallen

The annual David M. Marcus Memorial Service was held on May 4 at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Military tradition of troops at attention and at parade rest merged with the deep historical solemnity of a Jewish funeral. While AVI members around New York arrange the event, the event had the spirit of an AVI national observance. Members of the Jewish War Veterans Post of Rockland/Orange County and guests from the North Eastern states joined some thirty former Machal and their families. They had all assembled to honor Col. Marcus and, through his sacrifice, to honor the American volunteers who fought for the establishment of the Jewish State.

The ceremonies opened in the relatively new Jewish chapel. This year the Jewish cadet chaplain, Rabbi Huerta, always an imposing prophetic presence with his military bearing, was absent attending to our troops in the Persian Gulf. The assembled stood at attention as the JWV contingent marched down the center aisle presenting the colors. Retired Col. Lewis Zickel welcomed the veterans and guests in the name of the Commandant of the Academy. Si Spiegelman followed with words of welcome in the name of the AVI. Cadets Jacob Bergman and Mathew Moosey came forward to light a candle in memory of Col. Marcus. Rabbi Nisson Shulman, a retired Captain USN, gave an invocation, words of Torah and heroism.

Paul Kaye, President of AVI, intoned the names of nineteen American and Canadian veterans who had died in the past year.

- Irving Block, Haganah
- Victor Chaber, Air Force

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## A Future AVI Trusteeship... Role for Our Children

One purpose of the American Veterans of Israel has been to sustain the historical memory of Machal volunteers in Aliya Bet and the several Israeli military formations of 1948. The mechanisms for doing this have been our Newsletter, the Archives in Gainesville and the various collective events we have sponsored. It is reasonable to assume that the present membership will not be able to sustain this program for more than another five years or so.

In the light of that we are seeking to appoint a committee of trustees, which beginning around 2008, will monitor the closure of the organization. We envision that this will entail maintenance of the list of veterans, keeping in correspondence with them and, on this basis, reporting a once or twice yearly necrology, assuring that the archives are managed properly by personnel of the University of Florida, attending to fiduciary matters relating to endowments (such as the funds for the Archives and the Machal memorials in Israel) and, at the proper time, disposing of cash balances and closing the organizational bank account.

We believe that a committee of some of our sons and daughters could monitor this process responsibly. The purpose of this announcement is to inquire whether any member might have a son or daughter who could join such a committee. If so, please advise Simon Spiegelman, Chairman of the AVI Executive Board by telephone (212 685 8548) or by e-mail ([spiegelsi@aol.com](mailto:spiegelsi@aol.com)).

## MY MAHAL STORY: My experiences as a volunteer nurse during the Israel War of Independence. 1948-49

by Ruth Stern

Early in 1948, the excitement of recruiting people to go over and assist Israel, was spreading by word of mouth across South Africa. I was at the SA Zionist Federation in Johannesburg, sitting in the office of Simie Weinstein, the former chaplain of the South African Expeditionary Forces in East Africa. He had taken time to speak to me although he was extremely busy organizing volunteers to serve in the war that had broken out against the fledgling State of Israel.

'Ruth, Simie Weinstein smiled, 'I'm always pleased to see you, but my dear, this is about war, and not for you. Right now we are preparing to send people with military training to Israel. It is remarkable that the call to the South African ex-servicemen's League has aroused an uncanny flame of identification, especially from those who hadn't been oriented to Zionism. The general response for volunteers from so many unexpected sources has been heartwarming'. Simie looked at his watch.

I realized that Simie, in his quiet and unassuming way, was being polite. He was aware that I had spent the year 1946 in Palestine, (then under the rule of the British Mandate), one of the 30 participants in the first course for Zionist youth leaders, and now I had come to see him about returning to serve as a volunteer in the war. Despite my recent experience, his fatherly attitude to me hadn't changed as he kindly tried to dissuade me.

He obviously had many pressing and important matters to deal with and was rightly impatient for me to leave. 'I won't take up your time, Simie, but please understand, I have to go back to Israel. I made a vow to someone called Uri, when I spent time on Kibbutz Revivim in the Negev. He was killed recently.' I tried to keep the emotion out of my voice, 'Also I want to join the many friends I made there, in Tel-Aviv and in Jerusalem! I plunged on, 'I could really contribute to the war effort. Don't forget that I speak Hebrew, I have studied bio-chemistry and anatomy and physiology and dietetics, and done first-aid courses, I'm sure I could go as a practical nurse.'

Simie interrupted my outburst, 'OK Ruth, I'll see what I can do. Now off you go. I realize that your parents have a very determined and unusual daughter on their hands: As I got up to leave he added, 'Have you spoken to Bernard about your plans to return?' He was referring to my uncle, Bernard Gering who was chairman of the S.A. Zionist Federation. 'I don't



Ruth Stern

want special privileges, Simie, I know you'll be objective, that's why I've come to you. Israel needs reinforcement urgently and hopefully formal arrangements to send qualified army, airforce and medical veterans to Israel are already on the way. I want to join them, I must go back, Simie; I repeated, 'and thanks for listening.'

Until I received word about the death of Uri, I hadn't told my parents about my stay at Kibbutz Revivim, as I was sure they couldn't fathom how I felt or imagine the tiny Negev outpost where 25 young people were creating a new presence in the desert. Life in South Africa was so different from that isolated outpost, that it would have been impossible for them to grasp the simple and idealistic way of life that had so appealed to me. But they did understand and comfort me when they heard my faltering account of Uri's tragic death while he was trying to rescue his friend trapped in an Arab ambush. They accepted my desire to return to Israel, but it would be sometime in the future, perhaps. They could let their daughter take part in a study course under the watchful eyes of supervisors and naturally be a good Zionist in South Africa and support the movement and the war effort from the safety of the Diaspora. However, allowing her to go to a war-stricken country would be madness. I stood my ground to the consternation of my parents.

At last I got word that I was to join a group of volunteers, the only woman among the twenty. We were briefed on the plan to fly us to Europe, our supposed destination, where we would be met by Hagana members and from there transferred to Israel. A fictitious air line had been established by the organizers as a cover to allow us to leave SA legitimately. Each one of us was assigned a role; mine was as a student going to study in England via Italy.

'It's not too late to change your mind.' My father broached the subject again. We were having tea on our veranda. 'Please consider the practical side and the dangers. All the volunteers going over are war veterans or qualified doctors and nurses. You're too young and inexperienced.'

My mother quietly added her thoughts, 'Causing others to worry about you, you might even be a hindrance,' Then aloud, 'Ruth dear why can't you be like your sisters? Why not enjoy your popularity, complete your studies? Why do you have such strange aspirations?'

It was not easy to be the parents of their non-conformist daughter who had become dedicated to the Zionist cause and drawn to the Land of Israel, unlike her three older sisters. 'It's as if she has a calling,' my dear old nanny Janet said. She realized that I had changed, and that my convictions were not my former euphoric idealistic dreams. Now I was aware of a much harsher reality and ready to face it.

...*(There follows an account of the trip to Palestine..ed)*

As soon as we disembarked we were separated from the other passengers and driven to the *Kelet*, an induction center. I was directed to the women's section where I suddenly felt stranded without the quiet support of my nineteen 'body guards'. The impact of the strenuous journey now struck me. I recall the impression of being in the midst of confusion and darkness and feeling terribly tired as I was led away by a khaki clad woman. 'Why is everything so dim?' I whispered 'Air-raid precautions' she replied. She looked at me and kindly took my hand. I did not meet her again after that night, but I never forgot that simple act of compassion as a moment of panic came over me at what I had let myself in for.

Next morning I went through the procedure of becoming a member of the Medical Corps. The initial problem of dealing with a young woman who didn't belong to any contingent was solved by my insistence that I wished to assist as a nurse. I managed to make myself understood and received sympathetic attention. Perhaps it was because they didn't have much time to waste or more likely they were so short of nurses that they welcomed me. Thus on the 6<sup>th</sup>, September, 1948 I was accepted into the Medical Corps. I was sent to Tel-Litwinsky, Military Hospital No. 5, where there were already many South African doctors.

Tel-Litwinsky was originally an Allied Army base which had been converted into a sprawling hospital. An enormous clean-up had made the filthy barracks

## My Mahal Story

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suitable to accommodate patients and staff, but it was far from being anything like my vision of a hospital. I found myself in the staff quarters housed in a room with three nurses. Someone showed me where our showers and toilets were. Others took me to the dining room. It was very informal and friendly, but I soon realized how hard everyone worked and how the daily toll of sick and wounded needed immediate care which was administered unstintingly. With very little time to get my bearings I was sent to meet Lea, the head nurse of the internal medicine wards. I was assigned to report for duty the following morning at the internal medicine ward, hut no. 35.

It was amazing how the staff managed to improvise and cope in such austere, almost primitive conditions. There was a shortage of everything, from bedding and food to basic medical equipment and supplies. The few syringes and needles were washed and sterilized in boiling water to keep up with the demand. How people at home take the luxuries and comforts for granted, I found myself comparing, while here in the midst of war and suffering no-one complains. What had to be done was done by all, doctors and nurses, no matter how insurmountable the challenge seemed, no matter how exhausted they were, each was supportive of the other, all part of the team.

Two South African nurses, senior sisters, appeared one day creating a hush of awe. They were attired in starched white uniforms including the white headdress of their rank. Most of us were rather slipshod in comparison. Even the most meticulous of nurses like Hansi and Lea from the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem couldn't match these two, who were quite unaware of the sensation they aroused. However they calmly got on with the job pleasantly but firmly. It was a standing joke that when Phyllis Fische came onto a ward everyone came to attention, even the patients in their beds. They always kept up their high standards, despite the inadequate facilities, and they set examples that many of us followed, doing the most menial tasks with the same efficiency as their highly skilled nursing.

It was to Phyllis that I went running when I had questions about my work. She gave me practical advice and reading

material which helped to fill in the huge gaps in my nursing knowledge. Her short stocky figure became a legend at the hospital. She was loved and respected. Lea too, taught me a lot, giving me more responsibilities as I became more proficient. I learnt in days what nurses would normally do in months. Soon she relied on me to perform the duties of the qualified nurses, such as administering injections and many more professional treatments.

An official letter for me, from Army Head-quarters!! The meeting in the nurses' room was interrupted by the delivery. I couldn't believe my eyes. On a slip of cheap paper I read the type written words that I had been promoted to lieutenant.

"Nurse Ruth Saretzky No: 65911, you are informed with our blessings, that as from the 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1949" you are obliged to acknowledge your rank of lieutenant by wearing the insignia. Please enter the new rank into your army book". Lea hugged me followed by the rest of the staff. I put the envelope into my pocket with a nonchalant air. Lea smiled knowingly, 'OK, now let's get on with the job'.

New supplies started to arrive from the Diaspora Jews. What a blessing to all the hospitals. Naturally I was especially proud of the South African contributions. We appreciated the most basic equipment and wondered how we had managed without the spare towels and sheets and blankets and soap and cotton-wool and bandages and pajamas, and syringes and sterilizing sets, the list was amazing. Even South African jam from the Cape for breakfast; what a feast! Each consignment brought more supplies and made our patients more comfortable, our work easier, and our wards more up to date.

One day a tall dark haired woman sat down beside me in the dining room. I had become used to the arrival of so many remarkable people especially among the MAHAL volunteers. Now, Mildred Schlumschlag, a physiotherapist (M.A.) from New York who had come to join us was obviously 'someone special'. Mildred wasted no time setting up a physiotherapy department. The hospital director, Professor Spiro, known as a 'toughie', was soon complying with all her demands. for a suitable place, as well as the necessary fittings and equipment and staff. Mildred got all her needs within record time, and began work. There were very few physiotherapists anywhere in

Israel, and none with her qualifications. Her physiotherapy clinic which opened in 1948, laid the foundations for the establishment of the 'Tel Hashomer Center for the Treatment of Paraplegics in Israel'. (Tel-Litwinsky was renamed Tel-Hashomer after the war.)

The never ending numbers of casualties were brought in, confirming the daily reports of so many killed, so many wounded. Many of our patients were newcomers from the refugee camps, who had been taken straight off the new immigrant boats and into battle to join the Israeli fighters. They usually had no military training or knowledge of the country or Hebrew but I recall our praise for their uncomplaining spirit and enthusiasm. As soon as they were able to, they would offer to help on the wards, trying to emulate the Israeli patients who had grown up in the Haganah, or the Palmach or the Etzel.

When Lea was called away we suspected the worst. Her husband was among the fighters captured and tortured by the Syrians. Now their families had to face the horror of identifying the mutilated bodies of their loved ones that had been returned to Israel. To my consternation when I came to express my condolences, Lea took me aside controlling her tears, and asked me if I would accompany her on that dreadful mission. I could not refuse. For me Lea had always typified the strength of the *sabra* nurses and all the *sabra* fighters, men and women. Now suddenly in a reversal of roles she was leaning on me for support. Up to this time I had tried to keep my thoughts away from the death of Uri in the Negev but Lea's loss brought my loss back to me and gave me the courage to say yes, naturally I would. I was proud that she regarded me as her friend and one to give her support in the hour of deep sorrow and need. I overcame my fears, and I went with her.

The tragedies of war inevitably demand relief. I accepted many invitations from local people as well as joining the MAHAL volunteers on outings to Tel-Aviv. It was impossible to reach Jerusalem unless one was in a military convoy. Friends I had made in 1946 somehow found me and offered their hospitality. If I came off duty and an ambulance was going to Tel-Aviv, I would take a lift to the Epstein family who extended an open invitation to me to have a bath and wonderful tea. Their daughter Margalit had studied in

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My Mahal Story  
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England and worked at the hospital as a dietician Her father had been the district officer during the British Mandate. Many MAHAL volunteers were made welcome at their home.

One fine June morning I returned to the ward after a week of night duty. At the daily staff meeting a new patient, Theodore Ben-Amar, an officer in the engineering corps who had commanded the forces opening the way to Eilat, was singled out especially. 'He's very dashing, one of the 'desert rats', Osnat remarked grinning.

Making my rounds I went from bed to bed to chat with each patient and check their charts before the doctors arrived. As I approached the bed of the famous fighter, I noticed that he was reading an English book. I came nearer out of curiosity. Goodness, 'The Forgotten Ally' by Pierre van Paassen.

'Shalom', his white teeth flashed a smile. He seemed to be the one in charge instead of me. I returned his greeting, and went on my way, angry at myself for being so flustered by the handsome green-eyed soldier. Later, while I was writing my report in the staff room, the door opened and there he was. 'Please leave the room right away', I tried to hide my surprise and speak severely. 'This room is out of bounds to patients. There is a sign on the door'. He didn't seem perturbed by my authority, but sat down and offered me a cigarette. 'Now you have disobeyed two rules' I exclaimed, just as Dr. Bruno, our chief, walked in, adding to my consternation.

I'm in for a reprimand, I thought as I tried to appear calm. "Hello Teddy", Dr Bruno addressed my disobedient patient. 'How are all the family? Does Eli know you are here?' He raised an eyebrow in my direction, 'Does our South African nurse Ruth allow you to smoke and sit in the nurses' sanctuary?' Three days later Teddy was discharged from the hospital with a clean bill of health. However he returned again and again, but not as a patient. Our story began then and when I married him my MAHAL story ended.

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Isreal Consulate in New York  
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*Award Ceremony on the Intrepid R to L Major General Moshe Subenik, Ambassador Alon Pincus, Consulate Staff Member, Paul Kaye*

was on this day in the presence of the volunteers who put themselves in harm's way in the struggle for the Jewish State.

One of the AVI speakers, expressed a sentiments shared by most of the Veterans, saying, "In each of our lives, there have been important family and personal events and milestones; weddings, birth of children and then grandchildren, careers, professional recognition. But for all of us, our participation in the rise of the State of Israel remains as one the most meaningful events of our lives and we are grateful for this privilege."

The event focused on Veterans residing in the area covered by the Israel Consulate of New York in the wake of a similar assembly that took place in Los Angeles. The Consulates in Boston, Miami, Chicago and Toronto cover other centers where large numbers of Machalniks reside and these consulates may follow suit with similar events in their regions.

*Si Spiegelman*



*Israel Independence Day Parade, New York 2003*

*L to R: George Goldman, Ira Feinberg, Harry Bieber, David Gerard, Paul Kaye, Marcel Bertzowitz, Marcia Wohman, Sid Rabinovich*

## AVI Organizational Records

An effort is underway to assemble AVI Organizational records in our Archives, managed by Ralph Lowenstein, in Gainesville. These materials are crucial to maintaining a post-1948 record of Machal. They reside, primarily, with past officers of the organization.

The collection effort is being conducted by David Hanovice.

To date, Paul Kaye and Sam Klausner have sent their files to Gainesville. We look forward to receiving additional files from Bernard Ellman, Harold Kraushar, Nat Nadler, Sidney Rabinovich, Lou Brettler, Simon Spiegelman, Eli Bergman and David Gerard as well as materials from the survivors of David Kaplan and, Sam Alexander.

## Booklet Published Tracing the History of "Machal, Overseas Volunteers in Israel's War of Independence"

The booklet "Machal Volunteers in Israel's War of Independence, was first printed in Hebrew earlier this year under the auspices of Israel's Ministry of Education . (A news item on its presentation to President Katsav and a critical review of its contents was published in the AVI Newsletter, Winter 2003.). The author is Yaakov Markovitzky. The publication crowned many years of effort by World Machal in Israel. Zipporah Porath, *who initiated the project*, served as editor and among those who contributed to the content and promotion of the publication were Murray Greenfield, Eddy Kaplansky, Rafi Seroussi, Smoky Simon and Joe Woolf.

The text has been translated into the English language and printed in Israel. The booklet packs a lot of information considering the limitations of space dictated by budgetary constraints. AVI mounted a fund-raising campaign in late winter that provided the means for printing the booklet and it's distribution in the U.S and Canada. Twenty AVI members gave generously to start the ball rolling. Further distribution will be made to the press and media, major organizations, schools and libraries.

The effort to distribute the booklet is in progress with half of the 2000 copies distributed. All AVI members have received a complimentary copy of the booklet with an opportunity to purchase additional copies. We expect to complete the distribution campaign by the fall. A second printing does not appear to be in the offing. Therefore, we do not expect any books remaining after the current stock is exhausted. All Newsletter readers who want to have copies available for upcoming holidays and special events can order them from American Veterans of Israel, 136 East 39 St., New York, N.Y 10016. Just write us a note, including a check in the amount corresponding to the quantity of booklets ordered (\$7.00 each).

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to Menachem Begin, June 1979, p.2." To obtain this item, address a request to Mr. Van Ness for the AVI Newsletter dated June 1979. It is suggested that an entire issue be requested since the article may go over more than one page. In any event, there is a minimum charge of \$10 for the first 50 pages and \$.15/page thereafter.

The Index provides a skeletal history of the AVI. Among the headings are, as mentioned above, AVI Board Policy Decisions which records the ratification of an AVI constitution in July 1980 and a discussion of a proposal to establish the AVI archives in September 1990. A section on AVI Organizational Elections reminds us of the election of Sam Alexander to the Vice Presidency in February 1970, of David Gen to the Presidency In February 1971, of Nat Nadler's election as President in February 1978 and of Lola Sprinzeles as Vice President in September 1987. AVI Organization Events provides dates and speakers at Chanukah celebrations and West Point memorials. Twenty-five Book Reviews are listed including Ruth Gruber's

*Ahead of Time* in May 1991 and Rudolph Patzert's *Running the Palestine Blockade* in March 1994. A section on Historical Essays and Articles includes Elihu Bergman's "Adversaries and Facilitators" in Fall 2001 and S. Yurman on "Forty Hailed from Winnepeg" in August 1994. Letters to the Editor include those of H. Floom in August 1991 and H. Friedman in Summer 2000. Discussions of Machal Reunions in Israel are recorded in February 1971 and October 1997 among many other occasions. There have been forty-three articles on Machal War Deaths. A News of Members section mentions dates of marriages and Bar Mitzvah celebrations for grandchildren. There are 218 Obituary notices, some with extensive biographical and historical material. Several hundred Photographs published throughout the history of the Newsletter of a wide range of members and distinguished individuals may be located in the Index.

## Dues Reminder

If you have not yet sent your dues of \$36 for 2003 please do so now. Unfortunately, with the loss of so many members, we cannot continue to subsidize members by sending the Newsletter.

This does not apply to those exempt from dues such as widows of AVI veterans.

David Gerard, Treasurer  
American Veterans of Israel  
136 E. 39<sup>th</sup> St.  
New York, NY 10016-0914

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the editor...

Thank-you for sending the booklet about Machalniks, 1947-50, which I had ordered from Stanley Medicks in London, where I have lived since 1966. In order to let you and members know how I happened to become a Machanik, I enclose here my story of female participation and assistance in the establishment of Medinat Israel...

Etty Bohm  
9 Young Court  
175 Willesden Lane  
NW-7Yx, London, UK

Excerpts from Etty's story...

At age 8, I joined Maccabi-Frankfurt, trained in athletics and participated in the first Maccabia in Berlin in 1934. Our Plugat-Gordon made aliya and founded Kibbutz Usha in the Zebulun hills. I worked there as a weaver in the ATA textile factory. Due to nightly Arab attacks and fires set to some wooden huts we formed a Haganah unit... In 1940 I married Yochanan who was enlisted for six years to entertain troops with ENSA while I joined the intelligence service office in Cairo. After three years I returned to teach women self-defense... I served full-time with the Haganah after November 30, 1947. My duties were with motor convoys from the coast to Jerusalem where I distributed water during the siege. On May 15 I was directed to help prepare a prison of war camp in the hills. Although we had painted a Red Cross on the roof our building we were bombarded on June 10 causing four casualties including myself with a severed leg... When the next barrage entered through the window, I grabbed a baby to dive under the iron bedstead. At the hospital, the doctors requested my signature for an amputation but I refused. In the next bed was an immobile Esther Callingold who died the next day. Gold Myerson visited and placed a Medal of Valour on each girl in the room and cried, saying "that girls also had to suffer injury."...

To the editor...

I just finished reading the publication "Machal, Overseas Volunteers in Israel's War of Independence." I have a number of comments which I would like to offer:

Firstly, I commend the authors on a publication which is so important in recognizing the contributions of the Machal volunteers.

Secondly, for historical accuracy, I would like to point out that the 'Ben Hecht' mentioned on pages 11 and 13, was purchased, organized and operated by the American League for a Free Palestine. This effort was totally separate from the operations of the Haganah.

Thirdly, it is unfortunate that after all these

years, the authors, on page 7, could not find it in their hearts to define the 'other underground forces' as the Irgun Zvai Leumi (Etzel) and the Lochangei Herut L'Israel (Lehi or Stern Group). After all, they did play a significant role in forcing the British out of Palestine and a number of volunteers fought with the Etzel and Lehi battalions in Jerusalem during the War of Independence.

Ray Kaplan  
300 Winston Drive, Apt. 3020  
Cliffside Park, NJ 07010

To the editor...

Machal is in the hands of a bunch of politicians of the left. The booklet ignores the American Machalniks, or Anglo-Saxons who fought in the ranks of the Irgun. The Machal booklet was one-sided. In my Irgun outfit we had 25 volunteers in Jerusalem alone.

Harold Kraushar

Responses to Kaplan and Kraushar:

At its meeting on May 27, the AVI executive Board unanimously approved the following resolution directed to Israel's Ministry of Education. "We have received copies of Yaakov Markovitzky, Machal Overseas Volunteers in Israel's War of Independence (both the original Hebrew and English translation.) We are generally pleased to have this sketch of the contribution of Jews and Christians from 43 countries to the rescue of European Displaced persons and the War of Independence distributed. Yet, we are disappointed by the neglect of those who served in such formations at Lohamei Herut Yisrael and the Irgun Zvai Leumi. We have long accepted these individuals in our ranks along with those who served in the Haganah and the Israel Defence Forces."

The following response is from, Zipporah Porath, an editor of the booklet.

To the editor:

I can personally assure your members that there was no malice aforethought or political motivation in the omission of Etzel and Lechi Machalniks. The oversight was absolutely unintentional. During the protracted production of the Ministry of Education's Hebrew edition, the details sometimes fell between the chairs in the constant tug of war between the Hebrew editor and our team. They presented us with a totally unacceptable manuscript - we were stunned and frustrated when we read it - and had no option except to "deal with it" or see the project cancelled. We gritted our collective (remaining) teeth and persevered with damage control to assure that the Machal story be officially brought to the public. All final editorial decisions were theirs, including copyright approval for the English translation.

In all likelihood, neither the Hebrew nor English booklets will be given a second printing in our lifetimes. If the disappointed AVI members feel strongly enough about the subject, and have the resources to fund it, they might consider producing a corrected booklet. It serves no purpose at this point to write irate letters. I doubt you will get a better or truer explanation from the powers-that-be than I have provided.

Zipporah Porath,  
Project coordinator for World MACHAL

Paul Kaye, President of AVI, and Si Spiegelman, Chairman of the Executive Committee, addressed the following letter to Smokey Simon and Zipporah Porath of World Machal:

Dear Smokey and Zippy:

The booklet "Machal, Overseas Volunteers in Israel's War of Independence" has been well received. A few chaverim expressed disappointment that the Irgun Zvai Leumi (Etzel) and Lechi were not mentioned by name as Machalniks served in their ranks. We believe that this oversight can be easily handled in a second printing, should there be one.

We want to express our appreciation to you both as well as to Eddy Kaplansky, Joe Woolf, Rafi Seroussi and Murray Greenfield for the dedicated effort in getting both the Hebrew and English booklets published.

Paul Kaye, President  
Si Spiegelman,  
Chairman, Executive Committee

The following comment is a response to a story about Ben Hagai Steuerman's service published in the Kenosha News and reprinted, in part, in the AVI Newsletter Winter 2003, page 12. [ed.](#)

To the editor...

I contacted at least half a dozen people in the Defense office, inquiring about Ben Hagai Steuerman and his service on the Noga in the Israeli Navy. I had no results. I was informed on May 25, 2003, by Elan from a different office, that he had no evidence or proof of Ben Steuerman's. Elan advised me to contact Yehuda Ben Tsur from Cessaria, an officer who was in the navy in those days, but his reply was the Steuerman's name was not familiar to him. Elan promised to continue to search for more evidence and proof. I also spoke with David Baum from the AACI who mentioned that there are a lot of rumors about Steuerman...

I want to request that you ask Steuerman the following questions in my name:

1. How did 3 or 4 pistols from the Yucatan get to the Mala ship?
2. Why was he taken off the Yucatan that same day?
3. How is it that none of the crew who

letters continued on Page 8

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CONTINUED

reached Israel on the *Yucatan*, later the name was changed to the *Noga*, remember seeing him neither on that ship nor any other ship of the Israeli Navy?

I send through you, my regards to him and will appreciate your sending me his answers. In those days, my name, until I reached Israel, was Jack Teichman.

Jack Nachlieli, POB 219  
Ganei Omer, Omer 84965 Israel

*Ben Hagai Steuerman replies:*

In answer to Jack's letter of June 28 with three questions, these are my answers:

I took four pistols away from the Israeli youngsters on the ship and gave them to the captain. I was not taken off the *Yucatan* but I was transferred the same day with Ben Berg, Dan Bailey, Bernie Marks and myself, Ben Hagai Steuerman. We were transferred to other ships taking refugees to Israel.

I do not understand that none of the crew knew me and that no one saw me on the ship. If you will refer to the AVI newsletter Spring 2001, there is a two and a half page article by David Hanovice regarding the *Yucatan*.

(Hanovice wrote, "In all there were seventeen ship's officers and crew members. These included Captain Ben Berg; mates; Louis Malik and Jonathan Leff; seamen deckhands, Danny Landau, Jacob Teichman (now Nachlieli) and Jack Fox; Merchant Marine Radioman Lopez; Steward and cook Steward Manuel; Steward's helper, Nathan Mossaieff (now Massi); Chief Engineer, Dan Bailey; 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer, Ben Hagai Steuerman, Oiler Day Workers, Abraham Mandelberg and David Hanovice. While waiting in Marseilles, all of the American Merchant Seamen, including Captain Berg, C/E Dan Bailey. 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Engineer, Ben Hagai Steuerman and Bernie Marks were transferred to another ship...")

Jack Fox, who was close to me on the *Yucatan*, died of cancer last year.

May I add that at the request of Paul Shulman, Admiral of the Israeli Navy, I was made a naval officer and put in charge of training future naval officers. Paul Shulman, after a about a year, requested that I go to the oil refineries in Haifa to assist the lead engineer on incoming ships with oil.

If there is any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Ben Hagai Steuerman  
4250 N. Marine Dr. (2836), Chicago, IL 60613

*To the editor...*

Having read your Winter 2003 Newsletter, I must correct part of the Hebrew booklet as indicated by your review. I must admit that I was partly to blame as I should have paid more attention to the introduction regarding the

recruitment to Machal. I was one of the volunteers involved in trying to correct some of the misconceptions at a late stage and concentrated on changing the sections regarding the field units such as armor. It must be remembered that it was a publication of the Ministry of Education and we had been allowed very little leeway, as well as being limited to the 36 pages.

This Hebrew version stated that South Africa had sent a fraction of their volunteers due to financial and organizational problems. In fact, the recruiting in South Africa was probably the best organized and financed effort. It included pocket money of LP5 (Palestine pounds) to supplement the LP3 pay most volunteers received, free telephone calls and cables home, as well as facilities for storing unneeded luggage.

Towards the end of October when the war was turning in our favor, the authorities in Israel ordered the flow of volunteers from South Africa to cease, which left some 2000 disappointed recruits behind. However, I am happy to say that about half came on aliya in the years to follow. The recruitment and training in South Africa had been carried out by highly experienced WW II veterans headed by Major Leo Kawarsky, a decorated infantry officer of the World War. He had stated that, given another few months he would have been prepared to take the majority into military action.

This discrepancy has been rectified in the English version, which still bearing the copyright of the Ministry of Education, could not be changed or written as completely as we would have preferred. I must congratulate the coordinator, Zipporah Porath on her editing and finding space to include some late arriving photographs from the U.S.A.

Generally, as you noted in the review, regarding the target, middle school students, it has turned out to be quite a satisfactory presentation. Even I, with a limited Hebrew reading ability, read it in about one hour. I personally had purchased 20 copies and handed them out to family, friends and neighbors in the Lower Galilee where I live. I would like to recommend that AVI members able to do so, sponsor, for our friends and relations in Israel, the purchase of the Hebrew booklets. They are available at the Ministry of Information Centres and at Gefen Publishers in Jerusalem.

Regarding the 81<sup>st</sup> Battalion (not Division as per a previous Newsletter) in which the late Ben Sushman had served, Julian Scragenheim of South Africa mentions that the number 81 was changed to the 89<sup>th</sup>, whose first commander was Moshe Dayan. This Battalion had a complete platoon of English-speaking Machal from South Africa, the U.K., Canada and the U.S.A. To the best of my knowledge this

platoon had been involved in the heaviest and continuous actions of any group of English-speaking volunteers in the field units.

Joe Woolf, Moshav Ilaniya, Lower Galilee  
15255, Israel

*To the editor:*

Of interest to aliya betnicks is a book by Ninian Stewart *The Royal Navy and the Palestine Patrol*. Some quotes: "Trade Winds was well-prepared with hand rails and ladders covered in Vaseline." "The Ulua... was tougher meat... signaled changes of course and speed as though she was the senior officer." "Colon, ex-HMCS Beauharnois, Wedgewood was faster and better found than any encounter hitherto."

The author spoke to our people at the '97 Reunion in Israel. It is interesting to read the insights of the opponents.

Arthur Bernstein

*To the editor:*

During a business trip to Israel this past December, I took a one day holiday, rented a bicycle and cycled approximately 25 miles up and down the hills of the Galilee on the northern frontier of Israel with Lebanon.

I unexpectedly came upon the entrance to Kibbutz Sasa. It brought back memories of 1948 when the American presidential yacht *Mayflower*, renamed *SS Mala*, sailed from Brooklyn, NY, towards the south of France carrying, in addition to the Aliya Bet crew, a few young, idealistic, hard-working kibbutzniks. These young people were part of *garin hayof Hashomer Hatzair*. Their *hachshara* trained in Heightstown, NJ. It was my good fortune in the dining room to meet Archie Taller. Like many of us he probably is in his late sixties and dedicated his entire life to the building of Sasa as a kibbutz, as a community, and also his family with his charming wife. It was wonderful to see Archie again and talk about the voyage of the *Mala* and the holocaust survivors we took out of the camp Grand Arenas near Marseilles and loaded upon the *Mala* in the dark of the night in the small secluded port of La Clotat.

Archie would welcome visitors who are Aliya Bet veterans, particularly those he remembers from the voyage of the *Mala*. We remember Archie as a hard-working member of the kitchen crew who always had a hot pot of coffee ready any hour of the day or night.

While in Israel I called Murray Greenfield and saw Phil Levine, also a veteran of the *Mala*, and they both send their warmest regards to the readers of the AVI Newsletter.

Martin Silver, Third Engineer *SS Mala*  
[Microtools-usa@msn.com](mailto:Microtools-usa@msn.com)  
See obituary for Archie Taller in this issue. Ed.

## AVI Members in the News...

Five AVI members have been cited in the press over the past few months. They include Ralph Lowenstein, Vidal Sassoon, Naomi Kantey, David Hanovice and Nat Nadler. A feature article by Gary Kirkland in the Gainesville Sun of April 24 reports that Ralph Lowenstein will be honored by the Hillel Foundation at the University of Florida with the *Pras Ha Taninim* - The Gator Prize - at a fund-raising dinner Sunday at 5:30 p.m. at Savannah Grande. In addition to heading the fund-raising drive for a new Hillel building, he served five times as president of the Gainesville Jewish Appeal and recently chaired the cemetery expansion committee for Congregation B'nai Israel in Gainesville. For Lowenstein, the 73-year-old retired dean of the UF College of Journalism and Communications, and "Radio Ralph" to listeners on WRUF-AM, public service isn't something new.

At 18, he was one of the 1,200 Americans and Canadians who fought in Israel's War of Independence in 1948. He was a half-track driver in an Israeli armored unit, a job he earned because he'd held a driver's license since he was 12. "It was the defining moment of my life," he said of his experience in the Israeli Army. "You're 18 years old and you really recognize that nothing you'll do for the rest of your life, no matter what you accomplish, can really exceed what you did at 18."

As a U.S. soldier in the Korean War, Lowenstein was among the first group transferred to Fort Bliss, Texas, in 1953 to integrate the last all-black unit in the U.S. Army. Lowenstein grew up in one of the 60 Jewish families in Danville, Va., a town of 35,000 on the North Carolina border. He learned that being a Jew goes beyond religion, that it means being "a people with shared ideas and heritage."

Under the heading "Steaming Toward Palestine" in the *Jewish Standard* of June 13, Joanne Palmer described

the AVI members who had participated in the June 1 ceremonies on the *Intrepid*. She describes how Nat Nadler, born in 1927 in Brooklyn, encountered anti-Semitism while in basic training in the Army and, subsequently serving in Europe confronted the concentration camps. A couple of years after his discharge, he shipped out on the *President Warfield* from Pier 32 in Philadelphia. Renamed the *Exodus*, the ship would bring refugees to Palestine. Nadler describes the fight aboard the ship after the British navy boarded it. "...they attacked us when we were near the coast of Gaza. Of course that was illegal. In the first wave they took control of the wheelhouse..Everybody got out of the wheelhouse except Bill Bernstein, this little guy, a second mate with red hair and who was always horsing around. they clubbed him and he died. Before I knew it I was knocked out, bleeding profusely from my right eye, and when I came to I crawled out the starboard side of the wheelhouse...Bill Millman grabbed a British sailor by the crotch and by the neck; he picks him up and he's dragging him outside to throw him over the side. The other British marine takes out a 38mm revolver and shoots him in the head. Luckily the bullet hit his chin, shattering his jawbone, and he was knocked out. I managed to crawl out underneath the tear gas."

David Hanovice is described as serving aboard the *Noga* and later, with the rank of *hovel* in the navy served in naval engagements in 1948 and 1949. Naomi Kantey grew up in New York and became a member of *Habonim*, the Labor Zionist Youth group. During World War II she served as a nurse in the USN. In November 1947 she obtained a travel document from the Jewish Agency and boarded the *Marine Karp* for Palestine. hostilities erupted she served as a nurse with the Israeli forces. Part of the time she worked in a hospital in the Negev in-



*David Hanovice*



*Naomi Kantey*

# OBITUARIES

## Archie Taller: Kibbutz Sasa

Archie Taller was the earliest and most enduring friend of my childhood. The reflections I bring to this moment of farewell are of the shared influences which shaped us, and which give me leave to speak of the origins of those endearing qualities which made Archie the beloved person we all came to know.

Archie was born on January 28, 1925 in Ottawa and he grew up in that city. Ottawa was, in those days, the 1930's a dreary little provincial capital, wracked by the cold contemptuous antisemitism of the English and the rather more violent acting out of the French Canadians. We lived in the old part of town among a cluster of immigrant Jewish families, separated from the neighbors by a determined orthodoxy and compulsory attendance, enforced by our parents, at the Machzikei Hadas Synagogue two blocks away. Our saving grace was our early enlistment, by my older brother, into Hashomer Hatzair. Ken Ottawa shared comfortable quarters with the local Poalei Zion. We early became a sufficient force in Jewish Ottawa for the local rabbi to denounce us erev Yom Kippur as a threat to the Jewish youth of the city. Nonetheless the local Talmud Torah early allowed us to meet in their basement and their teachers were delighted to have us as enthusiastic students of Hebrew.

Archie was a very bright student. In public school, he was skipped from grade four to grade six and then went on to commercial high school where annually he was the highest ranked member of his class and the class medalist. By our third year our teachers were urging us to switch to an academic track which would permit university entrance. To my regret Archie demurred, I think now, perhaps, to go to work and help out the family.

But family and school were only exterior elements in the profound interior life we led in the ken. Far from metropolitan sophistication, and led by madrichim dedicated more to tzofit and the dream of kibbutz, our thrust was towards an intense social life mediated by music (Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra to which we regularly fell asleep at their late Saturday night concerts), skiing in the winter with our kvutzah, the moshava in the summer and a freedom from ideological cant. For Archie music remained a central passion and a whistle from me outside his house from any obscure theme would generate an immediate response.

Archie was always the quiet one. In our boisterous, talkative, verbal competitiveness Archie maintained a Lincolnesque reserve, but like Lincoln already laced with the humor that we all have come to know and love. Already in Ken Ottawa we were writing challenging

feullitons as to whether tra la la or tirra lirra was the more appropriate means for the wordless presentation of a song (Archie opted for tra la la but the results of the debate which wracked Ken Ottawa were purposely withheld). Archie was also a communicant of the religious movement developed in the Ken called the Every Day is Wednesday movement, presumably because of the equitable presentation offered by this midweek choice.

The war ended our Ken life. The rise of Hitler and with it a virulent antisemitism in Canada fueled by French Canadian resistance to the idea of enlisting in the defence of the hated English thrust themselves into our consciousness and brought us finally into various military services. Archie enlisted in the Canadian Air Force and became an electronic technician spending time in England. At this time he was considering using his military benefits to finally go to the University at the war's end. Instead, in 1947 he opted to make aliya and join Kibbutz Sasa.

In the kibbutz Archie's mission became, as we all know, the maintenance with Yudi of the refet. Their efforts, both sometimes in opposition to kibbutz politics and in sheer backbreaking labor, made this finally an "anaf machnis" and a further tribute to their tenacity. These need no further mention here.

But profoundly important to mention—and I know it only from a distance and infrequent contacts—is the enormous stature which Archie achieved in the kibbutz as an exceptional human being, humane, patient generous and with that wonderful self-deprecating humor that touched on important issues without wounding and without self-inflation, and with which he charmed us so memorably at the Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration. His death on November 7, 2002, leaves a wrenching loss in the lives of Yehudit, Amnon, Rafi, Nomi and their families, and in the larger family of the kibbutz. However, it leaves as well the tangible contributions he made to the kibbutz and the quietly inspiring image of a truly noble nature, unspoiled and untainted as I have known him from childhood to this moment of farewell.

*Haim Gunner*

*Condolences to:*

Yehudit Taller. Kibbutz Sasa 13870. Israel.  
972-4-6988647, judarch@sasa.org.il

We are saddened to note the death of **Esther Miller**  
May 24, 2003  
Holocaust survivor  
and refugee counselor  
wife of AVI veteran  
Leo Miller  
12 Harris Street  
Randolph, MA 02368



## MAX (Michael) FISHMAN, Radar Officer with IAF

Max Fishman was born in Haverhill, Mass. and brought up in a traditional Jewish home with Zionist values. He passed away in Tel Aviv on February 5th 2002 after a lifetime of noteworthy scientific achievements. He was in his 81st year.

Max began his electrical engineering studies in 1939 at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Institute of Technology. On obtaining his Masters degree, with the USA in the war by then, he joined the US Navy soon. After completing an officers course, Max saw service in the Pacific Theatre as Communications Officer on a seaplane-refueling tender. After VJ Day he taught electronics at the US Naval Academy.

Upon his release from the Navy, Max returned to the Carnegie Institute of Technology where in 1948 he obtained a PhD in electrical engineering. As an active Zionist, and keenly aware of the grave dangers then facing the nascent Jewish State, he declined offers for work in his field and instead traveled to New York to volunteer for the cause.

For the next few months Max was a busy member of Teddy Kollek's team in New York, covertly procuring war-surplus communication and radar equipment for the nascent Israel Air Force (IAF). In November he flew to Israel so as to be on hand when the first shipment of 'his' equipment arrived in Haifa. Max was soon at Har Meron, near Zefat, supervising the installation of an early-warning radar station and instructing others in its operation and maintenance.

As Technical Officer of the IAF's radar unit, 505 Squadron, Max trained technicians in electronics instrumentation and set up a communications workshop in Sarafand. It was while he was with 505 that he met Zehava Itzhaki, one of the unit's few Israeli radar operators, whom he married in October 1949. The newlyweds lived for a time at Kibbutz Yagur, where Zehava taught school while Max set up the Communication Technicians School at Haifa airbase - his final IAF assignment.

Unable to find work in his field as a civilian, Max and Zehava moved to the USA in July 1950. During the years that followed, Max held

# OBITUARIES CONTINUED

high-level positions at Convair, at Lockheed's missile division as their liaison man to the Pentagon, and at Stanford University in the development of a linear accelerator.

In 1970, at the invitation of the electronic optics firm El-Op - Tasiya Electro-Optit, Max and his family moved to Israel. For the first three years he also taught at Holon Institute of Technology - later part of Tel Aviv University. While with El-Op, he was twice awarded the renowned Kaplan Prize; the first time for developing a machine that translates regular text to Braille and later for developing a night-vision sight for the Galil rifle.

In 1979 Max took up a teaching post at Sacramento State University and later worked for GE's Nuclear Division. For five years prior to his retirement in 1991, he taught electronics at Fresno University. In 1997 they returned to Israel.

Max is survived by Zehava, his wife and partner of some 53 years, by their children Ronit, Ethan, Deena and Yonathan, 11 grandchildren, and his sister Rose Jacobson..

Whether as Max, or by his Hebrew name Michael - which he went by during his periods of residence in Israel, he is fondly remembered by all who knew him for his professional integrity and dedication to the Zionist cause. His former comrades-in-arms of 505 Squadron also remember him as a modest person who rarely mentioned his WW2 activities in the US Navy. Few were aware at the time that Max had a PhD, probably the only Machalnik with that distinction.

Zehava would be pleased to hear from anyone who knew Max back then. Her address is 34 Jabotinsky St, Givatayim 53361, Israel. Fax number; + (972 3) 732 1839. Phone number; + (972 3) 731 8907.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Prepared by Eddy Kaplansky, Haifa.*  
[kaplansk@actcom.co](mailto:kaplansk@actcom.co)



*Stewart R. Sprung in the US Navy*



*Stewart R. Sprung in Geneva*

## STEWART ROBERT "BOB" SPRUNG, Operation Balak

Stewart Robert Sprung, better known as Bob throughout his lifetime, was born and brought up in New York. He enlisted in the US Navy in February 1943, and saw active service in the Pacific Theater as an Aviation Machinists Mate, First Class. Following his release from the Navy in March 1946, he enrolled in the University of Miami under the GI Bill of Rights, but in 1948 interrupted his studies to volunteer for the nascent Israel Air Force (IAF).

I met Bob by chance in June 1948 on a flight out of New York. He was sitting next to me, a total stranger whose sturdy build led me to suspect that he was a plain-clothes cop. And when I noticed a shoulder-holster under his jacket out of the corner of my eye, I was sure that he was an FBI agent. Only after we arrived in Geneva did I discover that we were fellow volunteers on our way to Israel and the IAF. Our continuing journey, on a non-scheduled DC-3, was a circuitous one on which Bob acted as flight engineer.

Soon after we landed in Haifa, Bob was assigned to Air Transport Command (ATC) at Ekron Air Force base where his task was to ensure a quick turnaround for ATC's C-46 and DC-4 transport planes. ATC aircraft were then fully occupied with Operation Balak, the vital airlift from Czechoslovakia of much-needed fighter planes (Czech-built Me109s) and other military hardware. Before long he was transferred to ATC's de facto home base at Zatec, Czechoslovakia.

On his return to the USA, Bob resumed his studies at the University of Miami and in 1950 obtained his Bachelors degree in mechanical engineering. But with few job-opportunities in that field at the time, Bob accepted an offer to join the City of Miami police department. After some twenty-two years with the force, for the most part as a sergeant-detective, Bob switched to the Miami Port Authority where his domain was initially Port Security and then Port Operations.

During most of his civilian life Bob was an officer in the US Naval Reserve, with the rank

of Commander for many years prior to his retirement. He was also an active and well-respected Life Member of the Navy League, as well as a two-term President of its Council.

Bob was in his 81<sup>st</sup> year when he passed away on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2003, in Atlantis, Florida, after a bout with cancer. He was buried with full military honors, as a former USN Commander.

In whatever task he undertook, Bob was a tireless and dedicated worker. His friendly demeanor and positive attitude earned him the respect of everyone who knew him, even of those he arrested during his years as police detective.

He is survived his wife of 51 years, Doris, and their sons Eric, Elliott, Brad and Julian. Condolences may be sent to Doris Sprung, 6412 Tiara Dr., Boynton Beach, FL 33437.

\*\*\*

*Prepared by Eddy Kaplansky.*  
[Kaplansk@actcom.com](mailto:kaplansk@actcom.com)



*Yehuda Selah*

## Yehuda Selah: Served on Aliya Bet Ship Haganah

Yehuda Selah, born Harry Silverman in New York on April 27, 1918. He grew up in the Bronx in a typical family of new immigrants with a sister (Muriel) and a younger brother (Bill). At about age 12 he joined Hashomer Hatzair and quickly absorbed its Zionist ideology. It became the most important part of his life. He would look forward to the summer and winter Moshavot and loved the Ken with its *sichot*, singing and dancing.

He graduated from Morris High School in 1936 amidst the depression. His first job was in a dental technicians laboratory in the Empire State Building for \$5/week. With the occasional elevator operators strike he would have to walk up the nineteen stories to the lab twice a day. Later he obtained a civil service job with the Postal Service, which was a step up economically. But, he always placed the movement first. He did Hachshara for Palestine in Hightstown.

In 1942, he joined the United States Army

## OBITUARIES CONTINUED



*Nursing Mothers Corner on the Haganah,  
photo by Yehuda Selah*

Air Corps and entered an aerial photography course. He served as a photographer overseas in England and, following D-day he accompanied his unit to France and Luxembourg where he searched for Jews. Discharged from the army in 1945, he got wind of the illegal ships moving Jews to Palestine and sailed for France to sign on. There he joined the crew of the Haganah where, with all the difficult conditions aboard, he enjoyed talking with the passengers. The voyage between Marseilles and Haifa carried the American newspaperman I.F. Stone who would send regular dispatches on the conflict between the British and Palestinian Jews. Yehuda helped him with photographs of the ship and its passengers. Some of these received awards from Bet Hatefutsot and from Stef Wertheimer's gallery at Metulla.

In Palestine he joined a *gareen* in Rishon-Lezion, which was later to become Kibbutz Hatzor. In 1947 he married Rachel Pinchasi. Yehuda and Rachel were sent to Los Angeles as *shlichim* in 1949 and returned to Israel in 1951 with their baby Ami. Later they had a daughter Ophra who died of an illness in 1969. In the Kibbutz he worked in the *refet* and later in the factory and served as Kibbutz Secretary. After many years as a widower he met Leah Weintraub who became his common-law wife. Yehuda died on May 3, 2003 leaving Leah, their children and grandchildren, who remain in the Kibbutz.

*Bill Selah*

*Condolences to  
Leah Weintraub,  
Kibbutz Hatzor, Israel*



*Mickey Olfman Jack Olfman*

*Correction of photo in Winter 2003 Newsletter*

West Point, May 4, 2003  
continued from Page 2

- Maurice Commanday, Air Force
- Max Fishman, Air Force
- Miriam Hessel, Army
- Stan Klorman, Pan York and Seventh Brigade
- Elkan Levitan, Air Force
- Samuel Morris, Air Force
- Rudolph Newman, Air Force
- Leo Nomis, Air Force
- Jack Olfman, Air Force
- Mildred Rosenberg, Army
- Ben Sklar, Exodus
- Leslie Solomon, Altalena
- Stewart Sprung, Air Force
- Archie Taller, Mala
- Percy Tolchinsky, Air Force
- Joe Tunis, Artillery
- Emmanuel Weinstein, Hatikvah, Palmach, Navy

Ido Aharoni of the Consulate General in New York, the guest speaker, provided an analysis of Israel's continuing political and military struggle. Despite the homicide bombings and other terrorist actions, he described the morale in Israel as positive and determined. The continued support of American Jewry and the American government offer assurance of an eventual victory. As his words were absorbed by the assembled, the Shapiro Family Choir, regular annual participants in the ceremonies, sang a medley of Israeli songs of courage and hope.

As their voices faded into the background, Marcia Wolman ascended the podium and provided the following reminiscences of eight who gave their lives in the 1948 struggle. Following is an excerpt from her remarks:

New Yorker **David (Mickey) Marcus** completed the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and served in both the Pacific and the European theaters during World War II. He landed with the paratroopers in Normandy and later witnessed the devastation of the concentration camps. Colonel Marcus, recruited by the Haganah, guided the transition of an underground guerilla force to the nucleus of a functioning army, the IDF (Israel Defense Forces). Ben Gurion appointed him commander of the Jerusalem sector, besieged by Arab troops. He was instrumental in constructing the "Burma" road, skirting the enemy positions and breaking the siege of Jerusalem. Mickey Marcus was acciden-

tally killed by one of his own sentries the night of June 10, 1948 at Abu Gosh.

**William Bernstein** graduated from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He served as second mate on the "Exodus 1947". The ship with 4,553 refugees aboard set out to sea from Sete, France followed by the HMS Ajax plus British destroyers intent on enforcing the British blockade. Early in the morning of July 18, 1947 close to the coast of Mandate Palestine, the British marines boarded the ship swinging their clubs. The refugees resisted. In the battle, with no firearms being used by either side, three men were clubbed to death; two Polish refugees and Bill Bernstein.

New Yorker Sam **Pomerance** was an aeronautical engineer and licensed pilot. He **was** recruited by the Haganah as a technical supervisor of the Air Transport Command, flying materiel, including Spitfire fighter planes from Czechoslovakia in July, 1948. The aircraft were Jerry-rigged to boost their range and flew to Israel in groups arriving in time to engage the enemy in the major fall and winter offensives. Sam Pomerance his life in the Yugoslav mountains attempting to reach the refueling site in a blinding snowstorm on December 18, 1948.

**Mandel Math** served in the U.S. Army participating in the liberation of the Dachau and Buchenwald death camps and **Jerome (Jerry) Kaplan** served in the U.S. Navy as a Pharmacist's mate in World War II. Both men fell in the battle for Latrun on May 13, 1948, the day before the State was declared. Their bodies were never recovered.

**Leonard (Len) Fitchett** served as a pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force credited with shooting down the last enemy plane before Germany's surrender. As a Christian, he felt that Israel's battle for freedom was his fight as well. He volunteered and flew in the IAF's 103 Squadron downing 3 Egyptian Spitfires. His Beaufighter was shot down by anti-aircraft fire while making a low-level attack against the Egyptian forces at the Iraq el Sueidan police fortress. He is buried in the non-Jewish section of Haifa Military Cemetery. The remains of his two crewmen, pilot **Stan Andrews** of the USA and navigator **Dov Sugarman** of Britain were never found.

Arthur Bernstein, veteran of the ships Hayim Arloseroff and Medinat Yisrael,  
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tried to put in words our reasons for answering the call in 1948. Arthur's account was personal; and yet, in many respects, caught a sense of our shared motives. Following is a nearly full text of his speech:

...The captain of the Ulua was Gad Hilb, a Palestinian Jewish lad. He hid his role to protect his family. I was the legal captain and made public contact. Out of respect and affection for my former skipper, I speak out on this now. But more of this family matter later.

"The most frequently asked question on the part of reporters is, 'Why did you go? Did you realize the historical significance of your actions?' Let's take that last question first. We have long passages at sea, for days on end. For four of every twelve hours we are on watch primarily occupied with our thoughts. On this trip I recall my most searching thoughts were that if the sky doesn't clear and the sun come out so that we can accurately determine our position, we're in trouble. History never entered into our geometric equations. The job at hand was our concern.

"So what made you do it? Primarily two things. One, dad used to say to me, 'Vos shtaystu azoy vi a gelamteh golem? Tu eppes. (Don't stand there like a mute robot. Do something.) I did.

"Two, in my final year in high school, exactly sixty years ago, I heard and read extensively about the Warsaw Ghetto revolt. This event resonates with me still. I just didn't think we had to take this kind of treatment.

"I recall that in the course of our voyage, we dropped anchor in a quiet cove for a couple of days with our 600, or so, 'Swedish passengers,' it was in North Africa. With no watch duty, I had my first opportunity to spend family time with them—socialize, flirt, speak some Yiddish and share some songs. You cannot imagine their surprise that I, an American sailor spoke and sang in Yiddish precisely as they did in Vilna. You want to know why I did it? We're one big Jewish family.

"Another yarn, Capt. Hilb told me that if ever I was adrift in Palestine, safe harbor was to be found with his folks atop Mt. Carmel in Ahuza in Haifa. Well, events happen as they say and I had escaped capture by the British with the aid of those wonderful Egged Bus drivers. No papers,

no money, no nothing, they brought me to the very house I sought. The driver went alone to the house and spoke with a man. They motioned for me to approach them and in that short instant it took to walk to the doorway the words came to mind that would make me credible. 'Dr. Hilb, the second mate on the SS Katherine Lukenbach, asked me to visit you.' Only my skipper's father would know his previous job. My welcome was as a returning son. Once again, we're one big Jewish family.

"The Mossad had us pick up more passengers one dark night off the beach at Metaponte, Italy. We anchored quietly in shallow water, promptly and relatively efficiently, started taking aboard 700 more passengers in the finest surreptitious and clandestine manner. Suddenly I noticed two females on deck. One was shrieking and crying. Two sisters had met. Each had thought the other had perished. On deck in the black busy night they hugged and we shed a tear. And that's why we did it!

"My understanding of the Bar-Mitzvah event is to have the confirmand identify with the previous generations, feeling a sense of achievement, participating in and fulfilling one's responsibilities in Jewish life.

"What I did was my Bar Mitzvah. That's why I did it."

Arthur descended from the podium to a hushed audience. Chaplain Shulman offered a Benediction and the JWV contingent marched in a retreat of colors.

A few moments later we stood before the tombstones of David and Emma Marcus in the Academy's Military Cemetery. Four cadets, two bore rifles and the other two bore an American and the Academy flag, respectively, marched to the site in formation presenting the colors. Five AVI veterans stepped forward, holding the AVI banner, and read the names of the forty fallen. The names are inscribed at the Machal Memorial sites at Sha'ar Hagai and Har El in Israel. The assembled stood at attention as the names were read in order of the dates on which they fell:

- William Bernstein
- Moshe Avigdor Perlstein
- Dov Seligman
- Are Lashner
- David Guenther Livingston
- William Gerson
- Glenn Ernest King

- Harold Monash
- Jerome Kaplan
- Mandel Math
- Moshe Geberer
- George F. "Buzz" Beurling
- Moses Aaron Rosenbaum
- Baruch Linsky
- Jacob Klein
- Harvey Cohen
- Edward Lugech
- Irving Sevin
- David "Mickey" Marcus
- Louis Ball
- William Edmondson
- Robert Lester Vickman
- Reuben Schiff
- Joseph Kahn
- Sidney Rubinoff
- Spencer Andrew Boyd
- Edward Leonard Troyen
- Sidney Leisure
- Stanley Andrews
- Leonard Fitchett
- Jack Shulman
- Wilfred Canter
- William Fisher
- Fred Stevenson
- Oliver Garfield Holton
- Alan Levy
- Ralph Moster
- Sam Pomerance
- Philip Balkin
- Jacob Rothman

Sidney Rabinovich eulogized the fallen, commending their heroism and their sacrifice for the rescue of Displaced Jews and for the establishment of the Jewish State. The Shapiro Choir sang and Rabbi Shulman read a Psalm and then he and Consul Aharoni, Col. Zickel and Paul Kaye placed wreaths at the base of the two tombstones. The Shapiro Choir chanted the solemn tones of the K'el Maleh Rachamim followed immediately by a twenty-one-gun salute by the cadet Firing Squad. In the distance, a cadet bugler sounded Taps and there was an ordered discharge of colors.



*Cadet Honor Guard*

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hand, in view of the chaos in Baghdad and other large Iraqi towns, one is reminded about how little one knows of the realities of their situation. But, in all events it would be useful to shed some light on this aspect of the current Iraqi situation. The following points will be discussed:

- The roots of the Arab volunteer phenomenon... the example of Palestine and Afghanistan.
- The Arab volunteers in Iraq, their ideological roots and organizational context.
- Their situation in Iraq before and after the war.
- The future scenarios awaiting them.

### **Arab Volunteers... Their Appearance in Palestine as a Model**

Arab volunteers offering assistance to those they considered "weak" who were facing the "strong" is nothing new. Contemporary history is replete with such situations, which follow from the activities of the Palestinian resistance to Jewish immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century when a number of volunteers slipped into Palestine, especially in the Jordanian frontier communities, and participated along with the native populations of these towns in protecting their security. Later, they participated with them in military actions against the Israeli settlements that were established under the eye of and with the blessing of the British occupiers of Palestine at that time.

Later, the volunteer movement was expanded when, in 1948, Israel established its government, which the United States, and the Soviet Union recognized just moments after its declaration. The regular armies of several neighboring nations en-

tered the land along with irregular forces, which consisted of Arab volunteers from various political groups. The most prominent were volunteers associated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in coordination with the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and some number of Palestinian Muslims.

These volunteers enjoyed several victories on the battlefield especially in attacking the Israeli rear echelons. At the end of the war, with the Arab armies in crisis and retreat, volunteer resistance groups remained in several Palestinian cities and towns not under Israeli control. Some were in military camps established by the Palestinians in the Negev desert. After negotiations between Arab political leaders, especially the Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmy al-Niqrashi, and the British who, at that time occupied Egypt, an agreement was completed. Its main provisions were that they terminate their activity, disband the groups of the Muslim Brotherhood (who had organized and trained the Arab volunteers in Palestine) and that the returning volunteers would be arrested. There was a fear that they would renew their activities in Egypt against the British. They were imprisoned in the Sinai desert.

### **The Field of Martyrdom is Realized Again in Afghanistan**

The most important pages of the history of Arab volunteerism were written in Afghanistan in the early eighties following the Soviet destruction of the country. In Afghanistan, among its mountains and heights, Arab volunteerism again developed as a way to support the "weak" against the "strong." This was a period of ideological development of a movement developed on Afghan soil and which matured in the late eighties. Its members represented a mixture of various Islamic

religious and political tendencies.

When the Afghan-Russian war ended, this phenomenon did not come to an end. Some of them preferred not to return to their native lands out of fear of the power of the security apparatus, which considered them a danger to the political order. A portion of them remained in Afghanistan while others migrated to other burning and tense locations where they could again serve as volunteer fighters. They spread to places such as Chechnya, Bosnia and Somalia, among others. At the same time, the security and intelligence services of the Arab countries continued to pursue them, especially after September 11 in the United States.

### **Volunteers in Iraq**

Some characteristics of the volunteer movement changed in the case of Iraq. Iraq's need for volunteers emerged after it became certain that this Arab country was headed for war during February and March of 2003. As at the beginning of the Afghan-Russian war a number of Arab countries ignored the fact of their citizens traveling there. The security services of some of these countries encouraged them. Fatwas were published in Egypt and Syria, which treated attacks on occupying American and British forces as an occasion for martyrdom. This opened the "gates of jihad" to encouraging these young volunteers to stand alongside of their Iraqi "brothers." The head of the leading institution of Sunni Islam, the honored al-Azhar, offered its help to anyone seeking "jihad" in Iraq.

### **Their Ideological and Organization Development**

Under the influence of propaganda-inflamed feelings and driven by hatred for Americans, young Arab

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men responded to the call and streamed to Iraq. This flow was different from that to Afghanistan. They were not all Muslims but drew from among various other groups such as Christians, leftists and nationalists and even hangers-on associated with a variety of ideological and organizational groups.

### **Their Numbers**

It is difficult to be precise about the numbers of those who went to Iraq because they left their countries different ways. Some left as tourists, others for studies and others to fulfill the *'umra* (special pilgrimage to Mecca), etc. It is not possible to rely on the Iraqi declarations that eight thousand volunteers arrived as the Minister of Information, Mahmud Said al-Sahaf, announced. General Hazm al-Rawi, spokesman for the Iraqi army estimated four thousand arrivals from all Arab countries. These announcements came at the height of their military struggle for existence and were a political element juxtaposed between the past government of Iraq and the American and British fighting forces. There is no way of estimating whether there were hundreds or thousands and any research to provide precise statistics would be difficult at present.

### **Their Training and Encampments**

The volunteers arrived in Iraq and were stationed in several army camps, which the former Iraqi regime established for them. Several hastily arranged training courses served those who had not had prior experience with light arms. Al-Jazeera was able to visit one such camp before the war broke out. The Iraqi army declared that it was preparing them to become martyrs in

fighting the organized invasion. Subsequently the volunteers were dispersed among several Iraqi cities in addition to Baghdad, such as Basra and Mosul. Their functions are not known precisely. Perhaps the former Iraqi leadership was able to place them to protect institutions or at barricades at the entrances of main thoroughfares of Baghdad or were more widely dispersed than that.

### **Their Functions in the War**

When the war broke out on Thursday morning March 20 the press attended to the important events such as the continuous bombing of Baghdad and the battles around Um Qasr and Basra. No one paid attention to the volunteers excepting when they mounted several guerilla attacks. The most prominent being that which occurred on March 29 when the American military admitted to the loss of five American soldiers as a result of the explosion of an automobile in southwest Baghdad. Several British soldiers were kidnapped in Basra that same day. These were but two of the actions of the volunteers.

### **Their Situation Following the Collapse of the Regime**

On the ninth of April, under unclear circumstances, the veil of secrecy was taken away and American forces entered Baghdad without any resistance and most of the city surrendered quietly. No sign could be seen of organized Iraqi forces. One heard no voices of resistance excepting that which came from one or another neighborhood. Iraqi soldiers abandoned their positions in Baghdad and none remained, inexplicably, to confront the invaders. There was no sign of martyrdom. The volunteers received no reinforcement nor supplies nor organizational direction after the collapse

of the Iraqi government. They became the object of British and American propaganda aimed to create a split between them and the Iraqi people to facilitate identifying them before they melted into the larger Iraqi community.

### **Summary Remarks After 50 Years**

Several remarks are in order on this phenomenon:

- These volunteers were motivated by nationalism, religious salvation or, at the very least, they were not cut off from these forces.
- At the end of a war the balance of power changed. The attitudes of governments toward them changed from what it had been prior to the war. They were pursued and their mentality disparaged. Dealing with them became the responsibility to military courts and in some countries they have nearly been wiped out.

The British and Americans are committed to fighting them and their fate remains unknown. How many of them might be prisoners of the Americans? To what extent are they considered by the Americans as prisoners of war or simply enemies of the United States? How many are among their brothers in Gauntanomo and how many remain in Iraq awaiting a renewal of the resistance when other volunteers may join them? Will it be possible to get them back to their countries? How will their governments receive them? Many questions remain regarding the fate of these volunteers. The problem has become one of the important concerns after the war.

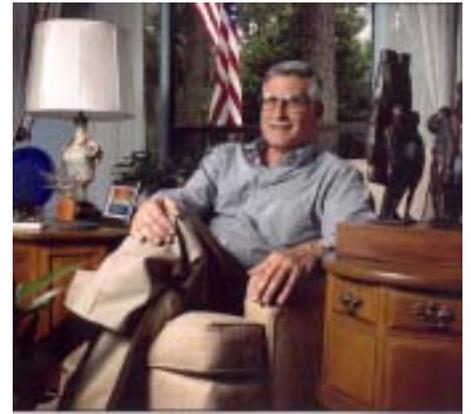
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oculating Egyptian prisoners against typhoid.

The English edition of *Haaretz* of March 21 carried a sketch of Vidal Sassoon entitled "This Hairdresser did not curl up and dye." by Orly Halpern. She describes how Vidal, along with his brother, was placed in Jewish orphanage in London. At 14, he began working at washing hair and from that humble beginning developed his hair styling skills and his corporations. The article relates how he stopped shampooing and came to fight in Israel's War of Independence. He was put in a unit with two other Britons and an American. He said, "I couldn't understand how the Israelis won the war. I never thought of losing, but I couldn't dream we'd win in such a way."



*Nat Nadler*



*Ralph Lowenstein, Photo by Doug Finger*



*Vidal Sassoon*

