



AMERICAN VETERANS OF ISRAEL

VOLUNTEERS IN ISRAEL'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

UNITED STATES & CANADIAN VOLUNTEERS

136 East 39th St., New York, N.Y. 10016

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I am pleased with the initiatives that are proceeding within the AVI program plan for this year. There are two especially exciting ones within the Legacy Project and Communications areas:

1. Sam Klausner has proposed an extension of Newsletter coverage and circulation to Machal veterans in other countries, including the U.K., South Africa, among others. It is something like an AVI version of "USA Today International." The overseas groups would supply news items (including obituaries which are an increasingly prominent feature in our coverage) and Sam would create a global distribution system, which would involve the web, as well as conventional post.

I discussed this proposal briefly with Smoky Simon during our meeting last month in Long Beach, and he was interested in pursuing it and assisting with the relevant contacts, and other resources such as mailing lists and, budget if needed. We agreed to discuss it during my forthcoming visit to Israel, and include Dave Baum, Eddy Kaplansky, David Tepperson, and other experienced individuals. I am impressed that the project would bring together the various Machal groups on a routine basis, not just occasional reunion encounters.

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CANADIAN MACHAL VETERANS JOIN BIRTHRIGHT YOUTH TRIP

Last December six seventy and eighty year old Canadian Machal Veterans joined the 18-26 year olds to tour Israel under the Birthright Israel Program. Joe Warner explains:

The Birthright Program, organized in many countries, takes Jewish youth who have never been to Israel on a ten-day free tour of the country. They must be between 18 and 26 years of age. In the past three years 25,000 young people have participated. The cost of



Canadian Birthright delegation in Israel. Standing: Ben Ocopnick, Sam Wasser, Alan Chapnick, Lorne Klemensburg (Director of Birthright Israel). Sitting: Joe Warner, Abe Levine, (Jerry Rosenberg not present).

this program is covered by two extremely wealthy philanthropists - one from Canada and one from the U.S. together with some participation of the Israeli Government.

When the Canadian organizers were planning this recent trip someone had the idea of an experiment to include six Machal Veterans. They would accompany the participants and talk to them about the concept of volunteering, commitment

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THE BATTLE OF LATRUN: A FOOT SOLDIER'S VIEW

Sid Halperin, a Canadian veteran of the War of Independence now living in Askelon, has sent the AVI Newsletter a book-length manuscript recalling his 1948 experience. In the winter of 1948, Sid was an architecture student at the University of Toronto. He writes, "At this time I knew very little about Zionism, and had not met many of the other Jewish students...I had heard of the Hillel Foundation...but had not yet been there. (Sid went to a meeting there.)...We were thanked for coming, etc. and told that we could go. "However," the chairman continued, if any one would like to help in a further way, please stay behind." Since it was very cold and snowy outside, I decided to stay." The manuscript then recounts the recruitment to Machal, the voyage to Palestine along with European refugees, and the loosely bureaucratic way in which he was assigned to an infantry platoon. That platoon found itself engaged with the Jordan Legion in the Battle of Latrun in an effort to lift the siege of Jerusalem. That section is reproduced here. This direct report of the foot soldier is the type of experiential battle report made famous by the American military historian General 'Slam' Marshall. The entire manuscript will be filed with the AVI Archives at the University of Florida.

A few weeks later we were told that a big convoy of trucks loaded with food and other supplies were going to try to break the siege of Jerusalem. Our job would be to seize the crossroads at Latrun and hold it until the convoy got through the narrow valley called Bab al-Wad. The main and only road to Jerusalem went through this narrow and deep valley, and the Arabs from up on the sides could and did shoot at any Jewish vehicle that tried to pass down below on the road. Because of the siege there were almost no food or provisions left in Jerusalem.

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*Deceased

Visit the AVI Website to read past
issues of the Newsletter
www.sas.upenn.edu/~sklausne/aviweb.html

AVI FINANCIAL REPORT

The financial report for the year 2001 reflects the drop in income from dues and the results of our efforts to keep expenses down and our treasury solvent. In raising the 2002 membership dues to \$36 we are in a position to cover all expenses and build up some reserve funds in the current year. I thank all the members for their support and ask those who are behind in paying dues to mail their check without further delay.

February 24, 2002

David L. Gerard
Treasurer

AMERICAN VETERANS OF ISRAEL

Statement of Income and
Expenses for Year 2001

<u>Begin. Bal. 1/1/01</u>	<u>4050</u>
INCOME	
Dues	6700
Chanukah Event (1)	468
Newsletter Contrib.	<u>410</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>7578</u>
EXPENSES	
Newsletter	2160
Postage 1247	
Software Support (2)	1000
Conference Calls	900
Bnai Zion Journal Ad	550
Printing & Copying	458
Chanukah Event (1)	438
Telephone	367
Computer Supplies	249
West Point Assembly	177
Salute to Israel Parade	100
Meeting Collation	<u>65</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>7711</u>
Ending Bal. 12/31/01	<u>3917</u>

- (1) Self-sustaining event
- (2) Replacement of antiquated data base

EVENTS THIS SPRING

MARCHING ORDERS

We will march off onto Fifth Avenue for the 'Salute to Israel' parade on Sunday, May 5th. Some will march and some will ride, but we will be 'present and accounted for' in this year of crisis in support of the State of Israel. Flyers with details have been mailed will soon be mailed.

REMEMBRANCE AT U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY- WEST POINT

The yearly West Point assembly, honoring Col. Mickey Marcus and the other U.S. and Canadian volunteers who fell in Israel's War of Independence will take place this year on Sunday, May 19. The memorial program will begin at 11:00 A.M. in the Jewish Chapel, lasting one hour, followed by a graveside ceremony remembering the names of the fallen. and the laying of wreaths in their honor. The ceremony will be concluded by the U.S.M.A. color guard, Salute by the firing squad and Taps by the bugler. For those arriving early there will be a breakfast collation beginning at 10:00 A.M. More detailed information will be mailed to all members in the region. Those outside the region who plan to attend, please contact Dave Gerard (631) 499-4327 for instructions. Non-AVI guests are more than welcome.

PAL YAM MEETS

Aliyah Betniks will have a reunion in Israel on June 8. All able and less able veteran seamen are invited and so are those who chose to serve on terra firma and in the air. It is the best year to visit Israel and show solidarity. You need to make your own travel arrangements and hotel bookings. When going, contact Si Spiegelman in the U.S. (212) 685-8548 or Dave Baum in Israel (972) 3 524-0410

AVI ISRAEL: VP DAVE BAUM REPORTS:

(E-mail address: rdbaum@netvision.net.il)

ANNUAL PALYAM REUNION — 2002.

The Directors of the Palyam veterans group have invited American, Canadian, and Latin American Palyam veterans to the annual reunion of veterans of Aliya Bet scheduled at the Sdot Yam guesthouse facility on June 8. The event provides a unique opportunity for visiting and bonding among fellow veterans. It is scheduled from mid-morning through mid-afternoon, and provides beer and wine and lunch, all at a nominal charge.

PROGRAM

Date: 8 June 2002 (Saturday)

Place: Sdot Yam (Caesaria)

Time: 10:00 AM — 16:00 PM

Program: 10:00-11:30 "Mixer" meet old friends and retell old stories, cold drinks, coffee and cake
 11:30-13:30 Discussion: The volunteers and their contributions to Aliya Bet, Several prepared talks and general comments from participants
 Introduction of visitors from abroad
 13:30 Lunch followed by coffee and more mixing.

Invitees: All North American Aliya Bet and Rechesh Volunteers. Families are most cordially invited.
 Participants: Pal Yam Members including Milavim, Captains, and crews of all the ships

Cost: Approximately 100 Shekels

PALYAM'S HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF ALIYA BET GATES ARE OPEN.

The 575 page personal recollections of Palyam and Aliya Bet volunteers who participated of the post World War II campaign is now available. The work, which

has received enthusiastic reviews, contains biographical accounts of the participants in the operations, plus sketches — twenty-three of which are in English — of American and Canadian volunteers who submitted them for publication. The volume is illustrated with photos of people, ships, and locations where the ships embarked and arrived.

Dave Baum has volunteered to take orders for the book: Here is the procedure: Mail a check for US 35.00 made out to Dave, and include a card with the purchaser's name and mailing address to: David Baum, 11/13 Mapu, Tel Aviv 63577, Israel. The purchase price covers the cost of the book and mailing.

EXHIBITIONS

The Machal Committee is still making efforts to establish a Machal Museum. As mentioned previously, space in the leading military museums is tremendously expensive and Machal's resources are limited. However, we are still appealing to the Machalniks for photographs, articles, books and any other memorabilia, and, of course, cash contributions would be greatly appreciated. Memorabilia should be sent to David (Migdal) Teperson, 9 Havatzelet Street, Kfar Shmaryahu 46910 (telephone 09 958 2718).

The Machal Committee (with profound thanks to Zippy Porath, Migdal Teperson, and Doreen) is preparing material for a 'Mobile Machal Exhibition', which will be conducted by the American Jewish Historical Society. The committee is putting together a wealth of material — photographs, personal testimonies, a range of documents relating to the War of Independence: a bronze sculpture designed by Machalnik Sol Baskin; a beautiful wall tapestry woven by a Finnish Machalnik; a painting of the 'Negev Air Lift 1948'; the Golden Book presented to Machal by the Vaad LeMa'an HaChayal; memorabilia relating to Machal Reunions; a vast number of books and publications; Machal Websites; films and video cassettes, newspaper features and information on present day Machal volunteers in the IDF.

CORRECTION...

The Winter 2002 issue of the AVI Newsletter featured a memoir by David Macarov entitled American Students at the Hebrew University Join the Haganah. Through the vagaries of computer typesetting, a substantial paragraph disappeared. The elided text follows. Begin at the bottom of the second column on page 8.

At one point the American Ambassador heard that the American students were taking part in the fighting, and wrote an official request for information to the Hebrew University. The Academic Registrar, Edward Poznanski, was in a quandary. If he denied it, and it was proved true, the University would lose its GI Bill accreditation; if he admitted it, the students would no longer receive their stipends. He therefore wrote a letter that became a classic. In effect, he said, "This will certify that the American students at the Hebrew University are studying just like all the other students." Nothing further was heard from the Embassy.

Although the roles of Machalniks in general, and of some individuals in the sea, ground and air forces, have been published, not many people know that that the Head of Air Force Intelligence was an American, Nat Cohen, the Head of Signals was Bernie Popkin (Dov Peleg), likewise an American. I headed the Codes and ciphers department with a discharge rank of Squadron Leader (between major and lieutenant colonel). In addition, the entire codes and ciphers department, with units all over the country was made up almost entirely of (mostly) American girls. Their work was boring and painstaking, but occasionally enlivened by a flash like, "We have just shot down five (repeat five) British planes." My life was made more interesting by a certain American girl who was reported by the Military Police as having shot the lock off her door., "To see if it worked, like in the movies." She also volunteered to work extra hours with me, until she learned I was married. At last, she was booked for shooting dice with officers, although herself a private (the officers were not booked). I have always believed that she was charged because she invariably won.

OBITUARIES



David Kaplan (second from left) Being Received by President Ezer Weizmann, 1996

David Kaplan: Ben Hecht Veteran, AVI Vice President

David Kaplan passed away on January 31, 2002 after undergoing bypass surgery in New York City. He was 75 years old.

David was truly the Tsadik amongst us, always having time and patience to listen to the next guy's problems. He remained serene, even stoic in the face of his medical problems. David and I teamed up at AVI in 1993 and immediately developed an easy friendship. His sharp intellect was a delight as were his copious e-mail messages full of his own brand of caustic humor. As accepting as he was, he had zero tolerance for views that compromised the rights of Jews to settle in all parts of Eretz Yisrael. And nothing would enrage him more than those who made false claims of having served on Aliyah Bet ships, in particular "his" 'Ben Hecht'.

David attended City College of New York and N.Y.U College of Dentistry (DDS). He conducted a private dentistry practice in Monsey, N.Y. and taught at the Clinical Faculty, NYU College of Dentistry for many years. At the time he retired he held the post of Professor and Department Chairman, Dentistry, Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery.

His military service in the United States was with the United States Maritime Service as a radio officer aboard cargo ships, troopships, tankers and colliers. He also served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps in Germany.

David was recruited into Aliyah Bet in 1946 for service as radio officer on the M/V Abril, renamed the S/S/Ben Hecht. David's summary of the events follows:

'The M/V Abril was formerly a private yacht with a capacity of 12 passengers and 12 crew. Commandeered by U.S. Navy in 1941 was a radar picket vessel PY31 USS Cytheria, patrolling the East Coast with a 60 man crew. Decommissioned after WWII, she was bought by the Tyre Shipping Co., a front for the American League for a Free Palestine (Irgun) and renamed after the playwright Ben Hecht. Refitted in Brooklyn in 1946 and registered under the Honduran flag. She sailed December 26, 1946 from New York with official destination Arica, Chile but instead crossed the Atlantic, stopping in Ponta delgada, Azores to refuel and then through Gibraltar to Port du Bouc, France. Repairs were made there to the damage caused by the transatlantic voyage, tore out all internal accommodations, built shelves throughout and boarded 600 passengers. Sailed from Port du Bouc following the coastline then headed South of Crete to Tel Aviv. Spotted by British Lancaster bomber patrol. Surrounded by three British destroyers and boarded 10.7 miles off the coast of Palestine, an act of piracy on the high seas since this was beyond the three-mile territorial limits of Palestine. The Displaced Persons were disembarked and sent to Cyprus aboard British prison ships 'Empire Shelter' and 'Empire Rest'. Several crewmen disguised as refugees accompanied the passengers. Remainder of the crew was incarcerated in Acre Central Prison, Haifa, convicted of 'aiding and abetting illegal immigration' and sentenced to 17 years hard labor by a British military court. After an intensive public relations effort in the United States, protesting the jailing of 21 Americans engaged in a humanitarian effort, President Truman pressured the British government into deporting the crew as undesirable aliens back to the United States on the S/S Marine Carp.

The British Government impounded the Ben Hecht and after the State was founded she was refitted for service in the Israel Navy as the 'Maoz' and saw action in the sinking of the Egyptian destroyer 'King Farouk'. She was later decommissioned, sold to an Italian firm and is still sailing as a ferry between Naples and Sicily. "

David Kaplan served for many years as National Vice President of AVI earning our respect for his devotion, reasoned solutions and passion for the issues. He was a founding member and a Vice President of Congregation 'Bais Torah' of Suffern, New York where he resided. His wife Ellen, his sons Abbe and Joshua and his daughter, Susan, survive him.

We will miss him immensely, compelled, as we are to go on without him. He was on the verge of completing the definitive roster of the Aliyah Bet crews. The evening before he was hospitalized he was speaking on behalf of the AVI Archives Fund in Whippany, New Jersey. We will carry on his work and fondly remember him to the end of our own days.

OBITUARIES CONTINUED

David Kaplan
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Condolences to
Ellen Kaplan
11 Pine Road
Suffern, NY 10901

*The following obituary was published
in the New York Times February 3, 2002*

Dean Ira B. Lamster, Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery, records with deep sorrow the death of our colleague, Dr. David Kaplan, Special Lecturer in Dentistry, on January 31, 2002. Dr. Kaplan made many contributions to the School's clinical, administrative and didactic activities, including the dental auxiliary utilization program for more than 35 years. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his wife Ellen, to his sons Abbe, Joshua daughter Susan, and to his mother.

Ira B. Lamster, D.D.S., M.M.Sc.
Dean, Columbia University School of
Dental and Oral Surgery

A distant friend adds—

Although all of my dealings with David Kaplan were by email, we developed a very friendly relationship and worked together to verify Aliyah Beth crew members. He treated each case fairly and in a gentlemanly manner. I am gratified that I convinced him to write his reminiscences of his experiences in the Aliyah Bet which appear in recently published "THE GATES ARE OPEN".

David Baum

A suggestion from Si Spiegelman and others—

Some of us have considered how best to honor David Kaplan's memory at this time. In view of the dedicated work he did in support of the AVI archives, it would be fitting to honor him with contributions to AVI's 'Machal Fund' that finances this work. Contributions are tax deductible. Address to Machal Fund, c/o Ralph Lowenstein, POB 118400, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, 32611.



**LAZ KAHAN (Kahansky):
Northland 3rd Engineer**

Laz Kahan, whom I've known since high school, passed away in Montreal on December 22nd after a prolonged illness. He was in his 77th year. Surviving him are his sons Stewart, Jeffrey and Robert, their mother Estelle Cooner Kahan and five grandchildren.

Brought up in the 1930s when anti-Semitism was rampant in Canada's Province of Quebec, Laz learned early on to defend himself and fellow Jews against the neo-Nazi bullies of that era. Small wonder that later in life he felt duty bound to fight for the Jewish cause whenever necessary, never waiting to be asked to do so.

Laz was as an active participant in our school's annual Field Day, and always did well in the 150-yard dash. He was also a skilled horseman who was hard to keep up with on Mount Royal's winding bridle paths.

World War Two saw Laz as a combat infantry soldier in Canada's North Shore Regiment. While tending a wounded comrade in the thick of the battle for Arnhem, he sustained a shrapnel wound that could have gotten him an honorable discharge had he so desired. But he chose instead to return to the field, and was back in ac-

tion within a month.

At the outset of the Northland's Aliyah-bet career, Laz and I shared a watch on the bridge. But within several days he was promoted to 3rd Engineer, after producing a brass bushing on the ship's lathe that was desperately needed to get one of our diesel engines working again. Other occasions followed during the remainder of our trouble-plagued 23-day trans-Atlantic voyage when Laz's technical acumen helped save the day.

Laz proved to be a steadfast comrade throughout our entire Aliyah-Bet ordeal. On one unforgettable occasion, when an opportunity presented itself to escape from the British army bus taking us from Haifa port to the Athlit detention camp, he made for the door but turned back when he saw that I was too weak to follow due to a bad cold.

Soon after returning to Montreal he went into the garage business under the name of Eagle Motors. In the mid-1950s Laz custom built a sports car for a local businessman, which caught the attention of the news media and brought him a degree of renown and greater ambitions.

Always a tinkerer and mechanical innovator, he expanded into the automobile brake business after developing an efficient method of cleaning discarded used brake shoes. Recycled "Eagle" brand brakes soon gained acceptance as reliable equivalents of original brands. The successor company, which was incorporated in 1981 as Satisfied Brake Products Inc., is today one of the largest of its kind in North America and managed by his sons Stewart and Robert. His son Jeffrey is a professor of English Literature and a well-known Shakespeare specialist.

Laz's life was never dull or uninteresting, and he certainly left his mark. May he rest in peace.

Eddy Kaplansky, Haifa
Kaplansk@shani.net

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR....

To the editor...

The Winter, 2002 edition of the AVI newsletter coverage of the 'NEGLECTED HEROES' article in last November's JERUSALEM POST, will give welcome support to the battle the Cornerstone Committee has been waging for years to get the IAF Beit Harishonim exhibit properly housed and completed.

The present situation is that work to stabilize the building damaged by subsidience is still unfinished. The good news is that The Air Force has appropriated sufficient funds to enable work to go forward; not enough to finish the job, but at least to bring the target much closer. Our representations to Turner (see your article excerpts) to reverse the scandalous renaming of Beit Harishonim for Colonel Zoric Lev - a much respected pilot who went missing in the 1973 war - has so far born no fruit. Worse, the defence of an inexcusable error of judgement is that Zoric was himself one of the "few"; patent nonsense as he was too young to have flown in the Independence War or contribute to making the IAF the pillar of Israel's defence as it did in that war. But we will, I hope with the help of Machal everywhere, pursue it till we right this outlandish wrong.

The Cornerstone Committee, I report with sorrow, has been depleted with the passing of three members: Cyril Horowitz a 101 squadron fighter pilot, Stefan Laron (Falk) a navigator of the first crews manning 69 (heavy bomber) squadron - both were veterans of WW2 - and Bill Katz's widow, Ruth, whom we enlisted because of her insights. She contributed to its formation and gave practical assistance after Bill's passing. A vital and courageous woman who suffered from cancer for many years. We miss them and deplore the years of delay that robbed them of seeing the object of their devotion come to fruition.

The Committee is now constituted of Eddy Kaplansky, Jules Cuburnec, Mike Manor (Mankowitz) and myself as chair. There were many mistakes in Arie O'Sullivan's article, not all as flagrant as misquoting Eddy and myself, but a few

quite nasty. One, not serious, was that the Cornerstone Committee had been won over to the cause, when in fact the Committee was in the van, appointed to continue Bill Katz's initiatives, collect, evaluate and catalogue memorabilia and ensure the exhibit was set up at the Hatzirim museum.

It was agreed and promised, too, that Yaacov Turner would consult the Committee at all stages to exploit its members' unique first hand knowledge of the events depicted in the exhibit. It was never done and we are sure this resulted in waste of time and money and an edifice less than appropriate to its designated purpose. In that Machal and other Air Force rishonim have been ignored, the project - the brainchild of Bill Katz - has been hijacked by those whose objectives may not correspond to the veterans'.

On a more positive note, we hope the project will be completed to a reasonable standard provided the money available is used according to professional planning, with our participation and with elimination of waste.

Sol Jacobs

: s-jacobs@zahav.net.il

To the editor...

In both the original Jerusalem Post article "Neglected Heroes" and the condensed version in the last Newsletter, I am wrongly quoted as having said that the IAF's first fliers came "out of a sense of adventure or for money." Those defamatory words are definitely not mine. What I actually told journalist Arie O'Sullivan was that "they came for a variety of reasons, but mainly because their skills were desperately needed."

Readers were further misinformed by the assertion that only Jewish volunteers stayed on in Israel after the 1948 war. The fact is that a number of non-Jews did as well.

Eddy Kaplansky, Haifa

To the editor:

Ira Feinberg writes of the need for Jews throughout the world to rally to the support of Israel. One instrumentality he proposes is the creation of Machal 2, a worldwide Jewish volunteer group modeled on the Machal Volunteers of the Israel War of Independence. The

formal part of the proposal is reproduced below. He invites discussion. A full copy is available from Ira Feinberg 2 Horizon Rd.-Suite 629, Fort Lee NJ, Email: deanoclean@aol.com

THE FEINBERG DOCTRINE

Be it resolved that there must be a pledge that every Jewish family dispatch their children to live, work and serve in The State Of Israel for a period of one year. Each time a family sends their children to Israel the bond of unity is strengthened. Living, working or studying in Israel by Jews from all over the world will create the numbers of supporters in sheer numbers that would discourage any and all of our enemies from contemplating attacking and attempting to destroy us. Destroying us means not only the physical destruction of the State Of Israel, but it equally means the destruction of the Jewish People.

Machal shall live on. Volunteers in the millions for now and all of human history. The Government of Israel as well as every major Jewish Organization, every Synagogue, every fraternal, every activist Jewish Organization must partake in this program by presenting and promoting it to their constituents. This is the meaning and spirit of Machal 2, and the method and means of preserving our heritage and human existence. We must never forget that if we do not all stand together now we shall surely perish together tomorrow, and return to our wandering existence sans state, sans freedom, sans everything. This must not happen. Action must be taken **now**.

This doctrine was presented as a resolution to a Machal Reunion in 1997 in Las Vegas by Ira Feinberg, a Machalnik who served in the Palmach in 1948 in Israel's War Of Independence. It is now again being submitted to the World Jewish Community and the State Of Israel for approbation, endorsement and **action**.

To the editor...

I was glad to read that we now have a representative, Mitchell Flint, from the West on our National Board. There are several members of AVI in the Phoenix, Arizona area and I wonder if it would be

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CONTINUED

Letters

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worthwhile to have a chapter here. I sometimes think it would be good for us to be represented on committees which plan local Jewish/Israeli functions like Israel Independence Day, etc. I would not want to lead such a chapter but would be pleased to be a part of one if this is desirable and feasible

Irv Fellner

To the editor...

I enjoyed the article by David Macarov on the American Students at the Hebrew University. I arrived in Palestine on the Marine carp in November 1947 as a tourist. Aboard ship I learned that I could attend the Hebrew University and receive assistance under the GI Bill of Rights. I made my way to Jerusalem, registered at the Hebrew University, was billeted at Pension Pax and was invited to join the Haganah two weeks later when the UN voted for partition, which I did.

There were a number of Americans who participated in several actions. Among them was my now friend, Lee Reinhardt, and a rabbinical student, Moshe Pearlstein. He was killed when a group from our outfit went to Kfar Etzion and all 25 (or 35) were killed.

Were we not a part of the American contingent from the Hebrew University? Please clarify, as I am not too clear on the facts.

Irv Fellner

David Macarov replies...

Obviously, I could not name all the American students at the Hebrew University, and a number of them have reminded me of their presence after seeing the article. Perhaps everyone who was there then should send in his/her name so the organization would have a more complete list. Incidentally, I have drawn on many of the things that happened there and then in my book, *The Uncles*, available on the net from Barnes and Noble and Amazon.

To the Editor...

I consider myself privileged to receive

the AVI Newsletter. Born in Nairobi, affiliated to the South African Machal Association, who provided me with my entry to Israel in 1948, I have always enjoyed reading your informative journal.

I began my association in 1988 and in one year collected 270 names. In 1989 I hosted your then President Lola Sprinzeles and her late husband Paul at a reunion of some 125 Machalnikim from Britain and Europe. The ceremony honored the 106 Machalnikim with the *ot hakommimut* and the *ot lochemei hamedinah* medals which were awarded and handed out by Brigadier General Menachem Meyara, Defence Attache, Israel Embassy, London.

It has always given me much pleasure in bringing Machalnikim together who have not met for many years. Your winter issue of the AVI Newsletter was instrumental in doing just that. I read with interest the enlightened article by Ira Feinberg who wrote about 'his buddy' Jerry Raymond. What intrigued me was that 'Jerry' was a Kinder (Kindertransport) from Germany who volunteered from England, yet was unknown to me. The Kindertransport organization also could not assist. I then turned to my friend who I knew as Gunter Raynard and who was also a Kinder from Germany. I asked him if he knew of a Jerry Raymond. He did not know Jerry Raymond but told me his name in Israel was Gerald and was known by his colleagues as Gerry. His surname must have been confused by Ira and him in 1948. Getting together by 'phone, at least for the time being, gave them both so much pleasure.

Another example concerns Eddy Kaplansky who writes interestingly in your Newsletter. He piloted the Dakota that was used for training Israel's first parachute regiment. The man who commanded and who wrote its first training manual was Tom Bowden, known in Israel as Captain Appel. He was not Jewish and as an ex U.K. First Airborne Division he gave Israel his expertise. Tom and Eddy never really knew each other. As a Personal friend of Tom's since 1948 I brought them together some year back in Caesarea. A rewarding experience I believe it is true to say, "friendships forged in fire" are everlasting.

*Stanley Medicks
Coordinator, British and
European Machal Association*

GIFTS TO THE ARCHIVES: LOWENSTEIN REPORTS

Ralph Lowenstein, chairman of the Research and Archives Committee, reports that he has received 70 gifts to the Machal Fund since January 1, totaling about \$9,000. Some of these are major gifts by a dozen *chaverim* to make possible accelerated research and cataloguing of material at the University of Florida Libraries, the official location of the archives.

A large number of the gifts were received in memory of Al Glassman, Dave Kaplan and Paul Silver. Gifts to the Machal Fund are a significant way of both remembering deceased comrades and continuing our various research and cataloging projects. All such gifts are completely tax deductible, and donors receive acknowledgment from the University of Florida. Also, Ralph notifies families of the name and address of the donor, but not the amount given.

Ralph also reports that he now has a student assistant working every day as they proceed with cataloging the large amount of documents, questionnaires and photographs that the archives have accumulated. Ralph and his assistant are also at work on a detailed roster that will list the name, age, hometown, unit and duty of each American who served in Aliyah Bet or with the army or navy. This will be added to the excellent list of Americans and Canadians in the air force and of Canadians generally already compiled by Eddy Kaplansky.

With permission of the executive committee, Ralph has also begun a project to create a "virtual" museum on the Internet. This museum will give a narrative about Aliyah Bet and Machal, and will eventually house all data, photographs, audio and video tapes collected, along with photos and information about ships, etc.

Those who would like to contribute either to the memory of a deceased comrade or to further the work in organizing the archives and building a virtual museum should send contributions to: Ralph Lowenstein, Aliyah Bet and Machal Archives, PO Box 118400, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611, or contact Ralph at rlowenstein@jou.ufl.edu

President's Corner
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2. Ralph Lowenstein has proposed a virtual mobile AVI museum on the web, which would include the growing collection of AVI material at Gainesville, plus linkages to existing websites such as the one created by MACHAL WEST, and others in Israel and elsewhere. With this resource we would leapfrog existing museums that, regrettably, have not been able to respond to our offers of exhibit material. This visual dimension would parallel the written archival material which is being collected and organized the University of Florida. Ralph is encouraged about the possibility of financial support. Meanwhile an enthusiastic Executive Committee provided startup funding at our April meeting.

OUTREACH AND LOCAL PROGRAMMING:

As a model for joint participation and community involvement in the in the Local Program area Bailey Nieder is working on a program to be scheduled for Los Angeles in June to be co-sponsored by MACHAL WEST, hopefully other interested community organizations. The program features a presentation by Dr. Robert Levy of UCLA, who will review his widely acclaimed newly-published biography of Ana Pauker: *THE RISE AND FALL OF A JEWISH COMMUNIST*. As a key figure in the post World War II communist regime of Rumania, Pauker was helpful in illegal immigration from Rumania, and later after the foundation of Israel, in legal immigration. She also was the first female and Jewish Foreign Minister anywhere.

In our effort at expanded educational outreach Bailey briefed a group of Jewish middle school students from Corvallis Oregon on Aliya Bet; Syd Abrams spoke at a Hillel-sponsored program at the University of Washington, and provided a copy of Captain Patzert's memoir to a Jewish congregation in Ashland Oregon; and I did a one-hour conference call with a group of non-Jewish students involved in a history project at a Bakersfield, California high school. All of these groups discovered Aliya Bet on our web site.

MEETINGS AND VISITS:

At his invitation I visited with Israel Ambassador David Ivri in Washington last

month. He was well acquainted with AVI, and especially with fliers who are AVI and Machal West members. He was the first CoC of the Israel Air Force who entered service after the Independence War. General Ivri commanded the Israel action against the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981.

Tev Zimmerman of Machal West and our Regional VP Mitch Flint invited me to Machal West's meeting with Smoky Simon in Long Beach. Tev introduced me to the group as the new AVI president, and I had the opportunity to meet and chat with a number of AVI members, including some of the first flier icons. Later in the evening I met with MW President Esther Friedman.

All the best,

Eli

Canadian Machal
continued from Page 1

and the idea of doing something about it. We would help the young people understand why we did what we did show them some of the important places where we were involved in the fighting. This plan was adopted and finally the following Machalniks were chosen: Ben Ocopnick, Abe Levine, Sam Wasser, Jerry Rosenberg and myself from Toronto and Alan Chapnick from Winnipeg.

The idea was a brilliant one. Things turned out extremely well as I will explain. We left Canada a few days before the actual tour started so that we old timers would be over any jet lag when the youngsters arrived, and it also gave us the opportunity to meet with the organizers in Israel and finalize any last minute plans. We were treated very well in all respects and are very thankful to those people for the manner in which they looked after us. The meeting between all of us was held in a Tel Aviv restaurant and it was at that time that we met with the President of World Machal, Smokey Simon, and a South African Machalnik.

On Friday morning, December 28th, at 5 a.m. we were taken from our hotel to the airport where we met up with the arriving Canadian youth. There were 650 of them but the six veterans would only be involved with six busloads, one veteran on each bus. I will not attempt to give a day-by-day report of the tour but I will try to

give you the highlights.

My first impression of my busload of kids (40) was that they had no idea what Israel was all about, had never heard of Machal, and had very little knowledge of the situation in the country other than what the headlines said in the papers. However, as we started traveling around the country and getting to know each other, this began to change and their interest increased ten fold. I found that after the second day, the age difference between these kids and the veterans was completely forgotten and we were accepted in all their activities and discussions. The days were full of traveling, visiting important places, listening to lectures on relevant subjects - and almost every evening after dinner, each bus group met in a private room in the hotel, for a discussion of approximately one hour, where that day's activities were analyzed and each participant gave his/her thoughts and ideas. I found it interesting to see how they were changing from one day to the next as they asked increasingly good questions.

The very first stop after leaving the airport was the old Israel Museum in Tel Aviv where the State of Israel was declared. It is now called Independence Hall - and a government official met us. He welcomed the group and made a fantastic speech setting the tone for the whole trip. Then with a stop in Caesarea we headed north to the various hotels where we would be spending the next three days. Each hotel had two or three busloads as no hotel could hold all six buses that included the veterans. My busload happened to stay at the guest house of Kibbutz Ramot which is on the east side of the Kinneret at the bottom of the Golan cliffs. This is a most beautiful location as we had the mountains behind us and the water in front of us with the city of Tiberias across the lake.

Some of the activities we did while in the north was a visit to Kibbutz Mayan Baruch on the Lebanese border where the group heard a lecture on "Living Along the Confrontation Line"; a hike on the Golan and a visit to Banias; a visit to Rosh Pina and Safad; a barbecue dinner in Tiberias followed by an evening of dancing on a boat on the Kinneret; and a visit to an amazing recreation complex called Canada Center (which was built near Metulla for soldiers serving in the north as well as

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Canadian Machel
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members of many settlements in the area who have little opportunity for these types of activities - ice skating, bowling, swimming, arts and crafts, use of a shooting range, and more).

From the north, on the fourth day, we drove down to the northern Negev, some 40 kilometers from Arad, to a Bedouin encampment. This location is actually put together for tourists and other visitors, and included tents where there are many flat mattresses for sitting or lying; all sorts of food areas; camels for rides and photos; and typical Bedouin entertainment. Since this was New Year's Eve, it was planned for the youngsters to party there all night or to get some sleep in those tents - and then at 5 a.m., they were bused to Massada where they climbed to the top and saw the sunrise from the east over the Dead Sea. As for the veterans, we were transported from that encampment at about 10 p.m. to Arad where we spent a very comfortable night in a hotel.

The next morning, the youngsters were taken from Massada to the Spa at Kibbutz Ein Gedi on the Dead Sea where they had lunch and a free afternoon to partake in the many facilities of the Spa. Meanwhile the veterans were picked up in mid morning from their hotel in Arad and driven to the spa where we met up with the group and joined in the fun. From there, we drove to the area of Jerusalem where we had dinner and spent the night at the guest house at Kibbutz Ma'ale Hachamisha, about 20 kilometers from the city. The next morning, ten female officers for each bus joined us. They stayed with us for the next two days. This gave the Canadian kids a chance to meet some Israelis of their age and chat with them about the differences in their life styles, etc. During those two days, we visited an archeological dig at Beit Guvrin; then a visit to the Faluja Pocket area where I was able to explain the importance of the battles there and the need to open the road to the Negev. The next day was an important day because we became aware of a surprise that the organizers had arranged for us.

The day started with a visit to Ammunition Hill in Jerusalem - they now have a small cinema right there and all visitors

are obliged to see a 20-minute film of the battle there during the Six Day War. This explained a lot to the young people and they were awed by it all. Next was Yad Vashem and then a visit to the national Cemetery on Mount Herzl - this was an extremely emotional visit, especially when we walked through the military part of the cemetery and saw the ages of the soldiers lying there in such vast numbers. Also amazing was the memorial pool for the sailors lost on the submarine Dakar with their names listed on plaques around the pool.

From here we drove to a kibbutz outside the city called Shoreshe. We had been told that there would be a service at the Memorial in the forest on the road to Jerusalem honoring the Machalniks killed in action. But the weather was bad and early in the day we were told it was canceled. But when we arrived at Shoreshe, we were taken to a huge reception hall where we found many round tables seating ten people each all set up - and at each table, a Machalnik was sitting with his wife - these are veterans who had stayed on in Israel and were invited to this very special dinner and evening. Eight Birthright participants who had just arrived on the buses were at each table with filled the other eight seats at each table. In this way, there was an opportunity for these kids to meet other Machalniks and talk with them about their experiences. There were speeches, of course, and Smokey Simon gave an excellent welcoming speech and set the tone for the evening. The Birthright organizers had arranged all this and it was wonderful for us six veterans as we were acknowledged for what we were doing. We also met many old comrades, many of whom we had not seen in years. It couldn't have been a better surprise!!!

The last three days of the tour were spent in Jerusalem, with our bus staying at the Mount Zion Hotel located across the valley from the Old City right opposite the Zion Gate. Our activities slowed down somewhat because of the Sabbath and it gave those that wished an opportunity to attend services at a local synagogue or again visit the Kotel and the Old City. On Saturday night, approximately 4,000 of the Birthright participants from many countries arrived at the Convention Center in Jerusalem for what was truly a gala evening. It started off with a Las Vegas style show

including lasers, Cirque d'Soleil style acrobats, singers and dancers. etc. Following that, we were addressed by the President of Israel as well as a number of top people of the organization who were responsible for bringing us all to Israel in such a wonderful manner. The evening was capped by a disco dance for these young people on the lower level of the Convention Center. Since this was going to last for hours, most of the veterans returned to our hotels around midnight for a nightcap and to discuss the events of the evening.

On Sunday, the last day of the tour, our bus left for the coastal area with a stop near Rehovoth at a kibbutz where a secret ammunition factory was built underground with a large laundry at ground level to fool the British while they manufactured ammunition and some small arms. This location is now a national museum. From there we went to the Yemenite Quarter of Tel Aviv where we had a final dinner at a wonderful restaurant called Magunda - a place I would very highly recommend each one of you visit on your next trip to Israel.

I would like to end my report by telling you about a small incident that happened to me while we were on the Golan. When all the youngsters went for a hike up one of the mountains, I stayed with the buses and the drivers as I felt it would be a bit too much for me. My bus driver introduced me to the other drivers and when I heard their names, I asked two of them to come and stand beside me. When they did, I put an arm around each one and made the following remarks, "Here I stand, an elderly Jew from Canada, in the twilight years of my life, and I am standing in the Holy Land with one arm around Shalom and the other around the Meshiach - what more could I ask of life?" Both these names are fairly common in Israel. This was, without a doubt, the most amazing trip of my life - and I hope I am invited again in the future. Also, I am sure that the effect all this had on each and every one of the young people will stay with them for a lifetime.

The Battle of Latrun continued from Page 1

Apart from the Arab villagers up in the hills there was a unit of the Arab Legion near by who were well trained with British officers and equipped with "25 pounders," the standard artillery of the British army.

The plan was that two platoons would attack the Arabs from the rear to attract their attention while one platoon would go on the roads to remove any obstacle on the road and keep it clear for the convoy to get through. When I heard the plan it sounded very dangerous for the poor platoon on the road. Naturally we Canadians were selected for the job! The Haganah still thought that we were all seasoned fighters.

A dusk we were loaded on to a bus and driven about 10 kilometers to a place behind a hill about a kilometer from the crossroads. After walking for about half an hour we came to the first roadblock, which was a big pile of stones completely, blocking the road. We immediately took cover in the ditches on both sides of the road in case there were any Arabs covering the road. Common military sense said that there would be Arabs behind the barrier.

After a few minutes when no one started shooting at us I crawled forward to see if I could see anyone there.. I called the rest forward and we 'formed a chain' and started to pass the stones from hand to hand as quietly as possible. I expected that at any moment some Arab would start shooting at us or that a hand grenade would explode. I had hoped that it would be a dark cloudy night, but instead it was a full moon and almost as light as day.

After we finished with the first roadblock there were two more on the way. Only after we finished the third roadblock did the Arabs realize what was going on. And they started to shoot at us. We took cover and returned the fire.

After a short wait the convoy from Tel Aviv consisting of more than 300 vehicles of all sorts started to come through as fast as they could go. The Arabs started shooting at us and the convoy went racing past. It was very noisy with both sides shooting at each other and the convoy roaring by.

When the last vehicle of the convoy went by we got ready to go 'home.' Then the word came through that a convoy of VIP (members of the government, etc.)

who had been stranded in Jerusalem were going back to Tel Aviv and we were to wait until they were through.

We sat at the side of the road and waited impatiently for the second convoy to arrive. Our crossroad and the surrounding area were in the hands of the Arab Legion in daytime. It was beginning to get light and we knew that we did not have a chance of getting out of there in daylight.

After what seemed like hours we heard the sound of trucks coming from Jerusalem. The Arabs started and we started shooting at the Arabs. In a few minutes it was over and we got the order to return to the busses waiting over the hill. We started running with the Arabs shooting at us as we ran. After a few minutes we got into the busses and felt safe. We were told to wait for three scouts who were going back with us. When we saw the scouts running down the hill towards us we all cheered but stopped cheering when we saw that after them were a number of Arabs.

When the Arabs saw the busses neatly lined up, they ignored the scouts and started shooting at the easier target, the busses full of soldiers. We scrambled out of the busses to give covering fire. As I jumped out of the bus I felt a blow in my knee. I realized that I had been hit with a bullet.

In Normandy I had been hit by a piece of shrapnel, which kept me in a hospital for a few weeks. This was much more personal. Shrapnel is fired at a target and explodes in all directions. This was a single bullet aimed at me. To make things worse it was a 303 bullet fired from a Lee Enfield rifle of the type that I had been carrying for almost six years. It did not seem right.

A solder form Company Headquarters had been hit in the head and was in a bad way. Also one of the girl wireless operators had been hit in the left leg and could not walk.

Since we did not have any first aid personnel with us we were told to lie down in the ditch and wait for an ambulance to come and pick us up.

By this time, we were told, the Arabs had gone home. The busses drove away leaving us alone.

A bit later the wounded were picked up and brought into a medical facility. The manuscript continues to detail Sid's experiences in Israel, his return to Canada and later decision to make aliya.

AVI/VOLUNTEERS FOR ISRAEL PARTNERSHIP: A Changed Life and a Memory of Ray Kurtz

Some years ago I assembled an anthology, *Single Women-Alive and Well*, Dianne Lorang and Ann E. Byrnes, editors. It tells how an adventure sponsored by Volunteers for Israel and publicized by AVI changed my outlook on life.

I signed up for the Volunteers for Israel trip in 1989 as a result of an AVI drive to have members work for the Israeli military for three weeks.

Though only a few members did go, one of them, Frank Lavine, was also stationed where I was, at a base on the outskirts of Eilat. My introduction to AVI had taken place in the early 1980s, when my late husband Ray and I were doing research into the life of his first cousin. Also named Ray Kurtz, he flew in the Zatec, Czechoslovakia to Israel airlift in 1948 and then continued to serve the new state as a pilot during the remainder of the War of Independence. When three war surplus B-17 bombers were smuggled out of the US and arrived in Zatec, under Ray's supervision as operations officer the planes were overhauled as best they could be and prepared for combat. On the morning of July 15, 1948 - fueled and loaded with bombs salvaged from a Czech arms dump - they headed for separate enemy targets.

Ray, commanding the mission, flew as co-pilot while Bill Katz served as pilot in the number one bomber.

"We staggered over the target at 9:40 p.m. local Cairo time," Ray reported.

"The city was well lit up, and they were totally unprepared for the raid. As a matter of fact, they must have expected someone to come in and land, because the runway lights were on at the time the bombing took place." The bombs slated for King Farouk's Abdin Palace actually landed in its yard or were scattered nearby. One hit a movie theater and created some damage and great confusion. It was a true moral victory

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for Israel, for this was the first time that one of her aircraft had struck a blow at Egypt's heart. Ray came back to the US after the war and continued to fly.

In May 1951, he was reported missing while ferrying a plane to Israel with navigator Seymour Lerner. No trace was ever found of the missing men, who were presumed dead after an extensive search.

The article, "Not as a Tourist," published in the book mentioned above, is available through 1stBooks Library at www.1stbooks.com, 800-839-8640. Written then from the perspective of a single woman, its lessons still hold for me as a member of a "55+ active adult" community in Rockaway, NJ.

Ellen Kurtz

DUES

IF YOU HAVE NOT PAID YOUR \$36 DUES FOR YEAR 2002, PLEASE DO SO A.S.A.P. THERE ARE FEWER OF US AND WE COUNT ON EACH AND EVERY AVI MEMBER TO CONTRIBUTE HIS/HER SHARE.

**THANK YOU,
DAVE GERARD, AVI
TREASURER**

ATHLIT HISTORICAL MUSEUM

In January the Historical Museum at Athlit accepted the Proposal below which was initiated and presented by Murray Greenfield and Harold Katz. Implementation has begun at the organizational and planning level.

The Athlit Museum is now a major tourist attraction and educational tool, particularly for the thousands of students at all levels from Israel and abroad who visit each year. For many years, Frank Lavine, of the Exodus crew, devoted his summers in residence there as a volunteer to lecture to visitors. Others of Aliya Bet residing in Israel have also given their services in similar fashion with the result that the visitors feel a living link with the history on exhibit.

The project when completed will give visibility to the contribution of the American volunteers; a visibility heretofore generally denied the volunteers. In a dramatic and enduring fashion, it shall help insure that the role of the American Volunteers takes its rightful place in the history of the founding of the State of Israel and will inspire generations to come to fidelity to the Jewish destiny.

PROPOSAL

The Illegal Immigration Camp at Athlit is dedicated to preserving the story of the entry of the first survivors of the Holocaust through its portals into Israel. Between 1945 and 1948 some 70,000 ma'apilim were brought to the shores of the then Palestine through the British blockade by the so-called 'illegal immigration' from detention in Cyprus and from gathering points in Europe. Half of this number came on ten derelict ships—the most famous of them being the Exodus—manned by 240 young North American volunteer Jews and a hand full of extraordinary non-Jews. It is an exciting and pregnant piece of history, which, today, more than fifty years later, continues to resonate with a timeless message.

It is proposed to construct at the Athlit Camp the additional replica of one of the huts which originally housed the ma'apilim. Through taped recordings and audio-visual display, photographs, texts and artifacts, in an interior crafter perhaps to reflect a crowded aliya bet deck.

The museum is intended to:

1. To record the historical event of North American Volunteers, largely unseasoned in seamanship but driven with a passion, who set aside personal agenda and reached out to identify with their European brothers.
2. Identify the individuals who served as crew and sailed the ships and the men behind the ships who enabled the sailing by financing and acquiring the ships, clandestinely outfitting them and enabling them to quit ports over British obstruction.
3. Convey the message of the oneness, the mutuality of the Jewish people everywhere, and to instill in the visitor the conviction expressed in the motto adopted by the American Volunteers, "I am my brother's keeper."

Harold Katz

אבינו שבשמים צור ישראל וגואלו, ברוך את מדינת ישראל ראשית
צמיחת גאלתינו, הגן עליה באברת חסדיך ופרס עליה סכת שלומיך
ושלח אורך ואמתך לראשיה שריה ויועציה, ותקנם בעצה טובה
מילפניך, חזק את ידי מגני ארץ קדשנו, והנחילם אלקינו ישועה
ועטרת נצחון תעטרם, ונתת שלום בארץ ושמחת עולם ליושביה,
ונאמר אמן.

**Our Father in Heaven, Rock and Redeemer of the people Israel: Bless the
State of Israel, the dawn of our redemption. Shield it with Your love; spread
over it the shelter of Your peace. Guide its leaders and advisors with your light
and Your truth. Help them with your good counsel. Strengthen the hands of
those who defend our Holy Land. Deliver them; crown their efforts with
triumph. Bless the land with peace, and its inhabitants with lasting joy. And let
us say: Amen.**