



# AMERICAN VETERANS OF ISRAEL

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

## FROM THE AVI PRESIDENT

Whereas the AVI Board has for many years been relaxed on dues compliance, this will no longer be possible in the future. A review of the numbers reported in the newly released Income and Expense Report clearly shows that our income shortfall is driving us toward a deficit in our treasury. This poses a threat to the continuation of our activities, including the publication of this newsletter.

We are contacting members in arrears with second reminder notices and will suspend the mailing of the newsletter to those not responding. The Board is also considering other measures to solve the problem and keep our activities intact. But first and foremost, I ask each AVI member to share the load and not count on those who are remitting dues to pick up the slack. Those who have not paid their \$25 annual dues are asked to respond immediately. Those who experience hardships will be exempt once they tell us in full confidence.

The many *chaverim* who have paid their dues, (even exceeding the amount billed), year after year, deserve full recognition of their dedication and accolades for keeping AVI alive and well. Our fellowship is important in keeping alive the legacy of our contribution to the creation of the Jewish State and in the commemoration of our fallen.

*Si Spiegelman*

## SOLIDARITY UNDER FIRE

*Since the resumption of Palestinian attacks on Israelis, the intifada, tourism to Israel has declined. Individual Jews from America and elsewhere as well as non-Jewish tourists (with the notable exception of American evangelicals who see Israel as preparing the way for the Second Coming, have been deferring their planned visits. Some Jews group tours were cancelled. Notable among these was a planned summer study tour sponsored by the American Reform movement and several delegations of athletes slated to attend the Maccabiah games. Several Israeli groups, including the Israel branch of Reform Judaism, were outraged about what they saw as a lack of support in these trying times. This bitter reaction was reported in the New York Times. The AVI then sent the following letter to the editor to the Times. It was published on the editorial page on June 14.*

To the editor:

Regarding the report "Israelis Angry..." (NYT June 11, A6) we support the sentiments of the Israeli leadership. The American Veterans of Israel consists of men and women, Jews and non-Jews, who volunteered to serve in Israel's defense in its War of Independence in 1948 and who sailed the DP ships that ran the British blockade in the years before that. We have

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## REPORTS FROM THE REGIONS

### NEW YORK

#### *Memorial*

The 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Col. David 'Mickey' Marcus Memorial was held on Mother's Day this year. Our original date was May 20<sup>th</sup> but an unexpected change in the Salute to Israel Parade schedule, from May 13<sup>th</sup> to May 20<sup>th</sup>, made it necessary for AVI to change the Marcus date and still be able to participate in the Parade. Fortunately,

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## ON AUTHENTICATING MILITARY SERVICE...

From time to time disputes arise among our members regarding a battle or aliya bet experience. Less frequently a question is raised as to whether some particular individual was even a participant. Memory, of course, plays tricks on all of us. Recently, a renowned historian was accused on claiming he fought in Viet Nam while the evidence argued that he never left the United States during the relevant period. On June 22, the New York Times ran an op-ed by Edmund Morris reflecting on the general question of autobiographical memory. Taking this article as a jumping-off point, the Newsletter editor asked several AVI members to think about the relevance of Morris' thinking to our own discussions. Here an abbreviated copy of the Morris article is followed by comment by David Kaplan, Eddy Kaplansky and Ralph Lowenstein and Sam Kafka.

### **Just Our Imaginations, Running Away**

By EDMUND MORRIS

Having been chastised by the eminent historian Joseph Ellis for fictionalizing the story of my life in "Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan," I suppose I should feel some satisfaction at the news that he has fictionalized his own. Actually, I feel no joy in Professor Ellis's discomfiture, only a profound sense of unsurprise. Well, of course he's woven the fabric of his life partly out of whole cloth and partly out of the shot silk of fantasy. Don't we all? Can any of us gaze into the bathroom mirror and whisper, "I never made anything up"?

All human communication, outside of the driest exchanges of statistical and other

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## NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

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### \* N.E. Region - Subdivision

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Paul Kaye & David Kaplan: NY, NJ, Pa.

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Reports from the Regions  
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the West Point administration was amenable. AVI members were joined by a representation of friends, including the Jewish War Veteran's color guard. A social hour, before the ceremonies, provided a well-needed opportunity to renew acquaintances.

Rabbi Dr. Nissan Shulman's Invocation, including a message of thanks, followed the lighting of the memorial candle by Cadet Sharon Engelmeier and the singing of the National Anthems. A warm welcome by Major Carlos Huerta, the new Jewish Chaplain at the Point, was acknowledged by AVI President Simon Spiegelman who spoke of the Will-to-Win spirit that carried the day in 1948 and asked us to imagine what Israel; would have looked like today had there been 10,000 or 50,000 volunteers from the United States instead of only 800.



Si Spiegelman, Chaplain Carlos Huerta,  
Ambassador Alon Pinkas

The guest speaker, Ambassador Alon Pinkas, Consul General of Israel in New York, despite two weeks of exceptionally difficult diplomatic problems, made it his business to be with us. He spoke of the difference between the Israel of 1948 and today. Today Israel has confidence in its economic, political and military capabilities.

For the past three years we were fortunate in having an exceptionally gifted musical family, the Shapiros, lift our spirits with

## FROM THE AVI TREASURER

### WHAT THE NUMBERS TELL US

REPORTED INCOME AND EXPENSES		
	Y2000	Y2001
Description	(Thru 12/31)	(Thru 6/30)
Beginning Balance	4597	4050
<b>Income</b>		
Dues and Contributions	6688	5440
<b>Expenses</b>		
Newsletter	2265	1214
Postage	2179	870
Telephone	526	610
Activity Subvention (1)	1104	280
Printing and Stationery	111	113
Bnai Zion Contribution	550	550
Friends of IDF Donation	500	0
Computer Systems	0	1092 (2)
<b>Total-Expenses</b>	<b>7235</b>	<b>4729</b>
Ending Balance	4050	4761

(1) Hanukkah, West Point and Israel Parade  
(2) Conversion to MSAccess database (Non- recurr.)

1. Income continues to decline steadily as a result of a diminishing membership and a segment of our chaverim that fails to pay its dues. Even after a first pass with dues reminders mailed out, total income for the current year is \$5440; twenty percent down from last year.

2. In order to sustain the activity level of recent years we require an expense budget of \$7000-\$8000. If we apply our actual expenses to date or last year's expenses to project the results for this year, it is clear that our reserves will be spent down to \$1500 by year-end and we can expect deficits next year.

3. The AVI Board of Directors will meet on July 10 to decide on measures aimed at keeping our organization solvent, and restore our reserves to acceptable levels.

*David Gerard*

their renditions of Hebrew and Israeli songs. This year, one of the three brothers, unable to attend because of his visit to Israel, was replaced by his son. The brothers Shapiro are known professionally as the Shevet Achim Choir.

The stirring ceremony at the gravesites of Col. Marcus and his wife Emma included the reading of the names of our fallen comrades, the laying of the memorial wreaths, readings of Psalms, the rendition of the K'al Maleh Rachamim by the Shapiro Choir. The Military Academy Firing Squad Saluted and their Bugler sounded Taps.

As usual, the Jewish War Veterans provided the Color Guard, thanks to Col. Walter Stern. The Wreaths brought by Sam Alexander.

### **SALUTE TO ISRAEL PARADE**

This year participation of the AVI marching contingent in the Salute to Israel Parade, May 21, increased over the last parade. Some of us were fortunate enough to greet Alan King, the Grand Marshal this year. AVI received loud and happy cheers as we progressed up Fifth Avenue with our banner and with our colors flying. It was good to see some new-old faces among the twenty-two members and spouses; Bernie Ellman and Charlie Weiss. Thanks to Rachelle Berkowitz and Ellen Kaplan, chauffeurs par excellence, our less-mobile *chaverim* were able to ride in the parade. It was a perfect day, sunny but not too hot and we left gratified, with lifted spirits and ready for next year.

*David Kaplan*

### **CANADA**

Canadian veterans participated in a Yom HaZikaron ceremony at the Toronto Cenotaph for the Jewish Legion. The Canadian Jewish Congress as promised a plaque with the names of those who fell in 1948 in a prominent place in the main foyer of one of its main administrative buildings.

*Jerry Rosenberg*

***With the passing of the deadline for this Summer 2001 issue of the AVI Newsletter, we have no substantive reports of regional activities in the Southeast, Midwest and Northwest.***



Independence Day Parade in New York

## **HARVEY SIRLIN REMEMBERS THE IDF ARTILLERY**

*The last issue of the AVI Newsletter recorded the death of Harvey Sirlin. Harvey, recruited in early 1948 from Winnipeg, wrote a memoir. It runs 39 single-spaced pages and has three photographs from the war appended to it. Following is a short excerpt recounting the battle for Beer Sheba. It is not a story of tactics or strategy but the recollection of a doughboy sloshing through the dirt amidst chaos, disorganization and technical challenges. Jerry Rosenberg, leader of the Canadian Veterans of Israel, AVI's Canada region, has the full text.*

The task of the jeep company in the attack on Beersheba was to cut the road to Hebron in order to prevent reinforcements being sent from Hebron. With the jeeps was a \_ ton truck (command car) carrying dynamite with which to blow up a bridge on the road. Well, what can I tell you? It was a night with a very heavy mist, a fog really, and it was soon apparent that we had lost our way. We wandered for hours and only with the first light of day did our officers think that they finally knew where we were. They spotted a fortified position on top of a slight hill, and shouted *shelanu* (ours). They couldn't have been more wrong. In the next instant 'ours' opened fire on us.. The Egyptians didn't realize that we were going to drive up to say hello, but obviously thought that we were going to attack them. Fortunately for us there was a gully not far away in which we all took cover because we had another problem to deal with. Just at the moment that we were

fired upon, the command car with the dynamite broke down and was sitting there like a big fat target.

Whether I was ordered to do it or I volunteered I do not recall.. But I went out with my jeep and backed up the command car, hooked a chain on to its bumper and tried to pull it.. For whatever reason I couldn't move it. Maybe with all the firing going on I forgot to release something on the vehicle. At any rate I sat down by the right front wheel of my jeep and shouted back to them that I couldn't move it. They started yelling back "for God's sake don't sit there, that's what they're shooting at and that's where the dynamite is." I took their advice and ran some distance away, although there was really no place to take cover. No sooner did I lie down when a shot glanced off a rock not ten feet from my head. I immediately ran back to the wheel of the jeep shouting, "It's safer to be where they're aiming at." True story, so help me. You surprise yourself at times. They finally told me to come back with the jeep to the gully.

They got someone else to go out and try to retrieve the dynamite but decided that this time he would get covering fire. So I was sent out again as No. 2 on Albert's machine gun. We ran to a slight rise and gave covering fire while the command car was successfully pulled into the gully. Now it was our turn to run back. I swear that I saw spurts in the dirt alongside of us as we ran, and when we got to the gully I felt as if I had run ten miles with my heart pounding wildly.

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Harvey Sirlin Remembers...  
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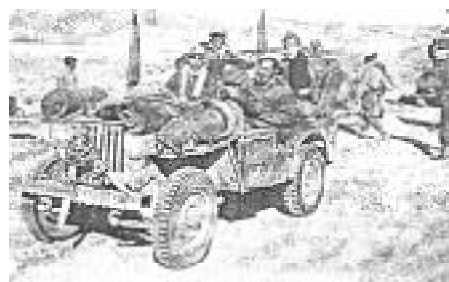
Somehow we extricated ourselves from this situation because the next thing I remember is going to Beersheba from the southern end of the town. We spread out and approached carefully as there were shots being fired over our heads and I'm not sure that the situation was clear to anybody. We then moved up the main street very slowly toward the main police station, which was the last holdout when we informed that they had just surrendered. We then started to go through the houses for two reasons. One was to make sure that there were no stragglers and, two, was to look for useful items such as chickens (which we did find), corn flakes and other tasty items. To the army's credit they allowed a very short time for looting from the shops, and then clamped down with Military Police making sure it was stopped.

The units started marshalling themselves in the open spaces and I thought to myself, "I hope there are some units at the edges of town in case the Egyptians counter-attack." But just then I was given another task. A fellow from one of the other units had one leg almost blown off and needed to be transported to a medical facility of some sort. The stretcher was set up on my jeep and he was lifted onto it and we set out to find a doctor or an ambulance. The situation was absolutely chaotic and in utter frustration whoever was traveling with the wounded fellow and me said, "Head for Mishmar HaNegev." That was the kibbutz they started out from and a hospital had been set up there.. I did not hesitate or tell anyone what our plan was and, under this fellow's guidance, headed as fast as possible for the kibbutz. I was absolutely furious at the fact that we couldn't get immediate help in Beersheba and was cursing the chaos that seemed to exist. At any rate when I returned sometime later my unit had gone. They had left towards the next objective, which was Bir Asluj. I hope that the fellow on the stretcher made it.

In Beersheba I was advised to return to our staging area at Kibbutz Gevulot... The first figure I saw was Arnold Brown with his massive beard. I must have looked pretty tired because the first thing he did was to sit me down and make me a nice cup of tea.... The next one to get hold of me was Solomon the Adjutant. He began scold-

ing me by saying I had deserted my unit. I really lashed out at him, in part because I was tired, and told him I was not about to leave a badly wounded man to just lie there and possibly die. That evening the rest of the unit joined us having merely reconnoitered toward Bir Asluj to make sure that the Egyptians were not preparing to counter-attack. The next day our unit moved to Beersheba which was to become our home for the next two or three months... My platoon got a new platoon commander, a nineteen year old by the name of Motta Gorban who, by the time he became chief of staff years later was known as Motta Gur.. Motta had taken part in the attack on Beersheba as part of a platoon of newly graduated officers...

I don't recall much in the way of entertainment being laid on such as movies, but maybe there were. It seems to me that we spent the evenings doing a lot of talking... The highlight of all the entertainment was when Leonard Bernstein conducted the Israeli Philharmonic in Beersheba. I can't remember what they performed but the ovation was wild. But I think that the highlight for me came one day when there was a reading in Yiddish of a Sholem Aleichem story by one of the entertainers. It was the most beautiful Yiddish I had ever heard and I enjoyed it with a large crowd of young guys just like me. The most thrilling moment for me came when Ben Gurion visited Beersheba. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time as it was an unannounced visit. I was thrilled to be standing within ten feet of someone I considered a living legend. I wanted to reach out and shake his hand but didn't have the nerve...



Negev, December 1948, Harvey Sirlin at the wheel

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Robert Weiss, *Joshko's Children*.

Robert Weiss, Machal comrade now living in Boynton Beach, Florida, is the author of two recent books. The first, *Joshko's Children*, is the story of a small group of German and Austrian Jewish children, age 8 through 16, who survived the Holocaust and found eventual refuge in Palestine. The other, *Unique Times*, is the daily journal of Weiss as a soldier during the War of Independence.

*Joshko's Children* was the basis of a documentary produced in Vienna last year and shown throughout Europe in May of this year. Weiss was an advisor during the filming in Austria, and also the commentator for the film. In conjunction with the filming, Weiss was invited to be interviewed by Austrian newspapers and radio stations.

A native of Vienna, Weiss immigrated legally into Palestine in June 1945, with an official British certificate. While a member of Kibbutz Amir in the Galilee, he joined the Palmach. During the War of Independence he served in the Palmach's Negev Brigade. He was also a member of the French Jeep Force. He immigrated to the United States in 1951.

*Joshko's Children* in English (338 pages) and *Unique Times* in German are both available on CDs. They can be obtained by contacting Weiss at [robweiss@bellsouth.net](mailto:robweiss@bellsouth.net).

Ralph Lowenstein

Isban, S. "*Umlegale*" yidden shpalten yamen: di geshichte fun an umlegale raize keyn erez ("*Illegal*" Jews Ply the Seas: *The History of an Illegal Transport to Palestine*). Buenos Aires: Central Farband fun Poilishe Yidden in Argentina, 1948.

Isban was an eyewitness to the voyage of the Hatikvah from Southern France, to Genoa and to Haifa. He accompanied its 1500 passengers who were transferred to detention camps in Cyprus. Why review a book more than half a century after its pub-

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lication? Because it has not appeared on any of the AVI bibliographies of works on *aliya bet*.

Isban, author of around twenty books on Zionism and Israel, all in Yiddish, accepted an assignment from the New York newspaper, *Der Morgen Journal*, to report on efforts to bring Jews into Palestine in the face of the British blockade. His tale begins at an art gallery in New York where young Jews, *the best of American youth* had gathered as volunteer sailors, *sea wolves*, along with young gentiles eager to defend Jews. The flames of Maidanek, Isban writes, not only burned six million of Israel's children but also ignited the enthusiasm and resoluteness of a portion of Jewish youth in America. The ship, built in 1896, was bought in Baltimore by American supporters of the Haganah and sent to Miami for conversion. Originally, the ship had served as a Coast Guard patrol vessel but had, in its dotage, been carrying Hudson River cargo. A stormy Atlantic crossing brought it to Southern France where Isban, guided by members of the Haganah, boarded. It would sail to Genoa where, with the help of Italian dock workers, it picked up its human cargo of survivors of concentration camps, the *living dead*.

Sidney Yellin from Baltimore was the captain. His crew included Sidney's brother Sol Yellin, Hugh MacDonald, a Catholic from San Francisco and a Stanford and Harvard graduate, Adrian (Abraham) Phillips from New York, trained as a mechanical engineer, who served as Second Engineering Officer. Isban said Phillips knew no Yiddish and dressed like an opium smuggler. Harold Katz, born in Rumania and brought to the United States as an infant. He was raised in Indiana and followed his rabbi father to a pulpit in Newport. Katz had been a naval officer in World War II. Norman Lewis, a product of Yeshivat Etz Hayyim in Brooklyn, hoped to remain in Palestine. He was a fireman aboard the ship. Joseph Gilden had served four years in the U.S. Army and intended to join a kibbutz. Herman J. Braverman, a former commander in the maritime service, became Chief Engineer. Murray (Mordechai) Greenfeld, also a merchant marine veteran, fulfilled a number of shipboard duties including cooking. Bernard Lerner, Second Mate, was a veteran of the Lincoln Legion

in Spain and hated England. August Labeczewski, a Polish Catholic, had had nine years of shipboard experience. He fulfilled a variety of duties. Aboard, but not a crew member, was a Catholic priest representing the Christian Committee for a Jewish Palestine.

Off the coast of Lebanon, the *Hatikvah* was surrounded by six British warships, two of which drew alongside and, after a warning, threw up a bridge between the ships. British troops swarmed aboard and were met by a stiff resistance from the passengers. Some were veterans of Stalingrad and ghetto fighters. Using tear gas and truncheons the British managed to take control of the engine room and the wheel and tuned the ship toward Haifa. The passengers were disembarked there and transferred to a transport to Cyprus.

Isban relates how he accompanied the to the detention camp in Cyprus. He was discovered and brought back to Haifa for interrogation about his contacts in Europe and jailed. Isban tells of being brought to Lod airport for deportation. His guard was an Arab policeman who argued that the Jews and Arabs could live together in peace were it not for the British.

The book was completed in 1947 before the UN Partition plan and the declaration of a Jewish state. Thus, he brings a picture of *aliya bet* unaffected by the experience of the War of Independence and the shift to the view of the Arab as enemy.

Samuel Z. Klausner

**Visit AVI Website**

<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~sklausne/aviweb.html>

scientific data, involves a certain amount of storytelling — which is to say, creative license. Information has to be arranged in some sort of sequence, tiny touches of humor or drama or pathos added, unnecessary details subtracted, hidden patterns emphasized. Such arts are applied instinctively, and quite justifiably, even by those of us who have no creative gifts.

I am loath to speculate what private motives Professor Ellis may have had in trying to convince a broadening audience, over the years, that he had served in Vietnam, when in fact he saw the war only on the evening news. (His reported claim to have scored a winning touchdown for a high school team to which he did not belong can surely be forgiven as plain old braggadocio.) But as a fellow Communicator, I can understand his urgent desire — Only connect! — to convey the divisiveness of the 60's to a generation rendered comatose by MTV...

President Reagan, who like Professor Ellis was gifted with a high degree of imagination, on various occasions told various listeners, including the prime minister of Israel, that he had been "there" at the liberation of the German concentration camps in the spring of 1945. He told the story poignantly and without the faintest attempt to glorify himself, his transparent purpose being to communicate the horror of what Eisenhower's soldiers saw through the barbed wire.

On other occasions he told other listeners ... that he had not served overseas in World War II but had spent several weeks, as adjutant of the Army Air Forces First Motion Picture Unit in April 1945, watching hour after hour of raw color documentary footage from the camps... Nobody who knew Mr. Reagan and heard either version of his two stories could doubt for a minute the sincerity of his revulsion for the Holocaust. The second story happened to be the "true" one, as far as logistics were concerned: he remained physically stateside during the war, as Professor Ellis did in the Vietnam era.

What interested me as a writer — and what

On Authenticating Military Service...  
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drove me, eventually, to use a biographical form that suited this kindly fabulist who guided our destinies for eight years — was the genuineness of his emotion, whether he was telling the “true” or the “false” story. To him, it was plainly the same parable, conveying the same moral essence told in two different ways.

Professor Ellis's fine work as a historian is not necessarily invalidated by his similar tendency to present himself as both a witness to, and a participant in, great events. But the odds are he will not be quite so ready in the future to protest literary innovations that try to come to terms with our perennial habit of mixing memory and desire.

...All of us might pay heed to the inspirational message delivered nearly 90 years ago by a past president of the historical association, that the historian “must ever remember . . . that unless he writes vividly, he cannot write truthfully.” That past president was Theodore Roosevelt.

#### COMMENTS—

*Ralph Lowenstein has been gathering information on service records.*

I read the article with a great deal of interest. I think the way to proceed is the way I am going at the present time. To date, Eddy has done a marvelous job of identifying all the Americans and Canadians who served in the air force, and all the Canadians who served, period. I am now working on the rest...

I started going through a whole list of names I had, and gave up when I realized that so many people could not identify a unit they served in, had no army number (that one is understandable) and could not name two living persons who served with them in a unit. We are going to have to assume that these people are phonies until proven differently. Migdal Teppenson in Israel said he would help me with confirmations.

The thing about Joseph Ellis is shocking...but not so shocking when we see what has happened in AVI. We cannot stop people from embellishing their

careers in the army (some people who sailed over with me and sailed back with me tell me that they came much earlier and stayed much later, even though they surely must realize that they are sending the questionnaire to me. You can imagine what others do.) However, we can eliminate people who absolutely lie about it...

#### **Eddy Kaplansky On Liars and Imposters**

If further evidence were needed that spinning ‘old-soldiers tales’ is not the exclusive domain of old soldiers, we need look no further than a recent NY Times article by Edmond Morris titled “Just Our Imaginations, Running Away.” He tells of an eminent historian who claimed “that he had served in Vietnam, when in fact he saw the war only on the evening news.” He also recalls that Ronald Reagan told the prime minister of Israel and others, “that he had been there at the liberation of the German concentration camps in the spring of 1945” when in fact he spent the entire war in good old USA.

Morris tacitly admits that he himself is not above such antics either. This likely explains his conciliatory stand on the fibbing described in his article. It's “Just Our Imaginations, Running Away,” he contends, nothing more serious than that. Really!

Although a lie is a lie is a lie, they go the whole range from forgivable to the other extreme - judged by the degree of harm they inflict on others according to the standards of the judge. Some may argue, with more conviction than Morris's suggestion to the contrary, that there's not much difference between a liar and thief. But not everyone will go along with that rather harsh view, particularly those who have been caught in the web of a lie or are fearful that they might be.

Most of us would probably find it easy to forgive Ronald Reagan for his above-mentioned fib, as it harmed nobody and was apparently prompted by a thoughtless impulse intended to emphasize his horror of the German death camps. Ditto for Edmond Morris, who allegedly fictionalized his own story as his fib, seems to have harmed nobody. One would have to be of somewhat more charitable nature to forgive the eminent historian's fib, if only

because historians are expected to be more meticulous than laymen with historical details such as the identity of those who served in a particular war.

Since AVI is ostensibly an organization of North American volunteers who took part in Israel's War of Independence, it would be reasonable to expect that all its members actually served in that war in the capacities they respectively claim. But that haven't necessarily so, judging by some of the whoppers published in the AVI Newsletter over the years. There may even be some members whose most reliable evidence of Machal status is their membership in AVI.

It is all too easy to turn a blind eye in such cases, especially if the perpetrator is an active member in good standing. All in the spirit of camaraderie, of course. “What good will it do” to challenge the culprit, I've heard it asked by those who should know better. It's obviously much easier, and less embarrassing, to sweep the dirt under the rug. But one should bear in mind that by so doing he becomes the unwitting partner of the liar and inadvertently helps spread his deception. It is also worth noting that many such deceptions have been found to be at the expense of another veteran, or of Machal comrade who fell in combat.

In my humble opinion, therefore, if the AVI wishes to enhance its good name as a responsible veterans organization it must face up to every instance of suspected deception and also make a serious effort to clean up its rapidly thinning ranks. Otherwise, it risks going down in history as another example of an insignificant 20th century mutual admiration society.

#### **Sam Kafka is writing Machal history**

He loved Ronald Reagan. When I was a young boy, I was sitting in the cinema on the first row looking on, when Ronald Reagan did ride by and shoot...I think, that he was on every battlefield with his films and did more for USA and the free world than any other soldier. That he told stories about being in different places but these may have been jokes. You have to remember that he was an artist.

Joseph Ellis was not known to me before I  
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read the Morris article. In writing the history of Machal there cannot be any imaginary stories, only facts. Here fairy tales may be...deceit. I like jokes and fairy tales, but not when I'm writing history.

### **David Kaplan comments**

The Morris article was interesting and I am inclined to include both him and Ellis in the category of historians with too much personal involvement. This makes their response subjective to an unacceptable degree. If they have no documentation for their conclusions, then these are considered theorems awaiting validation.

Our problem is far easier because we do not have to answer to the Muse of History. Adopting the Torah's halachic decree - "*Al yeday shtay aydim...*" so all any interviewee need do is supply the names of two comrades who "were with me", giving the unit, dates and general description of their service and they are in. Of course we accept any official document pertaining to their service, but not a note from their Mother. I challenge the one American Historical Association panel (in the original article but not in the above abstract, ed.) that said, "orthodox historiography simply cannot communicate certain experiences (maybe except sex!) like the awfulness of life on the Western Front during World War I. To them, I say, please view the video tape "Winter Winds of Hell" - the story of the Merchant Marine supply line to Murmansk/Archangel, made with the participation of survivors with official Nazi films, or the Nazi films of Sobibor and the Russian films of Katyn Forest.

But - we need only concern ourselves with the bare bones of the people involved and not the details of their service lives. However, anything beyond the basics should be clearly labeled "ANECDOTAL MATERIAL" !!!!

## **ITEMS...**

### **Max Kahn in the News**

Max Kahn, now of Southampton, PA, flew out of Ramat David in 1948. Recently he received an award from the Philadelphia District ZOA. His plaque reads "...a volunteer in Israel's War of Independence to Make the Miracle a Reality." On May 3 an interview with him was published in Philadelphia's *Jewish Exponent*. Following 25 missions in WWII, he was recruited by Al Schwimmer to "fight for Israel." He picked up a C-46 in Mexico and brought it to Palestine via New Orleans, Miami, Teterborough, where the plane was overhauled, and then on to Newfoundland, Iceland, Ireland, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. He flew 10 bombing missions from the Ramat David base. The *Exponent* reporter quotes him, "Truthfully, to this day I don't know how Israel won the war. It was guts—that's what it was."

### **Leidner on Christ**

Harold Leidner, a radio operator on the Exodus, has published *The Fabrication of the Christ Myth*. David Gen commends it as a scholarly work on the period. Copies are available through the website of Survey Books [www.surveybooks.com](http://www.surveybooks.com).

### **Weiss recalls days in the Palmach**

L'Chaim of Delray Beach published an interview with Robert Weiss (see Weiss in the Book Review section) on April 24. In it Weiss recalls that, at age 20, he joined the Palmach to build settlements in the Negev. He says that the Bible helped them survive because it identified locations where there was water. Only 300 Jews were in the Negev at that time without any medical facilities. He had

come to Palestine with a certificate issued by the British in 1945.

### **"THE PLEDGE" IS BACK!**

"THE PLEDGE," first published thirty years ago, describes how an American underground secretly sent airplanes, men, and materiel to help arm the new state of Israel. It is a story of how a varied group of Americans and Canadians – millionaires and longshoremen, ex-GIs and Biblical scholars, Protestants, Catholics and Jews – raced against time to locate, acquire and deliver the airplanes, ships (including an aircraft carrier), weapons, pilots, and instructors, that the Jewish homeland needed to defend itself against the invasion that began with its birth.

Its headquarters was the Hotel Fourteen on East 60<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, which it shared with the Copacabana nightclub's leggy showgirls and the white-haired ladies who lived upstairs.

Its author, Leonard Slater, a former editor, writer and correspondent for Newsweek, Time and NBC News, says: "Now a new generation can learn about the heroism, farce and stunning contradictions that, for instance, furnished the infant Israeli air force with Nazi fighter planes bought from Communist Czechoslovakia with money contributed by a Long Island real-estate magnate. The work has been republished and is may be bought online from amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

### **It's Fineberg!**

The last issue carried a photograph showing several unidentified Machal soldiers in 1948. The identity of one of them was sought by an Israeli military agency. Ira Fineberg recognized himself.

# OBITUARIES



Sam Boshes, 1948

## SAM BOSHES REMEMBERED

My friend of many years, Sam Boshes, passed away in Tel Aviv on April 18<sup>th</sup> at age 84. I first met Sam late June 1948 at the Galei Yam restaurant on Tel Aviv's Hayarkon Street, which at the time served as a sort of Machal fliers' club. He had just completed a brief stint with ATC on the Czechoslovakia to Israel airlift, and was waiting to be assigned a regular IAF squadron.

Sam was born in Philadelphia to immigrant parents, and raised in New York. His father, Abe Boshes, was a well-known professional wrestler and physical training instructor whose clients included US President Calvin Coolidge.

Though educated largely in the school of hard-knocks, Sam was well versed in both classical and contemporary literature. He also wrote well, but did so rarely. The Hebrew translation of his book on primitive man enjoyed three printings, somewhat of a rarity in Israel. He enjoyed good music, whether jazz, classical or opera, and knew the histories of many composers and musicians and was familiar with their music. He studied music for a number of years before enlisting in the US Army, specializing in orchestration and composition.

Sam's WW2 record as a US Air Force pilot is quite remarkable. He flew no less than 60 medium and low-level combat missions over occupied Europe in B-26 bombers, some 220 combat flying hours in all, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal and 11 Oak Leaf Clusters. This I only learned from his Army discharge certificate, as he was never one to brag about his accomplishments.

Though never exposed to Zionism in his youth, Sam fully understood the urgent need for a Jewish state after the brutal decimation of European Jewry. So when the time came he felt duty-bound, as a Jew and human being, to help assure the survival of the nascent Jewish State against the dangers facing it.

Sam was one of 103 Squadron's founding pilots when it was formed early July 1948. I felt privileged to be his co-pilot, flying supplies to the settlements in the Negev that had been cut off from the rest of the country by the invading Egyptian forces. It was hazardous work, night flying C-47s in and out of crude desert airstrips surrounded by Egyptian forces. Yet Sam never complained nor lost his cool, tirelessly flying as many round trips as the night allowed.

Sam never hesitated to resort to unorthodox measures, if other means failed, to resolve an urgent problem. At one point during his stint as commander of 103 Squadron, the fabric coverings of the C-47s' aileron, rudder, and elevator surfaces needed urgent replacement. Because the fabric was no longer taut, responses to pilots' control actions became dangerously sluggish. When promises by HQ to provide new fabric went unfulfilled for weeks, Sam forced the grounding of a C-47 by slashing the rotting fabric of its elevator control surfaces. He told headquarters what he had done, and promised that if the required new fabric wasn't received soon the other planes would get the same treatment. His response to ensuing threats of court-martial and accusations of sabotage was; "Do whatever you want. I'm not going to have any pilots kill themselves." As Sam put it to me in recent years: "A few days later the canvas miraculously appeared, and I felt a lot better."

After the war Sam settled in Tel Aviv and became one of El Al's early pilots. In the 1960s he gave up flying and was given an important administrative assignment, which he had requested so as to have more time with his family.

Samuel Boshes will be fondly remembered as an accomplished and very fine human being; a real mensch. Everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him will sorely miss him.

He is survived by his wife, Noemi, his daughter Lillian (Sapir) and his son Michael in Philadelphia.

*Eddy Kaplansky, Haifa*

*Messages of condolence may be sent to  
Noemi Boshes, Shderot Weizman 97  
Tel Aviv 62262, Israel*



Goodwin Lee, recently

## GOODWIN LEE, COMMANDER, AIR PHOTOGRAPHY UNIT

Goodwin Lee, first commander of Israel's Aerial Photography Unit passed away this spring at the age of 87. Goodwin Lee, a non-Jewish American, had served in an aerial interpretation unit of the United



# OBITUARIES

States Army during World War II. Following the war, Lee was open to further military service and, at the suggestion of a Jewish friend, joined the Israel Defense Force. A study of documents from the period show that he was a strict supervisor who did not allow his staff "not to dot the i's." He was a man of vision and foresight in all matters of aerial photography and its interpretation.

He strongly advocated for men in his unit when their pay was delayed and engaged in a contentious interchange with the Intelligence unit when it failed to deliver film on time. At another point a disgruntled lab worker provoked a security investigation of him and his work. He was cleared and complained that the charges had been part of an effort to sabotage the unit and arose from a vendetta against him personally.

During the 1948 war, the coastline around Gaza, then occupied by the Egyptians and areas around Ramallah were photographed with hand held cameras. Later cameras were mounted on the planes and, still later

F-42 automatic cameras were mounted on Spitfires, Messerschmitts among other planes.

In August 1948, he supported a section within the unit to produce educational films for the air force. This section was under Jules Krause, a Machal volunteer now living in California. His wife Silva, their son Martin and his wife Tiffany Devitt and their daughter Alana and her husband Michael Lardner survive Goodwin. A memorial was held in his home in Westbury on May 12, 2001.

*The above text was abstracted from a translation by Silva Lee of parts of History for the 21<sup>st</sup>. century by Moshe Tobolski.*

*Condolences may be sent to  
Silva Lee  
134 Briarcliff Road  
Westbury, NY 11590-1637*

Solidarity Under Fire  
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a sense of shame for those in the generation after us who refuse even modest risk to support their commitment.

*Simon Spiegelman  
National President, AVI*

*Subsequently, President Spiegelman received several letters and calls of support. One letter follows:*

Dear Mr. Spiegelman:

My name is Randy Barnes. I will be a senior at UC Berkeley this coming fall. I read your letter in the NY Times today and wanted to contact you and your group on behalf of the pro-Israel students at UC Berkeley. I myself am leaving for Israel in 2 weeks and I believe that it is crucial that we in America show out support for Israel by standing side by side with the Israeli people.

The sacrifices that you and others made in fighting for Israel when you were my age are appreciated and will never be forgotten. I am filled with pride when I read of the history of Israel, our history, and I cannot but feel a bit inadequate compared with those who have come before me. So, as stories of trip cancellations continue, please know that there are many young people out there doing our best to live up to your legacy.

Warm regards,

Randy

## RECORDS

**The AVI is continuing its efforts to complete the records of service of veterans**

**If your record is incomplete you may receive a telephone call from a member in your region who will ask you to verify the information we have on file and to complete the information where necessary. The completed records will be placed in our AVI Archives at the University of Florida managed by Ralph Lowenstein. They become a witnessing legacy for generations to come.**

**David Kaplan, 11 Pine Road, Suffern, NY 10901, is leading the current effort. Telephone: 845 357 2929; FAX 845 369 6034; [litvak@juno.com](mailto:litvak@juno.com)**

**Visit the AVI website to consult back issues of the AVI Newsletter  
<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~sklausne/aviweb.html>**



***AMERICAN VETERANS OF ISRAEL***

**VOLUNTEERS IN ISRAEL'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE**

**UNITED STATES & CANADIAN VOLUNTEERS**

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

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED