



# AMERICAN VETERANS OF ISRAEL

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



## PAUL KAYE ASSUMES THE REINS

As of January 1, Paul Kaye became President of AVI for the year 2003. Paul served as an officer on the Haganah ship *Hatikvah* and, along with other members of the crew was detained in Cyprus. Later, with other members of *Palyam* he participated in the sinking of the British prison ship *Empire Life-guard*.

Paul's first statement was a call to solidarity and mutual support among AVI members.

Serving with him will be Executive Vice President, Jerry Rosenberg of Toronto, Vice President, Canada, Arnold Friedman, Vice President, Israel, David Baum of Tel Aviv, Vice President, Public Affairs, Sidney Rabinovich of New York, Vice President and Treasurer, David Gerard of Commack, NY and as Chair of the Executive Committee. Simon Spiegelman of New York. The names of other appointees are found in the National Board listing on page.2.

President Kaye has restructured the Board. Following is his charge to the Board with descriptions of the responsibilities of the occupants of each position:

**The Board of directors:** Consists of 27 members in 2003. Will work with

continued on Page 2

## MACHAL VOLUNTEERS FROM CHINA

The contingent of volunteers from China, who joined the IDF, and the struggle for statehood, consisted of two groups totaling 13 men, in their early twenties, who arrived in Israel towards the end of 1948. Their story starts far earlier.

The majority of the Jews in China were either stateless or after the end of WWII received Soviet (USSR) citizenship basically valid for staying in China, or for travel to the Soviet Union. This differentiated them from most of the Jews living in the Western Diaspora, who possessed the citizenship of the country they dwelt in. Thus it was rather a simple matter for Jewish youth from the USA, Europe, South America and South Africa to travel, using normal means of transportation as available in those days, whereas for us in China, it was nearly impossible to do so in the pre-state period and in the early days of statehood.

The Jewish youth in China, and all of the first groups of volunteers, were mainly organized within the Betar (Brit Trumpeldor) Youth movement, with a few exceptions. Early in 1947, when it became evident that inevitably a military struggle would lead to the formation of a state, and that International Jewry would be called upon to help their kin in Eretz Israel, two youngsters from Tianjin, in North China; Harry (Arie) Marinsky z"l and Samby (Shmuel) Muller, who were an exception to the rule, and held valid Polish Passports, decided to attempt to reach Eretz Israel. They left China in Mid '47 sailing via the Suez Canal to Europe, where they joined the Irgun Zvai Leumi (E'tzel) and underwent a number of military and political training courses in Italy, Germany and Czechoslovakia. Both speaking fluent English, they were able to obtain a visa to "Palestine" from the British Embassy in Rome, this to the amazement of the Irgun leadership in Europe, and sailed to Eretz Israel, arriving in early February 1948.

Their joy in reaching Eretz Israel was short lived, following further military training courses in the Irgun camp at Shuni (near Binyamina), and some actual field action in Jaffa, at that time still occupied by Arabs, the 2

continued on Page 10



*Zipporah Porath and President Katzav*

## PRESIDENT KATZAV RECEIVES MACHAL DELEGATION AT BEIT HANASSI

*A Report by Zipporah Porath*

For the first time ever Israeli school-children will learn first hand about Machal thanks to, *MACHAL, Overseas Volunteers in the War of Independence*, a booklet in Hebrew just published by the Ministry of Education's Information Center. Produced in close cooperation with members of the World Machal Committee in Israel, this booklet adds a proud and authentic voice to the history of that pivotal period.

The booklet was presented to President Moshe Katsav at a reception at Beit Hanassi on January 7th. It was a lovely affair, a small informal gathering of about 25 Machalnicks, including the Israel Committee and representatives of the Ministry of Education. Leslie Marcus came especially from South Africa. We were all very sorry that members of AVI and others from abroad couldn't make it but, as I pointed out in my remarks as Master of Ceremonies, you were with us in spirit.

Smoky Simon spoke — he and I presented the Booklet to the President, followed by Raphael Seroussi (represent-

continued on Page 11

## NATIONAL BOARD

### President

Paul Kaye

### Past President

Eli Bergman

### Executive Vice President

Jerry Rosenberg

### Vice President, Canada

Arnold Friedman

### Vice President, Israel

David Baum

### Vice President, Public Affairs

Sidney Rabinovich

718 896 1102

### VP and Treasurer

David Gerard

### Chair, Executive Committee

Simon Spiegelman

### NATIONAL REGIONAL

#### Vice Presidents

**East:** Ira Feinberg

**South:** Irving Meltzer

**Midwest:** Ben H. Steuerman

**West:** Mitchell Flint

### PROGRAM VICE PRESIDENTS

#### Planning

Art Bernstein

Bailey Nieder

#### Activities/Events

Bill Gelberg

David Hanovice

Len Shaffron

#### Global Coordination

Zippy Porath

#### Speaker's Bureau

Naomi Kantey

#### Newsletter Editor and Webmaster

Samuel Z. Klausner

[sklausner@ucwphilly.rr.com](mailto:sklausner@ucwphilly.rr.com)

#### Archivist

Ralph Lowenstein

[rlowenst@jou.ufl.edu](mailto:rlowenst@jou.ufl.edu)

352 292 3565

#### US Museum Relations

David Gen

#### Membership/Welfare

Lois Sprinzeles (chair)

Sam Alexander

Marvin Lebow

Nat Nadler

Adrian Phillips

### AVI WEBSITE

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

Paul Kaye  
continued from Page 1

the President and Executive Vice President on specific tasks and issues. A general meeting of the Board will be called by the President to discuss and vote on matters changing the purpose or membership criteria of the organization.

**The Executive Committee:** will consist of ten "core" members drawn from the Board of Directors to deal with day-to day issues through periodic teleconference meetings and special meetings as needed. Other members of the Board will participate as required to deal with the issues on the agenda.

The Executive Vice President will conduct meetings of the Executive Committee in collaboration with the Chairman. Assist in running the organization, by performing special tasks as charged by the President.

**Vice President, Israel:** Coordinate issues dealing with historical research, reunions and visits to Israel

**Vice President, Canada:** Deal with all membership issues and activities in Canada

**Vice President, Public Affairs:** Deal with media announcements and promotion of special events to the community. Maintain Israel Consulate contacts

**Vice President- Treasury:** Maintain financial records. Report treasury status to the Executive Committee and annual financial reports to the membership. Handle dues bills and arrears.

**Chair, Executive Committee:** Schedule the Executive Committee meetings. Prepare meeting agenda, background material and minutes. Brief the President and the Executive Vice President. Maintain the AVI data base. (Membership records).

**REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS**(East, South, Midwest, West and Canada): Encourage and organize activities and special events in their respective regions. Deal with specific issues relative to dues compliance, membership pro-

motion and 'good and welfare', including condolences to bereaved families.

### PROGRAM VICE PRESIDENTS

**Planning:** Machal West connection, presidential successions, future receivership issue, 'Friends of AVI' membership. VP backup.

**Activities/Events:** Recommend activities and coordinate with the regional VPs including proposed Israel solidarity visits and Las Vegas (or other site). Invite Machal West members. Participate in US. Birthright Project

**Global Coordination:** Bridge AVI with Machal activities world-wide.

**Speaker's Bureau:** Offer and Schedule speaking engagements to major organizations and community groups. Coordinate AVI assistance to anti-defamation campaign on campus.

**Newsletter & Internet:** Publish quarterly Newsletter (Further exposure to global Machal). Expand subscriptions as warranted. Update AVI website.

**Archives:** Collect, file and catalogue historical material from members. Maintain data base of questionnaire responses. Launch fundraiser. Manage donations and expenses. Develop the internet museum. Coordinate with archival initiatives in Israel.

**US Museum Relations:** Promote and coordinate programs and exhibits undertaken by museums in the US relative to Machal and Aliyah Bet.

**Membership/Welfare:** Assist regional VPs in offering contacts and support to members, condolences to widows.



# OBITUARIES



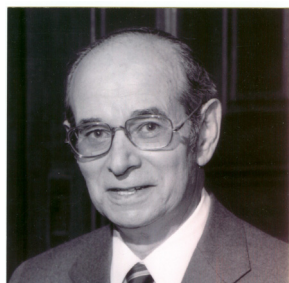
## Miriam Hessel: IDF Social Services

Miriam Hessel died on January 10, 2003. Miriam had gone to Palestine in early 1948 to be a student at the Hebrew University. When Israel declared its Independence she joined the women's army corps, serving from June 1948 until May 1949. In the IDF she engaged in work related to social services and also worked as a translator. Her daughter Judy recalls her describing her participation in action carrying a Molotov Cocktail under her skirt. She met her husband, Alexander, at this time. Alexander predeceased her. Prior to making *aliya* she had studied Jewish education at The Jewish Theological Seminary. She and Alexander remained in Israel until 1956.

In her professional career in the US, she was a teacher and guidance counselor in New York City. She held a BA from Brooklyn College and an MS from Long Island University. Miriam dedicated herself to support of the American Red Magen David. Friends knew her as a nature lover who raised African Violets which she gave to friends and with which she decorated the New Synagogue of Fort Lee.

Two daughters, Judy and Miriam, and their husbands and three grandchildren, Samantha, Jeremy and Jonathan, survive Miriam.

*Condolences may be sent to  
Judy Bosin  
6 Horizon Rd.  
Fort Lee, NJ 07024*



## Rabbi Irving Block: AVI Chaplain

Rabbi Dr. Irving (Yisrael) J. Block passed away on October 31, 2002 at the age of 79. Rabbi Block joined and fought with the Haganah in Jerusalem even before Israel became a state. He had suffered from Parkinson's for a number of years. In his last

years h would still, with the help of his wife, Phyllis, arrive at the B'nai Zion building to light the Hanukka candles for the New York AVI celebration. Following his wishes, he was interred on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

Following service in the Army in World War II, Irving completed a B. S. in accounting at the University of Connecticut and upon his return from Israel studied at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion receiving his ordination in 1953 along with a Master of Hebrew Letters and, in 1978, an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from HUC-JIR. In 1993 he received a honorary Doctor of Divinity from General Theological Seminary.

Irving was widely known as the founder of The Brotherhood Synagogue in Greenwich Village in 1954. For twenty years he shared the building with the Rev. Dr. Jesse W. Stitt and his Village Presbyterian Church. Rabbi Block and Dr. Stitt would speak of two faiths under one roof. They traveled together, espousing their principles, in the U.S. as well as in Germany and Israel. This arrangement was terminated upon the death of Dr. Stitt and The Brotherhood Synagogue, after some wandering, settled into what had been a Friends Meeting House on Gramercy Park. From this setting Rabbi Block provided services for the mentally ill, the African-American Jewish community, the Ethiopian Jewish community, the homeless and dozens of other groups. His son, Herbert, recalled that he was a member of NAACP, fought for gun control, worked with new immigrants and had a deep love for the State of Israel. In 1999 he published an autobiographical work *A Rabbi and His Dream: Building the Brotherhood Synagogue*.

At the service before Irving was flown to Israel for burial, Herbert said, "He taught me to care about all Jews everywhere, regardless of their affiliation. He taught me brotherhood and to strive for peace and I tried to follow." Herbert's son Isaac was born six days before the death of Yisrael and, at the *brit*, received his names Yisrael Yitshaq Noam. Irving is survived by his widow, Phyllis, their son, Herbert and a daughter-in-law, Judith, and two grandsons. His brother, Allen Block, is Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Emanuel in Canarsie. He leaves two sisters, Lillian Danberg and Evelyn Cooperstock, both of Connecticut.

*Condolences to  
Phyllis Block  
201 E. 21 St. 9-5  
New York, NY, 10010*



*Weinstein  
in RCN*

## Emmanuel (Wingy) Weinstein: Aliya Betnik, Palmach Fighter, Intelligence Operative, Ship's Captain

Manny Weinstein was four years old when he emigrated from Poland to Canada with his family. They settled in Montreal, where he attended the Jewish People's School (Yiddisheh Folk Shuleh) for several years before continuing through high-school in the city's public school system.

On December 6th 2002, two days short of his 76th birthday, Manny passed away in Montreal. Years earlier he had officially changed his name to Lukas Vongard, during a largely cloak-and-dagger sea-going career that began with his wartime service in the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and continued well into the 1960s.

He joined the RCN in 1944, as soon as he was old enough, and served on a corvette doing convoy escort and anti-submarine patrols in the North Atlantic. While in the RCN he acquired the nick-name *Wingy*, by which he was widely known for the rest of his life. After the war he worked briefly as a stoker on a coal-burning Great Lakes freighter before becoming involved in Aliya Bet.

Wingy's Aliya Bet career began in Baltimore, where he worked for a while with the team that helped prepare the *President Warfield* for her role as the Haganah Ship *Exodus 1947*. Before long he was sent to Miami to join the crew of the *Tradewinds (Hatikvah)*, on which he served through her entire Aliya-Bet career.

Following the *Hatikvah's* interception and capture by the British, he was detained in Cyprus with most of the ship's passengers and crew. There he became involved in the successful plot to sabotage the vessel that would, after their release from Cyprus, bring them to Haifa. To achieve this end the team of conspirators had to dig a tunnel under the camp's perimeter fence, smuggle in materials to make a bomb, get the bomb onto the vessel - the *Empire Lifeguard*, and detonate it in Haifa port just as the last of its passengers were disembarking. Wingy was among the suspects rounded up for questioning. He was held at Athlit until November 1947, when he was released for lack of evidence.

When the troubles started following the UN's adoption its Partition Plan for Palestine on November 29th 1947, Wingy joined the Palmach. He initially served with its maritime sabotage unit, and then in its

# OBITUARIES CONTINUED



Weinstein in Europe

"Haportzim" unit as it fought towards besieged Jerusalem. He participated in the fighting at Bab el Wad, Katamon and Sha'ar Etzion, where he was wounded.

In June 1948 Wingy was transferred to the nascent Israel Navy. Within its framework he did procure

and at various times sailed on three of the *Rechesh* ships that brought military supplies to Israel. After his discharge from the Navy, Wingy worked for a few years on ships of the Shoham Maritime Services Co. (later Zim Israel Navigation Company), during which period he obtained his Third Mate and Second Mate certificates.

In 1952 Wingy was nominated to the Intelligence Corps, then a unit of the IDF's Operations Division, which in due course became the Mossad. After completion of his training program, he was given an intelligence-gathering assignment. This necessitated a new identity. He visited Canada in April 1954 and officially changed his name to Lukas Vongard. For the next ten years or so he sailed, first as deck officer and then as Captain, on cargo ships of various foreign nationalities which frequently brought him into Arab seaports. He obtained a Canadian Master's (Captain's) Certificate in 1961.

Following his retirement he returned to Montreal where he was involved over the years in various maritime-related business ventures, and known only as Captain Lukas "Luke" Vongard except to family and old friends. He is survived by his wife of many years Pamela, his sister Tamar (Kofsky) and brother Les Weinstein.

Whether as Manny Weinstein, Wingy or Luke Vongard, he will always be fondly remembered by everyone who knew him as a good-humoured, warm and dedicated person who could always be relied upon to properly accomplish whatever he undertook. May he rest in peace.

Eddy Kaplansky, Haifa.  
kaplansk@actcom.com



Solomon is the One with the Fez



## Les Solomon: From The Altalena To The Computer Revolution

Leslie Solomon passed away on October 19, 2002 at the age of 83 after battling renal disease and emphysema. He was born in Leeds, England and came to the U.S. as an infant with his mother. He was a WWII veteran who landed with the U.S. Army Rangers on the Normandy beaches on the second day of the invasion. He was wounded in Normandy and again in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge.

Back in the States, Les was recruited by the Revisionist movement and sailed on the *Altalena* as a radio operator, bringing 4000 tons of armaments and 940 volunteers to Israel in June of 1948.

The LST-138 renamed *Altalena*, was a surplus World War II landing craft refurbished and refitted in the U.S. She was manned by volunteers, adherents of the Irgun. The ship loaded armaments and people at Port de Bouc, France. The *Altalena* began her seven-day journey across the Mediterranean Sea and came onto the Beach at Kfar Vitkin where a number of the passengers disembarked and some of the weapons and munitions were unloaded.

Because of differences with the Provisional Government on the planned distribution of the armaments the craft sailed down the coast and beached on the Tel Aviv shore. On June 22 the craft was shelled by orders of the government and sunk. Les, subsequently served on a Palyam ship bringing refugees to Israel

Upon his return to the U.S, Les dedicated his life's work to technology and played a pivotal role in the computer revolution. He was the technical editor of the magazine "Popular Electronics" for many years. He is remembered in computer circles as "the puller of strings who set the computer revolution in motion". He worked with Bill Gates before Microsoft was formed.

His life was marred by the tragedy of losing his first wife and two sons to illnesses. He is remembered for leading a courageous life. His close friends remember him as a master storyteller with an ability to make an easy friendship with everyone crossing his path. He was an avid ham radio operator all his life. Among the people he befriended over the radio waves were Barry Goldwater and King Hussein of Jordan. He leaves behind his wife Marlene and many close friends who will miss him.

Zichrono Livracha  
Simon Spiegelman

Condolences to  
Marlene Solomon  
13840 Via Flora  
Delray Beach, FL 33484

## Victor Chaber:

### Air Force Ground Radio Operator

Victor Chaber, who served as a Ground radio operator in the Israeli Air Force from 1948 to 1949, died on April 20, 2002, at the age of 83, in Boca Raton, Florida. He is survived by his widow, Gertrude.

Victor was born in New York City and was living in Alliance, New Jersey, when he volunteered to serve with the Air Force. He had served as a radio operator in the U.S. Army during World War II, seeing combat duty in North Africa, Sicily and Western Europe.

Following service in Israel, he was a poultry farmer for 12 years, then enrolled in Glassboro State College, where he received a bachelor of science degree in 1962. He was a school teacher until his retirement. A daughter died in Israel and is buried at Kibbutz Gat.

Ralph Lowenstein

*Unfortunately, we were unable to locate members of Victor's family to help us fill out the details of his life.*



Jack (L) and Mickey Olfman

## Jack Olfman: Air Force Wireless Operator and Trainer

Jack Olfman was 82 when he passed away on October 28, 1997. Jack is survived by his wife of 47 years, Ruth Olfman and his two sons, his daughter in law and four grand children.

At the outbreak of World War II Jack volunteered and enlisted in the Canadian Air Force. He trained as a wireless operator, and as an air gunner; and served Canada as a wireless air gunner during World War II. When the war ended Jack rejoined civilian life making his living as a grocer. After Israel received its independence in 1948, despite being a well-settled civilian in his early thirties, Jack volunteered to join Israel's air force.

In Israel's fledgling air force, trained wireless operators were in short supply. However, they were desperately needed for the essential job of obtaining coded weather forecast transmissions, which the air force depended on to plan its flights and bombing missions. Because of his five years of wireless operations experience during World War II, Jack was able to train other volunteers and Israelis in the operation and use of wireless equipment. Jack also worked as a wireless operator in Aqir's crucial underground wireless center, receiving and passing on coded messages for the Israeli Air Force.

# OBITUARIES CONTINUED

At the end of the War of Independence, because of his excellent service, the Israeli Air Force asked Jack to remain in Israel as an Air Force Instructor. However, Jack decided to return to Canada, where he met his future wife, the former Ruth Myerson; and he settled, for the second time, back into civilian life, and raised a family. Jack's family misses and remembers him, and says he is best described as a very nice person.

Shawn David Olfman

*Condolences may be sent to  
Ruth Olfman  
70 Polson Ave.*

*Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2W 0M2*



## **Joe Tunis:**

### **Anti-tank Gunner at Faluja and Iraq el-Sueidan**

Joe Tunis immigrated to Canada from Poland with his parents and sister in 1927, when he was a year old. He was brought up in Vegreville, Alberta, and after high school moved to Vancouver to study at the University of British Columbia.

In May 1948 he interrupted his university studies to help defend the nascent Jewish State in the War of Independence. Joe got to Israel in June 1948 on the SS Marie Anick, which had sailed from France carrying Machalniks from different countries. Before long he and six other Canadian volunteers found themselves in the 4th Troop of the Anti-Tank Regiment. He took part in raids against the Iraq el Sueidan police fortress during October's Yoav campaign, and in the fighting at the Faluja pocket during the Horev campaign some two months later.

Their unit was initially formed as a mortar battery, largely because its commander was a former US Army officer with WW2 mortar experience. But due to a shortage of mortars and the Givati Brigade's fortuitous capture of two 6-pounder and one 17-pounder anti-tank guns, it was soon converted to an anti-tank unit.

After the war Joe opted to make his home in Israel, and in 1951 he married Susan Stern at Moshav Kfar Daniel. They were among its original members, together with Machalniks from Canada, USA, South Africa and Britain. Kfar Daniel was their home ever since.

Joe Tunis passed away on September 11th 2002. He is survived by Susan Tunis, their children Mickey, Rachel and Moshe, his sisters Lee Kramer and Polly Howard, and nine grandchildren. His

former comrades-in-arms fondly remember Joe as a very warm and friendly person who was always supportive of his buddies. He is sadly missed by everyone who knew him.

Eddy Kaplansky

[kaplansk@actcom.com](mailto:kaplansk@actcom.com)



## **Elkan Levitan:**

### **IAF Aero-engine Mechanic**

Although an air force's heroes are sure to be found among its fliers, heroics are not necessarily their exclusive domain. A case in point is the WW2 record of Elkan Levitan, who passed away on September 12th 2002 in the Montreal suburb of Laval after a long illness. He was in his 80th year.

Elkan was barely 18 when he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in 1941. After training as an aero-engine mechanic, he was posted to No. 410 Squadron in England where he serviced the air-defense unit's Mosquito night fighters. His next assignment was in Scotland with No. 403 Squadron, a Coastal Command unit equipped with Bristol Beaufighters. After a while he was sent to a newly formed squadron in England, No. 433, the first RCAF unit to use Halifax heavy bombers.

Several months before the end of the war in Europe, Elkan was assigned to a combined operations unit in Italy whose purpose was to remove secret equipment from downed Allied airplanes, or, if unable to do so, to destroy the airplane. The unit was made up of several six-man teams, each consisting of two infantry soldiers, two demolition experts and two airplane mechanics. They operated in front-line areas, and at times were involved in skirmishes with the enemy.

On April 28th 1945, shortly before VE-Day, Elkan's team was behind enemy lines on a joint mission with four other teams when suddenly they came across a German infantry unit. Being greatly outnumbered, they considered surrendering, but much to their delight the Germans surrendered to them instead.

While Elkan was in Italy, Jewish personnel in nearby Allied military units were invited to a Pass-

over Seder given by the Jewish Brigade of the British Army. His resultant introduction to Eretz Israelis made Elkan acutely aware of their clandestine efforts to rehabilitate Holocaust survivors, and also sparked his interest in the Zionist cause.

Among the very early Machalniks, Elkan was sent to Czechoslovakia in May 1948. There he inspected the Me-109 fighter planes, and other military supplies, purchased for the nascent Israel Air Force (IAF). A short while later he was in Israel assembling the same Me-109 fighters, around which the IAF's 101 Squadron was formed. Elkan stayed with 101 for about three years, maintaining and servicing its Me-109s, Spitfires and Mustangs.

In 1951 he married Malka, who was from Petach Tikva, and in November of that year returned to Canada with her. Malka predeceased Elkan by about two years. Left behind are their two children, Rhona and Ilan, and two grandchildren, Jason and Shauna Rozen.

As is common among bona-fide veterans who have authentic war-stories to tell, Elkan Levitan rarely spoke of his RCAF and IAF experiences. Those of us who knew Elkan will always remember him fondly as a down-to-earth person who could always be relied upon to complete, properly and on time, whatever assignment was entrusted to him. May he rest in peace.

Eddy Kaplansky, Haifa

[kaplansk@actcom.com](mailto:kaplansk@actcom.com)



## EXODUS PLAQUE AT THE SMITHSONIAN TO BE DISPLAYED AGAIN

Eli Bergman reports:

I had discussions last week in Washington on the likely future of the EXODUS plaque in the Smithsonian with Dr. Paul Johnson, Curator of the U.S. Maritime Enterprise Exhibit. Johnson is the person who arranged and escorted an AVI group during a visit to the Museum in conjunction with our program at the Holocaust Museum introducing Rudy Patzert's book in 1994. The plaque was removed last year together with many items that will be held in storage while the section is being renovated. The timetable for completion is 12-18 months. Johnson is aware of our commitment to the plaque and expects that it will be restored along with the other exhibits.

Meanwhile the Smithsonian is raising funds from private sources to finance the renovation and additions to the Smithsonian museums. I told Johnson I did not think AVI was in a financial position to participate in this venture which involves big bucks mainly from firms in the transportation sector — but would let him know if any surprises or hidden treasures emerged. This private participation is an aim of the new Smithsonian administration, which has caused some criticism from the professional staff and others. I gather, though, that with the exception of one major and highly publicized episode in which a prospective donor wanted to call the shots (the donation was rejected) it is going well.

## HOW MANY OF US WERE THERE?

Various estimates have been tossed around regarding the number of Machal volunteers who were recruited from around the world. Eddy Kaplansky estimate 3500. He explains that the 3500 estimate was arrived at in the early 1990s by the late Joe Heckelman, Joe Woolf and me, soon after we completed our year-long task of identifying the Machal fallen and missing. Both lists were needed for plaques on the Machal Memorial.

The calculation was based on a combination of known numbers, projections and guestimates, in some cases. We started with reasonably accurate by-then known numbers for:

1. Aliya-Bet volunteers: From the Hochstein/Greenfield book.
2. The South Africans: From Katzews manuscript SOUTH AFRICA'S 800.
3. Machal killed and missing: From our f/m research project.
4. IAF aircrew personnel: From my work, THE FIRST FLIERS.
5. The volunteers from Canada: From another of my research projects.
6. The volunteers from Denmark: compiled by Danish Machalnik David Israel.
7. Those from Finland: compiled by Finnish Machalnik Shlomo Kafka.
9. Those from Columbia: "10 or 11" says Columbian Machalnik Yakov Ghittes, "they were all at my wedding."

Our South American representative in World Machal provided estimates on the South Americans that seemed reasonable. By projecting aircrew data from THE FIRST FLIERS, we arrived at seemingly reasonable estimates for several other countries. For the US we added the Aliya Bet numbers to estimate 1100 maximum. The numbers for Britain and France we had to guestimate, reasoning that they were not much different than the Canadian number.

The total came to some 3250, which we 'rounded' to "about 3500" to please those who apparently believe that more is better. Recently, I have learned that the numbers for USA, South Africa and France were less than originally estimated, and that there were volunteers from China, Sweden and one or two other countries whose numbers roughly balance those we previously over-estimated. All told therefore, I expect the "about 3500" estimate will remain valid.

## WELCOME TO NEW 'GLOBAL' MEMBERS

Over the past few months the AVI has offered membership to veterans beyond its usual United States, Israeli and Canadian constituencies. The following individuals have availed themselves of the opportunity and AVI welcomes them.

### Australia

Maurice Fremder  
Geoff Stark

### Belgium

Lazard Perez  
Mathilde Strassman  
Jean Zeydmann

### France

Maurice Fajerman

### Israel

Shaul Bubis  
Menachem Fuss  
Jacobo Gitis  
Sol Jacobs  
Yaacov Shelach

### South Africa

Freda Lewis  
Julian Schragenheim

### Switzerland

Maurice Stroun

### United Kingdom

Eti Bohm  
Michael Brecker  
Jack Freedman  
Sidney Graham  
Leslie Greenhouse  
Sydney Jacobs  
Gerald Levy  
Melville Malkin  
Maurice Mann  
Jack Mann  
Gerald Power  
Stanley Summers  
Betty Weisberg

### U.S.

Abe Sacks

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*To the Editor:*

Since 1998, Mahal 2000 helps young Jews from around the world who wish to volunteer to the IDF. Now Mahal2000 asks you to contribute to the defense of Israel - from your computer. Please spread the word to the young Jews who wish to volunteer to the Israel Defence Forces (IDF):

1. Place a link to Mahal2000 on your link page: <http://www.mahal2000.com> - "Mahal2000 - Volunteers to the Israel Defence Forces (IDF)"

2. Forward this email to webmasters of as many as possible websites with a Jewish audience

3. Spread the word to your friends who might be interested in volunteering to the IDF or spreading the word further. If you want to do more, see "Support Us" on the Mahal2000 page <http://www.mahal2000.com>

Thank you in advance for helping to defend Israel.

Sincerely yours,  
Daniel Katz  
Mahal2000

*The following are some questions put by the editor of the Newsletter to Daniel Katz and his reply.*

Dear Dan:

Thank-you for letting us know of this most positive program. I would like to consider an announcement in our newsletter but need to ask some questions for clarification:

1. The up-front pitch is for IDF service but your 'amuta permit describes it simply as a program to encourage *aliya*. Why the discrepancy?

2. The original Machal did not require *aliya*. I understand that this program must because IDF does not take foreign volunteers. This difference from the original Machal should be made clear.

3. Since the program involves *aliya* and thus the requirements of the Law of Return it must be restricted to bona fide Jews. The original Machal included Christians and we still number Christians among our members. Further, the Definition of Jewishness still follows that of the Israeli orthodox rabbinate. What are the implications for an American Reform Jew with a non-Jewish mother who claims Jewishness under the patrilineal formula? The other side of this problem would be the case of an ultra-orthodox American Jew, or a modern orthodox female, who would accept *aliya* but would not want to serve in the IDF. The position on this should also be straightforward in our announcement.

4. Obviously, the AVI does not have a copyright on the term Machal but somewhere in an announcement the difference between Machal1948 and Mahal2000 should be clear.

Sam Klausner

Dear Sam, Shalom,

Thanks for your offer.

Re 1: In practice, since 1998 we concentrate only on activities as reflected in our website.

Re 2: Mahal2000 volunteers are non-Israeli only, including during our program. Naturally, many or most prefer to live in Israel and become Israelis after discharging from the Mahal2000 program.

Re 3: Mahal2000 volunteers must get Temporary Resident Status (A1), which is granted by the Israeli Ministry of Interior, on basis of the Law of Return. In practice, all "our" appli-

cants had no problem at all. However, in our website ("Chain of Events") we recommend UNUSUAL volunteers to apply first to the Aliya Representative in the country of origin.

Thanks again for your interest,

Sincerely,  
Daniel Katz  
<http://www.mahal2000.com>

*To the Editor:*

Attached you will find an article that was published in the electronic bulletin, of the "Congregation Shaar Hashalom Happenings" and sent to the Consulate General of Israel (Houston, Texas).

Given the circumstances for Jews in Israel and Europe I believe it is time for a new generation of "Machalniks" to arise and follow your shining example. As one who served more than 20 years in the U.S. military, I like you know the tragedy and misery of war. We also know the price to be paid for appeasement and complacency. It is time for us to use our financial power to say to our "old" neighbors in Europe that the past has been forgiven, but not forgotten.

Please pass my admiration and thanks to the members of the AVI and wish them L'Shana Tova — Ketivah vichatima Tova. "If forget thee, Oh Jerusalem ... If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy ..."

Sincerely,  
Michael I. Hirsch  
[mihintx@aol.com](mailto:mihintx@aol.com)

*To the Editor:*

I have not received your Newsletter on a regular basis and this one in particular I found the most interesting. Most of the contributions for the Newsletter come from other people but you guys who edit these letters should be a little better acquainted with history and military terms. Let's see what I can point out as examples. In the obituary for Ben Sushman (Summer 2002) it says that during the war Ben carried out his duties as a Medic in the 81st Medical Armoured Division. There is no such thing as a Medical Armoured Division. The word Medical could have been left out, e.g. in the 81st Armoured Division.

On p. 7 there was a reference to 'ferrying' Messerschmitts to Israel from Czechoslovakia but they were transported. The transport was in two main parts, the fuselage and two wings, and these were carried in a C-46. Further in p. 7, the 79th Wing was not a brigade but a battalion. The 79th Armoured Battalion was part of the 7th Armoured Brigade. (The letter continues with a classification of IDF forces in 1948.)

I do not wish to get involved in the debate on whether to accept post-1948 Americans or Canadians into AVI but I can relate to the South African experience. From 1955 until the Yom Kippur War some 300, perhaps more, South African volunteers were included in the Nachal Scheme of the Israeli government. Volunteers served 18 to 24 months in the Nachal battalions. One of these was killed in 1956 and one in the Six Day War in 1967. A number of South Africans parachuted into Sinai at the Mitla Pass in 1956. (The letter goes on to describe attempts to draw these volunteers into Machal.) Today, none respond to our circulars. So, perhaps you are pissing against the wind in trying to get post-1948 guys joining the AVI.

Joe Woolf  
Moshav Ilaniya

*To the Editor:*

Thank you for sending me the Newsletter, which I found extremely interesting. I went to Israel via Aliya Bet from Marseilles on the Narkas in May 1948 and served in Shin Mem 2 for almost a year and a half.

The highlight of my service was when I intercepted an S.O.S. from the SS Richard Bourchard, which had been attacked by the Egyptian destroyer Emir Farouk. This message gave us the position of the Farouk that was ultimately sunk as a consequence.

Shalom and good luck and shana tovah.

Sidney Graham (Gumprecht)  
Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex

*To the Editor:*

Many thanks for the AVI Newsletter. I am interested to continue receiving the Newsletter.

With best wishes for the New Year and well over the Fast.

Jack Mann  
(Israel Air Force 1948-9)  
Eastcote, Pinner, Middlesex

*To the Editor:*

Thank you for sending me your Summer 2002 magazine. It is the first time I have received this magazine or have seen it in spite of the fact that I am a reasonably frequent visitor to New York as well as to Israel. I was a member of the 101st Squadron at its inception at a time when we were based in a paddock, orange grove, north of Tel Aviv. We flew the Spitfires from a makeshift runway situated between the orange trees. Our maintenance crew was led by a typical New York Jew, loud mouthed by English standards, brilliant organizer, worked us and himself by day and by night repairing and servicing the few aircraft we had as they came in from a raid and readied them for their next operation. His name was Harry Axelrod an ex-sergeant from the U.S. forces. He married an Israeli young lady at a time when our squadron had already been relocated from Hatzor in the south facing Abdul Nasser to Ramat David in the north... Has your organization any idea of his whereabouts? I would love to be able to contact him in the U.S. or in Israel before our years expire.

Shalom u'v'racha,  
Ze'ev Nayman  
London

*To the Editor:*

Many thanks for your summer issue. Please continue to send me future issues. All news about Machal is greatly appreciated. I am formerly from South Africa along with another 25 or so who have migrated to Australia.

Looking forward to your next issue,  
Fred Sarif  
Point Piper, Australia

*To the Editor:*

The article about the IAF Zatec and the 101 Squadron left me wondering if thinking is a lost art among the men who put the article together. It is always the Golden Boys

letters continued on Page 8

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CONTINUED

of the 101 who get the top billing But for the record let it be known that there were seven different squadrons that made up the IAF. I did 50 combat missions. The 69th Hammer Squadron dropped bombs on some very important targets. When the three B-17s left Miami for Zatec Czechoslovakia, I inherited the responsibility as Chief Flight Engineer making sure the 17s reached Zatec. All of this was not chopped liver. (He provides a number of additional examples of neglect of others than the 101st.)

For heaven's sake give some other men some credit too. ...Here are some fine men of the 69th B-17 Squadron that I would like to mention. All are incredibly dedicated men. Bill Katz, who became chief pilot for El Al; Al Raisin, Sam Feldman, Morris Yanker, Irv Aaronson and Jules Cubernek  
William Lichtman  
Chicago

Reply:  
Dear Bill:

Thanks for your comments, which I read with great interest. Inasmuch as I write the article, I would like to clarify a couple of points. First, the essence of the article, if you read it again, is precisely the point that the Machal contribution has not been adequately recognized neither in Israel nor abroad.

My intention in writing the article was not to present a comprehensive on the Machal contribution including all the Air Force units in which Machal guys served... This is a different theme. My focus was on the connection of the Messerschmitts and the early Spitfire shipments that came from Czechoslovakia and involved the 101 Squadron. The more comprehensive story that you are alluding to should be written and perhaps you would like to tackle it for the Newsletter. I know that Sam Klausner, as Editor, would appreciate receiving it.

Si Spiegelman

To the Editor:

The article by Si Spiegelman in the Newsletter Summer 2002 is AOK and very informative, as expected, but it contains an unfortunate little error which may well be my doing. I'm referring to the information, attributed to me, that 33 IAF pilots were killed or missing in 1948/49. In fact 10 of those 33 fliers had aircrew trades other than pilots (see page 37 TFF). Whether my error or yours, I trust you'll agree that it merits a note of correction in the next Newsletter.

Eddy Kaplansky, Haifa

To the Editor:

I was thrilled to receive your Newsletter and read it from page to page. Of particular interest to me was the article by Joe Woolf, a friend with whom I still maintain contact

I am a Machalnik, an ex-South African and now I am happy to tell you that I am an American citizen. There were seventeen Machalniks from my hometown in South Africa. On our return we had annual get-togethers which continue even today.  
Abe Sack  
Nashville, TN

To the Editor:

Thanks very much for your two complimentary magazines that I found most interesting. I will keep my eyes scanned for news of old comrades. I served in the Air Force in 48/49 and helped start the radar unit. My friends knew me as Jack and I am in touch with comrades Milton Sackin of Pittsburgh and Sam Greene of Manchester. We went over on the Pan York.

G. Jack Levy  
London, U.K.

To the Editor:

I read with special interest the letters telling the story of the birth of the Israeli Paratroop Corps (AVI Newsletter, Fall 2002). Many names turn up but the name of Charles Bortz does not appear.

In early 1948 I was part of a group of volunteers that sailed from New York bound for Israel by way of France. During the trip I became well acquainted with one of the group, Charlie Bortz. Charlie was not Jewish and had served as a Staff Sergeant in the 101st Airborne and had made the jump on D-day and engaged in all the fighting that followed. We were both the same age and had enlisted in 1942.

After reaching Camp Zebulon near Marseilles, Charlie and I were separated from the group and were sent together with volunteers from other camps, who had had experience at sea to work on Israeli ships in port. Charlie had spent a short time at sea after the war.

A few days later we helped load the Pan York with refugees and our original group was on the way to Israel. We were on hand to take the lines of a decommissioned U.S. Navy P.C., renamed Yucatan, that had made a very long trip from the United States. Charlie, Anahan Pizzaro, and an ex-Dutch naval officer, and I boarded the Yucatan as part of the crew for the trip to Israel. We docked in Haifa at the end of August or the beginning of September 1948. Charlie Bortz left for the Paratroops that was, at the time, located on the Carmel, and was made an officer. I remained on the Yucatan, renamed Noga K-26. Pizzaro was executive and, later, Captain. I served as Chief Boatswain and 3" gunner.

A few days after docking we started organizing our crew. I decided to go up to the Base of the 72nd Infantry. I wanted to influence one of my friends to join our crew. I did not succeed but I met his C.C. who was Captain Appel. Charlie Bortz was already an officer in the Paratroops.

Our homeport was Haifa and Charlie visited us. Later, the training took place in Ahuza where Charlie Bortz was in charge of the Jump School. The C.O. was Yoel Pelgi.

After the war, in May 1949 I joined the new settlement Moshav Habonim. Charlie continued his two-year contract with the paratroopers. Before leaving Israel he came to say good-bye and that was the last time I saw or heard of him.  
Aharon Ranot  
Israel

To the Editor:

I received the Fall 2002 Newsletter and was sad to note that in the breakdown of the Medical Corps 1948-49 that I was the only trained radiographer. I worked at No. 10 military hospital with my late husband, a medical doctor, and a strong contingent of South Africans. We all worked very hard and were a well-knit group headed by Cyril Kaplan and Dr. Wilton. Originally the late Arthur Helfel recruited us. Dr. Ossie Treisman from Boston can tell you lots of stories.

Good luck in your efforts.  
Ruth Landsman  
South Africa

To the Editor:

Thank you very much for the Summer 2002 AVI Newsletter. Jack was thrilled to see in your photo on P. 1 his old friend George Lichter. Having been married to Jack for 49 years I have been "brought up" on the exploits of the Mahal, especially the Air Force. Jack was at one time a squadron leader of 101. We were very sorry to hear about the passing of Benny Peled of the IAF.

There is no Mahal as such in Australia so Jack does not get much news. Jack and I were in Israel in 1973 (We lived in South Africa at that time.) and again in 1998. But due to severe health problems won't be able to make any more air trips. We can be contacted through our son-in-law Alan Abrahams at [avrm@bigpond.net.au](mailto:avrm@bigpond.net.au).

May and Jack Cohen  
Caulfield, Victoria  
Australia

To the Editor:

In October we had a meeting in Balfour House. So many are now missing! I was wounded in the hills of Jerusalem and had surgery five times. I refused amputation and was on crutches three years. With a 1952 diploma earned in the U.K., I now work as a Music Therapist.

Etty Bohm  
London, U.K.

To the Editor:

When I received the fall issue of the AVI Newsletter I broke down with emotion. All I read was part of my life - except I am not American. Hence I need to introduce myself. In 1937 my family escaped from Germany via Switzerland, Poland, Rumania. My father was a great Zionist and we had the necessary "certificate" to go to Palestine. I was 13 years young and we had no material assets and we were received by an uncle who lived in Haifa and by a hail of bullets from Arab terrorists. I loved Haifa, learned English and found a job. In 1947 I joined the Haganah and was sent to a training camp and then to Tel Litwinsky to join the army. Fate decided otherwise. I got on the wrong truck to Herzliya and arrived at the 101 Squadron with two other girls. I quickly learned that all of the pilots were Machal who were staying in Kfar Shemaryahu. I have a beautiful photo with Ezer Weizmann and Maurice Mann of the U.K. I met my first husband, Frank, in Haifa. That marriage did not last and I came to the United States where I married Jerome Greenhut who had fought in the Philippines. Sadly, he passed away in 1995. There is a picture of me in *I am My Brother's Keeper* (p. 224).

I wish I could send you money but I live on SS alone and have Medicaid but hope you will continue to send me the Newsletter.

Lucie Greenhut  
New York

To the Editor:

Of late I have been reading about men and their service in the IDF in 1948. I have also been receiving letters and a 'phone call which I consider rude. I do not know



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CONTINUED

whether the caller is a member of AVI but he told me he flew in Israel. He wanted to know what I did which I found ill mannered. So, I told him that I shot down a hundred Arab planes.

As for myself, I have never been in the hero business. I was in World War II and I went to Israel because I felt I had to. I never considered myself a hero. The real heroes to me are the guys that never made it back that gave their all serving Israel. I am thankful I came out of WWII and the 1948 war alive and that is enough for me.

William Lichtman  
Chicago

To the Editor:

Thanks for the complimentary issues. My subscription cheque is enclosed herewith.

Your extract from Chapter II of Teddy 'Eytan's' book brought back memories that may not entirely tie up with some of the details in your summary. This isn't really important. I first met Teddy in the refugee camp at Grandes Arenas, just outside Marseilles, about 10 April 1948. One of the Canadian volunteers insisted that I speak to him. The Canadian had also mentioned that the Haganah were suspicious of a *goy* such as Teddy joining up with us, the Jewish legion of the damned. Therefore, they put this senior officer of the French army, severely wounded in World War II, on a three-week basic infantry course in one of the clandestine training camps in southern France. Most of the time it rained. Teddy was housed in a leaky tent. But, according to the Canadian, he had borne everything with good-humored patience.

To my best knowledge, Teddy came from the highest ranks of the French aristocracy. His last rank, in the French army had been at least Lieutenant Colonel. He had been seriously wounded at the battle of Bir Hakaim in 1942 when Erwin Rommel had tried to turn General Bernard Montgomery's left (southern) flank and failed. (This was four months before the decisive battle of El Alemein that led to the final defeat of the Germans in North Africa.)

When I first spotted Teddy's lean, almost emaciated, figure (with the characteristic bent and scarred left arm), he was sitting on a concrete slab, his back against the curved corrugated steel of one of the camp's Nissen huts. He was wearing a khaki shirt and shorts. After I was introduced by the Canadian, Teddy remarked in his typical French accent, "...ze Haganah zey don't trost me..."

In June, after four of us had transferred from Battalion 31 to Battalion 81 (later 89), Teddy and I met once more. Evidently, after the Haganah had convinced itself of his bona fides - he must have left France after we did - to become training office in Battalion 81. The Battalion had been raised by Moshe Dayan, our first commanding officer, initially from volunteers from Dayan's moshav, Nahalal. This time Teddy and I passed each other at a training exercise and there was no more than friendly recognition and eye contact.

The third and last time I saw Teddy was during a night operation at the end of the famous "ten days." These were the ten days between the first truce and the second - during which the tactical situation changed totally. From then on we couldn't lose anymore. The task of the 8th Brigade was to open the road to the southern settlements that had been cut off by the Egyptian advance. The task of B company of Battalion 81 was to capture the village Khartiye

near the Majdal-Hebron lateral road.

We had just passed the Egyptian held Taggart fortress at Faluja (from where the Egyptians were putting up massive flare and Verey Light displays) when the entire column of half-tracks came to a dead stop. Later we were told that the driver of the leading half-track couldn't get up the further embankment of the wadi that we were crossing. There was heavy rifle and machine gun fire, with an occasional mortar bomb and once there was a six-pounder airburst above our half-track but no casualties. We were in dead ground and, for the moment, everyone relaxed. Some cigarettes were lit.

Suddenly Teddy appeared out of the dark. "Are you crazy?" he said in a tone of utter contempt (and no French accent that I can remember), "Put out those cigarettes at once!"

The above should add a little to your information about this great man. Mike Isaacson of Pretoria can confirm the last incident described, Julian Schragenheim George-East South Africa

To the Editor:

Even after making allowances for tricks of memory due to the passage of time, I take issue with Lou Laurie's account of the Tamra action (Newsletter Fall 2002) on the night of September 7 - 8, 1948 that appeared in the last Newsletter. But first, Laurie's version of how Canadian Machalnik Sid Leisure was killed shows a lack of sensitivity. Even if true, Sidney's relatives and friends would surely be hurt by it. Many of the comments about the 72<sup>d</sup> Battalion (not Brigade) and the Tamra action are quite wrong. Several examples follow:

1. "To cap it all, they had no training." Not so. Of the 44 Canadians in the Battalion, 13 were WWII veterans, including Lou Laurie.
2. "Most of the 7 Brigade (sic) were Americans." While Laurie's squad of 10 or 12 men, commanded by Corporal Harry Eisner, were indeed mostly from the USA, of the 245 Machalniks in the 72<sup>d</sup> only 27 were Americans. As will be seen in the data below. Which was compiled from 1948 documents, the numbers from Britain, South Africa and Canada each exceeded the USA's. Britain 92, South Africa 58, Canada 44, USA 27, France 5, Belgium 3, Kenya 3, Bulgaria 2, Costa Rica 2, Holland 2, India 2, Sweden 2, Lithuania 1, Norway 1, Switzerland 1.
3. "Louis saw action at a hilltop village called Tamra." The village was actually on the lower slopes of the mountain (not hill), where Battalion headquarters for this action had been situated. The skirmish took place at the top of the mountain.
4. "A bayonet attack. Indeed, it was the only one in the whole of the war." We advanced up to the top of the hill at night with fixed bayonets - those of us who had been issued with them; I did not have one. The bayonet charge Lou Laurie refers to was a spontaneous action by No. 2 Platoon, led by its officer and sergeant, to relieve No. 1 Platoon that was in danger of being surrounded on the mountaintop. It was reportedly a mad screaming charge by the squad closest to the sergeant, Harry Eisner's, and perhaps half of another squad. The platoons had been spread out on the mountain's slopes, and only those closest to the sergeant (hardly more

than one squad) would have heard his spontaneous call to charge. Some who had bayonets reportedly forgot to remove the scabbards. And it certainly was not "The only one (bayonet charge) in the entire war." Examples of other bayonet charges include:

- The capture by a Battalion of the Givati Brigade of hills 100 and 300, near Beersheba, on the night of October 16-17, 1948.
- The capture of hill 138, also near Beersheba, on October 20th by a Battalion of the Givati Brigade in a fierce hilltop bayonet battle.
- The capture of hill 102, overlooking the Rafah crossroads, on the night of January 3-4, 1949 by the 5th Battalion of the Palmach's Harel Brigade.
- 5. "Fourteen men went up to the hilltop, one killed." Wrong. "After being held down by enemy fire." Also wrong. Here's what actually happened. Two platoons had advanced during the night from Tamra village to the mountaintop in line formation with fixed bayonets (those who had them), without meeting any opposition except perhaps wild random shots high above our heads. All hell broke loose only at dawn when the enemy counter-attacked. In fighting it off three men were killed (from Canada, Belgium and Britain).
- 6. "The army base of Samaria near Netanya." Now called "Scraga," Samaria was actually close to Nahariya, some 50 miles north of Netanya.
- 7. "Ben-Gurion awaited them on the dock" Really! I suppose the 'old man' had nothing more important to do in those desperate days than wait on the dockside for the arrival of displaced persons from Europe.
- 8. "He accompanied the DPs to Palestine, arriving shortly after the State was declared." His IOF number (64583) indicate that he probably arrived on August 14th or later, considering that it's in the same range as the IOF numbers of Machalniks who arrived on the Pan York on August 14th, 1948. They were Cohen 64283, Eisner 64291, Goodman 64263, Katz 64524, Kesselman 64522, Klorman 64524, Nadel 64299 and Paschkoff 64284.

So much for Lou Laurie's account. Also Sam Pivnik's article in the last Newsletter was flawed, even after allowing for tricks of memory. Actually no South African of the 79th Battalion was killed in a tank (read "armoured truck"), as Pivnik stated. Perhaps he was thinking of South African Lou Hack who was in the 72nd (infantry) Battalion, and was killed on October 23rd during a deep penetration foot patrol. Nor did we, the 7th Brigade, liberate Safed. The Palmach and the Golani Brigade achieved this on May 10th, long before we operated there. Safed was the starting point for Operation Hiram on October 28th, during which we defeated the P.L.A. (Palestine Liberation Army) - one of the objectives of Operation Hiram. While it is correct that Pivnik's battalion, the 79th, decimated a volunteer Syrian company of the P.L.A. in their attack on Jish, this unfortunately doesn't mean that they defeated the Syrian army.

May I suggest to the Newsletter's editorial committee that personal accounts should be more carefully edited before being published, as some that I've read were pure fantasy. Joe Woolf,

Moshav Ilaniya, Israel.

Comment: Since the Newsletter is a one-man volunteer operation, it is not feasible to do significant "fact checking." Our readers must act as the editorial board and send along their versions of reports as Joe Woolf did above. So, the Newsletter continues to invite Machalniks to submit accounts of their experiences in the knowledge that another Machalnik may offer an alternative version. The original author has the right to offer a reply. Editor

## Machal China continued from Page 1

chaps, on specific orders of Menachem Begin and Haim Landau, were ordered to return to China to initiate an Eztel cell there and to mobilize and train Chinese youth, to join the fighting expected to break out in Israel. This took place Pesach 1948.

The original concept, as devised inter alia by Eliahu Lankin, the commander of the Altalena, who too was of "Chinese" origin, Eytan Livni, Etsel operations chief, Arie Ben Eliezer and others of the Irgun High command, was to transport the volunteers from China and from surrounding areas, as well as some from the West Coast USA by sea from a Chinese port. For this purpose they were to purchase a LCT or similar vessel in Shanghai, and obtain arms, which were readily available from American WW II surplus equipment stockpiles in the region. The plan included the enlistment of another ex China hand, who had served in the US Navy, and by this time was a naval Captain with American President Lines, and with the assistance of other American and local (China) sailors and military volunteers, the ship was to sail with about a battalion strength of fully armed and prepared troops and land in Aqaba, to join up with IDF forces from the North. The operation was headed by a young woman who was the China delegate to the Zionist congress in 1946 in Basle Switzerland, and head of the Betar movement in China, Ms. Judy Hasser later to become Mrs. Ben Eliezer. This idea was well advanced, but collapsed for a number of political reasons, and needs to be told in detail on another day.

The problem now facing the volunteers from China was to obtain appropriate traveling documents. Initially we forged authentic looking European passports, the writer does not want to mention the country, for obvious reasons. However since any itinerary from China to Europe (This long before the Jet Age) and hence to Israel, required passage through Arab controlled territories it was considered too risky, so other alternative means were devised and finally the two groups were ready to leave.

The first group consisting of five boys left Shanghai by plane in October 1948 and traveled on a Laissez Passer issued by a clerk in the French Embassy in Tianjin, who was a Jewish boy from France and going around (and finally married) one of the local girls. Jean Pierre was eventually fired from the French Foreign Service for this episode and always thanked us, since after leaving the French Foreign Service; he became a successful businessman and very well off. The Laissez Pass indicated that the traveler was going to join the French Foreign Legion and the authorities enroute were asked to provide their assistance. One of the group's stop was Basra in Iraq, where they spent 4 hours including lunch and

haircut. Two of the boys in the first group were of Iraqi origin, and spoke Arabic and had a hard time controlling themselves.

The second group of 8 men traveled on Soviet papers, except for Harry Marinsky who still had his Polish Passport. They flew via Damascus in Syria, in mid December of 1948, and decided to leave some sign of their transit, it seems that haircuts were in style. The existing dangers of transiting Arab countries, at war with Israel, was dwelt upon as were the dangers involved in these journeys, but there was no other alternative to reach the war in progress in Israel.

The first Group consisted of:  
Samby Muller group leader now in Kfar Shmaryahu  
Al Jacobs now in Australia  
Johnny Jacobs z"l (Israel)  
Joe Pittel now in Natanya  
Sammy Poliak now in Neve Monosson (Efraim)  
The second group consisted of:  
Harry Marinsky z"l (Israel) group leader \*  
Bobby Bershinsky now in Jerusalem  
Vova Dichne now in Zurich  
George Kanpol (Kanzepolsky) now in Savyon  
David Kopievker now in Jerusalem  
Emmanuel Pratt (Pirutinsky) now in Jerusalem  
Aaron Rothfeld now in Australia  
Boris Silberg now in Ramat Chen.  
\*Marinsky published a book "B'or ve B'seter" describing some of the exploits enroute to Eretz Israel.

Both groups initially landed in Paris, the first group was temporarily arrested overnight (at the airport) and met next day with Jules Moch, then Minister of Interior, who wanted to see how 5 guys traveled on a sheet of paper, without a picture, half way around the world. The boys were released, the Irgun had good French Connections, and given temporary French papers. The volunteers arrived in Haifa via the Marseilles staging area, and were inducted in Tel Litvinsky. The first group arrived in early December '48; the second group arrived about 3 weeks later.

Since the boys were all fully drilled and combat trained, they were sent directly to the Southern Front, and participated in the liberation of the Negev. They were stationed for some time in Ein Husseb, which was the farthest outpost of the IDF in the Western Negev - December 1948. The two groups with some South African Machalnikim in main, and a scattering of Americans and French volunteers formed a company, which was commanded by Captain Grisha Vernikoff, who himself made aliyah from China in the early thirties. We all were a happy and highly professional bunch. The whole Chinese detachment was later incorporated in the 8th Gdud (Battalion) of the Negev Brigade (Palmach). Towards the end of the Independence war in April '49, and the disbanding of the Palmach, some stayed on in the army in different other units, others demobilized and went their way in civilian life.

It is worthwhile to point out that in main, all the initial volunteers from China made aliyah and remained in Israel, occupying different positions in Israeli society. The group still meets from time to time and remain good friends, telling tall stories of times that were.

Here is a list of some of the books related to China written from the authors perspective. My write up while a little dry is a summary of facts as I remember them.

- a) *MY CHINA*, Jewish life in the Orient 1900-1950 By Yaacov Liberman  
Gefen Publishing House Ltd, Jerusalem-NYC
- b) *Shanghai Lost, Jerusalem Regained*.  
By Judith Ben Eliezer (nee Hasser Published in Israel, Steimatsky  
Both of the above are in English and published in the early Nineties (?)
- c) *B'or uve'seter (In Light and In Darkness)* In Hebre By Arie Marinsk Edanim Publishers, Yediot Ahronot, Israel
- d) *China and Israel, 1948-1998: A Fifty Year Retrospective* Edited by Jonathan Goldstein Westport CT, 1999 ISBN 0-27596-306-3  
Information on additional books written on the subject would be available from the Secretariat of Igud Yotzei Sin.

Samuel Muller  
42 Haoranim Street  
P.O.B. 9062  
Kfar Shmaryahu 46910  
Home Tel: +972-9-958 3149  
Office Tel: +972-9-956 3466  
Fax No: +972-9-956 3467  
e-mail: [bmic@netvision.net.il](mailto:bmic@netvision.net.il) or  
[hasam@netvision.net.il](mailto:hasam@netvision.net.il)

Pres. Katzav  
continued from Page 1

ing Latin American Machal) and Al Schwimmer (Israel Aircraft Industries). I took the occasion to announce that in response to a demand for an English version of the Booklet, a translation was already under way: the next step was to find funding for the project. The reception concluded with remarks by President Katzav, who pointed out to the representatives of the Ministry of Education that more has to be done to create awareness of Machal's historic role. They deserve it. He plans to invite the committee to Beit Hanassi for Israel's 55th anniversary celebrations and suggested we organize a World Machal Conference, which he would host.

### A Review

Markovitzki, Jacob with the assistance of Porath, Zipporah, Kaplansky, Eddy and Woolf, Joe. *Mahal: mitnadvei hutz la'aretz b'milhemet ha'atsmaut (Mahal: Foreign Volunteers in the War of Independence)*. Jerusalem: Publications Service of the Information Center of the Ministry of Education, 2002, pp. 36.

*Mahal* is lovely booklet with an attractive cover design by Nehama Vimer. It sketches the recruitment of non-resident Jews and non-Jews, known by their Hebrew acronym as *Mahal*, and their role in the armed struggle between the nascent Israel IDF and the Arab states in 1948-1949. Introductory comments recall the foreign volunteers, mostly American and Canadian, who served on the ships of *aliya bet*. Markovitzki, the principal author, lectures at the University of Haifa on Israeli military history. The other contributors, Porath, Kaplansky and Woolf, are veterans of *Mahal* who subsequently settled in Israel and have followed the history of *Mahal* and the war assiduously. The writing is direct and simple Hebrew appropriate to the main target audience, middle school students.

Early on we learn that the volunteers from 43 countries were impelled by a variety of motives including a Jewish national commitment, anti-imperialism, a humanitarian impulse and an adventurism. Presumably, religion, Judaism, was not a significant motive or the authors did not think of it or subsumed it under nationalism. Recruits with military infantry, tank and artillery experience were sought in North America through *Land and Labour for Palestine*. A group led by Hyman Schechtman and Al Schwimmer sought recently discharged military air personnel. A Canadian group succeeded in recruiting personnel for the armoured corps, many of whom fought with the Givati Brigade. Recruiters in Europe and South Africa dispatched only a fraction of their volunteers due to lack of financial resources and organizational inefficiencies. Following their arrival in Israel, difficulties emerged in

integrating them into Israeli units, partly for reasons of language and partly over disagreements about the obligations of the volunteers. The military responded with a unit designed to attend to the special problems of *Mahal* and by organizing English and French speaking units.

Most of the personnel of the Air Force, especially the pilots, were *Mahal*. They performed a vital service in creating a supply line from Czechoslovakia to Israel and in assisting the ground forces in stemming the Egyptian advance in the northern Negev. With English as the operative language of these units they had fewer organizational problems. The organization of the navy under the young Annapolis graduate, Paul Shulman, was accompanied by conflict with Israeli seamen trained in the period of underground operations. A letter to her family from the officer of her unit, caps a poignant vignette of the death of Esther Kalingold, a teacher from England, in defense of the Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. Photographs scattered throughout the booklet, provided by Eddy Kaplansky, add a tinge of personal memory. Perhaps the fact that they are amateur snapshots, and so lack something in focus, lighting and composition, may even add to this personal feeling.

It may be difficult for the work to reach its intended audience of school children. The tale is descriptive, more informational than educational. It misses what the contemporary educator calls "teaching moments." Thus, we learn of the locally illegal aspects of recruitment and supply. This could be the basis for student problem solving for the student. How did the Yishuv deal with such barriers? What other tactical options were available? What are the moral dilemmas here? Or, we learn of problems of tension between volunteers and Israeli personnel. What is the real basis of such tension? What part do the personalities of volunteers play in this? What might be the role of unclear authority structures? Or, we learn that non-Jewish volunteers were not fully trusted. Might this be related to the conspiratorial atmosphere of the underground days or the importation of attitudes based on European experience? How might the Israeli military, or any military, deal with prejudice in the ranks? Unfortunately, the bibliography is weighted with historical novels and memoirs. It has some, but not enough, references to credible historical works.

Without this educational problem setting, school officials are less likely to adopt the booklet than they would be otherwise. An experienced educator could easily rework the booklet in this way. One notes that the information office of the Ministry of Education produced it. Why did it not come through the Ministry's curricular division? The above article mentions an English translation in progress. Hopefully, these types of modifications can find their way into the English text.

The Editor

## SPRING EVENTS OF AVI'S EASTERN REGION

The annual A.V.I. Memorial Service to commemorate *chaverim* killed in Israel's War of Independence will be held on Sunday morning, May 4th, at the West Point Military Academy. Ceremonies will begin in the Jewish Chapel with a reception starting at 10 A.M. followed by a service 11 A.M. in the chapel. This will include a presentation of colors, remarks by an AVI leader and blessings and an invocation by the West Point Jewish Chaplain. Ceremonies will continue at the gravesite of Colonel David (Mickey) Marcus with a reading of the names of the fallen, a memorial chant and a six gun salute by the cadet Honor Guard.

While our members in the Eastern Region arrange the event it is a national AVI memorial. Members coming from afar should be able to arrange hospitality in or near New York on the evening before the ceremony.

The New York annual Salute to Israel parade will take place on Sunday June 1. Those in and around New York will receive information on the order of march.

## NEWSLETTER INDEXING: CALL FOR BACK ISSUES

We are planning to prepare a comprehensive index for the AVI Newsletter. This will facilitate searching for names and events in the organization's history. We have a complete file of Newsletters from 1993 to the present. Following are the Newsletters we have in our archive dating back to 1966. **Do you have copies of Newsletters not on this list?** If so, please send them to Samuel Klausner, 7055 Greenhill Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19151. If you request, the copies you submit will be returned to you after they are indexed. If you do not request their return, they will be placed in the AVI archives at the University of Florida and available to future researchers on Machal.

Dec.9,1966  
Feb.10,1970  
Aug.24,1970  
Feb.2,1971  
Dec.1,1971  
March 1,1972

April 14,1972  
July 1972  
Sept.1,1972  
March 1973  
July 1973  
Nov.6,1973  
April 8,1974  
June 1974  
October 1974  
March 1975  
May 1975  
October 1975  
April9,1976  
April 21,1977  
August 22,1977  
Dec.8,1977  
Dec.27,1977  
February 1978  
June 1978  
January 1979  
April 1979  
January 1980  
July 1980  
December 1980  
June 1981  
September 1982 (approx.)  
December 1983  
December 1983  
Dec.14,1983

July 1984  
March 1985 (approx.)  
April 1985  
September 1985  
Nov.11,1985  
October 1987 (approx.)  
January 1988 (approx.)  
March 1988 (approx.)  
March 23,1988  
April 1988  
May 5,1988  
May 11,1988  
December 1988 (approx.)  
January 1989 (approx.)  
March 1989 (approx.)  
April 1989 (approx.)  
July 1989  
January 1990 (approx.)  
February 1990  
June 1990  
November 1990 (approx.)  
December 1990 (approx.)  
May 1991 (approx.)  
August 1991 (approx.)  
December 1991 (approx.)  
March 1992  
May 1992  
July 1992  
November 1992  
Nov.17,1992

## BEN HAGAI STEUERMAN FEATURED IN KENOSHA NEWS

The Kenosha News published Ben Hagai Steuerman's Mahal story on April 12, 1998. Selections follow:

Steuerman, a member of Mahal says, "World War II had just ended, and a young Steuerman was considering a career as a rabbi. While serving in the U.S. Navy as a marine engineer he was asked to conduct religious services and he felt this to be his calling. Before becoming involved in Israel's struggle he remembers saying, We are tired of being kicked around. The Holocaust made a tremendous impression. We're going to fight."

Steuerman was arrested 13 times by the British secret service, before being forced to leave Palestine and he returned to his home in Brooklyn. There a man named Green who requested that he repair three small ships to be sent to Israel approached him. He says, "I worked on repairing the ship, the USS Yucatan which later became the Noga." A year later he returned to Israel to become an officer in the Israeli navy aboard the Noga.

### Dues Reminder

If you have not yet sent your dues of \$36 for 2003 please do so now. Unfortunately, with the loss of so many members, we cannot continue to subsidize members by sending the Newsletter. This does not apply to those exempt from dues such as widows of AVI veterans.

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