

# **SAN DIEGO** **BUILDERS** **OF ISRAEL**

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**1948 – 2008**



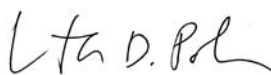
Dear Builders of Israel, families and friends,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the United Jewish Federation of San Diego County we want to congratulate and thank you for all you have done, and continue to do, for the State of Israel.

The recognition and *kavod* you have received by being named a Builder of Israel are well deserved.

The United Jewish Federation of San Diego County was established ten years before the founding of the State of Israel. Even then our predecessors knew the importance of our commitment to the future State.

Todah rabah,



Kenneth D. Polin  
Board Chair



Michael S. Ressler  
C.E.O.



Dear Friends,

For many generations it has been a Jewish tradition to use the phrase “until 120” when wishing one another longevity. The age of 60 is considered relatively young for people in current times. That said, how young would a country be considered, when at the same age? Well, it would probably be considered a teenager state.

We all have great expectations and high aspirations for this child that took 2000 years to conceive. Just like a teenager, its body has not fully developed yet, and it has yet to finalize its curves and features. However, when it is time to reflect on its achievements to date, we most certainly have a lot to be proud of as parents.

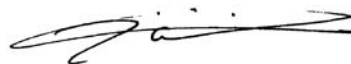
As we have been preparing for this year long Israel @ 60 experience, planning for the different events, we came to realize the full magnitude of this miracle. Whether it was about Israel’s industry, art, agriculture, or design; we were astonished by the creativity, imagination, and overall advancement this teenager state has made in all areas.

Even we Israeli grown Sabras have come to realize that “you cannot see the picture when you are in the frame,” and needed the San Diego perspective to fully appreciate this human wonder called Israel. We also realized that this wonder has thrived thanks to individual builders worldwide, who emerged through the decades, and made personal sacrifices to fortify Israel’s stance, and substantiate its existence.

This book salutes these brave San Diego builders of Israel.



Tibi Zohar, Co- Chair  
Israel @ 60 San Diego



Tami Zohar, Co – Chair  
Israel @ 60 San Diego



The Israel Center LLC and the United Jewish Federation of San Diego County are pleased to present this book in conjunction with Israel's 60th birthday .

*San Diego Builders of Israel* is a collaborative effort by 11 San Diego writers reviewing the relationships between San Diego County and Israel over the last 60 years. The book touches on the contributions of hundreds of San Diegans, but these are only a sampling of the many people in our region who have committed time, money and emotion to the building of Israel.

The San Diegans included in this narrative are representative of the many thousands of people who have played a role in the development of our region's close ties with Israel. A shortage of source material, time and space— but certainly not of interest nor appreciation— precluded us from attempting a more comprehensive treatment of this vast subject.

To those deserving people whose names might have been omitted from this volume, we offer an apology along with our assurances that we— and the community at large— truly value their contributions to our San Diego-Israel relationship.

Our appreciation also goes to Lori Mathios, Rachel Yourtz, Johann Wahmon and Dan & Jane Schaffer who assisted in the research and editing of this book.

Together, all of us have made a difference!

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We offer thanks to the San Diego Center for Jewish Culture for its collaboration in the Israel @ 60 project. The Center is comprised of the San Diego Jewish Book Fair, The Jewish Music Festival, the Samuel & Rebecca Astor Judaica Library, the San Diego Jewish Film Festival, the award winning J\*Company Youth Theater and the Art Gallery. Since its inception, the San Diego Center for Jewish Culture continues to grow in audience participation while stretching the boundaries of the arts.

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San Diego Center for Jewish Culture,  
Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center,  
JACOBS FAMILY CAMPUS



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## Chapter 1.

# Community Fundraising, 1948-1978

*By Donald H. Harrison*

In its first 30 years, Israel was forced to fight four major wars with its Arab neighbors, straining its economy nearly to the breaking point. San Diego Jews responded year-in and year-out by making the raising of money for the relief of Israel part of the fabric of their community life. San Diego Jews encouraged each other to make charitable contributions to Israel, especially via the United Jewish Federation and the Jewish National Fund, and to invest in Israel by purchasing Israel Bonds.

Fundraising luncheons and dinners became the warp and woof of the community's growing attachment to the reborn Jewish state. Most of the fundraising momentum came from dedicated volunteers and professional staff who deeply felt a responsibility to the local Jewish community, to the Jews of Israel and to those co-religionists living under oppressive conditions in other parts of the world. Guided by four executive directors between its founding in 1937 and 1978—Sol Stone, Al Hutler, Louis Lieblich and Don Gartner—the United Jewish Federation and Israel Bonds utilized a system of moving “up through the chairs” by which volunteers who demonstrated their commitment to their fellow Jews advanced through successively higher levels of responsibility to the pinnacle of the organization. Testimonial dinners and meals featuring well-known speakers enabled the community to thank volunteers for their efforts while simultaneously raising more money for Jewish causes.



Male leaders of the United Jewish Federation of San Diego were modern day knights of the long table.

Such a function was held in 1949 for U.S. District Court Judge Jacob Weinberger, who had served as the United Jewish Fund's founding president from 1937 to 1946, and attorney Eli H. Levenson, who had been elected to succeed Weinberger, following interim service by Nathan Baranov. That same year, businessman Victor Schulman was elected as UJF's fourth president. And Murray Goodrich, local UJF campaign chairman who eventually would rise to the UJF presidency, stressed the needs in Israel where 100,000 displaced Jews were living in tents, with their foods rationed to a minimum.

That need was so critical that the national United Jewish Appeal urged the San Diego community in February of 1950 to send an immediate \$75,000, as an advance on its 1950 campaign. San Diego complied. “Most encouraging to us is the sincere interest being shown by community leaders in ‘Keeping the Miracle Alive’ in 1950,” commented Goodrich and his campaign co-chairman, Nate Ratner. To encourage others to give, top contributors in 1950 announced the amounts that they had donated: Max Rabinowitz, \$5,000; Ratner Manufacturing Co., \$7,500; Victor Schulman \$3,500...”

In December 1950, the United Jewish Appeal urged San Diego for yet another \$75,000 as an advance payment from the expected proceeds of its 1951 campaign. Local leaders were so heartened by the enthusiasm in the community for Israel's cause that they surprised the national UJA: They voted to take out a loan for even more, a full \$100,000, "to carry on the program of resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction in Israel and in Europe." The leadership's confidence in San Diego was well-placed; Campaign co-chairmen Rodin Horrow and Morris Douglas were able to announce in June 1951 that \$201,000 had been raised to date.

Meanwhile, Israel Bonds was being launched as an organization, with Israel's Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion barnstorming the United States to urge people to purchase his nation's interest-bearing notes. His only West Coast appearance was May 24, 1951 at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. In response, San Diego's Israel Bond committee came into being with chairman Louis Steinman appointing to the local executive committee Alex J. Newman and Nathan Schiller, respectively the presidents of Tifereth Israel Synagogue and Temple Beth Israel.

Synagogues and Jewish organizations were encouraged to each conduct their own bond drives, with the *Southwestern Jewish Press* reporting in August 1951 that among those participating were the Labor Zionists, Hadassah, Council of Jewish Women, Auxiliary for the Hebrew Home for the Aged, Congregation Tifereth Israel and auxiliaries, B'nai B'rith, Beth Israel Sisterhood, Guardians for the Hebrew Home for the Aged, Zionist Organization of America, Jolly Sixteen and Jewish War Veterans.

San Diego County had good fortune in attracting as speakers both American and Israeli statesmen as well as well known entertainers and writers. One of the earliest political celebrities to visit San Diego on behalf of Israel Bonds was the sitting Vice President of the United States, Alben W. Barkley, who told a crowd at Tifereth Israel Synagogue in November of 1951, that "the cause of Israel appeals to every human being who believes in justice and decency. There could be no greater disaster than the collapse of Israel."

The next three decades saw at functions sponsored by the UJF, Israel Bonds and Jewish National Fund the delivery of similar messages by such celebrated Israeli personalities as Abba Eban, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Simcha Dinitz, General Mordechai Gur and such well known Americans as U.S. Senators Hubert Humphrey, William Proxmire, and Abraham Ribicoff. Occasionally, the speakers were entertainers and writers, among them Lloyd Nolan, Kirk Douglas, Harpo Marx, Jan Peerce, George Jessel, Bess Myerson, Leon Uris and Elie Wiesel.

The Alben Barkley event generated pledges of \$200,000 in Israel Bond purchases, according to Louis Steinman, San Diego chairman. In reviewing the amounts of money raised in San Diego, one should keep in mind two factors: Between 1948 and today, San Diego grew exponentially, propelling it from a small city to one of the major population centers of the United States. Furthermore, price inflation over six decades causes high per capita totals from yesteryear to seem much smaller.

From the outset, the United Jewish Fund and Israel Bonds had overlapping leadership, with Goodrich, for example, joining Steinman and Marie Berg at a November 1951 meeting to encourage UJF Women's Division workers to sell Israel Bonds in a door-to-door campaign. Separate UJF and Israel Bond offices were merged in January 1952 following an agreement in which businessman Sol Price, representing the Israel Bond organization, said the consolidation would prove more economical and effective. Price went on in 1952 to serve as a co-chairman with Harry Snyder and Louis Moorsteen of UJF's fundraising campaign under the general chairmanship of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Gross. In October 1952, UJF President Murray D.



Goodrich announced that \$125,000 from the funds raised by UJF would be invested in Israel Bonds.

When Goodrich was succeeded as UJF President in 1954 by Moorsteen, the latter named Price as campaign chair to be assisted by Seymour Rabin, whom, it was noted, was the son of business and communal leader Max Rabinowitz—an indication that a second generation was stepping to the fore. Rabinowitz was appointed as campaign chair for 1955 by Morris W. Douglas, UJF's 6<sup>th</sup> president. In 1956, Douglas named Milton Roberts to the campaign chairmanship.



Dialing for dollars, as shown here, evolved over the years into Super Sunday fundraisers, emphasizing direct outreach for contributions

A highlight of 1955 was the surprise found in the safe deposit box of Russian immigrant Iser Goldberg, who had died at the age of 90. He left his entire estate, amounting to approximately \$13,000 to the United Jewish Fund.

In the wake of the 1956 Suez War, the need to help Jews immigrate to Israel from Arab lands, became quite urgent. Roberts became UJF President in 1957. A predecessor, Victor Schulman, served as campaign co-chair with Dr. Walter Ornstein. Within the first two weeks of the 1957 campaign, this team raised \$260,000, as much as had been raised the year before. Ornstein went on to become UJF's ninth president in 1958, the year the United Jewish Fund agreed to

merge with the San Diego Federation of Jewish Agencies to become the United Jewish Federation. Harry Wax served as 1958 campaign chairman. Ornstein brought builder Harry Gleich and real estate investor M. Larry Lawrence into the leadership of the 1959 campaign, which raised over \$300,000.

“In a community like ours, which is not a particularly settled area, many persons are in need of acceptance and recognition, and many ardent and willing people are to be found who normally might be years away from any vital job in most communities...” Lawrence observed. “We were very well organized...”

Throughout the 1950s, former UJF President Goodrich, Richard F. Lustig, and Harry Sugarman helped to build the cause of Israel Bonds.

Seymour Rabin became UJF's tenth president for 1960. Rabin named William Schwartz, a three-term president of the Jewish Community Center, as campaign chairman.

Rabin was succeeded in order as UJF president by Maury Novak, Hebert Solomon and Leonard Zanzville. A new UJF group for young business executives and professionals was formed in 1964 by Richard T. Silberman. He would head the UJF campaign in 1968, assisted by Stanley Foster, a future UJF president.

In 1961, attorney and land developer Irvin J. Kahn contributed \$25,000 to the United Jewish Federation. It was the largest individual donation up to then in UJF history.

In April 1967, the volunteer to whom the pledge card of Judge Jacob Weinberger had been assigned was out of town. Concerned that his card had gone astray, Weinberger decided to take his contribution to the UJF office personally—and, as luck would have it, the contribution was the one that took the campaign over the quarter million dollar mark.

A few months later came the Six-Day War, prompting an outpouring of support for Israel. More than \$480,000 in outright gifts were made to the Israel Emergency Fund set up by UJF, and another \$400,000 was loaned to Israel through the purchase of Israel Bonds.

Murray Goodrich continued as Honorary Chair of the Israel Bonds Campaign. William Starr became Israel Bonds chairman in 1960, and was followed through the decade by Samuel S. Vener, Herbert J. Solomon, William Lipin, Abe Polinsky, Bernard Arenson and David Garfield.

Israel Bonds, directed by Barney Feldman, raised funds through a large citywide dinner and through smaller events in conjunction with synagogues and other pro-Israel organizations in San Diego. In 1969, the Israel Bonds organization saluted Zel Camiel, a longtime resident for his activities in behalf of the House of Israel and the New Life Club of Holocaust Survivors.

The years between 1970 and 1978, when Israel celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, saw the advancement to UJF's presidency of Bernard Arenson, who was the 14<sup>th</sup> man to hold the position; Stanley Foster; David Alpert, Bernard Lewis, and Arthur Levinson. The Israel Bond leadership during the same period included Dr. and Mrs. Milton Lincoff and Morrie Steiman; David Garfield and Murray Goodrich; Dr. Alvin May, William Recht and James Zien; Victor Ottenstein; Ernest Rady; and Jack Naiman.

A dozen San Diegans journeyed to Israel in December 1970, and were so impressed and moved by what they saw there they decided to more than double their annual gifts to the UJF, increasing their aggregate total from \$36,250 to \$78,700. The mission was led by Herbert Solomon and Stanley Foster, and included David Alpert, Dr. Melvin Goldzband, Bernard L. Lewis, Jerome A. Morrison, Sibley B. Newman, Alan E. Price, Sanford M. Ratner, Morris Slayen, Amos Summers and Irving Stevens.

Such enthusiasm helped the UJF for the first time break the \$1 million mark in fundraising, a record excitedly announced in May 1971 by Arenson, Solomon and Women's Division president and campaign chair Sivia Mann and Miriam Lincoff. The previous week, Leonard Zanzville had telephoned UJF executive director Louis Lieblich to ask, 'How's the campaign doing?' "Gosh, great, but we're still short of the million dollar mark," he responded. "How close?" "We must raise another \$3,500 to hit the million," said Lieblich. "You got it!" said Zanzville, a past president and campaign chairman. He increased his previous generous gift by \$3,500.

On May 7, 1973, in celebration of Israel's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson, the consular corps and other dignitaries gathered at San Diego's Community Concourse for a rally. That same month B'nai B'rith and four local synagogues sponsored an Israel Fair at the Scottish Rite Auditorium in Mission Valley. However, before the year was over, celebration turned to alarm as Egypt launched the Yom Kippur War.

On October 9, 1973, at Temple Beth Israel, more than 1,200 men, women and children jammed the sanctuary, Temple Center and corridors to show their concern for their embattled brethren. There was an outpouring of pledges and cash totaling more than \$100,000 for the Israel Emergency Fund. There followed on October 17 a meeting of 60 men who together pledged \$1,057,000 for the 1974 campaign—a gift that compared to \$368,000 the year before.

The same kind of enthusiasm also benefited the Israel Bond campaign in late 1973. A dinner honoring M. Larry Lawrence was converted into a *Shomrei Israel*—Guardians of Israel dinner at which each person purchased at least \$1,000 in Israel Bonds. More than 300 participated in the campaign, generating close to a half million dollars in sales.

San Diegans contributed at a record level to the United Jewish Federation. Bernard Lewis, then campaign chairman, announced in July 1974 that contributions had exceeded the \$2 million mark. "This unprecedented achievement marks a new era in the life of the San Diego Jewish community," he said, adding that two-thirds of the campaign would go to the United Jewish Appeal for Israel's emergency needs.



Under the general chairmanship of Victor Ottenstein, an Israel Bond routine developed in which various organizations held events at the neighborhood level, and a “citywide” dinner was held at which larger Bond investments were expected.

The organizations and their honorees over the next several years were: Beth Jacob Congregation—Sol Laufer; B’nai B’rith organizations—Harry Ruja; Howard Brotman; Eleanor Nadler and Ted Cashuk. Congregation Beth Israel—Fred Weitzen, Jr.; Sara Goodrich. Congregation Beth Tefilah—Mona Kolkey; Mr. and Mrs. Mel Semi; Mrs. Rose Fischbein; Jeffrey L. Rush. Hadassah and Zionist Organization of America—Ruth Kwint and Abe Hurlich. New Life Club and Cottage of Israel—Harry Cowan; Jeanette and Phil Abrams.; Cantor and Mrs. Henri Goldberg; Mr. and Mrs. Henry H. Marx and Mr. and Mrs. Fred Yarus. North County Jewish communities—Irving and Muriel Roston; Esther and Sid Gillman. Temple Beth Sholom—Dr. Harold Weinberger; Jack and Shirley Swed; Kurt and Ruth Sax. Temple Emanu-El—Mr. and Mrs. William Lipin. Tifereth Israel Synagogue—Dr. Maurice Schiff; Mr. and Mrs. I. Joseph Olsher. Citywide—Mayor Pete Wilson; U.S. Sen. Alan Cranston; Leonard Zenville and Charles Feurzeig.

Rabbi Baruch Stern of Beth Jacob Congregation urged his congregants to do a double mitzvah: buy an Israel Bond and donate it to the synagogue. Temple Emanu-El at one dinner raised \$100,000 in Bond purchases, many of which were donated to its building fund.

In 1975, UJF Women’s Division sponsored a mission and tour to Israel including a reception with President Ephraim Katzir and meeting immigrants from the Soviet Union. The Jewish National Fund stepped up its activities in San Diego with the appointment as area director for San Diego of Abraham Hertzog, who had been a member of the Jewish underground during the British mandate. Gert Thaler, serving as San Diego chair of JNF, organized a citywide dinner honoring Al and Pearl Slayen. Proceeds from the event, attended by more than 350 San Diegans, helped create an American National Bicentennial Park in Israel.

In late 1975, Israel’s Consul General Hanoch Givton was in San Diego to address the UJF’s 42<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting shortly after the United Nations General Assembly had branded Zionism as a form of racism—an action which the ambassador said was “a symptom of the immorality which pervades the world and, stripped down, is yet another manifestation of naked anti-Semitism.”

The U.N. insult made San Diegans only more determined to support Israel. In January 1976, Pacesetters of the UJF Women’s Division at the home of Bebe Zigman made 44 pledges totaling \$112,050. This compared to \$87,700 from the same women only a year before. At a training session in February for La Jolla residents at the home of Joe and Nomi Feldman, another \$50,000 was raised. A dinner for UJF’s La Costa-Rancho Santa Fe Division, featuring Technion president Gen. Amos Horev, brought in \$112,295, compared to just \$50,000 the year before. Mordechai and Norma Schaffer offered their personal collection of Israeli stamps for sale, with proceeds to support the work of American Red Magen David for Israel. Leonard Zenville wrote a check for double the asking price for the Schaffer collection.

There were multiple honorees in October 1976 at the citywide Israel Bond Dinner, with each synagogue choosing an individual or couple to receive a certificate from Abba Eban, Israel’s former foreign minister. The congregations and their selectees were: Beth El: Mr. and Mrs. Phil Shapiro; Beth Israel: Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Lewis; Beth Jacob: Mr. and Mrs. Morrie Steiman. Beth Sholom: Mr and Mrs. Sam Katz. Beth Tefilah: Mrs. Betty Teacher. Temple Emanu-El: Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Rubenstein. Tifereth Israel: Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Spatz. More than 1,000 people attended.

The Jewish National Fund honored twelve *vatikim*, San Diegans who had given a lifetime of service to Israel. The honorees were Sharlene Berman, Gladys Block, Zel Camiel, Rose Domnitz, Ray Feurzeig, Dr. Sam Ginsberg, Beno Hirschbein, Tully Kitaen, Lee Miller, Ida Nasatir, Dora Richlin and Rubin Umansky. And in another highlight of 1976, Herbert Solomon led a “This Year in Jerusalem” Mission, with San Diego travelers meeting with President Katzir, famed archaeologist Yigael Yadin, and Jerusalem’s mayor Teddy Kollek.

By 1977, San Diegans were confident enough in their fundraising ability to accept a UJF campaign goal of \$2.2 million, which they achieved. A Women’s Division event co-chaired by Dorothea Garfield and Joyce Berner featured Vivian Dinitz, wife of Israel’s Ambassador to the U.S. Simcha Dinitz; another at the home of Iris and Matt Strauss allowed attendees to experience vicariously the Entebbe raid in which Israeli commandos had rescued a planeload of hostages from Arab terrorists in Uganda. Dr. Nathan Zur, an Israeli physician who had participated in the heroic operation, was the speaker.

Jewish National Fund kept pace with Beno and Hadassah Hirschbein paying for a grove of 1,000 trees in the American National Bicentennial Park in Israel in memory of their parents. Likewise, Charles Silverman dedicated a grove of 500 trees to his wife Ethel—a grove dedicated by Rabbi Aaron Gold of Tifereth Israel Synagogue on a congregational mission. Twin brothers Eric and Douglas Freedman of La Jolla, in invitations for their *b’nai mitzvah*, asked all the guests to contribute to the Jewish National Fund. Impressed family and friends donated enough to establish a garden of 460 trees in the boys’ honor.

For 1978, San Diego UJF accepted a campaign goal of \$3 million on the recommendation of Ernest Rady, campaign chairman. He announced in February that \$2.3 million in pledges had been received, and added: “Whether the goal is met will depend in large part on the zeal of campaign workers...”

On April 7, 1978, PLO terrorists killed 33 persons who had been riding on a bus in northern Israel, prompting a memorial service at San Diego’s Jewish Community Center attended by an estimated 1,000 mourners. A month later, to celebrate Israel’s Independence, Sue Minkoff led members of the community in a walkathon from the JCC to Balboa Park.

“Now for the announcement you’ve all been waiting for...,” Rady said at a community event in May 1978 featuring General Mordechai Gur. “I am pleased to tell you that we are projecting our 1978 Federation final total will exceed \$3.4 million.”

In 1948, as Israel was being born, San Diegans rallied to raise \$272,146—an amount that took several years for the community to duplicate. At the end of 1978, looking ahead to the 1979 campaign year, UJF demonstrated how much it had grown during Israel’s first three decades. It announced its goal would be \$4.5 million, with \$800,000 of that towards a special 5-year, \$4 million program to help develop its adopted neighborhood of Galiut in the Israeli city of Kiryat Malachi.

A new era that increasingly would link San Diego directly to Israel was dawning.

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*Donald H. Harrison is editor and publisher of San Diego Jewish World, and also served as editor of this book project.*

## Chapter 2.

# Community Fundraising, 1979 - Present

*By Donald H. Harrison*

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The decision by the United Jewish Federation to take responsibility for Galiyut, a poor neighborhood in Kiryat Malachi, set a dynamic into motion that has resulted in the development between 1979 and the present of closer and closer ties between the Jews of San Diego and those of Israel.

The desire of San Diegans to visit Kiryat Malachi along with other venues in Israel spawned an accelerating flow of organized missions to Israel. These missions, enabling San Diegans to experience Israel first hand, not as tourists but as honored partners, resulted in many San Diegans feeling a deeper, more emotional bond with Israel. Such identification prompted San Diegans to increase their financial commitment to the United Jewish Federation as well as their volunteer involvement with the Jewish community. Ultimately, it led to an even deeper partnership between San Diego's Jewish community and the Israeli region of Sha'ar Haneghev.

Immediately after agreeing to raise \$4 million over five years to help refurbish Galiyut, the UJF appointed Sam Bicas as a liaison for the project. Robert Kaplan, reporting on a visit to the neighborhood, said that of 30,000 residents living there, 10,000 lived in substandard housing, and earned wages that were 60 percent of the national average. Many of the residents had fled or were expelled from Arab countries after Israel gained its independence. Galiyut lacked amenities: community centers, for example, were in air raid shelters. Playgrounds were filled with rubble. House facades were crumbling. Guided on a tour of the city by Mayor Moshe Katzav, a future president of Israel, San Diegans saw 12 members of a family from Morocco living in a 3 ½ room apartment. They learned that children were dropping out of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade to go to work to help support their families.

Mervyn Myers said he and a score of other mission members were shocked to see Israelis living in conditions that Prime Minister Menachem Begin described at the time as "intolerable to a Jewish society." Word of Kiryat Malachi's great need was spread by initial mission participants, who included Ron Bachrach, Mark Berger, Dr. M. Jay Berman, Gary Cantor, John R. Engel, Aaron Feldman, Gordon Gerson, Hank Gotthelf, Dr. Gary Hirsh, Stuart Hurwitz, Dr. Burton Jay, Chuck Klein, Robert Kohn, Jaime Liwerant, Enrique Milstein, Gary Polakoff, Dr. Jeff Rush, Dr. Ed Schechter, Dr. Richard Shapiro and Michael Steres.

Ernest Rady, UJF's 1979 campaign chairman, reported that UJF raised \$1,881,304 compared to \$1,540,955 from the same contributors in the previous year. Another \$1,575,000 was raised for Project Renewal. Gary Cantor noted that the 21 men who had visited Kiryat Malachi and other parts of Israel

on the Kadima mission pledged \$168,000 to the 1979 campaign, as compared to \$36,000 from the same individuals the previous year.

An honored visitor from Israel and good news on the international front also heightened community optimism. Ephraim Katzir, the immediate past president of Israel and a renowned chemist, came to UCSD to teach advanced students and conduct seminars, enabling San Diegans to get to know a well-known Israeli on a personal basis. In Washington, meanwhile, Egypt's President Anwar Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Begin signed the Camp David accords in a ceremony hosted at the White House by U.S. President Jimmy Carter. At the invitation of UJF President Arthur Levinson and Community Relations Chair Howard Brotman, more than 800 San Diegans, including Mayor Pete Wilson, gathered at the Jewish Community Center for a community celebration of the historic peace treaty.

San Diegans who had invested in Israel Bonds at the outbreak of the 1967 Six Day War were urged by Gary Pollak to reinvest them in higher denomination bonds to prepare for peace. He noted that there would be costs to relocate Jewish settlements from the Egyptian Sinai and to create new communities in the Negev and the Galilee. As in previous years, Israel Bond dinners were scheduled by synagogues and local Jewish organizations, including a Congregation Beth Tefilah fete for Naomi and Morton Hirshman; a North County Jewish communities' salute to Sondra and Victor Ottenstein; and a Beth Jacob Congregation testimonial for Rabbi emeritus Baruch Stern. M. Larry Lawrence continued to serve as honorary chairman of Israel Bonds' overall effort in the county, with Charles Feurzeig accepting appointment as chairman of Israel Bonds' local Prime Ministers Club, comprised of people who subscribed to Bonds at levels ranging from \$25,000 to more than \$100,000 annually.



Bob Shillman signs a personal check for \$1 million during San Diego's Israel Emergency Campaign following the outbreak of the Second Lebanon war.

Missions including a stop at Kiryat Malachi were sponsored both by UJF Leadership in San Diego's North County and by Israel Bonds. The Federation group, led by Bob Kohn, included Sil Abramson, David Bartell, Harry Gelt, Sid Gillman, John Greisman, Gert Koppel, Harrison Levin, Sy Miller, Allard Roen, Irving Sandler and William Worthing. Like the previous Federation group, members increased their cumulative contributions to UJF exponentially, from \$35,000 in 1978 to \$250,000 in 1979, including funds for Project Renewal. The Bonds contingent included Dr. and Mrs. Stuart Davidson, Dr. and Mrs. Jon Goodman, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Hecker, Dr. and Mrs. Ron Hecker; Mr. and Mrs. Sandy Ratner, Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Silverman and Mr. and Mrs. Rod Stone.

The campaign continued with Rady and film producer Zvi Kolitz showing a film about Project Renewal at the Rancho Santa Fe Garden Club to the North County UJF. By the end of the event, contributions from North County, then a developing Jewish area, amounted to \$750,000, with \$432,000 for Project Renewal.

At the same time, the Jewish National Fund continued its successful efforts in San Diego. LeRoy Lavine of San Marcos oversaw the planting by his daughters Kathee and Pam of the first tree in a grove sponsored by B'nai B'rith Palomar Lodge in a "San Diego Forest" near Jerusalem. Bernardo Gres and Jack Gilson added additional groves.

In 1980, Rady was elevated from campaign chairman to UJF President. He was followed in turn during that decade by Pauline Foster, Dr. Gerald Kobernick, Howard Brotman, Shearn Platt and Murray Galinson. Federation campaigns continued to grow, with 1980 campaign chair Gary Cantor reporting \$3,540,800 raised for the regular campaign and \$417,484 for Project Renewal. In 1981, under campaign chairman Matthew Strauss, the figures were \$3,953,783 for the regular campaign and \$417,914 for Project Renewal. In that same year, Stephen Abramson became UJF's fifth executive director. Pauline Foster, the 1982 UJF President, reported that in addition to UJF's regular and Project Renewal campaigns, "the Israeli government requested that the United Jewish Appeal create a special one-time fund to raise \$200 million" in response to Israel's "Peace in the Galilee" incursion into Lebanon to prevent PLO terrorists from launching any more attacks on Israel.

So responsive were San Diegans that the following year, campaign chairman Morris Slayen announced that the regular campaign for the first time broke the \$4 million mark; that Project Renewal received \$384,197; and that the Israel Special Fund obtained \$309,953 in donations! The totals dipped the following year, but growth regained its momentum in the 1985 campaign during Gerald Kobernick's second year as UJF President and Shearn Platt's campaign chairmanship: \$4,932,589 was collected for the regular fund, along with \$245,027 for Project Renewal.

Missions continued to be an important component in community philanthropy for Israel. In 1985, for example, 20 Jewish singles visited Kiryat Malachi, touring a dental clinic inspired by Dr. Norman Mann inside a new community center constructed with Project Renewal funds. Mayor Vanunu Yosef welcomed one group of visitors at a reception for which local residents had baked cakes and cookies. The following year, Barbara and Larry Sherman, Iris and Matt Strauss and Dr. Leonard Glass led a mission for donors pledging \$10,000 or more to the annual campaign. Besides visiting Kiryat Malachi, attending the centennial celebration of David Ben-Gurion's birth and watching a special presentation by Israel's air force, mission participants met such dignitaries as Israel's President Chaim Herzog and Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

At the end of 1986, Pauline Foster chaired a UJF Gala Dinner that attracted 133 donors of \$10,000 or more, who contributed a total exceeding \$2 million—a 24-percent increase in gifts by the same individuals the previous year. Pauline's mother, Anne Ratner, who had helped to start UJF's Women's Division, was an honored guest the following year at UJF's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Twelve of the Federation's past 23 presidents were escorted to places of honor, among them Herb Solomon, whose son and escort, Steve Solomon, would himself go on to become a UJF president.

In 1987, Campaign Chair Rosalyn Pappelbaum praised Gary and Sherry Naiman for continuing to donate a percentage of profits from local Jack-in-the-Box franchises to the Kiryat Malachi program. Among programs underwritten by contributions from UJF San Diego were a cooperative nursery school, senior and youth programs, and counseling services for distressed girls. Norman and Sivia Mann returned to Kiryat Malachi for a month, during which Norman administered dental checkups and education programs for 800 elementary school children. And a pilot exchange program was inaugurated in which five Kiryat Malachi teens stayed with San Diego families and worked as summer camp leaders.

In its 52<sup>nd</sup> annual report for the 1988-1989 fiscal year, an enumeration of community missions to Israel indicated just how popular they had become: There was a special fact-finding mission in response to that year's "Who is a Jew?" controversy, as well as summer and winter family missions, a president's mission, singles mission, *Livnot*/ young leadership mission; a national women's division mission and

a Gesher outreach mission. San Diegans were so mission-savvy that three of them were chosen to lead missions for national groups. Barbara Sherman led a UJA National Women's Mission to Morocco and Israel. Karen Marcus, a national Gesher leader, led another tour to Rumania and Israel. And David Winick chaired the UJA Singles Mission to Israel.

Following Murray Galinson's presidency of UJF, those who succeeded him to the organization's top position were Larry Sherman, Rebecca Newman, Gloria Stone, Rod Stone and Dr. Richard Katz.

As San Diego was completing its commitment to Kiryat Malachi, it was stirred by a new concern in 1990: There was an immediate need to resettle in Israel thousands, and ultimately a million, Russian Jewish refugees who, with the collapse of traditional Soviet society, had become targets of ultranationalist organizations like Pameyat. Operation Exodus, as the rescue effort was called, prompted an unprecedented emergency fundraising campaign under the leadership of Herb Solomon, Larry Sherman, Rod Stone and Shearn Platt, with \$4.5 million raised in under two months. Next came the First Gulf War, in which Israel came under Scud missile attack from Iraq. The cessation of hostilities prompted more than 100 San Diegans in 1992 to participate in a variety of missions to Israel, among them a UJA Women's Division mission to Czechoslovakia and Israel led by Linda Platt, Shirley Ravet and Mary Ann Scher. Wanting to make certain that teenagers too had the opportunity to travel, Anne Ratner in 1993 established a fund in Abraham Ratner's and her name.

The year 1993 also marked the first "Options" luncheon event of the Women's Division of United Jewish Federation, a program that so successfully fostered both friendship and fundraising that it was replicated three years later with the institution of an annual Men's Event. Options drew such renowned speakers from the Jewish world as Rabbis Joseph Telushkin, David Wolpe, Irwin Kula and David Woznika and such influential figures as Shoshana Cardin, Julius Lester, Elie Wiesel, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Susan Estrich, Ellen Cannon, Deborah Lipstadt, Malcolm Hoenlein, Linda Hooper and Anita Diamant.

The Men's Event also could boast an impressive lineup over the years: former Israeli Prime Ministers Shimon Peres (now Israel's President) and Ehud Barak; Rabbis David Hartman, Joseph Telushkin and David Wolpe; and such celebrities as Dennis Prager, Wolf Blitzer, Henry Winkler, Dennis Ross, Mario Cuomo, George Stephanopoulos and Alan Dershowitz.

The Options and Men's Event were combined in 2007 for an appearance by former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Over the years, the two events also provided new channels for volunteers to demonstrate leadership capabilities and thereby come under consideration for advancement in the UJF hierarchy. For example, the current UJF President, Kenneth D. Polin, served as a co-chair in 1997 for the event featuring Wolf Blitzer.

Back in 1994, the year following the inauguration of Options, President Clinton brought PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to the White House for a peace ceremony with Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. "That famous handshake...not only changed the future of the Middle East, it also symbolized the dramatic changes in the evolution and nature of the Jewish community itself," commented UJF executive vice president Stephen M. Abramson. "The Federation continues to provide for urgent social needs in Israel even while we develop new ways to build economic partnerships with the people of Israel."

The world chairman of the Jewish National Fund, Moshe Rivlin, visited San Diego in 1994, telling a



group assembled at the home of Sol and Lauren Lizerbram that in addition to planting trees, JNF was focusing on building reservoirs along the Jordanian-Israeli border. He also honored Nettie and Manny Fisher whose contribution to JNF enabled development of a recreational area for soldiers stationed at the military base at Ramat Aviv. Six years later in an address at Congregation Beth Am, JNF National President Ronald Lauder said that without desalinization plants and more reservoirs, Israel could run out of water by 2012.

Living themselves in an arid semi-desert that is dependent on imported water, San Diegans readily understood the need for reservoirs. Manny and Nettie Fisher underwrote a water reservoir in the Arava Region, while the Melvin Garb Foundation, whose principals included Garb, his sister Genesse Levin and brother-in-law Harrison Levin of San Diego, similarly contributed funds for a reservoir at Kfar Ruppin, south of the Kinneret and close to the border with Jordan.

The Shalom '95 Mission from San Diego to Israel in November coordinated by Tina Friedman was a mixed triumph and tragedy. It attracted more than 220 San Diego County residents, who would fuel San Diego's enthusiasm for Israel for years to come. However, while they were touring Israel, a right-wing assassin cut down Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, casting a pall over the entire Middle East peace process and plunging mission members and world Jewry and their friends throughout the world into deep sadness. Nearly a year later, Rabin's widow, Leah, visited San Diego to speak at the Chamber of Commerce's Insights program. She joined many of the Shalom '95 participants at a special Simchat Torah celebration at Congregation Beth Israel co-officiated by host Rabbi Jonathan Stein and Rabbis Deborah Prinz of Temple Adat Shalom and David Frank of Temple Solel. After participating in a Haka-fot, she was ushered by Rod Stone to the bima, where she said the Torah teaches people to value life more than land. She received a standing ovation.



San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson (a future U.S. Senator and California Governor) plants a tree in Israel during an official visit.

“Our new Israel Center and our participation in Partnership 2000 will form the foundation of a revitalized partnership with the people of Israel, one based upon interdependence, shared history, and common concern for a positive Jewish future,” Abramson and UJF President Gloria Stone predicted in 1996.

The partnership to which they referred was established in 1998 with the Sha’ar Hanegev (Gates of the Negev) region of Israel, running in the desert’s northwest corner along the perimeter of the Gaza Strip. Under the leadership of Gary Jacobs and Yaacov Schneider, the first Israel shaliach to be stationed at the UJF Israel Center, San Diego agreed to be a partner with the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) in the funding of a student village at Ibim, where young immigrants who traveled to Israel without their parents were educated. At first the majority of the students

were from the former Soviet Union, but later Ethiopian Jews, South American Jews—in fact Jews from all parts of the world—also took up residence there.

Past UJF Presidents Rod and Gloria Stone established a teen trip to Israel named after their late son, Scott Stone, with 40 San Diego teens participating in 1998, Israel’s 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. Another 88 San Diegans participated in a community mission—Shalom '98—under the leadership of UJF President Richard Katz.

Ibim's neighbors are the ten kibbutzim and one moshav of the Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council, led in the initial years of cooperation by Regional Mayor Shai Hermesh, now a member of the Knesset, and later by Alon Schuster. Both men traveled periodically to San Diego and in Israel made a point of warmly welcoming San Diego delegations that visited Sha'ar Hanegev. The relationship between the two areas was broadened with educational and cultural exchanges. In 2001, the William A. Schenk Educational Center, a modern building equipped with computer gear, was dedicated by San Diegans who traveled there with the building's namesake. Hanna Gersuani, a resident of Kibbutz Nir Am, wrote how pleased she was that San Diegans were taking such an interest in Sha'ar Hanegev. "It's clear that your willingness to understand the issues that concern us and to support as much as you can these ties contribute strongly to the stable relationship," she said. Matthew Feldman, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at San Diego Jewish Academy, expressing the hope that his bar mitzvah presents would come from Israel and thereby help the Israeli economy, created the website, [www.shopinisrael.com](http://www.shopinisrael.com)

Gary and Jerri-Ann Jacobs founded the Jacobs International Teen Leadership Institute (JITLI), which each year brings together Arab and Jewish students from Israel and the United States on a summer trip to Spain and Israel. Jewish students are drawn from the San Diego/Tijuana area and Sha'ar Hanegev, while Arab students come from nearby locations. The Jacobs also underwrote a park and playground for the nearby Bedouin community of Segev Shalom.

Teachers from San Diego Jewish schools traveled to Sha'ar Hanegev in summer 2001, where they participated with their Israeli counterparts in joint study, travel and home hospitality. Educators from Sha'ar Hanegev made a return visit to San Diego that December, meeting with students, teachers and principals from local Jewish day schools. They also were introduced to a wide spectrum of Jewish communal agencies

The turn of the millennium ushered in a new set of leaders for San Diego's United Jewish Federation: Mary Ann Scher took over the reins in 2000, followed by Gary Jacobs, Dr. Steve Solomon, and the current president Kenneth D. Polin. This year's campaign chair, Andrea Oster, is expected to succeed to the presidency at the beginning of the next fiscal year in July. The 2000s brought some key staff changes as well. Stephen Abramson retired after more than two decades as UJF's executive vice president, and was succeeded by UJF's sixth executive, Michael S. Rassler. The second Shaliach, Erez Strasburg, completed his tenure and was succeeded at the UJF Israel Center by Eyal Dagan.

Meanwhile, community fundraising for Israel developed a seasonal rhythm. In January and February, Options and the Men's Event took center stage. In June or July, as the fiscal year ended, new officers were elected and a report to the community was presented at UJF's annual meeting. During the summer, various missions to Israel left San Diego, each stimulating even more San Diegans to dedicate themselves to the Israel-San Diego relationship. In the fall, gala dinners and special events attracted major donors, fueling hopes that fundraising for Israel and the world Jewish community, as well as for local needs, would set new records.

The San Diego Jewish community responded generously whenever Israel or Jewish communities in the United States and elsewhere were threatened or victimized by terrorism. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by Al Qaeda terrorists prompted an outpouring of contributions to UJF's 9/11 fund. Additionally, an Israel and Argentina emergency fund was created in response to the challenges of the intifada in Israel, and a deteriorating economy and surging anti-Semitism in Argentina. The San Diego Jewish community raised over \$12 million for the various funds, including approximately \$5 million for the special campaigns.

San Diego was stunned in July 2002 when a daughter of the community, Marla Bennett, was one of the victims of a terrorist bombing of the cafeteria at Hebrew University. When her body was brought home to parents Linda and Michael Bennett, longtime Jewish community activists, more than 1,000 mourners shared their grief at a funeral service at Tifereth Israel Synagogue.

In July 2006, the San Diego Jewish community again responded to Israel's emergency needs in the wake of the Second Lebanon War that began following a cross-border raid by Hezbollah in which several Israeli soldiers were killed and two others—Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev—were kidnapped. In addition to contributing over \$7,336,034 to UJF's 2007 Annual Campaign, San Diego's Jewish community contributed \$4.8 million for the relief of Israelis besieged by rockets fired from Lebanon. Claire Ellman and Andrew Viterbi co-chaired this campaign. The Viterbi and Smargon families meanwhile contributed to an effort by the Jewish National Fund to provide outdoor camping activities away from the danger for families besieged by rockets similarly fired from Gaza by Hamas forces.

For 60 years members of the San Diego community have opened both their hearts and their wallets in helping Israel to meet its financial needs. That's what families do!

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## Chapter 3. Military

*By Gerry Greber*

San Diegans have rallied to Israel's cause throughout its recent history. They have contributed to its revival and survival during the various wars with the Arab nations, as well as during the pre-state era when it was controlled first by the Ottoman Turks and later by the British.

Julius Scheinholz was 15 years old, in 1917, when he lied about his age and joined the Jewish Legion inspired by Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, founder of the Revisionist movement of Zionism. He was involved in several battles and was wounded twice. At the end of WWI he returned to the States and joined a US cavalry regiment. In 1976 he and his wife Freida moved from New York to San Diego. In 1995, two years before his death, Scheinholz was honored at a ceremony in Mayor Susan Golding's office by a representative of the Israeli government as the last surviving member of the Jewish Legion.

Aircraft mechanic Fred Dahms, a Christian who had sympathy for the underdog, was hired by friends of Israel in 1948 to keep surplus planes operational, even when they were loaded with war supplies for the newly formed Jewish State. The San Diegan was part of a team that secured arms from factories in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and then surreptitiously flew them to Israel in surplus planes with limited flying range. The planes had to arrive in their destination after dark and depart before dawn, and Dahms kept them in repair. After the war, he went to Israel, where he helped the newly independent country build its Air Force.



Orly and David Perez are presented a printed version of a Torah in February 2006 by Israeli Reserve Brig. Gen. Yehiel Gozal in appreciation of their support of the Friends of the Israel Defense Forces.

During Israel's War of Independence whenever Abe Baum, a retired Army major, was asked by the Israeli High command for military assistance he responded with vigor. He contacted other retired US Army officers and eventually was successful in finding the appropriate military talent to fill each need, i.e. tank warfare experience, air combat etc. Through a chance meeting with Moshe Dayan, Yossi Harel, and Teddy Kollek, he made several suggestions on how to capture Lod Airport with the limited military equipment on hand. When this result occurred, Dayan sent him a message of thanks. He continued in this advisory capacity until the war was finally won.

Rabbi Hillel Silverman had been a student at Hebrew University in 1947 when the War of Independence began. Immediately he and other students volunteered and joined the Haganah. His job was to escort and protect convoys of food and water between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. They had no tanks, no planes except a few Piper Cubs, no helmets, no boots, and only one week of basic training. They were “checked out” on rifles, but not allowed to practice firing their rifles because they had no spare bullets for training. At one point during their tour of duty they were surrounded by the Arabs, and isolated, in the village of Har Tov near Jerusalem. This lasted one month during which time they lived on sardines and halava. The Arabs eventually “just went away” and they were able to return to duty.

Amnon Ben-Yehuda was a member of a Palmach unit that attempted to capture a critical fortress at Nebbi Yosha. While his unit was being driven back by Arab Legionnaires, Ben-Yehuda was shot with a bullet that passed through his head, somehow without killing him. Four Palmach soldiers carried him in a coma to temporary safety to the settlement of Ramat Naftali. Two days later, eight men carried him in a litter down a hill to a waiting ambulance, while other Palmach fighters evacuated infants from the endangered village. Ben-Yehuda eventually regained consciousness, and went on after the war to study in California, eventually becoming a business executive in San Diego.

Holocaust survivor David Kempinski landed in Israel in 1949, four years after being liberated from Dachau by the U.S. Army. He was conscripted into the Givati Brigade four days after his arrival in Israel, and sent to duty in the hotly contested Mt. Scopus area of Jerusalem. In the 1950s, he served along the Jordanian-Israel border. During the Sinai Campaign he was with the attacking Israeli forces who reached El Arish. He arrived in San Diego in the mid 90’s, after living in New Jersey for many years.

Ezra Schaffer, a former San Diegan, wrote a letter to his folks shortly after the Suez War of 1956 recalling the training required of able bodied Israelis to deal with attacks by Arab fedayeen. “Unlike the Arabs we respond to attacks by selecting a strategic military stronghold and wipe it out, rather than selecting innocent civilians,” he wrote. “The Israeli Army is essentially a defense army...”

Max Adler went to Palestine in 1936 as part of the Youth Aliyah movement. As part of the British army in North Africa, he fought the Nazis at El Alamein during World War II. He was in the War of Independence and remembers with bitterness how the Arab Legion was able to take the Old City of Jerusalem from a handful of defenders. In 1967, he was part of the forces who won back the Old City from the Jordanians during bloody fighting in the Six Day War. “It was an overwhelming feeling to touch the Wailing Wall.”

Batsheva Feldman, today regional director for the Jewish National Fund in San Diego, was serving in the Golani Brigade along the frozen Syrian border when emergency supplies arrived from the United States. The Israeli troops appreciated even more than the M-1 rifles and the warm overcoats that were included. Later, the same brigade was transferred to the Sinai, where it had to endure blistering heat.

Throughout the years many Israeli military figures visited San Diego to brief the Jewish community here. For example, in 1973, Israel Defense Force Lt. Col. Samuel Mor spoke at an Israel Bonds Dinner



Amnon Ben Yehuda, member of a Palmach unit, trained with a sten gun for Israel's War of Independence

sponsored by Hadassah in honor of Ida Nasatir and Dr. Sydney Weiner. A native of Poland who immigrated to Palestine in 1933, Mor fought during the War of Independence in the Givati Brigade defending southern Israel.

Later in 1973, Stella Levy, former commander in chief of the Israel Women's Army, visited in her new capacity as an attaché to the Israeli embassy serving as a liaison to American women. At a dinner at the Hotel del Coronado, she and the waiter had a great time speaking to each other in French.

Ruth Kluger told a United Jewish Federation audience in 1974 about her experiences, documented in her book *The Last Escape*, joining with nine other Palestinian Jews to organize Aliyah Bet (illegal immigration movement) to rescue Jews from Hitler's Europe, and bringing them by secret ships to Palestine. Towards the end of World War II she was singled out by David Ben Gurion to be the official representative to Europe of the Jewish people in Palestine. She was also the first Jew from Palestine to enter the concentration camps in Europe.



Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin, in sunglasses, is briefed by U.S. Navy officers in San Diego. To his left is Leonard Zandle. Rabin later would become prime minister of Israel.

Yossi Harel spoke in 2005, at a meeting of the Tel Aviv Foundation about his experiences as a member of Haganah and commander of the immigrant fleet. At the La Jolla home of Reina and David Shteremberg, he related some of his experiences, familiar to many listeners who had read or seen *Exodus* by Leon Uris.

Israeli Brig. Gen. Yehiel Gozal spoke at Congregation Beth Am in 2006 about Iran being a bigger threat to Israel than Hamas. Serving as national director of Friends of the Israeli Defense Force (FIDF), he welcomed any effort by the UN Security Council to deny Iran access to nuclear weapons. He said if diplomatic efforts fail, Israel "recognizes from the experience of Jews in the Holocaust that it may have to act on its own."

Given San Diego's status as a major center for the U.S. military, San Diegans serving in the U.S. Congress and Senate demonstrated with their votes considerable understanding and support for the needs of Israel's military. U.S. Senator Pete Wilson, a former mayor of San Diego, and Congressman Duncan Hunter in particular occupied powerful positions—Hunter as chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Hunter inserted \$30 million into the national budget to assist in Israel's development of the Arrow Missile Defense System against incoming missiles, a system which is still in use today.

Other San Diego members of Congress from the time of Israel's creation to the present included Charles Fletcher, Clinton McKinnon, Bob Wilson, Lionel Van Deerlin, Clair W. Burgener, Bill Lowery, Jim Bates, Ron Packard, Randy Cunningham, Lynn Schenk, Bob Filner, Brian Bilbray, Darrell Issa and Susan Davis.

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*Gerry Greber is a Carlsbad-based freelance writer who often writes on military topics.*



## Chapter 4.

# Diplomacy

*By Yiftach Levy*

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Although San Diego is located far from such decision-making capitals as Jerusalem, Washington or New York, it has, nevertheless, been involved over the years in furthering Israel's diplomatic cause.

For example, Prof. Sanford Lakoff came to San Diego to found the political science department at UCSD in 1974. Since then, he's written numerous articles and spoken in front of thousands of people, educating audiences about the Arab-Israeli conflict and US policy in the Middle East.

In late 1975, the United Nations General Assembly ratified a resolution equating Zionism with racism. This move, initiated and backed by the Arab bloc, prompted a massive upsurge in public comment relating to Israel, from within and outside the Jewish community. Leading the outcry was Gary R. Cantor, chair of the Community Relations Committee of the United Jewish Federation. He described the resolution as "a massive lie which, but for its serious possible consequences, might be dismissed as a preposterous absurdity. Zionism's dream of the restoration to the Jewish people of its ancient homeland has always envisioned a Jewish state in the Middle East at peace with its neighbors, who in their many millions inhabit the vast territories that surround it. To besmirch Zionism with the ugly name of racism is to make a travesty of the meaning of words."

San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson, who went on to become a U.S. senator and later California's governor, visited Israel in 1974, and became a vocal supporter of the Jewish state. After the Zionism equals racism vote, Wilson made headlines by resigning from the United Nations Association of San Diego, angrily stating that the UN had "discredited its underlying principles."

Throughout the decade, the Arab world persuaded many corporations not to do business with Israel lest they be boycotted by Arab governments, who controlled much of the oil the western world needed for its energy. Rep. Lionel Van Deerlin (D-Chula Vista) joined a growing movement in Congress calling for cutting off tax breaks from companies that supported the boycott. Van Deerlin noted, "Boycott is a dirty word and in the case of Israel it carries anti-Semitic connotations as well."

In 1979, Prof. Robert Ontell, who had taught social work at SDSU since 1965, took the first directorship of the Fred J. Hansen Institute for World Peace, a program of the SDSU Foundation. Under his leadership, the Hansen Institute organized and implemented the first cooperative programs between Egypt and Israel in 1980, shortly after the signing of the peace treaty between those two countries. In the mid-1980s, Ontell helped organize secret meetings between Israeli and Palestinian representatives, years before such meetings were publicly acceptable or even legal under Israeli law.

In 1997, SDSU's Hansen Institute joined forces with the Peres Center for Peace, established by the former Israeli Prime Minister (and current President), in an agreement designed to further both institutes' missions. Those signing the agreement included Stephen L. Weber, SDSU president, Shimon Peres, Harry R. Albers, executive director for the Hansen Institute, and Ambassador Uri Savir, executive director of the Peres Center and former Israeli Chief Negotiator for the peace process.

One of the projects discussed by the delegations was a \$25 million program funded by USAID to increase agricultural productivity in Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. The program, proposed by congressional representative Ron Packard (R-Oceanside), was delayed by federal budget constraints, but got under way in 1998. San Diego State University had earlier hosted representatives of nine Middle Eastern countries to discuss agricultural cooperation, water use, and other issues.

Meanwhile, the University of San Diego broke ground on the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace in 1999. Funded by a \$25 million gift from its namesake, construction on the 90,000 sq. ft. building was completed in December, 2001. During the groundbreaking events, Rabbi Moshe Levin of Congregation Beth El in La Jolla debated the Middle East situation with Salam al-Marayati, cofounder of the Muslim Public Affairs Council.

Cooperative ventures continued toward the end of the millennium, as Jewish and Arab mayors from Israel visited San Diego in July, 1999, as part of a national tour during which they met and discussed common municipal concerns with colleagues in the US. Among the local leaders who participated in the meetings were County Supervisor Ron Roberts and La Mesa Mayor Art Madrid.

In January, 2002, Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert met with his San Diego counterpart, Dick Murphy, to talk about traffic control and management, an increasingly important issue in Israel. Olmert told Murphy about his first visit to San Diego, when he met then-mayor Pete Wilson, who went on to become California's governor, and quipped that perhaps this visit would similarly propel Murphy's career. Instead, it was Olmert's political star that rose after that visit, when he joined Ariel Sharon in forming the new centrist Kadima party and eventually took over as prime minister after Sharon's debilitating stroke in 2006.

The United Jewish Federation, the Jewish community's umbrella organization in San Diego, provides local Jewish citizens with myriad opportunities to engage with prominent Israeli figures, including political leaders. Over the years, such Israeli leaders as Abba Eban, Yitzhak Rabin, and Shimon Peres have appeared at UJF events. The most recent, in January, 2006, was former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, currently the leader of the Labor party, who regaled attendees of the UJF Men's Event with favorite stories from his years of military and political service.



Rebecca Newman, who served as UJF President in San Diego and as a national board member for both the United Jewish Appeal Women's Division and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee is shown sharing a moment with Shimon Peres, former prime minister and foreign minister, and today (2008) the president of Israel.



San Diegans Norman Greene, Clarence Pendleton and David Nussbaum are received by Israel's President Yirtzhak Navon during 1980 mission to Israel.

Another Ehud visited San Diego in early 2006 – Ehud Danoch, who was then Israel's Consul General in Los Angeles, the senior representative of the State of Israel in the Southwestern United States. He met with two local Jewish congressional representatives, Bob Filner and Susan Davis, as well as with UJF executive vice president Michael S. Rassler and AIPAC regional chair Leslie Caspi. Danoch spends much of his time promoting Israel's image to an often mis- or under informed public that hears bad news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from mainstream media commentators.

Two San Diegans who previously were active in Israeli politics and who often serve as commentators on Israeli affairs are Ya'acov Liberman, former general secretary of the Herut party of Menachem Begin, and Isaac Yetiv, a former member of the Haifa City Council.

Since 1953, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) has lobbied regional and national lawmakers in the US on behalf of Israel and held public events to garner support from grassroots activists. One UJF president, Dr. Richard Katz, also served as an AIPAC National Vice President. One UJF President, Dr. Richard Katz, also served as a national AIPAC vice president and later became chairman of the organization's executive committee. In 2006, the local AIPAC chapter hosted Representative Shelley Berkley at its annual brunch in La Jolla, where the Nevada Democrat appealed to 800 attendees to continue their strong support of Israel, particularly in the face of a belligerent Iran with nuclear aspirations.

Caspi, the AIPAC regional chair, is no stranger to the political scene or activism on behalf of Israel. Daughter of Southern California Democratic leader M. Larry Lawrence, Caspi had worked in the office of Sen. Alan Cranston (D-CA) when she decided during the Yom Kippur War to volunteer on an Israeli kibbutz. She met her husband, Shlomo, in Israel. Since taking the reins at AIPAC, Caspi has consistently and significantly increased event attendance and awareness of core issues. Naturally, throughout the year celebrating Israel's 60<sup>th</sup>, Caspi has been intensely hands-on in organizing events and advocating for Israel's well-being.



Israel's Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak (left) was greeted at 2006 Men's Event by San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders (center) and Michael S. Rassler, chief executive officer of the United Jewish Federation of San Diego.

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*Yiftach Levy is a San Diego-based freelance writer who often writes about Israel advocacy.*

## Chapter 5.

# Science & Technology

*By Rachael Yourtz*

From breakthroughs in agricultural technology to the development of advanced military equipment, to helping to establish centers of higher learning, San Diegans have contributed to the scientific and technological development of the State of Israel.

A significant contribution has come from the Fred J. Hansen Institute for World Peace established at the San Diego State University Research Foundation in 1979 as a result of the generosity of avocado farmer Fred J. Hansen. He left a large portion of his estate to encourage peace through agriculture. Israel and Egypt agreed to cooperate in a program of the Hansen Institute promoting agriculture and desert development—topics of high mutual interest and economic benefit to both countries. Israeli and Egyptian farmers were able to develop techniques for growing crops such as melons and tomatoes in desert conditions. Through these efforts both the Israeli Negev and the Egyptian Sinai are in commercial production. According to Bonnie Stewart, the executive director of the Hansen Institute, “the reasons that the Peres Peace Center and the Hansen Foundation for World Peace are interested in such projects is that in the process of learning together, the Arabs and the Israelis form friendships transcending some of the political difference among their countries.”

Many San Diego based companies have also forged ties with Israel. For example, Robert L. “Buzz” Bernstein, formerly a scientist with Scripps Institute of Oceanography, invented an affordable weather tracking system. These devices, which can aid forecasters in predicting the weather, also help sailors navigate their ships, fishermen locate various species, earth specialists trace the growth of desert areas, and botanists map vegetation zones. The methodology was previously unavailable except to large aerospace



During a historic meeting of representatives of the Middle East jointly planning to make the deserts more productive, a large group toured the SDSU campus on March 11, 1997.

companies. In 1997 SeaSpace Corp sold a number of systems to the Israeli Air Force (the details of which cannot be disclosed for security purposes). Although they would have loved to donate the devices, the company did “give them a good deal!”

Planet Polymer Technologies, which converts plastic waste into materials for injection molding, established a joint venture with Israel. According to Dr. Robert Petcavich, Planet’s president, “We hope to set up a whole recycling infrastructure in Israel—both industrial and consumer—where

they can recycle polypropylene and create value-added products.” The agreement also envisioned the manufacturing of other Israeli products using Planet Polymer’s technology for controlling the rates at which materials dissolve or biodegrade.

In 2007 the San Diego Museum of Man opened an exhibit entitled *Journey to the Copper Age: Archaeology in the Holy Land* which brought artifacts from Israel including 6,000 year old objects from the Israel Museum. The exhibit was based on a national geographic expedition led by Dr. Thomas Levy, archaeologist with the University of California, San Diego.

Individuals have also contributed their intellect, wealth and influence to aid medical, dental, scientific and technological development of the State of Israel. For example, Dr. Norman Mann first traveled to Israel with the Alpha Omega Dental Fraternity as a volunteer dentist in the city of Sderot in 1982. He later returned to Israel as part of Project Renewal, an effort to improve the quality of life of Jews living in Kiryat Malachi, a sister city of San Diego’s United Jewish Federation. As part of the new community center built and run through Project Renewal, Dr. Mann operated a dental clinic. His wife, Sivia, assisted him in presenting a dental hygiene program for the children of the town. He returned to the town and worked for a month each of the next six years. “We were really part of the community,” Mann recalls. “People were very appreciative of the work we did and hopefully we raised the level of dental health in the community.” The clinic is still running today, 25 years later.

Mann also became known for his fervent support for Israeli commerce, urging San Diegans as well as *all* friends of Israel to purchase products with “Made in Israel” labels. “The lifeblood of any nation is maintained by its ability to export its products not only to keep people working, to maintain their dignity, but also to bring in needed hard currency dollars. In a way, the best type of support rather than charity is to get people working so they can provide for their families.”



Dr. Norman Mann of San Diego gives free dental exams to children in Kiryat Malachi, San Diego UJF’s Project Renewal city.

Dr. William H. Crosby of La Jolla served as co-chairman of American Red Magen David for Israel (ARMDI) in 1979. Dr. Crosby, world-renowned hematologist, was the director of the L.C. Jacobson Blood Center of the Scripps Clinic and Research Institute. He was a member of the National Advisory Committee of the American Red Cross and a chairman of the Blood Bank Program of the Massachusetts Medical Society. Dr. Crosby has visited Israel many times and has offered his expertise in consultation with many of Israel’s leading hematologists.

The Technion Institute in Haifa, Israel, has attracted substantial support from San Diegans. In operation since 1924, the Technion is the oldest university in Israel and focuses on the areas of science and engineering. Among San Diego supporters are Dr. Merle and Teresa Fischlowitz, who funded the construction of a chemistry lab at the Technion. According to Merle, his father’s biochemical company, Sigma Aldrich, had a close, mutually beneficial relationship with scientists at Technion. Over the years Technion became one of its largest customers. When he had the opportunity to honor his father and mother he chose to do it by naming a new laboratory at Technion after them. The Fischlowitz Catalysis

Laboratory in the Department of Chemistry at Technion opened in 2005. Two years later, Teresa Fischlowitz also gave a gift in memory of her parents, as part of the San Diego Chapter of American Technion Society's Graduate Student scholarship program.

Dr. Robert and Sondra Berk contributed two major gifts to the Technion Institute. "We really feel it is the engine of Israel—everything scientific, everything concerning defense, it all comes from Technion," Sondra commented. At that time there was a tremendous shortage of dormitories so they funded the Sondra and Robert Berk Dormitory. Additionally, the Berks joined others in providing a scholarship to an engineering graduate student.

Ehud Keinan, a chemistry professor at the Scripps Research Institute, divides his time between the Technion Institute in Israel and San Diego. At the Technion Institute he is the founding director of the catalysis science and technology institute.

The impact that the Technion has had on technological research also is illustrated by the fact that San Diego-based Qualcomm, pioneer in digital communications systems, has a subsidiary operation in Haifa.

Selwyn Lurie headed a cooperative South African-Israel project in 1955 to design and build the modern city of Ashkelon. "We established new industries including the diamond industry, a reinforced concrete pipe factory to bring water down from the north to the Negev area, and a solar water heating factory," he recalled. The Luries, who moved to San Diego in 2000, also were donors to the City of Raanana of Gan Alon (Alon Park) in memory of their son.

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*Rachel Yourtz is a recent UCSD graduate now entering the field of Jewish communal work.*



## Chapter 6.

# Travel

*By Norman Greene*

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A decade ago when “Israel at 50” was being celebrated, United Jewish Federation’s Nadine Finkel was setting up the Israel Center to promote closer ties between San Diego and Israel through Israel tourism, aliyah, missions and professional exchanges. Until that time, travel to Israel had been the province of San Diego-born, UJF stalwart Gert Thaler, the pioneer travel agent for Israel in San Diego County.

“Travel to Israel is truly a transformative experience to anyone who goes. There is no other method to make one connect to Israel than actually being there.” So said Eyal Dagan, San Diego’s third and current shaliach. But travel to Israel had to be sold, a market had to be created. It was not a natural happening in San Diego during the 50’s, 60’s and early 70’s. It required a catalyst to begin the experience.



Gert Thaler, pioneer San Diego travel agent for Israel, has a happy reunion with Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek.

In 1967, Thaler started doing liaison work for the Israel’s Consulate-General in Los Angeles. Any time an Israeli came to San Diego, she would smooth the way, make the arrangements and act as guide/host. She was a volunteer in that position for 20 years. Early on, El Al Airlines sought her out. “El Al only had two people from San Diego going to Israel and Manager Ami Goffer asked me to introduce him to travel agents in town to promote Israel Tourism,” she recalled. The agents were not encouraging, one even telling Goffer: “I don’t think there is any market for Israel tourism in San Diego.”

“By the time lunch was over, Ami had convinced me that I had to become a travel agent for Israel.” He placed her in Sol Price’s FedMart, the predecessor to the Price Club now known as Costco. FedMart had just started selling travel. Her first day on the job, Thaler sold a trip around the world and was now in business. Her friend Gladys Block soon joined the FedMart travel sales effort.

Arriving in Israel for the first time in 1968, Thaler knew only one person, her brother-in-law Zel Camiel’s cousin Yehuda, but she developed many personal Israeli friends in all walks of life. Among these was Prime Minister Ehud Omert, whom she met about 30 years ago when he came to San Diego to speak. In 1995, Omert, who was speaking in Israel to a San Diego Federation group, diverted from his planned speech to honor Thaler.

In 1969, Thaler played host to Yitzhak Rabin when he addressed the San Diego World Affairs Council.

By 1970, Thaler had made six or seven trips to Israel, when she and Block left FedMart to join Points Four Travel Agency owned by Sherwood Gordon. In 1974, UJF President Leonard Zanville gave Thaler's name to San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson. The Israeli Consul had invited the Mayor to Israel, and Thaler went into action. She arranged to meet the Mayor every day at five to plan the trip and provided him with a list of Hebrew words and phrases advantageous for him to learn.

Thaler suggested Wilson deliver a San Diego Zoo animal as a gift to the Tel Aviv Zoo which was being redesigned by San Diegan Homer Delawie, winner of an international contest for the work. The Mayor agreed to bring two rare South American birds.

Television cameras greeted the arrival of the birds, the Mayor and Thaler. KSDO's general manager Peter Lund and his wife Teresa accompanied the Mayor. And Thaler who had a radio show to promote Israeli travel on KSDO in those days, arranged for the station to carry reports every day from Mayor Wilson in Israel. Lund rose to become president of CBS Sports. Wilson was elected to the U.S. Senate and eventually to be Governor of California.

As a member of UJF's Community Relations Committee, founded by Gary Cantor, Thaler led the first two San Diego CRC Leadership Missions to Israel in 1980 and 1984. These trips were designed to introduce mostly non-Jewish leaders of San Diego's political, business, educational, medical, cultural and ethnic groups to Israel.



A happy Eli Meltzer waves an Israeli flag upon arrival at Ben Gurion Airport



Teens from San Diego explore the hills across the water from Jordan during the 2007 Scott Stone Israel Teen Trip.

Mayor Wilson agreed to headline the first trip along with four City Council members: Lucy Killea, Jim Bates, Dick Murphy and Bill Lowery. Over the course of the two CRC Missions, a State Senator, four U.S. Congressmen, a future San Diego Mayor, and California Governor were introduced to the State of Israel. It was Federation sponsored public relations at its most effective.

Thaler was repeatedly asked by Rabbi Aaron Gold to lead Tiffereth Israel Synagogue family trips to Israel. Rabbi and Mrs. Martin Lawson chose her to plan Temple Emanu-El's first congregational trip to Israel. It was on that trip to Israel 26 years

ago that Thaler suggested to Anita Lawson that she become a travel agent and she has since become a leading travel agent for Israel.

Other synagogues such as Beth Israel and Beth Tefilah regularly began conducting tours to Israel. In the mid 70's, The San Diego Bureau of Jewish Education organized student tours to Israel wherein teens spent almost seven weeks participating in kibbutz life, archaeological digs, social and cultural activities and instruction in history, geography and politics.

From the ranks of Points Four Travel, which Thaler purchased in 1971, a number of successful Jewish Travel agents emerged including Lawson, Lil Weiner, Randy Wax, Elaine Stern, Herb Gross, Cindi Newman, Tami Kobernick, Joy Krasner, Beth Friedenberg, Sonny Weinman, Carole Levy, Sondra Glaser, Sandy Sacks and Lori Lipkes ...many of whom joined other agencies and continue to “sell” Israel to this day.

In 2005, Thaler completed her 82<sup>nd</sup> trip to Israel.

Through the past 60 years, Federation has conducted numerous fund-raising missions to Israel such as “Operation Israel” led by Herbert J. Solomon and Stanley Foster in 1970. But it wasn’t until the Israel Center was formed in 1997 that Federation’s many Israel initiatives were formally centralized. When Nadine Finkel, a 15-year Federation professional, started the UJF Israel Center with Gloria Stone as its first president she said it was because “Federation leadership wanted to personalize the experience and feel a palpable difference in the people-to-people experience.” This was also the impetus for the beginning of the Sha’ar Hanegev relationship. The Center was formed to really strengthen “our connection to Israel generally and to make it a viable part of our Federation and our community...along with getting our young people involved.”

Within that first two-year period Rod and Gloria Stone lost their son Scott. He was so influenced by his Camp Ramah trip to Israel that the Stones made the decision to name a teen trip after him. Establishing the Scott Stone Israel Teen Trip was an important step in the first work of the UJF Israel Center. Since that time hundreds of teens have participated.

There is no shortage of Israel Center programs in San Diego County. In addition to the Federation and Stone Family funded Scott Stone Israel Teen Trip, there is JITLI, the Jacobs International Teen Leadership Institute (funded by Gary Jacobs)

JITLI takes ten teens from San Diego (who have been to Israel before), ten teens from Sha’ar Hanegev, ten teens from a Bedouin community next to Sha’ar Hanegev, and ten Arab Israelis from different Arab communities in the south of Israel. So 40 teens work mostly on the relations between the different cultures and backgrounds and try to facilitate a dialogue among the cultures. The program begins in San Diego, and then goes to Spain where the groups learn about the time in history when Muslims and Jews lived together successfully and peacefully. Finally, they to fly to Israel where most of the program takes place in Sha’ar Hanegev.



Jewish educators and communal workers from San Diego visit with counterparts in Sha’ar Hanegev in 2007.

The Israel Center brought Yaacov Schneider, the first shaliach to San Diego, followed by Erez Strasburg and then Eyal Dagan, in a joint effort between the Federation and the Jewish Agency for Israel. Shlichim are Jewish Agency employees serving at the invitation of the Federation with their salaries shared by both organizations.

As current shaliach Dagan describes it, the role is that of a “bridge” between Israel and the San Diego Jewish community. “I do that via different projects, partnerships with various community organizations.” Much of the work is done with synagogues and schools, day schools and congregational schools, the JCC, AIPAC and other



Joe Nalven of Congregation Beth Israel joins two policewomen at Mahane Yehuda market in Jerusalem.

organizations that relate in one way or another to Israel. As a facilitator, “basically, I try to engage many people in the community with Israel, around travel, cultural events, education activities, speaking engagements. There are endless opportunities to connect with Israel through the UJF Israel Center,” Dagan said.

He works with those planning to make aliyah to Israel. While there is no record of the numbers of San Diegans who have, there are quite a few including Hadassah leader Muriel Goldhammer who contributed articles from Israel to the *Heritage* for years. Dagan says some are families, some are individuals, but the majority are young people 18-26 who are looking for something special as far as their exposure to Israel. “Many are influ-

enced after traveling to Israel, perhaps the number one connector to the Land of Israel.”

Dagan believes there is no better method to connect one to Israel than actually being there. It could be a ten-day free trip to Israel, such as Birthright, or a month long program for teens such as the Scott Stone Israel Teen Trip, or a family mission to Israel with kids who are going to be Bar Mitzvahed in Jerusalem, or it could be an individual going to Israel via the four-year-old MASA program. Translated literally as “journey,” MASA is the gateway for some 120 different long term programs in Israel...all MASA programs are five months or longer.

Former Federation Executive Director Lou Lieblich summed it up in a 1972 article in the *Southwest Jewish Press Heritage*: “Christian friends ask how is it that so many Jewish people have visited Israel during these years of war, strife and murder, thinking it at the very least foolhardy. But the hundreds of thousands of people who have gone to Israel during these years have felt little if any fear, for they know the stuff of which Israelis are made...As long as there are men and women like Moshe Dayan and Golda Meir in leadership positions in Israel...just so long will the Jewish people of America refuse to be deterred from visiting the land of the Bible....”



UJF leads a Community Mission with over 200 participants from San Diego in 2006.

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*Norman Greene is the former co-publisher of the San Diego Jewish Press-Heritage*

## Chapter 7.

# Sha'ar Hanegev: Student Perspectives

*By Charly Jaffe and Gabrielle Maio*

The Jews came to Israel and made the desert bloom. But the once parched floor of the Negev isn't the only cultivation to be proud of. Today, after years of projects and partnerships, the unique bond between San Diego and its sister city, Sha'ar Hanegev has blossomed beautifully into a supportive, loving friendship. Extending beyond basic philanthropy through community and professional exchanges, San Diego residents have created a sound support system for, and played a vital role in developing the partnership between their coastal city and Sha'ar Hanegev.

In 1998 UJF leaders traveled to Israel in hopes of strengthening the connection between San Diego and the Jewish homeland. The result? A partnership with a youth village called Ibim. Located in Sha'ar Hanegev, Ibim was established in 1992 for young adults who have made aliyah without their families. This partnership eventually extended to include all of Sha'ar Hanegev and soon took on a life of its own as teens and professionals brought together on UJF exchange programs developed close friendships and became, as their sister city title implies, family.

Two participants from one of these exchanges, Larry Acheatel and Jeff Davis, respectively executive director and upper school principal of San Diego Jewish Academy, continued partnerships with Sha'ar Hanegev after the trip's conclusion. Both educators were impressed with Aharale Rothstein, the principal of Sha'ar Hanegev High School, and began a friendship. But "email only works so well," Davis commented. "To deepen bonds and strengthen these connections it must be by people to people." And this is exactly what it came to be. After participating in the professionals' exchange, Davis and Acheatel facilitated missions to Israel even during the Intifada, remaining steadfast in their dedication to show Israel their moral support.

On one of these exchanges, the idea of sending students from Sha'ar Hanegev to San Diego was born. One year of planning and fund raising later, the first SDJA—Sha'ar Hanegev exchange occurred in October 2005.



Mixed group from San Diego and Sha'ar Hanegev participate in a ceremony in Sha'ar Hanegev furthering cooperation between the two areas.



Sha'ar Hanegev students visited San Diego for two weeks and attended school with counterparts from San Diego Jewish Academy. The Israelis were housed with SDJA students and spent their days attending classes at the Academy and taking field trips to places such as the San Diego Zoo. Bonds formed instantly between families and students, continuing through the present. For example, SDJA student Sarah Abelsohn recently received voice mail from one of the Sha'ar Hanegev girls who called to wish her a happy birthday. She would have emailed, her Israeli friend explained, but her internet had been down. She simply remembered and made an effort to call all the way from Israel to wish Sarah, her new friend in San Diego, a happy birthday. Strong friendships such as these have become a trademark of the exchange program.

Extremely different from the Academy, Sha'ar Hanegev High School is located less than a mile away from the Gaza border, with its families and residents living in constant fear of Kassam missiles hitting their homes. At the middle school there are fences, “not to keep the bad guys out,” Davis said, “but to keep the kids within fifteen seconds from a safe room.” No stranger to rowdy middle school students, Davis said he was shocked by the lack of space to run and play. Even at recess, Acheatel explained, no one can be more than 20 feet from the building. Upon venturing into one classroom, a past participant of an SDJA exchange whispered to Davis and motioned for him to sit next to her; it was the “good side” of the classroom, she explained.

The side she was sitting on had missile-proof roofs; the other side did not. When the alarm sounds, warning the people of Sha'ar Hanegev that a Kassam rocket is approaching, the students on the ‘bad’ side of the classroom have to sprint to the good side for cover. Not long before Davis’s visit, a Kassam had fallen only a few classrooms away.

Davis and Acheatel utilized their experience in building SDJA’s Jaffe campus from the ground up, to help Rothstein build a new high school. These new facilities will be focused primarily on safety so that students and faculty are protected from Kassams-on both sides of the classroom.

The Sha'ar Hanegev students wanted to incorporate something into the new high school that was inspired by one of their exchanges to San Diego. After Sha'ar Hanegev students saw SDJA’s Reform and Conservative prayer sessions at school, something seldom found in Israel, they decided they would like to bring pluralistic practices and an extra touch of Judaism back to their school. Once the Kassam-proof high school is built, a Beit Knesset will also open at Sha'ar Hanegev High School. They say they will be the first public school in Israel ever to do so.

School programs aren’t the only exchanges available to teens. They can also create close bonds with their peers in Sha'ar Hanegev through summer programs. The Scott Stone Israel Teen Trip was created by the Stone family in memory of Scott Stone after his untimely death. The Scott Stone Israel Teen Trip takes American teens with other teens from Sha'ar Hanegev through Prague and Israel. Over the course of this trip, friendships are formed and deep discussions lead to a greater understanding of the Israelis’ and Americans’ lives and identities.



Shai Hermesh, then mayor of Sha'ar Hanegev and now a member of Knesset, at right, meets with visitors from San Diego, including, from left: Stephen Abramson, Howard Steinberg, Herb Solomon, Dr. Steve Solomon, and Richard Katz.



Unlike many Israel trips, this unique program allows teens to form a bond with not only the country, but with the people as well, bringing tough issues such as the disengagement and Kassams to life. Meredith Kaplan, a participant in 2005, said that these issues were never more potent than when the group went to the bar mitzvah of the brother of Aran, one of the Israeli participants. Initially quite reserved, Aran eventually opened up, telling her stories of forced eviction from Gaza during the disengagement and the life of fear she now lives as Kassams are shot at her from Gaza, her old home.

At the bar mitzvah, normally a time to eat and celebrate, tables shook violently from the Israeli artillery being shot into Gaza. Rose Sheela, another American participant, said that the teens from San Diego became nervous, yet the Israelis didn't even seem to notice. It was an everyday occurrence for them. Witnessing the struggle and bitterness, the participants would never see these as textbook or newspaper issues again. It became personal, and these stories touched the hearts and changed the perspectives of all the participants. They didn't only acquire different viewpoints, but also lasting friends. "We keep in touch, I saw all my friends from Scott Stone this past summer," 2004 participant Tamara Lubezky reported, "and I will see them again when I am there in May."

For teens a bit older who have reached their junior year in high school, the Jacobs International Teen Leadership Institute (JITLI) is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that offers insight not only into the lives of the Jews in Sha'ar Hanegev, but also of the neighboring Bedouins, as participants dive headfirst into Israel's toughest issue: peaceful coexistence. Founded in 2000 by Gary and Jerri-Ann Jacobs, JITLI selects ten American Jews, ten Jews from Sha'ar Hanegev, and twenty Israeli Arabs from the Bedouin villages of Segev Shalom and Lakiya. These forty teens spend their junior and senior year in the program with an intense three-week summer trip through San Diego, Spain, and Israel.

Yaacov Schneider, former Israeli shaliach in San Diego and the self-proclaimed 'matchmaker' of JITLI, has been involved since JITLI's inception. He says he now is enjoying the fruits of his labor as he meets



United Jewish Federation mission members go right up to the border with Gaza during a visit to Sha'ar Hanegev.

JITLI alumni around the world and finds the leaders of tomorrow forever changed by the trip. They carry "the message of peace and coexistence." But it takes time, work, and tears in order for participants to reach this end result. Sometimes as the teens engage in discussion, JITLI can be an emotional roller coaster.

During the San Diego portion, politics typically are ignored as forty very different teens spend time just getting to know each other. Mikey Shoemaker, a 2007 participant, said that although many were nervous at how everyone would get along, the Americans found that their new Jewish and Muslim Israeli friends were "chillers." While

traveling through Spain and Israel, politics were introduced. The participants faced the challenge of balancing friendships with arguments, as things got heated when discussing their *very* different beliefs and politics. But "at the end of the day, we were all friends despite our differences," Jenny Daniels, another 2007 participant, said.

While sharing their perspectives with the group, American teens gained a greater understanding of the conflicts that lie within Israeli society. Israel was no longer an idealistic “knight in shining armor” as Mikey previously had viewed it. After hearing the different perspectives on the many problems within the country from his own friends, Mikey explained “it made me closer to Israel ... giving me a more personal connection.” The JITLI participants are challenged, questioned, and forced to think and develop their own opinions about the very complex issues within Israel, but it is that exact process that binds these future leaders to the Jewish homeland so strongly.

Sha'ar Hanegev and San Diego have become sister cities in more ways than one. Residents have found not only friendship halfway around the world, but family. The bond between the two cities is strong and growing. In a time when some residents have left Sha'ar Hanegev for safer areas of Israel, those remaining are grateful for San Diego's support. Principal Rothstein asserts “If we abandon Sha'ar Hanegev, we abandon Israel.” Sha'ar Hanegev's citizens have friends in San Diego—and they are in the friendship to stay.



Officials from Sha'ar Hanegev and San Diego Jewish community share a moment during a visit to Israel.

## Chapter 8.

# Arts & Culture

*By Sheila Orysiek and Donald H. Harrison*

History is often presented as a series of events accompanied with eye-glazing dates. One battle follows another, the endless flow of despots—only the names change. But the lasting history of humanity is the art and culture which both binds and distinguishes us. A tiny country on the other side of the planet is firmly glued to a community in the southwest continental corner of the most powerful country on earth - not through battles fought, but through art and culture shared. San Diegans and Israelis—Israelis and San Diegans—nourishing one another.

In 1973, a future San Diegan, Clive David, helped to produce one of the biggest celebrations of Israel of all times—the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration for the State of Israel, with events in Jerusalem and Caesarea. Later shown as a special by ABC-TV, the celebration featured such performers as Pablo Casals, Josephine Baker, Robert Merrill and Alan King. David moved to San Diego nine years later and affiliated with Congregation Beth Israel. In celebration of Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Beth Israel plans to exhibit in its lobby from April 13 to May 9 photos taken by congregants of Israel throughout the years.

The many aspects of Israeli culture have been the subject of numerous exhibitions in San Diego. The face of Israel that non-Jewish citizens of San Diego would be most likely to see is in Balboa Park. A section of it includes a series of small cottages around a village green. Each cottage is run by people who are either from another country or their descendants and every week they present a different cultural program of dance, music and signing to the public. Each cottage contains samples of art and culture of the country it represents.

The “House of Israel” was opened in the year of Israel's birth and now shows the signs of age. Amnon Silberger, president of the House of Israel, was unhappy with the status quo. He wanted his “lady” to have a face lift and be a worthwhile representative of Israel, its history, people and culture. He raised funds with an auction of various goodies—a day at the spa, dinner cruise, yoga classes, etc., with auctioneer Bob Lipton running the show. Rina Kabiljo, an Israeli architect with a local architectural firm, was commissioned to design the facelift for the House of Israel, which is still pending.

Last year, The Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit familiarized Balboa Park visitors with another aspect of Israeli culture—its ancient religious



Amnon Silberger, left, president of the House of Israel in Balboa Park, tells visitor Yoni Peres' son of Israel's President Shimon Peres (whose picture hangs on left side of wall behind them) about current plans to refurbish the interior of the historic cottage.



USD Prof. Russell Fuller stands by fragments of a passage of Deuteronomy that scholars of the Israel Antiquities Authority pieced together. Fragments are part of Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit at San Diego Natural History Museum

texts. Curated by San Diego State University professor Risa Levitt Kohn, the six-month long exhibit featured 24 scroll fragments from the caves at Qumram, along with ancillary exhibits on the development of Bibles, the similarities between the terrain of Israel and San Diego, and fine art photography. Among the featured Israeli artists: Neil Folberg, David Harris, Didier Ben Loulou, Max Richardson, Duby Tal and Yval Yairi. In addition there were wood, ceramic and glass sculptures by Jeremy Kimchi, Charles Sherman and Dick Ditore.

The Museum of Man meanwhile exhibited copper age artifacts from a period of Israel's pre-history thousands of years before the Dead Sea Scrolls were composed. The exhibit was based on the work of UCSD Archaeologist Thomas Levy. That museum each month sponsors an evening saluting the culture of a different country, and in 2006 it was Israel's turn. On offer was a sampling of traditional Jewish (not quite Israeli food), Israeli dancing led by Yoni Carr and various ritual objects and more secular Israeli items such as a Jerusalem harp, wooden chamsa, and a sand painting by Rhea Carmi.

Similar multi-faceted exhibitions have become features of the annual Israel Independence Day Festival, sponsored by the UJF Israel Center. For example, in 1998, the Yom Ha'Atzmaut observance involved speeches, music, song, dance and other activities. Many groups and people came together, among them: Congregation Beth El, Beth Jacob Congregation, Tifereth Israel Synagogue, United Jewish Federation, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Humanistic Jewish Congregation of San Diego, Chabad Hebrew Academy, and the Israeli chorale group "Gevatron," among many more. Among participants were Moshe Arad, Israel's former Ambassador to the United States; County Supervisors Ron Roberts, Rabbis Avram Bogopulsky and Leonard Rosenthal; and Israeli Consul Ido Aharoni.

The arts in their various forms provided building blocks for the San Diego-Israel relationship. A review of news clippings over the last 60 years indicated that dance, film, literature, music, photography, the visual arts, and even such miscellaneous pursuits as philately and balloon-twisting, all helped to strengthen the bonds tying our region to Israel.

**DANCE**—In 1966, the Jewish National Fund brought a group of young Israeli entertainers led by Shlomo Livni to perform Israeli songs and folk dances using native Israeli instruments at the Jewish Community Center, then located on 54th Street. Two years later, JNF brought Israeli singers and dancers led by Itzhak Emanuel. Fast forward to 2007 when the Keshet Chaim Folk Dance Company performed at the Lawrence Family JCC as part of the San Diego Jewish Music Festival sponsored by the San Diego Center for Jewish Culture. That program was based on Jewish history and experience: passage through the desert to the Promised Land, offerings at the Temple in Jerusalem, The experience of the Diaspora, Yemenites, the 500th anniversary of the Expulsion from Spain, Russian Chassidim, and finally the "Spirit of Israel."

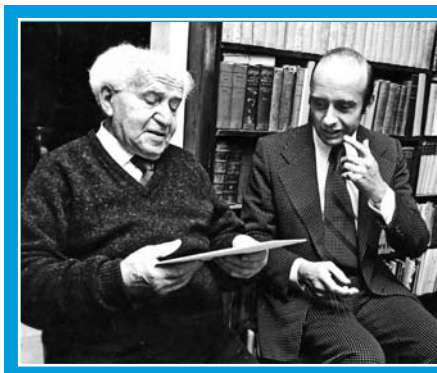


Women join in an Israeli dance led by Yoni Carr during salute to Israel at the San Diego Museum of Man in Balboa Park.

**FILM**—Elana Eden, a sabra and noted actress, addressed the Women’s Division of the United Jewish Federation in 1960 in conjunction with the movie, *The Story of Ruth*. She returned in 1968 to address the same group. Last year, San Diegan Zeji Ozeri joined Robert Moutal in Israel to make the movie, *The Land of Milk and Honey*, about the popular song with the same name in Hebrew: *Eretz Zavot Halav v’Devash*. In the film, which was given its premiere at the Lawrence Family JCC, Ozeri interviewed the song’s composer Eliyahu Gamliel, now a lively octogenarian. Preceding the showing was a performance by a local dance group, Lehatjil. Another film demonstrating the Israel-San Diego relationship was shown at the San Diego Jewish Film Festival in 2006: *Moshe Safdie: The Power of Architecture*. Safdie has been involved with building designs at UCSD. His daughter, Tal, is a principal of a San Diego architectural firm.

**LITERATURE**—Israelis Yehuda Amichai and Dan Pagis, visiting faculty members at UC Berkeley and UCSD, gave a poetry reading in Hebrew with subsequent English translations in 1975 on the UCSD campus. In 2001, native San Diegan Shimon Camiel published a witty book on his experiences living and defending a kibbutz, where he had lived for many years. Its irrepressible title: *The Outhouse War and Other Kibbutz Stories*. In 2007, a book by an Israeli about the United States and another by an American largely dealing with the Middle East were highlighted—illustrations of the fascination we have for each other. Israeli Michael B. Oren spoke about *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present*. Former U.S. Middle East Envoy Dennis Ross presented his book: *Statecraft and How To Restore America’s Standing in the World*.

**MISCELLANY**—Leonard Zanville collected stamps from all over the world, not only for their beauty but also for what they taught about his travels and Jewish heritage. Known affectionately as “Mr. Z,” he used to make up small collections of the stamps for distribution to youngsters as San Diego Hebrew Day School. Israeli Ori Livney whiled away his time throwing darts at balloons, evolving into Israel’s dart champion representing his country at the German Open and Spain’s Costa Brava. But the balloons also were part of his repertoire—he sculpted them into various shapes which he learned in 2004 from San Diegan Sandi Masori, who has made instructional videos on balloons and has performed in the U.S., Japan, Thailand and Israel.



Israel’s former prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, discusses plans for his country’s 25th anniversary celebration with major events planner Clive David, now a San Diegan.

**MUSIC**—The musical ties between San Diego and Israel are strong. David Amos, conductor of Tifereth Israel Community Orchestra in San Diego, and Yehuda Cohen, director of HED Music Conservatory in Israel, exemplified this when they exchanged podiums. But the connection also was demonstrated the times when Yoav Talmi, Yoel Levi, Uriel Segal, Gary Bertini and Meir Rimon, principal horn with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted the San Diego Symphony Orchestra. Many other Israeli musicians such as Zacharia Plevin have graced San Diego’s stages. The Israel Philharmonic performed in 1960 at the Fox Theatre here under the baton of Carlo Maria Giulini. In 1964, Israeli recording star Bat-ya performed here on behalf of Israel Bonds. In 1972, Ida Nasatir narrated the highlights of Israel’s first 25 years in a Casa del Parado ceremony that featured music by San Diegan Ellen Starr and the Tel Aviv Band led by Reuven Berci. Israel’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee was chaired in San Diego by Yearl Schwartz. In 1974, a “Sing Along With Israel” presentation featured Hillel Raveh playing on shepherd



flutes he had fashioned from reeds growing near Ein Gedi. Other Israeli performers in the show at Horace Mann Junior High School were Michel Hon, Aviva Shahaf, Chaim Barcharny and Yoav Nachson. After Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in 1995, music composer Aaron Zigman, who had grown up at San Diego's Congregation Beth Israel, expressed the Jewish community's grief by composing the classical five-movement opus "Rabin."

**PHOTOGRAPHY**—When Arthur Ollman was executive director of San Diego's Museum of Photographic Arts, he was commissioned to join a group of photographers to interpret Jerusalem celebrating its 3000<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Both Jews and non-Jews participated, but he was the only Jew from the Diaspora. He didn't want to offer predictable photographs of the city's historic/religious sites. Instead his inspiration came from a quote by Mohammed al-Muqaddasi: "Jerusalem is a golden bowl filled with scorpions."

**VISUAL ARTS**—During Yom Kippur of 1973, San Diego Jews followed the events as Israel was attacked and fought for its existence—yet again. The Sisterhood of Congregation Beth Israel auctioned off art works: lithographs, sculpture, etchings, antiques, stained glass, paintings and mixed media—all to benefit Israel. In 1975, the Walker Scott Department Store of San Diego put on display a replica of Marc Chagall's stained glass windows created for Israel's Knesset. This was in conjunction with a special sale of clothing, accessories, gift items and home furnishings produced in Israel. When longtime Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek visited San Diego in 1997, Suzanne Marie of Del Mar presented him with two figures to be placed by the Jerusalem Foundation at the Center for Battered Women. Wherever allowed, art will thrive whether in the city or on a kibbutz. In 2002, Arie Kutler brought 24 works of art from the Sha'ar Hanegev region to the Gotthelf Gallery at the Lawrence Family JCC. Artists included were Anat Botzer and Abraham Zepuniuk.

One cannot help but be struck by the depth of the cross pollination spanning a diverse palette of art and cultural activities. From sharing postage stamps and balloon sculptures to movies, art dance, symphonies, and photography, and much, much else, the two communities have closed the physical distance to a distance of a hand clasp and thus enriched both.

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*Orysiek is a freelance writer and dance critic based in San Diego; Harrison is editor and publisher of San Diego Jewish World*



Robert Price, chair of the San Diego chapter of Friends of the Jerusalem Zoo, welcomes students from Israel to an exchange program at the San Diego Zoo.



## Chapter 9.

# Religion

*By Irvin H. Jacobs, MD, MPH*

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Last July, three rabbis from San Diego County, representing Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform congregations, began a three-year cooperative study program in Israel. Through an outreach to unify Jews by the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, they are members of a 27-member contingent of North American rabbis invited to learn together and connect American congregations with Israel.

The three are Menashe East of Orthodox Kehillat Ahavat Yisrael, Scott Meltzer of Conservative Congregation Ohr Shalom and David Frank of Reform Temple Solel. They study with the Israeli philosopher, Rabbi David Hartman, for one month each July and one week each January. Their syllabus/agenda includes study of the land and Jewish texts, in the classical Talmudic chevruta manner of dialogue in dyads and triads. The program also includes Reconstructionist rabbis. During the course, each rabbi will prepare and share an original research paper. Many of the rabbis form bonds studying and enjoying meals together.

Bonding with Israel has a long history among San Diego's synagogues. For example, in 1974, Rabbi Joel Goor led 14 members of Reform Congregation Beth Israel on a trip to Israel. Afterwards, they made reports to the congregation and sent a youth contingent on another Israel tour. The following year Rabbi Goor conducted a Passover Seder in Israel, also during a tour with his members, thus fulfilling the pledge "next year in Jerusalem."

Rabbi Samuel Penner of Congregation Beth Tefilah led 42 members of his Conservative congregation to Israel in 1976. He reported that at the grave of the famous philosopher Maimonides, he chanted the *El Moly Rachamim* memorial prayer, following which he felt a "soul-stirring" moment. An elderly Sephardic Jew suddenly came over to grant the group "the most beautiful blessings I have ever heard in all my life. For several minutes we stood there showered with a great abundance of blessings and benediction in classical Hebrew cadences."

Over the years, San Diego's congregations have sent numerous visiting groups to see and tour Israel, and recent interviews with rabbis and congregants documented that there have been many other connecting events.

Rabbi Moishe Leider of Chabad Center of University City reported that a few years ago he honored the wish of one of his members to accompany his body to Israel for burial. Upon landing, he was met by friends and relatives of the man and the Jewish Burial Society. They proceeded immediately to Har Menuhot Cemetery outside Jerusalem. In that holy city, authorities "do not permit dead bodies to stay over night, so they bury at night. It is the only place in the world that they do so to my knowledge. Since the man was a Sephardic Jew, the men officiating were also Sephardic. What impressed me was the great care and love that was displayed...

to a total stranger. It was as if they knew him all their lives. In short order they were able to round up a minyan for the funeral including some former San Diegans...The man was given the greatest honors..."

Rabbi Wayne Dosick of the Jewish Renewal Elijah Minyan but then of Conservative Congregation Beth El recalled his visit in 1985 to an absorption center "for Ethiopian kids," as part of rescue Operation Solomon. He asked the immigrants what they learn, to which they replied, "Torah and computers!"

Patricia Kodosh, administrative assistant of Orthodox Congregation Adat Yeshurun highlighted her synagogue's participation in onefamily.org.il, a fund created in response to the crippling from terrorism that affects families and children in Israel. The fund promotes long-term physical and emotional health, educational, housing, income maintenance and other needs of terrorism survivors and their families.

I. Gerry Burstain, a former president of Conservative Ner Tamid Synagogue, visits his large family in Israel twice a year, and tours. He reported that Hakrayot Masorti Congregation in Kiryat Bialik, a suburb of Haifa, has over 180 member families, and their Argentine Rabbi Mauricio Balter is a friend and colleague of Rabbi Aaron Kopikis of San Diego. The synagogue's Community Aliya with the help of a sister congregation in Boston and others is dedicated to absorbing new Olim to the town that is expected to reach 80,000 in population by 2015. The Israeli synagogue provides furniture, sheets, blankets, toys, appliance, utensils, etc. to new arrivals.

Leonard Warren reported that Ohr Shalom Synagogue has a sister synagogue arrangement with Congregation Kod v'hadar in K'far Saba northeast of Tel Aviv. The two exchange visitors as well as their monthly publications and weekly announcements. The Israeli congregation involves itself in ecology and conservation. It has led a drive to do away with plastic bags. During the second Lebanon War in 2006, these sister Conservative/ Masorti synagogues sent money to provide relief camps for Israeli children living in Israeli border settlements near Lebanon and Gaza.

Rabbi Philip Graubart of Congregation Beth El recalled a tour his congregation arranged quickly during the height of the second intifada in 2002. Suddenly deprived of tourists, Israel felt abandoned. The Beth El group toured Hadassah Hospital's modern pediatric unit, where they treated kids suffering injuries from terrorist bombings. It was a moving moment when the chief of the pediatric unit responded to their financial gift. She embraced them with grateful hugs exclaiming that Israelis were *finally not alone*. An Egged bus driver whose leg required extensive surgery and rehabilitation as the result of a terrorist incident said it was important for the Israelis to know of "family connections" with American Jewry. The maimed driver has a family with seven children.

Reconstructionist Congregation Dor Hadash, Reform Temple Solel and Conservative Congregation Beth Am focus efforts in furtherance of the San Diego Jewish community's partnership with the Sha'ar Hanegev region, located on the edge of



Nearly a year after the assassination of her husband, Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, his widow Leah (3rd from right) attended a Simchat Torah celebration in 1996 at Congregation Beth Israel. Also pictured, from left, are: Gloria Stone, Rod Stone, Cantorial Soloist Myrna Cohen, Cantor Sheldon Merel, Rabbi Marc Hurwitz (Etz Chaim), Rabbi Jonathan Stein (Beth Israel), Mrs. Rabin, Rabbi David Frank (Temple Solel) and Rabbi Deborah Prinz (Temple Adat Shalom)

the Negev near the Gaza Strip. One of the kibbutzim in that region is Ruchama, to which Temple Solel often sends packages and mementos in a program spearheaded by Lisa Sweet. The kibbutz has reciprocated by creating a portion of the Temple's artistic Mi She-Berach tapestry, a mixed media canopy under which members seeking healing for themselves and loved ones recite the prayer for recovery during services. Assistant Rabbi Jeff Brown emphasized that the Temple also includes Israel as a large component of its religious school curriculum. Rabbi Frank annually escorts a group of 15-40 on a summer tour of Israel, where the group often celebrates b'nai mitzvot.

Administrator Mark Newman of Congregation Dor Hadash emphasized that in pursuing peace between world Jewry and members of other religions, its teens participate in dialogue meetings with teens from St. Marks United Methodist Church and the Islamic Center.



Rabbis Avram Bogopulsky, left, of Beth Jacob Congregation and Jeff Wohlgelernter of Congregation Adat Yeshurun participated in an emergency rally for Israel at the outset of the Second Lebanon War.

To honor Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, Reform Congregation Beth Israel compiled an art photography project, to be exhibited as "Israel Through Our Eyes." Digital art photographer Joe Nalven has recruited temple members to submit their most memorable photos taken on visits to Israel. When these are edited and assembled, the sanctuary and lobby will feature a print exhibit of captioned photos, plus a continuous loop video presentation. Scenes include: a *kippa* shop in downtown Jerusalem, and a sign at Rosh Hanikra on the coastal Israel-Lebanon border quoting the prophet Isaiah on the still evasive concept "...and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up swords against nation neither shall they learn

war any more." There is a photo of the inside of a mosque in Jaffa and of a McDonald's restaurant with golden arches...in Hebrew. There is a moving memorial to terror victims, teens killed at a disco by a suicide bomber.

Rabbi Leonard Rosenthal of Conservative Tifereth Israel Synagogue reported that on a trip to Israel, his wife Judy and he joined thousands of mourners paying respects on Yom Hazikaron (Memorial Day). "...groups of tearful Israelis gathered around individual graves. As I watched the throngs, the Bible's verse following the tenth plague came to mind: There was not a home in which death could not be found. Israel is a very small country in which almost every young man and woman serves in the armed forces. Almost every Israeli knows someone who was killed in battle or in an act of terror..."

Rosenthal added that during his last trip to Israel, Judy and he visited the former San Diego community *shaliach* Erez Strasberg and his wife Nesiya in their home in Moshav Tsur Moshe. Recently Strasberg founded a Volunteer Corps for Israel, in which young American college graduates work in Israeli communities. Erez and Nesiya told the Rosenthals they will always have fond memories of San Diego, to which they and their children send an Adash cham, the warmest of greetings.

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*Dr. Irvin Jacobs is a San Diego-based freelance writer who often focuses on religious topics*

## Chapter 10.

# Education

*By David Strom*

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In January 2000, nearly 5,000 college students and young adults from Diaspora Jewish communities participated in the launch of Birthright Israel, a ten-day educational tour provided as a cost-free “gift.” Its purpose was to connect young Jews (ages 18-26) to their heritage and to strengthen their Jewish identity. American philanthropists, the State of Israel, and the American Jewish Federations supported the program in response to concerns about Jewish continuity.

Since then, many young Jewish San Diegans have traveled free to the State of Israel. Hillel of San Diego, which operates houses at SDSU and UCSD and has outreach programs to other campuses, has sent almost 450 students on Taglit-Birthright Israel trips since the programs inception.

The journey usually lasts ten days and includes a number of field trips and events to teach students about Israel’s geography, history, culture, religion, community life and current challenges. For example, students visit one of the first agricultural communities established by the early Zionist pioneers, Zichron Ya’acov to learn what immigrants to Israel hoped to create in their new nation. They visit Caesarea, which was built during Roman times, to better understand the confluence and intermingling of cultures that make up modern Israeli society. To understand archaeology as a form of “digging into the past”, the students take part in an active dig for artifacts and ruins of ancient cities at Beit Gurim Caves. They climb to Masada, the site of the siege where the Jews defended themselves against the Romans. They learn about history and the challenges facing today’s city of Jerusalem through a visit to the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Western Wall. They honor Theodor Herzl and Yizhak Rabin on Mt. Herzl, and visit the Holocaust center Yad Vashem to gain an appreciation for Israel’s leaders and those who are memorialized through its creation as a Jewish state.

San Diego State University undergraduate student Alexi Biener participated on the January 2008 Birthright trip. When interviewed she had only glowing remarks about her wondrous trip to Israel. “Since high school, I always wanted to study in Israel. This trip has 110% confirmed my thoughts. You cannot escape your Jewishness in Israel. In the U.S., I could and often did.” Following her trip to Israel she added, “Now I wear my Jewishness on my sleeve and am proud of it.” From an Orthodox view she is not religious. Alexi calls herself “kosher style.” She keeps her brand of “kosher” by not eating pork or other unkosher cuts of meat or shellfish, not mixing meat and milk, etc.

There were 40 young people on her Israeli tour bus. Many of them were from Kansas. She was a

bit apprehensive about the girls from Kansas. After all she was from Southern California. What would they be like? Would she have much in common with them? Fortunately, her apprehensions and fears did not turn out to be correct. She found most of them were “just like me.” Biener also talked about how on the trip there was a young man who had a Jewish father but not a Jewish mother. He knew little about Judaism, except that his father and his grandparents were Jews. Neither was he steeped in the Christian world and described himself as non-religious. Biener described in vivid detail how, by the end of the trip, all of the Birthright travelers, including that young man, thought of themselves as a part of a community—a community greater than themselves and attached to the larger Jewish world in very positive ways. What helped build the sense of community “was sleeping in a large Bedouin tent with many of the other Taglit/Birthright people,” she said. Feeling like a majority member, rather than an outsider in the U.S., made the group feel “tight.” Because of their experiences and the companionship in Israel, Jewishness became more central in their lives. Their awareness and attention to Israel and its needs in this world of chaos became more important, to them. Regardless of their initial level of commitment to Judaism, they ended the trip with a renewed identity and commitment to their Jewishness.

Biener also described how learning experiences for the American Jewish students and their Israeli hosts were “a two-way street.” When Israeli soldiers assigned to travel with the Taglit/Birthright Israel tour group and “let down their hair” the Americans were shocked. The soldiers knew little about the Jewish religion. The Americans learned how people, even in Israel like the Israeli soldiers, could be Jewish without identifying with their religion, while the Israeli soldiers went away with positive views of young American Jews.

Brandeis University research on the Taglit/Birthright Israel experience testifies to its transformative impact. Ninety percent of the participants reported that their identification with Judaism and with Israel grew through the experience

Although the Birthright Israel trips are safe, structured and guided experiences for young Jewish students, others who travel or live in Israel independently to study its history, religion and culture sometimes do so at great risk. Such was the case of Marla Bennett, who was a student at Hebrew University on July 31, 2002. She was killed, along with eight others, when a terrorist bomb shattered the university’s Frank Sinatra cafeteria. Marla was only 24 at the time of her death. She was a very special young woman, intellectually gifted, and an incurable optimist who believed deeply that Palestinians and Israelis could live side by side in peace. She died in Israel where she was studying and learning more about Judaism and contributing her activism and commitment to humanitarian causes. According to the *San Diego Jewish Press-Heritage*, Bennett “...wanted to be a Jewish educator to pass on her heritage to future generations.” Programs such as Taglit/Birthright Israel give Jewish youth the opportunity to honor and preserve her vision through study tours and learning experiences in Israel.



Marla Bennett was attending the Hebrew University in 2002 when she was killed in a terrorist bombing.



Another international educational program is the *March of the Living* that takes thousands of Jewish teens from all over the world to Poland on *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Memorial Day). They march the three kilometers from Auschwitz to Birkenau, retracing the steps of the “March of Death.” They see the barracks, latrines, killing walls, gas chambers, and crematoria where hundreds of thousands of innocent Jews were murdered. Marcy Delson, at the time of her “March of the Living” sojourn, wrote in her journal, “I don’t look at Poland with utter hatred as I did before. Instead I look at it as a place to learn from. Being here has taught me not to be so naïve and blind to the events and happenings in the world.

“I know that each person can make a difference. If only one more Polish person was brave enough to hide more Jews in their home, a few more could have survived.”

After visiting “Jewish” Krakow, the Warsaw Ghetto, Tikochen-Synagogue and Cemetery, the students gather and discuss what they have learned, and how it affected them. Since its inception the program has taken thousands of Jewish teens to Europe, but not always to Israel. Ironically at times, the Israel portion of the trip has been considered too dangerous. For those teens who have gone on the Israel portion of the “March of the Living” they have experienced *Yom Ha’Atzmaut* (Israel Independence Day). After Auschwitz, they witnessed renewed Jewish life in Israel. According to Lou Dunst, a Holocaust survivor and five-time speaker and guide for the “March of the Living,” the two experiences of Israel and the march teach profound lessons in current and past Jewish history, and have a powerful life-changing and affirming impact on participants. Dunst shared what one young man told him while on the trip, “I am going to join the Israel Defense Force. What I saw at Auschwitz and other parts of Poland made me realize what I can do to help Israel survive.” And he did.



Students walking in silence from Auschwitz to Birkenau on the March of the Living



Stone commemorates partnership between Ibim student village and the United Jewish Federation of San Diego.

While the March of the Living and the Taglit/Birthright have had the greatest cumulative impact on young San Diego Jews, Israel and San Diego State University have been working together to create collaborative and reciprocal educational experiences and activities. One example is SDSU’s comprehensive education reform project in City Heights, a culturally and linguistically diverse neighborhood of San Diego. The City Heights Project was funded by Price Enterprises and sponsored by the SDSU College of Education as an innovative collaborative endeavor to increase academic achieve-



ment and increase parental and community involvement in schools in an economically impacted urban area. Tel Aviv University (TAU) sent four officials to visit the City Heights schools to learn if the San Diego State University program is applicable to TAU's efforts in mixed Arab-Jewish neighborhoods of Jaffa. Members of the Israeli team were interested in replicating the SDSU-supervised parent volunteer program they observed in operation at Rosa Park Elementary School. Parents from many different cultural backgrounds participate in the program. American educators and Israeli educators understand that whether you live in Jaffa or City Heights the children of those communities face many of the same problems; poverty, lack of role models, and a need for safe and quiet places to think, work and play.

During its 60 years of existence, Israel has had a profound impact on our education in how to live as Jews. San Diego has gained tremendously from Israel's existence and outreach to the Diaspora. San Diego's Jewish community has also given back its "fair share" of educational wisdom to the still young and vibrant State of Israel.

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*David Strom is professor emeritus of education at San Diego State University.*

## Chapter 11.

# Sports

*By Norman Manson*

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The image of the Jewish people as bookish, intellectual, cerebral, and averse to strenuous physical activity has been unalterably shattered in the 60 years since the birth of the State of Israel. Much of this change derives from the actions of the Israel Defense Force in war and peace, but a less publicized, yet vitally important, example of the “new Jew” lies in the field of athletics. And athletes and organizations connected with the San Diego area have played roles, in varied ways, in this upsurge of sports participation and interest.

Almost from Israel’s beginning, there has been a San Diego link to the nation’s sports teams and individual athletes. Early in 1957, when Israel was not yet ten years old, the country’s Olympic basketball team played a game against the University of San Diego at the Point Loma High gym as part of a nationwide tour which included games in Madison Square Garden, New York, as well as in Los Angeles and San Francisco. The team was coached by Elmer Ripley, a noted American basketball mentor, and was captained by Marcel Hefetz, an immigrant from Egypt who had participated in many international games. He also had fought in the Sinai campaign, which had just ended. The (Catholic) University of San Diego co-sponsored the event, along with the United Jewish Fund and the United States Committee for Sports in Israel.

And the San Diego-Israel sports tie has continued to the present day. Probably the most recent connection occurred last year when a young San Diego baseball player, Willis Bumphus, spent the summer playing second base for the Petach Tikvah Pioneers of the newly formed Israel Baseball League. Bumphus batted a respectable .327, second best on the club, which unfortunately finished last in the league.

Bumphus grew up at the Calvary Baptist Church in San Diego and attended Webster Elementary School, Lincoln High and San Diego Community College. He reported he got to know some of his Israeli teammates very well, was invited to Shabbat dinners and “found everyone to be very friendly after getting to know them.” He also greatly enjoyed his contacts with three Jewish former major leaguers - Ken Holtzman, Art Shamsky and Ron Blomberg - who managed teams in the Israel league.

Probably the most unusual San Diego-Israel athletic link is a long-term one: the story of Dorian “Doc” Paskowitz, an 86-year-old former San Diegan who has made a virtual career of trying to interest Israelis in surfing. He has been involved in that sport since he was 13, and still is thoroughly mesmerized by the power of the ocean’s waves. And, since his first visit to Israel in 1956, he has spent much of his life teaching surfing not only to Israelis but to Israeli Arabs in an effort to promote what he terms “peacefulness” as distinct from “peace.”

“Doc” has led a tumultuous, adventurous life. He went to Israel in 1956, ostensibly to fight in the Suez War, following a series of family reverses which left him psychologically damaged. But, instead of fighting--the army did not want him--he enjoyed a life-changing experience: He met a variety of “great personalities,” ate properly, exercised, lived in the desert like a Bedouin, and, as he says, re-created his body and learned that diet, exercise, rest, recreation and the proper attitude are all part of health. He says he came home “an entirely new man.”

Most recently, after having first gone to the Middle East to fight, he has returned there in a different role: to promote the seeds of peace. This started when he saw a story in the *Los Angeles Times* about two Arabs in Gaza who had one beat-up surfboard between them. This led to his founding “Surfing for Peace,” as he brought them new boards and, on his return to Israel, was besieged by all the major news outlets. His movement has attracted the support of eight-time surfing champion Kelly Slater, who is of Syrian ancestry. He takes the boards to the Middle East and Kelly provides lessons. Their aim is to find a way to bridge the gap between two warring peoples.

His “peacefulness” objective is to give people enough food, clothing, medical care, a better infrastructure and the other necessities of life, what he calls the mechanics of survival. He says the high-level Israeli-Palestinian peace talks are futile. And he says surfing is peacefulness “when you go out in the water with your enemies, they are peaceful.”

Regarding more conventional sports, perhaps the competition with the closest San Diego-Israel link is tennis, and the connection dates back more than 30 years. The Israel Tennis Center was organized in 1975, spearheaded by a group of U.S. tennis buffs, including some well-known players of the ‘70s. Groundbreaking for the \$1.5 million center, first public tennis courts in Israel, was held in July of that year. Albert A. Hutler of San Diego was secretary-treasurer and national coordinator of the sponsoring group, and four San Diegans, Herbert Solomon, Ben Press, Gerald Katleman and Gerald Kobernick, formed a committee to support the center.

In July 1977, a party at the home of Elene and Herbert Solomon in Del Cerro celebrated the first two years of the program. About 75 San Diegans attended, and they saluted the completion of the National Tennis Center at Ramat Hasharon, with a 4,500-seat stadium for international play.

In its first year, the program served more than 4,000 Israeli boys and girls, ranging in age from five to 17 years. There were about 100,000 free lessons, and thousands of hours of free playing time. Free equipment was furnished where needed, and plans for expansion were discussed at the San Diego event. A number of prominent San Diegans were among the Founders and Patron Founders. New satellite centers were planned in Jerusalem, Haifa, Beersheba and South Tel Aviv. It was announced that the program had more than 2,000 supporters, who had contributed more than \$2.6 million to build, operate and maintain the center. Jews from Canada, England, South Africa and Australia, as well as Israel, have contributed.

The Tennis Center has flourished for more than 30 years, and has “graduated” a number of world-ranked players during that time. Probably the high point of Israeli tennis came this year when Israelis Jonathan Erlich and Andy Ram, who were seeded eighth, won the men’s doubles event at the Australian Open in Melbourne, defeating Frenchmen Armand Clement and Michael Llodra, 7-5, 7-6(7-4). The program reaches more than 350,000 families (about five percent of Israel’s population). There are 14 tennis centers around the country.

Probably the ongoing event that has most strengthened San Diego's athletic ties with Israel is the Maccabiah Games, held every four years in Israel. The Maccabiah Games date from 1932, when they were first held in what was then Palestine. They have been held every four years since 1957.



Opening ceremonies are held at the 2005 Maccabi Games in Israel.

There also are the JCC Maccabi Games, with teenagers competing each summer in various U.S. cities. San Diego athletes--swimmers, tennis players, volleyball and basketball players, among others--have distinguished themselves regularly in both these Olympic-style competitions. This year, August 3-8, JCC competition will be held in San Diego for the first time with Detroit and Akron, Ohio, as co-hosts.

San Diegans have won gold medals in each of the last three Maccabiahs in Israel, with outstanding performances in a diverse range of athletic endeavor.

In the 1997 games, the U.S. beach volleyball team, coached by San Diego's Harvey Neiman and dominated by San Diegans, won both the men's and women's gold medals. The men's team consisted of four San Diegans: first-team players Ken Lentin and Dis Abelman and reserves Dan Neiman, son of the coach, and Dis Abelman's brother Marc. San Diego's Greg Glassman was assistant coach and devoted most of his time to the women's team which also won a gold medal. Two of the three women players were from Southern California.

The tournament, with six nations competing, was held at Netanya, Israel, and Neiman had to train his players to acclimate to the differing conditions between there and the South Mission Beach court to which they had been accustomed. Softness or hardness of the sand, and the difference in the wind velocity were key adjustments that had to be made. In the finals, both U.S. teams easily defeated the host Israelis. Other competing nations were Australia, Brazil, Canada and Venezuela.

Lentin and Abelman displayed complementary skills in sweeping the tourney: Lentin is tall, 6-foot-4, and excels in spiking. He also is a great blocker, Coach Neiman said. Abelman is shorter and has more of a shot-blocking game.

In the 2001 games, Ben Weston of La Jolla brought home seven medals in swimming, including a gold in the 1,500-meter freestyle, silvers in the 4 X 100 and 4 X 200 freestyle relays, and four bronze: 400-meter individual medley, and the individual 100-meter, 200-meter and 400-meter events.

At the last games held in Israel, in 2005, San Diegans won two gold medals, six silver and six bronze. There are three competition categories, open, juniors and masters. Elana Fogel was a member of the girls junior basketball team that finished first and Danny Dabby won the men's singles masters tennis event. The silver medalists were: Benjamin Brown, in the juniors track and field shotput; Soren Thompson, open fencing, epee and foil; Guy Dotan, open rugby; Lev Kirshner, open men's soccer; Ian Davidson and Kevin Lorber, open water polo. Winners of bronze medals were: Stephen Smidt, masters tennis men's singles; Andrew Fogel, open men's basketball; Howard Harris, open lawn bowls; Heather Shelby, open



San Diegan Danny Dabby displays gold medal he won in tennis for men between the ages of 60 and 65 at the 2005 Maccabiah

tennis women's doubles; David Levi, men's open volleyball; and Thompson, open fencing, saber. Other San Diego participants were: Lee Abelkop, juniors boys soccer; Joshua Cohen and Raymond Fink, masters half marathon; Harold Krasner and Clive Moch, masters tennis; Jeffrey Essakow, masters triathlon; and Julie Lazarus, open half marathon. Dennis Goodman was the team doctor.

In 2003, the JCC games were held in Houston, and a diverse group of twelve San Diego teen-age athletes were among the participants. They included four soccer players, four in the tennis competition, two basketball players, a swimmer and golfer. The soccer group included Rachel Belzer, Michelle Faierman, Avi Hanono and Alan Adler. On the tennis team were brothers Adam and Jason Sinkoff, Jenna Essakow and Steven Wertheim. The basketballers were Adam Goodman and Aaron Gipsman. Galia Besquin swam in the freestyle event and Ben Schenk competed in golf.

All the competitors had a wide variety of interests, ranging from other sports to music, journalism and politics. The spirit of *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world) and *tzedakah* (deeds of charity) pervades the Maccabi program. The first North American games were held in Memphis in 1982, and they have been held at various U.S. locations since then.

In last year's JCC event, held in Baltimore, Houston and Orange County, San Diego athletes won seven gold, ten silver and twelve bronze medals.

The relationship between San Diego and Israel in athletics has remained strong through the years, and promises to remain firm in the future.

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*Norman Manson is a freelance writer based in San Diego.*

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**Dedicated to Marla Ann Bennett, who gave her life while  
furthering San Diego's special relationship with Israel.**

**1978–2002**

