



AMERICAN VETERANS OF ISRAEL LEGACY CORPORATION

PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF AMERICAN AND CANADIAN
VOLUNTEERS IN ISRAEL'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

136 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016

The President's Corner



Dear Friends,
Greetings and
welcome to the
Spring 2014
A V I L C
Newsletter. It is
my pleasure to

report on some of the high points from
our AVILC year.

Our Hanukkah Party fell victim to
the whims of Mother Nature. Since
weather was not permitting we looked
for an alternative and had a very
successful Purim Party. Organized by
Donna Parker and Si Spiegelman, we
had a solid turnout. Highlights (aside
from the very tasty catering) included
reminiscences by Machal and Aliyah
Bet stalwarts and a stirring reading of
the Megillat Esther by former AVI
President Sam Klausner.

Mickey Marcus Memorial 2014 was
one of the best ever. A series of
anniversaries were remembered,
including the 90th anniversary of
Mickey Marcus' graduation from West
Point (Class of '24). The theme for this

48TH MACHAL COMMEMORATION TAKES PLACE AT WEST POINT

By Rafi Marom and Si Spiegelman

An audience exceeding 200
people attended the 48th
commemoration of Col/Aluf
David "Mickey" Marcus and the
other 40 North American
volunteers of Aliyah Bet and
MACHAL who fell in the re-
establishment of the Jewish
State (1947-1949). The
ceremony took place at the

opportunity to enjoy coffee and
small cakes, the audience was
ushered into the Chapel.

The national anthems of
both the United States and the
State of Israel were sung by the
West Point Jewish Choir. The
invocation for the service was
delivered by the Chapel Rabbi,
(MAJ) Henry Soussan. The first



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historic Jewish Chapel of the
United States Military Academy
at West Point, overlooking the
majestic Hudson River. Colder
than anticipated weather and an
overcast sky could not dim the
bright spirits which were
evident in the Chapel. After an

speaker was Ambassador Ido
Aharoni, Consul General of the
State of Israel in New York,
who addressed the important
historical place held by
MACHAL and Aliyah Bet in
Israel's establishment and
defense. Mickey Marcus played



(L to R) Sam Klausner and Paul Kaye, AVI, with Jeffrey Margolis AVILC President, behind at the AVI/AVILC Purim Party 2014.



(L to R) Bernard Ellman and Charles Weiss, AVI celebrating Purim.

year's memorial was the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landing, an unprecedented military engagement in which Mickey Marcus courageously participated. The theme was appropriate for the appearance of several high ranking U.S. Military Academy leaders including BG Timothy E. Trainor, Ph.D., West Point Dean of Academic Board and Col. Glenn H. Goldman, West Point Director of Military Instruction, who gave the Keynote Address. We were once again honored to have Ambassador Ido Aharoni, Consul General of Israel in N.Y., address us. The program date was also *erev* Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) and the Ambassador wove various themes of the day together—the heroism of Mickey Marcus and Machal, the “deliverance” from Europe of Holocaust survivors in the course of the Aliyah Bet and the hard fought for birth of the State of Israel, the only true bulwark against international anti-Semitism.

The AVILC Mickey Marcus Event planning team of Si Spiegelman, Rafi Marom and Donna Parker were once again at the top of their game. Our heartfelt thanks also to Rabbi Henry Soussan, Garrison Jewish Chaplain, for his active role in making this such a successful event.

Yes, the weather did cooperate for a bright and balmy Israel Day Parade 2013 where AVI/AVILC again had a prominent place at the head of the line and our enthusiastic (but somewhat rag-tag group) was smartly led by AVI stalwart Ira Feinberg as in many years past. I am sorry to report here that Ira passed away just a few weeks ago after having waged a courageous battle with cancer. His son, Bryan, will pick up the banner so to speak, and lead our contingent this coming June 1st. Still, that Parade just won't be the same without Ira and that infectious enthusiasm he brought to everything he did.

During the year we concentrated our efforts in communicating the Machal and Aliyah Bet narrative at a number of functions at synagogues and Jewish centers; addressed Taglit/Birthright meetings and displayed our mobile exhibition; “Heroes from Abroad” that is available for showing by contacting us at avimachal@aol.com. We give ongoing credit and thanks to the work of the American Jewish Historical Society that now holds the Machal and Aliyah Bet archives. These materials are now available for scholarly research concerning the contribution of the North American volunteers in Israel's War of Independence.

Kudos here to Ben Margolis (yes, the third generation) for his work on the Israelvets website.

Finally, special praise for Si Spiegelman, all purpose (and very) Senior Writer, Elizabeth Appley, our perennial Newsletter Editor, and her able assistant, Chrissy Walsh, for putting together this Newsletter. I thank our friends for the contributions that permit us to continue our work and especially publishing this Newsletter. We look to your sustained support in order to continue.

Best regards,
Jeff Margolis, AVILC President



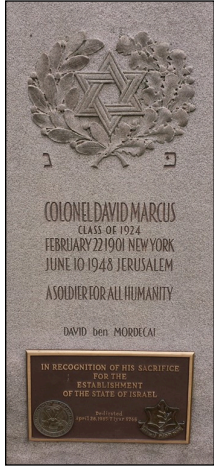
AVI's Sam Klausner reading the Megillah to a group of AVI and AVILC members and family.



(L to R) Naomi (Levin) Kantey, Marcel Berkowitz, Si Spiegelman and Jeffrey Margolis celebrate at AVI/AVILC Purim party in NYC.

MICKEY MARCUS MEMORIAL WELCOME REMARKS

By AVILC President Jeffrey Margolis



Rabbi Soussan, we of the American Veterans of Israel Legacy Corporation once again wish to thank you for your leadership in conducting the annual Mickey Marcus memorial service. We wish to publicly acknowledge the assistance and close support extended by the United States Military Academy at West Point for which we are deeply grateful.

Ambassador Ido Aharoni, Brigadier General Timothy Trainor, Colonel Glenn Goldman, Colonel (Chaplain) Barbara Sherer, Rabbis, ladies and gentlemen, Yizkor-remembrance is a deep and abiding principle of Judaism. This year is a year filled with events to remember. One hundred years ago, World War I, "the war to end all wars," broke out. In the 20 years that passed after it ended until the next World War, four empires disappeared, the Balfour Declaration was issued and started the ball rolling for the re-creation of a Jewish Homeland in Eretz Yisrael, and Nazism and Communism, the two most destructive forces mankind has ever seen, came to power.

Ninety years ago, Col. Mickey Marcus, along with the rest of the Class of 1924, was graduated and commissioned here at West Point. That class proved its mettle during World War II as senior commanders on all fronts. Seventy years ago, the Western allies under the command of General Dwight Eisenhower, Class of '15, landed at Normandy to destroy the Nazi maelstrom that caused the annihilation of millions of souls in Europe. Mickey Marcus was one of those who took part.

For Jews and their friends worldwide, tonight marks the observance of Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, an event that we also remember today. The Normandy landing was in part meant to end that slaughter. Remember -- just a week and a half ago, Jews around the world sat at tables to commemorate

the Passover festival which marked our people breaking the chains of bondage and making a covenant with the Almighty to obey His Laws in exchange for His divine benevolence.

For the past several years, AVILC has used this occasion to remember and honor members of Aliyah Bet and the voluntary fighters of MACHAL. Aliyah Bet was the so-called "illegal immigration" of Jewish survivors of Nazi savagery to British Mandatory Palestine traveling in flimsy barely seaworthy vessels. We honor those who came from around the world to serve the Jewish cause in a variety of positions in Aliyah Bet and MACHAL, putting themselves in harms' way to fill positions which could not be filled immediately by Israelis, such as fighter and bomber pilots, ships' captains and crewmen, tank commanders, artillery officers, and others.

Today, we wish to remember another group of fighters. The men who landed at Normandy and the graduates of this fine institution who led them into battle. Some of those men fell in battle and were returned to their *alma mater* to be buried in the West Point Post Cemetery. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

We thank all of you for attending to share in this important occasion.



More photographs of the Mickey Marcus Memorial Program may be viewed on line at: <http://ow.ly/wedIo>

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[http://ajhs.org/about/
machal_exhibition.cfm](http://ajhs.org/about/machal_exhibition.cfm)

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a central role in the formation of the Israel Defense Forces. The Ambassador also shared that his 84 year old father, a veteran of the pre-State Haganah, was not merely a leader in his area's Haganah veteran's association, but was also ready to bear arms once again, if need be, in defense of the State of Israel.

Following the Ambassador's address, Brigadier General Timothy Trainor, Dean of the Academic Board at the Academy, spoke about the values and ideals that Mickey Marcus acquired as a student at the Academy. It was those values and ideals which served as the template for the rest of his life. According to BG Trainor, Mickey was never satisfied with a desk job; rather, he craved the action which a field position offered and he felt a sense of accomplishment when during his combat days in Normandy, he was able to unify a detached group of American soldiers and turn them into an effective combat unit that inflicted defeat on a superior enemy force. It was this skill, taught at West Point and honed at Normandy, which served Mickey Marcus well in Israel's War of Independence.

Col. Glenn Goldman, Dean of Military Instruction at the Academy, reflected on how reading the Marcus biography, *Cast a Giant Shadow*, influenced him. It had been given to him as a present by a classmate, who, like Col. Goldman, was posted to Iraq in 1991 during *Operation Desert*



AVILC and Aluf Stone Veterans, board members, and friends with Tzvi Bar-Shai, Paul Kaye, Si Spiegelman, Jeffrey Margolis, Donna Parker, Marcel Berkowitz, Dave Adlerstein, Russ Poker, Marc Leibowitz, and Robert Bray at West Point Cemetery.

Freedom. Col. Goldman mentioned that some aspects of his career mirrored those of Mickey Marcus: both were Academy graduates, both were trained in Field Artillery, both had seen combat and led men in battle. He commented on how Mickey did not have to jump with the airborne troops over Normandy, but he did; and how Mickey did not have to serve in Israel, but he did. That is his legacy; as emblazoned epigraphically on his gravestone: "A soldier for all humanity." The speeches were followed by choral selections performed by the SAR High School Choir of Riverdale,

N.Y. under the direction of Mr. Kenneth Birnbaum.

Prayers in the Jewish Chapel were rendered by Rabbi (LTC) Doniel Kramer, VA Chaplain of Hudson Valley and Rabbi (Major) Henry Soussan, Garrison Jewish Chaplain at the West Point U.S. Military Academy. The Jewish War Veterans of the Rockland/Orange district provided the Color Guard for the chapel service.

Under gray skies, military honors were bestowed as the USAG Military Police Honor Guard posted the colors.

A wreath and flowers were placed at the graves of both Col/Aluf David "Mickey" Marcus and his wife, Emma, by the officers who had participated in the chapel service as well as by members of the extended Marcus family. The graveside service continued with reading of the names

of the 41 North American Machal volunteers who gave their lives in Israel's War of Independence. Rabbi (COL) Sanford Dressin, Director of the Aleph Institute, recited the *Kaddish* and Elliot Shapiro delivered the *K'el Maleh Rachamim*, prayer for the fallen. The tribute concluded with the

Shapiro brothers intoning "*Im Eshkachech Yerushalayim*," (If I forget thee, Jerusalem) and the bugler sounding Taps.

The now greatly diminished number of AVI veterans left the field with a prayer in their hearts to return in another year and once more pay homage to their departed comrades-in-arms.

Visitors in the Jewish Chapel were thrilled to see the Machal Exhibition "Heroes from Abroad" currently on display. The mobile exhibition was produced by the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) and is ready for display at venues in the U.S. and Canada by contacting the American Veterans of Israel Legacy Corporation (AVILC) at avimachal@aol.com.



Paul Kaye and Naomi (Levin) Kantey calling the Roll of Recently Departed at West Point Jewish Chapel as Donna Parker looks on.



Si Spiegelman, Bernard Ellman, Harry Bieber, Marcel Berkowitz, Moses Stambler, Paul Kaye MACHAL Veterans, with Rafi Marom AVILC at the podium.

Thanks to Thomas C. McCarthy, General Secretary of the NY Correction History Society (NYCHS) for creating a beautiful website page on the NYCHS site at <http://www.correctionhistory.org>, with numerous photographs from the 48th Mickey Marcus Memorial, alongside excerpts from the AVILC booklet about Col. Marcus. (Among his many other achievements, Mickey Marcus had served as NYC Correction Commissioner prior to his service in WWII.) To access the webpage, go to <http://www.correctionhistory.org/html/chronicl/nycdoc/html/48th-West-Point-Rites-Honor-Col-Commissioner-Mickey-Marcus.htm>



Ambassador Ido Aharoni delivering his address.

Obituaries

IRA FEINBERG, Z”L (1930-2014) **U.S. Army Intelligence, Israel Army** **Machine Gunner**

By Samuel Z. Klausner

Ira Feinberg died on April 21, 2014, at the age of 84 after a long struggle with cancer. Graduating James Madison High School in Brooklyn, not yet 18 and with no military experience, he importuned his



parents to permit him to volunteer for service in the Haganah in Palestine. With persistence and by assembling sympathetic supporters his parents finally agreed, and, having turned 18, he arrived in Palestine in April, 1948. Ira was detailed to an infantry company defending the Galilee. With modest training he became a machine gunner and was assigned to duty in Jerusalem and along the Burma Road, the mountainous path between besieged Jerusalem, and Israel's coastal plain. Ira's courage and enthusiasm for the Zionist cause is visible in his response to a question about his motivation for volunteering. He wrote: "Belief in the security of the Jewish people. We had a right to a homeland. To help rescue the persecuted Jews of the world and bring them to freedom. Not to allow us to be destroyed." Ira saw the war in Palestine and later in Israel as an existential matter for the Jews of the world.

Ira's own description of the first days of his service show his ironic self-deprecation and the optimism that propelled him. This selection is from a biographical statement on the website of the World Machal organization. "We were the most unfit soldiers you could ever find. At the age of 17, I was a pack-a-day smoker, and the most physical exercise I had in the past three years was holding a cue stick in a pool and

billiard parlor. The first day we were awakened at 5:30 AM and off we were jogging for two or three miles. I could hardly keep up but I wouldn't let on that an American from Brooklyn couldn't do the same as trained kibbutzniks."

Later, describing a battle in the north he wrote, "When our 30 caliber Browning finally started spitting out bullets, the Arab advance was halted but they kept firing on us from about 500 yards from our position. I was told to remain behind a large rock. Suddenly, bullets started hitting from all sides of the rock. I couldn't figure out why me! My commander came running over and pulled down a rifle I had been given that I had stood upright against the rock, making it a perfect target for the enemy to shoot at. After four days of military training what would you expect?"

Ira returned home in December 1948 as the Rhodes truce agreement was taking hold. He registered at Queens College and earned a B.A. degree. During the Korean War he served in U.S. Army Intelligence and attended the Army language school to learn Arabic. After his discharge, he attended acting school for five years. The United

Excerpts from condolence letter from Ambassador Ido Aharoni, Consul General of Israel to New York to Mrs. Yaffa Feinberg (April 24, 2014):

"As the State of Israel commemorates its 66th Anniversary of Independence, we look to the past and remember Ira [Feinberg] with pride. Through his courage, bravery, and determination, the State of Israel exists today. As part of Israel's first army and as the first American volunteer to join the Palmach, Ira's life serves as an inspiration to all of the men and women in the IDF who defend our homeland. His work to preserve the tales of our heroes, who fought for the creation of our nation has been a selfless gift and will serve as his legacy, leaving an impact on this world. I know he will be sorely missed by his family and many friends, and will forever remain in our hearts."

Jewish Appeal recognized his talent for public speaking and engaged him as a fund raising speaker. These talents emerged again in 2008 when he produced the film, "My Brother's Keeper" about the rebirth of Israel. He is survived by his wife, Yafa, a son, Bryan and daughter, Juliette and four grandchildren.

GEORGE LICHTER, Z" L (1921-2013)

A Pioneer in the Pantheon of the IAF

By Smoky Simon, Chairman of World Machal

World Machal pays its last salute to Machalnik George Lichter, an outstanding fighter pilot, a superb flying instructor, and an accomplished test pilot. Lichter passed away in Boulder, Colorado, after a short illness and he most certainly earned a well-deserved place in the pantheon of the Israeli Air Force.

Born in Brooklyn in 1921, Lichter signed up for the U.S. Army Air Force pilot training course on the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He finished his training with distinction. As a pilot in the 361 Fighter Group, he flew P-51 Mustangs and P-47 Thunderbolts in 88 combat missions over Germany and occupied Europe. Lichter returned home at the end of 1944 as a decorated war hero.

When six Arab armies attacked Israel on May 15, 1948, Lichter cast his lot with his fellow Jews. He volunteered to fly in the nascent Israeli Air Force (IAF). In the first stage in the process, he landed in Czechoslovakia with a group of other volunteer ex-World War II pilots, mainly from the U.S., South Africa, Britain, and Canada.

Israel had just acquired its very first combat aircraft—25 Czech-built Avia S-199s (known as the “Czech Messerschmitt”). These aircraft were modeled on the famous German ME-109 fighter aircraft, but had been cobbled together with ill-fitting aerial engines, air frames, landing gears etc., which resulted in a devilishly dangerous aircraft to fly. Even the Czech instructors who had undertaken to train the IAF pilots had the utmost difficulty in flying these planes, but the one pilot who mastered the art of flying this dangerous and awkward aircraft was George Lichter.

He had become so proficient in flying the Messerschmitt that he took over the pilot training program. He accomplished all this despite the fact that he and the other Machal pilots were living under

the most austere conditions concerning food and accommodations.

In August 1948, Israel acquired 50 Spitfires from Czechoslovakia. In defiance of the United Nations’ arms embargo on the export of military equipment to Israel, an air bridge had been established between Czechoslovakia and Tel Nof Air Base, which was Israel’s only line of communication with the outside world. However, due to pressure from the U.S. and Britain, Czechoslovakia was forced to terminate this air bridge at the very time that the Spitfires were sold to Israel. As a result of this devastating blow, the Spitfires could not be transported, but had to be flown to Israel, a distance of 1,900 miles (3,000 kilometers), which meant that the flying endurance of a fully laden Spitfire had to be increased from about 1.5 hours to 6 hours.

Due to the ingenuity and improvisation of Sam Pomerance, an outstanding Machal pilot and aviation engineer, the fuel capacity of the Spitfire was increased from 85 to 379 gallons. However this was achieved at the cost of stripping the Spitfires of their armor plating, guns, cannons, radios, oxygen cylinders, cameras and navigation equipment, and then attaching fuel tanks under the belly and wings of the aircraft and even inside the cockpit.

Once again, Lichter’s skill and talent came to the fore. Lichter and his fellow South African Machalnik, Jack Cohen, successfully test-flew all 50 Spitfires in their new configuration. A formation of 12 Spitfires took off from Czechoslovakia to Israel in mid-December under very adverse weather conditions. In this formation, Lichter led a section with two semi-trained Israeli pilots – Motti Hod and Danny Shapiro. Notwithstanding that these two trainee pilots had fewer than seven hours of flying experience on Spitfires, Lichter decided to take the risk of including them in this six-hour epic flight.

Shapiro reports that when he lost his place in his formation in a very dense cloud and became totally disoriented, he was just about to bail out. When Lichter realized that Shapiro was missing, he was determined to find him, which he did at the 59th minute. Shapiro asserts with deep emotion that he owes his life to Lichter.

On arriving in the country, Lichter joined the 101



Squadron, Israel's first combat squadron which had become a formidable fighting force manned by WWII pilots. The fighting phases of the War of Independence ended on January 7, 1949, on a highly dramatic and spectacular note when the Israel Air Force shot down five Royal Air force fighters which had intruded into the battle area (four Spitfires and one Tempest) and damaged three other Tempests.

After the war ended, most of the Machal pilots (including Lichter) returned to their home countries, but after a short while Israel drew Lichter back to the IAF. He was appointed chief test pilot at the Tel Nof Air Base. His next assignment was as chief instructor at the IAF's Advanced Flying School.

It must have given him deep satisfaction and gratification when the first four Israeli pilots were awarded their wings on March 14, 1949: Motti Hod, Danny Shapiro, Tibby Ben-Shachar, and Shaya Gazit. Hod subsequently became Commander of the IAF, leading it in the Six Day War in which it achieved spectacular victories over the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian air forces. Shapiro went on to become a legendary test pilot. Ben-Shachar became the chief pilot of Arkia Airlines and Gazit had a splendid record of service in the IAF.

George Lichter is survived by three children: John, Michael, and Peggy.

MAURICE "MURRAY" BAND, Z"L (1924-2012)

By Si Spiegelman

Maurice "Murray" Band of Malden, Massachusetts, passed away on Friday, January 20, 2012. Murray was born in Claremont, New Hampshire to a family of Russian immigrants. In his youth, he was a member of the Labor Zionist movement. During WWII he served for three years in the U.S. Army and saw combat in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. He graduated from Northeastern University in 1947 and was living in Malden in March 1948 when he volunteered for Machal. He was among the earliest Machal volunteers, arriving before Israel's statehood and joined the Hagana. With the formation of the IDF, he served in Givati 51st Battalion and later in the Air Force. His Givati unit confronted the Egyptian drive on Tel Aviv in June 1948. He was severely wounded in an explosion during the war and returned to the U.S. in October 1949.

Maurice Band wrote about his Machal experience: "We were the first Americans to arrive in Israel as volunteers. Excitement of Israelis was fantastic. Volunteers were very instrumental in helping Israelis win."... "I received a great sense of satisfaction and have always thought a little differently since then."

He was a member of the delegation that received Prime Minister David Ben Gurion during his 1951 visit to Boston. Maurice Band is survived by his wife Ethel (Borr), a son, Richard and his wife, Loretta, and grandchildren Stephanie, Joshua and Jonathan Band.



Band (indicated with arrow) with Prime Minister Ben-Gurion in the Boston Garden in 1951. (Editor's note: Please let us know if you recognize others who are pictured here. Thanks!)

PHILIP “POPPY” MARMELSTEIN, Z”L (1921-2014) A Dedicated Aviator

Even before Charles Lindbergh brought aviation to the front pages, Philip Marmelstein was an airplane enthusiast. He grew up in sight of the Navy airbase at Mustin Field in Philadelphia and was deeply into building model planes as a kid. He shared his hobby and neighborhood with future 101 Squadron pilot and close friend, Coleman Goldstein, who lived a few doors down.

Before World War II, Phil’s interest in aircraft had blossomed into a private pilot license, and he belonged to a local flying club. War broke out, and he was accepted into U.S. Navy flight training. Marmelstein excelled. His flying background helped him finish first in his class of 600 trainee pilots. He was assigned to be a trainer himself, and he wound up in Norman, Oklahoma as a primary flight instructor at NAS Norman. He served until November 1946, and afterward found work as a seaplane instructor in Philadelphia, alongside Goldstein. He also stayed active flying in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

Marmelstein had grown up feeling that there had to be a place that Jews could call their own. Goldstein uncovered the Jewish effort to recruit airmen in early 1948. Goldstein told Marmelstein that he planned to volunteer and Marmelstein decided that he had to go, too. The two men traveled together to New York, then to Rome on a commercial TWA flight. From Rome, Marmelstein went to Paris, where his skills as a pilot instructor would come in handy. He was assigned to a group that had the task of collecting war-surplus Noorduyt Norsemen from Munich. Marmelstein flew these aircraft from Germany to Amsterdam, where mechanics gutted each Norseman and refitted it with a large internal fuel tank (from a C-47, Marmelstein suspects) in the cargo compartment so that it could make the flight across the Mediterranean to

Palestine. The extra fuel allowed the Norseman to fly up to 13 hours non-stop. Marmelstein would exchange the surplus Norsemen he flew into Amsterdam for a completed modified aircraft which he would take to Paris. In Paris, Marmelstein trained aircrews to fly the modified Norsemen.

Marmelstein worked out of the Paris base until June 1948, when British pressure on the French authorities forced the operation to undertake a quick move to Czechoslovakia - via Nice and Strasbourg. Marmelstein thinks the group had meant to gather 20 Norsemen in Munich, but remembers a definite total of 11 coming out of that city.



The Norseman were a vital cog in the Israeli strategy. They were the only reasonably sized transports that could land at the short roughshod airstrips that served outlying settlements. The Norsemen of 35 Flight were the sole means of supply and communication for the potash works at S'dom (Sodom), at the southern end of the Dead Sea. Four Norsemen were assigned to the S'dom route. Able to maintain S'dom, Israel could claim it as an inherent piece of the country during the armistice talks and the border was drawn in part to reflect that.

Marmelstein crossed paths with the 101 Squadron as a participant in the second Velveta ferry mission. He had flown from Czechoslovakia to Israel in a Norseman in late July, and his availability and experience led Sam Pomerance to ask him to fly one of this second batch of Spitfires to Israel. He recalls that the following pilots also took part in Velveta 2: Jack Cohen, Caesar Dangott, Moti Fein, Aaron Finkel, Sandy Jacobs, George Lichter, John McElroy, Sam Pomerance, Bill Pomerantz, Arnie Ruch, Bill Schroeder, Danny Shapira, and Lee Sinclair. (One more pilot remains anonymous for now.)

The pilots gathered and roomed in the town of Stare Mesto, Czechoslovakia near the Austrian border, and on Dec. 18, 1948, a first group of eight Velveta 2 Spitfires left from the nearby Kunovice

STANLEY MEDICKS, Z"l (1925-2013)

A Soldier of the "Follow Me" Tradition

Assembled from various sources
by Si Spiegelman.

Stanley Medicks was born in 1925 in Nairobi, Kenya, to parents who had immigrated to Africa from Poland in the 1900's when it was thought that a new Jewish state would be established in Uganda. They settled instead in Kenya. Fervent Zionists, his parents had a photo of Herzl on the wall of their living room. He joined the King's African Rifles in 1943 and served in North Africa. He ended his British war service as an infantry captain in 1947.

Soon after the declaration of the State of Israel, Stanley volunteered for Machal and travelled with 804 Israel-bound South African volunteers to fight in Israel's War of Independence, landing at Sde Dov air force base on August 16, 1948. He was posted to the 72nd Infantry Battalion of the 7th Brigade as a platoon commander. The brigade was under the command of a Canadian, Brigadier Ben Dunkelman. It was made up of Companies "A" "B" and "D" and was involved in the liberation of the Galilee. It began its operations in September with many mountain patrols and skirmishes, and culminated in Operation Hiram which took place from October 29 to 31, 1948.

Stanley's platoon was made up of volunteers from South Africa, Europe, Canada, U.S.A., Costa Rica and India. They were formed into three sections and training

began with field craft and weapons instruction. Equipment at that time was scarce; the little that had arrived from Czechoslovakia. The platoon had Czech-made Spandau rifles, three German light Spandau machine guns, a few Israeli-made grenades and Sten guns. Stanley was well-known by some 60 men who considered him a fearless officer of the "Follow me" tradition, always leading from the front. His soldiers remembered



him with affection, devotion, admiration and respect.

"B" Company's commander was an American, Captain Norman Schutzman. The Company's first action began from the village of Tamra to capture the Kabul mountain which had been held by a force of the Kaukjis Arab Liberation Army northeast of Haifa. Three soldiers were killed and about a dozen wounded.

During a deep penetration raid on October 23 near Kibbutz Eilon, South African Louis Hack of

Stanley's platoon was killed. Later, during the Hiram Operation, the platoon was involved in the liberation of Meron, which houses the tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, one of the leaders of the revolt against the Romans in 135 AD and an important pilgrimage site. Kenyan Jack Banin of Stanley's platoon was also wounded in this battle.

The brigade then moved north, where the 79th Battalion captured Jish (Gush Halav) and then Sasa. After Sasa, the brigade moved on to capture Malkiya on the Lebanese border, where Israeli Platoon Commander Zachariah Feldman was killed on the last day of Operation Hiram. Stanley's platoon was sent to holding positions facing the Syrians at Kibbutz Mishmar Hayarden, where volunteers Wilfred Sheppard and Jonathan Balter, both from England, were killed. Stanley's platoon celebrated Chanukah on their platoon outpost on the right flank of the "B" Company position. The war ended in March 1949 and the 72nd Battalion was demobilized.

Stanley married his first wife, Monica, in 1949. She was an English journalist who had volunteered to fight with the Irgun. He returned to Kenya in 1951 where his two children were born and eventually settled in London.

In 1988 Stanley formed the British and European Machal Association and enrolled over 300 Machal volunteers. Through the offices of the Israel Military Attaches in London, Stanley arranged the presentation of Israeli War Medals, the Ot Hakomimiut and Ot Lochamei Hamedina, to its

IRVING “SPARKS” MELTZER, Z”L (1924-2014)

An Intrepid Sailor

Research by Augusta Gooch

Irving Meltzer grew up in Glen Cove, Long Island, and served as a ship’s radio officer on Merchant Marine convoys through treacherous Nazi-held sea routes during World War II. He survived the toughest voyage a sailor could draw in the war: the Murmansk run, in which American ships braved Nazi submarines, air attacks and the weather to bring vital supplies to the Soviet Union via the Arctic Ocean port of Murmansk.

When the war ended, he found himself at a Jewish community center in Bremen, Germany, where Holocaust survivors had gathered to search for surviving relatives. It was there that he quickly learned about the movement that sought to restore a Jewish state in what was then British-ruled Palestine.

“I asked them ‘What will you do next? Where will you go?’ They said ‘We’re going to Palestine. We will walk in the snow over the Alps to get there,’” Meltzer recalls.

Back in New York, he quickly learned that American Jews were purchasing U.S. vessels from scrap heaps and manning them to transport refugees from Europe to Palestine. The transports were illegal and required running past British blockades. Irving wanted in on the action and soon was the radio officer on the *Northland*, a former Coast Guard ice-breaker, renamed the *Jewish State* (*Medinat Hayehudim*). Between 1946 and 1948 Meltzer and some 250 other North American volunteers transported 32,000 refugees to Palestine.

“We knew we didn’t have a snowball’s chance in hell of passing the blockade,” recalls Meltzer, who added that their British enemies could have blown them out of the water at any time. But it was exactly this British embarrassment at being forced to take action against Jewish survivors of the Holocaust that made blockade running an important political tool for

the Zionists.

“Passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, the British challenged the *Northland* to state its destination. Meltzer, who ran the radio and the signal lights and whose shipboard nickname was “Sparks” derisively flashed back that they were on their way “to see Naples and die.”

In Burgas, Bulgaria, the *Jewish State* took on 2,664 immigrants for whom the Haganah was forced to pay a ransom to the Communist authorities. Having so many people crowded onto a ship that was built to hold less than a hundred crew members plus cargo, is something Meltzer will never forget, with sanitation a particular problem. But despite the problems, the rapport between the refugees and the sailors who had helped them was close. His fluent

command of Yiddish was invaluable, and he befriended a young group of Rumanian Jewish orphan boys who were known on the ship as “vilde chayas” (wild animals). During the voyage, babies were born and one was named for Meltzer’s father, an honor the mother insisted upon because “you have left a safe home and comfort to come and help us.”

Inevitably, as the ship approached the coast of Palestine, the British fleet closed in. They tried to sail as close as possible to the shore, but were blocked and then boarded by Royal Marines

and sailors. As with other *Aliyah Bet* ships, the crew, their Haganah officers and the refugees put up stiff resistance. Meltzer was hit by a British bullet just as the engagement began. It passed through the back of his scalp, missing his brain by inches.

He awoke moments later lying in a pool of blood. One of his shipmates incredulously asked, “Sparks, are you dead?” “Not yet,” he replied and then stumbled over to join the refugees and to avoid being singled out as one of the American crewmen after capture.

He was taken with the refugees to Cyprus, where he was imprisoned behind barbed wire in a detention camp the British had set up for Jews caught trying to get to Palestine. Conditions there were tough; he lost 30 pounds in just over two months. Later, he escaped



airfield after a delay due to winter storms. Heavy clouds en route forced most of this first group to turn back, but Sam Pomerance decided, fatally, to brave the weather and to try to push on the destination, Niksic, Yugoslavia. He soon perished in a crash, due either to low visibility or hypoxia. Eight Spitfires completed the trip the next day, and a second group of seven, including Marmelstein (along with Cohen, Finkel, Jacobs, Schroeder, Sinclair, and the unknown pilot) followed Dec. 20. The Spitfires' intended destination was Ekron and most of the pilots, Marmelstein included, landed there.

At the end of 1948, Marmelstein was named an official flight instructor for the nascent Israeli Air Force and he became Israel's first military-trained flight instructor. He later left training command and joined 69 Squadron, the squadron with Israel's three B-17s. In the squadron, he again flew a Norseman. Marmelstein flew as a co-pilot in Operation Magic Carpet. In May 1949, the Imam of Yemen secretly agreed to let 45,000 Jews immigrate to Israel. Operation Magic Carpet was the secret air bridge that brought them in, through roughly 380 separate flights. Marmelstein flew 93 Magic Carpet flights, and estimates that he ferried 10,000-11,000 Yemeni immigrants to Israel.

In February 1952, Marmelstein left the Israel Air Force to join El Al. Newly married, he returned to the U.S. in June that year after a honeymoon in Europe. To satisfy his aviation craving, Marmelstein returned to the U.S. Naval Reserve. His years of absence and, he suspects, politics kept him from promotion, but he was able to continue flying duties for several years.

Philip Marmelstein is survived by his wife, Rose, and two children, Jeffrey and Barbara, as well as five grandchildren.

Researched by Augusta Gooch (This obituary was reprinted from the *L.A. Jewish Journal* published March 13, 2013.)

Stanley Medicks continued from page 10

members.

Thanks to Stanley's dream and determination, as well as fund-raising assistance from the Jewish National Fund, a World Machal Memorial was built in 1993 at Sha'ar Hagai on the Burma Road. This memorial site serves as a focal point and meeting place for Machalniks to gather, to learn and to remember the devotion and sacrifice of the 123 heroic volunteers who came to fight and gave their lives in Israel's War of Independence.

Stanley Medicks is survived by his long-term partner, Marion, and his children, Elana and Ashley; step-children, Charlotte and Clive; as well as grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Irving Meltzer continued from page 11

and went to Palestine before leaving again.

After an interval he returned to the fight and helped to crew another refugee ship, the Mala, that arrived in Israel shortly after the State was declared. He then joined Paul Shulman and the other North Americans staffing Israel's fledgling navy.

Irving Meltzer is survived by his wife, Iris, three sons, Barry, Dean and Jonathan, a daughter, Lynn, and three grandchildren.

(Sources: New Haven Jewish Ledger, February 10, 1995 by Jonathan S. Tobin, and Veterans of Israel's War of Independence by R.I. Felson, published in The New York Times on April 26, 1998.)

HONOR ROLL

COMRADES IN ARMS FROM THE U.S. AND CANADA DECEASED IN THE PAST YEAR (2013-2014)

MAURICE “MURRAY” BAND

Served in Hagana.

KELLY BERNARD

Served in Sherut Mapot (Maps and Photography).

FERNAND BYBELEZER

Served with the French Commando unit in the liberation of the Negev. Raised the Israeli flag over the Bersheva police station after it was taken by the commandos in heavy fighting against Egyptian forces.

IRA FEINBERG

Served with Palmach, 1st Battalion and 4th Battalion as a machine gunner. Fought in Malkiya, Nabi Yusha, Hartuv, and clearing of the “Burma Road” between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. A past AVI President, he dedicated himself to furthering the Machal narrative in speaking engagements, writing and film-making.

MORRIS GUNZBURG

Served in Cheyl Ma’ada, the weapons research branch of the IDF.

GEORGE LICHTER

Served in the Air Transport Command ferrying weapons to Israel. Fighter pilot in the 101 squadron. Test pilot at Tel Nof Air Force Base and chief instructor in Israel’s pilot training program.

PHILIP “POPPY” MARMELSTEIN

Served in the Air Transport Command ferrying weapons to Israel. Joined the 69th Squadron as “Norsemen” pilot. Flew immigrants to Israel from Yemen, Iran and Iraq in “Operation Magic Carpet” exodus.

STANLEY MEDICKS

Platoon Commander in the 72nd Infantry Battalion/7th Brigade that liberated the Galilee. He served for many years as Chairman of the European Machal Association. He was one of the creators of the Sha’ar Hagai memorial honoring the 123 Machal volunteers who gave their lives.

IRVING “SPARKS” MELTZER

Radio operator on the *Northland* (Jewish State) that ran the British blockade bringing 2,600

Holocaust survivors to Mandate Palestine. Served on the *Mala* and joined the Palyam with other Americans staffing Israel’s fledgling Navy.

BARUCH JOSEPH RABINOWITZ

Served in the IDF signals branch based at Sde Dov. Worked in military radio communications.

TEV ZIMMERMAN

Served in the Israel Air Force ground technical crew.

SPECIAL MENTION: REAR ADMIRAL, RABBI AARON LANDES

Longtime Naval Reserve Chaplains Chief, Rabbi Landes directed 700 chaplains as head of the Chaplains Corps until his retirement. He was Senior Rabbi of Beth Shalom Congregation in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania for 36 years and served on the boards of several religious organizations. He was our keynote speaker at the West Point Marcus memorial in 2007.

ZICHRONAM LIVRACHA

MAY THEIR MEMORY BE A BLESSING FOR ALL

Editor's Note: We depend on our MACHAL families and friends for information about deceased MACHAL members. Please inform us using the return address of this newsletter.

Stories From the Past

THE SPIRIT OF MACHAL LIVES ON

By Smoky Simon

The South African Zionist Federation (Israel) honored Smoky Simon, Chairman of World Machal, at the 2014 TELFED Gala Dinner and Lifetime Achievement Award Celebration. Below is an adapted version of Smoky's speech that fascinated the audience.

For me, at the age of almost 94, this evening presents an outstanding opportunity to express my profound gratitude for the many blessings that have been bestowed upon me along my life's journey.

First and foremost, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Almighty (which behooves me to recite the Shehehiyanu prayer); secondly, to my family, to my wife, Myra, who has been at my side for 66 years, and to our four children – Philippa, Saul, Dan and Aliza, who have given us great pleasure. We now have 15 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren, of whom we are exceedingly proud. By the way, Myra is also a veteran of two wars – she was trained and flew as a meteorologist in the South African Air Force in World War II and she served as the first instructor in meteorology in the

Israel Air Force in the War of Independence. My two sons, Saul and Dan, were fighter pilots in the Israel Air Force (IAF).

Three events have had a life-changing impact on my existence. Firstly, in January 1941, I volunteered to serve in the war against Nazi Germany. I was trained as a navigator-bombardier and served in the South African Air Force and Royal Air Force for five years in many theaters of that cruel war, from which I thankfully emerged alive and unhurt. Secondly, in May 1948, I volunteered together with Myra to fight in the impending war against the Arabs, and I can state without hesitation that this was my finest hour and the most thrilling experience of my life.

There can be no doubt that the Holocaust, the Declaration of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, and the War of Independence were the absolute pinnacles of 2,000 years of Jewish history – a history of exile, oppression and injustice. On May 15, 1948, six Arab Armies attacked Israel – Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Kaukji's [Arab guerilla] Army of Liberation. Britain had supplied Egypt, Iraq and Jordan with aircraft, tanks and artillery. France had supplied tanks and artillery to Syria and Lebanon. The Egyptian Air Force had a

fleet of 62 frontline British Spitfire aircraft plus a squadron or two of Italian Macchi fighter aircraft. Israel did not have a single combat aircraft nor a single anti-aircraft gun. There was a total and overwhelming imbalance of troops and military equipment in favor of the Arabs. Britain, the U.S. and the Arabs were convinced that the war would be over within a few weeks.

On May 14, the Jordanian Army, led by British officers, overran the Etzion Block – 240 military and civilians were killed, 420 were taken prisoners of war, and the kibbutz was burnt down.



Smoky Simon and his wife, Myra, at the TELFED Gala Dinner where he received a lifetime achievement award.

Jerusalem was under siege and there was a tremendous shortage of water, food and military equipment. The road between Tel

Aviv and Jerusalem had been cut off by the Arabs. Tel Aviv was under constant attack from the Egyptian Air Force and suffered tremendous casualties. In its attempt to capture the British Fortress at Latrun, which had been handed over by the British to the Jordanian Army, the Israeli forces sustained tremendously heavy losses. The Egyptian Army had overrun the kibbutzim in the Negev, which had fought courageously with hand grenades and rifles against tanks and armored vehicles. By May 29 the Egyptian Army had penetrated into Israel right up to Ashdod, 30 km. from Tel Aviv. If Tel Aviv had fallen, the war would have been over.

Against this very somber background, the Israel Air Force was born in the heat of battle. We started flying in small civil aircraft which had been smuggled out of South Africa. The crew consisted of a pilot and a “bomb-chucker,” who held a 20-kilo or a 25-kilo bomb plus incendiary “bomblets” on his lap, which he would drop manually on the Arab targets. Massive efforts were being conducted to recruit World War II Air Force veterans to join the nascent IAF, and at the same time, an incredible and heroic operation of smuggling aircraft into Israel was taking place. This was perhaps the biggest and most noble and ethical smuggling operation in history.

On Friday afternoon May 14, at the very time that Ben-Gurion was declaring the establishment of the State of Israel, the late South African, Boris Senior, as pilot and I as navigator with an Israeli aerial photographer, flew in one of the Bonanzas smuggled out of South Africa on the IAF’s very first operational mission for the purpose of reporting to army headquarters on the strength of the invading Jordanian forces. The Jordanian Army was the first Arab army to attack Israel, and on that flight we saw the devastation which had been wrought on the Etzion Bloc.

Parallel to the arrival of the smuggled aircraft, combat air crews recruited from abroad were coming into Israel. These volunteers were known as “Machal” which is a Hebrew acronym for “Mitnadvei Hutz La’aretz,” meaning “volunteers from abroad.” During the war, a total of 426 combat

flying crews (including 81 from South Africa) served in the IAF – pilots, navigators, bombardiers, flight engineers, air gunners, radio operators, aerial photographers. These World War II veterans contributed their invaluable experience and skills in support of Israel’s war effort.

In June 1948, I was appointed chief of air operations of the IAF. By the grace of God, on May 29, on the very day that the Egyptian Army had reached Ashdod, the IAF’s first four Messerschmitts, which had been smuggled out of Czechoslovakia, became operational. The Egyptian Army was, of course, not aware that Israel had just acquired combat aircraft, when suddenly four Israeli fighter aircraft attacked the Egyptian Army with bombs, cannons and guns. The Egyptians were stunned and destabilized, and for several days and nights, the Israel Air Force maintained continuous attacks. The Egyptians never advanced beyond Ashdod.

By July 1948, 70 percent of Israel’s territory was occupied by the Arab armies, but the tide of the war was starting to change in Israel’s favor. The final drive against the Egyptians took place in December 1948 to January 1949. By all accounts, it was a brilliant campaign under the command of Gen. Yigal Alon with Yitzhak Rabin as Chief of Operations. The Egyptians were driven out of the Negev and into the Sinai Peninsula. Then came a United Nations Security Council directive that a final cease-fire in the war would take effect on January 7, 1949 at 16:00 hours.

Israel’s victory in the War of Independence has no parallel in military history. Up to this point, I have focused on the Machal component in the IAF in which I served, but let me add that this was only a part of the Machal story. There were in all 4,800 Machalniks (including 832 from South Africa) who came from 59 countries to fight for Israel – men and women, Jews and non-Jews. The Machalniks included men like Mickey Marcus, who had been a colonel in the U.S. Army in World War II. He was appointed to command the Jerusalem Front, and also commanded the building of the Burma Road, which relieved the siege of Jerusalem. Paul Shulman (an

American) was the first Commander of the Israel Navy. Ben Dunkelman, a highly decorated Canadian officer in World War II, was the Commander of the 7th Brigade, which liberated the Lower and Upper Galilee. Machalniks held positions of command and leadership in most branches of the armed forces. What a rare privilege it was for me to serve as Chief of Air Operations during this critical and dramatic period in Israel's history.

In 1968, I was elected Chairman of World Machal. We had a number of very successful Machal reunions in Israel, and we kept in close touch with Machal Associations abroad, which regrettably have now mostly faded away. Most of the Machalniks who are still alive are indeed a highly endangered species. I recently launched Machal's final assignment by undertaking to expand and to increase the facilities of the Michael Levin Center for Lone Soldiers in Tel Aviv, where Machalniks from abroad, together with Israeli lone soldiers, can relax and mingle with each other. Happily, the tradition of Machal lives on. There is a new intake of Machalniks into the Israel Defense Force (IDF) each year, who serve for a period of 18 months. I have the gratifying experience of giving talks to these new volunteers prior to their induction into the Army. It is truly heart-warming to know that to this very day, Jews from the Diaspora are willing to risk their lives in defense of the State

of Israel.

Under the leadership of the inimitable, late Harry Hurwitz, I was one of the founding members of the Menachem Begin Heritage Foundation, which was established to preserve the legacy and heritage of this great national hero. Menachem Begin, as leader of the courageous and heroic Irgun Zvai Leumi, that declared war on the British Mandatory Regime because of Britain's abhorrent policy of denying refuge in Palestine to survivors of the Holocaust. He was the dominant factor which led to the termination of the British Mandate in May 1948. The Begin Foundation has become one of the "Jewels of Jerusalem," and it's been my privilege to serve as the honorary Treasurer of the Begin Foundation since its inception.

I'm also currently involved in the establishment of The Museum of the Jewish Soldier in World War II, which is being erected in the area of the Armored Corps Museum in Latrun. I wonder how many of you in the audience are aware that 1.5 million Jews served in all the Allied Forces in World War II – the U.S., Russia, British Empire, Free French and Free Polish Armies, Underground Forces, Palestinian Jews, and the Warsaw Ghetto. No other nation in the world had the same proportion of combatants as the Jewish nation, and this noble, heroic and glorious story has to be told to the world.

One Kansas City Family's Illegal Zionist Saga

By Jan Jaben-Eilon



Surrounded by family, the author's grandparents are seated on the left and middle of the truck to take the boxes of arms for Israel to the Kansas City railroad station.

Not long after Israel's War of Independence was launched, a high school friend of my father's returned to Kansas City from a visit to Israel. Enthusiastically, he drafted my father, grandparents and other relatives in a frantic attempt to help the fledgling State of Israel. Just three years after the end of World War II, weapons could be found throughout the community as soldiers who returned home from war often brought with them rifles and other weaponry. My family was determined to gather as many arms as possible and ship them to assist Israel.

I grew up on these stories, but only second-hand. Both my father, Larry, and my Zadie, Philip, died when I was about 10 years old. But I still heard the stories over and over again, most often from my father's younger brother, my Uncle Sonny, who was 15 at the time.

"I remember coming home the day of the U.N. vote that declared statehood for Israel," says Sonny Jaben of the November 1947 partition vote. "My father was crying. He was so proud that the State of Israel was becoming a reality. He was a staunch Zionist and after his journey, injured in World War I, escaping from Poland, the difficulties in starting a new life in America, and everything else that he had lived through, he was driven to insure that Israel must live."

Sonny remembers cases of U.S. Army surplus bayonets still packed in Cosmoline, a heavy grease that was commonly used on firearms, hand tools and machine tools to prevent rusting. The weapons had never been used. (According to Wikipedia, during World War II, U.S. Coast Artillerymen were known as "Cosmoliners" because they were responsible for greasing down the guns. Cosmoline was also used to coat weapons for long sea voyages as it prevented rust even in salty conditions.) This was perfect since these armaments would be sent by ship overseas to Israel.

What I didn't learn from my uncle, I gleaned from the photos of my family members, apparently taken by my father. The family lore – backed by the photos – is of my family collecting the weapons and taking them into the dark, dank basement of my grandparents' house and secretly boxing up the weapons. It was illegal for Americans to send armaments to Israel, so they wrote on the outside of the boxes "farm implements."

They were so proud that they took photos in the basement of family members posing around the boxes they packed. Afterwards, the boxes were lifted onto a pick-up truck which transported them down to the venerable Kansas City railroad station. "I remember going with them to the Railway Express depot located beneath Union Station to ship the armaments by rail," says Sonny Jaben.

During one of my trips back to my hometown, my uncle showed me the exact berth where my family delivered the precious weapons. According to the legend, the train carried the boxes to a farm in New Jersey and they were later shipped to Israel.

"I'm sure that my father and the others realized the potential repercussions had the arms been discovered," says Sonny. "Shipping arms to a foreign country must certainly have been a serious federal violation back then. I'm also sure, in retrospect, that they held their collective breaths until the shipment arrived in Israel," says Sonny. "They knew the dangers but that did not deter them. It must have seemed to them to be the chance of a lifetime to help Israel. That was a generation of strong Jaben men who saw what was to be done, and did it. I was too young, 15 at that time, to realize how serious a matter it all was. It seemed to me to be an adventure of sorts."

I was always quite proud of this example of my family's Zionism. Only years later, after I made Aliyah, my Israeli born husband questioned my long-held belief that these weapons assisted the Haganah, the early form of today's Israel Defense Forces, to fight off the many Arab armies attacking Israel from all sides. He suggested that perhaps these weapons were shipped to the Irgun, the fringe fighting group often labeled as terrorists. I'll probably never know.

After the war, the family received a letter from the government of Israel, thanking them for their contribution to the war effort.



Jaben Family in Kansas City basement with Illegal arms shipment to Israel. Top L to R: Martin Jerwick, Chaim Beryl Jerwick, Albert Weiner, Kasil Jaben, Ruth and Philip Jaben. Bottom L to R: Maurice Jerwick and Louis Levine.

WAVES OF FREEDOM

By Yocheved Miriam Russo (*Jerusalem Post*)

In February 1947, 20-year-old Murray Greenfield had just completed three years of wartime service in the U.S. Merchant Marines. “I was the second youngest of five sons, all of us veterans. One older brother was already a dentist; another, an accountant. Obviously I was going to college, too” he said. “So when I sat my mother down and said, ‘Mom, I’m not going to college,’ I knew she’d be shocked. I couldn’t lie to her, but I couldn’t tell her the truth, either. All I said was, ‘I’m going to do something good for the Jewish people instead.’” What Greenfield couldn’t tell his mother was that he had just volunteered for a highly dangerous mission, one for which, if caught, he could be hanged. He was about to challenge the British blockade of Palestine – to outwit the British Royal Navy with a “rust bucket” of a ship – ferrying Holocaust survivors from war-torn Europe into Palestine. Orchestrated by the Hagana, Greenfield’s mission was strictly secret and was part of what came to be called “Aliya Bet,” facilitating the “illegal” immigration of the wretched survivors of the Holocaust into pre-state Israel. For four decades, the role that Greenfield and some 200 other North American volunteers played in Aliya Bet has remained one of history’s forgotten chapters. Not until Greenfield’s book *The Jews’ Secret Fleet* was first published in 1987 did the heroic story of the young American volunteers come to light.

Last year, an hour-long documentary film by Alan Rosenthal called *Waves of Freedom*, based on Greenfield’s book, retold the dramatic story, this time with actual footage of the events in addition to interviews with several of the participants – not just survivors and volunteers, but also with the British naval officers who worked to stop the immigrant ships. The simple fact is that during 1945-1947, almost 50 percent of the refugees from post-Nazi Europe who made it into Palestine – 32,000 men, women, children and babies – arrived on 10 ships purchased from postwar U.S. salvage yards and sailed by “American Jew-runners,” as British officials called them. Most of the volunteers were

little more than kids, and only a few had any seagoing experience. Yet the job they undertook played a significant part in the establishment of the State of Israel.

Each of the volunteers who decided they wanted to “do something good for the Jewish people” came to the clandestine operation in much the same way. In the documentary, Paul Kaye recounts how he was summoned: A voice on the telephone asked, “Would you like to save your people?” He was instructed to go to a certain location and watch for a man in a black leather jacket who would be carrying a newspaper. If the man put the newspaper under his arm, Kaye was to follow him. If he threw it in the trash, Kaye should go home. That meant they were being followed. Secrecy was prime. Greenfield’s introduction to the Hagana agents, came at shul. He met an American Zionist activist who told him the Hagana was looking for young men with sailing experience. Intrigued by that tiny bit of information, Greenfield agreed to meet one of the “Shu-shu boys,” so called because they were constantly “shushing” everyone, warning them to be quiet. At the subsequent interview, Greenfield listened and then asked two questions: First, was the mission dangerous? Second, what was the pay? On being told that, yes, it was dangerous to try to sail an old, salvaged ship seriously overloaded with human cargo past the strict British blockade; and, second, that no pay was being offered, Greenfield’s response was instantaneous. “Good!” he said. “Sign me up!” His reasoning was that if the mission was dangerous and no pay was being offered, that must mean it was worthwhile.

If secrecy was prime, time was critical. The situation of the European Jews who’d managed to survive the Holocaust was dire. Homeless, stateless, exhausted, broken and ill, the Jews who’d emerged from Hitler’s camps now found themselves facing a hostile world where no one allowed them entry. “The British had a slogan for the surviving Jews,” Greenfield recalls. “‘Go home! Go back to where

you came from!” But Europe’s Jews had no homes, most had no families, no possessions. Europe was under occupation by the Americans and British, but in Poland, where most Jews had lived, pogroms were still common. For two full years after the war, an additional 1,500 to 2,000 Jews in Poland were murdered by Polish nationals. “Going home” was impossible, but neither was there any other place to go. The U.S. and Canada had virtually closed their doors. As a result, the surviving remnant of Europe’s Jews huddled in “Displaced Persons” camps. Neither was Palestine a viable option. Since 1922, the British had held the Mandate for the administration of Palestine. And to placate local Arabs, they strictly limited Jewish immigration to Palestine. Under the terms of the 1939 White Paper, the British permitted only 75,000 Jews over a five-year period to enter Palestine.

With the war over, many world leaders, including U.S. President Harry Truman, expected that Great Britain would open the gates of Palestine to the few Jews who had survived. But as Sir Martin Gilbert writes in his introduction to *The Jews’ Secret Fleet*, that was not to be. The desperate pleas of Jewish leaders were denied. “On November 13, 1945, Ernest Bevin, British Foreign Secretary, announced that the British White Paper policy would continue as before. Although nearly 100,000 Jews moved throughout Europe during 1945, all of them seeking routes, ports or ships to Palestine, by the end of the year, only 13,100 had been allowed to enter – 1,500 fewer than had been allowed in 1944.”

With desperate survivors tenaciously clinging to life in the DP camps, something had to be done. “Aliya Bet” came to be applied to the clandestine “illegal” immigration, Jews smuggled into Palestine. The most obvious option for bringing Europe’s Jews to Palestine was by sea. “After the war, there was a tremendous surplus of vessels,” writes Paul N. Shulman, first commander of the Israeli Navy. “Ships of all kinds were headed straight for the scrap yard and could be purchased by weight for a few dollars a ton. Two of the *Aliya Bet* ships, the *Pan Crescent* and the *Pan York*, were purchased outright

for around \$125,000 each.” The other eight ships – the *Wedgewood*, the *Haganah*, the *Arlosoroff*, the *Ben Hecht*, the *Exodus*, the *Geula*, the *Jewish State* and the *Tradewinds* – were acquired for similar amounts.

When Murray Greenfield took leave of his mother in Far Rockaway, N.Y., he first traveled to Miami, Florida, to meet his shipmates for the *Tradewinds*, the ship to which he had been assigned. Formerly an icebreaker on the St. Lawrence River, the ship had spent the war as a coast guard cutter tracking down German submarines. “It was a rust bucket,” Greenfield laughs. “It didn’t look like it could hold 100 passengers, let alone the 1,500 she was scheduled to take.” In Miami, the *Tradewinds* was made marginally seaworthy in preparation for a sail up the U.S. coast. “But the evaporators failed and we ran into bad weather, so we put into port in Charleston, South Carolina,” Greenfield recalls.

Not all of the volunteer sailors were Jewish. One of Greenfield’s favorite shipmates was Hugh McDonald, an Irishman, who volunteered for the project on the simple grounds that he didn’t like the British. “Most of the volunteers were veterans of some service,” Greenfield notes. “A few were Navy, Coast Guard or Merchant Marines who had sea experience. But the majority had been infantrymen, paratroopers, aviators, medics, technicians – you name it. Some had seen action in the Battle of the Bulge, the Anzio beachhead or in the Pacific. Most were from the U.S., but a few hailed from Canada and a couple from Mexico. Some were religious, others had no connection whatever. “The one thing that united us was a deep commitment to doing something positive to help the survivors. Six million Jews had been murdered while the rest of the world looked the other way and failed to take any action that could have saved countless lives. We volunteers decided to act now. This was the option open to us at that moment, so we jumped in to save as many of the survivors as we could.”

Leaving Charleston, the *Tradewinds* sailed to Baltimore, with the full complement of 27 men and then set sail for Europe. Even at that point, the

volunteers knew trouble loomed ahead. Suspicion about the whole Aliya Bet operation had become common. The local Baltimore press had already written about the *President Warfield* – which became the *Exodus* – that had set sail. The secrecy of the mission had been compromised, but pushing ahead was the only alternative. Then real trouble erupted. As the *Tradewinds* neared the Azores, the fuel supply ran low. The British, in their vast plan to halt illegal immigration to Palestine, had forbidden fuel sales, but by virtue of something that can only be characterized as divine intervention, a local Jew appeared and, without fanfare, signed for the purchase of all the fuel the *Tradewinds* needed.” The next stop was Lisbon, where the *Tradewinds* would spend several weeks being refitted. The hold was gutted and replaced with shelves said to be designed to hold “bananas”, but really intended as resting places for the human cargo. While in Lisbon, the volunteers celebrated Pesach in high style aboard the *Tradewinds*. “We had a full Seder, all the traditional foods,” Greenfield recalls. “Everything was cooked by another of our non-Jewish volunteers, a Polish-American ex-Merchant Marine, “Duke” Labaczewski, who’d learned all the recipes while working in a Jewish bakery. In fact, the reason he’d decided to volunteer for the mission was that he held his former employers in such high esteem.”

Just as the refitting of the *Tradewinds* was nearing completion, the worst happened. Authorities had become suspicious of the crew, not quite buying the banana story. They arrested the *Tradewinds*’ captain, who was in reality a Hagana agent, a kibbutznik named Yehoshua Baharav traveling under a false Canadian passport identifying him as “Captain Diamond.” As the volunteers saw “Captain Diamond” being led away by the secret police, they knew it was now or never. They had to leave, ready or not. “But we had a problem,” Greenfield laughs at the memory. “We couldn’t get the anchor up – it was caught in a metal hawser. One guy grabbed a hacksaw and started sawing away, trying to cut the anchor loose, which eventually worked. But in the meantime we dragged anchor all the way out of the

port. “What was really funny was that as we moved forward, dragging the anchor, all the electric lights in Lisbon started going out, area by area. We’d snagged underground electrical cables with the anchor and were literally turning out the lights as we left.”

The *Tradewinds* – now called the *Hatikva* – set about picking up her precious cargo, the survivors, who would board on two separate nights from the Italian Riviera. Cold, weak and ill-clothed as they were, they had to cross the Alps by foot, crawling through snow a meter deep in places. Children and the elderly had to be carried. Ropes helped the struggling victims up some of the steeper inclines, but the going was tough. Once they reached Italy, the Hagana arranged secret camps, from which the survivors were loaded into trucks to be driven to the coast, where they’d board the ships. “We arrived just off the coast in Bogliasco,” Greenfield says. “It was like watching a movie with the sound turned off. Absolute silence prevailed. We watched for the signal – a light on shore being turned on and off. Then we saw the headlights of trucks snaking their way down the hill to the beach. “All night long the survivors came out to the ship in rubber rafts. One of my shipmates became very emotional. ‘I looked at those poor Jews, and all I could see was my people,’ he told me. ‘I saw my brother, my father, my aunt. But for some stroke of luck, that could have been my family. It could have been me struggling to crawl into this ship’”. The scene was repeated at the mouth of the Magre River. In all, just over 1,400 survivors were helped over the guardrails and lowered into the *Hatikva*’s hold. In the film, a passenger explains the wonder she felt at seeing American Jews arriving to help. “We’d lost faith in humanity,” she says. “But here were Americans – American Jews! – coming to help us. Seeing them gave us back so much of what we’d lost. It helped restore the one thing we thought we’d lost forever: hope.”

Ten days out, the *Hatikva* was spotted. A British airplane buzzed the ship twice and flew off. British warships appeared, surrounding the survivor ship, then boarding it and taking control. Now that they had nothing to lose, the volunteers proclaimed the

ship's identity. "We flew the Star of David and we painted the name *Hatikva* in big letters. Hugh McDonald, my Irish shipmate, went to one of the huge smokestacks and proudly painted a Star of David, together with the designation 'Eretz – 1947.' Under that, he painted a big green shamrock. And under that he wrote, 'Eire – 1922.' He equated the struggle of the Jews of Palestine with the Irish, who also struggled for independence from the British."

Even hemmed in by the heavily armed British warships, the survivors weren't about to go quietly. "This was their chance," Greenfield says. "During the war, they didn't have a way to fight back. A few ran to the forests, but in terms of personally fighting back against the Nazis, that hadn't been an option. Now their time had come, and they wanted to fight." The objective was for everyone to resist, but not so much that it would give the British an excuse to open fire. As one of the big warships pulled alongside the fragile *Hatikva*, a booming voice from a loudspeaker barked the standard warning: "Your voyage is illegal. Your ship is unseaworthy. In the name of humanity, surrender." The survivors armed themselves with canned food they intended to throw at the invaders, but one of the warships made a sharp turn, creating a wave that rocked the ship. Panicked, the survivors all raced for the other side of the ship, nearly causing it to capsize. The menacing voice on the loudspeaker sounded again. "Let the captain of your vessel identify himself!" Quickly, a 10-year-old boy was found, a hat plunked on his head, and the boy shouted in English, "I am the captain!" Not amused by these antics, the British pulled their warships very close and began boarding by swinging across on lines, or just jumping. In practice, the valiant idea of throwing canned food at the invaders didn't work. Canned food didn't stand against tear gas and clubs, not to mention warning shots fired into the air. The end came quickly. On May 17, 1947, the *Hatikva* was towed into Haifa harbor. Most of the passengers – survivors and crew alike – were taken to a detention camp in Cyprus. A few escaped.

"The Hagana had this all planned out,"

Greenfield notes. "They knew where to hide people on the ship. So a few of the crew hid, and then when cleaning people came on the vessel, they walked off with them. One tried swimming away, but he was caught. For the rest of us volunteers, it was up to us what we wanted to do. "Some felt they'd done their duty and wanted to leave, so they identified themselves as Americans and ultimately made their way home. Several of us decided to stay with our people. We hid the fact that we were Americans, pretending we didn't speak English. We were trucked off to Cyprus right along with the survivors, imprisoned behind barbed wire just like everyone else. "Why did I stay, go to Cyprus? The Jews of Europe had been abandoned during the war. Now I'd come to know them, and I felt a strong kinship. I wasn't going to let them be abandoned again."

The 10 American-purchased, American-sailed ships that ran the British blockade from 1946 to January 1, 1948, carried more than 32,000 Jews – 46% of the total 69,563 Aliya Bet immigrants – to their new home in Palestine. An 11th American vessel, the *Calanit*, arrived in July 1948, carrying 1,200 immigrants, but because it arrived after the state had already been proclaimed, it wasn't considered part of Aliya Bet. Interestingly enough, the *Calanit* had previously been called the *Mayflower*, serving as the personal yacht of U.S. presidents from Theodore Roosevelt through Herbert Hoover.

Greenfield still puzzles over why the story of the American volunteers' role in the founding of the state isn't better known. "The story of Aliya Bet has been told many times, but the American role in the drama is almost never included. Worse than that, when some reference is made, they usually get the facts wrong. Everyone knows about the *Exodus*, but the book and film were pure fiction. The real *Exodus* bears little resemblance to the ship Paul Newman sailed into Haifa. The true story is much better."

To tell the real story was filmmaker Alan Rosenthal's objective when he decided to make *Waves of Freedom*. "People know the Leon Uris

fictional story of the *Exodus*, but I thought it would be so much more interesting to tell what really happened,” Rosenthal told a Chicago film critic, when the film played there. “What interested me were the volunteers, trying to understand why these young men, just back from the war, would want to put their lives on the line again. It’s a very American story, almost an Errol Flynn sort of thing, with

American heroism and bravery, a story that had never been told. “Even more critical, though, was the timing. Today we live in an age where, at least in Europe, many people question Israel’s very right to exist. So here is a story that shows so clearly and humanely and passionately why Israel came into existence – as refuge, home and haven. That need still exists.”

WORLD MACHAL NEWS

MACHAL’S YOM HAZICHARON SERVICE 2014

Once again, Machalniks and others met at the World Machal Memorial on May 15, 2014, to honor the memory of our 123 fallen comrades at Sha’ar Hagai. The sounding of the siren marked the commencement of the service. Following the Memorial Service attendees enjoyed a picnic lunch with comrades and friends. A plaque in honor of the late Stanley Medicks who passed away in June 2013 was unveiled at the ceremony. (*See his obituary elsewhere in this Newsletter.*) This plaque is being donated by the Medicks Family in honor of Stanley who was the key figure behind the creation of the Machal Memorial.

WORLD MACHAL EXHIBIT AT BEIT HATFUTSOT

The World Machal exhibit “On the Ground, in the Air, and at Sea 1948” at Beit Hatfutsot which was opened to the public on June 1, 2012 is still running. The opening ceremony held on 31st May can be seen on the World Machal website: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2983103A4D0013A9>.

WORLD MACHAL WEBSITE

New material is constantly being uploaded to the World Machal website, which is well worth visiting. The website address is: www.machal.org.il. If you have not already supplied your personal Machal story for uploading to the website, please send it in English to Doreen (doreen@sw.co.il), and if possible please also attach a photograph of yourself taken during the War of Independence.

THE MICHAEL LEVIN CENTRE FOR LONE SOLDIERS

With generous donations from Machalniks and friends worldwide and in particular the Medicks Family, Machal has donated an extension to the Michael Levin Centre for Lone Soldiers on Hayarkon Street in Tel Aviv. This extension will be known as “The Stanley Medicks Machal Room.” Wall panels will depict the history of Machal from Aliyah Bet through to the current day, with a continuous screen presentation of photographs from Aliyah Bet and the War of Independence. You are most welcome to visit the Centre at your convenience. First call Brian at the Centre to ascertain whether the time of your visit will be convenient. Tel: 052-565-8218.

MACHALNIKS OF TODAY

Every year approximately 200-300 volunteers from abroad follow the Machal tradition and volunteer for 14 months of service in the IDF. This program is under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense, and Mr. Udi Dror is

in charge of the program. Tzemach Bloomberg and Doddie Gordon (1956-65 Machalniks) who are on the World Machal Committee are in contact with Udi Dror.

THE MUSEUM OF THE JEWISH SOLDIER IN WORLD WAR II

Construction is progressing on the "Museum for the Jewish Soldier in World War II." The Museum is located in the Armored Corps complex at Latrun which houses the world-famous exhibition of military tanks. The purpose of this Museum is to tell the world and to honor the 1,500,000 Jews who served in all the Allied Forces in World War II – 550,000 Jews in the USA Forces, 500,000 in the Russian Forces, and those who served in the British Empire Forces (U.K., Canada, South Africa, Australia, India), the Free French Army, the Free Polish Army, the Palestinian Jews as well as the Partisans, the Underground Forces, and the Ghetto Fighters. There is of course a very strong link between the Jews who served in World War II and Machal, as Machal was composed primarily of veterans from World War II. There will be a room in the new museum devoted to the Machal Story. Those Machalniks who served in World War II are invited to enter their details at the following link: http://www.jwmww2.org/show_item.asp?levelId=65023. For those who do not have access to a computer, please contact Doreen at the World Machal Office (03- The Museum's website address is:

http://www.jwmww2.org/show_item.asp?levelId=65021

TWO MACHAL ENTRIES ON FACEBOOK

Machal can now also be found on two sites on Facebook:

New Generation - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Generations-of-Machal/272679762744148?sk=wall>

Machal Legacy - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/MACHAL-LEGACY/107041309317122>

FORTHCOMING DOCUMENTARY ON MACHAL'S ROLE IN THE IAF ABOVE AND BEYOND: THE BIRTH OF THE ISRAEL AIR FORCE

Nancy Spielberg, sister of the film director Steven Spielberg, was in Israel recently and made contact with the World Machal office which helped her with information and interviews of Machalniks and Israelis who served in the Israel Air Force during the War of Independence for her upcoming film on Machal's role in the IAF, *Above and Beyond: The Birth of the IAF*. The trailer for this 55 minute film can be viewed on:

<https://vimeo.com/54400569> (password: iaf.). The film will be premiered later this year. We will keep you posted as to how you can view the full film in due course.

VICTORY AND FIGHTER MEDALS (ALEH AND OT HAKOMEMIYUT)

If any Machalniks have not yet received the Fighter and/or Victory medal ribbons, please get in touch with Doreen at Smoky Simon's office (doreen@sw.co.il)

Sincerely,

Smoky Simon

For ISRAEL MACHAL COMMITTEE

(Sol Baskin, Murray Greenfield, Sol Jacobs, Zipporah Porath, Smoky Simon, Migdal Teperson, Joe Woolf,
Tzemach Bloomberg, Doddie Gordon, Harry Shaer)

Announcements

SALUTE TO ISRAEL PARADE

Come March with Us!
Show Your Support for Israel!
Pay Tribute to Our Lost Members

SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 2014

ASSEMBLY POINT: Fifth Avenue at 56th Street
ASSEMBLY TIME: 10:30 am
STEP-OFF TIME: 11:00 am
ATTIRE: Dark Trousers or Skirts, White Shirts,
Blue Berets or Caps. Wear comfortable shoes
and carry a bottle of water.

LET'S STAY IN TOUCH! We Need Your Updated Address and E-mail

In order to communicate with you most quickly and effectively we need your email address for invitations and this Newsletter. Please send us any change in your contact info and your email address to: avimachal@aol.com or call (646) 298-8147. Thank you!

MACHALNIKS: Have You Received Your ALEH Medal? Your Victory Medal?

Palyam-Aliya Bet is trying to identify any Machalniks who may have not received the ALEH medal of the War of Independence. They are trying to give those Machalniks a small token of their service to the newborn State of Israel. If you participated in Aliya Bet before or during the War of Independence, by working either on an Aliya Bet ship or on a ship which brought weapons to Israel, then you are probably entitled to receive the ALEH medal (Fighters Ribbon). Please write the account of your participation giving as much details as possible, name of vessel, dates of departure & arrival from what ports, companions on voyage etc. If the Machalnik has not survived and his immediate family members can supply the necessary information then they may be able to receive the medal in lieu of the deceased. This information should be sent ASAP to: malkin@eindor.org.il

In addition, all Machalniks, including those participating in Aliyah Bet, are entitled to receive the Victory Medal as well. Contact Doreen Bliss of Machal for more information: doreen@sw.co.il

ACT NOW TO SUPORT THE MACHAL LEGACY!

Dear Friends,

We need your help today to preserve the MACHAL Legacy for the future.

AVILC charges no membership fees and we provide the Newsletter to all without cost. In order to sustain our efforts and the AVI legacy, we are asking members of AVI and their families and friends for contributions so we can continue to publish this Newsletter, sponsor the annual Mickey Marcus Machal tribute at West Point, support the Machal Archives located at the American Jewish Historical Society and manage a mobile AVI exhibit—all dedicated to informing the public about the role of Machal and Aliyah Bet in the establishment of the State of Israel.

We will be grateful for your tax-deductible contribution. Please make your check payable to American Veterans of Israel Legacy Corporation or AVILC.

THANK YOU!

Jeffrey A. Margolis, President Donna Parker, Treasurer
For the Board of Directors
American Veterans of Israel Legacy Corporation (AVILC)

AVILC is a 501(c) (3) charitable organization

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT FOR THE MACHAL LEGACY!



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