



THE volunteer CONNECTION

Israel at War

The hostilities are over for now. Citizens in northern Israel have returned to their homes. Children are again sleeping in their own beds; shops and restaurants are open. Life has returned to somewhat normal. But the war took a terrible toll in human life, leaving emotional and economic wounds.

For VFI volunteers, helping Israel from afar during the recent war was not enough. Hundreds of volunteers spent weeks on Israeli IDF bases and other places performing needed work.

The war started on July 12, 2006, and ended with a ceasefire 34 days later on August 14. During July, Sar-El had 750 volunteers from all over the world serving on bases all over Israel. During August, about 700 volunteers served. Their contribution was significant and recognized.

General Davidi says, "Because of the war with the Hezbollah in Lebanon, many Sar-El volunteers extended their stay in Israel. By showing their solidarity in a time of crisis, the volunteers contributed greatly towards raising morale."

"I needed to go there so that they—the soldiers, the people in the shop—could see that even in a time of war there are those who care and love Israel, who would be there," said Alan Vosko, 61, of Farmington Hills, MI. "It was the perfect way for me to help."

There were some notable war-time differences.

"There were a lot more soldiers at the base this time, and it was a whole different feeling," explained David Loeffler, 56, of Oak Park, MI, a five-time volunteer. "I'd listen to a transistor radio while I worked, and on the hour you'd hear when the funerals would be for the people killed the day before, and you'd hear about the people in the shelters."

Another difference was the amount of work that needed to be done.

"We worked almost around the clock, which is something we have never done," said Barbara Cantor of West Bloomfield, MI, who has volunteered with VFI 11 times since 1990. The usual workday is 8 hours, but many volunteers worked 12-15 hours, joining Israeli soldiers who were bused in to work throughout the night.

Jack Salem of Los Angeles said a group of French Jews were volunteering in Haifa when the missiles began falling. They were asked to evacuate to a less dangerous base. To a person they said they would return to France rather than leave their base. They said, "If missiles were falling on Israelis, we would not abandon our post." So they stayed.

"When the war broke out, I said, 'I have to go to Israel,'" explained Ed Kohl, 67, of West Bloomfield, MI. So shortly after celebrating his 25th wedding anniversary, he left for Israel.

"We all know Israel is a special place, and VFI is a special way to be a part of it. You build strong bonds with others and become like family, and the people who go are fantastic," said Kohl.

— STEVE PLOTKIN

“The only thing chicken about Israel is the soup.”

—Bob Hope

Interview with Major Tiran Attia, Commander of Sar-EL

Tiran Attia, the 39-year-old commander of Sar-El, has the direct, steady gaze and confident demeanor of a man who is used to being in a leadership role. He began his IDF career as a combat soldier in a tank unit and eventually rose to platoon commander. Later, he used his skills in the field of logistics, and two years ago assumed his current position.

Major Attia has responsibility for the more than 4,000 Sar-El volunteers—from across Israel and from abroad—who work on IDF bases each year. He indicated that most of his international volunteers come from France, the United States and the former Soviet Union.

"The work the volunteers do is important as is the financial saving that is a result of their work," he said. "But to me, their most important contribution is an added value." He says research has indicated that bases with volunteers show a decrease in discipline problems and number of deserters as well as an increase in morale and work productivity. The Sar-El volunteer's love for and dedication to Israel is apparent. They serve as positive role models for the young Israeli soldiers.

Major Attia said that his responsibility is to ensure volunteer satisfaction, to do whatever he can to make each person's experience a worthwhile and enjoyable one. He wants every volunteer to return home and spread the word about their Sar-El experience.

"I love my job," he said. "During my worst and most tiring days, I go to talk to the volunteers, and their smiles and positive energy lift my spirits."

— BEVERLY COHEN

VFI Regional Alumni Meetings

Illinois – The Chicago/Midwest Region has monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of every month, at 8:00 p.m., at 8610 Niles Center Rd, Skokie, IL. For more information, call 847.677.3817.

Mid-Atlantic Region – The Greater Washington, DC area of the Mid-Atlantic Region is starting a local group to help promote VFI in this area. To participate, please contact Marian Sacks at 301-603-9099 or mhsacks31@hotmail.com, or Vade Bolton at 703-860-0504 or vadebolton@comcast.net.

Los Angeles – For alumni reunion meeting schedule, call 323.661.7898.

New York – The Long Island “Gathering of Volunteers” is scheduled between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, November 5, 2006. This Israeli Wine and Cheese Party for Volunteers features a speaker from the Israeli Consulate. It is held at the North Shore Jewish Center, 385 Old Town Road, Port Jefferson Station, Long Island.

The cost is \$5. RSVP to george@vfi-usa.org or call 866.514.1948. This reunion is hosted by Eric Steinberg and Marilyn Aitken who request you bring a friend.

Philadelphia – The Philadelphia Region has responded to the increased need for volunteers in Israel. By October, 2006, our numbers are 50% greater than all of 2005! The volunteers are a mix of first timers and repeaters. 15% of all U.S. volunteers come from the Philadelphia Region.

Our alumni group meets four times a year. Over fifty people attended our October alumni meeting which featured Lawrence Husick, lawyer, terrorism expert and a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute's Center on Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism, and Homeland Security. He spoke on “Dealing with Terrorism: Why the US Will Never Learn from Israel's Experience.” His outstanding presentation was very well received by all. Our winter meeting is December 6 and the spring date is March 14, 2007. For more information, call 888.473.6527.

San Francisco – The San Francisco Region held a Reunion Picnic in Golden Gate Park on July 23. Over 30 returnees and their families as well as potential volunteers ate, reminisced and learned about VFI. The event was sponsored by Eugene Zauber and other returning Russian-speaking volunteers. They contributed drinks and food. Entertainment featured Anna Churikova, who sang songs about Israeli and Russian romance. The first president of the VFI San Francisco Region, Leah Garrick, also attended. Our next Reunion will be in February. For more information call 510.839.2900.

Eugene Zauber is organizing groups of Russian-speaking volunteers. He also is looking for returned volunteers to help promote VFI, especially in large metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles and Chicago. He can provide you with VFI brochures and newspaper ads in Russian and can help you organize informational gatherings. If you can help or would like to join or lead a group, contact Eugene at 415.759.0971 or eugenezauber@sbcglobal.net.

— **KAY WARREN**

BREAKING NEWS Note from General Davidi

Dear Friends,

I have decided to step down as the Chairman of Sar-El. It is good for Sar-El to have a young chairman and it is my duty to make the replacement as smooth as possible. Nehemia Dagan, a retired general of the IDF, is a good replacement. Since I will remain a member of the board, I'll help him with my 24 years of experience.

In the future, I will continue to meet with you and speak to the groups, although my work with Sar-El will be only one day a week instead of five.

This is an opportunity to thank you all for helping Israel and for the many friendships I have acquired during the last 24 years.

Shalom and lehitraot,
Davidi

VFI President's Message Continuity



During the recent war with Hezbollah, many VFI volunteers stopped what they were doing, contacted VFI, purchased their airline tickets and flew to Israel to lend a hand. They, like the other volunteers, like YOU, who have gone before them during prior wars, terror campaigns and dicey situations, understood that there comes a time when you are defined by what you do instead of what you say or wish you had done. VFI volunteers have been doing this for 24 years and we intend to continue into the foreseeable future.

I was personally gratified that the Israeli Embassy, the Israeli Consulates around the country, the Jewish Agency hotline, the United Jewish Community (UJC) hotline, and local Jewish Federation were all referring to VFI people who wanted to help Israel. VFI was one of the few organizations that continued to send volunteers during the war.

If you read the press – you are aware that another war with Hezbollah, Hamas, Syria and Iran is possible and expected. VFI will be here, ready as always, to help connect people to Israel.

B'Shalom,
— **Josef Herz, National President**

Join VFI as a Full Member

Support VFI by becoming a full member and receive your VFI business cards, membership card, subscription to Moment Magazine, this newsletter and other benefits. Basic annual membership contribution at the Chai level for \$18 provides those items.

The Meir level membership at \$50 also includes VFI luggage tags. At the Sharon level of \$100, you receive a tee shirt. The Dayan level is at \$250 and adds a duffle bag to the Chai level benefits. The Ben-Gurion level is at \$500 and above and provides you with a jacket.

VOLUNTEERS FOR ISRAEL MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM

Please check your desired level and return registration form, with your check payable to: “Volunteers For Israel,” to Marian Sacks, Treasurer, 13801 Bonsal Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20906

Ben-Gurion (\$500 and above) **Dayan** (\$250) **Sharon** (\$100) **Meir** (\$50) **Chai** (\$18)

FIRST NAME: _____ LAST NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE: _____ E-MAIL _____

VFI Respects Your Privacy and will not share your information with other organizations.

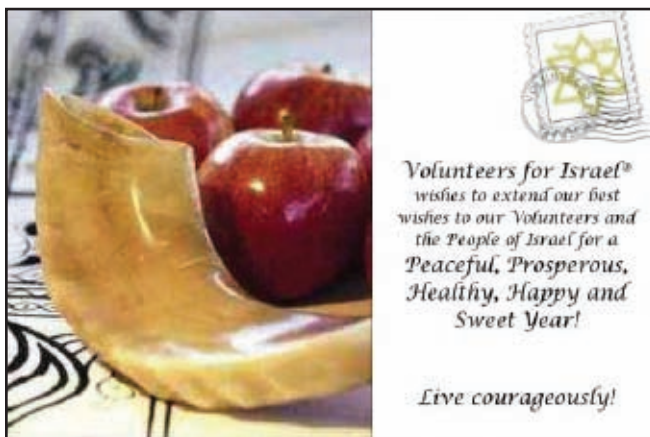
Single?

Interested in
a Singles Group
in Israel?

Meeting Like-
minded People?

Having Fun?

Finding Romance?



We seek singles who have been on the program to help us develop the criteria and programming for a Singles Group that would include the VFI / SAR-EL program along with other exciting and fun events.

If you wish to help to develop this new program option, call or e-mail Josef Herz, jaherz@vfi-usa.org or 212.643.4848 or 866.514.1948.

Ambassador for Israel Notes

The VFI Ambassadors for Israel Program is comprised of people who have volunteered in Israel and are now volunteering a little time, or a lot of time, in the United States to educate people about Israel and our VFI program. Ambassadors are busy throughout the country visiting friends, Jewish Federations, temples, synagogues and churches. They are introducing people to the VFI program and the benefits of an “adventure of a lifetime” at a time when Israel sorely needs help with reconstruction.

Do YOU remember what an adventure it was to volunteer in Israel? Do you remember how good it felt to make a difference, how important it was, **and still is**, to volunteer in Israel? Organize a reunion, a gathering, a house party of people who have volunteered, are thinking of volunteering or are interested in finding out more about volunteering in Israel.

I would like to highlight the efforts of Eric Steinberg and Marilyn Aitken of Long Island, NY, who are organizing a gathering of past VFI volunteers in their area. Ms. Ravit Bar-Av, the Chief Information and Education Officer of the New York Israeli Consulate, will speak to attendees about the current situation in Israel. The event will take place on Sunday, November 5, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the North Shore Jewish Center in Port Jefferson Station, NY. If you would like to attend, please RSVP to george@vfi-usa.org.

For information and help in organizing an event, or if you are interested in participating in the Ambassador for Israel Program, please e-mail me at: george@vfi-usa.org.

— GEORGE IVERSEN

DID YOU KNOW?

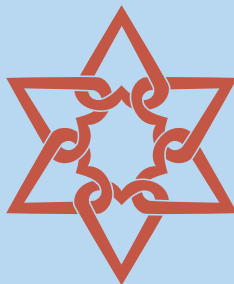
The SAR-EL work program includes:

FREE accommodations, plus

FREE kosher meals, plus

FREE military work uniforms, plus

**FREE lectures, possibly guided trips,
and immense personal satisfaction.**



“In Israel, in order to be a realist you must believe in miracles.”

—David Ben-Gurion

Why Do You Come Here?

Two soldiers from Ethiopia and I are conversing over a sunny table outside the mess hall when we hear, “Why do you come here?” We turn to see some soldiers walking by. One was looking straight at me, not even pausing for her answer. Before I could reply, she said, “What is it, some sort of Zionist thing?” All I could do was nod as she laughed and turned back to her friends.

“Why did you come here?” a Ben-Gurion security officer inquires. “Why don’t you just be a tourist?” asks a friend of a friend over dinner. “I don’t know why you are here, but I thank you,” says an Air Force pilot trainee. How can I answer without retelling my whole life story? What can I say that they will understand and relate to?

Only once do I remember answering fully. Our Madricha brought in three soldiers to speak to us. We sat in a half circle, fascinated as they told us about their work. The half-sniper smiles, “I shoot most accurately at half the distance of a sniper.” The jeep driver almost whispers, “We were driving through a dark, narrow street, lights off, on the way to arrest a man. You hear about people throwing stones, but there they threw a refrigerator down from a rooftop.” His voice cracks out, “They ruined my jeep!”

But the third man says nothing. He speaks only Arabic and Hebrew. He is an Arab-Israeli soldier and his buddies begin to translate for him. As a small boy, he admired the soldiers who entered his village. Today he fights for Israel against terrorists. His wife knows, but cannot tell friends or relatives. When off duty, he parties with the squad at their homes, but not at his. He experiences no discrimination, but it took him longer to complete his training. There aren’t many Arab-Israelis in the Army and he doesn’t know if he will make it his career.

He is very shy. They translate, “I have told you why I am here, may I ask why you are?” And suddenly I know my answer, “I come here for you.” I look at the other soldiers, at the Madricha, and at him. “My husband is a Viet Nam veteran and I have learned from his experience. I come to show you my appreciation and to thank you for all that you do.”

At the end of the evening, we all shake hands, but the third man does not let go of mine.

— KAY WARREN

Volunteer Program Schedules for 2006 and 2007

Programs start only on the specific Sundays (or following Monday) shown below. Volunteers can join for 2, 3, or more weeks.

Year 2006

Nov. 5 - 9, Special 1-week program
 Nov. 5 - 23, Nov. 26 - Dec. 14
 Dec. 17 - Jan. 4, 2007,
 Dec. 31 - Jan. 18, 2007

Year 2007 —

25th Anniversary Year
 Jan. 21 - Feb. 8
 Feb. 11 - Mar. 1
 Mar. 4 - 22, Mar. 18 - 29
 Apr. 15 - May 3
 May 6 - 22
 May 27 - June 14

June 17 - July 5, International Youth Program
 June 17 - July 5
 July 8 - 26, International Youth Program
 July 8 - 26
 July 29 - Aug 16
 Aug. 19 - Sept. 6

Sept. 16 - Oct. 4
 Oct. 7 - 25
 Oct. 29 - Nov. 15
 Nov. 18 - Dec. 6
 Dec. 9 - 27

See our web site at
www.vfi-usa.org
 for frequent special
 programs.

VFI Officers and Board for 2006/2007

Josef Herz, National President, WA, 425.235.8280, jaherz@vfi-usa.org
George Iversen, Vice President, NJ, 973.761.0549, george@vfi-usa.org
Marian Sacks, Treasurer, MD, 301.603.9099, mbsacks@vfi-usa.org
Ed Kohl, National Coordinator, MI, 248.788.0551, eskohl@vfi-usa.org
Vade Bolton, Recording Secretary, VA, 703.860.0504, vbolton@vfi-usa.org

Board Members:

Renee G. Bassell, CA
 Beverly Cohen, PA
 Joan Engel, NY
 Larry Feldman, MD
 Ed Koplin, CO

Marshall Lerner, NJ
 David Liebman, MD
 Howard Passman, MA
 Steve Plotkin, PA
 Jeanne S. Schachter, PA

Barry Stein, PA
 Carol Stein, PA
 Stephanie Stein, NY
 Kay Warren, CA



Kay Warren and
 Vade Bolton

The VFI *Volunteer Connection* is published quarterly by Volunteers for Israel (VFI). Copyright 2006, all rights reserved. VFI is a non-political, nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation with headquarters at 330 West 42nd Street, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10036. Telephone: 866.514.1948. E-mail: info@vfi-usa.org. Web site: www.vfi-usa.org.

Permission to reprint in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided the following credit line is used: "Reprinted by permission from Volunteers for Israel, www.vfi-usa.org." All trademarks herein belong to their respective owners. VFI and the Editor aim to publish accurate information and recommendations. Responsibility cannot be assumed by VFI, the Editor, contributors or any member, in the event of a claim of loss arising from any recommendation. Statements of contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect VFI policy. SUBSCRIPTION FREE UPON REQUEST to info@vfi-usa.org or toll free 866.514.1948.

—Steve Plotkin, Editor, steveplotkin@erols.com

www.vfi-usa.org • 1-866-514-1948

Better to be
 disliked
 than pitied.
 —Abba Eban

For unique adventure, the travel chance of a lifetime,
 and a frugal way to sample Israel, join the VFI Program.
 Get an insider's view of Israeli life, and make a difference.

THE VOLUNTEER
 CONNECTION
 FALL 2006

POSTMASTER:
 SEND ADDRESS
 CHANGES TO:
 Volunteers for Israel
 330 West 42nd Street, Suite 1618
 New York, NY 10036

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

HAS YOUR ADDRESS CHANGED?
 Do you know anyone who would
 like a free subscription?
 Please e-mail us at info@vfi-usa.org
 or call toll free 866.514.1948

Are you receiving VFI e-mail updates?
 To receive them simply send an
 e-mail to info@vfi-usa.org

NON-PROFIT
 ORG.
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 MEDIA, PA
 PERMIT NO. 100