

Knife attack in Tel Aviv PAGE 3

Iron Dome in the North

Israel thwarts terrorist attack; Iran brass killed

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel reportedly has deployed Iron Dome anti-missile defense systems in its North preparing for possible retaliation for an alleged Israeli airstrike on Syria.

The move was reported Monday evening, Jan. 19, by Sky News Arabia, which cited unnamed Israeli sources.

The Israel Defense Forces has neither confirmed nor denied the strikes.

An Iranian general and at least five Hezbollah members were killed in Sunday's airstrike in Quneitra.

The dead include Jihad Mughniyah, the son of the late Hezbollah military leader Imad Mughniyah, and Iran Gen. Mohammed Ali Allahdadi.

Allahdadi was in Syria to

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LOCAL EVENT

ADL civil rights

ADL's annual civil rights reception, honoring Terrance Carroll and Pat Steadman, is next Wednesday, Jan. 28, at 5:30 p.m.

50 YEARS LATER SELMA



David Sookne, front left, in Alabama during a voter registration drive in 1965. Bruce Hartford

By EDMON J. RODMAN

JTA

LOS ANGELES— How big of a "We" were the Jews in "We shall overcome"?

Since the nationwide release of "Selma" a week before the national holiday commemorating the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., I have wondered about the extent of Jewish participation in the civil rights movement. Was it just the Selma marches? Was our support also financial, in the voting booth? Or something more?

Albert Vorspan and David Saperstein concluded in their 1998 book Jewish Dimensions of Social Justice: Tough Moral Choices of Our Time.

"Jews served in the forefront of the fight to end racial segregation in education, public accommodations and voting."

But wanting to hear it from someone who was actually in the "forefront," I spoke with a Jewish recruit in the fight.

David Sookne may not sound like someone who served on the front lines of our nation's battle for civil rights. The semi-retired mathematician and computer programmer — a resident of suburban Los Angeles with whom I pray a couple of times a month — is exacting in speech and even tempered.

He's also blessed with an excellent memory: Sookne can name the people in the Roosevelt administration down to the level of the undersecretary.

So he vividly recalls his seven weeks spent in Alabama's rural Crenshaw County as a foot soldier in the voter registration campaign for blacks organized by King through the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

It was the summer of 1965 — after the Selma marches but before the passage of the Voting Rights

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Abraham Joshua Heschel, second from right, marches at Selma with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Dr. Ralph Bunche, Rep. John Lewis, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and Rev. C. T. Vivian.

Zeff gives IST, others \$5 million

'Joyce Zeff Israel Study Tour'; two 'sunset' endowments to JFS, JEWISHcolorado

JEWISHcolorado announced a gift of \$5 million from Joyce Zeff. This unprecedented gift ensures that the organizations and programs close to Zeff continue to thrive.

The gift is structured in three parts.

The first \$3 million creates a permanent endowment fund to benefit the Israel Study Tour (IST), one of the oldest Israel teen trips in the US.

"This gift enables one of our community's most treasured programs to exist in perpetuity," said Andra Davidson, chair of CAJE, the organization that adminis-



Joyce Zeff

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70 YEARS LATER

DACHAU



Inmates at Dachau immediately after liberation. Sid Shafner, who liberated Dachau, has collected many such photos.

By ANDREA JACOBS

IJN Senior Writer

Sid Shafner, 93, is reading the newspaper alone at a corner table at Brookdale Mountain View. Sitting in a wheelchair, he blends into the crowd. No one would suspect that 70 years ago he was one of the first US soldiers to liberate Dachau.

Sid, who received two Bronze Stars for bravery in WW II, has a sweet disposition that dismisses sentimentality. He enlisted in the army at 18, fought in France and Germany, and lived to tell the tale.

Although Sid has spoken about the war to family, friends, veterans, reporters and students, he realized the heroism of an entire generation was fading away.

Then Regis University repaid its former student by fulfilling a dream that waited seven decades to see the sun.

Sid, forced to leave school because

his country needed him, received an honorary degree from Regis University President Father John Fitzgibbons, SJ, at a heartwarming ceremony on Dec. 21, 2014.

The idea originated with Elisa Robyn, Regis' dean of humanities and social sciences, who met Sid at the shiva for his brother Sol Shafner.

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NEWS: Dachau at 70 years

Sid Shafner helped liberate Dachau

They cried, 'Thank you liberator, thank you liberator,' in broken English



SID AND ESTHER SHAFNER, CIRCA 1946

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er in October.

"Sid motioned for me to come over," recalls Robyn, who is Jewish. "He said, 'Tell me about yourself.' Then he shared his memories of Regis.

"He talked about his calculus class, the hallways, the students, the teachers," Robyn says. "His memories were so clear."



HONORED

Regis University, Dec. 21, 2014

When he told her he never graduated due to WW II, Robyn set the wheels in motion "and Regis pulled everything together in three short months."

Sid, a Philadelphia native, enlisted in the army right after Pearl Harbor and initially served in the Signal Corps.

When the Army Specialized Training Corps was formed to educate future doctors and engineers to rebuild post-war Europe, approximately 20,000 servicemen were selected for the program; 2,000 were assigned to Regis University.

Then 20, Sid had never heard the word Jesuit. "I didn't know what it meant," he says. "I called home and told my father I was going to college to study engineering.

"My dad said, 'We can't afford to send you to college,' but I said don't worry, Uncle Sam was footing the bill.

"When he asked what kind of college it was, I told him it was run by Catholic priests. My dad couldn't believe his ears. 'What, a nice Jewish boy is attending a Catholic school?' I reassured him it would be fine.

"I had a very pleasant time at Regis," Sid says. "The priests were very nice. I tried real hard to be a good student because I was afraid the army would make me go overseas if I flunked out. Some kids went to Lakeside or Elitches in the evening, but I behaved myself."

During this time he met Esther Dranoff, the beautiful young lady who would become his wife.

After one year at Regis and despite his good behavior, Sid was pulled from school to join the fighting. "The army decided it needed as many men as possible for the incoming American invasion."

For Sid, the war had begun.

Now in a small office in his apartment, Sid's lightning sharp mind paints the walls with flashing archival images. It's like watching a well-preserved newsreel, jumping here, there, everywhere. His narrative style is unhesitant and direct.

In March, 1944, the 20,000 servicemen in the training program, including 2,000 students at Regis University, were assigned to the 42nd infantry (Rainbow Division) at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma.

They landed in Marseilles, France, nine months later, on Dec. 10, 1944.

"I was in the reconnaissance unit," Sid says. "My platoon consisted of seven jeeps, four men to a jeep — 28 men in total. Each jeep had a .30 caliber machine gun on the front passenger's side.

"We went north from Marseille through Lyon and Dijon, France, and stopped in Alsace-Lorraine, just up the Rhine River near Strasbourg, France."

The Germans were on the east side of the Rhine, and Sid's platoon was on the west side.

"We played volleyball with the Germans," he says with a slight laugh. "This means they were throwing artillery at us and we were throwing it back at them. That's volleyball."

Right after Christmas, 1944, the soldiers prepared for their first battle — capturing Schweinfurt and Wurzburg, Germany. Then they received orders to investigate a fire in a nearby village.

"A house was on fire but there was no sign of life inside," Sid says. "When we drove into the next village, we ran into an ambush."

Out of the 28 men in his platoon, 12 survived the skirmish. The rest were killed, and some "may have been taken prisoner," he suspects.

Crippled by the ambush, they found shelter in a hayloft near a farmhouse. "We couldn't engage with the Germans because we only had 12 men," Sid explains. "We didn't know how many Germans were out there but we could hear them taking our jeeps."

Finally the farm's owner came in the barn and started climbing the ladder to the hayloft. He was carrying a pitchfork.

"At first we thought it was a weapon," Sid says. "So I grabbed him by the neck and asked him if the Germans were still around. I warned him that if he lied to me, I would kill him."

The farmer swore that the Germans were gone. The men descended the ladder, clumsily impeded by their rifles. "We were like sitting ducks on that ladder, without protection."

In the morning, the soldiers jumped in one remaining jeep. The motor was running. Twelve men crowded in the jeep and proceeded east to Nuremberg. Replacements met them.

"After Nuremberg, we went south toward Munich. On the way we encountered a 15-year-old Hitler Youth up a tree. He aimed at the tank behind us, hit the sergeant in the neck and killed him.

"We shot the boy and he fell out the tree, dead. He had a gun, brass knuckles and a knife. I guess he thought he was going to win the war with those weapons."

Sid pauses.

"We hated to kill a boy his age, you know? But he killed one of ours. It was either us or them. This

was our motto."

The soldiers were ordered to inspect a bridge and see whether it had been destroyed. The bridge was intact — but Sid will never forget what followed.

"Our own airplanes started attacking us because the pilots thought we were Germans," Sid says, his eyes enlarging as he mentally flinches with each bullet.

"We flew out of our jeeps and crawled underneath them to escape friendly fire. But the Americans kept hitting us. The whole thing must have lasted two or three minutes."

Sid sprang into the jeep and turned on the radio. "I'm not one to use profanity," he grins. "But I used some very profane language to get them to stop shooting! And they stopped."

According to the map, the next stop on the route to Munich was a small village called Dachau. No one had ever heard of it. Afterward, no one could forget it.

Sid had heard rumors about concentration camps, but until he marched into Dachau he had no idea of the massive scale of European Jewry's annihilation. Even after he saw the human wasteland, he couldn't absorb it.

Whenever the Rainbow Division arrived in an unfamiliar village, it immediately shot the church steeple in case German snipers were waiting in the rafters.

In that single, strategic respect, Dachau was no different — except this time American gunfire suddenly attracted "hundreds of people in strange clothes running from all directions," Sid says. "All hell broke loose."

It was April 29, 1945.

"Young people wearing striped pajamas started yelling and dancing. We were prepared to fight but not for this. The sight of them completely surprised us.

"Finally two youngsters about 16 or 17 who seemed in pretty good shape came up to me. They spoke Yiddish, which I understood because my grandparents taught me Yiddish.

"I asked them, 'What's going on here?' One of them said, 'Come quick, come quick, there's a camp down the road and people are being killed there! And people are trapped inside a railroad car. We need your help!'

"I asked, 'Are you serious? We're soldiers. I don't understand what you're telling us about a camp and bodies in a train.' The other man cried, 'It's true, it's true, help us!'"

Sid called for his commanding officer two jeeps behind him and told him what the kids said. "He ordered me to ask them whether they were telling the truth because we didn't have time to fool around. They said yes, they were telling the truth."

The commander got on his radio, called headquarters and told them what was happening. "At first there were only 12 of us, but we got permission to go to the camp. It was right down the street from the village.

"And the sight of the camp... was unbelievable."

Sid looks away.

"We only had one medic with us. We did what we could to make things comfortable for those inmates who could still stand."

When did he realize that the vast majority of inmates were Jewish?

"I didn't," Sid says. "Not right away.

"What did I see? I saw a bunch of people in pajamas speaking a strange language. Most of them spoke either Yiddish or Polish. They

were dancing for joy, thanking us in broken English, 'Thank you liberator, thank you liberator.'"

Before long a medical battalion arrived at the concentration camp. "The medics tried to care for the prisoners as best they could and cleaned them up. They were concerned about typhus and other diseases.

"We made a few mistakes, like giving them some of our chocolate. We thought chocolate would make them feel better. But their stomachs had shrunk and they couldn't digest it. It made them sick."

For Sid and his fellow combatants, instinctive training buffered the chaos. It took a while to fully comprehend the horror in front of their eyes.

"When things calmed down a bit I returned to the village," Sid says. "I happened to see a 17-year-old kid crying in front of a tree. He couldn't speak English. I couldn't speak Polish. So we communicated in Yiddish.

"He was very articulate and spoke perfect Yiddish. I said to him, almost as a joke, 'How come you speak such beautiful Yiddish? I was kidding but he took me seriously.

"He replied, 'What's the matter with you? I'm Jewish and the child of Jews. I ought to be speaking Yiddish.' I was very impressed with that. I never forgot his answer."

The Jews trapped in the railroad car, Sid adds, died shortly before the Rainbow Division could free them.

The Rainbow Division was in Dachau for one unforgettable day. Although those 24 hours suspended for an eternity, the soldiers had to push on and complete their ultimate mission — the surrender of the Third Reich.

Sid asked the two 17-year-olds who first alerted him to Dachau's dreadful existence to remain with the GIs. Originally from Salonica, Greece, the kids agreed. They had little reason to believe that their families had survived.

"One young man was Marcel Levy," Sid says. "I forget the name of the second boy. They stayed with us for a year."

The division received orders to march into Munich and capture the town, which was relatively easy. The next stop was Salzburg, Austria.

"Around May 7 or 8, we were informed that the war was over," Sid says. "We were out of danger, we relaxed and cleaned our equipment," he says.

Sid also had time to reflect on Dachau and its implications. His realizations and anger mounted over time, but he was still on active duty.

"A rumor circulated about concentration camp guards who remade their uniforms into civilian clothes," he says. "We were ordered to follow them up a mountain and apprehend them."

The two young men from Dachau accompanied the Rainbow Division. "Make sure you take off their shirts and look under their armpits for an SS tattoo," they insisted, Sid recalls.

"We found about a dozen guards and checked their armpits for the SS insignia. Every one of them had the tattoo. We took them into the woods and killed them."

(Sid learned that the SS guards tried to escape over the same mountain pass used by "The Sound of Music" Von Trapp Family Singers to flee the Nazis. "Can you believe that?")

OBITUARIES

Sadie Bergman



Sadie Weiss Heyman Bergman, 97, a former Denver resident, passed away Jan. 11, 2015, in Winter Haven, Fla. Private services were held at Mt. Nebo Cemetery. Feldman Mortu-

ary made the arrangements.

Sadie was born Sept. 18, 1917, in Newark, NJ, to the late Hayman and Jennie Chaytinski Weiss.

Before coming to Winter Haven, she lived in Nutley, NJ, Morristown, NY, Denver and Delray Beach, Fla.

She was predeceased by Nat Heyman, her husband of 44 years; and Sam Bergman, her husband of 14 years.

Sadie is survived by her sons Jerry (Jeanne) Heyman of Winter Haven and Stan (the late Joyce) Heyman of San Diego, Calif; grandchildren Ken (Martha) Heyman, Sharon (Rod) Xanthos, Cory (Heather) Heyman, Amy (Massimo) Giuliani and Melissa Gordon; 15 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.

Mark Stuart Miller



Mark Stuart Miller, promotor and producer of the Gabby Gourmet Shows, passed away Jan. 11, 2015, in Denver. Rabbi Steven Foster officiated at the Jan. 14 graveside service at

Mt. Nebo Cemetery. Feldman Mortuary made the arrangements.

"He was our ethical and moral compass — honest, straight and true," the family said. "He never lost his sense of humor, even on the worst day of struggling against Parkinson's Disease, but his humor was never barbed or hurtful."

"He wanted to help everyone and anyone and certainly achieved that desire. He loved traveling, photography and so much more."

"But above all else he adored his wife Pat and dedicated his later years to helping build her career."

"He was happy to be known as 'Mr. Gabby Gourmet.'"

Mr. Miller was born April 11, 1932, in Denver to the late Jacob and Ethyl Rose Miller.

He graduated East High in 1950 and Colorado A&M (now CSU) in 1954.

In 1954, he married Patricia Anne Greiper, who later became known as the Gabby Gourmet.

Mr. Miller entered into the family's ranching, land, oil, water and mineral resources business, Joe Miller and Co., and remained with the company until the mid-1990s.

He then joined his wife as promoter, producer and sales executive for the Gabby Gourmet Shows.

"I'd find him reading the IJN obituary section and ask him, 'Why?' one family member said. "He would say, 'I'm looking for my name. If I don't see it, it will be a good day.'"

Mr. Miller is survived by his wife Pat Miller; sons Steve (Carol) Miller and John Miller, PhD; sister Lieba Alpert; and grandchildren Joey and Hannah Miller.

Contributions may be made to The Denver Hospice or the National Parkinson's Foundation, 200 SE 1st St., #800, Miami, FL 33131.

Jack Polak



NEW YORK (JTA) — Jack Polak, a Holocaust survivor who helped found the Anne Frank Center USA in New York, has died at 102.

Polak, who toured the country to talk about his experiences in the Holocaust, died Jan. 9.

The Anne Frank Center USA, which formed as a consolidation of the Anne Frank Foundation, was founded in 1977. Polak served as the center's president and chairman for many years. In 1992 he was knighted by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands for his work.

Polak was born in Amsterdam to an Orthodox Jewish family. In 1943, in his early 30s, he was deported to the Westerbork concentration camp before being sent to the Bergen-Belsen camp in northern Germany. He was freed after 14 months by the Russian army and returned to Amsterdam.

Polak and the woman who would become his second wife, Ina, released a book based on their correspondence while in Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen. *Steal a Pencil for Me* was later the subject of a documentary film and an opera.

In 1951, he and Ina moved to the US, settling in the New York suburb of Eastchester. Polak worked as a tax consultant in addition to speaking on his Holocaust experiences.

Dovid Winiarz



BALTIMORE (JTA) — Rabbi Dovid Winiarz, the self-proclaimed "Facebook Rebbe" for his outreach efforts over Facebook, was killed in a car accident on an icy road in

Maryland.

Winiarz, 49, of New York, was a passenger on Sunday morning, Jan. 18, in a vehicle that lost control in the icy conditions and struck another car. He was on his way to a Jewish outreach convention in Baltimore.

More than 400 people attended his funeral on Monday on Staten Island. Winiarz was the father of 10 children.

The driver and the front seat passenger, as well as the two passengers in the other car, survived the crash, according to reports.

Winiarz was president of Survival Through Education Inc., which calls on Jews to discover their faith and reach out to unaffiliated Jews, and served as the rabbi at the Multi-Faith Center at the College of Staten Island, Willowbrook.

He often posted short Torah studies teachings on his Facebook page, which has nearly 13,000 followers.

Among his last Facebook posts reads: "I will be travelling Motzai Shabbos/Saturday nite with the encouragement of my wife and children to a convention in Baltimore . . . If I am delayed in replying to messages . . . please bear with me."

NEWS

Dachau at 70 years

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The division arrived in Vienna with the army of occupation. During his explorations, Sid discovered a building he describes as a cultural center "like the JCC. It housed a number of families liberated from Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia."

"The rooms were partitioned with sheets to give them their privacy. I was fully aware of what they had suffered at this point, so I got them extra food from the army kitchen and brought it to them whenever I had a chance."

He also understood that the families of these liberated Jews were scattered all over the world and "had no idea these people were alive. I told survivors I would use the army post office to contact their relatives."

"They wrote the letters and I mailed them to Palestine, England, America, Australia, you name it."

Locating survivors' families was a lengthy, complicated process. "Some responses arrived while I was still in Vienna but many reached me after I was sent home to Denver. I mailed the letters to people who might be able to find the survivors. I still have the copies. But I never heard anything back."

"I was discharged in April, 1946," Sid says without a faucet of emotion. "The two kids from Dachau came to me and said, 'You're going home. What's going to happen to us?' They had not registered with displaced person's camps. They had nowhere to go."

Upon discovering that the American Joint Distribution Committee had an office in Vienna that reunited Holocaust survivors with their families, Sid told them about the two kids from Dachau. "I knew Marcel had an uncle in Tel Aviv. The Joint contacted the uncle and Marcel joined him in Palestine."

The other Dachau survivor, who had turned 18, met a Viennese girl and decided to remain in Vienna. Sid lost contact with him.

"Marcel Levy married a *sabra*, had two daughters and is now a great-grandfather living in Israel," Sid beams. "We've stayed in touch all these years."

In 1981, Sid visited Marcel for the first time in 25 years in Tel Aviv. "I arrived at his hotel at 9 p.m., right after the plane landed. Marcel had been waiting for me since 9 a.m."

Regis contacted Marcel in mid-fall of 2014 to see if he could come to Denver for the ceremony. "Marcel sent me an email: 'Mazel tov! I hear it's very cold in Denver. Take care of yourself.'" Sid laughs. "He must be 86 or 87 now."

But who knows?"

At Dachau, Sid Shafner witnessed the most depraved evil the Nazis could dish out. Does it haunt him? "No," he says. Then he qualifies his answer.

"You have to remember that we were trained to fight. We spent only one day in Dachau. We were used to seeing people get killed. I was a soldier."

"I am also Jewish. I saw that young man crying by the tree because he was a proud Jew who deserved to speak Yiddish. At the time I partially understood what happened there. But I was not trained to help."

"I saw so much death before Dachau. Yes, I was angry. But I'm not a sentimental person."

The truth didn't sink in until Vienna, when Sid was able to fully contemplate the significance of the Nazi crimes against the Jews and started helping the survivors as much as possible.

He mentions a Jewish man in his outfit whose connection to Nazi brutality was deeply personal.

"This soldier was a German Jew," Sid says. "His family had sent him out of Germany but they stayed there — and the Nazis killed them."

"This man was about 35, and tormented. He had an ax to grind. 'At Dachau, he asked the inmates to point out the cruelest guards, lined them up against the wall, and shot them.'"

The Red Cross turned him in. "He was taken to Stuttgart to be court martialed."

When Gen. George S. Patton heard of the man's case, he defended the soldier. "You did a good job," Patton said. "I would have killed those bastards myself." The court returned a verdict of not guilty.

Sid never returned to college after his discharge. Sid and Esther became engaged and were married in 1946. "I had responsibilities," he says without regret. "I worked as a real estate broker for many years."

Esther and Sid have three children, Elaine, Mark and Alan; seven grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

"The Regis ceremony was incredible," he says as he displays newspaper clippings of the event. "It took only 70 years to get a diploma!"

His crowded table also overflows with prints of Dachau — many unfit for publication.

"I'm proud that I was able in some small way to help these people with food and contacting their relatives," Sid says simply. "I did what I could."

Andrea Jacobs may be reached at andrea@ijn.com.

Austria may seize Hitler's home

VIENNA (JTA) — The Austrian government is looking into expropriating Adolf Hitler's childhood home.

Trying to ensure the house is not turned into a neo-Nazi shrine, the Interior Ministry may seize the home if its owner refuses to sell it to the government, AP reported last week.

The owner, who has not publicly been identified, reportedly has turned down past offers to sell.

The house, which draws neo-Nazi visitors, has stood empty for the past three years after the owner refused to authorize needed renovations, AP reported.

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Wilf: Israel must review its public relations skills

WILF from Page 8

of the causes they ally themselves with today are not causes of goodwill," Wilf says.

"One favorite example is 'Justice for Palestine.'"

"It sounds like a wonderful cause. Who doesn't want justice for Palestine?"

"Until you dig deeper and realize that the injustice that is to be corrected is Zionism and the very existence of the State of Israel, the nation state of the Jewish people. Then 'Justice for Palestine' begins to appear as a very sinister pur-

pose rather than a very good cause."

Israel has a crucial role to play in the debate, Wilf says. It must revive its skills at *hasbarah* — Hebrew for public relations — and do a much better job of presenting its case to the world.

"We were good at it when our survival depended on it. I want to argue that our survival depends on it again and therefore we need to get good at it again."

"We need to send some of our best and brightest to our intellectual defense."

Chris Leppek may be reached at ijnews@aol.com.