

Israel Senior News

News and Issues affecting

Israel's Seniors

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Rosh Chodesh Elul

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בט"ד

Dear Readers,

The month of Elul and the High Holiday season are times of contemplation and reflection. We are given the opportunity to face our actions-- both positive and negative-- and hopefully to learn and grow from them. During this time of year, we are reminded that we can not only imagine a better world, but actually help create one.



This issue of Israel Senior Life honors both our desire as human beings to improve our world, and our ability as human beings to act in accordance with that desire. It is a tribute to our ability not just to choose, but to choose wisely and well.

The article from the Jerusalem Post profiles an extraordinary senior citizen who was able to realize his power as an individual to improve a grim reality during World War II. The extraordinary nature of his accomplishment is further astounding in light of Mindy Aber Barad's poem, which deals with the extreme suppression experienced by victims of war.

On the lighter side, Ben Goldfarb's short story poignantly mocks a group of elder dreamers who suddenly realize the power they have within them to actualize their goals for the world. Both the article and the story highlight the power of individuals to change the world for the better.

Please continue sending you submissions, as Israel Senior Life is intended to reflect your views and creativity.

May we be blessed with a meaningfully reflective Elul, and a new year filled with growth, happiness, health and fulfillment. May we further merit, as individuals and as a community, to make this world a better place.

Chodesh Tov and Besorot Tovot,

In This Issue:

UNsung HOLOCAUST HERO
CELEBRATES 100TH BIRTHDAY

As reported in The Jerusalem Post

IF I WERE PRESIDENT

by Ben Goldfarb

GRAY HAIR

by Mindy Aber Barad

UPDATE: NEW PEOPLE BEING
SERVED BY SENIOR-TO-SENIOR

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If I Were President

By Ben Goldfarb

Every Monday-Friday morning at 11AM, three retired professionals met at the same café in Manhattan. They passed their time complaining about the government, society, and the inefficiency of the postal system. After they ran out of things to critique, they paid their bill, left a hefty tip, and went home to their wives, who had some complaints of their own.

Peter Hart was the ringleader of the malcontents. After the preliminary discussions about which prescription

Tamara Fine Skversky
Editor

In Loving Memory



Ezrat Avot dedicates this issue of Israel Senior Life in loving memory of our dear friend and dedicated employee **Shmuel Ben-Aharon, z"l**. Shmuel passed away unexpectedly on the first day of Rosh Chodesh Elul at the young age of 32. He served Ezrat Avot for the past three years delivering food packages to homebound elderly all across Jerusalem. His devoted efforts greatly contributed to the success of our Senior-to-Senior program and brought tremendous peace-of-mind to many needy senior citizens. The Ezrat Avot family will remember Shmuel fondly and will miss him very much. *Yehi Zichro Baruch*.

Unsung Holocaust hero celebrates 100th birthday By Associated Press Atlanta, as printed in *The Jerusalem Post*

Andre Steiner was the muscle behind one of the most daring - and overlooked - missions to save Jews during the Holocaust.

In his youth, before he became a renowned architect, he helped engineer a plan to stave off the deportation of Slovakia's Jews through a network of work camps and a series of bribes that likely helped save the lives of thousands.



Andre Steiner speaks with a reporter in the retirement home where he lives in Atlanta. Photo AP

The last living member of the underground network that devised the plan, Steiner marked his 100th birthday Friday in a retirement tower north of Atlanta.

He's hard of hearing but his mind and memory are sharp, and his crystal blue eyes sparkle when he talks about his experience.

Wearing a loose flannel shirt and jeans that hung off his thin body during a recent visit, he was sporting two white hearing aids that blended with his close-cropped beard. But visitors still had to shout in his ear to be heard.

"Imagine - a hundred years," he said in a thick, halting accent.

drugs they were taking, and which of their friends had died or were playing dead, Peter would state, "If I were President of this country, things would be different."

The other gentlemen, British and Israeli ex-patriots respectively, took their cue, swearing if they were the Prime Ministers of England and Israel the entire free world would be different.

One morning, just as Peter bemoaned the soaring price of crude oil and claimed he could make the US less dependent upon fossil fuels, three men in black approached their table.

"Are you Peter Hart?" one of the men asked.

"Yeah, what's it to you?" Peter answered.

"Please come with us. The three of you are under arrest," the man continued.

"For what? Over-tipping?" Peter said and started laughing.



The agents retained their stoic expression. They displayed their FBI badges and one of them began reciting the Miranda rights.

"Spare yourselves the right to remain silent garbage. I'm a retired lawyer. You've got nothing on the three of us and if you leave now, I won't sue your boss," Peter threatened.

"The sooner you cooperate, the sooner you will get back home," the

"It's nearly too much."

Steiner already was in his late 20s when the Nazis occupied Czechoslovakia, bringing with them anti-Jewish laws they had spread through much of the rest of Europe. His father-in-law fled to England in 1938, but Steiner settled in Bratislava with his wife and young son.

He was arrested after Nazis seized control of the country, but was later released to finish a building project in town. He began designing work camps and other sites for the Nazis, hoping the Jewish community would be better off if they cooperated. Soon he had 4,000 people working in 130 workshops at the camps, making an array of items for the German war effort. At lunch, he gathered with other young Jews to talk about ways to improve conditions for the Jews. The band soon became known as the Bratislava Working Group.

But as Slovaks began a massive deportation of Jews to concentration camps in Poland in 1942, the group's mission changed as well. It decided to focus on finding a way - any way - to rescue Jews in Slovakia.

"We wanted to help in any way we could," he said. "It was a very close-knit friendship with one ideal: to help the Jews."

One of the members, Rabbi Michael Dov Weissmandl, had heard a rumor that a Nazi official was willing to accept cash bribes to keep Jews off the dreaded deportation list. Soon, they had devised a back story for their gambit: They were negotiating on behalf of a fictitious world Jewish leader named Ferdinand Roth.

When it was time for a face-to-face meeting, the group picked Steiner, the confident man who cut a dashing figure with slicked back hair and a golden tongue. Inside, though, Steiner was awash with anxiety. A single misstep could have cost him his life and betray the group's effort.

Asking the rabbi for advice, he got a most unexpected answer: Imagine the Nazi sitting on a toilet nude. When he arrived at the meeting and did just that, he couldn't stifle a smirk.

"He got really angry but I told him if you're angry we won't make a deal. He conceded, then said, 'Take a seat,'" Steiner remembers. "From then on, I wasn't nervous at all."

Steiner soon became the go-to-guy for the group's negotiations with local leaders and Nazi officials, handing over cash installments smuggled in through contacts in Europe, America

taller of the men said like an annoyed camp counselor.

"And if we refuse?" Peter asked.

"You will be resisting arrest, and things will get sticky," he said.

"You and your friends can leave the café with or without handcuffs. We'll have you back home in a few hours."

"If I were president of the US, law abiding citizens wouldn't be hauled off by power hungry FBI agents," Peter said.

The cantankerous trio cooperated reluctantly and left the café amidst the stares of customers and wait staff.

They were escorted into a waiting SUV, and drove for a few moments. Before they got out of the vehicle, they were blindfolded. When their blindfolds were removed, they were sitting in a movie theater.

"I'm going to win this lawsuit. You guys don't stand a chance. I've got years of experience fighting the big guys," Peter said.

The assistant director of the FBI walked out on stage. "Sorry for the inconvenience, gentlemen. You've been chosen to take part in a simulation," he said.

"Chosen without our permission," Peter said.

"It's all legal. The FBI has lawyers too, you know," the assistant director said.

"So what's this all about?" Tom, the

and elsewhere.

"He was the foot soldier of the group," said Jacob Fuchs, a Tel Aviv author who chronicled the group. "He went out there and risked his neck in actual negotiations."

Buoyed by its success, the group planned to boost the bribes to save Jews through the rest of the continent, but it couldn't come up with the cash. Their work was sidelined for good in September 1944 when Slovak partisans revolted, drawing a crushing response from the German military.

Steiner and his family fled to the mountains, hiding there for months until peasants from the countryside came with the welcome news that the war had ended. Newly liberated, Steiner moved to Cuba in 1948 and then the US in 1950, settling with relatives in Atlanta.

He became a celebrated architect here, responsible for planning some of the state of Georgia's largest attractions, from Stone Mountain Park to Emory University. He was also known for more ambitious ideas, like a 1970s proposal for a mini-city in downtown Atlanta that could be home to 130,000 people.

When shown a newspaper clipping about the project, he dismissed it with a wave of his hands. "Plans, schmlans," he said. "Only plans."

Steiner's long life has had its share of sorrow. He still regrets divorcing his first wife. He fought off colon cancer a dozen years ago, a stroke two years back. And he's outlived his two sons, who both died recently.

But he has long since come to terms with his quixotic relationship with the Nazi, a man he bribed with labor and money in hopes of saving his fellow Jews.

"He's an enemy in whose hand is the future."

British ex-patriot said, uttering his first words since the ordeal began.

"Using our sophisticated computers, we are simulating a world in which Peter is the President of the United States, Tom is the Prime Minister of England, and Uri is the PM of Israel," he continued.

"We made a list of your strengths and weaknesses and compared them to the current men in power. We then extrapolated what kind of world we would have if the three of you were in charge," the assistant director said.

"Don't you have better things to do with the taxpayers' money?" Uri, the expatriate Israeli asked.

"We see this as a worthwhile investment," he continued, "Anyway, we selected various factors to judge your success in your respective offices: Economic benchmarks such as cost of living and inflation rate, statistics on violent crime, and the number of terrorist incidents. Let's take a look," he said and the lights dimmed.

Three films played one after the other.

The men witnessed press conferences with each one of them at the microphone, spewing powerful rhetoric. While their new world order had increased rights for the elderly, government subsidies for high fiber foods, and increased efficiency at the post office, the world still looked and felt the same.

"What exactly is the point of this virtual nonsense?" Peter asked.

"We just ran the film. The

Gray Hair
by Mindy Aber Barad

A stray gray hair
Escaped from under
The brown wig
Is it safe to come out now?
The guns have stopped thundering
And the dogs no longer bark
Is it safe?



The stray gray hair
Has been hidden for years
Under the brown wig
Waiting for the war to end.

Mindy Aber Barad moved to Israel in 1977. She has a BA from Washington University in St. Louis, and an LLB from Hebrew University. Though she practiced law, writing is her career of choice. In 1997, Ms. Barad won second prize in the Jewish Librarians' Choice competition, for a children's story, Hannah's Succah (published in a Pitspopy anthology: Jewish Humor Stories for Kids). Her poetry, stories, book reviews and essays have been published in Wild Plum, Current Accounts, the Jerusalem Post, the Jewish Press and other publications both on and off line.

Update: New People Being Served by "Senior to Senior"

Each month, Ezrat Avot receives new requests to deliver hot meals to sick and homebound senior citizens all around Jerusalem. All suffer from severe financial distress in addition to health problems. Most receive a meager state pension, from which they have to pay for rent and medication, leaving little or no money for food.

Sarah P. – a 79 year old divorcee who has no children and lives alone. Sarah underwent two hip operations and suffers from a severe lung disease that requires special medication for which she has to pay out of her meager state pension, leaving little for food. She receives a weekly package of 7 meals and Ezrat Avot is helping her find sources of funding for her medical expenses.

Shoshana O. – a 70 year old widow who suffers from such severe osteoporosis that she is barely unable to stand up or walk on her own. Shoshana needs constant medical treatment and has no energy to cook for herself.

Shimon P. – an 80 year old widower who was recently hospitalized and is unable to look after himself. Shimon suffers from diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and asthma.

Asher F. – a 75 year old widower who is semi-disabled and lives with a retarded elderly daughter who is unable to look

interpretation is up to you. Thanks for your time. We will take you back home now," the assistant director said, and walked off the stage.

The three men hibernated for a few days. They didn't make their 11 o'clock meeting at the café for a full week. After some intense sulking, Peter made a few calls and the dynamic trio was up and running again.

Peter reasoned that history was a complex interplay of destiny and human effort. Their toil seemed to be a condition, a pre-requisite as it were, as opposed to an actual catalyst for change.

Even though the three of them couldn't change the world as heads of state, they were convinced they could make a positive impact on their corner of the universe.

The next week, the group met at the cafe, but for Sunday brunch along with their wives. On Monday and Thursdays, the three volunteered at a soup kitchen to help put real food in real hungry stomachs.

On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, each man went to a different inner-city high school to volunteer in a mentoring program. Fridays were designated for some self-indulgence involving poker games, cigars, and bowling.

The three men had learned a great deal from their FBI experience. Their complaining decreased and their well being increased even if their letters still arrived late.

Ben Goldfarb was born and raised in El

after her father.

Esther Ben S. – a 76 year old widow who lives on her own and recently underwent a severe muscular operation of the neck which left her semi-disabled and partly blind, and unable to look after herself.

Lazar G. – a 70 year old widower who lives alone in extremely poor conditions and is unable to cook for himself.

Avraham O. – is a 65 year old divorced man who lives on his own and is unable to look after himself, following a severe depression which requiring psychiatric hospitalization and by-pass surgery.

Mark and Ina B – are an elderly couple from Russia who live on meager resources. Ina suffers from dementia and her husband is unable to look after her. Their one daughter has a large family and does not live in Jerusalem.

We hope that this e-zine will give you a window onto life for seniors in Israel today.

Every month we will send you the latest news, together with profiles of veteran Israelis, reviews, articles and poetry written by or about seniors.

To subscribe, [click here](#) 

To submit a piece, email: info@ezratavot.org

Paso, Texas, and is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin. He moved to Israel in 1988, and now lives with his wife and children in Jerusalem. Ben is the founder and director of Paradigm Shift Communications. He has given seminars and training sessions at Israel Aircraft Industry and Philips Medical Systems.

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Israel Senior Life is a publication of Ezrat Avot

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We welcome comments and submissions to info@ezratavot.org

Ezrat Avot is a non-profit organization that provides services, resources and education to enable Israel's elderly to age in the comfort and dignity of their own homes and communities.

September 1st-October 30th your donation is worth more! The Feinstein Foundation has invited Ezrat Avot to participate in its first Fall Anti-Hunger \$100,000 giveaway. In anticipation of the upcoming holidays, every donation we receive between September 1st and October 30st will be counted towards a percentage of a \$100,000 grant. We once again applaud US philanthropist Alan Shaun Feinstein for so graciously reaching out to assist Israeli charities.

[To support our activities, click here](#)

Ezrat Avot 7 Tarmab, P.O.Box 5603, Jerusalem 91056, Israel Tel:+9722-582-5107