

THE JEWISH

# Veteran





The Olympic rings, representing the five major continents linked together to denote the sporting friendship of the peoples of the earth, whatever their creed or color, are dimmed by the shroud of violence and horror associated with the tragic death of the Israeli athletes during the Olympiad in Munich, and the Olympic creed, that the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle, echos on a hollow note.

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# commander-at-large

By Ainslee Ferdie, *National Commander*



To those who expressed concern at our Convention over the health of my daughter, Meredith, let me assure you she is now in good health. At the time of writing, my wife is still showing a pregnant pause, in our domestic conversation.

Like "Janus," the Roman deity of beginnings whose two faces looked ahead and back, I find our Organization and myself reflecting both on the past and the future. Let me share some of these reflections with you.

A few days following my installation, I was invited to address the National Convention of the Disabled American Veterans. I assured them of our mutual concern and support in the areas of veterans benefits and rights. I called upon their members, individually, to support JWV's boycott of Standard Oil of California. Their collective response was most gratifying. Of even more importance to me were the individuals who approached me and expressed their concern later. Some were members of JWV but others came from communities where we do not have a Post. I recall in particular two individuals, one from Columbia, Tennessee, and Shreveport, Louisiana. Their voluntary expressions of support indicate that if we communicate, we can do so effectively.

As plans for the Convocation in Israel near fruition, I recall particular incidents in relationship to our program. As a boy, before and during World War II, I attended Sunday and

Hebrew School at Agudas Achim Congregation on Chicago's North Side. We collected pennies for trees in Israel and celebrated Israel's Arbor Day. Israel was only an Idea then and in retrospect it was hard to visualize at that time the purpose of the Blue Box.

In 1968 my wife, Roslyn, and I attended the dedication of the JWV Forest in the Judean foothills. For me it was a moving experience as we planted trees in memory of a number of devoted members of our organization.

In 1972 my son, Marshall, then five years old, accompanied me. Marshall planted his own tree in Israel. Each day he would ask me "Has my tree grown yet?" "How tall is it?" In 1972 the trees we had planted in 1968 were already fairly tall and changing the barren desolate landscape to a green vibrant useful force. The rebirth of the land was real and dramatic.

We will plant trees again, both in memory of the fallen and in honor of the living and the future. JWV's program with JNF is not limited to our membership. The work is essential, the results are real, and our support is necessary. It is my fervent prayer that we shall meet this year our commitment and reach our goal. Let us do it together.

It is now a quarter of a century since I enlisted in the Army Reserve at Appleton, Wisconsin, and was assigned to the 85th Division Recon.

Co. (Arm-Cav). In reflection the times then are in many respects parallel to the present.

At the time of my enlistment, there was no draft. We talked of a Voluntary Armed Forces and of the need of demilitarizing our relationship. We talked of World Recovery and balance of trade. We said that wars were a thing of the past in the A-Age and would be little more than a brush-fire skirmish. Many college students were Veterans and while there was much talk of social injustice and discrimination, there was more concern with football, dancing and entertainment. Fraternities generally discriminated, although there were cracks in the wall of bigotry here and there.

The public was concerned with congressional hearings. This was the age of the McCarthyism and all the other symptoms. It was the year of the birth of Israel. It was a year of hope and optimism. And yet the seeds of good and bad were both sown.

Thoreau's "Walden Pond" was a standard textbook in literature and the humanities but the message of Thoreau, the man, was also implanted. Thoreau who mirrored self-reliant individualism, peaceful dissent and opposition to the Establishment and went to Jail for not paying taxes to support what he considered an unjust war. His reflection is seen in the

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