

Articles from
The Jewish
Veteran

The Official Publication of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Volume: 59, Year: 2006 · Number: 2, Season: Spring

J.W.V. - a Place at the Table

By National Commander David L. Magidson

Every once in awhile I'm approached by a veteran and asked, "Why be a member of J.W.V.?" Quickly I provide the answer, "Because we count!" We are invited to the table whenever veterans' issues, military issues, and Jewish/Israeli issues are being discussed. As my accountant (who sits on numerous local charitable boards) told me the other day, "you have the unique opportunity to influence national policy," and we do!

But we are not invited to the table because we are prettier or louder or richer than others. We are invited due to the deeds of our forefathers and foremothers in J.W.V. We stand on the shoulders of giants.

Our founders were weary of the Anti-Semitic remarks that Jews did not fight in the Civil War. In 1896 these Jewish Civil War Veterans joined together to shout back, "we did defend our country/our states in numbers greater than our percentage of the population. We died, we were wounded." Today we are the oldest continuous veterans' organization in the United States.

Photographs in our National Museum taken in March 1933, (let me repeat March 1933) show Jewish War veterans leading a protest march in New York City against Germany. We screamed to the world about the Nazi danger. We begged the million people who viewed us to stand up and boycott German goods.

Jack Jacobs graduated from Rutgers University's R.O.T.C. Program and was sent to Vietnam. Severely wounded and not knowing what to do, he remembered a saying from Hillel he had learned in Hebrew School; "If I am not for myself than who is for me. But if I am only for myself than what am I. If not now when." He gathered himself, went forward and was awarded The Medal of Honor.

Tibor Rubin was liberated from the Mauthausen Concentration Camp in 1945. He immigrated to the United States and joined the Army in time for the Korean War. Earlier this year President George W. Bush presented Tibor (Ted) with The Medal of Honor, not only for his actions against the enemy, but also for saving the lives of countless Americans while a prisoner of war.

Last Monday I received a call to come to Washington, D.C. for a briefing by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. There were 12 seats at the Pentagon's conference table and one was reserved for J.W.V. The topics were Iraq, Afghanistan and returning veterans.

On April 6, 2006 I will be revisiting the Pentagon (along with others) for a discussion with The Secretary of the Air Force about the attempted evangelization of Jewish Cadets at the Air Force Academy.

We have earned a place at the American Table. It is our obligation and debt to those before us, now, and into the future to continue to serve the Jewish Community, Military Community and Veterans' Community i.e. to serve America, by maintaining a place at the Table.

Mission Accomplished!

By Robert Pickard, M.D., Col.(Ret.) MC, National Editor

Dear Comrades,

Your National Editor had just returned from Israel as part of the JWV USA Leadership Assembly and Allied Veterans Mission to Israel when my dear sweet mother-in-law, Ann Lemkin, asked me the following question: "Bob, did you accomplish what you went to Israel to do?" Her question made me to think, an action which sometimes causes more heat than illumination. I replied: "Yes, absolutely!"

I had just spent the past 10 days in the company of 20 or so JWVers and a half dozen gentile members of various veterans groups.

We accomplished our mission in the following ways: First were the solid friendships developed between all members of the JWV and the other veterans groups. Second were the hours spent together learning about the history of Israel and the problems faced by her today. Third was the knowledge that these fellow veterans would more fully understand the common problems and challenges faced by both Israel and the USA.

Since 9/11, Christians have not been able to avoid the fact that the Christian world is being assailed in just the same ways that Israel has been since before its creation as a modern State in 1948. This trip and the information unavoidably in our collective faces told me that these gentile friends and fellow veterans now understand what it feels like to be a Jew and under fire constantly for that simple fact alone! They understood, and I could see it in the eyes, that 9/11 was what the Israelis have to deal with 24/7. They now know that the Christian world is every bit as under fire from Muslim extremists and their terrorist organizations as Israel is every day and night. They heard the briefing as did I from the US Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Richard Jones, that the USA and the rest of the Christian World is "under the gun" of the rogue State, Iran, with its impending nuclear, biological and chemical threat. Israel is just a short hop-skip-and-a-jump by SCUD from Tehran. We in America could be next! Hold on! We have been next! 9/11 changed us, and we can never be naive "virgins" again! So, again: "Yes, mission accomplished!"

We heard the Honorable American Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Richard Jones, tell us that in his opinion peace in the Middle East is still possible by means of diplomacy and political pressure. I hope and pray that he is right. How do you negotiate with terrorists?? What happens now that Hamas, an avowed and US-recognized terrorist group, has earned the majority in the Parliament of the Palestinian Authority? If diplomacy will not work, one has to do as President Teddy Roosevelt would have us and the Israelis do, that is, "speak softly but carry a big stick." Face it, the Christian American veterans who were with us heard it the same way we JWVers heard it: "Tehran means to have nuclear capability and seeks the destruction of Israel, and isn't too happy with the USA either! Israel is the "Little Satan," and the USA is the "Big Satan" according to Islamic Fundamentalists. Tehran is working not only on "the bomb" but also on the capability of delivery. If these fanatic Muslim extremists get "the bomb" and the deliverability, the whole world is destabilized and in grave danger. Our foreign policy supports regional and world-wide stability and "world order." Ambassador Jones emphasized that Iran is an avowed enemy of Israel, and the USA is next.

The joint missions met at TZEVEET Headquarters with MG Ran Goren, the Chairman of this retired servicemen and women's organization of former IDF members. At TZEVEET Headquarters we met our friends Harold and Barbara

Newman; Ron and Terry Shelley; and Jacques Weisser of AJEX, our UK counterpart and friends from the French Jewish War Veterans as well. We received an informative briefing by MAJ Sam Wiedermann of the IDF Public Affairs Office who told us that Israel has three basic tactical problems--Lebanon/Syria, Iran, and the Palestinian Authority. In regard to the Lebanon/Syrian problem, MAJ Wiedermann told us about UN Resolution 1159 (2004), which is a joint French/USA proposal calling for the exit of all "foreign forces" (read Syrian) from Lebanon. This followed the assassination of the extremely popular Prime Minister Hariri, the multi-billionaire Shiite, presumably by agents of Syria. The Syrians didn't realize the depth of the love of the populace in Lebanon for Mr. Hariri. The backlash has been significant, and since then the Syrians have been "on the run" in Lebanon. UN Resolution 1159 (2004) also calls for the disbanding and disarmament of "militias" in Lebanon, meaning Hezbollah, the radical Muslim/Islamic terrorist organization. The Major let us understand that the purpose of these Islamic radicals is to make the world totally Islamic, with everyone else in a "second class citizenship." Jews and Christians might live in that Islamic World, but only if they pay a "tax" and then only as second- class citizens. Resolution 1159 (2004) also calls for the Lebanese Government to take control of its own territories.

Secondly, Major Wiedermann told the joint meeting of the veterans about the Iran Issue. Since the 1979 Islamic Fundamentalist Revolution, Iran has called for the destruction of Israel and the establishment of a radical Islamic State in Iran. The Iranians have been seeking the development of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them and thereby "erase" Israel from the map of the world! What good are UN sanctions, even assuming we could get those against Iran? Iran would only thumb her nose at the UN and the West's sanctions. And too, the Iranians are actively seeking, not only nuclear capability, but the means to deliver such WMD to Israel or maybe further.

Then the problem of the Palestinians was discussed. Abu Mazzan (Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas) was elected to lead the Palestinian Authority in 2005 by a +70% majority with a platform of the Rule of Law with only one Armed Force and the belief that terrorism is counter-productive and is to be eschewed. Bear in mind, dear reader, that Abu Mazzan's doctoral thesis written while in Moscow claimed that the Holocaust was "exaggerated." Major Wiedermann spoke about Ariel Sharon's Disengagement Process, the practical approach by Sharon to the breakdown of President Bush's Roadmap for Peace, including the withdrawal of IDF forces from Gaza and parts of Samaria and the construction of a Security Perimeter. Sharon was able to convince the Bush administration that these two processes would ease tensions between the Palestinians and Israel and still be under the Roadmap for Peace Process. Now we have the duly and democratically elected majority of Hamas, a US-acknowledged terrorist group, as the majority of the Palestinian Parliament. What next? How do Israel and the US deal with a P.A. controlled by avowed enemies of Israel? Will the rest of the world open its eyes and see, as the USA is seeing since 9/11, that terrorists mean to do what they say they want to do when they call for TERROR. Our Christian Veteran Allies were listening and taking note.

Major Wiedermann went on to say that the best strategy for the Middle East and World Peace is then through the "Coalition Process," the involvement and agreement of EU, Russia, the USA and the UN (the "Quartet"). The Torah teaches us that a single twig is weak and breaks easily. It teaches that by many twigs united in a bundle that bundle is not weak and does not break. In Coalition there is strength. That is the hope of the USA and Israel together with moderate Arab states. These are lessons to be learned for America too!

Our Israel Mission was a success because we met with and had supper with Post #180 JWV of Jerusalem. We learned that there are JWV posts in Haifa, Netanya and Jerusalem. In the words of the Haluzim song: How good it is for brothers to dwell together! Heneh Matovu Maneyim Shevet Achim Gum Yachad!

The "group" (the Allied Veterans and the JWVers) went to the Palmach Museum and learned about the Haganah and the role it played in the Middle East when the Nazis threatened conquest and the Palmach was the spearhead in that conflict. We all learned how the Palmach fought in the 1948 War of Liberation and how it was the deciding force in the establishment of the State of Israel and the subsequent IDF.

We visited Yad Vashem together and silently crept through the Children's Memorial, feeling our way in the candle lit darkness hearing the names of the million children murdered in the Holocaust. Who would not be moved to tears?!

We visited the Air Force Museum in Beersheva where the original commercial jetliner involved in the Raid on Entebbe, the Spitfires, the Mirages and the F15s are housed. The sheer guts of the Israelis and their selfless sacrifice in the cause on Freedom rang true in each and every one of our hearts that day, Jew and Gentile alike! Similarly our concerted reaction to the visit to the Ayalon Institute. Under a huge noisy washing-machine/laundry, 20 feet underground, in just 300 square feet, a factory for the manufacture of millions of 9 mm bullets, crucial ammunition for the 1948 War of Independence! All hidden right under the noses of the British Occupiers!! Truly "allied" veterans we were as we marveled at the sheer CHUZPAH of our fellow Jews!

Our bus rolled further South toward the Negev whose hills and vales are usually brown, but this season were covered by a thin veneer of green from all the rain. We visited Ben Gurion's Southern Home at Kibbutz Sede Boker overlooking a mini-Grand Canyon in the Negev. His library full to the rafters as a simple memorial to a great and learned man!

What trip to Israel is complete without a visit to Masada?? Your National Commander David Magidson ran/walked up to the top and met the rest of the party at the summit overlooking the Dead Sea. History came alive as we saw the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947. Masada is the quintessential Israeli place where Jews besieged by the Romans chose to die as free men and kill themselves and their families rather than fall into the hands of the Romans and become slaves. Masada epitomizes the whole joint JWV mission. Our veteran friends and fellow Americans learned that we Jews are willing to give our all in the name of Freedom and Liberty. What was true of Jews of Masada/Roman times is true today.

"Yes, your JWV USA Leadership Assembly and Allied Veterans Mission to Israel was a huge success, and we accomplished more than we had hoped" is the answer I gave my dear sweet mother-in-law.

NEC Highlights

By PDC George Sepp and DC Barry Mann

The meeting began with Capitol Hill Action days. More than a hundred JWV Delegates representing all of our Departments spent the entire two days navigating the seemingly endless halls of the Senate, House, and Capitol Office Buildings visiting the offices of many Congressmen representing our Department membership.

Our JWV national office provided us with a short list of talking points and position statements which we presented at each office visited. Good job by National staff. We proudly wore our JWV hats and otherwise clearly identified ourselves in each office.

We verbally expressed our strong displeasure with the DVA funding battle every year along with subsequent years funding cuts being proposed. Congressmen and Senators were advised to take their cuts out of the massive pork in the annual highways budget-- allocation for projects such as "the bridge to nowhere" in Alaska. Senators were told also that the DVA budget should be independent of the Defense Department allocations. Our soldiers' sacrifices and the care they require should not be co-mingled or paralleled with funding for weapons systems and hardware. As usual, the offices were packed with people wanting special favors for one interest group or another.

The work environment in Congress seemed disorderly and hectic with poor cooperation between the parties. We spoke mainly with the Congressional staffers. The staff actually researches and drafts bills, writes position papers, and recommends action to their respective Congressman during frequent staff meetings. Most times we spoke with their

trusted Military Affairs Officers, who are usually veterans and who listen attentively to our position points. They carry the message forward and present it at the daily meetings within the office.

Fortunately several weeks prior to our visit Commander Mann arranged for several special congressional meetings with the Department's delegation. We were able to have coffee and photo opportunity sessions with Senators and Reps from several districts within our department. We were then able to personally present our lists of veterans' concerns.

We concluded the long day by attending a great congressional reception, sponsored by JWV. During the "Posting of the colors" the most moving display of military precision by the Honor Guard was awesome provoking a spontaneous sense of pride and patriotism. In addition a Colonial Fife and Drum Squad reminded us of the historical aura of our military.

The next morning we attended the JWV National Commander's testimony to the joint Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. JWV Commander David Magidson was very articulate as a voice for the JWV platform of issues and concerns. All of the Congressional panel members responded with clear resolve to try to do better on the current concerns and directions from the veteran's groups. Some of the members expressed very strong concern and dedication. Their voting record supports this. Others were just trying to use "all things to all of the people" rhetoric again. I left with a mixed sense of accomplishment.

The remaining two days were spent attending various NEC meetings to carry on the function and business of the national organization. Seminars on policy, leadership, membership, and budgets dealt with discussions on operations and the overall health of the JWV. A detailed seminar also presented issues and operations of the Museum. In all the discussions policy was debated, resolutions defined, and votes by the delegates were cast.

Your Department leadership is fortunate to serve on several boards and policy committees which have a direct effect on the membership. We have the opportunity and pleasure to let your voice be heard. It is also quite enlightening to meet closely with our members of the national staff. Each individual was found to be uniquely well qualified for his tasks and bound together in an overwhelming dedication to the Jewish War Veteran. They deserve a huge "well done".