

Community news

Plane hijacking victim tells Women's Endowment Fund luncheon:

Memories of eight-day ordeal form 'bond' between passengers

By MATT BELLAN
When Shirley Macklin boarded a return flight to New Delhi, India from Katmandu, Nepal on December 24, 1999, the Indian passengers were so eager to get onto the plane and head home, many "practically ran". Within minutes

after Indian Airlines Flight 814 took off, however, the Jewish Winnipegger and 154 other passengers became captives in a hijacking that lasted eight hellish days.

"There were times I'd be pulled into the most nightmarish terror," Macklin recalled March 14 at the first annual luncheon of

the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba's Women's Endowment Fund. "Somehow, I kept telling myself not to go there - to do it later, not now.

"I'd remember the mornings when I'd wake up, and say (of the five hijackers): 'Maybe they're not here any more.'" Macklin, who's

been a ceramic artist and film set decorator, went into details of the hijacking and her other travel experiences immediately before and after for a mainly female audience at the luncheon, held in the Ft. Garry Hotel's Crystal Ballroom. But she made clear there and afterwards that she

doesn't feel comfortable having to answer questions about the hijacking, "because she's a private person, by nature." "I'm not eager to be in the public eye," Macklin told the luncheon audience of her experiences during those eight days, which media in Canada and around

the world reported on. "I'm sharing it today as a way to support donations to the Women's Endowment Fund, which helps women who live with indignity every day of their lives."

The Winnipeg Free Press and other media covered Macklin's experiences extensively during and immediately after the hijacking.

Macklin, then 60, had just spent three weeks in New Delhi, doing volunteer work for an organization that helps disabled children. She'd gone as a tourist to Nepal for five days and planned to do more sightseeing on her return to India.

The nationalities of the hijackers were never confirmed, but according to a January 2, 2000 Winnipeg Free Press story, some passengers suspected they were Pakistani; they were seeking the release of Kashmiri militants in India. One stormed into the main passenger cabin from the "executive class" section after the plane took off, carrying a pistol and a hand grenade, and wearing a balaclava.

"There was a lot of loud shouting, and I realized there were more," Macklin said.

She had brought some oranges with her, and decided to limit herself to eating them during those eight days.

Other than that, she fasted, and later congratulated herself for doing that. A toilet passenger had access to eventually overflowed, covering several inches of the floor in that area.

On the first day of the hijacking, according to a January 2, 2000 Winnipeg Free Press story, the plane was denied permission to land in Lahore, Pakistan; it landed in Amritsar, India, and made an emergency night landing in Lahore's airport again.

(Cont. on page 3. See "Winnipeg Victim describes hijacking ordeal".)



Were You Forced To Work For The Nazis?

Jewish Holocaust Survivors May Be Entitled To Compensation From A New Fund

Individuals who performed slave or forced labor under the Nazi regime may be eligible for payment from the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future." In accordance with the German legislation, eligibility for "slave labor" and "forced labor" is as follows:

- **Slave Labor** – work performed by force in a concentration camp (as defined in the German Indemnification Law) or a ghetto or another place of confinement under comparable conditions of hardship.
- **Forced Labor** – work performed by force (other than "Slave Labor") in the territory of the German Reich or in a German-occupied area, and outside the territory of Austria, under conditions resembling imprisonment or extremely harsh living conditions; or work performed by force under a program implementing the National Socialist policy of "extermination through work" (*Vernichtung durch Arbeit*) outside the territory of Austria.

The Claims Conference is administering this program for the benefit of Jewish Holocaust survivors in this country. Heirs of laborers who died on or after February 16, 1999 may be eligible for this fund.

The deadline is **August 11, 2001**. If you think you may be eligible, please obtain an application form by calling:

**Jewish Child & Family Service
Jewish Federation of Winnipeg**

204-477-7430

Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, Inc.

Claims Conference web site: www.claimson.org

Community news

New Intifada didn't deter Birthright Israel participants

No cancellations because of terrorism

For Richard Hechter, the Birthright Israel trip showed how much more peaceful Israel is than what's shown on "CNN".

For Neal Cohen, the highlight was having 10 young Israelis travel with his group.

Hechter and Cohen were among nearly 70 Jewish Winnipeggers, age 18 to 26, who travelled to Israel on two separate 10-day Birthright Israel trips last January and February. This is the second year in a row the nearly free trips have been offered to Diaspora Jews that age who've never been to Israel as part of an organized group before.

"I found the trip as a whole very moving, very spiritual," Hechter, a science teacher at University of Winnipeg Collegiate said last



NEAL COHEN seated on a stone overlooking Jerusalem last month: 10 young Israelis accompanying the Birthright Israel participants on the bus he was on added another dimension to the trip.

week of the trip he went on from January 4 to 14.

For him, one of the highlights was gathering at the Western Wall on Shabbat with "5,000 other Jewish people."

He was also struck by the contrast between the terrorist violence CNN and other TV networks have been broadcast-

Note to readers

When pictures with photo captions, stories and other announcements appear in boxes that indicates the material inside the box is fully or partly paid for. Stories with headlines in a typeface other than the one used for standard news stories (samples of standard news headlines appear with all stories on page 1) are also partly or fully paid for.

Notice to organizations, publicists

The Jewish Post & News now is charging for publicity about upcoming events running in this newspaper.

• Stories, community calendar and other announcements publicizing upcoming events are charged for at a rate of \$7.00 plus GST for every 20 words. Announcements can also be published in smaller, eight-point news type, at a rate of \$7.00 plus GST for every 30 words.

• Items paid for in advance are published at a reduced rate of only \$5 every 20 words plus GST, or \$5 every 30 words plus GST in eight-point type. Headings of up to four words run for free.

• Anyone running a display ad at least "business card size" (2 columns wide by 2 inches deep) publicizing a Jewish organizational upcoming event will be entitled to up to the equivalent amount of editorial space free every time the ad runs.

• Announcements of synagogue service times run for free, but are subject to editing for length.

• All publicity about upcoming events submitted for publication must include the names and addresses of the individuals authorizing publication, for billing purposes.

• All news releases and announcements published in The Jewish Post & News are subject to editing, and all references to ticket prices, admission charges and phone numbers will be deleted, unless the items are authorized to run at the full display advertising rate.

• All news and advertising should be in our office by noon, Friday 4.

• We can't be responsible for the delivery time of the paper. You may wish to run your publicity or ad

ing from Israel in the past few months, and the calm he experienced there.

Hechter expected to see tanks escorting them, as they toured the country.

Instead, there was "never a time when we felt in danger."

The group he was with walked casually around Jerusalem's Old City "at midnight, on Shabbat."

Still, there were some inconveniences because of the violence in the occupied territories.

Birthingright Israel participants had to travel "all the way around Jerusalem and the West Bank" to get to Zichron Yaacov, south of Haifa, from Ein Gedi, south of Jerusalem. The trip took "five hours", instead of the much shorter route north through the southern West Bank and Jerusalem.

Cohen, a University of Manitoba commerce student, said he especially enjoyed the company of 10 Israelis his age on his bus, during the February 8 to 18 Birthright Israel trip.

He found it interesting to see the "in your face" reactions of the Israelis to events, as

Correction

Myron Love's column last week had an incorrect time for the Yiddish Radio Hour. It's broadcast from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., Sundays on CKJS 810 a.m.

process, the Israelis on his bus were "just screaming their positions" about what they'd heard, and the reality of living there.

His group also got to visit those Israelis' families in their homes in Kiryat Shmona, in northern Israel. "One of their little sisters was terrified to be alone. She was afraid her house might be bombed."

Roberta Malam, Winnipeg-based program director of the Israel Experience Centre, said the renewed Palestinian Intifada didn't deter the local university students and others who signed up for the January and February

his group travelled through Israel.

After sitting through a debate between an Israeli and a Palestinian writer about the peace

Winnipeg victim describes hijacking ordeal

(Cont. from page 2.)

It went on to the United Arab Emirates, before settling in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Macklin was one of half a dozen "Western" passengers, and the only North American. She was eventually ordered to sit with the rest of them, apart from the Indian passengers.

Thinking about their families kept the passengers going, despite the hijackers' mood swings. One minute, they'd be reassuring everyone they'd be safe; the next, they'd threaten to blow up the plane.

It later turned out that they'd murdered one young Indian passenger returning from his honeymoon; his wife sat next to Macklin for a while on the plane.

On the eighth day, the terrorists got off the plane, which had been sitting on the tarmac at Kandahar's airport. That happened after the Indian government released four terrorists - meeting a condition the hijackers demanded.

Asked whether she'd worried that the hijackers might learn she's Jewish (a fact the Free Press and other media didn't mention at the time), Macklin said no.

They'd have no way of knowing unless she told them, since ethnic origin or religion isn't included on Canadian passports, and "I didn't think it would be a good idea to tell them."

Macklin was especially grateful to the Canadian government for its behind-the-scenes negotiating during her ordeal, and other help after passengers were freed.

Among other things, a Canadian diplomat from Islamabad, Pakistan, was at the airport in Kandahar to greet her when she stepped off the plane; he'd arrived in that city several days earlier, after the plane landed there. And Canada's High Commissioner to India put Macklin up in his New Delhi residence, as she recovered and spent

trips. "We had just as good a turnout as last year...We didn't have anybody cancel because of the situation in Israel."

None of the trips the Israel Experience Centre organizes, including Canadian Birthright Israel trips, "go into the West Bank", she added.

There was one terrorist incident during the January Birthright Israel trip: a Palestinian from the Gaza Strip drove into a group of Israeli soldiers south of Tel Aviv, killing several.

"Obviously, the kids were upset by it."

(Cont. on page 8. See "Birthright Israel".)

time with her three sons, Hart Macklin of Winnipeg, and Dr. David Macklin and Richard Macklin of Toronto. (Air Canada flew them to New Delhi for free.)

Macklin returned to Winnipeg in April, 2000, after further travel in India and a visit to Israel. She doesn't know what happened to the hijackers. "Nobody knows where they went. If someone knows, they haven't told me."

Macklin suspects they were members of an "international terrorist gang", and may have been highly paid for the hijacking.

Macklin also shares a "very strong bond" with friends she made on Flight 814, particularly two she keeps in touch with often. "We write to each other quite regularly. It's quite beautiful."

Cathie Weinstein, chair of the Women's Endowment Fund, told the crowd at the luncheon where Macklin spoke that the aim of the event was to "grow" the fund.

A "small group of women" headed by Marsha Cowan, past president of the Jewish Foundation, started the fund eight years ago.

"We're all about women helping women," Weinstein said of the fund, which has a capital base of about \$180,000. It has provided grants over the years to a wide variety of causes, ranging from shelters for battered women across the province to the Chemo Savvy Dragon Boat Team, a group of breast cancer survivors that races in dragon boats to raise funds for research in that area, and to help boost participants' morale.

The fund paid for "paddles" for that team, noted Dianne Frost, a team spokesperson.

"We are leaving a legacy for the next generation of women," Weinstein said of the fund. "We are setting an example for our daughters and all those who follow us."