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**People**

**Lifelong Labor Zionist recalls a life working on the Haifa docks**

*Golda Meir's 1930 visit to Winnipeg helped persuade 'Chaim Lifshitz' to emigrate to Palestine*

Chaim Liron is a man who has lived the Zionist ideal. The former Winnipegger and lifelong Labor Zionist spent most of his working life as a dock worker on the Haifa docks. Earlier this month, he was back in Winnipeg visiting family and spoke about his life.



OUR LITTLE SHITEL

By



MYRON LOVE

**CHAIM LIRON: He "made aliyah" (emigrated to Palestine) from Winnipeg in 1933.**

Chaim Lifshitz was born in Winnipeg in 1914 to Zionist parents. Although the family tried to make aliyah twice in the 1920s, things didn't work out. Liron recalls a visit to Winnipeg by a young Golda Meyerson (later Golda Meir) in 1930 and the formation of a young Paolei Zion group.

In 1933, at the age of 19, Liron made aliyah. A younger brother had preceded him and was enrolled in an agricultural school.

"I knew no Hebrew," he recalls. "I went to find Golda. I ended up working on a kibbutz."

After six months, he was approached by the Jewish Agency and asked to join the Palestine Police Force. A Palestinian Police Force member earned six pounds a month, he recalls. Unskilled laborers could earn 10 pounds a month. So Jewish police were leaving the force to make more money as laborers. Since Liron was a newcomer and a single fellow, he was volunteered by the Jewish Agency for the police.

"It was the worst job I ever had," he says. "I stuck it out for two years until I met my future wife and she encouraged me to quit."

Over the next three years, Liron, now a married man, struggled to find work. It was a time of economic depression in Israel. Liron says he worked at a number of jobs in those years.

In 1938, he found himself on a more solid footing. He applied for a job with the British Army as a stores clerk. His new position also put him in a strategic position to help in the underground struggle for an independent Jewish homeland. The Haganah approached him to smuggle British Army goods to kibbutzim and other Jewish communities in the land through the Haganah. He performed his dual role for the next four years. He recalls he would get the British soldiers on duty drunk and have the goods - items such as woollens and food - moved out. Ironically, it wasn't his smuggling activity that got him fired. It was his union activity. In 1942, the Histadrut asked him to organize a labor union among Jewish Palestinians working for the British Army. The British Army frowned on unions. Liron was successful, but ended up losing his own job.

As a reward for his efforts, the Histadrut placed him with the British Admiralty at the Port of Haifa, keeping track of expense accounts and dock workers. With war's end and the Admiralty sailing away, he went to work as a laborer on the docks.

"We were 200 Jewish workers and 10,000 Arabs," he recalls. "Our main work was loading 50-kilo boxes of citrus fruits. Four or five Jews could do the work of 20 Arabs. The Arabs were paid a daily wage so they didn't hurry about anything. We Jews were paid on a piece-work basis."

The citrus season ran from October through May. During that time, Liron says, he had to earn enough to feed his family for the year.

In 1947, he became a heavy equipment operator on the docks. He learned on the job when a supervisor asked him to drive a forklift. Eventually, he learned to drive every kind of heavy equipment at the docks.

He retired from the docks in 1973, literally on the eve of the Yom Kippur War. At 60, he volunteered his service to the army, and was sent to a vocational school where high school dropouts were trained to drive heavy equipment that was used in the army. Most of the regular teachers were away fighting.

"I had 27 or 28 boys and seven or eight old tractors for them to practise on," he says. "I didn't have the faintest idea what to teach them at first. I ended up teaching there for almost six months."

With the return of peace, the retired workingman and his wife set off for North America, the first time he had been back on this continent since he made aliyah almost 40 years before. They travelled 45,000 miles through Canada and the United States, visiting family and seeing the sights.

He continued to work part time and travel abroad with his wife until he was slowed by a heart attack in 1990. His wife died a couple of years later.

Liron currently lives in a seniors home in Haifa. He proudly reports that he has three sons, six grandsons and one granddaughter and seven great grandsons.

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(Cont. on page 7. See "People".)

**People**



**IKE CHAMISH: Winnipeg Christians have continued visiting Israel in the past few months.**

**People**  
(Cont. from page 6.)

Jewish groups may be cancelling tours to Israel left and right, but the violence in the Holy Land is not deterring religious Christians.

One Vancouver Christian group, the Watchmen for the Nations, put together a group of over 500, notes Ike Chamish. The Canadian Jewish community's Solidarity mission, which went to Israel at about the same time, had only about 100 participants.

Chamish had assumed that Christian groups would also be hesitant about visiting Israel but, now that he sees that they are not, he is "going back to work". For the semi-retired life insurance agent, that "work" is promoting travel to Israel by Christian groups.

Chamish, who has two children living in Israel, began his avocation as an "honorary Israel Tourism Ambassador" in the mid-1980s, after a tour of Israel which was arranged by

the Israeli Tourism Department. He makes himself available as a speaker or resource person to church groups and other Christian organizations, and brings with him a great deal of information on Israel and travel in Israel. He doesn't organize the tours nor does he usually accompany the Christian travellers. He did once go on a tour with 44 Christian clergymen.

"I had a wonderful time," he says. He knows that there are many in the Jewish community who don't trust the Christian motivations in supporting Israel, but he points out that the Christian reasons vary. Some are missionaries, he acknowledges, but most go out of conscience or out of love for Israel.

"In all the years I have been working with Christian groups, I have only had to tell people twice to back off trying to proselytize," he says. "When my wife died a couple of years ago, I received the biggest bouquet of flowers from the Calvary Temple."

Right now, Chamish is in Regina for a couple of weeks visiting an old friend. Before leaving for Regina, he sent out letters to 50 to 60 churches in the city, advertising his availability to talk about Israel and encourage travel there. He was expecting to receive five to 10 positive responses.

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Harold Buchwald is Manitoba's new arts chief. As the executive director of the newly-formed Arts Stabilization Manitoba Inc., he will be working with a variety of local not-for-profit performing arts and cultural organizations to help them balance their budgets and operate in a more businesslike manner.

"A lot of these organizations operate on shoestring budgets and run deficits," he says. "They often have to be bailed out by government. We are talking about arts organizations such as the ballet and the symphony, which are, in reality, big businesses. The Royal Winnipeg Ballet, for example, operates on a \$9 million a year budget while the symphony has a budget of about \$6 million."

The concept of an arts stabilization fund isn't new, Buchwald notes. The Ford Foundation has been "in the business" in the U.S. for 30 years, and there are similar organizations in Vancouver and Alberta. The Manitoba body grew out of a committee that was established to come up with an arts stabilization plan.

Buchwald was a member of the committee. "We circulated our plan to different arts groups and received commitments from about a dozen of them," he says. "I was asked to chair the implementation committee and then, the new organization. (Cont. on page 9. See "People".)"

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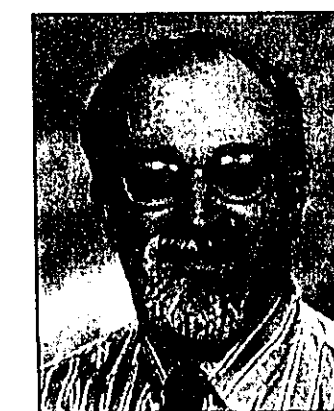
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**ROSH PINA CONGREGATION AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF WINNIPEG ARE PLEASED TO WELCOME RABBI HENRY BALSER AS THE NEW SENIOR RABBI AT THE ROSH PINA SYNAGOGUE**

Rabbi Balsler served as the spiritual leader at Shaarey Zedek Synagogue. After leaving Winnipeg, he has held pulpits for the past six years at Congregation Ezra-Habonim, Chicago, and B'nai Shalom, Boston Harbor, Michigan. He returns to Winnipeg to start his duties at Rosh Pina Synagogue on August 15.



*"There is a vital Jewish future in the north end of our city, and so we are extremely pleased that such a learned scholar, teacher and pulpit rabbi, will be joining our synagogue. This signals a new beginning for synagogue life here."*

- Merrill Shulman  
Chairman,  
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Rosh Pina Synagogue

*"I am pleased to join the other rabbis serving the Winnipeg community. I will be available for lifecycle events for members of our synagogue and for the community as a whole. We intend to start a variety of adult education and social action programs that will attract Jews from all over the city to a traditional and egalitarian."*

- Rabbi Balsler

Rabbi Balsler will be joined on his return to Winnipeg by his wife Ari and son Ezra. Their daughter Alisheva is studying at a university in California.

**WE WELCOME THE BALSER FAMILY AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO HAVING THEM BECOME AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR COMMUNITY.**

For more information contact:  
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