

IMPRESSIONS

By Ed Pizer

From Tel Aviv to Jerusalem -- from the Kinneret to the Mediterranean -- stopping, starting -- forward, reverse -- always asking directions and always lost or going in the wrong direction -- but always arriving at a destination -- a little late but always arriving. For seven days I saw the Galil as never before -- from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Five men -- from 24 to 60 -- from little to big -- from Israel, Holland, South Africa, New York and North Carolina -- from fluent Hebrew to "you all". All shapes, sizes, origins -- all Jews.

Charashim, Manof, Amnon, Amuka, Abirim, Klil, Hilla, Neve Tsuf -- Mitzpim that we visited and perhaps more. It seems as if we checked every mountain top in the Galil and a few more for good measure, except those occupied by the Israeli army.

Five weeks later, back in North Carolina, a world away from Israel, with slides, memories and impressions of those 7 wonderfully exhilarating, enthusiastic but tiring days. My previous trips to Israel have been too many to count but this time I really got to know her, if it is possible to know a country in 7 days.

The views from atop these mountains were absolutely beautiful -- each surpassing the other -- the last always being the best. In the nights it seemed as though every mountain top was lit like a giant American Christmas tree and the lights from the villages in the valleys twinkle in a way that one imagines when reading fairy tales as a child. But this was no fairy tale -- it was stark, living reality.

Even though the scenery reminded one of a painted picture, the people and the settlers were very real. The settlers are a diverse group -- for the most part young to middle aged -- South African, Israelis and Americans -- strong willed, open, candid, helpful, encouraging, hard working and idealistic. They were anxious to share their experiences with us and were eager for us to tell them about our group who would soon be their neighbors. They warned us of the difficulties and tried to prepare us for what the future would hold. Development of each Mitzpim was a difficult task but not one questioned that in the end, they would develop a better home and way of life for each of their families and they assured us that our cause was worthwhile. It was made clear to us that we should be well-informed of the sociological aspects of group living. Also, it was important to understand that there would be physical hardships during the first 2 or 3 years but that all of these could be overcome. We came away with the general idea that one has to have a certain flexibility in facing problems that will be encountered. It is important not to be rigid in one's expectations.

The settlers come in all types but generally they are friendly, hard working and proud. The spirit of the Mitzpim is the pioneering spirit of the Land of Israel. Long may it live!