

The Link

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Rachel

By Her Mother, Cindy Corrie

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About This Issue

AMEU was founded 36 years ago as a nonprofit, educational organization. Over the years we have come to know many outstanding educators. Sadly, we report the deaths of five who have contributed significantly to our understanding of Middle East history, culture, and current events.

The Rev. L. Humphrey Walz helped those fleeing Hitler's madness during and after WW II. Then, in 1948, he helped to bring the plight of Palestinian refugees to the attention of the U.S. public. As part of that effort he co-founded our organization and served as the first editor of this publication. A profile of his life is offered on page 13.

Dr. Edward Said was a prolific writer. Since we first put together our full-length book catalog in the late 70's, his books have consistently been among our bestsellers. In addition to being a writer, he was a renowned professor at Columbia University, a classical pianist, and a fighter. For years he fought leukemia, and noted wryly that he was being given experimental therapies at a Jewish hospital, under the direction of an Indian doctor, in the care of Irish nurses. "I'm their longest survivor," he once told me, as pleased, seemingly, for the care givers as for himself. With similar heroism he pledged that he would speak out, to his dying breath, for the rights of his people. Which is exactly what he did.

Issam Nashashibi, born in Jerusalem, came from a prominent Palestinian family forced into exile after the 1967 war. A successful businessman, Issam wrote articles for leading U.S. publications, served on the board of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), was president of the U.S. chapter of Deir Yassin Remembered, and actively supported our own efforts. This past June, he spent three days behind our

book table at the annual ADC convention. His most recent project was developing a lesson module for schools and study groups on the Israel/Palestine Conflict. He had just begun testing the module in schools, when he died at the age of 52. He will be sorely missed.

Dr. Evelyn Menconi taught in the Boston Public Schools, earning her doctorate in education at age 60. Among her many accomplishments, she published cookbooks ("Arabic Cooking in America"), served as curator of the William Abdalah Memorial Library in Boston, and helped in the production of the Arabic Hour television program. Shortly before her sudden death, she sent a message to her e-mail list calling attention to our October-November *Link* "Why Do They Hate Us?" as a MUST READ. The day before she died, she sent us a donation. Gracious, generous, energetic, Evelyn was also, I am proud to say, a good friend.

Rachel Corrie, 23, was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer on March 16. She was protesting the destruction of a Palestinian pharmacist's family home in Gaza's Rafah refugee camp. Up until her death, Rachel regularly sent letters home to her parents. Edward Said, who met the parents shortly before his own death, called these letters "truly remarkable documents of her ordinary humanity that make for very difficult and moving reading." I have heard Rachel's mother speak of her daughter twice, once at the ADC's convention and once at the United Nations, and on both occasions, when she finished, the audience rose to their feet. Their applause was for the daughter, who gave her life for others, and for the parents, who just want us to know who their daughter was and what meaning can be found in her sacrifice. We are honored that they agreed to write this article for *The Link*.

John F. Mahoney
Executive Director

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Rachel, Brian, and Tom

My daughter, Rachel Corrie, was one of those brave activists, now numbering in the thousands, who have made the journey from the safety of their own countries and homes to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. They come to see for themselves, to join in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and to work for a more peaceful world.

Rachel connected with the International Solidarity Movement (I.S.M.), a group of Palestinian-led international activists who use non-violent methods and strategies to confront the Israeli occupation. According to Huwaida Arraf (one of the co-founders), I.S.M. was formed “to provide the Palestinian people with a resource, international protection and a voice with which to resist, non-violently, an overwhelming military occupation force.”

In March and April of this year, three I.S.M. activists suffered tragedies at the hands of the Israeli military. On March 16, Rachel, 23 years old and in the spring of her life, died when she was crushed by an Israeli bulldozer while trying to prevent the demolition of a Palestinian home in Rafah near the Egyptian border. On April 5, another U.S. citizen, Brian Avery, 24 years old, from Albuquerque, New Mexico, was shot in the face by a burst of machine-gun fire from an Israeli armored personnel carrier in Jenin. On April 11, Tom Hurdall, 21 years old, from the U.K., was shot in the head as he tried to help two young Palestinian girls to safety.

Rachel, Brian, Tom. All three, members of I.S.M. All three, tragic victims of the U.S.-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They join the ranks of those who have died or been severely injured in the occupation. Like so many others who have suffered or been lost in both Palestine and Israel, Rachel, Brian, and Tom were

unarmed and nonviolent. And as with so many other killings of unarmed civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Israeli military has assumed no responsibility.

In the months since Rachel’s killing, our family has had numerous opportunities to talk with I.S.M. volunteers from the U.S. and from other countries. We have been struck by their thoughtfulness, their intelligence, their dedication, and, of course, their courage. They are young and old and in between—college students and retirees. They come from the United States, from the United Kingdom, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, South Africa, Australia—

from many countries in the world. They are students, teachers, accountants, lawyers, poets, mothers, fathers, grandmothers. They are Christians, Jews, Muslims and undoubtedly come from other faiths, as well. They have gone to Palestine because, in 2001, the U.S. and Israel vetoed a United Nations resolution calling for international human rights monitors in the Occupied Territories. In remarks at a U.N. conference last year, Huwaida Arraf stated that there are only two stipulations for joining

I.S.M.: one must believe in the right to freedom of the Palestinian people based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and international law; and one must agree to use only non-violent, direct action methods of resistance. She added, “The strength of I.S.M. activists is not in arms. Their strength is in the truth and justice of the Palestinian cause, and in believing that the Palestinian people deserve equal rights.”

To validate her own life, Rachel had a need to resist the injustices she saw impacting the lives of others. This is what drew her to I.S.M. and to the Occupied Territories. She went in January to Rafah because she believed the world had forsaken this place.



Cindy Corrie at the U.N., Sept. 4, 2003

She became our eyes and ears as she told us about the tanks and bulldozers passing by, about the homes with tank-shell holes in their walls, and about the rapidly multiplying Israeli watch towers with snipers lurking along the horizon.

She told us about Ali, the eight-year-old Palestinian boy shot and killed two days before she arrived, and about large groups of Palestinian men rounded up and held for hours at a time. She wrote of sleeping at night beside water wells to protect them from being damaged by Israelis; she recalled standing with other activists to protect Palestinian municipal water workers who were being fired upon while trying to repair the wells. She drank sweet tea with Palestinian grandmothers, held wiggling babies, and danced with children in the street. She wrote, "Know that I have a lot of very nice Palestinians looking after me. I have a small flu bug, and got some very nice lemony drinks to cure me. Also, the woman who keeps the key for the well where we sleep keeps asking me about you. She doesn't speak a word of English, but she asks about my mom pretty frequently – wants to make sure I'm calling you."

On March 16, according to six eyewitness accounts, Rachel was crushed by an Israeli D9R type bulldozer while trying to prevent the demolition of the home of a Palestinian pharmacist, his wife and three young children near the Egyptian border.

One of the eyewitnesses described the bulldozers that day, "plowing up the land in front of the buildings" and "making occasional runs at houses." From a distance, the activists stood and sometimes sat in the bulldozer's path indicating their intention not to move. The bulldozer would approach very close to the activists but would always stop in time to avoid injuring them. At one point the bulldozers retreated from the area, and the activists felt they had been successful.

But then the bulldozers returned and shortly thereafter one of them began to approach a home where Rachel had slept numerous times and had played with the children. She wrote about this family, "The two front rooms of their house are unusable because gunshots have been fired through the walls, so the whole family – three kids and two parents – sleep in the parents' bedroom. I sleep on the floor next to the youngest daughter, Iman, and we all share blankets... Friday is the holiday, and when I woke up they were watching "Gummy Bears"

dubbed in Arabic. So I ate breakfast with them and sat there for a while and just enjoyed being in this big puddle of blankets with this family watching what for me seemed like Saturday morning cartoons."

Eyewitnesses tell us that the bulldozer began a straight run at this house. Rachel, wearing her fluorescent orange jacket with reflective striping, knelt down well in front of the bulldozer and began waving her arms and shouting, just as activists had done many times earlier that day. But this time, the bulldozer, with its two operators on board, continued moving straight for Rachel and did not stop.

Months ago, the U.S. Department of State notified our family that the Israeli Military Police had completed their investigation, that no charges would be brought, that the case was closed and that Israel declined to release a report to the U.S. government. With some pressure from the U.S. government, Israel has now permitted a few U.S. officials and my husband and me to read the report and to take notes.

Recently, the Israeli Military Advocate General, "pursuant to the letter dated July 3, 2003, from Secretary Colin Powell to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarding the death of U.S. citizen Ms. Rachel Corrie," has reconsidered his position and has released to us and to members of the U.S. government the final section of the report which summarizes its findings. The Advocate General concludes that the bulldozer operators did not see Rachel and suggests (after apparent follow-up with the professor who conducted the autopsy) that her death was caused by an injury or by falling on building debris and not by direct contact with the bulldozer. The report itself, however, has still not been released to the U.S. government. The Israeli military has concluded that the bulldozer operators did not see Rachel.

On April 5, during the second day of a curfew in Jenin, Brian Avery, the 24-year-old I.S.M. activist from Albuquerque, New Mexico, and a companion had left their I.S.M. headquarters to investigate gunfire they heard coming from a distance. When they entered the street, two armored personnel carriers advanced toward them at low speed. There were no Palestinians in the street. Brian was wearing his fluorescent orange vest with a reflective cross. He and the other activist raised their arms in the air. At a distance of about fifty-five yards, the first armored personnel carrier issued a burst of machine-gun fire.

Brian's left cheek was almost completely shot off. He spent over two months having surgery and other treatment in Israel. He is now at home with his parents in North Carolina and continues to be treated for the severe injuries to his face.

We have met Brian. He is able to speak now. He has become creative with a blender since he still can eat only a liquid diet. With the best smile that he can manage, he tells us his goal is to be able to bite into an apple. His mother tells us that he will never smell again and that doctors think they may not be able to correct his blurred vision.

Brian speaks quietly, thoughtfully, and tells us that when he is stronger, he wants to travel in the United States to tell people about what is happening in Palestine. He says he wants to return there one day to continue the work that was halted so abruptly in that street in Jenin.

But first there will be more surgeries, and Brian has no medical insurance. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Hospitals are funding Brian's medical procedures for the present time.

In a command report, the Israeli military says it was not in the area when Brian Avery was injured. There has been no further investigation.

On April 11, I.S.M. activists had joined Palestinians in an action to set up a tent in an area of Rafah that Israeli tanks had used to shoot into the houses and streets of Yibna refugee camp and to prevent access to a local mosque. One of the activists was a 21-year-old aspiring photojournalist from London, Tom Hurdall. When live rounds were fired from a tank in the area and from a security tower, the activists called off the action and were in the process of leaving when they noticed children who had been playing on a roadblock in the area. Some of the youngsters ran off, but a few remained. Tom Hurdall lifted a five-year-old boy to safety but then saw two small girls who were in danger. When he reached out his hands to them, he was shot in the back of the head.

Tom, like Rachel and Brian, was wearing a fluorescent orange jacket that marked him as an unarmed civilian. Tom's mother writes that when she first saw Tom in an Israeli hospital, there was a young Israeli girl beside him who kept repeating, "I am so sorry for my country."

Tom is now home in the U.K. where he continues to lie in a deep coma and is not expected to recover.

The Israeli government continues to deny shooting Tom with intent. After months of delay, Israel has recently begun a Military Police investigation into Tom's killing.

We must keep Rachel, Brian, and Tom's stories alive. The world must demand credible explanations for what happened to each of them. Truth. The world, and especially people here in the United States, must hear about these tragedies and in doing so come to understand the magnitude of the violence and oppression that the Palestinian people have lived with for so long.

Rachel, Brian, and Tom were unarmed, nonviolent, peace activists trying to prevent the demolition of Palestinian homes, orchards, gardens, wells--trying to support the Palestinian people who nonviolently resist daily by going about their lives as best they can in the face of an unimaginably oppressive occupation.



Courtesy of I.S.M.

Rachel on the day she was crushed to death.

Rachel stood that March day before the Israeli bulldozer because of the failure of her own country and of the international community to stand for the innocents in Palestine. Rachel stood there that day protesting Israeli military actions that her own country is on record opposing yet fails to stop—actions that the U.S., in fact, contributes to through its funding of the Israeli military.

Rachel believed through the depth of her being that her nonviolent activism would make Palestinians, but also Israelis, Americans, and the world, more secure. She worked with Jewish-Americans and with Israelis who also work to end the occupation. She consulted with Israeli peace activists as she tried to better understand the destruction of the Palestinian water supply. She received guidance from a reservist in the Israeli military, a father of two teenage sons, who taught her Hebrew phrases to shout through her megaphone when she encountered bulldozer and tank operators.

As she lay dying, Rachel was held by one of her I.S.M. friends who is Jewish and has cousins in Israel whom she fears for whenever she hears of a suicide bombing. Rachel wrote to me, “The scariest thing for non-Jewish Americans in talking about Palestinian self-determination is the fear of being or sounding anti-semitic. Reading Chomsky’s book and talking to my non-zionist Jewish friends has helped me think about this. I just think we all have the right to be critical of government policies ... any government policies ... particularly government policies which we are funding.”

After the Killing

Since these incidents, the International Solidarity Movement and other human rights groups in the Occupied Territories have come under attack.

On May 9, nearly twenty military vehicles surrounded the I.S.M. media office, seized computers and video equipment, pillaged files and photos, broke equipment, and damaged office space. Activists were arrested and deported. Access to Gaza was severely restricted. Israel established new rules for foreigners entering Gaza requiring that they sign a statement in which they absolve Israel of all responsibility in the case of their injury or death.

On August 25, an I.S.M. volunteer named Kate was with another international and three Palestini-

ans delivering food to the Old City in Nablus when she was stopped by a jeep and taken into custody and forced to sit at a makeshift base with two tanks, many jeeps, and armed vehicles. She writes, “I cannot describe the horror. The soldiers were all around me and then there were clashes; rocks and glass were being thrown—sound bombs, tear gas, tank firing, machine guns, automatic weapons. The whole nine yards were being shot and the soldiers were all next to me. They were shooting at the Palestinians. They shot someone in the head. Every time a child would look out the window, they would point their guns and scream at them and cock their triggers. For five hours, I was there next to the firing guns and tanks. I tried distracting them by talking to them, which worked quite a bit, so that they wouldn’t notice Palestinians breaking curfew. I prayed, I prayed, and I prayed that God would warm their hearts so that they would stop this madness. I was so scared. They were all around me shooting. I knew that I was supposed to experience this, because now I have seen the war from the soldier’s point of view. Now, I know what they do, say, somewhat feel, and how they act ... there is nothing I can tell you to express the pain I feel and what it was like being in the middle of the soldiers shooting and bombing my friends. I wish I could make you see, but then again, I wouldn’t wish today on anyone. I am glad the soldiers released me.”

More recently, on August 27, two internationals with ISM were deported after being held in an Israeli jail for ten days after chaining themselves to the inside of a family home in the Balata refugee camp to try to prevent the Israeli Army from demolishing it, the home of Abu Salim, his wife and four children.

Huwaida Arraf wrote on August 26 of I.S.M., “We’re frustrated with the politics of governments and the complacency that is allowing this to continue. There can be no hudna or “road map” without restraints put on the Israeli military and government. We are going to keep telling you what’s happening on the ground in Palestine and urge you to take action. We are going to continue to organize to resist the Israeli occupation nonviolently, and urge you not to ignore us.”

Our Search for Answers

In September my husband, Craig, and I went to

Israel and Palestine. We wanted to walk where our daughter walked, to see what she saw, and to try to discover why she was killed.

We have called for an independent U.S. investigation. Rep. Brian Baird of Washington state and 50 co-sponsors have offered a resolution in the House of Representatives, HCR 111, calling for the U.S. government to conduct a “full, fair and expeditious investigation into the death of Rachel Corrie,” and for the Israeli government and the U.S. government to work together to make sure that something like this doesn’t happen again. Co-sponsors include:

Neil Abercrombie (HI), Tammy Baldwin (WI), Earl Blumenauer (OR), Dave Camp (MI), Lois Capps (CA), John Conyers, Jr. (MI), Danny K. Davis (IL), Peter A. DeFazio (OR), Norman D. Dicks (WA), John D. Dingell (MI), Lloyd Doggett (TX), Jennifer Dunn (WA), Rahm Emanuel (IL), Anna G. Eshoo (CA), Bob Etheridge (NC), Sam Farr (CA), Raul M. Grijalva (AZ), Rush D. Holt (NJ), Michael M. Honda (CA), Jay Inslee (WA), Darrell E. Issa (CA), Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. (IL), Sheila Jackson-Lee (TX), Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX), Patrick J. Kennedy (RI), Carolyn C. Kilpatrick (MI), Ron Kind (WI), Dennis J. Kucinich (OH), Ray LaHood (IL), Rick Larsen (WA), Barbara Lee (CA), John Lewis (GA), Zoe Lofgren (CA), Edward J. Markey (MA), Jim McDermott (WA), James P. McGovern (MA), George Miller (CA), James P. Moran (VA), Sue Myrick (NC), Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC), James L. Oberstar (MN), John W. Olver (MA), Nick J. Rahall (WV), Martin Olav Sabo (MN), Adam Smith (WA), Fortney Pete Stark (CA), Mark Udall (CO), Melvin Watt (NC), Lynn C. Woolsey (CA), and David Wu (OR).

We have had some support from some newspapers. The Houston Chronicle, for example, has called for an independent investigation. Mecklenburg County in North Carolina and Berkeley, California, have passed resolutions calling for support of HCR 111. Over 70 national and local organizations have called on the U.S. government to conduct an independent investigation into Rachel’s killing. These include:

Academics for Justice, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, American Friends Service Committee, Amnesty International, Arab American Institute, Episcopal Peace Fellowship, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Global Exchange, Grassroots International, The Green Party, Lutheran Peace Fellowship, Middle East

Children’s Alliance, Mothers for Peace—International, Muslim Public Affairs Council, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, Tikkun Community, Unitarian-Universalist Peace Fellowship, Veterans for Peace, U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, AFL-CIO-Washington State, Not in My Name—Chicago, NOW—Washington State, Jews Against the Occupation—New York, N.Y., Gush Shalom, and the Israeli Peace Bloc.

In Israel, the investigation into Rachel’s killing remains closed, the bulldozer drivers fully exonerated. On March 19, Richard Boucher of the U.S. Department of State said in reference to Rachel: “When we have the death of an American citizen, we want to see it fully investigated. That is one of our key responsibilities overseas, is to look after the welfare of American citizens and to find out what happened in situations like these.”

Our family could not agree more and that is why we continue to call for release of the complete copy of the Military Police Final Report with supporting evidence and for an independent U.S. investigation into Rachel’s death. Based on our reading of the report, on a memorandum prepared by members of the American Embassy who have read it, and on six eyewitness statements from I.S.M. members which conflict with the report findings, we believe there are unanswered questions and inconsistencies which demand further investigation.

The Israeli report concludes that the bulldozer operator could not see Rachel. Rachel was standing in front of a bulldozer and, according to I.S.M.’s practice, kept her eyes on the cab of the bulldozer, so that someone who wanted to look out could see her. We should remember that not only was there an operator in the bulldozer, but also a commander of the bulldozer. That day there were two bulldozers, two people in each bulldozer, plus an armored personnel carrier. That’s a lot of eyes.

My husband, Craig, was a buck sergeant in Vietnam, in 1970, with the combat engineers and the first air cavalry division of the U.S. Army. He was in part in charge of bulldozers, and he says it was his responsibility and the responsibility of all who drove those bulldozers to know what was in front of that blade. Craig notes that the Israeli inquiry quotes Rachel’s autopsy report accurately, but adds that the doctor who did the autopsy suggested that her death

was probably caused by tripping on the debris or perhaps by being covered by the debris. Craig wants to ask that doctor how many times he has seen somebody with many broken ribs, broken vertebra of the spine, broken shoulder blades, and ruptures of a lung – all from tripping!

We arrived in Tel Aviv on September 12. From the 15th to the 20th, we were in the Gaza Strip, primarily in Rafah. There we met with many of Rachel's friends: those she had worked with in I.S.M., the families in whose homes she had stayed to try to offer some international protection, with the children she had worked with in the youth parliament, and with the community members she had met as she tried to build connections between Rafah and her hometown of Olympia, Washington.

In Rafah, we witnessed some of the violence of the occupation: the nightly machine-gun fire from tanks and the fear of walking to a home after dark because the family that invited us to dinner lived on a street exposed to gunfire from Israeli watchtowers; we also witnessed the simple and profound dignity of our host walking slowly down the center of that same street to escort us from his home back to the relative safety of our car.

We went to the water wells where Rachel and other activists stood watch so municipal water workers could repair them. We saw there in the faces of the workers concern for our safety and for the safety of the children who followed us. At one of the wells, we saw, too, the shrapnel and bullet holes from the Israeli firing of the night before.

We returned a second time to a home along the border where we had lunched with a family on a previous day. On this latter visit, we found the wall of the room where we had eaten now pushed in and debris piled against the side of the house. We heard how the previous night the I.D.F. soldiers had sent dogs into the house, followed by soldiers that remained for five hours harassing the family.

We saw the ditch they had dug in the front yard, destroying a garden, but proving that, indeed, there were no gun-running tunnels.

We visited the site of Rachel's death. The home she was protecting still stands. Because of its location along the border strip in an area where bulldozers are frequently working, the Israeli military wanted twenty minutes notice before our arrival, wanted to

have a description of the vehicle we would come in, the license plate identification, and the number of people in the car. We complied. Prior to driving to the border area, we called our assigned contact in the I.D.F. and provided all of this information. The Israeli military knew who was coming to Dr. Samir's home. But shortly after our arrival, as we were preparing to join the family for lunch, Palestinians in our group anxiously alerted us to activity outside. An armored personnel carrier had taken a position across the street, approximately 30 yards from the door. When Craig looked through a crack in the garden (the same crack from which Dr. Samir had on March 16 witnessed Rachel's killing), he saw a bulldozer heading straight for the house.

I felt as though we had been trapped. Craig immediately called back to our I.D.F. contact to report what was happening and how we felt about it. About five minutes later he received a call back from the captain wanting to know, "Where are they now?" By this time, the bulldozer had changed course and was, instead of approaching the house, moving sideways to it. This seemed a shockingly aggressive and provocative action by the Israeli military, considering that they absolutely knew who we were and why we had come.

After the machines had moved away and I felt safer, I was, in a way, grateful that it had happened, because it gave me a chance to see the bulldozers and APC's and how they operate.

We also saw the high, steel border wall being constructed from west to east, separating the land, neighborhoods, and families of Rafah in Palestine from Rafah in Egypt.

We witnessed the voracious appetite of the Israeli bulldozers, consuming ever one more block of one community's homes in the name of another community's security.

We visited with groups that are continuing projects in Rachel's name: a kindergarten with its smiling children chanting a song of welcome at the top of their lungs, and a youth cultural center with its plans for a library and computer center still in search of funding.

We planted olive trees and drank sweet tea with friends.

And we learned that in her adopted city of Rafah, as in Olympia, Rachel was always expected just

around the corner, with her bright smile, her friendly concern, and usually with a small band of children.

Then we left Gaza and experienced the lonely walk through Erez checkpoint, where we were nearly the only people passing through, and our new friends – Rachel’s friends – were left trapped in Gaza, waving good-bye to us. It was emotional. My husband said to me, “It’s like all the movies we’ve watched where someone is finally walking out of prison and they leave their friends behind.”

We spent time in Jerusalem and the West Bank as well. In Jerusalem we went to a memorial at the site of a bus bombing and learned of Shiri Nagari, Rachel’s age, who was killed last year. We listened to her uncle describe Shiri with the same love and pride that our family uses when speaking of Rachel. We learned that the pain does not stop at the Green Line.

In the West Bank we witnessed the strategy of separation taking physical form in the web of fences, walls, identification cards, and checkpoints that separate not only Palestinians from Israelis, but Palestinians from Palestinians, farmers from their fields, children from their classrooms, workers from their jobs, the sick from their healthcare, the elderly from their grandchildren, municipalities from their water supplies, and ultimately, a people from their land.

As I stood in the checkpoint coming from Ramallah into Jerusalem, we had to wait about 45 minutes – a short wait, relatively speaking. We were packed into this little area with families and children. I think it was there that I really felt the humiliation that Palestinians feel. At one point a gentleman looked at me and spoke quietly in English: “This is the occupation.” It affected me deeply to think about that daily humiliation of trying to get from work to home, from home to school, from home to medical treatment.

We saw acres of crumpled aluminum, the jagged and torn remains of the once thriving marketplace of Nazlat Isa, a stark reminder of the occupation’s devastating effect on the economy of both peoples.

In East Jerusalem, we witnessed the horror on a woman’s face and listened to her screaming at Israeli soldiers as her cousin’s home was being demolished nearby. We watched, also, as two determined members of Rabbis for Human Rights challenged the soldiers blocking the street that led to the demolition site.

And on the eve of the Jewish new year, we cele-

brated Rosh Hashanah with Israeli friends in their synagogue and home. We shared their bread, beets, and pomegranates, their stories of the last year, and their hopes for the new one. We shared their music: the songs of so many centuries of suffering and courage, but also, through it all, of joy.

Before leaving to return home, Craig and I gave a statement to the press, the last lines of which recalled something my daughter wrote to me about the occupation: “This has to stop. I think it is a good idea for us all to drop everything and devote our lives to making this stop. I don’t think it’s an extremist thing to do anymore. I still really want to dance around to Pat Benatar and have boyfriends and make comics for my coworkers. But I also want this to stop.”

The Rachel Corrie Foundation

To help make it stop, Craig and I have taken steps to start the Rachel Corrie Foundation.

Sometimes I think I just want to retreat to a quiet place, and I think I’ll get to a time where I can do that and be comfortable with it. But in the early weeks, the quiet moments were some of the hardest ones, when I was alone, not sure of my direction. The foundation will hopefully give us and Rachel’s friends a direction.

We’re looking at a whole number of ways the foundation can help both here and particularly in Rafah.

The Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice will conduct and support programs that foster connections among people and that create peaceful understanding and cooperation with and between local and global communities. We hope to support grassroots efforts, which Rachel believed in so deeply – efforts that promote economic, environmental and social justice.

In her e-mails from Rafah, Rachel wrote of her dreams for both herself and for the Palestinian people. She was committed to making connections between her hometown, Olympia, Washington, and Rafah. She envisioned e-mail exchanges between children in the two communities and between mothers. She was planning for handicrafts made by women in Rafah to be sold at an Olympia fair trade store. She hoped that more people from Olympia would come to Rafah to witness as she was doing. She also hoped that our family would someday have

From Rachel Corrie's Website: www.rachelcorrie.org**Rachel Corrie, 1979-2003**

the opportunity to meet the families from Rafah that she had grown to love.

In Olympia, Rachel's friends are working tirelessly to develop the Olympia Rafah Sister City Project, a project that the Rachel Corrie Foundation looks forward to supporting. Some of Rachel's colleagues in the community have traveled to the Occupied Territories as I.S.M. volunteers. Craig and I have made our first journey to Palestine and Israel and look forward to returning. So Rachel's dreams are coming to fruition.

In Rafah, they say Rachel was "the woman who came to stop the tanks." In Athens, they refer to her as "she who would not retreat." In her hometown of Olympia, Washington, they call her "Peacemaker." Israel seems determined to do all that it can to stop the peacemakers of the world from coming to see and from coming to stop the tanks, but the peacemakers will not retreat. There is energy. We feel it wherever we go. Rachel's spirit—Brian's and Tom's—are remarkably alive in those who are ever more determined to carry on this work and to see the occupation end.

The website address for the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice is:

www.rachelcorriefoundation.org. The website for the Olympia Rafah Sister City Project is: www.orscp.org.

Rachel, in her own words . . .

From an email of February 7, 2003:

I have been in Palestine for two weeks and one hour now, and I still have very few words to describe what I see. It is most difficult for me to think about what's going on here when I sit down to write back to the United States—something about the virtual portal into luxury. I don't know if many of the children here have ever existed without tank-shell holes in their walls and the towers of an occupying army surveying them constantly from the near horizons. I think, although I'm not entirely sure, that even the smallest of these children understand that life is not like this everywhere.

An eight-year-old was shot and killed by an Israeli tank two days before I got here, and many of the children murmur his name to me, "Ali"-- or point at the posters of him on the walls. The children also love to get me to practice my limited Arabic by asking me "Kaif Sharon?" "Kaif Bush?" and they laugh when I say "Bush majnoon," "Sharon majnoon" back in my limited Arabic. (How is Sharon? How is Bush? Bush is crazy. Sharon is crazy.) Of course this isn't quite what I believe, and some of the adults with knowledge of English correct me: Bush mish majnoon... Bush is a businessman. Today I tried to learn to say "Bush is a tool," but I don't think it translated quite right. But anyway, there are eight-year-olds here much more aware of the workings of the global power structure than I was just a few years ago—at least regarding Israel.

Nevertheless, I think about the fact that no amount of reading, attendance at conferences, documentary viewing and word of mouth could have prepared me for the reality of the situation here. You just can't imagine it unless you see it, and even then you are always well aware that your experience is not at all the reality: what with the difficulties the Israeli Army would face if they shot an unarmed U.S. citizen, and with the fact that I have money to buy water when the army destroys wells, and, of course, the fact that I have the option of leaving. Nobody in my family has been shot, driving in their car, by a rocket launcher from a tower at the end of a ma-

jour street in my hometown. I have a home. I am allowed to go see the ocean. Ostensibly it is still quite difficult for me to be held for months or years on end without a trial (this because I am a white U.S. citizen, as opposed to so many others). When I leave for school or work I can be relatively certain that there will not be a heavily armed soldier waiting half way between Mud Bay and downtown Olympia at a checkpoint—a soldier with the power to decide whether I can go about my business, and whether I can get home again when I'm done. So, if I feel outrage at arriving and entering briefly and incompletely into the world in which these children exist, I wonder conversely about how it would be for them to arrive in my world.

They know that children in the United States don't usually have their parents shot and they know they sometimes get to see the ocean. But once you have seen the ocean and lived in a silent place, where water is taken for granted and not stolen in the night by bulldozers, and once you have spent an evening when you haven't wondered if the walls of your home might suddenly fall inward waking you from your sleep, and once you've met people who have never lost anyone—once you have experienced the reality of a world that isn't surrounded by murderous towers, tanks, armed "settlements" and now a giant metal wall, I wonder if you can forgive the world for all the years of your childhood spent existing--just existing--in resistance to the constant stranglehold of the world's fourth largest military--backed by the world's only superpower--in its attempt to erase you from your home. That is something I wonder about these children. I wonder what would happen if they really knew.

As an afterthought to all this rambling, I am in Rafah, a city of about 140,000 people, approximately 60 percent of whom are refugees--many of whom are twice or three times refugees. Rafah existed prior to 1948, but most of the people here are themselves or are descendants of people who were relocated here from their homes in historic Palestine--now Israel. Rafah was split in half when the Sinai returned to Egypt.

Currently, the Israeli army is building a fourteen-meter-high wall between Rafah in Palestine and the border, carving a no-man's land from the houses along the border. Six hundred and two homes have been completely bulldozed according to the Rafah

Popular Refugee Committee. The number of homes that have been partially destroyed is greater.

Today as I walked on top of the rubble where homes once stood, Egyptian soldiers called to me from the other side of the border, "Go! Go!" because a tank was coming. Followed by waving and "what's your name?" There is something disturbing about this friendly curiosity. It reminded me of how much, to some degree, we are all kids curious about other kids: Egyptian kids shouting at strange women wandering into the path of tanks. Palestinian kids shot from the tanks when they peek out from behind walls to see what's going on. International kids standing in front of tanks with banners. Israeli kids in the tanks anonymously, occasionally shouting--and also occasionally waving--many forced to be here, many just aggressive, shooting into the houses as we wander away.

In addition to the constant presence of tanks along the border and in the western region between Rafah and settlements along the coast, there are more IDF towers here than I can count--along the horizon, at the end of streets. Some just army green metal. Others these strange spiral staircases draped in some kind of netting to make the activity within anonymous. Some hidden, just beneath the horizon of buildings. A new one went up the other day in the time it took us to do laundry and to cross town twice to hang banners. Despite the fact that some of the areas nearest the border are the original Rafah with families who have lived on this land for at least a century, only the 1948 camps in the center of the city are Palestinian-controlled areas under Oslo. But as far as I can tell, there are few if any places that are not within the sights of some tower or another. Certainly there is no place invulnerable to Apache helicopters or to the cameras of invisible drones we hear buzzing over the city for hours at a time.

I've been having trouble accessing news about the outside world here, but I hear an escalation of war on Iraq is inevitable. There is a great deal of concern here about the "reoccupation of Gaza." Gaza is reoccupied every day to various extents, but I think the fear is that the tanks will enter all the streets and remain here, instead of entering some of the streets and then withdrawing after some hours or days to observe and shoot from the edges of the communities. If people aren't already thinking about the con-

(Continued on page 13)



Courtesy of I.S.M.

Rachel Corrie just after she was crushed twice by the bulldozer.



Courtesy of I.S.M.

The Children of Rafah

(Continued from page 11)

sequences of this war for the people of the entire region, then I hope they will start.

I also hope you'll come here. We've been wavering between five and six internationals. The neighborhoods that have asked us for some form of presence are Yibna, Tel El Sultan, Hi Salam, Brazil, Block J, Zorob, and Block O. There is also need for constant night-time presence at a well on the outskirts of Rafah since the Israeli army destroyed the two largest wells. According to the municipal water office the wells destroyed last week provided half of Rafah's water supply. Many of the communities have requested internationals to be present at night to attempt to shield houses from further demolition. After about ten p.m. it is very difficult to move at night because the Israeli army treats anyone in the streets as resistance and shoots at them. So clearly we are too few.

I continue to believe that my home, Olympia, could gain a lot and offer a lot by deciding to make a commitment to Rafah in the form of a sister-community relationship. Some teachers and children's groups have expressed interest in e-mail exchanges, but this is only the tip of the iceberg of solidarity work that might be done. Many people want their voices to be heard, and I think we need to use some of our privilege as internationals to get those voices heard directly in the U.S., rather than through the filter of well-meaning internationals such as myself. I am just beginning to learn, from what I expect to be a very intense tutelage, about the ability of people to organize against all odds, and to resist against all odds. Δ

[Editor's Note: During the recent incursions into Rafah, Dr. Samir and his family were forced to evacuate their home. Their bullet-ridden home that Rachel was defending stands empty and threatened with demolition or collapse at any time.]

In Memoriam

Rev. L. Humphrey Walz



Humphrey Walz once noted that he had crossed the Atlantic 38 times, most often on trips involving peace and justice issues. What he never said — but we can say it now — is that, through our organization, he made it financially possible for many others, particularly members of the religious press, to see firsthand the peace and justice issues that frame the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Humphrey himself experienced the devastation of war on innocent civilians while serving as pastor of a Presbyterian Church in New York City between 1937 and 1950. At the end of WW II, his congregation received the Presbyterian Distinguished Service Award for "service to refugees," and he received the King George VI Medal for Service in the Cause of Freedom by the British Government.

From 1948 until he died this year — over 55 years — Humphrey labored to bring the plight of the Palestinians to the attention of Americans. In 1967, he co-founded our organization and, for the first two years, edited *The Link*.

I first met Humphrey and his wife Jean in 1978. She was his muse — and editor. Following her death in 1989, Humphrey remained an active member of our Board of Directors, and wrote a regular column for *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*. In 1988, he entered a retirement community in Janesville, WI, where, not surprisingly, his favorite time of day was the men's discussion forum on current events.

One of the most dignified, wise, thoughtful men I have ever known, Humphrey Walz died as he lived, with an enduring empathy for those who suffer injustice.

John F. Mahoney

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- ▶ AJPME, **Beyond the Mirage: The Face of the Occupation** (2002, 47 minutes). Israeli and Palestinian human rights advocates challenge the misconceptions most Americans have about the Occupation and Palestinian resistance to it. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- ▶ DMZ, **People & the Land** (1997, 57 minutes). This is the controversial documentary by Tom Hayes that appeared on over 40 PBS stations. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- ▶ Howard Film, **The Loss of Liberty** (2002, 53 minutes). Latest information on Israel's 1967 attack on USS Liberty. **AMEU: \$20.00.**
- ▶ Kelley, R., **The Bedouin of Israel** (1998, 2 hours). Never-before-seen film of how Israel has treated its Bedouin citizens, including interview with the notorious Green Patrol. **AMEU: \$30.00.**
- ▶ Longley, J., **Gaza Strip** (2001, 74 minutes). Riveting documentary on the horric plight of the Palestinians in Gaza. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- ▶ Masri, M., **Frontiers of Dreams and Fears** (2002, 58 minutes). Focuses on two Palestinian girls growing up in refugee camps in Beirut and Bethlehem. List: \$50.00; **AMEU: \$43.95.**
- ▶ Moushabeck, M., **Anatolia: Lost Songs of Palestine** (2001, CD, 52 minutes). List: \$15.00; **AMEU: \$12.50.**
- ▶ Munayyer, F. & H., **Palestinian Costumes and Embroidery: A Precious Legacy** (1990, 38 minutes). A rare collection of Palestinian dresses with historical commentary. List: \$50.00; **AMEU: \$25.00.**
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