

Rosh Hashanah Message

A NEW LIFE

BY DENISE WEICHER

"Several years ago I felt that my life had ended. After forty years of teaching I retired. The faculty presented me with the usual imitation broach; The Board of Education awarded me the usual artificial parchment imprinted with words of thanks for a lifetime of teaching the children of the community. With my terminal trophies in hand I drove home, where I could not shake off my feelings of uselessness. A black pall hovered over each day as I searched for justification for my existence." These are the words of Californian Mollie Brill, reflecting on the all - too - common life crisis faced by older adults when they lose the status and position society has accorded them on the basis of profession.

For Mrs. Brill, who had led an active and

purposeful life teaching not only during the week working in the public school system, but on weenends as well in Sabbath school, the transition into retirement was particularly difficult. She had been a person who was always "doing," always helping someone, and long months of inactivity and loneliness led her into a deep depression. Then unexpectedly, she had the chance to reestablish connections with the world that was going on around her.

"One day, after months of emptiness, a friend of mine, a member of the National Council of Jewish Women, telephoned to ask me a favor," recalled Mrs. Brill. "She was a volunteer in NCJW's resettlement program for Soviet Jewish immigrants, and was going to be out of town when a new family was due to arrive. She wanted to know if I would fill in for her and show the mother how to get around the city, how to shop, how to go about finding a job. Suddenly the world opened up. I had a job to do. I became an NCJW volunteer who would help newly-arrived Russian Jews learn the ins and outs of life in America."

Mrs. Brill thus became one of thousands of women who participate in NCJW's resettlement programs around the country. These volunteers spend countless hours meeting new arrivals at airports, finding them housing and furniture, arranging for medical and legal appointments, bringing immigrants to social security appointments and job interviews, enrolling children in school, arranging for English classes, and generally overseeing the acclimatization of life in America.

"Suddenly, I was part of a vibrant, beautiful community of people," says Mrs. Brill of her own volunteer experiences. "As I plunged into the lives of the Soviet newcomers, I was no longer Mollie, but Mollishka. Spacibo, nitchevo and dasvadanya became as familiar to me as my own tongue. One Soviet family literally handed me over to the next newly - arrived group until I had an extended family of one hundred Soviet Jews.

"With each day I acquired new knowledge," Mrs. Brill continued. "I learned about my community, about its resources and institutions. I learned about the language, culture and customs of my new friends. But most importantly, as I strove to help one frantic Russian after another, I grew in human understanding and compassion. And as I realized the desperate need for my work, I grew in my own sense of self - esteem and productivity. Volunteering in this way has, literally, given me back my life."

Having perfected her Russian, Mrs. Brill will now be sharpening up her French as she prepares to help in the resettlement of the Indo-chinese boat people expected to arrive in her city. This is a new aspect of NCJW's resettlement work, and the national organization has, in a letter to President Carter, formally offered its services nationwide in welcoming the Indo-chinese boat people to this country. At the same time, NCJW has been gearing up its resettlement program to meet the needs of the growing influx of Soviet Jewish immigrants, whose numbers are expected to increase substantially over the next few years.

CHARGE TERRORISTS

TEL AVIV (WNS) -- Israeli military sources have charged that the terrorists in south Lebanon are using American-made weapons. They charge that the terrorists have 30 105-mm howitzers which were apparently stolen from the Lebanese army. The Palestinian terrorists also have 70 Soviet - made artillery pieces. Military correspondents and foreign journalists were shown a 105-mm howitzer shell fired by the terrorists into a Christian enclave.

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