

The Sun City Scene

BY SAUL SCHWARZ

The United States Census Bureau reported recently that in the ten years from 1970 to 1980 most states of the Union showed gains of at least 10% in their aged population but some really zoomed. Nevada's elderly population increased by 98%! Arizona went up 80%, while Florida rose 63%, Hawaii 59% and New Mexico 55%. Obviously, these large increases in the sunbelt states are due to migrations of elderly from frostier climes and not an acceleration of the aging process of their indigenous populations.

This information and the fact that whenever two or more retirees meet the question of relocation to the sunbelt inevitably arises, prompts me to set down some thoughts on the matter.

My advice is that you think twice before you uproot yourself and head for the sun belt. Ask yourself a lot of questions. Talk with those who have done it, regretted it and returned. The following are the most frequently stated reasons:

They missed their family, friends, children and grandchildren (though not always in that order). Old age has been described as a process of losing things, among them one's spouse, friends and associates. Why speed up the process by moving away from them, breaking those ties when you need them most. After all, if you live long enough you will find yourself alone in a world full of young strangers. Time enough to be lonely then.

It is exceedingly difficult to find employment, full or part - time, in those sun belt retirement communities and not everyone can find satisfaction in the endless round of bingo nights, birthday parties, dances, commercialized entertainment, and artsy - craftsy projects. Even golf and tennis pall after a while. Leisure is fine in moderation but most of us would prefer to wear out than rust out.

Many people, even those who never thought of themselves as nature lovers, discover that they miss the change of seasons, particularly spring when the budding and greening of trees and shrubs speaks of renewal, rebirth and en-

couragement to all forms of life. Ah yes, but what about winter with its snow, ice and frigid blasts? If it gets too rough for you, and you can afford it, by all means spend a couple of weeks in Florida, or some like place, and hope that you won't hit a cold spell there.

Life in those retirement villages, especially in the sun belt is like being in a geriatric prison. (you are surrounded by old people who always seem to look and act older than you). Children adolescents and the middle aged are seen only when they come to visit grandma and grandpa. Many retirement villages even limit the length of their visit. Some are even fenced off for security reasons and have guards at the gates who check every incoming automobile for identification (except of course the seemingly ever present ambulances on their way to pick up the latest heart attack victim).

It also turns out that the cost of living is not that much less in the sun belt. Energy costs, which are mounting every day and seem to have no relationship to the law of supply and demand, are less because one uses less fuel and power (except for air - conditioning in the summer). But food, housing and other essentials are not so cheap as to make a significant difference. And then there are the rip - off artists who seek to victimize the elderly by all kinds of frauds and misrepresentations. Because there are so many elderly the sun belt is their happy hunting ground.

Living in the sun belt doesn't always markedly alleviate your arthritic pains. It seems to help when you are there on a visit but that may be due to the fact that you are on vacation and away from the daily stress and strain of home. Be sure to discuss this aspect with your ortho-

pedist before you uproot yourself for that reason.

Sooner or later, just about all of us need the help of one or more of the several agencies of the Jewish community. Why not? These agencies deal with the guts of human existence -- being born, becoming a person, growing up, marriage (and divorce), child rearing, care of the elderly, etc., etc. They came into existence to help us but they can't serve everybody and they don't exist everywhere. They have enough difficulty with their limited budgets in serving long time community residents and usually cannot extend their service to newcomer. This is especially true of homes for the aged. So before you leave your home community with its complex of local Jewish social, health, welfare and educational services consider that you may be giving up your entitlements to those kinds of services in the process. Did I say you should think twice? Make it three times!

(This column is prepared by Saul Schwarz, retired Associate Executive Vice - President of the Jewish Community Federation of Metropolitan New Jersey and currently a private consultant in community organization and social planning.)

ISRAEL GETS AUTOMATED SHIP

HAIFA (WNS) -- The latest addition to Israel's merchant marine, the 29,000 ton container ship Zim Keelung, arrived here on her delivery voyage from Holland and sailed on her maiden voyage to the Far East via U.S. ports.

The \$40 million diesel - powered vessel, described as "one of the most advanced ships in the world," is equipped with sophisticated elec-

tronic systems for navigation, safety and loading and an automated power plant which is expected to save about 30 percent in fuel costs.

The Zim Keelung can carry up to 880 40 - foot containers. She will be operated on the Zim lines' "three continent service" which presently employs seven other large container ships on 112 - day round voyage from Israel and Mediterranean ports to the U.S. east and west coasts, Japan and Hong Kong.

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