



Central Arava
Regional Council

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With great sadness we announce that Shay Ben Eliyahu passed away on June 8, 2010. Fifty years ago he, together with the late Hagai Porat, founded Moshav Ein Yahav, thus pioneering the settlement of the Arava region. He served as Head of the Regional Council from 1992-2001. A true visionary, he lived to realize his dream.

place I once knew.

Independence Day, like most of the Jewish holidays, is celebrated in the Moshav together. The entire community organizes. Each family prepares their special dish or contributes in their own special way, which results in a great festivity and feeling of belonging. Belonging to a community; belonging to a great area; belonging to a great country. At times like these, I know I made the write choice of where to live and bring up my family. All the difficulties, of living in such a remote, extreme desert area become insignificant against the advantages the community has to offer. This extreme area, with extreme weather, miles from every where, is a true gem in the desert.

Keren Rotem, Resource Development Coordinator and Editor

Israel's 62 Independence Day was recently celebrated and got me thinking quiet a bit. I came to live in Moshav Ein Yahav a little over 4 years ago. I was imported, as the locals say, from Tel Aviv. A true city girl, although originally born in kibbutz Kfar Blum up in the northern part of Israel. As I was introduced to the area, I immediately fell in love with it and with the people that strongly reminded me of the

Year 2010

I started my third year as Head of the Central Arava Regional Council full of hope, in the true spirit of a farmer with an optimistic outlook (there is always the next season...). Two years ago we had extremely cold weather, something we have not experienced for many years. This caused extensive economic damage to all the farmers in the Region. Then last year we encountered the global economic crisis which severely hampered the export of agricultural products from our region, especially hurting the export of organic produce.

The January Flash Floods

On January 17th and 18th this year, we experienced another meteorological event that is very rare, occurring last in 1975 and remembered only by Arava old timers who lived here back then. During this recent freak weather event, extensive rainfall and flooding covered the area that to our sorrow also cost the lives of two hikers in the Arava riverbed. During the flooding the Arava Rescue Unit acted with courage and daring in rescuing and evacuating

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Regional Council

hikers throughout the region, as they do in fact every day of the year. The rescue unit comprises 80 volunteers who answer every call for help throughout the year and for this we express our deep appreciation and gratitude.

The Adopt an Acacia Tree Launching Ceremony

Rain is both a blessing to the desert and a cause of great damage to agriculture. We hope that the filled reservoirs and enriched underground aquifers will prove beneficial and bear fruit. With opportune timing, we celebrated the Tu BiShvat festival several days after the floods with the initiation of the Adopt an Acacia Tree project in partnership with the schoolchildren, members of



Ezra Ravins, Aylon Gadiel, Head of Arava R&D, Mrs. Cunningham and the US Ambassador during a tour at Yair R&D Station. Photo by: Matty Stern, American Embassy Tel Aviv

the Society for the Protection of Nature in the region, Keren Kayemeth Le Israel and JNF (Jewish National Fund) Australia. The project called for the planting and restoring to nature of the acacia trees indigenous to the region.

In all my 32 years in the region, I do not recall such a green, blooming desert. This

is the result of the Arava valley being saturated in the recent heavy and impressive rains.

Perhaps someone above noticed our desire to restore and protect the acacias and is now making it absolutely clear who is in charge of matters.

Visit of the Honorable US Ambassador his Excellency Mr. James B. Cunningham

We were recently honored to host the U.S. Ambassador and his wife during their visit to the region. We demonstrated to them our agricultural achievements during visits to the Yair Research and Development Station, a commercial greenhouse, a tour along the Peace Road (adjacent to the Jordanian border),



Ezra Ravins planting an Acacia seedling with two local school children during the launching ceremony on January 20th 2010

an explanation of the water problems and of the peace agreement. The excursion ended at the ecological community of Zuzim, with a tour of the ecological tourist projects and the planting of an acacia tree.

Populating the Central Arava

And now, returning to our daily reality, I am acutely aware of the immense challenge of populating the Central Arava. Huge difficulties stand in the way such as the distance from Beer Sheva with its university, the military bases, and the student villages and residences. I am aware of the difficulty of attracting new residents to our remote region, with its extreme climatic conditions. Only a



Ezra Ravins with the Acacia seedling, His Excellency the US Ambassador and his wife a few minutes before the planting in Zuzim. Photo by: Matty Stern, American Embassy Tel Aviv

joint effort, involving a special resolution by the Israeli government in support of the area, will help. The effort must provide for incentives in all aspects of civil services, such as tourism, education, agriculture, industry, health, senior citizen facilities. All of these are necessary in order

to facilitate our expansion plans, the absorption of families and the development of the region.

I have no doubt that our friends overseas can help us greatly in creating the necessary conditions for attracting additional and diverse populations to the region, and in this way to continue realizing the vision of the first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for your help and to wish you a pleasant and enjoyable summer vacation.

Sincerely yours,

Ezra Ravins

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US Ambassador and his wife in the Arava International Center for Agricultural Trainees (AICAT) in Sapir. Photo by: Matty Stern, American Embassy Tel Aviv



Preservation of Nature and Environment is the Arava Way!



Local children on a school trip to KKL Gilat nurseries

The acacia trees are back in our landscape – in a festive ceremony held in the presence of the Head of KKL (Keren Kayemeth Le’Israel) Southern District, Mr. Ami Ulliel, JNF advisor, Mr. Shalom Norman, the Head of the Central Arava Regional Council, Mr. Ezra Ravins as well as school students and farmers of the community, the first acacia trees were planted in the project entitled “Preservation of Nature and Environment is the Arava Way” (Adopt an Acacia tree). This ceremony marked the

beginning of community and educational projects accompanying the planting of thousands of acacias in the Arava.

The Adopt an Acacia project involves the community taking responsibility for the environment in which we live. Farming directly harms the environment and our objective is to bring the residents and farmers of the Central Arava closer to the natural environment and to provide them with the tools for repairing instead of damaging the environment.

In previous articles, we already wrote of how KKL and JNF

have risen to the challenge and taken responsibility for the project, and how thanks to JNF Australia and the young couple Zoe Spiegel and Darren Smorgon who donated their wedding gifts, we have managed to bring the project into being.

On 20 January 2010, in a moving ceremony attended by representatives of KKL, and the Regional Council, as well as Border Police Officers, farmers, residents and all the schoolchildren, the first acacias were planted in the Yair R&D Station and the project was launched. During the period preceding the ceremony, Central Arava

schoolchildren participated in lessons on the importance of the acacia in the Arava ecosystem. They learned about the acacia as part of their school activities, went on field trips to collect seeds and took part in a full day seminar at Hatzeva and Arava R&D Yair Station, after which they joined the launch ceremony. The junior high school students went on field trips to learn about the acacias and later help prepare the ground for planting.

The planting and other community events continued after the ceremony. As part of the Tu BiShvat activities and with the instruction of volunteers from the Hatzeva Field School, residents of Hatzeva planted hundreds of trees on the road leading to the Moshav, and farmers from the Moshav planted trees near their agricultural fields. Planting also took place in



KKL Experts & Supervisors from the Nature Preserve Society collecting seeds.

the agricultural areas of other Central Arava Moshavim (Agricultural Communities). On March 20th a nature preservation happening, Arava style, was held for the community and for visitors and tourists as well. During this event the tourists took part in bird banding at Sapir Park, enjoyed free tours of the Sheizaf Reserve under the guidance of the Hatzeva Field School and planted acacias in Sapir. In the near future additional events highlighting preservation of the environment and planting acacias will take place in each of the Arava communities

Thus far, in less than six months, hundreds of new acacias have been planted and adopted by residents and farmers from the area. The first 100 days of the project have indeed proved to be fruitful and we are proud of

our activities to date.

What we have managed so far, however, is only the tip of the iceberg. The major part will be the educational process that will begin in the local schools next year: The Adopt an Acacia project will spearhead the Arava community educational program in environmental studies and will form the core of the curriculum. Each and every student will learn of the importance of the ecological



An acacia seedling. Photo by: Oded Keynan



Gazelle feeding on an acacia tree. Photo by: Oded Keynan



Acacia planting event in Moshav Ein Yahav. Photo by: Hilla Elbaz

system in the Arava, its uniqueness and the role that the acacia trees play in it. The residents of the Arava have taken on the acacia tree planting project very seriously and apply it with a true sense of mission. We believe that, in the near future, the acacias will once again provide shade

to the residents of the Arava, as well as food and shelter to the animals that live in and depend on them. And to quote Janusz Korczak- He who is concerned with days, plants wheat. He who is concerned with years, plants trees. He who is concerned with generations, educates

people. The project Preservation of Nature and the Environment is the Arava Way will bring good days for the environment, good years for the ecological system and generations of residents who love nature and the environment and aim to develop a sustainable and healthy way of life in the Arava.



Acacia planting event in Sapir. Photo by: Oded Keynan

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Arava Rescue Unit

The Arava Rescue Unit was formed in 1991 at a time of growth in the number of visitors to the region. Coinciding with the beginning of the development of the local tourist industry, we recognized a need to provide a solution for the increasing number of hikers in distress. This need was highlighted after the tragic death of a hiker in the region, when it became clear that there was nobody that could have reached the place quickly and carried out a rescue operation.

As a result of this incident, Gil Slevin of Moshav Hatzeva initiated, established and commanded the Arava Rescue Unit. The Unit was set up with the cooperation and involvement of Matan Vilnai, who at the time was the Commander of the Southern Area Command, the late Nabi Marai of the Arava Brigade, Shlomo Aharonishki, the Commissioner of the Police at that time, and Nachum Bichler of the Dimona Police and of course by the many volunteers from the Arava Community. The unit then had 50 volunteers.



Rescue operation performed by the Arava Rescue Unit, in cooperation with Unit 669 of the IDF Air Force, during the January flash flood. Photo by: Gila Tal

Beyond the voluntary activity, commitment and availability

required from the volunteers, the Unit has also become a close social group.

Friendship, accomplishment and the Arava way of life reinforce and add meaning

to the initial reasons for establishing the Unit:

help, aid and rescue for people who are in distress.

In 1988 Peter Rabin, of Moshav Tzofar, replaced Gil Slevin and commanded the Unit for approximately 6 years. For the past 6 years, Elad Seker, of Moshav Ein

Yahav, is the Arava Rescue Unit Commander. The Arava Rescue Unit operates within the framework of the special units of the Civilian Guard of the Israeli Police, with the help of the Central Arava Regional Council and is also a member of the F.I.R.S.T. (Fast Israeli Rescue & Search Team) national organization.

The activities of the unit

Today the unit has 80 volunteers, residents of the Arava Valley. The volunteers are divided into teams and go through training and professional courses such as: climbing and gliding for rescue work, extracting people from ruins, medicine, finding people who are lost, reconnoitering, crossing turbulent water, aerial patrols, and many others allowing the volunteers to maintain a high level of professionalism. The experience of the Arava Rescue Unit and involvement in the many rescue operations over the years has made it one of the leading and prominent units in Israel.

The unit is operational and on call 365 days a year to answer any request for help, and, in contrast to the situation in the years before the establishment of the unit, today there is an immediate response which is professional, well-trained and skilled for every type of distress in the vast Arava region.

The professionalism of the Unit and fulfillment of the spirit of voluntary service expand beyond the boundaries of the Arava area. The Arava Rescue Unit is active in disaster areas



Arava Rescue Unit during a climbing, gliding & rescue training. Photo by: Amnon Ziv



Mutual training drill with AKUT Turkish Rescue Unit in the Central Arava. Photo by: Gilad Livni

all over the world. In the past few years the Unit's volunteers have participated in rescue teams to the Philippines and



Arava Rescue Unit volunteer, Dr. Amnon Zvieli, attending to a Philippine girl. Photo by: Ofer Meir.

Haiti during the nature disasters that struck them. The Arava Rescue Unit also cooperates in joint training and exercising with the Turkish Rescue Unit AKUT, with the assistance of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. These reciprocal visits between the Units contribute to both groups to achieve better

training results. During the rescue operation in Haiti, the connection between the units produced mutual aid activities. The first beneficiaries are the victims in need of help.

As in all areas of volunteering the Arava Rescue Unit members also derive great satisfaction from their work. During a recent event in the presence of high command officers of the Police and IDF with heads of many of

the neighboring Regional Councils Elad Seker, the Commander of the Unit, made the following speech (page 11). He defined the nature, purpose, difficulty and satisfaction from voluntary activities within the Rescue Unit in particular.

Just as we sent the paper for publishing we learned that Elad Seker had won the Volunteering Medal, presented by the President of the State of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres for his voluntary work within the Arava Rescue Unit. Elad has been invited to the



F.I.R.S.T rescue mission members with the Israeli Ambassador and heads of Operation Blessing organization, Manila. Photo by: Ofer Meir.

award ceremony that will take place on June 23rd in the President's residence.



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Words from the heart

You're sent out to a rescue at any given time. In a second you turn from a civilian to a rescuer. Always in the middle of something: work, in the field, with your family. You shower your kids with one hand and with the other you fill the questionnaire. One eye is on the sorting machine and the other eye on the door. There is no time. You have to rush! Someone is stuck, wounded, lost, dehydrated, bitten by a snake...

Now someone is counting on you. You are the light at the end of the tunnel and you have to switch your mind, be focused, accurate and operate at your best. We are volunteers but we are always committed. To help, aid and save lives, even when it isn't convenient. With your connection officer on the phone, you leave your stunned guest in your living room, the fertilizer shipment with no solution and you head out to rescue.

The responsibility, massive and heavy, sits on your heart, pressing your guts. The adrenalin is flowing and you forget you haven't slept or eaten.

You leave for a rescue, time and time again. By jeep, scouting, stretcher, ropes, sometimes a chopper. Every time a different case. different age. Boy, girl, man,

woman in distress. Sometimes simple other times complex. They are in a pit, defenseless, and you have the privilege and the obligation to reach out your hand and save them.

It's hard. very hard to be the commander of the rescue unit. I have my share of hardships and weariness. It becomes a part of life. A part of myself.

Sometimes when I take my friends, who are visiting the area, to one of the wadis out side the Moshav, from force of habit I stop at the closer acacia tree that is near the main highway, although the further one ahead is much more beautiful but has no reception near it and at any given moment there can be a cry for help.

Of course, it comes at the expense of other things. When you're late to your son's birthday party, there is no excuse. In the Police district or IDF Squadron you're asked about your promotion, terms, your pay... Me... I'm a volunteer, you answer.

And then, when it gets to you, you raise your eyes to the board with all the moving thank you letters. From a mother, a father, a school headmaster. You remember all the touching phone calls, like

the one when a young boy was thrown from a Jeep while driving in the Neqarot River. His leg was cut open and he was lying in the middle of the desert, bleeding, and no phone reception. The Unit responded quickly. We set up a command post, medical team, a smoke grenade, landing and closure. Take care of the distraught girlfriend. At night, when you fall exhausted on the sofa and all you want is to sleep, you get a phone call and answer it reluctantly. "It's me, the brother of the young boy. Our mom wants a word with you. We are in Ichilov Hospital outside the operating room". The mother is asking if it is you? By then I sit up and rub my eyes and listen. "Today" she says "I found out that angels are not only in heaven and thank you so much for saving my son. Thanks." That night I couldn't fall a sleep. I Say thank you for a great privilege... "

Dedicated to all the commanders and volunteers of all the Rescue Units" .

Elad Saker, Commander of the Arava Rescue Unit

Arava Rescue Unit volunteers take part in the F.I.R.S.T rescue mission

The earthquake which struck Haiti on 12th January, 2010 caused immense destruction and devastation. The dire situation and the plight of the survivors left no doubt that without massive aid the condition of the victims would be hopeless. The entire world mobilized and sent aid delegations.



Haiti 2010, earthquake consequences

Apart from the official Israeli Defense Forces Rescue delegation, several other aid delegations were organized in Israel, and these included a delegation of volunteers from the FIRST (Fast Israeli Rescue and Search Team) rescue unit in the form of a medical aid delegation consisting of 10 volunteers. Two of them are active volunteers of the

Arava Rescue Unit.

Sheva Cohen A resident of Moshav Ein Yahav and pioneer settler of the Arava, a senior nurse and also a mother and grandmother whose son and son-in-law

volunteer, like she does, in the rescue unit.

Karni Lev A nurse who works at Moshav Ein Yahav and also at the Soroka Hospital in Beer Sheva, a member of Moshav Tzofar and wife of Uri Lev who is the deputy commander of the rescue unit.



Sheva Cohen & Karni Lev attending to a local woman injured during the earthquake.

Sheva and Karni volunteered to join the delegation that left for Haiti on 15th January 2010, which was three days after the earthquake. They relate the story of the delegation. It is a story of the hard realities in the disaster area and also a story of hands on action. A story of two volunteers.

Arriving in Haiti was far from easy because all the

to Haiti January 2010

infrastructure of the island had been destroyed. But the moment the delegation arrived, the volunteers began organizing themselves in the field in the extremely poor conditions that prevailed. The agonizing and incomprehensible reality of virtually total destruction and helplessness confronted them.

In the initial stages of setting up, the delegation was helped by other organizations that were on site, such as Bnei Brit, Latet and Christians who love Israel.

On the first day the delegation went to the City Hospital. This was the only hospital still standing after the earthquake.



The first impressions and sights, etched with indelible clarity on their minds, were of absolute chaos, of terrible destruction and desolation, of naked children wandering the streets and of people roaming aimlessly back and

forth. These were indeed difficult and heart-rending sights to see.

Beds were laid out all around the hospital and people were being treated outside in very severe conditions. Not far away from them there was a pile of dead bodies. Everything they saw conveyed terrible misery and suffering. Everyone and everything was very quiet.

From the city hospital, the team moved to a stadium, which had been turned into a refugee camp and which provided a buffer from the streets and the general chaos. After the Israeli team began working in the stadium a more organized system was put in place for treating



Sheva Cohen (far right) & Karni Lev (far left) with other members of F.I.R.S.T mission to Haiti



Sheva Cohen attending a Haitian girl.

the injured persons, thanks in large part to the welcome assistance and cooperation provided by the locals who were happy to help and work alongside the delegation from the Holy Land. When it became known to the other aid delegations that the Israeli team had begun working in the stadium, some of the delegations, being mainly from private organizations and not countries, joined in the work and provided additional medical professionals and equipment that was sorely needed.

Until that time, the delegations had not been permitted by their countries and organizations to venture into the field due to fear for their safety.

All the aid delegations shared one goal and purpose and that was saving lives. Keeping this shared objective in mind we cooperated fully and worked together in true joint efforts. One of the aid delegations in the field was the Turkish AKUT rescue unit, with which the Arava Rescue Unit has been maintaining ties over the past two years and conducting joint training exercises. Encounters such as these with other rescue units highlight the importance of the units cooperating and



Kami Lev attending a Haitian girl.

working together, and also make it clear that this should not be the case only in disaster areas.

The Israeli team treated hundreds of people every day, while each day the sights of suffering around them grew worse and worse. There were many difficult decisions to make and medical dilemmas to resolve that required an immediate response in the field. Questions, such as what would happen with these people, who would care for them after the initial medical treatment, how they would survive remained unanswered. Meeting such helpless people, who are grief stricken and whose lives have been totally devastated, had a powerful effect on the aid workers and will remain with them for a long time after their return home. Together with this strong emotion there is an unparalleled sense of calling to help people whose worlds have been shattered.

Doing this volunteer work with people from all around the world who have been mobilized in order to help and who are dedicated to saving lives, all working with impressive concentration and diligence in the indescribably

bad conditions and all in the spirit of endless giving without limit either physical or emotional, is very uplifting. When speaking to Karni, one can learn of the satisfaction derived from this in her words:

Working as a team generates an intense sense of power, partnership and unity between human beings the likes of which few other experiences in life impart. It is also significant as a test of one's professional skills and one's limits as a nurse as one is required to diagnose and treat an enormous variety of problems while working in such difficult conditions. It is far from an easy or pleasant experience. It is real hard hands on positive action in a

situation in which you are truly needed.

The process of gaining an understanding of the population and its needs not just the medical needs - is very important in dealing with a sudden, multiple casualty events like this one. There are implications, and lessons to be learned, regarding the work that must be done and preparations made if, God forbid, such a disaster should ever occur in our country.

Sheva, Karni and the Israeli delegation returned home after nearly two weeks in the field, when the large delegations and floating hospitals began to arrive.

It takes time to come home and to acclimatize to the normal daily routines. Here too, many and various medical cases present themselves in rapid succession and one must cope all the time, however everything is in proportion.

The aid delegation to Haiti has taken its place in the annals of the aid delegations in which the Arava Rescue Unit has participated. The aid delegation preceding this one went to the Philippines in 2009 to help the flood victims there. That delegation went to the devastated areas and provided medical assistance under difficult conditions. The team members were Dr. Amnon Zvielli, a resident of Sapir, Vardit Aloni, a resident of Moshav Idan and Elad Seker who is the commander of the Arava Rescue Unit and a resident of Ein Yahav. They tell of experiencing the sense of the importance and significance of the mission, a sense of calling and of performing an important good deed at a time and place of great need.



A moment of contemplation

Photos courtesy of the F.I.R.S.T. Haiti rescue mission volunteers



A large scale meteorological phenomenon occurred on January 18th this year causing floods in the Negev, Arava and Sinai.

Intense rainfall in the Nitzana, Sdeh Boker and Mitzpeh Ramon regions produced floods of a strength not seen since 1975. Two additional floods of a much lesser intensity, originating in Israel and Jordan, occurred later in February. The welcome rainfall filled all of the Arava reservoirs, provided an important addition of water to the aquifers, raising the water depth at pumping stations, and improved water quality. Unfortunately, floods of such power cause damage to



Construction of the Paran operative Reservoir. Photo by: Ami Shaham

the drainage infrastructures. The monetary value of the damage to the water mains, electricity lines, roads and other installations is estimated at about NIS 10 million. Another major problem related to floods is that old

landmines are swept up by the floodwaters and scattered all over the valley area so that they cannot be found, thus endangering residents and travelers!

In 1975, while the Negarot reservoir was being constructed, the entire Negev and Arava was flooded. The flood waters broke the dams that were under construction and went on to merge with the Arava River which flowed with great force to the north. Many agricultural areas east of Ein Yahav were flooded and could not be cultivated for many years due to the problem of mines which were believed to have been deposited there by the floods. In the past, after the peace agreement with Jordan



was signed, the Arava Drainage Authority built and paved several Irish bridges crossing the Arava riverbed, with the intention of enabling immediate, safe and mine free access to the agricultural areas. Thankfully the floods did not damage the crossings. The immediate lesson learned was that additional bridges must be built in the Ein Yahav area, over the Neqarot and Arava streams, along a stretch of approximately 1.5km and at a cost of about \$600,000, which we must raise.

As time goes by, the need increases for a water supply that is reliable, backed up and adequate. This goal can be achieved by fully exploiting the drilling capacity of each well. Thus it becomes



imperative to construct large operating reservoirs to store water pumped during off hours, and thereby increase the supply when the demand goes up. At the present time such an operative reservoir is being built near Moshav Paran, similar to the Sheizaf reservoir near Ein Yahav, which was inaugurated by

Mekorot in 2006 and has a capacity of about 150,000 cubic meters. This new reservoir at Paran has a planned capacity of 215,000 cubic meters. The reservoir floor will be covered with a layer of plastic to prevent loss of water due to seepage and in addition a floating cover prevents evaporation and pollution. The Paran reservoir construction, carried out by Mekorot, began in August 2009. The ground work has been completed and the land is currently being prepared for the laying of the bottom sheet.



The Sheizaf operative reservoir and Neqarot flood capturing reservoir near in Yahav.
Photo by: Ami Shahan

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A moment of history Amnon Navon's column

Konstadter



One day, in the early 1960s, a jenny (female donkey) appeared out of nowhere in Ein Yahav. No one knows where she came from but, as is our custom, we gladly welcomed her, as we would any living being, in order to increase our population. Those days, there was no need for an acceptance committee and graphologists; no one asked her where she had come from or anything else about her past.

We called her Konstadter. Where did we get the name from? Konstadter is a character from one of Ephraim Kishon's short stories that we used to read every week in the Maariv newspaper. Why Konstadter? Just so: no special reason.

Konstadter gladly responded to her new name. She wandered

lazily around the settlement, eating straw from the cow troughs and fresh fruit from the few plants that we had, always at the risk of being injured by the stones thrown at her by the gardeners who toiled very hard in order to induce anything at all to grow in our fields. Truth be told, it was an amusing respite from the gardeners' dull daily routine.

Some people happened to meet Konstadter on the way to the dining hall, about 100m away, and climbed on her back.

Konstadter's public status was greatly enhanced when she was discovered by Fat Shmill.

Fat Shmill weighed over 150 Kg. When Shmill sat on her back, Konstadter sagged under his weight. Shmill got off, bent down, reached beneath Konstadter, wrapped his arms around her legs and lifted her up like a baby. Thenceforth Shmill repeated this exhibition on any request and certainly for any guest. Konstadter finally had an official job in the community and now justified the food that she took.

When the palm trees were planted on the drainage site, about 7 km north of the settlement, they were watered in pits with plastic hoses. Drip irrigation technology was only

beginning to emerge at the time. The hoses were dragged from one lot to the next by the irrigation workers. The grove consisted of about 1,200 trees and it covered about 1 km in length. Dragging the hoses was hard work.

This posed a dilemma for the Jewish mind. Why should we, the humans, drag the hoses like donkeys, while Konstadter, the donkey, relaxed and enjoyed herself?

Why not recruit Konstadter to this important task?

So we bought a harness for Konstadter at the Beer Sheva Bedouin Market and then on to work!

Konstadter had to be led to the drainage site, how could we do this? The answer was at hand. Every day the palm tree workers took a truck or a jeep to the grove. We decided to add Konstadter to the entourage.

There was a small mound in the yard. The jeep backed up to the mound and the back door opened.

Konstadter was brought to the mound and asked to mount the jeep. This would be the appropriate place to note that she was a very smart jenny (at least 700 SAT). She



immediately understood what was going on. Do they think that I am a sucker and will agree to give up my life of freedom for boring labor in the fields?

She set her heels in and could not be budged. Five people pushed her and she resisted. Shmill wasn't around and Shai Ben Eliyahu was called in to handle the situation. Shai, who had a good rapport with animals (both four and two-legged ones) tried, in the way King Solomon would, to persuade her to move using the carrot and stick method - but it was to no avail.

We finally remembered the old military field phone we had somewhere nearby. When

cranked to produce a ringing tone, it generated an electrical current strong enough to shock anyone who touched the wires. We found the telephone, connected the wires and then attached them to Konstadter's rear. One small crank and Konstadter leapt into the jeep.

Just as I said, she was a smart jenny. She knew exactly who she was dealing with. She quietly rode to the drainage site and happily got off of the jeep.

She was a quick learner and got the hang of things very quickly. When harnessed to the hose, she immediately started to walk to the next tap and then stopped at the right spot, without anyone standing

by her or giving her any orders.

Sometimes she acknowledged the scent of freedom and then she would run away (I would do the same) but at the end of the day when she saw the jeep approaching, she would hurry back because she knew that she would be allowed an indulgent evening in the bushes.

I took care of the date groves at the time and had a special relationship with Konstadter, and I was honored with her presence at my side when I married Ora in the disappearing valley now known as Sapir Park.

Konstadter served us for several years until the mobile irrigation method was replaced by a permanent dripping system.

When we relocated to our permanent settlement, Konstadter disappeared in the hubbub. She may have gone back to the Bedouin tents or found another owner. And then, there are those who claim to see her from time to time, wandering along the Arava Road at night.

Amnon Navon

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Photos courtesy of **Amnon Navon** and the **Ein Yahav Archive**

The January Flash Floods

