

Up Front

concentration camp. My father escaped from the train but never saw David or any of his other family members again. He also may have never seen Yusic again, but Yusic managed to escape while doing forced labor in the Stanislav ghetto.

My father's joke also managed to crack a smile on the face of Ishja, a serious-looking man with heavy glasses. Ishja worked for more than 25 years at the Philadelphia Inquirer, back in the days when typesetting was the basis for newspaper publishing and an acquired craft. In Ishja's case, it was a craft he acquired forging Red Cross documents in Romania and American-occupied Austria for the Bricha, to help Jews make their way to Palestine after the war.

Given the backgrounds of these people, would it make sense for Yusic, who was the first to arrive at the oceanside mall, to use Kalusz as the name identifying the group? It wasn't even an organized group, as the three couples had simply met at synagogue that morning and spontaneously decided to go out together for lunch. And it wasn't as though anyone actually had ever made an effort to organize a formal meeting of Kalusz *landsleit*. It was only during their retirement years, as they descended to Miami for the winters from the various cities across North America where they had rebuilt their lives after the war, that they had all met up with each other again. Still, Kalusz *landsleit* were the first people they sought out after arriving each year, and now, with my parents selling their winter apartment and others uncertain if their health would allow another winter trip, the meeting had an unspoken sense of finality to it.

Just then, the quick-footed, dark-haired Cuban hostess, with a list of names on a clipboard held closely to her chest, came up to Yusic. "Come this way," she simply said.

Bernard Dichek

All in the Same Boat

On Friday at 12:45 p.m. one young man falls to his knees on his prayer rug as he surrenders to Allah. On Saturday at 9 a.m., in the same small chapel aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, a handful of sailors light Shabbat candles and read from a prayer book in Hebrew and English.

This ship of 5,655 men and women is a floating slice of sovereign U.S. territory. It's also a small city at sea that reflects American diversity as well as any cos-

mopolitan town back home. And by conducting 35 different religious services a week, the Navy chaplaincy is determined to bring its crews into the faith — any faith.

"We're the primary support system for the crew," says Lt. Commander Wesley Sloat, the Protestant chaplain. "We give people the freedom to come to us, whether they're religious or not." In fact, since the Abraham Lincoln extended its mission in the Persian Gulf in January, Sloat's on-ship phone started ringing off the hook as the crew grappled with being away from home for so long. He estimates demand at the chaplaincy, for everything from services to counseling, has risen around 15 percent since then.

Something else has changed since the carrier left its home port in Everett, Washington, last July. Religious Program Specialist Chief Richard Kleiner, a Jewish reservist from New York City who directs the ship's "lay" non-Christian services (the only ordained religious officials on board are Christian; there are about 25 Jews on board), insisted on establishing a formal Muslim service for Fireman Naveed Muhammed, a Pakistani-born man from Detroit. "When you're away from home, you need something to feel that you're at home," explains Kleiner, a retired police officer.

Kleiner has just finished attending a Shabbat service that doubled as a Purim ceremony as well. He and five young men drank grape juice (alcohol is prohibited on U.S. Navy ships) and ate apricot *homen-tashen* that Petty Officer Justin Miller's wife had sent. "I don't know where I would be without this," says Airman Noah Harnick.

Kleiner met Muhammed by chance one day when the young technician was working in the chapel. When he noticed the 20-year-old's last name on his uniform, he realized the ship had a Muslim crew member. (When the Abraham Lincoln left port, Muhammed was the only Muslim; today there are three.) "How come you don't pick out a time? I can help you," Kleiner says he told Muhammed. Until then, Muhammed had been praying five times a day in a corner of his workshop. Kleiner wanted him to at least have a chance to pray once a week in a more spiritual place, even if it was the noisy room below the flight deck that did double duty as Christian chapel and synagogue. Why couldn't it serve as a mosque on Fridays as well?

"I was surprised when Chief Kleiner



overlooked everything else and said, 'You know what? Every Friday, you can come here and pray,'" the soft-spoken Muhammed says. "And I was like, wait a minute, aren't you Jewish? All my life, I've been taught that Jewish people don't really like Muslims. Since then I've thanked him many times."

Muhammed says no one has questioned his loyalties. Instead, the Navy has gone out of its way to allow him to worship freely. "Fireman Muhammed said it quite correctly," Kleiner says: "Do you realize that if everybody worked as well as we work here, there would be no strife in the world, there would be no wars?"

But there are wars, and the Abraham Lincoln is one of the most powerful warships on the planet. How do these men of faith reconcile their spirituality with their mission? Chaplain Sloat puts it simply, "Even warriors merit the ministry, and the right to worship."

H.H.

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