

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS FOR SEEDS OF PEACE VIDEO
MAY 6, 1998

I am so thankful to have this opportunity to be part of this extraordinary gathering of young people at the First Middle East Youth Summit. I only wish I could be there in person, to tell you how much I admire your efforts to bring peace and understanding to your communities. I want to thank everyone who has helped bring all of you together -- but especially John Wallach, who has devoted himself to giving you -- the children of war -- the opportunity to plant the seeds of peace. He is an inspiration to us all.

What you are doing at this summit is an extraordinary act of courage. As young people who have grown up surrounded by violence and hatred, you have every reason to think that the problems you face in the Middle East are too great to overcome. Many of you have lost sisters, or brothers, or parents, or grandparents to struggles that are centuries old. Yet you have not lost hope. In fact, you've found the courage to defy history -- and envision a new kind of future.

In your communities -- and now here at this summit -- you have shown the world that hatred is never a solution. That what we all share in common is far greater than what keeps us apart. That understanding each other's histories and cultures, and respecting each other's differences, are the foundations of a just society. That by looking into each others eyes -- we can sometimes touch each other's hearts. Your message is particularly important now -- as the leaders of your nations are struggling to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Through your work with the Seeds of Peace, you know how difficult it is to overcome hatred and misunderstanding. As one Egyptian girl said a few years ago while she was attending a Seeds of Peace camp in the United States: "the first step we have to make right now is not only to want peace for your own people.... You have to really want it, really desire it, for the others." She went on to say that "If you are an Israeli, you have to want for all the Palestinians to feel happy and safe and comfortable. And if you're a Palestinian, you have to want the same thing" for the Israelis.

This girl, and all of you, have already learned the greatest lessons of all. Yet tolerance and understanding, and the ability to come together over the lines that divide us, aren't just the tools of international diplomacy. They are the rules by which we try to live every day -- in our families, in our schools, and in our communities. Because it's only when these values are honored, and are a part of our every day lives, that we will have the strength to turn our communities -- and our nations -- toward justice and peace.

No country is immune from war, or hatred, or violence. Unfortunately, it's all around us, in every corner of the world. But you are offering us a different vision of what the future can hold -- a future where children can live free from violence and conflict; where every citizen can live in dignity; and where every child is able to live up to his or her fullest potential.

My husband, the President of the United States, is working very hard for the just and lasting peace you too are seeking. And I know he joins me in thanking all of you for what you are doing to fulfill that vision of peace not only in the Middle East, but throughout the world.

I look forward to talking with you about what you've learned over the past few days at this summit, and your plans for the future.

TAPED OCT 7
1996

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
VIDEOTAPED REMARKS FOR THE SCREENING OF
THE ELIE WIESEL FOUNDATION'S "WAGING PEACE."
OCTOBER 29, 1996**

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to be part of this premier screening of "Waging Peace." I would like to thank your hosts, Michael Eisner, Michael Ovitz, and Robert Guillaume [Gheeyome]. And most of all, I would like to thank Elie and Marion Wiesel, who embody the spirit of peace, understanding and humanity that we all strive to attain.

It is easy in today's world to watch the evening news and conclude that the problems our world faces are insurmountable. Too many children live with hunger, poverty and homelessness; millions of children around the world live with daily trauma and violence -- violence born from ethnic, religious and cultural conflicts, and violence that results from the breakdown of family, community and other institutions that once provided an anchor for our young.

But beyond the horror stories and tragedies, there are people like the young men and women that the Elie Wiesel Foundation brought together last year in Vienna who are seeking to live in peace and understanding with their neighbors. They know how easy it is to vilify someone you don't know. And they are learning how challenging, and also how rewarding, it is to treat your fellow citizens, whatever their race, ethnicity or religion, with compassion and respect.

These young people are teaching us that hatred is never a solution. From Ireland to the Middle East, and from Bosnia to the streets of America's inner cities, they have lost brothers and sisters, parents and grandparents, to struggles that are often centuries old. Yet they have not lost hope about their or the world's future.

I will always remember one young man I spoke with last year. He was living in a refugee camp in Bosnia and he asked me how he could be hopeful in the midst of such chaos and hatred. I told him that part of the answer was there in the room with him. I told him to look at his compatriots from other countries -- and to look at the example of Elie Wiesel, who in some of history's darkest nights, never lost hope that mankind would see brighter days.

When all of us are able to raise our children without hatred in their hearts, we will be one step closer to living in a world at peace. A world where children can live free from violence and conflict and where every child is able to live up to his or her God-given potential.

Thank you all for the important work you are doing and best wishes.

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PEACE MAKING



At a summer camp in Maine, the children of bitter enemies live with the people they've been taught to fear. It's no love-fest, but it might be a volatile region's best chance for building lasting peace.



Middle East

LIKE ROADSIDE ICE CREAM stands or country churches, summer camps in Maine have a reassuring orthodoxy all their own. Visit one and you'll probably find a line of cabins strung out along a lake. There will be a main lodge and a jumble of lesser structures, each with its own blend of rumpled out-of-plumbness speaking of light construction and heavy winter snows. On your visit, you're almost certain to hear the shriek of whistles from the swimming dock, the sound of distant shouting as a well-hit ball arcs deep to left, dusty footfalls

clumping closer and then suddenly tripping on a well-worn root by the dining lodge, as a thousand teenage feet have tripped a thousand times before. At summer camps, what you'll mostly hear is laughter, and in the spaces between the laughter, the plaintive song of a white throated sparrow from the woody margins, the uncertain plunk of tennis balls, and the snap of a wet towel with its answering yelp of pain. In the long inhale and exhale of summer days by a sandy-bottom lake, what you'll surely find among the grassy spaces and dappled shade of camps is a special mix of away-from-

home safety and risk that helps kids grow right.

Not surprisingly then, when it came time to find a place for the children of Arabs and Jews—bitter enemies who have been killing each other for generations—to attempt the painful and uncertain work of making peace among themselves, a summer camp in Maine seemed like a natural place to locate. To make peace, these kids need distance from their homelands. They need neutral ground. The cultural, political, and personal walls that separate them are incomprehensibly high. There is, in the words of contemporary historian



Teenagers from the Middle East including Adi Shelag (left) of Israel and Malek Fayez of Egypt explore their differences—and their shared humanity—in a Co-Existence Group discussion at Seeds of Peace International Camp.

Peace Talks

BY BILL MAYHER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
SARAH PUTNAM

Mohamed Haikal, such “fury and revulsion” between them, that most of the teenagers chosen by their countries to attend a camp called Seeds of Peace in Otisfield, Maine, have never met a single one of their opposite number. For this reason alone, they need time to talk together; they need time to listen. Most of the 162 campers at Seeds of Peace have traveled from Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and even Qatar to eat American camp chow and sleep in open cabins with people they have been taught their whole lives to hate. For taking these risks, they deserve a chance at reconcil-

iation and friendship. At Seeds of Peace, they’ll get it.

On a dazzling July morning, Seeds of Peace founder John Wallach opens this year’s session with a challenge to the teenagers gathered around him on the grass. “Today this is the only place in the world where Israelis and Arabs can come together on neutral ground and try to be friends,” he says. “Because of this, I would ask one thing of each of you. No matter what else you do in your time here, make one friend from the other side.”

In laying down his challenge—regardless how idyllic the setting, or

how eager the kids—Wallach is saying that building friendships between enemies is, after all, no easy thing.

John Wallach left a high-powered journalism career to launch the Seeds of Peace International Camp in 1993. Wallach had been a White House correspondent for thirty years. He had broken the story of the CIA mining Nicaraguan harbors, and he had covered the Middle East. He won the National Press Club Award and the Overseas Press Club Award for uncovering the “arms for hostages” story that led to the Iran-Contra

**"I'VE LEARNED THAT THE
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scandal. When few people had thought such a thing was possible, he had written, with his wife Janet Wallach, a biography of the elusive Yasser Arafat.

But Wallach didn't feel satisfied being, in his words, a "fly on the wall of history." Perhaps he felt a sense of personal destiny because his parents had escaped the Holocaust. Perhaps he has always had an instinct for seeing beyond superficial differences because

Catholic priests had guided his parents through the Pyrenees to safety. Whatever the reasons, in 1985, when the Cold War thaw was merely a trickle,

Wallach initiated a program in what he called "citizen diplomacy" at the Chautauqua Institute in Upstate New York to bring together ordinary Russians and Americans together to search for common ground. For this work, Wallach received the Medal of Friendship, the former Soviet Union's highest civilian award, from then president Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991.

At news of the World Trade Center

bombing in New York City in February 1993, Wallach again heard the call to action. A month later, an idea came to him: because the adults of the world had so clearly failed at peacemaking in the Middle East, he would skip the present generation of leaders and go straight to the next. He would bring together young people who had been born amid the violence and searing hatreds of the region, and allow them to explore their mutual humanity.

"I spent my whole life with the powerful," Wallach recalled in an interview with Susan Rayfield in the *Maine Sunday Telegram*. "I can't tell you how

A Middle East Primer

The Arab-Israeli conflict is rooted in Biblical times, but, for our purposes, we might begin in 1892, when violent anti-Semitism in Russia stimulated a wave of Zionist immigrants into Palestine, pitting Jewish settlers against indigenous Palestinians in a struggle over land both groups passionately believed was originally theirs. These pressures grew even more intense after World War I. With the demise of the empire of the Ottoman Turks, Britain assumed a League of Nations Mandate to govern Palestine and then, via the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, supported the establishment of a Jewish homeland—with the understanding that the rights of indigenous Arabs would also be upheld. But no formal steps were taken until after World War II when, with the Holocaust adding critical impetus to the Zionist dream, the United Nations General Assembly, on November 29, 1947, voted to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. The Arab League rejected this initiative, refusing to give up any land to the founding of a Jewish homeland.

On May 14, 1948, when the British mandate expired, Zionist leaders proclaimed the State of Israel. In answer, the Arabs invaded Israel with the intent of eliminating it as a political entity, but Israel managed to survive the assault and, in the ensuing years, settled into uneasy nationhood surrounded by a hostile population of displaced Palestinians and other Arabs.

Following Israel's decisive victory in the Six Day War of 1967, animosities grew more intense. Israel occupied territories it had won in the war: Arab East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank of the Jordan River. Except for Sinai, which Israel returned to Egypt in the peace negotiated at Camp David in 1978, and the modest territories in Gaza and the West Bank that Israel later relinquished to the Palestinians, the Jewish State has continued to occupy and administer the territory it conquered. Using a code

inherited from the British rule of Palestine, the "British Defense (Emergency) Regulations," it claims the right to "deport citizens of Palestine, to demolish houses, to impose curfews and town arrest, to censor newspapers and books, and to administratively detain, all without the necessity of judicial proceedings." Israel also allowed the founding of Jewish "settlements" for strategic and ideological purposes, and then provided the subsequent logistical and military support necessary to protect them. This has further exacerbated tensions and a ferocious eye-for-an-eye continues to this day, with terrorist attacks by radical Palestinians countered by the harsh reprisals of Israeli extremists. In addition, the occupying Israeli army's tight grip on border check points and vital resources has held the Palestinians in a state of permanent subjugation, which itself led to the Palestinian uprising known as the Intifada, beginning in 1987.

On September 13, 1993, Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat came to the White House to sign a peace accord negotiated in Oslo, Norway, in which the Palestinians agreed to end their call for the destruction of the state of Israel in return for the beginnings of national autonomy that would ultimately lead to the creation of a Palestinian State. As a result of the Peace Accord, the Palestinians were allowed to establish their own freely-elected government in Gaza and expand their authority to other parts of the West Bank, including the biblical city of Hebron. The promise of this accord proved to be short-lived, however. Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in November 1995 by a right-wing Israeli who claimed Rabin had sold out to the Palestinians. Rabin was succeeded by Shimon Peres of the Labor Party, but, Peres was then narrowly defeated by the conservative Likud party of Benjamin Netanyahu. While agreeing to honor the Arafat-Rabin treaty in principle, the Likud government has continued its hard-line policies toward the Palestinians.

—B.M.



Above: Seeds of Peace staffer Tim Wilson has a talent for keeping things lively and under control at the same time. Right: Founder and former journalist John Wallach joins campers in the opening celebration.



many times I've been on Air Force One, or with the White House pool, or world leaders. I had a lot of power as a journalist. I've learned that the answer to life is not the poohbahs, it's the basics. The coming home to Maine. To what is human in all of us, that ties us together as human beings."

Wallach needed staff, kids, and a facility to realize his vision. He found his first staffer, Executive Director Barbara "Bobbie" Gottschalk, in Washington, D.C. Gottschalk's book group had invited Wallach and his wife to discuss their book on Arafat and afterwards, he shared his vision for Seeds of Peace. Gottschalk was so intrigued, she left a secure job as a clinical social worker to join him.

To find kids for his camp, Wallach approached the Middle East's major players, each of whom he personally knew: Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization; Yitzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel; and Hosni Mubarak, the President of Egypt. "Trust me with your children," Wallach asked each of the beleaguered men. "Give me the next generation. Give them a chance to escape the poison." His years of journalistic engagement and fairness were to have an unforeseen payoff: all three leaders answered Wallach's plea, an

acquiescence little short of miraculous.

Serendipity intervened when Wallach found that a Camp Powhatan in Otisfield, Maine, would let him use its facility after the camp's regular session ended. Touring the camp, Wallach met Tim Wilson, Powhatan's co-director, whom he immediately recognized as a Maine-camp classic with his own dazzling bag of tricks for keeping things lively and yet under control at the same time. An inner-city teacher and football coach around the steel mills of Pittsburgh, Wilson is as good at the up-in-front-of-everybody bluster that keeps things cooking as he is at the quiet arm-around-the-shoulder buck-up that helps an exhausted and melancholy adolescent get through another day. So in the summer of 1993 with a camp facility and a core staff in place, Wallach had assembled the basics of what would become Seeds of Peace.

In four short years, the camp has won awards including a 1997 Peace Prize from the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and drawn accolades from world leaders. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, wrote in a letter to Seeds of Peace this year, "There is no more important initiative than bringing together young people who have seen the ravages of

war to learn the art of peace." In her speeches, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has mentioned Seeds of Peace as a bright spot on an otherwise dark Middle East horizon. Yasser Arafat has said, "Seeds of Peace represents the hope and the aim which we are working to realize, namely just peace in the land of peace." Before he was assassinated, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin noted after meeting with campers, "Witnessing young Arabs and Israelis together gives me great hope that soon all Arabs and Israelis can live normal lives side-by-side."

The new arrivals, all between ages thirteen and eighteen, plunge into the usual sports and games, ready to fulfill the camp's mission to make peace among themselves. That is, until the hard work begins. Staff assign campers to Co-Existence groups, where the most intense, and arguably the most important, work of the camp occurs. Here, campers learn to listen to the histories and feelings of age-old enemies and begin to move toward accommodation and ultimately, empathy. Led by pairs of trained facilitators, these groups of about fourteen campers meet daily in a cycle of three sessions, and then move on together to a new pair of facilitators who, using a



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LOOK THEIR ENEMY IN THE EYE AND BEGIN
TO KNOW THEIR ENEMY'S HEART.**

variety of techniques including oral history, role playing and role reversal, art, and drama, teach effective listening and negotiating skills. The group work is at first designed to create a safe space between participants. The facilitators then direct the group toward more difficult issues.

In one group, facilitators Linda Carol Pierce and Janis Astor de Valle delve into intense racial tensions in Brooklyn, New York. Their role-play, in which a black camper from Bedford Stuyvesant runs into a white camper from Bensonhurst, starts out as friendly banter. Suddenly, it veers into a dramatic shouting match recapitulating incidents of muggings and mob murder that continue to divide their neighborhoods to this day. As the actors shout at each other, "You people," this, and "You people," that, campers see graphically that bone-deep prejudice is not confined to the Middle East.

Following the role-play, Pierce and

deValle ask individuals in the group to share with a partner a personal story of prejudice each has suffered, and then have that partner report the story to the entire group—a well-known technique that builds listening skills among the youngsters and, as they tell each other's stories, helps put them into each other's shoes. An Arab girl tells of being snubbed on the Internet by members of her chat group when they discovered she was from Jordan. She relates how one of them shot back, "Isn't that where people with bombs come from?" and refused to acknowledge her further, letting her twist in cyberspace—a new style victim of a very old disease.

In another group, campers who already have represented the opposition's side in a mock Middle East negotiating session are now allowed to present their own points of view in debating who should have control over Jerusalem. But before the teenagers begin, the facilitators ask them to assemble pictures from colored toothpicks in a tabletop exercise that serves

as a metaphor for issues of personal and collective space. The kids' individual designs—stick figures of people, houses, stars, and suns—soon expand to cover the entire table. The facilitators then start with the questions. "Were there borders there for you?" one facilitator asks. "There were borders on the table. Whoever was stronger took more space," a camper replies. "The quick and the strong get it all," adds another. "Let's relate this to Jerusalem," the facilitator then suggests, giving the kids fresh angles of approach to discuss this contentious and emotional issue. The debate that ensues is spirited, often heated, but it is also respectful because both sides have established the need to honor each other's "space."

Through the process of working with different facilitators—each with different strategies—campers cannot avoid getting down to the most stubborn problems that divide them. There is too much bad blood, too much history to let campers play at peace like they play at tennis. This camp, by Wallach's own design, is no feel-good paradise; rather it is a camp that compels them to look their enemy in



Playing hard outside and talking hard inside, campers work out their differences and search for common ground. Opposite: Baseball and tug-of-war are just two events in the Color Games, a competitive crescendo in the camp's final days that uses teamwork to melt boundaries and foster new friendships like the one between Israeli Edi Spitz and Palestinian Adhem Rishmawi (bottom left). Above: Indoors, teenagers from opposite sides of the Middle East conflict begin to forge bonds by interpreting one another's drawings of safety, trust, and personal risk, and by listing things they all share in common.

the eye and in doing so, begin to know their enemy's heart. When the kids get down to it in the groups, Wallach says, "It doesn't take them very long to realize that they don't like each other very much."

As they hash out their deep-seated differences, the kids at Seeds of Peace also spend plenty of time on the playing field—a few individual events, but mostly team sports that put individuals from opposing political factions on the same team: baseball, tennis, lacrosse, soccer, swimming, volleyball, relay races, basketball. The theory is that in the heat of competition, young people will become teammates and forget the elemental differences that brought them here.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Color Games, a competitive crescendo in the final days of the camp. Guided by the skilled (and wily) hand of Tim Wilson, the camp is divided into two teams: Greens and Blues. Tee shirts are donned, separate cheers invented. The teams are then turned loose to relentlessly compete against each other

across the entire spectrum of camp sports and activities. Every camper has to contribute, the efforts of each essential to the whole. It is raucous, loud, dusty, and hilarious: transcendent partisanship forging white-hot loyalties—if only for the moment.

As the Color Games rush toward the final events, in the age-old tradition of a summer camp, it becomes increasingly impossible for the participants to assess with any precision what it might actually take to win. The totals for each team remain maddeningly close until, in the final event, one team surges to capture the crown only to discover that, in fact, there is no actual prize for the hard fought victory except the opportunity to give an enthusiastic cheer for the losing team and to jump in the lake first.

At this moment, the Color Games become a metaphor for sharing the victory equally between "winners" and "losers." After days of running their guts out and shouting over the tree-tops, the campers begin to understand that most elusive of truths: People on each side of a conflict must be truly satisfied if there is to be peace; victory

can and must be a shared thing.

Perhaps Egyptian camper Silvana Naguib said it best in a film made at the camp several years ago: "The first step we have to make right now is not only to want for your own people.... You have to really, really want, really desire for the others. If you are an Israeli, you have to want for all the Palestinians to feel happy and feel safe and feel comfortable. If you're a Palestinian you want the same thing [for the Israelis]. All the people in the country have to really want everyone else to be happy."

On July, 30, 1997, a double suicide bombing by radical Palestinians tears through a Jerusalem marketplace called Mahane Yehuda, killing fourteen Israelis and wounding more than 150 others. The horror of the attack is captured by Serge Schmemmann writing in the New York Times: "Witness after witness recited the same litany of flame, flesh, and horror. They described bodies covered with fruits and shoes; a man sitting on his motorbike dead; limbs flying."

Reports of the bombing rip through

Seeds of Peace as well. When the news breaks, John Wallach addresses the camp as a whole. Special groups are formed with facilitators to help campers ride out the emotional storm. In the first hours, a deep sense of mourning and sympathy pervades the camp. In the next few days, as the initial shock wears off, the work in Co-Existence Groups takes on a harder edge; it becomes more difficult to maintain safe space and good listening. At this point, says facilitator Cindy Cohen, "It's almost impossible for kids to [acknowledge] the suffering of the other side without feeling it as an attack."

In the groups, tension is palpable and harsh phrases fly: "Palestine does not exist!" "Israel has no culture!" "You people always bring up the Holocaust to justify everything you have done to us." Historical interpretations are shot like missiles; it is raining verbal SCUDs. Of this phase Wallach says, "You could leave a Co-Existence Group and feel pretty discouraged by the depths of anger you see there. But it's all part of the process of peacemaking. It is the beginning of wisdom."

At first it's hard to see much in the way of either peacemaking or wisdom happening. It just looks like bickering. But then, through the sluiceways of talk, one suddenly glimpses—washing along amid the hard, gray slag of ancient enmities—bright nuggets of reconciliation: "I can understand your fears." "Everyone has the same sort of pain.... We share that." "We hear history repeats itself, and that's really scary." "If we can't compromise here, how can we expect two whole countries to compromise?" Finally in one combative session, a particularly hard-line Israeli boy turns and looks into the eyes of the Palestinian youth next to him—a boy who was jailed at the age of eight during the Intifada, and who saw his uncle killed by Israeli soldiers. The Israeli boy says, "I can't guarantee that my government won't kill your people, but I can guarantee that I won't."

In the days ahead, the kids will be allowed to exhaust themselves in passionate arguments—no matter how futile. Eventually they will reach the point when they look across the abyss that divides them and finally see other



Campers go wild when their team scores a basket at the height of the Color Games.

human beings. It is the tradition of this camp that, amid the games and cheering and fireside songs, amid the long, hot days of talk, trust will be built on the simple idea that if each side listens attentively enough to the other, each will at long last realize there is no alternative to peace.

Wallach's charge to make one friend from the other side seemed like a modest goal in the first, euphoric days of camp. In the darker days following the bombing, it seems nearly unreachable. This is the point when a paradox embedded in the way Seeds of Peace works becomes clear: The pain of the journey is the very thing that insures both its validity and its durability. Without hardening-off at camp, the tender shoots of reconciliation nourished there won't be hardy enough to survive transplanting to the rocky, unyielding soil of their homelands.

Role-playing and other group work gives the campers a sense of how to cope with the re-entry process. But when the teens return home, they will still face formidable obstacles to keeping in touch with new friends from the other side—especially since the suicide bombing has led Israel to impose even stricter control over border checkpoints. A Palestinian camper explains that he had to stand in line for four hours to apply for a pass into Jerusalem. He then had to wait about a month for the pass to be processed.

After his request was approved, he had to stand in line for another four or five hours to cross into Jerusalem to visit his friend who lived only twelve kilometers away. And that was before the bombings.

Luckily, there is e-mail to keep kids communicating with camp friends, and Wallach and executive director Gottschalk—who maintains contact with all of the kids—have developed other techniques for helping them stay in touch. A full-time coordinator in the Middle East works at establishing events for alumni, who also write feature articles for the organization's quarterly newspaper, *The Olive Branch*. Two years ago, King Hussein of Jordan welcomed 200 campers to a Seeds of Peace reunion in Jordan and symbolically donned a Seeds of Peace necktie.

Towards the end of camp, evidence of friendship is everywhere—in arms casually twined around another, in easy banter and teasing. Hazem Zaanon from Gaza and Noa Epstein from just outside Jerusalem are hoarse from cheering and flushed with excitement about the Color Games. Hazem says that he got to know Noa at their lunch table when they "just began to talk, first about Palestine and Israel, but then about everything. We became friends because everyone listened to the other's part," explains Hazem. "We became easy in

The Future of Seeds of Peace

Seeds of Peace is an expensive operation that, independent as it is of government funding, calls for intense annual fund raising to cover the tuition and transportation for all its campers, as well as to pay for the salaries and costs of running the camp. Fortunately this year, with a long-term lease of the former Camp Powhatan property, Seeds of Peace has found a permanent home. This will enable John Wallach to eventually expand the mission of the camp to three, three-week sessions every summer for children from other regions. Several years ago the camp included delegations from Bosnia and Serbia. Wallach would like to continue this tradition by inviting other groups involved in long-standing conflicts: Protestants and Catholics from Northern Ireland, Greeks and Turks, white and black South Africans, and American inner-city youths. —B.M.



this. We listened and respected each other without yelling and screaming." Noa agrees: "Camp is wonderful for me. I wouldn't have made a Palestinian friend back home." She then speaks of the "easy" luxury of time with her friend, "not in Co-Existence groups, but eating lunch and playing ball games. Things that require friendship." Of course each of them knows it will be hard to keep in touch when "they face reality back home." But, Noa adds, "I think we have taken a step toward a new reality."

Whether this new reality is to be born in the region may end up being a matter of sheer numbers. When this year's campers return home, there will be 800 Seeds of Peace graduates in the region; next year close to 1,000. The Arab-Israeli conflict has been fought out in a tiny theater of operations. For the most part this geographic compression has intensified the struggle, allowing enemies to throw rocks at each other, shoot into each other's homes, launch inter-neighborhood rocket attacks, cross the street to blow each other up.

If every problem contains its own solution, the solution in this case is to unleash what Wallach—now a Senior Fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace—calls a "small army" of peacemakers. Kids who can speak clearly and listen carefully. Kids who have learned to negotiate patiently and who know that to achieve peace, each side must leave the table feeling safe. Kids who, by any accounting, are among the best their countries have to offer. Kids who, as Wallach predicts to the camp, will surely return to Seeds of Peace as the presidents or prime ministers of their countries. Kids like Noa and Hazem who have had the courage and suppleness of mind to make a friend from the other side, who have combined to make a double-play together, dished-off for a winning basket, collaborated on a sculpture. Kids who together have watched the moon rise over a lake, and in its soft light seen that their enemy has a human face and known, in that moment, something of their enemy's heart. ▲

Bill Mayher, a former teacher and college counselor, is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to Hope.