



VOICES

Black & Orange

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A theme began to take shape: photographs focusing on the background of the struggle for Gush Katif, "not the front stage activities". Menachem said, "I didn't take pictures of the expulsion itself. I didn't take pictures of people dragged away. I wanted to show that those involved in the Orange Campaign were normal people doing every day normal things like playing cello, celebrating a wedding, praying at the Kotel, etc. The idea of presenting the photographs in book form only came up after the expulsion in order to make sure that the events that occurred during the summer of 2005 are never forgotten."

The oldest picture in the book was taken just before Tisha B'Av 5764. It depicts links in the first human chain, that stretched from Kfar Darom to the Kotel. Exactly a year later, he photographed the last human chain, on the roads of Gush Katif, and also a chain painted on the cement barriers of Neve Dekalim. It is thought provoking to note that on the barriers, you can see the names of the Gush children who painted each panel. One wonders where these children and their families are now.

Gush Katif Exhibit

On the night before the expulsion of Jews from the Palm Beach Hotel site, Maoz HaYam, Menachem was the guest artist at an art exhibit at the hotel. In addition to showcasing

Menachem's unique work, the aim of the evening was to defuse media-inspired tensions between the new residents of the hotel and the old-time residents of the rest of the Gush. The evening was a tremendous success, but police attacked the hotel the next day and expelled its residents.

Photo Therapy

For Menachem, working on the photographs was a form of therapy. While not believing for a minute throughout most of the campaign, that the government would be able to carry out its expulsion plans, Menachem, like many others, had an emotionally difficult summer. Producing these beautiful pieces of art allowed him to escape his frustrations. Even in the last days, when it was becoming apparent that his worst nightmares were about to be played out, Menachem continued to travel to the Gush to help. While there, he continued to photograph the positive efforts of so many brave and wonderful people. He says this helped him maintain his sanity when everything else seemed to be falling apart around him.

"Actualities in Black & Orange" is available in Jerusalem at Judaic Book Center, Moriah Book Sellers, and 613 Mitzvah Store, in Efrat at Mintzer's Books, in Gush Etzion at the Etzion Judaica Center, www.judaica.org.il, and on amazon.com.

The Black & Orange collection, as well as some of Menachem's other photographic work, can be viewed at www.MenachemKuchar.com.



Let My People Know
SPEAKERS BUREAU

In Israel:
Beit Agron International Press Center
37 Hillel Street, First Floor
Jerusalem 94581, Israel
Tel. +972 (0) 3 636 4010
Fax +972 (0) 2 679 2688

Diana Dubrow, Bureau Chief
Cell +972 (0) 547 440 866

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