

Xaviera Hollander

My annual end of the year newsletter

Dear friends,

BACK TO OUR ROOTS



Let me introduce you to my own personal crew on board of El Al to join me on a two week whirlwind tour to Israel in November. **OWEN LIEBREICH**, my funeral director/friend from Brooklyn N.Y. now living as a Jewish Huckleberry Finn on his own mountain in Tennessee: what an eccentric.

PHILIP DE HAAN , all around good guy, born Sabra, now living with me in Amsterdam, sterling personality, chauffeur extraordinary, **MY MAN**.... Found his way out of the West Galilee a day before the Hisbola attacked the Israeli army.



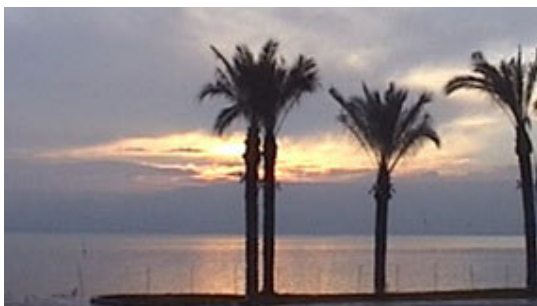
Upon arrival in Tel Aviv we were met by my uncle **JAAP GRUNWALD**, father of Gad, who lives in Amsterdam. Then we had dinner at my gracious friend **DAPHNA AROD** , a well

known artist, with great talent who no doubt will make it to Amsterdam next year with her own exhibition.



She introduced us, but in particular Owen to her best friend AMY , a Brooklyn Jewish schoolteacher who transplanted to Israel many years ago, so much that her two kids in fact became orthodox Jews. Amy made the finest apple strudel and ice-cream for us all. She made us all laugh so much that I think I gained some new crowfeet that night and Owen almost peed his pants with laughter. Philip seemed a bit intimidated by Amy's bubbly personality. All Daphna dreamt of was a match with Owen and Amy.

The next day we stumbled into Jericho after several roads were closed for us, but we, the three rebellious musketeers had to get our way in to this rather grim Palestine town. As we rolled through the check point the Palestinian guards snapped to attention, saluting us with :”Welcome to Palestine”. We were lucky to find one cafe that served us the strongest Turkish coffee and mint tea. Then we headed towards Lake Tiberius , more kibbutz hotels with separate beds and sheets too short for biggies like us....but the weather was so great we hardly needed cover.



We ate at the fanciest Chinese restaurant in Tiberias, the Pagode which got us all pretty sick that night and not even from any sweet and sour spare ribs! The whole Tiberias lake district was breathtakingly beautiful along with the Golan heights as a back drop. We mainly stayed in kibbutz hotels, like Ness Amin in Acco where we were welcomed by the wrong wind that reminded us of the garbage dump around the corner. The surroundings were overwhelming as long as we kept our doors shut. We sure did not fart around too long in this place.

The second week of our stay we drove into the mountains of Rosh Pina, which reminded me a lot of an artsy Mexican town San Miguel de Allende, with many art galleries and artistic craftsmen working in leather and making colorful paintings.



We had a charming hairy chested Israeli host who treated us to some fine traditional Israeli food. Tahin, Humus and chickpeas with delicious Arab breads made me put on 4 kilos in two weeks time, specially the halva we were served as deserts did it to us. On to Jerusalem, where we were welcomed by heavy rains and Philip and Xie started to squabble about which way was up. It seems in Israel there are 4 main routes.. but the one Philip ended up taking wasn't it.



After too many hours driving with invisible steamed up windows we found our way at last to our kibbutz Shoresz in the Judean hills, miles away from Jerusalem. That night we decided to stay in and not risk our lives trying to find Jerusalem by night. The following morning all we could think of to do was visit a shopping mall instead of the soaking souk of Jerusalem. We met with my Israeli friend IAN at the YMCA for a nice meal and as surprise at the end of the meal our sweet friend handed us a neat little package with some fine grass.

Now we came to our last leg down at the Dead Sea. Lowest point on earth where Owen got quite sick due to the pressure. Some good strong Arab coffee brought him around and made his eyes as big as hens eggs for the rest of the day.



We enjoyed the spectacular view of the Massada and had a lot of fun in the en Gedi wonderfully laid out health spa where I witnessed a surreal movie- like spectacle in the Gardarochel – (dining room) where in particular elderly orthodox Jews, mostly from Russia and France were all dressed up or I should say DOWN, in their demure old fashioned outfits and bulky shoes, wearing woolen hats or scarves that looked like they belonged to cousin IT from the Adams family.

The food was mass produced and disastrous. Philip could not stop making ugly faces, while trying to swallow morsels of the kosher inedible food.

I had just picked up a handsome Indian lawyer from London, named A.J. and tried to prevent Philip to take away the guy's appetite...but he agreed by nodding that he too disliked what was on his plate.

Later on that night a far too skinny Israeli belly dancer entertained the crowd of orthodox Jews and treated them to an Arabic night. She even got some of the men to dance with her, but somehow the orthodox women preferred to cackle on amongst themselves, slightly disturbing the atmosphere.



In Nazareth Philip and Owen smoked a hooka, not to be confused with a hooker. We were taught by some nice Arab and it tasted real good. I then bought some haunting Arab music by Oum Kalsoum and other famous singers like Fairuz, some long dead. Our last few nights were spent at the house of KARIN TSAFRIR and her husband YARON and their three lovely kids.



She took us to a great Arabic restaurant and at the end of that delicious meal I felt like my belly was about to platz . I swore not to eat Arabic food for a long long time. The last night, Sjabbes evening Karen had organized an intimate dinner for 17 of her friends, including her somewhat overpowering mother who had recently moved to Tel Aviv to be close to her daughter and grand children. There was a definite friction between mom and daughter, but don't we all know these kind of moments. Her tiramisu and fennel soup were delicious but Mother managed to find fault in everything including her own cooking. Some things never change.

The meal was kosher once more. This time milk products... on Karens huge octagonal table we had at least 6 types of pasta made by her friends. Delicious salads were produced by Yaron and Karen. The last day Yaron's for-ever-young dad MOSHE offered to be our tour leader in Caesaria. And he sure did a great job, charming man. Enjoyed throwing water over the famous mosaic stones.

Well, we made it back all right to Amsterdam from 25 degrees C to near freezing. Off to Spain with Philip once more till just before X mas. Then I will undergo a meniscus knee operation, a few days before X mas, which will put me on crutches for a week or so. Lots of physiotherapy to be done in the next month. Meanwhile planned a smaller, more intimate than usual X mas party for 24 people only and on the 24th of December.

I will probably supervise it all from my hospital bed in the living room as I doubt if I can be a perfect hostess or even make it up the stairs the first week after the operation. It sure will

make me slow down.

Well friends... this is it in a nutshell... the last few months of this year. I am still extremely happy with my man Philip, whom I met on my own birthday party in June this year. Sometimes my hectic life style gets him a bit confused but in general we are extremely happy, travel very well together and he is of great support to me. Caring and considerate and loyalty are his main characteristics that endear him to me.

Well. what's next on our program in the new Year? A 3 week tour to Mexico...and then off to San Francisco, Los Angeles and Palm Springs. Ah si... my life just does not seem to have many dull moments, if any. I wish some times I could clone myself into two or three Xaviera's so I could actually take some time off and read a good book, or better still write one again!

Meanwhile my villa Caprice in Spain is nearing renovation and should be on the market to rent out hopefully round Easter next year,

Merry Xmas you all and a happy New Year.

Xaviera Hollander and Philip and not to forget love also from Owen

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