

Mike, Myself, and the Trials and Tribulations of an Educator

By Gerald A. Honigman

A while back, after unpacking boxes from a recent move, I came across a wonderful surprise.

What I discovered was an example of what makes a middle school (or any) educator's life worthwhile, despite the trials and tribulations teaching 12-14 year olds in that "in between" age, often too willing to engage in negative behaviors just "for show" to gain status among peers.

Teen age girls seem to just love the "bad boys"— yet often girls were the most problematic.



Teachers will routinely tell you that the middle school years are probably the most nerve wracking, in terms of behavior issues, to engage in. Indeed, many teachers give it up at this point and seek more lucrative opportunities.

Mike P. was an amazing young man, and, like some others, a challenge in class.

I taught 12-14 year olds biological sciences for a quarter century, having an ingrained love for G_d's natural world instilled in me at a very early age by my Father, of blessed memory, whose Yahrzeit (anniversary of passing) occurs December 2nd every year on the Western calendar, but differs annually on the lunar Hebrew calendar.

Numerous early morning fishing excursions, since I was literally just out of diapers, on our boat or at dozens of different fresh and salt water land accessible locations, and hikes through the woods to get to some of those hidden spots, made an everlasting impression on my life.

I became dedicated to passing this on to my own children and a few thousand others and their families, with many parents (and fellow teachers) serving as eager chaperones for my numerous wetlands ecology field trips in the coastal Florida I came to cherish and lived in for some forty years.

Here's [the precious letter](#) I received from Mike as a surprise one day which brought some tears to my eyes...

The biological sciences, especially marine biology and related disciplines, were some of my other life's passions. My undergraduate degree was in Science.

All things related to the region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), was another, and my extensive masters and doctoral work was concentrated in this area along with national security policy studies.

After serving as a TA for many grad courses, and being one of the most advanced students in my doctoral program, I fell victim to what you'll read below...

[here](#) and [here...](#)

Unfortunately, the tenured chief honcho in the department had an admiration for Hitler's head of the Waffen SS corps in the Balkans, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, Chief Mufti of Jerusalem—the Arab leader whom EGYPTIAN born, “native Palestinian” Yasir Arafat, would model his Fatah PLO terror organization after in the mid 1960's.

Having to attend Findley's doctoral seminars, I tried my best to just let some of his obviously biased—and historically inaccurate—lectures just go unchallenged during what should have been an uninhibited exchange of ideas among advanced students of this region of the world.

So, naively, I did so indulge anyway...

And daggers frequently came out of his eyes, when responding to my questions and comments, when he wasn't speaking about racist, fascist, colonialist, apartheid Zionists.

While listening to one of his favorite anti-Zionist, Greek Orthodox students sing praises to Amin al-Husseini's name, he gleefully proclaimed V. Ze'ev Jabotinsky a fascist when reviewing my own research on this magnificent Son of Israel Reborn, the man most responsible for creating the formidable IDF which exists today.

To make a long and painful story short, when Ph.D. dissertation time came around, Professor Carter Findley looked me in the eye and, with a nauseating smirk of satisfaction proclaimed to me “you'll never receive a dissertation advisor while I'm here.”

I was recently married, and our first precious gift from G-d was on the way, and I was now in shock...

Like so many other professors who were receiving huge amounts of financial backing from various Arab oil potentates in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and other anti-Israel countries such as Turkey (Findley was a specialist on Turkey and did much of his

work in Jew-hating Syria), Findley also knew who greatly helped to butter his bread.

And I got screwed... just never learned when to keep my mouth shut. [See here](#) for another example of this flaw...

My consolation prize was that my year long study of the quest for justice among 40 million truly stateless people, whose cause was never even mentioned in most university Middle Eastern, history, and political science classes, was accepted for publication in a heavily Nobel Laureate-sponsored academic journal, the winter 1982 edition of the Middle East Review.

From there, "British Petroleum Politics, Arab Nationalism, and the Kurdish Struggle for Independence," became acquainted by leading universities such as Paris's acclaimed Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Sciences Po), and was placed on recommended reference lists at those schools.

The President of the Kurdistan National Assembly of Syria later contacted me and subsequently wrote most of the Foreword to my forever timely book, "[The Quest For Justice In The Middle East](#)—The Arab-Israeli Conflict In Greater Perspective"