

A LETTER FROM GEORGIAN PRISON by Si Frumkin

Our newsletter, "Graffiti for Intellectuals" is sent, without charge, to about 1000 people every two weeks. The readership is varied - several hundred U.S. Senators and congressmen, personal friends, activists in 7 different countries, former Soviet Jews and people who had heard me lecture or visited my website. There are also a dozen or so people in several U.S. prisons. I had been sending "Graffiti" to Jonathan Pollard for many years when I got a letter from a man who had shared Jonathan's cell, read his "Graffiti", and was being transferred to another facility. He asked to be put on the mailing list and then, I suppose, he shared it with others and the word spread.

I believe that most of the prisoners who get it are Jewish – they complain about anti-Semitism by the guards and other inmates and about the lack of matzohs for Passover – but I am sure that quite a few are not. I even got a letter not so long ago from a prisoner who was an immigrant from the Soviet Union and asked for Russian-language prayer books and materials on Jewish history, Zionism, and Israel; he said he needed them for a small group of "Russians" he was teaching.

And no, I never asked anyone what they were in prison for – not really my business.

A few weeks ago I received the letter I am going to share with you. It starts with a request:

*"There is a slight change in my address (the guards who work in the mailroom can and often do, deny getting mail if the address isn't exactly correct – generally, they don't, but we have a new crew in the mailroom who have a serious case of cranial immersion in the anal cavity).*

*"So, please use this address:*

**Robert L. Schneider, 393551 Scott S P, P.O.Box 417 Holly A-49, Hardwick, GA 31034"**

He goes on:

*"I have now been 'in' 31 years, grrr! Georgia loves to keep a Jew locked up (not that I haven't deserved this). Anyway, for the past year I have been transcribing Braille for Georgia high school (and recently, 3<sup>d</sup> grade) students, but I did another book on my own called "Soldiers and Slaves", the story of American-Jewish POWs at Berga, which you mentioned in your newsletter. This lesson in history is now available to the blind. I am currently doing David Mamet's, "The Wicked Son". I want, especially, for blind Jewish kids, to have such materials available. I have to do this in my spare time, and it's very*

*time-consuming, but who else will fill this need? Do you have any books to suggest for me to Braille?*

*“B’shalom, Robert L. Schneider”*

I wrote back to Mr. Schneider suggesting that he consider Dennis Prager’s books, “Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism” and his study of reasons for anti-Semitism, “Why the Jews?”

I wrote that if these books were not available in the prison library, I would send them to him. I also asked if he would allow me to distribute his address and ask people to correspond.

I got his response less than a week later. He thanks me for writing, tells me that he enjoys getting the “Graffiti” and then, *“...Rest assured that our ‘library’ not only does not have these books, but would choke on their pork chop sandwiches at the suggestion of their inclusion. So, I would gratefully accept them and will put them in my queue to Braille.*

*“Friday I finished Mamet’s “The Wicked Son – Anti-Semitism and the Self-hating Jew”, and this morning I started Esther Schor’s “Emma Lazarus”. Mrs. Sadorf of “Nextbook” was kind enough to send me these advanced readers editions. Before she did so, I had no source for Jewish literature except for the occasional accidental discovery.*

*“Your offer to have other people correspond with me would be a monumental blessing! So, yes, you have my permission to make my name and address available as you see fit. Thank you for understanding that I would have such a need to communicate with people ‘out there’”.*

Robert writes that he is one of the editors of the “Unchained”, a “very cheesy” and “heavily censored” prison paper. He mentions the new warden who censored out his article on voting – “too political” – out of the most recent issue.

*“I have lived all over the world, though since 1976 all my traveling has been done in dreams, reading books and listening to others. I was very lucky to have had all those memories.*

*“Anyway, I’m confessing that I’m a little excited at the prospect of losing some portion of my solitude through your compassionate intervention. But even if it doesn’t work out that way, there’s still “Graffiti”.*

And so, when you have a few minutes, write to **Robert L. Schneider** who is now in his 31<sup>st</sup> year as **393551 Scott S P**. For the foreseeable future he will be transcribing Braille,

editing the prison paper and dreaming at *P. O. Box 417 Holly A-49, Hardwick, GA 31034.*

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