

Joan Roth's statement

I traveled by myself to Bukhara in the late 1980's and again in 1990-91 when a new wave of emigration of Bukharian Jews to Israel and the United States was about to begin. There was a small Communist hotel within walking distance to the Jewish quarter (Mahalla.) I entered the walled community on a whim, never dreaming I would uncover such a gracious vibrant community, where music flows and celebratory song and dance are plentiful.

Waiting for me as I entered this community was a teenage boy. I explained my mission to him, the best I could in broken Hebrew, for neither spoke the other's language. He led me to the home of his multli-generational family. His grandfather, at first upset about his associating with a stranger, later relented, and from that moment on, I was warmly received and welcomed into every home throughout the mahalla.

I attended weddings, bar mitzvahs, eyebrow ceremonies and funerals; prayed, in the recently restored ancient synagogue dating back to the 17th century, on Shabbat, Sukkot and Passover; partaking of winter, spring and summer with the community.

I remain grateful and honored by the overwhelming hospitality extended to me. My thanks to the miraculous heart and generous support of David and Lisa Ribacoff, who for years believed in the message of these intimate photographs, and who encouraged the American Sephardi Federation to display them, along with objects from Aron Aronov's Bukharian Jewish Museum in Queens, and a selection of vintage photographs from the collection of Amnun Heifitz. Thus we will always remember those, cut off from the rest of the Jewish world for more than 2,000 years, who managed to survive in the face of countless odds.

In addition, I want to express my profound thanks to the American Sephardi Federation, especially to Acting Director Lynne Winters, whose masterful eye, sweet skilled direction, and unbounded efforts made this exhibit happen; to Program Chair, Dr. Zoya Maksumova, for her generous support, and as Editor-in-Chief of the famed *Ladies World Magazine* (founded by the women's organization, *Esther-Ha-Malka*), for promoting the exhibition and featuring the outstanding achievements of the modern Bukharian Jewish woman in the June issue of the magazine. Special thanks to master photographic printer, Sid Kaplan, Lana Levitin and Lida Kandchorov, and all our other supporters.

I admire the fortitude of this great community who so readily, and successfully, transplanted themselves. It wasn't that long ago - around 1985- during the time I was putting together my book about Jewish women, when the calls began to come in. "Joan, Joan, I'm here," they said, "in Queens."