I don’t have to read Dr. [Steven T.] Rosenthal’s book (Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel, Fall 2001) to know that it gives aid and comfort to the enemies of Israel, both in this country and abroad. The title and the Diana Simonds Observer review of it make that clear.

Israel’s desperate struggle for security is plain and simple. She doesn’t have the luxury to engage in warts-and-all “open dialogue” between fellow Jews while being surrounded and terrorized by savages. Is any country on the face of the earth above criticism?

The expression “waning of American Jewish support for Israel” suggests that, more and more, American Jews are willing to let Israel go down the Middle East drain. Is that what Dr. Rosenthal hoped to accomplish with his book? Does he know of any Arab who wrote a similar book criticizing his people?

I can’t help but wonder if Dr. Rosenthal would have written his book and had it published knowing that Sept. 11, 2001 would have the Palestinians celebrating America’s pain by dancing in the streets.

I am surprised that Brandeis University Press published it.

Edward L. Friedman
Professor Emeritus of Electrical Engineering
University of Hartford
West Hartford, Conn.
friedman@mail.hartford.edu

Steven T. Rosenthal replies:

Professor Friedman’s letter well reflects the attitude of American Jews—of three decades ago. Since then, the majority of American Jews and Israel’s major political parties have come to the conclusion that the benefits of American Jewish public debate about Israel far outweigh the real or imagined comfort such debate might give to Israel’s enemies. That Prof. Friedman is incorrect in most of his assertions about my book is hardly surprising, since by his own admission he has not read it. If Prof. Friedman’s strong support of Israel is to be effective, it must be based upon knowledge of what is, not upon emotion and wishful thinking.

P.S. To Professor Friedman: If you can bring yourself to actually read Irreconcilable Differences?, call the History Department. It would be my pleasure to send you a copy.

Steven Rosenthal
Associate Professor of History

The Observer welcomes your comments, whether you wish to praise, criticize, analyze, or simply to communicate with fellow alumni or warmly remembered faculty or staff. Our e-mail address: <observer@mail.hartford.edu>. Postal address: Letters to the Editor, The Observer, University of Hartford, 200 Bloomfield Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06117. Letters may be edited for space consideration.

A Notable Nonagenarian

WHEREAS Sid Clark showed the same persistence at Avon Old Farms School, staying a total of 37 years there as Chairman and later Chairman Emeritus of its English Department, becoming beloved to two generations of faculty, parents and students and becoming the faculty member to “come the oldest and stay the longest,” so far as is known, in any American private secondary boarding school.

NOW THEREFORE does the University of Hartford send congratulations and felicitations To its distinguished graduate

SIDNEY CURTIS CLARK on his NINETIETH birthday, and join with The more than 100 friends assembled to wish him many happy returns of the day. Given under the Seal of the University of Hartford at West Hartford, Connecticut, on this 25th day of October, 2001.

Walter Harrison, President