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Photograph, taken in 1984, shows cruise ship passengers (top, from left) June Kantor, Mildred Hodes, Charlotte Speigel, Marilyn Klinghoffer, (bottom, from left) Neil Kantor, Frank Hodes, Viola Meskin, and Seymour Meskin.

6 Long Branch friends among ship's hostages

By SHERRY CONOHAN and SUSAN DE SANTIS
Press Staff Writers

SIX TRAVELING companions from a Long Branch condominium complex, who passed up a strenuous one-day trip to the Egyptian pyramids, are among the hostages of the Palestinian terrorists who seized the cruise ship Achille Lauro in the Mediterranean.

Another 67 Americans, including eight from the Shore area, left the ship before the hijackers took control. They are reported to be safe in Cairo, waiting anxiously for word about the hostages' fate.

"I think it's nonsensical for these innocent hostages to be involved in some insane political game without any obvious reasons," said Dr. Steven E. Hodes of Middletown Township, whose mother, aunt, uncle and cousin are still aboard the ship.

The Achille Lauro carried 753

passengers when it left Genoa, Italy, last Thursday, but fewer than 100 were aboard with the crew when the Palestinians seized it. Most had disembarked at Alexandria for a side trip to Egypt and were to have met the ship at Port Said, northern entrance to the Suez Canal.

Presidential spokesman Larry Speakes in Washington said about a dozen Americans probably were aboard, including the six with ties to Long Branch. They are:

■ Mildred Hodes, 64, a housewife whose husband, Frank, 66, an insurance salesman from West Orange, had gotten off the ship in Alexandria.

Mrs. Hodes had a stomach ache the night before the trip to the Pyramids and decided to stay aboard the ship. The couple have a home in Springfield Township as well as the condominium in Long Branch.

■ Frank Hodes' sister, Viola Meskin, 70, and her husband, Seymour, 72, a retired accountant. They have a

home in Union in addition to the Long Branch condominium.

■ Sylvia Sherman, the Hodes' cousin, a textile designer for 45 years with Sterling Creative Textile Printers in New York. She had moved to Long Branch from New York several years ago and makes her home year-around in the condominium.

■ Marilyn Klinghoffer, 58, and her husband, Leon, 69, friends of the other families. The Klinghoffers have an apartment in New York as well as the condominium in Long Branch. He has had two strokes and is confined to a wheelchair. He also suffers from high blood pressure.

"They don't need bombs to kill him. The stress is enough to do it," said Jerry Arbitter, the husband of Klinghoffer's daughter, Lisa, of New York.

The Klinghoffers' other daughter, Lisa, went on Italian television to ask

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Hopeful families must sit and wait

By STEVE CHAMBERS
Press Staff Bureau

THE HOME of Steven and Ardit Hodes appeared normal from the outside yesterday, imposed in its size but peaceful.

Their young son pedaled his tricycle along the driveway of the modern residence surrounded by landscaped properties in the quiet, exclusive section of Middletown Township.

Mrs. Hodes answered the doorbell as though she was expecting company, asking who was there but then opening the door.

When the boy on the bike asked who the reporter was and what he was doing at the house, he was told it was a survey.

"They don't know about their grandmother," Mrs. Hodes said in a whisper so her young daughter and son couldn't hear. "They're really too young to understand all this."

The Hodes and a number of other

families in New Jersey and New York were playing a waiting game yesterday, a serious game that involved relatives aboard the cruise ship Achille Lauro that was hijacked off the Egyptian coast Monday.

Dr. Steven E. Hodes, a gastroenterologist with a practice in Edison Township, got the bad news that his mother, Mildred Hodes of Springfield Township, was aboard the ship about 3:30 a.m., when the State Department called.

With her is Dr. Hodes' uncle and aunt, Seymour and Viola Meskin, Union, and a cousin, Sylvia Sherman, Long Branch.

All of his family members aboard the ship own condominiums in Long Branch and took the trip together.

Hodes' father, Frank, left the ship to take a tour of the Pyramids between ports, as did many Americans, and was not on board when the ship was hijacked.



DR. STEVEN HODES
Mother on ship

"I think it's nonsensical for these innocent hostages to be involved in some insane political game without any obvious reasons," Hodes said.

See FAMILIES, page A9

Hijackers of ship said to want talks; claim none killed

The Associated Press

PORT SAID, Egypt — A hijacked Italian cruise ship with more than 400 people aboard returned to the Egyptian coast today. Port sources said the hijackers denied killing any hostages, and demanded to talk to the British, American and West German ambassadors.

"No one has been killed and no one will be released," shipping sources in Port Said quoted an unidentified hijacker as telling Suez Canal officials. The hijackers reiterated their demands that Israel release 50 prisoners, the port and shipping sources said.

A man who said he was the captain of the Achille Lauro reported by radio last night that all aboard were safe and pleaded against rescue attempts, contradicting unconfirmed earlier reports that the hijackers had killed two Americans.

The number of Americans on board the ship was uncertain, but was estimated to be about a dozen.

One maritime source told The Associated Press that an Egyptian naval vessel approached the Achille Lauro as it steamed toward Port Said early today, but turned back when hijackers threatened to blow up the liner.

The shipping and port sources in Port Said, who spoke on condition they not be identified, said the ship was anchored 15-20 nautical miles off the coast.

Their reports confirmed earlier reports by Israel Radio, which said radio monitor Mickey Gurdus had picked up communications between the ship and Port Said.

Gurdus reported that the ship was about 20 nautical miles off Port Said, the northern terminus of the Suez Canal, and that hijackers demanded that the three ambassadors be brought to the port to negotiate with them.

He said Egyptian authorities had forbidden the ship to enter its territorial waters, but had promised that the ambassadors were on their way.

PATH OF HIJACKED SHIP



INSIDE: THE HIJACKING

Travel danger

4 area residents discover ships also can be hijacked.

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Not secure

Couple says security aboard hijacked liner was lax.

Page A8

Travel as usual

American travelers won't be deterred by hijackings.

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Help for families

U.S. task force on call to serve hostages' kin.

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However, British Embassy spokeswoman Christine Ferguson said that as of 9 a.m. (3 a.m. EDT) the embassy had not heard of the hijackers' request.

The hijackers seized the vessel Monday night after the ship left Alexandria, Egypt, where about 600 people

including 67 Americans got off for a one-day tour of Cairo and the pyramids. They were to have reboarded the Achille Lauro in Port Said. Flotta Lauro, the shipping line, said 413 people were still aboard, including 331 crew members.

See HIJACKERS, page A10

Separated traveler keeps prayerful vigil for friends

By PATRICIA M. MARTIN
Press Neptune Bureau

IT WAS 3 A.M. in Cairo, and Neil Kantor was trying to set aside the traumatic turn of events that had left six of his friends in the hands of Palestinian terrorists aboard the Achille Lauro.

All he wanted to do is get a few hours sleep before he and his wife, June, resume their vigil with close friend and neighbor Frank Hodes, whose wife, Mildred, is still aboard the Italian cruise ship. Their prayers, though, also extend to five other close friends being held aboard the luxury liner.

Kantor, of Metuchen, was trying to put behind him a report from the Egyptian government that an American couple on board had been killed.

Reports from the U.S. State Department contradict the Egyptian report, and the ship's captain has been

quoted as saying everyone is well.

"It's OK so far, and Frank has been holding up pretty well," Kantor said from his hotel room in the Cairo Concorde. "It's just frightening not knowing what is going on."

Kantor and his wife, who summer with their son, Robert, in the 60-unit Beach House condominium complex on Ocean Avenue, Long Branch, were on the 14-day cruise of the Mediterranean with eight friends, all of whom own condominiums in the Beach House.

Kantor, his wife, Hodes and Charlotte Speigel opted to take an excursion to the Sphinx, pyramids and Egyptian museum when the liner docked in Alexandria on Monday.

The six others, Mrs. Hodes, Sylvia Sherman, Marilyn and Leon Klinghoffer and Viola and Seymour Meskin, had decided to stay on board and sail to Port Said, where they would hook up to the excursion group.

Kantor described the situation as "hectic."

"We're supposed to come to some decision today, and I assume they'll try to evacuate us," he said, "but we're going to stay here and wait... until there is some conclusion (to the hijacking)."

And thousands of miles away, a blurry pair of sideburns provided the first ray of hope hours earlier for Robert Kantor that his parents were not aboard the hijacked ship.

"That's my dad," Kantor exclaimed at 10 a.m. yesterday, pointing to the upper right hand corner of The Associated Press Laserphoto of tourists who had left the ship in Alexandria. "I'd recognize those sideburns anyplace."

For Kantor, a self-employed businessman, the vigil began at 6 p.m.

See TRAVELER, page A9

Juggling keeps government afloat

The Associated Press

early hours today, the Senate considered a series of miscellaneous amend-

and President Reagan and offered by Sens. Phil Gramm, R-Texas; Warren

Leader Robert Dole, R-Kan., sarcastically saying to Democrats at one

INSIDE

Bad language?

Expert doubted DMV computer program would work.

New Jersey/A3

Probe begins

MOVE investigation opens with emotions running high.

Region/A7

Jays jump

Blue Jays go one up on Royals with