In Service to Country and Community: Jewish War Veterans of Canada, Post #2

By R. Kerr

The first North American organization of Jewish war veterans, the Hebrew Union Veterans Association (HUVA), was formed in New York City in 1896 by former Jewish combatants of the American Civil War in response to unfounded charges of non-participation. As quoted by Albert Isaac Slomovitz in his 2001 book, The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History, members of the organization pledged to “combat the powers of bigotry wherever originating and whatever the target; to uphold the fair name of the Jews and fight his battles wherever unjustly assailed … to gather and preserve the records of patriotic service performed by men of Jewish faith; to honor the memories and shield from neglect the graves of Jewish heroic dead.”

In an article in The Canadian Jewish News (undated), David Birkhan noted that HUVA was the first “general ex-serviceman’s organization in modern times” pre-dating even the American Legion by more than twenty years. In 1917, it merged with a newly-formed group called the Hebrew Veterans of the War with Spain, becoming known the following year as the Hebrew Veterans of the Wars of the Republic. In 1923 ‘Jewish’ was substituted for ‘Hebrew’, and in 1929 the name was changed to Jewish War Veterans of the United States.

The first Jewish War Veterans of Canada branch was formed in

President’s Message

By Saundra Lipton

It is my honour and pleasure to serve as the fifth president of the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta. As a descendant (maternal and paternal) of southern Alberta Jewish pioneers involved in homesteading, peddling, shop keeping, cattle buying and fur buying/trading, my own roots in this province go back over a century.

This year, 2015, marks a quarter century of incredible accomplishments by a group of dedicated community volunteers working closely with our staff, Katie Baker, Roberta Kerr and Agi Romer Segal. We are indebted to the foresight and leadership of the late Jay Joffe and the many individuals who have shared Jay’s vision that the stories of our past need to be celebrated. The efforts of these individuals, with the financial support of our many longstanding members and donors, have ensured that the history and legacy of Jewish life in southern Alberta is preserved and promoted. Our exhibits, publications, archives, clipping files, etcetera, serve as important research resources for our local community and beyond. In this issue of Discovery, we highlight our latest acquisition, the papers of the Jewish War Veterans of Canada, Post #2. We also pay tribute to the pioneering Jewish homesteaders with excerpts from

In this Issue:

In Service to Country and Community................................. 1
President’s Message .......................................................... 1
My Early Reflections of Western Canada.............................. 2
Lillian Waterman Fishman, 1915–2013 ................................. 3
A Brush with Fame........................................................... 5
My Grandmothers’ Legacies................................................ 6
JHSSA Spring Program....................................................... 6
2015 Members .................................................................. 7
JHSSA News .................................................................. 8

JWV Post #2 Dinner and Dance, 1983. Left to right: Allan (Curly) Gurevitch, ?, ?, Vera Himelfarb (back to camera) Ezekiel Litwack. Source: Jewish War Veterans of Canada, Post #2. JHSSA #2631.30

SUPPORT JHSSA WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP
My Early Reflections of Western Canada

By Lillian Waterman Fishman
(an excerpt)

Charles Waterman and Ethel Guttman after the Wedding

After the wedding, my mother moved into the house Charles had built. My father often spoke of the hardships of having to haul lumber by horse and wagon from the town of Olds, 40 miles away. Many details of this house are still clear in my mind. At the heart of the kitchen near the entrance stood a large black iron stove embellished with intricate iron scroll-work. It was the only source of heat for the house. Rounds of metal on top could be removed by a poker to reveal flaming coals. Next to the stove was the pantry with a modern cream separator. A square trap door flush with the floor could be pulled open to gain access to the steps going down into the root cellar where the winter vegetables were stored. Its earthy smell still lingers in my memory. Adjoining the kitchen was the sitting room where my mother would serve tea to aunts when they came to visit. They had the privacy to nurse their babies while they partook of tea and rose jam my mother had made from the prairie wild roses. The third room in the house was the bedroom. The attic served as a second sleeping room for my grandparents.

In the winter, the inside walls of the bedroom would be covered with frost. When the new babies arrived, my parents kept them warm by taking them into their own beds at night. As each of us grew older we became very hardy and slept soundly in our frigid bedroom under homemade down comforters.

There were four of us, and we thrived amongst the cows and the chickens. My mother used many kinds of remedies to ward off illness. We each wore a square of camphor in a bag hung around our necks. When we contracted ringworm from playing with the calves, my mother cured us by painting the lesions.

School – On the Farm

When Freda turned six, she was enrolled in the Greenleaf School which consisted of a large room containing eight rows of student desks, a black-board, and the teacher’s desk. A furnace in the room was stoked by the teacher to warm the room when the weather turned cold. The teacher taught eight grades, each row of desks representing a grade.

The students came from English, Irish, and German families. When the weather was stormy, the parents brought the younger ones when travel was possible. In good weather, most walked, often long distances. A few of the older ones rode horseback and tethered their mounts in the nearby field. The teacher, Miss Ourhan, accepted me as a student when I turned six in the spring of 1921. By then all the first graders were able to read, and the teacher was too busy to tutor me individually. Still, I must have picked up quite a lot by osmosis because when I re-entered first grade in the fall, I was reading quite well. I often think about how competent and versatile the teacher had to be to meet all the challenges she or he faced in a one-room schoolhouse.

Miss Ourhan apportioned her attention on one grade at a time while the rest of the class worked silently on their assignments. Those who were capable could augment their knowledge by listening and learning with the next higher grades. My first lessons in geometry began by watching the teacher draw circles and triangles as she taught the eighth-grade class. She began to mold the brighter students into becoming teachers by recruiting them to help the younger children. As I think of it, the classroom was a model of progressive education.

Several years previous to our enrollment in primary school, our parents had hired a Jewish tutor, Anna Podolski, because they were concerned about our education as Jews. Anna taught us the Hebrew alphabet and we read the story of the Garden of Eden in Yiddish. She did not stay long because life on the farm was too dull for a young woman. Our Yiddish studies came to a halt for the time being until our parents followed up their decision to move to Calgary for the sake of preserving our Jewishness.

It cannot be said that we left the farm because my parents lacked the ability to earn a livelihood from the land … the truth is for centuries Jews were not allowed to own land.

Charles was proud that he was able to prove otherwise. His wheat crops were abundant, he owned a herd of cattle and a team of horses, and he won many prizes at country fairs for his wheat and vegetables. The well he constructed was so excellent it is still in operation and can water many heads of cattle.

The Family Moves to Calgary – Joining the Community

Others of the Jewish settlers also longed for the closely-knit communities they had left behind in Europe and moved to towns and cities large enough to support a synagogue. In the summer of 1921, our family moved to a house in Calgary while a tenant farmer took over our farm. Our new address was 325-13 Avenue East. We were in the Victoria school district where I entered first grade and Freda, third. Compared with today’s families, we were surrounded with relatives. My mother’s brothers and her younger sister had all married and we were blessed with many cousins. They too moved into the city and lived within walking distance from each other.

Life in Calgary was altogether different from farm life. Trochu was our beginning and left an indelible impression on our minds, young as we were.

Charles and Ethel Waterman had four children: Freda (Levy), Lillian (Fishman), David Waterman and Phyllis (Rubin).
Lillian Waterman Fishman, 1915–2013

A Eulogy
By Joel Fishman

Lily Waterman grew up on the prairies of Western Canada on a homestead near Trochu, Alberta. Her parents, Charles Waterman and Ethel Gutman, came from Bukowina, which was an eastern province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In an interview, Lillian said that her mother believed in good nutrition and followed a column on this subject in Der Tog, the Yiddish paper which they received from New York. The columnist explained the importance of a good diet, and this may explain why, later, she took up home economics. Her father was away for long periods of time. On the farm where the nearest store was ten miles away, her family had to be self-sustaining, so she gained practical experience running a household. She explained, “If I wanted to do something, I simply did it.”

Lily had a love of science, a fine intellect, and the ability to learn. In two areas she demonstrated her independence. She was the first person in her family to receive a higher education and she chose her own husband. She preferred to marry the young biochemist, William Fishman, rather than a respectable businessman or a dentist.

One of the reasons for Lily’s success was the tacit understanding and love of her father. When, in the mid-thirties, Charles Waterman brought her to Edmonton to begin her studies at the University of Alberta, he told Lily, “My friends think I’m foolish spending my money to send a girl to the University. Do you think I’m foolish?” They had warned him that if his daughter went to university, nobody would marry her. In reply she asked, “Daddy, are you worried?” He smiled and said, “No. I have decided to give my children as much education as their abilities will allow.”

This was a notable conversation because by the time it took place the Waterman family had moved from the farm to Calgary, and in the early twenties Charles Waterman founded a business importing hardware. Lily had her family behind her, and her father backed her choices. This made a very big difference.

Lily Waterman completed her Bachelor of Science in Home Economics in 1936 and finished at the top of her class. At the campus dance, the Chair of Medicine, O.J. Walker, asked Lily for a dance and told her that she had received the highest grade in the chemistry exam of that year. Unfortunately, the discrimination of the time outweighed academic excellence. While her gentle friends were finding their first jobs and beginning their careers in Canada, Lily learned that one professor, when she wrote recommendations for her, added the sentence: “I must inform you that Lily Waterman is Jewish.” Not being able to set her foot on the first rung of the ladder in Canada, Lily applied for and was accepted as a dietetic intern at Montefiore Hospital in New York City, and this was the beginning of a serious career. (In our days of air travel, we should give thought to what it meant to leave home, because in the thirties the separation was effectively greater. It then took four to five days of solid train travel [with the coal-fueled locomotive] to get from Calgary to New York.) In the end, Lily, at the age of about 21, with great determination, strength of will, and the support of her family, turned a reverse into an advantage and overcame this obstacle. (It is only speculation, but if Lily had received her first job in Alberta like the rest of her classmates, she might just have led an uneventful life.) I am certain that, when in 2010 she received the Distinguished Alumni Award of the University of Alberta, she was too gracious to mention what really had happened.

It was at this stage in her own career that Lillian met and later became engaged to Bill Fishman, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Biochemistry at the University of Toronto. She loved him and understood his work. After the fact, it is evident that Bill Fishman was happy to have a smart and beautiful wife. It was also clear that, by this time, Lillian Fishman had launched her own career and established her independent identity.

Let us now discuss Lillian Fishman, the person, and say a word about her way of looking at things and how her special abilities contributed to her success. She was an optimist and always kept her youthful curiosity and creativity. She was a real feminist but on her own terms. She took the view that the role of the woman is unique and important, particularly because it is the mother who has the most contact with the children. As a mother, she read to her children extensively. Nina and I can remember her reading to us on a vacation, chapter by chapter, the complete Treasure Island and Robinson Crusoe.

On certain occasions Lillian Fishman was an activist. While living in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, she was the head of the local Hadassah chapter. With the Second World War in progress, the established Jewish community kept a low profile. Lillian quietly enlisted their support and raised money for Youth Aliyah, a program which helped rescue young people from Germany and Austria. She also raised funds for building a room at Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus, Jerusalem. Later, in Boston, she directed Hadassah’s educational and cultural programs. In addition, Lillian raised money to launch Boston’s first educational TV channel, WGBH.

At a time when many of her contemporaries were entering retirement, Lillian discovered the opportunity in La Jolla to make new friends and to apply her formidable social and leadership skills in partnership with her husband, William H. Fishman, by launching the La Jolla Cancer Research Foundation, which has now become the Sanford Burnham Institute.

Our mother may not have been consciously aware of it, but her
In Service to Country and Community

Continued from Page 1

Montreal in 1969, followed by Vancouver and Toronto in 1976, and Calgary in 1977. At its peak, there were eight branches in all, including Ottawa, Saint John ("Atlantic Post"), Winnipeg, and Halifax; only the Toronto branch remains active.

The Jewish War Veterans of Canada, Calgary Post #2, was formed in 1977, the fourth branch Post to be founded in Canada. The driving force behind its formation was Robert Sattin who served as commander from 1977 to 1992, followed by Sid Macklin (1992–1995) and Val Rimer (1995–2014). Often referred to as the Jewish War Vets (JWV), the aims of the organization were “to combat anti-Semitism, to promote comradeship amongst Jewish veterans, to protect the rights of Jewish servicemen, to have a strong representation for the Department of Veterans Affairs, to help the welfare of service personnel in Israel who are very much in need.” The Post began with $300 in a trust account and 35 paid-up members, and it doubled those numbers in its first year of operation. At its peak it boasted of approximately 200 regular and associate members, and created an important and impressive legacy.

Over the past several months, JHSSA has received several boxes of material from the JWV office. They totalled almost five feet (150 cm) of textual records, including everything from formal minutes and correspondence to newspaper clippings and scraps of paper, and well over 1,000 photographs. This large accession required hours of careful sorting and weeding. The information we are uncovering is fascinating, with a wealth of knowledge being added to our records regarding not just the organization itself, but also the individuals who were both its mainstay and its focus.

The Jewish War Veterans were staunch supporters of many community activities and projects, and hosted social events both for their membership with everything from information on available government services, to the replacement and repair of medals and decorations, to the provision of an honour guard at burial. Though not an official JWV project, Bob Sattin was instrumental in helping to establish The Calgary Association of Jewish Immigrants from Russia, which was formed in 1978 to assist Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union with their adjustment to life in Canada. Many of these individuals were also veterans and as such were welcomed into the JWV fold. In 1986 a banquet was held in their honour, and each received a Jubilee Memorial Medal commemorating 40 years since the Allied victory in WWII.

The JWV initiated several major projects, including the erection of a Memorial Cenotaph (1977) to honour Calgary Jewish servicemen who fell in the two World Wars; the creation of a Wall of Honour (1998) in the Jewish Community Centre acknowledging all local servicemen; the publication of Memories on the March (2002), a tribute book containing the “Personal Stories of the Jewish Military Veterans of Southern Alberta”; the creation of a Seniors’ Lounge (2005) in the Jewish Community Centre. They also played a role in the development of Calgary’s Museum of the Regiments’ Jewish War Veterans Memorial (1989) and Plaque (1994), and participated in the establishment of that institution’s War Art Gallery, which includes a large mural mosaic and a permanent display of materials “describing part of our veterans’ contribution to Canada”, through the Sharing our Military Heritage Foundation (2007).

JWV qualified for a provincial casino license in 1984, and over the 27 years they held the license their proceeds supported a wide range of organizations, including the Alzheimer’s Society, Calgary Children’s Hospital Foundation, Calgary Food Bank, Calgary Homeless Foundation, the Calgary Jewish Centre’s Meals on Wheels program, Camp B’nai Brith (later Camp BB-Riback), Chevra Kadisha of Calgary, Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta, Salvation Army, War Amputees Association and many others. In 1997 casino funds purchased the first Bob’s Bus, a passenger van for the use of the Calgary Jewish Centre in memory of Robert Sattin, and in 2007 an Endowment Fund was established through the Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary with an initial donation of $10,000. The casino license was given up in 2011 when both the numbers and health of the JWV membership had declined to the point where it was impossible to muster the required volunteer workers.

Even after the decision was made to no longer collect dues or

Continued on Page 5
A Brush with Fame

Stan Winfield Finally Meets Winston Churchill in 1995

The following is an excerpt from an article from the Vancouver Courier, May 24, 1995, by Rafe Mair. It is about the late Stanley Winfield, former Calgarian, war veteran and 1982–2004 director of the Churchill Society of BC, on his visit to the 50th commemoration of VE Day. 2015 marks the 50th anniversary of Churchill’s death. Mr. Winfield served in the RCAF 1941–46. He died in Vancouver in August 2011.

In the run-up to the VE Day celebration, over a pint or two in the evening before, Stan and I talked a lot about Churchill – he from his perspective as a young airman during the war, me from the perspective of a precocious teenager who followed the entire war with a world map and pins showing which army was where … We chatted about the Churchill papers which had been in the news … Churchill’s private papers, in the hands of the family, were sold to the government for £ 12.5 million and one of the beneficiaries was likely to be the great man’s grandson and namesake, Winston Churchill, MP. We both rather thought that while it would have been nice if ‘young’ Winston (he’s 54!) had given the papers to the government, it was likely to be the great man’s grandson and namesake, Winston Churchill, MP. We both rather thought that while it would have been nice if ‘young’ Winston (he’s 54!) had given the papers to the government, he was under no obligation to do so … I tell you this for two reasons.

First, to give you the strong impression that Winston Churchill formed a very great part as [we] stood outside Buckingham Palace … Secondly, to set the stage for what happened right after the ceremony …

As we walked down the side of the palace … we sat down on some steps … As we sat there, a man, obviously noting Stan’s medals and small Canadian flag lapel pin, walked over and shook our hands. His face looked very familiar. He introduced himself.

“I’m Winston Churchill, MP,” he said, “and this is my son Randolph and this is my son Jack.”

If you have had a ‘brush with fame’, please let our office know.

Lillian Waterman Fishman

Continued from Page 3

accumulated experience gave her the perfect skill set for reaching out to the community and mobilizing support for the new foundation. She would meet with her friends regularly to stuff envelopes and send out the newsletter which she edited and published. I have been informed that the Friends Group of the Sanford Burnham Institute was initially a women’s project which attracted a certain type of person with a sense of public service and at the same time provided a positive and enjoyable social experience. After the death of William Fishman, Lillian, with her good friend, Reena Horowitz, launched the Group of Twelve, a circle of 12 friends who would bring their lunches in brown bags and meet to hear a lecture on the latest developments, mainly at the La Jolla Cancer Research Foundation. Today, the Sanford Burnham Institute keeps this tradition alive, and the Group of Twelve has grown considerably. In addition, Reena chairs the Fishman Fund which she launched with the late Mary Bradley. This wonderful project makes fellowships available to deserving young researchers at the Sanford Burnham Institute.

Perhaps with time the uniqueness and originality of Lillian’s contribution will be fully appreciated. One reason why is that with her gentle grace she made it look easy. From her many friendships she built a larger family, and all those who worked with her for the good cause will miss her dearly.

She leaves two surviving children, three grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, and many, many wonderful friends.

May her memory be a blessing for us all.

In Service to Country and Community

Continued from Page 4

hold meetings other than executive meetings and the AGM, the JWV continued to maintain an active presence within the community. While increasingly fewer in number, they remained ardent supporters of their membership and their community, continuing to meet and function to the best of their ability. The living veterans were the focus of the JHSSA’s 2011 AGM, and the Post provided access to many of its files and resources for the creation of the JHSSA Southern Alberta Veterans of World War I & II Database. They continued to participate in the municipal Remembrance Day ceremony at the Jubilee Auditorium, the wreath-laying at HMCS Tecumseh and various other veterans’ events, and donated funds both to their long-standing recipients and to special projects in the Community Centre and to the Bertha Gold Jewish Senior Residence.

Following the death of Commander Val Rimer in March 2014, the decision was made to dissolve the organization. All financial assets were transferred to the JWV Foundation Fund, which will continue in perpetuity, and all organizational records were donated to the JHSSA.

The minutes of an executive meeting in March 2011 noted that “All are in favour of our Post’s presence in the Community as long as we are able to verify that our Post has a marked influence on the citizenship as a whole.” There can be no doubt about the influence of the Jewish War Veterans of Canada, Calgary Post #2, on this community. Their history reveals that they were true servicemen in the broadest sense of the word.

Sources: Jewish War Veterans of the USA in Encyclopaedia Judaica c2008 The Gale Group; JWV fonds, JHSSA files
By Sarabeth Carnat

JHSSA is interested in family history. Calgary artist Sarabeth Carnat, daughter of Morris Carnat and Ruth Richmond, has found a unique way to preserve and transmit her family history. Her necklace “My Grandmothers’ Legacies” was showcased in the Glenbow Museum’s Fall 2014 exhibit “Made in Calgary: The 2000s.”

I began research for this piece in 2000. A second cousin of my father’s, Lillian Faffer, was rumoured to be the family historian, and I was able to find her contact information through my mother and her sister. Thus began my exploration into our family history.

I was the first female born in my family, and I was named after both of my grandmothers. My mother and her sister were the first women in our families to live long lives. My grandmothers both died long before my birth – Sarah from a stroke at age 61, and Blumeh, quite young, from complications of diabetes – so I learned about them from stories and pictures.

Sarah, my father’s mother, was born into a large family with many girls. Unlike most women of the time, my grandmother and her sisters were educated. Her mother, my great-grandmother, owned a business, a soap factory, highly unusual for that time. Sarah married my grandfather, a tradesman, and immigrated to North America. Her married life was difficult, filled with uncertainty and poverty. To quote Fanny Slezas: “She could make a meal from a carrot.”

My mother’s mother, Blumeh, was fulfilled with her role as a wife and mother. At the age of ten her mother died and she became responsible for her father’s household, including caring for the customers’ horses. She was a balebustah, making noodles and raising chickens to subsidize the family income. She spoke of being “onion rich or onion poor.” As long as you had an onion, a delicious meal could be prepared.

Each of the charms represents an important element of my grandmothers’ stories. For Sarah: the book symbolizing her education, a bar of soap representing the factory, my father in gold, his two sisters, Ruth and Toby, Toby’s wedding rings (given to me in her will), and a big fat carrot. For Blumeh: a work horse, a golden onion, my Aunt Billie, Uncle Dave, my mother in gold, a chicken and a rolling pin. The brooch/pendant in the centre is a combination of their dresses.

This necklace is a tribute to Sarah and Blumeh.

Sarabeth Carnat studied in Canada, Israel and the U.S. Her 45-year span in the field of jewellery and metals includes over 30 years of teaching and committed contribution to the Alberta College of Art and Design. She has a private practice in one of a kind production and conceptual jewellery, metal painting, Judaica, and anodized aluminum objects.

JHSSA Spring Program

Monday, April 27, 2015
7:30 pm   Calgary JCC

Postcards from the Past: Insights into history, technology and popular culture with David Daley

David Daley is a mixed collections conservator with Archives and Special Collections at the University of Calgary. He will talk about the preservation of vintage postcards and about what they can reveal about our history. He is interested in preserving and interpreting historic collections.

The public is invited to bring vintage postcards to share with the audience.
Thank you to all our 2015 Members

Membership donations are used to support the projects and operations of the JHSSA, which is an independent, self-sustaining organization. We issue official tax receipts for all donations. Our membership year is from September to August. We welcome our new members. Special thanks to all those members who have made donations beyond their membership fee. Please inform our office of any inadvertent omissions or corrections so we can include them in our next issue.

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Jack Wise
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Abe Zeisler
Minnie Zuckier
President’s Message  Continued from Page 1

Lillian Waterman Fishman’s memoirs of her early years in Trochu and her eulogy by Joel Fishman.

As a self-funded, non-profit organization, we rely on community support and our own fundraising. In 1961, my great-uncle used his savings to buy a “piece” of the Empire State Building, one-half share, to be part of this historic building. Please consider becoming a “shareholder” in the JHSSA by taking out a membership, establishing a perpetual donation, or giving a one-time contribution. We are very grateful to the past boards of the JHSSA for their foresight in developing a legacy fund. Our current endowment balance requires significant growth in order to have a perpetually guaranteed base of funding to sustain and enhance our annual operation. This, our 25th year of operation, is a legacy year, and I encourage you to give JHSSA consideration in planning your own legacy contributions.

At this time, I want to express my appreciation to our past and current board members for their pioneering efforts in establishing JHSSA. Let me also express my gratitude to the many members of the Southern Alberta Jewish community, a number of whom now reside in other locales, for their ongoing support. Please join them in helping to preserve our history for the generations to come.

Dov Chetner’s Bequest

The late Dov Chetner was a long-time supporter of JHSSA. Our collections contain material relating to his family history and to his Zionist activity. Dov also remembered JHSSA and its work in his will. The funds from the Dov Chetner bequest have been directed to the copying and digitization of issues of local Jewish newspapers.

Saul Glin’s and his Table Tennis Legacy

As part of its 75th anniversary commemoration, the Edmonton Table Tennis Club has included a history of the late Saul Glin and his contribution to the sport. John Kim, editor of the Club’s blog, wrote JHSSA, “we are fortunate to have great men like Saul Glin be a part of our history.” The full article can be found at https://ettcblog.wordpress.com/2014/12/18/saul-glin-table-tennis-champion-holocaust-survivor/

JHSSA NEWS

Seeking Maccabi Alumni

Maccabi Canada alumni are launching a project to connect with former Maccabi participants from southern Alberta and to collect stories and photos of their Maccabi experience. Contact Barb Krell at krells@shaw.ca or 403-238-4247.

Doris Miller Celebrates 100

On January 20, 2015, Doris Mittleman Miller celebrated her centenary with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Doris arrived in Calgary in 1930 at age 15. We hope to feature a full oral history of Doris in an upcoming issue of Discovery.

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

☐ Single – $18 ☐ Patron – $50
☐ Family – $36 ☐ Benefactor – $100
☐ Institution/Corporation – $36 ☐ Other

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