



DISCOVERY

The Journal of the

תגלית

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Southern Alberta

VOLUME 20, No. 1

WINTER 2010

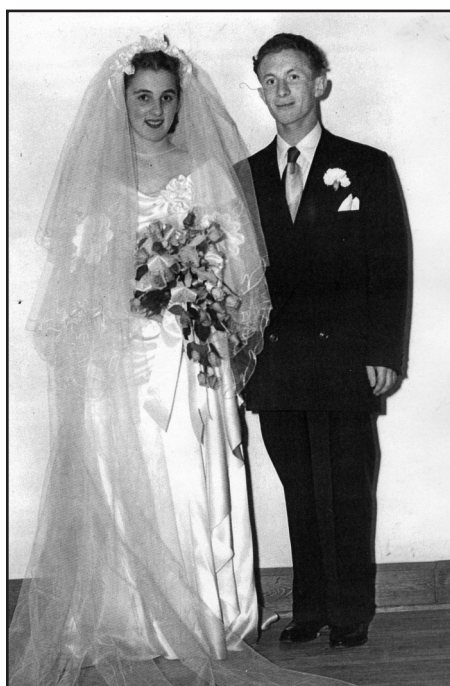
Members of the JHSSA
and the community at large
are invited to attend our

Wedding Show and Tell

Sunday May 16, 2010

3:00 pm

Calgary JCC Chapel



Minnie and Elliot Zuckier, June 1949. Photo courtesy of Minnie Zuckier. JHSSA #2370.

The JHSSA has a wonderful collection of wedding photos spanning eight decades. Other archival treasures include the wedding registry of the Calgary Jewish community's first permanent spiritual leader, Rabbi Simon Smolensky, and some historic ketubahs.

We would like to add your wedding memories to the historical record. Please

Tanya Volovnik Gelfand Sklar: A Woman Ahead of her Time

By Irena Karshenbaum

An early 1960s photograph of a State of Israel Bonds meeting in a private home shows men sitting along the periphery of the living room listening to a male presenter. A few women's heads are visible sitting to the side, but the presenter has his back to them and speaks to the men, including Henry Koschitzky, Bob Barron, Jack Edelson and Joe Busheikin. Only one woman sits in this circle, a cigarette in her hand, happy to be one of the boys. Her name is Tanya Gelfand.

Tanya Volovnik, an only child, was born on April 21, 1919 in Winnipeg. Her parents, Osis and Ida, had married in Calgary but moved, briefly, to Winnipeg, returning shortly thereafter. Osis had a confectionary on Fifteenth Avenue East that "was not the most successful of businesses," according to his grandson Shael Gelfand. Osis' real passion was Yiddish language and culture, especially Yiddish theatre. It is therefore not surprising that he was one of the founders

bring us your courtship, engagement, wedding and honeymoon memorabilia. Share your gowns, ketubahs, photographs and anecdotes.

There are some great stories out there, so pull out your albums, check your closets and share your romantic, poignant and humorous memories of something old and something new.

If you have photos, treasures, or stories you would like to bring to the program, please call the JHSSA office at 403-444-3171.

We look forward to sharing *Show and Tell* highlights in future JHSSA publications and programs.

of the I.L. Peretz School where Tanya learned Yiddish at night. Tanya was the valedictorian for the first I.L. Peretz graduating class in 1936.

As Canada entered World War II, Tanya quickly enlisted. She was in the first class of the RCAF Women's Division and the only Jewish woman from Calgary to enlist in the Canadian forces. Tanya's title was "clerk steno" and she spent the war years serving in Winnipeg, Calgary and Toronto. Eventually she worked as secretary for the Wing Commander of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, which trained, across Canada, 130,000 personnel from all over the Commonwealth.

On Sunday, May 19, 1946, B'nai Brith Calgary Lodge No. 816 hosted a welcome home banquet for returning Jewish war veterans. The program lists hundreds of names including "Volovnik, T., R.C.A.F." The message from Lodge President R.B. Berkoff fails to thank women for their contributions. "Throughout this long and arduous war, we civilians have time and again expressed a keen consciousness of

Continued on Page 2

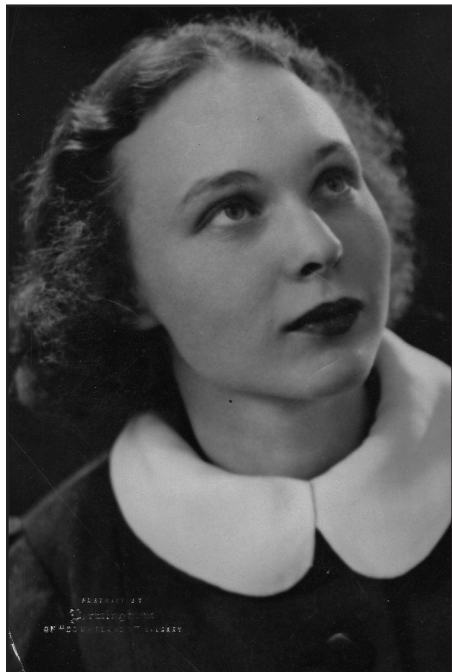
In this Issue:

Wedding Show and Tell	1
Tanya Sklar – Her Story	1
Beth Tzedec's Berlin Torah.....	3
Calgary Tay-Sachs Clinic.....	4
Photo to Identify	5
1988 Olympic Memories.....	5
History Quiz Answers	6
2009 AGM Report.....	7
Jay Joffe Memorial Program.....	8
JHSSA News	8

To sponsor an upcoming issue of *Discovery*, contact our office at 403-444-3171.

Tanya Volovnik Gelfand Sklar

Continued from Page 1



Tanya Volovnik. Photographer: Birmingham of Courtlands, Calgary. Photo courtesy of Shael Gelfand. JHSSA #2377.

the debt we owed our fighting men, who so bravely defended Canada in the waters of the Atlantic, the mountains of Italy and the skies over Germany.... Welcome home, boys! It's good to have you back."

As WWII came to a close, Tanya set out to study at the University of Toronto business school, a faculty then dominated by male students. After graduation, she returned to Calgary and was introduced to Robert Gelfand by his cousin and best-friend, Sid Gelfand.

Robert Gelfand had been a navigator during the war. Shot down over Holland, he bailed out of a burning aircraft. Gelfand was imprisoned in a German POW camp and escaped just before VE Day.

Robert and Tanya married in 1950 and three sons followed: Julian in 1952, Shael in 1955 and Jan in 1958.

Shael says of his mother, "She married because that's what you did in 1950. She probably would have preferred not to marry because she had a life to live." Yet, she lived a very full life, channelling her energy into writing, community work and a variety of contract positions.

Tanya worked as a freelance writer and had a column in the Winnipeg-based *Jewish Post* called "Post Marked Calgary." Much

of her column was devoted to current events of the Calgary Jewish community, usually expressed in a polite 1950s voice. Yet Tanya was not afraid to let her opinion show. In one column, she expresses her disappointment about the defeat of an aldermanic candidate, stating, "Some of the things which happened are frightening but the general apathy is even more appalling. Good government needs citizen participation and interest: without these the city's business cannot improve."

"She was a rebel, she was outspoken, she could rub people the wrong way because of her outspokenness," Shael recalls.

She was a board member and later became president of the Calgary Branch of the Women's Press Club, an association of women writers working in print, radio and television. She won a *Calgary Herald* award in the best feature or column category for her six-part series "Wither the G.P. Now." The series highlighted a problem we are all-too-familiar with today: declining numbers of general practitioners and increasing numbers of specialists. She wrote about the importance of the G.P.s and how they "can provide continuity and coordination in a person's medical care." She also received honourable mention from CKXL Radio for her public relations work promoting State of Israel Bonds.

In 1960, Robert Gelfand died of a heart attack and Tanya was left on her own with three small children. Her mother, Ida, lived with the family and was a great help as Tanya took on a series of jobs in media and public relations to pay the bills. In the early 1960s, she hosted two live TV shows, one on sewing and one on cooking, for CHCT TV, the predecessor to Global Television. She also did live commercials for Channel 2, mostly for Safeway, Shael recalls.

A *Calgary Herald* article shows Dr. Morris Carnat, president of the Calgary Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, with another woman and "Mrs. Tanya Gelfand who will assist Mr. Miller (the executive director) with office work."

Today, it is hard to imagine that a person with a business degree from the University of Toronto would be relegated to such positions. "She hit the glass ceiling many times," recalls Shael. Later, in keeping with the times, she worked as a



Tanya Volovnik, WWII, Toronto. Photo courtesy of Shael Gelfand. JHSSA #2378.

receptionist for Dr. Sid Gelfand. There, she met her second husband, Sid Sklar, whom she married in 1965.

Tanya Gelfand embraced leadership opportunities in her community work. For many years she served on the board of Jewish Family Service Calgary. Dissatisfied with being relegated to the women's auxiliary of the Lion's Club, she advocated for a club that would afford women the same rights and privileges as their male counterparts and co-founded the Calgary Chinatown Lioness Club in 1977.

Tanya also maintained friendships with influential people including Calgary Mayor Grant MacEwan, who later became the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, and Ted Soskin, the founder of CHQR (currently QR77).

In 1968, Soskin gave Tanya a nightly radio talk show, *Forum*, which dealt with the issues of the day. From 1972 to 1982, she volunteered with Calgary Cable (later Shaw Cable) and had her own talk show.

From 1988 to 1995, Tanya was a volunteer docent with the Glenbow Museum where she helped to interpret many exhibits, including *The Precious Legacy: Judaic Treasures from the Czechoslovak State Collections*. In 1988 she also volunteered for the Olympic Arts Festival.

Continued on Page 6

A Berlin Torah Redeemed and Restored

by Jack Switzer

In a secure storage area of Calgary's Beth Tzedec synagogue is a small Torah scroll, one of several that are surplus to those in the congregation's *Aron Kodesh* (Ark).

The Torah scroll originated in Europe, and could be considered a "Holocaust" Torah, but it is not one of the 1500 Torah scrolls looted by the Nazis in World War II from Czech synagogues and stored in Prague, some of which have made their way to North American congregations.

This Torah came from Berlin, capital of the fascist empire. After the German surrender in 1945, several American officers were billeted in an abandoned house in Berlin. It had been occupied by a Jewish family, among the 170,000 Jews in Berlin when Hitler came to power. Like most Berlin Jews, the family perished in the Holocaust.

One of the Americans, a Protestant chaplain, came across a Torah scroll, hidden in the house by its pre-war Jewish occupants. He kept it as a "war souvenir" and later brought it back to the United

States, where it was stored in his home. On the clergyman's death, the Torah came into the possession of his daughter, Mrs. Susan Keenan, who had moved to Calgary.

A happy coincidence then occurred. At an early-1980s Stampeder football game, Calgary Bernie Cohen was seated next to Mrs. Keenan. They conversed, and Mr. Cohen became aware of her Torah and its story. He passed on the information to Rabbi Lewis Ginsburg, who set out to return the Torah to Jewish use.

After considerable persuasion by Rabbi Ginsburg, Mrs. Keenan agreed to give up the scroll, but at a price – \$4,500. Calgary B'nai Brith Lodge No. 186 formed a fundraising committee, led by the Rabbi and Mickey Sander. The drive was successful, and in 1983 the BB Lodge became owners of the Berlin Torah.

The Torah scroll was damaged, as might be expected. Restoration was undertaken by a scribe, Rabbi Peter Hayman, of Congregation House of Jacob. His restoration work, much of which was done on Sundays at the Calgary Jewish

Centre, took four months. In addition to scattered re-lettering, a badly damaged four column section had to be completely redone. The public was urged to sponsor individual letters of the restoration with a donation of \$18. The Torah restoration was completed with a *Siyum Hatorah* re-dedication ceremony on June 21, 1983 at the Calgary Jewish Centre. The event was described in the Bnai Brith Lodge's publication, *Menorah*.

B'nai Brith donated the Torah scroll, now deemed *kosher* ("ritually" fit), to the Shaarey Tzedec synagogue. In 1986, the Berlin Torah was moved to the newly-formed Beth Tzedec synagogue.

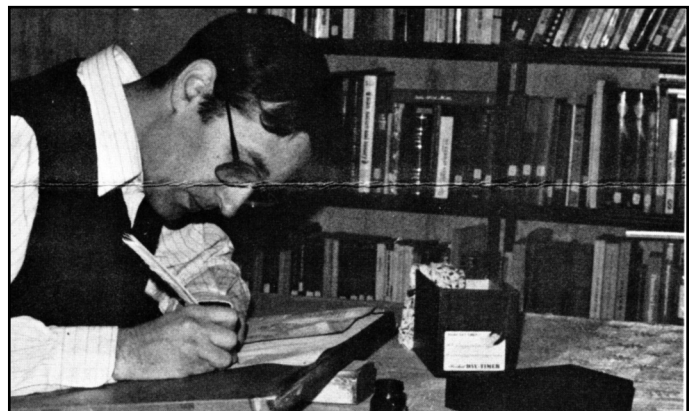
The Berlin scroll does still see use, as the congregation's "traveling" Torah, for *B'nai Mitzvah* (bar and bat-Mitzvahs) and other religious occasions outside the synagogue.

Returned to a Jewish setting, in Calgary, the Berlin Torah has been given new life.

(The badly-damaged four-column section and the Torah's velvet cover are in a display case at the Calgary Jewish Centre.)



Mickey Sander and Rabbi Lewis N. Ginsburg holding the "Berlin" Torah.
Source: *Menorah*, Calgary B'nai Brith Lodge #816, June 1983.



Rabbi Peter Hayman working on the restoration of the "Berlin" Torah.
Source: *Menorah*, Calgary B'nai Brith Lodge #816, June 1983.

A JOYFUL HARVEST SPECIAL OFFER FOR OUR READERS

Name: _____

Address: _____

Number of copies _____ @ \$50 (plus \$15 out-of-town shipping and handling) Total Payment: _____

Method of Payment: ☐ Cheque (payable to Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta) ☐ Visa ☐ MC

Card Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____

Name on Card: _____ Signature: _____

Return form to: **Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta**
1607 - 90 Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T2V 2T4

ORDER BY PHONE:
(403) 444-3171

EMAIL:
jhssa@shaw.ca



Tay-Sachs Screening in 1973: Calgary Jewish Community Unites to Conquer a Tragic but Preventable Disease

by *Maxine Fischbein*

Most will agree that the Calgary Jewish community works best when it comes together to promote an urgent cause.

This was evident in 1973 and 1981 when Tay-Sachs screening clinics were held as part of the local effort to eradicate the rare but fatal genetic disease which then occurred most frequently among Ashkenazim or Jews of European descent.

Tay-Sachs attacks seemingly normal babies causing rapid mental and physical deterioration. An autosomal recessive disease, there is a one in four chance that Tay-Sachs will afflict children whose parents are both carriers.

Although the disease was first identified during the late 1800s – just prior to the arrival in Calgary of our first permanent Jewish settlers – a blood test to identify carriers was some eight decades away.

By 1971, the first mass-screening clinics were held in the Jewish communities of Baltimore and Washington, DC. Two years later, volunteers from the medical and Jewish communities were mobilizing throughout North America to educate Ashkenazi Jews about Tay-Sachs, to inform them about risk factors and to screen individuals in their reproductive years. Tay-Sachs screening set a vital precedent for genetic screening of a population.

At the forefront of local screening in 1973 was the public affairs group of the National Council of Jewish Women. Under the leadership of Brenda Eisenberg, Calgary's NCJW Tay-Sachs Testing Program Coordinator, the local committee sought, and obtained, the support of medical experts, Rabbis and many Jewish organizations to join the vanguard of genetic testing of a population.

The medical expertise for the Calgary initiative came from Dr. J.T.R. Clarke, a medical geneticist who, according to Dr. Joel Fagan, became one of Canada's most prominent paediatricians.

Fagan, who, at the time, was a research paediatrician at the University of Calgary, also served on Eisenberg's committee. "As a Jewish Paediatrician I felt it was my duty," he recalls.

While training at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Fagan – who now lives in Victoria – treated children who died of Tay-Sachs. He describes the experience as having made "a profound impression" on him.

A friend and colleague of Joel Fagan's figured very prominently in Tay-Sachs testing across Canada: the late Dr. J.A. (Sandy) Lowden lent his expertise and his laboratory at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children to test blood samples from mass-screening clinics held in Calgary and other Canadian cities including Montreal, Toronto, Windsor, Kitchener, London, Edmonton, Vancouver and Victoria. According to a report written by Brenda Eisenberg in 1973, B'nai Brith of Southern Ontario helped to fund equipment used in Lowden's lab.

A letter from Brenda Eisenberg to Dr. Lowden dated August 15, 1974 included "... a cheque for the sum of \$221.00 for 442 Tay-Sachs tests at \$0.50 each, for the Calgary program." The blood test was provided free of charge to members of the community.

Doctors Clarke and Fagan sent a letter on Faculty of Medicine, Division of Paediatrics letterhead to all practicing Calgary doctors to provide them with information about the disease, inform them about the clinics and encourage them to "convince your patients of the need for testing."

"Because the disease is preventable if the carrier state is known, and because children will continue to be born with Tay-Sachs disease until all Jewish couples have been tested, we are planning a program of carrier screening in the Calgary Jewish community," the letter, in part, stated.

Many members of the Jewish community attended information

sessions featuring slide presentations by Doctors Clarke and Fagan. There, they learned many facts about the screening program and the disease which, at the time, was 100 times more common in Jews from Eastern Europe. One in every 200 Jewish couples was unfortunate enough to both be carriers, resulting in a one in four chance that their child would be born with Tay-Sachs.

Eisenberg's committee sent letters to "all known Jewish families in Calgary, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat" to inform them and to encourage testing for all members of the Jewish community between the ages of 12 and 45. Reminders were sent about a month before the screening clinics were held. Additional publicity included posters distributed to the various communal organizations and telephone calls.

The JHSSA archives contain evidence of broad support for the Tay-Sachs screening initiative. A report written by Brenda Eisenberg tells us that a special meeting was held for Jewish students at the University of Calgary. Dr. Fagan spoke at a Calgary Hebrew School Parent Teacher Association meeting.

Thanks were extended to the Hebrew School PTA, the Mooter Farein of the I.L. Peretz School, the National Council of Jewish Women, B'nai Brith, B'nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO), Shaarey Tzedec Sisterhood, Eleanor Roosevelt Chapter of Hadassah, Beth Israel Sisterhood and the Jewish University students for their cooperation.

For Brenda Eisenberg, it remains a point of pride that only nine people received payment for services for the Tay-Sachs screening project in 1973. All of them were lab techs employed by Foothills Hospital to staff the screening clinics held on October 28 and November 4 at the Beth Israel Synagogue.

Continued on Page 5

Tay-Sachs Screening in 1973

Continued from Page 4

The project was mainly propelled by volunteers. A telephone committee included Lil Faider, Leslie Levant, Shira Tanzer, Helen Zenith, Cheryl Bercuson (now Shiell) and Bea Yuffe.

Brenda Eisenberg recalls working with Helen Zenith to create a list of individuals and families within the target ages.

Members of BBYO and other volunteers including Gert Cohos, Leni Hoffman, Sharon Abbott, Bindy Winston, Jenny Belzberg and Leslie Levant stuffed and addressed letters to physicians and community members.

Eisenberg chuckles today as she recalls turning her Kelvin Grove kitchen into the nerve centre of the initiative. She personally provided the typewriters, paper and stamps, not to mention her own children, Jennifer, Cliff and Stanley, who personally "stuffed, licked and sealed the last 500 letters to the Calgary community."

Cynthia Litsky, a public health nurse, coordinated the clinic volunteers, many of whom also had backgrounds as nurses or laboratory technicians. They were Jessie Moscovitz, Noni Shatz, Ruth Secter, Louise Maerov, Sheila Savell, Joan Caplan, Sheila Riesenbergs, Hazel Cosman, Betty Brody (now Sharpe), Hessie Switzer, Gay Switzer (now Libin) Shauna Switzer, Gladys Shuler, Miriam Milavsky, Evelyn Viner and Shirley Viner (now Katz).

Discretion was a key qualification considered in recruiting volunteers to staff the clinics, recalls Eisenberg. "Confidentiality was a huge issue, especially in a small community where everyone knows each other."

In her report at the conclusion of the 1973 screenings, Eisenberg expressed gratitude to "Gary Cohn of the Jewish Community Council, Sabine Joffe of the Jewish Family Service, and Gert Cohos, of the National Council of Jewish Women, for the moral support needed for this project."

Thanks were also extended the Alberta Children's Hospital medical staff.

Although the committee opted not to create a blitz in the general media,

they did provide information when requested. An article by Margaret Calder that included an interview with Dr. Clarke appeared in the *Calgary Herald* approximately three weeks prior to the first clinic in 1973. Calder had picked up the story while covering a Jewish Family Service meeting.

According to Eisenberg's summary, 443 people were tested. Of these, nine individuals were identified as carriers and an additional seven were deemed "possible carriers".

Joel Fagan recalls that the screening clinic did not identify any couples that were both carriers, with the exception of one family who were known carriers and, tragically, had already lost a baby to Tay-Sachs.

"In medical terms, a major contribution of pre-screening was the ability to provide reassurance that [most families] were not at risk of having a child with Tay-Sachs," Fagan says.

An article published in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* on January 18, 2005 claims that Tay-Sachs "... has been almost completely eradicated," at least as a Jewish disease.

"Last year not a single Jewish baby throughout North America was born with Tay-Sachs," states Geneticist Dr. Robert Desnick of New York's Mount Sinai Hospital. The article does state that 10 babies were born with the dreaded disease, none of them Jewish.

The historical record shows how well the medical and Jewish communities joined forces in an attempt to make Tay-Sachs a thing of the past. Victory cannot, however, be claimed until we know for sure that the tragic disease has been eliminated in the Jewish community as well as other higher risk groups including French Canadians of south eastern Quebec and Cajuns in Louisiana.

Joel Fagan sums it up in simple yet profound – and profoundly Jewish – terms: "Every life is precious."

Right: Andrea Silverstone carrying the Olympic torch during the 1988 Winter Olympics Torch Relay at the corner of Elbow Drive and Heritage Drive. Photo courtesy of the photographer, Brahm Silverstone. JHSSA #2357.

Photo to Identify



Can you identify the women in this photo? Please call us if you can. Source: Leo Sheftel family collection.

Olympic Memories



Calgary Jewish Community History Quiz Answers

Congratulations to Aron Eichler, winner of the history quiz in our Fall issue. Aron was awarded the prize of a copy of our 2007 publication, *A Joyful Harvest*. Even Aron, with his broad and intimate knowledge of our community, did not have all the correct answers. So for the historical record – here are the facts as we know them.

1. The House of Jacob synagogue building, 523 Fifth Ave. SE, was the community building in use for the longest period. It was in use from the end of 1911 to 1967
2. Its rabbi, Rabbi David Barenholtz is Calgary's longest serving rabbi to date. He served the congregation from 1935 to 1968.
3. Both Saul Glin and Boris Vaynsteyn were table tennis champions.
4. Gordon Signer played the mayor in *Superman III*.
5. Grigori Garbovitsky was a violinist and conductor of the Calgary Symphony Orchestra, while his concertmaster, Jascha Galperin, headed Mount Royal College's music school and conducted its orchestras. Both had been hired by J.B. Barron to conduct the stage orchestra in the Grand and Palace theatres. They also took part in many Jewish musical events. In the 1930s and early 1940s.
6. Harold Hanen (1935-2000), grandson of Rabbi Simon Smolensky, is well known for planning Calgary's Plus 15 landmark.
7. The town of Frank, site of the disastrous 1903 slide, is named after American Jewish entrepreneur, Henry Frank.
8. Phyllis Maerov Switzer (1931-1989) was asked by the CTV network to organize the host broadcaster facility for the 1988 Winter Olympic Games in Calgary.
9. Morris Shumiatcher (1892-1958) tried his hand at acting in California and even landed a role in a silent movie with Mary Pickford before he came to be associated with Calgary's iconic Smithbilt Hats.
10. Southern Alberta landmarks or insti-

tutions named after local Jewish residents include the Barron Building, the Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre, the Martha Cohen Theatre, the Martin Cohos Common at SAIT, the Kahanoff Conference Centre, the David Lander Centre for the Treatment of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (Claresholm), the Libin Lecture Theatre at the University of Calgary, the Dr. Carl Safran Centre, and the Jack Singer Concert Hall.

11. The Calgary JCC (Calgary Jewish Centre) was opened in June and inaugurated in October 1979.
12. The most recent building to be erected by a Calgary Jewish organization is the Chevra Kadisha Chapel on 37 Street SW which opened in 2005.
13. The Calgary Jewish community entered a float in the Stampede Parade in 1975.
14. The Pearlman family founded Polar Aerated Water Works. It was the first bottler of 7-Up in western Canada (1936).
15. This was an open-ended question asking for names of Jews involved in various occupations in Calgary prior to 1980. Here are just some of the names provided by Mr. Eichler and from our files. *Tobacconists* – Bell, Block, Dubisky, Smith; *Antiques* – Smithens; *Kosher Caterers and Restaurateurs* – Fishman, Jacobson, (Katz) Manusewicz, Messer, Rabinovitch, Rosen; *Furniture Dealers* – Adelman, Belzberg, Libin, Ravvin, Sidorsky, Smolensky, Switzer; *Kosher Butchers* – Friedman, Lukatsky, Marks, Rootman, Schayer; *Hotel Owners* – Bell, Blitt, Fixler, Frietag, Gold, Groberman, Hoffman, Krygiel, Rosenbaum, Sheftel, Silberman Smolensky, Switzer; *Movie Theatre Owners* – Allen, Barron, Diamond, Hoffman, Slutsker; *Liquor Store Owners* – Diamond, Guttman.



Polar Aerated Water Works, c. 1940. Abe Pearlman, standing on the far right and David Pearlman in the middle. Photo courtesy of Lillian Pearlman Hamer. JHSSA #475.

Tanya Sklar

Continued from Page 2

Tanya acted in theatre productions of the Calgary Seniors Musical Players and discovered the joys of a book club, reading contemporary titles to the end of her life.

Tanya was already in her 70s when she learned to use the computer and started taking courses, mainly with an emphasis on women's issues, through Athabasca University. A family photo from October of 1997 shows Tanya sitting with her faculty advisor and surrounded by four students young enough to be her grandchildren. She became good friends with this faculty advisor who encouraged her to run in student union elections. After a successful campaign, Tanya represented older students on the Student's Union. Travelling to Federation of Canadian Students conferences in Edmonton, Tanya discovered another new joy, the Red Arrow bus.

Her son Shael recalls, "She would always say, 'I'm going to live 'till I'm 90 and that will be about that.'" Sure enough that's what she did. Tanya Volovnik Gelfand Sklar passed away on January 1, 2009, less than four months short of her 90th birthday.

Like Tanya Sklar, Irena Karshenbaum is an only child, attended the Peretz School and has a Bachelor of Commerce degree. She is a freelance writer and is the founding president of The Little Synagogue on the Prairie Project Society.

AGM 2009:

Franklin Press Handbills Reveal a Rich Communal History

The 19th Annual General Meeting of the JHSSA on October 21, 2009 saw President Sheldon Smithens step down from his position after a rewarding and productive term. Harold Elman stepped down after numerous years as a Director. Barry Finkelman (Medicine Hat), Paul Finkleman, Noel Hershfield, Sandra Lipton, Betty Sherwood and Svetlana Shklarov were newly elected to the JHSSA board.

Naomi Kerr was recognized for her many years of dedicated service in the JHSSA office, especially with our photo collection. Sixteen community elders who marked their 80th birthday in 2009 were honoured with special certificates. The executive of the JHSSA consists of Jack Switzer, president; Bren-

da Eisenberg and Donna Riback, vice presidents; Deborah Katz, treasurer and Zena Drabinsky, secretary.

Abraham Shnitka and His Franklin Press Handbills

The focus of the special program of the AGM was the collection of Calgary's Franklin Press handbills that are housed in the collection of the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta (JAHSENA). It was a very full program, highlighting the benefits of cooperation within the small community of Jewish archives. Reproductions of about 50 handbills were mounted on the walls of the Calgary JCC auditorium and the presentations that followed the business meeting included a closer examination of a number of these handbills.

JAHSENA archivist Debby Shctor opened with a very interesting presentation about the career of Abraham Shnitka from his founding the Franklin Press in Calgary in 1913 through to the end of his career as King's Printer. She described Shnitka's friendship with William Aberhart and how it influenced his career. Debby also explained how the collection of handbills came to be donated to JAHSENA.

Sheldon Smithens, great-nephew of Abraham, talked about the history of the Shnitka (Smithens) family in Calgary. JHSSA archivist, Agi Romer Segal, examined some of the Franklin handbills that advertised events that took place at the

Congregation House of Jacob which celebrated its centennial this past year. She demonstrated that the variety of events advertised in these posters and handbills indicate that the House of Jacob served as our community's earliest focal point – until the development of other communal structures such as the Peretz School and the House of Israel Community building.

Lectures by visiting scholars, Zionist meetings and emergency meetings to deal with pressing issues and cultural events were held at the synagogue until the late 1920s. The language of these handbills is especially instructive. The focus is almost exclusively on communal responsibility and individual duty. Events and meetings were seen not as optional entertainment but as a social and cultural necessity.

JHSSA historian Jack Switzer devoted his presentation to events involving the Yiddish circles of the I.L. Peretz Institute. These included many cultural, as well as political activities, and often featured well known visiting personalities.

As an interesting addendum to our AGM program, the JHSSA received a letter from member Rena Cohen in Tzfat, Israel. Rena wrote that there had been a museum of Jewish printing in Tzfat, which was an early centre of Hebrew printing in the 16th century. Rena recalls having seen a small printing press there that had been described as having once belonged to Abraham Shnitka of Alberta. This makes sense since Abe, along with his family, was an ardent and active Zionist. Unfortunately, the Printing Museum in Tzfat was shut down due to lack of municipal funds. Rena has written to the authorities protesting the closure, but has so far been unable to trace the whereabouts of the Shnitka press.

Thank you to Rena for adding this interesting tidbit to the historical record.

גרניסער באזאר

פון י. ל. פרץ-אינסטיטוט

מיטוואך, דעם 7. מערץ

אנהייב 6 אוונט. סאפער 6 ביז 8 אוונט. מאנץ פון 9 ביז איינס.

חשובע פריינט:

מיר רופן איך אלעמען צו קומען מיטגעלעבן צום דערפאלג פון אונזער ערלעכן באזאר לשבת אונזערע אינסטיטוציעס.

אין דער איצטיקער צייט פון נאציאנאלן חשבון הנפש טארן מיר נישט לאזן אויף חשק אונזער יונגט—מיר מוזן צובינדן אונזערע קינדער צו די לעבנס פראבלעמען פון אונזער עקזיסטענץ. די פריז של מוט די דאזיקע הייליקע ארבייט.

מארגס איר נישט שטיין אין דער דייט, ווען מיר נויטיקן זיך אין אייער שטיצע.

קומט צו דעם איינציקן באזאר פון היינטיקן יאר—קין שום באזאר האט נישט געהאט אזא גרויסן אויסוואל פון פארשידענע סחורות ווי דער איצטיקער באזאר.

איר וועט באמת זיין איבערגעראשט מיט דער פארשידענהייט פון ארטיקלען און מיט די ביליקע פרייזן.

מיט אייער קומען צום באזאר דערגרייכט איר צוויי צילן: נוצן פאר זיך און געוועלשאפטלעכן חוב.

עס איז א שווערע צייט, אונזער עקזיסטענץ איז אפט באדראם, א דערפאלגרייכער באזאר וועט אונז פינאנציעל אסאך העלפן.

זינט צווישן די וואס שטיצן! באזאר קאמיטעט.

ANNUAL BAZAAR & DANCE

OF THE

I. L. PERETZ INSTITUTE

To Be Held

Wednesday, March 7th - 1934

FULL COURSE DINNER WILL BE SERVED FROM 6 to 8 p.m.

DANCING TO A GOOD ORCHESTRA—TILL 1 p.m.

FULL LINE OF GROCERIES AND FANCY GOODS AT REAL BARGAIN PRICES.

IT IS THE DUTY OF EVERY JEW IN CALGARY TO ATTEND.

The very existence of the Institute depends upon the success of this Bazaar.

I. L. PERETZ INSTITUTE, Bazaar Committee.

Franklin Press handbill. Courtesy of JAHSENA.

JHSSA News

Bertha Gold^z (1924-2010)

The board of directors, staff and members of the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta mourn the recent loss of Bertha Gold^z. Bertha's dedicated efforts to record the story of the Jewish community in Calgary and southern Alberta was most evident in the many oral histories she recorded as head of our Oral History committee. Bertha also helped to train fellow oral history interviewers. She even took on the difficult task of transcribing the tape recordings so that the histories of our pioneering community members would be more accessible. She made sure that a copy of each oral history was available to the family of those interviewed.

Her contribution as a director of our society was invaluable. She always had the interests of the community as a whole in mind and her comments at board meetings reflected her rich experience with a wide variety of volunteer organizations.

Bertha's friendship was a true gift. We learned a lot from Bertha and will all miss her. May her family be comforted together with all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

JOIN THE JHSSA

- ☐ Family membership – \$36
- ☐ Single membership – \$18
- ☐ Institution/Corporation – \$36
- ☐ Patron – \$50
- ☐ Benefactor – \$100

Please make cheques payable to:
**Jewish Historical Society of
 Southern Alberta**
 1607 - 90 Avenue SW
 Calgary, AB T2V 4V7

Membership payable by
 credit card through our office.

Please do not send cash through the mail.

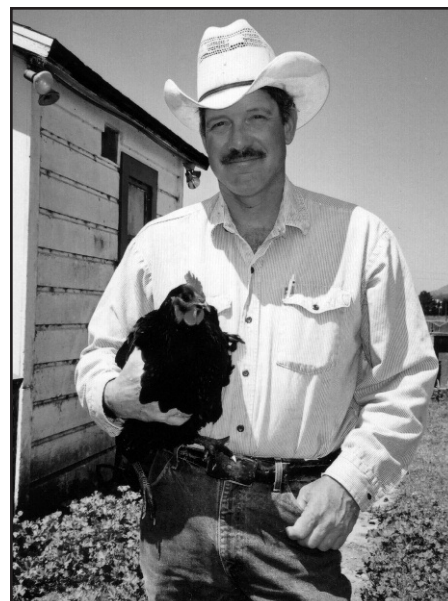
Inaugural Jay Joffe Memorial Program Warmly Received

An afternoon of historical insights, engaging analysis, fond memories, laughter, Yiddish songs – all with a western flavour – it was a truly a fitting tribute to the late Jay Joffe, founding president of the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta.

The first Jay Joffe Memorial Program was held in conjunction with and in co-sponsorship by the Beth Tzedec Jewish Film Festival on November 22, 2009. It featured the documentary film *Home on the Range: the Jewish Chicken Farmers of Petaluma*, followed by a performance of Yiddish and English songs by cowboy Scott Gerber, who is featured in the film.

The program was introduced with much warmth and humour by Jay Joffe's younger son, Jonathan, who is himself a local filmmaker. Jonathan pointed out some of the connections between the Petaluma story and the Jewish community in southern Alberta. He noted that such a program combining education and entertainment was just the sort of activity Jay would have had in mind when he founded the JHSSA.

Scott Gerber's performance was very well received. Audience members remarked on the honesty and warmth



Scott Gerber.

that were evident in his singing. They snapped up all the available copies of his CD. For his part, Scott was overwhelmed by the friendliness and hospitality of the community and his hosts.

If you have any programming ideas, please let us know by calling the office at 403-444-3171 or emailing us at jhssa@shaw.ca.

DISCOVERY

Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta

Founding President: **Jay Joffe**
 Past President: **Sheldon Smithens**
 President: **Jack Switzer**
 Vice-President: **Brenda Eisenberg, Donna Riback**
 Treasurer: **Deborah Katz**
 Secretary: **Zena Drabinsky**
 Directors: **Shel Bercovich, David Bickman, David Busheikin, Emanuel Cohen, Trudy Cowan, Cliff Eisenberg, Barry Finkelman, Paul Finkleman, Maxine Fischbein, Bertha Gold, Sheila Gurevitch, Noel Hershfield, Barbara Joffe, Harriet Libin, Sandra Lipton, Therese Nagler, Betty Sherwood, Svetlana Shklarov, Carey Smith, Darlene Switzer-Foster**
 Honourary Directors: **Hy Belzberg, Jack Edelson, Henry Gutman, Mel Polsky**
 Archivist: **Agi Romer Segal**
 Office: **Naomi Kerr, Roberta Kerr**
 Editors: **Jack Switzer, Agi Romer Segal, Maxine Fischbein**

The editors welcome submissions for publication relating to areas of Calgary and Southern Alberta Jewish history. All articles should be typed, documented and sent for consideration.

Statements of fact or opinion appearing in Discovery are made on the responsibility of the authors alone, and do not imply the endorsement of the editors or the JHSSA.

Please address all communications on editorial and circulation matters to:

Discovery
 c/o The Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta
 1607 - 90th Avenue S.W.,
 Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2V 4V7

Phone 444-3171
 Email: jhssa@shaw.ca
 Website: www.jhssa.org

ISSN: 1916 – 3886