



DISCOVERY

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תגלית

# JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Southern Alberta

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## Sacrifice and Spirit: Calgary Hadassah-WIZO in the 1930s



By Maxine Fischbein

In mid-November, women from across Canada will converge in Calgary for the first Canadian Hadassah-WIZO (CHW) national convention to be held in Alberta. While national in its scope, Canadian Hadassah-WIZO's 39th convention will be a source of much pride for Hadassah stalwarts and for the Calgary Jewish community at large as the achievements of outgoing president, Calgarian Sandy Martin, are celebrated.

The CHW convention theme, *Igniting the Power of Women*, acknowledges a fire that has burned brightly in the spirit of its members for more than 90 years. As Martin passes the torch, many will focus on the future of Canada's largest Zionist organization. It is also fitting to reflect upon some of the

women who built the organization and provided badly needed aid to the people of Palestine and, later, Israel.

Hadassah was founded in the United States by Henrietta Szold in 1912; a parallel organization, founded by Anna Selick in Toronto, took root four years later. The Calgary Chapter of Hadassah was founded by Marcia Goldberg and Rose Rabinovitz (later Jaffe) in 1921, with the assistance of Rose Rady of Winnipeg. Locally, the organization was the successor of an early women's group, Daughters of Zion, which began meeting in 1913 under the leadership of Dora Shnitka.

Marcia Goldberg, who served as the first Calgary Chapter of Hadassah secretary

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Calgary Hadassah-WIZO members and guest speaker, Mrs. Barnett Janner, J.P., at the 1955 Youth Aliyah campaign launch. Dorothy Hoffman chaired the campaign. Back Row (L to R): Susan Nagler, Ruby Smolensky, Lillian Groberman, Annabelle Gurevitch, Eleanor Barron. Third Row: Rose Libin, Ethel Kerr. Second Row: Fanny Mitchell, Mrs. Janner, J.P., Gertie Markus, Sarah Fasman. Front Row: Evelyn Gurevitch, Ida Eichler, Leah Saltman. Photo: JHSSA Archives.

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

### 18th Annual General Meeting

Monday, September 22, 2008

7:30 pm

Calgary JCC Auditorium

Come say "Chai" and enjoy a special program –

### THE WAY WE WORE: OUR CLOTHES AND THE STORIES THEY TELL

Join us for a stroll down memory lane that offers rare glimpses of a variety of outfits and accessories worn by members of our community, and hear some of the facts associated with them.

Additional archival treasures will help us to tell the tales of the way we wore!

If you have an article of clothing or fashion accessory that "speaks" to the history of the Jewish community we would be very pleased to include it in this or other upcoming JHSSA programs or publications. Please let us know by calling the JHSSA office at 403-444-3171.

The evening's program will feature reports on JHSSA activities over the past year, the election of new directors and the presentation of Heritage Certificates

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## Sacrifice and Spirit

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and an early president, made it her mission to light a fire under the Jewish women of Calgary to support Hadassah-WIZO and other Zionist projects in Palestine as well as other worthy causes, including the Jewish National Fund, United Palestine Appeal, Red Cross and war effort projects.

Goldberg was elected national vice president of Hadassah-WIZO's Western Division in 1930 and served in the same capacity between 1941 and 1945. She is most fondly remembered for the annual Medical Aid Tea she hosted for over four decades.

Other notable Hadassah personalities active in Calgary during the organization's formative years included early presidents Rose Rabinovitz, Gertie Markus and Millie Barron. All four Calgary matriarchs served the organization for many years; their names still resonate today with veteran Calgary members who learned leadership and fund-raising skills from them.

Regrettably, very little archival information remains from the earliest years of the organization, but with the JHSSA's acquisition of the Calgary Chapter of Hadassah minutes (1933 – 1941), we are able to review the activities of Hadassah-WIZO in Calgary during those busy years.

Another treasure is a copy of a passionate handwritten speech by Marcia Goldberg for the "Ten Dollar Give or Get Luncheon", which she co-hosted with Ethel Libin and Sarah Gurevitch at the Jewish Community Building on May 18, 1932.

In her speech, Mrs. Goldberg urges members "... to work unstintingly and to give for something that we do not see before our eyes – something that appeals to our Jewish senses – the rebuilding of our Ancient Homeland in Palestine.

"This ideal can be our only path – if we are to rescue our down-trodden brothers and sisters in Europe; if we are to provide them with the humble homes which under existing conditions are being denied them; if we are to provide shelter for those who, wandering about homeless and helpless, facing the closed doors of the rest of the world; look to us their only saviour. To answer their call – is to be a True daughter of Israel."

This rallying cry is all the more poignant when one considers the historical context.

Goldberg acknowledged the sacrifice it took for some members to attend a \$10 luncheon during the Depression; the luncheon was served in the basement of a community building that would not be completed until the community had recovered from the economic setbacks of the Depression and World War II.

"Once again I must thank you – and I sincerely hope that this unfortunate depression that is hanging over us – will soon be a thing of the past – and once again you may enjoy your comforts and



*Marcia Goldberg with her young family in 1921, the year she co-founded the Calgary Chapter of Hadassah. (L to R): Abraham Henry Goldberg, Mozah Goldberg, Marcia Goldberg. Foreground: Muriel Goldberg. JHSSA Archives.*

give to others without the sacrifice that it now entails," Goldberg wrote.

The urgency with which she described the situation of Jews in Europe is, in light of subsequent events, eerie. Hadassah-WIZO members would soon be digging ever deeper in support of the Youth Aliyah Campaign, established two years later, which shortly thereafter engaged in an urgent attempt to pull endangered Jewish children out of the clutches of the murderous Nazis and settle them in Palestine.

In her speech, Goldberg lauded the work of American Hadassah founder Henrietta Szold as well as Canadian founder Anna Raginsky and Dominion president Lillian Freiman, whose joint appeals across the country for support of "The Helping Hand Fund" and the formation of Hadas-

sah chapters "... resulted in the forming of the Hadassah Organization of Canada".<sup>1</sup>

Marcia Goldberg then summarized some of the projects and causes supported by Hadassah-WIZO, including the Girls' Agricultural School in Nahalal, the Motzah Convalescent Home, the Tubercular Hospital in Safed, the Baby Creche, Keren Hayesod and [Jewish] National Fund.<sup>2</sup>

Goldberg refers jubilantly to some very happy events on Palestinian soil, including "the Jewish Olympic," the establishment of the first Hebrew Radio Broadcasting station and the seventh anniversary of Hebrew University.

A summary of early Hadassah-WIZO activity in Calgary, believed to have been written in the 1960s, refers to early fund-raisers as having included various teas, luncheons, fashion shows and small bazaars to support projects in Palestine benefiting women, children and health care services.

A seemingly successful offshoot of the Calgary Hadassah Chapter during the early 1930s was Junior Hadassah. The organization's purpose was described in a 1942 AZA publication listing local youth initiatives:

"Tel Hai Chapter of Junior Hadassah have at present a membership of around 40 girls. It is part of the great Zionist organization and its purpose is to educate the young girl of today (the woman of tomorrow) and give her a better understanding of our place in the world and what Zionism stands for."

The minutes of the senior organization provide glimpses of typical club problems. There are frequent pleas for members to pay their dues, encourage new membership and raise more funds. There are some thinly veiled and more direct remarks concerning cooperation – and, occasionally, the lack thereof – between Hadassah-WIZO and other organizations.

At a 1937 executive meeting, Mrs. B. Idelson of Palestine delivered a report about Hadassah-WIZO work at Nahalal and the Motzah Convalescent Home. She ended her talk "... by asking for better cooperation and understanding between Pioneer Women [today Na'amat] and Hadassah." One can only imagine the

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knowing smiles of contemporary leaders as they consider how little organizational politics have changed.

What most often radiates from the minutes is a spirit of cooperation, resourcefulness, generosity and painstaking attention to detail as members plan various fund-raisers, share news briefs describing current events in Palestine, and enjoy tea and dainties.

Meetings often included entertainment. Sometimes members presented papers, usually relating to events and personalities in Palestine. Their children or other guests provided musical interludes. Guest speakers included some very prominent figures in the Zionist movement. A talk by Zionist leader Dr. Ben Zion Mossinsohn, guest speaker at a Calgary Chapter meeting held in 1937, is summarized in the minutes as "... a beautiful and inspiring lecture, which we shall long remember."

The minutes of December 20, 1933 noted a membership campaign, an honour accorded national president Lillian Freiman by the Canadian Legion, a positive report from the treasurer, perennial plans for the annual luncheon, and a plea to members to arrive on time for meetings. Kindergarten children entertained the members with their "Chanukah exercises" and Evelyn Paperny "rendered two beautiful piano solos".

"Last but not least," read the minutes, "the greatly respected Goldie Myerson spoke as only she could speak on the work of the Pioneer Women".

This is all we know about Calgary Hadassah-WIZO members' close encounter with the Labour Zionist from the American Midwest who would later ignite the hopes and dreams of women around the globe as a founder of the modern State of Israel, its fourth Prime Minister, and the third female prime minister worldwide.

Members of the Calgary Chapter of Hadassah shared something precious in common with Golda, notwithstanding her closer association with a rival women's Zionist organization. In her summary of the history of her chapter (c. 1962), early Hadassah-WIZO stalwart and Council president Ruby Smolensky describes the *raison d'être* of the group in its early years:

"Most business, of necessity, was relat-



*Hadassah-WIZO tea at the home of Joe and Gertie Hoffman on Prospect Avenue, c. 1960s. (L to R): Pat Hector, Joe Hoffman, Dorothy Hoffman, Gertie Hoffman, Sarah Steinberg (pouring), Hilda Hector, ?, Rose Kesnick, Fanny Sheinin, Sunni Gelfand, Miriam Dvorkin, Lena Hanen, Ruby Smolensky. Photographer: Rosetti Studio, Calgary. JHSSA Archives.*

ed to fund-raising for Palestine, and it is highly unlikely that the Zionist ideal was ever forgotten; this Hadassah chapter was dedicated to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine."

Decades later, CHW celebrates its 90th anniversary and Israel's 60th. Most business still relates to fund-raising in support of the people of Israel. The Zionist ideal endures.

As Hadassah-WIZO expanded locally in the early 1950s, adding a second chapter and envisioning subsequent growth, the Hadassah-WIZO Calgary Council was born under the inaugural presidency of another of the organization's matriarchs, Fanny Mitchell. The Council has since coordinated the work of as many as 10 local chapters in support of numerous projects including two time-honoured favourites: Youth Aliyah and Medical Services.

Women in Medicine Hat and Lethbridge established Hadassah-WIZO chapters in 1940 and 1942 respectively. Sophie Lesk was the first president in Medicine Hat as was Mary Cohen in Lethbridge.

Outgoing national president Sandy Martin has walked in the footsteps of some other impressive Alberta leaders. She earned a spot at CHW's national table as vice president and then blazed a new trail in 2005 as the first Alberta-based national president.

Other Alberta women who have served

as national officers include Calgarians Charna Shapiro, Ida Eichler, Sophie Kettner, Doreen Abugov, Ruth Ullman and Sharon Sattin; as well as Edmontonians Becky Bloomfield, Rose Bogoch, Anne Eaman, Bunny Smordin, Cori Friedman, Gillian Horwitz and Miriam Cooper.

The power of women has been successfully ignited and re-ignited through successive generations of Canadian Hadassah-WIZO's history. For members in Calgary and all of Alberta, Martin's presidency and a national convention in Calgary signal a breathtaking lift off!

Sources: Glenbow Museum, Hadassah-WIZO publications including *Golden Jubilee: Canadian Hadassah-WIZO 1917 - 1967*, Esther Waterman, Ed., The Eagle Publishing Co. Ltd., 1967., JHSSA Archives, Miriam Cooper, Ida Eichler, Diane Marcovitch, Leah Saltman, Sharon Sattin, Ruth Ullman.

- (1) According to CHW sources, in 1921 the organization affiliated with the Women's International Zionist Organization to form Canadian Hadassah-WIZO. Members often refer to the organization simply as Hadassah. In the Calgary minutes from the 1930s and 1940s, the chapter is self-identified as the Calgary Chapter of Hadassah. The national organization is currently re-branding itself as CHW. While the organization's official name is Canadian Hadassah-WIZO, other nomenclature has been used in this article according to the source.
- (2) It is important to note that Calgary Hadassah-WIZO members played a critical role in the success of other local Zionist campaigns. For example, they collected JNF Blue Boxes and canvassed door to door on behalf of the United Palestine Campaign.

# Haimson Family Not Forgotten

By Jack Switzer

The names of many of the pioneering Jewish homesteaders from the Rumsey/Trochu "colonies" are relatively well known. Their families stayed in the area for many years, they moved to neighboring towns and set up businesses, or they relocated to Calgary and became part of our flourishing and well-recorded community history.

A few names, however, have been largely forgotten. Some left their farms for more distant Jewish communities; others had daughters whose married names do not carry forward their fathers' legacies. Some simply left few records for historians to follow their paths.

One such family, that of Kiva and Rivka Haimson, has found its local history obscured for all these reasons. Three of their four children were daughters; two eventually settled in the United States. Their one son left the province, as did his parents, and they left no close relatives in southern Alberta.

The Haimson name briefly appears, with various spellings, in Rumsey community history books. A major new source of information on the family recently came to light when the JHSSA received a donation, from the estate of David Spindel, of the responses to a 1970 questionnaire sent to the pioneers' descendants by the then-active Calgary Jewish Historical Committee.

Several letters from Haimson descendants were received by committee member Allan "Curly" Gurevitch, himself a Rumsey pioneer. The letters and questionnaire data provide a more detailed, sometimes colorful, picture of this early southern-Alberta family.

Kiva and Rivka Haimson (originally Haimovitch) and eldest children Sam and Ann immigrated to Canada from the Odessa area of Russia in 1905. He was likely persuaded to homestead by the blandishments of Canadian immigration agents in Odessa, who publicized the availability of free land in the West.

Kiva filed his homesteading papers at Calgary in 1906, "proved up" his quarter-section (one fourth of a square mile)

farm to the satisfaction of the land inspectors, took title, and gradually established a livable home for his growing family. It is likely his family stayed in Montreal or Calgary until a proper house was built. Betty and Sally were born in Canada.

(The girls all changed their given names: Ann was born Hannah; Betty was originally Bessy, and Sally's first name was Minnie.)

Homestead records show three land grant titles for the family. One homestead was in the name of Kira Haimson. Another homestead title was in the name of Sam Haimson. Having adult sons file on homesteads near that of their parents was a common practice.

The Haimsons moved from their original homestead in the Scollard area to a farm closer to Rumsey, near the Red Deer River. They apparently had a full section, one square mile, a sizeable farm at the time. The family may have carried a sizeable debt load. (Many area farmers expanded their land holdings with borrowed money during the high-yield, high-grain-price World War I years.)

As the questionnaire responses indicate, the Haimson farm fortunes were precarious. They shared the ups and downs of prairie farmers – bad weather, pests and volatile grain prices combined with their inexperience to make homesteading a difficult, uncomfortable way of life.

A railway line reached the area in 1912, making the trip to the urban comforts and Jewish community of Calgary relatively easy. Son Sam went overseas with the Canadian army during World War I. Ann worked in Calgary as a stenographer, while Betty and Sally attended high school in the city.

About 1924 the Haimsons gave up farming, and the family moved to Calgary, and then Vancouver, where Kiva opened a second-hand store on Commercial Drive.

Excerpts from the letters tell more of the Haimson story:

Sally Waller, of San Mateo, California, daughter of Rivka and Kiva Haimson wrote: "Four families emigrated



Rivka Haimson, Vancouver, 1947. Source: *Pioneer Days, Rumsey Community History*.

from Russia together on the S.S. Baltic, as I understand it, to escape the pogroms (about 1906). They were Kiva Haimson and family, Alter Hackman and sons, Mendel Pepper and wife and two daughters, and the Gordon family.

"About the farm: flat prairie land, not scenic by any means, rough, strewn with rocks that had to be picked up before planting, work from dawn to dusk with many disappointing results in monetary returns. I recall one fall when the wheat was about ready to be harvested, and a hailstorm laid it low, wiped out a year's hard work.

"I can remember my father crying when it happened, hail so large it broke windowpanes on our home. As a result I disliked the farm, and from that time all farms.

"I mustn't forget the unbelievable excitement we experienced when the railroad trains first cut through our land and started running. My sister Betty and I would sit by the hour waiting for the train to roll by. The brakeman would stand in the door of the caboose and watch for us and wave to us, and we would wave and jump for joy, then they started tossing out little gifts to us, like a bag of oranges that would scatter for yards and we would scatter just as fast after them, and the brakemen would laugh and wave...

"Might mention that from Rumsey

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## Haimson Family Not Forgotten

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we moved to Calgary. I was quite young then but it was my impression that my father finally abandoned the farm, feeling it would never make a good living for the family. I don't believe any of us experienced any feelings of regret about it. The living was rough, the work was hard, the pleasures were few. We would look forward to piling in the wagon and riding a number of miles to visit a family friend ...."

Leonore Steiner Foorman, of Oakland, California, daughter of Ann Haimson Steiner wrote: "Life was very harsh for these settlers, and since the family knew nothing about farming whatsoever, things were very rough. Mother spoke of life there with no regrets at having left it and certainly with no desire to go back. She would often tell us how my grandmother would put hot bricks in the wagon (horse-pulled, of course) before they left for school, and how she and her sisters would ride Bessie, the horse, bareback to school during good weather.

"She would tell us about the horrible crop failures, the freezing weather, and the continual financial setbacks they suffered.

"At the age of 16 (in 1919), she went to Calgary to take a secretarial course, and once established she sent for her sisters.

"Mother disliked talking about the Rumsey days but when she did, it was so sad and heartbreaking ... and when we would pass farms out in the country, and as children be envious of them, my mother could only voice her thankfulness that this was not her lot in life.

"She described winters as being utter horror."

Additional family data from the 1971 letters include the following: Keva Haimson died in Vancouver in 1934. Rivka died some 20 years later, in 1954. She spent her widowed years with daughter Ann and Ann's husband William Steiner. The Steiners have two daughters, Irene Fink and Leonore Foorman (*data from 1971 ed.*). Ann Steiner died in 1959, also in Vancouver.

Sam Haimson lived in Toronto, and later returned to Vancouver. A niece

says he lost contact with the family for many years, and changed his name to Charles Lewis.

Betty and Sally moved to San Francisco; both married and raised families in California. Betty married twice (Al Moffett and William Dorn) and has three children, Betty-Ann Assender, Carl Dorn, and Larry Dorn. Sally married Sidney Waller and has one daughter, Carol Sydney Ungar.

Some might view the Haimsons' abandonment of their farm as a failure,

but in fact their nearly 20 years on the land far exceeded the average tenure of early homesteaders. Most gave up much earlier; only a few farmed for more than one generation. And Jewish farmers were no more likely to leave their farms than their non-Jewish neighbors.

The Haimson family does not deserve the obscurity into which their Alberta history has fallen. Their story, now told, returns them to their rightful place in the annals of the Jewish homesteading experience.

## Sam Haimson – Heroic “Jewish” Soldier

Our research of the Haimson family story turned up some interesting information about the only son, Sam Haimson. A sister says he was born in Russia and came to Canada with his parents about 1906.

Conflicting data comes from the "Attestation Paper" that documents his enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in August 1915. Sam Haimson joined the army in Sewell, Manitoba. The form tells us he was a single farmer, from Scollard, Alberta. His date of birth is listed as July 24, 1893. He claimed Montreal, Quebec as his birthplace. Most notably, he marked his religious denomination as Church of England – Anglican.

Why did Sam Haimson lie to the recruiting officers? He may have felt that an eastern European birthplace might have made him ineligible for army service. And we know that in both world wars some Jewish servicemen hid their religious affiliation in order to avoid anti-Semitic harassment. Recruiters apparently did not require birth certificates, only the recruit's "attestation."

His niece Leonore Foorman noted the following in a Rumsey community history book: "Sam went off to World War I from the farm. He ultimately went to Vancouver for a short time, and then disappeared. He eventually went to Toronto and lived there with his wife for some years. ... Sam



*Trooper Sam Haimson, Rumsey, C. 1915. Photo source: Louis Rosenberg collection, Public Archives of Canada.*

changed his name to Charles Lewis".

Samuel Haimson served overseas with the Lord Strathcona's Horse regiment. He was wounded twice. Our photo of the mounted soldier is in the collection of Louis Rosenberg, former western manager for the Jewish Colonization Association. It became part of Rosenberg's "Jewish farming" exhibit at agricultural fairs.

Sam Haimson, who apparently turned his back on Judaism, became a "poster boy" for the civic contributions of prairie Jewish farm communities.



## Riva Wolf: "I think I live through *Chutzpah* alone"

*Riva Wolf was interviewed by Bertha Gold for the JHSSA late in 2007. Here are highlights of her colourful and active life, taken from the transcript of that interview.*

My parents were Nathan and Jennie Sanofsky. They were born in Russia; I'm not sure where. I had a brother named Abraham. I was born in Calgary in 1917.

My first memories are of being in our house on Centre Street and Fourth Avenue, right down where that dome in Chinatown is now. I went to Central School [later James Short] on 5th Avenue in Chinatown. Then I went to Victoria School and I graduated from Western Canada High School.

I went to Peretz School after public school hours in 1929, when it first started, because my father was one of the founders. I went through to grade six. By that time we had moved to 1505 Second Street East [now Macleod Trail], near the exhibition grounds. It wasn't far from the Peretz School, and I always walked.

My father had the Pleasant Confectionary, a very small store on Second Street East. He built an addition as our house, alongside the store.

I've always used my wits. I think I live through *chutzpah* alone. Don't forget I started performing on the stage when I was five. My mother thought I was a genius.

It was at the Variety Theatre on Eighth Avenue. Every Saturday they had an amateur show. You never got paid or anything, but people used to throw money on the stage. Whoever got the most money was asked to come back. I sang songs, whatever I would hear. Because I was small and cute and a kid, I got the most money. I did it for a whole summer.

It gave me a lot of confidence; I was a very self-assured child.

Later, as a teenager, I did a lot of singing and dancing on the Grand Theatre stage. They had bands from different places and I danced the jitterbug with this fellow. We did this three times a week and we got paid by the band.

About social life in the Jewish community: You went with everybody. It



Riva Sanofsky (Wolf), Calgary, 1938. The photo was given to Jessie Switzer, who married Riva's brother Al Sanofsky. Source: Riva Wolf.

was a small community and whatever was taking place you went, regardless, whether you had an invitation or not.

My first full-time job was as a teacup reader in a coffee shop.

Who trained me? Actually, my elocution teacher loved to read tea cups. She did mine every so often. I was looking for a job after high school. What could I do with grade 12? Nothing. I didn't want to be a clerk. I saw a sign in a window saying "tea-cup reader wanted" and I thought "that sounds like a lot of fun", so I went in and talked to the manager.

I told her that I had ESP, extra-sensory perception, and I was willing to work free for a week to show that I could do a good job for her. She said "that sounds like a good idea."

But I wasn't going to take any chances. I asked all my friends to get their mothers to have their teacups read and they walked out telling the

manager how wonderful I was. She didn't catch on, and I stayed on that job, reading tea leaves, for two years, and I made enough money for a long trip to the States.

How did I do it? Mostly it was psychology; people would tell what they want to hear. If you start out and let them talk to you, they will tell you their whole life's story and they would think it came from me.

I was able to visit my uncle – my mother's brother – and his daughter, my cousin, in New Jersey before the war. My uncle was a Russian soldier in the First World War and had been a German prisoner-of-war. He returned to Germany and married a Jewish woman there. When Hitler came to power he was able to get out with his daughter and go to the United States, but he couldn't take his wife because she was German.

My mother was not well, so she wanted me to visit him and tell them about our family in Canada. His name was Kadishevitch; his daughter's name was Betty. He died shortly after my visit.

I stayed in New Jersey about two months. I was twenty-two. It was 1939, and the war hadn't started yet for the States. I visited other relatives – a cousin in Massachusetts, and another in New York, so I spent time in different places, introducing myself and telling them about our family. We had lost contact with everyone up to that point.

It was during this trip to the United States that I met Freddie Wolf. He was from Germany; he got out just before the gates were closed. He saw my photo at my cousin's house and asked to be introduced to me. When I came, my cousin Betty made me a little party, and Freddie was there. He asked me out, again and again.

My brother was in the Canadian army by then and he was stationed in Petawawa. He was Sergeant Sanofsky, then Private Sanofsky. He went up and down in rank, depending on what trouble he got into. I went to Toronto to meet him and we spent a week together.

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## Riva Wolf

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er. I came back to Calgary by bus.

In Calgary, I got a job with *The Albertan*. I solicited advertising on the phone, for about two years.

Freddie would write to me. He soon asked me to marry him and sent me a ring, but I sent it back. I had no intention of getting married. But he kept writing. He worked as a chef in a big hotel – that was his trade in Germany. When the U.S. declared war in 1941 he joined the American army.

I quit my job at *The Albertan* because I wanted to do something different. I went out to Vancouver with a friend of mine, an Irish girl. I was 23. I applied for a job as a Russian-speaking clerk in a war surplus store. They supplied Russian sailors with clothes. We were allies with the Russians in the war; it was 1942.

I got a book and I learned to say pants and shirts in Russian. The sailors were happy to learn a little English from me. I stayed there a year and a half and then came back to Calgary.

Freddie sent me a telegram saying he was coming to Calgary whether I liked it or not. So I decided maybe it was about time I got married. I was 25.

We got married in April, 1944. I followed Freddie to his postings as a German interpreter for a few months, and because I had a green card I was able to work at odd jobs. Our oldest son Gary was born in Calgary in July of 1945. Freddie was stationed in India and came back six months after the war ended, early in 1946.

When Freddie came he decided to stay in Calgary. He fell in love with my parents. They loved him – he was another son that they hadn't expected. We lived in Parkview; I bought a house before he came. He looked for work at the Palliser, and told me they offered him \$100. I said "is that a month or a week?" He went back, and it was \$100 a month. He refused, but they phoned back and he got what he wanted.

He was in charge at the Palliser, and at the Banff Springs Hotel in the summer. I pretty much stayed at home while he was working as a chef. Canadian Pacific wanted Freddie to be a trouble-shooter all across Canada for

their hotels, but he didn't want to go. He had a family and he wanted to stay put, so he said no, and he quit. That's when we bought a store with living quarters – Tuxedo Grocery.

Phillip was born when we were in the store, and three years later Norman

they bought the Grand Coffee Shop, next to the Grand Theatre. Nate and Freddie were there for a long time, working together. I helped on the night shift as a cashier, and Freddie would come home to be with the kids.

When Nate Greenberg passed away (in 1971) they sold the business. That's when Freddie started selling menus to restaurants, business cards, and so on – any printing to do with restaurants. That is what he did right up to when he passed away. He was 86.

During the mid-1950s I got very involved with fund-raising for the Peretz School. I thought, well I have a musical background so maybe we could have a revue. I advertised for talent and it came – in droves. I found talent that I didn't know existed. Our revues were very successful. We started selling advertising on the programs. That's how the Jewish telephone book got started. I remember saying that Saskatoon had a Jewish phone book.

I performed at the Jubilee Auditorium during the fifties in musicals put on by the Junior Chamber of Commerce. They put out an ad for auditions. They were bringing in a producer from New York; it was big time. I tried out as a singer and dancer and got both parts. The second year I didn't have to audition. They called me and asked me to be in it. I sang solos and danced in the chorus. It was wonderful – the costuming was incredible.

Then I was in the Beth Israel Players productions. Later I went to the Glenmore Dinner Theatre and did six weeks of *Crossing Delancey*. I was the Bubi; that was in 1988, the year we closed our clothing store.

We opened the store in 1968. In 1967 we were on a holiday in England, and I loved the clothing that I saw on the young people. They were all dressed like the Beatles. Gary and Phillip had been on a trip to San Francisco at the time when there were still "flower children" there. Gary and I both wanted to open up a business, and we both had the same idea – a "Hippie" clothing store.

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*Wedding of U.S. Army sergeant Fred Wolf and Riva Sanofsky, Calgary, 1944. Source: Riva Wolf.*

was born. After four years at Tuxedo Grocery we sold the business. Then Freddie got a job with Radio Centre.

A friend of my parents, Zalman Lubinsky, knew that his son-in-law, Nate Greenberg, was looking for a business and wanted a partner. My father put up some money for Freddie and

## Riva Wolf

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I had to find a place in a basement. That's what I wanted. I found an available space in the basement of the Royal Hotel. It had been a beer hall. Anyway, to make a long story short, we got into business – Lord Wolf. We were at the Royal Hotel for six months before they tore it down for TD Square. Then I moved into the Lancaster Building, and later into another space.

We were in business for 21 years, from '68 to '88. Gary worked there, and Phillip worked for a short time and then Norman came in. Phillip got married and left. It was wonderful running Lord Wolf; I had the time of my life. But my rent got too high and I decided I couldn't do it anymore – I was working for the landlord.

Afterwards, I worked for a short time for my in-law Jack Feingold in his shoe business. Then I worked for Gary at his Kosher World deli. When we closed that, I went into telemarketing, booking dinners for a hotel in Kelowna. I did that until Freddie got sick, four years before he passed away.

My new job is at Gap Kids.

*Riva's part-time job at Gap Kids, at the age of 90, was widely reported in the Calgary press. This remarkable woman, one of Calgary's most enduring, and durable, Jewish citizens, can serve as a model for us all. She turned 91 in mid-September.*

*Riva's mother, Jennie Sanofsky, died in 1951. Widower Nate Sanofsky later married Annie Geffen, a widow. Annie passed away in August, 1979, a few months after Nate, who died in February of that year.*

*Abraham (Al) Sanofsky, Riva's brother, married Jessie Switzer late in 1938. Six months later Jessie died of a brain tumor. Al joined the Canadian Army in September of 1939, served in Europe, re-married, and returned to Calgary. He rose through the ranks of the Calgary Fire Department, retiring as a Captain in 1981. A very active militia member, Al Sanofsky was Regimental Sergeant Major for the Calgary Highlanders. He died on Vancouver Island in 1998.*

## JHSSA News

### Historic Calgary Week

Jack Switzer's illustrated talk, *Calgary's Jewish Roots: Key Decades, 1904-1924*, for Historic Calgary Week drew an audience of about 30 history buffs. Jack Switzer was chosen by the JHSSA board of directors to receive this year's Calgary Jewish Community Council Shem Tov award for his important work on behalf of our Society.

### Your Donation Can Go Even Further

The Alberta government has implemented a new Community Spirit Program through which non profit organizations such as the JHSSA can apply for grants to support special projects. The grants will be based on the annual charitable donations from individual donors. As of January 2007, Alberta has increased the provincial tax credit on eligible donations above \$200 so that a 50-cent tax credit is available for every dollar above that \$200 amount.

### Little Synagogue Soon in Heritage Park

The Montefiore Institute, the one-room synagogue/community centre that served Jewish homesteaders near Sibbald, Alberta will soon be moved to its Heritage Park site. Restoration of the early 1900s building will continue at the

Calgary park, and the "Little Synagogue on the Prairie" is to officially open next spring. Four JHSSA directors serve on the Little Synagogue board.

### Florence Elman<sup>z</sup>†, 1941 - 2008

Long-time JHSSA director Florence Elman recently passed away. Florence was one of Canada's leading Jewish genealogists, and fielded many of the family-history inquiries coming to our office. Her friendship, expertise and devotion to Jewish history will be missed. Our condolences go to Harold Elman and their three children, Shana, Bill, and Laurence.

### 18th Annual General Meeting

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to members of our community celebrating their 80th birthdays this year. If you or someone you know is reaching this milestone, please let us know.

Copies of *A Joyful Harvest* will be available for purchase with a one-copy special price for new or upgrading members.

Please join the JHSSA today; if you are already a member, we look forward to receiving your membership renewal. All benefactors, patrons and members will be acknowledged in an upcoming issue of *Discovery*.

## DISCOVERY

### Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta

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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.

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