



DISCOVERY

The Journal of the

תגלית

# JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Southern Alberta

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 1

WINTER 2018

## JHSSA Spring Program

**Trudy Cowan presents children's book  
*Quarantine: Keep Out!***

**Monday, May 7, 2018 at 7:00 pm, JCC Seniors Lounge**

In the spring of 1919 the Montefiore Institute, the little synagogue now at Calgary's Heritage Park, became a quarantine hospital for three Jewish homesteaders who had contracted the terrible "Spanish Flu". *Quarantine: Keep Out!* is a story for older children, at least grades three or four and beyond. It is about the children of the woman quarantined there as they try to keep life going on their homestead while Mama is ill and away from home. The talk to the JHSSA will be primarily for adults, although older children are welcome. Trudy's passion is connecting young people to history, a difficult task when a particular history is uncomfortable, sad, or even frightening. This beautifully illustrated book makes those connections in a way that promotes learning and understanding in a positive way. Trudy will talk about the 1918–1919 influenza epidemic that raged around the world, including its effects in Canada and Alberta. She will describe (and show) the book and the process of writing, illustrating, and publishing the story. Copies of the book will be available for purchase.

Trudy served on the JHSSA board for a number of years, and we have often benefitted from her advice. We are pleased to present her latest project to the community.



## President's Message

*By Sandra Lipton*



It is with great pleasure that I welcome our new directors, Dorothy Hanson and Mel Ksienski, to the 2017/2018 JHSSA board of directors. I am very grateful to all the continuing board members for their ongoing support for the JHSSA.

We had a very busy fall with our Annual General Meeting highlighting our virtual tour of historic Jewish Calgary, the Jay Joffe Memorial Program, our co-sponsored program at the JCC Jewish Book Festival (featuring Ellin Bessner's most interesting talk on her forthcoming book about the Jewish Canadian servicemen and women of WWII), and the wonderful presentation by Roberta Kerr on her fascinating discoveries during her research on our southern Alberta Jewish veterans (see also Roberta's article in this issue). Roberta's research into our southern Alberta veterans has been funded by a grant from Alberta Culture in honour of Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A product of this research will be a series of vignettes highlighting stories of our veterans which will be available on our website.

This has been a difficult time for my family with the passing of my father, Harry Sherman<sup>21</sup>. As a native Calgarian, Dad was a strong supporter of the JHSSA. Our family has been very touched by the many memories shared with us and we are most appreciative of the outpouring of donations in his memory to the JHSSA and

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# The Dvorkin Family: A Century in Scrap Metal

By Gary Dvorkin

The history of our family in the scrap metal industry begins with my grandfather, David Dvorkin, arriving in Calgary from Russia in 1912. He started Western Hide and Junk in 1918. After many years of effort trying to get his children out of Soviet Russia, he finally welcomed them to Calgary in 1922. My father Ted Dvorkin, the oldest son, started working for his father in the mid-1920s at the age of thirteen. He was taught to sort things such as furs, rags, bottles, animal bones, scrap steel, cast iron, copper, brass, and a number of other items so that they could be sold to consumers who would either re-use them as they were or convert them into new products. This was the beginning of what came to be called "the recycling industry" in the 1970s.

The company name was changed to Western Hide and Fur by the 1920s, and then changed again to Canadian Junk Company. During WWII workers at scrap metal companies were not enlisted into the forces as they were working in an essential industry, supplying metal to build trucks, tanks, ships, planes, and other supplies for the forces. The company name was changed again in 1957, when it became Calgary Metal Ltd. In its beginnings, metal was only a small part of the various products bought and sold by the company, but as the name changes indicate, scrap metal took on an increasingly important role. Canadian Junk also sold products such as used steel pipe, pipe fittings, used structural steel, and various types of used machinery. If used material was not available, often new material was purchased for resale. In the 1930s, Ted's stepbrother Sam Sanford started to work in the family business and eventually became a partner; he retired in the late 1960s.

During his time in the business, Ted saw it change from being basically a collector of goods to being an important part of the "metal recycling industry" in Canada. The company collects, identifies, sorts, processes, and packages various types of scrap metal so that they can be sold to consumers to be converted into new products.

In 1965, Ted's oldest son Rick came to work for him, and in 1969 he became a shareholder. In 1974 Gary, Ted's youngest son, entered the business and became a shareholder shortly afterwards. For a considerable length of time the company operated at two locations, one owned and one leased. The property at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Second Street SE in downtown Calgary was expropriated by the City of Calgary, so the whole operation was moved to the leased property owned by the CNR at the corner of Seventh Avenue and Sixth Street SE. The company operated at that location until 1973



David A. Dvorkin, far right, in Western Hide and Fur Co., 1920s. Source: Ted Dvorkin. JHSSA #175

when the CNR made a decision to sell the property to the City of Calgary for the reconstruction of Fort Calgary. In 1973, the property that Calgary Metal currently occupies at 3415 Ogden Road SE was purchased.

In September 1976, Calgary Metal merged with a competitor and took on the new name of Scrap City Scrap Metal Industries Ltd. The reasons for the merger were firstly, that greater volumes justified purchasing more efficient equipment for processing and secondly, with larger volumes better markets could be found for the material. Scrap City even published a few issues of a newsletter, *The Can Opener*. Sales grew rapidly for four years, but the partners' management styles were very different, and they decided to separate and return to their original companies. In 1983 Ted, Rick, and Gary went back to Calgary Metal (1983) Ltd. By the summer of 1985, Ted began exhibiting the early stages of Alzheimer's disease and was starting to slow down at work. Rick and Gary decided that they would no longer be partners at Calgary Metal. Rick stayed at Calgary Metal with a silent partner, and Gary and his family moved to Mississauga, Ontario. Ted's disease got progressively worse until he passed away in 1997 at the age of 86. I remember when we were at his funeral at the Erlton Cemetery and his casket was being lowered into the grave, I could see downtown Calgary and realized that most of the buildings were not there when my father came to Calgary in 1922. With Calgary Metal being located in the heart of Calgary, the thought came to me for the first time that my father most likely purchased a piece of scrap metal from most if not all of the buildings in downtown Calgary.

Calgary Metal purchased more land from their neighbour, increasing their property size to eight acres. The new land was used to inventory new and used pipe which was sold to the oilfield industry. Calgary Metal also purchased a shredder for processing ferrous scrap which allowed them to process more material and sell to new markets. Calgary Metal had years of ups and downs following the general economy and the oil patch in Alberta. In 2003 Rick became ill, and he passed away in March 2004 at the age of 60. The silent partners tried to run Calgary Metal, but the scrap metal industry is unique and they decided to sell the business in 2006. They sold it to people who were already in the same industry, which made for a smooth transition. Calgary Metal is still operating today at the same location on Ogden Road SE.



First lugger truck in Alberta, 1960s. Source: Gary Dvorkin. JHSSA #2980

*Continued on Page 3*

## The Dvorkin Family: A Century in Scrap Metal

*Continued from Page 2*

When I moved to Mississauga, I got a job with a local scrap metal company as general manager. In 1990, my brother-in-law Jeff Shaffer and I opened Peel Scrap Metal Recycling Ltd in Mississauga close to the Toronto Airport. Peel Scrap started as a small company with strong values which Jeff and I learned from our parents. The company started in the non-ferrous business, and as the company grew and acquired more equipment we expanded into the ferrous side of the business. We had set out plans for the growth of Peel Scrap Metal and have stayed on course over the years. Each year the business grew and more new customers were acquired. All employees were taught the importance of good customer relationships, which is one of the main reasons for the success of Peel Scrap Metal.

My sons, Jeremy and Joshua, had both worked at Peel Scrap Metal as students just as I did at my father's business, Calgary Metal. Joshua decided to pursue another career, but Jeremy has continued on in the industry and is now a partner at Peel Scrap Metal. Jeremy came into the business full time after graduating from Humber College with a diploma in Business Administration, and soon thereafter Peel Scrap Metal expanded its facility with more warehouse space and land for outside storage.

Jeremy has brought many new ideas to Peel Scrap Metal. He put into place a software system designed specifically for the scrap metal industry, which simplified our paper flow and allowed Peel Scrap Metal to have quicker access to information. He worked side by side with the employees to gain their respect and trust. In 2009, he installed a wire chopping line for insulated copper wire. This separated the insulation on the wire from the metal and also separated the copper, aluminum, and steel, resulting in a better product for our consumers. In 2011, Jeremy thought that it was time to open a second location. The new location in Oakville, Ontario has grown to almost the same volume as the one in Mississauga. In 2014, Peel Scrap Metal purchased more equipment at their Oakville location to better process ferrous scrap metal.

For many years before the green revolution, the scrap metal industry was at the forefront of industries that took their environmental responsibilities seriously. In today's world, part of the basic cost of doing business in the recycling industry is investing in the equipment, machinery, and training to manage a wide range of client needs and to do so with the least amount of environmental impact.

It is not well known or appreciated that recycling makes it possible to significantly reduce the cost of producing products because the recycling process not only preserves limited resources but also lowers the amount of energy required to produce many of the products we currently enjoy.

We can't be a completely green business, but our contribution to the green solution is a substantial one, with new technologies coming regularly on-line which make us more adept at playing our part in maximizing the amount of metals that have a new life thanks to the efforts of our industry.

One hundred years in the same industry, the future looks bright to continue on. The Dvorkins have always been progressive and looked ahead for better ways to process scrap metal. The only roadblock is that we all have only a finite time on this planet, but the fourth generation carries on for now.

## Dvorkin Children Reunited with their Father – 1922

Abraham David Dvorkin, generally known as David, was born in 1885 and emigrated without his family from Gomel, in Belorussia, to Calgary around 1913. His wife, Rachel, died shortly after his departure, leaving behind four young orphans. Dvorkin spent the next nine years trying to bring his children to Canada. A detailed article in the *Calgary Daily Herald* from August, 1922 recounts the tribulations of the Dvorkin children until their safe arrival.

Dvorkin, called Dworkin in the article, had tried to get his children, Ted, Leah, Mona and Archie, out of Gomel after his wife's death, but the outbreak of World War I and then the Russian Revolution and the ensuing imposition of Soviet rule in the area hampered all his efforts. By September 1921, he had placed the case in the hands of the Red Cross which created a large file of "accumulated letters and telegrams... which tell the story of red tape and obstruction." Until April 1922, Dworkin was even unable to get money or food to his children who were living with relatives. A letter from his daughter from November 1921 had stated that they had no clothing or boots. This had further delayed the possibility of getting them to a port city for travel.

The article mentions that the Red Cross had tried to arrange for Calgarian Harry Isenstein, who was planning to travel to Gomel in April to bring his own relatives to Canada (see *Discovery* Fall 1999), to accompany the children out, but he was initially refused entry to the country. (In his oral history, Isenstein states that he entered Russia in June, 1922. He finally succeeded in boarding a ship to Canada with 32 of his relatives in September.)

Dvorkin's payment for the children's passage was finally received in the Riga CPR office and their ship reached Quebec on August 25, 1922. CPR and Red Cross officials looked after them until Dworkin met them in Moose Jaw and brought them home to Calgary.

The grateful father stated, "I want to pay tribute to the Red Cross for what they have done for me in the case. The efforts by Mrs. Waagen and R.B. Bennett are certainly responsible for my children arriving safely... The elder children tell me that the conditions in Russia are terrible..."

*Thank you to Rena Cohen for informing us about this article.*

**FOUR CHILDREN  
TRAVEL HERE ALL  
WAY FROM RUSSIA**

**D. Dworkin Sees His Family  
For First Time in Nine  
Years**

**YOUNGSTERS HAVE HAD  
UNHAPPY EXPERIENCES**

**Joyful Reunion in Calgary Is  
Largely Due to the  
Red Cross**

# Attestations: selections from a military mosaic: Mark Beards, D.C.M.

By R. Kerr

*On November 29, 2017, Roberta Kerr presented a program for JHSSA. "Attestations: A military mosaic of unexpected stories" highlighted varied stories gleaned largely from the military service records of our veterans. That program was very well received. Here we present the story of a WWI veteran which Roberta unearthed recently.*

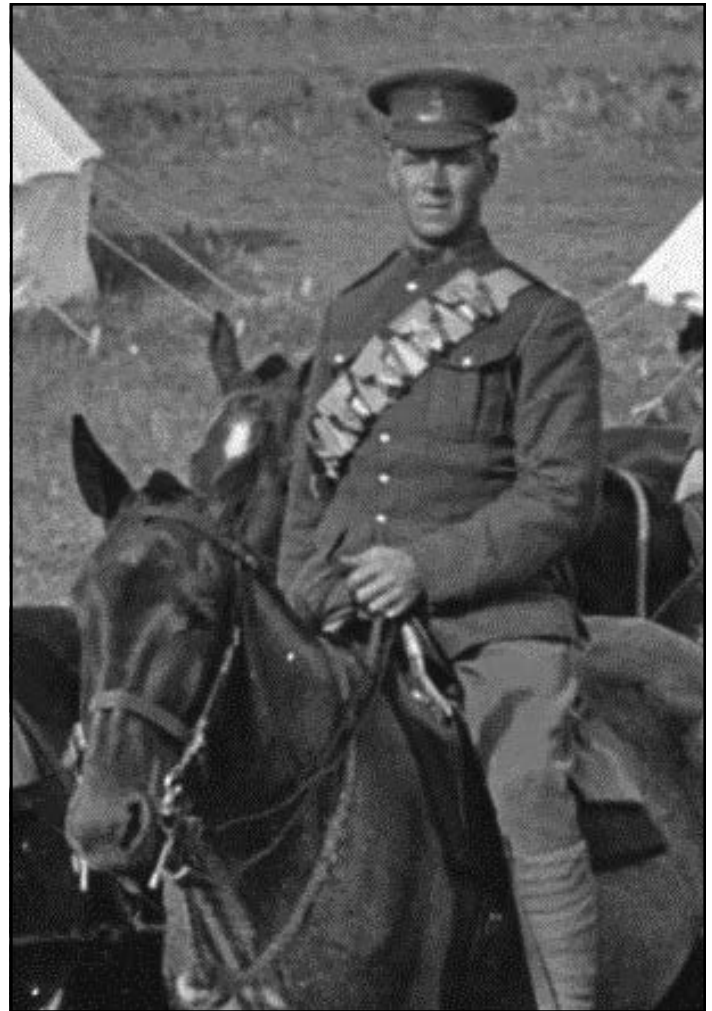
The JHSSA website hosts the Southern Alberta Jewish Veterans of World War I & II Database, a searchable collection of biographical information on Jewish veterans who had a significant connection to southern Alberta. Now numbering over 500, the individuals in the database came from a variety of sources, with varying amounts of background information. Some are well known, but many are merely names taken from a list, or a photo caption, or a headstone.

There are two such headstones in the Mountain View Cemetery in Lethbridge, one of them marking the gravesite of Dr. Alexander Cherry (*Discovery* Winter 2017). The other had been somehow, inexplicably, overlooked until recently, and it led us to the notable story of Mark Beards.

Born in Liverpool in 1882, Beards was brought up in London, where his father was a draper. When he was 18 he joined the British army and volunteered for the Boer War but was considered too young to serve overseas. In 1905, after five years with the Royal Field Artillery, he immigrated to Canada, landing in Halifax en route to Toronto and then Hamilton. In Hamilton he found work as a labourer with the International Harvester Company, living in rooms in a lodging house. There he became friendly with a Mrs. Stewart, whose husband was a travelling salesman for a company headquartered in Calgary. Mrs. Stewart and daughter Janet left Hamilton to join Mr. Stewart, and after a time Beards, too, went west. He took a job on a farm near Pense, Saskatchewan, which was challenging for him in

an interesting way; bacon, served three times a day, was the only meat provided—and Beards never ate pork. When he received a letter from Janet Stewart telling him of work available in Alberta, he was ready to move on. When the farmer refused to pay him, saying that he had not yet worked a full month, Beards chose to leave without his wages and headed to Lethbridge, where he was met by a relative of the Stewart's.

In January 1907,



*Sergeant-Major Mark Beards. Source: Galt Museum and Archives*



Beards married 33-year-old Janet Helen Home Stewart, in a non-Jewish ceremony. He worked in various capacities with area lumber and supply companies and was briefly a coal mine tippie boss. In 1913 he was hired by the Crown Lumber Company of Calgary, who put him in charge of their yards at Nanton. The family was living there when WWI was declared, and Beards enlisted with the 20<sup>th</sup> Battery of the Second Division of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He was soon promoted to Sergeant, and in May 1915 his unit went to Sarcee Camp in Calgary. There Beards was appointed Sergeant-Major, and when a draft for overseas service was announced he was quick to volunteer. He sailed to England on the HMS Hesperian in June 1915, landing at Shorncliffe. He was soon appointed Sergeant-Major again, this time with the 22<sup>nd</sup> Battery—part of the Sixth Brigade of the Second Division Artillery under the command of then-Major Andrew McNaughton. He was deployed to France in January 1916.

It was during an advance the following October that Beards was severely injured by shrapnel, which fractured the head of his right

*Continued on Page 5*

## Attestations: selections from a military mosaic

Continued from Page 4

Church of England C.O.E.

Presbyterian

Wesleyan

Baptist or Congregationalist

Other Protestants  
(Denomination to be stated.)

Roman Catholic

Jewish

Church of England C.O.E.

Presbyterian

Wesleyan

Baptist or Congregationalist

Other Protestants  
(Denomination to be stated.)

Roman Catholic

Jewish yes

Church of England

Presbyterian

Wesleyan

Baptist or Congregationalist

Other Protestants  
(Denomination to be stated.)

Roman Catholic

Jewish yes

One of the most curious things about Beards's military record is that it contains three separate attestation papers—the document filled out on enlistment—all with the same date and the same information—except for one, significant difference. One paper notes his religion as “C.O.E.” (Church of England); one has C.O.E. crossed out and “yes” written in beside “Jewish”; the third, marked “Certified True Copy Substituted For Triplicate”, has “yes” written in beside “Jewish”, and has something rubbed out on the Church of England line.

femur and resulted in such an alarming rate of blood loss that the field doctor feared for his life. Only after the bleeding was stemmed did Beards realize he had also been hit in the arm, fortunately clean through. He spent a week in the base hospital at Etaples and another week on board a hospital ship whose landing in England was delayed because of loose mines in the English Channel. Near the end of his two-month stay at Western General Hospital in Manchester, Beards received a letter from his captain informing him that he had been awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal, “For Acts of Gallantry and Devotion to Duty in the Field”. Ultimately, he made a full, if not combat-sufficient, recovery and continued his service in England as an instructor. He remained in this role on his return to Canada in January 1918, and was discharged in December of that year with the rank of Battery Sergeant-Major Instructor, in New Westminster, BC.

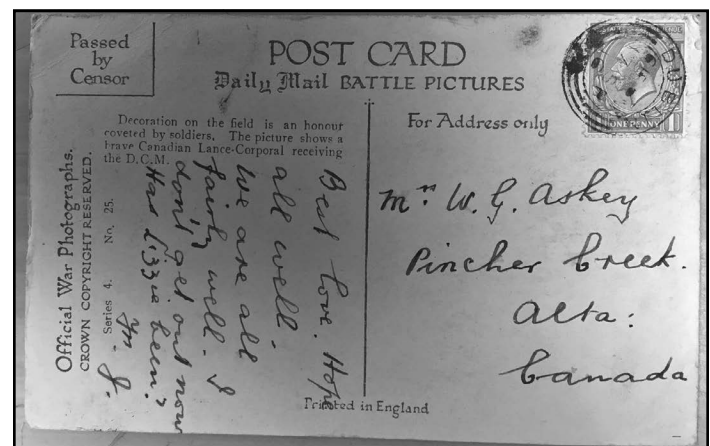
Beards had been joined in Vancouver by his wife and daughter (Helen). He quickly found work clearing land on the Kitsilano Reserve and they stayed in BC for several months, but the family wanted to return to the prairies. Beards had taken up a homestead west

of Vauxhall, Alberta, in 1916, a “by proxy” arrangement with his wife fulfilling the residency requirement during his service. Although his previous farming experience had been limited to his stint in Saskatchewan, by the mid-1930s he had become an award-winning wheat farmer. Eventually his work as trustee and secretary-treasurer of the New West Irrigation District required his full attention, and in 1939, though continuing to live on the farm, he began renting out his fields. Widowed in 1949, he moved to Lethbridge in 1951, working in the Alberta Resources Department offices, Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District. Beards died in May 1955, shortly after having been struck by a vehicle while crossing the street.

Mark Beards was one of only two southern Alberta Jewish veterans to be awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal (Louis Zuidema, *Discovery Fall 2000*). He is buried in the Hebrew Section of the Mountain View Cemetery in Lethbridge. His wife is buried elsewhere in the cemetery.

Sources: Library and Archives Canada, *Lethbridge Herald* December 1951, 1955

## Decorating a Canadian on the Field of Battle



The JHSSA collection includes a photo of Louis Zuidema receiving his Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) in 1915. This photo, which had been given to us by his family, was featured in our Military Display at the entrance of the JCC in November. Philip Wolf of Select Stamps and Covers contacted JHSSA to let us know that years ago he had purchased a WWI Canadian military postcard. The card featured an unnamed soldier. He was delighted to find the exact same image in our display at the JCC! Phil was pleased to have a name for the war hero and we are delighted that a member of our community was featured on an official military postcard. We have subsequently learned of Mark Beards, another Jewish veteran from Alberta who was awarded a DCM (See page 4).



# Past JHSSA Events



*Katie Baker and Harry Sanders presented our AGM program, Building Community, on October 30, 2017. JHSSA #4107.44*



*Speaker Ellin Bessner receiving a gift of A Joyful Harvest from JHSSA's Betty Sherwood. Ellin's presentation at the JCC Jewish Book Festival on December 9, 2017 featured her forthcoming publication, Double Threat. Photographer: Ken Drabinsky. JHSSA #4106.18*

# Thank You to our 2018 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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## JHSSA NEWS

### In Memoriam

JHSSA lost some former board members in the past few months. We are grateful for their support and advice over the many years they served as directors.

#### Jack Edelson, 1920-2017

Jack Edelson was involved in numerous Calgary Jewish organizations throughout his long life. Jack and Rose were JHSSA benefactors for a number of years before Jack joined the board in 1997. He served for many years and was eventually named an honorary director. He and Rose were sponsors of both the exhibit as well as the book of *A Joyful Harvest*. We are grateful to have benefitted from Jack's knowledge of our community and from his advice.

#### Faith Riback, 1935-2017; Donna Riback, 1938-2017

Sisters Faith and Donna Riback had deep roots in the Calgary Jewish community. Faith joined the JHSSA board in the early 1990s and served two terms as a vice president in 1994-95. Although Donna officially became a JHSSA director in 2006, she had been a member since 1995 and volunteered on JHSSA's first exhibit, *Land of Promise*. Faith and Donna were sponsors of all subsequent JHSSA exhibits and publications. Donna's financial acumen and sound advice were much appreciated.

### In response to our Fall 2017 issue

Great articles as usual. I especially enjoyed David Busheikin's recollection of the Six Day War. In fact, as far as I can recall, that emergency meeting was probably the first time that I can recall all of Calgary's rabbis and cantors appearing on one bima together. It was quite an experience. Keep up the great work and thanks for reminding us of past and present happenings. – Rena Cohen

#### A correction re *Community Milestones, 1917:* B'nai Brith Lodge #816

Thank you to Harold Lipton for clarifying that Grand District Lodge #6 was based in Chicago and included a wide area in the Midwest. While the delegation from Edmonton that came to the consecration of the Calgary Lodge might have represented Lodge #6, Edmonton Lodge #732 was established in 1913.

## President's Message

*Continued from Page 1*

other Jewish community organizations. This issue also pays tribute to three former board members (Jack Edelson, Donna Riback and Faith Riback) who have recently passed away.

I encourage you to explore our various resources and to attend our upcoming events. Our spring program will feature Trudy Cowan's presentation on the impact of the Spanish Flu on the Jewish community of southern Alberta. Please check out our *Building Community: An online tour of historic Jewish Calgary* available through our website. We are most interested in receiving your feedback on this great resource which was made possible through a Canada 150 grant from the Calgary Foundation.

The JHSSA is grateful for your continuing membership and we want to especially thank those who have made generous donations beyond the membership fees.

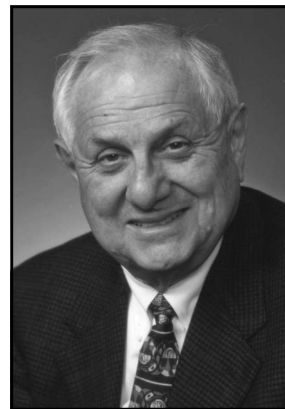
## Order of Canada: An omission and an addition

*Our Fall 2017 issue featured a list of people with connections to southern Alberta who have been named to the Order of Canada. Thank you to Doran Veiner for pointing out an inadvertent omission.*

Senator Jacob (Jack) Austin was invested as a Member of the Order of Canada in November 2015 "for his public service and for his work in advancing Canada's foreign trade relations, notably in the Asia-Pacific region." Jack was born in Calgary.

A month before his death in late January, Jay Switzer was invested as a Member of the Order of Canada. Jay was born in Calgary in 1956 to Israel (Sruki) and Phyllis Switzer. The family moved around the prairies for Sruki's career as a cable systems pioneer. In 1967, they settled in Toronto, where Phyllis became co-founder of CITY-TV. Jay was involved in the broadcasting industry from his youth. His name is associated with the development of CHUM Ltd. and of Hollywood Suite Inc.

He was named to the Order of Canada "for his exemplary leadership in the Canadian broadcasting community and for his mentorship of emerging artists and filmmakers."



**Jack Austin.** Photographer: Michael Bedford Photography. Source: Senator Jack Austin. JHSSA #1806

### DISCOVERY

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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.

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ISSN: 1916 - 3886

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