



DISCOVERY

The Journal of the

תגלית

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Southern Alberta

VOLUME 29, NUMBER 3

FALL 2019

JHSSA 29th Annual General Meeting

Monday, October 28, 2019 at 7:00 pm
in the Calgary JCC auditorium

Voices of Experience: Stories from the JHSSA oral history project, presented by Judy Shapiro, project coordinator

In June 2018, JHSSA's grant application to Alberta Historical Resources Foundation's Heritage Preservation Program met with success and our *Voices of Experience: Jewish Community of Southern Alberta's Memory Project* became a reality. With the help of volunteer interviewers and transcribers we have met our deadlines, and 50 interviews have been conducted. We are pleased to have Judy Shapiro, the project coordinator, present a description of the project after our business meeting at this year's AGM.



We invite you to come to hear some of the compelling and delightful stories gathered in JHSSA's on-going Oral History Project. We will share a few vignettes of the lived experiences of the *machers*, mavens, and menschen who make our Calgary Jewish community what it is today. Judy will also report on the progress of this important project which aims to preserve the stories of our past.

We will once again present certificates in recognition of those in our community who have celebrated their 80th birthday within the past year. Please contact our office if you are interested in serving on the JHSSA board or if you know of someone who has turned 80 this year.

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President's Message

By Sandra Lipton



This summer has been a busy one for the JHSSA. In August, we presented two programs with Zelda Dean as part of Historic Calgary Week. Zelda, one of the founders of the Jewish community theatre group, Beth Israel Players, provided a fascinating overview of this successful theatre troupe's history. We appreciate Beth Tzedec's co-sponsorship of a reunion gathering with Zelda. Kudos to Agi Romer Segal for suggesting and helping to co-ordinate these two events. Thanks also to our board member, historian Harry Sanders, for his presentation on September 18 about the Jewish connections to 17th Avenue.

We continue to work on developing our LIFE & LEGACY program. We are very grateful to all those who have already made a legacy commitment to ensure that our history lives on for future generations. Please consider including the JHSSA in your legacy planning.

Our Voices of Experience oral history project (Phase I) is nearing completion. Thank you to Judy Shapiro for her wonderful work coordinating this. Thanks also to all of our volunteer interviewers and transcribers for the many hours they have devoted to this important project. We also so much appreciate the participation of 50 members from our community as interviewees. I hope you will be able to join us at our AGM October 28th where we will highlight some of the fascinating stories gleaned from these interviews.

We are pleased to welcome back our office manager Katie Baker and are very happy that her interim replacement Carol Hinatsu will continue working with the JHSSA, job sharing with Katie. This summer we hired two students, Haley Bercuson and Danika Cheyetz, to help with our archival collections.

As we enter a new membership year, we thank all of you who have renewed your support of our organization. Your membership donation is a key source of funding for our operation. We hope you would consider encouraging your family and friends to also join JHSSA. If you are not yet a member, please consider supporting the JHSSA through memberships and/or donations. I want to thank our board members for all their support and to acknowledge the office staff for their incredible work on behalf of the JHSSA. I am also grateful to all the volunteers who contribute their time to our various projects. Our continuing success is truly a community effort.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy new year.

PLEASE SUPPORT JHSSA WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP.

Community Milestones 1919 and 1969

1919

The Jewish community brought in the New Year with the celebration of a marriage. On January 11, 1919, Rabbi Simon Smolensky officiated at the wedding of Rebecca Diamond, daughter of Philip Diamond and Peter Block in Hickman's Hall. Their daughter Martha (Cohen) was born in 1920.

1919 was important in the history of Canadian Jewry. It marked the formation of Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC). On March 2 a community meeting in Calgary was held at the House of Jacob Synagogue to elect delegates to the proposed Canadian Jewish Congress, which convened in Montreal on March 16. According to the *Calgary Daily Herald*, 426 votes were cast, and many more would have attended if the weather had been more favourable. The chosen delegates were Ben Ginsberg and H. Rudnick. Other candidates were Jacob Woolfe and M. Kurtzberg, the socialist nominee. Some of the issues facing the delegates were the future of a Jewish homeland in Palestine and minority rights of the Jews in Eastern Europe, especially in view of recent pogroms in that region. Issues relating to Jewish immigration to Canada also dominated the discussions. Unfortunately, after a promising start CJC faltered and was not revived until 1933.

The local community was also deeply involved with these issues. Calgary Jewish Benevolent Society, which held its first AGM in March 1917, had a club room at 229 Eighth Ave. E where monthly meetings were held. In January 1919, a whist drive was given by Mrs. J. Bercuson for their benefit in the grill rooms of Charles Bell's hotel.

The Society held a social at Unity Hall in late April to honour returning Jewish soldiers. Society president, Mr. H. Margolis, gave the opening speech and Mr. I. Florence served as chairman. There were violin and piano selections and dancing. Mrs. Charles Bell presented engraved souvenirs to the following returned men: Messrs. Florence, Goldstein, Woolf, Lipetz, Martin, Diamond, Shinsky, Dworkin, Dagul, and Rubin. Yet to return from their service overseas were Messrs. Goodman, Rabinovitz, Rose, Goodman, and Davidson.

In 1919, Morris Shumatcher, who had finished his service in the Canadian Army, purchased Calgary Hat Works. This purchase can be considered



Peter and Rebecca Block (front) celebrate their anniversary with relatives Tillie Shulman, Martha Cohen, Rose Diamond and Harry Diamond at the National Council of Jewish Women Friendship Club. Source: Martha Cohen. JHSSA #1289

the beginnings of Calgary's Smithbilt Hats.

Zionist activity dominated the social calendar in 1919. Dr. S. Gould spoke to an audience of 70 members of the Canadian Club in the Palliser Hotel on March 3 about "Palestine and Arabia in Relation to the Peace Conference." He also addressed a large meeting of churchmen in Paget Hall in the evening.

In mid-March, William Goldman of Eighth Ave. NE left on an extended trip to Europe on propaganda work regarding the reconstruction of Palestine. Another mass meeting was held later in March to canvass for the Palestine Fund. This was part of a national campaign to lobby the government and the Peace Conference for support of a Jewish homeland under the protectorate of Great Britain and to encourage people to purchase shares in the Zionist commonwealth to help Jewish people of devastated countries in Eastern Europe.

The Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 led to increased vigilance for Bolshevik sympathies, especially among "foreigners". In early July, local RNMP raided the Calgary Labour Temple and some private homes and businesses, including the Alexander News Stand on Eighth Avenue and First Street, which was operated by Solomon Dworkin. He was cleared of any charges. Apparently his employee had been suspected of Bolshevik sympathy and his brother and previous business partner, Benjamin, was known to the authorities for his support of "red" theories.

1969

Robert Sattin was JNF Negev Dinner honouree January 26 at Shaarey Tzedec. Sattin was recognized for his devotion to Israel and to Jewish community life. He was long serving chair of the Calgary Histadrut campaign and its national vice-president. He was a member of the Calgary Zionist Council, B'nai Brith Lodge #816, Shaarey Tzedec, the Canadian Legion, and the Sir Winston Churchill Society. The dinner was chaired by Harry Cohen and the guest speaker was Israeli Lt. Colonel Samuel Mor. Robert Sattin went on to become a founding member and commander of the Jewish War Veterans of Canada, Post # 2, Calgary.

Pianist Marilyn Engle performed with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra in early January. Marilyn was pursuing her B.A. degree at the Juilliard School of Music in New York at the time.

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Molly Potter and Sam Kline wedding, Calgary, November 1919. Sam was a cattle buyer who arrived in Calgary in 1910 via the US and worked out of Lethbridge. Molly worked for a furrier in Calgary. They raised three children, Betty, Cecil and Sheila. They lived in Lethbridge from 1950 until Sam's retirement in 1969, when they moved back to Calgary. Source: Sheila Bermack. JHSSA #2997

Community Milestones 1919 and 1969

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Miriam Dvorkin was selected president of the Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations of Calgary. The Federation, established in 1962, included representatives of all the chapters of local Jewish women's organizations, sisterhoods, and the P.T.A. of both Jewish schools.

Calgary Hebrew School sponsored a gala benefit premiere performance of the movie *Funny Girl* at the Odeon Theatre on January 30. The event was very well attended despite the 30 below weather. This successful event was followed by a gala premiere of *Hello Dolly* at the Chinook Theatre in December.

Festivals of Joy was held in February at Shaarey Tzedec. It featured tables of traditional holiday items and showcased songs and dances depicting the gaiety of the festivals.

On Sunday, February 2, the Jewish community gathered at the Shaarey Tzedec for a memorial service on behalf of the victims of the public executions of Jews accused of espionage in Iraq.

As a result of the enthusiastic reception to Abe Arnold's presentation "Contributions of the Jews to the Opening of the Canadian West" on March 16, a proposal was made to form a Calgary Jewish Historical Society with the aim of collecting material relevant to the history of the development of the local community. Contact was made with the Glenbow Foundation, and Dave Spindel volunteered to help the group. Members developed a questionnaire and also conducted a number of interviews. The material collected was donated to the Glenbow Archives.

Alvin Libin served as president of Calgary Jewish Community Council in 1969. The House of Israel building continued to serve as a community centre for social programs. A Hot Seat Series was inaugurated in 1969 and the first program featured Alvin Libin and CJCC executive director Harry Shatz. The goal of the 1969 UJA campaign, chaired by Maurice Paperny, was \$390,000. The slogan was "Give to Live." The campaign windup was at the community Yom Ha'Atzmaut celebrations featuring Israeli actor Rivka Raz and CBC News chief David Schoenbrun. Both the Peretz School and the Calgary Hebrew School ran fundraising campaigns throughout the year to reduce their respective deficits.

The 1969 annual Hadassah Bazaar in May reflected the times by including a Carnaby Aisle for "mod" shoppers. A new feature was the involvement of auctioneer Robert Smithens, who conducted two auction sales at the Bazaar.

Also in May, National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) recommended that the federal government strike out all references to abortion. Locally, NCJW's annual Angel's Ball was held on June 4 at the Calgary Inn. The 1969 theme was A Roman Holiday.

In September 1969 Calgary Jewish Community Council announced the purchase of 8.2 acres of land at 14 Street and 90 Avenue SW for a "Jewish Community Complex", to include a nursing home and a community centre.



In 1969, Robert Sattin (right) was recognized by the 6th Canadian Field Regiment R.C.A. Association. JHSSA #3234

Due to the success of the I. L. Peretz School's 1968 Art Show, it was repeated in October 1969 and became an annual event.

Calgary delegates to the Pioneer Women's second Triennial convention in Toronto in November had the pleasure of attending the premiere of Srul Irving Glick's (1934-2002) Hebraic Suite II, which was composed especially for the convention.

In November, Izzy Florence was awarded the Royal Canadian Legion's highest tribute, the Meritorious Service Medal. Israel Florence was born in Glasgow in 1896 and came to Canada with his family in 1907, arriving in Calgary in 1913. He served and was wounded in World War I and afterwards continued his involvement with the military. He became president of 137th Battalion Association and spearheaded the

construction of a

memorial to the unit in Glenmore Park. He was instrumental in having a bridge over the Elbow River named in honour of J.G. Pattison, Calgary's only Victoria Cross recipient. Within the Jewish community, Izzy was known for having organized and led 19th Boy Scouts Troop. On receiving the medal, Izzy stated that he wished to "try and set an example for younger people."

CFCN's Buckshot, as well as young local Jewish talent, entertained at the Shaarey Tzedec Synagogue's Chanukah Dinner.



Israel "Izzy" Florence. JHSSA #703

Thank You to our LIFE & LEGACY™ Donors

JHSSA gratefully thanks our legacy donors as of September:

Marni Besser
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Help ensure the future of the JHSSA with a gift in your will, trust, retirement account or life insurance policy. Contact our office at jhssa@shaw.ca or through jhssa.org or call 403-444-3171.

The Play's the Thing: 50 years of great theatre in the Calgary Jewish community

By Zelda Dean

This is an edited and shortened version of the presentation Zelda gave during Historic Calgary Week in August. The full text, as well as a list of all the productions, is available in our office. Zelda is now the Artistic Director of Bema Productions in Victoria.

I start by honouring the Yiddish theatre that was in Calgary long before my time. We Jews have always used theatre and music to survive no matter how good or bad times were. I was thrilled to recently discover a poster for a Yiddish production from those days in my sister's house on Pender Island. Her father-in-law, Alter Bloomenthal, was involved and although he was just the prompter, he got the best spot on the poster. Those shows were much loved and Yiddish was alive and well.

In the late 1950s, my sweetie Bill was one of the AZA advisors who, along with Morris Switzer, Allan Kerr, Aron Eichler, and Joe Brager, decided the young guys needed a project, and so they formed Star Players and held the first (and last) Calgary Jewish Theatre Festival in 1960. Bill even enticed the esteemed Betty Mitchell to adjudicate. It was a big deal.

I have been giving thought to why I kept coming back to the arts, and particularly Jewish theatre. We were the only Jewish family in our small anti-Semitic prairie town and I was exposed young to ingrained hate. Then our family moved back to Calgary and I quickly learned that anti-Semitism was alive and well in the big city too. My remarkable mother Sandra Haskovitch was a member of Pioneer Women and friends with Riva Wolf and Stella Wolfson. These amazing women regularly put on musical fundraisers for the Peretz School and my mom volunteered me. The events were presented in the old Jewish Community Centre. Anyone who could sing, dance, recite, stage-manage, or just walk and talk at the same time was recruited by Riva and Stella.

Fast forward to 1969 when the Deans helped Beth Israel's new Rabbi Louis Schechter and family move into their home. Thanks to our mutual love of the arts and our desire to fight anti-Semitism, Bill and Lou each put in \$25 and Beth Israel Players (BIP) was conceived. We broke down barriers by intentionally opening the doors to Jews and non-Jews alike. Remember, in those days Jews were not yet welcome in country clubs. I can picture Lou meeting the theatre patrons at the front door of the shul helping them to feel immediately welcome. We pulled in our families, friends, neighbours, and anyone we could get to help and Beth Israel Players, lovingly known as the Bippies, was born.

Between 1971 and 1986, twenty-nine shows were produced and I'm going to share an anecdote or two about some of them. BIP leaned to popular, if not family entertainment—generally a musical in the fall and a comedy or drama in the spring—so the group appealed to different audiences as well as different actors, producers, directors, and crew. Over the years many folks went on to work with other theatre companies or to professional careers. The purpose of the Players was always to provide a vehicle for anyone wanting

to be involved in any aspect of amateur theatre. Every year BIP made a generous donation to the shul to help defray costs.

March 1971 – *Tevye and his Daughters*: The wish was to stage *Fiddler on the Roof*, but with barely any stage equipment and only a small number of people to draw from, it remained a wish. The stage was pretty barren, and with the proceeds of each ensuing production curtains, teasers, lights, tools, etc. were purchased. Bill was the resident stage manager for quite a few years as he was the guy with the experience. He also made sure we had scenery and lights.

November 1971 – *Have Mezuzah Will Travel*: All I recall is that we had a lot of fun and laughed a lot. A few pieces of fabric scenery were built by Bill and his friend Harry Finnegan. There was a really awful smell in the shul for a while that no one could figure out. No one admitted that the boys had used horse glue to size the fabric flats.

A Bill Dean tradition began with this play. He would come into the dressing room before curtain and announce that it was "Pishy Time." That always got a laugh and confirmed the audience was seated and the cast could use the shul's public bathrooms. This was also when Audrey Sniderman offered to sell tickets out of her kitchen and ended up with phone calls at all hours. Talk about loyal volunteers.

February 1973 – *Come Blow Your Horn*: Around this time we were covering all the windows in the stage half of the sanctuary with black tar paper in order to darken the room. Those windows were floor to ceiling. We used many rolls of tape and the room felt more like a theatre.

June 1973 – *The Wizard of Oz*: I will never forget Bippies' first really big cast musical, with 35 in the cast including a whole swack of little Munchkins. Our resident set designer, Harry Finnegan, came up with an innovative set made of strips of painted plastic. The fact that at every performance we watched the paint flaking off the plastic just added to the fun. Sydney Kalef had these kids dancing all over that little stage and put a jazz beat in as they sang and danced



Poster for the Calgary Jewish Literary Club Dramatic Section's performance of "Die Stifmame", 1930. Source: Zelda Dean

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The Play's the Thing

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down the yellow brick road. Yes, we used live musicians all the time. I convinced my seamstress neighbour to costume this show and the Munchkins stole the show. Anyone involved with Bippies had their kid in this show.

November 1973 – *The Fifth Season*: This one had some drama not on the stage. We had long lighting poles across the ceiling to hang the instruments. Bill often climbed to the top of the 20 foot ladder to hang the lights. One day a light slipped while he was adjusting it. Bill's finger got caught in the safety chain and broke neatly backwards. People were hollering at him to get down and he said he would just fix the light first. So he reached down and snapped his finger back into place. Much screaming ensued, and that is when Audrey Sniderman fainted. I walked in and one dirty look got him on the way to emergency. By this time in our marriage, nothing surprised me anymore.

March 1974 – *Lovers and Other Strangers*: One night one of the actors playing a small role wasn't wearing the glasses that he needed. He had a simple walk across the stage and managed to bump into the set hard enough that it actually began to fall over backwards. Fortunately, Betty Claire, then Warhaft, happened to be backstage and caught the set when she saw it falling and slowly pushed it back into place, holding it until the scene was finished. The audience gasped and applauded. I would tell you who the actor was but he's family and he would kill me.

November 1975 – *Never Too Late*: This was a good old fashioned domestic farce. You know one of the beautiful things about community theatre, everyone puts their all into it, and they feel wonderful and firmly believe they are doing an incredible job up on that stage. So few people can actually earn a living in professional theatre, but so many can feel so good in community theatre.

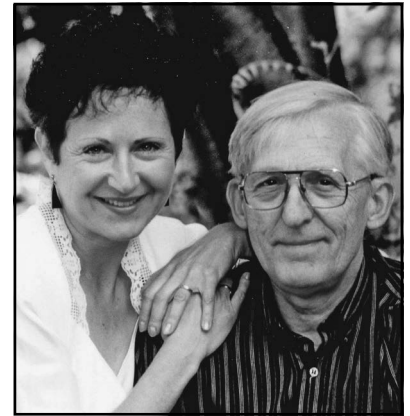
May 1976 – *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*: This was the first of many large cast adult musicals that Bippies produced. I can still picture all those guys in their cute little togas and will never forget my sweet Bill who was sitting in the wings waiting for his cue, doing what every good actor should do—studying his lines. But Bill needed glasses to do that and forgot to take them off when he heard his cue and ran onto the stage. The biggest laugh was when he realized it, took them off, and had nowhere in the toga to put them.

November 1976 – *Fiddler on the Roof*: This first *Fiddler* was the only Bippies show ever held over. The production featured not one, but two, rabbis in the cast—Rabbi Louis Schechter and Rabbi Lewis Ginsburg—neither cast as the village rabbi.

Sydney Kalef directed and choreographed this winner. I portrayed Tzeitel, the oldest daughter, while my own beloved daughter Marni played a younger daughter. I remember struggling not to cry in the final slow exit from Anatevka because we could hear the audience crying every performance.

April 1977 – *The Diary of Anne Frank*: This was the first serious holocaust drama the group did. I recall the discussions around choosing this play and the unanimous feeling that it was our responsibility as a Jewish theatre group to do it. It was an intense rehearsal period, and I remember the actors and crew struggling with their emotions. My personal passion for using theatre to educate, enlighten, and fight anti-Semitism continues to this day.

Beth Israel Players was probably the only theatre group in Western Canada operating in the black with no government or private funding. Any money made was put into theatrical equipment, and eventually Beth Israel enjoyed a well-equipped stage. But there was a need for growth, so in 1977 BIP took 3 giant steps: the first board of directors was elected with Bill and Zelda Dean, Rabbi and Rivka Schechter, Syd



Zelda and Bill Dean, 1970s. Source: Zelda Dean. JHSSA #2088

and Audrey Sniderman, Harry Finnegan, Donna Riback, Naomi Kerr, Sydney Kalef and Mel Tonken; the Players were incorporated under The Societies Act of Alberta; Maurice Sunderland drew up some designs and a new room was planned to provide much needed rehearsal, make-up, and costume space.

November 1977 – *Cabaret*: Donna produced *Cabaret* and Rabbi Ginsburg agreed to portray the German commandant. There were folks who did not like that, but Donna explained how amazing it was that a rabbi would be willing to do this for the greater good. This was the first time we sold seats at little cocktail tables in front of the stage.

November 1978 – *Funny Girl*: Donna had finally agreed to direct, and we received permission to form an orchestra of non-union members, under Harry Aoki's guidance. This was the first opportunity to include young musicians into our original purpose of providing a platform for anyone interested in any aspect of amateur theatre.

I shared the role of Fanny Brice with Debbie Cohen-Perron. The gambler, Nick Arnstein, was also double cast including Richard Heyman. Richard is blind in one eye, and we were out on the narrow ramp singing when suddenly all of the lights went out except for the tiny ones on the music stands and on the edge of the ramps. Before I could panic, I felt Richard's hand on my arm as he whispered, "It's okay. Just keep singing." And the band kept playing and we kept singing while the guy with one eye led us back to the main stage.

By now BIP had involved hundreds of people throughout the community, including a good mix of volunteers from inside and outside of The Tribe. An addition to the synagogue was being completed to provide for essential storage and support space, and a real lighting booth was built at the back of the "theatre". Government grants received after incorporation let the Players' profits go to the physical improvements.

Alberta's Minister of Culture Horst Schmid was eager to showcase Alberta's community theatre. He had been impressed with our *Cabaret* and had wanted to fund us for a tour, but it was logistically impossible so we designed *Funny Girl* with a tour in mind. Bill and his crew drove a rented truck to Vancouver with the big back-drop scenery, which was attached to a wooden beam, wrapped in heavy plastic, and secured on the roof. Fifty cast, crew, and orchestra

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The Play's the Thing

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members presented three shows at the Vancouver Jewish Community Centre to help celebrate its 50th anniversary.

Following this accomplishment, I remember the time Donna and I wrote to the Calgary Regional Arts Foundation advising them that we wouldn't be applying for a grant that year because we didn't need the money. They were so excited and said that never in their history had anybody ever said, "Thanks, but we don't need it."

March 1979 – *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*: This was the first time an extended stage was built. Audiences found themselves walking into a psych ward of a hospital. The critics said, "Nest a Triumph" – "Nest at its Best."

November 1979 – *Hello Dolly*: I had the privilege of sharing the main role with my dear friend Laura Shuler. Apparently folks came to see the show twice so they could catch both of us. The orchestra "pit" wasn't lower than the floor and so the conductor's arms were visible. One critic said it was quite funny when Dolly addressed the audience centre stage and the conductor's arms waving up and down on either side of her made her look like an ancient Hindu statue.

February 1980 – *The Fantasticks*: This show, directed by the Totino brothers of Loose Moose fame, featured two fathers, played by Bill Dean and Noel Hershfield. They had a duet about vegetables and neither of them could remember the lyrics. We never knew what veggie was going to get planted each night or if they would plant the same veggie at the same time.

It was about this time that Bill and I, along with Rivka Schechter, left BIP and opened the first professional dinner theatre in Calgary. However, Bippies carried on just fine because they had so many talented people committed to what they were doing.

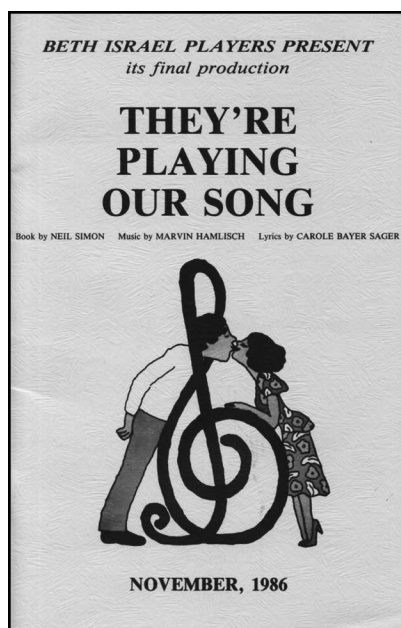
March 1981 – *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*: This was BIP's 10th anniversary show and Rivka directed it. This show had eight children in the cast and toured to Edmonton for the Alberta Multicultural Drama Festival. It's a moving play based on the poetry created in a concentration camp by the Jewish children of Prague. For the curtain call, Rivka chose to not bring the young actors out for a bow. Instead, she showed the characters' names accompanied by photos of the young actors. Her point was made and there were few dry eyes in the audience.

May 1981 – *There's No Business Like... A Musical Revue*: A snappy five-piece band and 19 cast members in all sizes, shapes, and ages—two hours of singing, dancing and comedy routines. This was 1981 and the directors added a bit of local colour when they changed some lyrics to criticize Trudeau's oil policies.

November 1983 – *The Boy Friend*: Bill always said, "Let's do *The Boy Friend*." For 13 years he heard, "No," but then the board said, "Yes" and Bill said, "No." He was talked into it and *The Boy Friend* became another BIP success story. Bill finally directed a show but then had to step back to get all the production values together and asked me to co-direct. Two of the founders of Bippies, Rabbi Louis Schechter and his wife Rivka, were cast in leading roles. The audience was delighted to see them on stage and clapped every time their characters grew in intimacy during the play.

November 1984 – 2nd *Fiddler on the Roof*: The production was outstanding and the full houses loved it. Critics' comments included: "Fine Show—Lives Up to Fiddler's Promise Admirably."

November 1986 – *They're Playing Our Song*: What an apt title



for the final production. Louis Hobson, our favourite critic, had the following headline on his review, "Beth Israel Curtain Falls—Our Song Plays Farewell."

I was thrilled to come and direct this last show and it seemed right since I had also directed the first show. It was with an odd mixture of joy and sadness. We had full houses and the audiences laughed and applauded. In his review, Louis said that during intermission patrons were noticeably sad as they talked

about the past 16 years in which BIP served the theatre community. He went on to say that we had chosen the ideal vehicle to bring down the final curtain as the show is tuneful and laugh filled—the combination which had always spelled success for the company.

Laura played the lead against Ronnie Finestone who had fortunately just returned to Calgary. He acted, he sang, he danced, and he played the piano—everything we needed. Louis commented that he and Laura had great stage rapport and that their voices were well suited to the mellow musical style.

Louis's closing words kind of said it all, "They're Playing our Song is an effortless and rewarding way to spend an evening and the ideal way to say goodbye and thank you to friends we're most certainly going to miss in the years to come."

We amazingly ended up with \$35,000 in the bank, and an endowment was set up with the Calgary Foundation for scholarships for full-time second year theatre arts students at both Mount Royal College and the University of Calgary. When Mount Royal presented *Village of Idiots* in 2004, they dedicated their production to the Beth Israel Players, and all alumni could obtain free tickets.

A final farewell party was held at the Palliser Hotel in February 1987. Tribute was paid to the final board of directors, which included Beverley Barron, Joan Beddard, Lorne and Zena Drabinsky, Bharbara Egan, Donna Grunberg, Noel and Libby Hershfield, David Kletke, Edith Ruvinsky, and Shelley Switzer. Harry Finnegan and Sydney Kalef were warmly thanked, and everyone said goodbye by singing "Those Were the Days."

Theatrical presentations continued in the Jewish community. The Calgary Jewish Community Centre's Cultural Arts Coordinator Leslie Gotfrit and I worked together in the mid-1990s on *Lies my Father Told Me*, *A Rosen by Any Other Name* and the incredible holocaust play *Playing for Time*.

The play is the thing and 50 years of great theatre in the Calgary Jewish community live on in the hearts, the minds, and the scrapbooks of many. May its memory always be for a blessing.

11th Annual Jay Joffe Memorial Program



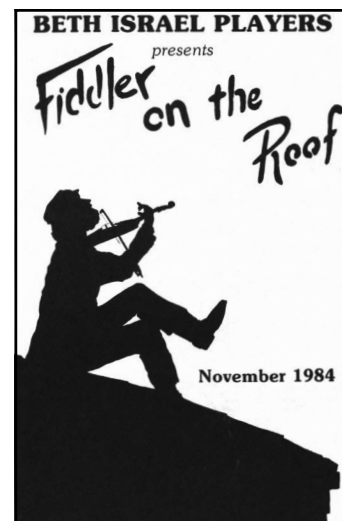
In partnership with the Beth Tzedec Jewish Film Festival

Sunday, November 17, 2019 at 7:00 pm

FIDDLER: A MIRACLE OF MIRACLES

The Jay Joffe Memorial Program honours the memory of JHSSA's founding president with a film that explores Jewish history in an engaging way. In 2011, the 3rd Jay Joffe Memorial Program featured the movie *Sholem Aleichem: Laughing in Darkness*. This year's presentation, *Fiddler: A Miracle of Miracles*, explores the origins of the 1964 Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, based on Sholem Aleichem's Tevye stories. By the 1960s, "tradition" was on the wane as gender roles, race relations, and religion were evolving, yet this show became a hit. The film explores the reasons for the show's universal appeal and the continued relevance today of the underlying themes of the musical. It also tells the story of the global impact of the play. The film includes rare archival footage and interviews with well-known Broadway names.

ALL THOSE WHO HAVE SUBMITTED JHSSA MEMBERSHIP FORMS TO OUR OFFICE BY FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2019 WILL BE ENTERED INTO A DRAW FOR TWO FREE TICKETS TO THE SCREENING OF THIS FILM.



Also for film buffs during Jewish Film Festival Week:

When Dreams Came to Calgary: The dawn of moving pictures in Calgary

presented by Ken McGuire

Wednesday, November 13, 2019 at 1:00 pm at the JCC

Movies can take you to far-off places, tell stories that entertain or inspire you, or even motivate you to chase a dream. Ken McGuire, a volunteer at Heritage Park, will speak about a few moments during Calgary's early years when moving pictures captured the public's attention. The talk will highlight some of the people associated with Calgary's emergence in the moving picture business, including the Allen family who were very involved in the local Jewish community.



Official Opening of the Calgary Jewish Community Centre, October 28, 1979. Source: Calgary Jewish News Collection. JHSSA #859.07



Promotion photo for a film at the Monarch Theatre, 1924. Source: Mel Nagler. JHSSA #2087

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

- | | |
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JHSSA membership year is from September to August

Do not send cash through the mail

JHSSA NEWS

Honouring 80 Year-olds

We are looking for those in our community who have celebrated their 80th birthday this past year in order to present them with a special certificate recognizing their contributions at our AGM on October 28. We would also like to mention the names of those who turned 90 or 100. Names can be submitted to jhssa@shaw.ca or 403-444-3171.

Thank you

Thank you to the CHW volunteers who helped to sort and identify photographs of past Hadassah activities: Linda Barron, Rhoda Brickell, Reesa Givritz, Lily Joffe, Gail Ksienski, Gail Melanson, Therese Nagler, Sharon Sattin and Betty Sherwood.

Thank you to Darlene Hyrnchychyn and Tevy Grunberg for the loan of materials relating to Beth Israel Players. Thanks to Laura Shuler for locating these valuable resources. They enhanced our two programs with Zelda Dean in August.

We thank the Ghert Family Foundation for the generous grant enabling further work on our database of local veterans. New information received can now be entered on a regular basis.

A Photo Seen Around the World

We occasionally receive requests for permission to use photos from the JHSSA photo collection for exhibits or publications. The photo of the 1944 Zysblat/Switzer Passover seder has become our most requested photo. We have often used it in our holiday displays, and it was part of the Southern Alberta Experience panels in the 2014 *Jews: A Canadian Story in Pictures* that was curated by CIJA. Now it has travelled the world. It was featured in the *Canadian Haggadah* (2015), and this year it was published in the *Koren Minhagim Haggada* (page 30). It was recently requested to enrich an exhibit at the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa. *Jewish Journeys – Stories of Immigration from the Treasures of Library and Archives Canada* presents Judaica from the holdings of the Jacob M. Lowy Collection. Visitors to Ottawa can see the exhibit until February 23, 2020.



The Zysblat and Switzer families celebrate Passover in 1944. Left to right: Twins Jack and Henry Switzer, Mendle and Rifka Switzer, Zeisha Zysblat, Allen Zysblat, Rifka Switzer Zysblat and daughters Ida and Miriam Zysblat. Source: Ida Eichler. JHSSA #1201

Corrections to Discovery, Spring 2019

The correct name of the spouse of 1959 AZA member David Eisenstadt is Rhoda Coopersmith. The names listed in the photo of the Medicine Hat Jewish community should have included the Belzberg family.

JCC Jewish Book Festival December 8-15, 2019

The schedule for the Jewish Book Festival is still pending, but we are pleased to host a session with former JHSSA director, David Bickman. David will talk about his recently published book, *Patriarch: The Abe Bickman Family History*. Book Festival coordinator Shula Banchik is looking for volunteers to help with set-up and sales during the week.



Beth Israel Players Reunion, August 1, 2019 at the Beth Tzedec Synagogue. Zelda Dean is in front, fourth from the right. Former Bippies shared their fond memories and many expressed how important their involvement had been to them. Photographer: Michael Switzer. JHSSA #3235

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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