

JHSSA 32nd Annual General Meeting: The War Orphans Project

Monday, October 24, 2022, 7:00pm (on Zoom)

In early 1948, over a dozen young Holocaust survivors came to live with adoptive Jewish parents in Calgary. These teens and young adults, who faced challenges that we can scarcely imagine, came to Canada through the War Orphans Project, a refugee resettlement scheme sponsored by the Canadian Jewish Congress, and supported by Jewish communities and social service agencies nationwide. This movement, which brought a total of 1,123 Jewish orphans to Canada between 1947 and 1952, signified Canada's first major finite initiative to help relieve the postwar European Jewish refugee crisis.

In honour of the 75th anniversary of the young survivors' arrival in Calgary, our AGM program will feature a presentation by guest speaker Adara Goldberg, Director of the Holocaust Resource Center at Kean University, and author of *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation, 1947–1955*. Adara will offer a historical overview of the War Orphans Project, and highlight stories of some of the young Holocaust survivors who became part of our southern Alberta community.



Adara Goldberg

The evening will also include a business meeting, consisting of our financial report, board elections, and the presentation of certificates in recognition of those in our community who have celebrated their 80th birthday in the past year. As always, please contact our office if you know of someone who has become an octogenarian since our last AGM.



Alberta Jewish War Orphans banquet, December, 1948, Calgary. Standing l-r: (?), Saul Dlin, Fred Manus, Robby Waisman; Esther ?, Yale Katz, Ebie ?, Mike Garbusz, Moishe ?, Mark Janasz, Molly Hollander, Oscar Kirschner, Ben Katz. Seated, left to right: Elyse Schwartzpele, Eliott Zuckier, Abe Goldstein, Helen (Macklin), Clara Candle, Saul Blayways, ?, ?, Rochelle Schwartzpele, Izzy Averbach, Klara Kagan, Paul Kagan. Photographer: Tigerstedt Studio. JHSSA #444

President's Message

Saundra Lipton



I hope this issue of our journal finds you all healthy as we continue to face the seemingly endless COVID-19 pandemic. I very much appreciate all the work of our staff, Board and volunteers in ensuring that we continue to preserve and present the history of our community.

I want to especially acknowledge all the volunteer oral history interviewers and transcribers who contributed 500 hours under the direction of Judy Shapiro and jointly completed 39 fully transcribed interviews in just over eight months. The Voices of Experience Oral History Project (Phase II) was made possible through a Government of Alberta "Heritage Preservation Partnership Program" research grant. We so much appreciate the participation of all our interviewees. Capturing the stories of our community is a key mandate of the JHSSA. *Discovery* issues often feature our oral histories and this issue includes excerpts from Frank Kettner's oral history along with an extensive article by Joe Spier on Frank and other Calgary machalniks (overseas volunteers who fought in the Israel's War of Independence). Appreciation also to Joe for his financial support for this expanded issue.

We are most grateful to JHSSA members Gay and Eric Libin and family for their recent significant donation in memory of Beryl and Leon Libin and the legacy they left. This donation has enabled us to implement two of our strategic planning goals: an inventory

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Community Milestones 1922 and 1972

Agi Romer Segal

1922

A general evaluation of the Calgary Jewish community by *Dos Yiddishe Vort's* correspondent (signed as Ben Yitzkhak) appeared in its February issue. The article states that Calgary's 200 Jewish families are not concentrated in one area, but are to be found in both the wealthiest and the poorest sections of the city. The writer points out that there is not a large labour element in Calgary since there are few factories. The Jewish community has viable institutions of which the west need not be ashamed. There is already talk of the need to expand the lovely synagogue [House of Jacob]. The Talmud Torah has its own building which contains not only classrooms and a hall for the children, but also a committee room and a nice hall to accommodate gatherings of all local organizations. The school leadership has worked hard over three years to develop a new curriculum featuring Hebrew-in-Hebrew instruction. An enrollment of 90 students has created the need to recruit more teachers. A newly established Workmen's Circle school with a Yiddish curriculum opened the school year with 35 pupils.

Efforts on behalf of the Talmud Torah continued throughout the year. In a Fathers' meeting in June, the historic decision was taken to give the teachers (and thus the students) a two-week vacation at the start of July — with pay. Talmud Torah students showcased their skills during the Sukkot holiday. Festivities started with a fundraising "Silver Tea." The next evening the pupils opened their performance with a flag parade on stage at Paget Hall. Numerous acts followed featuring songs, dances, recitations and skits about the old-time *cheder* and Jewish pioneer life, ending with the one act drama *David and Goliath* — all in Hebrew. The celebrations were concluded with a banquet for the children on the following day. All proceeds went towards the expansion of the school and its library.

Even a few years after the armistice, the issues of relief work and immigration were at the forefront of community concerns, with women's organizations taking a leading role. At the close of 1921, members of National Council of Jewish Women and of Hebrew Ladies Aid had joined women across the city to raise funds for relief work by serving tea at the Palace Theatre during the Christmas season. At the end of January 1922, the *Calgary Daily Herald* (CDH) reported that the Calgary Jewish Mothers' Alliance of Canada had made a donation of \$1000 for the purchase of furnishings for war orphans' homes in eastern Europe. In addition, \$200 was given for the benefit of arriving immigrants and the Calgary Herald Sunshine Fund received \$25. The Alliance held a fundraising drive at the Plaza Theatre in April, and in December a Tag Day was held to aid "destitute little children who have survived the Terror of the Ukraine." (CHD, Dec. 9, 1922 p. 9) In October, Simon Belkin visited Calgary on behalf of the Immigration Society of Canada with the aim of establishing a local branch.

Indeed, Jewish immigrants began to arrive in Calgary after a hiatus during the war years. The local press highlighted two family stories. In August, David Dworkin was reunited with his four children after a separation of nine years. He had been working on their emigration from Gomel for about a year. In October, relatives of Harry Isenstein arrived as a result of his personal exertions in



50th wedding anniversary of Basha and Elchanon (Allan) Isenstein, Calgary, 1929.
Back row (l-r) Harry Silberstein, Harold Sengaus, Vechne (Victoria) Sengaus, Leah Smehoff (holding Leon Smehoff), Albert Isenstein, Sara Donen, Sophie Friedman, Nate Friedman, Louis Rosenblatt, Jack Stein, Harry Isenstein.
Middle (l-r) Eddie Rosenblatt, Elias Sengaus, Rivka (Rebecca) Silberstein, Basha and Allan Isenstein (holding Dorothy Rosenblatt), Masha Rosenblatt, Minnie Stein, Dora Rosenblatt.
Front (l-r) Willie Sengaus, Sam Silberstein, Pearl Isenstein, twins Saul and Simon Isenstein, Florence Isenstein, Sara Rosenblatt, Lil Isenstein, Esther Silberstein.
Sons-in-law Ben Smehoff and Chaim Silberstein were not present, and son Isaac Isenstein lived in Russia. JHSSA #810

Russia on their behalf. The group of 11 people, also from Gomel, was touted as the first legal party to immigrate since the armistice.

While relief work demanded immediate attention, Zionist activity was varied and widespread. In March, the youth of the Young Men's Jewish Club of Calgary held an inter-city debate with the Young Jewish Literary Club of Edmonton supporting the resolution that Palestine adopt a policy of public ownership of land and industries. A memorial honouring Theodore Herzl was held in July. In August, the entire community celebrated the ratification by the League of Nations of the British mandate over Palestine with a special service in the House of Jacob, and later Calgary Zionist Society (president J. Serot) held a large gathering. At the end of that month, a musical program at Hickman Hall marked the 25th anniversary of the first Zionist Congress held in Basel in 1897.

The activity of the Young Men's Jewish Club inspired the establishment of a Jewish Boys' Club (L. Sosinsky, president) at a meeting at the Talmud Torah at the end of April. The goal was to improve the young boys both physically and morally. In October, the members of the Boys' Club mounted a program in English.

While a number of new leaders had arisen at the helm of community organizations, community founder Jacob Diamond started his tenth year (non-consecutive) as president of Congregation House of Jacob.

Generally, the economic situation in 1922 was not bright. The summer was very dry and there was little work, causing some to migrate to California. However, the *Calgary Daily Herald* featured one well known business that was expanding. Its October 12 edition featured Harry Smith's Boston Hat Works and News Co. at its new location on Eighth Avenue West. The article summarized Smith's

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Community Milestones: 1922 and 1972

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business career from his ownership of The Wave in 1910 to his operation of movie houses at the soldiers' camp at Sarcee from 1914–16 to his opening of Boston Hat Works.

1972

Calgary's Jewish community started 1972 by honouring the efforts of Joe Busheikin, past president of Calgary Jewish Community Council (CJCC), at the Jewish National Fund Negev Dinner in January. Significant developments within CJCC and the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) campaign had an impact on the growth of community institutions. Three major moves were planned and implemented in 1972: 1. The concept of the new Jewish Community Centre to be built on the newly purchased 90 Avenue property needed to be developed. 2. Both the Calgary Hebrew School (CHS) and the I.L. Peretz School (ILP) would now be included as beneficiaries of UJA funds. The move to allocate funding to the Jewish schools was seen as establishing Jewish education as a communal responsibility. 3. CJCC was to be allocated funds by Canadian Jewish Congress to further develop programs and services supported by Congress, including those for immigrant aid and community relations.

The 10th UJA campaign was conducted under the banner of "Keep the Promise" and the 10th anniversary of the operation of CJCC was observed at its AGM with a special program on June 4. The "Promise" extended to other communities in crisis. Efforts on behalf of Soviet Jewry intensified. By 1972, issues involving the situation of Soviet Jews were covered regularly in the Calgary press. In May, a "Telephone for Freedom" campaign reached out directly to Soviet "refuseniks" to show support for their efforts to emigrate. Students were active in the Jewish Student Association



Boston Hat Works Opening Announcement, 1922

on campus and in an interesting development, high-school students formed the Calgary Jewish Youth Council to coordinate community-wide activities involving such issues as Soviet Jewry and the fate of Jews from Arab countries. BBYO (B'nai Brith Youth Organization) closed 1972 with its NW Canada Winter Convention which brought 226 Jewish youth from Alberta and Saskatchewan to Calgary.

The 1971 fundraising moratorium on communal organizations had been lifted and the community calendar was once again full with special events. In March, the Calgary branch of National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) convened a gathering of Calgary women's groups at the YWCA. The featured speaker was Muriel Kovitz, the national chair of NCJW's School of Citizen Participation Program. NCJW's 12th Angel's Ball "Floral Fantasy", chaired by Annie Brodsky, was held in November. That autumn saw a flurry of communal activity. Mizrahi Women held an art auction. The I.L. Peretz School Art Show featured "A Canadian Collection" in the Centennial Planetarium. Hadassah-WIZO's Youth Aliyah campaign brought Winnipeg's Chai Folk Ensemble to entertain Calgary audiences. Beth Israel Congregation held its first President's Ball and dedicated the Cecil Horwitz Memorial Chapel.

Preparations were begun in 1972 to mark the upcoming 25th anniversary of the State of Israel. Unfortunately, the shocking massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics affected the mood of the community. On September 8, 500 people attended a Jewish memorial service at the Shaarey Tzedec synagogue. Rabbis Morris Myerowitz and Abraham Postone officiated. Guests included Mayor Rod Sykes, MLA Ron Gitter and Minister of State Pat Mahoney. Services were also held at the I.L. Peretz School and on Saturday, at Congregation House of Jacob. When Menachem Begin, leader of the opposition in Israel's Knesset, visited Calgary to kick off Israel at 25 celebrations in early October, security was so tight that the celebratory luncheon had to be limited to 50. A rally was sponsored by State of Israel Bonds and the celebrations opened with a torch lighting ceremony. Students of both Jewish schools ran with their torches along Elbow Drive to 66 Avenue. The Women's Division of State of Israel Bonds held an Israeli Fashion Show at the Palliser Hotel on October 11.

Two significant communal appointments were made in 1972. Gary Cohn was hired as program director for Jewish activities for the Calgary Jewish Centre. In July, Harry Sherman, a 1947 graduate of the Calgary Hebrew School, was hired as CHS principal to succeed Albert Eisenberg. Sherman was one of the many CHS graduates from the 1940s who had gone on to further their Judaic and pedagogical expertise in New York in order to contribute to Jewish communal life. He had worked for a number of years in Vancouver. Sherman served as CHS principal for three years and then went back to Vancouver, returning to settle in Calgary in 1979.



*Harry Sherman, 1972.
Calgary Jewish News.*



*"Keep the Promise": UJA committee, 1972, JHSSA #666
Standing (l-r): Walter Barron, Beverly Barron, Hy Belzberg, Jenny Belzberg, Norman Green, Ariel Sharon, Charlie Smith, Maurice Paperny
Seated: Dorothy Smith, Faith Green, Mrs Lily Sharon, Myra Paperny*

Reflections

Kevin Ko

Despite it having been an everyday occurrence for the past month, I have yet to become accustomed to the strange sensation of familiarity I get when I flip through the JHSSA photo collection. I can best describe it as akin to the feeling of *déjà vu*. For instance, I have never seen these faces, and yet, I recognize their expressions and features; I have not heard nor read these names before, yet, their sound and syllables resonate. Until recently, I couldn't explain this apparent trick of the mind – but, readers, if you'll indulge me, I think I have a better idea now.

Let me back up a bit. My name is Kevin Ko, I am a fourth generation Chinese-Canadian, and I am currently performing archival work for JHSSA regarding their photo collection. Like many of the families in these photos, my family has been in Canada for over a century.

My forebears came to Canada as part of the mass migration from Southern China during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railways in the latter half of the 19th century. They landed in Victoria and followed the work inland before settling in Calgary's Chinatown in the early 1900s. Although they were in a foreign land where the people and government deeply resented their presence, my ancestors sought and fought to build a place for their families and their communities.

I tell you this because the similar timelines in which the Chinese and Jewish peoples began immigrating to Canada (i.e., late 1800s-early 1900s) provides a conveniently parallel context for a comparison of the two.

While we can by no means deny the respective unique experiences of the Jewish and Chinese-Canadian communities, we can most certainly draw parallels between their common experiences in making this country their home.

Here lies the crux of my epiphany and what I believe to be the source of the strange familiarity I described to you earlier. That is, that these faces feel familiar to me because I recognize them from the photos of my own family albums.

The expressions of hope, hardship, and love I see in the photos and faces of the JHSSA collection are the same as those



Kevin's father Tom Ko (2nd from left) and friends, Calgary 1967.



Friends hanging out, Calgary 1947. JHSSA #3066

reflected in the photos of my parents, and grandparents, and great grandparents' generations.

In both the Chinese and Jewish-Canadian communities, we find men and women who were pioneers, adventurers, entrepreneurs, statesmen, philanthropic activists, and salt of the earth human beings. They broke sweat and ground to lay the foundations of prosperity so that their families could flourish in a land of plenty.

The parallels can be overwhelmingly eerie at times simply by virtue of being so apparent. Each community, separated by culture, but bound by a specific space and a specific time, could not help but develop some degree of commonality visible to the naked eye.

Moreover, with each photograph I am also gaining something new. I am gaining another jigsaw piece of the uniquely Jewish experience in this land. Each family album contributing more clarity and depth to the rich heritage of the Jewish community; each photograph adding a miniscule blip of history to the collage of experiences that I am able to share vicariously through this amazing collection.

Perhaps most important of all, I have gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of that which transcends the nominal differences between cultures, religions, and flags flown. A universal which insists upon the simple self-evident truth: that regardless of eye colour, skin tone, and prominent facial features, we are fundamentally connected by our humanity.

JHSSA welcomes donations of identified photographs depicting people and events in our local, southern Alberta Jewish Community. Please contact us for more information.



Kevin's Uncle Bill Chow Kam in uniform, with friend. 1940s



Lee Family, Cardston Alberta, 1927. Kevin's maternal grandmother, Ann, is standing at the far right.



Smalley Family, Winnipeg c 1908. Gertie (Belkin) in front with her doll. JHSSA #2890

“You Came To Israel When We Needed You The Most”

Calgarians who fought in Israel's 1948 War of Independence

Joe Spier

It was May 14, 1948. David Ben Gurion rose to the podium at the Tel Aviv Art Museum and with an emotional and passionate voice spoke, “By virtue of the natural right of the Jewish people and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, we declare the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz Israel to be known as the State of Israel.” Dancing and singing broke out in the street below. The euphoria would last less than 24 hours.

The very next morning, the armies of five Arab countries, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, supported by the local Arabs, invaded the tiny embryonic State of Israel, intent upon destroying it. The Arabs came in large numbers, fully equipped with fighter planes, bombers, many tanks, heavy guns, plenty of ammunition and an abundance of confidence.

In stark contrast, when the invasion started, Israel had no regular army, only a cluster of semi-autonomous paramilitary groups, not one military aircraft, not one tank, not one modern artillery piece, very few military vehicles of any kind and only 10,000 rifles for the defense of the whole country.

By all logic, Israel's defeat should have come in a matter of weeks if not days. But Israel had a secret weapon. It was the Machal, an acronym for the Hebrew words “*mitnadvei chutz la'aretz*”, meaning “Volunteers from Abroad”. These volunteers (Machalniks) came from 59 countries, some 4,900 of them, men and women, mostly Jews but some non-Jews. They left the safety of their homes and loved ones, gave up their jobs, abandoned their careers and studies, made their way along clandestine routes and put their lives on the line for the reborn State of Israel.

Foreign volunteers served in every branch of Israel's armed forces during its 1948 War of Independence, on the ground, at sea and in the air. They contributed far beyond their numbers. Many were veterans of World War II, bringing badly needed military experience. Machal provided the decisive critical difference between victory and defeat against an overwhelming invading force in Israel's fight for existence.

Of the 4,900 members of Machal, 250 were Canadian, 11 of whom gave their lives in defense of the Jewish State. Of the Canadians, 18 were Calgarians. Knowing they would be outmanned and outgunned, they proudly donned the uniform of the first Jewish armed force in over 2,000 years and went into battle. This is their story.

During World War II, **Sam Camerman** was a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force's 420 Squadron, the rear gunner in a Halifax 4 engine heavy bomber. On January 16, 1945, while on a bombing run over Germany, Sam's aircraft took a direct hit from heavy flak. The plane crashed, killing five crew members. Only Sam and one other survived. Sam was interned in a German prisoner of war camp until war's end.

Following Sam's return to Canada, he volunteered to fight for Israel, where he became an air gunner, a member of the 69th squadron that had

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Getting There

An immediate challenge facing Canadian Machalniks was to find their way into the country. Each volunteer met with a different situation, depending on the date of their planned departure. In all cases options were limited, especially prior to the end of the British Mandate in Palestine and the withdrawal of British troops on May 15, 1948.

In reaction to the Arab riots of 1936–1939, the British government issued its 1939 White Paper restricting both Jewish immigration to Palestine and Jewish land ownership. Even after World War II ended, the Royal Navy continued to maintain their blockade, thus deterring efforts to smuggle refugees from European Displaced Persons (DP) camps into Palestine. There was a quota of 1500 legal Jewish immigrants per month. Ships were stopped enroute and “illegals” were sent to detention camps in Cyprus, Palestine, or even back to Europe.

David Bercuson, in his 1983 book *The Secret Army* about the history of foreign volunteers in the 1948 war, outlines two possible routes available to those who volunteered for ground forces in Palestine. The direct route was on the ship *Marine Carp* which sailed from New York every six weeks, stopping in Marseilles and a few other European ports before reaching Beirut and then Haifa. It was used by students and kibbutz volunteers from 1946. This route was useful to those volunteers who had proper passports and visas to clear British Immigration in Haifa. [Note the complications experienced by volunteer D. Sidorsky, who used this route.] The indirect route generally used U.S. Lines sister ships from New York to Le Havre. This route was cheaper, with more frequent departures, and had been popular with students and the wives of servicemen since 1946. It was used by Machalniks, who would then make their way to Paris and then on to Marseilles, often ending up at the nearby DP transit camp Grand Arenas. Volunteers were given some training and indoctrination sessions in the area. A few other ships were also used, with similar routes.

The *Haganah* [Jewish underground army] plan before May 15, 1948, was to disperse some volunteers, supplied with false identity papers, among the refugee immigrants. For those ships carrying legal refugees, this might work. But other ships were stopped by the blockade. A few managed to run the blockade and arrive on shore. These routes were generally maintained even after the British withdrawal and the start of hostilities. Foreign volunteers were intermingled with refugees, who themselves were often recruited into the armed forces upon arrival. Some volunteers had spent time working with refugees in the DP camp, but for others the voyage provided their first encounter with the remnants of European Jewry. Most refugees were first taken to UN-run internment camps which were loosely guarded, so foreign volunteers usually managed to slip away to find their way to fighting units. As Israel gained more access to chartered air craft, increasing numbers of volunteers were flown directly from Marseilles.

Machal

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been formed to operate three B17 Flying Fortresses acquired from the United States. The three Flying Fortresses comprised Israel's entire fleet of heavy bombers.

Because the U.S. at the time had embargoed the transfer of all arms to Israel, the three aircraft had to be smuggled out of the country. The subterfuge was accomplished by filing fake flight plans showing the aircraft would be making an aerial survey of the Azores. The aircraft never returned to the U.S. After refueling in the Azores and a subsequent stop in friendly Czechoslovakia to refit, the Flying Fortresses made their way to Israel, bombing Egyptian bases in the Sinai and King Farouk's palace in Cairo on the way. Meanwhile back in America, the authorities were furious. They charged and convicted several citizens of breaching U.S. law.

Dov Chetner, in 1948, then aged 20, was called to a meeting in Edmonton of a small group of Zionists. The meeting was brief and to the point. Israel needed men. Dov volunteered. Dov's Zionism was influenced by the teachings of Rabbi Aron Horowitz who was the principal of the Calgary Hebrew School in the 1940s. Credit to Rabbi Horowitz was a common refrain among those who volunteered.

Dov had some naval training aboard a frigate, but in Israel he would end up fighting with the army rather than the navy.

Like most other foreign volunteers, Dov transited in Marseilles on his way to Israel. It was early September 1948. After a week working with Jewish refugees in the nearby Grand Arenas displaced persons camp, Dov flew on to Israel. Dov fought on the northern front with both the 72nd Infantry Battalion and the 79th Armoured Battalion; except the armour that was protecting Dov was merely a truck with no protective armour. Dov fought with the Nahariyah platoon as it launched dangerous attacks behind Lebanese and Syrian lines. Since Dov spoke Hebrew and the unit was made up of both Hebrew and English speakers, he handled the communications.

Following the war, Dov travelled in Europe for a time before returning home to continue his studies.

Al Gelmon was studying at the University of British Columbia in 1948 when he volunteered to fight on behalf of the fledgling State of Israel. He already had some military experience in the Officer Training Corps, a volunteer program administered by the Canadian military in high schools and university campuses whereby students received military training.

In May 1948, Al boarded an aging freighter from New York to Le Havre, then by train to Marseilles and to the adjacent Grand Arenas, a Jewish refugee camp that served as a clandestine assembly point for Machalniks. Al stayed for two months at the camp where he helped train other volunteers and then in August was flown to Israel

aboard a Douglas DC-3 transport aircraft.

Fighting in Israel, Al was a platoon commander, a *sgan aleph*, equivalent to lieutenant first class. He commanded a platoon of heavy 180-millimeter mortars in the strategic Jerusalem corridor, in which Israeli and Jordanian forces battled for control of Jerusalem. At the end of the war, Jordan controlled the Old City and Israel the modern city. Jerusalem would not be united under Jewish sovereignty for another 19 years.

Al's mortar crew consisted of soldiers originally from Uganda, Yemen, Morocco and Romania. Al's Israeli commander nicknamed him the "crazy Canadian".

After the war, Al traveled throughout Europe as a *shaliach* [emissary] and returned to Canada a year later.



Dov Chetner in Israel c1948. JHSSA#2108

Yale Joffe, while attending the University of British Columbia in April 1948, volunteered to fight for Israel. He, like many others, arrived in France and from there boarded a fishing boat loaded with Jewish refugees and sailed for Tel Aviv, arriving in June. There he met an Australian non-Jewish Machalnik who was organizing an artillery unit. After eight days of training, Yale was fighting back the Syrians in the Upper Galilee's *moshava* [settlement] of Mishmar Hayarden with unreliable, modified World War I French anti-aircraft guns which often jammed and injured the operators. Yet it was these guns that stopped the Syrian advance in the Galilee panhandle. The sound of the exploding shells did the job more than any damage to the Syrians.

Yale, who had commercial aerial photography experience, was later reassigned to the Air Force which needed aerial photographers. His rank was *pakad avir* [Flying Officer]. For the duration of the

war, Yale leaned out of a single-engine Harvard training aircraft at altitudes of 12,000 feet with a hand-held camera, recording the results of bombing raids and taking photographs of enemy positions.

Yale stayed in Israel for a few months after the war teaching the first class of Israelis to use aerial photography and then returned to Canada. In Yale's words, "I went for a purpose, the purpose is finished. I'll go home."

Frank Kettner, a young Zionist, left for Palestine in early 1947 to live on Kibbutz S'dot Yam on the Mediterranean coast near Haifa. After 9 months on the kibbutz, in December 1947, Frank joined the Haganah, the Jewish underground army battling to create a Jewish State. The Haganah would later become the core of the Israel Defense Forces. Frank was immediately sent to Kfar Tavor, a *moshav* in the lower Galilee, where he was given a Czechoslovakian made rifle to trade shots with the residents of the adjacent Arab village who would sporadically fire upon the moshav.

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When the war for Israel's independence broke out, Frank served in an infantry battalion that spearheaded a fierce counter-offensive against the Arab Legion and drove the Arab forces out of Nazareth, recapturing the city. Frank's battalion was subsequently incorporated into the now famous Golani Brigade.

In August 1948, Frank contracted malaria. Upon his recovery, he was forbidden from re-entering combat and spent the remainder of the war in Air Force intelligence culling reports from intelligence sources. Frank was posted first in Tel Aviv and later in Beer Sheva, getting there by flying over the Egyptian lines in a rickety, two-seater Piper Cub.

Frank returned home in 1949, but never really got Israel out of his blood. He returned about 40 times.

Lawrence "Lawrie" Levine was born in Calgary in 1922. During World War II, he served in the Royal Canadian Navy. Unfortunately, the only record we have of Levine's service to Israel during the 1948 War of Independence is a notation in his 2006 obituary.

Presumably, Lawrie would have served on an *Aliyah Bet* ship. In 1939, Britain issued its infamous White Paper severely limiting entry of Jewish refugees to then Palestine. In response, the Jewish underground formed *Aliyah Bet* to secretly transport Jewish refugees, most of them Holocaust survivors, by ship to Palestine. Britain referred to this as "illegal" immigration and blockaded entrance to Palestine by armed naval vessels.



Lawrie Levine. JHSSA #2279

By 1948, well over 100,000 people had taken this route, including more than 70,000 Holocaust survivors. However, 90 percent of the ships were intercepted by the British navy who forcibly moved the refugees to detention camps.

One of the *Aliyah Bet* ships boarded and captured by the British was the "Exodus 1947". On July 18, 1947, some 4,515 refugees were forced off the ship in Haifa harbour, callously sprayed with a delousing agent, caged in British prison ships and then shockingly the Holocaust survivors were dumped in Germany where they languished in detention camps.

The horrendous treatment of the Holocaust survivors by the British was the catalyst which triggered the United Nations to vote to end the British Mandate of Palestine and partition Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state.

Upon his return to Canada, Lawrie attended the University of Saskatchewan Law School after which he practised law in Pincher Creek until 1969 when he was appointed an Alberta Provincial Court Judge.

Will Manolson was in high school during World War II, so was too young to join the armed service. He did join the Royal Canadian Air Cadets, which was formed to develop a select group of young men who would be trained to become pilots. Will would have received some flying training during that time. World War II ended before Will became of age, but a couple of years later, in 1947, Will volunteered to fight for Israel.

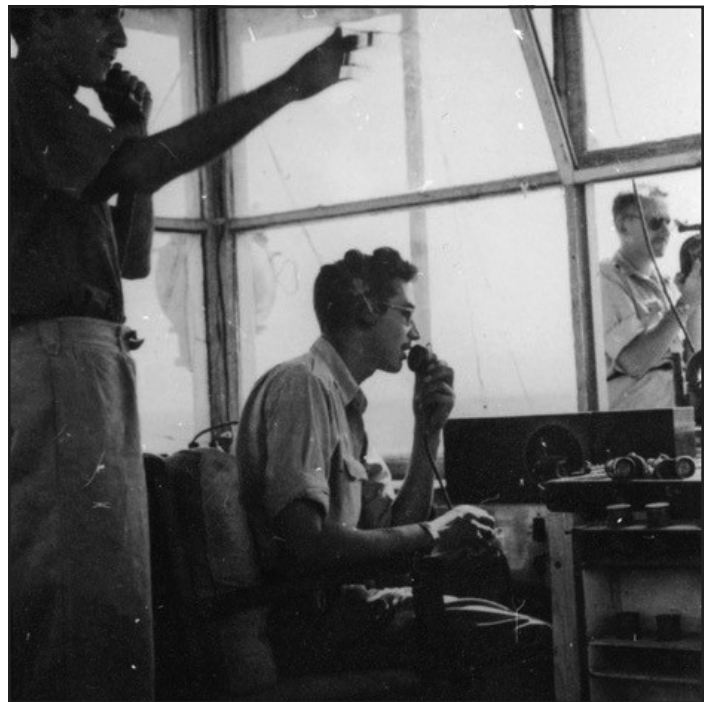
Like many others, Will was put on a boat to France where he trained for about four months and then he flew on to Israel.

Will hoped to fly as a pilot in the Israeli Air Force but men with combat experience were selected and instead, he became an air traffic controller at a military air base near Tel Aviv.

As an air traffic controller, Will was responsible for the orderly flow of aircraft to and from the air base and the prevention of collisions between aircraft during take-off and landing. His methods included verbal instructions by wireless, but because all aircraft did not have radios, also by a system of flag waving.

The commander of Will's squadron was a man named Ezer. They would party together when off duty. Ezer was Ezer Weizman, who would later become President of Israel.

Will spent about 2 years in Israel and then returned home.



Will Manolson in air traffic control tower (from Yale Joffe's album)

Stan Miller was one of the first Calgarians to volunteer as a Machalnik. Taking a boat from New York, he arrived in Marseilles in early May 1948. Because the British Mandate had not ended and the British blockade was still in effect, Stan was smuggled into Israel. Together with a group of Holocaust survivors, Stan was crammed into an *Aliyah Bet* ship, if you could call it that. It was a tub, which hardly stayed afloat. The ship successfully ran the British blockade and landed in Netanya, where Stan and the others were offloaded.

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Machal

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On shore, the group was swarmed by a mass of kibbutzniks, who changed the clothes of the newly arrived and walked off with them. The British would have been unable to distinguish the illegally landed from the kibbutzniks.

Stan joined the Israeli army and was assigned to the 79th armoured battalion as an armoured car crewman. Armoured car was a bit of a joke, because initially Israel had none, only jeeps with steel panels welded to the sides. Later on, Israel obtained real armoured cars and also Sherman tanks which Stan also crewed.

Stan's battalion participated in Operation Hiram, successfully destroying the enemy in the central Galilee, occupying the whole of the Galilee and establishing a defense line on the border with Lebanon.

Lionel Schneider, was born in South Africa. At age 16, Lionel volunteered for the South African Air Force. Lionel trained as an armourer, handling the explosive end of weaponry, and served during and after World War II from 1941 to 1946 in Italy and Africa. In May 1948, Lionel was asked to attend a meeting in Capetown. They were recruiting volunteers with special expertise to fight for Israel. Lionel signed on. He told his friends and family he was going to Rhodesia to buy wine, but instead boarded a transport plane for Israel.

In Israel, Lionel became a sergeant in the Israeli Air Force assigned to the ground technical crew at a secret airbase near Hadera. There Lionel and others performed a miracle, building Israel's first Spitfire fighter plane out of parts scavenged from dumps and wrecks. Lionel also designed and built the crude but effective bombs that "bomb chuckers" literally threw out of planes onto enemy targets.

Five years after Israel's War of Independence, by-then-Captain Lionel Schneider resigned from the Israeli Air Force and returned to South Africa. Lionel and his wife Margot immigrated to Calgary in 1977.

David Sidorsky left Calgary in 1944, at age 17, for university in New York, where in 1948 he was recruited by Israel. He, together with 69 other fighters, both Israelis and Machalniks, left by boat for Haifa, with stops in Athens and Beirut. When the ship landed in Beirut it was May 18, three days after Lebanon had declared war on Israel. The 69 were interned in Lebanon for six weeks and only departed after they agreed to return to America. David got as far as Italy, when he turned around and reached Haifa on July 12.

David was immediately placed in B Company of the 72 Battalion, 7th Brigade, the English-speaking army unit. David was a radio operator, which simply meant that he had a walkie-talkie strapped to his back while wielding his almost ancient Lee Enfield rifle.

David participated in Operation Hiram, which captured the Upper Galilee from the Arab Liberation Army. As a result, the Upper



Lionel Schneider, 1941, South African Army

Galilee, originally slated by the United Nations partition plan to be part of the Arab state, would become part of Israel.

David finished the war on the Syrian front, after which he took classes at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Returning home in September 1949, David turned from fighter to philosopher, obtaining his PhD from New York's Columbia University, where he stayed to teach philosophy.

Mel Silver, in September 1939, joined the Canadian army, one of the first Jewish volunteers. Trained as a radio operator, Mel entered Europe after D-Day and fought with the Canadian forces in northern Europe.

Back in Canada after the war ended, when Israel called, Mel answered. Like many others, Mel travelled by boat to France and from there in July 1948 to Israel. Mel

served in both the Israeli army and its air force.

In the army, Mel fought as a member of the famous 7th Brigade, the armed force that freed the Galilee from the Arab armies. The Brigade fought and pushed the enemy army all the way back to the border with Lebanon.

In the air force, Mel was stationed at Israel's main air base at Ekron, near Rehovot. With Mel's World War II experience as a radio operator, he was a wireless operator sitting in the belly of Israel's larger aircraft, bombers and transports, handling all communications. This was extremely dangerous as many combat deaths suffered by Machalniks were in the air.

Mel Silver returned to Calgary in the winter of 1949.

Charles "Bill" Wadman was born in Winnipeg and later moved to Calgary. He was one of the non-Jewish members of Machal.

During World War II, Bill was a Royal Canadian Air Force bomber commander. Bill was recruited for the Israeli Air Force in June 1948 but refused to give any particulars of his recruitment, only saying that he was a volunteer. The reason for this was that under Canadian law, it is illegal for a person, within Canada, to recruit or otherwise induce any person or body of persons to enlist or to accept any commission or engagement in the armed forces of any foreign state.

Fearing that he might personally run afoul of Canadian law by fighting for Israel, Bill went by the name Chaim Ben Chaim, although it is doubtful that Bill could speak a word of Hebrew except for perhaps "shalom".

In Israel, Bill was assigned as a B17 Flying Fortress air gunner in the 69th squadron. Bill would refer to those aircraft as "lousy". Though they were well maintained, they were old. "But we kept flying them – we had nothing else," he would say.

Continued on Page 9

Machal

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Also serving were Calgarians **Jack Belkin** (7th brigade, 72nd battalion, infantry), **Irving Mark Gold** (7th brigade, 72nd battalion and headquarters, infantry), **Henry (Hank) Goodman** (army), **Arnold Kipnes** (7th brigade, 72nd battalion, infantry), **Benjamin "Barry" Ross** (ground security and 7th brigade, 72nd battalion, infantry) and **Sam Shnitka (Shaw)** (radar 505th squadron, air force). The particulars of their service to Israel may be lost in history but not in our veneration.

Without the contribution of Machal, the outcome of Israel's 1948 War of Independence may well have been different. Sadly, as we approach Israel's 75th birthday, the significant role that the Machal volunteers played in the birth of the State of Israel is nearly forgotten, having faded in the dimness of time. Yet the words spoken 30 years ago by Yitzhak Rabin, former Prime Minister of Israel, ring eloquent, as evocative today as then.

"You came to us when we needed you the most, during those dark and uncertain days in our War of Independence. You gave us not only your experience, but your lives as well. The people of the State of Israel will never forget, and will always cherish this unique contribution made by you - the volunteers of Machal."



Jack Belkin, Will Manolson, Yale Joffe (from Yale Joffe's album)

Our Story in this Place

Editorial: Katie Baker

"Could we imagine land acknowledgments that recognized the tangled histories that brought Jews to traditional Indigenous territory, that opened conversations and paths to reconciliation with the Indigenous People who offered to share their space?"

Betsy Jameson ended her Spring 2022 *Discovery* article, "Our Place in This Place," with a question that stuck with me. Persistently. Based on the feedback we received, the article and its questions resonated with many of you as well. It left me wondering where we go next, both as an organization and as individuals.

Land acknowledgements are often people's first engagement with "Reconciliation". That was the case for JHSSA, with a lot of questions, and evolving answers. Should we make acknowledgements in print? At programs? Only when the content is specifically about related topics? What are or are not related topics? Is reconciliation part of our mandate? Outside of our mandate? Outside of our mandate but still within our responsibilities?

Where are the edges of our story?

It is important to hold our "tangled histories", these alternate narratives, beside each other; holding the larger context of Canadian history, including settler colonialism, beside our pride in our community accomplishments. The ways we knit our community fabric with the different individuals and institutions--from Jacob Diamond's arrival in 1889 and our first community endeavour buying land for a cemetery to bury Goldie Bell in 1904, through to the present day --includes many things to celebrate. How do we celebrate them in a larger context? How do we acknowledge the

tension between multiple truths in a way that enriches them, rather than detracts from them? How do we acknowledge our implication in larger systems as part of the community history that we preserve?

How do we, as a community, and more specifically, as people invested in local Jewish history, engage in reconciliation in a way that uses our strengths, and honours our own identities, perspectives, traditions and history as Jews?

When studying Talmud, we're advised to "provide for yourself a teacher, and get yourself a friend". The advice holds good for many areas of study. I was fortunate to find a friend for this inquiry, Sulyn Bodnaresko, who is engaged in related research at the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary. In conversation with her and her colleague, Eileen Clearsky (Cree-Métis), I learned that before diving into reading, or tackling big communal questions, we build the best foundation by considering some personal questions: What are my relationships with Indigenous peoples and with this place? What is my purpose and intent in learning more?

If you were also left pondering Betsy's parting question, or are currently asking yourself where you are standing and what next steps to take, please consider participating in Calgary Jewish Federation's upcoming program on Sunday, October 23rd, as a way to meet both teachers and friends, and engage together as a Jewish community. Please watch CJF publications for more information, and feel free to reach out to Danielle Braitman at dbraitman@jewishcalgary.org with questions about the program.

Katie Baker is a member of the Jewish community of Calgary, located in the traditional territory of the Kainai, Piikani, Siksika, Stoney-Nakoda and Tsuut'ina Nations, and Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3.

And That Was It: the Machal experience of Frank Kettner

The following excerpt is from Frank Kettner's 2003 interview, conducted by JHSSA.

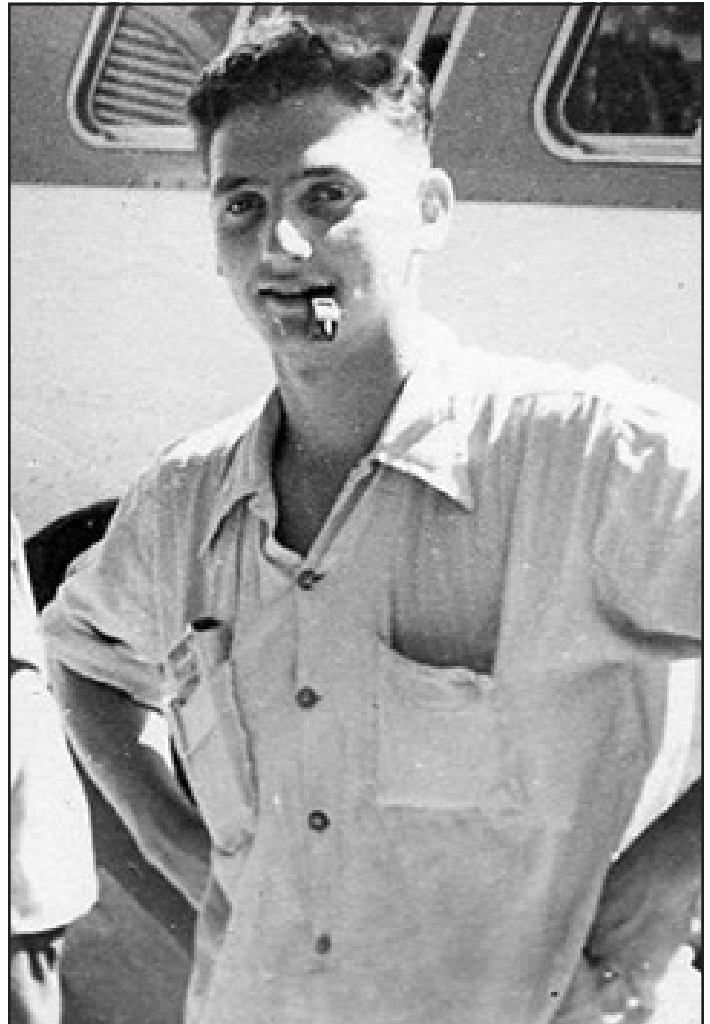
My mother and I lived with her parents. My closest childhood friend was the guy who became my brother-in-law, Yale Joffe. We always used to play together, they lived five or six blocks away. My grandfather was a very hot Zionist, and I became a hot Zionist too. I became a member of Young Judaea in my early teens, and that was it. I graduated high school in 1946 and I went to Palestine, alone, in 1947, on a ship out of New York. I was 18.

My first person of reference there was Bill Engel, who had a refrigeration business in Tel Aviv—his brother Izzy lived here. My first couple of months in the country I stayed with him, and I got a job working in construction there even though I wasn't a member of the Histadrut [Zionist Labour Federation]. But this wasn't going to be a future, this working in construction in Tel Aviv, even though they were able to get me this job. And Lawrie Levine was living in S'dot Yam which was a kibbutz near Hadera, and I decided to go and try the kibbutz life. So I went to S'dot Yam and stayed there about eight months. It was a very tough life. I was getting correspondence from my family telling me to get out of there and that there was going to be a war, there was going to be trouble, and I hemmed and hawed and thought about it and I got on the bus to Tel Aviv and took a few days off from the Kibbutz. I had a couple of friends there and then the State—rather the Partition—was declared by the UN on November the 29th. November 29th, 1947. Of course, the trouble had been brewing all along, and now we knew it was going to be pretty serious, it was going to be live or die. So, being a Zionist, I figured I better stay even though I had no training. On December 1st, I volunteered for the Haganah [defence force that preceded the formal establishment of the State of Israel].

I was shipped up to a place called Portabor where they were training guys for infantry units, and I was there in that area for several months. I did get my training there. [And we got into battle] some number of times, although it was never as hot and heavy as other places got.

By that time, I was very fluent in Hebrew. I was the only English-speaking fellow in the entire battalion, except for the doctor who happened to be Nate Leath from Edmonton. I'd been up there for months before I met Nate.

Anyway, in the summer of 1948—it was after the State's declaration of independence in May—I came down with a dandy case of malaria, and my temperature was at 106 degrees for seven days. The oddity of the thing is, the man who treated me in the Tiberius hospital happened to be a doctor from Winnipeg. I don't think I've seen him since. He did a good job and got me around eventually, but by the time I came around, my Unit had gone to the Negev because the fighting in the north and Galilee was finished and everything was more or less secure. The confusion was enormous. So what do I do and where do I go? No one in Tiberius could tell



Frank Kettner, 1945, from JHSSA #1529

me. Finally, I forget who it was, I talked to some officer, I told him the story and said, "I know my Unit is down south somewhere." So he says, "I don't know where they are. I don't know how to find out where they are, but can you rejoin your Unit?" I said, "Well, no I can't. I've got to have some rehab, some recuperation for several weeks." Well he had nothing to offer, and finally, I knew Yale was in Tel Aviv with some other people I knew in the Air Force and so I thought maybe I'll go there and see what's doing. So I went to Tel Aviv on my own and I saw the guy who was in charge of that particular branch of the Air Force, and I said, "Is there anything I can do?" "Well you speak English. You speak Hebrew. You can read and write both languages. We'll put you into Intelligence. No point in you going back in the army yet. You can't go, be useful." That's where I wound up. Not that I was qualified to do it, but I learned and contributed a little bit there. Of course, by the end of December 1948, there was really very little fighting anymore. The game was all over, and all that remained to happen was that swing from Bersheva all the way down to Eilat. That was accomplished with not very much battle. And that was it!

In April of 1949, I decided I'd like to come back to Canada. Things were pretty tough in Israel. There was no money for anything. There was nothing. To go back to the kibbutz and that life, that's not for me, although they treated me very well. So I finally decided my future, if any, is going to be back in Canada.

JHSSA NEWS

JHSSA Harry and Martha Cohen Library – comings and goings:

We have had two additions to our library in recent months: a copy of *Here to Tell* was donated by Ron Plucer, and Izak Paul donated a copy of his book, *Journey of Discovery*, to our Local Authors collection. Izak's book grew out of his research into his family's history, a story he first shared publicly at a talk he gave for JHSSA in February 2017. JHSSA members are welcome to borrow our circulating books, and the general public can access the library for research.

In major news, our library catalogue is now available online through our website (click on the library link in the Research tab), or through the TinyCat website: <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/jhssa>. Many thanks to the Harry and Martha Cohen Foundation for their generous grant supporting the creation of our digital catalogue and our ongoing library software subscription. Additional thanks to Sandra Lipton, for the many volunteer hours she has given to the project. As part of the cataloguing work, we pruned a number of wonderful books from our collection to reduce duplication. The removed books will be available for free (donations gratefully accepted) from October 24 through 27, at a table in the JCC lobby.

Harry Sanders' HCW talk:

The proposed redevelopment plans for Calgary's downtown 7th and 8th Avenues provided Harry Sanders with the perfect topic for JHSSA's 2022 Chinook Country Historic Calgary Week presentation, with many Jewish families and businesses having strong connections to this part of town. Harry's programs are always popular, and this virtual event was no exception. In addition to a large local audience, Calgary Public Library, who co-presented Harry's talk, was able to provide a link for the use of our out-of-town members. Anyone who missed or would like to revisit our presentation from last year's HCW, can find it on our website.

November Jewish Film Festival:

We look forward to sharing details of our Jay Joffe Memorial Program and the Annual Beth Tzedec Calgary Jewish Film Festival once they become available.

JHSSA Photo "pre"-project:

JHSSA has been investigating grant funding for a major project to organize, catalogue and digitize our photograph collection, which includes an estimated 14,000 images. We have determined that in order to qualify for grant funding, we need to undertake a basic inventory of our photograph collection. Work has begun on this "pre-project" (which will make our collection easier to access and maintain moving forward) with contract archivist, Kevin Ko. He is currently creating a digital catalogue of basic information on each of our photographs. An article drawn from his experience thus far can be found on page 4.

New to our Archives:



These service medals came to us from the estate of Lil Faider. They belonged to her late husband Sid, who was a Flying Officer with the RCAF from 1940-1945. Included are a 39-45 Star, an Africa Star, a Defence Medal, a Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp, and a 39-45 War Medal, as well as RCAF uniform insignia.



Kevin Ko working on the photo collection, summer 2022.

President's Message

Continued from Page 1

of our photograph collection and a reorganization of our subject files. In the spring we also completed our goal to update our library catalogue and provide online searchable access thanks to a grant from the Harry and Martha Cohen Foundation. We thank our Agi Romer Segal and recent graduates Carly Heffner and Kevin Ko for their work on these initiatives. This issue includes an article by Kevin about his work on the photo project.

JHSSA is most grateful to the many volunteers who came out to staff our fall casino and extends appreciation to our casino co-chairs Mel Ksienski and Sara Drabinsky. Casino funding represents over forty percent of our annual operating funding.

JHSSA is also most appreciative of all our LIFE & LEGACY donors who are not only ensuring future support for our organization but have also qualified us for current financial assistance. I am pleased to announce that in year three of this legacy-giving program we received a total of \$10,300 bonus funding, a much-needed supplement to our budget. If you are not yet a participant in this program, please consider including JHSSA in your legacy planning. In this issue Jenny Belzberg provides a testimonial as to why she is a LIFE & LEGACY donor.

As we start our new membership year, I thank our new and renewed members and hope that if you are not yet a member, you will consider joining us in keeping our history alive for current and future generations. Please check out the resources available on our website, and I hope you will participate in our upcoming programs, including our Annual General Meeting on October 24.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy 5783.

DISCOVERY

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When asked, "Why us? Why the Jewish Historical Society?" Jenny replied:

I'm just an ordinary citizen, was born in Calgary, and I'm thrilled to be part of this community, from my birth on. My family, my parents were happy to live in Canada, were so grateful they came to Canada from Russia, and lived a wonderful life here, and so far, so good! Calgary is a wonderful city to live in, and I'm proud to be here, and I wanted to leave a legacy, and I'm doing it whichever way I can, to the best of my ability. But the Historical Society is very dear to my heart to begin with, because Jay Joffe was a good friend, and my husband Hy and he worked together, raising funds for the Jewish Historical Society. And my whole family benefit from this organization. Because I send on a lot of things to them – some of the clippings and newspapers, even to a sister who passed away many years ago. But her children live in Vancouver, and her daughter is very interested in all the historical facts. She keeps writing me things that she finds even today, to remind me of what was in newsletter, and she's still interested. And she was never a citizen of Calgary, she lives in Vancouver, but your organization makes this happen. So across the country, maybe even in the United States or in the world, they know about the Jewish Historical Society in Calgary. And I think it's very, very important, and we have to remember our past. So we have to make a point of it.

Edited excerpt of Jenny Belzberg's Life and Legacy testimonial. This clip and her longer interview are available on our website.