

ירשה

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HERITAGE

The Journal of THE JEWISH ARCHIVES & HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF EDMONTON & NORTHERN ALBERTA

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SAVE THE DATE:

AGM

JAHSENA's Annual
General Meeting

Thursday, Oct. 27, 7 pm,
at Beth Shalom
Synagogue

Speaker:
Justice Eric Macklin

Camp B'nai Brith First Session 1956



JAHSENA Archives

The first campers attending Camp B'nai Brith at Pine Lake.



From the President,

by JUDY GOLDSAND

August 2016

JAHSENA has had a busy few months. Our newly published book, *From Generation to Generation: Jewish Edmontonians as Heritage Builders*, was launched Sunday, May 1, at Audreys Books. More than 30 people attended to learn about the book's content and to listen to Gillian Horwitz read the story about Abe Miller. The book highlights twenty-five historic Jewish Edmontonians who, in addition to their jobs or professional work, made outstanding contributions to enhance life in Edmonton. The book has been very well received, and we were excited to see that it made the Edmonton Journal's Best Seller list for Non-Fiction during the first week of May.

Thanks to all our members who supported the Edmonton Jewish Film Festival held during the last two weeks of May. The attendance was great for all the movies, including the movie sponsored by JAHSENA on May 22 entitled, *Before the Revolution*, the untold story of the Israeli paradise in Iran before the overthrow of the Shah in 1979.

On Tuesday, June 5, JAHSENA partnered with the Chevra Kadisha and Temple Beth Ora to host OPEN DOORS, part of the Edmonton and District Historical Society's Festival week. We welcomed more than 50 visitors to a program at the Chesed Shel Emeth. David Marcus and Michael Paull talked about the Jewish Burial Society which, as a volunteer service organization, coordinates all aspects of Jewish burials for all denominations of Edmonton's Jewish community. Temple Beth Ora representatives, Francie Nobleman and Steven

Friedenthal discussed the Jewish Reform Congregation's role in our city. The audience was keenly interested in everything and asked many questions.

JAHSENA was invited to speak about our new book to members of the Jewish Seniors' Drop-In Centre on July 21. After I told them about the work of JAHSENA, the members enjoyed a reading by Vice-President Gillian Horwitz of the story about Alfie Simons, who for many years had been an active member of the Drop-In Centre.

Colleen Paull is keeping busy running the office, organizing the archival materials and answering many inquiries from a variety of people who want information from our archives. Again we invite you to bring us your letters, documents, photos or artifacts about your family that you would like properly preserved for the future.

We wish all our readers an enjoyable summer!

THANK YOU

to Phyllis Nurgitz and Mel Wyne for their super salesmanship when volunteering to sell JAHSENA'S new book, *From Generation to Generation: Jewish Edmontonians as Heritage Builders* at the Jewish Film Festival.

to Sari Schiff for donating one of JAHSENA'S new books to be given as a door prize to a lucky film goer.

ירשה HERITAGE

The Journal of the Jewish
Archives & Historical Society
of Edmonton and Northern
Alberta

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GRAPHIC DESIGN

PageMaster

MAILING ADDRESS

**JAHSENA,
10220-156 St. Suite 200,
Edmonton, Alberta, T5P 2R1
Telephone: (780) 489-2809
Fax: (780) 481-1854
Email: jahsena@shaw.ca
Website: www.jahsena.ca
Cemetery Website:
www.edmontonjewishcemetery.ca**

ca

An *Insider/Outsider*

Fondly Remembers the Edmonton Jewish Community

By LUCIEN LIEBERMAN



Hong Mah and Lucien Lieberman

How do you react to a senior Asian gentleman greeting you with a string of Yiddish isms? With curiosity of course. This was my recent experience when I reacquainted myself with Hong Mah, a Vancouver resident. We had first met in Edmonton in the late 1950's when I was an Engineering student at the University of Alberta. He was the proprietor of the Cathayan Chinese Restaurant, a popular meeting place on Whyte Avenue. We met again forty years later in Vancouver when he asked me if I was a Lieberman from Edmonton. Close, I replied, I was from Calgary. I then remembered that Hong had paid for a poster advertisement in 1959 promoting my candidate for Engineering Queen. "Vote for Peggy O'Neil, Chemical Engineering's choice for Queen sponsored by the Cathayan Restaurant." I went home and dug up a copy of that poster from my box of

nostalgia and presented it to him the next day.

I would meet Hong again as he was prone to walk into our realty listings in his complex. "Let's meet for coffee some morning, he suggested, but not Monday or Wednesday as they are my mornings for Tal Chi". When Hong and I went for coffee the first time, he noted my two booster seats in the rear of my car and questioned. "For the aineklach?" Later when my grandchildren were here visiting, he asked if "I was "shepping naches?"

Hong Mah, now 86, comes by his Yiddish honestly, through business partnerships with Jewish people over a 40 year period. In the early 1950's he was working as a waiter when a frequent customer, Sam Brener, a businessman from Minnesota suggested "You are too smart a fellow to be working for others, let's form a partnership." Thus, Sam

put up the money and Hong became the active partner of the Cathayan. It was successful because of its location near the university and the business district of South Edmonton. It attracted a Jewish clientele because Jews liked Chinese cuisine. Also Hong is very gregarious by nature and his clients liked to schmooze. From his Jewish clientele Hong got to know who was married to whom and who was in partnership with whom. Many business deals were put together at his tables and on occasion Hong was invited to join the action. Hong's father came to Canada in 1905 and was engaged in import and export sales. Hong was 6th in line of 9 children born to two mothers. The first mother remained in China and the second raised her children in Canada. Hong visited the first mother in China in 1936-38. He and his siblings grew up in the Boyle Street neighborhood of central Edmonton. He attended Alex Taylor Elementary and the older Victoria High School. He remembers that there were not many Chinese students in the school yard in the 40's. The majority were Ukrainian and Jewish and he could not tell them apart. Later he realized that it was the Jewish kids who treated him more fairly. This initiated his attraction to the Jewish community.

In 1972 Hong sold the restaurant and entered into a new partnership with Fred Manus establishing the Town & Country Furniture Store located at 87th Avenue and 109th Street across from The Garneau Theatre. They chose this line of work because it enabled them to work without a large staff. It was Fred and Hong with a warehouseman from 1972 to 1996. Fred Manus came to Edmonton as a teenage Polish Jew, a survivor of the Holocaust. His story resides with the Shoah Foundation's collection of memoirs. In 1978 they established a second furniture store and billiard parlour in Fort McMurray. Although my time in Edmonton was

Continued on page 7

Texture & Colour:

Tslila Barzel's Love of Teaching, Art, and Kids

BY DANIEL ERIN

After sharing a pleasant, informative, and inspiring conversation with Tslila Barzel, one question seemed impossible to answer: where to start telling her story? You see, Tslila—as she prefers to be called—has done, and continues to do, a lot in the Edmonton community. An accomplished artist, a beloved teacher, a diligent tutor, a devoted Bar and Bat Mitzvah instructor, as well as a loving mother and grandmother, Tslila's life offers fertile ground for the storyteller. But after a couple of days, six emphatically stated words that she repeated a couple of times echoed in



Tslila Barzel at home

my mind: "Every child has something to offer." Indeed, taking the time to recognize, nurture, and celebrate a child's strengths characterizes much of Tslila's life. As a grade six student in Tel Aviv, Tslila's principal asked her to help students who were struggling with their studies; she happily obliged.

At nineteen Tslila had earned a degree from the Herzliya Teacher's Art College. After graduating, Tslila developed and wrote the Special Education curriculum for high schools and went on to instruct junior and senior high school teachers on how to implement it in Math, Language Arts, and Hebrew. She also developed a set of three Hebrew language courses for students in Special Education. After moving to Edmonton, Tslila also earned a Bachelor of Education degree with a major in Art from the University of Alberta.

Tslila and her husband, Gershon, first moved to Edmonton in 1969. The young couple found the Jewish community in Edmonton to be welcoming, warm, and supportive. In fact, Tslila and Gershon had such a positive experience during their first two years in Edmonton that they exercised the option for a third year on their teaching contracts with Talmud Torah. In 1972, they returned to Israel for six years but then decided to come back to Edmonton permanently in 1978.

Although it was not an easy decision to leave Israel again, Tslila tells us that she and Gershon felt very comfortable returning to Edmonton because



Tslila and her husband Gershon, outside Talmud Torah c1970

of all the great friends they'd made. Importantly, Tslila had made a profound connection with Talmud Torah. At the time, Talmud Torah was much more than a school. *It was the centre of the community.* Community members celebrated major holidays, attended dances, and partook in festivities at the school. Both parents and students were deeply involved with the school, so it became a special place where members of different generations lived with and learned from one another. Tslila repeated that she was more than just a teacher at Talmud Torah; she felt like she was part of a bigger family. Today, Tslila's former students are now teaching her grandchildren.

Tslila loved teaching at Talmud Torah. She would often stay at school until two and three in the morning developing the curriculum and lesson plans. Teaching Hebrew was her passion, and she is proud that for a long time all of the Jewish subjects were taught in Hebrew. "The students," she fondly remembers, "spoke lovely Hebrew." Ensuring that the students had a positive environment in which to learn about their history, culture, and language formed an integral

part of Tslila's life in Edmonton. Indeed, she wanted to make sure that each student had a strong connection to Israel. Tslila's dedication to teaching Hebrew extended beyond the walls of Talmud Torah; she developed a program and exams for three Hebrew courses-Hebrew 15, 25, and 35-at Ross Sheppard High School, so students could learn the language while earning university credits in high school.

It is very important, Tslila explains, to create a learning environment founded on positive reinforcement. A teacher must recognize that each student has something special to give. She always tried to cultivate a child's strength- not make them dwell solely on the areas in which they struggled. "Help singers sing!" Tslila states gleefully. Moreover, Tslila stresses that the students are always teaching her; they introduce her to new music, technology, phrases, and new forms of cultural expression. "I love that the kids teach me," Tslila laughs, "I really, really love it!"

Having retired from Talmud Torah, Tslila continues to teach as a Bar and Bat Mitzvah instructor. She cites one of her former grade two students as her inspiration for learning how to prepare children for the ritual. According to Tslila, this student asked her to help her prepare for her Bat Mitzvah, so Tslila *had* to learn how to prepare students. Laughing, she says: "again, I was learning through the kids!"

Seeing her students' devotion to the year-long preparation-and the considerable personal growth that accompanies it-provides Tslila with great joy. She understands that a huge amount of work and responsibility goes into each child's preparation, so she is always nervous while watching them perform. "However," she clarifies, "you always see them develop confidence," Watching students make profound personal changes-and valuable contributions to their community-through such an



Tsililas and Gershon's wedding

important tradition is another important aspect that Tslila cherishes. Her commitment to helping her Bar and Bat Mitzvah students has even taken a technological turn; during the three months of the year when she is in Israel, Tslila will Skype with her students once per week, so they can continue their lessons uninterrupted.

Vibrant paintings enliven every wall in Tslila's house. My first thought was, "where did she find such unique art?" Well, as it turns out, Tslila painted them herself. Tslila explains that she's always been artistic and interested in the history of art, but she only started painting towards the end of her career at Talmud Torah after developing a serious case of carpal tunnel syndrome. Her routine involves waking up at 4:00am and listening to classical music or opera while she paints.

Her style involves mixing media by incorporating diverse materials such as door screens and/or sand, and sometimes when she needs a canvas, Tslila will cut apart and use a dress. Her paintings aren't realist depictions of objects. Rather, she creates abstract and expressionistic interpretations of

objects; for example, Tslila will imbue a tree and its roots with deep personal meaning. She never plans a painting. Instead, she reacts to moments and encounters to guide her process. The results are diverse, but they share a common Draft 3 theme: colour melding with texture. Tactility is very important because Tslila uses her fingers to paint, and she will invite you to engage her paintings by touching them. Tslila's artwork is exhibited in Edmonton at the Lando gallery; you can also find her work exhibited in Toronto and California. The Jewish National Fund commissioned one of her works for Lt. Governor Lois Hole.

Tslila loves people, and having taught for over thirty years, she truly loves kids! She's already eagerly anticipating the Bar Mitzvah preparations for the coming year. It's also clear that Tslila loves teaching, but it seems that she does more than teach subjects and lessons. She helps students of all ages and abilities create meaning, add colour, and discover texture in their own-and others'-lives: "help singers sing!" And, as I happily discovered, she does this for those of us outside of the classroom as well.

From the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta:

**"FROM PEDLARS TO PATRIARCHS:
A LEGACY REMEMBERED"**

and

**"BITTERSWEET MEMORIES:
THE WAR YEARS"**

These documentary films about the history of the Edmonton Jewish Community are available on DVD for \$18.

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office at 780-489-2809**

Happy Tears, Salty Smiles: The Stories of Joy Ruth Mickelson During the Blitz in *Facing The Shards*

BY DANIEL ERIN

Very early in Joy Ruth Mickelson's biography, *Facing the Shards*, a common theme emerges rather poignantly: *movement*. Indeed, Joy Ruth recalls that during her youth, she and her sister, Viv, were "moving, moving, always moving. Nothing stayed still" (75). And it's Joy Ruth's skilful and subtle narrative that takes us on a journey filled with moments that warm and break the heart. Throughout the book, the reader encounters a diverse group of characters. Getting to know them isn't always easy or pleasant, but their nuanced portrayals help explain the troublesome world that Joy and Viv were thrust into during the Blitz.

Before the start of World War II, Joy shared very special times with her small family, which included her mother, father, and Viv. An example

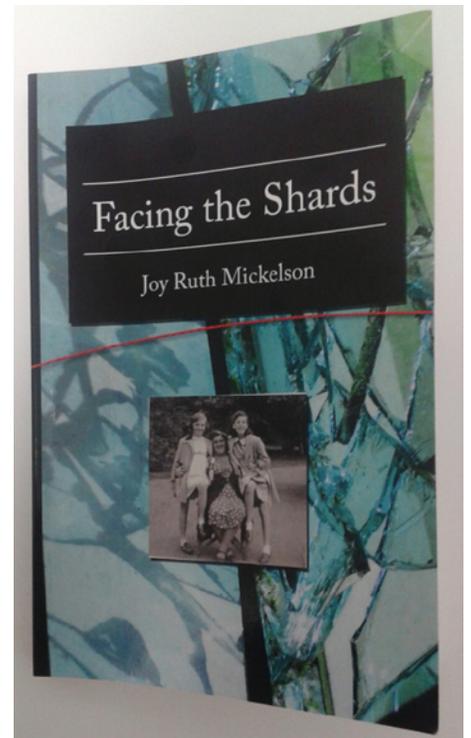


Joy Ruth Mickelson

of such times involves their breakfast routine. Everyday—very early in the morning—Joy, Viv, and their mother would pick wild mushrooms in the fields near their garden; they had to be quick so as to avoid being late for school. Upon returning home with their fresh mushrooms, Joy's mother would cook breakfast for the family: "At breakfast, the mushrooms sizzled as they fried. They smelled of the fields and the sun and the sizzling sound tickled our ears" (3). Joy's father savoured the mushrooms as they made the journey from the frying pan to his plate. Almost every day started with the simple pleasures of a family breakfast.

From this serene breakfast routine, Joy and Viv's lives followed an increasingly turbulent path: a moonlight flit that saw the family leave their home in the countryside, a move into a cramped London boarding house, and then a rushed evacuation from the city back into the countryside. Indeed, the sisters faced significant challenges that no child or young person should have to endure. Moreover, Joy had to navigate many of the turbulent situations alone after being separated from her sister because billeting families were unwilling to take in two children at once.

Scarlett Fever separated the sisters first. Joy woke up one night burning



hot, feeling as though she was on fire (54). Instead of receiving care and compassion when she fell ill, Joy was chastised by her billet, Mrs. Bourne, who screamed: "I think this kid's got scarlet fever! She can't stay here and infect our Helen [the Bourne's daughter]. It's a dangerous disease ... I ought never to have offered to take in Jews. I expect those kids' clothes are full of diseases. I'm going to call the ambulance, and they'll deal with her." After receiving such verbal abuse, Joy had to live in an isolation unit for an entire month. But, as becomes clear throughout *Facing the Shards*, Joy found constant support and solace in her family.

Once Joy had fully recovered, she and Viv went to live with the Canns, a kind and caring family who warmly welcomed the sister into their home. Mrs. Cann—who preferred for Joy and Viv to call her Ma—did all she could to make the sisters feel welcome and at home. Every day after school, Ma would have the girls conduct a scavenger hunt in the garden. They

would find books, brooches, and tiny jam tarts if they successfully followed Ma's clues. However, this tranquil period came to an abrupt and tragic end. One morning before school, Joy and Viv discovered that Ma had passed in her sleep. From this traumatic event, the sisters would move on again to less friendly and even abusive billets.

Eventually, Joy settled in with the Downey family. The Downey's lived in a brickyard, but Joy found a consistent place to stay during the rest of her time in exile from her family. It wasn't physically comfortable, but the Downey's home helped Joy strive intellectually. While with the Downeys, she succeeded in an accelerated program at an all-girls school. Although it was Draconian, Joy learned and overcame a number of obstacles.

Throughout the book, we are earnestly reminded of the longing and sorrow a child feels while away from her parents. As Joy laments while with her second billet—the spiteful Shorts—"I wanted to [billet with] someone who was kind and would like me. But most of all I just wanted to go home" (46).

Joy shows us that our time with loved ones is fleeting, but fleeting time can and must be cherished. Her stories show that we can't take the smell and sound of sizzling mushrooms, the frustrating yet enchanted time together on a crowded bus, or even the strained moments of a disagreement for granted. Her candid book demonstrates that we will miss these moments dearly. Joy achieves many things in *Facing the Shards*, but helping us confront and better understand the moments in our lives when happy tears create salty smiles is a unique accomplishment—one that we're all better for having witnessed.

Facing the Shards is available at amazon.ca.

DONATION CARDS

JAHSENA has donation cards with historic pictures on them available for purchase. Mark your special simchas by sending a donation to JAHSENA. Contact the office for more details at: 780-489-2809. We have received the following donations:

MAZEL TOV

To Penny and Phil Hardin on the celebration of their anniversary, from Michael and Colleen Paull

GET WELL

To Miriam Rabinovitch for a quick recovery, from the JAHSENA Board and Staff

To Eugene Linetsky for a speedy and complete recovery, from Michael and Colleen Paull

To Leo (Sonny) Superstein for a speedy recovery, from the JAHSENA Board and Staff

SYMPATHY

To Honey and Eddie Isaacs with sympathy on the passing of your sister Valerie, from the JAHSENA Board and Staff

To Sparkie and Bernice Milner with sympathy on the passing of your brother Samuel, from the JAHSENA Board and Staff

To Cory Felber with sympathy on the passing of your cousin Bernie Dlin, from the JAHSENA Board and Staff;

To Cory Felber with sympathy on the passing of your cousin, from Michael and Colleen Paull

To Sol and Marilyn Rolingher and Family with sympathy on the passing of their mother, grandmother and great grandmother, Thelma Rolingher, from Michael and Colleen Paull

To Sol and Marilyn Rolingher and Family with sympathy on the passing of Thelma Rolingher from George and Judy Goldsand

To Michelle and Mark Huberman with sympathy on the passing of your dad, Jack Feldman from Michael and Colleen Paull

To Rhoda Friedman with sympathy on the passing of your husband Dr. Manuel Friedman, from the JAHSENA Board and Staff

To Rhoda Friedman with sympathy on the passing of your husband, from Michael and Colleen Paull

To Arthur Hiller with sympathy on the passing of your wife Gwen, from the JAHSENA Board and Staff

INSIDER/OUTSIDER

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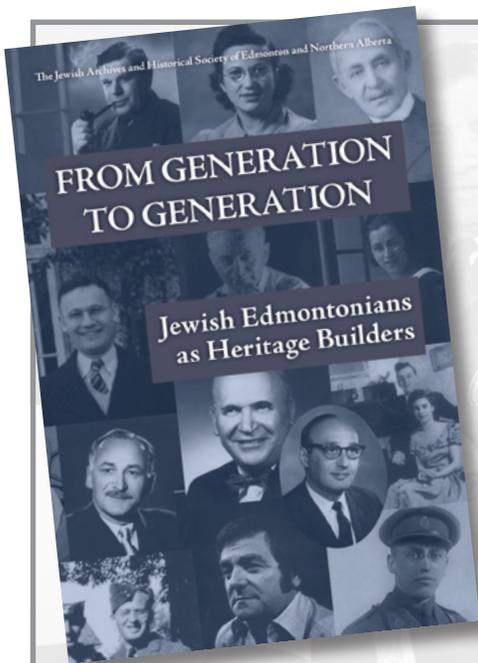
a short four years, Hong can tell me something about everybody that I connected with in that time. I asked if there was a commonality between the Chinese and Jewish communities based on discrimination in the early years. Was there a mutual respect based on the fact that they were both minorities? Hong's memories suggest that there were certainly strong connections in the business community on an individual basis. It is noteworthy that he chose to retire into a Vancouver Oakridge complex which housed many former Jewish Edmontonians.

Interesting to note Hong's oldest daughter spent a year living on a kibbutz in Israel in 1973. Hong takes his Tai



Hong Mah's Restaurant on Whyte Avenue

Chi very seriously explaining that it is equally physical, mental and spiritual in nature. When one notes how active mentally and physically he is, one is inclined to sign up for the nearest Tai Chi class.



New from the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta:

From Generation to Generation Jewish Edmontonians as Heritage Builders

A 136 page book featuring 25 historic Jewish Edmontonians who made outstanding contributions, in addition to their job or professional work, to enhance life in Edmonton and beyond.

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This book ... contains stories of hardship and perseverance ... featuring colourful sketches of the individuality and personalities of those celebrated.

Ken Tingley
Edmonton's first historian laureate

It's so important that we remember and honour Edmonton's Jewish roots, not just for the sake of the Jewish community, but so that all Edmontonians understand what a rich, diverse province we share. This book is a lovely introduction to some of the Jewish community's own diverse cast of colourful characters.

Paula Simons
Edmonton Journal columnist

MEL HURTIG



Mel receiving the Order of Canada in 1980 from Edward Schreyer, Governor General of Canada.

Melvin Hurtig, OC, publisher, political activist, and author, was born 24 June 1932 in Edmonton, AB, and died 3 August 2016 in Vancouver, BC. In 1956, Hurtig opened a bookstore, Hurtig Books, in Edmonton. The store soon became a centre for the literary community and grew into one of the largest retail book operations in Canada. Hurtig sold his stores in 1972 and concentrated on publishing Canadian books under the imprint Hurtig Publishers; he was twice named Canadian Book Publisher of the Year (1975, 1981). Most notably, Hurtig conceived of and published two editions of the highly acclaimed *Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985 and 1988) and *Junior Encyclopedia of Canada* (1990). He sold Hurtig Publishers to Toronto-based McClelland & Stewart in 1991.

Hurtig was one of Canada's best-known economic nationalists. In 1985, he was founding chair of the Council of Canadians. A critic of the high degree of foreign ownership and control in Canada, he campaigned vigorously against the Free Trade Agreement with the United States (NAFTA).

Mel Hurtig has received much recognition for his outspoken nationalism, including six honorary degrees, and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1980.

Information from the Canadian Encyclopedia.

JAHSENA Recent Acquisitions

These items have recently found their way into the archives, and are available for research purposes:

An oral history interview, along with pictures, articles, textiles and assorted treasures from Sharon Abbott and Marilyn Lerner;

A major collection of books, personal artifacts, photographs and certificates of Dr. Theodore and Gloria Aaron donated by Arlene Morin;

We would like to welcome our newest

member of the JAHSENA family, Lucien Lieberman, who not only became a member, but published an article in this newsletter!

Unfortunately, due to space issues, for the foreseeable future we will no longer be accepting donations to the Jewish Federation Library. Please contact Beth Shalom synagogue or the Jewish Drop In Centre if you'd like to donate collections relating to Jewish history or Judaism in general.

We are still accepting donations of books relevant to local family or organizational history. Should you have any questions about donations, please contact our office.