

ירשה

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HERITAGE

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

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Capitol Theatre c. 1930

ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY!!

The Edmonton Chevra Kadisha will be 115 years old next year. We will be opening our new cemetery in the spring of 2022* and will continue to serve the needs of the Edmonton Jewish Community. To date we have amassed 2/3rds of our financial goal to pay for phase one of the new cemetery. This is a major event for our community and we do not want to leave anyone out. Please consider donating today. All donations are Tax Deductible. Please see the insert in this edition.

*weather dependant

Thank you to The Jewish Federation of
Edmonton for their grant providing digitization
of cassette and video tapes.





From the President

HOWARD DAVIDOW

March 2021

Shalom chaverim,

I trust that everyone is getting by and staying as healthy as possible during these trying times. I would guess that almost everyone reading this newsletter has been advised of the anticipated dates of their first Covid -19 shot. The outlook seems to have improved along with the weather. My wish is that we all remain healthy and look forward to better times. I, personally, am trying to spend less time watching the news.

In the most recent column we devoted some space to recapping the history of JAHSENA, and the importance of keeping historical records in general and specifically for our community. It seems that we are not the only ones profoundly desiring to maintain a strong link with our past. As you must all be aware, Our Parents' Home (OPH) was recently sold. A significant portion of the proceeds of sale have been set aside as an endowment, for the benefit of our Jewish Community, the earnings from which will be used to grow the fund and provide money for community undertakings for many years into the future. Another portion of the proceeds has been set aside to assist JAHSENA with the creation of a permanent home for the display of JAHSENA's archives. It sounds as though real estate may be involved in some form. This is absolutely wonder-

ful news for our community. Our board is meeting to plan the best manner to utilize these funds. We want to hear your ideas and suggestions about how to go forward with this opportunity. Kol Hakavod on the board of OPH for their foresight in making these funds available to our community.

Included in this issue are articles about two community members who have passed, Hal Simons z'l, a former JAHSENA board member and Abner Rubin z'l, also a very involved member of our community. Eric Schloss once again has taken up pen and paper and continues to provide informative and interesting material, this time an article about Mel Hurtig z'l. As always, we appreciate your contributions, Eric.

Colleen Paull, our archivist and office manager, continues to keep us moving forward, accepting and cataloguing archival donations, responding to requests for information from all over the world, and completing the many unsung and everyday tasks involved in keeping our office running smoothly. Thank you, Colleen. Income tax receipts for 2020 donations have been sent out. We thank you all for continuing to support our work.

Stay safe everyone.
Howard Davidow

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Alberta

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Mel Hurtig at 80

MEL HURTIG | PROUDLY CANADIAN BOOKMAN

By ERIC SCHLOSS

Proud native Edmontonian, Mel Hurtig (1932-2016), was one of the few to achieve a major triad in the book world, as bookstore owner and operator, publisher, and author. Born in Edmonton, his early life was detailed in his book, *“At Twilight in the Country-Memoirs of a Canadian Nationalist”* (1996).

In his detailed memoir, he describes his early life in Edmonton as the youngest son of Jewish parents. He lived near 113 Street and 100th Avenue, close to the General Hospital.

He describes his Jewish neighbours such as the Slutker family and Friedman “The Butcher” across the street, and their sons “Tootsie”, “Mooshie” and Manuel (Louis, Dr. Morris, and Dr. Manuel). Despite graduating from Victoria Composite High School, he was uncertain of a future career, and chose not to pursue post-secondary education. His father operated a well-known fur store on Jasper Avenue, *Hurtig Furs*, and in the book, Mel gives an anecdote from 1956 while working in the store: helping a very heavy lady customer with her coat selection who had already tried on several coats, finally with the last one she twirled around and

said to Mel, “Do you think this makes me look fat?” He immediately realized that the fur business was not for him, and soon proceeded to look for an opening for a retail bookstore, as books had become his major interest.

His interest in books rather than his earlier primary focus on girls and sports was stimulated by finding and reading a rare English copy of the literary classic, “La Peste” or “The Plague,” by Nobel Prize winner Albert Camus, as a nineteen-year-old in 1951. After eventually arranging a \$3500-dollar bank loan co-signed by his father, he was able to open a small bookshop on 103rd Street just north of Jasper Ave. The bookshop eventually moved to other locations, plus several satellite facilities, mainly centralizing in a larger location on 103rd Street south of Jasper Avenue. The store grew quickly and became the largest volume retail bookstore between Toronto and Vancouver. His stores became popular venues for the reading public as his literary interests greatly expanded. There were few books, on almost all subjects, which were eventually not available through his shop. The facility was highly praised by national and international

major literary figures, and was described by one as, “The best and most complete bookshop in Canada”. Mel also took pride in various sections of the store, and felt that his children’s book section was the best in North America.

He was also helped by University professors such as Henry Kreisel. I clearly recall taking his English course in 1957, when he encouraged us to purchase the necessary literary volumes from Mel. The following year, taking a Canadian History course from Professor W. Eccles, he also advised that we could purchase the necessary volumes from Hurtig Books. The store also became a focal point for poetry and literary readings, chess games and occasionally staging plays. Mel eventually sold the bookstores in 1972, as he had become interested in publishing, and proceeded to establish Hurtig Publishers Ltd., This had a major impact on the Canadian literary scene, as he republished major classic historical exploration and travel accounts of Canadiana. Many new authors were introduced by Mel, particularly new Canadian authors and works of prior little known Canadian and international writers. His publishing career started several years before the sale of his book shops. In 1967, one of his earliest published books was a poetry collection by well-known poet, Eli Mandel, entitled, “An Idiot Joy” (1967) which won a Governor General’s award.

Mel’s early interest in Canadian nationalism was also reflected in an early book in 1968 by well-known Canadian poet Al Purdy, published by M.G. Hurtig as, “The New Romans: Canadian Opinions of the US” which was an obvious early critique of US policies. One of his early publications dealing with the FLQ political crisis was entitled, “Bleeding Hearts-Bleeding Country-Canada and the Quebec Crisis” by Denis Smith in 1971.

A well-known published book on

the Jewish community was entitled, "Jewish Life in Canada" (1976) which contained 16 full-page coloured illustrations by the well-known artist William Kurelek, along with his commentaries. It also included a historical essay by Abraham Arnold, a well-known Winnipeg Jewish historian. The Great Hadassah-WIZO Cookbook, with recipes compiled by members of Edmonton Hadassah was gratefully published in 1982. A further book of ethnic interest was "All of Baba's Children" by Myrna Kostash (1977) which reflected the author's personal discovery of her Ukrainian heritage and focused on Alberta's Ukrainian culture and history.

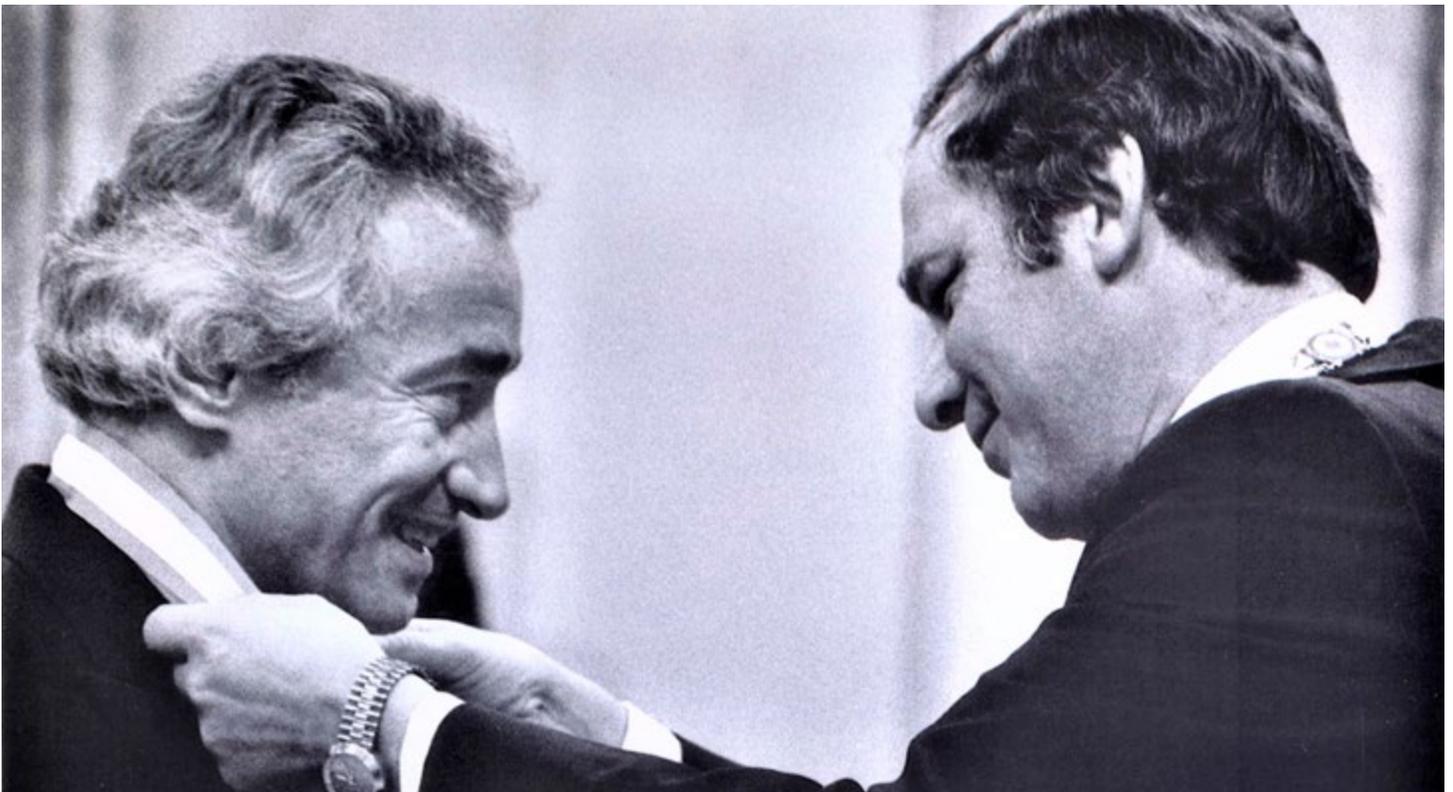
Mel eventually became well-known as the publisher of the Canadian Encyclopedia, starting with three initial volumes in 1985, and followed with an additional four updated and revised volumes in 1988. They featured over 3000 contributors, more than 9000 articles, and were highly successful, selling out quite rapidly. Ultimately, a five-volume

Junior Encyclopedia of Canada was published in 1990. The achievement of producing the Canadian Encyclopedia was monumental in encompassing detailed knowledge of all aspects of Canada. Unfortunately, Mel's timing was not beneficial, as the age of encyclopedias and the onset of the internet eventually forced him to sell Hurtig Publishers to Toronto-based McClelland & Stewart in 1991. The encyclopedia was later digitized and expanded, and eventually acquired by the Canadian Historic Foundation, and has been placed online in both English and French translations. The number of articles has now risen to at least 19,000, with over 4000 contributors.

Mel met and became friends with countless well-known authors, politicians, celebrities, and publishers, and was a close associate of Jack McClelland, the operator of McClelland & Stewart. In his memoirs, there is a detailed account of his difficulties with well-known Montreal Jewish author,

Mordechai Richler. The time he spent with Mordechai included trips to the Alberta Rockies, plus a tour of the Arctic. However, he ended up disliking him, particularly after Richler wrote articles about Edmonton, Calgary, and the Alberta Rockies, which Mel felt were derogatory, reflecting his "visceral anti-nationalism".

As a prominent Canadian nationalist, Mel was the founder of the Committee for an Independent Canada (CIC), which lobbied against foreign ownership and cultural imperialism, and was chairman of the Committee in its first year. Another nationalist organization, the Council of Canadians, was established with his help in 1985, with a primary focus to lobby against support for free trade. He had initially unsuccessfully run as a Liberal candidate in 1972 in Edmonton West but in 1992 he was elected leader of the New National Party of Canada. Leading this party in the 1993 federal election, he personally achieved only 12.8% of the popular vote,



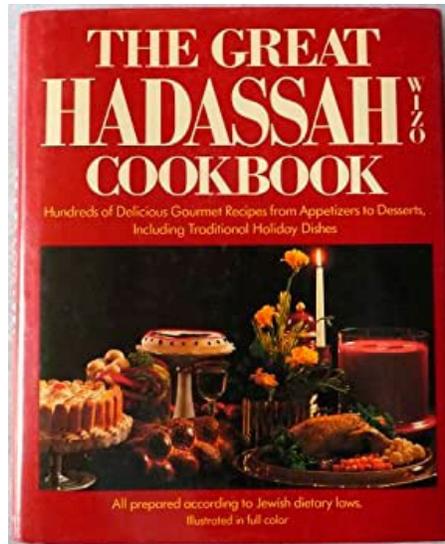
Order of Canada from Edward Schrayer, Governor General of Canada c. 1980

and finished a distant third to Anne McLellan, who became Deputy Prime Minister of Canada.

As an author, Mel published many critical books (at least eight) largely with a theme of Canadian nationalism. These included: “The Betrayal of Canada” (1991), “Pay the Rent or Feed the Kids” (2000), “The Vanishing Country—Is it too Late to Save Canada?” (2002), “Rushing to Armageddon” (2004), and “The Truth About Canada” (2008). A final book critical of Stephen Harper and the Conservative party was entitled, “The Arrogant Autocrat: Stephen Harper’s Takeover of Canada” (2015).

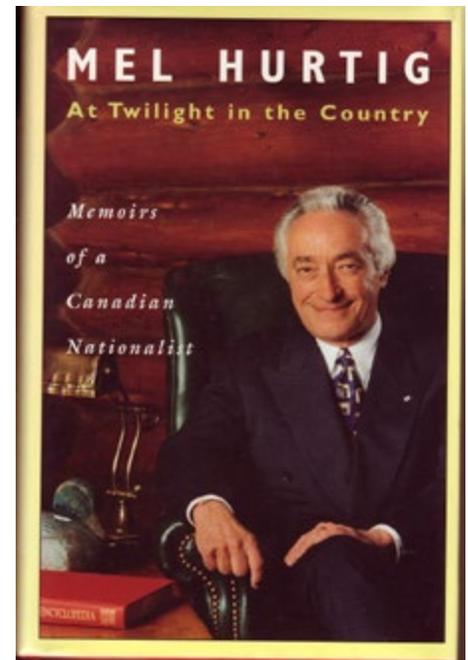
Mel won many major awards, including the Lester B. Pearson Man of the Year Peace Award, and was installed as an Officer of the Order of Canada. It was unusual for someone who had not progressed to formal post-secondary education, to be granted an honorary degree from six Canadian universities, including the University of Alberta!

When he moved to Vancouver, his primary pastime, golf, was available year-round. Mel passed away



The Great Hadassah Cookbook

in Vancouver in 2016. At the time of his passing, many praise-worthy memoirs and comments by well-known national and international figures were published or broadcast. His friend, well-known journalist Don Braid, commented that “Mel’s publication of the Canadian encyclopedia “was the single greatest publishing feat in the history of Canadian publishing”. He also commented that Mel was ferocious in his



At Twilight in the Country

convictions and beliefs.

Mel was known as a loving father to his four daughters, who were all greatly influenced by his love of books and career. His daughter Leslie, particularly took great inspiration from her father, growing up in a house full of books. Over her career she has worked for major bookstores and was involved with book and magazine publishing, creative writing, and book marketing. She also organized author tours and supervised many book fairs. Leslie also served as a foreign rights and contracts manager at Raincoast books in Vancouver. After serving on the Board of Directors for the past 18 years of the internationally well-known Vancouver Writer’s Fest, she was appointed the new artistic director in 2018. At the time of Mel’s passing, she commented that he had read voraciously “everyday of his life” whether it was novels or numerous newspapers and had a very strong thirst for knowledge. Leslie also said that Edmonton was, “in his blood”. “He believed in the people of Alberta and believed it could be a place where all people could prosper and live good lives.



Clockwise from Mel are Gillian, Barbara and Leslie c. 2015



Jane Hurtig

Mel's focus on and interest in Alberta was obviously reflected in his publications. His very first book, published by M.G. Hurtig in 1967 was entitled, "Alberta: A Cultural History" by W.G. Hardy, a well-known classics professor at the University of Alberta. Later, he published the "Alberta Diamond Jubilee Anthology" a collection of Alberta's best writers in 1979. An additional book published at the time was entitled, "Alberta – A Celebration" authored by Rudy Wiebe, Harry Savage and Tom Radford, with major literary, artistic/photographic and film contributions by these well-known men. One of his last books published before the eventual sale of the company was entitled, "The Best of Alberta" authored by Tom Radford and Harry Savage in 1987.

In Edmonton, Mel's second office was usually the Mayfair Golf Club, where he held many unofficial discussions and meetings. When I was first proposing a Canadian Literature Centre at the University of Alberta, I went to meet with him at the Mayfair, to discuss the matter and obtain his ideas on how to proceed. Immediately liking the idea and thinking it had great merit, he said he would speak to literary colleagues in Toronto such as Margaret Atwood and Robert Fulford. I tried to point out that they would obviously want it based in Toronto (with their central Canadian

literary focus). Insisting that it would have to be based in Edmonton, being a proud Edmontonian, he then readily agreed. At another meeting, I was at the time attempting to write a book about Canada in all aspects. As our children could never get the lyrics right to our National Anthem, I thought the title "O, Canada – Our Home and Naked Land" would be catchy. However, as a sensitive Canadian nationalist, Mel thought it was a very bad idea!

In addition to golf, Mel developed a great interest in hiking, particularly in the Canadian Rockies. A friend of Mel's, Brian Patton, author of *The Canadian Rockies Trail Guide*, had his book, "Tales From the Canadian Rockies" published by Hurtig Books in 1984. After successfully navigating a hike around Lake O'Hara Lodge, Mel wished a further trail hike, and the area of Skoki Lodge was recommended by Patton. For some reason Mel, his wife Kay and daughter Leslie were dropped off 10.5 kms short of their destination, and they set off for Skoki with one large, overstuffed suitcase. They hadn't brought the trail guide map, and became somewhat lost in their hike, but eventually reached their destination. On their return trip they again apparently became lost or disoriented but returned safely. Brian Patton indicated that the trip was over 30 kms with a large suitcase, "a record that will never be equalled, I'm sure". Mel was also proud of climbing Mount Fuji in Japan on a subsequent trip.

To honour Mel, the Hurtig Annual Lecture on the future of Canada was launched by the Department of Political Science in the Faculty of Arts U of A in 2006. A primary goal of the Hurtig Lecture Series is to provoke, educate and generate an understanding of Canadian experiences and responsibilities as engaged citizens in a complex world.

The first lecture in the series was

by Mel's friend, well-known Canadian author and historian, Peter Newman. The timing around the first lecture coincided with the 50th anniversary of the opening of Mel's first book shop in downtown Edmonton in 1956. An event was therefore held to celebrate the anniversary at the current successor, Audrey's Bookshop on 107 Street and Jasper. Many friends and colleagues were in attendance including Peter Newman. Mel asked me to speak at the event and for some reason I had the chutzpah (as the popular program *Seinfeld* was still on people's mind, and with Peter Newman in attendance) to start by saying, "Hellooooooo Newman!". Everyone laughed, except Mel.

A memorable, personal experience occurred in 1978. On a hot July evening, Alexis and I decided to stroll downtown. We stopped in front of Mel's former bookstore (then Audrey's Books) on 103rd street south of Jasper Ave.

As the store was closed for the night, we were perusing the books in the window display. Suddenly I felt a whizz pass my head producing a small hole in the window. Obviously panicking we ran around the corner and down to the Caravan Hotel to call the police. They soon informed us that the perpetrator of the gunshot was an inebriated tenant of the Cecil Hotel across the street from the bookstore. On subsequently relating this story to Mel, he was absolutely horrified, but very relieved we were not injured.... however, he managed to ask if any of the books in the window had been damaged!

Mel lived his whole life trying to teach Canadians about their country. He also invited Canadians to reflect upon fundamental values that shape our daily lives and our collective future and made a lasting contribution to our national heritage and culture with the publication of the Canadian Encyclopedia.



Abner and Hilda Rubin

Eser Rubin Family

BY ABNER RUBIN

In 1927 my father, Eser Rubin, left Pinsk, Poland, and with Moishe Feldman, Shmuel Lieberman and a Polish Ukrainian friend and army buddy, Wasiel, arrived by ship in Halifax in July. They all came to Edmonton looking for work. My father and his friend Wasiel went to work on a farm west of Edmonton near Edson. Seeing no future there, my father returned to Edmonton and worked buying and selling produce to the Weinbergs, and buying and selling furs

with Shep Slutker. For a while he was partners with Mr. Sklove, also dealing in produce.

On July 13, 1928, having saved enough money, he was able to bring the family over from Pinsk: my mother Mariam, my sisters Claire and Ainya, and myself. We sailed on the White Star Line. Every year his goal was to save money and bring family members over. In 1929 he had saved enough to bring over his brother Lazer, who was already slightly ill with sleeping sickness, Lazer's wife Zlotka, and their two sons Alex and Harry, and their daughter



Front left-right: Shmuel Lieberman, Moshe Feldman, ? Back left-right ?, ?, Eser Rubin. Arrival in Halifax C. 1927

Esther. In 1930 he was able to pay and bring over from Pinsk his mother Rebecca, his brother Manuel and his sister Jenny.

In 1936 my father purchased a farm in Vilna, Alberta, in order to qualify and bring over his brother David, wife Esther, daughter Rosalie and son Abraham – all from Pinsk. They were able to come to Canada under the Homestead Regulations. Abraham had a terrible accident near the farm when the horses bolted and he died from a gangrene infection of the cut on his thigh. There was no penicillin in those days.

My father went into business with his brother Lazer, buying and selling eggs and poultry. Lazer had become quite ill with sleeping sickness and died a few years later. Our family had a stall in the market to sell eggs and chickens. Rabbi Postone came to our house every week to kill kosher chickens and I delivered those chickens and eggs to all the Jewish homes. My mother would go with a children's wagon every day and sell eggs and chickens to stores and cafes – door to door.

For a few years from 1928, when we arrived in Edmonton, we lived with Mr. and Mrs. Oscar and Zipporah Heifetz, their daughter Eva and son Moishe. We all shared a small house on 103 Avenue and 95 Street. In 1934 Moishe died from pneumonia. It was considered improper to become pregnant when nearly 40 years of age, but to give each other support my mother and her friend Zipporah Heifetz agreed to try to become pregnant at the same time. So, in July 1936 my mother gave birth to Goldie, and Mrs. Heifetz gave birth to Sophie. That, to me, was the ultimate friendship.

Our home was always open; all my uncles, aunts, cousins and Grandmother

Rifka would live at our house for a few years till they were able to become more independent. Such hard work day by day and the stress of keeping home and family together took its toll on my mother's health and she passed away at home at 47 years of age in 1947. At her bedside during the last days of suffering were her very good neighbours and friends, Mrs. Ethel Petal, Mrs. Heifetz and Mrs. Feldman.

My father had intended bringing out from Pinsk his two other sisters and their families, but the war foiled his plans – the borders were already closed and they all perished in the Holocaust.



Ainya, Miriam, Abner, and Claire Rubin on Polish exit permit c. 1928

JAHSENA Recent Acquisitions

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

Various papers and photos of the Weinlos family from Eddy & Honey Isaacs;

Certificates and Hadassah donation cards from Michael & Stephanie Hendin;

Talmud Torah Grade 1 cloth book "Religious Objects" from Ian & Helen Lapin;

Group photo of BB Girls around 1948 and Beth Shalom Confirmation photo unknown date from Linda Hilford;

The book "Travel and Travails by Teviah Estrin, an article about the Jewish War Orphans, and "Resilience" the immigration story of Esther's father, Abraham Aaron Estrin by his son, Tevvy from Esther Starkman;

Receipt from Irving Kline Jeweler and Optometrist from Maxine Raphael;

Klein family photos, newspaper articles and Hockey Team photos from Morinville and Vegreville, two 2007 Federation Newsletters, January Class of 1946 U of A Yearbook from Esther Slofsky;

Pekarsky photos and articles from the Cairns & Pekarsky families;

Four publications about the philanthropy work and histories of Irving and Dianne Kipnes, articles and community programs. In addition, building drawings, reports, photos, publications, articles and mezuzzahs from Our Parents Home from Irving & Dianne Kipnes;

Photos from the Rubin family, Canadian Passenger Lists 1865-1935, Lieberman family historic documents and certificates, books, Pesach wine glasses from Susan & Murray Lieberman;

Artifacts, articles, 1990 Ross Sheppard Yearbook, books, kiddush cups and menorahs from Ron & Carol Ritch;

Articles, booklets, newspaper and other articles, stories/histories of family members, awards & certificates regarding the Podolsky/Miller/Paull families from Michael and Colleen Paull.

Several newspaper articles about Talmud Torah two class photos and 1992 - 1993 Event Sign-In Book From Natalie Soroka

Should you have any questions about donations, please contact our office.

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.

GROWING UP IN Round Hill, Alberta

By: HAROLD (HAL) SIMONS
(ORIGINALLY, SIMOVITCH)

The Town: Located 14 miles south of Tofield, Alberta, off Highway 14. In 1930s and 1940s the population was about 150 people.

In the 1930's and early 1940's There were three general stores: ours, the Round Hill Trading Company; Bresden's (just a block away); and Bosmans (about 3 blocks away, on the East side of the slough). Behind the Bresden store, they would let us watch them hang a hog up on a kind of tripod, butcher it and then dip it in a large barrel of hot water (to help remove the bristles) before cutting the carcass into halves or quarters.

Sam Simons (Simovitch) owned the Round Hill Trading Company. It was a general store that provided more than the basics in groceries,

fresh fruit & vegetables, meat, dry goods and hardware. Next to the store was a large building filled with 100-pound sacks of flour (a full boxcar brought in by rail, unloaded and hauled from the train station by horse and wagon). Another nearby round building in the summer housed blocks of ice stacked and insulated with sawdust. The store operated an Esso gas pump in front of the store as well as other oil products housed in two large oil storage tanks located near the train tracks. To round out providing for the needs of the rural community surrounding the town, the store was the official Massey-Harris machinery agency. Dad sold the first rubber tire tractor for the area in approximately 1936.

Our home was located about a quarter of a block just behind the store.

It was a one-storey home, with three small bedrooms and 6 kids. We had a coal and wood stove (with a water tank at one end of the stove) in the kitchen and a "pot-bellied" stove to heat the living room. During many cold winter nights, our blankets froze to the wall, because there was little or no insulation. In those days' sawdust was used for insulation, and over the years it settled down to the bottom. In our back yard we had a chicken coop, a coal shed and a two-seater outdoor toilet. Most people used newspapers or magazines for toilet tissue. A special toilet treat was the paper tissues from mandarin



Norman, Noots, Hal, Sid, and Sam in front of the store c. 1941



Hal and Sam in front of the store c. 1941



Sam and Rose Simons c. 1972

oranges imported from Japan before Christmas. We always had a dog, usually a retriever.

Although our parents had very minimal formal education before coming to Canada from Russia, they were adamant about the importance of education. As an example, before owning a refrigerator and even though they had no musical background or training, they purchased a piano (a "Morris" piano, made in Canada). Morris and Sarah were very young when they started piano lessons. When Morris was in high school my parents sent him to Legal, Alberta, to live with our Aunt Freda Slutsky & family so that he could learn French. They owned and operated a store there. I learned how to play piano by listening to both Sarah and Morris practicing, but never did have lessons. It wasn't until their 25th wedding anniversary that our parents

purchased a refrigerator to replace the old icebox.

Since our mother helped Dad in the store, they hired 2 successive live-in home-helpers, named Lucille and Dorillda. Both were French Canadian ladies from Legal, Alberta. They did the laundry, kept the house clean and bathed me and my younger brothers Norman and Sid. They were treated like family.

It is only a faint memory, but when I was very young (probably 3 or 4 years old), my father, for a short period, had a partner in his general store. His name was Mr. Simkin. He and his wife had 4 children: Harry, Louis, Esther and Rose. They moved to another small town after purchasing a store there. Rose married Gene Pechet, who was later very well known in Edmonton.

During the depression years our

store, and others, provided credit for many families who lived from paycheck to paycheck, from crop to crop, or from slaughter to slaughter. There was no such thing as a credit check. It was based on trust and empathy. A number of families were unable to repay their bills. Some farmers brought in produce or meat as a gesture of repayment. The families of the storeowners bore the brunt of the many thousands of dollars that were never paid. Some families never did pay their bills and would avoid us at any town events. So the merchant was on the hook. The wholesalers and other suppliers had to be paid otherwise they would not ship items ordered.

From the 1920's to the early 1940's Round Hill had several industries. There was a cheese factory (one manager was Sam Boychuk), one underground mine and three strip mines - Burnstad, Red Flame (Sandy Russell) and Gotheridge mines, a train station (managed by Mr. Ashley), four grain elevators (for many years the elevator agents were Olaf Bruce, Mike Johnson, Henry Quail, George Shortreed), the Urlacher and Foss garages, a pool room and cafe run by Mr. Moore, Vic Swanson's blacksmith shop, etc.

There were two schools in town – a one-room high school for up to 20 students, with principal Mr. Butchart, in grades 10-12; and a two-room combined elementary junior high school. Although crowded and often noisy, one teacher taught up to 20 students from grades 1 – 6 in one room, while a second teacher taught up to 20 students from grades 7 to 9 in another room.

Upon reflection, the main advantage for some students was

that they heard and often absorbed what was being taught in the higher grades, thus affecting their curiosity and interest. They were also exposed to the behaviour (good and bad) of both younger and older students. Students in this setting likely became quite responsible at an early age. In the summer some students walked to school from their farm homes. In winter many of them came by horse and sleigh. The horses had to be tied up and provided with hay and water behind the school. Because the pails of water froze over it was necessary for the students to go out a few times each day to refill them.

The schools, as well as the homes, were heated by coal and wood stoves and sometimes furnaces located in the basement. Coal from the mines was loaded into railway cars

and because of the hard times many families would walk along the railway tracks and pick up any pieces of coal that had fallen. This provided fuel for their stoves.

I was very anxious to go to school, so one day at age 5 I ventured into the school to attend grade one. The teacher, Agnes Bowness, very gently instructed me to go home and wait until I was 6 years old. The next year she became my grade 1 teacher. After leaving Round Hill in 1941 I saw her at her brother's funeral in 2001. She was in her late 90's but when I went up to her, she recognized me and said "Hello Harold".

The only "field trips" were literally out into a large open field encompassed by some larger trees and many varieties of small bushes. Every summer this large open space, im-



Sid, Hal, Sam, Rose, Alfie, Sarah, Morris, Norman c. 1952-1

mediately south of the town baseball diamond, attracted Gypsy visitors. Although parents advised their children to be careful, I was not aware of anyone who was told to avoid them. We did have some interaction with them and were curious about their wagons, their mode of dress and their cooking. The one thing that

In Memoriam 2020

The following individuals were lost to us this year. We offer our condolences to their families and friends, and hope that their memories will be blessings to us all.

Paul Lewis Adilman z'l	Tamara Shvets z'l	Kenneth Leslie Edwards, z'l	Alex Leyderman z'l
Nathan Reboh z'l	Marlen "Mark" Chernyavsky z'l	Saul Zalik z'l	(Miriam) Bebe Lieberman z'l
Miriam Adler z'l	Ruvim Slitsian z'l	Harry Fefferman z'l	Leon Liger z'l
Leonid Rodels z'l	Philippe Chkliar z'l	(Jane) Shana Fefferman z'l	David Lutsky z'l
Doreen Albert z'l	Jack Soroka z'l	Frida Feldman z'l	Marvin Lutsky z'l
David Schwarz z'l	Leon Cohen z'l	Lilian Green z'l	David Mansour z'l
Nissim Arie z'l	Allan Tallman z'l	Jeffrey Paul Grobman z'l	Risa Margolus z'l
Yeva Shekhtman z'l	Hilton Dinner z'l	(Carol) Carlee Hurl z'l	Ann Mishna z'l
Dr. Morris Besney z'l	Lizaveta Ukrainskaya z'l	Fhira Khodorovski z'l	Dr. Marvin Mitchell z'l
Cameron Shragge z'l	Gregory Dogor z'l	Martha Kushner z'l	Iliya Oratovsky z'l
Adam Brauner z'l	Dr. H. Richard Uretsky z'l	Rabbi Eli Lagnado z'l	Arnold Ostfield z'l
Dr. David Shragge z'l	Evelyn Eaman z'l	Dina Lapin z'l	Cecil Paull z'l
Bobby Cairns z'l	Igor Volovodovsky z'l	Debra Arlene Lazanik z'l	Isaac Pels z'l
Boris Shukhman z'l	Harvey Emas z'l	Gary Julian Levine z'l	Ruvim Perkis z'l
Sharon Cairns z'l	Morley Wolfman z'l	Maria Lewit z'l	Soly Pokroy z'l

Every effort has been made to identify all those who have passed away in the last year, but if we have omitted someone, please contact the JAHSENA office.

still stands out was their cooking of grasshoppers. In retrospect, this provided them with some protein in their diet.

The town ball diamond was well used by the school and by adult ball teams. I can remember the voice of my father, Sam Simons with his Yiddish/Russian accent, in the role of umpire calling strikes and balls. This field was also used for the annual school track meet.

Many town students brought their lunch to school, especially if there was a school program scheduled. Times were very tough and one image that has never left me was the sandwiches brought to school by Charlie and Eddy Starcheski. They consisted of home-made bread slathered with lard which had been sprinkled with salt to provide flavour.

Rainy weather could be a time of fun during the summer holidays. The town roads became soft and muddy and kids loved to run barefoot in the mud.

Another activity that some people enjoyed, while others despised, occurred on Halloween. Every year without fail one or more outdoor toilets in town magically appeared atop the school or other structures around town. It was always “suspected” that a bunch of high school boys waited until the early hours of the morning to do this. To my recollection, although there were many “suspects” nobody ever found out who the guilty “troublemakers” were.

Another annual event was the fall baking and garden fair sponsored by the schools. All the kids helped plant their family garden. In the fall, when every vegetable was at its prime, we dug them up, selected the “best” of each variety, and washed them.



Alfies 85th. Front: Alfie, Sarah, Morris.
Back: Sid, Norman, Hal c. 2003

We were then encouraged to arrange them artistically in bunches or piles to show them at their best. So, vegetables of many varieties and colours, such as carrots, potatoes, beets, onions, parsnips, garlic, tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins, squash, etc. were carefully prepared and delivered to the town hall to be displayed and judged. Most of us (with our mother’s help or supervision) baked a cake or cookies to be submitted for a prize. Everyone participating looked forward with great excitement to winning prizes and ribbons for their submissions.

Our mother made sure that each of her children learned how to cook and insisted that some of us learn how to sew. She was a wonderful cook and we all remember smelling her freshly baked cinnamon rolls when we came home from school.

There was no such thing as a swimming pool in Round Hill. Just a short distance east of town we had the “Collieries” which were deep holes resulting from strip mining. After many years of rainfall they were filled with water. In town the closest thing we had to a lake, or water, was called the slough – it was located in the middle of town between the cheese factory and Bosman’s store

and was probably no more than two or three feet deep. I can remember spending many hours there, “flying” a windup pontoon airplane on the surface of the water and having to retrieve it when it got tangled up in the weeds.

Our outdoor hockey rink was located just across the slough, on a road that cut through it. We had a very small shack to change into our skates. But most of us put our skates on at home (while listening to Foster Hewitt broadcasting a Toronto Maple Leafs game) and then “skate-walked” to the rink. It was a good three-block walk for me. As we got older (10-14 years old) we played in a hockey league with games in Camrose, Ryley, Holden, Tofield, etc. Harold Mohler (married to Mary Boychuk, who worked in our Dad’s store) was our coach. I remember him making many anti-Semitic remarks. We always looked forward to a hamburger at a Chinese restaurant in Camrose.

At many birthday parties, one of the activities that everyone enjoyed was “bobbing for apples”. My recollection is that apples were floated in some water in a large tub and we had to place our head in the tub to pick up an apple with our mouth.

As a pre-teen and young teenager I experienced two traumatizing events. The first and most traumatic occurred when some of the older boys tossed me into the local swimming hole called the collieries. The collieries were some large, very deep excavations created as a result of strip mining. Following the drainage from the melting of winter snow as well as rain, the collieries filled with water. Since I couldn’t swim it was a terrifying ordeal finding myself in a pool of

water that was so deep. Fortunately for me some of boys jumped in and pulled me out. This experience has been etched in my memory and it took many years to shed my fear of swimming.

The second trauma happened when a few of us went out “hunting” for gophers and partridges with our slingshots. Just before heading for home, I bent down to pick up a rock for my slingshot, and as I stood up something feeling like a baseball bat hit the back of my head knocking me out. Upon regaining consciousness, the guys were standing over me and someone had pulled off a sock to cover the wound at the back of my head that was bleeding profusely. That was when I found out that Keith Johnson, who was standing behind me, had pulled his slingshot back and accidentally let go just as I stood up.

Our school always held Christmas concerts consisting of plays and music. The kids had the opportunity to dress up in costumes and act in Christmas scenes. Even though we were Jewish our parents always encouraged us to participate. It should be mentioned that we were also encouraged to investigate and learn about the different religious practices (Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Pentecostal, etc) of our friends and neighbours. One vivid memory was the funeral for Charles Fergstad Sr. It was the first open-coffin funeral that I experienced. When a Pentecostal minister (who had one wooden leg) started to conduct services in the High School every second Sunday, it was our father who invited him for lunch or dinner following the service. They held many long discussions of religion and world

affairs.

In the Round Hill area, there were people from many different European countries: Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, etc. as well as from other parts of Canada and the United States. We were therefore exposed to many different cultures, food and languages at the store and at social gatherings. As a result, Alfie and I in particular, besides learning Yiddish and Russian from our parents, managed to learn and use a few languages. We became quite fluent in Ukrainian and Polish and were able to communicate speaking Norwegian and Swedish. We also had a number of Mennonite families, whose women wore a bonnet type of head covering. Jake King, who lived on a farm just north of town, used to drive his truck to Drumheller to get oil for my Dad. Because he would leave very early in the morning, when I went with him, I stayed at their house overnight. They did not have radios and did not have mirrors in their homes (to prevent vanity). I remember them being very hard workers and very honest and reliable.

Many wedding, anniversary and other parties, dances and meetings took place at the town hall. Most activities were very well attended by the townspeople and farmers in the area. In the winter people put their coats on tables around the circumference of the hall. These “padded” tables became nurseries. Many women, after nursing their babies, would rock them to sleep and then make a depression in the coats to place the sleeping babies. Then they would resume dancing or talking to their friends.

Other memories of daily life in

Round Hill:

- ♦ making coffee in copper tub (tea made especially for Sam Simons who didn't drink coffee)
- ♦ beer drinking around hall fights
- ♦ watching pigs slaughtered, dipped in hot water, skinned, etc
- ♦ training pet owls, dogs, harnessing gophers with binder twine
- ♦ stooking (stacking bunches of wheat upright, to prepare it for the threshing machine)
- ♦ the town pump – no water tower, no running water, just underground wells. Townspeople had to carry water – some people drilled their own well.
- ♦ coal & wood stoves in homes and schools

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 Sam & Esi Zion on Amy and Daniel's wedding from Cory Felber.

To Murray and Marilyn Glick on their daughter Jackie's wedding from Cory Felber.

SYMPATHY

To the Paull family on the passing of Cecil Paull, z'l, from Tessie Finkelstein and Howard Davidow and Anita Sky.

To Paula & Eric Weil, Cheryl & Wayne Shur, Jerry & Norma Grobman on the passing of Jeff Grobman, z'l, from Cory Felber and Marni Dlin.

To Anna Linetsky and Family; Lena and Victor and Family on the passing of Eugene Linetsky, z'l, from Michael and Colleen Paull.

- ♦ daily delivery of milk from the Boychuck farm in large wine jugs or whatever glass bottles were available. The milk was NOT pasteurized.
- ♦ horseback riding at the Fergstad's on their farm just across the tracks from town.
- ♦ large families with 13 to 17 kids – some country schools filled by 2 or 3 families

Frank Starcheski, cousin of Eddy & Charlie, was born deaf. He attended the School for the Deaf in Winnipeg. He would come home for two months every summer. We became good friends and I learned some sign language from him. He would come to the store almost every day to “listen” to the vibrations from the radio. We did not see each other again until 100th Anniversary celebrations in Round Hill in 2005. As soon as I walked into the town hall, he immediately recognized me and walked briskly toward me with a huge smile and gave me a big hug.

- ♦ watching Sam Boychuk make cheese from milk in large vats, cutting soft cheese into strips, filling rounded forms to press it, then weeks later dipping the large rounds of cheese into hot wax in order to help preserve it. Sam always allowed us to sample some of the delicious “rubbery strips” of cheese.
- ♦ going down into the underground mine with the permanently etched smell of carbide (used in miners lamps), with the only showers in town, the clicking sound of the small coal cars on tracks.
- ♦ watching the wagons unload their loads of wheat at the elevators into the grates on the floor and then watch it being lifted by scoops

attached to a conveyer belt going up high into the elevator; watching the agent inspecting the grain by the handful. The kids were always allowed to take a handful of wheat and chew it.

What a wonderful, unforgettable taste.

Mr. Ashley, the train station agent who also raised bees as a hobby. He allowed some of the kids to squirt smoke at the beehives as he pulled out the frames filled with honeycomb, from which he sliced off the wax to spin out the honey. He always called me “Ikie”.

- ♦ watching and helping our father, Sam Simons, assemble new farm machinery because it was only partly assembled by the manufacturer and shipped by rail.
- ♦ marvel at how mechanic, Jake Urlacher, disassembled the parts of a car and then put them all back together (with no pieces left over), as well as watch how Dick Foss would heat, bend and shape metal, how he would weld pieces together and listen to him explain some of his inventions (one invention was a different kind of battery which was rumoured to have been bought out by some large corporation). It now happens that a relative, Marvin Foss and his wife Noreen operate a restaurant (“Noreens”) on the very site that Dick Foss had his garage.

Vic Swanson's Blacksmith shop – he made horseshoes and would put the horse's hoof between his legs and nail the horseshoes using special nails.

- ♦ listening to our father playing bridge with some of the neighbours. We would always hear something like “Mike (an elevator agent), why didn't you show me

your ace?”

Most people take for granted the hardtop roads now found around small towns. Up until the late 1940's or early 1950's most of the country roads were dirt (like the road to Camrose and Tofield). In the late winter or early spring anyone traveling after a wet snowfall or rain had to rely on “natural pavement”, i.e. if they didn't want to get stuck, they would have to travel very early in the morning while the heavily rutted roads were still frozen. The road from Tofield to Edmonton was very rough and covered with large loose gravel that accounted for many broken windshields and dented grills. The 65-mile trip to Edmonton could take from almost two hours to three hours, depending on the road conditions.

Two young men- Walter Gill and Bob Moresby, who played hockey with me (a couple years older than me) were among the many local “boys” who joined the army in 1940. Unfortunately, they were killed overseas.

My father sold our store and the family moved to Edmonton in 1942.

Our parents had 6 children:

- ♦ **Alfred (Alfie):** Born May 12, 1918; passed away July 12, 2003 at age 85
- ♦ **Morris :** Born September 3, 1920; passed away November 16, 2010 at age 90
- ♦ **Sarah:** Born February 25, 1923
- ♦ **Harold (Hal):** Born October 8, 1928; passed away 2019
- ♦ **Twins:**
Norman: Born August 20, 1931; passed away September 11, 2019 at age 88
Sidney: Born August 20, 1931; passed away June 23, 2018 at age 87



A Funeral Conducted by the Connely-McKinley Funeral Co. 1938

Czar, crafted the ornate iron gates decorated with birds and flowers, which guard the cemetery. In 1963, the Chesed Shel Emes was built at 12313-105 Ave., a much larger facility, which included rooms for preparing the taharot, or body, and for sewing of the tachrichim, or shroud. The smaller chapel was renovated in the mid-1990s and is still often used for services.

Today, the Edmonton Chevra Kadisha is comprised of about 60 volunteers, both men and women, who offer 24-hour service for families of the bereaved. The Shomer and cemetery caretaker are paid employees. Once contacted, the Chevra meets with the family and looks after all funeral arrangements. The Shomer watches over the body until the funeral, and members of the society conduct the burial and look after the cemetery.

The current Jewish Cemetery has served the needs of the community for more than 100 years but will run out of room for new burials in another two to three years. Fortunately, the Edmonton Chevra Kadisha has been preparing for this time, and purchased land on 156th Street and 147th Avenue almost twenty years ago. Site work for the new Jewish Cemetery gets underway in Summer 2021. Now is the time to plan for laying of the foundation for the next 100 years. A campaign is underway to raise funds for the new cemetery. Some money was raised already in the Edmonton UJA Over and Above campaign this year, but the Chevra are still a long way from their goal of \$1 million needed for construction of the new cemetery.

Please see the insert for further information.

The Edmonton Jewish Cemetery Enters a New Chapter

By DEBBY SHOCTOR

Jewish tradition has always stressed that each of us is responsible for one another. The burial of the dead and the comforting of mourners have been times when Jews, throughout the centuries, organized themselves to reach out with aid and compassion.

Numerous rabbinic texts stress the importance of caring for people at the time of their death and the Talmud, Shabbat 127a, teaches us that attending the dead to burial is a deed which yields a reward both in this world and in the the world to come.

The first Chevra Kadisha with an explicit mandate to provide for the entire community – whether a member of the Chevra Kadisha or not – was founded in Prague by Eliezer Ashkenazi in 1564. Since

then, Chevra Kadisha organizations, loosely translated as “Friends of the Dead,” have been founded worldwide, wherever Jewish communities exist.

Our Cemetery here in Edmonton has been around for well over 100 years. Following the formalization of the Edmonton Jewish Community in 1906 with the establishment of the Edmonton Hebrew Association, Mr. Abraham Cristall, Edmonton’s first Jewish citizen, purchased land on the south side of the North Saskatchewan river on May 26, 1907, for a Jewish Cemetery. The land was located at 7622-101 Ave., which still serves as the community cemetery to this day.

Early on, founding member Jacob Baltzan formed an alliance with local funeral parlour owner J. Connely, of Connely-McKinley funeral directors, to help with the Jewish funerals and this relationship continues to this day.

At first, there was nothing but a small wooden shed used for shelter out at the cemetery, but from 1930-1935 money was collected to build a permanent chapel there, which was and is used for services for many years until it became too small to accommodate larger funerals. Mr. Aronov, a former Blacksmith to the



Cemetery Plaque c. 1907

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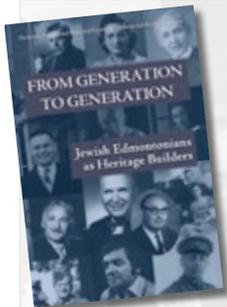
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