



UJPO News



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Enclosed with this edition is a special feature:
A Most Honourable Mentsh: Tribute to Sylvia Friedman

The United Jewish People's Order is a national, nonpartisan, socialist-oriented, secular organization, serving Canada's progressive Jews in individual organizations since 1926 and collectively as the UJPO since 1945.

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Banner graphic by Avrom Yanovsky, 1911-1979

JEWISH PIONEER FARMERS OF WESTERN CANADA

By Gloria Geller

A well-kept secret is that Jews were among the early Europeans to settle the Prairie provinces as farmers. Eager to fill in the vast prairies with immigrants, the Government of Canada provided homesteads of 160 acres for a \$10 registration fee. Alexander Galt, Canadian representative in Britain, after attending a meeting of the Russo-Jewish Committee seeking to provide assistance to Jews who had fled pogroms in the Russian Empire in 1881, told John A. MacDonald that Jews would make good farmers. MacDonald responded: "A sprinkling of Jews in the Northwest would do good; they would at once go in for peddling and politics," suggesting they would be both entrepreneurial and active citizens.



Isaac Blatt and his sons Henry and Jack stocking wheat sheaves in Sonnenfeld, Saskatchewan. From "Pioneer, Plough and Prayers: The Jewish Farmers of Western Canada" by Cyril Edel Leonoff.

At about the same time the established Jewish communities of Montreal and Toronto were finding it hard to meet the needs of the large numbers of destitute Jews arriving from the Russian Empire. A Montreal group reached out to the Jewish Colonization Association for help with the establishment of farm colonies in the west as a solution. The Jewish Colonization Association was established in 1891 by Maurice de Hirsch, a banker who along with his wife Clara, were Jewish philanthropists and visionaries who believed in providing the poor with training and tools to make them self-supporting. The Jewish Colonization Association supported colonies in western Canada in the late 1880s through to the mid-20th century.

New Jerusalem was the earliest community consisting of 27 families that settled in Moosimin, Saskatchewan in the early 1880s. The families were provided with insufficient loans of \$259-\$485 for all of their needs. The colony experienced early frost, drought, hail that destroyed their crops along with inadequate shelter in sub-zero weather. Nevertheless they built a small synagogue and a Hebrew School and hired a rabbi who was also the teacher. Ill prepared for a Prairie winter, the rabbi was caught in a blizzard. His frozen feet had to be amputated. When fire destroyed their entire hay crop, the settlers resettled much more successfully in Winnipeg, much to the chagrin of Alexander Galt who denounced the settlers as "vagabonds" who had returned to their "natural avocation of peddling." Other settlements turned out to be more successful although all experienced many hardships.

A small group more familiar with farming established a settlement in Wapella that lasted from the early 1900s through to the 1960s. One member of this group, Hirsch Jacobson stated: "I started alone and with no experience, uprooted trees, cleared brush and broke up the land. Eventually with the help of my wife and son I became a big farmer working three quarters of land, have lots of cattle and horses and full equipment from a needle to a threshing machine. I have made the land one of the most fruitful farms in the district and have proved that a Jew can be a farmer as well as anybody else."

Clara Schwartz met Israel Hoffer on board the ship taking both families to Canada. Israel had studied agriculture at a Baron de Hirsch funded agricultural school in the Russian Empire. Clara

(continued on page 6)

NATIONAL UJPO NEWS

FROM TORONTO

By Julia Barnett, President UJPO-Toronto

As usual, Toronto UJPO is busy and engaging in multiple areas. Below I report on our Alternative Shabbes events, other talks and forums, the Shule, Camp Naivelt, staffing developments, and other notable events and reminders.

Alternative Shabbes Programs: In March and April we held two events. On March 31 the discussion was about the **rise of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of racism**. The event was well attended and participants engaged in small groups with a series of questions about experiences with and responses to the rise in all forms of racism. We have made links to a multi-faith group in Brampton who have come together in response to the dramatic rise of Islamophobia in their community. We attended the first meeting of the group, have signed a joint statement, and are looking forward to inviting them to be part of the Peace Tea at Camp Naivelt this summer.

On April 28 a small enthusiastic crowd gathered for our Alternative Shabbes event MC'ed by Martin van de Ven, with the theme **"What's On Your Playlist"**. Participants were asked to bring a musical piece – whether song or orchestration – that resonated with them, play it for the audience, and initiate discussion. Some brought a CD, some brought music or YouTube on their smart phones, and a family member of the Jaeger-Blatts, visiting from Australia, brought his didgeridoo!

After an introduction by Martin emphasizing the importance of listening, volunteers explained the reason for their selection, the impact it had on their or others' lives, and after playing the piece, there were questions and discussion. We were privy to a slice of our members' personal lives that we usually don't see during other meetings and social events.

On May 26th we hosted a **pre-Pride Alternative Shabbes**, celebrating the publication of Coach House Press' book, "Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer". We were joined by editors John Lorinc, Maureen Fitzgerald, Rahim Thawer and several contributors to the book including Amy Gottlieb, Anu Radha Verma and Rachel Epstein (our new Executive Director).

Third Seyder: April also saw a well-attended annual Third Seyder, on April 15. (See the following article by Rachel Epstein for more details.)

The Rise of Fascism – Israel in the Age of Trump: On May 11, UJPO Toronto and Independent Jewish Voices co-sponsored a talk by Lia Tarachansky, the Morris

Winchevsky School Education Director. In a well-informed and fascinating talk, Israeli-Canadian journalist Lia Tarachansky drew parallels to some of the characteristics of fascism outlined by Italian writer Umberto Eco and concluded with a discussion of

what she continues to see as reasons for hope amidst the global rise of ultranationalism and xenophobia. Her talk generated a lot of interest and discussion, and will be followed up by more conversations within UJPO-Toronto, as we continue to educate ourselves and map out a path for activism on issues related to Israel/Palestine.

Shule: The school has had many positive changes this year, culminating in the closing day on May 7. The plan was to have UJPO members Ester Reiter and Joyce and Hannah Wayne conduct a historical tour of Kensington Market, but the weather did not cooperate, so we did a virtual tour and a virtual picnic indoors. Our B'Nai Mitzvah celebration with six graduates is coming up on June 17. The students are working hard to prepare with their teacher, Izzy Waxman.

Lia Tarachansky participated in a year-long seminar on Experiential Learning, and will, over the summer, re-design a multi-year curriculum to incorporate it into each lesson plan.

Other important and noteworthy UJPO-Toronto news:

- The Camp Naivelt season is ramping up. There has been a community clean-up session and exciting programming planned, including a Music and Art camp. Programming includes an opening day on July 1 with a Progressive Feast, a cultural program with Min Sook Lee, bagel brunches with Judy Deutsch of Science for Peace and Stephen Lewis, and the annual Peace Tea on Sunday, August 6 (Hiroshima Day). Music camp runs from July 23-29, and Arts camp from August 7-12.
- At the office: Barbara Blaser has resigned from her bookkeeping role as of April 30. Maxine Hermolin will be retiring at the end of June. Maxine's Retirement Party will be held on June 3rd. (For more information call 416 789-5502). *We will sorely miss these dynamic and hardworking women, both of whom have made invaluable contributions to UJPO over many, many years!*
- We have hired a new bookkeeper, Matt Hicks, who has been trained by Barbara and will sit on the newly-established Finance Committee. We have also established a Building Committee to work with the Executive Director to



Lia Tarachansky, Morris Winchevsky School Education Director
Photo: Sam Blatt

ensure ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the Winchevsky Centre building.

- A new musical initiative spearheaded by Max Wallace is reintroducing music to UJPO Toronto since the demise of the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir. On May 18 the first gathering of interested participants met to sing, and to explore the potential forms in which singing will again become a significant part of our current and future year-long cultural life. Its next gathering will be June 8th. Stay tuned for exciting developments!
- The UJPO-Toronto Board continues to consider the five areas identified as priorities: Indigenous Rights; Anti-Racism; the Environment; LGBTQ issues; Israel and Palestine. We will be moving forward on some new strategic planning initiatives soon. ♦

Third Seyder: Tikkun Olam 2.0 – Building Creative Solidarity

By Rachel Epstein, Executive Director

Over 200 people attended the 2017 UJPO/MWS Third Seyder on April 15, a mixture of UJPO members, Shule families and others seeking a secular, social justice-focused celebration. The theme this year was **Tikkun Olam 2.0 – Building Creative Solidarity**. Our aim was to celebrate the multitude of ways people here and around the world, in the face of rising hatreds, are expressing resistance and solidarity by speaking, acting, singing, dancing and protesting. We also wanted to bring focus to the five areas of work prioritized by UJPO members: solidarity with Indigenous peoples and struggles, anti-racism, the environment, LGBTQ issues, and Palestine and Israel. And we tried to integrate politics and culture, celebrating some of the great artists of our time, artists who weave social justice into the fabric of their work: Buffy Sainte-Marie, Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen.

This year we integrated some new elements – a Human Bingo game to encourage people to mingle, and the Sephardic custom, popular in Iran and Afghanistan, of whipping each other with green onions while singing *Dayenu*. The children from the Shule were joined by others to lead *Dayenu* and to ask the Four Questions.

The current moment calls for new questions and new ways of doing things and we took the opportunity of the Seyder to pose some key questions:

Building Creative Solidarity: How do we build creative solidarity and connect the dots between issues and communities? What is working? What must we do differently? What are the next steps we can take together?

Reconciliation: How do we consistently, effectively and respectfully act as allies to Indigenous people in their



May Day march: Sahaj Blatt, Sam Blatt, Ronnee Jaeger
Toronto. Photo: Errol Young

struggles for justice? How do we push Canadian governments to work in meaningful partnership with Indigenous people?

Anti-Racism: How can we honour Viola Desmond and all who have followed her, and confront anti-Black racism, both in our culture and within ourselves? How can we support groups like Black Lives Matter who are rejecting government tokenism in favour of real change?

Palestine & Israel: How can we support the movement of Jews and Palestinians, both here and in Israel, who work not only for an end to occupation but for a country where all have the same rights? How do we who are Jewish and care deeply about justice persuade other Jews to see the injustice that is happening in our name in Palestine?

Environment: Are we ready to leap in relation to the environment? Can we afford not to? What does this look like?

Queering Our World: How do we link LGBTQ2S struggles with other social movements in order to connect the dots between issues?

We asked people to respond, both verbally and by adding to flipcharts we had placed on the walls. These comments will guide our ongoing reflections and activities.

A huge thank you to all who worked so hard to make the Seyder happen, and to all those who brought it alive by attending! ♦

FROM VANCOUVER

By Carl Rosenberg

The Peretz Centre for Secular Jewish Culture is the home of many lively cultural programs. I always enjoy the Friday morning Sholem Aleichem Speakers Series. Recently writer and editor Martha Roth gave an excellent presentation on the American Jewish writer Tillie Olsen, “How Much is Enough? Tillie Olsen and Scarcity.” Martha (who was active in *Outlook* as both writer and editor) read from and discussed Olsen’s stories, which often portrayed oppression and poverty. Martha knew Olsen personally, and gave a vivid description of her life, which was one of activism as well as literature.

I also enjoy the Fraytik Tsu Nakht (FTN), the Peretz Centre's monthly secular shabbes gathering, with its readings, songs, potluck dinners and presentations. Two recent ones stood out for me. Paul Zysman, an active member of the Peretz Centre and a child survivor, showed slides of his recent visit to Warsaw, the city of his birth. Another Peretz regular, musician David Skulski, told us about Salomone Rossi and the Jews of Italy. Rossi (ca. 1570 – 1630) was an Italian Jewish composer and violinist, and a transitional figure between the late Italian Renaissance and early Baroque.

As always, the Peretz Centre had a wonderful Community Passover Seyder, featuring its own secular *hagaddah*, a Holocaust memorial service, the Vancouver Jewish Folk Choir's Peysakh repertoire, and a delicious traditional Peysakh meal.

One event in which I was involved was a panel discussion on April 9, held at the Peretz Centre, organized by Independent Jewish Voices-Vancouver on the subject of "Israel, Canada and Me in the Age of Trump." Ably moderated by IJV member Stephen Aberle, the discussion featured four progressive Jewish speakers reflecting on what is being done to resist oppressive policies in all three countries, and the speakers' own involvement with these issues.

All four speakers were excellent: Eviatar Bach, a physics and computer science major at the University of British Columbia, active in the UBC Social Justice Centre and Progressive Jewish Alliance campus groups; Dr. Shayna Plaut, Research Manager of the Global Reporting Centre and Adjunct Professor in International Studies, Simon Fraser University; Ofira Roll, born and raised in Israel, a PhD candidate in Education at UBC; and Rabbi Susan Shamash, recently ordained by ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal, and a retired lawyer and active member of Or Shalom Synagogue. (For a more detailed summary of their views, see my preview article, "Jewish values in Trump era," *Jewish Independent*, March 24.) ♦

FROM WINNIPEG

By Henry Shorr

Here are happenings for UJPO Winnipeg:

- Long time UJPO member Harry Rosenbaum passed away on May 6. He was a *mentsh* who touched the lives of many people and will be missed by them. His obituary is at: http://passages.winnipegfreepress.com/passage-details/id-245734/ROSENBAUM_HARRY
- The UJPO Book club met on April 23, 2017 and discussed the book "In the Garden of Beasts – Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin" by Erik Larson. The next meeting is on June 11. The group will be watching the video "Open Bethlehem".

- UJPO Winnipeg, with the generous donation of the Zuken Foundation, is three quarters of the way through the lecture series "Jews in Space" with Dr. Itay Zutra. The last lecture will be on Contemporary American Jewish Culture – the Post Diaspora Perspective.

- On April 25, UJPO and the Sholem Aleichem Community co-sponsored the commemoration of the 74th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The event was titled "Honouring Resistance – Vilna and Warsaw: Heroism and Sacrifice". The program included songs from the ghetto and by the partisans, with the North End Jewish Folk Choir, and soloists, a narration featuring guest Harry Nelken, and a memorial candle lighting. UJPO Winnipeg has been commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto resistance since 1945.

- Our annual barbeque and windup will be held on June 15.

- Henry Shorr is stepping down as chair of UJPO Winnipeg on June 15 after almost six years in this role. The board is trying to recruit new executive members and devolve some of the many roles of the chairperson.

- We have three new members. ♦

FROM HAMILTON

By Lyn Center

On April 2 UJPO members and friends met in Hamilton at the home of Gloria Geller and Carolyn Lehman. Gloria spoke on "Jewish Pioneer Farmers of Western Canada". It was so engrossing that we asked her to share it with *UJPO News*. It starts on page 1 and continues on page 6.

Our next "schmooze and nosh" will be held at the home of Paul Weinberg and Cathy McPherson, and will feature Ronnee Jaeger and Sam Blatt who will speak about their thoughts on Israel and their recent departure. The theme will be: "Where we are here, where they are there." ♦

WHAT'S IN ORDER

Mazl Tov

- To David Abramowitz on receiving the Ben Shek Social Justice Award at our Annual Third Seyder
- To Harriet Zaidman for receiving the well-deserved Outstanding Teacher-Librarian of the Year Award, from the Manitoba School Library Association
- To Roz Usiskin who has a new great grandson named Laurence (after Larry), born May 1 in Victoria to her granddaughter Jana

Condolences

- To Gary and Stuart Lubin on the passing of their brother, Michael Lubin
- To Rhonda Sussman on the passing of her partner, Howard Tessler (both were previous UJPO members)
- To Dora Rosenbaum on the passing of her husband Harry Rosenbaum (May 6)

Speedy recovery

- To John Williams, who is recovering from a shoulder operation. John has been our regular political cartoon contributor for the last three years, and is also a member of Union Art Service.
- To Bea Levis, who at age 98, fell recently and broke her nose and some ribs – lucky it wasn't worse!

POETRY & SONG

Ed. Note: This column of poetry and song was begun by Dan Meaney, who regularly contributed songs of resistance, labour and union. The editors of UJPO News are continuing this tradition in his memory.

There Is Power in a Union

By Billy Bragg

There is power in a factory, power in the land
Power in the hands of a worker
But it all amounts to nothing if together we don't stand
There is power in a union

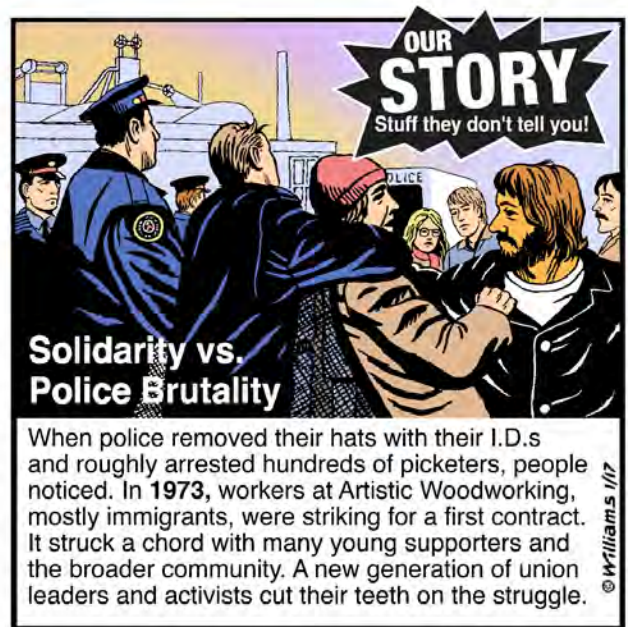
Now the lessons of the past were all learned with workers' blood

The mistakes of the bosses we must pay for
From the cities and the farmlands to trenches full of mud
War has always been the bosses' way, sir
The Union forever defending our rights
Down with the blackleg, all workers unite
With our brothers and our sisters from many far off lands
There is power in a union

Now I long for the morning that they realize
Brutality and unjust laws can not defeat us
But who'll defend the workers who cannot organize
When the bosses send their lackeys out to cheat us?

Money speaks for money, the Devil for his own
Who comes to speak for the skin and the bone
What a comfort to the widow, a light to the child
There is power in a union

The Union forever defending our rights
Down with the blackleg, all workers unite
With our brothers and our sisters from many far off lands
There is power in a union ♦



The Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU) took on the toughest struggles fighting for workers' right to organize and strike.

There Is Power in a Union lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

Ed. Note: "There Is Power in a Union" was written by Joe Hill in 1913. This version, with different words, was recorded by Billy Bragg for his album "Talking with the Taxman About Poetry".

https://www.google.ca/search?q=There%27s+Power+in+a+Union+lyrics&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&gws_rd=cr&ei=LJsKWdGaF4L-jwTwyqD4Bg

YIDDISH

National Yiddish Book Center Receives Grant to Further Its Cultural Preservation Efforts

By Miranda Cooper, Tablet, May 3, 2017

With the help of a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts, has new resources to put toward its honorable mission of preserving and showcasing Yiddish literature and Jewish history. The \$170,000 award, which could include up to \$100,000 in additional matching funds, will support the Center's Wexler Oral History Project, an online archive of video interviews about Yiddish, as well as Jewish language, history, and culture. The videos, available in excerpted format on the center's website, chronicle the lived experiences of people from all walks of life who have a story to tell about *yiddishkayt*. Some are in Yiddish; others are in English. The project, which was founded in 2010, currently includes more than 700 interviews.

The Yiddish Book Center, located in Amherst, Massachusetts, was founded in 1980 by Aaron Lansky in order to preserve a vast number of Yiddish texts that would have otherwise been forgotten or discarded. The Center has since saved over a million Yiddish books, and is committed to sharing the rich world they contain with scholars and visitors through conservation, translation initiatives, language and culture educational programs, exhibits, and much more. In 2014, the Center was awarded a National Medal for Museums and Libraries, the nation's highest honor for such institutions, at a White House ceremony. ♦

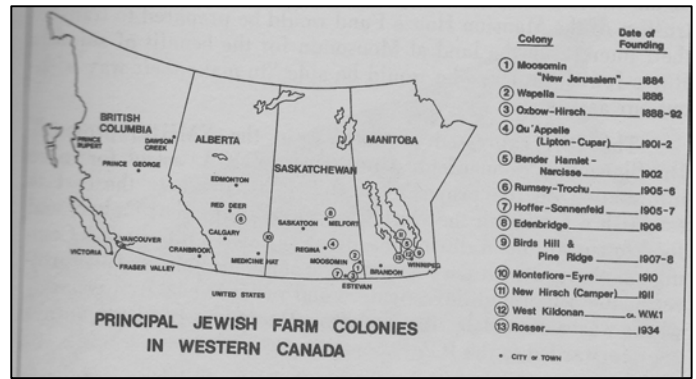
Ed. Note: This article has been abridged for publication.

<http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/231932/national-yiddish-book-center-receives-grant-to-further-its-cultural-preservation-efforts>

CANADA

(Continued from page 1) described their arrival in Lipton, Saskatchewan in May 1905 dressed for warm weather to find the ground covered in snow, a strong prairie wind blowing. There was no road or trail to follow, only dense shrubbery and trees and the sound of coyotes howling. The family purchased a pair of oxen, a cow, wagon and farm equipment. Their sod hut was built five feet down into the ground and four feet above ground. Their closest neighbour was four miles away. Clara also described the beauty around them, the animals, birds, prairie sky, clear clean air. When they lost their home to fire the family moved to Hoffer where Israel, his father and brother settled. Clara describes a trip Israel made to get a mare and colt. He and his friend walked 50 miles to Estevan and took the train to Hirsch. On their way back they took turns riding the mare. They got caught in a blizzard, were blinded by ice particles but survived, unlike two children who died a few yards from their home.

The Vickar family, three brothers and a sister were among a group of twenty-two who chose land in North Central Saskatchewan around the Carrot River. The group worked for other farmers, cut and hauled wood to town, helped build a bridge over the Carrot River. When a post office was introduced in 1907 they wanted to call the post office Jewish Bridge, but thinking the Postmaster General would not agree they named the new post office Edenbridge (*Yidenbrik*), meaning “Jew’s bridge” in Yiddish. A member of the group, Mike Usiskin, (brother-in-law of immediate past president of Winnipeg UJPO, Roz Usiskin) wrote (as translated by his niece, Marcia Usiskin): “from the turmoil of London to the deathly silence of the forest... the call of the land pulled us strongly... We were young and strong and afraid not of hard work... When could we have dreamt to own such vast lands – imagine 160 acres. We are all poorly dressed in patched overalls, we smoke cheap tobacco. We are all one family, without false ideas, no wealthy classes at present.”



Members of the Vickar family served as reeves of the local municipality, one was the first Justice of the Peace and another served in the Saskatchewan legislature. There was a school, community centre, a library and there were Jewish teachers of Hebrew and Yiddish, a dramatic society, debating teams and periodicals in the community.

The 1930s devastated many of the farming communities of the Prairies, with 247,000 residents including Jews leaving after experiencing drought and a massive grasshopper infestation which caused \$30 million in crop damage. Others prevailed well into the 1960s and beyond. Their accomplishments include the introduction of modern farming methods, involvement in the formation of the cooperative movement and wheat pools, involvement in civic affairs and the early establishment of a strong Jewish cultural and social life. ♦

Gloria Geller lived in Regina for over twenty years where she taught in the Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina. She now lives in Hamilton.

INTERNATIONAL



MARINE LE PEN, YOUR SLIP IS SHOWING.

kempkes union-art.com 2017

By J.G. Kempkes, with thanks to Union Art Service

A MOST HONOURABLE MENTSH

Sylvia Friedman - 1928-2016

By Michael Friedman and David Abramowitz



Photo by Michael Friedman

SYLVIA (TZIVIE) LILLIAN JACKSON, the youngest child and only daughter of four children to Sonja (Sarah) and Maurice Jackson in Winnipeg, was born on October 5, 1928. Her parents fled to Canada from eastern Europe's political strife, chronic poverty and rampant anti-Semitism.

Tragedy struck one week after Tzivie's birth when her father, a Canadian National Railway's locomotive painter, took gravely ill and died due to severe lead poisoning; in a six-month period five of his colleagues also died from handling the extremely toxic paints and materials.

As Sonja was now a widow and single mother, her oldest son Alec (12) had to find work for meager wages. Life was an existential crisis through the 1929 market crash, the great depression and World War II. With determination, love and the help of extended family, neighbours and friends they survived and Tzivie had relatively happy school years, never complaining about her early years. The only thing she missed was the father she never knew. In spite of economic hardships, she flourished at school graduating with honours. There were no qualms when funds were found for her piano lessons. She loved language, music and theatre, read voraciously and was boundlessly energetic, showing great athletic ability for one of her diminutive physical stature. At school Tzivie was an eager member of the choir, involved in many of the drama productions, and loved creative writing. Her *mameloshn* (mother tongue) was Yiddish – her first home language, and thus always was passionate for Yiddish literature, poetry, song and history. Her bilingual upbringing was very supportive of the creative things that she found most alluring and it explains where the roots of her later undertakings took hold.

During WWII, her brothers enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces and post-war they settled in Vancouver. So, after Tzivie finished her schooling in Winnipeg, she and her mother moved by train to Vancouver in 1948 to join them. Her first job was secretarial and, after her brothers established a toy distribution firm, she worked in their office.

In those early Vancouver days her brother, Soli, introduced her to her future husband, Searle Friedman; they married in 1951. She thus learned of the activities of the Peretz Shule and the UJPO, the Peace Movement and National Federation of Labour Youth. She very quickly and enthusiastically became involved in many of the associated political and creative activities. Most memorable were her theatrical performances in the Peretz and UJPO Drama Workshops which produced serious theatre productions by venerable Yiddish playwrights such as I.L. Peretz, Sholem Aleichem, Friedrich Wolf, Bernard Kops among others. Sylvia performed and starred in such plays as *Bontshe Shvayg*, *The Pious Pussy Cat*, *Professor Mamlock*, *Tevye and His Daughters*, and *Hamlet of Stepney Green*.

Between 1954 and 1960, Sylvia bore Michael, Robert and David. Raising them was no small feat, yet she remained active and the kids were usually nearby to experience the goings-on. She, Searle and the recently born Michael attended the Paul Robeson Peace Arch concert in 1954, organized by the United Mineworkers Union. This in turn inspired Sylvia and Searle and Searle's younger brother Perry to organize Pete Seeger's first concerts in Vancouver. They also organized concerts for composer and folk singer Earl Robinson and other progressive performers. This helped the artists sustain a living for both Seeger and Robinson, as each had been "blacklisted" by the House Unamerican Activities Committee. The Friedman household became the Vancouver whistle-stop in a chain of similar locales across North America for other "blacklisted" American artists in need of work, given that their blacklisting had shut down many of their normal employment opportunities.

Searle, having harboured a desire to study choral conducting and vocal technique, left in 1964 to study at the Deutsche Hochschule für Musik "Hanns Eisler" in East Berlin (German Democratic Republic). Sylvia and the children were able to join Searle in Berlin seven months later. Among the many arrangements that had to be in place was a new vocation for Sylvia as a radio broadcast journalist. She took to her new career like duck to water, working in the North American Department of Radio Berlin International (RBI). She wrote stories daily and also interviewed many visiting artists, musicians, actors and dignitaries. Sylvia, Searle and their sons were often called upon to act in radio plays (some on Holocaust themes.) The international RBI employees included those banished from their homelands, some displaced and many ex-pats, who ended up in Berlin. A natural organizer, Sylvia brought them all together, encouraging them to participate in a yearly bazaar or exhibit their artistic creations, or present some unique skills. It was a lively and lovely way to bring "the world" together.

On finishing his studies in 1970 Searle and the family moved to Toronto; he accepted the project to rebuild the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir. Sylvia joined the choir and became a driving force in the Toronto Ensemble Theatre (TET). Sylvia's theatrical endeavours were not limited to the UJPO's TET. Her brother-in-law, Perry Friedman, was commissioned to write and produce a professional pro-union production at Toronto's Jane Mallet Theatre. He hired a 16 piece orchestra, comedians Don Harron and Dave Broadfoot (Sylvia's colleague in the early days of the Vancouver UJPO Drama Workshop). It featured Sylvia and David Abramowitz as the narrators of the multi-media presentation titled "Employable You!" – a tribute to the advantages of and significant advances unions have made in improving the wages, benefits and living standards of their worker-members.

Sylvia's cultural experiences in East Germany led to her arranging for the UJPO to bring legendary Holocaust survivor, singer and entertainer, Lin Jaldati and her accompanist husband, Eberhard Rebling, to Canada for concerts sponsored by the UJPO, the major one in Toronto's Koerner Hall of the Royal Conservatory of Music.

In 1973, Sylvia took another career opportunity when Joshua Gershman offered her the position of managing editor of *Canadian Jewish Outlook*. Bringing her creativity and new ideas to the magazine, she quickly learned what it took to keep a small independent progressive Jewish magazine afloat and she set about drumming up many new subscriptions. After Gershman died, the magazine was solely in her hands. Receiving the opportunity to teach music at an alternative high school, Searle moved to Vancouver. In 1979 Sylvia and the family followed, taking the running of *Outlook* with her where she set up the new office in the Peretz Centre building.

With her as managing editor, Ben Chud and Henry Rosenthal became co-editors. She managed the magazine for 43 years and every issue was a proud achievement. The magazine's last editor, Carl Rosenberg, began as a volunteer, rising to assistant editor under Rosenthal, and finally becoming its editor after Rosenthal's death in 1998. *Outlook* Magazine was the crown of Sylvia's cultural achievements.

She continued to be active beyond the magazine, becoming member number one in Searle's newly founded Vancouver Jewish Folk Choir in 1980 (some jokingly referred to her as its assistant conductor). She helped keep theatre productions at the forefront at the Peretz Centre with the Peretz Players. She played a key role in assisting Lynna Goldhar Smith with the award winning Jewish Young People's Theatre. Consistently on the Peretz Board of Directors, she was twice the Vice-President of the Vancouver United Jewish People's Order and she helped organize the Peretz Seniors, the wonderful *Fraytik tzu Nakht* pot lucks with interesting speakers and entertainers. She also booked the Peretz Centre's Hall rentals, yet always found plenty of time to spend with her family and friends.

She worked tirelessly in the cause for social justice, was a staunch feminist, and believed fervently that peace and understanding were not only possible but also desirable between people of Jewish and Palestinian background.

Sylvia managed *Outlook* right to its last issue in May, 2016. In June, she sang in the Vancouver Jewish Folk Choir's Annual Spring Concert, the final season concert. Shortly thereafter she was diagnosed with cancer and on December 22, 2016 she died peacefully. At 88 years of age the candle went out on an amazing and creative lifetime of devotion to her family and friends, and the causes of peace, justice, universal understanding and saving our planet. ♦

Sylvia in Winnipeg

By Roz Usiskin

The other day, reviewing memories, I scanned some pictures of our early days in Winnipeg's Yiddish socialist movement. In 1947 Leibl Basman, principal of the Sholem Aleichem Shule and leading member of the newly formed UJPO, gathered together a group of 40 young people and produced S. Halchin's "Bar Kochba" the Playhouse Theatre. This was of major significance because the production, staged in a major venue downtown, was performed totally in Yiddish by young people in their teens and early twenties. In the cast photo, with all in elaborate costumes, Soli and Sylvia Jackson are in the front row.

This was probably Sylvia's first foray into the left wing movement having been schooled at the Talmud Torah, (Winnipeg's traditional religious school) soon followed her brother Soli who was already a "leftist". After the production, as did many other "would be actors", Sylvia became an integral, active member of UJPO Winnipeg taking part in such activities as our choir and drama club.

Thereafter, our friendship deepened especially when Sylvia married my school friend Searle. I fondly recall our many visits. Though they were then in Vancouver, they often traveled by car with their three sons stopping in Winnipeg for a few days on their way to Toronto or coming back from Germany, or *Outlook*'s first National convention at our Winnipeg Beach cottage, or the number of times I went to Vancouver staying with Searle and Sylvia and later with Sylvia, and UJPO's National

Board Conventions in Toronto. Later, we vacationed together in Puerto Vallarta with Lee and Hi Shechter, joined on occasion by Maxine. And of course, our work with Outlook over these many years bound us even closer together.

I have lost a dear friend but Sylvia has left me with wonderful memories of a friend who lived her life with honesty, integrity, dedication, enthusiasm and always with a smile on her face. I honour her memory. ♦

A TALE OF TWO FAMILIES

By Barbara Blaser

Upon arrival in Toronto Sylvia dug right in and joined all the groups and committees to which she was able to commit while being very dedicated to the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir. She never wavered from her interest in all the work that was going on in the UJPO at that time and her strong political points of view.

In the 1970's our family and the Friedman family spent a lot of time together, sometimes going to Bo Bo's for Chinese food and then for ice cream (which we shouldn't have, as we later realized). We had wonderful discussions believing we could solve world problems. Unfortunately, we did not.

Both families were very adventurous. When Searle's brother Perry and family arrived, we all decided to spend a Thanksgiving weekend together. We rented some cabins, packed up our families, took food, clothing, games, books, and anything else we could think of and headed to Minden, Ontario. It was cold, rainy, and between us, we had nine young children to keep busy!

Cooking was quite an adventure; Sylvia and I became very resourceful. How to cook a huge turkey on a wood burning heater in the centre of one of our cabins? We actually did it and it was the weekend food highlight.

Michael decided to take a boat ride in the lake, in the rain. The old boats hadn't been checked over, as he discovered in the middle of the lake, and the boat (with a hole in it) was taking on water. So we all yelled, "Michael, row the boat ashore," which he did and we still talk about it when we see him. ♦

SYLVIA, A DEAR FRIEND AND FELLOW TRAVELER

By Maxine Hermolin

My friendship with Sylvia was a genuine treasure that encompassed family connections and community and the sharing of culture and values.

At Outlook

I had the privilege of working with Sylvia when the *Outlook* and *Vochenblatt* (the progressive Yiddish/ English Canadian Jewish weekly newspaper) were in Toronto. This included Joshua Gershman, the beloved *Vochenblatt* editor and Karen Levine working on the newspaper's archives. Seeing Sylvia in action was impressive – organizing the content of the magazine, handling the subscriptions, overseeing the archive project – basically running it all.

An aside: After Sylvia and *Outlook* moved to Vancouver, we had phone chats and compared notes about the activities at the Peretz and Winchevsky Centres; given our similar roles, we had lots to talk about.

Travels with Sylvia: Sylvia and I took our trip of a lifetime – a Mediterranean Cruise. In Barcelona, before we boarded the cruise ship, Sylvia, aged 80, fell at Gaudi Park and we spent the day in the hospital where a cast was put on her broken wrist. It didn't deter her – although she was disappointed that she couldn't swim in the pools on the ship. We didn't miss a beat – excursions every day in France, Italy, Greece, Croatia – a dream vacation! Back on the ship we did everything – movies, spectacular concerts and of course, fine dining.

Then, when Sylvia was 85, we took a Danube River Cruise – cobblestone roads, busy itinerary and again, she was unstoppable. We visited Vienna and Budapest and met interesting people from all over the world. It was an exceptional treat to have been able to travel with Sylvia and share those incredible, unforgettable experiences I will always treasure.

In that tiny little package was quite the ball of fire. Sylvia was a going concern, never stopping, never losing energy, always thinking, working, doing – in her job, for her family, for her friends. It was non-stop action and giving.

Sylvia's positive outlook, boundless energy and drive were characteristics that kept her active and which influenced and inspired all around her. Ever present was her warmth, compassion, generosity, intelligence, wonderful sense of humour and her strong sense of justice. ♦

GOODBYE, SYLVIA

By Carl Rosenberg

It's not easy to say goodbye to Sylvia, given how much she was a part of all our lives, on a group level, in her immense work over many years as managing editor of *Outlook* magazine, and for me personally.

I became involved in *Outlook* over twenty years ago, and Sylvia, as managing editor, and Henry Rosenthal, our late editor, were my friends and mentors. I owe a lot to them both, and learned from them in many ways. It was Sylvia whose influence I especially absorbed, because of our day-to-day work together for so long.

Sylvia continued as managing editor when *Outlook* moved to Vancouver – in *Outlook's* new location this was a major factor that enabled *Outlook* to continue for so long. Later, Sylvia oversaw another transition – its move to temporary quarters while the new Peretz Centre was constructed, and then its return to the new Peretz Centre.

Sylvia played a pivotal role in *Outlook*, in addition to her day-to-day work in so many functions, from editing to managing subscription lists to dealing with finances. In the process of putting out the magazine, from editing to production, she always provided a much-needed perspective. In our discussions, not just between the two of us, but with everyone involved in the magazine (especially in recent years our Vancouver Associate Editor, Martha Roth), she often helped find just the right solution to whatever problem we faced, whether articles under consideration or the choice of a particular piece of cover art.

Another thing I loved about Sylvia was her sense of humour. We had a lot of laughs together, often about the inevitable mishaps (typos, etc.) that arise in magazine production (or any other business), and I enjoyed her many stories from her long life of activism in Winnipeg, Toronto, Berlin and Vancouver. She had memories of many people – many of them well known – and her recollections often gave fresh insights about them. She had a refreshing view of people – often irreverent, but not disrespectful. She saw their foibles, but also appreciated their strengths and good qualities.

Everyone in her several overlapping communities – the United Jewish People's Order, the Peretz Centre, the Vancouver Jewish Folk Choir, *Outlook* – was part of her family. Her connection with everyone in her *meshpokhe* (family) was visible in so many ways – in the office, when she greeted visiting out-of-town friends and supporters, at meetings of our Vancouver collective, and at the annual *Outlook* suppers, which were not only fund-raising events, but social gatherings for *Outlook* readers. In her Jottings column she took note of the joys and sorrows of our readers, of whom she knew a vast number. Our various neighbours – in the Peretz office, in the Vancouver Jewish Film Festival, the Montessori, the Jewish Museum and Archives – were our friends – and especially Sylvia's friends – and often dropped into the office to talk.

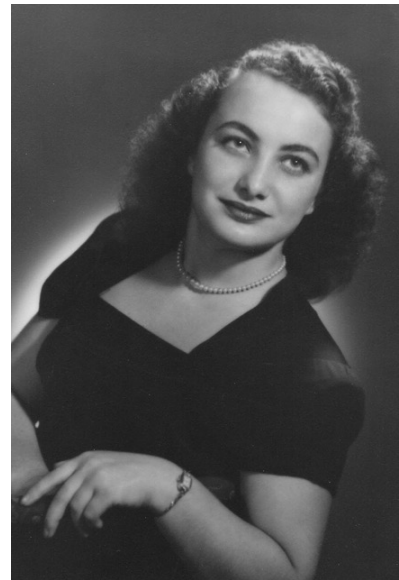
Sylvia was to me and all of us much more than a co-worker – she was an elder of the family of which we are all part. When I met my wife Delta and introduced her to Sylvia, she told Delta how pleased she was that we had met, since she had worried that I would always be single. When Delta's mother came to Vancouver from Mexico for a visit, Sylvia enjoyed meeting her. Even though they spoke only a few words of each others' language, they felt a strong connection.

Sylvia will live on in many ways – in the communities and movements to which she gave so much, in her family – her own personal family, and the family of activists of which she was part – in the many ways she touched every one of us. Sylvia, *zol zayn mit sholem!* ♦



Pious Pussycat (Vancouver)





UNITED JEWISH PEOPLE'S ORDER

The United Jewish People's Order develops and perpetuates a progressive secular approach to social and cultural matters, our Jewish heritage, the Yiddish language and holiday and festival celebrations; we sponsor secular Jewish education, musical and cultural groups, concerts, lectures, public forums, and take part in social action and related community activities.

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