



Living generously

Jo Ann Pomerantz and the art of giving **P13**

Nothing to lose

Ilana Pekar's long wait for a kidney **P17**



Hamilton Jewish News

THE VOICE OF JEWISH HAMILTON

DECEMBER 2014 VOL 29:2/ KISLEV 5775

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We especially wish to encourage anyone who has never made a donation to the Community Campaign to make this the year you join our community of givers and feel the joy that results from knowing you've made a difference.

AGH returns Nazi looted painting

FAMILY'S DECADES-LONG SEARCH ENDS AT THE ART GALLERY OF HAMILTON



Portrait of a Lady by Johannes Verspronck

Photo credit: Mike Lalich

Story by ABIGAIL CUKIER, Courtesy of the Canadian Jewish News

A family's decades-long search for a Nazi-looted painting has ended at the Art Gallery of Hamilton. Portrait of a Lady, by Dutch 17th-century artist Johannes Verspronck, was stolen in 1940, along with other possessions of Alma Bertha Salomonsohn, who had left Germany for London in 1939 and put her belongings in a container to be shipped to her. After it was stolen, Salomonsohn tried to lay claim to the portrait, but was unsuccessful. It was sold at auction in Hamburg in 1941, with the proceeds going to the tax office in

Berlin-Brandenburg.

Salomonsohn's husband Arthur Salomonsohn, chair of the board of the Deutsche Bank, who died in 1930, had assembled an important art collection. Salomonsohn, who changed her name to Solmssen after immigrating to the United States in 1948, began a search for her husband's paintings. After she died in 1961, her family continued the search.

"The record went blank until 1987," said Benedict Leca, the AGH's director of curatorial affairs.

See AGH TO RETURN PAINTING on page 9



Mystery Man

Irascible, outrageous and profane, but also, soft-hearted, loyal and exceedingly generous. Almost a year after his death last December at the age of 91, those closest to Marvin Goldblatt still wonder at how those seemingly contradictory qualities were able to co-exist in one man. Read Wade Hemsworth's profile on page 14.

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WHEN DOES PARENTING END?

A “helicopter parent” is a pejorative term describing parents who hover over their children, micro-manage their lives, and over-program their schedules. Technology has only made things worse with cell phones being described as the world’s longest umbilical cord.

While this phenomenon is certainly prevalent in many Jewish households, the focus surprisingly does not encompass all aspects of life. While math, music, French and dance are certainly within the purview, other things are glaringly absent. These include: Shul, substantive Jewish education and meaningful Jewish experiences. Most often these values find themselves at the bottom of the totem pole with few parental eyes “hovering” above.

As my oldest child began high school this year, I found myself reflecting on how the years of impactful parenting are so fleeting.

As a rabbi, I often meet with newlyweds and young couples and comment on the irony of how we are challenged to raise our children precisely during our busiest years. How, if we pause to blink, we can miss the opportunity entirely.

Nearly all the parents I encounter recognize the importance of transmitting Jewish values. Yet, a predictable pattern emerges – we fail to gauge the speed of time. Toddler and pre-school years are dismissed as premature for lifestyle changes. We feel no pressing need to engage in synagogue life or to enhance the Jewish character of our homes. Time seems endless.

As the primary years arrive, life quickly takes over. We soon find ourselves shifting to a bar and bat mitzvah mindset. Precisely then, we are unexpectedly confronted with teenage adolescence. Without warning, the opportunity for meaningful interaction quickly diminishes or dissipates entirely. Suddenly we realize that the core years of active parenting can almost be counted on one hand.

While much of the blame for the increased trends in Jewish disengagement focus on the education we provide our children during their formative years, this is only half the battle. In order to turn the tide, we need to recognize that the responsibility of parenting never ends. It is a lifetime endeavour. The only thing that changes are the tactics.

As our children become adults we often resign ourselves to being bystanders who constantly swallow opinions. While this approach may be prudent and wise, in actuality, the primary mode of influencing others requires no words.

A paradigm for the transmission of our values is evident in the first divine directive given to the Jewish nation. While still in Egypt, Moshe and Aaron summon the people and impart the laws of the paschal lamb. Their instructions conclude with the words “vechen asu” – and they (Moshe and Aaron) also engaged. Why the need to stress their compliance? Would anyone doubt the sincerity of Moshe and Aaron?

At the outset of Jewish history, our tradition is imparting an essential lesson. Moshe and Aaron recognized that words alone ring hollow. Only by modelling behaviour can we hope to inspire others. While they were both in their eighties, they understood that actions speak louder than words.

Responsible parenting requires the constant demonstration of our values no matter what the age of our children. Wherever we may be on the religious spectrum, this message is pivotal. We need to become the embodiment of our belief system in the most self-evident of ways. If we want our grandchildren to be affiliated Jews, we need to attend Shul consistently ourselves even if this means altering behaviour patterns of a lifetime. If we want our children to become lifelong learners of Torah, we ourselves need to crack open the spine of a book and exhibit an excitement and passion for Jewish knowledge.

Whether you’re the prime minister of Israel or a parent in Canada, we need to be aware that the eyes of our children still gaze in our direction. No matter what the age, we can never underestimate our power of influence. Parents are the perpetual role models and parenting is a lifelong responsibility.

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COMING UP

PASSOVER ISSUE

- **Deadline for Booking Ad Space**
Jan. 30, 2015
- **Deadline for receiving copy**
Feb. 6, 2015
- **Deadline for receiving ad copy**
Feb. 28, 2015
- **Estimated Date of Arrival**
March 19, 2015



MITZVAH GARDEN

Photo by Clareta Schoenberg

Dana Schoenberg and her family invited students from the Beth Jacob Hebrew school to help her plant 350 bulbs in the shul garden last October in honour of her bat mitzvah. The bulbs were purchased from Am Yisrael Chai, a non-profit Holocaust education and awareness organization. The Daffodil Project aspires to spread awareness of the Holocaust by planting 1.5 million daffodils in memory of the 1.5 million children who perished in the Shoah. “It was a great activity for the kids and a very meaningful mitzvah for Dana to twin her bat mitzvah with Elvira Ferdinand, a child who died in Auschwitz,” said her mother, Clareta. When the daffodils bloom next spring, the Schoenbergs will dedicate a plaque, officially launching a living Holocaust memorial garden.

Hamilton Jewish News

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HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS is published four times a year by Hamilton Jewish News Inc. and is funded by the Hamilton Jewish Federation Circulation 2,000

EDITORIAL POLICY
The HJN invites members of the community to contribute letters, articles or guest editorials. Written submissions must be forwarded by the deadline indicated in each issue. This newspaper reserves the right to edit, condense or reject any contribution for brevity or legal purposes.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

CARL DE LEON, PRESIDENT,
HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION



According to the Oxford English Dictionary, renewal is the act of refreshing or reviving, to change or to make new. The concept of renewal is also deeply rooted in Judaism. Indeed, to paraphrase Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, a person must always renew, begin and go back and begin anew. Since my tenure began a year and a half ago, the Hamilton Jewish Federation has been engaged in a process of renewal.

During the past year we have embarked on a number of new initiatives. As custodians of community funds, we continue to be more accountable to the community, and to strengthen our financial footing. We are working to enhance community cooperation and involvement with our Community with Open Doors. An example of a direct outcome of this initiative was the rally and memorial for the three slain Israeli teens this past summer, and will continue to engage the community to move this initiative forward. We laid the foundation for more and broader input from our community, with our new website, and surveys and direct outreach from our CEO. We allocated the most money in our history to our beneficiaries in a one-time increase designed to help them meet their needs. In addition to our regular allocations, we designated two pools of money to be used for cross-community projects, one for education and one for families of children who have special needs. In addition, our major events have been under the supervision of the Va'ad Hakashruth to enable all segments of the community to participate.

On the campaign side, we redesigned our strategies, incorporating professional input, to reinvigorate a campaign that has been level for many years. We were aggressive with our target of \$1.4 million; our community needs are great and, accordingly, so our targets. On the allocation side, we are moving to engage our beneficiaries more than once a year. We are partnering with and supporting our beneficiaries within the spirit of "Community with Open Doors." We also entered into conversations with Jewish Federations of Canada – UIA to discuss among other things, our catchment area.

Our leadership is committed to bringing even more accountability and transparency to Federation. They are dedicated to ensuring a community that is sustainable in the long term. This renewal is possible through the dedication and leadership of our Board, CEO and staff working in conjunction with the community. It is possible when we are all working together and moving in the same direction. To do that we need to continue to evolve as does every organization that wishes to progress and grow.

We are lucky to live in an incredible community with enormous potential and huge heart. We benefit from a committed CEO and passionate volunteers and staff. Together we do have the capacity to address the serious needs in the community: poverty, declining Jewish identity, and our system's long-term sustainability. Together, we can do extraordinary things.

PJ LIBRARY WAS THERE!

PJ Library was at the JNF community Sukkot extravaganza on Oct. 12, where children of all ages enjoyed building and eating their Sukkah creations, made of graham wafers, pretzels, icing and assorted candy. PJ Library books, mailed monthly to a child's home, are a vehicle in which to create Jewish moments that last a lifetime. Children in our community, between the ages of six months and six and a half years are eligible for this gift. Signing up is easy! Go to www.pjlibrary.com and complete the section "Enroll in this Community" in the Hamilton-Wentworth program. To receive the PJ Library monthly newsletter, or if you have PJ Library books your family has outgrown, contact Elaine at 905-627-9922 ext. 24 or email elvine@jewishhamilton.org.



This gift is made possible through the generosity of our donors and partners, including the Hamilton Jewish Federation, Harold Grinspoon Foundation, Shirley and Morris Waxman Family, our Lions of Judah Division and an anonymous donor.

Pictured above: Zane Lobb proudly displays his edible sukkah.

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

YVES APEL, CHAIR
COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN



A year and a half ago I had no idea; and now I have too many ideas. Not sure how this counts as progress, but learning on the job has sure been fun!

We are a generous community that has entrusted the Hamilton Jewish Federation as its main fundraiser for Jewish causes. We are good at it and we are getting better. A good fundraiser pays attention to the changing winds of donors' preferences, communicates clearly and passionately, and thanks all participants.

With this in mind, your Campaign Cabinet, an incredible bunch of tireless volunteers, have been redesigning our communication strategy so that we can connect with more donors and raise more money for more than 25 beneficiary agencies and programs. Our goal is to touch every donor and to give our donors the opportunity to express their commitment to a sustainable, fulfilling, prosperous, connected, and a secure Jewish life by making a pledge to the Community Campaign.

We have been raising about a million dollars a year in this community for longer than I've been alive, and we have made great use of it! Yet today our

beneficiary agencies need us to raise more. We need to raise \$1.4 million this fall so that we can begin to distribute it in the spring. When you get a call, please thank your canvasser for volunteering and consider making a responsible gift.

We are making great progress, with a number of donors increasing their donations by 18 per cent or more. Our two telethons raised a record \$13,808. We are working on a new mentorship program for new volunteer canvassers. We have hosted and will continue to create new recognition and educational programs for our top donors. We are looking into how to use social media in fundraising by connecting with the younger demographic. We are involving teenagers in "thank-you-thons".

In summary, we are on a roll! We hope we can finish as strong as we have started, and I look forward to updating you again soon.



Jordana Katz, Jake Kam and Noa Perez share their March of the Living reflections at the Kristallnacht commemoration during Holocaust Education Week 2014.

Holocaust Education Week

ELAINE LEVINE

This year's Holocaust Education Week programs furthered the Hamilton Jewish Federation Holocaust Education Committee's goal of applying the lessons of the past to prevent anti-Semitism, prejudice and racism today.

Our opening program on Nov. 2 featured the documentary 50 Children; The Rescue Mission of Mr. and Mrs. Kraus, the story of an ordinary Jewish couple who traveled to Nazi Germany and saved 50 Jewish children. On Nov. 6, the Canadian premiere of the documentary Blue Tattoo attracted about 250 people, many from diverse backgrounds, thanks to publicity from The Hamilton Spectator. Director and co-producer, Rich Kellman introduced the film and answered questions following the screening. On Nov. 9 the Kristallnacht commemoration featured personal testimonies from March of the Living participants, Noa Perez, Jordana Katz and

Jake Kam, and moving remarks by Nadia Rosa about the aging of Holocaust survivors and the need for education. The program also featured a screening of the Azrieli Series Short Films, intimate profiles of five memoirists who reflect on their wartime experiences. Also on display were projects created by 2014 Asper Foundation for Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program high school participants.

Many thanks to volunteers Lois Freeman-Collins, Sima Aronowicz, Doug Collins, Bev and Les Lasky, Anna Schaefer, Rhonda Dahan, Anne Barrs and Robin Zilberg, who helped make the week a huge success. Special thanks to our sponsors and community partners: The Hamilton Spectator, The Azrieli Foundation, Paratus Investors Corporation, Ewin Jacobs Endowment Funds, Temple Anshe Sholom, Beth Jacob Synagogue, Adas Israel Synagogue, Shalom Village and the JCC.

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Barry is lovingly remembered and deeply missed by his family and friends.

Federation responds to the "Hug A Terrorist" Campaign

HANNA SCHAYER, chair, HJF Public Relations Committee

On November 13, a provocative campaign on the McMaster Campus called "Hug A Terrorist" was given a sympathetic read in the Hamilton Spectator. This campaign literally used lovely young children as the face of the terrorists with which Israel engages. It was a callous and exploitative piece of public relations by the group known as Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) particularly in the shadow of our own terrorist encounters which claimed the lives of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent and Corporal Nathan Cirillo. The Hamilton Jewish Federation Public Relations Committee sent a letter to The Hamilton Spectator, in which we said, "such stunts do nothing to contribute to a genuine understanding of the Israeli-Arab conflict, let alone promote a peace that benefits both sides. We look forward to the day that Palestinian activists unequivocally disavow terrorism and affirm the right of Israeli children to live in security. Until then, such grotesque campaigns will only continue to betray the safety and security of all children and the legitimate interests of all Israelis and Palestinians." Raffi Szajnfarber, director of Jewish student life at McMaster

University Hillel, described what occurred on campus in a Federation e-blast that went out in mid-November.

"On November 13, Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) McMaster ... booked a table in the Student Centre. In addition to mounting a small visual display and occasionally handing out flyers to passers-by, SPHR brought two young boys to campus. According to media reports, both boys were under 10 years old. When large groups of students passed by, the boys were told to hold signs saying: 'Hug a Terrorist.' The shameful publicity stunt ... trivializes the serious nature of terror, including the negative impact it has on innocent people and their families. Fortunately, the vast majority of students recognized this and saw through SPHR's exploitative political stunt. We will continue to work closely with our partners on campus, within the University administration and student government, to ensure that the McMaster campus remains a safe space for all students."

Federation will continue to keep the community informed of developments on campus.

Mac student raises funds to promote inclusivity

SARAH KOHANZADEH



Sarah Kobanzadeh, 21, is a third year student at McMaster University.

Goodlife Fitness Half Marathon on behalf of Yachad. My team of close to 100 people, including Hamilton's Andrea Levy and Marc Scwhartz and their children Max and Arielle, exemplified everything that Yachad stands for: the inclusion of every Jewish individual, regardless of his or her personal challenges or communal affiliations.

As a beginner runner who had to walk every few meters to catch my breath, I still managed to complete the race. Among us were walkers, children being pushed by joggers, and those who weren't able to complete the entire distance, but cheered us on from the sidelines. We were participants of all ages and backgrounds and we achieved something wonderful together, because we helped and encouraged each other along the way.

Once again Toronto Yachad is participating in the Goodlife Fitness Marathon on May 3, 2015. I would love for my community to get involved with this amazing organization by joining the Toronto team. You can register at Toronto.teamyachad.com

If anyone would like to support this venture, please contact director of Toronto Yachad, Devorah Marmer at 416-986-1985 or email torontoyachad@ou.org. Yachad is such a special part of my life and I look forward to Hamilton's involvement.

Growing up in Hamilton and commuting every day to a Jewish high school in Toronto I had to find a place to meet new people and friends. That place was Yachad, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to enhancing life opportunities of individuals with disabilities through quality programming and facilitating inclusion throughout the Jewish community.

Through its wide array of inclusive programs, Yachad empowers participants to lead full lives with opportunities to socialize, learn, work and celebrate their Judaism. This model allows Yachad to empower its members, while increasing awareness and understanding of those with special needs in the Jewish community.

I have been volunteering with Yachad since Grade 9, and last year I participated in the Miami half-marathon and the Toronto



PICTURED ABOVE, l to r: Tiger-Cats coach Jim Trimble, quarterback Bernie Faloney and Phil Rosenshein at a B'Nai Brith dinner circa 1960.

B'NAI BRITH SPORTS DINNER

The B'nai Brith Sports Celebrity Dinner is pleased to announce the induction of Phil Rosenshein into its fabled Hall of Fame. Aside from being one of the founders of the annual event, Rosenshein has been an active fundraiser for B'nai Brith for close to 60 years. His tireless efforts over that span have resulted in numerous honours and accolades, including 10 successive annual fundraising awards from B'nai Brith.

Dinner co-chairs Jeff Paikin and Brent Clifford couldn't be more thrilled about this year's inductee. "Phil's efforts are nothing short of inspirational to anyone looking to make a meaningful and lasting impact on their communities," said Paikin, "His contributions over the past six decades have served as a constant reminder of what it means to be dedicated to a cause."

Asked what the upcoming induction meant to him, Rosenshein said, "I have always been a firm believer that there is nothing more self-satisfying than doing good for those in need. I hope the example I've set will encourage others to get involved in some way. Just like sports, it's always more gratifying to get on the field rather than simply watching from the sidelines." Rosenshein joins the likes of Saul Smurlick, Paul Hanover, Gordie Zack, Les Levitt, Cuppy Katz, Barry Foster and Stephen Foster in the Hall of Fame. The annual B'nai Brith Sports Celebrity Dinner, now in its 64th year, draws dignitaries from across North America and attendees from across the province and has raised over two million dollars for various local, national and international charitable causes. This year's event, which will take place on Jan. 25, 2015 at the Hamilton Convention Centre, features yet another star-studded head table. Those interested in sponsorship or tickets can contact Laura at 905-777-0000.

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SUNDAY, MARCH 1 AT 10:30 A.M. MAGIC MEN
 An elderly Greek man and his Hassidic rapper son embark on a journey with absurd encounters, which ultimately leads them to a final confrontation of father and son.

SUNDAY, MARCH 1 AT 1:45 P.M. PRESENT CONTINUOUS
 The year is 2002. After two years of suicide bombers and many casualties, Israel is a society in crisis. One Friday afternoon, while everyone is asleep, an Israeli mother barricades her home.

\$30 ticket price includes all three movies, refreshments and a delicious Israeli lunch that will be served on Sunday at 12:30 p.m.
 Cost for one day only \$20; Students \$20 for the entire weekend
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Na'amat Canada Hamilton
Na'amat Wellness Day

Na'amat Hamilton is holding its first Wellness Day on Sunday, Jan. 25 at Temple Anshe Shalom (215 Cline Avenue North in Westdale). The event combines exercise activities led by certified trainers and educational presentations by a panel of health experts (note that participation in the fitness activities is not required). The Wellness day is open to all, men and women, the young and the older. Please come out for an enjoyable and enlightening day.

SCHEDULE

REGISTRATION 12:30 - 1:00 p.m.
 Registration and welcome (note that some fitness classes have limited capacity, so please arrive early to avoid disappointment).

FITNESS CLASS 1:00 - 1:45 p.m.
 Yoga with Wendy Schneider or Pilates with Debbie Strub (please bring your own mat).

PANEL OF EXPERTS 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
 Dr. Sonia Anand, Professor and Chair of Women's Health at McMaster University; Dr. Stuart Phillips, Professor of Kinesiology and Director of McMaster's Centre for Nutrition, Exercise, and Health research; and Dr. Jeff Ennis, a specialist in pain management. Topics presented will include Healthy nutrition, exercise programming, and relaxation techniques.

FITNESS CLASS 4:15 - 5:00 p.m.
 Salsa/Bollywood with Tracey Kornblum or Insanity, cardio-based interval training, with Gustavo Araujo (you'll need comfortable clothes and sport shoes).

Tickets (\$30) will be available at the door. Light snacks and drinks will be provided. Money raised will be used to support Na'amat Projects. For additional information, please email Ronit Mesterman, planning committee chair at naamat.wellnessday@gmail.com

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Celebrating 40 years AT HOME at Shalom

A jewel in the crown



"A jewel in the crown of Hamilton," is how one speaker described Shalom Village at the open house held on October 26 to celebrate our 40th Anniversary.

Incorporation
Shalom Village became a legal entity in 1974 when incorporation documents were registered. It took several years of fundraising and planning before the first building was constructed.

Challenges
Founding Executive director Sheila Burman shared her memories of those early days and the challenges faced in establishing the original Hamilton Jewish Home for the Aged.

"Today is a day to celebrate this journey," added CEO Jeanette O'Leary.

Tours
More than 100 people came out to celebrate, enjoy good food and fellowship, and tour Shalom Village to get a taste of all we have to offer.

"The tours showed all visitors the diversity of opportunities available to residents," said Shalom Village Board President Dr. Larry Levin.

Our guests included residents, family members, community members, and volunteers and staff past and present. As well as enjoying tours and great food they were treated to a dynamic performance by the Shalom Village Glee Club.

Stories
Many shared their stories with us and helped put names to faces in our photo archives. This is a project that we plan to continue as we document the history of Shalom Village.

Video
An exciting new video about Shalom Village was showcased at the event. The video was produced by Jennifer Howe of Perfect Sphere Productions and features many of the Shalom Village residents, volunteers, and staff that you know and love. Visit our website at shalomvillage.ca to see it. You won't want to miss it!

Smiling faces
Thank you to everyone who came out to help us celebrate. It was great to see so many smiling faces at Shalom Village helping us honour our Fathers and our Mothers!



Guests at Shalom Village's 40th Anniversary Open House included residents, family members, community members, and volunteers and staff past and present. It was great to see so many smiling faces helping us honour our Fathers and our Mothers!

hamilton hebrew academy



Photo by Perla Zaltzman

Being the only Jewish child in your class or in your school is commonplace for many children in the Niagara region and Kitchener-Waterloo. Jewish children in these centres face the highest risk of assimilation, but thanks to the initiative of HHA Judaic studies teacher Perla Zaltzman, 19 Jewish children from those areas now have access to the Hamilton Hebrew Academy's strong Jewish studies curriculum and the opportunity to affiliate with other Jewish children.

Jewish education is the paramount value in our faith, superseding even the building of a synagogue. We have provided a lifeline by making the Hamilton Hebrew Academy accessible to these children. Fundraising efforts have already taken place and have been successful. Thanks to the generosity of donors across North America, we now have the opportunity to help preserve the continuity of Jewish families beyond Hamilton, and strengthen the roots of our Jewish future.

jewish social services

Hamilton Jewish Social Services is happy to announce the addition of employment counselor, Alma Arguello, to our staff. Alma will help our clients navigate Hamilton's many resources and employment agencies. To contact Alma, email almaarguello@yahoo.com or call Carol Krames at 905-627-9922 ex 21.

There comes a time when a person has to retire. But if you're employed at something you love, it should be put off as long as possible. The best time to retire is when

you have something else to replace it with, as a lack of mental stimulation can be devastating to our well-being. When the time does come, consider signing up for our Chai choir, that meets on Tuesday mornings; the Chevra Club, that meets monthly and plans its own programs; theatre outings, computer classes or Wednesday morning drop-ins. Volunteers are also needed to shop for the Kosher food bank. Call Carol at 905-627-9922, ext 21 or email carolkramesjss@hotmail.com for more information.



Alma Arguello joins the JSS staff

There's still time to help!

December 2014						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Donations received by December 31 are eligible for a 2014 tax receipt! Be a part of the Shalom Village donor family for 2014. Help us continue to make possibilities possible.

Call Kathleen at 905-529-1613 ext. 264 for more information.

Honours for Goldie Robbins

Recognized by Legion's Poppy Committee

Shalom Village Charitable Foundation
Executive Director Kathleen Thomas had the honour and privilege of accompanying Goldie Robbins to the Dundas Legion following the Remembrance Day services on November 11.

Goldie, who resides at Shalom Village, was honoured by the Legion's Poppy Committee for her decades of faithful service selling poppies. In appreciation, and as part of their support of worthy community groups, the committee awarded a donation in the amount of \$1,500 to her charity of choice - Shalom Village. This is the third year in a row that her efforts have been recognized in this way.

Goldie is quick to acknowledge Morley Balinson, who works with her to make sure everyone wears a poppy for Remembrance Day.

Goldie gave a moving speech about losing her brother in the war and why it is meaningful for her to do this important work year after year. Following the ceremony Goldie was approached and congratulated by many and had a particularly moving moment with the



recipient of the Silver Star who lost her son while he was on tour in Afghanistan.

Goldie is truly an inspiration and we are grateful for her and for this donation.

Hannukah Cards

Tribute cards support possibilities

You can send Hannukah greetings to your family and friends and help support Shalom Village possibilities at the same time!

Just send us your list and we will take care of the rest for only \$10 per card.

All proceeds from card donations support the Possibilities Fund at Shalom Village.

Just send us your list and we'll take care of the rest!

Thank you

Grateful thanks to the families of **Walter Samek, Reta Abrams, Thomas Allan,** and **Sigmund Goldberg** for requesting donations to Shalom Village in lieu of flowers.

Memorial donations support the Possibilities Fund at Shalom Village, making many special programs and services possible for our residents.



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kehila jcds



Kehila students pay tribute to Cpl. Nathan Cirillo at the downtown Armoury.

Photo by Rina Rodak

CARRIE SNIDERMAN

Kehila students from Grades 4 and 5 visited the James Street North armoury on October 29. The fortress and its history are remarkable but were dwarfed during our visit, as it was one week after Cpl. Nathan Cirillo was killed, and the street front was teeming with exhibits of Canadian sorrow and pride. Our students paid their respects to the fallen soldier and his fellow service brothers and sisters at the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry.

The goal of this visit was to explore our identity as Canadians and as Jews; how we recognize ourselves with respect to our heritage and our ethnicity. We were joined

by Rabbi Dan Selsberg who touched on how uniquely fortunate we are to live in this country where we can be Jewish with our rights and freedoms protected by our government and military. Regimental Sergeant Major James Murray also addressed our students, who were duly impressed to be in the company of an actual Canadian soldier. He told them a bit about the armoury and also challenged them to think of ways to honour our military and our country every day – not just in response to tragedy.

This visit was an ideal example of Kehila's integrated curriculum.

jewish genealogical society

HAZEL BOON

There have been a number of TV programs recently targeting the growing audience interested in family history research. One of these is "Finding Your Roots" now in its second season on PBS. A recent episode traced back histories for three notable Americans, renowned attorney Alan Dershowitz, Grammy Award winning singer/songwriter Carole King and Pulitzer Prize winning playwright and screen writer Tony Kushner. All three have deep Jewish roots in Poland. Much of the research for this episode was done using

JRI-Poland's online database. This is one of the many sources we use when helping members of JGSH research their families.

Please join us at one of our upcoming meetings. We are pleased to offer assistance to our members who are researching their family histories. Our upcoming meetings are Dec. 7, a joint meeting with the Temple Anshe Sholom Breakfast Club, Jan. 14 and Feb. 11 at 7:30 p.m. at Temple Anshe Sholom. For more information check out www.jgsh.org/events.php or call Hazel Boon at 905-524-3345.

WITH YOUR HELP, WE HAVE SUPPORTED MANY WORTHWHILE CHARITIES, INCLUDING:
St. Joseph's Healthcare Foundation, Serenity Garden at Ronald McDonald House, City Kidz, Eva Rothwell Resource Centre, Speckkids Unlimited, Mohawk College, JCC Hamilton, Mac Kids, Freeman House and more

adas israel synagogue



A ladies challah baking event during the interntaional Women's Challah Bake. Photo by Chana Griver

Building on the energy of the new grassroots project T.W.O (Together With Others), several women from the Adas were inspired to create additional initiatives for women from across the community. Recent programs have been as diverse as Samba dancing to study groups. During Operation Protective Edge, our women's prayer group joined together in collective prayer on behalf of Israeli citizens and IDF soldiers serving on the front line.

Other spiritual initiatives have included a Simchat Torah women's brunch spear-headed by Trudy Gardner and Andrea Levy and a women's chevruta program (partner study) on Shabbat afternoons to delve deeper into the Torah. This

past October, the group participated in the international Women's Challah Bake as well the Yahrtzeit of Rachel, our matriarch.

Creating a space that is conducive to the growth of women's initiatives is a central goal of the group. To that end, a chic lounge that provides an open and relaxed atmosphere designed to foster a sense of community has been created at the Yeshiva building at 235 Bowman St. A lunch group has been formed by Baila Vaturi and Rebecca Shapiro that meets in the lounge every Tuesday. For more information about Adas programs for women, call Rebecca Shapiro at 905-528-0039.

jewish national fund



A hayride at the Loewith farm Photo by Carl Cuneo

More than 100 people celebrated Sukkot the JNF way on the Loewith family farm on Sunday, Oct. 12. The fact that it was a long weekend and many people were out of town and still so many people showed up is testament to the fact that this is the fall event to attend!

The Amazing Blue Box Race took place on Oct. 19 complete with tasks, challenges, and trivia – all while picking up blue boxes at homes in our community. The winning team was Blue Box Power, led by superdad, Vadim Gershkovich – Yasher Koach! Call us if you did not get your full box picked up and we will arrange to pick it up and bring you a new one.

Last January's Beauty 360° event was a great success, and this year we decided to create a new format with the same great cause, the "Securing the Land Garden" project at a women's shelter in Ashdod. This year's event will be an elegant cocktail evening for women only, called "Mind and Body 360°" as the focus will be on women's physical and emotional health. We will have cocktails, fabulous delectables, and

we are thrilled to have Dr. Esther Konigsberg speak to us about women's physical and emotional health. The event will take place on Jan. 29 at 7:30pm – venue TBA. The cost is \$36 per person with opportunities for sponsorships at all levels. Lax Financial is once again our generous lead sponsor for the evening.

Finally, 5775 is a shmita year, a sabbatical year, which means there is to be no planting in Eretz Yisrael for this whole year. What more perfect a time is there than to change up our annual Tu Bi'Shevat event and consider planting our own JNF forest in Hamilton! This year's Tu Bi'Shevat community event will take place on Sunday, Feb. 8 at Shalom Village between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. Come for the planting! Come for the drums! Come for the fun!

For more information on these and all events, please contact Suzy Polgar at the JNF office – 905-527-5516, extension 2.

And as always, make sure to bring your full blue boxes to our office, your synagogue, the JCC or to any JNF event!

AMAZING BLUE BOX RACE



Team Blue Box Power: The Gershkovich family wins 5775 Amazing Blue Box Day. Photo by Roberta Katz

temple religious school



Photo by Laura Wolfson

Last month on Shabbat Noach, TAS religious school students learned about tza'ar baalei chayim, the Jewish value of taking care of animals. Through the story of Noah they learned that God gave permission for people to eat animals, but at the same time made laws against cruel forms of slaughter, teaching us we must prevent any unnecessary suffering for animals. We ended our morning of learning with a celebration of the animals closest to our hearts: our pets! Rebekah Houpt led the pet parade outside

behind the Temple in the Shalom Teaching Garden, with a rousing rendition of "Swinging On A Star", while children and parents marched through Churchill Park with their pet dogs, bunnies, and even a hamster in a cage. Heather McDonald led a teaching session about how to safely approach and pet a stranger's dog. An outdoor Kiddush using the picnic tables made a perfect ending to the morning! "Noah's Ark Shabbat" is an example of the kinds of "out of the classroom" Torah teaching that is an important and regular part of our school.

beth jacob hebrew school



Photo by Rina Rodak

It seems like only yesterday that we were apple picking alongside our friends from Temple Anshe Sholom. The Beth Jacob Keshet Education Program's first Shabbat "Kid" dush Club of the year was also a success. After a child friendly service led by Cantor Eyal Bitton, Grade 3 children and older joined educator, Rina Rodak in the library to share in some learning and a special Kiddush! Everyone was intrigued

and engaged – and those of us who attempted to read the Rashi type face were most certainly challenged!

Please join us at our annual Chanukah dinner on Dec. 17, and our family Havdalah program on Jan. 10, hosted by Camp Ramah. For more information contact Rina Rodak at school@bethjacobsynagogue.ca. Hope you will join us!

jewish community centre



If you would like to update or add your contact information to the new Hamilton Jewish community phone book, or if you would like to advertise, please email jccphonebook@gmail.com or call the JCC at 905-648-0605 and speak to Laura at extension 308 or Jenn at extension 307. The deadline is Dec. 22!

upcoming events

Morris Black Public Speaking Contest
Dec. 14 at 2 p.m. All are welcome

Mitzvah Mission Youth Organization
for students in Grades 6 - 8
Mondays, Dec. 1 - Jan. 26
from 7- 8 p.m. M \$25; NM \$35

Chanukah Lunch and Vendors Market
Dec. 16 at 11 a.m. Members only.

Israeli Dancing with Anita Millman
Dec. 8, 22 from 6-7 p.m. M \$2; NM \$5

Mahjong on Tuesdays at 10 a.m.
\$5/week or purchase a value membership and play all you like.

Bridge on Thursdays at 10 a.m.
Bring your team and your game
\$5/week or purchase a value membership and play all you like.

Boot Camp is coming to the JCC in January. If you are interested in this program please contact Laura at 905-648-0605.

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1 FAMILY

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surrounded by family and wish you
always have light in your life**

Portraits in Giving

Jo-Ann Pomerantz is as committed to volunteering as she is to Israel. And that's saying a lot.

LIVING



Photo by Wendy Schneider

GENEROUSLY

portraits in giving

A series that offers a glimpse into the generous habits of Jewish Hamiltonians, who, in their own words, explain why they give.

Pixie-like and always smiling, Jo-Ann Pomerantz has an inner glow that never fails to light up a room or lift the spirits of the many people she serves. Whether it's Tuesday morning at the JCC where she teaches a weekly Mahjong class, or the four days a week that she serves customers at Shalom Village's Bubbie Bessie's café, Pomerantz is a constant presence whose sunny disposition exudes warmth and self-effacing goodness. Below, Pomerantz explains what's behind her passion for working with seniors and Israel advocacy.

You've been volunteering at Shalom Village for more than 30 years. What is it about seniors that attracts you? When I was young, my grandmother used to volunteer at Baycrest in Toronto when it was time for her friends to move there. I thought that I would like to do something like that, and that's one of the reasons I went in to nursing. I like seniors a lot. I get so much out of it. I just love the staff. I love the residents. I love the atmosphere.

What do you do there? I've been on the board. I help in the café, answer the phone, help out at events, and I'm part of a team that does palliative care for people in the end stages of life. We sit and chat with them, read to them, play music, depending on how the resident is feeling at that particular time. It's very rewarding.

What Israel advocacy activities are you involved with? I edit my husband's letters to The Hamilton Spectator. We're also involved in the Never Again Group, which is a group that believes in countering propaganda from 'the other side' through Israel advocacy. We get together to discuss things and bring in speakers, particularly at McMaster. It's quite rewarding to feel that we have a voice.

Jo Ann's personal philosophy:

"Try to enjoy and try to be positive. Be as helpful as you can because you'll get much more out of it than you give."

What's behind your wanting to be such a strong advocate for Israel?

I was raised in Niagara Falls and St. Catharines in the '50s and I had a lot of difficulty being the only Jewish child in the class. When I was in Grade 8, my dad used to have to meet my brother and me at school and walk us home for lunch because we got chased. We lived on a street with two Jewish families and every 24th of May when everyone got together to light fireworks, our families were excluded. I've always felt that I had to stand up for myself and for all of us. Although things have changed, I believe that anti-Semitism is coming back in a different form and that it's important to counter the propaganda in the media.

Who were your role models, growing up?

My parents and my grandmother. I was extremely close with my maternal grandmother and my father was an advocate and very vocal about anti-Semitism.

Have you observed a decline in volunteerism?

I've noticed students volunteering at Shalom Village, but I don't see many younger people volunteering there. I'm concerned because there's not the same sense of community that there used to be. People are working and I can understand that. When I was young we were mostly stay-at-home moms and (volunteering) gave us something constructive to do out of the house. I worry about what's going to happen when my generation get tired.

What do you think can be done about that?

You have to have that desire, inside, to want to help and to do as much as you can for the community. I don't know if you can train someone to feel that.

What's your personal philosophy?

Try to enjoy and try to be positive. Be as helpful as you can, because you'll get more out of it than you give.



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The Mystery that was Marvin

The scion of one of this community's most philanthropic families, Marvin Goldblatt was benefactor to his family, his synagogue, his community and his city. But he was also a man whose rough and tough exterior could intimidate, even wound those closest to him. Below, Wade Hemsworth offers some insight into the mystery that was Marvin.

by WADE HEMSWORTH, special to The Hamilton Jewish News



PICTURED (clockwise from top right): Marvin as a young boy; Marvin and his beloved Lillian; Marvin with his father, Frank, and his younger brother, Abby, at the Intermetco offices; Leah Rabin at the Goldblatt home in 1973; Former McMaster University president Peter George and Marvin; Marvin with his daughter Beverly and several grandchildren; Marvin's mother Dolly with her father, Morris Levy, on her wedding day; Marvin and Lillian, taken the year before her death; Dolly and Marvin as a youngster; the house at 45 St. James Place; Marvin with his daughters, Wendy Schneider, Michaele-Sue Goldblatt, Janet Goldblatt Holmes and Beverly Creed. Photos courtesy of Wendy Schneider.

One could argue that Marvin Goldblatt was a softhearted, giving soul. Charities lined up at his door, and he found a way to share his family's success with them all.

One could also argue that he was a crusty and profane egomaniac who always insisted on getting his way.

Those who knew him best affirm that he was both, but that the generous Marvin Goldblatt was the dominant character, and for some reason, the gruff Marvin Goldblatt did his best to hide his better side.

Under his tanned hide and gold chains the two characters of Marvin Goldblatt fought one another for 91 years, creating an energy and power that will long be remembered, and a legacy that will benefit the Jewish community and the broader community alike for generations to come, through philanthropic donations totaling into the millions, to Beth Jacob Synagogue, the Hamilton Jewish Community Centre, the UJA, the YMCA, McMaster University and other public institutions and, on a more private level, gifts that quietly helped individuals and families through hard times.

Unlike some characters whose irascibility is a simple mask protecting a kind and vulnerable heart, Marvin Goldblatt was actually irascible yet kind in all parts of his life. For all his outbursts and interruptions, he apparently listened far more than most people realized.

Wendy Schneider, one of Marvin's four daughters and the editor of this newspaper, says the family has spent decades trying to put together the puzzle.

A year after his death on Dec. 10, 2013, they are still sorting through the fragments of his complex personality. Wendy loved and admired him deeply, yet also experienced his anger.

One of the best theories, she says, is that he was a hybrid, sharing opposing characteristics drawn from members of his parents' families, the Levys and the Goldblatts.

Marvin's mother, Dolly, believed his personality came from her father, Morris Levy, a man with a bold personality and a big family – 11 children in all.

Among Morris's business ventures was a restaurant. One night, while his wife was in the kitchen cooking and he was working the dining room, he asked a customer how he had enjoyed his meal. Not much, he answered.

Outraged, Morris kicked the customer out of his restaurant and told him, "Don't you ever come back!"

Dolly traced a straight line between that kind of behaviour and what she saw in her own beloved son, Marvin, whose arrival as the first-born in a prominent Hamilton family had been celebrated like the birth of a prince and who grew up with an imperious manner to match.

As he grew into a young man, she sent him to see a psychologist—unusual for the time – because she was concerned he had too few friends and too much of a temper. The psychologist said he was excitable, high strung. His mother wondered why he couldn't just be calm, why he always seemed to be testing boundaries.

At the same time, he was responsible and helpful to everyone, especially to his mother, helping to make up for his father Frank's frequent absences due to his work at the family company, International Iron and Metal Ltd. – later Intermetco.

"He had the Goldblatt generosity – incredible generosity that he had inherited from his father and his grandfather," Wendy says. "He'd been raised with it, as had his brother Abby and his sister Sorie.

For those contemporaries, colleagues and family members who endured Marvin's F-bombs and confrontations, the reward was deep loyalty.

Those who knew him from the YMCA, where he was a noon-hour fixture in the Y's Club, were used to his salty locker-room replies to queries about his well-being: "What are you? A f--ing police detective?"

They did not see that after his public show, he would return to his office at Intermetco, which his grandfather Jacob and father Frank had built into a powerhouse, and eat a simple lunch alone at his desk as he tackled the day's business, which he

pursued with determination and talent. Nor did they necessarily see him take his seat in the synagogue and listen respectfully to the rabbi.

Marvin's in-born toughness would help him build the family enterprise, even in the tough scrap-metal business, where cheaters, liars and thieves often thrived, but where he maintained a reputation for fair dealing, if not for genteel negotiation. Under his leadership, the company grew in scope and size, reaching 700 employees and branching into food distribution, refrigeration and real estate.

"He was real. There was nothing phony about him," remembers son-in-law Lorry Schneider. "He was like a big fish in a medium-sized pond."

After 100 years in business, Intermetco was purchased by Phillip Services Inc. in 1997.

Marvin Goldblatt found love on a Florida vacation. He was lounging beside the hotel pool, recovering from appendicitis, when he spotted an especially attractive woman.

Lillian was married at the time and had a young daughter back home, and though it would be some time before they could be together, they fell in love immediately, and were married in 1951.

Later, they built a cottage on Lake Simcoe, near Barrie, and spent many weekends and holidays there with their growing family.

As their daughters grew and started their own families, they built cottages for them,

"He was a very complex person."

HOWARD SHERMAN
Former employee

too, and Marvin liked to tour his domain at least twice a day.

There, far from the working world and its demands for personal toughness, he was most relaxed, but still bombastic. When Wendy and her husband Lorry would bring new friends over to meet him at cocktail hour, he'd start by asking them, "Who the F-- are you?" No matter how startled they may have been, they'd always come out after drinks laughing, feeling like they had been part of some kind of show, Wendy says.

"We take pride in the fact that we had such a colorful father. He loved the shock factor. He loved to stand out."

Howard Sherman, who started at Intermetco by working summers in the scrap yard and went on to become an executive at the company, calls Goldblatt the original "shock jock".

He remembers Marvin Goldblatt as fiercely intelligent and deeply devoted to his family and his community, at his core a shy man who used his bluster both to protect himself and to test the calibre of those who sought his trust.

"He was a very, very complex person," Sherman remembers. "If he knew there was a right thing to do, he would find a way to do it. He also tested your mettle. He wanted to see how people would react in hard situations."

Those who won his loyalty would know the strength of his devotion. Sherman says Goldblatt was a loyal boss who made sure his employees had what they needed to live and to do well at work.

He himself remembers being a young man in a board meeting at another office, decorated in the style of the time, with mirrored walls. Already nervous in a room of more senior executives, Sherman pulled out his chair and it banged hard against the glass. Everyone turned to look at him, but the first voice he heard was Goldblatt's, yelling at the hosts.

"Why is this room so narrow? What are you guys? Poor?"

What he was really doing, Sherman says, was giving him cover so he could regain his composure and perform well in the meeting.

Ultimately, Sherman says, his old boss should be measured by the lessons of his actions, which provided the best form of mentorship.

"In his way, he taught a lot of people how to give money," he says. "You learned from him that that was the proper thing to do. His family should be very proud of him."

The fuse that had burned so brightly through most of the long life of Marvin Goldblatt dimmed considerably when Lillian died in 1994, says Max Mintz, who describes Marvin as his best friend, even today.

Mintz said Marvin never recovered from Lillian's death. He kept the clothes in her closet arranged in exactly the same way for as long as he lived in the house.

"He died with her," Mintz says.

Six decades earlier, the two men had met at Mintz's Chicken Roost restaurant, a beloved gathering spot during the golden era of downtown Hamilton. Their friendship would take in meals, tennis matches – both of them cheating – vacations, and community activities.

Mintz said Marvin was as generous as his father Frank had been, but didn't like to make it obvious.

"He helped more people out than anyone will ever know," Mintz says. "He would help everybody, no matter who they were. No one knew. He gave away so much."

When dementia began to chip away at Marvin's formidable intellect, he resisted longer than most, and kept up the life he loved in the family home at the foot of the escarpment near James Street.

In 2009, he moved permanently to the cottage. By the time the family sold the family home on St. James Place, it had become a period piece on the inside. The man who bought it said the interior looked like something out of the show "Mad Men".

Up at Lake Simcoe, the decline continued privately, marked by flashes of the old Marvin Goldblatt, who would see his grandchildren and great-grandchildren running through his yard and shout, "Get off my property!"

Near the end, Wendy remembers driving Mintz up to the cottage to see her father. Mintz cooked his old pal's favourite, chicken livers.

At first, Goldblatt was brittle and distant, but Mintz persisted with the songs, stories and cooking. Soon, Marvin relaxed and the two best friends, who understood one another so well, were bantering again, like they had for 60 years.

"He was a special person. Once in a lifetime you get to know someone like that," Mintz says. "I miss him every hour."



PROFILE
DEBBIE MOLOT
Co-owner of The Bean Bar

As The Bean Bar celebrates its 20th anniversary, Debbie Molot explains why her passion for the Westdale landmark is as strong as ever.

Story and photo by WENDY SCHNEIDER, the Hamilton Jewish News

Twenty years ago, sisters Carolyn, Debbie and Andrea Molot decided to go into business together. They opened up a coffee bar in Westdale Village that, with its casual but elegant vibe, was an instant hit. But their subsequent takeover of the iconic Main Street West deli Switzer's (which they renamed Sisters) proved to be too much of an energy drain for the three young mothers, and as Carolyn and Andrea moved on to other endeavours, Debbie would discover that her strong work ethic—and the benefit of a new business partner, would allow her to reach this milestone.

Can you describe what those early years were like?
We opened up The Bean Bar in four months in '93 and then we took over the deli a couple of years later. It was brutal. One of us might open up The Bean Bar for the day and then have the night off but then would have to open up the deli at 6:30 in the morning. We all had little kids... We were nuts. We stumbled and fumbled. We had management and people experience, but certainly not restaurant experience. The deli was not making money. Coffee prices had gone up and we hadn't changed them. It was too much work for nothing and my sisters moved on.

How did things turn around?
I have an incredible support system in a man named Robert Wilton. Robert came in and we went from being a very popular poorly-run restaurant to being a money-making full lifestyle restaurant. He managed to tighten this ship so I could do what I did best and he could do what he did best. I'm the day girl. He's the night guy. I'm the schmoozer. He's back of the house.

What do you mean by "lifestyle restaurant"?
We're different things for different people. We don't have a target market. We don't want one. We want to be different things to different people.

What's your business philosophy?
As soon as you walk in that door I want you to feel like there's nothing we won't do for you. You are walking into my home. But it is not just about me. We've had staff here for nine years. The kids that start here are either phenomenal or they will evolve and grow with us. They're rewarded and made to feel like family.

It sounds like you really care about people.
It's the only thing. I can only be here 20 years later because hopefully we as a team are doing a good job, but we listen, and grow and evolve – which is my number one word. It's important to me that both my staff and our customers evolve. Everytime you come in here there should be something fresh and new. I'm not going to take away your favourite grilled cheese. But I do want you to learn and grow and try new things.

What brings you the greatest satisfaction?
A customer talking with you, embracing what you do and loving being here. I met a woman today who told me she comes here every week to have our tuna sandwich. It's a basic tuna sandwich, but the portioning is gorgeous.

Do you have any regrets?
There is not one thing I regret doing because it gets me to the next better step. I'm turning 50 and every year is better than the next. I've learned to embrace everything – even the bad decisions and financial problems. Everything. It's all in there with health and happiness. You can't avoid it.

What makes The Bean Bar a Hamilton institution?
Three sisters. We grew up here. We all came back. Everyone of us. We believe in supporting Hamilton and we care.

A brave portrayal of one woman's struggle with mental illness

by BEN SHRAGGE, Special to the Hamilton Jewish News

Robin Zee has quite a story to tell. Sexual abuse. Drug addiction. Human trafficking. Mental illness. Street life. She's lived through them all.

"After working in social services and telling my story," Robin recounts, "people would say I should write a book. And I tried but I wasn't very good at it. Then I went to see Shelley Marshall's play Hold Mommy's Cigarette, and I thought, 'Oh, that's a way to tell your story.'"

Inspired, Robin did a 10-week solo theatre workshop in Toronto, where she learned to adapt her life to the stage. She hired a director and found a collaborator in musician Orange McFarland, resulting in eight sold-out shows at the 2014 Hamilton Fringe Festival. St. Joseph's Hospital also invited her to perform for their psychiatric ward.

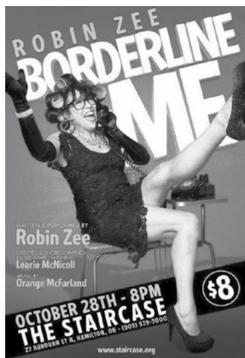
The show, *Borderline Me*, incorporates monologue, movement, incidental music and humour to express her life experience and struggles with mental illness. She also uses a post-show Q and A session to open up a dialogue with the audience.

"I've had people come to the show three, four, five or six times. People have been woven into my tapestry of life," Zee says, and she proudly counts many new friends she's made through her performances.

"I met a wonderful woman during the blues festival in Westdale," Zee recalls. "We got into a conversation and I gave her my Fringe card, and she looked at the title and said, 'Is that what I think it is?' I said, 'Yeah.' And she said, 'Oh, me too!' And she came to see the show."

"A lot of this stuff happens in secrecy. I wanted to accumulate witnesses for my own well-being," Zee said. "But I also saw that it was inspiring other people. My intention was not shock value. My message is you can go through this and come out the other end."

Zee describes the play as a balance between the light and the dark, and she is careful not to overwhelm the audience with



A promotional poster for *Borderline Me*

disturbing details. An outside observer might hesitate to use the term, but Zee calls *Borderline Me* "a zany journey."

She ends the play by discussing future travel plans, and hope is the driving force of her story—both on and off the stage. As a mother, counsellor, artist and active member of Hamilton's Jewish community, she's a living example that a troubled past doesn't have to define the future.

Zee herself was inspired by the Jewish community. "I have a few friends who are Holocaust survivors, and children of survivors, who still came out and functioned, who still came out productive. I learned it's not what life throws at you; it's what you do with it."

Through *Borderline Me*, Zee hopes to dissolve the stigma that surrounds mental illness and emotional trauma. "It's hard enough living with mental health issues. The stigma only makes it worse. Everybody's idea of normal is different. People don't always wear their issues, but we all have them. Whether it's a death, a miscarriage or a rape, we all have our shtick. It's not always as it appears."

Zee is currently working on expanding her now-20-minute show for the next Fringe Festival. She's looking into performing in other locations, including Florida and the UK. A partnership with McMaster University is also in the works. "I'd like to perform for as long I can. Maybe when I'm 80 I'll still be up there performing."



Nothing to lose

Ilana Pekar's 21-year wait for a kidney has given her a deep appreciation for the preciousness of life

Story and photo by WENDY SCHNEIDER the Hamilton Jewish News

Ilana Pekar looks vibrant and in good health at a lunch date at Bubbie Bessie's in Shalom Village.

"It's deceiving," she said.

The truth is, at 61 years of age, Pekar is a walking miracle. Diagnosed with genetic kidney disease in her 30s, Pekar has been on dialysis for 21 years.

"Most people don't last more than five or seven years. I don't know how to explain it except to say I'm not ready to throw in the towel."

Pekar's name may sound familiar. Her son Arie underwent a successful kidney transplant last year, after a well-publicized search that culminated with his friend Darren Kudlats giving him the gift of life. While Pekar's own situation was highlighted on their Facebook page, Mom and Me Need A Kidney, it is only now that she feels ready to truly focus on her own need.

"I'm running out of time," she said. "A transplant is really the only option I have left because I don't know how much longer I'll be able to dialyze."

The fact is, Pekar did undergo two kidney transplants

when she was first diagnosed in the 1990s, but both failed. Last September after an 18-year wait she came very close to having a third shot at it, but the kidney belonging to the young man on life support in a Kingston hospital was no longer viable by the time she was wheeled into surgery.

"It was devastating," said Pekar. "I think I went through a week of grieving... But then you're back in the saddle, right?"

That kind of positive attitude is, one senses, what's really behind Pekar's bucking the odds. Having to endure two decades of six-day-a-week dialysis treatments, coupled with an inability to travel (Pekar has only gone on two vacations in the last 18 years) could easily make a person succumb to bitterness and despair. But Pekar's vibrancy, her refusal to give up on herself, defy such generalizations.

"Every day is precious," she said. "I can lie in bed with my aches and pains or I can go out and try to be distracted and enjoy my life. It's very unfortunate that most people wait until they're faced with a dilemma before they realize how every day is valuable. Remember the book that said, 'don't

wait to use the good dishes? I bring out the good dishes. I use them every day."

Pekar has no illusions that a transplant will cure her kidney disease, but she figures that, whatever the risks, it would still be a better way of dealing with it than continuing to be on dialysis.

"I've been waiting a really long time. But (a transplant) is really the only option I have left because I don't know how much longer I'll be able to dialyze."

In the meantime Pekar is working out regularly at Shalom Village and says she has never felt in better condition. And she's enjoying her life.

"I figured out as soon as I started dialysis that every minute was precious, that I want to be with my kids as much as possible, that I want to enjoy things. I love concerts, I love reading. I love going out to eat... Every day is a gift. Every day is a blessing."

Those interested in learning more about Ilana and how they can help can visit the Pekar family's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/MomAndMeNeedAKidney.

May your hearts and home be filled with light and joy.

Happy Chanukah!

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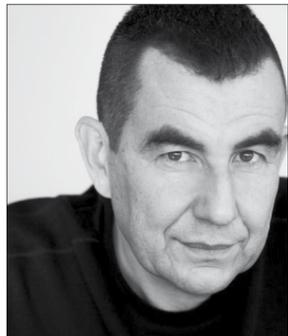


Reclaiming Zionism

Liberal Zionist activists choose hope over despair

Story by WENDY SCHNEIDER, the Hamilton Jewish News

It was all painfully familiar – a murderous terrorist attack that unleashed yet another horrific round in the cycle of violence in the 66-year conflict between Israeli and Palestinians. But there was something unprecedented that unfolded on Israeli streets and in the country's social media last summer – a wave of racism, hatred and incitement leveled against both Palestinians and left-wing Jewish Israelis that plunged many on the Jewish left into despair. The conflict and its aftermath, wrote the political pundits, rang the death knell for liberal Zionism, but the large turnout at the New Israel Fund of Canada's (NIFC) annual symposium at the Toronto Centre for the Arts last August would suggest otherwise. Close to 1,000 people gave up one of the last Sunday afternoons of the summer to hear Ari Shavit and Akiva Eldar, both columnists with the Israeli daily Haaretz, present their views on liberal Zionism.



Israeli author and columnist, Ari Shavit

our voices to a chorus that's clearly tainted with anti-Semitism?"

In her remarks, Garson defended her organization's willingness to criticize certain Israeli government policies.

"As liberals we believe in the possibility of a better Israel, which can be a shining model to the world. We do not believe we need to compromise that vision," she said.

Nevertheless, Garson added, "This being a liberal is not easy. It means we're engaging in a struggle with our values, making sure we don't sacrifice our values in the pressure of the moment. Sometimes it puts us in uncomfortable positions."

The afternoon's strongest defense of liberal Zionism came from Ari Shavit and Akiva Eldar, who said they could not imagine an Israel that was not both liberal and Zionist. Both placed the blame for Israel's deviation from its liberal roots on the settlement project. But whereas Eldar calls for Israel to withdraw to its 1967 lines, Shavit said that it has been a mistake to try and seek ultimate justice for the Palestinians.

"It's very hard for us to question and criticize for two reasons. First ... we're all afraid of angering relatives, losing friends and losing communities we love. Second ... it can be very difficult to criticize Israel when we see other people viciously lashing out. How can we add

"Ultimate justice is the greatest enemy of peace," he said, adding, that while the Palestinian demand for a right of return sounds reasonable, "It is not." If the millions of people displaced by the Second World War had demanded repatriation, he said, "the remarkable peace we have in Europe" could never have been achieved. Saying that "the problems of the Middle East did not begin with occupation and they will not end with occupation," Shavit said that a two-state solution will only be achieved by a "step-by-step" approach, that relies on support from the international community and moderate Arab countries.

Turning his attention to Israel's internal challenges, Shavit said that greater efforts must be made to integrate Israel's Palestinian Israeli and Haredi minorities, which he characterized as living "outside the Israeli mainstream." Saying that the issues raised by the 2011 social justice protests have yet to be addressed, Shavit said, "We ask our boys and girls to risk their lives for their country ... When you do that you need to give these youngsters hope. They must have decent housing, the prospect of jobs and they need to have a future."

The closing moments of the discussion focused on what Shavit calls "the most critical issue facing us" – the question of how to engage young Jews in Jewish activism. The author said he dreams of Israel being at the forefront of a Jewish peace corps that would see tens of thousands of young diaspora Jews engage in social justice projects around the world.

"If we have this kind of humane Zionist vision," he said, "that will totally change the way young people see Israel and see Jewish life ... and at the same time save the Jewish nation."

AGH to return painting

Continued from page 1

Portrait of a Lady has been part of the AGH's collection since 1987, when the gallery's volunteer committee purchased it for \$58,000 at a Sotheby's sale of important old master paintings in New York, unaware it had been stolen during the Second World War.

The Solmssens retained a Berlin law firm that specializes in the restitution of Nazi-confiscated works. In 2003, the law firm notified the AGH that it believed Portrait of a Lady had been stolen. More than 10 years of negotiations and research followed to prove the painting's provenance until the gallery agreed earlier this year that it belonged with the Solmssens.

When Leca joined the gallery in May 2012, this was the first file handed to him. He has spent hours researching the painting's story.

"I found it was on the sought works database. There is a bill of sale from 1909 from the gallery where the portrait was purchased. There are documents in Germany showing the Gestapo had taken Alma's possessions," Leca said. "The database of sought works is relatively new and was not around when the AGH purchased the painting. The Art Gallery of Hamilton bought it in good faith."

Leca said that in these situations, galleries have to allow for certain gaps in documentation due to the circumstances of the war.

"You have to take people at their word. But as stewards of the civic collection of Hamilton, we can't be just giving stuff back without checking. The overarching evidence shows the painting belonged to this family, and the Gestapo and the evildoers got it."

The gallery has agreed to return the portrait to Sarah Solmssen, Alma's great-granddaughter-in-law, who represents Alma's heirs.

"We are grateful to the Art Gallery of Hamilton for its decision. Portrait of a Lady hung in Omi's (Alma's) bedroom in Berlin and we are happy for its return. We are sad only that Omi (Alma) did not live to see her painting again," Solmssen said in a statement.

Last month, Sarah and her husband Peter Solmssen came to Hamilton to view the painting. They advised the gallery that it could remain there until April 26, 2015, when AGH's Art for a Century: 100 for the 100th centenary exhibition closes.

"It's a story of displacement and wrongdoing," Leca said. "But it's also the story of the dogged pursuit of one woman. She kept pushing and looking and then her descendants pushed and looked. This is a sad story but with a happy ending."

Study in Israel

Naale Elite Academy fosters independence and a love for Israel

Story by WENDY SCHNEIDER, the Hamilton Jewish News

As the costs associated with a day school Jewish education continue to soar, Israel-based programs are presenting parents with another option. For the independent-minded, academically motivated student, the Naale Elite Academy enables young Jews from the Diaspora to complete their last three years of high school (in some cases, four) at an exclusive, top quality Israeli high school while learning to be independent, self-sufficient and resilient. All of its costs, including tuition, room and board, living expenses and even airfare, are covered by Israel's Ministry of Education and the Jewish Agency. The Naale program dates back to the early 1990s as a way to ease the aliyah experience of teenage immigrants from the Former Soviet Union. In 2000, the school opened its doors to students from Argentina, and attracts students from the United States, Europe, the FSU, South America, Germany, Poland and South Africa – and Canada.

Dundas resident Tiki Levgoron is Naale's Canadian representative. The 32 Canadian students currently enrolled in the program represent 70 per cent of those who applied. All applicants to the program are required to go through a comprehensive screening process to evaluate their academic ability, maturity, independence levels and psychological aptitude. Once accepted, Canadian students have the option of choosing one of six Naale residential high schools located across the country, that range from secular to Orthodox. For students interested in pursuing an advanced degree in engineering and technology, there's the additional option of applying to the Anieries Elite Academy, an affiliate program with the Technion. Only 30 international and 30 Israeli students are accepted on an annual basis. Among the most recent successful applicants was one Canadian.

First year Naale students are taught in English, with an additional 20 hours a week of intense Hebrew language classes. By Grade 11, all courses are taught in Hebrew.

Roni Levgoron, 16, is currently in her second year at Naale. Despite her daughter being raised in Israel, Levgoron said that it wasn't a given that her daughter



Roni and Tiki Levgoron Photo by Wendy Schneider

would choose Naale over her Dundas high school. "She wanted to be in Israel. She missed the atmosphere."

"I loved Highland," said Roni. "but then I realized this is a once in a lifetime opportunity ... I get to be with Israelis and with people from all around the world." Roni loves that the program is offered in actual Israeli high schools, so that Naale students have the opportunity to socialize with their Israeli peers outside of class. And while she prefers the Canadian semester system, Roni appreciates that her teachers "really know you and they're there to help you."

With all the freedom that comes with living among one's peers, free from parental supervision, one might expect a high failure rate. But the opposite is true. Levgoron reports a matriculation rate that is significantly higher than the Israeli average. Chalk it up to another Naale perk: Tutors on any given subject, as needed. About mid-way through Grade 10, Roni said, students realize it's time to buckle down and get serious.

"If you want to stay in this program you have to show them you care."

Those who are interested in learning more about Naale Elite Academy are asked to contact Tiki Levgoron at naale.canada@gmail.com or call 416-822-6190. Additional information about the program can be found at www.elite-academy.org.

Semester at Hebrew U. 'a defining point in my life'

by ELANA MOSCOE, Courtesy of the Ottawa Jewish Bulletin

The semester I spent at the Rothberg International School at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem made a significant mark on my personal growth, academic journey, and Jewish learning.

There is nothing like waking up in the morning with a bird's eye view of the entire city from my bedroom window, or seeing the Old City in the distance on my walk to school. I've had the chance to meet people from all over the world, who are all studying in Jerusalem for different reasons, and I've gained new perspectives on the significance of this place to so many different people. These are the people who I felt challenged by in my classes, and who have allowed me to grow and to dig deeper into the many layers within this region.

The intensive Ulpan at the beginning of the semester and the Hebrew language courses throughout my time at Hebrew University really helped me improve my Hebrew, but I learned that I still have a long way to go. The small class sizes and engaging professors allowed me to focus on topics relating to Judaism, to Israeli society, and to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in ways I would not have been able to do anywhere else. History came alive in field courses which allowed me to explore the history of this city with my own eyes as I saw the archeological layers beneath one another within the foundation of Jerusalem.

Outside the classroom, I took advantage of an incredible variety of programs, in particular the Hillel Beit Midrash program that meets once a week and allows students to tackle any topic in Judaism with a learning partner. I also participated in a new program called THRIVE, an academic program for a select group of students, which includes monthly Shabbatons and weekly classes to explore different facets of Israel.

The semester flew by and left me with the itch to travel and to continue to explore my Judaism. It has pushed me to struggle and grapple with Israel and Judaism, and helped me to find meaning in new places. The semester has challenged me to push beyond my comfort zone, to build a community, and explore new elements of myself.

McMaster Bursary Fund offers scholarships to Hebrew University

McMaster University's Freeman Family Foundation Bursary, established in 1997 with the assistance of the Canadian Friends of Hebrew University and the McMaster Student Opportunity Fund initiative, may be awarded to graduate and undergraduate students to assist with their costs of living and studying at Hebrew University. For more information contact Celia Rothenberg at 905-525-9140, ext 24363 or email rothenb@mcmaster.ca.

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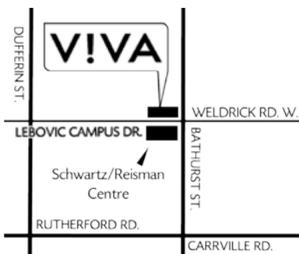
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review

AN ORDINARY HERO:
THE STORY OF DAVID GOLDBERG
SECOND WORLD WAR CANADIAN SPITFIRE PILOT
by David S. New

REVIEWED BY GORD MCNULTY



Hamilton's David Goldberg was recognized for outstanding courage and skill as a fighter-bomber leader flying spitfires in Italy. Photo credit RCAF, courtesy of Mary Goldberg.

Readers will enjoy this riveting narrative of how a Jewish boy from Hamilton realized his dream of becoming a pilot, was shot down in France and evaded the Nazis to reach Gibraltar, then returned to lead airmen in war.

In a revealing account of his exceptional RCAF career, Group Captain David Goldberg goes beyond typical military history to examine many dimensions of warfare and its psychological effects on pilots. Goldberg (1917-2006) told his story to Hamilton author David S. New in a series of 15 three-hour, tape recorded interviews.

This lively, fast-moving account ranges from the thrill of flying to the ever-present horrors of war. The emotions and loneliness of being a wartime commanding officer tested Goldberg to the limit but he won his personal battle of attrition.

Goldberg had empathy for the pilots under his command and inspired them with his combat leadership. His vivid memory and thought-provoking observations make for a compelling book from start to finish.

While Goldberg faced many tense episodes, none were more challenging than being shot down by ground flak at low altitude while attacking a Luftwaffe airfield in his beloved Spitfire IX on March 8, 1944. It was his 80th operation.

As he described it: "The ground comes up fast. There's an abrupt thud, then prolonged scraping and screeching --- the sound of a thousand fingernails moving down a blackboard. My speed drops quickly to a softer skidding sound. Hold on, baby. Hold on. No smoke. No flames. I'm okay! I'm going to live!"

The Spitfire flipped onto its back. Goldberg just managed to inch his way out of the cockpit and burned the aircraft before the Germans could capture it. Tired, cold and hungry, he avoided detection with the help of the French underground. Life as a Jewish fugitive on the run was a nerve-wracking, cloak-and-dagger ordeal. He encountered a host of characters, from strangers who were willing to risk their lives to a mysterious bearded man "straight out of a Hollywood spy movie."

Living with the constant fear of being turned over to the Germans, Goldberg fortuitously made it out of France with a larger group of downed airmen over the arduous Pyrenees Mountains to Spain. He finally arrived in Gibraltar two months after being shot down and was able to get word to his family that he was alive.

Goldberg sailed home to Canada for 30 days' leave and a family reunion. Upset by people complaining about relative trivialities while the war was on, he wanted to "get back to the boys" overseas.

He was worried that he might never again fly in combat. After using the French underground system, Goldberg would be considered by the "brass hats" to be a security risk should he be captured by the enemy.

Goldberg, however, was posted to Italy and the only RCAF squadron in the Desert Air Force. Excelling in dive bombing and strafing sorties, he rose to commanding officer of 417 Squadron. In 1945 he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for outstanding courage and skill in dangerous ground attack.

Ironically, Goldberg never downed a single German aircraft. A sensitive man, he abhorred killing. Only once did he claim a life and it left a painful memory.

"That starkly vivid image would remain with me for the rest of my life," he reflected.

Goldberg didn't see himself as a hero. He gave the credit to everyone who laid their lives on the line, including those who served in the background: the men and women of the French underground and the merchant seamen who transported troops in the perilous, submarine-infested North Atlantic.

Though he saw the cruelty and chaos of war, Goldberg felt the esprit de corps and camaraderie of the air force made all the difference. The joys of being a pilot gave him the experience of a lifetime, many times over.

"The war made me more tolerant, expanded my horizon," he recalled. "I learned that people are more alike than different. I saw people ignore class and ethnic distinctions, disregard stupid prejudices, in order to co-operate and accomplish something."

Throughout the book, Goldberg's talent for drawing in the reader leaves a strong impression. Consider, for example, his excitement when flying the Spitfire.

"In my mind I was at the Battle of Britain... A flash of fire from the exhaust stubs, blue smoke, black smoke, bang, bang... a thundering crackle, the smoke banished as she catches. A tremendous roar, a torrent of wind from the propeller presses the grass back as she catches. She's alive! And I was alive, more alive than I'd ever been."

Hollywood could not write a better script.

Gord McNulty enjoyed a 38-year career in journalism as a reporter and editorial writer. He retired from *The Hamilton Spectator* in 2006 and is an active volunteer with aviation and environmental organizations.



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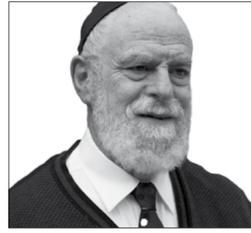
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MINDFULNESS COLUMN

Your thoughts do not define you



Lester Krames is a clinical psychologist, whose work has been influenced by his exploration into mindfulness and self-compassion. His mindfulness column will be a regular feature in the next three issues of the HJN.

learn to safely resolve emergencies by being trained in simulators that provide an environment in which they can experience and respond to virtual emergencies. Ninety-nine per cent of the situations the pilot is exposed to will never happen. In fact, most pilots will only experience routine non-emergency flights through their entire careers.

The daily 67,000 thoughts may appear to be random but mind chatter is our personal virtual simulator. Chatter offers up endless possibilities and "what if" scenarios with the false idea that if we consider all options we will be safe and avoid pain. Chatter attempts to create order from chaos. Failing to recognize that chatter is only simulated virtual reality means over responding to it and leads us to miss out on life all around us. We're anxious about the future worrying about the past and missing out on the "Here and Now".

Most people believe they feel or think a certain way because of their circumstances, unaware how their thoughts both wanted and unwanted create those very circumstances. Thoughts arise without our intention. Thoughts do not always reflect what we think, but rather are habitual patterns and reactions to the world. We act as if our thoughts are who we are, our deepest self. But they are only surface phenomena, like the waves on the ocean.

An intellectual process cannot control mind chatter. What mind chatter does not like, is to be watched. Awareness of our thoughts is the key to controlling "mind chatter". We should never be afraid of any thought no matter how forbidding. We need to be able to recognize that it is safe to have thoughts because we don't have to believe them. Like the pilot 99 per cent of our anxious thoughts will never happen. Awareness and acceptance not to fear "mind chatter" is the beginning of a process that can change your life. Our thoughts create reality, and we have the power to change and create how we experience those circumstances.

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan describes thoughts as the chattering of the mind operating in a fashion that makes it seem, as they are autonomous. fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) studies estimate the chatter is made up of approximately 67,000 thoughts passing through our minds every day; thoughts of anxiety, anger, sadness, as well as happy thoughts and thoughts of hope. These thoughts often contradict each other, sometimes wander, and at other times worry or scare us.

It is truly amazing that we can accomplish anything having to deal with this baffling chatter. What possible purpose can it serve? A simple analogy can provide an answer. When on an airplane if an emergency arises we want to know the pilot is prepared to handle it. Pilots

Judaism appreciates this invaluable lesson. In our prayers we recognize the conflict between what we say with our mouth and what is in our hearts when we conclude our daily prayers pleading, "may the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before you ..."



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A Sable Island stallion on a bluff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, with the Sea Adventurer, an Adventure Canada vessel, anchored offshore.

The horses of Sable Island

Since being declared Canada's newest national park, this fabled island is more accessible than ever

Story and photos by WENDY SCHNEIDER, the Hamilton Jewish News

The man crouched before his subject, camera in hand, in a gentle dance of seduction that culminated with the tenderest touch of cheek against cheek. I must have watched that Youtube clip of famed photographer Roberto Dutesco getting up close and personal with a Sable Island horse a dozen times in the weeks leading up to an Adventure Canada expedition to Sable Island that my husband and I signed up for last June. Secretly harbouring fantasies of my own close encounters with wild horses (as did several of my fellow passengers, I was soon to discover) I was quickly brought back down to earth after learning that island rules demand a 20 metre distance from any and all wildlife. But dashed hopes would ultimately be replaced by a sense of awe and deep appreciation for an opportunity to simply walk the shores and witness the magic of such a wild and untouched place.



The rare Ipswich sparrow breeds only on Sable Island.



Researcher Zoe Lucas with author Noah Richler.



One of 70,000 grey seals who breed on the island.

Until Sable Island was declared Canada's newest national park in December 2013, visits to the remote island, located 170 km off the coast of Nova Scotia, were mainly by a chartered flight out of Halifax and required special permission from the Coast Guard. But last summer, Canada Parks permitted Adventure Canada to bring two consecutive expeditions to its shores, as a way of collecting data it will use to create a sustainable management plan.

Cruises have never been my preferred mode of travel, but an Adventure Canada expedition is more like a floating university, with daily lectures by a team of experts on various aspects of its out-of-the-way destinations. Among the specialists on board were biologists, marine researchers, photographers, filmmakers, artists and author-in-residence, Noah Richler, whose father Mordecai Richler made a famous visit to the island with former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in the mid 1990s. Both father and son had been featured guests at Na'amat Hamilton's celebrity author luncheons, and I was looking forward to reacquainting myself with Richler and asking him whether walking in his father's footsteps held special significance.

Sable Island is known for many things: the 350 shipwrecks that ran aground its treacherous shoals and led to its being known as the graveyard of the Atlantic, its wildlife, that includes the world's largest grey seal colony, Canada's largest migratory tern population

and the tiny Ipswich sparrow, that breeds only here. But its most famous inhabitants are the wild horses that roam its crescent shaped shores. Descended from livestock stolen from the Accadians, a French colonial population that was expelled by the British in the mid-1700s, the horses were shipped from the Nova Scotia mainland to Sable Island for harvest. When various attempts at long-term settlement were eventually abandoned, the horses returned to a feral existence.

All of the above was presented to us during the day and a half's journey from St. John's, Newfoundland and our destination. It was during those briefings that we first learned about the woman who has made the Sable Island horses, and indeed the island itself, her life's work. Zoe Lucas was an art student in her 20s when she first came to Sable Island in 1971 in search of wild horses. Since 1982 she has spent a majority of her time there, studying its horses and marine life, and tracking shark predation, the occurrence of oil on seabirds and the amount of detritus that washes up on its shores.

Playing the role of ambassador, Lucas was waiting on the shore every morning to greet the Zodiacs that ferried us from our ship, anchored offshore, where she exchanged pleasantries and graciously answered our many questions. Noticing a gathering forming around Lucas and Noah Richler one morning, I tumbled over in time to hear her regaling Richler with colourful details about his father's visit in 1994. Her description of Trudeau bounding up Bald Dune (the island's highest point) leaving her and the elder Richler in the dust, the latter chain-smoking his way to the top, drew peals of laughter from all of us.

Blessed with beautiful weather and an ocean that resembled the Caribbean more than it did the North Atlantic, we spent three half days and one unforgettable sunset exploring Sable Island's north and south beaches, its fresh water ponds and its wind-blown dunes. In the end, the rule that had us keep a 20 metre distance from our subjects, didn't prevent those of us with telephoto lenses from shooting to our hearts' content, fulfilling the dream of a lifetime.

In 1960 the Diefenbaker government passed a law that forbid any interference with the horses of Sable Island. But, although the horse population stands today at a healthy 500, their future is anything but certain. Some biologists, claiming that the horses are an alien species that contribute to the desertification of the island by consuming large amounts of vegetation and compacting the soil, are calling for their removal. (A similar call in the late 1950s caused a country-wide outcry that led to the Diefenbaker ruling.) There is also the question of the island's ever diminishing number of fresh water ponds which have sustained the horses for generations. It's hard to imagine, however, any government being willing to end the love affair between a country and its mythical horse population.

As luck would have it, my husband and I missed the final Zodiac exploration of the island on the final afternoon. Opting out in favour of relaxing on deck had us miss what my fellow passenger, Jane Perry of Williams Lake, B.C., called the perfect ending to our time on Sable Island.

"The Zodiacs putted slowly along the shore alongside a group of about six to eight horses galloping along the sandy ridge," she wrote to me in an email. "We caught sight of a lone horse trying to catch up, when one of the horses in the band stopped, wheeled around and galloped back towards the loner."

As the band's lead stallion gave chase to the interloper, the passengers watched, transfixed by the drama unfolding before their eyes.

"Few of us are able to observe such a scene," wrote Perry. "Like us, modern horses are domesticated. They live in stalls or outdoors, and even then without the natural interaction of the Sable Island horses. To see such pure equine behaviour will be a lasting memory."

Of the 2007 film Chasing Wild Horses that documents Roberto Dutesco's time on Sable Island, the photographer said that he hoped to inspire people around the world to better appreciate one of the planet's last wild places. Whether the rise of ecotourism bodes well for Sable Island's future, only time will tell. But this writer will tell you to get there while you can.

SABLE ISLAND

Geography: Sable Island is a narrow, crescent-shaped sandbar, nearly 42 km long, and 1.5 km across at its widest point. 300 km southeast of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Getting there: Adventure Canada is planning its next expedition for the summer of 2016. Visit www.adventurecanada.com.

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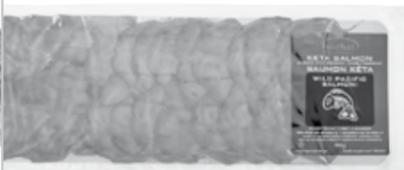
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