



Our stories

of Abrahamic inter-faith
harmony and cooperation in
and around Edmonton, Alberta





The Phoenix Multi-Faith Society for Harmony rose from the ashes of a hate crime because men and women of a good faith chose to come together in mutual respect and with a desire to leave this world *tikkun olam*, better than they found it. Rather than turn away from each other, leaders in the Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities of Edmonton took four years under the sponsorship of the Chief of the Edmonton Police Service to formulate a mutually acceptable vision, mission and values statements that became the basis of the Society's constanding documents.

Upon the Society's inaugural meeting in 2006, the Alberta Minister of Culture and the Mayor of the City of Edmonton recognized, acknowledged, accepted and acted upon the mandate of this new organization. Unique in all of North America, and jointly funded by both, the creation of this publication is a celebration of the mutual respect and admiration felt by these three faiths for each other. In the following pages you will find thirty-three stories of inspiration, cooperation and support by each of these faiths proponent for another upon which rests the very precepts of respect and accord the Society stands for.

Inshallah, may you be inspired by these stories of good faith and good will and may there be peace on earth towards all good people.

Sol Rolingher, Q.C.
Chair, Phoenix Multi-Faith Society for Harmony.

Phoenix Multi-Faith Society For Harmony, Board of Directors

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ALBERTA
CULTURE AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Calgary-North West*

**Message from the Honourable Lindsay Blackett
Minister of Culture and Community Spirit**

On behalf of the Government of Alberta, I would like to pledge support for the Phoenix Multi-Faith Society for Harmony Booklet, and its efforts to combat racism, discrimination and hatred in Alberta.

No matter where we live, we are all part of the same world, and it is important that we work together to live in a peaceful, accepting society. I truly believe that humanity is kind by nature, and it is through groups like the Phoenix Multi-Faith Society for Harmony that we are able to embrace diversity and see the beauty in our differences.

Special thanks to the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Police Service and all of the faith groups associated with the Phoenix Multi-Faith Society for Harmony. May this publication inspire all of its readers and contribute to Alberta's vibrant cultural landscape.

Lindsay Blackett
Minister of Culture and Community Spirit
MLA, Calgary-North West

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**Message from His Worship
Mayor Stephen Mandel**



On behalf of City Council and the citizens of Edmonton, it is my great pleasure to extend warm greetings to all members of the Phoenix Multi-Faith Society for Harmony.

The Phoenix Multi-Faith Society for Harmony is an excellent example of individuals of different faiths and backgrounds coming together to promote a peaceful coexistence and positive relations among all faiths. By fostering open communication, inter-faith dialogue, and education, the work you do will go a long way to eliminate negative stereotyping, hatred, and discrimination, making Edmonton an even better place to call home.

As Mayor of this great city, I salute your continued efforts to promote compassion, understanding and tolerance among the members of Edmonton's various faith communities.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Mandel".

Stephen Mandel
Mayor



Message from the Edmonton Police Service Chief Michael J. Boyd



On behalf of the Edmonton Police Service, it is my pleasure to extend sincere congratulations to the Phoenix Multi-Faith Society for Harmony, as you celebrate the publication of "Our Stories."

The stories in this wonderful booklet are both inspiring and deeply moving; they exemplify the true beauty of acceptance and respect. As a long-time Police officer, I have a keen appreciation for the value of community partnerships at every level. Such partnerships are forged at the grassroots level, where people of various ethnicities form the bonds of friendship and cooperation.

Thank you to all Society members, and to everyone who contributed their stories to this initiative. It's not easy for newly arrived immigrants to adjust in a foreign country. "Our Stories" clearly shows, however, that this city, this province, and this country have been greatly enriched through the kindness and respect that new friends and neighbours extend to one another.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Boyd".

Michael J. Boyd, C.O.M.
Chief of Police
Edmonton Police Service

Building A Better Tomorrow

Arrival of Christians, Jews and Muslims to Edmonton

As a frontier province and as a frontier town, Edmontonians have always placed a high value on interfaith cooperation as both a way of life and a way to survive in a harsh northern Canadian climate. This attitude continues today as the stories contained in this booklet attest. A very brief overview of when each of these faith groups arrived in Edmonton is presented below.

Christian

In 1838, the first priests stopped at Fort Edmonton, now the Legislature grounds, celebrated the first Mass and ministered to Catholics. After 1842, Fort Edmonton was served from Lac Sainte Anne.

Arriving in 1852, Father Albert Lacombe completed Fort Edmonton's Saint Joachim Chapel in 1859. It also served as the first school. By 1899, the present Saint Joachim Church, Edmonton's first Catholic Parish, was built.

St Albert was named after Father Albert Lacombe who, in 1861, built the first chapel there. This chapel, the oldest wooden building in Alberta, still stands on the St. Albert 'hill' as a provincial historic site.

Methodist Reverend Rundle arrived in 1840. In 1871, Reverend George McDougall built Edmonton's first Protestant Church.

Christians of many traditions and cultures followed.

Jewish

Abraham Cristall and his wife Rebecca were the first Jews to arrive in Edmonton in 1893. By 1906, there were enough Jewish people to form the Edmonton Hebrew Association, and hire the first Rabbi, Hyman Goldstick.

In 1912, the first Synagogue, the Beth Israel, was built at 95th St. and Rowland Rd. Afternoon Hebrew School ran in the basement until the Talmud Torah, the first Jewish Day School in Canada, was founded in 1933.

Today, there are six congregations in the city, ranging from Reform to Orthodox, and the Jewish population is holding steady at about 6000 Jewish souls.

Muslim

Muslims have been living in Edmonton since the first decade of the 1900's. By 1938, Edmonton's Muslim population had grown to several hundreds.

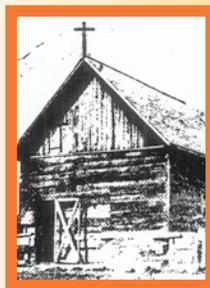
This increased population had the desire and the heart to build a religious centre. Their religious centre would result in Edmonton having the first mosque built in Canada. The mosque would be named the Al Rashid. The mosque is now located in Fort Edmonton Park.

Members of the Muslim Community originally came from present-day countries of Lebanon and Syria along with some who came from other parts of the Ottoman Empire.

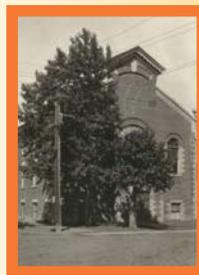
Muslims in Edmonton today number approximately 35,000 and they came from over 35 countries. They represent various branches of the Muslim faith as well as numerous cultures.

We now invite you to review the numerous other stories the Phoenix editorial team have collected of Abrahamic faith group interactions in Edmonton. Through constructive inter-faith dialogue, each of us helps in our own way, to help build a better city, a better province, a better Canada.

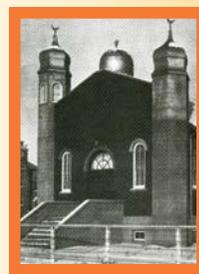
Sincerely,
Marvin Abugov
Editor



St. Joachim Chapel, 1859



Beth Israel Synagogue, 1912



Al-Rashad Mosque, 1938

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Our stories
Muslim

Formation Of The Edmonton Council Of Muslim Communities (ECMC)

By Marlene Haymour and Shayda Nanji

The events of September 11, 2001 have been indelibly etched in all our minds not only because of the tragic loss of life and property but also because of the resulting perceptions that, in many ways, lead to widening the chasm of misunderstanding about Muslims and their faith, Islam.

In the immediate aftermath of the events of September 11, there were concerns of a potential backlash towards the Edmonton Muslims. Driven by the need to find ways to mitigate this potential for adverse reactions, the leadership of various Muslim groups held a series of meetings, led by former Alberta MLA and Cabinet Minister, Larry Shaben, and supported by the former Mayor of Edmonton, Bill Smith. Out of these meetings was born the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities (ECMC).



2009 ECMC Board Members

From its inception, the ECMC was conceived in a spirit of dialogue, friendship and harmony so that it could speak with one voice on behalf of the Muslims of Edmonton. Following a series of consultations, an agreement was reached by the Muslim leaders and community representatives to work together to create a vision and mission that would guide the collective efforts of the Muslim communities in our city. The resulting mission statement has since bound the ECMC, which is currently made up of representation from nine mosques and faith based organizations, to speak and act with fellow Edmontonians and Canadians in a manner that protects, promotes, and enhances the understanding of Islam and Muslims in matters of public policy, education, peace and interfaith dialogue.



Formation of the ECMC continued...

In keeping with this mission and the Islamic ethic of consultation and consensus, the newly founded Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities further committed itself to promoting and upholding certain fundamental values, which include:

- Humility, respect and steadfastness
- Integrity and honesty
- Openness in communication
- Non-violence of thought, word and deed
- Recognize, honour and value diversity
(racial, cultural, and linguistic, etc.)

From the outset of its formation in early 2002, the ECMC has recognized that in order to understand Islam, one needs to understand its rich heritage of multiplicity of ethnicities, languages and traditions which have been part of its history for over fourteen centuries. At the same time, one needs to deepen one's understanding of other faiths as well as various interpretations within Islam, to enrich the society that we live in. Based on this recognition, the Council has successfully helped establish the first community-endowed Chair in Islamic Studies in Canada, at the University of Alberta, to provide various courses in Islam and its history - an accomplishment which all Albertans can be proud of. During this time, the Council has also partnered with Alberta Learning in shaping the Social Studies curriculum to include certain modules in Islamic Civilization.

Further, driven by the spirit of discussion and dialogue, the Council has either initiated or otherwise participated in numerous interfaith dialogues and interactions among the various faith groups in the city. The ECMC has supported local institutions such as the Edmonton Police Service through its Hate-Bias Crime Unit and the Chief's Advisory Committee as a multilateral partner. The Council has also participated in and supported a dialogue with representatives of the Jewish community, which has since lead to the formation of the Phoenix Multi-Faith Society for Harmony within the city .

The Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities represents a unique model of community alignment within the city-wide Islamic communities, just as the Phoenix Society represents a model for wider cooperation and collaboration among the tri-faith Christian, Jewish and Islamic communities within the city of Edmonton. The Council hopes that this will serve as a beacon for intra- and inter-faith community collaboration in other parts of Canada, and beyond.



Saima Ahmed's Realization

By Saima Ahmed

I am Saima and I arrived in Canada eight years ago from Rawalpindi, Pakistan. I had never lived anywhere other than Pakistan so coming to Canada was truly a big move for me. I had to become used to the weather and the life here. I had to put behind my life back home. I had studied English in school but hardly got a chance to converse in it when I was there. After living in Edmonton for seven years, I now have a circle of friends. Through the Multicultural Women and Seniors Services Association (MWSSA), I got the opportunity to meet other women and show off my sewing skills. I now participate in most events that the Center holds, however this was not the case two years ago when my children were younger and I could not drive.

Last year, I attended the ladies only Christmas/Hannukah/Eid/Diwali celebration for the first time. My friend Nadia insisted that I join her, but at first I was unsure as I did not know what kind of entertainment it would be, and I thought the interfaith part will be boring and pointless. I know what my religion is about and our faith is the true faith. Nadia was very persistent and she told me that the food would be great and there will be singing and dancing from different countries. I was hesitant to go to a place that would have dancing, but she convinced me that it is a woman only event so I ended up going with her. There were over three hundred women there, some were familiar faces that I knew from the MWSSA, but most were new.

The event started with the singing of the national anthem by a young girl named Amna. This was followed by a hymn (song in praise of God) in Persian by Fatima from Afghanistan. Both girls had strong, beautiful voices so I enjoyed the songs although I didn't understand the language. Then I heard four speakers talk about their faith. I was told that Sofia Yaqub from MWSSA has been organizing this interfaith, multicultural ladies event for many years. In addition, Sister Rosaleen Zdunich from the Christian Community and Karen Gall from the Jewish community have been important to these celebrations. Nadia told me that they have graciously participated in these celebrations, sharing their beautiful traditions and promoting goodwill and friendship which MWSSA members appreciate.

This occasion reaches out to women newly immigrated to Canada by allowing them to meet and interact with women of different faiths. I was told by Sofia that through such events, MWSSA hopes to building bridges which allow its members to become exposed to the diverse religions. They get to see the individuality of each faith, witness the similarities and the differences each offers. Most often, immigrants come from countries that have no or limited opportunities to experiencing religious diversity. In some countries, due to cultural restraints, women have



Saima Ahmed's Realization continued...

inadequate exposure to the different faiths. By celebrating events such as these, we not only create opportunities for women to celebrate their own faith and culture but to also become exposed to the different faiths that are practiced around the world.

As a Muslim I knew that we shared some common beliefs with Christians and Jews but I had not given much thought about the way each practiced their religion. As I listened to the speaker, I experienced a change in my thoughts and feelings. I felt as if there was a new bond of friendship and understanding with these women. I began to realize that fasting was part of all the faiths. We fast for the same reasons but in different ways. I was truly surprised for I thought that Muslims only fast. But I learned that the Christians fast during Lent and Jews fast as part of Yom Kippur. Although I had been living here in Canada among Jews, Christians and Sikhs, standing in lines next to them at the bank or grocery store, attending school events or talking to them, it dawned on me that I did not know much about their religions. But now listening to them I can see that for these women, their faith was as important to them as my faith was to me. That was one thing we had in common. When I heard these women talk, they spoke with the same emotion towards God as I would. They spoke of values that are similar to Islamic values. I felt a little ignorant and guilty. I questioned my knowledge of my faith too. One speaker quoted the following lines from The Quran:

To Thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the Scripture that came before it, trustworthy and a witness over it. So judge between them by what God Hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the truth that hath come to Thee. To each among you have We prescribed a law and an open way. If God hath so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you; so compete (all of you) in good deeds. The return of you all is to God; then He will inform you about that which you used to differ. (Surah 5 Verse 48)

I must have read these lines a dozen times but today it meant something different to me. Islam talks about respecting and accepting different religions and I had not done enough in the past. I promised myself that I would make more effort to learn and practice my own religion as well as appreciate what is good in others and celebrate and enjoy with others what we have in common.

The Diwali presentation was lovely and I learnt something about the Hindu and Sikh religions. The singing and dancing by the Polish, Romanian, Thai, Pakistani, Bollywood and other groups that went on for the next two hours that evening was very entertaining. Then we all sat and enjoyed a delicious meal together – sisters from different faiths and cultures – I felt that we as women too, had much in common. I cannot wait to go again this year and promise to take a new friend with me.

Nomination for a King

By Richard Awid

In 1994, Canada lost one of its best musicians when Ameen *King* Ganam passed away. He was known across the country as the “King of the Fiddle”. Ameen was the second son born to Lebanese immigrant Sied Ameen Ganam Kadri and his wife Chelsea. In later years “King” would become the star of the CBC television program *Country Hoedown*. Due to his musical talent it was not long before he was nominated to the Country Music Hall of Honour. One of the nominators was Joe Shoctor (well known Jewish lawyer, entrepreneur, founder of the Citadel Theatre, Officer of the Order of Canada) who wrote:



Ahmed “King” Ganam

“As a native Albertan and long-time Edmontonian, I remember with great pride the career and music of Ameen “King” Ganam whose talents as a songwriter, composer and musician were enjoyed by millions of Canadians throughout several decades. While King Ganam’s fame evolved largely around his fiddle, he was also deeply involved in his own community as a teacher, writer and composer.”

Joe Shoctor also said that Ameen had received the title “King” following his winning a world fiddle competition in Vancouver, B.C. in the early 1950’s. He concluded his nomination with, “While Ameen’s recognition as a western entertainer in the Hall of Honour should be obvious to all who followed his career during the 1940’s, 1950’s and 1960’s, I am nevertheless pleased and honoured to add my voice to those who wish to see such recognition acknowledged to this great individual.”



The Annual Interfaith Symposium: Uniting Women of Faith

By Ayesha Mian

“Significant Women of my Faith.” “The Founder of my Faith and His Service to Humanity.” “The Portrayal of my Faith in the Media.” If in attendance at the Annual Interfaith Symposium organized by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women’s Association, Edmonton, one would find these topics being passionately examined and discussed by ladies belonging to major faith groups. For the past 12 years, these ladies have gathered at Bait-ul-Hadi Mosque to share their unique experiences as women of faith and to learn about others’ religions and belief systems.

An event designed to connect and unite women under a common banner of faith, understanding and respect, the Annual Interfaith Symposium has become a crucial date on the Edmonton interfaith calendar. This women-only event provides a warm and hospitable environment in which ladies feel comfortable sharing their thoughts in relation to faith and religion. In Canada’s vast multicultural landscape, it is crucial that a platform be created in which ladies can share their personal journeys, values and concerns.

The evening begins with a recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by an introduction by the moderator, Sister Rosaleen Zdunich, who became a vital member of the organizing team and one of the first panel speakers 12 years ago. The panel is comprised of four prominent women from Judaism, Christianity, Islam and another faith, such as Sikhism, Hinduism or Buddhism. Speakers present their views on the topic at hand either from a personal perspective, recounting their daily experiences in relation to the topic, or by describing the teachings of their faith in accordance with the theme.

An intermission presentation educates guests about a unique or interesting aspect of Islam. Topics in the past have included Khilafat, the system of successorship in Islam, and Hijab, the veil of a Muslim woman.

Following the remaining two presentations, guests are encouraged to browse the display tables, upon which each speaker has exhibited artifacts, books and significant relics relating to their faith, mingle and address questions to the speakers while enjoying the delicious food prepared by the hostesses.

The format of the evening allows for a comfortable and relaxed environment. Guests and panelists feel that they are able to express themselves honestly and connect strongly with females of other faiths. A discussion of the role of women in modern society and a focus on religious teachings prescribed for women enables the ladies to delve deep and create solid bonds with one another. Guests look forward to this event, mainly due to its emphasis on and appreciation of women of faith.

Since its inception in 1997, the Interfaith Symposium has grown significantly through word-of-mouth. The organizers were delighted to receive positive feedback from over 100 ladies last year. They consider it imperative that females from different cultures, religions and ethnic backgrounds express their unique experiences in the hopes of reaching a common Canadian goal of acceptance and understanding. Through the dedication of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women’s Association and the eager participation of the interfaith community, the Annual Interfaith Symposium will continue to do its share in uniting women of faith.

Uncle Sam Jamha

By Richard Awid

Esmeil Muhammed Jamha was born in 1890 in the small village of Lala, Lebanon. He would come to Canada, with a small group of other Muslims at the very youthful age of fifteen years. He had a very warm personality toward his fellow Muslims, other Arabs as well as other Canadians. His warm personality, in time, would allow him to become known to many as simply 'Uncle Sam'.

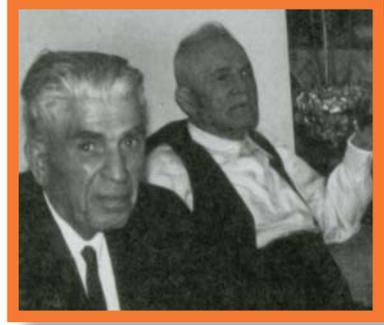
In his early Canadian days, the young Sam Jamha traveled over much of Western Canada as a peddler, selling all kinds of smaller items to farmers and villagers. At times, he would meet up with some fellow Muslims and they would go into some joint ventures.

In addition, Sam would get to know and live with Cree Indians. From the Cree, he would learn about furs and this learning was very fascinating for Sam. Eventually, he became a fur buyer. The Cree Indians taught him how to tell the difference between excellent pelts and poor pelts. They also taught him many native secrets about trapping and preparing the skins the proper way, in order to get the best value for them. By 1927, Uncle Sam was deeply involved in the fur trade. He began to ship furs to Montreal and during another time period, Sam shipped approximately \$50,000 worth of furs to Fred Swartz at the Edmonton Fur Auction Sales.

During the depression years, Sam would experience some very hard times. He became unemployed when the fur value dropped tremendously. This situation became very hard on his wife, Vera, and their three young children. By 1939, however, things got better. Sam started working again and went into a partnership with the Edmonton Fur Auction Sales at that time owned by Fred Swartz and Sol Levine.

After getting on his feet again, Sam went into business for himself and he became a buyer of raw furs, hides, horse hair and wool. Uncle Sam continued to sell his supplies, whenever possible, to the bigger fur buyers, one of which was the Slutker Fur Company in Edmonton.

On December 15, 1974, Sam Jamha was hospitalized and died at age 84 in hospital. He, in time, would be honoured by the City of Edmonton when it named Jamha Road (east of 50 Street, south of Whitemud Drive) after him.



Uncle Sam Jamha (left foreground)



Lawyers Working Together

by Ms. Yasmeen Nizam (Barrister and Solicitor)

Saint Thomas Lawyers Guild is named in honor of Thomas More who was a lawyer and 16th century chancellor of King Henry VIII. He was martyred because he remained loyal to his God. While he was on the scaffold he declared that he died "the king's good servant but God's first". He was canonized a Saint by the Roman Catholic Church and is Patron Saint of Lawyers.

Every September, in honor of St. Thomas More, St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild celebrates a special Mass referred to as the "Red Mass" because of the blood Thomas More shed. Held at St. Joseph Basilica and presided over by the Archbishop, this celebration of the Mass asks God to bless the lawyers, judges and the court system for the upcoming judicial year. In 2007, in order to celebrate the Alberta Courts' 100th anniversary, the Guild decided to sponsor an interfaith service and dinner focused on peace and unity that would include representatives from several faiths. Co-sponsoring the event along with the lawyer's guild were Catherine Fraser, Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal of Alberta; Allan Wachowich, Chief Justice of Alberta Court of Queen's Bench; and Gail Vickery, Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Alberta. In the audience were Christians, Muslims, Jews, Members of First Nations, Hindus and Sikhs.

I was flattered when Rosanna Saccomani, a well known and respected lawyer, and spokesperson for the Guild approached me to request that I give a brief history about the first Muslim lawyer and judge in Alberta and reflect about what my faith meant to me. Similarly, five other lawyers from the Jewish, Christian, Sikh and Hindu communities were also requested to give their reflections. Ms. Saccomani during an interview with the Edmonton Journal, prior to the service stated that all lawyers, not just Christian have made a fantastic contribution to Alberta's legal community and that this year, being the centennial year, "we (the Guild), just thought it would be fitting that there be an interfaith service to recognize that God's hand is in everything we do". On September 26, 2007, McDougall United Church witnessed a unique and engaging interfaith prayer wherein lawyers representing six faith groups reflected on their religion and bowed their heads together in prayer along with their respective spiritual leaders.

My reflection to the group essentially expressed that Islam was an integral part of my life and that it was a serene oasis from which I sought refuge from the material world. I also alluded to the challenges I faced as a Muslim woman lawyer in a post 9/11 world. I explained that the first Muslim lawyer and judge in Alberta was Edward Saddy, who was the brother in-law of Alberta's first provincial cabinet minister, Larry Shaben. I also explained that one of the first Muslim lawyers in Alberta was my own dear father, Viqar Quraishi, Q.C. who was called to the Alberta Bar in 1967. Imam Tamir Ali of the Canadian Islamic Centre lead the prayers for the Muslim Community by reciting the Surah Al-Fatiha prayer:

*In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment.
You alone do we worship; You alone do we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path,
the path of those whom you have bestowed Your Grace. The path of those who earn your anger nor of those who go astray.*

Barry Zalmanowitz who represented the Jewish faith stated that the "legal profession has always been accepting of other people's faiths," and that the event was a way of showing the broader community that we (lawyers) stand together. He also talked about the first Jewish judge, Samuel Lieberman, retired justice of the Alberta Court of Appeal. The Jewish prayer was lead by Rabbi David Kunitz



of Beth Shalom Synagogue who lead the Jewish Community in the “Prayer for Justice”.
O God and Creator; we thank You for the sense of justice you have implanted within us, and which always seeks, though at times haltingly, to express itself in daily life. Make us, O God, more steadfast in our desire to do your will. Teach us that the men and women around us are brothers and sisters, and fill us with such love for our fellow creatures that we will never wrong them or exploit them or take advantage of their weakness or ignorance. Kindle in us a passion for righteousness, grant us the vision to see that only justice can endure, and that only in being just to one another can we make our lives acceptable to you. May we by our thoughts and our deeds hasten the time when wrong and violence shall cease and justice be established on earth. Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Master Walter Breitreuz, Q.C. the representative lawyer, (Master) from the Christian community reflected on the history of the Christian faith during the first 100 years of the Courts’ establishment. United Church of Canada Reverend Kathy Hogman, Catholic Archbishop Richard Smith and Reverend Mark Zazula lead the Christian Community in the Lord’s Prayer, as follows:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and glory now and forever.*

The program ended with a prayer for peace that brought together the theme of this celebration:

*God of many names, Lover of all Nations,
We give you thanks for gathering us here today to celebrate
the Centennial year of the Law Courts in Alberta and for the
privilege of living in this city and country.*

*Bless the rich tapestry of this community;
The many strands of creeds, cultures and languages.
May we appreciate the blessings of one another in our diverse ways
and grow in solidarity with responsibility to strengthen this Canadian dream.
Recognizing those who first dwelt in this land,
May we learn from the sacredness of all creation.
Divine Creator, teach us your way of compassion.
Help us to banish hatred, despair and cynicism
So that peace may flourish among us.
May this interfaith gathering be a symbol of goodness,
generosity and harmony in our daily life.*



The Arabic – Hebrew Experience In Edmonton

By Soraya Zaki Hafez

In 1983, Edmonton Public School Board adopted two new Language Bilingual programs, Arabic and Chinese. Two curriculum writers were appointed for the new programs, Caroline Pei for the Chinese and Soraya Zaki Hafez for the Arabic.

On the first day of work at the school board, Caroline and Soraya were introduced to two other curriculum writers. One of them was Judith Sela from the Hebrew Language program at the Talmud Torah School. The Hebrew program had been in existence for seventy years within a private school, but the Jewish community decided to join the public school system in 1983.

For the first time in my life I had to share an office with a Jewish lady. For the first few weeks, I tried to be professional in my behaviour towards her. I was reserved and quiet not knowing how to deal with this person. Growing up, all I had read or heard about was the injustices done to the people of Palestine by her people and her government.

Then we started going for coffee. We talked about our families and found out that we both cared a lot about education and educating our children. We talked about the challenges we face in Canada trying to preserve the language and the culture. We talked about special celebrations. Then we talked about Arabic and Hebrew coming from the same root and the words that are the same in both languages.

We had started a friendship that allowed discussing everything except the Palestine issue, and we stayed away from that for good reasons. We knew that our friendship would continue as long as we followed our common interest and avoided politics.

There are three incidents that I would like to share:

- A friend of Judith came to visit her at the office. When she heard my name and where I came from, she was shocked that we were going for coffee and were so relaxed with each other. She spoke in Hebrew to Judith trying to understand how could this happen!
- My Arabic typist was a Palestinian. He came to the office one day sad and upset because his brother was killed in an explosion. Judith was horrified until we found out the cause of the explosion was during a Palestinian mountain road construction project.
- It was Christmas and the school board invited students from the bilingual programs to sing in the different languages. One of the school board officials invited the students from both the Arabic and the Hebrew programs to cross sides and hug one another.

Judith and I worked for several more years as curriculum writers, and we continued to have a very good working relationship.



The Road to Healing

By Soraya Zaki Hafez

In 1967, I was living in Toronto, Ontario. I joined an international women's group and I was invited to their first meeting. Everyone had to bring a dish from their native land. I was so proud of myself for making baklava; I thought it was the best. When I got there, I put my baklava on the table and looked at the other food and to my surprise I saw a dish of falafel. The falafel looked perfectly round and golden brown. They looked absolutely delicious. I asked who brought them and I was introduced to Rachel from Israel. I tried to hide my disappointment but I couldn't. She was apprehensive when she knew that I came from Egypt. She asked about the weather and my education and in return I asked her how she made the falafel. We started talking about Toronto and Canada, in general. We complimented each other on the dish we brought and left.

I found out that Rachel lived close to where I lived. We met several times on our way out shopping or catching the bus. We started to feel comfortable talking to each other. We went for coffee several times.

Then it was June, 1967 and it was tense between Egypt and Israel. Rachel was scared of what might happen. I had a brother in the army and I was terrified of the prospect of war. I cried a lot and my relationship with Rachel at this time was very difficult to maintain. On June 5th the war started and ended in six days with a defeated Egypt. I didn't know what happened to my brother. Rachel came every day to ask me if I heard any news about my brother until the day I received a message saying that he was safe. Rachel came and hugged me and we both cried. I moved away to Edmonton, Alberta and Rachel and I kept in touch with each other.

In 1971, my brother was killed during an Israeli raid on Egypt. This news was devastating to me. I cried and cried until I couldn't cry anymore. I didn't want to have anything to do with Rachel or any other person with the same background.

However, one weekend I was in Toronto attending a conference and as I was sitting reading the program. I looked up and there was Rachel standing right there wearing a black dress and looking very sad. Her father had been killed in a bombing.

We talked about both of our situations. We talked about the anger that leads to violence against innocent people. We both agreed that there must be a solution. Peace is the answer to all that. We promised each other that we should work for peace so no one would have to go through what we went through losing loved ones.

The anger inside me turned into a feeling of accepting my brother's death as my start toward a journey of healing, and I was determined to do all I could to help bring peace between the Palestinians and the Jewish State of Israel.

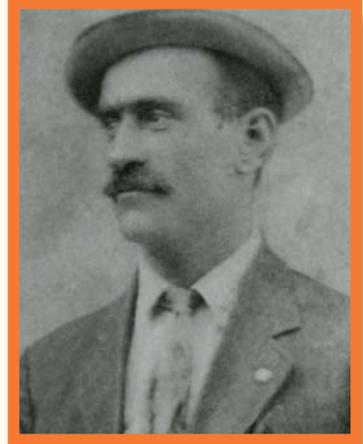
A story told to Soraya Zaki Hafez by Mona Ahmad Zaki, a Muslim by birth.

Compassion Leads to Friendship

By Richard Awid

Dr. Lila Fahlman passed away on May 13, 2006. Her father Sied Ameen Ganam Kadri came to Canada in 1901 from present-day Lebanon, and she was always fond of telling stories about him.

One day I was sitting with Lila at a restaurant and we started to tell stories about our families. One she remembered quite vividly showed her father's compassion even toward his competitors. In the 1930's during the Depression, Sied was the owner of a grocery store in a small Saskatchewan town. Competition for sales was very tough. About a block away was another grocery store, a little smaller and older. By the end of his first week as owner of his store Sied decided to go and see his competitor, an elderly Jewish woman.



Mr. Said Ganam

He introduced himself to his new neighbour but didn't realize at first that the store was not open because it was Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, when work is prohibited. However, she invited him in and offered him a chair and tea. A conversation took place, and Sied soon noticed that it was a little chilly in the store. He walked over to the stove and realized it was ice-cold, also due to the Jewish prohibition against lighting a fire on the Sabbath. Without saying a word he gathered some kindling and newspaper, lit a fire and put some left-over food into a pot to warm up. The heat soon filled the room and the woman thanked Sied for what he had done. He came to know her well and talked to her on many occasions.

When he returned home that day he told his son Saleem that in the future he must go to the lady's store and help her out in any way he could. Sied was undoubtedly a firm believer that compassion should always be shown to others.



Imam Hummudah Abd Al-Ati

By Richard Awid

In 1938, Canada's first mosque, the Al-Rashid, was built. The first Imam (religious leader) was Najeeb Ailley. Mr. Ailley died in 1959 and the mosque was without a leader until Imam Hummudah Abd Al-Ati arrived in Edmonton from Montreal in July, 1960. While in Montreal, Imam Hummudah attended McGill University from which he received a master's degree in Sociology. Abd Al-Ati originally came from Egypt where he had received a Bachelor's degree at the world famous Al Azhar University. He came to Edmonton through the courtesy of that university and had the duty of serving Islam in Canada as well as conducting the activities of the Al-Rashid Mosque.

It wasn't long after settling in Edmonton that he began to reach out to both his own congregation as well the non-Muslim population. He was so pleased when he saw large Muslim groups appearing at the mosque and was just as pleased when he was able to receive visiting church groups and cultural clubs at the religious centre of which he was in charge. He was overjoyed when he had the opportunity to open mail that came from remote areas in Canada and overseas. He took pleasure in writing letters to the press and giving radio and television interviews. The Imam always found it interesting to address a non-Muslim audience and answer their questions about his religion. Abd Al-Ati would often stress to his audience that the mosque for him was a bridge between the civilizations of the ancient and the modern worlds and that it was the most effective medium of direct communication between the cultures of the West and the East. He also said that the mosque in Canada is without a doubt the best platform for Canadian Muslims to present the truth of their religion, to show their goodwill toward their fellow citizens, and to practice their faith in the existence of God and the brotherhood, equality and freedom of all mankind. During his stay in Edmonton, he authored an outstanding book on Islam written for western readers, entitled, "Islam in Focus". The book is well-regarded as an introduction to Islam and has been reprinted many times.

Imam Hummudah Abd Al-Ati believed that a religion advanced when explained properly to people from other religions. He left Edmonton after being offered a fellowship at Princeton, where he earned his PhD. The Imam died at only forty-five years of age while teaching at Ithaca College in New York State. Needless to say, he was sadly missed after his death, but will always be remembered as a prominent figure in Canada's Islamic history.

The Al Rashid – Canada’s First Mosque

By Richard Awid

In 1938, Edmonton was home to a small number of Muslims, most from the present-day countries of Lebanon and Syria. Many of these early pioneers were storeowners and fur-traders. They would deal not only with fellow Muslims, but also with the non-Muslim population. Fur-traders bought from the indigenous peoples in the northern part of the province and occasionally learned to speak their languages. When they returned to Edmonton to sell their furs the buyers were often Jewish.



Historic Al-Rashid Mosque - Fort Edmonton Park

As Edmonton’s Muslim community began to grow and prosper, they began to feel that their religious life was disappearing. As a result they started to hold meetings and soon came up with the idea that a building was required if their religion was to survive in their new homeland. They concluded that a mosque was urgently needed; this would provide a place to worship and to gather. This small group hired a non-Muslim construction firm to build the Al Rashid Mosque, Canada’s first.

Construction was started in May of 1938, but the Muslim community ran out of money and construction was either slowed down or ground to a halt on two different occasions. But they never gave up on the project. A group of Muslim fundraisers started to seek financial assistance, not only from their own community but also from the Christian and Jewish communities. As a result of their tireless efforts, they were able to collect enough funds, and Canada’s first mosque was finished by the beginning of December, 1938.

The inauguration of the Al Rashid took place on in Edmonton on December 12, 1938. The master of ceremonies was Mr. I.F. Shaker, a Christian Arab and mayor of Hanna, Alberta. Mayor John W. Fry performed the official opening on behalf of the City and the dedication was conducted by Allamah Abdallah Yusuf Ali, a Muslim scholar from India and translator of the Qur’an into the English language. In the early 1990’s, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women succeeded in moving the mosque to Fort Edmonton Park where it is now part of the city’s living history museum.



Our stories
Jewish



My Lebanese Cousins

By Paula E. Kirman

As a life-long Edmontonian, Frank Sheckter has seen a lot of changes take place within the city. One thing that has remained consistent, according to his experiences, however, has been the good relations between the Jewish and Lebanese communities.

One memory that stands out in Sheckter's mind happened when he was 14 and working for his father's business, Alberta Bakery. "In 1941, I was delivering bread to a little store in north Edmonton called Fort Road Confectionary, across from the Transit Hotel on 66th street and Fort Road. It was owned by a Lebanese fellow. I believe his name was Tarrabain. There are a lot of Tarrabain families in Edmonton and have been for over 50 years. I always made that the last stop on the route so I would sit and have a Coke with him and visit with him and talk.

"On this day, in 1941, the war had been on for two years, and I walked into the store with some bread and was met by a German lady who apparently had moved in and was living with my Lebanese friend there. When I walked in, she immediately started in on me about Jews and cursing me. I was quite shocked by this, as a young kid, and did not quite know what to make of it. Mr. Tarrabain must have heard it from the back room (they lived behind the store). He came running out, seized her by the arm, shook her, and said, 'You are talking about my cousin. This man is my cousin, and you are not allowed to say anything bad about him. If you do not apologize immediately then get out this minute.' She sort of apologized. I don't know how long she was there after that; I never saw her again and we never made any reference to it."

Sheckter remained friends with many of the Tarrabain family of that generation, most of whom have now passed away. Visits between his family and Lebanese friends worked both ways: a Lebanese shop owner across the street from where Sheckter's father's bakery was located would often come to visit as well.

Another of Sheckter's memories took place in the mid-'90s. "I was at an automotive shop almost behind Grant MacEwan on 105th Avenue just east of 105th Street. I was waiting for them to finish servicing my car. There was another fellow there, a Lebanese man, and he had a son who was about four or five at the time. He kept watching me and eyeing me. Finally he came over and asked, 'Are you Lebanese?' I said, 'No, I'm not Lebanese. I'm Jewish.' He immediately said, 'You know, in Edmonton, there is no problem between the Jews and Lebanese.' I said, 'I was born in Edmonton and I've known that all my life. We've always been close friends. We call each other cousin.' He said, 'Do you know why?' And I said, 'It's always been that way. I did not know there was a special reason for it.'



The man speaking to Sheckter had emigrated from Lebanon about ten to twelve years earlier, and was an electrician. He said, “When I arrived in Canada, the Lebanese community told me immediately that in Edmonton the Lebanese and the Jews are close friends. There are no arguments, no mistrust. They are very close.” Again, he asked me if I knew why, and I again answered that I felt that I had always known and accepted this.

“He went on to say that when the Awid family first came to Edmonton in the 1920s, they were living in a house down in the flats beside the bridge on the bottom of 95th to 98th avenue. A couple of months after they moved in, there was a flood. The river rose and came across the road. They were sitting on the front porch wondering what the next step was, because they were being flooded out of their house. Where would they go? What would they do?” Sheckter retells the story as it was told to him:

“A big Cadillac pulled up and a man got out and said to the family, ‘Come with me.’ They all got in his car. The man was Hy Weisler and he took them to his home and actually put them up in his residence. They became very good friends. They went to work for him and eventually bought out his wholesale business.”

“There were a lot of Lebanese families in the city at that time,” Sheckter continues. “None of them helped this family except for this Jewish fellow (Hy Weisler) who came and helped them out. This man speaking to me made it sound like that was the whole turning point between the two communities from that day on.” Sheckter points out that he has spoken with Weisler’s son Marvin, a urologist practicing in Edmonton, who had a cursory knowledge of the event.

In some cases, according to Sheckter, cultural differences were bridged so well that some Lebanese friends of Jewish people could indeed pass for being their cousins – or at least, members of the Jewish community. “I am not aware of ever having any cross words, anything almost. I can probably think of a half-dozen Jewish people when I was a boy, who had a Lebanese boy as one of their best friends. It was interchangeable to the point that in the 1970s, when Beth Israel was still on 119th street, Bill Lutsky had a friend who was one of the Awid family. They used to come to shul together at four or five in the afternoon. The rabbi did not know who he was and used to count him as part of the *minyan! That happened on a regular basis. It wasn’t a case of deception or anything. They walked in together, and were both counted.”

Sheckter, a semi-retired realtor, continues to maintain and enjoy friendships with people of Lebanese background. In a day when tensions in the Middle East can sometimes spill over amongst the related ethnic groups in other parts of the world, Sheckter’s experiences demonstrate that two sides can live harmoniously as friends and family.

**Minyan: Quorum of ten Jewish men needed to recite certain prayers.*

The Relationship

By Richard Awid

My father came to Canada from the present-day country of Lebanon, in 1901. He joined a very small group of other Muslims in that year which numbered about 1500 in all of Canada at that time. My father, Ahmed Awid, first settled in eastern Canada, but within four years he would move westward to settle in both Winnipeg and Brandon, Manitoba.

In Manitoba, he would meet up with Hymie Weisler, a Jewish businessman, and thus began a business relationship that lasted for years. Eventually, both Weisler and my father would move to Edmonton, Alberta. In their new city, Hymie Weisler would open a wholesale business and my father, Ahmed, started a retail business.

The two businessmen continued to do business with each other and if each person was able to make some good deals with their suppliers, they would ask one another if they were interested in buying some items they could use in their own business. This type of business exchange continued as the years moved on, but in time my father would sell his retail business, and become a self-employed salesman. Mr. Weisler continued to operate his wholesale business.

One day, my father asked Mr. Weisler if it was possible for my oldest brothers, Alex and Mickey, to work for his wholesale company. Hymie Weisler answered without hesitation that it would be an honour to have them work at the wholesale. The two brothers were employed for many years at Weisler's business.

The years flew by and as Mr. Weisler grew older, he decided to sell his business. He offered to sell it to Alex and Mickey and they soon became the new owners. They would eventually change the name to Western Varieties Wholesale, a business that family members would own for approximately fifty years. My father, while he was able, would offer his business advice to the family members.

Ahmed Awid past away in 1979 and in his last years of life, he had prostate cancer. One of his doctors, at the time, was Marvin Weisler, the son of Hymie Weisler. It seems that during ones lifetime that some relationships always continue on in one form or another.



Mr Ahmed Awid (Centre)



Remembering Sam & Annie and the Crown Grocery

By Don J. Manderscheid, Q.C.

In the spring of 1960, my parents, together with myself and my four brothers and sister moved into a house in the Boyle Street area which came to be known in our family as “Sam’s Place”. This house was owned by Sam and Annie Wyne and my family was to continue to reside at that house for the next three years. During this time, certain events transpired which have left an indelible impression on myself, as well as my siblings. I wish to take this opportunity to relate to you certain of those events.

The unique thing about Sam and Annie was that, in addition to being our landlords, they owned and operated the Crown Grocery, which was located on Jasper Avenue in what is known as the Gibson Block or the “Flat Iron Building”. Every month my father would dutifully attend at Sam and Annie’s grocery to pay the monthly rent. My father would also use this time to shop for the necessary household groceries. Needless to say, with five strong, healthy boys, my father would usually enlist one or two of his sons to carry the family groceries home. During the times when I was one of the fortunate bearers, I will never forget that when you entered Sam and Annie’s grocery, the first thing that you saw was this huge, round block of cheddar cheese. After receiving a warm welcome from both Sam and Annie, Annie would immediately proceed to cut each of us a piece of cheese. Contrary to what we children may have thought, both Sam and Annie were of the belief that the cheese was needed more than candy. My father’s heritage was a mixture of German and Luxembourgian and he spoke English, German, and I believe, a little Russian. I do not know exactly what specific language my father and Sam spoke but I do recall on several occasions seeing him and Sam conversing in some foreign tongue and having a gay old laugh. Interestingly, at these times, Annie was not present in the store.

At the time that we moved into “Sam’s Place”, my father was a carpenter employed in the construction industry. For the first two years, things went relatively well as employment opportunities for my father were readily available. Unfortunately, this was all to change in the winter of 1962. For whatever reason at this time the construction industry in Edmonton began to slow down drastically, with the result that my father was placed into a layoff situation and unable to meet his debts. My father was a very proud man and to seek “relief” as he called it from the government was something he just couldn’t bring himself to do, despite the fact that it was very close to the Christmas season. At this time, I remember going with my father to meet with Sam to discuss the situation. What transpired was not a notice of eviction but rather an offer of employment. As Sam and Annie owned several houses in the vicinity, Sam merely stated, “You are a carpenter, I need a carpenter, you owe me rent, I will pay you money to pay the rent and more”. The end result was that my father worked the entire winter for Sam and Annie repairing their various properties.

Of significance is that a few days before Christmas, Sam came to our house bearing a box consisting of unshelled mixed nuts and Christmas candy. When he passed these items to my mother, I overheard him say to my mother, “For the children at Christmas”. This is quite a unique statement as both Sam and Annie were of the Jewish faith and to my knowledge did not celebrate Christmas. However, from what I understand from my father, Sam and Annie most likely justified the gifts as being gifts given at Hanukkah. It wasn’t until some years later that I came to understand that in Judaism, Hanukkah is somewhat equivalent to the Christian celebration of Christmas as it is also a time of eating special food and in some cases the giving of gifts, especially to the children.

Neither myself nor any of my siblings will ever forget the Christmas of 1962 and the kind generosity of both Sam and Annie Wyne. To this day, unshelled mixed nuts and Christmas candy are a mandatory requirement in my home at Christmas.

Ironically, some 25 years later, as legal counsel for the City of Edmonton, I was to acquire on behalf of the City of Edmonton the Gibson Block; the very place where Sam and Annie owned and operated Crown grocery. At any time when I pass by the Gibson Block, I remember with fondness the Christmas of 1962 when Sam and Annie Wyne literally saved Christmas for the Manderscheid children in Edmonton. For their kindness, they will always be remembered.

Sam and Annie Wyne operated the Crown Grocery store in the Gibson Block during the early to mid-1930s.



Jewish Family Services: Supporting Edmonton Families of All Faiths

By Debby Shoctor

Jewish Family Services (JFS) is more than a Jewish welfare organization, although it started out that way back in 1942. Today, JFS is a community-based counseling and support service available to anyone in Edmonton and surrounding area regardless of religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, age or financial status. Today, only about half of their clients come from Edmonton's Jewish Community. The remainder come from the Edmonton community at large.

Officially incorporated in 1955, its mission is to promote the well-being of individuals and families in a confidential, caring environment: "We envision a world of economic and social justice: a world where individuals, families and the community care for and support themselves and one another. To this end, we provide strength and support to individuals and families in need, in a manner sensitive to Jewish values."

Jewish Family Services is founded upon the acceptance of the intrinsic worth and dignity of each individual; the appreciation of people's right to meaningful opportunities to make and influence decisions which affect them; the recognition of the interdependence between individuals and society; and the respect for cultural and religious heritage. The role of the agency is to be responsive to, and to care for everyone who walks through the door of the agency, as resources and manpower permit, by providing a professional counseling, education and information service.

A Brief Look Back

Before 1942, the welfare needs of the Edmonton Jewish community were met by volunteers from various organizations, including the local B'nai Brith Lodge, the Shalom Aleichem Free Loan Society, the Aznoches Orchim, the Federated Budget and the Council of Jewish Women. When the Edmonton Community Chest was organized in 1942, a grant was given to the Jewish Community so that further campaigns in the Jewish Community for welfare money would be unnecessary.

Accordingly, the Jewish Welfare Society was set up and given a yearly grant of less than \$2000 from the Chest and this was administered by a committee of representatives from the above mentioned organizations. In January of 1955, an informal society was formally incorporated, and registered under the Alberta Societies Act with its own board.

In October of 1956, Mr. Max Levy was appointed the first full-time Executive Director, replacing the part-time case worker, Mr. Ram. An office was established in the Petroleum Building, and costs were shared by the Jewish Welfare Society and the Jewish Community Council. In 1957, the Edmonton Zionist Council became a partner.



Between 1955 and 1958, Clara Mintz, a professional Social Worker, served as the Agency's first President. In 1958, she became its Executive Director. In 1959, the society became an autonomous agency with a half-time graduate caseworker and an Executive Director appointed to work solely for the Society.

In 1960, when the Community Chest ceased to exist, the United Community Fund of Greater Edmonton was established, and the Society became a member of that fund. In January 1961, the agency changed its name to Jewish Family Services, and adopted a new constitution. According to Clara's son, Bruce, "The reason for this change was that Clara believed that the use of the term "welfare" depicted something that would apply only to a certain segment of the community. She firmly believed that the family was the core of the community. [At that time] Jewish Family Services focused on parent/child relationships, marital problems, the elderly and delinquency." In 1962, Canadian Jewish Congress started funding services rendered to new Jewish Immigrants. It is at this point that Edmonton's Jewish Family Services started to grow rapidly. In 1963, for example, its annual budget was \$12,000. By 2000, it was \$338,000.

Jewish Family Services Today

Presently located on 124th St., the current JFS activities include general counseling, services to immigrants, seniors, including the SMART program (Seniors Making Age-Related Transitions) support to people in poverty, bereavement counseling and support through the Edmonton Bereavement Centre. Community development is under the current leadership of Larry Derkach and his staff. Rabbi Daniel Friedman (Beth Israel Congregation) is the current Board President.

Counseling services include help dealing with many areas including: Anxiety and Stress; Relationship Difficulties; Family Conflicts; Self-Esteem Issues; Depression; Grief, Separation and Loss; Life and Career Uncertainty; Anger Management; Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; Abuse; Addictions and mental Health Issues.

The JFS Bereavement Centre offers program and support services such as: Living with Loss, Walking with Grief, Living Beyond Loss – Who Am I Now?, Healing Grief for Parents, Griefworks, Bereavement Support Training Courses, Grief in the Workplace, Adolescent Grief and Mourning and Complicated Mourning. There is as well a lending library.

Today, funding for the activities of JFS comes primarily from the United Way, Canadian Jewish Immigrant Aid Services, United Jewish Appeal, the National Council of Jewish Women, Family & Community Support Services, Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association (ECALA), casino proceeds, private donations and fundraising activities.



True Harmony: Bridging cultural divides through music

By Paula E. Kirman

Music is a universal language that can be used to bridge gaps between faiths and cultures. Ben Ragosin has first-hand experience with music's unifying power.

Ragosin, who resides in Edmonton but grew up in Israel, is part of a musical group at the University of Alberta that involves a number of people from different Middle Eastern and European backgrounds. The Middle Eastern and North African Music Ensemble is based in the Department of Ethnomusicology in the Faculty of Music under the direction of Dr. Michael Frischkopf. It consists of between 20 to 30 musicians and vocalists, varying from week to week at their regular rehearsals.

The ensemble has been together for four years and includes a large choir section and instrumentalists playing ethnic and Western instruments such as tablas, drums, oud, violin, and organ. Members of the group come from a variety of different backgrounds, including Egyptian, Turkish, Iraqi, Iranian, Moroccan, and Canadian-born people of European background. Ragosin is currently the only Jewish-born members of Israeli origin who attends on a regular basis.

"I love performing and creating music," says Ragosin of the reason why he joined the group. A former student at the U of A, when he heard the group was looking for male singers he jumped at the opportunity. Ragosin has a musical background, as well as some Arabic studies. Joining the group gave him the chance to sing and speak in Arabic – something he is not often able to do in day to day life. The influence of the ensemble has also resulted in him diversifying the instruments that he plays. Primarily a guitarist, for the past few years, Ragosin has been learning the oud, a Middle Eastern lute.

The Middle Eastern and North African Music Ensemble is inclusive in its approach to attracting new members. The group performs for the public four or five times during the academic year. People interested in joining can simply show up at a rehearsal. Songs are transliterated, so knowledge of other languages is not required.

"I just find so amazing that we gather every week, people who come from all over the region," says Ragosin, 32. "I could not do this in Israel. I could not play with a Palestinian who grew up 30 minutes from my kibbutz, living on the other side of the Green Line in the Territories. Here, we play together, the music."



As a result, Ragosin has been able to experience different perspectives on some of the most contentious issues concerning the situation in the Middle East. “I asked some of the older Egyptian people how long they have been in Canada. They said since 1969. I asked them why. After the Six-Day War they did not want stress and conflict and wars, so they came somewhere peaceful. For me, it was very interesting to hear that side of the story because I am familiar with the Israeli side. After the Six-Day War there was more euphoria than fear; for them it was different,” Ragosin explains.

Non-Muslim participants are also having the opportunity to take part in Islamic religious and cultural celebrations, in particular Ramadan. “We perform yearly at the Egyptian Society’s Ramadan party, so for me and for all the other non-Muslims it is an opportunity to learn about the customs of Ramadan.”

The mutual cooperation and learning works both ways. “We performed a Hebrew song last year. It was something just amazing for me, and a bit surreal to teach the entire group to sing in Hebrew. Suddenly they go, ‘Oh, that’s very similar to Arabic!’”

Ragosin was born in Edmonton and works in building and exhibit maintenance at the Telus World of Science. He left with his family for Israel when he was two and returned to the city in the mid-90’s to re-connect with family members still here and finish university. His degree from the University of Alberta is a B.A. in Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies. “Studying these topics in Canada was also very different for me because you can talk about ideas and concepts, but when you’re within a conflict zone, they can be very touchy and sometimes taboo,” he explains.

“Here, I could entertain certain ideas that would not be that easy to do in Israel. Also, I got to interact with other people from the region that I would not have been able to interact with in Israel. I remember the first week walking into class; I knew I was not going to hide who I am and where I am from, but you feel the tension. But once I started talking to the people, it was like, we’re all here, we’re all people. I am Ben, not an Israeli, and we go from there really. I built some really nice relationships with many people regardless of their origin.”

Another way in which Ragosin has drawn common threads with people of other backgrounds is through his private music lessons. A guitar teacher, his current roster includes students of both Jewish and Iranian backgrounds. “I find it kind of funny because all of my students are in the Callingwood neighbourhood, but half of them are Jewish and half of them are Iranian.”

Most of all, taking part in his musical adventures has created friendships between people who otherwise would likely never have met. “We are there as friends, as human beings really, considering the backgrounds we come from.”

Mitzvah Day

By Paula E. Kirman

In Judaism, the term mitzvah refers to the 613 religious laws that Jewish people follow, such as those concerning the Sabbath or keeping kosher. Some also deal with moral and ethical issues. As a result, the word has also come into every day use amongst Jews to mean a good deed. When one helps someone else, that positive action is called a mitzvah.

A local group of Jewish people have taken the concept of mitzvah and turned it into a community event helping agencies throughout the city. Mitzvah Day started 12 years ago as an initiative of Rabbi Lindsey Bat Joseph, former spiritual leader of Temple Beth Ora, Edmonton's Reform Jewish synagogue. Mitzvah Days were taking place in other cities, and she felt it was time for Edmonton to have one of its own.

Francie Nobleman, a local speech pathologist and member of Temple Beth Ora, became Mitzvah Day's organizer. "The concept of a day where you're looking at ways to make the world a better place is what Mitzvah Day is all about," she explains. Mitzvah Day in Edmonton started out small, with Rabbi Bat Joseph bringing in a representative from the Bissell Centre to speak about poverty and someone from Nicaragua who had lost everything in a flood in that country before coming to Canada to speak about his experiences. The children from Beth Ora's religious school brought mittens and other small items of warm clothes to give to them.

Within a year, Mitzvah Day became established on the third Sunday of November and would include more and more organizations as time went by. After 11 years, there were more than 20 recipient agencies throughout the city, including the Youth Emergency Shelter, the Bissell Centre, Boyle Street Community Services' youth center, Boyle McCauley Health Centre, George Spady Centre, Terra (for teenage mothers), Multicultural Health Brokers, Africa We Care, WIN House, Wings of Providence (a crisis shelter for women and children), and the YMCA, all non-denominational charities here in the city. The only Jewish agency receiving donations is Jewish Family Services. "We try to have a balance of the kinds of different people we help," says Nobleman.



Sorting clothing during Mitzvah day



Mitzvah Day continued...

Each agency provides the Mitzvah Day group with a wish list of what they need. Items would start to be gathered at the Jewish Community Centre (JCC) in late August, and stored in the part of the building where the swimming pool used to be. As the date drew closer, the area would grow packed with the needed items: clothing and household items, as well as toiletries, toys, baby items, electronics, kitchen supplies, furniture, food and sporting goods. Volunteers from throughout the Jewish community would sort, box, and deliver to the various agencies.

“We have teams of schleppers, (schlep is a Yiddish word meaning - to drag around), people who drag all the donations that were made to the JCC and sort them in the back,” Nobleman explains. Cash donations are also accepted, but not actively solicited, and donors receive income tax receipts through the JCC.

There is some major work the night before the main event. “We’ve got some tremendous volunteers with really good organizational skills and they have this down to a fine art,” Nobleman explains. “As soon as sundown comes and Shabbat is over, a whole crew of volunteers comes in to sort what has not already been pre-sorted. The next morning we’ve got a head start. It evolved from one Sunday morning with two people speaking to this huge community effort that involved teams of sorters for three months, teams of people bringing the stuff from various places, then on the weekend of teams of people to sort and finally to deliver.”

Due to the expectation that the Jewish Community Centre was going to be sold, Mitzvah Day did not happen in 2008 with the same scope. Instead, there were a bunch of smaller Mitzvah Days helping out one organization at a time. The sale of the building fell through, but impending renovations have put the future of a large Mitzvah Day up in the air, and Nobleman suspects that 2009 may bring another series of smaller events.

Nobleman says that for her, the biggest purpose of Mitzvah Day is, “to bring people in the Jewish community together for something that is not just for us, but for the broader community. The thing that gives me the most pleasure is seeing all the different people in the community working together for something that is helping a whole bunch of other people of different faiths and backgrounds.”



Dr. Harry

By Sterling Haynes

On a sunny August day in 1938, I was walking and humming a Winnie the Pooh bear song, *Nobody Knows Tidily Palm* and not paying much attention. I was a fat little kid and I'd been swimming in Edmonton's south-side pool and my eyes were red from chlorine. Not seeing well and being awkward, I fell scrambling in a public rock garden and broke and dislocated my left elbow.

My eleven-year-old chum, Bill, saw that my arm looked "kind of funny" and ran across the street and got a solid citizen to drive us home. Each bump in the gravel road made me let out a howl.

At home, my mother phoned Dr. Harry Weinlos and his nurse told her to take me to the Misericordia (Mizz) Hospital. Dr. Harry, a prominent Alberta surgeon, would see me when I got there. I was told not to eat or drink anything. Mother called a cab and took me to the hospital. This was the first of many meetings I would have with this compassionate man.

Over the years, Doctor Harry became my doctor, mentor and hero. At the Mizz hospital, Dr. Harry appeared. He was a short, stocky man with a small, black moustache, a kind face and large, strong-looking hands. He wore small rimless glasses and behind the lenses he had bright, twinkly, brown eyes.

"Well, Sterling, you have a painful looking elbow. We'll have to take an X-ray and then Dr. Adamson will put a mask over your face and put you to sleep with some smelly stuff – it's called a 1-2-3 gas and you'll waken with your elbow fixed and no more pain. It's just a 1-2-3."

"Thanks Dr. Weinlos, I'll try and be good but my arm really hurts." Even now I remember Dr. Adamson putting the mask over my face and dripping on some 1-2-3 liquid on the cloth mesh as I struggled to breathe. Years later I was to learn that the metal mask composed of layers of cloth was called a Schimmelbusch mask. The liquid, called a 1-2-3, dripped onto the mask and was composed of chloroform, alcohol and ether. This very potent mixture quickly put me under. I remember waking up in the kid's ward vomiting and smelling ether, but my left arm didn't hurt. My fracture dislocation had been relocated. The next day Dr. Weinlos sent me home in a cast with a sling. There was no physiotherapy in Edmonton at that time. The only the rehabilitation was provided by Dr. Harry.

After eight weeks, Dr. Harry cut my cast off by hand with giant plaster cutters and I was told I could use the sling at home when necessary. My left elbow was locked in the flexed position and wouldn't bend much. I went to Dr. Harry's office on the 4th floor of the Birks building twice a week for treatment. At home, I was told to carry a gallon pail of water weighing ten lbs. with my left hand for 20 minutes twice a day. I wouldn't disappoint Dr. Harry!

The treatment at the office consisted of Dr. Harry putting his unshod heel in my left arm-pit and pulling on my forearm. I can remember hollering and trying to hold back tears. Dr. Harry persisted and always gave me 25 cents for hurting me. After four months, Dr. Harry had pulled my arm straight. I had acquired \$4.00, a vast sum for a 10-year-old kid in those depression days. When my Dad offered to pay Dr. Harry for looking after my arm, he refused. Instead Dr. Harry said he might ask my Dad for a few special favours. My Dad's dental office was in Room 321 of the Birks building at 104th Street and Jasper Avenue – just a floor lower than Dr. Harry's. The first of many favours Dr. Harry asked of my Dad was to fix the abscessed teeth of his indigent patients. After a few weeks, Dad called a halt to Harry's request as the number of dental abscesses doubled each day and my Dad's office was over-run with homeless people. Then Dr. Harry asked that on cold nights these same people be allowed to sleep on the floor in the dental office and use the office lavatory. Soon the Birks building manager noted that the third floor toilets were a mess in the morning. The



superintendent of the building then had a talk with Dad and Dr. Harry's request to house the homeless in Dad's office was stopped. This last episode strained their friendship slightly. Finally, my Dad wrote Dr. Harry a cheque to cover his professional fee for fixing my arm. Dad figured that paying Dr. Harry would be cheaper in the long run. Over the years, I would occasionally see a friendly Dr. Harry in the Birks building. He always asked about my school work and if I was going to be a doctor. He seemed disappointed when he found out I was only interested in hockey, baseball and tennis.

I got to know Dr. Harry much better when I was 18. One summer night, in 1947, I started vomiting and developed pain in the right side of my belly. Again Dr. Harry came to the house and diagnosed appendicitis and drove me in his car to the Mizz hospital for surgery. At this time, Dr. Harry's ancient Ford, Model A Flivver, made it across the high level bridge. Dr. Harry then arranged for Dr. Adamson to give me an anesthetic – this time it was a spinal. Under anesthetic Dr. Harry took my appendix out and I made a complete recovery. Two days later Dr. Harry walked me to the street car stop on 109th Street where I caught the street car for home and he took the tram to his office in the Birks Building. Dr. Harry's Model A Ford had conked out completely. My Dad was glad to pay Dr. Weinlos' professional fee immediately – “with no sutures” attached. I made a rapid recovery.

Dr. Harry and I became friends and we often met by chance, usually in the Birks Building. He always wanted to know what I planned to do. He was disappointed, when I was 21, to learn that I was going to become a colonial officer in Northern Nigeria and had signed on for three years. He tried to dissuade me and recommended I apply to medical school but my mind was made up and I sailed on the Empress of Canada in 1951 to Liverpool and then on the MV Accra to Lagos, Nigeria. Three years later, after being invalided home from Africa recovering from Weil's disease and having lost 80 pounds, I realized that Dr. Harry was right, and I applied to Medical school at the U of A in 1954.

Dr. Harry always encouraged me during the pre-clinical years at med school when I would see him in the Birks building. Later, when I was a clinical clerk assigned to the Misericordia Hospital, Dr. Harry took over the teaching of my clinical rotation. Although he was a surgeon, Dr. Harry had patients on the paediatric and medical wards. He allowed me to do many deliveries of his patients in the obstetrical unit, but under his supervision. His surgical practice was huge, and he had a varied group of general surgical patients as well as orthopedic, urological and plastic surgical cases. Dr. Harry was a whirlwind and many times we were making rounds at 7am or midnight. Dr. Harry was one of the few doctors who looked after the native people from the reserves in West Edmonton and Hobbema. The colour of either a person's skin or his race meant nothing to Dr. Harry: everyone was treated equally, and with respect.

The Nuns at the Misericordia hospital loved him – he was their favourite doctor. He had the ability to get around their rules and religion and get his own way from the staff. Some of his poor patients at home were dehydrated and he used to beg the Mother Superior at the Mizz for special fluids so he could give intravenous fluids to them in their own beds. The nuns always saw to it that he had free meals in the doctor's dining room and a place to sleep in the doctor's lounge; they even did his laundry and ironed the starched wing collars that he always wore. He was a bachelor and seldom went home.

When I interned at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton, Dr. Harry had many surgical patients on the wards. He always phoned me to help him with rounds even when I wasn't assigned to his surgical service. He was a fabulous teacher who always related everything to the well-being of his patient. His reasoning was sound and he was knowledgeable and kind – I loved him.



Dr. Harry continued...

One very cold night in February, Dr. Harry phoned me to go on rounds at the the Royal Alexandra Hospital. When I arrived on the surgical floor, after visiting hours, Harry's hands were red and cold-looking.

"Where are your gloves Dr. Harry?" "When it turned cold I gave them to one of my patients. I ran out of gas and had to walk to the hospital – all the way down Kingsway against that north wind. But I'm OK now, apart from having cold hands and missing my supper. "

"We'd better go to the hospital cafeteria and get you some supper now. You didn't run out of gas again, Dr. Harry?" I was calculating that Dr. Harry didn't have any money for supper or gas. I had just cashed my monthly hospital intern's cheque and had \$20 in my pocket.

"Here, Dr. Harry – I'll lend you five bucks for supper and gas. You can pay me back sometime."

"That should get me back to the *Mizz* after we have supper and we do rounds. Thanks Sterling."

It was the end of June when Harry repaid my loan. We met at Mary Samuels's house for a massive Jewish feast honouring Max Wershof's appointment, a Canadian ambassadorship to the UK, and Dr. Harry's humanitarian way of practicing medicine in Edmonton. My wife and I were included as Harry's friends and my mother and dad were long-time friends of the Samuels. I was also being honoured having just passed my LMCC [Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada]. This was a national examination allowing me to practice in Canada.

Supper was sumptuous, but Dr. Harry was an hour late. I thought Dr. Harry might have run out of gas again and walked over from the *Mizz* When he arrived, all the guests had already finished the main entre. Harry bustled up to the table and was obviously famished and apologized for being late between mouthfuls.

"I'm so sorry to be late Mary," said Dr. Harry. The gefilte fish was marvelous and the soup was a little cold, but... "What did you say Dr. Harry – you are impossible! You arrive late at my dinner party and then complain the soup is cold." "I am so sorry Mary – excuse my boorishness. Thank you very much for having me."

We had a rollicking evening – entertained by Dr. Harry's stories set on 97th Street in Edmonton or at the *Mizz*. Max's eloquent tales of working in European embassies were fascinating. As the evening closed, Mary Samuels told very funny Yiddish stories that her father had brought to Alberta from Europe. But I can never forget Dr. Harry and his humanitarian ways. This is the last time I would see Dr. Harry.

Dr. Harry never sent bills out for all the work he did but he would mention his fee to patients after they were back working. Patients paid their medical bill when they could. Edmontonians loved him for his kindness and altruism.

Medicine was in the Weinlos family blood in Europe and Canada. Manuel graduated from Vienna's medical school and was Harry's eldest brother. Manuel was killed serving in the German army medical corps in World War I. The remaining family came with their parents, Leah and Isaac, from Austria in 1921. The five brothers and sisters were educated in Austria. The two youngest, Harry and Morris, were educated in Edmonton. Dr. Morris graduated from medicine at the U of A in 1929. Dr. Harry, the younger brother, graduated a few years later. Harry and Morris were among the first to enlist in the Canadian Medical Corps in September, 1939. They both served in WW II until 1945 and were both discharged with the rank of Major. While both Weinlos brothers were serving overseas, Dr. Morris recalls the following story:



“Harry was hit in the head by a piece of German shrapnel during a Nazi bombing raid in Yorkshire. But he had the wound patched up quietly and never did report the incident. That was his attitude; he just didn’t want to bother anyone.”

Debby Shoctor, archivist, for the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta sent me a copy of a postcard written by Dr. Harry and mailed in 1941 from England to Master Billy Lewchuk in Spirit River, Alta. The article was labeled “a postcard from beyond.”

This postcard, according to the archives, was delivered to Billy’s sister in Spirit River, 67 years late, in February 2008. Dr. Harry had treated Billy for a broken leg and other injuries at the Misericordia Hospital but was mobilized for the army overseas before Billy had recovered. Dr. Harry wrote and asked Billy in his postcard: “Hope that when this card reaches you, you will be much healthier and stronger.” Unfortunately, Billy succumbed to his injuries. Dr. Weinlos did not find this out until after the war, at which time he wrote a heartfelt letter of condolence to the Lewchuck family, which they still have. The postcard Dr. Harry mailed from England during the war is in the Jewish archives.

The Edmonton Sun newspaper, in 1960 reported that Dr. Harry made a housecall to a rural farm. “The farmer was paralyzed by acute appendicitis but would not leave his abode because the plowing was not finished. Dr. Weinlos, it is reported, got on a pair of overalls and finished the plowing.” He then drove him to the Mizz and took out his appendix.

Dr. Harry provided free medical services to The O’Connell Institute, The Alberta Protestant Home, and The Good Shepherd Home for orphan children; voluntary services to The Beulah Home for the poor [which he helped to establish]; and voluntary service since 1928 to orphaned children in the Atonement Home. He was active in the Edmonton Community Chest and provided voluntary services to the Home for Ex-Servicemen’s Children according to the Edmonton Sun.

Dr. Harry and his brother Dr. Morris were rewarded by the City of Edmonton when the Weinlos district of Edmonton was named in their honour, as well as a primary school in Edmonton called the Weinlos School. This school provides instruction for students with mild and moderate cognitive developmental disabilities. This is Edmonton’s tribute to Drs. Morris and Harry Weinlos, who were outstanding city surgeons and teachers.

Dr. Harry was my doctor, mentor and friend for twenty years. His happy ways and compassion made him well-loved by me and his many patients in Northern Alberta. I wish to acknowledge the help and support of the City of Edmonton archivists and Debbie Shoctor, archivist for the Jewish Archives & Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta. Mrs. Florence Weinlos Soifer, of Edmonton, Dr. Harry’s niece, was full of facts and stories about the life of Uncle Harry. Her help and encouragement was exceptional.

Rabbi Ginsburg and the Deicide Debate

By Kathryn Ivany

Rabbi Louis N. Ginsburg was the rabbi at Beth Israel Synagogue from 1953-1955 and again from 1963 -1967. A native of Minneapolis, he had previously served congregations there and in Saskatoon. He was also active in the general community. The bachelor rabbi was chaplain of the Alberta Curling Association and a director of the Edmonton branch, Canadian Mental Health Association. He was not only a popular speaker at sports banquets, but city churches of all denominations invited him to speak. "It's a breath of fresh air," he says, "because there really is very little difference between denominations and there is a great need for the love of your fellow man. Love only comes with understanding the other fellow."

In the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect, in the late 1960s, the various denominations of Christian Churches in the downtown joined together to offer support to Edmonton's two Synagogue congregations during a period when anti-Semitism experienced a resurgence in Edmonton. At the invitation of Beth Israel, several clergymen and priests from the neighbouring churches, including Msgr. Joseph P. Malone of St. Joseph's Cathedral, Dr. Edwin J. White of First Presbyterian Church, Dr. James E. McNeill of the Central United Church, Rev. Cannon John Flagler from St. Faith's Anglican Church, and Dr. Carl Klein, Rabbi of Congregation Beth Shalom, came together to discuss "deicide", specifically the role played by the historical Jewish people in the crucifixion of the Christ.

In light of an upcoming vote of the Vatican Council on the absolution of the Jews of the charge of deicide, the panel discussed interpretations of history and scripture which informed the audience of the Christians' belief that people of the current Jewish community could in no way be held responsible for the death of Jesus. Further, the participants in the discussion held that Jesus freely chose his death and that, as a final point, as God, Jesus could not be killed. The successful conclusion of the discussion led to a convivial gathering for refreshments. From this initial basis of discussion the group continued the conversation on a number of other issues of mutual interest over time which proved Rabbi Ginsburg's theory that understanding and love are closely linked.

Rabbi Ginsburg later moved to Calgary, where he served at the Shaarey Tzedec congregation from 1967-1971, and served as the first advisor to the newly-formed University of Calgary Hillel chapter in 1967. Many Calgarians still recall Rabbi Ginsburg's friendship with Father Pat O'Byrne and how it contributed to his nickname, "the Catholic Rabbi." A famous picture of him in the Calgary Herald from 1971 shows him ringing the bell for the Salvation Army in uniform during their Christmas campaign.

Ginsburg was also a sports announcer, worked on the Hospital Pastoral Care Association of Alberta, the United Way Campaign and Century Calgary. In 1976, Premier Peter Lougheed presented Rabbi Ginsburg with the Government of Alberta Achievement Award, one of many awards he received in his lifetime. At a 1972 dinner sponsored by Calgary citizens of all faiths, Mayor Rod Sykes said of Rabbi Ginsburg, "While Sharry Tzedec is his congregation, all of Calgary is his parish."

Rabbi Ginsburg (left) officiates in 1962 at the second 'Bar Mitzvah' of Congregation Beth Israel's founding Rabbi, Rabbi Hyman Goldstick (1906-1912) on the occasion of his 80th birthday. (photo courtesy, JAHSENA Archives)



Eliot Cohen (Corday)

By Sterling Haynes



*David Cohen family; Hay Lakes, Alberta, 1926. Courtesy of the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta.**

I first met Eliot Cohen when I was seven. It was during the depression, in the spring of 1935 that Eliot's parents, Katie and David Cohen asked our family, my mom, dad and my sister, Shirley, to a Sunday dinner in Hay Lakes, Alberta. It was a hot noon when we arrived at the Cohen Mercantile store by car from Edmonton. The road East to Cooking Lake was gravel but from Cooking Lake on it was rutted and dusty to Hay Lakes. After 31 hard Canadian miles we were dusty and irritable.

The Hay Lakes Mercantile was a combination grocery, dry goods, farm implement, and hardware store with two 10-gallon gas pumps by the front door. The pumps were hand-operated. The gas flowed by gravity into the car, truck or tractor and was next to the horse trough

filled with murky, alkaline water. There were usually a few teams of horses hitched to the railing in front of the store. The store was open seven days a week. This Sunday afternoon, farmers and church people had gathered at the store to shop, buy gas and gossip.

We had just arrived and Dave welcomed us but was busy selling gas and directed us to the upstairs living quarters where Katie was waiting for us. Dad and I parked and waited in line to gas up our old Ford Fliver. Mother and Shirley walked up the stairs of the store to the Cohen living quarters. David and his three boys, Teddy, Eliot and Hy were standing on the boardwalk by the front door watching Dave chewing on his cigar stump and pumping gas. Dave was a chunky, short man who wore bib GWG red strap overalls. This day his greasy denims were soaked with gas as he attempted to light a large Eddy wooden match on the seat of his pants. There was a little explosion, and before he could light his cigar stump, Dave was engulfed in flames. Dad dashed out of our car. The three sons and Dad each grabbed one of Dave's limbs and threw him in the horse trough. No one was hurt and Dave sheepishly declared that he was "OK" and then went into the store to change his wet clothes. This episode put a bit of a damper on Dave's mercurial temper and he seemed subdued. Eliot, a medical student, at the University of Alberta, tended his father's minor burns to his hands. Then we all gathered in the dining room above the store for a sumptuous Jewish meal. The meal included borsht with lokshen (noodles) and gefilte fish and mounds of shredded cheese, matzos (unleavened bread) and whipping cream. There were honey and figs for dessert and the men drank homemade wine.

I got to know Eliot much better four years later, during the spring of 1939. Eliot was a handsome slim man. His suits were always smart and well pressed and his black hair was combed back. He had a pencil thin black



Eliot Cohen continued...

moustache. He was always well-groomed whenever we met. Eliot's academic record was always superlative except for Latin. At the U of A he started his studies in electrical engineering but later on he switched the Faculty of Medicine.

Eliot was in his final year of medicine at the U of A when the Dean of Medicine, Johnny Ower, declared that unless Eliot passed his pre-med Latin exam he would not graduate with the class in medicine. My mother, Elizabeth, was a Latin scholar, and three times a week, Eliot arrived at our house for Latin lessons and to have his homework corrected by my mother. His Latin homework was always done and he arrived on time. He had a very rigorous schedule at medical school but he was friendly and polite to me and we talked about his family as well as mine and the practice of medicine. Eliot, after studying with my mother, passed the Latin exam with flying colours and graduated from the University of Alberta medical school in 1940. Eliot married his sweetheart, Marion, in Edmonton after graduation. Then he joined the R.C.A.F. where served as a Canadian air force doctor in World War II.

In 1945, Marion and Eliot moved to New York City to be with his brother, Ted Corday. It was in NYC that Eliot and Marion changed their name to Corday as well. There had developed in Canada and the USA, some anti-Jewish racism in the 1930s. Teddy felt this underlying racism. He was the first to change his name to Corday when he started to write, produce and direct for the stage and radio in NYC. After the name change, Ted worked with NBC. When Eliot arrived, Ted was established in theatre and radio. They both looked Spanish or perhaps French Canadian and the French name of Corday fitted.

Eliot had a medical residency in NYC in cardiology and trained with Dickenson Richards, a Nobel prize-winner in medicine. Then Richards and Corday, along with Dr. Arthur Masters, refined the early Masters Two Step Test, from the simple two-step stair stress test for cardiac function. Eliot, with his engineering experience, developed the modern cardiac stress testing and EKG monitoring performed when walking on a treadmill. Again with Dr. Richards, Eliot developed research studies that led to the development of cardiac catheterization. Eliot was only 32 years old at the time.

In 1949 Eliot and Marion moved to Los Angeles and worked in the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital where he developed radioisotope studies that became the forerunner of modern nuclear cardiology. Soon he was the leading cardiologist in the USA and contributed to four new fields: stress testing, ambulatory EKG monitoring, cardiac catheterization and nuclear cardiology.

Eliot was not only a researcher and teacher but a dedicated physician. He was the cardiologist who looked after William Randolph Hearst, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower when he was in the White House. He was chief consulting cardiologist for the United States Army and looked after many of its soldiers including five star General Omar Bradley, who was supreme commander of the U.S. Army in the 1940s. Busy as he was, he looked after my aging Aunt Iva, when she lived in Los Angeles.



When my Aunt Iva phoned Eliot's office for an appointment she was told by the receptionist, "Dr. Corday is not accepting new patients." Iva said, "I'm a long-time friend of Eliot's family. Would you please tell him Iva Haynes of Edmonton and Hay Lakes, Alberta phoned. I'll leave my phone number and perhaps Dr. Corday could call me." Eliot called the next day and spoke about the Haynes' family with fondness and his Latin tutoring in 1939 by my mother. He said he would be "delighted to see Iva about any cardiac problems at any time." The receptionist gave Iva an appointment.

Aunt Iva developed atrial fibrillation that was resistant to treatment. Eliot spent time with Iva and diagnosed a toxic goiter and thyrotoxicosis. Once the thyroid problem was treated by a thyroidectomy, her atrial fibrillation was relatively easy to control.

Iva was greatly improved and always raved about the great care she had received from the famous Canadian cardiologist Dr. Eliot Corday!

In the 1960s, Eliot was elected president of The American College of Cardiology. Eliot and his close friend cardiac surgeon Michael DeBakey advocated federal funding for cardiovascular research. As a professor at UCLA he was involved with teaching the latest cardiac diagnostic and treatment methods internationally. He also organized live interchanges on television with physicians globally and those behind the Iron Curtain as well. The David Cohen family emigrated from Lithuania to Canada in 1901. I am sure Eliot was aware of his Jewish family ties in Lithuania and Russia. President Ronald Reagan honoured Eliot Corday when he wrote this letter: "Sharing your knowledge and skills with physicians of other countries, you have served as an Ambassador of Goodwill. Your efforts dramatically demonstrate that America stands ready to work with others to help solve common problems."

Eliot Corday was born in Prince Rupert, British Columbia in 1913. He was raised and educated in Alberta, British Columbia and the U.S.A. and died in Los Angeles Feb 10th, 1999. He was a humble man, gave of himself, never forgot a friend and asked nothing in return.

**The picture of the Cohen family [1926] was supplied by Myra Paperny courtesy of the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta. Eliot is the 13 year old boy standing in the centre of the picture beside his mother.*

Jake Superstein: A Man for All Faiths

By Debby Shoctor

During one of the most tumultuous times in European history, Jake Superstein was born in Pinsk, Poland, into an Orthodox Jewish family in 1915. It was during the Great War, just before the Russian Revolution, and a time of violence and prejudice for Poland's Jews. As a result, Jake's parents, Leyzer and Hannah, decided to seek a better life in the new world. Leyzer left first, as did many men of that era, arriving in Canada in 1927 behind several of his brothers. Ten months later, he sent for Hannah and their six sons: Eddie, Max, Jake, Jack, Larry and Albert.

They settled on 95th street, in the heart of the immigrant neighborhood. Leyzer opened two stalls in the City Market, and later, he and his sons founded the Edmonton Produce Company in 1935, which grew into one of the largest wholesale poultry companies in Canada. During WWII, the company supplied powdered eggs to Canadian troops in Europe, and Jake Superstein was the Alberta representative of the Canadian Produce Council and an advisor to the federal government's Stabilization Board.

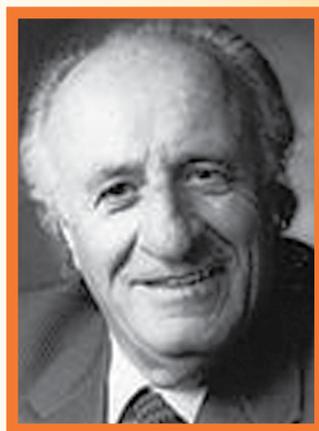
It became known that the boss of the poultry company was always willing to donate extra food to those in need, and in the 1950s, the Fathers from St. Mary's Silesian Boys' School approached Jake, asking for help with a special Christmas meal.

"I went to the school to see for myself what was needed. When I looked at the boys, I didn't ask what race or colour or creed they were. When I see a need, or I'm called to help, I'm there."

This began a life-long relationship with the school, and he served on their board of directors for over 30 years, nine of them as chairman. Before joining the Board, he made sure the school was inter-denominational. It also began a Superstein tradition of giving away about 100 turkeys to various charities every Christmas, including the Boyle Street Co-op, the Marian Centre, Bissel Centre, Operation Friendship, Urban Manor, the Edmonton Food Bank and others, providing about 1200 Christmas dinners every year.

In the office beside his home, each year Superstein would count and crate the turkeys himself, then he and his driver would load the turkeys into the car and personally deliver them to the organizations. "My wife, Ruth, writes a card to go with each turkey. I like to send greetings from my family," said Jake. "Sure, I'm Jewish. But I'm also a citizen," explained Superstein. "It's part of my faith to give. And it's also unethical for a society not to help their hungry people."

In the mid-1980s, inspired by the work of Edmonton's fledgling Food Bank, Jake helped to found the Joy of Sharing Society, along with 10 city congregations. This Society grew out of a meeting that he and then Rabbi Haim Kemelman of the Beth Shalom Congregation, had with the neighboring parish of St. Joseph's Cathedral. The Society was formed to put together a concert to raise funds for the Food Bank



Mr. Jake Superstein



at the Jubilee Auditorium, featuring the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Israeli conductor Uri Mayer, amongst others. The sold-out concert raised about \$50,000 for the food bank, and brought together many of the city's congregations, including: Beth Shalom, St. Joseph's, the Ahmadyya Muslim Association and Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Anglican and United Church congregations.

According to Jake, one of the projects he was most proud of was spearheading a fund-raising drive that, with a matching provincial grant, raised more than \$300,000 for the Friends of the Catholic University in Lublin, Poland.

In 1985, Jake Superstein, an Orthodox Jew, was awarded a Medal of Merit from the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem. "It may seem unusual that someone of the Hebrew Faith was presented with the award, said Christian Graefe, Prior of the Order, "But it seems that wherever we turned, whether it was for a project to re-equip a children's hospital or something else, the name of Superstein popped up." In 1986, Superstein was awarded the City of Edmonton's Silver Ribbon Award for improving Edmonton's quality of life. A year later, he was awarded the Order of Canada, and in November, 1995, the University of Alberta awarded him an Honorary Doctorate of Laws. He also served on the boards of the Edmonton General Hospital, the University of Alberta, the Boyle Street Co-op, the Marian Centre and the Salvation Army.

When asked in 1995 why he helped people of other faiths, Superstein said, "The Bible tells us that when God created the world, He created one man whose name was Adam. He was the first man – not the first Jew, Catholic or Protestant, not the first white, black or yellow man. In the words of Scripture, he was the first Universal Man, the father of all God's children." He added, "I cherish the ground I walk on in Alberta with my family. I love the freedoms we have from the freedom of worship to the freedom of being able to debate and agree to disagree."

Jake passed away in 2005 at the age of 90, leaving behind his wife Ruth, son Don, and daughters Shelley and Marlene. At his funeral, a booklet of his quotations was passed around. Speaking about Canada, Jake said, "There are few lands in the world blessed by God and men of good will where people of all faiths, cultures and all races can get together in the spirit of true and sincere brotherhood. I, as a loyal and proud Jew, am happy to take part in these festivities among friends of other faiths. This is indeed a shining example in a world torn by prejudice and racial hate."



Remembering First “Twins” Bar Mitzvah

By Harold Rodnunsky

Peter Rodnunsky immigrated to Canada in 1910 from Mirgorod, Ukraine, Russia to Winnipeg, Canada. The following year, Peter sent for Mania Hardashnikov, from the town of Sorochina Poltova, Gebernia, Ukraine Russia. Mania, along with cousins Kalman and Hodel Hardin, parents of Susky, Sarah, Isadore and Tom, who came via Wales, British Isles, arrived in Winnipeg during March 1911. Peter and Mania were married in Winnipeg and traveled to Edmonton to join the other three family members who were already living in Edmonton since 1906 including Hyman and Sonia Satanove, Max and Malka Rodnunsky and Sam and Ann Rodnunsky. Sonia, Malka and Sam were Peter’s siblings. Peter and Mania had four children: Esther in 1913, Hymie in 1917 and two twin boys; Harold and Albert in 1926.

On arriving in Edmonton, in 1911, Peter and Mania opened a small grocery store and snack business on the west side of 101 Street and 103 Avenue. They attended the Congregation Beth Israel. Peter was a charter member of the Chevra Kadisha along with Max and Sam Rodnunsky. Mania looked after the Women’s Wing of the Chevra Kadisha.

In 1916, Peter and Mania moved to Kingman, Alberta (60 miles south-east of Edmonton between Tofield and Camrose) where Peter built his general store known as Kingman’s Farmers Supply.

In 1931, when the twin boys, Harold and Albert, were five years old, the Rodnunskys moved back to Edmonton locating at 107 Avenue and 95 St. The twins were enrolled in a Jewish school located at 103 Avenue and 95 St. and they regularly attended Synagogue.

Rabbi Haft’s cousin, Mr. Levine, who lived just down 107 Avenue prepared the twins for their Bar Mitzvah which was held at the Beth Israel on Saturday, August 13, 1939. Harold presented the introductory blessing, then he said the Haftorah, whereupon Albert repeated the same Haftorah. Albert then completed the last seven prayers.

The Kiddish that followed was held outside in front of the Synagogue with a large table in the form of a “U” shape with the Rabbi and Rebbitzen and a visitor from the Roman Catholic Parish of Legal, Father Tessier (who later became Monsignor Tessier) at the head table with Peter and Mania and the twins. There were approximately 50 guests at the table. Kosher delights were prepared by Mania Rodnunsky with the table served by Mania’s sisters and sister-in-laws: Aunt Rose Simmons, Aunt Freda Slutsky, Aunt Rae Sorokin, Aunt Marie Hardin, Aunt Rita Hardin and Aunt Fanny Hardin. The menu included gefilte fish with hard boiled eggs, followed by blintzes, vartuten, sour cream, salad and pickles and buns. Dessert was kichel, bagel and sponge cake, tea and milk.

Harold and Albert continue their shul observance. In 1945 Albert enrolled at the University of Toronto and Harold, in 1956 began teaching for the Westlock School Division at Jarvie, Alberta.



Genocide Memorial Garden Dedication “One Step in Fostering Cooperation Among Faith Groups”

By Paula E. Kirman

When Rev. Audrey Brooks had a landscaped dry riverbed garden built on her front lawn, she decided to dedicate the garden in memory of the victims of genocide. Brooks, a Unitarian minister and member of The Raging Grannies protest singing group, had some very personal reasons for her decision.

“The idea to dedicate the riverbed came to me after my daughter and I visited Jewish cemeteries and synagogues in Prague, Vienna, Budapest, and Frankfurt,” Brooks explains. “We also visited the Dachau and Theresien concentration camps. Our family found out in 1958 that our Hungarian grandmother was Jewish, had married a Christian, and both were cast out by their families. They came to Canada as homesteaders and told their children they were both orphans with no living relatives. However, one of their daughters always disputed this because she remembered visiting relatives when she was a little girl. When her grandmother died and her immigration papers were found, she was listed as a Jew.”

“In the 1980s,” Brooks continues, “My mother and I visited those relatives, who had been located by one of my aunt’s sons. The story of my grandparents was proven to be true. So, when we planned our trip to Europe, my daughter and I decided to honor our Jewish heritage by doing this trip. We noted that visitors to the various Jewish sites often left small stones behind to mark their visit.”

To honour her Jewish heritage, Brooks originally was going to dedicate the garden to the Holocaust alone and to place a memorial plaque to honor that. However, upon reflection, she decided that the garden would have a larger scope. One day, Brooks explains, “I was sitting at my living room window, looking at the morning sun play over the front yard, and over the stones in the riverbed. I was listening to the news on the CBC radio station.”

Brooks found herself crying as she heard news from the Republic of Congo, stating that soldiers were raping women and girls, one as young as 11 months old. “History keeps on repeating itself,” she says. “Then there was more killing: in Darfur, in Somalia, in Nigeria - and the list kept getting bigger as I recalled other genocides.” Brooks decided at that moment that the dedication of the riverbed must be to honor all those who have perished because of violent deaths in events such as wars, racism, slavery, greed, religious persecution, gender orientation, and appropriation of Aboriginal lands. “This is how,” says Brooks, “the idea of the Genocide Memorial Garden began.”

An official dedication ceremony took place on June 21, 2009. The ceremony included sacred readings and prayers provided by Brooks and Rev. Brian Kiely, also of the Unitarian church, as well as musical reflections. The central part of the ceremony involved people from different faiths and backgrounds, many of them personally invited by Brooks, to write the name of a person, place, or event affected by genocide and put that stone in the riverbed. Afterwards, the person would explain the significance of what they wrote on the stone. Participants included a Christian

Genocide Memorial Garden continued...



Rev. Brian Kiely and Rev. Audrey Brooks from the Unitarian Church co-officiated the ceremony.



Stones placed in the Genocide Memorial Garden



Genocide Memorial Garden



Genocide Memorial Garden

survivor from Rwanda, a Muslim cleric, and a rabbi, in addition to others of the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faiths (including this writer, who laid a stone for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust).

“It was my goal to have a loving and respectful interaction among the participants regardless of differences in faith,” says Brooks. “I invited as many representatives from ethnic, religious, and family groups as I could. I sent invitations to 30 associations, inviting them to participate in the dedication of the Genocide Memorial Garden, and to place a stone with the name of the group they were honouring, then to tell the audience why it was important to place that stone. I emphasized that the ceremony was to be ‘a peaceful witness to violence in the world.’ I also spoke with my Muslim colleague, Shaykh Zak Sheikh, from the U of A Chaplains Association, who was thoughtful and inspiring in accommodating not only the various groups within his own faith, but to honor those of other faiths. During the ceremony Brooks said, “It goes without saying that Rabbi David Kunin and Shaykh Zak Sheikh knew instinctively what was needed, and acted accordingly. I also emphasized, in my personal contacts with people, and in the service, that we are all brothers and sisters. Even our DNA tells us that very clearly. People responded with their hearts rather than their politics or religious biases. I was so honored by this ceremonial event!”

Brooks is now considering making it an annual event and possibly combining it with a citizens march or rally. As for her thoughts on how genocide can be avoided, her belief relies heavily upon interfaith dialogue and understanding. “We simply have to stop killing each other and telling ourselves that it is God’s will that we do so. If we publicly and repeatedly promote and engage in interfaith dialogue, and really mean to change the way nations relate to each other, the idea of religious wars being used as a cover for genocide can be shown to be a lie,” she explains.

Says Brooks: “The Abrahamic faiths in particular have more in common than they have in differences. Each culture responded to God’s call in their own way, but they don’t have to be mutually exclusive. God calls in many ways, in many cultures. We do ourselves serious religious injury if we draw a circle to exclude the beliefs of others. The ceremony of dedication of the Genocide Memorial Garden is one step in fostering cooperation among faith groups. We respected the truth as each one spoke it. We cried together. We listened to each other.”



Our stories
Christian



Father Bill Irwin: The Man, The Vision

By Marc Barylo

It could be said that Father Bill was a rebel: a priest and social worker who combined the best of those two paths to become a catalyst for social action and change.

On August 15, 1961, when he hung up his shingle: “Archdiocese of Edmonton Catholic Charities”, he heralded a new attitude toward social work, a holistic concern for clients’ physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. He was blessed with an unwavering faith and concern for humanity, bolstered by the very human traits of tenacity, stubbornness, an incisive business sense, and ability to anticipate and meet social needs.

From the beginning, Edmonton Catholic Social Services (CSS) has taken, and maintains, a proactive stance toward helping people of all faiths and cultures, often anticipating social needs and creating programs to meet them even when the decision is unpopular or “socially unacceptable.” This spirit infused and continues to inspire Catholic Social Services.

Its vision is “Dignity, hope and a purpose for people of all faiths and cultures” and its mandate “The enhancement of human well-being in a spirit of truth, justice, freedom, and solidarity”. Both point toward a compassionate vision of the world as described in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, the foundation upon which Father Bill developed the CSS service philosophy and framework. Jesus enumerates the issues that wear away human dignity: hunger, thirst, sickness, imprisonment and lack of basic material and emotional needs. He stresses the importance of personally responding to each person: “As often as you did it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me.”

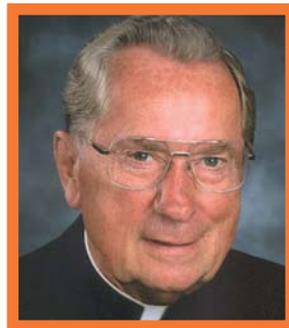
CSS was in response to the city’s rapidly changing landscape and dramatic social transition. Family Counseling, the first service delivered by Father Bill logged nearly 2,000 cases that first year. In conjunction with the Christmas Bureau, CSS engaged in the first Christmas Hamper Drive.

Welcoming “strangers” began early. In 1962, the Agency instituted an Immigration and Settlement Service which provided newcomers with the support needed. CSS was one of the first to sponsor those who could not otherwise immigrate to Canada. In the late 1970s, CSS was a major player in helping the Vietnamese “boat people”.

The Agency’s support for those fleeing violence, war, and fear has continued to grow, welcoming refugees from Afghanistan, Sudan, and Somalia. CSS is cherished by many as the place that first welcomed them to a new life in Edmonton. Florim Tafilaj, current Settlement Counsellor and himself a former CSS client, remembers the upheaval of being a refugee and says of CSS, “In Canada we are their sign of hope, their family where they find support, comfort, love and human touch.” The first years saw rapid expansion. In 1965, CSS opened Marydale, Alberta’s first residence and program for emotionally disturbed children. In 1975, CSS began offering programs to individuals dealing with substance abuse, as well as the first programs for people with developmental disabilities. Over the intervening 48 years, that small, one-man office has grown into Canada’s largest multi-function social service agency offering more than 100 programs, serving 60,000+ clients each year. CSS employs more than 1,200 people who are supported by over 1,900 volunteers.

As Catholic Social Services has grown, it has developed innovative programs: Safe House for sexually-exploited street youth, Elpida programs for those rebuilding their lives after prison, Kairos for people with HIV/AIDS, programs for Temporary Foreign Workers and a range of support for those affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Over the past 25 years, the Sign of Hope campaign has raised more than \$35 million for Agency programs and provided seed money for many of its undertakings. Each program undertaken over the past five decades is a living testament to the values which fuel CSS. The Sign of Hope campaign was born due to this steadfast adherence to the Agency's core values. When Planned Parenthood joined the United Way, CSS withdrew, and, in order to raise the \$400,000, it had received from the United Way campaign it embarked upon a fundraising campaign of its own. However, CSS is more than programs; for its employees, phrases like "social justice", and "truth" are not idealistic window dressing but a dynamic embodiment of the Catholic social teachings in which the Agency is rooted. The teachings stress inclusivity, dignity, respect for all, and sanctity of life, as well as spiritual health. Clients and employees are supported and encouraged to explore their spirituality, no matter what form it takes or which belief system it may follow. Employees of Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, and Aboriginal backgrounds work together to bring hope to each client. Juma Naikyar, was one of those clients. A former refugee, he is now a Settlement Counsellor with the Agency's Immigration & Settlement Service and experiences this commitment every day. "I am not of the Catholic faith," he says, "but I can proudly say that CSS provides service with a deep sense of integrity."



Father Bill Irwin

Father Bill has been honoured with: Officer of the Order of Canada in 1998; Paul Harris Fellow with the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International; Queen's Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of Canada; Doctor of Divinity Degree from St. Stephen's College, University of Alberta in 1995; outstanding Citizen of the Year for the City of Edmonton in 1985.

He served on numerous national and international Boards of Directors, including international migration and social services consultant for the United Nations and the Vatican. He was particularly proud of the international development work that Catholic Social Services has done for the last 14 years in the squatter areas of Manila, the Philippines.

Perhaps this is Father Bill's greatest legacy: the wisdom to inspire those around him to put aside differences and work toward a greater good in a Christian spirit that transcends categorization because it lives in the common values which unite all cultures and faiths. Father Bill passed away August 2004. Catholic Social Services has continued to grow and flourish due to this insight and the strength to, in the words of Saint Francis of Assisi, "Witness the Gospel always; if necessary, use words."



Come and Pray in our Mosque

By David J. Goa

Tragedy sometimes brings out the best in us. In mid-February 1980 the Edmonton Fire Department (EFD) was reeling from a sequence of fires that burned Beth Shalom Synagogue, Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Cathedral and the Church of the Nazarene on the Southside of Edmonton. Other fires followed. Officials with the EFD noted similarities in the way the fires were started by a man whom I came to call the "ecumenical arsonist". After the third fire religious communities began to organize watch committees and negotiate for twenty-four hour security.

I remember hearing the early morning news broadcast of the first fires at Beth Shalom and Saint Joseph's Cathedral. My thought immediately turned to Rabbi Hyman, whom I had come to know through my work at the museum and who graciously helped me in preparing the first museum exhibition in Canada on living religious traditions. I had attended services at Beth Shalom along with Eve Pascoe, who worked for the Jewish Historical and Archive Committee which partnered with me at the Provincial Museum of Alberta to develop a Judaica collection which included a large body of artifacts, photographs, ephemera and field notes documenting the life of a number of the Jewish communities in Alberta. I normally rode my bike from my home in Old Strathcona, across the High Level Bridge and through back lanes and side streets, to the Museum. Beth Shalom was on my way and that morning I rode to the Rabbi's home next to the shul. The fire trucks were still on the scene when I knocked at the door. In a few moments Rabbi Hyman came and opened the door. He was deeply distressed by the fire and it showed in the whole of his demeanour. The burning of synagogues calls to mind a long history of horrors for Jewish communities. The Rabbi put his arms around me and wept and wept, trying to control his tears without avail. After a time his tears and sobs abated, and he stood back and spoke. Here is my memory of that moment. "But, David, something extraordinary has happened. A couple of hours ago, when the firemen were just getting the blaze under control, there was a knock at the door and I answered it expecting the fire chief or an investigator. There, standing right where you are, were Imam Chebli and Imam Saleem Ganam. I had not seen them since you introduced me to them in the Spiritual Life – Sacred Ritual Gallery at the Museum a few years ago. The Imam put his arms around me, David, and said, 'We have come to offer the condolences of Dar al-Islam [the House of Islam], for a house of God has been destroyed. Come and bring your people and meet in the basement of our mosque.'"



Later that week I visited Imam Chebli at Al-Rashid Mosque. Just as I had come to know and cherish my friendship with Rabbi Hyman through my museum-based work, I had come to know and cherish my friendship with Imam Chebli. I wanted to tell him how much it meant to so many of us that he had gone to the Rabbi's home and spoken those words, and how touched I was by it, and that our life together in Edmonton was enriched that morning in the face of a trauma. Al-Rashid Mosque stood on 111th Avenue by the Royal Alexander Hospital but the community was planning what we have come to know as the Canadian Islamic Centre in north Edmonton. On greeting the Imam I was immediately ushered downstairs to see the model the architects had developed for the new mosque and Islamic centre. He was so excited by the prospects of the new building that it took some time before I could get a word in edgewise and express my appreciation for his visit to the Rabbi's home a few days before. He then told me how he and Imam Ganam had spoken to the congregation in the Mosque at the Friday noon prayer about their visit to the Rabbi's home and about their expressions of condolences on behalf of Dar al-Islam. He described in detail the responses of the congregation, which included some strong protest. But in the face of that protest young Palestinian men had come forward to stand with the Imam. They said to the gathered community that they not only understood the Imam's action but lauded it, because they had lived with the trauma of the terror of history in Palestine/Israel. This was the only kind of action that made sense to them. "In Canada, this is what we must do! We Palestinians know the pain of communal hostility."

In the early morning of that winter day in February two Imams stood in the entryway of the Rabbi's home. They had responded to a neighbour out of the teaching, sensibility, and courage born of the Glorious Qur'an and the struggles for faithfulness. We are all richer for it.

Celebrating 150 Years in Solidarity with the People of Alberta

Sisters of Charity of Montreal “Grey Nuns”

by Sr. Rosaleen Zdunich

In 1857, Bishop Alexandre Tache made a request to Sister Julie Deschamps superior of the Sisters of Charity “Grey Nuns” of Montreal: “There are many needs in the far-west! Would you have Sisters ready to come to Lac Sainte-Anne”?

Sister Dechamps sent the Sisters quoting Saint Marguerite d’Youville, Foundress of the Grey Nuns, “Take good care of the poor”. These words epitomize the life of the Grey Nuns.



St. Marguerite d’Youville, founder

With deep faith and incredible courage, three young Grey Nuns left Montreal on September 19, 1858 and reached Saint-Boniface, Manitoba 42 days later. They remained there for nine months to become acclimatized and to learn pointers from the Native people. Marie-Louise, a young Métis interpreter, asked to join them on their trip and became a very important member of the community.

After journeying 53 days through sloughs, muskegs and creeks with the ox carts, finally September 24, 1859 the Sisters reached the Sacred Ground of Lac Sainte-Anne. They were greeted with prayers of thanksgiving, ringing of the church bells and dances by the Natives. Within a week of their arrival, the sisters were visiting families, teaching day school to some forty adults and learning Cree. Living in extreme poverty and sharing the people’s hunger, they wrote home, “We keep no account book as no one here has money or salary”.

The Sisters, with seven orphans, left Lac Sainte-Anne March 23, 1863 and travelled a full day to St. Albert. They opened a school, an orphanage and a rudimentary hospital where all people found care and respect. Soon local women joined in their work.

In 1895, the Grey Nuns established the first Edmonton hospital, Edmonton General and the first Nursing School in 1908. At the opening, the Sisters confirmed: “The Sisters of Charity have the pleasure of announcing to the public that the new hospital is open. It is to be clearly understood that this is a General Hospital, run by the Sisters of Charity, and all have free access without distinction of race, creed or nationality. The sole object of the Sisters is to minister to the temporal wants of suffering humanity; the rest will be left to the Lord who watches over all”.

With fortitude, they passionately transmitted the flame of healing, service, faith and love to the people of Alberta

The General Hospital is now home to a Continuing Care Centre while a new Grey Nuns Hospital opened in 1988.

...and the journey continues!



My First Inter-Faith Encounter

By David J. Goa

The North American Van lines truck was finally empty and drove away at 4:30 PM. It was the 15th of August, 1951, my birthday, and that night was the first night we slept in our new home in King Edward Park in Edmonton. We had moved from Camrose, from the comfort of a tight-knit Norwegian immigrant community to the big city fifty miles (as we said in those days) northwest. The row of modest new homes along 78th Avenue, built by the Lakusta brothers, all needed landscaping. That would come with the following spring along with the first vegetable gardens. One block over stood a farmer's field.

I took my father's hand and we walked half a block to 80th Street, turned north and walked another four blocks and crossed the well graveled main street that connected the University to highway 16. The Whyte Avenue of my memory, in my neighbourhood, remained a gravel street for most of my childhood. We needed milk and butter and a few other things and my father had spotted a little convenience store across Whyte Avenue. Once inside I wandered about checking out what was on the somewhat dysfunctional shelves.

My father had emigrated from Norway as a young man and it was the custom in his home town to shake hands with virtually everyone you met. In the convenience store he had stretched out his hand to greet the gentleman behind the counter, said "hello" and introduced himself. My father was named for the Irish resurrection hero, Finn McCool. The name Finn caught on in Norway a thousand years ago, the work of Irish monks, and the gentleman who took his hand was Moses, a name loaded with meaning even for me as a young child.

I was raised in the landscape of the Bible. The stories of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Rebecca and Ishmael, Jacob and Leah and Rachael, Joseph and his Egyptian wife Asenath and his brothers, of Moses and the prophets and, of course, of my namesake David, the Psalmist and King, were part of our daily reading and conversation. At seven years of age I thought this was how everyone grew up. And, now, I was standing listening to my father in an animated conversation with Moses, who I later learned was the owner of the store.

A visit to Moses' store was a regular part of our life for a number of years. My father, a carpenter by training and a lay Biblical scholar by avocation, built new shelves for Moses several years later and I helped install them. The installation took longer than it ought because Moses and my father would take lengthy breaks to engage in their shared and distinct understandings of biblical narrative.



My First Inter-Faith Encounter continued...

Every time I was in the store with my father we also took a journey into the landscape of the Bible. I listened carefully as he sought to understand how his new friend and neighbour understood texts that my father loved and held so close to his heart. In my late teens when I first read the great scholar Martin Buber's discussion of how Jews read the Bible and of our need for what Buber calls "an I- Thou" relationship to biblical text, I thought of that first visit to Moses' convenience store, to the conversation between two men, one a Jew and one a Christian, sharing an uncommon love for a common text. Both stood on the foundations of their distinct religious traditions as they turned to each other.

Friendship was forged in the deep mutual engagement in thinking together out of what each brought to the conversation. By the end of each conversation there were always more distinctions to appreciate and, at least for my father, a deeper regard for the mystery of how these narratives unfolded in the mind and heart of Moses. These conversations, distinctions and mysteries were carried into his reading and re-reading of the Biblical narratives throughout his life. And, I suspect that it was in the vigor and golden hue of these conversations that the desire to understand how others understood was born in a seven year old boy.

The greatest of the Hebrew Prophets, Moses, and the Irish resurrection hero Finn, and their namesakes, bequeathed to me a singular gift: the luminous presence that comes to shape spiritual friendship when two people engage each other out of what is best in their understanding and so glimpse "the image of God" in each other.



What We Want the Other to Know and Teach about Our Religious Traditions

By Sr. Rosaleen Zdunich

This title was the topic for a Jewish, Christian and Muslim dialogue organized at the initiative of Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz, who was the Executive Director of the Centre for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut.

It was one of five that took place in the world under his direction. The conferences began in 2000 in Jerusalem and Edmonton, Alberta followed by conferences in Rome, Italy; Bamberg, Germany; and Fairfield, Connecticut. We were very privileged to host such a prestigious dialogue and the first of its kind to be held in Edmonton as expressed by the following statement:

** “Humanity has reached a dramatic crossroad in history. We have the opportunity to put aside our divisiveness and seek reconciliation and understanding once and for all”.*

This statement served as the theme and the spirit in which this dialogue was organized and held. This event generated a great deal of interest and enthusiasm due to anticipation which surrounded it. When the media heard about it, they phoned for more information and interviews.

The evening preceding the dialogue, drew a crowd of more than 500 to City Hall for the official opening. Mayor Bill Smith welcomed the capacity crowd. The Interfaith Prayer Service marking the annual day of “Elimination of Racial Discrimination” designated by the United Nations followed. Fourteen faiths prayed each according to their own faith tradition and Rabbi Ehrenkranz gave the keynote address.

The following two days created an opportunity for the three Abrahamic faiths to engage in a dialogue of mutual respect and understanding. The warm hospitality of Beth Shalom Synagogue created an atmosphere where open and honest discussions took place.

High profile speakers included Dr. Derek Penslar, Professor of Jewish History at University of Toronto, Ontario; Dr. Leonard Swidler, Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Dr. Jamal Badawi, Professor of Islamic Tradition at St. Mary’s University in Halifax, Nova Scotia provided an intellectual basis for critical thinking and stimulating discussions. These religious leaders and historians spoke about their faith from a historical perspective and called for understanding and co-operation among their followers. They agreed, that in a multicultural 21st century society, it is crucial that trust and understanding be the foundation of good relationships, and one way this can be accomplished is through dialogue.

** The Centre for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut.*



Our Religious Traditions continued...

The 300 participants from the three faiths including academics, university students, and the general public challenged the keynote speakers with thought-provoking questions. They sought clarification on complex issues. They questioned how to create greater understanding and harmony among these faiths.

At the conclusion of the two days, comments echoed throughout the hall: “I’ve enjoyed the intellectual level and I’m getting a tremendous education”; “I’ve learned there is an openness to understand more about each other”; “There is readiness of people of different faiths to grow together”; “A good beginning to building bridges”; “Outstanding event and a good education”.

This momentous and historic dialogue was supported and sponsored by generous donations from individuals and organizations of the three faiths.

The proceedings of all five dialogues were put into a book entitled: *“What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Us?”* Sacred Heart University Press, 5151 Park Avenue, Fairfield, Connecticut.

In Edmonton, two additional dialogues took place.

2001 Topic: Jerusalem – A Centre of Faith

Keynote Speakers: Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz, Archbishop

Thomas Collins, Dr. Saleem Qureshi

Host: McDougall United Church

2004 Topic: The Contributions of Religious

Traditions to Civil Society

Keynote Speakers: Rabbi David Kunin,

Rev. Bill Phipps, Dr. Bilal Kuspinar

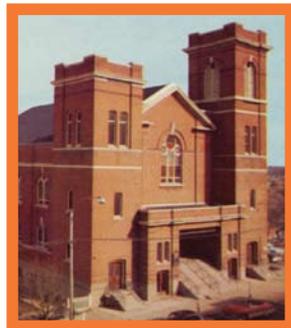
Host: The Faculty of Arts,

University of Alberta

Interfaith Generosity: McDougall United Church and Beth Shalom Synagogue, 1938

as provided by Tim O'Grady

In 1908 members of McDougall Methodist Church (today's McDougall United Church) started planning for the construction of a new sanctuary. The cornerstone for the new church was laid in April of 1909, and the church was dedicated January 15, 1910. The building held 1600 people and was much larger than their previous church, built in 1892, which held only 150. The new church soon became a venue for the city's major social events, including concerts, debates and socials. The total price for the new church was \$70,000, paid largely through a loan of \$50,000 from the Independent Order of Foresters – a fraternal benefits society still active in Canada and the United States.



McDougall United Church

Unfortunately, the First World War significantly lowered church attendance, and the church experienced financial difficulties into the 1920s and 1930s. By 1935 the Church had managed to pay \$70,000 back from its original \$50,000 loan, yet it still owed an additional \$40,000 as a result of accumulated interest. In 1938 the Foresters agreed to cancel the remaining debt of \$20,000 could be raised by October, 1939. Special appeals for donations went out across the city in what McDougall United called their "Victory Fund". As a result of the generosity of numerous Edmontonians who all gave a little, the Foresters received a payment of \$21,020 on May 22, 1939. Although affected by the Depression, members of Beth Shalom Synagogue were among those who donated what they had to the cause. Rabbi Eisen, who issued a \$50 cheque, proclaimed, "The men who made it possible were only too glad to let me have the money for this more than worthwhile purpose, I assure you, good friend, that your Victory shall be mine also".

Tim O'Grady, Archivist at McDougall United Church found this story in the McDougall Church Victory Magazine, dated May 22, 1939, and the McDougall United Church 130th Anniversary Memorial Booklet, printed in 2003 by McDougall Church.



A House of Understanding and Cooperation The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers' Trinity Manor

By Paula E. Kirman

The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers(EMCN) helps recent immigrants to Edmonton meet their basic needs while seeking access to work, housing, education, and other services. Clients of the EMCN come from all over the world, including refugees from regions of Africa and South America.

The organization operates several housing projects in central Edmonton. Housing is an urgent need for new Canadians. "The struggle for decent housing is fought in every community, whether in Edmonton, Canada, or around the world," explains Delmy Garcia-Hoyt, who is a Coordinator with the EMCN's Supported Housing services. "The Mennonite Center plays a key role in the struggle to house newcomers to Canada; first by taking a position and giving a voice to refugees, and second by educating the community at large about their special needs."

Trinity Manor is one of the EMCN's housing facilities. As Garcia-Hoyt explains, it is "actual housing, with modest, well-built apartments in which support services are offered by caring professionals. As workers we have been given a wonderful opportunity to hear, to see, and to live the context in which our tenants live, struggle, adapt and learn to walk in their new life in Canada. Trinity Manor is a place where each and everyone is embraced."

The background of the residents of Trinity Manor are varied. They include a number of Muslims and Christians both present and former clients. "We want tenants to be able to express their faith, their gratitude, their care, their hopes, and their love," says Garcia-Hoyt.

The EMCN has been able to build bridges of understanding between residents of different faith groups through the work it does with the tenants. "Through formal and informal groups we work with people from different cultures and backgrounds. This interaction leads to learning from each other and being better able to establish good lives in Canada. People also begin to create new opportunities to learn together," Garcia-Hoyt explains.

"We don't let individualist theology trap us into thinking, 'It's all up to you!' or, 'It's all about us versus them.' We are in this world together. As we give and take, treat each other as we want to be treated, remember that each of us is part of all of us, we achieve much more, and, most especially, we notice the same divine spark burns in each of the souls that make up the Trinity Manor Housing Program."

Garcia-Hoyt is easily able to relate numerous instances of interfaith cooperation between tenants. In fact, in most cases, one's individual religious beliefs do not even come up in the specific situations. "A young single woman originally from Sudan lived with us for awhile and became very ill. She was placed on bed rest in a local hospital for almost three weeks. Another tenant, an Eritrean woman in her sixties learned of this tenant in the hospital through other tenants and she began to visit with her. She borrowed from us a thermos to take tea as well as sweet bread to the young woman. Neither of them spoke a common language to communicate, but both of them knew that they needed each other. So during the visits they drank the tea, held hands, and prayed, to make company together."

Even when language barriers exist, faith can be a unifying element between tenants. "A Moroccan woman found herself having to adjust to a new life in Canada while also learning how to be a new parent far from the practices and customs of her homeland," Garcia-Hoyt tells. "A young single woman, originally from Somalia, decided that after school she would go to her place to assist her with the cleaning and cooking of the apartment. These young women found unity through common experiences and their Muslim faith even though neither can speak the same language. They looked beyond these differences to find common cause in looking after each other and enjoying each other's company."

Most of all, EMCN realizes and respects that faith is central in the lives of many of its tenants at Trinity Manor. "As EMCN staff we believe that the best vehicle for the transmission of faith is not to be found in printed reports or numbers of activities done in a year. Faith moves through the commitment of staff and tenants to community who together are the protagonists of this project," Garcia-Hoyt explains.

She continues, "In all our programs at Trinity we try to take into account what came before in the life of every tenant, whether it is the life and death of a loved one or tenants' memories of persecution in far away lands. And so every part of every program becomes an opportunity to breathe hope. We witness the tenants in new environments and contexts evolving with new thoughts and discovering and believing in the possibility of renewal. For many of the tenants such faith as this has been the only thing that has sustained them to live and carry on."



Edmonton's Memnonite Centre for Newcomers

Jews and Christians Make History in Edmonton

By Sr. Rosaleen Zdunich

On April 20, 1986, a historic meeting of two faiths was celebrated. Conservative Rabbi Haim Kemelman and Roman Catholic Archbishop Joseph MacNeil prayed together at Beth Shalom synagogue.

Warm greetings were extended to the Archbishop upon his first official visit to Beth Shalom synagogue and to all who were present. This meeting came one week after Pope John Paul II participated in a similar service in the main Jewish Synagogue in Rome. The two visits were coincidental. However, the Rabbi and the Archbishop commented that this service was arranged before the Pope announced his plans to visit the synagogue in Rome. Rabbi Haim Kemelman opened the service by chanting in Hebrew Psalm 100, “A Psalm of Thanksgiving.” “Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into His presence with singing.”

He reminded the congregation that “we are custodians of a common ethic.” He praised Pope John Paul II for his “one step in a giant leap of faith,” and said, “The two faiths should not be strangers or competitors in a pluralistic society.”

After leading the congregation in a responsive prayer, Archbishop MacNeil addressed the assembly. He recalled Pope John Paul’s II’s visit to the Synagogue in Rome the previous Sunday where he said, “You are our dearly beloved brothers; you are our elder brothers.” The Archbishop reminded everyone that this shows the important new steps being taken to deepen the relationship and dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Jewish people.

Archbishop MacNeil also spoke about Vatican II document “Nostra Aetate” (In Our Time) which expresses a new attitude of the Catholic Church to Jewish people and to Judaism. He said, “This document is significant not only for Roman Catholic Christians but also for Catholic – Jewish relations. Even though we belong to two different and important religious traditions we are rooted in this common heritage. We can see this in our common spiritual values and especially in the many links between the Christian Liturgy and the Jewish Liturgy. These links are a powerful force that can bring us closer to each other as we come to understand our common roots.”

He concluded his presentation by saying, “We have begun a long and important journey together as



Left: Archbishop MacNeil, Right: Rabbi Kemelman



Christians and as Jews. The important thing is that, having begun, we continue and come to a deeper appreciation of our two religious traditions in fidelity to the Most High.”

At the conclusion of the Archbishop’s presentation, questions were welcomed by the two religious leaders. Then, together, they prayed Psalm 133, “The Blessedness of Unity.” “Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.”

The Rabbi and the Archbishop concluded the celebration as they extended their hands in a joint blessing in Hebrew and English.

*“May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you.
May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace.” Numbers 6: 24-26*

The standing-room-only crowd far exceeded expectations. A reception followed. Everyone agreed it was a history-making day in the City of Edmonton and a remarkable and blessed Sunday afternoon.

This service was organized and coordinated by Sr. Rosaleen Zdunich and Rabbi Haim Kemelman. Rabbi Kemelman slipped into eternity in 1988, two years after this service.

Rabbi Delivers Lecture Series at Roman Catholic Newman Theological College

By Sr. Rosaleen Zdunich

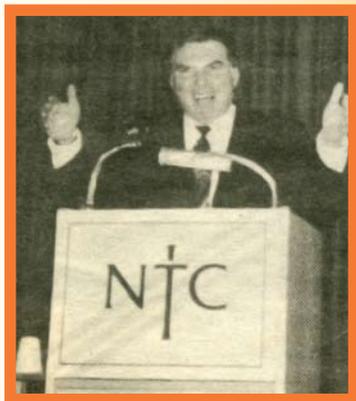
Archbishop Anthony Jordan OMI, Archbishop of the Edmonton Archdiocese, 1964-1973, was responsible for founding Newman Theological College (NTC). It opened its doors in 1969 for theological education in response to Vatican II. This lecture series is dedicated in his memory.

The Lecture Series offers everyone, as well as academics, an opportunity to hear world-renowned scholars address topical subjects in theology. With ample time for discussion, and debate, this series is a popular and thought-provoking Newman Theological College event.

Christians from many denominations attend these lectures to hear profound Christian speakers. However, in 1997, the series took on an interfaith dimension when Rabbi Asher Finkel was the guest speaker. Rabbi Finkel is co-founder of the Department of Jewish-Christian Studies in New Jersey with Roman Catholic Priest, Edmontonian Father Larry Frizzel.

Rabbi Finkel's three lectures addressed the topic "Christianity and Judaism in Dialogue". The series was opened with a prayer in Hebrew and English by Neil Loomer from Beth Shalom Synagogue. Rabbi Asher Finkel was introduced by Sr. Rosaleen Zdunich, Founding Coordinator of The Edmonton Interfaith Centre.

The lecture series ends with a banquet to which presidents of all the Christian colleges are invited. But how was this banquet different from previous banquets? Because it was held at Beth Shalom Synagogue! At each table, Jews and Christians sat together sharing a kosher meal and their respective faith and practices. Animated conversation could be heard throughout the banquet room. This lecture series came to a conclusion when, after the banquet, everyone was invited for a tour of the synagogue. I was privileged to coordinate this event with Newman Theological College.



Rabbi Finkel speaking at Newman Theological College



Working to Eliminate Discrimination: The Harmony Brunch

By Paula E. Kirman

A sad part of our world, both now and in the past, is the amount of violence and hatred that has been caused by divisions along religious and racial lines. March 21 is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. One of the ways the day is marked in Edmonton is with the Harmony Brunch.

“The message of the Harmony Brunch is that we all must to work together to eliminate racial and all other forms of discrimination,” explains organizer Karen Gall. “The atmosphere, while friendly and celebratory, is thought-provoking and encourages attendees to think about these important issues and take action to eliminate racism in their personal and professional lives.”

The Harmony Brunch has occurred annually for the past twelve years and is held on a Sunday some time close to March 21. It is organized by the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation (CMEF), which is made of up individuals from many different cultural and religious backgrounds. The CMEF is an Edmonton-based non-profit organization with a mandate to promote public education and awareness of multiculturalism, and to advocate adherence to a wide range of multicultural values including diversity, equality, fairness, justice, unity, harmony and inclusiveness. “The annual Harmony Brunch has proven to be an excellent tool to further this goal,” Gall says.

Gall is Chair of the Harmony Brunch Committee. “In that role, I oversee all aspects of the Harmony Brunch as well as open the program and welcome the speakers, dignitaries and guests. All members of the CMEF Board assist in various aspects of the Harmony Brunch,” Gall explains.

The work that goes into organizing the Harmony Brunch is evident in the large attendance. “Approximately 400 people from various local communities-at-large attend the Harmony Brunch including representatives from the business community, public officials, academics, various religious and cultural (ethnic) groups, aboriginal groups, women’s organizations, youth, and the media - a good cross-section of Edmonton’s multi-cultural/multi-faith communities,” Gall says.

In 2009, the featured speaker was Mike Boyd, Chief of Edmonton Police Service who delivered the keynote address entitled, “Promoting Peace and Harmony in Our Changing World.” Former Edmonton Poet Laureate, E.D. (Ted) Blodgett read his new poem, “Questions” that he wrote for the occasion. The prayer before the meal (a delicious buffet) was delivered by Reverend Richard Reimer, Lutheran Chaplain, University of Alberta. As well, the Harmony Brunch also served as the book launch for *Among Friends*, the newly published biography of Robinson Koipillai, C.M., founder of CMEF and lifelong promoter of racial harmony and multiculturalism. Both Robinson Koipillai and author Allan Sheppard attended and they autographed and personalized copies of the book.



Working to Eliminate Discrimination continued...

Young people are encouraged to get involved and attend the Harmony Brunch. They can even get their tickets sponsored. “Two years ago we invited students from the U of A, Victoria Composite High School, the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps and others,” says Gall. “This year we invited university students, high school students, St. Albert Air Cadets, inner city students, and students from the Chinese bilingual and First Nations programs. Many of these students volunteer to make this event a success.”

Gall believes that the fruit of the Harmony Brunch is seen in the lives of those who attend. “The Harmony Brunch is an extremely effective tool for promoting peace and understanding between ethnic and faith groups in our region,” she says. “Many of the individuals who attend the Harmony Brunch are already working, in their personal and professional lives, towards racial and religious harmony and the elimination of discrimination in society. As well as providing an opportunity to network, it is encouraging for them to see the support from various individuals and organizations also working for similar goals. Each year, the CMEF attempts to address different aspects of these important issues in order to broaden our knowledge and educate the attendees. It is also a learning experience for all, including those public (elected) officials who join us for the Harmony Brunch.”

The CMEF presents the Harmony Brunch in partnership and with the assistance of the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR), the Alberta Association for Multicultural Education, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission, and the Department of Canadian Heritage. Gall encourages anyone interested in volunteering for the Harmony Brunch to get in touch via the following contact information: harmonybrunch@cmef.ca

A Journey of Faith

Sr. Rosaleen Zdunich

The story of St. Joseph's Basilica goes hand in hand with the history of Edmonton itself. It was a journey of faith, hope and waiting; a story of the incredible dedication and determination of Edmonton Catholics who dreamed of building a Cathedral.

A Cathedral is the Church of the Bishop and is the hub connecting all parishes. It is a symbol of authority, permanence and faith to the community.

St. Joseph's Basilica often is referred to as one of Edmonton's stately landmarks but its beginnings were more humble. Edmonton's increasing population required another Church. In 1913, a basement was excavated but with the First World War, the project had to be abandoned. In 1924, work began again on a new church. The first services were held in the basement in 1925. That year, it was chosen by Archbishop O'Leary as the Cathedral Church for Edmonton.

Dreams to build a cathedral remained alive but the depression and the Second World War delayed the construction. For almost 40 years, the Cathedral basement was the heart of the Catholic community in Edmonton.

Only in 1961 did the Cathedral upper structure begin to rise. Finally, after 50 years of waiting, the Cathedral was completed. It was blessed and officially opened on May 1, 1963. Walking into it, one is touched by its beauty. The peaceful atmosphere of its interior is appreciated by many.

Over the past 47 years, St. Joseph Basilica has celebrated many significant events. But one special event was a visit by Pope John Paul II, in September, 1984. He bestowed on it the honorary title of Basilica, one of only two in Western Canada.

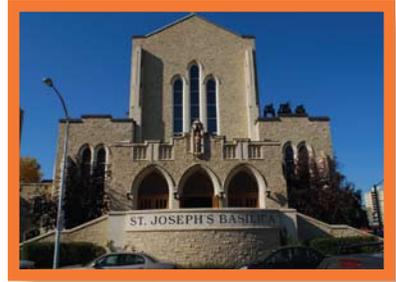
In keeping with Pope John Paul's efforts to build bridges with all faiths, an interfaith service was celebrated with representatives of many faiths. This was the first of many interfaith services to follow in Edmonton.

Although made of stone, St. Joseph Basilica is truly a living community and a beacon of light. It exudes tradition and devotion, stories and history. Church bells call worshippers to Sunday celebrations and remind them of the traditional three-times-a-day prayer. Parishioners fill the Church for the five Sunday services and leave inspired by the prayerful liturgies and the sacred music. Worshippers often linger after services to listen to the magnificent Casavant organ.

On weekdays, amidst the busyness of their lives, people come to its noon-hour and after-work services to pause, pray and thank God. "This community provides me with a venue to meet Jesus Christ, nourish my faith, and interact with other people and with other young adults" was a comment of a young adult.

It was a 24-hour open-door church providing a sacred space for worship and quiet prayer at any time of day or night while its pews gave refuge to tired bodies of homeless people until 1980 when an arsonist caused extensive damage to the interior.

In the words of former Archbishop Thomas Collins: "Beauty is a sign of God's presence. As we look at the images of beauty in this church, we are shown how to be God's people, making this world a better place. The Basilica is right where it should be, here on Jasper Avenue, in the hustle and bustle of our lives".



St. Joseph's Basilica

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