



# MONTREAL FORUM

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE  
JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF MONTREAL

## TO CATCH YOUR EYE

In the September 2007 issue of our journal, we announced that all past issues of Montreal Forum had been added to our website. This time we are pleased to advise that from now on, the current edition will also be available on our site from day of release.

**Beginning with this December 2007 issue, we shall be advising all people and societies who have expressed an interest in our journal that a new issue has been released and added to our website.** Anyone wishing to be added to this list may do so by making such a request by email to [aejoseph@videotron.ca](mailto:aejoseph@videotron.ca).

Access is easy. 1) Log on <http://www.jgs-montreal.org/>. 2) Next, click on “Now Online – Click Here”. The table of contents for each issue is listed on the index. Then 3) you can gain access to the appropriate issue by clicking on [Vol. 3, No. 2](#) – i.e. Dec. 2007.

Do you want to find out more about family and friends who settled on Canadian farmland? Or maybe the whole story of colonization by Jews “down on the farm” in Canada appeals to you. If so, you will find plenty of new and interesting information in the article by **Janice Rosen**.

Our next article is a “people chaser”. **Stanley Diamond** was asked for help in finding the family of a man who had been buried in Montreal back in the 1940s. Just to make the chase more challenging, Stan discovered that the family name had changed.

The next article highlights snippets from the genealogies of many people, and is a **Showcase of Jewish Resolve**. These are fascinating stories about ordinary Jews accomplishing extraordinary feats in times of stress.

Anne Joseph

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of Montreal

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 unless otherwise specified

**MONTHLY LECTURE SERIES**

**Monday 21 January at 7.30pm**

Annual Film Night.  
 Watch for email announcement identifying  
 what films will be shown.

**February**

Winter break – no meeting.

**Monday 17 March at 7.30pm**

To be advised.  
 Watch for email announcement – or phone  
 our Hot Line at 514-484-0969.

**SUNDAY FAMILY TREE WORKSHOPS**

10am to noon at the Jewish Public Library,  
 5151 Côte Ste Catherine Road, Montreal

6<sup>th</sup> January  
 3<sup>rd</sup> February  
 2<sup>nd</sup> March

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**FINDING THEM  
 DOWN ON THE FARM  
 Harvesting the Records of the  
 Jewish Colonization Association**

**by Janice Rosen  
 Archives Director  
 Canadian Jewish Congress  
 Charities Committee  
 National Archives**



*Janice Rosen's contribution for this issue brings to light a recent upsurge in interest for research data in an area of Canadian Jewish history that has perhaps not received as much attention as it deserves in the overall picture of our Canadian heritage. With her words, Janice opens new vistas for many of us.*

An old collection at the CJCCC National Archives has been getting its share of time out of the vault of late, due to an increase in research interest in several of the Jewish farming colonies of Western Canada and the Laurentians communities north of Montreal. A professor in Israel is writing a book about Lipton Saskatchewan, a student from N.Y.U. is seeking Rumanian Jews in the colonies, a group in Alberta is promoting a project to recreate the site of the Montefiore synagogue at Calgary's Heritage Park Historical Village, (see <http://www.littlesynagogue.ca/>) and closer to home, JGS stalwart Merle Kastner has been exploring La Macaza records in order to learn more about the cemetery there. While none of these projects started as family history research,

information about the families who lived in these colonies always enters into the picture.



**Succah beside home in Lipton Saskatchewan**

This increased interest has led to improvements in access to the collection – the complete finding aid to the 78 document boxes of the collection has now been transferred to Filemaker, therefore allowing for rapid keyword searches whose results can be transmitted by email.

The Jewish Colonization Association (JCA, or in Yiddish, ICA) was created in 1891 by the Baron Maurice de Hirsch, whose aim was to facilitate the mass emigration of Jews from Russia and other Eastern European countries, by settling them in agricultural colonies on lands purchased by the committee in North and South America. The Canadian Committee of the JCA, from whence most of our records originate, was established in 1906. Several colonies were established before 1906 throughout the west and in Quebec. They included Hirsch (1892), Qu'Appelle or Lipton (1901), Cupar near Regina (1901), Edenbridge east of Prince Albert (1906), and Sonnenfeld west of Estevan (1906) all in Saskatchewan; Bender Hamlet or Narcisse (1903) located north

of Winnipeg in Manitoba; Trochu (1906) and Rumsey (1906) halfway between Calgary and Edmonton in Alberta; and, in Quebec, La Macaza (1904) and Ste-Sophie (1904), both north of Montreal. After 1906 the JCA founded Pine Ridge (1907) not far from Winnipeg in Manitoba; Eyre (1910) and Montefiore (1911) near Alsask in Saskatchewan; Bird's Hill (1911) east of Winnipeg, and Camper or New Hirsch (1911) 150 kilometres north of Winnipeg in Manitoba; and Rosetown (1911) near the town of the same name in Saskatchewan.

Most of the Western colonies were dissolved by the end of World War II, due to economic difficulties, especially during the Great Depression. After this time the JCA concentrated its work in the east by purchasing farms or making loans to farmers in



Jewish Cemetery, Lipton Colony.  
1916. Small log cabins built over each grave, to prevent damage by coyotes.

the Niagara Peninsula and the regions of Brantville-Woodstock, Spencerville-Kemptville, and Beamsville in Ontario, and in Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Damase, Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Frelighsburg, and Clarenceville, in Quebec.

JCA's Canadian Committee made no more loans after 1970 and ceased all legal existence in 1978. Most of their papers came to CJCCNA in 1978, with the remainder of the most recent documents following in 1989. More details about this collection can be read on the CJCCNA website at [http://www.cjccc.ca/national\\_archives/archives/arcguideJCA.htm](http://www.cjccc.ca/national_archives/archives/arcguideJCA.htm)

Although the JCA records can be used to provide information about the overall development of the economic and communal life in these colonies, many researchers have used it for more specific questions relating to their own family history. In this regard the Yearly Individual Colonist Situation Surveys series (series KC) is especially useful to family history researchers. Each of these 172 folders is filed by community name and by year, and contains booklets with a page on each colonist's family at a particular point in time. From these books one can follow a family from its arrival with one or two children, through the birth of new siblings, the growth or loss of land and animal holdings, until, often, the family drops out of sight by leaving the farming community.

There are also specific files on loans to individual farmers, but the practice must not have been universal since few of the descendants of the colonists have found one of these for their family name.

A more promising resource in this regard is the photographs associated with this collection,

many of them with the family name identified on or below the picture.

Among the photos of Montefiore we provided for the Little Synagogue on the Prairie project was the one of the Bercovitch family, shown below. A Bercovitch descendant who serves on the Board for the project was very excited to discover this revealing and hitherto unknown glimpse of the family.



**Bercovitch Family of Montefiore, Saskatchewan  
Photographed in 1914**

Although the JCA collection is fully accessible to researchers in its present state, there is potential for enhanced future access. If the names recorded in each booklet of the KC series could be entered into a database, even researchers from far away would be able to learn immediately whether the resources of the JCA would be able to tell them more about those almost mythical early days when the Jewish farmers worked their land. This is a project that could be undertaken easily if volunteer person hours or a little funding to hire someone were sent our way.

Photo credits: All three taken by Louis Rosenberg, JCA colony inspector and teacher.

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## FINDING THE FAMILY OF DAVID MYER WALD by Stanley Diamond

*How Stanley ever finished up devoting his business career to the manufacture of decorative ceilings beats me. Until, of course I remember that it was during the exercise of his marketing skills that he demonstrated his natural ability to chase goals. The following story illustrates his skill at finding people – and in the process also illustrates the value of all the records indexing being undertaken by so many willing volunteers. They really do make a difference.*

My part in this story began on 13 August 2007, when I received from Roni Liebowitz a message from Meir Rotenberg of Liege, Belgium, asking for help in finding the family of the late David Myer Wald of Montreal.

Meir's request can be summarized as follows. "I would like to receive your help regarding a very interesting issue. A Jewish soldier, American or Canadian, was killed during the Second World War in the Netherlands, not far from the city of Maastricht. Some time ago, in an old safe at the Maastricht synagogue, the rabbi found a long forgotten Sefer Torah in very good condition. He started to look for the owners and found only the following inscription. 'For our son, David Myer Wald, who was killed in the war'. The parents donated this Torah for their son to the synagogue nearest to the battle field."



From Rabbi Yaakov Schapiro came the additional information that David Myer Wald passed away September 27, 1944, was buried January 4, 1949 at Back River Memorial Gardens cemetery in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Cemetery ID CAN-01552, section Chevra Kadisha new. Plot: line 3, grave 8. His mother Hania Wald was buried July 10, 1955, same cemetery, line 3, grave 9. His father Zelig Wald,

buried November 22, 1956, same cemetery, line 3, grave 7.

The hunt was on to find any Wald relatives.

A search through Lovell's Montreal City Directories was unproductive, so I sent out a few enquiries.

The next day, 14 August, Helene Vallee, Assistant Archivist at Canadian Jewish Congress Archives, suggested calling Canadian Veteran Affairs as well as the American Jewish Veterans Association, since it was not clear whether David had served in the U.S. or Canadian Army. A few days and many phone calls later, all I got from the Americans was that they had no useful information: they suggested I ask at the U.S. National Archives (but that would require on-site research or an extended wait time) or the Allegheny County Registrar's Office (which would also take time).

My luck changed when Helene called back. She had found the memorial to a David M. Wald on the National WWII Memorial website at <http://www.usmemorialday.org/memorialsfull.htm>. There is a link to the World War II Registry. There were four David Walds, but only one David M. Wald, Allegheny County, PA, U.S. Army (Source National Archives). The link to David brought up a plaque which read:

**National Archives and Record  
Administration,  
War Department Files**

**PVT David M. Wald**

**ID: 33708862**

**Branch of Service: U.S. Army  
Hometown: Allegheny County, PA  
Status: KIA**

I then called the General Information number shown on the National WWII Memorial website (800-639-4WW2), and was referred to Personal Records office at National Archives (314-801-

0800). A recorded message said all requests must be in writing.

Next I called Meir Rotenberg in Liege to get more background. Meir attends Shabbat services in Maastricht, Holland, and had there heard the Rabbi speaking of his frustrating efforts to find the Wald family so that they might attend the dedication. Meir then emailed Roni Liebowitz, my colleague in Jewish Records Indexing – Poland in New York. Meir explained how he had met Roni in Poland and felt she might be able to help in the research.

A fellow Montreal researcher and expert on Jewish burials, then called to say she had discovered that permanent care of the graves of David's parents had been paid for by a Mrs. Wilansky at 5551 Alpine Avenue. There are no longer any Wilanskys at that address. (Digressing for a moment, what I then remembered was that my wife Ruth, who was born in Amsterdam, had been living with the Kirsch family at 5553 Alpine when I met her in 1965, and Mrs. Renee Kirsch is still living there. By the time I spoke to Mrs. Kirsch, I had already found the family, but she told me that she remembered the elderly couple and a son.)

Reaching the current occupants of 5551 Alpine was not immediately possible, so I decided to telephone Wilansky listings in Montreal. The third number was that of F. Wilansky on Coolbrooke. A young man said he recalled the name Zelig (David's father's name) in the family, and suggested I call his mother Flora Wilansky Fehler on her cell phone. Before I could reach Flora, the expert on Jewish Montreal burials called back to say she had found that the Wilanskys on Alpine were Morris and Sonia. Morris died in 1986, Sonia in 1996, and a son, Melvin, had also died.

When I reached Flora, she confirmed that this was her family and indicated that Morris and Sonia's daughter Dorothy Wilansky Marcus still lives in Montreal. With Flora's help, I was able to locate Dorothy and her husband David. When I reached Dorothy by phone and related the story, she was both amazed and excited.

Dorothy explained that some of the Wilansky family, including her grandparents Zelig and Henia, emigrated from Russia to Pittsburgh (where their son David joined the army). After David was killed in 1944, Zelig and Henia decided to move to Montreal to join other members of their family. It seems that while the Canadian members of the family who stayed in Canada retained the name Wilansky, others in the United States changed their name to Wald.



David Myer Ward

I mentioned that the Rabbi in Maastricht was hoping that someone from the family could go to Holland for the dedication of the Sefer Torah on 26 August.

Dorothy has a photo of David Wald and mentioned he had received the Purple Heart. She also has photographs of her grandparents Zelig and Henia (David's parents).

I promptly called Meir in Belgium – it was still only 14 August, a busy day for me that had started with a phone conversation with Helene Vallee. Meir was excited to hear that the family had been found and undertook to call Rabbi Yankel Schapiro to tell him all about it. I also tried to reach the Rabbi, but in his absence talked to his wife Chani.

It was Chani Schapiro who, in trying to help find the family, had found listings in the Back River Cemetery in the Jewish Online Worldwide

Burial Registry (JOWBR) on JewishGen which had opened the door to pursuing the search for family members in Montreal. My call to her completed the circle, since it was the JGS-Montreal that had contributed the Back River Cemetery listings to JOWBR!

Two days later, on 16 August, Dorothy Wilansky Marcus mentioned that her cousin, Michael Wilansky, was very excited by the news and would like to speak to me. Michael told me that he has David's Purple Heart in a frame and the citation from President Harry Truman (dated 18 September 1945).

Michael was at the airport when David's body arrived in Montreal in 1949 on a U.S. Military transport; he vividly recalled the entire military ceremony. As the flag-draped coffin was carried off the plane by a uniformed guard of U.S. Marines, a bugler played taps and the flag was folded in military tradition. The coffin was then placed in the Paperman's Funeral Home hearse.

Michael indicated that he would call his cousin Michael Wald in Pittsburgh, who is also a nephew of David.

The dedication of the Torah Scroll took place on Sunday 26 August 2007, and the following day descriptions of the event appeared in the Dutch press. Happily my wife Ruth was on hand to translate, and one of the articles follows.

Limburgs Dagblad, Monday 27 August 2007  
Maastricht --- \_Maarten van Laarhoven

**"Forgotten" Torah-scroll of Maastricht has,  
since yesterday,  
all its 304,805 handwritten letters.  
The Jewish community in Maastricht yesterday  
experienced an extraordinary event:  
the rededication of an old torah scroll.  
The handwritten torah  
donated after World War II  
by the parents of a fallen allied soldier.**

The Jewish community of Maastricht held a unique event yesterday: the re-dedication of an old Torah. Little boys with kipot playing Tag between the pillars of a synagogue, surrounded by men in black with broad-rimmed hats. It is a lovely tableau, not something you would expect in the centre of Maastricht. The Jewish community in Limburg province celebrated an exceptional event. As far as can be ascertained it was the first time a torah scroll was re-dedicated in a synagogue in Maastricht. Benoit Wesly, who leads the Netherlands-Israelite Main Synagogue Limburg called it "a wonderful event for the Jewish community."

The centre of the event, the Torah scroll itself, was donated to the Maastricht synagogue in the Capucijnengang, shortly after WWII, by the parents of David Meyer Wald. The Canadian soldier died during Operation Market Garden, the failed attempt by the Allies, to take Arnhem. The young soldier died on September 27, 1944, the day on which Jews all over the world were observing Yom Kippur. The donation of a Torah to the Maastricht synagogue was probably done because the Shul is the closest to the Margraten cemetery, where Wald's remains were initially buried.

How it was possible that the special parchment scroll then lay in a cupboard for the next 60 years is unclear. When the sacred text of the Jewish people was found two years ago, Rabbi Yaakov Schapiro decided immediately to have it restored. The last part of the restoration was yesterday in a solemn ceremony entering of the last, missing letters.

A Torah scroll contains exactly 304,805 characters. If a letter is missing, or a character is damaged, the scroll is un-kosher and it can no longer be used. That was the reason the long scroll's text was once more examined by the restorers. The score of letters that were missing were carefully written by volunteers, who received a Certificate of Commendation. Those who write Hebrew well, wrote independently. But those uncertain of their Hebrew writing skills had no reason to fear: the hand of the restorer guided their pen.

*Translation by Ruth Diamond, Montreal*

### Montreal - In Days Gone By THE MORE PERSONAL LIFE OF LEVY SOLOMONS



In the last issue of Montreal Forum, the activities of Levy Solomons in the fur trade were the subject of this feature. Now perhaps it would be nice to learn a little of the personal life of this man who endured hardship and indignities, as

well as experiencing triumphs, while wrestling with the vagaries of life in wilderness areas.

Levy arrived in Montreal from Albany New York in 1760. Retaining his Albany home, Levy settled mainly in Montreal, handling enterprises that extended from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of the St. Lawrence and down the Hudson River.

Levy Solomons married Louise Loubier (a.k.a. Lizette Loubière) on 23 February 1768 in Montreal. Louise was a Christian, and although it is not clear just where the ceremony was held, there is in the McCord Museum Archives a document certified by George Henry, Minister, that the wedding did, in fact, take place. Louise died in 1772 after less than five years of marriage, but during that time the couple had a daughter Sarah and a son Levy Jr.

When Levy and Louise married, money problems were part of their lives, and within months Levy and his partners had reached the point of presenting their Memorial for financial protection to the governor. Louise stood by her husband while he struggled through the challenges facing him, fighting to reverse the financial setbacks he had suffered during the most difficult years of his life as a fur trader. She lived long enough to know that her husband had succeeded in his quest for financial security.

When their mother died in 1772, Sarah was just a toddler and her brother was still a babe in

arms. Levy Jr's circumcision at birth was certified by Barnet Lyons as having been "conformable to the Jewish Ritual", and the children were raised as Jews in Montreal. There is no record of how Levy managed during his years raising his motherless children, but it is reasonable to assume that the close-knit community in this pioneering generation of Montrealers would have supported one another.

On 31 May 1775 Levy Solomons married Rebekah Franks, daughter of Abraham Franks who had been one of the founders of Montreal's Shearith Israel in 1768. Clarence deSola wrote that the Franks family were Sephardic Jews, whose name in Spain had been Franco and Franco-Dacosta. After the expulsion they went to Holland, then Germany and then on to England, where their name became Franks.

Newly-weds Levy and Rebekah took Sarah and Levy Jr into their home, where they became the eldest in the blended family that in time reached a total of 13 children. One of Levy and Rebekah's daughters, Rachel, married Henry Joseph, and it is descendants of this line from Abraham Franks who still reside in Montreal.

Sarah Solomons (1768/70-1812) and Thomas McCord were married on 27 November 1798 in London. They moved to Ireland where their two sons were born. In 1805 the family returned to Montreal. In the fullness of time, Thomas and Sarah's grandson, David Ross McCord, founded the McCord Museum in Montreal.

Levy Solomons Jr (1771-1823) married Catherine Manuel in New York, with the Rev Gersham Mendes Seixas of Shearith Israel officiating. Catherine's sister Hannah was Mrs. Gersham Mendes Seixas.

Levy Solomons died in Montreal in 1792, and his wife Rebekah died in 1812.

Anne Joseph

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## NUGGETS FROM VARIOUS FAMILY HISTORIES

*What follows are all snippets culled from stories that flesh out many people's genealogies. Some are better known than others, but all showcase Jewish resolve.*

### LONDON – 1940

This story was told in the August 2006 issue of B-J News (online journal of British-Jewry) by Mike Joseph, assisted in his research by Sherry Landa. This re-telling is with their permission.

**Harry Ehrengott/Errington** was born in Soho on 29 August 1910 to Baila and Shepsel Ehrengott, Jewish immigrants who had arrived in London from Poland in 1908, and later became Bella and Solomon Errington.

Harry joined the Auxiliary Fire Service at the outbreak of the Second World War, and was one of several firemen on duty in a basement shelter during an air raid on 17 September 1940. The building was hit by a bomb, killing 20 people including 6 firemen. Having been briefly knocked out by the blast, Harry realized when he came to that the building was on fire, but as he was making his escape, he heard the cries of two of his comrades who were trapped under rubble. Without hesitation he turned back, wrapped a blanket round his head against the flames and, digging with his bare hands, managed to free one of the men. After dragging the first man upstairs into the street to safety, and even though he was himself badly burned, he went back and rescued the second man.

Harry recovered enough to return to duty a few months later, and then in August 1941 learned that he had been awarded the George Cross. The GC is Britain's highest civilian honour, ranking side-by-side with the Victoria Cross. Harry was one of only three firemen to earn such recognition during the Second World War, and the only one in London.

Harry stayed with the Fire Service throughout the war, and afterwards became active in the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women.

### SPAIN AND ENGLAND – 1588

A Portuguese Marrano named **Hector Nunes** graduated in medicine from Coimbra University in 1543, but on recognizing the horrific effects of the Inquisition, especially in his home town of Evora, he fled to England. His career at first focussed mostly on trade, but once he gained certification by the Royal College of Physicians, he became well regarded as physician to many in the highest aristocratic circles, including Lord Burghley, Lord Treasurer of England, and Sir Francis Walsingham, Principal Secretary to Queen Elizabeth I.

Before long Nunes was providing Burghley and Walsingham with intelligence on the military and naval forces of Spain. He obtained this largely through his long-standing network of informants working under the protective cover of Nunes' ongoing trading activities. One such informant sailed from Lisbon with the final few vessels of the Spanish Armada on 30 May 1588, but not before he managed to get this vitally important news en route to England. The moment Nunes received this dispatch, he headed straight for Walsingham's house.

And so it happened that a bunch of Portuguese Jews, Marranos, provided the English with vital intelligence data. As is well known, England was ready and waiting for the Spanish fleet.

### DUNKIRK - 1940

The evacuation of Dunkirk took place between 26 May and 4 June 1940. 900 naval and civilian craft crossed the English Channel under RAF protection and managed to rescue 338,226 British and French people from the beaches.

Among the 300 or so amateur yachtsmen who gathered when the call came for volunteers was

a 37 year old Jew named **Raphael de Sola**. Once assembled, the volunteers were told only that what lay ahead was a most dangerous job, and if anyone wished to do so they could withdraw at that time. Nobody did.

Raphael was put in command of a lifeboat which was towed across the Channel. They were machine-gunned en route. During their first night anchored off Dunkirk, a light was seen on shore, and Raphael was ordered to take his lifeboat in and bring the people back. However, when they reached shore they did not find anyone, only a light shining from a deserted truck. Next day, back on the beach, de Sola and his men were subjected to more machine-gun fire, and while they were attempting to seek protection by lying on the sand behind a rowboat, a piece of shrapnel struck Raphael's steel helmet. They succeeded in rescuing their fair share of weary troops and got them safely back to England, but not before Raphael had swum back and forth from boat to shore many times.

And not before Raphael took a few minutes out from the demanding task of saving stranded troops, in order to lay tefilin whilst he was on the beach. It must have been quite a sight.

The de Sola family was quite wealthy, and back in January 1940, Raphael de Sola had hired a small liner in order to send 30 Jewish refugees and their families to the United States. He also helped to finance schools for evacuated children, and even donated money to help victims of the earthquake that hit Turkey. After Dunkirk, during the blitz, de Sola helped in both rescue work and firefighting.

Raphael de Sola died in the summer of 1989.

#### OFF THE COAST OF CRETE – 1942

The only Jewish recipient of the Victoria Cross in World War II was **Thomas William Gould**, whose father Reuben had been killed in action on 22 July 1916 when Tommy was just 18 months old. In 1933 Tommy joined the Royal Navy and in 1937 became a submariner.

Petty Officer Gould was serving off the north coast of Crete on 16 February 1942 aboard HMS Thrasher. After sinking a supply ship, Thrasher experienced more than three hours of attack by enemy aircraft and by depth charges. The sub survived, and after dark surfaced to recharge her batteries. It was then that Tommy Gould was sent with Thrasher's First Lieutenant, Peter Roberts, to explore a strange banging sound that turned out to be two unexploded bombs in the casing. Roberts and Gould swiftly dislodged and dropped the first overboard, but the second was trapped between the casing and the internal hull.

Circumstances dictated that the only way to move it was for Tommy to lay on his back and hold the bomb in his arms, while Lt. Roberts had to edge backwards while lying on his stomach, pulling Tommy inch by inch by the shoulders. It took 40 minutes to traverse the required 20 ft, all the time knowing that if the sub were forced to dive, both men would have drowned.

Both men were awarded the VC. When asked what went through his mind as they worked to remove each bomb, Tommy replied "I was hoping the bloody thing would not go off".

Tommy was invalided from the Navy in 1945. Until his death in 2001, he kept up his interest in the Navy and the Jewish community, taking part in Jewish ex-Servicemen's marches.

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**DEADLINE FOR THE MARCH 2008 ISSUE - 15 FEBRUARY**

**A MESSAGE FROM OUR  
PRESIDENT  
Stanley Diamond**

As I approached my retirement years, I never could have anticipated how I would be spending my time or the fascinating and often absorbing experiences that would emanate from studying my family and learning more about the history of Jewish communities at home and abroad.

Gratifying, rewarding, satisfying, heartwarming, enjoyable, fun.

Each of these words describe one or more of the feelings and emotions I have felt in my daily activity as a family historian and educator and through my deep involvement in the world of Jewish genealogy.

But I am not alone in getting nachas from genealogically-related activities. All of us involved in the world of genealogy have stories to tell and I hope, through this president's message, readers will be encouraged to do just that – share their stories with the readers of Montreal Forum.

But back to what got me thinking about the theme of this message. It seems that each day I receive an email or phone call asking for help of one type or another. The article "Finding the Family of David Myer Wald", beginning on page 5 of this issue, tells the story of just one of the more recent ones. Was I a miracle worker? Hardly! I merely used the tools and knowledge that we genealogists have acquired to follow the logical steps in turning the challenge of finding the David Wald family into a *heartwarming* story with a satisfying conclusion.

If you're like me, you have been asked for help by family you've known all your life or new-found cousins. Of course there are the de rigueur family trees and ancestral charts for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah or bride and groom. But I have also been asked for the Hebrew names to be used on

matzevot because the family did not know them. That, by the way, is one of the important reasons for always documenting Hebrew names when you hear/find them.

Recently, an elderly cousin asked me if I knew the location of his parents' graves in New York. He is an only child who had moved west as a young man and had forgotten the location. Very few New York area burials are online, but they do include all seven cemetery sections relating to my cousin's and my ancestral town, indexing projects that I had led a number of years ago. Luckily, that is where they were buried.

A few months ago I testified as the expert witness (in Brooklyn Surrogate Court) in an inheritance case related to cousins of my cousins. The deceased was not related to me but my cousins were among the potential beneficiaries. They asked for my help, and since I already had their branch in my database and knew the steps to quickly document the other relevant branches, my involvement seemed so natural. Not only was the experience *fun*, but working as a professional was also *rewarding* financially.

Most requests I receive are not related to my family. As the President of our society and Executive Director of Jewish Records Indexing – Poland ([www.jri-poland.org](http://www.jri-poland.org)), it's natural that there is a stream of questions relating to Montreal, Quebec, Canada and Poland. Most *gratifying* in handling these requests is knowing that I played a role in creating the resources for some of the answers I am able to give. Among them, databases of the Jewish vital records of Quebec and more than three million Jewish vital records of Poland.

Because of its international impact, leading JRI-Poland has been particularly meaningful and *satisfying* for me. What started because of my need to document the incidence of, and warn family about, our Beta-Thalassemia genetic trait has helped others with medical or genetic reasons for tracing their ancestors and living

cousins. It's led to reunions of families of Holocaust survivors, and providing thousands of records that document previously unknown individuals (or names) for the creation of Pages of Testimony.

And what *fun* it has been to share the microphone with Gary Schroder (President, Quebec Family History Society) on radio call-in shows, answering questions and spreading the word about Jewish genealogy.

As the founder and president of the JGS of Montreal, I take great *pride* in the knowledge that you, our members, have acquired over the years, and the important contributions you, too, have made with recently acquired expertise. You have written family histories and created booklets with family tree charts; your research has helped ensure successful family reunions; you have traveled to your ancestral shtetls and shared your stories with presentations to our members; and you have painted pictures of your

ancestors and prepared art exhibits and books about your ancestors.

And you have used and shared your skills on a broader level. You have contributed to JGS-M indexing projects. You have become solid resource persons responding to posts on JewishGen or the JGS of Montreal list, answering requests from around the world, whether photographing a gravestone for an out-of-towner or doing more exhaustive research. You have volunteered to help Holocaust survivors submit Pages of Testimony. You have lectured at international conferences, to other Jewish genealogical societies and local groups.

Now it's time for you to share some of your experiences with the readers of Montreal Forum, to tell us about your personal research or genealogically-related outreach to the wider world. Your gratifying, rewarding, satisfying, heartwarming, enjoyable, and fun stories are ours as well. We want to hear them!

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### SAME CLOTH, DIFFERENT THREADS: THE JEWS OF QUEBEC CITY

**Shalom Quebec – Exposition Judeo Quebec 2008** will mark the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Quebec City with an extensive, well-designed exposition. The March 2008 issue of Montreal Forum will have more news on this, but if you want to check it out before then, see [www.shalomquebec.org](http://www.shalomquebec.org).

All summer long, the concourse of the old train station at the Gare du Palais in Quebec City will be buzzing with excitement and enlightenment as those who attend discover the significant contributions made by so many colourful individuals in the Jewish community of Quebec. And that is not all ----- !!

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While we, the Montreal Forum editorial trio, endeavour to ensure that all information presented in our publication is accurate, we wish to remind our readers that we cannot guarantee it.

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