

People

Social Notes

MAZAL TOV

To Cookie Kushner and Max Roytenberg who were married in Jerusalem, and reside in Ottawa.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS



Marni Wiseman and Shane Perlmutter are very happy to announce the birth of their beautiful little daughter

POPPY WISEMAN PERLMUTTER

Poppy was born on February 18, 2006 weighing 7 lbs.
Jonah and Molly are very excited to have a new little sister. Nathan and Eva Wiseman and Bert Perlmutter are proud grandparents, and Dr. Alexander Veres is a proud great-grandfather.
Poppy is named in loving memory of her Baba Pearl Perlmutter.



Sam and Natalie Wiseman of Vancouver, B.C. are thrilled to announce the birth of their daughter

NICOLE YAFFA WISEMAN

Nicole is little sister to Jacob and Isabel.
Proud grandparents are Nathan and Eva Wiseman of Winnipeg and Robert and Stella Barcessat of Montreal. Proud great-grandfather is Dr. Alexander Veres of Winnipeg.

RODKIN - HALL

Sandra and Simon take great pleasure in announcing the birth of their first child. **ABIGAIL CLAIRE** was born in Winnipeg on March 4 weighing 9 lbs, 8 ozs. and was 21 1/2 in. long.
Thrilled first time grandparents are Louis and Judy Rodkin, and Van and Susan Hall.

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'I never walk alone,' says Rabbi Peretz Weizman

Holocaust survivor recalls early life in Poland

Rabbi Peretz Weizman, Winnipeg's longest serving active rabbi, is a familiar figure as he goes for his daily walks up and down Main Street and elsewhere in the North End. Although he may seem to be by himself on his walks, he never walks alone, he says.

OUR LITTLE SHETEL.



By

MYRON LOVE

He explained what he meant in a moving dvar Torah he delivered one Saturday morning a few weeks ago at the Chavurat Tefila Synagogue.

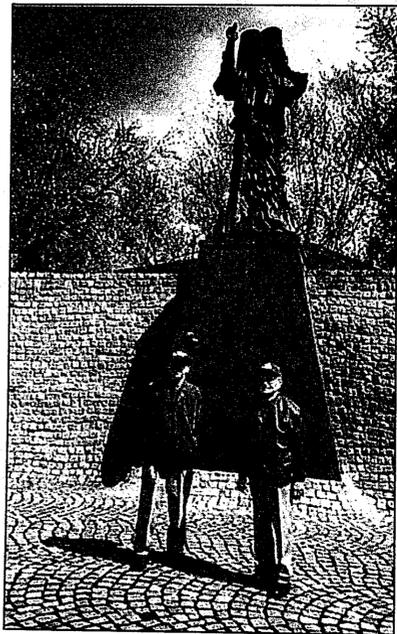
Weizman is a Holocaust survivor who grew up in a Chassidic home in Lodz in Poland. "My father was a follower of the Gur Dynasty," he said. "Chassidim didn't daven in big synagogues. They preferred to daven in the so-called Shtiblech."

A shtibel was a very simple structure without decoration. "Chassidim don't pay much attention to decorum, formalities or external beauty," he continued. "They don't sanctify beauty. Rather, they beautify sanctity. Hence the shtibel was the ideal place for them to worship."

In a shtibel, you felt comfortable and at home, he noted. It gave you the feeling the entire congregation was one family. Everyone knew each other and was concerned about each other. In this place of worship, people engaged in conversations, studied together, debated, expressed opinions and discussed the political situation and its ramifications on Jewish life. The atmosphere was friendly and warm - without strict regulations and starchy behavior.

A shtibel did not have a chazan. The Baal Tefilah led the congregation in prayer. The worshippers joined in singing and chanting.

"I loved hearing the chazan," said Weizman. "Friday nights, I would sneak out of the shtibel and go to the nearest synagogue. That was the Alshetishe Synagogue. (Weizman explained that the name meant "the old city". The synagogue was located in the old part of Lodz.) This synagogue was built in the 19th century. It was considered one of the most beautiful synagogues in Poland. As kids, we were told that special architects and masons were brought from Italy to erect this magnificent edifice. It was enormous. The decorations were beautiful and artistic. The Holy



DR. SAM WEIZMAN (at left) and Rabbi Peretz Weizman standing on the site of the former Alshetishe Synagogue in Lodz, Poland in 2002.

Ark was a masterpiece. Everything was gilded in gold. There were three galleries for women. The acoustics were excellent. The synagogue was truly the glory of Jewish Lodz.

"Entering the synagogue," Weizman said, "You felt that you were on a different planet, a world of splendour and glitter. We forgot that we were surrounded by enemies who hated us and that the world outside was filled with misery, deprivation and injustice. Every Jew who entered this sacred and serene place experienced tranquility and was transformed into a prince or princess."

Weizman remembered the cantor was a tall man with a powerful voice. He wore a shining gown and specially designed kippa.

"As a child, I looked up to him with reverence and awe," Weizman said. "In my eyes, the High Priest couldn't have looked more impressive."

As a youngster, Weizman possessed the gift of impersonation. He recalled that he would imitate this cantor in certain cantorial renditions of the Shabbat prayers.

In November, 1939, young Peretz Weizman, by then a teenager, watched as the Alshetishe synagogue went up in flames. "The Germans burnt down this magnificent edifice," he said. "the pride of our community."

"Gazing through my window, I saw the entire sky of Jewish Lodz covered with sparks. Everything was destroyed. I am one of the sparks that survived."

In the Lodz Ghetto, Weizman prayed at a small shul which went unnoticed by the Germans. "Every Shabbas, a small group of people worshipped there," he recalled. "It is humanly impossible to describe the depressive mood that prevailed in this place. Starvation, cold and fear of death prevailed. At this painful and agonizing minion, I met the great cantor from the Alshetishe. He was no longer tall. He had become shorter and thinner. He was wrapped in sorrow and grief. I approached this great and heartbroken cantor and asked if I could sing for him a cantorial piece of the Shabbas prayer that I had heard him sing at his synagogue. I asked him to tell me if I sang it the way he did."

"The cantor listened most attentively and tears welled up in his eyes. With a choking voice he told me I sang it exactly the way he used to chant it. His eyes lit up. I felt that I had recreated for him his glorious past and injected in him a great sense of hopefulness and comfort."

"I never saw him again."

When Rabbi Weizman goes for his walks along Main Street, he is always humming. The melody he hums, he said, is that long-ago chant (Cont. on page 7. See "People".)

People/community news

After 42 years in operation, Garry Bowling Lanes and Billiard Room on Pembina Hwy. closing its doors

Owner Israel Agasi born and raised in Israel

By REBECA KUROPATWA

"I've always told my customers that I can't help them by bowling for them, but everything else I can look after. It is very important to me that my customers feel at home here." That's how Israel Agasi sums up 42 years as owner of Garry Bowling Lanes on Pembina Highway, about to close its doors at the end of May. He's seen up to four generations of families come to Garry's to bowl.

The place got its name not from the name of the owner, as Agasi says many people think, but from the former name of this area of Winnipeg, Fort Garry.

Agasi was born and raised in Israel. When he completed his army tour of duty, in 1961, he worked as a Camp Massad counselor in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania. He "was kicked out of the bowling alley, there, because (he) couldn't figure out how to work the machine that clears away the bowling pins. That was the first time (Agasi) had ever seen a bowling alley."

In Israel, Agasi met a Winnipeg woman,



ISRAEL AGASI in Garry Bowling Lanes and Billiard Room. He and his wife, Audrey, came to Winnipeg for their wedding reception and ended up staying. Photo by Rebeca Kuropatwa.



Agasi at his cash register. Photo by Rebeca Kuropatwa.

Audrey, when they were both working at a tourism company. They came to Winnipeg to have their wedding reception, and ended up staying. His wife's family used to own Garry's Movie Theater, and then converted it into Garry's Bowling Lanes and Billiard Room in 1962. Agasi became its soul owner and operator.

From Agasi's experience working for the Winnipeg community, he has "found that if you treat them nicely, and with respect, they reward you in kind." In getting to know his customers, he has "discovered that being from Israel and being Jewish, people began to have an apprecia-

tion of who I am and where I have come from." "When I first moved to Winnipeg, and started running this business, there was so much I had to learn." Agasi says that, "I didn't know anything about having to have a liquor license back then. In the early days, people would come in with a Mickey of alcohol in a brown bag, and I didn't know what it was. I had only seen this in the movies. When I came to understand, I had to put a stop to it."

In November 1992, Garry's survived a fire. Even then, Agasi says "I had no question in my mind. I would fix it up and reopen." The bowling alley was operational again in May 1993.

Agasi divulges that he "has never bowled, himself." This was a conscious effort, on his part, as he "wanted to focus on the people's happiness, customer satisfaction. Teaching is another matter," says Agasi, "I have always enjoyed teaching. I give bowling clinics. As is the case with coaching hockey, you don't have to be a player to coach the game."

"A little girl - I could barely see her over the counter - she comes into the bowling alley a couple of weeks ago," says Agasi. "She says to me, 'why do you break the bowling alley?'" Agasi says, "I think she meant 'why am I closing it up?' Very nice."

Reflecting on what it will be like when there is no more Garry's, Agasi says, "It will be very difficult to leave this place. But for over 40 years, I have been working day-in, day-out, 7 days a week. That is too much for me now." One thing Agasi is looking forward to, though, is "being able to spend more time with Winnipeg family, and to visit longer with family in Israel."

The writer is a Jewish Winnipeg freelancer.

People

(Cont. from page 6.)

that he learned from the cantor at the Alshetishe Synagogue.

Everything of Jewish Lodz is gone but one thing that Rabbi Weizman has been able to save is that melody. "This melody the Germans can not destroy," he said, "and this melody escorts me always. I will hold on tenaciously to it. I will never part with it. So I don't walk alone. I walk with this immortal heavenly melody that I rescued from the devilish hatred and hellish fire."

In 2002, Rabbi Weizman and his son, Sam, revisited Lodz. The area where the synagogue had been had been converted into a park with a statue of Moses holding the two tablets.

The writer is a Jewish Winnipeg freelancer.

Next week in The Jewish Post & News...

- An update on anti-Semitic incidents in Winnipeg and Canada
- Robert Warren, director of the Asper School of Business Centre for Entrepreneurship describes how Israeli technology firms are 'leading the world'
- Winnipeg Jewish Theatre offers 'Salute to Broadway' at Winnipeg's Mayberry Gallery

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