

Der Bay

The International Anglo-Yiddish Newsletter

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Lecture/Workshop Presentations at the IAYC 11th Conference

This is the Fifth in a series of reports on the IAYC XI Conference August 3-6, 2007 at the Marriott Cleveland East Hotel. Each month there will be an update and a report on another phase of this great Yiddish Conference. All the updates are on the Conference website at: <http://www.derbay.org/cleveland/>

Last month we covered the three keynote plenary session speakers. Each morning will start with a keynote lecture in plenary session.

Among the 30 lecture/workshops will be some of the performers and vendors who will also have materials for your groups back home. They include: Adrienne Cooper, Bert Stratton Hale Porter, Cookie Blattman, Miriam Beckerman, "Lil Rev" Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson, Sonia Pressman Fuentes, Hilda Rubin, Frank Krasnowsky and Marcia Gruss Levinsohn.

As we near the Conference date there will be more details and about the presenters. Some will be discussed here and others in *Der altveltlekher farband fun yidish-klubn naves*.

Here is the list of lecture/workshop titles.

Programming for Yiddish Clubs—A Workshop
Yiddish Translator's Workshop
Yiddish and the Labor Movement
Di Yidishe Shtunde
Fascinating Yiddish Children's Literature
The Exciting KlezKamp Experience
New Yiddish Songs from Around the World
Isaac Bashevis Singer Made My Mother Cry
The Early Montreal Immigrant Experience
Oysgeblozn fun finger: mir shafn a nay folkslid

The 3 Great Classic Yiddish Writers:
Similarities & Differences
How Being an Immigrant Affected My Life
Life for Jews in the Middle-Ages
The Songs of Mordecai Gebirtig
Vladimir Medem: Non-Jewish Jew and Yiddishist
Yiddish Used in Communication
Komputeray-blits post un veb zaytlekh
Jewish History through Yiddish Music
Yiddish Kids in Action
The Jews of Krakow, Poland
Yiddish Theater's Influence on Music & Culture in America
Turkey's Rescue of Jewish Intellectuals 1933-45
The History of Jewish Music
The Vilnius Yiddish Institute
Lomir Shpiln Teater: Di Khelemer Naronim
Jews in Vaudeville
Learning Yiddish Through Music
Mickey Katz From Cleveland
Bolsheviks and Bundists
Born to Kvetch by Michael Wex—A Critique

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Our Friend, Sidney Weinstein o'h

Sidney Weinstein passed away at the age of 91. He was a devoted Yiddishist, a camp director, school teacher, published writer, lecturer, produced and directed many of his own Yiddish plays.

During World War II he served in the Army Air Corps as a gunnery instructor. With the G. I. Bill he completed his education and received two degrees from NYU. In 1954 he accepted a teaching position and moved his family to Lakewood, CA.

Sid helped organize and taught Kindershuln in Boston, Philadelphia, New York and Southern California. His wife Ethel joined him in teaching at the shuln. They loved children and each other.

Sid considered the JCC in Long Beach an important part of his life. He took pride in his contributions to the Center. Throughout his life he was socially and politically active for the rights of all people. Those who knew him marveled and enjoyed his warmth, his humor, sensitivity and knowledge.

Editor's note: Sid was a prolific writer and a person to whom I often turned for advice. He will be missed.

No. Shore Sr. Ctr. Yiddish Club by Miriam Stein

Our Senior Center requires that all members of the Yiddish Club be members of our Senior Center. We offered the Yiddish Club for the first time in our bulletin a few months ago. The response was overwhelming. We had to close the Club at 30 members with 25 on the waiting list. This coming year we are offering a Yiddish Club on Monday and a different Yiddish Club on Friday. There are still people on the waiting list. Who knew!

I think we will indeed subscribe to *Der Bay* and also to the International Association of Yiddish Clubs. We will be passing around an envelope each meeting to collect \$2 from each person. It's a funny thing, I never get as much money as there are people at the meeting.

You know what we need more of? Good Yiddish jokes. We have conversation, tell jokes, sing songs, and read very short stories or proverbs each week. I will indeed spend time on your site.

Is there an exchange of interesting material among the Yiddish groups? I know we'll all have different approaches. Our group wants fun. No grammar. Nothing academic. Just a love of the *mame-loshen* that we heard when we were children.

Dr. Mordkhe Schaechter o'h

Professor Schaechter passed away just as the last issue of *Der Bay* went to the printer, and I had read several of the obituaries written about him. They all noted the many contributions he made to Yiddish in the form of publications, organizations and teaching. This list is a very, very impressive one.

My personal remembrances is of the man who greeted me in #40 when I was just beginning in the summer of 1990 and leading up to the first issue January 1, 1991. He was warm and friendly. Even though there were frequent interruptions with phone calls, Dr. Schaechter never made me feel that I should leave.

From that time on he was a phone mentor. I remember he jokingly said that I could refer to him as "du", for I was a year older.

The dozen letters that I happened to save are very dear to me. He gently castigated me on my errors, along with the corrections.

How are you? OK? I hope everything is well. Sometimes one reads undeserved criticism, sometimes undeserved praise. A good example of the latter is your statement (*Der Bay*, Nov. 1994 p.1) about "interesting information of world-wide interest in"

I never felt that they were said in any way other than to be informative and helpful—especially when it happened the second time. Sometimes the letters were signed by Nettie Farber mentioning that "Dr. Schaechter" had asked her to write to me.

Then there was the two-page, single-spaced letter in regard to the ongoing debate over the shtumer alef.

Thank you for the very warm words that you had to say about *Afn Shvel*, Yugntruf and me in the latest issue of *Der Bay*, March 1996 issue. In the same issue on page 1, you write that [it is desirable that one] "not quibble over minor matters. — like the shtumer alef." I would like to comment on it, if I may.

Professor Schaechter then proceeded to comment on a possible discussion between two Orthodox Jews about *kosher* versus *glatt kosher*, or *kol-ishe*, or any of a thousand other details of Jewish religious law or customs. He proceeded to write about what is relevant to someone and what is not. This was followed by a detailed discussion.

Dr. Schaechter, we all shall miss you.

Live Yiddish, Learn Yiddish at the University of Ottawa:

New Intensive Elementary Yiddish Program,

May 3 – June 12, 2007

Rebecca Margolis, University of Ottawa

With its inception in 2006, the Vered Jewish Canadian Studies Program is piloting a number of new courses at the University of Ottawa in history, literature, and language that address the multi-faceted experience of Canadian Jewry. The Vered Program is attracting a variety of undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral students as well as members of the community-at-large.

As of September 2007, the University of Ottawa will be offering a minor in Canadian Jewish Studies and further expanding its course offerings. As the newest addition to the Vered Program, I am excited to be announcing the following developments in the field of Canadian Jewish Studies, and in my area of specialization: Yiddish Canadian Studies.

Yiddish is one area of emphasis in the Vered Program, as reflected in the creation of two new courses in 2007. The first, a seminar called "Yiddish Canada in the Twentieth Century" taking place in the winter, examines the past and present of Yiddish as it relates to ideology, the press, education, literature, and theatre.

The second is an intensive elementary Yiddish language course slated for the spring. This intensive language and culture course provides the basics of Yiddish reading, writing and speaking, plus the fundamentals of Yiddish cultural literacy in just six short weeks, and with a uniquely Canadian focus.

The course will run from May 3 to June 12. It will offer morning instruction from Mondays to Fridays covering the first half of Weinreich's *College Yiddish* and supplementary materials on Canadian literature and culture, as well as additional activities on some afternoons, evenings, and Sundays.

This program is designed to complement the expanding field of Jewish Canadian Studies, where much of the collective experience of Canada's Jews has been steeped in Yiddish. An intensive Yiddish language program is a highly effective means of acquiring basic skills in Yiddish grammar, comprehension, reading, writing, speaking, and an overall appreciation of the wealth of Yiddish culture.

Such programs, which are generally offered during the summer in places like New York, Paris, Tel Aviv, and Vilnius, combine classroom learning with outside enrichment activities.

They attract a diverse, international body of students, and have produced accomplished scholars in areas including Jewish Studies, comparative literature, history, and performance as well as helped to train Yiddish singers, actors, writers, and Yiddish-speaking parents.

Having taught for several years in New York's intensive Uriel Weinreich Program in Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture, I can attest to the effectiveness of the intensive approach: with no "Yiddishland" to call home, these program's provide a full immersion experience. However, there is currently no such program in Canada, despite its status as a centre of Yiddish language and culture.

This very intensive course, which is being offered under the auspices of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, will provide students with a multifaceted immersion experience in Yiddish. The intensive course consists of two components that function in tandem: formal classes in language, and complementary activities.

Several afternoons a week, students will participate in activities such as lectures, workshops, or Yiddish film screenings to complement classroom learning. Students will also have the opportunity to take part in programs and excursions some evenings and Sundays. The course thus integrates grammar and language study with a strong cultural component that includes folklore, music, literature, film, and theatre.

The course will teach Yiddish as a living language and culture. As its instructor, and a former instructor of New York's Uriel Weinreich Program in Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture, my approach to the teaching of Yiddish is to emphasize active engagement with Yiddish from day one. Students will be able to hold a simple conversation by the end of the first week, and be able to write a postcard soon after.

They also will be exposed to the development of the language and its literature over its long history in Europe as well as in its immigrant centres, with a strong emphasis on the Yiddish communities across Canada. Instruction will take place in English, and no previous knowledge is required. The course is designed to appeal to a wide variety of participants: students at the high school,

undergraduate and graduate levels; post-doctoral scholars and researchers; writers, actors, singers and musicians; genealogists and individuals with a personal interest; and anyone with an interest in learning a language and culture of a thousand years of Jewish life. It will prepare students to read a wide variety of texts, and to write and speak Yiddish in its Standard form while at the same time gaining an appreciation of its many variants and dialects.

The course will highlight Canadian writers such as J. I. Segal, Ida Maza, Rokhl Korn, and present the rich institutional life of Yiddish in Canada: newspapers, journals, libraries, schools, theatre, and political organizations. It will encourage students to tackle the language creatively and produce projects that present an aspect of Yiddish in Canada, from an interview with a Yiddish activist to the creation of an original work of literature or art.

The course consists of two 3-credit undergraduate classes: YDD 1101-1102. It is open to all University of Ottawa students, while students registered at other universities may enrol with a letter of permission from their home universities. The course also is open to non-University students as Special Students (auditors are not permitted).

For details on fees and payment, visit: www.uottawa.ca/academic/info/regist/fees/fees2006_en.htm or call the University of Ottawa's InfoService at 1-877-868-8292. Limited accommodation is available in the University of Ottawa's Residences. For more information on housing at the University of Ottawa, visit www.ottawaresidences.com or call 1-888-564-4545.

To register for the course or for information, please contact Houria Messadh, Administrative Assistant of the Institute of Canadian Studies, at 613-562-5800 ext. 3231, or via e-mail at hmessadh@uOttawa.ca. The Vered Program's website is located at <http://www.canada.uottawa.ca/en/vered.htm>
Space is limited: reserve your spot today!

Editor's note: Rebecca Margolis, the course instructor, received her doctorate in Yiddish Studies at Columbia University. She has taught Yiddish in a variety of settings, including Columbia University, the Uriel Weinreich Program in Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture, the Charlotte Institute, Workmen's Circle shuln in the New York area, and at Montreal's Jewish Public Library. The focus of her research is Canadian Yiddish culture, in particular on issues of transmission.

This article is based on one that is also appearing in The Canadian Jewish Outlook magazine in March of 2007.

Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson

Rabbi Yosef Yitzkhok Jacobson, in his early thirties, is the youngest Yiddish editor. Each week, he produces the largest circulation Yiddish newspaper, the *Algemeyner Zhurnál*. When his father, Gershon Jacobson, the paper's founding editor passed away in 2005, Yosef Yitzkhok ("Y.Y."), not quite 33 at the time and the youngest of the editor's five children, took over editorship, while his older brother Simon became publisher.

Since then the paper has, included new writers ranging from Hasidic to a wide range of authors from the international Yiddish literary community who contribute weekly from Washington New York, Boston, Vilna, Kiev and Tel Aviv. The paper has been republishing classics of Yiddish literature, including works of Sholem Aleichem, Leyb Naydus, Y. L. Peretz, Mendele Moykher Sforim and Moyshe Kulbak, bringing the best of Yiddish literature to today's (largely haredi) Yiddish speakers.

Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson achieves, and maintains the one major Yiddish forum truly open to haredi and secular Yiddish writers and readers alike.

Rabbi Jacobson is a sought-after Jewish speaker internationally, and has lectured to Jewish and non-Jewish audiences on 6 continents and in 35 states. An orator renowned for his humor, erudition, and ability to communicate profound subjects lightly and entertainingly to diverse audiences, he is also known for his tolerance and respect toward the widest diversity of thought in Judaism (and in the field of Yiddish!) today.

He teaches Jewish philosophy and mysticism at the rabbinical college Chovevei Torah in New York and produced the tape series "A Tale of Two Souls" and "Rebuilding a Shattered World." His weekly Internet essays (in Yiddish and English), on Judaism, mysticism and psychology are read by tens of thousands worldwide. His weekly Yiddish editorials in the *Zhurnál* have become one of the most exciting current Yiddish reads of our times.

Instead of shirking the issues of the Haredi-Secular "Yiddish confrontation", Y.Y. has taken them on frontally, opening up the major issues of Yiddish culture to frank discussion in a spirit of moving forward with mutual respect and cooperation.

The online part of the Yiddish edition is at: <http://www.algemeiner.com/generic.asp?cat=4>. Y.Y. Jacobson will address the IAYC Conference on Monday morning August 6, 2007. The title of his presentation is: Integrating the Secular Rich Yiddish World and the Religious Jewish Universe.

Yiddish, As the Language of Choice for the Great Jewish Writers of Eastern Europe in the 19th Century

by Samuel W. Levy

This is a slightly amended e-mail exchange I had with Dr. Angelika Maeser Lemieux, a history (?) professor in Montreal, on the emergence of Yiddish, as the language of choice for the great Jewish writers of Eastern Europe in the 19th century. She has no objections to using her name.

...Sam

4 Oct 2006

Dear Sam,

I read this beautiful and informative article of yours and congratulate you on bringing to the foreground an important part of Jewish history and culture. About two years ago I read a book at McGill about the history of Yiddish and knew something of the fight against Yiddish in Israel, but your article gives a brief yet succinct view of the facts and rightly maintains that language is a culture carrier; great poets/writers have indeed shaped the consciences of millions of people and raised their level of humanity.

Perhaps the Yiddish revival will help somewhat to restore it again; like many aboriginal tongues, Yiddish may have been deliberately silenced, but it will be taught and spoken again even if it is marginal to the mainstream culture. It occurred to me that perhaps there is an unconscious gender bias in the rejection of Yiddish and the hegemony of Hebrew as the official language of Judaism in Israel.

After all, "mother tongue"—the Yiddish spoken and written language which as you say produced a highly humanistic and creative culture among Ashkenazi Jews—can be symbolic of the Mothers, the archetype of the eternal Feminine principle which the arch-patriarchal advocates of a "muscular Judaism" want to deny and suppress. (See Y. Rabkin on the transformation of Eastern European male identity to "muscular Judaism")

I would also add that the same phenomenon can be seen in Protestant Canada at the turn of the century when the term "muscular Christianity" came into prominence, and the Western Canadian minister, Ralph Connor, wrote many novels to reinforce that "macho" male WASP identity among the pioneering Westerners! I see a link here between the Jewish settlers of Palestine and the Anglo-Saxon settlers of the Great Plains; both threw off the gentle side of the Mothers or the Feminine

aspect of Being and tried to force the "tough guy" traits to prevail in the "conquerors of the land".

In social and cultural life, the rejection of the maternal principle brings about greater violence, militarism, cruelty, one-sidedness, the destruction of nature, and the demonization/inferiorization of women, pagans, and people of color.

Clearly, Jewish culture in Israel has suffered due to the lack of balance, and the Tree of Life is dying (if such a thing could be, but I am speaking metaphorically here) for want of water from the "springs of salvation": the Feminine/Mother side of Being. For me, "tikkun" today requires that we each try to restore that primal union, balance, and integration of polarities. And maybe speaking some Yiddish wouldn't hurt either, "nu"?

Sam:

Dear Angelika,

We think of languages in general, and Yiddish in particular, as a mother tongue (mameloshn) with all the love and nurturing it implies. Dovid Katz in "Words on Fire" (p.203), discusses it in another way. Back in the days of a struggle between Hebrew & Yiddish, an ardent Yiddishist (Lifschitz) in Odessa wrote some daring poetry in an early Zeitung (1862) about Yudl & Yehudis—Yudl being the Jew (male) and Yehudis, the female language (Yiddish). Yehudis challenges her husband as follows: "You just want to have pleasure from others," she tells him, but "if you pamper me and caress me, you will work yourself up into a sweat, but afterwards you'll have the ultimate pleasure." "The romantic and sexual images then broaden out to issues of equality with other nations," writes Katz. "If you want to be equal to other people, then don't keep your distance from me.

Polish me, clean me up, and I will be beautiful. You will see how in a short time a great person will emerge. I will sing my song for you as the finest nightingale. I will be able to read and write in every branch of wisdom, all kinds of work, whatever you will want; let me just learn, I absorb things lightly, just try and you'll be full of joy...." It came to pass, of course, that writers Mendele Mokher Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, Y.L. Peretz and many others, caressed her into beauty and maturity. "Nu?"

This is a book worth reading!

Israel Medres, Montreal of Yesterday: Jewish Life in Montreal 1900-1920

Translated from the Yiddish by Vivian Felsen (Montreal: Vehicule Press)

ISRAEL MEDRES' portrait of Montreal Jewry is akin to and as evocative of its subject as the Spirit of the Ghetto (1902), Hutchins Hapgood's sympathetic snapshot of Yiddish culture on Manhattan's Lower East Side. But *Montreal of Yesterday*, a series of newspaper sketches begun just after World War II and first published in toto in 1947, is a unique document.

Medres wrote for a popular Jewish readership, in the Yiddish-language *Keneder Adler* (Daily Eagle); as a Yiddish speaker, Medres knew his subject in a way that Hapgood, a non-Jew coming from an old Boston background, could not. Although *Montreal of Yesterday* is arguably the more valuable historical resource, however, given both its depth of understanding and its breadth (covering twenty years in chronological order), it was virtually a lost work, unknown to most historians.

It was unknown, that is, until 1997, when French-Canadian Yiddishist Pierre Anctil translated it into French. Now that Vivian Felsen, inspired by Anctil's example, has rendered her grandfather Israel's words into English, the book is available to an even wider circle of readers. *Montreal of Yesterday* is compulsory reading not only for students of Jewish history but also, because of the far-ranging influence of Jewish radicalism as well as for anyone interested in the early development of the left in Canada.

Although only about 8 of Medres' more than 50 chapters deal explicitly with issues relating to labour, his laconic prose conveys the complexity of the ideological choices offered to and made by new immigrants to Canada's then largest metropolis—Montreal. Medres relates the rising and falling fortunes of anarchism, socialism, Bundism and the Arbeiter Ring, political and cultural Zionism, and two variants of labour Zionism (one Yiddishist, the other Hebraist) in the hearts and minds of those who cared and thought about these things in his city's east end. All receive their due in a manner that ordinary readers could understand.

But the limpid style is of benefit to historians as well. For instance, Medres' explanation of the difference between cloak-makers and other needle tradespersons, in terms of status and skill level, is deceptively simple but crystal clear: "In the pre-World War I period, women dressed differently than they do now. Suits were more fashionable than dresses. Therefore ... cloak-makers were the aristocrats among the workers. They earned higher wages, they were better dressed, they attended the Yiddish theatre more frequently, they purchased Jewish books more often, and in

summer sent their wives to St. Sophie or New Glasgow."

Medres' strength lies not in the analysis but in an artistic, journalistic flair for telling detail. Here is his description of typical theatre-goers: "People who frequented the theatre on a regular basis were those who earned more money, those who had arrived. It was easy to recognize these successful people. The surest sign that they had been in the country for a long time, perhaps as long as ten years, was their gold teeth.

A well-to-do Jewish husband would wear one or two quite massive gold rings and a gold watch and chain over his vest. His wife, in an oversized hat with a long feather, was adorned with jewelry, much of it from the old country. The gold teeth, however, were most certainly acquired here in Canada."

There are some errors, of fact and of omission. According to Medres, the first Jewish bookstore in Montreal was Hirsch Hershman's on Main Street, between Ontario and Craig. This is only partly true. Hershman, a socialist who had previously been the door-to-door distributor of the Daily Forward (a Yiddish daily from New York that was perhaps the most influential Jewish newspaper at that time), was persuaded to set up shop as a general purveyor of Yiddish literature in 1902.

Slightly east and southwards, on St. Lawrence (68 Lawrence, to be precise) the Zionist Reading Room had been established two years earlier in 1900. It did not last long, because local support for Zionism had yet to pick up steam, but it was there. Seven years later, the *Keneder Adler* came into being and could be found up the street, also in the heart of The Main, at 508 St. Lawrence.

Translator Felsen provides us with a map of "The Old Neighborhood," but one would have to be armed with a microscope to locate any of the many landmarks mentioned above, in her introduction, or in the text proper. Incidentally, bad maps, or no maps at all, are a problem in most Canadian Jewish historiography.

Therefore, It is time for someone to create a historical atlas for students in this area of study. My students are often unaware that Montreal, or Manhattan for that matter, is located on an island. How then are they to apprehend spatially the contours of immigrant quarters in The Main or the

Lower East Side, to say nothing of second-generation migrations to Outremont and Westmount or Brooklyn and the Upper West Side, without benefit of clearly laid out visual aids? More satisfactory is the job Felsen has done of annotating the book. Without the over 250 endnotes she provides readers would have a hard time with some of Medres' more obscure allusions (I detected but one slip: A.A. Roback was raised in Québec City, not in Montréal, as Felsen says). A glossary of Yiddish terms as well as a bibliography is also provided courtesy of the translator.

Medres' most egregious error of omission is his neglect to mention Montreal's other Jewish newspaper: the Jewish Times, a fortnightly that holds the honour of being Canada's first Jewish newspaper. This glossing over of its existence is understandable. The Jewish Times was founded in 1897, and by 1910, the date of Medres' arrival in Montreal, its influence was on the wane. More significantly, however, he, like other downtown detractors, regarded the Jewish Times, Westmount-based, Anglophonic, and Anglophilic—as nothing more than an uptown society rag.

Nevertheless, several of the personages figuring in Montreal of Yesterday, had one connection or another to this bastion of acculturated Jewry. Sam Jacobs, described by Medres as "an outstanding jurist, a leading figure in the Baron de Hirsch institute," and "the first Jewish member of the Parliament of Canada," was one of the co-founders of the Jewish Times. The other individual was Lyon Cohen, another member of Montreal's Jewish elite, who during World War I helped to establish the national body known as the Canadian Jewish Congress.

Among his collaborators on that project was Hirsch Wolofsky, publisher of the Keneder Adler. Eventually Wolofsky bought out the Times and hired a new staff, including writer A.A. Roback. A frequent Adler contributor, Roback was given the opportunity to write his blistering denunciations of the stultifying effects of Anglophone culture in English as well as in Yiddish.

All of which is to point out that although they were in some respects worlds apart, the two newspapers—and by analogy the Jewish community of Montreal as a whole, uptown and downtown—were yet linked in various ways. His snubbing of the Jewish Times aside, Medres showed how the dots connected in a manner that was fair, relatively unbiased, and colourful.

Editor's note: The second printing will be available in May as well as from Vivian Felsen, the author, at the IAYC Conference where she will be a presenter. *Montreal of Yesterday; Israel Medres, Véhicule Press P.O.B. 125, Place du Parc Station, Montreal, Quebec H2X 4A3 CANADA ISBN 1-55065-133-1 Tel: 514-844-6073 Email: vp@vehiculepress.com*

My Grandfather—Israel Medres by Vivian Felsen

Israel Medres was my grandfather. For over 40 years he was a full-time staff writer for the Montreal Yiddish daily, the *Keneder Adler*, known in English as the *Jewish Daily Eagle*. The *Adler* was an influential paper with a large readership, and Medres wrote on a daily basis. He was a court reporter, movie reviewer, theatre critic, political commentator, news editor, and labour editor. His articles also appeared in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, in the Canadian Labour Zionist newspaper, *Dos Vort*, which he edited, and the *Morgn Zhurnal*.

He was the Montreal correspondent for the *Morgn Zhurnal*. Medres excelled at writing *fellietons*, short light-hearted personal essays on serious subjects. These *fellietons*, under a penname, Ben Mordecai, were reprinted in Yiddish newspapers worldwide.

Almost 20 years after his death there were books that appeared in Yiddish, but what is even more surprising is that they also were in English, mentioning my grandfather or had his biography or excerpts from his work. I collected them and had a whole shelf of them – the *Canadian Jewish Anthology*, the *Canadian Jewish Mosaic*, *A Coat of Many Colours*, Lexicons of Yiddish writers, histories of Yiddish literature, etc. On this shelf were the two Yiddish books my grandfather wrote, that everyone in the family knew about, but few had read.

Suddenly, in 1997, exactly fifty years after its initial publication, *Montreal of Yesterday* appeared in French. This came as a total surprise to the family. Even more surprising was the fact that its translator was a non-Jewish French Canadian anthropologist, who had made the effort to learn to read, write and speak Yiddish in order to study the Jews of Quebec.

The first time that I actually read one of my grandfather's books was in 1997—in French. I discovered that in 55 short chapters, Medres described almost every aspect of Jewish immigrant life in Canada between 1900 and 1920: where people lived, what kind of jobs they had, what the synagogues were like, what weddings were like, the Yiddish theatre, movies, what books they were reading, trade unionism, Zionism, socialism, etc. etc. And it is Medres' gentle humour, always gentle, never biting or sarcastic, that gives *Montreal of Yesterday* its special charm.

The French translation inspired me to translate my grandfather's books from Yiddish into English, and to go on to translate other books. I am working on an English translation of *Hundert yor yidische un hebreyjische literatur in Kanade* by Chaim Leib Fuks.

My Strange Example of "Jewish Geography"

by Tom Lewin

Editor's note: this incident occurred at a wedding and was told to Laurie Melrood, Paul's daughter.

I'm a 75-year-old German Jew from Berlin who left Germany in early 1939 for the U.K. and eventually rejoined my father, in Minneapolis, in 1945. My dad got out of Germany in 1940, via Poland, Russia, Korea, Japan and Panama, while the Stalin-Hitler pact was still in effect. Being of good Ashkenazic stock, what did I know of "Ost Juden and Yiddish"? But I married "one of them," and have lived a happy married life for over 42 years -- so far! My wife -- whose grandparents came to America from Romania and Lithuania -- told me how her father called us Reform Jews "those Christian Jews," but he attended a few of our services at Reform Temple Israel, his reaction was "They're not that bad a bunch after all!"

Her father was the sports editor of the Minneapolis Morning Tribune, and later its Copy Editor, and was very involved in the Minneapolis Jewish Community. He was president of his Beth El Synagogue -- conservative -- and chaired its capital campaign for the new building they eventually built in the suburbs. He has a forest in Israel in his honor for the fund-raising work he did when Israel became a state.

Yesterday afternoon, my wife, Rhoda, and I were at a wedding in Tucson. The son of Rhoda's first cousin, Rabbi Arnie Turchick, by his first wife, was marrying a non-Jewish girl from Canada, and Arnie flew in from Sao Paulo for the occasion. Arnie does not have a congregation in Sao Paulo; Brazil he works as a chaplain in a Jewish hospital and a seniors' residence.

During the dinner following the wedding, Arnie happened to mention a collection of 20,000 Yiddish books, which are stored in a Sao Paulo warehouse that's about to be demolished. He said the books would be burned or buried because no one was interested in that "old stuff."

Rhoda and I immediately thought of Aaron Lansky's National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, and mentioned that to Arnie. His reply was, "That's interesting, but there's no way we can ship so much stuff to the US. It's far too expensive!"

Lori sat opposite me, and she said that her father was the president of the International Association of Yiddish Clubs, and gave me Paul's telephone number, because I figured he might be able to give me Aaron's home telephone number in Amherst. Arnie is flying back to Brazil tomorrow, Monday, and leaves at 6 a.m., so there was no way I could

reach Aaron on a Sunday. When you clarified your situation with me, I called the library, which IS open on Sundays. It turns out that the library in Amherst is moving much of its collection to a new building, so the staff is more than fully occupied. But they said they'd figure out what to do and call me back a.s.a.p.

Soon I received a call from Catherine Madsen, who said they're interested in ALL Yiddish books, but has no idea how they can possibly move quickly enough to retrieve 20,000 books from Sao Paulo. She said that she also knew you -- and sends her regards!

They do have contacts in Buenos Aires, and said that if Arnie and others in Sao Paulo can figure out a way to get the books packed, the Book Center could probably raise the needed funds to have the collection shipped to America! She also thought that some of the folks in Buenos Aires might be able to come and help with the packing. I gave Catherine Arnie's phone number, address, and E-mail information so she can have someone reach Arnie when he gets back to Sao Paulo.

This is another example of Jewish Geography. I'm currently in a Humanities Seminar class at the University of Arizona that's being taught by Professor Tom Price. He is an amazing fellow who spent 20-plus years, as one of only a very few Jews, in the U.S. Foreign Service, mostly in the Middle East and Central Europe, and speaks at least 8 of that area's languages fluently, including Turkish, Hebrew and Yiddish.

Tom tells a wonderful story about how, when he was stationed in Austria in about 1970, he told his station chief that he wanted to take time off for the Jewish High Holidays. His chief was "of the old school," and was somewhat reluctant to give a Jew time to attend services, but the Foreign Service had received specific directions from the President that religious services attendance for non-Christian holidays was to be granted. So his question to Tom Price was, "I wonder how we'll code that absence from work -- medical leave?"

After his retirement from the Foreign Service, he received his Ph.D. and is now teaching at the U of AZ. The course I'm taking is called "Modern Jewish Literature," and covers Jewish authors from the French Revolution (1789) to 1939, after which the genre became "Post-Holocaust Literature." Naturally, most of that early literature is Yiddish -- Sforim, Alechem and Singer, etc.