

Full Transcript

Montreal Jewish Memories

Post-War Stories, 1945-1952

Bernard Finestone:

In 1940 I went in; armoured corps. I took my training at Camp Borden. By November I was in England. We were sent to Italy; I was on staff, which meant that I saw action at Cassino and Ortona long before my regiment. I came back in July or August of 1944, badly wounded. And my parents threw a big party, and all their friends came to welcome me back. And they were talking about how hard it was to get gasoline and how hard it was to get sugar, and how you couldn't get a good maid. These were my father's social circles. I listened that first evening for maybe thirty minutes...I couldn't take it. Why was I upset? When your best friend's lying there, and you see his guts on the ground. You can't help him. He's going to die. You can't come back without being affected. Everybody! Some of us recovered, some didn't. Those who reached their limits...It's a little bit like a bank account. You can keep drawing on it but, eventually, there's no more left.

Narrator:

Band leader Peter Barry was transferred from a combat unit to help entertain troops in Amsterdam waiting to be shipped home.

Peter Barry:

I was in Holland during the liberation of Holland and I remember I would see these people with Semitic features, and they would be walking down the road. Now, they weren't necessarily in concentration camps. They had been hiding out or had been hidden by the Dutch people, who I thought were absolutely tops. And I shall never forget this Jewish man stopping me in Amsterdam and he said "Bist a Yid?", and I said "Yes". And he said, "Mein liberator!", and he threw his arms around me. You know, it really tore me up. I asked him about himself. He said he had been living in this old barn – in fields – a couple of years there. And he was walking around with rags around his feet – he had no shoes, no proper ones. So I gave him a pair of my army boots and, so that he wouldn't get caught with them, I cut them off and made them into – you know – into slippers. And then I invited him to see the show, He said it was the first show he had seen since the invasion.

Narrator:

H.M. Caiserman, Secretary General of the Canadian Jewish Congress, spoke with Jewish soldiers who had fought with the Red Army or with the partisans....He also visited children in transit.

Samuel Bronfman:

On this pitiable remnant of Jewry in Europe depends the future of the Jewish people in the world. You all feel the dignity of the Jewish name. You treasure it. Our work must continue. It must be increased in the months to come. Our brothers and sisters call to us. We must not fail.

Antonia Robinson:

When the Germans started to invade Russia, her father was a doctor and he changed her name and moved her to a farm in Russia. She was eleven years old then. Her father and mother and two brothers were shot by the Germans. She came with a group of orphans that the Canadian Jewish Congress had arranged to come. She was living in France at the time. A friend of mine recommended her. She'd interviewed her with a group of girls, and I had the same group of girls come to my house. She wanted to be educated and that pleased me. I took her for five years, until she got married.

Narrator:

Many orphans waited years for permission to come to Canada. Many others were denied entry.

Musia Schwartz:

During the war – I survived the war under an assumed name. As a kid I was twelve years old when I assumed that name which wasn't mine. My father got me a birth certificate so that, more or less, the ground was prepared. And with that birth certificate I started out to Warsaw. In Warsaw, through all kinds of trials and tribulations, which seem almost incredible to me now – you know – I found my first job from an ad in the paper that they're looking for a helper, orphans welcome. And that's how I got me first job, and after a few months I felt I was an experienced assistant maid, and that I could go on... If I would go into the store, to buy bread or something, and the stores were always the headquarters of all the rumours and gossip, whatever; very valuable information, very valuable for me who was living with my ears always to the ground when I slept, and one eye open – because my life depended on it. And she would say something like "Oh, you know, did you see that new governess? I think that's a peroxide Jew with dyed hair. Hey, I don't know what's happening to our district – a regular Palestine. That meant that I have to get out as quickly as I can, without attracting attention to getting out.

Narrator:

When the war was over, there was a mass movement of survivors across Europe, searching for family members who might still be alive.

Musia Schwartz:

My only surviving relative, my aunt, my mother's sister, was looking for me. But I had not registered in any Jewish institution or committee or nothing. So it was very difficult to look for me. Ultimately, my aunt came to Lodz to fetch me and said that I have to resume the kind of normal life, which means going to school – and study was always something which both attracted and amused me. ...I received a letter

from the American government that they are creating a separate quota for children under eighteen who are war orphans. In the orphanage I found out that there were some changes in the immigration law. I had to have been in Germany in 1945 in order to qualify. Well I wasn't! "You brought me here. What do you want?" Would you go to Canada? There's a commissioner or somebody who came in; they're ready to take kids; the Jewish Congress is sponsoring. "By all means!" It didn't make much of a difference to me.

Dr. Joseph Kage:

They started arriving in September 1947. As a matter of fact, I met the first group that came into Halifax. And I remember it was shortly before Rosh Hashana – probably a day or two – and I was anxious to get them to Montreal before the holidays. So I flew to Halifax three times in one day to ..bring them back here.

Max Wolofsky:

My father wanted to adopt one of those young girls who came over here. And – she was living with us. My mother had a great heart.....Chaye Sura her name was. And he wanted to adopt this girl. My mother said, "Oh, no, oh no, she's not my child, she's not my child. And she insisted that the child leave, and the child went into an orphans' home - Jean Mance.

Andre Landsman:

I was born in Mishkolz and, as a child, I was sent to Budapest to go to school, elementary school...And then.. the ghetto was a tough place. It was a tough place to survive. We were bombarded. And then, when the Russians approached, it was artillery. If they ask you, you know, an eleven year old – you were aware of some things. I'll tell you what I was very much aware of. It was the safe houses, and I was in there for awhile.

Narrator:

Zionist youth, operating underground, set up these places of refuge and organized food supplies for thousands of Jews throughout the siege.

Andre Landsman:

It wasn't in the ghetto, but it wasn't all that safe. Well, I wasn't there that long, but the fighting came close, and we were chased out of there too, out of the...The safe houses weren't so safe. But that was at the end.

Narrator:

After liberation by the Red Army, Andre and other children were brought to Austria for school and rehabilitation.

Max Beer:

I came from a DP camp in Germany. My parents were survivors from Poland. And, after the war they came here because my father's father had come here in, I think, the late twenties. And, I guess, he sponsored my father and his family; that is, me and my mother. ...I was – really – I was watched all the time. They never let me ride a bicycle. They never let me go too far from the house. (*Nar: Did you realize why?*) No, I didn't. I just thought my parents were weird. I was a kid. I mean, I wanted be like everybody else.

Deena Dlucy-Apel:

I later found out that Max's mother had handed a baby to her father, and never saw the baby or her father again. He didn't know this all the time that he was...

Max Beer:

Yeah! She never told me about the fact that she had had a family before the war.

Andre Landsman:

I ended up in Montreal. I was supposed to go to Regina but I didn't know where Regina was and I put up a fuss. And the leader took an eraser and erased on a yellow sheet somebody's name from Montreal and put him down for Regina. We were taken – on Jean Mance there was the Herzl Centre. We were given a card - J. Shreter on St. Lawrence. So I show up at Shreter's and Joe grabs me, because he was of Hungarian origin as well, and immediately he wanted to hear; he had a million questions which I answered, and "Take this and take that" - I could barely walk out of there. He was the most generous, generous man. And then, I was invited to the Brownsteins for a Friday night dinner. And then at the end of the dinner, Mrs. Brownstein asked me if I'd like to stay with them. And I said "Yes"...I was not legally adopted but, in every other sense of being adopted and being a brother, I was and I am. You know, I put myself back in time: Who would adopt a youngster when all the kids were out of the house except for my youngest brother, Irwin? When I graduated High School I went to work in one of the stores – Brown Shoe Stores. I became manager of the store on Queen Mary, which became a very busy store as Cote St. Luc started to come into existence. While I was working in the store, I met Esther, my dear wife, and it was fairy tale from then on.

Max Beer:

There was, like, a community on St. Urbain at that time. There were a lot of immigrants on St. Urbain and a lot of survivors, and they stuck together. Yeah, I remember a lot of times like, uh, friends of my mother and father coming into the house, telling stories of what they went through during the war...but they kept it within that community.

Zave Ettinger:

We knew that, let's say, east of St. Lawrence you never went alone, because there was the McGuire St. Gang. So you always went in twos. The street that I lived on was a real mixture of Jewish boys, Catholic, Protestant, French Canadians – you name it. We were all friends. We were a gang. The racial-ethnic factor didn't play a role at all. I mean, if you were in a scrap, you were in a scrap; that's all there was to it. But we all knew there were certain things you didn't do. For example, you never scheduled a ...baseball game between four and five-thirty because most of the Jewish kids went to afternoon school – you went to 'cheder', so they knew you didn't schedule it at that time. We never scheduled any games for Sunday morning, because we knew that the church was a factor. And this is the way we lived together.

Narrator:

In Montreal, newcomers discovered Jewish schools and services and Yiddish-speaking labour and cultural organizations similar to those they might have joined in pre-war Europe. There were groups of every persuasion, Liberal, Socialist and Communist, Zionist and non-Zionist, religious and secular, social clubs and sports clubs...Youngsters went to the 'Y' or to Neighbourhood House.

Bernard "Bucket" Herman:

Zionists, Bundists, Communists – we were all arguing till we were blue in the face about how to make a better world.

Shirley Herman:

Well, we went to 'folkshule', the day school. We were both so-called "scholarship children". In other words, we didn't pay – OK? And I remember in Grade 6, Habonim already sent a 'menahelit' for us, and we started having meetings – in Folkschule, Grades 6 and 7. So, naturally, we were Habonim.

Narrator:

Many teens joined Zionist youth movements such as Hashomer Hatzair, Habonim and Bnei Akiva which encouraged, each in its own way, an enlightened world-view and a commitment to building the new Jewish state as kibbutz pioneers. Their camps were a place for enjoying summer, discovering nature and strengthening bonds to each other and to their ideals.

Tzippy Hadari:

At the time, I think, Hashomer Hatzair was the strongest, Habonim came a nice second and Hashomer Hadati, which became Bnei Akiva, was the third. But we felt we had things in common because Israel was the big one.

Bernard "Bucket" Herman:

The Habonim and the Shomer got along. We used to have our little disagreements but, by and large, we got along. They were a little more left than we, and what does that mean I don't know, except that they had more rules and...(Shirley breaks in)

Shirley Herman:

They had more rules, yes. And ...I was in Habonim, and I sort of got to like the boys in the Shomer more. So I came home once and announced "I'm leaving Habonim and I'm going to Shomer" My mother said "If you join the Shomer, don't bother to come home – you're not my daughter anymore". And that was that!

Tzippy Hadari:

Bnei Akiva and the religious, the 'dati', the orthodox – however you want to call them – were part of the general, the mainstream. And we all adhered, because our homes were very strongly orthodox at the time. So we could afford to mix with others and we all knew where our home base was. Israel, at that time, meant 'hagshama', which meant realization, and 'hagshama'-realization meant living on kibbutz. The kibbutz philosophy, the idea where we will have that egalitarian society, all of this was part of the general picture. And my leaders who left in '48, all of them went to kibbutz...I don't remember that the rabbis had much say on that. The issue was so much, much bigger. Eretz Yisrael, we're going back to Eretz Yisrael after ..almost 2000 years. And that was good enough for them; they weren't going into the details then; everything was laudatory; everything was worthwhile. They weren't nitty-picky about it.

Bernard "Bucket" Herman:

Friday night we used to dance. At that time, we were still on Esplanade Street. You get twenty, thirty people doing the hora, the building had to be pretty strong. Let me tell you, those buildings – the new buildings wouldn't have survived. ...I remember distinctly, Mordecai Richler was in Habonim. And, if you read one of his books, he's talking about why was he in Habonim; because he was told the girls were allowed to stay up past ten o'clock.

Jocelyn Cooper:

But, you know, thinking about Habonim again, we became a little politicized there. I can remember when we were helping A.M.Klein in his campaign to get elected, and we stuffed envelopes with his flyers.

Narrator:

UJPO, a fraternal organization, fostered social justice and Yiddish culture.

Saul Friedman:

My dad was secretary-general of UJPO. One time – it was in 1952; I was ten years old at the time - he brought me to a building. He took a look, and he showed me a padlock, a lock with a bronze chain wound around the metal door. And he went over to it, shook the door with both hands and said to me, in Yiddish, “Yingele, dus is Duplessis”! It wasn’t till much later that I realized that he was talking about Maurice Duplessis, Premier of the Province of Quebec.

Narrator:

The UJPO schools were named for Morris Winchevsky, renowned socialist, journalist and poet...UJPO provided many services, including camps, choirs and drama groups, and was informally linked to the Communist Party.

Stanley Asher:

My mother was a teacher at the Winchevsky School from the end of the war until it closed in 1952...The cops pulled up one day. She said to the children as she saw the cops entering the building, “It’s a school holiday but just go out the door, quickly...”

Narrator:

This was an extension of the Red Scare which spread across North America in the late forties.

Jerry Cooper:

We sort of realized we weren’t going to make aliya – we became involved with Bnei Brith. I particularly was very active with various levels of Bnei Brith. It was a very nice experience. It was a lot of fun. I went to a lot of Friday night dances at a lot of different schools as a DJ.

Zave Ettinger:

You had dances! The YMHA would have dances. Dances were part of the social life. Money we didn’t have. You had to find a cheap way of entertaining yourself.

Malka Ettinger:

They ended always with “Stardust”; that was the last dance of the evening, at the ‘Y’ anyway...

Zave Ettinger:

Everywhere!

Narrator:

Newcomers were getting jobs in needle trade.

Kalmen Kaplansky:

The organized labour movement was opposed to immigration, because immigration was used as a source of bringing indentured labourers to Canada, when they built the CPR, the transcontinental railways, and they brought in the Chinese. The first thing we did was to develop a program in which we said that admission to Canada should be based only on the absorptive capacity of the country. We got together – The Canadian Labour Congress, The Canadian Jewish Congress, The Jewish Immigrant Aid Society – we got ... McNamara, the Deputy Minister of Labour and the others, to instruct the Canadian immigration officials in occupied Europe at that time, and in Britain and in France, to cooperate with a tripartite delegation from Canada, formed from the trade unions and the manufacturers. Then, of course, the immigration officials began, of course, boycotting the whole effort; it almost collapsed on several occasions.

Dr. Joseph Kage:

I went up St. Lawrence, probably from Pine Avenue approximately – all the factories, and asked them who do they want; and they told me. And we told them “If you have a job for them you will accept them. If you do not have a job, we will not hold you responsible – that sort of a thing...which was perfectly legal.

Kalmen Kaplansky:

Don't forget, they triggered – those people triggered yet another wave of immigration: relatives who they brought in. And we got special permits. One time we got seventy, another time we got sixty people. The only thing we had to do was to get people in Canada who were established who said they would look after those people..sponsor them....And The Jewish Labour Committee became a sponsor.

Maurice Silcoff:

It was agreed that we would give employment to as many workers as is humanly possible who could be brought into the work force. And based on the decision of the Jewish Labour Committee, in cooperation with the Canadian Jewish Congress, in cooperation with the Canadian government at that time, delegations were sent down to bring in cloakmakers, dressmakers, men's clothing workers and, in the case I'm talking about, where I was directly involved, hat workers, cap workers. I was able to get two hundred families here, roughly about six hundred souls. That was the minimum we could possibly do. Unfortunately, there was no other way of bringing them all to a country where people are searching for peace and fraternity and democracy and freedom.

Narrator:

When the Germans invaded Russia, a 21 year old Jewish soldier from Poland joined the move to the Ural Mountains. At the factory where he worked as a tailor for the army he met his future wife...At the end of the war, the young couple returned to Poland with their baby, and soon moved to a DP camp in Salzburg. His skill as a tailor would be the key to a new life in Montreal.

Rachmiel Glaser:

They sent people from the unions checking just that we are really tailors. Some tailors, me too, we did this for other people – for ourselves - for other people. *They tested the people to see that they are really tailors; they made sure they are alright, they are really tailors (Yiddish)* They could come to Canada. There were many, many. We waited there for ships. So, that's how we are coming to Canada. ...

First of all, we got to get a room. They rent for us a room – the first month, through the JIAS here in Montreal... I got enough money to rent an apartment on Clark Street, after fifteen months being in a room. I needed money, to pay for... 'key money', they called it at the time, \$500 for a broken kitchen table and four broken chairs. I went to the union. I couldn't get much help from the union, because they sent me to small places. Today they were in business; two months later, went out of business. So then I found myself, through the Keneder Adler, I found myself a better job. It was a hard time for everybody.

Max Wolofsky:

I really do believe that the Jewish community, those who read the Keneder Adler, looked at the Keneder Adler as a source of authority on a lot of things, a lot of things. We had Hersh, we had Rabinovitch, B.G. Sachs. They were all learned guys. As long as they didn't take the left-wing line, the pro-Zionist line, I was satisfied. But they never submitted the editorials to me... We had a reporter, Ginsburg, I don't know if you remember... Medres. They used to go to these Jewish functions. But, for world news, we had to take it from the Star. They'd always say, "How'd the Star know yesterday what you're going to print today?" The favourite joke: "How'd the Star know yesterday?" But the Star went out too! ..We had some celebrated editors in our time. If they were making \$30-\$35 a week, they were on top of the world. A.M. Klein was the editor of the Chronicle at that time.

Narrator:

Do you have any strong memories of A.M. Klein?

Max Wolofsky:

Oh, he had that high-falutin' English, you know. He would never use a one-syllable word if he could use a six-syllable word. And I would say to him, "Abe", I says, "Why don't you write in a language that people can understand? ... hyperbole, you know. So he says to me, "Look", he says, "I don't want to go down to the level of my readers. I want to bring the level of my readers up to my level". You couldn't tell him anything about it.

Sylvia Ary:

The poet Itzik Manger was in Montreal, and he had managed to alienate everybody of the Jewish world in Montreal. And he used to come up to our house because he really had nowhere else to go. And I thought to myself, "If I don't do a portrait of him, I'll have lost this opportunity and that'll be too bad. So I set up my easel right in the middle of the dining room and so on and I started painting. The minute he saw me looking at him, he'd get up and walk around. He didn't want to pose. He said, "Nobody can do

my portrait. Marc Chagall tried; it didn't come out. Saul Lerner tried in London – no. Nobody can do my portrait. At that time he'd already had, in his mind, a battle with Melech Ravitch. So what happened was, I just happened to mention Melech Ravitch's name. The minute he heard the name of Melech Ravitch, he sat down and started railing against Ravitch – he's this and he's that, and he completely forgot about getting up and walking around. I got him..and the portrait became ... very good.

Max Beer:

My father – he started reading really as soon as he came here. He had to learn English, and he started reading. And I still have somewhere his little Webster pocket dictionary that he had. He was an avid reader. That's why he had the store, I think, so that he could sit there and just read most of the day. 'Cause nobody used to come into the store; very few people used to come into the store.

Musia Schwartz:

So I went to business college, Outremont Business College and, within six months, I got a job. I got my first job at Samuelson's Limited, men's clothing... And then, I went to the library, and Rochl Eisenberg said to me, "I see that you're not taking Polish books anymore. I said, "No, now I'm reading English". "Why don't you read Yiddish books now?" I said, "Give me a break. I'm ploughing through the English ones. Yiddish would take me I don't know how long to put the words together. And Rochl told me that there is a wonderful man who's going to give some classes at the library. She says, "Even you, with your nose in the air – you're going to appreciate him. You just go to one class and see. And that's where I met my husband – that was in '49. (Nar: ..and the wonderful teacher?") Ach, you came in...Irving Layton! You would come in after a day's work. It was very easy to doze off; after all, you're tired. He would wake you up. He would walk in with that dynamic step and voice of his. He would walk into that class – it was incredible.

Irving Layton:

One of my teaching practices – it was a teaching practice as old as the hills – was to start the class talking. These were all – you know – newcomers. I would start asking questions about what their lives were. You know: "What did you do during the war?" – that kind of thing. But, instead of the usual thing, "And what did YOU do, Johnny, during the war?", you see, and: "Where were you at the time?", and so on and so forth.. So, I got to hear all these stories about the survivors. And it had a tremendous effect on me, and it got me started writing about Jews and Jewish themes that I'd not paid that much attention to before.

(Layton recites:)

I live among the blind, the deaf and the dumb. I live among amnesiacs.

My murdered kin, let me be your parched and swollen tongue,

Uttering the maledictions of bullets and gas, silenced by your lips.

Fill! Fill my ears with your direst curses. I shall tongue them, unappeasable shame,

'Til the sun turns black in the sky.

Tola Feigenbaum:

I came back to Poland in 1946,...because the Russians took all the people, when they liberated us, and they took us to work for them. I got news that a younger sister from me is alive. And I saw her, how they took her to that block, Block 30, everybody knew that they ..end up...put the people on fire, with the people and everybody. So I knew that I lost her. But, all of a sudden, a friend of mine took me to see somebody who came from Sweden, and she told me that my sister is alive. ...So my sister sends a visa to us. ..We decided to come to Canada. A Jew from Montreal, a man by the name – he was a lawyer I think – Feigenbaum, was the sponsor for us. (**Narrator: No relation?**) No relation. I bought a present for appreciation, He didn't want to see us; he didn't want to take the present. He said, "I did what they asked me to do. The rest I don't care, I don't care who they are." We arrived Friday night. That same evening, they said that in his organization there's a meeting: the Arbeiter Ring, The Workmen's Circle. ... Saturday he was looking for a job as a carpenter. On Monday, he went to work. We arrived Friday; Monday he went to work.

Avrum Feigenbaum:

The feeling I had at the time were different from the feelings I have now. So the farther you go away from that period, the more you see it, the more you think about it...we didn't have time to think at the time. We were, you know, like...drunk with what some call it the freedom that we had, which I never had. I never had that feeling of freedom in Poland or in Germany...until I came into Canada. And I remember, when I arrived into Canada, and I walked off the boat, and the Canadian officer came and shook hands with me and I handed over my passport, and he said "Welcome to Canada"! And that was the greatest thing I could ever hear. I'm 31 years old, and the first time in my life somebody, an official, says to me, "Welcome". I wasn't welcome in the country I was born in. I was not welcome in the country I came back to, and my patriotism to that country has..faded away. I don't have that feeling no more. If I have feelings for what we called at the time 'fatherland', this is my fatherland, Canada is.

Tola Feigenbaum:

In the beginning, it was a little bit to swallow – not too nice. For instance, they used to say, “Mrs. Feigenbaum”- or somebody else, it’s true; many are going to tell you - “we heard that the Germans were running away and they left everything and you took so much.. jewels and so much money and this and that”. I’m telling you, this was something – it hurt so much! Because, you really, you went out from this war just like you were born. I came without shoes, what shall I tell you. I came to Lodz and, excuse me for my exp(ression)..., I came without underwear.

Dr. Joseph Kage:

They expected a different attitude – they expected. And they expected, within the first year or two, to receive all the privileges, whether it’s furniture or housing or other things. Well, this wasn’t done. Moreover, you do not create friendship just because the synagogue invites you to a dinner or a person invites you to a tea. There were those things. But the immigrants told me too that they were very hesitant to accept those invitations, because they felt inferior - they could not reciprocate. So I guess it takes time till the integration takes place. I...I think the reception was good but what they missed, as some have missed, was the personal interest in it.

Rachmiel Glazer:

In the shops it was not easy for us. The operators were older people. Many of them were afraid. They weren’t very friendly to us. One operator, sitting next to me at the next machine...One day, my middle daughter was born. The boss was a very fine man. He came over – my wife went to the hospital to have the second child with a friend of mine because I couldn’t afford the time to go to the hospital with my wife – so he came over to say ‘mazel tov’ to me. So the operator next to me – he didn’t have any children – he turned to me and he said, “At this time, you allow yourself to have children?” So..they weren’t pretty times.

Shirley Herman:

We took in a Polish girl after the war, and she lived in our house. We were very, very poor. In fact, Sam Gesser’s parents were our landlords. And my parents got paid for it, I guess. And I gave up my bedroom, which was like a postage stamp and I slept on the hide-a-bed in the living room. And we became very close, and she was very resentful that my parents got paid for her. But we really became close, and I took her to the symphony and to the art galleries and things like that. And she seemed just very well adjusted and very normal – until the night came. And she went to sleep. And, in her sleep, we hear blood-curdling yells. And – yes – she was in the woods; they found her in the woods, and she doesn’t have a memory of family or anything. She was all alone, and they found her. And it left its mark on her.

Zave Ettinger:

I slept on the floor for a year and a half while a refugee couple had my bedroom. ..They're still alive, and we're still very close friends with them.

Malka Ettinger:

We were four children in two little bedrooms, and there was hardly any room to take anyone in.

Sylvia Ary:

We lived in a poor working-class section of Montreal, on St. Dominique Street, and we offered our double-parlour, the big room of the house...They were Polish Jews. Each had had a former spouse who was killed, and children who were killed. They met again after the war and married, and they came to Canada. It was a time when the Jews of Montreal – well, anyway, we – were very anxious to help them out, and got strong feelings about them, and heard many stories about what had happened. They couldn't understand that here we were, in a country like Canada, which had so many opportunities, and we were poor people. We lived a certain kind of life where material things were not of the utmost importance. And, to them, it was incomprehensible. Because they, without very much time, they found a place, and they managed to do very well – well, materially well – much better, anyway, in their lives.

Tzippy Hadari:

We found that one nephew was a survivor. So we did everything; I mean my parents did everything possible to bring him in. And they brought him in as my father's younger brother. And my mother was very intent that he marry and have his own family; and she did that. She went out of her way to find a suitable young lady for him, and they did marry, and they had three children. But, if we look at the results, the children of the parents of the Holocaust...Boy, it didn't end with six million. And he was of one of the few people that I knew that, when Germany was ready to offer reparation money, we could not convince him. The mental anguish that permeated his whole ..(?)...that was my cousin...and, inevitably to the children, something unbearable. But, today, I know in Israel so many people who have made wonderful strides, wonders with their lives. But now, at the end of the day, they're old now, and they say that the only thing that visits them are those years in the concentration camps. That's the memory they leave this world with.

Narrator:

In the months leading to Israel's independence, new immigrants were living in tents and shacks....and Montreal volunteers helped ferry planes from Czechoslovakia for the fledgling Israeli air force.

Dr. William Novick:

We didn't have any radios, and the airport in Israel didn't have any radio either. But we knew that if we would hit Crete at nightfall, at dusk, and we would turn right 180 degrees due south, in about an hour and a half we would hit the coast at Tel Aviv. And just to the right was the airport near Rehovot. At that time it was called Akir. And it had to be done at night, and they picked me because I had been a night-bomber pilot. Most of the other American pilots had been daylight pilots. I landed there and I found out that there was one problem -planes were supposed to come in one after the other. And propellers, when the planes landed, churned up this tremendous cloud of sand and rock. And, of course, the planes circling overhead couldn't come in to land until all this settled down.

Narrator:

After a short recreation break, Novick resumed his medical studies in Canada. ..Most Montreal volunteers were in infantry units, and were caught up in fierce fighting early in Israel's War of Independence.

Sidney Cadloff:

We were in a gully when I was hit. It was a Bren gun. He was in a tree, over a house. All he could do was see my leg; well, he couldn't . Well, he was shooting like that. He cut it; it was being held by a few strands..

Jerry Gross:

..And I tore a door down to create a stretcher for him, to pull him out.....May 14th before midnight, we were paraded out on the parade square at Kfar Bilu in the camp, and the State of Israel was proclaimed. I remember that night so good and clear, so beautiful, that we're having our own country. At last, our own, our own medina.

Bernard "Bucket" Herman:

I went in '52 to a kibbutz called Urim in the Negev. And we had quite a few Montrealers there. I think probably that the highlight of my life were the two years prior to going on aliya which I spent on 'hachshara' in Smithville, Ontario. This is where you took a city kid and put him into a farm environment. It was a large farm. The man in charge of that farm was a man by the name of Patterson, who was the brother to the principal of Baron Byng.

Malka Ettinger:

Yeah, my mother used to take a room in a house – like once in Prefontaine. Then we went for a few years; they'd share a house in Val David. But they went to get away. And their husbands would stay for their week or whatever they had for vacation. And they would come up on weekends. Like the train; the train came up. Or there was always somebody they knew with a car who would charge the guy whatever it is for a trip here and back..

Peter Barry:

These people who owned that Castle des Monts - they wanted something 'grandioso'. And I had imported a congo drummer from New York, and I had a girl singer Julita, and she sang and played the maracas and shook her..hips and everything and ..that was a big hit.

Bernard Finestone:

The fact of the matter was when I came home and got out of the hospital, which was in October of 1947, and decided I wanted to resume life, one of the things I wanted to do – I was only 27 – was to get a date and go with a girl, go dancing, do something. So I pulled out my little black book. It's funny I have it in this drawer right here; I looked at it the other day. And I went through the book and to cut a long story short, every single one of my dates was married; I couldn't get a date. So I went to my kid sister - my kid sister! – and said "Could you introduce me to some of your girl friends?" She said "Why?" I said, "I'd like to have a date." She said, "I'm sorry. All my friends are married, except two who are divorced." So I started from scratch.

Rita Finestone:

So he scraped the bottom of the barrel and there he found me...and that's how it happened.

Bernard Finestone:

...You know, life had moved on. Among the things that were affected were that kids could contemplate getting married. And their parents would give them money to buy a home. It was a whole different game in 1946 from 1938. Everything was different.

Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat:

Everybody knew each other. It was before the suburban expansion. Everything was within reach. There was Shaar Shomayim close to downtown. So was Spanish and Portuguese on Stanley Street. So was Temple Emanuel. So was Bnei Jacob...The whole congregational development was in arm's length of each other. It was a very compact community.

Rachmiel Glaser:

Then we established ourselves here. Bought the first house on Fairmount near Clark. I saved more money - \$11,000 - to put for a down payment. I bought this house 46 years ago. We still live in the same house.

Avrum Feigenbaum:

When I worked in the Lodz Ghetto, next to my workbench was a Czechoslovakian Jew, a very nice intelligent guy. His name was Otto Czerny. And that Otto, his dream was to survive, live until after the war. And then, he said, he straightened himself out and said, "And then, to lay down somewhere on a beach...in Canada!" Canada was the dream.