

# EYE ON MONTREAL

NAMES IN THE NEWS IN OUR CITY

By MIKE COHEN

**LUFTHANSA'S MAN FROM ISRAEL:** Before sitting down with Tal Muscal and Esther Buchsbaum for breakfast recently at the Snowdon Deli, I must confess to not knowing a lot about The Lufthansa Group (<https://www.lufthansagroup.com>). Buchsbaum's agency, energi PR, was recently awarded the Canadian mandate for the Lufthansa Group and its Canadian portfolio of brands which includes Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines and Swiss Airlines. Muscal is Lufthansa's charismatic Israeli-born director of group communications for the Americas, with an interesting background

in journalism with the Jerusalem Post.

Muscal recently located from the Middle East where he held a similar position as director of communications responsible for the Middle East and Africa. Young, progressive, and very well respected within the industry he was in Montreal to be part of history as Austrian Airlines, officially introduced year-round flight service to and from Montreal - Vienna. The long-haul flights will operate with a Boeing 767 aircraft. Service will occur daily throughout the summer schedule and five times per week during the winter season.

Muscal was proud

to tell me how Lufthansa, Germany's national airline, continues to be the largest foreign carrier serving Israel with 14 weekly flights. The group itself accounts for over 70 weekly flights. They started flying to the Jewish State more than 40 years ago. "We've stayed in Israel during difficult times," he said. "A lot of foreign carriers had cut their frequencies to Israel. Lufthansa took a calculated risk that it needed to remain in the market and serve its customers."

Muscal was born in Israel, but raised in the United States. He found his way back to Israel when he decided to study at Hebrew University. From 2000 to

2005 he worked for the Jerusalem Post, where his beat was macroeconomics, aviation, infrastructure and tourism. It served as the natural jumpstart to the airline industry.

Muscal assumed his present role in April 2017 and settled with his wife and three children in Long Island, New York. "It was a great opportunity," he says. As for Montreal, he said "it is a very strong market for us. Montreal is a melting pot with people from all over the world."

**HECHT SHARES HIS STORY:** Seventy eight years ago Thomas O. Hecht arrived in Montreal with his family at the age of 12, with  
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# A VERY SPECIAL CAMP

HERMAN WOUK'S SPECIAL ZIONIST CAMP AND THE CANADIANS WHO COMPRISED IT

By **AMY NUSSBAUM**

My mother, Shirley Friedberg Neustein, became friends with Herman Wouk as a child and kept up her friendship with him until she died in 2001. They met as children at a very special Zionist camp in the 1920s and 30s situated on the picturesque Lake Champlain in Milton, Vermont. The boy's division was called "Keeyuma," and the girl's division was known as "Carmelia." The camp was comprised of hand-selected campers coming from very prominent Jewish homes both in the US and Canada.

Sam Bronfman would

send his children there, soon becoming an ardent supporter of this Zionist camp. He teamed up with Louis Lipsky and Meyer W. Weisgal, whose children likewise attended the camp. My mother shared a bunk with a very special girl, Miriam Wolofsky, the daughter of Montreal publisher Hirsch (Harry) Wolofsky. When I visited Montreal as a youth in the summer of 1976, I had the great pleasure of meeting with Miriam Wolofsky Cooperberg who gave me a tour of the city. I will never forget how she proudly

pointed to the bust of her father at the entrance to the Jewish museum, regaling me with stories of his amazing efforts to form the first Yiddish weekly in Montreal.

Every morning at 6am the campers awakened to "Oh, say can you see," and "O Canada," broadcast over the camp loud speakers. My mother never forgot those wake-up calls: she found it jarring to awaken to the chilly New England weather, and admired her Canadian bunkmates for being able to handle the cold. She would describe, perhaps with a tinge of envy,

the supple woolen blankets brought by the Canadians campers, claiming at the beginning of every camp session she would know right away who were the Canadians by simply looking at their beds.

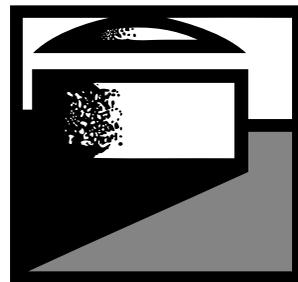
In May of 1962 my mother made a monumental camp reunion in midtown Manhattan bringing together the Zionist youths that had now become household names in literary, operatic, theatrical, political, business, and philanthropic circles: Arthur Miller, Moss Hart, George London, Joel

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## A VERY SPECIAL CAMP

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Carmichael, Michael Wager ("Mendy" Weisgal), Norman Lear, Paul Goodman, Bob Treuhaft, Andrew Goodman (founder of Bergdorf Goodman), Edgar Bronfman, just to name a few.

My mother would describe the reunion to me years later as an "alchemy in the air." Having all these special people in one room was "a force greater than life." She told me of Mendy Weisgal, who came to the reunion with a full face of makeup. He was performing in a Sunday matinee. He came across town to the reunion and dashed back to Broadway for a later performance that day.

George London, a Montreal native who migrated to California as an older child, made a point of coming to my mother's camp reunion as well. When he got up to say a few words, his fellow campers were quick to ask him to sing a few lines from one of his operas. By this time he was a celebrated bass-baritone operatic singer, having already made his debut at the New York Metropolitan Opera as Amonasro in Aida.

Herman Wouk, who at the time of the reunion was immersed in Youngblood Hawke, secluding himself in the Virgin Islands so as to devote full concentration to his novel, sent my mother a tape to be played in his absence. My mother brought a scissors with her, and out of respect for Herman's sensitivity she cut the cassette tape immediately after it was played.

The room stood still, as the former campers listened closely to Herman's reflections on his camp days: stories, commentaries, and humor about life among an oasis trees for a Jewish boy growing up in the Bronx.

I've never stopped hearing my mother's stories about her camp days. She would say "Amy, this was one camp that didn't stress athletics, they stressed lectures instead." Sam Bronfman helped to pay the travel expenses of speakers who would come every weekend to talk to the young campers, instilling in them the importance of forming a Jewish state. They were encouraged to keep their heads high during an era when Jewish identity was kept safely (or cravenly) in the closet. This common interest brought the children from different backgrounds, Canadians and Americans, together. And they kept up with each other throughout their adulthood as a result of the mooring of the camp. In remembering Herman Wouk and how he made every Jew feel comfortable in their skins (Inside, Outside, This is My God, The Will to Live On), the effect of this very special Zionist camp, fostered by Canadians and Americans, must not be forgotten either.

*Amy Neustein, Ph.D.  
Editor, Tempest in the Temple (Brandeis University Press) Author, From Madness to Mutiny (Northeastern University Press)*

## EYE ON MONTREAL

(Continued from page 5)

no money and without knowing a living soul or one word of English. He was enrolled as a student at the High School of Montreal on University Street and went

on to become a very successful businessman and community leader.

Mr. Hecht, about to turn 90 years young, returned to that same High

School of Montreal building recently to talk to Grade 6 and 7 students at FACE School about his experience as a child survivor of the Holocaust, his adjustment to life in their very same building and how he went on to achieve such success. His visit was very well received and covered quite extensively by Bill Brownstein in The Gazette.

Thomas Hecht was born in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, in 1929. His childhood came to an abrupt end when Germany occupied Czechoslovakia, as Jews were subject to increasing deprivations. The family escaped to Paris in December 1939, only to have the Germans reach there in June 1940. To avoid being caught, the Hecht family joined millions of refugees on France's roads, trying to stay one step ahead of the advancing Nazis. Tom's family reached Lisbon, Portugal, in January 1941.

In 1942, Tom, then 12, along with his sister and parents, arrived in Montreal. After graduating from the High School of Montreal, he pursued undergraduate and graduate studies at Concordia and McGill universities, all the while working to pay his way. He eventually became the president of Continental Pharma Canada, a pharmaceutical distribution company started by his father. Under his leadership, the company became the world's largest independent supplier of human blood plasma derivatives. Hecht has been a dedicated volunteer for many Jewish charitable organizations, serving as Chair of the Montreal Combined Jewish Appeal, President of the United Israel Appeal of Canada, and President of the State of Israel Bonds Canada.

In 1993, he founded the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University. He was also  
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president of the Canada-Israel Committee-Quebec Region for over 15 years and was heavily involved in the rapprochement of cultural communities in Quebec

and Israel. He is perfectly bilingual and the worthy recipient of a number of prestigious awards for his community work and support of Israel, and of two

honorary doctorates.

Mr. Hecht and his wife, Riva established the Riva and Thomas O. Hecht Scholarship Program Teaching of the Holocaust for Educators (t-h-e-pro-

gram.org) 14 years ago as a way to promote Holocaust education for educators in Quebec.

*Mike Cohen can be reached at [info@mikecohen.ca](mailto:info@mikecohen.ca).*

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**TRAVEL TALES***(Continued from page 5)*

Anshe Sholom Temple, another reform congregation and B'nai Shalom Congregation (Conservative) in Oakville. B'nai Shalom Congregation of Halton-Peel is a newly formed egalitarian Conservative shul serving Oakville, Burlington, Brampton and nearby Mississauga. The congregation currently consists of approximately 70 families and meets for monthly services in a local hall.

**WHERE TO STAY:**  
The Hilton Garden Inn ([www.torontoburlington.gardeninn.com](http://www.torontoburlington.gardeninn.com)) was indeed the deciding factor in our decision to base ourselves in Burlington, even though it meant a somewhat tiring 20 to 30 minute commute each day. Parking is free and the

hotel is located very close to a number of fun restaurants (Denny's, Milestones, Swiss Chalet, Harvey's, Kelseys and Montanas.) The hotel also has a good restaurant, the Garden Grille & Bar, which serves three meals a day and provides room service. There is a fitness center, pool and whirlpool as well. Each room has a mini-fridge, a microwave and a Keurig coffeemaker. A large Longo's supermarket is a few minutes away so we purchased a small order and had many of the essentials available. The rooms are spacious with nice comfortable sitting chairs, a fabulously comfortable working desk, plenty of light, a 37-inch

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**Guy Ouellette**

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