

## Asper family 21st century philanthropic visionaries

*This is the second in a continuing series about well-known Manitoba Jews.*

By MYRON LOVE

In this second instalment of great Winnipeg Jewish individuals/families, our focus is on the Asper Family. What I.H. (Izzy) and Babs Asper and their children – David, Gail and Leonard – have built has been nothing short of phenomenal. And it is even more remarkable in that Izzy Asper didn't co-found Canwest and move to the top until somewhat later in life – after practising as a tax lawyer and serving as Manitoba's provincial Liberal leader.



**ASPER FAMILY (l-r): IZZY, DAVID, GAIL, BABS, and LEONARD**

Look around Winnipeg and the Asper legacy is everywhere – the Asper Jewish Community Campus and Asper Jazz Series at the Campus, the I.H. Asper Clinical Research Institute at the St. Boniface Hospital, the Asper School of Business and Asper Chair of International Business and Trade Law at the University of Manitoba, the Asper Centre for Theatre and Film and the Babs Asper Lilac Garden at the University of Winnipeg, the Lyric Theatre at Assiniboine Park and the piece de resistance – the world-first Canadian Museum for Human Rights at the Forks.

The family's new project is equally ambitious, if not more so. It is a proposed new Jewish Museum that the Asper Family is hoping to build at the north end of Hayarkon Park in Tel Aviv.

"This museum is something that my family and I have been considering for more than 15 years," said Gail Asper in an earlier interview. "I had discussed it with both my father (Israel Asper) and my mother (Babs Asper) before they died."

The aim of the museum, Asper says, would be to focus on the positive contributions of the Jewish people to all fields of endeavor and the overall enrichment of Western civilization over the past 4,500 years. It would also try to highlight the role that Jewish values and learning have played in fostering excellence in a variety of fields including philosophy, medicine, scientific research, the arts and culture, entrepreneurship and philanthropy.

The Asper name should be included among the top ranks of philanthropy in the new museum. I know, from personal experience though, that despite their prominence, all of the family members have remained approachable, modest and down to earth.

May the Asper family continue to enrich our community and the world with their vision and generosity for years to come.