

Israel Asper

high asperations

by Aliza Davidovit

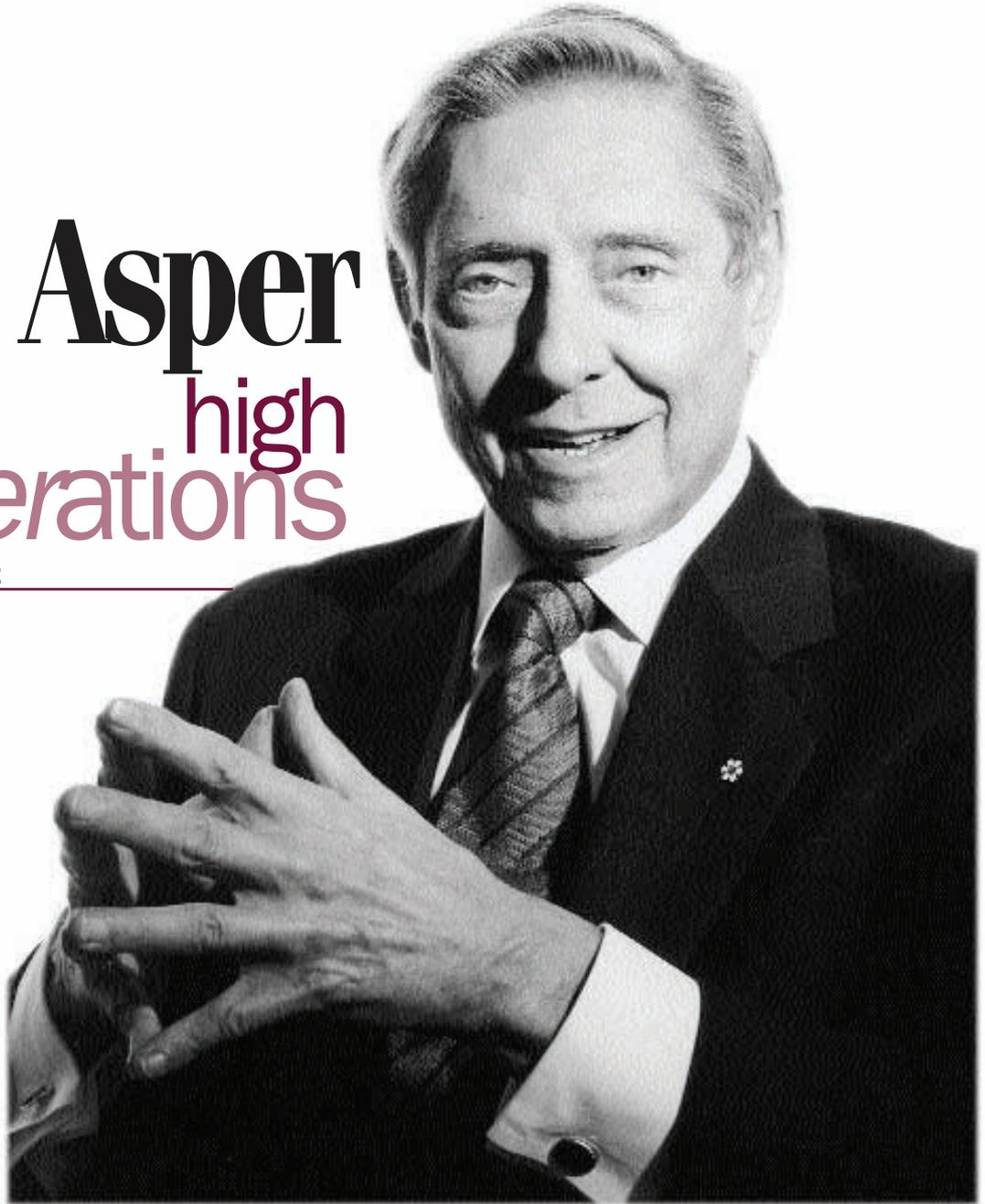


Photo by Gideon Lewin

The last thing Leon Asper wanted his youngest son Israel to become was a lawyer. Leon and his wife Cecilia were both classical musicians who had fled to Manitoba, Canada in the 1920s to escape the pogroms of their native Ukraine. They had witnessed during the Great Depression how people used to pay their lawyers with bags of potatoes. Law was not an income-earning profession for a Jewish boy. (How many latkes can a lawyer eat?) But young Israel, nicknamed “Izzy,” was determined nonetheless to become an advocate. Frustrated with his son’s persistence, Leon said one day, “Let me show you how you are going to end up.” He took his son down the street to where a man with a long, white beard was selling newspapers. “That’s what you’re going to end up doing,” he said, “selling newspapers.”

It turns out that Leon Asper was not only a great musician, he was also a prophet. Today, his son Israel does sell newspapers—millions of them a year. He also owns numerous television networks, is executive Chairman of CanWest Global Communications Corporation, a company he started, and is worth more than a billion dollars.

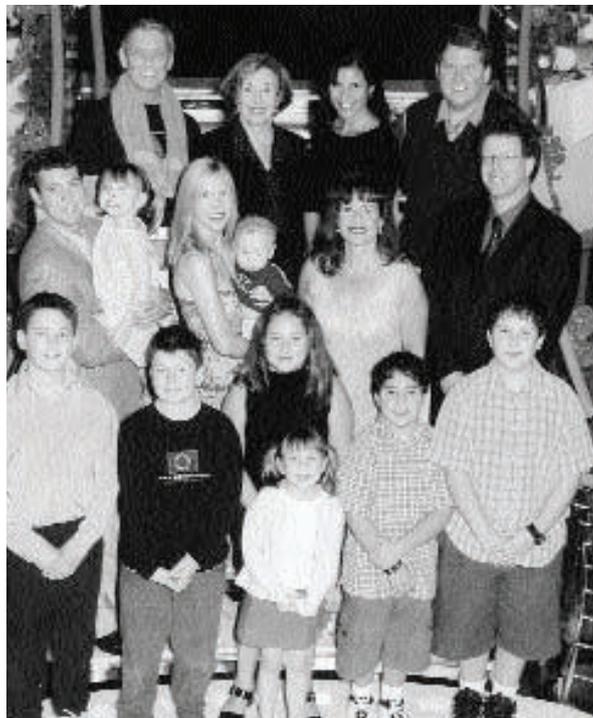
Asper's parents also proved to be prophetic in naming their son Israel—a name of which he is very proud, a name he always kept, and a name that could have easily soured the antisemitic stomachs of the corporate Canadians and politicians he contended with throughout the years. Even Asper's friend, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, praised the media mogul for keeping and using his Jewish name; for, in Judaism, it is believed that a person's Hebrew name is a reflection and a semi-prophecy of the soul that kicks inside.

It is thus with both the burden and the blessing of his biblical namesake that Israel Asper has lived out his own life. In the Torah, the patriarch Jacob was renamed "Israel" by God Himself, because he had continuously prevailed in his life-struggles with dignity and proved himself to be a prince among men. Much like the biblical forefather, Asper is also a prince among men. He, too, has triumphed, with dignity, in the face of his endless struggles, and put up a gracious and tenacious fight every step of the way. "Everything is doable," Asper says. "If you are tenacious enough, you can do whatever you set out to do, because all you need is more determination than the guys who are trying to stop you."

Evidently, Asper had the requisite moxie and determination. His company, CanWest Global Communications Corporation, owns seven networks and dozens of TV stations. His Global Television Network alone broadcasts over-the-air via 11 television stations and is licensed in eight provinces, reaching 94% of English-speaking Canada. Global broadcasts ratings hits such as the reality series *Survivor*, *Friends*, *The Simpsons* and *Will & Grace*. CanWest owns other networks in New Zealand, Ireland and Australia. The company also owns 11 major English daily newspapers in Canada such as *The National Post*, *Montreal Gazette* and *Ottawa Citizen*, to

name a few, in addition to over 60 smaller publications. It also has interests in film production, the Internet and radio.

However, Asper's road to success was not quite as easy as following the "yellow brick road." With hurdles continually popping up before him like in an action-packed video game, it is no wonder that he has come to define success as he does: "Success should never be measured by what you've accomplished, as much as it should be measured by what you've overcome to accomplish it."



Photos courtesy of the Asper family

The Asper family during a recent vacation. Back row: Israel, Babs, Ruth and David.
Middle row: Leonard, Olivia, Susan, Matthew, Gail and Michael Paterson.
Front row: Stephen Paterson, Jonathan Paterson, Rebecca, Sarah, Maxwell and Daniel Asper.

But Asper does admit that he himself is part of the problem. He goes looking for "fights." With a twinkle in his knowing, intoxicating blue eyes—eyes that can make ladies swoon, business opponents cringe, and bankers hand over billions—he says that if someone claims something can't be done, they have his attention right away. "I find challenges irresistible," Asper says, bemoaning what he calls a character curse. "If people say

it can't be done, I will go through great pains to do it."

Israel Harold Asper, the youngest of three siblings, was born and raised in Minnedosa, Canada in 1932. Without "bleating" around the bush, he admits that he was the black sheep of his family, explaining that he earned that status because of his willfulness, his nonconformity and his sense of humor. Asper relates how as a young boy he used to like joking around and always found the funny aspect of things. He still feels humor is very important and to this day "jokes around" in business as a matter of survival.

"I came from an immigrant background where my parents had a hard time making a living and were always worried about money," he reflects. "I always felt that there were two choices: either to laugh or to cry, and I decided it's much better to laugh." His parents, however, were not amused.

"My father couldn't relate to me and take me seriously because he didn't have a sense of humor," Asper says.

But the wise-hearted son does not blame his parents; to the contrary, he very much understood them. "You had to have a look at where they came from," Asper explains. "My mother snuck out of Russia at the age of 16 past the rifle fire of border guards. They went through discrimination and pogroms, the abject poverty of the Great Depression, and the agony and uncertainty of WWII—the waiting for ominous letters from the

Red Cross saying your sister died in Odessa. They were the product of all that."

Perhaps because it was the antithesis of their chaotic lives, Asper's parents revered classical music, which is characteristically predictable, measured and controlled. But Izzy Asper's nature would not permit him to be a byproduct of any circumstance. He was always a man of his own making. Even now at age 70, he is a man still in-the-making.

As a result of his independent

“I’m very self-critical. Everyone knows there is no point in giving me hell for my mistakes, because I torture myself more than anyone else can.”

thinking, one of the main things he used to challenge (and tease) his parents about was their reverence for classical music. His father was a violinist trained at the Odessa Conservatory, and his mother had been a concert pianist. Both felt that after Beethoven died nothing musically important had ever happened again. So Asper really rocked their foundation when he abandoned playing classical piano and opted for jazz instead, a form of music that actually reflects Asper’s own character: inspiring, improvisational, creative, enlivening, unpredictable, but nonetheless, structured. (In future years, many of his important business discussions would take place late at night at jazz lounges.)

But when Asper was growing up, his father always dismissed jazz, associating it with the flappers of the 1920s and the “greasy swing” music of the ’30s. It is deliciously entertaining to wonder what Leon and Cecilia Asper would think today about their grandson playing Gun’s ‘N Roses music on the piano and their great-grandchild playing Alice Cooper pieces on the electric guitar.

Forever determined to prove to his father that jazz was indeed an intellectual form, Israel played a trick on him, much like Israel the patriarch played on his father Isaac: Both put before their fathers the semblance of something that was not what it appeared to be. Asper told his father that a box of Mozart’s unpublished works had been discovered and urged his father to listen to the record. What he really played for him was a Chico Hamilton fugue of the Rogers and Hart pop song “Funny Valentine,” a very progressive jazz piece cloaked in classical style. His father loved what he heard.

“He finally realized at the end of his life that jazz was an intellectual form,”

Asper says with a bright smile. “When he realized that, then we became friends.”

If Asper’s predilections often parted paths with his parents’ preferences, there are several essential values which he did not leave home without. He has never ceased to be a profound lover and supporter of the



Sept./02 (l-r) Israel Asper, Gail Asper, and Benjamin Netanyahu in Winnipeg, Canada.

Jewish people, a stalwart Zionist, an acute appreciator of democracy and a prodigy of a home that demanded excellence.

It is because Asper is such a perfectionist that a bar mitzvah gift he received from his brother—a record of Oscar Levant playing George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*—made him decide that he did not want to become a musician, a career he had once considered. Gershwin had not only turned him on to jazz, but also made him realize that he could never be that good. And if he couldn’t be that good, he didn’t want to do it at all.

“I’m very self-critical,” Asper confesses to *Lifestyles*. “Everyone knows there is no point in giving me hell for my mistakes, because I torture myself more than anyone else can.”

Asper sincerely laments the fact that Gershwin died at the young age of 38. “My

life got turned around musically when I first heard him,” Asper says, and points out how Gershwin’s jazz idioms were actually adapted from the synagogue’s liturgical chants. “If I could be reborn,” Asper says, “I would want to come back as George Gershwin.”

But if Asper had been born as George Gershwin, he would have been profoundly peeved when he broke his two fingers while sneaking into a Winnipeg nightclub through a back window. As a writer for his high school newspaper, the ambitious young man wanted to get an interview with Frankie Laine, who was performing at the club that night. After Asper and his friend, the paper’s photographer, were laughed at and then shooed away from the front entrance by the owner, they found the alternative means of entry. Once inside, they spotted their talented target, and the teenage reporter actually interviewed Frankie Laine—with two broken fingers. So if anyone ever hears Asper singing Laine’s hit, “That’s My Desire,” they’d do best not to stand in his way.

Asper’s parents, however, were singing an entirely different tune when the time came for Asper to head off to law school. To his defense, an aptitude test he had taken in the eighth grade rated law as the number one profession for him, with journalism coming in second and farming third. Instead, his father wanted Izzy to work in the family business.

After music had stopped putting food on the table, Leon Asper had bought a few motion picture theaters: the Lyric in Minnedosa, the Roxy in Neepawa—where the family had moved in 1941—and then three other theaters. Every Sunday, the theaters offered free classical music concerts.

His father desperately wanted his

Photos courtesy of the Asper family

“I have a short attention span. After practicing law for so many years, I ran out of challenges.”

three children to be a part of it. Luckily, this time Izzy was not the only child who opted out. Neither his older sister nor his brother were enticed. However, what compounded his parents' case against Izzy was his “iniquitous” choice of professions. “My brother and sister were also smarter than me,” Asper says. “They didn’t tempt fate by clowning around all the time.”

Israel Asper studied law at the University of Manitoba. He became a member of the Western Canada Debating Team and editor of the school newspaper, *The Manitoban*.

It was during those “halcyon” days of McCarthyism that Asper wrote a column that almost got him expelled from school. His column had simply proposed creating an exchange program with students from Communist countries. Asper was summarily warned by the school president that if he continued to write articles “sympathetic” to communism, he was out. As a result, Asper changed themes and wrote “Words on Music,” a column about jazz that ultimately earned him interviews with Duke Ellington, George Shearing, Dave Brubeck—and no broken fingers.

It was at U. of M. that Asper forged his long-lasting partnership of 46 years with wife Babs, with whom he has three children, David, Gail and Leonard. The couple had met, for the second time in their lives, at the Hillel student organization on campus. (They had met briefly once before at a mutual friend’s party.) “I was short, and she was the only person of the opposite sex who was shorter,” Asper jokes. He continues to jest by saying that what solidified their rela-

tionship was that Babs was the only girl he knew who had a long-playing record player, as well as a record of Dave Brubeck, one of the best-known jazz pianists of all time. Asper says that they actually rushed into marriage so that they could go away together to see a Brubeck concert in San



Seated (l-r) Leonard and Ruth (Babs) Asper. Standing (l-r): Gail, Israel and David Asper.

Francisco. On a more sedate note, Asper says that Babs was the only woman who shared the same interests as him.

Babs and Izzy married in 1956. The young bride was the one earning the living while Asper was still earning his degree. But just two years after being called to the Bar in 1957, the young tax attorney opened his own practice and eventually joined forces with his life-long friend Harold Buchwald, creating the firm Pitblado, Buchwald & Asper.

Even while practicing law, Asper never abandoned his love for journalism. He wrote a weekly, nationally syndicated column from 1966 to 1977 dealing primarily with tax issues. But, even so, he went to Israel in 1967 to write about the Six Day War. In 1970, he wrote a book about tax policy while he was supposed to be home recuperating from mononucleosis. He was

appointed Queen’s Council in 1975, the year such appointments were re-instituted with much higher standards in Winnipeg. And contrary to his parents’ long-held fears, he was indeed able to put food on his family’s table, lots of it.

But after being in the legal profession for 18 years, Asper grew bored and decided to hang up his barrister robe for good. “I have a short attention span,” Asper says. “After practicing law for so many years, I ran out of challenges.”

Asper, however, didn’t wait for his interest in law to expire before he picked up new challenges along the way. In 1970, he became leader of the provincial Liberal Party in the Manitoba Legislature, a position that only earned him \$14,000 per year and caused him to tap into his personal savings. “I was in public life for five years,” Asper says, “and I hated every hour of it.” Asper’s daughter Gail says that her father’s public service was a thankless task, and she was always impressed that he did it because he felt it was the right thing to do. “It certainly showed me that he didn’t do it for glory.”

His political engagements also showed his daughter and the entire family a side of Canada they would have preferred not to see—the antisemitic side. “He was definitely being criticized and insulted for being Jewish,” Gail says. She relates how her father used to receive hundreds of antisemitic letters at his office. The name-calling even extended to his family and became so cruel that one of Asper’s sons had to drop out of high school until things lightened up. It was a painful experience for a family which, in light of its history, was raised to have a profound appreciation for Canada’s

Photos courtesy of the Asper family

democratic institutions, and whose grandparents were dedicated Canadian patriots who had conducted and played with the Canadian Legion Symphony Orchestra during WWII and traveled throughout the country to entertain soldiers at army air force camps.

By 1975, Asper's political life had run its course and his personal savings had run out. He was 44-years-old, with little money, when he took up his third professional challenge: founding and building a business. The only glitch was he had no idea what kind of business. But that didn't matter. He and a former law associate, Gerry Schwartz, teamed up and sought to raise \$20 million to get started.

They made a credible couple: Asper was a pre-eminent tax attorney, and Schwartz, who had been a vice president at Bear, Stearns and Co., was a specialist in mergers and acquisitions. They named their company CanWest Capital Corporation which eventually was renamed CanWest Global Communications Corp. They defined themselves as a team of specialists who seek out opportunities to invest in business and industries that are fundamental to economic life, and where new leaders could arise and develop to their highest potential.

With the above mandate, they set out in the cold Canadian winter of 1977 to entice both private sector investors and financial institutions to invest with them. "We were doing four or five road shows per day and getting bored listening to each other's pitch," Asper wrote in *From Winnipeg to the World*, the company's 25-year retrospective. "The pace was exhausting." On one occasion, while Schwartz was schmoozing a CEO, Asper fell asleep and Schwartz had to kick him under the table to wake him up. "Needless to say," Asper tells, "that company did not sign up."

What they had set out to do was a tough sell, explains a former company associate who is quoted in the book. "A lot of the investors asked why they should invest in a blind pool of capital run by a tax lawyer with limited business experience."

But Asper's lack of experience was

more than compensated for by his focus, tenacity and relentlessness. He calls his tri-partite formula for success "seeing zed"—keeping your eye on the end point—but an infinite one, a mutable one that beckons a person to achieve even more than they had set out to. "That [philosophy] has served me well," Asper says. "But you pay a personal price. There is a lot of pain that goes with it. It hurts to lose, and every time you fail you have to dust yourself off and start again."

But after all the dust had settled from Asper's tumultuous trials, he found himself with the \$20 million he had set out to obtain. It really was a superlative sales job, seeing that the investors would receive no shareholder distributions for 10 years, as all profits were to be placed back into the company, and the investors had to butt out for ten years and leave Asper and Schwartz to do their own thing.

The two entrepreneurs focused on private investment banking, financial services and communications. The CanWest Global Communications Corporation empire began with the purchase of CKND-TV, a station in Pembina, North Dakota, that broadcast into Manitoba. The station was relocated to Winnipeg and set up in a vacated Safeway supermarket. The smell of meat and other food odors pervaded the studio for many years.

In 1977, CanWest acquired a 40% share of Global Television; in 1982 it acquired 20% more, and by 1989, it owned the whole company. But the success was marked by difficult years. In 1983 Asper underwent triple-bypass surgery, and in 1984, he and Schwartz split up because of differences in their business strategies. Asper manned the helm himself and forged forward continuously acquiring media outlets and expanding CanWest. In 1991, Asper took his company public, offering shares on the TSE (Toronto Stock Exchange) and in 1996 CanWest listed on the NYSE with its symbol as CWG.

CanWest now employs over 11,000 people and still remains true to its founding principal of creating leaders and developing them to their true potential. Ironically,

although Asper thought he was done with law when he went into business, he spent the next 20 years in court constantly fighting regulators, the government and competitors over TV licenses and stations.

It was worth the fight. "Today, CanWest Global is a leading international diversified media empire spanning three continents with interests in television, film production, radio, the Internet and newspapers," writes Allan Levine, author of the company retrospective. "Its \$800 million purchase of Western International Communications—completed in July 2000 after several years of intense negotiations—finally gave Asper the Canadian television network he had been striving to create for more than 20 years."

(Asper told *Lifestyles* that when he set out to pursue his dream, everyone laughed at him. "People said there is no way we could ever do it," he recalls.)

CanWest also eventually took over *Southam* and the *National Post*, a deal which cost him \$3.2 billion and made him Canada's largest newspaper publisher. But, when Asper used his position as publisher to write an op-ed piece outlining the benefits of having a Liberal majority government, he came under attack by the Conservative party and many others. His son, David, was also attacked for writing an op-ed piece which defended Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien from detractors. "It seems there's freedom of speech for everyone but the owner of a newspaper," Asper says.

Asper's professed "short attention span" has turned its attention elsewhere in recent years. "Business is interesting," Asper says, "but I didn't think I'd stick with it for 25 years." The company's 25-year retrospective, which opens with Asper's picture, symbolically closes with his son Leonard's picture, who replaced his father as CEO in 1997. Leonard will, metaphorically, write the preface for the next quarter century of CanWest adventures. Asper has stepped aside to become executive chairman and will soon further remove himself to become non-executive chairman of the board.

The “retiring” businessman has achieved more in his three careers than most people can in nine lives. There are dozens of awards listed on his resume, one more prestigious than the next. He received the B’nai Brith International Award of Merit in 1993 and was inducted into the Order of Canada and the Canadian Broadcast Hall of Fame in 1995. He was also chosen as Western Canadian Entrepreneur of the Year in 1996, just to name a few.

Nonetheless, Asper still will not say that he is a success. He does say there is one thing he feels he succeeded in doing while pursuing his goals and that is maintaining his value system and his ethical principals. Of that, he is proud. But as for success, “It is a highly personal thing,” Asper explains. “You look at somebody and can think they are successful in your terms, but they may not necessarily be successful in their terms.”

According to Asper’s theory, there is no traffic sign on the road to success which reads: “You’ve Reached Success: Dead End Ahead.” Each person has his own exit ramp. Metaphorically speaking, a person may have climbed many mountains, “but in their own eyes they are not a success,” according to Asper, “for they may have set out to climb Mount Everest.”

When the eloquent Asper speaks thusly, it is apparent that he is referring to himself. “I failed to recognize early enough the possibility of mortality,” Asper admits to *Lifestyles*. “Now, as I reach the autumn of whatever sphere of time I’m in, and have a huge agenda that I didn’t get to, I have a sense of failure, self criticism and embarrassment.”

Interestingly, Asper hardly spoke to *Lifestyles* about his successes of the past 50 years. Rather, he chose to speak at length, with great enthusiasm, about all the things that he intends to achieve and has achieved since leaving business, things that are most dear to his heart and soul: the Jewish people, philanthropy and the State of Israel.

The philanthropist first founded the Asper Foundation in 1983 but did not dedicate himself to it as much as he would have

liked. His priorities have changed a lot in the past seven years. “Other than my family, the Asper Foundation gives me the greatest pleasure in life,” he says. “When you take a look at what’s real in life, and you take away the games and challenges, you see what’s really important.”

Asper has donated millions of dollars throughout the years to both Jewish and non-Jewish causes alike. He donated \$10 million to his alma mater, the University of Manitoba, and the Foundation gave a \$20 million gift to be shared equally between the Winnipeg Foundation and The Jewish Foundation of Winnipeg. He built a Jewish community center which is named for his late parents, and a popular stadium named after his father’s first theater, the Lyric. Every Sunday the Lyric has free concerts and plays, just as his father’s theaters used to have. “I take great pride in seeing all the people sitting on the grass and listening to classical music, jazz and Shakespeare,” Asper says.

But for Asper, philanthropy is not just about giving. “Anybody can give money or time or whatever resource they have,” Asper explains. “What counts for me is making a difference, causing things to happen that would have not happened if you didn’t come this way. That is pleasurable.”

There are several other things that Asper is trying very hard to make happen. One of those very important missions is to educate young Jews about their Jewish roots and heritage and give them the informational tools to fight back against anti-semitism and Arab/Palestinian propaganda.

“Jewish kids, even the ones that go through an alleged Jewish education—and this is shocking and revolting—cannot make the case for the State of Israel,” Asper says, visibly perturbed and disappointed about the degree of ignorance of the historical facts prevalent among Jewish youth. “They can’t make the case for Jewish pride. It’s staggering.”

He has taken Jewish organizations to task and warned them that he would begin his own organization if they did not create comprehensive programming to deal with this issue.

As far as his own grandchildren are

concerned, Asper grills them regularly and keeps them on their toes.

Asper says that the Jewish communities in Canada and in the Diaspora have been stricken with amnesia, or some rare form of sleeping sickness.

“Everyone just thought the world was fine,” he says. “Vigilance was no longer urgent. People assumed that antisemitism was something our parents had to worry about, but not them.” Then, Asper explains, an alarm woke everyone up recently when Jewish kids were being beat up on campus. One case was so bad, Asper reveals, that the kid refused to wear a *chai* or a Star of David or a *kippah* so he wouldn’t be identified as a Jew.

As for the Arab student body, he points out that they are extremely well-organized and financed. “I learned the Arab culture and method of debate while exploring the ’67 War,” Asper tells. “They just lie and keep repeating a lie. Then, when you explode the myth in their face, they are not embarrassed. They just bounce out of that lie and go on to the next one.”

In his campaign to separate fact from fiction, Asper has brought in numerous specialists to speak to students about the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Included among those speakers was Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose intelligence and eloquence can certainly win over hearts and minds; journalist Joseph Farah, editor and chief executive officer of WorldNetDaily.com, an Arab-American who strongly supports the Jewish Sate and exposes Palestinian falsehoods; Daniel Pipes (DanielPipes.org), director of the Middle East Forum and a prize-winning columnist and author whose exposés clearly delineate the Islamic agenda, and Sheikh Abduhl Hadi Palazzi, Secretary General of the Italian Muslim Association, who says that in historical reality there never was such a thing as a Palestinian and that the Koran actually validates the Jewish homeland.

Asper’s Foundation, in which his three children heavily participate, has also created and sponsored the Holocaust & Human Rights Studies Program. The program includes a series of ten training sessions on various aspects of the Holocaust; a

commitment by the participants to undertake 16 hours of community service, and a four-day visit to Washington, DC, where students visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. On the most recent trip to DC, students met with Congressman Tom Lantos, the only Holocaust survivor ever elected to Congress.

The latest project which has spurred on Asper, is his desire to create a Jewish television cable network. He has already begun an executive search, and is actively meeting with significant people and researching possibilities. Of course, he has met with the same answer he's heard for most of his lifetime: "If it's such a great idea, how come no one else has done it?" Or, "It simply can't be done!"—compelling words for the man who loves to prove otherwise. Asper has already figured out the programming time slots and some of the programming itself, such as the *Aliza Davidovitch Show*. Look out E! and MTV, because here comes J-TV—Jewish television.

But until the time that a Jewish network will be up and running to edify the masses, Asper is also fighting Israel's battle with a war of words. The following are excerpts from a recent speech he gave at the Israel Bonds Gala in Montreal.

"I make the charge that much of the world media, who are covering the Arab Israeli conflict, have abandoned the fundamental precepts of honest reporting. They have been taken captive by their own biases, or victimized by their own ignorance. They have adopted Palestinian propaganda as the context for their stories. They have become partisans in and not providers of knowledge about this war against Israel. Thus dishonest reporting has made truth a casualty of the war, causing grievous damage to both Israel and the integrity of the journalistic profession, injuring all of us who practice it."

Asper also took issue, in that speech, with the terminology used by the media. Although some institutions will characterize Palestinian acts of murder against Israelis as terror, other's will term the perpetrators as "militants," "resistance fighters," "gunmen," and "extremists"—not terrorists. He also takes issue with the terms

"cycle of violence," "moderate Arab states," "peace process," "occupied territories," and "illegal settlements," terms which he regards "as tools and weapons used by the journalistic propagandists in their desire to create undeserved sympathy for the Palestinians and opprobrium for Israel."

Asper goes on to say: "The war itself proves there is no peace process, there are no moderate Arab states, the term 'cycle of violence' is an insult to the truth, and under the Oslo agreements there is no prohibition against Israel establishing new settlements in the territory which it captured from Jordan, not from the Palestinians."

Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tells *Lifestyles* that Israel Asper is a dedicated Zionist who is fearless in his defense of the truth. "In his battle against the many falsifications and slanders hurled at the Jewish State and the Jewish people, Izzy puts forward the facts bravely challenging hypocrisy and political correctness." Netanyahu continues, "This is the mark of a strong character and an independent mind, both of which Izzy Asper possesses in abundance."

(Asper proves Netanyahu correct as he continues to lambaste the media in a lawyer-like manner presenting fact after damning fact. It is worth going to the website, www.israelbonds.ca, to read his 5000-word well-deserved chastisement of the media.)

But Asper does not put all the responsibility on the press. He urges his audience to take a stand and do something. He reminds them that all it takes for evil to triumph is for a few good men to stay silent: "You, the public, must be more vigilant and aggressive against media wrong-doers, by your e-mails, your letters to the editor, your phone calls, your cancellation of subscriptions, your refusal to patronize advertisers of offending media, your withholding of your own advertising from media which are guilty of dishonest reporting," he says, cautioning all about the price of apathy. "I appeal to you, do not repeat the errors of your parents and grandparents who passively and complacently witnessed government indifference to the rise of genocide in Europe during the 1930s. It is time to vig-

orously and vigilantly become activists."

Asper is truly afraid for the future of Israel, the land that safeguards his people and shares his name.

"The biggest problem facing Israel is that too many people in the Diaspora who are in a position to do something, do nothing," he says. "People don't fully appreciate what the issue is in the Middle East conflict. It is a determined, intellectual decision of the Arabs to wipe out the Jewish presence in the Holy Land. It began with the Balfour declaration in 1917 and has never changed. Their technique has changed, their style has changed, but their objective has not changed."

Asper also feels that if American strategic interests change, nobody will have a stake in keeping Israel alive. He feels that one of the surest safeguards is for Israel to continue to maintain military superiority. He says that another possibility would be a revolutionary reprogramming of the Arab mind, a process which would take three generations to achieve if it started tomorrow.

As far as Israel Asper's tomorrows are concerned, one lifetime is hardly enough for him. Even at the age of 70, he still refuses to write an autobiography because he says his story is still in the telling. The second reason he won't write one is because he can't think of a title. His children, however, have each suggested one: "His Way," "Take Away His E-mails," and "He Mattered!"

We dared not ask his wife, because after 46 years of marriage, she might want to throw the book at him, not title it. As for Asper himself, he says he knows he won't live forever, and can kick himself for staying in business for as long as he did instead of pursuing all the causes he is currently working on.

"The only thing that gives me comfort is that the product of staying in business too long is the money which can be used to achieve the things I didn't get around to doing," Asper says. "I'm just sorry I won't be around to see it. But my legacy will be the Asper Foundation and of that I am very proud." lifestyles