

In Herzl's Footsteps

INSIDE TORONTO LAWYER DAVID MATLOW'S QUEST



David Matlow and his wife Leanne.
Left: David Matlow with a piece from his collection.

BY DANIEL HOROWITZ

With the proliferation of so-called "reality" shows filling our television screens from morning to night, seven days a week, it's a shock that producers have yet to knock on the door of Toronto's David Matlow about the possibility of "The House of Herzl".

Matlow, a lawyer at Goodmans LLP, a documentary producer, and a man who will chair United Jewish Appeal of Greater Toronto's Campaign 2015 along with Andrea Cohen, has long held a passionate connection to, and love for all things "Herzlian".

Married to Leanne, Matlow is the proud 52-year-old father of Naomi, Orli and Yael, and also happens to

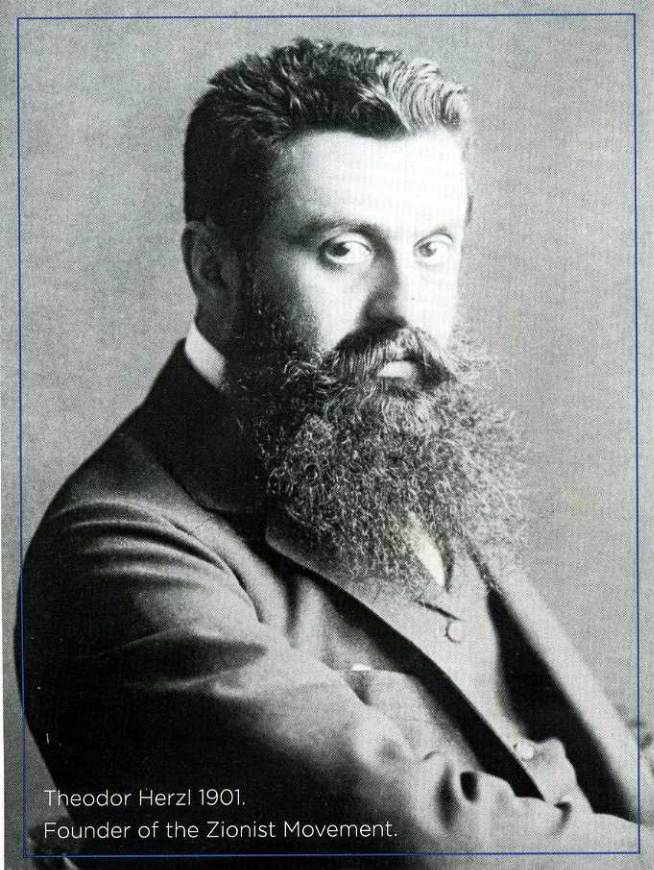
possess the globe's largest personal collection of Herzl memorabilia. And, not one to stand on his laurels, he's taken the next logical step in spreading the word about his hero by having recently produced a documentary about the founder of modern political Zionism, dubbed, not surprisingly, "My Herzl".

The film, a Canada-Israel co-production produced by Matlow, along with his Israeli brother in law, Eli Tal-El, was screened in Toronto a number of times in early

October, followed by its U.S. premiere at the Chicago Festival of Israeli Cinema where it received rave reviews.

Matlow's Herzl collection, consisting of over 2,500 pieces from postcards and autographs to household items and ▶





Theodor Herzl 1901.
Founder of the Zionist Movement.

people. His family life and fortune, and his health, suffered for our benefit. As the movie shows, Herzl was human just like us, which means we all have the potential to change the world for the better. Herzl causes me to ask myself every day, "am I doing all that I can for the things I believe in?"

So, just how does a Toronto lawyer end up devoting so much of his time to a man who died in 1904?

It seems Matlow's grandparents,

Archie and Goldie

Matlow, unwittingly lit the spark.

The couple moved to Ramat Gan in 1955, and a portrait of Herzl that hung in a special place of honour in their home got David's attention during a visit. The portrait was given to David in 1991 after his grandmother's passing, and the floodgates were opened.

"Herzl's objective was to improve the condition of the Jewish people, to make them safe because he was worried that the future of Jewish life in Europe was bleak," says Matlow. "Tragically, he was more right than even he could have imagined. My involvement with UJA and my fascination with Herzl are entirely consistent. UJA's goal is to improve the condition of the Jewish people. And it does so not by talking about doing things, but by doing them. A social safety net for our fellow Jews in

need doesn't just happen; somebody created it. That somebody is UJA."

My Herzl, set in many of the same iconic venues that Herzl made famous, is based on a trip made by Matlow and 27 other members of his family and close friends to Basel, Switzerland to celebrate Matlow's fiftieth birthday.

And talk about gaining a true sense of the Herzl experience, the group even slept at the Three Kings Hotel, where the man himself, pulled up the covers at night while at the first Zionist Congress in 1897. The hotel has a Herzl room, which is adjacent to the balcony where the iconic photograph of Herzl overlooking the Rhine was taken.

"As a partner at the Goodmans law firm in Toronto, we are encouraged to take on leadership roles in our

"Herzl's objective was to improve the condition of the Jewish people"

community," says Matlow. "It is possible to apply your skills, energies and talents both to the practice of law and to helping those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Not only is it possible, it is our responsibility. Come to think of it, Herzl was a lawyer too. So it all just fits together." ■

pen knives, is clearly a labour of love for its owner, who hopes the priceless pieces he has amassed will teach North American Jews – young and old alike, about the Jewish state and its history.

While his collection has been exhibited in synagogues and other Jewish institutions in Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa, the documentary – an extension of that collection – brings the vital story of Herzl to a worldwide audience.

With popcorn, no less.

"I think it is critical to talk about Herzl and to learn from his life," says Matlow. "Herzl was a doer. He didn't just talk about how great it would be for there to be a Jewish state. He actually did something about it. As our documentary shows, Herzl sacrificed everything for what he believed in, which is a better future for the Jewish