

# **AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.**

Member of the JCA Family of Communal Organisations



## **NEWSLETTER**

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### **1. A LITTLE LATE.**

My apologies and those of the Australian Jewish Historical Society for this issue of the Newsletter being a little later than usual, but it is not because we have been inactive, or asleep on the job, but for other very legitimate reasons.

Firstly, to acquaint you with the Committee of the Australian Jewish Historical Society Inc for the calendar year 2005:

**PRESIDENT: SOPHIE CAPLAN O.A.M.**

**VICE PRESIDENTS: JUDITH SHAPIRA, DR. HARRIS LEWIS A.M.**

**SECRETARY: JEANNETTE TSOULOS**

**TREASURER: RUSSELL STERN**

**COMMITTEE: JOE BEN MAYOR**

**HELEN BERSTEN (Hon. Archivist)**

**JULIUS MAYER**

**PHILIP MOSES**

**HELEN RASKO O.A.M**

**SUZANNE RUTLAND (Journal Editor)**

**SARAH VORCHHEIMER**

## 2. OUR NEW PRESIDENT.

Members will notice that, after many years of leading the AJHS and editing the Sydney Journal, Assoc. Prof. Suzanne Rutland has stepped down as President although she will still continue to edit the Journal. Overseas commitments mean that she will not be in Australia for much of the second half of this year, so we are very fortunate to have the services of Mrs Sophie Caplan as our new President. Sophie has been Vice-President of the Society since 1997, so she has served her apprenticeship well.

Apart from her work for this Society, Sophie was the founder and first President of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society, our “sister” group, and working for them she achieved an enviable international reputation for know-how and research ability, as well as laying the foundation for their considerable resources for research and founding their Journal, *The Kosher Koala*. She retired from the presidency only three years ago, after ten and a half years.

Sophie has been a tireless worker for the Sydney Jewish community in her own right, and also as support for her husband Leslie Caplan, a former President of the N.S.W. Jewish Board of Deputies, and President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. Now she is his greatest supporter and nurse in his present illness. (Readers might like to look up the Profile of Sophie which appeared in the *Newsletter* No.60, of May 2003).

Thank-you, Sophie, for accepting this position for our Society and may you find great fulfillment in the task, as you bring your considerable abilities to the service of the Society.

## 3. OUR FIRST ‘KUMSITZ’. (Yes, I found another name for a general meeting of an informal kind!)

A gratifyingly large number of members and their friends gathered in Mandelbaum House on Sunday afternoon, 27<sup>th</sup> February, to congratulate our former President Rabbi Raymond Apple on his retirement from the Great Synagogue, and to wish him and his wife well. It was a very pleasant afternoon, when two Executive members (Sarah Vorchheimer and Helen Rasko) presented musical items of quite different types. Sarah was accompanied on the piano by our Secretary, Jeannette Tsoulos, who was to have performed a classical sonata but her violinist partner could not come. Helen was accompanied by her son, classical guitarist David Rasko, and her whole family was present. Sophie Caplan presented Rabbi and Mrs Apple with an original painting of the Great Synagogue exterior by artist N. Milat on behalf of the Society, which was really lovely. Rabbi Apple gave an interesting talk which will be reprinted in the next *Journal*, and there was even time to meet and talk with members while enjoying a lovely afternoon tea.

Incidentally, the term “Kumsitz” originated in Kibbutzim in Israel. It just means “Come and Sit” and enjoy the company! We shall have more Kumsitzim.

#### 4. A TRIBUTE TO RABBI RAYMOND APPLE ON HIS RETIREMENT

*by Judy Shapira*

*Now friends gathered here, at this afternoon affair,  
We don't want to hear you've got the wrong idea.  
We know he's not retiring from the A.J.H.S.  
But only from the helm of the Big G-S.*

*When the time came in nineteen eighty- eight  
The Bicentenary to celebrate,  
The Rav was our President, and capably led  
This historic group as its Presidential Head.  
He enjoyed heading up an historic group  
At this moment in history, ..it was quite a coup.*

*We had watched from afar – (at least some of us did)-  
As he reshaped the Shule, in a quiet bid  
To reclaim the Choir for the masculine sex  
By turfing out the women, whom he really did vex.  
But the Rav is not a misogynist complete,  
"Cause on the Board there are two who compete.*

*We are proud that he sends his archives to us,  
(It must be when his wife clears the desk of his stuff).  
But we have an office for just those things ...  
Whatever historic the postman brings.*

*He has been our Patron for quite some time ...  
Though what that means – is it something sublime?  
But we know he has our welfare in mind  
"Cause he's honest, approachable, and very very kind.*

*So we wish him good health as he steps aside  
From his leadership role, from his path true and tried.  
We hope he will always be a prop to us...  
The Aussie Jews Historical ... A –J –H –S.*

#### 5. PROFILE ... SARAH VORCHHEIMER.

Born Patricia Anne Coleman, Sarah is an eighth generation Australian who received her schooling at Hurstville Public School and Kingsgrove North High School. From the age of twelve, she regularly attended Shabbat morning services at the Great Synagogue, until she became more religious and would only walk to Shule, attending Illawarra (Southern Sydney) Synagogue and the Yeshiva.

Sarah participated in many Jewish youth groups, including the Sydney University Jewish Students' Society (SUJSU), B'nei Akivah and Jewish youth groups, including the Sydney University Jewish Students' Society (SUJSU), B'nei Akivah and Yeshiva Girls. She won second prize in the Australian Broadcasting Commission Commonwealth Literary Awards, and became a cadet journalist with the *Australian Jewish Times* while still a student doing an Arts course at Sydney University. Before graduation she married Ludwig (Lou) Vorchheimer, and helped him in his computer business, and raised four sons. In her spare time, Sarah taught for the N.S.W Board of Jewish Education and also taught English to migrants in state schools and to evening classes.

Sarah completed a Bachelor of Laws degree at the University of Technology (Sydney) and was admitted as a solicitor in NSW sponsored by the then Shadow Attorney General, (now Justice) John Dowd. A.O., Q.C. She practised as a solicitor privately in Goulburn, and in Sydney as a government lawyer. Sarah has been a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society, the Australian Army Reserves, the Liberal Party, the National Trust, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, and the L'Chaim Toastmasters Club.

With such a wealth of varied experience, Sarah is indeed an asset to the AJHS, (and she sings, too!)

## **6. HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED ... by Lionel Fredman.**

*(Lionel Fredman, former Professor of History at the University of Newcastle and prolific contributor to our Journal, is now resident in a nursing home in Newcastle. He was secretary of the AJHS (Vic) Inc .in the 1950s and here recalls Synagogue attendance in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in the St.Kilda Synagogue, Melbourne.)*

Synagogue attendance has surely been the most colourful and edifying influence of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish history, particularly the sight of a packed St. Kilda congregation, predominantly Anglo-Jewish, led by their revered Rabbi, Jacob Danglow. Rosh Hashanah (New Year) usually marked the advent of spring with a willingness to greet old friends and the warmer weather.

Leadership was shared by the patriarchs, S.J.Slutzkin, M. Isaacson and the founding family the Michaelis-Hallensteins, who readily imitated the Rothschilds in England and elsewhere. "Anglo" was a lifestyle, not necessarily a place of birth or place of emigration. These gentlemen were prominent in the general community, in the case of the Michaelis-Hallensteins for their tanneries, and the Isaacson's rubber goods. Slutzkin and his family resembled merchant princes in their St.Kilda Road mansion.

The "packed congregation" included packed headgear ... an usher in uniform; President and Treasurer in silken top hats; senior males in dark Homburgs; younger males in snap brims; schoolboys in tight caps of the school colour;

ladies in creations of much straw and ribbons, purchased in the millinery shops in every arcade and shopping centre. It was lucrative for some, being alleged that the then Premier's wife operated fifty such places.

Perhaps the vexed problem of attendance today might be solved by bold leadership, derived from wearing individual headgear.

*Mon chapeau! My hat!*

## **7. WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE A.J.H.S. THIS QUARTER.**

(a) With the assistance of the J.C.A. we have bought a new computer, and it is installed and functioning well, being used to record our membership and large collection. However, we need more assistance from members and friends to clear some of the backlog on recording and filing our resources. In addition, our Archivist, Helen Bersten, is very keen to train someone else to eventually take over her work. Helen has been Archivist for twenty-six years, and assists most people who come to the office to research, which takes much of the time of the Tuesdays and Thursdays which she gives to the Society. A remuneration may be available, but we urgently need to find an "apprentice" - some willing person who would like to help in our work.

(b) We also need some new volunteers, to replace many of our old and valued friends who have "retired" after years of service. There must be some of our members or friends who would like to help a worthy cause (us), in congenial company and pleasant air-conditioned surroundings for a few hours each week, or fortnight. Please help. Phone, fax or email us: 9518 7596, 9692 5260, ajhs@ozemail.com.au.

(c) The latest book by Assoc. Prof. Suzanne Rutland, commissioned by the Cambridge University Press, entitled *Jews in Australia*, is now at the printer, and should be available soon.

(d) Our talks this year will be on the theme of **Jewish Minorities in our Midst**, with some interesting speakers lined up. More news later.

## **8. CORRECTIONS.**

(a) Dr. Harry Lewis has the Australia Medal (A.M.), not the OAM as reported last newsletter. Sorry, Harry.

## **9. FROM THE ARCHIVES --**

Received with thanks from:

- Morris Forbes: magazines and newspaper articles and Journals
- Sophie Caplan: articles and ephemera
- Nate Zusman via Doris Rubinstein: *Anti-semitism and Human Rights*. 1984. proceedings of seminar, AIJA/Hist. Dept., Melbourne University.

*Ahad Ha-am, the Zionism of the Future* by Israel Kipin, Mandelbaum Trust.

*Ratlines* by Mark Aarons and John Loftus.

*War Criminals Welcome* by Mark Aarons.

*Twilight Whisper* by Jacob Rosenberg (poems)

*Pomegranates, a century of Jewish writing* comp. By Gael Hammer

- George Denes: final boxes of negatives from his 40 years' taking photographs for the Jewish News.
- Dan Goodridge: papers from the Jewish Folk Centre
- B'nai B'rith: The History of B'nai B'rith in Australia and New Zealand by Garry Fabian.
- Rabbi Apple: books as follows- *Tall Poppies* by Susan Mitchell (chapter on Eve Mahlab); *Australian Inventions* by Leo Port with Brian Murray.

For review: *Kish in Australia* by Heidi Zogbaum

*Zion - the story of Col. J.E. Patterson*

*The Outsider who won the War* [Monash] by Roland Perry

Purchased:

Bendigo Advertiser Index to Funerals etc, 1854-82

### **Volunteers**

We bid farewell to Sandra Rosen, who has been filing the many negatives from the George Denes collection. Thank you Sandra for your help and for being part of our team of happy faces. If there are any other volunteers out there who would like to carry on her good work, we would love to hear from you.

Noela Symonds has begun accessioning our serial publications and we hope she will be a regular member of our volunteer assistants.

### **Conservation project**

Thanks to the generosity of our late Patron, Harry Kellerman, we were able to fund a special project in 2004, which was the careful examination of our whole collection to identify items in need of conservation. Thanks to Selena Alexander for undertaking this work. Sometime this year, we hope to select the most pressing items and have them conserved professionally. Donations to the Library fund will benefit this project.

### **Rookwood cemetery – unmarked graves.**

As well as the excellent work that is being done by the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society, the Jewish Cemetery Trust has published a list of names of people buried in unmarked graves at Rookwood. We have made a copy of this list and filed it with our Rookwood cemetery file AB72. The JCT asks that next of kin contact Caroline Corrigan on (02) 9369 1767 or email

[ict@jewishcemeterytrust.com.au](mailto:ict@jewishcemeterytrust.com.au) to discuss erecting markers. Your lost ancestor might be buried in one of the graves.

Thanks to our committee member, Philip Moses, who has produced an alphabetical listing of these names.

### **Gympie Pioneer Register**

The Gympie Family History Society is compiling a register of families who lived in the Gympie region pre 1900. Some areas of the region are Kilivan, Gunalda, Traveston. Curra, Kybong, Widgee, Goomboorian and the Mary Valley.

Information can be submitted online at [www.gympiefhs.egympie.com.au](http://www.gympiefhs.egympie.com.au) or write to Pioneer Register Co-ordinator, Gympie Family History Society Inc, PO Box 767

*This Newsletter has been generously sponsored by our President Mrs Sophie Caplan and her husband Mr. Leslie Caplan on the occasion of their Golden Wedding to be celebrated shortly. Mazaltov and our best wishes to them and their family on this wonderful occasion.*

*Judith Shapira, Newsletter Editor*

Contributions to the Newsletter are most welcome. They should be sent to the Newsletter Editor, AJHS, Mandelbaum House, 385 Abercrombie St., Darlingtown, NSW 2008.