

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Member of the JCA Family of Communal Organisations



NEWSLETTER

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OUR GREAT LOSS ... MORRIS ZION FORBES OAM

Our co-patron, ex-president and ex-Journal editor, Morris Forbes died suddenly on September 2007. The following is a shortened version of the eulogy given at the funeral service by Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence of the Great Synagogue, Sydney.

Morris Forbes, Benzion Ben Hachaver Chayim Shalom was a man of principle and of tradition, supported by a real knowledge of Jewish law, as well as secular law, as well as so much besides ... and ever hungry for greater knowledge.

Morris never stopped knowing what was what...and imparting that knowledge, regardless of its accuracy and even your interest if he thought it was something you should know. Even Shabbat a week ago, as he readied himself for his final *haftara*, he just had to tell me that the tune I had used for his Mi Shebayrach was the Rosh Hashana tune and not the regular Shabbat one. He asked with a twinkle in his eye, was I getting in some early practice?

Morris was thirsty for knowledge and understanding. There was always some text that intrigued him, a word which was unusual, a point of grammar calling out for explanation, and when he asked the question, he would quote the verse by heart and he would have read the Rashi and he wouldn't be fobbed off with an inadequate answer. He liked puns and intelligent humour, but he would simply shrug at a flippant comment.

From Louise Rosenberg, I learned that his father was Chayim Shalom Himmelferb, a pious and learned man who used to take services at the Newtown Synagogue. Unfortunately, his first four children were killed in a house fire in 1918. Morris, born in 1919 and his sister Hannah were raised knowing the tragic story. The two of them were very close and Morris cared for his sister through to her recent death. When he

placed her in the Vaucluse nursing home, he started taking the Friday night services there for the Jewish residents. He continued taking the services there till Friday two weeks ago. It was one of the greatest pleasures of his life.

Morris's father wanted him to become a lawyer, but raised him with the Jewish knowledge that he might become a Rabbi if he didn't succeed in law. Succeed he did! He became Deputy Crown Solicitor, and was highly regarded for his encyclopaedic knowledge, his mastery of detail and his analytical capacity. He held high standards and expected everyone else to have high standards.

In the Australian Jewish Historical Society, he encouraged Louise Rosenberg to publish some of her written papers, and to become Secretary of the Society, for which he helped her. Morris was passionate about his Judaism and passionate about Australia. He was fiercely proud of the contribution that the Jewish community had made in the development of this land. He prized his OAM and the honours awarded to other members of the community.

Not quiet, never still, demanding righteousness and wanting to shine: not for himself but to radiate God's glory...the prophet Isaiah describes Morris Forbes.

2. YOUR FAMILY HISTORY.

FAMILY HISTORY.

We are very grateful to those of our members who have responded so well to the plea for members to research and write up their family history. Please keep them coming. We have received some of the details of the life of Woolf Ruta Cohen, one of the founders of the Central Synagogue in Sydney, which is in many respects, typical of a whole generation of Jewish immigrants to New South Wales. So many of these wonderful men and women faced immense difficulties and problems to give their families a better life in Australia, yet preserving their Jewish heritage and religious practices in a completely alien environment. We can read and marvel at their persistence and courage, and thank the Almighty for their strength.

WOOLF RUTA COHEN ...by Mrs Billie Einfeld, his grand-niece.

Woolf Ruta Cohen, the brother of my maternal grandmother, was born in Radzmin, Poland, about 1858, the second youngest of nineteen (yes, 19!) children. He started work at the age of 8 years and at the age of 19 he married Hannah Novadnorr who was born in the same district. In 1883 together with three children, they migrated to England, where they settled in London until just before the end of the 19th century, then crossed the oceans to far off Sydney, Australia.

In order to earn sufficient money to feed his increasing family (they had another four children in Australia), Woolf worked as a bricklayer at Garden Island, before becoming a hawker, like so many others. He filled large bags with household goods to sell to farmers and people outside the town of Walgett in far western New South Wales. He travelled by Cobb and Co coaches, then hired a horse and buggy to reach the vast remote areas he had to cover. Despite the hardships and hazards and the increasing number of children (they eventually had two sons and five daughters), they

eventually managed to establish in Walgett what the Cohens euphemistically named “W.R.Cohen’s Departmental Store”, which venture his wife and children helped to become a successful business.

During all this obviously stressful time, their home was as kosher as humanly possible under the circumstances, and the children were taught Hebrew and to read the Bible with great pride and love for the Shabbat and Yomim Tovim. When the eldest of their five daughters reached puberty, the Cohens decided they must leave “the wilderness” and take their children to the Sydney Jewish community to be among Jewish people. My uncle set up a menswear store named “Paris House Tailors” in Broadway, and lived until he was 95 years old.

The fascinating finale to this story is that each of their seven children married a Jewish partner, and followed the pattern set by their parents. At one time all were members of the Central Synagogue, of which their father was one of the founders, and where his name is commemorated with a plaque.

His children were: Abraham Cohen (married Lucy), Miriam (Min) (married Edward Benjamin), David (married Rosabelle), Anne (married – Samuels), Rose (married Felix Freeman), Lilian (married Norman Ellison) and Ruby (married Phillip Greenberg). Long live their descendants.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Over the weekend of 19th -21st October, our Society was represented at the above Conference by the President (Mrs Sophie Caplan OAM), the Vice-President (Mrs. Judy Shapira), and the Archivist,(Mrs Helen Bersten). The theme of the Conference was “Magic to stir men’s blood”: Canberra’s big ideas, plans and planners.” and some of the papers were of great interest. There have been other Jewish recipients of this great honour, including Louise Rosenberg, Helen Bersten, Joe Ben Mayor, Nate Zusman and Stella Marshall. However our main intent was to be present at the presentation of an RAHS Certificate of Achievement to Mr. Earle Hoffman, founder and President of the Australian Jewish Historical Society (A.C.T), in recognition of his 23 years as initiator and President. We were delighted that Earle was able to be present at the presentation, as were his son David and daughter Adele Rosalky. His wife Anne (nee Eshensky) died two years ago. After months of begging and reminding, I at last managed to get Earle to put his life-story into writing for us.

EARLE S. HOFFMAN .. FOUNDER OF THE A.C.T. JEWISH COMMUNITY.

The award of a Certificate of Achievement from the Royal Australian Historical Society was presented on Sunday 21st October 2007. The award recognises his twenty-three years as initiator and President of the Australian Jewish Historical Society (A.C.T.) as well as his continuing efforts to explore the growth and decline of Jewry in southern New South Wales prior to the development of Canberra. Progress reports have appeared mostly in *Hamerkaz*, the journal of the ACT Jewish community. Even before AJHS (ACT) began, Earle was already a Benefactor

Member of AJHS (Sydney). He also joined the Canberra and District Historical Society many years ago.

This latest award is only one of the honours that have been bestowed on him. He holds the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his services to the Jewish Community in Canberra as founder of and fund-raiser for the National Jewish Memorial Centre. He was one of the original members of the ACT Jewish Community, from its formation in 1952, serving initially as Honorary Secretary. Subsequently he became President for terms totalling seven years, a record yet to be exceeded. A few years ago he presented to the Community a beautiful Torah Scroll, in honour of his wife Anne.

The late Rabbi Porush gave an assessment of Earle's efforts for the young community in a special issue of the AJHS Journal (Vol. IX Part 3 1982 pp.182-232.) The Jewish Community later made Earle its Honorary Life President.

Earle has been and is a firm believer in unity among Australian Jewry. He is Canberra representative of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), and one of the limited numbers of Life Members of that body. Similarly he is a regular contributor to the Joint Communal Appeal (JCA of NSW/ACT), to the Montefiore Homes and to the Archives of Australian Jewry at Sydney University.

Earle went to Canberra in 1948, as one of the recruits to the then new Bureau of Agricultural Economics (B.A.E. – now Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE). He holds degrees in Agricultural Science and in Commerce/Economics from Queensland University; and a Master of Science degree from Iowa State University, gained on a Commonwealth Public Service Fellowship. In the federal Departments of Primary Industry he concentrated on resource development: in the Department of Trade on commodity policy, advising mainly National (Country) Party ministers, including Sir Earle Page, John (“Black Jack”) McEwan, Doug Anthony and Ian Sinclair. As well, he participated as a member of Australian delegations to some fifteen conferences: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT, now World Trade Organisation WTO); UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO); UN Conference in Trade and Development (UNCTAD); International Wheat Council; Commonwealth Economic Conferences; Australian Trade Mission to West Africa; International Whaling Commission; ...attendance at these meetings usually meant an absence from home of about six weeks, although on one occasion, as the Australian member of an International Food Mission to Japan, India and Indonesia, he was away for six months, travelling twice around the world – in the days before passenger jets came into service.

He was also a regular participant at meetings of federal/state Australian Agricultural Council and its subordinate bodies as chair of the Commonwealth/State Committee on Drought and Other Natural disasters: and of the Soil Conservation Council, as well as federal representative on a series of Commonwealth/Industry Research bodies, allocating funds for suitable rural research projects.

As he is heard to say:

“I was a rather sound ag. economist, so they made me an Administrator, gave me a red passport and exiled me to London.”

In Australia House, 1979 -82, he was Agricultural Counsellor, his duties extending to frequent meetings at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), trying to convince the Commission and member states of the European Economic Community about the damage that their Common Agricultural Policy was having on Australia and other Pacific nations.

During his thirty-five years in the Public Service, he was also involved as Secretary and President of the ACT branch of the Professional Officers Association.

During World War II, manpower control operated in Australia. Earle was sent to the Food Technology Laboratory in Melbourne. Australia had a long and successful experience in canning fruit, but the canning or dehydration of vegetables for Defence contracts was new and more difficult. Quality control under Commonwealth supervision was essential, against the risk of spoilage or more serious problems such as botulism.

Towards the closing days of WW II., Earle was allowed to return to Brisbane, to be with his parents when his brother, Flying Officer Adolf Hoffman, in RAF Bomber Command was killed in a raid deep into Germany on the eve of Anzac Day 1944.

Earle Hoffman and Anne Eshensky wed in the Margaret Street Synagogue on 5th December 1944. Their marriage lasted over 60 years, producing a son David and daughter Adele, now Mrs David Rosalky, leading to five grandchildren and so far to six great-grandchildren.

Socially, Earle is a Grand Lodge member of the United Grand Lodge of NSW and ACT, and a founder member of the Masonic Museum in Sydney. He is also a long-time supporter of the Bell Shakespeare Company and a member of the ACT Tradesmens Club. Anne was active in the Australian National Council of Jewish Women (ANCJW); also in the Women's International Club and its Arts and Crafts Circles, as well as in an enthusiastic bridge group.

Earle received his scholastic education at the Central Practising School in Spring Hill, Brisbane, and at the Brisbane Grammar School. In 1938 he was War Memorial Librarian, came first in the BGS Long Distance race, won various scholastic prizes, was Dux of the School, and more importantly in the 30's..won scholarships to the Queensland University.

Earle is the son of Charles Solomon Hoffman, (born Joppa, now Jaffa, Palestine 1896) and Hinda Sadie Hoffman, nee Levin, born Melbourne, 1896. Earle Samuel Hoffman was born in Melbourne on 12th March 1921.

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS – from HELEN BERSTEN, Archivist.

As we approach the end of the year, I would like to thank those who work behind the scenes helping the Society's wheels turn. Joe Ben Mayor, who has been invaluable in providing support to me, whether it is a matter of the office's computers or data entry. Over the years he has computerized the major part of our collection and has recently

been scanning the photograph collection. Joe has been part of the Tuesday team, which includes Jeannette Tsoulos, our genealogist, and Philip Moses, who is patiently entering data from our index cards.

Thanks also to Noela Symonds, John Temple and Jack Klarnet, part of the Thursday team, who also catalogue items and enter data; Stella Marshall has been copying our newspaper clippings on to acid-free paper and putting our photos into archival sleeves for years; I also thank Lisa Marx, our librarian, who keeps our library collection up to date. Sarah Vorchheimer may have a regular volunteer job as we replace our old serial boxes with new acid-free ones.

FROM THE ARCHIVES:

Received with thanks from:

1. Arnaldo Buch: *A Journey through Life, the memoirs of an immigrant to Australia.*
2. Society of Australian Genealogists: CD: Pubs and Publicans in the County of Cumberland NSW to 1850.
3. J.C.A. *Triumph of the Jewish Spirit: Forty Years of the Jewish Communal Appeal* by Suzanne Rutland.
4. Sophie Caplan: microfiche reader.

Purchased:

1. *Worlds Apart, the Remigration of South African Jews* by Colin Tatz, Peter Arnold and Gillian Heller.

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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., Darlington. NSW 2008.