

the Beth Din — more in accordance with accepted tradition and the realities of the local situation — Rabbi Rapaport refused to depart from the status quo even when the plan in question had been approved by the Council of Orthodox Synagogues in Victoria. He found himself isolated at times from those who sincerely tried to be friendly and helpful.

His forte was his pen as much as his speech, whether in Yiddish or English, being possessed of a fine style and a convincing presentation. He wrote prolifically, and he was the only Rabbi to make Yiddish his regular literary medium, publishing 10 books — 6 of them in English and 4 in Yiddish. Some were of a scientific nature relating to his field of academic studies at the University, but most dealt with the challenge of the non-Jewish world and with the defence of Israel and the Jewish people. He was a staunch religious Zionist and *Ahavat Yisrael* was a cornerstone of his ideology. His letters to the Press, some of which were collected in his book, *Brave Israel will Triumph*, are a testimony to his burning love for his people and for Eretz Yisrael. His writings are his greatest, most enduring contribution, as a spiritual leader.

As senior Rabbi he represented the Jewish community with dignity and grace at official functions. He was often invited to represent Jewry at meetings called to promote social, charitable and public activities in the general community of Victoria. He was honoured with the O.B.E. in 1973 in recognition of his services. In 1979 he retired from his post and went on Aliyah to be with his children and grand-children. Whilst in Israel he wrote for Biblical journals. He passed away peacefully in Givatayim on Shabbat, 9 March last, aged 75 years — *Yehi Zichrono Baruch*.

Israel Porush.

JUDAH WATEN A.M. died in July on the day of his 74th birthday — he was born in Odessa in 1911 and arrived in Perth, Western Australia with his parents early in 1914.

“The first writer in my life was Sholem Aleichem” he wrote, explaining how at his father’s house a group of “indigent migrant hawkers” gathered to hear Chaim Frankel read from New York Yiddish newspapers to which a few wealthier families subscribed.

Recalling the New York account of “Sholem Aleichem’s funeral attended by hundreds of thousands of New York Jews”, Waten said “The Jews like the French are good at giving their writers a grand send off.”

Judah Waten learned to speak English as a young child and his own writing was in English, but his Yiddish heritage of language and literature was always important to him. After he moved from Western Australia to Melbourne he was closely associated with the Jewish authors Pinchas Goldhar (b.1901), Hertz Bergner (b.1907) and a group of pictorial artists who included Yosl Bergner. Their politics were left wing, their stance in art and literature that of social realism or social humanism — it was Goldhar who encouraged Waten to write his fictional reminiscences of childhood that in 1952 were published as *Alien Son* — the first book of this type of direct migrant experience ever written in Australia. Seven novels, another volume of short stories and a book of reportage and reminiscence *From Odessa to Odessa* followed. He was also an excellent book reviewer for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*.

Waten, like so many people in the grey years of the 1950s, suffered from labelling. Because of his political leaning he was not considered an acceptable candidate for official patronage.

Some of his moving, compassionate fiction, for instance in his novel *The Unbending*, explores the problems of Eastern European Jewish migrants, not only in relation to the Australian community and lifestyles as a whole but, also, and sadly, as newcomers who found little in common with long established Australian Jewish people and communal organisations (including synagogues and Rabbis) which reflected the predominant English and German origins of Australian Jewry.

I must confess that, before I first met Judah Waten, I was apprehensive, for one of the not very sympathetic families and one of the uncongenial rabbis in one of his novels were recognisably my own kin and I am honest too, and thought I might have to tell him that.

As it turned out I met one of the nicest, most interesting, and best informed of Australian writers — a man who was most deeply concerned for and on behalf of his friends of all ages and walks of life. Alas, I was insufficiently musical to fully share the richness of Waten discourse, but we were good friends for some twenty-five years thereafter. In 1973 he and I were appointed to the newly established Literature Board and I came to appreciate his wide knowledge and utter objectivity.

He is survived by his wife Hyrell, a retired secondary-school principal, and his daughter Alice, a professional violinist.

The final words are Judah's own:

"Although half of my work is about foreign Jewish migrants I do not regard myself as a Jewish writer, but as very much an Australian writer who happens to be of Jewish extraction. I am very happy that my work is accepted as part of Australian writing. . . . But Australia is part of the world and human beings are human beings wherever they happen to live.

I think that for all writers, big and small, it is at home that the true fire burns with all its warmth and light. However limited it is, his home base will in the long run be a writer's mainstay, certainly for the writer from the smaller countries, and Australia, despite its size, is one of them. You might have some success in faraway places where they make you king for a day. I myself have had a number of novels published in England and in nine European and Asian countries, and at least a dozen of my stories have been translated into ten languages. In the long run, however, the people that matter are those who stand behind you through thick and thin. Those are your own people. Your small world will not forget you as quickly as the big world does."

Nancy Keesing

Ed. Athol Burns, in a letter in *Australian Jewish Times*, states that he knew Waten as a boy and believed him to be 77 years old. Waten posthumously gained the Patrick White Literary Award.