

methods of promoting the building. These ideas led to the purchase of the statue outside the QVB, the building of the Wishing Well, the Royal Clock, the replica Crown Jewels and the establishment of the Victoria Cross Memorial. His memoirs include some hilarious episodes as well as frustrating ones, but Neil's vision and determination and *chutzpah* drove him on.

Rather than spoil the readers' fun by relating some of the more amusing episodes in Neil Glasser's life from his wayward boyhood to his early work experiences, through war service and discharge, to various business achievements and final global success, I can only say, 'read the book from cover to cover or just dip into it; there will be rewarding anecdotes to leave you laughing and in awe of a most successful larrikin'.

Helen Bersten

SPIRITUAL TREASURE: A BIOGRAPHY AND TRIBUTE DEDICATED TO RABBI DR. SHALOM COLEMAN

By Andrew Blitz (Vivid Publishing, Freemantle, 2013).

Small in size but a giant in stature – that describes Rabbi Shalom Coleman, who changed the face of Judaism in Western Australia. Thanks to his refusal to give up or give in, a sleepy distant community was set on the path to becoming a lively centre of orthodoxy. This judgment of mine is quoted in and sets the tone of the biography of Rabbi Coleman produced by Andrew Blitz, an admirer of the rabbi who has diligently assembled an amazing record of a great man's career and added to it a number of pages of plaudits by people who have worked with the rabbi over the years. Rabbi Coleman is now 95 - in cricketing terminology, 95 'not out'. He is still officiating as a rabbi, gives a weekly Talmud *shiur*, and works and speaks for an array of public bodies.

The quality of a biography depends on whether the author makes his or her subject come alive for the reader, and judged by this criterion, Andrew Blitz has done a remarkable job. The book describes a man who never stops, and this is how thousands of people think of this rabbi.

Born into an orthodox family in Liverpool on 5 December 1918, Rabbi Coleman was both a student and a man of action from his youth. After gaining a BA degree he attained a Bachelor of Letters in Hebrew and Ancient Semitic Languages and Egyptology. In World War II he served with the RAF as a wireless operator/air gunner on missions in

France and Western Europe, and in 1944 he was recruiting officer in England for the Jewish Brigade Group. He returned to university in 1945 as tutor, review writer and librarian. At Jews' College, he gained rabbinic ordination in 1955. He also undertook postgraduate studies in Semitic languages at Pembroke College, Cambridge.

In 1947, urged by the then Chief Rabbi of South Africa, Dr Louis Rabinowitz, he went to the Potchefstroom Hebrew Congregation in the Transvaal, and then served the Bloemfontein community in the Orange Free State from 1949-1960. He gained an MA at the University of Pretoria and a PhD at the University of the Orange Free State for a thesis entitled 'Hosea Concepts in Midrash and Talmud'. He was chairman of the Adult Education Council of the Orange Free State and vice-president of the Victoria League, and introduced essay and oratory contests for schools. As a military chaplain he was active in the ex-service movement and was awarded the Certificate of Comradeship, the highest award of the MOTHS (Memorable Order of Tin Hats). He edited a Jewish community journal called *HaShomer* and an anniversary volume for the 150th anniversary of the Orange Free State.

In 1961 he came to Sydney as rabbi of the South Head Synagogue. He was a member of the Sydney Beth Din, vice-president of the NSW Board of Jewish Education and director of the David J. Benjamin Institute of Jewish Studies, for whom he edited three volumes of proceedings. He established a Hebrew teachers' seminary, lectured at the University of Sydney and wrote a thesis entitled 'Malachi in Midrashic Analysis' for a DLitt.

In 1964 he used a Robert Waley Cohen Scholarship to study adult education in various countries. In 1965 he became rabbi of the Perth Hebrew Congregation and held office until retirement (in difficult circumstances) in 1985. He determined to turn Perth into a *Makom Torah* (a Torah centre). He obtained land as a gift in trust from the State Government for a new synagogue, youth centre and minister's residence in an area where the Jewish community lived in Mount Lawley, replacing the original downtown Shule and enabling more members to be *Shom'rei Shabbat* (Sabbath observant). Further initiatives led to a kosher food centre in the Synagogue grounds; a *mikveh* (ritual bath); a *genizah* (storage area) for the burial of outworn holy books and appurtenances; a Hebrew Academy where high school students met daily, and extra classes four days a week at a nearby state school.

It takes the reader's breath away to learn that he also taught for the Department of Adult Education of WA University and served on the Senate of Murdoch University. He was an honorary professor at Maimonides College in Canada, led educational tours to Israel for Christian clergy and teachers, lectured to religious groups, schools and service organisations, and wrote booklets on Jews and Judaism. Talks

with the Minister of Education led to a Committee of National Consciousness in Schools, which he chaired. He was a member of the Karrakatta and Pinarroo Valley Cemetery Boards and wrote two histories for them on the State's 150th anniversary in 1979 and the Australian Bicentenary in 1988. He was a member of the Perth Dental Hospital Board and chaired the Senior Appointments Committee. The North Perth Dental Clinic is now the Shalom Coleman Dental Clinic.

A Rotarian since 1962, he was president 1985/86 and governor 1993/9, representative of the world president in 1995, and representative of WA Rotary at a conference in San Francisco in 1995. He co-ordinated the District Ethics and Community Service Committees and chaired the Bangladesh Cyclone Warning Project, which saved the lives of 40,000 residents of the chief fishing port of Bangladesh. He received a certificate of appreciation as District Secretary of Probus Centre, South Pacific. He has spoken at conferences all over the world and is a patron of the Family Association of WA. He has been a vice-president of Save the Children Fund since 1967.

He was a foundation member of the Perth Round Table, and their first lecturer. He is still a military chaplain; he was on the RSL executive and edited their *Listening Post* from 1989-91. He holds high rank in Freemasonry. He is honorary rabbi at the Maurice Zeffertt Centre for the Aged and officiates at their services. After several years as president of the Australian and New Zealand rabbinate his colleagues made him honorary life president. Several times he went to New Zealand as interim rabbi for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. He shines in the pulpit, and is a fine *chazzan* (cantor). He has received awards from the Queen and the Australian Government. The University of WA gave him an honorary LLD in April 2000. He is still, despite his age, a prolific speaker and writer; travels widely, and his services are in constant demand.

In 1942 he married Bessie Anna Daviat, who died in 1982. Following her death, he married Elena Doktorovich in 1987 who died in 1997. He has a son in Melbourne, a daughter in the USA, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

At 95, Rabbi Coleman's energy, enterprise and enthusiasm are undimmed. Largely thanks to him, Judaism is strong in Perth, with five synagogues, a Chabad House, a Jewish school, a fine *kashrut* system, and many *shi'urim*. No longer is it a struggle to be Jewish in Western Australia.

Andrew Blitz has compiled his material diligently, written his story lucidly, and made a significant contribution to Australian Jewish historiography. Presumably he plans a companion volume when the rabbi reaches 120.

Raymond Apple