

OBITUARIES

CLYDE SAMUEL EPSTEIN

In June, 1983 Clyde Samuel Epstein, President of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation passed away after a short illness. He had been President of the Congregation since 1959, and thanks to his devoted and hard work, this small Community was kept alive and active. The Funeral was conducted in a most dignified manner by Rabbi A. Sternfein of Melbourne, a longtime friend, and Clyde is buried next to his parents in the Jewish section of the Cornelian Bay Cemetery, Hobart. He was born in Hobart some 80 years ago and his late father, Moses Epstein, was actively concerned with the Synagogue and at one stage was its honorary Reader.

Rev. I. Morris was Minister in Hobart from 1910–1921 and he taught Judaism to the children and he must have been an excellent teacher because Clyde had a thorough knowledge, and that enabled him to conduct Divine Services in the Synagogue. Unfortunately, there has not been a resident Minister in Hobart since 1956, but thanks to Clyde Epstein and some other members of the Congregation the doors of the Synagogue were opened every Sabbath. We hope this will also continue now.

The deceased had graciously represented the Congregation at official functions and he conducted very dignified Services on every Anzac Day, when representatives of the Federal and State Government were present, in the Synagogue.

He was well known and respected in many spheres, in business and tourism circles, having worked as a bookmaker. He was a frequent visitor at Wrest Point and in this way met many visitors to Hobart and induced them to come to the Synagogue and to support the Congregation.

As Vice President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Clyde took a keen interest in all deliberations, although he could not attend the meetings personally, and he supported every Zionist and Israel-oriented endeavour. At all times he was ably supported by his wife Muriel and only daughter June. Messages of sympathy had come to the family from all over Australia.

Hedi Fixel

BENZION PATKIN

Benzion Patkin passed away in Melbourne on 25 April, 1984 at the age of 82. He was active in the Australian Jewish Historical Society, as in so many other communal institutions, until the very end of his long, interesting and worthy life. Born in Tatarsk, Russia, in 1902, he received a traditional *heder* education until the age of nine, after which he attended Russian gymnasia in Kaluga, Mstislavl and Moscow. In 1917 he joined the Zionist youth organisation *Akhdut Utkhiyah*, and was elected to its committee that same year. Later he joined *Hehalutz*, *Gehaver* and *Maccabi*. In 1920, when he was a student at Moscow University, he was elected to *Maccabi's* Moscow committee and in 1922 to its all-Russian executive. This brought him to the notice of the Bolshevik authorities, which in 1922 banned him from Moscow University as well as from the Textile Institute of Technology. Undaunted, Patkin continued his Zionist activities underground.

In 1924 he arrived in Eretz Israel, and together with some 40 other *Halutzim* from Russia he formed the nucleus of *Havurat Hadarom* in Ness-Ziona, a collective group for training workers for road construction, house-building, agriculture and other occupations. He reorganised the local *Maccabi* branch and represented it at national conferences. In 1925 he was invited to join the guard of honour at the opening of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Benzion married Hemda Shani in 1929 and the same year arrived in Melbourne. His uncles, Maurice and Aaron Patkin, both of whom had been active Mensheviks in pre-Soviet Russia, preceded him to Melbourne — in 1908 and 1927 respectively. Another link with that city was his family tie with Sidney Myer. Benzion's paternal grandmother was the sister of Myer's maternal grandfather.

Benzion and Hemda became the parents of two children, Nehama, now a well-known musician, and Michael, a surgeon. Not long after they settled in Melbourne, the Patkins founded, with a number of other recent arrivals from Eretz Israel and Europe, the Ivriah Society. This was a forerunner of *Brit Ivrit Olamit* (World Hebrew Union). The Ivriah Society's inaugural meeting was held in 1929 at the Carlton home of Aniya and Joseph Ginsburg.

Patkin's contributions to the Jewish community were varied and considerable. In 1936 he co-founded both the Victorian Zionist Organisation and the State Zionist Council of Victoria. The latter elected him an honorary life member in 1970. In 1936 he helped to establish the Australian Friends of the Hebrew University, and also the Friends of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Since 1962 he served as the latter's senior vice-president. In 1937 he initiated and sponsored the first visit of the Eretz Israel Maccabi soccer team to Australia. From that year onwards he was instrumental in the development of trade between Australia and Eretz Israel. For many years he was the local representative of several Israeli firms, importing Israeli clothing and other goods.

From 1938–49 Benzion was senior vice-president of the International Club of Victoria. In 1940 he founded the *Pro-Magen David Adom* Society, and from 1946–48 he was Australian correspondent of the Eretz Israel daily newspaper *Haboker*. From 1931–47 he held office in the *Keren Hayesod* as, successively, honorary secretary, vice-president and treasurer. He was president of *Brit Ivrit Olamit*, Victoria, from 1958–59 and again in 1962, its federal president from 1962–82, and its honorary life president since 1982. He was a member of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation's Board of Management, 1951–53. He was vice-president of the Jewish National Library, *Kadimah*, 1951–54, and its president, 1955–58. From 1966–69 he was an executive member of the United Nations Association of Australia, Victorian division. In 1982 he received the B'nai B'rith Menorah Award. From 1932 Benzion was a delegate to the various Zionist Federation conferences held in Australia, and at these he advocated the establishment of a Hebrew Day School, his great vision which was realised in 1947 with the foundation of Mount Scopus College. He served as its first president from 1948–52. The full story of the college, arguably the most outstanding of all his communal achievements, is told in his book *Heritage and Tradition* (1972). He also played a key role in effecting the democratisation of Victorian Jewish communal organisation (see his "From Advisory Board to Board of Deputies," *A.J.H.S. Journal*, vol. IX, part 1, 1981). And, as related in his book *The Dunera Internees* (1979), he was instrumental in organising migration to Eretz Israel of 150 Dunera detainees from Tatura Internment Camp.

Benzion Patkin was, truly, a *tsaddik*. It was a privilege to know him, and to know him was to love him. He was a wise, kind, gracious gentleman, with an impish sense

of humour and a keen, incisive mind. He was equally concerned with Eretz Israel (where he now lies buried) as with Diaspora Jewry. He often expressed concern that younger generations of Jews lack a sound knowledge of Jewish history and are thus unable to place the contemporary Jewish condition and the Zionist movement in their proper historical perspective. He endeared himself to scholars and researchers, and had many fascinating reminiscences, such as seeing and hearing Lenin in person and aiding Jewish First World War refugees in White Russia.

At the time of his passing, Benzion was working on his memoirs, drawing upon his experiences in three cities: Moscow, Jerusalem and Melbourne. He persisted in this task despite failing eyesight. It is to be hoped that his memoirs might be published in some form, perhaps in future issues of this Journal. Certainly, his life and achievements deserve a far fuller account than can be provided in this obituary. His life was a blessing. He will be remembered with affection.

Hilary Rubinstein

AMELIA KELLERMAN

Amelia (Millie) Kellerman who died on 16 April last — Erev Pesach — was the youngest daughter of Judah Ellis and Fannie (nee Isaacs). Her Australian Jewish ancestry was a long and proud one. Her grandfather, Jacob Isaacs, was prominent during the era which saw the building of the York Street Synagogue; and during the following years he was closely involved in the establishment of Jewish Education in New South Wales. Mrs Kellerman maintained this tradition of devoted service to the community and to Jewish Education. She will be remembered mainly for the personal dedication she gave to tasks, which she loved, and took special interest in helping her husband, Mr. M.H. Kellerman, O.B.E., with his work of editing publications for the Masonic Lodge, the Jewish Education Board, and the Australian Jewish Historical Society. She helped her husband compile our Society's indices, and she found time to re-type manuscripts, keep the membership lists up to date, type the envelopes for Journal and Notice of Meeting before "labels" were used. Certainly, she had been a Hebrew School Teacher; certainly, she had given of her many and various skills for her family, friends and the community.

Millie Kellerman was so proud when, two years ago, after being on the Executive and Committee of the Historical Society for almost 30 years, her husband Harry was appointed a co-Patron of the Society together with Rabbi Porush.

As each year passed, she would say, "Phoebe Davis and I are the last of Rabbi Cohen's first confirmation class, in 1914." That was how she saw herself, as an integral part of Australian Jewish history. We shall remember her as a sweet, kind, Jewish wife, mother and grandmother — an unfailing wise-hearted friend.

L.R.