

## OBITUARY

*Dr Lionel Edward Fredman*

*19 July 1931—20 April 2008*

**A**fter years of progressive Parkinson's disease, borne with courage and dignity, Lionel died peacefully at his Newcastle nursing home. He had devoted his working life to the teaching of history at the University of Newcastle, and helped to hold the small Jewish community together as the Newcastle Synagogue secretary for many years.

Lionel was the eldest son of Stanley Lewin Fredman (1901-1975) and Rose Olga, née Sharp (1907-1974) and was born in 1931 in Reservoir, then a small satellite village of Melbourne situated at the terminus of the electric train line. Stanley had set up a general medical practice there in 1926. Stan and Rose met when she came over from Perth for a family wedding, and after a courtship done mainly by correspondence, they married in Perth in November 1928.

Faced with the difficulties of the depression years, Rose, Stanley and Lionel, aged two at the time, moved in 1933 to a practice in a large Edwardian house in the more populated area of Westgarth, an industrial area closer to the city. This house had been vacated by Dr Emanuel Rosanove, who went on to specialise in dermatology, and his barrister wife Joan. The house was modernised in 1940-41, and an air-raid shelter was built in the front garden. Lionel continued to live with his family until he left for America in 1957.

Lionel attended Westgarth Central School from 1936 to 1943, Wesley College from 1944 to 1948 where he gained two exhibitions on matriculating, then The University of Melbourne where he graduated BA(Hons) in 1953, LLB in 1955 and MA in 1956 for his thesis entitled 'Sir John Quick, the Role of a Founding Father'.

During his teens, Lionel was a contestant in Junior Information on 3KZ radio, compered by Norman Banks. A fellow contestant at that time was Barry Jones.

Lionel was a keen thespian, and played a number of roles with the *Habimah* Players during his university years; his acute mind was also well honed for debating; his team went out to Pentridge one night to debate the prisoners and he was also in the Victorian debating team for the Jewish sporting carnivals in Sydney in

1955/56 and Perth in 1956/57. Lionel used to attend the informal book and bottle nights of the 'Bread and Cheese Club', held in the Richmond home of the legendary J. K. Moir, OBE (1893-1958). Devoted to mateship, art and letters, this Club was active in promoting Australian writers, and published books for them especially on poetry and local history, often in limited editions.

In 1954, Lionel became the first honorary secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Jewish Historical Society (AJHS). He wrote many papers for its journal, including one on the long-gone Jewish community of Bendigo, and organised the editing and publishing of the Selected Short Stories of Nathan Spielvogel in 1956. Each copy was numbered and signed by the author shortly before his death. Lionel remained fully involved with the Society until his departure to the USA in 1957. Lionel was to continue his involvement with the AJHS on his return to Australia, and wrote eleven papers in all for the *AJHS Journal* from 1955 to 2000.

Lionel decided that he was not suited for the Law and decided to go to the United States to undertake further study in the discipline of History. He went first to Stanford, where he was awarded an MA, and then to Tulane where he gained his PhD. After his return late in 1959, Lionel gained a position in the History department in Newcastle. His career there spanned 33 years, and he progressed to Associate Professor. During this time, he became a proud and passionate Novocastrian. He was a prolific writer of books, papers and reviews covering Australian and American history and was appointed the first life member of the Australian & New Zealand American Studies Association (ANZASA) in 1994, the year after his retirement. Associate Professor Chris Dixon remembers his influence at the University, and in his tribute to the members of ANZASA, noted that:

Lionel played an important role during the association's early years and hosted the 1974 and 1988 conferences. Lionel taught American History at the University of Newcastle from the early 1960s until his retirement. During that early period he flew Old Glory in a History Department that rarely looked outside British and Australian history. Along with his interest in The Great White Fleet, Lionel's abiding passion was the study of politics and political systems.

Lionel was a quietly spoken and earnest man who displayed a great love of learning, a genuine passion for the Great Republic and a subtle sense of humour. Lionel also devoted time and energy to the local community and was a regular speaker at local schools and community events. He

was a gentle man in every sense, a scholar whose love of his discipline was apparent to all who encountered him.

Lionel's first marriage was to Carolyn Rosemary Rees in 1965 at the Parramatta Registry Office, long before the days of civil celebrants. They produced three children – Jacqueline, Nicholas and Antonia. The family home was initially in Adamstown, a Newcastle suburb. Lionel then bought an 1835 house 'Government Cottage' in East Maitland in 1977. He was so excited about acquiring an historic house he forgot to tell Carolyn until after he had put down the deposit!

Lionel was anything but a dry academic. He had a droll sense of humour, and delightfully eccentric interests, perhaps best exemplified by his passion for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes, for which he attended international conferences. He enjoyed Dracula movies, musical theatre such as Gilbert & Sullivan, and old songs by Noel Coward or Al Bowlly. His elder daughter Jacqueline agonised every Father's Day to find a card without the hackneyed male scenes of golf, fishing or beer cans.

Dr Rachael Kohn, the ABC Radio National broadcaster has fond memories of Lionel, and admired his contributions to the Jewish Studies Conferences in the early 1990s. She still recalls the tour of Newcastle he gave her, just a few months after the earthquake in 1989. Lionel delivered a paper at the Ninth Annual Conference for Jewish Studies in July 1995 entitled 'Wesley College: The Jewish Experience' which was reported in great detail in the *Australian Jewish News* of 28 July.

Lionel's second last trip to Melbourne was in 1997, where he read, with some difficulty, a paper about the Hon. Nathaniel Levi, ancestor of Rabbi Dr John Levi, at a Colloquium in honour of John on his official retirement. Lionel had written up Nathaniel Levi and no less than 13 other entries in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Lionel and John had been good friends and colleagues for a long time; back in 1982, Lionel arranged for his second marriage to Jacqueline Simon to be conducted by John in Melbourne. The marriage lasted ten years, sadly halted by Jacqueline's death from cancer. Another life-long friend from Wesley College days was historian and author Professor Geoffrey Blainey.

Lionel was the brains and the energy behind the launching of the magazine PAN (Performing Arts Newcastle) as a Bicentennial venture in 1997. The first issue was dedicated to Nellie Stewart who, he felt, epitomised the performing arts in Australia.

From the early 1980s, Lionel began his long association with

the small Newcastle Hebrew Congregation being its secretary for nearly two decades, and one year as president. He reissued a revised and expanded version of the original small 1977 Jubilee Booklet on the Newcastle Hebrew Congregation as a contribution to the Newcastle City's Bicentenary in 1997. His dedication and service to the survival of the Congregation led to the naming of the Synagogue Hall after him at his 70th birthday luncheon, which was held there in July 2001. Invitees to the luncheon included his extended family, the local Jewish community, University colleagues, and many public office holders of the City of Newcastle.

Lionel was a true bibliophile with a magnificent library on a broad range of subjects. His declining health meant that this had to be dispersed among his family and his precious books are now a permanent reminder of him. He was an excellent correspondent, and we have kept many of his letters which continued right through until his Parkinson's disease made his writing totally illegible. He encouraged his children's academic pursuits and the value of travel.

Soon after his first grandchild was born, Lionel said to him: 'I hope you will be curious', truly a noble aspiration.

Through troubled times, Lionel's first wife Carolyn had been a tower of strength for her children, and in more recent years, had given much time and care to Lionel as his illness progressed. He is survived by his first wife Carolyn, their three children and their families.

This tribute was written by Lionel's younger brothers, Malcolm and Clive with assistance from his daughter Jacqueline.