

## 2 February 2014 AGM — Ken Arkwright's Retiring Address

In Genesis we read that Adam and Eve were our earliest forebears. The Hebrew word “Adam” means “Earth” and “Ishto” is how Adam called his beloved (Genesis 3/20). Eve, means “mother of all living”. We don't know much about Adam and Eve; all we know was that Isha=Ishto=Eve was a lot of trouble!

Let us skip a few thousand years and get to the year 1492 when King Ferdinand II of Aragon married Queen Isabella of Castile. They made Spain the foremost power in Europe and together they were called *Reyes Católicos Catholic Kings*. In 1478 a papal bull established the *Spanish Inquisition* under royal control. Isabella was certain that to expel the Jews from Spain in 1492 was her religious duty. She also supported Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros to introduce the forced conversion of the Moors to Christianity. Her financial support of Christopher Columbus for his travels to a *New World* was also based on her passion to spread the influence of the *Christian Spanish Empire* around the world.

My forebears were expelled from Spain. They were reasonably affluent horse merchants. I know little details of their lives for the next 176 years.

Jews often benefitted from conflicts between their persecutors. Martin Luther (1483–1546) at first hoped that Jews would at long last realise that the *Old Testament* had been superseded by the *New Testament*. The refusal of Jews to also accept his version of Christianity made Luther despair and it made him write the hateful essay: “*Von den Juden und ihren Lügen= About the Jews and their lies.*”

The 30 year war between Catholics and Protestants 1618–1648 ended with the *Interim Peace of Augsburg* and peace was confirmed with the *Peace of Augsburg* in 1555 that agreed to tolerate the Lutherans. The peace of Augsburg demanded that all Citizens be well-treated and protected and that they were allowed to follow their respective incumbent religions.

Frederick William, the Great Elector (1620–1688) after fighting numerous wars, became an interesting type of 17<sup>th</sup> century ruler. The creation of a Protestant Modern State in Europe was his objective, as he so clearly expressed in his political testaments of 1667, 1680 and 1686.

Members of the Jewish community benefitted by this change of attitude to religion by the State. So did my Family.

In the 11th and 12th centuries (e.g. Brandenburg), Jews had the status of *Servi camerae regis*. This status gave them imperial protection against paying special taxes to the Empire's treasury. In 1668 my family took advantage of this and against an annual payment to the Prussian Government they became *Schutzjuden=Protected Jews*. This gave them the right to build a house in the town of Halberstadt Germany in 1668, which still stands today. I still own some of the relevant bilingual documents (German and Judeo-German written in Hebrew letters).

On the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1812 *Friedrich Wilhelm, by the Grace of God, King of Prussia* gave the Jews of Prussia full citizen rights, on the condition that they conducted their business in the German language, adopted German names and if required in war served in the Prussian Army. At that time my *Great-Great-Great-Grandfather* had only a Hebrew name *Shimeon ben Ja-acov (1737–1835)*. The form of endearment for Shimeon is Schimmel and the Citizenship documents were signed by the Berlin Royal Castle and so this part of the family

created the German Family name of *Schimmelburg*. Part of our family continued to live in this town until the Nazi Government made the town of Oschersleben *Judenrein=Free from Jews* and some of them perished in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Shimeon's son Leiser (1793-1856) served in the Prussian Cavalry in the 1813/1814 *Wars of Liberation* against Napoleon. He was cited for valour by General Wrangel. He brought a French Cavalry Pistol home as booty. This weapon had two functions — shoot, and bludgeon! I played with this pistol as a child until Hitler disallowed Jews to own arms. My father put the pistol into the fire to burn the wooden bits and softened the metal thereof. We went through the town at night putting these bits into a series of drains. Nowadays, an Australia Museum would have been very glad to own and display it.

My great-grandfather Jakob Schimmelburg also served in the Prussian cavalry. He donated stained glass windows for the Saint Nicolai Church on Oschersleben's Market Place in memory of Jews and Non-Jews who died on the battlefield in the Napoleonic and the Franco-Prussian War. Outside this Church at the base of the donated windows, there was a plaque with Jacob's name on it expressing the gratitude of the citizens of Oschersleben. The Hitler Regime had the plaque removed. This sign of Jewish/Christian co-operation was never reinstated.

In 1815 the *Napoleonic Wars* had ended, but there was only a short period of peace between Germany and France, until the *Franco/Prussian Wars* of 1870/1871, that established Modern Germany. My great-grandfather Jakob Schimmelburg served and my great-grand-uncle was killed on the battlefield in the latter war in the Prussian Cavalry.

Albert Einstein once said: "*God has a wicked sense of humour.*" The next *Great War* was *World War I*, 1914/1918 (A mere 43 years after the Franco/Prussian War). My father's first Cousin Irma Futter had married Hans Monasch. Hans Monasch's 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin was Sir John Monash, the Commander of the Australian Army in WWI. The three Cousins, my father Rudof Aufrichtig, his first cousin Hans Monasch and their 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin Sir John Monash were shooting at each other in WWI for Kaiser, King and country respectively.

Sir John Monash's aunt, Marie Monasch was married to Heinrich Graetz, the author of 5 volumes of *History of the Jews*. This *History of the Jews* is one of the early Scientific Jewish Histories. It has been translated into English and is well worth reading. Heinrich and Marie Graetz are buried in the Breslau Jewish Historic Cemetery next to my great-grandparents Aufrichtig and whenever I visit my great-grandparents' grave, that of the Graetz/Monasch family is included in the visit.

I pointed out, that according to the Creation story in Genesis, we are all related, as we are all descendants of Adam and Eve. Fortunately, there also is the *Enuma Elish* Babylonian/Mesopotamian Creation story. This version was written sometime in the 12th century BCE in cuneiform on seven clay tablets.

The *Enuma Elish* story allows me to assert that Adolf Hitler is not related to any *human being*, but that he was totally unrelated to the rest of creation.

On April 1, 1933, the Nazis carried out the first nationwide, planned action against Jews, a boycott targeting Jewish businesses and professionals. It was a test of Jewish/Christian Relations. My father's Christian WWI comrades in arms stood by him. They blocked access of the Nazi thugs to him.

On the 10th May 1933, students burned about 25,000 volumes of "un-German" books, thus starting an era of state censorship and control of culture. In Berlin, some 40,000 people

gathered to hear Joseph Goebbels deliver a fiery address: "*No, to decadence and moral corruption! Yes, to decency and morality in family and State! ...The future German man will not just be a man of books, but a man of character and thus you do well in this midnight hour to commit to the flames the evil spirit of the past.*" (Joseph Goebbels, *Speech to the students in Berlin*)

On the 9<sup>th</sup> November 1938, the night the synagogues were burned, Kristallnacht Eve, my father was warned by his Christian WWI comrades to leave and to hide in the forest. He did not take up their tip-off until he saw the synagogue burning.

Hitler's issue was "race" not "religion". I got complications from scarlet fever and required a blood-transfusion. The Health Department explained to my Jewish Doctor that *Arian* blood cannot be transfused into a *Jewish* Body. I was lucky! I survived without the *Arian* blood.

I had to learn many more interesting lessons. On the 31st March High School Education ended for me, as higher education was prohibited for Jews. The 30<sup>th</sup> June 1942 School education was no longer allowed for Jews and all Jewish schools were closed.

Then followed Forced Labour, Labour Camp and the Concentration Camp Gross Rosen. Dr Kurt Goetzl, a German/Jewish Lawyer was a camp-mate of mine. He taught me a most important lesson. He said: "*There is Justice and there is Law. Most of the time these two concepts have nothing in common.*" This lesson encouraged me to risk my life by escaping from the Concentration Camp, and I furthermore changed my name illegally to Klaus Schneider.

I lived in the home of a hard working committed Catholic family as a farmhand, and during this time I experienced good Jewish-Christian relations. They did not know that they sheltered a Jew in their home until the war ended in this region on the 28th May 1945.

Before I left them, the farmer's wife walked a very long way to the next village of Konnersreuth to get me a Good-Bye gift. It was the most precious thing she had to offer to a Jew. It was also for me one of the most moving presents I ever got. In spite of all this I could not carry the bottle of *Holy Water* for 700 km back to my hometown of Breslau. I carried it far enough so that the bottle could not be found and thereby offend its donor. I poured the Holy Water on the soil in a forest of Germany.

Maybe it had a beneficial effect, because a mere 15 years later in March 1960 Konrad Adenauer and David Ben-Gurion met in secret and laid the foundation of a friendship between Germany and Israel which will hopefully stand the test of time.

I then studied Medicine in Communist East Germany. Once again I left Berlin illegally in October before the Wall was built at the time of the "Airlift". For a little while thereafter, I lived in Paris. There I learned that "prejudice" is shared by all Nations and all religions.

I was sitting on a park-bench in the Champs-Élysées, when a man approached me in a kindly way and struck up a friendly conversation, while I stroked his pet-dog. When he heard I spoke French with a German accent, he asked me whether I was German. I simply answered: Yes. He pulled his dog away from me, and spat into my face, and said: "You Germans killed my parents in a concentration camp and I am Jewish". The following day was the Day of Atonement and I saw him in the synagogue. He must have got the shock of his life. I thought to myself: "You have to learn a lot about national and religious prejudice." After the Service he tried to approach me, but I walked straight out into the dark. I never saw him again and left him to live with this misguided action.

I arrived in Australia on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1949. At that time the Commonwealth Government called the Jewish Migrants from Germany, *Enemy Aliens*, the General Populous called them *bloody foreigners*, and the Australian Jews who felt uncomfortable with German Jewry's efforts to progress Jewish Theology into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century called them *yekeh*= יקה, a Hebrew acronym for *Yehudi Kasche Hawana*=*a slow-witted Jew*.

My original name was Klaus Aufrichtig, and when I arrived in Australia, Australians said to me that with a name like Klaus Aufrichtig, I would not get any work! As my mother had embroidered my initials "K.A." into my socks, I chose Kenneth Arkwright as my new Australian name to save changing the embroidery in my socks.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote: "Eine Rede ist keine Schreibe=A speech is not an essay." I never write down my speeches for this reason and this reconstruction and embellishment of it must now be cut short. Goethe furthermore wrote: "To be old means to live in the past and to be young means to work for the future." CC&J, WA is fortunate to have Dr Mary Marshall as its Secretary. Mary is young, because she works for the future of CC&J and motivates all its members to do likewise.

I found common interest with other Australians in the Council of Christians and Jews. It was founded in England in 1942. I recall our first CC&JWA meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1994 here in Perth under the leadership of Dr Rowan Strong at Wollaston College. The other four members were Dr Norm Hoffman, Graham Nielsen, Fr Brian Pitman and I. It is only a small group that has engendered goodwill and friendship among many others over many years. Its head-quarters are in the onetime home of the German Jewish Philosopher Martin Buber.

I know of no better way to say *thank you* to my many friends of the CC&J than Buber's *Thank You* on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1958: "*The thanks to all are not addressed to a mere aggregate of people; they are addressed to each single individual personally.*"