

## Matthew Pamm (1914 – 1979)

### *Arts Critic and Businessman*

### Cape Town

Biography by his son Anthony Pamm



**MATTHEW PAMM** was born in Cape Town on 19 December 1914. At the time the Pam family lived at 25 William Street in the general area of the section of the city known as District Six. This was where many immigrant Jews settled at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It was at that time a mixed-race area which was later to see the forced removal of its Cape Coloured population during the Apartheid era.

### Imperial Russia



Matthew was the second (and the first South African born) child of **Moses Benzion and Cecilia** (Shatel Yocheved *née* **Solomon**) **Pam**, Yiddish speaking Jewish immigrants from Lithuania (then part of Imperial Russia).

They had grown up in an autocratic and corrupt police state, caught between feudalism and modernity and Europe and Asia , where various tolerated and underground movements, ideologies and philosophies were present or nascent, where unrest and dissatisfaction were fermenting in the general population (and being ruthlessly suppressed) and where the Jewish population was officially ranked at the very bottom (after the Asiatic nomads of Siberia) of a descending hierarchical ranking of population groups and ethnicities and was being subjected to state policies of discrimination and terror aimed at causing ‘one third to emigrate, one third to convert to Christianity, and the remainder to die of starvation’.

Moses Benzion, Cecilia and baby Julius Pam (taken in Lithuania circa 1906)

In addition to this overall situation , the Jewish Community in Russia was also experiencing a number of (sometimes contradictory) internal trends and influences with cultural traditionalists combatting modernists (Maskilim) the Mitnagdlim (defenders of traditional Religious Orthodoxy) opposing the Hasidic movement, both of increasing Hebraisation and Russification in an

ascendancy and Modern Political Zionism and Jewish Worker Socialism (in the form of the 'Bund') emerging and vying for adherents.

Among Eastern European Jews there were also regional differences with the Lithuanian Jews having some characteristics different to their coreligionists in Poland and Galicia.

Other than the attributes mentioned hereafter, how much of all of this was brought to South Africa and how much was left behind is now lost knowledge but some, or some traces, of all of this must have been present in Matthew's home and social environment when growing up.

### **To South Africa and family ties**

His elder brother Julius (1905-73) Yehuda Leib, named after his late paternal grandfather; later an accountant in commerce or industry and who had no issue, was born in Russia prior to his father Moses departing to South Africa to which country Moses's wife Cecilia followed later on, arriving in Cape Town with Julius (Yudele) on the 'Briton' in late September or early October 1913.



Another two children were added to the family after Matthew, these being Abraham Meyer (1916-2005) named after his recently deceased uncle AM Solomon; later self-named Michael. He married Sheila Levetan (1924-90) and had seven children; and Gwendoline (1918-77) Geulah Shulamit, who married Archie Ruch (1909-76) an Ochberg Orphan, and had three children.

Pam Family children born in South Africa: Matthew, Gwen and Abraham Meyer (Michael)

Matthew's father, **Moses BenZion Pam** (1875 -1942) hailed from Anykst (Anyksciai) and had studied at the famous Slabodka Yeshiva (Jewish Religious Instruction Institution) before teaching Hebrew in Ponevez (Panevezys) a career that he later followed in South Africa where he spread Hebrew knowledge among many Jewish congregations and also taught Gentile clergymen. His obituary in the SA Jewish Chronicle described him as a 'well-known member of the community' who 'was a fine Hebrew scholar' and 'one of the earliest Zionists who always took a very keen interest in the movement'. Besides these interests, he had secular reading interests and was an admirer of Rabindranath Tagore.

Moses had three younger siblings whom he helped support when growing up due to the early death of his parents and who also migrated to South Africa and who settled in Krugersdorp and Johannesburg. These were: in Krugersdorp: Isaac, ?- 1945; who had no issue; in Johannesburg: Abe, ? -1956 who also had no issue and **Peia who married Lazar Rosen**, a presser in a clothing factory



**Peia and Lazar Rosen** had four children: here we see the family together: Louis – a Chartered Accountant; Hilda – a Medical Doctor; Lily – a Sales Lady; and Fanny who was in later life Secretary of the Rabbinical Association in Johannesburg (and who was the mother of Phyllis Spira, the famous Prima Ballerina Assoluta of South Africa).

Matthew apparently spent some time with the Rosen family in 1930 (attending Athlone High School and passing the Transvaal Secondary School Certificate there). He maintained fond relations with his Johannesburg first cousins in later life. In his youth he also visited in Piet Retief (and possibly also in Johannesburg) with the family of a cousin of his mother named Anna (nee Hamber or Hamben) who was married to **Lazar Braudo**.



Lazar Braudo Family (Lazar and Anna with children Phyllis and Charles)

**Lazar Braudo** pioneered timber plantations to supply timber to the mining industry on the Reef. He was a Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation. They had two children, Phyllis (slightly older than Matthew and with whom Matthew maintained correspondence into the 1930s, as he did also sporadically with her parents until at least 1949) and Charles (much younger).

The Braudo family migrated in 1932 to Palestine where Lazar was a founder and Chairman of the Africa-Palestine Investment Company and also Chairman of the Anglo-Palestine Bank (later Bank Leumi).

Phyllis's first marriage in 1936 was to Yadin Frumkin (son of Justice Frumkin; who was later to command one of the Palestinian Jewish units in the British Army during World War Two). (Her second marriage was to Jack Lavie)

Charles became a scientist and departmental head at the Weizmann Institute of Science and was a pioneer and creator of Israel's radar defence installations during the Independence War of 1948-9.



### **Matthew's mother Cecilia**

Matthew's mother Cecilia (1883 – 1949) graduated from a Gymnasium (an institution at a higher level than a normal high school) at a time when illiteracy amongst the masses was the norm in the Russian Empire. Her family lived in Yanishek (Janiski) where her mother Rikla (Ruth) died in 1911.

Her father Shmuel (Samuel) tried life in both of the USA and South Africa but then returned to Lithuania circa 1909 and thereafter reportedly died in Poltava in the Ukraine in 1916 (to where many Lithuanian Jews were forcibly deported during World War One). He was possibly a casualty of the deportations.

Matthew and his mother Cecilia

Cecilia's only sibling Abraham Meyer Solomon (1879 -1916) immigrated to South Africa circa 1897, engaged in commerce and was prominent in Jewish communal affairs in Cape Town being a onetime president of the Dorshei Zion Association. He was a member of the delegation to the Cape Colony Government led by Morris Alexander in 1903 which successfully sought recognition of Yiddish as a European language (possession of which was a requirement for immigration into the Colony and without which recognition Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe would have been substantially reduced).

His marriage in 1913 to Alida Sacks (circa 1890-1974; then of London, previously of Yanischek; later Eban, after her second marriage in the UK to Dr Isaac Eban; who was Secretary to Nahum Sokolow and who translated the Balfour Declaration in 1917; of the same family as Oliver Sacks the neurologist and writer) produced two Capetonian born first cousins for Matthew: Ruth (1913-2005) named after her late mother-in-law; who married Dr R Lynn and was the mother of Jonathan Lynn the writer and film director of 'Yes Minister' and 'My Cousin Vinny' fame, and Aubrey (1915-2002) later known as Abba Eban, the famous Ambassador to the UN and USA, Minister of Education, Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of the State of Israel.

## **Abba Eban**

Aubrey Solomon aka Abba Eban left Cape Town in late 1915 when his dying father sought medical treatment in London. He corresponded sporadically in Hebrew with his Uncle Moses during the 1930s, arrived back in Cape Town in early 1942 on a troopship bound for the Middle East.





His uncle breached a bottle of champagne laid down many years previously (reportedly at Aubrey's bris) and his cousins Matthew and Michael showed him the town. The family still retains the two letters of thanks\* that he sent to his aunt and uncle and two cousins (the latter lengthier and much more informal and lighter in tone than the former)

This Group photo was taken at the Foreign Minister's residence in Jerusalem, in January 1970  
 Left to Right: back row: **Anthony Pamm, Matthew Pamm, Eli Eban, Julian Pamm. In the front: Joan Pamm, Suzy Eban (inset Abba Eban taken that day)**

Moses Pam's talents lay in the field of scholarship and pedagogy rather than commerce. Although he could command a premium rate for private Hebrew lessons, the Pam family was apparently far from well off during Matthew's youth. However, by 1930, the family owned their own semi-detached double-story house in Lingen Street, Gardens, Cape Town. (acquired costing 900 Pounds)

Whilst resident there, Matthew passed the Senior Certificate with Matriculation Exemption in 1931 having studied English Higher, Afrikaans Lower, Latin, Physical Science, History and Mathematics. His school principal (AP Blair of Cape Town High School) certified him as being 'a serious minded and conscientious pupil who devoted a considerable amount of his out of school time to the promotion of the school's athletic and literary clubs. His character was thoroughly sound'. His youthful interests also included spectator interests in rugby and cricket which continued throughout his life.

He was a voracious reader in his youth, primarily (but not exclusively) in English literature (an interest shared by his brother Michael who wrote poetry extensively in his latter life) and also, through self-education and effort in early adulthood, became knowledgeable about the Performing Arts

### **Pam / Pamm and legal studies**

Following matriculation, Matthew (possibly on the urging of his father) commenced legal articles with Edgar Clarence Solomon in January 1932. After completing these three-year articles, he continued in the employment of Solomon and Co, as a General Clerk in their Legal and Conveyancing Practices until May 1936 when he left of his own accord, apparently having decided that a legal career was not for him.

Until the commencement of articles, he had spelt his surname as 'Pam' (with one 'm' only). However, when the registration of Articles required the obtaining and submission of a birth certificate, it was discovered that his surname had been spelt as 'Pamm' (with two 'm's) when his

birth was registered, and he was legally 'Pamm' (which became his subsequent usage) although his parents and siblings were 'Pam'. Prior to World War One, his father probably used the spelling 'Pamm' : when attempting ventures in the then German South West Africa.

This surname (Pam) apparently falls into a class of surname that originated in the Hebrew abbreviation of a community title or position held at the time when the Jews in Russia were compelled to adopt surnames. 'Pam' apparently comes from the letters 'P' and 'M' and the abbreviated title (which is in full: Parness uManhig or Parness HaMedinah) apparently meant or stood for a Community Leader of a Province or Judicial District.

During his period of articles, he held memberships in the Cape Town Maccabee Organisation, the Western Province Table Tennis Association and the Harlequins Club and is shown on programmes of the latter two organisations as having been selected to be one of the MCs of their social functions. He actively played both table tennis and tennis.

Sometime during the 1930s he assisted with a Jewish Community Rehabilitation Effort and personally mentored a German Jewish Refugee from Nazism (Hans W.) who had arrived in Cape Town. Identification with Jewish causes continued throughout his life and in 1946 he donated the very substantial amount (both for the time and for his modest pocket) of 50 Pounds and 8 Shillings to the SA Jewish War Appeal for Jewish Relief and Reconstruction.

In various years thereafter he gave financial support to a number of local Jewish institutions as well as to the Israel United Appeal. These included a joint donation together with Michael Pam to the Cape Jewish Aged Home in memory of their parents.



In 1949 he commenced a multiyear affiliation with the recently established Temple Israel Reform Jewish Congregation (as also did his brother Michael at a date unknown, his other siblings remaining within Orthodoxy). Whilst he did attend High Holy Day services annually, he was not a regular attendee of weekly services.

From time to time his reading interests diverted into matters religious and Martin Buber's 'Jewish Mysticism and the Legends of the BaalShem' is mentioned in a 1970 letter to his nephew David who had become involved with the Hasidic Movement in Israel.

## Joining the Cape Times

From June 1936 until November 1942 Matthew Pamm was employed in the Advertising Department of The Cape Times (Cape Town's English language morning newspaper) where his duties embraced the selling of advertising space and writing of copy, duties which he discharged exceedingly well. E Lispett, his Advertisement Manager went on to say in his reference: 'I have at all times found him honest, loyal, reliable and competent, and I would like to comment on the cheerful way in which he has tackled difficult tasks. In addition to Mr Pamm's normal work he has, on a number of occasions, written the editorial matter to accompany feature pages. I wholeheartedly recommend Mr Pamm for any position which requires brains and initiative,

qualities which he has in abundance. I am sorry that he is leaving us and wish him every success in his future endeavours’.

Apparently selling ‘Smalls’ advertising space during this time was very much of an uphill battle involving much direct personal canvassing due to the rival evening ‘Argus’ newspaper having a monopoly position due to previously created public preference.

His journalistic career seems to have kicked off informally in early 1936 with a submission of a report of an armed raid on a house in the Gardens, Cape Town for which he received a payment of five shillings from the Cape Times. This was followed later in the same year by a substantial book review in the Cape Times of a volume of sermons of by the Chief Rabbi Prof Dr JL Landau (from whom he subsequently received a letter of appreciation) a substantial joint (with T Paitaki) newspaper article on ‘Table Tennis in the Province’ in September 1937, and a feature article entitled ‘Famous Last Words’ which appeared in the Argus in February 1938.

A note from management of December 1939 states that: ‘Mr Pamm is to be congratulated on the November figures. Our classified advertising rose in volume while Argus fell off. This is very encouraging and creditable’.

In early 1940 , Matthew gave notice on his employment to volunteer for military service with the UDF but was, after medical examination, not accepted due his frail physique.

Matthew's resignation from the Advertisement Department in 1942 was not a total departure from the Cape Times as he then transferred to their Editorial Department (which he had previously been assisting with entertainment notices and performance reviews whilst still officially with the advertising department) and continued thereafter, until 1953, to function on a part time basis as a from time to time locum for their Entertainment Editor Ivor Jones and as their Ballet, Film, Theatre and sometimes, Music Critic (this arrangement allowing him the latitude to pursue other interests as well).

## **Writing Arts Reviews**

He seems to have started giving practical journalistic expression to this interest by, at the very latest, 1941 when (still in the employ of the Advertisement Department of the Cape Times) he wrote a number of performance reviews and publicity pieces for the Performing Arts which appeared in the Cape Times in that year and had close contact then (as also in subsequent years until his retirement from Criticism) with a variety of Capetonian organisations in the Performing Arts whose gratitude he earned by his efforts to assist with, and promote in the press, their endeavours. This was done gratuitously, purely as a person interested in seeing the Arts develop and grow in Cape Town and certainly not as a paid Public Relations person.

(95)

17/10/42

## Success of Shaw Play

Halfway through "The Apple-cart," which opened at the Little Theatre last night, Shaw makes his central character, King Magnus, say: "There is no wife so precious, no children so jolly . . . that it is impossible ever to get tired of them." Analogously, unremitting talk, however brilliant, will inevitably lead to tedium on the stage unless the players pull something extra out of the bag.

It was a triumph for Jean de Beer and her cast that a first night audience, which perhaps demands more dramatic titillation than Shaw sometimes provides, received a play which is virtually a prolonged conversation with such expressive satisfaction.

"There's richness" of thought and ideas in this Shavian assault on democracy, sprinkled as might be expected with Shawmanship—whimsy-whamsy, gammon, or what you will. But one should not be too quick to read into the play a sweeping condemnation of democracy. As Shaw himself says: "It is never safe to take my plays at their suburban face value." "The Apple Cart" is a dramatic debate in which there are pros as well as cons, and provokes us into trying to penetrate the fog and working out a solution for ourselves.

Most of the acting fell on W. F. Grant as King Magnus and right royally did he bear the burden. Majestic without pretension expressive without emphasis, gracious yet aloof, he suggested perfect breeding and dignity, and in speech, he gave one a clearer realisation of what is meant by the King's English. His performance naturally dwarfed all the rest, but one could descant at length on the poised serenity of Ruth Snape's Queen as a foil to the metallic brilliance of Joyce Bradley's Orinthia, the subtle and consistently-maintained characterisation of Gordon Bagnall's Prime Minister, and the exaggerated but recognisable portraits of that amusing crew of political gangsters who compose his cabinet. And a word of praise to Cecil Pym for his sets.

M.S.P.

10/11/42

## "Spotlight" Reads Wilde

Those who love laughter larded with wit could ask for nothing better than "The Importance of Being Earnest" which was read by "Spotlight" last night in the Electricity House theatre to an appreciative audience. But Wilde's brilliant farce of ideas, like a butterfly which delights with its flutterings, must be handled carefully, lest under rough treatment the bloom be rubbed from its delicate wings.

### THE RIGHT NOTE

For the play to succeed, the players must never warm into humanity, and should be seen through a haze of artificiality, as if on a puppet stage. This tongue-in-cheek detachment to their parts seems to demand an almost clairvoyant type of acting—a case of the importance of being mock-earnest? Of the "Spotlight" players, Eirwen Jones struck the right note, and, at times, so did Cecil Williams and Ruth Kadish. Perhaps if Rosalie van der Gucht and Pat Nicholson had interchanged their parts, Lady Bracknell and Prism might have been better Wilde.

Generally, though, the "Spotlight" playreading was a rollicking affair, and if one missed the champagne sparkle, there was lots of beer froth to compensate.

The final performance takes place to-night.

M. S. P.

As an example, the following is taken from a letter dated 24-7-1941 from Miss A Stephens, Secretary of the Cape Town Ballet Club (the forerunner of CAPAB Ballet): 'I should like, on behalf of the Committee of the Cape Town Ballet Club, to thank you for the hard work you put in on behalf of the Club during and before our present season. It is a great pleasure to find someone connected with the Press who is really enthusiastic about ballet, and I can assure you we all appreciated very much the considerable amount of publicity you were able to obtain for us. There seems to be no reason now why we should not now go from strength to strength'.

These promotional efforts were not at the expense of his critical integrity when it came to reviewing performances. Where negative criticism was due, it was forthcoming but with the taking of 'pains to be constructive without being unkind'. Whilst still engaged in journalism, Matthew befriended and fostered upcoming younger talent in the field of criticism.

## Marriage to Joan

Whilst scanning the typists pool at the Cape Times his eye had been caught by Joan (1923-94) an immigrant from the UK, who in 1948 had found employment as secretary to George Ashman, the Day Editor. Marriage followed in 1949 and sons Anthony and Julian were born in 1951 and 1953 respectively.

In January 1945, Joan had lost her father and had almost lost her own life when she and her mother were buried under the rubble of their house when a V2 Rocket Bomb demolished much of their London street. She and her mother only survived because collapsed floorboards dropped them downwards into the cellar as the roof fell down on top of where they had been. Thereafter they endured, with few remaining possessions, very harsh winters in the UK before deciding to make a new life in a warmer climate.

Matthew with Julian and Joan with Anthony on their laps 1954

His literary activities during the period of his journalistic career included writing the book for the Ballet 'Fete Gallante' which was produced to the music of



Prokofieff and with the choreography of Dulcie Howes and the decor and costumes of John Dronsfield at the Alhambra Theatre in November and December 1944; and again presented in December 1945. Matthew also drafted scenarios for filmlets for African Consolidated Films Limited in 1946 and contributed a chapter entitled 'Ballet visits South Africa' which takes up pages 16 to 27 of the book 'Ballet in South Africa' which was edited by John Worrall and published in 1951 with a foreword by Anton Dolin. (This was apparently the first book on ballet ever to be published in South Africa.)

### **The 'South African Arts Review'**

Also, he attempted (initially in partnership with Neville H Romain and thereafter on his own when Romain pulled out of the venture in favour of safer paid employment) in 1944-45 to found and publish a monthly magazine, to be entitled the 'South African Arts Review', to be devoted to the furtherance of the Arts and Creative Writing in South Africa.

Despite receiving the recommendations and support of various prominent persons, this venture did not get off the ground due to wartime paper rationing and the refusal of a government paper usage permit due to uncertainties of paper supplies at the time.

In his motivation to the Controller of Paper, Matthew stated as follows: 'There is not one magazine at the moment in the country devoted to the promotion of South African art, in its widest sense as embracing painting, sculpture, etc., literature, music, theatre, ballet, cinema.'

Matthew went on to say: 'A few periodicals do touch on the arts, but they do so very lightly, and serve only to emphasize the serious lack of a national arts review, such as I have in mind, which will provide a forum to our best writers in English and Afrikaans to expose their views constructively, and which will at the same time carry, as regular features, reviews of art events all over the Union. To do this, I shall maintain correspondents, who are experts in their various fields, in all our big cities. Also, space permitting, I would like to encourage original literature, essays, poetry, fiction, with a South African flavour. If allowed to publish, I shall work sincerely to produce a truly national magazine, without political or any other bias, and of high standard. I have a wide choice of contributors, all able and sincere'.

His reviews of performances and films were subject to the constraints then applying to someone writing for a morning newspaper; for, at that time, the ethos was that a review should appear the morning following the opening night. This meant that the critic had to see the performance or film on its opening night and then immediately thereafter type out his review in time to get it to the night editorial staff to beat the very tight deadline for the forthcoming morning edition.

He was writing for a general daily newspaper and not a specialised publication and he had to bear in mind the general level of theatrical literacy of his readership so that his writings could be intelligible to, and adequately inform, the 'woman on the Kloof Street bus'. In accordance with a common journalistic practice of the time, he wrote under a pseudonym, at first as 'MP' and then as 'MSP'.

When he died in November 1979 his obituary in the Cape Times (there was also one in the Argus) included the following tribute from their then dance critic Eve Borland (nee Hurwitz; the sister of Sir Ronald Harwood):

'His knowledge of dance came from a deep love of his subject of theatre and certainly of music. In the early years of the Cape Town Ballet Club, I remember him watching rehearsals, watching classes and never missing a performance. He was known for the literacy of his reviews, and for his natural feel for good taste, artistry and quality'.

### **Cuttings book: The Performing Arts in Cape Town (1941 to 1952)**

Matthew left behind files of cuttings of his writings that had been published in the Cape Times. These were edited and put into date sequence by his son Anthony with considerable secretarial help from Mrs Joan Pamm and Mrs Marjorie Evelyn Gregory and reproduced in a very limited photocopy edition of 369 pages in 1983 with a 100 page supplement thereto in 1984 under the title "**The Performing Arts in Cape Town ( 1941 to 1952 ) as seen and reviewed by Matthew Pamm (1914-79 ) who was the Theatre, Ballet and Film Critic of the "Cape Times"** (writing under the pseudonym 'MSP'. One copy of each was donated by the Pamm family to the South African Library in Cape Town and originally appeared in their catalogue under Clippings References 09551 and 09552.

The cuttings contain reviews of theatrical productions and ballets staged, musical performances and films shown in Cape Town as well as informational advisories and commentary as to what was on or forthcoming in the spheres of

theatre, ballet, dance, music and film. They give comprehensive coverage on what was produced and available for viewing in the Performing Arts in Cape Town during this period which was a formative period for some of the Capetonian organisations in these fields.

One copy remains (in January 2024) with Matthew's sons who would like to find an eventual good home for it as they have no descendants. The original cuttings were presented by the Pamm Family to the Centre for Theatre Research at the Human Sciences Research Council and were catalogued by them under Reference 1000 / 1-6.

Matthew also retained all the programmes of performances that he saw, and this historically valuable record was, after his death sold, to Mr Percy Tucker, the well-known theatre personality (who developed Computicket) who had indicated that he would be entrusting them to a relevant archive at the University of Grahamstown.

The cuttings and programs record, and Matthew's activities, efforts and contributions took place within, a seminal period in the development of the Performing Arts in South Africa when Cape Town was the cultural capital of the country.

His activities are also reflected in published books by other writers (either under his name or under his pseudonym of MSP): Those known are as follows:

- (1) 'The History of Ballet in South Africa' by Marina Grut. (References or quotes are on pages 43,45,46,78,80,83,95,137,138,143,147-8,151 & 152) (2) '
- (2) 'Forty Little Year. The Story of a Theatre' by Donald Inskip (References are on pages 53,69 and possibly on page 70)

(3) 'She shall have Music' by Beatrice Marx. (On page 75 there is a profile of Matthew in a photograph of him, Ivor Jones and Beatrice Marx interviewing Noel Coward in 1944)



Left to right in this picture above from the Cape Times of their critics in action are Noel Coward, unidentified man standing, Beatrice Marx, Ivor Jones and Matthew Pamm

(4) 'The Flag is Flying. A Very Personal History of Theatre in the Old South Africa' by Leonard Schach. (References are on pages 49 and 125)

(5) 'Cape Theatre in the 1940s' by Dennis Hatfield. This gives a review of 'Fete Gallante' but omits any mention of Matthew (a rival critic) whilst mentioning his cocreators Dulcie Howes and John Dronsfield)

**The importance of the Matthew Pamm Cuttings Archive** is emphasized by comments made by Leonard Schach (who was unaware of its existence) on page 125 of his book (referred to above) where he bewails the absence of collections of the writings of South African critics and stresses the importance of such for the preservation of, and the provision of easy access to, theatre history. (Leonard was friendly with Matthew and had correspondence with him.)

### **Years in the clothing industry**

Matthew's life in commerce and industry developed from 1942 onwards, concurrently with his career as a Critic. His journalistic career as a critic continued until 1953 when changed personal family circumstances caused him to abandon journalism entirely for full time engagement in commerce and the clothing industry.

In the early years before he learned to drive and could afford a car, his activities as a manufacturer's representative involved lugging suitcases containing samples around on public transport.

By circa 1945 he was acting as manufacturer's representative and Cape Town sales agent for the 'Hellas' clothing manufacturing firm owned by the German Jewish immigrant brothers Carl and Edgar Fileman. He was made a Director of this company circa 1953 and continued with 'Hellas' until 1957 when he left to join 'Tavetta' as a Director. Tavetta was a clothing manufacturing firm which had been started by his brother Michael who had also previously been a successful manufacturer's representative. Part of the motivation for the change was to assist Michael after he had had a serious operation.

In a letter later in the same year to Sydney Press (the founder of 'Edgars') he noted that 'Tavetta is toil, unremitting toil' which was involving him in twelve hour working days and producing "Tavetta tiredness", which is frequently not far removed from physical and spiritual exhaustion'. The last more than a decade of his life were seriously marred by health disabilities to which the various severe stresses of the greater Tavetta (and its successor firm Michello) environment are thought to have been a major causative factor.

In 1964 Tavetta was written up in The Buyer (magazine of the clothing industry) when a first batch of employees (all from the Cape Coloured race grouping that was then discriminated against by Apartheid legislation) received substantial length of service gratuities arising from an employee

EXTRACT FROM : THE BUYER February 1964

## GENEROUS GESTURE BY TAVETTA 10 years' service

### Nearly R8,000 paid in bonuses

TAVETTA (PTY.) LTD. of Queens Park Avenue, Salt River, Cape Town, leading manufacturers of women's outerwear, have paid 15 employees nearly R8,000 in bonuses for faithful service, the smallest individual amount being almost R500 and the largest almost R1,000. Newspapers throughout the country reported this generous gesture, and great interest has been evoked throughout the trade by this scheme which is believed to be unique.

Tavetta (Pty.) Ltd. instigated the scheme 10 years ago, and the first pay-out took place in January this year when the first group of workers who had completed 10 years of unbroken service received their cheques.

Each year all employees are graded from A to F depending on their progress and initiative, and varying amounts of money are put aside by the firm according to the grading attained. In this way the special fund accumulates to sizable proportions over the 10-year period.

"This is a reward for long, loyal and diligent service and outstanding character. We keep the money and give them a lump sum instead of an annual pay-out. When they receive the money we advise them on its disposal, whether to pay debts, invest in housing, or just put away for a rainy day," said Mr. Michael Pam, managing director of Tavetta (Pty.) Ltd.

In addition to the bonus scheme all workers take part in an annual leadership contest. The man and the woman who have shown exceptional qualities receive a cup each, and should the same worker win the cup for three years in succession they become the proud owner of the trophy. Two cups have already been won by women in this scheme.

Among the 15 diligent employees who have benefited from this scheme there is a determination not to waste the money, a pride in the fact that they have worked hard to earn such a bonus, and an incentive to continue doing their duty and to put in that extra enthusiasm.

Each succeeding year more employees will qualify for a bonus, and in January 1965 a group of 14 workers will have completed their decade and can look forward to an appreciative gift from the directors of Tavetta (Pty.), Ltd.



Workers of Tavetta (Pty.) Ltd. women's outerwear manufacturers, of Cape Town, who received bonuses for 10 years loyal service in January this year. (Back row—From left): Sulieman Dramat, button-hole maker, Joe Mias, storeman, Gamat v. d. Schyff, presser, James Hopley, head packer, John Dixon, presser, and Leonard Carlse, head cutter. (Seated—from left): Achmat Abrahams, collar shaper, Maud Fredericks, tea girl, Kathleen Bagley, examiner, Nellie Barron, baster, Beatrice van Schalkwyk, examiner and shop steward and Ben Rughbaar, presser. Three workers not in the picture are Lily Fredericks, head tea girl, Hester Cupido, machinist, and Hoosein Kamaladien, supervisor machinist.

benefit scheme instituted and run by the firm. This scheme was a nationwide 'first' for the extremely competitive and cut-throat clothing manufacturing industry

Both of the brothers Matthew Pamm and Michael Pam of Tavetta were accorded biographical entries in the 'Who's Who of Southern Africa' (1966 Edition)

### Leisure activities

In his leisure life, Matthew continued to be interested in music, theatre and film and continued to be a reader and collector of books, adding Africana to his range of interests and focussing his English literature interests on twentieth century writers and the 'Modern Movement'. These latter interests took him on regular Saturday visits to the bookstall of Mr and Mrs 'Sanctuary' Stokes on the Grand Parade and the bookshops of Anthony Clarke (a previous Cape Times colleague) and Rael Semanovitch ('Cranfords') in Long and Dorp Streets. He also took up golf and played bridge with friends from time to time.



In 1962 he was invited to join the committee organising a celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Helen Webb's teaching. In 1965 his second cousin, Phyllis Spira, joined CAPAB Ballet in Cape Town in the first stages of her illustrious ballet dancing career in South Africa after returning from the Royal Ballet in London.

Before she arrived, Matthew and Joan offered to host her until she could establish herself in Cape Town and this offer translated into a stay by Phyllis of a couple of years as a house guest in the Pamm family home in Oranjezicht, Cape Town. These circumstances brought the entire Pamm family directly into the milieu of Cape Town's ballet world with which Matthew had had decreased contact after his retirement as a critic.



Phyllis Bernice Spira was born in 1943 in Johannesburg where she started



dancing school at age 4. She made great progress and is pictured as a teenager with all her trophies and medals before leaving for London where she was accepted at the Royal Ballet School and then into the Royal Ballet Touring Company as a soloist where she toured extensively in Europe, and the Middle and Far East. In 1964 she decided she wanted to return to South Africa to dance in the country of her birth, and in so doing, she was obliged to turn down an invitation to dance with Rudolf Nureyev. She joined the performing arts company in Johannesburg in 1964 but moved to the Cape equivalent the following year. After touring with the National Ballet of Canada from 1967-9 she returned to CAPAB where she became the leading performer. She enjoyed two dance partnerships, the first with Gary Burne and the second with Eduard Greyling. She was awarded the title of *prima ballerina assoluta* in 1984 and continued to dance until 1988 when she suffered an injury on the opening night of Giselle. She then became the Principal Ballet Mistress of CAPAB until 1999 when that company was renamed the Cape Town City Ballet Company. She and her husband, Philip Boyd, ran the 'Dance for All' Programme originally started by David Poole, which teaches ballet in the black townships of Cape Town. See Phyllis dancing in Le Corsair in Cape Town in the 1980s

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGZoZ6MJ5To>

## Family Holidays

Coinciding with the annual factory closing period of the clothing industry) family holidays were often taken in Hermanus (where Mathew and Joan had honeymooned) and sometimes the family went on a Union Castle Line ship travelling up the coast to Durban.)

In 1970 the Pamm family undertook its first joint overseas holiday. Highlights were seeing Joan's and Matthew's overseas relatives. On Matthew's side, Alida and Isaac Eban were still living in London and Ruth Lynn was also visited there. In Israel, Charles Braudo was visited at the Weizman Institute and dinner was had with Abba and Suzy Eban and their son Eli in the Foreign Minister's official residence in Jerusalem. This was the last time that Matthew was to see his overseas relatives although Joan, Anthony and Julian were to meet with some in subsequent years.

In 1971 Matthew collaborated with the aged David Zuckerman (who had actually known AM Solomon) in researching the biography of Abba Eban's father for the biography of Abba Eban then being written by Robert St John. David credited Matthew with having produced most of the research into which effort Matthew had put much time and energy. When the biography subsequently came out in 1973, Matthew did a review of it for The Argus newspaper.

Matthew lived to see both of his sons, graduate – Anthony as a BCom CA(SA) and Julian as a Medical Doctor, MBChB (UCT). Matthew died at a relatively young age of 65 on 4 November 1979 following an operation some months previously which produced no positive result. He was buried in Grave # 218, Row WB, Section 3, Pinelands Jewish Cemetery Number 2 in Cape Town.

He was a man of generosity of spirit who, throughout his life, had benefited many people by acts of generosity and kindness.

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## Biography of Matthew Pamm written, and pictures provided by his son Anthony Pamm,

Cape Town, January 2014 (updated, July 2024)

## **Anthony Pamm Articles Published in the Jerusalem Post**

The following have appeared on the JERUSALEM POST WEBSITE .

All were previously published in THE JERUSALEM REPORT

(1) COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE AND PROTECTING ECOLOGY IN ISRAEL (JP 9 March 2024 ) (JR 11 March pages 28-9)

[jpost.com/environment-and-climate-change/article-790731](https://jpost.com/environment-and-climate-change/article-790731)

(2) THE PALESTINIAN WAR PLAN AND THE TWO-STATE PEACE DELUSION (JP 14 May 2024) (JR 13 May pages 30-31)

[jpost.com/opinion/article-799912](https://jpost.com/opinion/article-799912)

(3) FROM THE SEA TO THE LAKE : THE PROBLEMS WITH DESALINATION IN ISRAEL (JP 29 June 2024) (JR 24 June page 38)

[jpost.com/israel-news/article-808075](https://jpost.com/israel-news/article-808075)

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### **\*There follows A LIST OF ABBA EBAN LETTERS AND INSCRIBED BOOKS IN THE FAMILY ARCHIVES in CAPE TOWN**

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The following is a listing ( in chronological order ) of original LETTERS held in the Capetonian Family Archives from ABBA EBAN (born Aubrey Solomon) 1915-2002 (Israeli Founding Father, Statesman, Author and Historian ) to relatives (the Pam / Pamm Family) in Cape Town, South Africa, where he was born.

The catalogue of LETTERS is followed by details of where these letters are illustrated on a history website

This is followed by a catalogue of BOOKS by and about Abba Eban (some of which are inscribed by him to family members in South Africa)

Note: the LETTER COLLECTION and the BOOK COLLECTION are two separate entities

#### (A) THE ABBA EBAN LETTER COLLECTION

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##### EARLY LETTERS TO HIS UNCLE IN CAPE TOWN

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(1) Dated 16-5-1933, from London: To his Uncle Moses BenZion Pam in Cape Town  
2 Page (3 Sides) signed manuscript letter in Hebrew Some repairs with cellophane tape

(2) Dated 24-9-1933, from London: To his Uncle Moses Benzion Pam in Cape Town  
3 Pages (3 Sides) signed manuscript letter in Hebrew

(3) Dated 17-1-1935, from Queens' College, Cambridge: To his Uncle Moses Benzion Pam in Cape Town  
3 Pages (5 Sides) signed manuscript letter in Hebrew. On headed (3 pages) Queens' College, Cambridge notepaper.

## Notes

(a): These letters provide important records of his development, thinking and aspirations in his early years.

(b) M B Pam was the husband of Cecilia Pam (nee Solomon) who was the sister of Abraham Meyer Solomon, the birth father of Abba Eban, who later took his stepfather's surname after his mother remarried after the death of her first husband.

LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS SENT AFTER LIEUT. A SOLOMON EBAN, INTELLIGENCE CORPS, HAD BRIEFLY STOPPED OVER IN CAPE TOWN (HIS PLACE OF BIRTH) EN ROUTE TO EGYPT IN LATE DECEMBER 1941 OR EARLY JANUARY 1942 AND HAD SEEN, AND BEEN PROVIDED HOSPITALITY BY HIS AUNT AND UNCLE AND COUSINS THERE

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(4) Telegram (undated) (1 page, 1 Side) from London Signed "Alida" (Eban; mother of Abba Eban) To "Pamm, care Zuckerman Cape".

Text: "Many thanks for cable. Our love and best wishes to all, including Audrey. Happy to hear family well".

(5) Letter dated 10-1-1942, at sea between South Africa and Egypt. 4 Pages (4 Sides) signed manuscript letter in English: To his cousins Matthew Pamm and Michael Pam. Thanking them for their hospitality during his visit. (This letter is more informal in nature and with more extensive content than his thank you letter to his Aunt and Uncle.)

(6) Letter dated 11-1-1942. at sea between South Africa and Egypt. 1 Page (1 Side) signed manuscript letter in English: To his Uncle and Aunt, Moses Benzion and Cecilia Pam, thanking them for their hospitality during his visit

(7) Telegram (1 Page, 1 Side) dated 5-2-1942 from Egypt. To "Pam Knightsbridge, Beach Rd, Cape" (address of his cousins). Text: "Fondest greetings all well and safe My address is Gen Staff Intelligence / C GHQ MEF Aubrey Eban".

## LATER CORRESPONDENCE TO FAMILY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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(8) Dated 14-4-1981. To Joan Pamm (wife of his late cousin Matthew Pamm)

Thanking her for assistance during his and Suzy's visit to Cape Town

(during which Joan identified, and took them to see, the house of his parents Avromeir and Alida Solomon where he started life)

1 Page (1 Side) typed, with autograph signature "Aubrey" on "The Knesset Jerusalem" letterhead.

(9) Dated 1-8-1988 To Anthony Pamm (son of his late cousin Matthew Pamm)

Thanking him for a letter and photographs and referring to family member Phyllis Lavie (daughter of S African Zionist Pioneer Lazar Braudo).

1 Page (1 Side) typed, with autograph signature "Abba", on letterhead of "The Chairman Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, The Knesset Jerusalem".

(10) Dated 31-10-1989 To Anthony Pamm (son of his late cousin Matthew Pamm)

1 Page (1 Side) typed, with autograph signature "Abba Eban", on personal letterhead



Abba Eban (Aubrey Solomon) in Cape Town with cousins, December 1941/January 1942  
From the left Matthew Pamm, Abba Eban, unidentified woman and Michael Pam (picture courtesy of the South African Jewish Museum (SAJM) Jewish archives.

#### NOTES:

(a) This archive incorporates early and important items foreshadowing later career developments

(b) At various times Abba Eban held the official positions in Israel of:

Ambassador to the USA, Ambassador to the United Nations, Chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Minister of Education and Culture, Foreign Minister, Deputy Prime Minister.

(c) The Pamm family had preserved a large wedding photograph of Abba Eban's parents (AM Solomon and A Sacks) which had on its frame a presentation inscription from the Dorshei Zion Association, Cape Town.

When the Ebans visited Cape Town in 1981 (refer letter # 8 above) the Pamm family presented this to Abba Eban, and he took it back to Israel with him.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS ON WEBSITE

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These letters are currently illustrated on the website of the JEWISH DIGITAL ARCHIVE PROJECT ([sajmarchives.com/pamm-relatives-collection](http://sajmarchives.com/pamm-relatives-collection))

The illustrations are of scanned photocopies of the originals and might possibly incorporate copying defects and losses of textual content which defects are not in the original letters

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#### (B) THE ABBA EBAN BOOK COLLECTION

Note: this is a separate entity to the letter collection

BOOKS BY ABBA EBAN: INSCRIBED BY HIM to family members in South Africa

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(1) ABBA EBAN.VOICE OF ISRAEL (NY c.1969 New enlarged edn DW)  
Inscribed: "To Matthew and Joan affectionately Abba Eban Jerusalem1970 ".

(2) MY PEOPLE. THE STORY OF THE JEWS (Ln 1969 1st UK edn DW)  
Inscribed: "To Matthew and Joan, Anthony and Julian affectionately Abba Eban Jerusalem 20 January 1969".

(3) HERITAGE. CIVILISATION AND THE JEWS (Jerusalem c.1985 DW)  
Inscribed: "To Joan, Anthony and Julian with cordial wishes Herzliya December 28, 1985".

BOOK BY ABBA EBAN: INSCRIBED BY HIS DAUGHTER to family in South Africa  
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(4) PERSONAL WITNESS. ISRAEL THROUGH MY EYES (NY 1992 1st Edn DW)  
Inscribed by Gila Eban: "To Julian and Anthony Is been a great pleasure to meet you and I hope we'll meet again. Warm regards to the Solomon and Pamm families in South Africa Gila Eban 25 June 2014 New York City".

BOOKS BY ABBA EBAN: NOT INSCRIBED  
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(5) ABBA EBAN. VOICE OF ISRAEL (NY 1966 1st Edn )

(6) ISRAEL IN THE WORLD (NY 1966 1st Edn DW)

(7) MY COUNTRY. THE STORY OF MODERN ISRAEL. (Ln 1972 1st Edn DW )

(8) THE NEW DIPLOMACY. INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS IN THE MODERN AGE (NY 1983 1st Edn DW)

(9) ABBA EBAN. AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY (Paperback)

BIOGRAPHY OF ABBA EBAN  
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(10) ROBERT ST JOHN. ABBA EBAN (NY 1972 1st Edn DW)

ADDRESSES TO THE UNITED NATIONS BY ABBA EBAN AFTER THE SIX DAY WAR OF 1967  
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(11) ISRAEL'S FINEST DAY. THE COMPLETE TEXT OF ABBA EBAN'S ADDRESS TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL  
(USA c.1967 Illustrated Collector's Edition)

(12) (GRAMOPHONE RECORD VOICE RECORDING OF ABBA EBAN )  
'WHY ISRAEL FOUGHT': THE ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL MR ABBA EBAN ON 19TH JUNE 1967 AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

(Two records in a pictorial double sleeve Produced and distributed by ABC for the SAZF) (3 copies held)  
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