

Unsung hero Maurice honoured in project



BEHIND THE COUNTER: Maurice Dorfman in 2016

★ **HABERDASHERY, Clapham and Judaism: just three of the wonderful facets of MAURICE DORFMAN's life being posthumously celebrated next week in London.**

A visual exhibition as well as a 230-page book, *Behind the Shop Facade: The Life of Maurice Dorfman* (printed copy £40; digital copy £10), documents the memories and stories of a Jewish man who ran Jeanette Fashions, the longest surviving traditional shop on Clapham High Street.

Written and illustrated by Clapham-based Jim Grover, the project took more than 18 months to pull together, taking him on an extraordinary journey through Maurice's life.

And detailing exactly why he felt compelled to honour this man, the award-winning photographer and author said: "I like finding unsung heroes and Maurice is one of those."

"This is a man who served his community and made a difference in people's lives."

"When I hear about Maurice, and his impact on customers and friends, I am inspired."

"The man was still opening the shop at the age of 86, even when business was dwindling. He kept it open as a way of life and I was full of admiration for him."

Maurice's paternal grandparents originally emigrated from western Ukraine in 1902, fleeing pogroms, whereas his maternal side emigrated from Australia.

The family was steeped in tailoring traditions. His mother Jeanette was a corsetière while father David was a tailor.

Maurice, born in 1932, would follow in their footsteps.

Based in Essex during his early years, Jim believes the family faced antisemitism, which had been rife in the country in the 1930s and 40s.

"I was unable to find out if he celebrated his barmitzvah or was

religious, but he was commonly known as Murray," Jim explained.

"His brother Hyman, meanwhile, was often called Harry, which made me think they anglicised their names deliberately."

"Although his religiosity is not clear, I found a yarmulke in one of the drawers of his shop, as well as a book detailing the rules of Jewish burials."

Maurice's father passed away in 1992, and without any other family or spouses, Maurice continued to run the shop alone until he died in 2020, just prior to the pandemic.

It is likely the shop will be sold and the building renovated, but Jim was not satisfied with allowing this man's memory to pass uncelebrated.

Following Maurice's death, 63-year-old Jim printed out large

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portraits he had taken of Maurice in 2016, and filled the shop window with them to communicate his passing.

Complete strangers reminisced outside the store, discussing a man who had been a massive part of their life and their high street.

And acknowledging how Maurice's memory brought the community together, Jim had found the inspiration for his tribute exhibition.

"When I retired, I wanted to become a documentary photographer," he continued.

"I was really keen on telling the story about Clapham High Street, a schizophrenic place — by day a classic and suburban London high street and by night a bonkers area with bars and clubs."

"But right at the far end of the high street was this large fading haberdashery where I discovered this wonderful man."

"It was clear he had been there forever. The shop was decaying slightly, but here he was, this strong independent man of 84 years, opening the store six days a week."

"He was a bastion of the old-fashioned high street, while all around him new developments and bars were thriving, but he was always there, almost stubbornly."

"Every time I visited, we would chat and he would play music — it was lovely — and I grew very fond of him."

And it is not just Jim on whom Maurice had an enormous effect.

As it becomes clear in the book, his influence extended far and wide, and that was abundantly noticeable to Jim.

"This project morphed into something much bigger than I originally expected," Jim said.

"The more I explored, the more people were keen to speak with me about Maurice."

"People contributed all sorts, but one of the most special was this woman in America, Anne, who is the daughter of one of his former romances, Margaret."

"They were together in the swinging 60s and Anne said that whenever Maurice took her mother out for dancing or sailing, he would often take her along, too."

"She vividly remembers their relationship and was just one of many who were keen to continue this tribute, reflecting about this wonderful character."

■ For more information on the project and the exhibition visit: Behindtheshopfacade.com

■ The 230-page book, which contains all of the images in the exhibition and the memories and stories of more than 60 contributors, is available to purchase through the website or by contacting Jim directly at jim.grover@mac.com

Natasha gets a kick from her football training

★ MANCHESTER United fan NATASHA WILLIAMS, pictured right, is following in the footsteps of her footballing hero, CRISTIANO RONALDO.

The 20-year-old — who is completing a BA in psychology at Leeds University — signed for Yorkshire side Harrogate Town Ladies, of the North East Regional Women's Football League Premier Division, in the summer.

And despite injury and Covid-19 curtailing much of her football last season, the former Manchester High School student is thrilled to have been given the chance to recover and flourish at the Sulphurites.

Playing as a right-winger, she learned a lot of her skills from watching Portuguese superstar Ronaldo, who returned to United in August.

"Cristiano is definitely my biggest inspiration from a footballing point of view," Natasha said. "He was the player I always aspired to be."

Natasha has mostly featured for the Harrogate Ladies second team this season in a bid to help her recovery from injury.

The team sits fifth in the division at the moment, but for Natasha, the most important thing was to get back in the swing of things.

"I play for the reserves predominantly, but we train with the first team," she added. "It has been a good way to get back into it after an injury and they are great players."

"I have been treated really well since joining, and it has been a great experience joining up with the men's team so we have managed to get tickets to a few games and use really fantastic resources."

Natasha's footballing journey started when she was just nine, playing for Bury until she turned 16, before making the move to her first senior club, Wythenshawe Amateurs Ladies.

She has also featured in the Maccabiah Games before moving to Leeds for university.

She started work as a football coach at Leeds Maccabi in 2019 and has since joined Leeds United as a junior coach.

Natasha has helped develop a range of individuals, including kids, adults and disabled footballers.

That is how her role at Harrogate Ladies came to fruition, and she has not looked back since. She praised the coaching gig for improving her playing ability.

"Coaching has been an amazing experience and incredibly different to playing," Natasha continued.



"However, it has really added to the playing side because you can become more self-critical and see mistakes being made and learn how to rectify things."

And these improvements and opportunities may not have been available to Natasha only a couple of decades ago.

Women's football and its status has grown rapidly, with attendance records being smashed every year in the Women's Super League.

And the fact that there are women's leagues for Natasha to play in, four divisions below the country's elite level, is not a fact lost on her.

"When I started playing there really were not many teams at all," she explained.

"There was practically no media presence either. But as I have grown up, it feels as if women's football has grown with me and seen a massive improvement."

"Even just from working in coaching, the amount of available opportunities is far better than it

'The coaching and psychological side is where my biggest interest lies'

used to be, which is great for girls coming into the game nowadays."

Despite her love of playing the game, she has set her sights on a future away from the pitch.

Next year, she is planning on doing a Master's in sports psychology.

And she praised her parents, GISELLE and ROBERT WILLIAMS, of Prestwich, Manchester, for their academic focus.

"They certainly gave me more of a push towards uni, but my dad in particular has always been very into his sport," she added.

"He always encouraged me to take up sport in some way and if I found a passion, to follow it."

"Getting into coaching was a fluke and became a part-time job, but it has now led me to something I think will be a future career."

"I do not think playing is my long-term plan — the coaching and psychological side is where my biggest interest lies, but for now I will hope to play for as long as possible."

HAVA LAUGH

★ A JEWISH businessman returns home after a long business trip and discovered that his best friend had passed away.

He visits his friend's grave and reads on the stone: "Here rests Moishe Chochem, a virtuous man, and an honest merchant."

The businessman says: "Poor Moishe!

Buried with two strangers!"

★ CHAIM, a rich 80-year-old, bumped into an old friend.

"I'm engaged to a gorgeous 25-year-old woman!" Chaim bragged.

"Why would a 25-year-old woman want to marry an 80-year-old man?" his friend asked.

"I told her I was 90."