

Novel was inspired by father's true identity

BY SIMON YAFFE

AUTHOR Karen Millie-James thought her father was Swedish when she was growing up.

And it was not until years after his premature death that she discovered the truth.

Roger Cummings' story unfurled for Karen and the family when she discovered letters which were written in German.

They revealed that he was born Rudi Adolf Cohn in Germany and was one of the first children smuggled out of the country on the Kindertransport at the age of 12 in 1939.

He left behind his whole family, including his older twin brothers, Hans and Gunther, who were too old to qualify for the Kindertransport.

And Roger's family were murdered in the concentration camps.

I knew nothing about him until I found letters

"I also read his obituary in a local newspaper and asked my mum about it," Karen told me.

"Other than that, I knew absolutely nothing about him until I found the letters."

And it was her father's story which inspired Buckinghamshire-based Karen to write the novel *Where In The Dark* (King of The Road Publishing, £14.99/£8.99), which will be published on Monday.

It tells the story of two bearer bonds, each worth £1 million, arriving at the homes of two Holocaust survivors, with no clues as to their origin.

Fearing their lives are in danger, they enlist the help of corporate forensic investigator Cydney Granger to track down the bonds'



INSPIRED BY DAD: Karen Millie-James

origins and bring the demons of their past to justice.

Along with her team of investigators at Granger Associates, Cydney enters the secretive world of international banking to uncover a web of corruption, blackmail, murder and stolen Nazi treasures.

And, with a little help from beyond the grave, Cydney's investigation brings her face-to-face with an escaped Nazi criminal living under an assumed name, whose son is running for the American presidency.

"The escaped Nazi is using stolen gold to fund his son and the family bank," said Karen, who is married to Peter.

"I wanted to find whether he would find any remorse when he thought back to his actions and put him in situations to explore the character."

For 16 years after the war, Roger exchanged letters with the United Restitution Office in London.

He had to create exhaustive lists of household items, such as butter dishes, cutlery and bedding, from vague memories.

Finally, in 1961, he was offered the paltry sum of £1,314.13s 2d — incredibly, they also deducted commission and exchange handling charges.



SECRET: Roger Cummings when he was chairman of AJEX

Karen, who runs a consultancy business, said: "Around 16 years ago, Germany opened up its restitution files, so I went to the German embassy in London.

"My father's family owned a bank, factory and other properties in Charlottesburg, Berlin.

"What struck me when I was at the embassy was that a woman came out to see me and asked, 'These are your grandparents, uncles and aunt who died?' and I just replied, 'No — they were murdered'.

"I was told the claim would not go ahead, but we did receive £1,000 from an American insurance policy which my grandparents had taken out in the 1920s or 1930s."

Karen, the oldest of four children, was 12 when her father died in 1967, at the age of just 39.

He had gone into hospital for a routine hernia operation, but suffered a pulmonary embolism.

"Dad told everyone, including his children, that he was Swedish," Karen recalled.

"But I remember coming home on my 11th or 12th birthday with a cassette player made by (German company) Grundig.

"I had brought it with some money dad had given me for doing well in my 11-plus, but when he saw it, he said he was not having that brand in the house and he threw it out. I never understood why."

Rudi attended boarding schools

in Taplow and Hereford before being placed with a family in Birmingham and was naturalised in 1947, changing his name to Roger Cummings.

He joined the British army in 1944 and the Intelligence Corps in March, 1946, was stationed in Belgium and ventured into Germany to help capture fugitive Nazis.

For his work, he was awarded the France and Germany Star.

Roger went on to serve as chairman of AJEX, too.

Karen, who read business and languages at the University of Westminster, wanted to write from an early age.

Five years ago, she penned *The Shadows Behind Her Smile*, which introduced Cydney Granger.

"With *Where In The Dark*, I wanted to work out in my own mind why the Nazis did what they did and why they used the Jews as

He threw out my Grundig tape player

scapegoats," Karen explained.

"I wanted to find answers on behalf of my dad, as well as his family who were murdered.

"I interviewed two Holocaust survivors, Ziggi Shipper and Ivor Perl. They are both amazing men."

Karen has been to Germany just once, overnight in her teenage years, but hated it.

Karen recalled: "I was so uncomfortable. My brothers have suggested the four of us go to Charlottesburg and see the family's house, factory and bank, but I won't.

"It was so much for dad to leave Germany and for us to voluntarily go there, I think he would have turned in his grave.

"I don't think it was something he would want."

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Back-seat singer Emma lands the lead role in Evita

BY SARA RADIVAN

AS a young child, when Emma Kingston, above, used to travel in the back seat of her father Mark's car from north-west London to visit her paternal grandparents, Naomi and Mervin Kingston, in Liverpool, she would sing songs from the shows for the whole three-hour journey.

Her mum, dad and younger siblings Rebecca and Sammy didn't stand a chance; the musicals always won and Emma's voice was always louder than theirs.

But it has paid off with a number of starring roles in hit musicals.

The 26-year-old recently finished playing the part of Hodel in *Fiddler on the Roof* at the Chichester Festival Theatre, performing alongside Omid Djalili as Tevye and Tracey-Ann Oberman as Golde.

"I used to watch the film with my grandma when I was younger and *Fiddler* was always quoted around our house," she said.

"Far from the Home I Love was the first song I ever sang in a singing lesson when I was 11."

In September, Emma will fly to South Africa to start the international tour of *Evita*, in which she has been cast as the leading lady Eva Peron.

Emma, whose musical idol is Barbra Streisand, was personally chosen by director Hal Prince, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice for the relaunch of this production.

The show will start in Johannesburg on October 14 before heading to Cape Town from December 1. After South Africa, the tour heads to Asia.

"My mum Lisette was born in Argentina, so I really have come full circle" Emma proudly declared.

Emma attended Rosh Pinah Primary School and gained a music scholarship to her secondary school, Immanuel College.

She played the piano and had singing lessons outside school. She graduated in musical theatre from Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts.

Since graduating, Emma has always been in work, starting with the part of Miss Lynch in the touring production of *Grease*.

Other theatre credits include *21 Chump Street*, *In The Heights*, *Les Miserables* and *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*.

Israeli music lover's project given recognition by Forbes

DUDI Patimer's hobby is certainly a unique one, writes SIMON YAFFE.

For he resurrects somewhat forgotten Israeli songs from the 1940s to the 1980s, contacting the bands and singers for interviews and uploading clips which had previously fallen off the radar on to his YouTube channel.

He documents it all on his website, dudipedia.wordpress.com — which, earlier this year, won the Forbes Award For Promising Projects Under 30.

The Israeli's passion started as a 12-year-old, when he received his first Israeli record, *Eifo At Ahuva* by Yehoram Gaon.

Tel Aviv-based Dudi said: "I was always curious about Israeli musicians from the past, especially the 1950s.

"After I served in the army and



RECORD MAN: Dudi Patimer

without any encouragement, I started to document past Israeli musicians. Something about it touched my heart.

"I started the project about eight years ago, but only really began to receive recognition for it around three years ago.

"It is not a job for money — I do

it purely for my love of the music."

The 30-year-old has tracked more than 4,000 artists and interviewed many of them, too.

The first former star Dudi, whose day jobs are as a gym trainer and radio DJ, got in touch with was Bezael Jungreis, who released the first Hebrew rock song, *Ho Yaldonet*, in 1957.

Dudi, who is of Iranian and Syrian descent, managed to track down Jungreis, who is now a businessman.

"I realised that for many Israeli musicians, nobody had documented their stories, which is why I set up my blog, Dudipedia," he recalled.

"Every week, I put up a biography of someone from Israeli music in the past, whether it is rock, Mizrahi, jazz, opera, whatever.

"What excites me about it is that the lyrics were so good back then, not like today.

"I like hearing the music when they did not have the technology like there is today."

Dudi, who ironically also writes about new music in Israel for newspaper *Ma'ariv*, also enjoys tracking down recordings which were never released.

"People need to know that Israeli music did not begin with Arik Einstein," he added. "There is a lot of music which was never aired.

"Unlike in America or the UK, it was not really preserved, maybe because Israel had a lot of wars and did not give much attention to it."

One of the most emotional interviews he did was with an Israeli singer from the 1940s

called Zimra Ornat.

"Everyone I have interviewed is unique and has their own story to tell, but it was very emotional with Zimra," Dudi said.

"I tracked her down, but she had Alzheimer's and was blind. It was very sad, but I took along an accordionist to meet her and she began to play one of her songs.

"Right then, she began to remember every single detail of her career."

Collecting seems to be in Dudi's genes, as his father, Avi, boasts one of Israel's largest collections of musical instruments.

"When I first started the project, my family and friends thought I was a wacko, but when they saw that it has received recognition, they know it is in my blood and is my passion," he said.