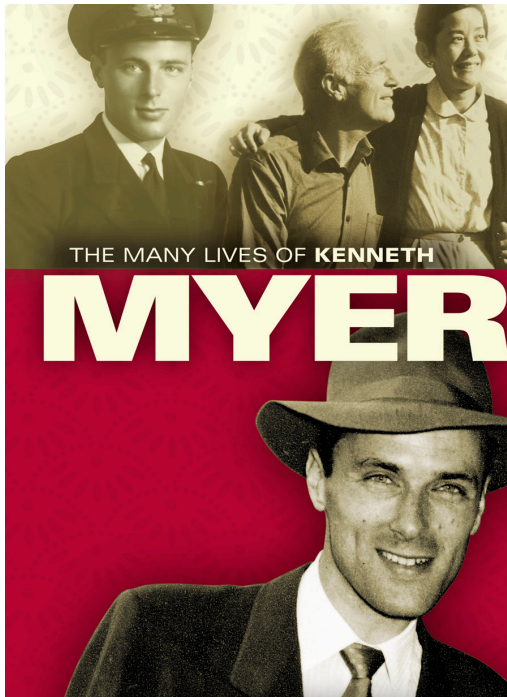


MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING


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BOOKS WITH SPINE

'I accepted the commission from Ken and Prue's five children ... the spur was Sir James' comment that although he had known Ken for sixty years, he remained "an enigma". That is all a biographer needs.'
— Sue Ebury



THE MANY LIVES OF KENNETH MYER

By Sue Ebury

When Kenneth Baillieu Myer's father fell dead on the footpath in 1934, Ken's life changed in an instant. As the eldest son of the Jewish immigrant retailing genius, Sidney Baevski Myer, who went from pedlar to philanthropist millionaire in fifteen years, 13-year-old Ken was immediately acknowledged as head of the family.

Despite a conventional education at Geelong Grammar and a year at Princeton University, Ken was an unconventional man. He had hit headlines when he was born and continued to make news throughout his life—as the powerful Executive Chairman of Myer; in his refusal to be Governor-General of Australia; with his separation and divorce from his wife Prue and remarriage to a Japanese woman half his age, Yasuko Hiraoka; as Chairman of the Victorian Arts Centre and the National Library of Australia; and during his disastrous years as Chairman of the ABC—a reward for signing the 'Myer It's time' letter, acknowledged by Whitlam as influential in bringing the Labor Party to power in 1972.

Ken Myer introduced Australia to the first regional shopping centres, with Chadstone changing the face of the Australian landscape. Parking meters, state of the art information systems at the National Library of Australia, ground-breaking medical research at The Howard Florey Institute and genetic engineering at CSIRO were all facilitated by him.

Visionary and romantic, he was depressive and driven, charming one moment, icy the next. Unpretentious and a passionate conservationist, he was generous both publicly and anonymously, giving away his fortune and in doing so founding modern philanthropy in Australia. Happiest when finally free of the Store, he died with his wife Yasuko in a light plane crash in Alaska in 1992.

With unprecedented access to family documents, Sue Ebury paints a vivid portrait of the many aspects of Ken Myer's life, and the man himself.

Sue Ebury was born and educated in New Zealand. After nineteen years as an editor and publishing director at an international publishing house, she moved to Hong Kong, where she edited *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop* and wrote the bestselling biography *Weary: The Life of Sir Edward Dunlop*.

Ken Myer's children commissioned the biography of their father, and Sue's research of Ken's life took her to the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Canada and the United States, where she interviewed friends and business associates.

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Sue Ebury is available for
interview.

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