

# 'Candy man' Mr Ziedman lived for many years in musician Pierce's notebooks

BY SIMON YAFFE

IT would have been no mean feat to locate a Jewish resident in a small town in Alabama in the 1950s and 1960s.

Yet, perhaps the only Jewish person living in Fort Payne inspired Pierce Pettis to write a song about him on his forthcoming album.

*Father's Son*, which will be released by Compass Records next Friday, is Pierce's first album for almost a decade.

And he delves into his childhood for the track *Mr Ziedman* — the "one and only Jew" in his little town, who always wore long sleeves to "keep an ugly thing from view" (his Holocaust tattoo).

Musician Andrea Zonn has arranged the strings on the song, which ends with Pierce lighting a candle for "our one and only Jew".

Pierce told me from his home in Alabama: "Mr Ziedman lived in my notebooks for a long time. He made a big impression on me."

"He owned a ladies' apparel store in our town and I knew him very well."

"There are some details in the song which I have added, but songwriters, like novelists, take liberties!"

"My grandmother always told me not to let facts get in the way of a good story."

Pierce believes that Mr Ziedman, who was from Poland, was a Holocaust survivor.

He said: "I don't know for sure, as it is an assumption of mine, but, looking at the timing of when he arrived in America, in 1946, and the fact a couple, who

lived in Fort Payne, sponsored him to come over."

"It is hard to think that anyone who came out of Poland at the time would not have been affected by the Holocaust in some way."

The 64-year-old was later told that Mr Ziedman retired, sold his business and moved to Miami, where he married.

But Pierce was also told that Mr Ziedman committed suicide by jumping off his balcony in Miami.

"I am not sure if that was a fact too, but I was shocked by it and it stayed with me for a long time," he explained.

Mr Ziedman's shop was next to Pierce's father's hardware store and the two were friends.

"Mr Ziedman was a very kind man and whenever children came into the store, he would fetch a

big bowl of candy to give to them," Pierce recalled.

"As far as I recalled, he was the only Jewish person in town and probably in the entire county."

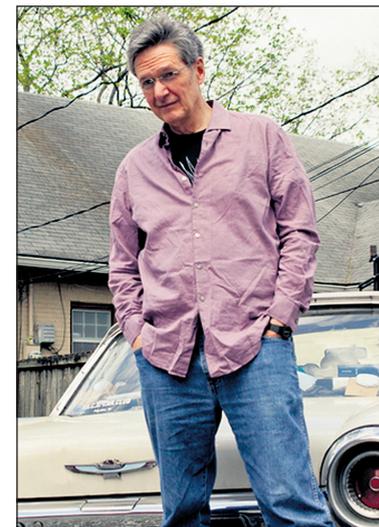
"I learned about the Holocaust from my father and he had a lot of affection for Jewish people."

"He grew up in a town smaller than Fort Payne and, when I took him back there, he showed me his house and a house across the street and told me, 'that's where the Cohens lived' — they were the only Jewish family in town."

"He and his brothers, and the Cohens' sons grew up together, so I was raised in a home with a lot of respect for Jewish people."

"There was no antisemitism in my house."

■ Watch Pierce perform *Mr Ziedman* at [tinyurl.com/ZiedmanJT](http://tinyurl.com/ZiedmanJT)



MEMORIES: Pierce Pettis

## 'Sabrina' facing a witchhunt

**SABRINA the Teenage Witch star Melissa Joan Hart is at the centre of a witchhunt after telling her six-year-old son that only people who believe in Jesus are "good".**

Hart discussed her religious observance on the *Journeys of Faith* with Paula Faris podcast last week.

"We don't know if these people are good people. We don't know if they believe in Jesus . . . and he really took the Jesus part to heart," Hart said she told her son when he moved from a Christian pre-school to a secular school.

Her son made friends with a Jewish boy on the school bus and asked his mother: "If you're Jewish, how do you get to heaven?"

Hart said the Jewish boy's mother called her after their sons started discussing religion and they had "chats" about their son's religious questions until they were in the sixth grade.

She said the conversations became "a little more heated" and led to "some problems".

Hart said she told her son the importance of "respecting each other's beliefs and listening to each other".

She was pilloried on social media for her remarks, and for using an instance with a Jewish child as the example in the interview.

"Holy c\*\*p that's some casually dropped antisemitism in a completely mainstream fluff piece . . . this is fairly terrifying and just gross," one tweet read.

Another wrote: "I found her questioning of Jews & their beliefs/character to be quite offensive. It's antisemitic & worse she's raising her kids to be antisemitic. Didn't the Pittsburgh temple massacre teach anyone anything?"

# Béatrice's musical tribute



OPERATTA COMPOSER: Joseph Beer

SOPRANO Béatrice Beer performed music written by her late father in Leeds last night.

Joseph Beer — who died in 1987, aged 79 — was a Jewish composer whose rapid rise to fame in his mid-20s was cut short by the Nazi regime. He was the last of the Viennese "silver-age" operetta composers.

He fled to France in 1938 from Austria, where he studied music and had been working.

His family, left behind in Poland, were murdered in concentration camps during the Holocaust.

Beer continued to compose in Nice after the war, leaving what his daughter describes as an important body of work yet to be discovered.

His "lost" music is currently enjoying a significant revival in Austria, and Béatrice performed some of it as part of a recital-lecture at the University of Leeds' Clothworkers' Centenary Concert Hall.

Her visit was joint-funded by the Jewish Music Forum, New York, the Jewish Music Institute, London, and the European Research Council.

A conference looking to reappraise operetta will end tomorrow at Leeds' School of Music, called 'Gaiety, Glitz and Glamour — or Dispirited Historical Dregs? A Re-evaluation of Operetta'.

Organised by Professor Derek Scott, from Leeds' School of Music, the conference was held in association with the project German Operetta in London, New York and Warsaw,



IN FATHER'S MEMORY: Béatrice Beer

1906–1939.

Professor Scott said: "Béatrice Beer's vigorous efforts to make her father's music known are impressive."

"I'm certain that he would have been recognised as one of the great composers of operetta, had his music not been suppressed by the Nazis after he was forced to flee."

Béatrice studied at the Manhattan School of Music and Juilliard.

■ [josephbeercomposer.com](http://josephbeercomposer.com)

# Nazi hunters win top book prize

NAZI hunters Serge and Beate Klarsfeld won the American Jewish Book Council's top book award on Wednesday.

*Hunting the Truth: Memoirs of Serge and Beate Klarsfeld* was named Jewish Book of the Year.

The American Jewish studies award went to *The New American Judaism: How Jews Practice Their Religion Today* by Jack Wertheimer.

Ehud Barak's *My Country, My Life: Fighting for Israel, Searching for Peace* won the autobiography and memoir award, while *Witness: Lessons from Elie Wiesel's Classroom* by Ariel Burger was named best biography.

The Book Club Award went to *The Girl from Berlin* by Ronald H Balson.

*All Three Stooges* by Erica S Perl won the best children's literature.

Leon Wiener Dow was victorious in the contemporary Jewish life and practice category with *The Going: A Meditation on Jewish Law*.

The debut fiction prize went to *The Book of Dirt* by Bram Presser.

*The Talmud: A Biography* by Barry Scott Wimpfheimer won the education and Jewish identity prize.

The fiction award was won by

Michael David Lukas for *The Last Watchman of Old Cairo*.

In the history category, the winner was *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations* by Ronen Bergman.

Holocaust winner was *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* by Omer Bartov.

Triumphant in the modern Jewish thought and experience category was *Does Judaism Condone Violence? Holiness and Ethics in the Jewish Tradition* by Alan L Mittleman.

Poetry winner was Erika Meitner's *Holy Moly Carry Me*.

Scholarship winner was *Historical Atlas of Hasidism* by Marcin Wodzinski.

The Sephardic culture award went to *Dominion Built of Praise: Panegyric and Legitimacy Among Jews in the Medieval Mediterranean* by Jonathan Decter.

Alice Shalvi's *Never a Native* won the women's studies award.

In the writing based on archival material category, Rebecca Erbelding won with *Rescue Board: The Untold Story of America's Efforts to Save the Jews of Europe*.

The Paper Brigade for new Israeli fiction winner was Maya Arad for *Our Lady of Kazan*.