

AUGUSTA (GUTA) ZYSKIND
1929 — 2005



Memorial Service
Sunday, June 26, 2005

Rabbi:

Rabbi Jonathan A. Stein

Temple Shaaray Tefila,

250 East 79th Street (at 2nd Avenue)

New York, NY 10021

<http://www.shaaraytefilanyc.org/>

People mourning in New York:

Danny and Emily Adler & family – cousins

Yanek Adler – cousin

Rose (Rouza) Zarucki – close friend

Kathy – close friend

Tony – close friend

Simone – close friend (unable to attend)

Max – close friend (unable to attend)

Donna – close friend (wife of the “super” in her building, unable to attend)

Claire and Albert Harmon, Patricia Kanfer – Emily’s family

People mourning in Israel:

Sofka, Doubi, Ilan Schwartz & their families – cousins

Ron Adler – cousin

Anat Rabinovich & family – Danny’s sister, cousin

Aliza Adler – Danny’s mother and close friend

People mourning in France:

Helene and Alfred Werner & family – cousin

Dina Levy – close friend

People mourning in Belgium:

Anna Kempinska (Malgosia) – friend who is documenting

Gutka’s war story

Biography by Sofka Schwartz as told to Doubi (Israel):

Gutka was an only child living in a large house with her parents, Joseph and Dora, who loved her so much, and with Aunt Tonya that lived with them. They lived in Kovel, then Poland, now part of Ukraine.

Gutka was very gifted, especially in music (she was a pianist), and a very good pupil in school. When the War started in 1939, their house was filled with many people, family members who fled Warsaw to the west of Poland, they were all welcome to stay in the Zyskind house. Danny's grandparents (Zosia and Mietek), father Ron (Kazik) and Yanek were among them. They stayed at the house, I believe almost a year, until the Russians sent them to Siberia. Gutka was still in school until 1940 when the Germans came to Kovel.

They stayed at their house for more than a year, we had to leave our house and we came to live with them. Uncle Joseph, Gutka's father, was among the first Jews to be captured by the Germans. We hoped that he was sent away somewhere, but we discovered later that he was killed immediately outside of Kovel. It was 1942, spring 1942. It was a big shock for the whole family.

Then the Germans organized 2 Ghettos in Kovel. We all moved to a Polish neighbor's house (who received Gutka's house instead), with many more members of the family who then came to live with us. A month later one Ghetto was liquidated. Gutka was with us at the other Ghetto. She had some Polish friends who hid her at times. Then, I escaped from Kovel, it was still 1942. I (Sofka) was 17 years old. My friend Vala, a Polish woman, who helped me escape, got Gutka fake papers, and sent her to her sister in Warsaw. Gutka's mother, my parents, all the people in Kovel were killed by then.

Gutka told me later that she worked there as a baby sitter. She was around 12 years old at the time. She was in Warsaw during the Polish revolt. After that, she was sent to work in Germany, as a Polish worker, hiding the fact that she was Jewish. The first time that I heard about her since I last saw her in Kovel was when I was already in Palestine in 1944, the war was still on. Via relatives who came from Russia, I heard that Tonya somehow found Gutka, and took her to live with her in Moscow. She survived.

The first time that I saw her after the war, was I think, in Paris in 1952. I wanted her to come live in Israel, become a music teacher, but she refused.

When I think of Gutka I think that she had a hard life, that she was a very gifted person with many dreams, and that she just wasn't born at the right time. We all wanted so much to help her, but she refused and insisted of being independent. I loved her very much, so did my sister Fira.

Biography by H el ene and Alfred Werner (Paris):

In August 1942, the Nazis and the Ukrainians came to Kovel's ghetto, dragged all the people out of their home and locked them up in the town's biggest synagogue. Three days later, they made them walk out of town, dig big ditches and then shot them all. When the shooting started, Guta fainted and found herself protected by her mother's dead body. At night, she regained consciousness and climbed on a tree. She remained there for a couple of days, and then went to the only family in town she was sure would help her : The Szymkiewicz. She lived in the attic of their house, till they got her fake papers. Through people they knew, she was taken to a small Polish town, where she took care of children in different families and lived there till April 1943. Afterwards she went to Warsaw, and later was sent to work in Germany.

During the last part of the war, Guta's aunt lived in Moscow. One day, she was told that her niece was alive and had been taken in by a troop of Soviet soldiers. They dressed her up as a soldier, cut her hair short, so that she could look like a young boy.

Once Guta had reached Moscow, she lived with her aunt. She went to Moscow's academy of music and later taught music herself. As she was out of Russia during the war, she was treated more or less like a sort of spy and couldn't choose exactly the kind of job she wanted. So, when it became politically possible – at Khroutchev's time- Guta and her aunt left Russia, lived for a time in Warsaw and then got at last in Paris, where my father and mother had prepared with much love a home for them. When they both arrived here, I remember the excitementand the tears, after all those years of separation. Guta was then 30, looked very pretty and romantic. We used to go a lot to the cinema together, to see her Polish friends from Marcel Marceau's famous mime company and.....to laugh at trifles.

Guta found a job here, unfortunately nothing to do with music, and finally worked at El-Al. In the late sixties, I think, she decided to go to New York to start a new life and meet new people. She worked there for KLM and seemed to like it. While her aunt was still live (up until 1991), she used to fly to Paris once or twice a year at least, always for her aunt's birthday in May. The last time we saw her was in 1995, after she went to Brussels for a seminar about the Shoah.

We'll deeply miss her; her intelligence, her wit, her sense of humour and her culture. Her life was hard and unfair. Her illness too.

Message to Gutka from my Mother Aliza Adler (Israel):

Dear Gutka

I was not your cousin as a blood-relation but I was truly your friend and I loved you as a cousin or more.

We had so many good times together : we shared the love of music, art and yes - good food and wine.

I can not imagine coming to New York and not seeing you or talking to you;

Shalom and farewell.

Love,

Lizka

Message in Polish to Gutka from Malgosia (Brussels):

ZEGNAJ GUTKO, SIOSTRO KOCHANA,

I SPIJ SPOKOJNIE.

ODESZLAS ODE MNIE, LECZ MNIE NIE OPUSCILAS.

ANI MNIE, ANI TYCH, KTORZY CIE KOCHALI I KOCHAJA.

JA CIEBIE TEZ NIGDY NIE OPUSZCZE.

ZROBIE WSZYSTKO, ZEBY OPOWIESC TWEGO ZYCIA, KTORA MI POWIERZYLAS, STALA SIE TWOIM PRAWDZIWYM POMNIKIEM. JESTES CALY CZAS PRZY MNIE I JA JESTEM I BEDE PRZY TOBIE.

TERAZ TEZ JESTEM, MIMO ZE DZIELI NAS KILKA TYSIECY KILOMETROW.

GDY SIE SPOTKAMY, PRZYPOMNE CI UPALNE NOCE W BRUKSELI, KIEDY TWOJ WSPANIALY GLOS NIOSL W DAL PIESNI POLSKIE I ROSYJSKIE, A JACEK AKOMPANIOWAL CI NA PIANINIE.

ZEGNAJ !

MALGOSIA,
JACEK, JULIA, MICHAEL.