

A celebration of life

Hanna Henry

10th August 2019 - 7th October 2019

10-11 am, 23rd October 2019, Cam Valley Crematorium

a personal goodbye

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Tribute to Hanna

Hanna's mother, Yanna Patznofsky was from Łódź in Poland and met her father Heskiyah Siaki in Switzerland. They married and made their home in Athens, where Heskiyah was a judge in the Supreme Court of Appeals. Hanna was born in Athens in 1941, ten years after her two brothers, Peretz and Eliyahou.

However, the Germans invaded Greece in 1941 and in 1943 Hanna and her family had to go into hiding. They went to a remote village, Livadeia, and using fake identity cards were supported by the villagers and by Heskiyah's legal colleagues back in Athens. Unfortunately, the Germans established a base nearby and were on the alert for Greek partisans hiding in the area. The family's papers were often checked, the Gestapo once searched their father in the market and asked him if he was a Jew and the boys were sometimes interrogated. Nevertheless, the boys, who understood German, would report plans that they had overheard to the partisans, once enabling a Greek family to flee their home before it was set ablaze. They would also collect dropped German bullets to pass them on to the partisans.

When the Germans retreated from Greece in September 1944 the family were able to return to their home in Athens, which had remained intact, and resume their lives there.

In 1945 Hanna's brothers emigrated to Israel and Hanna and her parents followed in 1950 when her father retired. Hanna stayed with her parents and went to school in Tel Aviv and her brothers went to join the Kibbutz Givat Brenner where Yanna's sister Clara lived. They are still living there today.

Hanna had grown up speaking Greek and with her mother always spoke a sort of German which later became sprinkled with English words. At school in Israel Hanna spoke Hebrew and so began a love of languages which stayed with her. She was in fact very good at picking up different languages and had some French and Italian too at one time. She loved meeting Greek people and chatting a bit in Greek and always remembered some Greek songs.

When her father died, Hanna and her mother decided to come to London where Hanna took her A levels and then began to study Law.

In the early 1960's, enticed by the prospect of a little house of their own, Hanna and her mother moved to Acrefield Drive in Cambridge and Hanna took a job as a secretary to the manager of a bank. In 1967 she met William at a party in London. Their next meeting in Cambridge was a little awkward as Hanna's fiancé and his friends were present but William proposed the very next day and they married, two-and-a-half months later, in February 1968, in the Wesley Church in Cambridge.

William was living in Edinburgh, working at Ferranti who supported him to study electronics at University, so they moved north immediately to start their married life. The Cambridge bank manager had secured a job in a bank in Edinburgh for Hanna but she found that it did not suit her and resigned after just one morning there. William was somewhat alarmed but he did not need to be, as Hanna had secured an alternative position, in a lawyer's office, that very afternoon.

However Hanna missed her mother badly, staying in touch was so much more difficult in those days and the weather in Scotland, with snow and frozen pavements still in April, was too much to bear. They wanted to return to Cambridge. William's employers found him a job to transfer to at the Cambridge Instrument Company and they were able to return to live with Hanna's mother. Their first son Adam was born soon afterwards.

When William graduated he left the Cambridge Instrument Company to take up a position at British Aerospace and the family moved to a small home of their own in Stevenage. Their second son Reuben was born there.

William had always wanted to join the RAF and when he decided to take that step the family moved to married quarters in RAF College Cranwell in Lincolnshire. William describes himself as being 'moulded' into an officer and was quickly promoted within the RAF. Hanna very much appreciated the communal life in these years, enjoying the family Sunday lunches and other events in the mess and even gave the RAF minister lessons in Hebrew.

William was then posted to RAF Brawdy in Pembrokeshire and the family moved to a small seaside village nearby with a long sandy beach and cliff walks. Benjamin, their third son, was born there.

Three years later William was posted to Norfolk and the family moved to Fakenham where they stayed for a few years, finally moving back to Cambridge for the boys to attend school here. Hanna had always remained very close to her mother and while William served in the RAF the family would come back to stay with her, in Cambridge, at weekends and in the holidays. So on their return, the family joined forces with Hanna's mother establishing upstairs and downstairs 'apartments' within the house in Cavendish Avenue.

William served in RAF Brize Norton and came home at weekends when he could but was necessarily away from home a lot, including a time serving in the Falklands War, a particularly difficult time for Hanna and the family. When the RAF wanted William to relocate to Germany he felt that his time there had come to a natural end and decided to take retirement from the RAF at the 16 year point, in 1987, and return to live with the family in Cambridge.

Hanna looked after her mother, the boys, William and the home while also working. She worked as a secretary for many years, in a bookshop, in Ridley Hall theological college and then in a trade union. She even had an interview with Neville for work at Magpas but that was one position that she didn't get.

After retiring from full time work Hanna became seriously ill and needed major surgery and extensive radiotherapy. She recovered well. Then, a few years later, she became unwell again and was diagnosed with primary progressive multiple sclerosis, possibly precipitated by her previous illness and treatment. The effects of this condition were not immediately evident and Hanna continued to lead a normal life for some years. For the last ten years of her life Hanna needed to use a wheelchair but she continued to maintain an active life.

In their retirement Hanna and William had joined the Cambridge Jewish Residents' Association which became a major part of their social life and through which they made a wide circle of very good friends. As Hanna's condition deteriorated the community gave her great support.

Hanna enjoyed the monthly meetings with guest speakers, the book group to discuss the latest novels and most of all the garden club, 'Friends in Gardening', visiting members' gardens and having afternoon tea and discussions. Hanna loved their garden at home and despite the restrictions of her wheelchair helped with the dead-heading and would pull up the odd weed. She enjoyed visiting the University Botanic Garden and College gardens too, especially Clare College. She and William would spend half a day going round the gardens and then spend some time relaxing by the river, watching the punting.

Hanna was also very interested in the arts, she liked impressionist paintings and would always gravitate to them when visiting the Fitzwilliam, while William would revisit the pottery collections. She and William often visited Edinburgh, always in the summer mind you, and making use of their disabled parking permit could visit Princes St Gardens as well as the lovely art galleries there.

Hanna was very fond of Scottish folk music, though she and William had rather different preferences, and Welsh male voice choirs. They both liked listening to classical music and the pieces that you will hear today were favourites.

Hanna also joined the University of the Third Age for several years and she and William attended courses in the arts, literature, history and science.

She and William also took part in weekly keep-fit classes with the Cambridge branch of the MS Society and attended social events where they made good friends.

Enjoying their life in Cambridge to the full Hanna and William tended not to bother with holidays but in May this year they decided to investigate the possibility of going on a cruise and took a seven night trip to Norway, in great comfort and luxury. They had a wonderful time, from the moment that they were collected in a limousine, the well adapted facilities made life on board easy and comfortable and they loved exploring in Norway. In Kristiansand they stumbled across a free recital in the cathedral with wonderful singing and were really enjoying themselves until faced with the challenge of a rather steep hill en route back to the ship. Two young women saw them and rather took over, saying in English "We are nurses, we'll help you get over the bridge". William was not too keen to be treated as an 'elderly gentleman' but did appreciate the assistance. William and Hanna were very pleased to have been able to enjoy such a wonderful trip before Hanna's health took a turn for the worse.

Hanna was a very calm person and a very positive one, William cannot remember her losing her temper or speaking about others in derogatory terms. He has received messages of sadness and support from all over the world, testament to Hanna's close relationships with family and friends.

Despite her severe disability, Hanna's calm, cheerful, uncomplaining, friendly and loving nature remained unchanged.

Some of Hanna's many friends in Cambridge are going to say a few words.

Hanna as a member of the Cambridge Jewish Residents' Association , Lady Marilyn Fersht -

The Cambridge Jewish Residents Association, or CJRA for short, is a charitable organisation for Jews of all denominations or none in the Cambridgeshire region. Hanna belonged to the latter category. She was a secular Jew, a long-term member of CJRA, who identified through her Jewish heritage and survival. She and Bill in recent years attended many of our social and cultural events including the annual Chanukah celebration. One of their favourites was the Gardening Club, which you will hear more about later this morning. They were also very active members of the U3A in Cambridge being particularly interested in literature and music. They attended David Waldman's musical appreciation class (David is a member of our committee).

I first met Hanna in 1995 soon after the death of her beloved mother, Janna Siaki, when I went to pay my respects to her at her home in Cavendish Avenue at that very sad time. We became friends. Her mother was also a member of CJRA and is buried in the Jewish section of the Cambridge City Cemetery in Newmarket Road. I realized then how close the bond with her mother was as the whole had family survived the war in hiding in Greece, where Hanna was born, due to the bravery of some non Jewish friends. Hanna and her family were the fortunate part of the minority of Greek Jews who managed to survive the war. Greece lost at least 81% of its Jewish population (nearly 70,000) in the Holocaust, most at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Hanna was a very sweet natured and intelligent woman, who bore her illness with great courage and fortitude. We never heard her complain. However, she was particularly fortunate to have found such a loving and caring husband as Bill. We hope he finds strength in this fact to cope with his great loss.

Friends in Gardening, Carole Gold -

Hannah and Bill were at the very first meeting of our newly formed Garden Club back in 2011, which we chose to call 'Friends in Gardening.' They have been loyal members ever since, coming to almost every meeting over the last eight years. They have taken an active part in both hosting and visiting other members' gardens, giving advice and joining in the general questions and answer sessions over tea and cakes afterwards.

They generously shared their plants and seeds with us all, which Bill had obtained from various sources, often not knowing how or what they would grow into – a surprise for us all! Their own garden is a delight of beautiful colour and amazing varieties of plants which Hannah enjoyed enormously. I remember once asking her if she had a favourite part of the garden. "Yes" she replied telling me of the spot towards the back of the garden where she liked to be in the shade.

Although in later years Hannah wasn't able to speak so much, there was always a smile on her face when she saw us all, and I believe she really enjoyed coming to our meetings. We certainly enjoyed having her there.

Hannah will be sorely missed by her Friends in Gardening, and speaking on behalf of them all, I do very much hope that Bill will continue to be part of our Club.

Friendship with Hanna, Sara Kemp -
Sara spoke in Hebrew

Hannah and I met a few years ago at the home of the late Susan Stopford who had invited us and another couple for lunch. We took an immediate interest in both her and Bill as she had been to Israel and spoke Hebrew and Mike had been in the RAF. But somehow we lost touch for a short while till we met up again at a gathering with the Jewish Community in Cambridge.

We have fond memories of them coming over to us in Haslingfield for High Tea followed by attending a concert in our local Church which we all enjoyed on a number of occasions.

I was interested in her brothers and the Kibbutz they still live in now as it is a Liberal Kibbutz. This is the sort of ideology connected to Zionism in which I was brought up as well.

So the connection and our past drew us together and we remained friends to this day. We shall always have very fond memories of you, d