

Ann Reisman

Der liebe Gott wollt' noch einen Engel und so rief Er Dich zu Sich. God wanted another angel, so he called you to him. A quotation from a poem written by my late great-aunt on hearing of the murder in Auschwitz of her great-nephew Daniel, my cousin several times removed. The epithet can equally be ascribed to Ann who has been called to higher authority. If ever a person lived who never uttered an unkind, cross or unpleasant word, who was gentle and kind, yet was incredibly strong in adversity, Ann was that person.

Born in Budapest, she went to school in Vienna then lived in Pressburg or Bratislava in what is now Slovakia, in Moyzesova Street, the name perhaps derived from the name Moses, in the centre of town. Low-grade anti-Semitism was present and grew out of all proportion with the annexation of the land by the Germans and Ann caught the last train out of the area round about the third of September 1939. She went, of all places, to Glyndebourne to help look after English evacuee children, revealing even then her social conscience. Her parents and brother had to stay behind and lived underground.

In the mid-1940's she came to Bradford, working first at Busbys, then as manager of her cousin Hans Frankl's knitting-wool shop. Meanwhile her mother Teri died in 1942 at the early age of 47. Francis had come to England in 1946, their father in 1947, went back to Bratislava to be with his mother until Ann's grandmother died in 1949, then he came to Bradford again where he died in 1960.

In Bradford Ann met Frank, they married in 1947 and had three wonderful boys. The adversity I mentioned earlier refers, of course, to the tragic and unexpected loss in 1966 of Larry by disease just after his A levels which, incidentally, he passed, though he never knew it. After an exploratory operation he had difficulty breathing and when Ann not unnaturally showed her concern he said characteristically; "oh, stop fussing!", but a few hours later he was dead to the devastation of friends and family who were distraught. But the family, being made of stern calibre, picked itself up from the nadir of depression and resumed their lives as best they could and led by the strong Ann did so wonderfully well in spite of the dreadful gap left by Larry. Ann immersed herself in being a beautician using amongst other things a dangerous looking, very complicated machine such as I had never seen before nor since, and, as a member of the B'nai B'rith Lodge visited mentally unstable people. She was very active in and supportive of Wizo and created some amazing tapestries. Ann and Frank had an unusually large circle of friends, some very close and of many years' standing and their hospitality was boundless. Ann and Frank's great pride and joy were Julian and Steve and their families. Though Julian and Steve gave their love to their parents in their own right, perhaps they gave even more of themselves to their parents to try and make up for the missing Larry. In this they were lovingly helped by Yvette and Shirley, not to mention Francis and Lilian. Most fortunately Ann and Frank were able to celebrate their Golden Wedding 5 years ago.

Ann was diagnosed with cancer in 1975 and after treatment was given five years of life. Happily this forecast lifespan was exceeded many times over. Coupled with this bonus, though we are desperately sad at Ann's passing, we should perhaps regard today's assembly not only as a very sad funeral service which indeed it is, but also as a celebration of Ann's life, before and after, that is before 1975 and the bonus after 1975. My friends, death always comes too soon. The psalmist gives three-score years and ten and by reason of strength four score years. Ann has lived according to the psalmist's prediction and for that we should be thankful and grateful. Perhaps this



might also be a good opportunity of expressing most grateful thanks to Ann's doctors and ancillary staff for keeping her alive against all odds for such a long time.

I sometimes relate an allegory for a particularly unwelcome death and it goes something like this: it has been said and will no doubt be said many times again, that God moves in mysterious ways which we mere mortals do not understand. It is as if an insect crawling on the ground is smitten by a perhaps quite carelessly thrown stone by one of us humans and in its moment of death it cries out: why do I have to die? It cannot possibly understand the sequence of events which have led to its fate, though to us it is quite simple to comprehend. And so it is with God: we cannot possibly understand the probably ethereal machinations of God in his mysterious ways in calling to himself this person or that at this time or that. We do not understand, but at least we understand that we do not understand.

Except for the tragedy of Larry, Ann had a wonderful life. She knew in the last weeks that her days were numbered, but to my knowledge, she did not utter a single word of complaint. Of regret yes and who can blame her, but of anger – no. And this just about sums up Ann's character: she was a gentle, kind and very fine lady, wife, mother, mother-in-law and grandmother of three lovely grandchildren, their number very soon to be increased; sister, sister-in-law and aunt. We should tarry a while, put our own lives on hold for a few minutes and reflect on the sanctity and value of life in general and on Ann's life well lived, a life which can be lost in the flutter of an eyelid. Again the psalmist sums it up beautifully: sung on Yom Kippur he says Enosh kechazir jomav. Frail man, his days are like grass: he blossoms like a flower in the field; but the breeze passes over it and it is gone and its place knows it no more. Ann's life has come to a peaceful end. Her soul has already travelled to the absolute safe-keeping of God Almighty in a land where there is no ill nor pain and where even at this moment her soul is reunited with the family who have gone before her and above all with her beloved Larry. May she be bound up in the proverbial bundle of peace for ever and a day. Amen.

-----

Such was the strength of character and unassuming state of mind of Ann that she was able quite normally to discuss certain aspects of this very service with me. The point she made was that in the last days she was no longer able to see or accept calls from even her closest and most loyal friends and she asked me actually to name those friends, and mention some who are no longer with us. It will sound like a list, which of course it is, which may embarrass some, but as it was Ann's express wish, it should not do so. Also the list is not exhaustive, so any person whose name is inadvertently omitted should not feel offended. The names of three people who have gone before Ann are: Alla Levin, Edith Layton and Muriel Bell; and in NO particular order: Evelyn Jane, born Early, in New Zealand, Elga, Inge, Margit, Olivia, Lily, Turid in Norway, June in Brussels, Rita, Daphne and Wilma.

-----

The kaddish would normally signal the end of this kind of service. But I want to say something else. The family was inevitably traumatised by the events, but there is one person for whom the trauma has provoked an inner conflict of unbounded proportion, by a coincidence which was as unfortunate as it could not have been foreseen, a

juxtaposition of a most joyous event and the imminent death of a parent. I refer to Steve who sadly could not be in two places at the same time. # In this connection, as we have heard, when Ann realised that she may not live to experience Shirley and Steve's so much longed for baby being born, she expressed the wish at least to ascertain the baby's sex, which by design was not known to Shirley nor Steve. Arrangements were made for Shirley's professional advisers to telephone the baby's sex through to Ann who gladly and still with full consciousness received the information only a day or so before she died. Noone else knows it. # Our condolences and deepest sympathy go to the family, but especially to Steve who has had to face this terrible dilemma in addition to the trauma. He had been in our thoughts constantly. I know that I express the fervent wish of everybody here today for Steve to take back to Shirley our very best wishes for the immediate future. We pray for a healthy baby and all the best for the future for Steve and especially Shirley. Amen