OBITUARY

Ibi Ginsburg

A Holocaust survivor whose mother and two youngest sisters were murdered in Auschwitz has died at the age of 85. For 66 years, Ibi Ginsburg lived with the memory of the terrible hardship she endured at the camp after arriving there in May 1944 with her parents and three sisters.

She never forgot the number 86711 the Nazis gave her minutes after she and her family arrived along with thousands of other Jews from the Hungarian town of Tokay.

Ibi, who died at her home in Elland, near Halifax, which she shared with her husband Valdemar (Val), recalled how she and her 13-year-old sister Judith were selected to work. Her mother Emily and two youngest sisters Rachel, 10, and Miriam, 7, were selected for the gas chambers. Her father Herman was sent to Mauthausen but survived and was reunited with Ibi and Judith after the war.

Towards the end of the war, Ibi and her sister were sent to Dachau and worked on the same construction site as Val, who was

Ibi Ginsburg in 1945

born in Lithuania and survived four years in ghettos and camps. But they never met until after liberation, when Ibi was sent to work at a monastery near Munich converted into a military hospital. Val, who had lost 13 members of his family in the Holocaust, had spent several months there recovering from his ordeal and had then been given a job as a security man.

The two met, were married a year later and in 1948 moved to England. They settled in Elland, where both worked in the textile industry.

Ibi and Val decided 15 years ago that they owed it to the victims to tell their stories. Val told his in a book *And Kovno Wept*, published in 1998. The couple have told their story countless times in schools and colleges and at meetings and conferences. Their testimonies have also been filmed by the Steven Spielberg Shoah Foundation and for the AJR's *Refugee Voices* testimony archive.

Ibi regularly attended services at the Bradford Reform Synagogue.

Members of the synagogue and other members of the Holocaust Survivors' Association and many friends attended her funeral at the Park Wood Crematorium in Elland along with her husband, daughters Mandy and Pauline, son-in-law Malcolm, and grandchildren Samuel, Jacob and Amy.

David Edge, a friend for many years, said: 'She was a lovable, feisty woman whose indomitable spirit and will to live enabled her to survive. She was a very special lady.'

This is an edited version of an obituary which appeared in the Yorkshire Post *on 6 March 2010.*

Back in Germany

by Lester Christie

'It was like a bullet to the head,' Gunter said, thinking back to 9 November 1938, when he was an eight-year-old in Herne, a mining town (now twinned with Wakefield) with a population of about 160,000 and some 70 miles from my mother's home town of Duisburg.

Two days earlier, Gunter's father – awarded the Iron Cross in the First World War – had been warned of what was to happen 'spontaneously' on what came to be known as Kristallnacht by the 'outraged people' of Germany! Gunter, his father and brother had entered the magnificent synagogue in Herne, built in 1911 and featured with pride on the front page of the local paper – the same paper that would 27 years later scream out 'Don't buy from Jews, buy German' – and removed the Sefer Torahs, one of which is now in Ramat Gan.

My mother's second cousin, Editha Jankleowicz, aged six, gazed out of her bedroom window on the evening of 9 November, watching, terrified, the black smoke and flames of the burning synagogue.

Soon after began the frantic efforts of parents to at least get their children out of Germany. Editha, an only child, was put on a Kindertransport to Belgium (and, when Belgium fell, on a goods wagon to France, then to Vichy France, then, towards the end of the war, to Cadiz, and then on an old, battered boat to Palestine – a story for another time).

Gunter was more fortunate – a Kindertransport to England, ultimately a British citizen, now residing in New York, enjoying what his parents never would – a grandchild.

How was the choice made? Who would go and who would stay? Who would live and who would die? Neither Editha nor Gunter had any idea. Both remember the time of parting at the railway station in Herne as if it were yesterday.

Back **Lester Christie, Jeff Christie;** ***front*** **Irit Matan, Esther Hocherman, Carmi Tzadock**

My mother, Toni Berger, 17 years old and living in Duisburg, was sent out of Germany by her widowed mother early in 1939 in a desperate attempt to obtain visas for her mother, Channah, her sister Lottie and her brother Max. Among the few possessions she was able to take was her pocket-size *siddur*.

29 January 2010, Herne. Editha (now named Esther), with one of her daughters Irit and one of her grandchildren Carmi; Gunter, his wife and children with two other survivors from Herne; myself, my brother Jeff and 250 or so local dignitaries on a freezing snow-filled day, so symbolic of the hardship of camp life – all witnessed the unveiling of a beautiful memorial to the Jews of Herne who had perished in the Holocaust. A memorial illustrating every name, date and place of death, composed of concrete (mixed to the colour of Jerusalem stone) and glass with a black-slate ramp displaying the names of the camps and ghettos in which millions of Jews and others had died. In the background, the doleful sound of a Yiddish folk song 'You watch whilst my village burns' found by Editha and played on trumpet, trombone and tuba drifting into the cold midday air. Editha had fought long and hard to achieve this memorial service.

Gunter, now over 80, well over 6ft, upright, spoke. Reliving those days back in 1938, he visibly crumpled.

Editha spoke – again her memories of life in Herne. She took out the only photographs she had from her childhood: one as a six-year-old holding a doll, the other her first day at the Jewish school. Both had been sent by Editha's parents to my mother in England for safe-keeping and given to Editha by my mother when they found one another at the end of the war by chance. Editha's speech, a reflection of her very being – having learned as a child how to survive: trust no one, rely on no one – was uncompromising.

The speeches at an end and a minute's silence observed, I took out of my pocket the black, leather-bound *siddur* – my mother`s *siddur* – and, after a brief explanation of the journey it had made since 1939, in memory of our uncle Max who did not survive and all the other victims of the Shoah, I and my brother Jeff recited Kaddish from that *siddur*, back once again in Germany.