

We have assembled here today to pay tribute to a remarkable lady Martha Neumann who died having reached the high age of 90. Though we very much mourn her passing let this service and commemoration be one of thanksgiving for the fact that Martha existed, lived and loved. Her life story mirrors that of so many Jewish people of our age. Martha was born in Prague which was to remain for her a symbol of culture, a jewel in the crown of all that was best in pre-war Europe. She came to England just in time in 1939 and worked at the Czechoslovak Embassy throughout the war. Late in life she married Erwin Neumann who unfortunately died in 1962 and she never re-married. Her brother-in-law, affectionately called Mucky, his wife Rita and their son Victor were HER children. Her parents had died in a concentration camp as did Rita's mother, so that out of four grandparents only one survived, a situation all too often repeated among that particular generation. A true story is told, and I heard it from the person who said it, that a baby was born in a concentration camp, she and her parents survived, but not any of the grandparents. When the girl was about 8 she asked her parents: 'Why don't Jewish children have grandparents?'

Martha continued as a secretary, was very interested in music, opera, concerts, painting, exhibitions, indeed art of any kind. Apart from family her great love was still Prague and Czechoslovakia. I am told, as all the information has been given to me because I did not have the great fortune to have known Martha, that she was an excellent driver, negotiating the streets of London like a seasoned taxi-driver.

Martha was kind-heartedness personified, spoiling Rita and Victor to the full. Eventually with no relatives or close friends left in London she came to live in Bradford where, in her latter years, her mind unfortunately and to the great distress of the family, became clouded. My interpretation of her reaching a great age was as if she was trying to make up for the early demise of her forebears. If, in the process, her mind became less focussed she would be nearer God whose ways, as you know, we don't understand. The mental diffuseness was the transition from her mortal life on earth to an immortal one with her Maker. To us it causes distress, but in the overall conception of life and after-life it makes sense.

I mentioned her great loves and of course the greatest was for her family. No request was ever turned down and this is in the best of Jewish tradition. Martha will be sadly missed but the memory of her will never be forgotten.

Victor

Mother of Rita E. Britain