

TRIBUTE - Remembering Issy Schlisselman 25.2.1924 - 24.9.2017

The eulogy to Issy was written by his brother Dennis Selman and given at his funeral by Rabbi Helen Freeman at Edgwarebury Cemetery on Wednesday 27 September. Here is an extract from Dennis's tribute.



Issy was one of the four children of Beatrice and Lazar, who had come here as refugees from Eastern Europe.

Like so many of that generation, they seemed to have given their children, Maurice, Shirley, Issy and Dennis a profound sense of family love and loyalty, together with a **real optimism about the future that meant**

almost anything was possible with determination and dedication.

Issy was profoundly deaf from the age of 8, because of polio, but that never stopped his involvement with the arts and acting, two things close to his heart.

Like so many Jewish boys of his generation, he started life as a tailor. **But Issy was destined for something a bit more unusual, even special.**

He saw that there was a need for a Jewish Deaf Association and was JDA's first Chairman.

➤ Issy with his nephew, brother and sister-in-law.



Issy was a man who loved to make life better for other people, particularly those in the Deaf community and so he trained and worked for the RNID as a social worker. Issy also worked as a sign language teacher.

He worked hard to make sure that Deaf people were always included in the community, and had full access to Jewish communal life.

Whenever West London Synagogue held BSL interpreted services, Issy was there, where he loved to be, taking part in the Jewish traditions that meant so much to him.



◀ Issy blowing the Shofar at JDA Day Centre.

JDA remembers Issy - and Lisa Mansur adds her own fond memories



In 1936, when nine-year old Issy Schlisselman made his debut performance on Prize Day at the Hugh Myddleton School for the Deaf, **the audience went crazy for him and his love of the stage was born.**

As a deaf little boy, Issy **preferred communicating in British Sign Language rather**

than speech. Although his favourite subject was drama, he felt he had no option but to follow the path of so many Jewish, and especially Deaf, people back in the 1950's and he became a tailor.



But Issy was bored and unfulfilled, and determined to get back to the stage.

Whilst working as an RNID Social Worker for Deaf people, he found his way into the spotlight through the Theatre for the Deaf, playing every role, from tragedy to drag, with great skill and enthusiasm.

Issy laughs: "In Cinderella, I must have been the ugliest Ugly Sister ever!"

Over seven decades, everyone in the Deaf community came to know and love Issy, either for his acting or his social work – or both! **As the first Chairman of the Jewish Deaf Association, Issy had lifelong friends here.**



Lisa Mansur, JDA Support Worker, adds:

Issy lived his whole adult life with his sister Shirley and stopped coming to JDA whilst nursing her through a long illness. After Shirley passed away four years ago, he became more involved

with JDA again and I started visiting him regularly.

I so enjoyed my precious time with Issy. **He was a man of strong faith and good humour.** He never complained, even when he was suffering terribly. He always smiled and expressed his appreciation. **He was a great character and we will all miss him very much.** He is now free of pain.

May his dear soul rest in peace.