

## Tribute – Remembering Marie Littman

07.02.1920 – 24.12.2017

### Neil Littman pays tribute to his beloved mother, JDA member Marie Littman

Marie was born in Bethnal Green. Her mother had arrived in the UK in 1901 after fleeing the Russian pogroms and her father was born in London.

When Mum was nearly two years old, she contracted scarlet fever and became profoundly deaf. It took some time for my grandmother to discover Marie had lost her hearing.

**Marie attended the Residential School for Jewish Deaf Children until around 1938.** Her mother told her not to use sign language so that nobody would identify her as deaf. Her mother helped her to learn to speak more clearly by placing a hand on her throat to feel the vibrations of the sounds she made. This meant we grew up speaking directly to her with few gestures.

Marie showed an aptitude for art and had three paintings chosen for an exhibition at Whitechapel Art Gallery. Her guess was they were lost or destroyed during WW2.

After the war, she worked as a dressmaker and met my father Daniel at a tea dance. **At first, my father was unaware that Marie could not hear** as she used the vibrations on the dance floor to work out how to dance. When they spoke, he thought she was from another country!

They married in 1952 and had two sons, my brother Stephen and me. **My father was a hairdresser with a salon and a hairdressing school** in Islington. They lived at the family house in Clapton with my grandmother. Life ran smoothly until 1972 when my father died of a heart attack aged 53, leaving my mother with two teenage children and almost no income, surviving on contributions from the family.

My grandmother Rose was by then 84 and Mum began to look after her almost singlehandedly. This continued for another 20 years until my grandmother passed away in 1992, aged 104.

In 1985 my brother Stephen - who had moved to the USA after marrying his wife Barbara - passed away, which was a terrible blow to Mum. Barbara was eight months pregnant at the time with my niece Daniella. A strong bond developed between Mum and her granddaughter Daniella. Daniella visited Mum almost every year and Mum also visited the USA regularly until she was in her 80s.

Mum eventually moved to warden-assisted housing in North Finchley. **At JDA's Day Centre she rekindled old friendships and met her good friend Helen Eisen.** At JDA's Happy Mondays she rediscovered her love of painting and drawing.

Mum moved to Rosetrees residential home where she was looked after until she passed away aged 97. She still managed to attend JDA almost every week as this was an important part of her life.

**My family really appreciate the JDA staff and members for being such a positive addition to Marie's life.** JDA gave her many opportunities to see places she may not have had access to and allowed her to maintain contact with friends from school.

Marie was a kind, generous and loving mother, an outgoing and sociable person who will be **greatly missed by all who knew her.**

