



Erna Stern

April 19, 1920 - November 18, 2018

Erna Stern of Sunny Isles Beach passed away on Sunday, November 18, 2018. Beloved mother of Ruth S. Waechter and Daniel C. Stern. Erna (Ester), was born April 19, 1920, Hannover, Germany.

Her parents had moved from Galicia, Austria-Hungary, to Hannover in 1906, soon after marrying, following her uncle's move there for a job singing in the Hannover Synagogue's new chorus. Erna was the last of nine children of whom only two older sisters and a brother survived the WW1 era into adulthood.

Her father, a brass candelabra maker, died unexpectedly at a young age when Erna was near seven. After her father's death, her mother, financially strained, sheltered her in a nearby Jewish home for children. There she blossomed — designed, sewed and play-acted, and several years later was selected as one of about 24 students to attend a secondary school for gifted children of the city of Hannover. Erna was very proud of this, and was fond of the school and her friends. But soon, with the Nazis attaining control of the government, life became difficult. She remembered that classmates and teachers were supportive, but increasingly some adhered to the regime's new decrees of discrimination.

In 1932, Erna's brother Moshe, then 19 and involved with Zionist youth, immigrated to British-mandate Palestine when it was still legally possible. He then arranged with the British authorities for his mother and sister, Erna, to emigrate to Palestine, which they did in November of 1934.

Erna was 14 and a half. In Tel Aviv she joined Ha'noar Ha'oved — The Working Youth — where she made life-long friendships, worked, and learned sewing and dress-making. She learned Hebrew and English proficiently in classes and from friend tutors. She also became part of the Palmach youth military organization training to defend the country. She specialized in flag signaling communications.

One of her jobs was at a commercial laundry, where she met Werner Meyer Stern who escaped Nazi Germany in 1938, and had managed to reach Israel wading in darkness to the Jaffa-Tel Aviv shore. They married on Lag Ba'omer, May, 1941.

They soon opened a commercial laundry of their own with adjoining small living quarters in an old Arab-style building in Giv'at Herzl, the southern area of Tel Aviv, bordering Jaffa. The neighborhood was the core of the nascent industries of the country, with factories of every description - "Nezach" ink making, a warehouse and a restaurant, all sharing their building, and "Run" battery manufacturers, a lead-solder factory, "Hed Artzi" — the first bakelite record making company in Israel, and a custom furniture making shop, all just across a small dirt yard.

When the shelling from the nearby hills began in the "Mora'ot" period of the 1940s, Ester arranged for the children to be housed in a safer area in northern Tel Aviv, but she and Meyer remained in the neighborhood working, washing, ironing, sewing repairing machinery even as a bomb shrapnel transversed the house wall and window. After the war, the family lived with the large patched hole in the wall, and neighboring factory men admitted that they stuck it out as well to avoid the embarrassment of leaving while Ester kept on without a pause. Erna had a disposition that seemingly didn't react to danger. Never panic. What will be, will be.

She continued her work, later largely converted the business to a sheer-curtain refinishing operation, and was famed and whistled at by area men as the blond hauling two kids — front and back on her bike. She was unfazed.

But, after 20 some years of work and no progress in savings or in housing, Erna was the force in negotiating the complex arrangements of moving to the US, made possible by sponsorship of Rudy Stern, Werner's brother who had managed his own Nazi escape from Germany and became a US soldier and citizen.

In the US Erna worked in the mid-Manhattan garment industry, sewing the model pieces that she said she preferred - as these required near-perfection but done at a slower pace, unlike the neck-break pace demanded of the ordinary piece-workers. On her way home she would walk-through Macy's 34th Street or Gimbels to pick up the bargains, followed by fixing them for a perfect fit. Son, Dan, was voted best dressed in his 9th grade Jr High class.

She continued work, private sewing, and later owned a small alteration shop in the pricier east-side Manhattan location. When her husband, Werner, died in 1971, friends

introduced her to Kurt, a recent widower, unrelated second Stern. They married in 1972.

About 1979 Kurt and Erna moved from Island Park, NY to Miami. Erna continued to sew. Kurt passed after ten years of a good marriage.

When Erna was about 65 she began painting classes. Her talent hinted at in her early notebooks, lay dormant for years, then blossomed. Her painting style motto was "chick-chuck", no waste of time. A painting a week including finding a frame, hopefully at bargain prices, refinishing if need be, stapling, stringing and hanging, that is, when there was space.

Erna was gregarious with many close friendships, sadly gone now. She could be humorous in her direct talk. She'd all but tell you if the baby is ugly. She seldom displayed overt emotion, mostly sticking to the practical. She was a helping mother and grandma. Something needs to be done, she'll do it. Chick chuck, quickly with no fuss. She tutored, cooked, fixed a wall plug. or housed a grandchild for a year. She loved buying clothes at a great price and fixing the fit, rearranging, re-creating. Take her shopping and she'll figure out how to make it work and do it as soon as she neared the sewing machine.

Her toughness, intelligence and practicality and resiliency upheld her for many years, including through her decline with Alzheimer's. She was the legend of her HCT assisted living unit, steady, engaged as she could, and constantly walking. And the chocolates she loved a-plenty didn't appear to harm her.

Erna is survived by her children Ruthi and husband Bill, Daniel and wife Tamara, by her six grandchildren Craig and his wife Susan, Jill and husband Luis, Robin and husband Greg, Michael and wife Shayna, Eric and wife Tina, Adam and wife Shari, and by nineteen great-grandchildren in Miami, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Melbourne Australia. She will be so missed.

Graveside Service November 20, 2018 at 11:30 a.m. at Lakeside Memorial Park, 10301 NW 25th Street, Doral, Florida. Arrangement by Levitt-Weinstein Blasberg-Rubin-Zilbert Memorial Chapel (305) 932-2700

Comments



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Erna Stern.



November 24, 2018 at 12:19 AM



“ Erna”s art: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Ay5MsDC2FVbi0p7A2>

Dan Stern - November 23, 2018 at 03:59 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Dan Stern - November 22, 2018 at 11:18 AM



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Dan Stern - November 22, 2018 at 10:58 AM