



Mira Ryczke Kimmelman

September 17, 1923 - April 17, 2019

Mira Ryczke Kimmelman, 95, of 969 West Outer Drive, died peacefully at home at 1pm on Wednesday, April 17.

Mira's long and purposeful life was dotted with tragic events and redeeming joys. She was born on September 17, 1923 in the seaside resort of Zoppot, a suburb of the free City of Danzig. Her father Moritz was a grain merchant and her mother Eugenia dedicated herself to raising Mira and her younger brother Benno. This happy life came to an abrupt end in 1939 when the Nazis invaded Danzig and drove Mira and her family from their home, first to ghettos in Warsaw and Tomaszow Mazowiecki, then to concentration camps Blizyn-Majdanek and Auschwitz, and thereafter on a horrific death march to Bergen-Belsen, where Mira was liberated and reunited with her father. Sadly her mother and brother did not survive the Holocaust.

In 1946, she met another survivor, Max Kimmelman, who had lost his wife and daughter in the Holocaust. They married on May 19, 1946 in Germany. With the assistance of family in Cincinnati, Ohio, they were able to immigrate to the United States and arrived in Cincinnati, Ohio on August 2, 1948. Mira's father arrived in 1949. Both Mira and Max worked in Cincinnati and both their children, Benno and Gene, were born there.

In 1964, Max's employer relocated to Rockwood, Tennessee. Mira, Max and the boys moved to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, in August of that year. It is in Oak Ridge that Mira blossomed into the Woman of Valor we all knew her to be. While raising their sons, Mira volunteered in various capacities in their school. She also began her many volunteer activities in the Jewish community, many of which she continued until recently, for fifty years--teaching in and directing the religious school of the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge, teaching Hebrew, as well as tutoring children for Bar and Bat Mitzvah. She joined the Zionist Women's Group Hadassah, where she served as president of the local chapter from 1969-72 and 1990-92, as president of the Southern Region from 1981-84, and as a member of the National Board from 1981-86. She also served on the Chevra Kadisha since 1972, and served as President of her Congregation from 1994-97.

Mira was also active in the larger Oak Ridge community by serving as president of the American Field Service from 1977-79, and as president of the United Nations Committee of Oak Ridge from 1979-82 and 1984-93. Mira lectured widely, both locally and nationally,

in schools and to other groups, on her experiences in the Holocaust.

Mira's dedication was rewarded with numerous honors, among them the Sertoma Annual Heritage and Freedom Award (1983), the Knoxville Women's Club Annie Selwyn Award for Teaching and Lecturing on the Holocaust (1987), the Oak Ridge Chapter of Hadassah National Leadership Award (1987), the Women's League Light of Torah Award (1992), the National Conference for Community and Justice Award for Religious Services (1997), National Hadassah's Deborah Award for Hebrew Teaching (2000), the YWCA of Oak Ridge 2001 Women of Distinction Award in the category of religion, and the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge Recognition Award for forty years of teaching (2003).

In 1997 Mira became an author and published *Echoes from the Holocaust: A Memoir*, and in 2005 her second book, *Life Beyond the Holocaust: Memories and Realities*, both by the University of Tennessee Press. She recounted the story of her survival with the fervent hope that remembering the horrors of the past would help ensure that no one would ever suffer such atrocities again.

Mira's life has been an immeasurable blessing for not only her family and friends, but for the Oak Ridge and Knoxville communities and beyond. She is survived by her sons Benno and Gene, her daughters-in law Joy and Caroline and her grandchildren Melanie, Michael, Max and Ellie.

The Funeral Service will be held at 1 pm Friday, April 19 at the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge (101 W. Madison Ln) with Rabbi Victor Rashkovsky officiating. Burial will follow at the Oak Ridge Jewish Cemetery at the Oak Ridge Memorial Park.

The family requests that any memorials be in the form of donations to the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge (P.O. Box 5434, Oak Ridge, TN 37831), Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem, or the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Online messages may be left for the family at www.martinfuneralhomeoakridge.com.

Martin Oak Ridge Funeral Home is handling the arrangem

Comments



“ I saw Mira speaking on the news around 20 years ago. I was so moved by her story that I wrote her a letter. Immediately after receiving it, she called me! She had a speaking engagement the following week at a local church. She explained of how emotionally exhausting it was to speak of her haunting past....and that she must always have a driver on hand to return her home. She asked if I would be available to BE her driver! So, upon picking her up that following week, our friendship began and it bloomed. She gave me a signed copy of her beautiful book. I bought several copies throughout the years and had her sign them for my friends as well. One of my treasured momentos is a photo of my son Isaac with Mira. Isaac was a toddler at the time. The photo was taken at the synagogue. It was important for me to have their photo together as I knew I would share the history of the Holocaust with Isaac later in life. I wanted this connection, as Mira's life blood was to educate the young people. Heaven has gained a special angel. How blessed are those of us who had the opportunity to know her in this life.

Vickie Quick - April 24 at 08:38 PM



“ Hi Benno,

I heard about your mother on the morning of her service and was unable to change my schedule to be able to attend. She was a wonderful person, and my thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. I remember her laughing face and kind acknowledgement of my explanation that I was only 'playing the part' of the delegate from Lebanon at our mock UN debate.

David Russell

David L Russell - April 23 at 10:50 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Malgorzata Tarasiewicz - April 23 at 03:44 PM



“ Mira Ryczke Kimmelman lived in Sopot as a child and she came back in the 90s to visit the places of her childhood. She funded the memorial plaque commemorating burning of the Sopot synagogue by the Germans in 1938.



“ Mira was an incredible teacher, a brave woman, and so proud of her family. She taught me about tzedakah and about setting high expectations for myself. Her experiences as a Holocaust survivor are now part of my story, and I will share her story.

Sarah Woulfin - April 21 at 10:36 AM



“ I personally did not know MRS Kimmelman, but as a long Oak Ridger, I was familiar with her incredible story. We lost a piece of history with her passing. Blessing to the family.
Ron Teague

Ron Teague - April 19 at 11:23 PM



“ She has to be a special Angel in Heaven. "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

John (Jack) Cowen - April 19 at 07:20 PM



“ Lynn Harrington lit a candle in memory of Mira Ryczke Kimmelman



Lynn Harrington - April 19 at 05:57 PM



“ In 2010, I had the honor of accompanying Mira to Cleveland High School, as she spoke to selected students, about her experiences during the Holocaust. I was in awe of her presence, her wit and all of the lessons she taught me. #neverforget

Lynn Harrington - April 19 at 05:56 PM



“ I had the pleasure of meeting and speaking with Mrs. Kimmelman while working as a caregiver for Mr. Agron and attending service with him. She was such a pleasure to speak with. I admired her for her strength and grace. I look forward to reading her books. May she rest in peace.

Lisa Overton - April 19 at 04:06 PM



“ Mira was one of the kindest, most gracious people I ever met. She came to my wedding and talked with my uncle, who was so moved he arranged for her to go to Indiana to share her story. Every time we visited her, she would point out the plant she received and show me how well it was doing and ask to be remembered to my aunt and uncle. She brought me into her fold and loved and supported me when I went to law school, even when my own family didn't. She allowed us to name our daughter after her, and they developed a beautiful relationship with each other, becoming "Big Mira" and "Little Mira." We have her books and a recording of one of her presentations so that when Little Mira is older, we can share them with her. I cannot overstate the impact she made on my life or how much I will miss her, so I can only imagine how much greater the loss must be for you, her family.

Mary Hobson - April 19 at 02:55 PM



“ A very kind, loving, and gracious woman is only a few words to describe this woman. I'm sure she will be very missed by many.

Lisa Overton - April 19 at 04:08 PM



“ I had the privilege of meeting your mother a few times. I admired her so much. Though it must have been very painful to do so she was very generous about sharing her experiences. My deepest sympathy to all of your family

Ginny Minturn

Ginny Minturn - April 19 at 11:21 AM



“ Condolences to Benno and the entire family, Mark Somerstein

Mark Somerstein - April 19 at 11:21 AM



“ Mrs. Kimmelman came to my class at ORHS in 1977 and some about her life experiences. It is one of my most cherished memories of my high school experience. In college I took several courses related to the holocaust and have read many books since then. As a teacher, whenever i have the chance, i speak to children about the horrors of the holocaust and our duty to remember and celebrate the survivors. This passion was first ignited by Mrs. Kimmelman. Thank you for sharing her with all of us.

Heidi McDaniel - April 19 at 11:01 AM



“ Mira has inspired me since I first met her 40 years ago in Oak Ridge. What a woman of valor and courage. The world has lost a shining star.
Judy DiGregorio

JudyDiGregorio - April 19 at 09:40 AM



“ I want to begin by sharing my most heartfelt condolences and sympathies to your family.

Mrs. Kimmelman came to my eighth grade class to speak about her experiences during the Shoah. She spoke with such strength and perseverance about the many trials and atrocities that she endured. I remember leaving that day, wanting to learn more about what happened.

Her talk is what led me to pursue a career in History and Judaic Studies, teaching about the Shoah, later in my life. I met her once more, during my Bachelors studies at UT. After her talk, I told her that she inspired me to pursue a career in teaching about the Shoah to future generations. I am sure that she made this impact on many others.

She was an incredible woman, inspiring and impacting generations to come. Her testimony made such an impact on me, as well as many others.

I am so very sorry for your loss again. She will be missed dearly.

Amanda Alarcón
Kraków, Poland

Amanda Alarcón - April 19 at 07:41 AM



“ I had the honor of hearing this beautiful woman speak on a couple of occasions. She was gracious, passionate and generous in the sharing of her experiences. Truly an inspiration who made such an impact to all whom she met... including me. Thank you Mira Kimmelman. Marla Lenihan

Marla Lenihan - April 19 at 07:34 AM



“ We are thinking of you all today, our hearts a little heavier with Mira gone. It is hard to believe, even though she was 95, that such a lady could leave us. One who could render such life out of such death. Mira's spirit lives in all of us, whom she touched deeply.

Manya Sundstrom - April 19 at 06:11 AM



“ I can share a story about when I first met Mira. I must have been around 5 years old, my mother took me to the synagogue. I was moved by the music, it was as if I had heard that music my whole life. And I was especially struck by a woman, who sat a few pews behind me singing louder than anyone else, from the bottom of her soul. That was Mira. After that day I came to Friday night services every week, even if my parents could not drive me, and I sang as loud as I could to match the voice of that woman a few pews behind me. Singing has always been an important part of my life, and many years later someone asked me who was my inspiration. The answer, simply, was Mira. I have recorded her voice, by the way, if you ever want it. -Manya Raman Sundström

Manya Raman Sundstrom - April 20 at 03:45 AM



“ Cousin of our fathers Mietek and Gutek and Niece of our grandmothers Hela and Gustava, Mira looked after our family history, celebrations and traditions from Kalisz and beyond so that we might know what our fathers were not able to tell us. Mira is the most precious thread that runs throughout our lives , knitting us all together regardless of the miles that physically separate us. She has given us so very much to treasure which we in turn can look after for our own families. We will love and cherish Mira always. Didi, Karen, Sarah and Simon

Karen Gorbutt - April 19 at 02:39 AM



“ Mira was a dear friend. I admire her courage even in the face of the atrocities and losses she endured.

I will miss talking to her each Friday before Shabbos. Rest easy Mira. My condolences to Gene and Benno and their families.



“Hearing Mrs. Kimmelman speak to my entire 8th grade class is a memory I will never forget. I'm grateful for her courage to share her experience with so many. Many thoughts and prayers to her family during this time.

Amanda (Redmon) Cofer - April 18 at 05:21 PM



“Mira Kimmelman spoke to my Western Civ classes at UTK many times. Her courage, warmth, and intelligence created a real human connection with my students, and an unforgettable memory of seeing the Holocaust in terms of one person's experience, not abstractions or numbing numbers. We are all so grateful for her generosity of spirit.

John Bohstedt - April 18 at 04:44 PM



“Mira Kimmelman certainly was an icon in her time, surviving unforgivable tragedies and going on to live a knowledgeable and exceptionally fulfilled life, teaching generations of people about overcoming past horrors with humanity and love. She will always be remembered for her engaging sweet smile, friendliness, and kindness to everyone who knew and loved her. May her life be a blessing to all....

fay campbell - April 18 at 03:31 PM



“How I enjoyed our little lunches together! You were inspirational in so many ways...you even came to my farm and rode a horse. Shalom, Mira...you will forever be in my heart.

Judy Raman

Judy Raman - April 18 at 03:29 PM



“Mira was a gentle soul and a huge contributor to the Jewish and secular community of Oak Ridge.

Walter Hanig - April 18 at 03:08 PM



“ A remarkable friend, neighbor and human being. You will be missed. We love you Mira and are blessed to have shared time, conversation, and yummy apple torte. Your memory will remain in my heart for the rest of my days.
John wenzel

John Wenzel - April 18 at 02:10 PM



“ Gene, I am so very sorry you have lost your mother, but I am so happy that she is reunited with her brother and mother! I send my love to you and your family.
Maria Orlando Gee

Maria Gee - April 18 at 06:46 PM



“ on a floating bed of heaven, on the grand rolling waves of eden, soaring through the pauper skies, princes and princesses smiling, Abraham and Moses sending their flowers and kisses, i give my thanks to a God omniscient, for you Mira, as your soul rises to greet this glorious Earth.....

Philip Shapiro - April 18 at 01:28 PM



“ Andrea J. Abrahams lit a candle in memory of Mira Ryczke Kimmelman



Andrea J. Abrahams - April 18 at 12:38 PM



“ Mira was one of my Mom's best friends. We all loved her dearly. She will be missed. My thoughts and prayers are with all of you.

Melinda (Rudo) Durden - April 18 at 12:10 PM



“ To someone who reached out and touched so many lives with her wisdom and love.
We were so honored to be friends of yours, dear Mira.



Beth Meyer - April 18 at 10:23 AM