



Susanna Wiener

December 31, 1923 - November 3, 2004



Mitzvah, Toronto Nov 18, 2000



Suzy with Buddy, Toronto - May 2004





Susanna Wiener



A Love Of Life and a Zest for Living...

Susanna Wiener was born Zosha Jegier, December 31, 1923, in Kielce, Poland. Susanna was known by many names, but in Canada, she was known mostly as Susan or Suzy. At home, she was given the Jewish moniker of Zeesil (sweet) by her family, and in Hebrew, her name was Naomi.

She was the youngest of five children born to Wolf and Sonia (Sura Basha) Jegier. Her older siblings were, Bernard (Baruch), Cecilia (Cesha) and Srulik (Israel), and Fischele, who died before Susan was born.

When Susan was a baby, her father, a wealthy merchant and property owner, was experimenting in his home laboratory, when an experiment he was working on went awry and there was an explosion. Susan was told that Wolf lost his life in the resulting fire but only after ensuring that all the children were safely out of the house. Wolf threw her out the window to safety, and while remaining in the house to save some valuables or money he perished.



Coincidentally, this house was located across the road from where her future husband would grow up. Since Susan's family moved right after the fire to Sosnowiec, another city in Poland, it would be a long time before they would be destined to meet. Susan's mother remarried an older man with his own children and between them they had a son Michael (Moniek) Nash (Nusonovitch), who today lives in Los Angeles. Michael claims that Zosha was an avid reader as a child and loved to read all types of books until the late hours of the night.

Her mother's second marriage was not working out, and it seemed that her new husband was more interested in Sura Basha's assets than in the marriage. To complicate matters, Susan's paternal grandfather was also interested, as a trustee, in obtaining the estate's assets for his other children's families. Her older brother Bernard, in order to protect the family assets, managed to manipulate the birth dates of some of the siblings on documents, in order to show their ages as being older. In this manner, Bernard was able to show the courts that he was old enough to look after his assets as well as those of his siblings. As well, the family was able to hold on to the building they lived in, which ended up providing members of the family a place to live and a hiding place during the war for Bernard and Cecilia.

Susan was gutsy. Under the Nazi occupation, she would take off her yellow star and walk around like a gentile in order to procure food for family and friends. She was once stopped by a Nazi but talked her way out of the situation without losing her cool. In the end, it was a Jewish collaborator, Moishe Merin, the head of the Judenrat (Jewish government under the Nazis) for Sosnowiec, who was responsible for catching Susan and her mother on behalf of the Nazis.

Susan was sent to a Nazi German work camp in Czechoslovakia, which contained factories and barracks. Some of the workers were poorly paid locals who went home after work, but most of the workers were Jewish slaves. Susan worked in a factory that made yarn and woven fabric. Most of the Jewish slaves were girls or young women, as this type of work required precision and delicate fingers. Although this was not a death camp, conditions were harsh and many of the inmates perished. Susan was thought to be a Jew of German origin, because of her last name, Jegier. This afforded her some privileges; one being that she was permitted to receive packages from home. She would share its contents with the Matron of the factory, which ensured that she continued to receive these packages unopened. In them, she would find hidden pieces of jewelry that she could trade and would give a piece of jewelry to a Czech worker who would smuggle in food, in exchange. In this way, Susan survived the war.

Upon returning to Sosnowiec, she discovered that her sister Cecilia and brother Bernard had survived, hiding in the attic of their house with the aid of Bernard's fiancée Marisha, but her brother Srulik had died, murdered by the Croats. Her mother had perished in Auschwitz, because she had given her very best friend, a gentile woman whom she trusted, some jewels for buying food with. Instead of bringing her back food, she brought back the Gestapo. She was betrayed by her best friend, which cost Sura Basha her life. Susan was molded by this experience and it affected her ability to trust people for the balance of her life.



After the war, she went to Kielce to visit friends, who were staying in a building that was a refuge for Jews returning from the camps. It was in this refuge that the worst post war pogrom took place. Local Poles killed over 40 Jews and this became the impetus to start the exodus of many Jews from Eastern Europe. While visiting with her friend, she ran into the man who would become her husband. David Barwiner knew that the Poles were planning something and wanted to leave Kielce, and asked Susan to join him. She told him that she would like to but that she was an old fashioned girl and wouldn't travel with a man unless she was married. David and Susan were married August 24, 1945, two weeks after meeting, in her family's home in Sosnowiec. They couldn't find a Rabbi to officiate the ceremony, so David took a guest, a friend of Cecilia, who was a Jewish scholar and David, being a Cohen (Jewish Priest), ordained this scholar as a Rabbi. After the wedding, the married couple fled Poland, in a commandeered Russian army truck, together with part of their wedding entourage, including the newly ordained Rabbi.

David and Susan ended up in Unteramingen, Germany, where he obtained a position working with the American Army and UNRA acting somewhat like a mayor for the Jewish population of five towns. During this time, they started working for the Haganna, organizing, and smuggling material and Jewish refugees to Palestine. In 1946, during a bust on a post war Nazi meeting that turned violent, a battle ensued between American forces and the Nazis. As a result, David was arrested, and blamed for causing the violence. He ended up in a prison cell in Lansburg, the same one occupied by Adolf Hitler before his rise. Susan helped smuggle out a Jewish prisoner from that prison, a member of the Haganna. She was probably one of the few people in history to smuggle weapons out of a prison, which were also used by the Haganna.

Later, David and Susan settled in Munich, Germany, where he took a senior position as a procurer of arms and equipment for the Haganna. Sonia, their daughter and first child was born January 22, 1948. Sura Basha had made their children promise to name their first born daughters after her if she perished. Both Cecilia and Susan, honoured that promise

Subsequent to the creation of the Jewish State, Israel, in part of the former land of Palestine, David went on to create a textile business, which flourished. Susan managed to bring up her child in great style and affluence, and had a chauffeur as well as a nanny.

In 1951, certain former Nazis had taken positions in government. A former Haganna associate of their efforts was arrested by the Germans and died shortly afterwards in prison. Susan had a strong intuition that often proved right, which told her they should flee. They shipped all their possessions to a kibbutz in Israel, but just before departing Sonia got sick. The ultimate diagnosis would preclude her from tolerating the Israeli climate and she needed a temperate climate. The family landed in Canada at the end of 1951, this time without any possessions or assets.

In 1952, they settled in Toronto and David got a job as an electrical technician. He was unfairly fired from his position, but Susan knew that they would call and try to rehire David. She insisted that he not go back. As it turned out, they did call him back, but David heeded Susan's advice. It was a tough decision, because by this time they had another child, a boy, born in Toronto July 10, 1953 who was named William (Bill) after Wolf, Susan's father. Susan assured her husband that somehow they would manage, and they did.

David started a contracting business, and subsequently a manufacturing business founded by both Susan and David, called Wiener Electric Limited (now known as Visioneering Corp). They both worked to build up the business and sometimes Susan would go to work with her little child in her arms. As the business grew, they prospered. Susan's children were given a good education, married, and provided Susan and David with grandchildren. Bill and his wife Lillyann Goldstein have two sons, Kevin 14 and Michael 18, and Sonia and her husband Gerry Rowan have two daughters Andrea 17, Julia 29 and one son Sheldon, soon to be 32.

Susan dedicated her life in Canada, to bringing up her family and towards volunteer work. She had a zest for life, which never left her, even until her last days on earth. She loved to travel with her husband and she was a devoted wife. When David, was dying, she took such good care of him that he would refer to his wife as "my angel."

His angel has now joined him in Heaven.



Circa 1950



Brandon Stier's Bar



July 2004, Wiener Clan at Camp George



Israel 1965



Poland, 1939, with her Brother Israel



Florida 1966

