



Zoly Zamir

July 27, 1922 - April 22, 2017

Zoly Zamir passed away peacefully on Saturday, April 22, 2017 in the care of Houston Hospice. He is preceded in death by wife, Shoshana, and is survived by their two daughters, Yardena Bobys and Varda Zamir. His grandchildren are Jair and his wife Graciela Bobys, Jordan "JJ" and his wife Kathy Perry, Tamar Bobys, Eliya Grinpas, and Avital and her husband Luther Martin. He is survived by great grandchildren Danielle Levy, Harley Grinpas, Oliver Martin, and Kira Perry. He also leaves behind his loving companion, Sharon Covan.

Zoly was born in a small village in Transylvania, Romania in July, 1922. He was raised by his grandmother on the family farm until age 11 when his family moved to Bucharest. With the rise of Nazi ideology and antisemitism, he was forced to leave school and search for work when he was only 15 years old. Zoly found a position as an elevator operator in the Grand Hotel Lafayette in Bucharest.

The Chief Concierge of the hotel took young Zoly under his wing and gave him a variety of important responsibilities that led to key interactions with many influential people in Bucharest including the Prefect.

In 1939, the hotel received several visitors from Germany, one of whom Zoly befriended. A matter of weeks later, Romania allied itself with Germany and the Germans checked into the hotel came downstairs in their Nazi uniforms

and seized the Grand Hotel Lafayette as its local Headquarters. With his gift for languages, Zoly spoke perfect German and over the next few years, Zoly would use this ability and his connection to a young Nazi to access and steal German letterhead to be used by the local Jewish organizations to forge exit papers for Jewish families seeking escape to Palestine.

After Zoly's identity as a Jew was exposed, he was forced to use his contacts to obtain his own forged exit papers. In 1941, he obtained a passport falsely indicating his age as seventeen so that he could qualify for a Youth Alia to Palestine. This only worked because of his personal connection with the Prefect resulting from his work with the Chief Concierge over the previous years.

Upon arrival in Palestine he reconnected with a childhood friend from Romania whose family owned a diamond factory and introduced Zoly to the craft of diamond polishing. It was at this time that Zoly met the love of his life, Shoshana Kempinski. Shoshana was already working at the diamond factory and, upon seeing Zoly for the first time, told her closest friend that this was the man she would marry. They were married for 60 years and had two beautiful daughters, Yardena and Varda.

At the request of the Haganah in 1943, Zoly joined the security patrol for Kibbutz Afikim along the Jordan River Valley. These patrols were sanctioned and trained by the British Army. During this period he worked with the British by day and smuggled Jewish refugees and weapons for the Haganah at night.

When the State of Israel officially came into being in May 1948, Zoly began serving with the newly formed Military Police and served during the War of Independence. After being discharged from the army in 1949, Zoly returned to the hospitality industry when he found work as the Concierge at the King David Hotel.

Zoly and Shoshana opened their first restaurant, Café Merkaz, in Jerusalem in 1956 after the indefinite closure of the King David Hotel for the Sinai Campaign.

At the behest of his longtime friend Harry Schein and with the encouragement of his older brother Dave Singer who was already in the U.S., Zoly decided to move his family to the United States in 1962. The Schein family was now in the tire supply business in America. Zoly opened ZZ Distributing in Louisville, KY and invested the next 20 years traveling the highways of Kentucky and Tennessee.

Zoly and Shoshana moved to Houston in 1982 to be closer to family. They returned to the restaurant business and opened Zoly's Deli in Houston's Galleria area.

After Zoly retired from the restaurant business, he kept himself busy doing what he did best - storytelling. He volunteered at Seven Acres, The Medallion, and Holocaust Museum Houston. Over the next 27 years he volunteered countless hours at the Seven Acres Gift Shop and entertained the Yiddish Group with endless jokes. He often spoke on behalf of Holocaust Museum Houston to thousands of people in schools, churches, and civic organizations. As someone barred from completing his formal education, he found joy telling the story of his life to school children to encourage them to stay in school and receive the education he was denied.