

A teen hood friend of hers once recalled how the two of them would routinely spend many hours going for walks, and with the fervor of youthful idealism planning to make this a more just world.

Novels could be written about Marta's story of survival.

The Jews of Koscicze were rounded up and taken to a brick factory, from where they were herded onto cargo carts and transported to Auschwitz. On the train, Marta looked after a little baby that was torn away from her parents.

When they arrived at Auschwitz, Marta was separated from her own parents and never saw them again. She witnessed an old woman being choked to death by one of the female guards for the crime of wanting to be with her daughter. Marta then prayed that she should never again see her mother in Auschwitz.

The next day Marta was taken to Riga by train. From Riga they were marched over many days in the hot sun to the concentration camp at Stuffhoft. During the ordeal Marta's legs were badly burned and swollen during the march. She was taken to the hospital at Stuffhoft where she contracted typhoid and nearly died.

In April of 1945, very near the end of the war, as the Russian liberating armies were approaching, the Nazi SS attempted to mop up the evidence of the Holocaust by evacuating some of the concentration camps. Some of the inmates of Stuffhoft, along with Marta, were boarded on ships. Many of the inmates were thrown overboard into the ocean as the SS attempted to dispose of witnesses.

The ship was bombed by the British air force and it capsized. Paradoxically, a German U-boat fished some of the survivors out of the water, presumably to gain favour with the Allies for their humanitarian act. The U-boat took the survivors to the free port of Kiel.

Marta suffered shrapnel wounds during the bombing of the boat, and pieces of shrapnel remained imbedded in her back for the rest of her life. She was taken to a hospital weighing 45 pounds. She arrived back to Budapest, to my mother's home, at the end of July, 1945.

Upon her return from the inferno Marta resumed her professional life. In many ways she became the surrogate grandparent to us children. She was the person we could always talk to in confidence, who would listen to us with patience and respect. She would always bring us gifts, and as children we would cuddle up to her and she would tell us the stories her father used to tell.

Our dear Aunt Marta died in Vancouver on December 13, 1987. In her will she requested that she should be cremated, because as she wrote: "I felt very strongly about this since I was 18 years old and more strongly because of the way my parents died in the Holocaust: their bodies were cremated too and their ashes scattered -who knows?- over Europe."

Dr. Marta Lövi's ashes were scattered in the ocean by Jericho Beach, while our father recited the Kaddish (the traditional mourner's prayer) and we placed flowers upon the waves to bid her good-bye.

THE LÖVI MATÉ FAMILY HANUKIAH

The day before our Grandparents were deported they buried this Hanukiah, along with a few other precious items, in the basement of a compassionate neighbour's house.

After their deportation a German officer occupied their spacious apartment. When the Germans retreated from Koscicze they looted all of our grandparents' possessions, works of art, dishes, cutlery and furniture.



Our Aunt Marta, after her miraculous return (at the end of July, 1945) from the concentration camps, retrieved the Hanukiah. It remains for our family a constant connection to our grandparents, aunt and now departed parents.

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

Our family thanks the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre and the Vancouver Book Festival for this opportunity to honour the memory of our grand parents and our aunt.

-Gabor, Janos and George Maté

LÖVI MEMORIAL FUND OF THE VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE



The Lövi Memorial Fund of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre was established to promote education and public awareness about the Holocaust through public programming.

The fund was established by the Maté family in honour of their grandparents, Anna (Abrahamsohn) Lövi and Dr. Joseph Lövi, their aunt Dr. Marta Lövi and their mother Judy Lövi Maté. Anna Lövi and Dr. Joseph Lövi both perished in Auschwitz. Marta survived Auschwitz and other camps and passed away in Vancouver in 1987. Judy Lövi Maté passed away in 2001.

The VHEC is a teaching museum that delivers Holocaust based anti-racism programming through its exhibits, school programs, teacher conferences, student symposia, outreach speakers program, teaching materials and public programs. The Centre has proudly partnered with many diverse ethnic, cultural and educational groups in the delivery of many of its programs.



ABOUT THE LÖVI FAMILY

We never met our maternal grandparents. Grandfather, Dr. Joseph Lövi, and grandmother, Anna Abrahamsohn-Lövi, were murdered on June 4, 1944 in the gas chambers of Auschwitz / Birkenau. They were selected for the gas chamber by the notorious Dr. Mengele as they disembarked their transport train.

Our aunt, Dr. Marta Lövi, was deported by the Nazis and the Hungarian fascists (Nyilasok) from Koscice, Slovakia, together with our grandparents. By some great miracle and sheer will of spirit she survived the horrors of Auschwitz and Stutthof concentration camps.

Our mother, Judith (Lövi) Maté, and her baby son, Gabor, survived the Holocaust in the Budapest ghetto. Our father, Andor Maté, spent two and a half years in the Jewish forced labour brigade of the Hungarian army.

How different our lives may have been had the Holocaust not happened, had our family not been shattered by those horrible events.

To this day, the impact of the Holocaust remains imprinted upon all the generations of our family.

We try to understand how one human being can put another into a gas chamber. We don't have the answer.

GRANDFATHER JOSEPH AND GRANDMOTHER ANNA

We wish we had known our grandparents, to have direct personal memories of them instead of just the few anecdotal fragments about their lives that we inherited from our mother and aunt.

In their photos, they always appeared rather formal, and Grandfather especially seems to have a rather stern demeanor. And yet, according to our mother her parents were both soft, loving and joyous people.



Grandfather, Dr. Joseph Lövi, was born January 16, 1884, in Sárbogárd (Hungary) into a religious family. His mother was Katalin Abelesz. His father, Ignáz Lövi, was a rabbi.

Grandmother, Anna Abrahamsohn-Lövi was born December 22, 1888, in Nagy Tapolcsány. Her mother was Sarah Leah Singer. Her father, Wilmos Abrahamsohn, was a cantor.

Anna Abrahamsohn and Joseph Lövi were married on January 24, 1912. On the day of their engagement Joseph penned the following love poem for his bride:

TO MY ANNA

*A home where true happiness resides
Surpasses all places of worship as a sanctuary for prayer*

*Our home, my dearest, will be such a home
And when words of prayer shall pass your lips
Our home shall be heaven's domain*

*For the true prayer of a pure heart
By great miracle unites heaven and earth*

*Our constant love, like a heavenly guest
Will never depart
For heaven itself is with us forever.*

(1911, November 24 - 5672 Hestvem 12)

Anna and Joseph made their home in the city of Koscice, which is situated close to the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian border.

Grandfather was a medical doctor who was renowned for his great intellect, wisdom, and his compassion. He was highly respected in both the Jewish and the general community for his professional competence and commitment to healing. He would treat poor people without any remuneration. In turn, the Jewish community honoured him by reserving for him two of the best seats in the synagogue.

He spoke six languages – Hungarian, German, English, French, Hebrew and Slovak. He was an avid reader and a poet. He translated French and German literary works into Hungarian. Apparently he had a great sense of humour, loved to tell anecdotes, and to share a good laugh with friends. He was also athletic, and while at university he was on the wrestling team.

He was a loving father to his two daughters. When they were little he would make up wonderful bedtime stories about imaginary characters who just happened to resemble our mother and aunt.



Grandmother was also a respected figure in the Koscice Jewish community. While fulfilling the traditional role of a Jewish mother, that is being the pivotal point of the family's life, she also was very active in community work. She established a dining hall for poor Jewish students, and was one of the founders of the orphanage for Jewish children.

Anna and Joseph loved attending operettas, operas, theatre and concerts and spending time in the company of good friends.

They are both written about in respectful terms in a book published in Israel about the Jewish community of Koscice.

AUNT MARTA

Our Aunt Marta was an extraordinary person. Born on April 8, 1913 in Komadi, Hungary, she was 31 years old when she was taken, together with our grandparents, to Auschwitz.

She was a highly educated, rather brilliant person. As a teenager she thought about journalism for a profession, but later opted for medicine, specializing in ophthalmology. She eventually achieved international recognition for her work.

Marta spoke numerous languages, including Hungarian, Slovak, French, English, German, Italian and Hebrew. She loved literature, classical music, the opera. She was, what one could only refer to, as a gentle, cultured being.

