

Minnie Goldberg

31 January 1915 – 7 December 2010



Minnie was born on 31 January 1915 in South London, where her parents ran a shoe shop. She attended The Residential School for Jewish Deaf Children for the last two years of her education. It was there that she became a part of the Jewish Deaf community, and part of the group of friends who grew up together, shared each other's lives for nearly nine decades, and who attend the JDA.

At school, Minnie met Alfred, who saw and fell in love with her. They got married, when Minnie was 21, after a four year engagement. They were married for over 65 years, and received a telegram of congratulations from the Queen when they celebrated their Diamond Wedding anniversary in 1996. Minnie was devoted to Alfred. When, in his later years, they sadly had to be separated and he moved to a residential home, Minnie visited him daily, to cheer him up, to take him out into the gardens where he was always happiest, and to make sure he was included in everything going on.

Minnie was tall, energetic and very capable. Although she tended to dress in a boyish fashion, she was a talented first class dressmaker. She worked at the Royal National Orthopedic hospital for five years, making corsets for people with spinal injuries. She loved working there and learnt a lot about medicine. She said she would have loved to be a nurse, and in the last few months, she complained about the nurses caring for her and the people around her, saying that she could have done a better job!

Both Minnie and Alfred loved the outdoors. They often rambled together and cycled on a tandem together. In their later life, they spent their holidays in Eastbourne. Minnie enjoyed arts and crafts, and produced beautiful tapestries and water colour paintings, displaying them with pride for visitors to admire.

They had a son Peter, whom they adored and were very proud of. Their family grew with a lovely daughter in law; Maureen, and granddaughter; Alexandra. Both Minnie and Alfred doted on Alexandra and were proud grandparents. Minnie even stopped smoking when Alexandra was born!

Minnie's strength could come across to other people as a bit scary. Mira (her niece by marriage) says that when she first met her 30 years ago, when Minnie's late nephew Gerald introduced her as his girlfriend; it felt as though Minnie was judging her, and it wasn't easy to gain her approval! But she became an important person in Mira and her family's lives and adored Mira's daughters, Simone and Laura.

When Alfred died in 2002, Minnie felt a deep sense of loss. She tried to overcome that feeling by becoming an active member of the Jewish Deaf Association. She participated in every activity that took place – outings, arts and crafts, parties, even holidays in her 90s. Whatever the JDA was doing, Minnie was there, adding sparkle and her wicked sense of humour. She was demanding and brutally honest, but at the same time always funny, always wise. She was a great person to banter with and people loved spending time with her as she was always such good company ... but she would always put on a quizzical expression and say "Why do they like me?" Friends were drawn towards Minnie – this fiercely independent woman with a husky voice, a strength you had to admire, and a warmth you couldn't help but feel. The staff and volunteers adored her, and she was part of the heart and soul of the JDA.

Minnie's son Peter tragically died in a car crash in 2006. That day, something inside Minnie died, and although her personality was as big as ever, and her laugh as raucous as before, her heart was broken and she was never quite the same.

With the support of others, Minnie lived independently in her own flat for 30 years.

Personal Column

At the age of 94, she agreed to have a carer to help her at home. Mira and her family, and Minnie's extended JDA "family" did everything they could to enable Minnie to enjoy the final years of her life, when she felt so very alone.

Minnie died peacefully in her sleep in the early hours of Tuesday 7 December 2010, aged 95 years. Until her final hours, every single day she had the company and support of friends and family beside her, which is a testimony to her, and how much she was loved.

Sadly, her grand-daughter, Alexandra, was unable to attend Minnie's funeral. She thanks Mira and her family, the JDA and the staff of Lady Sarah Cohen House for looking after Minnie so lovingly.

We remember Minnie with love and truly celebrate what a privilege and joy it was to have known her.

Message from Elaine Cohen:

I have known Minnie ever since I was a little girl and she looked after me when I was ill at the Jewish Deaf School. My Deaf parents were great friends with Minnie and her late husband and always invited them to our home.

I remember Minnie and Alfred came to my wedding with their son Peter. Peter told Minnie that he had wet pants and just like Minnie being always prepared, told Peter "You're lucky, I've got a spare pair of clean dry pants!"

She was really friendly to everyone and always smiled. I do know all the staff and friends of JDA and I loved her. I do feel the loss terribly as she always used to sit near me at JDA.

Rest in peace, Minnie, without any more suffering.



Minnie with her late husband Alfred in the earlier days