

KOSHER KOALA

Newsletter of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society Inc.

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October 2015



Rieke Nash

1938 - 2015

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Rieke Nash was, for many, the welcoming face of AJGS. Always smiling, always encouraging, and always planning the next treat for our members.

Rieke was among the founders of AJGS way back in 1991 and continued to play a vital role in its activities right up until ill-health intruded last year. Her official titles included Vice President, Honorary Secretary, President 2002-2009, and Resources Co-ordinator and Librarian throughout the years. These are the roles noted in history – in minute books, correspondence, and conference programs.

However, Rieke was also our corporate memory. She remembered who was researching which families and towns, how everyone connected to their mishpochah, and happily introduced new members to cousins they never knew existed. She knew every resource in our library in great detail and could recommend the best title for a particular topic.

For our members and those tentatively beginning their Jewish genealogical odyssey, these were undoubtedly much appreciated attributes. But it was her warmth, together with her generosity of spirit, which marked Rieke as someone special in the JGS pantheon.

Further afield, Rieke contributed hugely to the collective expertise in Jewish-Polish genealogical research. She was the town co-ordinator for Włocławek; indexed many, many LDS microfilms; translated hundreds of births, deaths and marriage registrations; and answered countless queries to the Society by phone, letter and email.

Of course, Rieke had a life before AJGS, and indeed an active life beyond AJGS. She grew up in Sydney's Eastern suburbs and proudly attended Sydney Girls High School from 1951 to 1955. Rieke's schooling, but not her education, was curtailed by her father's premature death. Rieke went to work to help sustain the family, but undeterred, also enrolled in evening classes and matriculated in 1957.

Romance blossomed at that great Jewish match-making venue – the steps at Bondi Beach. In 1960, Rieke married the love of her life – Peter Nash. Shortly after, Rieke became the first female programmer at IBM. Three adored children – Tony, Simon and Elana might have proved sufficient challenge for mere mortals, but Rieke apparently had energy to burn. She enrolled as a mature-age student at Macquarie University, graduating in 1977 with Honours in Education with a thesis titled: *Some methodological problems in large scale non-experimental research in education*. The family recall that this thesis was completed watching the Ashes series in the middle of the night, live from the UK – for Rieke also had a passion for watching sports.

Rieke worked in the Education faculty at Macquarie University, providing specialist expertise in statistical analysis of research data, primarily in the field of special needs education. In her 'spare' time, Rieke brought mathematics alive for many children whose parents were wise enough to engage her as an after-school tutor.

Community too, was important. Rieke was active in the P&C at her children's school and together with Peter, ran the Little Athletics program at Maccabi. The Reverend Katz Library at North Shore Synagogue benefitted greatly from Rieke's passion for books and her commitment to orderly cataloguing and borrowing.

Only Rieke and Peter could have produced offspring who would found and nurture *Booktopia*. We would all marvel as Rieke regaled us with tales of very long nights spent in the warehouse lugging cartons of books and preparing orders for despatch. Similarly, we enjoyed the yarns about the grandchildren as they matured and became the interesting individuals they are today. Their love of music and theatre, and their curiosity about the world, were greatly influenced by Rieke.

When I returned home from the *minyán* for Rieke, there was an email in my In-box asking if the society could assist in researching a family from Włocławek. My first instinct was to think despairingly, "You

are 24 hours too late!" My second thought was that it was Rieke's wicked sense of humour still at work, reminding us that there is still much to do and that the bar has indeed been set high.

Deepest sympathies to Peter, Tony, Simon, Elana and their families. May they each have a long life in good health, and may Rieke's memory be for a blessing.

Robyn Dryen

With thanks to the Nash family
for additional information



At the AJGS AGM 2013 – with Kym Morris and Kim Phillips

Rieke and Peter have been a part of my family for many years. And, while I have many memories of their help with finding my family, and in understanding their culture and religion, it is the memories of their friendship that I treasure.

I remember time spent with them at Copacabana, my son and Peter playing table-tennis together, shopping with Rieke and having her convince me that my 13-year-old daughter should be allowed to have her ears pierced. I remember the look of pride on Rieke's face when she and Peter attended my son's university graduation ceremony with me, and later at his wedding.

In 2009, when I was planning a tour and a two-week stay at Gallipoli, Rieke and Peter were among the first to say that they would come with me. We spent time there taking photos and pouring over spreadsheets which, with Rieke's approval, were colour-coded.

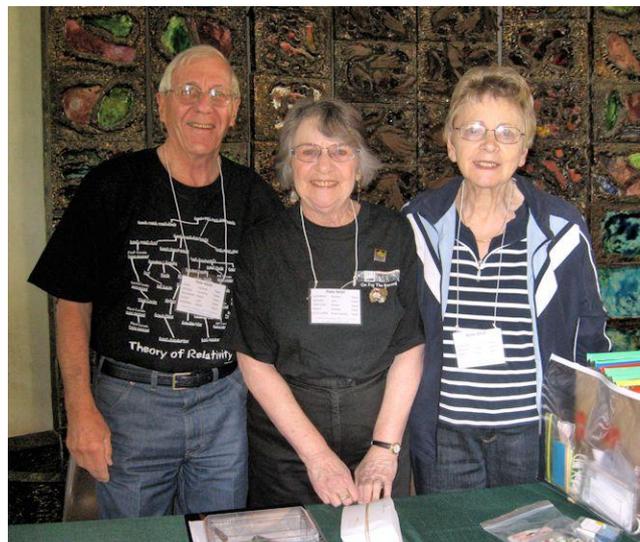
But what I remember and cherish most are the weekly lunches we had, chatting for hours. Rieke once said "I wonder if we will ever run out of things to talk about?" While I was visiting her in hospital, she commented that we never had.

Her passing has left a void that will never be filled.

Kim Phillips

At a workshop in March 1998, I discovered a publication entitled, *The Scattered Seeds*, authored by George Sackheim, from Illinois, USA. It contained his family tree dating back to the 1600's and I suddenly saw the name Lazar Kaganovich. I was quite excited because this was the maiden surname of my maternal grandmother, Sarah Sapier, but I didn't know if there was any connection. Rieke jumped to my aid and wrote to George straight away, asking for any information about Lazar's family.

This resulted in a flurry of letters between him, Rieke and me, with the three of us developing a warm relationship. The happy ending was the confirmation, by George, that my grandmother was probably a first cousin of Lazar (who was Stalin's henchman). Thanks to Rieke, I now



*At the 2008 AJGS Conference, Canberra
with Peter Nash and Sunny Gold*

have a complete family tree of my mother, Minna Sapier Altshuler. To top it off, she even managed to get me a copy of George's satirical book, *Grin-ealogy*.

One other memory of Rieke, who was my closest friend, was, when I was helping her with mail-outs, she kept rousing on me for not putting the stickers on straight on the envelopes.

Sunny Gold



*At the IAJGS conference, Boston 2013
with Evelyn Frybort*

Rieke was a friend, colleague and mentor. We lived in the same suburb, shared genealogical interest in the same part of Poland, in particular, in the towns of Aleksandrów Kujawski and Dobrzyń nad Wisłą.

It was only recently that I discovered that we were distantly related through our Dobrzyń nad Wisłą ancestors.

I hold fond memories of Rieke and Peter's warm hospitality in their home, where Rieke and I would spend many hours in wonderful discoveries.

Rieke and I travelled together to the Yiddish Library Day-Tour held during the IAJGS Conference in Boston in 2013. At the Conference, she would introduce me to people she knew and I was thus able to put faces to names who are so well known in the Jewish Genealogical world. Canadian Ken Drabinsky, Rieke and I gave a presentation about the proposed Kolo-Rypin- Plock Area Research Group.

This is a part of Poland which we felt needed a Special Interest Group Representation. Sadly, due to her illness, Rieke was unable to continue her highly valued participation in this project.

I feel a great void with the loss of this warm-hearted, generous friend, who lived life to the full with Peter, her family, friends and genealogical accomplishments.

Evelyn Frybort

How to start to write about Rieke? She was such a remarkable person – so very capable, yet so modest. Such a warm, caring person – she and Peter were always together whenever I saw her. She was so proud of her children and all their activities – sport, the part they played in the Sydney Olympic Games, the extraordinary success of Booktopia. She adored her grandchildren and had close relationships with her children's partners and their parents. The nurses at Greenwich Hospital had never seen anyone with so many friends – she was a wonderful friend and a lot of fun.

Rieke was a real 'people person.' She knew all the main genealogists who went to the International Jewish Genealogical Conferences and renewed her friendship with them every year. Because their families were from closely related towns, she had known Stanley Diamond years before his work resulted in the launch of JRI-Poland, and she continued to work with him until her final illness made it impossible. When I'd pop in to consult Rieke about something, she'd be in the midst of translating Polish birth, death and marriage certificates spread out on the dining room table, and no sooner had she completed that task than more would arrive in the post. Her work for JRI-Poland was an ongoing commitment that she fitted in somehow – along with her life with her family and friends and her work for the AJGS.

Rieke was the most incredibly organised person. She kept the archives in apple-pie order, including the family names and ancestral towns of every member of the Society, many of which she

remembered, and, if she came upon any information that would help a member, she would let them know. For many years, until computers became widespread, she submitted the names and towns of every member to JewishGen Family Finder, enabling many, myself included, to find unknown relatives overseas and tear down brick walls.



At the 2008 AJGS Conference, Canberra
with Jeannette Tsoulos and Dianne Johnstone

It is impossible to think of the Society without Rieke. She has been the mainstay of the library as resources librarian, gradually assembling a reference library, subscribing to the most important genealogical journals and exchanging journals with similar overseas societies. She read every book and every journal that came in. Any new information she found was added to a collection of folders she had assembled, one for every country where Jews had lived. New information was then passed on to the editor of the newsletter, *Kosher Koala*.

Along with her role as resources librarian and her other roles on the committee, Rieke kept up the archives and was responsible for the publishing, distribution and much of the editing of *Kosher Koala*. I took over from her as President when she stepped down in 2009. In my President's Reports at every following AGM, my description of her as *my right-hand woman*, came from the bottom of my heart. Rieke's help to me in my term of presidency was invaluable. I could not have survived without her.

Rieke was indefatigable in working for the Society. Most of the innovations and ideas for the Society came from her. When I became a member in 1994, workshops were already being held every first Sunday of the month, and Rieke and Peter attended, indeed ran, every one of them. Some years ago we added a monthly Monday workshop, which again they ran. We owe them both a tremendous debt of gratitude for their willing and untiring efforts in helping members and visitors with their research in this way – year in and year out.

During her presidency, Rieke continued the practice of organising all-day beginners' seminars. She organised an Expo and also the first National Conference, which was a great success. She presided over the development of four CDs – one in particular is widely used as it documents 1,700 burials in the Old Jewish Section of Rookwood Cemetery.

While devoting so much time and effort to the Society and its members, Rieke managed to find time to research her own family history, as did Peter. Conferences and visits to Salt Lake City and the International Tracing Service at Bad Arolsen occasioned weeks of frantic updating of the latest family information and sorting out missing information, in the hope of filling in some gaps. Rieke's deep involvement in her family research in Poland and England, along with her extensive reading in genealogy and her work with JRI-Poland, combined to her developing a formidable expertise in Polish and English research.

Rieke's qualities as a leader, her organisational ability and her overriding interest in enabling members to discover their family history made her a guiding force in the Society and in Jewish genealogy. Her warmth, enthusiasm and kindness endeared her to all who had contact with her.

My heart goes out to Peter, Elana, Tony and Simon and their families. Rieke will be greatly missed.

Jeannette Tsoulos

[To the BRITISH-JEWRY list:](#)

Dear fellow Genners,

It is with incredible sadness that I am advising you of the death of Rieke Nash, who for many years has been involved in the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society. Her loss will be deeply felt, not only by the Australians who explored Jewish Genealogy but also by members of the world-wide societies and groups who met her at Conferences and society meetings.

She is an enormous loss.

Miriam Pollak

Melbourne, Australia

[To the JRI-Pol list:](#)

Dear friends:

It is with a heavy heart and a deep feeling of sadness and loss that I share with you the news of the passing of Rieke Nash of Sydney, Australia after a long illness.

Rieke and husband Peter were regular attendees at the annual conferences and all who had the opportunity to meet her knew that they had encountered a wonderful lady in every sense.

As President of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Australia and a devoted Jewish Records Indexing - Poland volunteer, Rieke was a friend, colleague and mentor to countless researchers at home and abroad. In her devotion to the role of JRI-Poland Wloclawek Archive Coordinator for more than fifteen years, we have been witness to Rieke's unique talents for collaboration and helpfulness.

As a family historian, Rieke was an indefatigable researcher, traveling to archives around the world in her efforts to unravel her family's ancestry.

On behalf of the executive committee and board of JRI-Poland, I extend our deepest sympathies to Rieke's husband Peter and the entire Nash family. May her memory be for a blessing and may they know no further sorrow.

Stanley Diamond

Executive Director, Jewish Records Indexing - Poland

[To the JewishGen Digest](#)

We have lost one of the great genealogists: Rieke was a meticulous researcher, a powerful speaker, a tireless organiser and one of the most delightful people you could meet. She and her beloved husband, Peter, were a focus throughout Australia for genealogy. Immensely knowledgeable and immensely generous, Rieke provided hospitality and information whenever she could.



*At the IAJGS conference, Washington DC 2003
with Stanley Diamond*

The world genealogical community is very much the poorer for her passing. She will be remembered affectionately as one of the icons of our strange community. I mourn her passing and will always feel privileged that I knew her and had the benefit of her warmth and wisdom. May her dear soul rest in peace.

Miriam Margolyes,

Jaipur, India

Some thoughts from our AJGS members past and present



*At the IAJGS conference, NYC 1999
with Lionel Sharpe*

In the early years, Rieke was a tower of strength to our group and I personally miss her friendship and wisdom.

Lionel Sharpe (Melbourne)

What sad news. I send my condolences to her family. She gave a great deal to the AJHS and will no doubt be well remembered.

Dinah Harvey

Rieke was a wonderful lady and my dealings with her will long be remembered.

Kay Radford

Central Coast Family History Society Inc.

As an attendee to the AJGS workshops, Rieke was always so knowledgeable and helpful to me and others with research questions. She will be greatly missed.

Elizabeth Suggit

It was fate or divine intervention. I'm not exactly sure which.

A friend from Auckland suggested I call Rieke to ask for her help with a brick wall I ran into in my research. She gave me Rieke's telephone number and in ten minutes Rieke had punched through the wall and opened up a Pandora's Box of treasure in my WINTER family research. I will be eternally grateful to her for this breakthrough. It led me to London and the cemetery where my father's cousin was buried, and to the Czech Archives in Prague which I had never seen before, and which yielded plenty of files and new material about Dr Pavel WINTER, a writer, soldier and human rights lawyer, who studied in Vienna and Prague and helped set up the UNRRA post war.

The second vivid memory I have of Rieke, who became a friend along with her husband Peter, was when they came to visit me in Prague – my home town. We spent a few days while I tried to show off my lovely birthplace. It was such fun to be able to take them walking through the huge Letna Park that leads up to Prague Castle and the massive cathedral overlooking the city and the river Vltava. We *schlepped* around the castle through the thousands of other tourists, had lunch in an indifferent café (as so many there are) and inspected the Black Tower, the Golden Lane where Kafka lived and the incredible bejewelled room in the cathedral.

All along the way to the castle Rieke regaled me with her indignation about the Polish archivist who had tried to stop her seeing records for one of the towns she was working on for JRI Poland. I was so

impressed with her strength and enthusiasm for the task and I enjoyed her and Peter's company enormously.

Daniela Torsh

We have lost a wonderful, generous, kind friend.

Rieke was so helpful and dedicated in helping us all to research our family history.

I am grateful to Rieke and Peter, as they spurred me on when I was frustrated not finding the answers.

May Rieke repose in peace.

Liane Corbett

One of the things that I remember most about Rieke is her willingness to always go the extra mile when helping people with their research. I remember when I was at a workshop a few years ago and needing help in looking up the Bevis Marks records, she showed me where the entry could be found in the records and actually found the particular record for me. She will be sorely missed by the Jewish genealogical community.

Stuart Shaw



At the AJGS AGM 2011 – with Miriam Shifreen

During my years as editor of *Kosher Koala*, Rieke and I regularly met when she came over to my house and we edited the next edition of the newsletter. I look back on those times as very special as I feel I got to know Rieke, who was so motivated to support and promote the Genealogy Society. I miss those times and I miss Rieke's friendship and enthusiasm.

Miriam Shifreen

So sad to hear of the passing of a really wonderful human being ... I didn't know her well ... but after so many years of being around her so many times, I appreciate what a great soul she was. Her presence will resonate through the family and AJGS forever.

Caroline Josephs

I am greatly saddened to hear of Rieke's passing.

I have the fondest memories of her friendly, kind, helpful, nature, since I first met her two decades ago at the Sydney Jewish Museum when she, along with Sophie Caplan, encouraged me to join AJGS.

I thought her wise counsel would be available for ever!

John Guggenheimer (Canada)