

HEMAR FAMILY PAPERS

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Alice Hemar Biography

Alice Hemar was born as Alicja Ala Kalwari on May 25, 1920 in Warsaw Poland. She and her two years younger sister Zosia, lived with their parents in a five room apartment at 62 Hoza Street in Warsaw. Their father, Szymon Kalwari, was an accountant and was an importer of typewriters. Their mother, Helena Haber Kalwari, who was born in 1896, took care of the girls and later had a candy store. When the girls grew up, the Kalwari family moved to the Praga district of Warsaw and resided at 40 Szeroka Street, close to the paternal grandparents. Both girls attended Polish public schools.

In 1935 the Kalwari family moved to Katowice and later to Krakow. Ala met her future husband, Henryk Wladyslaw Abrahamer, in Katowice. The young couple fell in love and married in Krakow on November 26, 1939. They were able to find a rabbi who married and registered them.

The young couple returned to Warsaw and joined Ala's family. At first they lived again at Hoza Street, but upon the establishment of the Warsaw ghetto, they had to move to Franciszkanska Street within the perimeters of the ghetto. They supported themselves mainly by selling off their possessions from before the war. Wladek, Ala's husband, worked outside the ghetto at the Luftwaffe base and had some opportunities to barter clothing for food.

Szymon Kalwari died of typhus in January 1942 at the age of 51. His wife Helena was caught during the "kocioł" (cauldron) action on September 6, 1942 and deported to Treblinka, where she was murdered. She was 46 years old.

Ala, Wladek and Zosia regarded themselves as one unit – whatever will happen to one, same will happen to the rest. Ala worked in the Toebbens workshop and despite having a work permit she was taken to the "Umschlagplatz" on November 11, 1942. Ala was forced into the cattle wagon and when the door closed she noticed an older relative. There was no doubt about the destination of the train. The relative urged Ala to jump out of the train. He helped to cut the barbed wire in the small window and pushed her out. Luckily the train was not going yet at full speed and in addition Ala landed in a pile of snow. She was not noticed and she was not hurt. Ala understood that she needs to wait till dusk to start moving again. She walked towards dim lights and suddenly she noticed a group of Jews marching back to the ghetto from slave labor. She managed to blend in and returned to her husband and her sister in the Warsaw ghetto.

Wladek decided right there and then that they have to leave the ghetto. He contacted a friendly Pole, who was an officer in the Polish underground army AK. The Polish man purchased three birth certificates from the church archives in the Grochow district of Warsaw. These were birth certificates of deceased people. Wladek paid with a ring and other jewelry.

On November 26, 1942 Ala, Zosia and Wladek left the ghetto. Ala became Jadwiga Kazimiera Ziebinska, her husband was Henryk Ziebinski. Zosia had false papers for the name of Eugenia Janiszewska. Wladek and Ala lived on Targowa 41 in the Praga district of Warsaw, on the east bank of the Wisla River. Zosia lived on Koszykowa Street in Warsaw. She pretended to support herself by knitting sweaters, but in reality she knitted and unraveled the same sweater over and over again.

On July 2, 1944 Ala gave birth to her son Ryszard and registered him at the Roman-Catholic Parish of the Sacred Heart, which was certified by the civil registry on July 24, 1944. Wladek and Ala felt quite lonely in the Praga district and after a few weeks decided to join Zosia. They crossed the bridge over the Vistula River a few days before the outbreak of the Warsaw uprising on August 1, 1944.

The Warsaw uprising was suppressed at the end of August and the three adults and a baby were taken out of Warsaw to Pruszkow transit camp and later they moved to Milanowek near Warsaw.

In January 1945 the Soviet Army liberated the area. Ala and her small family moved to Katowice, into Wladek's old apartment. They met Zygmunt Perutz, Wladek's childhood friend, who survived in USSR. Zosia and Zygmunt soon married and their daughter Helen was born in Katowice. The two families left Poland in 1947 and settled in Stuttgart, where they waited for their US visas to come through. Ala and Wladek Hemar had another son born there: Peter and Zosia and her husband had a second daughter: Joanne. In 1961 both Hemar and Perutz families arrived in the US and settled in Los Angeles.