

MATY GRUNBERG - HAUNTED MEMORIES

I never knew when a haunted memory will catch up with me....

My story began a long time ago. At the end of February 1943 my grandmother, Signora Donna Kamhi, a midwife, said to her daughter, my mother, Bella Grünberg “Come, daughter, let us move to the village. The air is better there, and the food is healthier. You will have a good birth there.” And so, the young couple, Bella and her husband, my father, Leo Grünberg, set off from Skopje and settled in one of the nearby villages. I was born on March 4th 1943. A few days later my father went to Skopje to bring a Mohel (Jewish circumciser). Seeing him, the townsfolk yelled “Run for your life! They have taken all the Jews!” He ran back to the village.

On March 4th 1945, the Germans ordered the Bulgarians to gather all the Macedonian Jews. On March 11th 1943, Skopje’s Jews were rounded up and taken to the “Monopol” tobacco factory near the city train station. They were sent to Treblinka concentration camp, never to return...

Of the Kamhi and Grünberg families, no one survived but those who left before March 11th. My birth had saved the lives of his parents and grandmother.

I was named Matityahu – God’s gift.

I am probably the last Jewish baby born at that time in Macedonia to have survived.

I grew up in a hiding place. The house in which my parents, my grandmother and I were hiding was close to the road where German troops were passing. My parents used to rush me to the attic whenever a danger came close. Though I was a very young child I remember vividly the horror and the nightmares of being caught and interrogated by the German.



Maty Grunberg, age 3, Skopje, Macedonia.

When the war had ended, the family returned to Skopje, and in 1948 we made Aliyah to Israel.

As a young adult I was haunted by my parents' memory of their experience.

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Never had I imagined that exactly 73 years after I was born, I will have the privilege and the honor to exhibit the works I created years ago to express the trauma of the Holocaust, in the place I was born, in Skopje.

This exhibition is for the memory of Kamchi and Grunberg family that were all perished during the Holocaust.

Maty Grunberg, Israel, 2016