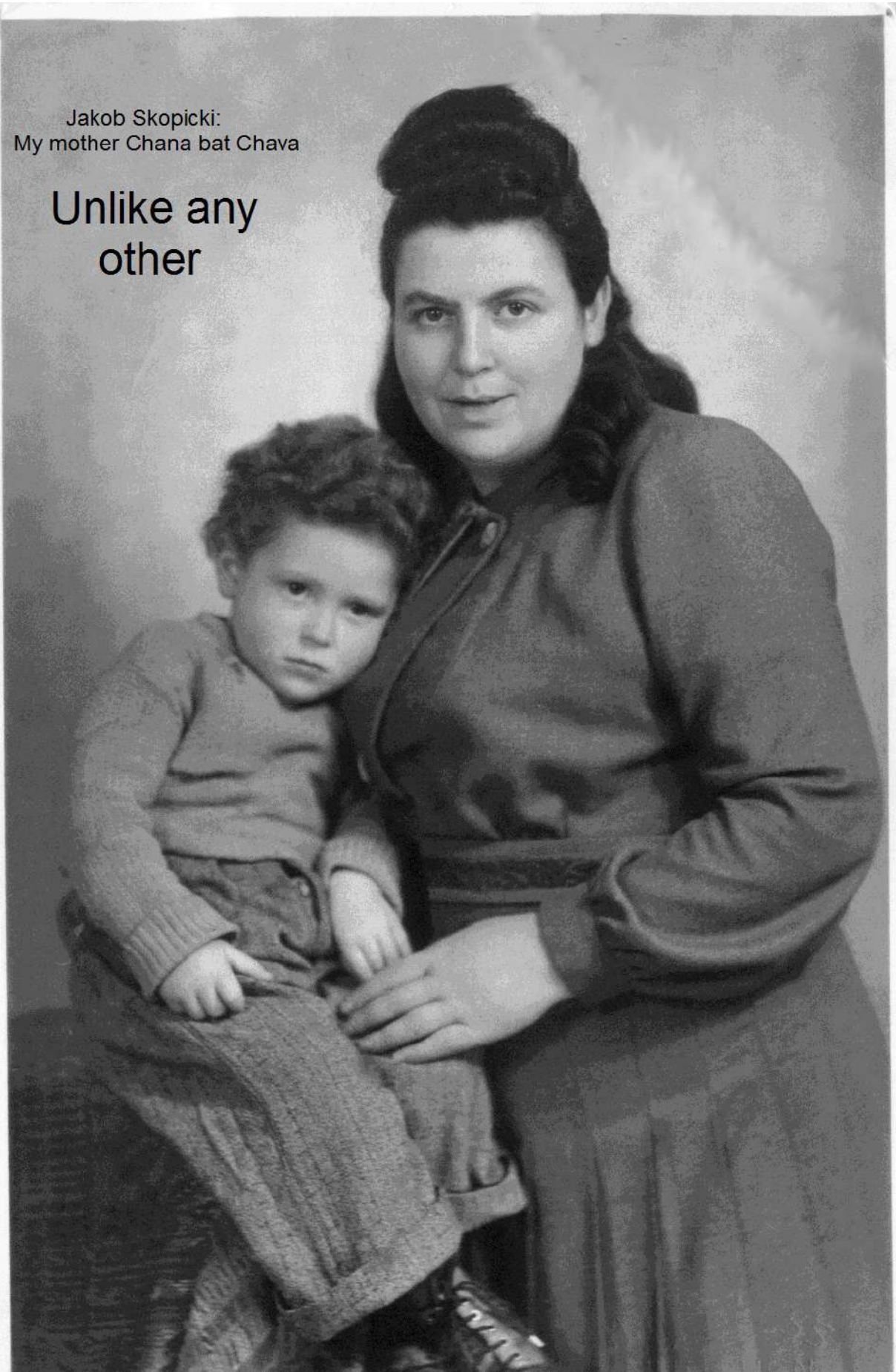


Jakob Skopicki:  
My mother Chana bat Chava

Unlike any  
other



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*Prologue:*

*She saved lives: mine, my son's and, at least twice, my father's.*

*She saved an unknown three-year-old child at her peril, that of a young woman who lived at her home and certainly others whose history I don't know because she never spoke about it. I only learnt these facts as reported by third parties.*

*Her schooling stopped at the age of 14 with the arrival of the Germans in Poland. However, she possessed infinite practical intelligence and an energy that made her able to overcome all obstacles. She was fluent in five languages and and many dialects. Her optimism defied reality and transformed it.*

*She was only two metres away from Adolf Eichmann when he announced the loss of their human rights to the prisoners of the Skarzysko-Kamienna forced labour Camp, that my mother called Skarjisk.*

*She met Anne Frank in Belsen.*

*She saved her husband from prison in record time when the best lawyers said it was impossible.*

*From the height of her 1m50 I saw her face in business a legendary giant of the German electronics industry, Mr. Max Grundig and triumph so completely that he wrote her a letter asking her not to punish him for his forfeiture. I have kept this letter.*

*She was the best cook I knew.*

*She was always optimistic even in the worst moments. "G .. will help," she said. She was always right, except for her last fight.*

*Her exceptionally infectious laugh is the first thing that people who knew her remember.*

*My father considered that her gifts made her "not normal". I believe that like all of us, she was a unique being and to paraphrase George Orwell: « Some are more unique than others ».*

*She was simply "Unlike any other".*

*Since we all differ from others, we all resemble her in this.*

Written on the occasion of the end of my year of mourning on 26 Tischri 5780 which corresponds to October 25th, 2019 of the civil calendar.

Hereunder is the little that I know of her history in a, mostly, chronological order.

## Camps

*Chana Cukier was born on December 24, 1926 in Pacanów, 95 km northwest of Krakow, Poland. At the time it was a village of 2500 inhabitants, the majority of whom were Jews.*

*She was the daughter of Leibish Cukier and Hava Saionc. Her father was a merchant specializing in cloth for religious clothing, both Jewish and Christian. She had a happy childhood.*

*Here is the picture of her class at the beginning of the 30s. She is in the middle row, on the far left.*



*It should be noted that in this picture only my mother, the mistress who left for Israel in 1936 and the two girls above and below my mother, survived the holocaust ...*



*When the Germans arrived, my mother suggested that her family leave for nearby Russia. Her mother refused because she had just bought a brand new living room and did not want to abandon her house to looting.*

*A first glimpse of her gifts occurred during the first German bombardment as her mother and the rest of the family sought shelter in a barn. My mother forced them out screaming and hitting, to make them obey and led them to a ditch for refuge. A few minutes later a bomb hit the barn ...*

*Shortly after the arrival of the occupiers, the Jewish men were assigned to forced labor, initially for the clearing and repair of roads, under horrible conditions, without clothing adapted to the winter climate and without food. Thus at 14 my mother was in charge of "organizing" food for her family and bringing meals to her father and brother requisitioned by the Germans.*

*Not afraid of anything or anyone, she temporarily got rid of her yellow star and then went on her way. She was often given lifts by trucks of German soldiers to whom she introduced herself as a Polish peasant who carried food to her grandmother.*

*Then in November 1942 most of the Pacanów's Jews were transported and murdered in Treblinka.*

*At almost 16, my mother was sent to a forced-labor camp she called Skarjisk, actually Skarzysko-Kamienna. Having pretended to be 18 instead of the 16 that she was, she worked for ammunition manufacture and owed her survival only to her vivacity, her immense practical intelligence and her exceptional visual acuity that allowed her to fine-tune the machine tools, settings inaccessible to more than 99% of the population.*

*This camp was **run** under the authority of the same Amon Göth who ran the camp of Płaszów, the camp of "Schindler's List".*

*In this camp the prisoners worked until exhaustion. Those who managed to survive the gruelling conditions died of maltreatment, hunger, summary executions or illness. Two-thirds of all prisoners died there.*

*My mother stayed in Skarjisk for 20 months until the evacuation of the camp in July 1944. Her suffering during that time was enormous. It seems impossible that a progression to such horror can still be endurable, however it was even worse in the period of roving and the march of death that followed and which lasted from July 1944 to April 29, 1945, date of liberation of the Dachau concentration camp.*

*Below I attempt to describe some glimpses of her experiences, which she passed on to me when she was at least 80 years old and her recurring nightmares about the Holocaust had resumed after an interruption of almost 60 years.*

*A constant in most accounts of Holocaust survivors is the evocation by almost all, of a case of atypical behavior of a jailer who, in complete contradiction with his normal bestial behaviour, had a temporary moment of humanity that saved the person in question.*

*My mother lived such an experience. She was very much appreciated for her work and her rare ability to fine-tune machines thanks to her exceptional eyesight. As a result, when she caught typhus during one of the frequent epidemics, she was not sent away to die, but cared for.*

*The woman who cared for her was one of the jailers, known for her cruelty, responsible for the deaths of dozens of inmates. She watched over my mother for several nights, stroked her hair and said, "You are too beautiful to die." My mother healed and went back to work.*

*After the war my mother was asked to testify against this "Frau Mirsch" during her trial. She refused, saying that if she testified she might save her ...*

*Another time my mother was requisitioned by an SS woman to take care of her household, the preparation of meals and childcare during the weekend. Normally it was the dream of every prisoner to obtain such an assignment where one could finally find food by cleaning the plates of the remains and bring some back for her friends. But in this case, the SS did not allow my mother to touch it. She gathered the remains herself and accompanied my mother to the bathroom, where she forced her to throw them away and then flushed the toilet.*

*Obviously the fellow-inmates were disappointed and suspected that my mother had kept everything for herself. Thus the next weekend when the SS woman told her to come again she refused knowing that this refusal condemned her to death and she burst into tears. Disturbed by the noise and above all the shouts of the furious SS woman an Oberst (Colonel) SS entered and asked to know what was happening. My mother told him the story and he told her to leave and that she would never have to work for this woman again. Mother told me about him: "If I did not know that it's impossible I would have said he had a tear in his eye". However, my mother never heard of the SS woman again ...*

*The machines my mother worked on were greased with paraffin oil stored by the thousands of litres. Although containing no calories it could be used for cooking. My mother stole a few litres at the request of Polish workers who left the camp every day and from time to time gave her a crouton of bread in exchange. A Polish supervisor had observed these questionable activities and told my mother that these workers were selling the oil for a lot of money outside the camp, while my mother was risking her life for a crouton of bread. Knowing herself discovered but not denounced my mother stopped.*

*Towards the end of her time in Skarjisk one of my mother's girlfriends tried to persuade her to commit suicide with her by throwing themselves on the electric barbed-wire barriers. My mother refused and tried to convince her to give up her project. Without success. The next day she was found dead, electrocuted.*

*At the end of July 1944 Skarzysko-Kamienna was evacuated and the prisoners began a long and horrible journey to different destinations.*

*For my mother this trip began in a cattle wagon towards the Hasag factories still in operation. After their departure a man carrying a three-year-old boy ran alongside the train, threw him into the wagon full of women yelling in Yiddish: "Helft Ehm", "Help him".*

*My mother took care of the child for several weeks, feeding and protecting him during the frequent bombardments by the allies and keeping him safe from some prisoners who wanted to take away his meager rations because "he will die anyway".*

*They passed through Buchenwald, a concentration camp near Leipzig. Here the Germans, in an attempt to deceive international opinion, had established a "Kinderheim", a shelter where Jewish women cared for children. My mother left the child in their hands and continued her journey of horror.*

*The bombings increased in frequency and intensity as the allies moved closer to Germany. During some air raids prisoners were allowed to take shelter in the railway ditch. One of the guards used to practice violent kicking in the lower abdomen of women within his range. One of my mother's neighbours was seriously hurt by this and my mother cursed the guard in Yiddish by wishing him to die soon of a painful death. Less than five minutes after the bombing another guard who understood Yiddish came to see her saying "Dort liegt er schon", "he lies there".*

*This incident gave her the reputation of being able to cast a bad spell, which protected her for a time from the guards. However, I am not quite certain that this reputation was completely false because much later I realized on many occasions that it was better not to get my mother angry.*

*Towards Christmas 1944, for her 18th birthday they arrived at Bergen-Belsen; another extermination camp near Hanover. Their treatment was similar to Skarjisk. The camp was overcrowded. As a result, typhus epidemics were endemic and caused tens of thousands of deaths. My mother met Anne Frank but had no lasting memories of the few hours they were together. A little girl, was her only comment ...*

*At the end of January 1945, in the middle of winter, they left Bergen-Belsen on foot heading south. Under heavy snow and temperatures of minus 20°C, dressed in rags and bare feet protected by rags they crossed Germany from north to south under heavy blows from the guards and frequent air raids by the allies. The German intention was to bring them into alpine valleys where they planned to bury them alive under rock avalanches triggered by explosives.*

*Their journey is one of many "death marches" following the evacuation of camps about to be liberated by the allied advance. They walked. They walked until those that fell were unable to get up. For those who survived until the end of February the climate became warmer with temperatures around 0°C.*

*One day they were allowed to stop in a field not far from a castle. A handsome aristocrat mounted on horseback (My mother's description) asked the guards for a work "Kommando" for the duration of their halt. In exchange he paid the guards.*

*He was given a dozen prisoners including an "old" woman 25 years old.*

*They followed the man on horseback to the castle. He took them to the kitchens where their job was to prepare meals and eat them. This "work" of 48 hours gave them life and energy. My mother tried unsuccessfully after the war to locate the place again to thank her "Saviour".*

*They set out again on foot, but soon afterwards took the train to arrive at Allach, the sub-camp of Dachau, and were later integrated into the main camp.*

*The "life" in Dachau did not differ from the previous camps except that the camp was completely overrun by the constant arrival of new transports of prisoners. On the evening of April 28, the camp guards having fled, the Hitler youth threw grenades into the barracks, causing many deaths.*

*On the morning of April 29, the camp was liberated by an American detachment made up of "Negroes and Jews" in my mother's words, because the others had not had time ... Every year she thanked them in her thoughts and speech for her second birth.*

*In the following days many prisoners died either as a result of epidemics or because of the over-rich food provided by the Americans and to which their wounded body was no longer accustomed.*



## *After the war*

*My father had been married before the war. His first wife Chana\* and their two children were murdered by the Germans. He had suffered a similar fate to that of my mother, which took him from Auschwitz to Dachau. He was 38 when he was liberated.*

*\* Thus there were two Chana Skopicki. That is why I use her Hebrew name "Chana bat Chava" when I talk about my mother.*



*My father in 1946.*

*Six weeks after the liberation of the camp the Americans announced the allocation of apartments reserved for couples wishing to leave the camp.*

*Highly motivated to escape from this concentration camp universe, my father set out to find a soul mate who would allow him to do so. For this he posted himself at the exit of the camp and approached the women of his age, the ugliest possible, believing that they would be easier to persuade. He was misled by several uglies, one even without teeth and one without hair.*

*My mother who had the same desire to get out, watched this show, approached him and asked: "Do you really have to be old, ugly and toothless to be invited by you?"*

*The last six weeks had allowed her to regain some weight. With her 18 years and 40 kilos she was radiant with beauty and youth, despite her size of only 1m50 and her past suffering.*

*My mother had a friend, a "camp sister" named Toshka, and my father took a young man whose life he had saved at Auschwitz named Wolf. They claimed to be two couples and were together awarded a four-room apartment.*

*Shortly after leaving the camp my mother worried about the fate of the child she had left at Buchenwald. Three months later she received the good news: not only had the child survived, but his father too. Alerted by her search they would come to visit the one that the child had described as his new and very beautiful mother. Ties had developed over time and my father insisted on accompanying her to the meeting so that he was able to prevent her from leaving with the child and his father, which she would have been tempted to do.*

*In December, for her nineteenth birthday, my father married my mother. She quickly became pregnant and as I was already impatient at the time, I was born prematurely on July 26 1946 at six and a half months for a weight of 1800 grams.*

*Normally, at that time, I would not have survived, because in the Munich of 1946 power cuts were frequent and long and the babies put in incubators died one after another. My mother refused that I be taken away, saying: If he must die, let it be with me. She placed me upon her breasts, between her skin and her blankets, for weeks. Being close to an always accessible food source and warm, I slept and ate and gained strength. Within six weeks I grew into a little bear and could go home.*

My mother had extraordinarily nourishing and abundant milk. At the same time as she, a neighbor, Mrs. Warshavski gave birth, in her case to triplets. Mrs. W had no milk, and her children languished until my mother offered to feed and thus save them.

In their Polish homeland the Jews were not be welcome because to reintegrate them it would be necessary to return their possessions which others had appropriated. My parents settled in Munich, 20 kilometers from the Dachau camp, and my father returned to his former fur-trading profession.

The first time she saved my father's life was early on a Sunday morning in July 1948 when my father had a date with a good friend to try out the new convertible which he had bought the day before.

My mother did not let him out of bed despite his strong protest, using all the weapons of women, ranging from matrimonial enticements to cries and tears and other blackmail to keep him close to her. She did not know why, but she did not want him to leave. In the afternoon they learned that the car had been sandwiched between two trucks, totally destroyed and all occupants killed.

I have never known my mother to be afraid of anyone. When my father's car was stopped for a speeding ticket my mother was present. She had nothing against the ticket but when the officer began to threaten him about a number of other offenses against the Highway Code of which my father was innocent, she stood up and said, "Your people have killed our families, made us endure the worst suffering in your camps in Belsen Auschwitz and Dachau throughout the war and you think we are scared of your threats?" The policeman turned white, turned and walked away.

My father had a good friend. Unknown to my father, this friend was jealous and envious of his success. Just before Christmas 1949, at the height of the fur season, my father was arrested, being accused of rape by this friend's wife.

He was jailed and his lawyers were unable to secure his release because, in the approach to Christmas the courts were overloaded in preparation of the pending judicial vacations. He would remain in prison at least until mid-January.

My mother did not accept this situation. Unable to get an immediate appointment by normal means, she remained in the Attorney General's waiting room all day. When he left his office at 8 pm she called out to him, introduced herself and obtained the 5-minute audience she requested.

The prosecutor was a very handsome man and she spoke to him: "You have seen my husband and the woman who accuses him and now you see me., This accusation makes no sense because this woman is ugly and I am beautiful. It is like if I had the choice I would have chosen my husband instead of a handsome man like you ".

No doubt amused and flattered the prosecutor decided to summon the accuser for a confrontation with the accused the next morning instead of waiting for the end of the judicial vacations after the holidays. During this confrontation the woman began to cry and confessed to being forced by her husband to make false accusations and my father was released immediately.

On August 13, 1951 my sister Eva-Lea was born. She was a very beautiful baby. But she had a pancreatic dysfunction incurable at that time. She died on December 31st. My mother was inconsolable and continued to weep for her on each of these two anniversaries, until the end of her life.



At the end of the 1950s, the Nazi movement reappeared in Germany and we began to see parades again. Watching one of the first, my mother was standing beside a police officer who was observing the parade. Suddenly she ran and slapped one of the Nazis, a tall fellow of 1m80, then quickly returned to the shelter of the policeman. The Nazi addressed the policeman: "She slapped me, I am lodging a complaint". "I did not see anything said the policeman."

The second time my mother saved my father's life was on December 17, 1960. My father and mother were shopping in the city center and they were late. My father urged my mother to hurry because he was awaiting friends at home in the early afternoon and it was already 13:45. To be on time they needed to take the next tramway that would take them to within 20 meters from home in 10 minutes. All of a sudden my mother decided that she had to eat an ice cream and nothing that my father could say made her move from the table of the Gelateria where she had sat down. When he decided to leave alone she ordered him to sit down too, otherwise he would not see her again.

Suspecting a mental disorder he did not want to aggravate, he complied with what was obviously a delirium. They watched their tramway leave.

Less than 5 minutes later they heard a huge noise and an explosion occurred one kilometer away. A US Air force transport plane had crashed on the streetcar that they intended to take. The 20 occupants of the aircraft, the 27 passengers of the tramway and 5 passers-by were killed.

Another 20 people in the square were wounded. My father did not remember the similarity of this incident with that of 1948 until the next day. He told me this story during his visit, in January, to the English College where I had just finished my first term, commenting: "She is not normal, your mother".

In 1962 my father was operated for cataract on both eyes. It was a heavy operation at the time, requiring hospitalization for a whole week and then wearing "pebble-glass spectacles" for the remainder of his life. It was a major handicap for him and he retired at age 56.



The family at the villa "Les Oliviers" Av du Serret RCM

My parents bought a villa in Roquebrune Cap-Martin and moved there. My father bought a self teaching course for French but never learned the language. My mother was not afraid to show her ignorance of the language and could quickly make herself understood and then acquire a progressive mastery in the years that followed.

On May 7, 1966 my father suddenly died of a heart attack. The shock was so great that my mother lost 10 kilograms in the next 3 weeks.

In 1963 my father bought the villa "Le Grand Large", next to the Hotel Vistaéro. This property had a superb view over Monaco. The villa was divided into three apartments of one hundred square meters each. But it was difficult to live there without a car, because it was far from the center. Although she had my father's car my mother did not have a driving license and I was mostly away in Paris, continuing my studies.

Although buying the villa for its view, my father was aware of the difficulty of an eventual resale. The house had been on the market for 5 years so he was able to negotiate the purchase at half the asking price.



1964



View from the terrace at night 1975

Speaking of the Vistaero my father said: "Today the owners have no money but one day a wealthy person will buy this hotel and he will need the villa to enlarge it. At that time our house will be worth a fortune".

My mother was 39 years old when my father died and I tried to get her to pass her driving license. After her fortieth lesson I threw in the towel because if she steered the car well and managed to change the gears, she still could not brake ...

But as always she learned quickly how to get by. She made male and female friends who were happy to give her a lift, she also had the bus 10 meters from the villa and when no one was available she hitchhiked. The longest time she had to wait did not exceed 10 minutes. This is what my son says about it:

*When we lived in the "Grand Large" I spent all my holidays with my grandmother. But I wanted to go to the beach and we did not have a car. We had to hitchhike or walk. The idea of walking bothered me, while my grandmother loved to walk. I do not remember walking more than 500 meters even once. I remember, however, being taken in some great*

*cars ... notably an Excalibur. We were both sitting in the back as if we were marching victorious through the streets of Monaco. The driver, a very gallant man was not indifferent to the beauty of my grandmother. He proposed to come and pick us up every day. My grandmother refused with a smile.*

*Excalibur ->*



Living alone in a house with 3 furnished apartments, she used to spend her time on the terrace enjoying the sun and the view. Many tourists stopped their cars and admired the same view from the road. If she saw a couple or a family that seemed trustworthy she came to talk to them and if this first impression was confirmed she offered to rent them an apartment. It was rare that the house was empty.

But she was also very generous. Many times she adjusted her rates or she reduced them to 0 when people were friendly but impecunious. One day in 1972 a bus of Polish pilgrims in transit for Lourdes stopped for the view. Hearing her mother tongue, my mother started the conversation. The 40 Poles had no money, they had even brought their food with them and their tents, which they used for camping in the wild. After a prolonged conversation during which my mother explained to them that she was Jewish and that she was aware of the anti-Semitic feelings of some Polish Catholics. However if they wanted they could pitch their tents on the terraces of the villa. They settled there but as soon as the tents were erected a real deluge broke out and the tents did not resist.

She slept them all in two of the three apartments, the third being rented.

The girl who lived with her at the time described the scene to me: "They were everywhere, in the living room, the hallway, the bedrooms and even in kitchens and bathrooms."

The next day my mother offered to let them bathe, gave them breakfast and they left with many thanks. Their priest wrote a letter of thanks on their return to Poland stating that they had prayed for her together in Lourdes and that he continued to pray for her every Sunday.

"It serves me right," my mother told me.

My son was born on March 11, 1979. As it was a predictable event, my mother came to Paris for the occasion and accompanied us to the hospital at 4 am. The birth proved difficult because at the last moment the umbilical cord encircled the neck and cut off the baby's breathing. The doctor decided to intervene with forceps and Pierrette suffered appallingly. She took months to recover.

When the baby was brought into the room, my mother noticed that the child sometimes had slight convulsions. The hospital staff saw nothing disturbing in it. But my mother did not give up. She asked for the pediatrician, but it was a Sunday and he was away for the weekend. She demanded to talk to him on the phone and finally got his number. The doctor's wife replied that her husband did not work on Sundays. My mother got angry and said, "If you do not send me your husband I shall get the Police to pick him up and if anything happens to the baby I will establish his guilt and his career will be over." The lady passed the phone to her husband to whom my mother could now describe the symptoms. A quarter of an hour later he arrived and treated Roman for five hours in a row. At the end of the day he came to see my



mother, thanked her for having called him and told her that by her energetic action she had saved the child.



16/3/1979 - Grandma since 5 days.



The day of the **Brith (Circumcision)**

In the early 80's, as my father had predicted, a wealthy man bought the hotel. It was Max Grundig, one of the very big German industrialists of the post-war period. He had sold his industrial empire and who was now starting a new chain of luxury hotels with the Vistaéoro. From the very beginning, his managers offered us many times to buy the villa but their proposals never lived up to our expectations.

Finally in 1987 my mother declared herself ready to sell the villa for a price which was twice that of the market. Grundig seized his chance and invited my mother to drink a glass of champagne, then they sealed the deal with a handshake. They made an appointment to sign the sale after the return of my mother who was due to spend Passover with me in Paris. When my mother returned, Grundig had changed his mind. His advisers had found the price too high. My mother simply told him that she now knew what a Max Grundig's word was worth.



2017: just before the demolition of the Vista Palace Hotel, formerly Vistaéoro.

Three months later Grundig returned. He was now ready to close the deal.

"Yes" says my mother, "except that the price has increased and that it is now a million more. " Grundig pleaded and wrote her a letter begging her not to punish him, but she did not budge. She told him that in a week she would go back to Paris and that on her return, it would be a second million that would have to be added.

Grundig capitulated all the way. Not only did he accept the new price, but also the condition to give her, directly to her and not to the public notary, the 10% of the price due to block the sale with the notarized promise of sale which was redacted and signed the next day.

This is how she arrived in July 1988, after the sale, in an apartment on the "Place des Moulins" in Monaco. Previously, to supervise the movers, she spent a week, housed and fed for free, in the best suite of the Vistaéro.

I would have so many other events to narrate but I think that the reader will remember my mother with these few anecdotes and that remembrance is the purpose of this story. And I'm a little tired of writing ...

However, my conscience asks me for one "encore". So I'm going to talk about a strange story that happened a few days before her death but that starts well before.

My mother was passionate about auctions. Above all, she bought jewelry far below their in-store price, either to resell, to keep, or for presents. Thus in 2010 she had bought a gold Rolex for the companion of her grandson. But Roman refused the gift because he had just offered her the watch she had asked for.

My mother put the Rolex away and 8 years passed.

In the summer of 1988 Roman and all his family came for two weeks to visit us. My mother loved her great-grandchildren who returned her love. But Lucie had broken her watch and Roman asked my mother if she still had the Rolex.

She answered yes but did not know where she had put it. My son and I looked everywhere but we did not find it. Roman went back to Paris.

Six weeks later, my mother was admitted to the hospital. Her condition was deteriorating day by day. Fearing a fatal outcome Roman returned to Monaco and we took turns at her bedside day and night. Five days before her death when she could no longer speak, I was sleeping in her room while Roman had returned home. During the night he dreamed that his grandmother called him to tell him where the watch was. He got up, opened the indicated drawer, moved some linen and a few boxes and took a particular box directly below. He opened it and he had found the Rolex.



She was an outstanding cook. At one point in her life she had also owned an Italian restaurant in Munich. When the cook, who was recognized by the guides, fell ill, my mother took to the stove. When she was cured, the cook was upset to hear the customers say her food was excellent, but the week before had been even better!



*My son remembers : One day when we were at Le Grand Large and a bushfire was raging, with the flames on the other side of the road that ran along the house, firefighters wanted to evacuate us. The hotel Vistaero was already empty of all its occupants but Chana refused to leave her house.*

She spent her time in the kitchen. So much so that I jokingly offered to rent the rest of the apartment since she did not use it. What she was preparing was not only delicious but she was never short of ideas and could feed a regiment with a few potatoes in her own recipes. Her speed of execution was phenomenal and I often saw her prepare a full dinner for 10 people in 15 minutes. A neighbor who had invited herself with husband and three children, unexpectedly, could not believe that the meal could be served so quickly. "But how did you know we were coming?"

*She told the fire chief that we were not running any risk but that if he wanted to get strength fo fight the flames he could come with his brigade to eat something at home. Without waiting for an answer she returned to her kitchen to make potato pancakes for a regiment.*

My mother loved to laugh and laughed often. Besides, she said that even in the camps she had laughed at least once a day, otherwise she would have died.

She was not good at repeating other people's jokes but had dry sarcastic humor based on self-deprecation that she never exercised to the detriment of others. On the last day when she was still talking, a nurse asked her if she was nauseated. "Madam, I'm not pregnant," she replied.

My mother died on November 4, 2018 around 5 am. Since 30 minutes before I had started repeating the "Chema Israel" prayer over and over again, holding her right hand, while Roman held her left.

## Annex

### 1. Skarzysko-Kamienna (Kamienna in German sources):

Forced labor camp for Jews, located in the Polish city of Skarzysko-Kamienna.

The camp belonged to the German company Hasag. It was created in August 1942 and was liquidated on August 1st, 1944.

In total, 25,000 to 30,000 Jews were brought to Skarzysko-Kamienna and between 18000 and 23 000 people died there.

The camp was divided into three separate factory camps, called Werke A, B and C. The three camps were located next to the factories where the prisoners were working and were guarded by Ukrainian police from the factory. Werk A was the biggest of the three factory camps. Werk B shared administration and security with Camp A, but had his own council of elders.

Prisoners in Werke A and B were working on ammunition. Werk C was connected to a filling plant where underwater mines filled with picric acid were produced. It was the worst of the three camps because the acid poisoned the prisoners within three months.

All the plants had two 12 hour shifts. Men and women, working together, were obliged to meet quotas impossible to fulfill. The sanitary conditions were unspeakable and there was not enough food. The prisoners had to wear the same clothes for weeks. There were also terrible epidemics in the camps. From time to time there were "selections" --- the prisoners chosen to die were killed by the factory police. Only because of a great shortage of labor in the spring of 1944, were the living conditions slightly improved. Mass executions of prisoners in the prisons of the Gestapo were held at Camp C late 1943 and early 1944.

Just before Skarzysko-Kamienna was about to be destroyed in the summer of 1944, the SS forced Jewish detainees to dig up the bodies of these victims and cremate them, in order to conceal evidence of the massacres. At the end of July, many prisoners were executed.

The remaining ones were sent to Buchenwald and other German camps.

Many members of the German camp staff were tried in 1948; four were sentenced to death, while the others were imprisoned with varying sentences. (see also Selection.)