

In Memoriam

Ivan Grosz



Ivan Grosz passed away on January 14, 2022 at White Plains Hospital. He was 86 years old. He leaves behind Judy Grosz, his wife of 53 years, his children, Maya and Peter and their spouses, Siddhu Nadkarni and Debra Downing, his three grandchildren, Tara, Zora and Abraham, and his sister, Judith.

Ivan was born in another era and in another land - March 21, 1935 in Timisoara, Romania. Prior to World War II his father was a successful businessman and owner of a flour mill.

After the war the Russian forces occupying Romania nationalized all private property, including his father's business and the family fell on hard financial times. When Ivan was 17 his father died from complications following a motorcycle accident and their lives were thrown into even more chaos. Throughout the next ten years, they all worked hard to earn money in the communist system, but longed to find a better life. Ivan resolved that the only way this was possible was to leave Romania.

Direct emigration to America was unthinkable so they applied for emigration to Columbia, where his mother's cousin lived. Not only was their request denied – twice ! – but the government punished everyone who attempted to leave the country. Ivan was expelled from college and his sister was removed from her job at a hospital in Timisoara and transferred to a rural village, miles from home where she was the only doctor. They were even named “enemies of the people” on their identification papers.

Ivan was able to find meager work on a beer transport truck, in factory demolition clean up, as a helper in a truck repair garage, and as a stripper of used copper wire from burned out motors.

In 1961 Ivan and his sister and mother were finally able to secure visas to leave Romania to travel to Vienna, Austria. They planned to use that as a launching point for the next leg of their journey to America. That summer, carrying only small crates of items, including bedding, sheets, and pots and pans, they left Romania by way of Budapest to Vienna, Austria. Ivan said, “The click clack of the train passing over the train tracks sounded to me like ‘I am getting out, I am getting out, I am getting out,’ and was the sweetest sound I ever heard.” They were on their way...

In Vienna they applied for American immigration as political refugees and within a year they received green cards. But the move was too much at that time for his mother, Elizabeth, or “Anyuka” as she was affectionately called. Her health deteriorated in Vienna, to the point that she was hospital-bound. So Ivan had to make the difficult decision to move to America alone, and to send for his mother and sister to join him later.

His first job in the U.S. was as a sheet metal worker in a commercial chicken barbecue machine manufacturing company. To make more money he worked at night as a soda jerk dishing out banana splits and other varieties of ice cream at Freedomland - an amusement park in the Bronx. Within another six months he learned enough English to get a white-collar job at an insurance company, then he later worked as a computer programmer at the Maxwell House division of General Foods. There, he was told by a co-worker that he will amount to nothing in America unless he had a college degree. Following this advice, he enrolled in night school at NYU to complete a B.S. in engineering.

He was determined to succeed financially in the U.S. At General Foods he noticed that some people made twice the amount of money that he was making. When he learned that they were in marketing, he was determined to enter that field but was told that he needed a business degree. He asked others he knew what is the best business school in this country, and was told the Harvard Business School. Colleagues discouraged him from applying, saying there was no chance of getting admitted. Despite that advice, he applied to Harvard Business School without looking at any other school and was accepted.

In 1966 he met Judy through a mutual friend. And in 1967 he became a US citizen. Judy and Ivan were married in August 1968 and on return from their honeymoon he entered the Harvard Business School. Judy worked for IBM and with her salary paid for all of their expenses and more than half his tuition. In 1970 when he graduated business school he also completed his masters degree in operations research from NYU.

In his early career he worked mostly in finance and international consulting, cofounding the firm Cralin with several partners. Beginning in early 1990 after the fall of communist Romania, and for the next 10 years he consulted and advised post communist eastern European governments, central banks, businesses and individuals. He also advised, coached and helped several clients with M&A activities.

Judy and Ivan moved to Scarsdale in 1972 where they raised their children. They grew strong roots in the community, making many friends, and engaging actively with their synagogue, Westchester Reform Temple. His sister, brother-in-law and mother lived in Manhattan, and they remained very close. He also stayed in touch with many childhood friends from Timisoara, all of whom left Romania and who settled across the world, in Israel, Canada, and Australia.

Ivan loved to travel, collect and drink wines, eat in fabulous restaurants, and meet new people. He and Judy took their family on many trips across America and beyond, including visits back to Romania. Ivan was passionate about history and politics. He was a true intellectual and a life-long learner, most recently participating in Siddhu's weekly study of Hindu scripture and philosophy. He was a voracious reader, and when he lost his vision, he adapted and listened to many books on tape. And he arranged for his grand-daughter Tara and volunteers to read books and articles to him, which led to deep discussions and new friendships with his readers.

Ivan was a loving and generous father, grandfather, brother and son. And he was a devoted husband, enamored of his wife Judy, appreciating her and praising her up until his last moments. They were married 53 years and she was the fulcrum of his existence. As his granddaughter Tara said after their 50th wedding anniversary, they were “couple goals,” teenage speak for the ideal couple.

Ivan lived a rich life full of adventures, pleasures, achievements, challenges and much love. He will be missed and remembered by the many people who were lucky to have walked this earth with him.



Ivan Grosz (third from left) with classmates and friends from Timisoara. Israel, around 2010.