

Tony Tauba Schnitzer

1904-1942



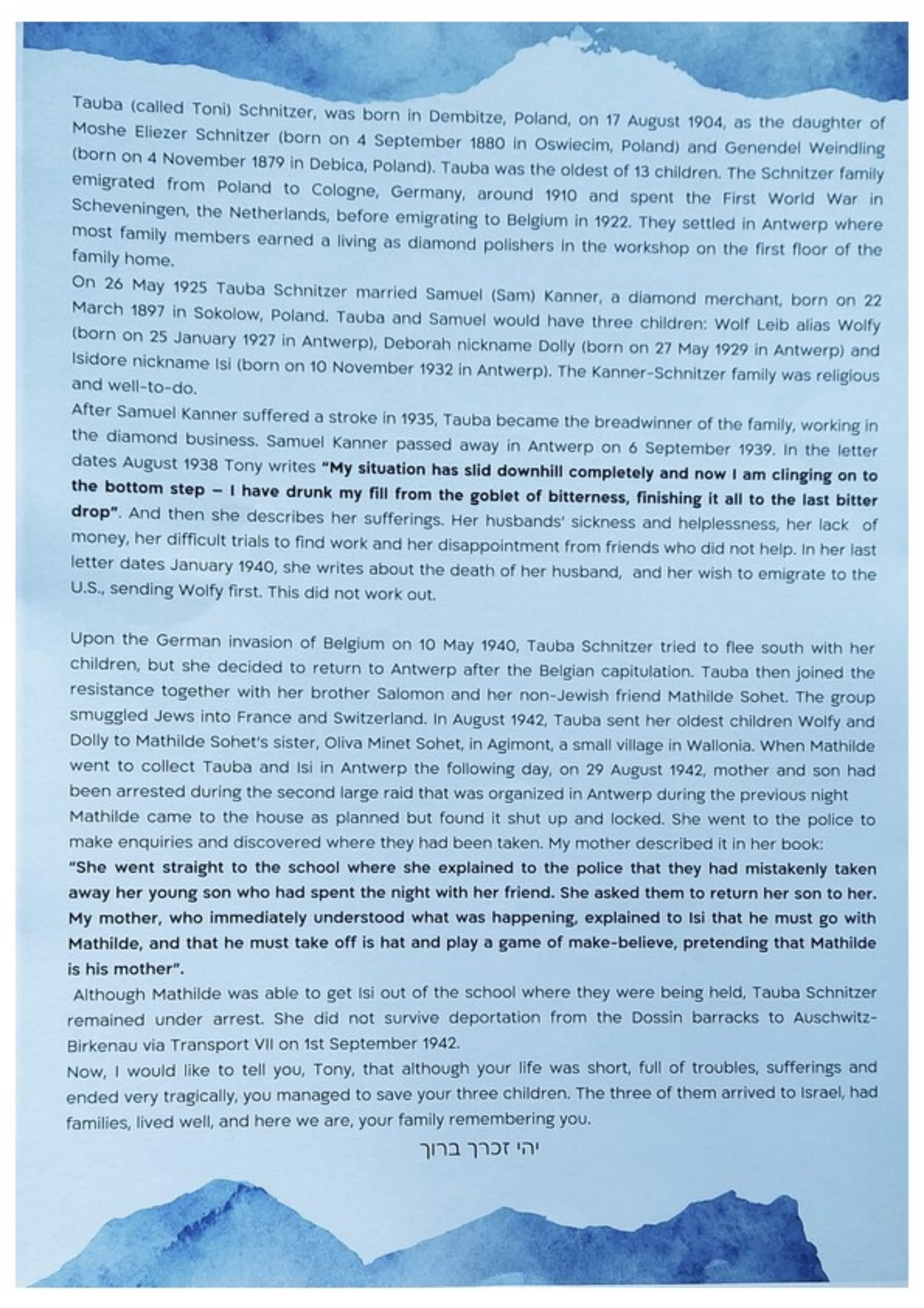
A Stolperstein ceremony - Baron Joostensstraat Antwerp

24/2/2023

Tony is my grandmother whom I haven't known, but her wisdom and deeds enabled my existence. The little that I know about her comes from My mother's story, Kazerne Dossin archives and two letters that she wrote to relatives in the U.S.

Before I dive into her life story, I would like to bring her legacy as it comes very clearly from her last talk with my mother, on the eve the family was to split, fleeing from Antwerp and a day before Tony was caught . My mother describes the situation as such:

"I sat on the floor with my head on my mother's knee. She talked to me and explained that now I must be responsible for my two brothers, because they don't know how to manage. She warned me not to be tempted by people or to be impressed by them because "even the King uses the bathroom!" These were the provisions that she gave me for this journey"



Tauba (called Toni) Schnitzer, was born in Dembitze, Poland, on 17 August 1904, as the daughter of Moshe Eliezer Schnitzer (born on 4 September 1880 in Oswiecim, Poland) and Genendel Weindling (born on 4 November 1879 in Debica, Poland). Tauba was the oldest of 13 children. The Schnitzer family emigrated from Poland to Cologne, Germany, around 1910 and spent the First World War in Scheveningen, the Netherlands, before emigrating to Belgium in 1922. They settled in Antwerp where most family members earned a living as diamond polishers in the workshop on the first floor of the family home.

On 26 May 1925 Tauba Schnitzer married Samuel (Sam) Kanner, a diamond merchant, born on 22 March 1897 in Sokolow, Poland. Tauba and Samuel would have three children: Wolf Leib alias Wolfy (born on 25 January 1927 in Antwerp), Deborah nickname Dolly (born on 27 May 1929 in Antwerp) and Isidore nickname Isi (born on 10 November 1932 in Antwerp). The Kanner-Schnitzer family was religious and well-to-do.

After Samuel Kanner suffered a stroke in 1935, Tauba became the breadwinner of the family, working in the diamond business. Samuel Kanner passed away in Antwerp on 6 September 1939. In the letter dates August 1938 Tony writes **"My situation has slid downhill completely and now I am clinging on to the bottom step – I have drunk my fill from the goblet of bitterness, finishing it all to the last bitter drop"**. And then she describes her sufferings. Her husbands' sickness and helplessness, her lack of money, her difficult trials to find work and her disappointment from friends who did not help. In her last letter dates January 1940, she writes about the death of her husband, and her wish to emigrate to the U.S., sending Wolfy first. This did not work out.

Upon the German invasion of Belgium on 10 May 1940, Tauba Schnitzer tried to flee south with her children, but she decided to return to Antwerp after the Belgian capitulation. Tauba then joined the resistance together with her brother Salomon and her non-Jewish friend Mathilde Sohet. The group smuggled Jews into France and Switzerland. In August 1942, Tauba sent her oldest children Wolfy and Dolly to Mathilde Sohet's sister, Oliva Minet Sohet, in Agimont, a small village in Wallonia. When Mathilde went to collect Tauba and Isi in Antwerp the following day, on 29 August 1942, mother and son had been arrested during the second large raid that was organized in Antwerp during the previous night. Mathilde came to the house as planned but found it shut up and locked. She went to the police to make enquiries and discovered where they had been taken. My mother described it in her book:

"She went straight to the school where she explained to the police that they had mistakenly taken away her young son who had spent the night with her friend. She asked them to return her son to her. My mother, who immediately understood what was happening, explained to Isi that he must go with Mathilde, and that he must take off his hat and play a game of make-believe, pretending that Mathilde is his mother".

Although Mathilde was able to get Isi out of the school where they were being held, Tauba Schnitzer remained under arrest. She did not survive deportation from the Dossin barracks to Auschwitz-Birkenau via Transport VII on 1st September 1942.

Now, I would like to tell you, Tony, that although your life was short, full of troubles, sufferings and ended very tragically, you managed to save your three children. The three of them arrived to Israel, had families, lived well, and here we are, your family remembering you.

יהי זכרך ברוך

Some People \ Wislawa Szymborska

translated by joanna trzeciak

Some people fleeing some other people.
In some country under the sun
.and some clouds

,They leave behind some of their everything
,sown fields, some chickens, dogs
.mirrors in which fire now sees itself reflected

,On their backs are pitchers and bundles
.the emptier, the heavier from one day to the next

,Taking place stealthily is somebody's stopping
and in the commotion, somebody's bread somebody's
snatching
.and a dead child somebody's shaking

,In front of them some still not the right way
nor the bridge that should be
.over a river strangely rosy
Around them, some gunfire, at times closer, at times
,farther off
.and, above, a plane circling somewhat

,Some invisibility would come in handy
,some grayish stoniness
or even better, non-being
.for a little or a long while

Something else is yet to happen, only where and
?what
,Someone will head toward them, only when and who
?in how many shapes and with what intentions
,Given a choice
maybe he will choose not to be the enemy and
.leave them with some kind of life

אנשים כלשהם / ויסלבה שימבורסקה (מפולגית: רפי וייכרט)

אנשים כלשהם במנוסה מפני אנשים כלשהם.
בארץ כלשהי מתחת לשמש
ומתחת לעננים כלשהם.

מותירים מאחוריהם איזשהו כל-אשר-להם,
שדות זרועים, תרנגולות וכלבים כלשהם,
מראות זעירות, שהאש משתקפת בהן.

על נבם כדים וצורות חפצים,
ככל שיתרוקנו, יכבידו מיום ליום.

בשקט מתרנשת ובאה איזושהי התכלות,
ועל הלחם ברעש איזושהי התנפלות
וטטול ילד מת בידי איזושהי דמות.

לפניהם עוד דרך-לא-דרך כלשהי,
לא הגשר הנחוצ
מעל לנהר סמוק להפליא.
מסביב יריות כלשהן, פעם קרובות, פעם
רחוקות,
ובמרומים מטוס שחג לאטו.

אי-נראות כלשהי היתה מועילה,
אבניות אפרפרה כלשהי,
וטובה אי התקיימות
למשך זמן כלשהו, קצר או ארוך.

משהו עוד יקרה, אולם היכן ומה.
מישהו עוד יצא לקראתם, רק מתי, מי,
בכמה דמויות ובאלו כונות.
אם תהיה בררה בידו,
אולי לא יבחר להיות אויב
וישאיר אותם בחיים כלשהם.

Ash and Dust \ Yehuda Poliker and Yaakov Gilad

אפר ואבק / יהודה פוליקר ויעקב גלעד

A spring day the smell of lilac
Between the ruins of your city
A beautiful day to fish in the river
Inside me my heart is broken
There it was and it wasn't
Your child is a small woman
People that no-one knows
There isn't even a house that you'll remember

And if you're going, where are you going
Forever is just ashes and dust
Where are you going, where are you going
...Years and nothing is erased

Take a coat, it'll be cold
Money in your pocket, sugar crystal
If the days are hard
Remember me sometimes
And if it's a more desperate journey
To the hut, to the plot
On the path of the old city
...No one will wait in the station

..And if you're going

Who will sweeten your nights
Who will listen to your crying
Who will stay by your side [while you are] on your way

And if you're going, where are you going
Forever is just ashes and dust²⁶
Where are you going, where are you going
...Years and nothing is erased

.Take a coat, it'll be cold

יום אביב ריחות לילך
בין חורבות העיר שלך
יום יפה לדוג בנהר
בתוכי הלב נשבר
שם היתה ואינה
ילדותך אישה קטנה
אנשים שאיש לא מכיר
אין אפילו בית שיזכיר

ואם את נוסעת לאן את נוסעת
הנצח הוא רק אפר ואבק
לאן את נוסעת לאן את נוסעת
שנים וכלום עוד לא נמחק.

קחי מעיל יהיה לך קר
כסף כיס, גביש סוכר
אם יהיו קשים הימים
הזכרי בי לפעמים
ואם זה עוד מסע נואש
אל הצריף, אל המגרש
במסילת העיר הישנה
איש לא יחכה בתחנה.

ואם את נוסעת...

מי ימתיק לילותייך
מי יקשיב לביכייך
מי ישמור צעדייך בדרכך.

לאן את נוסעת לאן את נוסעת
הנצח הוא רק אפר ואבק
לאן את נוסעת לאן את נוסעת
שנים וכלום עוד לא נמחק.

קחי מעיל יהיה לך קר.