

IN MEMORIAM

A number of people who were mentioned in the Rolnick book have died since the book was sent for publication. I thought it would be appropriate to append here some obituaries. I begin with two people very close to me, my late brother Sylvester Stein (page 174 of the Rolnick book) and my late brother in law Mervyn Susser (page 175).

SYLVESTER STEIN

The Guardian Denis Herbstein Sunday 3 January 2016

Sylvester Stein, who has died aged 95, always gave the impression of sailing through life with effortless ease. In his time he edited the South African magazine *Drum*, was a founding figure of direct marketing in Britain, and sprinted to a gold medal at the world masters athletics championships – the veterans' Olympics.

Son of Lily (Rolnick) and Philip Stein, Sylvester was born in Cape Town. His father was a maths professor, and he enjoyed a privileged upbringing in a Jewish home in Durban, with a sojourn in 1926 in Cambridge, where Philip was completing a doctorate. After qualifying as an engineer, Sylvester enlisted in the South African navy during the second world war.

He had a brief marriage, in 1944, to Pauline Urry, and was demobbed in the UK as the war ended, soon finding work as an actor in London. In October 1945, he landed up in the crowd scenes in the Old Vic company production of *Oedipus Rex* with Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson and Sybil Thorndyke at the New theatre, and in 1946 joined the Arts Council Midland theatre in Coventry. He married Jenny Hutt before returning to South Africa the following year.

There, he acted with the Munro-Inglis company before turning to journalism. In 1948 he became the political correspondent of the *Rand Daily Mail* in Johannesburg. Then, when the British editor Anthony Sampson quit *Drum* magazine in 1955, the virtually unknown Stein took over, inheriting and recruiting black journalists and photographers who today are leaders in their fields in South Africa; "the new Africans cut adrift from the tribal reserve – urbanised, eager, fast-talking and brash," in the words of one of them, Lewis Nkosi. One reporter was hired by a white potato farmer and was able to expose the slave-like conditions endured by black labourers.

Drum's proprietor, Jim Bailey, was being leant on by the apartheid government and he in turn tried to rein in his editor. Bailey decided to send Stein to Ghana to edit the west African version of the magazine. Fatefully, in 1957, when Althea Gibson became the first black person

to win the women's singles title at Wimbledon, Stein prepared a cover showing the champion embracing the white runner-up, Darlene Hard. Bailey ordered the picture to be spiked. Stein resigned, and sailed for Britain with Jenny and their four children, Jeremy, Lyndall, Harriet and Alexandra. His first novel, *2nd Class Taxi* (1958), a rare satire on apartheid that was published soon after their departure, was quickly banned in South Africa.

At first, Stein worked at Reynold's News in London, but then borrowed money from his family and, in partnership with Bob Troop, set up a publishing company, Stonehart, and launched a property newsletter. Potential subscribers, culled from the "posh" parts of the London phone book, were offered a no-obligation free trial. They pioneered the standing order for subscriptions and renewals – US-style direct mail had arrived in Britain.

In the 1970s, Stein took note of a new phenomenon in London's parks: joggers. The outcome was the launch of *Running* magazine in 1980 and, later, *Peak Performance*, a sports science newsletter still published today.

In late middle-age, sprinting had become a fresh challenge for Stein, too. He won silver in the 200m at the world veteran games in Toronto in 1975 and, six years later in Christchurch, New Zealand, converted it to gold, with a time of 26.81sec. He gave up competitive athletics only in his 80s, lamenting that there was no one left to run against.

Aged 78, he founded *Electric Word*, a publisher of sports fitness and education newsletters. In 2007, the Channel 4 show *Bus Pass Workaholics* featured him as one of Britain's oldest working directors.

His books, over the years, included *Old Letch* (1959), deemed "excellent reading" by JB Priestley, *Running Guide to Keeping Fit* (1986) and *99 Ways to Reach 100* (1987), co-written with his son Jeremy. *Who Killed Mr Drum?* (1999) examined the enigma of the murder in 1957 of Drum's star investigator, Henry Nxumalo, when on the tail of a Johannesburg abortion racket. It was adapted into a play of the same name staged at Riverside Studios, west London, in 2005. Stein's memoir, *I Danced With Mrs Gandhi* (2012), revealed a talent for imaginative name-dropping, the choicest example of which was "I danced a dignified kwela with Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela."

Stein's marriage to Jenny ended in divorce in the early 1980s. In 1985 he married the artist Sarah Cawkwell; she, his children and three grandchildren, Sunna, Carlos and Rosa, survive him.

- Sylvester Roman Stein, writer, journalist, publisher and athlete, born 25 December 1920; died 28 December 2015

MERVYN WILFRED SUSSER

(A version of this article appears in print on August 27, 2014, on Page B16 of the New York edition with the headline: Mervyn Susser, 92, Dies; Studied Illness and Society.) by WILLIAM YARDLEY

Dr. Mervyn Susser, a South African-born epidemiologist whose work drew new attention to the connections between disease and the social conditions that can enable its spread, died on Aug. 14 at his home in Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. He was 92. His death was confirmed by his daughter Ida Susser. Dr. Susser, something of a self-taught epidemiologist, is widely credited with helping the field establish proven methods for studying and treating disease.

He learned on the job in the 1950s while working in a clinic that served black South Africans and went on, over the next several decades, to examine peptic ulcers in Europe, hunger in the Netherlands, and AIDS in the United States and in South Africa. He and his wife, Dr. Zena Stein, promoted some of the earliest educational and treatment programs for AIDS in South Africa. Dr. Susser sought to improve public health from the ground up by gathering data on who was affected by diseases and why, and by trying to understand what their distinctive social and economic circumstances were. Social medicine, it was sometimes called.

Mervyn Wilfred Susser was born on Sept. 26, 1921, in Johannesburg and grew up near what is now Mokopane, in Limpopo Province. He was the youngest of two children of Solomon and the former Ida Rose Son. His mother, never at ease in the bush, committed suicide when Dr. Susser was a boy, and he moved in with relatives in Durban to attend school there. He grew up in rural South Africa, the son of Jewish immigrants from Latvia who ran a modest store and hotel near a tin mine. In a country divided by apartheid, he played with white and black children. He learned to track game in the wild even as his parents enrolled him in a Roman Catholic girls' school because it was the best



*Dr. Mervyn Susser in 1992.
Credit Charles Manley*

education available. (He stayed for a year before being sent to a boys' school in Durban several hundred miles away.)

Years later, after serving with South African forces fighting with the Allies in Europe and Northern Africa during World War II, he abandoned dreams of a literary life for medical school. At home and at war, he had seen suffering, and he wanted to help reduce it.

“Our medical curriculum addressed the conditions apparent in the segregated white fraction of the population,” he recalled in a 2003 interview with the journal *Epidemiology*. “What happened in the black majority population was foreign land. We learned about that independently out of hours in outpatient clinics and wards of black hospitals.”

After receiving a medical degree from the University of Witwatersrand in 1950, he accepted a job helping to run the Alexandra Health Center, in a poor area on the outskirts of Johannesburg. In 1955, he and Dr. Stein helped write “Medical Care in a South African Township,” which was published in the journal *Lancet* and was one of the first studies of what became known as community-oriented primary care in a developing country.

All the while, Dr. Susser and Dr. Stein became outspoken opponents of apartheid. In 1956, under pressure from disapproving clinic officials, they left South Africa; over the next decade they moved first to England and then to the United States. Dr. Susser became chairman of the division of epidemiology at Columbia University in 1966.

Dr. Susser had not considered himself an epidemiologist in South Africa — the field was still emerging — but his reputation as an innovative thinker about disease expanded with the publication in 1962 of his first book, “Sociology in Medicine.” Written with the anthropologist William Watson, the book explored the role of family and community in disease.

In his most influential work, “Causal Thinking in the Health Sciences: Concepts and Strategies of Epidemiology” (1973), which grew out of a series of lectures he gave after arriving in the United States, Dr. Susser discussed the shifting focus of epidemiology then underway — from infectious diseases to chronic ones like cancer and heart disease. When H.I.V. began spreading in New York in the early 1980s, he and Dr. Stein were among the first epidemiologists to study it. Dr. Stein, who also worked at Columbia, helped establish that women, not just gay or bisexual men, were vulnerable to H.I.V.

In the late '80s, the couple turned their research back to South Africa, and in 1990 they helped organize a conference on AIDS and H.I.V. there just as apartheid was coming to an end. They had been early allies of Nelson Mandela in protesting apartheid, and at the time

he had recently been freed from prison.

“Over the years, especially when we were in prison, we managed to get trickles of information about you,” Mr. Mandela wrote in a tribute in 2001, when the couple turned 80. “It was always heartening to know that, albeit under difficult circumstances and many miles from home, your commitments and active contribution to struggle for democracy remained undiminished.”

In the late 1970s, Dr. Susser founded the Sergievsky Center at Columbia University, which explores genetic, environmental and social factors of disease. He led the center until 1990. That same year, he became editor of *The American Journal of Public Health*.

In addition to his daughter Ida, his survivors include Dr. Stein, whom he married in 1949; his son, Ezra, who also served as head of epidemiology at Columbia; another daughter, Ruth King; Elie Valencia, a Chilean political refugee who came to live with the Susser family in the 1970s; and nine grandchildren.

Dr. Susser saw his field change over his career, and he worried at times that epidemiology was shifting from public health to what he called “big science,” detached from directly serving people. In the 2003 interview, he recalled how he and his wife turned to medicine after witnessing apartheid and then seeing Jews and other populations killed during World War II.

“The social and political commitment we then made stayed with us,” he said. “It all flowed from the anti-apartheid struggle and broadened into human rights, something one had to pay attention to and do what one could.”

RACHEL RONNEN 1931-2016

On pages 54 and 55 of the Rolnick book we read about Yoram Rolnik/Ronnen, the son of Meier Rolnik of the Northern Rolniks from Plunge. Yoram was first a radio announcer and then one of the founders of Israeli television. He married Rachel Shmueli, who died in 2016. Their son Gilad wrote the following notes about Rachel. (A translation from Hebrew follows, edited somewhat).



Rachel and Yoram Ronnen

Rachel Ronnen, my mother, was born Rachel Shmueli, daughter

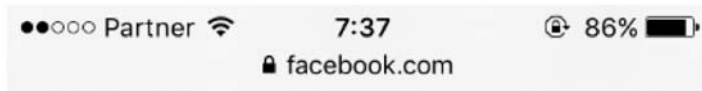
of Yehuda Shmueli and Ruzina Alchanali, in the town Larissa in Greece, 85 years ago. She came on Aliyah at age 3, the beloved little sister of two brothers, daughter of immigrant parents who never totally adapted to the country, who had financial difficulties, and never completely learned Hebrew during the scores of years they lived in Israel. But their children fully absorbed the Hebrew language. Rachel, a clever and ambitious child, received a scholarship to the "La Yada" high school graduating with distinction from there. She went, on her brother Eliezar's advice to the teachers seminary and worked as a teacher for some years. Later, after enlisting in the army, she joined Galei Tsahal, the Army radio programme, where she met Yoram who would become my father. After her army service, she continued to work in radio. She loved the work, and advanced - first to be in charge of Ivrit La'am-the World Service programme, and later as director of broadcast programs for immigrants-responsible for broadcasts in over 10 languages, and directing many workers. All of this, of course, only in the hours when she when we were at school. When she returned home, she was always there to perform her real role, the most meaningful to her-to be our mother.

She was an announcer-on the radio, but not only on the radio. She had perfect pronunciation-a guttural "resh"., and clear enunciation. She used to say that even when she got on a bus and asked for "one ticket" the drivers would say: "madam you have such a beautiful Hebrew". One of the most serious disciplinary faults in our childhood was to make mistakes in Hebrew. The chest of drawers in the parent's room was called "kamtar" and strangers to the house did not understand what she meant when we told them: put them on the "kamtar".

Rachel as a mother was a sturdy rock, a concrete wall to lean on, a lioness prepared to fight fearlessly against anyone she thought was hurting us, however slightly.....One who listens, tells stories, plays, takes me to town and dances with me in the street. Hides from Father when he comes home from work in the evening and then jumps on him from behind and hugs him.... A pillar of strength for our father, to get angry on his behalf more than he does himself, and bearing a grudge long after he himself has forgotten.

MASHA ROLNIK

Masha Rolnik's haunting holocaust experiences contributed much to chapter three of the Rolnick book. She died last year. Her greatniece Gabriela Rolnik wrote the following on Facebook:



Gabriela Rolnik

8 hrs · 👤

Today my family lost last family Holocaust survivor - Masha (Maria) Rolnikaite. From today I will be one of those who will hear Holocaust stories from the books and no longer from the person itself.

Masha was known as Lithuanian Anne Frank. She was writing a diary during the Holocaust. She felt a duty to shear about the atrocities Jewish people went through the Holocaust and thus all of her life she dedicated to writing books about the Holocaust. You can read them in at least 18 languages.

Masha Rolnikaite: "I want to give those a voice who did not survive the Holocaust. By talking about my experiences I feel I am doing something useful ... I am contributing to the fight against racism and exclusion."

Today is a sad day... and Yom HaShoah this year is going to be different... Holocaust turning into complete history that only a few can share it first-hand.

Dear friends, use your time to ask and listen while Holocaust survivors are still with us... and when they leave be responsible to NEVER FORGET.

Masha contributed much oral history the Holocaust Museum:

Record Type: Oral History

Interview Summary: Masha Rolnikaite discusses her Holocaust experiences in Vilnius and in Stradsdenhof concentration camp; the poetry and song lyrics she composed in Yiddish while in the Vilnius (Vilna) ghetto; and her post-war literary career.

Date: 2006 July 16 (interview)

RG Number: RG-50.853*0001

Accession Number: 2006.436.2

Extent: 1 CD.

Language: Russian
Yiddish

Provenance: Masha Rolnikaite donated her oral testimony to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on July 16, 2006.

Interviewee: Masha Rolnikaite

Interviewer: Bret Werb
Vadim Altskan
Ludmilla Gordon

Legal Status: Permanent Collection

Geographic Name: Vilnius (Lithuania)

Personal Name: Rolnikaite, Masha.

Topical Term: Lithuania--History--German occupation, 1941-1944.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Lithuania--Personal narratives.
Jewish ghettos--Lithuania--Vilnius.
World War, 1939-1945--Concentration camps--Liberation.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Poetry.

Conditions on Access: No restrictions on access

Conditions on Use: No restrictions on use

Part of: Masha Rolnikaite collection