

The Life and Times of Isa Kaftal Zimmerman

I was born in Lisbon, Portugal. My parents were Polish and had had the foresight to get married and get out of Poland before the Holocaust. They sent me to Queen Elizabeth's School so that I knew how to speak English, Portuguese and a little Polish and Yiddish. I also learned enough Hebrew to get by in Israel.

My father owned a knitted outerwear factory in Lisbon and when he was approached by the Nazis to manufacture the khaki sweaters the Nazis wore, he refused...As he said, he could do it because we were in Lisbon, not in Poland. I always have maintained that unlike my husband, I would not have survived because when the Nazis came to our door, I would have said 'how dare you' and they would have shot me.

My childhood was spent in Brooklyn, New York but I needed to get away so attended Cornell University as an undergraduate. There I enjoyed being an editor of the Cornell Daily Sun.

After college, I worked in NY City for a year on a trade magazine (I was an English major and Medieval history minor) ...what an incredible experience! I came to Cambridge, MA because a friend from Cornell invited me to spend a week with her on my vacation. Among the people I met was the then Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education...I went back to Brooklyn, applied and was accepted within a week! (There is a back story available upon request.)

My husband has been a physicist at Boston University since he received his PhD and so the Boston area has been our home for 54 years.

I was a teacher, a high school principal, a superintendent of schools, faculty and administration at a private and then a public university. I have always believed in working collaboratively with people and have done so in every job I have ever held. I follow the advice: See Something? Say something! and I add, Do something.

We are supporters of most of the cultural institutions in the greater Boston area and have enjoyed being a part of this historic city and many of its organizations.

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