

## IN MEMORY OF ESTHER P. MORDECHAI

Esther Mordechai was born in Ioannina in 1920, the daughter of Iakov and Anneta Politis. There were five children in the family: Iosef born in 1912, Nissim in 1916, Fortouni in 1918, Esther in 1920, and Moisis in 1923. Iakov sold yarn and thread, and would prematurely die at the age of 48, leaving his widowed wife to raise the children on her own.



On March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1944, the Politis family was rounded up with the rest of the Jewish Community of Ioannina. Roused from their beds in the middle of a cold March night, they were loaded into open trucks, taken across the mountains to a warehouse in Larissa, stripped of their valuables and, then, after the arrival of a transport of Jews from Athens, were loaded into cattle-cars taking them to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Their transport arrived on April 11, 1944. According to the Auschwitz Archives, of the approximately 2,500 Jewish men, women and children, only 320 men and 328 women entered the camp. The rest were sent to the gas chambers. Esther was the only one in her immediate family to survive.



The marriage of Fortuni Politis and Avram Negrin-Most of the people in this picture perished in the Holocaust



Politis family 1930s

After the end of the war, Esther returned to her home city of Ioannina and married another survivor, Elias Mordechai. Elias had lost his first wife and young daughter in the camps, along with his parents and most of his extended families.



Esther and Elias



Esther with Evelyn



Esther with Anna

Their two daughters, Anny and Evelyn, were born in Ioannina.



Proud mothers in Ioannina show off their new babies: 1947

In 1951, the family made the decision to come to the United States and settled in Greensboro, North Carolina where there was a small community of Yanniote Jews working in the textile industry. Her husband, Elias, died in 1987.

When given the opportunity to remove the numbers tattooed on her arm "77097," Esther refused. She said the number was engraved in her heart. Esther was one of the first Holocaust survivors to be videotaped by the Steven Spielberg Foundation and spoke frequently on the Holocaust.

This exhibit was lovingly created with the help of Esther's daughter, Evelyn Mordechai.