

SOYKA FAMILY GENERATIONS

ALEX*, SYLVIA AND MARC-ADAM CANADA



Sylvia Soyka was born in Brussels, Belgium and when she was one and a half years old, she immigrated to Montreal.

Sylvia's father, Alex, spent a year at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1937; after which he went to Belgium, which is where he was when WWII broke out. He fought under the British in several of the "free" armies. Sylvia's mother, Niusia, was a hero of the Polish urban resistance, Zegota, and some of her wartime work has been displayed in Yad Vashem. Sylvia's parents met and married in Belgium.

After a BA in English Literature at McGill University, Sylvia completed an MA in Comparative Literature at the Sorbonne in Paris and then attended L'Institut d'Etudes Politiques where she studied economics and finance.

In Canada, Sylvia's father started a successful stationery and office supplies company. Shortly after returning to Montreal, Sylvia joined the business and for the next thirty-five years she played a vital role in the growth and success of Sotal Ltd. In 1978, she established a branch in Toronto and expanded the business nationally into Ontario and western Canada. As a young female executive, Sylvia soon became the face of the company. She sold the business in 2010 and, upon Alex's death later that year, became president of Soyka Holdings Inc.

Sylvia's strong family values, her interest in creating a legacy of a larger scope for her family and her personal interest in the arts have helped shape her philanthropic mission. To honour her father's strong connection to the Hebrew University, Sylvia has made an innovative and major commitment which has created an international co-operative research project in pancreatic cancer presently under way at the Institute for Medical Research Israel-Canada, the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research, Toronto and at the Sheba Centre of Tel Hashomer Hospital, Tel Aviv. To honour her mother Niusia's memory, Sylvia supports the Women's Brain Health Initiative, a Toronto-based charity for Alzheimer's, dementia and other brain-aging diseases in women.

Additionally, since her parents' death, Sylvia has annually sponsored a concert as part of the Montreal Chamber Music Festival in their memory. In Toronto, she is a major supporter of theatre and the performing arts.

Sylvia has a wonderful and supportive son, Marc-Adam, who she hopes will continue the family's philanthropic efforts into the next generation.