



Daniel Kuttler, right, and his extended family in the early 1960s in Miami.

## An uncle to emulate

By HILLEL KUTTLER

ARYE GOLDSTEIN stepped knowingly along the Jerusalem gravel, bounding up stone stairs and around low walls to reach the section of a cemetery he's visited twice a year for three decades.

A Massachusetts native who's lived in the capital since 1977, Arye was leading my younger son Gil, my cousin Miles, and me to the graves on Mount of Olives of our uncle, Daniel Kuttler, and his wife, Arye's mother Charlotte. Despite living in Israel for two years and previously visiting many times, this was my first pilgrimage to their graves. In fact, I'd only met Uncle Dan and Aunt Charlotte once, at their downtown Jerusalem apartment at 7 Keren Hayesod Street, in 1985.

Getting there this October day wasn't easy—and not only because the massive graveyard, the final resting place of an estimated 150,000 Jews, lacks an administrative office or a help-

ful website. The mountain, meaningful to Jews since King David and the prophets and a cemetery for about as long, has been a daunting place to approach in modern times.

I'd read about residents of adjacent Arab villages accosting Jewish visitors verbally and physically. Arye related that the night of Dan's interment, in February 1988, protestors burned tires in the road and pelted the hearse with rocks. Arye sent the bus of mourners back, proceeding with just the requisite nine other men to bury Dan and recite the Kaddish prayer.

Ahead of our visit, Arye ordered an escort that the national government's Housing Ministry provides free. "Some people are afraid of going. In the past, there were many rock throwers. Now, there are fewer," a woman at the ministry's car-escort department told me later.

At the designated intersection above the City of David, our taxi driver called to inquire about the car's whereabouts and was told of traf-

fic delays. Sensing safety that mid-afternoon, we proceeded unaccompanied. Hundreds of tourists trudging up a winding, narrow road to the cemetery reassured us, too.

My only previous Mount of Olives visit, in 1985, I walked in complete safety from nearby Mount Scopus. I'd observed with dismay an Arab man grazing his donkey and sheep amongst Jewish graves. Many markers lay toppled and shattered, a legacy of Jordan's control of the site from 1948 to 1967, when the kingdom infamously paved roads through graves and desecrated tombstones.

Now, though, the vast complex appeared tidy and vandalism-free. Gil placed a stone on the grave of Dan, my grandfather's brother, and headed to a railing offering a wondrous view west down to the Kidron Valley and beyond toward the Temple Mount.

Arye spoke of his love for Dan for bringing joy to Charlotte during their 12-year marriage. He also revealed much I didn't know about my uncle.

Charlotte and Dan, both widowed, were married in Jerusalem's Batsheva Hotel in 1975 following a short courtship. Dan was celebrating Sukkot in Israel and asked Charlotte, by then a Jerusalem resident, to dinner. She brought along two friends visiting from Miami, along with Arye. Dan, in turn, invited four children he sponsored at Bayit Lepletot Girls Town Jerusalem. Dan's friends, a Mobile, Ala. couple, also came.

A typical first date it wasn't, but Charlotte told her son afterwards, "This is it"—Dan was the one for her.

As to the little girls attending: The home's cofounder, Rabbi Samuel Stern, approached Dan and his first wife, Jean, in their Miami Beach house



Above: Mount of Olives' Jewish cemetery looking west toward the Old City's walls. Right: Daniel Kuttler's grave on the Mount of Olives. Photo credits: Hillel Kuttler.



in the 1960s. He proposed a dollar-a-day sponsorship. In Israel, the couple met the girls. They selected one to sponsor, but quickly reconsidered and committed to all four.

Until his death at 80, Dan maintained contact with the girls, including financially assisting them. Charlotte continued the relationships. Then Arye did, following the wishes of his mother, who died at 91 in 2003. Each year, he brings the girls, now mothers and grandmothers, cash-filled envelopes.

That wasn't all. Having owned a company manufacturing fine women's clothing, Dan, post-retirement, founded a charity lending wedding gowns to poor Israeli brides.

The couple became friends with Clara Hammer, an American immigrant known as The Chicken Lady of Jerusalem for providing meat to poor Jerusalem families every Shabbat. Miles contributed to Hammer's initiative, and in 2000 I wrote an article after witnessing her goodness. Four years later, I started a short-term fund to assist the widower and eight children of my high school classmate who'd just died of cancer. I watched,

stunned, as classmates contributed over \$3,000.

"For sure, Uncle Dan was my role model," said Miles. "I saw what [he] did with charities that fell into his lap."

On the Mount of Olives, I read the Hebrew text chiseled onto Dan's gravestone: "Loyal and devoted husband. His home and heart were open to the poor and destitute. Involved in addressing public needs. Devoted to the mitzvah of marrying off brides."

The next day, my high school classmate's widower called to invite me to the Jerusalem-area wedding of their daughter. It would take place the night before Thanksgiving. ■

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