OBITUARY: RUTH WEYL
(1 OCTOBER 1924–17 MAY 2013)

Writing on the website of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ), Eva Schulz-Jander and Michael Korn record an outline of her life:¹

She was born in 1924 as Ruth Grünfeld, the youngest daughter of Fritz and Hilde Grünfeld, the owners of the well-known Grünfeld department store in Berlin on the Kurfürstendamm. Raised as a Liberal Jew with a very strong Jewish identity, she was encouraged from early on, especially by her father, whom she liked to quote, to speak her own mind and not to be afraid. She followed this principle until the very end. The Grünfeld family was forced to flee to Palestine, where she lived from 1938 until 1958, when she and her new family moved to London, where she remained the rest of her life.

In London she became involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue reaching into Continental Europe, especially into Germany. In 2008 the President of the Republic, Horst Köhler, awarded her one of the highest honours the State has to offer, the Bundesverdienstkreuz to honour her for her untiring contribution to German-Jewish and Jewish-Christian understanding.²

Being multilingual, English, German, French, and Hebrew, she was able to reach out to many countries. I remember her powerful presentation during our joint participation in the annual Conference of the Amitié Judéo-chrétienne de France in Mulhouse. She was a regular participant at conferences in France.

Ruth Weyl was a builder of bridges. She reached people’s minds, but more importantly, she touched people’s heart[s]. We from the Friends and Sponsors of the Martin-Buber-House owe it to her to continue her work. May it be given to us to bring the world a bit closer to her hopes and expectations.

Dr Deborah Weissman, President of the ICCJ, notes:

But generally, the ICCJ has lost its organizational memory and our living link to Seelisberg. Over the years, Ruth held many positions within the CCJ [Council of Christians and Jews], the Three Faiths Forum and the ICCJ and, most recently, served as Consultant to our International Executive Board. . . . With Ruth’s fluency in English, French and German (as well as Hebrew), she helped link up people from many of our different member organizations. . . . Despite her age, she was one of the youngest and most energetic participants in our activities, by far the most successful of us when it came to communicating with youth and young adults.³
Aaron Goldstein, in a eulogy for her, recalled how she concluded a talk at Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue on the festival of Chanukah with a remark typical of her customary optimism, humour and hope:

And may the dreidel always fall with the best side up!

Notes

1. http://www.iccj.org/Friends-Sponsors.15.0.html
2. “Als unermüdliche Brückenbauerin zwischen Deutschland und jüdischen Einrichtungen in Großbritannien, Israel und anderen Staaten hat sie die Herzen unzähliger Menschen auf der ganzen Welt erreicht”, so wurden ihre Verdienste von Bundespräsident Horst Köhler gewürdigt. ‘As a tireless bridge-builder between Germany and Jewish institutions in Great Britain, Israel and other countries, she has reached the hearts of countless people throughout the world’ – thus was her Award honoured by the German President Horst Koehler.