

PSY605: Mila Singer Life Story

Mila was born in 1945 in a hospital in Brooklyn, New York. Her parents, Miriam and Leo Lucas, were both in their early twenties when she was born. Mila was the first person in her Jewish-American family to be born in America. Miriam and Leo had escaped Germany as young children with their own parents just as the persecution of Jews was beginning in Europe in the early 1930s.

Miriam was a stay-at-home mother, and Leo worked for his father's successful construction company. Mila spent her pre-school years playing with the other children in their primarily Jewish neighborhood and helping her mother keep up with housework. Once she was old enough, Mila began attending a primary school in the New York City public school system. Her parents had five more children during the next nine years. The family was not wealthy; however, they always had enough financial stability to provide Mila with everything she needed, if not everything she wanted.

Mila's parents constantly encouraged Mila and her siblings to value education and use it to their advantage. Because of this, Mila performed very well in school. Mila was tall and had a lean figure, beautiful brown eyes, and long curly brown hair that often attracted the attention of the boys in her classes. However, her strict religious upbringing caused her to ignore any advances she received. Mila took her religious education very seriously and loved going to Hebrew School to learn the Hebrew language and prepare for her Bat Mitzvah. It was in Hebrew School that she met Oliver Singer, the young man who would later become her husband.

Mila and Oliver were married in a traditional Jewish ceremony in 1965 and took up residence in a neighborhood just minutes away from both their families. Oliver began attending a local college in hope of becoming a pediatrician. Mila went to work as a secretary for her father, who was priming her younger brothers to take over the construction company once they finished school.

Mila and Oliver had two sons: Oliver, Jr. (born in 1966), and Elliot (born in 1968). When her mother died of lung cancer in 1968, Mila's family moved back in with her father and youngest siblings. Mila found that the burden of caring for everyone made it impossible to continue working. Shortly after Elliot was born, Mila left her job and Oliver was forced to leave school so he could begin working and supporting the family financially. Oliver decided to join the family business and worked alongside his brothers-in-law for many years, even after Mila's father died in 1986.

Mila, Oliver, and their children lived a humble life, much as Mila's parents had. Although the family worked hard and always had what they needed, they never became as prosperous as Oliver had dreamed when he began college. As he got older, Oliver became bitter about how his life had unfolded and turned to drinking to cover his emotions. During this period, Mila pleaded with Oliver to seek help for his addiction, but he refused. Their relationship suffered, and Mila often felt depressed. She, too, neglected to reach out for help for her problem. In 1999, Oliver died from complications of liver disease. He was only 54 years old.

Not wanting to be alone, Mila decided at that time to leave Brooklyn and relocate to a small condo in Atlanta, Georgia, to be close to her son, Elliot, and his family. Although she missed her husband, she was admittedly happy to be removed from the unhealthy living situation of their combined troubles. It was a difficult transition at first; having spent her whole life in Brooklyn, Mila never learned to drive, and getting around the Atlanta suburbs without a car was nearly impossible. Over time, however, Mila met other widows and couples her age and began attending local events with her new friends.

PSY605: Mila Singer Life Story

Earlier this year, Mila sold her condo and moved in to a retirement community in the area so she could be closer to her friends and avoid travelling to participate in social functions. A Jewish temple is located near her new residence, so Mila can still enjoy an active religious affiliation and sense of community with her like-minded peers. Elliot and his family come over once a week for a short visit. Oliver, Jr. and his family visit two or three times a year. Overall, Mila is very satisfied with how her life turned out and acknowledges that the “bumps in the road,” as she likes to call them, helped her to appreciate everything she has today. While she is beginning to decline physically, she maintains that she is still “sharp as a whip” and enjoys giving back to the community by passing her knowledge on to the youth who visit the retirement community. Mila looks forward to her sunset years.