Susanne Czuker was born in Budapest, Hungary. She grew up in an environment where German was the preferred language, a proficiency which helped her move around occupied Budapest, until she was caught in a round-up and later placed on a transport train destined for Auschwitz. During this difficult journey, an opportunity to escape presented itself. Hoisted through the roof by fellow “captives,” she jumped off the train, and surviving by her wits and the sheer determination to reconnect, she found her way back to Budapest and her family.

After liberation, in the shadow of the terror of Stalinism, Susanne’s father’s textile business and knitting factory were confiscated. The family’s courage and tenacity was indefatigable and in early 1948, their second attempt to escape was successful. America was the dream, but the family would have to wait in DP camps in Austria and Italy and briefly stay in Canada before immigrating to the US in 1952.

Settling in New York, Susanne taught herself English, worked days and studied nights at Hunter College.

In 1957, she married the love of her life, Jan Czuker, a survivor of five concentration camps. They had a unique relationship based on profound friendship, shared values and mutual respect which lasted 54 years until Jan’s passing in 2010.

In Los Angeles, the Czuker’s entrepreneurial spirit flourished with their own successful businesses – Jan in real estate development and Susanne as president of her own interior design company. Their love of community prompted their support for Jewish education in day schools and Yeshivot as well as Cedars Sinai Medical Center, and they are well known as founders of Congregation Beth Jacob and the US Holocaust Memorial.

An ardent Zionist, Susanne is an active leader in Israel Bonds, JINSA and Yad Vashem. At Bar-Ilan University, she is dedicating the Jan & Susanne Czuker and Family Main Lobby and Auditorium in the Jim Joseph Education Building.

Says Susanne, the proud grandmother of 15 grandchildren, “Bar-Ilan University is what brings together my love for the State of Israel, our beautiful heritage and the future for all our children, who are the ultimate victors of all those who tried to destroy the Jewish People.”