

Blake Family Information

Holocaust survivors Carl B. (Blake) and Lita Heiber Blake (Melitta Bloch) and their child, Yara Pitchford. Both from Jewish families living in Austria, Carl and Lita escaped Vienna using false papers, among them cultural visas and baptismal records created with the help of a Catholic organization. They had full, complex lives in Viennese society when they were forced to flee; Lita was a piano prodigy and Karl a chemist and multiple patent holding inventor. Lita left Austria with her brother Walter on a cultural visa in March of 1938. She and her brother took refuge in Antwerp where Lita saw her brother and others rounded up on the street and deported. Her brother and her parents would perish in Auschwitz. Carl managed to escape as well and was reunited with Lita in Belgium. From there, they fled to Brazil where they remained through the end of World War II. In 1946, Lita gave birth to her only daughter, Yara. Although successful in their escape from Europe, the family continued to live as Catholics for protection and their daughter was baptized in the Catholic Church. That same year, the family immigrated to the US and settled in New York. Carl continued to have a successful career as chemist. He died in 1973. In her 90s, Lita moved to Santa Fe to be with her daughter. On June 5th, 2014 the City of Santa Fe declared "Melitta Heiber Blake Day" in honor of her extraordinary life. She died in 2007.

Yara

Yara Pitchford was born to Dr. Karl and Melitta (Heiber) Bloch in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Her birth was a miracle to her parents who had escaped from Nazi-ridden Vienna, Austria in 1938. The family immigrated to the United States on a coffee freighter and landed on Ellis Island. Her early years were spent in Manhattan in the Columbus Avenue neighborhood filled with other émigrés. They moved to Mexico City for 2 1/2 years and eventually settled in Great Neck, Long Island. She spent her junior year of high school in Vienna. Her life and multi-language experiences led her to Georgetown University, where she received her degree in Applied Linguistics and where she continued her graduate studies in Portuguese literature. However, in 1974, she changed direction and went into the newly created field of Information Technology. She was a Systems Analyst for the data arm of the U.S. House of

Representatives. One of the offices she had the pleasure of working with was the newly elected congressman from the Third District of New Mexico, The Honorable Bill Richardson. It was while working in Congress that she met her husband, Gerald Pitchford. Gerald was working as staff consultant on Africa for the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Yara joined Gerald in Africa. In 1984 Yara was sent to Santa Fe to help Congressman Richardson's office with their information technology needs. The Pitchfords continued to visit Santa Fe, and on their third trip in 1987 they formally eloped and were married in a side chapel of the historic Saint Francis Cathedral. The rest is history. They moved to Santa Fe and Yara devoted herself to exploring everything she could about the Native American community. She became very involved in a movement taking place during the late 1980s and early 1990s, a Native American renaissance in fashion and jewelry. She served on the board and foundation committees of many organizations: the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, Museum of New Mexico, Friends of Indian Art Committee, Pueblo V Design Institute, Foundation Board of the Institute of American Indian Arts, Friends of Dine' College Committee, Swaia Gala Committee and a "Runner" for SWAIA.