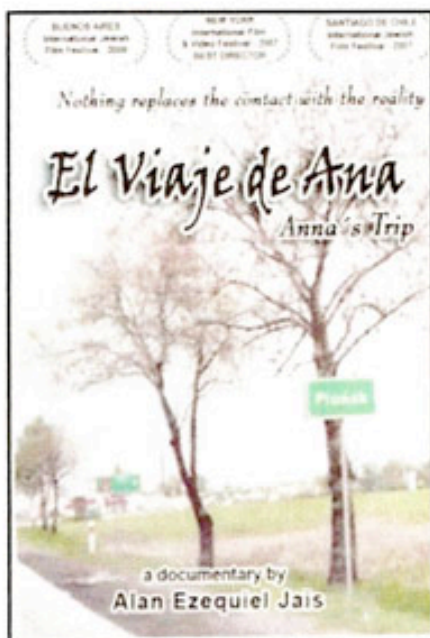


**“EL VIAJE DE ANA/ANA’S TRIP”—ALAN EZEQUIEL JAIS (ARGENTINA, 2006)**



Seldom are the concepts ‘lost’ and ‘found’ so poignantly juxtaposed as in the 30-minute documentary “El viaje de Ana/Anna’s Trip” by Alan Ezequiel Jais. This powerful yet short film follows the ‘search and rescue’ mission of Argentine Ana Nuta, and her adult son Gerardo Weisstaub Nuta, in their effort to recover their family’s physical existence and presence in Plonsk, Poland, before being murdered by the Nazi killing machine. What begins as a hesitant search of Internet sources such as Jewish Genealogy Family Finder and the Yizkor Book, and then leads to writing email messages to perfect strangers, not only uncovers living relatives in New Jersey and Poland but also stirs in Ana a desire to travel and personally experience the birthplace and concentration camps where her father’s family lived and died—places such as Auschwitz and Birkenau. When she leaves for Poland, she takes with her a greyish expectation of what Poland and her search would be like; when she returns home, she has found much, much more.

Ana Nuta is a wonderfully articulate woman whose deliberate analyses throughout the film allow us to intimately feel what she is experiencing

throughout her journey. On one occasion, when Ana sees a sign for a ‘Muzeum’ at one of the death camps, she reacts viscerally, taking issue with the difference between people visiting a place like that to commemorate, to remember, and just ordinary tourists seeing the sights. At another location, she takes great pains to emphasize the importance and impact of a monument to the resistance made of stones originally destined to build a monument to the Third Reich. When she is in Plonsk, one cannot help but be moved by her emotional reaction to actually touching the walls of her father’s family home. ‘There is nothing like reality,’ is the mantra that Gerardo, her son, begins to repeat after he, himself, feels the power of the physical evidence of his connection to Plonsk. Gerardo, whose original motivation for traveling to Poland was simply to accompany his mother on the journey, is finally overtaken by emotion when he sees the living proof of his connection to this distant, faraway place in a male relative, Vladimir Nuta (his grandfather’s first cousin), who bears a striking resemblance to his own grandfather. Both he and his mother succumb emotionally to the human bond they establish with these former strangers now family, and with the physical structures that housed and saw the extermination of much of the Nuta family during the Holocaust.

Time, distance, and irony provide the necessary backdrop for appreciating what Ana Nuta experiences as she, the ‘survivor-descendant,’ travels to cities, former ghettos and *shtetls*, death camps, and finally to the place in which she might have been born if not for the Final Solution. Her thoughtful visits to and reflections on her father’s family home and street, and the death camps, make this film both a commemoration and a celebration. Whereas Ana sets out to personally confirm the existence and destruction of her family in Europe, what she discovers is much more—evidence of the enduring nature of human life and love—an extended family of people who, just like her, are searching to recover their past—a past they feel allows them to have a real future. Ana finds that she is not alone and disconnected from her past and family. How many of us might find ourselves in a similar situation if we made the effort to go back into the future? This story should be an inspiration for many of us to try to make our own version of ‘Anna’s Trip.’

In Spanish, with English subtitles, “El viaje de Ana/Anna’s Trip” is an excellent vehicle for introducing the subject of memory and recovery in the Holocaust to undergraduates, graduates and community audiences alike.

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