

# 'Jewish Catholic' is matchmaker extraordinaire

BY ZE'EV PORTNER

Barcelona," Malamud proudly exclaims. She also interpreted for Maradona in interviews with the British press, and became friendly with ex-Tottenham players Ricky Villa and Ossie Ardiles who she would meet socially.

Malamud openly admits that she was a lady of leisure in London. And yet her time there was not always pleasant.

"I had a particularly rough time during the Falklands War," she said. Her letters from Argentina were daubed with swastikas. She was told to go back to Argentina, and her relations with her father-in-law deteriorated.

The Falklands conflict was very confusing for Malamud as all maps in Argentina show the Malvinas (Falklands) to be part of Argentina. She wondered how it was possible that Britain could go to war over something that was an integral part of Argentina.

Indeed, this confusion was further exacerbated over

reports of the war. Her sister who was living in Buenos Aires at the time was being told by the state run media that the Argentinians were winning the war, "while I listened to the BBC who gave me a more accurate position of the situation. My sister at the time of the sinking of the *Belgrano* had no

knowledge that it had gone down."

In the late 1980s, her marriage dissolved and she went back to Argentina where she established an English language school, with a number of teachers working for her. It was in 1994 that she finally reconnected with her Jewish heritage when at the age of 44 she went to synagogue for the first time in Buenos Aires.

"I cried and cried. I felt something very strong, that these are my people," Malamud stated. It was from this moment that she decided she wanted to live in Israel, emigrating in 2001.

"I lived in high society and had rich friends, but one day woke up and realised that my life was empty. People were very superficial. Women talked about plastic surgeons, clothes and gyms. I had to leave. I didn't like Argentina and I wanted a Jewish husband."

The transition was not easy; Malamud had to endure months of Jew-

ish Agency bureaucracy, including repeated visits to the local rabbinate, to prove that she was Jewish.

But, within four years she was married to an American Jew and was running her own matchmaking business in Jerusalem, the World of Jewish singles.

And yet even in Israel she did not totally escape her 'Catholic traditions'.

On one occasion she gave an Orthodox friend in Jerusalem an old wallet that she did not need. When her friend opened it she was shocked to find a letter inside written by Sara, when she was in her late 30's, to the "spirit of Father Christmas", asking for things that she wanted to have in her life like a good husband.

"Even today we laugh about it," says Sara.

Commenting on her role as a matchmaker, Malamud states that "there is no school for matchmakers, but you do need to love people. It is a difficult vocation and people expect too much. I am not David Copperfield".

Some of her clients ask for the most ridiculous things. "I have had someone who only wanted a female who went to Cambridge University and a girl who asked me for a guy without hairs on his chest.

"Can you imagine me asking clients whether they have hairs on their chest?"

But ultimately, Sara believes that God gave her this job; this gift of putting Jewish people together.

Malamud loves her life in Israel. The 'Catholic Jewish matchmaker' says "she has come back to her roots, come back home.

"We are all family in Israel. As the President of Israel once said; 'same history and same destiny'".

And for Sara being a Jewish matchmaker living in Jerusalem is the fulfilment of her destiny.



DESTINY: Malamud

FROM Catholic to Jewish matchmaker, living in Israel, Sara Malamud has undertaken a truly remarkable spiritual journey in her life.

Born to two Jewish parents in Argentina, Sara's parents divorced at a very young age both remarrying devout Catholics. Sara was raised as a Catholic. She attended a strict convent school run by nuns, went to Church on Sundays and would put up the Christmas tree, buy presents and sing Christmas songs.

Sara said: "I knew more about singing Merry Christmas than any Jewish song."

Despite her Catholic upbringing she was reminded of her Jewish roots. There were some girls in her class who were forbidden by their parents to pray with her, and she was teased with the name Russian, which in Argentina is code for Jew. She felt an emotional bond with Jewish people; she would cry as a teenager when watching Holocaust movies.

In her late 20s, in 1978, Malamud ran a successful boutique in Buenos Aires where she met Jeff Powell, a *Daily Mail* sports writer, who was covering the World Cup in Argentina that year. She moved to London for eight years and married Powell in February 1982.

Her wedding was attended by Bobby Moore, captain of the 1966 England World Cup winning team, and his wife Tina as well as George Best, all personal friends of her husband.

Sara's connection with football did not end at her wedding. She helped Terry Venables get his job with Barcelona in 1994. She acted as his personal interpreter in his negotiations with the club, even being sent to Spain on a private plane.

"I was always on the phone to club officials on Terry's behalf. I helped bring Terry Venables to