
PORTRAITS OF SURVIVAL
VOLUME 1: THE HOLOCAUST

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Foreword

The history of the Holocaust is often seen through the lens of trains snaking into Auschwitz, anonymous Jewish people lining up to be shot at open pits and bulldozers filling mass graves. But there is another equally painful and enduring story that also needs to be told: the story of seeking refuge, which you will read about in the first chapter of this book.

The Jews that fled Europe and escaped the gas chambers, although seemingly 'lucky'; did not escape the shadow of the Holocaust. The memory of mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters they left behind, who did not survive, would stay with them and be passed down to their children and their children's children – a memory of the lives lost to senseless genocide. Furthermore, it was extremely hard for those that fled to leave their homes behind and start a new life in far-away South Africa. Would they ever return to their hometown? Would they see their families again? The answer was no, for almost all of them.

I read these stories for the first time in this book – and I have read thousands like them before – but each story was unique and touched me as a human being. They inspired me to be more involved in our world. Every single survivor in this book relied on someone to be their friend. That's all it took.

That's all it takes.

Stephen D. Smith
Executive Director, USC Shoah Foundation

The Holocaust

The 20th century witnessed many genocides. The most documented of these is the Holocaust: the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of the Jews of Europe between 1933 and 1945. The universal lessons of the Holocaust have a special meaning in South Africa with our history of racial discrimination. It encourages us to confront our own painful past of racism, colonialism and apartheid.

How did the Holocaust happen?

Germany's defeat in World War I (WWI) and the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles led to economic collapse, mass unemployment and widespread political violence. In this atmosphere of disillusionment, the Nazi Party was formed in 1920 with Adolf Hitler as its leader.

The 1929 Great Depression exacerbated Germany's economic devastation and increased support for the Nazis. Hitler promised to 'make Germany great again'. Divided and weak, the opposition parties allowed the Nazis to take power.

In January 1933, Hitler became the leader of Germany. Parliament and the constitution were suspended, and Germany became a dictatorship. Opposition parties were banned, while the army, judiciary and most of the population remained silent. Communists, social democrats and dissident clergymen were arrested and sent to newly established concentration camps where many were killed.

One of the Nazis' major goals was to establish a 'master race', which would exclude minority groups perceived as racially inferior.

Minority groups were targeted for persecution, including Roma and Sinti, Jehovah's Witnesses, gay men, those classified as 'mentally or physically disabled' or 'chronically ill', Slavs (especially Poles and Russian Prisoners of War), and black people.

However, the Nazis identified the Jews as the greatest threat to the survival of the German people. Between 1939 and 1945, six million Jews were murdered.

To understand this irrational hatred of Jews, we have to go back 2 000 years in history. Around the world Jews were stereotyped, unjustly blamed for society's problems and excluded from most forms of economic activity. Antisemitism provided fertile ground for the new Nazi ideology. Jews were defined as a separate 'race' and not a religious group. Anyone with at least three Jewish grandparents was regarded as Jewish by blood and could not escape discrimination through conversion to another religion.

In 1933, there were about 500 000 Jews in Germany, less than 1% of a population of 60 million. They had lived there for centuries and were part of German society.

Between 1933 and 1939, over 400 antisemitic laws excluded Jews from German society. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 took away their citizenship. Viewed as enemies of the state, it became increasingly difficult for them to remain in Germany.

On 1 September 1939, World War II (WWII) began with the German invasion of Poland, home to over three million Jews. From 1940, they were forced into ghettos, specifically marked areas for Jews, where thousands died from starvation and disease.

In June 1941, after conquering 20 European countries, the Nazis attacked their former ally, the Soviet Union. Special mobile killing units, *Einsatzgruppen*, followed the advancing German army and shot entire Jewish communities. One and a half million men, women and children were murdered.

In late 1941, the Nazis made a decision to kill every Jew in Europe. They called it the 'Final Solution'. Mass shootings had proven inefficient and took a psychological toll on the executioners, so it was decided to murder the Jews of Europe in specially constructed gas chambers. By mid 1942, six killing centres were constructed in occupied Poland.

The killing process was extremely well organised and thousands of perpetrators, ordinary men and women, played their role as train drivers, guards, soldiers and clerks. For most of them, genocide had become an impersonal process of human destruction.

After 1943, Germany began to lose the war. As the Allied armies closed in, the retreating Nazis evacuated the concentration camps, sending the prisoners on forced 'death marches' deep into Germany. When the camps were liberated, the Allied soldiers found thousands of dead and dying people. By the war's end in May 1945, two thirds of European Jewry were dead. Six million had been murdered, of whom one and a half million were children.

The Holocaust happened because individuals and governments made choices. Their choices began as discrimination and ended in mass murder.

Genocide can happen anywhere, and this terrible history should serve as a warning to us all.

How to use this book

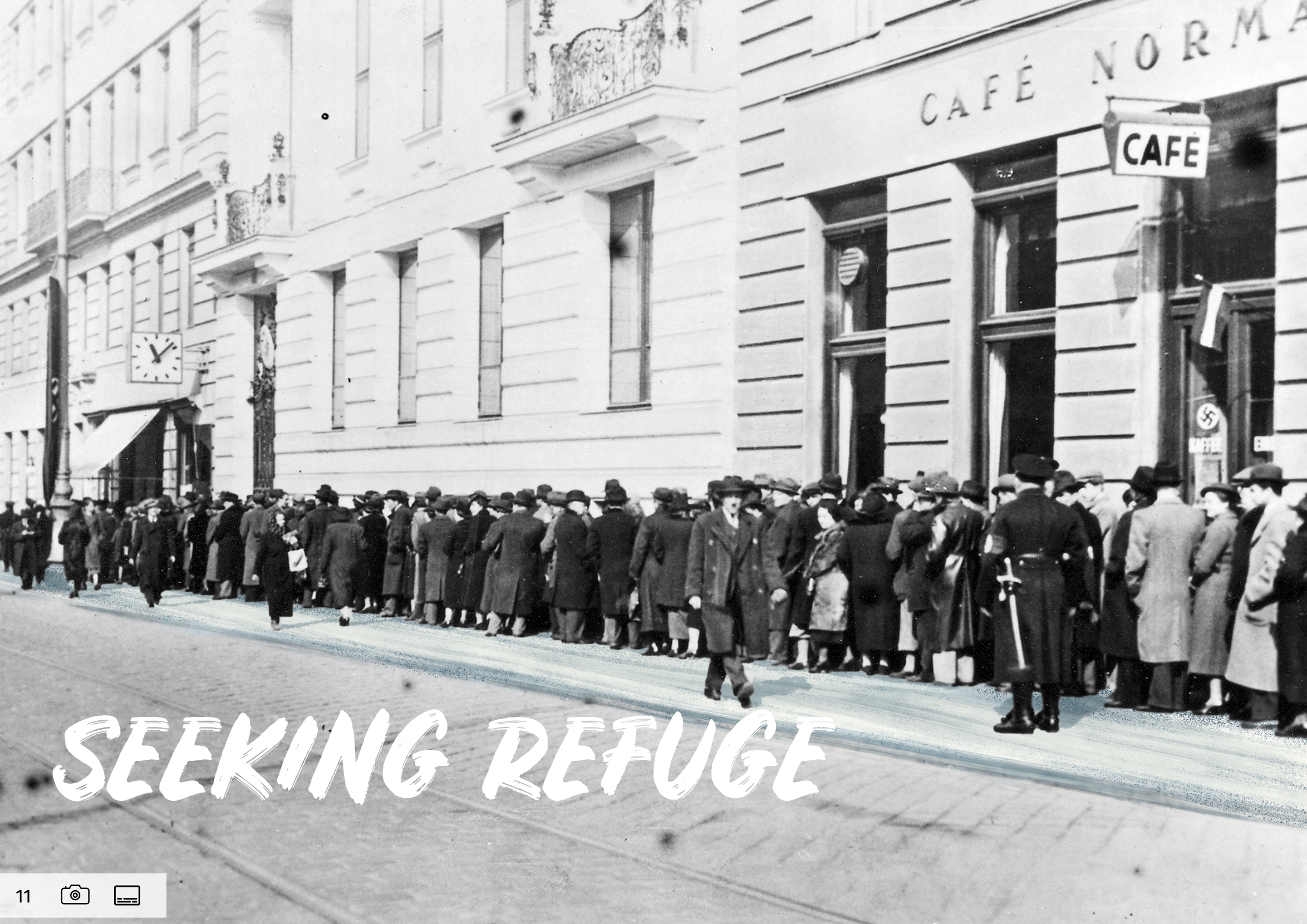
This book showcases and honours the lives of Holocaust survivors who later settled in South Africa. We hope this collection of short vignettes will be valuable as an educational resource for learners and educators. These stories highlight not only the diversity of experiences of genocide, but also many important lessons and insights into the consequences of discrimination, prejudice and othering, as well as the power of activism and speaking up.

 Click on this icon to view the original, untreated image.

Throughout this book, we have made use of a special colour treatment, which intends to bring new life to images rooted in a complex and painful history. Historical photographs, especially those in black and white, can often feel far-removed from life today; as if they have been frozen in time. This treatment brings them into a contemporary space.

We can think of the brushstrokes as a physical representation of the contemporary connecting with the historical. In this sense, the paint interacts with the original image in a way that honours its beginnings but also facilitates the image's re-imagining and reconstruction for the present. Overall, the treatment hopes to transform stories of the past into relevant and hopeful lessons for the future.

 Click on this icon to reveal an image's caption and credit.



SEEKING REFUGE

In response to Nazi persecution, many Jews attempted to leave the German Reich. However, largely because of immigration quota systems implemented around the world after the Great Depression, it was extremely difficult for them to get into other countries.

South Africa's Response

South Africa's Quota Act of 1930 only restricted immigrants from Eastern Europe. Between 1933 and 1936, 3 621 German Jews were still able to enter South Africa. However, this immigration was stopped with the introduction of the 1937 Aliens Act and, during WWII, only 220 Jewish immigrants were able to enter the country.

On 27 October 1936, the SS *Stuttgart* arrived in Cape Town with over 500 German Jews on board. It was met by a nationalists' protest against Jewish immigration to South Africa.

The Kindertransport

The Kindertransport was a rescue effort that brought approximately 10 000 child refugees under the age of 17 from the Reich to Great Britain between 1938 and 1940. Most of the children never saw their parents again as they were murdered during the Holocaust.

The November Pogroms (Kristallnacht)

Between 9 and 10 November 1938, government-led anti-Jewish violence erupted throughout the Reich (Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland). These pogroms were staged as an 'outburst' of national anger over the assassination of a minor German embassy official in Paris.

Over 1 400 synagogues were attacked and many were set on fire. Approximately 30 000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Some 7 500 businesses were destroyed and looted. Jewish cemeteries, hospitals, schools and homes were vandalised. More than 100 Jews were killed. These pogroms became known as Kristallnacht (the Night of Broken Glass).



CLAIRE LAMPEL

BORN 1906, GERMANY

"We could have stayed in Germany. Why are we here?"

Before WWII, Claire Lampel (née Kallmann) worked in the offices of a large newspaper publishing firm in Germany. She had worked there for seven years and became indispensable as the director's 'right hand'. She recalled how ***"living in Germany was absolutely a privilege. It was [the best] culture ... and theatre and everything you could wish for. It was the centre of culture in the whole of Europe and it was wonderful to live there."***

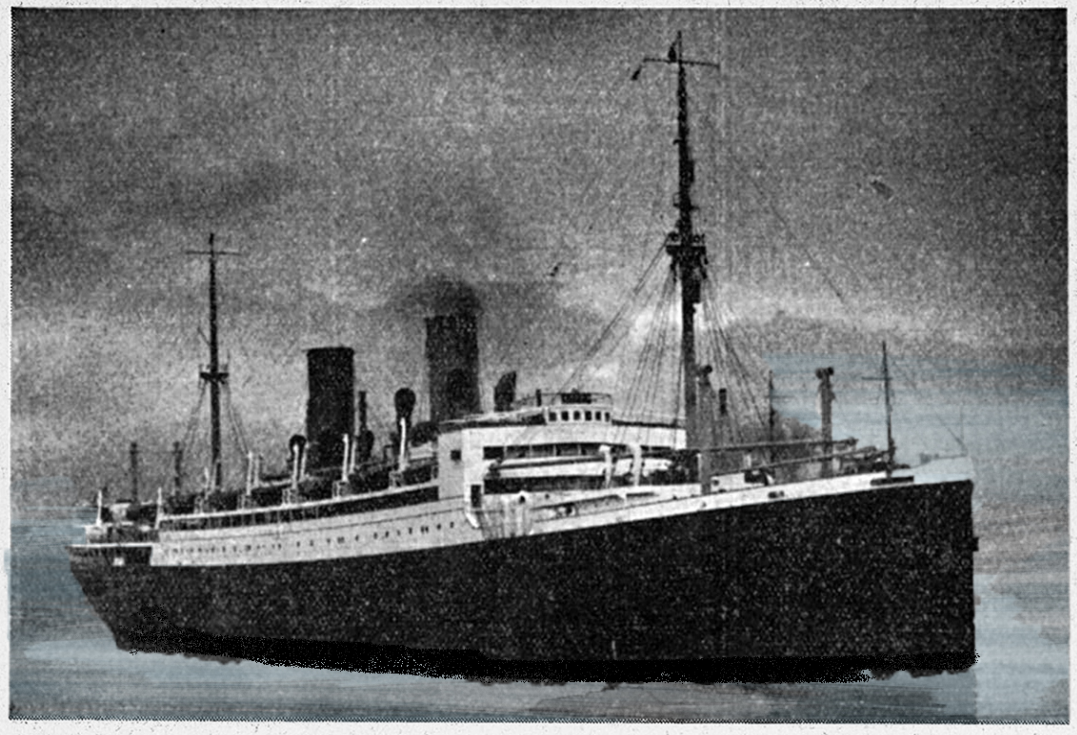
However, as Adolf Hitler gained popularity, the idea began to take hold that Jews were to blame for Germany's economic difficulties. Claire believed that most Germans didn't know much about Jews, and so it was easier to believe the messages they were told by politicians and propaganda posters. Soon after the Nazis came to power and implemented various antisemitic laws, she lost her job at the publishing firm.

Claire then approached the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* (The Reich Association of Jews in Germany), a Jewish umbrella organisation established to coordinate the activities of Jewish political and religious groups, as well as provide legal defence and emigration assistance in the face of growing persecution in Germany. She requested assistance to emigrate to the USA, where her father was living after being interned there during WWI. However, she was told that their strict quota system would make emigration impossible. They suggested she consider emigration to South Africa instead, but Claire declined the offer to this far-off country that she knew nothing about. Luckily her visit to the *Reichsvereinigung* still proved valuable as she was offered a job at their emigration office.



CAPE TIMES, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1936.

THE STUTTGART ARRIVES



The specially chartered German liner Stuttgart arriving with Jewish immigrants, at Cape Town early yesterday morning.

GERMAN JEWS ARRIVE

Stuttgart's Passengers Not Molested

THE intention to hold a demonstration against the landing of 550 German Jewish immigrants from the liner Stuttgart yesterday was thwarted by the weather and police precautions, and they were not molested.

CAPE TIMES, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1936

Jewish Immigration Denounced

Greyshirt Meeting and March to the Docks

AT least 1,000 men and women of all ages, including many Greyshirts, marched down to the Docks about 11 o'clock last night, after hearing a rumour that the liner Stuttgart, carrying 538 German Jewish immigrants, had entered the harbour seven hours before she was expected.

While working at the emigration office, Claire and her colleagues were informed that new legislation was to be implemented in South Africa that would prohibit Jewish immigration. They immediately began organising the charter of one last ship to bring refugees to South Africa before the legislation came into force; the ship was called the SS *Stuttgart*. Claire worked tirelessly to prepare the documentation for over 500 passengers to South Africa in October 1936. She was to accompany them on the ship as an immigration secretary and to ensure their safe arrival.

Claire recalled that overall the passengers had a good voyage and a wonderful 'holiday' on board. However, due to the rushed nature of the trip, their documentation was often disorganised and problematic. Some had even embarked without passports, while others had no financial guarantees to present to the immigration authorities on arrival in Cape Town. Claire worked the whole voyage to try and sort out the paperwork so that their emigration would be successful.

Claire remembered that when the SS *Stuttgart* finally arrived at Table Bay in Cape Town, she had looked at the landscape and seen nothing: no buildings, no infrastructure, just Table Mountain, wide-open spaces and beaches. Chillingly, she also recalled that as they got closer to the dock, a group of Greyshirts were shouting *"Heil Hitler"* and waving flags with the swastika emblazoned on them.

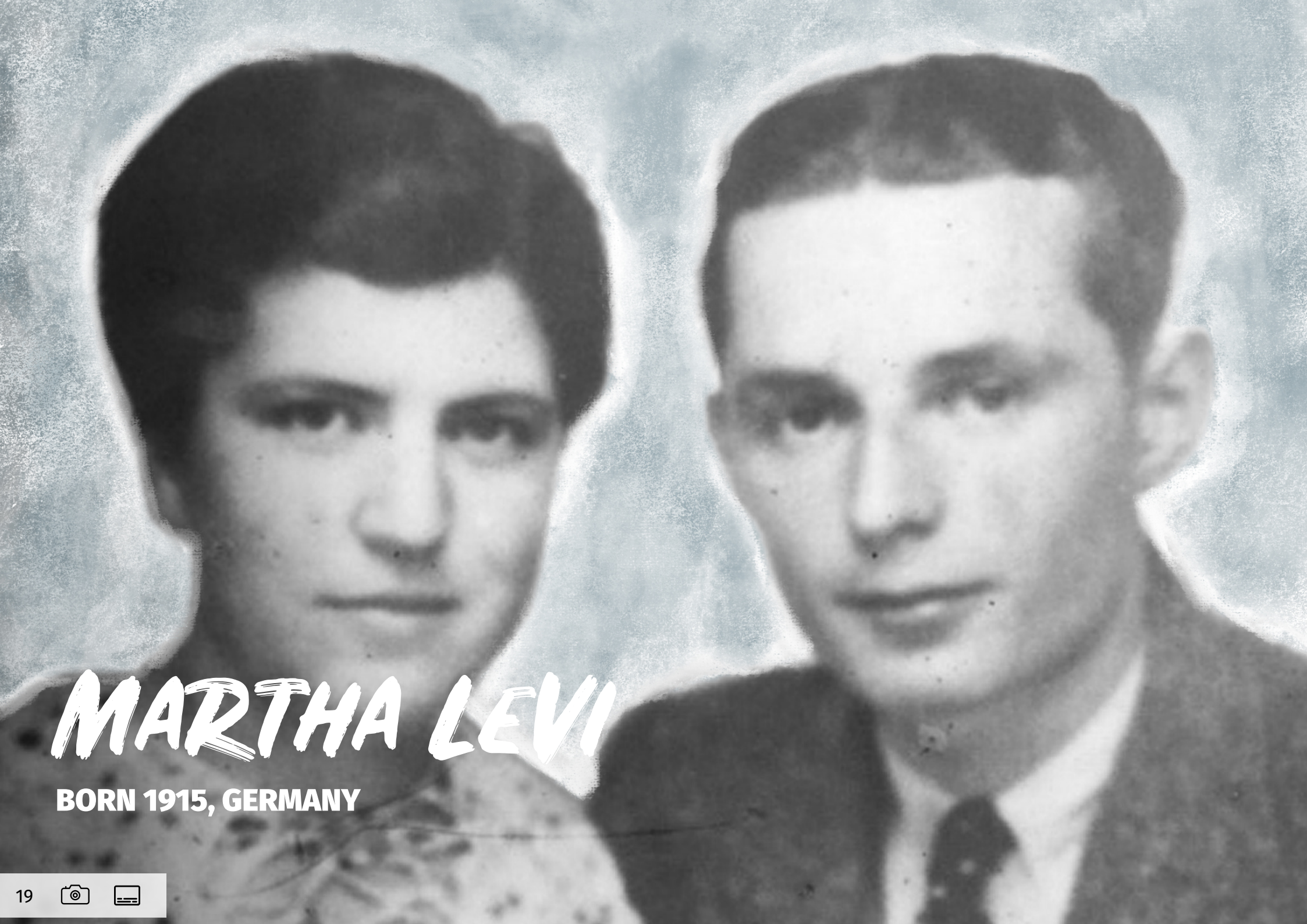
“I said to my future husband, his mother and two sisters who were also on the boat, ‘We could have stayed in Germany – look at that. Why are we here?’ ”

Within weeks of the arrival of the SS *Stuttgart*, the hardline Afrikaner nationalist breakaway party, the Purified National Party, led by D.F. Malan, engaged in vociferous anti-Jewish rhetoric. Meetings opposing Jewish immigration took place across the country. In response to this, the ruling United Party passed the Aliens Act in January 1937. This was designed to restrict Jewish immigration, particularly from Germany, without mentioning Jews by name. Claire was utterly shocked by these developments. She had not known that at the time many South Africans supported Hitler. These new regulations also meant Claire was unable, despite her immense efforts, to find a way to bring her mother and brother over to South Africa. In 1942, they were both deported from Berlin and subsequently murdered in the Holocaust.

In Cape Town, Claire began to take on various ‘odd jobs’ to eke out a living, from childminding to clothing alterations. She later married Willi, one of the passengers on the SS *Stuttgart,* who got a job at a flour factory. Sadly, after only three months of marriage, Willi was diagnosed with tuberculosis. He was admitted to the tuberculosis clinic in Woodstock, but his health continued to decline. He suffered terribly and succumbed to the illness after nine years.

Claire was eventually employed as a secretary at the German Consulate in Cape Town, where she earned a steady income. She chose not to remarry after her husband's passing. She faced many challenges immigrating to South Africa and suffered from poor health for several years until her death in 2005. She will always be remembered for her extraordinary courage and hard work assisting the passengers of the SS *Stuttgart*, and countless other Jews, with their immigration to safety before the war.





MARTHA LEVI

BORN 1915, GERMANY

“Martha, if you return, the reception awaiting you is incarceration in a concentration camp.”

Martha Levi (née Strauss) was born in the Frankfurt area of Germany, where her family had lived for generations. She grew up with her parents, Tilla and Julius, and described her older sister Ruth as her hero. When Martha was 15, Ruth got married and Martha warmly remembered how she then became ***“the queen in residence”.*** Her father was greatly respected by both Jews and Christians in their suburb, where he was a member of the Bergen Town Council. He had earned the Iron Cross in WWI for bravery. Martha’s future husband, Ludwig and his family had also been residents of Bergen for many generations. He had one brother Max, nine years younger than him.

By 1935, as the political situation in Germany worsened, both families realised that they had no choice but to try and leave Germany. In May 1936, Ludwig approached Julius with a request for financial assistance: ***“For one day only, I can buy a ticket to South Africa without needing a sponsor, and without needing more than £10 landing money.”*** Julius bought him the ticket, but Ludwig insisted that he would not leave without Martha. The two were engaged in June and Ludwig left in July. A few months later, Martha was able to obtain passage on the last ship bound for South Africa, the SS *Stuttgart*, and arrived in Cape Town in October 1936.

“Happily engaged, excited to see my fiancé, who had found a sponsor for me, I arrived in Durban. Never had a prospective bride been so torn between all-encompassing happiness and abject sorrow. While I was absolutely delighted to be reunited with my Ludwig ... my terrible homesickness as well as the fear for the well-being of our loved ones left behind in Germany, ate me up alive.”



DURBAN HEBREW
Congregation.

לא תרצח
לא תגאף
לא תגנוב
לא תענה
לא תחמוד

קול חתן וקול כלה

"מזל טוב"

קול ששון וקול שמחה

אנכי ה׳
לא יהיה
לא תשא
זכור את
כבד את

On the First day of the week, the 15th day of the month Kislev, in the year 5697 A.M., corresponding to Sunday, the 29th of Nov., 1936 the holy Covenant of Marriage was entered into, between the Bridegroom— Ludwig Levi Bachelor of Durban Natal and his Bride— Marta Friederike Strauss Spinster of Durban Natal

The said Bridegroom made the following declaration to his Bride:

"Be thou my wife according to the Law of Moses and of Israel. I faithfully promise that I will be a true husband unto thee, I will honour and cherish thee; I will work for thee; I will protect and support thee, and will provide all that is necessary for thy due sustenance, even as it beseemeth a Jewish husband to do. I also take upon myself all such further obligations for thy maintenance, as are prescribed by our religious statute."

And the said Bride has plighted her troth unto him, in affection and with sincerity, and has thus taken upon herself the fulfilment of all the duties incumbent upon a Jewish wife.

This Covenant of Marriage was duly executed and witnessed this day according to the usage of Israel, and the laws of the State.

Nathan Menachemson
Marriage Officer,
Durban Hebrew Congregation.

Ludwig Levi *Bridegroom.*

Marta Friederike Strauss *Bride.*

Witnesses: David Hendler
A.W. Stock

בשבת חמשה עשר יום לחדש כסלו
שנת חמשת אלפים ושש מאות תשעים ושבע לבריאת עולם
למנין שאנו מנין כאן בקק דדורבן באפריקא הדרומית
איך ר׳ יהודה מ׳ בר ר׳ אליעזר הלוי מ׳ אמר לה
להדא בתולתא מרת רבקה מארטא בת ר׳ יצחק ישראל מ׳
הוי לי לאנתו כדת משה וישראל ואנא אפלח ואוקיר ואיזון
ואפרנס יתיכי ליכי כהלכות גוברין יהודאין דפלחין ומוקרין
וזנין ומפרנסין לנשיהון בקושטא ויהבנא ליכי מוהר בתולייכי
כסף זוזי מאתן דחזי ליכי מצאוריתא ומזוניכי וכסותיכי
וסיפוקיכי ומיעל לותיכי כאורח כל ארעא. וצביאת מרת
רבקה מארטא תי בתולתא דא והות ליה לאנתו.
ודין נדוניא דהנעלת ליה מבי אבוה בין בכסף בין בזהב
בין בתכשיטין במאני דלבושא בשימושי דירה ובשימושי
דערסא מאה זקוקים כסף צרוף וצבי ר׳ יהודה הלוי מ׳ חתן דנן
והוסיף לה מן דיליה עוד מאה זקוקים כסף צרוף אחרים
כנגדן סך הכל מאתים זקוקים כסף צרוף. וכך אמר
ר׳ יהודה הלוי מ׳ חתן דנן אחריות שטר כתובתא
דא נדוניא דין ותוספתא דא קבלית עלי ועל ירתי בתראי
להתפרע מכל שפר ארג נכסין וקנינין דאית לי תחות כל שמיא
דקנאי ודעתיד אנא למקני נכסין דאית להון אחריות ודלית
להון אחריות כלהון יהון אחראין וערבאין לפרוע מנהון שטר
כתובתא דא נדוניא דן ותוספתא דא ואפילו מן גלימא דעל
כתפאי בחיי ובמותי מן יומא דנן ולעלם. ואחריות וחומר
שטר כתובתא דא נדוניא דן ותוספתא דא קבל עליו
ר׳ יהודה הלוי מ׳ חתן דנן כחומר כל שטרי כתובות
ותוספתות דנהגין בבנות ישראל העשויין כתקון חז״ל דלא
כאסמכתא ודלא כטופסי דשטרי וקנינא מן ר׳ יהודה הלוי
בר ר׳ אליעזר הלוי מ׳ חתן דנן למרת רבקה מארטא תי בת
ר׳ יצחק ישראל מ׳ בתולתא דא ככל מה דכתב ומפורש לעיל
במנא דכשר למקניא ביד **הכל שריר וקים**

נאום [illegible]
ונאום [illegible]

יברכך
יי
וישמרך
אהבה

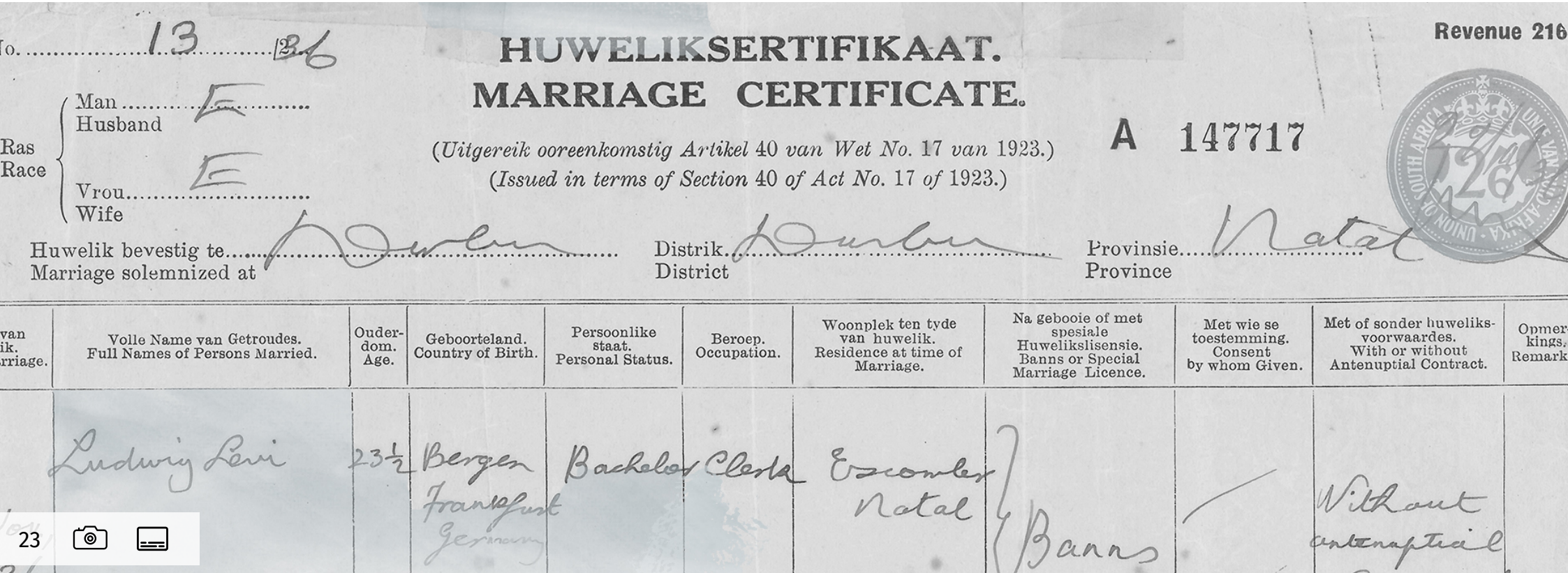
יאר יי
פניו
אליך ויחנך
שלום

ישא יי
פניו אליך
וישם לך שלום

Martha and Ludwig were married in Durban on 29 November 1936 at the home of Mr and Mrs Morrison, Ludwig's boss and Martha's sponsors. ***"They gave us a lovely wedding with 75 guests. The only two people I knew were Ludwig and his best friend, Siegfried Hess. While we missed our parents and family dreadfully, we were young and in love and the promise of our lives together beckoned."***

Martha wrote numerous letters to her parents lamenting how homesick she was, until she received a letter from her father explaining in no uncertain terms, ***"Martha if you return, the reception awaiting you is incarceration in a concentration camp."***

Martha and Ludwig both worked hard to establish a new life. As time passed, they were kept informed by family of the growing difficulty for Jews in Germany. On Kristallnacht, Martha's father and brother-in-law, as well as Ludwig's father and brother, were arrested and sent to the Dachau concentration camp.



No. 13 /36

Revenue 216

HUWELIKSERTIFIKAAT.
MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE.

(*Uitgereik ooreenkomstig Artikel* 40 *van Wet No.* 17 *van* 1923.)
(*Issued in terms of Section* 40 *of Act No.* 17 *of* 1923.)

A 147717

Ras / Race — Man / Husband: E — Vrou / Wife: E

Huwelik bevestig te / Marriage solemnized at: Durban — Distrik / District: Durban — Provinsie / Province: Natal

van ik. rriage.	Volle Name van Getroudes. Full Names of Persons Married.	Ouderdom. Age.	Geboorteland. Country of Birth.	Persoonlike staat. Personal Status.	Beroep. Occupation.	Woonplek ten tyde van huwelik. Residence at time of Marriage.	Na gebooie of met spesiale Huwelikslisensie. Banns or Special Marriage Licence.	Met wie se toestemming. Consent by whom Given.	Met of sonder huweliks-voorwaardes. With or without Antenuptial Contract.	Opmer kings. Remark
	Ludwig Levi	23½	Bergen Frankfurt Germany	Bachelor	Clerk	Escombe Natal	Banns		Without antenuptial	

After the men were released from Dachau, Ludwig's brother Max was sent to England on the Kinder-transport. Although Ludwig and Martha didn't earn much money, they were happy to struggle in order to help their families. They sent parcels to Max with clothes and pocket money.

At the end of October 1940, they received a letter from the Red Cross informing them that Martha's family had been deported to the Gurs camp in France. They immediately contacted the French embassy in Pretoria and were allowed to send £7,80 a month to support them. However, by the end of 1941, Martha lost contact with her family. In mid-1942 they were advised by the Red Cross that Ludwig's parents had been sent to 'parts unknown'.

France was liberated in August 1944 and Martha and Ludwig were overjoyed to hear that Martha's mother, as well as her sister Ruth, her husband Gustel and their two daughters had survived. Sadly, however, her father, Julius, had been murdered at the Majdanek concentration camp, and Ludwig's parents, along with most of the people they had known from their hometown, had been *'im Osten verschollen'* – they had been murdered in the East.

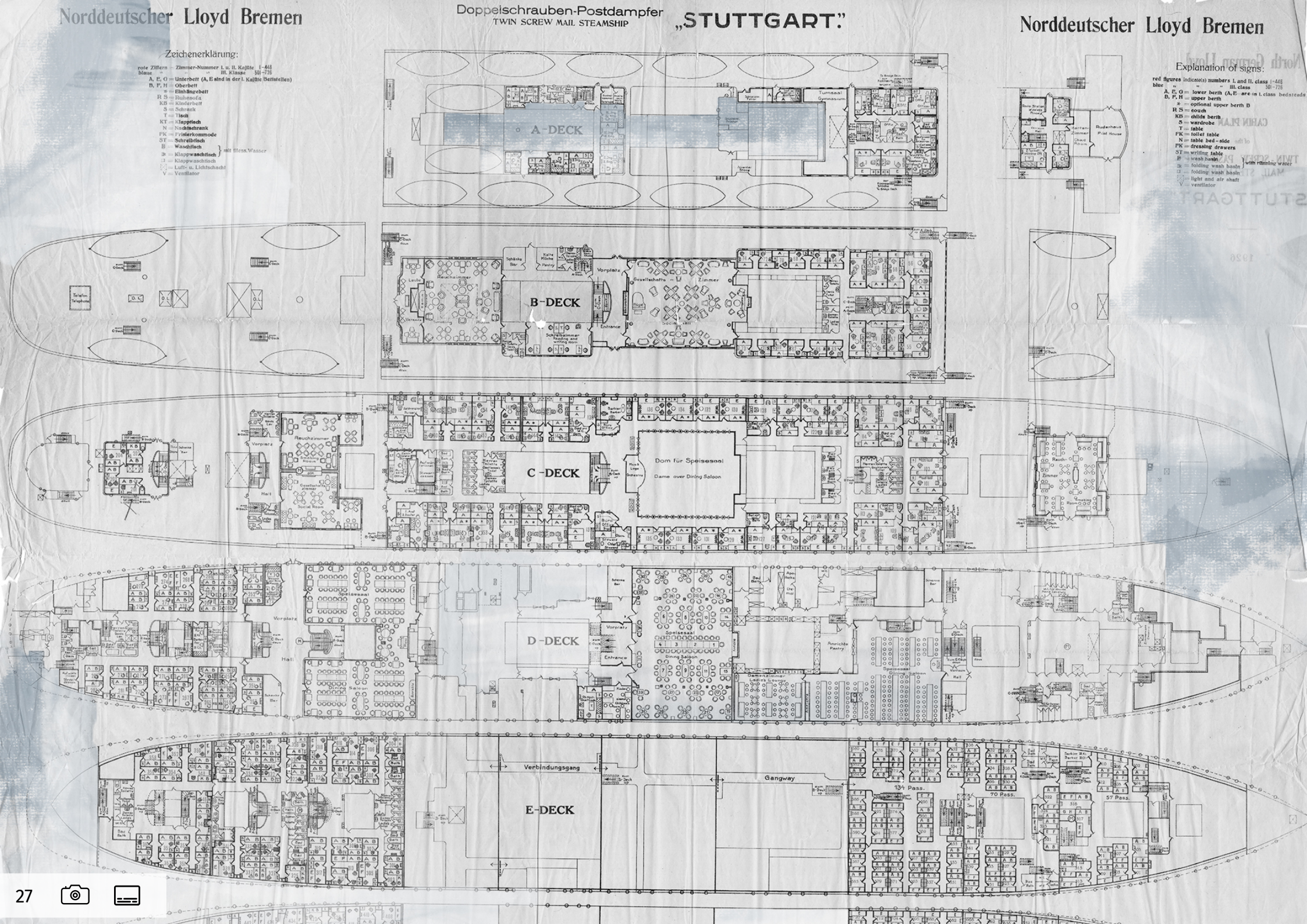
"There were no words to describe our pain."





Ruth, Gustel and their girls emigrated to Chicago in 1947, while Tilla moved to Durban to be with Martha and Ludwig. The Levi's bought a small store in Durban and grew a successful business. Sadly, Martha never saw her sister again as Ruth died at the age of 43. Her daughters, Renee and Ellen, became the children Martha and Ludwig never had. Martha explained, ***"Knowing that we have each other lends meaning to our lives."***

Martha died in Durban at the age of 103. When reflecting on her life she said, ***"When people speak about Holocaust survivors, one thinks of prisoners in Auschwitz, Majdanek and so forth, not an old lady aging peacefully in Beth Shalom. As a matter of fact, until recently, I never thought of myself as a Holocaust survivor. I finally realised that even if I did not have to live through the hell that was Auschwitz, I am a survivor of the Holocaust. Being torn from one's home, forced to leave one's country, separated from one's loved ones whilst one's heart remained with them in the abyss that was Germany, caused a very deep wound. A wound that will never heal. A wound that never stopped aching, not even during my happiest hours."***


Norddeutscher Lloyd Bremen
Doppelschrauben-Postdampfer
TWIN SCREW MAIL STEAMSHIP
„STUTTGART."
Norddeutscher Lloyd Bremen
Zeichenerklärung:
rote Ziffern = Zimmer-Nummer I. u. II. Kajüte 1-448
blaue " " " III. Klasse 501-726
A, E, G = Unterbett (A, E sind in der I. Kajüte Bettstellen)
B, F, H = Oberbett
* = Einhängebett
R S = Ruhesofa
KB = Kinderbett
S = Schrank
T = Tisch
KT = Klapptisch
N = Nachtschrank
FK = Frisierkommode
ST = Schreibtisch
B = Waschtisch
* = Klappwaschtisch
mit fliess. Wasser
□ = Klappwaschtisch
Luft- u. Lichtschacht
V = Ventilator
Explanation of signs:
red figures indicate(s) numbers I. and II. class 1-448
blue " " " III. class 501-726
A, E, G = lower berth (A, E are in I. class bedsteads)
B, F, H = upper berth
* = optional upper berth B
R S = couch
KB = childs berth
S = wardrobe
T = table
FK = toilet table
N = table bed-side
FK = dressing drawers
ST = writing table
B = wash basin
* = folding wash basin
with running water
□ = folding wash basin
light and air shaft
V = ventilator
A-DECK
B-DECK
C-DECK
D-DECK
E-DECK
Dom für Speisesaal
Dame over Dining Saloon
Verbindungsgang
Gangway
134 Pass.
70 Pass.
57 Pass.



HELGA UCKO

BORN 1916, GERMANY

“I had to have a man who was prepared to marry me when I arrived in South Africa.”

Helga Helene Ucko (née Altmann) was born to Alfred and Margarete in Breslau, Schlesin (Silesia), in what was then Germany. Helga was the youngest of four children. She had two brothers, Heinz and Hans, and a sister, Ursula. Helga’s father was a shoe salesman who travelled during the day, while her mother cared for the family. Helga described a fairly big Jewish community in Breslau. Her family belonged to the Breslau United Hebrew Congregation, and although they were not particularly religious, they did observe the Jewish high holy days.

Helga recalled ***“a happy youth”*** and described herself as a small and quiet child. Her sister, Ursula, would take her out for walks and complained that too many people would stare at Helga’s beautiful blonde curls.



Helga attended the local school in Breslau, which had a mix of learners from different religious backgrounds. She did not recall experiencing any antisemitism at school. She was passionate about physical education and belonged to the local gymnastics club. She displayed talent, so much so, that when one of the physical education teachers was ill, she was called to run the class.

After her schooling, Helga attended a commercial college where she trained in shorthand and typing. One afternoon while walking with friends, she recalled two men walking behind them, ***"I had the feeling they were following us".*** When they reached their destination, the men, who were Nazis out of uniform, came to the door wanting to know who they were and to see their birth certificates. The next day Helga and her friends were required to report to the police station with their documents and were fortunately sent home without any consequences.



For Helga, Kristallnacht symbolised the end of her life in Germany. On 10 November 1938, she was on her way to work at a Jewish-owned clothing business, Kunert & Co, when she saw devastation in the streets. ***"We had no idea what was going on during the night. And when I went to work, I noticed that things must be wrong. Round the corner from us was a Jewish bottle store, and all the bottles were broken and the contents flowing in the gutters. As I looked alongside, I saw the synagogue up in flames."***

When Helga arrived at her workplace, she realised that the Nazis had not yet been there. She threw a stone at the glass signboard, smashing it. She went inside and threw the papers around the office. She opened the safe and removed its contents. The Nazis did not enter the business because of her efforts to make it seem that someone had already destroyed it. Reflecting on that day, Helga was extremely proud to have protected her employer's business. She asked a co-worker to go to her parents' home to warn them not to leave the house, and then made her way to her employer's home with the contents of the safe.

Later that day Helga arrived home to discover that her father had been arrested. ***"It was impossible to console my mother. Who would be next? Would my brother be taken away as well? Ten days later my father returned, a broken man who had become ten years older in ten days."***



Ursula had left Germany in 1935 to settle in South Africa. After Kristallnacht, Helga began to make arrangements to follow her sister, but by that time the ***"laws in South Africa had changed and I had to have a man who was prepared to marry me when I arrived in South Africa."*** Ursula managed to arrange with her flatmate, fellow refugee, Denise Ucko, that her brother Erasmus would marry Helga when she arrived.

Erasmus, who had been in South Africa for a few years, signed all the necessary paperwork stating that he and Helga were engaged to be married. The two corresponded in the time before she was set to travel. Helga left Germany with no valuables and sailed to South Africa. Shortly after arriving, she married Erasmus in Krugersdorp, not knowing that the marriage would blossom into ***"a happy union of forty years".*** The couple were from the same region of Germany, although they had never known each other's families.

Helga helped her parents to join them in South Africa a few months before the war started. Her brother, Hans, settled in Argentina, while her second brother, Heinz, and his one-year-old son were picked up by the Nazis and murdered during the Holocaust.

Helga created a new life in South Africa. She and Erasmus had two children, Peter and Joan. Helga was involved in various outreach projects throughout her life. She worked for the Red Cross West Rand for ten years before the family relocated to Durban. She was well known as the wonderful bar mitzvah teacher at the Reform Congregation in Durban. She was also a founding member of the Sisterhood, the women's charitable arm of the congregation. When reflecting on her mother's life, Joan said, ***"She gave me an incredible foundation for life, and a wonderful moral and ethical compass to live by."***





GERDE GOEDECKE

BORN 1907, GERMANY

“The countries where we wanted to go were difficult to go to. They didn’t want Jews.”

Gerde Goedecke (née Hirchfeld) was born in Hirschberg, Germany. Her father was a businessman and owned a general store. He had served in the German army in WWI. Gerde’s mother, Adele, was a housewife who cared for Gerde and her older brother, Heinz.

There were not many Jews living in Hirschberg but Gerde did not remember experiencing any antisemitism. On weekends, her family would visit the Sudetenland mountains, a short trip from their home. In winter the family enjoyed skiing: ***“We went nearly every weekend to the mountains; we were all fond of mountains.”*** Gerde attended the local school in the town. She and Heinz had mostly Christian friends.

With the rise of Nazism in Germany, Gerde, like many young Jewish people, emigrated to find more opportunities. ***“You had to leave … the countries where we wanted to go were difficult to go to. They didn’t want Jews.”***



Gerde managed to leave Germany in 1935 and join Heinz in Ibiza, Spain. As there were no employment opportunities for refugees, he had started farming rabbits. It was there that Gerde met her future husband, a Christian man named Oskar. However, the German Embassy in Spain refused to marry them because of the Nuremberg Laws prohibiting relationships between Jews and Christians.

The couple travelled from Ibiza to Majorca, where they planted vegetables. They earned very little but managed to make ends meet. In 1936, as a result of the Spanish Civil War, they were evacuated by British war ships first to Barcelona, and then to Gibraltar, on their way to Britain. However, they did not have visas to enter Britain and were given 24 hours to leave. Gerde recalled how fortunate they were at this point, as an uncle arranged for them to join his family in Amsterdam.

When Gerde arrived in Amsterdam she was pregnant. Her relatives lived in Merwedeplein, a suburb of Amsterdam that was home to many German Jews seeking refuge. When she had her baby, she remembered fondly that Heinz came to visit her on his way to Argentina. Gerde and her brother found refuge on different continents and never managed to meet again.



At this time, Gerde lived nearby to the Frank family. Anne, their younger daughter, would often come to Gerde's home to play with the baby. Gerde reminisced with laughter that Anne ***"came and disturbed the baby a lot so that I was forced to throw her out, because I was pleased when my baby slept."*** Anne Frank subsequently became famous for the diary she wrote while in hiding.

As war loomed over the Netherlands, Gerde's uncle advised her to leave Europe as soon as she could. She made plans to leave for South Africa, with financial assistance from her parents who were still in Hirschberg. Gerde and her husband were also lent money by The Society of Friends (or Quakers), a religious movement that helped at least 22 000 individuals and families before, during and after WWII. In 1938, the couple managed to reach South Africa.

In November 1938, following Kristallnacht, Gerde's father was interned in a concentration camp. After he was released, Gerde's uncle managed to get her parents to Amsterdam. She tried to help them enter South Africa with no success. During the war, in the short letters that they were able to send through the Red Cross, Gerde's mother wrote, ***"We live very crowded".*** From this, Gerde assumed they had been transported at some stage to a ghetto. She subsequently learnt that her parents were murdered at the Treblinka killing centre in June 1943.

Gerde described how not long after arriving in South Africa she got divorced, and had to make ends meet as a childminder and later by travelling to people's homes to teach aerobics classes. Gerde felt that it was important for her children and grandchildren to understand what had happened to their family in the Holocaust; that an awareness of the dangers of racism and prejudice could prevent events like these in the future.





MELITTA & BORIS NEMIROVSKI

BORN 1925 AND 1922, YUGOSLAVIA

“I can’t stay here, because I knew what was happening in Germany and all the places Germany invaded.”

Boris Nemirovski was born in Yugoslavia to Max and Terka. He and his older brother, Fedor, were raised in a Zionist home and their mother, Terka, was the secretary of the Women’s International Zionist Organization (WIZO) in Zagreb. When Boris finished school, he interned at his friend’s paper factory near the Austrian border. However, as the situation on the border intensified during WWII, Boris realised that the invasion of Yugoslavia by German forces was imminent and returned to his parents in Zagreb.



Boris's sweetheart, Melitta Gross, lived on the same street as him in Zagreb. Melitta grew up with her mother Elizabeth (Erjie), younger brother Alexander (Sasha), and maternal grandmother Sidonia, who was the matriarch of the family. Her father, Leon, had died when she was four years old and so her mother, who was the manageress of a shoe shop, provided financially for the family. As Erjie was a single parent, Melitta's relationship with her mother was very special. Melitta described her childhood as ***"carefree and very happy".*** She attended the local high school and had many friends.

In April 1941, Germany invaded Yugoslavia and the antisemitic laws that had been implemented in Germany over many years, arrived in Yugoslavia 'overnight'. Boris recalled, ***"When I saw this, I told my parents I can't stay here, because I knew what was happening in Germany and all the places Germany invaded."*** Boris decided to leave the country and went to Melitta's home to say goodbye. However, his first attempt to escape Yugoslavia, with a cousin who worked at the US embassy, failed. In desperation he and his friend decided to drive to the mountains hoping to join the Yugoslav resistance. The journey was treacherous and they were stopped by Croatian fascists and locked up for the night. Miraculously during the trip, Boris had re-established contact with Fedor, who managed to help him escape. Together the brothers set off on foot towards the Dalmatian Coast through deserted Serb villages and eventually arrived in the coastal town of Split, which had been annexed by Italy. Soon after arriving, Boris travelled to the island of Korčula and settled in the town of Vela Luka.



With the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia, Melitta was turned away from her school and she recalled that, ***"nobody looked into my eyes".*** Her mother made the painful decision to send Sasha to a convent for his protection. After Boris left, Melitta's family continued to keep in touch with Boris's parents, who after some time announced that they were going to join their sons in Korčula. They had found a railway conductor who would take them over the border to the Italian annexed island and they discussed with Erjie the idea of Melitta joining them.

Erjie sold most of her possessions in order to send Melitta to safety with the Nemirovski family. ***"It was very traumatic for me to leave my mother. I was never away from home before and not knowing where I am going and with whom I am going."*** Melitta and her mother went to the station and Melitta recalled a traumatic goodbye. ***"My mother was crying and waving her handkerchief and so was I, until I couldn't see her anymore."***



On the train Melitta was asked by young Italian officials to present her documents. They told her that the papers were invalid because they were missing signatures and stamps, and that she would be sent back to Zagreb. ***"I was very young and very naïve, and rather pretty, and spoke a little Italian so I started flirting with them to pull the time a little bit."*** She successfully managed to distract the officials until the train crossed the border and she was free. She met Max and Terka at the station in Split and together they made their way to Korčula.

There were around 800 Jewish refugees living in Korčula. Boris worked cutting wood and fishing. The couple remembered being extremely hungry: ***"Boris and I went into the vineyards and looked for dried grapes after they had been picked. We went into attics of peasants, when they didn't look, we stole ... when you're hungry you do a lot of things."***

After some time, the Nazis demanded that the Italians deport all of the young Jewish men to Germany. A local official told Boris and Melitta, ***"You know we Italians are very romantic, I don't think we will touch the married couples."*** They decided to get married in the hopes that this would ensure their safety. On 18 April 1943, in Vela Luka, when Boris was 21 and Melitta, just 18 years old, the couple was married. Boris borrowed a suit. ***"The most decent piece of wardrobe I had was my school uniform. It was a dark blue dress with a white collar, and that was my wedding dress!"*** recalled Melitta.

Meanwhile in Zagreb, Erjie was picked up by the Nazis and taken to the train station to await deportation. While there, she managed to buy a box of cigarettes from a young boy on which she wrote down what was happening to her. She asked him to take the box to her special Christian friend Bella, who was also hiding her mother, Sidonia. Melitta could find no further details about the fate of her mother.

Soon after, Bella wrote a letter to Max and Terka explaining how the Nazis had come looking for Sidonia. Before taking her away, she had asked if she could get some things from her room. ***"She went into the room and she didn't come out. They broke in and she was dead on her bed."*** Bella told Melitta later that she had had cyanide with her.



In 1943 when Italy capitulated, Boris and Melitta had been in Korčula for two years. With the threat of a German invasion, the Jews living in Vela Luka made plans to rent a boat and travel to the north of Italy. The couple initially planned to go with them but then decided to find Boris's parents who at that time were on the other side of the island. Boris and Melitta had to walk the distance, which took three days. Melitta had worn out her only pair of shoes, ***"most of the way I walked barefoot and my feet became sore and wounded."*** Finally the couple reached their destination where there was chaos in the harbour. ***"There was a huge ship waiting, people running to and fro with suitcases"***, Melitta recalled. In the chaos they managed to find Max and Terka and were miraculously able to join them on their voyage.

Reflecting back, Melitta and Boris described how if they had pursued their original plan to board the ship in Vela Luka, they would have been transported to the north of Italy where the passengers, including their friends, were immediately deported to concentration camps. If they had arrived a few hours later in their search to find Max and Terka, they would have missed the opportunity to leave at all, ***"God knows what would have happened to us".***

Their ship travelled to Bari, Italy where they were first housed in a recreational camp and the couple found work with the British army. In 1944, the family immigrated to Israel with the help of Terka's WIZO contacts. Eventually, Melitta's brother Sasha managed to join them. Soon after this their son Dani was born and after some years, Melitta and Boris immigrated to South Africa.



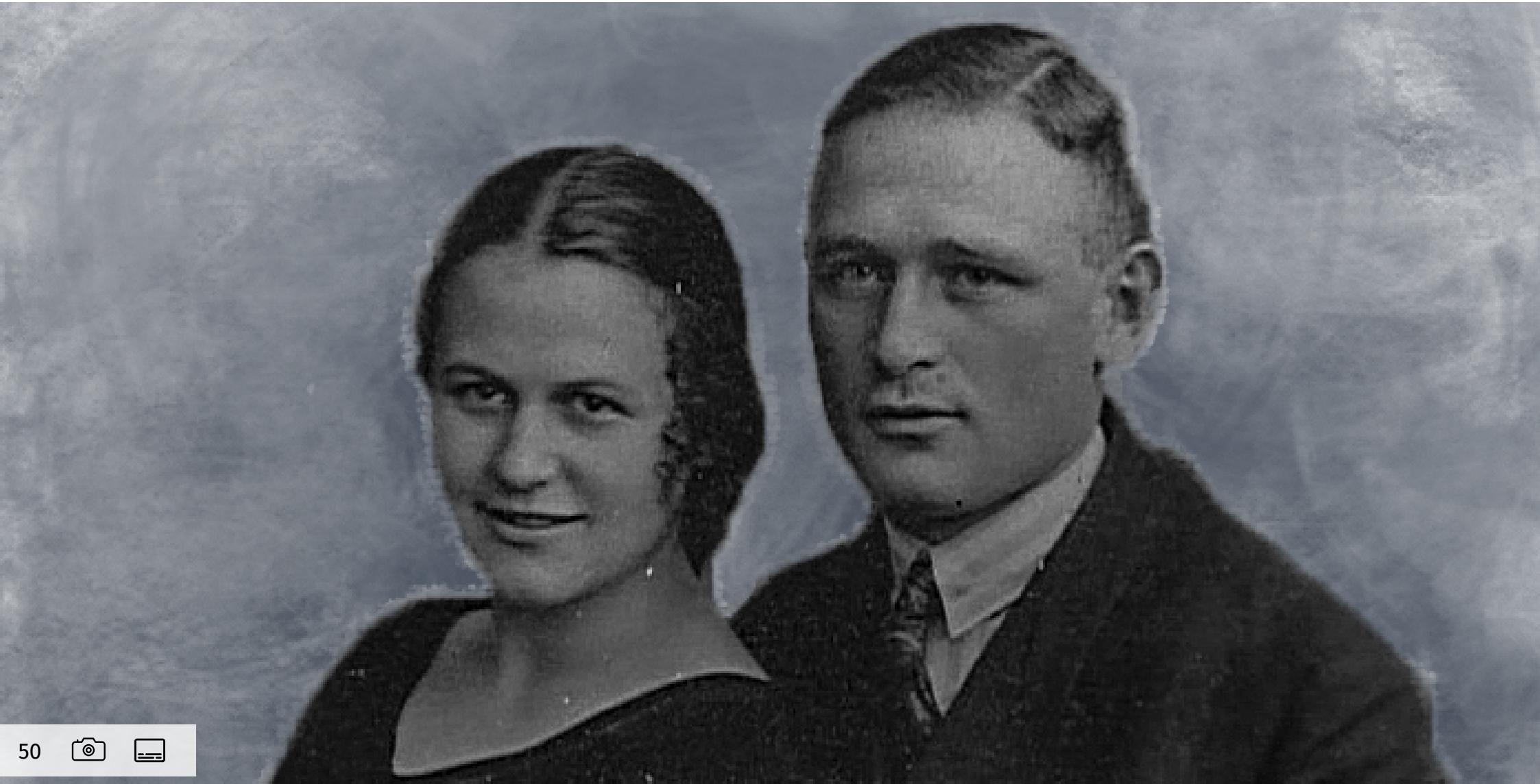
“Wave goodbye to your father!”

Susan Clapper (née Eichmann) was born in Bad Salzuflen, Germany. Her father, Hans, a cattle farmer, was a quiet reserved man who was extremely well-respected. Her mother, Gertrude, a housewife, was a vivacious, kind woman and Susan’s childhood idol. The family was Orthodox and there was a small Jewish community in Bad Salzuflen, with a synagogue.

Susan attended the local primary school. She did not remember any antisemitism among her classmates, aside from one instance where another child threw a stone at her saying, ***“You Jews, you killed Jesus”.*** One day a little girl came to sit next to her, and Susan said to her, ***“Annalise, you know I am Jewish and if you don’t want to sit by me, it’s alright”.*** The next day Annalise told her that she had spoken to her father and he had said that if Susan was anything like her father, then ***“it is an honour for me to sit next to you”.***

With the rise of Nazism in Germany, Susan remembered her grandfather being thrown out of the mattress company that he co-owned. Her father’s farm was taken by the Nazis and he was forced to work in a factory. She also remembered her father being arrested on Kristallnacht. Police, who did not know the local people, were brought in from other areas to make the arrests. When her father was arrested, a local policeman cried. Her father was sent to a concentration camp for ten weeks and came home in the middle of the night. She said he was ***“a different man after that”.***

Susan explained how her parents ***"managed to get me on to the Kindertransport".*** They had found a single woman in England, who according to British law was not allowed to adopt a British child. After seeing a photograph of Susan, the woman agreed to take her in as she was not too young or old and ***"just fitted her requirements".*** Susan's journey began at the train station. Her father handed her to a man on the train in charge of the children who told her to ***"wave goodbye to your father".*** It was in that moment that she realised the full implications of what was happening.




Hans Eichmann

Susan travelled by train to the Netherlands, where she remembered the Dutch people bringing them food and sweets. She then boarded a boat to England. Arriving in London, she was taken by her guardian to see the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. She was thrilled to see a sign in the park opposite the palace that read ‘keep off the grass’. This brought her great relief as she was used to seeing signs in German parks that read ‘Jews not allowed’.

Susan described her guardian as a strict but kind woman who saved her life. She had bought an English-to-German dictionary so that she and Susan could communicate and enrolled her at the local grammar school.

Susan left school when she was about 15 years old. She worked in an office and attended night school. In 1941, she received a letter from her grandmother informing her that her mother had died at the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Susan tried to trace her father’s whereabouts at the end of the war, but it would only be in the 1990s that she would learn his fate; he had been murdered in Riga, Latvia.

Absender: Hans Eichmann
Schötmar (Lippe)
Wohnort, auch Zustell- oder Leitpostamt
Schlageterstr. 18. Deutschland.
Straße, Hausnummer, Gebäudeteil, Stockwerk od. Postschließfachnummer

Ja, mein Liebling mein Haar geht immer noch aus. Wenn wir erst auch in England sind, hört es von selbst auf. Bestellt Du auch immer die Grüße für Miss Hayes von uns. Also grüß die l. Miss Hilda vielmals von uns. Von Vati, der noch in Salzuflen arbeitet, soll ich Dich vielmals grüßen. Sei auch Du mein kleines goldiges Mädchen vielmals gegrüßt u. geküsst von Deiner Mutti

Postkarte mit Antwortkarte
Carte postale avec réponse payée



SCHÖTMAR 30.8.39.-12 Deutsches Reich d

Susi Eichmann

c/o Miss Hilda Hayes
75 Garrat Street
Birmingham

West Bromwiel Staff
Straße, Hausnummer, Gebäudeteil, Stockwerk oder Postschließfachnummer
England.

53



After the war, Susan's guardian married, and Susan became a naturalised British citizen as a result of her status as a war victim. In 1947 she left England to join her maternal aunt who had survived and settled in Salisbury, Rhodesia (today Harare, Zimbabwe). There she met Max, her future husband. After three weeks of courting they were engaged and within six months of their first meeting, they were married. The couple moved to Durban in 1952 where Max worked as a Hebrew teacher. By 1957, the couple had three children and sadly, in 1960, Max passed away.

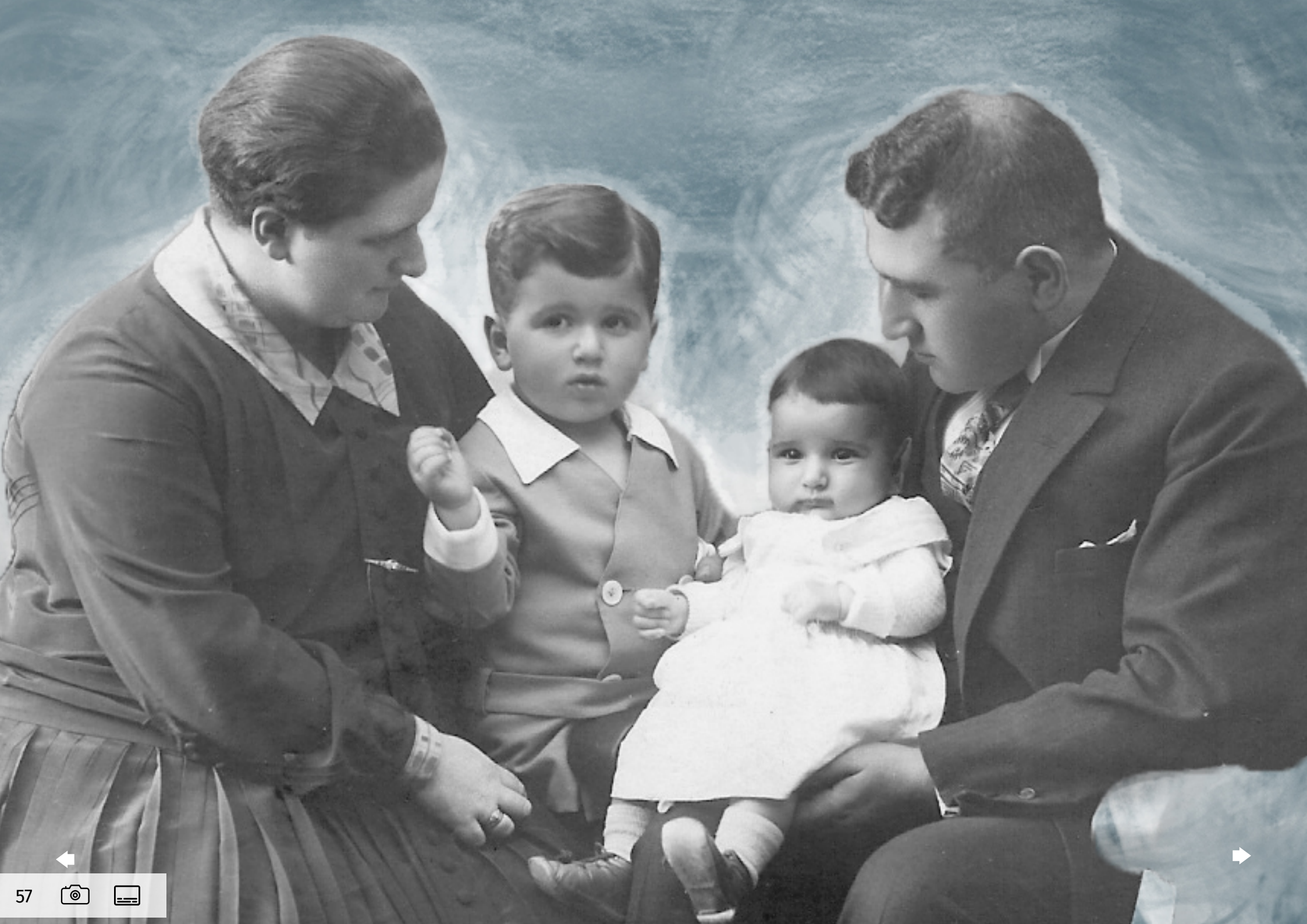
Susan was left alone to raise her young children, Paul, Michael and Trudy (named after her mother Gertrude). She felt that it was not natural for children to grow up in this way with no father, aunts, uncles, cousins or grandparents. She explained her battle to relate to her children in their teenage years as a result of having been separated from her own mother at such a young age. With no role model for parenting, ***"I didn't have that example to build on. I've failed them."***

When they were still young, Susan tried to tell her children about her own experiences during the war. She remembered them questioning why the Jews did not engage in physical resistance. She believed she should ***"have been closer to them"*** but without the experience of being around her own mother, she felt ill-equipped.

“I feel very cheated out of never having had a mother when I needed her most.”

Brigitte (Gitta) Rossi-Zalmons (née Markes) was born in Hattingen, Germany. Her father was a dentist and a proud German who was awarded an Iron Cross after WWI. Gitta lived in a large house next to the town’s synagogue with her parents and brother, Hans-Joachim, who was two years older than her. She was a mischievous, fun-loving girl and had many friends. Her best friend was Leonie, and Gitta later named her daughter after this special friend.

Gitta recalled her first day of school walking proudly with her *Schultüte*, a traditional bag of sweets given to German children to ‘sweeten’ their first day of school. It was September 1933 and Adolf Hitler and the Nazis had already come to power in January of that year: ***“On the way home from school I saw the brother of a friend of mine and I rushed up to him and I said, ‘Please, don’t you want a sweet’. He, in full uniform, clicked his heels and said, ‘Not from you’. I will never forget that answer and I realised for the first time this was going to be the new politics of our little town.”*** While Gitta was aware of rising antisemitism and experienced incidents of children throwing stones at her, she generally did well at school and made friends.



When Kristallnacht happened on 9 November 1938, Gitta was just 11 years old. Her family's home was ransacked and her father's dentist practice was totally destroyed. The following morning her father was arrested and sent to the Dachau concentration camp. Gitta's mother took the children to their old nanny, Elna, and asked her to look after them. After a couple of weeks a neighbour threatened to report Elna for harbouring Jews, and the children were returned home. It was then that her mother made the very difficult decision to send Gitta and Hans-Joachim on the Kindertransport to England.

"Babies, that is what we were. The babies of our wise old parents. But even then our parents were not sure of what to do. They did their best ... that's all a parent can do. They were courageous enough or maybe frightened enough, to send their children away, alone."

Gitta and Hans-Joachim travelled by train to the Netherlands and then on to England by ship. They arrived in London and were taken to Dovercourt Refugee Camp in Essex where they lived with all the other children that had not been taken into homes. Gitta was offered a place in a private home but she wouldn't be parted from her brother. She recalled that ***"when a priest gave me a doll and offered to adopt me but not my brother, I flatly refused. The priest took the doll away and gave it to someone else."***



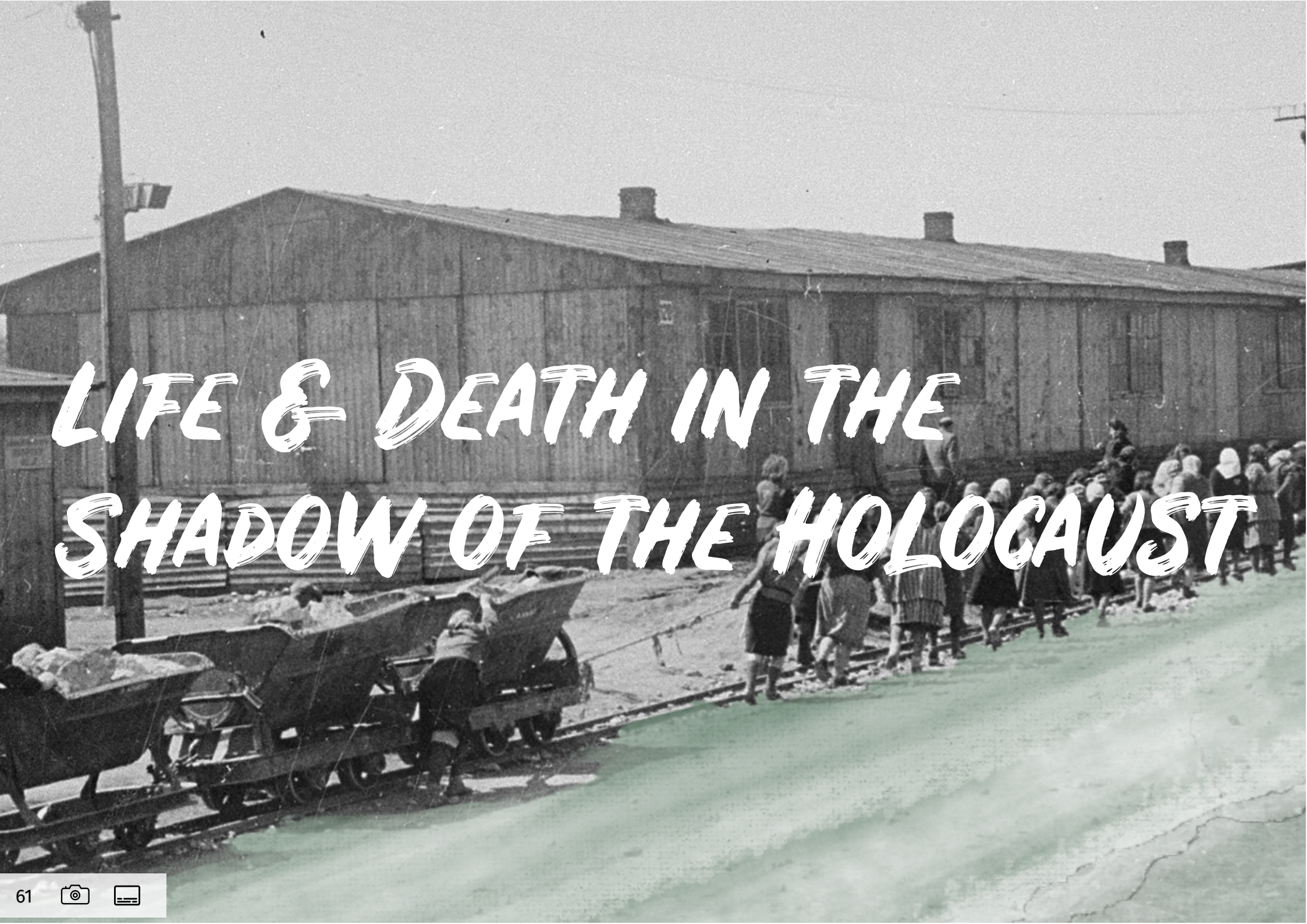
Gitta was very happy at Dovercourt and was interviewed by the BBC with other refugee children for a programme called “Children in Flight”. The broadcast was heard by her parents in Germany who were very proud of her. She was also able to receive letters from her mother who always wanted to know how the children were and whether they were warm enough. Although the letters were heavily censored, she was relieved to learn that her father had been released from Dachau. These letters from Germany aroused the suspicion of the British police who wanted to know why she was corresponding with the ‘enemy’. Gitta very indignantly told the policeman that she was related to Mr Marks from Marks & Spencer and that she would report them to her ‘uncle’. She was never bothered by the police again although she admitted that she didn’t even know if such a Mr Marks existed!

Later Gitta was sent to a nearby boarding school, Bunce Court, staying there until she was 14 years old. She was then offered a position at a nearby children’s nursery and after two years she obtained her diploma and qualified as a nurse. She moved to Birmingham, where she had cousins, and worked in the hospital. Her brother joined the army and served in France. Sadly, her father and mother were taken to the Theresienstadt ghetto and then to the Auschwitz concentration camp where they were murdered. Hans-Joachim married after the war and stayed in England; he had one son.

After the war, Gitta met her first husband, Eddy, a refugee from Berlin; she was only 17 years old. They decided to emigrate to South Africa, got married in Johannesburg and had a son and two daughters. ***"I now have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. So you see, Hitler did not altogether succeed."***

Gitta had an active life, sharing her story with school children and charity organisations in Johannesburg until she died in 2016. She traveled back to Germany three times and attended a reunion of the Kindertransport children in Israel. Despite all this, she still struggled with the decision that her mother made over 80 years ago. ***"I have learnt how to forgive but still feel very cheated out of never having had a mother when I needed her most."***




Life & Death in the
Shadow of the Holocaust

The invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, which marked the beginning of WWII, brought 2.1 million Polish Jews under Nazi control. With the German invasion of Western and Northern Europe in 1940, anti-Jewish decrees were implemented throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. In 1941 the Nazis expanded their reach into Greece, Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia). An additional 3.5 million Jews were then under Nazi rule. The Jews of Europe tried to cling to life in the most difficult of circumstances imposed on them by the Nazis – in ghettos, camps and killing centres. Some survived, most did not.

Ghettos

During the war, the Nazis established hundreds of ghettos throughout Eastern and Central Europe. Jews were separated and isolated in small, overcrowded sealed-off areas surrounded by high walls or barbed wire fences and were forbidden to leave without permission.

Nazi Camps

Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis established over 42 000 concentration, labour, and transit camps throughout occupied Europe and North Africa. The earliest camps housed political and 'asocial' prisoners within Germany. With the outbreak of war in 1939, the camp system radically expanded to include millions of prisoners from across Europe, including Jews, prisoners-of-war, resistance fighters, and forced labourers. Many died from starvation, disease, exhaustion and exposure to the harsh weather conditions while others were murdered.

Killing Centres

Six killing centres, centrally located near railway lines, were constructed in Poland with poison-gas facilities for mass murder. At the Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka killing centres, deportees were gassed shortly after arrival, with only a few selected to forcibly assist with the murder process. Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek functioned both as concentration and forced-labour camps as well as killing centres.



ELLA BLUMENTHAL

BORN 1921, POLAND

"It was with one wave of the whip: rechts *(right) to life,* links *(left) to death."*

Ella Blumenthal (née Frank) was born in Warsaw, Poland. She was the youngest in a family of seven children. Her father was a respected and a well-to-do textile merchant, and her mother and siblings all helped to support the family business.

Ella recalled that when Warsaw was attacked by German forces in September 1939, the city was in a state of confusion, panic and fear. On 16 November 1940, Ella and her family were forced into the Warsaw ghetto where they lived in appalling conditions. The ghetto was enclosed by high walls and was overcrowded with 10 to 15 people living in one small room.





Ella described her daily experience in the ghetto: ***"There was malnutrition, starvation, epidemic … starving children in rags were begging in the streets. At night, families used to put out their dead and injured, you could see every morning the streets were laid out with these corpses."***

From July 1942, the Nazis began raiding the ghetto and sending people off to 'work'. Word had soon spread that those chosen were, in reality, being sent off to the Treblinka killing centre to be murdered. Ella and her family immediately went into hiding to avoid the raids. Sadly, not all of her family were able to escape: ***"I lost practically every member of my family in these different raids, miraculously, there were three of us left: it was my father, my eldest niece (Roma) and myself."***

Ella, her father and niece remained hidden until the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April and May 1943. After being discovered, they were sent to the Majdanek concentration camp, where Ella was attacked by a dog on arrival: ***"We had to go through a selection and I was afraid that I wouldn't pass because of my bleeding back from the dog bites. Roma assured me that she would follow me wherever I would be sent, and it was with one wave of the whip:*** **rechts *(right) to life,*** **links *(left) to death. When it was my turn to go past the selection, I lifted my head high and my shoulders and I was sent right and so was my niece."*** Her father was sent to the left to be murdered.



Ella and Roma endured horrific experiences in Majdanek, where they were used as 'human horses' to pull carts around. One day they were with a group of women and were chased and pushed into what appeared to them to be a gas chamber.

"We screamed, we yelled, we tried to push the doors open, but to no avail. I was holding my niece's hand and whispering, 'Don't be afraid. I don't think it will hurt. It won't even take long; we will soon join our loved ones.'

We just looked up at the showers and waited for the gas to come down. We called out [the Jewish prayer] Shma Yisrael *and somebody was saying [the mourner's prayer]* Kaddish, *but then a miracle happened. The door opened, and an SS man marched in shouting,* 'Ruhig *(quiet) ... you are going to be sent to another camp.' We then travelled for days in cattle trucks. When the train stopped, we were in Auschwitz-Birkenau."*

When Ella and Roma arrived at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, they were 'welcomed' by an orchestra of prisoners and taken to have their arms tattooed. ***"My number was 48632. All our hair was shaven off and I looked for Roma, I was calling for her although she was standing right next to me. I didn't recognise her."***

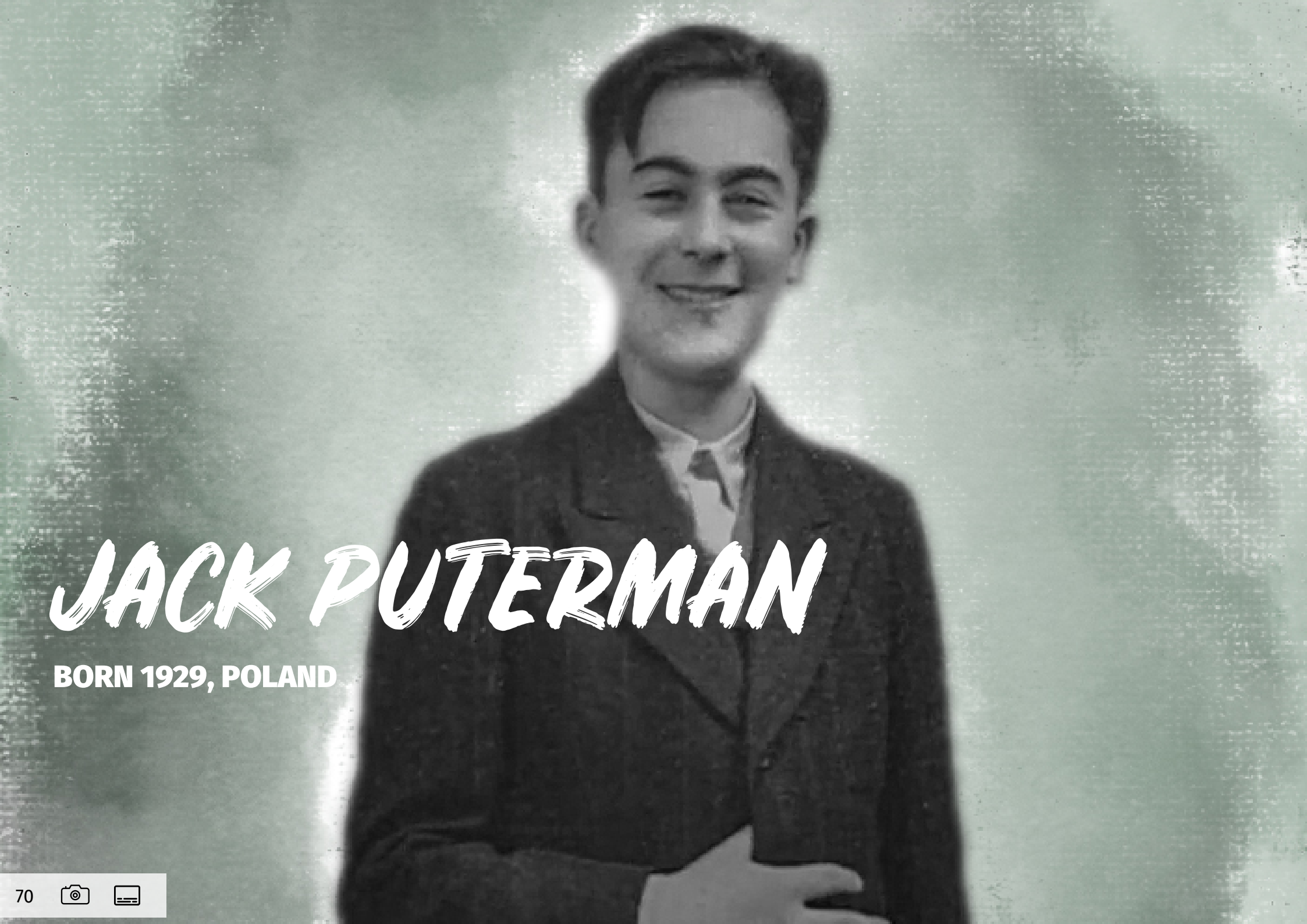
While in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ella worked building roads. She would carry heavy bags of sand and cement, as well as heavy stones that would need to be crushed. ***"I don't know now when I come to think of it, where did I have the strength to do this work? But now I knew I wanted to survive, I wanted to live, I must carry on."*** She recalled how Roma had once pleaded with her to end their suffering together: ***"Join me and let's end it, let's get onto the electrified wire, it's no use: in any case, the only way to survive in Auschwitz is through the chimney, so come let's end it, let's join our loved ones."*** However, Ella's ***"will for survival had awakened. I wasn't ready to die, and I convinced her to carry on, so that if we survived we would be able to tell the world what these beasts have done to us."***

In November 1944, Ella and Roma were eventually sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany. It was there that they were liberated by the British army on 15 April 1945.

In August 1945, Ella went back to Warsaw in search of her family, but none had survived. ***"I lost everybody, 21 souls of my immediate family, my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, their husbands, their wives and the eight children."***

For many years after liberation, Ella did not share the experiences she had endured during the Holocaust: ***"I couldn't speak about my suffering and fight for survival because the open wounds were still bleeding. But now, after so many years, the tears have dried up and the scars have healed and I'm ready, I think, I'm able to share it with you."*** Even at the age of 99, she continued to share her testimony with audiences throughout South Africa, spreading a message of resilience, perseverance, strength, and hope. ***"The horrors are forever imprinted on my memory. Now, by spreading tolerance and understanding, we will contribute to ensuring that these horrors never happen again."***





JACK PUTERMAN

BORN 1929, POLAND

“My greatest support was my mother who gave me courage when conditions were terrifying.”

Jack Puterman grew up with his family in Skarzysko Karmienna, Poland. His father, Josef (Yosel), owned a grocery store and his mother, Bronia, cared for Jack and his younger sister, Cymale. He didn’t recall experiencing any antisemitism in his youth. ***“There was no animosity between Jews and non-Jews at school. I had non-Jewish friends … it was a very good association with the Poles until the Germans invaded Poland in 1939.”***

Following the German occupation of Poland, Jack’s family moved in with his paternal grandparents in Sydlowiec. They soon moved back home but decided to leave Cymale with his grandparents for safety.

In May 1941, a ghetto was established in Skarzysko. The Puterman home and grocery store both fell within the ghetto walls. At the age of 12, Jack had to endure forced labour carrying bricks in the ghetto. He recalled living in atrocious conditions, with little access to food, fuel or medicine.



In October 1942, 10 000 people from the ghetto were made to gather at the local football ground for a selection process. The majority were sent to their death at the Treblinka killing centre, including many of Jack's extended family. Jack and his parents were sent to the Skarzysko Karmienna camp. Although they were separated there, they developed a routine that allowed them to still see each other. Each morning and evening Jack and Yosel would go to see Bronia and on Sundays she would wash their clothes.

While at the camp, they discovered that Jack's grandparents and sister had been murdered in Treblinka. When interviewed later in his life, Jack found it incredibly difficult and painful to talk about this loss. He recalled that his father ***"completely lost the will to live after he heard of the deaths of [my] grandparents and sister".*** Yosel became ill with typhus and died soon after.



Jack and Bronia also contracted typhus and tried to help each other to survive. ***"My mother helped me first and then, at my age I helped my mother. I tried to get [her] to eat and pleaded with her to walk outside the barrack to recover her strength. I had to hold her to keep her from falling but each day she got a little better and miraculously she survived. My greatest support was my mother who gave me courage when conditions were terrifying."***

In 1944, the camp was evacuated as the Nazis tried to evade the approaching Soviet army. Jack was separated from his mother and transported by train to Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany and shortly thereafter to Schlieben concentration camp. He befriended a Polish woman, Stashka, who worked in the camp's kitchen and kept him well fed. Jack would assist her with odd jobs, such as bringing food for the commandants' dogs. In this way, Jack was able to smuggle food to other prisoners and help save many lives, including Lazar Levin, a family friend who credited his survival to Jack's kindness.

After nine months in Schlieben, the camp was evacuated, and the prisoners were forced to march towards a makeshift camp in the Sudetenland. ***"People couldn't make it, people died on the way."*** Jack himself was overcome with exhaustion, but some of the other prisoners kept waking him and carrying him. ***"If I had slept, I would not have survived."*** Not long after they arrived at the camp, he was liberated in May 1945 by the Soviet army.



After liberation, Jack began searching for his mother, first in Germany and then eventually in Lodz, Poland. While in Lodz, he got a message that his mother was in Skarzyko. ***"Words cannot describe the emotional experience of being reunited."*** Jack later reflected, ***"We were a huge family, about 150 ... Only 15 of my cousins remained alive, and my mother and myself."***

Once reunited, Jack and his mother relocated to Sweden where his uncle, Yair, lived. They found work at a suit factory and Jack attended a trade school to learn upholstery. Eventually they emigrated to Durban with the help of an uncle (also named Jack Puterman), as well as the generosity of businessman and philanthropist, Aaron Beare.

Jack and Bronia experienced a rich life in Durban and maintained a very close relationship. ***"The most traumatic and dramatic events of my life were shared with my mother and for both of us that bond strengthened us and enabled us to survive. I was blessed that we were also able to share the good times after the war and especially the happiness of our lives in South Africa."***

Jack married Marcia and the couple was blessed with five sons and eight grandchildren. With the skills he learnt in Sweden he started his own upholstery business in Durban, which was then taken over by two of his sons.





HENIA BRYER

BORN 1925, POLAND

“There were mountains of shoes and glasses and we were told that this was from a big transport that came from the Lodz ghetto.”

Henia Bryer (née Fishman) was born in Radom, Poland. Radom had a big Jewish community and Henia attended a Jewish school. She recalled a happy childhood with her two brothers and little sister.

Eight days after the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, Radom was occupied. Henia remembered how ***“immediately everything changed. There were different orders and decrees and Hitler’s speeches were broadcast through loudspeakers in the street. All Jews had to wear white armbands with a blue Star of David and a curfew was imposed.”***

In April 1941, the Jews of Radom were moved into two ghettos: a ‘main’ ghetto in the central Śródmieście District and a ‘small’ ghetto in the Glinice District. There were constant roundups and selections for deportation within the ghettos and by August 1942, the Jewish population of Radom had shrunk from 33 000 to just over 3 000.



One day, Henia recalled, there was an edict that anyone who was sick or had a disability should report to the hospital immediately. Henia's elder brother had a physical disability, and her mother was forced to bring him to the hospital. It was during winter and he was wearing a warm coat. ***"My brother took off his coat and gave it to my mother saying, 'Give it to someone who will need it — where I'm going, I am not going to need it.'"*** Indeed, all of those who reported to the hospital that day were murdered.

In March 1944, Henia and her family were loaded into cattle trucks and taken to the Majdanek concentration camp. When they arrived, they were separated: women on one side and men on the other. They were forced to strip naked and walk past the Nazi guards. Those who looked old or sick were sent to the left and the others went to the right. Those who survived the selection were sent to the showers for delousing, given a striped uniform and sent to the barracks.

The prisoners were put to work sorting out shoes. ***"There were mountains of shoes and glasses and we were told that this was from a big transport that came from the Lodz ghetto. When we realised where these shoes came from, it was a doubly awful job to do."***

After a few months, Henia and her family were taken to the Plaszow concentration camp. There they had to endure hard labour pushing iron wagons loaded with stones up a hill. Henia was later selected to work as a housemaid for the SS women guards.

In 1944, Henia was sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Once again, on arrival, she was forced to strip naked and go through the selection process. Those who were sent to the left were taken immediately to the gas chambers. The rest were sent to the delousing showers, given a bundle of clothes to wear and sent on to the awful conditions of the women's barracks. Henia was also tattooed when she arrived at Auschwitz. Reflecting on the tattoo years later, she was resolute: ***"Many people wanted me to take it off. I know some doctors and plastic surgeons who volunteered to take it off without payment. But I don't want to take it off. People already are saying these things never happened – they're talking nonsense. I want them to see that it did happen. I was there."***

On 18 January 1945, as the Soviet army approached the camp, the prisoners were sent on a ‘death march’. The weather was freezing, and the tracks were covered in snow. Those who couldn’t walk were shot and there were dead bodies on both sides of the road. The prisoners were then loaded into open cattle trucks and taken on a long journey to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. ***“Bergen-Belsen in 1945 was a sight I will never forget as long as I live. There was desolation … piles and piles of dead bodies everywhere just lying outside.”*** The prisoners were herded into large empty barracks with no food.

The British army liberated the camp in April 1945. However, the prisoners were so sick and weak that they could hardly appreciate their own liberation.





Soon after, Henia heard that survivors from Radom had made their way to Stuttgart. There she was reunited with her mother who was devastated by the loss of her husband and two children. Henia and her mother spent a few years in Paris with distant family before going to Israel where she met her husband, a South African named Morris. They settled in Bloemfontein where Henia learnt English and became a teacher and later the principal of the community's Hebrew school. In 2010 they moved to Cape Town where their two sons and four grandchildren were living.

On 27 January 2013, in honour of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the BBC aired the documentary, "Prisoner number A26188: Henia Bryer", recounting Henia's experiences during the Holocaust. She also continued to share her testimony with learner and adult groups through the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, warning about the dangers of intolerance and hate.



JUDY DIAMOND

BORN 1932, CZECHOSLOVAKIA

“Jews, by then, were simply non-existent. There were supposed to be no Jews there.”

Judy Diamond (née Riff) was born in the Moravian city of Ostrava, Czechoslovakia. She was very close to her grandmother to whom she attributed many of her life’s philosophies. Her parents divorced before she was born, and her mother later married a Czech Christian man. This marriage most likely saved Judy’s life.

In 1939, with the German occupation of the Czech lands, life for Jews began to change drastically. ***“I was going to school for about a year and a half when the Germans marched to Ostrava on 15 March 1939. All I can remember is that my mom was very sad on that day. She came back from the office very late and saw the German troops while driving home. It was raining and she could see the helmets of the German soldiers glittering in the rain. She was crying that evening.”***



Jewish children were no longer allowed to go to government schools, and were moved to schools exclusively for Jews on the outskirts of the city. The school buildings were very old and in a bad state of disrepair. Their daily walk past the German school was fraught with fear. From September 1941, it was mandatory for Jews to wear a yellow star, which made Judy and her friends a clear target for groups of German children who would harass them by throwing snowballs, stones and chestnuts.

The Jews of Ostrava were already well known by the government because they had all been registered as Jewish for income tax purposes. ***"So really, there was no escape."*** Then from November 1941, Jews began to be sent to the Theresienstadt ghetto, and from there often to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

Judy and her mother were protected from these initial transports because of her stepfather's 'Aryan' status. However, while they were allowed to remain in Ostrava, her mother eventually contracted tuberculosis and was denied medical assistance and treatment because she was Jewish. Without medical intervention, her mother tragically died from the disease in 1943. Judy was just 11 years old. ***"Jews, by then, were simply non-existent. There were supposed to be no Jews there."*** After her mother's death, Judy's stepfather decided to send her to Zlín, south-east of Moravia for a couple of months. He hoped this would protect her from deportation. There, she was sheltered by some of his Christian friends, until she was discovered and sent to the Theresienstadt ghetto in March 1945.

Judy was 13 years old when she arrived at the ghetto; shocked, scared and alone. All the new arrivals were told they would need to shower. By then, they had already heard rumours of gas chambers and fake showers that would gas people in the camps. When Judy heard the word 'shower', she started screaming in fear and kept repeating that she was clean and did not need a shower. Realising why she was so upset, one of the medical workers tried to reassure her that just water would come out and offered to accompany her into the shower. ***"And she undressed and entered the shower with me, holding me tight all the way. I never saw her afterwards, nor learnt her name but she came into the shower with me to reassure me and I will never forget this woman's wonderful humane gesture and act of kindness."***


THERESIENSTADT-
BAUSCHOWITZ

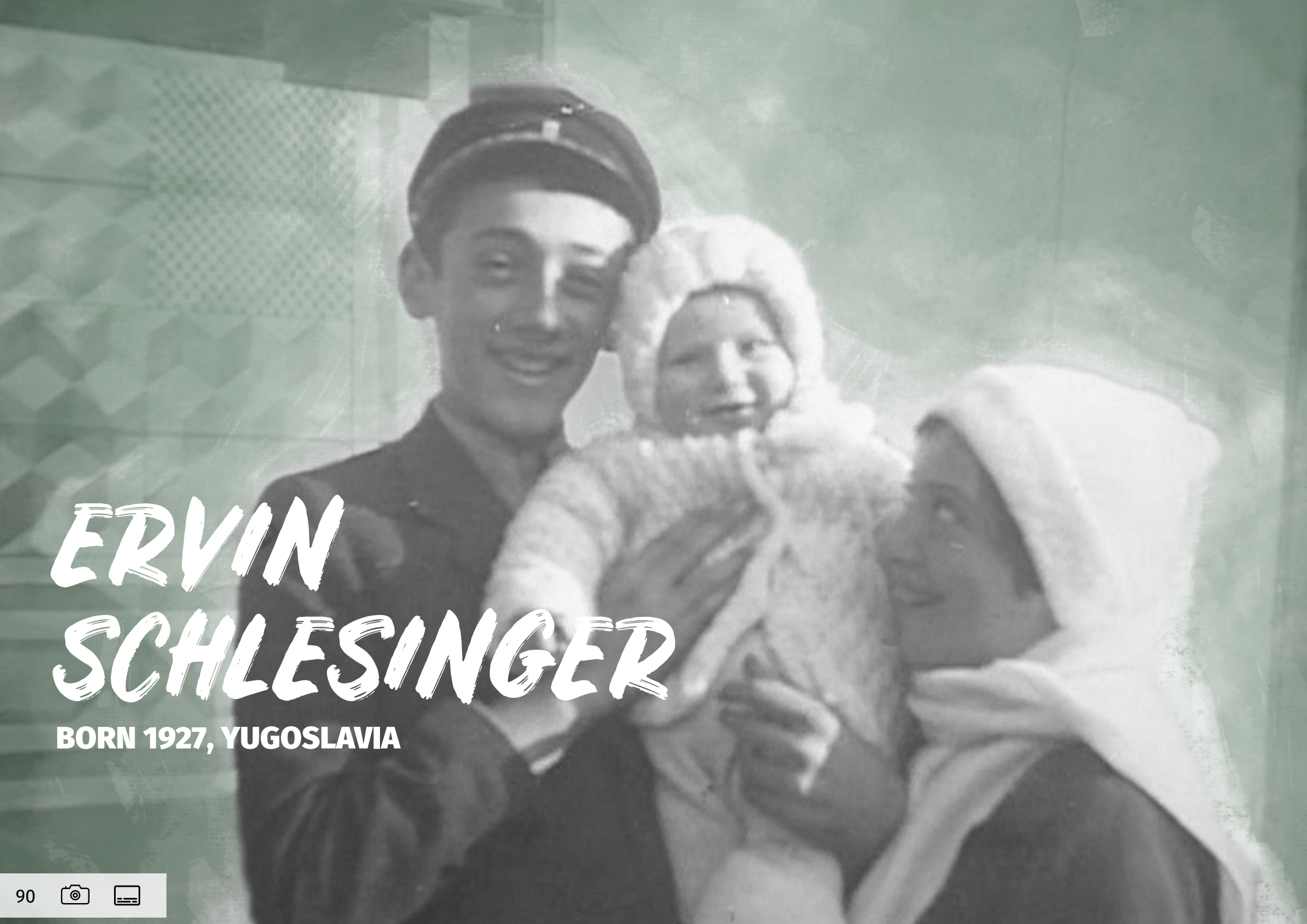
Judy remembered the children's dormitory rooms filled with three-tier bunk beds so as to squeeze 32 children into a single room. She endured terrible suffering in the children's home. Illness was rampant, in particular typhus, and she was sick much of the time; their food rations were almost inedible and wholly insufficient. ***"We got groats and potatoes. Twice a week we had black bread, margarine and a tiny pack of sugar."*** Education was forbidden in the ghetto, but the woman in charge of the children's dormitory, Bertha Wolf, tried to make their lives as normal as possible. ***"She would give lessons in the mornings, and there was always somebody on the look-out because it wasn't allowed."***

Theresienstadt ghetto was liberated in May 1945. Judy returned to Ostrava to live with her stepfather, where she learnt that her grandmother and aunts had been murdered at Auschwitz. In 1946, her only surviving relative, her maternal uncle, traced her through the Red Cross and made arrangements for her to join him in England. Years later, on a visit to Kenya, she met her future husband. ***"I have two daughters and being through the fears of a war and seeing how dysfunctional families had become, that has always been my greatest fear. When they were little I would not be parted from them. Wherever we went, the children went with us, and I think many second-generation Holocaust survivors or victims have the same problem."***



Judy lived for some years in Cape Town and moved to New York in 1999 to be closer to her daughters and grandchildren. Before emigrating, she shared her testimony with various school groups at the newly opened Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre. She was often asked by learners why the Holocaust had happened and what she had learnt from these experiences:

"No other reason, except that you had a 'Jude' [yellow star] on your jacket or on your dress. You've done nothing to anybody; you didn't aggravate anybody but because you were a Jew, you were a non-person. And this is why you had to die. And this is something that people must remember: that it can happen again and again, because hatred is something that doesn't disappear."



ERVIN SCHLESINGER

BORN 1927, YUGOSLAVIA

“We were just waiting to be collected.”

Ervin Schlesinger was born in Bački Petrovac, Yugoslavia, a small town with about 20 Jewish families. His father, Franz, was a lumber merchant and his mother, Irene, cared for Ervin and his siblings, Esther and Joseph, at home. The family was Orthodox and kept kosher.

German forces occupied Yugoslavia in 1941, just after Ervin’s bar mitzvah. He remembered that Jews and Serbs from the town were rounded up and murdered. One day his family was also rounded up, but miraculously, as they marched towards the Danube River, they were released and allowed to return home. However, life was still incredibly difficult for Jews during this time.

Soon after the occupation, Ervin’s father was arrested. Ervin recalled bringing him food in prison. At around the same time, the Schlesinger home was ransacked, and his family could do nothing but watch from their front yard.

Franz finally returned home in 1943, after two years in prison, but by the beginning of 1944 they ***“were just waiting to be collected”.*** The Nazis knew all the Jewish families in the town, so there was no escape. After Passover, Ervin’s family, including his maternal grandparents, were deported first to a concentration point in Baja, Hungary, and a few weeks later to the Auschwitz concentration camp.



The journey in the cattle trucks took five days and Ervin remembered it being extremely hot, with no access to water or a toilet. In the chaos, he fondly recollected how he was near a girl called Babutse, a friend from the synagogue. They tried to stick together and hold hands. Her mother, however, was displeased and at night she would shine a torch to check up on them.

On arrival at Auschwitz, Ervin's mother started to cry as she saw they were about to be separated. His father tried to comfort her, saying, ***"Don't cry, it won't be long."*** The family had heard that the Germans had lost the battle at Stalingrad and were losing the war. His mother replied, ***"No, we are only going to see each other in heaven."***

After the family was separated, Ervin and his father were sent to the men's barracks. After a few days, Franz volunteered as a handyman in the hope that this would increase their chances of survival. He was sent to another barrack and Ervin never saw him again.

Ervin was soon moved to the Mauthausen concentration camp. He received his new identity – number 71223 – engraved on a band he was required to wear around his wrist. He was part of a group that was soon moved again to Melk, a sub-camp of Mauthausen. He had developed a friendship with two young boys, Yankele, Babutse's brother, and Mirko. Shortly after arriving in Melk, Yankele collapsed and went to the camp's hospital barrack. Sadly, ***"the next day, he was dead".***



Ervin and Mirko were selected to work for the Hopferwieser company in Amstetten, preparing timber and posts, where they received a fuller lunch of soup and potatoes. Ervin described how he carved a spoon from wood so that he could eat his soup without drinking it from the bowl. This extra meal each day is what Ervin believed helped him and Mirko survive until the end of the war.

In February 1945, the camp prisoners were forced to march for several days to Ebensee concentration camp, another sub-camp of Mauthausen. Ervin was liberated there by American soldiers on 6 May 1945. After liberation, he returned to Bački Petrovac in search of any surviving family. He found his sister, Esther, but sadly his mother, grandparents and brother were murdered at Auschwitz. Of around 80 000 Jews living in Yugoslavia before the war, only 14 000 survived. Ervin and Esther were two of only six Jews from Bački Petrovac who survived.

At the end of 1948, Ervin emigrated to Israel. There he met and married a South African nursing student, Anita. The couple had two children and in 1958 they moved to South Africa, where they settled in Durban. They only intended to stay for a year but never left. Ervin rarely spoke about his experiences during the war, even with his own family. ***"I don't know why, I've got two children, I never ever told them ... I couldn't bring myself to tell them."***



MAJA ABRAMOWITCH

BORN 1929, LATVIA

“It could not happen! How could innocent children be shot!”

Maja Abramowitch (née Zarch) was born in Dvinsk (Daugavpils), Latvia. Her father, David, was highly educated and with his brothers, managed their father’s crockery business. Her mother, Rebecca, was very cultured and mixed in intellectual social circles. They were affluent and lived in a beautiful home. Maja, an only child, was well looked after by her beloved Catholic nanny, Petronella.

Maja had a happy childhood, visiting the family’s *dacha* (holiday house) on Lake Stropi and her grandparents in Lithuania. She took piano, ballet and French lessons. Her parents were acutely aware of Hitler’s rise to power and she remembered overhearing them discussing Kristallnacht in 1938. After the start of the war in September 1939, Polish refugees flooded Dvinsk and on hearing their stories, she recalled the sombre mood in their home.

In June 1940, the Russians occupied Dvinsk and her parents’ business and properties were nationalised without compensation. Her father, a socialist, managed to secure an engineering job with the national railway. Maja went to school with Russian officers’ children and was very happy, making many friends and becoming a proud member of the Young Communist League.



In June 1941, when Germany invaded Latvia, Dvinsk was heavily bombed. Maja remembered grabbing whatever they could, running to the street and seeing their house engulfed in flames. ***"Frantic parents, lost children, mothers and fathers with babies in their arms and dogs were all trapped in this inferno. They were rushing in every direction, shouting."*** The family stayed with friends, only returning to their burnt-out house to collect their hidden valuables, which they gave to Petronella for safekeeping. Some Jewish men were ordered by the Germans and their Latvian collaborators to clean up the town. Maja's father was imprisoned; he was later murdered in custody.

In July 1941, the remainder of the Jews living in Dvinsk were moved to the ghetto. Maja recalled official announcements for the sick, elderly and parents with young children to come forward so they could be moved to a place where they would receive better care. ***"Within minutes there were so many volunteers that queues formed. Any other place would be better than this."*** But then rumours spread that those who volunteered were being shot on the outskirts of town. ***"But even then, people would not believe it. It could not happen! How could innocent children be shot!"*** Between July and August 1941, over 9 000 Jews were murdered in Dvinsk.

Maja's mother realised that in order to survive she needed to obtain a work permit. She found a job sewing and cleaning for German soldiers. Petronella helped them by providing extra food. She even managed to hide Maja in her home for two months but had to return her to the ghetto after being threatened by neighbours.

In May 1942, the ghetto was liquidated, and Maja and her mother were taken first to 'the citadel' fortress and then to Kaiserwald camp near Riga. After a few months, they were transported by boat to the Stutthof concentration camp where they endured an unimaginable existence, cheating death many times. They managed to deceive the Nazis about Maja's age and were sent to a sub-camp, Bruss-Sophienwalde a month later. Conditions in this camp were much better and they stayed there in comparative safety. In 1945, with the Russian advance, the remaining prisoners of the camp were taken on a 'death march'. Maja and her mother survived and were liberated in May 1945.



Maja recalled that liberation did not signal the end of their suffering. ***"At the age of 16, I looked like an old woman. There was not an ounce of flesh on me. When I lifted my arms, the skin hung like rags."*** Tragically, many liberated prisoners still died from typhoid or overeating after years of starvation. Soon after liberation, Maja and her mother stayed at a displaced persons camp before moving to Paris for a year. In 1947 they sailed to South Africa to join two uncles who had settled there before the war. In Johannesburg, Maja returned to school, matriculated and went on to study at university.

In 1950, Maja married Sidney, who'd shown her around the city when she had first arrived in Johannesburg, and they had four children and many grandchildren. In July 1992, Maja, accompanied by her two daughters, returned to Dvinsk and visited sites from her past. Diana, her eldest daughter recalled: ***"So began our journey into hell ... a hell we had heard about since our childhood, read about, but somehow could never put into context. Here we were being led through all the painful memories by an actual survivor – our mother."***

In her later years, Maja found herself becoming more introspective and reflected on the enduring trauma she carried:

“How does one come out of such ordeals? Unscathed? Hardly! Whilst enjoying the comforts that life has bestowed on me, at times pain assails me at the thought of throwing away even a piece of bread or a strand of string ... No, the past structures the present and to forget is to damn tomorrow.”



LEON BORSTROCK

BORN 1913, ENGLAND



“When we got off the trains there was a selection and I never saw my family again.”

Leon Borstrock was born in London, England, and brought up in the Netherlands with his parents. He was educated in Amsterdam and was studying architecture when the war broke out. He was first detained in Westerbork, a transit camp in northeastern Netherlands. In the winter of 1942, Leon and his wife Roosjie, their five-year-old daughter, Frederika, and six-month-old son, Jacques, were sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. ***“When we got off the trains there was a selection and I never saw my family again. They were all gassed.”*** Only 340 of the 1 700 people that arrived on that transport survived the following six weeks.

Leon was considered useful to the Nazis because of his background in the arts and his skill of sign-writing, which he had learnt from his father. He was initially put to work spray painting cars in the ammunitions workshop, and later inscribed the names and functions of all the SS personnel in the camp into registers. ***“As a result of this, I was not treated as badly as the other prisoners and I was sometimes able to help them.”*** In 1944, following an assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler, SS personnel had to write all their mail in German. As many of them came from countries like Poland, Hungary, France and the Netherlands, they used Leon to help them write their mail in German. He was ‘paid’ with bread or potatoes, which he would share with fellow prisoners. ***“I wrote for 18 hours a day while the SS officers dictated to me. Frequently they would say, ‘Jew, make one mistake, and we’ll put you in the chambers with your brothers!’”***



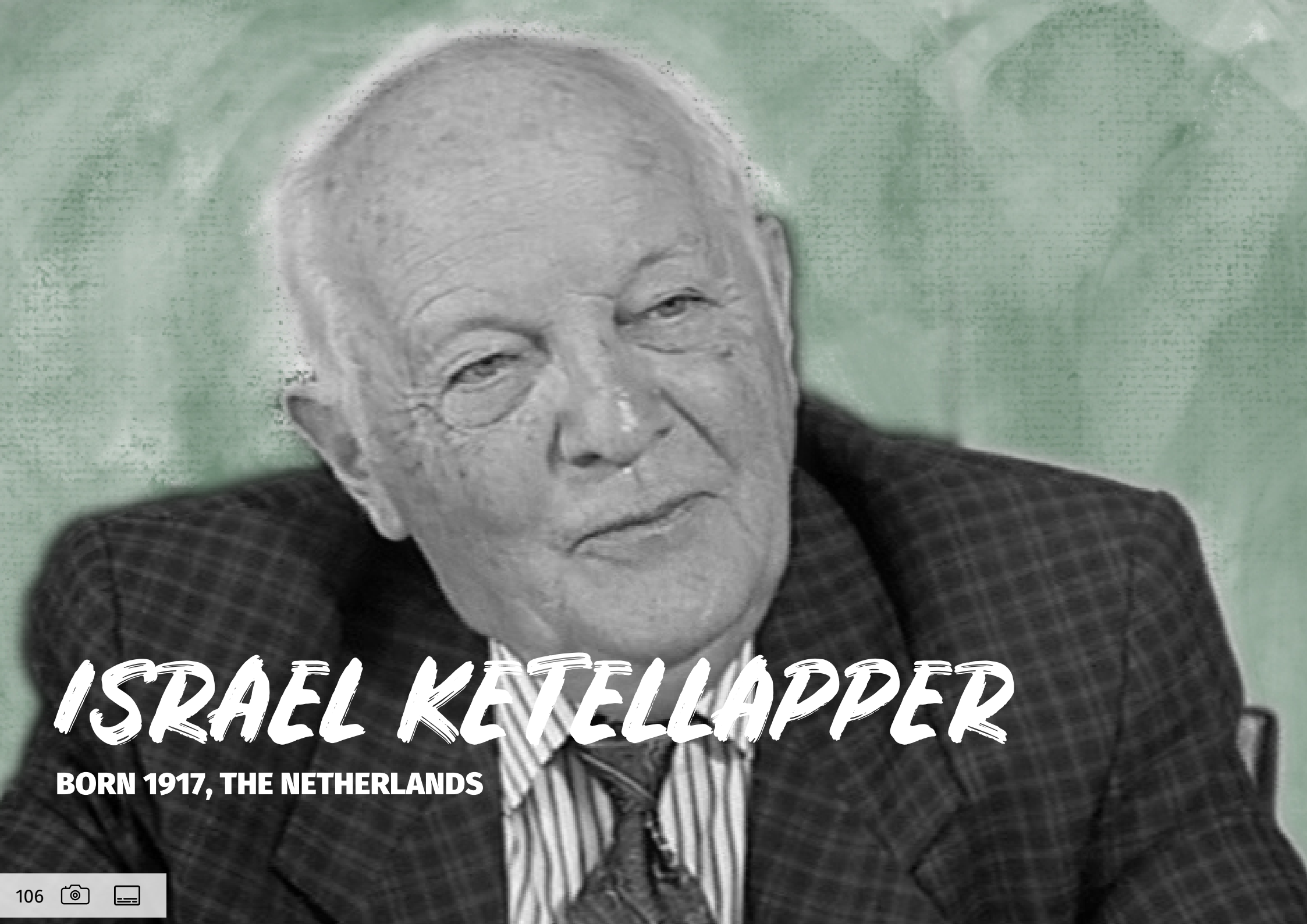
Leon was selected twice to move to other camps for hard labour, but he was spared both times by the German commander and foreman, Josef Anders. ***"He was a forthright and well-liked man, who had noticed my skill at signwriting and seemed to have taken a liking to me",*** he recalled. ***"Because of the protection he offered me, I escaped the worst of the ill-treatment that the other inmates got."*** He still endured terrible hardships and was punished by whipping for things he did not do.

On 18 January 1945, the prisoners were taken from Auschwitz on a forced 'death march'. Approximately 60 000 prisoners left Auschwitz to evade the Russian approach. On 29 April, Leon's group reached the Dachau concentration camp, but very few had managed to survive.



After Leon was liberated, he learnt the fate of his family through the Red Cross. His younger brothers, Jules and Harry, had been shot; his older brother Michael had survived in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. When Leon returned to Amsterdam, a former neighbour recognised him and returned some of the clothing that they had managed to rescue from his apartment when he was taken away. In the pocket of a jacket, he found a photograph of his daughter Frederika: ***"All that remained of a life that had gone up in smoke."***

In 1946, Leon married his second wife Lily in London and in 1948 they moved to Johannesburg, settling in Cape Town in 1960. They had two sons, Jeffrey and Milton. When asked about why he chose to share his story, Leon was resolved: ***"Why am I recalling these events? I believe that I owe it to posterity and particularly to the memory of my relatives and fellow prisoners who never survived to ensure that this horror is never forgotten."***



ISRAEL KETELLAPPER

BORN 1917, THE NETHERLANDS

“If you are working, there is a possibility that they won’t transport you to Auschwitz-Birkenau.”

Israel Ketellapper was born and grew up in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. In 1941, he married Ray. The newlyweds however, began to witness attacks on Jewish people by members of the *Gruene Polizei* (green police), Dutch collaborators with the Nazis, and they decided that it was unsafe for them to continue living in Amsterdam.

Israel’s father-in-law arranged for them to go to Haarlem, where an elderly business associate and his wife offered to hide the two of them in a concealed attic in their house. There they remained in hiding for about seven months. One day the elderly couple were visited by the German secret state police, the Gestapo, who were searching for hidden Jews. The elderly man invited them to investigate the house but because the attic was so well concealed, they were not discovered.

Israel, not wanting to endanger the elderly couple any further, decided that they should return to Amsterdam. By this time, his parents and in-laws had been deported to the Westerbork transit camp. Israel’s aunt had heard a rumour that one could ***“buy a special stamp”*** that would allow you to travel safely either to Palestine or Switzerland. Israel sold the family’s collection of diamonds in order to afford these ‘special stamps’.

1. GESLACHTSNAAM. 2. VOORNAMEN. 4.	1. Geboorteplaats. 2. Geboortedatum. 5.	1. **Vader.** Voornamen. 2. **Moeder.** a. Geslachtsnaam; b. Voornamen. 3. **Voogd of curator.** a. Geslachtsnaam; b. Voornamen.	1. Woonplaats: a. van den ingeschrevene (voor minderjarigen en onder curateele gestelden de werkelijke woonplaats); b. van den wettigen vertegenwoordiger. 2. Inrichting, waarin de ingeschrevene verblijft. 3. Korps, enz., waartoe de ingeschrevene als vrijwilliger behoort, en duur der verbintenis. 7.	1. Beroep van den ingeschrevene. 2. Genoten onderwijs. 3. Opgegeven reden tot vrijstelling. 8.	1. Lengte. 2. Gewicht. 3. Index. 9.

Keuringsraad. 1. Datum. 2. Opgegeven gebreken. 3. Uitspraak. 4. Nr. keuringsreglement. 5. Bijzondere bevindingen. 6. Handteekening voorz. 10.	Herkeuringsraad. 1. Datum. 2. Opgegeven gebreken. 3. Uitspraak. 4. Nr. keuringsreglement. 5. Bijzondere bevindingen. 6. Handteekening voorz. 11.	Vrijstelling en uitsluiting. Door wie uitspraak is gedaan, datum en aard der uitspraak, datum van ingesteld beroep, enz. 12.	Bestemming. Gewoon of buitengewoon dienstpl. (G. D. of B. D.) 13.	Gegevens voor indeeling. 1. Wenschen van den ingeschrevene: a. in de eerste plaats; b. in de tweede plaats. 2. Meest geschikt voor: a. in de eerste plaats; b. in de tweede plaats. 3. Minder geschikt voor: 14.	Toewijzing en inlijving 1. Korps, enz. 2. Garnizoen. 3. Tijdvak van inlijving. 4. Datum van inlijving. 15.

---

1. Ketelaar
2. Johan Wilhelmus

1. Amsterdam
1917

1. Jan Mathieus Johannes Hollard
2.
3. a. Johanna Wilhelmina
b.

1. electricien
2. —
3. Bed.

1. 1 m
mm.
2. kg.
3.

1. C. d. K. 2 MAART 1936 4e Afd. No. 26/362 vrijgesteld broederdienst.

B.D.

---

1. Ketelkapper
2. Israël

1. Amsterdam
2. 29 October 1917

1. Abraham
2. a. Drukker
b. Raatje
3. a.
b.

1. a. Amsterdam
b. idem
2.
3.

1. ékaleur
2. 2 j. Mulo
3. —

1. 1 m
659 mm.
2. 45 kg.
3. 16

1. 6 April 1936
2. —
3.
4.
5.
6. Goed

Niet voor inlijving aangewezen.

---

1. Ketting
2. Cornelis Salon

1. Amsterdam
2. 1 Maart 1917

1. Cornelis Salon
2. a. Nieuwenhuyzen
b. Henriëtte Jacoba
3. a.
b.

1. a. Amsterdam
b. idem
2.
3.

Spijs- en paardenhandel
1. exp. knecht
2. 6 kl. L.O.
3. —

1. 1 m
665 mm.
2. 60 kg.
3. —1

1. 6 April 1936
2. —
3. geschikt
4. —
5. —
6. Goed

G. D.

1. a. Ber. art. bereden. Amersfoort 1911
b. —
2. a. Bereden
b. Inf.
3.

1. 6 April 1936
2. —
3. geschikt
4. —
5. —
6. Goed

---

1. Kettner
2. Erick Carl

1. Amsterdam
2. 11 April 1917

1. Carl
2. a. Cnopius
b. Petronella Aartje Maria
3. a.
b.

1. a. Amsterdam
b. idem
2.
3.

Rekenen cijfers eindexam. gymn. A. Jan D.
1. zonder
eind. dipl. Gymn. A. 1935
2. 4 jaar Rechten (gemeente Universiteit) Amsterdam

1. 1 m
784 mm.
2. 70 kg.
3. —82

1. 6 April 1936
2. —
3. geschikt
4. —
5. —
6. Goed

G. D.

1. a. Ber. art. bereden. (alleen)
b. —
2. a. Ber. art. bereden.
b. Inf.
3. G.K. (gezien opl.)

vak I: 11
vak 7: 21
{ 6.9.7.152 A

1. 6 April 1936
2. —
3. geschikt
4. —
5. —
6. Goed

---

1. Keulemans
2.

1. bakkersgraadsnijder
2. 7 Juli 1917

1. Gerardus Isidore Josef
2. a. Reuvers
b. Joanna Frederika Maria
3. a.
b.

1. a. Amsterdam
b. idem
2.
3.

1. volontair b/c tabaksmakelaar
2. 3 klassen Mulo les in Engelsch
3. —

1. 1 m
776 mm.
2. 62 kg.
3. 76

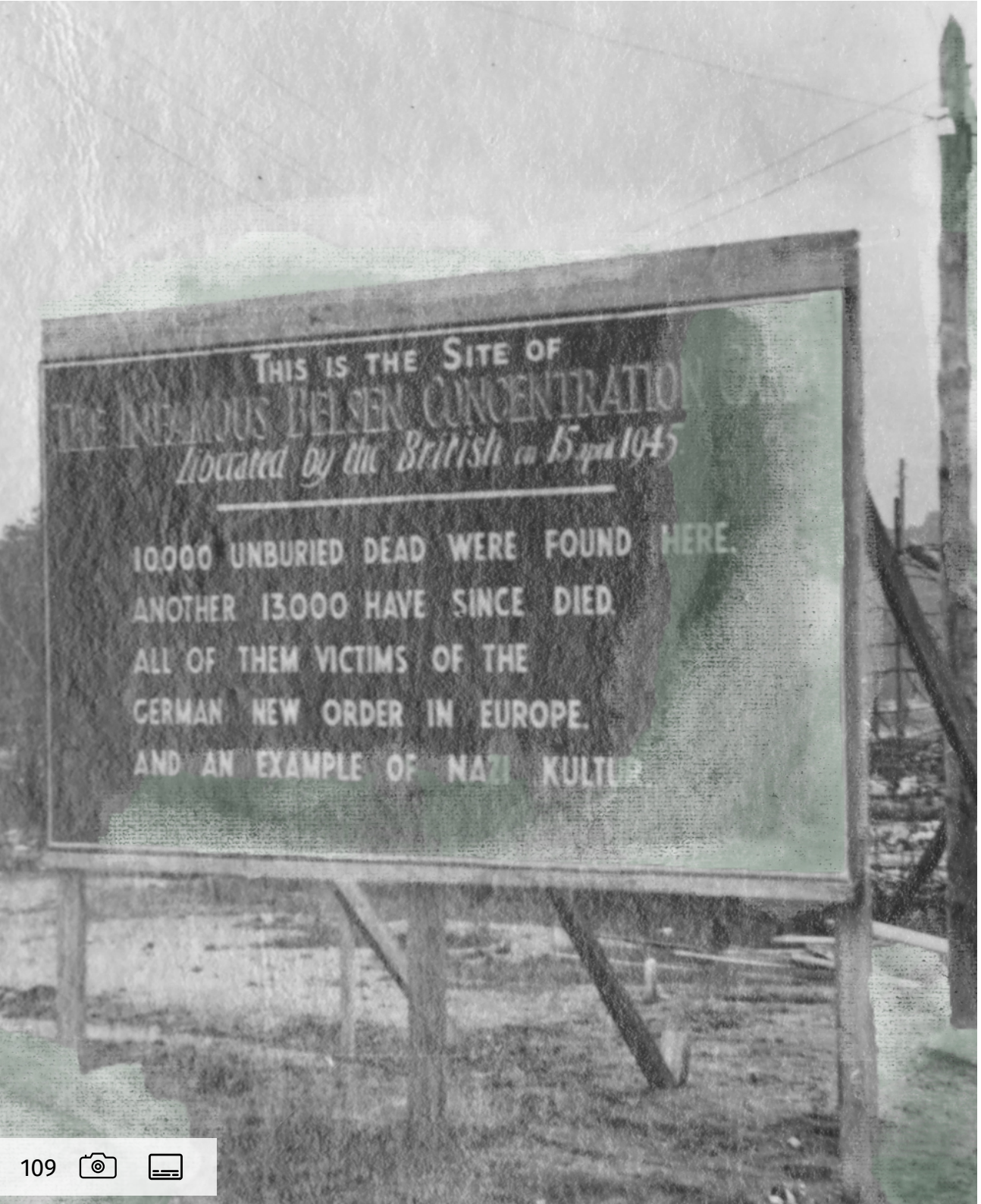
1. 6 April 1936
2. —
3. geschikt.
4.
5. verm. gezichtsscherpte en kleurenzien
6. Goed

G. D.

1. a. Inf. 2 pl.
b. —
2. a. Inf.
b. G.K. (niet gezien opl.)
3. ber koopv. fonk tonk. Gemaakt Zie kolom 10 ad 5 j.

1. 18 R Inf. 2e plaats
2.
3. 25 Mrt. 1937
4. 23 MAART 1937

108



However, in 1942, the Nazis began rounding up Jews to send them to 'work camps' and despite having these stamps, Israel and Ray were deported to Westerbork. There they were reunited with Ray's parents and brother.

After a few months they were all sent by train to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. On arrival the prisoners were assembled in a big square. Those who were able to work were asked to step forward. ***"I thought to myself if you are working, there is a possibility that they won't transport you to Auschwitz-Birkenau."*** Israel offered up his skills in painting and general repairs. He was appointed in charge of a group of 20 prisoners. Every morning they were marched out to paint and decorate the barracks of the guards.

At the supply store where they had to go every day, Israel was lucky to befriend the *Scharführer* (squad leader) in charge of the food. Israel recalled him saying, ***"Look, if you don't talk, every morning when you come past with your commando to get a cup of porridge, then you put down your bucket with your paint and I will drop in a tin of meat and bread."***

Ray's parents, who were also at Bergen-Belsen, both died of starvation within a short period of one another. Israel and Ray managed to survive in Bergen-Belsen for two and a half years.

Towards the end of the war, the surviving prisoners were put on a train travelling deeper into Germany. They travelled for 15 days without water and food. Ray was very weak, weighing only about 34kg.

"I still had managed to keep my gold Rolex watch, so I asked a German soldier, 'Have you got any rye bread? I will give you my gold watch in exchange for such a bread.' He gave me bread and I gave him the watch, and we had something to eat."

Eventually the train came to a halt in the middle of the night. The next morning the doors of the train opened and in came the Russians. They were liberated. But Israel and Ray were both very ill with typhus. Ray was so sick that she couldn't even be moved and had to be treated on the spot, while Israel was taken to hospital. Nine weeks later he came back for Ray who had had to remain in hospital for a further six months of treatment and recovery.

Israel and Ray moved to South Africa in 1951. They had two daughters, Bettina and Patricia. When Israel was asked whether he found it difficult to talk about his experiences, he answered: ***"No, I personally don't find it hard because the more I talk about it, the more I get relief because it comes out of me. My wife, not: she doesn't want to talk about it. Not everybody is the same. But I feel in times like it is now, and you are able to talk about it, it's worthwhile because look what is happening today in Europe: they're starting in a different way, but they're starting again."***





VIOLETTE FINTZ

BORN 1921, RHODES

“I’m thinking now – it was madness to … to fast [for Yom Kippur], because it was a place [with] no god or no anything …”

A native of the cosmopolitan island of Rhodes (off the coast of Greece), Violette Fintz (née Maio) was the eldest of five children, with three younger sisters, Sara, Stella and Miriam, and a brother, Leon. She described a rich, religious family life before the war and a sense of the deep connectedness of the Rhodes Jewish community.

Violette’s father was a confectioner. During the war, however, he was unable to ply his trade as sugar was unavailable. Violette consequently worked for the Singer Sewing Company in order to help provide for her family.

On 17 July 1944, the remaining Jews on the island were interned. Many of the younger people had already left Rhodes in the earlier years, but Violette and her family had stayed. That day, their possessions were stolen and they were held in one of the government buildings for four days without food. They were then marched to the port where they boarded two ships and left Rhodes for Piraeus, Greece, where they were then put into trucks and transported to Haidari camp in Athens.

Four days later they were forced to walk to the station where they saw cattle trucks upon which were painted the words: ***"Horses 8, people 80".*** They spent weeks in those cattle trucks en route to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Violette recalled that as they were disembarking from the truck, ***"a German came, grabbed my mother from the hair and she turned and said, 'My children' and I had the courage to turn round and say, 'Ciao Mamma.' My pay was a blow on my head from the German."***

Violette described her arrival at Auschwitz: ***"On the third or fourth day they 'matriculated' us, we had no names: our names were our numbers and my number is 24425 ... 'matriculation' was a tattoo ... the lady said to me, 'It's sore?' [and] I said, 'No my heart is more sore than what you're doing on my arms.'"***



Violette found herself at a distinct disadvantage in the camp as she was unable to speak German or Polish. This meant that she was unable to understand the commands of the guards and was at constant risk of punishment.

During the Jewish Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the girls from Rhodes fasted and asked the other prisoners to keep their lunchtime soup until after the fast. However, the starving prisoners ate their helpings, and the girls were left for 48 hours without anything to eat. Violette reflected, ***"I'm thinking now – it was madness to ... to fast, because it was a place [with] no god or no anything ... really and truly, I don't know ... we had faith."***

Violette and the other new arrivals from Rhodes searched for news of their family members who had also arrived at Auschwitz. Some of the Polish prisoners, who had already been there for two years, helped the newcomers understand that their family had been murdered upon arrival.


ARBEIT MACHT FREI
HALT

After some time, the Nazis moved 84 of the girls from Rhodes to another concentration camp, Dachau. Violette and her sister, Sara, were among those chosen. In Dachau, Violette was reunited with her brother, Leon. By that time, he was already ill; hot soup had been spilled down his leg and the wound had gone gangrenous. He died shortly after Violette left the camp.

In January 1945, Violette and Sara were moved to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp where they found their sister, Miriam. Violette recalled, ***"She put her arms around me, saying, 'Never will I be separated from you again.'"*** Everyone in Bergen-Belsen was extremely ill with typhus, typhoid and cholera. Violette was not spared from these diseases, and it was through sheer luck that she survived.

On 15 April 1945, Bergen-Belsen was liberated. Violette and Sara survived; Miriam did not. In November 1945, after they had recuperated, Violette and Sara returned to Rhodes. When they disembarked, they were met by their only aunt – she had been saved by the Turkish Consul, Selahattin Ülkümen, who was later recognised by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Among the Nations. According to Violette, when her aunt saw the girls, ***"she starts screaming, 'Where are our people?' ... and I never had the words to tell her."***



In 1946, the sisters moved to the Congo and later to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) where Violette married and had a family. Her son moved to Cape Town and after the passing of her husband in 1975, she also moved there, where she lived until her death in 2007. A very active member of the survivor community, Violette was the chairlady of the Sh'erit Ha'pletah, an organisation of Holocaust survivors, and devoted herself to the work of keeping the memories alive of those who had perished in the Holocaust. She was always ready to speak about her experiences as she believed it was her mission to be a witness.

"They listen to me, but some other people, they don't want to listen and this makes me sad because to forget the Holocaust is a dangerous thing. We must never forget. Never."



STELLA ISRAEL

BORN 1926, RHODES

“My body was reduced like a phantom, full of boils but I was scared to complain.”

Stella Israel (née Sigura) was born in Rhodes. On 20 July 1944, Stella and her mother were deported from the island by the Germans, having already lost all their possessions. For eight days they travelled on a fishing boat without any food or water until they finally arrived in Piraeus, Greece. From there they were herded into cattle trucks and transported to Haidari camp.

“We had to take off our clothes and were completely naked in front of the German soldiers. We had already lost everything, so I believe they did this for the pleasure of maltreating and abusing us.”

They were housed in different barracks and were made to run between them. Her mother, a previously fit and healthy 52-year-old woman, was so weak that she could barely stand. A few days later they were once again pushed into cattle trucks and transported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. On arrival, they were separated from their families and Stella recalled ***“that was the last day I saw my mother”.*** She was murdered in the gas chamber on 17 August 1944.



During her time at Auschwitz, Stella worked transporting bricks. She remained there for three months before being deported to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

At Bergen-Belsen, Stella was made to sleep in a stable as the barracks were not yet ready for the prisoners. During the day she worked in the latrines. She remained there for four months and was then deported to yet another concentration camp, Dachau. She remembered that by that time her ***"body was reduced like a phantom, full of boils but I was scared to complain."***

For two months, Stella worked in a factory in Dachau that assembled aeroplanes. She had to walk 10 kilometres to and from work every day, and people from the nearby villages used to laugh at her dishevelled appearance: shaven head, torn rags and twisted shoes.

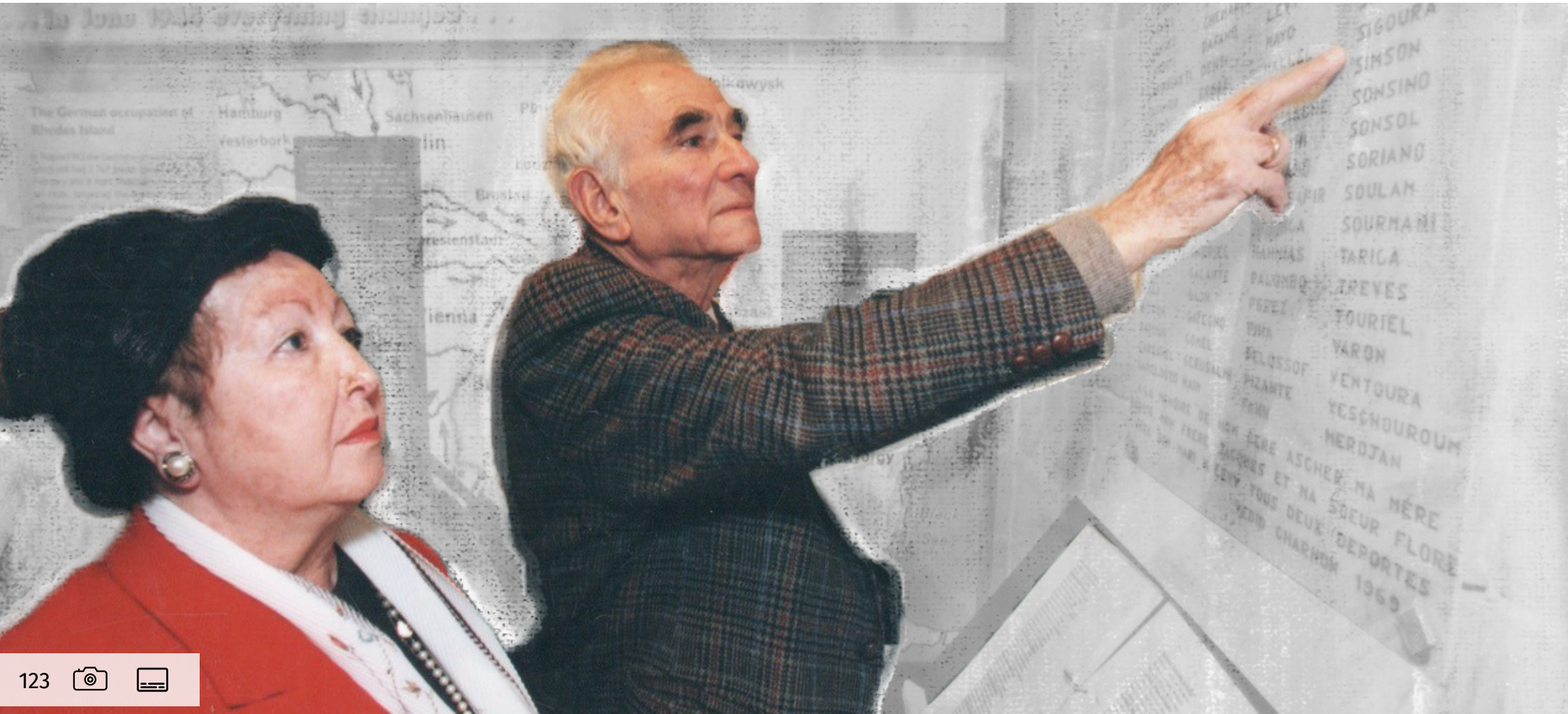
While Stella was in Dachau, the camp suffered from heavy air bombardments by the Allies. It was subsequently decided that the prisoners would be moved to the Theresienstadt ghetto. Once again, she was herded into a cattle truck without food or water. Every second day the doors were opened, and the prisoners were allowed out for half an hour. They scavenged for herbs to eat and looked in the pockets of dead soldiers in the hope of finding a morsel to eat.

By the time they arrived at the ghetto, Stella was seriously ill with dysentery and typhoid fever and only remembered being loaded onto a stretcher and taken to hospital. There she learnt that the Russians had arrived and that they had all been liberated. She was kept in hospital for two months in Milan and was then sent to a displaced persons camp until September 1945.

"I was a prisoner of the Germans for more than 10 months, but for me it was like 10 years. Even now I ask myself how it was possible to survive after so much suffering."

Stella settled in South Africa in 1960 and had two children, five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. She reflected on her experiences during the Holocaust in a letter to her children in May 1964:

"I am sure God helped me and he felt pity to see such a young girl of 18 years old go through so much. He gave me strength to make me come back into the world of living people."




KINDNESS & COURAGE

The Holocaust happened in full view of the world. Millions of individuals witnessed the crimes of the Nazis. Some chose to resist the regime while others collaborated; some helped the victims while most were bystanders. The portraits in this book showcase the wide range of choices made by perpetrators, collaborators, bystanders, resistors and rescuers.

Hiding

Thousands of Jews attempted to survive the Nazi onslaught by going into hiding. They were hidden in attics, cellars, bunkers, and sewers, or by passing as 'Aryans' using forged papers. Many were sheltered by Christian or Muslim families at great personal risk. Some, especially children, were hidden in churches or monasteries.

Rescue

Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust came from different countries, religions, genders, ages and social backgrounds. They risked their lives to save Jews while facing danger and even death. Rescue included hiding Jews in homes or farms, providing them with false identities, smuggling and assisting Jews to escape and sheltering children at risk. Rescuers acted because of their opposition to the Nazis, their compassion and religious beliefs or for moral principles. Yad Vashem (Israel's official memorial to the Holocaust) recognises rescuers by awarding them the title of Righteous Among the Nations.

Resistance

In Nazi-occupied Europe, thousands of individuals and numerous underground movements resisted the Nazis. Resistance included non-cooperation with the authorities, listening to forbidden Allied radio broadcasts, producing anti-Nazi newspapers and leaflets, forging papers, warfare, sabotaging rail lines and recapturing of towns. These acts of resistance significantly hindered the Nazis' plans, saved lives, and gave encouragement to all those who were persecuted.


IRENE GROLL
BORN 1933, GERMANY

“I became a French girl, no longer Jewish, named Irene Duclos.”

Irene Groll (née Kayem) was born in Kusel, a western province of Germany, near the French border. Her family had lived in the Kusel area for generations. Her grandfather had fought in WWI and had been decorated by the Kaiser.

On Kristallnacht in November 1938, when Irene was almost six years old, the Jewish men of Kusel were taken to the Dachau concentration camp — her father and grandfather among them. She recalled that from that time on, her mother always had a suitcase packed and ready.

“For the first time I felt fear.”

Irene and her mother went to live with her grandmother in the nearby town of Ulmet. They were later reunited with her father and grandfather who were eventually released from Dachau. Yet all of them suffered from the new restrictions that forbade Jews from working or attending ‘regular’ schools.



In October 1940, together with almost 5 000 Jews, Irene and her family were loaded on to trains and taken to the Gurs internment camp in southwestern France. After about four months, her grandparents were sent to the Noé internment camp, while Irene and her parents were sent to the Rivesaltes internment camp. Because of the high concentration of children and families incarcerated at Rivesaltes, it was sometimes referred to as a ‘family camp’.

It was in Rivesaltes that Irene learnt her first Yiddish songs. Although her family were practising Jews, for many generations they had considered themselves first and foremost German and spoke only German.

From the spring of 1941, after strenuous negotiations with several international humanitarian organisations, the French government agreed to allow Jewish children under the age of 15 to be removed from the camps. Although extremely difficult to do so, approximately 500 children were successfully removed from internment camps during the war.

After much persuasion from the Jewish authorities, Irene's mother agreed that Irene should be removed from the camp, knowing that it would improve her chances of survival. ***"It was only after I held my first-born in my arms that I felt the pain my mother must have felt when she had to let me go",*** reflected Irene. Her mother had made her a little cotton purse while in Gurs, which she treasured. It was the only tangible reminder of her parents, whom she never saw again. They were sent from Rivesaltes to the Drancy transit camp and then to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where they were murdered.

After a harrowing parting from her parents, Irene was taken to a children's rehabilitation home in Palavas-les-Flots near Marseilles. Irene was happy there: she was well fed, cared for and enjoyed the freedom of walking on the nearby beach. She was later transferred to another children's home, Château Le Masgelier, near to where her paternal family still lived. They found her at the children's home and she went to live with them. When things in France started getting even worse for the Jews, they asked a friend to assist with getting her false documents. ***"I became a French girl, no longer Jewish, named Irene Duclos."*** Her family then arranged for her to be taken into a Catholic convent where she was taught the catechism and became fluent in French. She remained in the convent for two years.

When the war ended, Irene and her surviving grandparents decided to move to South Africa. They had some family members who had managed to escape there in 1936. Sadly, Irene's grandfather passed away six weeks before their departure. Her grandmother didn't speak any French, which left 12-year-old Irene to deal with the intimidating bureaucracy of the French officials. Irene and her grandmother first had to travel to Paris to obtain travel visas and then had to wait for six weeks to board their ship from Lisbon. They eventually arrived in South Africa on 27 August 1946.



Irene later married George in Cape Town and they had four children and four grandchildren.

"I consider myself as one of the fortunate people. Approximately one and a half million children perished in the war. Hitler did that on purpose because when you kill off the children you kill off a nation, because children are the next generation."

Like many survivors, for a long time after the war, Irene chose not to speak about her experiences. ***"We didn't ever, ever discuss what had been before. I didn't speak about it because one of the things I really prided myself on, was that I was like everybody else: nobody could look at me and say, oh, she's been in a camp."*** However, she regretted not sharing her story with her family. Over time she slowly allowed herself to research the historical details of her ordeal and give her testimony. The one aspect she never allowed herself to focus on was the suffering of her parents: having to let their only daughter go, the terrible conditions they must have endured in the camps and ultimately their murder.



ASCIA LIEBERMAN

BORN 1934, LITHUANIA



“[He] was like an angel. He looked after us. He did whatever he could.”

Ascia Lieberman (née Kushner) was born in Subačius, Lithuania. She lived in a double storey house with her parents, two older sisters, Mina and Sonja, and a younger brother, Joseph. She recalled a very happy childhood until the war started and described playing in the garden and looking for wild mushrooms and cherries. ***“I was looking for my own adventures.”***

When the Soviets occupied Lithuania in 1940, Ascia’s father’s business was confiscated without compensation and the family was told that they would be sent to Siberia. Two weeks before their departure, Germany invaded Lithuania and while many other families fled to Russia, her father believed that, as had occurred in WWI, they would be well-treated by the Germans and so they stayed put.

However, as the Germans began bombing Subačius, Ascia and her family took refuge with a Lithuanian family outside of the town. Their hosts were initially very friendly until they heard the instruction, ***“Juden raus! (Jews out)”,*** broadcast on the radio. They were no longer welcome and had to go back home. During this time, the Nazis and their local collaborators rounded up many Jews, including young children and old people, and marched them through the streets into the forest where they were shot into mass graves.



Ascia's father made himself invaluable to the German officers by fixing the radio stations and supplying homemade wine. This would save their lives for a time. Ascia and her family still had to move into the ghetto though, where they shared accommodation and the little food available with other families. Her father was sent to work in a wool factory.

One evening there was a commotion as the word spread of the ghetto's imminent liquidation: ***"Tonight they are going to kill us all, they are going to liquidate the ghetto."*** In the ensuing panic and confusion, Ascia and her brother were separated from the rest of their family. Unknown to them, their mother and eldest sister were murdered by Lithuanian collaborators, and their bodies dumped in a mass grave.



Ascia and Joseph made their way to their father's factory. There they ran into the local chemist's wife who took them to her house, where their father and sister were already hiding. The four Kushners then made their way across the fields in the deep snow to the farm of Juozas Markevičius to seek shelter. Juozas created a space in his barn where they could hide in safety. Ascia emotionally recalled that he ***"was like an angel. He looked after us. He did whatever he could."***

The barn was filled with hay from floor to ceiling, into which a small hiding place was made. There was just enough room for them to sit or lie down and no daylight. They had a small paraffin lamp which they had to be very careful with so that the hay didn't catch fire. They had a bucket to use as a toilet and Juozas brought them what little food he could get. Ascia recalled that there were ***"some days we had no food at all as he couldn't steal from his wife because a woman notices what is in her home, in her kitchen ... She couldn't know that we were there."*** They hid like this for nearly three years.

In 1943, when they could no longer tolerate the harsh conditions, the Kushners decided to join a group of Jewish labourers who were building a house for the Nazi authorities. The overseer of the group allowed the family to join without registration. However, after a short time, the Nazis announced that all the Jews of Lithuania were to be deported. Her family realised that deportation meant death and they escaped once again to the Markevičius family, bringing with them three other Jewish labourers. They eventually decided it would be safer to separate; Sonja went to stay in a monastery and Ascia moved to another farm, pretending to be a Lithuanian orphan. She worked as a herd girl, looking after pigs and a cow.

Ascia lost contact with her family during this time but after liberation managed to reunite with her father. They travelled together through Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, never staying long in any one town. Once they reached Hungary, they joined a group of Jewish refugees and walked through the Alps to Austria. She remembered seeing the sun rising as they entered Austria: ***"It was safe and everyone just lay down, they were exhausted, they lay down at the edge of the mountain."*** After a short stay, they were taken to a displaced persons camp in Italy.

Sonja had also survived in hiding and would later immigrate to Israel with her fiancé. The rest of the family immigrated to South Africa to join an aunt in Durban. Once Ascia completed her education, she too managed to get a job in Durban. She married and had three children and grandchildren and lived for many years in Johannesburg.

In 1991, Yad Vashem recognised Juozas and Elena Markevičius, their sons, Jonas, Romualdas and Vladas, and their daughters, Marijona Rytmetienė and Valerija Stanevičienė, as Righteous Among the Nations.

Ascia vividly remembered her traumatic experiences during the Holocaust, yet she always tried to hold on to the beauty and light of her childhood with her family.

"When I close my eyes and cast my mind back, a long long time ago as if in a dream, I see green fields filled with wild flowers, butterflies hopping from flower to flower, and the breeze is swaying them from side to side as if inviting: 'Come and dance with me' and I danced among the butterflies with a handful of flowers for my mother."





LYONELL FLISS

BORN 1935, ROMANIA

“I am not a religious person … [but] I believed he was a messenger of god.”

Lyonell Fliss was born in Iasi, Romania. His father, Lupo, owned a fabric shop, *The Golden Pomegranate,* in the centre of the city and his mother, Adela, assisted in the shop. They lived comfortably in an apartment and Lyonell recalled spending many hours in the shop mischievously making paper airplanes and launching them at customers.

Iasi was a cultural city with many theatres, museums and universities. Half of the population was Jewish, and they were involved in all facets of cultural and economic life. Although Lyonell was an only child, he was part of a large, warm extended family and had a happy childhood. His earliest memory was of an outing to the countryside with aunts, uncles and cousins all travelling on a large cart pulled by two horses. They visited an uncle who worked on a nearby vineyard and he remembered spending many happy hours playing with his cousins.

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Rezultatul concursului organizat sub patronajul revistei „Realitatea Ilustrată".







DUMINICĂ 12 Iunie crt. a avut loc la Parcul Regele Carol II din Iași, serbarea Asociației Funcționarilor Judecătorești din Circ. Curții de Apel, Iași, serbare dată sub patronajul revistei „Realitatea Ilustrată".

In cadrul acestei serbări, care s'a bucurat de un succes deplin, s'a ținut și un concurs, la care au fost premiați cei mai sănătoși și mai frumoși copii din Iași.

Au fost premiați următorii copii: CATEGORIA I-a, până la 2 ani: premiul I, Rodica Popovici, premiul II, Lydia Oberhoffer; premiul III, Marica Segal; premiul IV, Doinița Dobrovici. CATEGORIA II-a, dela 2 la 6 ani: premiul I, Angela Orășanu și Nușa Gavrilescu; premiul II, Dumitru Tudoran, și Fliss Lionel; premiul III, Lică Nestor și Adrian Grișnic; premiul IV, Monica Costin. CATEGORIA III-a, dela 6 la 13 ani: premiul I, Irina Iamandi; premiul II, Miorica Iamandi și Violette Dardală; premiul III, Violette Gheorghiu și Lulu Bercovici; premiul IV, Rosica Rahmil.

Un grup de concurente dela 6 ani în sus.

Concurenții și concurentele dela 2 la 6 ani.



Every year in the middle of summer, a competition was held to find the most beautiful and healthy children in Iasi. There were always hundreds of children accompanied by their proud parents. When Lyonell was about five years old, he came second in this competition, winning a prize and having his photo printed in the local newspaper. The last happy memory that he had of his childhood was being chosen as the runner-up in the Mr Iasi competition.

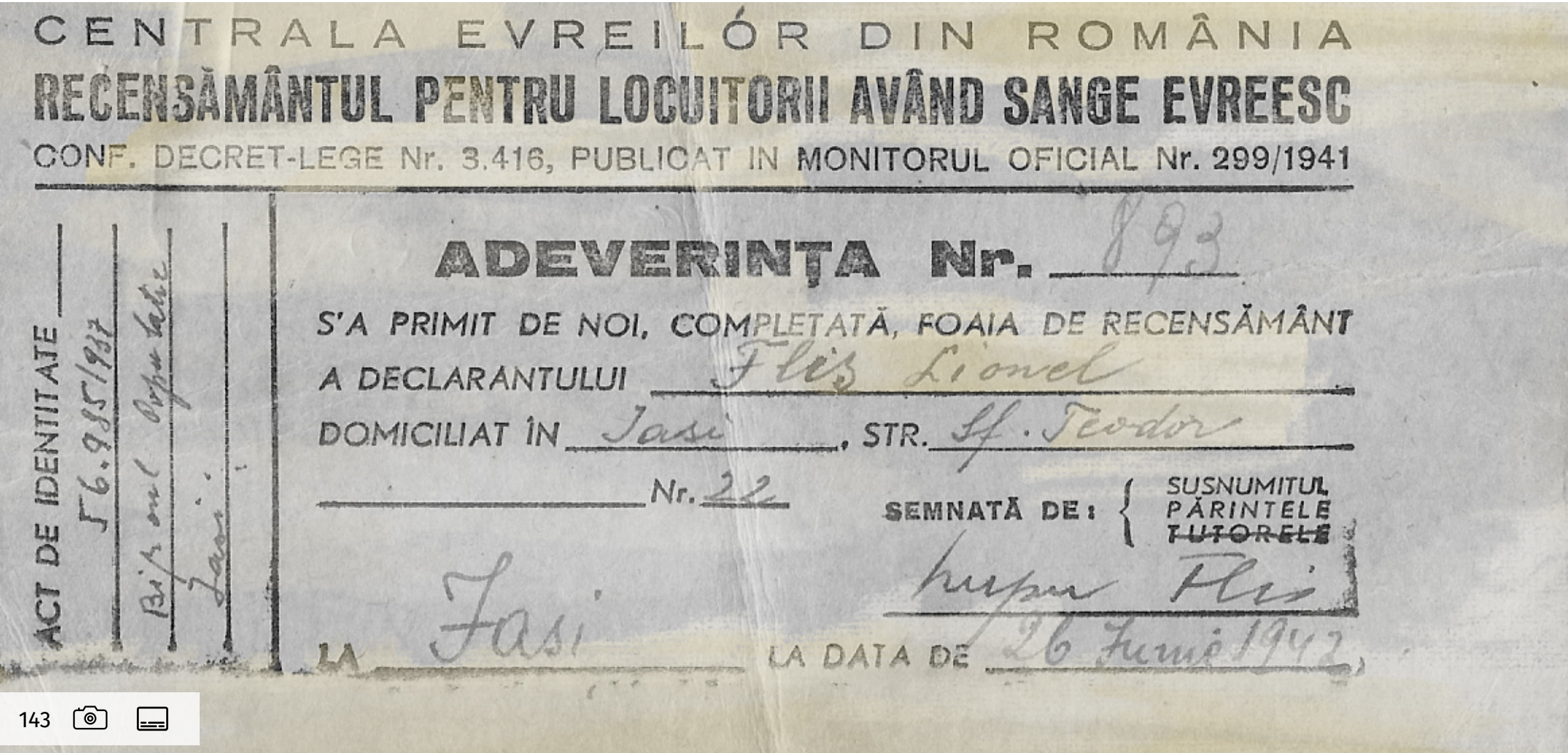
Romania already had a history of antisemitism, but the situation became worse when it joined Nazi Germany as part of the Axis Powers in 1941. Iasi was about 20 kilometres away from the Russian border and as German and Romanian troops prepared for the invasion of the Soviet Union, his parents grew more and more concerned.

On 28 June 1941, the caretaker of their apartment building threatened to target their family. Luckily, Lyonell's mother saved them by insisting that they all hide under their beds when they heard banging on their door. The caretaker broke the door down but seeing that nobody was there, he helped himself to their precious possessions and left. Later, German soldiers were searching all the Jewish homes and found the Fliss family hiding under their beds. They were forcibly removed from the apartment and Lyonell's mother broke her leg when a soldier pushed her down the stairs.



The Fliss family were then ordered to join a line of Jews outside the central police station. The queue moved forward very slowly and while they waited, they heard gunshots and saw piles of dead bodies. Lyonell's mother spotted a kindly looking young Romanian soldier and begged him to take Lyonell and adopt him. He told her not to worry, that he would protect them. He then took all three of them to the back of the line, by which time the shooting had stopped and they were released. They could not go back to their own apartment as they were scared of the caretaker, so they joined other family members who had gathered at Lyonell's grandmother's home. Over 13 000 Jews were massacred in the Iasi pogrom that day. Lyonell's relatives were among the thousands of Jews rounded up and packed into freight cars and vans. Those 'death trains' were sealed and moved back and forth between railway stations and 2 650 people died of suffocation or thirst, while others lost their sanity.

Although the killings stopped, life continued to be very dangerous for the Fliss family and, like all in the Jewish community, they had to wear an identifying yellow star. Lyonell remembered being six years old, seeing other children going to school and asking his mother when he would also start school. She had to tell him that he could not go to school because he was Jewish. ***"It was the first time that I was told that I am Jewish",*** he recalled. The family moved to a small house near a synagogue, where classes were held for the Jewish children. Although the family had suffered losses, including the death of Lyonell's great-grandmother, he felt very protected by his parents and was unaware of any immediate danger.



CENTRALA EVREILÓR DIN ROMÂNIA

RECENSĂMÂNTUL PENTRU LOCUITORII AVÂND SANGE EVREESC

CONF. DECRET-LEGE Nr. 3.416, PUBLICAT IN MONITORUL OFICIAL Nr. 299/1941

ACT DE IDENTITATE 56.985/1937 Biproul Populatie Iasi

ADEVERINȚA Nr. 893

S'A PRIMIT DE NOI, COMPLETATĂ, FOAIA DE RECENSĂMÂNT

A DECLARANTULUI Fliz Lionel

DOMICILIAT ÎN Iasi, STR. Sf. Teodor

Nr. 22

SEMNATĂ DE: { SUSNUMITUL / PĂRINTELE / ~~TUTORELE~~

Lupu Fliz

LA Iasi LA DATA DE 26 Iunie 1942



Towards the end of the war, Iasi was bombed daily by the Allies and many families, including Lyonell's extended family decided to flee to Bucharest, the capital of Romania. There they lived in his uncle's small apartment.

After the war ended, the Fliss family stayed in Bucharest, where Lyonell finished school and went on to study civil engineering at the university. In the late 1950s he met and married his wife, Liliana, and they decided to escape the Iron Curtain. After a difficult journey, they arrived in Israel where they lived for six years before moving to Johannesburg for work.

In 2011, Lyonell returned to Iasi for the 70th commemoration of the Iasi Massacre where he met, among others, the German ambassador. He told him of his 'guardian angel', the Romanian soldier who risked his own life to save the lives of three Jews.

"I am not a religious person ... [but] I believed he was a messenger of god impersonated in a Romanian officer, a Romanian soul".



HÉLÈNE JOFFE

BORN 1934, FRANCE

“At nine years old I was a mother to my younger brother.”

Hélène Joffe (née Mindel) was born in Marseilles, France. She had three brothers — Leon, Michel and Armand — and a sister, Berthe. When Hélène was about six years old, France was attacked by Germany and Marseilles was bombed. She recalled going with her mother and little brother to buy milk when suddenly everything went dark and she heard the bombing. Her mother pulled them into a building for safety. When they later came out, the street was filled with glass and there were dead people everywhere.

Yet Hélène’s family had no intention of leaving France. ***“My father believed that the French would never be touched – he used to say, ‘In France I sleep with the windows open’. He did not believe French Jews were in danger.”***

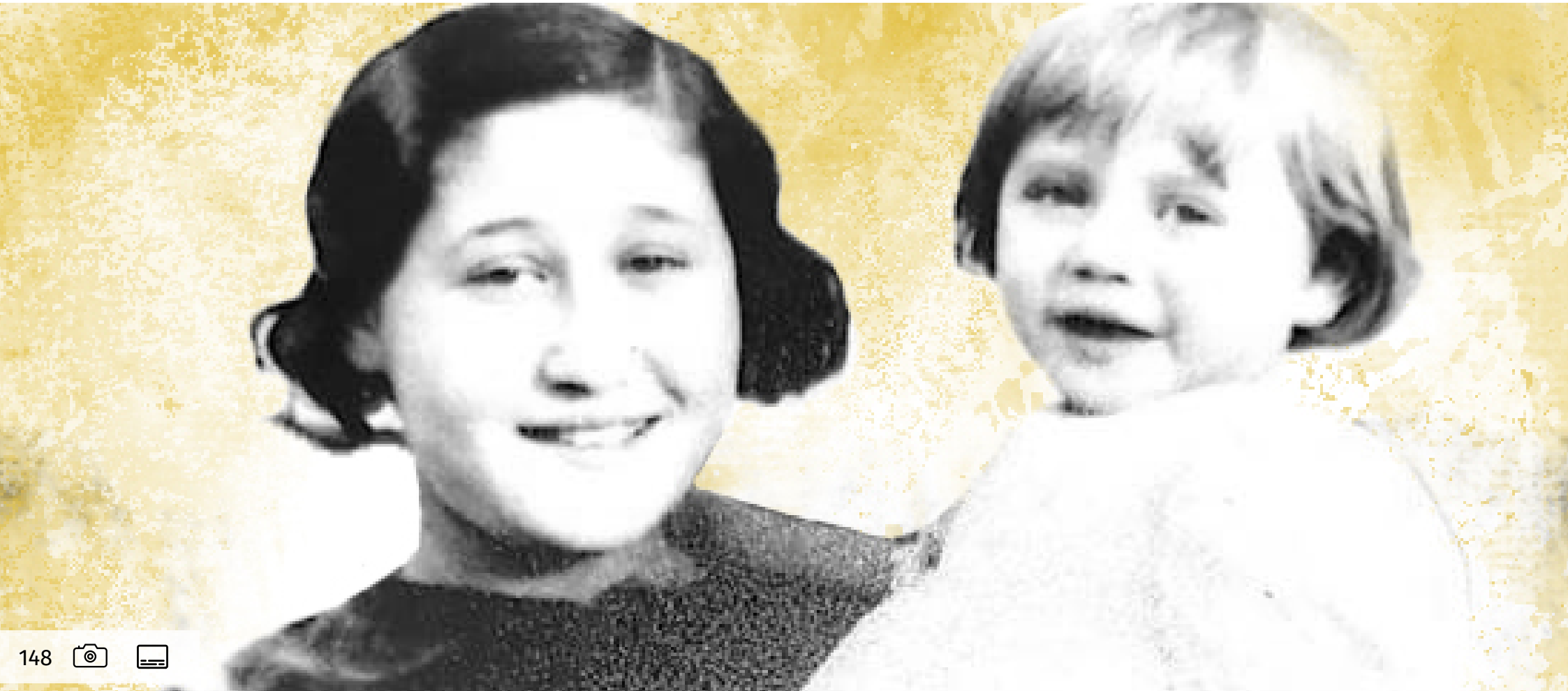
At midnight on 22 January 1943, Hélène recalled a knock on their door. The authorities demanded to see her father’s papers, which were stamped with the identification, ‘Jew’. He was ordered to get dressed and was then taken into a police van. Berthe stood at the window screaming after her father, but was soon silenced by the police’s warning, ***“go in or we will shoot you”.*** Their father was subsequently sent to the Drancy transit camp, and from there to the Sobibor killing centre where he was murdered.

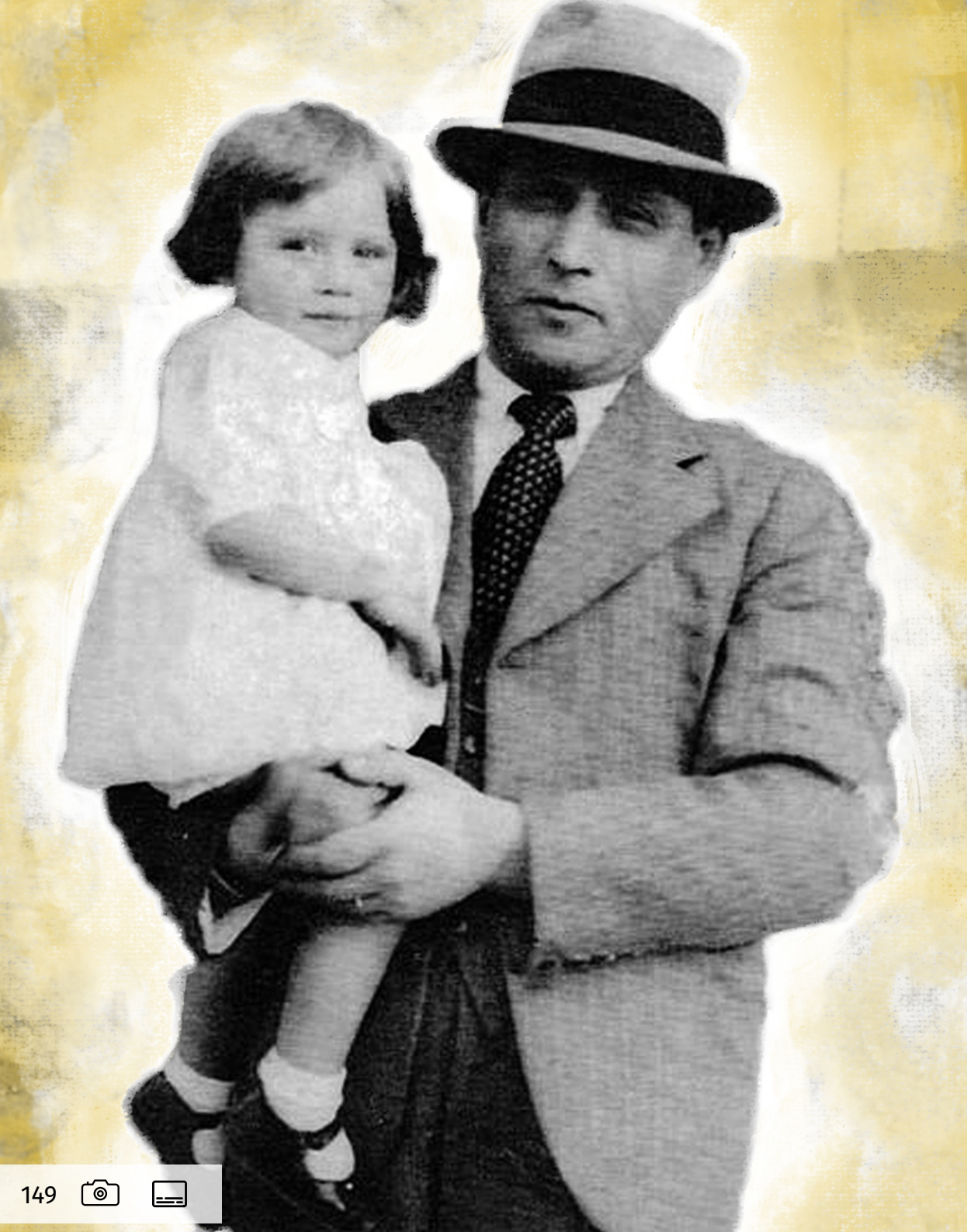
The following day, the French police returned for the rest of the Mindel family. They spent a full day standing in the town square without food and were joined by the other Jewish families of the town. That evening, they were marched to the train station, where the women and men were separated and then pushed into cattle trucks. Hélène's two older brothers, Leon and Michel, managed to jump off their cattle truck and join the French Resistance. Meanwhile, Hélène, her mother, sister and little brother Armand were taken to a transit camp called Fréjus, where they stayed for about two or three weeks in freezing conditions. It was then announced that they would be sent to the Drancy transit camp. However, while they were waiting to be transported, a German officer looked at their papers and then inexplicably allowed them to escape. Hélène's only explanation was that her mother and brother had blonde hair and blue eyes – typical 'Aryan' features.



The four of them managed to find an Italian family who agreed to hide them so they could evade further transportation. They later managed to reunite with Leon and Michel, who, through their connections in the resistance, organised new identities for the family, changing their last name from Mindel to Arnaud. As the Arnaud family, they moved into a house in a little village occupied by German troops.

Hélène was only eight years old at the time. She remembered how one day a little girl said to her, ***"You know, I am Jewish."*** She had felt such an overwhelming joy and instinctively revealed, ***"I am also Jewish!"*** Following this revelation, Hélène and her family's identities were discovered and the resistance had to swiftly move them out of the village for their safety.





Hélène and Armand were separated from their mother and sister. They were sent to hide in the mountains in an area where the resistance received parachuted arms. They spent two years there, and despite her youth, Hélène was given various tasks to do, including washing clothes and putting out traps to catch wild rabbits in the forest. She remembered feeling that although she was young, she was no longer a little child anymore because of the mental suffering and the constant hunger she endured.

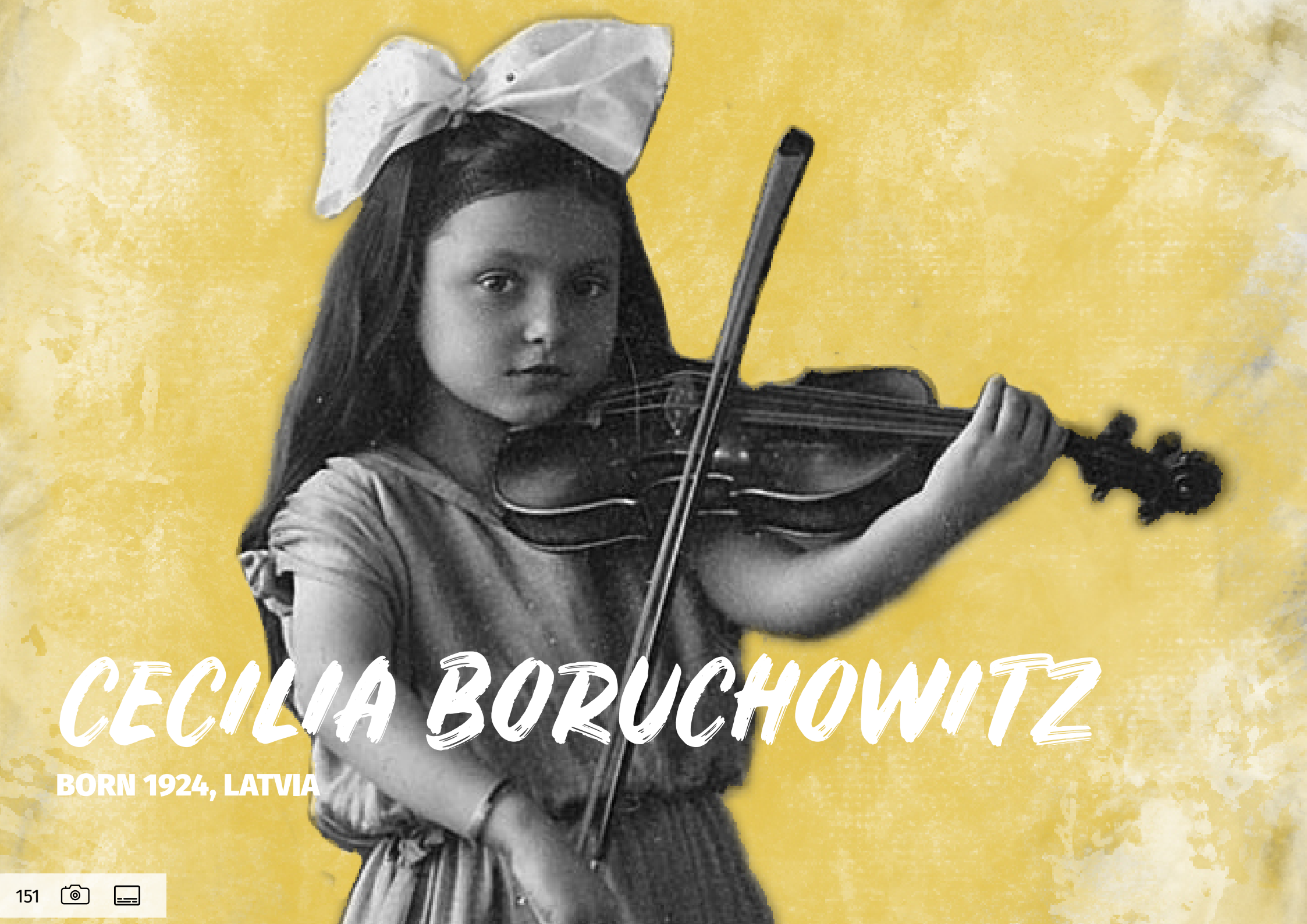
Hélène recalled how she became a little mother to Armand and therefore had no right to be scared.

"If I was scared, Armand would have been hysterical. I gave him whatever I could get. They fed us but not much because they didn't have. The forests had a lot of wild fruit and hazelnuts and mushrooms. I knew the wild fruit, I knew everything that grew in the wild; that's how we lived."

After liberation, Hélène and Armand were reunited with their mother. At first Armand did not even recognise her. They went back to Marseilles where they were given an apartment, and Hélène and Armand were even able to return to school. Sadly, Armand later got leukaemia and died at the age of 21.

Hélène came to South Africa in 1954 where she met her husband. She had three daughters, four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. In November 2013, she received the prestigious award, the Knight of the French National Order of Merit at the French Embassy in Cape Town.





CECILIA BORUCHOWITZ

BORN 1924, LATVIA

“All the nations have got good people and bad people.”

Cecilia Boruchowitz (née Gradis) was born in Dvinsk (Daugavpils), Latvia. She had two older sisters, Elizabeth and Nadia. They lived in comfort with their parents and were a musical family. Cecilia remembered that her parents, particularly her father, liked to entertain guests. ***“He was so proud that his daughters could play the violin and speak three languages. I was the little one and so everybody liked me and used to give me chocolates.”*** They spoke Russian, Latvian and German. Cecilia attended a Latvian junior school in Dvinsk and later went to live with her aunt and uncle in Riga where she attended a private Latvian school and also studied to play the violin at the Conservatoire under Professor Metz. She had a very happy and active life.

Once the Soviet Union occupied Latvia in 1940, life became very difficult. Cecilia returned to her family in Dvinsk just a week before the Germans occupied Latvia in June and July 1941. Soon after her return, all the Jews in the town were rounded up and taken to the local synagogue where Cecilia and her sister, Nadia were separated from the rest of their family. That was the last time they saw their mother, father and sister, Elisabeth, who were all murdered in the Holocaust.



Cecilia and Nadia begged a nearby guard to let them escape and somehow managed to get away. Taking off their yellow stars they went to the home of Professor Metz, Cecilia's Christian music teacher who agreed to hide them for several months. He even arranged forged Latvian passports for them but when they went to collect the passports, they were recognised, arrested and jailed for a week. Fortunately, Professor Metz had good connections and managed to get them released. They then hid in various people's homes until they secured train tickets to Vilna (Vilnius), Lithuania.

When Cecilia and Nadia arrived in Vilna, they first stayed with local peasants and then with a Polish woman who was very kind to them. However, Cecilia decided that she would rather live and suffer with Jews, and so they moved to the Vilna ghetto. She joined the ghetto's Symphony Orchestra and worked in the hospital as a cleaner. She remembered playing ***"in the evenings when people were exhausted, hungry ... I played some solo, I played with the orchestra. I played also [for] the policemen."***

Cecilia and Nadia managed to escape to Vienna, Austria, just before the Vilna ghetto was liquidated. They lived there as Roman Catholics and Cecilia joined the Vienna Orchestra. She was even offered an audition for the prestigious Radio Orchestra. However, when she went for the audition, she saw another Latvian musician who would recognise her as a Jew and ran away.

After liberation, it became very difficult for Cecilia and Nadia to live in Vienna, and they travelled first to Hungary and later to Italy, where they were helped by the Jewish relief organisation, the American Joint Distribution Committee. They gifted Cecilia with a violin, which was recovered by American forces from among looted valuables taken by the Nazis. The violin's former owner was most likely murdered in the Holocaust. This gift made it possible for her to study violin at the Santa Cecilia Music Academy in Rome.

Cecilia's experience during the Holocaust exposed her to both the kindness and cruelty of humankind. She poignantly surmised from this ***"that all the nations have got good people and bad people ... there were good people and bad people also in Latvia."***

While studying in Rome, Cecilia met her future husband Salomon, a survivor from Lithuania. After they got married, they moved to South Africa in 1949 and had three children. Cecilia played the violin for the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra for many years.

Today, Cecilia's violin has found its home in the permanent exhibition of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre. Cecilia's teenaged great-grandsons, Jacob and Joshua, were moved to see her violin and story shared with the public. Joshua spoke about the privilege of having heard her testimony first hand and said that hearing ***"about her survival during the Holocaust has made me, a fourth-generation survivor, a witness to her story."*** Cecilia's violin forms a tangible connection with her story and the varied human responses to the horrors of the Holocaust that it holds. Joshua believed that his ***"great-grandmother's story of ultimate resilience will go a long way to ensure that her legacy as my Holocaust heroine lives on forever."***





JACK SHMUKLER

BORN 1936, BELARUS

"I have told the story to my children, and they will tell it to their children, so that your name will be remembered by us forever."

Jack Shmukler was born in Iwye, Belarus. Iwye had a population of about 4 000, of whom 3 500 were Jewish. Jack's father, Saia Leib, owned a painting and decorating business. His sister, Sara, was two years older than him. When Jack was only one, his mother, Chaia Beila, died and he sadly had no memories of her. His father remarried Leika, his late wife's sister, as was customary at the time, and his brother Chaim was born. They had a large extended family and Jack recalled visiting his grandfather's bakery and being fed large slices of freshly baked bread with butter and sprinkled sugar, ***"a culinary delight for a quiet little boy!"***

In 1941, when Jack was four, the Nazis invaded Iwye and almost immediately, raids, selections and executions began. They were moved into the ghetto and his father was forced to bury murdered Jews, which deeply traumatised him. He decided that the family should go into hiding. Jack's grandfather, Joseph, had good relations with the Christian locals and they made arrangements to leave the ghetto. Saia Leib and Leika had to make the difficult decision to leave their beautiful blonde baby, Chaim, with a couple in a nearby village who would pass him off as their own for safekeeping.



When the final roundup came, Jack's family hid with his uncle, waiting for nightfall to escape the ghetto. Ten members of the family eventually escaped, moving from one place to another to avoid their hiding places being discovered. Jack remembered one time climbing out through the trapdoor in a farmer's shed with his cousin Avramel and seeing two little karakul lambs feeding on leftover potatoes. The boys were starving and had to decide whether to eat the potatoes themselves or to walk away. Finally, they took half the potatoes, leaving the rest for the hungry lambs. One of their final hiding places was with Pavel Konon, a farmer who fed them and made sure that they were safely hidden in a bunker in his shed. Chaim eventually joined them there as the couple looking after him could no longer keep him. Unfortunately, it was impossible to keep the little boy quiet and some members of the group, afraid that he was endangering their safety, insisted he be returned to the couple. Tragically, Jack never saw his baby brother again.

Eventually, the family moved to the relative safety of the forest and Jack recalled that living above ground felt like paradise after long periods sitting in shallow, crowded bunkers. Saia Leib and Jack's uncle would make trips at night to nearby villages to find food for the family. On one of these excursions they were captured by renegade partisans but thankfully were released.

The Russians liberated Iwye when Jack was about eight, and the family returned to their home, which they managed to reclaim with some difficulty. Saia Leib couldn't return to his previous business and instead painted slogans on flags for the Russian parades. Jack started school and excelled. However, the indifference shown to them by the villagers was difficult to live with and after a year they moved, first to Lodz, Poland and then to a displaced persons camp in Germany.

Jack's family dreamed of going to Palestine but unfortunately, unable to do so, they emigrated to Bulawayo, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1948. The family had to start over in a foreign country, with a different language and culture and no money. A year later, Jack's youngest brother Michael was born.

After matriculating, Jack went to London to complete his O levels and study architecture. He returned to South Africa in 1963, where he worked as an architectural assistant. He met his wife, Denise, at a movie club and they fell in love. Jack lived a happy, fulfilling life, involving himself in his communities in Cape Town and Johannesburg. He taught and translated Yiddish and helped organise the Yiddish Music Festival in Cape Town.



“Seventy-five years on, I live a life in safety and freedom from persecution. I have a wonderful family and nine beautiful grandchildren, and this is the triumph of my survival.”



In a letter to Pavel Konon, when he was recognised as a Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem, Jack wrote: ***"You performed an act of human kindness which we will never forget. I have told the story to my children, and they will tell it to their children, so that your name will be remembered by us forever."***

For his 80th birthday, Jack received a book full of photographs and messages from his wife, their three sons and his beloved grandchildren. In their messages, they described him as ***"brave", "courageous", "loving", "inspirational"*** and ***"the best bappa in the whole entire universe!".*** The book was a testament to a life and family full of love and laughter. His brother Michael wrote how ***"against all odds, and through determination and the will to persevere you raised a family you can be proud of. You are a personal inspiration and a pillar that supports us all."***





WANDA ALBINSKA

BORN 1936, POLAND

“You gave up your own life ... in order to share the fate of the sick, the hungry, the wounded and the dying who were entrusted to your care.”

Wanda Albinska (née Rotstein), her twin brother, Jan and older brother, Robert were born in Kutno, Poland. Their father, Wladyslaw, was an engineer and a partner in various family enterprises, including a chemical refinery. He met their mother, Halina, when she tended to his injuries from a car accident – at the time she was a post-graduate medical intern. After the children were born, Halina stayed at home and was a loving, attentive mother who, according to Wanda, said she would be happy to have 12 children. They lived in a beautiful large villa and led a very secular, cultured life.

When war broke out in 1939, Halina persuaded her husband to escape the Nazis by running east. As a capitalist, however, he was captured by the Soviet Secret Police (NKVD) in Lvov and sent to work as an engineer in a distillery.

Meanwhile Halina and the children remained in Kutno, which was occupied by German forces. Soldiers soon appropriated the Rotstein villa and refinery, forcing a pregnant Halina and her three children to move into cramped rented quarters. The children were cared for by their helper and every evening they walked hand in hand to the hospital where Halina worked, and she would teach them how to read and write.



When the hospital was evacuated in January 1940, Helena and the children left Kutno and moved in with her parents in Warsaw, where her youngest child, Stanislaw was born. There she found work at the Czyste Jewish Hospital for Infectious Diseases.

In early 1941, the Czyste Hospital was relocated to the Warsaw ghetto. Halina and her four children lived in a little damp room in the basement of the hospital. Wanda remembered that they barely left the room as it was too dangerous to go outside. They developed boils all over their bodies and were constantly hungry. In addition to the children, Halina also cared for her mother, Stefania, who was in the hospital with typhus, as well as her husband's parents, Izydor and Irena, who were staying in the ghetto. Stefania and Irena both died in the ghetto.

In 1942, Halina realised that she had to get her children out of the ghetto and arranged for them to be smuggled out through the court house. Initially the children were housed together in an apartment near the ghetto with a very strict woman who forbade them from making any noise or sudden movements. Wanda was extremely anxious about the safety of her mother who had not escaped with them. A few weeks later the children were each taken by various Catholic and Jewish friends of Halina's. Wanda stayed at the home of Dr Andrzej Trojanowski, who was instrumental in saving the lives of many Jews.

From July 1942, mass deportations from the Warsaw ghetto began. Although Halina had the opportunity to evade deportation from the ghetto, she offered her 'life ticket' to a nurse, one of her friend's daughters, instead. On 12 September 1942, Halina made the painful decision to accompany her patients on the train to the Treblinka killing centre, where she would be murdered, most likely on arrival. Wanda ascribed this decision to the fact that ***"Halina represented an ideal of charity and selflessness, a wonderful co-mingling of Polish and Jewish social traditions."***

With the help of Dr Trojanowski, the four Rotstein children were reunited and placed in an orphanage in the small town of Konstancin, near Warsaw. Halina's friends kept in touch with them and they were well cared for in the orphanage.



When the war ended, Wanda's father came to the orphanage on his way to Germany and spent a memorable day visiting the children. He later remarried and had two more children. One of the highlights of the post-war years for Wanda was eating real 'American' sausages that arrived in aid parcels from America – they were a far cry from the stodgy food that the children had been fed during the war.

After finishing high school and with the help of Dr Trojanowski, Wanda went on to study chemistry at the Warsaw Polytechnic, where she met her future husband, Wojtek. The couple married in 1959 and Wojtek secured a position in Iraq. From Iraq they spent time in France and Switzerland, where their first son Luc was born. Later they moved to Botswana and then South Africa, settling in Johannesburg, where their second son Dominique was born. Wanda had a happy life with her family.

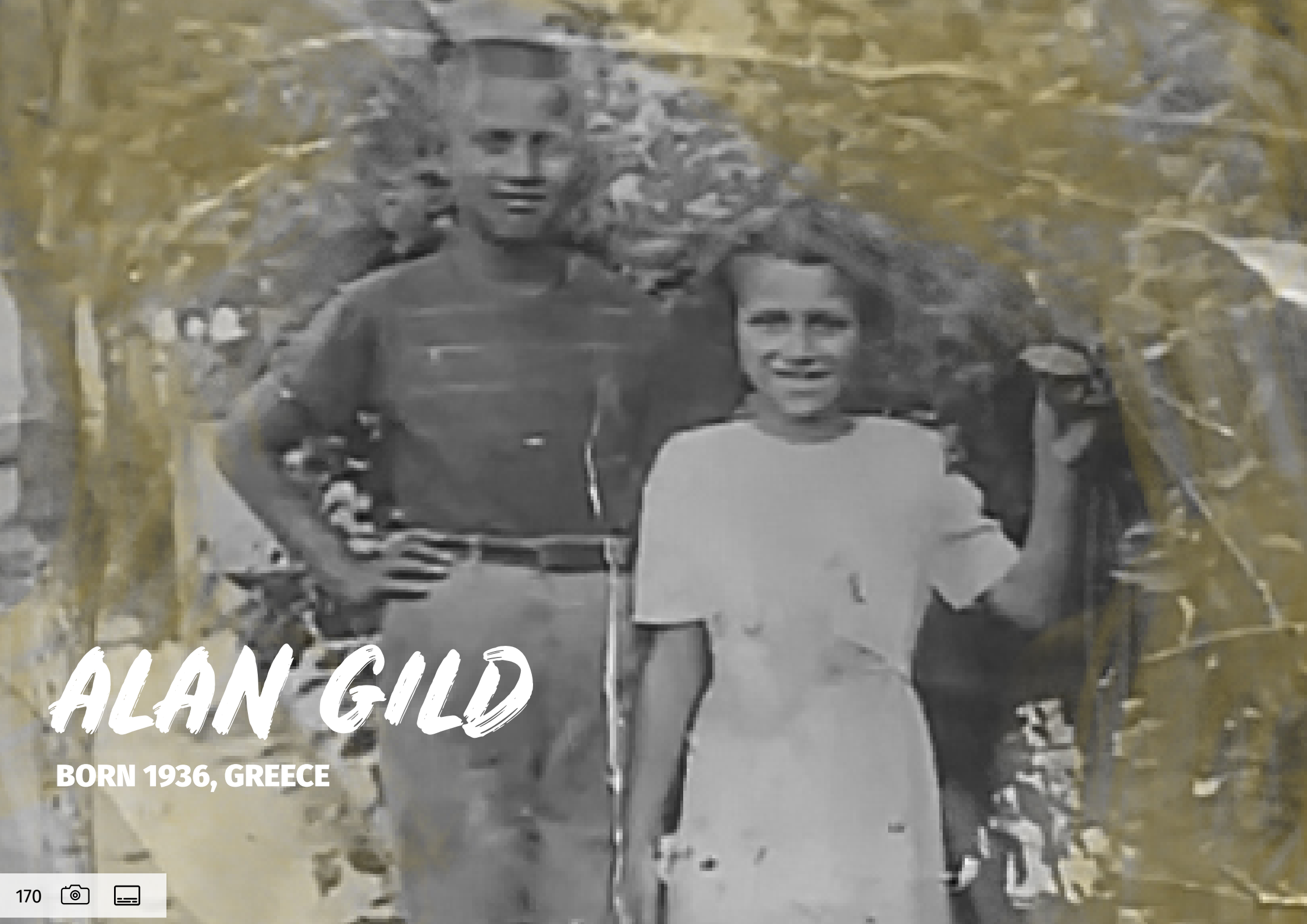




Wanda kept in touch with Dr Trojanowski until his death in 1964. He was bestowed the Righteous Among the Nations award by Yad Vashem. In the mid-1990s, Wanda returned to live in Poland where she was reunited with her brothers.

Wanda often thought about her mother and the tremendous sacrifices she had made.

"She epitomised for me what goodness, courage and selflessness means. In the hell of the ghetto, in the horror of Treblinka, whilst the Jewish nation was being murdered, you stood for the protection of the most helpless. You gave up your own life and us, your four beloved children, in order to share the fate of the sick, the hungry, the wounded and the dying who were entrusted to your care. May your memory be honoured!"



ALAN GILD

BORN 1936, GREECE

“A Jewish family in South Africa wished to adopt me.”

Moises Negrin was born in Athens, Greece. He had three siblings, Rachel, Sammy and Fourtounie. When he was just a toddler, his father, Kalef, passed away, making his mother, Allegra a single parent.

In 1943 when the Nazis took Athens from the Italians, Moises was only six years old. He remembered the last day he saw his mother. She took him and his younger sister Fourtounie to visit the local synagogue. Before they went in, however, Allegra was approached by a distressed non-Jewish woman who urged her to leave the children outside of the synagogue with her. Allegra agreed, not knowing that Nazi authorities were waiting inside the synagogue to deport Jews to the Auschwitz concentration camp in occupied Poland.

Immediately afterwards, the family carer took Rachel, Moises and Fourtounie into hiding in the mountains. Conditions were difficult and they lived in constant fear of being discovered. On one occasion, Rachel decided to go into the town to buy some supplies. She was caught by the Nazis and deported to Auschwitz. Meanwhile, Moises’s older brother Sammy, who was around 13 years old, joined the resistance. Moises and Fourtounie remained in hiding in the mountains until the end of the war.



After liberation in 1945, Moises and Fourtounie worked selling cigarettes in Athens and took refuge in a local synagogue at night. Miraculously, they were reunited with their sister Rachel who had survived Auschwitz, as well as their brother Sammy who had returned from his time with the resistance forces. Rachel and Sammy managed to place Moises and Fourtounie in an orphanage, where they hoped they would be better looked after. The carers in the orphanage tried to make up for the education Moises and his sister had missed. He remembered that this was a difficult time and that some of the orphans were even abused.

In 1947, a Jewish family in South Africa expressed interest in adopting Moises. Sammy and Rachel felt this was an incredible opportunity and encouraged him to go. However, Moises found the separation to be ***"very traumatic and very difficult".*** The journey to South Africa was long, as he was first required to travel to England for a month-long quarantine. He then flew to Johannesburg, where he was met by his adoptive father, Mervyn Gild, who would travel with him to their home in Durban.

Moises recalled that his adoptive father was ***"anxious to introduce him to the rest of the family".*** When they finally arrived in Durban, he was met by a warm reception of aunts, uncles and cousins. Thinking back on this day, he remembered feeling homesick and missing his brother and sisters. He couldn't help but feel disconnected and isolated from this new family, especially because he couldn't speak any English.

"I was very tearful and I was crying."

When Moises was adopted, his new family changed his name to Alan Mervyn Gild. Mervyn and his wife Thelma had three of their own children, Margaret, Keith and Pam, who all poured their hearts into helping Alan become a part of the family and community. The family even employed a private tutor to help him learn English. Yet Alan still encountered many struggles trying to integrate into his new world. He missed his brother and sisters terribly and wrote to them every day. On one occasion he even tried to run away from home. ***"I was very emotional ... I was rejecting the new way of life."***

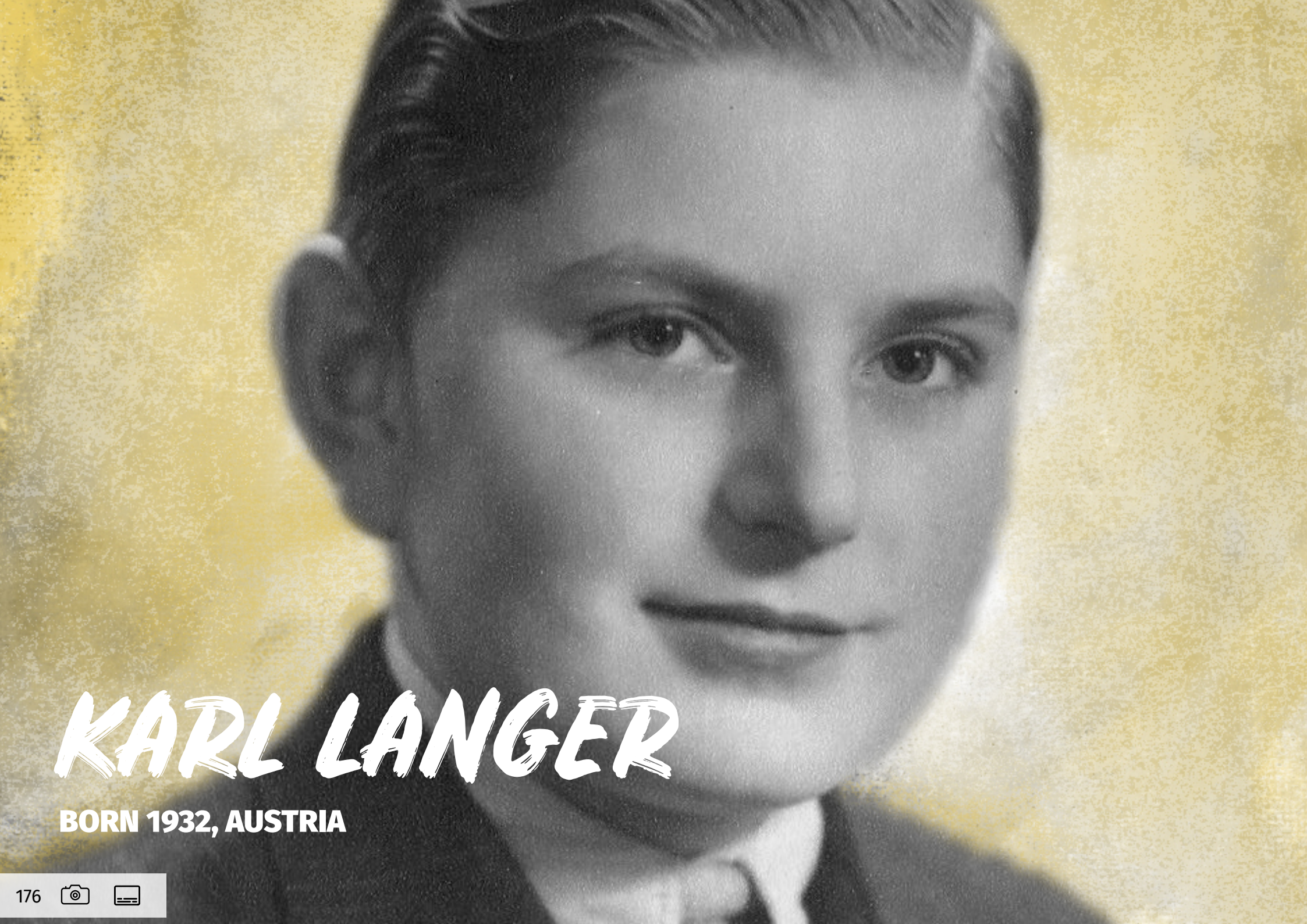


Mervyn and Thelma enrolled Alan at a local school and despite having no prior education and learning in a foreign language, Alan managed to complete his classes. He recalled that after he completed prep school his grandmother bought him a fishing rod to congratulate him. ***"They were always very proud of me as I did nicely at school, or anything I did, they were very happy and encouraged me. They were very wonderful."*** After about a year with his new family, Alan celebrated his bar mitzvah at the Reform synagogue. His father Mervyn was the founder of the Reform Congregation in Durban.

Alan's siblings, Sammy, Rachel and Fourtounie emigrated to Israel after the war. When Alan got married, he and his wife spent their honeymoon in Tel Aviv where he had the opportunity to reconnect with his brother and sisters, and he maintained periodic contact with them as they grew older.

Reflecting on his life, Alan expressed appreciation to his adoptive parents, especially Mervyn. At the time of relating his testimony Mervyn had passed away but remained prominent in Alan's thoughts. Mervyn's kindness had transformed Alan's life: ***"He was instrumental to bring me out ... He was a wonderful human being."*** Alan spent most of his life in Durban. He was a father to three sons and a daughter and became a grandfather and great-grandfather.





KARL LANGER

BORN 1932, AUSTRIA

“We were now classified as Reich Germans … it took great courage and it worked.”

Karl Langer was born in Vienna, Austria to a Jewish mother, Helene, and a Catholic father, Karl, after whom he was named. His father had him and his sister Lieselotta baptised, although his mother was not religious at all. He was only a young boy when Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany in 1938.

At that time, Karl’s parents decided that it was best for his mother to take the children to the Netherlands. They were allowed to take only one small suitcase each and a limited amount of money, hiding a little jewellery among Karl’s toys.

The family’s final farewell at the station remained a striking memory for Karl for the rest of his life. He recalled how exuberant he felt as a young boy by the adventure of being on a train – confused as to why everyone else was crying.

“I remember as a five-year-old saying goodbye to my father at the station.”

He would never see his father again.



Karl and his family struggled to find safety in the Netherlands, as in May 1940 it was invaded by Germany. The Langers, like other Jews, were forced to move inland and settled in Utrecht. Karl and his sister were taken into Catholic schools where they were protected throughout the war.

Meanwhile, restrictions on Jews became increasingly severe. Helene decided that she would need to take drastic action to protect her family. She destroyed the page in her passport which had a 'J' that identified her as Jewish, put on her fur coat and make-up and went to the offices of high-ranking German officials. She explained that she was a German citizen visiting her sister in the Netherlands while her husband, a German officer, was on the Eastern front and that her current passport had been damaged.

"She would never talk about the visit but when she returned, she had a new passport without the letter 'J'. We were now classified as Reich Germans ... It took great courage and it worked."

Having secured this tenuous protection, Helene decided she wanted to help others. She began taking in other Jews, who came to live with them in hiding in their apartment. Some people stayed for short periods, while others remained throughout the war. She also made contact with the underground and her apartment became a transit station for Allied pilots who had been shot down.

Even this was not enough for Helene. When young (non-Jewish) Dutch teenage boys were being ordered to report to the Germans for work, she and a neighbour came up with a plan. They would dress up in their finery and go to where the boys were lining up for duty. Pretending that these boys were their lovers, they would smuggle them back to the house, before sending them to the countryside for safety.

Helene made an extraordinary choice. At a time of complete inhumanity, she upheld the sanctity of all lives, choosing to save strangers, even at the risk of her own family.

Tensions in the house, though, could be extremely difficult. ***"People were sitting the whole day and night on the edge of their nerves; they could not even go to the windows. Sometimes people broke down",*** Karl recalled. ***"They would be shouting and screaming in the middle of the night."***



A key problem was finding enough food and supplies for everyone, which meant that the family sometimes had to resort to crazy schemes to survive. In the last freezing winter of the war, the family even cut up roof beams to burn for some heat. They were also subjected to constant raids by the Nazis; the fact that they survived them all was a miracle.

Karl remembered one particularly tragic experience when a Jewish barber, Abraham 'Bram' Danielson, along with his mother and sister were staying with them. The Danielson family were betrayed by neighbours with whom they had stored their possessions. The Nazis stormed into the apartment and although Helene shouted at them to leave, they searched the house and found the Danielsons. They were taken away and murdered, though no details of their fate have ever been found.

Later, the Nazis returned and arrested Helene, along with Karl. They were sent to Amsterdam's Joodse Schouwburg (Jewish theatre), where deportations to the concentration camps were being organised. ***"We knew, this was the end",*** remembered Karl. Yet after two days there, ***"again a miracle happened, and my mother somehow talked her way out of it."*** The family survived the rest of the war, sometimes through sheer will alone. ***"You want to live; you knew it was impossible; there was no food, no hope almost ... Sometimes even, you felt you couldn't care less what happens to you – but then still you carried on."***

Karl and his mother eventually settled in South Africa and Lieselotta moved to Namibia. Karl had three children, Anton, Benjamin and Mirah. He was happily married to his second wife, Sandra until his death. His daughter Mirah reflected on the enduring trauma from Karl's experiences: ***"In reflecting on my father's life, I think a really complex portrait emerges of what life was like for some of the survivors after the war. It doesn't offer the happy neat endings that we so longed for, for them ... in adulthood it became clear that some of this pain and trauma wasn't healable ... trauma is not an event but a process."***




HONOURING THE PAST

As WWII came to an end, the victorious Allies encountered horrifying evidence of Nazi crimes across Europe. Soviet, American, British and Canadian troops liberated the camps and found tens of thousands of emaciated and disease-ridden prisoners. Many of the Jewish survivors, who had lost their homes and their entire families, had nowhere to go and ended up in displaced persons camps from where they later moved to various countries, including South Africa.

Although liberated, survivors of the Holocaust continued to face immense challenges in 'returning to life'. In many cases, their lives were filled with pain and enduring trauma. Yet despite these difficulties, survivors also thrived; they rebuilt their lives, they studied, they cultivated careers and families, built businesses, communities and legacies.

Survivors also engaged with their traumatic experiences in various ways: many decided to keep silent and to try and forget what had happened to them, while others chose to share their stories within their communities and beyond. In this chapter we explore some of the ways that survivors chose to remember their past, both through education and activism.

We are especially grateful to the many survivors who have bravely and generously given their time to the Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centres. Over and over again, they have agreed to revisit their most painful experiences and educate future generations about the consequences of prejudice, discrimination and othering, so as to prevent the recurrence of mass atrocities and genocide in all its forms.



GIUSEPPE CONE

BORN 1910, RHODES

“He is always optimistic about everything and does not worry or complain about silly things.”

Giuseppe Cone was born in Rhodes. Before WWII, he lived a happy life with his wife and three children. In July 1944, he and his family were deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp. On arrival, he was separated from his wife and children and never saw them again.

Giuseppe was selected to work at a coal mine at Charlottengrube, a sub-camp of Auschwitz. His arm was tattooed with his new ‘identity’ – number B-7251. At the coal mine he was selected to place mine explosives, a dangerous and physical task that involved digging out the mine tunnels by hand and placing large boulder rocks to support the tunnel roof. On one occasion, he suffered a terrible leg injury that was treated with just a mild anaesthetic and then wrapped in toilet paper. He was sent back to work immediately after ‘treatment’.

To evade the Russian and American advance, Giuseppe and his fellow prisoners were moved from Auschwitz, first to the Mauthausen concentration camp and then to the Ebensee concentration camp in Austria. They were transported in open wagons, and only wore a flimsy layer of clothing to protect them from the intense winter and snow. The majority of prisoners froze to death on this treacherous journey.



Giuseppe's recollection of the camps revolved around being constantly hungry. Despite the physical work they carried out, prisoners were only given a little bread and watery soup each day. After a terrible attack of dysentery, a friend advised him to stop eating the bread. He hid his rations under his mattress, but ***"when after a few days, I began to recover, I realised that someone had stolen all my bread. How hungry I was!"*** Shortly afterwards, he witnessed one of the guards feeding a dog a bowl of bones, meat and hearty soup. He could not stop himself from chasing the dog away as soon as the guard left and wolfing down the contents. It was unbelievable to him that all the prisoners would get was a slice of bread and soup, while this dog was so well fed. He would often have to pick up old, dried animal bones or pieces of asphalt to chew on so as to keep going until his next 'meal'.



Giuseppe was liberated at Ebensee by American forces. ***"It was horrible to see how many inmates died after liberation because when offered food, they ate too much and their bodies, unaccustomed to food, could not cope",*** he recalled. For a long time after liberation, whenever he was given food, he would hide it under a pillow or mattress for fear that the next day he would face starvation again.

After a period of recovery, Giuseppe was moved to a care facility in Rome where he met his second wife, Miriam. They eventually moved to the Congo, where they lived for 20 years and then relocated to South Africa.

Despite his traumatic experiences, Giuseppe always tried to exude positivity, generosity and kindness. He was known to be an exceptionally charitable man even when he did not have much of his own to give. He would often say, ***"I am poor, but I still give to the poor, and only because of*** **zedakah** ***(charity) the almighty saved me from the camps."***



Miriam fondly described Giuseppe's propensity for positivity: ***"The amazing thing about this man is that he is always optimistic about everything and does not worry or complain about silly things. Worse could happen! Worse had happened before."***

Later in his life, Giuseppe was determined that his story be recorded. Recounting his testimony in a letter to the American Society for Yad Vashem in 1989, he wrote: ***"I am now 80 years old and I hope that you will always continue to let the world know of the damage that we have suffered."***

As a lasting tribute to Giuseppe, his son Matteo created a website to preserve his father's story for generations to come. Matteo deeply admired his father for his optimism and resilience: ***"In spite of the horrifying pain suffered during his ten months of forced labour under harsh conditions, he has always been grateful to god for sparing his life. Due to his remarkable resilience, an incredible positive attitude and optimistic outlook on life, he was able to move on quickly and enjoy the start of his second life."***



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IRENE KLASS

BORN 1931, POLAND

Q visa



Komitet Org. Z. [illegible] Warszawa

Michalina Styller
Własnoręczny podpis
Signature

Warszawa, dnia 9. 5. 1947 r.
Issued at Warsaw on

Udaje się do A. Simons, 327 Chesfield Rd., Sheffield
Proceeding to

[illegible] KONGRESU
w POLSCE
Warszawa, Twarda 6, (Grzybowska 13)

Presiding Rabbi

For

"I thought that when the world learned what had happened to us it would never happen again. But it did ..."

Irene Klass (née Sztyller) was born in Lodz, Poland. She was an only child and had a very happy childhood. As a prosperous family, they had a holiday home in the south of Poland where they would spend their winters. Her father, Mieczylaw, owned a prestigious gift shop and her mother, Paulina, a card club. Irene attended a public school, but the Jewish and Christian children did not interact, and she remembered occasional antisemitic incidents and name-calling.

When Irene was eight years old, the war broke out while they were visiting their holiday home. When they returned to Lodz, they found that the German army had taken over their building. They were permitted to take no more than one suitcase of clothing from their home before being evicted to the outskirts of Warsaw. Luckily her mother had managed to quickly sew jewellery into her clothing.

In November 1940, Irene, her mother, grandmother and uncle moved into the Warsaw ghetto. Her father stayed behind as he had managed to secure false Christian papers. In the ghetto, they lived in one room with three other families. Food was scarce and the living conditions were grim. Irene remembered: ***"When I saw my first dead body it was a terrible sight to see and I said to my mother 'I never want to see that again', but unfortunately, that was life in the ghetto."*** Despite the difficulty in communication, they managed to phone Mieczylaw once a week. As conditions deteriorated, they begged him to get them out of the ghetto, but it was almost impossible to do so.



During the mass deportations from the ghetto, in July and August 1942, Irene's family was ordered to pack their clothes and vacate the building. They already knew that people were being deported to the Treblinka killing centre where they would be murdered, so Irene told her mother not to worry about packing warm clothes because ***"where we are going, we won't need them".***

Irene and her family were marched to the *Umschlagplatz,* a holding area for Jews before their deportation. Her uncle, Witek, was fluent in many languages, and miraculously convinced the guard to let them all escape into the deserted buildings. They moved to another part of the ghetto where they worked and slept in a factory until that too was evacuated. They urgently sent word to Mieczylaw that they needed help escaping the ghetto, but he was only able to obtain a forged document for Irene.

"I remember standing on the stairway saying goodbye to my mother, not knowing if I ever will see her again."



Mieczylaw paid a French Catholic woman, Mrs Suliga, to look after Irene. He pretended she was his Catholic niece. Mrs Suliga was very kind to Irene, taking her to church on Sundays where she found some solace and peace.

Later, Irene's mother also managed to escape the ghetto through the sewers. She lived in hiding, first in Warsaw and then in the countryside, where she worked as a maid. Tragically, Mieczylaw disappeared soon after and to this day, his fate is unknown. Without her father's support, Irene had to pay for her lodgings herself by selling soap and toiletries in the street. She reflected on how ***"from the age of eight till the end of the war, my childhood was gone. I had to think for myself and I had to fight for my existence."***

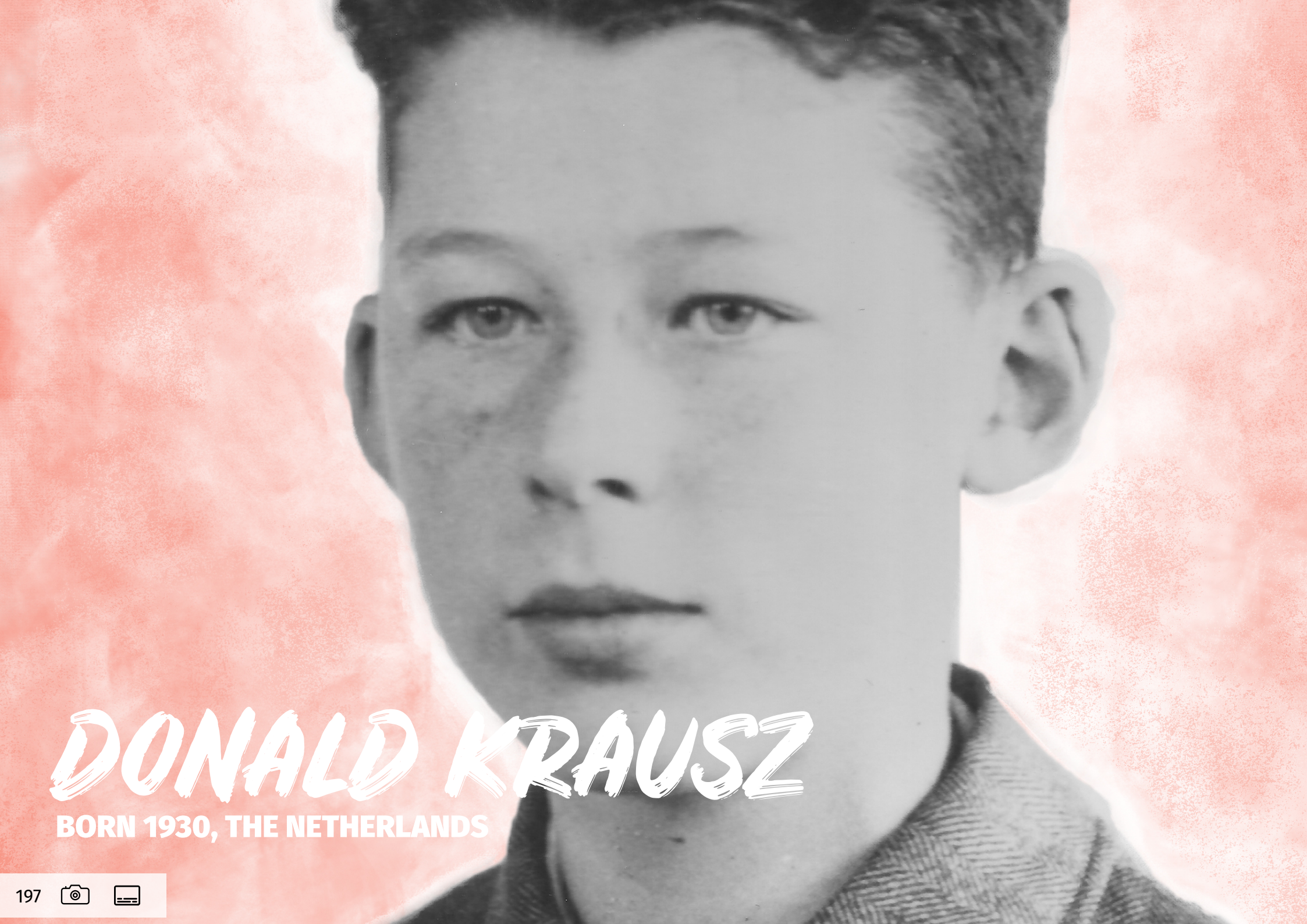
In August 1944, after the Warsaw Uprising, the Germans evacuated Warsaw and Irene was sent to a nearby work camp. Her aunt, Vladzia, found out where she was, disguised herself as a Red Cross nurse, and arrived at the camp claiming she was collecting people with typhus. She rubbed white flour onto Irene's face, told her to feign illness and together they walked out of the camp. Mrs Suliga stayed behind and Irene never discovered her fate. Irene was able to join her mother in the countryside, posing as her niece from Warsaw.

After liberation, Irene and her mother returned to Lodz in the hope of finding her father. After two years of fruitless searching, Irene was sent on a relief programme to England with a group of Polish orphans. Her mother remarried and emigrated to Israel, and Irene joined her there in 1950. On the plane she met her future South African husband and after a short period in Israel, moved to Johannesburg. They had a daughter, Michelle, but unfortunately, the marriage did not last long. Irene had a happy second marriage and another daughter, Noreen.



"For 40 years, I didn't speak about my experiences. I never wanted anybody to feel sorry for me. I didn't want pity. I wanted to be like everybody else." Yet after 40 years, Irene broke her silence and began sharing her story, especially as an active volunteer at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre. *"It is amazing to see and hear that my words are having a powerful impact on young learners and teachers who come to the Centre."* Irene also shared her testimony alongside survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, highlighting the tragic truth that the world has not yet learnt from the horrors of the Holocaust. *"I thought that when the world learnt what had happened to us it would never happen again. But it did ..."*





DONALD KRAUSZ

BORN 1930, THE NETHERLANDS

"We must speak for those millions of men, women and children who are no more and whose voices will never be heard again."

Donald (Don) Krausz was born in Schiedam, the Netherlands. His father, Bela, was Hungarian and had a successful Persian carpet business, and his mother, Rachel, was an English teacher. His sister, Irene, was five years younger than him and they had a happy childhood. When Don was seven years old, the family moved to Rotterdam and lived near the canal in a large house above his father's business. He went to a public school and recalled being mischievous and pulling all sorts of pranks with his friends, riding his bicycle and stealing fruit from the orchards.

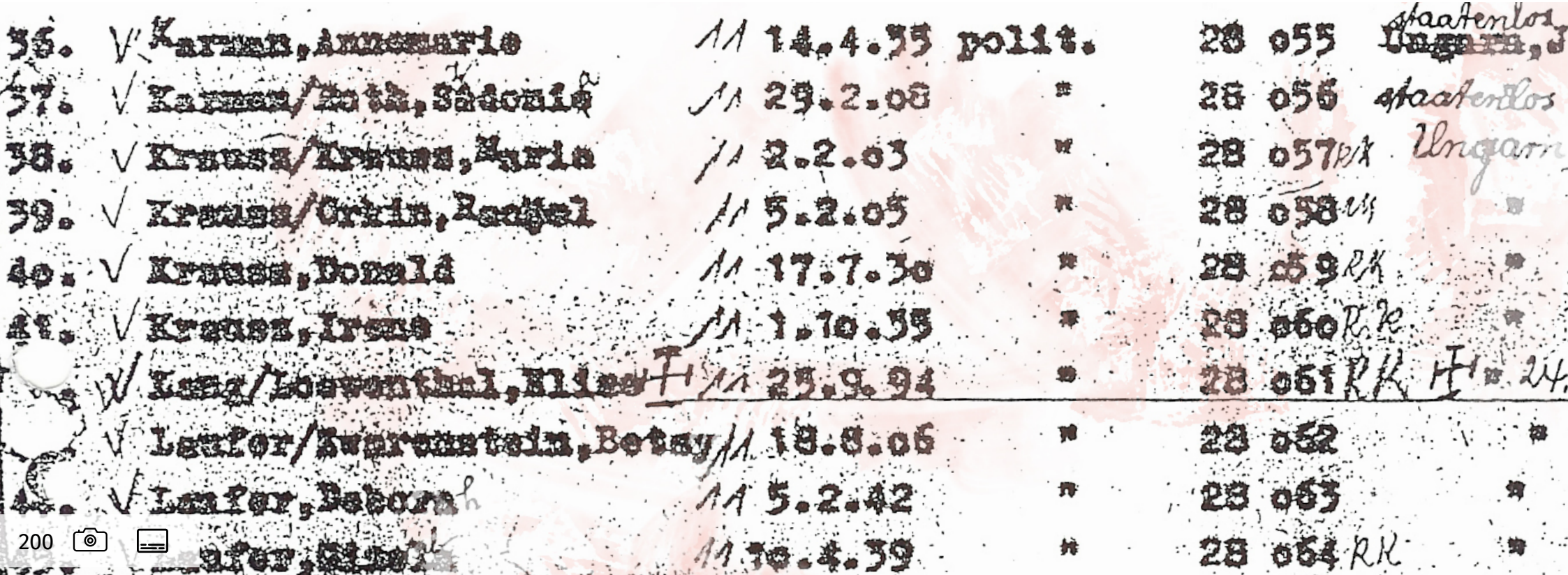
In May 1940, Germany invaded the Netherlands, and Rotterdam, being a large port, was heavily bombed. The family's house and business were totally destroyed and so they moved in with Don's aunt in the Hague. In 1941 the Nuremberg Laws were introduced, and all Jews had to attend Jewish schools, which Don remembered as ***"a sad place with teachers and pupils under great stress".*** As Hungary was an ally of Germany at that time, and Don's family were considered Hungarians, they were not subjected to the same heavy restrictions as other Jews. They were exempt from wearing yellow stars and could move around the city freely.

In early 1942, the family was deported to the Westerbork transit camp. Once a week there would be a deportation of 1 000 Jews, usually to the Sobibor or Auschwitz killing centres. In 1944, his father and three uncles were deported to the Buchenwald concentration camp. Don, Irene and their mother were sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp for women. Don and Irene were allowed to wear their own clothes as there were no uniforms for children. This helped keep them warm in the freezing cold conditions.



At 14, Don was sent to the Ravensbrück men's camp and later to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. He was placed in an area known as the 'destruction camp', for its extremely harsh conditions that few survived. Don had to remove the corpses from the barracks each morning. He recalled seeing a guard beat a nine-year-old Jewish boy with a truncheon: ***"I later watched that guard go off duty and walk through the camp gate to his house a little way down the road. His children came running out of the house to meet him and he picked up the youngest one and tossed him in the air like any normal father would. Then I realised that to this guard we were not children but a different species,* Untermenschen, *subhuman."***

In mid-April 1945, Sachsenhausen was evacuated, and more than 30 000 prisoners were forced on a 'death march'. It was very cold, and they were fed a slice of bread or one potato every three days. Don recalled losing his sense of reality due to fatigue and hunger: ***"I hardly remember lying down to sleep at night ... I must have dropped where I stood. What I do recall vividly was the agony of having to get up in the morning."***



When they neared the battle lines, surrounded by Russian heavy bombing and artillery fire, the German guards threw down their guns and fled. Don and his friend Otto spent three days resting in the forest with no food until, feeling stronger, they walked to the American Zone and were taken to a displaced persons camp.

Don described how through the years of terror, horror, starvation and death he imagined his liberation: ***"The tanks smashing through the gate of the camp, Allied soldiers storming in and what we would do to those inhuman guards."*** But when that moment finally arrived, ***"we were exhausted, both emotionally and physically. We were starved. With guns in our backs we had forced ourselves to put one foot in front of the other for two weeks despite the pain, the fatigue, the horror. Now we just lay on the ground and watched as the guards casually walked away."***



When Don returned to the Netherlands, he heard that his mother and sister had also survived. They had been taken by the Red Cross to Sweden and then England, where Don rejoined them. Sadly, his father did not survive. In 1946, Don, Irene and their mother emigrated to Johannesburg to live with his maternal family.

Don resumed his schooling and joined the Habonim Jewish Youth Movement. After matriculating, he moved to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) to work in his uncle's business, and then to Israel, where he worked on the oil rigs. Irene sent him a return ticket to South Africa for her wedding and there he met his wife, Phyllis. They settled in Johannesburg. Don dedicated his life to sharing his testimony with others, later becoming the Chairman of Sh'erit Ha-Pletah, the Holocaust survivors' association, as well as an active volunteer at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

Don believed that, as a survivor, he was obligated to not forget, to bear witness, and to testify to what he saw and experienced.

"We and we alone know what really happened; it is we who must speak for those millions of men, women and children who are no more and whose voices will never be heard again."





MIRIAM LICHTERMAN

BORN 1922, POLAND

“Despite my experiences I was never bitter. I never sought revenge.”

Miriam Lichterman (née Teitelbaum) was born in Warsaw, Poland. ***“We were a very close, a very warm family. There was my sister. She was the oldest and there was my brother, four years younger, and I was the youngest. I recall a very happy life with my parents, with uncles and aunts, cousins, friends. I recall with much emotion how it was my teachers and my home environment that really moulded my character and made me the person that I am today. That allowed me to remain human when I found myself in later years in very inhuman circumstances.”***

Miriam was a young schoolgirl when WWII broke out on 1 September 1939. In November 1940, the Warsaw ghetto was officially established. The ghetto was divided into two – the ‘large ghetto’ and the ‘small ghetto’ – so as to exclude an important thoroughfare, Chłodna Street, from its official boundary. Miriam and her family were forced to move into the ‘small ghetto’.



Despite the hunger, cold and deprivation they endured, Miriam and her family tried to keep some semblance of a normal life. They were told that if they volunteered to work, they would get bread and jam in return. Miriam found work as a machinist in a factory.

In July 1942, deportations began from the ghetto to the Treblinka killing centre. Early one morning in September 1942, Miriam recalled finishing up her night shift at the factory and finding herself locked in the factory with her fellow workers. When they were eventually released, she tragically discovered that her parents had been deported to Treblinka. She never saw them again.

Miriam's brother, Israel, had been in another part of the ghetto during the deportations and had managed to smuggle himself out to safety. He returned to see Miriam only to tell her that he was one of the leaders of a planned uprising in the ghetto; he felt strongly that it would be better to die fighting than to end up murdered in a gas chamber. Israel died fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943.

Meanwhile, Miriam was deported to the Majdanek concentration camp. When she arrived, there was an immediate selection process to choose who would live and who would die. Miriam was chosen to join a smaller group of prisoners who would remain at Majdanek. After a few weeks, she was transferred to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. ***"On arrival in Birkenau I was shocked to discover that we were being tattooed with numbers on our arms. My number was 447332 — we had stopped being individuals, being humans — we became numbers."***

In January 1945, Auschwitz was evacuated as the Nazis tried to avoid the advancing Russian troops. Miriam joined thousands of prisoners on a 'death march' from Auschwitz to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany, navigating their way through knee-deep snow.

"Even today, so many years later, I wonder how I survived the 'death march' because anybody who became so weak that they couldn't walk anymore was just shot on sight by the guards."



Miriam was soon moved to Malchow, a sub-camp of Ravensbrück. After some time, the prisoners were told that they would need to move out again. However, on the day of departure, ***"suddenly a cry came from the girls who were right in the front. There was nobody guarding us. The guards with the dogs had disappeared. The commandant must have run away the day before. There was not a uniform to be seen — we were liberated, we were free — we were not really free to go and do whatever we wanted, but we were alive, we were not destroyed, and we were free."***

Soon after liberation, Miriam met her husband who had been a cantor of the prestigious Nozyk Synagogue in Warsaw, which she used to attend as a young girl. The two married and moved to South Africa, where they built a home and a new life. Their two sons both became cantors like their father. They had five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Miriam was a long-time volunteer of the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, where she spoke about the intrinsic necessity of living with hope, the ability to forgive and the need for young people to resist all forms of injustice.

"Despite my experiences I was never bitter. I never sought revenge. While walking back after the war through devastated Germany, I met German refugees, elderly people and small children. Their sons and their fathers were probably in the SS and guarding camps and committing all crimes against humanity, yet I could not say a nasty word to these people. I couldn't do anything to them."





VERONICA PHILLIPS

BORN 1926, HUNGARY

“This is history that you cannot forget, it needs to be told to as many people as possible.”

Veronica Phillips (née Katz) was born in Budapest, Hungary. She grew up with her parents, Meier and Regina, and her younger brother, Miklos Mikhayl (Michael). They were an Orthodox Jewish family and kept a strictly kosher home. Meier had a small sweet shop and Regina was a housewife who helped her husband in the shop, working long hours from early morning to midnight. Veronica was very close to her father and recalled that he loved the theatre and would often take her to see shows.

Veronica explained that antisemitism had always been rife, even before the Nazis came to Hungary. ***“I was a bright child, top of my class; I always see the picture of the yearbook where all the top students had their names in large print. Not mine. And when I asked why, they said, ‘Because you are a Jew’. I remember answering: ‘Can’t Jewish children be clever?’”***

After WWII began, Hungary became an ally of Nazi Germany. In 1940, Meier was sent to a labour camp. While the family wasn't allowed to see him, Regina still managed to smuggle food, which she had cooked, into the camp for him. Veronica helped to run the shop in his absence so that her mother could do the housework.

Meier returned to Budapest after a long period, but it became more difficult for Jews to live in Hungary, as the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party was extremely antisemitic and supportive of Nazi ideology. Yet, it was impossible for Veronica's family to escape as they didn't have enough money to reach safety in neutral Switzerland.



In March 1944, German forces occupied Hungary. Veronica's family was fortunate to receive the coveted *Schutzpass,* a protection pass issued by the Swiss government, which afforded them some safety in the 'International Ghetto' of Budapest. This was issued to them by the Swiss diplomat, Carl Lutz. However, this protection did not last long, and Veronica and her father were detained and then deported to different concentration camps. Veronica was sent to the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp. ***"We arrived in Ravensbrück at night, we heard the dogs barking and growling, the SS men were shouting ... This was a living nightmare especially for a young girl."*** Although the conditions at Ravensbrück were horrific, she started sewing little purses and handbags for the women guards and was able to acquire more food to sustain herself and her two cousins.

One day Veronica and all the women in her tent were marched off to the gas chambers. As they were waiting in line, an officer came and asked for 120 volunteers to work in a factory at the Penig concentration camp. Veronica and her cousin were chosen because they could speak German. When they arrived at Penig, they could see the nearby city of Dresden, which had been burning continuously after days of Allied bombing.

As the Allies approached the camp, the prisoners were moved to the Johanngeorgenstadt camp from where they were later sent on a 'death march'. They were liberated while marching, and Veronica and her cousin were taken to a displaced persons camp to recover. The two got a lift on top of an oil tanker to Budapest and Veronica was relieved to discover that her mother and brother had survived the war in the ghetto. Her father, however, had not survived.



Soon after, Veronica met her husband, a returning Russian labour camp prisoner, and they got married in Budapest. Veronica's family became especially close after their experiences, and so when her brother was offered a job in England in 1956, they all followed him there. Many years later they would once again all move together, this time to South Africa. Veronica was unable to have her own children as a result of medication that was given to the prisoners of Ravensbrück, but always considered her niece Janice as her own.

In Johannesburg, Veronica built a distinguished career as a genetic scientist at the University of the Witwatersrand. Yet, despite her belief in the importance of education, she also carried a scepticism, which she illustrated with a quote from survivor Haim Ginott:

"I am a survivor. My eyes saw what no man should witness. Gas chambers built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians. Infants killed by trained nurses. Women and children shot and burned by high school and college graduates. So I am suspicious of education."

For many years Veronica didn't share her story. It was only very late in her life that she opened up and generously gave of her time to speak with various groups through the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre. ***"People have to carry on telling the story because this is history that you cannot forget; it needs to be told to as many people as possible."***

Veronica always shared her testimony with emotion and authenticity. She explained that despite numerous retellings, the ***"pictures and images have left an indelible print on my mind's eye. I so often wish they would disappear."***

In 2015, at the opening of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, Veronica donated her childhood doll as an artefact to be displayed in its permanent exhibition. She was extremely emotional: ***"I came to have a stroke of luck and found my favourite little doll [when I returned to Budapest] which I now donate to this museum."***




"Above all, ve have been put under an obligation to
remember to record events an
people and characters, images,
moments; o record in writing, drawing, in paint
in any way and by every means available to us."
AVRAHAM TORY
Secretary f the Jewish Council of Elders
Diary entr , 25 July 1943
Veronica Phillips's Doll
Dis-Chem
PHARMACIES
Pharmacists who care

“Next year I hope I’ll be 83 and I’m going to have a bar mitzvah because I never had one.”

Shlomo Pieprz, born in Będzin, Poland, was the youngest in an Orthodox family of four brothers and one sister. He attended the Fürstenberg Gymnasium, a private Jewish school where the language of instruction was Hebrew and Yiddish. He had many friends, socialised within the community, was a good soccer player and enjoyed riding his prized bicycle. His father owned a shop that sold leather goods, which were made in the family tanneries, and his mother was a housewife. They were not wealthy but lived comfortably.

When German forces occupied Poland in September 1939, all the Jewish schools and synagogues in Będzin were forcibly closed. Shlomo recalled how the Nazis frightened the population by forcing them to watch a public hanging in the main market square. Soon after the occupation, they sent him to work in a small suitcase factory nearby. One of his brothers was sent to Germany to work in a large factory and the other two were taken to concentration camps. During a selection in 1942, his mother was taken to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, and so were his sister and father later that year. They were all murdered at Auschwitz.

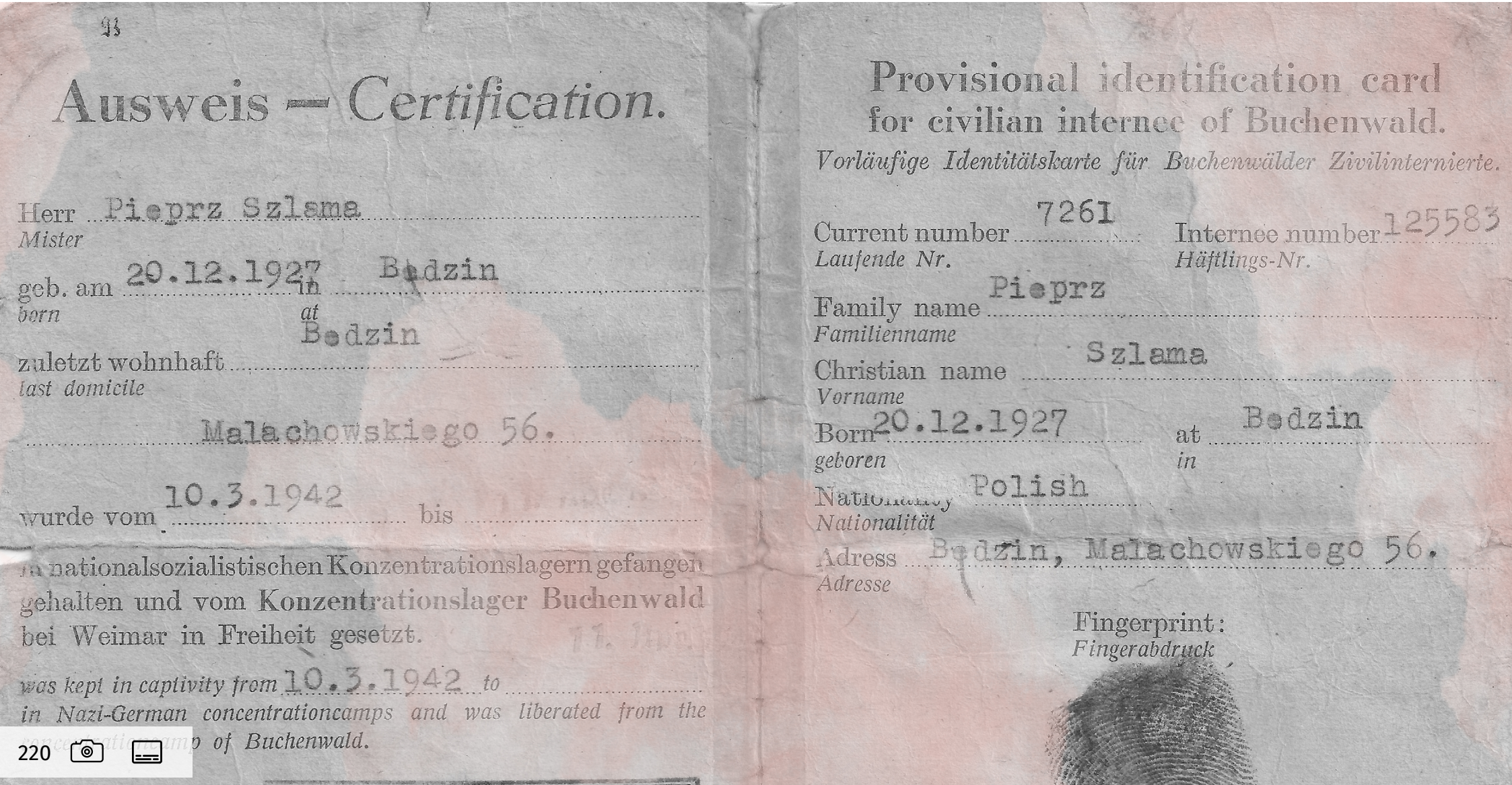


In 1942, Shlomo was sent to work in a labour camp in the IG Farben factory in Erfurt, Germany, the largest chemical and pharmaceutical company in Europe. After only three months he was moved first to Golleschau and then Blechhammer, both sub-camps of Auschwitz. In Blechhammer he had a number tattooed on his arm: ***"The number was 184738 and that was my name actually ... They used to wake us up early in the morning, like six o'clock. They used to count us, and they called out not the name, they called out the number and I had to say: 'Yes, Jawohl' I'm here."***

While a prisoner at Blechhammer, Shlomo worked under a German engineer who ***"was against Hitler, a Communist, and was very nice to me. I was like his apprentice and he taught me welding ... I was only 15 years old."***

With the Russian army advancing, inmates from Auschwitz-Birkenau and its many sub-camps were forced on a 'death march' to the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany. Shlomo would be liberated there by the American army in April 1945. From his family, only Shlomo and two of his brothers survived the Holocaust.

After liberation, Shlomo spent time at a displaced persons camp in France before emigrating to Israel and serving in the Israeli Defense Force, first as a welder and then as an engineer. In Israel he met his future wife, a South African woman named Evelyn. Evelyn's family offered Shlomo a position in their engineering business in South Africa and the couple moved to Johannesburg in 1956. After working for the family for about 18 months, Shlomo joined a business that made wooden boxes for soap, Coca Cola and Pepsi bottles. He became known as the 'king of the boxes'.



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Ausweis — Certification.

Herr Pieprz Szlama
Mister

geb. am 20.12.1927 in Bedzin
born *at*

zuletzt wohnhaft Bedzin
last domicile

Malachowskiego 56.

wurde vom 10.3.1942 bis
was kept in captivity from *to*

in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern gefangen gehalten und vom Konzentrationslager Buchenwald bei Weimar in Freiheit gesetzt.

in Nazi-German concentrationcamps and was liberated from the concentrationcamp of Buchenwald.

Provisional identification card for civilian internee of Buchenwald.

Vorläufige Identitätskarte für Buchenwälder Zivilinternierte.

Current number 7261
Laufende Nr.

Internee number 125583
Häftlings-Nr.

Family name Pieprz
Familienname

Christian name Szlama
Vorname

Born 20.12.1927 at Bedzin
geboren *in*

Nationality Polish
Nationalität

Adress Bedzin, Malachowskiego 56.
Adresse

Fingerprint:
Fingerabdruck

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In 2010, Shlomo celebrated his first bar mitzvah at the age of 83, surrounded by his wife, his two children and two grandchildren. He had been unable to celebrate the day when he was 13 years old, as at that time his school and synagogue had been closed, and social gatherings for Jews had been banned. His granddaughter, Melissa, remembered the day well: ***"It was incredible to witness the joy and pride that he experienced. It really was a very emotional and special time for all, and he was so humbled to finally get the opportunity that he had been waiting for his whole life."***

Throughout his life, Shlomo was outspoken about the destructive impact of discrimination and othering on today's society and how important it was to learn from history: ***"The same thing is happening [today], people killing people because of race and religions. For different reasons but still killing. The young generation must stop this, work together as one nation, poor and rich, young and old."***

Shlomo passed away in 2014 but was remembered by his granddaughter as ***“a real mensch with a heart of gold and a soul that echoed resilience. He was my hero, my person and forever my special Zaida (grandfather).”***




CARMELA HEILBRON
UNKNOWN DATE & PLACE OF BIRTH

“Take a good look at what’s happening around you. Don’t ever turn around and say it’s not there because it’s not affecting you.”

Carmela Heilbron (née Hayman) could not be sure of her exact birthdate; it could have been anywhere from 1938 to 1940. She was most likely born in Lithuania. Her first clear memories began around age seven: ***“I didn’t remember. I elected not to remember. This is the story as it was told to me.”***

As a child, Carmela grew up in the Kovno ghetto. She remembered very little except sleeping with her sister and grandmother like sardines on the floor. She knew her mother was with them at that time, but she couldn’t recall her face.

The head of the *Ältestenrat* (Council of Elders), Dr Elchanan Elkes helped to create a scheme to smuggle out young children from the Kovno ghetto with the help of the Catholic Church. Carmela’s mother managed to arrange for them to smuggle Carmela out the ghetto in this way.

"The smallest children [got] an injection ... then they arranged to drop these children into a sack and into a cart as if it was waste. I was the first child put over the wall [in this way] and taken to a Catholic safe house."

Carmela spent the following years protected by a group of Catholic nuns and priests. They were constantly on the move in order to avoid detection by the Nazis. She remembered once being hidden inside a pit toilet during a Nazi raid of the convent. As a result she was left with *"a whole lot of fanatical hang-ups"* about being clean. For example, for years she was unable to use a public toilet without wearing a mask. *"Growing up, I had some very very strange habits",* she recalled.



At the end of the war the nuns handed Carmela over to the Red Cross. She was adopted by her father's friend and colleague, Dr Max Levin. Eventually, her mother, who had survived the Auschwitz concentration camp, regained her strength and began searching for her child. However, when she finally located Carmela, Dr Levin would not give her up. Carmela's mother arranged with a Jewish underground group to 'kidnap' her from the Levin family.

"Although I hadn't seen her probably since I was two, I knew it was my mother — I just knew it was my mother and I related to her."

Once Carmela was reunited with her mother and sister, they made their way to Tanzania to start a new life. Sadly, they were the only survivors of their immediate family; her grandparents, father and two brothers had all been murdered during the Holocaust. ***"Nobody talks about them. My aunt told me about them, but my sister refuses to talk about them."***

Reflecting on her relationship with her mother, Carmela felt she never really knew her. Once in Tanzania, living in safety, she believed her mother returned mentally to Auschwitz. She lived with dementia for seven years until her death. She thought Carmela was a 'kapo', an inmate of a Nazi camp appointed as a guard, and ***"if I walked into the room she'd get up and huddle under the bed."***

Carmela eventually settled in Durban, where she met and married her husband Lew. The couple had two children, Steven and Mandy. Although she opened up to members of the local community about her story, she only gave her testimony on camera in 2008 because in her mind, ***"I did not regard myself as a survivor".***

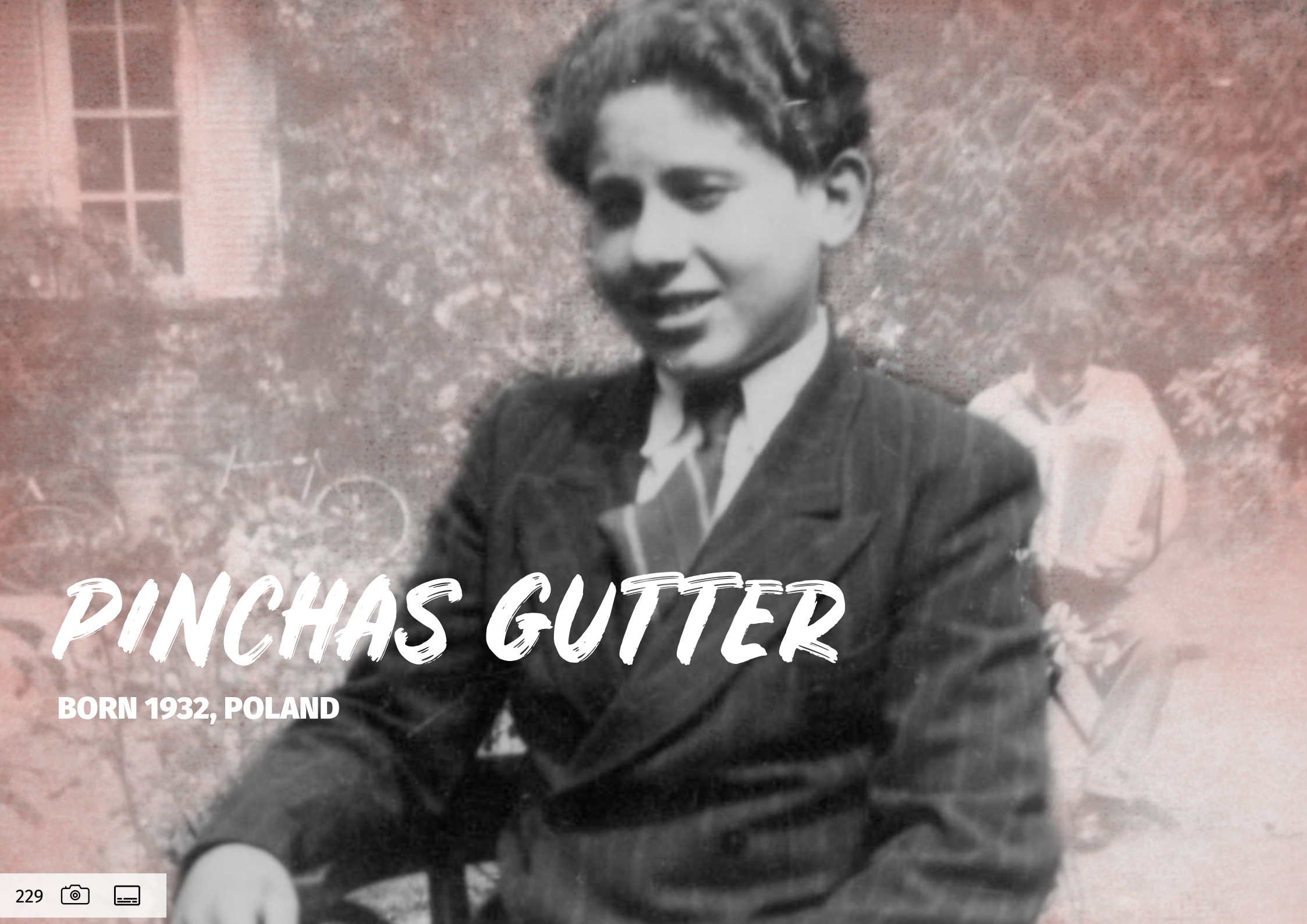
Through a connection in the Durban community, she was reunited with the other girls the nuns had protected. They had been searching for her for 40 years and Carmela met them in London. ***"They knew more about me than I knew about myself."*** This group of survivors succeeded in having the priest and the nuns who had rescued them recognised at Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations.



Carmela was politically active in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and was jailed several times for her activism. She was also professionally involved in early childhood education outreach projects in South Africa. In 2008, Carmela became a guide at the emerging Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre. She continued to volunteer there until 2014. When reflecting on what she felt contemporary society could learn from the Holocaust, Carmela said:

"Take a good look at what's happening around you. Don't ever turn around and say it's not there because it's not affecting you. The important message is to actually take action. Speak up, because when you don't speak up, it just compounds itself into a hideous situation."





PINCHAS GUTTER

BORN 1932, POLAND

“I tell my story for the purpose of improving humanity.”

Pinchas Gutter and his twin sister Sabina were born in Lodz, Poland. Lodz had a very large Jewish population and Pinchas grew up in a very close, religious community. Within a month of the Nazi occupation of Poland in 1939, his father, a very successful wine merchant, was brutally beaten and their wine cellars looted.

His father decided to move the family to Warsaw, where he thought they would be safer. However, from November 1940, they were forced to live in the ghetto where they endured harsh and difficult conditions for three and a half years. When deportations to the Treblinka killing centre began in July 1942, the family went into hiding in an attic, managing to survive until a few weeks after the start of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943.

Pinchas recalled that ***“it was like four o’clock in the afternoon and we heard rifles banging, [officers] saying if you don’t come out, we are going to gas you. If you come out, we are going to send you to work and to freedom. You must come out with your hands high and no guns.”***



Pinchas and his family were rounded up and deported to the Majdanek concentration camp. ***"We were squeezed into those cattle trucks and all you could do was just stand ... We just stayed together huddled in the middle and from time to time my mother managed to open a sock filled with sugar and give us a teaspoon of sugar. That's the most vivid memory that I have — the sock, the teaspoon and the sugar for the children. They didn't take any. I never saw my mother or father take a bit of the sugar."***

On arrival at the camp, men and women were separated before the selection process began. Pinchas saw Sabina run towards his mother and he remembered with great pain that these were the last minutes of her life. ***"I have an enormous amount of guilt about my sister, because she didn't survive ... I can see her hair and what she was dressed in, but I cannot see her face and that is something that has been troubling me all my life. I remember the last few minutes of her life in Majdanek but again I can't see her face. I can only see her running and I can see her hair and I can see her grasping my mother, but I can't see her face."***

Pinchas was chased into a barrack where he had to undress and dip into a bath of disinfectant before going into the showers. He was given striped prisoner clothes and wooden clogs. He looked for his father but in vain. At 11 years old, Pinchas was all alone.

Miraculously, Pinchas survived the hard labour, harsh conditions and starvation rations of Majdanek before being deported to a series of Nazi labour camps – Skarzysko-Kamienna and Czestochowa in Poland and later to Buchenwald and Colditz in Germany, where he was put to work making ammunition for the German army. Finally, towards the end of the war, he was forced on a 'death march' from Germany to the Theresienstadt ghetto in Bohemia and Moravia; he barely survived. The 13-year-old Pinchas was liberated on 8 May 1945 from Theresienstadt by the Russian army.

Under the auspices of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, Pinchas and many other children were taken to England for rehabilitation. He later moved to Paris to live with a cousin, and left for Israel in 1950, where he volunteered for the army. After three years in the army and a short time working for a textile factory, he attended school to learn Hebrew. As a student he met his future wife, Dorothy. They moved to England, where they were married. Pinchas and Dorothy later moved to South Africa and had three children. In 1985, the family emigrated to Canada.

For over 25 years Pinchas devoted himself to Holocaust education by telling his story, especially to young people. He led the annual March of Remembrance and Hope and the March of the Living programmes in Poland, taking groups to visit Holocaust sites so as to ensure the legacy of the Holocaust would never be forgotten.

Pinchas had several films made and a number of books written about his life. He was also the inaugural participant in the USC Shoah Foundation's innovative project, "New Dimensions in Testimony". The project uses the latest technologies available to record survivor testimony in a way that allows one to interact with Holocaust survivors through a virtual conversation.



“I tell my story for the purpose of improving humanity, drop by drop by drop. Like a drop of water falls on a stone and erodes it, so, hopefully, by telling my story over and over again I will achieve the purpose of making the world a better place to live in.”



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