



My name is Walter Frankenstein.
I survived the Holocaust.
This is my story.

Walter's Story

Part 1 • My Childhood 1924-1936

The text is based on several interviews with Walter Frankenstein.
Walter Frankenstein has read and approved the text.

ETERNAL ECHOES

Teach and Learn About the Holocaust

My Childhood 1924-1936

My Family

I come from a small town called Flatow. When I grew up, the town was located in northeastern Germany in what was then known as West Prussia. The entire province became a part of Poland after the Second World War.

My father was called Max Frankenstein. His step-parents managed a general store and a tavern in Flatow, and father and his wife later took over the business. They had a son, Manfred, in 1910. A couple of years later, in 1914, they had twins. One of the children died but Martin survived. A while later their mother died from blood poisoning after opening a tin and cutting herself on the lid.

My father met my own mother, Martha, in 1923. At the time, she was living with her parents in Braunsberg. She moved to Flatow when they married, and I was born one year later on 30 June 1924.

When I was four years old, my father died of pneumonia and heart failure. Mother continued to run the business and my uncle Selmar Frankenstein, who was a doctor in Berlin, became my guardian.

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The photo of my father was taken during the First World War. The picture of my mother is from the 1920s. You can see me along with my brothers in the photo in the middle. It was taken in 1927 when I was three years old. Manfred is standing to the left and Martin to the right.

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When I turned seven, we had a large party in the yard of our house in Flatow. I was contacted many years later by one of the girls in the photo. By coincidence, one of her friends had seen a film that I had taken part in. In that way, I got in touch with one of my childhood friends, and she later came to celebrate my 90th birthday.



This map shows Flatow, the town where I grew up. At that time the city was in northeastern Germany. After the war, it became a part of Poland, and its name changed to Złotów.



My brothers and I. The photo was taken in 1934, the day before Martin emigrated to the British Mandate of Palestine. Manfred also settled there three years later. He studied at Königsberg in the German province of East Prussia (known as Kaliningrad in Russian) and became a dentist. To graduate, he had to renounce his German citizenship. A week later he was informed that he had to leave Germany since he was now stateless. He emigrated with his wife to Palestine.

The Threat Against the Jews Grows

At school I had both Jewish and Christian friends. Flatow was a small town with seven thousand inhabitants and we children were fairly free. We often played by the lake and in the woods.

Things changed a lot when Hitler came to power in January 1933. People stopped shopping in stores owned by Jews. The Christian children no longer wanted to hang out with us. I was put next to another Jewish boy in the classroom. We were alone during our breaks. Nobody wanted or dared to show that they associated with Jews.

Our apartment was in the same building as the general store, on the first floor. On 1 April 1933, I was stood by the window and saw how Nazis in uniforms positioned themselves outside the Jewish stores to stop people from going in. Suddenly, a man pulled out his gun and shot straight at our house. Nobody was hit, but I thought to myself, "God, if that man doesn't fall down and die, then I'm not going to believe in you anymore." Yet nothing happened. In that moment I became an atheist. I was nine years old when I stopped believing in God. Sadly, it has stayed that way ever since.

Our little family used to meet up with a Christian family. The husband taught self-defence to the police force. He used to use the back door so that nobody else would know that he had visited us. He said to my mother, "I'm going to train your son in jujutsu so that he never again has to be afraid." It took a long time, one and a half years. At first he showed me a number of different strikes and grapples, and he spent many months teaching me self-restraint. I became more and more self-confident and unafraid. Later on, when I was confronted with various situations, I noticed how much it had benefited me to learn. My self-confidence made others keep themselves to themselves and nobody dared attack me.

I started school when I was six years old. In the spring of 1936, the headmaster suddenly announced that I was no longer allowed to continue my education. All Jews were forced to leave German schools. My uncle arranged for me to continue at a Jewish school. It was located on Rykestraße in Berlin. During that time I lived in the Auerbach children's home nearby.



This picture from the 1930s shows our tavern in Flatow. The apartment where we lived was located above the store.

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Part 2 · Life Changes 1936-1939

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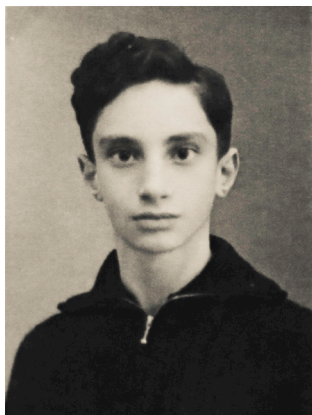
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Life Changes 1936-1939

Life at the Children's Home

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I am thirteen in this picture. The photo was taken about a year after I came to Berlin.

I came to the Auerbach children's home on 27 July 1936. I had never been that far away from home before. I was twelve years old and accustomed to having my mother nearby. Now she was back in Flatow, 320 km away. At night I used to lay in my bed quietly weeping to myself. Fourteen other children slept all around me. They were used to life in the children's home, and soon I would be too.

On the first morning, the other boys came up to me. They started asking me question after question. "Can you play football? Can you box?" It was enough for me to simply answer "yes" to be accepted into their gang. With time we became brothers to each other. We spent a lot of our spare time playing football and handball.

One of my uncles was interested in athletics and bought tickets for us to watch the Olympic games. He took me along with him so that I would stop feeling so homesick for a while. I remember as if it was yesterday when Jesse Owens ran the 100m sprint and won. He jumped 8.06 metres in the long jump. It was the first time anybody had ever jumped over eight metres! He bagged a total of four gold medals.

The Jewish school was close to the children's home. There was also a synagogue next door, which we used to go to on Friday evenings and the day after, on the Sabbath.

I got on well at school. The food was good and our studies were interesting. In the evenings they used to put on extra courses in drama, astronomy and mathematics. There was a music night once a week.

At the children's home, the boys were divided into groups according to age: 6-10 years, 10-13 years, and 13-18 years of age. There was a mentor for each group. The staff at the children's home and the school was caring, and I felt that I could go to the adults for both advice and comfort.

On Sundays I used to visit my uncle Selmar and his wife Otilie. He was an old soldier. Everything at my uncle's place ran exactly by the clock. We would first eat sandwiches and drink tea, and then we would go to the zoological gardens. At 1pm we would eat lunch. Even though I was thirteen years old, I had to have a nap in the afternoon according to the schedule my uncle had set. He and his wife had furnished a little Japanese-style room half a staircase up in the house. That was where I was sent to sleep an hour while the others went out into the garden and had a nice time.

At 4pm I was woken up and given coffee and biscuits. We then went for a shorter walk. In the evening it was time to head off. Before we said our goodbyes I would be given a chocolate biscuit and some money for the underground ticket.

Those children who weren't able to visit relatives had to stay at the children's home for the whole day. In the evening we used to gather together and lay out all the fruit and chocolate that we had been given to bring back. We sorted it all on napkins, bit by bit, into piles on each pillow. It was very important that we all received just as much.

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We spent a lot of time playing sports at the children's home. I'm the taller guy in the back row, third right from the teacher.

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We often played chess at the children's home.

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I was fourteen in this photo. I had jumped 1.80 metres. It was the best result for my age range in Germany, but, as I was a Jew, I wasn't allowed to compete.

I went home during the breaks when my mother still lived in Flatow. Between these breaks my mother wanted me to stay in touch. She gave me postcards. She had written the address and the words "I am fine" on them. All I had to do was sign them with "Walter" and post one card a week.

We were so busy all the time that I forgot to write. The only time I wrote was when I was playing football and managed to smash one of the windowpanes. Then I wrote to say, "Mummy, I don't have enough money!"

In October 1938, the Nazis forced my mother to close the general store and leave the house. For a short while she lived in Braunschweig and took care of her aging mother. My mother moved to Berlin when grandma died. Thereupon we met each other every weekend. Later on, she moved with my aunt Flora Hirschfeld to another address. In order to get there I had to take the underground.

The November Pogroms in 1938

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The synagogue at Auerbach.

We lived fairly ordered lives and weren't particularly aware of the persecution of the Jews until 9-10 November 1938 when the November Pogroms, or *Kristallnacht* as they are also known, occurred.

The headmaster, Jonas Plaut, had been tipped off by the police from a station nearby and gone into hiding. Many other men were arrested that night and taken away. His wife Selma Plaut decided to hand over the keys to a teacher, Ilse Löwenstern. Ilse was twenty-seven years old when she was suddenly put in charge of the entire children's home.

The house hadn't been attacked and Jewish families came to seek shelter since their own homes and shops had been destroyed. Storefronts had been smashed up and goods stolen. Some Jews, having been beaten up, even turned up during the night.

I went onto the roof with some other boys. From there we could see the flames from several synagogues that had been set ablaze.

When a group of Nazis came into the courtyard, I tried along with a number of other boys to convince them that it would be dangerous to set fire to the building since it was full of children. The fire could even have spread to other houses nearby.

Instead, the men went in to the synagogue. There was a prayer room in the basemen, with a gas lamp, which was always lit in front of the Torah ark containing the holy books. They blew out the flame but kept the gas running. It soon started to smell and we ran there to open all the windows. If somebody had struck a match nearby then the house would have exploded and we would all have been seriously injured.

After the pogrom we continue to live a fairly sheltered life for a while longer. Next to the children's home was a German school. Despite what had happened, nothing had changed in terms of our relationship with the children there. We could walk by without being harassed or beaten.

The Outbreak of War

In 1938 I left school and started training as an apprentice. I trained for two years to become a mason while continuing to live at the children's home.

On the same day that the war broke out, 1 September 1939, I was on my way from the Auberbach children's home to eastern Berlin, which was where I was training. It was around 8am when the first air raid siren sounded. The Polish air force had been trying to reach Berlin but all their planes were shot down.

We didn't really notice the war at first. But new laws started being introduced that concerned us Jews. When you were being drafted, you were first examined and then had to answer some questions. Then you were given a grade (A, B, C or D) and a certificate that showed what condition you were in and what sort of military service you would be most suited to. But on my document it simply said, "Excluded from military service due to Jewish origin".

"Excluded from military service due to Jewish origin."

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Part 3 • Stuck in Germany 1940-1943

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Teach and Learn About the Holocaust

Stuck in Germany 1940-1943

Love and Resistance

In 1941, the Nazis closed an institution for deaf Jewish children in Berlin. In the autumn a number of those children came to us at the Auerbach children's home. Accompanying them was a young woman, Leonie Rosner, who was a carer and a trainee teacher. Leonie was about to turn twenty, and I was seventeen years old.

I was sat on a bench in the courtyard with two friends when Leonie went by. When I caught sight of her I said confidently to the others, "It has to be her or nobody at all". And that was how it became.



Leonie, Walter's true love. Year: 1937.



Walter, at the age of 17.

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As Jews we had to wear a Star of David. But I persuaded Leonie that we should take ours off. There was also a law ordering all Jewish men to use the word "Israel" and Jewish women to use "Sara" as a middle name. If someone had stopped us and demanded to see our identity papers then it would have been all over. They were clearly written out: Walter, Israel, Frankenstein; and Leonie, Sara, Rosner.

We were cheeky and courageous. To show our resistance we took off our Stars of David and went to places where only "Aryans" were welcome. We went to the cinema, theatre, opera and concerts. We sat down on benches engraved with "Forbidden for Jews".

Once we went to an amusement park. There was a place there where you could shoot bull's-eyes on vases. If you hit the vase, you would win the flower in it. I asked Leonie which flower she would like. Leonie pointed, and I fired. And then I aimed at the next vase, and the next. We laughed and had fun. When we had managed to bag four or five flowers, we suddenly noticed that people were starting to gather around us to watch what was happening. Among them were five soldiers on leave. A sergeant looked at me with curiosity and asked, "Why aren't you a soldier?" I answered straightaway, "It's my lungs, I've got tuberculosis and can't serve in the military sadly." Then he said, "That's the reason then. You would have made a great sniper." I thanked him for the compliment and said evasively, "I serve my Fatherland in other ways." And then we quickly made ourselves scarce.

Since we were underage Leonie and I had to ask for permission to get married. Our guardians signed the papers. On 20 February 1942, we married in a civil ceremony with a registrar serving as the officiant. My mother Martha, mother-in-law Beate Rosner, stepfather-in-law Theodor Kranz, and Uncle Selmar and Aunt Ottilie Frankenstein came to celebrate. We had a lovely time. Those were hard times but somehow they had managed to sort out a cake and brew substitute coffee made out of oats.

The Meeting with Eichmann

The Jewish construction school was shut down by order of the Nazis in 1941. I was then employed along with two teachers by the Jewish community to work as a mason and to repair the Jewish older people's home, the children's homes, and other buildings managed by the community.

An order came from the Gestapo at the beginning of 1942: all craftsmen were now to start working for them. Electricians, plumbers, carpenters and masons were taken to a house that used to belong to the Freemasons. It was to be renovated and furnished for the Nazi elite. I worked there everyday. There was always an SS man with a sub-machine gun stood behind.



In this picture, you see the working unit of the Jewish community in Berlin, to which Walter belonged.

At one point I had to plaster one of the rooms. When I came in there were four men sat around a table. One of the men looked up at me and said, "You're a Jew. If you so much as make a stain on the carpet then you'll be heading straight to Auschwitz tomorrow." When I went away from there I turned around to read the name on the door: "Eichmann". At the time I didn't know who he was, but this was in fact Adolf Eichmann, the SS officer who turned out in theory to be responsible for the deportation and extermination of Europe's Jews.

We Go Underground

Leonie and I had rented a room at a Jewish family close to the Auerbach children's home. We would soon be forced

to hand over our valuables and assets.

Our first son was born on 20 January 1943. We wanted to call him Peter but had to give him a Jewish name and chose Uri. We were given orders a month or so later to move to a quarter where only Jews lived. We also had to wear a yellow patch on our outer garments. They had complete control over us. When Uri was six weeks old, SS men picked up him and Leonie. They were put onto the back of a lorry. By that time, 1943, people knew where the Jews were being sent and what would happen to them. "Poor child," said one woman. Another said, "We'll finally be rid of them."

Some of the women on the lorry showed certificates that their men had been given. They were subsequently released. I worked with repair jobs for various SS authorities and also had a document, which stated that I was needed for work. But Leonie had left the document at home. A Jewish man shouted out the names of women whose men worked for the Germans. Since he hadn't called out her name, Leonie went up to him and asked, "What will happen to me?" He answered, "Don't ask such silly questions." She then understood that this was a chance for her to sneak out and get away from there.

During that time I had arrived home to find the door was sealed and Leonie and Uri were gone. When I heard what had happened I bought bread and other edibles and rushed over to the assembly point. "I want to meet my wife," I said. The orderly looked at me and replied that she had gone home. When Leonie and I met at the apartment we hugged one another. We understood that, from then on, we always had to be on our guard.

During March of the same year, my mother Martha was collected for deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau. I ran to the train station to look for her. There were thousands of people there and armed guards everywhere. There was nothing I could do.

The workers were collected at their workplaces. Their families were taken during the night. In the morning when I went to the Gestapo, a foreman came forward and said, "What are you doing here?" The others had been rounded up when I wasn't there, but I didn't know that. "Wait there. I'll see what we shall do with you." When he disappeared into the house I quickly got away from there. We had luck on our side. Leonie and I had just moved and the work leader didn't have our new address. When I got home, I said to Leonie, "It's time now." We had agreed that nobody would be allowed to deport us. We packed what we needed: cloth nappies, food and clothing. Then we sorted out a ticket for Leonie so that should could travel to Leipzig. That was where her mother Beate lived. Leonie and Uri would be safer there than in Berlin since her stepfather wasn't a Jew.

When we made the decision to go underground, we burnt the cards that were marked with "J" for "Jew" and took off our Stars of David. To conceal our identities we even started to call our son Peter, and Leonie used Gerhard as her surname. In order not to arouse suspicion I decided to call myself Franz after my father-in-law, and sometimes Frank.

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Walter's Story

Part 4 · From Hiding Place to Hiding Place 1943-1945

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ETERNAL ECHOES

Teach and Learn About the Holocaust

From Hiding Place to Hiding Place 1943-1945

Without Identity Papers

On the train to Leipzig, Leonie shared a compartment with some other women. The doors were opened and a man from the Gestapo stepped in. He demanded to look at their identity papers. One woman after the other took out their documents. One woman took out a card with ration coupons for clothes and said that it was the only thing she had with her. The man scolded her. "You can buy that sort of stuff on a street corner! It isn't a valid form of ID." In his agitated state he almost tripped over Leonie, and apologised to her before he disappeared.

We were often lucky. One week later, I also travelled to Leipzig. I wasn't brave enough to sit in a compartment but instead stood in the aisle. The door in front of me suddenly opened. Six Gestapo men came out. They split up and went in different directions. They never checked me. There were coincidences like this that helped us to survive.

I didn't dare stay with Leonie and her parents in Leipzig for too long. There was too great a risk of being discovered. A woman with a child wasn't particularly conspicuous. But, as a man at the right age for military service, I would arouse the suspicion of the neighbours.

When I got back to Berlin I started looking for places where I could hide. Once when I was on the underground I was very close to being discovered. I hadn't found a place to sleep for a number of nights. I fell asleep exhausted and woke to the feeling of someone tapping me on the shoulder. "Identity papers, please." It was the military police. I started rummaging through my pockets. "Oh, I must have forgotten it in my work clothes. I've just come off the night shift." "Alright. Then get off with me at the next stop and we'll go to the police station to check your papers out there." We climbed off and were about to get on to the escalator. Then I stopped him and said, "I'm a Jew. I am living under a false identity. If you take me to the police, they'll send me to Auschwitz." He looked at me thoughtfully. To convince him, I revealed a birth certificate that I had kept with me. "My name is Frankenstein, it's a typically Jewish name," I said. "I'm not looking for Jews, I'm looking for deserters," he replied, "Disappear!"

In Berlin there was a restaurant where you didn't need to hand over food coupons. You never knew what sort of meat was in the food. It could have been dog or cat. I sat there eating when a young lieutenant came in. He was around twenty-four years old, perhaps younger. "Identity papers," he said. I replied in the same way that I usually did, "I've forgotten them in my work clothes." He smiled at me and said, "I'll let it slide this time, but don't let it happen again."

I really would have liked to know what that guy was thinking in that exact moment. He had grown up during the Nazi era with the Hitler Youth and gone through officer training.

It even happened once that I ran straight into the arms of the Gestapo. Then I started to wave and point. "Are you looking for the guy that ran in that direction? If you go that way, I'll go the other way," I suggested. And they did as I said.

Other Jews who lived under a false identity didn't have the same amount of luck. Eventually they ended up getting caught and deported.



I don't know the name of the man in this picture, but he was hiding in Berlin, and we met at the opera. I went there sometimes to sit down and rest. He gave me the photo as he wanted to leave something that he could be remembered by if he wouldn't survive. One day when we had decided to meet, and I was watching out the window. The man came along, and I noticed that two Gestapo men were in his heels. They arrested him, and I never saw him again.

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Leonie's Mother is Arrested

Leonie's mother Beate could feel somewhat secure since she was married to a Christian man. All Jewish women had to use "Sara" as a middle name, but Beate had an old identity paper from the post office, which didn't have that name on it. But this was noticed by an acquaintance in the queue at the post office that informed the police about it.

When the police came to arrest my mother-in-law she hid Leonie and Uri under a blanket in the bedroom.

Leonie and Theodor were sure that Beate would be released. That's why they didn't pack any clothes. Beate had been ordered to go by herself to the police station and the others followed her. She was accused of "concealment of racial background" and put into custody. The Gestapo took over. On 6 November 1943, after two months in prison, she was sent to the women's camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Theodor took some groceries and travelled to the concentration camp. He went up to the fence and demanded to speak with his wife. "I want to hand over a parcel," he said. "This is a restricted area," the guards answered. "If you don't get out of here, you too will end up in here." My step-father-in-law later received a death certificate from Auschwitz-Birkenau. The document stated that Beate had died of "heart failure" on 3 January 1944.

Theodor took great risks even for our sake. His mother was in a bible studies group. They used to collect grocery coupons to send to Theodor who in turn passed them on to us. Without the coupons we wouldn't have been able to buy any food. When we tried to work out how to get over to Switzerland, Theodor went to the border to have a look for us. This was in 1944. We even had plans to get to Sweden using a canoe. But we couldn't turn these plans into reality as all the borders were heavily monitored.

Helpful People

There were many people who helped us. One of them was Edith Berlow. In her first marriage she had been married to a German film director who was a Nazi and close friend of Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda. The man had produced a number of films. He gave a portion of the earnings to his ex-wife Edith, who in turn, helped people to find hiding places.

Edith was active in the resistance organisation that Werner Scharff had formed. She housed twelve Jews living under false identities in a Berlin apartment that she had sorted out.

JI knew Werner well as we had earlier done forced labour together for the Gestapo. He had been arrested and sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp, but had managed to escape and get back to Berlin.

To cope with living under hiding, I tend to say that you need to have at least forty people helping out. When I was alone in Berlin, helpful people arranged temporary places where I could stay the night, or gave me food. But it also happened that I slept in bombed-out houses and didn't have anything to eat for two or three days. After the war I weighed around 50 kg, which wasn't much considering that I'm 180 cm tall.

It was only when the bombs fell over Berlin that I dared go out into the open. That's when I felt free. There wasn't another soul on the streets, but always some smashed storefront where I could get in and find something to eat. I used to take egg powder and milk powder, or potatoes and turnips.

If anyone had caught me I would have been shot, because what I was doing was theft in their eyes. And that was viewed as treason.



In this picture from 1928 you see Leonie's mother, Beate Kranz (Rosner).



In this picture, you see Leonie's father-in-law, Theodor Kranz.

Leonie Leaves Leipzig

Leonie was worried the whole time that someone would denounce her. The neighbours in Leipzig had started talking and wondered why she didn't work like the other women. In September 1943, when Beate was arrested, Leonie and Uri couldn't stay in the house any more. That's when they ran away to Berlin.

Leonie didn't know where I was but she got in touch with Edith who had helped find me a protected home. I had been given a job with Arthur "Otto" Ketzer and he had arranged a room for us in the basement of a house on Königsallee 23. There was an air raid shelter in the garden that I had extended. That's where we sheltered when the air raid siren sounded.

In February 1944, a bomb fell close to our house. The bunker held out, but the door was completely destroyed. Leonie went to the assembly point and explained that she had left her handbag with identity papers in the house that had been bombed. To conceal her identity she gave the name of a Christian school friend. She was then given help in the form of a new home for her and Uri in the little village of Briesenhorst.

It turned out that Leonie was pregnant and, when our second son Michael was born, the authorities asked to see her birth certificate. She didn't have the birth details of the school friend whose identity she had been using, but said that the papers were in Leipzig. When they couldn't find the documents there they started asking awkward questions. Leonie didn't dare stay there. Instead, she came back to be with me in Berlin.



Leonie and Uri in May 1944, Briesenhorst.

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Part 5 • End of War 1945 and the Journey to Sweden

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ETERNAL ECHOES

Teach and Learn About the Holocaust

End of War 1945 and the Journey to Sweden

The Red Army Captures Berlin

Since the house and the bunker that had given us shelter had been destroyed, I had to find somewhere else to live. Sometimes I slept in a car, a bombed-out house, or in a seat at the theatre or the concert hall. In the end I managed, with Arthur Katz's help, to rent a basement property owned by an ex-brothel Madame. I called her Mary but we never got to find out what her real name was. When Leonie came back to Berlin, we lived there together all four of us.

An SS major, a *Sturmbannführer*, lived on another floor. When the house was hit by incendiary bombs we stood side by side and tried to put out the fire, but everything burned down. Later on, when we were stood there on the street and coughing because of the poisonous smoke, the major walked by and asked, "What is your name?" I replied, "Kranz." "Do you have anywhere to go?" "No." "Well, come to my office in the morning and I'll help you find an apartment."

Obviously I never went to his office. Instead, we were helped by one of the prostitutes who worked with our landlady Mary. When she went past Leonie and me who were stood there with the pram and two small boys, she sighed and said, "Oh, poor children." Leonie explained how it was, "We're Jews. We don't know where to go." Then the woman handed over a set of keys and gave us an address.

We lived in the new apartment for almost two months. Leonie and the boys could move around fairly freely. Mothers and children weren't an uncommon sight in Berlin. But it was harder for me. Men of my age were expected to serve in the military. That's why I kept myself hidden.

When the end of the war started closing in and the battles in Berlin became harder, there was a risk that our house would be hit. That's when we went to an underground station where there were small bunkers. I snuck in and hid myself in one of the bunk beds. Leonie came afterwards with the pram and helped to hide me under the mattress.

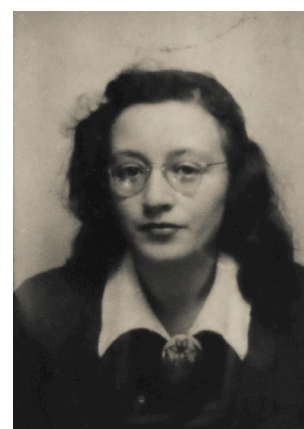
The Red Army captured Berlin in 1945. That was when we knew that we had survived. The Russians found it hard to believe us when we and the other Jews came out of our hiding places. Some people were shot, or deported to Gulag camps in Siberia and only came back ten years later. We had luck on our side and met a Russian officer of Jewish origin. He cried when I cited *Shema Yisrael*, the Jewish affirmation of faith in Hebrew.

We Leave Germany

Nazi ideologies didn't die with the end of the war, and we couldn't stand it. To stick out from the masses we had blue and white bands on our coat and dress. Once on the underground, a woman looked at us and said, "They're here again now." We couldn't tolerate such talk. Leonie reacted quickly. She hit the woman over the head with an umbrella. The fight continued. By the next station the woman and a few others had gotten off and we could sit down.



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These photos of Uri, Leonie and me were taken in Berlin 1945 for the new identity papers

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This is my work team by the Dead Sea during our last summer in Israel in 1956.

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Leonie, me, Michael and Uri in Israel. The photo was taken in 1949.

of the masons' union, Åke Richter. It only took him three days to sort out the work permit, and I started work as a tiler at the Slussen underground station.

We lived for a while in an apartment on Neukölln Emser Strasse 6 in Berlin. Later on we got in contact with the Jewish Brigade. Already during the war they had arranged illegal transports of Jewish youths to the British Mandate of Palestine.

Since we didn't want to stay in Berlin we sorted out the paperwork that was needed to emigrate. Leonie and the boys travelled with a military transport to Paris and onwards to Marseille and by boat to Alexandria and then to Haifa. They arrived in April 1946 and my older brothers who had emigrated years earlier picked them up.

During the first period in Israel I was in the Hagannah, an illegal Jewish paramilitary organisation. In October 1949 I started working as a civilian, as a mason on a kibbutz in the newly established State of Israel. There I got to know an engineer from the USA who was a planner and specialist in irrigation systems. I became a work leader at the same workplace. We carried out a number of projects by the River Jordan and the Sea of Galilee. The last job was by the Dead Sea. The work was arduous and I started to have problems with my kidneys. We stood in a deep trench, in temperatures between 45 and 55 degrees, handling concrete pipes weighing 160 kilos. At that time we weren't assisted by cranes the same way as nowadays.

When my body started to complain and I couldn't handle any more of the work we started to consider leaving Israel. It was hard to find other work in the country and we soon decided to try to get to Sweden.

To Sweden

It was tedious sorting out a work visa for Sweden. At the consulate in Tel Aviv they said, "You need to have proof of employment from a firm." My friend Rolf Rothschild who had tried to help us in Sweden told a company about this, but there they said, "He needs to have a work permit before we can hire him."

In the end, we arranged a visitor's visa and travelled to Stockholm. My friend took me to the representative

It was in the year 1956 that we started a new life in Sweden. After nine years I ended the manual labour and started to study. In the winter of 1970 I graduated with my second degree in engineering. Shortly thereafter the Vattenbyggnadsbyrå, a major engineering consultancy, employed me. My doctor, who was the staff doctor there, had arranged it. That's where I worked up until my retirement.

When Leonie and I came to Sweden, my friend Rolf said, "Surely you're going to send your children to the Jewish school?" I replied, "No. They've gone to Israeli schools for six and seven years respectively. They already know a lot about Judaism; now they even need to learn about other religions."

We sent our children to different schools so that they wouldn't speak Hebrew to each other but instead learn Swedish as quickly as possible. It didn't take long before our apartment was full of children from the neighbourhood.

When I was working, Leonie was at home taking care of the children. During the longer holidays the boys came home and they often had friends with them. At first they spoke English but after a number of weeks they started learning Swedish. Leonie and I did too.

We quickly became a part of society. I was the only Jew at my workplace, but it was no barrier for us. Once when we were working at the Vattenfall office in Råcksta, one of the guys I was in charge of asked where I came from. "From Israel," I said. "Ah alright," he said, "then you're a Jew?" "Yes," I said. "Yeah, yeah," he said, "that means you're a type of Catholic."

In Memory of Erna

At the Berlin school that I went to as a child we were given lessons at a very high level in physics, chemistry and mathematics. They were like lectures. The teachers who taught us were well-educated professors who had come from colleges and universities, which the Nazis previously had expelled them from.

When the school was closed, one of my teachers Erna Samuel was made to do forced labour. When the last transport with children from the Auerbach children's home was carried out, she chose to go voluntarily with them, despite knowing what was awaiting them at Auschwitz.

In Berlin there is a street named after Erna Samuel. I campaigned for a long time to have a memorial put in place for the Auerbach children's home where I also once lived. There is now a wall there in memory of the two hundred children who were deported, with their names engraved. Erna Samuel's name is also there, on Schönhauser Allee in Berlin. In 2015 a memorial was also installed in the pavement outside the house that Erna Samuel lived in.

"When the last transport with children from the Auerbach children's home was carried out, she chose to go voluntarily with them, despite knowing what was awaiting them at Auschwitz."

What Happened Later?

When Leonie and I got married, we promised each other that we would stay together as long as we loved each other. We kept that promise for sixty-eight years. Sadly she passed away in 2009, and life feels empty without her. I am not used to living alone. All my life I have had someone by my side, whether it be my mother, a teacher or the boys at the children's home.

Leonie and I used to travel a lot in Europe. I retired when I was sixty years old and that's also when Leonie retired. One evening when we were sat talking Leonie said, "It would be nice to go away somewhere." "Alright," I said, "Pack your bags." The next morning we reversed the car out of the garage and drove to Switzerland and later on to Italy and France. It was a wonderful time. We were still relatively young and could just jump into the car and drive 1000 km without a break.

In 1972, Leonie and I travelled to Berlin. We were well taken care of at the Hotel Savoy and subsequently returned there year after year. Nowadays I travel to Berlin around five or six times a year to talk to groups of youths at the Jewish Museum. I always stay at our hotel and in the same room. The staffs are used to my ways and serve me coffee with artificial sweetener without me having to ask for it. They have even promised not to renovate the bathroom, as I love the pattern in the tiling.

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Leonie and I.



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In this picture, you see the Star of David that Leonie and I took off when we went underground in Germany. The medal is a *Bundesverdienstkreuz*, the Federal Cross of Merit which is the highest honour a civilian can be awarded in Germany. I received that for my work with German youths. Every year I travel to Berlin to talk about my experiences during the Holocaust. The star and the cross of merit come from the same country, and I think they go well together.

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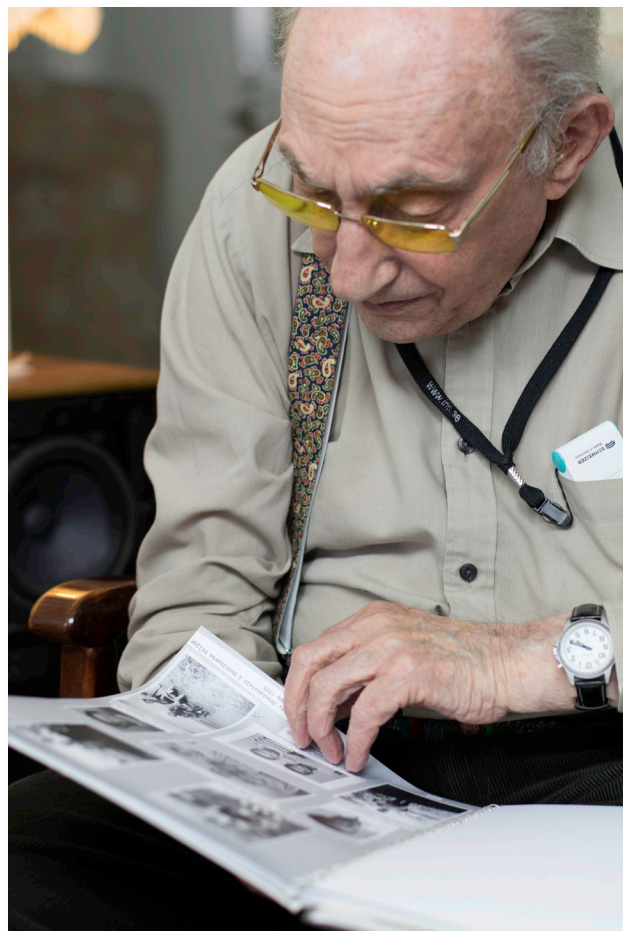


I wanted to honour the memory of the children. The monument became a brick wall in the rear yard of the Auerbach children's home. The children's names and ages when they were deported are listed on the wall. The woman who lives in the house has planted an apple tree next to it. Every year she sends me six apples from the harvest.

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The book "Not With Us" retells the story of Leonie and I in Nazi Germany.



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My older brother Manfred was a keen photographer. He started taking photos at the end of the 1920s. I became interested in what he was up to and got to take part and learn to use the camera and develop photos in the darkroom. We used our bathroom since there weren't any windows.

At that time we used a little frame with a pane of glass. You placed it underneath and then put another pane of glass on top. Then you took it out of the darkroom, held it up to the sun and counted one, two, three, four, five... Then we went back into the darkroom and fixed, or developed, the image.

My first camera consisted of a small box with a lens at the front. There were a handle and a shutter button. I took many pictures both before and during the war. When Leonie and I decided to go underground, I gathered up all the photos, put them in a metal tin and buried it in Grunewald.

I packed the photos in a watertight metal tin and buried them at a location where three trees stood forming a triangle next to a lake. Three months after the liberation I dug up the tin. The originals are now at the Jewish Museum in Berlin, but I have copies of them in my private album.

My childhood and a large part of Leonie's and my time in Berlin are on those photos. I am glad that I managed to keep them. They are all that I have left from that time.

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