

them in jail for the rest of their lives when they're that old? But mostly they should have all been punished.

**How do you think the German people reacted to the persecution of the Jews?**

They did nothing, period. They did nothing. They did nothing to stop it. Guilt by omission is as bad as guilt by commission. You can be just as guilty by not doing something as you are guilty of doing something.

And yet, you can't say all Germans. I don't know if you have seen the movie *Schindler's List*. There you have a man who bribed people. He did everything he could to save twelve or thirteen hundred people. He went through all kinds of little misdeeds in order to save people. If you had more people who stood up like that, things wouldn't have happened. And he was a Nazi in the beginning. But he saw what was wrong, and he changed it.

## ELISE AND HERMANN GOTTFRIED

### The common people, they were watching you. They were all detectives in civilian clothing.

*Hermann was born the son of a Berlin law professor in 1923, and Elise was born the daughter of a Berlin widow in 1924. They left Germany in 1939 on a children's transport to Great Britain.*

**E**lise: My mother was a widow from 1936 onward with two young children. A man we knew always promised my mother he would take her out of Germany. He wasn't born in Germany—he came from either Romania or I don't know where. He was a watchmaker, a non-Jew, and he was very friendly with us, and he was supportive. On the night of *Kristallnacht* he went to our business and said to the people, "Look, this is a poor widow with two children. Leave the business alone." But they didn't. They smashed the windows and robbed whatever they could get. So he wasn't very successful in that. But he was the one person I remember that would support us. [Still] many people were friendly to us. We didn't feel the anti-Semitism directly. They didn't do anything against us. But maybe I was too young to notice, and I was in a Jewish school.

Hermann: I was in Berlin and I was nearly fifteen at the time of *Kristallnacht*. As a matter of fact, a few months before I left I was hiding out. I left Germany in April 1939 and my father was still in Berlin. He was a professor of law. He was given forty-eight hours to leave or otherwise he would be sent to a concentration camp. There were many people who tried to go over the border illegally. My mother, my sister, and my brother were in Berlin, and he went probably with a group of people to try to get across the border. But he was caught in Aachen, terribly beaten, and sent home with the idea that he would be collected and sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. I don't believe he ever went to Sachsenhausen, but he came back [to Berlin] and he died shortly afterward. I was not there anymore when he died.

It was illegal [to try to cross the border]. They would not let anybody through. You had to have papers—papers were a lifeline. If you had no papers to go to Holland or Belgium, you were caught on the border. We had an affidavit to go to America, but there was a waiting list for about ten years ahead.

Elise: A religious Jewish organization that sent children to Palestine after a certain training gave us an opportunity to go to Scotland in order to do our training there. Everybody tried to save themselves; it was not a question of age. What mattered was which opportunities one had to leave. We were all supposed to go to Palestine, but the British had set up a certain quota system, so we couldn't go there.

Before we left Germany, we had received letters from people who had left earlier which said that Lord Balfour had donated a castle to house Jewish children and that there were two hundred children there. The glorious letters that we received said that it was a castle with beautiful rooms, so my mother told me that everything was beautiful and everything was nice there and she tried to make it sound as nice as possible. So we thought we were going on vacation somewhere. I didn't realize it was really for good. I was fifteen years old.

Hermann: I was already quite mature [by the time of] *Kristallnacht* and also had seen the treatment of Jews being hunted and beaten up by other young kids our age. So I remember what was going on. We were Zionists and we were thinking about having a Jewish state and we saw that Jews were being treated as outcasts. We were some of the lucky ones to be able to go to England. There were ten thousand children who were saved by the British to go to England. We were two of the ten thousand.

Elise: I knew that some of my friends that had left earlier were in that castle, but that's all I knew. I thought I would go to somebody I would know. I knew one or two people who had written back and they were very happy there. So I thought, "Okay, I'm going to see a friend of mine." I didn't realize that I would never see my mother again or my sister. I knew that they were very quiet when I left, but I couldn't understand why. My parents told me it was so beautiful

there and they packed everything up and put in some of the books of my father—we had a large library and my mother wanted to save certain books. It didn't really sink in. I didn't realize this was final; I thought it would be temporary. It didn't bother me at the time to leave Germany because everybody tried to leave. Some people went to Shanghai, some people went to Palestine. Everybody tried to save themselves somewhere. I was glad to get out.

Hermann: When we left Germany, I was politically quite up-to-date. I knew what communism meant; I knew what fascism meant. I knew what Hitler was doing to the Jews. I became convinced that we had no future in Germany and we were trying to get out of the place. I knew we would end up in concentration camps—my teachers and parents and other people. I was also present in 1938 when my grandfather was deported to Poland—I was at the railway station. I had seen what was going on and I knew there was no future for any of us. I hated the Germans and I wanted to have it out with them and show them how I hated them. I wanted to have the most dangerous assignment in the British army. I was accepted in the tank corps of the British army and became a tank commander, and I stayed in the British army for a considerable time. After the war, I was stationed in Berlin and I was one of the first Jewish soldiers who came to Bergen-Belsen.

#### Do you continue to hate Germans?

Hermann: Yes. I make no distinction among Germans from my generation. Anybody born before 1945 is detested and hated by me. There were a few exceptions, but I've never met them. My blood pressure rises anytime I see any German of my age because I imagine him wearing a Nazi uniform. Even so, I have to draw a line. The line is 1945.

Elise: I don't feel that way. I feel definitely that I would not like to associate with the older generation, but I feel that the younger generation we have met are very friendly, very nice, and different than their parents were.

#### What were your school years like in Nazi Germany?

Elise: We didn't associate with non-Jews. In 1933, I was nine years old. You felt already at that time that you were different from the rest of the Germans. The Germans didn't want anything to do with us either. I was in a public elementary school, and there the Jewish children were always the better students, and, whenever it came to Saturday, the teacher would say to us that it was *Judensfeiertag* [a day off for Jews]. They were always friendly. But there came a time when they couldn't give good marks to Jewish students anymore. That didn't happen to me because I left before that. But I had a cousin who was told that she should find another school because the teachers were afraid to give her

the best marks in class. They were afraid because she was Jewish. In *Gymnasium* I went to a Jewish school. Our friends were all Jewish. At that time, Jews were already looked at as something second-class. Still I knew I was a Jew, and I was in a way very proud to be a Jew.

Hermann: You must understand that you are talking to two people who had a very religious upbringing. We were not assimilated. We had a Jewish education. We were conscious of being Jews. Of course, like my father, we were also very proud that we were German, which, of course, I lost after Hitler came. But the Jewishness and its self-consciousness were instilled in us. People who came from assimilated backgrounds couldn't understand why all of a sudden they were called Jews and had a much harder time coming to grips with the matter. I knew Jewish history; I knew how we were persecuted. But I've had German Jewish teachers who were more German than the Germans and these people I detested, because after a while I saw what was going on.

Ninety-nine percent of the German population either were anti-Jewish or they were *Mitläufer* [fellow travelers] and continued going along with it. They saw us getting beaten up in the middle of the street. They saw us being sent away. You were treated in a most cold manner. I've seen truckloads of people being taken away to concentration camps. I've seen people come back from concentration camps with their hair completely shorn off. I had a teacher who gave us a report about what happened in Sachsenhausen. I was one of the lucky people who was in a Jewish school. My brother was thrown out of a Christian school. He couldn't go there after 1937. Jewish children couldn't go to any school, so we had our own. We could not go to theaters or movies or anything, so everyone concentrated on emigration, wherever they could go. Unfortunately, America did not do what they should have done. Many other countries did not do what they should have done. They could have saved many of our people but didn't. That's the end of the story.

As children, fifteen years old, we were thrown out into a world where we could not speak the language. But we adjusted very quickly. I didn't speak a single word of English when I came to Britain and I learned it very fast. We also had the idea of going to Palestine, but then the war broke out and we were restricted.

I was then interned as a German, together with German seamen. We were sent to a German camp outside London. We were a group of forty boys from that place in Scotland, all German or Austrian and all Jewish boys. We marched into this camp and we had to stand at attention. We stood guard. We wanted to protect ourselves from the Germans. At night the British soldiers moved out. We went on a hunger strike because we wanted kosher food even though about half of us were not interested in kosher food. But after a while we just wanted food. In the meantime, we had people working on the outside to get us out of the camp because we were not really Germans. We were then sent to Liverpool,

There was a famous boat called the *Andover Star*, a British boat that transported German and Italian prisoners and civilians to Canada. Just a few hours before we were to board this boat, a telegram came saying that we had certificates to go to Palestine and we were taken off that transport. As it turned out, that boat was torpedoed and I think 80 percent died. We were released after that because the British understood that we were not really enemy aliens and we were sent back to Scotland to work.

**How do you feel about the Jews who remained in Germany and survived or returned to Germany to live after the war?**

Hermann: Many of the survivors are not always good people. Quite often the scum survived. Why? Because they were strong enough to go over other people's dead bodies. Those German Jews who live in Germany, I call the scum of the earth. You can repeat it to them. They are people who have no honor. After they have been thrown out of the country, to go back, to stick there because they get a pension!

Elise: They said they didn't want to learn a new language. They didn't want to start from scratch. You can't judge. They couldn't start again.

Hermann: I would not allow my children ever to set foot in Germany if I can help it. You would say I must be very hateful to them, very vicious. I am not. I understand German culture. I was brought up in Germany. I know Schiller and Goethe and Heine. All these people I've studied. But it has nothing to do with me anymore.

Elise: Our children aren't interested. But, if they wanted to go, I would let them.

Hermann: I told them I don't want any of my children or grandchildren ever to set foot there. You forget one thing. When Jews were taken out of their apartments and deported, who were the first ones in the apartment? The neighbors! When I was a soldier, I came back to Berlin after the war in 1945. I went to the house where my parents lived. I went into our neighbor's apartment and I saw my parents' candelabra. I didn't ask them any more questions.

**Didn't the Jews have to turn over their property to the government when they left?**

Hermann: The procedure used to be that the Gestapo sealed the apartment and took the stuff out. Where they put it, I don't know. But on *Kristallnacht*, which was a complete organized plundering, who came? You think the police came to get it? It was the neighbors who came into the apartment and smashed the glass and smashed the china and took whatever they wanted. It

things that they didn't have. That's it! Do you think they asked our permission to take something?

**Did you ever feel that your family was being watched?**

Hermann: Yes, of course. You just had to be careful in everything you did. Being a Jew, you were marked. The common people, they were watching you. They were all detectives in civilian clothes, like the FBI in a corner watching you. The Gestapo only came in after you were handed to them. That was before the war. After the war started, the Gestapo had organized razzias.

I'll tell you a funny story, a true story. Many Polish Jews were peddlers. Some of them also tried to get people together to marry. So we had one particular old Jewish man who always had a pocket of photographs of young girls, Jewish girls. And when he came to somebody, he said, "Look here, would you like to meet this girl and make a wedding?" Well, they picked this guy up outside our house. He was a harmless little guy who was trying to bring people together and they accused him of *Mädchen* handling, a kind of white slavery, and the poor guy was taken away and never heard of again. This just shows you how the mentality was; how they were thinking of every conceivable way of prosecuting a person, a harmless person. He was trying to make a living. Because many Jewish young men could not go out and meet other girls, we tried to meet them in other ways. He was a matchmaker. They did everything possible to make our life a misery in every possible way. They wanted us to disappear.

**Did you ever wish that you were not Jewish at that time?**

Hermann: Correct. I had a very bad experience. There were people going around getting people to join the Hitler Youth. I saw these young people in uniforms, playing the drums like in the Middle Ages. There was one guy who came up to me and said, "Why don't you want to join?" They wanted to enroll me. I didn't tell them I was Jewish—I disappeared. I thought many times to myself, "I wish I was them," because who wants to be persecuted? You don't want to stick out.

Elise: You want to belong.

**How do you feel about being Americans?**

Hermann: I'll give you an answer that I think many people would give you. I have been German, I have been stateless, and I have been British. I am now American. But I was always a Jew, and always will remain a Jew.

Elise: A Jew first. Because we found out that if you were a German Jew, you ended up in the alley. If you were an English Jew, they were very nice to your face. But behind your back, you were a refugee and you could never really be English. But I'll never forget that we are thankful to the English people that they saved us. But I'm foremost a Jew, and then English. I'm foremost a Jew, and then American.

Hermann: Ninety-nine percent of all Germans were Nazis or followers of Nazis. My wife may feel different, but I don't. And to that 1 percent, I give the benefit of the doubt. There were some exceptions, but it's so minute.

## REBECCA WEISNER

### Every few weeks they rounded up people and shot them.

*Born in 1926 and raised in a Berlin working-class family of Polish extraction, Rebecca Weisner was forced to go to Poland in July 1939, was deported to Auschwitz in October 1942, and escaped from one of the death marches near the end of the war.*

I was born in 1926. My first memory is from 1932 or 1933, when I used to go to the park to play with my friends. It was different in Europe in those days. You could go in the street and nobody harmed you. But I did see the Socialist and the Nazi Party fighting and shooting in the streets. This was how we grew up there.

At that time, we lived in a working-class neighborhood in East Berlin, a few blocks away from Alexanderplatz. Both of my parents were from Poland. My parents were religious; they were Orthodox. Near to where we lived there was a police station. I remember they were barricading it every night and there was shooting going on just below our window. We were on the first floor. My mom kept my brother and me under the window in case a bullet came through.

Anyway this was my first experience as a Jewish kid. In 1933 I entered a German school, a little German Protestant school, because we lived at the time in a working-class Gentile neighborhood. I remember having Hebrew lessons three times a week in the first few months in the first grade. The teacher came in to teach us Hebrew in the German school. I was one of about seven Jewish kids there. I remember with Germans I had a lot of fights because they called

When I was six, Hitler came to power. I started school in April 1933, just at the same time. I remember that we were the only Jewish people in that apartment house and there were some German girls I was friends with—we grew up together—and, all of a sudden, one day I come down and they call me “dirty Jew.” My friends, the friends I grew up with!

I couldn't comprehend it. I would say to my mother, “Why do they call me dirty? I am not dirty.” And she said, “You had better get used to it. You're Jewish, and that is what you have to learn. So just take it.” But I didn't want to take it. I fought. I fought in school in the first grade and I remember my aunt told me that I once locked up a girl. I don't know how I locked her up in the bathroom at school, but she missed her whole hour and they were looking for her and I didn't say anything. Well, during the pause they went into the bathroom and they heard her scream and so they found out it was me. They then kind of punished me. They put me in the corner and they gave me a note for my mother to sign. She kept saying, “Hey, listen. If you are going to be like this, you are going to cause us a lot of trouble.” I said, “Why? Why is it different for me?” I couldn't comprehend why I should be different. It was me.

After the first grade was finished my mother sent me to a Jewish school. These were all private, but those who couldn't afford them were supplemented by the Jewish *Gemeinde*. It was a regular school like the German one, but it wasn't German. Every day we had one hour of Hebrew. But everything else was like any other school. And we had other languages too, like English, because we were being prepared. It was 1934 when everybody was thinking about emigration.

### Did you have Gentile friends after you went to the Jewish school?

No, they were never allowed to play with me. They wouldn't talk to me. They called me names like “dirty Jew” and probably some other things.

I was very upset and I caused a lot of trouble for my parents. Luckily they were Polish citizens. Because of me my mother was arrested twice that year and had to stay overnight at the Gestapo. The teachers called the Gestapo and said that I was not well behaved, that I reacted too violently. So my father said, “Look, you have to keep quiet. You cannot do anything. You cannot say anything.” And I couldn't accept that; there was no way I could accept that. And then it happened a second time, and, if she would have been a German citizen, she would have been already somewhere else. But, because of the Polish passport, they had to release her. At that time you were still protected by Poland. And so after this I learned to keep quiet more.

Then we moved into a Jewish neighborhood in the Lothringer Strasse. We were close to that famous religious, Jewish street, the Grenadier Strasse. That is where you had all the kosher stores and you had all kinds of Jewish things that you couldn't get in other stores. There, where we lived in Berlin, each city or

So I started the Jewish school and then things went better for me. But we had a German school across the street and we had a lot of trouble with German Jewish kids. They were always taught that they were better than the Eastern Europeans and they looked at us like we were from Eastern Europe even when we were born in Berlin. So there was a lot of fighting between the two sides. There was a lot of resentment from the German Jewish people.

There are so many incidents. We weren't allowed to go swimming anymore [in the swimming pools]. Jewish kids were not allowed to mix, so we never learned to swim really. But we used to go outside of Berlin with the subway and the train and we, by ourselves, went bathing in the Wannsee. And we had only one Jewish sports stadium left. I belonged to a Zionist Jewish organization and we were very into sports; sports kept me going. We had competitions every few months, and in school we had a lot of sports too, indoors and outdoors. So we were always into sports and we had a lot of friends, all Jewish friends, but all from Eastern European backgrounds.

#### **Do you remember seeing many signs and symbols of anti-Semitism?**

Oh, I do. I saw the *Stürmer* newspaper. It was all over the place; it was on every corner, you couldn't miss it. There were the Jews with the big noses and all that. I could not understand that anybody could imagine that Jewish people could look like this. I guess you could say I was a little angry with that; there was a lot of anger that came out later.

Also I remember that there were Christmas displays in one of the big department stores. I used to love it. In '37 I said to my mother that I wanted to go to see the display. Now my mother was dark blond—she didn't look Jewish. But I was very dark like my father. So she said to me, "You can't go there. You look too Jewish." And this gave me another complex—I looked Jewish. I said, "Now how am I supposed to look?" She said, "Well, you are a Jewish kid and you look Jewish, so you can't go there." And then there were the Germans who gave us a lot of trouble. There were so many minor incidents. But, all and all, I must say that with all this anti-Semitism, me and my Jewish friends, we had a pretty good childhood. We belonged to Jewish organizations, belonged to Jewish schools. We knew we had to accept it and that was it.

#### **What did you think when you saw Hitler Youth walking around?**

Very, very afraid. Now, I used to see Hitler sometimes. He used to come by in an open car especially on Unter den Linden by the Brandenburg Gate. One Saturday my mom and I were out walking on Unter den Linden because that was the thing to do and we could still go to one Jewish café [near there], but no Jews were allowed on the left side of Unter den Linden because Hitler lived in the

Kaiser Wilhelm Strasse and we couldn't walk there. On Unter den Linden we saw Hitler come by in an open car with his arm raised up and everybody had to raise his arm back. So my mom said, "You better raise your arm. If not, everyone will realize that you're Jewish." And I said, "No, I can't do that." She said, "Do you want to get me arrested again?" So I had to do it. But I always rebelled against it.

Now I will give you an incident that happened in 1936. There was one café in West Berlin that was called Café Dobrin. I was too young but my brother went there. Many young Jewish people in their later teens went there to meet somebody—it was a hangout—and the Gestapo used to come by every few weeks, unannounced, naturally, and just take everybody in. Among them there was a cousin of mine who was maybe eighteen or nineteen. He was born in Berlin, but his parents were stateless—they were from Poland. Anyway, he had no country and he just disappeared. His name was David Adler. It didn't take six weeks until the postman came and gave my aunt a box and she had to pay twenty-five marks. She opened it and it was his ashes from Buchenwald. This was an incident that I had witnessed in 1936. He was taken from that restaurant, that café, where they were hanging out. He didn't do anything. They just came and took you.

That wasn't the only incident. How do you think so many Jewish people from Germany wound up in Buchenwald way before 1938?

#### **What do you remember of *Kristallnacht*?**

On October 28, 1938, they took my father out of the apartment. All the Polish Jews were rounded up and it took something like twenty-four hours to round them up. My father was taken and my brother was taken (he was just sixteen) and my grandfather was taken; my mom and I and my grandmother were left behind. They took them to Poland, but we didn't know that for three days. Now my mother's sister lived in Stralsund, which is near Stettin and Rostock by the Baltic Sea, and I had just been there that summer helping my aunt with her little baby girl. In that little city lived about twenty Jewish families, all immigrants from Poland, but all related. I remember well how my mother then put me on the train and my aunt took me off the train and how, at age twelve, I went there and they all were beaten up. They were already beaten up on the streets by the Germans. I don't know how they knew they were Jewish, but being that it wasn't such a big place, maybe they knew that. They didn't arrest them, but they were beaten up. This happened in every small town in Germany except in Berlin.

Now, what happened to my father was that he somehow got out of that internment camp on the Polish side of the German border and went to the town where he was born, where he still had sisters and brothers who remained there. And then he called us from there and said that everything would be okay and that we shouldn't worry

**When did you leave Germany?**

I went to Poland because we had to leave in July 1939. We got from the Jewish committee an apartment with a room and a kitchen in a small town in Silesia near Krakow, about half an hour away from Auschwitz by car. I was there when the German army marched in. It was six in the morning when we heard on the radio that the Germans had marched into Poland. By nine o'clock they were in the town. My father's brother was like a big shot [in that town]. I think it wasn't more than two days that the Germans were there before they arrested him. But he ran away and they sent the dogs after him and they killed him. Every few weeks they rounded up people and shot them. That was before they even had camps [in Poland]. In 1939 I was just thirteen, August 11 was my birthday. I never went to school after that; I had finished just barely the sixth grade in Berlin.

**Did you know about any other shootings of Jews?**

There was no way of getting any news. But, yes, we did hear some things from some people who traveled, from the ones who didn't look Jewish. Some of them had Gentile papers, if they were blond and spoke a good Polish without a Jewish accent. My uncle from Berlin from my mother's family wound up in the Warsaw ghetto, but I didn't know much about it until after the war. Near the end of the war, I myself escaped from the death march. That was a tough thing.

Anyway Auschwitz wasn't ready yet. One day I was walking down the street with a friend and two German officers from the Nazis stopped their car and said, "I take you with me. You come here." Like a kid with a big mouth, I then said to them in German, "You can't take me. I am too young to go." He gave me right away a slap on the face, a big hard one, and said, "You come with me." And then they took me and the girl who had walked with me into the school. Later on they rounded up a lot of Jewish girls from that town, I think about forty, and we were sent to a *Durchgangslager* [a transport camp]. We were there a few days. It was hard for me there; it was like I couldn't cope with it. It was in January or February 1942.

[Then we were sent] to a women's camp near Breslau in eastern Germany. At the beginning, we were not too bad off. But sometime in September or October 1942, my brother, my parents, my grandparents, and my cousins were all taken to Auschwitz and nobody ever saw them again. Then they came at the same time to my camp; maybe it was a few days later [and we were sent to Auschwitz].

**Did you know about Auschwitz already, about the gassing of Jews?**

We already knew by late July, August. One came from this camp, one came from that camp. Somehow we knew those things were more or less going on—that there was Auschwitz and that they had gas ovens to gas all the people, children and so. We knew that.

I cried for maybe two days because I knew that I was all alone. I only had one brother and I really didn't want to live at that point. I never cried again after that time. Until today, I still cannot cry and I have had a lot of emotional problems because of all those things. I can't cry; I choke, but I can't cry.

You know, they were young—my mother was forty; my father was forty-four; my brother was just barely twenty—and this was something that I had to live with.

**What was it like in concentration camp?**

They took away whatever we had—our watches, clothes, and everything. They shaved our hair. It was tragic. You know, you're a young girl and they shave your head. We didn't get any food anymore. If you asked me what was the worst in the camp for me personally, it was hunger. It was also cold; we didn't have much warmth. We slept in an old factory hall, in bunk beds, up and down in wooden bunks and straw. It was like an outdoor, not an indoor, house, with little holes in the middle.

All my life I had to run around in the middle of the night. I still do. Over there, where you were walking, you had people screaming, and people crying, and people praying. It was so weird! It was so frightening! I'm still trying to figure out today how they cleaned it all up. There was no water, no paper. In '44 it went from bad to worse for us in the camps. We were exhausted. Once I was beaten in the lower back, and I have had to have surgery from that. Twelve years ago I was paralyzed. It was a long story. Also I have had psychological difficulties. I've had psychiatry on and off for twenty years now. I finally gave it up because it didn't help me. They were not qualified to help a survivor.

**How do you feel about Germany today?**

I have a big problem with that. I blocked the German language completely. Until recently, I practically didn't remember a word. I just didn't want to hear about Germany.

In 1977 I got an invitation from Berlin to come for a visit with my husband. If I would have gone much earlier, I would have gotten all this restitution money, but I just didn't want to hear or know about it. When we went there in '77, I said to my husband, "They're paying. This isn't our money. Maybe we should go." I felt that maybe I would get over it if I went there

I met two school friends on the plane and we landed in Berlin. They gave us a hotel and a few marks. One day we decided to visit our old home in East Berlin. We took the subway and got out on the Alexanderplatz. Then we walked to where we used to live, and what do you think happened when I came to the house where we lived? It was gone. The house I had lived in was leveled to the ground. Apparently it had burned. This was the instant that I acted like a maniac. I felt like I don't come from anyplace—no background, no home, like out of the thin air, nothing to look back at. It was a very weird feeling. You come to collect something from your childhood and this is gone.

**Going back to your life in Nazi Germany, how did you get out of the concentration camp?**

I liberated myself I guess. I ran away from the transport in January or February after New Year's in 1945. It was the coldest winter in Europe in 1945. We didn't have much clothes or shoes. We had to walk in that cold weather and we had no food after the first few days. If they were in a good mood, they put us in a barn. It wasn't warm, but it was better than the snow. But most of the nights we were outside sitting or whatever—it was so cold! Then I said to myself, "I'm not going to make it." I was near the end. We were Auschwitz girls; there were like three and a half thousand girls. I remember that when the girls sat down, they were shot. They couldn't walk; they would sit down and were shot. So I said to myself, "What can I do? I am not going to make it either way, so I'll take a chance." And when we walked by a certain woods, somehow I had the chance to run into the woods. Some girls followed me and they were shooting at us. But instinct told us to hide behind the trees and I guess they gave up on us.

That was a lucky thing because the Germans were evacuating east Germany already. They were going west, so we went east. At night we were walking and in the daytime hiding. Then we said, "We have to get some food." So we took a chance, and a farmer found us in a barn sleeping. He was nice and gave us food. We had prison clothes on—girls from Auschwitz completely in prison clothes. There was no way we could take our clothes off; it was too cold. Anyway, he gave us some food and said, "You can sleep here. But, in the morning, you had better go." Our only hope was to get to the Russians. It took us two weeks, and then we got to the Russians.

## JOSEPH WEINBERG

### We did not feel, especially in Stuttgart, the anti-Semitism.

*Born in 1914 and raised in Stuttgart, Joseph Weinberg emigrated to the United States in June 1940 and returned to Germany at the end of the war as an interrogator for the American army.*

My parents originally came from Austria. In 1928 my parents separated and my mother had her own little business in the *Städtische Markthalle* [city market hall] in Stuttgart. I went to school in Stuttgart—to a *Realschule* [secondary school] and then to a *Handelsschule* [business school]. When I was finished, I became an apprentice in a Jewish firm.

While I was in school, I didn't notice very much anti-Semitism, except that, of course, I was always with Jewish men. We had religion in school, but I had this along with everybody and did not have much trouble. I joined a German sports club in 1934 where I did running. I liked long-distance running, 1,500 and 3,000 meters. In 1936, I think it was, I was told that I couldn't stay in the club anymore because I was Jewish. Then I joined the *Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten* [Reich Association of Jewish Frontline Soldiers], which had a sports club. We, the Jewish people, had our own Jewish Olympiad in Berlin. I was elected to go there because of my talent as a sprinter. I also belonged to another youth organization called the *Bund deutsch-jüdischer Jugend* [Association of German Jewish Youth].

I grew up in Germany. I tried to connect with people. We had good friends who were German people and who were very nice. We did not feel, especially in Stuttgart, the anti-Semitism. It was not so bad in Stuttgart as in other towns further north. After the apprenticeship, I was kept in that firm, a Jewish firm, and stayed there until 1937. When they closed, a German man came and said, "Jew, we cannot keep you because we will not get any orders from the government." So I had to leave the firm. There was no problem, except that I was Jewish. So they were very sorry about it.

**Do you really think they were very sorry about it, or did they just say they were?**

No, they were. There was one fellow who actually brought me in as an apprentice. I stayed in touch with him after the war. Then, of course, I had no job and I got these little jobs. My mother had a stand in the *Städtische Markthalle* and