

# KLAUS FRANK



The Nazis arrested Klaus Frank's father in 1934 because he was an election overseer for the Social Democratic party in the industrial town of Dortmund, Germany.

"They let him go," Klaus says, "but that was when we should have left."

Richard Frank was a World War I veteran who had run an import/export business with his brother in Copenhagen. He met his future wife, Emmy, on a train while on a business trip to Berlin.

As a child, Klaus enjoyed visits to Elberfeld, Germany, where his mother's parents owned a department store. Among his fondest memories are trips with his grandparents to the zoo and on the *Schwebbahn*, the elevated tramway. Vacations with his parents also meant travel to the Baltic Sea and islands off the seacoast.

The Franks owned the four-story building where their apartment encompassed the entire second floor. Klaus, his sister, Marianna, and the maid each had their own bedrooms. The only amenity they lacked was instant hot water. Richard Frank fired up a "big monster" heater in the bathroom every Friday night for baths.

Klaus went to a private lower school and public high school. Talented in art, he worked three years as a department-store decorator.

The Franks were members of Dortmund's Reform temple. On holidays, they had the cab drop them off a couple of blocks away so they could walk to services. They had a tree at Hanukkah. When it was time for Klaus's bar mitzvah, the cantor helped him memorize his *parsha*, his Torah reading. Klaus enjoyed meeting his buddies at temple on Friday nights and went often – even when his parents did not.

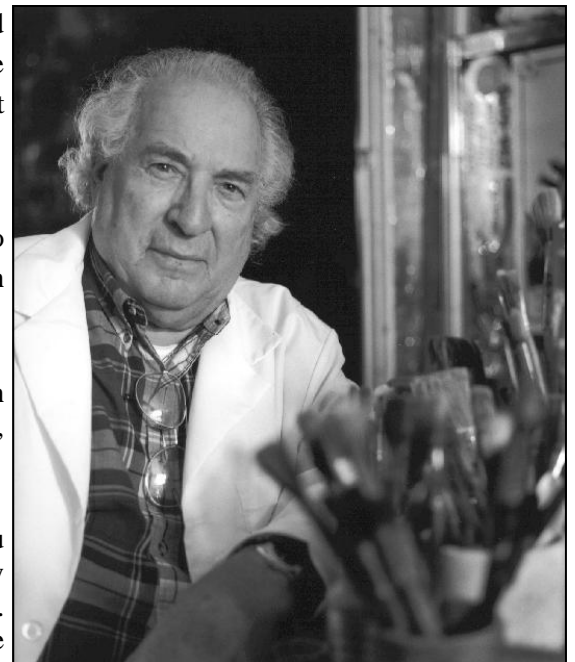
Klaus's Christian friends grew scarce in 1933. Mrs. Huesemann, who sold dairy products to Emmy off her boat on the Rhine River, offered to take the children to the Netherlands, but the Franks – particularly Richard – thought Hitler "wouldn't last the next week."

Klaus was 17 on November 9, 1938, *Kristallnacht*, when the Gestapo arrested him and his father and sent them to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. They were released after five weeks thanks to a bribe.

The Franks fled to Copenhagen. Another bribe got them to the Dominican Republic, where Klaus met Eva, whom he married in 1946. A year later, they came to the United States.

Klaus hated New York. "I was not used to that many people, and you couldn't find a room," he says. He and Eva visited a cousin in Kansas City and loved it. They found an apartment at 39th Street and State Line Road. Klaus worked four years for Rothschild's as a display designer before going into business for himself. He still loves to sketch and "putter around with the car." He and Eva have four children: Suzie, Kenny, Sylvia, and Sandy.

Klaus would like to forget the Holocaust. He gave his German passport – which identified him as "Israel" Klaus Martin Frank – to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. When the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary came around, his children's questions prompted him to write a book about his experiences.



Portrait by David Sosland

Excerpt from *From the Heart: Life Before and After the Holocaust ~ A Mosaic of Memories*

© 2001 Midwest Center for Holocaust Education