

Ralph Berets

Ralph Berets was born in Amersfoort, Holland in December 1939. Originally from Germany, from 1936-1939, his parents tried to emigrate to the United States because conditions for Jews in Germany were worsening. They eventually moved to the Netherlands.

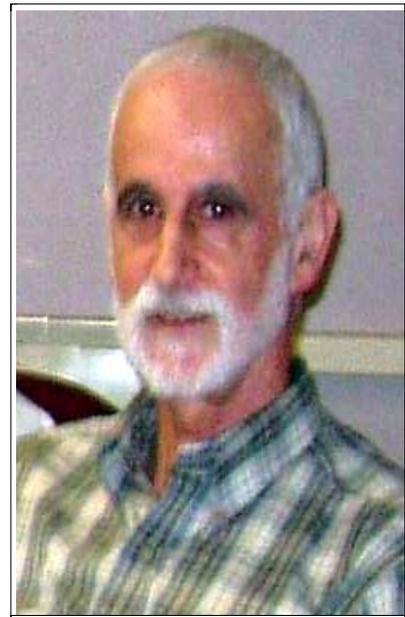
Ralph spent his childhood moving from one hiding place to the next. His family first stayed in a Christian friend's cottage in the woods near Nijmegen. They were there for nearly seven months until the Nazis nearly caught them and burned it down. They hid in a ditch below the house and escaped when the Nazis left.

Next they moved to a space above an ice cream store where they were able to stay for three weeks.

The family spent the last three years of the war hiding in a chicken coop near the German border. Ralph said at one time twelve people lived in the coop. Because of the small space, they slept in shifts. The farmers provided them with nothing, but scraps were up for grabs, so the family lived on potato peels, cabbage, and whatever else they could find.

The Berets family was liberated by the Canadians while living in the chicken coop.

Ralph arrived in the United States in 1951. He has returned to Europe six times over two years to bring back relatives.



Margalith Clarenberg

Margalith Rothschild was born in Düsseldorf, Germany, where she lived only a few weeks before her family moved to the Netherlands.

For three years as a child she was in hiding in the Netherlands, continually living in fear about what might happen, and food was scarce.

Many of the Dutch offered Margalith's family shelter. She speaks about living in an attic room, and the restrictions that were placed on Jews, such as only being allowed to go to the store at certain times, wearing the Star of David, and having few or no food coupons. Food was so scarce that Margalith remembers eating tulip bulbs and having dreams about food.

Margalith tells the story of when she received a notice about going to a Polish work camp in the fall of 1942. She was able to fake appendicitis and missed the date to leave. The following spring she received another notice. At this time, she knew nothing of Krematoria but noticed friends leaving abruptly. Her parents told her to find a hiding place.

She hid in a boarding house where she could do housework for the woman who ran it. After getting the flu, she was taken to where her parents were hiding and then returned. Margalith talks about other hiding places and the conditions in which she lived.

After being liberated by the Poles, she went back to The Hague in the Netherlands where she was prior to hiding, but her home had been bombed and nothing was left.

In 1959, Margalith came to the United States.

Ilsa Dahl Cole



Emil Dahl was fighting for Germany in 1916 when his second daughter, Ilsa, was born. He had a cattle business in Geilenkirchen, a town of about 4,000 near the Dutch border with only a few Jewish families. Some property he owned; the rest he rented. Ilsa, her sister, Hilda, and younger brother, Erich, had a nanny.

Emil was a strict disciplinarian. As for synagogue, he went occasionally. Her mother, Clara Dahl, kept kosher

and went to synagogue every week. Ilsa started Sunday school at 6. In her regular school, which was run by nuns, Jewish and Lutheran children were excused from class when it was time for Catholic religious education. In school plays, Ilsa played angels, never Jesus or Mary. The Dahls had friendly relations with their Christian neighbors and shared their holiday celebrations.

Ilsa and Hilda spent summers with their grandparents in Hamm, Germany.

A valedictorian, Ilsa graduated in 1932 at age 16, fluent in French and English. She wanted to be an archeologist but higher education was inaccessible.

Instead, she apprenticed to a French dressmaker in Aachen, who hid her from the Nazi wives who patronized the shop. Ilsa moved to Berlin in 1937 to further her design education, but the school closed a few days after she arrived. She joined a group for Jewish young people, was active in sports, and she met Walter Cole, from Koblenz, who was studying to be a chiropodist. They enjoyed dates on boats, at country inns and swimming.

Ilsa was home in Geilenkirchen, packing to leave for America on Kristallnacht, when rioters threatened to burn down her parents' home. Emil Dahl took her to the railway station that night.

Ilsa's parents and most of her extended family died in concentration camps, as did Walter Cole's. For too long, her father had thought that Hitler would not last. "It was a constant hurt that we were unable to bring out parents out," she says.

Unmarried when they arrived in America, Walter went to St. Louis, Ilsa to Kansas City, where she found the biggest challenge was the heat. She and Walter were married in St. Louis in 1940. For two years, they lived near Denver, where Walter, drafted by the Army, served a prisoner-of-war camp

After the war, he worked for a floor covering company in St. Louis and was transferred to Kansas City. The family settled in the President Gardens Apartments and later moved to a house in Meadow Lake. Walter started his own business, W.J. Cole Floor Products Co. Ilsa helped him in the office. Paralyzed by a stroke in 1990, Walter died in 1997.

Ilsa and Walter were members of Temple B'nai Jehudah and have three children: Carol, Ann, and Steve. Ilsa has shared little of her past with them because, she says, "I didn't want them to grow up with that burden and to feel that terrible things could happen to them because they were Jewish."



Marianne Dennis



Before Marianne was born in Berlin in 1931, her father, Willie Latter, toured as a concert pianist. Blind since age 13, he had studied at a conservatory. Her mother, Margaret Latter, was an actress. After their marriage, Willie became a secretary for a large textile firm and later for a lawyer. Margaret worked in a telephone company accounting department.

The Latters lived in an apartment in the Berlin suburbs. They were strict parents to whom Marianne says she would never, ever talk back. Marianne went to a Jewish day school and, for the most part, had Jewish friends. Her family went to services every week, and she attended a synagogue camp. Once a year, they took a vacation to visit friends in the country. Marianne

enjoyed playing games, roller skating and riding a bicycle.

Then came November 9, 1938, *Kristallnacht*, the “night of broken glass.” Jews were beaten and their homes ruined, more than 200 synagogues were destroyed, nearly 100 people were murdered and 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

“They came to our apartment and painted a big Star of David with the word ‘Jew’ in the middle,” she recalls. “Soon after, we weren’t allowed to use any transportation. Grocery shopping was allowed for one hour a day.”

Marianne was beaten and harassed on the way to school. Still, her parents did not send her away. “They said, ‘If we perish, we perish together.’”

In 1941, the Jewish schools closed and the Latters were forced out of their apartment. From 1943 until the war’s end, they hid in basements. Marianne was 14 when the Russians marched into Berlin. It was, she says, “one of the happiest days of my life. They set us up in an apartment, and there was one officer who especially looked after us.”

Marianne worked as an infants’ nurse for orphan survivors and, at 18, married her first husband, a Briton who worked for the United Jewish Relief Organization. After the birth of a son, David Solomons, in 1950, the couple lived in Manchester, England, where Michael Solomons was born.

In the meantime, Marianne’s parents, with the help of the Brand family, emigrated to Kansas City. Marianne still treasures the piano the Brands gave her father.

Marianne came first to Hollywood; her husband had been sponsored to immigrate there for a job. However, he was abusive and after a year, she fled to Kansas City. Living in basement apartments, often working three jobs, she raised her two boys. She and her second husband, Robert Dennis, who died in 1996, have three daughters: Deborah, Rebecca, and Naomi.

For years, Marianne and her parents never talked about what happened in the war.

“People don’t understand,” she says. Despite the passage of decades, “when I talk about it, it’s just like yesterday.”



Maria Devinki



Solomon Braun, a decorated German World War I veteran, and his wife, Regina Braun, ran a successful export business in Hanover, Germany. Mala, their second child, was a little girl when they moved to Wodzislaw, Poland, where more than 2,800 of the town's 3,500 residents were Jewish.

In Wodzislaw, the Brauns lived in a 200-year-old house containing 4,000 square feet of floor space. It was owned by Regina's parents and was situated on the town's main street across from city hall. Mala and her two brothers each had their own room. Live-in servants helped with the cooking, laundry and childcare. For fun, Mala and her friends took the bus or train to nearby cities to attend concerts and plays.

The main synagogue in Wodzislaw – where worshipers had their own seats and passed them on from generation to generation – was 400 years old. There were also smaller houses for daily worship and study called *shtieblach*.

Polish law required all children to attend school through the seventh grade. Mala went to public school from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and to a Bais Yaakov Hebrew school for girls from 3 to 6 p.m. She studied math for three years in high school and planned to become a teacher, but World War II intervened.

When Hitler came to power in Germany, Regina Braun wondered why he would want to take over Poland, a poor country. But he did.

In 1941, Solomon Braun was sent to the Treblinka death camp. In September 1942, while Mala was a slave laborer in an ammunition factory, she and her boyfriend, Fred Devinki, were married by her uncle. Later, one of her father's former business associates, a righteous gentile, arranged for Mala and her mother to hide in a cramped underground bunker on a farm outside Wodzislaw. They hid for 27 months.

Mala left her possessions with a friend, the mayor's sister. After liberation in January 1945, she returned for them – especially for her shoes. "I have nothing of yours," the so-called friend answered heartlessly.

Mala's younger brother was moving along with their mother to the nearby town of Sosnowiec when Poles – unhappy that Jews were returning – murdered him.

Mala and Fred raised a small sum through barter and sale of yard goods and bought a grocery in Sosnowiec. The grocery flourished but, believing they were in danger, they left and settled in Regensburg, Germany. There they established a successful textile business and their son Sam was born. They left for Kansas City in 1950.

piece of property. Kansas City Life needed the land for a parking lot and bought it for a large profit. This venture gave her credibility with local bankers and enabled her to create Devinki Real Estate, in which she is still involved.

Until recently, Maria Devinki told her children little about her experiences in the Holocaust. "You put poison in your children, you don't know what you're going to bring out from that," she says. "They know just little...pieces."

Maria believes the stolen assets that are being returned to Holocaust survivors should also be sent in large part to Israel, "so Israel can be strong enough in case of anything happening."



Dora Edelbaum



In a small house on the outskirts of Lodz, Poland, in the town of Pabianice, Dora Kiwasz lived with her mother and father, Hinda and Hersh Kiwasz, an uncle and four siblings: Yakov, Kalman, Avram, and Manya. The house was a wedding present.

When Dora went outside to get water from the well, her father would go after her, objecting that “girls do not carry heavy things like that.” Yet Dora retained her independent streak. One day in public school, she lost interest in the lesson. Leaving her lunch behind to make it appear that she was still present, she walked out of the classroom and headed home. “My mother was shocked,” she says.

Hersh Kiwasz was a tailor who specialized in making uniform tops. Hinda Kiwasz helped in the evenings with hand sewing. Dora was thrilled when she was finally allowed to pick out her own patterns and take them to a nearby dressmaker. The

clothes her father made for her were always too big, so she could grow into them. Dora preferred styles that fit.

“When I came home from school, all the food was made,” says Dora, recalling most vividly kugel, potato casserole, and knaidelach, a dumpling soup. Her mother was adamant about one thing: She detested gossip. For Shabbat, Sabbath, Dora’s father brought poor people home for a meal and a place to sleep. On motzei Shabbat, the evening after Sabbath ends, her parents went to meetings for an organization that assisted orphans and the poor.

Dora attended a Hebrew school for Jewish girls. After synagogue, she and her classmates delivered food to the home for the elderly. For recreation, children in Pabianice walked together, went to the park and ate ice cream cones. It was a treat to hear an outdoor band. The Kiwaszs’ neighbors were predominantly Christian. Dora had friends who weren’t Jewish, but came to be afraid of them after an incident when they ripped off her clothes.

When the Germans invaded, the first thing Hinda Kiwasz did was to hire someone to teach the children German. One of Dora’s brothers wanted to go to Israel, but their parents did not want the family to separate. To be safe, Hersh Kiwasz sewed 500 zloty, the Polish currency, and a birth certificate in each child’s coat.

When Dora was liberated from Bergen-Belsen in 1945, she had typhus. In a displaced persons camp, instead of eating, she traded food on the black market for money to buy shoes. When she and her husband, Ben Edelbaum, arrived in America in 1947, she kissed the Statue of Liberty. “And I kissed the ground too,” she says.

They found jobs. They went to night school to learn English. And they had children: Harold, Helen and Estelle. Now, they have five grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

“I always felt strong,” says Dora. “I didn’t give up.”



Ann Federman



Miriam and Abraham Warszawski had nine children, all born at home in the Polish city of Bedzin. Anna was next to the youngest. The Warszawskis' apartment building was next door to a ladies ready-to-wear shop. A sweets shop was across the street and a men's shop a few doors down.

The great room served as living room, dining room and bedroom for the entire family. The parents had one large bed and the children doubled up in other beds. Mother served the main meal from 1 to 3 p.m., and sometimes a sandwich and buttermilk snack at bedtime.

The Warszawskis were strictly observant Jews. Miriam wore a *sheytl*, a wig. Abraham never went out without a hat. On Shabbat, the family often walked an hour or two to visit aunts and uncles in nearby *shtetlekh*, or small towns. The children huddled under their mother's shawl for warmth.

Well known for their hospitality, the Warszawskis had few Shabbats without a traveler or needy guest spending the night on their black leather couch. Abraham Warszawski, a real estate dealer, was a member of the *chevra kadisha*, the Jewish burial society. If someone needed a bank loan, he would vouch for him. All the boys played instruments. Anna's brother, Moishe, was an accomplished violinist. Anna went to public school. She felt little overt antisemitism but was asked to leave the room during prayers.

The war started in 1939, and in 1942 Bedzin's Jews were ordered to report to a football field for deportation.

Anna was 20 when she and her older sister, Gutcha, were liberated from a labor camp in Czechoslovakia. The sisters returned to Bedzin, then to the displaced persons camp at Bergen-Belsen, where Anna met Isak Federman.

In June 1946, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and United Jewish Appeal arranged for them to settle in Kansas City. Anna, now Ann, got a job lining trunks and later sewing. The hardest part of her new life, she says, was learning English. Ann and Isak were the first Holocaust survivors to marry in Kansas City. To their amazement, more than 500 people attended their wedding.

Ann became a citizen in 1951, at the very courthouse where Arthur, the son she was carrying, would be sworn in as federal judge four decades later. The Federmans have two other children, Rachel and

Ann doesn't dwell on the war, except for what happened to her little sister, Laika, who also made it to the Czech labor camp. When Laika became ill, Ann and Gutcha sent her to the camp sanitarium, which had always been safe. Laika was taken away in a surprise raid by the SS.

In spite of it all, Ann believes in God and America.

"In Poland or Germany," she says, "you could wake up during the night and not know who's going to knock on your door."



Isak Federman



Isak Federman comes from a legacy of strength. His father, Baruch Federman, suffering from pneumonia contracted as a soldier, died when Isak was an infant. His mother, Rachel Federman, raised three children alone and, out of the family's apartment, ran a shirt factory that employed three people. Isak was the youngest until Rachel remarried and gave him a younger brother.

The Federmans lived in Wolbrom, Poland, a small town that was nearly all Jewish. As was traditional, Isak began *cheder*, Hebrew School, at 3 years old and entered a Polish public school at 7. Wolbrom had no high school so, after seventh grade, Isak moved to Bedzin and a year later to Lodz. In Lodz, he worked in his uncle's fabric

warehouse, joined a Zionist youth organization and considered leaving for Palestine. But, he said, "My parents didn't buy that program."

In summer 1939, Isak received letters from his mother, worried about the friction between Poland and Germany, asking him to come home. By August he was home. Nevertheless, most – including Isak's mother and stepfather – didn't believe the rumors of what was ahead. "The Germans are cultured people," they said.

On September 1 the Nazis marched into Wolbrom and shot a woman accused of spying. Five days later, they rounded up the men, Isak among them. Isak's sister flirted with a soldier and won his release.

A Christian farmer named Yelnick helped the Federmans get by until December, when his mother sent Isak out for food.

"On the way, a bunch of Nazis with machine guns stopped me, beat the hell out of me and pushed me on a truck," Isak says. He never saw any members of his family again.

Isak endured 17 concentration camps.

"When things were rough, I tried to find the chance to volunteer to go someplace else," he says. "It didn't always work, but sometimes it helped."

After liberation, Isak returned to the displaced persons camp at Bergen-Belsen, where he met Ann Warszawski. He persuaded her and some others to move to the American zone, in the hope they could eventually immigrate to the United States. While waiting, with the help of Kansas Citian Sol Firestone, they refurbished the synagogue.

When they arrived in New York, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee sent Isak and Ann to Kansas City. There they were married on Sept. 22, 1946. They have three children: Rachel, Arthur, and Lorie.

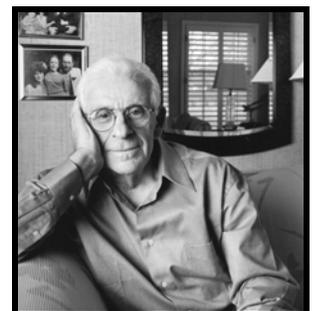
In Kansas City, Isak made a small mistake on his first job and his boss yelled, "You should have stayed in Europe." Refusing to take abuse in America, Isak resigned and started Superior Upholstered Furniture Co. He

sold it 26 years later, and started another business and today is semi-retired.

In 1993 he and Jack Mandelbaum founded the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education.

A past president of Kehilath Israel Synagogue, Isak believes in God.

"But," he says, "I have problems with him, or her, or whatever."



June Feinsilver



June Rubenstein was born in Lodz, Poland in October 1922. At 16 she was separated from her parents.

She talks about going to her grandmother's home in Warsaw in 1941. Those in the ghetto were always hungry, and many died of starvation. June looked for work while in the ghetto and eventually met a man at a factory who sent her bread, cheese and preserves. He was a Pole of German decent who was in charge of food for the military. Through him, June received a job in the factory.

Soon the ghetto was liquidated and June was invited to hide at the factory by her future husband who also worked there. She did and then in March 1943, the Germans made an announcement that Jews who wanted to leave

empty, and those inside had been taken out to be shot.

June was transferred to Bilzyn and lived there for a year and a half.

Bilzyn was liquidated early in 1944 and June was transferred to Auschwitz. While at Auschwitz June worked making braids from old clothes. She had volunteered to transfer elsewhere and was almost sent to an experimental camp, but escaped. She was caught and then made to empty sewers.

In January 1945 June was transferred to Bergen Belsen. The camp was liberated by British troops four months later. June was in the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp for four years when she and her husband Isaac Feinsilver emigrated to the United States.

Isaac and June were happy to be assigned to Kansas City. They started in a tiny apartment in Kansas City, Kansas, moved to 10th street and later to 26th street and Benton Boulevard in Kansas City, Missouri.

The Feinsilvers have a daughter, Evelyn, and two grandchildren.



Clara Grossman



The Hercz Family of Nyirbator, Hungary, was Orthodox. On Shabbat and holidays, Armin Hercz wore a shtreimel, a fur-trimmed Hasidic hat. His wife, Ann Hercz, put out a white damask tablecloth and fine china. Gathered around were children, sick relatives living with the family and others in need of hospitality.

On Fridays, daughter Clara walked to town to fill a decanter with kosher wine and deliver the cholent to the community oven for the next day's meal. Clara, born Klari in 1930, was the second of four children. She loved the freshly prepared gefilte fish, challah, chicken soup, homemade noodles, and roast chicken, duck or goose and liver paté that graced the Sabbath table. Still, at times, she resisted the limitations of Orthodoxy. "I was angry about wearing long hose and long-sleeved dresses in the summertime," she says. "Even as a young child, I said I would never marry anyone someone picks out for me."

Her father, Armin Hercz, bought raw chemicals from farmers, processed them in his warehouse and shipped them around the world. As a youngster, Clara remembers moving into a large house with rugs, gardens and two servants. Ann Hercz and the children spent summers at a mountain resort.

The boys rose at 5 a.m. to attend cheder, Hebrew school. Clara attended a Jewish school after fifth grade, when the public school no longer permitted Jewish pupils.

The Herczes were among about 1,800 Jews in Nyirbator, a town of about 20,000. There were three synagogues. The Jews and gentiles of Nyirbator interacted superficially. "Life was good because our families were so close and we made our own lives," Clara says, "but there was always a feeling of uneasiness."

The Nazis invaded in March 1944. The Herczes were deported to a ghetto in April and a month later to Auschwitz. Selected for work, Clara escaped at war's end from a forced march.

An orphan at 15, she made her way back to Nyirbator and later to a displaced persons camp in Germany. U.S. immigration quotas prevented her from leaving until April 1948.

Once in the United States, Clara lived with cousins in Hazelton, Pennsylvania. After high school, she worked in her cousin's bank while taking university courses at night. Clara was introduced to the man she married at a family wedding. Uncle Cal, who had worked hard for her freedom, gave her away.

Clara owned a ladies' boutique, sold wedding clothes and arranged corporate meetings before retiring to make time for travel and volunteering. She and Ruvane "Rip" Grossman, originally transferred to Kansas City by Marion Laboratories, have three married daughters and eight grandchildren. They are members of Temple B'nai Jehudah.

Says Clara, "I am Hungarian by birth and Jewish by religion, but American because this is where they opened their doors and gave me a home."



Abe Gutovitz



Avram, later Abe, Gutrovitz was born on Dec. 14, 1911, in the small town of Warka, the second oldest of six children of Laibel and Passa Gutovitz.

When the family moved to Bialobrzegi, Poland, they lived on the main street near most of the town's 50 or so other Jewish families. Their home included a kitchen, a bedroom and a room for Laibel Gutovitz's shoemaking business. "We

didn't even know about vacations," Abe recalls.

He did not begin school until he was 8 years old. Instead, his mother's sister Chaya, who "talked a few languages," taught him at home. His public education ended at 13, although he still went to cheder, Hebrew school. Along with his parents, he and most of his friends belong to Zionist organizations. As a teenager, Abe was a member of the Revizionist Party, a Zionist group espousing Vladimir Jabotinsky's philosophy that fighting would be a necessary precursor to the birth of the State of Israel. Not interested in shoemaking, he went into business with a partner buying fruit, which they delivered by horse and wagon to larger cities.

In Bialobrzegi, says Abe, "Shabbos [the Sabbath] was Shabbos and yontif [a religious holy day] was yontif. We came from the synagogue, we had dinner. Then, everybody went to sleep. The young people had speeches, went to the organizations, went shpatzierin [promenading] with girlfriend or boyfriend."

In those years, he says, "You could walk days and nights; nobody bothered you." Abe noticed the change a few years before World War II. "They start talking, 'Don't buy from Jewish businesses.' But you didn't want to know. Because you were living with them. In our town, the gentiles didn't bother you."

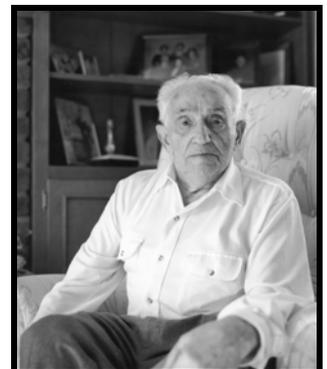
When the Nazis arrived, they gave Abe's family 15 minutes to pack and leave their home. It was the last time Abe saw his parents. He and two of his brothers were among the few taken as slave laborers to an ammunition factory, where Abe remained until 1944. Abe was hiding under bodies of the dead when he was liberated from Buchenwald concentration camp.

At the displaced persons camp in Landsberg-am-Lech, Abe and his brothers met and married under the same "chuppah," a wedding canopy, in 1946. "She was a beauty," says Abe of his wife, Bena Gutovitz.

The couple was brought to Kansas City in 1949 by Abe's uncle. Together they ran a shoe repair and alteration shop until 1991 when Bena was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. Abe closed the store the next day and devoted the next six years to her care. She died in 1998.

"She was more important to me than the business," he says. "She was like a princess in the house." Abe is proud of his children – Patsy, Toby and Sam – who helped care for their mother. He also has six grandchildren.

"You know," Abe says, "the Torah says, 'ka-chalom ya-ouf.' You know what that means? It means the whole life is like a dream."



Bertha Gutovitz

Bertha Cukier was born in December 1922 in Bialobrzegi, Poland, not far from Warsaw.

She was 16 at the onset of the war and lived in a ghetto in Radom, Poland with her family. Her mother sold groceries from their one-room living quarters. The family stayed in the ghetto from 1939-1940. Bertha had heard that people were being sent to Palestine, so she stood in line to register but soon found herself at a work camp called Blizyn. She was there from 1940-1941.

One night while in the camp, Bertha and a friend escaped to return to Radom to find Bertha's brother. They were eventually caught and sent back to Blizyn. Her brother soon joined her there. A month or two later, men and women at the camp were separated and the women were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Bertha was in Birkenau for 18 months between 1941 and 1942. At one time while in Birkenau, Bertha came down with typhus and suffered with hallucinations for 10 days.

From Birkenau, Bertha was sent with other women to work in an ammunition factory in Czechoslovakia. Work standards there were so high that if a woman made an error in her work she was killed on the spot. Bertha remained there for several months until she was liberated by the Soviet Army.

Bertha spent the next four years in the Landsberg displaced persons camp in Germany. She was able to emigrate to the United States in March 1949.

Joe Gutovitz

Joseph Gutovitz was born in 1918 in Poland. He was one of eight children. His father was a cobbler who made shoes by hand. His mother was a generous woman who never ate dinner with her family, but rather gave her dinner to beggars.

Joseph remained in school through the seventh grade. His ambition was to become a barber. Barbers in those days were “half doctors;” they extracted teeth, gave injections, and performed leeching. He attended barber college for four years and was licensed by age 17.

Joseph moved into his own apartment in Warsaw. There he met and married a young lady. They lived together in the Warsaw Ghetto. Joe was able to escape to his hometown, but his wife stayed with her parents and was eventually deported to Treblinka where she was killed.

The Germans rounded up the Gutovitz family along with the other 5,000 Jews in town in 1942. Joe and his two brothers were the only survivors from the town. The rest of his family died at Treblinka.

The Gutovitz brothers were sent to Skarzysko-Kamienna, a munitions plant. They were to be separated but Joe appealed to a soldier to keep them together. All three brothers ended up contracting typhus, but received no medical attention. They encouraged each other to continue to go to work because they knew they would be shot if they did not. They were transferred to Czestochowa, also a munitions plant but were eventually separated.

Joe was liberated at Czestochowa by the Soviets. Joe’s brothers had also survived and were liberated at Buchenwald. The three were eventually reunited in the Landsberg displaced persons camp. During their three year wait for visas to come to the United States, Joe was a policeman in the camp. He remarried and had a child. His family came to America, settling in Kansas City because an uncle lived there.

Dorothy Harding

Dorothy Kuzecki was born March 14, 1925 in Wloszczowa, Poland.

She was in the Czestchowa Ghetto. For eight days in September 1944 Dorothy was in the Ravensbruck concentration camp. Dorothy recalled a night at Ravensbruck when a woman was missing from roll call. The Nazis made 100,000 people stand outside all night as punishment. She was later sent to Leibcyk where she worked examining ammunition and separating bullets. She was liberated there by the Soviets on April 27, 1945.

Dorothy eventually returned to her hometown but anti-Jewish pogroms soon began. She and her new husband left for Germany and eventually came to the United States on July 4, 1949.

Werner Hartwich

Werner Hartwich was born in Kuestrin, Germany on September 11, 1910. He lived there with his parents and two sisters. His father was in the grain business.

Werner and his family were arrested and taken to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp on November 9, 1938 – Kristallnacht. His parents were released after three weeks and were able to secure Werner's release on January 9, 1939 by proving they were prepared to leave Germany.

They sold all of their belongings in Kuestrin and Berlin and then Werner and ten other family members fled to Shanghai which was the only place in the world allowing Jewish immigration without visas.

The family struggled in Shanghai, but in 1943 their condition worsened with the Japanese invasion. All Jews were put into the Shanghai Ghetto and were not allowed to leave without special permission. Werner survived the rest of the war in the Shanghai Ghetto.

Following the war, the United States set up a base in Shanghai which enabled Werner, his wife, and his infant son to emigrate to the U.S. on July 3, 1947.

Lea Indyk

Lea Indyk was born in Mszczonow, Poland. She had one sister and one brother.

Her family was placed in the Warsaw Ghetto and she was eventually deported to Majdanek. From Majdanek, Lea was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau then to a work camp in Czechoslovakia.

After being liberated by the Soviets, Lea traveled to Lodz where she met her husband. Before coming to the United States, they lived in Israel for two years.

Judy Jacobs



Judy Jacobs was born Judith Gondos in 1937 in Budapest, Hungary. Had the Holocaust not intervened, she might have followed in her father's footsteps as a physician.

The Gondos family – Bela Gondos, a radiologist, his wife, Anna Ilona Havas, an artist and interior designer, and Judy – lived an upper-middle class life in a large, well-furnished apartment on the Pest side of

Bela grew up in an observant home in northeastern Hungary near the Czech border. When the family moved to a town with no secondary school, he was sent to a nearby community where he attended a Catholic high school, the only high school in the area. Antisemitism there stirred him to become an ardent Zionist. Anna, from the small town of Bekes, knew the contents of every art exhibit in Budapest. The Gondoses also enjoyed theater and opera.

A major component of being Jewish for the Gondos family was communal identity. They tried to keep kosher, but it was difficult during World War II.

Judy was 2 years old when the Nazis invaded Poland. Her early childhood years passed largely in that shadow, with the German invasion of Hungary finally occurring in March 1944. Only a few months earlier, at 6, Judy had started first grade in a Jewish day school. Fond memories of childhood linger: ice skating with her father at lunch, spending summer with her grandparents in Bekes, playing with friends.

The Gondos family was together in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp from July to December 1944, when they were taken to Switzerland. Judy's grandparents and her extended family died in Auschwitz. Her mother's brother died in a forced labor camp.

Judy was 9 in 1946 when the family moved to Arlington, Virginia. Anna sewed lampshades. Bela updated his professional skills as a volunteer at Georgetown University Hospital and later did a fellowship in Boston. The family settled in the Washington, D.C. area in 1949. Judy was confirmed

While a student at the University of Michigan, Judy's early goal was admittance to medical school. Marriage to David Jacobs intervened, and she graduated as an education major. Later, at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, she earned an MBA in finance and a Ph.D. in higher educational administration.

Judy and Dave have four children: Diane, Dan, Tom and Jonathan. When the children asked questions about her experiences, she always responded, but it wasn't until the late 1980s, she says, that the "floodgates opened."



Ann Jacobson



The German government hired Fritz Reisner, an Austrian civil engineer, to build oil installations during World War I. After the war he moved to Germany, where he met Eugenia Goldman, who had moved with her mother from Poland to Berlin. Eugenia, a graduate of the Berlin Conservatory of Music, spoke six languages and was working as a secretary to Pola Negri, the movie star, when she met Fritz. When they married, he was 40 and she was 36.

Anni Ernestine Reisner was born to them in Berlin in 1926. Fritz Reisner worked for Olex, a German oil company. When they moved to Stuttgart, Germany, the Reisers lived in a large house on a hill and drove a Mercedes. The children had a

nanny. Eugenia Reisner had live-in help.

In 1933, Anni's father received a letter from his company asking him to resign. Germany was requiring businesses to be Judenrein, free of Jews. Eugenia wanted to go far way. Instead, Fritz took the family to Vienna, where he could work for his brother-in-law's company with no change in his way of life.

Fritz didn't believe in organized religion. Until Anni was seven, the family had a Christmas tree, and Anni knew no one who kept kosher. Eugenia, however, came from a religious family. In Vienna, she sent Anni to Hebrew school. Anni also trained to be an Olympic swimmer and belonged to a Zionist youth organization.

Anni's application to a Vienna private high school was rejected because she was Jewish. Instead, she attended a private Jewish gymnasium, or upper-level school, until all schools were closed to Jews in November 1938 after Kristallnacht. On that night, three Gestapo officers came to the Reisers' home and demanded that Eugenia hand over her money and jewelry. Eugenia asked when she would get her things back. "Lady," they said, "you should be glad we didn't throw your children out the window."

Fritz and Eugenia were planning to send Anni and her younger brother on a Kindertransport to England, when, in February 1939, the U.S. consulate approved their immigration.

Anni, 13 when her family arrived in Kansas City, babysat, cleaned houses and worked a weekend job. Eugenia catered baked goods. Fritz Reisner was a maintenance man, salesman and finally a bookkeeper for A.D. Jacobson, the plumbing and heating company owned by her future husband's family. Anni – now Ann – married Elliot Jacobson in 1946, after earning her degree in modern languages at Kansas City University. Fluent in four languages, she taught German at the University of Kansas and Kansas City University until her children – Mark, Steven and Susan – were born.

"From the moment we found out how many people perished," says Ann of the Holocaust, "I have been driven to make my life count for something."

She went back to school, earned a degree in social work and developed the Panel of Americans. A project director for the George Washington Carver Neighborhood Center, she also founded what became Black History Month in Kansas City. She organized the Volunteer Center and later became its director. She was one of half a dozen women in the United States to hold an executive position at United Way. President Richard Nixon appointed her to the board of the National Center for Voluntary Action.

She has published in the field of volunteerism. A delegate to the Jewish Agency in Israel, she served three years as president of Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City and recently held the same position in Naples, Florida. She is presently the national president of Shepherd's Centers of America.



Abe Kopec

At the outbreak of the war in 1939, Abraham Kopec was a young boy in his hometown of Goworowo, Poland. As a five and a half year old, he was chased out into the streets with the rest of his family and neighbors by the Germans. The Nazis set fire to the town and Abe's family escaped to the fields.

After living in a barn for two weeks, Abe's father hired a wagon to take the family to the Soviet Union. They traveled at night and were there for six months. In June 1940, the Soviets loaded them into cattle cars destined for Siberia. They lived there for about one year in an army-type barrack. After that, Abe and his sister lived in an orphanage in the center of the Soviet Union until 1946. Most of the children in the orphanage were Catholic and Abe was not able to get a Jewish education until he was 14 years old.

Early in 1946, Abe and his sister returned to western Poland with their uncle. Abe then lived in Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany before emigrating to the United States in May 1950.

Kurt Levi

Kurt Levi was born in Wiesbaden, Germany in 1910. Kurt recalls enjoying the culture and prosperity of German life prior to World War I but that after the war when poverty struck the country, Jews were treated poorly and as second-class citizens.

Kurt briefly lived in Paris and Brussels but soon returned to Germany. He wanted to emigrate to the United States but did not have the proper paperwork. He joined his father's cattle business and lied to the consulate in Frankfurt to enter America for a short trip.

In 1937, the family emigrated to the United States. Kurt lived in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Detroit before settling in Kansas City in 1950.

Ida Loeffler



In Krakow, Poland, population 260,000 – where Adolph and Rosella Wolf raised five daughters and a son – nearly every fourth person was Jewish. Most lived in the middle of town.

“Jewish people kept to themselves,” Ida recalls, “because we couldn’t get help from anyone else.”

Her father, a tailor, had served as an officer in the Austrian Army, and came from a land-owning family that sold lighting oil. Her mother was working as a nanny when Adolph fell in love with her.

The Wolfs lived in a large apartment with electricity and running water. It was filled with nice furniture and crystal that Ida’s father brought back from his travels. A maid helped with the laundry and cleaning three times a week. With six children, Ida’s mother cooked most of the day.

“Everything fresh – fresh bread from the bakery every day,” Ida recalls. “When I was young, I was very spoiled and my mother had to buy little breakfast cakes for me.”

Ida’s parents valued education. Adolph Loeffler said, “I will give you education, which nobody can take away from you.” But it was a struggle. In public school, Ida could not get an “A” in Polish because she was Jewish. Gentile children threw stones. In gymnasium, an equivalent of high school, she worked especially hard. “They would kick Jews out for no reason,” she remembers.

Ida’s happiest days were spent in a Zionist youth organization, Akiva. Jews were not allowed to belong to organizations; if found out, she could have been expelled from school. In Akiva, she studied Hebrew, sang Jewish songs, learned about Jewish writers, raised money to help Jews in Palestine buy land from the Arabs, played games and socialized with friends. She held a job delivering hats to earn money for Akiva – and to buy an occasional treat.

Morris Loeffler and Ida, both liberated from concentration camps, met in Germany. Because Ida refused to marry in Germany, Morris found his brother in Sweden, and they decided to be married there – first by a justice of peace and later by a rabbi. Life was good in Sweden, but Ida became ill. She was 31 when Morris’ aunts in Kansas City sponsored them to immigrate in 1957.

Familiar with German, Swedish, Hebrew and Polish, English “just came” for Ida. She worked as a cashier for Katz Drug Stores and sold Avon products for 15 years. She learned to drive. She volunteered

at Shalom Geriatric Center. Today she does needlepoint and is hard to beat at cards.

Passover was once her favorite holiday but, she says, she doesn’t like Jewish holidays anymore – “Too much memory.”

Her son, Stephen, born in Sweden, died at age 31. She has a daughter, Rose. “In the beginning, we didn’t want children,” says Ida. She and Morris were “too afraid to have a family – too afraid what may happen to them.”

“Survivors, we keep very close,” she says. “We are different. We are not happy people.”



Jack Mandelbaum



Jack – Janek in Polish – grew up in a secular Jewish home in the Baltic Sea port city of Gdynia, Poland.

Because Gdynia had a small Jewish population and no private Jewish school or synagogue, Jack attended the public school, which was oriented toward Catholicism. At Christmas, he joined his Catholic school friends going house to house singing carols.

On Passover, he remembers eating matzos, and being fitted, along with his brother and sister, for new clothes and shoes. Jack was 12 when his parents hired a bar mitzvah tutor. His father, Mejloch Mandelbaum, had been drafted to serve in the

Baltic and stayed in the region to start a fish cannery. His father wanted to immigrate to Australia but did not in order to avoid a six-month separation from his wife.

The Mandelbaums' large two-bedroom apartment, which was in the most prominent spot in the city, was a 10-minute walk from the beach. The housekeeper arrived each morning in time to bring in still-warm milk delivered fresh from the farm. Jack entered bicycle races and collected stamps from foreign consulates in town. In the cold winters, he and his siblings warmed themselves under down bedspreads his mother heated against a coal-burning tile oven.

In August 1939, afraid Gdynia would be bombed, Mejloch Mandelbaum sent the family inland to Dzialoszyce, Poland, where he had been raised in a Hasidic home. Jack was shocked to meet his Hasidic grandfather in a caftan. His grandfather was similarly shocked to see his grandson in short pants, suspenders and no cap.

A month later, they received notice that his father was in a concentration camp. They had no idea what a concentration camp was. Meanwhile, 13-year old Jack helped support his family by substituting for people who paid him to take their place in forced labor. A document verifying his work as the mayor's electrician saved him – but not his mother, sister, or brother – from the gas chambers.

Years later, Jack learned that his father had been arrested on Sept. 14, 1939, with 400 Polish intelligentsia – many of them non-Jews – and survived almost to the end of the war, dying in Stutthof in 1944.

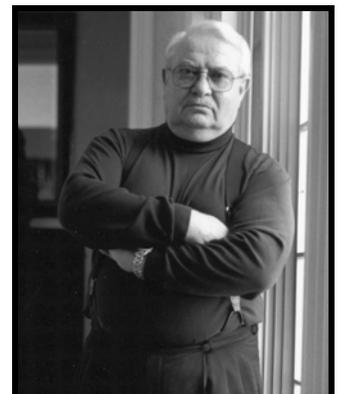
Jack Mandelbaum was liberated from Dornhau in May 1945. He and his Uncle Sigmund Mandelbaum traveled together to American in June 1946. Jack had dreamed of coming to America ever since he heard stories about it as a boy. Given a choice of where to live, they chose Kansas City because it was “not too

big and not too small.”

Jack found a job at Rose Mercantile, a dry goods wholesale house he later bought. He and his American-born first wife have four children: Sharon, Mark, Barry and John. He is now married to Claudia. Together, they have 12 grandchildren. “I am grateful to be here,” Jack says, “and thankful to all those that lent a hand to bring me to this great country.”

He rarely spoke about the Holocaust until 1975, when a neighbor asked him what sports he played in the concentration camp. Jack then realized that many people knew nothing of what happened in the Holocaust.

He and Isak Federman founded the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education in 1993.



Erika Mandler

Erika Raab grew up in a large apartment in the Second District of Vienna, Austria. She loved ice skating, enjoyed music and piano lessons, studied and attended the opera, and practiced Orthodox Judaism. Erika's father, Simon, was in the wholesale dry goods business and also owned two restaurants. Erika pursued training as a seamstress. Erika's parents allowed her to have Christian friends and to attend their religious observances, despite a growing level of antisemitism.

Erika's uncle and his family had fled Berlin for Vienna in 1934, leaving their livelihood and belongings behind. Erika's father and brother returned from synagogue on March 11, 1938 with the news that radio broadcasts announced the surrender of Austria to Germany. Erika's mother said it was the beginning of the end.

Erika's non-Jewish friends turned against her. Soon yellow stars were required and public seating was segregated. German soldiers marched in the streets. Erika's parents used their work visas to relocate to Czechoslovakia. Erika and her brother joined them in Trenchin. It was there that Erika met Eric Yoker, her first husband, who she married on June 18, 1940. The couple intended to sail for Palestine, however, on board the ship they learned that they would not be allowed to enter Palestine so they moved to a nearby village. Eric was not allowed to practice his profession, dentistry, and was soon forcibly "relocated." Two years later, Erika was notified that Eric had been killed in January 1942 at Mauthausen.

Erika returned to Trensin but was soon interned in the Novaky camp. There her brother worked in the camp infirmary. Through him Erika met her second husband, Dr. George Mandler. Dr. Mandler kept Erika and her family from being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, but when they were pulled off the cattle car, four other Jews were forced to take their places.

Novaky was liberated by the Czechs on August 6, 1944. Dr. Mandler joined the Czech army and Erika, who was pregnant, followed him. The couple lived in the woods with trees as their only shelter. Erika's parents were lodged with a local farmer who betrayed them to the Germans. Her mother starved to death at Ravensbrück and her father died at Buchenwald.

Sam Nussbaum



Sam Nussbaum – Shmuel in Yiddish and Samek for short – installed the first indoor plumbing in his family’s apartment. He became a plumber at 15 when his father, Laibish, took him out of yeshiva, Orthodox Jewish academy. “We didn’t have such a good time in Poland,” says Sam. “My father wanted me to learn a trade so I could go to Israel,” Sam never made it to Israel, but plumbing did save his life.

The Nussbaums lived in Przemysl, a town of about 80,000, including

Shmuel started cheder, Hebrew school, at age 3 and yeshiva at 8. He also went to public school, played soccer, belonged to a Zionist youth organization and went to synagogue every day before work.

In September 1939, the Nazis came to Przemysl, took 500 children to a cemetery and shot them. Hitler then turned that part of Poland over to Stalin, according to a Soviet-German pact signed a month earlier. Until 1941, Przemysl was Soviet territory. When the Nazis returned, they made Shmuel their plumber. Shmuel tried to escape by volunteering for a transport – he thought – to work in Germany. A Gestapo agent who appreciated Shmuel’s work had him taken off. The other 8,000 Jews on the transport went to the gas chambers.

Having liberated Shmuel from a labor camp in Austria, the Jewish Brigade took him on an American truck to a displaced persons camp in Italy. There, until leaving for America in 1948, he managed the kitchen for 300 people, sold old clothes and married 17-year old Elizabeth. The birth of their son, Larry, quashed their plans to immigrate illegally to Palestine.

The Nussbaums were sent to live in Kansas City because, they were told, there were already too many new immigrants in New York. In Kansas City, Sam met a rabbi who helped him find an apartment. Still speaking hardly any English, Sam walked into a plumbing shop and got hired.

Sam didn’t talk much about his experiences until 1992, when he traveled to Stuttgart to testify against the Nazi Josef Schwammberger. “It was worth surviving for my children,” he says, proudly, adding, “I’m protected! I got David, a rabbi, Larry, a doctor, Bonnie, a lawyer, and Mel, a plumber. And I got 19 grandchildren.”

In 1973, Sam and Elizabeth bought an apartment in Israel. “I’m waiting for maybe one child to go to Israel,” he says. “I won’t be here 10 minutes.”

The Nussbaums also bought 10,000 trees in a Jerusalem forest and built a monument to their lost family. “Made me feel I had done something,” Sam says.



Bronia Roslawowski



“I was not afraid of the Germans. I am strong like iron.”

When Bronia Kibel of Turek, Poland, was a little girl on the streetcar, she would ask strangers, “What language do you speak?” When her older, weaker sister was to be deported to the camps, 14-year old Bronia insisted on taking her place.

Bronia survived five camps and a death march. She doesn’t live in the past but she will never forget it.

She remembers the brick house in Turek where she and her four siblings had no time to be bored. At 3 p.m., after public school, the family had dinner. Then

were off to Hebrew school. In the evening, they studied. A talented violinist, Bronia practiced until the day she lost her temper and, to her mother’s horror, broke the instrument.

Bronia preferred to ride her bike, make dolls, invent lays, plant sweet peas and radishes in her family’s 1 ½-acre garden, and, when it snowed, ride a sleigh pulled by her Russian husky.

Bronia’s parents, Tzvi Eliezer Kibel and Bluma Bajrach, worked together in a business that prospered, thanks to a winning lottery ticket. They hired Jewish girls from the country to help with the children. In the summer, Bronia enjoyed spending time on the maids’ families’ farms. The Kibels got along well with their non-Jewish neighbors. They spoke Russian, Polish, German and some French. They never believed the Holocaust would happen.

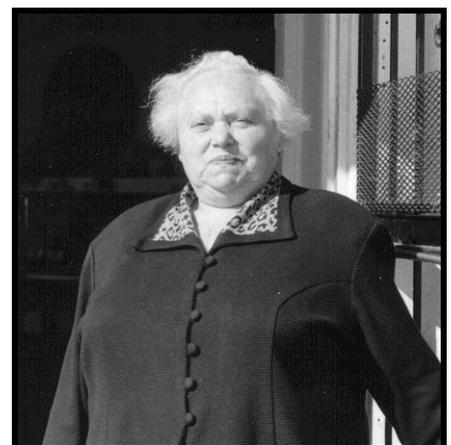
Bronia has no pictures of her mother and cannot remember her face. But she remembers her kindness. How she prepared the braided bread called challah, soup and meat for needy families. How she insisted on cleanliness. How she never spanked the children when they misbehaved but “talked till we were blue in the face.” Which is just how Bronia raised her daughters: Beverly, Alice, and Judy. Pregnant but adamant they not be born in Germany, she signed a paper releasing the boat that took her to America from responsibility for her health.

Fewer than a dozen Jews from Turek survived the Holocaust. Bronia told her American liberators, “You are my father, my mother, my brother, my sister.”

Living in Missouri – home of President Harry S. Truman – suited her just fine. She borrowed \$450 from the Jewish Family and Children Services to train as a nurse. She married Mendel Roslawowski and

his son, Walter. She cared for other people’s children in her home and, in 1962, she and Mendel opened the M & M Bakery at 31st Street and Woodland Avenue. For her children, she found substitute grandparents. She invited her neighbors at 45th and Main streets to play cards, Bingo and Monopoly, and enjoy the beef and barley soup she concocted from a “bunch of bones.”

Bronia wants the world to know what happened. She was one of the first area survivors to speak out about the Holocaust – but without bitterness. “You cannot condemn a nation,” she says. “I pity the Germans, that they had such poor psychology. I don’t hate. What will it give me? I’d be a miserable, bitter person.”



Abe Sander

At the outbreak of the war, Abram Sandzer, lived in Bedzin, Poland. From September 1940 through March 1945, Abe was in several concentration camps including Gross Rosen and Buchenwald. His deportation to Buchenwald, near the end of the war, was a 12 week death march. He was liberated at Buchenwald by the American army.

After liberation, Abe lived in a displaced persons camp before emigrating to the United States.

Chana Sander

Chana Wajntraub was born in 1924 in Dabrowa Gornica, Poland. Her father managed a shoe factory and her mother cared for Chana and her siblings. Chana graduated from high school and attended business school until the Germans restricted Jewish students from receiving high education. When the Germans entered her hometown, they burned the synagogue and murdered some of the Jewish community. The family was deported in 1940.

Chana was sent to forced labor at the Carbeitslager work camp in February 1940. She was later sent to Gross Rosen.

In December 1944, Chana was forced on a death march to Bergen-Belsen. The girls ate snow along the way. At Bergen-Belsen, the girls were forced into one room, lying on the floor “like herring.” Chana contracted typhus and was so ill that she does not remember liberation of the camp by the British Army.

Shortly after liberation, Abe Sander bicycled from Buchenwald to Bergen-Belsen to find Chana. Once reunited, they hitchhiked back to Buchenwald which was in the American zone. Chana and Abe returned to Poland to look for survivors. Non-Jews in her hometown were not happy to see her and Chana learned that the rest of her family was dead. Chana and Abe went to Lodz where they were married. They then made their way to a displaced persons camp near Frankfurt where they remained until 1949. Their son was born during that time.

In 1949, the Sander family emigrated to the United States. They came to Kansas City because Abe had a brother there and as a butcher could find work in the packing houses.

Sam Sander

Sam Sander was born in 1926 in Bedzin, Poland as the youngest of four children. His father was in the rental business and his mother was a seamstress. Sam's sister moved to Russia before the war. His older brothers were inducted into the Polish army. He attended school until 1939 when Jewish children were barred from classes.

Sam's family was forced into the Bedzin Ghetto in November 1939. Sam lived there until he was deported to Siebersdorf labor camp in Cieszyn, Poland in March 1942. He never saw his parents again. He worked at Siebersdorf for approximately one year before being transferred to Blechhammer (a sub-camp of Auschwitz). There he worked 16 hours every day.

During the winter of 1945, Sam was put on a death march in sub-zero weather. He subsisted on grass and snow. During a two-day stop at Gross Rosen Sam volunteered and was transferred to Buchenwald. In April, the Buchenwald sub-camp was evacuated and Sam was again sent on a death march. Sam was in the small town of Endorf when he was liberated by the U.S. Army. He was 18 years old and weighed 85 pounds.

After liberation, Sam spent nearly four years in the Zeilsheim displaced persons camp. He searched for and found his brothers in other DP camps and all of the brothers eventually emigrated to the United States.

Otto Schick

Otto Schick's was born in 1921 in Vienna. His parents had lived in the United States, where his father was a sales representative. His older brother was born in America. But in 1914, they returned to visit family and his father was inducted into the army. During World War I, his father was an officer and suffered from frozen legs, and eventually lost a leg.

After World War I, the family decided to remain in Europe. They settled into a lower middle class life in Vienna, where his father was an accountant and his mother owned a retail store. They barely made a living, and Otto had to work hard. Otto's father dreamed of returning to the U.S. and taught his son English.

Otto knew that he needed to leave Austria and he escaped to Hungary. He lived briefly with a family, the parents of a woman he later married. He wound up in two successive Hungarian refugee camps. Otto suspected that the Germans would deport him to Auschwitz when they took over, so he bribed a guard to let him escape from the refugee camp. He took a train to south of the Hungarian border. For two months, he did farm work, but was told to leave when the Germans came. He was traveling, trying to escape, when he was captured by the police and turned over to the Germans.

Otto was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Morale was low on the train, where he and his fellow passengers received nothing to eat or drink for four days. Since there was no room in the regular barracks at Birkenau, Otto was put in the barracks for Jewish criminals. They were tortured and forced to engage in punishment labor, such as jogging for an hour with a block of cement on their backs. Otto recalls many inmates being killed by the German's dogs.

Eventually, Otto was able to move to the regular barracks. In June, 1944, Otto was selected, along with some of the other healthier inmates, to go to Sachsenhausen, near Berlin. Otto was growing increasingly weaker, but tried to keep working. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis in April, 1944, but news that the Allies had landed gave him increased will to live.

The Germans transferred the prisoners to Dachau. Otto arrived with typhoid fever. The French and Americans liberated the camp in April, 1945. Otto was very ill but was nursed back to health at an American field hospital. It was through an American soldier that Otto was reunited with his brother, then a U.S. soldier.

Otto returned to Vienna to be reunited with the girl he eventually married. Otto worked briefly for the American army as a civilian employee. In 1946, he and his bride immigrated to the United States.

Ernie Simon

Ernest Simon was born in Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia on February 26, 1923. He has an older sister, Hilda (Simon) Raab, who also survived the war. While in Europe, Ernest lived in Karlsbad, Pilsen, Tristan, Paris, Regensburg, Murnau and Munich.

From 1933 on, Ernest lived in fear. He remembers seeing a swastika on a flag waving across the street from his school. It wasn't long before his family left for Pilsen, Czechoslovakia. Ernest says they took a few essentials and lost everything else. The family stayed in Pilsen for about one year.

In 1940, he was notified of a place where he could safely live. He went to Tel Aviv with a group of other children. After this time, anyone who was left was sent to the camps.

Ernest enlisted in the English Army and then became a member of the Czechoslovakian army in exile, an anti-Communist group. As a part of this army, Ernest liberated camps in France. In 1945, Ernest returned to his hometown as a soldier.

He lived in the Regensburg displaced persons camp from 1948-49 and in Murnau from 1949-1950. He came to the United States in 1950.

Walter Stras

Walter Stras was born on October 10, 1924, in Steinbach, Germany.

Kristallnacht was the beginning of the Holocaust for Walter. He vividly remembers the German troops marching into town, the destruction and the fear of the townspeople.

Walter was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943. His journey, by freight car, took two days.

Walter escaped from Altenburg in 1945. After his escape, Walter got papers from the American Army and went home, where he became ill and had the beginnings of multiple sclerosis. He lived in two displaced persons camps before emigrating to the United States in January 1948.

Hanna Sukiennik

Hanna Sukiennik grew up in Bedzin, Poland. The war began September 1, 1939, when Hanna was just 15 years old. She remembers the Germans burning part of her town, including the synagogue and many houses.

The very old and the young were soon taken away from Bedzin little by little every two to three weeks, Hanna says. Conditions for Jews in the town gradually worsened.

In 1942, Hanna's mother, father and older sister were taken to Auschwitz. The remainder of the family hid in a bunker.

From 1942 to 1944, Hanna was in five labor camps. She worked as a welder in Gruenberg for a short time, and she was in Christadt for over a year. In February, 1945, the Soviet army liberated the camp.

Hanna went home to Bedzin in April, 1945, but she did not find a reason to stay. She then went to Prague and to Munich, where she stayed until 1949. In Munich Hanna registered to go to America. The following year she came to Kansas City.

Frank Szasz

Frank Szasz was born in 1925 in Budapest. His father worked for a newspaper and his mother was a housewife. He had a younger sister who survived Auschwitz-Birkenau but died in 1975.

Frank was in a Nazi forced labor camp from March until October, 1944. The majority of those in the camp died as a result of the hunger, exposure and terrible conditions. Frank encountered a Hungarian guard who confided that he was worried about his future. Frank offered to help the guard if the guard could help Frank return to Budapest. The guard got him through German lines and back to Budapest. Returning to his apartment, he found it labeled a “Jewish House” with 36 persons living in five rooms. During his brief stay in Budapest, Frank worked with a Jewish resistance group. He was in hiding, moving from basement to basement.

When the Soviets liberated Budapest, Hungarian men were forced to build trenches in frozen ground in the dead of winter. Frank and a comrade were wounded in an explosion, which gave him a temporary break.

Along with about 20,000 others, Frank was conscripted by Soviet troops occupying Hungary. He was sent to the Soviet Union in January, 1945, to build railroads. Frank’s skills as an artist resulted in his assignment to less rigorous duty, and he was able to trade sketches of guards for extra food. From 1948-1951, Frank was interred in a camp in the Ukraine.

In 1951, Frank was finally able to return to Budapest. He married and became an art director.

The Hungarian Revolution occurred in 1956. Frank drew a poster that became a symbol of the Revolution. The Soviets were looking for him, and he and his wife knew they had to leave. They went to Vienna and were able to immigrate to the United States because an uncle sponsored them.

Bernard Tenebaum

Bernard Tenenbaum was born in 1920 in Warsaw, Poland. He had four sisters and a brother 19 years his junior. His father was in the transport business and his mother was a homemaker. Before the war, Bernard lived an ordinary, happy life. He did not go to school very long, but helped out at home, and worked to help support the family.

Bernard's family was in the Warsaw ghetto. Bernard helped his family to survive by smuggling food from outside the ghetto. Sometimes he had to bribe guards and once he was severely beaten. The Germans took 10,000 people from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Lublin Ghetto, including Bernard's mother and sisters. When he tried to go with them, a soldier beat him to the ground. His three-year-old brother ran to the soldier and was killed.

Bernard was sent to Budzyn concentration camp from Warsaw. At first he worked in the fields removing manure. Then he was put to work building airplanes. He was threatened with death if he sabotaged the work; those who did were shot on the spot. He was in Mielec and Wieliczka building airplanes.

In April, 1945, he was sent on a death march. The prisoners were given no food for a month, and those that lived survived on potato peelings and grass. Right before the Americans came to liberate Dachau, Bernard escaped and was hiding in a barn.

Following the war, Bernard went briefly to Munich and then to Frankfurt, where he lived until 1949. He found work in a displaced persons camp, eventually working his way up to a kitchen manager. He registered to go to the United States in 1945. In 1949, Bernard was finally allowed to immigrate.

It wasn't until 1948 that Bernard learned his sister had survived and immigrated to Israel. Bernard visited her in Israel in 1966, four months before her death.

Allegre Tevet

Before the war, Allegra Tevet lived in Drama, Greece with her parents, three sisters and three brothers. She attended Jewish day school, where she studied Hebrew, Greek and French.

The Germans entered Greece in 1941, through Italy. Allegra's family was living in Salonika, where the Germans restricted Jewish activity. The following year the family was placed in the Salonika Ghetto. In March, 1943, they were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Allegra was in Birkenau until being sent to Bergen-Belsen in January 1945.

After liberation, Allegra lived in Switzerland and Brussels. When Allegra was given a choice of destinations to start life anew, she chose to return to Greece to find her brothers. However, all of Allegra's family was lost in the Holocaust.

In Greece, Allegra met her husband Albert. Times were hard and the Tevets could not reclaim their house or resume their Jewish life style. In 1951, they immigrated to the United States.

Ann Walters

Chana Finkelstein, daughter of Israel Finkelstein and Chaya Wasserstein, was born in 1932 in Radzilow, Poland. She is the youngest of three siblings, with two brothers and one sister.

When the war broke out, Ann was almost seven years old. She remembers the Gestapo coming after her family. Her mother stalled, which ended up saving their lives. As they were taken from their home, they saw flames in the distance. The rest of the townspeople had been taken to a barn and burned alive. The Gestapo officer told them to go back home. Instead, they went into hiding.

She was in hiding in Konopki, Poland and surrounding farm areas from 1940-45. Ann's mother counted that the family had changed hiding places 52 times. They hid in bunkers, barns, cellars and attics. They were liberated in August, 1945.

Following the war, in 1946, Ann and her youngest brother lived in Selvina, Italy for one year. In January, 1947, they attempted to enter Palestine illegally and were detained by the British in Cyprus. The family was reunited in Palestine later that year. Ann lived there from 1947-1957 when she came to the United States.

Sonia Warshawski



In 1939, three-quarters of the residents of Miedzyrzec, Poland – about 18,000 people – were Jewish. Not more than 300 survived the Holocaust.

When Sonia Grynshztejn was a child there, the Jews of Miedzyrzec had an orphanage, a home for the elderly, youth organizations, Hebrew schools and a private gymnasium, or secondary school. A few Jews were allowed to attend university, but they were required to stand for lectures.

town. Crowds were large on Thursdays when farmers came to the market. The Grynshztejns enjoyed free tickets to the Yiddish theatre provided by visiting artists who stayed in rooms at the restaurant.

Sonia's dream was to live in Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel. She belonged to a Zionist youth organization, Betar, whose members believed Palestine should be taken by force. She knew young men who trained secretly in the forest with the Irgun, the Jewish underground in Palestine.

Her parents, Moishe and Rivka Grynshztejn, had met at a wedding and fallen in love. In his business, Moishe imported bristle and pelts and manufactured jackets and coats.

“My parents were modern,” says Sonia. “My father did not wear a beard or my mother a *shetyl* [wig].” Sonia had a Hebrew tutor and attended a public school with crucifixes on the wall, Christian prayers every morning and a visiting Santa Claus at Christmas. Although “Kill the Jews” occasionally was written on walls, most of her classmates were friendly.

On Friday in Miedzyrzec, as Shabbat neared, a bell rang signaling that shops were closing. Friday night, Moishe Grynshztejn and his brother Gedalia prayed in the beit midrash, a house of study, across the street and brought home guests with no place to eat. There was fish, chicken soup and song. Sonia's father begged her mother to move east when Miedzyrzec fell to the Russians before the Nazis took over, but she could not bear to leave her home.

After Sonia was taken to concentration camps, she dreamed, “God, why don't you turn me into a little bird and let me be free?”

Sonia's sister, Manya, survived the war hiding in the forest. In the chaos preceding her liberation at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, Sonia was shot in the chest. Not quite 18, she recovered and met

“After all I went through, I felt I was not a strong anymore to go to a country (Palestine), which is turbulent,” she says.

John Warshawski operated a tailor shop on Broadway. Sonia worked as a salesperson. John was stricken with Parkinson's disease in his early 40s, which led the couple to open a tailor shop together in Metcalf South Shopping Center, where Sonia still works. Her husband died in 1989.

Sonia Warshawski has three children, Morrie, Regina, and Debbie.

“I always felt a special strength for my children,” she says. “And that kept me going.”



Mania Weindling

Mania Feldbaum was born on August 16, 1922, in Myszkow, Poland.

When the war broke out, a friend of her father's who was a priest, offered to hide the family in the parish, but her father refused, fearing for the man's life. Mania's family fled to the Soviet Union while she was in high school. They returned, however, because her mother decided she didn't want to live there.

Six months later, her parents and brother, who were hiding in an attic, were found by the Nazis. Her brother was taken to a concentration camp. Mania had working papers and remained in the ghetto in Zawiercie, Poland. She was there for about one year.

In 1941, she was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. She lived in Block 8 in Birkenau, where she worked as a stone cutter for a few months. She later sewed and then worked in the kitchen, called the "potato bunker." Mania was in Auschwitz for 4 ½ years before being sent to Ravensbrück.

After being liberated at Ravensbrück, Mania recalls being driven to Sweden in 1945 in Red Cross trucks driven by the British. She says she was given small amounts of food to keep from becoming ill. After they crossed into Denmark, they were taken to a place with large tables filled with food. They then took a ferry to Sweden, where they burned their clothes and were given fresh clothes donated by the Swedes.

Mania remained there until she immigrated to the United States in September, 1953.

Leo Zemelman

Leo Zemelman was born in 1920 in Wloclawek, Poland. Leo had four brothers and two sisters, none of whom survived the Holocaust. His father was a tailor and his mother was a housewife.

As the war began, a ghetto was formed and Leo's family was forced to live with five other families in two rooms. People were sent out on work details. Leo was sent on work details from 1940-1943. His 18-year-old sister was shot in the ghetto. His parents and one brother were deported to Treblinka. One brother died of typhus and another of starvation in Pozan.

Leo was sent from the Kolmar camp to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943. There was virtually no food and Leo slept on the floor with no covers. He attempted to escape but was captured and beaten. After six weeks, Leo was sent to Buchenwald and then a Krups munition factory in April 1945.

With the Americans bombing the area, the Nazis put some Jews, including Leo, in open train cars and road them around the countryside for weeks. On April 28, 1945 Leo was liberated near Dachau. He weighed 89 pounds and he was near death.

Leo lived in the Landsberg displaced persons camp until 1950. He attempted an unsuccessful illegal submarine entry into Palestine in 1946, but returned to Germany.

Leo married and raised two daughters.

Rose Zemelman

Rose Weiss was born in 1922 in Sosnowiec, Poland. She was the youngest of three daughters of a tailor and a housewife. Although the family was not wealthy, Rose remembers being very happy in a loving home and having everything she needed. She has a scholarship to a music conservatory near Warsaw, but was never able to attend due to the war.

One day in 1940 Rose's mother came into the room and told Rose to leave through the window. She was in the process of doing so when she was grabbed by the Nazis who were rounding up Jewish teenagers. After this, the family was placed in the Sosnowiec Ghetto.

Rose was deported to a succession of three slave labor facilities. She worked at Bolkenheim picking vegetables in the fields. Because of this work, the girls were able to supplement their camp diets with vegetables.

She was then sent to Waldenburg in Germany and to Gabin where she was unexpectedly reunited with one of her sisters.

Rose recalls her worst time beginning when she and her sister were sent to Bergen-Belsen. They became ill with typhus. Rose was so weak she crawled and considered herself lucky to be able to do that. She was liberated at Bergen-Belsen by British soldiers on April 15, 1945.

After the war, Rose stayed near Bergen-Belsen in homes provided by the Jewish relief organization. Rose's sister remembered having an uncle in Kansas City, so the Jewish relief organization wrote to ask him to sponsor their immigration to America. Rose immigrated in 1949, kissing the ground when she arrived. She met her future husband, also a Holocaust survivor, during school in Kansas City.