Karkomi Permanent Exhibition Personal Narratives

Condensed Biographies - 2023





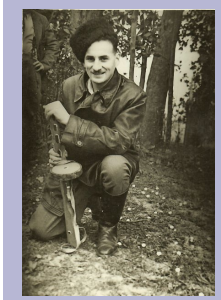




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- Aron was born in 1922 in Slonim, near the Russian border. There was a vibrant Jewish life, and Aron joined a Zionist youth group.
- Lisa was born Lisa Nussbaum in Raczki, a small town near the German border. It had a small but active and religious Jewish community.
- Raczki, which had antisemitism, saw an increase in the 1930s. Antisemitism also increased in Slonim. In both towns priests began preaching to Poles not to buy from Jewish owned businesses, and Jews began being harassed.
- In 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, it occupied Rackzi immediately. Soviet soldiers encouraged people to leave with them. The Nussbaums did, moving to Augustow. Lisa's father had difficulty working there and the family moved to Slonim.
- Slonim came under Soviet occupation, which the Jews there felt was better than Nazi rule.
- Aron attended a technical school in Wilno, and in 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, he decided to return to his family in Slonim.
- Shortly after escaping German soldiers and arriving to Slonim, his family's house was set on fire. Germans were capturing all men escaping the flames. Aron and his father were forced to dig a mass grave for all the people murdered that night.
- The Jewish population grew to 20,000, and the Nazis created ghettos in Slonim. Conditions were poor, but the family was happy they were together.
- The Einsatzgruppen entered Slonim, selected 1,200 Jewish men, took them to the woods, shot them, and put them in a mass grave. Aron's father was one of the men murdered. Lisa's father and brother managed to hide.
- Conditions worsened greatly in the ghetto, but Aron always had steady jobs and food for his family.
- Another Einsatzgruppen Aktion occurred. Aron heard rumors of the attack. Many Jews hid while others believed they would be deported to another ghetto. Those who did not hide were shot and buried in mass graves. The rest prepared better hiding places for the future.
- Lisa's mother gave Lisa and her sister to a Christian, former neighbor outside the ghetto to be hidden. The woman made them leave when she heard about the mass murder of Jews. Lisa and her sister were sent toward the forest and witnessed the execution of Jews. They returned to the ghetto and Lisa learned her mother and aunt had been killed in the mass murder.
- The remaining Jews coped as best they could in the ghetto and followed the Nazis' orders. During this time Aron and Lisa met and developed a close relationship.
- Another Aktion occurred. Lisa's sister was shot while running to hide. The remaining Jews went into hiding, so the Germans set fire to the buildings.
- A German officer allowed Aron and a few other workers to be spared. Aron went back into the ghetto to clear it of bodies and found his mother, sisters, and many more in their hiding place. He also found Lisa, her father, and brother. Aron procured life certificates for his and Lisa's family.
- Most of the remaining Jews in Slonim were murdered.
- Aron arranged for a farm woman to take Lisa's family to Grodno, where they entered the ghetto there. The woman took Aron's family to a small town. Aron left his family to go to Grodno and find Lisa.
- The Grodno ghetto was sealed. Deportations to "resettle" Jews began. Aron, Lisa, and her family hid through many *Aktions*.
- Aron was arrested and deported but managed to jump through the window of the train. He was found and brought back to the ghetto, and found Lisa there.

- Tadek,a Polish man Aron was acquainted with, helped Aron, Lisa, and some others escape to Wilno.
- Unlike most Jews in the Wilno ghetto Aron and Lisa did not they could survive there until liberation. They escaped from the ghetto and joined the underground partisans in the forests of Belarus.
- The underground was made up of many different groups. The Jewish group worked to disrupt Nazi operations, as well as for survival. Antisemitism also existed in the group of Partisans.
- Lisa contacted her father in the Wilno ghetto, who then walked to the underground camp in the forest.
- Aron, Lisa, and her father were liberated in the summer of 1944.
- There were antisemitism and pogroms in Poland after liberation, and Aron and Lisa decided to immigrate to Palestine with help from a Zionist organization. Palestine's borders were closed, and Lisa's uncles in the US sponsored them to come to America.
- Lisa and Aron decided to settle in Chicago. Aron took many jobs until he could open a clothing store.
- They had 3 sons and raised them to know that there are good and bad people but to stay positive.
- They kept in touch with Tadek and brought him to the US, and encouraged Yad Vashem to honor him as Righteous Among the Nations for saving them and others.
- Lisa became an activist for Holocaust education and especially active with the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois until her death in 2002.

Exhibition Objects

JEWISH ARMED RESISTANCE

Photograph of Aron
Photograph of Lisa and Aron

Aaron Elster

***Survivor*, Poland**

- Aaron Elster guesses that he was born on February 4, 1933, but he could be 6 months or a year older. He grew up in a little town called Sokołów Podlaski, Poland.
- His parents, Chaim Sruel and Cywia, had a butcher shop. He had 2 sisters, Irene and Sara. They were raised very religiously.
- Aaron remembers that things started slowly to change in September of 1939. Jews had two wear armbands, food was rationed, and people from outside of the town were ghettoized.
- Aaron recalls the first bombs falling in 1939 and that his family ran into the woods to protect themselves. Several people decided to flee to Russia because rumors about concentration camps were spreading, but Aaron's parents did not believe in the rumors and decided to stay.
- In 1942, the ghetto was closed. In June 1942, Aaron's family and 30 others were chosen by one of their former customers to work on their farm temporarily.
- In September 1942, the family had to return to the ghetto. His mother anticipated a difficult future and. made a deal with Mrs. Gorski, a Polish gentile woman, to care for Aaron's elder sister, Irene.
- Soon the ghetto was invaded by SS and Ukrainian soldiers and the liquidation began. Aaron and his family were rounded up at the market place and Aaron's father told him to flee to the farm where they had spent the summer. Aaron ran and crawled through open sewers to escape.
- A Polish woman outside of the ghetto fence urged Aaron to flee. She pulled up the thorny wires so that he could crawl through. On the other side, he ran and went to the farm as his father had instructed him.
- He learned that his mother was still in the ghetto working for German soldiers. He returned to the ghetto, but soon, SS and Ukrainian soldiers came again to liquidate the ghetto.
- Aaron and his mother decided to flee. They moved from farm to farm, negotiating with farmers to get hiding places and some food.
- One day, Aaron's mother negotiated with a Polish man. After the conversation, she prompted Aaron to leave the farm without her in order to find Mrs. Gorski, the woman his sister stayed with.
- Mrs. Gorski originally did not want to take him in. Aaron cried and begged, promising that he would stay only for a few days. Mrs. Gorski agreed and sent him to the attic. This was his home for the next 2 years.
- In 1944, the Red Army approached. The town was bombed, and Irene joined Aaron in the attic. When the bombing stopped, they could not stay in the attic. Mrs. Gorski put them in a chicken coop to hide.
- Mrs. Gorski told the siblings that their mother was shot by the Gestapo 3 months before liberation. Aaron and Irene never found out what happened to their father and baby sister. They can only guess that they were killed in Treblinka.
- Aaron's Uncle Sam – who escaped to Russia in 1939 – showed up and took care of the siblings.
- They went to Prague and ended up in a DP camp. They found someone who helped them to escape into Germany and reached a DP camp outside of Nuremberg.
- His uncle found out that a brother of his grandfather was in the US, so they left Germany after 2 years and arrived in New York in June 1947.
- After the war, Aaron married, started a family, and built a successful career in the insurance industry.

Exhibition Objects

RESCUERS	REBUILDING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY	BECOMING AMERICANS	
Righteous among the Nations medal and certificate Mrs. Gorski	3 photographs	2 Photographs Certificate Identification Certificate	Identification Tag Military Ribbon Bar

- Alice Redlich Fink was born to George and Ella Redlich in the German capital of Berlin. She lived in a third-floor apartment in a Jewish neighborhood with her parents and her brother, Heinz. Her grandmother, uncle, and aunt lived in the same building.
- Alice's father owned a tobacco business, and her mother helped out in the office. Alice has described living in the 1920's as not quite easy for ordinary people.
- Alice's mother grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home; her father did not receive a Jewish education. As a consequence, Alice's childhood was imbued with both Jewish culture and German patriotism.
- One of the first changes Alice witnessed once the Nazi party rose to power was the boycott of Jewish businesses, which led to the closing of her father's company.
- Though life for German Jews had become difficult, Alice's father belonged to a Jewish veterans' organization, and most of the members, her father included, were convinced that the new government would not interfere in their affairs.
- At her father's behest, Alice stopped attending school in favor of something more practical, so she received training in nursing at a Jewish infant's home, graduating in 1938.
- Alice's cousin moved to England with his wife, where he founded a hospital in London. Seeing an opportunity to continue her nursing education, Alice prepared to immigrate to England.
- When Kristallnacht began on November 9, 1938, Alice was on her way to England. Once she arrived, she called her family only to discover that her father had been sent to a concentration camp.
- In October 1942, Alice's father was deported. Her mother was required to work for Siemens until she too was deported in March 1943. Her brother was deported a month later. All three died in Auschwitz.
- Although she had begun learning English three months prior to her arrival in England, adapting to the new environment, language, and people was incredibly difficult for Alice.
- Toward the end of the war, Jewish organizations such as the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad were formed. They began to think about post-war problems and were in search of volunteers. Alice joined the group and participated in the preparation program.
- In August 1946, Alice arrived at DP Camp Bergen-Belsen. Her job was to take care of the children in the camp by teaching them good hygienic practices and basic life skills.
- Soon after Alice arrived in Germany, she met John Fink, who worked in the camp and joined the British staff for meals. They connected immediately upon discovering they both spoke German. They married in the camp on June 20, 1948.
- Alice and John came to the United States in August 1949; the moved to Chicago, where they raised their four children together.
- Alice now lives in the Self Help Home in Chicago.
- Alice considers herself lucky, saying her greatest fortune was receiving the opportunity to go to England. She says, "it is very important to have faith and to keep it. You can't foresee the future, but you have to try to make the best out of your possibilities."

Exhibition Objects

REBUILDING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Photograph

- John Fink was born Hans Finke in 1920 in Berlin, Germany. His father, Julius Finke, owned a dry goods store in a suburb of Berlin, which he lost in 1923 when the economy began suffering from hyperinflation.
- John, his parents, and his step-sister Ursula shared a four-room apartment in Berlin's inner city
- Growing up, John attended local elementary school, and once a week he attended religious school.
- By the 1930s, John had become well aware of the turbulent political situation in Germany. One day, John's sister accidentally dropped something from their balcony and hit two SA men standing below; enraged by what they considered a trick, the two men came upstairs. They left only after Mr. Finke bribed them with the precious few goods he had.
- After his first boss was forced to sell his business, John found work with a small contractor commissioned by the Air Force Ministry to build new offices. His worksite was guarded by SS-men who knew him by name.
- On Kristallnacht, John's family was spared because of their apartment's remote location. However, one of John's uncles was arrested. He later immigrated to Shanghai.
- When the war broke out in September 1939, John was still working for the same electrical company making installations for the Air Force Ministry, and he learned firsthand about the Luftwaffe's brutality in Poland.
- John began doing forced labor for the Siemens electronics company, and his entire family was relocated to do hard labor in factories. A Jews were told to have a suitcase always prepared.
- On March 12, 1943, John was taken to the railroad station and loaded onto a cattle car. All this took place in daylight and in full view of other citizens.
- The train ride was a horrifying experience for John. The uncertainty of his destination and the conditions in the car were unbearable.
- John and many other men were loaded onto trucks and taken to a sub-camp, Monowitz, or Auschwitz III.
- After his first night in Barrack no. 2, John received his number, 107821, which was tattooed into his forearm. As a new arrival, he always had the hardest tasks, such as carrying heavy bags of cement, and he got as little as a piece of bread, some margarine, and a watery soup each day.
- After six weeks, all tradesmen were ordered to report themselves. John reported himself as an electrician and was moved to another block, where conditions were slightly better.
- After a few months, John became accustomed to life in camp: "You became an old-timer. You had to. Either you lose your head and you die or you went along the best you could with the climate."
- On the night of January 17, John and all other prisoners were marched out of the camp, the SS shooting anyone who collapsed along the way. They ended up in a satellite camp near the German border, where they were once again packed into boxcars and eventually taken to Bergen-Belsen.
- Older soldiers ran Bergen-Belsen at that point and often gave prisoners more food. John began realizing that the Nazis were not innately evil; rather, they had become capable of committing these atrocities after a long process of dehumanization.
- On April 15, the Second British Army announced through loudspeakers that all prisoners were free. Over the next few days, they sent British medics and medical students to the camp to take care of survivors.
- After the war, John began working for the Red Cross, UN, American Jewish Distribution Committee at Bergen-Belsen.
- While working at Bergen-Belsen, he met his future wife, Alice, a nurse who had immigrated to England before the war.
- After John and Alice got married, they immigrated to the United States and settled in Chicago, where one of Alice's cousins lived.

- Once in the states, the young family never discussed the Holocaust. John did not share his story with his kids, nor did he speak German.
- After retiring, John began reflecting on his wartime experiences. He never knew where God was during the Holocaust, but he continued cherishing his Jewish heritage throughout his life. Because he felt connected to all survivors, he got involved with the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois.

Exhibition Objects

REBUILDING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Photograph

Betty Zwang Fleischman

Survivor, **Germany**

- Betty Zwang was born to Herman and Flora Zwang in Stein am Kocher on November 12, 1912.
- Growing up, Betty attended the local public school with her four siblings, Victor, Jenny, Ludwig, and Selma. Her father was co-owner of a textiles business and the mayor of Stein am Kocher for several years. His relative Abraham later took over as mayor.
- Betty and her family worshipped at a small synagogue in town, which remained open until it was disbanded in 1937.
- As a teenager, Betty attended a women's needlework school in Heilbronn am Necker. She then began apprenticing for the L. Blum business in Heilbronn.
- In 1938, Betty's older brother Victor emigrated from Germany, arriving in New York on September 27.
- Less than one month later, all German Jewish passports were invalidated. To be honored as legitimate, Betty's would need to be stamped with a large "J," a policy suggested by the neutral Swiss government.
- Shortly after Kristallnacht, Betty wrote to a Mrs. Laura Willstaedt in London, seeking employment with her family as a domestic servant. She arrived in London by April of that year.
- Betty's younger sister joined her in London, but unfortunately, Betty's parents and sister Selma were unable to procure emigration papers. Hermann died in Mannheim in 1940.
- Betty began working for the Fleishmanns in 1942; they had previously employed Betty's future husband, Julius Fleischman.
- On October 22, 1940. Betty's mother and sister were deported to Camp de Gurs in southwestern France. Betty wrote them as often as she could, and she inquired about sending them food as well as money; however, on August 8, 1942, Selma and Flora were taken to Drancy, and from there they were deported to Auschwitz. They were killed on August 30, 1942.
- Betty moved in with her sister Jenny and brother-in-law Ernst in 1943.
- On December 28, 1945, Betty began her journey to the United States by taking a Pan-Am flight to New York.
- Though a stateless immigrant in a new country, 33-year-old Betty Zwang already spoke English and had several contacts in the States. The day after her arrival, she received a money order from her future husband, Julius Fleischman.
- Betty moved to Chicago, where she married Julius Simon Fleischman, a German Jewish immigrant and World War II veteran.
- Julius was drafted into the U.S. Armed Forces the same year his parents came to Chicago. He served as a private for one year before being honorably discharged with two medals. During this time, he corresponded with Betty via letter-writing.
- Once married, Betty and Julius lived together in the suburbs of Chicago for the remainder of their lives. On October 19, 1988, Julius passed away in Skokie, Illinois at the age of 81. Nine years later, on March 2, 1997, Betty passed away. She was 84. They had no children.

Exhibition Objects

JEWISH COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO NAZISM

Identification Certificate

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- Frankenstein family lived in Swinemunde, Germany before the rise of Nazi Germany. Parents, Julius and Martha Frankenstein, owned a dressmaking shop in town. Daughter Carla met Cantor Leopold Fleischer in 1937 when he rented a room from her parents. They fell in love and married May 1939.
- Julius and Martha's son, Heinz, found attending school difficult because of increasing antisemitism.
- Julius was arrested immediately after *Kristallnacht* and was imprisoned for 6 weeks in Sachsenhausen concentration camp. After his release, Martha insisted that the family leave Germany.
- Julius, Martha, Carla, Leopold and Heinz immigrated to Shanghai in January 1939. Shanghai became an open port in which refugees did not need to obtain a visa to enter.
- They sold their store to wealthy non-Jewish neighbors. The Nazi's stripped them of their possessions and stamped their passports and visas with a red "J."
- Leopold's family chose not to leave. His parents and sister were murdered in Auschwitz in 1942.
- Shortly after emigration, the family lived in the Hongkew ghetto where Carla gave birth to a daughter Judith "Daisy" Fleischer.
- The family tried to maintain a normal life. Leopold officiated as a cantor and taught the Talmud Torah. Julius and Martha ran a transportation company. Heinz opened a bakery.
- They made friends with other German refugees; however, living conditions were very poor. The family needed special ID cards and lived in very unsanitary conditions.
- July 1945, American aircraft accidently bombed Hongkew injuring 250 Jews and killing 31. After the Japanese surrendered in 1945 the family stayed in Shanghai 3 more years.
- In Jan. 1948 the entire family, including Heinz's new wife Inge Kaufman, left Shanghai for the US. They settled in San Francisco, where Leopold officiated at a synagogue, and Martha and Carla worked at the Levi-Strauss factory.
- They all lived under one roof- 8 adults- until 1950. Judith's brother Ernest was born the same year. Later, in 1958, Heinz opened a successful bakery in San Francisco.
- In 1955 Carla, Leopold, Judith, Ernest moved to Chicago, along with Carla's parents Martha and Julius. Leopold passed away in 1995.
- Today, Judith lives in Northbrook, IL and volunteers at the Illinois Holocaust Museum. She has three children and seven grandchildren.

Exhibition Objects

Jewish Community responds to Nazism		Becoming Americans
2 Photographs	Passports	2 Naturalization Certificates
Certificate	Identification Certificates	
Dress		

- Jerry Glass was born on April 14th 1926 in Chicago.
- He was raised Jewish and spoke Yiddish as his second language.
- Because his Russian grandparents were brutally murdered by the Nazis, he enlisted in 1943 as a 17-year-old.
- He was part of the Army 3rd Division, 259th Infantry, and landed with the third wave on Omaha Beach (Normandy, France) on June 6, 1944 as part of Operation Cobra. During the battle on Omaha Beach 2,499 American soldiers were killed in action.
- The 3rd Division reached Germany by mid-September and fought in the battle of Aachen and later in the battle of the Bulge.
- On March 23, 1945, Allied forces captured Cologne and crossed the Rhine River. The division suffered more soldiers killed in action than any other US division.
- Jerry helped liberate Mauthausen concentration camp in May 1945, and he was overwhelmed and shocked by what they found in the concentration camp.
- The forces of the 3rd Division stayed in Germany until 1947.

Exhibition Objects

LIBERATION

Photograph

2 Nazi Armbands

Leah Gutman

***Survivor*, Poland**

- Leah Gutman, née Grochowsky, was born on December 10, 1919 in Bialystok, a city in the northeastern part of Poland about 100 miles east of Warsaw.
- Leah remembered going to two movie theaters in the city, walking and playing in the beautiful public park with her parents, taking piano lessons, and being a part of sport teams.
- The total population of Bialystok at that time was about 100,000, and about half of its residents were Jewish. Leah and her siblings went to a private Gymnasium for Jewish children, where they received an excellent education.
- Leah's family was part of the local Jewish community, spoke only Yiddish at home, and supported all efforts for the creation of a homeland in Palestine.
- Although Leah Gutman had positive memories of her childhood, she was confronted with antisemitism by Polish gentiles long before 1933, when the Nazis came to power.
- When new antisemitic laws were passed in Poland, Leah decided to leave for Palestine against her family's wishes. The road to Palestine was rough and exhausting; to get to Haifa, Leah took several trains as well as a ferry.
- Leah lived with her brother, Alexander, and his wife in Haifa until the spring of 1939, when she began school in Jerusalem.
- After the German occupation of eastern Poland in 1941, Leah's father's money transfers stopped, forcing Leah to leave university, move back to her brother's house, and become a construction worker in the suburbs of Haifa.
- Shortly thereafter, Leah met Ernie Gutman, a German Jew from Dresden who immigrated to Palestine in 1932.
- After only three months together, Leah and Ernie got married. In 1942, Leah became a member of the Palmach and the Haganah, both predecessors of the Israel Defense Force.
- Leah and Ernie moved to Chicago in 1947 to take care of Ernie's parents.
- In the United States, Ernie worked as a driver and Leah as a Hebrew teacher, although she was not very religious. In 1951, Leah became pregnant with her first child, Elana. Her second child, Joseph, was born in 1958.
- On June 1, 1995, Ernie Gutman died at the age of 79, after more than 50 years of marriage to Leah. In January of 2012, Leah Gutman died in Glenview, Illinois.

Exhibition Objects

JEWISH LIFE BEFORE WWII

5 Photographs

- Ludwig Adolf Haas (Hebrew: Jehuda Ben Aron) was born to Adolf and Anna Haas on October 26th 1924 in Landau, Palatinate in Germany.
- Growing up, Ludwig, his parents, and his sister Friedl lived in a two-story home in Ruelzheim with their grandmother, aunt, and uncle. They had a barn as well as a garden, and their father made his living as a cattle dealer.
- Ruelzheim, a small farming village, was a predominantly Catholic town founded during the age of the Romans. Of the total population of 4,000, about 250 of its residents were Jewish.
- The Haas Family was very conservative and went to the synagogue in town frequently. On Saturdays, when all the other children in town went to school, Ludwig and his sister stayed home to observe the Sabbath; they would pick up their homework from classmates in the afternoon.
- Ludwig attended the Jewish school in Ruelzheim for two years before the Nazis shut it down. Following his school's closing, he transferred to a public school where boys were taught by male teachers and girls by nuns. After a short while, the German government replaced the nuns with young Nazi teachers from out of town.
- To explain what a true Aryan looked like, one of the new teachers pointed out Ludwig's sister, the only Jewish girl in her class, commenting on her blonde hair and blue eyes.
- In 1937, all Jewish cattle dealers' licenses were revoked. Ludwig and his sister were kicked out of the public school and forced to travel to a neighboring town, where a Jewish school remained in operation. Ludwig's Christian friends told him they were no longer allowed to play with him.
- On January 20, 1938, about three months after Ludwig's bar mitzvah, his father passed away. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery, but his family was not allowed to place a gravestone in memory of him. The next morning, the names of all Christians who attended the funeral were printed in the local paper.
- After Kristallnacht, the family moved to Mannheim, where they stayed with friends.
- In 1940 the family received visas to Italy from the U.S. Embassy. First taking a train to Genoa, they later boarded an Italian ship in Naples destined for New York.
- With the help of the Jewish Aid Society, the Haases moved to Wisconsin to live with relatives after arriving in New York.
- In May 1944, just before the end of his freshman year of college, Ludwig was drafted into the U.S. Army. While undergoing basic training, he became a naturalized citizen.
- In August of that year, Ludwig and his unit were shipped to Liverpool. From there they took a train to Bournemouth, a port just across the channel from France. In September, they landed on Omaha Beach.
- About 10% of Ludwig's unit was Jewish, but he does not recall any antisemitism in the army during the war.
- With the permission of his commander, he went to Mannheim to search for an aunt and uncle, who he learned had both passed away.
- Having been unsuccessful in Mannheim, Ludwig hitchhiked to his home in Ruelzheim, where he found many of his old friends and neighbors. He visited the Jewish cemetery where his father was buried and arranged for somebody to make a headstone as well as maintain his grave.
- Before returning to his unit, Ludwig learned that his childhood home was still registered under the Haas name, so he sold it as well as the surrounding farmland.
- While in Germany with the U.S. Army, Ludwig never heard more than rumors regarding the Final Solution, much less see a concentration camp. As a consequence, it was impossible to ascertain the scope of the Nazis' crimes while serving as a soldier.

- In early 1946, Ludwig returned to the U.S. and was discharged from the army. He returned to school, and in 1950, he graduated from Marquette Engineering University. He got a job with as a Milwaukee civil engineer, where he worked his way up to district manager.
- In February 1960, one of Ludwig's cousins set him up on a blind date with one of her college friends, a girl named Silvia. Ludwig and Silvia fell in love, and on October 23, 1960, they got married at Temple Shalom in Milwaukee.
- In February 2002, Ludwig took his children and grandchildren back to Ruelzheim, where they visited some old friends still living there. It was for them, his family's younger generations, that Ludwig eventually recorded his life story.
- Ludwig Adolf Haas passed away on January 12, 2005, in Northbrook, Illinois. He was 80 years old.

- Samuel Harris, whose birth name was Szlamek Rzeznik, was born on May 13, 1935, in Deblin, Poland, about 40 miles in the southeast of Warsaw.
- His family lived together with his cousins, aunts, and uncles in a Jewish neighborhood. He also recalls that life in Deblin was peaceful and secure.
- Sam was the youngest of seven children, a product of his father's second marriage. He was loved by everyone and was treated very well by his family.
- Sam's father, Shmuel Rzeznik, was a religious man who wore beard and dark clothes; he was the town scribe.
- He stressed his children's education, so Sam spent his childhood at cheder, learning how to read Hebrew. Growing up in a Jewish neighborhood, Sam did not know anything about anti-Semitism.
- In September 1939, the Germans attacked Deblin. Alerted by the sounds of circling airplanes, Sam's family ran outside to see what was happening. A short while later, soldiers in tanks and men with machine guns arrived to take over the town.
- Almost immediately the Nazis built a ghetto surrounded by barbed wire. Jews were confined to the ghetto and required to wear a Star of David to identify themselves as such.
- Sam's sister Rosa, who lived in Warsaw, came back home, and became the leader of the family. She was fluent in Polish and therefore able to leave the ghetto without being recognized as Jewish.
- In 1942, the Nazis rounded up the Jews of Deblin, lining them up in long rows and packing them in boxcars, to be sent to concentration camps. While Sam and his family waited in line, Sam's father pushed his son out of the crowd and told him to hide by his sister. He did. It was the last time Sam saw his parents.
- Sam's sister Rosa did all she could to feed him, but he felt constantly hungry. When the German soldiers came to deport Deblin's remaining Jews, Sam and his two sisters, Sara, and Rosa, ran as fast as they could, ending up in an outhouse.
- Rosa was sent to a concentration camp for work, so she entrusted Sam and Sara to a friend, who then had them split up and given to two different families. Sam ended up in a potato cellar with several other Jews.
- Sam and Sara were later smuggled back into the concentration camp, where Rosa and other prisoners hid and fed the children to the best of their ability.
- Rosa, her husband Walter (she had gotten married in the camp), Sam, and Sara were deported to Czestochowa in the Spring of 1944. Sam was separated from his family upon arrival.
- After a time, Sam was taken back to the main camp, where he was reunited was his siblings. However, he remained at constant risk of being shot because he was too young to work.
- Sam began stealing potatoes from a railroad car near the camp to help feed his family and other prisoners, who would then cook the potatoes in a rusty, water-filled can.
- One day, Sam was caught stealing potatoes. However, the soldier who held a gun up to the little boy's face never fired, and Sam escaped with his life.
- Sam and his sisters were liberated by the Russians on January 17, 1945. Unsure what to do with their freedom, the former prisoners ran into Nazi quarters to get food. Sam ate too much butter and got sick.
- After liberation, Sam and his family left camp to go home. However, they discovered that many Poles had moved into the Jews'homes, threatening and attacking those Jews who tried to come back.
- With Deblin unsafe, Rosa and Walter went to Vienna; Sara and Sam stayed temporarily in a Lublin orphanage. Almost a year later, Rosa paid off a Russian soldier to smuggle her siblings out of Poland.
- After a short time in Vienna, Sam and Sara were sent to the United States, where Rosa believed they would have a better life.

- Sara was adopted by a family on the South Side of Chicago, and Sam was adopted by a family from Northbrook in April 1948.
- In 1954, Sam graduated from high school; four years later, he finished college and started a family with his wife, Dede.

Exhibition Objects

Departure and Arrival	Becoming Americans
Photograph	Belt, Essay 2 Photographs

- Gisela Emily Hesse, née Meyer, was born in Berlin, Germany on February 15, 1913. Her family moved to Delmenhorst in Oldenburg, Germany before World War I broke out so they could be close to her father's sister.
- Gisela says that she had a very nice childhood. Her family often joined her aunt for gatherings, and her parents made many friends, so they always had company.
- Gisela attended a Catholic school for three years, receiving a good education without being required to say Sunday prayers or attend church.
- In 1933, her mother died at home from a brain tumor. Although they had lived together in the same house, Gisela had not felt close to her mother the way she did with her father. At this time, Gisela learned that her mom had not been Jewish.
- Once a week, Gisela and her siblings attended Jewish schools, where they learned Hebrew and history. The family celebrated both Christmas and Easter, but they did not celebrate Jewish holidays at home. Instead, they went to their aunt's.
- Gisela and her family moved to Bremen after Word War I so Gisela's father could expand his watch-making business. She began working as a bookkeeper for her father when she was 15.
- Later on, one of Gisela's cousins arrived in Bremen to stay with her family. One day, while attending a relative's funeral, this cousin met Walter, another Jew living in Bremen.
- Hoping to get her family involved in the Jewish community once more, Gisela's cousin insisted that she introduce Walter to her relatives, so one evening, he came to Gisela's family's home for dinner.
- Over time, Gisela and Walter grew to like each other. After initial reservations, her father let her marry Walter when she was 25. They celebrated at her family's home.
- Gisela was apprehended by the SA on Kristallnacht, and she had to register her name before she was allowed to return home.
- Believing Germany was no longer safe, Gisela and Walter attempted to go into hiding during Kristallnacht, but they had to return to Bremen upon learning that the person with whom they would stay had been interrogated.
- On Kristallnacht, Gisela's father was arrested and taken to a concentration camp. Though he was released to sell his business, he was rearrested after a neighbor heard him declare he would outlive Hitler.
- After Kristallnacht, Gisela and Walter decided to flee Germany. They were granted passage to Holland, where they shared a small, sparsely-furnished room with another couple. Gisela's brother joined them around Christmastime.
- Gisela and her family obtained visas to the United States, and after staying briefly in England, they boarded a ship destined for New York.
- The three emigres traveled by bus to Pittsburgh, and from there, they traveled to Cincinnati. Struggling to make a living, they decided to move to Chicago, where Walter began a company.
- After the war, Gisela contacted her former housekeeper, who informed her that Gisela's sister and father were the only relatives who had survived in Europe. They remained in Bremen for the rest of their lives.
- Gisela and Walter and three children together in the United States, a country they are grateful to call their home.

Exhibition Objects

DECEPTION

COFFEE COUPONS

PAINTING

- Walter Hesse was born in Leer, Germany on June 30, 1907. The youngest in his family, he lived in a house on Main Street with his father, birth mother, a half-brother named Max, and a sister named Paula.
- Walter's mother died in 1914, shortly after World War I broke out. This time period was rough for seven-year-old Walter as food was scarce and his family could not keep kosher.
- Walter's house was situated on a harbor, and he had many friends, all of whom were gentiles. As a young Jewish boy, he did not experience antisemitism.
- Walter attended a co-educational school before going to Gymnasium for nine years. Once he received his diploma, he decided not to go to university and quit school. He also declined to volunteer for the army although he could have entered as a sergeant.
- When he was sixteen, Walter moved to Hanover, where he began an apprenticeship with two Jewish brothers who sold cookware.
- At the age of eighteen, Walter moved to a suburb of Hamburg, where he got a job as a salesman and fell in love with the big city.
- Around 1935, Walter began noticing that things were changing. For instance, he recalls a time when he was walking down a street and noticed that some people walking the opposite direction crossed the street to avoid walking past a Jew.
- While travelling, Walter came across a small town in Northern Germany where he would later meet his future wife, Gisela.
- On November 21, 1938, Walter Hesse received a tax assessment levied against Jews to pay for damages on Kristallnacht. The Jewish community was fined one billion *Reichsmarks*, which was then assigned to individual Jews to pay.
- Shortly after Kristallnacht, the Gestapo told Walter to evacuate his dwelling within four weeks. Recognizing that he had only a short time to get out of Germany, Walter obtained three green cards from the Dutch government for his wife, his brother, and himself.
- Once in Holland, Walter and his wife were taken by a couple to a big building where they housed and rehabilitated seamen who had fallen ill.
- From Holland, they traveled to London, stayed in a hotel for three days, and boarded the *S.S. Washington*. Shortly before their departure, Gisela discovered that she was pregnant, complicating matters a bit as she often fell seasick during the trip. Still, the couple arrived in New York, and from there they took a Greyhound bus first to Pittsburgh and then to Cincinnati.
- Struggling to make ends meet in Cincinnati, the family moved to Chicago, where they stayed with Walter's friends, the Rosenbergs.
- Eventually, the family was able to find an apartment in Chicago, and Walter began a business.
- Walter soon saved enough money to buy a car, which allowed him to expand his business's reach. Shortly thereafter, he purchased a storefront.
- When the war broke out, business became more difficult as Walter struggled to acquire merchandise. However, the company survived; after the war, it thrived. The family celebrated the business's 50th anniversary during the 1990s
- Walter says that he was extremely lucky to be able to escape Germany and arrive in the United States, where he had the opportunity to begin a successful business and raise a family. He is thankful that he has lived such a long life, married a wonderful wife, and watched his beautiful children and grandchildren grow up.

Exhibition Objects

JEWISH COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO NAZISM	NOVEMBER POGROMS
Photograph	Invoice
Advertisement	
Letter	

Boris Kacel

Survivor, **Latvia**

- Born Boris Katzel in Riga, Latvia in 1922. He lived in mixed neighborhood with little antisemitism and received a very good education.
- Boris's family stayed in Riga after Operation Barbarossa began in June 22, 1941. They thought German occupying forces would be better than life under Stalin.
- Restrictions for Jews began, and vigilantes abducted and killed Jews. Boris pretended to be an electrician and his father lied about his profession, thinking working for German affiliated companies be safer.
- All Jewish families in Riga had to move to the ghetto. Boris' father traded their apartment for a small house in the ghetto and gave furniture to a store owner who agreed to bring food into the ghetto.
- A second family moved into their house, and although crowded, they became friends. Boris and his father got into a work group that worked outside of the ghetto for companies affiliated with Nazi Germany. Their work group was ordered to move to the Little Ghetto next to the original ghetto.
- On November 30, 1941 Boris, his father, and cousin heard what they thought was the typical drunken behavior of guards which was actually the Riga ghetto liquidation. Boris later learned his mother and three siblings were shot in the Rumbula woods.
- Boris worked with electricians again and learned from them which ultimately saved his life.
- In early 1943 Boris and his two family members were chosen to live at a work site. They supported each other under harsh living conditions.
- In September 1943, Boris was sent to Kaiserwold where his head was shaved and he was given a number. In October, they were transported by rail car to Vaivara in Estonia. He told the Nazis he was an electrician to get an off site job, traded stolen supplies for food, and shared with his father and cousin.
- Boris's father and cousin were selected for Sonda work camp, so Boris volunteered to go with them. Sonda inmates were transferred to Stutthof in Germany because of the advancing Soviet Army.
- Boris signed up for extra work assignments for more food. His cousin signed up for another camp assignment and perished because of it.
- At Buchenwald, Boris worked as an electrician. He and his father had a ten day rest during a typhus epidemic. He stole food every day. The only fight between father and son was over a cup of food.
- April 9, 1945 allies and the German Army fought so close to camp that Boris thought liberation was near, so he hid, was discovered but escaped with a backpack. He hid again for a few days in a barn.
- After leaving the barn he learned the US Army won. He was mistaken as a German and imprisoned, but later freed. He did not know his father's location.
- Entire town of Magdeburg surrounding the camp was in a state of destruction without laws. Boris had clothing and an abandoned apartment. When money was used again, Boris worked for the new German police and then as a translator for the Soviet Union army.
- He finally found his father in summer 1946 but couldn't get to him since he was in Latvia and was not allowed to leave the Soviet Union. In fall 1946, Boris escaped with only his backpack. He spent a year in different DP camps, was sponsored by his aunt, and moved to the USA in 1947.
- Boris worked as an electrician and married Tamara Abramson, a woman he met in a DP camp. He went to night school and eventually started his own business. He's still happily married with two children.

Exhibition Objects

Becoming Americans
2 Photographs
2 Certificates
Badge

- Born Cipora Fuchs on July 10, 1938 in Semiatych, Poland.
- Extended family lived together in the ghetto, including her grandfather, father, mother, sister, uncle and his wife, and their 4 children. Cipora's Uncle Benjamin was determined that his family would survive despite difficult conditions in the ghetto
- On November 22, 1942, Uncle Benjamin told the family that the ghetto was being surrounded by the SS troops and that they all must leave immediately.
- Cipora's mother refused to leave because her sister was in the next town visiting relatives. Her aunts and grandfather also refused to leave. They were all murdered by the Nazis.
- Cipora's uncle cut a hole in the barbed wire fence and led the 8 family members into the forest. The Germans shot at them but missed. Before they left, Cipora's mother wrapped her in a blanket.
- Uncle Benjamin knew a Polish gentile family before the war who owned a farm. They gave him a loaf of bread and sent him on his way, fearing for their own. The family continued to live in the forest.
- Cipora's uncle went to the home of Mr. Luchinski, who he had helped during the Russian occupation. The Luchinskis agreed to hide the family in their potato silo. The silo was nothing more than a hole in the ground where potatoes were stored during the winter. They lived in the silo for 22 months. It was so small that only Cipora could stand up.
- They were covered with lice and their only toilet was a metal pot. Her uncle left at night to get food from the Luchinskis.
- Cipora's father died in the silo. She slept next to her dead father for a week, thinking that he was asleep. Her uncle buried her father deep in the forest and vowed to return for her father's remains and rebury him in a Jewish cemetery if he survived.
- The Russians liberated the family in October 1944. The 8 looked like living skeletons and could barely stand. They returned to Semiatych until they realized there was no future for them in Poland. Her uncle reburied Cipora's father in the Jewish cemetery in Semiatych, as he had vowed.
- Cipora, her aunt and 2 cousins left for Israel in 1945. One year later, her uncle and the 2 remaining cousins joined them.
- On June 2, 1955 when Cipora was 15, her uncle, Herman Bush, brought her to the US.
- In 1957 Cipora finished her advanced degree and became a registered nurse. She married Mordechai Katz on August 23, 1960.
- She worked at Edgewater Hospital from 1960-1970. Cipora did not have the privilege of knowing her own parents and because of that she worked mainly with older people. In September 1962, her daughter, Simona Shifra was born.
- In Sept. 1990, Cipora suffered a major heart attack. After this, she began talking about her experiences during the Holocaust.
- Cipora attributes her survival to Mr. Luchinski, the help of God, and the incredible stamina, intelligence, and determination of her uncle.
- The only memento Cipora has of her experience during the Holocaust is her wool blanket which is on display in the permanent exhibition.

Exhibition Objects

The Ghettos	New Home: Israel	Becoming Americans	
Blanket	Photograph	2 Photographs	Prayer Book

Photograph Plane Ticket Report Card

Simone Liebster

***Survivor*, France**

- Born in 1930 in countryside of Alsace-Lorraine and grew up in the town of Mulhouse.
- Her family was Catholic but converted to become Jehovah's Witnesses.
- Simone's father, Adolphe, was an intellectual and taught her many subjects, developing her desire to learn and study.
- Simone became aware of the Nazis when she read news from Germany about Jehovah's Witnesses in concentration camps.
- When Simone began school in 1936 she observed antisemitism and persecution of her Jewish classmates. As she began discussing her family's faith with other children she experienced discrimination and bullying herself.
- The persecution against Jehovah's Witnesses worsened when Germany occupied France.
- In 1941 her father was the first Jehovah's Witness in her town to be arrested. The Gestapo regularly interrogated her mother to learn names of other Witnesses.
- After her father's arrest, Simone and her mother struggled. The Gestapo closed their bank account. Simone suffered greatly from stress.
- Refusing to say "Heil Hitler" in school, Simone was punished and publicly shamed. She was issued an ultimatum to say "Heil Hitler" or leave, and she chose to leave. She was also persecuted in her next school.
- Simone and her mother tried to maintain a regular life and continued to pray and study their faith. They smuggled bible texts to her father in a concentration camp.
- When Simone refused to go to a Nazi-sponsored camping trip, she was publicly shamed and denounced. In early 1943, Simone was arrested and moved to a penitentiary home. She was 12 years old.
- The home was run by strict Catholics, and the conditions were harsh. Simone had to do hard labor, often outside as punishment.
- Simone snuck a small bible into the home and read it as often as possible. Her faith sustained her and kept her connected to her parents.
- In 1944, the following year, Simone's aunt was allowed to visit her, and did regularly. She learned that most of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Mulhouse had been arrested.
- Simone's mother had been arrested in 1943 and imprisoned. Refusing to perform labor related to the war, she was put in solitary confinement and beaten badly. When liberated, she immediately went to take Simone from the home.
- Also imprisoned in many camps, Simone's father refused to perform tasks related to the war and was badly abused in the Mauthausen and Ebensee concentration camps. He returned home after the war, almost deaf and barely able to walk.
- The family found solace and a common bond through bible studies.
- Simone became involved with Jehovah's Witnesses missionary work, met her husband Max Liebster, and moved with him to the US.

Exhibition Objects

MOSAIC OF VICTIMS

Photograph

Bag

Envelope

Small text smuggled in a cookie

Kate Lipner

***Rescuer*, France**

- Born Marie Catherine Rossi in Nice, France, May 29, 1925
- Strong-willed and rebellious as a child, Kate's parents sent her to a convent at age 8, hoping she would become more obedient. It did not work.
- Strong interest from an early age in world events. When World War II began, Kate's father joined the French Army. After the French surrender, the area where Kate, her mother, and her younger sister lived became Vichy France.
- Kate had many Jewish friends in her neighborhood. As she became increasingly alienated from her Catholic faith due to the harsh treatment she received at the convent, she spent more and more time with her Jewish friends. They never discussed their religious differences, but Kate had a genuine fondness for her Jewish friends.
- In 1940, at age 15, Kate began buying and selling food on the black market in order to survive. She soon expanded her resistance activities to include posting anti-Nazi posters.
- By 1942, Kate was procuring ration stamps and false identity papers for Jewish families and leading refugees across the French border into neutral Switzerland. Her efforts as a guide ended when her mother died unexpectedly, and Kate had to return to Nice to care for her younger sister.
- As the treatment of Jews in Nice worsened, Kate hid three Jewish children in the one-bedroom apartment she shared with her sister. The five shared a bed, and the children were able to play in the building's courtyard. They occasionally went on walks together despite the risk.
- She was once questioned by the Gestapo about hiding the children, but she had just dropped them off to visit with one of their fathers in the countryside. She was eventually released.
- One day in 1943, Kate heard the boots of a Gestapo officer approaching her apartment. She pulled out a gun that she kept in her kitchen and shot him at close range, killing him instantly. She was not yet 18 years old.
- While Liberation and the end of the war were joyous for many, Kate was devastated at being separated from the children she had cared for, who were returned to their surviving parents.
- Kate married an American soldier from Chicago and moved to the US in January 1946.
- Maurice, one of the children she saved, later reunited with Kate in France. With his effort, she was honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations in 1995. Kate is also honored on IHMEC's Ferro Fountain of the Righteous and at the Avenue of the Righteous at the Civic Center in Evanston.
- Kate died in Glencoe, Illinois, on November 11, 2010, at age 85.

Exhibition Object

RESCUERS

Photograph

- Hannah Messinger was born Hannah Löwy on October 16, 1920, in Karlovy Vary in the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia. She lived in an apartment with her parents and her older sister.
- Though citizens of Czechoslovakia, her father and mother spoke German, the region's vernacular; as a consequence, Hannah and her sister spoke Czech at school and German at home.
- Though the Löwy Family was Jewish, they were assimilated to the non-Jewish community; they did not keep kosher, but they attended synagogue.
- In 1936, Hannah began feeling the effects of increasing antisemitism when her non-Jewish friends began treating her differently.
- Just months before Germany annexed the Sudetenland, Hannah and her family moved to Prague. Her parents were unable to find work as they could not speak Czech, so Hannah, who worked in an office, was the family's sole financial provider.
- In March of 1939, the Nazis marched into Czechoslovakia, and life changed dramatically for the Jewish population. Hannah remembers that they were neither able to go shopping before 5 pm nor were they allowed to travel.
- In March 1940, Hannah got married to Karl Messinger, and the couple lived in Hannah's family's apartment.
- Hannah and her family knew about the concentration camps and tried to obtain visas, but the world's countries had closed their doors to Jewish emigres, and they could not leave.
- In 1941, Hannah's husband was deported to Theresienstadt. Shortly thereafter, she was forced to report to the train station. For several weeks, Hannah, in shock, did not speak.
- In Theresienstadt, Hannah worked as a hair-cutter because of her previous experience in a beauty shop.
- While in the camp, Hannah was allowed to communicate with her family, and they sent her care packages with food as often as they could.
- In May 1942, a transport including Hannah's parents arrived in Theresienstadt before being taken to Poland. Unaware that the transports almost certainly led to their deaths, Hannah and her husband tried to join them, but they were unsuccessful.
- In June 1942, Hannah's husband was sent to work in a nearby town. When he returned, he told her that thousands of the town's people had been murdered, and he had been forced to clean up the aftermath of the mass execution.
- In 1943, Hannah became pregnant. As children were not allowed in the camp, she and Karl hoped the war would come to an end. When it did not and she could no longer hide the pregnancy, she agreed to have an abortion.
- When the Red Cross came to investigate Theresienstadt, the prisoners were forced to paint houses and create signs for synagogues, restaurants, cafes, and schools. They were forced to perpetuate the image the Nazis wanted the world to see.
- In September 1944, Hannah's husband was deported to Poland, and Hannah lost the last person dear to her. A few weeks later, she too was stuffed into a cattle car and deported to Auschwitz.
- Upon arrival at the largest extermination camp, the people were divided into two groups, and an SS officer began selecting who would live, and who would die. Since they needed a haircutter, Hannah was led into the camp.
- Hannah's head was shaven, and she was forced to take off her clothes. Everybody looked so similar, she said, that she would not have been able to recognize her own sister if she had been there. The prisoners were given the same set of clothes, no underwear, and wooden clogs.

- In January 1945, Hannah was selected to work at a textile factory where she operated heavy machinery. She used stolen material from this factory to make a bra, which both kept her warm and helped her to feel human.
- Hannah was liberated in May 1945 by Russian soldiers.
- Hannah eventually returned to Czechoslovakia and discovered that she was the only member of her family that had survived.
- She decided to write to her aunt in Chicago who began the process of bringing her to the U.S.
- In 1946, a stranger named Imre Messinger wrote to Hannah seeking information about his cousin, Karl. He too was planning to immigrate to the United States.
- Hannah arrived in the U.S. in 1946. A year later, she married Imre in New York. They had two children together.
- Hannah studied art at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Evanston Art Center, and Northeastern University.
- Hannah was able to work as a painter and an artist. She has written her story down and continues to carry the guilt of being the only person to have survived out of a wonderful family.

Exhibition Object

Killing Centers

Bra

Irene K. Poll

***Survivor*, Germany**

- Irene Poll was born Johanna Elisabeth Kahn in Mannheim, Germany on June 29, 1921. The family lived together in an apartment and had a live-in maid as well as a nanny to look after the children.
- Irene remembers that because poverty was rampant, it was extremely difficult to live in Germany during the 1920s. Though she describes her childhood as quiet and pleasant but without luxury, she wishes she had not been living in Germany.
- Her parents were not Orthodox Jews, so they celebrated only the main Jewish holidays. The family dressed up, went to synagogue, and had friends over.
- Irene went to kindergarten, elementary school, and high school in Mannheim. Unlike most of the children in that time, she never joined a youth group because she did not like uniforms.
- In 1927 Irene began noticing graffiti swastikas on her way to school, but she had no idea what any of it meant. In 1931, children in the Hitler Youth started wearing armbands with the swastika, and she started to realize Jews had no place in the lives of these children.
- On April 1, 1933, the boycott of Jewish businesses started, and Irene recalls that a big sign was placed in front of her father's business.
- One day, she fell on the playground in school and cut her hand, and when she asked a teacher for help, he started laughing, saying he would not touch dirty Jewish blood. It was the single most significant moment that convinced her she needed to leave Germany.
- In March 1934, Irene left her family to live with her aunt and uncle in Lille, France. She learned French and attended school there until she graduated in 1940.
- During the Kristallnacht pogrom on November 9, 1938, Irene's father was arrested and sent to Dachau along with some 30,000 other Jewish men.
- Once he came back, Irene's family left for Luxembourg. Since Joseph had family in the United States, he applied for a visa.
- By the end of the summer of 1942, Irene received information that the Gestapo were searching for her. Trying to find her, they had already threatened her aunt, so Irene decided to leave immediately.
- The same night she learned she was being hunted, Irene took a train to Lille, where a woman picked her up and brought her to the house of Father Vancourt and his cousin Raymond. For the rest of the war, Irene lived in hiding at this apartment.
- In September 1944, the Germans fled Lille before the British army arrived.
- After an unusually cold winter in 1944 and many battles in the nearby fields of Belgium, Irene joined the Red Cross in Maastricht as a translator. As she worked for the Red Cross, she met many American soldiers, and learned English as well as basic American culture. She also began learning about big American cities such as San Francisco and Chicago, and about racism against African and Native Americans.
- In January 1946, Irene's parents prepared her papers so Irene could immigrate to the United States. She got on a priority transport with 7,000 G.I.s and arrived in Chicago.
- To make a living, Irene worked for *Time Magazine* and the University of Chicago. For her, working was never about establishing a career but about earning money.
- One year after she arrived in Chicago Irene married Nathan Diamond, a Polish-born émigré. They had two children together, Mark and Fay, but in 1956, tragedy struck when Nathan died in a car accident. After a failed second marriage, Irene married a man named Albert Poll in 1983.

Exhibition Objects

RESCUERS
Photograph

Maurice Raichel

***Survivor*, Poland**

- Moses Reichel (birth name M. Sohkliar) was born on December 27, 1907 in Ponewcesz, Poland.
- At a young age, Moses moved to Kovno, Lithuania where he went to school and later to college. During his time studying engineering, Moses met his future wife Lea Reichel, who was born on March 15, 1916 in Kovno.
- In 1941, Moses' life changed dramatically when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The Reichel family lived in the Kovno-Sobotka Ghetto for the next three years, where Moses suffered through inhumane conditions.
- In July 1944, the Germans evacuated the Ghetto, and the entire Reichel family was sent to concentration camps in Eastern Europe. Moses himself ended up in Dachau, where he continued to live as a slave laborer for the Germans.
- In April 1945, Moses was liberated by the American army and was sent to the DP camp Neu Freimann near Munich, where he resided for an additional twelve months.
- The Nazis murdered Moses' parents, two sisters, and three brothers in various concentration camps.
- In 1946-47, Moses Reichel changed his name to Maurice Raichel and immigrated to the United States. After arriving in New York City, he travelled to Paterson, New Jersey where he started his new life.

Exhibition Objects

KILLING CENTERS

Jacket

Trousers

- Ruth Rehbock, née Nussbaum, was born in Schmalkalden, a small town in Thuringia,Germany, on November 24, 1906. When she was eleven years old, the Nussbaums moved to Ohrdruf which had an army base close by.
- After finishing school at the age of sixteen, Ruth moved to Gotha. She trained as a dental hygienist and also learned how to sew and type.
- The Nussbaums were not devout but observed the Jewish holidays. In her childhood, Ruth did not experience any antisemitism.
- In 1933, the proliferation of antisemitic propaganda began, and the Nussbaums' neighbors stopped talking to Ohrdruf's Jewish families.
- Through her father's acquaintances, Ruth met Hans Rehbock in Gotha. He was an intern at Ruppelwerk, a metal factory in Gotha that exported products to European countries as well as the United States.
- Although Hans's mother did not fully agree with his relationship with Ruth, Hans married her in 1933.
- Convinced that the political situation against the Jews would pass by, they wanted to raise their son Ralph, born on July 11, 1934, in his homeland of Germany.
- Eventually, Hans and Ruth decided to leave the country as well. They made arrangements and applied for papers at the beginning of 1938.
- Since Ruth's relatives lived in Chicago, Hans insisted that his wife would go to the U.S. in order to arrange all the paperwork that was needed for their sponsorship and exit visas.
- During her stay in Chicago, Ruth observed what her family might need for starting over in a new country. As soon as all the formalities were completed, she returned to Germany.
- She submitted all forms and finally got an appointment at the American embassy on November 10. To ensure they were on time, the family travelled to Berlin several days in advance. There, they witnessed Kristallnacht. The burning synagogue by their hotel is one of Ruth's strongest memories.
- While Hans went into hiding in Berlin, Ruth took care of the exit visas by herself.
- While Hans stayed hidden in Berlin, Ruth and Ralph went back to Gotha. Ruth began filling containers with the family's possessions to be shipped to Chicago.
- They arrived in New York on Christmas Eve of 1938. Welcomed by the Statue of Liberty, they knew that they were free. They did not spend much time in New York but took a train to Chicago almost immediately.
- The Rehbocks spent a couple of days with Ruth's relatives before they moved to their own apartment on Chicago's south side.
- In 1943, they became naturalized citizens, officially cutting their ties to Germany.
- Ruth did not speak about her escape from Nazi Germany until Hans Rehbock died in 1983. On that night, Ralph finally learned the details of his family's escape from Germany when the rabbi's wife asked his mother to tell them their story.
- Ralph was struck by that story and the difference one person could make in another's life. As a consequence, he became involved in Holocaust education.

Exhibition Objects

JEWISH LIFE BEFORE WWII	GERMANY: A FRAGILE DEMOCRACY	BECOMING AMERICANS
Photograph	Money	3 Naturalization Certificates
Event Diary		

Walter Rosenbush

Survivor, **Germany**

- Walter Rosenbush was born on June 23, 1913, in Kattowitz, Germany (now Katowice, Poland)..
- Walter lived a very comfortable life with his two older sisters, who grew up speaking only German and living a very happy childhood free of antisemitism.
- This normalcy was interrupted by the Silesian Uprisings of the Polish-Russian War, when the Polish army fought the German nationalists. Walter's town eventually became Polish territory.
- He finished his German high school degree in 1930, leaving him with the choice to go to university in Poland or Germany. Walter chose to study in Germany.
- He received his doctorate in 1936 and moved back home with his parents. One year later, his oldest sister and her husband immigrated to Palestine—they were the only family members to escape Europe before the war broke out.
- In Katowice, Jews under the age of forty were told they would be sent to work camps. Walter was put on a train supposedly heading to one of these camps, but found himself kicked off the train in the middle of Poland.
- After a week-long journey by foot, Walter made it to Lviv, then the center of Soviet Ukraine.
- Walter received a letter that his father was in the Lublin ghetto and immediately decided to go find him. In January 1940, he and another Jew boarded a train for Lublin.
- Walter got a job in a leather factory; being a "desirable worker" made his circumstances relatively easier. When an open ghetto was established in Lublin, he chose to move into it to try to protect his friends.
- In the spring of 1942, 32,000 Jews from the Lublin ghetto were deported and gassed at Belzec. Walter was one of 5,000 who remained.
- A visiting Gestapo officer warned Walter about the "final solution" planned at the Wannsee Conference and urged him to go into hiding. Walter spoke with friends in the Underground and was given a cyanide capsule in case he was captured.
- Soon after, Walter and the others were sent to Majdanek, and Walter was selected for work.
- On March 19, 1943, a Jewish engineer at another factory called, informing Walter and his coworkers that the Gestapo were coming.
- Walter immediately left for a friend's house, where he remained for three days until his friend's brother, who worked for the railroad company, could get him a train ticket to Warsaw.
- Previously, Walter had become friends with a couple who had also escaped to Warsaw.
- Luckily for Walter, the couple took a liking to him and asked their connections to help save him as well. Upon his arrival in Warsaw, Walter called the wife's brother, who helped him go into hiding. He placed Walter with one of his girlfriends and her sister.
- Walter decided to leave, knowing the area wasn't safe, and asked the women to go with him. They refused and were ultimately killed by German planes.
- On the evening of February 12, 1945, Walter saw lights late in the evening, and felt the earth shake for hours. He realized that nearby Dresden was being bombed, first by the British and then by the Americans.
- After liberation, Walter went back to Lublin and found that the factories were still operating. A friend in charge of a factory convinced Walter to stay with him, which he did for a few weeks.
- He went back to his home town of Katowice and was able to get radio contact with someone in Israel. He then discovered that his sister in Gleiwitz had perished in Terezin, along with his parents and all other relatives in the area.
- Walter made his way to Stuttgart, where he recognized a woman, Rena Eibel, from his time in Majdanek. They reconnected and married a few months later.

- At the time, the government was looking for German Jews to work in factories, so Walter took a job in a chemical factory. He was happy to get a company car and be able to drive once again, but he quit after a few months to prepare for immigration to the United States.
- In January 1947, Walter and Rena immigrated to New York, where his wife had relatives. Ultimately, they ended up in Chicago, where Walter got a job with a distribution company traveling around the Midwest. They had three children and built a happy life for themselves in the United States.
- Walter passed away on November 15, 2004. He is survived by his three children and three grandchildren.
- In the 1960s and 1970s, Walter traveled to Germany several times to participate in trials of accused perpetrators. Not all of the defendants were convicted, but he was happy to have the opportunity and saw his role as forcing the German public to face the truth of their past.

Exhibition Objects

BECOMING AMERICANS

Naturalization Certificate

Suitcase

- Klaus was born the only child of Moritz and Erna Schaap on August 9, 1933, in Nordhorn, Germany. His father, Moritz, owned a butcher shop in Nordhorn. His mother stayed at home to watch him.
- When Klaus was only one year old, Nazi soldiers marched through his hometown and broke the windows of all the Jewish-owned stores, including his father's butcher shop.
- With the public's growing hostility towards Jews, Moritz decided Germany was no longer safe for him and his family and moved to Angerlo, Holland, where there was little antisemitism.
- In early May of 1940, German troops invaded Holland; the country surrendered six days later.
- Following Germany's invasion, school changed drastically for him and his classmates. Instead of learning in the classroom, the children spent most of their days hiding in bomb shelters.
- Shortly after Germany gained control of Holland, Klaus was kicked out of the school he had been attending because he was Jewish. Before he was forced to leave, his school's head hugged him, crying, and said, "When the war is over, you will come back to my school."
- Jews in Holland were forced to wear the Jewish star. Children who were once Klaus's friends mocked him and called him a dirty Jew. Signs declared "Juden verboten" ("Jews forbidden") in parks, stores, and certain areas of the city, and the Schaaps began fearing for their safety.
- In 1942 the Nazis ordered the Dutch police to round up every adult, Jewish male, and Klaus's father was deported to Mauthausen. It was the last time Klaus ever saw his father.
- After Klaus's father was deported, he and his mother left their home under the cover of darkness with nothing but the clothes on their backs. They biked 149 miles to Boekelo in the Netherlands, where they went into hiding with the Shukking family.
- Soon, Nazi soldiers began scouring towns for hidden Jews, and the Schukkings, concerned that Klaus and Erna would be discovered, told them that they needed to leave.
- Erna and Klaus went to the Schukkings' neighbors, the Burgmullers, for help. They agreed to hide them in their barn's hayloft, and once a day, the family brought Klaus and his mother their leftover potatoes and bread.
- Eventually, Klaus' uncle (Walter), his aunt (Gerda), his cousin (Inge), and his grandmother (Emma) found Klaus and his mother at the Burgmullers, and Mr. Burgmuller built an underground bunker for them to stay in.
- While in the bunker, the Schaaps used carbite as a cooking and lighting source, and they dug a well, which they had access to inside of the bunker. Mr. Burgmuller continued to bring them food daily, but only when it was safe.
- One night when Klaus and his cousin were out looking for food, they heard voices coming from an area near their bunker. When they went to inspect the noise, they discovered another family's bunker right next to their own.
- One morning, Klaus' family was woken up by Johann Schukker's yells. A hunter had betrayed them and given up their location, and the Schaaps had to flee the soldiers on their way to arrest them.
- When they fled the Burgmuller's farm, Klaus' family split up into different groups. Klaus went with his mother and grandmother, but he does not know where the others went.
- The three of them did their best to find shelter and hide in barns, but it was winter and very cold. They eventually revealed themselves to a family, who agreed to help the Schaaps get to Becken, where a family friend would be able to help them.
- The trip to Becken took several weeks, but Klaus, his mother, and his grandmother arrived safely and were taken in by the Hurker family, who hid them under a false step in the basement.

- Several weeks before liberation, Klaus' Uncle Walter and Aunt Gerda found Klaus, his mother, and grandmother at the Hurkers. The Hurkers kindly took the three of them in despite the increased threat.
- Klaus recalls that his liberation day came on Easter Sunday. American soldiers came to the house with chocolates and turned the oven on for heat, much to Klaus's joy.
- After the war, Klaus and his mom returned to Hanover to find their home completely empty. Klaus went to work in a bookstore and Erna remarried to a man who was a cattle dealer.
- In 1954, at the age of 21, Klaus moved to Freeport, Illinois with only $80 in his pocket. His uncle employed him at his cattle business, and while working there, he met a man from Dickson, IL who introduced Klaus to his niece, Evelyn. They married two years later.

Ava Kadishson Schieber

***Survivor*, Yugoslavia**

- Ava Kadishson Schieber was born in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia on April 12, 1926. She lived in an apartment complex with her older sister, her parents, and her grandparents.
- Ava and her family lived a traditional Jewish life by attending synagogue, celebrating the Jewish holidays, and actively participating in their town's small Jewish community.
- Ava's father, Leo, fought for the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I. Her mother, an Austrian who had been born into a Viennese Christian family, had converted to Judaism before marrying Leo.
- Ava had a close relationship with her sister, who was five years older than she; for Ava, she was a role model and a friend. Before the war, she married a Serbian man.
- Ava's childhood was happy and fun-filled. She cannot recall any anti-Semitic experiences in school before the Nazis invaded Yugoslavia, and her parents were well informed about what was going on in Germany as well as Europe.
- In 1939, Ava's family moved to Belgrade because her father decided it would be a safer place for them. Ava remained in Novi Sad with her grandmother to finish the school year before joining her family.
- When the bombing of Belgrade began on April 6th, 1941, the war came "like a black cloud," and Ava decided to join a youth anti-war organization.
- On April 12, 1941, the Nazis entered Belgrade. A few days later, all Jews were required to report themselves to the Germans, but Ava's father decided they would not do so.
- As soon as the Nazis entered Belgrade in 1941, the round-up of Belgrade's Jews began, and Ava's family had to devise a plan for survival. Her father fled to Hungary, where he had connections. Her mother still had a Christian birth certificate from which she could obtain an Aryan passport. Because she was married to a Serbian, Ava's sister could also pass as Aryan.
- Ava alone could not obtain falsified documents, so she went into hiding.
- The farm on which Ava would stay the next four years was a three-hour walk away from the city. Because life was reduced to a bare-bones routine of food and work, "time stopped being meaningful" while she lived on the farm.
- Although grateful to the family who took her in, Ava felt homeless; it was as if she had no place, no name, and no existence.
- After some time, Lepa, the young woman in the family with whom Ava stayed, obtained a license to sell tobacco on her farm. Ava's job was to smuggle cigarettes out of the shop so they could sell them on the black market. She remembers that a German soldier was in the shop, and Ava had nightmares after every day she had to steal the cigarettes.
- Ava recalls that she was not growing during the time she spent in hiding and could wear the same clothes the entire time. Her hair started to fall out, and she had boils as well as swellings; ultimately, she stopped looking in the mirror.
- Occasionally, Ava managed to see her mother and sister during her time in hiding. Once, she was going to get some food for her mother when a German soldier hit Ava with the rifle in the face, breaking all of her front teeth.
- Ava's sister found out that her husband was gambling away all their money, and she fell out of love, beginning an affair with a courier. They joined the partisans together and later were killed.
- After three years in hiding, Ava was invited to a party thrown by friends of the family who had given her shelter. At first, she had time to talk to a girl named Verica about her life in hiding, but at the party she became invisible to everyone.

- During her time on the farm and with nearly no one to talk to, books and education helped Ava persevere through her isolation.
- With the Russian army advancing on Belgrade, Ava decided to leave the farm after four years in hiding. Her mother was living with a neighbor. Her sister had been arrested.
- Ava traveled to Novi Sad with a Russian convey of the Red Cross to find out about her father and grandmother. Her old neighbor told her that her father and grandmother had been taken to Auschwitz, and she gave Ava some old family pictures and clothes she had saved.
- From 1945 to 1949, Ava attended the Art Academy in Belgrade, found a job, and took care of her mother. In 1949, she and her mother left Yugoslavia for Israel, where she married the manager of a comedy theater. After her first husband died, Ava married a man who had been collecting her art and moved to Chicago.

Exhibition Objects

NAZI IDEOLOGY SPREADS WEST

Drawings

Fred Sinay

***Survivor*, Austria**

- Born Fritz Sinai on November 16, 1921 in Vienna, Austria.
- Although Fred grew up in a religious household, the family lived in a friendly, non-Jewish neighborhood and had strong connections with that community.
- Fred's father, Berthold, was a successful businessman. He owned a clothing manufacturing company, which employed many people, including Fred's mother, Else.
- In 1938 when the *Anschluss* took place, Berthold was in London on business. Wanting to keep the entire family together, he returned home rather than stay in England alone where it was safer.
- The day after *Kristallnacht*, the SS arrested Berthold at his office. They sent him to Dachau concentration camp, where he was interred until May 1940.
- The SS also bought his Nazi-seized company for pennies on the dollar, which they continued to operate with the non-Jewish workers until the end of the war.
- Fred returned to school after his father was taken away, but his mother remained in constant fear for her son's life. She purchased a ticket for him on the *Kindertransport*. Fred departed for England on December 10, 1939 as one of the oldest children, leaving his mother alone in Vienna.
- In England, Fred lived with his parents' friends for 6 months, after which they fled to the US while he was away at summer camp. After a year living with a family he had met while waiting for government assistance, Fred contacted his cousin in Chicago requesting an affidavit to come to the US.
- Fred's cousin sent affidavits for the whole family, but they had to wait for their quota number to be called before they reached safety. In January, 1941, Berthold reached the US through Florida and then traveled to Chicago, where he and Fred were reunited in mid-1941.
- To avoid deportation to Poland, Else worked as a nurse in a Jewish hospital while she remained in Vienna. In June, 1941, she departed for Shanghai, China where she stayed with an aunt and cousin for 6 months until she set sail for the US in December of that year.
- The family lived together in a one-room apartment in Chicago until Fred was drafted into the US Army a few years later.
- In 1944 Fred was shipped to England for the upcoming invasion of France, where eventually his unit was assigned to General Patton's 3rd Army. It was during this time that he learned about the true fate of Europe's Jews, including the murder of his father's entire family as well as most of his mother's relatives.
- In December, 1945, Fred returned to the United States, where he met and married his wife. They had 3 children and 6 grandchildren.
- In 2008, Fred died at the age of 87.

Exhibition Objects

Jewish Life Before WWII	Jewish Community Responds to Nazism
Card Scissors	Photograph

- Adam Starkopf, originally named Abraham, was born on April 1, 1914 in Warsaw, Poland.
- Pela Starkopf was born November 18, 1914 in Warsaw, Poland.
- Adam and Pela both grew up in close-knit, well-to-do families. Both families celebrated Jewish holidays, but neither came from very observant homes. Each family was Zionist in their attitudes and beliefs.
- Adam and Pela, childhood sweethearts, were married in 1936 by the first Reform rabbi in Poland.
- Both experienced antisemitism at university, but neither was ever physically harmed.
- When the war broke out in September 1939, Adam was drafted into the Polish Army and sent to the Eastern front. En route, shrapnel injured him and he had to have a toe amputated.
- Following Adam's return from the front, the Warsaw ghetto was established. Adam and Pela's apartment was located within the boundaries of the ghetto.
- In January 1941, Adam and Pela's daughter, Janka (Johanna), was born in the Warsaw ghetto under difficult circumstances. Pela's father had his gold teeth removed to trade them for milk for Johanna.
- Blonde and blue-eyed, Adam was able to sneak in and out of the ghetto, passing as Polish. But in February 1942, he was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned for 2 days.
- Rearrested in May, 1942, Adam was again imprisoned. Upon his escape before being put on a transport, he vowed to do everything in his power to keep his family alive. Adam and Pela began to plan their escape from the ghetto.
- On July 31, 1942, Adam and Pela drugged Johanna to sleep and placed her in a coffin. When a German officer wanted to check the coffin, Pela told him she had died of typhus, causing him to retract his hand. Pela carried the coffin containing Johanna to the Jewish cemetery, and Adam smuggled himself out of the ghetto and crossed the wall to the adjacent cemetery, where the caretaker placed a ladder for Pela and the baby to cross over.
- Friends on the outside forged fake documents for the Starkopfs, who then traveled under aliases to a town near Treblinka where Adam found employment in a lumberyard. An SS officer ran the lumberyard and all of the other workers believed Adam was Polish working for the underground resistance.
- In August 1944, the Starkopfs were liberated by the Russians after hiding in a potato cellar for five days to avoid the fighting that had broken out around them.
- After traveling to Lublin, Adam got a job in the Polish government.
- When Johanna was 4-years-old, she was told she was Jewish. Having grown up believing she was Catholic and susceptible to the rampant antisemitism around her, Johanna was bitterly disappointed to learn of her true identity. Eventually, she came to learn about and accept her religion.
- In May, 1945, the Starkopfs immigrated to Chicago, where they lived with Adam's uncle for a short time while Adam looked for work. Eventually, Adam secured a bank loan to start a business manufacturing footballs with a fellow survivor.
- Adam, Pela, and Johanna have all played active roles in the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center. Johanna continues to speak to student groups to keep her family history alive and to educate young people about the evils of genocide.

Exhibition Objects

Jewish Life Before WWII	The Ghettos	Rebuilding Family and Community	Becoming Americans
2 Photographs	Wallet	2 Photographs	Photograph

Hilda Stern

***Survivor*, Germany**

- Born Hilde Pander March 25, 1923 in Bochum, Germany to Max and Berta Pander. Grew up in a privileged home, attended private school with children from different religious backgrounds. Max was respected as a watchmaker and jeweler and thought of himself as a German first.
- After Hitler came to power, Hilda and other Jewish children were separated from other students in the classroom and then expelled in 1938. Max's jewelry store was vandalized and Nazi police stood outside to prevent customers from entering. Max believed the Nazi movement would soon pass.
- November 9, 1938, *Kristallnacht*, Max's store was destroyed. The next morning while cleaning up his store, he was arrested and taken to Sachsenhausen concentration camp.
- January 4, 1939, a few days after Max returned home, Hilda was sent on a *kindertransport* to the Netherlands. Instead of going to a farming village, Hilda blended in with a group going to Amsterdam where she thought she'd be able to reach her family more easily.
- Max used connections to return Hilda to Germany. The Panders boarded the St. Louis on May 13, 1939.
- Max's American brother-in-law paid for Cuban land permits, and Max purchased tickets for the ship. Captain Schroeder ordered the crew to treat the Jewish refugees respectfully and the voyage was very comfortable.
- On May 27, 1939, the St. Louis arrived in Havana Harbor, but the Cuban government refused to allow the refugees to disembark. On June 6, 1939 the St. Louis sailed back to Europe.
- On February 27, 1940 all St. Louis refugees were moved to a new Dutch-controlled camp, Westerbork. Summer of 1940 Germany invaded the Netherlands, and in 1941 Nazis took control of Westerbork turning it into a transit camp to deport Jews to killing centers in Poland and to concentration camps.
- In Westerbork, Hilda met Adolf Wolff, fell in love and got engaged.
- January 18, 1944 the Panders and Wolffs were sent to Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia. They were forced into hard labor and in constant fear of the frequent transports.
- On June 25, 1944 Hilda and Adolf were married. Adolf's 12-year-old brother had traded his bread rations for weeks to give them a paper bag full of sugar as a gift. It was the most valuable gift Hilda ever received.
- Three months later, Adolf, his 4 brothers, and Max were transported east.
- Hilda's job splitting mica was considered important and kept her off deportation lists. She courageously approached a Nazi officer to have her mother transferred to her work group, increasing her chance of survival
- On May 5, 1945 Russian troops liberated Theresienstadt. After 4 days in a rail car, Hilda, and her mother arrived in Amsterdam on July 11, 1945. On August 27, 1947, after living in Amsterdam for 2 years, registering with the US Consulate, and contacting relatives in New York, Hilda boarded the US freighter the Notre Dame for New Jersey.
- Hilde adopted the American name Hilda and established herself in Brooklyn working as a manicurist. Four months later, her mother joined her. December 25, 1948 Hilda was introduced to her land lady's cousin from Chicago, Harry Stern. They were engaged by December 30, married 2 months later, and moved to Chicago with Berta.
- Hilda and Harry ran a successful medical supply business and had 2 children and 5 grandchildren.

Exhibition Objects

Jewish Community Responds to Nazism	World Response	Deception
2 Documents	2 Photographs Identifications Card	Identification Card 2 Documents

- Paul Stiefel was born on February 9, 1923, in Furth, Germany. A busy town of about 50,000-75,000, it boasted a strong religious community with about 2,000 Jewish residents. He lived with his parents and older sister.
- His mother, Matilda, was a very kind and gentle woman whose children could do no wrong in her eyes. She did not work and was extremely social. His father, Arthur, was a disciplinarian who was stern, though fair. He fought for Germany during WWI.
- The Stiefels were upper-middle class and employed a maid as well as a governess. Arthur owned a successful chemical factory with his father.
- The Stiefels were conservative Jews, and their synagogue was conservative leaning towards Orthodox. Though they did not keep kosher, the holidays and traditions were important to them.
- Paul's sister joined a Zionist organization, but Paul was more sports-minded, participating actively in a Jewish sports organization. He had non-Jewish friends at school, but outside of school he interacted mainly with other Jews. He recalled encountering little anti-Semitism prior to 1933.
- Many of Paul's memories of being discriminated against as a Jew took place at school. One gym teacher would single out his Jewish students, forcing them to stand in front of the class while he pointed out their "Jewish" noses and mouths.
- Paul wondered why he was treated differently, but he felt so ashamed he never mentioned the incidents of frequent bullying to his parents.
- In 1936, all Jewish children were forced to go to separate Jewish schools. Luckily, Furth had a pre-existing Jewish school for Paul and his sister to attend. Many Jews began to avoid going out in public.
- The Stiefels listened to Hitler's broadcasts on the radio, but Arthur, a World War I veteran, believed that there were enough Germans against Hitler to overpower him. Matilda, however, wanted to leave the country as early as 1936.
- The Saturday morning after Kristallnacht, Arthur received a frantic phone call from his sister. She was surprised that he answered, telling him that their father along with almost all other Jewish men had been taken away.
- Shortly after Kristallnacht, Paul's father had to see his business and give the profits to the German government; the same happened to the family's house, but all the Stiefels cared about was leaving Germany as quickly as they could.
- Paul departed from Germany with his parents and sister as soon as they got their papers, leaving all their possessions behind. He snuck only a few pages from his beloved stamp collection with him, keeping it hidden on his body.
- The Stiefels arrived in New York on November 23, 1938, and they moved to Green Bay, Wisconsin two days later to stay with their uncle.
- Paul's family arrived in Green Bay on a Monday; he and his sister started high school on Tuesday. Paul considered himself very lucky: his teacher took special care to teach him and his sister English, which they learned quickly thanks to his uncle, who forced them to speak only English with him.
- Though Paul enjoyed living in Green Bay, his family, hoping to find better jobs, relocated to Chicago after he graduated high school in 1941.
- Not wanting to go to college, Paul did a variety of odd jobs in Chicago. Shortly after the U.S. declared war on Germany and Japan, he was drafted and sent to basic training in Wyoming.

- From there, he went to Oregon with the 96th Division. His division was deployed to the Philippines in October of 1944, where he participated in Operation Leyte. They were then sent to Japan, where they took part in the Invasion of Okinawa.
- After the war, Paul returned to Chicago. Having served as a radio operator during the war, he decided to go to the Illinois Institute of Technology to become an electrical engineer.
- Paul met his wife, Senta, another Holocaust survivor, while living in Hyde Park. He took her to the opera on their first date, and they were married on July 11, 1948.
- Paul and Senta had three children together. Proud of their Jewish heritage, the family honored their religious traditions; however, the couple never told their children about their wartime experiences.
- When asked to reflect on his experiences in the Holocaust and his perspective on it today, Paul said that he believed in forgiveness, but he would never forget.

Exhibition Objects

JEWISH COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO NAZISM	BECOMING AMERICANS
Identification Cards	2 Naturalization Certificates

- Aline Eva Wintergreen was born Aline Haspel in Tarnow, Poland on June 20, 1922.
- Her father was not around much as he had a wholesale building and supply business.
- Shortly after she was born, the family moved to the town of Przemysl, an old city surrounded by walls and fortress in the Carpathian Mountains.
- Aline was raised and educated in the town of Przemysl where Jews represented ten percent of the population.
- She attended a public elementary school where both Catholics and Jews were present. She completed the last two years of high school attending the new Jewish Community High School her father had been instrumental in building.
- Aline commented that her Jewish friends were not religious. Her family did not keep kosher or fast, and she recalls that they attended only the High Holiday services.
- When Aline was six, her sister was born. The family hired a German nurse, and Aline began learning to speak German as well as German traditions.
- In 1939, the Nazis attacked Poland and demanded Gdansk's surrender. One week later, Aline's family packed their things and moved south to the Romanian border.
- When the Russians invaded, soldiers moved into the Haspels' apartment. Eventually, the family was kicked out.
- Most of the family's fortune was in U.S. gold that had been sewn into a fabric belt. The rest was put into a tea can, buried in the snow, and forgotten.
- Aline attended a Russian business college, learned Russian language and geography and made new friends. Her father, a capitalist, went into hiding, but people came to the house to visit, and they continued living as Jews.
- At one point, Aline was arrested for not wearing the armband required of all Jews. Her father paid off a Ukrainian soldier, and within three weeks, she was home again.
- On August 14, 1942, Aline's mother was deported. She never saw her again, nor did she learn what happened to her.
- Her family decided to join their father in hiding and bought forged documents to change their identities.
- With life in Poland becoming more dangerous, Aline boarded a train for Vienna, but she was arrested when it stopped in Czestochowa.
- Eventually, Aline was able to befriend a German guard and told him he would be well paid if he could help her escape to Warsaw. She was escorted out of the camp by a member of the Wehrmacht, who sexually abused her while she stayed with him.
- Once in Warsaw, Aline reunited with her father. He was working in a German facility as a bookkeeper and lived in a modern apartment with a beautiful prostitute and another couple.
- Aline bleached her hair, and with the help of their Polish friends' connections, she and her father moved to another apartment, where they lived with the wife of a Polish officer who had been killed.
- Her family stayed until the Warsaw uprising in 1944 when tanks came and destroyed their building. They were arrested after living in their cellar for a month. When the Germans captured Aline, "The young and the old were separated and we were placed on a cattle train. No one knew we were Jews."
- The Poles were separated from the others; their papers and pictures were examined, and they had to take a medical exam.

- Aline and her sister volunteered for a new camp, Wobbelin. Although they were paid, they could not use the money. They sent the currency to their father and Maria in Krakow, who sent them care packages in return.
- When the Allies liberated Wobbelin, a small group of American officers asked for Aline's papers, looked them over, took all the money Aline had, and drove away.
- After the war, the girls ended up in the English sector, and Aline commented that very kind people gave them a bed and food. They joined the first convey and went to Brussels, where they were placed in an organized DP camp.
- Soon, Aline's father got in touch with some cousins from Chicago, who began helping the family so they could immigrate to the U.S. After a flight to New York, they traveled to Chicago. Aline's sister moved to Toronto shortly thereafter. Aline got married in 1967. She had two kids.

Exhibition Objects

THE GHETTOS

Necklace

- On October 11, 1923, Lucille Wolf was born to Walter and Lili Wollmann in Breslau, Germany. Her given name was Liselotte Wollmann.
- Her father, Walter, was a WWI veteran and owned a successful business that sold office supplies.
- Lucille remembers a very happy life with her parents and two sisters, Ilsa and Susan. The girls frequently played games, read books, and played instruments together.
- Slowly, change came to Lucille's world. At school, her grades steadily declined as teachers began ignoring Jewish students and refused to give them any grade higher than a "C." The situation worsened and the principal finally suggested to Walter that he withdraw his daughter.
- In 1933, Lucille's uncle fled Germany. Several years later, her sister Ilsa followed suit, immigrating to Rochester, New York shortly before the November pogroms.
- On the night of November 9, 1938, the rabbi's wife called to tell Lili the synagogue was on fire and Jewish men were being arrested.
- At the time, Lucille was baby-sitting for another Jewish family, the Sterns. When she arrived the morning after Kristallnacht, the couple told Lucille they were going to spend the day driving around, hoping to avoid Mr. Stern's arrest. The Gestapo interrogated her about their whereabouts, but she told them nothing.
- Lucille's uncles also chose to spend the day driving. When a German policeman came to arrest them at the home of Lucille's grandmother, she told them they were not home. Her uncles were never arrested, but her father was.
- When Walter was arrested and lined up at the train station, a police officer recognized him and pulled him out of line. He made a deal with Walter: report to the police station every day to show he was taking steps towards immigration, and he would not be deported.
- Shortly thereafter, Walter contacted a distant American relative requesting an affidavit. It would take almost a year for it to arrive.
- When word of the Kindertransport came to Breslau, Lucille's mother and father became embroiled in a great disagreement over whether to send their daughter. Eventually, Lucille chose to go.
- On December 2, 1938, the Kindertransport arrived in England and the children were taken to Dover Court, a summer camp of sorts where Lucille stayed before being moved to an orphanage in Yorkshire.
- Lucille enjoyed her time at the orphanage, and she made many friends with other girls there. She also began improving her English-speaking skills and attending school there.
- A few months after being in the orphanage, an English woman came to find a nanny for her children. She chose Lucille. After getting permission from Lucille's parents, or perhaps her grandparents, the woman brought Lucille home with her to York.
- Lucille worked almost constantly, sharing a room with the children whilst only receiving about ten shillings a month. She remembers the huge house the family lived in, the disapproving older nanny, and the couple's heavy drinking.
- Most of Lucille's small wages, she remembers, went to postage for letters to her sister in America and her family, who had found sanctuary in South America.
- When war broke out in 1939, Lucille remained in England. However, early in 1940, her American affidavit came up. Lucille booked passage on a Dutch-American ship that was to leave England in May.
- Upon arriving in the United States, Lucille visited her sister, Ilsa, in Rochester, New York before continuing on to Chicago, where she became a nanny for the children of an uncle's friend, Dr. Norman Levy.

- During the day, Lucille attended high school, and at night she cared for the children. Lucille remembers feeling as though she were a member of the Levy family.
- When the United States entered the war, Dr. Levy joined the army, and Lucille moved back in with her family, who had recently arrived in America.
- Lucille's family first immigrated to New York, searching for jobs near their eldest daughter in Rochester. When none were to be found, they moved to Chicago, where a family friend found positions for both Walter and Lili in his hotels.
- Lucille went on to marry her rabbi's son Henry and complete nurse's training in 1946. She began working at Levy's old hospital and had two children.

Exhibition Objects

JEWISH LIFE BEFORE WWII	JEWISH COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO NAZISM
Photograph	Kindertransport Pass