



JEWISH LIFE IN PRE-WAR GERMANY

# READINGS FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF KRISTALLNACHT, NOVEMBER 9-10, 1938



Excerpts from the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive

Compiled and Edited By Violet Zeitlin

Dedicated to the Memory of Gloria M. Schwartz, ז"ל

**Gratz**  
COLLEGE



## THE GRATZ COLLEGE HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

The Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College is a special collection of the Tuttleman Library and a contributing organization to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Research Institute. It comprises over 800 audio-taped testimonies, most of them transcribed, of Holocaust survivors, rescuers, liberators and other eyewitnesses. The Archive is also committed to documenting Jewish cultural life in pre-Hitler Europe. Included in the collection are unpublished memoirs, letters, diaries, photographs, memorial books and survivor registers.

Established in 1979 by the late Professor Nora Levin, the Archive was one of the earliest collections of Holocaust testimony in the U.S. Since 1989, Josey G. Fisher has directed the Archive staff of 25 volunteers, over half of whom were born in Europe before WWII and represent a wide range of Nazi era experience. Many of the staff actively promote Holocaust education and memorialization.

The Archive is open by appointment to scholars, educators, and researchers seeking first-person accounts of Holocaust experience.

### IN MEMORIAM: GLORIA M. SCHWARTZ, ז"ל

Assistant Director of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive, Gloria M. Schwartz died of metastatic breast cancer on June 19, 2008.

After receiving a double masters degree in Jewish Studies and Jewish Education from Gratz College in 1990, Gloria immersed herself in Holocaust education, teaching in Tiferet Bet Israel's Hebrew High School in Blue Bell, PA and preparing high school students for the International March of the Living, a two-week educational trip to Poland and Israel. In line with her dedication to preserving oral testimony, Gloria focused her lesson plans on survivor testimony, bringing her students into the life experience of those impacted by the Nazi era.

Gloria lived what she taught. In addition to her dedication to peace organizations, she was project director of "Unity in Diversity: Anne Frank's Story Exhibit" at Tiferet Bet Israel in 1999, bringing community-wide school and adult groups for docent-led tours and meetings with survivors.

Her focus on humanizing the history of the Holocaust and using developmentally appropriate resources for teaching its lessons resulted in guidelines and lessons plans created for numerous teacher workshops.

Gloria served as secretary of the Pennsylvania Holocaust Education Council (formerly Holocaust Education Task Force) and was an active member of the PHEC Education Committee.

Gloria was the loving mother of Michael (Angie), Jeffrey and Dori (Josh), and grandmother of Heather Rose Herman (born May 2008). She is also survived by her sister Susan and brother Steven Miller. Her beloved husband Joe died in 2006.

Gloria's first book, *Secrets of a Man's Garden*, written during her husband's battle with Leiomyosarcoma, was published by Xlibris in August 2008.



**FRED BACHNER** [BORN IN BERLIN, GERMANY 1925; DEPORTED TO POLAND;  
SURVIVED SEVERAL CONCENTRATION CAMPS INCLUDING AUSCHWITZ; LIBERATED 1945.]

...as a Jew you were not allowed to go to the movies, you were not allowed to sit on the benches. They were marked "For Aryans Only." ...I guess my father thought that this is just a restriction, that it's not going to get worse than that and we took it in stride, so to speak, you know, that this is what it is—that's what you have to live with if you want to remain in Germany. ...I was playing on the street with kids of my age and they started to call me, "You, Jew, go away, we can't play with you." ...You feel rejected not just as a human being [but] you are a Jew that nobody wants to be with.

**HARDY KUPFERBERG** [BORN IN BERLIN, GERMANY 1922; HIDDEN SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE SHE WAS SENT TO RAVENSBRUCK CONCENTRATION CAMP; LIBERATED 1945;  
EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1947.]

[At the time of the Nuremberg Laws] we had a boat, a motor boat, beautiful motor boat. It was taken away before the cars were taken away. The most awful thing, the absolutely most awful thing, was the law to give up our pets. We always had dogs, always. I was raised with a dog, it was a Great Dane. My father was a great animal lover. My mother had a bird. And after 1935, after the Nuremberg Laws, every few months came out a different law. ...The pets was absolutely a terrible thing. ...As we had to give up our pets, the person who brought the pet had to see how it was clubbed to death. ...My father had to take the dog and the bird...he was requested to see how it was clubbed to death. ...And this was absolutely horrible.

**STEFFI BIRNBAUM SCHWARTZ** [BORN IN BERLIN, GERMANY 1928; SENT TO ENGLAND WITH KINDERTRANSPORT 1939; EMIGRATED TO ISRAEL.]

...I recall the *Stürmer* caricatures...caricatures of Jews. ...In the latter period I remember that we couldn't go to the cinema or couldn't go to the theater and couldn't sit on park benches. But I think most of all I remember my parents in the early years telling us, *Du musst vorsichtig sein, was Du auf der strasse sagst!*" [You have to be careful what you say in the streets.]

**LISA TYRE** [BORN IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA 1929; WENT TO NEW ZEALAND 1938;  
EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1946.]

...the one incident...that I think really got to my father took place the day after the *Anschluss*. Viennese always go to coffee houses and they have their own coffee house and they have a table and they have a waiter, and my father also had this coffee house that he had been going to for 20-30 years, and he had been sitting at this one table and he had been waited on by this one waiter, and the day after the *Anschluss* when my father went to his coffee house, as usual, the waiter looked at him and pretended not to know him. My father said, "Hello, Franz," ...and the waiter just looked at him...looked at him up and down, turned over the lapel of his coat and showed a long-time Nazi membership button and said, "I don't wait on dirty Jews."



FRED STAMM [BORN IN A VILLAGE NEAR WARBURG, GERMANY 1919;  
EMIGRATED TO PHILADELPHIA, WHERE HIS BROTHER RESIDED, 1939.]

I would say that within three months [after Hitler came to power] that there was absolutely no intercourse between German youth and Jewish youth whatever. It had completely ceased. I believe this was really spontaneity by the youth—young people themselves who felt that they had been associated with an inferior race and the time had come to separate themselves.

[Later, after Kristallnacht], ...I found our home, the doors were destroyed. Some of the windows were destroyed. ...I found a mood of desperation among the members of my family because we had a large house and people from the villages who had suffered even more than we had, they had come to us and my parents took them in.

HERBERT LINDEMAYER [BORN IN MINDEN, GERMANY 1922; WENT TO ENGLAND 1939; INTERNED ON ISLE OF MAN; JOINED U.S. ARMY 1945; EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1948.]

[When Hitler first came to power] my father...said, "There is still time, after all, this is the country of the old familiar things, Goethe and Schiller and Beethoven, and they wouldn't do anything to us. All right, it is tough right now, but how long can it last?" ...He had to give up his pharmacy. They didn't take it away immediately. He had to employ somebody who would run the pharmacy and he was only allowed to help out occasionally. ...The reason they said was he could poison the German people by selling them poison instead of drugs and medicines. ...[In 1938] he was forced to sell the pharmacy.

[At the time of Kristallnacht] I wasn't home. ...I was in a different town. ...My father was arrested. ...My mother asked me to come home immediately and I did. ...My father was in Buchenwald until December -- about four or five weeks...then he was released because he was a war veteran...he had the Iron Cross. He was in sad shape when he came home. ...I am sure he was beaten. ...It took him quite a while to recover after he came home. It was winter time. ...I remember his feet were frostbitten. ...Then he was more or less convinced there was no future and he took steps to emigrate. But by that time it was too late. I know to get an American visa or American papers in January, there was a waiting list. ...I still remember our number: it was 44,444, so I can never forget that number.



INGE KARO [BORN IN ESSEN, GERMANY 1926; EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1939.]

[Under the Nuremberg Laws] no Jewish people could have a live-in gentile maid because they were afraid the Jewish men would sleep with them and pollute the Aryan race, so we lost the maid. All Jews...had to all turn in our radios because we were not allowed to have radios. We had to turn in all our silverware and sterling things and jewelry and watches. We were not allowed to go to the movies or to the theater and of course you were not allowed to travel. ...One thing I particularly remember because I used to read a lot and I was forever going to the library...they passed a law that Jews were not allowed to have library cards. I had to go to the library and turn my library card in, and the librarian gave me an argument because she knew me and she knew I read, and it was very painful for me. I had to tell her I had to turn in my library card because I am Jewish and I am not allowed to have a library card anymore.

...As you may know from newsreels...they had this terrific propaganda. ...They had a lot of pageantry and flags and banners and the youth organizations had nice uniforms. ...On the one hand I knew that they were persecuting the Jews; on the other hand it was all so appealing that I was really very sad that I could not belong to the Nazi youth organization, and that I couldn't take part in the parades and in the pageantry and the ceremonies. ...The propaganda was so great and so glamorous and so attractive and there was so much propaganda, like all the children's stories being published...about the wonderful things they did at these youth camps, so that if you were so indoctrinated by this even as a Jewish child, that I think if I hadn't been Jewish I am sure that I would have joined.

...[on] Crystal Night...they burned this magnificent beautiful synagogue down and destroyed my father's store. ...One day the Nazis came and said, "You have a choice, you either sell us this house for five *marks*...or we are going to burn it down." So, of course, they signed the bill of sale and sold the house. And when they were threatening to burn our house down, across the street from us was the family of a Dutch diplomat. ...They invited us over and said we could stay in their house because we would be safe there...they wouldn't burn a Dutch house. ...Unfortunately once Holland got invaded that whole family got killed, too.



**KURT KUPFERBERG** [BORN IN BERLIN, GERMANY 1907; SURVIVED SACHSENHAUSEN, DACHAU, AND BUCHENWALD CONCENTRATION CAMPS; LIBERATED 1945; EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1947.]

Yes, we were frightened...then they were marching on the streets—the S.A.—and sing [ing] songs about the Jewish blood has to *spritz* from the knives. But the really frightening moment came when Hitler came to power. ...But still the Jews said, “He won’t long exist. Give him three months. ...Nothing can happen to us.”

[As to leaving Germany because of this], I never felt that I go take my skin and save myself. My parents were old people, my father was in his 70’s and both of them were very sick people. ...I always felt obligated to watch them, to be there, to always be there...very often [I] was thinking, “You can’t go away and save your skin...” I felt this, you know? An inside voice said to me, “You have to be with your parents. You can’t run away.”

[On Kristallnacht, they] burned all the synagogues, *plundert* [pillaged] Jewish homes, tear everything apart. The S.A. went into the houses, in the apartments, slit with knives, everything, sofas, pictures and everything, tore everything down. ...Then the real *tsorris* [trouble] happened.

**IDA RUDLEY** [BORN IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA 1922; SMUGGLED TO YUGOSLAVIA 1941; DEPORTED TO FERRAMONTI CONCENTRATION CAMP IN ITALY; LIBERATED BY JEWISH BRIGADE 1943; EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1947.]

In Europe religion is taught during school hours and when the Father [priest] or preacher came, I left the room two hours in the week. ...When I returned they were all really completely hostile because of the teaching of their religion that I’m a Christ-killer and things like that. But the one experience which sticks out still in my memory...my girlfriend was sitting behind me and she made some kind of noise. I wasn’t able to listen exactly to what the teacher was talking, so I turned around and said, “Shh, be quiet.” So she, in turn, my friend, said, “From you, a dirty Jew, I don’t have to take any orders.” So I turned around and slapped her in the face and naturally she started to cry and the teacher asked what happened. She told and I told my side of the story and we had to both go to the principal. ...While we were waiting for him, my teacher took her aside and I heard when she said, “It wasn’t right what you did, but in a way I can understand. We cannot let the Jews go over our heads.”

[On Kristallnacht] they burnt the synagogue, of course, and later we found out that they went to our apartment...the neighbors told us...and since we weren’t there, they left. But [they] were completely like a bird, free to do anything [they] wanted to do with [us]. You could hear in the night people yelling for help and nobody helped, no police or anybody.



**HANNA MARX** [BORN IN HAMM, GERMANY 1928; FAMILY DEPORTED TO RIGA GHETTO AND THEN TO STUTTHOF CONCENTRATION CAMP; LIBERATED 1945; EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1947.]

...then we heard already that...the synagogues were burning. ...We had one little *shul* and one nice synagogue, which, they were both downtown,. One was on the east side, and one was in the middle of town. And they destroyed both the synagogues. And all the stores in downtown and in all the areas, they were all broken into and the glasses were broken and merchandise was taken out.

**WILLIE NOWAK** [BORN IN BERLIN, GERMANY 1908; WENT TO SHANGHAI 1939; EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1948.]

...when Crystal Night came...from that moment on it was impossible to work, as a Jew. ...I was called in the morning by a German Christian friend who told me that I shouldn't go out on the street. ...I told him that I will because I want to see what's going on. So he went with me and we were standing right on the other side of the street, looking at the burning synagogue, at the prayer books laying on the street, the Torah scrolls laying on the street burning. ...On both ends of the synagogue on the street were policemen standing and firemen. Nobody did anything to kill the fire. They just let it burn. ...

They didn't do anything to save the synagogue or anything else. I listened to the comments, the laughter of the people among whom I was standing. I was very upset. My friend had to hold me back because I wanted to jump in and save at least the Torahs, or a prayer book, anything. But he held me on both arms...trying to calm me down, not to start anything.

**SUSAN NEULANDER FAULKNER** [BORN IN BERLIN, GERMANY 1921; WENT TO GUATEMALA 1938; EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1940.]

It was a dark, sort of a greyish day, hazy and slightly warm for November and somehow there was some kind of electricity in the air that we sort of had a feeling to stay at home, be cautious. ...Then after dark, my aunt with her husband came and they told us that there was already destruction going on outside. ...And then my mother... sent me out into the streets of Berlin on the night of Crystal Night, the pogrom ongoing then, to buy, believe it or not, pork chops, because after all, the guests could not go without a proper dinner. I had to go to the northern part of Berlin to find a butcher shop that was still open [where they would not know me]. ...I was walking over the sidewalks with glass crunching under my feet, and on the next street – *Fasanenstrasse*...the oldest synagogue in Berlin...was in flames. The firetrucks were there training their hoses on the neighboring houses, but letting the synagogue burn. ...And the entire sidewalk across from the synagogue was filled with hundreds of people...as if it was like a carnival to them...applauding and laughing...flames lighting up in the sky...and the people standing in the reflected light, in the glow of the flames...laughing. ...I tried to walk past them in such a way that they wouldn't see that I was crying. ...Then... there were some brown shirts and they were beating up an old Jewish man with a long beard...and there were people standing around laughing and applauding...like a Roman circus. ...I came home and I was promptly sick all over the kitchen floor.



INA ROTHSCHILD [BORN IN DARMSTADT, GERMANY 1903; DEPORTED TO THERESIENSTADT ; LIBERATED 1945; EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1946. SHE AND HER HUSBAND RAN A JEWISH ORPHANAGE IN ESSLINGEN AM NECKAR, NEAR STUTTGART, FROM 1933 TO 1942 WHEN THEY WERE SENT TO THERESIENSTADT.]

...suddenly we saw that they threw out of the office and out of our apartment and out of the synagogue everything—*Sefer Torahs*, books, the silver candelabras and everything—and let it go up in flames. And here we were standing with the children in that rain. And the children cried in fear. And one of those monsters came over and said, “If you are not quiet we throw you in the flames, too.” And here we were standing until it was almost dark. Then they suddenly came and said, “You can go into the house, what’s left of it.” The children were wet from up and from down. Nobody could go to a bathroom. And when we came in there was no gas, no electricity, no water, everything was turned off and everything full of glass. The windows, the little synagogue, completely destroyed. ...We found there Samuel [one of the teachers] unconscious, beaten to a pulp.

ALINE TISCHLER [BORN IN SCHLESSEN, GERMANY 1912; WENT WITH FAMILY TO SHANGHAI 1939; EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1947.]

...the door bell rings. ...I went and opened it up and there were two Gestapo men. “We want Mr. Zander.” That’s my father. And I said, “He is not home....I don’t know where he is.” “When do you expect him?” I said, “To lunch around 1:00.” ...They came about three, four times and every time they wanted my father. [When my father returned home, we said] “Alright, we go right away [but] my father said, “No. I don’t run away. I am a soldier and I a good German and I am a good citizen...*Ich hab nicht was schlechtes getan*. (I didn’t do anything bad.) I never did. I always was a good soldier.”...He was weeping.

[Then they came back to arrest him.] They were very nice with him. They say he should take extra socks along. “Maybe you will be cold,” and they put a sweater on... and they took him away... to Sachsenhausen. ...And that was the 9<sup>th</sup> of November.



**RABBI HELMUT FRANK** [BORN IN WIESBADEN, GERMANY 1912; EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1939. HE WAS THE LAST RABBI OF THE MEDIEVAL SYNAGOGUE IN WORMS BEFORE ITS DESTRUCTION ON KRISTALLNACHT.]

[On the morning of November 10, 1938] they called me about quarter of six. "Rabbi Frank," the president [of the congregation] said "the synagogue is on fire." So, you know what I answered him? "You have to call the fire brigade." I didn't have a better answer. I got dressed in a hurry and I went on my bike. ...The pulpit was burning. ...I immediately went to the telephone...just across the street and called the fire company. "We are so busy," they said, "that we haven't got time now. We can't come." At that time I did not understand two things. First of all, I could not understand why the fire company would not come and I didn't know that happened in Worms was happening all over Germany. ...So the children came...it was quite cold out. And before I could think of anything they had already buckets filled with water and went to the shul and the fire was out in no time. ...The non-Jewish population was silent. They were looking. They were silent. What they thought in their hearts I do not know.

...So while I was looking for my bicycle there was a policeman. ..."*Kommen sie mit, Rabbiner.*" It means "Come along, Rabbi". So, from that moment I was arrested and brought to the police headquarters and put in the police cell. ...Then we were told we would have to clean up the streets...because we Jews had caused all this trouble. We had murdered someone in Paris. ...The German national soul boiled over and did all this, but of course, it was not true. It was well organized by the Nazis, this whole Action. Then we were taken to the main building of the police. ...We were chased into these trucks...maybe 100 [men] and there was a huge crowd of people standing there to clap, showing their happiness that we were carted off. ...So we were taken [on] a night ride...until we reached Buchenwald concentration camp. ...There were...thousands of Jews assembled...they came from other parts of Germany. ...We were called *Aktion Juden*, Action Jews...victims of the Jewish action of 10<sup>th</sup> of November.



**ANNELIESE NOSSBAUM** [BORN IN GUBEN, GERMANY 1929; MOVED TO BONN 1931; SURVIVED SEVERAL CONCENTRATION CAMPS, INCLUDING THERESIENSTADT, AUSCHWITZ AND MAUTHAUSEN; LIBERATED 1945; EMIGRATED TO U.S. 1946. FOLLOWING IS EXCERPT FROM HER WRITTEN MEMOIR.]

The ashes of our destroyed synagogue contained God's laws. Nazi laws and authority had taken over and dictated our total being. Actions of that day [Kristallnacht] burned deep into our memory. Mine was the loss of our beautiful, spiritual "Home." The one shared with my people, my praying and singing mother, singing and preaching father, who was the cantor of this synagogue.

Another memory that made an indelible impression was the unexpected arrival of my aunt and uncle. Their phone call, late in the evening of November 9: "We are coming to visit you NOW,"—out of character for them—sent chills. I remember crawling into my parent's bed and saw the panic-stricken face of my mother in this well lit room. There was a reason for this visit: in their village the pogrom had already taken place and my uncle had been thrown into a well! A local policeman, with a conscience, pulled him out or he would have drowned—hence the immediate urgency of leaving.

There is a question: Who carried out these destructive deeds? Local people? Sure, some of them joined the organized groups who were sent on a mission of destruction. However, we found out later that these groups were not the "locals." No, locals could have been someone's neighbor, friend, schoolmate, customer of a Jewish bakery, etc. Hence, the locals were sent to other cities where they became "The Group," where they were not emotionally involved in the demolition, but through their participation proved their faithful loyalty to the Nazi Party.



ANNE DORE WEIDEMANN-RUSSELL [BORN IN BRANDENBURG, GERMANY  
1926 TO NON-JEWISH, ANTI-NAZI SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FAMILY; EMIGRATED TO U.S.]

[After Kristallnacht] I saw pictures in the paper of broken shop windows and all kinds of vandalism, and men in Nazi uniforms standing in front, and my father talking about that, and explaining to me that from then on the Nazis would keep a record of anyone insisting on shopping in these stores. And a week later I remember that my dad had to go to get a pair of shoes and went to a store that had been boarded up but was opened again. And the local paper published his name and showed him in front of the store, saying, "He insists on buying from Jews." So that didn't go on much farther because they drove them out right after that, totally.

...I knew about some families that owned department stores that my grandfather had business relations with. And they stayed in town waiting for a visa to leave for Australia. And during that time they were under a state of house arrest. They were not arrested properly, but it had been indicated to them that it wouldn't be safe for them to be seen in the streets anymore, and they had young children and asked my grandfather, "Would it be possible that the nanny could take the kids into our garden so that they could get fresh air and use the swing?"...I remember that they came twice a week and very cautiously just walked through the garden to play in the sandbox and use the swing and I looked at them. I couldn't understand why they didn't go to the public park. And my grandfather took me aside and said, "I don't want you to talk about it. That's none of your business. These kids will use the swing and you will share it with them and you will understand later on why we do this." And so I had a feeling that they were very special people. However, in what way they were special I did not fully understand.