



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### **Franco Cesana**

Date of Birth: September 20, 1931

Place of Birth: Bologna, Italy

Franco was born to a Jewish family living in the northern Italian city of Bologna. Even though a fascist leader, Benito Mussolini, came to power in Italy in 1922, Bologna's Jews continued to live in safety. Like many Italian Jews, Franco's family was well integrated in Italian society. Franco attended public elementary school.

1933–39: When Franco was seven, Mussolini enforced “racial” laws against the Jews: Franco was expelled from school and went instead to a Jewish school hastily organized in makeshift quarters in one of Bologna's synagogues. Franco could not understand why he had to leave his friends just because he was Jewish. His father died in 1939, and he moved with his mother and older brother, Lelio, to Turin, where he began religious school.

1940–44: Mussolini was overthrown in July 1943. Two months later, German forces occupied Italy and gained control of the north, the part where Franco's family and most of Italy's Jews lived. The Italians had been protecting the Jews, but now Germany controlled Italy. The Cesana family went into hiding in the mountains. To evade the Germans, they moved from hut to hut. Lelio joined the Justice and Liberty partisan group. Though only 12, Franco joined as well, proud that so many Jews were fighting in the Italian resistance.

Franco was shot by Germans while on a scouting mission in the mountains. His body was returned to his mother on his 13th birthday. He was Italy's youngest partisan.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Kornelia Mahrer Deutsch**

Date of Birth: April 7, 1904

Place of Birth: Budapest, Hungary

Kornelia was known as Nelly. She was the older of two daughters raised by Jewish parents in the Hungarian capital of Budapest. Her father fought in the Hungarian army during World War I. Kornelia attended public school and later worked as a bookkeeper for a soap factory. In 1928, she married Miksa Deutsch, a businessman who sold matches.

1933–39: Kornelia's husband was religious, and the Deutsches' three children attended Jewish schools. Miksa and his brother were the sole distributors in Hungary of Swedish-made matches, and the business prospered. In May 1939, the Hungarian government began to limit the number of Jews who could be employed in a business, forcing the Deutsches to fire some of their Jewish employees.

1940–44: In 1940, Miksa was conscripted into the Hungarian army's labor service. Later, he was forced to surrender control of the family business to a brother of the Hungarian prime minister. After Germany occupied Budapest in March 1944, Jews were ordered to move to special houses marked with a Star of David. In October 1944, Hungarian fascists began rounding up Jews from these houses. Kornelia was offered a job at an orphanage through the Swiss embassy, but on November 15, before she could take the job, she was rounded up.

Kornelia escaped detention but was recaptured and deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany, where she perished. Her three children survived the war.



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### **Isadore Frenkiel**

Date of Birth: ca. 1898

Place of Birth: Gabin, Poland

Isadore and his wife, Sossia, had seven sons. The Frenkiels, a religious Jewish family, lived in a one-room apartment in a town near Warsaw called Gabin. Like most Jewish families in Gabin, they lived in the town's center, near the synagogue. Isadore was a self-employed cap maker, selling his caps at the town's weekly market. He also fashioned caps for the police and military.

1933–39: Isadore felt the pinch of the Depression, but although business was poor, he was able to provide for his family. Shortly after the Germans invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, they occupied Gabin. Ten people were shot in the streets; others, such as doctors and teachers, were taken away. The Germans rounded up the Jewish men and held them in the marketplace while soldiers doused the synagogue with gasoline and set it on fire.

1940–42: In 1941, the Frenkiels heard rumors that the Germans were evacuating some towns and deporting the Jews to a death camp. A cousin visited the family after escaping from a transport and said the rumors were true. “They put you in trucks, gas you, then throw your body into a burning pit,” he said. Isadore’s three-year-old son ran to his mother crying, “Will they burn me, too?” Isadore urged his cousin to tell the Jewish elders. He met with them, but they did not believe his story and told him to leave town.

In May 1942, Gabin’s Jews were deported to the Chelmno death camp. Isadore, Sossia, and four of their sons were placed in a sealed van and asphyxiated with exhaust fumes.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Irene Freund**

Date of Birth: October 15, 1930

Place of Birth: Mannheim, Germany

The younger of two children, Irene was born to Jewish parents in the industrial city of Mannheim. Her father, a wounded German army veteran of World War I, was an interior decorator. Her mother was a housewife. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Irene's older brother, Berthold, was attending public school. Three-year-old Irene was at home with her mother.

1933–39: “Celebrating Jewish holidays with all my aunts and uncles was really nice. One of my favorite places was the zoo; I especially liked the monkeys. When the Nazis forced Jewish children out of public school, I began attending a Jewish school. I was a ‘daddy’s girl,’ and my father would take me home from school on his bike. After the Nazis burned our school, my older brother left for safety in Britain—I was too young to go with him.”

1940–44: “In 1940, when I was ten, our family was sent to Gurs and then Rivesaltes, terrible camps in southern France. The food was awful. The Jewish Children’s Aid Society took me away and placed me in a Catholic convent along with 13 other Jewish girls. I became Irene Fanchet and studied under Sister Theresa. One day the SS came to our convent looking for hidden German Jewish children. One of our girls, who was fluent in French, did the talking for us. It worked. The Germans left, and we were safe.”

Thirteen-year-old Irene was freed by Allied troops in July 1944. After being transferred to several children’s homes in France, she emigrated to the United States in 1947.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Pinchas Gerszonowicz**

Date of Birth: January 21, 1921

Place of Birth: Miechow, Poland

Pinchas was born into a large family living in the town of Miechow in south-central Poland. His father was a machinist and locksmith. Pinchas spent long days studying, either learning Hebrew in the Jewish school or taking general subjects at the public school. He belonged to the Zionist youth organization Ha Shomer ha-Tsa'ir and played left wing for a Jewish soccer team.

1933–39: “At 13 I finished school and started work as an apprentice machinist and blacksmith in a building contractor’s shop. When the German army invaded Poland in 1939, my parents decided that my older brother, Herschel, and I should flee to the Soviet-occupied part of Poland. We were on foot and no match for the motorized German division that overtook us about 150 miles east of Miechow. We had no choice but to return home.”

1940–44: “I repaired vehicles for the Germans in Miechow and later at their Krakow airbase. In July 1943, I was deported to Krakow’s suburb of Plaszow, where the Nazis had established a labor camp over a very old Jewish cemetery. There, I worked as a machinist and blacksmith with my father. Every day I saw Jews being shot by the SS guards or torn to death by dogs. The camp’s commander, Goeth, always had two large dogs with him. All he had to say was, ‘Get somebody!’ I never knew if my last minute was approaching.”

Pinchas was deported to Auschwitz in early 1945. One of the few survivors of a two-week death march, he was liberated near the Dachau camp in April. He emigrated to the United States in 1948.



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### **Zuzana Gruenberger**

Date of Birth: March 3, 1933

Place of Birth: Kosice, Czechoslovakia

Zuzana was the youngest of three children born to Hungarian-speaking Jewish parents in the city of Kosice. She was the baby of the family, and they called her Zuzi. Her father was a tailor whose workshop was in the Gruenbergers' apartment.

1933–39: In November 1938, when Zuzana was five years old, Hungarian troops marched into Kosice and made it a part of Hungary. The Hungarians changed the name of the city to Kassa. The Hungarian government was friendly to Nazi Germany and introduced anti-Jewish laws in Kosice.

1940–44: In 1941, one year after Zuzana began school, the Hungarians moved the Gruenbergers and other Jewish families to camps in other parts of Hungary. The Gruenbergers were released the following spring and returned to Kosice, but Zuzana's brother and father were taken soon after for slave labor. In 1944, Hungarians who were cooperating with the Germans rounded up Kosice's 12,000 Jews, including Zuzana, her mother, and sister. They were sent to a brickyard at the city's edge and put on trains headed for Auschwitz.

Zuzana and her mother were gassed immediately on arriving in Auschwitz in May 1944. Zuzana was 11 years old.



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### **Karl Lange**

Date of Birth: October 28, 1915

Place of Birth: Hamburg, Germany

Karl was born in the north German port of Hamburg. His father was American, and his mother was German. Soon after Karl was born, his father returned to the United States, and a little later, his parents were divorced. Karl left school when he was 14 and worked as a shop apprentice.

1933–39: “In 1935, an informer told the police about my secret meetings with a 15-year-old youth, and I was arrested under the Criminal Code’s Paragraph 175, which defined homosexuality as an ‘unnatural’ act. Although this law had been on the books for years, the Nazis broadened its scope and used it as grounds for mass arrests of homosexuals. I was released after 15 months but was arrested again in 1937 and imprisoned.”

1940–44: “In 1943, Hamburg was the target of heavy Allied bombing, but the Fuhlsbuettel prison, where I had been held for six years for ‘security reasons,’ was not hit. During that period, many prisoners were transferred to the Neuengamme concentration camp, but I was in the group sent to the Waldheim prison in Sachsen. I had a nervous breakdown there and entered the prison hospital. I was lucky, because as the Allies moved closer, many of the other prisoners were released for combat and died on the front lines.”

After the war, Karl found a position in a bank in Hamburg, but he was fired after 18 months when his employer learned that he had been imprisoned under Paragraph 175.



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### **Emanuel (Manny) Mandel**

Date of Birth: May 8, 1936

Place of Birth: Riga, Latvia

Manny was born to a religious Jewish family in the port city of Riga, Latvia. Shortly after Manny's birth, his father accepted a post as one of the four chief cantors in Budapest, and the family returned to Hungary, where they had lived before 1933. Manny's father was based at the renowned Rombach Street synagogue. Between the wars, Budapest was an important Jewish center in Europe.

1933–39: "Father wouldn't let me have a bicycle. He thought someone might take it away from me because I was Jewish. After anti-Jewish laws were passed in 1938, Jews were severely harassed in Hungary. Father followed me to school to see that I made it there safely. My school was only a few blocks away, but he was afraid someone might come up behind me and push me into traffic. Father said things like that had happened before."

1940–44: “I was just old enough to explore my neighborhood when the Germans came to Budapest in March 1944. Mother told me we were being deported. I wasn’t sure what that was, only that we were leaving. It sounded like an adventure, but Mother said it was serious. We were with a group of Jews the Germans were exchanging for trucks. We left on trains; at night we slept outside in tents. We came to the Bergen-Belsen camp. It was muddy and my shoes fell apart. That meant I couldn’t run around; running was the only ‘play’ we had.”

After the war, Manny went to Switzerland with his mother for several months, before emigrating to Palestine in 1945. He moved to the United States in 1949.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Maria Sava Moise**

Date of Birth: June 1, 1925

Place of Birth: Iasi, Romania

Maria was one of four children born to poor Roma (Gypsy) parents in the capital of Moldavia in eastern Romania. The family lived in a mixed neighborhood that included Romanians and Roma. Maria grew up in a house with a yard where the family kept a pig and some chickens. Her father made a living by singing and by working at some of the many wineries that dotted the Moldavian countryside.

1933–39: “My parents couldn’t afford to send me to school. To help make ends meet, my sister, older brother, and I helped my mother pick grapes for a local winery. The work was seasonal, and we were contracted by the week. We worked hard and long, from 5 a.m. until evening.”

1940–44: “When I was 16, my father was drafted by the Romanians to fight against the Soviet Union. The following year, Iasi’s Gypsies were rounded up by the Romanian police and sent eastward by cattle car. When we disembarked in Transnistria, we were marched to a farm and left in open fields to die slowly. That’s how my sister died. My husband, Stefan, managed to run away. By coincidence, my father’s unit was stationed nearby, and on New Year’s Eve of 1943, he smuggled some of us back to Romania on a troop train.”

Maria survived the rest of the war in Iasi. After the war, she and her husband reunited and resettled in Iasi.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Eva Rapaport**

Date of Birth: October 27, 1929

Place of Birth: Vienna, Austria

Eva was the only child born to nonreligious Jewish parents. Her father was a journalist. Eva enjoyed spending time with her cousin Susie, who was two years older. Eva also took special vacations with her mother. Sometimes they went skiing in the Austrian Alps, and on other occasions they stayed at her uncle's cabin along the Danube River.

1933–39: “When the Germans annexed Austria in 1938, life changed. Father was harassed by the Gestapo for writing articles against the Germans. My good friends called me bad names because I was Jewish. My parents said we had to escape. We fled by train to Paris. There, during my third-grade class, one day bombs began falling. We raced to the air-raid shelter and put on gas masks. The smell of rubber was overwhelming. I felt like I was choking.”

1940–44: “After the Germans entered Paris in 1940, we escaped to the unoccupied south. Two years later, when I was 13, Germans occupied the south, and we were forced to move on again. During the treacherous trek in the mountains between Switzerland and France, we took refuge in the small French village of St. Martin. The village priest, Father Longeray, let my parents hide in his basement. I lived openly in the parish house as a shepherdess. I attended church with the other children and learned the Catholic mass in Latin.”

Eva and her parents remained hidden in St. Martin. They were liberated at the end of 1944. In 1948, when Eva was 18, she and her parents emigrated to the United States.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Shulim Saleschutz**

Date of Birth: March 7, 1930

Place of Birth: Kolbuszowa, Poland

Shulim was the oldest of three children born to religious Jewish parents living in Kolbuszowa, a town in south-central Poland. His father owned a wholesale general store in town and was known in the region for his impressive strength. Shulim's mother tended to the house and cared for him, his brother, Shlomo, and his sister, Rozia.

1933–39: When Shulim was nine, the Germans invaded Poland. Polish soldiers on horses tried to fight against the German army, but they were no match against the tanks. After the short battle, Shulim's father and his uncle Naftali were forced to help bury the many dead horses left in the streets. The Germans ordered that Jewish children could not go to school anymore. Shulim stayed at home with his mother, brother, and sister.

1940–42: In July 1941, the Germans forced all the Jews of Kolbuszowa to live in one small section of town. Two of Shulim's grandparents, an uncle, and two aunts moved in with his family, making their apartment very crowded. Shulim's 12th birthday was a milestone—he now had to wear an armband with a Star of David like the other men. He felt proud and asked his uncle Naftali to take a picture of him wearing the armband. Shulim was assigned to work details with the other men. He cleared snow and repaired the roads.

Shulim was deported to the Rzeszow ghetto on June 25, 1942, and then to the Belzec camp in July. There, Shulim was gassed with his mother, brother, and sister. He was 12 years old.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Karl Stojka**

Date of Birth: April 20, 1931

Place of Birth: Wampersdorf, Austria

Karl was the fourth of six children born to Roman Catholic Roma (Gypsy) parents in the village of Wampersdorf in eastern Austria. The Stojkas belonged to a tribe of Roma called the Lowara Roma, who made their living as itinerant horse traders. They lived in a traveling family wagon and spent winters in Austria's capital of Vienna. Karl's ancestors had lived in Austria for more than 200 years.

1933–39: “I grew up used to freedom, travel, and hard work. In March 1938, our wagon was parked for the winter in a Vienna campground when Germany annexed Austria just before my seventh birthday. The Germans ordered us to stay put. My parents converted our wagon into a wooden house, but I wasn't used to having permanent walls around me. My father and oldest sister began working in a factory, and I started grade school.”

1940–44: “By 1943, my family had been deported to a Nazi camp in Birkenau for thousands of Gypsies. Now we were enclosed by barbed wire. By August 1944, only 2,000 Gypsies were left alive; 918 of us were put on a transport to Buchenwald to do forced labor. There, the Germans decided that 200 of us were incapable of working and were to be sent back to Birkenau. I was one of them; they thought I was too young. But my brother and uncle insisted that I was 14 but a dwarf. I got to stay. The rest were returned to be gassed.”

Karl was later deported to the Flossenbürg concentration camp. He was freed near Roetz, Germany, by American troops on April 24, 1945. After the war, he returned to Vienna.



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### **Johann Stossier**

Date of Birth: May 29, 1909

Place of Birth: Techelsberg, Austria

Johann was born to Catholic parents in the part of Austria known as Carinthia, where he was raised on the family farm. Johann enjoyed acting and belonged to a theater group in nearby Sankt Martin, which also happened to have a Jehovah's Witness congregation. He became a Jehovah's Witness during the late 1920s, actively preaching in the district around Sankt Martin.

1933–39: Johann continued to do missionary work for the Jehovah's Witnesses even after this was banned by the Austrian government in 1936. The situation for Jehovah's Witnesses worsened after Germany annexed Austria in March 1938. Like other Witnesses, Johann refused to give the Hitler salute, to swear an oath of loyalty to Hitler, or to enlist in the army.

1940–44: In April 1940, Johann was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned in Klagenfurt. The Nazis deported him to the Neuengamme concentration camp and then to the Sachsenhausen camp. In Sachsenhausen, the Germans tried to force Johann to repudiate his faith as a Jehovah's Witness, but Johann refused. Although it was forbidden, he had secretly hidden a tiny Bible, and reading Scripture enabled him to fortify his belief that the power of God was stronger than the power of the Nazi regime.

Johann was executed on May 7, 1944, in Sachsenhausen. He was 34 years old.



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### **Dora Unger**

Date of Birth: January 7, 1925

Place of Birth: Essen, Germany

Dora, her parents, brother, aunt, uncle, and two cousins lived together in her grandfather's home in Essen, Germany. The Ungers were an observant Jewish family, and when Dora was eight, she began to regularly attend meetings of Brit Hanoar, a religious youth organization.

1933–39: “In October 1938, a teacher, with tears in her eyes, came to me at the municipal pool, saying ‘Jews cannot swim here anymore.’ Just weeks later, on November 9, Jews were arrested and their property destroyed. A neighbor tried to protect us, but that night as our family huddled together, Nazis spotted our house. Suddenly, an ax flew through the window, landing by my head. A few days later, we fled for the Netherlands.”

1940–45: “In Amsterdam, as refugees, my parents were not permitted to work and so could not provide for me and my brother. I was sent by a Jewish aid organization to the Buergerweeshuis, an orphanage that had 80 Jewish refugee children. Just after the Germans invaded the Netherlands in May 1940, ‘Mama Wismueller,’ a Dutch woman who worked to rescue thousands of children by arranging their passage to England, came and told all of us to get dressed. We were taken by bus to a pier and put on the *Bodengraven*, a boat.”

Dora spent the remainder of the war in England. Her parents and brother perished at the camps of Sobibor and Auschwitz. Dora emigrated to Israel in 1946.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Gabrielle Weidner**

Date of Birth: August 17, 1914

Place of Birth: Brussels, Belgium

Gabrielle was the second of four children born to Dutch parents. Her father was a minister in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. She grew up in Collonges, France, near the Swiss border, where her father served as a pastor. Gabrielle was baptized in the Seventh-Day Adventist faith at 16 years of age. She attended secondary school in London, England.

1933–39: Gabrielle became increasingly active in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, eventually becoming the secretary at the French-Belgian Union of Seventh-Day Adventists headquarters in Paris. Her student travels in western Europe and her knowledge of foreign languages proved useful in her work. On September 3, 1939, two days after Germany invaded Poland, France declared war on Germany.

1940–44: German forces invaded France in May 1940, and Gabrielle fled to the south. After the armistice, Gabrielle returned to Paris and resumed working for the church. On Saturday, February 26, 1944, the Gestapo arrested her during 10 a.m. church services. Along with 140 other members of the “Dutch-Paris” network that helped Dutch Jews and political refugees, Gabrielle was implicated by a fellow member who was tortured. On August 24, Gabrielle was deported from the Fresnes prison in Paris to the Ravensbrück camp in Germany.

On February 17, 1945, Gabrielle died of malnutrition in Koenigsberg, a subcamp of Ravensbrück, just days after being liberated by Soviet troops.



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### **Bertha Adler**

Date of Birth: June 20, 1928

Place of Birth: Selo-Solotvina,  
Czechoslovakia

Bertha was the second of three daughters born to Yiddish-speaking Jewish parents in a village in Czechoslovakia's easternmost province. Soon after Bertha was born, her parents moved the family to Liège, an industrial, largely Catholic city in Belgium that had many immigrants from Eastern Europe.

1933–39: Bertha's parents sent her to a local elementary school, where most of her friends were Catholic. At school, Bertha spoke French. At home, she spoke Yiddish. Sometimes her parents spoke Hungarian to each other, a language they had learned while growing up. Bertha's mother, who was religious, made sure that Bertha also studied Hebrew.

1940–44: Bertha was 11 when the Germans occupied Liège. Two years later, the Adlers, along with all the Jews, were ordered to register, and Bertha and her sisters were forced out of school. Some Catholic friends helped the Adlers obtain false papers and rented them a house in a nearby village. There, Bertha's father fell ill one Friday and went to the hospital. Bertha promised to visit him on Sunday to bring him shaving cream. That Sunday, the family was awakened at 5 a.m. by the Gestapo. They had been discovered.

Fifteen-year-old Bertha was deported to Auschwitz on May 19, 1944. She was gassed there two days later.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Inge Auerbacher**

Date of Birth: December 31, 1934

Place of Birth: Kippenheim, Germany

Inge was the only child of Berthold and Regina Auerbacher, religious Jews living in Kippenheim, a village in southwestern Germany near the Black Forest. Her father was a textile merchant. The family lived in a large house with 17 rooms and had servants to help with the housework.

1933–39: “On November 10, 1938, (Kristallnacht, ‘Night of Broken Glass’) hoodlums threw rocks and broke all the windows of our home. That same day police arrested my father and grandfather. My mother, my grandmother, and I managed to hide in a shed until it was quiet. When we came out, the town’s Jewish men had been taken to the Dachau concentration camp. My father and grandfather were allowed to return home a few weeks later, but that May my grandfather died of a heart attack.”

1940–45: “When I was seven, I was deported with my parents to the Theresienstadt ghetto in Czechoslovakia. When we arrived, everything was taken from us except for the clothes we wore and my doll, Marlene. Conditions in the camp were harsh. Potatoes were as valuable as diamonds. I was hungry, scared, and sick most of the time. For my eighth birthday, my parents gave me a tiny potato cake with a hint of sugar; for my ninth birthday, an outfit sewn from rags for my doll; and for my tenth birthday, a poem written by my mother.”

On May 8, 1945, Inge and her parents were liberated from the Theresienstadt ghetto where they had spent nearly three years. They emigrated to the United States in May 1946.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Marcus Fass**

Date of Birth: ca. 1925

Place of Birth: Ulanow, Poland

Marcus, known to his family as Moniek, was one of three children born to a Jewish family in the Polish town of Ulanow. His father worked as a tailor. Ulanow's Jewish community had many of its own organizations and maintained a large library. From the age of three, Moniek attended a religious school. He started public school when he was seven.

1933–39: In 1935 Moniek's father left for America to find a job so that his family could later join him. He sent money to them while they waited for their emigration papers. Moniek's mother worked as a seamstress to help support the family. At age 14, Moniek graduated from secondary school. In September of the same year, the family was completing the paperwork for emigration when Germany invaded Poland.

1940–43: After Ulanow was occupied, Moniek was forced to work as a laborer for the German army. In 1942 the Nazis ordered a roundup of all Ulanow's Jews. Fearing deportation, Moniek went into hiding with a friend. For more than a year they managed to elude the Germans by hiding in the forests and fields near Ulanow. But during a German search for partisans, Moniek and his friend were trapped in a rye field. Sweeping the field inch by inch with their dogs, the Germans finally captured the pair.

After being seized outside Ulanow in 1943, Moniek and his friend were never heard from again.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Moshe Finkler**

Date of Birth: October 9, 1926

Place of Birth: The Hague, Netherlands

Moshe was brought up in a religious Jewish family in The Hague, the center of government in the Netherlands. His father was a businessman, and his mother raised their seven children. Introspective by nature, Moshe was an avid student.

1933–39: Moshe was starting eighth grade when the war began in September 1939. At home, his family discussed the terrible things happening to Jews in Germany. Moshe believed more than ever that the Jewish people needed their own homeland. He continued attending public school and also was tutored at home in Jewish studies. He loved learning languages and was studying eight of them, including Hebrew.

1940–44: Germany invaded the Netherlands, reaching The Hague on May 10, 1940. When the Nazis began rounding up Jews in the summer of 1942, Moshe and his family escaped to Belgium, where no one knew them and where they hoped they could pass as Christians. His father secured false papers, including an “Aryan” permit to live in Brussels. But on April 7, 1944, while the Finklers were celebrating the Jewish holiday of Passover, Gestapo agents stormed their apartment. They had been betrayed.

Moshe and his family were deported to Auschwitz, where Moshe died at age 18.



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### Jakob Frenkiel

Date of Birth: December 3, 1929

Place of Birth: Gabin, Poland

Jakob was one of seven boys in a religious Jewish family. They lived in a town 50 miles west of Warsaw called Gabin, where Jakob's father worked as a cap maker. Gabin had one of Poland's oldest synagogues, built of wood in 1710. Like most of Gabin's Jews, Jakob's family lived close to the synagogue. The family of nine occupied a one-room apartment on the top floor of a three-story building.

1933–39: “On September 1, 1939, just a few months before I turned 10, the Germans started a war with Poland. After they reached our town, they doused the synagogue and surrounding homes with gasoline and set them on fire. All the Jewish men were rounded up in the marketplace and held there while our synagogue and homes burned to the ground. Our house had also been doused with gasoline, but the fire didn't reach it.”

1940–45: “At age 12, I was put in a group of men to be sent to labor camps. More than a year later, we were shipped to Auschwitz. The day after we arrived, my brother Chaim and I were lined up with kids and old people. I asked a prisoner what was going to happen to us. He pointed to the chimneys. ‘Tomorrow the smoke will be from you.’ He said if we could get a number tattooed on our arms, we’d be put to work instead of being killed. We sneaked to the latrine, then escaped through a back door and lined up with the men getting tattoos.”

After 17 months in Auschwitz, Jakob was force-marched to camps in Germany. Liberated in April 1945 near Austria, he emigrated to the United States at the age of 16.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Joseph Gani**

Date of Birth: 1926

Place of Birth: Preveza, Greece

Joseph and his family lived in Preveza, a town on the Ionian seashore with a Jewish population of 300. Joseph's father had a small textile shop. The Ganis were of Romaniot descent, Jews whose ancestors had lived in Greece and the Balkans for more than a thousand years.

1933–39: Joseph attended Greek public school in Preveza. He also received a religious education; the local rabbi would come to the public school for several hours a week to give religious instruction to the Jewish students. Joseph loved sports, especially soccer and baseball.

1940–44: Germany invaded Greece in 1941 and took over Preveza in the fall of 1943. The Jews of Preveza were deported to Auschwitz in Poland in March 1944. There, Joseph was assigned to work in Birkenau as part of the Sonderkommando, a work unit that carted corpses to the crematoria. On October 7, 1944, Sonderkommando workers in Crematorium IV revolted, disarming SS guards and blowing up the crematorium. Soon, other Sonderkommando workers, including Joseph, joined in the uprising.

Joseph was killed in Birkenau in October 1944. He was 18 years old.



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### **Matvey Gredinger**

Date of Birth: June 2, 1921

Place of Birth: Vertujeni, Romania

Matvey was the youngest of three children born to a Jewish family. The Gredingers lived in the town of Vertujeni in Bessarabia, a region of Romania. His father was a kosher butcher, preparing meat, especially chicken, for sale in his kosher shop. Matvey attended a Jewish school where he studied Jewish history and Hebrew.

1933–39: “We heard stories from other towns about antisemitic groups, especially the League of National Christian Defense, harassing and sometimes attacking Romanian Jews. But only small groups tormented us in our town. After I completed the seventh grade, I went to the Romanian capital of Bucharest in 1934 and secured a job working in a textile factory. While I was away, my family moved to the town of Vysoka.”

1940–44: “While I was visiting my family in 1940, the Soviets occupied Bessarabia. Within a year the Germans occupied the area. At once, Romanian soldiers began shooting Jews. We barricaded our house, but the soldiers broke in. I was dragged out and a soldier fired at me; the bullet passed through my neck. I collapsed, unconscious but alive, lying in a pool of blood. Later, the soldiers used a match to check my breathing. I feigned death. They heaped rocks on me and left. After dark, I rose and ran through the woods.”

Matvey fled to a nearby town, but the Germans came the next day. He was then deported to a forced-labor camp in Ukraine. In 1944 he was liberated by the Red Army.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Magdalena Kusserow**

Date of Birth: January 23, 1924

Place of Birth: Bochum, Germany

One of 11 children in a German family, Magdalena was raised as a Jehovah's Witness. When she was seven, her family moved to the small town of Bad Lippspringe. Her father was a retired postal official and her mother was a teacher. Their home was known as "The Golden Age" because it was the headquarters of the local Jehovah's Witness congregation. By age eight Magdalena could recite many Bible verses by heart.

1933–39: "Our loyalty was to Jehovah, so the Nazis marked us as enemies. At 12 I joined my parents and sister in missionary work. Catholic priests denounced us. Papa was arrested for hosting Bible study meetings in our home; even Mama was arrested. The Gestapo searched our house many times, but my sisters and I managed to hide the religious literature. In 1939 the police took my three youngest siblings to be 'reeducated' in Nazi foster homes."

1940–44: “I was arrested in April 1941 and detained in nearby juvenile prisons until I was 18. I was told that I could go home if I signed a statement repudiating my faith. But I refused and was deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. After a harrowing trip with common criminals and prostitutes, I was assigned to do gardening work and look after the children of the SS women. Within a year, my mother and sister Hildegard were also in Ravensbrück; with God’s help, we Jehovah’s Witnesses stuck together.”

During a forced march from Ravensbrück in April 1945, Magdalena, her sister, and her mother were liberated. When the war ended, they returned to Bad Lippspringe.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Helene Melanie Lebel**

Date of Birth: September 15, 1911

Place of Birth: Vienna, Austria

Helene, the elder of two daughters born to a Jewish father and a Catholic mother, was raised as a Catholic in Vienna. Her father died in action during World War I when Helene was just 5 years old, and her mother remarried when Helene was 15. Known affectionately as Helly, she loved to swim and go to the opera. After finishing her secondary education, she entered law school.

1933–39: At 19 Helene first showed signs of mental illness. Her condition worsened during 1934, and by 1935 she had to give up her law studies and her job as a legal secretary. After losing her beloved fox terrier, Lydi, she suffered a major breakdown. She was diagnosed as schizophrenic and was placed in Vienna's Steinhof Psychiatric Hospital. Two years later, in March 1938, the Germans annexed Austria to Germany.

1940: Helene was confined in Steinhof and was not allowed home even though her condition had improved. Her parents were led to believe that she would soon be released. Instead, Helene's mother was informed in August that Helene had been transferred to a hospital in Niedernhart, just across the border in Bavaria. In fact, Helene was transferred to a converted prison in Brandenburg, Germany, where she was undressed, subjected to a physical examination, and then led into a shower room.

Helene was one of 9,772 persons gassed that year in the Brandenburg "euthanasia" center. She was officially listed as dying in her room of "acute schizophrenic excitement."



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### **Barbara Ledermann**

Date of Birth: September 4, 1925

Place of Birth: Berlin, Germany

Barbara was the older of two daughters born to Jewish parents in Germany's capital, Berlin. Barbara's father was a successful lawyer. As soon as Barbara was old enough to walk, he would take her around Berlin to see the sights and tour the city's art museums. Barbara liked to go horseback riding and dreamed of becoming a dancer.

1933–39: “After the Nazis came to power in January 1933, it was illegal for my father to have non-Jewish clients. His law practice quickly folded. Later that year when I was seven, our family moved to the Netherlands where my mother had relatives. I continued my schooling in Amsterdam and quickly learned Dutch. Although we no longer lived in a big house with servants, I enjoyed Amsterdam—it had a much less formal atmosphere than Berlin.”

1940–44: “The Germans invaded the Netherlands in May 1940. Two years later, when they began to deport many Jews, my boyfriend, Manfred, told me that these deportations to ‘labor camps’ really meant death. He got false IDs for me and my family, and told me, ‘If you get called up, don’t go.’ I asked, ‘What will happen to my parents if I don’t go?’ ‘Nothing that wouldn’t happen otherwise,’ he answered. ‘What do you mean?’ I asked, and he responded, ‘Everyone who goes will be killed. They are all going to die.’ ”

Barbara remained in hiding until May 1945, when Amsterdam was liberated by Canadian troops. She emigrated to the United States in November 1947.

## PERSONAL HISTORY



### **Channah Mazansky-Zaidel**

Date of Birth: ca. 1908

Place of Birth: Panevezys, Lithuania

Channah was one of six children born to a Jewish family. In 1914, a year after her father died, the family fled during World War I to Russia. After the war they returned to Lithuania and settled in the village of Pampenai in a house owned by Channah's grandparents. When Channah's three oldest siblings moved to South Africa in the 1920s, Channah helped support the family by sewing.

1933–39: Channah was working as a seamstress in Pampenai when, in the mid-1930s, she met and married Channoch Zaidel. The couple had one child.

1940–41: German troops invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, and soon overran the area around Pampenai. In late summer 1941, German troops approached the village in an action that was part of a Nazi plan to eliminate Lithuania's Jews. Before the troops arrived, however, groups of armed Lithuanian collaborators herded Pampenai's Jews to a nearby forest and forced them to dig trenches and strip naked. The Jews were then ordered to climb into the trenches and were machine-gunned.

Channah, Channoch, and their child were killed, along with Channah's mother, Sara Rachel, her twin brother, Moishe, and her younger brother, Chaim. Channah was 33.



## PERSONAL HISTORY

### **Robert T. Odeman**

Date of Birth: November 30, 1904

Place of Birth: Hamburg, Germany

Born Martin Hoyer, Robert took Robert T. Odeman as his stage name when he began a professional career as an actor and musician. A classical pianist, Robert gave concerts throughout Europe, but a hand injury tragically ended his concert career.

1933–39: In 1935 Robert opened a cabaret in Hamburg. One year later, the Nazis shut it down, charging that it was politically subversive. Robert then moved to Berlin where he developed a close relationship with a male friend who was pressured to denounce Robert to the Gestapo. In November 1937, Robert was arrested under Paragraph 175 of the Nazi-revised criminal code, which outlawed homosexuality. He was sentenced to 27 months in prison.

1940–45: Robert was released from prison in 1940 but remained under police surveillance. They monitored his correspondence with a half-Jewish friend in Munich and with friends abroad. In 1942 Robert was arrested again under Paragraph 175 and deported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. There he was assigned an office job. On a forced march from the camp toward the Baltic Sea in April 1945, 40-year-old Robert escaped with two other “175ers.”

After the war, Robert returned to Berlin, where he worked as a writer and composer. He died in 1985.