

A Living Memorial in their own words

Family of Curt Warner

Curt Warner was born on June 25, 1921 in Aschaffenburg, Germany. His father, Leopold Worms, was born in the same city and his mother, Gerda Straus born February 7, 1896 came from Bad Nauheim Germany. His mother was an invalid from the time Curt was born and she walked with 2 canes. This is why she was murdered in a gas chamber in 1942 at the age of 47. Curt went to public schools. When he was about 12 years old he became scared to go to school because he had to go by a corner where a man sold the Nazi newspaper, *DER STÜRMER*. The man spit at and kicked Curt every day. Curt had to endure it because he had to go to school.

Like many other Jewish people, Curt's father said: The Nazis won't last long. Everything will be over in a month. He was not willing to leave Germany because he was a soldier on the frontlines in WWI. He said that If he had to leave, it would be on the last train out.

Curt's father had a home goods store and a car that he drove out to the farmers to sell his wares. In the mid 1930's when the Nazis came to power, people were told to boycott Jewish business. Eventually Curt's father had to close his store and the family became penniless. His father took ill in 1935, but was refused admittance to the local hospitals, because he was Jewish. A gentile doctor came in the middle of the night to operate on him in his own bed. The operation failed and Curt's father passed away in December 1937. He was 49.

Alex Straus, Curt's uncle helped the family financially. He and his wife Else (Lomnitz) from Kirchain had no children. This uncle took daily walks in the parks and woods of Bad Nauheim. One day he failed to return. Two days later his wife found a note with a map. Alex hung himself because he was afraid to leave Germany for England one week later. Curt witnessed when he was cut down from the tree and transported to the morgue.

Penniless, Curt moved to Frankfurt where he worked for room and board for a Jewish employer in the upholstery

business. On Kristallnacht, while everything was burning and men and boys were rounded up and sent to Buchenwald, Curt hid inside a sleeper sofa. That evening Curt tried to return to Aschaffenburg which people believed to be safer than the city. Curt's cousin joined him but they were recognized as Jews and other passengers pushed them off a moving trolley car. They finally reached home where they hid in the attic of the cousin's house for one week. A Christian family, who lived in the same house brought them food. They then returned to Frankfurt.

During 1939 Curt sewed money and other valuables into sofas for people leaving Germany to help them salvage some of their possessions. Later that year he chose volunteering for a labor camp (Furstenwalde/Spree) over being arrested. 75 boys and 8 girls went to pick potatoes which they got for 3 meals a day. Curt broke out in pus boils and was sent home to Bad Nauheim. He was told to report back in two weeks, but he never did. Most of the remaining "volunteers" were eventually murdered in a concentration camp.

Curt got a Visa -- he had done the paperwork beforehand -- and left for the U.S. on January 21, 1940, catching the last passenger ship to leave Rotterdam. Two friends in the US advanced him a \$250 loan for the passage. His cousin from Hartford picked him up when he landed in Hoboken. Curt brought with him only the allowed 10 German marks - worth \$3.75.

On the way from the ship to Hartford, Curt saw a black man on the subway -- the first black person he had ever seen. He was afraid because in Germany he was taught that blacks were cannibals in Africa.

A Jewish agency got Curt a job and he rented a room from the Buchheim family. In 1944 he joined the U.S. army. He returned to Hartford in 1947 and married Marion Buchheim. They have two children--Steven and Beverly.



Curt Warner - kennkarte photo



Leopold Worms store circa 1935.



Leopold and Gerda Worms on their honeymoon in Berlin.

Curt Warner's school circa 1928. Curt is in the second row, first on the right.

