Ilse Engelbert Lindemeyer was born an only child in 1927 near Frankfurt Germany. She attended public school where she made friends with other children whether they were Jewish or not. After Hitler took power in January 1933 life changed drastically. Three months later the Nazis passed a law decreeing that Jewish children could only compose of 1.5% of the students. Ilse was then forced to attend a Jewish school across town.

A few days before Kristallnacht, her father received a call from a friend warning about the imminent action. On November 9-10, 1938, the Nazis arrested 30,000 Jews and burned 7,500 businesses and 200 synagogues. When the police were unable to find her father, they beat Ilse and her mother and destroyed their home.

A few days later her parents found out about the Kindertransport, a program during which England rescued 10,000 children from the Nazis. Much to her protests, her parents placed her on a train to England on May 24, 1939. She never saw her parents again.

Ilse did not speak English and found it nearly impossible to communicate with the British. One day she was taking pictures and was suspected of being a German spy. She was arrested and was interned at the Isle of Man.

Ilse’s foster parents collected signatures showing that she was not a spy and she was released. She could not return to London because the Germans were bombing it so she was housed in a home in Manchester with 50 other boys and girls. It was here she met her future husband, Herbert.

After the war, Ilse and Herbert worked as interpreters for the U.S. Army for three years. She returned to Germany and discovered that her parents were killed on their way to Minsk, Russia. Ilse and Herbert then moved to Philadelphia in 1948 and had two children.

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Holocaust Survivor Biography: Ilse Engelbert Lindemeyer

Witness to History Project:

The Witness To History Project is designed to further the message and lessons of the Holocaust by direct interaction between students or interested adults and Holocaust survivors. Participants "adopt" a survivor by learning his or her unique account of via listening to the survivor tell his/her story, asking questions, writing a biography, reviewing a videotape, and memorizing and re-telling the story to others. Ultimately, the participant will have the lifelong job of educating others about the Holocaust by sharing this personal narrative. Contact the Holocaust Awareness Museum to participate.

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