

Holocaust Survivor Biography: Ralph Rehbock

Ralph Rehbock was born on July 11th, 1934 in Ghot, Germany to Hans Rehbock and Ruth Rehbock. Hans owned a factory, so when Ralph's family needed to flee in 1938, their connections helped them escape. Hans's factory manufactured goods for the American company Marshall Fields, and Hitler needed foreign money, so the Rehbocks were able to maintain more rights under the Nazi government. Despite this, they still suffered tremendously. The Rehbocks lost twenty-eight family members from both sides, including Ralph's aunt and young cousin.

In 1938, the Rehbocks fled to England where they stayed until they were able to acquire American visas. Jewish men were being taken from their homes, and it was too dangerous for Hans to remain in Germany. In December 1938, when Ralph was four years old, the Rehbocks were able to escape to America with the help of a cousin.

Growing up, Ralph never remembered much about Germany. His parents never hid what happened to them from him, but they rarely volunteered information. Ralph knew that he was born in Germany, that he left when he was four, and that some family died, but never anything about specific experiences. From the day they immigrated, Ralph's parents decided that they would be American. They made a pact to only speak English and told Ralph "We are now going to be Americans." Ralph's parents cut their ties with Germany immediately. Germany had betrayed their trust, and the memories were too bitter to remember.

Ralph returned to Germany in 1985. Though she did not approve of the trip, Ralph's mother contacted non-Jewish people who helped their family and drew a map for Ralph to find old relatives and familiar buildings. He rediscovered places from his childhood and found himself connecting with Germany and his family's experience in a way he hadn't before.

Ralph now shares his story to keep the legacy of the Holocaust alive. He believes that we cannot forget and that we must teach our children the full extent of what happened.



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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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