



Summer Institute
June 18-20, 1997

"ABC's / 123's of School Improvement"

Lee County School System

Push (pushes you out)

Pull (pulls you out of situation)

not financially stable
Nazi humiliation

- Deaf (so is brother)
- citizenship revoked
- brother & 2 daughters

- brother was a skilled trailer
- seamstress (factory work)
- wants to go to US
- brother in USA

Choice

Factors

- take brother ^{leave him} or
- what to tell father of daughters about relocation

- Deaf
- single mother w/ deaf kids

Shanghai Ghetto

Hilda Rattner

- Hilda died in 1990 @ 85
daughter Lilly tells Deaf community from a Deaf perspective of the Nazi persecution

- deaf
- bro. Richard - deaf
- 2 daugh. - deaf
- separated

- bro Emil - in US hearing
- traveled by taxi & rail to border of Austria/Hungary
- passage on SS Rep from Genoa to NYC but only the hearing mom could go - after 5 mths @ Ellis Isl they studied & gained citizenship

Bureaucratic Hurdles to Emigration

The bureaucratic hurdles facing German Jews attempting to emigrate in the late 1930s were overwhelming. Nations required extensive documentation that was often virtually impossible to obtain. The following is a list of the documents required by the United States to obtain a visa.

- Visa application (5 copies)
- Applicant's birth certificate (2 copies)
- Quota number (establishing the applicant's place on the waiting list)
- Sponsors (2)
 - Close relatives of the prospective immigrant were preferred
 - The sponsors were required to be U.S. citizens or to have permanent resident status
 - Each sponsor was required to have completed and notarized six copies of an *Affidavit of Support and Sponsorship*
- Supporting German government documents dossier:
 - Certified copy of most recent federal tax return
 - Affidavit from a bank regarding applicant's accounts
 - Affidavit from any other responsible person regarding other assets (affidavit from sponsor's employer or statement of commercial rating)
 - *Certificate of Good Conduct* from German Police authorities, and (after September 1940) from several responsible disinterested persons (2 copies)
 - Police dossier (2 copies)
 - Prison record (2 copies)
 - Military record (2 copies)
 - Other government records about individual as requested (2 copies)
- Report of physical examination at U.S. consulate
- Proof of permission to leave Germany (imposed September 30, 1939)
- Proof that prospective immigrant had booked passage to the Western hemisphere (imposed September 1939)

TIMELINE: AMERICAN RESPONSE

- 1917 Immigration Act
- 1924 Immigration quotas set specific limits on the number who could immigrate to the United States in any given year from any given foreign country; eligibility based on country of birth. The total of all quotas is 154,000; almost 84,000 of this number was assigned to the British and the Irish, peoples who had no need to flee
- 1920s through 1945 U.S. immigration policy shaped largely by three important aspects of American society: unemployment, nativistic nationalism/restrictionism, and antisemitism
- April 1, 1933 **Boykott of Jewish stores and offices**
- April 7, 1933 **Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service; contains "Aryan Paragraph," first definition of "non-Aryan" (Jew); "non-Aryans" removed from civil service (with some exceptions)**
- September 15, 1935 **Nuremberg Laws; implementation decrees follow in November with second definition of "Jew" ("Volljude" = 3-4 fully Jewish grandparents; "Halbjude" or "1st Degree Mischling" = 2 fully Jewish grandparents; "2nd Degree Mischling" = 1 fully Jewish grandparent); all full Jews stripped of citizenship; sexual relations and marriage with a Jew forbidden**
- March 12, 1938 **Anschluss; Austria annexed by Germany, ceases to be a nation; becomes a province of the Reich know as the "Ostmark"**
- 1938 President Roosevelt combines the German and Austrian immigration quotas
- 1938 **Evian Conference**
- November 9-10, 1938 **Kristallnacht; Jewish organizations liquidated, Aryanization accelerates, wave of suicides, and marked increase in emigration**
- June 1939 German liner, S.S. St. Louis, refused entry by the Cuban government; U.S. refuses to admit ca. 700 of over 900 passengers who hold numbers on waiting lists for U.S. visas
- September 1, 1939 **Germany invades Poland**
- Fall 1939 U.S. tightens its barriers to immigration again
- April-May 1940 **Germany invades Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Belgium and France**
- 1940 **Battle of Britain**
- 1940 **Germany invades Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete**
- Spring 1941 **While planning the invasion of Russia, the Nazis made the decision to annihilate the Jews in the territories to be taken from the USSR**

- June 1941 Germany invades the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia)
- June 22, 1941 Before dawn, the German army opened its drive against the Soviet forces. Following directly behind the frontline troops were special mobile units (**Einsatzgruppen**), under the direction of **Reinhard Heydrich**, chief of the Reich Security Office (**RSHA**), that rounded up Jews and killed them in mass shootings
- Between June and **Einsatzgruppen** and associated support units murdered some 500,000 Jews in December 1941 eastern Poland and Russia
- July 1941 America's gates are nearly closed to immigrants (the best chance to save the European Jews has passed); immigration is held to about 10% of the already small quota limits for European countries.
- July 31, 1941 Reich Marshall **Hermann Goering** issues a directive instructing and authorizing **Reinhard Heydrich** to organize "a complete solution of the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence in Europe." Heydrich began preparations for collecting the Jews in all the occupied lands and deporting them to eastern Europe. The organization of the deportations was assigned to **Adolf Eichmann**
- October 1941 Germany forbids Jewish emigration from the Reich and from German-held territory
- Fall 1941 **Einsatzgruppen** made a second sweep through the occupied territories, through 1942 annihilating another 900,000 Jews (**1.4 million** in all during 1941 and 1942)
- Late 1941 **Chelmno** established as a killing center using gas vans as the instrument of murder
- December 7, 1941 **Pearl Harbor**; the United States enters the war against the Axis Powers; the war narrows the possibilities for Jewish immigration to the U.S. from the Reich and German-occupied territories and for saving Jews
- January 20, 1942 **Wannsee Conference**
- Spring and summer Mass killings underway at **Auschwitz, Belzec, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka** 1942 for which gas chambers and crematoria are constructed. Carbon monoxide was used at all centers but **Auschwitz**, where crystalline Zyklon B (hydrogen cyanide [prussic acid] was used.
- August 1942 **Riegner telegram** reports mass gassings of Jews; **Rabbi Stephen Wise** agrees to State Department request that he withhold content of telegram until State can confirm

- November 1942 Montgomery breaks Rommel’s line at El Alamein; Eisenhower lands forces in French North Africa

- November 24, 1942 U.S. State Department confirms to Rabbi Wise the content of Riegner telegram and related reports: Wise calls a press conference

- November 1942 through February 1943 **Stalingrad**

- 1942 – 1944 Nearly **3 million** Jews were murdered at the six killing centers (plus at least 1.4 million by *Einstazgruppen*)

- September 3, 1943 Allied landing in **Italy**; first Allied foothold in Europe

- January 7, 1933 A Gallup poll asks Americans, “It is said that two million Jews have been killed in Europe since the war began. Do you think this is true or just a rumor?” ; 47% of the respondents considered it true, 29% thought it was a rumor, and 24% had no opinion

- May 1944 Hungarian Jews, the last large Jewry of Europe (450,000), deported to Auschwitz and gassed

- June 6, 1944 Allies land at **Normandy**

- December 1944 **War Refuge Board** established

- December 1944— January 1945 **Battle of the Bulge**

- January 27, 1945 Soviet troops find **Auschwitz**

- April 15, 1945 British troops find **Bergen-Belsen**

- April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt dies at Warm Springs, GA; V.P. Harry Truman becomes President

- April 23, 1945 U.S. troops find **Ohrdruf**

- May 8, 1945** **VE-Day**; Goering surrenders to Allies

- May 14, 1945** Austrian sovereignty restored

2. MAI 1938	JUDISCHE WAND BERUFSSUMSICH- TIGUNG	ERUNG AUS DER SCHEMATISCHE DER FUER DIE ANLAUFENEDEN ORGANISATIONEN	OSTMARK DARSTELLUNG AUSWANDERUNG AEMTER UND	31. MARZ 1942
WIEN 165,000 JUDEN ORGANISATIONEN VOR DEM 13.3.38				WIEN 39,884 JUDEN
180,000 JUDEN IN DER OSTMARK	JUDENSTERBLICH- KEIT IN WIEN VOM 2.5.38 BIS 31.3.41	DIE AUSWANDER EINZELNEN LAEND TEILEN	UNG NACH DEN ERN UND WELT-	39,984 JUDEN IN DER OSTMARK
PROVINZ 15,000 GLAUBENSJUDEN 33 KULTUS GE- MEINDEN	JUDENGEBURTEN IN WIEN VOM 2.5.38 BIS 31.3.41			PROVINZ 100 GLAUBENSJUDEN 2 KULTUSGE- MEINDEN *AUFGELOST*

<p>2 MAY 1938</p>	<p>JEWISH Occupational Retraining</p>	<p>EMIGRATION Schematic of the Emigration Organi-</p>	<p>FROM AUSTRIA Representation Still Operating Offices and zations</p>	<p>31 MARCH 1941</p>
<p>Vienna 165,000 Jews Organizations prior to 13.3.38</p>	<p>(Graph)</p>	<p>(Schema)</p>	<p>(Schema)</p>	<p>(Schema)</p>
<p>(List)</p>	<p>(Graph)</p>	<p>(Schema)</p>	<p>(Schema)</p>	<p>Vienna 39,884 Jews (List)</p>
<p>180,000 Jews in Austria</p>	<p>Jewish Deathrate in Vienna from 2.5.38 to 31.3.41 Total deaths: 7,894</p>	<p>Emigration to and Regions</p>	<p>Specific Countries of the World</p>	<p>39,984 Jews in Austria</p>
<p>Provinces 15,000 Jews by Faith 33 Jewish Communities (List)</p>	<p>Jewish Birthrate In Vienna from 2.5.38 to 31.3.41 Total births: 461</p>	<p>(Map) Total Emigration 141,975</p>	<p>(Map) until 3.31.41</p>	<p>Provinces 100 Jews by Faith 2 Jewish Communities *LIQUIDATED* (List)</p>

RATTNER, Hilda

Seamstress

b. Vienna, 14.5.1904; Austrian citizenship (revoked)

Applied ?1939?

(Has brother, Richard; and two daughters, Nelly and Lilly)

Wishes to go to U.S.A.

She is Deaf.

UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM



Hilda Wiener (later Rattner) was born into a Jewish family in Vienna on June 14, 1904. She was the daughter of Joseph and Mathilde (nee Grunwald) Wiener, and had two older brothers, Rudolph and Emil. Not long after her birth Joseph and Mathilde, a hearing couple, realized that Hilda was Deaf. Mathilde was profoundly upset at this and initially did not know how to cope with a Deaf child. Two years later, their fourth child, Richard, was born, and he was also Deaf. Although Mathilde wanted to have more children, she did not want another Deaf child, so on the advice of her doctor she waited seven or eight years before becoming pregnant again and in 1914 gave birth to Isabella (Bella), who was hearing. Emil immigrated to the United States on April 13, 1927, and Bella emigrated to Palestine in the late 1930s.

In the interwar years Austria had several Deaf schools, and Vienna in particular had a very vibrant Deaf community where Jews and non-Jews mixed freely. In Vienna, Hilda and Richard attended a Jewish school, where they learned to sign. It was through these associations and activities that Hilda met Isadore Rattner, a Deaf Jew from Poland. They married, and had three Deaf children: Nelly (born 3/21/1929); a son Joseph (b. 12/30/1930) who died at nine months as a result of an accident; and Lilly, (born 10/27/1932). Over the years, various events put a strain on their marriage and they separated some time after Lilly's birth. Following her separation from Isadore, Hilda and her daughters lived with Hilda's mother, Mathilde, and brother, Richard. Richard was an accomplished tailor and Hilda a skilled seamstress, so they started a

successful business out of their home.

In March of 1938, Germany annexed Austria. As the Nazis consolidated their control and antisemitic laws went into effect, life became increasingly difficult. Nelly and Lilly were prohibited from attending school, and spent their days at home. As Hilda and Isadore prepared to finalize their divorce, an edict prohibiting Jews from divorcing prevented them from it. Strict curfews were imposed, and Jews were only allowed to shop during certain hours. Hilda had to wait in long lines to buy food for the family, and was in constant fear that she would be discovered to be Jewish. She witnessed Nazis humiliating and persecuting Jews in the streets, and Lilly witnessed the temple next door burn to the ground during Kristallnacht. When Hilda saw Adolf Hitler during a military parade, surrounded by saluting Austrians, she realized that she and her family would have to escape. Meanwhile, the area in which they lived, District 2, was in the process of becoming a ghetto. The five Wiener/Rattner family members were forced to live in one room of their apartment, while another family was moved into their other room. One evening, Mathilde heard pounding on the doors of their building, saw flashing lights outside their window, and realized that Nazi raids were underway. The SS officers entered their room and had begun to search, when one officer exchanged glances across the room with Richard. After scrutinizing their papers, which showed that they had all been born in Austria, the officer told the others that there was nothing there and that they could leave. Afterwards, Richard explained that he and the officer knew each other, and had worked together as tailors. The family in the adjoining room, who came from Poland, was eventually deported and sent to a concentration camp.

Hilda began to finalize plans for emigration. Prior to the annexation, her brother Emil had immigrated to the United States, so he was able to supply the family with affidavits and other necessary documents. In addition, they were aided by HIAS (Hebrew Immigration Assistance Society). Finally, in order to take her daughters out of the country, she had to secure the signature of their father, Isadore. Knowing that he would object to their move to the U.S., she told him that they planned to go to England, or perhaps Israel. They met briefly in the street to complete the paperwork and that was the last time they saw him. In April, 1940, they left quietly in the early morning and traveled by taxi to the train station, then by train to the border of Austria and Italy. There, they waited while the Gestapo inspected the train, searching anyone who they thought looked suspicious, and confiscating any valuables. Fortunately, the family was not detained, as they had a few valuables such as gold jewelry sewn into the shoulder pads of their clothing. They were told that this was the last train that they could have taken out of Austria. After waiting for some time in Italy they secured passage on the SS *Rex*, an Italian liner setting sail from Genoa. Though they traveled in third class steerage, Nelly and Lilly remember it being a beautiful ship and recalled that they were able to celebrate Passover during the voyage. It was said to be the last ship that they could have taken out of Italy. Later during the war, the *Rex* was sunk by U.S. bombers who suspected that it was carrying German soldiers.

After a voyage of nine or ten days, they arrived in New York. Lilly remembers the throngs of people waiting at the dock and her mother pointing out the Statue of Liberty to her. Unfortunately, they found that only their hearing grandmother, Mathilde, would be allowed to disembark, because immigration officials were not convinced that four Deaf people would be able to support themselves. The following day, they were ferried to Ellis Island, where they remained for five months. While there, Hilda and Richard made dresses for Nelly and Lilly, and even earned a little money sewing for other immigrants there. Tanya Nash, a social worker at the New York Society for the Deaf, visited them frequently and advocated tirelessly for them. They gained admittance to the U.S. in time to celebrate Rosh Hashanah with relatives, but only after immigration officials required that the family pay a \$2,500 bond to show that they could support themselves while looking for work. With their brother Emil's help, Hilda and Richard found employment and apartments, first in the Bronx and later in Brooklyn and Manhattan. After five years of work, they were able to repay the bond loan entirely. In the evenings they attended English classes taught by a Deaf teacher from Gallaudet, Alice McVan. Hilda and Richard excelled at their studies and quickly learned enough to pass their citizenship exams.

It was through another student in their class, Fred Fedrid, a Deaf Austrian survivor who they had known in Vienna, that they learned the fate of Hilda's husband, Isadore. He had been sent to a concentration camp with a group of other Deaf people, and was thought to have died in the gas chambers. Further inquiries with the Red Cross indicated that he had last been seen near Minsk, but no additional information has been verified. In order for Nelly and Lilly to attend school, the family was able to secure the sponsorship of a Jewish philanthropist, Simon E. Osserman, who had a Deaf daughter, Beatrice Osserman, and a Deaf grandson, Jimmy Stern. Nelly and Lilly attended the Lexington School for the Deaf and there became friends with Jimmy Stern, not realizing until much later that he was the grandson of their benefactor. Hilda never remarried, and went on to reside in Tanya Towers, a home for elderly Deaf people in New York City which had been named after their former social worker, Tanya Nash. She died in 1990, at the age of 85. Richard married a Deaf survivor, Eva, and had a son. Mathilde moved to Israel to live with her hearing daughter, Bella. Nelly and Lilly grew up to marry Deaf men and have both Deaf and hearing children. Today, Lilly devotes herself to informing the Deaf community about Nazi persecution during the Holocaust from a Deaf perspective.