

# Kindertransport and New Zealand's Kindertransportees

By Claire Bruell

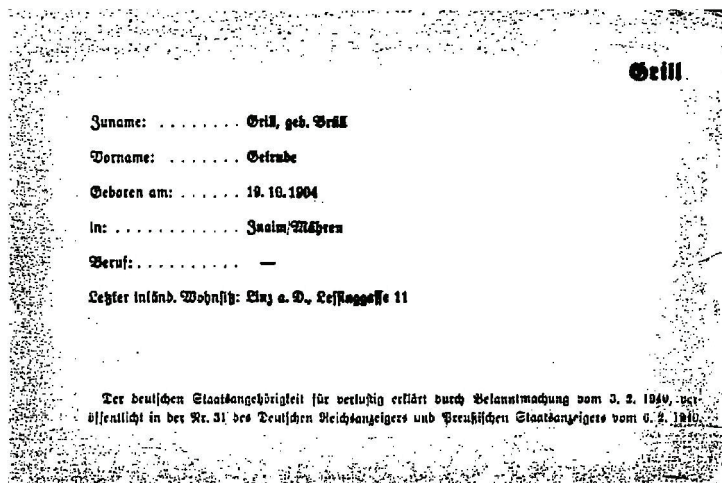




Kindertransport was the unofficial name given to a rescue effort between 1938 and 1940 that saw approximately 9-10,000 children brought from Europe mainly to Great Britain. Within this number, small groups were also sent to Sweden, Holland and Belgium and about 1400 were transported to the United States. Of the total number, about 7,500 were Jewish. A smaller number of non-Jewish children came from institutions such as orphanages.

## Background - The Nuremberg Laws in Germany 1935

**W**HEN Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933 he began to put into practice his ideas of a superior Aryan race. At the party's annual rally in 1935 in Nuremberg he passed new laws that encapsulated these ideas, preventing any relationships between Jews and non Jews. The laws excluded German Jews from Reich citizenship and discriminated in many more ways also. Others, such as gypsies, the disabled, homosexuals, Slavic and mixed race people were also discriminated against.



*Document stating that Gertrude Grill's German citizenship is revoked*

Hitler's power grew through the 1930s, undergoing a radicalisation in 1938 that encouraged him to move against Austria on 15th March of that year. This "Anschluss" (annexation) continued a period of especially severe hatred against the Jews and the anti-Jewish laws in Germany were enforced in Austria too. On 9th November 1938, a night now commemorated as Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass) SA and SS men pretending to be citizens, set fire to 1000 synagogues, smashed up 7,500 Jewish businesses, fatally assaulted 90 Jewish men and herded 30,000 Jews into concentration camps, pending ransom.



*Vienna shop front defaced: "Jude" (Jew)*

## Escape and emigration - where to?

Desperation grew as Jews sought countries to immigrate to. At the Evian conference in July 1938 not one of the 32 countries attending agreed to take more than a small number of refugees. Pressure increased, to find ways of saving people and in particular, getting children out of Germany and Austria and other countries that were under threat of invasion by Germany, as a matter of urgency. In Britain, there were a number of groups that ultimately worked together to make the Kindertransports a reality.

These groups included Jews, Quakers and other Christians of many denominations. The Movement for the Care of Children from Germany (later called the Refugee Children's Movement – RCM) set up ways of selecting, processing and transporting the children. About half lived with foster families and the rest stayed in hostels, schools or on farms. Homes were visited and checked, however because of the haste and ad hoc nature of the project, children were not always matched to the most appropriate host families. In the rush to finalise arrangements and find good foster homes, the outcome for the children was not always as was hoped for. The children ranged in age from the very young to teenagers and often infants were in the care of older siblings. They arrived bearing a tag around their necks which corresponded to a label on their luggage. A bond of £50 was to be paid for each child, pending their travel onward to other countries. As war was declared, this further travel did not eventuate.

## Rescuing the children

Children were identified and grouped by list and issued with a travel date and departure information. The first train left from Berlin on 1 December 1938 and the first from Vienna, on 10 December of the same year. Trains passed from Germany into the Netherlands and the children travelled by ferry from the Hook of Holland to Harwich or Southampton, accompanied by a few volunteers who had to return to their homes after delivering the children to freedom. Three trainloads of Polish Jewish children were organised in February and August 1939. Kindertransports also left from Prague in the final months before war was declared in September. Although most of the children left from their homes by train travelling to main cities, then by train to the Hook of Holland, ship and train again, some also went by plane and by boat. The last transport from Germany left on 1 September 1939, on the eve of war.

## Nicholas Winton

Nicholas Winton was an English stockbroker of Jewish background, although he was not a practising Jew. He was alarmed at the growing persecution of Jews in Austria and Germany and determined to bring out children from the countries under German domination and those likely to be invaded in the near future. In December 1938 Winton went to Prague and met organisers from the committee formed to help the refugees created by Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland. In the name of the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia, he raised funds and organised eight transports from Prague in all, the last trainload leaving Prague on 2 August 1939. Today Winton's name is famous for having organised and overseen the rescue of 669 children from Prague. However, after the war his efforts were not publicised or acknowledged until 1988 when his wife found a scrapbook from 1939 with the children's photos and lists of names of those rescued. Nicholas Winton was made an honorary citizen of the city of Prague, later knighted by the Queen in 2003 and received many other accolades for his humanitarian work.

## During the war

In 1940 the British began detaining people from countries that were enemies of Britain in internment camps on the Isle of Man and in Canada and Australia and about 1,000 of the Kinder were interned. Some later joined the British Armed Forces and fought in the war. Some even lost their lives.

# Kinder who settled in New Zealand

After the war ended most of the rescued children never saw their parents again. They had been murdered in the Nazi death camps. Those few who were reunited with their families had been separated for the war years. The children had grown, many had even forgotten their mother tongue and parents were often traumatised by their experiences during the war. Reestablishing the pre-war family unit was almost impossible. Most of the Kinder settled in Great Britain, Israel, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The common thread binding all the Kinder was that their experiences during the six years of the war, having had their childhoods effectively stolen or truncated, affected them for the rest of their lives.

## **Ten known Kinder came to New Zealand as follows:**

Ilse Brauer

Robert Fantl

Walter Freitag and Leonore Ball

Michael Goldschmidt

Liesl Green

Eva Hayman

Hans Herbert Simon Hirsch – later Herb Hirst

Vera O'Brien

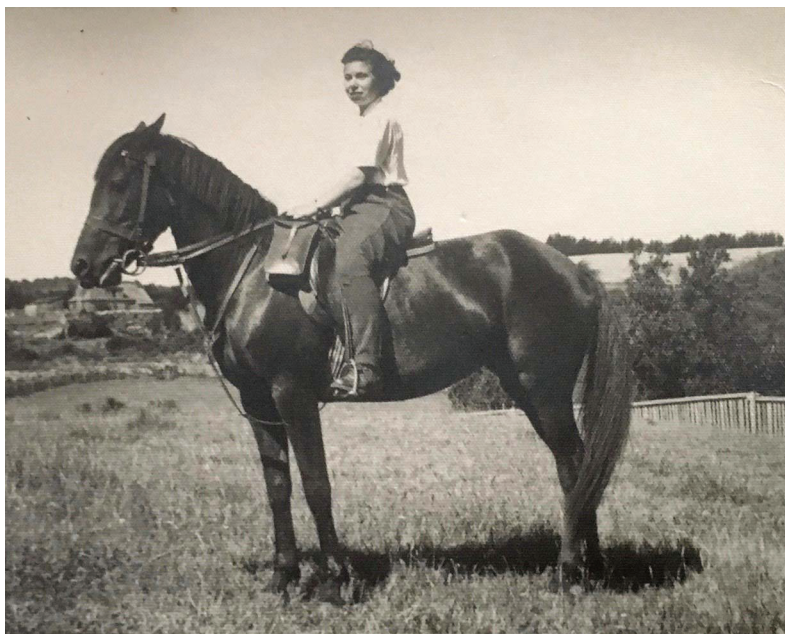
Gerhard Wachsner - later Gerald Warner

## **Three others came to New Zealand initially but later moved away:**

Eva Binder (nee Grätzer) - Sydney

Anita Chard (nee Grätzer) - Sydney

Ruth Hirsch - United States



## Ilse Brauer (nee Goldschmidt)

*Ilse Goldschmidt post war*

tongue was German. Her father had a wholesale business dealing in textiles. Though not a very observant family, they belonged to a synagogue and kept a kosher home.

After 1933 Jews were no longer allowed to go to Christian schools so Ilse was sent to the Jewish school. There were a large number of Jews in the city of several synagogues and even a Jewish hospital. The household boasted a maid who hid Ilse's father during Kristallnacht. Nevertheless her father was taken to Buchenwald shortly after, although he returned a month later having suffered from the cold, beatings and sleeping rough. Then the family made efforts to leave Germany.

Ilse's brother Hans left on a Kindertransport in February 1939 and Ilse followed in June of that year. Their parents were lucky to get tickets to Chile, courtesy of a lawyer uncle. They left on the last boat to leave Genoa before war was declared on 3rd September 1939. Hans went to the Balfour Institution in Scotland. This was a home for Jewish children outside Edinburgh, donated by Lord Balfour. Once he left school, Hans got a job on a poultry farm.

The first family Ilse stayed with was a family of German Jewish immigrants. She was initially sent to a Catholic school where she said the nuns were kind and gentle. Unfortunately her stay with that family came to an abrupt end when the family was interned. Ilse spent most of the war years in a Jewish house in Leicester. Although appreciating what they had done for her, Ilse said when interviewed for the Auckland Holocaust Oral History Project, that she had been abused. She was made to do housework and was treated like a servant. Attending school until 1942, she left to work in a hosiery factory where she learned to sew.

In 1946 Ilse was finally able to join her parents in Puerto Montt, Chile. She and Hans left by ship from Marseilles and Ilse remembers that they were in third class "removed", sleeping on bunks in the luggage hold that was infested with rats. They finally landed in Buenos Aires, Argentina where they were stuck for five days. The deep snow on the Andes held them up because the train could not pass. When they finally made the trip to Santiago many of the passengers were sick because of the altitude and had to be given oxygen. At last in Santiago they met their father who had come to welcome them and together they made the 27 hour train trip to Puerto Montt.

Ilse began to learn Spanish, worked in her parents' shop and settled in. In 1949 she met her future husband and they were married in 1950. Ilse and Gunter had three children and in between she worked in the shop her parents-in-law owned. Life was idyllic until 1960 when there was an earthquake with its epi-centre in Puerto Montt. In the early 1970s Salvador Allende came to power and everyone realized that his policies would make business difficult. The political situation deteriorated and the Brauers began to consider leaving. They arrived on 11th February 1973 with their two younger children and made Auckland, New Zealand their new home.







## Robert (Bob) Fantl

*Robert (Bob) Fantl*

A transport from Prague took Robert (Bob) Fantl, age 15, to freedom at the end of June 1939. He was born in Reichenberg/Liberec, Czechoslovakia and came from a large extended family. His family (mother Pola Fantl/Bornstein, sister Lidia (Fantl/Hess) and he himself) were organising to immigrate to New Zealand when a relative alerted his mother to Nicholas Winton's Kindertransports. Hurriedly Robert's mother arranged for him to leave, promising to meet up in England for his birthday August 29, 1939. In an interview with the Dominion Post, later in life, Bob recalled how terrified he had been on that journey and how grateful he later was to (Sir) Nicholas Winton, whose rescuing of 669 mostly Jewish children, is described in his biography, "If it's not impossible". Bob was lucky to be on the train, since the age limit was 15 and he had already passed his 15th birthday. In England he stayed in camps, until he was able to come to New Zealand in 1940 and was reunited there with his mother and sister. Most of the extended family died as victims of the Nazis, about 140 people. In New Zealand, he became a pilot in the Royal New Zealand Air Force in the Pacific "to get back at the Nazis". He married Claire Wolff, daughter of German Jewish refugees from Hamburg, in 1949 and settled in Wellington, having two children – Judi and Peter. Tragedy struck when Judi died in her early 20s and again when Peter died at age 48 in 2001.

Although Bob's schooling finished abruptly when he was 13, he studied and qualified as an architect, joining the firm of Plischke Fantl, then becoming a partner and later forming his own practice. He became a leading modernist Bauhaus architect and was as egalitarian, modest and unpretentious in his architecture as he was in his life, designing affordable houses for everyday people. His architectural mark can be viewed throughout New Zealand in such landmarks as Massey House on Lambton Quay, a Catholic Church in Taihape, the Sutch-Smith house in Brooklyn and the heritage listed (Henry) Lang House in Karori, Wellington. The best example of his architecture was his own house at 117 Wilton Rd, Wellington.

Bob was known as a leading environmentalist, co-founding COENCO, (later known as ECO) a nationwide coalition of over 100 environmental groups where he guided the organisation through key environmental changes for over 20 years. He fought against the motorway destruction of the Bolton St Settlers Cemetery in Wellington and was active in preserving Wellington's Otari/Wilton Bush from destruction, ultimately preventing via the courts, a major road cutting through Wilton Bush and saving an 800 year old rimu tree in the process. Bob was Jewish, though not a practising orthodox Jew. His style was to shun the limelight, keeping a low profile despite his considerable achievements. He is survived by two grandchildren, his wife having predeceased him many years before.





**Walter Freitag and Leonore Ball  
(nee Freitag)**

**W**ALTER AND LEONORE FREITAG were born in Königsberg, East Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia), Walter in 1927 and Leonore (Lore) in 1933. Their father, Hans Freitag, was a lawyer. His wife, Trude, was originally from Chemnitz, Saxony. After Kristallnacht the Freitag parents increased their efforts to immigrate and join Trude's sister and brother-in-law, Hilde and Hans Frohlich, in New Zealand. Their application was not successful and they decided to send Walter and Leonore to England by Kindertransport.

Lore left first on 14th May 1939. She was told that Walter would follow her as soon as a home could be found for him, and their parents would follow later. Her mother accompanied Lore by train from Königsberg to Berlin, a journey of seven to eight hours. In Berlin she joined the Kindertransport. The journey took her by train to Holland then by ship to Dover, England. Yet another train took them to London where Lore was greeted by a distant cousin, 'Uncle David'. Their meeting was long enough only for a cup of British Railways tea, before another train trip, to her final destination, Newcastle on Tyne. Lore was placed in a hostel for Jewish girls at 55 Percy Park, Tynemouth, which had been established as a temporary home for Jewish refugees. At the time Lore arrived there were 20-24 girls aged between four and 18 in the care of two matrons. In 1940 the hostel was evacuated to Windermere in the Lake District, where staff and children remained until the end of the war. Lore spent a total of seven years in this hostel. In 1989 she attended a hostel reunion, prompting her a few years later to document her memories of this time.

Walter, aged 10, travelled by train from Königsberg to Berlin with his father in July 1939. From Berlin, he went via Holland also to Newcastle on Tyne. In Newcastle, Walter was fostered by a working class family with three teenage sons. Six weeks later they were evacuated to a large privately-owned estate near Kirkby Lonsdale, some 20 miles from Windermere. When the other children returned home, Walter remained in the care of the estate's owner, who funded his attendance at a local grammar school. Lore visited him from time to time during school holidays. After completing his school certificate in 1945, Walter gained employment as an assistant industrial chemist in Newcastle.

During the first year or two of the war the children received Red Cross letters of 24 words each until finally the last letter arrived from Königsberg in mid 1942. Records at Yad Vashem show that Hans and Trude were deported first to Theresienstadt, then to Auschwitz. Neither they, nor the children's paternal grandparents survived.

After the war the children were sent to their uncle and aunt, the Frohlichs, in New Zealand. Walter and Lore arrived in Wellington on 6th December 1946. Hans and Hilde Frohlich had arrived in Masterton, New Zealand, from Chemnitz in 1938. A dentist by profession, Hans Frohlich had set up a practice in Masterton and initially Walter and Lore went to live with them. Eventually Walter moved to Wellington to start work as a laboratory chemistry technician and part-time study for a science degree. In 1947 he gained NZ citizenship. In 1952 Walter married the daughter of refugees from Chemnitz who had settled in Christchurch. For most of his working life he was chief chemist and technical manager of BP New Zealand. He lived his adult life in the Hutt Valley, moving to Turangi in 2010 where he died in 2014.

Lore attended Wairarapa College, gaining School Certificate in 1949. She then worked as a governess on a farm for a year before starting Training College in Wellington in 1951. Lore travelled widely, initially working in speech therapy and teaching roles in Blenheim and Wellington then in the US and Europe, before settling in New York for nearly 20 years. She returned to NZ in 1985, where she met and married Graeme Ball, another former pupil of Wairarapa College. She died in 1994.







## Ernst Michael Goldschmidt

*Michael Goldschmidt with his mother*

**F**RANKFURT-AM-MAIN, Germany, was the hometown of Ernest Michael Goldschmidt, known as Michael Goldschmidt. He was born there on 5th December 1936

In November 1938 when he was almost two years old, his mother Thea had to leave him in a home run by the Jewish Womens' League (Heim Isenburg) while she went to search for her parents. They had been ordered to leave Germany as they had been deemed Polish citizens by the National Socialist government and had been ordered to return to Poland. The Poles refused them entrance and the family had lost touch with them. During Kristallnacht, on 9th November 1938 the main building of the Heim Isenburg was set on fire and the children watched from the yard in their night clothes. This was traumatic for all of them, even the younger ones like Michael.

Michael's father was arrested and deported to Buchenwald concentration camp and when he returned a month later it was clear he had suffered badly. Michael lived with his mother at the Heim Isenburg until the end of May 1939 and in June 1939 he was sent on a Kindertransport with his older sister.

On arrival in England on 7th June, brother and sister were taken to separate families near Marple. Michael went to a Methodist family and his sister Eva was cared for by Quakers. Some time later both parents escaped separately and Michael was taken back by his mother who was employed as a housekeeper on a farm. His father Walter, was interned as an enemy alien and sent to a prison camp in Australia, on the SS Dunera. The ship is famous for the appalling, overcrowded conditions on board; the men were treated very badly, and there were Nazi prisoners of war also on the ship. Walter returned to England in 1943 when the family was at last reunited after the British government realised it had made a dreadful mistake.

Michael's grandfather Eduard Jammer was deported to Buchenwald where he died in 1941, however his grandmother Jenny survived, living temporarily with the Goldschmidt family in England, then spending the final years of her life in Australia.

Michael completed his education in England and trained in agriculture at the Reaseneath Agricultural College at Nantwich, Cheshire. He came to New Zealand where his aunt and her family were living on 29th April 1957, arriving in Wellington. Michael's aunt and uncle were living in Dunedin and kept him connected to the Jewish community there whenever he came to the city. After years spent working on farms, he eventually lived in Christchurch and Rangiora, working for the Department of Agriculture and teaching agricultural students. Michael married in 1968 and had two sons. In later life he took a "retirement" job through Lincoln University as site co-ordinator for visitors from overseas who came to New Zealand to learn about agriculture.





## Liesl Green (nee Simon)

*Liesl Simon (Green) aged approximately 18*

**L**IESL GREEN was born into a well-established Jewish family in Hamburg on 23rd November 1925. She lived with her brother Eric (born 7th February 1923), mother Wally (nee Rosenbaum) and father Hans, at 143 Mittelweg nearby the Alster River. At that time, Hans was a director of one of Germany's largest life insurance companies, a position he held until he died from appendicitis in 1936. They lived a Reform Jewish life, attending their Temple which stood alongside their local police station. There was a large extended family and Liesl recalled the large numbers attending at her maternal grandmother's home for

Jewish festivals. Home life was very strict with the children being brought up by a governess.

In the early 1930s Hans talked about the family emigrating to USA for fear that Germany might become a Communist state. But they remained living in Hamburg. In 1936, despite the growing anti-Jewish sentiment he again had his directorship renewed. Until he died he still held to some optimism about Germany rejecting Hitler. Now, without a father, still living at home with her mother and brother Eric, Liesl learned that if you saw or heard a band marching towards you, it was time to go in the opposite direction. She continued her schooling at a Jewish school close to home. About 50% of the school pupils were non-Jewish.

Kristallnacht saw the Temple by the police station burnt to the ground. Only two siddurim (prayer books) survived. One of those found amongst the embers had belonged to Wally's mother. It survives to this day, now safely in New Zealand. The day after Kristallnacht, Liesl stood behind a curtain and watched her great uncle being taken from his house by the Gestapo. By late 1938 it was clear to Wally that she and the children must somehow get out of Germany.

Liesl was put forward to go on a Kindertransport which left from the Bahnhof (station) soon after her 13th birthday. As with all of the children she was only allowed to take what she could carry, a small suitcase – which held practical items and a blanket which belonged to her grandfather strapped to the outside of the case. The train arrived at Calais and from there she was put on a ship to England and placed in a children's camp awaiting family allocation. Dinah and Mossey Davis took her in to their home on Knights Road, Hackney, London where she lived with their children Betty and Bernard.

Later, Wally and Eric also got to England and were taken in by a Quaker lady, Miss Seeborn. When the bombing of London started and children were moved to the country Miss Seeborn also took in Liesl and so for a brief while the family was reunited. In 1940 Wally, together with Eric sailed for New Zealand where Wally married Walter Baer and they settled in Wellington.

It was not until later in 1941 that Liesl boarded the SS Akaroa which sailed out of Newcastle to New Zealand. She watched as two days out, they sailed through a convoy of sinking ships and people drowning all about them. When the ship berthed in Auckland Liesl was met by Rabbi Astor who, having taken her home for a meal then saw her on the train to Wellington. Her mother and Walter were there to greet her on the platform and took her to their small home in Northland, Wellington.



Liesl became the first Jewish refugee to be accepted into Teachers' Training College, and at age 20 met and married Israel (Issie) Green on 21st March 1946. They lived most of their lives in Lower Hutt, and had two children, Valerie and Phillip. Liesl left teaching, and became office manager for her brother Eric and his company, Simon Metal Products Ltd. She graduated with a commerce degree from Victoria University, became a real estate agent and in later life taught English as a second language to new immigrants and was doing that until she died in Auckland on 11th May 1999. Issie had died on 23rd October 1997.

*Liesl and family in Wellington 1941*



## Eva Hayman (nee Diamant)

*Young Eva*

**E**VA DIAMANT was born in Prague on 1st January 1924 into a warm and loving family like most of the Kinder, and lived in the town of Celakovice. Czech was the language of the household, and Czech patriotism was emphasised from an early age, from both school and home. Eva had one younger sister, Vera, and was very close to her parents. Her father had a business as a wine merchant and her mother worked with him. The family was not religiously observant and there were few other Jews living in the small town near Prague.

On 29th June 1939, at the age of 15, Eva left Prague on a Kindertransport, together with her sister Vera who was 11 years old. Eva felt a responsibility for Vera, throughout her life.

Eva was sent to a girls' boarding school in England where she was under the care of the principal, and later adopted by the family of a school friend, the Allners. Although everyone concerned was kind and tried hard to help her settle into a different life, Eva poured her lonely, anguished heart out into her diary. The diary was the answer to the intense culture shock and powerlessness she felt. She worried constantly about her parents and particularly about Vera for whom she felt a heavy responsibility as the older sister. Her diaries were published in 1992 as "By the Moon and the Stars". She arrived at the title by referring back to her father's parting remark to her "If we can't communicate by letter we will send our love by the moon and the stars".

After leaving school, Eva decided to choose a career that would enable her to help others. She studied nursing in Poole, Dorset from 1941.





*Eva Hayman (left) with Nicholas Winton and Vera O'Brien.*

Eva's father died on a hunger march towards the end of the war and her mother died in May 1945 in Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp.

In Prague after the war, Eva felt she could no longer live there. She returned to London and married a doctor, Michael Hayman. They immigrated to New Zealand with their two young children in September 1957. In later years Eva studied at Auckland University, achieving an MA with honours in education. She lived the remainder of her life in Auckland, making occasional trips to England and the Czech Republic.

Eva took part in Kindertransport reunions in England and was even featured in a book "Into the Arms of Strangers" and a documentary film of the same name in 2000. She spoke willingly to school and other groups about her life.

Vera was taken in by a loving Christian family, the Rainfords, who lived in Liverpool. Apparently she was chosen by their daughter who had selected Vera from photographs of six girls on the basis that she liked Vera's smile. Some time later Vera managed to attend a Czech boarding school in Shropshire where she was happy to be in the company of other Czech children, many of them Jewish, and to return to the Rainfords for holidays. At the end of the war the girls heard that their mother had survived Bergen-Belsen, only to find subsequently that she had died there of typhus. Eva had the truly terrible job of writing to Vera with the sad news. Vera also returned to Prague for some years after the war but escaped to England when the Communist government took over in Czechoslovakia. She married and lives still in England. She also kept a diary through the war years and published a book "Pearls of Childhood" in 1988.

Eva and Vera had two boy cousins who were to leave on a Kindertransport from Prague on 1st September. Homes had been found for them, but unfortunately the train was not able to leave and the boys were murdered in Bergen-Belsen. Hitler had invaded Poland and all borders were closed.





## Vera O'Brien (nee Harth)

*Vera O'Brien*

**O**N the same transport as Eva Hayman and her sister Vera and Bob Fantl, was another young girl by the name of Vera Harth from Vienna. She was born on 7th February 1929. The family had both a cook and a personal governess for Vera, who was an only child. For some time Vera attended a Jewish school, however eventually she had to leave because of the growing antisemitism. Her father owned a pharmacy that was defaced during Kristallnacht with the word "Jude" (Jew) scrawled across the front. She was eight years old when Kristallnacht disrupted her life. Her family went into hiding, first living away from the spotlight at her grandmother's secluded house in Czechoslovakia, then going from place to place and eating in

soup kitchens as their flow of money and food ran out.

Vera was put on a Kindertransport on 30th June 1939 at aged 10 and was taken in by a family in Sheffield, Yorkshire, that was wholly unsuitable for her. They were not Jewish, were working class and totally different from the household she had come from. When she left Vienna, her father gave her a diary with a lock and like Eva, she poured her heart into it.

When she arrived in England Vera knew no English although she was fluent in French, German and Czech. In an interview for the Holocaust Oral History Project in Auckland, 2001 she reported that she had been verbally abused by her foster mother for years, referred to as "Jewish bitch" ordered to do housework and so on. Vera said that she did not turn out to be the malleable, feminine little girl her foster family had wanted and she found the environment harsh and unwelcoming.

Vera left school at 14 as the foster family would not pay for any further education and as soon as she could she ran away from the household and joined the army at 17. Some months later she met and married her Catholic husband John and became a Catholic herself. They arrived in New Zealand on 5th November 1953 and had six children, living at Waiouru, as her husband John had joined the NZ Army, then coming to Papakura near Auckland in 1968. Vera's parents were killed in Auschwitz Concentration Camp in 1941. The Sydney Jewish Museum facilitated the publishing of her autobiography called "Journey to Life."







## Gerhard Wachsner - later Gerald Warner

**G**ERALD WARNER, originally Gerhard Wachsner, was born in Charlottenburg, Berlin, Germany on 29th September 1924. His father was a businessman dealing in buttons who had been a soldier in the German Army during the First World War. Although awarded the Iron Cross 2nd class, this was later taken from him by the Nazi Regime.

Gerhard's grandparents had come to Berlin from what was then Prussia (on his mother's side) and Upper Silesia (on his father's side). The family was not religiously observant, however Gerhard had a bar mitzvah and the study he did in preparation for this influenced him for a time. Young Gerhard attended a state primary school, followed by 18 months at the Kaiser Friedrich Gymnasium (High School) and in 1935 his parents moved him to a Jewish school due to the increasingly anti-Semitic atmosphere in Berlin and in particular at the Gymnasium.

Gerhard and his sister both belonged to a Zionist group in Berlin. He attended a hachshara (agricultural training camp) in Berlin, intending to go to Palestine, however this didn't eventuate and Gerhard left Berlin on a Kindertransport for Scotland on 1st August 1939. His sister, Anneliese, eventually married and went to Palestine early in 1939. After Kristallnacht, business came to a standstill for Gerhard's father and Gerhard and his brother Gunter became the main breadwinners - Gunter earning his wages as an apprentice and Gerhard by doing delivery jobs on his bicycle.

Gunter was the first to leave Berlin. He accepted a job as a carpenter in Wellington, New Zealand where he landed as an 18 year old without any connections at all. Gerhard, still under 15, qualified to leave on a Kindertransport. He was one of only three children on his transport who went to Glasgow; the others went to London. Gerald, as he became in Scotland, was to have gone to school and live in a hostel with other boys, however because war was declared, he was evacuated to a village called Glencarse, between Perth and Dundee. There he was allocated to a farming family with three other boys. As soon as he could, he made his way back to Glasgow and after taking odd jobs he accepted an apprenticeship as a piano tuner.

Before completing this training, being 18, he joined the army. While serving in the British army he changed his name to Gerald Walker. He was stationed in Germany from April 1945 for two years and while there, found out through international aid agencies, that his parents and many of their relatives had not survived the war. His skills as an interpreter were very useful, especially when translating in the law courts for the War Crimes Tribunal.

In England after the war Gerald sat some University Entrance exams and on 25th October 1948 he arrived in New Zealand where he completed his degree in languages – initially in French and English, then a Masters degree in English Literature. At this stage he also took a name that aligned more closely with his brother Gunter's and became Gerald Alfred Warner. He eventually became Head of Languages in two Auckland Secondary Schools, first at Papakura, then at Glendowie College. He said in an interview for the Holocaust Oral History Project in Auckland, that he had very much enjoyed teaching. Gerald married three times and had three children and one step daughter. He died in Whangarei on 4th July 2007 and Gunter died in Auckland on 3rd January 2017.





## Eva Binder (nee Grätzer) and Anita Chard (nee Grätzer)

*Eva and Anita Grätzer*

**S**ISTERS Eva and Anita Grätzer grew up in comfortable surroundings, with families of both parents close by. Their father Viteslav, (aka Siegfried aka Friedl), ran several businesses with his father Leopold and his brother Otto, in the locale of Olomouc (German, Olmütz), Moravia in the newly formed republic of Czechoslovakia. Principal among these businesses was a considerable paper products manufacturing operation in Litovel, nearby. The Grätzer family lived in a fashionable building, each on different levels, which also included the business office. It was a building with baroque style features that later, after passing through Nazi and into Communist hands became small apartments for 16 or 18 tenants who were allocated housing by the City/State. Today, after so many years of total neglect, the earlier charms of the building are still evident.

With Hitler invading Czechoslovakia in March 1939, at the ages of 13 and 8, respectively, Eva and Anita, were farewelled in Prague by their parents, Herta and Friedl. They had managed to obtain permission for the girls to be taken to London – on the fourth such Kindertransport. The promise was that their parents would soon join them.

Eva was charged with caring for her younger sister, a responsibility that burdened her throughout their lives. The two sisters were always close. They were initially placed in a boarding school south of London that they both hated. After a few months, their uncle and aunt and their two children who had been able to reach London took the girls in and for several years became “their family”.

For the first two to three years there was very brief and spasmodic communication with their parents. It was in 1944 and 1945 that the truth of their fate became known. In 1942, Herta and Friedl, along with grandparents, other aunts and extended family from Olomouc were transported to Theresienstadt and shortly thereafter to Baranovice where they were murdered.

A small number of their immediate Grätzer family managed to escape or evade the Nazis and made their homes in the UK and the US. Some of their mother’s family, including those who cared for Eva and Anita, also managed to eventually become established in the UK and the US – and in New Zealand.

Eva Grätzer learned millinery in London and at 19 married Kurt Weinstein, who had migrated from Stuttgart. In England, Kurt became Ken; he engaged in agricultural machinery. Their son Eric was born in 1947 and in 1952 they migrated to New Zealand, where members of Eva’s family had already settled. For many years Eva ran a ladies’ millinery store in Auckland, supplying much of the North Island. But changing fashions put an end to that. Later, Eva pursued a cosmetics career with a leading brand in Auckland and then continued in Sydney from the late 1960s. In Sydney she ran several coffee bars over a number of years and later became manager for a Sydney jewellery manufacturer – in fact, for 20+

years until 2008 when she retired. In Sydney she had married Alan Binder, also from Europe, in 1977, however sadly he died shortly after the wedding.

Ken changed his name from Weinstein to Winton by Deed Poll in 1948. He remained in Auckland, where he died in 2002. Ken's parents were transported to Theresienstadt and murdered at Treblinka.

Anita's desire to be with Eva drew her to New Zealand in 1955 and in 1959 she made the move to Sydney where, soon after arriving, she married Jack Chard (known in Europe as Icik Chajmovic). They created a family with two children, Deborah and Gary, and established a life-long joint enterprise in restaurants and coffee lounges.





## Hans Herbert Simon Hirsch (later Herb Hirst)

**H**ANS was born on 14th March 1929 in Königsberg, East Prussia. He had an older brother Ernest and a younger sister Ruth. Their father Erich Hirsch had a department store in Neidenburg, also East Prussia. His mother Helene had three sisters, Beppa, Grete and Jenny.

The Hirsch household was firmly middle class, not religiously observant. After 1933 when Hitler came to power East Prussia became a Nazi stronghold and life for Jews became increasingly difficult. The family moved to Berlin. Hans and Ruth went to a Hebrew School, as by that time Jews were banished from any but Jewish schools. Kristallnacht in 1938 saw the family's store vandal-

ized and Hans's father Erich was taken to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.

On 14th March 1939 Hans, then aged 10, Ernest aged almost 14 and Ruth aged 7 left on a kindertransport and that was the last time they saw their parents. Ernest records "I must confess for me it was more of an adventure and leaving my parents, we thought was a temporary thing." The last memory he has is of his mother at the railway station in Berlin, hiding behind a pillar with tears running down her face as she waved goodbye. This is an echo of Gerald Warner's memory of his mother also. He too left from Berlin. While Ernest spoke some English, neither Hans nor Ruth spoke English.

Arthur Ehrlich, an uncle by marriage had sponsored the children to come to Scotland and arranged a Jewish foster family for each child. Hans and Ruth were living with foster families who were brothers and they formed close relationships with their foster siblings and cousins. The children were well looked after. They remember being taken to buy clothes like the local children had, and wellington boots.

In September 1939, two days before war was declared, grandfather Erich left Berlin and arrived in Scotland, however he was classed as an "Enemy Alien" and interned on the Isle of Man.

Mother Helene and her sister Jenny remained in Berlin to settle family affairs and between 1939 and 1942 many affectionate letters arrived for Erich and the children. They were full of news and questions: are the children playing the piano, skating, wearing the clothes she sent and please, please could they write more often. She was desperate for a visa that never came for any country she could get to. After 1942 no more letters arrived. Helene died in the Litzmannstadt ghetto, probably in 1943. After his release from internment Erich bought a small house but struggled with poor mental and physical health, dying in a care home in 1953, aged 63.

Meanwhile, Hans's aunt Grete Hirsch sailed from the south of France and arrived in New Zealand in 1939. She had a domestic visa and worked as a cook for Sir Ernest Davis, mayor of Auckland. Her husband Ernst Ehrlich wasn't able to join her in New Zealand until 1948.

By 1950 Hans and Ruth had finished school and were finding life in post-war Britain challenging. Grete and Ernst, having no children, offered to have Ruth live with them in NZ where she could attend Auckland University. Hans followed soon after, studying at Teachers Training College. He anglicized his name to Herb Hirst and joined the army during this time. Becoming a captain in the Army, serving in Korea he was the first German born officer in the NZ Army since von Tempsky.

Travelling the world after the war he found a wife, Iona in Scotland and they were married by her father, a Presbyterian minister. In 1960 Herb brought his family back to New Zealand, resolving to settle here. Throughout his life he was adventurous and sporty, clever and kind and he kept in close contact with his brother Ernest and sister Ruth all his life. He was a popular man who made a number of career changes and died suddenly in 1990 aged only 60. He was survived by his brother Ernest in Scotland and his sister Ruth in the United States as well as daughter Jenny and two grandchildren Simon and Zoe.

After completing her BA at the University of Auckland Ruth won a scholarship to do a post-graduate degree in social work at Brown University in the US. For many years she worked for the Jewish Association for Services-Aged in New York. She was an accomplished musician.

Ernest has been involved with Holocaust education in Britain for the past 20 years.





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