

## Lucille Eichengreen

### Wartime Experience: Camp Survivor

I was born Cecilia Landau in Hamburg, Germany; my parents were Jews from Poland. I attended a private Jewish school for girls and was eight years old in 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany.

My father was arrested September 1939 and murdered in Dachau on January 31, 1941. We received a small cigar box with ashes from the Gestapo. My mother, younger sister, and I were deported to the Lodz Ghetto in August 1941; my mother died of starvation on July 13, 1942, and my little sister was deported and killed in Chelmno in September of that same year.

Life was filled with commonplace horrors, illness, hard work, routine beatings, and the ever-present hunger. We dreamed of bread and imagined a never-depleted warm loaf. Hunger created the dream, and hunger awakened us to reality.

At times I felt no emotion; at times I felt too much. I alone survived the Lodz Ghetto, Neuengamme and Bergen-Belsen. The British liberated me on April 15, 1945. I was totally without help. Liberation seemed to promise a return to "normal life," but it did not bring happiness. On the contrary, it revived feelings I had long suppressed in the daily struggle for both mental and physical survival--feelings of guilt, loneliness, and utter devastation. I had dreamed of a celebration with fanfare, music, dancing, and fireworks, but in its stead, there was only renewed sorrow for the dead and little hope for the living.

After the war I helped the British locate and convict forty-two Nazi war criminals, but that did not give satisfaction; I knew my only hope for survival was to leave Germany and perhaps even Europe--but without papers there was no proof at all that I existed, and it was difficult to gain admission to Palestine, England, or the United States.

I arrived in New York in March 1946. I am the author of: *From Ashes to Life* (Mercury House Publishers, 1994). It took a great deal of determination, the support of family and friends, and the will to go back to school--to be open to other options and other people, and to not be consumed with hate--in order to write this memoir.

When I got married, I knew I wanted to live. I wanted my life to amount to something, and I wanted my children to have a happy childhood.

One needs a purpose in life, and I can only hope that I accomplished these goals.