

## Ruth Geoffey

Wartime Experience: Fled to Shanghai

I was born Frances Ruth Huber on July 2, 1915 in Brunn, in the former Czechoslovakia. When World War I broke out, my father Theo Huber, an officer in the Kaiser and Koenigliche Army of Austria was recruited. My mother, Elsa Huber, went with her baby to her family in Berlin where I was raised and educated. My parents divorced when I was two.

In 1933, when Hitler came to power, I had just finished high school. The new laws made it impossible for us to go to the University, so the family decided I should develop my talent for drawing and I attended various art schools (Reimann Hausdorf and Eugene Hersh). I illustrated stories for Jewish papers and did fashion design.

I married the journalist Joseph Reiner in November 1938, and we planned to immigrate to Shanghai. We left by train on Christmas via Austria to Italy, hoping that the guards would be more lenient because of the holiday. A couple we were traveling with was taken by the guards and was never seen again. We arrived safely in Trieste with all of our hidden "treasures" which allowed us to live until our ship for Shanghai sailed. We then went to Manila, where World War II caught us. Having Austrian passports with a "J" marking me as "Sarah", we were considered "Allies of the Axis" and were not interned. However life was very difficult for Jewish refugees who were under the leadership of a Rabbi who had escaped from Germany. Because of tremendous inflation, people were forced to sell most of their belongings and to plant gardens as their main source of food.

I lost all of my family in Czechoslovakia and Germany except for my mother for whom I was able to get a ticket to Shanghai. My husband died in 1945.

In 1947 Gus Geoffey, a survivor of the Holocaust who had been in several concentration camps, came to Manila as an executive for the Far East for 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox film. We were married in 1949 and lived in Manila. I taught arts and crafts at the American School. Upon his retirement, we came to California where I started painting and attended UCLA, earning a degree in Fine Arts in 1968. Time went on and my husband became ill. I started painting Jewish subject matter to recall the times lost and revive memories of Jewish traditions. Thus the paintings that surround me in my portrait evolved.

I have a grandson and granddaughter who live with me now and take care of me in my illness.