

## Alice Staller

Wartime Experience: Sent on Kindertransport to England

I was born July 25, 1923 in Vienna Austria. After Hitler invaded Austria in 1938, life turned into a nightmare for us Jews. The first day back to my school class showed every student with a Swastika lapel pin with the exception of a handful of Jewish students. After a couple of days, I did not return to school. We had to leave our apartment because it faced a street where every window displayed a Nazi flag (and we did not).

My father spent days at the police station where he refused to sign in his passport that he would not return. I will never forget the day when he came home showing us the passport without the oversized red letter J stamped in it. This enabled him to get a visa for Switzerland. As our furniture was packed for storage in Switzerland accompanying him, he went off to Zurich to get visas for my mother and myself to follow.

Meanwhile, mother and I left to live with her sister in Vienna, who ran a 'Pension' which by this time was overrun by Jewish people leaving the countryside and coming to Vienna looking for 'ways out'. One night the men in the family living with us were picked up and taken to the police station. A cousin of mine never came back until many months later. He had been sent to Dachau and for reasons no one will ever know, he came back at night. After that he tried to cross the Austrian border. He was shot at a couple of times, but finally made it and ended up in England. His parents were later picked up and shot somewhere in Poland in the woods while trying to escape. Meanwhile, my father was not successful in getting visas for us to join him and time was running out.

My mother ended up leaving us with my aunt and uncle while she went to England on a working visa as a housekeeper. Prior to the time she had to leave, she extracted a promise from the Jewish Community organizing childrens' transports that I would be out on the next train to England, and so it happened that we both ended up there. and I was fortunate enough to get on a train of children rescued by the British government and brought to London for distribution to various locations.

Meanwhile, my father went to Paris to gather some material in his professional capacity as a journalist in economics. He was picked up there as an Enemy Alien and interned. He spent the war years in French concentration camps 'Curs' and 'Des Filles'. He survived the war and was given permission on compassionate grounds to come and visit us as my mother had just had cancer surgery. When we saw him we tried everything we could to get permission from the British government to allow him to stay with us until we could all emigrate to the United States together. This was denied over and over again. At the end of the war the British bureaucracy refused to let my father- who had survived hard labor concentration camps stay for the short time until our quotas enabling all three members of my family to emigrate the US came up.

My father had to return to Vienna. Shortly thereafter he had a heart attack, collapsed on the sidewalk and died. My mother and I continued our journey to the US alone. Many other members of our family perished in the Holocaust.

After marriage, divorce and raising three children I am now a very blessed grandmother to my first grandchild. There is a new impetus to live, to speak out against injustice, hate, ignorance and misguided directions toward life together on our planet.