

## In honour of the memory of my Mother

I was born on the 18 August 1930 in Vienna.

This is one child survivor episode out of many from Child Survivors who are still witness to the horrors through which we lived and through which we still live.

I thought I had worked through and come to a reasonable balance to my 1930/40 experiences in my late teens, early twenties.

I broke my hip at 78 and coming out of the operation back to my room at Epworth Hospital I was totally panic stricken. I thought I was at the border of Germany and Belgium and my mother and I were being taken to concentration camp. A close friend came to see me, thought I had been operated on and decided to wait for me. It was midnight by the time I returned. Her speaking made me aware that I was in Melbourne not Europe 1939. I am so grateful that she was there and brought me back to 2009.

The surgeon told me he had patients screaming, swearing and singing coming out of anesthetic but I was the first that was silently fighting strongly to get away. I asked if I had hurt anyone. 'No', was the answer. It is incredible how deep the damage lies.

My parents only truly realized the true horror after *Kristallnacht*.

My grandparents were already in Belgium. They sent information that they would pay to have local farmers take us into Belgium and then by car to Brussels. We had to cross into Belgium and go to a farmhouse.

Mummy and I left Vienna for Aachen in January 1939 to try to cross the border into Belgium. The first time we tried to cross, the German in charge let us through at once.

On our first attempt we were caught in searchlights by the Belgians and sent back to the German border. There were at least 15 people in our group. Six were sent to concentration camp as it was their second attempt. We were told not to try again as the same fate awaited us.

My mother thought our only hope was to try again. We took the tram again to the border. This time an Austrian was in charge. He said (I can still hear his voice): "Go to the forest and kill yourself and your daughter. I will not let you through." Another guard whispered to my mother: "Walk back along the tram track and come back when we are being relieved."

We walked back and I became totally hysterical, crying in



**Margit Korn and her mother**

fright. My mother was strong and wonderful. She hugged and calmed me. The tram came and the man in charge was the same one who had let us through the first time. He looked at us and said "You are still here." He let us through as soon as we arrived at the border. We made it through this time. I was violently ill in the car on the way to Brussels. I could not travel by car for many years without being sick.

We arrived at the farmhouse. I could hardly walk. My mother was petite and I was a tall, not quite 9 years old. She could not carry me. She told the farmer about the first time. He gave us clothes and told my mother he would say we were his 'deaf and dumb' wife and daughter if we were caught. He carried me. We were not caught.

Mummy was an outstanding woman. In Brussels Mummy had a visa to go as a housekeeper in England. We went to the English consulate asking what we needed to do for me to go as well. It needed P50, an immense sum in 1939.

Our family was prepared to sell jewellery and stamps but no one was buying in July 1939.

At the consulate Mummy told them she would not be going. The Consul advised Mummy to go and to leave me with my grandparents, then later to send for me.

I still feel the wonderful love I felt then as Mummy said "I would not leave my parents if it was not for my daughter's safety." He gave us both a visa.

We arrived in England three weeks before the war started.

**By Dr Margit Korn**

## Have your say

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