

OUR HISTORY

July 1999.

Written by Frieda Wolff- born Gruenspan.

My daughter Sylvia Wolff wanted to know more about our families.

I am 83 years old and I am searching my memory for details.

My parents came from Poland to Germany in 1915.

They were married in Poland . My father was born in Tarnopol

Poland July 31, 1889. My mother was born in Grodeck,

Poland , October 26, 1889, Their name was,

Riven Gruenspan and Sara Leah Gruenspan born Altkorn.

My sister Klara was born May 13, 1915 in Berlin,Germany.

I , Frieda was born July 11, 1916 also in Berlin.

My brother Max was born July 28, 1918 also in Berlin.

My youngest brother Sally was born in 1919 in Berlin too.

He was 6 years old , when he was killed by a truck

running over the street. I only remember that he was

a very sweet child . I was only 9 years old , when he

died and was buried at the Jewish cemetery in Berlin-

Weissensee. We have only one family picture where he

was in . He loved his sister Klara and called her Lala.

Klara was the oldest of us and took him under her wings.

My parents were poor , but worked hard to make an

honest living . We had a happy childhood and did not

know we were poor, we did not know any better.

My mother was a wonderful goodhearted person and tried her best to make a happy home. My father was a man of all trades, he was a locksmith , a shoemaker and repairman, a trader on the roads and markets, He went to fair's made a stand and sold candies and chocolates of different kinds. When we got older , we went with him and helped him selling.

We went to public school in Berlin, Germany and finished grade school. When we were 14 years old we started to find a job as an apprentice .It paid little wages for 3 years .We learned on the job and worked ourselves up. That was the way , starting in Germany to work.

My sister Klara worked in a clothing factory , buying and selling . I worked in a toileteries and perfume company . I stayed there for 8 years and learned everything from filing, bookkeeping , billing, packing etc.etc.

My brother Max started learning plumbing, but came home from work too dirty. My mother told him : you need a cleaner trade , he had not too much choice at that time and he learned tailoring. He became a good tailor in later life.

All the money we earned, we gave to our parents .

They needed it for food and clothings for us.

We just kept a little spending money for personal things and streetcar fare, buses or subway.

It was a law, that the boss had to give us three times off a week to go to afternoon classes, while we were apprentices to finish junior high school.

We also went twice a week to Hebrew school and got a good Jewish education. I learned typing , shorthand bookkeeping and arithmetic. I worked many years at the company in the billing department.

The Hitler regime started rising in 1933 and it got worse by the year. In 1938 the Gestapo started to get the Jewish people out of the homes and destroyed businesses . First the Polish Jews then others who came from other countries , who settled in Germany. We were citizen of Germany, but that did not matter.

It was called arisieren ,cleansing of the Jews.

My parents had the Polish passport and in October 1938 the Gestapo came at night to our house and told our father and brother to get some warm clothings and come with them.

We did not know, what was going on, it was all done secretly, My mother found out later . that all the Jewish people , they gathered over many days and weeks, were herded like animals ,very crowded , by trucks and trains to camps and Ghettoes in Krakau,Poland. Many people got sick transporting them.We got only one postcard from them from the Krakau camp.

The company I worked for , they were Jewish , had to give up the business to Hitler , got very little for a striving business and got only a small amount for their whole company. We all lost our jobs and that was it. The company was given to the Hitler regime. I found another job for six months. But then the Jewish committee told us, it was time to get out of Germany. We had not much money , so the Jewish committee and with the help of the U.N.N.R.A. , like the Red Cross the(United Nations for Refugees Assistance) chartered 2 ships from Italy . People who needed to get out of Germany , could go on the ships to travel to Shanghai, China. This was the only country to let people in without affidavits. Other countries need to sponsor people or send affidavits, to get in.

So thousands of people went to Shanghai by train and ship. We only could take our personal belongings. bedding , no furnitures , and \$ 10.-- in cash. The values they had , gold ,money , businesses, properties etc. were left behind. The Gestapo took all.

My husbands father had a wholesale ^{car}slaughtery in Berlin, had many employees and Richard and his brother Hans worked together with their father in the business. We stayed in camps under poor conditions, no mosquito nets or cooling . We endured heat without aircondition. Shanghai is a tropical land, cold weather with very little heating, we had in severe weather coalstoves for warming. About 20.000 people came from all over Europe, Germany, Poland ,Hungary ,Russia ,Italy ,France etc. where Hitler occupied the contries, to settle in Shanghai,China. Before I tell you about the life in Shanghai,I have to give some more details of our family. My sister Klara got married to Joseph (Josel) Hirsch in 1938. They were really in love. They left with the first ship to Shanghai end of 1938. I was still living with my mother . I was engaged to

to Richard Wolff for one year. We got married May 21, 1939 before we left for Shanghai, May 31, 1939.

My mother got a notice from the Hitler Regime , to get out of Germany. She still had the Polish nationality but was a German resident. We wanted her to come with us, but she said: my place is with my husband and young son, who was 18 years old , when picked up,

At that time , we did not know, how bad it would be in Poland. I could not talk my mother in , to come with us to Shanghai. I made all of it ready for her taking care of all the paperworks, dissolving her small apartment , packed and labeled everything to the Ghetto in Krakau, Poland.

We left May 31, 1939 for Shanghai, My mother left very soon too, going by train to Krakau, Poland.

My mother said farewell to us at the trainstation on the way over Hamburg and then by train to Genova Italy , to get on the ship to Shanghai,

I never forget her face, she was smiling at us, waving good bye, that was the last time, I saw her alive. not knowing , if we would see her, or my father and brother again. She did not know, what was waiting for her-----

They lived for a while in the Krakau Ghetto , but later were shipped off to different Koncentration camps in Poland , to starve and to die. About 6 Million Jewish people were killed , till the war was over and were liberated from the american soldiers.

Young people ,like my brother Max had to do hard labor day and nights with very little food. They died young from exhaustion and starvation. Older people were put to death in Gasschambers. My parents died in Bergen-Belsen, Poland in 1942. My brother saw them going to the Gasschamber, they all thought that were showers. not knowing instead of water, gas came out.

My brother wanted to go with his mother , but she said: if you come out alive , make your own life and look for your sisters.

When we went on the train, going to Shanghai. We were 11 members of the Wolff family. My husbands parents Salomon Wolff and wife Clara Wolff born Chaskel , Richard and myself, Richards sister Minnie Wreschner , husband Martin and young son Gerd, who was 5 years old born February 14, 1934 . His Grandfather Salomon Wolff , was born on the same date February 14, 1878.

An Uncle Willy Wolff and aunt Flora Wolff , their son Heinz Wolff and wife Jenny Wolff , Arriving after four weeks from the ship , we were put in camps in Shanghai , China . People were prepared for us and the camps were ready . We got food from a big kitchen. The committee provided it, through the help of the UNNRA like the red cross and people who came before us, worked in the kitchen .We had to stand in line to get the food . The food was not too good , to cook for so many people , but it was edible , but who was complaining,we were glad to get something.

My sister Klara with her husband and his father were then already 6 months in Shanghai and slowly, they got one room rented in a chinese house. My brother in law Josel, learned the Hotel business in Berlin ,(Hotel Adlon, which was very famous there) and found a job in a Hotel in Shanghai.

My sister Klara was always good in knitting and crocheting and worked long hours at home , for a knitting company to earn some extra money .They did a little better than we.

It was very hard to find a job in Shanghai , because the chinese people were knitted families and did not take anybody into their businesses. So in order to survive, many immigrants who had professions trade or other qualities, started to build some businesses , stores , restaurant with the help of money, the lucky people, who had some relatives elsewhere in the states or England , Israel who went before Hitler times. Over the years , we all lived in one district, could make a living on our own.

My husband Richard took odd jobs, because for men it was hard to find jobs. I was a waitress for 6 years in two different restaurants and made pretty good money, but it was hard work. We all shared a house. Richards parents ,my husband and I. Richards sister Minnie and her husband and son and later on Richards brother and wife , who came later in 1940 with a 3 months old baby. We all shared the expenses and got along alright. My mother in law was the cook and we helped.

In 1945 I got pregnant and we had a son. He was very small and I was told , he could not hold food too good. I had to cook special food , like cream of wheat with my milk and feed him with a small tube, it was very hard on me ; but it was wrong to release the baby too early from the hospital. We were poor Immigrants and life was not that important.. I think there was something wrong with his digestive system. I had him home three weeks , but then he got sick , we went to the hospital and he died in a day. I was exhausted and got very depressed for a half year. His name was Barry Steven, weighted 5 1/2 pound when born. Family told us later to have another baby and after two years our ~~son~~ Ronald Steven was born. Times got a little better for us , my husband got a better job at the American air base, he was the jeep driver to bring the people in from the airplane to the terminal. We moved to a bigger room , never had an apartment , just rented from the owner of the house.

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We stayed about 10 years in Shanghai. It was a hard primitive life many sicknesses in a tropical land under poor conditions, heat without aircondition, cold without much heating . We were a family and that helped, we survived together.

In 1949 the chinese people wanted all the white people out, and there was a threat that the communists were coming .We were told to try to get out of Shanghai.

Many people who had relatives in America got affidavits, were able to get out. My sisters husband had a former friend from Germany , who went earlier to Guatemala; sent an affidavit to him and my sister Klara. When they left in 1948 she was pregnant and had her daughter Lilian on the way to Guatemala, in Panama City and the girl became an american citizen. My sister had a difficult pregnancy , had too much fluid in her body , was hospitalized and treated to get rid of it. She gave normal birth to her daughter, but some fluid remained in her inner ears and

had all her life trouble with equilibrium, she was treated a long time , not much helped and on the end she learned to live with it.

They made their home in Guatemala and her husband found a good job in one of the Hotels, later on in an elegant Restaurant, made a good living, but worked hard day and nights. Her daughter Lilian de Altalef is still living in Guatemala City, got married , her husband David is an architect , they have two sons. now 22 years old and 20 years old. Joe (Joseph and Daniel.)

Now the Wolff's Family:

We had no way to get out of Shanghai at this time and many thousands of people too. So we were helped again and 2 ships were chartered to go to Israel . So thousand of people went by ship to the land. Again it was a hard time, because many emmigrants came from all over the world to freedom , in 1949.

In the meantime we heard through my uncle in Oklahoma that my brother Max survived from concentration camp

and our uncle Harry Gasser (the brother of my mother)
and a cousin Otto Hart brought him over from Germany.
He settled in Oklahoma City , got married and had a son
Ronald. My brother shortened his name, the family told
him to americanize his name was Gruenspan, to Green.
We got an affidavit from him and his cousin Otto Hart.
In Order to come to the States you are on a waiting quota
number and depends were you were born. My husband was born
in Posen at that time it was Poland and the polish
quota was very small . So we waited & waited -----
We lived 4 ½ year in Jerusalem , our daughter was born
September 5, 1951 in Jerusalem ,Israel , our son was
born in Shanghai August 19th, 1947 in a Jewish hospital,
his brother and wife , daughter and a son born in
Shanghai August 1, 1948 in a house together.
My husband and his brother Hans worked in a construction
business and did hard work. They got the job through a
from Otto Hart
brother who lived in Jerusalem. Our cousin Otto Hart
wrote him, to give them work. My husband could tolerate

the work , but his brother Hans said," I die here, I cannot take it ". He went back to Germany with his wife and 2 children . He did fine, he was a business man all his life, was in the cattle business buying and selling . He picked up, where he left and did very good moneywise.

We never wanted to go back to Germany, to many bad memories and stayed on in Jerusalem. Waited for the Visa, to go to America. Somebody from ^{the} committee told us, if we go back to Germany, we can apply on the German quota in my name, because I was born in Germany and they have larger quotas.

We had not much to loose, so we packed up and went with my mother in law to Germany. (My Husbands father Salomon Wolff) died January 1951 in Jerusalem of a stroke. At that time we did not know too much about high blood pressure , it was not treated and that was the cause of his death.

He was a wonderful person, never a bad word, very good nature-d , He was 73 years old , when he died. He was buried in Jerusalem, we have a picture of his grave.

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In 1953 we went back to Germany , by ship to Italy and train to Germany. Richards brother found an apartment for us and we waited another 2 years till we got the visa to come to america. Finally we were ready to go to Oklahoma City, his mother stayed with his brother and family in Berlin.

Her son wanted her to stay on in Berlin.

So we parted and arrived on a long trip to Oklahoma City.

My brother Max was there, we stayed a short time in his

house and then rented a house nearby and after a year

we bought a house on the same street my brother and family lived. Through my brother , my husband found a job

in one week , he is a professional butcher ,at the

Schwabs Meat packing company, where he worked for

17 years till he retired. He worked hard and made over-

time for extra earnings and we got along alright.

I was a housewife all the time, took care of my husband and children and saved at home, did everything myself.

The rest you can read in the other papers which I wrote

many years back.

Richards sister Minnie and her Husband Martin Wreschner and son were lucky. They had the German quota and a good will organisation took a lot of Refugees to America. They settled in San Francisco. Richards sister died young was 49 years old, had cancer and when they found it, it was too late. She suffered many years.

Her husband remarried , it was the friend of her , she saw a good man , They were married 25 years and over the years both died of illnesses. Their son Gerd, got married, they have twin boys and another boy.

They are all grown up, the twins got married and have children. I don't know too much about the younger one.

With time, we got away from each other and don't hear too much of them.

Coming back to Richards brother ^{Hans} , he died of diabetes

he did no take care of himself ,his wife ^{Herta} our sister-

in law is still alive in Germany and lives in a Retirement home in Berlin , is 85 years old , but not in good health.

Their daughter Bela got married, has 3 sons. She lost her husband very early, he died after a bypass-heart-surgery, she was a young widow, never remarried.

She has a knitting factory for many, many years and her two sons are in with her in the business.

Their son Garry Wolff is married and has two daughters. He has 2 stores in mens clothings.

Richards uncle Willy and aunt Flora, he was the brother of Richards father , also went from Shanghai back to Germany. Their son, Richards cousin was with us in Shanghai, went from Shanghai to Argentine. His wife had a sister there , who emigrated earlier there . they sent them an Affidavit and they lived many years there, had a daughter .The baby was premature , but was a little retarded and blind on one eye. In earlier time, they did not have all the treatments, to save premature babies. After many years of hard life in Argentine , they went back to Germany .They died later on of old age and illnesses. Their daughter is still

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alive in a Jewish nursing home. We always stayed in touch with them. Onkel Willy had another son, ^{and family} they got killed at Hitler time and a daughter went to England. She is still alive.

Richards mother had a sister Lina Lewin , they lived in Germany ^{she and} in a smaller town, her husband and daughter got an affidavit from a friend and went to Santiago de - Chile, right from Germany. The daughter got married there and has 3 children .One daughter was a nurse and went to the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. After many years she brought her sister over , but her brother stayed in Chile , is an engineer and is doing very well. Later on her mother(Tante Lina) came to Jerusalem too, where she lived with her daughter; she was 98 years old when she died. She was a wonderful person. I knew her.---

That's all the family from my husbands side.

Richards mother was not too happy in Germany in her sons home, she wanted always to live with us, she was like a mother to me . So in 1962 , I went to Germany to pick her

Cont;

up to bring her to Oklahoma . She was 84 years old
and she lived with us till 91years old , when she died.
So we lived in Oklahoma City and made it our home.
Many years the Jewish people were trying to make
a living , wherever they landed and did not talk
too much of the past, because we wanted to forget.
After about 25 years people ask question and things
came to the surface. A new Generation and Government
in Germany grew up and they wanted to make good,
what Hitler destroyed. We got some restitution for
the suffering, loss of livelyhood, money and gold
they took from all the people. It took many years,
paperwork , red tape etc. till we got a small pension.
Also Israel got help for all the refugees , who
found rescue there.
X when we were living before Hitler time
We worked in Germany many years and paid taxes. When
we retired we got social Security pension from Germany.
In order to get it, we had to pay some more money , to get
the certain years which were requierd to be able to get

an old age pension, at 62 years old for women and 65 years old for men. So things got a little more comfortable in our later years.

Just some things I still remember:

My father was a religious man and we celebrated all the high holidays. My mother was a good cook and had some friends over. My father loved musik , theaters and took us to shows, circuses and Jewish plays. We went to our Synagogue on Fridays and my mother always made a nice friday night dinner. We went to Hebrew schools for many years and got a good jewish education , when we were young at school age.

In Shanghai over the years , we had a Synagogue a jewish hospital and a jewish school. A very rich man , an Egypt native, sponsored the school. His name was : Kadorie; and was very known in Shanghai.

People who had friends or relatives in other countries helped us, send care packages with ~~non~~ perishable goods

food and clothings etc. etc. My husband had a friend in England , who moved there earlier, send us money and food. He remembered, that he needed one time some help from the Wolff family, was very thoughtful . He invited us three times to come to England,while we lived in Oklahoma. He passed away, but his wife is still living in London and a daughter too , who got married.

My sister and family and my brother send something to us, while we lived in Israel.

So ,when times got bad in Guatemala and they were in need of help, we helped, because we never forgot , that they helped us a little bit, too.

" That's all I can remember "

Frieda Wolff.

Frieda Wolff, living now in a

nice Retirement home in

Oklahoma City, Okla. U.S.A.

Many Years later, when we visited Germany, my brother-in law Joseph (he was called Josel) ask me to visit his mother . I did , she was a very fine beautiful elderly woman . She remarried and had a daughter, Josel's stepsister, but they never got in touch, because they lived already in Guatemala, Central Amerika.

My sister did not get along too good with her father-in law . He was jealous of her, sharing his son with her. He was his only son. They lived together in Guatemala, time was hard and they shared the same home . He died in 1970[?] in Guatemala. I visited my sister many times in Guatemala and she came to visit us in Oklahoma City and liked America. We did many trips to show her part of our country.

My sister died January 6, 1999 at the age of almost 84 years old. I miss her very much. We were very close.

Her husband preceded her in 1975 , he had cancer.

My husband Richard died in 1993 in Oklahoma.

We lived 42 years in the same house in Oklahoma City.

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Some names and dates I still remember :

My mothers maiden name was Sara Leah Altkorn,

My fathers name was Riven Gruenspan,

My sisters daughter 's name is Lilian de Altalef,

Lilian named after her Grandmother Sara Leah (the L)

Richard's brother Hans was 3 years older , then him,

was born October 26 th, 1904 .

His wife Herta was born March 4, 1914.

My husband Richard was born in Schubin, Posen

June 29, 1907 . He was 9 years older than I am,

but looked younger and kept younger, he was a very

strong man., died when he was 86 years old.

Bela Cuckierman born Wolff , the daughter of Hans

and Herta Wolff , was born in Berlin , June 11, 1940.

Gerd. Wreschner the son of Minnie Wreschner (Wolff), sister

of Richard Wolff, was born 1902 and was the oldest of them,

Gerd was born in Germany February 14, 1934, the same date as

his Grandfather Salomon Wolff, Richards father, Febr.14, 1878.