PART OF THE FAMILY

CHRISTADELPHIANS, THE KINDERTRANSPORT, AND RESCUE FROM THE HOLOCAUST

• JASON HENSLEY •

middle-class Germans felt in "economic and political liberalism" continued to erode.[6] For some, it seemed as though the only way to get out of the economic crisis was by some radical means.

In May 1931, the *Oesterreichische Creditanstalt,* Austria's largest bank, collapsed. This event was felt in Germany too, because, as the bank collapsed, it withdrew 288 million Reichsmarks as loans from German banks.[7] By the middle of June, many banks in Germany were forced to close. This was exacerbated by the fact that a few days earlier, on June 5, German Chancellor Heinrich Bruning had announced that Germany would no longer pay reparations on the Young Plan. With all this uncertainty in Germany, more foreign money that had been invested in the country was also withdrawn.[8] Consequently, more banks collapsed.

On July 13, 1931, *Danat,* a large German bank, closed its doors, and many attempted to withdraw their money from all German banks.[9] The German government then intervened and ordered all banks to close for two days; during those two days, another large German bank, *Dresdner,* declared bankruptcy.[10]

These bank failures further destroyed any confidence that Germans had in their government and the economy and were used by Adolf Hitler to demonstrate that a change in government and policy was essential. On July 31, 1931, *The New York Times* reported Hitler's reaction to the crisis, which he had published in his newspaper, *Voelkischer Beobachter*:

> 'Never in my life,' he wrote, 'have I been in such high spirits and inwardly so thoroughly at peace, so entirely satisfied, as in these days. . . . The broad masses of the public have seen for themselves, perhaps for the first time, who was right—the Young Plan swindlers of the

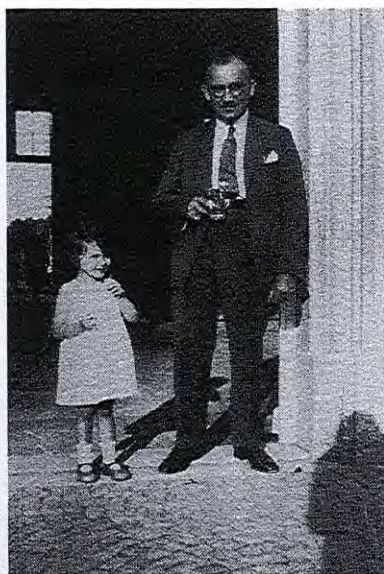
> Social Democratic, Centrist and affiliated parties, or th
> men of the Young Plan referendum.[11]

While the German economic world collapsed, Adolf Hitle could see that the pieces were slowly coming together t enable his rise to power.

Beginnings

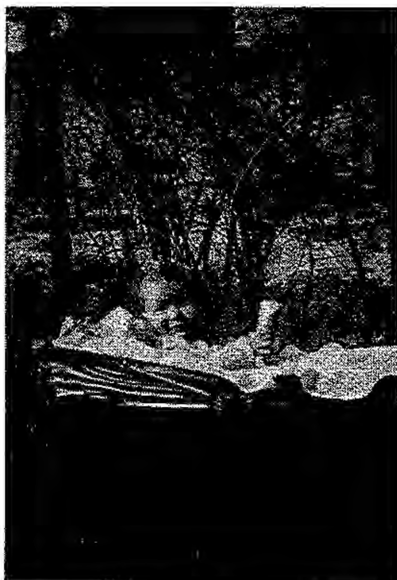
Suse Margot Herz was born on May 6, 1931, in Worms Germany—directly in the midst of this financial crisis. Yet she knew nothing of it. Her childhood was comfortable, carefree, and surrounded by family members who loved her.

The Herz family was middle-class and owned a hardware store in Worms, named "The Herz Brothers," where both of Suse's parents worked. Albert Herz and his brother, Ferdinand, opened the store in 1919. The store and the Herz apartment

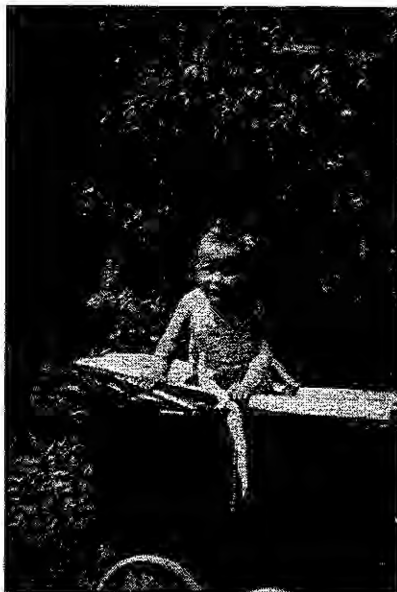


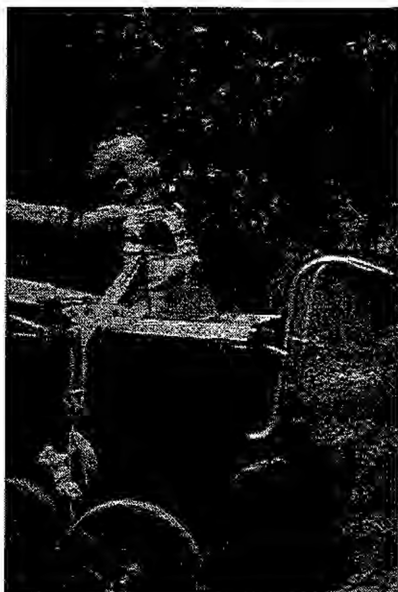
Albert and Flora Herz with Edith.

were connected; the apartment stood on the opposite end of the courtyard. They were a family of four: Albert Herz and



Suse Herz, 1932.





Flora Herz were Suse's parents, and Edith Herz, four years older than Suse, was her sister.

Life for Suse was very good. Though the economy in Germany was collapsing when she was born, her family's standard of living remained high. Although both her parents were quite strict—especially when it came to education—Suse felt well loved. Albert Herz held strong values and beliefs, one of which was his certainty that because he had fought in the First World War for Germany and had received the Iron Cross, he would be spared from any radical persecution against the Jewish people. Flora Herz was an extremely strong woman with a character and opinions to match. If something needed to be done, even if she had no interest in doing it, she would see that it got done. Both Albert and Flora kept a welcoming home, propping the door open on Sundays so that anyone could drop by. There was always lively conversation and laughter filling the house.

Suse's family celebrated all of the Jewish holidays together, typically at her maternal grandparents' house. She remembered her parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents all being there. At Passover, there were stacks and stacks of matzah; for Rosh Hashanah, there were huge plum cakes and crumb cakes—and it was all prepared and made before she had awakened that morning! She remembered simply being astonished and wondering where it all had come from.

For the Herz family, the festivals were not just a time for family, but also a time to remember their religion. Albert Herz belonged to the synagogue at Worms, the oldest synagogue in Germany, and well-known in Judaism because of its connections to Rashi, the famous Jewish scholar—and the Herz family were active synagogue members. Every Friday and Saturday, they attended Sabbath services there, and Edith

belonged to the children's choir. At her Jewish school, Suse was taught her prayers and how to host a Passover Seder.

Education was extremely important for the Herz family. Suse remembered being berated when she did not bring home the best marks. Edith, in her autobiography, wrote similarly:

> My parents wanted Suse and me to become broadly educated, so that if and when we immigrated to another country—America, Palestine or wherever we could be safe—we would be prepared for anything that might come our way. In addition to Hebrew, Chumash, Talmud, and English, we were taught the basic subjects.[12]
>
> My parents firmly believed in education. I can still hear them saying, 'Whatever you know up here,' (in your brain) 'it's very easy to carry.' When I graduated from this school . . . my father insisted that I go on to the equivalent of high school. With no such school available in Duisburg, I traveled one hour by train to the Javne Jewish School in Cologne. This was the best time of my life then. I loved learning, and we were taught a variety of subjects from some of the finest teachers.[13]

Edith relished her studies and did well in school, both of which pleased her parents. Suse wanted to be just like Edith but not just in school; being four years younger than Edith, Suse always saw Edith as the one she should emulate:

> [I] want[ed] to always do what my older sister did; she's four-and-a-half years older than I. Of course in those years, that was a lot of difference. She had a lot of different privileges than I did, and I didn't like that. I wanted to be just like her.[14]

Edith and Suse at a wedding.

Despite the squabbles that sometimes arise between siblings, Suse and Edith had a strong relationship all throughout their lives. In her autobiography, Edith lovingly described Suse and showed that although Suse longed so much to be like her older sister, Suse had a character all of her own.

> What haven't I told you about my dear sister Suse? . . . We were as different as night and day, as two sisters born to the same parents can often be. When I came home from school, I looked neat as a pin. When Suse walked in the door, her backpack was off the shoulder, her stockings were sagging, and her shoelaces were untied. Her homework was always messy. I would erase it from the slate before my mother had a chance to check it, because I knew she would get angry if it looked the way it did.[15]
>
> She had a wonderful sense of humor and a dry wit, even at a young age. Back in Worms, a heavy lady came

Suse Herz with classmates at the beginning of the school year. Suse is the third from the right.

into our hardware store looking to buy a chamber pot. Suse asked her, with a little twinkle in her eye, 'What size?' She couldn't have been older than 7![16]

In another instance, Edith told two other stories about Suse's humor: both taking place when Suse was six. Edith remembered their grandmother shaking her head at Suse and asking: "How come you always fall on your knees?" Suse responded, "Let me fall how I'm used to it." In the second instance, Suse and her grandfather were getting ready to go to the synagogue. Grandpa tried to hurry Suse along: "Hurry up. Let's go, child. I'm sitting on hot coals." Suse, not understanding the problem, simply said to her grandfather: "Well, sit on another chair."[17]

Suse Herz was a dear child, one with a strong imagination, a fun sense of humor, and a loving family. She played cards with her friends, was taught how to sing by her mother because her father could not carry a tune and was afraid that she would not be able to do so either, and went to pick white cherries on Sunday mornings when it was the season.

She was a typical child with a happy childhood.

Antisemitism

But then, in Suse's own words, "Childhood melted away."[18]

At school, Suse remembered being prevented from playing with the non-Jewish children. She simply did not understand what was happening. Suddenly, students at school were no longer allowed to associate with her. Parents snatched their children away in hopes that they had prevented them from interacting with Suse. Multiple times, she was chased home from school by children who were throwing stones at her and yelling, "Dirty Jew!" and "We don't want you here!"[19]

Edith had similar experiences. After Hitler was elected, she, along with the other Jewish students, was placed in the back of the classroom. She received tardy notices even though she came to class on time. For the first time in her life, she came home with Ds on her report card despite the fact that she had done all of her work well. Albert and Flora, who placed such a strong emphasis on education, were in shock that their daughter was receiving terrible marks simply because she was Jewish.

For Suse, life had changed: "Things were serious; it wasn't all fun and games anymore."[20] She was still a child who had a jolly and amiable personality, but her childhood was disappearing. And she was no longer carefree.

In 1935, Suse and Edith were prohibited from attending public school, so they went to the Jewish school in Worms. Edith wrote about how life became progressively harder:

> Things began to get worse for the Jewish citizens of Worms. The Jewish School was denied tax exemption, mass arrests of Jews occurred, Jewish doctors lost their professional status, and Jewish lawyers were disbarred. Special identity cards were issued, all Jewish passports had to be stamped with a large red letter 'J' and, as a further measure, an ordinance was enacted which required all Jews to adopt Sarah or Israel as an additional name to clearly identify them as Jews.[21]

The law regarding the name change was issued in August 1938, and all the Jewish passports were stamped with a "J" in the autumn of that year.[22] Albert Herz brazenly refused to change his name: he was a man of values and religion. He had a Hebrew name, he claimed: Albert Zadok Herz, *zadok* being the Hebrew word that translates to "righteous" in English.

For the whole family, shopping became extremely difficult. When they walked into stores, they could feel the atmosphere change. Shopkeepers did not want to sell to them. And the converse was true, too: the hardware store was boycotted. Repeatedly, the Herz family woke up to find red swastikas or slogans painted all over the sidewalk in front of the shop, saying things such as "Dirty Jew" and "Don't buy here."[23] And repeatedly, Albert Herz woke up in the middle of the night and went out to the front of the store to scrub away the paint, attempting to rid his business of its stigma. At times, Flora, Edith, and Suse joined Albert in the scrubbing once the morning had come.

Eventually, the hardware store was moved from Main Street to a back street in hopes that the Nazis would leave the business alone. Albert and Flora also made the difficult decision to attempt to immigrate. Flora's parents still lived in Germany, and she struggled to fathom leaving the country without them. But life in Germany had changed so dramatically, and this was not a way to raise children.

To apply for a visa, Albert made the journey from Worms to Stuttgart, a city about an hour and a half south. After applying, he was given the disheartening information that he was number 49,000 on the waiting list for a visa.

Then, November 9–10, 1938 was *Kristallnacht*. Life changed inalterably.

Kristallnacht

On *Kristallnacht*, the synagogue in Worms was reduced to rubble, Jewish shops were destroyed, and 87 Jewish men from Worms were arrested. Suse described that night as follows:

> *[Kristallnacht]* is something that is etched in my memory, and of course will be forever. My father had been saying *Kaddish* for my grandparents, my mother's parents who had died, and ran home quickly to tell us that there would be no school that morning . . . that the synagogue was on fire. And my mother was in the store with my father at the time, and she ran upstairs and gathered my sister and me, and we went to hide in the attic: a terrifying experience because it was the shattering of glass; it was the terror of not knowing what was going to happen to us. We were all crouching together, the three of us, not being able to move . . . and seven-and-a-half years old—things like going to the bathroom, you know, just trying to keep still. My mother wanted to go and save what she could and here she was with two little girls; what was she going to do? She stayed with us. Cold, basically hungry, and then after a long time, coming downstairs and viewing what had been done to our house by other people. . . . A cupboard in the kitchen was completely smashed . . . I can still remember it . . . seeing all the glass, all your belongings on the street, having to gather them up. And then of course watching my father being taken away, not knowing where, and there we were, in this mess, my mother with two little girls.[24]

Edith described the terror and gave a few more details regarding what had happened with their father. Just before *Kristallnacht,* the son of Flora's vegetable vendor gave their family a tip: "Go away. Go away. You will all be imprisoned and everything will happen to you."[25] He was a Nazi stormtrooper, knew about what was going to happen, and was absolutely forbidden from conveying that information to their family.

Nevertheless, because he had done so, their family was able to develop a plan. Because it was more likely that the men would be arrested, Albert would leave his family and go into hiding temporarily, returning to them once the danger had passed. After learning that the synagogue was on fire, Albert warned his family and then fled. The rest of the family, meanwhile, hid in the attic. When the violence was over, they left their hiding place, surveyed the damage, and wondered what had happened to their beloved husband and father:

> Where was my father? Somewhere in the forest . . . cold, hungry and fearful for us. After a while, my father returned to the apartment; but, unfortunately, a little too early. Moments later, two SA men burst through the door, pushed me aside, and arrested my father. No crime had been committed. He was Jewish, that's all. So there we were, Mother and Suse and I, just standing there in the wreckage of our home. Not a window left. Not a lock on the door. The furniture was smashed, upside down, and strewn all over the apartment and in the street. The trolley car that came down our street couldn't help but run over our bedding, and hundreds of feathers slowly drifted upward into the sky. I can still see the crooked keys on the busted cash registers. Utter devastation. We had no way to contact anyone. It was now just the three of us, bewildered and fearful of the unknown: a young woman not knowing whether she would ever see her husband again, and her two juvenile daughters not knowing if they would ever again see their father. Somehow we were able to board up the windows and clean up the entire store and apartment. I can't recall any friends or neighbors helping.[26]

After attempting to pick up the pieces of their shattered business, home, and family, Flora, Edith, and seven-year-old Suse tried to make the best of the tragedy. Each day, Flora

summoned up her courage and went to the police station in an attempt to free her husband. But it was to no avail. November 12 was Albert's 50th birthday, and he spent it in jail.

One day, when Flora came to the police station, she found that he was no longer there—but neither had he been set free. Instead, like so many of those innocent Jewish men who had been arrested on *Kristallnacht,* Albert Zadok Herz was taken to Buchenwald concentration camp.[27]

At this point, Suse cried daily—for her father and for their ruined home and because of the unpredictability and the fear. To allow Suse some space away from the destruction, in hopes that she would be able to recover, Flora sent Suse to Frankfurt, about an hour north of Worms. There, for a couple of weeks while she recovered, Suse lived with Herta and Toni, Flora's sisters, whose apartment had not sustained any damage during *Kristallnacht.* She returned home before Albert was released from Buchenwald.

After a number of weeks, many of the men who were taken during *Kristallnacht* were released, Albert Herz being one of them. Suse remembered clearly the day that he returned:

> By the time he came back . . . he didn't even look like our father . . . the weight he had lost, the stress and the strain, the dirt. . . . Word had gotten to us that he was coming home; we had this big gate that . . . the car was driven into next to the store, and we waited for his familiar knock that night that he came home . . . the middle of the night. . . . I remember standing behind that gate with my mother and my sister.[28]

Edith described her father's return home in a similar way. Albert Herz was a different man when he came home from the terror of Buchenwald:

> But when he came home, I hardly recognized him—he had aged 10 years. My father came back a broken man, but never talked about it, at least not to me. He saw things . . . he knew the worst was yet to come, and he knew in his heart that he would never make it through.[29]

The Kindertransport

Eventually, it became clear that the four of them could no longer stay in Worms. Albert and Flora were now prohibited from owning a business, so they sold what they could of the hardware store and lived off the money. While Albert and Edith stayed in Worms dissolving the business, Flora and Suse moved to Duisburg, about three hours north of Worms, where Flora's aunt and uncle lived.

After all these experiences, Flora and Albert Herz contacted organizers in Berlin, working with World Jewish Relief, to seek places for both their girls on the Kindertransport. Albert Herz, though he had lived through Buchenwald, did not feel very comfortable with this prospect—the idea that his daughters would go to live with non-Jews was not an idea that he favored. However, when he argued against it, Flora reminded him that he had not registered them at the American Embassy to see whether they could somehow get out, because he had mistakenly thought that his World War I record would keep them safe. Flora, with her iron will, pushed hard for immigration, saying that they needed to save whom they could from their family. Eventually, Albert agreed.

Within a couple of weeks, it was time to leave for England.

> going to do? He wasn't going to agree; this wasn't anything Jewish.[46]

Flora agreed, but Albert, being so religious, was not happy with the idea of his daughter attending a non-Jewish service. He raised objections, but the two families eventually decided that Suse would attend the meeting with the Parrys. Deborah Rosenstock explained why it was so important for her mother to attend:

> They never attempted to change her religion, and Auntie Florrie even asked my grandparents in a letter if they would be ok if my mom attended Church with them so she could fit in and be family. . . .They treated her like family.[47]

The Parrys all went to the meeting on Sundays. They did not want Suse to feel different or excluded. To this end, when Suse arrived in England, all of her clothes were German clothes—they were not the types of things that English schoolgirls wore. George and Florrie, though they were not people of great means, bought her English clothes so that she would fit in with all of the young girls around her.

But in a difficult balance, the Parrys wanted to make sure that Suse did not forget her heritage. She came with them to the Christadelphian functions, and she started to acclimate to English culture, but they always wanted her to remember that she was Jewish. Again, Deborah Rosenstock said:

> They were concerned that she fit in . . . never trying to convert her in any way, but to maintain her Judaism. When they could get together with other Jewish children, they did get together with them. My Auntie Florrie was really quite remarkable.[48]

In fact, Suse explained further just how hard George and Florrie tried to keep her bonded with her heritage. George Parry sought out opportunities for her to connect with Judaism:

> My foster father was the one who found out that the . . . liberal synagogue in London was doing correspondence courses in Jewish history and registered me for that. It had nothing to do with anybody else. They tried to get ahold of anybody . . . any Jewish people in Coventry—nobody came forward unfortunately. My foster parents had tried.[49]

For the first few months of her stay with the Parrys, Suse was able to correspond with her parents. But when war broke out between Britain and Germany, on September 3, 1939, the letters stopped. Adding to that trauma, Suse was a German living in England:

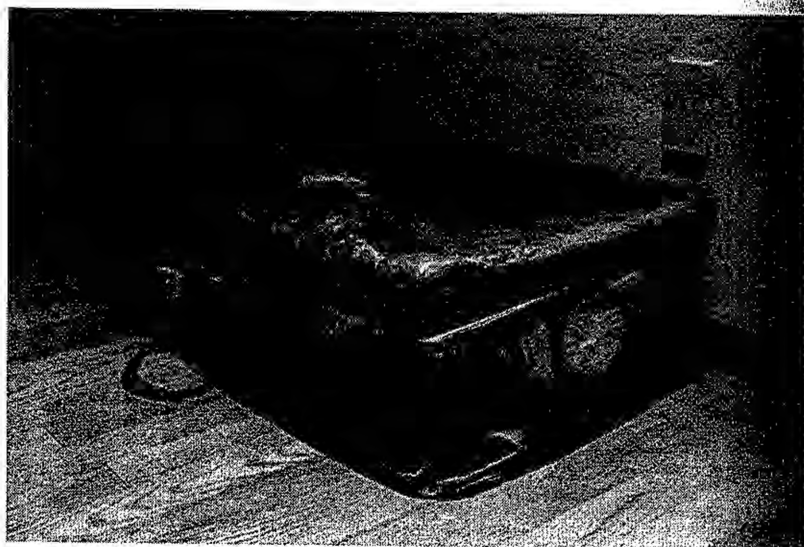
A birthday party that the Parrys threw for Suse. Suse is the second from the right.

It was July 25, 1939. There was approximately one month left before Great Britain declared war on Nazi Germany, so Suse was on one of the last transports out of the country.

Because their family was currently living in two separate locations, Suse and Flora took a train from Duisburg to meet with Albert and Edith in Worms. There, Suse said goodbye to her father. She would never see him again.

One parent was allowed to go with her as far as Mainz, and it was decided that it would be Flora. Once they arrived in Mainz and waited for the train bound for Holland, Suse saw another side of her tenacious and determined mother. She described the parting:

> The train pulled in, and that's the first time that I saw my mother flinch. The first two cars of my train were babies in hammocks . . . my mother saw that, and that



The suitcase that Suse took with her to England.

> was the first time in all those horrible months that I saw her flinch . . . and she was going to put her daughter onto that train. . . . The last thing that she said to me was 'Be a good girl. Whoever you're going to go to, help in the household and just be a good girl' . . . this is the way that I was brought up. You do the proper thing all the time.[30]

As they parted, Suse's mother was most concerned that Suse grow up to be a respectable woman: a woman who did what was right, regardless of the cost. In those parting words, Flora conveyed what was most important to their family.

Suse sat on the train alone. It was not that she had chosen to sit apart from Edith; it was that Edith was not there. Although her parents had sought a place for both of their daughters on the Kindertransport, only Suse was able to escape to England. On that train bound for Holland, Suse could no longer follow the older sister she adored. This time, she was given a privilege that was not allotted to Edith. Edith and Suse had said their goodbyes in Worms.

Suse's only companion was her suitcase. It had been packed with clothes her family had salvaged from a store owned by Flora's aunt and uncle, before it had been taken over by the Nazis.

She was eight years old.

The Journey

On the train, Suse sat in a compartment with nine other children. Five of them sat on one side, and five of them sat on the other. She sat there, throughout the entire journey, terrified.

After arriving in Holland, Suse was meant to meet one of her aunts, her mother's sister. Flora had given Suse a few pieces of jewelry she was supposed to pass on to her aunt—in hopes that the aunt would be able to trade the jewelry for whatever supplies she might need.

Suddenly, after riding all day without seeing any chaperones, Suse heard her name called out. They were almost to Holland, and as part of the check to make sure that none of the children were smuggling any valuables, Suse's suitcase was going to be searched.

She was petrified: she knew that she had two pieces of jewelry that had not been declared and that she was not supposed to have with her. What would happen if she were caught? Would she be detained at the German border and sent back?

Thinking quickly about what she might be able to do, Suse thought of places where she could hide the jewelry:

> My mother had bought me [a] pen . . . I took out the pen and I dropped the necklace into the little case and put the pen back in neatly. I found another hiding place . . . I put two other necklaces down my hosiery, down my stockings, and so it would land in the instep of my shoes, and so when they turned my suitcases upside down, and they searched them, there was nothing there but clothing. And the couple of things that my father had given me, such as my personal pictures; he had given me an alarm clock . . . but they found nothing else. And we finally reached the border of Holland.[31]

It was a near disaster, but by thinking quickly, at eight years old, Suse stayed on the train and entered Holland. There she

met up with her aunt, delivered the jewelry, and around midnight, she boarded a boat bound for England.

On the boat, two children were assigned to each cabin. Suse's partner was a six year old, so Suse was in charge. On the journey, this poor little girl became terribly seasick, and Suse began to feel the same. Trying to think of what she could do, as the elder in the cabin, Suse remembered that whenever she was ill, Flora would dab a small bit of 4711 cologne on her forehead. Suse's mother just so happened to have packed a bottle of this cologne. Suse recalled her attempt at mothering this little girl: "Well, if a little is good, then a lot has to be better, and I must tell you that that cabin reeked from 4711 cologne. But nothing helped."[32]

Suse knew that she needed real medicine to help her cabin-mate and herself. In Germany, Suse and Flora had sought to buy Dramamine for the sea journey but had not been able to purchase any—not because they could not find it but because they could not find someone willing to sell it to Jews. Nevertheless, Suse remembered that there were a couple of older girls on the boat, about 12 or 13 years old, who had mentioned that they had some.

In a desperate attempt to find the girls with the medicine, Suse exited her cabin. Unfortunately, her timing happened to be bad—when she stepped out, it was just as a steward was walking round the boat to make sure that all of the children were in their rooms. In English, he told her to go back to sleep. She did not speak English. Finally, in frustration, he grabbed her arm, shoved her back into the cabin, and closed the door.

> My mother said everything was going to be fine. Nothing had been fine. My mother was left on the platform . . . I'm on the train with people I don't know,

> and all these 'wonderful things' are happening. . . . I finally snuck out and found the girls.[33]

The next morning, after the little girl had been able to sleep, the children were all fed an English breakfast: white toast and tea. Suse had never seen white bread. Suspicious, after that night's incident with the steward, Suse warned the children around her: "Maybe you shouldn't eat this because I think they're trying to poison us."[34]

Sadly, Suse's trip was off to a difficult start.

Suse's Family

Flora Herz had hoped that she would be able to send both of her girls away to safety—and in fact, at one point, that is what the whole family had thought was going to happen. Suse was to be sent on the Kindertransport, and Edith was going to be sent on a similar type of movement, albeit much smaller, to the United States. It was thought that this U.S. movement would accept 1,000 children. Edith packed up her suitcase, a family was found to sponsor her, and all of the Herz family was certain that she was going to leave for Cincinnati, Ohio.

But she never left.

Albert and Flora never heard back from the family in the United States, and Edith's suitcase was given to Suse.

Instead, Edith stayed in Germany, in Worms, with her father.

Eventually, Albert and Edith were able to move to Duisburg to be with Flora. Edith attended a Jewish school in Duisburg, which she loved. Other than her schooling, however, life was not pleasant:

> We had to make do with what little money we had from the sale of the scrap of our hardware store in Worms. My mother seemed to make the best of it. My father, a medaled German military veteran forced to do slave labor in a burlap factory, was in a constant state of depression. By April 1940, the Jewish population of Duisburg was dwindling. Those who remained were forced to live communally in one section of the city. We lived in a small, cramped apartment with two other families. It was not unusual for bombs to burst through the air.[35]

In 1941, trains began to leave Duisburg for "the East." Edith was 14 and wanted to go with the first transport—not knowing where they were bound. Many of her friends were placed on it, and so was her boyfriend; yet Albert refused. Only later did Edith find out that the trains were bound for the nightmare that came to be known as the Holocaust.

After the second train departed in December 1941, all the remaining Jews in Duisburg were forced to live in a department store attic. Flora managed the cooking: the few provisions that some of the women were able to collect—along with the food that she and Edith were able to gather when they visited the baker, the fish shop, and some others during the cover of night. The owners of the shops all refused payment.

On July 26, 1942, Albert, Flora, and Edith were deported from Duisburg. They were among the last Jews in the town. They knew that their future looked grim, but they had no idea what awaited them when they stepped on the train.

The train took them to Dusseldorf, where they were corralled into an animal slaughterhouse, which reeked of death. They stayed there overnight, waiting to be joined by Jews from other transports. The next day, when their group numbered about

1,000, they boarded another train. This train took them to Theresienstadt.[36]

In Theresienstadt, Albert, Flora, and Edith were given numbers—not tattoos. Albert was VII/2-500, Flora was VII/2-501, and Edith was VII/2-502. They no longer had names, only numbers.

After a few months of life in Theresienstadt, Albert contracted a bladder infection and was taken to the infirmary there. He had no access to medication or doctors. On October 2, 1942, Albert Zadok Herz perished. He was 53 years old. Suse said the following about her father's death:

> My father died in Terezin (the Czech name for Theresienstadt) in October of 1942. He had been taken there . . . in July of 1942, and he died in . . . October. I thank God that he didn't have to suffer anymore. He had already suffered once in Buchenwald, and God was good to him.[37]

Flora and Edith continued to live in Theresienstadt for nearly two more years. Then, in mid-1944, they were selected for another transport. This time, the trains were made up of cattle cars.

After what seemed like a couple of days, the train stopped, and the door swung open. It was the middle of the night. Edith saw lights, barbed wire, SS guards with dogs, towers with weapons, machine guns and rifles, and a large sign that read *Arbeit Macht Frei*—"Work Makes You Free."

They were at Auschwitz.[38]

Edith was 17, and Flora was 42.

They were given tattoos with their numbers. Flora's was A-2674 and Edith's was A-2676.

At one point, the two of them were forced, along with a number of other female Jews, into a large room where they were told to take a shower:

> There were probably 100 women in our group, all ushered into a large room with tiered benches, like a modern day sauna, and multiple 'shower' heads. We looked around—no soap, no towels, no water. My mother looked puzzled and said to me, 'I thought we'd have a shower.' The window was locked, the airtight steel doors were bolted shut and there we sat in the dark.[39]

Somehow, astonishingly, when it was their time to die, the machinery of death malfunctioned:

> But nothing happened. Maybe 10-15 minutes later, the SS opened the doors and angrily said, 'Get your stuff and get dressed'. . . By some miracle, the gas chamber had malfunctioned and we were all saved. I think this was one of the only times in Auschwitz that this happened. A few years ago, I watched a documentary on television about Auschwitz. The gassing of the Jews in Birkenau and Auschwitz took place in two old farmhouses described as 'the little white house' and 'the little red brick house.' There it was as plain as day. My mother and I had been in that red brick house.[40]

In July 1944, Flora and Edith were sent to Stutthof.[41] In Stutthof, they were able to join a group of women that was leaving the camp to dig ditches. They were put on another cattle car and taken to the "middle of nowhere"[42] where they were woken up while it was still dark, given spades and