



Biography of Edith Carter

Edith Carter (nee Knopfmacher) was born in a small town in Deutschhause, Czechoslovakia on December 17, 1914. Edith and her family, the only Jews in the town, had not experienced any issues with antisemitism until the rise of Nazism. The first incident occurred in 1923, when a group of boys from their town returned from a trip to Germany and affixed a swastika on the lightning rod of Edith's family's home. Edith's parents, Otto and Olga, decided to move the family to the town of Olmutz, which had a larger Jewish community. While in Olmutz, Edith met a young man named Ernst Karter, whom she married in 1937.

After the Munich Pact of 1938, which ceded the Sudetenland to Germany, tensions and acts of antisemitism rose in Czechoslovakia. Edith and Ernst wanted to leave, but were unable to because of the German occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. During this time, Edith's family's home and business were taken over or "Aryanized." Edith and Ernst were deported to Theresienstadt (Terezin) in 1942. Edith lived in close quarters with 7-8 other women and was subjected to forced labor for two years. In June 1944, representatives from the Danish Red Cross and the International Red Cross visited Terezin for an inspection. This came about after Danish leaders urged the Red Cross to check on Danish Jews who had recently been deported there. Prior to the visit, Edith and other prisoners were forced to "beautify" Terezin by planting gardens, painting houses, renovating barracks, and creating spaces like cafes, in order to deceive the inspectors and show that Jews were not being mistreated.

On May 15, Edith and Ernst were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau as part of the plan to fool the Red Cross. They were two of the 7,503 inmates who had been deported in order to decrease overcrowding. After being tattooed as prisoner A-3908, Edith was assigned to hard labor moving bricks. She never gave up hope that somehow she and Ernst would survive and be reunited. The last time Edith saw her husband was on July 1 when he was selected with 1,000 other men for a labor detail. Edith remained in Auschwitz until she was sent to two other camps including Stutthof and Koch. In January 1945, Edith and other prisoners were forced to evacuate the camp on a death march because of the advancing Soviet Army. The snow was so bad, the women were forced into a barn where they were guarded for six weeks with very little warmth or food. Forced to march again, Edith and five other women managed to escape and hide in a ditch. A farmhand found them, housed them in a pigsty, and brought them food. When the Russians arrived to the area, Edith and her friends were finally free.

After the war, Edith was cared for by Polish Catholic nuns for several weeks before being sent to a repatriation camp. Making her way back to Olmutz, Edith hoped to be reunited with her family and husband, but was soon told none had survived. In 1948, she left Czechoslovakia and came to Cincinnati, where she married Gustav Carter, Ernst's cousin. Gustav had lost his wife during the war, but his two daughters, Janine and Ruth, had survived. Together they became a family and in 1951, Edith and Gustav had a daughter, Deborah. Edith died in 2010 at the age of 96.