

Echoing Voices: Werner Coppel

Key Highlights of Werner's Story

- Provides the perspective of a German male teenager who experiences the rise of Nazism firsthand, a concentration camp, and a death march.
- Werner's story is unique in that he was a member of a Zionist youth movement, which prepared youth for Aliyah (immigration) to Palestine (modern day Israel).
- Werner's story provides examples of resistance (escaping from a death march) and camaraderie (among his Hachshara members), which he attributes to sustaining him while in the camp.
- Describes the heartbreaking process of returning home and finding that he was the sole survivor of his family.
- While in Auschwitz, a rabbi told Werner about many religious objects that he had buried in a cemetery in Berlin to keep them safe from the Nazi's destruction. Werner and other survivors would retrieve these items after the war to use in religious observances.
- Werner met Trudy Silberman during his stay in Gleiwitz, Poland after the Russians liberated him in the forest. She nursed Werner back to health.
- Werner and Trudy Coppel were the first Jewish wedding in Berlin after the war.
- Process of immigrating to the United States and rebuilding one's life.
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Suitcase Contents

- Photograph; pre-war, Werner's family. When Werner received news that his family was to be deported, he returned home and asked for permission to go with them, but he was denied, and returned to his Hachshara group.
- Photograph; Dog on a bench. Werner recalled seeing signs stating, "Jews and dogs forbidden." The Nazis equated Jews with dogs or animals to dehumanize and isolate them from society.
- Photograph; sign that reads "Juden Unerwünscht," forbidding Jews from public spaces.
- German Star Badge; beginning in September 1941, a decree was established that required that German Jews wear a star badge on the outermost layer of clothing to identify them as Jewish.
- Israeli Flag; represents Werner's Hachshara group. Hachshara were formed with the goal that members would immigrate to Palestine (modern-day Israel). Members were taught agricultural skills.
- Photograph; Werner's Hachshara group. This group was arrested in 1943 and were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Werner believed he was able to survive in the camp because of support of these individuals.
- Sock; represents how members of his Hachshara group supported one another. At great risk of being caught, the girls in the group ripped sweaters apart and knit socks for the men.
- Haggadah; a prayer book used during Passover Seders. This is the Jewish holiday that celebrates the Jews' freedom from slavery in Egypt. This was unburied by Werner after the war.
- Marriage Certificate; Werner and Trudy's wedding was the first Jewish wedding in Berlin after the war in 1946.