

With My Own Eyes: HOLOCAUST. GENOCIDE. TODAY.

PART TWO

This is the second in a three-part series featuring testimony from three local Holocaust survivors. In this article, you will read an interview with Steve Adler.

This series supports the Holocaust Center's recently re-released film, "With My Own Eyes: Holocaust. Genocide. Today." which weaves testimonies of local Holocaust survivors with contemporary issues of bullying, bystanders and world genocides. Watch the film online or order a copy of the DVD (with bonus features) at wsherc.org.

Steve Adler, Holocaust Survivor



Steve Adler's kindergarten class in 1936. Steve is the third from the left. He is one of the only survivors from his class.

Steve Adler was born in Berlin, Germany in 1930. When Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, life became increasingly difficult for Jewish people. When Steve was seven, his parents put him in a small Jewish kindergarten. Jewish students were being harassed in the public schools and his parents thought this school would be safer.

Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass): On Nov. 9 and 10, 1938, there was a pogrom (violent attack) against the Jews that was supported by the government. The Nazis and their collaborators burned the synagogues, looted thousands of Jewish-owned stores and arrested 30,000 Jewish men.

STEVE: Kristallnacht started on the evening of November 9. In the morning, I went to school with my brother, but we were immediately sent home. There was a man in our living room with my dad, and he took him away. We didn't

know where my dad was. After six weeks, he came back. His head had been shaved. He'd been beaten up and he smelled terribly. He had just endured Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.

Many Jewish people tried to find ways to leave Germany, but many families, like Steve's, had been in Germany for generations. Some were reluctant to leave, others had no place to go; countries around the world closed their borders to Jews trying to leave Germany. In 1938, England agreed to accept 10,000 Jewish children, but not their parents. This was called the Kindertransport.

STEVE: I was 8½ years old when my parents put me on a train to Hamburg, after which I traveled to London. I was selected for the Kindertransport, but my brother was not.

I arrived in London on a train, along with hundreds of other children. All the kids were met by relatives and friends. They were all whisked away to safety, until there were only two people left: me and a young boy about my age from Prague. I felt abandoned. I was in a foreign country. I didn't know the language. I didn't know where I was supposed to go. Eventually a driver came and took us to my great uncle's house.

What was it like for you to live in England?

STEVE: My great-uncle sent me to live with a new family. It was a small house and I slept in an unheated attic room. It was lonely. I missed my family.



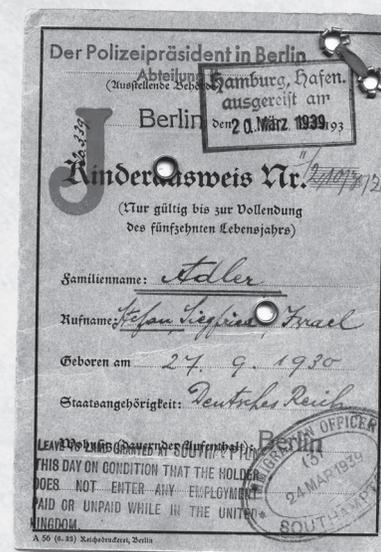
Steve Adler's passport, stamped with his departure from Germany and his arrival in Hamburg.

Did you see your parents and brother again?

STEVE: I was one of the lucky ones. Most of the children on the Kindertransport became orphans. Within a year, my parents and brother met me in England, and in November of 1940 we traveled by ship to the United States. However, my mother's parents had to stay behind. They were eventually deported to Riga, Latvia in 1942, where they were murdered.

Why do you tell your story?

STEVE: 1.5 million children were killed in the Holocaust. I feel that I am the voice of the children who didn't make it. The second reason is that I feel that my experience is being played out again in schools. Children who are different are singled out and bullied. This is what happened to me. I want students to know that their actions matter. Even the small ones make a difference.



Steve Adler's passport with the large red "J" to indicate that he is Jewish. In accordance with Nazi law, all Jewish males were to change their middle names to Israel. Steve's full name on the passport reads "Stephen Siegfried Israel Adler."