

Episode 1: Meet Ruth Zimblner



Ruth Zimblner, born in Vienna, Austria on February 22nd, 1928, is a 91-year old Austrian Kindertransport survivor. Ruth was only ten years old when Kristallnacht occurred on November 9th and November 10th, 1938. During Kristallnacht, she and her younger brother Walter witnessed the destruction of the largest synagogue in Vienna from their apartment in the Leopoldstädter Tempel complex. Later, her family was locked out of their apartment and her father was sent to

Dachau. He was released after 36 hours as he was needed at work. Concerned about the safety of his children, Ruth's father secured places for them on the first Kindertransport, a series of rescue efforts that brought thousands of refugee Jewish children out of German-occupied Europe. In December 1938, Ruth and Walter fled Nazi-occupied Austria on the Kindertransport. They found refuge in Holland however, it came at the cost of being separated from their parents.

When Hitler annexed Austria, Ruth's father applied for visas to the U.S. In 1939, the visas became available just as World War II broke out. That year, Ruth and Walter luckily got passage from Rotterdam to New York. It was a turbulent voyage up until they were greeted by the Statue of Liberty. Their parents followed later on, in November 1939. After almost a year apart, the family was back together and ready to start a new, better life in America.

Ruth has vivid memories of her childhood in Austria. In particular, she remembers her mother's cooking and the delicious Shabbat meals she made for family and friends who visited their home. Ruth takes great pride in how her mother learned to cook; as a seamstress working in Austria and Czechoslovakia for wealthy and affluent people. During week to month-long work trips, Ruth's mother spent her time sewing trousseaus (clothes, household linens, and other belongings collected by a bride for her marriage) for clients, and learning to cook different cuisines in her employers' kitchens. She brought back countless recipes that her family cherished. Ruth's favorite is her mother's recipe for Kasha Varnishkes, a Jewish delicacy consisting of bowtie noodles, buckwheat, and light seasoning. It reminds her of childhood in Austria, her mother, and life before Kristallnacht.

Holocaust education is of crucial importance to Ruth. She regularly shares her story as a Holocaust educator and member of The Holocaust Speaking Bureau at the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in lower Manhattan. Ruth believes that Holocaust education must reach younger and diverse communities and that the events she lived through must be remembered.