

# Lucie Rosenberg

Lucie Rosenberg was born as Lucie Lucija Sternberg on December 5, 1921, in Zagreb, Yugoslavia (now Croatia). Her father, Manfred Fredo Sternberg, who was born on February 27, 1892, was a well to do industrialist. He owned many factories in the Croatia and Slovenia provinces of Yugoslavia. His family lived in Slavenska Pozega, Croatia, 90 miles from Zagreb. Fredo Sternberg studied in Zagreb where he met Lilly Prister, the daughter of a prominent Jewish architect. The two married on February 15, 1920. In 1923 the proud parents commissioned a portrait of their daughter, Lucie, and gave it as a gift to Fredo's mother.

Lucie attended a Jewish elementary school and later transferred to a public gymnasium. Her brother, Mario, who was born on January 14, 1925, was sent to the same schools. During the summers the Sternberg family resided in a palatial house in Jasenovac, Croatia, close to one of the factories owned by Fredo Sternberg. The children traveled to Zagreb by train. Lucie recalls that for modesty they always traveled by third-class coach. During the winter the family lived in the Prister family complex in Zagreb.

In 1937, at the age of 16, Lucie left her high school in Zagreb and was accepted at Oxford University in England. Her brother, Mario, was sent to St. Edward's boarding school in England. In June 1939 Lucie and Mario traveled home for their summer vacation. Lucie's boyfriend and later fiancé, Joseph Heaton, and some of his friends joined them in Zagreb. In September 1939, as Germany invaded Poland, all of the English boys left Yugoslavia immediately and enlisted in the British Army. Joseph Heaton was sent to India and later to Burma where he was subsequently killed in action.

In the years between 1933 and 1941, 50,000 Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria passed through Yugoslavia. The Prister family accepted many refugees into their home in Zagreb. Fredo Sternberg knew very well that he had to take his family out of Yugoslavia. He transferred some of his money to Switzerland and to the United States. In 1940 he was called into military reserve duty and served for two months. He secured a military permit to leave the country as well as a certificate which stated that he served as a representative of the Ministry of Trade. He sold pro-forma his factory in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and made acquaintance with the U.S. consul in Zagreb. The consul offered four U.S. immigration visas to the Sternberg family, and Fredo accepted.

On March 25, 1941, Yugoslavia joined the Axis alliance but did not implement it. On March 29, 1941, Fredo Sternberg, his family, his brother, Feliks Sternberg, and the family chauffer drove to Belgrade, Serbia. Lilly, Fredo, Lucie, and Mario Sternberg boarded a train to Budapest, Hungary. They spent the night in the Gellert Hotel. Fredo phoned his family in Zagreb warning them of the imminent German invasion but was greeted with disbelief. The next day the Sternberg family took a train to Vienna, Austria. The next train took them near the Swiss border, but they had to spend the night in a local inn where German

# Lucie Rosenberg

soldiers were preparing for the invasion of Yugoslavia. Fredo Sternberg was interrogated by one of the officers, but since most of his permits were written in Cyrillic, they gave up and let him go. In the morning the family was able to board the train to Geneva, Switzerland. They arrived there on April 6, 1941, and immediately called the family in Zagreb to warn them again. On that date Yugoslavia was invaded by Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria. Two weeks later an "Independent State of Croatia" was established under the Ustaša regime.

After three weeks in Geneva, the Sternberg family traveled on a sealed train via France to Spain and later by bus to Lisbon, Portugal. After a month they secured a passage on the *SS Siborney*, a US Export Lines ship. They arrived in Newark, N.J., and quickly settled in New York City. Mario, who was 16 years old at that time, attended high school, and in 1943 he was drafted into the U.S. Army. Mario was encouraged to change his last name from Sternberg to Sorell, in case the Germans captured him. Mario Sorell was killed in action on July 9, 1944, in Normandy, France, where he is buried.

In 1942 Lucie started to work for the Office of War Information. She continued to work there until her marriage in 1946 to Morris Rosenberg, a journalist. They have two daughters, Jane and Mary, and two grandchildren. Lucie Rosenberg volunteers at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, where in the past year she worked intensively on the Jasenovac collection. Lucie and Morris Rosenberg reside in Washington, D.C.

---

## Felix Sternberg

Felix Sternberg, Lucie Rosenberg's paternal uncle, was born in Slavonska Pozega, Croatia, on September 21, 1897. His father, Zigmond Sternberg, owned a factory which produced alcohol, liquors, vinegar, and a distilling plant for brandy as well as a grain mill. In 1916 Felix was drafted into the Austro-Hungarian Army and served in WWI. In 1918 he started his law studies at the University of Vienna, and later he passed the bar in Zagreb where he received the degree of Doctor of Law. Upon graduation Felix entered his father's business and later supplemented his education in Hochschule for Fermentation in Berlin, Germany. In 1923 he married Adela Laufer, but the marriage ended in divorce in 1938.

Felix completed his law training obligations and opened his own law practice in 1932. He offered legal advice to many refugees from Germany who arrived in Zagreb. In April 1941, during the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia, Felix volunteered to serve in the military to defend his country, but after a short while it became clear that he needed to leave as soon as possible. Felix managed to reach Italy, and in July 1941 he was imprisoned in Camp Ferramondi di Tarsia. Felix was able to contact his brother, Fredo Sternberg, in New York, who obtained a Cuban visa for him.

# Lucie Rosenberg

In December 1941 Felix reached Rome, Italy, and hoped to fly to Barcelona, Spain. Italy declared war on the United States on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1941, and Italian authorities wanted to expel Felix to North Africa. With the help of the Christian Immigration Office, Felix was able to remain in Rome as well as obtain necessary documentation to leave Italy for Cuba. In February 1942 Felix finally was able to fly to Barcelona and from there he traveled to Lisbon, Portugal. On March 16, 1942, Felix boarded the *SS Guine* en route to Cuba. His travel expenses and later his living expenses were covered mostly by his brother, Fredo, in New York.

Felix Sternberg stayed in Cuba until September 1945 when his U.S. immigration visa was granted. He became part owner of a liquor store and later a salesman. In 1950 Felix enrolled in laboratory technician courses, and upon graduation he and his wife, Anna Ercoli, opened a diagnostics laboratory. In 1951 Felix Sternberg officially changed his last name to Sorell to honor his nephew, Mario Sorell, who was killed in action in Normandy in 1944. In 1956 Felix and Anna Sorell emigrated to Venezuela where Felix was reunited with his sister. He died in January 1961.