

**Richard Teig**

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### **Abstract**

Richard Otto Teig was born on November 5, 1924 in Essen, Germany to parents born in Poland and had a sister, Claire two years younger. His father served in the Austrian Army in World War I and was in the furniture business until it was closed on Kristallnacht. Richard attended the Jewish Public School and after school saw a Rabbi for Jewish education. He played with his many cousins. His parents were worried as to what was going to happen so sent him and his sister to Holland by train on January 20, 1939 without a permit. A childless couple accepted Claire in their home and hid her when the Germans came. Richard was placed in a camp with the other boys where he received an education. Once war started, they had to settle away from the water and were transferred five times. In December '42 they reached Emmen and he went to school to learn machines and worked in a bakery. On December 25, 1942 the SS lined them up and put them on a train to Westerbork, a transit camp, in Northern Holland. First he was rented out to a farmer and later worked on a narrow gauge railroad. Soon he joined the Dutch underground and helped prisoners escape on the railroad and carried messages back and forth. His parents were the only Jews in their area not deported and they succeeded in going to Belgium in May where they planned to reunite with the children and get a visa for the US. His parents went from Belgium to unoccupied France. They escaped from a camp and crossed the Pyrenees to Barcelona and then to Madrid where they awaited the children. When Richard was liberated from Westerbork on April 13, 1945 by the Canadians, he hitch-hiked to his parents in Madrid, stopping off to visit his sister and viewing signs in Paris, "Kill the last Jews." His sister flew to Madrid. His father's death in 1945 from Parkinson's Disease. Richard immigrated to the US and obtained a position with a diamond business. He succeeded by using his design creativity and married Charlotte January 23, 1955 and had children.

### **Summary**

00:00 Richard Teig was born as Richard Otto Teig on November 5, 1924 in Essen, Germany from Polish parents who came to Germany in 1920. He dropped the "Otto" as thought it too German. They probably left Poland as the Jewish/Polish population were not well off and thought they would have a better life in Germany. Other relatives preceded them to Germany. His parents came from small towns in Poland; his father from Natrona (?) and his mother from Solatrina (?). At home they spoke German and some Yiddish. He does not recall speaking Polish. He was the eldest child as his sister Claire was born in 1926. She passed away twenty years ago. She hid, like Anne Frank, in an attic room in Holland during the war. His father, Julius Teig, was born around 1898 and his mother, Lois Sheiner Teig, was born around 1901.

- 05:00 His father had a furniture store in Essen, like their other relatives there. His uncle David came to America and went into the furniture business in Titusberg. Richard has his father's report card from accounting school in Strassenhour, Austria where he graduated. His father left Poland and went to Austria which was Russian/Polish/Independent. His father had lived in Limburg (Lvov), the Russian section of Poland. He came from an average family and served in the Austrian Army in World War I. He did not talk much of his childhood. Richard wanted to see his grandfather (father's father) in Poland but never saw him. His desire was because he felt strongly Jewish, felt for a small Jewish town and wanted to see a Jewish Shtetl. He felt different from the others in the Essen Jewish community which was large. He felt at home until events happened. Richard has a book with the names of the Essen Jews
- 10:00 . His mother's and father's villages were close to each other. Richard has the card notifying his grandmother that his father was wounded in World War I. His father was quiet but told him about it. His father liked music. When Hitler came to power, the family was worried about their future and spoke little of the past. Richard attended kindergarten and had cousins close by to play with. He was pretty well off as went to resorts in the summer with the entire family. They went to Duisburg which was not far. The family had an apartment in a big apartment building. He introduced his wife to his parents in the US where they had to pull a chain to flush the toilet. Their apartment in Essen was not very spacious. He had a room with his sister. The apartment was in the center of town. They rented their apartment. His father walked to work. His mother was a housewife and had no help.
- 15:00 His mother was a very quiet woman. She survived the war and died at 93 years old. She was a typical German/Jewish housewife. She made him read a lot and got him books. She was a good cook. He did not have a favorite dish at that time. He does not feel that his parents influenced his life. His father died in 1945 so his mother became more prominent in his life. His father never sat down and talked to him. His parents had little social life but had a large family with many children with visiting back and forth. He had so many children to play with that he did not pay attention to the adults' conversations. He believes that most of the conversation was the political danger that was coming. Richard was nine when Hitler came to power. Richard does not believe that his father had problems during the Wehrmacht. His father's business sustained them and they had an average life. His father made a decent living. He did not feel any deprivation. Richard never visited his father's store so only saw it from the outside.
- 20:00 It was called, "Julius Teig Furniture." He does not know if their home furniture came from the business. He got along with his sister. He does not know if he was close to her. His father came home at night and brought them noshes (sweet snacks) which his sister wanted. He has the report card from his Jewish Public School. Richard remembers his teachers, the subjects he studied and that he never did his homework. After school, his

father sent him to a Rabbi every day for Jewish education. He studied the Torah and its commentaries and learned to understand Hebrew. School was secular except for one subject, religion, but it was superficial. His father was traditional. He was Orthodox. He observed the Sabbath and the holidays and prayed every morning. His son prays every morning and Richard does it occasionally. He had a strong Jewish feeling living in Essen.

- 25:00 Perhaps he wanted to see how his parents lived, see his grandfather and see his background. Richard knew the non-Jewish people in his apartment house but only had contact with the children. After Hitler came to power, he walked a certain street to get to the Jewish Community Center. The same German child always waited for him to kick him so he walked a long way around to get to the Center. The teachers did not talk politics. His family had a radio but no car or telephone. Politics did not interest him at the time. When some of his school friends left was the first time he became aware of the danger and tried to avoid it. This was around '36 and '37. His father kept the store after '33.
- 30:00 Kristallnacht in '38 was when the store was boycotted. From '33 to '36 life was normal. In '37 his father bought him a used bike and a neighbor child took it away and he did not get it back. His sister attended the same school that he attended. His parents looked the same but were probably worried as in '39 sent him and his sister to Holland without a permit. They must have feared what was going to happen. From the time his friends left until the time that he left, one thing happened. His mother's brother left Essen in '35 for Israel so he was lonelier as his cousins left. Richard had to live with the situation as it slowly changed. His uncles left because of the political situation in Germany. They liquidated their houses and business and left for Israel where one still lives. Richard does not know if they urged his parents to do the same. His mother had four brothers.
- 35:00 Two went to Israel and two remained in Germany who were deported. There was a time before the war when all the Polish Jews in Germany were sent to Spungin (?), Poland a border town. They were picked up at night and sent there. From there, they were sent to Auschwitz where they perished. Richard's family was the only family not sent there. Richard's father had a brother in Berlin with two sons who were all deported and perished. Richard did not know them. His family never desired or needed German citizenship. He did not hear any conversations the family had. All his relatives who left were Zionists. When Hitler came, they decided to go to Israel in '35. The rest of the family was apolitical and remained in Germany where they made a living and had no reason to go to Israel. His father's business was destroyed during Kristallnacht. Richard was there..
- 40:00 They were the only family in the area who were not taken. Richard had an appendix attack. From his window, he viewed the burning of the books and of the Torah in the

Plaza near his house. His father got an ambulance to take him to the hospital. It was a Catholic hospital that accepted him and operated on him and he went home ten days later. Over 100 Jews perished in Holland and he does not know why he survived. G-d was good to him. They remained four to six weeks after Kristallnacht. His school closed and he does not know if it was destroyed. He heard his father tell his mother that the business closed. Four weeks later he and his sister were sent on a train to Holland. They did not prepare for it as there was no need. They already had the idea to leave Germany.

- 45:00 The plan was for him and his sister to get to Holland while the borders were open. There was no need for a visa or a passport. The Kinder transport just passed through without a passport. His parents planned to go to Belgium in May and the children would meet them and go to the US. They would get a visa to immigrate and war broke out. They took the train on January 20, 1939 without any luggage. His parents waved at them. They were not fully aware of the coming separation. They did not see their parents until 1946. They were told to get off at Neingarten (?) where a Jewish congregation waited to receive children coming from Germany. His parents knew others who had sent their children earlier so copied them. They were not asked to show passports.
- 50:00 When they got off the train, a Jewish/Dutch couple liked Claire and took her into their care but all the boys had to go to a Jewish camp in Vaykonzee (?) in Northern Holland. There he learned Dutch. He can converse in seven languages – German, Dutch, French, Spanish, Hebrew, Yiddish and English. The camp was a Children's Home which already had 100 to 150 children. It was at the ocean and was fun except he was worried about his sister. He wrote to her and learned that she was happy. She hid with the couple from '42 to the end of the war in an attic. They asked her parents to adopt her as they had no children of their own. Richard met the foster parents at the train station when they took Claire. He saw a picture of them from Drimsimmer (?) when he was in Spain. Richard does not know why they did not place boys with families. At the camp he had lessons as they had improvised school for the children. He was required to be very clean and wash his hair with commercial soap which caused him to get bald but the hair grew back.
- 55:00 He wrote his parents and they sent him postcards. They wrote they were OK and hoped to reunite in Belgium in May as they made arrangements. His parents packed up and traveled to Entner (?), Belgium in May '39. Richard did not see his parents as he was restricted in the children's camp and had to be approved by the Dutch and Belgium authorities and his parents were unable to come to Holland. He was worried about them as had four stamps to write them and only wrote two letters and gave the other two stamps to friends and sent the money to his parents in Belgium. He had no money upon arrival. The boys came from Vienna and Germany. The camp was in a resort town and was specifically for refugee children. The Dutch government ran the camp. The building looked like a school. There were lots of small rooms. It held 75 to 100 boys.

- 60:00 War broke out and Germany prohibited Jews from their borders so the boys had to pack up and go inland. They went to five different places. First to Breeburgen (?) for three months and then to Sustaberg (?) and then to Quarantine Hiplog (quarantine for refugees) and then to Rotterdam. In May '40 it was completely bombed by stink bombs. Their building was one-quarter mile from the bombing. They went out with pails of water for the people whose buildings were destroyed. The boys were transferred to two other places. Richard was mostly with the same boys except some were added and some removed when families took them out. It was always the same people who cared for him. The director was a prominent pediatrician from Berlin. There were assistants, teachers and musicians who helped with the educational program.
- 65:00 The same administrators went with them from place-to-place but the housekeepers remained behind. Richard does not know why they moved so frequently. They always had the same teachers – for French, music and Spanish lessons. The administrators were refugees so received no salary. HIASS, a Jewish organization funded them and it was sponsored by the Dutch government even when occupied by the Nazis. The camp ended December '42 in Emmen and he went to school to learn machines where he got promoted and it saved his life. It was in Limburg, in southern Holland, close to Belgium. When the Germans occupied Holland, he had to wear a Jewish star and was prohibited of going to certain places. There was constant fear of being picked up by the Germans. Even outside of the Jewish community, people were taken to camps. He was allowed to walk around.
- 70:00 Some boys got jobs working for the butcher. It was funny as they came home with little pieces of meat which was cat meat. Richard worked in a Jewish bakery and took scraps from plates and put them together to make a cake and brought it to the camp. He played a mouth organ and they had an orchestra. Richard lived in fear as knew what camp meant so was prepared. He had a satchel next to his bed with necessary belongings to take if he had to leave hurriedly. He needed it December '42. He knew where his parents were so wrote them. He could not write his sister who was in hiding since '43. His parents went from Belgium to unoccupied France when war broke out. They were in a camp in Sed (?) and escaped and crossed the Pyrenees to Barcelona where they remained until the end of the war.
- 75:00 They were in a camp in Barcelona and when the tide turned the Jews were let out. His father died in '45 from Parkinson Disease and pneumonia. Richard saw him before he died. Richard was liberated in '45 and hitch-hiked to Spain. The Dutch resistance gave him names and places to stay. He visited his sister and bicycled two days to Belgium and then to France, to Pelpion (?), to the Pyrenees and then to his parents in Barcelona. He hitch-hiked most of the way. The border guards would ask him where he was going and he replied to the US and then to Israel. He saw demonstrations in Paris where people had big signs reading, "Let's kill the last Jews." He inquired about an address in Paris and

the person said, "Speak Yiddish." He did not see Army personnel in France. Richard slept one night at the railroad station.

80:00 He reached Barcelona where he had the address of Germans who had moved there. They took him into their house and bought his shoes as his were German and too big. He had not bought shoes for five years. The Joint Distribution Committee gave him a permit to travel to Madrid to see his parents. His father lost his hair and his mother was no longer stocky. His father had a job teaching French to children. Richard stayed a few months and got a job as an English correspondent using a dictionary as he did not know English. After a few months his sister flew from Niegarden (?) to Madrid. They waited to go to the US. Jewish Adults were already picked up in December '42 so had his knapsack ready as he expected the same.

85:00 On December 25, 1942 the SS lined them up and put them on a train to Westerbork in Northern Holland. The camp had been built before the war for refugees who awaited departure from Holland. Barbed wire encircled it and it became a transit camp for Dutch Jews deported to the East. He had seen SS in the streets earlier who were marching and singing but this was his first contact with them. Richard had no documents issued by the Germans. The Germans knew they were Jews as they were registered by the Jewish administration in Amsterdam. They registered all Jews and submitted it to the German "Yotsera."

90:00 He arrived at Westerbork (?) late at night and submitted his belongings to the German. He was placed in a barracks with three layers of beds made of straw. He wore his own clothes to work in the morning. His first assignment was to be rented out to a Dutch farm for six months which supplied food and materials to the Germans. Then he heard a steam locomotive was to be built in the camp that separated parts of airplanes into components including copper and aluminum. The parts were transported from the camp to a cabana on a barge to be shipped to Germany. They needed a narrow gauge railroad and he had experience so volunteered. Secretly the prisoners exchanged coal from the locomotive for food from the farmer he met. At the farm, Richard fed the cows and tilled the earth but did no harvesting. He was treated as a worker, the same as the others, but got extra food for working there. SS escorted him back to camp each night. He was fortunate to have a job on the outside.

95:00 The locomotive position was more attractive. Transports to the East started on Tuesdays. Each barrack had 100 to 150 people and were awoken at 5 or 6 AM when the list of people for the transport was read. You lay on your cot as awaited to hear the list. Eighty-five children were placed in one barrack but only a few were called, mostly Dutch. When you were called, you took your bundle and went to the cattle car. You had a blanket and a pair of boots or shoes. Richard had two pairs of wooden shoes. His bundle was gone. People did not have a real understanding of transport. They were

uprooted from their home and country without knowing their future. Richard had rapport with the engineer of the train who told him that all the deportees would be killed.

100:00 The engineer did not go from Holland to Poland but heard the news. Richard could not grasp the information as it was hard to believe. He never saw people shot in the street or corpses. He saw people mistreated in the street when older Jewish men were commandeered to clean up the grass between the gravel as it was humiliating. He saw this outside of Westerbork in Emmen. German/Jewish refugees were used as Capos and SS and German soldiers commanded them. When Richard arrived he resented the Capos but later realized they had not volunteered. Some were his friends and he saw that it was their job.

105:00 He learned to use the locomotive. It was a small narrow gauge railroad with a few handles. Someone else loaded the firebox. He had to watch the gauges. His machine training helped a little. He was able to do the work. The journey was 15 to 20 miles. There was always a German soldier in the cabin. They changed soldiers. He unloaded coal into a bag and the farmer left him bread. He shared it with the other children. One or two of them are still alive. The food that he got in Westerbork was soup, bread and potatoes. One young man worked in the kitchen and tried to get them extra food. One prisoner stole a gun from a German soldier.

110:00 He went once a week to the bathhouse used by the Germans and stole it from the locker room and was shot on the spot. He was associated with Har Shacher, a young Zionist group who worked on farms in Germany and Holland to learn how to run a farm. The group was preparing to go to Israel to work on a kibbutz. The group stayed together and went on transport together. When he hears the "Hatikvah," the Israeli national anthem, he recalls the group singing as loaded on a cattle car. Perhaps three or four have survived. There were Dutch workers at Westerbork who were the leaders in agriculture who were rented to the farmers.

115:00 Richard was asked if he would transfer information in and out of the camp. He smuggled mail in and out by dumping a bag and when Germans were not looking, picked up a bag and handed it out. He also smuggled people out by having them hide in the cart covered with a blanket and coal. He moved them when the Germans were at lunch or the bathroom. He ran the locomotive twice a day. Near the end of the war, the British Air Force shot at cars, trucks, trains and locomotives. There was one person in front of the locomotive and one person at the rear on the lookout for planes. When they waved, he threw the break and everyone jumped off. He broke his knee one week before liberation. He wore a bandage and worked with it. Canadian troops came in and bandage opened up which left a trace behind him.

120:00 Richard realized there were no more Germans as they had left the day before. He found out that Japan was at war with the States and that Hiroshima was bombed. He likes the History Channel as finds out what happened in the world when he was isolated. When he first got to the camp, they took away their bundles. The next day they started working. He carried barbed wire and built a trench of water around the camp with posts and barbed wire. It was bitter cold so was a hard job. He was in Holland from 1/39 to 12/42 when he joined the group until Westerbork was liberated by the Canadians. He passed a small crematorium. They often shot and buried people who tried to escape. It was hard to escape except by locomotive. The barrack leaders were responsible to count the prisoners so it was hard to escape.

125:00 He worked for the Underground of the Dutch resistance. He was supplied with a little wagon on roller skates. He could have escaped through the sewer and used a bicycle with false ID if he got on a transport. He had special permission to leave the camp. He did not think that people knew what transport meant except it meant to be uprooted. Richard did not believe the truth and did not tell anyone. People thought that transport was for labor, not for extermination. The Germans disappeared the day before liberation. They were liberated April 13, 1945.

130:00 It was wonderful to see liberation after the formality of the SS and the German soldiers. They went every day to the Pell Platz, the square in the center of town and the Canadians were very casual. He had to stay in the camp until he got permission from the Dutch authorities that he is politically reliable. He was in the camp from December '42 to April '45. He thought his sister was safe as she was not at the camp so he had confidence. Besides Westerbork, there was only another little transit place that he knew about. He received permission to leave and stole a bicycle to travel to southern Holland to visit his sister. First he went to Neingarten (?) and then told to go to Tilburg. He did not know where she was hidden and returned to Neingarten (?).

135:00 His sister had interconnected with the couple for five years who were so good to her. They sent her to school so she did not go along with him. He was 21 and she was 19. He wrote a book, "Jews from Essen." He visited world-renowned people in Israel who were schoolmates. He was terrible in all subjects except drawing and painting. He did not know what he wanted to do and had no ambition. He thought just let things happen. He does not know what experiences affected him.

140:00 He probably would have done something different if he had a choice. He applied as a shipping clerk in the US as there was an opening. The owner headed a diamond firm liked him so he became a diamond person. He was creative and was always happy with what he did. The owner wanted him to do something better than be the shipping clerk. His role was supplying diamonds and styles. He created jewelry. He designed and altered and bought models. He also ordered, sorted and purchased diamonds and helped

the firm to grow. He started ten little stores and they went bankrupt. He went to India for an auction for colored stones in their price range and was the only occidental person. It was the auction for a former Pasha's treasure, \$100,000 to \$200,000 so not for his business. He attended auctions in New York including Sotheby's and bought large pieces that he converted into smaller pieces. A jeweler in Portugal made them into rings. He had a gratifying position.

145:00 He obtained this position eight days after arriving in America. He would have preferred attending college. There were Black ex-GIs looking for work but he got the position. His father passed away in America. His father's relative in the furniture business sponsored the family. After five years, they became citizens. They had left Spain at the end of summer '45 and stayed at the Hotel Marseille in New York .using a coupon from the Joint Distribution Committee. Then they moved into an apartment on 77<sup>th</sup> Street on the East Side of Manhattan. His father died in a hospital. They took a bus to Pennsylvania to meet their relatives and were asked to talk German. The wife taught the how to peel a banana. Richard never returned to Essen. He attended a Jewish show and had to return for a meeting in New York. He had to take a train to Frankfurt as that was where you could get a plane home. He refused to put his foot down on German soil. His sister met the couple from Holland. Richard and his wife went to Switzerland, London where she had family and Holland.

150:00 They have two children and five grandchildren. He met his wife in New York after introduction by a mutual friend. His wife's apartment was next to an elevator. He put his foot in the elevator and were on the wrong floor and asked her out. They married on January 23, 1955. His wife, Charlotte, was born in Argentina. His children are Julius, Shirley and Denise. They asked him how life was during the war and he told them. They requested he put information together for others so brought it to the Museum. Last thoughts – people should be nicer to each other. Jealousy is normal. He lost his Yiddish feelings during and after the war as he saw things—children without parents loaded into cattle cars to be eliminated.

155:00 God let it happen and did not do anything about it. It makes him doubt what humanity became and doubt God. He did not get back his belief in God. He prays out of respect for his son. He does not believe in God who would let it happen and allow what is happening now as people are being killed and starving. He lost his religion but does not feel the loss. He shows a page of a looseleaf with his Jewish Star and a list of the places where he spent time since he left his parents until liberation. He shows articles: camp photos of today, photo of 100 prisoners on the narrow gauge locomotive and the material sent to Germany.

160:00 He shows a card from Lager Westerbork indicating when he worked, shows his Dutch ID card with "J" for Jewish, his false Resistance ID card without the "J" and with his false

Dutch name, shows the outer cover with his fingerprints and false name, Franz Vermeer. Richard shows two photos of children with him at the Children's Refugee Camp before he went to Westerbork. Some were from the Austrian Kinder transport as they were seeking a neutral country. He shows his Registration Document from the Amsterdam Jewish Register so that the Germans could find him. He shows a list of his possessions and their value before entering Westerbork. Also shows the telegram he sent relatives that he is OK. Finally, he shows a photo of his father when he was in the Army in World War I. Richard owns a photo of him with his father.

166:00