

Dorothea Fingerhood

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Abstract

Dorothea Fingerhood (née Dorothea Hilda Cohen) was born on February 16, 1928 in Hammer, Germany and moved to (East) Berlin when she was one year old. Her sister Harriet was 15 months younger. Her parents worked as pharmacists at two of their drug stores and her mother's brother managed the third. Her father, Leo, was an assimilated German Jew. Her mother, Rosetta Lump, was from a large family in Fulda and her father had two brothers in Breslau. Dorothea often visited her grandmother in Fulda where she lay in a bed in the living room as she suffered from cancer. Dorothea was closest to her Aunt Berthe, her mother's younger sister. Dorothea's family lived above their drug store where they had electricity and indoor plumbing. Dorothea started school at age six and was given a flag with a swastika. The family studied Spanish in hopes of going to South America. Dorothea's mother contacted a Rabbi who got Dorothea and her sister on a Kinder-transport to England in August '39. The family's drug store was Aryanized on Kristallnacht and her father had to work in a factory as a chemist for the war effort. Later her parents hid until '43 when a fellow Jew turned them in and they were sent to Auschwitz. After the war started, the sisters' school was evacuated to Stains (?) Middlesex, a rural area, where they lived for two years with several families. After the second home, her sister went to trade school and became a cook and Dorothea lived with her friend's family. Aunt Berthe enabled the sisters to immigrate to the US in '46 where they lived in her house in Flatbush, Brooklyn, NY. Dorothea married at age 21 and divorced at 25 and remarried at 28 to Stanford Fingerhood and gave birth to Steven and got divorced. Steven has three daughters—Mina (present during the interview), Bolivia and Sarah. Dorothea has been an Interior Decorator since age 21 when she attended Pratt Institute and the New York School of Design. In May 1987 Dorothea attended a reunion for Jews from Fulda, Germany with many relatives and met others who came from all over the world, especially Israel. The Mayor was trying to rededicate their synagogue. It was the first time she was able to speak German and translate it into English since living in the US but could not read it. She had spoken English since 1939. They went to see the grandparents' home and the owners were reluctant to let them in. They saw a cross where the grandmother's bed had laid. Dorothea's only child, Steven, had been to the 1987 reunion in Germany. He is present and reports they were on TV and in the newspaper with military protection at the rededication. Judith Miller, a reporter at the New York Times accompanied the group and wrote, "One by One by One" in 1990. A few years after the Reunion, the two sisters went to Berlin to try to get restitution and learn details about their parents' demise. Dorothea lives on the upper west side of Manhattan where she leads a good life attending opera, ballet and the symphony. After the interview, Mina is shown.