

## **Hilda Seftor**

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Born Hilda Cohen on August 21, 1923 in Edinburgh, Scotland; had a brother and a sister. Father, Judah, was a strong Zionist, active in the synagogue; mother, Etty Pass, came from Riga, Latvia; became naturalized in 1897. Hilda was the only Jewish student in her class at a small private school in Edinburgh. She experienced no anti-Semitism.

December 1938: Hilda's parents "adopted" Max and Egon Konigstein, 2 young boys from the Kindertransport. Judah Cohen found 33 homes in Edinburgh for other Jewish refugee children who had been at Dovercourt camp. The couple started a social club for adult Jewish refugees.

In 1939 Lord Traprain, nephew of Prime Minister Arthur Balfour offered his estate, Whittinghame, in East Lothian, Scotland to the Jewish community. 160 Kindertransport children, ages 14-18, were placed there. Hilda's father raised money to buy furniture and farm equipment and hire staff from England, Palestine and Germany. The children were being prepared for later life on a kibbutz in Palestine. Chaim Weitzman's wife Vera visited frequently. Clothing came from the Jewish community. Hilda helped out. As a gift to the Seftors, the children carved a 3-foot long Chanukah menorah, which is now in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum collection. Because the children were considered enemy aliens, their movements were restricted; and in 1942 boys 16-18 were taken to internment camps near the Royal Air Force base.

Hilda graduated from the College of Domestic Science during the war; then worked preparing meals for Edinburgh schoolchildren as her obligatory "work of national importance". She often visited the children in Whittinghame, all the while taking care of her ill mother.

Judah died in June 1945, at age of 59. After the war, Hilda married; emigrated to the United States in 1951 with her husband and son. They came to Washington, DC in December 1994, and Hilda began volunteering at the Museum. She has catalogued and captioned thousands of photos, transcribed survivors' testimonies, and recorded over 14,000 names of children who were in the Lodz Ghetto.