

ARTHUR PLAUT
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Arthur Plaut was born in 1901 in Franckenau, Hesse, near Kassel. His father was a merchant and he had 7 other siblings, so he was not able to go to the gymnasium and was sent to Hildesheim to study the textile trade. For 12 years he managed a store in Westphalia and lived in Themar, a little town and later moved to Thüringen. He married and had a daughter in 1935. He began to notice the changes after 1933 and stated he would have thought to leave earlier if business wasn't so good. Some Nazis marched daily in front of his store. Some of the older Jews in town thought that they could wait out the Nazis, but the younger ones wanted out of Germany. A cousin in America gave him an affidavit for a visa; he was the last in his family to leave.

On Kristallnacht he was taken with other Jewish men to Buchenwald, where he stayed 3 weeks. He was lucky he wasn't beaten like others, but conditions were horrible, with no beds and open latrine. He was told by Gestapo to leave Germany as soon as he sold the store (for which he never received money). After he left Buchenwald he moved to Berlin and had to sell his store and his apartment. At first Arthur wanted to go to Israel, but nothing materialized and he was able to go to England. When war broke out, his wife was in Berlin with their daughter and her mother. They were able to move to Holland where his wife learned to make corsets in a Jewish school. They had to wear the Star of David, but felt safer than in Germany because they didn't know anyone. She was finally able to go to America on a Portuguese ship, but she had to leave her mother in Berlin because at that time no one over 45 could leave the country.'

While in England Arthur was interned as an enemy alien. He worked at various jobs, in a sugar beet factory, gardening in a vicarage. It took him 2 years to finally get visa and go to America. He arrived on Labor Day, 1941. He was briefly detained on Ellis Island, perhaps because they thought he might be a spy, but was shortly released. He easily got a job in the textile industry and stayed for 27 years. When his wife first arrived, she lived with another woman who cared for her daughter in Washington Heights. The Plauts lived in Washington Heights for several years and then for 20 years in Jamaica.

Arthur and most of their friends are German Jews. At first, he had trouble speaking with other Jews because he never learned Yiddish. His daughter was able to go to college.