

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

HEDY TOWER

Self-written Memoir

Date: December 1988

This testimony is part of Project Kated: The Jerry Freimark Collection and was donated to the Holocaust Oral History Archive by Jerry Freimark.

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Gratz College

Melrose Park, PA 19027

Project Kabed¹

You shall remember the days of old....

You shall love your father and your mother...

Project **Kabed** is a series of oral interviews, designed to preserve the memories of the immigrant generation that left central Europe under the pressures of the Third Reich.

These interviews may be of interest to succeeding generations to help them learn about our experiences. The subject has certainly found much interest among students of the history of the recent past.

It is therefore our intend, to make these personal histories accessible to any seriously interested students and to collections of archival materials such as, but not exclusively, to the Leo Beack Institute.

All interviews will be transcribed and a copy given to the person interviewed.

A copy of the tape may also be requested.²
Thank you for participating in the **Kabed** project.

Jerry M. Freimark, 1999

¹Jerry Freimark referred to his oral history project as both Project Koved and Project Kabed at different times.

²The Holocaust Oral History Archive has these interviews in the form of CD Rom.

[The audio provided includes this introduction]

Introduction:

Your reader is Margaret (Marge) Freimark, née Hartman. I was born in Germany and came to the United States in 1938.

Today is 17 of May, 2012.

From Hedy Tower
December 1998

Personal Written Communication

A Personal History

I, Hedy Tower, [née Kaufman] (born March 11-1913) grew up in an ordinary bourgeois family in Bayreuth (Oberfranken). My father built himself a factory of leather goods. We were comfortably situated, without any money problems. Our synagogue (there was only one) was orthodox - we were kosher.

Only during [the] First World War my mother ventured into small villages to farmers to exchange leather goods for food. My father, in the 1st World War was in the army as "Feldwebel" (I believe, sergeant). We were all Germans, belonging to the German Reich – (without doubt). My sister (who is six years younger than me, born April 12, 1919) and I went through elementary and high school without any dramatic events. I always danced and acted in schools and for other occasions. (In fact, a talent scout wanted to take me to America. – My mother refused)

My sister and I were the only Jewish children in our classes and we had "Arian" girlfriends. – My mother, not having a profession or job (women of that generation did not work) had leisure time to meet her women friends several times a week for afternoon coffee and pie. We had two maids, one for cooking and cleaning, one for us children. After high school I attended Mary Wigman's school of dance in Dresden. (The most famous dance teacher in Europe. It was more like a dance college.) My sister went to England to become a trained child's nurse. – After four years, (from 1930 -1934) with Mary Wingman, I graduated with a teaching certificate. In my last year I became aware of Hitler's influence. Mary Wingman suddenly dismissed all the Jewish teachers, while saying and trying to convince us of her "unpolitical" views.

Many German people were afraid to associate with us. I had lived for three years in a rented room, where one day her son arrived in an SS uniform and I was informed that I had to leave. We still believed in the "miracle" that this nightmare would end soon. We were "full-blooded" Germans, having been Germans for generations.

I went to Berlin to find engagement but no “Arian” theatre took me. Finally there was still one “Jewish Theatre of Culture” in existence (Ernst Makray?). I danced there in the group for some time.

From there [I went] to the Jewish “Kulturbund“ “Jewish Theatre of Culture” where I became solo dancer and choreographer. Only Jews were allowed into the theatre and only Jews could perform there. It was a wonderful exiting experience for me and Hitler was way in the background. Until – September 8th—[9th] 1938, “the *Kristallnacht*” -- the Crystal night. The next morning when I saw the burning synagogues, the destroyed buildings, I took the 1st train home to Bayreuth. My parents were not home. — I heard from our housekeeper, who never left us, that my parents were put into prison. — I had no idea where they were – did not know [if] I will ever see them again. I became numb – feelingless. —

I could not believe or understand. I was told that the Nazis came the night before, threw all the crystals, the silver, the gold, everything that was reachable into the yard! –

For many years we [had] lived in an apartment in the middle of town, (Bayreuth had around 40,000 inhabitants). When several years later my father had an apartment house built close to the factory, with two adjoining yards. The next day after “Crystal night” the manager and assistant manager from the factory came to our house, and made me sign that the yard and factory is theirs from now on. So [that] they are the owners of the factory and the yard. They took possession and forbid us to enter the property that had legally been ours for many years. In fact, our housekeeper who went into the yard to pick cherries was nearly thrown down from the ladder and warned never to come back. —

After many months my parents came back from prison. My mother was quite disturbed.

It got worse. None-Jews did not dare to know us anymore. When we saw them we had to get off the sidewalk; we were not allowed to sit on benches; they tried to deprive us of our dignity.

We waited for our affidavits from America. My mother had two rich “uncles” in the States. The money my mother inherited was mostly sent to Germany where it was confiscated. But the American relatives kept some and sent us affidavits. My father then was in Holland. I was the first one to come to the States, my mother last. 1941. — We had no money at all when we came here. It was harder for my parents (because they were older) than [for] me. But we all managed and adjusted and are grateful that this country allowed us entrance and to live a new life.

P.S.: As of her writing, the very lively, petite, old lady, Mrs. Tower, at age 85, was still running her School of Dance in Jenkintown, PA, a suburb of Philadelphia. J.F