

Erika Eckstut (Neuman)



Born June 12, 1928, Znojmo, Czechoslovakia

Erika (Neuman) Eckstut was born in Znojmo, Czechoslovakia, on June 12, 1928, the younger of two girls. Her father, Ephram Neuman, was a respected attorney and an ardent Zionist who hoped to immigrate to Palestine with his family. Her mother, Dolly (Geller) Neuman, held a degree in business and worked in a bank before the birth of her children.

**First Person
Today at 1:00pm**

In 1930, the Neumans moved to Stanesti, a town in the province of Bukovina, Romania, where Erika's paternal grandparents lived. Erika attended public school as well as the Hebrew school her father helped found. She loved to play with her sister, Beatrice, and especially enjoyed being with her grandfather.

The Persecution of Jews Intensifies

In 1937, the fascist Iron Guard tried to remove Erika's father from his position as the chief civil official in Stanesti. Eventually, a court cleared him of the fabricated charges and he was restored to his post. In 1941, when Romania joined Nazi Germany in the war against the Soviet Union, the Soviets were driven from Stanesti. As a result, mobs carried out bloody attacks on the town's Jews.



In the fall of 1941, the Neumans were forced to settle in the Czernowitz ghetto, where living conditions were poor and they faced constant fear of deportation to Transnistria, a killing area in Romanian-occupied Ukraine. In 1943, Erika and Beatrice escaped from the ghetto on false papers that their father had obtained through the help of a local priest.

Erika and Her Sister Escape to Kiev

Erika and Beatrice fled to Kiev, where Erika obtained work in a hospital. Toward the end of the war, a nurse at the hospital mistook Beatrice for a German and reported her to the

NKVD, the Soviet secret police, which cooperated with the Gestapo. After this, Erika and Beatrice decided to go back to Czechoslovakia.

On their way back, Beatrice was again mistaken for a German by a group of Russian soldiers and narrowly escaped arrest. Erika and Beatrice reached Prague and were eventually reunited with their parents, who had been in Bucharest, Romania. Erika's father died from natural causes shortly after the war.

After the War

On August 28, 1945, Erika married Robert Kauder. A Czech Jew who fled his native country for the Soviet Union, Robert had been deported to a labor camp in Siberia by the Soviets. Upon his release in 1942, he joined the Svobodova Armada, a Czech battalion formed by the Czech government-in-exile. Robert and Erika met while she and Beatrice were on their way to Prague. After marrying in Jesenic, where Robert's unit was stationed, the couple remained there until 1948 and then moved back to Prague, where they had two children together.

After Robert's death in 1957, Erika began trying to immigrate to the United States and was permitted to do so in 1960. After settling in the United States, she became a supervisor of a pathology lab. Today she is a volunteer at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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