

The Silberbergs

Paula Silberberg was the fourth out of nine children born to my great-grandparents Isidor and Jenny Lewin. Paula was a younger sister of my grandmother Emma Gottfeld. She was born in 1901 in the small town of Trelong/Trlag, in the Posen region. A few years later the family moved to nearby Mogilno, where her father had a clothing store. After World War I the family moved to Berlin.

In Berlin Paula married Max Silberberg, born in 1895 in Ergste, North Rhine Westphalia. The couple had two daughters, Edith, born 1927 and Ingeborg, born 1930.

The family lived in the Weissensee neighborhood, first on Mutzigerstr. 4a and later on Pistoriusstr. 141. Max made a living as a house painter. The two girls went to the Clara Schuman School on Pistorius st. (now the Primo Levi school).

The family was deported from Berlin to Theresienstadt on February 1943 and stayed there for almost two years. They were further deported to Auschwitz - Max first on September 29, 1944 and two weeks later Paula and her daughters. Apparently, Edith, the older daughter, who was 17 at the time, was not on the list of those to be deported to Auschwitz but decided to join her mother and sister. We learned that fact from the serial numbers of the deportees sent to Auschwitz: Paula and Ingeborg had very low numbers (92 and 93); Edith's number was 1497, which probably means that she was added at the last minute.

I had the good fortune to actually meet in 2010 a childhood friend of Ingeborg, Mrs. Eveline Grasse (formerly Haucke). She told me that Ingeborg and she were best friends, played together with dolls, visited each other and went together to the neighborhood library. One day in 1938, when the girls were 8 years old, Ingeborg no longer came to school and she never saw her again. Years later, when Eveline learned about what the Nazis did to the Jews, she only hoped that Ingeborg somehow survived the Holocaust and searched for her. With the help of her two grandchildren, Katja Stettin and Mathias Bergmann she found my internet site and we met here, on Pistorius st. 141. She showed me the apartment where Ingeborg lived, in the hinter-house, the school, the library and more. I learned from Katja that Mrs. Grasse died a few years ago, otherwise I am sure she would have been here, remembering her friend.

With this Stolpersteine Verlegung I complete a project of laying Stolpersteine in front of the nine houses of all my family members, both those killed by the Nazis between October 1941 and October 1944, as well as those who were forced to leave Germany in the 1930's – altogether 37 stones for 37 individuals, men, women and children.

Every time I and my family members come to Berlin to attend such a Verlegung ceremony, I am impressed by the fact that dozens of current residents participate in those ceremonies. They come to pay respect to the former Jewish neighbors of their parents or grandparents and hear their stories. I would like to thank all of you for coming here today and especially to Mr. Michael Landmann who organized this ceremony.

This entire Gottfeld/Lewin family remembrance project could not have been taken place without the active participation and the deep and meaningful involvement of the Sie Waren Nachbarn initiative in Moabit. This is an opportunity to thank the members of that Initiative for their hard work in commemorating the Jewish presence in Moabit. When I come to Berlin, they make me feel as their long-time neighbor.