

From Peter Benjamin, Sydney Australia:

Let me tell you a little about ourselves. My parents were Alfred Benjamin, born 1894 in Bochum, and Lili Goldstaub, born also in Bochum in 1902.

(Lilli's father was Jacob Goldstaub of Bochum, born November 7, 1862; died April 22, 1925. He owned a movie theatre restaurant. One of Lilli's sisters moved to Palestine in the 1930s). They married in 1930 when my father left his job in Munich and moved to Berlin. I was born on November 24, 1937. I was named Peter Julius, in honor of my grandfather. Julius died in early 1938, which was a blessing, as he would have been too old for any country to accept him as a refugee migrant.

On the day of Kristallnacht, (6 hours before Kristallnacht began) my parents and I were lucky enough to depart for Australia via the UK, Canada & then to Sydney. (They flew to Holland where someone was supposed to be holding gold coins for Alfred. The person apparently did not return the money he was holding. . Then they took a boat to Canada, a train across Canada, and a boat to Sydney. They arrived with 143 German Jewish refugees)

After a considerable struggle with a new language, a different culture and a new country, my father re-established himself in business. (He manufactured clothing. After Dunkirk, Australia entered the war and all Germans were considered aliens. The Benjamins had to report to the authorities every 2 weeks for several years. During the war Alfred's factories started manufacturing uniforms necessary for the war effort and Alfred was not drafted into the army.)

Tutti and Willi and August escaped from Germany and spent the war years in Shanghai. After the war they moved to Australia and they spent the rest of their lives in Sydney. Tutti died when she was about 65 years old and August died later that year.

Australia declared war on Germany on 3rd September 1939 the same day Britain did. Australia was now an independent member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It did not have to join the war to support Britain. But most Australians believed that if Britain was in trouble it was Australia's duty to help. With the outbreak of war the Australian government began the registration of all people classified as Enemy Aliens. As the conflict progressed, internment camps were set up to place not only Prisoners of War (POWs) behind barbed wire but also civilians considered to be a threat on the home front. In addition to the internees from Europe German Christian families arrived from Papua New Guinea and Palestine. By September 1942, the total number of internees in Australia was 6,780. They included 3,651 Italians, 1,036 Japanese and 1,029 Germans. Among the internees were women and children.

One of the best-known episodes of wartime internment is the story of the *HMT Dunera*. In July 1940, the Commonwealth government agreed to accept 6,000 internees from the United Kingdom. However, only one shipment was dispatched to Australia. On board this ship – the *HMT Dunera* (Hired Military Transport) – were about 2,000 male German Jewish refugees aged between 16 and 45, who had escaped from Nazi Germany. Also on board were 200 Italian POWs and 250 German Nazis. The voyage lasted 57 days. The conditions were appalling. Apart from overcrowding on the ship with the attendant problems of hygiene and harsh treatment by crew members, the journey was also made unpleasant by the fear of torpedo attacks, the uncertainty of the destination, and by tensions between Jewish refugees and German Nazi passengers. Arriving in Sydney on the 6th of September 1940, the Dunera Boys were first interned in Hay and Orange in NSW. Eventually they were brought to Tatura, Victoria ¹.





The Hay POW camp was constructed in 1940. The first arrivals were 2036 German and Austrian Jewish refugees who fled the Nazis. They were mostly professionals who had simply fled for their lives. They were placed along side 451 German and Italian POWs many of whom were pro Nazi and fascist. While awaiting

release, the Dunera Boys developed a rich cultural and intellectual programme at their camp, giving concerts and establishing an unofficial university. The small group of strictly Orthodox Jews also managed to organize a kosher kitchen. After a period of time the injustice of their situation was realized and they were permitted to return to Britain.



hochzeit of Megan and Peter Nov 9, 1964

Peter Benjamin: I have been married to my wife Megan since 1984, and we have one child, a son named Paul Alfred (in honour of my father). I trained as a Chartered Accountant, and then spent many years as a director in the clothing industry. Since 1996 I have worked as a business consultant to several organizations, and have gradually reduced my working week to 2-3 days, so I am now semi-retired. We lead a very pleasant life here in Sydney, enjoy the beauties and facilities of Sydney and have a wide circle of friends. We live in a nice suburb, located three kilometers from the city centre. Sydney has a population of 4 million. I have been a keen yachtsman for the last 50 years, and now Megan and I enjoy boating in a comfortable motor cruiser rather than in a sailing boat.



Alfred, Lilly, and Megan.



Lilly 1933.

Our son Paul is Deputy Principal of a Jewish school with 700 students, ranging in age from Kindergarten through to University Entrance. He studied in Sydney, then two years in Los Angeles at the University of Judaism and a final year in Jerusalem. He gained a Master of Arts Degree and a bachelor of Letters in Hebrew. He lives close to our home in a small but nice apartment, some 800 meters from us, and he is the best son that any parent could ask for. All his mother asks for is he should find the right girl - that hasn't happened yet!



a recent photo of the Australian end of the Benjamin family. Our son Paul Alfred Benjamin celebrates his 40th birthday this coming Sunday. Incidentally, I haven't joined the clergy - I'm just wearing a collarless shirt! PAUL MEGAN PETER BENJAMIN