



**Hilda Samuel**



In 1955 two little girls  
ten and eleven years

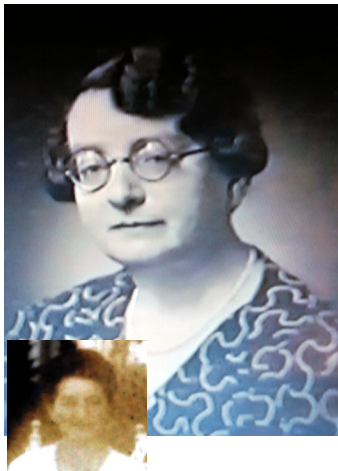
old met in their neighborhood bakery and realized

they both spoke German at home. Marion Seidemann and Ruth Samuel became fast friends, as did their families. Ruth's parents were German Jews who grew to adulthood in the Deutschland of the 1930s. This was the decade when Hitler and the Nazi party rose to power, then increasingly threatened the freedom, rights, and ultimately the very lives of its Jewish citizens. They fled to Shanghai where their children Ralph and Ruth were born. After the Second World War the Samuel family came to St. Louis. Ruth's father died in 1956. Ralph and Ruth's mother Hilda was interviewed by a Spielberg volunteer shortly before her death. Ralph, her son and Ruth are sharing her story with us.

Hilda was from a town in Northern Germany, a town called Strelitz. It was in a territory in North Germany; bounded on the north by the Baltic Sea. Hilda Samuel nee Zemack born June 27 1906 in Strelitz a small town of 5000 people in the state of Mecklenburg in Germany. Her parents (1910) were:

Pauline Ephraim

Adolf



Hilda: I was an only child.  
When I was five years old I had a little brother but only for 9 days.  
So he died as a baby.  
I grew up as an only child. I had no Jewish girl friends  
There were very few Jews in Strelitz.  
There were play mates. There were 6 that I had.  
And since I always was very short my parents took me for one year to a private teacher. This teacher took 2 girls for one year.  
At 6 ½, I started school. My playmates and school mates were: One daughter from the mayor One daughter from the Warden.  
They were my friends all through the years later.



A painting of town not unlike Strelitz, The town of Halberstadt early 1930s; the Old town - near what had been the Jewish Quarter. Halberstadt was tucked against the Harz Mountains, in the northeast of Germany two hours from Berlin,

After the first year we were ready to go to the regular school which was in the next city, which was just a few kilometers away, but we had to use the train.

That city was the center of the area. Kids from all around came every day. That was the better school. There was a lyceum 10 grades.

When we got there we could have

skipped a grade.

But the other two girls had to have religion. They stayed back. I didn't want to be alone. So I stayed back so we could go together. I had my playmates.

My grandfather came as a young boy over the border from Russia into Germany. The northeast of Germany. And there he stayed. How he made his living I don't know. He met my grandmother and they got married. He was 19 and she was 21. They had 4 children. Where they lived Jews were not allowed to own property. My grandfather wanted a house. So he moved his family to Strelitz where I was later born.

My father was the oldest and had 2 sisters. Through the years of course as his sisters grew older they got married.



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THE BUILDING GRANDFATHER BOUGHT IN STRELITZ the store was a haberdashery.



My grandfather never thought about that he was still Russian. And then the war broke out in 1914, and all of a sudden we were Russian, my grandfather, my parents and I. My father's sisters got married to German men and the law in Germany was that you become the citizen of the state of the

husband. So they were not Russians. They were not affected. My grandparents had no problems. They were older people.. But my father had to enlist in the army. To become a citizen. And that's what he did. At 40 he went into the army. So we became citizens too. It was a shock for a while. My father had to go away. But since he was already 40 first of all he had to go through the training with the young boys. He was a very



heavy set man. Unfortunately and had to go through all these exercises.  
 And that was the foundation for the 3 day illness.  
 He never was sent really to the front. He was sent to where I was living. He did office work. And then for a while he was in France, but not at the front. In 1917 he was sent home one year before the war was over, but he still had to work in the factory that made boxes for ammunition. I watched him there once. In 1918 he got out he could stay home finally. I didn't have much of a father. He was never home. My grandfather's name was Simon my grandmother's name was Henriette Nee Gerson  
**SIMON ZIMACK**

;When I started getting a Jewish education we only had a cantor in Strelitz



There were so few Jewish people in Strelitz.  
 We had no minion any more  
 We had a cantor until he died in 1919.

First of all there was another girl. She was already 14 and she dropped out  
 The cantor made me come every shabbos afternoon to his house  
 I had some history, but the old history. Nothing about modern Jewish history.  
 When he died I had to go to Neustrelitz where I really went to school also.  
 There we were a group of 8 or 10 children all ages.  
 And another cantor came from still another city and taught all of us at the same time.

I was aware of being Jewish.

On the high holidays our store was closed. It was really closed. Sometimes people tried to come the back way to get something We wouldn't sell. I was told that one time a customer came from a nearby village to buy a dowry for his daughter. She wanted to get married. We wouldn't sell. He had to come back another day. In those days customers were different. They didn't go from one store to another to check on prices. If you had a customer he was your customer. And he came to you. If you were closed he would come another day. As long as we had the cantor of course we had services. I guess when I was very little they had services on shabbos evening I remember my grandfather going to the synagogue. I guess at one time Strelitz must have had a large congregation. We had a very old synagogue that was big enough for 300 people. There was no light. No electricity. On Yom Kippur it was already cold in Strelitz. When my mother went in the morning to the temple she had a maid bring a blanket and a foot stools so she could keep warm during the day.

HILDA 1920

There was an old synagogue. When it started to get dark the shammas came with a candle at the end and lit up the candelabra that hung from the ceiling. Wherever there was someone standing each person had a candle for himself.



The candelabra was really very pretty. The synagogue was very very old.

The Germans had a munitions factory outside Strelitz which they blew up before the



Russians came, so the city was damaged. My house

doesn't exist any more.

### **Synagogue Strelitz built 1913**

My father passed away in 1922. He was very sick. My mother kept the store. She was not really a business woman. She did the best she could.



I sort of drifted a few years. I didn't know what I wanted. I was a typical teenager.

I heard of a woman who taught typing and short hand. And I went to her and took lessons.

She got me my first job. I was only there three months. She said, I think I have a job for you. He is just a beginner. He cannot pay much. Why don't you go there?

And I did and I got the job. I loved it. That was 1928. My boss was not Jewish. But he was officially Nazi. To protect himself he joined to party. He wore the uniform. Sometimes he had to go to meetings. Before he came to the office left he showed me to make sure his arm band was right. He was laughing about it. To protect himself.

Some friends of my mother were visiting. And they heard I just got the job; If this is your first job you need to stay there at least a year. Otherwise if you want to go somewhere else it will make a bad impression.

A whole year in one place?

I had to do everything that you need to do in the office. I was the only one. My boss came in in the morning and most of the time he left. And I did my work.



After five years he had to fire me because the Nazis were after him. He couldn't help himself. That was in the fall of 1933.

Our house I remember upstairs we rented out to students. Rooms. One of them took the Nazi flag out of the window. There was a box near the entrance from the Nazis where they put their notes in there. If they were having a meeting. And we couldn't do anything about it.

I wasn't afraid of the Nazis at that time. There was very bad inflation in Germany. So my mother wanted to sell the store. And if you were having a total sale you had to tell the police about it. And she did. So she told the

police she was going to have a total sale on April first 1933. And then Hitler announced a boycott of all Jewish stores on April 1, 1933. and that was the first time I realized I had a nervous stomach. I was so afraid at that time. I really was.

When the first came of course we couldn't open. Outside stood a big guy with a sign hanging around his neck not to buy here. People walked by him and came around the back way and bought on that day.



They didn't take Hitler serious at that time. Not that serious. That was the problem. Because they didn't believe it would be like that.

A few months after I left my first job my boss came over to me and said he had a job for me in Rostock.

It was a man who had visited him a few times so I knew him. And I didn't have much choice. He said talk it over with your mother. And if you want to take it come over to me and we will call him. I needed something. I decided I better do that.

I went to him.

He made the phone call.

I went to Rostock not knowing anybody except the man I worked for.

100 km north. That was not a Jewish enterprise either.

Strelitz is 100km north of Berlin.

When I went to leave Strelitz my mother accompanied me to the station. And we knew the cantor from Rostock would come.

An old Jewish man had just died. The cantor came to bury him. So while we were waiting for the train the counter train came and a man came through with a black coat and a big black hat. And I told my mother that has to be the cantor.

I went to him and said: Excuse me. Are you the cantor from Rostock? I told him I was to go to Rostock not knowing anybody.



He said come to the synagogue on Friday night and I will introduce you to my family after we doven. So at least I had something.

I went to Rostock. And I was terribly homesick at first. One of the employees of the company I

went to work for picked me up at the railway station and took me to his mother's house, who had a

room for rent. It was a terrible room, just awful.

But my job was nice. I was very satisfied. I liked it. I even made a friend there.

We went out a

few times. Later it turned out that this guy that got me the first room turned Nazi and told the boss

he had to dismiss me. After five months.

But in the mean time I had found another room with a very nice elderly Jewish couple. They had a room empty. The room used to belong to their daughter. There was no comparison with the other room.

I found the synagogue. I went in. The service was in progress. After the service I went downstairs and the cantor introduced me to his family and invited me for a cup of coffee for the next day.

Of course I went. There was another old lady. She was the widow of a rabbi. They must have talked about me. They gave me the addresses of several families that had daughters approximately my age. And told me I should pick one of them and pay them a visit on the Sunday morning. Of course I had never done anything like that in my life. But I was desperate. So on Sunday morning I picked a family that had two daughters and paid them a visit. They were very nice people. They invited me, two sisters, and

their girl friend, another girl. They were going for a walk that afternoon and I should join them. So I did.

As we were walking one of the sisters was walking with me and said I know a husband for you.

Oh, you do? I said the man that I marry has to be tall because I'm so short.

And she said don't worry about that. The man I have in mind is tall. He is a friend of my bothers.

Of course we were joking around.

So I said: You know something. If I would make an appointment with him to meet him at a nice out doors café would you join us?

I said: Sure.

Sure enough after a couple of weeks or so I got a phone call at the house I lived with the Jewish couple.

#### ADOLPH SAMUEL AS A BOY



And she said I have a rendezvous with this man at this café, it was a very nice outdoor café.

Will you come?

I said I'll come

And I did go.

And they were sitting, she and the young man

And we had conversation. It was very nice. I liked the way he talked.

And after a while we went to an amusement park that was in Rostock at that time. We didn't go on any rides but



we walked and talked for quite a while

Then he and I took the other girl home. Then he took me home. Of course there were no cars. We walked.

And I came home that evening it was 2 o'clock in the morning.

We made an appointment the next day to meet at the railway station where he lived close by. And we were going to a resort at Warnemunde which is a resort something like Miami. A beautiful beach.

#### **Warnemünde**

Located just 10 km or six miles from Rostock's city center, this seaside district on the Ostsee is Rostock's jewel.

The next day I met my landlady. She said: Fraulein Zemack. Where have you been? We were worried to death.

I said I was out with Mr. Samuel.

Mr. Samuel? Oh, then you were in good hands. No worry about that.



Well I met Mr. Samuel on that Sunday and every Sunday thereafter.  
Unfortunately the times were so bad that we didn't dare to get engaged or married  
We met on June 2, 1934.  
On Sept 28 1935 we were engaged which happened to be Rosh Hashanah  
And three years later we finally got married.  
By that time we knew already that we would have to leave the country.



IDENTY PASS WITH J FOR JEW.

Both of us had a job.  
I was fired from that first job I had after five months.  
I found another job with a Jewish company. It was like a dime store. I worked in the office.  
The company was called Kadwa. I had two bosses. Mr. Loewenstein and Mrs Freida Rosenthal. I hated him like terrible but otherwise I did like my job. I hated him and I'll tell you why. I took dictation from him. One day he called me in and while I was waiting for him to start he

called in his manager from the store. He had his office next door. He was not Jewish. He had a letter in his hand. He was hoping for another girl to hire for the store, and apparently he had advertised in Germany somewhere. And this girl from a completely different area in Germany had answered, and he must have already answered once and told her that he would hire her three months of probation. And she wrote back and he had that letter in his hand that she would like to take the job, but that she came from so far away she couldn't come for three months probation. And she had all the experience and she had all the experience and she had shown in paper, but she could not accept that probation. And this letter he showed to the manager who was gentile. And he said look at this. You only can get this from a Jew. And he was Jewish.

And I was sitting there listening to him.

And later I understand on crystal night when they took all the men to concentration camps, I found out that all the men who they caught were taken to Strelitz into the prison. There was a prison and they used that as a concentration camp. And he now was there too. The others gave him their piece of mind. For they knew how he was. Supposedly he came here to America later. I never heard from him again, of course.



#### **DAMGARTEN IN RED**

In 1938 we got married.

My husband came from a much smaller town than Strelitz, from Damgarten. His family had there a grain business from many many years. They even had a little plot of cemetery in Damgarten. After the inflation they had to give it up. His father had died very early anyway, and my husband had become the manager when he was old enough.

They had to give that up. He bought a truck with a second truck and with something hanging off behind so he could transport more. And he had the various customers from the grain business, so they had him transport their grain where it was supposed to go or whatever they had to transport. And he had good business for a while.

#### [Germany Inflation in the Weimar Republic](#)

Germany went through its worst inflation in 1923. In 1922, the highest denomination was 50,000 Mark. By 1923, the highest denomination was 100,000,000,000,000 Mark. In December 1923 the exchange rate was 4,200,000,000,000 Marks to 1 US dollar. At one point in 1923 prices doubled every two days.



Then all of a sudden the Nazis got hold of that and went to his customers and told them to get somebody else. So he wrote the customers; and he lost the customers and he lost quite a bit of money on that truck that he had to sell.

That was already after I met him. So now he just found a job with a Jewish company who made accessories for shoes. His bosses name was also Samuel. No relation at all. And his boss got away from Germany

the easy way; went over the border with no passport or whatever. Apparently he had money lots of money outside already.



We were married in 1938. Three months later was Kristallnacht. And we had heard about that this young man in Paris was killed, the man from the consulate was killed supposedly by a Jew and now they gave Mr. Goebbels the reason to go and have that Crystal Night.

We only knew about this murder, but we didn't know about anything else. So on the Morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1938 both of us went to work like usual. He walked. I had to take the street car.

As I was riding along I saw already some windows smashed from small Jewish stores. That was the first thing I saw.



As I came to my store where I worked of course the windows were smashed. And I went upstairs to the office and there were two other girls already there. They were not Jewish. But they didn't work. They were just sitting there. Their faces were white. And they told me the men were downstairs waiting to be picked up. And I heard they tried to take all the men to concentration camps. So I figured I better see my husband again. After three months exactly three months.

After I was upstairs for a short while they let us know we should go home. So I walked home. I didn't take the street car. I was afraid to show my face. Back ways.

And shortly before I reached home I met one of the janitors from the stores. And he came running to me and said: Oh Mrs. Samuel, I have message for you from your husband. He got away. And he is on his way. And he will call you as soon as he can and let you know where he is and what he is planning to do.

I tell you something fell off my chest.

And we only had a room with my mother in law. And I went in to my mother in law. We didn't even try to get an apartment. I don't know if we would have gotten one.

I told my mother in law what happened. How we were waiting for the phone call.

And it came. My husband had gone to Waramunde where the trains go very often. And this was in winter so it was not in season; but there was a spot very near the station; and there he was with two other men who had gone with him. It was a cantor and someone else. But they went home afterwards. They didn't go with my husband. But my husband wanted me to take a suitcase for him and meet him there in Waramunde. And get some cash.

So my mother in law packed a suit case for him, and I went to my lady boss who didn't live far from me to get some cash. And she told me that all the apartments of the Jewish families had been invaded

that night and the furniture smashed except for two. One was my mother in law's. and another one from my boss. All the others were invaded. And she wanted to take me to my other boss because his was damaged.

I said thank you. I don't want to see it.

We figured out that we were exempted because our name and the name from my husband's boss were the same. And the people who did the invading must have had a list. But they didn't know there were two Samuels and there was also two Rosenthals. One was my boss. And there was a young couple. They had just married maybe 6 months before. There's was invaded. And they cut open the feather beds and poured jam into it. It was just awful.

So I got the cash. And I went to meet my husband in Waramunde. And he told me what he planned. He planned to go to Hamburg where his mother had two old lady cousins who he thought would put him up for a little while. And I should follow him.

Now he told me what happened at his place when the Nazis came. He got to work as usual and was just about to sit down to start to work when another young man came in. He was a friend of my husbands who happened to come there.

He said: Oh Adolf get on your coat and hat and leave. The Nazis are coming up to get you. Just leave.

My husband did that. He didn't really look Jewish so he put on his hat and coat and as he went down the stairs the Nazis came up. So when he came out onto the sidewalk a big desk came smashing out through the window right a few feet ahead of him. He was not hurt but he realized how serious it was. So then he made his plan that he would go to Hamburg for a while.

When the train came we both went in I got off in Rostock and he went on to Hamburg but he told me to come after him on the next train so we would be together. So I did that. I went home and I packed most of the things. And a few hours later there was another train that happened to be the same train we used three months earlier for our honeymoon. So I followed him a few hours later.

In Hamburg at the big station the train was underground, and I had to look around first and see where he might be.

I saw him upstairs with a Nazi in full uniform. So I thought there we go again.



Of course I walked up the stairs. He saw me coming. He came towards me. Apparently excused himself from that Nazi. So we left took a cab. He stayed at these two old