

Holocaust Survivor Biography: Fred Behrend



Fred Behrend was born in 1926 and lived a life in old-world Germany, dwelling in the gilded compound once belonging to the manufacturer of the zeppelin airships. Behrend's childhood came to a crashing end with Kristallnacht (the Night of Broken Glass) and his father's harrowing internment at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. When the Nazis came to power, Fred and his family escaped oppression and persecution in Germany for Cuba and ultimately settled into a life of freedom and happiness in the United States.

Behrend would go on to experience brushes with history involving the defeated Germans. By the age of twenty, he had run a POW camp full of Nazis, been an instructor in a program aimed at denazifying specially selected prisoners, and been assigned by the U.S. Army to watch over Wernher von Braun, the designer of the V-2 rocket that terrorized Europe and later chief architect of the Saturn V rocket that sent Americans to the moon. Upon returning from service in the U.S., Fred rose out of poverty, built a successful business in Manhattan, and returned to visit Germany a dozen times, giving him a unique perspective into Germany's attempts to surmount its Nazi past.



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Witness to History Project:

The Witness To History Project is designed to further the message and lessons of the Holocaust by direct interaction between students or interested adults and Holocaust survivors. Participants "adopt" a survivor by learning his or her unique account via listening to the survivor tell his/her story, asking questions, writing a biography, reviewing a videotape, and memorizing and re-telling the story to others. Ultimately, the participant will have the lifelong job of educating others about the Holocaust by sharing this personal narrative. Contact the Holocaust Awareness Museum to participate.

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