

Reva Kanner Dexter
Displaced Person and
Child of Holocaust
Survivors
General S.D. Sturgis
January 13, 1948



I arrived at age 3 with my mother Sara Schwarzman Kanner, my father Mechel Kanner and my brother Chaim Kanner on January 13, 1948.

The stamp on the very tattered paper which is headed " Office of the Military governor, Certificate of Identity in Lieu of Passport", remains the only document which proves that I was born in Czymkient, Russia.



My parents were Holocaust Survivors who fled Poland in 1939 into the Ukraine to escape the Nazis. They were tricked by the Russian authorities who rounded them up promising to return them to a " Russian Occupied Poland." Instead, they were herded into cattle cars to Siberia to work as slave labourers in the forests. My father Mechel organized a strike to get warmer clothing and better food for the workers, but was thrown in prison, leaving my young mother alone with a baby.

Sara & Michael Kanner in 1939

How we ended up in Bad Reichenhall Displaced Persons camp, Germany, in 1945 is a much longer story.

However, the four of us managed to get passage on the General Sturgis Ship in Munich on December 8, 1947. We arrived in Halifax on January 13, 1948. The only other official document I have is a German paper entitled Ausfertigung Nr. 2379, signed by a Notary in Bad Reichenhall on September 16, 1947 which I assume gave us the authority to leave Germany as my parents were still Polish citizens, but with no papers.



So, it is now 62 years later and I am exploring my roots. Our family went from Halifax to Montreal, where my father worked in the burgeoning clothing industry. A third child was born in 1949.

From early on I remember how grateful my parents were that Canada finally provided them with a safe haven after the unspeakable horrors they experienced. They camouflaged their emotional scars by working hard and trying to forget their murdered families.

After a long and fulfilling career as a counselling psychologist, teacher, banker and community activist, I am now teaching Holocaust studies, so that future generations will better understand how racial hatred can lead to genocide.

Chaim and Regina in Bad Reichenhall, Germany
(Upon arrival in Halifax our names were changed to Hymie and Reva)



Family in Czymkient, Kazakhstan (former U.S.S.R.)
1945

