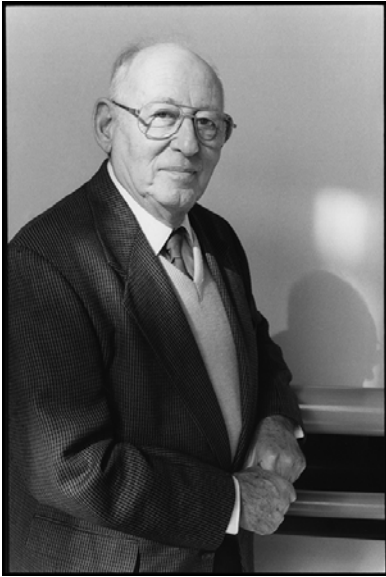




GUNTHER KATZ

"Never forget. When you see injustice done, doing nothing is not the right thing to do."

Gunther Katz was born an only child in Mannheim, Germany on August 17, 1929, to Sally and Gertrude Katz. He was raised in Speyer, living with both his parents and grandparents. Gunther remembers when Hitler was elected to power during his childhood, and hearing about the Nazis on the radio.

He recalls listening to many political discussions among concerned family members. When Gunther was of school age, he was unable to attend public school because of anti-Jewish laws. Instead, he received his education at the local synagogue.

In 1940, Gunther's family was transported to Camp de Gurs, a French internment camp run by the Vichy Government. The conditions in the camp were terrible; there was very little to eat, constant rain, muddy floors, and dysentery. After some time, the children were moved into separate barracks, and surprisingly, they did receive lessons in French and Math. The head of each barrack conducted daily roll calls to monitor the prisoners and to make sure that no one escaped.

Since Gunther's family had acquired papers that allowed them to leave France, they were able to relocate to Marseilles in hopes of leaving the country. While they awaited their passage, his father was placed in Camp des Milles, a nearby camp, and Gunther and his mother were held in an internment hotel.

In 1942, the family was denied safe passage for the U.S., and consequently, both parents were ordered to be transported to Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Before their deportation, Gunther's parents made arrangements for Gunther to be cared for by the OSE organization. OSE,

OEUVRE DE SECOURS AUX ENFANTS FRANCE, is an international Jewish organization, at the time devoted to the care of Jewish children. Gunther was only 13-years old at the time; he lived in a children's home run by OSE for less than a year before he was smuggled out of France to Switzerland. In Switzerland he was taken in by a non-Jewish family with whom he lived the following three years. Gunther was very happy during this time period; the family treated him as one of their own, the town was beautiful, and he was able to go to school.

On May 8, 1945, the day of liberation, all of the churches in Switzerland rang their bells, and the end of the war was reported all over the radio. Following the war's end, the Swiss government ordered Gunther to leave the country. Because he had an aunt living in Philadelphia, Gunther was able to acquire his immigration papers very quickly and board a plane to New York. He arrived in the United States in 1946 and met his aunt and other family members who cared for him after his arrival. Unfortunately, he learned that both of his parents had perished in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, and that his grandparents died somewhere in the Soviet Union. Gunther lost 35 members of his immediate family to the horrific tragedy of the Holocaust.

Gunther proudly served in the U.S. Air Force and was stationed in Korea during the Korean War. After his military service, he continued his education and graduated from Paul Smith's College and the University of Denver with degrees in Hotel and Restaurant Management. After a successful career in Restaurant Management, he switched to selling lighting products. In 1963, Gunther married Susie Spitz, and they have two sons. Their older son is Steven, married to Ruth, and they have a daughter named Rachel. Their younger son is Andrew.

Gunther has shared his story at the Museum of Tolerance since 2005 in the hope that "at least one person in each of my audiences will remember what I said and do the right thing when asked to do the right thing." Gunther Katz passed away on February 13, 2011, but his legacy of perseverance and tolerance will be remembered.