

Biography of Bruno Lyon (born Lachotzki)

Bruno was born in Tempelburg, East Prussia, on Dec. 17, 1887. At the age of 13 he was apprenticed to a businessman in a small town somewhere in East Prussia, working in a country store. Bruno was conscripted into the army with the outbreak of WWI, was wounded on the Russian front, and decorated with the Iron Cross for bravery. He was always proud of his service to his fatherland. Having won the Iron Cross was one reason he never believed that any serious harm would come to him or his family despite the Nazi's continually worsening laws against the Jews.

Upon release from the army, Bruno moved to Berlin. Eventually he went to work as a salesman for Lewinsky and Meyer, the women's dress manufacturer that Selma Lyon (born Oster, married name in Germany Lachotzki) was a partner in. Bruno and Selma married in 1921. As the head salesman, Bruno traveled all over Europe each season selling the company's new creations. The company was very successful and Bruno and Selma lived a good life in Charlottenburg with their daughter Rosemary, their son Fritz (later Fred), and Selma's sister Dorothea Oster.

Bruno and Selma had rejected the Orthodox Judaism of their parents, but they attended the synagogue Friedens Tempel on Markgraf-Albrecht Strasse. At the time of Kristallnacht, Bruno was president of the synagogue.

The morning after the Night of the Broken Glass, Bruno was arrested at his business and sent to Sachsenhausen. Selma was able to obtain visas for the family to England while Bruno was being held. She paid a great deal of money in bribes to obtain Bruno's release from Sachsenhausen, and the family was given two days to leave Germany. The family stayed in England until their visas to the U.S. had been approved, and in the late spring of 1940 took a ship to the U.S.

The family settled in Minneapolis, MN, because a cousin who lived there convinced some wealthy local businessmen to sign an affidavit swearing they would be financially responsible for the family. Once in the United States, the family changed their name from Lachotzki to Lyon. Bruno, despite his little English, became a salesman again, selling women's clothing for the rest of his working life in the U.S.

In 1956, after Rosemary and her family moved to CA, Bruno, Selma and Dorothea moved there as well. They settled in Burlingame, a pleasant suburb south of San Francisco, where he remained until Selma died in 1964. Then Bruno moved back to Minneapolis to live with his son Fred's family, where he died of lung cancer on June 25, 1966.

Judith Kalitzki, Seattle