

Biography of Dorothea Oster

Dorothea (known as Thea) Oster was born in Xanten am Rhein on August 7, 1893. She was the youngest of five sisters and one brother. When her older sister Selma moved to Berlin in the late 1910's, Thea moved with her, and like Selma, she got a job as a saleswoman at the department store KaDeWe. Thea worked in the children's clothing department, and always remembered proudly that she outfitted the famous child prodigy, Claudio Arrau, a Chilean pianist, when he arrived in Berlin for his European debut.

At some point Thea became engaged to be married, but the engagement was called off, perhaps because her family considered the match unacceptable. After her older sister Selma got married to Bruno Lachotzki in 1921, Thea went to live with them and became the person primarily responsible for the upkeep of their home and for looking after their children. This allowed Selma and Bruno to concentrate on their business, a women's dress manufacturing company called Lewinski and Mayer. Thea was a much loved surrogate mother to Bruno and Selma's children, Rosemary and Fred.

When the family left Germany a few months after the Night of the Broken Glass for England, and then a year and a half later immigrated to the United States, Thea went with them. In fact, Thea continued to live with her sister and brother-in-law until Selma died in 1964. At that point, she moved to the Jewish Home for the Aged in San Francisco, CA, where she remained until she died on November 16, 1978.

Thea was much loved not only by her niece Rosemary and her nephew Fred, but by their children. She was a sweet woman, very motherly, always willing to entertain and comfort the children around her. Although Thea did not seem to have had a very fulfilling life, she never complained and always cheerfully took care of those around her.

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