

English Version

Hans Harpuder was born 26 November 1901 in Berlin, Germany to Josef Harpuder and Gertrud Harpuder (geb. Hannes). They resided in an area not far from the present-day Kanzleramt. The oldest of three boys, Hans' brothers, Erich (along with his wife Hertha and daughter Marianne) and Alfred both survived the Holocaust, fleeing Germany in the late 1930s for New York. Their father, Josef died before World War II while their mother Gertrude wanted to remain in Berlin; she was subsequently deported to Theresienstadt and murdered in Auschwitz. On 26 December 1931, Hans married Gerda Lewin in the synagogue on Fassanenstraße in Berlin which was subsequently destroyed on Kristallnacht (Reichspogromnacht). Upon the death of his father-in-law Josef Lewin, he took over the family business on Memhardstraße which produced material for packaging and shipping. This business was subsequently damaged on Kristallnacht. In 1934, his only natural-born child, Ralf was born; he had a daughter, Ursula whom he adopted upon marriage to Gerda. In 1937, Hans, along with his son Ralf had his German citizenship revoked as part of the implementation of the Nuremberg laws. Recognizing the situation in Germany was deteriorating and the repression of Jews expanding, Hans applied to depart the country along with his wife, children, and mother-in-law Selma. They departed from the Anhalter Bahnhof station in Berlin in March 1939 for Italy, where they boarded a ship to take them to Shanghai, China, the last open city where they could enter without a visa, having been declared stateless by the Third Reich. Living very much on a day-to-day basis and ultimately selling much of what little they were able to bring with them, Hans attempted to earn a living as a door-to-door salesman. As a result of the squalid living conditions they lived in, Hans died from an infection caused by food infested with parasites. He was buried in Shanghai in 1945. His gravesite was subsequently destroyed during the Communist takeover of China and has been lost to posterity.

Gerda Harpuder (geb. Lewin) was born 21 November 1905 to Josef and Selma Lewin (geb. Nathansohn) in the Hackescher Markt area of Berlin. She was the older of two children, having a brother Werner (he was able to flee Germany for the United States prior to Gerda). In 1924, she gave birth to her first child Ursula. On 26 December 1931, Gerda married Hans Harpuder in the synagogue on Fassanenstraße in Berlin which was subsequently destroyed on Kristallnacht or Reichspogromnacht. In 1934, her only son, Ralf was born in the Wilmersdorf neighborhood of Berlin. With the repression of Jews in Berlin only increasing, Gerda along with her husband, children, and mother, Selma, fled Berlin in 1939 for Shanghai, China. This was the last open city where they could enter without a visa having been declared stateless by the Third Reich. Her loving husband died in 1945 as a result of an infection caused by parasites due to the squalid conditions in which they lived. In 1947, Gerda, along with Ralf, Ursula, and Selma, were finally able to immigrate to the United States as a result of sponsorship by her brother. In the 1950s she married Victor Stummer, a refugee from Vienna (who was previously imprisoned at Dachau) who she had met in Shanghai. She settled in Los Angeles, California where she continued to live until her death in 1997. While living in the United States, she quickly made friends with fellow European Jewish immigrants who had fled the Nazis and attempted to maintain a European lifestyle. She enjoyed entertaining friends and her daily Kaffee und Kuchen. Until the early 1980's she continued to cook almost exclusively German food. She liked being called Omi by her

four grandchildren.

Ralf Heinz Harpuder was born 12 April 1934 in the Wilmersdorf neighborhood of Berlin, Germany to Hans and Gerda Harpuder (geb. Lewin). In 1937, Ralf, along with his father had his citizenship revoked by the Nazi government and was declared stateless as part of the implementation of the Nuremberg laws. As a four-year-old child, Ralf was diagnosed with appendicitis, but due to the implementation of the Nuremberg laws, his parents had difficulty finding a doctor within the city center who would operate on him. They subsequently traveled to the countryside to find a doctor willing to perform the operation. In 1939, the Harpuder family fled Berlin for Shanghai, China, the last open city where stateless refugees could enter without a visa. Ralf's very last memory of Berlin prior to departure was his arrival at Anhalter Bahnhof where the family boarded a train for a ship leaving from Trieste, Italy. Ralf spent his most formative years living in the Jewish ghetto of Hongkew in Shanghai. There he attended a Jewish school whose instruction was in German, the native tongue of the Jewish refugees. Those years living in China shaped his outlook on life and helped to forge a very tight relationship with his mother, particularly after the passing of his father, Hans in 1945. In 1947 he immigrated with his mother, sister, and grandmother to Los Angeles, California where he went on to finish high school. He subsequently attended a 2-year college and began working for Douglas Aircraft company performing mathematical calculations for aircraft construction. He also served his adopted nation in always remaining proud of his service which gave him the opportunity to truly live the American Dream; this was in stark contrast to the horrors he would have faced in Nazi Germany. In 1965 he married Yvonne Harpuder (geb. Friedemann) who herself was the daughter of refugees from Berlin having been born just four years after their arrival in the United States. After marriage, he returned to college and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree and began a career working with the Los Angeles County Health Department until his retirement in 1996. In 1974, his only child, Brian was born. Brian was raised with a combination of Jewish and German traditions that had accompanied Ralf's and Yvonne's families as they moved from Berlin. In his later years, Ralf spent his free time exploring his family's history in Germany and his own childhood in Shanghai. His dedication to maintaining detailed family records in pristine albums will ensure his descendants live the mantra of "never forgetting." Throughout his life, Ralf never lost his German identity or culture, always enjoying the full spectrum of the German kitchen and identifying as ethnically German until the day he died. On 31 July 2009 Ralf Harpuder died in Los Angeles, California. He lived a full life dedicated to ensuring future generations would not forget the horrors of the past while also be committed to forgiveness and a better future.

Recherche and text: Brian Harpuder,
all pictures: private

[Documentation of the laying of the stones:](#)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/usbotschaftberlin/albums/72157713238603327>