

Biography of Rosemary Kalitzki (born Lachotzki)

Rosemary was born on January 7, 1927, in the Charlottenburg district of Berlin, to Selma and Bruno Lachotzki. Her family was quite well off, since the business her parents were co-owners of, a dress manufacturing company, was very successful. Although her mother and father spent much of their time at work, her aunt Thea and nanny Lina were there to take care of her and her younger brother, Fritz (later Fred).

Rosemary's life in Berlin, despite the rise of Hitler when she was only six years old, was generally a good one, with extended family members nearby, many friends at school, and vacations in the mountains during both winter and summer. Her home at Paulsborner Strasse 3 was elegant and comfortable, near the bustling Kurfurstendam and not too far from the Zoo.

Rosemary began school at the local public school on Sybelstrasse, not far from their home. In 1936, however, after Jewish children were forbidden to attend public schools, she and her brother went to a private Jewish day school in Dahlem called Privat Waldschule Kaliski (PWK). Their school was a real refuge, where the children learned not just the usual subjects, but skills that would help the children survive in Palestine, if they were lucky enough to be able to emigrate there.

The morning after the Night of the Broken Glass, her father Bruno was arrested and taken to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. As the older child in the family, almost twelve at the time of Kristallnacht, Rosemary must have been very aware of what was happening both with her family and in the country. Rosemary almost never talked about her childhood as an adult, presumably because it was too traumatic to remember in light of everything that followed.

A few months after Bruno's arrest, Rosemary's mother Selma was able to pay enough bribes to get Bruno out of the camp, and the family was given 48 hours to leave Germany. Selma had obtained the necessary papers to allow the family to enter England, where she had cousins who loaned the family a small cottage on the Sussex coast. It was meant to be a summer home, and therefore had no heat. It was a very uncomfortable place to spend the winter of 1939-40. Rosemary attended public school in the tiny village of Shoreham-by-the-Sea. Although Rosemary and Fred didn't know a word of English when they arrived, they became quite fluent by the time they left England for the U.S. in the late spring of 1940.

The family settled in Minneapolis, MN, where Selma had a cousin who allowed the family to stay with him and his family when they first arrived. Rosemary attended junior high school and then high school in Minneapolis, intending to enroll in nursing school once she finished high school. But at the age of 17 Rosemary met Hans Kalitzki and the two promptly fell in love, marrying in March of 1945, when Rosemary was 18 and Hans was 30. At that time, married women could not attend nursing school, so Rosemary had to drop that long-held ambition.

Hans Kalitzki had been born in Sorau, Germany, and did an apprenticeship at the Hotel Adlon in Berlin from 1931-1936, when Hans decided to emigrate to the British protectorate of Palestine, where he worked as a cook at various restaurants in Jerusalem. During WWII Hans joined the American Merchant Marines as a cook, and on leave took a trip to visit an old friend from his Berlin days who was then living in Minneapolis. This is how he met Rosemary.

Rosemary and Hans had three daughters, Kathleen, Barbara, and Judith, between 1947 and 1952. After working as a cook and then a sous chef, Hans decided that he could reach the height of his profession only if he moved to either New York City or San Francisco. Rosemary chose San Francisco, so the family moved to California, where she spent the rest of her life.

As Hans became highly successful as a chef, he and Rosemary were able to travel frequently to Europe. Rosemary loved visiting France, Italy, and Austria, but she refused to ever set foot in Germany. She became so interested in and knowledgeable about travel that she ended up working for a travel agency, getting a great deal of satisfaction helping others discover the joys of travelling.

Even when busy with her three daughters and keeping up the home, Rosemary always found time to volunteer at least once a week at a local hospital. She was a marvelous cook and baker, and her friends loved nothing better than to come over for a cup of coffee and piece of pastry or cookie and a good talk. Rosemary had a real gift for friendship and was a great listener.

Once her daughters were grown, Rosemary volunteered in the library of a local elementary school, helping to make sure all the children learned to enjoy books and reading, teaching them games and handicrafts, and giving special attention to those that needed it. She was a beloved figure at the school.

Tragically, Rosemary died at the age of 47, on June 1, 1974, leaving a shocked and grieving family and community of friends.

Judith Kalitzki, Seattle