



My address for the ceremony of unveiling the memorial stones in front of my family's residence

Dear friends,

Six million Jews were murdered during the Nazi occupation of Europe. Most of them remained anonymous like my husband's family who was murdered in Poland.

We are standing now at the front door of the apartment where my family – the **Blum family**, lived before the war, there were four of them: my grandparents, Sidi and Harry, my father Hans and my little aunt Hedy.

All my grandmother's siblings were born and raised in this building. Later they lived and earned their living here as adults with their own families.

On this day, November 9th, 75 years ago, during the Kristallnacht pogrom, rioters broke down the door, in front of which we are standing, entered the house, and vandalized the content of the house, beat my family up and arrested my grandfather Harry and put him in the Dachau concentration camp.

My grandfather Harry, a recipient of the Iron Cross, first class, from WWI, was released from Dachau on the condition that he leaves Austria, his Vaterland immediately. And so after a very long and exhausting journey he arrived illegally in Palestine, where he lived and worked until the day his heart could no longer bear the sorrow of losing his family. In 1947, at the age of 53, he died of a heart attack.

My father Hans was expelled from school right after the Anschluss and a year later, in April 1939, at the age of 12, he was sent to Paris with 63 Austrian Jewish children in a Kinder Transport sponsored by the French baron Rothschild.

In 1940, when the Nazis arrived in Paris, my father had to escape and to hide in many places in France until he managed, with the help of the French Resistance to cross the border to Switzerland, where he lived in a refugee camp until the end of the war. After the war he arrived in Israel and reunited with his father after 6 years of not seeing each other.

Sidonie and Hedy were left behind to live in this house, but not for long.

On May 1939, a few months before the war began; they were forced to move from this house to District II, the Leopoldstadt where all the Austrian Jews were concentrated.

There they had to share an apartment with 3 other families.

They lived there 3 years. During that time they used to write letters: to Harry in Palestine, to my father Hans in France and to other relatives who managed to escape away from the Nazi occupied countries.

Many letters were found in Harry's room after his death.

They are the testimony to the family's tragic story.

In June 1939, Hedy wrote in her childish hand writing to her father:

"Allerliebster goldigster guter Vati!

Wie geht es dir? mir geht es sehr gut. Wenn du mich einmal sehen wirst dann wirst du mich gar nicht erkennen den[sic.] ich habe jetzt zwei Zöpfe. Vorige Woche habe ich von der Fr. Lehrerin eine Schülerbeschreibung bekommen. Sie lautet: Diese Schülerin Hedy Blum ist ein strebsames fleißiges Kind. Sie weißt ser[sic.] gute Fortschritte auf. Viele 1000000 Bussert von Hedy".

And in March 1940 she wrote:

"Allerliebster goldigster braver Vati!

Haben deinen l. Brief erholt worin du mir schreibst wie groß ich bin. ich bin 125 cm. ich wiege: 32 kg. Wir sprechen sehr oft von dir überhaupt in der Früh wenn wir im Bett liegen. Wir möchten dich schon sehr gerne sehen. Viele viel viele 10000000000000 Bussi Hedy".

Sidonie in her letters wrote Harry mostly about her daily life:

She has many difficulties in getting food since their income sources were taken away from them. The shops and the bank account were confiscated. Food was sent to her by relatives from Hungary or given in a small amount from the Jewish community.

She wrote about family and close friends who managed to leave the country while she, despite her endless looking for ways to escape the country, failed to do so.

People in her new neighbourhood helped her a lot as did Harry's brothers and sisters, who also stayed in Vienna and were later on murdered.

But still her longing for her husband and her son Hans was very strong and enduring.

On the 17th of August 1942, Sidonie and Hedy started their journey towards death.

They arrived in Minsk in Belarus on August 21st and were immediately taken to a forest near Maly Trostinec where they were both, alongside hundreds of Austrian Jews, shot.

They were buried in an unmarked mass grave in the forest.

Hedy was only 2 days before her 11th birthday; my grandmother was 44 years old at the time of her death.

Dr. Netzl brought me some of the ashes and I put it on Harry's grave in Israel.

Their original letters, several pictures and now these memorial stones are their only remains on earth.

I'd like to thank all the members of the committee who chose my family to be memorialized here, in the house they lived and worked in and to Mrs. Waltraud Kovacic for her correspondence with me before the ceremony.

Most of all I'd like to thank **Dr. Gerald Netzl** for the long years of friendship with my family, a friendship that started when my father was still alive and had the chance to see the respectable memorial plaque for his sister Hedy at her elementary school.

Dr. Netzl helped me a lot in writing the book about my family by translating Sidi's and Hedy's letters, finding information about my family in archives and describing me many important aspects of life in Vienna at the time of the war.

I'd also like to thank my cousin **Peter Blum**, who worked with me shoulder to shoulder in exploring the history of our family and in showing me all the places our families lived in.

All the best to you! May we all live in peace wherever we are!!

Judy Gopher.