

HOLOCAUST
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HUMANITY

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Ron Friedman | Second Generation | Son of Austrian
Kindertransport Survivor



"It is important to remember an event such as the Holocaust. It is a reminder to us all of the evils of bigotry and humiliation of others. Unfortunately, there are many holocausts in the world—both big and small—which have occurred since, and continue to occur. And it is left to ensuing generations to resonate the lessons of history." – Ron Friedman

Herbert Friedman escaped from Vienna at age 14 aboard the Kindertransport. This event, and the ensuing years before Herbert's emigration to America, were the defining moments of his life.

Herbert Friedman was born in 1924 in Vienna, Austria. His family traveled from Radom, Poland to Vienna in the early 1920s. At the time, Jews played a central role in Viennese culture.

Herbert had a happy childhood. He attended public school during the day and Hebrew school at night. His mother stayed at home, and his father worked as a shoemaker. They lived in an apartment in a middle class neighborhood of Vienna and Herbert had many friends, Jewish and Christian. Herbert loved to swim, including in the Danube River in Vienna, known for its strong currents. At the age of 12, Herbert and another youth saved a young women from drowning in the Danube.

In March 1938, Austria fell under Nazi occupation and became part of the German Republic and the lives of all Jews came under threat. Herbert was immediately expelled from school by the Nazis, and Jews all over the region suffered. A particularly brutal act of anti-Jewish violence occurred in November 1938, *Kristallnacht*, when Jewish shops were smashed and looted, synagogues burned, Jewish businesses dissolved, and hundreds were arrested and taken away, never to be seen again.

Following *Kristallnacht*, Herbert knew there was no future life for the Jews of Vienna and he resolved at the age of 13 to escape. Through a series of unlikely events, Herbert was able was to meet an organizer of the shirt-lived *Kindertransport* (Childrens' Trains) and to become a passenger on the first train of ten that left Vienna. The *Kindertransport* is credited with saving 10,000 children in Europe from facing a certain death in the gas chambers of Europe. Only 10 trains escaped before the Nazis ended the *Kindertransport*. Herbert was lucky to be among them.

In the end, 1,500,000 children are estimated to have died in the Holocaust. Nine out of 10 of the children who were fortunate enough to have escaped on the "*Kindertransport*" never saw their parents again.

Herbert's son, Ron Friedman, is now a second generation speaker and an attorney in Seattle.