



Susan Hodgins on Dorrith Sim



Questions & Answers with Timestamps

1. How was Dorrith's life affected by antisemitism and by her experiences as a child in Germany?

02:18 Her mother was worried to learn she went skating with boys from the Hitler Youth, but Dorrith learned early on that keeping quiet and saying nothing was the way to live.

05:38 His father lost his job in 1938

06:22 Dorrith's school was vandalized after Kristallnacht.

07:01 Their house was raided by the Nazis, who took valuables from them.

07:42 Dorrith's father Hans was taken away overnight by the Nazis, along with another neighbour. They were beaten and left in the countryside.

08:06 The family had to move house several times, living in cramped conditions with other families, with little money as Hans was unable to work.

08:20 The family was separated as Dorrith's uncle and grandparents emigrated to Canada.

11:38 A couple from Edinburgh, Mr and Mrs Gallimore, agreed to take in Dorrith so she could leave Germany on the Kindertransport, leaving her parents behind.

12:13 The stress of the daily visit to the Town Hall with her parents to help her escape Germany had a huge effect of Dorrith, and in later life she suffered with mental health issues, being particularly haunted by the lion sculptures from outside the town hall.

2. How did Dorrit's life change when she moved to Scotland?

16:58 Her adopted father had a car instead of a bicycle and the family had a dog – she'd never had a pet before.

17:12 When she came to Edinburgh, Dorrit was able to play with other children on the street, something she couldn't do in Germany because she was Jewish.

18:07 She went to school in Edinburgh, where she found it hard to remember not being able to speak English.

19:24 Her adopted mother had two children, meaning that Dorrit had siblings for the first time.

20:40 She was brought up in a Christian home. Her parents, and later her grandparents, stated that she should be brought up as her foster parents dictated, in terms of religion.

22:10 She never saw her parents again and after they were taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau, their final fate is unclear.

23:22 She adapted to her new life in Scotland, and probably found it hard to connect to her German family.

24:46 She met Andrew Sim, they later married and she had children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

25:51 She was involved in many local groups and also became involved in a Scottish group to reunite children from the Kindertransport. She wrote a book for children as part of her legacy.

Glossary

Aryan

Term used by the Nazis to refer to exclude groups of people from German society, namely Jews, Roma and people of colour. Historically the word was a more neutral term that was manipulated – there is no racial group that can be defined as ‘Aryan’.

Aryanization

Transfer of Jewish-owned property to non-Jews – ‘Aryans’ at a greatly reduced price. This was a voluntary process from 1933 until the summer of 1938, after which Jews were forced to transfer businesses, property and assets. In April 1938, Jews had to register all of their assets so that the value of Jewish property was known, with the intention to acquire it for the Reich.

Auschwitz-Birkenau

Complex of concentration and extermination camps in Poland, of which Auschwitz-Birkenau was the camp with gas chambers. There were 1.1 million people murdered on this site, Jewish and non-Jewish.

Awful Deed

A document from 1789 that was among Dorrit's family papers. It shows that Dorrit's ancestors had the right to live and work in Kassel but were still to be treated differently, because they were Jewish.

Hitler Youth

A Nazi-organised youth movement with sections for boys and girls. Its aim was to prepare members for war. The boys' movement was modelled on the Sturmabteilung (SA) or ‘Storm Troopers’, who were a paramilitary group associated with the Nazi party. The SA were also known as ‘Brownshirts’ due to the colour of their uniform.

Kindertransport

From German, meaning ‘children's transport’. Programme approved by the British government, allowing the admission of almost 10,000 mostly Jewish child refugees from central Europe following Kristallnacht, until the outbreak of war. Due to immigration restrictions, the children were unaccompanied by parents and had to be sponsored by welfare agencies.

Kristallnacht

From German, meaning 'Night of Broken Glass'. A nationwide action, organised by the Nazis, on the night of 9th-10th November 1938 in which Jewish businesses and homes were attacked and looted, synagogues burned, and 91 people killed. More than 30,000 Jews were held in concentration camps until they agreed to leave Germany. Also called the 'November Pogrom'. Pogrom is a Russian word meaning a violent riot and has historically referred to anti-Jewish violence.

Molotov Cocktails

A weapon that is thrown by hand, made of a container that will shatter on impact (usually a glass bottle) filled with a flammable liquid and sealed with a cloth wick. Once broken, flames will spread easily due to the flammable liquid.

Theresienstadt

Theresienstadt was presented in propaganda to Jewish people as a model Jewish settlement but in reality, was a ghetto run by the SS which served as a transit camp for Jews on route to extermination camps. The camp operated during November 24 1941 and May 9 1945 in northern Czechoslovakia, where 35,440 Jews died in the ghetto and 88,000 were deported.