

Siegbert Burghardt

Jenny Burghardt née Nacheinstein

Rolf Burghardt

Hans Burghardt

Hermann Burghardt

Martha Burghardt née Kaufmann



Jenny Nacheinstein was my paternal grandfather Leopold's sister. Altogether there were four Nacheinstein brothers and four sisters who were all born in Hohensalza, now Inowrocław, Poland. Jenny's father was Leiser Nacheinstein, born in Lessen, now Łasin, Poland, and her mother was Rosalie

Ephraim. Jenny was born on 24 April 1887.

Where Jenny met Siegbert Burghardt is not known. Siegbert was born in



Stassfurt, Saxony-Anhalt, on 27 June 1889. His mother was Martha Burghardt née Kaufmann, from Könnern, Saxony-Anhalt, born on 20 January 1857. Siegbert's father was Isidor Burghardt, born in Gröbzig, about 9 Km from Könnern. He probably died in 1915 in Leipzig.

Jenny and Siegbert married in Berlin in 1912 and moved to Leipzig, where their first son Rolf was born on 3 October 1913. Later they moved to Aachen. There Hans was born on 23 March 1922 and on 30 March 1935 celebrated his Bar Mizwa. In Aachen the family lived at Monheimsallee 30 (1927), at Heinrichsallee

16 (1933), at Peterstrasse 22 (1934/35) and at Couvenstrasse 1 (probably from 1936)¹.



Hermann Burghardt, also known as “Männe”, was Siegbert’s younger brother. He was born in Leipzig on 28 October 1898. Hermann married Berta Makowski, who came from Aachen and was born on 5 February 1901, the daughter of Max and Selma Makowski née Luft. Hermann moved to Aachen and worked there as a commercial traveller, while Berta was a salesperson. On 2 November 1933 the couple moved to Marktgasse 21. An address in 1938 is given as

Marktplatz 4.

My father, Herbert Nachemstein, remembered visiting his Aunt Jenny, a truly cultured lady, in 1925 in Aachen, where Siegbert and Jenny Burghardt had a wholesale toy business: “Siegbert Burghardt Retail and Toy Wholesaler”. The business had two known addresses: Grosskölustrasse 58 (1922) and Adalbertstrasse 16 (1927). The toy manufacturing was remembered by a niece, as “very nice wooden toys”.



The Burghardts had established business connections with neighbouring countries, selling their products, for example in Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg including during the Nazi period after 1933. Rolf was their representative and travelled regularly to these countries, especially to Belgium. He applied for and received permission to leave Germany and stay away for varying periods. He was also required to provide the names of customers and

suppliers he planned to visit and also in which hotel he would stay.

¹ One of these addresses may also have been a business address. (Ref. historical Aachen address books over range of years)

The Burghardts were optimistic of a change for the better, so they continued to stay in Aachen. In the first half of 1938, before *Kristallnacht*, the family decided however for a permanent move to Belgium. They submitted a proposal to the Belgian commercial authorities to set up a toy and party novelties manufacturing factory in Eupen. The main factors to support granting their proposal, which were fully outlined in the Burghardt family proposal, were that they would use their own capital, eliminate the importation of the same items to Belgium by utilising Belgian raw materials and Belgian workers and also export to Luxembourg, and Holland².

Siegbert, together with his brother Hermann, were taken prisoner on 10 November 1938 and sent to Buchenwald Concentration Camp³. This was confirmed in a letter dated 14 November 1938 from the Mayor of Eupen to the Public Security Bureau in Bruxelles. However he was soon released on the evidence that he and his family had permission to immigrate to Belgium to start a new business. They moved there on 16 January 1939. The name of the new business was RO BU-*Jouets* (Rolf Burghardt Toys). Hermann was also soon released.



On 14 April 1939 on a Ro Bu-*Jouets* letterhead Siegbert informed the Mayor of Eupen that Rolf and Hans were available if required to be called up for the Belgian Military Forces.

On 12 May 1940 all the male Burghardts were collected and deported to an internment camp at St. Cyprien in the Lower Pyrenees in France. Hermann was also amongst them. It seems he and Berta had also immigrated to Belgium.

In St. Cyprien life became very harsh. There was very

² Letter from the Mayor of Eupen to the Public Security Bureau in Bruxelles dated 4 November 1938

³ Memorial Book – Victims of the Persecution of Jews under the National Socialist Tyranny in Germany 1933-1945

little food, so the prisoners starved unless money sent by family and friends was on hand. Infectious diseases such as typhus and malaria were common.

After St. Cyprien was closed Siegbert, Rolf, Hans and Hermann were transferred on 28 October 1940 to a Camp at Gurs also in the Lower Pyrenees⁴.



It appears that Jenny, Berta and also Siegbert's and Hermann's mother Martha Burghardt remained in Bruxelles. In a report from the Police Commissioner's Office in Molenbeek-Saint Jean, Belgium, dated 23 December 1940, it states clearly that Jenny was living in an apartment in Molenbeek since March 1940 but was unable to pay the rent and dependent on community welfare and doing housework for sustenance⁵.

The precise movement of each of the Burghardts from Camp Gurs is not so clear. But records from Camp de Rivesaltes in the Pyrenees Orientales were found for Siegbert, Jenny, Rolf, Hans and Hermann. Then they were separated.

On 8 July 1941 Hermann was in Camp des Milles, near Aix-en-Provence, while Rolf was recorded as being in a hospital on 26 August 1941. Siegbert was noted as transferred to a GTE (meaning Group of Foreign Workers) as at 9 May 1942. Hans was in a group of young Jews placed in Central Lastic in Rosans (High-Alps) one of a number of centres created by Catholic Abbot Alexandre Glasberg, a converted Jew, with the aim of rescuing many Jews⁶.

⁴ Ms Manuela Wyler from Lyon is the Director of Projects *Dorot: association d'histoire*. Her website www.jewishtraces.org has databases of exiled Jews from Germany, Austria, etc, many of whom were brought to French internment camps, such as Gurs, St. Cyprien, Les Milles and Rivesaltes, and finally deported to the extermination camps. Ms Wyler has access to many Archives in France and Belgium and was able to source many historical documents from these archives relating to the Burghardt Family. Many of the quoted events that have come to light are a result of Ms Wyler's helpful research.

⁵ Refer *Dorot: association d'histoire*

⁶ Ditto



However a census taken by the French Vichy Police on the 14 August 1942 in preparation for the round-ups on 26 August 1942 shows that Siegbert was in Camp Barcarès, Hans in Rosans and Hermann in Camp Les Milles. At some stage Jenny was re-connected with Siegbert. Rolf was possibly separated from his father and brother because of an illness⁷.

French internment camp lists show that Rolf died at Nîmes, France. Later through a cousin in France I obtained his death certificate⁸. He died on 10 July 1942 from an unknown cause. His father Siegbert was allowed to come from his detention camp to Nîmes and certify by signature that Rolf was his son. The certificate also states that Siegbert and Jenny were living together in Perpignan, at the end of the Eastern Pyrenees. They must have been devastated. It is possible that there is still a grave at the Nîmes Cemetery but efforts to confirm this have failed. It is a small blessing that Rolf died there and not murdered in Auschwitz like his parents, brother and uncle.

On 14 August 1942 Hermann was deported via the collection camp Drancy on Convoy 19 to Auschwitz and murdered. As well Hans was deported via Drancy on Convoy 29 on 7 September 1942 to Auschwitz. Like him a short time later his parents were sent via Drancy on Convoy 33 on 18 September 1942 to Auschwitz and murdered⁹.

A report from the Police Ministry in Bruxelles on the residential status of former resident foreigners dated 4 June 1953 shows that Bertha Burghardt had lived at Rue de l'Intendant 52 in Molenbeek and that her name was removed from their lists on 25 March 1947, allegedly because she had moved to New York¹⁰. I found that she arrived in New York on 5 March 1947 on the "SS Queen Elizabeth" with the help of HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) and her sister-

⁷ Ditto

⁸ Death Certificate from the Registry Office in Nîmes, France

⁹ Serge Klarsfeld's: Memorial to the Jews Deported from France 1942-1944

¹⁰ Refer *Dorot: association d'histoire*

in-law Margaret Westheim as her sponsor¹¹. Also noted on the passenger arrival list was that Berta's relative in Belgium was her brother 'A. Roakaueski' – who lived in Molenbeek. Obviously the name was misspelt and should have been Makowski¹². Berta later returned to Germany. She was re-married to Peter Drabin, and died on 29 May 1970 in Simmerath¹³.



The exact fate of Oma Martha Burghardt is not known.

In 1992 I sighted a publication that included a 1926-28 class photo of the Aachen Jewish Community School¹⁴. The names of children in the photo included Hans Burghardt. Hans was then about six years old. Hans' friends Alfred (Fred) Voss and Kurt Rosendahl were also in the photo. Fred, who lived in Pennsylvania, USA, told me that Hans was one of his

best friends.

Kurt Rosendahl, who lived in New York, confirmed that his family were close friends of the Burghardts in Aachen and Hans was his friend. Hans and Kurt belonged to the same youth organisation in Aachen.

The last time Kurt saw Rolf was two days after *Kristallnacht*, when Kurt and his father crossed the border illegally into Belgium to elude the Gestapo. They made their way to Eupen. Rolf immediately loaned them money and helped them get to Bruxelles. They never saw each other again. Kurt was in about a dozen concentration camps in France and Poland and recalled seeing Hans in one of them, probably Auschwitz. Kurt survived and eventually made it to the United States.

¹¹ Passenger Arrivals in New York 1820-1957 from ancestry.com

¹² Alex Makowski, born in Dortmund, married Maria Bahnen, died 1978 in Laurensberg. (<http://thekesters.net/Genealogy/Luft.html>)

¹³ From the Luft Family Tree: <http://thekesters.net/Genealogy/Luft.html>

¹⁴ *Gesellschaft für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit Aachen e.V.* "Sources for Jewish Life in Aachen from 1850 to 1938", edited by Bettina Klein.

After I contacted Kurt Rosendahl he forwarded my letter to Aachen born Ilse Zechermann, née Westheim, his old friend and a niece of Siegbert Burghardt. Her mother, Margaret Westheim, née Burghardt, was Siegbert's sister. Ilse and her mother left Aachen going in 1939 to Belgium, where they were often together with the Burghardts. In March 1940 mother and daughter managed to flee to the United States, as one of the Westheim relatives guaranteed their financial needs. Over all the years Ilse's mother kept the school photo and wrote the names of the students on the backside¹⁵.

The last letter the Westheims received in New York was dated 18 September 1940 and came from Rolf Burghardt in St. Cyprien¹⁶.

Ilse Zechermann passed away in New York in 2011.

Peter Nash (formerly Peter Nachemstein)

Sydney, March 2012

¹⁵ As far as possible all the names have been acknowledged in the *Gedenkbuchprojekt Aachen*.

¹⁶ The copied letter is appended to this biography.



Standing left to right: Hans Burghardt, ? Korn, Hans Rabinowitz, Hans Windesheim, Ilse Westheim, Silly (oder Lilly?) Berg, Rosa Hoeflich, Werner Cahn, Erna Berg, Hedwig Saul, Ruth Marx, Rosa Hausmann (Häusler?), Ruth Sollinger, Ruth Kaufmann (?), Kurt Robens, (Otto?) Robens, Lotte Heidelberg, Regina Lukas, Jacob Hoeflich, Eddie Gross, Max Podsclebnik (Potter), Alfred Labbee, ? Hertz, ? Gottschalk, ? Koopman, ? Sitting; Sitting left to right: Walter Falkenthin, Edgar Friesem, Leo Katzman, Ernst Rosenberg, Isidor Hausmann, Max Steinweg, Hans Hartog, Paul Stern, Fred Voss, Kurt Rosendahl, Kurt Hartog, Walter (or Leo?) Weinhausen, Walter Wildau, Max Leyens

Photos:

- Last family photo in Aachen in 1937 on the 80th birthday celebration of Martha Burghardt. The original photo came from Ilse Zechermann née Westheim. Private photo with kind permission from Peter Nash.
- Jenny and Siegbert Burghardt. Private photo with kind permission from Peter Nash.
- Marriage of Hermann Burghardt and Berta Makowski. Abstract from private photo with kind permission from Klaus Falldorf, Bremen.
- Rolf Burghardt. Private photo with kind permission from Peter Nash.
- Siegbert Burghardt. Private photo with kind permission from Peter Nash.
- Jenny Burghardt. Private photo with kind permission from Peter Nash.
- Hans Burghardt. Private photo with kind permission from Peter Nash.
- Martha Burghardt née Kaufmann. Abstract from private photo with kind permission from Klaus Falldorf, Bremen.
- Boys and girls from the Aachen Jewish Community School 1926-1928. Private photo with kind permission from Peter Nash.

Letter from Rolf Burghardt (Camp St. Cyprien, France) to Margarete and Ilse Westheim (New York, USA)

Rolf Burghardt
Flot. I – Baraque 43
Camp St. Cyprien
Pyrénées-Orientales

St. Cyprien, 18 September 1940

My Dearest!

Today a letter of a special kind is coming and I think you would not have already received my letter from the previous week. Due to lack of funds I sent my previous letter by ordinary mail, which detailed everything. Enclosed also were various letters and greetings from other interned Aacheners (43 men) with an appeal to the USA based Aachen Landsmen. I guess the other letter will take 3-4 weeks. -- Firstly, I hope you are both well and healthy. I can report the same from us thank G'd, except for Dad. For more than 3 weeks he has been lying here in Camp Lazarett and has been operated on. It was very, very dangerous, still the same old problem, on his backside! A growth had developed. The cut is 4 cm wide and the tissues were cut through. Today we received a letter that an infection had developed and another thing developed on the other cheek. So now tomorrow he will be cut again. Unfortunately both of us can only visit him occasionally. We can only go to him every 3 weeks. Here it is always getting worse. A German concentration camp is a rest home in comparison. Männe returned under heavy guard yesterday after his escape from the Camp. 3 weeks ago he and Alex M.¹⁷ fled to Toulouse. Alex escaped. All this is fully described in my previous letter. In this letter I asked for a "wish list" for us 4, Siegbert, Männe, Rolf and Hans. Furthermore I "carefully" stressed the theme "money". Hence our Priority Letter today. We are all completely broke, also Männe after his mindless wandering, we beg you urgently by return airmail to send us some Dollars, perhaps French Francs but preferably send Dollars. I guarantee that you will get your money back. We are absolutely unable to buy any additional food. Everyday we only have terrible dry bread. Eggs, marmalade, etc. we don't know anymore, etc. etc. I hope you can appreciate our situation. Maybe, if you can, send us some money by return mail. From Männe this morning I received the enclosed letter and he begged me to write to you, to send him 5 Dollars from his money. Also, he is broke. We don't have anyone else outside, to whom we can turn, except you and so you have to bite the "bullet" this time. Now something else very important: Undernoted is an address of a Committee, to which I beg you, to go to with my "Camp Report" and my letter which is on the way. This Committee can also well be of use to us and perhaps make our situation much better. "National Refugee-Service Inc. / 165 West 46th Street, New York City". -- Do not be ashamed to tell them our situation. As the previous letter is being repeated I will briefly give you just the following. Here in the Camp in the last 3-4 weeks typhoid and malaria is rampant. The former is especially very big. Sadly we have already lost a lot of our friends. On Saturday I again had the opportunity, to go along with an ambulance to Perpignan and

¹⁷ Alex M., most likely refers to Alex Makowski, brother-in-law of Hermann (aka Männe) Burghardt.

again visited Siegfr. Höflich¹⁸ there. It is sad for the boy but "without hope". He has typhoid. The doctors have given up on him. Moreover his father, Josef H.¹⁹ arrived today in the hospital in Perpignan with _____ consumption. The same hospital where Siegfried lies.

From Dad I received today the following letter: "Now to Höflich. I believe that he will not survive beyond this week. Today he arrives in Perpignan and yesterday he already had a _____ injection. He looks like a skeleton and as of today I am not allowed to visit him anymore. Have you heard anymore from Mum and Grete." This is Dad's letter verbatim. You can see dear Aunt and Ilse, who gets sick here, is in trouble and we would hope and thank dear G'd when our father is again with us. But don't write anything to Mum and Grandma that father is in hospital. In any case I beg you sincerely to send us something urgently, so that we can at least have a chance to buy some additional food, so that besides the grub here, we can supplement something, and do not have to eat dry bread for months. For reasons of postage costs we are sharing this letter with other friends, and beg you kindly to forward the enclosed letters. To think of escape at present is unthinkable as sniper shooting would immediately result. So this dream is ended for the time being as well. Surely I can count on your help and when you can arrange immigration for us, we will immediately come free! Our hopes again to get to Bruxelles to be with our family have vanished into thin air. Or the War must take such a turn, that we are all again assured of a decent life. From Bruxelles we have calming news that all are well. Mum writes that she is still living in the old place, but that she wants to take a smaller one. Factory is closed. Berta again has her old position in Antwerp. A card came yesterday from Berlin. Among others Aunt Regina²⁰ wrote that Mum had written her, that Margot Löwenstein (Mrs Mendel) when fleeing to Calais gave birth to a child and became very sick. Her husband Rudolf Mendel is also here in the camp and has had no news from his wife until then. It is the first. Just now received news from the Office that the Burghardt brothers can visit their father for 1/2 hour under military escort. So Dad will at least have the chance to add a few lines. So my dearest, I am counting on you and many thanks in advance. For today many thousand heartiest greetings and kisses from your

(signed) Rolf

Dear Mrs Westheim and Ilse. Hope you are in best health. My wife is doing good at Villafruche Lamajai (____ Haute Garonne) 15 Place Gambetta. Hope to come soon

¹⁸ Siegfried Höflich, born 9 September 1916 in Aachen, immigrated to Belgium (Antwerp and Sainte Livrade, Vilmur), but was sent on 12 May 1940 to St. Cyprien. He escaped, but was captured again (in Belgium?) and on 19 April 1943 deported from Mechelen, Belgium, on Transport XX-1510 to Auschwitz. He was probably murdered in Monowitz.

¹⁹ Joseph Höflich was born on 23 August 1886 in Eilendorf. He was a butcher. He married Eva Henriette Höflich née Heidt, and together had three children, Siegfried, Jakob and Elsa. He died on 19 September 1940.

²⁰ Regina Pfifferling, née Nachemstein, was born on 5 June 1882 in Hohensalza (Inowrocław). She married Ernst Pfifferling and was Jenny Burghardt's sister. Regina was deported with transport no. 10 on 25 January 1942 from Berlin to Riga and murdered there.

together with my loved ones. The situation at the moment is hopeless. With heartiest greetings for you both and all friends. (signed) Hermann Levy²¹

My Dearest! Just came back from Dad and he is not yet better. It is hard to get medications. Again greetings and kisses from your (signed) Hans

²¹ For the Biography of Hermann Levy, born 1 June 1885 in Haaren, see Gedenkbuch 2008.