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## **The Fate of Kurt/Claude Levy From Busenberg**

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Translated by Peter Blystone, Arizona

Kurt Levy, born on 07/16/1930 in Busenberg, was the son of a cattle dealer Leo Issak Levy (born on 05/12/1900) from Busenberg, living at Kirchstraße 4, and his wife Carola Meta, née Löb. His mother was born on 10.13.1904 in Schifferstadt and married Leo Isaak on 03.09.1928. They also had a daughter Hannah Barbara, named Hannele, on 09. 27.1935.

On 01.10.1938 the Leo Levy family, was forced to leave Busenberg under (red zone) invasion relocation orders. Kurt moved with his parents, his sister and grandmother Rosa Levy, née Schwarz, to his mother's hometown in Schifferstadt, Bahnhofstraße 48. Five weeks after their arrival, they experienced the "Reichskristallnacht" in Schifferstadt. Their furniture, which they brought with them from Busenberg and stored in the synagogue, served as kindling for the synagogue fire. Leo Levy was arrested and taken to the Dachau concentration camp for interrogation and intimidation along with many Jewish men.

On February 9, 1939, as the eldest son, Kurt was sent by his family from Schifferstadt to Wissembourg, Alsace to live with his great uncle Julius Schwarz. Here Kurt was given a new French name Claude by his "second mother" Emmy Schwarz, which he still bears today. Emmy Schwarz, daughter of Julius Schwarz, was a dentist in Karlsruhe and later in Limoges/France, where she remained after the war.

At the beginning of the war, (in preparation for invasion) the population of Wissembourg was evacuated to the Massif Central in the area of Limoges/France. Kurt also went there with his great uncle's family. In 1942, when the German troops also occupied the so-called "Free France" administered from Vichy and entered Limoges in December, the Jews were forced into hiding. Kurt stayed hidden in an attic in Limoges. To protect him from the Germans, he was given a new identity with forged papers that identified him as "Claude Leroy from Algiers." Claude then survived the war attending a boarding school in St. Leonhard near Limoges. After the war, he entered a boarding school in Grenoble.

On October 22, 1940, his parents, his sister Hannah Barbara, and his grandmother Oma Rosa were deported from Schifferstadt to Camp Gurs in southern France. On the transport to Gurs, Carola Levy wrote to her son Kurt: "We are on our way to America." She was truly of the opinion, or more of the hope, they would be deported to the USA. From Limoges, Claude and his relatives sent parcels to his parents in the Gurs camp. Claude was able to visit his parents twice at Camp Gurs, first between Christmas and New Year's in 1940/1941 and then in the summer of 1941. Shortly after the visit, his parents were moved to the Rivesaltes internment and transit camp at Perpignan, where they remained until further transit on Sept. 23, 1942.

Oma Rosa was also taken to the Rivesaltes camp in 1941; from here the over 70 year old was sent to the Noé camp (Haute-Garonne) a camp for the elderly.

Later she was moved to the Nexon camp in the Limoges arrondissement where she survived the war. After the liberation, she went to live with her relatives in Limoges and then emigrated to the United States in 1946. Claude's sister Hannah Barbara was in the Gurs camp until March 10, 1941, and later with a family in Montpellier. She stayed hidden with yet another family in Limoges, until she found safety with a group of children in a convent. The French organization Œuvre de secours aux enfants (OSE) rescued Hannah in 1941 through an adventurous transport via Spain to Palestine. In Palestine, she grew up with a Russian-Jewish immigrant family named Levi. Here she was given the name Chana.

In September 1942, Claude with his great-uncle Julius Schwarz intended to visit his parents in Camp Rivesaltes. However, after hearing that Jews were being deported from the camp they refrained from making the trip. As a result, both may have escaped deportation.

On September 13, 1942, Leo and Carola Levy were taken from the camp Rivesaltes to the transit camp Drancy near Paris. A rabbi from Strasbourg, who like all Alsatian Jews had been taken to the region around Limoges, was able to speak with Leo and Carola before the train continued on to Drancy. On September 16, 1942, Leo and Carola Levy were transferred to Auschwitz with Transport No. 33 on train D 901/28 at 8:55 a.m. from Drancy/Paris. Carola Levy perished in Auschwitz in 1942. Leo Levy was selected with 300 other able men for labor from Cosel (near Auschwitz), and taken by truck to St. Annaberg. He was assigned to Auschwitz III as a work slave.

Leo Levy wrote several postcards from Auschwitz to the Sturm family, his neighbors in Schifferstadt, asking for money and food. In June 1944, Leo Levy's final card arrived from Heydebreck in Upper Silesia. In it, Leo asked for a package of food and money. He informed them that he had not seen his wife for a year and a half. In Heydebreck/Upper Silesia, the "Badische Anilin & Sodafabrik" (IG-Farben) had production facilities where Auschwitz prisoners were employed. There was no sign of life after that. Leo Levy is classified as disappeared (missing).

His son Claude Levy attended boarding school in Grenoble from 1945 to 1949. From 1950 to 1952 he completed his military service as a French soldier in Wittlich. Meanwhile Claude visited Schifferstadt and his parents' house in Busenberg, Kirchstraße 4, for one day. At that time, Claude received letters and cards from the Sturm family in Schifferstadt that his father had written from Auschwitz concentration camp until mid-1944.

In 1952 Claude went to Wissembourg and from there to Paris. In 1957 in Paris, he met for the first time since the war, with his sister Hannele/Chana from Israel. Communication was very limited between the two because Hannele spoke only Ivrit, modern Hebrew, and some English. She had no memories of her childhood in Busenberg and Schifferstadt. She could only vaguely remember her mother. Claude spoke only French while his wife Simone attempted conversation with Chana in English. So a real verbal understanding did not succeed, because a translator who spoke Ivrit was not present. At that time Claude also visited Schifferstadt with Chana. As a consequence of their tragic childhood separation and experiences under the Nazi era, and distant lives, contact turned out to be difficult.

Chana married in Israel and had two children. She died in 1997 at the age of 62. Claude moved to Paris in 1952 and worked at the Renault car company until his retirement.

On 12.12.1953 Claude married his wife Simone in Paris, born Simone Levy on 10.27.1932 in Wissembourg. On 02.09.1961, their daughter Catrine Carola was born in Paris. December 12, 1994, on their 41st wedding anniversary, Simone Levy passed away in Paris. She is buried in the Jewish cemetery in Wissembourg, where Claude will also have his final resting place next to his wife.

Addendum

On April 15, 2021, Claude Levy died of Covid-19 in Paris, France. On April 17, 2021, he was buried at the Jewish Cemetery in Wissembourg, France without a family funeral ceremony next to his wife Simone.

The report is based mainly on interviews conducted by the author with Claude Levy between 2002 and 2012 and on research by Dr. Emil Georg Sold, Schifferstadt.