GEORGE WOLF

I was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia. The reports of persecution of Jews in Germany, and Hitler's raving speeches on the radio, got scarier and scarier. In 1938, the Austrian people welcomed Hitler with open arms and a pogrom. In the fall , Czechoslovakia had to give up its border regions, the Sudetenland, and the infamous "Kristallnacht" followed in November. Jews were panicking and applying for visas wherever they could. Few were successful.

 When the Germans marched inbto the remaining Czech lands in March 1939, my father, mother and I, forewarned the night before,   drove to Prague, and by sheer luck got an exit visa from the Gestapo.   We said tearful goodbyes to our extensive family, never to see any of them again. We first went to France but were across the lake in Switzerland when war broke out and France closed its borders. We didn't know it then, but we had escaped the trap that Vichy France would become for its Jews, and found refuge in Switzerland.

Most of our family were herded into Theresienstadt (Terezin), and one by one, were shipped to Auschwitz. By the end of the war, I worked for the American Consulate in Zurich. In the summer of 1946, I had the chance to visit the Nurnberg War Crimes Trials, with the remaining Nazi leadership in the dock. I met Czech government representatives, got a nasty feeling of their Communist politics and anti-semitsm, and decided not to go back. My father had died in Switzerland, mother remarried and stayed there. At age 19, I got on the first civilian ship to America, landed in NY in late 1946, and rebuilt my life.

I became a fashion designer, consultant and eventually manufacturer. By 2005, as the industry migrated to China, I had to close my business, and at my age, had become unemployable. Instead, I found a new career and a much more fulfilling life of volunteer work with The Blue Card, aiding Holocaust survivors far less fortunate than me. At age 85, I expect to retire in about fifteen years.