



LEO MARCHUTZ

CHILD OF A SURVIVOR AND SURVIVOR

Leo Marchutz rarely talked about the war. It was a subject that his father, Carl, also avoided. Out of shame for their native Germany, or fear for their family, no one can say. Antony Marschutz, son of Leo, grandson of Carl, is currently researching family history in order to pierce decades of silence. Below are notes that shed initial light on their story.

The Father, Carl Marschutz (1863-1957)

Based on extracts from the publication "Traces of a Jewish Past in Aisch, Aurach, Ebrach, and Seebach, Germany (Mesusa 9, 2013)



Leo's father, Carl, was one of the first Jewish industrialists in Germany, "as only since 1871 Jews were free to choose trades and industries to their likings". Carl created the Hercules bicycle manufactory in Nuremberg in 1886 and is considered the pioneer of the European bicycle industry.

"But it was all lost when Hitler came to power."

Carl's father, Moses, was buried in the New Israelite Cemetery in Furth, Germany in 1922. Carl wrote: "Of the misery that the Jews later suffered, the parents fortunately were spared. Father experienced great respect and honor by both Jews and Christians. He was appreciated also by gentile teachers, who valued him." **Carl's brother, Heinrich**, "went to London during Hitler" with his wife and their daughter Liesl. Their second daughter, Gerda and her husband were unable to leave Germany and "disappeared in the transport of Jews to Riga".

Little is known of Carl's trials and humiliations before he was dispossessed by the Nazis and forced to flee to America. Described as "strict and without much humour" by his grandson Tom, Carl nonetheless wrote his own obituary seven years before his death. In it, one could read "For over 50 years, Carl was the soul of his company. . . .In 1941, Germany, in all its hatred, expelled him, and he was thus able to enjoy a pleasant retirement in the magnificent city of Los Angeles."

The Son, Leo Marchutz (1903-1976)

Leo Marchutz emigrated to Aix-en-Provence, France in 1931, but like Jews all over Europe, hatred and fear from all sides, caught up with him.



Forced into Hiding to Avoid Deportation

As a German national, Leo Marchutz was considered a "possible threat to France" and was interned at "Le Camp des Milles", the largest internment and deportation camp in the south of France. Once released, he barely escaped arrest by Vichy police and went into hiding in the hills above Chateaufort to avoid deportation. Marchutz survived with the help of his wife, Barbara, who brought him food: eggs and sometimes chicken from their poultry farm. For fear that she would unintentionally give her father away if questioned by the Gestapo, their two-year old daughter, Anna was placed in a shelter in Dieulefit, France. Run by Protestants, later recognized as 'Righteous Among the Nations', Anna remained there until the end of the war.

Liberation and Resurgence of Artistic Activity

After years of uncertainty, Leo Marchutz slowly resumed his artistic activity after the Liberation of Provence in 1944. It is difficult to say how the struggles of the war affected the art of Leo Marchutz, but the universal themes of suffering, betrayal, compassion, forgiveness, and hope, became a major focus of the artist after the war.

Three Brothers, Three Religions

Leo Marchutz had two brothers, both preceded their father in emigrating to America. Alfred, the youngest brother, raised his children in the Jewish faith. Frank, the eldest, chose to educate his children as Protestants, wanting them to embrace the major religion of his adopted country. Similarly, in France, Leo Marchutz's two children, were sent to Catholic schools.