

Aleida Keesing, born 1918, today lives in the U.S., State of New York

Aleida Keesing emigrated to the United States six weeks before the German invasion of the Netherlands, together with her husband. Her attempts at rescuing her parents and her brother failed: In the summer of 1943, they were brought to Sobibor and murdered there. Aleida Keesing, a woman that had, jointly with her husband and out of an everlasting fear, instructed her children never to reveal their Jewish identity, has decided to act as co-plaintiff: „People shall not forget what happened in Sobibor“, she says. „If I can aid that by acting as co-plaintiff for my parents and my brother, I want to do so.“

Ralph Erman, born 1923, today lives in the U.S., New York City

Ralph Erman grew up in Wittlich / Rhineland-Palatinate as the eldest of the four sons of the factory owner Alfred Erman. The family flee to the Netherlands after the Night of Broken Glass in 1938 to escape the wide-spread antisemitism and from 1942 onwards are in hiding, separated from one another. With the help of the Dutch underground, Ralph Erman manages to survive in changing hideouts. After the war, the four Erman brothers return to their old house and, after waiting for their parents in vain, emigrate to the United States. The parents had been betrayed and transported to Sobibor in the spring of 1943, where they were murdered. Ralph Erman comes to know of his parents' fate only years later.

Ralph Erman does not wish to come to Munich for the trial against Demjanjuk, he says, „I do not need to do this to myself at this point“. But the trial against Demjanjuk is to be conducted also in his name.

Geertruida Zeehandelaar-Beffie, born 1922, today lives in the U.S., State of New York

With the help of a lot of money, Geertruida Zeehandelaar-Beffie's parents manage to arrange for their daughter to get to travel to Southwestern France via Paris in the fall of 1941, accompanying three small children. She succeeds in escaping to Spain, from where she flees to Cuba and later to the U.S. Her brother and other members of the family were murdered in Sobibor in July 1943; her father and mother at places unknown to Geertruida Zeehandelaar-Beffie. She is a co-plaintiff „because I owe it to my brother“.

Symcha Bialowicz, born 1912, today lives in Israel

Symcha Bialowicz was deported to Sobibor from Izbica, Poland, in April 1943. His father, mother and sister were murdered in Sobibor. Symcha Bialowicz, together with his brother Philip, managed to escape in the uprising of 14 October 1943, and he is one of the few survivors of Sobibor. He is unable to come to Munich due to his health. His brother Philip will be participating in the trial as co-plaintiff and witness.

Martin Hass, born in 1936, today lives in the U.S., San Diego, California

Martin Hass grows up with his three siblings in the small town of Breda in the Netherlands. First he loses his father who is brought to Germany in a „labour assignment“ and was murdered in Auschwitz in February 1943. In October 1942, Martin Hass' mother receives the command that she and her four children are to report for transport to the internment camp in Westerbork. 5-year-old Martin and his 6-year-old sister are smuggled out of the house and hidden with two Catholic families the night before the report. He remembers his mother's last words: „No one must notice that you are a Jewish boy.“ He makes a promise to her: „For the time ahead, I will simply forget.“

After the war, his „new“ mother tells him that he now has to return to his people, to his Jewish family. The 8-year-old, who finds out only years later that his mother, his two siblings and almost his entire family had been murdered in Sobibor, is to be put up with a number of adoptive parents before a remote relative finds him and takes him in. Martin Hass will be coming to Munich for the trial.

Jack Polak, born in 1912, today lives in the U.S., State of New York

Jack Polak is the headmaster of the school in the Westerbork internment camp when in summer 1943 he helps his two parents mount the train to Sobibor. He then believes that he will see them again after the war. Two days later comes the arrival of the papers that would have prevented his parents' deportation to Sobibor. Persons holding these papers are sent to the Concentrationcamp Bergen Belsen and there designated for an exchange with German prisoners in Palestine. Jack Polka has the papers altered to pertain to him, his wife and his sister instead. He is transported to Bergen-Belsen in February 1944, put into a cattle train on 9 April 1945, and when liberated by the Soviet Army 14 days later weighs a mere 70 pounds.

Together with his second wife Ina, Jack Polak has written a book titled „steal a pencil for me“. This book, on which a film is also based, mainly consists of the love letters that Jack and Ina wrote to each other in Westerbork and in Bergen-Belsen, and it describes life in the camps. For decades, Jack Polak has been dedicating a large part of his life to education about and the lessons to be drawn from the Holocaust. He has been awarded numerous distinctions for his work. He was among the six Holocaust survivors who read articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights before the General Assembly of the United Nations on 27 January 2006, the international day of commemorating the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

„Everyone has to stand up to his responsibility, no matter his age“, 96-year-old Jack Polak says.