

DIE LETZTEN ZEUGEN



Gerald A. POLLACK

geb. 1929

USA

Family members, who were murdered:

- Helene and Viktor HERSCHEL

“To the youth of Austria:

Austria's experience of the Anschluss and its tragic aftermath exemplifies **how easily men and women are manipulated**, susceptible to propaganda and social pressure, and **ready to find scapegoats for their troubles**.

My maternal **grandparents, Viktor and Helene Herschel**, who remained in Vienna

after the Anschluss, were subsequently sent to **Theresienstadt** and **murdered**. He was a certified public accountant and she was a pianist, and avant-garde musician who befriended Schonberg and Steuermann. I **never saw them again** after we said goodbye in July, 1938, en route to America.

How could such bestiality have been unleashed on them and on so many countless others **in a country** with the **cultural tradition** of **Goethe, Schiller, Mozart, and Beethoven?** How could they have been so completely abandoned, indeed, persecuted, by the legal and judicial systems?

It is now 70 years after the Anschluss, and **today's young people are already two generations removed from those who were complicit in the barbarism** of that time. Most of the perpetrators are no longer alive, casualties of the war or old age. There is hope in the 'A Letter To The Stars' program, in bringing today's youths into personal conversation with some of those who were persecuted, in giving them insight into what it was like to be Jewish in the Austria of 1938, and in hearing how they made new lives for themselves elsewhere. For those of us who were once Austrians, some of the political development in our former country - Waldheim, Haider - have been troubling. But with the 'A Letter To The Stars' program, **there is hope that facing the realities of the past can help to ensure a wiser future.**”

A LETTER TO THE STARS