

DIE LETZTEN ZEUGEN

Charles (Karl) Robert STEIN

geb. 1919

USA

“At the end of July 1938, I was mostly in hiding, and my life in Vienna no longer possible. I had found a way to flee to Luxemburg and told my parents that I was leaving. On August 12, 1938 my parents accompanied me to the Westbahnhof. After a very tearful “Good bye”, I turned to get on the train.”

“At that moment I heard my mother say to my father: **“Wir werden unseren Sohn nie wieder sehen.”** Those words have been with me every day of my life.”

Charles was born to a Jewish family in Vienna, Austria. His father was a printer. In 1937, Charles was admitted to the Medical School of the University of Vienna. When the Germans marched onto Austria and arrived in Vienna on March 13, 1938, Jews were no longer permitted to study at the University, and Charles began to search for a way to get out of Austria, now a part of Germany. By August 1938, he had found a way to leave, and on August 12 he said his last goodbye to his parents and fled to Luxembourg.

After his arrival in Luxembourg, he received temporary asylum with the help of a Jewish aid organization, ESRA. He contacted some distant relatives in the USA, and asked for help. Soon he received the required Affidavit of Support which he immediately presented to the nearest American Consulate which was in Antwerp, Belgium. He was told that all was in order and he would hear soon when to come and get his visa. What he did not know was that the US State Department had issued orders to stall all Jewish applicants. Soon he received a letter from Antwerp, asking that his sponsors submit "one more document." This went on about 4 or 5 times, until war broke out in Europe in September 1939. Charles was then invited to get his visa on October 7, 1939.

He arrived in New York on December 18, 1939.

Charles found work in the shipping department of a textile firm, worked as a waiter in a Jewish summer camp, and was drafted into the US Army on October 7, 1941, exactly two year after receiving his visa. In June 1943, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Field Artillery, and shortly thereafter was transferred to Military Intelligence. He served in World War II in combat from Normandy to the Czech border and again during the Korean War in Korea. He then worked as an Intelligence Analyst at the Department of Defense, and in 1966 transferred to the Department of the State Foreign Service until his retirement in December 1978.

In early 1946, Charles found out that his parents had been deported to the Lodz ghetto in 1941.

In 1995, he finally learned that they were gassed at Chelmno on February 28, 1942.

A LETTER TO THE STARS