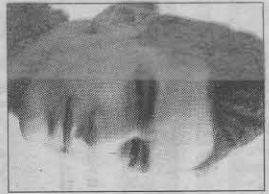


Holocaust survivors recall escape



Alfred Batzdorff was 16 in 1938, when he became one of the first to escape Germany with the help of Kindertransport.

Part of SSU lecture series, German immigrants to share tales of British effort that saved thousands of children

By **KATY HILLENMEYER**

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

At 16, Alfred Batzdorff was the oldest male at home in his family's Breslau apartment when Nazi storm troopers knocked on Nov. 10, 1938, scouring the German town for any Jewish men they'd not yet incarcerated.

It was the second night of the Nazi pogrom Kristallnacht (night of broken glass), when German and Austrian Nazis torched and destroyed 267 synagogues, killed 100 people, ransacked 7,500 Jewish businesses and took nearly 30,000 into custody.

Driven at gunpoint past his burning synagogue, Batzdorff narrowly avoided a train bound for the concentration camp Buchenwald, where his Gestapo captors sent hundreds of other able-bodied Jewish captives. Instead, he hid among disabled veterans from

World War I and elderly prisoners who were spared that trip. He spent the night in a basement cell emptying their urine from the same bucket police gave them for drinking water.

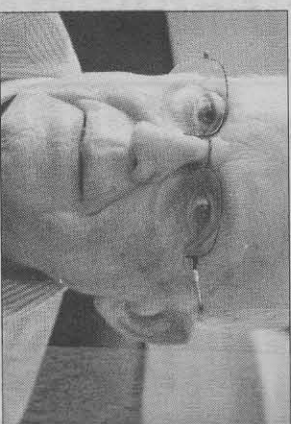
Warned upon release by a friendly policeman to flee the country, Batzdorff in December 1938 became one of the first Jewish youths to escape Germany through the Kindertransport, a British refugee effort that rescued 10,000 children under 17 from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia by train.

Once in Britain, he secured visas and financial sponsors for his younger brother and parents, who likely would have perished, as his grandmothers did, in a Nazi camp.

"If the Gestapo had never arrested me, I wouldn't have gotten to England," the 84-year-old Santa Rosan and retired engineer said Monday. "What seemed like the most disastrous and traumatic event really resulted in my family's survival."

Batzdorff and two other German immigrants who escaped Nazi persecution in their teens, Santa Rosans Hilde Catz and Hans "Hank" Cohn, will share their stories today at Sonoma State University as part of the Holocaust Lec-

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MARK ARONOFF / The Press Democrat

Hans "Hank" M. Cohn escaped Germany as part of the Kindertransport refugee effort.

Cohn, at 10 years old in 1939, when he left Germany by train for a home outside Paris.



