

Dahn in October 2022

**The Life of Lore Katz - A Jewish Woman from Dahn
2022**

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Translated by Carol Buterbaugh, Philadelphia/USA - 2022

Lore Katz was deported along with her parents from Ludwigshafen/Rh. to the Gurs internment camp in southern France on October 22, 1940. She survived the Holocaust, but the experiences of those terrible years were indelibly etched into her memory.

Lore Wertheimer, née Katz, with whom we had been in correspondence since 1987, invited us to the synagogue in Mannheim on the occasion of a home reunion of her husband, Fred Wertheimer, in 1991. We were warmly and unreservedly received. From the beginning there was a relaxed and cordial atmosphere. After the synagogue service, which we attended together, the questions about former friends came immediately. Are they still alive? What is the situation in Dahn today? This report is based on many intensive conversations.

Lore Katz was born on May 22, 1924 in Dahn, Marktstraße 14. Her father was Josef Katz from Dahn, her mother, Thekla Katz, née Teutsch from Venningen. Josef Katz, along with his brother Julius Katz, ran the hardware and housewares store at Marktstraße 16. Josef & Thekla Katz had eight children: Albert, Ludwig, Ernst, Fritz, Wilhelm, Liesel, Ilse, Lore.

All of the siblings, except Lore, emigrated from Germany between 1936 and 1938. Five of the siblings survived the Holocaust in the USA and two in Palestine (Israel).

Until the early 1930s, Lore had a happy childhood in Dahn. Her parents' house was a kosher home, and the ritual and religious regulations were strictly observed; pork was forbidden, dairy and meat dishes were treated and kept separately. The Jewish holidays, fasts and feasts were celebrated with dignity and the daily prayers were said. On Shabbat, called Shabbes for Dahn Jews, the store remained closed from Friday noon until Saturday. The children were scrubbed and dressed up in the wash tub on Fridays. Lore's father, Josef, went to the synagogue in the Schäfergasse (Judengasse), dressed solemnly for the service. Mother Thekla, respected in Dahn as a kind and generous woman, meanwhile set the Shabbat table. Then came the solemn moment when Lore's father came from the service and benschte (blessed) the children, her mother lit the Shabbos Lights and said the Kiddush (blessing prayer) over the home-baked Bersches (bread: poppy plait made of white bread dough). Of course, the required cup of wine was also on the table.(1)

On Shabbos there was always a festive meal that the family looked forward to all week. Sometimes Lore's father would bring a passing Jewish person (an Eastern Jew) from the synagogue to eat with him. Mother Thekla was an excellent cook.(2) Usually for Shabbos there was soup with homemade noodles or matzo balls, meat with rice or noodles; on Fridays there were never potatoes. For dessert, cake and the popular wine cream was served. This dessert was never missed by Aunt Fine.(3) Josefine, Josef, and Aunt Fine sang Hebrew songs with Lore's family on Shabbos. The pre-cooked meal was only warmed up on Shabbos.

On Saturday morning, the whole family went to the synagogue for services. There was a strict separation of the sexes. The women and girls were in the women's gallery,(4) which ran all the way around, and the men and boys were downstairs.(5) The synagogue leader at that time was uncle Julius Katz. He led the service, raised the Torah scroll and called the readers. To be allowed to read from the Torah was a special honor.

Saturday was almost a holiday for the Jewish school children. They had to attend classes in the Catholic(6) elementary school, but they did not have to do any written work because no physical work was allowed on the Sabbath.

In the afternoons, they went on Shabbat walks together with Jewish families who were friends, which led them in the direction of Busenberg to today's Klan shoe factory, to the Grautälchen, to the Michaelskapelle or to the Dahner Burgen.(7)

As a small child, Lore attended the Catholic kindergarten. She likes to think of the sisters and can still remember their names. Lore would have liked to go to communion at that time, to wear the white dress. Her brother Wilhelm played the baby Jesus in a nativity play in the kindergarten in the twenties. From 1930, Lore attended the Catholic elementary school in Dahn. The Jewish teacher Heimann from Pirmasens gave Israelite religious instruction once a week until 1938. These examples show that before the Nazi era, Christian and Jewish life could intertwine without any problems.

Lore's parents as well as Uncle Julius and Aunt Marianne were good people who helped everyone who was in need.(8) Even today, the Katz family's helpfulness is praised by older Dahners. Many people remember the good matzos that he received as a child from Mrs. Thekla Katz for the Pascha celebration. People got along with each other, they cultivated the neighborhood and supported each other.

This changed radically with Hitler's seizure of power in 1933. Already at the beginning of the Nazi era, the Josef Katz family, like the other Jewish families, were harassed. During the nationwide boycott at the beginning of April 1933, an SA (Sturmabteilung) man in uniform marched up and down in front of the hardware store owned by Josef and Julius Katz at Marktstraße 16 to discourage Aryan customers from buying from Jewish stores.(9)

In 1934/1935, Josef & Julius Katz were ordered by the Dahn municipality to have their business premises at Marktstraße 16 plastered. Since they were unable to comply with this request, they were sentenced by the Dahn District Court to a fine of RM 500 on the grounds that their house was an eyesore for Dahn and had not been plastered despite repeated requests. The plaintiff was the town of Dahn.(10)

Starting in 1937, stones flew through the windows into the parents' bedroom. Nazi hooligans threw the shutters several times into the opposite well trough on the church wall. When the nightly harassment by the Nazis got worse and worse, Josef Katz let his guard dog Lux run free in the house, who made sure that the nightly disturbances of the peace were kept within limits.

At school, Lore was spoken to less and less by the other children and eventually even shunned. Among the reasons for this were the racial doctrine and her classmates' fear of sanctions. They shouted antisemitic slurs at her and the other Jewish students(11).

Lore's father, Josef Katz, had a friendly relationship with the people from the mill, the neighboring Riesbeck(12) family, who ran a mill on the Wieslauter. Lore's mother also got along well with the Catholic priest Hafen, with whom she had long conversations.

After the death of his brother Julius on July 13, 1938, Josef Katz was the last synagogue director of the Jewish religious community of Dahn. On behalf of the Jewish religious community, he sold the synagogue, which was no longer in use, along with the Jewish school at Schäfergasse 4 (Judengasse) to master carpenter Flory from Busenberg.(13) Josef Katz sold his residential house in Marktstraße 14 to a businessman from Dahn, after he had previously offered it to a private citizen from Dahn, who, however, wanted to have the house for free.

After the sale of the house, the Katz family moved to Ludwigshafen in August 1938 to Prinzregentenstraße 26, where they lived in a small apartment in a building that could be described as a kind of Jewish ghetto. Only Jewish families lived here, moving from all over the Palatinate to be crammed into a very small space.(14)

In Ludwigshafen, Lore attended Jewish school. Later she learned sewing and tailoring. The family lived meagerly on savings, since Josef Katz was no longer allowed to work. As a devout Jew, Josef Katz went to prayer at the synagogue every day. In the so-called Reich Crystal Night (November 9, 1938), the Katz family fortunately managed to avoid the atrocities felt so intensely by other Jews. A courageous dentist stood protectively in front of the entrance door. He told the SA men that all the Jewish men on the upper floor had been arrested, whereupon they moved on.

The next day, November 10), Josef Katz went to prayers in the synagogue as usual; after a short time he returned and said with tears: *"We will never have services again, the synagogue is in flames."*

Lore's uncle (Teutsch) from Venningen, a brother of her mother Thekla and a teacher at the Jewish school in Ludwigshafen, was arrested around 10:00 a.m. and the school children were sent home.

The men were arrested and taken to the Dachau concentration camp. After the beginning of the war, September 1, 1939, the situation of the Jewish families worsened visibly. They were not allowed to leave the house after 8 p.m., had to give up the radio, and were allowed to shop in stores specially assigned for Jews and only at a certain time. The Jews became more and more isolated.

On October 22, 1940, the Jewish people of Baden, Palatinate and Saarland were deported to Gurs at the foot of the Pyrenees in a night and fog operation.(15) On the evening of that day, Gauleiter Josef Bürckel reported to Adolf Hitler: ***My Führer, the Palatinate is free of Jews!***

Lore reports:

At 5:00 a.m. the Gestapo appeared and told us that we would be picked up in an hour. We were to quickly pack the most important things. We were allowed 50 kilograms of luggage per person.

My mother hurriedly packed, G.s.D. also the warm winter clothes that were so bitterly needed later. She boiled eggs and made sandwiches. We had to leave behind the little we had brought with us from Dahn. At 6:00 a.m. we went to an appointed assembly point. In the hurry I had forgotten my handbag. I ran back to the apartment, but it was already sealed and marked with a "Confiscated" sign.

From the collection point we went with other Jewish families on trucks to the main train station. Here we had to wait. We met friends and acquaintances. At the main station there were extra trains with French wagons (not cattle cars). For two days we went across France via Toulouse - Pau - Lourdes - Sainte Marie to Oloron (Basses-Pyrénées). Here we were loaded onto French trucks and taken to Camp de Gurs on a rainy night. The French railroad authorities in Toulouse were completely surprised, as they had not been informed by the Germans beforehand. We pulled into Toulouse twice. The train sometimes went so fast that we thought the locomotive was without a guide. The Gurs camp had previously interned Spanish fighters fleeing Franco.

We were put in empty barracks with no windows, no floor, no chairs, no stove, no water. Men and women were strictly separated. The barracks were grouped into so-called ilots (islands). About 25 barracks were surrounded by a barbed wire enclosure and formed an ilot. One could only leave the ilot with a special pass. There was an exit or entrance guarded by a French guard. My mother, Aunt Marianne, Uncle Julius' wife, and I were taken to the women's ilot L. There we met two sisters. There we met two of Aunt Marianne's sisters. My father, Julius Levy, his son Helmut and his brother Ludwig Levy from Dahn, Weißenburger Straße 2, were placed in Men's ilot J. We were taken to the women's barracks.

Our barrack was occupied by about 70 women and girls. In the beginning we slept on the bare floor. Only later were we given straw and straw sacks. We had only the most necessary linen. We kept our clothes on at night, partly because of the cold and partly so that they would not be stolen. The barracks had adjustable skylights instead of windows. It was always dark and cold. Later we were given a stove, but fuel was scarce. The hygienic conditions were catastrophic. There was only cold water and washing troughs. The older women immediately had crabs because they could not wash properly with the ice-cold water. Washing the clothes only with cold water was not very successful.

In terrible memory I have the latrines. They were located a bit outside the ilot and represented a kind of "high stand" that could be reached by a wooden staircase. The walk to the latrine was an ordeal for the old and sick. The latrine was draughty and cold, unacceptable conditions for the camp inhabitants, who were plagued by diarrhea and dysentery. The paths inside the ilots were in an indescribable condition. Especially after rain - and it rained often - they turned into swamp and mud paths that made going to the latrine a dangerous and exhausting undertaking. Some women returned with only one shoe, the other stuck in the mud.

The food was consistently poor and insufficient. There was a little black coffee, hardly any bread, a thin soup enriched with turnips, cabbage and potato pieces. Meat was almost never served. I will always remember the yellow Spanish peas (cara bugs), which never became soft. At exorbitant prices one could buy food in French currency inside and outside the camp. We children were helped by a Swiss relief organization. We received some fat, brown sugar, bread and cocoa from them weekly. Without this additional food, many children could not have survived.

On December 14, 1940, my mother, Thekla Katz, died of dysentery. She was buried at the northern edge of the camp cemetery. Her gravestone is number 393. 14 more dead were buried that day, including two of my mother's cousins. After my mother's death, I was allowed to leave our ilot for the first time to visit my father. Which I was allowed to do every day from that time on.

In March 1941, parents with children were transferred to Camp Rivesaltes on the Mediterranean. Thekla's sisters were also sent to this camp. Here Lore met her school friend of the same age, Gertrud Levy from Dahn, Weißenburger Straße 2. They attended a sewing class together at the camp. In the afternoons they met for needlework in Gertrud Levy's room. Her father, Julius Levy, was responsible for the luggage of the Ilot residents in the camp as a magazine caretaker. For this he was given an apartment of two rooms.

In Rivesaltes, the barracks were more massive than in Gurs, but people were housed above and next to each other in small hutches called rabbit hutches. Again, there was only cold water for washing, but the food was better and the roads paved. Fleas and lice were a terrible nuisance. But more terrible were the stinking bugs that fell from the ceiling at dark.

From Rivesaltes, Lore was taken to a children's home in Cantal (Vic sur Cere). With the beginning of the deportations to the death camps in 1942, Lore was hidden for three months with sisters in a convent. With false identity papers, she lived under the name Laure Keller first with a family in the mountains near Grenoble, then, until the end of the war, with the family of Dr. Paul Michel in Lyon. Here, too, she had to conceal her Jewish identity in order not to be extradited to the Germans. Lore's father was taken from Rivesaltes to Perpignon to the St. Louis Hospital because of prostate disease.

On November 8, 1943, Josef Katz was taken from the hospital on a stretcher, put on the train to Drancy/Paris on November 20, 1943, and from there deported to Auschwitz on transport No. 62. There he was murdered.(16)

Lore, who sent her father a parcel to the hospital at the beginning of November 1943, received it back with the note: Moved without giving address. From this wording, Lore knew that her father had been deported. A few weeks earlier she had been able to visit her father in the hospital. The return of the parcel in November 1943 was the last news from her father.

She then worked as a maid for Dr. Paul Michel in Lyon until her liberation in 1944. After the liberation, Lore Katz resumed her old name and worked in Limoges in a pomponiere (tassels for curtains) at No. 7 Rue Verline until her emigration. From Limoges, Lore went to Paris for a short time, returning again to Limoges.

In January 1947 Lore Katz emigrated to the USA. There she lived briefly in Philadelphia with her sister Ilse and her husband Edward Roller. Later she lived and worked in Greensboro NC with her sister Liesel and brother in law *Männer*.(17)

On September 25, 1948, Lore was married to Fred Wertheimer.(18) They lived together in Philadelphia, PA, USA. Lore and Fred Wertheimer have three children: Stuart Joe *05.05.1951 (died 11.04.2020) - Diane Barbara *04.12.1953 - Carol Ann *10.04.1957

In the summer of 1991, at the invitation of the city of Dahn, 21 Jewish people originally from Dahn from Germany, France, Switzerland and the USA came to Dahn for a 10-day home reunion. Lore and Fred Wertheimer gladly accepted the invitation.

Fred Wertheimer died on March 26, 2001 and Lore Wertheimer, née Katz, on May 11, 2007 in Philadelphia, USA.

It is in Lore's desire that the names of the Jews from Dahn who were deported with her to Gurs and perished in the Holocaust be mentioned:

Katz, Josef, Lore's father

* 22.08.1870, married to Thekla Katz, née Teutsch from Venningen Dahn, Marktstraße 14. Moved in August 1938 to Ludwigshafen, Prinzregentenstraße 26. Deported to Gurs on 22.10.1940 and transferred to Camp Rivesaltes on 11.03.1941. Taken to Perpignan to St. Louis Hospital or St. Jean Hospital because of prostate disease. Brought back from here to Rivesaltes on stretcher on 08.11.1943. On 20.11.1943 Josef Katz was deported from Drancy with transport no. 62 to Auschwitz and murdered there.

Katz, Thekla, née Teutsch from Venningen, Lore's mother

* 24.09.1881 married to Josef Katz, Dahn, Marktstraße 14. Moved in August 1938 to Ludwigshafen, Prinzregentenstraße 26. Deported on 22.10.1940 to Gurs. Died on 14.12.1940 in the Gurs camp. Her gravestone bears the number 393.

Katz, Marianne, née Simon from Trier, Lore's aunt

* 26.05.1886, married to Julius Katz, brother of Josef Katz, Dahn, Marktstraße 16. Moved to Ludwigshafen in 1939 and later to Mannheim. Deported to Gurs on 22.10.1940, from there transferred to Camp Récébédou. She wanted to emigrate to the USA. Her two sons Erich Theodor and Rudy in the USA had already paid the travel expenses. A place was reserved for her on the ship Excambion. Apparently Marianne Katz did not receive an entry visa to the USA. On August 28, 1942, Marianne Katz was deported from Drancy on Transport No. 25 to Auschwitz, where she was murdered.

Levy, Julius,

* 29.09.1886 Busenberg, legal advisor and merchant, married to Elsa Rosenstiel, Dahn, Weißenburger Straße 2. Had to leave Dahn on 01.09.1939, moved to Mannheim. On 22.10.1940 Julius was deported from Mannheim to Gurs with his wife Elsa and their children Gertrud and Helmut Levy. The family arrived in Rivesaltes on 10.03.1941.

Julius & Elsa Levy were taken from Rivesaltes to Drancy on 24.08.1942, deported from there to Auschwitz two days later and murdered there.

Julius Levy was awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class (EK II) as a German soldier in World War 1.

Levy, Elsa, née Rosenstiel,

* 12.12.1894 Dahn, married to Julius Levy, Dahn, Weißenburger Straße 2. Had to leave Dahn on 01.09.1939, moved to Mannheim.

Elsa Levy had the same fate as her husband. She was deported with him to Auschwitz and murdered there.

Helmut Levy

* 03.04.1925, son of Julius & Elsa Levy, Dahn, Weißenburger Straße 2. Had to leave Dahn on 01.09.1939 and moved with his parents to Mannheim. On 22.10.1940 Helmut and his family were deported from Mannheim to Gurs. He was used as a forced laborer in various camps in southern France: Gurs, Rivesaltes, in Brest/ Normandy and various other places. On 07.09.1942 he was deported to Auschwitz via Drancy with transport no. 29. In Cossel, station before Auschwitz, he was selected for forced labor. In January 1945 he was on one of the death marches from Auschwitz to Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar. He disappeared in Buchenwald concentration camp in February 1945. Presumed date of death: 23.02.1945 Buchenwald Concentration Camp

Levy, Ludwig, brother of Julius and Blüta Levy

* 19.3.1878 Busenberg, moved to Dahn. Had to leave Dahn on 01.09.1939, moved to Mannheim. On 22.10.1940 he was deported from Mannheim to Gurs, came to Camp Noé. On 14.8.1942 he was deported from Drancy with transport no.19 to Auschwitz and murdered there.

Julius Levy was awarded the Iron Cross 2nd class (EK II) as a German soldier in World War 1.

Levy, Blüta (Barbara), sister of Julius and Ludwig Levy

* 24.11.1880 Busenberg, moved to Dahn. Had to leave Dahn on 01.09.1939, moved to Mannheim. On 22.10.1940 she was deported from Mannheim to Gurs, came to Camp Noé. On 14.08.1942 Blüta Levy was deported from Drancy with transport no.19 to Auschwitz and murdered there.

Rosenstiel, Helene, sister of Elsa Levy, née Rosenstiel

* 05.08.1889 Dahn, lived in the household of her sister Elsa Levy in Dahn, Weißenburger Straße. 2. had to leave Dahn on 01.09.1939 and moved with her sister Elsa Levy to Mannheim, Lameystraße. 18. from there she was deported to Gurs on 22.10.1940, transferred to Camp Rivesaltes on 14.03.1941; later to Camp Noé. On 14.08.1942 Helene Rosenstiel was deported from Drancy with transport No.18 to Auschwitz and murdered there.

34 Jews who were born in Wasgau or once lived here were deported to the Camp de Gurs in France on October 22, 1940.

22 of the deportees perished in the camps in the south of France or were deported to the extermination camps in the east

12 of the deportees survived

A total of **6504** Jews from Baden, the Palatinate and the Saarland were deported to the Camp de Gurs in France on October 22, 1940, 823 of whom came from the Palatinate and the Saarland.

Footnotes

(1) Thekla Katz, née Teutsch from Venningen, received a barrel of wine from her parents every year.

(2) Lore: When I have to cook something good for my children, they still say today: Mother, make Dahner potatoes again.

(3) Josefine Josef was the youngest sister of Josef Katz. She lived with her husband Sigmund (called Hasebelz) at Pirmasenser Straße No. 6, next to the Lutheran church. In 1935 Josefine and Sigmund Josef emigrated to Argentina with their two children Adolf and Edith. All family members died after only a few years there.

(4) The women entered the synagogue building through a separate door and stood in a small room separated from the men's synagogue by a wooden shutter. From here they reached the women's gallery with 40 seats via a wooden staircase, which is still preserved. The men could not see the women and the women could not see the men.

(5) There were prayer desks for 60 men in the synagogue.

(6) Lore: My siblings all attended the Jewish school until about 1930; then it was closed for lack of students.

(7) Lore: In my time, only the young people took the Shabbos walk. My dear mother stayed at home and read a book. My father met with other Jewish men at the Hotel Hartmann to play cards. During the Hitler era, they met in Jewish homes.

(8) Lore: Many a Dahner still owe my parents money today.

- (9)** This is the Reich-wide boycott of April 01, 1933. The SA man who patrolled in front of the store was A. Sch.
- (10)** Hans Wörsdörfer attended a trial at the Dahn District Court in the 4th grade of elementary school with Miss (?), in which Chief District Judge Memmer sentenced Josef & Julius Katz to a fine of RM 500. (Communication from Mrs. Wörsdörfer.)
- (11)** Lore can still remember the primitive anti-Jewish slogans common at that time such as: Jud, Jud! - Stinking Jew! - Saujud!
- (12)** Josef Katz used to talk to his neighbor, the miller Riesbeck, after work. The two continued this habit during the Nazi era, although interaction with Jews was strictly forbidden. When Josef Katz appeared, Riesbeck's teenage daughter Lina was assigned a job in the house or stable so that she would not witness the conspiratorial conversations. (Communication from Mrs. Lina Schantz)
- (13)** Mr. Flory immediately converted the synagogue into a carpenter's workshop and the schoolhouse into a residential building. Due to the timely sale and immediate conversion into a carpenter's workshop, the synagogue was spared in the Reichskristallnacht and its contents were well preserved.
- (14)** Today, the building houses the editorial office of the RHEINPFALZ.
- (15)** On October 22, 1940, the two Gauleiters Wagner (Baden) and Josef-Bürckel (Palatinate) in a night and fog action arrested 9500 Jews from Baden, Palatinate and Saarland, shipped them on foot, by trucks and military vehicles into waiting trains and deported them to France to Camp Gurs at the foot of the Pyrenees. 2 trains came from the Palatinate and 7 trains from Baden.
- (16)** Presumed date of death 15.12.1943.
- (17)** Männel was the uzname (nickname) for Ernst Kahn. He was married to Lore's sister Liesel Katz.
- (18)** Fred Wertheimer was born in Mannheim on December 30, 1920. The family lived at Karl-Ludwigstraße 9, today Bachstraße 9.