

Hanni Begg

Hanni Begg was born in Germany in 1929 to a Jewish father and Christian mother. The family moved to Berlin when she was six.

Whilst at school she once shook hands with a famous visitor - Adolf Hitler.

One day, in 1943, she returned home from school to find that her younger brother Max (8) and sister Ruth (6) had been picked up by the Gestapo. Max and Ruth were both murdered in Auschwitz (as was Hanni's grandmother). Max and Ruth went via Theresienstadt and it is possible that they were present at the first performance of Brundibár.

Hanni herself, bound for Auschwitz, made a miraculous escape from another Czech transit camp, and made her way back to Berlin where she was hidden for the last eighteen months of the war in a convent hospital run by Protestant nuns.

As the Russians closed in on Berlin at the end of the war, Hanni received a note through the hospital door telling her that her father (who she thought was dead) was alive and living in a nearby bombed-out building. Hanni found her father, who was dying, nursed him in his final days and finally buried him herself. Her adoptive parents (Hanni's mother had died just before the war started) encouraged her to go to England in 1949 to train as a nurse in the recently started National Health Service. While training in Scotland she met her future husband, Frank, who was a medical student.

Hanni and Frank moved to Guisborough, North Yorkshire in the 1950s where Frank was a GP for the next 30 years. She is godmother to Emily who decided to name her daughter 'Hanni' in Hanni's honour. By a remarkable coincidence the younger Hanni was born four years ago on January 27th - Holocaust Memorial Day.

A short film of Hanni Begg's life was made recently by Teesside University.

BBC feature on Hanni Begg:-
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-35409930>

with a link to the short film at:-
<https://vimeo.com/151003328>