

25. January 2022

Education and culture

Sigmar Seif from Bocholt survived the genocide

Commemoration of Auschwitz liberation 77 years ago // New WDR app remembers murdered Jews from Bocholt

77 years ago, on January 27, 1945, the few survivors of the Auschwitz concentration camp were liberated by Russian troops. Sigmar Seif from Bocholt survived due to the fact that his name was on a transport list that gained international notoriety through the film "Schindlers List". Recently, commemorating murdered Jews has become possible through a new Stolperstein app from the WDR.

To coincide with the 77th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp by Russian troops, WDR has published a new app on the approximately 15,000 Stolpersteine laid in NRW under the title "Stolpersteine NRW - Gegen das Vergessen". The Stolpersteine laid in Bocholt are also listed and partly accompanied by audios and additional texts. The app can now be used on smartphones (app stores "Stolpersteine NRW") and also on PCs or laptops(stolpersteine.wdr.de) and offers a new and digital way of commemorating.

Auschwitz is today synonymous with the Nazi mass murder of about 1.3 million Jews. The camp is the expression of murderous racial mania, the mark of Cain in German history.

38 men, women and children from Bocholt

On the evening of January 27, 1945 - 77 years ago today - the enormous complex of the Auschwitz I and II murder factories was liberated by Russian troops. A horror of truly apocalyptic proportions awaited the soldiers in the camps: the smell of death from the murdered men wafted everywhere. Among them were 38 children, women and men who were born in Bocholt or had once lived here.

Sigmar Seif alone survived. The Seif family of eight had left their homeland of Schrimm (Regierungsbezirk Posen), which fell to Poland. In 1920 the Seifs had come to Bocholt. Here father Salomon became a cult official of the Israelite community. The then seven-year-old son Sigmar attended the Israelite school at Nordwall 26. Later he was an accountant in the Ostberg company at Ostwall.

"... Will to live was stronger..."

After the pogrom night in 1938, Sigmar Seif fled to Dinxperlo (Netherlands) on November 29, and on October 8, 1939, he was among the first inmates of the later Jewish transit camp Westerbork in North Holland. In one of the last deportations, he was taken from there to the Theresienstadt ghetto on September 6, 1944. Here he married Rosetta Levie, a ray of hope in a hopeless situation. On September 28, 1944, Sigmar Seif was transported to the Golleschau subcamp near Auschwitz. Sigmar Seif remembered this camp in 1946 in a letter to his former neighbors, the Roloff family from Bocholt: "I ... suffered hunger, received beatings, had to [work] very hard in a quarry in Poland, was already to be buried, but the will to live was stronger in me. ..."

Seif was on Schindler's list

Along with 81 Jewish men, Oskar and Emilie Schindler put him on their transport list made famous by the film "Schindler's List" and had the men from Golleschau taken to a ghetto near their company in Brünnlitz (now the Czech Republic). Here he fed his "Schindler Jews" well at his own expense and prevented attacks by the guards.

On May 10, 1945, Sigmar Seif was liberated by the Red Army. He then began a new life with his wife Rosetta, who had been freed from Theresienstadt, in Overschie near Rotterdam. In 1953 they emigrated to the USA with their daughters Regina and Betty, who

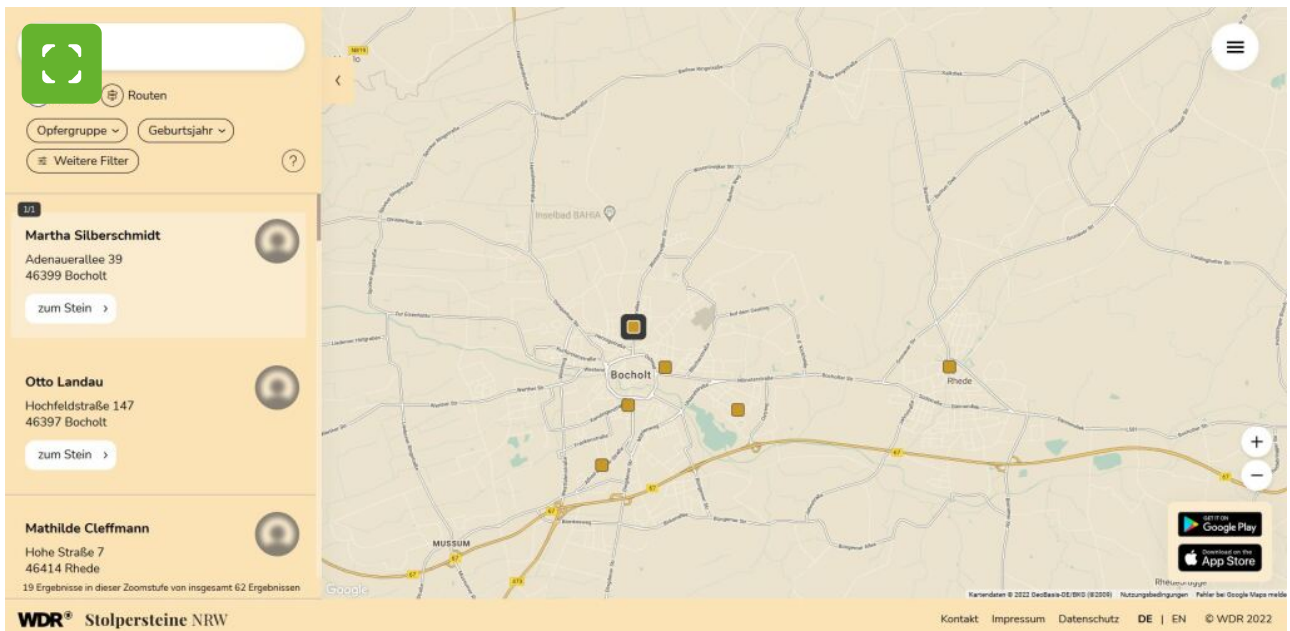
had been born in the meantime. Sigmar Seif died at the age of almost 97 in 2009 in Paterson/New Jersey.

Sigmar Seif, including his parents Regina and Salomon, was the only member of the family of eight who was not murdered in the Nazi Holocaust.



© Josef Niebur

Pfingsten 1996 in New Jersey USA, Sigmar Seif, 83 Jahre alt, aus dem Privataarchiv von Josef Niebur



© Stadt Bocholt

Screenshot der neuen Stolpersteine-App des WDR. Auch über damals in Bocholt lebende Jüdinnen und Juden sind Informationen eingepflegt.