

**Marion Blumenthal –Lazan**  
*Four Perfect Pebbles*

Holocaust Survivor

April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014



# Introduction

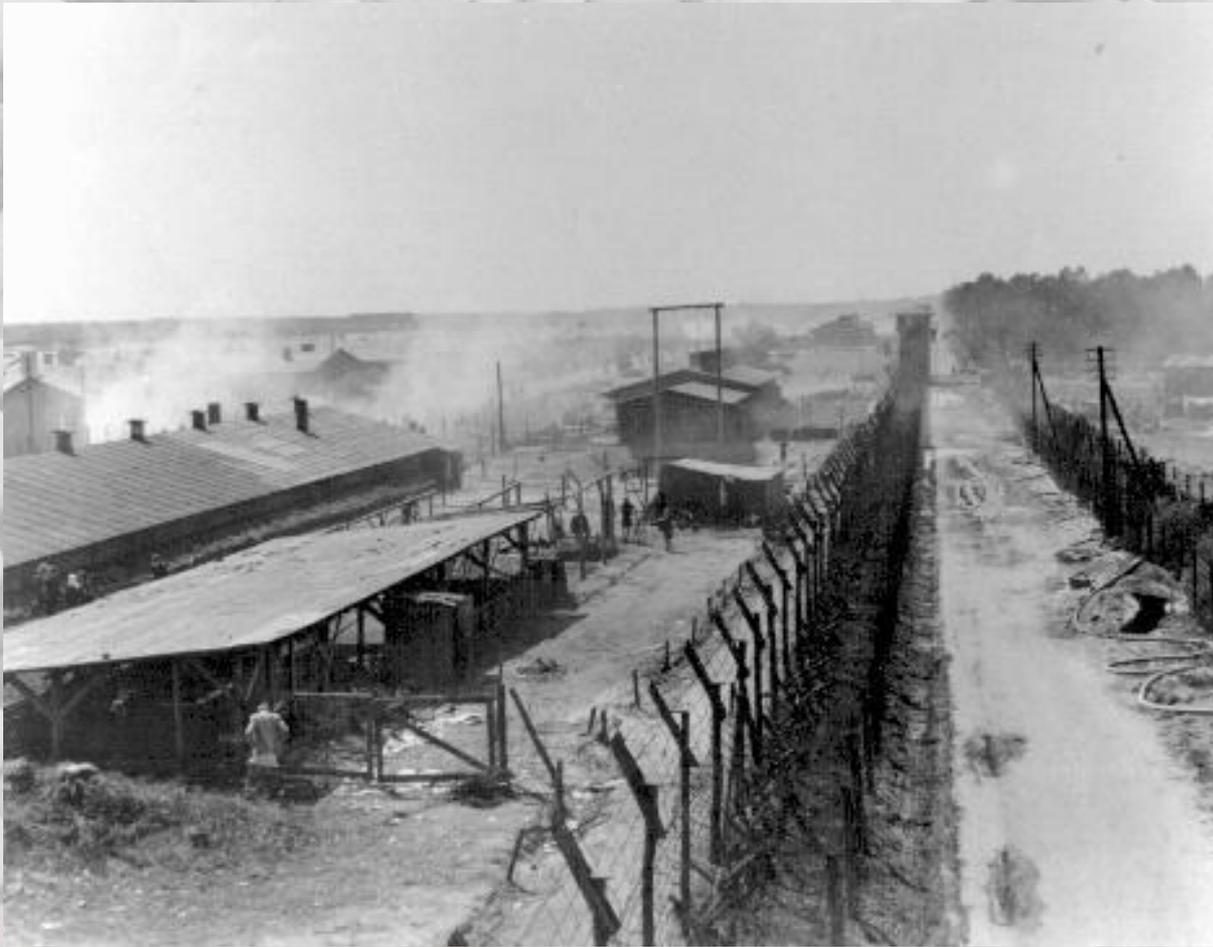
**Marion Blumenthal Lazan and her family survived the events of the Holocaust. They initially were trapped in Germany until they fled to Holland, only to have their area of refuge taken over by the Nazis. For six and a half years they were refugees, prisoners, or in transit camps. This power point summarizes Marion's book, entitled Four Perfect Pebbles, written by Marion, Lila Pearl, and Marion's mother, Ruth Blumenthal Meyberg. The slides include information presented in the order it appears in the book.**

# Part I

## Chapters 1-4

### I. Life in Bergen-Belsen Camp

- Located in north-western Germany
- Originally a POW camp, converted to a work camp by the Nazi's
- Marion was able to stay with her family. She bunked with her mom, and they were able to see her father and brother daily.
- Only meager rations existed-black bread and a cup of soup daily.
- Roll call was twice a day, at 6 am, and in the evening after work detail, despite any weather conditions.
- Anyone who tried to escape caused the entire camp to stand at attention all day without food, water, or toilets.



**A view of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp after the liberation of the camp. Bergen-Belsen, after April 15, 1945.**

**— National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md.**

## I. Life in Bergen-Belsen continued...

- Marion was nine years old
- She busied herself with finding four perfect pebbles to represent her family-and these became a symbol of hope for her to have all four of her family members survive.



# A Small Town in Germany...

## II. Prior to Bergen-Belsen...

- Marion was born in Hoya, a small northwestern German town, where her family owned a clothing business.
- In 1933, the Nazi ordered boycott of Jewish businesses began. Marion's mother remembered children throwing stones at Alfred's baby carriage.
- In 1935, Hitler's Nuremberg Laws aimed to destroy Jewish businesses, and also stripped Jews of their citizenship, calling them an inferior "race."
- While many Jews were fleeing Germany, Marion and her family stayed in order to be with her elderly grandparents, who were ill.

# Nuremberg Race Laws

## Reichsbürgergesetz.

Vom 15. September 1935.

Der Reichstag hat einstimmig das folgende Gesetz beschlossen, das hiermit verkündet wird:

### § 1

- (1) Staatsangehöriger ist, wer dem Schutzverband des Deutschen Reiches angehört und ihm dafür besonders verpflichtet ist.
- (2) Die Staatsangehörigkeit wird nach den Vorschriften des Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetzes erworben.

### § 2

- (1) Reichsbürger ist nur der Staatsangehörige deutschen oder artverwandten Blutes, der durch sein Verhalten beweist, daß er gewillt und geeignet ist, in Treue dem Deutschen Volk und Reich zu dienen.
- (2) Das Reichsbürgerrecht wird durch Verleihung des Reichsbürgerbriefes erworben.
- (3) Der Reichsbürger ist der alleinige Träger der vollen politischen Rechte nach Maßgabe der Gesetze.

### § 3

Der Reichsminister des Innern erläßt im Einvernehmen mit dem Stellvertreter des Führers die zur Durchführung und Ergänzung des Gesetzes erforderlichen Rechts- und Verwaltungsvorschriften.

## II. Prior to Bergen-Belsen continued...

- 1938-a very critical year-Marion's grandmother and grandfather died, Marion and her family left Hoya and moved to Hanover, and waited for their papers so that they could move to the United States.
- November 9-10<sup>th</sup>, 1938: Kristallnacht occurred, and the events of the Holocaust took a new, violent turn for the worse.

# Kristallnacht

- Kristallnacht was a pogrom, or attack on Jewish businesses, homes, and synagogues. It was the first time Jews were taken prisoner in mass numbers.
- Marion's father Walter was among the prisoners.
- Within weeks he was released, but was ordered to leave Germany in 30 days.
- The Blumenthal family left for Holland, where Walter's sister lived, with hopes to eventually go to the United States.





**The Boerneplatz synagogue in flames during  
Kristallnacht (the "Night of Broken Glass").  
Frankfurt am Main, Germany, November 10,  
1938.  
-US Holocaust Memorial Museum**

# While in Holland

- The Blumenthals were shifted from one refugee camp to another, where they ended up in a camp for Jewish refugees in Gouda, Holland.
- Meanwhile, World War II began with Germany's invasion of Poland
- In 1939, the Dutch government set up a refugee camp known as Westerbork, which did provide some sense of normalcy for the Blumenthals.
- They waited for their papers to come through for travel to the US. In January of 1940, these papers arrived, and the Blumenthal family booked a trip for March.



**Marion's family in Westerbork, courtesy of Yad Vashem**

## Holland continued...

- The Blumenthals waited anxiously as the time passed. They learned that their trip in March was postponed to June.
- Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway in April of 1940. He invaded Holland in May.
- The Blumenthals lost all of their belongings in the invasion, as well as their escape. No ocean liners would be sailing to America.

# Westerbork as a transit camp...

- \* Westerbork began to change with the Nazi takeover-beginning July 1, 1940, the Germans officially took over the government of Holland.
- Westerbork changed from a refugee camp to a transit camp-meaning it would be a feeder camp to some of the worst camps, like Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- By 1942, news of the Jews being gassed in Poland was reported in American and British papers, with little reaction.

# Dutch Jews deported to Westerbork, 1942



# Ruth Blumenthal's paper from Westerbork

Aussug a.d. Kennkarte - Uittreksel u/h Personenkaartje.

Numer van Persoonsbewijs: W37/No. 00749

Naam: Moses--

Voornaam: Mimi Ruth--

Geboortedatum: 7 Februari 1908

Plaats en land van geboorte: Stallupönen-Duitsland

Nationaliteit: Vreemdeling.

Gehuwd met: Blumenthal, W.F.--

Gesch. op:  
Overl. op:

Laatste beroep: zonder

Laatste woonsadres: Westerbork, Vreemdelingenkamp

Opmerkingen: ~~xxx~~ Vrouw - Kenn. kaart

Uitgereikt op: 5 November 1941

In Gemeente: Westerbork

Voor uittreksel conform,  
Westerbork, den 31 Januari 1944.

den Burgemeester van Westerbork,  
De chef van de hulpsecretarie  
"Lager Westerbork"

(B.T. van Dongelaar)



# Deportation of Jews from Westerbork



# Deportations from Westerbork

- As the months went on, transits from Westerbork carried more and more Jews from all over Holland.
- The street alongside the train platform was called the “Boulevard des Miseres” or ‘boulevard of misery.’
- Marion’s father tried to prevent them from getting sent to Auschwitz, and arranged for his family to be a part of an “exchange” program, where Jews were let into Palestine in exchange for freedom for German prisoners held by the British.
- In February of 1944, the Blumenthals boarded the train on the Boulevard des Miseres, after living in Westerbork for four years, and went to Cele, Germany, where they believed they would be allowed to go to Palestine, and to freedom.

# Part II

## Chapters 5-7

- The Blumenthals did not go to Cele, rather they went to Bergen-Belsen, a camp with many sections, one of which was the Star Camp, for exchange Jews like them. Others were deported to Auschwitz.
- Bergen- Belsen, however, was "hell." The conditions were unbelievably harsh. Hunger, cold and degradation were part of every day life.
- The Blumenthals waited daily in roll call for their name to be called for the exchange. Their names were never called.
- When Marion's dad Walter questioned the officer and presented their papers, he was beaten and called a pig. At that point all hope of making it to Palestine died for the Blumenthals. They later learned very few of the exchange Jews ever made it to Palestine.

# Back to life in Bergen-Belsen...

- One of the fearful parts of the daily routine was the shower. Rumors circulated about the gas chambers of Auschwitz, where Jews were killed with Zyklon B gas after entering shower-like areas.
- Bergen-Belsen had a crematorium, where Marion remembers the awful stench of disease, decay and lack of sanitation.
- Eventually the crematorium could not keep up with the dead bodies, and they were tossed into fire pits, mass graves or in piles.

# Crematorium from Bergen-Belsen, April 1945



- With the D-Day invasion in France in 1944, Nazi's drove many prisoners to Bergen-Belsen from other camps to hide the evidence of the camps.
- The large influx of prisoners worsened the conditions there, creating the most difficult time period for the Blumenthals.
- They faced lice, extreme hunger, disease, and the spread of typhus, which killed tens of thousands of prisoners.
- One night Marion's mother tried to make a soup in their barracks, and Marion spilled the scalding liquid on her leg when they were nearly discovered by the guard.
- This led to infection and great pain, with no medical care available.
- To make matters worse-they learned they would be evacuated from the camp immediately. It was April, 1945.

# No Liberation

- With the British nearly at the camp, the Blumenthals and other prisoners were loaded onto a train by the Nazis. The British liberated Bergen-Belsen six days later.
- Instead of being free, the Blumenthals were on a "death train." They were the last of the transports to leave Bergen-Belsen. The others had been taken to camps that were soon liberated.
- The Blumenthals would not be so fortunate.

# On the Death Train

- The prisoners were loaded on, and then simply sat there all day. They were allowed to leave the train car and sit alongside the tracks. Then, at nightfall, they were loaded back in.
- Within a day, they moved about fifteen miles, when the Germans ordered them to push out the dead. The typhus outbreak was spreading fast in the train.
- The train continued, with regular stops to empty the growing number of dead from the disease.
- Illness spread, as the train, moving slowly from the weight, inched north, often in the way of dive-bombings and artillery cross fire.

# Finally Liberation

- Although the train neared Berlin and the prisoners could tell Germany was at its end in the war, the Germans insisted on moving forward. Conditions worsened, and food all but disappeared.
- The train had become their home, as it worked its way around blown up bridges and road blocks.
- Finally, after two weeks in transit, Russian soldiers opened the doors of the train. The prisoners were liberated. It was April 23, 1945.

The Dachau death train, similar to the Bergen-Belsen train. American soldiers are seen viewing it in April of 1945.



# Freedom and Sorrow

- While Marion and her family, along with fellow prisoners, were liberated, there were no supplies for them to recover.
- Marion was 10 ½ years old, and weight 35 pounds.
- Her mother weighed 75 pounds.
- Marion's leg needed medical attention, which the Russians did help her find. But the emotional toll would continue to haunt her.
- They stayed in Trobitz, Germany, in a quarantined area, where many abandoned farm houses provided refuge for the former prisoners.
- The typhus threat was lessening, and the Blumenthals began to think about returning to Holland.

# Freedom and Sorrow continued....

- Unfortunately typhus began to spread again, this time reaching Marion's father, Walter, and her mother, Ruth.
- After several days of severe illness, Walter died. Her mother survived.
- One day after her father's death, they were told to leave and had two hours to prepare. The Blumenthals, minus one, sought refuge in Holland six and a half years after they had hoped to find freedom there in 1938. Penniless and homeless, they looked forward to starting a new life.

# Part III

## Chapters 8-9

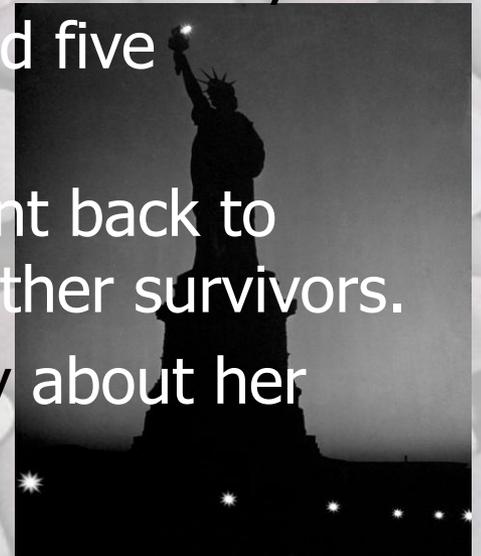
- The Blumenthal's ended up in Amsterdam staying with a cousin, where Marion had her first new piece of clothing in years, a flower patterned dress.
- They were eventually put into a shelter for displaced persons where hunger was no longer an issue, but the future was.
- Marion and her brother Albert were sent to study in preparation for possibly going to Palestine.
- Ruth's mom became a beautician, and visited them once a week.

# From Palestine to the US

- Complications with the transport to Palestine caused the Blumenthals to change their plans and instead seek a visa for America.
- A stroke of luck! The Holland-American line still had paperwork showing the Blumenthals had paid for passage to America back in 1938.
- After a ten day voyage, Marion, her mother Ruth, and brother Albert stood on the deck of the Veendam as it sailed into the New York Harbor.
- It was April 23, 1948-exactly three years from the day they were liberated from the death train.

# In America

- The Blumenthals stayed in New York for awhile, and then moved to Preoria, Illinois, due to a sponsorship from the Jewish Community Council there.
- After a period of adjustment, the Blumenthals became an active part of the community.
- In 1951, while attending services for Yom Kippur, Marion met Nathaniel Lazan. On August 2, 1953 they were married. They have three children and five grandchildren.
- In April of 1995, Marion and her family went back to Holland and Germany and re-united with other survivors.
- Marion continues to travel and speak today about her experiences.



# Marion Blumenthal- Lazan

