

Rolf Hess: A Survivor's Story

Rolf Hess, one of only two known Holocaust survivors in the Toledo area, told his story at a small private gathering last night that included several members of his extended family, Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo staff, and community members. Born in Germany, he was deported to Vichy France and was later rescued by Quakers. He was brought to the United States as an 8-year-old orphan in 1942 to live with relatives in Cleveland.

Rolf discussed the terror he experienced as a young boy, beginning at 4 years old when he and his family were taken from their home and soon separated. The trauma stayed with him in America, despite being well fed and cared for (hiding in his own backyard when a plane flew overhead, stealing tomatoes from a neighbor's Freedom Garden).

In a powerful recollection of resilience and hope, he shared many of the personal experiences that brought him to America, to his wife, Marcia, and to the joyful life he has today.

When asked if he calls himself a "Holocaust survivor" today, he responded, "No, I say I am an American Jew."

