

Rosa GOLDSCHMIDT

25 Dec 1875 – 20 Jul 1927



Rosa's tombstone in the Jewish section of the Nordfriedhof cemetery in Dusseldorf

Leo Goldschmidt's sister, **Rosa Goldschmidt**, according to synagogue records, was born on 25 Dec 1875 in Stolzenau. The date of birth on her tombstone (25 Dec 1874) is incorrect. On 24 Aug 1899 she married Joseph Leib Rubin (b.1870)., from Tarnow, Galicia (Poland). His family was involved the wholesale egg distribution business, transporting eggs from Eastern Europe to markets in Western and Central Europe.

Joseph's father, Moses Rubin, is listed in an 1891 Galician Business Directory, where he is named as an egg dealer and importer. Moses had 9 children who all moved away from Tarnow as they reached adulthood. In most cases, they continued their involvement in the egg business. This was the case with Joseph, who lived in Berlin when he married Rosa.

Joseph and Rosa had two sons, **Max Rubin** (b. 25 Oct 1900) and **Hans Rubin** (b. 12 Nov 1901), both born in Berlin. The family moved from Berlin to Dusseldorf soon after the children were born, and Joseph appears to have continued in the egg business.

Around 1927, their younger son **Hans Rubin** married outside the Jewish faith, which reportedly broke his mother's heart, and may have contributed to her death in that year at the age of 52. Max blamed Hans for his mother's premature death, and this led to a lifelong rift between the two brothers. Almost nothing is known about what became of Hans. He and his wife may have had children, and it is believed that before or during the war he fled to Barcelona with his family and from there they may have gone to South America. He may have returned to Dusseldorf after the war.

More is known about their older son, **Max Rubin**.



Max Rubin in 1963



Berta Rubin née Wolf in 1963

As a child, and later as a young man, Max Rubin was physically strong. He was athletic and keenly involved in sports. Reportedly¹, in 1920, he won a German Championship for motorcycle racing – on a 1000 cc Harley-Davidson motorcycle. During WWI, he volunteered to serve his country and was wounded, but recovered. Other than this, little is known about his life from 1918-32 except that he worked in the egg business.

Around the time the Nazis came to power in 1933 he fled Dusseldorf in a hurry and went to Brussels. He found that Belgians regarded all Germans as enemies, whether Jewish or not, so he soon moved on

to Amsterdam. It is unclear how he earned his living in Amsterdam in the years prior to WWII. In later documentation he gave his occupation as salesman, or mechanic.

During this time he was in contact with his Uncle Semmy Goldschmidt (another of Leo Goldschmidt's siblings) who had fled from Berlin to Amsterdam. Max had some success settling in Holland, and he made friends who shared his interest in sport.

He lived in a quarter of Amsterdam called *Rivierenbuurt*, where many Jewish refugees from Germany lived after 1933. His apartment was just five minutes away from the place where Anne Frank and her family lived for 8 years before going into hiding. Max also went into hiding, but was eventually betrayed.

He was arrested on 20 Apr 1943 and sent to the Westerbork transit camp in the northeastern Netherlands. One can trace what subsequently happened to him, and his remarkable survival, through Holocaust records. In September 1943 he was transported from Westerbork to Bergen-Belsen; in January 1944 he was transported from Bergen-Belsen to Theresienstadt; and in September 1944 he was transported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz.

The first transport Max was on, which left Westerbork on 14 Sep 1943, was particularly eventful. 1005 Jews were on that train. 700 of them were destined for Auschwitz, and 305 were "Preferred Jews" destined for Theresienstadt. This smaller group included German Jews with World War I war decorations who emigrated to the Netherlands after 1933, and other Jews who had been given credit for doing "Peace Work for Germany", plus longtime camp officials from Westerbork. Max Rubin was among this smaller group.

Around 7:15 pm on 14 Sep 1943, the train from Westerbork reached Soltau station in northern Germany. At this point the train drivers received a message that Theresienstadt was overcrowded, so they uncoupled 7 wagons holding the 305 passengers and diverted them to Bergen-Belsen. These people remained in Bergen-Belsen for the next 3 months.

The 700 passengers who were not diverted continued on to Auschwitz. On arrival, on 16 Sep 1943, 578 of them were immediately sent to the gas chambers.

Located in northern Germany, Bergen-Belsen was one of the most notorious Nazi concentration camps where many thousands died from disease or starvation. But it was not a place where prisoners were killed in gas chambers. Prisoners were treated differently in different parts of the camp. Max's group was held there for 3 months, from 15 Sep 1943 until 25 Jan 1944, when they were transported to the Theresienstadt Ghetto.

The Theresienstadt Ghetto, in the town of Terezin, Czechoslovakia operated from 1941 until 1945. For the Nazis, it served a propaganda role. Although many died there from malnutrition and disease, conditions were generally less severe than in other concentration camps. Many prisoners were held for months or years before they were eventually transported to death camps further east. Max remained in Theresienstadt for 8 months, and on 28 Sep 1944 he was transported to Auschwitz.

During this period it is likely he met his uncle Semmy, who was held in Theresienstadt for 6 months, from April to October 1944.

On arrival in Auschwitz in September 1944 Max was 44 years old and had been a concentration camp prisoner for 17 months. It is remarkable that he was not immediately selected for extermination. Instead, he was selected for work, reportedly as a *Sondercommando* (a member of a forced labour unit that disposed of dead bodies from the gas chambers). According to family legend, he actually witnessed his uncle Semmy being sent to a gas chamber. Max survived Auschwitz and was liberated on 27 Jan 1945.

After liberation, Max and other Auschwitz survivors were taken about 660 km east to the city of Czernowitz. There he met **Berta Rubinstein née Wolf**, who had been born in Czernowitz (27 Jan 1911). She was taking care of survivors. Previously, the city had been an important commercial and cultural centre in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the capital of a region known as Bukovina. German had been its *lingua franca*. Before WWII the city had a large German-speaking Jewish population (approx. 42,000). During the years 1941 and 1942 Czernowitz was held by Romania, an ally of Germany, and Jews were forced into a ghetto and many were deported. The Red Army re-took the city in 1944, and by the end of the war, approx. 30% of the Jewish population had survived. Berta's husband, Max Rubinstein, had been a lawyer and had fought with the Red Army, but he was killed in June 1945. Berta had a young son Herbert, born in 1936.

Max Rubin subsequently returned to Amsterdam, and then invited Berta and her son to join him. On 13 Nov 1946 Max and Berta were married in Amsterdam. Max proceeded to work in the fashion business, becoming an owner of a small factory making ladies' belts, buttons, and decorations for female garments. His business in Amsterdam did not do well, and in 1956, with the encouragement of friends, Max decided to move to Dusseldorf with his wife and stepson and re-established his business there. Max died in Dusseldorf on 19 Jan 1971. Berta died in Dusseldorf on 17 Dec 2003.

During the years from 1956 until his death in 1971 Max always had mixed feelings about returning to live in Germany. His business became successful, but as a result of his feelings, he refused to apply for or accept restitution payments from the West German government.

At some point in the 1960s, Max Rubin visited his cousin, my uncle Max Goldsmith, who was living in Manchester, England. Some of the information I learned about Max Rubin came to me (third hand) from things he told my uncle on that visit. Other things I learned more recently from his stepson Herbert Rubenstein.

ⁱ "Reportedly", means that I was given this information orally, but I do not necessarily believe it is true. Harley-Davidson was certainly building award-winning racing motorcycles in 1920. But I have found no information to back up the claim that Max Rubin was a German motorcycle racing champion.