
Naomi Warren



Naomi, Poland, 1939.

Born: Naomi Kaplan
Wolkowysk, Poland
September 1, 1920

Parents:
Samuel Kaplan, *survived*
Chasia Salman Kaplan, *d. Auschwitz, 1941*

Siblings:
Mark, *survived*
Elizabeth, *survived*

Husband:
Alexander Rosenbaum, *d. Auschwitz, 1942*

NAOMI WARREN GREW UP IN WOLKOWYSK, a small city in eastern Poland. She was part of a large, cultured, and highly educated family, where Jewish traditions complemented secular pursuits. Her relatives often gathered for memorable meals and lively discussions. Decades later, Naomi still recalls the wonderful aromas that came from her mother's kitchen during the Jewish holidays.

Naomi was finalizing arrangements to attend a university in England when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, foiling her plans. Shortly after, Soviet troops marched into Poland from the east, occupying her hometown. The Soviet presence offered liberation of sorts: since Jews were no longer limited by quota in Polish universities, Naomi could enroll at the university in nearby Bialystok. At the beginning of 1940, she married Alexander Rosenbaum, a young physician she met on the train to Bialystok.

In the summer of 1941, Germany overran eastern Poland and began systematically isolating, interning, and murdering its Jewish population. Naomi and Alexander were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau in January 1942, riding in an airless cattle car that was so crowded they could barely sit down. They were separated when they arrived, and Alexander was sent to the men's camp where he perished several months later. Selected for a labor detail, Naomi resolved to survive.

Despite Naomi's determination, constant work and starvation rations took their toll. Naomi grew so emaciated that she did not recognize herself when she caught her reflection in a window. But she toiled on because she knew that if she stopped, she would be sent to the gas chamber. Naomi endured almost three years in Auschwitz-Birkenau. As Soviet troops approached in the beginning of 1945, she and her fellow inmates were sent to Ravensbruck and then to Bergen Belsen. When the British liberated her there in April 1945, Naomi felt as if "the whole world opened up" for her.

The following year, Naomi came to Houston with the help of her maternal uncle William Salman and her sister Elizabeth Brandon, who had settled in the United States before the war. Naomi's father Samuel had survived the war as an internee in Siberia, and he came to the U.S. at the end of 1946. In 1949, Naomi married Martin Warren and together they established a business importing Danish hams to the United States. They had three children—Helen, Geri, and Benjamin. Naomi and Martin worked together until he became ill and died in 1960.

After Naomi assumed leadership of the import business, it experienced tremendous growth, receiving numerous awards from suppliers and customers. She serves on the boards of Holocaust Museum Houston, the Jewish Federation, and the Southwest Region of the Anti-Defamation League. Among her many honors are awards from the Jewish-American Committee, Holocaust Museum Houston, and the Government of Denmark, which recognized Naomi for her contributions to improving Danish-American trade relations. In honor of Naomi's 80th birthday, her family established the Warren Fellowship for Future Teachers at Holocaust Museum Houston.

“Friendships in camp were very important because you had to have a moral support system and we really supported each other very, very much. And sometimes we would tell jokes and sometimes we would laugh. You had to develop a certain defense system within you to be able to deal with all these problems. We were very scared.”

