

# You Will Be Alright Now, You Are Free

by Lynne Belluscio

If you ever met Eveline Aron, you knew by looking in her eyes that she had a story to tell, that was beyond what most of us could comprehend. About ten years ago, she gave to the Historical Society a collection of her stories. Here are excerpts from one that she wrote in 2001:

To begin this story I first have to tell you that I am a Jew and was born in Berlin. ... I received a phone call from a friend of one of my sisters to get out of Germany as fast as I can. I was to go to a certain travel bureau at Unter den Linden with my passport. I was not to take a suitcase of any kind on the train, just an attaché case with the barest necessities of clothing and no jewelry. Yes, she told me, I was permitted to take my wedding band. Such a shiny, brand new ring was, and my watch, which was also a brand new and a wedding gift, and was the first timepiece I ever owned.

In those days a watch, was a precious commodity and not everyone had one. ... I packed what every German packed when they went away from home for any length of time, a bottle of cold tea, and buttered rolls with something tasty inserted between the two halves, perhaps some cheese or some cold cuts, but it had to be mild so one did not crave more to drink that one carried along. A brother-in-law took me to the station and as the station platform was peopled edge to edge, he stayed with me so he could push me onto the train and I would not be left behind. No, he could not come, as neither he nor his wife nor their child had the necessary papers to go. For that matter, neither did I, but I was one step ahead by having a passport and a visa, and therefore the travel bureau let me have a ticket in these fearful times.

If my friendly phone voice had not pulled a string or so, I would not have had a ticket either. I finally made it to my compartment that had a sign that it was for Jews only. I sat down, and before the train even started to move, people ignored the sign and crowded into this compartment to strap hang. They did not seem to mind to be

in the company of Jews. After a while I got restless and got up and maneuvered it so that an old man could sit in my place. I tried to get to the washroom, but it would have taken me far too long to get there, and I was pushed into another compartment without wanting to go there.

Two well dressed elderly women were sitting there talking loudly in English ... They were completely oblivious what anyone might think of them or how hurtful their words might be. I was facing them and they discussed me as if I were deaf. They saw the birthmark I have above my nose, and they decided that my parents from India, must have had it tattooed so I would never forget that I am an Indian and could not hide the fact.

(Of course Eveline wasn't Indian, but these ladies thought she was.) All I could think of was that they were thoughtless and tactless and I wished that when I get to the border and showed my passport that had a large J for Jew stamped in it, that the border officials will think someone made a mistake and that I am an Indian from India, and not one of these hated Jews from Germany.

When we got to the border, we J passports holders were herded into a large room and the other passengers were on a train that would take them out of Germany, but I was not on that train, and when I saw it leave I was filled with despair and fear to the very end of each hair. There were so very many of us J passport holders. I stood behind a man when the official started to point to people shouting "You" and again pointing and shouting "You" and someone else then got pointed at "You." He kept on doing this what seemed like hours to me, but were only minutes, and I ever so slightly, just slightly bend my knees, yes, only slightly and when he pointed and shouted again "You" it was the tall man in front of me who was pointed at and not I. Would I have been next if I had not diminished myself physically as I already was diminished in pride?

Those of us who were not

pointed at and what I thought of as the first run of the gauntlet, were not herded into another room. Again I thought that this was hopeless for me, but no, this time we were searched and had all our belongings taken away from us. My shiny gold wedding band and my new watch. I minded the loss of my wedding band. Yes, I did. I was even asked what was on my roll and in the bottle, and he liked what I said there was and took it. He also took my attaché case with my extra clothing, and every thing I had.

From there I went to another platform with my passport and only what I wore, and nothing else, not even a coat nor a handkerchief, and got onto a train I was told to get onto, hoping it would be to the other platform that was already Holland, but I was still not sure. I sat in a compartment with three other women and they started talking how lucky we were, that we were on this train. I still had my passport in my hand when two men came on board and asked me to step outside my compartment into the corridor. Fear inundated and covered me and became all of me. I do not know what was said as my ears made this awful noise



and I looked at the nearest man to me, who was in civilian clothes and told him that I just got off one train and they inspected all my papers. He looked at me and then he put his arm about my shoulders and told you I was safe now, I was in Holland. ... Eveline, the stoic, broke into tears and all I could hear him say was the German equivalent of: "There, there, you will be alright now, you are free."

Eveline Aron, passed away on December 26 at the Jewish Home in Rochester, and we are most thankful for her collection of essays. Memorials in her name may be made to the LeRoy Historical Society or to the YWCA in Batavia.

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