



Migration Museum
News Release

Piecing Complex Lives Together from 'Bits' of Paper

The Migration Museum's latest exhibition 'Evidence of Survival: The Impact of World War II in Documents' takes an intriguing glimpse at the extraordinary lives of ordinary people. Through powerful drawings, official documents and personal papers, it pieces together their fascinating stories. What could be to others just 'pieces of paper', these documents were integral to people fighting for survival during World War II and for building new lives in Australia in its aftermath.

The exhibition profiles the experiences of eleven individuals including:

- **Krystyna Luzny** - In the 1940s Krystyna led a double life when she worked as a nurse with the

Polish Red Cross in Warsaw as well as for the Polish Underground Army. She collected, hid and delivered ammunition and weapons used for secret operations. During the 1944 Warsaw uprising she was taken prisoner by the German forces and sent to various stalag camps. At the end of the war she lived in Germany with her fiancé Tomasz, as a refugee. They feared that the Russian occupation forces in Poland would arrest them if they returned home because of their involvement in the Resistance Army. In 1950 Krystyna and Tomasz were finally allowed to migrate to their country of first choice, Australia. They knew nothing about their future homeland and were given little information about it. Krystyna's preparation for entry to Australia was being sprayed with DDT. She kept the document to prove it. Despite Krystyna and Tomasz' qualifications, both were required to serve two-year work contracts doing manual labour.



- **Antonio Giordano** - For security reasons, the Australian authorities detained Italian-Australians as 'enemy aliens' in special internment camps. Antonio Giordano, a journalist who migrated from Naples as a teenager was one of them, despite having lived in Australia for more than twenty years. He was arrested in his flat, his personal belongings were confiscated and he was placed in camps in NSW and SA. He chose to vent his frustration and anger through a range of car-

toons that he completed while spending the rest of the war behind barbed wire. He also produced a newspaper for fellow internees.

- **Steffie Sebastian** - Steffie was born



in France but moved to the German town of Heidelberg with her family as a child. In 1939 Steffie married Karl Golz, but like many marriages of the time, it was cut short by the war. In 1945 Steffie received an official letter of condolence from the German high command informing her that Karl had been killed in action on the Russian front. At the end of the war Steffie wanted a fresh start and obtained an official statement acquitting her of Nazi involvement. She also met her second husband, Hubert Sebastian, whom she married in Heidelberg in 1952. A few months later the couple left war torn Germany, still struggling with its past, for a new life in Australia. After 20 years in Australia Hubert died in 1974. Steffie, now widowed again, was shocked to find that the Department of Immigration still listed her and Hubert as 'Aliens of German Nationality.'

- **Stanislaw Toegel** - Stanislaw was originally a lawyer but made use of his gift for political satire in order to rebel against Nazi oppression. Serving in the Polish army he came into contact with the German forces when he was taken prisoner during the 1939 Battle of Poland. He later escaped from prison but was captured once again during the 1944 Warsaw uprising.

Whilst in prison the second time, he



European migrants boarding sea transport en route to Australia, 1952. Photo courtesy Rosemary Urban.

risked his life by drawing and circulating anonymously a variety of sketches. Self-taught and fuelled by rage, his caricatures emphasised the arrogance, brutality and sadism of the Third Reich. Stanislaw lacked basic necessities such as paper or drawing materials but was nevertheless able to draw an impressive range of caricatures, twelve of which are displayed in the exhibition. Some even reached his enemies, no doubt reminding them that though you can dominate others physically you cannot oppress their minds and sense of rebellion. Stanislaw's work was published for a wider audience in 1946 in two volumes titled *Hitleriada Furiosa* and *Hitleriada Macabra*.



- **Anna and Kalman Kiss** - Anna and Kalman were Hungarians and married in 1942. Kalman served as a lieutenant in the Hungarian army, which was incorporated into the German army.

When Russia invaded Hungary later that year the couple fled because of Kalman's military background. Forced to split up, they hid separately between 1942 and 1945. A pregnant Anna escaped to Austria hiding in the back of a

cart. She suffered from frostbite during the journey and eventually miscarried and would never again be able to have children. Anna and Kalman kept in touch while on the run by sending postcards via family members. After the war, the couple stayed in Austria rather than go home and face hostile reactions due to Kalman's service under German command. Opting instead to immigrate to Australia, they were accepted as Displaced Persons in 1949. Once in Adelaide they quickly secured jobs as manual labourers. They also bought a block of land where they initially had to live in large packing cases from Holden's car factory while Kalman built a house. As the couple was unable to have children themselves, they fostered a number of Hungarian war orphans.

This exhibition conveys the horror of war and its impact on individuals whilst exploring related themes such as identity, defiance, continuing cultures, journeys and 'measuring up' in new homelands. It shows suffering, loss and hardship, but also courage, hope, unbelievable determination and survival.



Antanas Mazelis' passport photo 1945. Passports donated by Vic Mazelis

What 'Evidence of Survival: The Impact of World War II in Documents' exhibition When Friday 22 August – mid February 2009 Where Migration Museum, 82 Kintore Avenue, Adelaide Entry FREE