



Dr. Robert (“Bob”) May

Robert was born in 1926, the youngest of three boys. For several generations, the family owned a dry goods store. A small synagogue served 12-15 Jewish families, and his father served as unofficial cantor.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, antisemitism exploded. *Der Stürmer*, the antisemitic Nazi tabloid, was prominently displayed about town. The neighborhood grocer would no longer sell to the family. Classmates joined the Hitler Youth, and fear became part of daily life.

By 1936, school had become intolerable, requiring Robert to leave. He moved with his Aunt Emma to Frankfurt and attended a Jewish Day School, the Philanthropin. Robert recalls *Kristallnacht* in Frankfurt, November 1938. He and his aunt were warned by a neighbor to get out of their apartment. While wandering the streets, the apartment was ransacked, and Robert’s school and synagogue were burned.

A month later, Robert traveled to Brighton, England, to attend a Jewish boarding school, Aryeh House. This was facilitated by the British Kindertransport, which allowed children under seventeen to enter Britain as long as they could obtain private funds to support themselves. Funding for Robert came from his Uncle Siegmund, who had previously escaped Germany to Holland. Robert recalls his relief when the train crossed the German border. In Brighton, Robert learned English and studied for his Bar Mitzvah, a milestone marked with no family.

Two days before the war started, Robert’s parents left Germany with only two suitcases. They traveled to London and made plans to come to the U.S. In August 1940, amidst U-boat attacks, Robert and his parents left England for Havana, Cuba, then New Orleans. Robert remembers standing by the ship’s lifeboats with life jackets and reciting the *Sh’ma* (Jewish prayer) ... everyone believing they would die! Upon landing in Havana, passengers were placed in prison camps in an extortion attempt. Ultimately released, they arrived in New Orleans on September 9, 1940.

In the U.S., Robert continued his schooling, becoming a medical doctor and serving in the U.S. Air Force. He married his wife, Anita, in 1953, moved to Birmingham, and practiced obstetrics and gynecology for close to fifty years. They were blessed with three children and eight grandchildren.