

## MEET MARGRIT



### BIOGRAPHY:

Margrit was born in 1928 in the city of Cologne, located in western Germany near the Belgian border. The only child of Max (Markus), who worked as a paint chemist, and Alice Rosenberg, Margrit was not raised in a religious household, but her family did celebrate Jewish holidays with her father's relatives. She was a quiet and happy child, though she was frequently left in the care of nannies when her parents were travelling. After Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, Margrit's life began to change as she experienced rising anti-Jewish persecution in Germany. In September 1938, Margrit's parents realized that living in Germany was too dangerous, and they decided to leave the country. After an unsuccessful trip to Belgium, the Rosenberg family settled in Oslo, Norway, in January 1939, after Margrit's father was able to find work there. Margrit and her parents adjusted to a new culture, a new language and a new climate, and then once again had to flee following the German invasion of Norway a year later. They fled to the Norwegian countryside, where they hid for almost three years and then escaped into neutral Sweden with the help of the Norwegian resistance. Margrit and her family survived because of several individuals and groups in Norway who risked their lives to rescue them. Returning to Norway after the war, Margrit met her husband, Stefan, in 1948, and they married the following year. They immigrated to Montreal, Canada, in August 1951, where they raised a family together.

“Despite the fact that I left the country of my birth more than a lifetime ago, in my heart I know that the little German Jewish girl I was still lives deep inside me.”

— MARGRIT ROSENBERG STENGE

Margrit Rosenberg Stenge is a Holocaust survivor who immigrated to Canada after the war and settled in Montreal. You can learn about her experiences by reading her memoir, *Silent Refuge*, or on the digital resource Re:Collection.

Below is some background that will help you understand Margrit's story.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Margrit's family lived in **Germany**, a country located in Central Europe. The Jewish population of Germany was approximately 500,000, which was less than 1 per cent of the country's total population. When **Hitler** and the **Nazi Party** came to power in 1933, they gradually implemented many **anti-Jewish measures** that reflected their **antisemitic ideology**. In general, the German population supported these measures or did not speak out against them. Due to this rising **discrimination**, many Jews tried to leave Germany by obtaining visas to immigrate to other countries. Leaving Germany was difficult because the German government restricted the amount of money that Jews could take with them, and few countries wanted to accept Jewish refugees. Nevertheless, more than half of the Jewish population managed to leave Germany before the start of **World War II** in **September 1939**. Some families moved to nearby countries like Belgium, and a small number went to the Scandinavian country of Norway, which had a very small Jewish population. Despite the presence of some Nazi collaborators in **Norway**, Jews who lived or fled there as refugees were safe until the **German invasion** in **April 1940**. Starting in 1942, several hundred Jews in Norway were deported to **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, where nearly all of them were killed. The remaining Jews went into hiding or fled to the neighbouring neutral country of Sweden with help from **underground resistance movements**. Between **131,000 and 180,000 German Jews** were killed during the Holocaust, including several of Margrit's relatives.

