

“Journal”

By: Faith Heinle

Our Lady of the Elms

Elaine Fippin, Instructor

Words: 996

May 10, 1939

Hamburg, Germany

Dear Diary,

Departure is nearing. We are awaiting our visas for entry into Cuba. Momma and Papa are packing our belongings. All our friends are hoping to escape from the men who carry rifles. I'm excited to see the world.

Liesel

May 10, 1939

Germany

In three days, our family departs on the St. Louis and sets sail to Havana in hopes of escaping this war. We nervously await our visas. As I talk to others, it seems they are in similar situations. We cannot buy clothes for the journey after the \$150 tickets. I spend all my time with preparations. Hopefully life will be better soon.

Heidi

May 12, 1939

Germany

Dearest Diary,

How frightening life has become! The boat leaves tomorrow. Momma says we are fleeing, but Papa says it's a new start.

Baking bread makes the apartment smell delicious. Last night in darkness we unburied our coffee can of precious items that will buy goods later. The day is late and we wake early. I will write to you from the boat!

Liesel

May 12, 1939

Hamburg, Germany

In just a few hours, we set sail. Maximillian has heard that 937 Jewish refugees will be on the journey with us. If we escape the Third Reich, so many worries will end. I do not believe Liesel understands what is happening, but she seems to be in good spirits.

Heidi

May 14, 1939

St. Louis

Greetings Diary,

Yesterday we climbed aboard this big ship along with many other people. So far, I have heard passengers discussing plans for the future; it is intriguing. Papa has kept me by his side to keep me safe. I hold onto him for fear of losing him. Having Momma's bread has provided me with a sense of home. Hopefully we reach Cuba soon.

Liesel

May 15, 1939

St. Louis

Hasty entry today. The ship is more crowded than I anticipated, yet no one seems sick. Bread is beginning to become stale but edible.

Heidi

May 27, 1939

Cuba

Dear Diary,

After weeks of being at sea, we have reached land. The area is pleasant, but there is a panic among us. So far only a few people have been allowed to go ashore. I hope my turn comes soon. The other night, a man became loud and wanted to go for a swim. I wanted to join him. I still wonder why he wanted to swim in the ocean, for it was so cold.

Liesel

May 27, 1939

Cuba

After two weeks on the St. Louis, we have anchored in Havana. Initially, joy erupted over the passengers. Now, panic fills our midst. Once we arrived, Cuban police were harsh. After negotiations, twenty-two passengers were released. Why them and

not I? This question haunts me. A few nights ago, a man attempted suicide. Life boats with patrol are watching us now so that no others reach such an end. I refuse to give up hope.

Heidi

While awaiting in the harbor, one more man committed suicide. When news of this incident reached the United States, many Americans urged the government to take in these refugees. Telegrams were sent to the Cuban government full of anger over refusing the Jews entry. Both countries refused access.

June 2, 1939

St. Louis

Dear Diary,

Pardon my absence. After long weeks full of cruel words, harsh officers, and tragic deaths, our captain has made the decision to leave Cuba without entry. This is quite disturbing but we will persevere.

Heidi

June 10, 1939

Europe

Dear Diary,

After turning around, we have again landed. I am confused about where we are. Papa says we will have a home soon. This whole journey has been puzzling. Mama seems to be losing her spark.

Liesel

June 10, 1939

Belgium

We have made it to land once again; after losing so much hope, the spark is returning again! There is a rumor of entry into Belgium tonight. I hope so. Sending prayers to God at this time of disturbance.

Heidi

On June 10, Belgium admitted 200 passengers. On June 12, the Netherlands took 194 more.

Finally, Britain and France accepted the rest.

June 12, 1939

The Netherlands

Diary,

Just a few days ago, Belgium took many passengers in. My family tried to get off but were shoved back. Today, we heard the news of more passengers possibly getting off. Hopefully we do.

Liesel

June 13, 1939

The Netherlands

My dearest Journal,

Yesterday the St. Louis passengers received news of possibly admittance into Belgium. My family was approved! God is good.

Heidi

June 30, 1939

The Netherlands

Dearest Diary,

Today is my eighth birthday. It is the first in my new home, the Netherlands. The town seems beautiful. It is much quieter than my old neighborhood and smells of sweet flowers. One of my friends from the journey is in the apartment above us and we visit often. I do not remember the last time I saw Papa so happy. Our prayers have been answered.

Liesel

August 13, 1939

The Netherlands

It has now been a month in the place I can safely call home. We just celebrated Liesel's eighth birthday; it was such a splendid time. The Wunderer family is living above us. This is perfect for Liesel. Maximillian is employed in a shoe store. This job brings in enough for us to make ends meet. I feel like we were meant to be here.

Heidi

After a few months in the Netherlands, the Dayson and Wunderer families were approved entry into the United States. Full of mixed emotions and nerves about an advancing army, the families took a leap of faith. In May of 1940 the Netherlands were invaded. The journals were lost for years but recently found.

January 29, 2018

Akron, Ohio

My name is Josephine Wunderer, granddaughter of Maximillian and Heidi. They have passed away but I have uncovered this journal. To honor my family, here is my story:

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