

Margot Heuman

(February 17, 1928 - May 11, 2022)

This essay was written by Pink Triangle Legacies Project Intern Ayelet Kaminer and is based on the important research of Dr. Anna Hájková and Margot Heuman's own oral history testimony. Thank you for your work in preserving queer history.



Margot Heuman as a teenager.
Stolpersteine NRW

Margot Cecile Heuman was born in the German village of Hellenthal. She is the only lesbian Jewish Holocaust survivor who bore testimony, which she did in an interview with historian Dr. Anna Hájková. In 1937, Margot's family moved to Bielefeld, where she grew up with her younger sister, Lore. They received both a secular and religious Jewish education. She cherished memories of skiing, biking, and spending time with her cousins and grandfather. Her father owned a dry goods store and her mother was a homemaker.

Margot's father worked for the organization *Hilfsverein für deutschen Juden*, which was a German Jewish organization dedicated to improving the political and social condition of Jews. Because of his work with the organization, the Heumanns were among the last Jewish families to be deported from her town. On June 29, 1943, Margot and her family were deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto.

Like almost all children, Margot and Lore lived in a youth home in Theresienstadt. Margot quickly acclimated to the social environment of the camp. Margot saw her parents daily. Her youth home was also where Margot met a Viennese girl: Edith "Dita" Neumann. The two became "inseparable" and affectionate early on in their relationship. At night, they shared a bed and quickly fell in love.

In May of 1944, Margot and her family were sent by cattle car to the Theresienstadt Family Camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Margot remembered feeling "terrible...very lost" at the prospect of leaving Dita. But, amidst the hunger and horror of the camps, Margot was reunited with her beloved Dita, who arrived a month later. Shortly afterward, the two girls were transferred to another camp. As Margot was leaving, she recalls her father blessing her with a Jewish prayer. "It was the first time I saw him cry," Margot stated. "I didn't realize I would never see my parents again."

At the next camp, Dessauer Ufer, Margot waited in line for processing, uncertain whether "real showers" awaited her. After showering, she looked back and saw Dita still waiting in line. "We knew by then that it was okay," Margot recalled, "so I lifted my dress up, I showed her, 'I have a dress but no underwear!'"

They faced homophobia from fellow prisoners, and Margot recalls her experience of the camps as harrowing. “We didn’t have enough clothing, we were hungry, but we were alive...and I was with Dita.”

Margot and Dita were transported to three different satellite camps of Neuengamme, and ultimately ended up at Bergen-Belsen. After the British Army liberated Bergen-Belsen in April 1945, Margot was taken to Sweden to recover from typhus. In 1947, she traveled to the United States to visit relatives. Dazzled by the vibrant lesbian life of New York City, Margot decided to build a life there. She also changed her surname from Heumann to Heuman.



Margot Heuman, 1994.
USC Shoah Foundation

Margot felt she “owed it” to her parents to have children. She married a man and started a family. At the same time, Margot maintained an affair with the wife of a neighbor. “I’m a very good actress,” Margot stated, regarding her ability to hide her queerness for much of her life.

At 88, Margot came out to her family. “I always knew,” Jill Mendelson said. Despite Margot’s openness, Margot’s queer identity is absent from much of the available archival materials. It is thanks to Dr. Anna Hájková that Margot’s testimony has been preserved without censorship.

Margot lived as an openly queer woman until her passing in May 2022 at age 94. She and Dita remained extremely close. “We went [to] each other’s children’s Bar Mitzvahs, children’s births, weddings. I was her matron of honor.” She credits her relationship and their mutual love for one another as the reason for their survival. “Because of my caring for another human being... we remained people.”

Sources & Further Reading

Penelope Green, “Margot Heuman, Who Bore Witness to the Holocaust as a Gay Woman, Dies at 94,” *New York Times*, May 27, 2022.

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Anna Hájková, “Das wundersame Leben der Margot Heumann,” *Tagesspiegel*, January 2, 2021.

Anna Hájková, “Between Love and Coercion: Queer Desire, Sexual Barter, and the Holocaust,” *German History*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2020), 112-133.

Margot Heuman, “You Just Survived because You Had To,” oral history transcript, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany. February 21, 2013.

Margot Heuman, Oral history interview. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. October 23, 1992.

Read more about Margot Heuman [online](#) and watch a video on [YouTube](#). For more LGBTQ+ Stories from Nazi Germany, visit pinktrianglelegacies.com/stories.