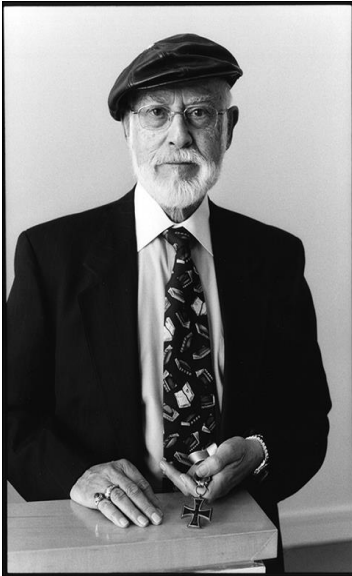




ROLF GOMPERTZ

“Because after all is said and done, there is only one answer left: Love and Reconciliation.”

Rolf Gompertz was born on December 29, 1927, in Krefeld, Germany, and grew up as an only child to Selma and Oscar Gompertz. His father Oscar was a veteran of the First World War and worked as a traveling silk salesman in Krefeld, the silk manufacturing capital of the country. His mother worked in a department store, but after she married, she left her job to raise her family. Growing up in Germany, Rolf experienced the rise of antisemitism firsthand. Propaganda cartoons expressing hatred for Jews began appearing in popular newspapers and magazines. Some of Rolf’s earliest memories are of signs that read, “No Jews Allowed,” plastered all over areas he frequented, including swimming pools and restaurants.

The rising antisemitism reached a climax on the eve of November 9, 1938, a night that would become known as *Kristallnacht*, or “the Night of Broken Glass.” On this night, German soldiers destroyed Jewish-owned stores and synagogues and ransacked Jewish homes and businesses. Thousands of Jews were arrested and deported to concentration camps, and nearly 100 people were murdered.

Fortunately, Rolf’s family’s home was spared due to his father’s action. When the soldiers stormed into their home, his father showed them the Iron Cross he had received during the First World War, causing them to leave without breaking a single dish. However, not all families were as fortunate, and many Jews were left homeless. His father invited a neighboring family whose home had been destroyed to move into the second floor of their apartment.

Prior to *Kristallnacht*, Rolf’s family had petitioned relatives in the United States for help in acquiring the documents necessary to emigrate to the U.S. However, due to strict immigration quotas in the U.S., they had to wait four months before receiving their visas. Prior to their departure, German inspectors came into their home and examined the boxes to make sure that no items that had not been approved and paid for were packed. They also forced the Gompertz family to pay a tax for the “privilege” of leaving Germany.

In March 1939, Rolf and his family traveled to Hamburg to be interviewed by the Consulate's Office before finally being granted passage out of Germany. They boarded a freighter/passenger ship bound for California and traveled for seven weeks, through the Panama Canal and up the coast of Central America. They finally arrived in San Diego, where upon landing on American soil, the entire family knelt and kissed the ground. They continued to San Pedro, their final destination, where they arrived on June 11, 1939.

Rolf finished high school in Los Angeles before joining the U.S. Army, where he worked in Washington, D.C as a translator of German documents. After being released from the military, he enrolled in UCLA and acquired both his bachelor's and master's degrees in English. He then began working for NBC, where he spent 30 years and eventually rose to the position of director.

Rolf married Carol Brown, and they are blessed with three children – Ron, Nancy, and Philip, and six grandchildren, two girls and four boys. He taught for thirty-two years at UCLA Extension, and Rolf is the author of five books, which he considers to be his answer to Hitler, *Kristallnacht*, and the Holocaust.

Rolf was a respected speaker at the Museum of Tolerance. He inspired thousands of students, educators, and law enforcement professionals with his message: always remember our common humanity, and never allow such a tragedy to happen again.

Rolf Gompertz z"l passed away on December 19, 2022, just days before celebrating his 95th birthday. His memory will always be a blessing at the Museum of Tolerance.

In the Jewish tradition, when someone passes away, z"l is added after their name. In Hebrew, z"l stands for *zichrono/zichrona livracha*, which means "May his/her memory be a blessing."