

'From Dachau To D-Day': Remarkable Story Of Remarkable Life

From Dachau To D-Day
Werner Kleeman with Elizabeth Uhlig
Marble House Editions
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BY LINDA J. WILSON

Sunday, November 9 marked the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht—"the Night of Broken Glass" when hooligans and many ordinary citizens in Nazi Germany with the tacit consent and in many cases the encouragement of police and civic authorities smashed the windows of businesses and homes owned by the Jewish population. It was a grim sign of things to come.

Werner Kleeman, the son of a prosperous Jewish grain merchant in the village of Gaukönigshofen, had begun to experience discrimination against Jews several years earlier, when he was, in his words "thrown out" of school at age 14. As persecution under the Nuremberg Laws enacted soon after the Nazis came to power worsened steadily, the Kleeman family—Werner, his parents, three brothers and sister—began to look for ways to leave the country that had been their homeland for generations.

Days after Kristallnacht, before arrangements to leave could be completed, Werner

Kleeman was imprisoned and then sent to Dachau, one of the first concentration camps built during the Nazi regime. He was literally snatched away from death when a cousin in the United States to whom he had written asking for assistance agreed to sponsor him so he could come to the U.S. Kleeman left Germany for England on Jan. 10, 1939. In November 1939, a year after Kristallnacht, he sailed for America and in August 1942, he was drafted into the U.S. Army.

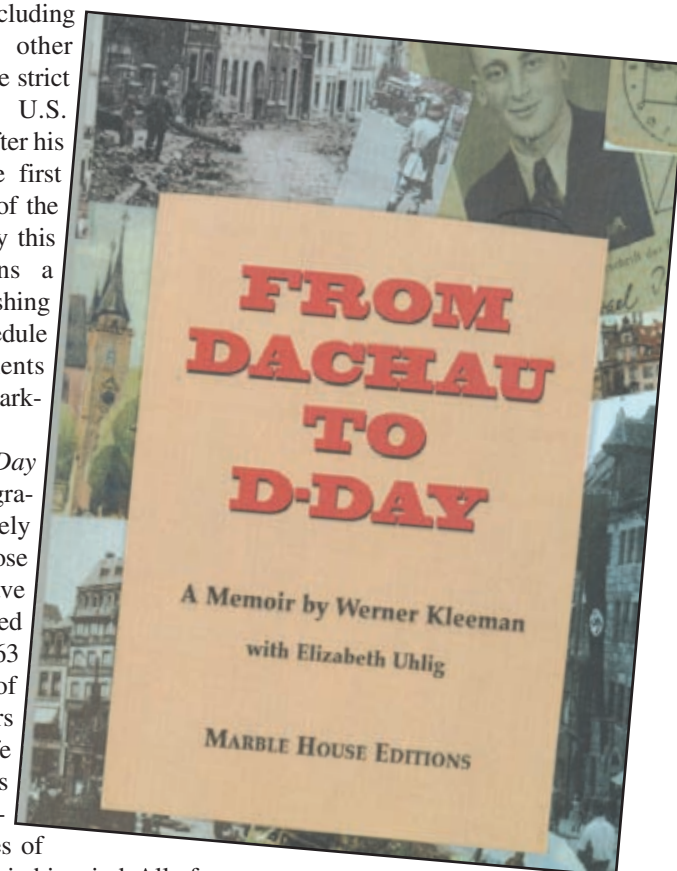
Kleeman's story of his experiences in Germany, England and America and his rise in enlisted ranks in the Army that eventually led to his landing in France on D-Day, June 6, 1944 and his role in the occupation government in his former home town form only one part of his enthralling memoir, *From Dachau To D-Day*. His Army career led to his acquaintance with General Theodore Roosevelt, the son of former President Theodore Roosevelt, author Ernest Hemingway, a young man named Jerry Salinger with aspirations of being a writer and a host of other individuals, all of whom make this a fascinating story written in a lively and entertaining style.

Kleeman's life did not stop when the war ended, of course. He returned to America, married, had two daughters and carved out a career as a supplier of interior

decorating materials, including hospital curtains and other items in adherence to the strict specifications of the U.S. Navy. Nearly 40 years after his wartime experiences he first began to recount some of the stories of his life. Today this nonagenarian still runs a business from his Flushing home and keeps a schedule of speaking engagements where he relates his remarkable story.

From Dachau to D-Day is a memoir, not a biography, and as such, freely admits that there are loose ends. Some people have appeared and reappeared in the course of the 63 years since the end of World War II; others came into Kleeman's life only once in the 89 years he has been on this planet but still left memories of themselves that are fresh in his mind. All of them have become part of the fabric of his truly amazing life.

The book is written in a conversational style that allows, even calls for, colloquialisms and occasional grammatical lapses. These do nothing to detract from the book's readability—or its importance. *From Dachau to D-Day* was published by Marble House Editions in 2007, but the significance of the 70th anniversary of the



Kristallnacht atrocities warrant its being brought once more to the public's attention. We unreservedly recommend this book as a look back at one of the most significant spans of time in the 20th century, a remarkable account of a remarkable life, a warning of what can happen when the darkest elements of the human spirit are unleashed and a hope that no matter what happens, people of good will can prevail.

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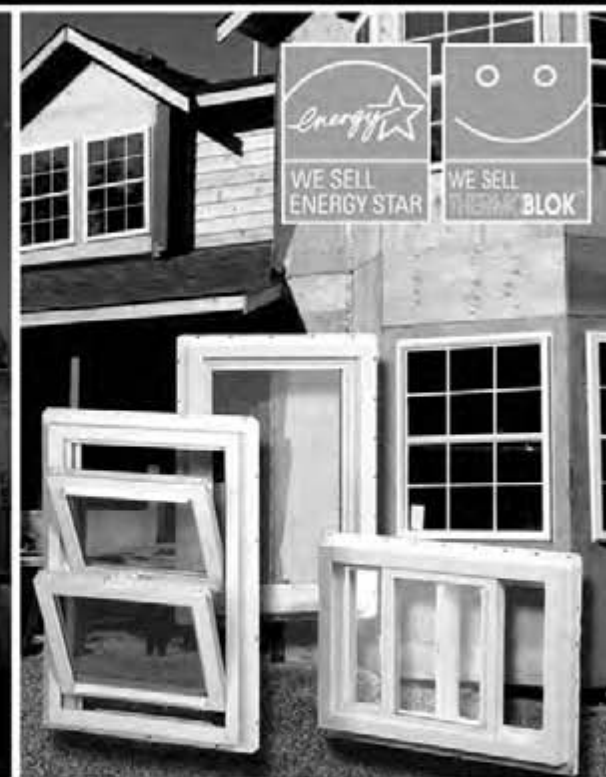


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