

# GAD BECK

***"I mustered strength from the individual moments of happiness that I was always able to wring out of life, no matter how dire the straits."***

Gerhard "Gad" Beck was born June 30, 1923 in Berlin, Germany. His father was Jewish and his mother converted; he grew up celebrating both Jewish and Christian holidays. When the Nazis took power, he was considered a "mischling" (individual of "mixed" ancestry). In 1943, Gad and his father were seized by Nazis, and his mother was among a group of Gentile wives who participated in the famous Rosenstrasse protest. One of the few successful peaceful protests, several civilians descended on the detention center en masse, the majority of them Gentile women, and demanded that the Nazis release their husbands and sons. The protest lasted several days despite threats from the soldiers that they would shoot into the crowd if they didn't disperse. The protesters were resolute, and eventually the men were freed.

After his release, Gad helped to form Chug Chaluzi, an underground Zionist resistance youth group that provided underground support to Jews living illegally in the city. At one point, he disguised himself in a Hitler youth uniform to rescue his lover Manfred Lewin from a deportation center, though Lewin refused to abandon his family. The Lewin family was later deported to Auschwitz and murdered.

Despite the Nazi regime's persecution of gay people Gad believed his homosexuality assisted his resistance activities: 'As a homosexual, I was able to turn to my trusted non-Jewish, homosexual acquaintances to help supply food and hiding places.'

In 1945, just before the end of the war, Gad was betrayed by a Gestapo spy and taken to a German concentration camp. He was soon liberated by Allied forces. Gad moved with his family to pre-state Israel (Mandate of Palestine) in 1947, and spent the next several years working to help other Jews move there as well.

In 1979, Gad returned to Germany, where he was appointed the director of the Jewish Adult Education Center. Through his actions as director of the Center, such as welcoming sexologist research and organizing meetings for gay singles, he was a significant figure in helping to break down the homophobic barriers that continued to exist in Germany well after the war had ended. He was widely described as open, sweet, and extroverted.

Gad died in 2012 at age 88, six days before his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday. He was survived by Julius Laufer, his partner of 35 years.

***(On life as a gay Jew): "God doesn't punish for a life of love."***

