

GAD BECK

b. June 30, 1923

d. June 24, 2012

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

*“Even today we are not liberated.
We are just beginning.”*

He was openly gay during a period when the subject was taboo.

Gad Beck was a Holocaust survivor who helped gays and Jews escape the Nazis.

He was born in Berlin to a Jewish father and a Protestant mother who converted to Judaism. In 1943, Beck and his father were seized by the Nazis. The Gentile wives protested and convinced the Nazis to release the prisoners. Beck joined an underground movement to help Jews escape to Switzerland. He relied on non-Jewish gays to help hide the Jews. Beck was not deported because he was not considered fully Jewish.

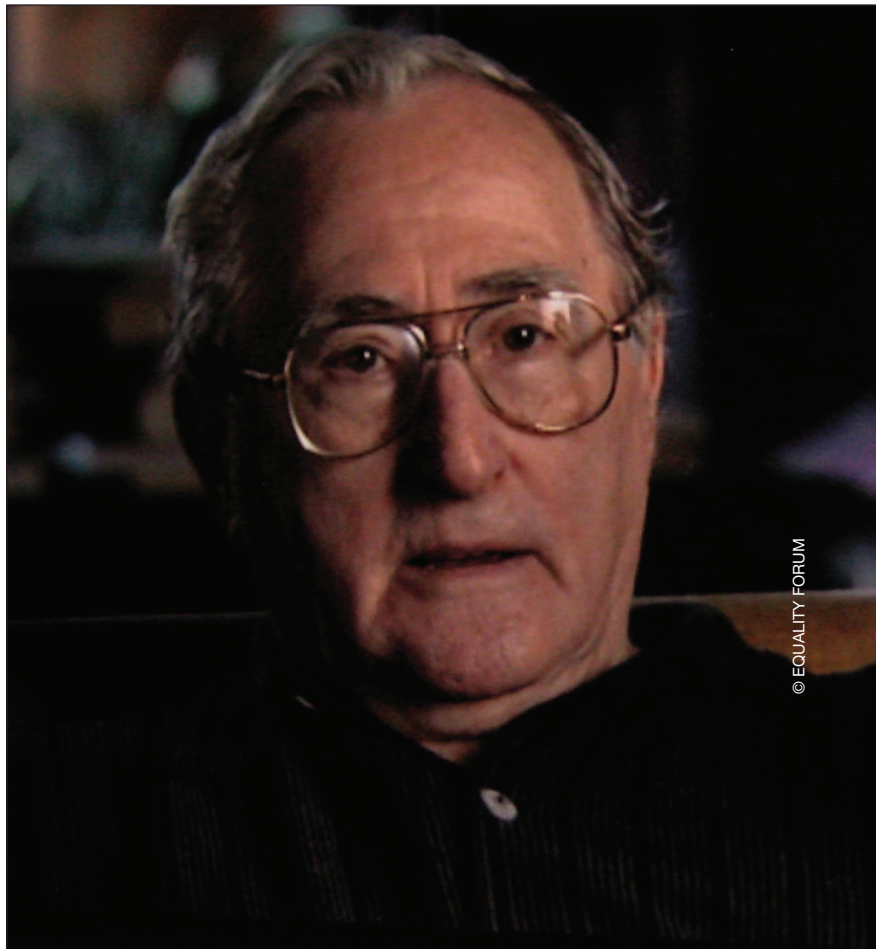
When the Nazis captured his lover, Manfred Lewin, Beck tried to save him by impersonating a Hitler youth. Lewin refused the opportunity to escape because he did not want to leave his family. Lewin and his family were deported to Auschwitz, where they were murdered.

Beck led a Zionist group called “Chug Chaluzi” (Circle of Pioneers). The organization helped shelter, feed and transport Jews to safety. In 1945, he was betrayed by a Jewish spy for the Gestapo and sent to a holding camp in Berlin. He was freed when the Allies defeated the Nazis.

The German government continued to repress homosexuals. Although gays were liberated from the Nazis, they were subject to incarceration because homosexuality was criminal. Beck helped gay German Jews escape prosecution by taking them to Israel. In 1979, he returned to Germany and continued his activism in the gay and Jewish communities. He was the director of the Jewish Adult Education Center in Berlin.

In 2000, Beck’s autobiography, “An Underground Life: Memoirs of a Gay Jew in Nazi Berlin,” was published. In 2006, the film “The Story of Gad Beck” was released. Beck was featured in “Paragraph 175,” an HBO documentary about gay Holocaust survivors.

Beck is survived by Julius Laufer, his partner of 35 years.



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