

## PAUL SCHWARZBART

Paul Schwarzbart was hidden in a Catholic school.

*"Our legacy is to teach about the Holocaust as a tribute to the men and women who risked their very lives to make our survival possible. We must never forget."*

Paul Schwarzbart was born in Vienna in 1933. He enjoyed a loving and sheltered family life with his parents Friedrich and Sara until the Anschluss and Kristallnacht.

In the winter of 1938, Paul and his parents smuggled themselves into neutral Belgium hoping to get entrance visas to the U.S. In May 1940, just before the arrival of German troops, Paul's father was arrested by the Brussels police as an undesirable Austrian. He was sent several concentration/labor camps in the French Pyrénées from which wrote close to 100 letters to Paul and his mother who remained in Belgium living under stringent German occupation. In 1942 Friedrich was deported to Auschwitz and died after three brutal years.

In Brussels, with his mother's consent Paul was taken by a member of the Jewish Resistance and placed in the Home Reine Elizabeth, a Catholic boys' school in the village of Jamoigne s/Semois in the Ardennes Forest near Luxembourg. Paul spent two years there living as a Belgian Catholic with 125 boys. Known as Paul Exsteen he became an altar boy and cub-scout leader and was eventually baptized in secret shortly before the liberation in 1944.

While in hiding, Paul agonized over the whereabouts of his parents and extended family. He returned to Brussels and found his mother and together they began the wait for Friedrich's return not knowing that he had died in 1942. Paul and his mother reapplied for visas to emigrate to the U.S. and following an obligatory three-year delay they emigrated to the United States settling in San Francisco in early 1949.

Paul graduated from the University of California and had a long career teaching French at high school and university levels. He wrote and spoke extensively about his wartime experiences. Paul married and had two sons, who stand beside him in his portrait.

In 1988, Paul discovered that the Home Reine Elizabeth, under the strict guidance of Major Émile Taquet and his wife Marie had been a secret haven for 87 Jewish boys and that he had not been the lone Jew in hiding there as he had believed at the time. He searched the Belgian archives and eventually unearthed his father's tragic camp history as well as those of other family members.