

CHARLOTTE CHANEY

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



Charlotte Chaney (born Charlotte Ellner), daughter of Harold and Elsie, was born on October 15, 1921, in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Charlotte had an

older sister, Beverly, and they were raised in a traditional Jewish family. During the Great Depression, the family moved to the Bronx, in New York City. Both of her parents worked to make ends meet. Charlotte lived with an uncle in Florida for her senior year of high school.

Charlotte did not have money to go to college, and in February 1940, she began training to become a nurse. When she was in nursing school, she met Bernard Chaney. Bernard was in the army and was stationed in Camp Bowie, Texas. In 1943, Charlotte volunteered to be a nurse in the Army Air Corps. She trained in Montgomery, Alabama, and was then sent to Panama City, Florida. Charlotte and Bernard wed in August 1944. By that time, Charlotte was a nurse for the Army's ground forces. Charlotte became a member of the 127th evacuation unit, which was stationed at Camp Bowie.

In January 1945, Charlotte's unit arrived in France. They were in the Reims and Neufchâteau area for about two months. The unit then headed to the south of France, where she and a GI went and found Passover supplies for Jewish service members. The unit then moved towards Germany.

On May 3, 1945, Charlotte's unit arrived at Dachau, a recently liberated concentration camp in Germany. Charlotte and the other members of her unit set up an evacuation hospital at Dachau. The survivors they treated were malnourished, and many had tuberculosis, typhoid, or dysentery. The death rate at

the hospital was about 100 – 150 people per day. To stop the diseases from spreading, the patients and the hospital staff had to be deloused with DDT, an insecticide. Citizens from Munich—which was located about 10 miles away from Dachau—were forced to dig ditches and bury the dead.

Charlotte was the only Jewish nurse in her unit, but she worked with Jewish doctors at the field hospital. She remained at Dachau for three months; she then returned to the United States. She and Bernard had one daughter and two grandsons. This interview took place in Hollywood, Florida, on May 23, 1995.