

Ellen and Herbert Gezork

Ellen Gezork, a "young" centenarian at age 101, died April 6, 2015. Ellen was born in Berlin, Germany. Her life goal was to become a medical researcher, however the Nazi regime ended this dream.

Ellen met the 'true love of her life' in Berlin, in 1934. In 1937, Ellen emigrated to the United States to marry Herbert Gezork. Her first day in the U.S. was her wedding day.

Herbert's first teaching job in South Carolina ended dramatically when he flunked an important football player who failed to study. At that time, Ellen was pregnant with her first child, Peter. Three more children were to follow. Herbert was already well respected in theological circles and he eventually became the president of Andover Newton Theological School until his retirement in 1965.

With Herbert's death in 1984, Ellen began her new life as a widow, determined to live life to the fullest and with purpose. The matriarch of the family, she was the epitome of gentility, composure, courage and strength.

Ellen tutored chess at Beachland Elementary, wrote poetry, and was a proud co-founding member of the Vero Beach Chess Club. Family and friends were her greatest joy. She was an inspirational person, strong willed, compassionate, and gracious. She lived independently until her death.

In addition to her husband, she was preceded in death by her three sons, Peter, Tom and Jim. She is survived by her loving daughter and an extended caring family and beloved friends.

Herbert Johannes Gezork was born June 15, 1900, in Insterburg, Germany. He graduated from Baptist Divinity School in Hamburg and in 1925 became pastor of First Baptist Church in Berlin, where he was ordained December 8, 1927.

He did graduate study at the University of Berlin from 1925 to 1928 and continued his doctoral work in the United States at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. After receiving the Ph.D. degree at Southern Baptist in 1930, Gezork returned to Germany to become General Secretary of the German Baptist Youth Movement. He held that position until 1934, when the group was dissolved under Hitler's government because the Baptist organization was in direct opposition to the popular Hitler Youth organization. During this period he published two titles, both of which were banned by Hitler's government: an essay, "Unsere Jungerschaft und unser Zeugendienst im Blick auf die Gottlosenbewegung" (1932) (*Our Discipleship and our Witness in View of the Ungodly Movement*) and a book, "So Sah Ich die Welt" (*That's How I Saw the World*) (1933).

He escaped arrest by coming to the United States in 1936. Gezork became a citizen of this country in 1943. After World War II, he traveled to Europe on three different occasions on behalf of the U.S. government, twice for the Defense Department and once for the State Department.

Before his association with Andover Newton Theological School, Gezork taught at Furman University (1937-1938) and Wellesley College (1939-1943). He became Professor of Social Ethics and Christian World Relations at Andover Newton in 1939. In 1950 he became President, a position he held until his retirement in 1965. He was an active preacher and lecturer in retirement. Herbert J. Gezork died October 21, 1984, in Vero Beach, Florida.