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Sally Perel – “Hitler Youth Solomon” celebrates 95th birthday

- The victim of Nazi persecution from Peine is an ambassador for respect and tolerance
- His autobiography “I Was Hitler Youth Solomon” is world-famous
- Perel was an apprentice toolmaker at the Volkswagen Vorwerk in Brunswick
- Since 2013, the Volkswagen plant at Brunswick has awarded the “Sally Perel Prize for Respect and Tolerance” for exemplary initiatives of school students

Wolfsburg/Tel Aviv - Sally Perel is celebrating his 95th birthday on April 21. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, he will be spending his special day alone at home in Givataim, near Tel Aviv (Israel). “Above all, I hope that I will be able to travel again soon,” said Sally Perel over the phone. He gained international fame through his autobiography “I Was Hitler Youth Solomon”. He is not content with doing nothing. Sally Perel is used to being on the road and meeting young people so that he can “vaccinate” them, as he says, at discussion events, to make them immune to nationalist, racist and anti-Semitic ideas.

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Sally Perel will be 95 years old on April 21



Jupp alias Sally (fourth from left) with other apprentices at the Volkswagen Vorwerk in Brunswick



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Sally Perel grew up in a Jewish family in Peine which was persecuted and driven out of Germany by the Nazi regime. He survived the Nazi period under the assumed identity of Josef Perjell, initially with the German army and then as a Hitler Youth and apprentice toolmaker at the Volkswagen Vorwerk preparatory plant in Brunswick. For more than 30 years, Perel has been telling the story of his survival as “Hitler Youth Solomon” to an international public on tours with readings from his autobiography. Nowadays, he is an ambassador for tolerance and respect. He unmasks false ideals and calls upon people to respect each other. He is committed to peaceful coexistence.

Since 2013, the VW plant at Brunswick has awarded the “Sally Perel Prize for Respect and Tolerance” for exemplary initiatives of school students. Two schools in the region from which he came are already named after him, the Sally Perel comprehensive school in Brunswick and the Sally Perel secondary school in Meinersen.

Surviving under an assumed identity

Sally Perel was born in Peine in 1925 and had a happy childhood. When he was 10 years old, anti-Semitic persecution forced the family of six to emigrate to Łódź in Poland. Following the German invasion of Poland and the forced relocation of the family to the Jewish ghetto, Sally had to flee again. Together with his brother, his parents sent him to the Soviet Union, where they lost contact with each other. Sally



spent a few months in an orphanage before fleeing again in June 1941 following the German invasion of the Soviet Union.

During his flight, Sally was captured by German soldiers. With considerable presence of mind, he buried his documents and claimed to have lost his family in the chaos caused by the war. The soldiers believed in the new identity which he had quickly assumed as the ethnic German Josef Perjell. As "Jupp", he became an interpreter for the soldiers as he spoke German, Polish and Russian. To provide him with a foundation for his civilian life, the commanding officer of the company decided that Jupp should complete an apprenticeship in the German Reich.

In the summer of 1943, "Jupp" came to the Volkswagen Vorwerk preparatory plant in Brunswick, where he started an apprenticeship as a toolmaker. The objective of this Nazi prestige project was that future skilled workers should also assume leading roles in society. They therefore also received ideological and pre-military training. He had to conceal his identity from the other apprentices, who were envious of his experience at the front. "I survived in the skin of the enemy," says Sally Perel. "Disguised with a false name and the Hitler youth uniform". During the daytime, he was Jupp, but at night he remembered his true identity, his parents and siblings; he did not know whether they were still alive.

On April 22, 1945, Perel experienced liberation by the US troops as part of the Volkssturm. He had so completely adopted his false identity that the liberation itself was insufficient to liberate him from Jupp. "The enemy's skin was bonded so strongly to me that it took some time before it was removed," says Perel. "But I am still grateful to Jupp to this day because I would not have survived without him."

In 1948, Sally Perel emigrated to Israel, where his two brothers were already living with their families. His parents and his sister had been murdered in the Holocaust. In 1959, he married his wife Dvora and they had two sons. He soon realized that the story of his survival was problematic in Israel. He therefore mostly said that he had survived with false documents. "That was not the whole truth but it was certainly not a lie," he says with a twinkle in his eye.

It was only in the mid-1980s that Sally Perel started to work intensively on his life story and wrote down his memories of the era of persecution. His story became famous throughout the world in the 1990s as a result of the film by Agnieszka Holland, "Europa, Europa", which won a number of awards and was nominated for an Oscar. In Germany, the film was known under the title of "Hitlerjunge Salomon" (Hitler Youth Solomon). Sally Perel has regularly given readings on tours especially in Germany and Israel. Recently, he visited South Africa and Japan.

Note to the editor:

This text and photos can be downloaded at www.volkswagen-newsroom.com. For further information on Sally Perel please download our publication "Surviving in Fear" [here](#).

About the Volkswagen brand:

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