

-TITLE-IRENE OPDYKE
-I_DATE-MAY 2, 1987
-SOURCE-CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-
-IMAGE_QUALITY-
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

1:00 We have to encourage, stand together. She's going to speak to high school kids.

2:00 Talking about her book and movie.

3:00 She needs to get an agent, not the rabbi that's been helping her.

4:00 Jeanie, her daughter, named after her sister. Born September 25, 1957 in Phoenix, Arizona.

5:00 Jeanie first learned about her mom and the war by hearing bits and pieces from relatives and friends. In the 70's, a group of college kids called to ask her mom what she thought of the US. She told them that freedom is priceless, she helped to change the minds of some of those kids about their negative attitude toward the US.

6:00 Irene- another Holocaust is possible if we don't start mingling together as a people. We must get rid of the ignorance and prejudice that still exist.

7:00 She was threatened by Neo-Nazi's after the movie was made. They called her "Jew lover" and said " we will fix you."

8:00 Jeanie never got the full story of her mom until after she was married.

9:00 Jeanie is very proud of her mom and what she has done. Irene didn't tell Jeanie because she wanted the chance to be an American and raise her daughter in America. To learn and work in the USA.

10:00 Jeanie's best girlfriend as a child was Jewish and sometimes she would celebrate holy days or go to services with them.

11:00 She first opened her mouth about the Holocaust to her daughter when she heard derogatory remarks about Jews, to teach her.

12:00 As a kid, she thought that maybe Jeanie wouldn't understand, she wanted to forget what had happened at that time. Now she talks to little kids about the Holocaust. She felt Very-alone when her daughter got married.

13:00 When she read in the paper "the Holocaust never happened", that's when she got motivated and angry enough to speak out.

14:00 Jeanie has told her kids all about grandma and the Holocaust. Both parents loved Jeanie very much and wanted to give her everything. They traveled all over the US and she opened up to new people and ideas, she saw a lot. There were always friends and politicians around the house. Her dad was a politician. She was influenced by many things.

15:00 They often talked about politics. Irene did everything for her daughter, they were always together.

16:00 As the child of a rescuer she feels proud and amazed by her mom's courage.

17:00 She supports her mom in any way possible, but doesn't get very involved herself. Irene believes Jeanie doesn't know own capability, if she was in the same position she would have done the same thing.

18:00 Jeanie had a late awareness of her mom's accomplishments, read her mom's novel and thought it was a great experience to read about her own mom. One day Irene was at Jeanie's house and there was a woman there who didn't know her. Her 7 year old grandson said "That's my grandma and she saves lives." Irene felt so proud, her grandchildren want to get involved.

19:00 Irene's mom was the stronger influence. She wasn't very educated, but was quick-minded. She never turned anyone away from help from her doorstep, humans or animals. There were 5 daughters in the family and they all helped out.

20:00 When Irene first came to America she didn't speak English. She was overwhelmed by everything she had to do. That's why her daughter never saw the other side of her mom. She came over in 1949, before Christmas. She was already established in the US before Jeanie was born.

21:00 One lady came over for dinner and ended up staying for 14 years. Vivian Bennet, she was almost blind and had no one to take care of her.

22:00 Irene took care of her, and many times she took care of Jeanie. She had only \$1500.00 and the stuff in her suitcase. She was basically homeless, but very intelligent.

23:00 When Irene found out that, she wanted her to stay with them. She stayed in their big house for 14 years. Then they moved and dad wanted to get rid of her, they would have no more room for her.

24:00 Irene signed the contract and would have to get rid of Vivian, but she didn't have the heart to tell her.

25:00 The next day the realtor told her there was another apartment available with an extra room, Irene was so glad because Vivian could stay. Vivian had none, she would have killed herself if she was kicked out. She died about 2 years ago.

26:00 Jeanie resented Vivian. She was very smart, but unattractive and scary.

27:00 She was always there. She knew about everything, it got on Jeanie's nerves. She knew her as Mrs. Bennet, but who was she? She watched Vivian die, clinging to Irene and felt guilty.

28:00 Irene misses her. They needed each other. She started the book, from childhood.

29:00 Publishers liked the book but it was from childhood. Needed to be revised. Vivian was fighting her illness, but her mind was still crisp. She wanted to be alive so she could pay her for writing the book.

30:00 Irene said " Vivian, I love you, you don't owe me anything. Please Erase the book". She couldn't bear to watch her suffer. She died that night.

31:00 Jeanie just started working recently as an accountant. Mrs. Bennet always stayed at home. Jeanie saw Vivian as a freeloader, but was glad she was there for her mom when she got married.

32:00 Irene wanted to show Jeanie that we have to reach out, give something of ourselves in order to learn. Jeanie has learned this, she brings lost, druggie kids into her home and offers them help and a place to stay. She has learned a lot from them.

33:00 Irene believes in God, she was raised Catholic, but doesn't have the patience to memorize the Scriptures, like her daughter , but Jeanie isn't Catholic. Jeanie never understood if mom was Catholic or Jewish.

34:00 They only went to church on holy days and some Sunday's when Jeanie was growing up.

35:00 Grandchildren and Granddad walk in, talk, and leave.

36:00 Jeanie's family lives there too, now there are 3 generations that know about what Irene did. Irene trusts that her grandkids have inherited her compassion and desire to help.

37:00 Jeanie believes her kids would get involved if any form of a new holocaust arises. They're willing to speak out.

38:00 Jeanie wasn't baptized, so she could make her own decision about religion. She went to temple sometimes with her friend.

39:00 In Poland there was so much anti-Semitism. But Irene was not raised in that way. She had a different group of friends.

40:00 She knew some people who were anti-Semitic, but Irene says they were in every nation.

41:00 For 150 years Poland was occupied, carved and divided by Russians, Prussians and Germans. You can't say that the Poles were anti-Semitic. There was large amount of Russians, Prussians, and Germans living there in Poland, as well.

42:00 During the war, Poland was occupied by Russia. The people were under siege. Many Poles saved Jews and were not recognized. There were pogroms in Poland but they were Russian, German and Ukrainian. Poland had a huge Jewish population who where invited to come to Poland by the king for their skills.

43:00 She has problems with SHOAH because it-didn't show anyone in Poland who helped.

44:00 SHOAH doesn't show everything, especially for children. It has an important message but for Irene it was biased.

45:00 There many Jews who were not helped.

46:00 Irene says you cannot blame the whole nation.- It happened on Polish ground because Poland was under siege.

47:00 Many times Irene came into contact with reverse anti--Semitism, against Poles. A woman from the United States told her that she hated Poles, but she doesn't know Poland.

48:00 This is why Irene is so motivated to speak. She says that we have to reach out and standtogether. That is the only way. The new generation must create unity for the job that lies ahead. Jeanie knew of her mother's capabilities and wasn't surprised by what she did. Jeanie typed Irene's book and was so moved by the things she hadn't heard before that-she cried.

49:00 The Germans wanted to burn the Jews and liquidate the Poles so that there could be no witnesses to the crime. Jeanie couldn't believe the courage of her mother to even move to the United States. A place totally unknown to her. Two years ago, Irene went back to Poland to see her sister. Everyone was crying.

50:00 Irene went to Auschwitz with her sisters. After so many years there i s still the smell of death. There were barbed wire gates, gallows, torture chambers, ovens and bath houses.

51:00 Sometimes it took a half an hour to die. Irene was helping during the war but never saw this. She was filled with horror.

52:00 She felt ashamed by the humanity of the 20th century. Ashamed of a genocide of this proportion.

53:00 Irene wonders what will happen next time. This is a question that each of us has to answer.

54:00 Irene is speaking before A Rotary Club of 100 men and 1 woman. The listeners say that she gives them a lot to think about.

55:00 When Irene was in the Ukraine she was in some commander's house. His house had a 3 block fence. His main responsibility was to deliver ammunition and guns, and provide transportation for the German army.

56:00 There were about 300 Jewish workers there. Under his command he had officers, secretaries, and German soldiers. Even when She wanted to help them she was racing with time. They were supposed to be liquidated the next day.

57:00 She hid them in the laundry room, at night she transported them to the major's room and hid them in the attic above his bathroom. There are so many stories and things she cannot put into words in a matter of 15 minutes. Some of these people are alive and living in Israel or Europe.

58:00 Irene saved many, but remembers there were about 200 Jews hiding in a forest, she brought them food and shoes.

59:00 Once while walking down the street in New York a man came to her and said "You know, you brought me shoes in the forest."

1:01:00 Irene says "If people need, you help, that's all."

1:02-05:00 pictures.

1:06:00 Irene is mad about the Neo-Nazi's. She has no regrets and would go back again if it would help her kids and grandchildren. As a young girl she was given the courage by trusting and believing. She wanted to fight her memories of WWII but it is important for her to know that she helped and to teach and tell. "WE aren't alone, we need and rely on each other. Success is by reaching a few.

1:07:00 She believes that the path was already chosen out for her. She can't really imagine what life would be like without that experience.

1:09:00 Her sister Jeanie is younger than her. She felt responsible for her. Her sister and daughter look so much alike. She sees her sister in her daughter. She was beautiful.

1:10:00 A Gestapo man once spotted her sister when she was working in a cafe, he wanted to meet her. Irene wanted to discourage him so she told him that Jeanie had the beginnings of TB.

1:12:00 The last time she saw her sister was her trip to Eastern Europe. From 1943 to 1985 she had not seen her sister

1:13:00 pictures
.END.