

-TITLE-RUTH DANNER

-I_DATE-

-SOURCE-JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

-RESTRICTIONS-

-SOUND_QUALITY-

-IMAGE_QUALITY-

-DURATION-

-LANGUAGES-

-KEY_SEGMENT-

-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-

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00:00:00 Intro remarks. My name is Ruth Danner.

00:00:30 My father's name is Jacques; my mother' Augustine. Was born Dec. 9. 1933.

00:01:00 My father was born in March, 1898; my mother, 1899. I had one sister and she was born in 1922.

00:01:30 Before the Germans came, it was an easy life. Started school in 1939.

00:02:00 My father was Protestant, and my mother very Catholic. My father started with the Brothers in 1925.

00:02:30 She fought against it a long time, until 1929.

Q: What caused them to change?

A: My father, the Protestants has the Bible but no explanation.

00:03:00 My father wanted to know what it meant. My mother, by the example of my father, his faithfulness.

Q: Did your parents understand that if Hitler had come into France

00:03:30 they would have been persecuted because of their position against the war?

A: Yes, because they had been prosecuted in Germany since 1933. And we lived in the Eastern Part of France.

00:04:00 Sometimes Germans came over the border to take Watchtowers from us. We knew about the persecutions.

00:04:30 My parents helped get publications to Germany. The Germans came and put the Watchtower inside their clothing so they could go through the border.

00:05:00 We even had one-day assemblies that the German came to. The purpose was to give them religious instruction.

00:05:30 There were about 25 people in my congregation.

Q: How were you prepared in case something happened?

A: My sister was 12 years older than I, an adult. But I had to attend school and say, "Heil Hitler".

00:06:00 They taught me that Jehovah wanted his Witnesses to be neutral. They taught me to have confidence in Jehovah no matter what happened, because sometimes I would come home from school, and the Gestapo had taken my mother.

00:06:30 So when I came home there was no one there. When the Germans came in the students had to salute the flag. Say "Heil Hitler"

00:07:00 Sing the national anthem with the right arm up . The Witnesses couldn't do that because they were supposed to be neutral.

00:07:30 In the Bible, Acts, Chapter 4, it is said 9 Pauses) don't know how to say it in English. Searches for the word.

00:08:00 She asks for the camera to stop. Because it says that salvation only comes by Christ, not by humans. So we couldn't say, "Heil Hitler," which means salvation to Hitler.

00:08:30 Every morning before I left for school, my mother prayed with me. Yes, it was a hard time, but my parents showed me the way. Anytime they asked me questions, I was supposed to pray very fast.

00:09:00 My sister was an adult but I had to go to school and my parents prepared me. In giving me religious instruction.

00:09:30 They taught me to have confidence because sometimes I came home and they had taken my mother.

(Note: From : 00 to here appears to be a repeat. In fact, the interviewer now says, "Let's go back to when you started school," which he has said once before.)

00:10:00 Q: What was it like before the Germans came into France?

A: They had to salute the flag, say "heil Hitler, and sign the hymn. Repeat of 7:00 and 7:30 And repeat of next minute as well.

11:00:00 I was supposed to pray very fast so the answer would be as Jehovah wanted.

00:11:30 Do you remember what it was like when the German armies came into France?

A: They put down the stores and peered out. Everyone knew that when they came it was a catastrophe for France.

00:12:00 Q: What happened to you and your family?

A: My father was supposed to go in the civil army to help out when the bombs came.

00:12:30 I was supposed to sew soldier's uniforms, I was at school. We all refused to cooperate. That brought pressure on the whole congregation.

00:13:00 My father was in charge of the congregation.

Q: What did he do to prepare the congregation for this?

A: Often he made home visits. And we had study sessions at home. Often I played outside and watching if the SS came.

00:13:30: When I saw someone suspicious, I warned them and they put away the Watchtowers.

Q: When did the Germans come into France.

A: 1940

00:14:00 NOTE: The repeat begins here once again. I will time things until we get back here. About 4 1/2 minutes.

00:18:30 Q: Your parents and sister refused to engage in any activities for the war. What began to happen?

A: They would search the home for literature, for pictures.

00:19:00 We were very well known as Jehovah's Witnesses. Sometimes they picked up my father for a few hour. Sometimes my mother or my sister.

00:19:30 My father was a machinist. He worked in
That's part of the Lorraine area.

00:20:00 Some helped us. Some were not sympathetic. Some people put pressure on us because they were pro-German.

00:20:30 The woman who lived under us, then she saw someone who looked like SS, she knocked.

Q: Tell us what happened with your father

00:21:00 Jan. 28t, 1943, they picked us all up together. Half past three in the morning. I remember it.

00:21:30 We were not surprised because we had been picked up and threatened so many times. Every day we said. "Together today, we will see about tomorrow."

00:22:00 How were you able to carry on your Bible education work until 1943?

A: Everything was underground. We had to be very careful about to whom we spoke.

00:22:30 We had no pictures, no Watchtower, nothing, so then they came here, they would find nothing. My father travelled a lot to bring the Watchtower to people.

00:23:00 The Publishers were busy copying the Watchtower by hand. When the Germans came, they put us on the train, and three days later

00:23:30 we were with people from around. Just one family was J.W. He became a J.W. in 1941; his wife and children were not, but they picked them up as J.W.

00:24:00 The lady came out as a J.W. Some coaches were for sitting, some were standing. It was very crowded. The people were mainly political prisoners.

00:24:00 We were taken to Now its Poland. Once or twice a day, WE GOT FOOD.

00:24:30 It was very terrible for my parents. A child doesn't know. I told my mother I was hungry, but she had nothing for me.

00:25:00 I didn't realize what was wrong. My father kept telling us to be faithful, that if one of us should die, we should expect resurrection.

00:25:30 If we did not meet again in this system, we would meet in the next. He had a very strong faith. The new world that we were praying for - that His will would be done on earth.

00:26:00 Q: What happened when you arrived at your destination?

A: They put us in the camp, Kochlevitz (ph). It was not a concentration camp, just a deportation camp.

00:26:30 They had in mind to make us Germans. Two months later, they gave my parents papers to sign that they were no longer J.W. My father refused. They said we could never get back to France.

00:27:00 During that two months, my parents had to work. My sister always worked with my mother.

00:27:30 I had to work too - to sew. I was 9 years old and taking care of the vegetables; preparing the food. Since we were J.W.

00:28:00 sometimes, the SS sent me out to do the shopping for them. Did not wear special clothing or a purple triangle.

00:28:30 Did you see the mistreatment of other prisoners?

A: All the prisoners were political prisoners.

00:29:00 They had no German mind. Since Alsace-Lorraine was with Germany as one country, the young men were supposed to do military service. But they did not want to. So their parents kicked them out.

00:29:30 So the parents were with us. There was one other family in the camp, J.W., and we were able to get together for Bible readings.

00:30:00 We were not able to get information from the outside. But we did have one Bible. The Bible was in German. My parents always spoke German, because they went to school before 1918, when their area was in Germany.

00:30:30 They spoke very little French; they could understand some.

00:31:00 We talked some to the other people about religion, but they were busy getting food and getting out of the camp.

00:31:30 They were not interested in the Bible. At the beginning, we did not expect to get out, maybe at the end of the war.

00:32:00 Later, we got sheets from the Watchtower, and it said that after the war, there would be work to be done in preaching. There would be no Armageddon. We knew the Germans were losing the war. So we waited to get out.

00:32:30 We learned this from some prisoners who made a radio and they told us what was going on outside. My sister and my mother had very hard work to do.

00:33:00 Building work. And it was very cold there. My father was sometimes mistreated. Because I refused to say "Heil Hitler." They said he was forbidding me to say it but that was not true.

00:33:30 He gave me the reason, but it was between Jehovah and me. It was my own decision. The Germans couldn't believe that a little girl would make that decision as a matter of faith.

00:34:00 But they punished him. He would say, "If you say Heil Hitler, you are still my girl" it is not between us but between you and Jehovah.

00:34:30 Q: Was it hard for you to stand up to those men?

A: I was very shy. and so it was difficult. But I always prayed to Jehovah before answering, so I could do it.

00:35:00 Q: It was said that German soldiers took advantage of women prisoners.

A: I know it happened in some camps, but not in mine. In the concentration camps, not where we were.

Q: What about the food?

00:35:30 The food was very bad. We had the peel from the potatoes, not the potatoes. There was no meat or vegetables. And they cooked the bones of horses.

00:36:00 The boiling water, they put in our food. I was always Hungry. To drink there was something like coffee, very bad coffee.

00:36:30 Q: The living conditions?

A; It was different in different camps. In most of them, there were two levels of beds, and about 50 or 60 persons in a room.

00:37:0 Families slept together. They had stoves with wood for heating.

Q: Who was closest to the heat?

A: Those who arrived the first.

00:37:30 Q: Who was put in charge of the barracks?

A: The SS themselves were in charge.

00:38:00 There were always Germans in charge.

Q: What kind of clothing did you have?

A: What we brought with us. We had overcoats because we were picked-up in January.

00:38:30 Q: Did you see any people being persecuted, beaten?

A : Some people were beaten because they were not neutral. Sometimes, when they met the SS, they sang patriotic songs.

00:39:00 Other people celebrated Xmas, but not the J .W.

Q: What did you think of these people celebrating the birth of Christ but mistreating people?

00:39:30 There whole way of life showed that they were not Christians. It was very hypocritical. There were no clergymen in the camp.

00:40:00 Because we refused to sign, they told us we would never more come out of the camp. They told my father that he would go to Auschwitz because

00:40:30 that was the closest to where we were.

Q: Did you or your family ever experienced health conditions because of improper food or the conditions you were under?

00:41:00 Since that time I have had poor health. Calcification of the bones.

Q: Did you see other prisoners having health problems?

00:41:30 Yes, many had health problems. But they were disappointed. They weren't deported on account of politics. They say the world is not any better, so they suffered in vain. But we suffered for our faith.

00:42:00 So, while we had health problems after, we never regretted the camp experience. When the war was coming to an end, and the Germans put us out of the camp, we had to walk 249 kilometers by foot.

00:42:30 Where we were, the Russians were coming, and the Germans wanted to empty the camps. It were American soldiers who rescued us.

Q: How were you and the others able to walk that distance?

00:43:00 It was very difficult. Those who could not, they were shot on the street. So we walked.

Q: What was going through your mind as you were walking through the western part of Germany?

00:43:30 We knew that freedom was close and that we would get home. We came into contact with the American army.

00:44:00 They treated us well. By that time we were the only J.W. left. It was on April 20 that we were liberated and May 5th we were home. It went very fast.

00:44:30 Q: Did the American soldiers asked why you were in the camp?

A: No, they were not interested. They did not capture the German soldiers. They were all gone.

00:45:00 Where did they all take off, what town?

A: I think it was Steinfeld (ph) . It was half past two in the afternoon.

00:45:30 We were in a mine, because of the shooting. All the prisoners were there. And at half past two, the American soldiers came.

00:46:00 The Americans knew we were prisoners. Everyone was very thin.

00:46:30 When I got home, we were very happy that we had survived and none had made a compromise. We had been faithful to Jehovah. We had nothing material, because even the clothes we had, the neighbors had given to us.

00:47:00 So we had nothing. And my mother said to remember that we had nothing, but that we were back, all four.

00:47:30 We had no home anymore because the Germans had given away all our furniture. A neighbor gave us a place to live. Day after day

00:48:00 the neighbors began to bring back pieces of our furniture. We didn't get everything back, but it was nice.

00:48:30 After about two months to take care of his health, my father started working where he was before.

Q: What did other people think of your family?

00:49:00 They appreciated that we came back. One man, who was not interested before became a J.W. because he was impressed.

00:49:30 Q:What happened to you after the war?

A: I went back to school. Then I wanted to pioneer but my father didn't want me to.

00:50:00 I wanted to go at 14, but he said I was too young. So I waited until I was 17, then I became a pioneer = serving God full-time as a missionary.

00:50:30 Teaching what is the hope of mankind. Where all that is bad will be destroyed.

Q: I understand that you went to a school.

00:51:00 Yes. There I got instruction for being a missionary. I was hoping to go to someplace like Africa, but I was sent back to France.

00:51:30 I was very happy working in Paris. My father died in 1978, and my mother in 1980. Shows pictures.

00:52:00 Shows an identification card given her father after they came back. It showed, in addition to his picture, the dates of his stay in the camp,

00:52:30 and date of their liberation. Shows a picture of her mother taken about two weeks after they came back.

00:53:00 Shows a book that tells what happened to the Shtruto (ph) Which was in Shilneck (ph) in the eastern part of France.

00:53:30 It was published 20 years after the liberation from the different concentration camps. It mist have been 1965.

00:54:00 Q: What do you think about people who say maybe these things were exaggerated?

A: They are wrong. When you went through it, you knew it was bad.

00:54:30 They refuse the facts, because it happened.

Intr: We want to thank you.

.END.