

Mrs. Waterford, can you describe for me how rescue efforts worked in Holland, and in general, how that differed from other countries in Europe, if you can address that.

I know only after the war what had been. During the war, you practically knew nothing. Because if you went to the places who we are supposed to know, you heard only you should do what you are told.

We don't know what happened. We do not know what you should do. We cannot give you any answer because we do not know. This was the official.

What private was, I don't know when that did start. But I do know that very close friends of ours came to us in 1942, in July, that they had a few people who offered to help. And this was a small church of blue collar workers who made it their goal to help Jewish people who needed it to take in their homes as far as possible.

And we naturally said we do. Because by that time, we were already ordered to come to the train on the 15th of July, 1942 at night. And we brought-- would be brought east-- that was on this letter-- to work.

So this didn't-- we didn't like this sort of expression it was supplied. And the Jewish-- the Jewish people who were in charge of that didn't help us at all. So we were very happy to accept the help of this group. And they did help us. We have-- the first thing go to those people.

What did you and your husband decide to do? Explain to me about how big your family was, and how much you knew of what was going on, what fear you had, and then what you decided to do with your child.

Now, we had no idea. And like everybody else, we only knew since we came originally from Germany, that practically all the people who had left in Germany, Jewish people, were not there anymore. They were taken-- they were taken by train, or whatever, and nobody had ever heard anything from them when they were gone.

And nobody knew where they were. So this was already enough for us to decide that we would do anything, and take any help. The first thing we did was that my husband discussed it with a doctor if he could get his-- now, I don't know the word anymore-- removed.

Appendix.

Yes, his appendix removed, even the appendix was fine. And when he woke up in the hospital, there were more lost appendixes. So this would-- since we had to be at the 15th at the station, that was a few days before. So we had time with the doctor thing at-- doctors telling what he had done to get two weeks time, and then we should come again.

So with this two weeks, we were using because I had heard that the Jewish council was hiring people for all kinds of work. And all those people were on a piece of paper at that moment free of deportation. Our family was my husband, our little girl, which was at that time four years old, and me.

So we decided to do all that. And I went around and I got a job, which made us all available not to go, and we could stay the time-- there was no limit. So my husband came home and we thought maybe with a job I have that we would be helped at the time. I worked at old people's home in the kitchen.

And I worked every day. And I cooked for 40 people. I liked it. I liked the work, and it seemed to be safe. And one morning after about six weeks of working, I came at 7:00 and the doors were open, and all the people in there were gone.

It was a terrible, terrible frightening. Rooms-- every room was looked for probably for valuable things. I don't know. When I saw what had happened that most of the people who couldn't walk and were taken and must have been taken in stretchers, I didn't believe any word any more. I ran out and ran home, and I knew what we had was not safe, the piece of paper.

Describe to me what you and your husband decided to do with your daughter.

This same man who came just-- I talked about before, which came just after that has happened to us, he told us that our friends, and our friends told us, also. They had a daughter. She was about five, six months older than ours. And we were-- the mother of the child, we were friends from school in Germany. So we all knew each other very well.

And they had told us that they had made the decision and the child is already gone. And he and she and his mother who lived with them was gone. They won't be going that one of the leader into wherever they were safe, where they're supposed to be.

We never-- we didn't hear anything. And that was the right way. And this man said, we will try that for you, too, if you want to give up your child. Because three of you cannot be in one part. You have to give your child somebody.

And the leader, he said he had somebody as we found out much, much later, that was his sister, this man's sister. That was Joe Fisch. He's still alive.

And that's where they took our child. And there was very, very helpful. They got the bed and the toys and clothes and everything there already, that when she would come, it wasn't all foreigners, strangers.

And then he was trying to look for us for a place, and that took a little longer, maybe a month, until we found the first place to go so-called underground. It was never underground. It was always in an attic.

Describe what your daughter knew about hiding, and how difficult it was for you to part with her.

My daughter didn't know she was hiding. As I said, she was not five yet. And we-- my husband and I had more than a year ago decided since we knew of children transports from Germany to England, maybe that would be one day possible. So we would give away our child any place we knew where she would be welcome. And why should she maybe has to die when she can live a good life.

We have family in the United States who were only too happy to take her. So we decided that we-- that to make it to her-- for her heart not to kiss her anymore, not to have her too close physically. Both of us did that.

And that has helped her. Because when we had the time that she had to leave, and we told her-- she was an outgoing child. She would go and visit a couple and they have no children, and they would so much like to see her. And she was-- she always like to visit people.

So when those other people came to talk to her, they had-- when they came on a Sunday afternoon, and we didn't know their name. We didn't know where they lived. And she saw them and we told her this was the friends who would like you to see where they're living. See, they have no children.

And she went with-- we took-- we went with her to the streetcar and we said goodbye like that. No kissing, nothing. That comes afterwards. And this is very personal, and it's ridiculous to say that it's difficult because it never changes. It never changes for all those years. Because it was '45 before we saw her-- before I saw her.

But you rescued her.

In that way, I rescued her, yes. We rescued her-- my husband and I, we did so. There was no arguing about it. This was just one way to do if we want her to live.

I'd like you to describe for me what it was like to live in hiding. How restricted you were, how you felt, were you afraid.

To be in hiding? I don't think that anybody can be trained for that. Because every situation, since you are in people's homes, is different.

So the first place where we were was a bungalow. We had downstairs, a young couple with two small children was living. And on the second floor, the mother of one of them. And she was alone and she cooked for us.

And we had to bring beds, metal beds. We had to bring them there because they didn't have beds for us, and we were in the attic. This was the situation.

We came, and they were kind of primitive people, but they meant well. And since they got some money, that was helping them, too. But we would have stayed. There was really no connection to talk about with this is old-- now, I say old lady. She wasn't as old as I am now.

And she wasn't-- she wasn't interested that we were there. But it came then, though, [INAUDIBLE] that when there was a holiday and there was a little special meat or so available, that we didn't even get it. But that was not important. Important was that all of a sudden, they said to Joe Fisch that they cannot stand it anymore to have those two people around, and he has to get us out the same day and not the next.

So Joe-- that was-- Joe was a hard working man. He did this. He found places sometimes. Not the right ones, and we only could stay there a day or two because the people who were hiding us got scared. Because there were so openly in the newspapers, he who hides Jews will be treated like the Jews. It didn't say a word about killing or anything.

Because at that time, we did not know what was happening. We did not know. It was known to the British and the American governments, but we, the people, did not know.

And we came to places where we were very short, some of them maybe was four weeks, and then they got scared. And some of them was very, very lovely people. But they couldn't work anymore they were so much afraid. Until we got to Harlem.

And we were there in a bungalow where there was a mother with three teenage daughters. It was nice and roomy building, and we had in the attic a small room. We were there for a long time till the end, until we were found.

And we were very-- you could be alone in our room. And my husband for the time we lived there, more than a year, he was writing 19 books all with a pencil. And in school-- this was blue school-- blue school papers.

I have all those things, but there is not too much interest in there because he wrote only about what he would wish for the country, Holland. He felt very close to Holland. And the whole world, and the human-- the humans, what they would do when the war was-- when the war would be over.

And he was sure already for years that Germany would lose. And even when it looked uncertain times that it was impossible because they were, practically, in all of Germany, in all of Europe, every country besides two or three, we are not under the Germans. But he said the Germans will lose.

And from this view out, he had articles about economics, about religions, about anything you can think of-- philosophy, form of philosophy. And how it was that the people who were helping us to get to the place that every two weeks, one came and he had a whole list of books he wanted for his writings. And they all came every two weeks when we also got our food slips.

How much the food was for any person in Holland. How much they could have. And all the people who were underground were supported and were helped with those coupons.

Because every month, the places where there were-- where the people could pick it up themselves, they broke in and then took out what they needed. And it was every month another place. And they never found who did this for more than two years. That's really remarkable.

And the woman who had us there, she needed it. Otherwise, she couldn't have fed us at all. Because everything which

was edible, everything, needed a piece of paper and a coupon.

At that time, I was still smoking. And I was making from one cigarette, I think, three new ones. And so-- and I-- we got a package, I think-- my husband didn't smoke so it wasn't very nice of me that I was smoking in that little room. But I thought at that time, I couldn't live without smoking.

And he was writing, and on the second floor was a woman who lived there with her mother. She was a seamstress, a very nice, very nice person. And I sat very often downstairs with her because she very seldom had clients. And when she knew when they would be coming.

And I learned how to make, I think, seamless. But that was about all. She didn't let me do so much.

What were the rescuers like, and why do you think they did it?

What do you mean?

People who hid you, what were they like? Were they all different kinds of people, and why do you think they did it?

No, the others who were before we were in Harlem did not know where we were, naturally. They were glad to be rid of us. The people in Harlem, this was a woman who told anybody. And I heard from the top floor always when people came with anything to do in the house that she told them that her husband had left her when her youngest child was a baby. The baby was in the meantime 15 years.

But she told various, she had a hard life. I'm sure she did. She did it probably to get some money, but we didn't have to pay, I mean, outlandish amounts. But we paid about what she's spending a little bit more. So it was-- it was a very decent. But she-- but she needed it.

Was she afraid-- what was she risking by doing this? And was she afraid--

No. Everybody thought-- everybody-- and you can read about that the people who were hiding the Jews would be treated like the Jews. So they were scared. And the more things got bad for the Germans, the more they got against who were to take people in.

Political, we didn't talk much with-- with this woman. There was not much interest. And then it was that she was a poor woman, and she had that house and she didn't belong to her. It was rented.

But she made something on the rent from the people upstairs, and she got our money. And so she could get her children to-- at least to high school.

Did you know about persecutions in this period of time while you were hiding?

No. We heard one story, and that was the saddest of all this. Joe Fisch, who had at that time, I think, three children and his wife was pregnant, he took people into his house when he had no other place anymore, and they wouldn't have-- they wouldn't know where to go.

And he had a man at that time-- I think that must have been in July 1943, late '43, that he had a man in his house with all the other people and the children that he was from the Spanish war on the black list of the Germans. And he had for a few days no place to go. He was from Holland, originally.

And so he took him in. And that night they came and emptied the whole house. The neighbors took the children. But everybody else who was there, there was two people I knew very well. I had sent to Joe Fisch, if he would help them.

They were there because they had no-- he had no other places. And that man and he and his wife, and they were brought to-- I don't know, they were brought to a person, I know. But when they found out that his wife was pregnant, they sent

her home.

And the others, Joe came to the house and said from that, he lifts--

OK. Paint me a portrait of this man, Joe.

Joe Fisch was like very many people are in Holland-- white, blond hair, tall, husky guy. And this part of Holland where we found the friends, and we found most of the places where we could hide, and where he brought some of his people, and that was the churches. He was-- he was a carpenter starting out.

But when I met him, he was already in connection with childrens-- all kinds of difficulties with childrens and the children. And he was-- he had some-- a completely different job above his way what he originally went in schooling. And so he was-- this church was quite liberal.

And-- but they were not very rich. And he was not very rich. But he was a friend. He and his wife came very many times at night when you're not allowed to be on the street, and took things which were needed for our daughter, or which we would need when we can go to the first place, beds and linen, and all those things. We couldn't carry anything when we were going.

When we were going, we had to take off the star and go by train. And that's a very obvious, very difficult because they were obviously looking for a younger man, that my husband was never asked for any identification because we had none. And everybody had to have identification.

Joe was, for the people he helped, more than a father-- more than a father. Because really, he had the best things in his mind what should be done. And when he was arrested, his best friend took over like nothing. In this best friend was the gardener of the City of Zan--Zandarn.

And he had a library, and he brought-- what we found out afterwards-- the books my husband wanted. He all had them at home. He had a tremendous library, and a very, very highly intelligent man.

As I said, he came every two weeks. And we were looking forward when he came, because he brought with him his-- what he thought about what was going on. And he was also listening to the British BBC, which was forbidden, because they would kill you. And then you'd know that you have left the radio on that station.

And he told us everything-- everything-- what he heard. And he was the first one who told us in July 1944, that by that time 1 and 1/2 or 2 million Jews had been killed in Auschwitz. We had no idea. We had never heard the name of Auschwitz.

And I think practically all the people who had nothing to do with the Nazis or whatever didn't know. So-- but he told us that. That helped us later on to get a better picture when we were arrested where we would be going.

How many people did Joe rescue, do you think?

I don't-- you see, only the ones I know. I'm sure he had many, many more. How many? It's Doris and it's me and it is the friends in-- I introduced him to who had three daughters, all three daughters-- no. Yeah.

The third-- the oldest daughter was in his house when they were all arrested there. So the oldest daughter up to that point, she was-- she was with him, and she was taken to Bergen-Belsen where she found her mother. And the mother and this daughter came along at least six months before the war was over and a changing of prisoners of Germany and Jews.

Why do you think Joe was a rescuer?

Now, he-- at first, he made us open the place to go and hide. We wouldn't have known anybody.

Why do you think he did it?

Oh, I know why, because he loved people. He was basically very, very good man. There was nothing wrong in any way to complain ever. He was a fantastic, hardworking man and loving man.

Was he risking not only his own--

Oh, sure.

--but his family?

His family, too. But he's not the only one who did that for us. The family would have suffered already in the first days when they were arrested. But nothing would have happened to his wife and nothing did.

But he would-- you don't know when you do that. But I think he didn't even think about. We have other friends who risked everything.

We did not come from this place, from him. They didn't know each other. We brought them together, and the two of them really did get more groups and different kind of people.

The other man had all our belongings. The most important thing were our books. And he had clothes. The first thing you would need if you have nothing. That's why my husband said, if he takes it, it will be right.

Into so he had-- he went and-- went when Joe was-- Joe was arrested and was gone, he came in by himself to go every two weeks to my daughter, too. And in some way, he made our daughter his-- a wonderful man.

Did you have-- did you get news about your daughter while you were in hiding?

Not personally. But everybody was there at least every two weeks sometimes. Yeah. Yes, we know. We got those pictures they had made. But we did not want any other contact. We had no contact only really before she was gone.

And we did not want her ever to feel that she's homesick for her parents. She should forget it. And she did.

That-- this is maybe one-- some of the reasons that she maybe forgot it for a long time, our relationship. And this is what we did. Because she would not call it that we saved her life at that time and much later. But what she called it abandoned.

And she's not the only one. There's a very big literature about children who were brought by their parents to other people. They always said that they were abandoned.

Tell me about getting arrested.

Oh, that came very suddenly and unexpected. Because the-- more than a year we were in that house, I was only one time out to get a tooth pulled at night. And the dentist was more excited than I was. He was shaking until he gets it. I don't know what he thought what he had to do with it.

But anyway, we didn't get out, and we could hardly look out of the window. It was on a Friday morning, and it was the 25th of August, the same day that Paris was liberated by the Allies. We didn't know.

But that was the day we were arrested. And we-- as I said, we lived on the top floor. And we heard a knock on the door-- not a kick, a knock. And here were two men-- not in uniform. I found out later on that there were two men downstairs on each side of the house.

Those two men said that we were under arrest. They knew our names. Nobody in that house knew our names. And they would come in and they looked around. And then saw a picture of the last picture we got from our daughter on the wall.

And one of them said, if this is your child, if you have other children in hiding, we suggest you take them with you, because you are brought-- you will be brought to work and to take care of the children while the parents are working. And then we were both found out if we had any money on us. and we had money on us, but they didn't even find it.

And they also said-- they looked in the drawers. We had very little clothes, just absolutely necessary. And they said, take cold-- take winter clothes with you. Where you are going, it's very cold. Now, that was true. The other thing of the children were [? bad life. ?]