

Lotte Salus
RG-50.106*0028
February 26, 1996

Abstract

Lotte Salus was born January 31, 1920, in Weseke, Germany. Her family moved to Gemen, near the Dutch border. Her parents were Willy and Elsa Cohen, and Lotte was the fifth of eight children. After September 1939, some of her brothers and sisters went to Holland. Lotte stayed with an aunt in Cologne then joined family in Westerbork, Holland. Her family had a little apartment and everyone had small jobs. In January 1944, Lotte and her brother, Leo, voluntarily accompanied their parents to Theresienstadt. On May 23, 1944, her family was sent to Auschwitz. In August, Lotte and two sisters were sent to Stutthof where her sisters died. Lotte went to a labor camp in Danzig, and in January 1945 everyone was ordered to go on a march. Lotte went to Berlin, then returned to Gemen and waited five years to go the United States. She arrived in the United States October 11, 1948, and on October 22, she married Ernest Salus who had come from Vienna. They had two children.

Lotte Cohen Salus (Charlotte Helena Cohen) was born on January 31, 1920, in Weseke, Germany.

:48

Lotte lived with her parents Willy and Elsa Cohen and eight siblings in a single house. She was the fourth youngest. Her father was a skilled tailor and had his shop upstairs.

In 1922 the family moved to Gemen, a small town 10 minutes from the Dutch border.

3:29

Lotte's family was middle class. Twenty-five Jewish families lived in Geman, and there were two synagogues.

4:42

Her mother was very observant. Her father was not interested but went along with her. There were a few Jewish neighbors, and Lotte never experienced anti-Semitism.

6:26

Lotte went to a Protestant school and then transferred to a private Jewish school for religious training. She spoke German and Hebrew, but only German at home.

7:31

Lotte, her sisters, and friends went to a monastery where nuns taught sewing and knitting. She had no sports.

9:23

Lotte was 13 years old in 1933 when Hitler came to power, and everything changed. She had to stop going to school. The day a Jewish neighbor's son was bar mitzvah, the German SA marched back and forth in front of synagogue singing Nazi songs.

Lotte remembers her father saying, "This is it."

10:39

Lotte only knew mother's mother. Mother's other relatives lived in Cologne. Her father's brother, Hyman Cohen, was a butcher who lived nearby and stopped on his way to market.

11:56

Lotte remembers the house being nicely furnished. She shared a bed with one sister.

12:52

After school was closed in 1935, Lotte lived with a Jewish family in Bocholt and took care of one of their children.

That year her father's business failed. No one would come to a Jewish tailor.

15:04

After she came home from Bocholt, she went to Ramsdorf for one and a half years to live with another family where she did everything, including milking cows and cleaning the house. When that family moved to Holland, Lotte moved back home.

27:09

Family had little income. They grew food and got meat from their uncle.

18:12

November 1938, on Kristallnacht, all windows of Jewish homes were broken in the middle of the night. Then all Jews were marched past the burning synagogues and put into jail. The next day Nazis told them to go and fix their windows.

In September 1939 Lotte and some of her brothers and sisters went to Holland. But when Lotte came to the station, she was sent back to Germany. Meanwhile her siblings stayed in Holland because the Queen had gave everyone permission to remain.

22:00

Lotte stayed in Germany and went to live with her aunt in Cologne for a few months. Everyone was very frightened. Father biked to Holland. Mother stayed in Germany but left house with broken windows. Lotte had no problem in Cologne.

24:10

In September 1939, a man came to aunt's house and told Lotte that her father wanted her to come to Holland. She and the man walked to Holland, and sister's husband came from

Amsterdam to pick them up. By then mother lived in a little town near by, and Lotte joined her.

28:13

From January – May 1940, Lotte lived with German-Jewish teenagers in a big house in the woods near The Hague. She was in contact with her mother, father, two brothers, and two sisters who by then were living in Westerbork.

30:38

In May 1940 Lotte had to register at the police station and was then taken to Westerbork to live in an apartment with her family.

Side 2

Lotte's family had a little apartment, and everyone had small jobs. Her father worked in a tailor shop, her mother in a kitchen, and Lotte was assigned to do some cleaning. She made many friends.

It was not difficult to find enough food and to keep warm. People either ate in a dining room or at home.

36:16

No one had any news about Europe. Twice a week people were transported out of Westerbork, but no one knew where anyone went. New people were always arriving.

38:40

In January 1944, Lotte and her brother Leo voluntarily accompanied parents to Theresienstadt. They went on a train and met American POWs also on the train, who asked them for food.

41:30

When they arrived at Theresienstadt, it was very confusing. Germans took pictures. Women and men were separated. She was with mother and a sister, but they saw the rest of the family every day. It was not very frightening, and everyone was kept busy cleaning.

44:09

On May 23, 1944, the family left Theresienstadt and went on a cattle car, but they did not know where they were going. The trip lasted two days, and no one had any food. When they got to Auschwitz, they were still all together. A German guard asked her mother for her gold wedding ring.

48:29

Family was put in the same barracks and was given a number. Women and girls were examined.

“We didn't know what they wanted.”

Lotte describes talking directly to Mengele and telling him “I want to live.” He told her to “go over there.” Her two sisters also were put into the same line.

From end of May until August 4, Lotte and two sisters were sent to Stutthof. Her parents were gone, and her brother had been transferred to Mauthausen.

At Stutthof, she and sisters slept outside for two weeks. Her 15-year-old sister got sick and was taken to the hospital where she died. Her pregnant sister was taken away.

Lotte went to a work camp every morning.

In the fall of 1944, Lotte was taken to Praust, a labor camp near Danzig, where she pushed lorries, carried bricks, and stood in *Appels*. Nazis were very nasty.

1:01:53

In January 1945 everyone was ordered to start on a march. Whoever could not walk was thrown into a hole.

On March 14, 1945, they saw Russian tanks.
Russians raped girls.

Lotte then went to Berlin, was interviewed by UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration], and given food. She then went back to Germany by train and waited for five years to go to the United States. She attended ORT [Organization for Rehabilitation through Training] school in Cologne.

Lotte came to the United States on October 11, 1949, and on October 22, she married Ernest Salus who had come from Vienna. They had two children.