

PINKHOF, Ruchama
RG-50.120*0352
Three Videotapes
In Hebrew

Abstract

Ruchama Pinkhof was born in November 1922 in Amsterdam and grew up with her father, step-mother, sister, two brothers Yehuda and Menachem, and a stepbrother. She describes a difficult early life at home and at school, where she experienced anti-Semitism. When she was 15, she was sent to a children's home maintained by the Youth Aliyah.

She was 17 when the Germans invaded Holland. Both brothers joined the underground, and one tried to get her to leave, but she declined. Her father was a member of the Judenrat in Amsterdam. Many of her good friends were deported to Dachau and killed in 1941. Many family friends feared the worst and committed suicide in 1942.

In June 1942 (or 1943), she and her family were deported to Westerbork.

While at the camp, Ruchama contracted polio and soon was transferred to Bergen-Belsen. There, she also contracted hepatitis, tuberculosis, typhoid, and other severe diseases. She says she was determined to survive. She found her 6-year-old sister in the children's barracks, and they saw each other every day.

Ruchama describes British troops liberating Bergen-Belsen, and taking care of the inmates.

After liberation, Ruchama's sister contracted typhoid, and Ruchama caught it from her. Both spent much time in a hospital, and Ruchama went on to several other hospitals.

Menachem told her that their father had been killed at Mauthausen, and other relatives also had perished. Later, she learned that Yehuda had died at a camp. She couldn't accept Yehuda's death, and continued to look for him.

Ruchama started to sculpt, and was offered an art scholarship. She remained sickly, with tuberculosis and other illnesses.

She was sent to a hospital in Davos, Switzerland, and remained in Davos for two and half years to recuperate. There, she met and married a man, but eventually, they divorced.

Time-Coded Notes

Tape 1:

- 0:01:00** Ruchama was born in November 1922 in Amsterdam. Her father was a well-known doctor who had some research published. He had grown up in Rotterdam in a poor family but was able to put himself through school and university. Only later in life did he begin to study Judaism, and he became extremely religious.
- 0:01:12** Ruchama says she had a difficult childhood. Her mother died when Ruchama was 2 years old, and her father remarried just a year after his first wife died. The stepmother often acted insane and was physically abusive. Ruchama has two brothers and one stepbrother.
- 0:01:21** Ruchama describes her childhood and her psychological development. She attended a Jewish school but did poorly there. She was socially withdrawn and seemed to live in her own world.
- 0:01:32** She shows family photos and talks about her mother.
- 0:02:00** Ruchama's stepmother had a very negative influence on her.
- 0:02:10** She shows photos of herself and her brothers and discusses their relationship with their father. He hardly supported Ruchama.
- 0:02:16** In June 1942 (or 1943) Ruchama's family was sent to Westerbork (Westerburg). Her brother was in the underground (before Westerbork) and tried to get her out, but she did not want to leave.
- 0:02:21** Ruchama talks more about her early childhood. She was sick frequently with pneumonia and several other infections. She usually felt very isolated in school.
- 0:02:29** She describes Passover at home. Her father discriminated between Ruchama and his sons. He would read to them but not to her.
- 0:03:00** The Great Depression in the U.S. affected Holland's economy. Ruchama's family had to move to smaller quarters, and she shared a room with her stepbrother.
- 0:03:07** Ruchama stopped studying and had to repeat a grade at a poor high school. She continued to be sickly.
- 0:03:14** Ruchama describes the anti-Semitism that she experienced while at school.
- 0:03:19** When she was 15 years old, she was sent to a children's home maintained by the Youth Aliyah.

- 0:03:22** Ruchama describes her school and its students. She went there for two years and started to flourish there.
- 0:03:29** When she was 17 years old, the Germans invaded Holland. Ruchama became close friends with an older girl in the school.
- 0:04:00** Ruchama says a school counselor persecuted her, and she suffered for a long time before complaining to the school's supervisor. Then, the counselor was fired.
- 0:04:05** Ruchama became very sick and had to be hospitalized. She was sent to recuperate with her grandparents in Rotterdam.
- 0:04:09** She describes her brothers Yehuda and Menachem and her relationship with them.
- 0:04:17** In May 1940, Germany invaded Holland. She describes Rotterdam burning and refugees passing through the city.
- 0:04:20** Ruchama discusses her religious feelings and doubts.
- 0:04:24** She describes the chaos in Rotterdam after the Dutch capitulated. Her father took her to Amsterdam.
- 0:04:30** Ruchama talks about the anti-Jewish laws that were in place at the beginning of 1941. She worked in a kindergarten school and then in a religious kibbutz.
- 0:05:00** She talks more about her brothers and their relationship.
- 0:05:17** Ruchama shares a few stories about her school and its teachers.
- 0:05:19** Ruchama describes her work in the religious kibbutz. During Amsterdam's first Razzia (round-up) in February 1941, many of Ruchama's good friends were sent to Dachau. All of these friends were killed at the camp.
- 0:05:24** Ruchama describes her life in the kibbutz. Later, she moved back home in Amsterdam and worked in the kitchen of the Jewish hospital. Her father was a member of the Judenrat.

Tape 2

- 0:06:00** Ruchama worked as a maid for a wealthy religious family and always had enough to eat. She describes her feelings of doom about what was happening to her. Her brother Menachem joined the underground.
- 0:06:12** Ruchama and the other Jews of her town did not know about Auschwitz in 1942. However, many of her family's friends committed suicide because they feared the worse.

- 0:06:20** Her brother Yehuda, also in the underground, was caught taking a group to Belgium in the summer of 1942.
- 0:06:25** In June 1943 (or 1942), Ruchama and the rest of her family were deported to Westerbork during an action. She cannot remember the details of this deportation.
- 0:06:30** Ruchama describes Westerbork, where she was from June 1943 (this year repeated, although 1942 is the year given elsewhere) to January 1944 when she was deported to Bergen-Belsen. While there, she was sent to work on farms.
- 0:07:00** She describes the camp's accommodations and her feelings.
- 0:07:15** Ruchama became very sick with polio and also with many other severe infections. Polio paralyzed her at first, and left her with a limp. She describes her care by Jewish doctors in an infirmary.
- 0:07:30** She describes the infirmary and the doctors.
- 0:08:00** Ruchama discusses her transport to Westerbork and the fates of her relatives. In the autumn of 1942, there was a transport of the Hechalutz group to Auschwitz. Ruchama talks about her mood at the time and how she was determined to survive.
- 0:08:10** She describes the Razzia (round-up) and the transport to Westerbork.
- 0:08:16** In January 1944 (?) Ruchama was sent on a transport to Bergen-Belsen. She was limping due to polio, and when she told the Germans of her disease, they left her alone in fear of getting infected.
- 0:08:28** Ruchama did not have to work because of the polio. She has only vague memories of that period.
- 0:08:32** She describes the arrival of the transports of Jews from North Africa.
- 0:09:00** Ruchama's brother Menachem arrived on a transport (see **0:10:28**, which seems to contradict this). Some of the prisoners were treated differently because they were being kept for a prisoner exchange.
- 0:09:13** The group that was kept for a prisoner exchange was sent to Palestine, and Ruchama's family was on the list for this group. However, she contracted hepatitis, was taken off the list, and had to return to camp.
- 0:09:20** In August 1944, her father was sent to Mauthausen.

- 0:09:25** In November 1944, everyone with a connection to the diamond industry was killed. She describes children being separated from their parents.
- 0:10:00** Ruchama recalls the synagogues and other Jewish institutions in Amsterdam.
- 0:10:07** Ruchama shares her reaction to seeing herself.
- 0:10:17** She describes her transfer to Bergen-Belsen and the camp's accommodations. Ruchama found her 6-year-old sister in the children's camp, where she visited her daily and took food to her.
- 0:10:22** Ruchama's sister contracted typhoid. Ruchama visited her in the infirmary and took care of her.
- 0:10:28** Ruchama was able to contact Menachem, who was in another camp. He told her of the arrival of their younger brother at the camp. Her sister's health improved, and she returned to the children's barrack.

Tape 3

- 0:11:01** Ruchama's group Hakochav was separated from the other groups. She had tuberculosis and did not have to work.
- 0:11:07** She describes how her camp was mistaken as a German army camp and was shot at by British airplanes.
- 0:11:13** She and the other inmates sometimes received packages from the Red Cross. In January, prisoners from Auschwitz and Mauthausen were brought, and the hunger and death rates increased.
- 0:11:21** Ruchama describes the outbreak of typhoid in the camp. She caught typhoid.
- 0:11:31** She describes her illness.
- 0:12:00** Ruchama discusses how people around her were dying.
- 0:12:06** She describes the entrance of the British army into the camp and how they took care of the inmates.
- 0:12:14** Ruchama talks about visiting her sister who was taken, with all of the other children, to a special house.
- 0:12:20** Her sister got typhoid and was taken to a hospital. Ruchama became very sick again with typhoid, and also had to be hospitalized.
- 0:12:25** She talks about the fate of her family and how it affected her.

- 0:13:00** In May, her sister went on a transport back to Holland, and she came to say goodbye.
- 0:13:15** Ruchama had tuberculosis and was taken to a hospital in Celldömök (Hungary) and then to one in Holland. She re-encountered Menachem, who told her about the death of their father and other relatives.
- 0:13:25** A man came to tell her about the death of her brother Yehuda. Ruchama could not accept that he had died and continued to look for him.
- 0:14:00** Ruchama again describes her stay in the hospital, where her uncle worked.
- 0:14:09** Ruchama started to sculpt and was offered a scholarship to an art academy.
- 0:14:11** After a year, Ruchama was sent to a hospital in Davos, Switzerland. She describes her train ride there.
- 0:14:11** She describes Davos, her life there, and how she met the man she married. They have since divorced.
- 0:14:28** Ruchama stayed in Davos for two and a half years. She discusses her treatment and recuperation.

(It seems that the last part of the interview is missing.)