

TITLE-Frances Hirshfeld
DATE-May 22, 1984
SOURCE-South Point High School, Belmont, North Carolina
SOUND QUALITY-fair
IMAGE QUALITY-fair DURATION-A one minute excerpt from a television speech made by the late Mr. Hirshfeld, followed by a 34 minute speech made by Mrs. Hirshfeld to a high school audience.
LANGUAGES-English
KEY SEGMENT-
GEOGRAPHIC NAME-
PERSONAL NAME-
CORPORATE NAME-
KEY WORDS-
NOTES-Summary from unauthenticated transcript. All information from interviewee, without correction.

CONTENTS-Mr. Hirshfeld spoke at the dedication of Holocaust Square and the television newsmen recorded the part of his speech where he stated that an American GI found him in Buchenwald 34 years ago. This is not the main body of the tape. Mrs. Frances Hirshfeld is a survivor of Auschwitz.

TIME: [main body of tape]

00:00Frances Hirshfeld has been in the US since 1946 and life here is like heaven. She wondered if the reason she survived was to bear witness.

00:01She is a Jew born in Poland. Poland has a history of being occupied by other countries.

00:02She was born the same year Poland gained independence. When the war broke out, she was 21 and just out of college. She was interned only because she was Jewish.

00:03When the war began she had a job but was not allowed to keep her job or ride the train.

00:04She had no idea what Hitler was up to. The Germans were always very systematic. First the Germans liquidated the intelligentsia; lawyers, doctors, etc. 00:05 They rounded up these people and shot them in

the head. Elders and youngsters were eliminated. Everyone ran for cover. 00:06 The average person walked or rode in a horse-drawn carriage. When Germans entered her city she and her family were riding on a horse-drawn cart. 00:07 People fled "away" but Hitler kept coming into all the towns they approached, until they got to the Russian-occupied area. 00:08 It was winter, very cold and the conditions were bad. Her family thought about returning to the German section. 00:09 She smuggled herself back and found nothing remained. Nice homes were confiscated by Nazis. She tried to return to the Russian zone but could

not. Her family came to her. 00:10 The Germans started forming ghettos. Hers was a big textile area that made German uniforms. She escaped selections. 00:11 At night the Germans would round up people calling "All Jews out!" She avoided early selections, but was ultimately sent to Auschwitz. 00:12 People took their most precious possessions and were loaded onto cattlecars. She had had earrings and a German tore them off because Jews were not allowed to own earrings. 00:13 Jews could not own coats with fur trim, etc. She arrived in the camp. 00:14 They were unloaded by guards with dogs. Prisoners lined up 5 abreast for selection. Some were selected for work and some for death. 00:15 Electrified barbed wire surrounded her and she had only the clothes she wore. Possessions were left at the station. 00:16 Men and women were separated. There were prisoners there with striped suits with numbers on their sleeves. She was ordered to strip and her head was shaven. 00:17 They were told their hair had to be shaven because it was lice-infested. They had a bitterly cold shower without towels or soap. 00:18 She was given a dress that did not fit. Then she was tattooed and became just another number. There were no complaints or questions. If she asked a question she was slapped until her teeth shook. 00:19 The clothes had lice. They wore either wooden shoes or mismatched leather shoes. They had no change of clothes. 00:20 They lived in a stable and slept 6 in a bunk. There were three layers of bunks. Some prisoners were sent to carry heavy rocks back and forth. 00:21 They were awakened early and were rushed to the latrine and sent off to work with a small piece of black bread and some coffee. 00:22 This was the morning meal. At work they had some soup that seemed like dishwater. At night they got hot coffee and a piece of bread. 00:23 If you wanted to wash your clothes you had to wear them wet to bed. Men called zondercommandos unloaded the trains from all over Europe. 00:24 These men were ordered to help or else they were sent to the oven alive.

There could be no resistance because people would be shot on the spot. 00:25 Whatever is written (about the war) is not enough. She was taken from Birkenau to Auschwitz. She lived near the place where medical experiments were conducted. Those who were experimented on were never the same.

00:26 Twins were experimented on. There were few younger people there. There was one Belgian girl who tried to escape. 00:27 She got a (Nazi) woman's uniform but she was caught. All the prisoners were called back to camp "to see a show." They were to witness the girl's hanging. 00:28 Someone smuggled her a razor blade and she cut her own wrist to avoid the gallows. Mrs. Hirshfeld's husband was the keynote speaker at the dedication of the Holocaust Square. 00:29 She has been to Washington, D.C. to attend the Holocaust survivors gathering. 00:30 Some 20,000 survivors were there and the President spoke. It is important to remember but her generation is going [dying]. She hopes the children of survivors will continue. 00:31 This year the survivors met at the Kennedy Center. Spectators were asked not to applaud as the Days of Remembrance were marked by the arts. 00:32 Elie Wiesel was honored. He is the Chairman of the Holocaust Council. Wiesel got the Congressional Medal of Honor, one of only 50 to get such an honor in the last 100 years. 00:33 He got the award for his books and his humanitarian work. In his latest book, A Jew Today, he tells a lot. There was a ship filled with children which America turned back. 00:34 Her best gift from Providence was that both her children were born in the US--the best place in the world.