

August 29, 1991

Slate # 1349-008

Interviewee: Mr. Bert Gosschalk

Interviewer: Mrs. Janet Hudson

Notetaker: Mrs. Lillian Shames

0:00 - Bert Gosschalk Born 1920; East Province Davinter (sp.?) Holland
5 children in family; 3 boys and 2 girls ; all survived Holocaust. Family in cattle
business; branches in Belgium, Germany, and Holland. Home was kosher and all
holidays observed. Went to religious school; no antisemitism in Holland.

7:38 - 1939- was apprentice for large packing house where they started using
pancreas for insulin (invented in 1924)

9:40 - Holland was always neutral in previous conflicts.They were all aware of
developments in Germany. All young adults lead very sheltered lives and were not
politically informed.

10:50 - Refugees from Germany were being trained how to develop the soil and
they were anxious to develop soil and go to Palestine. Bert Gosschalk, as he got
older was a Zionist.

13:56 - Holland had a very poor army. May 1940 Germany crossed river into
Holland. They tried to protect themselves by flooding the whole area. It was to no
avail.

20:05 - Germans started slowly putting on all kinds of regulations. No Jews in
movies. I.D. cards for Jews. No restaurant, no public school, curfew, everything
started getting tighter. No income, property confiscated.

24:00 - Most had to move to ghettos. Very difficult way of living. About 2% of
population were Nazis.

25:27 - 1942 - Order was given that all unmarried men were to be taken to labor
camps. Bert had a long time girlfriend. They got married in July, 1942. Three
months later another order for all married men to be taken.

28:45 - Bert went into hiding. Some families took you in for payments, but then
there were some who just did it out of sympathy.

29:30 - September 1942 went into hiding and worked for underground. Lived in
small cabin in woods. Absolutely no facilities. Some friends help with food and
clothes.

42:00 - Underground decided to blow up a bridge and a rail that was left in the
area. Unfortunately, dynamite did not explode. Nazis found dynamite and arrested

all men in area. Bert and wife were arrested. Wife was in her early pregnancy. At the time he had no contact with his family.

48:00 - Taken to barracks. Separated from his wife. Sixteen people were put into a cell meant for one person.

53:58 - The inmates were questioned very cruelly by Gestapo. Meantime, the resistance groups found a high S.S. official was coming to town. They shot him. All occupants were immediately taken out and shot. Bert was not shot as he was being questioned by Gestapo at the time, away from prison, so his life was saved. (Luck!)

56:45 - Taken to concentration camp Westerbrook and found wife in same camp. He was put to work in the the fields starting at 5:00AM until sundown. Very little food. Water with potato peels and a slice of bread. Sometimes he stole a potato or two from the field, hoping he would not be caught. Consequences for this very severe. War was winding down, Germans knew this and they became a little friendlier. Bert was given permission to spend one night with his wife on April 10.

60:31 - April 12 was liberation. Germans all left. Bert alerted people of their freedom, but they did not know what to do or where to go.

69:12 - First Canadians came to liberate them.

76:49 Friend of Bert helped him to leave camp with his wife. They went to find mother-in-law who had been hiding in an insane asylum as patient for 1.5 years. This in itself was an ordeal.

79:49 - Bert was appointed as leader to go back to camp Westerbrook and put remaining Nazis in camp. He was able to let his vengence out . By this time his wife gave birth to a daughter.

89:35 - The winter of 1945 was a very bad hard winter in Holland. He went back to his home town and found a job, but after a while he felt there was no way he could improve himself in Holland. His brother advised him to come to U.S. He and his young family came to U.S., then went to Texas where his brother lived.

92:58 - Through the years he moved to a number of states, finally to Charleston, S.C. where he resides today with his family.