

-TITLE-MARGOT FIELD
-I_DATE-MARCH 13, 1991
-SOURCE-FORT WAYNE JEWISH FEDERATION
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-IMAGE_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-DURATION-50 MINUTES
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-
Childhood until Underground (1942).

0:00 Margot Field lived in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany. She was born on July 24, 1916. She had one brother. Her parents owned a wholesale business. Her family had lived in Germany for many generations./ They were members of the Orthodox Synagogue. Very Jewish family -- children went to a school on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. Father closed the business on Saturdays. She even went to an all Jewish school that was formed by the Jewish community and established in the Ghetto in 1804.

2:04 Children attended Jewish School from kindergarten until University. The school was well known throughout Europe. Her friends were mainly Jewish because she attended a Jewish school. In 1933 nothing had happened yet but in 1938 things got bad for the family. At the time she worked for a large export company. She left Germany for a one week vacation to Holland in 1938. She had no idea that Hitler had reached Holland already. Life was worse for the Jews there than in Frankfurt.

4:06 In Holland she wasn't allowed to enter public places and had limited access to other places. In 1942 she received a letter to report to the Jewish Community Center but instead went underground where she stayed for 2 years. She also refused to wear a Jewish Star. Margot lived in constant fear as she moved from family to family and place to place.

Dutch Camps.

5:35 Always to hide when neighbors entered the house and could never go outside. She was caught two years before the war ended. She felt relief because she no longer had to hide. Margot was taken to a prison in Amsterdam where she spent two weeks alone in a cell. With other people she was then sent to another camp called Westerbork (Holland). Margot stayed in the Dutch camp for 2-3 months. All Dutch prisoners had to go here first before being sent to other camps. Now she was in mid-twenties and worked as a nurse. Learned to be a nurse in Germany.

7:30 In July/August Margot was put on a transport to Bergen-Belsen with Ann Frank. At first she worked as a nurse. Everyone was sick there. She has typhus fever and diarrhea. Her bunk mate had scarlet fever. Just before the English soldiers arrived - she could hear them shooting - the whole camp was put on a transport headed east.

Liberation.

9:29 They stayed on the train for two weeks. Men, woman and children were all put on the same transport. The Germans were also on the transport hiding from the English. Before they reached their destination the Russians liberated the train and arrested the Germans. At the time she had meningitides and was very weak. They hadn't had anything to eat during those two weeks. They would try to go into the fields to find food. Farmers would ask if they were the Gypsies from the train and wouldn't help them.

11:25 After they were liberated nobody helped them. It took a month before a small hospital was set up. A friend took care of Margot. After Margot got a little better she took care of her friends daughter and then her friend had to be taken to the hospital because she got very ill.

Her family.

12:00 Her parents were picked up in Amsterdam at their home and taken to Westerbork and then to Sobibor, Poland to the gas chambers. The Red Cross informed of this. Her brother was supposed to go to Switzerland. A group of them paid a driver to take them but he turned them over to the Germans in Belgium instead. They were then sent to Poland to the gas chambers/ She is the only survivor of the family.

Help she received.

13:39 She has blocked out quite a bit of her experience because she wants to forget it. Friends remember more than she does. (shifts) They always had hopes of America coming to help but they never did. Doesn't understand why. The Dutch were very nice and so were some of the Germans but it was very dangerous. These people risked their lives.

15:35 One family Margot stayed with, the mother was very nervous. The mother had children and the six year old boy would talk about the stranger that lived with them at school. She was lucky that the teacher came and told the family what the boy was saying. Margot then hid with another family.

Camp life.

19:10 At the camp she received soup daily and a piece of bread that had to last the whole week. The prisoners would first eat the crust and then ate the rest later on. The camp was a family camp -- men, women and children in one barrack. She was the only nurse that arrived on her freight car which was attached to a passenger car. She recalls one man jumped out the window and the Germans brought him to her. Since they didn't have any bandages, nothing couldn't help him. He died.

20:40 Margot only talked with Ann Frank and really didn't know her because she was much younger than her. She was unaware that so many people were being killed. They had no connections with the other prisoners. People just came in and out of the camps all the time. The worst part was being sick and having fleas and lice.

Outside help.

22:45 In Bergen-Belsen and Westerbork Margot didn't think there was any resistance. The resistance had no chance because they were killed right away. Outside the camps the "resistance" gave her coupons and other things because she was not legalized. Margot didn't have a card. She was always hiding because the Germans always came around. Even her good friends would have to enter through the back door in order to see her.

24:20 Couldn't trust anyone nor talk to anyone. Since she lived in a small village everyone knew who everyone was.

Feelings on Her experience.

26:23 In 1938 Hitler burned down all of the synagogues. She fears that the Holocaust can reoccur because when she visited Holland some people denied that it happened.

Camp life.

28:38 If she hadn't gone through this experience she doesn't think that she herself would believe it either. She doesn't want to remember anymore. Like the trains. They went through many German towns. The trains got bombed all day long. They would only travel at night. White flags were put on the trains so that the Germans could travel with us. Many people were killed during the bombings.

30:05 Margot did receive beatings in the camps especially when she refused to do things. She remembers getting a swollen head but doesn't remember what she refused to do. Some people did cooperate with the Germans and got better food but she never would. They were a special kind of people. They would sleep with the Germans and stuff.

31:56 After the concentration camps Margot had trouble getting back into Holland because she was born in Germany. Friends had to come with papers showing that she had money there and could support herself. For a week she stayed in a Monastery on the border waiting to get in.

35:02 One of my friends husbands starved to death.

Religion

35:40 Margot found a friend with a child in the camp and they helped one another. Many families were killed in the camps and may also gave up living. Before she entered the camps she was very Kosher and Orthodox but now she is just the opposite. Sometimes she feels guilty because of her parents but... Her own children now are not very Orthodox in their religion.

36:43 The people in the camp were very religious. There were quite a few rabbis in the camp. They would eat or do anything so they just starved to death. No one thought that Hitler would last very long. Every one thought that this would end the next night or the following week. No one thought that the Germans could be so forceful.

After the war

39:40 Margot was invited back to Germany for a two week trip sponsored by the city of Frankfurt. She was shown the city and the new synagogues and cemeteries but where she once lived was now destroyed. Many of the people on the trip were never even taken to the camps. They tried to show us that Germany did everything they could to help us.

41:32 I got a little pension because I was in the camps but I would not go there ever again. They wanted us to go back but none of us will. Everything looks nice with the new building but Margot doesn't trust it.

43:55 She asked some people from her village if they ever asked where the Jews were taken but they all answered, "no". They didn't ask even though they were curious because they were afraid of being killed. Even when there was resistance it really didn't help.

45:18 She still feels vulnerable as a Jew. One of the first questions she was asked in Fort Wayne, was, "To which church you belong?" Margot answered, "It's none of your business."

48:25 She is very glad that she has done this because sh feels that it will help herself and hopefully others too.
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