

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
Oral History Interview with Esperance Tsiridaki
Time Coded Notes

RG-50.443*0002

Acc. 1996.A.0562

Title: Oral History Interview with Esperance Tsiridaki

Extent: 2 videocassettes

Provenance: Jasa Almuli, project director for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Oral History Branch, coordinated the interview with Esperance Tsiridaki on November 13, 1996. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives received the tapes in December 1996. Forms part of the Corfu, Greece Project oral history collection, RG-50.443.

Restrictions on access: No restriction on access.

Restrictions on use: No restriction on use.

Language: Greek with some Italian

Preferred citation: Standard citation for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collections Division, Archives Branch.

TIME CODED NOTES

- 1:01 **Background** She was born in Kerkira in 1921. She had four brothers and sisters. Her siblings were born in 1908, 1912, 1917 and 1925. They lived very well. She was raised by her uncle because he did not have any children of his own. They owned a general store.
- 1:02 **War Outbreak** The first stage of bombing began in 1940. Her family left and went to the villages.
- 1:03 **Leaving their home** On September 13th 1943 the Germans bombed the city of Kerkira. Everything was ruined after the bombing. They could not stay in the city and they walked to the village of Bero.
- 1:04 **First time seeing Germans** On September 14th 1943 she saw German military for the first time.

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- 1:05 **Jews disappearing in the night** On March 25th her family learns of Jews being taken in the middle of the night. Her family decided it was time to go into hiding.
- 1:06 **German order for Jews to assemble.** While playing tennis with other children, she overhears a German order that stated all Jews were to meet in the town center. She told her family and they decided it was time to split up. They told each other goodbye and good luck.
- 1:07 **A friend offers their home for the night.** After walking all day she stopped at a friend's house for rest. She did not get any sleep that night. A friend that was helping her go into hiding went ahead to the house where she would be hiding to make sure everything was settled. He returned past curfew, but her hiding place had been secured.
- 1:11 **Precautions before the war** Before the Germans occupied Greece, Esperance's brother met with the local Government in Kerkira. He had a friend that worked there who allowed him and his family to falsify their identification cards so they would appear to be Christians and not Jews.
- 1:12 **Betrayal by a fellow Greek** Her aunt and niece were found and captured by the Germans because a neighbor disclosed where they were hiding.
- 1:14 **Greeks helping Greeks** The radio broadcasted day and night, "Greeks marry Jews the weddings will become void after the war."
- 1:15 **Marriage** She married Pano Tsiridaki.
- 1:16 **Encounter with the Italian military** One day while walking with her husband, they encountered twelve Italians. One of them asked for her identification, but she pretended she did not speak Italian. A nearby baker served as a translator and told her what the Italian was asking of her. She told the Italian that she did not have it on her and he ordered her and her husband to follow him back to the barracks. Once arriving in the barracks the same man began questioning her and looking for her name. Fortunately, he could not find her because her brother had changed her id and she was now a Christian. During this interrogation period she was very scared and thought that she would be discovered. She was allowed to leave.
- 1:19 **In custody with the Italian military** She tells her husband not to let her live if she is going to be captured by the Germans. He promised her that if he has to he will shoot her and then himself. Esperance was terrified and even attempted to escape out of the bathroom window, but the bars prohibited her. While in custody, she overheard the Greeks took over a region in Albania. This is when she was ready to give up; she did not think she was going to leave the barracks alive. But they allowed her and her husband to leave. However, she was afraid they were going to come back for her and did not want to stay in hiding there.

- 1:22 **Traveling to another city** She and her husband left and went to another house in Allepou. She had to walk two hours to get to the city so she could sell basic necessities. Then she would give that money to aunts and uncles who were unable to make the long journey to the city. Esperance sometimes made this trip several times a day. Every time she did, she thought it would be her last because airplanes would constantly fly overhead.
- 1:23 **Going into hiding and being separated from her family** When she and her family first went into hiding no one really knew where each other went because they were afraid if someone was caught by the Germans they might disclose their other family members hiding places. However, they heard how each other was doing without knowing where they were.
- 1:24 **Her husband became very sick.** He had been traveling almost every day delivering food to those who were in hiding and he physically had exhausted himself. Luckily, he had a cousin that was a doctor and that was able to visit and care for him. Sixty days passed and her husband was still quite ill. Fortunately, he got better and resumed his food deliveries.
- 1:25 **Reuniting with her Aunt.** She brought her aunt to Allepou.
- 1:26 **Reuniting with her parents and little sister** She found out that her mother, father and little sister were staying at a house in the center of the city. She took the risk and decided she was going to try and visit them. They were elated to see her, but her little sister was sick. They believed it was due to her being locked indoors and unable to play outside. Her parents suggested Esperance take her younger sister with her to Allepou. She obeyed them.
- 1:27 **Caring for her younger sister** Esperance let Rosa, her younger sister play outside despite her worries she would be recognized. Rosa stayed with Esperance for two months.
- 1:28 **A scare in the middle of the night** One night, while they were sleeping they heard the Germans coming. Esperance told her little sister that if the Germans asked her name she would not say her real name Rosa Sussi, but instead Litza Tsiridaki of Athena and Deno. Her little sister was so scared she became soaked with sweat. Fortunately, a drunk happened to be wandering the streets near their home and the German military were distracted by him instead of searching the homes. Rosa was traumatized by this incident and suffered from a type of shock. She had nightmares until she was eighteen years old. No one can imagine what they endured. She told her parents that it would be best for her to return to them. She could not handle seeing the Germans daily.
- 1:29 **Her little sister must leave.** She sent Rosa back to her parents. Her brothers and sisters decided to go to nearby Albania. They went along with two Englishmen

and two other Greeks by boat. They were lucky to arrive without being captured. Once they arrived in Albania, they immediately joined the resistance and helped fight the Axis Powers.

- 1:30 **Her brother is captured.** Her youngest brother returned to Kerkira to see his parents. Even though it was dangerous he opted to take the risk. He was captured and beaten. He was held for five days.

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- 1:00 **A scare in the town center.** In one of the villages where she was hiding an old friend spotted her and yelled in front of everyone, "You're alive!" At that moment she was very frightened because she had no where else to go and hide. She worried that someone may have noticed her and may reveal her identity to the authorities.
- 1:02 **Attempt to find a new place to hide.** Her husband wanted to take her to a monastery because she was living in fear of being captured on a daily basis and this stress was becoming far too great for her to endure. The nun in charge of the monastery said Esperance could stay, but she decided she was going to remain with her previous family. They did not want to see her go and they promised whatever happened to her would happen to them.
- 1:03 **Her life before the war.** Before the war she lived like a princess, whatever she wanted she had. She paid a lot of money in order to be hidden.
- 1:04 **Hard times** She went through two very difficult years.
- 1:06 **Background of her parents.** Her parents were from Arta, they came to Kerkira, Greece. They grew up in Kerkira and began their family.
- 1:09 **Reason for going into hiding** She went into hiding because all the Jews were being captured and the land where Jews resided was being burned. So she knew it would their turn soon. Kerkira would not be an exception. This is why her parents were cautious and arranged hiding places for everyone.
- 1:11 **Reason for staying in Kerkira.** They lived on an island so it was difficult to leave.
- 1:12 **Hardships during the war.** She and her family endured so much. She does not know what else to say. It would take hours for her to elaborate. She only told the more serious things.
- 1:13 **Help from her husband.** Her husband arranged her hiding as well. He found villagers who were willing to help. He also promised them to take full responsibility if anything went wrong. He told them if the Germans asked who

- these people were. They were to say, they are Christians who lost their house due to the bombing.
- 1:14 **The war is over** On December 18th she woke up to the sound of bells ringing. The local children told her that they were free. As soon as she heard those words she ran to her husband immediately and told him they must go and see her family. She and her husband were given a donkey to help carry food and they began their journey home.
- 1:15 **Sadness in the town.** The villagers cried because they were leaving.
- 1:16 **Her family begin their journey home.** She her husband, aunt and uncle were forced to stop at a nearby coffeehouse because they were caught in a rainstorm. A man inside the coffee house saw how drenched they were and offered to get them dry clothes. They were also given some food. This was greatly appreciated because food was hard to come by and the people offered them everything they had. It was only a meal of potatoes, but they were very grateful.
- 1:17 **Their journey continues.** They left the coffee house in the morning and began their journey to Allepou. When they arrived the found their houses destroyed. The Germans did not leave anything. Their furniture was taken. Her family went into the city to reunite with Esperance's Mother and Father.
- 1:18 **A little boy realizes his mother is gone.** Esperance's aunt that was captured by the Germans left a little boy behind. This little boy asked where his mother was on a daily basis. Esperance told him that she was not feeling well and that she went to her mothers. But the little boy knew this was not true. He was a smart little boy. He was only three, but he said that he knew the Germans took her and if he were older he would have went under her window and whistled so he could have rescued her.
- 1:19 **Leaving the village.** Esperance and her parents left the village and went to the city with the little boy.
- 1:20 They endured a lot.
- 1:21 **Life after the war.** The years passed and thanks from the help of God, her house filled up once again. She believes the Jews have a certain blessing to never be forgotten and to live again. She and her parents reopened their general store and everyone in her family worked together. Everyone was doing well once again. In 1958, her father died. In 1978, her mother died. Her oldest brother died in 1984 on Christmas. Her other brother and sister died in 1988 and 1989. Her husband died on January 5th 1985. In seventeen days she had to go to two funerals. She has one daughter with two children.
- 1:22 This is her story and she is thankful for those who listened to it.

- 1:26 Only her youngest brother is alive. He is married with two kids.
- 1:27 She has two grandchildren. Her daughter is married and is twenty-five years old.
Her son-in-law is twenty-two.
- 1:28 Her daughter is very happy.