

Interviewee: VAN ADELSBERG, Erica

Date: December 8, 1981

Interviewer: Lucille Fisher

No. of Audiotapes: 2 English

Transcript: 1 v. (unpaged)

No restrictions

SUMMARY

Erica Van Adelsberg, nee Herz, was born in Munich in 1928 to an assimilated, liberal Jewish family. She left Germany with her parents and younger brother in 1932 to live in Aerdenhoudt, Holland, near Haarlem. They lived comfortably and Erica recalls the decency of the Dutch people. In 1940, after the German occupation, her family was designated as being stateless; they were forced to move and conditions worsened. They were sent to Westerbork internment camp in 1942. Erica continued her education and was trained as a laboratory technician at age 14. She became part of a Zionist youth group, which heightened her Jewish identity, in contrast to her parents assimilated orientation. She describes life in the camp, including her friend's wedding as well as the weekly transports to Auschwitz.

On February 15, 1944 her family, including grandparents who had joined them, was sent to Bergen-Belsen. She describes the camp routine, her work in a plastic pipe factory and the cruelty of the Polish *Kapos*. She was sick with para-typhoid for several weeks, with no medication. In April, 1945 the family was transported by train, with about 600 others, all of whom assumed they were going to Auschwitz. After two harrowing weeks, including bombings by Allied planes, the train was liberated by two Russian soldiers on horseback in Trebitz, near Leipzig, in Saxony. The Russians set up a hospital and cared for the survivors, many of whom succumbed to typhoid fever.

Six weeks later, Americans took her family back to Holland, where her brother became the first to celebrate a Bar Mitzvah after the war. Erica came to the United States in 1946 and was the first European student admitted to a Quaker school after World War II. Collateral material to this interview includes copies of two small books of poetry written by Erica, in German and in Dutch, when she was in Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

Concentration camp inmates--Medical care.
Holocaust survivors.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Personal narratives.
Jewish youth--Europe--Societies and clubs.
Jews, German--Netherlands.
Jews--Germany--Munich.
Jews--Identity.
Bergen-Belsen (Concentration camp)
Westerbork (Concentration camp)
Kapos.
Soldiers--Soviet Union.
Typhoid fever.
Women concentration camp inmates.
World War, 1939-1945--Deportations from Netherlands.
Zionists.

Aerdenhout (Netherlands)
Leipzig (Germany)
Lower Saxony (Germany)
Munich (Germany)
Netherlands--History--German occupation, 1940-1945.
Trebitz (Wittenberg, Germany)
United States--Emigration and immigration.