

Interviewee: HERZFELD, Malvina
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Interviewer: Marian Salkin
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SUMMARY

Malvina Herzfeld was born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1914. Lived in Tsobut, Danzig from 1924 to 1936. Moved to Holland where she married Martin Sternfeld, a German lawyer, in December, 1937. Briefly describes the German invasion of Holland May 1940 and the establishment of Westerbork as a transit camp for German Jewish refugees who were supported by the Dutch Jewish community and the Jewish Council. Her husband was arrested by the SS during a roundup of Jewish men in 1941, sent to a camp in Holland and then to Mauthausen concentration camp. She received his death certificate September, 1941.

Malvina worked for the Jewish Council. She was arrested and released. Malvina and other Jews were helped or hidden by a non-Jewish Dutch neighbor. Molly agreed to work with the Dutch underground led by Walter Suskind. She describes how her group saved Jewish children, who had been taken from their parents, from the transports. While working as a courier to the Hague and Westerbork, she tried to rescue Jewish boys. She was arrested by the SS, put into solitary confinement, and tortured. She did not talk and was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau where she encountered Hans Totman, a Jewish war criminal who worked for the Germans. She describes arrival, selection process, living and working conditions in Birkenau.

Because she spoke German, she was taken to work as a secretary for the *Oberscharfurer* at Budy, together with an other Jewish girl. They narrowly escaped being sent to the crematorium for stealing food.

Auschwitz was liquidated in January 1945. Malvina went on a deathmarch to Bergen-Belsen, where she stayed until April, 1945 during a typhoid epidemic. She describes liberation by British troops, punishment of the guards, the hanging of the camp commanders, and post-liberation conditions. The British took survivors to a military camp until displaced persons camps were established. She worked for the British army as a translator and had a brief reunion with her brother who served in the British army.

Malvina could not get permission to join her brother in England. She was sent to Holland and quarantined. She stayed in Holland until 1947 and relates attempts to find out what happened to her family and her husband, and located friends from the underground. An interesting vignette details how she located the Jewish girl from Budy after the war. She emigrated to the United States in 1947.