

BAY AREA HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW WITH RENEE DUERING

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"Tape 1 of 2"

A But, he was disappointed, he was also, very often, not feeling well. And, when he sat down at the curb on the street, because he couldn't breathe. Either it was too hot in the summer time, or it was too cold, in the winter time. He had, I didn't know he had half a lung.

Q YOUR FATHER OR YOUR BROTHER?

A My father. He was injured in the war, he said. But it could have been tuberculosis - that was in his family. His mother died of it and his step-mother died of it. But his father never got it, strangely enough. And, I was immune to tuberculosis because I inherited the tubercle inside of me. And I must have had tuberculosis in the camp, because it shows up in the X-ray that there are capsules. Anyway, you asked me again...

Q YOUR FATHER WAS IN THE UNITED STATES FOR SIX MONTHS WITH YOUR BROTHER?

A Yes, my father was six months there. My brother came later. And they lived together for two months, in New York. Don't ask my brother whether that's true or not, because he doesn't, maybe, remember it - but I remember exactly - things like that. And my father got a letter from my mother, that we do now have the visa, that she was born in France. She proved that she was born in France, and therefore she could have the visa. Is it alright to come, and pack up and sell everything? And my father said: "No, you stay where you are. I come back and I don't want to live in America, and explain it later". And my mother made another attempt to get the money together for the tickets. She was too timid to sell. She didn't ask me, I was already seventeen. I said, I would have said to her - sell the piano, sell the Persian rugs, sell the china and we have tickets.

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There was my sister, me, we were under 21 and we could go in the French quarter, because my mother was born in Paris. But nothing like that she did discuss with me. I was never asked any opinion. And I want to tell to the next generation - that's wrong. Parents should discuss things. Young people have ideas, they are fresh, they are innocent, they are true, they are logic. And the parents should definitely discuss things with the young people.

Q SO YOUR MOTHER DIDN'T FEEL CONFIDENT TO TAKE ANY ACTION ON HER OWN?

A There were too many things around that would have ... yeah, she was not strong enough to do it on her own, against the will of my father, who ?? might be on the ocean. I mean, look at it this way. She also rented out the house, the apartment where we lived, and so she could cover the cost of the rent at least. But Hitler came.

My aunt called up in May, and she said: "Put on the radio". It was four o'clock in the morning when she called up and said "Leo, listen to the radio, the Germans are dropping down over Rotterdam, in parachutes. They have bombed Rotterdam - made it flat". And we didn't know in Amsterdam about it. And it was true that they invaded and there was a fight for - I think ten days, or fourteen days - that the Dutch people stood up against the Germans and resisted. You cannot say that from the Belgium's - they didn't want anything destroyed. And I had three bombs around where I lived, in Amsterdam.

Q WERE YOU LIVING WITH YOUR AUNT THEN, OR YOUR...?

A No, my parents had come. I lived then with my parents. And three bombs fell, German bombs. In front and in the back yard and farther up, in the same street.

Q DID YOU HAVE ANY PLACE TO GO, ANY SHELTERS, OR...?

A No, my father opened the window and closed it quickly again, because the smell of the sulphur was there from the bombs. And it had killed some people in the lowest floor, where the garden apartments were. It had come in a [bias?] and killed some people in our block, where we lived.

And the other bomb in front was in the greeneries, where the streetcar turns around into [Schilderstraat?]. [Schilderstrasse?] Yeah, and the other bomb was at the [Maasstraat?] or [Waalstraat?] - Waal and Maas.

Q NOBODY WAS INJURED IN YOUR FAMILY, AT THAT POINT?

A At that point - no. No.

Q HOW DID YOUR PARENTS MANAGE TO GET A PIANO, EVEN?

A That was our piano from home. That's a good question. I found out that there was man, his name was Rogendorf, in Cologne. He had an illegal transportation for furniture - license. And he did all the Jewish people's moving. And when there was a moving to be done, each time he put some furniture of ours on the truck and delivered it in Amsterdam to us. So, I had my piano again.

Q AMAZING.

A It was done, slowly.

Q WAS THIS ILLEGAL AT THAT TIME?

A It was illegal. He just put it down as if it did belong to that family that he legally moved. Umm, what else?

Q YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU SPENT A LITTLE TIME IN SPAIN. AT WHAT POINT WAS THAT?

A That was in the beginning, when my father was thinking to dissolve the family. My brother went to Switzerland. And so, I wanted to go with my girlfriend. But my girlfriend's parents who were planning to go to Spain, they stayed there for half a year until they wrote that Margot Lucina can come with me. She stayed in my house, as a child. I mean, she was my girlfriend and my parents took her in. Until they would be settled in Madrid. And that is when I told you in the beginning, I stayed only three months there, but not half a year. When they had some reputation - they left some reputation behind that they weren't such honest people. And if you come to think of it today, I think what they did is, they bought a car to get out of there and then they didn't quite pay for it

And when they were looked for payments, they had left. That is when they did something illegal. And wouldn't you do the same thing, if it is your neck?

Q SO, WAS THIS WHEN YOU WERE STILL, SAY, THIRTEEN, BEFORE YOU TURNED FOURTEEN, WHEN YOU WENT TO SPAIN?

A I was thirteen and a half. And when I came back, I had my birthday, in January. So I came back and was admitted to the school again, like I told you. Till Easter. There the class change Easter, not in summer.

Q WHY DID YOUR - WHAT DID YOU MEAN, YOUR FATHER WAS GOING TO DISSOLVE THE FAMILY?

A He didn't want to leave as a five person family. He wanted to leave singly.

Q YES, I SEE NOW. SO HE WAS ALREADY VERY WORRIED IN '34?

A Yeah, I guess so. He wanted us out of the way. But he stayed until the last. My mother was visiting me, one day, in Holland, and he called up and he said, "Don't come back". And then, my sister came alone with - she was eleven. This what I told you. Carpet? Brought her over and something happened in Cologne with his passport. Some man came and said: "You are in danger, Mr. Duering. They are after you. You are Jewish, you have a good business. We are warning you - leave. And here, I give you your passport back now". And my father left the next day. And he called up and he said: "I'm coming". And he dropped everything.

And he gave the procureur, that is, the man in charge of the business, he gave him the license to continue the business. But he was also Jewish. And he had put in Mr. Nauman, a Swedish man, he had married a Swedish woman, that is. He lived in Sweden and he put him as a puppet, say. He put him in the business so that the firm was not dissolved. It was him who was now to be the manager - in the absentia of my father. But Mr. Nauman was in for a surprise, when this procureur, the Jewish man got cold feet. He had a brother-in-law, by the name of Bergman. And this brother-in-law said: "If Mr. Duering left all of a sudden, and you are here in charge - why don't you just burn all the books?"

And, he did that. He burned all the books and Mr. Nauman came into the business, without books. That was a terrible shock to him and he accused my father of being guilty - while he was not.

And his procureur, he lived in Cologne all the time. He was of Polish descent - his name was Josef Raadt. He had a lot of brothers and sister and his mother. His father had died, I heard. I was a child when that happened. So my father felt sorry for him and he did have the job that took care of his entire family. My father gave him that honor, and my mother was kind of, wary, and said: "You have too much trust in that man. You don't where he's coming from". And when this happened, my mother talked up, in Holland, and said: "Didn't I tell you, I didn't trust him. To burn all the books - what a thing to do". And he was influenced by his brother-in-law, and his family already had been sent to Poland, because they were of Polish descent. They took first the Polish Jews out of Germany. And he was in charge now and did this.

So, the end of the story was, when I came to Cologne in 1956, that he was killed, in the back. Shot, while he was on a bicycle in Cologne, trying to sell coffee on the black market. He didn't want to stop his bike when he was asked to stop. And they just shot him dead, and he fell off the bike. And Mrs. Kapper told me that - that's how he ended.

Q WAS THAT STILL IN THE THIRTIES?

A No.

Q ALL THE TIME HE MADE IT THROUGH THE WAR, AND EVERYTHING?

A Right.. He had black, curly hair, but he didn't have a Jewish face. And he was known as Josef Raadt. And he made it through the war, in the bombardments, in everything, in Cologne. And like I said, he was shot in the back, and he died before the war was over.

Q WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BUSINESS?

A The business - I was in Cologne in 1945. The building had been bombed, but downstairs where the business was in Cologne - Mozartstrasse - across from the brown house. You know what the brown house is?

Q NO.

A No? Okay, where the Nazis were sitting. They called it, every time, they had the brown uniform - they called the house where they were sitting in, the brown house. This brown house and that was in the Mozartstrasse and my father was [kitty?] corner [about?]. And that house, in 1945 was unsafe to go into. But I did it anyway. I walked into it. There was not a piece of furniture left, there was not glass left. And while I was walking through it in the basement, it was kind of three steps down, while I was doing that I heard the cent roll in the walls. And I thought I better get out of here before I get house on my head. So that was left of the business.

Q AND YOUR FATHER GOT NO MORE INCOME FROM THAT BUSINESS AFTER HE FLED FROM GERMANY?

A No, that was all up to that Mr. Nauman that he would be in charge. And there was no income. And there were no books anymore, to begin with.

Q SO DID THE BUSINESS STOP JUST THEN?

A I guess so. A little bit on, you know, it went... They tried to retrieve things, I guess. That is something that I have no way of knowing.

Q AND SO NOW, YOUR WHOLE FAMILY IS IN HOLLAND AND YOU'RE TRYING TO LIVE OFF THE INCOME OF LODGERS IN YOUR APARTMENT, AND DOING THAT, I GUESS. AND DID THE CLIMATE START TO CHANGE IN HOLLAND AT THAT TIME, OR LATER. POLITICALLY SPEAKING HOW WERE YOU FARING IN HOLLAND THEN - SAY FROM '37 ON?

A Well, it went - no, it went stricter and stricter when the Germans came. That changed the whole picture. Even, the Dutch people suffered and there wasn't enough to eat for anybody, anymore. Not with the coupons, either. And it became a black market thing. My father started to deal with material - textiles. He bought material and sold it

And he ended up hiding a lot of material, that when the war was over and I came to Holland, people would give me material and say: "That is what your father left behind".

Q SO YOUR FAMILY THOUGH HAD TO OBVIOUSLY GO AND PICK UP COUPON BOOKS TO LIVE? YOU HAD TO HAVE ??

A Yes. And we had to give - we were given a star. We all went, everybody. But the Jewish people had to have that star at that same moment, with the books. We had a 'J' in our identification card, like you have a driver's license picture, a 'J' on it and we had to have that with us at all times, wherever we walked. And we had to sew on the stars on all our garments. Every garment - if you take your coat off, you still had to have it on your dress.

Q AND WHEN DID THAT BEGIN?

A In 1940. 1940, when the Germans came down.

Q AND YOU FATHER - YOU SAID THAT THE POLICE, HE - YOU TOLD THEM HE WAS GOING OFF TO ENGLAND, OR HE'D GONE TO ENGLAND...

A I lied, and that would have been wonderful if that would have been the truth.

Q DID THE POLICE COME BACK AGAIN FOR HIM?

A Yeah, I said, they came back on his birthday, every time.

Q EVERY TIME. HOW DID HE MANAGE? DID HE GET A RATION CARD TOO?

A Yes, he did get that ration card. And that's what they picked up on. And he talked them out of - to arrest him. He would say to them: "Listen, you're son of a father also. I am a father of here and don't take me away - what are you doing?" And my mother would talk to them sometimes and they would go away.

Q AMAZING.

A But he explained it to them. It had to do already - he knew that it was about the German payment he made instead he should have paid in Dutch guilders

He knew that, but he didn't explain it to me. I found that out after the war.

Q AND WERE YOUR PARENTS EVEN THINKING OF LEAVING HOLLAND AT THAT POINT?

A Yes, my mother wanted to go to America. She had the right for a visa, French quarter, and she could have gone fast - would we have had the guts to just do it and appear in New York. And my father didn't like it there.

Q WHEN DID HE GET BACK FROM HERE?

A Before the war broke out, in '39. And my brother was there, and my father took a big sigh, mental sigh, and said: "Yeah, but my son is in America". It was as if that was his goal; that was the main thing. His son was always the main thing - the girls didn't count, you know.

Q YES, I KNOW.

A I would like to talk a lot about that. The injustice to girls... I could have escaped several times - I saw it coming. They wouldn't let me - I could have married several people that went to America. They even asked my aunt, before my parents came. "I have a visa - I can take a woman along. Let me marry her before, I take her out of here." And my aunt says: "No, you can't do that - she's too young, and I'm responsible." So what? I would have been out of the way.

And an American came to our house, and I never forget it - I asked him in the middle of the night, while he was asleep, and he picked up his glasses from the side - didn't believe his eyes. There was I, in the dark room, with the moon shining in, and I said: "Marry me tomorrow and then I'll be free." But I was already engaged - to Fritz Kremer, and my father thought that was rude to Fritz Kremer to do this. And it was rude to use Mr. John Ross, to ask him to marry me, to get out of the country. But he eventually would have to get a divorce from me. When the war would be over, Fritz would claim me. He said: "You are engaged to Fritz and you cannot just marry someone to get out of the country. That isn't done," he says. But, I would have done it. I would have had no affair with this man

That was something that Mr. John Ross agreed on. And I'm looking for him and I wish he would see this film, to tell: "Yes, Renee, I was worried about you, I didn't know you survived, and please let me hear from you." I found out that there are four hundred John Ross' listed in the military. He went back to... he was from, actually he was on a ship with my father, when he came back from New York. It was a simple ship, merchant ship. There were a few people on there.

My father gave him the address and said: "If you come through Amsterdam, visit us." My father had already forgotten about him when he, one day, knocked the door, and said: "This is Mr. Ross. Is Duering zu hauze?" And he had come from Dresden, where he spent some time, studying. He said: "I can stay one week. Do you have a room for me?" I said: "Yes, we have room for you." And we let him sleep in the dining room on the sofa. And that night, I crept up there, sneaking up on my tippy toes and I discussed with him everything. And it was alright for him to marry me, to get out of the country. When at eight o'clock, we had breakfast and my father scolded me for asking such an immoral thing to do.

Q WERE YOU REALLY AFRAID OF HITLER...?

A I knew it was going to happen. There was nothing that stopped Hitler; he was on the run. He was overwhelming all the countries, occupying - giving us stars to wear, giving us a 'J' in the passport, taking away bicycles, taking away right to go in a streetcar. We were married together, my Fritz and I, in the zoo. That's where we Jewish people got married in Amsterdam.

Q IN THE ZOO?

A In the zoo, in an office in the zoo, not in a cage.

Q AND THIS WAS MEANT TO Demean THE MARRIAGE, I ASSUME?

A It was that the Jewish people couldn't enter a city hall. It was a substitute of a city hall for the Jews.

Q HOW DID YOU MEET FRITZ?

A Ah, that's a good question, you know. I went to educate myself in the English language - my mother suggested it. And we went to a Jewish club where they taught English in the evening, after work. And we walked there for twenty minutes to get there, and we walked home for twenty minutes. And on the way home we walked together with some of the pupils who also learned English. Those people lived with the family Kremer, Betefsky and Baumann. Baumann lives, if he is still alive, in Bay area, in Oakland somewhere. And he said to my mother: "Where I live, those are very nice people. They are immigrants they are coming from Friedburg. And they have two children, one daughter is the age of Renee."

So one day, my mother was invited by these two young men, who rented the room there, and it was also done, you know. People had to pay their rent, so they rented out. It was done by immigrants. And I think it is done in America now, by some other people. So that is how I met, first, his mother and then his sister. And the sister said to me - she was my age, "If you meet my brother, he takes all the girlfriends away from me." So that was how I met him, one day.

He worked in car business, with his father - he was very busy and he came only home for dinner and left early in the morning. And then he came home for lunch, and then one day, his mother let me sew. My aunt laid me off - she said: "Work is slow now, and you can sew in the homes of the customers." And a few customers that had dresses done, knew me, and they called me to come and do some alterations and new things. And I was always engaged for a week at a time. And Mrs. Kremer took me in for a week also. And I made a beautiful dress for her. And she liked me a lot. And my future sister-in-law, she was fixing the table one night and she couldn't resist hitting me on the head with a spoon in the middle of my crown - here. [indicates middle of head with hand] What you call this?

Q IT'S THE TOP OF THE HEAD.

A Yeah, the soft spot. The open spot. And I cried so much, I couldn't stop crying - it was so unexpected and so out of the... what you say...

Q CHARACTER

A Out of character to do this. And she laughed her head off - that I cried. And that is how she is, and that is how I felt, that it was out of character. But I barely could eat that night and my mother always said: "You come always home, and you have eaten. I cook and you don't eat here." I said: "Well, you know, I make a living that way, and I have to eat. I work all day there, then they make dinner, and then I have to stay for dinner. You don't understand that." And she was, in a way, happy that she didn't have to cook for me. But she didn't admit it. She felt guilty about it - that she had to send me to work and took all the money from me. I never had a cent in my pocket - with all the money I made, I always gave it to my mother, always.

But my brother he could keep some money. You know what he made. Because he had the girlfriend, and he could take her out. And Fritz, my future husband, he had to visit us at home, while my father was in America and we sat there in the evening, and Hitler was already there - we had to be at home at eight o'clock, I think. I forgot if it was seven or eight. There was a curfew - you had to be at home, Jew or not Jew. And he came to visit sometimes only for ten minutes or half an hour.

And he sat there in the living room and he didn't know what to say. We never were alone together. That is how I had to be as a girl, and my brother went to America though, you know, and left his girlfriend behind. And she married somebody else. His name is Lefkowitz, and he told me after the war that he met my husband in the camp. But he died pretty soon - after three months he was dead.

Q WHAT WAS - SO, WERE THE KREMERS IMMIGRANTS ALSO OR WERE THEY...?

A Yes, they came from Hesson, in Friedburg, near Frankfort.

Q AND AT THIS TIME, NOW GETTING INTO THE LATE THIRTIES OR 1940, HAD YOU HEARD ANYTHING FROM REFUGEES, SAY, FROM POLAND OR GERMANY ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THOSE PARTS? WERE THERE ANY REFUGEES COMING?

- A Yes, yes, we listened to the BBC in Holland, and that was also forbidden. We weren't supposed to listen, and that is a very good question, because that is when I heard about the gas chambers. BBC broadcasted that Polish people came to report that they are building gas chambers in Auschwitz.
- Q REALLY, WHEN WAS THIS?
- A '40, '41. And my father listened to it together with me. And he said: "Don't believe it."
I said: "Why not?"
He says: "Well, the Germans, they are smarter than that. They let the Jewish people work. They make slaves out of them. They let them work in the ammunition factories to produce more war material, but to kill them - that would be very foolish. And I don't believe it," he says to me.
And I was a child and I said - I didn't want to contradict him, but I didn't believe it. I didn't believe my father at that point. I thought, what a fool you are! What a fool you are. And he died in the gas chambers. And I'm asking you now, what do you think he thought of in the last twelve minutes of his life?
- Q I DON'T KNOW.
- A I think he thought of me. I told him I believe it, and he didn't believe it.
- Q WHAT ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY - HOW DID THEY REACT TO THIS KIND OF NEWS?
- A Oh, it was the secret to know this. It was a secret to listen to the radio.
- Q DID YOU TALK ABOUT IT?
- A So, no, we didn't talk about it. It was forbidden to talk about that we listened to it.
- Q I SEE. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DANGER, JUST TO MENTION IT?
- A Yes, yes.
- Q WHERE WAS THE RADIO?

A The radio was still in our house, but soon we had to give it up. The Jewish people couldn't have a radio, and every radio was marked and listed and we had to bring it away. Like bicycles, we had to give it to them. They didn't come and pick it up. We had to bring it there.

Q DID YOUR FAMILY TURN IN ALL THESE GOODS THAT THEY ASKED FOR?

A Yes, yes. They knew exactly what we had. There were - the Germans were always very good in statistics, and still are.

Q DID YOU HAVE TO REGISTER CERTAIN, LIKE, PROPERTY THAT YOU HAD?

A Right. Because, listen, if you have a radio and you have cable, you must register your TV, okay. But if you buy a television set, the man who sells it to you must say who bought it. There is no way out to keep it a secret that you have a TV set, if you bought one. Or, if you buy it illegally. I mean, I don't know, how can I explain this? Everything was done according to the law. And the law was that everybody who had a bicycle had to pay a license plate, like you have to pay for your car. We had to pay for the bicycle, a license plate. We never thought about it that that could bring it to this situation, that it was misused. And therefore, I don't blame all the people that don't want to register. I don't blame the people that want no visa cards. I believe visa is alright for me. But people that don't want to be traced, they pay by cash. And lately, those people who carry cash, they are arrested because they carry cash.

Three times a day - he wasn't satisfied. When he went to work in the morning, we passed our ways crossing. I walked, and he was in the car. And we waved and he blew the horn. And the same at lunch time. And the evening we would visit with each other.

Q WHAT WAS HIS ATTITUDE ABOUT YOUR IDEA OF MARRYING SOMEBODY AND GOING TO AMERICA?

A I didn't tell him. That was my way of saying... I would have told him afterwards, that I only saved my neck to be with him together, after the war. And we would have made it that way.

Q SO, YOU SAID, YOU DID THINK OF GOING INTO HIDING - WHAT PREVENTED YOU?

A In hiding - no. I wanted to go together with him, in hiding.

Q YOU SAID THAT FAMILY USED TO ??

A Yes, that's right. And, my father-in-law changed his mind all the time. My father-in-law who paid. We had no money. You see, you can't do anything without money. They always said we can't burden these people. They had three little girls and it was always the moral, that you can't do that to other people. Just sit there and be a burden. But these people did it gladly and it was all away from the Nazi traffic. It was in the countryside, in Friesland.

Q DID THEY KEEP A FARM, OR SOMETHING?

A I forgot what they were doing, but there was another family in Amsterdam. The family Krieken that came to us after the biggest day when they took all the Jews away. The Jews had been moved from Amsterdam to Amsterdam East and we were all living like in a ghetto. So they had control over us. They knew where we were to be found. And one Sunday, they took all the Jews. And somehow, they didn't ring our doorbell. Either we were not on the list, or our name, Kremer, was not Jewish enough. But we were spared that Sunday. However, I saw my parents walk by with what they could carry.

On Monday, came the family Krieken and said: "Oh good, you are still here. Come with us." They had known now what happened. And they were postal office managers, across from the Konsertgebau. And they said: "We have a very big building, we can hide you in the closets if something comes up." And my father-in-law said: "But you have sons, and the children will talk." And they said: "No - we will say that you are our relatives. That you live from now on with us and we hide you - all four of you."

And the Kriekens were really meaning that, and if ever Mrs. Krieken hears - sees this movie - in Holland, I would say that I am apologizing for one thing that I did after the war. She wanted my evening gown that I had designed. It was black taffeta with red, big bow in the back that touched the floor. And she said: "Renee, can I have that evening gown?" And I said: "No." Well, I had designed it - it was mine, but I never had an opportunity to wear it. And I'm ever sorry that I didn't give it to her, but I sold it and I needed the money. She didn't offer me, or if she did offer me something, I forgot about it. And I apologize to Mrs. Krieken who wanted to hide us, four of us. I am ever sorry that my father-in-law turned down that offer. And my husband and I, we were standing by and listening to: "No, we can't do that to you." And we were children, even married. We were so dependent on what the grown ups would say and do, that I hoped that we do respect the young people now, mainly in an emergency.

Q AND PLUS, AS YOU SAY, YOU DIDN'T HAVE THE MONEY EITHER - TO KEEP GOING.

A Right. I never had any money.

Q WHERE WERE THE JEWS TAKEN? YOU SAW YOU PARENTS GO BY, YOU SAID.

A They lived also in Amsterdam East. And they happened to walk to that railroad station where they filled the cars with the Jews that they'd gathered on that Sunday. And they cut off the entire city. And my sister came out of a hiding place. She was hiding because she had blue eyes and blonde hair.

Q AND DID YOUR PARENTS ARRANGE THE HIDING PLACE FOR HER?

A No. A friend of hers did. He said: "With your face, you don't have to go. You can hide easy." She was sixteen. And she never saw the parents again. But she came home for a stupid reason. My mother asked this young man who did hide her: "Where is she?" And he answered: "You cannot know where she is." This is what hiding is all about. And he was very rough with my mother.

And, added to it: "If you want to see her, then she has to come here and I'll get her out of the hiding place." And that's what he exactly did.

He went to these people, whispered with them. My sister didn't know what was the whispering about and said - the people said: "No, you have to go home to see your parents." As if my mother was threatening the young man, to follow him, if he would visit her. It was in the countryside. And so she came home, and she almost ran into that [ratzia?] in that day, in that Sunday. And the Germans told her: "You can't get in here. It's all closed up." And she went to where we used to live. And she slept that night with some old neighbors who had moved to another house. And recently, I talked to her about it and she had forgotten where she spent that night. Then she came to us in the Retief street, and she said to my father-in-law: "Can I stay with you?" That was a Monday, and he said: "No, you can't. It's too dangerous." And so she said: "What am I to do? The parents are gone now." The Sunday before, and she said: "I was at the apartment. It's empty already."

The neighbors had taken out everything, or had exchanged furniture for better furniture, and had put their old stuff there. And after the war, they had to give it to me. They didn't want to give it to me. They said: "Oh, we put our stuff there. They would have picked it up anyway." But it was our furniture and the police said they had to give it to us. So, we got back the stove, for cooking. We got back the dining room furniture. And I didn't pay these people anything, I think. If I did - I forgot. And that wasn't fair either. But I had no money after the war, either.

Q WELL, WHAT DID HAPPEN WITH YOUR SISTER? WHERE DID SHE GO?

A Yeah, she went back to her hiding place, and the people were glad to see her again, because they must have also read what had happened. And they were glad that she had come back. And my sister knew now that she had to give up the parents for a while. And that she had to give me up. She said: "Renee, come with me in the hiding place." She couldn't stay with the Kremers and I said: "I'm sorry, I'm married now - I can't do that "

It is always the moral, you see - that I didn't do this, and I didn't do that. And one person drags into the other. I could have escaped in the police station in Amsterdam East. I was there with my mother-in-law when they arrested us, the next day - on Tuesday.

Q SO THE NEXT DAY THEY CAME TO YOUR PLACE?

A Yes, they came - a civil men came and I did write it down in that story, how that went.

Q HOW DID IT GO?

A I felt my parents might want to eat something there. I didn't think there was enough food in Westerborg where they were sent to, and next door was a little store. I went downstairs and at that moment the sirens were blowing. There was an alarm to come; there was a bombing to come. And some kind of a civil man walked up to me and said: "You are on the street," you know, "You are not supposed to be on the street." I said: "Yes, I know. I'm just living," - no, I said: "I'm just buying a bread here." And my mother-in-law, at that moment, came on the little balcony and put her head towards the street and said: "Renee, you forgot your identification cards." And I had been going there without a star and this guy was a civil man, and I didn't think it was possible that civil people also can arrest you. He was a helper for the Nazis. He arrested us.

Q HE DID?

A Because my mother-in-law was hanging out of the balcony saying this to me. And he asked me: "Do you live there?" And I didn't answer. And she said: "Yes." And when we were arrested and we were two days and two nights in the Jewish theatre to be guarded. They guarded all the people that they hadn't picked up yet. And we waited there and my father-in-law was telling me that it was all my fault that we were arrested now. And the day before we could have been in hiding. And he blamed me and I had to live with that.

Q WHAT A BURDEN!

A Through the camp, through Auschwitz, through everything. And after the war, I saw him again and guess what he said to me - the first thing, "Renee, I did you wrong. It wasn't your fault that we were arrested." Well, fine, thank you very much. Was I ever happy, and it happened in my life so often, that people apologized. That happened so often to me. Never - I'm used to it now, that it takes about fifteen years until the truth comes out that I foresee. And it takes that long until the people come to me and say: "Renee, you were right." Okay, like when I was, for example, in the Cologne School. There was a Jewish girl - Bobby was her name. Bobby Izzaeh. And I saw her after the war. She somehow survived the war in Holland, or I don't know how, but I met her again. And she said: "Renee, I must apologize to you for something. I didn't talk to you in school when you came in the uniform of the Scout Girls." But the German children had to come in the uniform of the Hitler Youth - BDM - Bundes Madchen - Deutsche Bundes, BDM, you know, that was the name. And they all came on request, because we had a fire drill. The fire drill was to show us what to do if it would be bombed on us - with the buckets, with the sand, and there was an artificial bomb thrown. And we had to douse it with the sand and the bucket. And every house should have sand buckets. So we had that drill in the courtyard, and I was the only one in a uniform that was not BDM, that was green and blue and white. And it said - Jewish Padvinder, Jewish Scout Girl. But she didn't talk to me anymore, Marlize, it was over. She thought that I did something very wrong - that I wanted to be equal to the Hitler Youth. But I was actively standing up for the Jewish girls. And I came in my Jewish uniform. And she admitted that to me when we saw each other again, and I was delighted. That was 1946, when I met my second husband to be, we visited her. Yeah, she came to the wedding. That was... at this time I married in the real city hall, and with a real old fashioned horse and buggy. And, except, I didn't wear a white dress. But she had read in the newspaper, my name, that I was on the list of being married and she came there - otherwise I wouldn't have found her. And she invited us later on, and she said that to me. That was such a reward.

- Q SO, THERE YOU WERE, BURDENED WITH THIS REMARK THAT YOUR FATHER-IN-LAW HAD MADE THAT EVERYONE WAS ARRESTED BECAUSE OF YOU...
- A Yeah, because I was on the street to buy bread for my parents.
- Q YES, AND YOU STARTED BY SAYING THAT YOU HAD ALL BEEN ARRESTED AND TAKEN TO THE POLICE STATION, BUT EVEN THEN YOU COULD HAVE ESCAPED.
- A Exactly.
- Q HOW COULD YOU?
- A Well, they told us, my mother-in-law and I only, we had to wait and she told them where her husband was and my husband - where they were. And they went after them, they had already walkie-talkies. They found them and they said: "You go to the Police station. Be ready in ten minutes and then the men will come after you." I was sitting there on a bench with her in the Police Station and there was not a Dutch policeman who would have said to me: "Don't go outside." You know, I went one time on the street to see if they were coming or not. And while I was on the street, I thought 'Now I could escape. But, would it be nice to my mother-in-law, if I would escape by myself?' If we would have escaped - the two of us, would it have been nice if my father-in-law and my husband would have arrived there. ?? protection from the Nazis and SS and so on, and so I didn't escape. I could have - I was on the street. I could have walked away.
- Q NOW, ALL THESE YEARS LATER, HAD YOU DONE THAT - DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN SATISFIED WITH DOING THAT?
- A Retroactive, what would have happened was, that my husband would have jumped the train - he wanted to jump the train with me in it, when we were in the train. And I said: "Don't jump the train, because it's so steep. And all these rocks down there. You have broken your ribcage twice." And he said: "Yeah, I had forgotten about that." He had a tendency to break his ribs. And if he wouldn't have told me about it, but sometimes it came to pass that he had to be careful. And I said: "You will only break your ribs and you will lay there "

And he said: "I'll jump, if you jump first." I said: "No, I don't jump." So, would I have escaped on my own? And my mother-in-law, I would have let her sit there. If I would have survived, I would have had to live with the idea that it was my fault that they didn't survive, or that my husband wouldn't survive. Or that he would have jumped and broke his ribs. I wanted to do it all together. I was married and I was told: "You do everything together." So, it wasn't morally right. And I was told so often it wasn't morally right. I always had the tendency to do something against the law. But it wasn't - I was brainwashed already. You don't do that. You don't escape alone, if you are married. And I had said the day before to my sister: "I can't come with you because I am married." And here I am with my mother-in-law, and I could have escaped, and I don't do it. So we went, the four of us, into the Scharburg - we waited, and then my father-in-law said it was all my fault. And I had to live with that.

- A [Inaudible]...doctor, who had given my husband and me some ultra violet rays. My father ?? that. He knew a lot about health. And it gave us some strength. And now, [Break in Tape] Doctor, he had to give us shots, vitamin B shots, for one entire week, because I had a pain in my leg that was unbearable. I could barely [inaudible] - I recuperated real fast. 'Cause, we were not in a ghetto visibly. We had no bathrooms sometimes. Maybe ?? that somebody would [inaudible][sound track breaks down completely]

[picture of a man with glasses] - inaudible talk.

"Tape ends abruptly"