

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

Name of interviewee: Duering, Renee

Date of interview: 4/8/1991, 4/23 & 12/2/1992

Summary: (Summary includes all three video interviews. The first one covers birth through Westerbork, the second one covers Auschwitz and the third one the subsequent camps and life after the war.)

Renee was born January 7, 1921 in Cologne (Köln), Germany. In 1933 Renee's brother Rudy, moved to Switzerland to study. Later he moved to Holland to join the Dutch army. Also in '33, Renee went with a friend to Spain for 3 months. Renee moved to Amsterdam in '33 and lived with her aunt. Renee's sister, Ellen, joined them later. Rudy moved to America with his father, who only stayed for 6 months. Renee's father dropped his business and moved to Amsterdam with the rest of his family.

At home, Renee's family owned a radio, and they listened to the BBC, where they learned about the gas chambers at Auschwitz. Renee worked legally as a maid and sewed; earlier she worked as a dressmaker, but it was not considered legal work. Renee married Fritz Kramer, who had been in hiding, in an office in the zoo in 1941. All Jews were moved to Amsterdam East, and a few days later were rounded up, though no one came to Renee's door. Mrs. Krieken offered to put Renee and her family in hiding, but Renee's father-in-law turned down the offer. Ellen was in hiding and remained there until the end of the war. A couple of days later Renee was found by a civilian, and her family was sent to a Jewish theater, where they stayed for two days and then sent to the police station. Renee had opportunities to escape, but she could not desert her family. Renee's family was sent to Westerbork in July 1943 as well. Fritz worked as a telephone operator in the transportation division, which spared his family from being sent to other camps. Renee taught and prepared people for their transportation to other camps.

A couple months later, Renee's family was sent to Auschwitz by cattle car for 3 days. Renee's parents were to be sent to Theresienstadt, but they were sent to Bergen-Belsen instead because they were in the last cattle car, which usually separated to go to Bergen-Belsen. They were later shipped to Theresienstadt and then to Auschwitz in 1944, where they were gassed. Fritz also died in Auschwitz. Renee was put in a special block for experimentation (Block 10), where doctors or barbers sterilized women's ovaries. Renee only had half of her body sterilized. Block 10 had better living conditions than the other barracks. Most women died from the sterilizations. Renee also picked leaves for tea outside of the camp and was involved in the music department.

Renee was sent to 3 other camps and then walked the death march, beginning in Jan. 1945 to Ravensbruck. She escaped during the march when passing through the town of Riesa and hid in a Dresden suburb until liberation by the Russians on May 10, 1945. Renee had her tattooed number removed from her

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arm. She lived with her sister, who survived in hiding, in an apartment and later moved to Israel for 10 years. Then she decided to move to America, where she married her second husband, who was also sterile. At the doctors in 1952, Renee learned that she could have a child because only half her body was sterilized. Her husband divorced her because he married her only because they were both sterile. Renee bore a child, Naomi, in 1954 from an anonymous donor.