

-TITLE-LAKSHMI RADICH
-I_DATE-7/24/90
-SOURCE-SAN FRANCISCO HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-GOOD
-IMAGE_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-DURATION-2 HOURS
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

1-10:59 Lakshmi Radich is age 60, she was born in Holland January of 1931. Her father was a seaman. He participated in the mobilization of Holland in 1938. Lakshmi did not see or hear of her father until a few years after the war.

1-11:05 Lakshmi's father was stationed in Norway for part of the war. He was assigned to sabotage Norway's uranium stock for the purpose of limiting Germany's nuclear power. Lakshmi was not raised Jewish but she was part Jewish on her mothers side.

1-11:08 Lakshmi met the majority of her Jewish acquaintances through her aunt and her mothers side of the family at various family celebrations.

1-11:12 May 10, 1939 was the pivotal point that changed her life. On this day the Germans invaded Holland. Lakshmi can vividly recall seeing the faces of the German men parachuting from their planes. When the invasion began Lakshmi's mother and she fled to her grandmothers house. On this day the backdrop of Holland was painted with exploding bombs and flying bullets. Upon reaching her grandmother's house, she was told to go into the cellar where the rest of the family was hiding. Lakshmi refused saying, "If I have to die, I want to die above ground."

1-11:16 The next day, she and her mother returned home, once again against a backdrop of chaos, destruction, and death. At this point she began to see burning corpses and mangled bodies. The air was filled with gases and caustic substances. She and her mother walked the streets with a handkerchief covering their mouths. Lakshmi remembers the Jewish situation, at this point, as being regular or normal.

1-11:20 Lakshmi remembers when the Germans came to take the Jews. She had some close Jewish friends and one day went to visit them. What stuck out most in her mind was the faces of the two kids looking out the window anticipating her arrival. After she arrived, the Germans came and took the family away, separating them first.

The cries of the mother were horrible. Subsequently, Lakshmi's mother revealed the harsh reality to her, that the Germans were attempting to get rid of the Jews.

1-11:24 During the Jewish segregation process, the Dutch citizens wore the Star of David, along with the Jews, to confuse the Germans. However, it wasn't long before the Germans discovered the true Jews. At this point in the war, Lakshmi's mother joined the resistance. During this time, many people would come to her house, stay for a night, and be gone the next day. Her mother was helping Jews and allied soldiers escape to England.

1-11:28 Lakshmi, in the face of the brutality of the war, was forced to grow up fast. As part of the resistance movement, she had the opportunity to talk with the Jews and soldiers trying to escape, noticing that the Jews were more afraid than the soldiers because they were hunted. Not until Lakshmi was hunted did she know why the Jews were afraid and realize the psychological affects of being hunted.

1-11:32 Being in the resistance movement was tough. Lakshmi was constantly separated from her mother. Her days were filled with fear and dangerous tasks, even though she was a child. The fact that she was a child allowed her to go in and out of places that adults could not. Lakshmi distinctly remembers the food shortages and the how the Germans would steal their food. One particular instance that sticks in her memory was the day the Germans began transporting the stolen food back to Germany and written on the train was "Thanks for the Gift". It was written to hide, from the German citizens, the fact that the soldiers had stolen the food.

1-11:36 Life after May 10th was never the same for Lakshmi. She rarely saw her mother and seldom knew where her mother was.

1-11:42 Lakshmi Jewish friends were slowly beginning to disappear. The German soldiers began to use the Jews as examples. They would hand the dead bodies of the Jews from lamp posts and throw some into the streets. This did not discourage Lakshmi and her people, it only made them more determined. However, the evils were everywhere. Lakshmi was raped several times by soldiers, both American and German. She does not believe in "good" or "bad" soldiers, all are relative. During war everybody lives in an emotional nomad's land. Citizens and soldiers don't know how long they will live so they take what they can get.

1-11:44 Lakshmi was first raped when she was 11 years old. It scared her deeply, but she also remembers the good people. Those are the people that kept her alive. Not everybody went through what she did. Some people worked and went to school. They lived a bit more of a normal life. She had no choice!

1-11:48 It is important to Lakshmi to remember the good people, British soldiers, Canadian police, others etc... She can remember one Canadian soldier who protected her, got her out of jail, and helped her to survive. He lived in (Shakertown)ph.

1-11:52 The only news Lakshmi heard was by radio. By the end of the war, she was constantly hungry because of the shortage of food. She got so hungry at one point that she went inside a German camp and said, "give me back my food". She never denies that she was scared, however her hunger was greater than her fear.

1-11:56 Lakshmi had a young Jewish friend with whom she planned an escape. They escaped from a German holding area and were in hiding for several weeks.

1-11:59 Lakshmi and her Jewish friend escaped to a British fortification with a group of people that were in hiding also. They had to cross a river to get there. Lakshmi's job was to lie on the bottom of the boat and pan the water out. The group had to wait until the soldiers guarding the boat were drunk before they could cross. Just about the time the boat reach the middle of the river, the Germans discovered it and began shooting. It was a miracle they lived.

1-12:03 Another miracle occurred for Lakshmi's group just after departing the boat. They crossed a dike and a field to reach the British camp. However, after they had reached the camp it was discovered that they had come across a mine field. One man in the group, who was an escaped German soldier, thought that he would receive less punishment if he returned and turned himself in. He attempted to cross the river with six people, of which he planned to kill if anything went wrong. He had just six bullets in his gun for such an occasion.

1-12:06 When Lakshmi reached the outpost she was met by two young British officers that told her they were going to liberate Holland from Germany and save the Dutch citizens. She remembers that they were very naive, although she was young, she was not naive. When she reached the outpost she thought the reception from the British would be grand. However, when she arrived she realized that the British had not known what she and her companions had been through. At this outpost, Lakshmi met the Canadian officer, Steve, who helped her from that point until the end of the war.

1-12:10 At the outpost, Lakshmi and her friends were put into cells. She recalls that her Jewish friend was well accepted. Steve got her out of the jail and got her work in a villa. She felt liberated, almost like this freedom was her salvation. While working in the villa, Steve continued to protect her.

1-12:18 Lakshmi worked in the villa until the end of the war. She cooked, cleaned and washed clothes. After the war, her main goal was to return to Holland, find her mother and what had become of the resistance movement. Lakshmi returned to Holland in a truck with prisoners. This was the only manner in which she could cross the bridge into Holland.

(Bad Sound Quality)

1-12:18 Lakshmi knew of the concentration camps and the extermination of the Jews. And because of this, she was anxious to find out information on her Jewish friends and what had become of the resistance. Five to six years after returning to Holland Lakshmi tracked down the information she needed to find her mother. Her search took her to Scandinavia, where she learned of a group of prisoners, 4 men and 1 women, who were kept in a small town. With the help of the town mayor, Lakshmi located the area where she believed her mother was buried. However, she is still not sure if her mother was buried at this location in (Vinabelt)ph Lakshmi was fully prepared to continue her search. She asked the mayor to have the bodies exhumed. He refused.

1-12:28 Even today Lakshmi is unsure about the death of her mother. The mayor of the city was very nice to her. He told her, "do yourself a favor, leave this country and never come back - go and live your life. If it makes you feel better that your mother is dead, then good, but leave this place". Lakshmi left Holland and subsequently, was contacted by her father.

1-12:26 Lakshmi got her money to travel to Sweden, where her father was, by selling cigarettes on the black market. She was 15 years old.

1-12:30 The best thing about Lakshmi's experience is what she learned. The hardest things, the most difficult things to talk she cannot talk about. (She had to take a break at this point because the emotions were flowing.)

1-12:34 After the war and even today, Lakshmi feels that the people she is closest to, are Jewish. She often breaks bread with them, but does not always feel like one of them. Lakshmi feels that all the pain and horror of the war has followed her to California.

1-1:09 "I only have so much information. I only went to school up to the six grade because war broke out. I'm merely a person that was forced into a situation where I had to help people. I just did what needed to be done. I'm no hero."

1-1:13 "War is absolutely horrible but there is some good, that is how people survive. What happened can easily happen to the human race again - to any group of people. There is no peace in the world, people would go crazy if there was peace."

1-1:28 Many times during the war, while she and her mother were hiding Jews, Lakshmi's house was inspected by the Gestapo. She could tell her mother was nervous, however she learned to be tough. Lakshmi and her family got through many inspection. It was very dangerous because the Germans shot first and asked questions later.

1::32 During the war, Lakshmi and her mother were not working together but they were doing the same thing. They were helping people.

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