

-TITLE-NAN KOEHLER, SOLOMAN

-I DATE-JULY 12, 1990

-SOURCE-SAN FRANCISCO HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

-RESTRICTIONS-

-SOUND_QUALITY-EXCELLENT

-IMAGE_QUALITY-EXCELLENT

-DURATION-82 MINUTES

-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH

-KEY_SEGMENT-

-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-

-PERSONAL_NAME-

-CORPORATE_NAME-

-KEY_WORDS-

-NOTES-

-CONTENTS-

00:00 Nan was born in 1941 in Darmstadt, near Frankfurt, West Germany. While she was born in a city, she lived in a little village in the country with her mother Lenore, father Franz, brother Echardt (Nickname Kay), and sister Gerta. Her earliest memories are about her crib and her feeling of being caged in while her sister and brother could crawl out. She also remembers the nutrition deprivation. The food was very plain. Meat broth soup was a special Sunday dinner.

00:05 She goes on to talk about her interest in psychotherapy, natural childbirth, and new age consciousness. The Nazi bigotry and the patriarchy of the Middle Eastern countries stem from the degradation of women and their natural instincts. Her mother was on the lowest level because she did exactly what she was told by the book and doctors and did not trust her natural instincts. Natural birth give empowerment to women.

10:00 Her father was an authority figure. Her parents divorced when she was young. She begins to talk about the bombing of Darmstadt. She lived on a slope of a mountain that housed German antiaircraft guns. The bombing was frightening for her. It was an interruption in her life. She said the bombing was an alienating and isolating experience. The bomb shelter was very dark, stuffy, and experience. The bomb shelter was very dark, stuffy, and scary. She had no one to comfort her and reassure her. After one particular bombing incident, her mother took them to a puppet show.

She goes on to talk about the fear the villagers had of the Americans.

15:00 The Americans came into the village in camouflage. Both the Germans and Americans used her house as headquarters. The American weren't scary. They gave the children chocolate and clothes.

Daily life before the war. She was confused because her parents agreed to shelter their children from any negative information: the war and their divorce. Therefore, when anything bad happened she was surprised. She had a hard time speaking and communicating her thoughts.

She remembers moving constantly. Her father tried to maintain German rituals throughout this time. On St. Nicholas day, children received coal if they were bad and candy if they were good. Her sister received coal one year. It was very traumatic.

20:00 She doesn't remember playing with other German children, just her sister and brother. When her parents divorced, her sister went with her father and her brother and Nan went with their mother. The three of them came to America when she was five years old. She couldn't understand anyone. They lived in Philadelphia with relatives. Her cousins teased her for being German, not because she was part Jewish.

She doesn't remember her mother talking to her about her being Jewish. She thinks she always just knew that her grandfather was Jewish. He looked Jewish as did her mother. His mother was culturally Jewish. He was originally an atheist who then converted to Christianity. She never had any negative feelings about her Jewish ancestry, only feelings of pride. She doesn't remember any discrimination in Germany as a child.

25:00 Her mother joined the Quakers while in college. Her father was an agnostic. His family were rich peasants from Czechoslovakia. He was the first to attend university. Her family first lived in Philadelphia, where she grew up among "The Friends", a name for the Quaker community. She spent kindergarten in Washington D.C., moved back to Philadelphia for first grade and then moved to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania for second grade. There was very little anti-German sentiment in Bethlehem, she didn't learn the alphabet until fifth grade.

30:00 One lasting impact from the bombing was Nan's fear of thunderstorms. Living in California as an older child, she used to hide under the bed during storms because she thought it was the bombs again.

Her mother is one half Jewish. Nan's father's anti-Semitism was partly responsible for his rejection of her as wife.

The malnourishment of her childhood has had lasting effects, Nan believes. Her teeth and her eyesight are bad. The daily food of carrots, bread, and potatoes was not enough.

35:00 She and her brother are very close. They were a comfort to each other. Her first husband died when their first child was two years old. She wanted to give her son a sibling so she lived with another man and they had two children together.

40:00 She has five children total. The last seven or eight years, she has undergone spiritual practice to train her mind not to carry things with her from the past. She went through psychotherapy. As a mid-wife she has joined the rebirth movement.

Her husband not has been to Germany to meet her father, seen her village, etc. He is emotionally more stable than Nan.

45:00 She now sees war in a historical context and on a global scale. She sees war in economic terms and social pressures. She believes that there is plenty, we all need to share. She goes on to talk about the family bed and tribal culture.

50:00 She summaries her adult life. Her first husband Bill died when their son was two. She has two children with her second husband. Her third and current husband is younger than Nan. They have two children.

60:00 She talks about her trips back to Germany.

1. 1955 The first time she went back Nan was 14. It was frightening because the war was still evident.

2. 1961 She was a junior in college and she studied in Germany. She lived in Vienna. The war was gone and no one talked about it. She also wanted to connect with her family, especially her father.

3. 1971 Her first husband had died. she went to Germany with her first child and was pregnant with her second. Her father really liked her first child. Nan and her father grew closer together.

65:00

4. She went back with her third husband who is a physician. Her father liked him. She was there to help her father die.

Nan doesn't have an opinion on the affairs of Germany today. She believes that the Germans worship materialism but that change will stem from Germany.

She wrote a book called Artamis Speaks, on natural childbirth.

70:00 She connects with the Holocaust because she is part Jewish. Her personal life has been affected by the war. She has a fear of being displaced, homeless. She has a great need for stability.

75:00 She sees the Jewish and Quaker communities hoarding their possessions. She believes many of them are materialistic while she is an idealist. She tries to make life a celebration. She believes knowledge should be free.

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