

Title- Suzanne Kalter Dewitt
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Contents- Excellent insight into anti-semitism.

TAPE 1

1:30 Suzanne was born in Munich, Germany in November 1934. Her father, born in 1894, was a physician. He had trouble practicing because he could not belong to the system of socialized medicine. He could not join the system because he was Jewish. Suzanne's mother and father both worked at a Jewish home for the aged. This is where Suzanne was born.

3:00 Suzanne's mother was an orthodox Jew. Her father was less observant.

4:55 Her father was drafted into the German army. He served as a medical officer in World War I.

5:50 Suzanne's father specialized in internal medicine. He studied under Professor Rundkin who discovered Rundkin Rays (X-rays). He wrote his Ph.D. thesis with Prof. Alzheimer on Alzheimer's disease. He had trouble getting research positions because he was Jewish.

7:30 Suzanne's family belonged to the Jewish community. The Rabbi was Rabbi Barevald (ph).

9:40 The Nurenburg laws were like a "straight jacket." Her parents considered leaving but this was very difficult. It was difficult to purchase tickets. They also did not want to abandon the people in the old age home.

11:20 There was even more holding them back. Suzanne's grandmother was in her late 60's and had a child with Down's Syndrome. The government would not give a visa to her uncle with Down's. The grandmother would not leave her son and Suzanne's mother would not leave her grandmother.

13:00 Her mother was one of six brothers and sisters. Two brothers has emigrated to the U.S., the rest were in Munich. Suzanne's father had one sister, her husband and two children.

15:00 Suzanne's grandmother was deported to Lithuania to a work camp in 1942. She thinks the camp was Terishtenstad (ph). In the late 1960's her father's sister and husband were killed. Their two children were sent to Holland underground to live with a Christian family. Eventually her two cousins converted to Christianity. Fifty percent of Suzanne's family was killed. She is unsure about where they were placed.

17:30 Memories of her first four years of life are vague. She recalls that people were very afraid. It was difficult to get food and clothing. It was an anxious and tense time.

18:10 Suzanne recalls the hypocrisy of the Nazi era. Jews were arrested for not registering. But in order to register one would have to walk on the sidewalk. But if one was on the side walk without having registered one would also get arrested.

19:45 There was a certain amount of normalcy in Munich. Suzanne recalls her most vivid early memory. It was on November 9, 1938 of Kristalnacht. Suzanne was arrested and interrogated away from her parents but she would not cooperate.

21:20 There was a time when she was deported to Poland to be interrogated. She was given no food. Suzanne had a sense, even at her young age, that the Nazi's were evil.

22:20 Her family was among the first to be taken because during Kristalnacht the SS attacked the weak and vulnerable, those at the old age home.

24:00 The night of Kristalnacht, Suzanne was asleep in her bed at the old age home. The SS broke in through her bedroom window. Then they locked everyone into their rooms. Then processing took place. Everyone was then arrested and driven to Dakhau in vans.

25:50 Jews were stateless. So their citizenship defaulted to Poland where Suzanne's father was born. But they were not let in to Poland. The train just sat there for days.

26:45 They went back to Dakhau for not more than a week. At this time Dakhau was just a holding station.

28:00 Suzanne's family were transported by a passenger train during November. The weather was very cold. There was no place to wash. Some cars did have toilets, some did not.

30:00 In general, this time was vague for Suzanne.

32:30 During Kristalnacht Suzanne remembers an orderly disorder. For example, the SS stole her mother's belongings but gave her a receipt for them.

37:00 In preschool Suzanne remembers feeling prejudice. The Jewish students were not called on to answer questions but then were marked off for not participating. During school indoctrination

occurred.

40:25 Schools were run by the churches and were very oppressive.

43:00 Suzanne's mother hired those people that were down and out. She had some non-Jewish employees even though it was forbidden. One woman with papers for a young child offered to take Suzanne to Holland to insure her safety.

44:15 She was given a mild sleeping pill to keep her calm during the journey. The Dutch Queen had just given birth to a baby the country was celebrating. This allowed for more relaxed travel. The border guards were less strict.

45:05 Suzanne woke up and did not know anything. The family she lived with spoke only Dutch. It was like a nightmare to her.

47:25 Suzanne was soon placed with relatives, the Stein's (ph), in Amsterdam in 1939. Holland was invaded in September of 1939. Since the Steins were an affluent family they were able to go to their seaside home in Sandfoot (ph) during the invasion.

48:20 Later in 1939 she was shipped to England just weeks before the bombing of Rotterdam. She got out just in time.

50:00 The Stein family stayed behind in Holland. The parents and the older sons were sent to Bergenbelsen. The younger son was taken in by a gentile family and survived. Mrs. Stein is still alive.

52:00 Suzanne's mother and father got out to England. They were classified as enemy aliens. German Jews were still considered Germans. A British woman sponsored Suzanne's family. Sponsorship was for life. Suzanne spent time in a boarding school/orphanage until her parents were stable financially.

53:30 Suzanne's mother ran a youth hostel. Then came the blitz, when the German's bombed London.

55:00 Doctors were needed to fill in for doctors in the army. Suzanne's family moved to a mining community in South Wales, Tumble (ph) in Corovenshire (ph) County.

58:00 When Suzanne met up with her parents in England she had forgotten German and her parents did not speak Dutch.

60:40 Suzanne's family applied for visas to go to the United States. They were granted temporary visas.

62:00 It was difficult in England. Suzanne did not have a common language with her parents. She was in the hostel when it was bombed by Germans.

64:55 It was a scary time during the bombings. The British were

the type to "keep a stiff upper lip."

67:30 The hostel was a place for Jewish children. Some were very upset. Suzanne knows that there was anti-semitism but cannot remember specifics.

70:00 Suzanne was a very independent young woman, a bit defiant. Her parents were consumed by their challenge for survival. Her father was very eccentric, even neurotic.

72:10 All mail ties to Munich stopped in 1942. Her mother had been very upset to hear that her mother and brothers were taken away. A non-Jew named Paula Lawtmen (ph) corresponded with her mother.

74:40 Suzanne believes that her grandmother was taken to Terishenstad (ph). She does not know were her uncle who had Down's Syndrome was taken. One of her cousins, Max Rothchild, survived in hiding in Holland. He wrote her many letters.

76:50 Her cousins Hanna and Elisi Wolf converted to Christianity and lived in Holland. After the war she looked them up and persuaded them to go to the U.S.

80:00 Suzanne's father worked with infectious diseases in England. But after the war the original permanent doctor returned and he lost his job.

83:10 The children in the Welsh schools were ignorant to Jews. They thought Jews had horns. The town she lived in was baptist. Her family, in order to become a part of the community, joined the baptist church.

90:25 In 1945, Suzanne and her mother and father came to the United States. They came by boat. The movement of ships in those days was kept very secret. But they were informed of a ship leaving from Liverpool heading to Halifax. From Halifax they took a train to New York.

92:35 They were met at the boat by Suzanne's mother's brother. In New York her family lived in a room in a multi-family apartment.

94:45 Her father tried to get his licence to practice medicine in the U.S. but the A.M.A. was very anti-semitic.

96:50 Suzanne felt that there was ignorance concerning other cultures in the U.S. Suzanne was placed in a class for the mentally retarded. Her teacher would not call on her in class.

98:50 Children in school were very mean. The boys would urinate on her. They would tear up her Hebrew school homework. Suzanne was sent up to Boston to live with her uncle, his wife and their two children.

1:01:00 Her father got temporary licenses to practice in undesirable jobs. He worked on welfare island. There was much exploitation and anti-semitism.

1:02:25 Home life in Boston was fine. Suzanne was sent back to live with her parents after two years. She attended Joan of Arc Junior high school. She hated it. She did not fit in. She turned to the sciences. She wanted to study genetics to fight racism.

1:04:05 Suzanne wanted to go to Bronx School of Science. But none of the teachers would recommend her to take the test. So she said there was a mistake and was able to take the test. She was accepted. This was a turning point in her life.

1:07:40 Suzanne attended City College of New York where she was a math and pre-med/biology major. Her father got his licence and was transferred to Middletown Mental hospital. So she had no place to live. She applied to Cornell to transfer.

1:13:15 Anti-semitism was strong at Cornell. She retreated to Academics and became an avid zionist. This is where she met her husband. He was not Jewish but they got married anyway.

1:14:55 Her husband was awarded a fellowship to study in Hidleburg, Germany.

1:17:40 Suzanne went to Germany and made a point of visiting as many places as possible. She found some personal property that had been taken from her family during the war. She was able to get it back.

1:19:15 German society was generally polite Suzanne recalls. She was at a house where Mein Kampf was still in the family's collection of books. This was in 1956. She thought this was very insensitive.

1:20:00 In 1963 her husband was awarded another fellowship. This time Suzanne spoke with many people about the war days. She was very candid about the fact that she was Jewish. She was accepted to Berkeley Graduate school in 1957 to study microbiology and genetics.

TAPE 2

1:30 Suzanne had two boys and one girl. She worked in a radiation lab. She had difficulty getting a job.

3:40 She wanted to work with people, possibly doing genetic counseling. Applied to jobs but got rejected.

5:55 She asked why she was repeatedly rejected from a job she was qualified for and truly wanted. They responded that Suzanne was not accepted because she was too involved with her ethnic identity.

8:25 Suzanne's mother's maiden name was Katzenstein (ph). Her

father's name was Kalter. His sister married a wolf.

13:50 Suzanne's father considered himself a German.

17:40 Suzanne would like to see positive actions taken to heighten awareness in Germany. Institutions and leaders should take a stand and teach the world that they can learn.

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Jennifer Dickman

Oral History
Theological Implications of the Holocaust
Prof. Berenbaum
April-1993