

Summary of Oral History: Ina Hoffman

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SUMMARY

Hoffman recalls her childhood in the Netherlands; Being raised in a close knit family with a sister who was four years older than her. Attending an academic high school with studies leading to a career as a pharmacist. Anne Frank attended her school but they were not acquainted. Her father was a diamond dealer and hid some of the valuables with friends when the country was occupied by the Germans; Discusses the occupation, being required to wear the Jewish star and not permitted to shop at certain stores; Her father had thoughts of fleeing to England or Switzerland but was not speedy enough. The Germans requested valuables from Jews to excuse them from being deported; Ina Hoffman recalls being sent to a ghetto for six months instead of being deported; She recalls hiding places in the ghetto; Her father building a closet in front of the entrance to the attic and placing supplies in the attic where they hid when the Germans came; being separated from the rest of the family and the two groups hiding with different families; being betrayed by anti-Semites; Being captured and facing deportation, taken to a large building for a few days, then to Westerbork and finally on a tightly packed cattle car to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp; Discusses life in Bergen-Belsen, the men were segregated from the women. Three times a day, they were fed water with turnips which gave them dysentery and caused her father's death from malnutrition; Recalls her father's death. Her father was dying, he told Ina that she would be the only one to make it and this came true. Ina felt that families only helped each other and not the other inmates; Realized that prisoners were being gassed, initially only knowing that a bad smelling smoke was outside; Discusses liberation in April 1945; being placed in a cattle car with no food or water and soon the Russians liberated them; The Russians not providing any medicine or food; Her mother leaving to look for food and disappearing; Her mother, sister, and herself contracting typhoid fever, being placed in isolation, and her sisters death; Ina being transferred to a Russian hospital; Being placed on a Red Cross hospital train and taken to a Catholic hospital in Belgium where she was given good care; Learning of her mother's death from another camp survivor who informed her that her mother had died in a hospital; Living in a woman's apartment in Maastricht; Moving to Amsterdam to live with a cousin and her family; Developing pleurisy and being placed in a sanitarium for a year where she received care; Being asked to identify the policeman who arrested and helped deport her family and other Jews; Using his speech and testifying in court in Amsterdam, resulting in his being sentenced to a prison term of 20 years; The JOINT finding her uncle, Harry Bolak, who had immigrated to San Francisco at age 17 who sent her packages and obtained a visa and affidavit

for her; Immigrating to San Francisco in 1949; Working as a domestic and attending City College of San Francisco; Getting married; Discussing her Jewish upbringing and her father's desire for her to marry a Jew; She feels religious inside her but little desire to attend services. She married a Jew and their sons were Bar Mitzvah, they observe holidays; Discusses her desire to live in the present and not discuss her experiences with her children; Seven years ago, her sons toured Europe including Bergen-Belsen and Africa; Connecting with one surviving cousin who lives in Australia and with a friend in the Netherlands who is still depressed. Her youngest son, Jeff, requested she give this interview.