

1 INTERVIEW WITH: EDITH KAISER

2 INTERVIEWER: Sandra ~~Vanduyon~~ (Phonetic)

Bendayan

3 ALSO PRESENT: Evelyn ~~Thierdon~~ (Phonetic)

Fielden

4 DATE: January 4, 1988

5 PLACE:

6 TRANSCRIBER: Irene Bernstein

7
8 MS. VAN DUYN: Let's Start right from the beginning
9 with the fact that I am Sandra VanDuyon, and I am here to
10 interview Edith Kaiser. This is the 4th of January,
11 1988. And I am with

12 MS. THIERDON: Evelyn Thierdon, also the same day, and
13 we are working for the Oral History Project, the Holocaust
14 Center, in San Francisco.

15 We are sitting in (inaudible) at a lovely table,
16 talking to Edith Kaiser.

17 Edith, where were you born?

18 MS. KAISER: I was born in ~~Aurich~~ Aurich, Germany.

19 MS. THIERDON: When were you born?

20 MS. KAISER: I can't say it too good in English -- I
21 was born the 3rd 30th 1914. I have five children, and
22 we live peacefully now in (inaudible - there are birds
23 in the background)

24 MS. THIERDON: How many Jews were there?

25 MS. KAISER: Six thousand and a hundred and ten family Jews.

(The birds in the background are drowning out this
interview)

EDITH KAISER

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2 MS. KAISER: I hope you can hear it.

3 MS. THIERDON: In the background, in our musical
4 background, is a canary, which Edith got for Chanukah,
5 so I hope she's not going to interfere. But it sounds
6 very lovely, anyway.

7 So you were saying there was a community of six
8 thousand people in ~~Aurich~~ and a hundred and ten family
9 Jews?

10 MS. KAISER: And a hundred and ten family Jews.

11 MS. THIERDON: Yes.

12 MS. KAISER: In our community.

13 MS. THIERDON: And you said they were Orthodox?

14 MR. KAISER: They were Orthodox.

15 MS. THIERDON: Yes. And your family?

16 MS. KAISER: Yes, we still have (inaudible) on Shabbat.
17 And in it would come a letter, you had to sign it or
18 the post wouldn't deliver it. They wouldn't come to the
19 dinner, the Jews wouldn't sign it on Shabbat.

20 MS. THIERDON: But only in the Jewish community?

21 MS. KAISER: In the Jewish community, right.

22 MS. THIERDON: And your parents had been born there too?

23 MS. KAISER: My parents lived there.

24 MS. THIERDON: Were your parents born there?

25 MS. KAISER: My father was (inaudible) my mother was

1
2 born in Aurich.

3 MS. THIERDON: I see.

4 And what did your father do?

5 MS. KAISER: My father was a cattle dealer.

6 MS. THIERDON: And he was Orthodox?

7 MS. KAISER: Orthodox; my father was very Orthodox.

8 MS. THIERDON: And how many sisters and brothers?

9 MS. KAISER: I had two brothers and three sisters.

10 MS. THIERDON: And why don't you tell us where they
11 lived?

12 MS. KAISER: In Aurich: but one brother emigrated in
13 '39 to America in San Francisco. The other brother
14 went in '38 to Holland; my sister went, was married and
15 went to Byland, that is also in Holland. I went also
16 in '38 to Holland to (inaudible), and my younger
17 sister went to Belgium. she was married also
18 (bird is still chirping)

19 MS. VAN DUYON: Did they all emigrate because of the
20 conditions in . . .

21 MS. KAISER: Yes, that was the reason they all left.
22 That was the reason. And my parents also came in '38
23 in Nov -- after the Kristallnacht they came to Holland.
24 and my brother and with me.

25 MS. THIERDON: Just for information, we want to

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2
3 establish where was ~~Aurich?~~

4 MS. KAISER: ~~Aurich~~ was in AUS-TRESH-LANK, near EMDIN,
5 LIA, NOR-THAN-I, ISLAN NOR-THAN-I, very close to the
6 Dutch Border.

7 MS. THIERDON: You said it was . . .

8 MR. KAISER: One and a half hours, not more than that.

9 MS. THIERDON: By car?

10 MS. KAISER: By car, yeah.

11 MS. THIERDON: So that was for you, naturally, very nice
12 for you to go over to Holland to . . .

13 MS. KAISER: That's right. That was the best thing to do.

14 MS. THIERDON: And you went to Orthodox school?

15 MS. KAISER: Yes, there was one Jewish school in ~~Aurich~~
16 which was the only, eight years of schooling, and then
17 you went to other schools.

18 MS. THIERDON: I see. Eight years of schooling. And
19 what other school did you go to?

20 MS. KAISER: We went to the GID-NAS-IUM, or whatever.

21 MS. THIERDON: Yes, but that was . . .

22 MS. KAISER: I didn't. I did not. But it was not Jewish
23 anymore.

24 MS. THIERDON: That was not Jewish?

25 MS. KAISER: That was (inaudible).

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MS. THIERDON: And what year did you leave?

MS. KAISER: I left in '38, 1938 I left for Holland.
My brother was there already, so I went to him.

MS. THIERDON: Why don't you tell us how you left?

MS. KAISER: I left (inaudible) I left my (inaudible)
and went to Holland.

MS. THIERDON: But you told your parents you would not
come back?

MS. KAISER: No, they knew that.

MS. THIERDON: They knew?

MS. KAISER: They knew, they knew.

MS. THIERDON: And you knew . . .

MS. KAISER: I knew that I wouldn't come back, I knew
that. Also my sister, I think she was -- no, she left
later. I think she was the only one at home, yeah.

MS. VAN DUYON: Did somebody warn you in particular that
you (inaudible) to leave (inaudible)

MS. KAISER: No, we knew we had to leave, we knew that.
But we thought Holland is safe. But how did we know?

MS. VAN DUYON: Right.

MS. THIERDON: When you lived in Germany, you had
Gentile neighbors?

MS. KAISER: Yes.

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MR. THIERDON: There was no friction between you?

MS. KAISER: Never.

MS. THIERDON: Never?

MS. KAISER: No, I still correspond with them today.

MS. THIERDON: So before '38 you did not feel any
antiSemitism. . . .

MS. KAISER: Never.

MS. THIERDON: At all?

MS. KAISER: Never, no, there was never a problem.

MS. THIERDON: Did you travel in, within Germany, during
that time?

MS. KAISER: Yes, yes.

MS. THIERDON: Did you notice anything after Hitler got
into power?

MS. KAISER: No, I only notice that in my own hometown.
And when they march through the city, and, and things
like this. And then the 10th of November, I remember my
brother was hiding in the attic, they never got him. My
father was picked up but they let him go the same night.
He came home. And my other brother, I think he was
already in Holland.

MS. THIERDON: They were older than you?

MS. KAISER: Yes, I was . . .

MS. THIERDON: You were how old?

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2 MS. KAISER: I . . .

3 MS. THIERDON: At the time?

4 MS. KAISER: I was born in 1914, what was I in '38?

5 MS. THIERDON: 26?

6 MS. KAISER: Yes, it was possible.

7 MS. VAN DUYON: 24.

8 MS. KAISER: Yes.

9 MS. THIERDON: Did you have a profession at that time?

10 MS. KAISER: Yes, I learned sewing, I was a seamstress.

11 MS. VAN DUYON: A seamstress?

12 MS. KAISER: Yes, and that's what I did in Holland, to
13 earn some money.

14 MS. VAN DUYON: Do you know why the Germans let your
15 father go, after they picked him up?

16 MS. KAISER: He looked too old, I guess.

17 Yes, they left him go. He was lucky that -- most of
18 them came home, from the Kristallnacht, they sent them
19 home.. They don't, they didn't keep everybody.

20 MS. VAN DUYON: Were there any of the shootings in the
21 street or the humiliations that went on in the

22 MS. KAISER: Not that I, not that I noticed. But maybe
23 there were, but I would, didn't pay so much attention
24 to it, I guess, I don't know.

25 MS. THIERDON: Why don't you tell us about your brother,

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who was picked up?

MS. KAISER: My brother was, that night he had to pick up a cow, brought it home so the cow could give birth to a calf, so it was better it was at home. And my father had it on a cord, and my brother was in the back patting the cow. And in the evening somebody came and told him you'd better leave fast, they went to pick you up the next day for only handling the cow. So he left the same night and went to Holland. It was no problem to go to Holland, you didn't need any . . .

MS. THIERMAN: Visa.

MS. KAISER: Visa.

MS. THIERMAN: So he just

MS. KAISER: He just took a train to Holland. It was good that time. But the only thing was you couldn't take any money with you.

MS. THIERMAN: Did they search you at the border?

MS. KAISER: No. So if you had

MS. THIERMAN: So if you would have taken money, how would they have found out?

MS. KAISER: I have no idea.

MS. THIERMAN: You don't know?

MS. KAISER: I have no idea.

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2 MS. THIERMAN: But that was.

3 MS. KAISER: I almost went to Holland before, and the
4 police picked me up. But I forgot the details why they
5 picked me up. I didn't have the right papers or something.

6 MS. THIERMAN: I see.

7 MS. KAISER: I went to (inaudible) HIGH in Holland, but --
8 I wanted to go to Israel but my father didn't want me to
9 go. I had to come back, and I went back to my home town.
10 and I wanted to go.

11 MS. THIERMAN: Now, you told us you were strictly Orthodox.

12 MS. KAISER: Yes.

13 MS. THIERMAN: That you were brought up in an Orthodox
14 family?

15 MS. KAISER: Yes.

16 MS. THIERMAN: So now you're in Holland. Where did you
17 go in Holland?

18 MS. KAISER: In Holland I went to my brother. We stay
19 together for a year or two or something -- no, not so
20 long, I guess. Then my parents came pretty soon after
21 Kristallnacht. And since they didn't come with any
22 money, didn't have any money, my brother did all the
23 cattle dealing in Holland

24 MS. THIERMAN: Where was that?

25 MS. KAISER: In New Amsterdam, in (inaudible), over in

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2
3 STRANKA. So I said, I'm going over to Amsterdam to find
4 a job, I'm going to earn some money, and that's what I
5 did.

6 MS. THIERMAN: What did you do in Amsterdam?

7 MS. KAISER: I worked in a house, like a cook.

8 MS. THIERMAN: For a family?

9 MS. KAISER: For a family, a Jewish family.

10 MS. THIERMAN: A Jewish family?

11 MS. KAISER: A very well-known family.

12 MS. THIERMAN: I see. And how long did you work?

13 MS. KAISER: I worked for a few years till '42 -- '43

14 I went to -- it must have been '42. It was very bad in

15 Amsterdam, very bad. They were picking up the Jewish

16 people, and so many suicides, it was just horrible.

17 Every night one of your friends was picked up or

18 committed suicide.

19 MS. THIERMAN: Were you free to move around during that

20 time?

21 MS. KAISER: I was very lucky. I was near the, I lived

22 in a street where the control was not so strict, so I

23 still could get fish and could get vegetables and could

24 get fruit, brought to the house. And so -- But the

25 other ones, it was, they couldn't go at that particular

1
2 time to the store, they couldn't go on the streetcar
3 anymore, they had to take their bikes. They took the
4 bikes away, they had to walk, and things like this.

5 MS. THIERDON: Did you . . .

6 MS. KAISER: Restrictions from the Germans.

7 MS. THIERDON: Yes. Did you have ration cards?

8 MS. KAISER: Yes, ration cards. Oh, yes.

9 MS. THIERDON: Did they ration . . .

10 MS. KAISER: Yes.

11 MS. THIERDON: To the Jews as well?

12 MS. KAISER: Yes.

13 MS. THIERDON: Did you have to wear the Star . . .

14 MS. KAISER: Yes.

15 MS. THIERDON: When . . .

16 MS. KAISER: It's now in the Library, in the Hdocaust.

17 MS. THIERDON: Yes, I see that. Do you remember when
18 that was issued?

19 MS. KAISER: I forgot the month; I think it's in '42.

20 In 1942. And -- but then I had a teddybear coat, and
21 here I had my Star. But then I went out of the house
22 I . . . put a little . . .

23 MS. THIERDON: You put it over . . .

24 MS. KAISER: I put it over it so nobody could see it.
25 Then I went without a star.

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MS. THIERDON: Were you ever in any way picked up?

MS. KAISER: No.

MS. THIERDON: By the Nazis at all?

MS. KAISER: No.

MS. THIERDON: Or stopped?

MS. KAISER: No. But once a German Nazi came to the doorway where I worked and he asked for the lady of the house. I said, Come in. He came in and I left. I just went out. A few hours later I went back. Still today I don't know why he came. I have no idea. But he didn't do anything.

MS. THIERDON: Where was the lady of the house?

MS. KAISER: In the house.

MS. THIERDON: And what did -- she was also Jewish wasn't she?

MS. KAISER: Yes, yes.

MS. THIERDON: What happened to her?

MS. KAISER: I for what, for what reason, I forgot the reason. But nothing happened.

MS. THIERDON: She was not harmed?

MS. KAISER: No, he left, I went back to the house.

MS. VAN DUOYN: You were saying about the people who were committing suicide. Was it that people already knew ..

MS. KAISER: Yes.

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2 MS. VAN DUYON: What the outcome was going to be, that
3 they were going to be put to death?

4 MS. KAISER: Yes, we got the card, that we had to
5 register, and they wanted to send us away to Germany for
6 labor, labor camps, that's what they said. But I didn't
7 believe them, I didn't. And I didn't go either.

8 MS. VAN DUYON: What made you not believe them?

9 MS. KAISER: They took everything away from us. They
10 emptied the stores, there was nothing left. They send
11 us to Germany. If they were so bad off in Germany
12 what would they do with us? They wouldn't feed us. That's
13 what was on my mind.

14 MS. THIERDON: When you say they took everything away from
15 the Jews during the . . .

16 MS. KAISER: No, all, all the stores.

17 MS. THIERDON: All the stores?

18 MS. KAISER: There were not so many Jewish stores, not in
19 the city Like Amsterdam. No, there were no Jewish stores.

20 MS. THIERDON: Why don't you tell us about the Camp the
21 Dutch . . .

22 MS. KAISER: ~~WESTERBORK~~ WESTERBORK.

23 MS. THIERDON: ~~WESTERBORK~~ WESTERBORK.

24 MS. KAISER: The German Jews had to leave. It was
25 around '38, '39, I guess, and they came to Holland, and

1
2 the Dutch opened a camp for the German Jews, and the
3 camp was called ~~Westerbork~~. That was in TRANS-IN.
4 My sister lived in Byland, a half-hour from there, that
5 camp.

6 MS. THIERDON: That camp . . .

7 MS. KAISER: That camp was strictly for the German Jews,
8 for, to give them shelter.

9 MS. THIERDON: Shelter; by the Dutch . . .

10 MS. KAISER: By the Dutch State. Not by the Dutch
11 (inaudible)

12 MS. THIERDON: And there were good conditions in the
13 camp?

14 MS. KAISER: Oh, yes.

15 MS. THIERDON: To eat?

16 MS. KAISER: Yes. That was that time very, very nice
17 that they, you know, -- they know they had to leave Germany,
18 you know, where do we put them, and that was the solution.
19 They opened a camp for them, but it was not a concentration
20 camp.

21 Later on it was a transit camp. I think you heard about
22 ~~Westerbork~~.

23 MS. THIERDON: Yes.

24 MS. KAISER: When the Nazis came. And this was a transit
25 camp. Every was (inaudible) to Auschwitz and (inaudible)

1
2 My father and mother were picked up and they stayed
3 several months in Westerbork. I have letters from my
4 father. I gave one letter to Dr. Boas. I do not know
5 if he translate it into English. It is written in
6 German.

7 MS. THIERDON: But he wrote a letter?

8 MS. KAISER: He wrote a letter, yeah.

9 MS. THIERDON: What year were your parents picked up?

10 MS. KAISER: That was in '42. I wrote -- I saved from
11 the war.

12 MS. THIERDON: Your diary?

13 MS. KAISER: Diary. I wrote in every day. I sent my
14 parents every day a package of food. And it is a very
15 funny story, and I found it out only a few months ago,
16 I could do that, they encouraged it, the Germans, and
17 they got it.

18 MS. THIERDON: They delivered it?

19 MS. KAISER: They delivered it. I cooked, I made potato
20 salad, I had eggs in there, and I, whatever they asked. I
21 have every package written down here, what I sent to them.
22 And they got it.

23 MS. THIERDON: Could you read one or two of . . .

24 MS. KAISER: That is all I got.

25 MS. THIERDON: Could you try to translate it a little bit

1
2 for us, please?

3 MS. KAISER: Wait, one second. Three apples, three quart
4 of milk, four large -- I don't know what that is --

5 MS. THIERDON: Applesauce.

6 MS. KAISER: Applesauce, yeah.

7 MS. THIERDON: The contents of the package you went to
8 your . . .

9 MS. KAISER: Every day. Every day. But I have a letter
10 where my father wrote and said send me this and send me
11 that.

12 MS. THIERDON: And the mail functioned all right at that
13 time?

14 MS. KAISER: Yeah. But they had a reason, which I didn't
15 know. I had no idea about this, and I will tell you
16 what happened. I provided them with food.

17 MS. THIERDON: Yes.

18 MS. KAISER: And they could cook, they were lucky.

19 MS. THIERDON: In Westerbork?

20 MS. KAISER: Yes, not Theresienstadt. So they had to eat
21 -- one helped the other. If they had more food they
22 gave it. My sister was still with Richard, and she went
23 very fast on the train with me. No money -- (inaudible)
24 three beautiful children. And my parents stayed for seven
25 months and they then had to go to the Theresienstadt.

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2 MS. THIERDON: What year was that?

3 MS. VAN DUYON: Do you remember?

4 MS. KAISER: That was -- I went in hiding in May of '43,
5 that was the beginning of '43. And they said -- my father
6 was 1914, in the First World War, he served in Russia,
7 wherever he was. And the Fueur meant very well. And for
8 this they are going to Theresienstadt. And they, they
9 lose everything, you know.

10 MS. VAN DUYON: Even at that late date they. . .

11 MS. KAISER: Yeah. They went out in the -- I don't know
12 if you know that in Holland there was a theater. They
13 emptied the theater, the Shorbork. I don't know if you
14 heard that; maybe you didn't. There was a big theater.
15 And every night when they got all the Jews together they
16 brought them to the Shorbork. The name was the Shorbork,
17 an empty theater.

18 When my parents came, we even could take them home.
19 I took them to my niece, and they stayed there the first
20 night, and the next day they got back to the Shorbork.
21 My father didn't believe in hiding.

22 MS. THIERDON: Let me

23 MS. KAISER: But I didn't have a place for them either.
24 I didn't even myself have a place. I'll tell you the
25 story what happened to me.

1
2 I didn't know where to go. My brother was in hiding, I
3 didn't know where, I had no idea where he went.

4 MS. THIERDON: Let us backtrack a little bit, because
5 you were going to tell us why the mail was. . .

6 MS. KAISER: But before that I want to tell you that I
7 went home. I told you that before. I left Amsterdam,
8 and I went to my parents in the Province.

9 MS. THIERDON: Yes.

10 MS. KAISER: And then we got a notice we were going to
11 be picked up, and that night we slept in the barn. We
12 really slept with the pigs in the pigsty.

13 MS. THIERDON: How about the (not audible), where the
14 Dutch picked the (inaudible) container up?

15 MS. KAISER: Yeah, and then my father and mother opened
16 the door. I saw them, I went out the back door, to my
17 neighbor, and he put me in a big crate and brought me to
18 his brother who had a farm. When I came up in the attic
19 where there was some hay, my brother was there. With his
20 fiance then at that time.

21 MS. VAN DUYON: The same neighbor had helped him?

22 MS. KAISER: Yes, had helped him too. The morning was
23 very foggy, nobody could see anything, and my brother had
24 also left. But I didn't know. He left with his girl-
25 friend, and I left by myself.

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2 So we found each other up there in the hay.

3 But a few days later I had no hiding place. I went
4 back to Amsterdam. I didn't look Jewish, you know. That
5 was my, a -- a big plus.

6 MS. THIERDON: A plus.

7 MS. KAISER: A plus for me. So I went back to the same
8 family, and they were very happy that I came back.

9 MS. THIERDON: Now, they . . .

10 MS. VAN DUON: The same Jewish family . . .

11 MS. KAISER: The same Jewish family that I had left, where
12 we go to before. I was gone. It was maybe only two
13 weeks that I was gone.

14 My brother went into hiding with his wife. Neighbors
15 for my parents had a place for him, which I didn't know
16 at that time.

17 MS. VAN DUYON: They were not Jewish, the neighbors?

18 MS. KAISER: No, but they helped him. They are here now.

19 MS. VAN DUYON: They are here now.

20 MS. KAISER: Yes.

21 MS. THIERDON: I keep asking you about the post office,
22 what happened with the mail?

23 MS. KAISER: But that is a later day.

24 MS. THIERDON: Oh.

25 MS. KAISER: That was a later date.

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2 MS. THIERDON: All right.

3 MS. KAISER: Now, let me tell you.

4 MS. THIERDON: Yes.

5 MS. KAISER: My parents were in Westerbork.

6 MS. THIERDON: Yes.

7 MS. KAISER: And I was in Amsterdam with the same people.

8 MS. VAN DUYON: Right.

9 MS. KAISER: And I could provide them with packages, which
10 they encouraged. And I found out why.

11 Now, I have to go back. In '43 I went into hiding.
12 Maybe two months before, or a month before, I got a card,
13 did you hear that (unintelligible) in Amsterdam for the
14 German instances. They had the headquarter, A-STA-FRIN-TEN
15 was the MA-HA, and they had the headquarters at STRAD-A-
16 STRAD.

17 MS. THIERDON: Is that the name of the street?

18 MS. KAISER: That's the name of the street, yeah. And I
19 got a notice that I had to come. In the meantime I had
20 met my husband, in the meantime. What shall I do? We
21 wanted to get married. My husband (his name), so he didn't
22 have to go to a camp, since he was working. He had a
23 permit.

24 And he went, and he wanted to ask to get married.
25 But they said I didn't have a permit. "If you marry this

1
2 girl, then you will be picked up also." So we couldn't
3 get married.

4 Now I got this notice. What shall I do? They have
5 my papers. Bring your birth certificate. Now, I have
6 to tell you, I had a birth certificate, my original one.
7 And in this birth certificate written in typewriting was
8 that my father waited four weeks to give me a name. And
9 when he gave me a name he called me Edith Seeman Samson.
10 So he gave me his name as a middle name, which is very
11 unusual, and his name was a man's name, a boy's name.
12 So I went to the STRAD-A-STRAD today. If I think about
13 this today, I can't believe I did it. When I said
14 good-bye to everybody, I thought, "That is it, they have
15 my name, they have my address." How, I don't know.

16 All of a sudden they had my address where I was.
17 Since the first night of deportation, I never heard
18 anything and I thought I was safe. So I went -- I still
19 can't believe what I did.

20 When they saw this birth certificate, they laughed
21 so hard, they said to me, "Go home."

22 MS. THIERDON: They had . . .

23 MS. KAISER: Because they gave me the name Seeman.

24 MS. VAN DUYON: That you had a man's name?

25 MS. KAISER: That I had a man's name.

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2 MS. THIERDON: But your first name was Edith?

3 MS. KAISER: Edith. I never got the original back. I
4 wrote to my parents, but they never sent me the original
5 birth certificate.

6 MS. THIERDON: They kept the birth certificate there?

7 MS. KAISER: I had one, not the original one, with the
8 long writing in there. No, the Germans kept it.

9 MS. THIERDON: That's what I mean, the Germans kept it.

10 MS. KAISER: They kept it. I never got it back.

11 But that I went, I can't today, I can't believe it.

12 MS. VAN DUYON: Because you had decided that you were
13 going to hide and not go, no matter what?

14 MS. KAISER: There was no hiding place; I had no hiding
15 place. I didn't know where to go. If I had a hiding
16 place, I would have gone into hiding. I had no money, I
17 had nothing. I went home.

18 But now I had to go into hiding. Now they knew where
19 I was. Now I will tell you why they knew it.

20 I read that in a book, I forgot which book, that the
21 Germans encouraged the people in Westerbork write to their
22 families and get packages, so now they have my name and
23 my address. And I read that in the book six months ago.

24 MS. THIERDON: You read it in a book?

25 MS. KAISER: In a book. Now I knew why.

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MS. THIERDON: Did they tell you . . .

MS. KAISER: How come they have my name. How come, who gave it to them. Then I knew it. Then I had to go into hiding.

I knew my husband then, we were friendly. And they lived in a different part of Amsterdam than I did. And I went to his father and mother. And just when I was there a girlfriend of theirs who was in hiding already came for a visit. She didn't look Jewish either. In fact she looked a little like me.

And she said, "You go with me tonight." And I went with her. And I never met her. I called her the (German), you know, the Saving Angel. And she took me. And she didn't know me, she just knew that I was a girlfriend of their son's, and that was good enough for her. And she took me.

And I had thousand (Bird obliterates), because you had to pay. They didn't just take you, you had to pay.

MS. THIERDON: Okay.

MS. KAISER: Naturally you had to pay, because it cost plenty of money.

MS. VAN DUYON: That was a lot of money then?

MS. KAISER: A thousand guilders was a lot of money. But we (Bird obliterates). But it was terrible in Amsterdam.

1
2 And then I went into hiding in '43, '43. Now my husband
3 was not safe anymore. We're not married. He was not safe
4 anymore. And I begged him to go into hiding. And he said,
5 "No, I go to HURK." HURK was camp in Holland. But that
6 was a bad camp. That had a name as a bad camp.

7 MS. THIERDON: A concentration camp?

8 MS. KAISER: A concentration camp. But he listened to me,
9 and one week later he came.

10 MS. VAN DUYON : The same hiding place?

11 MS. KAISER: The same hiding place, that I was.

12 MS. THIERDON: That was in Amsterdam?

13 MS. KAISER: No, that was in the Province.

14 MS. VAN DUYON: Could you tell us then about . . .

15 MS. KAISER: Then his parents had to go into hiding also,
16 and they went into hiding. But they never made it, they
17 found them. They never made it.

18 MS. VAN DUYON: His parents didn't come to the same place
19 that you were?

20 MS. KAISER: No. But there was this other story. My
21 husband and I were hiding in the same place, hiding in the
22 bakery. The guy had a bakery and a grocery store. So my
23 husband worked as a baker.

24 And then his parents had to go into hiding. They never
25 made it. I forget that story. I think about them.

1
2 Then there was a castle for Jewish people into hiding.

3 MS. THIERDON: A . . .

4 MS. KAISER: A. Castle.

5 MS. THIERDON: I see.

6 MS. KAISER: With two entrances, a big castle. And the
7 name was HAIR-HU-HA-LA. And his parents went to this
8 castle, into hiding. And I don't know why we were there.

9 MS. THIERDON: Yes.

MS. KAISER:

10 My husband and I were there too. Why I forgot, why we
11 left the -- now I know. When we were at the baker's, the
12 baker couldn't keep his mouth shut. And he told people
13 he had Jewish people hiding, which was naturally wrong.
14 And again there was a RATSIA announced, and we went into
15 the church, the tower, they brought us there, my husband
16 and me.

17 MS. VAN DUYON: Who is they?

18 MS. KAISER: The baker, and the pastor. They are good
19 friend with the pastor. So we were there for eight days.
20 And in the meantime they didn't find anybody, we were in
21 the church tower.

22 MS. THIERDON: For how many days?

23 MS. KAISER: For one week.

24 MS. THIERDON: So how did you, can you tell us a little
25 bit about the church tower?

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2 MS. KAISER: The church tower, everything was open.
3 Of course we had no water. And the food, on a string, we
4 pulled the food up so we had something to eat.

5 MS. THIERDON: Who gave you the food?

6 MS. KAISER: The pastor, yeah, that was very nice. They
7 gave up food to eat. And then we went back to the baker.

8 MS. THIERDON: How were the sanitary conditions there?

9 MS. KAISER: Don't ask, don't ask. Nothing. We had no
10 water, nothing, nothing.

11 Then we went back, everything was quiet and whatever,
12 we went back to the baker.

13 MS. VAN DUYON: How did you live with the baker? Did you
14 have your own room?

15 MS. KAISER: Yes, we had our own room, yes. And the
16 food was fantastic, and my husband helped him bake in
17 the bakery.

18 And then I don't know why we went to this castle
19 where my husband's parents were, but we went there, I don't
20 know, for what reason I don't know anymore.

21 MS. THIERDON: You did not keep it in your diary?

22 MS. KAISER: No, I don't think so, that is not in there.
23 So then we went in their room. And then there was another
24 couple hiding there, with two boys, my husband's age.
25 And we could walk in the gardens there, there was nobody

1
2 there.

3 Well, one night a girl came to the door, "You'd
4 better go in your hiding places, the Germans are on their
5 way." So we lived in the attic. And then this is the
6 door and that is -- they had two closets, one closet here
7 and one closet here. They moved that closet, there was
8 no door.

9 If they would have, the Germans, if they would have
10 moved this closet, then they would have seen the door,
11 would have seen us.

12 MS. THIERDON: Did you say glass was ...

13 MS. KAISER: Glass was (inaudible), the cupboard.

14 MS. THIERDON: The cupboard?

15 MS. KAISER: The cupboard, next to each other.

16 MS. THIERDON: Oh, two cupboards . . .

17 MS. KAISER: Yes.

18 MS. THIERDON: Side by side?

19 MS. KAISER: Yes. One in front of the door, and one next
20 to it. They moved up one, the Germans, when they came in.
21 They left one. But this one they didn't.

22 MS. THIERDON: The right one you were hiding?

23 MS. KAISER: That was the door.

24 MS. THIERDON: The hiding place?

25 MS. KAISER: For the hiding place. If they would have

1
2 moved up one, I wouldn't be sitting here today. I wouldn't
3 sit here today. We were twelve people in that room. My
4 father-in-law, he screamed, we put the hanky in his mouth,
5 to be quiet. So they left.

6 MS. THIERDON: Why don't you tell us about the twelve
7 people, how they . . .

8 MS. KAISER: The other . . . Next morning I said, unh-unh,
9 that's not for me. I left. And I went to the little
10 town where I know the principal from the school, which
11 was a wonderful man, Mr. Fisher. And I told him what
12 happened the night before. He said, "You stay here right
13 away and we pick up Ziggy tonight."

14 MS. THIERDON: Ziggy . . .

15 MS. KAISER: My husband, Ziggy was his name. We pick him
16 up tonight. So Ziggy came out that night, my husband, and
17 I was there already. And his parents were brought to the
18 pastor, and he did a bad thing, he put them in the rooms
19 where the coffins were, where the dead people was, it
20 was terrible.

21 MS. THIERDON: Your parents . . .

22 MS. KAISER: My husband's parents.

23 MS. THIERDON: Oh, your husband's parents?

24 MS. KAISER: Yes.

25 MS. THIERDON: Were brought into the room where the dead

1
2 people . . .

3 MS. KAISER: Where the coffins were. It was terrible.
4 But there were two entrances. In one entrance, one, on
5 one side . . .

6 MS. THIERDON: In the castle?

7 MS. KAISER: In the castle, they found three people, one
8 was a pharmacist and another couple, they found them.
9 So they were satisfied, at least they found something.
10 So my husband's parents, they went back to the same
11 castle. I said no.

12 We went to another province, my husband and I, we
13 had people who helped us. We went over Amsterdam to a
14 different province. My husband's parents were picked up,
15 it was very bad, it was a very bad accident. There was
16 a couple, and the woman was always knitting. And again,
17 the Germans were on the way, searching the houses.

18 And that woman who was knitting took her knitting
19 stuff, she dropped the wool, and went right away to the
20 hiding place.

21 MS. VAN DUYON: How did that happen, she dropped the . . .

22 MS. KAISER: She dropped the wool. She didn't see it.

23 MS. THIERDON: Oh.

24 MS. KAISER: She didn't see it. Showed them exactly
25 where they were, were hiding, so they never came back.
There were six, seven people.

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2 MS. VAN DUYON: It seems that often people would warn
3 you, that the Germans were coming.

4 MS. KAISER: They did. The Dutch people were very good.
5 But we were in a different province. But the same day we
6 arrived, there was a search again. So the pastor, who was
7 very good, he brought us all to, in the church, not in
8 the tower, in the basement, this time. So until the
9 search was over we had a hiding place.

10 MS. THIERDON: It was now you and your future husband
11 alone?

12 MS. KAISER: Alone, yes. We had a hiding place. We didn't
13 know if the neighbors saw us or what. We didn't know if
14 they were good and wouldn't report you. They got seven
15 guilders and fifty cents for each Jew that they reported.

16 MS. THIERDON: Seven guilders . . .

17 MS. KAISER: Seven guilders and fifty cents, for each Jew
18 they reported.

19 MS. VAN DUYON: About how much do you think that would
20 be today?

21 MS. KAISER: Now? One hundred dollar.

22 MS. VAN DUYON: So very little?

23 MS. KAISER: Very little.

24 So we now had eight hiding places. Now we are
25 approximately at the fourth hiding place.

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2 MS. THIERDON: The fourth?

3 MS. KAISER: First the baker, and then . . .

4 MS. VAN DUYON: Then you went to the church tower?

5 MS. KAISER: That was really when we were at the baker's
6 place, we went to the church tower, and then we went back
7 to the baker. But then it was not safe anymore. He talked
8 too much.

9 MS. THIERDON: Then you went . . .

10 MS. KAISER: Then we went over Amsterdam. I was sitting
11 next to a German in a tent. I didn't mind if we were
12 just talking. We would have talked, you know. I thought
13 I am safe to sit next to him.

14 Then we arrived in a little town, and there was all
15 these people, the town people who helped you. So they
16 brought us to (German) was his name, this man was picked
17 up too, a Gentile man. They found him hiding Jews.

18 MS. VAN DUYON: He was gone?

19 MS. THIERDON: But then we weren't there anymore. We were
20 gone. And we were at a farm, we were. Then we were at
21 the (unintelligible); then we were at the post office for
22 a long time, the post office.

23 MS. THIERDON: How many years or months . . .

24 MS. KAISER: Two years we were in hiding.

25 MS. THIERDON: Two years.

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2 MS. KAISER: We were in hiding from May to May.
3 MS. THIERDON: From . . .
4 MS. KAISER: From '43 to '45.
5 MS. THIERDON: '43 to . . .
6 MS. KAISER: War was over in May '45.
7 MS. THIERDON: May '45.
8 MS. KAISER: And we went into hiding in May of '43.
9 MS. THIERDON: '43?
10 MS. KAISER: Yeah.
11 MS. THIERDON: That's three years?
12 MS. KAISER: Two years.
13 MS. THIERDON: Two years.
14 MS. KAISER: The worst part was the hiding kept up for
15 some long.
16 MS. THIERDON: Yes.
17 MS. KAISER: How long can that last. When so many with
18 underground papers, so many were picked up. Once we heard
19 ten shots. Gentile boys they killed. And they let them
20 lay on the street.
21 MS. VAN DUYON: So . . .
22 MS. KAISER: We heard it.
23 MS. VAN DUYON: You would hear a lot.
24 MS. KAISER: Then once we were in a house, in a farmhouse,
25 and the Germans didn't allow that the water is running off.

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2 The water came into the house that night. So we had to
3 leave.

4 We went to the -- this was a terrible experience.
5 We went to the son and daughter-in-law, since we had to
6 leave their house . . .

7 MS. THIERDON: The . . .

8 MS. KAISER: Dutch Gentiles.

9 MS. THIERDON: Dutch Gentiles, yes.

10 MS. KAISER: And we went to the son's house. And I was
11 cutting my husband's hair. I look out of the window, and
12 I saw the German -- The Green (German) we called them
13 there, always the green striped suits -- at the next house.
14 We had ammunition in the house. Those people, we were in
15 the house, the English dropped ammunition. And they
16 picked it up and cleaned it.

17 See, they held up the offices where we get our ration
18 cards. So they had to do that. That was the underground.

19 MS. THIERDON: So they . . .

20 MS. KAISER: They were not only Jewish, they were Gentiles.

21 MS. THIERDON: Yes.

22 MS. KAISER: The Dutch underground.

23 MS. THIERDON: The Dutch underground.

24 MS. KAISER: They picked up those cards, we had something
25 to eat; the ration cards, they had to have them. How would

1
2 you get food otherwise

3 So we, my husband and I were in the house, and we
4 had ammunition. There was a closet like this with a door,
5 a walk-in closet, but the floor we could open. And under-
6 neath, we could go underneath, underneath the floor.

7 MS. THIERDON: So it was hollowed out?

8 MS. KAISER: Hollowed out. And one, two, three, we were
9 underneath. And the woman, the mother was very clever.
10 She put the vacuum cleanr on top and everything on top,
11 and she herself spent at the washtub to wash, wash the
12 linens.

13 They came in, and I heard them say, (German)

14 MS. THIERDON: Which translated means?

15 MS. KAISER: "Now here's a lot of room to hide." I heard
16 that, in the German. But they didn't find us. They would
17 have put us on the -- we had all the ammunition.

18 MS. VAN DUYON: You were hiding?

19 MS. KAISER: Guns and everything. That was the worst,
20 I have to say it. That was the worst, what happened,
21 in hiding.

22 MS. VAN DUYON: And you made it again?

23 MS. KAISER: We made it again. Our time was not up. So
24 we left there. Then we went back to the parents' house
25 again when that was gone . . .

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2 MS. THIERDON: Whose parents' house?

3 MS. KAISER: From the parents' house we went to the . . .

4 MS. THIERDON: Your husband's parents?

5 MS. KAISER: No.

6 MS. THIERDON: Your parents' house?

7 MS. KAISER: No.

8 MS. VAN DUYON: The children of the people in the farm-
9 house.

10 MS. KAISER: The Gentiles.

11 MS. THIERDON: Oh, I see.

12 MS. KAISER: We went to his parents' house, where we were
13 before.

14 MS. THIERDON: I see.

15 MS. KAISER: And this house was in May of '45 until the
16 war was over.

17 MS. VAN DUYON: How long were you in the parents' farmhouse?

18 MS. KAISER: At least eight months. A long time.

19 MS. VAN DUYON: And how long in the children's house?

20 MS. KAISER: Not too long. Maybe a month or two. Not
21 too long. See, the mother was gone, we went back to their
22 house.

23 MS. VAN DUYON: So you mostly stayed with them?

24 MS. KAISER: Yes.

25 MS. VAN DUYON: Did you pay them too?

1 MS. KAISER: Yes.

2 MS. VAN DUYON: Where were you getting the money?

3 MS. KAISER: My husband had money.

4 MS. VAN DUYON: Enough to last you the two years?

5 MS. KAISER: Yes. If you did not have money, you would
6 not --

7 MS. THIERDON: If you . . .

8 MS. KAISER: If you didn't have money, the underground
9 would have paid for us. But since we had money, we didn't
10 want their money. We said we don't need the money.

11 Once we got (unintelligible) we got money for it, the
12 condition that after the war we can buy it back. So we
13 sold it. So we sold it.

14 MS. THIERDON: Gentiles?

15 MS. KAISER: Yes. And we (unintelligible) and that was
16 all right. But after the war . . .

17 MS. THIERDON: You got it back?

18 MS. KAISER: We got it back, we bought it back.

19 MS. VAN DUYON: How did you spend your daily life?

20 MS. KAISER: My husband and I would get out of the -- the
21 Dutch people, are known for clean, but it is not so. They
22 are clean from the outside but not from the inside. I
23 can tell you stories of the . . .

24 MS. VAN DUYON: Go ahead, go ahead.

25 MS. KAISER: And we did the cleaning and we did everything.

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2 I can tell you that. When we were at the last place, I
3 don't know, I haven't pictured this, call it a (inaudible)
4 in the wall, in the back, and in the daytime you close the
5 door. Like a hide-a-bed, a hide-a-bed. But that is not
6 to take out. That bed is in the wall, so it's built in.

7 MS. THIERDON: Does it fold up?

8 MS. KAISER: No. No, in the wall, you just close the
9 doors. But I knew that from the (unintelligible). That
10 was not new to me. And I never worked on Saturdays. The
11 kids didn't know we were Jewish. The parents knew, but
12 not the kids.

13 MS. THIERDON: The kids didn't know you were Jewish?

14 MS. KAISER: No, they never knew. That was too dangerous.

15 MS. THIERDON: Why did they think you were hiding?

16 MS. KAISER: They were too small. And the grownups, they
17 knew. The bigger ones.

18 MS. VAN DUYON: Yes.

19 MS. KAISER: They knew.

20 So it's a funny story. For every bed there was
21 a little container --

22 MS. THIERDON: For . . .

23 MS. KAISER: For a potty. Then one afternoon, Saturday
24 afternoon, I come into the kitchen, I see that pot in the
25 oven with the red beets in it. I said to my husband,
tonight I am not eating.

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But I didn't say anything.

Later on I told her. I said, look what we did here.

She was . . .

MS. THIERDON: German?

MS. KAISER: German, I don't know; very common name.

MS. THIERDON: DITSCHÉ?

MS. KAISER: DITSCHÉ. She said why didn't you eat tonight. I said, I'll tell you why I didn't eat tonight. I said, the same container you have for the potty, or whatever, you cooked the beets in tonight.

But we peeled them.

MS. VAN DUYON: I assume that they washed the pot out first?

MS. KAISER: I hope so, but I didn't -- See, most of the time when we were there -- we were with the farmer, see, the Dutch, they go to bed with everything on, they don't undress.

I once had to sleep with the girl for one night. I thought, my God, is she fast, she was in bed already. She just took her dress off. And didn't believe in washing. Didn't believe in that either. You couldn't sit next to them.

MS. VAN DUYON: So you spent a good part of your daily work doing the housework?

1
2 MS. KAISER: Housework and cooking, wherever we were.

3 MS. THIERDON: I have one more question. You were mostly
4 in the country, right, you were never in the big city?

5 MS. KAISER: Yeah. Never hiding in the big city.

6 MS. THIERDON: Foodwise at the farmer's, did you get enough
7 food?

8 MS. KAISER: I just told you, we had ration cards.

9 MS. THIERDON: You had ration cards.

10 MS. KAISER: The last winter was terrible. There was one
11 kitchen for the whole town, for the whole town; we had to
12 pick it up.

13 MS. THIERDON: The farmers did not grow anything?

14 MS. KAISER: No, no, no, we had -- - we bought once cocoa,
15 ourselves we bought cocoa, we spent a lot of money for it.
16 It was ground bricks.

17 MS. VANDUYON: Ground bricks?

18 MS. KAISER: Ground bricks. It was ground bricks. And
19 we paid a lot of money for it. No, the last winter was
20 really -- I was eighty pounds, till the war was over.

21 MS. VAN DUYON: My goodness. MS. KAISER:
We had nothing to eat.

22 MS. THIERDON: They had chickens, they had cows.

23 MS. KAISER: No, not where we were, not where we were.
24 One farmer, yes. One farmer where we gained ten pounds
25 each, we had good food, milk and cream and everything.

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But depends where we were.

MS. THIERDON: Did the Nazis at all, the military, did they come and take food away?

MS. KAISER: They took everything away. They took everything that they could lay their hands on. They took everything away.

MS. VAN DUYON: Were there any problems with visitors to the farmers that had anything that you were hiding there?

MS. KAISER: One farmer, we could see miles ahead who was coming. That was good, and we went into a closet. Right away we had to take this off, whatever. Once I came out and said, "Are they gone", they were still there.

And once, when we were at the baker, the police also came. The Dutch police. And my husband always had his Tefillin with him. And I just want to grab it; but he was a good (inaudible)

MS. VAN DUYON: So he ignored it?

MS. KAISER: He ignored it. But he saw me.

MS. VAN DUYON: I was going to ask about this baker who was . . .

MS. KAISER: He was in Auschwitz, he was in Auschwitz. He came back. They sent him to Auschwitz.

MS. VAN DUYON: For doing this?

MS. KAISER: For doing this. That was his own problem.

1
2 MS. VAN DUYON: Did they ask why did he speak out?

3 MS. KAISER: He had a big mouth. "I have Jews hiding in
4 my house." But he paid good for it. Once he staged a
5 robbery, he staged it, it was not true, and he made us
6 pay for it. He was not a good guy. Therefore, as soon
7 as we could we left his house. It was no good to stay
8 there.

9 MS. THIERDON: And have you met him when he came back?

10 MS. KAISER: After the war once, I was in Holland. No
11 he had a (inaudible) there, she was a good girl, she was
12 very nice. But he, he talked too much.

13 MS. THIERDON: Can you tell us a little bit about the
14 rest of your family?

15 MS. KAISER: My brother was in America, in San Francisco,
16 he went in '39 to San Francisco. My brother in Holland
17 was in hiding for two years. He was -- it looks like a
18 brick, prison like this, and that is something that you
19 (unintelligible) for heating. I don't know if you know
20 what that was.

21 MS. THIERDON: Peat.

22 MS. KAISER: Peat.

23 MS. THIERDON: Peat moss or something?

24 MS. KAISER: No, peat. And made like a brick.

25 MS. THIERDON: Right.

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2 MS. KAISER: They build this like this for him with peat,
3 and inside he was with his wife, almost like a . . .

4 MS. THIERDON: Igloo with the Eskimos?

5 MS. KAISER: Yes.

6 MS. THIERDON: They make this.

7 MS. KAISER: He is sitting in there with his wife for two
8 years.

9 MS. VAN DYON: How big was it?

10 MS. KAISER: Not big. But he just had a bed in there and
11 two chairs.

12 MS. THIERDON: Just . . .

13 MS. KAISER: And the kids didn't even know it. And when
14 they took from it to heat the oven, he just put it back,
15 he always put it. He -- I have articles about this from
16 the paper, it was all in German.

17 MS. VAN DUYON: Where was this peat? This building?

18 MS. KAISER: Outside, outside.

19 MS. THIERDON: Outside?

20 MS. KAISER: Yes. So after the war he got this (inaudible)
21 disease, I don't know if you know that, it's a blood sick-
22 ness that is a circulation problem. So they had to amputate
23 his leg.

24 MS. THIERDON: Where was he after the war?

25 MS. KAISER: In Holland; he stayed in Holland.

EDITH KAISER:

43.

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2 MS. THIERDON: He stayed in Holland?

3 MS. KAISER: He got married and stayed in Holland. Three
4 boys. And in '59 he died on the street in a car and
5 the (inaudible) took him. It was too much for him. They
6 would have taken off his other leg also. Which he didn't
7 know, but I know.

8 MS. VAN DUYON: Are you saying his disease came directly
9 from his . . .

10 MS. KAISER: Yes, yes, yes. His wife is still alive. And
11 one of his boys is here now. He came seven years ago,
12 and this is (inaudible) now.

13 MS. VAN DUYON: And your parents?

14 MS. KAISER: What?

15 MS. VAN DUYON: Your parents?

16 MS. KAISER: My parents?

17 MS. VAN DUYON: Yes.

18 MS. KAISER: My father died in Theresienstadt. He hit
19 himself on the window sill; in '44 my mother was sent to
20 Auschwitz at the same month that my husband's parents went
21 to Auschwitz also. When they found him now in this castle
22 and the woman, where the woman was with the wool, they
23 found him, they sent him to Auschwitz.

24 And in '44, October '44 was the last gassing in
25 Auschwitz, and they were there in October '44.

1
2 MS. VAN DUYON: Your mother?

3 MS. KAISER: My mother and my husband's parents. His two
4 sisters were in New York, they still live in New York.

5 My other sister with three children, my brother-in-law
6 didn't believe in hiding either. He could have afforded,
7 he had the money for it, and he looked like a Dutch cowboy.
8 He didn't go into hiding. He didn't want to. So they went
9 to Westerbork and then to Auschwitz.

10 MS. THIERDON: Was it for religious reasons he . . .

11 MS. KAISER: No.

12 MS. THIERDON: . . . did not believe it; not going into
13 hiding?

14 MS. KAISER: No, he didn't want to pay for that. That's
15 my opinion. he didn't want to pay the money.

16 MS. THIERDON: But he . . .

17 MS. KAISER: It's too bad, it's terrible. And they looked
18 so Gentile, even the kids, white-blond hair. Too bad I
19 didn't get out the picture, I couldn't show it to you.

20 MS. VAN DUYON: I guess he didn't believe he was going to
21 be killed?

22 MS. KAISER: No, maybe not. I don't know what he knew.
23 See, I was in Amsterdam, we had no correspondence. But
24 they left together -- my parents were together with them
25 in Westerbork.

1
2 MS. THIERDON: But you told us earlier about your father
3 (Whereupon the first side of the tape was concluded, and
4 I think some words were lost as the tape was turned over
5 to the second side.)

6 MS. KAISER: He wasn't close to Auschwitz.
7 She wouldn't let him go alone.

8 MS. THIERDON: Did they have children?

9 MS. KAISER: No, they didn't have any children. She came
10 to Holland, they thought she was a German Gentile. I was
11 still in Holland. And she came visiting my parents. But
12 she went back to BOSWITZ. And when I went to the station
13 with her, I knew that I never would see her again. I
14 knew it.

15 MS. VAN DUYON: You had a . . .

16 MS. KAISER: I had a-- I was sick, I knew I never would
17 see her again. That was like that.

18 And my other brother, one was in America already, he
19 came in '39. He had no children either. He passed away
20 in the meantime. And my other brother lived in Holland, he
21 married after the war, he was in hiding for two years, got
22 married after the war, had three children, then he died, also

23 (Whereupon the transcriber stopped.)
24
25