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LONI KATZ

Tape #41 C-60 Side B

Transcribed by: Janice M. Knetzger CSR#4434
5605 Kingston Way
Sacramento, CA 95822

1 Q. I'd like to ask you some very general questions and some
2 very specific questions about your experiences during the war.
3 What is your name?
4 A. My name is Loni Katz.
5 Q. And where do you live today?
6 A. I live today in Forest Hills, New York. 113-14 72nd Road.
7 Q. Thank you. What is your current address?
8 A. 113-14 72nd Road, Forest Hills, New York.
9 Q. I'll start with a very general question. First, I wanted to
10 know where you were born and what city you grew up in during
11 the war.
12 A. I was born in Essen --
13 Q. Just relax.
14 A. -- in Essen, Germany in February 1913. I left Germany in
15 1933 when I found out that the Nazis took over even the firm
16 where I used to work as a secretary. From there, I went to
17 Holland by boat because at this time you couldn't get a
18 passport.
19 Q. What year did you go to Holland?
20 A. In 1933.
21 Q. How long were you in Holland?
22 A. I stayed in Holland until 1942 until the Germans came. The
23 Germans came in 1940 but I still managed to stay in Amsterdam
24 until 1933 when I was --
25 Q. You mean 1943?
26 A. '42. Until I was picked up and sent to the camp in Holland.
27

1
2 The camp, the name of the camp was Vestabalg. There I stayed
3 for one and-a-half year practically and when they transport in
4 Polland I was sent to Terestecald. In Terestecald, I sayed
5 from February 1944 until May 1944 when they put a transport
6 together to Auschwitz. I went to Auschwitz in May 1944.
7 Naturally, as everybody knows Auschwitz. I don't have to say
8 anything about Auschwitz because everybody knows what was going
9 on there. The only thing --

10 Q. Not everybody knows what's going on here. I'm here to ask
11 you what experiences you personally had that are not too
12 painful to discuss. But continue telling me.

13 A. How can I explain it? One good thing for me personally in
14 Auschwitz was that I arrived during the summer time in May. It
15 wasn't so ice cold. We arrived and everything was taken from
16 us. And I came there and saw all those military and those
17 people with the big dogs, in the beginning I really thought
18 those were nice people with nice dogs. I didn't even realize
19 that those dogs was meant for the people who arrived with the
20 train and the train arrived everything was taken out from you
21 and everybody said leave everything in the train, you get
22 everything back in about an hour.

23 Q. This was train you took from Holland or this was the train
24 from Terestecald?

25 A. This is the train from Terestecald. That's where cattle --
26 From Terestecald there are also cattle train.

27 Q. Yes.

1 A. You could hardly take anything from Terestecald to Auschwitz
2 either though. You arrived there in Auschwitz and they took
3 everything away and then they --

4 Q. Was there -- When you arrived was there a line and a
5 decision what direction you would go once you arrived in
6 Auschwitz?

7 A. Not right away.

8 Q. A selection?

9 A. The selection came later. But in the beginning you just
10 stood on the ramp and they showed you some dresses which didn't
11 fit you and the shoes which didn't fit you -- something so you
12 had something on your body.

13 Q. They took all your possessions, jewelry, etc?

14 A. Jewelry. You didn't have anything even when you left
15 practically Terestecald. You didn't have anything either any
16 more. So -- And then they all told you, "Oh, you are lucky.
17 They didn't even shave your head yet." Because most of the
18 inmates were already shaved. That was a special transport who
19 came from Terestecald. So, we were put in barracks where we
20 had to sleep three -- How do you say it? Three.

21 Q. Three persons to a bed or a barrack?

22 A. Two persons in one naturally but two.

23 Q. Two layers on the bed?

24 A. That's right.

25 Q. Like a bunk bed?

26 A. Like a bunk bed. I didn't even know the name of it. You
27

1 didn't get anything to eat, naturally. But had to get up every
2 morning in the dark and had to stay for hours. Appels they
3 used to call it.

4 Q. What work did you do in the camp?

5 A. I was toavaher(sp) that wouldn't mean anything to anybody.
6 That means I had to watch that nobody was out of the barrack
7 but nobody was into the barrack. And then we had to --

8 Q. Like a guard?

9 A. Like a guard. That was at this time -- but in Auschwitz I
10 only stayed for until July and then we were selected and the
11 one --

12 Q. Selected for what?

13 A. For the gas chambers or to be sent for work. Since I was at
14 this time fairly healthy, --

15 Q. How old were you?

16 A. If I can figure it out. 31, no, yes, 31. So, Dr. Mengele,
17 the very famous Dr. Mengele --

18 Q. Sure.

19 A. -- selected me and he said left which means at this time she
20 goes on transport. If he would have selected right, it meant I
21 go to the gas chamber.

22 Q. Did you know it during the time during the selection what it
23 meant to go left or right?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. How did you know?

26 A. Because you talk to people who were already in the camp.

27

1 When we came, they always said, "You are lucky, you still have
2 three weeks or two months to live. The other ones are already
3 in the gas chambers."

4 In the begining, we couldn't even -- we couldn't even grasp
5 that it could be this way.

6 Q. So, people helped each other.

7 A. As far as they could. There was not much to help. But you
8 never, ever 'til today -- I will never forget the smell from
9 the gas of this burned flesh like you would smell all the time.
10 It was a terrible smell.

11 Q. You knew what you were smelling?

12 A. Sure, we knew it.

13 Q. How were you able to cope with it?

14 A. Because at this time as I said, still a little bit healthy
15 and younger and I tried to survive and I had nobody really to
16 worry about because I was at this time I was not married. And
17 I knew my family was safe.

18 Q. You knew your family was safe? Where were they?

19 A. Because they were already in America.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. One sister was in England. So, that is something that
22 really helped you.

23 Q. How did you feel that you would survive the camp? Did you
24 feel that?

25 A. You couldn't really say that I felt it but I did hope I
26 would. That I would get out of there. But sometimes you would

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1 be mentally discouraged if you would stand for hours and hours
2 in the heat for a period. You really fainted, you know. And
3 then you had to have -- There was always somebody you would
4 say, "Come on, get up. You have to get out of here otherwise
5 you go into gas chamber right away." After the selection in
6 July, I was sent also in a little cattle car to another camp
7 from Osozen. Have you heard Osozen? In the -- We had two
8 load those centlories (?). We had to schlep those -- We had to
9 cut out the trees from the floor. We had to carry those
10 railroad --

11 Q. The railroad ties?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. That's heavy work.

14 A. It was very heavy work. And you didn't get really very much
15 to eat and then we had to meet those cement blocks where they
16 build houses from.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. And by then it was already November, October, November,
19 December and it was ice, ice, ice cold. And you didn't have
20 anything, except a very small little coat. They naturally
21 froze to death in. But we still managed.

22 Q. I have a specific question. Were you medically experimented
23 on?

24 A. No.

25 Q. You were very lucky.

26 A. No. That I know.

27

1 Q. Did you see people actually tortured or murdered for any
2 reason or no reason?

3 A. No, I personally didn't see it, personally.

4 Q. What was a typical day like for you?

5 A. That you had to get up in the morning at 5:00 o'clock and
6 stand for one or two hours in line when --

7 Q. For role call?

8 A. -- role call, you call it. Yes. Until the Germans finally
9 decided that one and one is two because sometimes they couldn't
10 even count. And then you had to stand like you was standing
11 around the whole day because I didn't work in one of those
12 factories. In this respect, I was very lucky that I didn't have
13 to. This was in Auschwitz. In the other camps, I had to work.
14 Like in Terestecald, Osozen.

15 Q. Did you say that you did not have family members in the
16 camps with you, they had all gone to the United States?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Why had you not left?

19 A. I left the first one in Germany in 1933. The other one left
20 later and I couldn't get out any more from Holland when the
21 Germans came. Then, it was too late. And I -- I was there
22 everyday but it was too late to get out and there was somebody
23 in Waterdam. There was one counsel who was not too helpful
24 anyhow.

25 Q. What was it like in Holland before you were taken away?

26 A. To life in Holland? It was marvelous before the Germans
27

1 were there. Holland is a very, very nice, friendly, helpful
2 people. They always thought it's our Jews.

3 Q. They protected the Jews?

4 A. As much as they could protect they did. Naturally. Later
5 on there were some people who said, "Oh, the Germans are nice
6 people." And they like everybody else, they became Nazis too.

7 Q. Before you were taken away from Holland, did you have any
8 idea what was going on throughout the rest of Europe?

9 A. No, not really. Some people said, "Okay, they go and make
10 some soap out of people." And we always said, "No, they can't
11 possible." But, later on I found out they did. You know. But
12 there were things you really wanted to put out of your mind
13 because it can't be true. Something like this. And then --
14 After Christians -- Generally, the Russians were in the
15 neighborhood. So, they emptied the camp and we had to walk for
16 five and-a-half weeks through Germany and it was when they
17 bombed Tresen in 1945. We were just there in the neighbor in a
18 little in a -- how you call it? I can't even remember words --
19 Anyhow, after this march, we had to stay during the night when
20 they bombed Tresen we had to stay in a little place and the
21 next morning we had to march and it was just my birthday. I got
22 from somebody half a onion. This was the biggest birthday
23 present I ever got. And then there were some SS people and
24 then people couldn't walk any more. They just shot them
25 directly so.

26 Q. Um-hum.

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1 A. And we had to walk from the interior and then we arrived, I
2 think it was the middle of March. And then in Dassen, I walked
3 as much as I could and by then we were already thin like, like
4 a pencil. You know. And then you got the starving sickness,
5 the flectuss(?).

6 Q. What is that?

7 A. Flectuss(?). It is a certain type of typhus. Most of the
8 people died of flectuss(?). I think it comes from a little fly
9 or something.

10 Q. Malaria. Something like that.

11 A. Something. Yeah.

12 Q. Did you become ill from typhus?

13 A. Oh, yes.

14 Q. How did you survive with this illness?

15 A. I don't know. God helped me.

16 Q. Did you have a fever and weak?

17 A. I had so terrible a fever that I really that everybody
18 thought really I would die. But by then the British came --
19 this was in April -- practically around this time. The British
20 came and liberated.

21 Q. Describe the day of liberation and where you were and what
22 you felt.

23 A. You couldn't believe it. You just couldn't believe it. And
24 then you saw the first British people, you said it can't be
25 probable. Is it really so? And they were so -- They were so
26 upset, so, so,so, flabergasted that this is possible that

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1 people looked that way, that people were lying there, dying
2 there. It was undescrivable. But I was still able at this
3 time to walk a little bit. I could have looked this by the way
4 after the liberation because I helped a few friends of mine who
5 couldn't walk any more in a sort of a hospital -- whatever you
6 could call a hospital. It was not a real hospital but some
7 station where you could put people. And, there I lost a lot of
8 friends who just couldn't make it anymore which is -- They had
9 a lung sickness. They were completely exhausted.

10 Q. Where was this hospital?

11 A. In Bamberg. There are so many things which I can't even say
12 now really because sometimes it is too hard to express.

13 Q. Is it painful to discuss this or have you blocked some of
14 this out?

15 A. I blocked it out. Otherwise, I could not have survived.

16 Q. So, it's better now to block it out then to discuss it?

17 A. In a certain way maybe to discuss it. You have some days
18 where you really can talk about it and on some days where you
19 just block it out. You know.

20 Q. Do you have children?

21 A. No. I met my husband who was married and I was very -- I
22 mean I knew his wife very well and I saw her in Bamberg where I
23 knew that she died.

24 Q. So, you met him after the war?

25 A. I knew him before the war because I worked for a lawyer in
26 Amsterdam and he was a client there. That's why I knew him and

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1 I was the only one who really knew what happened to his wife.
2 So, after a while I said I'm going to America and he said,
3 "Okay, I'm going too." So we married.

4 Q. In America?

5 A. No, no. We married in Holland.

6 Q. Married in Holland. You said that he was also in the camps?

7 A. My husband? Yeah, he was in Romania and he was sent to
8 Bougenvald. His wife was sent to Rafsbrek and he was sent to
9 Bougenvald and had to work at the braberg. This was also one
10 of this German big factories where they make coal, brown coal
11 -- pen ceen auct ceen -- and there he worked for -- I don't
12 know how long even -- and then he had to march for over two
13 weeks to Terestecald. This was already then in 1945 that he
14 was liberated. But he died absolutely from all, through all
15 the sicknesses he developed in the concentration camp.

16 Q. He died two months ago you said?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. And, what did he die of?

19 A. He developed bleeding ulcers in the camp so he was
20 constantly -- He was 45 times in the hospital only since 1964.
21 45 times. Always bleeding, always blood transfusions until
22 now. He couldn't make it any more.

23 Q. From bleeding ulcers he died which he developed in the
24 camps?

25 A. That's right. The final the doctor says he got pneumonia
26 and that was what he really died of, but his main sickness was

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1 ulcers, the bleeding ulcers.

2 Q. Did you two discuss your experiences in the camp a little
3 bit, a lot?

4 A. We could talk about it. I mean I never could have married
5 anybody else and somebody who was other than in a concentration
6 camp because he never could understand the reactions and he
7 could never have done the same because we knew those things.
8 You know, some remarks and you would say uh-huh.

9 Q. It was something understood that you didn't have to even
10 discuss?

11 A. Exactly. That's right.

12 Q. Were you able to discuss this with anyone else such as your
13 family members who were in the United States that did not
14 experience what you experienced?

15 A. You could hardly because you wouldn't -- they wouldn't
16 understand it.

17 Q. Did you want to discuss with them? Did they want to hear?

18 A. No, they didn't even want to hear. They didn't even want to
19 hear. Now, they start -- even the younger niece of mine, a
20 younger one -- Now, they start getting a little bit more
21 interested in it and say, "Oh, tell me about it." But even if
22 you tell them about it, they wouldn't grasp it. Nobody else
23 who wasn't there could. You know.

24 Q. What brings you here today to the gathering?

25 A. Because I feel I have to -- practically the last honor I can
26 give to friends of mine which I had and who died in the

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1 concentration camp. I mean I wouldn't forget them anyhow but I
2 think if there is some memorial for those things that's the
3 least thing I can do for them. I won't forget them anyhow
4 but --

5 Q. How do you feel now that you've survived today and even your
6 expectations when you were in the camp to survive? Did you
7 have expectations?

8 A. That I survive?

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. I had the will power to survive. And as I said, since I
11 didn't have anybody really to worry about --

12 Q. After you were liberated from the camp, where did you go,
13 what did you do?

14 A. I went back to Holland and I used to work for a lawyer also
15 who tried to find out where people, what happened to this and
16 this people, the memories about it, what I could say to help to
17 find family of some -- You know, from a so called surviving
18 people. And I got letters from all over the world. You were
19 in Auschwitz, you were in Bagenbelzen, would you remember
20 seeing my aunt, could you remember seeing my sister, could you
21 remember what happened to my brother and those things. What I
22 did.

23 Q. When did you come to the United States?

24 A. On April 8, 1947.

25 Q. So, you were in Holland up until that time?

26 A. That's right. We couldn't marry because we didn't get the
27

1 official death certificate from my first -- from the first wife
2 of my husband, you know, because they give death certificates
3 in Beldhousen. She died in Beldhousen of malnutrition. She
4 starved to death period.

5 Q. Did you experience any anti-Jewish or anti-Semitism feelings
6 after your were released or any time since?

7 A. In Holland? No.

8 Q. In Holland or in the United States?

9 A. I personally, no. Personally, I don't.

10 Q. Have you spoken out specifically about the Holocaust to
11 anyone else besides your small conversations with your family?

12 A. I don't think I'm not such a big speaker.

13 Q. I know.

14 A. Not only this but as I said, my memory what after the
15 reflective, after those things very, very bad that even the
16 dear good Germans decided that I was entitled for a small --
17 They call it zoomdicharn because they said my memory is very
18 bad. My memory is very bad but some things in time you never
19 forget anyhow even if you can't explain it so well. I'm not a
20 good speaker even in German and not even in English and Dutch
21 okay, a little bit also.

22 Q. You've heard the expression that Jews went like "sheep to
23 the slaughter". What do you think of that?

24 A. All those people who say they just should have stood
25 there -- If somebody else stay with a gun in front of you and
26 said "March" and if you didn't march he'd just take you over
27

1 there because you didn't have anything. You just had a pair of
2 shoes, your bare and nothing. I remember one day I fell down,
3 I couldn't get up very fast so this SS man took a little tree
4 thing and he hit me over the head and over the nose that for
5 days I was bleeding on my nose. So, if they tell me they walk
6 like cattle, they didn't have any other choose.

7 Q. Sure.

8 A. If there was -- I mean, this was a bunch of women.

9 Q. Has Israel been important to you?

10 A. Yeah. I went to Israel. We went to Israel once.

11 Q. We know that most countries would not allow the Jews to
12 enter. Does that make you bitter that there were quotas on
13 immigration either during the war and after?

14 A. It does amaze me but I wouldn't go there anyhow as much as I
15 wouldn't go to Germany any more. Never, ever.

16 Q. Well, I want to thank you very much for this interview. You
17 were very, very sweet.

18 A. I need a little bit out of it even if I couldn't provide
19 much more or more valuable or more --

20 Q. Just the fact that you're here today.

21 A. Yeah, I wanted to come and my husband would have loved to
22 come too at this time. I registered already in November for
23 this gathering here and he would have loved to come here but in
24 the mean time, he couldn't make it any more.

25 Q. Thank you very much.

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