

1 ANNE TEICH

2

3 INTERVIEW WITH: Anne Teich

4 INTERVIEWER:

5 DATE:

6 PLACE:

7 TRANSCRIBER: Jean Potter
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9 Glendale, Arizona 85301 (602) 846-8328

10 THE INTERVIEWER: Will you tell me your name, where you
11 were born and when?

12 ANNE TEICH: My name is Anne Teich. I was born in
13 Czechoslovakia May 14, 1920. I come from a family of six
14 children, three boys and three girls. I am the only survivor.

15 My father had a brother who also was married and
16 had four children and they were killed too, in 1941, in
17 November, in Kamenets-Podolski in the Ukraine. About 60,000
18 Jews perished there. They were all shot. They were --. We
19 were working for awhile and then when they couldn't use us,
20 they shot all these people.

21 I then escaped to Hungary and Budapest. I was in
22 In-ter-ne-dence (phonetic) camp in Budapest for awhile and
23 I was on my way to another concentration camp, and I escaped
24 through Wallenberg and I lived in Budapest under an assumed
25 name and I worked for the underground. I was associated

1 with the Pi-to (phonetic) underground and also worked a group
2 for Wallenberg's Swedish concentration. We saved quite a lot
3 of people.

4 THE INTERVIEWER: I think perhaps it would be good to
5 start near the beginning and then any special vivid memories
6 that you have -- well, of course, of Wallenberg as a person,
7 but also I think just of the daily life.

8 ANNE TEICH: Yeah. Well, how it started, actually, the
9 part of Czechoslovakia where I came from, Hitler promised that,
10 at Munich conference they had to Hungary, that was Hungary-
11 Austria once, and he, in 1938 we were occupied by the Hungarian
12 military, by the Hungarian government. Prior to that, while
13 we were waiting for the occupation, the Slovaks, we were ,
14 got very angry that they had to give up some of their territory,
15 that was Slovakia, so they went and put 10,000 Jewish families
16 on the border, so-called new border, and we brought them into
17 our city and we took care of them to occupy the synagogue, we
18 formed temples, we formed schools --

19 THE INTERVIEWER: Did they live in your house?

20 ANNE TEICH: Some of them. Some people took them to
21 their houses, some of them. We had several people live in
22 our house. Then when the formal occupation, the ceremonies
23 were over, the Hungarian police and military started putting
24 these people back on the border, and I saved about 80 people.
25 We converted the Jewish school to a hospital. We had 80-some

1 people, and I took care of these people, and with some luck I
2 convinced the Chief of Police that these people were very
3 ill, and I played on his sympathy and I asked him if the
4 situation were reversed and he would be here and his family
5 would be, have to be going back to the border in the mud and
6 in the snow, how would he feel? And I asked him to put himself
7 in our shoes. And he wore boots, very heavy tall-set man,
8 and he picked up his leg and put it on the chair and he hit
9 his boot and he said "By God, let them stay." Yeah.

10 And they stayed for quite awhile.

11 And I worked that day all day. I wasn't home --

12 THE INTERVIEWER: Was it just you with the 80 people?

13 ANNE TEICH: No. Well, no, that had nothing --. I was
14 safe. Those were the people from --

15 THE INTERVIEWER: What I mean is, you were taking care of
16 them as a nurse, but were there any other --

17 ANNE TEICH: Oh, no, we had several doctors, physicians,
18 Jewish physicians, and I had quite a few --. As a matter of
19 fact, it was, I really learned my first lesson, what it was
20 about Hitler, and we didn't know until then.

21 Two young men came in one afternoon and they spoke
22 German and they asked me, they asked me whether they could
23 help me, and I thought to myself, well, German? I don't need
24 any Germans here, and they said "We are Jewish." So I had --.
25 I am a nurse. I had a small burner that I sterilized, I had

1 a couple of diabetic patients where I sterilized the syringes,
2 and they stayed, I let them stay, and I asked them to pour
3 a little alcohol and light it underneath a little pot to
4 sterilize the syringe, and a small fire started and the young
5 man scratched his hand. And there was no hemorrhage or anything,
6 but he passed out, went out cold on me. So I was kidding him
7 and I said, you know, "What kind of man is he, that a slight
8 scratch, and that he is so frightened or scared, you know, that
9 he passed out?" And he said to me, "If you would have gone
10 through what we went through to get here, then you would
11 understand." And then he told me that he escaped from a
12 concentration camp and they walked from Germany and they hadn't
13 had a decent meal in months, and they showed me the shoes,
14 they had holes in them, and the whole soles of their feet were
15 all sores.

16 This was the, really the first time, you know, in
17 1938, that we realized what we were up to. When the Hungarian
18 soldiers came in and the parades and everything was over, they
19 started taking the people back. I was still with the sick
20 people.

21 My sister -- I had an older sister. I was second
22 of the --

23 THE INTERVIEWER: How many were in your family?

24 ANNE TEICH: Six children, three boys and three girls.
25 I was second to the oldest.

1 But my sister came over and she said "They arrested
2 Daddy. They were looking for you and you were away, and
3 they arrested --." See, what we did, the Chief of Police
4 trusted me and there were a lot of people working, as I told
5 you, they gathered everybody in the yard and at the temple,
6 and he told me, he asked me to stay with him and with soldiers
7 at the exit. He said "A lot of Jews say that they belong to
8 the cities and I don't know. How can I tell? Do you know
9 everybody here?" And I said "Of course." I said "I was
10 born in a small town, but I came here to this city when I was
11 two years old," so I said "I know everybody," and this way I
12 helped a lot of people escape. "Do you know this one?"
13 "Yes, I know all this." "Do you know this one?" And I let
14 a lot of people get out of the building, and they went in
15 hiding.

16 So they arrested -- they found some, and they
17 arrested my father.

18 So I went home and I asked my mother, "Did they find
19 anybody in our house?" And my mother said "No, because we
20 put them, several people, under the beds," and you know, in
21 Europe, they have those huge down feather beds, and "We threw
22 the feather beds all over and they were looking under the bed,
23 and we put some in the attic, so they didn't find anybody at
24 all except that they found some people on the streets and
25 they were looking for you and they couldn't find you, so they

1 took Dad."

2 So I went to the police department and I went to the
3 police chief and I said "Look, you were looking for me. I am
4 here. Will you please let my father --?" And he didn't
5 remember my name, but "Oh," he said, "It is you." He said
6 "All right, I'll let your father go," and he let my father go,
7 and I wasn't arrested.

8 We stayed at home until 1941, but we had to have, we
9 were considered foreign Jews. There were Hungarian Jews,
10 they didn't bother these. We were the Czechoslovakian Jews.
11 So in, we had to go to the Ministry of Interior, to Budapest,
12 every three months and get like a visa that you can stay. So
13 I used to go every three months, every two-and-a-half months,
14 to Budapest, and get a visa until 1941, in the early spring,
15 and then they took every --, all of the foreign Jews.

16 What happened was Hitler asked the Hungarian government
17 to get him some young Jewish men to go on the front line to
18 pick the mines. The Jewish community said "There are so many
19 foreign Jews, take those," and that is how they were taking
20 families.

21 And when we came to Kamenets-Podolski they couldn't
22 take children to the front line because they wouldn't be any
23 help, so they just shot them. And that is how my parents
24 got killed, and I was the only one who just by sheer luck
25 escaped.

1 THE INTERVIEWER: Could you go into how you did escape?

2 ANNE TEICH: Well, I am a very peculiar person. I am
3 a fighter. I fight injustice, not only for me, but in general.
4 I don't like any kind of prejudice, and I fought my, I said --
5 -- I was sure I was going to die. I didn't fight because
6 I wanted to save my life, but I was fighting because I was
7 innocent. I didn't do anything bad, and we were mistreated
8 and I didn't think it was right. And I said "If I'm going
9 down, I'm not going down without a fight."

10 THE INTERVIEWER: Were there other people with the same
11 spirit?

12 ANNE TEICH: No. Unfortunately not. And another thing,
13 what really helped me was a lot of people got very weak because
14 there was no food available at all. I am like Gandhi, I
15 can, whether I eat or not doesn't really matter. What little
16 food they gave us, I gave it away. I am a survivor. I was
17 the sickest in the family -- I have a kidney condition,
18 everything. And I was the only one who survived.

19 THE INTERVIEWER: So --.

20 ANNE TEICH: We were digging the graves and I have an
21 ulcer and, excuse me, but I had to -- I had stomach ache, and
22 I, so I told the German SS man that I have to go, and even a
23 criminal gets his last wish, and that is how they told me to
24 get in the woods, and that is how I am here today.

25 THE INTERVIEWER: So then you just ran when you got in

1 the woods?

2 ANNE TEICH: Yes.

3 THE INTERVIEWER: And how did you survive in the woods?

4 ANNE TEICH: Oh -- whatever you find, you eat, and
5 whatever.

6 THE INTERVIEWER: Were you alone then?

7 ANNE TEICH: Yes. You get along.

8 THE INTERVIEWER: And how long was that?

9 ANNE TEICH: I don't know. Very long. Very long. Because
10 you couldn't walk or do anything in the daytime. You have to
11 do it at night. So it took me months, and then I got into
12 Budapest.

13 THE INTERVIEWER: So you just survived on nuts and berries
14 and whatever?

15 ANNE TEICH: Well, you get into, you get by a farm, you
16 get into the thing, you gather potatoes and things, you dig
17 them up and stuff like that.

18 THE INTERVIEWER: Could you describe any of the feelings
19 or the scenes or specific memories that you have?

20 ANNE TEICH: I have seen --. I have heard the shots.
21 I haven't seen it. I have been, when I was in Budapest, when
22 I came to Budapest I had rented a house. My mother sent her
23 jewelry back and fortunately I had that money, and I lived
24 on that because everybody was rationed, and I was going to go
25 into the city from the subway, from where I lived to get on

1 the trolley, and the police came and picked everybody up.

2 We were taken out on a field and there were a long
3 ditch about two miles long, and the whole row on that ditch
4 there were women and children, face down, and all were shot
5 in the back of the neck, and they were turning them over,
6 each one.

7 Prior to that I recognized somebody from our city,
8 and on the trolley, and people were so scared that they
9 wouldn't acknowledge each other, you know, you didn't trust
10 anybody. And we used to be friends. She didn't say hello to
11 me and I didn't say hello to her because you never knew whether
12 the Gestapo men was on the trolley.

13 And when they turned over one body and I recognized
14 her, and her name was Mrs. Roten, and one of her daughters
15 I recognized. So I made a noise and the police came right
16 away and asked me "Do you know them?" and I had to deny it,
17 of course, that I knew her.

18 They drove us to another field and we found the
19 same amount of men shot the same way. And I witnessed an
20 awful lot of horrible things in Budapest.

21 When Sol-o-she (phonetic) took over, -- I don't
22 know whether you remember, you might not even have been born
23 then, Horthy was a Prime Minister and he capitulated in 1944,
24 I think, end of 1944, and he said he wasn't going to fight
25 alongside the Germans, and we thought, you know -- '45, I

1 think it was -- we thought what if I, I think we thought
2 whoever was hiding, we were going to be free, and the people
3 who were in ghettos were going to be free, but a couple of hours
4 later Sol-o-she (phonetic), who was a Nazi, Hungarian-Nazi
5 leader, he took over as Prime Minister, and it was unbelievable.

6 You walked on the street and the Hungarian-Nazis
7 were throwing people and little children and babies from six,
8 seven, fourth floors on the streets. They took them down to the
9 Danube and lined them up. They underestimated, they had to
10 walk through the streets naked with their hands up above
11 their heads, and shot them.

12 For years the Danube was washing bodies out. It was
13 just unbelievable.

14 This is why I have taped my part of what happened in
15 Budapest because this was another part of Hitler and Sol-o-she
16 (phonetic), and you know, if he would have had as much time
17 as Hitler had, there wouldn't have been any human, any Jew
18 left at all, because he was just as bad as Hitler.

19 THE INTERVIEWER: I don't know whether to go on or not.

20 Let's see; when did you find out that you were
21 indeed free?

22 ANNE TEICH: When the Russians occupied us. In 1945, in
23 the winter, they came, yeah. They came by and I was arrested
24 the first or second evening. They took us, and I had a hard
25 time with the Russians, and that is why I left.

1 I had a friend of mine living with me -- several
2 other people. We called it an International House. Anybody
3 who was running from the German Nazis or the Hungarian Nazis.
4 She was a half Jewish girl from Vienna, and they came looking
5 for the German girl. She in the meantime went into the city.
6 Fortunately, otherwise she would have been killed, and they
7 came looking for her and they took me instead of her, and I
8 was questioned for a whole night and beaten by the in-ca-ver-
9 der (phonetic) until I convinced them that I thought, I told
10 them "We prayed for you to come, I'm Jewish and I was waiting
11 for you to come and save me from the Germans, and now you are
12 doing the same thing," and I went on just like a record, over
13 and over and over. I speak some Russian. And they finally
14 let me go.

15 THE INTERVIEWER: And the others in the house?

16 ANNE TEICH: No, yeah, but they survived, yeah, some men
17 were taken. The Russians took a lot of men. They started
18 right after they occupied Budapest. I don't know why, but
19 they picked all young men up. If a young man walked down
20 the street, they picked him up, and that was it.

21 THE INTERVIEWER: So what were your feelings and the
22 adjustment that you made after?

23 ANNE TEICH: I am a very lonesome person. I am all alone.
24 I have very good friends and I came here and I thought maybe
25 I'd find somebody. I'm still looking, hoping.

1 My mother is supposed to have two brothers here
2 in this country, and I haven't been able to find them. They
3 have families. I don't know whether they changed their names
4 or what. I made good friends. I love America.

5 That is about it.

6 THE INTERVIEWER: What about your -- well, I know you said
7 you were always a champion of the oppressed. How does this
8 work out in your life now?

9 ANNE TEICH: I'm still fighting. I'm still fighting.

10 THE INTERVIEWER: In what way?

11 ANNE TEICH: In a lot of ways. There is a lot of work
12 to be done here too.

13 THE INTERVIEWER: Well, now like --?

14 ANNE TEICH: I'd rather not go into it.

15 THE INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me why?

16 ANNE TEICH: There's a lot, it is a beautiful country,
17 wonderful country, but when you, when the phone rings at
18 3:00 o'clock in the morning and they tell you "It's too bad
19 that you didn't get killed with the rest of them," and "I'm
20 going to kill you," then --

21 THE INTERVIEWER: That's right.

22 ANNE TEICH: Then there's a lot of work to be done here
23 too.

24 THE INTERVIEWER: Well, I just want to thank you.

25 (a pause)

1 (The tape was turned off, then turned back on again)

2 THE INTERVIEWER: Now we are talking about displaced
3 person camps after the war.

4 ANNE TEICH: After the war I escaped from the Russians
5 in Prague, I went to Pil-fin (phonetic) and the Americans
6 helped me. A Jewish chaplain helped me go to West Germany
7 and I stayed in Deggendorf in a displaced persons camp. Four
8 years I waited to come to this country because I didn't have
9 anybody to sign up for me.

10 THE INTERVIEWER: What was life like there? What did
11 these people talk about? What did they do?

12 ANNE TEICH: Well, you could work, I worked in the
13 hospital. We had hospital work. You could work. People
14 cleaned. Just we didn't go very much into town because you
15 were afraid of the Germans. Another thing, when there was a
16 siren blew, like there was a curfew in '45, in Germany, you
17 were running for the shelter, or you were running. Even now
18 when I hear a siren going, sometimes I just start running.

19 But you stayed to yourselves and, in the camp,
20 because you did not trust the Germans. You were afraid.

21 So we entertained ourselves. We had a hospital, we
22 showed movies, and there was a community kitchen, you know,
23 people ate there. There were five, six people in a small
24 room. Some were lucky and there were only two, or some
25 married couples got a room for themselves, but you know,

1 you were crowded and cramped. -- quarters. You had a cot
2 and that's about all. You didn't get any money or any thank
3 you, just sit there and waited until your turn came to go, or
4 to go to Israel when Israel became, Palestine became
5 (inaudible), or to America. It was very hard. Very, very
6 difficult.

7 After all you went through, you know, to be in a
8 camp again, it was just, well, that was insulting. It was
9 very bad. I don't think they should have let the people wait
10 that long. I don't think it is fair, you know, because they
11 don't do it to other people. They had all kinds of excuses.
12 They bring them very fast to America and to other places.

13 And that was four years out of my life, from 1938
14 actually through 1945 I lived like an animal, you know, like
15 a hunted animal, and then to go and have to be in another
16 camp again --. I think that hurt more than anything.
17 But -- that's life. You are just --. We had a polio case in
18 our camp. We were scared that it is going to spread. And the
19 people really worked miracles, that only one case, one child
20 died, and I really think this was something unbelievable.
21 They scrubbed even the yards, the ground, they cleaned
22 every --. We worked so hard, you know, not to have any
23 fatalities. It was very hard.

24 I guess that's all.

25 THE INTERVIEWER: Okay. Well, thank you again.
