

KREFT, Ursula
Germany Documentation Project
German
RG-50.486*0060 [audio copy]

Tape 1, Side A

In this interview, Ursula Kreft speaks about her life, especially when she was a young girl in Germany during World War II. Ursula has a diary. She checks her notes as she talks. She speaks about the Nazi era, but says that her children know more about this than she does. She says that she knew no details about concentration camps during the war, only later did she find out about them.

[The interviewer, Annette Leo, suggests that a copy of the diary be made.]

[01,A:] 00:02 – [01,A:] 21:14

She speaks about her life; mentions her sister, who is 12 years younger; describes her home, her school, her family; discusses graduating from the Volksschule in 1939, emphasizes her training as a cook in a convent school (1939–1941); says that her father never allowed her to participate in gatherings with other young people; shows a certificate of completion as proof that she finished her exams; says that her parents did not live together during the war, her mother lived in Sponheim with her younger sister; mentions living with her father in Duisburg where they sometimes sheltered other people; describes her many trips by bike and on foot with girlfriends; mentions the curfew and seeing MPs on the street.

[01,A:] 21:15 – [01,A:] 46:37

She discusses the return of her girlfriend **Sigrid** to Sponheim; mentions the delivery of a package to **Sommerloch**; describes an experience in Düsseldorf during a 10 p.m. curfew when a man gave her a bedroom for the night while he repaired her bike; discusses persuading her mother and sister to move to Duisburg; describes their three day and two night trip.

[The interviewer suggests again that a copy of the diary be made.]

Tape 1, Side B (46.52 min.)

[01,B:] 00:05 – [01,B:] 13:11

She discusses her work as a cook in **Bad Bruckelheim**; mentions that her uncle was the mayor of the city; mentions that her family found a husband for her, but he was too old, 42; describes her work; explains that she worked for French people; mentions holding a certificate that allowed her to travel to collect her things from Duisburg where her family lived; remembers being afraid of the soldiers; mentions seeing a movie in which Hanna Schygulla played the main role.

[01,B:] 13:12 – [01,B:] 17:12

She describes her work as a cook with two assistants at **Bad Bruckelheim**; remembers dancing and having fun there; mentions that her parents insisted that she come back to Duisburg; discusses her work as a cook at a hotel in December 1946.

[01,B:] 17:13 – [01,B:] 30:33

She speaks about her husband, whom she married in 1949; discusses her married life and the arrival of her children, the first child arrived in 1951, the second in 1953; emphasizes that she did not work after her wedding, but rather took care of her family; discusses not returning to **Bad Bruckelheim** for a long time except for two visits that took place after 1985 when she had more freedom.

[01,B:] 30:34 – [01,B:] 46:52

She mentions that both her daughters married in 1976, mentions that if she were honest, she would not have gotten married; comments on her husband's work as a machinist; discusses the difficulties her family experienced, especially at the beginning; mentions their moving to different homes; talks about her mother-in-law who died in 1955 (of cancer); discusses details of her husband's death at home in 1996.

Tape 2, Side A (46.37)

[02,A:] 00:00 – [02,A:] 09:24

She comments about her fear to go to work because of the presence of soldiers in the streets; discusses details about her parents, their wedding in November 1921 in **Bad Bruckelheim**, and their move to Duisburg three years later; describes her father's work as a blacksmith in Duisburg, [*she shows photos*], and also gives details about his work in a factory; comments on her family's background; her father was born in 1896 in **Wald Bruckelheim**, her mother was from Breslau; mentions her father's ten siblings; comments on her parents meeting in Breslau where her mother was a saleswoman; remembers details of the life during 1933; remembers seeing people looting and burning the factories; comments on details about soldiers in brown uniforms, but does not remember seeing SS soldiers in the street before the war; explains that her father kept the family away from others, and arranged for her to be trained at a convent school; discusses

details about the persecution of Jews carried out in the open and her father's reluctance to explain the happenings to her by telling her: "Shut your mouth!" every time she asked.

[The interviewer asks again if a copy of the diary could be made. Ursula says yes, her children can do that.]

[02,A:] 09:25 – [02,A:] 20:54

She discusses her parents' political affiliation as Zentrum (Deutsche Zentrumspartei), and Christliche Gewerkschaft (Christian Union); comments on her family; mentions an uncle who disappeared during the war; discusses her work as a cook in an iron factory; describes her work; talks about her friends; describes their housing and what people did for fun.

[02,A:] 20:55 – [02,A:] 30:59

She comments on a camp near the iron works; discusses spending their free time with the Russians at the Russian camp; remembers a few episodes about visits from the secret police; remembers watching German films with Russian subtitles together with her co-workers; she comments on the guest workers; remembers that there were people from Holland, France, and Italy; mentions having two boyfriends, one who brought her perfume from Paris and another male friend who moved to Auschwitz and from whom she received a few letters.

[02,A:] 31:00 – [02,A:] 41:27

She mentions details about the letters from Auschwitz; remembers that her friend did not write about Auschwitz [*you can hear her rummaging*]; describes a fire that destroyed her kitchen at the factory; discusses the difficulties at the factory without running water; mentions a family with 13 children whose parents had died.

[02,A:] 41:28 – [02,A:] 46:37

She talks about her Jewish grandmother; remembers that her grandmother died in 1942 of natural death; comments that her cousins were all married; comments that she does not know details about the fate of Jewish people; remembers that she heard that Auschwitz was a work camp; describes seeing the yellow stars and the subsequent disappearance of Jews; emphasizes that her children know more about it; discusses seeing detainees, but they were soldiers; mentions details of her stay in a bunker for six weeks; comments about her coworker **Klara** [**Clara**] who went back to the Crimea.

Tape 2, Side B (30.10)

[02,B:] 00:00 – [02,B:] 11:49

She mentions that many people died in the Crimea; remembers that she and her husband received letters from **Klara**, but **Klara** did not come back to Germany; discusses other friends; mentions details of a trip to France; comments on her husband; remembers visiting his war buddies who are all dead now; mentions that her parents died, her father in 1968, her mother in 1980.

[02,B:] 11:50 – [02,B:] 30:10

She emphasizes that she does not know much about the persecution of Jewish people; mentions that there are many films about this topic; mentions that her children have questions about Hitler and the Nazi era; remembers that many sick children disappeared during the war and did not come back; mentions a film, *Der Blaufuchs*; she describes her daughters, their professions; mentions that she has no education and could not help her daughters with their schoolwork.