

RG-50.552.0004

Paul and Rudi Oppenheimer

Paul Oppenheimer born 1928 and Rudi Oppenheimer born 1931 both in Germany discuss childhood in Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen; family's immigration to Holland in 1936; lived near coast; moved by Nazis farther inland after 1940; attending regular school until transfer to Amsterdam; attending Jewish school in Amsterdam possibly with Anne Frank; children being fluent in German and Dutch, parents speaking accented Dutch; liberal parents; learning about Judaism either in camps or after liberation; opportunity to hide with neighbor in Amsterdam but opted to go to Westerbork; transportation to Westerbork 23 June 1943 with rest of Amsterdam's Jews; belief they would not be deported as sister was a British national and all family identification contained "blue stamp;" mother could have relocated to Red Cross camp with children due to daughter's nationality but chose to stay with father; deportation to Bergen Belsen February 1 1944, rode in 3rd class train car to Belsen with doors locked after leaving Westerbork; discuss receiving parcels and wearing regular clothing in Belsen; remained with father in barracks during stay; discuss stealing bread to stay alive and Rudi volunteering for barrack cleaning to avoid roll call; mother died January 17 1945 and father March 1945; Red Cross parcels arrived as father died; boys remained in barracks rather than going to orphanage; sister went to orphanage; children were separated at liberation because sister was with orphaned children; contracting typhoid and recovering in Russian sector before returning to Holland; finding sister in Leipzig on return route; being sent to camp which held SS guards after returning because the brothers lacked identification; sent to orphanage outside of Maastricht with sister July 1945; Rudi learned Jewish customs in orphanage; uncle arriving as British soldier and taking sister; uncle arranged visas for brothers; brothers to England November 1945; in England at time of recording