

GIJZENIJ-EPKE, Adriana  
Netherlands Documentation Project  
Dutch  
RG-50.570\*0017

Adriana Katharina Epke was born in Zaandam on April 20, 1928. She grew up in the city centre of Amsterdam. She moved within Amsterdam many times. In the interview she describes events she witnessed as a child. Among other things, she talks about the deportation of Jewish families, the eviction and deportation of Jewish patients at the Jewish Home and Hospital, "Joodse Invalide", and about the February Strike on Waterlooplein. She also mentions an incident at a bakery where a Jewish woman mentioned the word Auschwitz. She talks about her father's escape from a camp, about a German prisoner who came to their home, and about people in hiding. She describes the war through the eyes of a child.

*[Translator's note: Mrs. Gijzenij-Epke comes across as being confused at several points in the interview.]*

Box 1, Tape 1

**[01:] 00:16:05 – [01:] 09:26:09**  
**00:25 – 09:57**

Adriana Gijzenij-Epke explains that she was born in Zaandam; talks about her parents who worked for the Bruynzeel company on a ship where they also lived; describes her large family; says they were poor; describes her father's work and how he got this work; explains that she lived in Kattenburg (Amsterdam) in a popular neighbourhood; describes the time she fell out of the window as a nine-month-old baby; indicates that the family moved within Amsterdam many times; says her father became a contractor and then worked mostly for himself; indicates that she lived in so-called Jewish neighbourhoods; says the family always felt connected with the Jews; says she went to many different schools.

**[01:] 09:26:10 – [01:] 19:04:14**  
**09:58 – 19:59**

Adriana Gijzenij Epke says she got along well with Jews; indicates that there was a difference between the working class and the middle class; says her mother worked as a cleaning lady for a Jewish woman; tells us that as a child she was good at observing and feeling things; talks about Jewish refugees from Germany who came to live in their neighbourhood before the war; says there was no animosity towards the German Jews; talks about the last few years before the war; describes the German invasion and mentions the airplanes and bombs that fell; describes how her mother woke them up crying; says her father worked for a municipal office, "Bevolkingsdienst", at the beginning of the war; says she collected shrapnel; describes a time she saw German soldiers walking past who just looked, from her perspective as a child, like nice people; explains that she did not understand the word "enemy."

**[01:] 19:04:15 – [01:] 28:41:01**

**20:00 – 29:59**

Adriana Gijzenij-Epke says that much changed after May 10, 1940 [*the date of the German invasion of Holland*]; talks about the fathers of friends who turned out to be members of the Dutch National Socialist Movement (NSB); indicates that she was afraid to talk freely; tells us how she continued playing with the NSB children up to a certain point; describes how children became involved with the Hitler Youth, “Jeugdstorm”; says she saw one girl again after the liberation who was in a desperate situation; indicates that there were not many Jews living in the poor quarters; talks about a Mr. **Petten**, a man who worked with fur, who looked Jewish and whose son had his eye on her; thinks her mother cried so hard when the Germans invaded because of the responsibility she had for so many children; describes a girl, **Lenie [Lena] Plas**, who had beautiful, thick hair, who the interviewee supposes was Jewish; says thick hair was a distinguishing feature of Jews; indicates that for children things did not change much [*this would seem to contradict her earlier statement that much changed after the beginning of hostilities on May 10, 1940*].

**[01:] 28:41:02 – [01:] 38:17:07**  
**30:00 – 40:00**

Adriana Gijzenij-Epke explains that she often observed things; indicates that she saw people become nervous; describes the arrest of a number of Jewish families on Oude Schans in 1941; recalls shouting German soldiers and crying people; talks about the serious conversations she overheard between her mother and other women in a laundry in the neighbourhood on Rapenburg; says these women were crying and in retrospect thinks they had received letters from Germany; describes the crushed attitude of the Jews who she saw being arrested on Oude Schans; recalls the German soldiers in grey uniforms; describes the car in which the Jews were deported.

**[01:] 38:17:08 – [01:] 47:54:06**  
**40:01 – 50:00**

Adriana Gijzenij-Epke explains how as child she felt she did not have any support; says that in the Bloedstraat [*a street in Amsterdam's Red Light District*] she lived among Jews, Chinese, Italians and blacks; talks about the blacks and Chinese in Amsterdam; indicates that she went to school with Jewish children; talks about the sudden disappearance of a Jewish girl, **Marjolee**, from the Raadhuisstraat; indicates that as a child she registered the events but did not understand the meaning of what she saw; says she then came to live directly opposite the Jewish Home and Hospital, “Joodse Invalide”; mentions the suicides in the hospital by people who jumped out of the windows; indicates that many Jews turned themselves in voluntarily; describes her memories of the “Joodse Invalide”.

**[01:] 47:54:07 – [01:] 57:28:10**  
**50:01 – 59:59**

Adriana Gijzenij-Epke describes how she heard the screaming of people who committed suicide opposite her window; describes how these people were taken off the street in the morning; describes how one afternoon the inhabitants and patients of the “Joodse Invalide” were taken away; recalls how long that took; indicates that after that time, girls who were pregnant by German men came to live there; describes where she was and what exactly she saw of the eviction of the “Joodse Invalide”; talks about how people on stretchers and in

wheelchairs were brought outside and stuffed into ambulances; indicates that her father, as a contractor, had also worked at the “Joodse Invalide”; describes a large round-up on Waterlooplein in 1942; talks about the February strikes on February 25; describes the Waterlooplein; describes how dockworkers on Waterlooplein fought with German and Dutch policemen; mentions the term “hij is nat” [*he is wet*] meaning he’s a collaborator [*or possibly: he has been arrested?*].

**[01:] 57:28:11 – [02:] 02:29:24**  
**01:00:00 – 01:05:14**

Adriana Gijzenij-Epke describes how dockworkers fought with German and Dutch policemen on Waterlooplein; mentions the term “hij is nat”; describes how people stood in line and had to get into a police van.

Box 1, Tape 2

**[03:] 00:01:24 – [03:] 09:33:14**  
**00:12 – 10:01**

Adriana Gijzenij-Epke describes rows of tough Dutchmen on Waterlooplein, who she thinks were dock workers; indicates that she could tell from one’s appearance whether he was Jewish; indicates that Jews often had beautiful eyes and beautiful hair; says she saw people flee during the fighting to the Mozes en Aäron church on Waterlooplein; describes the chaos on the square; describes [*with difficulty*] the trucks the men had to get into; says she also ran away; thinks that strange things happened to her, giving as an example what she witnessed on the corner of Weesperstraat, a place where she later came to live; explains the route she took to get home; describes the scene of a street with little shops where it always smelled nice; indicates that she experienced these incidents often.

**[03:] 09:33:15 – [03:] 19:08:22**  
**10:02 – 20:00**

Adriana Gijzenij Epke says she had to bring letters or packages to the Dutch Theater, “Hollandse Schouwburg” [*served as a collection point for deportees in Amsterdam*]; describes what she brought and what the situation at the “Hollandse Schouwburg” was like and what happened there; talks about the courtyard; indicates that she learned to keep her mouth shut; describes an incident at a bakery on Jodenbreestraat in which a Jewish woman said the word “Auschwitz”; describes the situation in which she heard this; indicates that she had not heard that word before that moment; says she also wore a Jewish star herself although she cannot remember why she did this; talks about the silent cars of the Germans that nobody heard coming; talks about German soldiers who arrested people lining up outside a shop on Nieuwmarkt.

**[03:] 19:08:23 – [03:] 28:45:15**  
**20:01 – 30:01**

Adriana Gijzenij-Epke explains why she probably wore a yellow star as a non-Jew; says she lived in Koningsstraat; mentions an aunt who was married to an Austrian man; talks about the

fences around the Nieuwmarkt and about signs in German that said it was forbidden for Jews; indicates that trade came to a standstill; recalls that she saw from her aunt's house how men nervously slipped into a café; describes the police station on Jonas Daniel Meijerplein where Dutch policemen worked alongside the Germans; talks about how her father was arrested for attempted theft; mentions that he escaped after being in camp Vught and camp Amersfoort at the end of 1944; describes his escape.

[03:] 28:45:16 – [03:] 38:21:17  
30:02 – 40:01

Adriana describes how her father hid himself when he sensed danger; describes how she saw armed Nazis rounding up Jews on the Nieuwe Achtergracht and the Weesperstraat [*becomes emotional*]; says she saw how the Jews were taken away; says she watched in secret; tells us how she let a German soldier into her house; says a photo of her German uncle Rudi caught the soldier's attention; talks about uncle Rudi's trials and tribulations; says she thinks the German may have wanted to arrest them but did not because of her relationship with uncle Rudi, who was a citizen of the German Reich.

[03:] 38:21:18 – [03:] 47:59:05  
40:02 – 50:02

Adriana Gijzenij-Epke describes how her father hid himself quickly; says she is of the opinion that it was **aus der Funten** [*meaning unclear but possible reference to **Ferdinand aus der Funten** who was a member of the SS and oversaw deportations of Jews from the Netherlands*]; says she heard that trams were running during the night to deport the Jews; states that she does not remember names by heart but does remember she wrote them down; indicates that she is unable to remember everything because of all the emotion; mentions a girl friend, **Stella Prinselaar**; recalls another girl friend, **Taska Sarrierse**, who came from a circus family; mentions a contortionist, **King Kong**, and a beauty queen from Belgium; tells a [*somewhat incoherent*] story about people she knew who worked in a circus.

[03:] 47:59:06 – [03:] 57:37:23  
50:03 – 01:00:05

Adriana Gijzenij-Epke gives more details of her visit to the "Hollandse Schouwburg" and says she sees several images in her head at the same time [*the information becomes increasingly confused*]; talks about people in hiding who would come to their door during the evening after curfew; talks about one woman in hiding who gave birth to twins during the war; describes how her parents looked after things for people in hiding; knows hardly anything else about the woman in hiding who gave birth to twins; describes the return of a few Jews from Weesperstraat; talks about a famous artist called **Tom Manders**; talks about the diamond exchange; says she sometimes brought men to the south.

[03:] 57:37:24 – [04:] 05:08.10  
01:00:06 – 01:07:55

Adriana Gijzenij-Epke says German army deserters came to their door crying; recounts how they brought these Germans without hesitation to the Amstel [*reference unclear, could be the train station*]; talks about people who had died in hiding who were brought to a church; describes in more detail what she recalls about the twins born on Nieuwe Achtergracht 49;

indicates that she heard this information later; describes how the liberators came with tanks from the direction of Amstel station; says that she could talk about this for hours; talks about the year 1946 when there was a food cart on Waterlooplein just like before the war; talks about someone she saw after the war who had a tattoo; repeats the scene at the bakery where she heard the word Auschwitz; thinks this was in autumn 1941, when she says the yellow star had already been introduced [*the yellow star was imposed on Jews in Holland during the summer of 1942*]; insists that she heard the word Auschwitz at the time.