

Judith Copel

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Summary

Judith Copel was born February 19, 1938 and was a passenger on the SS St. Louis. She responds to questions regarding the SS St. Louis. Her family left home after Kristallnacht for the ship. My family left after Kristallnacht or the ship. She was a baby when she was on the passenger ship St. Louis which landed in Belgium after 10 days in the Havana Harbor. Judith was angry with the US for not letting the passengers of the SS St. Louis to enter as it affected the rest of her life. Her parents would not have gotten killed and she would have had a different life. She was with her mother, father and grandfather and they were sent to France. One day the family were captured by the French Police and she went to her grandfather who was too sick to travel so he was left behind. The rest were taken to Camp Gurs in Southern France and then to Rivzalts where she saw German soldiers with machine guns. Judith was placed in barracks with other children. One evening her mother said, "Judy, ma and dad have to go away and I do not know when we will be back." Judith will never forget the look in her eyes. That evening her father came and said to her, "Judy, let us go for a walk" and her mother kissed her cheek and said, "Good-bye." She walked with her dad who said, "Come on, Judy, look over there" and she saw something that interested her and turned around and someone else instead of her father held her hand. She never saw her parents again. From that time on she had feelings of anger, fear of abandonment and fear of separation and still has these feelings. She tried to get rid of these feelings by going to psychiatrists and psychologists, and to Ashram where she met a Guru, and her Rebbe. She had to find it in her heart to do a lot of forgiving including forgiving the US. She came to America on a ship called Atos Deux with 58 orphans. She was met by her aunt and uncle (her father's brother) and lived with them until she was 19 and got married, and, subsequently had two children. She lost almost everyone in the war including her mother's sister, Katie, her grandparents, and Pauline Weissenberg, her mother's mother. When she came to America she was unhappy about being here as missed her French mom who she lived with for four and one-half years during the war. Coming to America was a cultural shock. She could not write to her French family or speak to anyone about them. She was angry and fearful of being abandoned. To overcome her bad feelings, she went to a Reiki healer and did meditation. Judith felt that Franklin Roosevelt went along with Hitler in the same way that nobody wants the Jews. Her only siblings were the brother and sister from her foster French parents, Mr. and Mrs. Inar who had a son and daughter, and in America she acquired two brothers: Henry and Mischa, her cousins. When the SS St. Louis returned to Europe, her family got off in France as Uncle Ludwig and Aunt Lola were living in Paris. They went to Nigh Besperinay and she remembers seeing Uncle Ludwig, her mother's brother, and Aunt Lola and their son, Gustad who survived the war in Paris. She was brought up as a little French girl and was told her name was not Copel but Inar and she took their name. They took her to church every Sunday. She had no fear as felt secure as a child. The Nazis came into her town shooting and her mama came after her and they

went into a shelter. She was not afraid as did not know guns could shoot and kill them. The OSE Coeurs Des Enfants was the organization that saved a lot of Jewish children. They were told by the OSE that she had to leave her mama and papa and go to Paris where she was placed in an orphanage. Then Judith was taken to Marseille and boarded the ship, "The Azusa." She was 8 and ½ years old when she left France. She has four grandchildren (two with her son and two with her daughter) and want to see them happy, joyful and fearless and not the way she was. Judith became an electrologist which enabled her to pay her rent and put some money aside. After her mastectomy she asked help from her friend for her pain who placed her hands 10 minutes on her shoulder and the pain left her. Judith took an intensive course of Reiki by trading electrolysis treatment for the training. She then became a Reiki practitioner, and then second degree and five years later became a Reiki Master. She taught Reiki and had classes and healed some people. She got rid of her own painful headaches. Next she went to an Ashram and learned to meditate. Recently Judith went to a group called "Laughter Yoga Group" and decided to lead some groups. She feels a victim is someone who feels sorry for themselves, so she would rather be called a survivor. She feels that she was saved because she believes in G-d and G-d had other plans for her. She believes she is all religions and is an Interfaith Minister. Judith feels she is somewhat American but no longer French. Judith wants her grandchildren (Adam, Morgan, Jesse and Alexis) to know her story and remember it for the future so it can be told to future generations. She recently went to Auschwitz with the March of Remembrance where they held a memorial. Her message to all is that the Messiah will come when there is love and peace in the world. There is still hatred toward Jews and she tries to be peaceful with it and hopes someday that hate will turn into love.