Guide to Debora Sessler oral history interviews OHP.3886

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Title: Debora Sessler oral history interviews
Identifier/Call Number: OHP.3886
Contributing Institution: Tauber Holocaust Library
Language of Material: English
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Storage Unit: OHT Box 36
Physical Description: 0.3 Linear feet comprising one sound disc with accompanying transcript of 121 pages, and two videotapes with a combined total running time of 4:35
Date: 1985 March 1 and 1995 June 2
Abstract: This collection comprises one sound disc with accompanying transcript, and two videotapes of two oral history interviews with Debora Sessler conducted by the Holocaust Media Project on March 1, 1985 and by the Holocaust Oral History Project on June 2, 1995.
Creator: Sessler, Deborah
Creator: Antelman, Judith
Creator: Rosenthal, Sarah
Scope and Contents note
This collection comprises one sound disc and accompanying transcript and two videotapes of two oral history interviews with Debora Sessler. The interviews were conducted by Sarah Rosenthal on behalf of the Holocaust Media Project on March 1, 1985 and by Judith Antelman on behalf of the Holocaust Oral History Project on June 2, 1995. Debora Sessler is a Holocaust survivor.

The interviews describe Ms. Sessler's childhood in Amsterdam, being placed with her sister in a Jewish children's home, and her experiences there. She describes the arrival of German Jewish children fleeing Nazi persecution to the home in 1938, the invasion of the Netherlands by Germany in 1940, and the increasingly restrictive anti-Jewish laws. Ms. Sessler describes her father's arrest and transfer to a work camp, their last visit, and his subsequent deportation and death, probably in Bergen-Belsen.

Ms. Sessler describes the arrest of all residents of the home, their transfer to Westerbork in 1942, and her and her sister's subsequent deportation to Sobibor. She discusses volunteering for a cleaning work detail, and being transferred to Lublin, thus escaping death at Sobibor. Ms. Sessler describes her experiences in Lublin and Majdanek, the terrible conditions, her sister's illness from typhus and recovery. She relates a second volunteer work detail, this time to Milejow, to work in a marmalade factory. Ms. Sessler describes being transferred, after 6 weeks, to Trawinki, where she and her sister enjoyed relatively good conditions, working to clean barracks that had been vacated by prisoners who had been murdered. Ms. Sessler describes her return to Lublin, and a death march to Auschwitz. She describes the terrible conditions in Auschwitz, being separated from her sister who was again ill with typhus, her own illness and their reunion in the hospital there.

Ms. Sessler describes the joy she felt at seeing the Soviet soldier who liberated Auschwitz in January 1945, the prisoners' care by the Soviets and their transfer to Odessa until May 1945, their sea voyage to Marseilles, France, and their return to Amsterdam, where they were able to locate a few surviving family members. Ms. Sessler discusses her and her sister's emigration to England, her subsequent emigration to the United States, her marriage and family life, and her feelings about discussing her experiences during the Holocaust. She also describes testifying at war crimes trials in Hamburg, Germany in the late 1970s.

Conditions Governing Access note
There are no restrictions to access for this collection.

Conditions Governing Use note
There are no restrictions to use for this collection.

Existence and Location of Copies note
Master copies of the oral history interviews are located at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.

Preferred Citation note
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Subjects and Indexing Terms
Auschwitz (Concentration camp).
Majdanek (Concentration camp).
Sobibor (Concentration camp).
Trawniki (Concentration camp).
Westerbork (Concentration camp).
Amsterdam (Netherlands)
Death marches -- Europe
England -- Emigration and immigration
Forced labor -- Poland
Holocaust survivors -- United States
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945) -- Personal narratives
Hospitals -- Poland -- Oswiecim
Jewish children -- Institutional care -- Netherlands
Jewish children in the Holocaust
Jewish families -- Netherlands
Lublin (Poland)
Odesa (Ukraine)
San Francisco (Calif.)
United States -- Emigration and immigration
War crimes trials -- Germany
World War, 1939-1945 -- Concentration camps -- Liberation -- Poland -- Oswiecim