-TITLE-MARION PRITCHARD

-I\_DATE-

-SOURCE-CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT

-RESTRICTIONS-

-SOUND\_QUALITY-

-IMAGE\_QUALITY-

-DURATION-

-LANGUAGES-

-KEY\_SEGMENT-

-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-

-PERSONAL\_NAME-

-CORPORATE\_NAME-

-KEY\_WORDS-

-NOTES-

-CONTENTS-

M=Marion T=Tony Pritchard Q=interviewer

9:40 M: My parents didn't seem to be anti-Semitic as far as she

knows but my parents belonged to a social club which did not admit

Jews.

12:19 Q: I noticed that all the Jewish literature you have is

recent. Why is that?

M: Because until then, with the exception of The Diary of Anne

Frank, nobody really talked about it.

13:35 M: My son applied for conscientious objector status during

the Vietnam War, so before then we had never really talked about

it. He knew I had been involved against the Germans and he knew

that we had both worked in displaced persons camps after the war.

T: We met after the war while we were working in the displaced

person camps. I was in the army. Then I was discharged, and we

moved to the states, and had two children.

Q: Why did you not talk about it?

M: No one was interested. Everyone was tired about hearing about

it.

Q: What were you doing at that point, when the occupations began?

M: I wanted to go to medical school to be a psychiatrist but you

had to be 19 to be accepted to medical school. I was 18 when I

graduated, so I decided to spend half the year in England and half

the year in Switzerland so I could work for a social services

agency and get some experience.

Q: This was in 1939?

19:16 M: I was in England in September 1939 when the war started.

I stayed there with my parents. As the Dutch weren't in World War

1, we expected to stay out of it. I left in November, on the last

plane out. In January of 1939 I went to work in a little town

called Nijwegen, a little town about 15 miles from the German

border where there were factories where children worked. Most of

these children were from large Catholic families. They would come

there after work to a settlement house to learn how to sew, cook,

clean, etc, So I was there when the Germans came on the 10 May.

When we got up in the morning we could hear the planes overhead. I

was living with a family whose youngest child had just come up for

army service. The Germans just came in and we were totally

unprepared. The Dutch Army was kind of a joke, anyway. They were

using old WWI airplanes. They held off the Germans for 5 days,

though. After a few days I rode my bike to Amsterdam to see if my

family was alright. Everything was fine; the apartment was fine. I

stayed a few days, then went back to Nijwegen. In the fall I

started the School of Social Service in Amsterdam.

M: Being occupied is a shock, to say the least. You only gradually

become aware of it. The Germans did not immediately start

segregating and attacking the Jews. It's much easier to segregate

the population if the rest of the population is with you-not

against you. So they start with propaganda, and they start with a

film.

The film was called, "The Eternal Jew." One of the instructors told

us to go and see it, and we laughed out loud. It was totally

ridiculous. One of the students said the next day that

23:58 they didn't believe a word of it but what it had done is that

it has divided us into they and us. But now I look at people and

say,"Hey, you're Jewish." There is a difference now. There were

those people who were bound and determined to help the Jews but the

split had been made.

Q: Was the film made in Germany?

M: Yes, it was German, as far as I know it was.

Q: So that was the early steps?

M: That was what was so diabolically clever about it. It was the

"inclementality" if I can use that word. The first official thing

that they did was to forbid the Jews to be a part of the Civilian

Air Patrol. The steps were so small, which was clever, because it

did it not give you a reason to protest. Then there was the

important step-which no one realized called the "Aryan Station" in

that they sent two forms to all people who were in professions in

the government, teachers, doctors, etc. if you were Aryan you

filled out form A and if you were Jewish you filled out form B. of

course it was a tremendous help to the Germans to figure out who

was Jewish and who was not. But very few people saw that-almost

everyone signed it. Like with all those measures it was under

penalty of death and deportation if you didn't do what they told

you. That was always the threat.

26:29 Q: There wasn't a government also-besides the occupational

government?

M: There was a difference between Holland and France or Holland and

Denmark because in Holland the Germans took over the civilian

administration.

Q: So in other words there was no one to say, "Don't anyone fill

these out? As in the Danish case?"

M: That was very local. The President of one university said don't

fill it out. There was one high school principal, I think it was

the Amsterdam Lyceum, who told his staff, too, don't fill it out.

Q: Your father had this important position in the government

before, so what did he do through all this?

M: He didn't sign. There were no immediate repercussions but of

course the Germans took prominent people hostage so when the

resistance did something they didn't like they would take out five

or ten people and shoot them. When they came to get my father in

1942 he was so ill with cancer that they didn't bother. I think one

of the reasons that they came to get him was because he didn't

sign.

T: There was no "Dutch" Holland.

29:00 Q: One of the problems was that so many Dutch collaborated

with the Germans...

M: Well they cooperated with various degrees of collaboration. Some

of the Burgermeisters were excellent, but some were not. For

instance, there's the story of the Burgermeister of Amsterdam who

was dealing with the Nazis who told him, "Now we have to deal with

the Jewish problem" and he told them, "We don't have a Jewish

problem; we have a German problem." The degree of collaboration

varied greatly-even within the police departments.

30:30 When they were trying to round up the Jews they tried to get

the police to help them. Some did, some didn't.

Q: I always say when I do interviews with rescuers that "I couldn't

have done that myself."

M: Well if someone had asked me before the war if I could have done

that I don't know what I would have said. I didn't make any

decisions - it started off with my friends; one of the many

difficulties was that no one would believe it. My father had read

"Mein Kampf" from beginning to end-and it said that all Jews were

going to be exterminated from Europe. When I started to talk like

that, when I told my Jewish friends and classmates they would be

angry with me! No one would believe it. When the time comes for a

decision to be made-that is when everything falls into place...when

I did make a decision it was made later on, when I was taking care

of the children myself full time and their father-and I heard that

the Germans were coming to raid the area where we lived.

I remember particularly where I knew that a certain house was going

to be raided and I didn't know if they had been warned. I made the

decision not to go warn them because what would happen to them, my

own kids, if the Germans came when I wasn't there.

33:50 You can say that was a very good decision to make; you were

responsible but you can also say it was chicken.

H: That's what I meant about "shades"; Marion's brother when they

had to wear stars-he put a star on. That was a "step."

M: My brother and his friends all put stars on-they were 12 years

old. My mother told him to take it off, but my father supported it.

M: My brother had another experience with the Germans. Just to show

what kind of people they were. My brother and his friend were

walking home from school and the Gestapo headquarters were between

my home and the school and they were calling the Germans (?) which

means dirty Kraut or something like that and the Germans overheard.

They took them in to the building and held them. After about three

quarters of an hour they let my brother go but the other boy-they

called his mother and asked her if they would give him a beating or

did she want her husband arrested. Of course she was fixing lunch

for the children-she told them to give the boy a beating. They told

her to come and pick him up, and when she did, he was dead-12 years

old.

M: Well when you talk about the decision-it reminds me of the

Kresch(?)which were day care centers where they collected Jews for

deportation. The adults were sent to the theater and the children

were next door at the day care center. There was a lot of traffic

between the theater and the day care center and the day care center

workers smuggled 1000 Jewish children from the center-the teacher's

college helped place the children in foster homes.

Q: Something I wanted to mention were all the people that helped...

M: There was also, near where I lived, there was a house where

there was anywhere from 17-20 people. One day I was asked to kidnap

a child, and did. I just knew she was in danger so I went and got

her. When I was in Holland last November someone gave me a book

written by the mother that had the circumstances surrounding her

story. What happened was that she-they were betrayed-they took in

too many-everyone knew they would be betrayed because there were

too many in (45:00) the house. They asked the Gestapo while they

were in the house if they would take the children-while they were

searching for the others in the house-if they could take the

children to the two local village doctors so they wouldn't have to

go to jail-the Gestapo agreed but they did make the doctors promise

that they wouldn't release the children to anyone but the Gestapo.

They took the girl's mother, Lince, to Gestapo headquarters and

they interrogated her but she refused to talk so they said, "We'll

get your child-then you'll talk." and her husband managed to escape

while being taken from headquarters to jail and he warned people in

the village and got word to me to go and pick her up. And with me

was Karel Poons, who was gay and Jewish-double jeopardy. The night

before we had tried to get the doctor to give her to us voluntarily

but he refused, saying he had sworn a Christian oath

46:32 not to release her. They were furious when they got to the

doctor's house, they arrested him. She said the Germans had posters

everywhere looking for her. An interesting thing-when people asked

me things now and I say I don't know it's not because I don't

remember but because I tried not to know. The less you knew the

less they could make you say if you were caught. The ballet dancer,

we had hidden him with a woman painter-if you had two Jewish people

and a family of five you had to make sure when the Germans came

that there were not seven beds being slept in. The Jews slept with

the rescuers which sometimes led to all sorts of abuse of the Jews.

This woman painter decided she was going to make Karel straight-

sexually. After about two weeks-he came to me and said, "I can't

stand it-l want to go to a concentration camp." So he moved to a

little house in the garden. He didn't tell me anything he knew and

I didn't tell him anything I knew that could cause trouble for us-

even though in a lot of things we were in it together.

Q: Did he survive?

M: Oh yes, he's 76 now-living in Amsterdam.

Q: You've said in The Courage to Care that it was the film and then

seeing the children taken away in the trucks was when you decided

to help...

M: No, before that because at that time I was already helping

friends. I had never seen, at that time, the Germans in action but

I knew about the threats. That time I saw them was when I decided

to help the children.

Q: When did you hide the first person?

53:12

M: A man I knew-we found him a place to hide and I took him food-he

lived with a family. A lot of people would take either one but not

both of Jews. One would take adults but not children and vice

versa.

Q: Did he survive?

M: No.

Q: What are the numbers of people that you helped?

M: I helped in so many degrees. There was a couple who had gone

into hiding and while in hiding she became pregnant-and the family

that we had hidden them with couldn't hide the baby. So we went to

a high school teacher-a friend in Rotterdam-and asked them to take

the baby when it was born. We asked them because they had been

giving money. They said yes, so the wife pretended to be pregnant

and when the baby was born I took it to stay with them. I spent a

total of a week or so there's so many I only knew for a couple of

days. So if I had to guess I'd say about 150-that includes the most

casual of contact.

Q: So did the baby and/or his parents survive?

M: The parents did not, but the baby did. He was born prematurely

so I stayed with him for a week. When I was there they had prepared

a splendid nursery for him but they didn't care anything about him.

However I heard from a friend after the war that they had totally

accepted him and, when the parents never came back, they adopted

him. What they were debating at the time was whether to tell him or

not; I don't know if that was a good idea or not to not tell him.

Q: So you think they should tell him?

57:03 M: Well that leads me to when I was working in the Displaced

Persons Camps. Lots of people had been brought to Germany by force

and we were trying to help them get back to where they came from.

Lots of DP's were talking about their American relatives-and one

boy, Aaron Schneider, who was about 14 years old, had American

relatives, an aunt and an uncle in Brooklyn and I started

enthusiastically processing him to go to the United States and the

head of the Jewish Council came to me and said, "You can't do that.

We Jews have lost a million children. We are going to establish a

new world." But I said, "He wants to go to America." A few days

later I returned to find my office ransacked and papers and stuff

thrown everywhere to prevent this from happening. In retrospect I'm

surprised they didn't do worse. I took the child to the

Interstert(?) which was a children's search center-the Nazis had

taken Aryan looking Jewish children and placed them with German

parents. Interstert were trying to find them. They arranged for him

to get to the US.

Another time, back during to the war I had brought a baby to a

farmhouse in the country. They told me apologetically when I left

that they had told the children in the house that this was my

illegitimate baby so that when the neighbors asked where the new

baby came from the children would tell the right story.

Q: So when did you see your mother during the war?

M: I remember telling my mother once to not tell anyone that I had

brought a Jewish man home with me and she said of course not, but

the next morning my mother asked the milkman for an extra quart of

milk because we had an "underground" with us.

1:07 Q: Did she have any idea, what you were doing?

M: Yes, she has some vague idea.

M: In the back of a friend of her's house, was a little house where

her son-in-law arranged for me and a father and three Jewish

children to live- the father being a friend of the son-in-law (the

son-in-law was the director of the Municipal Electrical(?) works)

one of the things that he did-well there was this old

communications system that had been built over by a

1:09:40 new one and was not in use anymore-he revitalized it for

the resistance so that, under the nose of the Germans and all who

worked for the communications system we could send the messages to

England and internally. It was this man whose wife asked me if I

could hide the Jewish father and his three children.

Q: Have they kept in touch with you?

M: The father died about three years ago. After the war he had

appointments to two Dutch universities-he was the director of the

Dutch Central Economic Planning. He was a prolific writer. While in

hiding he'd take down a lantern and some paper and write books. He

worked during the day at a house across the street as to maintain

the fiction that there were just those three children there-somehow

it seemed safer. One time when the Germans came during the day the

oldest boy-they asked

1:11:45 him where his father was and the boy-he was about five at

the time said, "You took him away yourself!" He was very

convincing-and of course the father hadn't been taken away. After

the war the son took a Gentile name and eventually joined

Lufthansa. Erika, the little one, emphasizes her "Germaneness"-she

called her daughters Erika and Esther-and the other boy is an

administrator in Germany. I don't understand-we told them to be

Gentile-and German-and we taught them with rosaries and crucifixes

to be Catholic in case the Germans questioned them. I guess we

can't expect them to just give it up.

T: There was a story now-in Holland-about how child survivors

didn't know they were Jewish and were confused at the end of the

war.

1:17:13 Q: How did you end up in Jewish displaced person camps

after the war?

T: I don't know. I was in the army-fought my way through from the

coast of France to deep Turingen. In fact, my division went into

Buchenwald 6th Armored Artillery Division-and we didn't have enough

military commanders-so I found myself in charge of an area. Anyway,

I was wounded, and my commander promised me leave, and while on the

plane to London I saw a copy of the Stars and Stripes-they had an

article about the DP camps. So I went to the London office and

applied, and they hired me on the spot. Then after the war she and

I married in Germany and I came back to school. At that time they

started the IRO which was the International Refugee Organization

and we had to decide whether we wanted to continue it or not, so we

decided to go to the US.

Q: How long did the camps last?

T: I got out of college in 1950 and they were still around.

Q: After what you saw in the war, did you talk about your

experiences?

M: So many people told me they didn't talk about their experiences

1:22:00 because of guilt because so many of their colleagues died,

and they lived. I didn't see things that way.

T: I don't think either of us decided to talk about our experiences

in the war or in the DP camps until this letter came from the

Israeli consulate totally out of the blue-saying that Marion had

won a metal.

M: We never talked about it because there was always something else

to do. We never asked the DP's to talk about their experiences

because we knew what had happened to them. When we came over here

in September of 1947 I called the Jewish agency in Boston and said

that I knew about the relatively small number of Jewish DP's who

were coming

1:25:57 to the US would need help so I went down to their office

and interviewed with them and they told me they were sorry but it

was their philosophy not to hire Gentiles. So I said that was too

bad and went to work for the New England Medical Center. They

called me the next year and asked me if I was still interested and

I said yes and so they hired me because I speak fluent Yiddish. I

learned it from them at the camps.

M: Our director (at the camps) was a man called Dominic Capolungo

who was a close friend of Fiorello LaGuardia and he was not

interested at all in the DP camps-anyway, Lieutenant Grup(?), a

Texas ranger, shot a Jewish person in the leg and as a result

everything was shaken up and we were all fired except me and a

nurse.

M: In the Jewish agency in Boston there was a great upheaval-l went

from a junior case worker to a senior case worker to a district

supervisor all on the strength of my Yiddish. We had agreed not to

have any children until he finished college but I got pregnant

while working at the Jewish center and gave birth to a son on

Christmas day-we called it the second immaculate conception-

Anyway, so I stayed home and took care of kids for six years. By

this time we were so busy we never talked about the war.

1:30:58

Q: You stayed home with the children for six years?

M: Then I went to work for a very fancy private psychiatric

hospital in New York.

Q: By this time you had finished medical school?

M: I never went to medical school. When the Germans came they tried

to make everyone swear the loyalty oath but I didn't do it, and I

don't blame the people who swore it with mental reservations. They

never found the social work school because it wasn't near the rest

of the universities-so I went there and completed it in 1942.

Q: So you gave up your life entirely after that during the war to

the rescue effort?

M: I didn't really think of it as giving up my life-l didn't think

about it.

Q: Could you have done anything else had you not done that?

M: I didn't think about doing anything else. I just wanted to make

sure that I could do everything I could to help out-I'd been asked

to take care of a man and his children and I was sort of doing that

part time and I couldn't wait to move in and do it full time-then

after the war was over-I'd been taking care of a baby for almost

three years since she was a week old, and then I had to give it up.

It was hard. So when I saw an ad in the newspaper asking for people

to work in displaced person camps...

1:32:20 I went there for two reasons: one, it was a job and two, I

thought that I'd find out quicker what happened to some of my

Jewish friends.

Q: When did this medal come?

M: First there was this letter from the Israeli consulate telling

me that there would be a medal-they called and told me about the

Revisionist movement in Chicago about people who were trying to

prove that the Holocaust never happened-they wanted to show it for

publicity. I didn't start telling about it for a long time-the

first time was in a synagogue in Massachusetts. I am very much a

follower of Elie Wiesel who believes that one must tell the story

over and over-I was astonished to find myself slightly weepy.

Q: It must be difficult-painful- for you to remember...

M: It's not as hard now as it was before.

Q: When did you tell your children about it?

M: I have three-a single one and a set of twins. I'd had a picture

of Erika-the littlest one- on my desk for most of my life and I'd

asked them who they thought she was and they said they thought she

was me when I was little.

T: They were in college.

Q: What did they do?

M: One has a Ph.D in History, one has a Ph.D in Philosophy, and one

went to Dartmouth and works for the Department of Education.

Q: What was their reaction?

M: They were interested; they were surprised.

T: They're proud of her.

Q: Did you see your children doing that sort of thing-doing what

you did?

M: They are all incredibly good fathers-also our son arranged a

conference on Ethics in Washington on building character.

1:49:06

Q: What would you want your grandchildren to know?

M: I don't know how children, especially small children, can

differentiate between what happened 50 years ago and 1000 years

ago. It's very difficult to know. I think what's not so important

is knowing but how the parents behave against anti-Semitism or

anti-blackism or anti-anything.

Q: How can you say the war years marked you, or changed you?

1:54:06 M: I don't think I would be all that different. The reason

I went for a career in psychoanalysis was because I wanted to see

how Hitler could get so many people to do what he wanted. But I

always wanted to be a psychiatrist-even before the war.

Q: Do you think it could happen again?

M: Well I saw it happen but I naively thought that it would end.

But the problem is now that it's not just the Jews- I thought that

everyone could have wanted to help them-establish Israel and so

forth-but I see all the murders, abuse, etc. I'm less optimistic

about humanity than I was 10 years ago. If you want to raise a

generation of people who care about each other and who really

sacrifice for each other each mother should sacrifice a few years

of her career to stay home and take care of the children to show

them they're important. If the mother doesn't show the child she's

willing to sacrifice for him because he's important why should the

child think that anyone else is important?

TAPE 2

8:00

Q: What was your reaction to fear?

M: I think I had my mother's ability to ignore fear until I spent

some time in jail. You carry the fear with you always on some

level. I remember in Amsterdam the only people who had trucks

during the war so whenever you heard the truck you knew the Germans

were coming. When I first came here whenever I heard a truck in the

middle of the night I got scared- especially if he [her husband]

wasn't here.

.END.