

ERICA VAN ADELSBERG

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



Erica van Adelsberg (née Herz) was born on October 2, 1928, in Munich, Germany. She had one younger brother, Ernest. Erica grew up in a secular Jewish family.

In August 1933, Erica's parents decided to leave Germany for the Netherlands, fearing that the Nazi rise to power would be dangerous for the Jewish population. As her father had a business connection in Amsterdam, they moved to Aerdenhout, a suburb west of the city.

Shortly following the German invasion in May 1940, Erica and her family moved to Hilversum on September 9, 1940. She and her brother moved in with the family's former housekeeper for six months before finding somewhere the family of four could live together.

In January 1942, Erica and her family were ordered to Westerbork, which was then a camp for legal and illegal Jewish refugees under the supervision of the Dutch Ministry of Justice, with a 24-48 hour notice. Soon, the camp was taken over by German Security Forces and became a detention and transit camp. While most deportations of prisoners from Westerbork began in July 1942, her father's administrative work allowed their family to stay for a few more months.

The Hertz family was given a 24-hour notice that they would be deported from Westerbork to Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp in Germany, on February 15, 1945. They were sent on a transport with other passengers possessing foreign papers or passports. At the time Erica arrived, there were roughly 15,000 inmates across the various divisions of the camp.

While in Bergen-Belsen, Erica worked in a textile factory-setting, and then was re-assigned to look after 20-30 children.

On April 9, 1945, the Hertz family sent on a cattle train carrying about 1,200 others from Bergen-Belsen. During the transport, Erica's grandmother was among the 500 that died. In the town of Trobitz, two young Russian soldiers liberated her transport on the morning of April 23.

After liberation, Erica and her entire immediate family were eventually sent back to the Netherlands. They lived in Amsterdam for one year before Erica immigrated to New York alone in 1946. Her family moved to the United States while Erica was in college studying languages. After graduating, she became a teacher.

In 1955, Erica married Martin van Adelsberg, whom she had met during her one year of school in Amsterdam. The couple moved to Syracuse, New York, where they had two children. The family later moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

This interview was recorded on November 27, 1995, in Philadelphia, PA, U.S.A.



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