

Graduation 2009

Acceptance Speech by Honorary Graduate Dora Love

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and those connected with giving me this award, I thank you for nominating me and I am very happy to accept it.

Having survived the concentration camp, I consequently, as you heard, subsequently worked in, mainly in education but my main task in life arose from something I had watched in the dark of early mornings and late nights when I was in the ghetto. Somehow under barbed wire, sacks were being pushed out, in these sacks were Jewish children from the ghettos and somehow communication had been taking place and these children were received on the other side by non-Jewish. Friends, neighbours, and if it happened in that ghetto it must have happened all over the world.

So when finally I came out of the camps, the rest of the story you don't want to hear again, I had a task. I worked first for the army and under our United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation administration and then one day a big black car arrived, it had AJDC on the car and the Star of David and it was the American Joint Distribution Committee. And it turned out, I'd never heard of them, but they were the wealthiest Jewish welfare organisation in the world and they told me, knocked at the doors said they were looking for Dora Love, "Yes I'm Dora Love", "Well from tomorrow you'll be working for us", it was a bit peculiar, I mean after all I was already doing two jobs. But somehow they had already seen the head of Unra in Amsterdam; they got their pike of the British Army and had permission to borrow me for three months.

For three months I went to Hamburg, I didn't return because I had this wonderful organisation; American Joint. When I found out that children were found alive in concentration camps such as Bergen Belsen, brought to what became the home that I ran, I was adamant about looking for children that I had seen handed out at the barbed wire. And when American Joint asked me to please exchange my period and stay on, I used a bit of blackmail; "You want me? I'm prepared to stay if you allow me to look for the children that I know who are somewhere in hiding". These children, I found, American Joint asked me what it would involve; yes radio stations all over Europe, newspapers all over Europe, offering compensation to the people who'd looked after them and who were those people who had hidden them in cellars and attics; all the non-Jewish people, all the friends and neighbours who existed, they were the ones who had real courage. They hid them; such danger to themselves and their whole families, they kept them alive without every getting a morsel of food or a stitch of clothing for them.

So how can I make a difference between those in the ghetto; the Jews and those on the outside who helped? And this task, there is no such thing as one lot being wonderful and the other lot being evil, oh no it doesn't exist and we have got to learn that hatred must stop and we must all try and help one another. What we need is the courage, the finance will be found. I hadn't a clue what finance was and when America Joint, the head of the Schwarz said to me "What money would that involve?" ooh, I said "I could start with half a million dollars", my husband over there looked at me and said afterwards they went out to discuss it, "I never saw you work anything out", I said "Don't be silly Frank, I just thought million looks and sounds like a good word" and I suddenly hadn't the courage to ask for a whole million so I asked for half. But mark you as I edit, if not sufficient more money will have to be found. And good people are always found. Then the car was standing outside in Hamburg and (unsure of exact word) Mr Goulach came up and said "I'm half Jew or quarter Jew, I don't know myself but my German friends hid me and I saw this car with the Star of David, can I help you in anyway?" I said "Yes, is there such a thing as a house that is standing up in Hamburg that would have a room where to accommodate people if we find them?" "Ooh" he said, "Not in Hamburg, but there's a very wealthy family, the (unsure of exact word) Varbook

family, in Blankenese"; which is just part of Hamburg almost. And he said "The SS used it for their amusement for their headquarters for you name it." And they used other terms which are not important; there are too many young people here. But in any case, that gentleman; the whole Varbook family had virtually immigrated to England, Canada and America but "one of them" he said "lives in Stockholm"; Iris Varbook. And with this terrible German efficiency, he went to the telephone and I couldn't do it today, even with all new fangled telephones, he just dialled a number and I was next speaking to Mr Varbook in Stockholm and he said "I don't know when I could come and see you, could you help us with any of your buildings?" Ooh he said "You don't come, I'll see you tomorrow". He came and he said; "Just find the people, find the children that you're talking about, as many buildings as you require shall be theirs, yours, all it was you want", theirs meaning the children, for the use.

I found originally 147 children; they called in Yad Vashem, (unsure of exact word) Israel Dora's children. At intervals of 2, 3 years we've had reunions in Hamburg, again completely organised by the German-Jewish Friendship Association, headed by Dr Martin Schmitt. They've raised the money and we met, then they decided that the last free union should really be perhaps in Jerusalem at Yad Vashem and at that reunion, we asked them to put down their husbands, wives, their children and grand-children that was all. And my 147 children were now 968 go forth and multiply but they did. And so it was rewarding when you have the chance to do a job, do it, the reward will come later. And at that particular stage I also had a Polish monk an abbot actually arrived, I returned out of a tea hat, seven names for them, seven people, they had been hidden in the Polish abbey. Roman Catholics, two nuns from (unsure of exact word) Levine arrived, they had hidden some children.

There is so much that one can do and so many good people about, just show the world that you want to do it and there's always a way of doing it. When I found my father alive, who 10 months after the war in Italy and I found him working with children in a camp (unsure of exact word) Santas Desiree. And he said "What do you know, what do you do with children?" "Ooh" I said "I don't know", but in German he said to me "Ohne jugend keine es zukunfft"; without youth, there is no future. So I thought that was a good job to do and there it was and this is how it's gone on and believe it or not twenty years later, I even found my one brother in Russia; he had survived the Soviet's. He was still under their auspices so to speak if you can call it auspices, he had been in Siberia and the (unsure of exact word) Ghulak, he had been beaten so much that he'd lost a kidney but he was alive and he's still alive today; my one and only brother.

And what can you say other than never give up, not for yourself, not for anybody else, there's always something you can do. I found that as little as I'm able to do anything, physically or mentally, there are much better people about but don't ever give up.

Thank you.