

Katharina Frank – nee Brucker 1917 - 2003



Friday, 9 October 1942 – Catharina and Jacques Frank entered Westerbork. She was a nurse and assigned to Barracks 58, bed number 60.

LAGER WESTERBORK [LEGITIMATIEWIS]	
Frank geb. [illegible]	
NAAM: Katharina	ACV.
Geboortedatum: 12-12-1917	WOONDE: 58
ADRES: Frankenslootweg 1592	STAD: Rotterdam
INGANG: 9-10-42	STAD: 58
VOORNAAM: Katharina	
ADRES: Frankenslootweg 1592	STAD: 58
INGANG: 9-10-42	
Handtekening: [illegible]	
[illegible]	
[illegible]	
[illegible]	
[illegible]	

Saturday, 24 October 1942 – Catharina Frank was issued with a late pass because she was a nurse and needed to travel around the camp after curfew.

24/10/42
 Geleide Luitenant R.C. Franks - Middel
 te late passeren, dan zij als verpleegster
 in Bunk 70 te kampen was.
 P.m. [illegible]
 [illegible]

Saturday, 1 May 1943 – Catharina Frank gave birth to her first son in Westerbork, and they call him Clarence.

Tuesday, 25 May 1943, train number 13 and the largest yet to Sobibór transported 2,862 men, women and children from Westerbork. That morning, Catharina Frank had said goodbye to her husband, Jacques, aged 31. He was on this train. They had only arrived that month and had agreed that he would go on ahead and they would meet up later when she was in a better state to travel because she was at least six months pregnant. The last she saw of him was a face perhaps looking through the door before Hans Margules or one of the others closed it. By Friday, they were all dead or condemned to a life that would lead to death.



Friday, 28 May 1943 – The 21-year-old Jacques Frank, husband of Catharina Frank, died at Sobibór. Remember his name for later.

One visitor to the camp in August 1943 ensured that one member of the Bühne group would survive the war. In August 1943, after the success of the Bunter Abend, Humor und Melodie was put on, and some of the Westerbork girls persuaded Catharina Frank to dance. Catharina was not all that keen, but they persuaded her to put on a short skirt and kick her legs. She had taken dance lessons as a youngster and had recently given birth to her son, Clarence, on Saturday, 1 May 1943. Gemmeker sat in the front for the performance but next to him sat Adolf Eichmann. Gemmeker fawned. Everything had to be perfect. He roared with laughter, and Eichmann joined in, but during one of the dances, entitled “You Should Always be Artistic. Behave Yourself,” a particular woman with a pretty face and seemingly nice legs caught Eichmann’s eye. He asked who she was and was told it was Catharina Frank. Not that Gemmeker knew, he had to ask. Catharina was brought to him. She said that her name was Catharina Frank but she was also known as “Dinnie.” Eichmann complimented her on her dancing. She told him that it had not been too easy, as she had only given birth to her son, Clarence, a few months earlier. Eichmann must have been even more impressed. He made her a promise, quite out of the blue. He promised her that if she and Clarence were to go east they would go to Theresienstadt. Gemmeker nodded his approbation. He could not have done anything else, but notes were made that Catharina Frank was to go to Theresienstadt. Gemmeker instructed the Diensleiter of Catharina’s special position. It was odd. Eichmann did not have to do that, yet he would do more. These Nazis often made gestures towards the camp inmates. They knew they had the power of life or death over people.

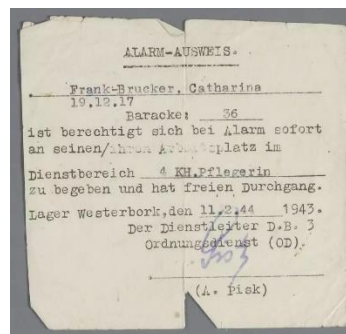
A few more of the women in Westerbork wished they had “beautiful” legs. Catharina and Jacques had entered the camp last May as a newly married couple. She had been six months pregnant, and Jacques Frank from Amsterdam, 31 years old, the proud father, had been deported on Tuesday, 15 May 1943. By the following Friday, he was dead.

In August 1943, when Eichmann discussed deportation with Catharina, did she mention her husband and that she hoped to meet up again with him, as he had already gone to Sobibór? Did Gemmeker and Eichmann feel a twinge of guilt knowing that Jaques had been dead for nearly three months? If

Gemmeker had asked Eichmann about Jacques, he would have been told that the chances of their meeting again were nil, as had he gone to Sobibór, he was almost certainly dead. Did Eichmann make enquiries back at the office about the transport on the 25th of May? If he did, he most likely got a short telegram back from Reichleitner stating they were all dead. I am sure that Gemmeker would then have asked Eichmann how he knew Jacques was dead and then would be told exactly what kind of place Sobibór was.

Thursday, 9 September 1943 – Catharina Frank was issued a special pass. This might not have seemed of much importance to someone always in the camp. She received the special pass because of her involvement in Willy Rosen's revue, and while the revue was on, she would be allowed out after curfew, as long as she was on her way to or from her "apartment" and work. Every member of the revue group would have had such a pass.

Friday, 11 February 1944 – Catharina Frank was issued with another special pass which entitled her to go to her place of work, hospital service area 4, during the hours of curfew. It was called an Alarm Pass. Pass? It was a scrap of paper, only big enough to hold the 11 lines of type. It was signed by Arthur Pisk, head of the camp police. Pisk forced young boys and girls to work as messengers. He was feared by the other prisoners; he represented the "Jewish SS," of which there were just over more than 180.



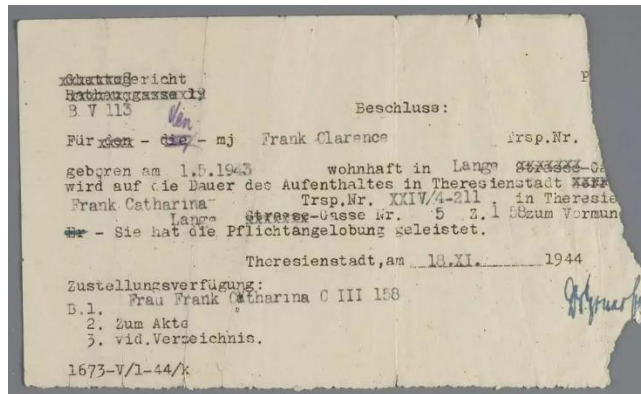
February 25 1944 One person on this train had also been personally promised by Eichmann a place at Theresienstadt when she and Eichmann had met the **previous** August. This was Catharina Frank (Brucker) and her son, Clarence. No doubt she was nervous, but did she feel at least some ease that Eichmann was "looking after" her too? Remind me about her later.

Do you remember Catharina Frank and her son, Clarence? They were sent to Theresienstadt, and Eichmann had said she would not be sent anywhere else. She was settled in Theresienstadt by this time, where everyone made such a fuss over Clarence. Rahm had made the preparations to deceive the Red Cross visitors. He called an artist, Charlotte Buresova, to his office. He pointed to the wall behind his desk and said that he wanted her to paint a picture of Madame Butterfly or similar that he could hang there so it beautified his office. I am sure Charlotte went away wondering what to paint. As she was puzzling over what would please Rahm, she spied Catharina with Clarence. She had painted Clarence and Catharina before, when she wore a blue flamenco dress and Spanish headdress entitled "The Last Flamenco." Here was her muse. Catharina became Madame Butterfly, and the painting was placed in Rahm's office.

It was likely that soon after the Red Cross visit had occurred, Eichmann turned up. Eichmann saw the painting and identified Catharina as its subject. Catharina was sent for and was asked how she was faring. She said it was difficult bringing up her son without privacy and she could do with some extra food. Eichmann had Catharina and her son transferred to a private room where they also received the extra food from the Danish deportees she was billeted with.



Saturday, 18 November 1944 – Catharina Frank was issued a certificate naming Clarence as her son, including his birthdate of 1 May 1943. It noted that she had arrived in Theresienstadt on Transport XXIV/4 as number 221.



Monday, 6 August 1945 was the day Katharina Frank and Clarence were repatriated to the Netherlands. But they do not stay; they felt they were not welcomed back with open arms.

One-Way Ticket from Westerbork – Amsterdam Publishers

Author: Jonathan Gardiner