

**United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**  
**Archives**

**Oral History Interviews of the  
Kean College of New Jersey  
Holocaust Resource Center**

**Interview with Miriam Spiegel  
October 21, 1993  
RG-50.002\*0002**

## **PREFACE**

On March 2, 1987, Miriam Spiegel was interviewed on videotape by Joseph J. Priel on behalf of the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. The interview took place in Union, New Jersey and is part of the Research Institute Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies.

Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center created a summary and time-coded notes for the interview. The reader should bear in mind that these finding aids attempt to represent the spoken word in the recorded interview, yet have not necessarily been verified by the interviewee. The finding aids should not be used in place of the interview itself.

Rights to the interview are held by the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum houses a copy of the interview as a result of a contributing organization agreement with the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. Details concerning the Museum's rights to use and reproduce the interview are contained in the contributing organization agreement.

**Summary of the  
Interview with Miriam Spiegel**

**October 21, 1993**

Miriam Spiegel was born in Janów Lubelski near Lublin, Poland, on May 8, 1931. Her father was a butcher. From Miriam's immediate family of six, only four survived the Holocaust. Their home was bombed at the beginning of World War II. After her uncle was shot for no reason on the street, her father decided to move the family to a nearby village.

After Miriam was attacked by two German soldiers, her father took the family to live in a hut in a forest near Wola Rasztowska, Poland. Two of Miriam's cousins were captured while trying to get food. Two other relatives were killed when the hut caught fire.

The family moved to yet another forest near Sulowiec, Poland, where they encountered fellow Jews as well as bands of antisemitic partisans. One night the family heard gunfire and started to run. Miriam's mother was killed but Miriam escaped and was taken in by a Polish family. She was sheltered by the family for five years.

When Sulowiec was liberated by the Russians (circa 1944), Miriam was retrieved by her surviving brother and reunited with her father and sister Fay. She went to live in a children's home in Lublin, Poland. Her sister got married and moved to Bergen-Belsen, Germany. After a short time, Miriam's father collected her and her brother and took them to Bergen-Belsen, Germany, as well. Miriam was placed in a children's home near Hamburg, Germany. She left Germany for Palestine where she lived from

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1947-1959, while her father headed to Canada to be with other family members.

In 1950 she married and in 1959 Miriam joined her sister in the United States and worked for two years to bring over her family. She has a son and two daughters.

**Time-coded notes of the  
Interview with Miriam Spiegel**

**October 21, 1993**

01:00:00

Miriam resides in Staten Island, New York. She shows a picture of herself nine months after the war. A second picture shows the Polish family in whose barn Miriam was saved during World War II. Her immediate family consisted of six persons, two parents and four children. Three children and her father survived.

01:05:00

Miriam was born on May 8, 1931 in Janów Lubelski near Lublin, Poland where her father was a butcher. Their home was bombed at the beginning of the war. Her uncle was shot and killed by Germans for no reason as he was taking a wald. Her father took the family to live in a nearby village. As Miriam was walking, (she was eight years old), she encountered two German soldiers, a

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Polish boy nearby said "Jude! Jude!" A soldier punched Miriam and knocked out two teeth. Her father then decided to move the family into the forest.

01:10:00

They were starving in the forest. Her father and two cousins (sons of her uncle) went to a village to get food from a Pole who had received all their possessions. They were told never to return. Her father and her cousins had separated in the village. Then the Pole denounced the boys to the Germans for five pounds of sugar! Her father heard screaming, saw what had transpired, and had to return to the forest and tell her uncle the fate of his sons.

01:15:00

Her father was the head of the whole family. There were no facilities in the hut in the forest. There was no water and no plumbing. Food? "We stole from the farmers, whatever we could get at night," Miriam says. Water? They drank dirty water from streams or from ice. This was the winter.

01:20:00

"You couldn't imagine how we smelled. . . Lice, . . . People dying from hunger," says Miriam. A fire was started by some of

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Miriam's cousins the hut. Some of the ten or more people who were in the hut escaped, but Miriam's aunt and her mother would not come out. They would rather be destroyed in the fire. They died rather than continuing to see how the children were suffering. The village was Wola Raszowska. They then went to another forest, this one near Sulowiec.

01:25:00

There were many Jews and young people in this new forest. They called themselves Partisans -- Polish, not Jewish. They said they wanted to liberate the camp near Bedzin, Poland, in the area of Lublin. There were perhaps 200 partisans. They wanted the Jews to join them. "They were against the Germans, and also the Jews" she says. At night they killed the Jewish boys.

01:30:00

Two of the partisans heard that her father had two rings. They came one night to the hut and demanded the rings. Father gave them the rings. One sister died of disease at this time. This happened about one year after the war started. One night they heard bullets. The family started to run. It was the most terrible night of her life.

01:35:00

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Miriam was bloodied. She thinks it was a bullet. She ran into the village Sulowiec, and went into a barn. When she left the barn to find something to eat, she was caught by young Polish men, who hit her so hard that she still has a stain on her lung today. They took her to a barn, and said they would take her to the Germans. She felt that her mother would have insisted that she save herself.

01:40:00

The snow outside was very high. Somehow, Miriam got onto a tree, then onto the snow and started to run. She ran into a barn, then into another barn, where she lay down. She lay there a couple of days, all alone. She walked into the home of a Polish family and begged for bread. The woman said, "Don't worry child, I'll take care of you." The woman and her husband put Miriam in the barn.

01:45:00

Miriam hid in the barn, in a hole covered by straw. The couple could not give her food regularly, for fear of the Germans. She washed herself with cold water, but only occasionally during the five years she was there. The couple was very good to Miriam. She had no knowledge of the progress of the war, or whether any Jews were left alive.

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01:50:00

Sulowiec was liberated by the Russians, around 1944. The woman took Miriam out of the barn. The neighbors did not know that Miriam was a Jew, and thought that she was the woman's niece. At age 13-14, the woman took Miriam to church to be baptized. She also wanted to adopt Miriam, who agreed to everything.

01:55:00

One day the woman kept Miriam in the fields for an entire day for no apparent reason. On the return home, Miriam saw her brother and ran to him. The woman's husband said "A dirty Jew you were, a dirty Jew you remain." She hugged her brother and they held each other. She told her brother that their mother was dead and about their mother's dying words.

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02:00:00

Her brother reported that her sister Fay and her father were alive. Thus, four members of her family survived. The Polish couple listened. Until this day, Miriam can wake up in the middle of the night and scream.

02:05:00

Her brother was 16 and Miriam was 14. That night Miriam went to see her father. The couple knew that Miriam was leaving permanently. They were a very fine couple.

02:10:00

The woman's husband came to visit her a month later, in Krásnik, Poland. They lived on food donated by Poles. The husband wanted to check whether it was really true that Miriam had a father and brother. She was then placed in a children's home in Lublin for a short while. Her sister married and moved on to Bergen-Belsen, Germany. Her father took Miriam and her brother to Bergen-Belsen as well.

02:15:00

After a short time, Miriam was placed in a children's home near Hamburg, Germany. She left Germany and went to Palestine.

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Her father learned of family he had in Canada. He went to Canada with Miriam's brother. Her sister went to Brooklyn, New York.

02:20:00

Miriam was in Israel from 1947 to 1959. Miriam joined her sister in the United States, worked for two years, and brought her family to the United States. Today, her older son is a salesman, her older daughter is a teacher, and her younger daughter, (who was born in the United States) is a legal secretary. She has told her children her stories and experiences of the Holocaust.

02:25:00

Germans and Poles both killed her family. The Holocaust has affected her faith somewhat, but she keeps kosher, fasts, and attends synagogue as a tribute to her mother, as well as for herself.