

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Archives

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

**Interview with Pepa Gold
March 26, 1987
RG-50.002*0004**

PREFACE

On March 26, 1987 Pepa Gold was interviewed on videotape by Frances Farber 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 Pepa Gold
March 26, 1987

Pepa Gold was born in Buczacz, eastern Poland in January of 1924. She was still a schoolgirl when her town was occupied by the Russians in 1939. The Germans captured Buczacz in 1941 and remained there until March of 1944. According to Pepa, life was reasonable under the Russians although they had to line up for food and all business activity stopped. Under the Germans, Jewish children could not go to school. The Germans requisitioned all the men to work without pay in September of 1941, including Pepa's two older brothers. Pepa's father was considered too old to work. One of Pepa's older brothers was ordered out of city. Shots were heard and he never returned.

In February of 1942 during a two-day Aktion, 15 or 20 people hid in Pepa's basement while the Germans searched above. 1000 people were taken away. Typhus germs were introduced. Pepa's parents were killed. Pepa spent several months in the houses and barns of several Polish people. The Russians liberated Buczacz in March of 1944. In July of 1945, she joined her two surviving brothers in Breslau (Wroclaw), Poland. From 1946 to 1948 she lived in Berlin supported by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Between 1948 and 1951 Pepa worked for a Jewish agency in Munich, Germany. Pepa was brought to the United States by her uncle in 1951.

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**Time-coded notes of the
Interview with Pepa Gold
March 26, 1987**

01:00:00

Born in Buczacz, Eastern Poland. Family consisted of parents, four brothers, she was the fourth in line. She attended public and Hebrew schools. She was still a schoolgirl when town was occupied by Russians, 1939. The Germans came in June 1941 and remained until March 1944. First experience of danger—day Germans arrived: soldier spotted her father looking out second story window, entered house seeking "the Jew" to cut his beard. Mother's quick answer turned him away and the danger passed. Life was reasonable under Russians although they had to queue up for food and all business stopped. No problems in school with non-Jewish friends. Outside, mostly Jewish friends. Under Germans, Jewish children could not go to school. Under Russians all people were considered equal, regardless of religion. Under Germans, all men requisitioned to work without pay, except for her father—too old. Men 18-45 or 50 were called to register. September 1941—lost her 2nd oldest brother. He was aware that holes had been dug outside the city but went as ordered since he feared parents would be taken if he didn't report. Shots were heard; he did not return.

01:05:00

Pepa and mother took care of errands outside of own area. Pepa was blonde and could get by. It was more dangerous for the mom to go. Restrictions began during first year of German occupation: Jews were permitted to use only one line at multi-line post office and storekeeper whom Pepa knew refused to serve her; the daughter, a classmate, cut her dead. Curfew was set at 5 p.m.; windows had

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to be closed, even in summer. February 1942—2 day Aktion—15 or 20 people went into basement hiding place while Germans searched above. Small baby began to cry, was put in floor under a pillow for the entire 2 days. Happily, baby survived.

01:10:00

Main result of Aktion—1,000 people taken away, typhus germs introduced into peoples' homes, resulting in many deaths. Family had to leave town, her parents were killed, she moved to several towns with people she knew and was then brought to a small town, nearer her home. She spent her time knitting in the houses or barns of several Polish people, brought there by her family's former Polish maid who was afraid to keep Pepa in her own home. In February 1944 a neighbor warned of the approach of German soldiers. Pepa entered empty house belonging to Jews. She stood against the wall for 5-6 hours and escaped detection. In March, Russians advanced.

01:15:00

Ukrainians came and burned Polish homes. Russian soldiers liberated the town March 24, 1944. Pepa went back to family maid for food, wash and rest, then returned to Buczacz to former Ukrainian friend who gave her shoes, coat, bread. She joined a Jewish family she knew, and when the front moved after 8-10 days very close to their town, went with them to the Russian side, rather than return to German control. Walked all night, spent 3 days in an empty house, repeated walk at re-approach of Germans, and arrived at town of former Russian-Polish border. Remained 3 months until Germans were pushed back. Returned to Buczacz in July 1944 and found town ruined, floorboards torn up in each house, weeds everywhere, and left.

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01:20:00

July 1945 went to Kraców, Poland with some single girls; then to Breslau, Poland to join her brother. Life fairly normal there. She studied English, could speak freely, come and go at will. Recalling times of danger back home—each house had look out. Warning sent all to hiding place, previously prepared under wooden part of floor of father's candy factory, requisitioned by Germans to sew soldiers' caps. Box containing remnants was placed over entrance to hollowed out room where people sat without lights or obvious ventilation for the 1 or 2 days of the Aktion, this escaped detection. Lived in Breslau, Poland July 1945-May 1946. Two brothers were there. Berlin, Germany 1946-1948, supported by UNRRA. American government took the Jews to West Germany, Munich 1948-1951. Pepa worked for Jewish agency. One of her brothers had been in Russia, mobilized in 1944; other had been hiding in Poland. Brought to United States by uncle in 1951.

01:25:00

Couldn't evaluate effect of war experience except that her children think she is over-protective. This is common to survivors. Met her husband in Breslau, Poland. He had spent war in Russia. Has been too busy making a living, learning English, raising children, to reflect on the war experiences. Always had belief that she would survive whatever happened. Now attributes her survival to luck, or fate, not her own qualities nor her own religiosity since others more intelligent, better educated, more religious did not survive.