

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Archives

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

Interview with Lisa Reibel
December 17, 1987
RG-50.002*0023

PREFACE

On December 17, 1987, Lisa Reibel was interviewed on videotape by Nancy Kislin and Marcia Weissberg 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 Lisa Reibel
December 17, 1987

Lisa Reibel was born in Novogrudok, Poland in 1930. She was the second of four children. She had an older and a younger sister, and a younger brother. The Russians first occupied Novogrudok in 1939. Then in 1941, the Germans occupied Novogrudok. According to Lisa, pre-Holocaust Novogrudok had a thriving Jewish religious and cultural life. This changed with the arrival of the Germans. Her older sister was selected to be murdered along with 5,000 of the remaining 6,000 Jews still living in the Novogrudok ghetto in December 1941. As the ghetto's population dwindled, escape plans were formulated. The remaining population of 150, comprised primarily of young people, dug an escape tunnel. At night, the ghetto population crawled through the tunnel and out into the woods. Her younger brother was captured by the Germans and killed. In the forest, Lisa, her sister, and her father joined a partisan group led by Tuvia Bielski. They remained in the forest, living in dugout holes, until liberation by the Russians in 1945. After the war, they spent four years in a displaced persons camp in Italy. They then moved briefly to Rome, Italy. Her family came to the United States in 1949. They first lived in Brooklyn, New York, and then moved to Elizabeth, New Jersey.

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**Time-coded notes of the
Interview with Lisa Reibel
December 17, 1987**

01:00:00

Born in Novogradok, Poland. The Russians came in 1939, the Germans in 1941. This is when all the trouble started. Her family consisted of two parents and four children. The eldest sister was killed. Her father was a furrier. Family survivors include her father, sister Rae, and Lisa. The Jewish life was wonderful. Novogradok was near White Russia. Attended Jewish school, half Jewish studies, half general studies. Your fondest memories include School, camping in the summer, especially with family.

01:05:00

Father from Novogradok. Not sure where mother was from. Talks about synagogue and about the camps.

01:10:00

The Germans wanted 50 Jewish professionals. They were placed face to face and were shot. Children in the their windows looked to see

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if their fathers were involved. What happened next? On December 5, Jews ordered to assemble at the courthouse with one valise.

01:20:00

Sister, brother, and father were standing in line. Mother told the children to run in different directions in order that someone be saved. In 1941, 5,000 of the 6,000 were killed in their town. They were taken to a ghetto.

01:25:00

Soldiers shot 3 boys, including her brother. Her brother was alive, however. The next day, the soldiers who tried to kill her brother saw to it that he was brought to a hospital and fed well.

01:30:00

There were 500 people left in the ghetto. It seems there was a smaller number, finally about 60. They built a tunnel.

01:35:00

Lisa's brother was to be among the first to go out through the tunnel, they said, because he helped to build the tunnel. Also

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Lisa and sister Rae were asked to go with the first group, because they were young. But father was old and he had to be toward the end of the line. The daughters refused to be separated from their father and they went with him. Mother had been killed among the 550. They went into the forest when they came out of the tunnel. (Lisa was born in 1930, and Rae in 1922.)

01:40:00

They remained in the forest until 1945. Liberated by the Russians. She was 16 at the time. When they returned to the city, everything was gone. Neighbors asked, "Are you still alive?" Their home was broken down. They decided to go to Israel. They went to Italy and spent four years in a displaced persons camp. They then traveled to Rome, Italy.

01:45:00

In Rome, they lived in a Kibbutz. The Italians treated them very nicely. They received permits to come to the United States via relatives. They went to Brooklyn, New York, then to Elizabeth, New Jersey. Father went into the hat business. Mother died May 7, 1945. Sister died on December 8, 1941; brother was killed on September 22, 1943, when he came out from the tunnel. Maybe two or three Jews were left in their city.

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01:50:00

Lisa's message? People must live like humans, not animals. They killed children. It's not normal. What could you have done? Built a tunnel and escaped earlier. She had not heard about Dachau and Auschwitz.

01:55:00

The memories will last forever. She is very happy to be a U. S. citizen.