

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Archives

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

Interview with Regina Faigenbaum
1984
RG-50.002*0081

PREFACE

In 1984, Regina Faigenbaum was interviewed on videotape by Sidney Langer 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 Regina Faigenbaum
1984

Regina Faigenbaum was born in Rzeszów, Poland on January 22, 1926. Her family consisted of her parents and seven children; three boys and four girls. Only Regina and one of her sisters survived the Holocaust. In 1933, the family moved to Sosnowiec on the advice of the Pinchever Rebbe. They experienced much antisemitism in Poland prior to the start of the war. When the Germans arrived in Sosnowiec, they murdered the most prominent Jews. Regina's father's beard was forcefully shaved off. In April 1940, a Polish family reported Regina to the SS. She was shipped to Parschnitz forced labor camp in Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic). Her sister had been taken to the same camp earlier. Regina describes the living conditions, routines, and her work in a textile factory and on railroads. She also tells a story of how she was saved from being included in a shipment to Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. The Russians liberated the Parschnitz camp on May 8, 1945. Regina returned to Sosnowiec and was greeted with antisemitic remarks. She met her future husband in Poland and then moved to Landsberg am Lech a displaced persons camp in the American zone in Germany. Regina married in 1946 and emigrated to the United States in 1949. Three months later, she was joined by her surviving sister. Regina and her husband currently reside in Union, New Jersey. They have two children.

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**Time-coded notes of the
Interview with Regina Faigenbaum
1984**

01:01:00

Regina Faigenbaum is a resident of Union, New Jersey. She was born in Rzeszów, Poland, near the city of Kielce, on January 22, 1926. Her family moved to Sosnowiec, Poland in 1933 on the advice of the Pinchever Rebbe with whom her father had discussed his financial difficulties as a butcher.

01:06:00

She mentions the limited opportunities open to Jews as a result of Polish antisemitism. Her family consisted of her parents and seven children. Only she and one sister survived. She attended public school for Jewish children.

01:11:00

The girls and boys were separated in school. She was the youngest child. She belonged to Gordonia, a Zionist youth organization. This was against her father's wishes.

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01:16:00

She sites instances of Polish Antisemitism in the 1930s.

01:21:00

Three siblings and their families returned to Rzeszów in September 1939. The family was thus split between Rzeszów and Sosnowiec.

01:26:00

All three brothers and one sister were married and returned to Rzeszów. The three single girls remained with their parents. When the Germans arrived, they took out the most prominent Jews and murdered them.

01:31:00

In about April 1940, she was transferred to a camp. Previously, a number of people had been taken to Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. Her father's beard had been shaved off.

01:36:00

One day at around five a.m., the Germans came and took her 16 year old sister to work. Regina had gone to the bakery. Upon return, she did not enter her own home, but went to the janitor's house. That family reported her to the Germans who returned and sent Regina to Parschnitz forced labor camp in Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic). Her hair was shaved, etc. It was a women's camp. It was a two day train journey.

01:41:00

One sister was in the same camp. There were 6,000 girls working in a textile factory. She remained in the same camp until 1945. She describes the camp routine, the Appel, the sleeping conditions, etc.

01:46:00

Not too many Germans guarded the camp, and they were older women. The SS guards were cruel and well trained. At the end of 1943, she was selected for transfer to Auschwitz. On a Friday, a German woman left her wallet accidentally. Regina found it and returned it on Monday. The return was observed by an SS woman. This

created quite a storm. Finally, by miracle, the story of Regina and the German woman was believed and she was not shipped to Auschwitz.

01:51:00

In 1944, her work assignment was changed from the factory to a railroad. It was heavy outdoor physical labor. She worked six months on the railroad, until May 8, 1945 when the camp was liberated by the Russians.

01:56:00

She discusses the turning tide of the war prior to liberation. American planes dropped leaflets, not bombs.

02:01:00

The Germans left ammunition around the camp in order to blow it up so as not to allow survivors to relate their stories. The Germans left and the Russians came. The Jews were in the camp. She remained in the camp with her sister for two weeks. They then returned to Poland. She tells of a fine, helpful Czech mechanic.

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02:06:00

She found nobody in Sosnowiec. She was greeted with: "What a shame he didn't finish you. He left the job for us." She met only her future husband who recognized her sister. They remained two months and left for the American zone in Germany.

02:11:00

They went to Landsberg am Lech displaced persons camp in Germany and remained there from the end of 1945 until 1949. She had a cousin in Cleveland, Ohio. She never saw him. He died in 1950. Antisemitism and the murder of Jews continued after the war.

02:16:00

She tells more about German antisemitism. David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of the state of Israel, visited the camp in an effort to convince displaced persons to come to Palestine. She married in 1946. She and her husband came to Newark, New Jersey in 1949. Her sister married the same day and came to the United States three months later, in June 1949.

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02:21:00

She describes the welcome by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

02:26:00

They wanted to start working immediately. Her husband was a tailor. She describes their efforts to adjust and to find employment.

02:31:00

They earned 28 dollars a week, and they thought it was enough. They even sent a package to her husband's sister in Europe after their first week of work. The welcome mentioned above was probably the United Jewish Appeal, not UNRRA. Regina has two children; a 36 year old daughter in California, who is a teacher and a 33 year old son who is a certified public accountant in Springfield, New Jersey.

02:36:00

When asked if there was any lesson to be learned, Regina said,

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"Yes, it can happen here. We have seen so much antisemitism for no reason at all. . . .To lose a whole family, I don't think anyone would feel different."