

RG-50.002.0108

Summary

Helena Bokor, born in Košice, Czechoslovakia, describes her family and life in prewar Košice; her father's work as a wood merchant; the occupation of Košice by Hungary in 1938; almost being caught without papers during a street closure; her father paying to replace his name with a Christian one on his business; Germans marching into Košice on March 19, 1944; Jews rounded up to live and work in a cinder block factory; being forced to work clearing belongings out of Jewish homes; deportation of her family via cattle car train; separation from her father, mother, and younger sister at Auschwitz; her sister Naomi's illness; avoiding selection for work to stay with Naomi; transferring to Stutthof concentration camp while Naomi stayed at Auschwitz; selection for agricultural work at Botten; collecting sugar beets in the freezing mud; being beaten with a shovel in the farm's coal cellar; transferring to a farm in Grodno as the front approached; digging a trench for a mass grave on a peninsula in a lake; marching through forests as the front neared Grodno; hiding in the hay of a barn with her friend Claire to escape in January 1945; receiving clothes and food from the Polish farm owners; an SS and a Wehrmacht soldier sparing her and Claire's lives; jumping on a train of Ukrainian forced laborers; working alongside the Ukrainian laborers digging trenches; hiding in a cellar; crawling through trenches to the Russian side of the front; walking to Kraków then back to Košice; learning her sister Naomi and her brother survived; meeting her husband Ernest Bokor in the Tatrys (Tatra) mountains; immigrating with her husband to Israel in 1949; immigrating to the United States in 1958; the importance of education; no one wanting to hear stories of the Holocaust for many years.