

-TITLE- RUTH HALBREICH

-I_DATE-

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-RESTRICTIONS-

-SOUND_QUALITY- EXCELLENT

-IMAGE_QUALITY- EXCELLENT

-DURATION-

-LANGUAGES-

-KEY_SEGMENT-

-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-

-PERSONAL_NAME-

-CORPORATE_NAME-

-KEY_WORDS-

-NOTES-

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1:01:26 Ny name is Ruth Halbreich and I was born in Warsaw Poland, where I stayed until 1944. In 1939 the war started and that summer my family and I were up at our summer cottage. My father came to get the family and took us back to Warsaw. Then we stayed there for two days in a basement because of an air raid.

1:02:10 On a truck the family started towards Russia and 1/3 of the Jews also left. My mother was scared of the Germans. There are three girls and one boy in the family and all of them are alive.

1:03:25 The family settled in Russia in part of Poland, where the Russians occupied. There were schools for children and my father worked in the paper business.

1:04:05 Father decided to go back to Warsaw to look on things at home. He and friend went back. My home had been destroyed, but my father's factory was ok. Able to cross the border one at a time through the snow.

1:05:10 The farmers knew how to get people over the border in spite of the snow. I was one of the first to go to Warsaw. My mother was sent by the Russians to Siberia.

1:06:00 I stayed at my aunt's house with some of my siblings. The Germans began building a wall and this started the Warsaw ghetto in 1940, where we settled. My father able to sell merchandise on the black market to get food.

1:07:05 We were not hungry in the ghetto. Also, there was no school, but everyone was studying and the teachers would come to my house to teach us. There were dance and drama classes also. There was a curfew after 9:00pm. Because of the long nights there was time to study, sing, and dance.

1:08:13 In June 1942 the German trucks stormed into ghetto and caught people and took them out. We found out later that the people were gassed immediately.

1:09:05 Family built a hiding place. Germans came in every day and looked for people. Made a hiding place in the wall.

1:10:05 You knew when the Germans came into the ghetto because of the screams by people. Then you would go into the hiding place. People would call people in yiddish and begged them to come out to work... There were 40 people in the small room that served as their hiding place. People in warsaw ghetto basically worked in a factory making brushes for the Germans.

Supposedly you were needed if you had a factory button on, but when the Germans came in they would take anyone. My sister got sick and the doctor said that she needed to live in the country and get out of the ghetto. She got sicker every day and the only way to get out of the ghetto was on a truck taking out merchandise from the factories.

1:12:02 To get out you had to go by a gate with a check point. Her sister was on a truck and father gave her id papers saying that she was Catholic.

1:13:05 Before the ghetto, my father arranged for his business to be taken over by a Christian customer, and he taught this man the business. The customer wanted to help my father out. I got letters from mom up until the Russian war.

1:14:05 Mom had good chance of surviving. Customer loved children and helped them out a lot.

1:15:20 The customer was a devout catholic and spent his days in the orphanage helping out. This orphanage was very self-supporting. My sister went to the convent and liked it there and my father was relieved.

1:16:40 My sister, Helen, was 16 yrs. old and at this age children would be sent out to jobs in the area. My sister was put in charge of the nursery and was improving daily. Times worse and worse daily in the Ghetto for me but I didn't want to leave my father.

1:18:00 In 1943, when I was 17, I left the Ghetto out the same way as my sister. I was in charge of children a little bit older than my sister's group.

1:19:00 Story of 12 yr. old girl who got out after her father had been shot in the street by the Germans. She went to the convent as well. Stayed in convent until the spring of 1944.

1:20:00 Since we were without ID's, the sisters made us leave after they found out that the Gestapo was looking for Jewish children in convents. We went to the house of the man who took over my father's business, but his wife was scared, so he turned to a friend and he said that he would let them staying an extra room for American gold coins.

1:21:10 We stayed in one room until Fall 1944, the Polish uprising. In September I saw out of the window barricades everywhere.

1:22:05 I was told that the Germans had left the area, but then they dropped bombs on the area and leveled the town. I felt free and walked around. You could only walk in one direction in the town because of the barricades and the road ended by the trains and we found out that we were going to be used as slave laborers. I had no where to go and had no ID.

1:23:20 By train we went into Germany and into a camp where we were later segregated for work. There were 15,000 prisoners there. I met a man there who was sympathetic for us and he brought food for us at night. He came one time and gave them advice that in the morning people will be called out of the barracks to go to an underground munitions

factory. He advised us that we should stay in the barracks.

1:24:45 We did stay inside. The next day they called us out and sent us to do domestic work in a restaurant where we had good conditions.

1:26:00 We would get the coal to heat up the restaurant from across the street. This work was ok for me to do, but not for the 12 yr old girl. I talked to those in charge of us and they let the girl do whatever she wanted to do.

1:27:15 Little girl was happy and they were very close. Her hair was long, brown, and kinky, this scared me because it would give her Jewish identity away. So, I would buy her some bleach for her hair.

1:28:10 The bleach burned her hair and made her suffer, but her hair was blond. I worked in the kitchen until April of 1945. Next day bomb raids in the city. Everyone was moved to another city and the planes did the same there. I came out of the shelter one day and heard english being spoken and I introduced myself to a Jewish American soldier.

1:30:00 The soldier asked me about me family and he let me stay where the soldiers were. He got out a prayer book, but I couldn't read the Hebrew or speak Jewish.

1:31:05 I was in shock and he took care of us. We communicated in English and slowly the Jewish came back. And then he took us to a camp "Dora".

1:32:02 The camp was for displaced persons after the war. We went to the Polish section. (During the war it was a concentration camp where underground they were making bombers) There was a hospital there and I wanted to work there.

1:33:11 I segregated papers for them. I saw a group of people come up to the hospital, among them was my husband to be. He was helping to prepare for the Nuremberg trials.

1:34:10 He invited me to a barrack to a get together. I was still ambivalent about being Jewish.

1:35:10 He told me about a train going to France. And we went on to Paris and got a room in a house for displaced persons.

1:36:15 I got a job with a Polish family, helping them sew. The arrangement was good. I wrote a letter to the girl's aunt in Palestine and told her about their situation. The aunt wrote back that the little girl must come to Palestine.

1:37:10 The little girl could have been smuggled in and was taken to Palestine, although it was a difficult trip for her. The parting was sad.

1:39:10 In 1948 she was taken into the Israeli army and fought in the war of Independence. My mother was there. When I was in Paris I wrote the Jewish community in Warsaw.

1:40:00 My sister was working at this office. I got a letter from her and we corresponded a lot. I then got married and moved to Germany.

1:41:10 I then found out that my mother was out of Russia. My mother was not allowed to go back to Warsaw because of the living conditions. But she did one day go there to look through the lists of people to find relatives.

1:42:05 My mother was reunited with my sister. I have a picture from 1941 of my sister and I and we had sent it to my mother when she was in Siberia and she still had it when they were reunited.

1:43:10 I heard of Truman's quota of displaced persons to come to the US and we took advantage of this and came to America in the summer of 1946. My mother stayed in Poland until 1947. My mother and some of her children went to Israel and made their home there.

1:45:00 My mother came to US a few times; her heart was very much with America because some of her family would come to US every so often before war time.

1:46:20 My mother's family, in the early 20's, moved to America, but she was married and stayed on in Poland.

1:47:33 Her family was doing very well in Poland and the children were able to go to private schools.

1:48:05 In 1939 my mother wanted to go to the world's fair in the US, this would have been the first time in 20-22 years that she would have been able to see her mother, then the war broke out. When my mother came to the US after the war she met a lot of the family.

1:49:20 A great reunion in the US with the family.

1:50:00 The uprising was in April 1943, I left in January and my father had left the Ghetto in the trucks carrying merchandise. I met him in his office. He gave me a handkerchief of his to remember him by.

1:51:20 My father's biggest wish was to be able to save his children, and he was able to do this.

1:52:00 My father went back into the Ghetto to save the little girl's mother and no one really knows what might have happened to him. He was killed somehow. The little girl's mother was sent to Treblinka.

1:53:15 My father died in 1943. We could see the flames from the ghetto in the convent and we were very sad.

1:54:15 We told the mother superior that we were Jewish and that we were scared for our father in the ghetto. The mother superior said that she wished she could have known this before, perhaps she could have let our father be a night watchman. Our father gave us a lot of money in gold coins we gave it to the mother superior to hide for us.

1:55:00 After the war the sisters gave the money back to my sister. They wrote to me. The sisters never betrayed us. The customer who had taken care of us earlier was a kind man and truly wanted to help us in any way possible.

1:56:10 After the war when my mother came back and knew that he had the money, he was no where to be found. The man respected and loved my father.

1:57:20 My only wish is that my father had never left Russia.

We would have had a chance to survive as a family.

1:58:01 I wish that we had never gone back to Warsaw and would have kept my father. I am thankful that my mother survived. My mother had a tree that lived as long as she did.

1:59:08 In the last two years of my mother's life I went to Israel 4 or 5 times to take care of my her.

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