

ERIKA JACOBY AND MALVINA ENGEL
RG-50.005.0028. (RECORDED 1983)

Erica Jacoby and Malvina Engel are sisters, born in 1928 and 1914 respectively, in a small town in Hungary. They were well-to-do; their father ran a coal mine with 400 workers but it was eventually nationalized. They moved to Miskolc where they had a restaurant next to their house and then to Ederling where their mother was born. Their 2 brothers went to Cheder and had to be protected by their maid to and from school because of all the antisemites. Erika talks about feelings of wanting to belong and being discriminated against; Malvina did not feel that way.

They felt more Hungarian than Jewish and only slowly realized the horror of Hitler. In 1941 they didn't even believe their brother who was studying in Vienna and who told about the Nazi actions in Vienna; he soon moved to Mexico. Malvina stated there was terrible ignorance and that the family believed in Worthy. There was already hunger in 1941 and 1941, but it really wasn't too horrible until the Nazis came in in March 1944. At that point Eichmann was in charge of the deportations, and within six weeks, 500 thousand Jews were deported. They stayed in the ghetto at Miskolc for a few weeks, where there were 10,000 Jews. Erika was allowed to go outside the ghetto for work at first. After a few weeks they were sent to an empty brick factory that had no beds and no bathrooms.

After a few weeks they were sent by cattle car to Auschwitz. Erika remembers Dr. Mengele and the selection process. She talked about how difficult it was to undress in front of men, and remembers the chaos and confusion. Erika found herself in the same barracks with her mother and her aunt. They all laughed because they looked so horrible.

After 10 days they were sent to Plaszow where they had hard labor mining rocks. As soon as the Russians got closer, they were moved back to Auschwitz, where they again went through the selection process, were shaved and got tattoos. They were taken to Birkenau where they sleep 10 to a wooden slab with no blankets. Then they were moved to another camp. Malvina was so sick that she was hidden in a trash container so she wouldn't be sent to the gas chambers. They stated that they survived merely by luck.

They were liberated by the Russians on May 8 1945. They eventually went back to Hungary to try and find family. They lived in Hungary for 2 years, then Erika spent 2 years in Cuba before coming to the US illegally and getting married. Their mother and brother went to Mexico with their uncles. Finally, Malvina was able to immigrate to the United States.