

-TITLE- HANKA KENT
-I_DATE- 1/28/84
-SOURCE- UCLA HOLOCAUST DOCUMENTATION ARCHIVES
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY- EXCELLENT
-IMAGE_QUALITY- EXCELLENT
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
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She was born in Chelm, Poland which is known as the town from which the Sholam Alechim stories take place.

2:09 Came from lower middle class family. Father was a shopkeeper. Lived in a 2 story apartment house; most residents were Jews.

2:57 One of residents was a cobbler. Their apartment had 3 rooms with no running water. Fresh milk was delivered to them daily. Water was supplied by a man. There was no refrigeration. They had an outhouse.

3:56 Everyday a man delivered a letter from her grandfather to her mother. There was no electricity in their home.

4:27 She had a very happy childhood. She knew she was the most important thing to her parents and grandparents. She was allowed to roam to the woods to play, etc.

5:12 She always remembered there being a pot of soup cooking in her mother's kitchen. Anyone who came to the house was welcome to eat.

5:21 She was an only child until she was much older. Her job was to take the chicken to the Shochet, to flick the feathers herself afterwards.

6:44 Shabat was very important in her home and in the shtetl of Chelm. Her father's name was Gershon and her mother's name was Minsha.

7:12 They didn't have an oven. But the wealthiest member of the apartment building had a baker's oven. On Thursday night, all the women baked cookies and bread for the week in that oven.

8:13 They cleaned everything in the house on Shabat and the house took on a new look.

9:38 She watched her mother cook every Friday night and she could cook the same dishes herself by heart by watching for so long.

10:19 On Shabat, all the children had their hair washed and shoes polished. She spent all day walking and playing and at night they had a Havdalah service.

11:53 She went to a private school, to learn Sephardic Hebrew. She spent every summer with her grandfather in another town. At age 9, in 1939, she remembers first hearing about the war.

13:40 In Sept., 1939, she remembers the planes bombing the town. She and her parents went to a little village to wait out the war. When they returned, Poland was decimated although there wasn't much destruction in Chelm.

14:45 The Polish army took over. Then the Russian army invaded and took over.

15:39 The Russians made a tomb for the unknown dead soldiers in Chelm's square.

16:01 Many of her friend's parents had been in jail because they were communists; when the Russians came in they were released from jail.

16:44 Suddenly, the Russians withdrew from Chelm. But while they were there, life was pleasant, there was plenty of food and no restrictions.

17:30 Russia had made a pact with Germany to withdraw. The Russians had asked the Jews to leave and to bring along their belongings but her parents decided not to go with the Russians.

18:57 Her parents wanted to go to Israel after the war and felt this wasn't possible if they had gone to Russia.

19:39 When the Russians left, the pogroms started. The Poles took revenge on the Jews because they felt they were communists.

20:24 Her family hid for 2 days in a large closet in the apartment house. They heard shooting all during the night.

21:14 Her parents begged G-d to send the Germans to help them. When they got out, they found dead bodies everywhere and broken windows.

22:15 When the Germans came into the town, her parents were grateful because they thought the Poles would kill all the Jews.

22:49 There had always been a lot of anti semitism in the small towns. There were stoning and beatings each day; it was taken for granted.

24:20 When the Germans came, there were slow changes. Jews were restricted to a Ghetto, had curfews and had to wear a yellow star. Her father was forced to close his store so there was no means of support.

25:34 One day, her father went out to some work; he was rounded up and never returned. They realized after 2-3 days he wasn't coming back.

26:15 The Germans started kicking and beating Jews and pulling out their beards.

26:55 Her parents had told her that---we love you very much--there may be a time we'll be separated. If so, you are in charge of your little sister (there was a second child by that time).

28:29 Soon after, the Germans started taking women and children. They went into hiding in a cellar with other people; they had some provisions but then ran out of supplies. They started drinking urine. They started hearing the S.S.'s voices.

30:29 Her mother went out to get snow for water for the children and she was shot. The S.S. found them and marched them out and undressed them. She ran with her sister and hid--they escaped.

31:24 They ended up in a synagogue and spent the morning hiding there. They walked 15 kilometers to the grandfather's house during the night. When she got there, there wasn't one person left in that town from her family.

32:39 That town had a working Ghetto that worked in a sugar factory. She and her sister lived in a cellar with a family in the Ghetto; she was like a cleaning woman while the others went to work.

34:34 She had a friend, Esther, who was friends with an S.S. man; she told her about her and he'd come and visit and be friends. The little sister's name was Faigeleh, she was 18 months old.

35:36 One day the S.S. man came with a barber and asked her to go out and get them some water, which she did.

36:31 When she came back, the little sister was dead. They'd given her a shot. Later, the S.S. man said the entire Ghetto was going to Maidenek and if the little sister was dead this was Hanka's only chance to survive.

37:45 She felt she'd betrayed her sister and failed her parents

39:05 Esther didn't go to Maidenek but she didn't survive.

39:30 When the wagon came to collect the Jews from the ghetto, the S.S. man told her not to come out when the wagon came--not to be counted. She hid in the cellar. They waited for hours; then she joined the group but wasn't counted and

went to Maidenek. At the camp, she went with the workers.

41:39 She always felt lonely as she had no one with her at the camp. She worked at menial jobs like carrying boulders. Women SS were in charge.

42:32 When someone made the smallest infraction they released the dogs on the people.

43:30 From Maidenek she was sent to another camp. There was also no one there to care for her.

44:30 In Chelm, they believed in the world hereafter and that everything in life is decided for you. It kept her going that all this was the will of G-d; she wasn't angry at G-d at that time.

46:15 She then went to . It was a munitions factory in Poland. She was physically underdeveloped; she lived only on the rations given her; she worked two 12 hour shifts.

47:47 At the factory, pieces of steel would fall on her arms and legs and she'd be burned and didn't heal well because of poor nutrition. She worried because she knew that those with bad lacerations went to the crematorium.

49:47 The Poles ran this factory. There was a mens and a women division. She had no contact with the men.

49:47 Then she went to Chesterhau which was a working camp; she worked on small arms.

49:59 She befriended 2 girls named Salla and Frieda who were sisters from Warsaw; they became like older sisters to her.

50:30 Then she went to Bergen Belsen. She saw people eating human flesh; she experienced the worst hunger there.

51:12 She would stand for hours for the count in the cold and thought about food only and then peacefully dying. She thought a lot about eating potatoes.

52:10 She saw her first crematorium with her own eyes. She never knew when she was going in for a shower if water or gas would come out.

52:48 Everyday there were fewer people; if you were sick they killed you.

53:15 She didn't talk much; she was shy and withdrawn; felt inadequate coming from a small village that wasn't sophisticated when so many of other prisoners were from the big towns.

54:15 They were evacuated from Bergen Belsen on cattle

wagons. All of a sudden they stopped at Vierdoburg, Germany. They stayed there 3-4 days with the bombing all around and saw only flames around them. They were no longer fed and people were dying.

55:45 The track was repaired and dead bodies were removed.

56:18 They ended up in a brand new camp that had never had any prisoners. Salla and Frieda were also there. They were sure they'd all die in the end.

57:02 There were no personal-human qualities left in her; but there must have been a strong will to survive.

01:24 They realized the camp was near the front line and maybe the Americans were near. She shared bunks with Salla and Frieda.

2:20 Frieda was sick and afraid to tell anyone. Hanka was chosen to work in the kitchen; at the end of the day the workers bodies were checked and searched for food. She worked with boiled potatoes.

3:38 She hid 2 potatoes on her;she wasn't searched. She saw Frieda being so sick and gave the 2 potatoes to Frieda which was like giving up the greatest treasure on earth.

4:10 When Frieda got well she attributed her life to the 2 potatoes and felt she owed her life to Hanka.

5:10 After being in this camp for a week they were sent to another camp in the middle of the night. They stayed only 2 days in this camp and then moved.

7:52 Rumors started that Russians and Americans were near. They went to many camps like that for short periods; they kept moving them.

8:22 They went to Turkai-a camp in Bavaria-most persons there were from Turkey and Greece. They were there a long time. They knew the war was coming to an end. It was established it was the end of the war and that's why they were moved so much.

9:40 They were told they'd march to Dachau. If you feel down they shot you. As they marched they saw planes and bombs. The SS ran. Some prisoners ran. She ran into the woods.

10:32 When they got into the woods, they found Russians that had been in camps. Bullets came into the woods. They were there for a few days;they drank the moisture from the leaves.

11:42 After the 3rd day, they went to the road and saw German

wagons with supplies the German soldiers and horses were dead.

12:15 They walked to a house and knocked on the door. It was some German people who put them to bed and fed them. The next day they were all ill as they were not accustomed to food.

13:05 They were close to Leipzig; they walked into the city and saw the American soldiers. The prisoners took over homes.

13:57 They stayed in an army barrack. People were registering and looking for surviving family.

14:49 She felt all alone. At age 15, she was much younger than the other survivors. She had a vision that she'd find her parents alive.

15:25 Her first thoughts of the Germans who'd taken her in the house right after the war was, look how wonderful these Germans are now who were so awful before. Finally, they had the feeling they'd survived but were empty and alone.

16:35 At Tourkheim there was an epidemic of typhoid which she got; she was taken to the hospital. It was too full so she was taken to the morgue room. There were no doctors there to care for them or medicine.

17:42 She was sent across the street to the cloister to survive. There was no medicine but she made it.

18:33 Salla and Frieda knew she was sick. They walked to the hospital everyday and brought her food. Salla found her husband alive and Frieda found her fiance.

19:40 They wouldn't leave the town without her. But she couldn't leave as she was too ill. Then she got a second illness. In her hallucinations she saw her entire war experience vividly.

21:41 It turned out she had an inflammation of the cardiac sac. Salla and Frieda went off to Stuttgart.

22:37 When she was better she went to Stuttgart to stay with Salla and Frieda. She felt lonelier than ever there. Everyone had someone, but not her. She ; was still a child and didn't fit in at age 15.

24:38 She found out about the UN Glouster House which was a home for orphans. She went there. The UN workers were very kind; they tried to make them feel like a family and rehabilitate them. It was a happy period. Except others had

family elsewhere. But she was being taken care of. They asked her where she'd like to go.

27:10 She was told a lot by them about the US but she wanted to go to Israel. But it didn't work out so she came to the US.

27:49 From her early experience, she has a tremendous will to survive and a compassion for other people. She was left with an enormous amount of guilt. She doesn't have the hate that she used to have.

29:10 She's tried to use her life in a constructive way if her life is to have any meaning at all.

1:00 Hanka Kent, born in Chelm (ph.), Poland, 60 km. from Lublin.

2:00 Her family was lower-middle class. They owned a store that sold cigarettes, etc. They lived in a second story apartment - the apartment house was all Jewish families.

3:00 The apartment consisted of 3 rooms that encompassed living, dining, and bedroom quarters for Hanka, her two parents, and her baby sister. They had no running water and no refrigeration.

4:00 They had no phone, no electricity, and no radio. She remembers her childhood as being extremely happy. She remembers feeling important to her parents and grandparents.

5:00 She had an extended family in her neighbors. Her mother always had a pot of soup cooking on the stove.

6:00 Shabbat was very special in the shtetl of Chelm.

7:00 Her mother and father both participated in Shabbat. Every Thursday evening the women of the shtetl had a community bake, because most of them didn't have their own ovens.

8:00 The entire apartment was transformed for Shabbat. She remembers having to take the chicken to be killed and feathered every Shabbat for dinner that evening.

9:00 She watched her mother cook every Friday night.

10:00 They dressed up for Shabbat. She remembers it as being a warm and loving time.

11:00 Chelm had no public transportation. There were no telephones either. On Shabbat she went walking with her parents to visit friends and wish them a happy Shabbat.

12:00 She remembers going to a private school called Tarbut (ph.). She went every summer to stay with her grandfather in Reyoviyitz (ph.). It was a small town, and had no radios, but in the town square people met to hear the news and the gossip. She remembers hearing something about the war, but she was only 9 years old and didn't really understand.

13:00 In September of 1939, the man who delivered their drinking water stopped delivering it. She had to go and get it, and one day while she was doing just that there were suddenly bombs and planes everywhere.

14:00 Her family went to a small village to 'wait out' the war. When they got back to Chelm, the Polish Army was everywhere.

15:00 The Polish Army then left, and the Russian Army came. In the middle of the square in Chelm, the Russians made a statue to the unknown soldier.

16:00 The Russians let out all the Jews in the jail in Chelm. The Russian occupancy was a very peaceful time. Then all of a sudden they withdrew.

17:00 She was not unhappy because the bombing had stopped, they were not restricted, and they had plenty of food. The Russians left asking the Jews to go with them back to Russia.

18:00 Her parents decided to stay because Russia was known as a 'closed casket' and when the war was over they wouldn't be able to get to Palestine. Both of her parents simply assumed that they would survive the war.

19:00 They were ardent Zionists, and dreamed of going to Palestine. She recalls pictures of Herzl in her house. Her mother collected money for the Zionist movement. After the Russians left, the Poles started the pogroms. She and her parents went into hiding.

20:00 For two days they heard nothing but shots. They were hiding in the back of a bakery in a large closet. She remembers her mother pleading for her father's life at one point.

21:00 While they were hiding she remembers her parents praying to God that the Germans would come and save them. When they came out of their hiding place on the 3rd day, there were dead bodies everywhere. Store windows had been knocked out, and there was glass everywhere. She was scared to death, afraid of losing her parents.

22:00 Her parents were overjoyed when the first German tanks rolled in. They were convinced that the Poles would have cleared out all of the Jews had the Germans not arrived. She had been sent to private school because the anti semitism was so strong. If she had gone to public school she would have been stoned, beaten up.

23:00 As the Germans came in, it was a hopeful time, but they had heard that it was horrible in Germany.

24:00 When the Germans came, not much happened at first. Then they restricted the Jews to a certain part of the city, implemented curfew hours, made the Jews wear the yellow star. Her father had to close his store.

25:00 They had no means of livelihood. Her father left early one day to look for food, and just never came home. It was called Black Thursday or Friday, and they rounded up all of the men and deported them to a working camp.

26:00 After 2-3 days they realized that he wasn't coming back. When her father was still alive, they had heard rumors about children being separated from their parents. They told her that if that happened that she was to be in charge of her sister until they could all be together again.

27:00 The first big change was when her father was taken away. At this point they lost touch with her grandfather.

28:00 After her father was gone, they started taking women and children too. They went into hiding in a cellar with 230 other people. They had provisions at first, and were in total darkness.

29:00 They probably went in at the beginning of the fall. They ran out of supplies and had to drink human urine for fluids.

30:00 Chelm was in ruins - her mother crept outside to get snow for Hanka and her little sister because they were dehydrated, and she was shot and the SS found them all.

31:00 The SS asked them to undress and line up. She remembers shouts and shooting. She and her sister somehow ran away and escaped, and they ended up in a synagogue. That night she blindly walked the 50 km. to her grandfather's house carrying her sister most of the way.

32:00 There was not a soul left of her family there. She knew some of the people in the town, and lived with them illegally. She slept in the cellar and during the day she did the chores for food.

33:00 Her little sister hid under the table all day long so

that she wouldn't be seen. They lived that way for quite a while.

34:00 A friend of hers was a personal maid for an SS official. She told him about Hanka's situation, and he came and visited her.

35:00 Her little sister was very sick the whole time - her name was Feiga.(ph.) One day the SS man came with a fleischa (ph.) (a barbar?).

36:00 The SS man asked her to please fetch some water, and she left to go do as he asked. When she came back, her sister was dead. The SS man and the fleischa had given her a shot. The SS man said that he knew that it was difficult.

37:00 He told her that the entire ghetto was going to a concentration camp and to kill her sister was the only way that she would survive. She wanted to kill him. She had such great responsibility for her sister because her parents had told her that she was responsible.

38:00 For years she couldn't even look at a child. The friend of hers who was the maid to the SS man didn't get deported but she was the only one of her family to die.

40:00 Hanka couldn't get counted because she was living there illegally, but she managed to join the group.

41:00 She was very tall for her age, so she survived and was allowed to work in Maidanek. She had none - she was utterly alone.

42:00 The jobs were all meaningless - like carrying boulders back and forth from one end of the camp to the other. She doesn't remember doing anything constructive. The SS guards were women, not men, and they had German shepherds. If someone did anything wrong, they would set the dogs on them.

43:00 Their heads were shaved, they were in the striped uniforms, and they were constantly counted over and over again. Many people still had one or two members of their families with them, but Hanka had nothing.

44:00 She had no feelings, no thoughts. She believed in the will of God, in fate, and she believed that she had no say.

45:00 In Maidanek she wasn't angry (at God) but later she was. She kept imagining that she would be reunited with her parents.

46:00 She was then moved to another camp called Scargiscocamiena (ph.) which was a factory camp in Poland. It was divided into three sections, and she was in the first section. She still felt totally alone. She had stopped developing and knew nothing about life.

47:00 She worked twelve hour shifts. Pieces of hot steel would fall on her skin and burn her.

48:00 People with big lacerations from the hot steel went to the gas chambers. The barracks here were better. There were Poles in charge, and the work wasn't aimless. They were able to communicate with the men's camp some.

49:00 Many women had boyfriends, and the black market supplied cigarettes. From that camp she was taken to Chanstrhow (ph.), which was a munitions factory/work camp. She finally befriended two sisters from Warsaw.

50:00 They sort of took care of her and became her adopted older sisters. Their names were Sala and Freida. Then they were transported to Bergen-Belsen. She saw people eating human flesh. She experienced such awful hunger that her mind became deranged.

51:00 She only thought of food 24 hours a day. Her only wish in life was to have a full stomach and then die. She hallucinated about food.

52:00 She saw a crematorium here. One never knew if they were going to make it through the day.

53:00 She was very withdrawn and shy, and didn't talk much. She felt inadequate coming from such a small shtetl.

54:00 Sala and Freida were with her. They were then evacuated from there in cattle wagons. They were stopped at Viersburg (ph.) because the front had moved and the railroad tracks had been bombed.

55:00 They were stopped there for 3-4 days. They saw bombs, flames. The SS stopped feeding them, and people started dying. Then they finally continued.

56:00 They were taken to a spotless new camp (she couldn't remember the name). She never thought that she would survive except by a miracle. She lived one day at a time. She was beyond thinking - she was like an animal.

57:00 She did whatever she was told, but she thinks that she must have had a strong will to survive.

1:00 They were in a front line camp, and none had been there before them. Sala and Freida were there with her and they all shared bunks. Freida was very sick but scared to tell anyone.

2:00 She didn't know what kind of a camp it was. (Crematoria? Gas chambers?) Hanka was chosen to work in the kitchen.

3:00 They were told that they would be shot if they smuggled anything out of the kitchen. She decided to take 2 potatoes and hid them on herself. She didn't get caught.

4:00 She gave the potatoes to Freida, and she eventually got well. She was convinced that she owed Hanka her life because of those two potatoes. She had been in conflict about what to do with the potatoes - keep them for herself, or give them to Freida.

5:00 All of a sudden, they were packed into another car and taken to another camp.

6:00 Although her family wasn't wealthy, they had always stressed giving to the needy, so she had to give the potatoes to Freida.

7:00 After this, they were sent to a variety of camps, but always moved again after 2-3 days.

8:00 They heard that the Americans and Russians were on the front, and they had a tremendous surge of hope. They were finally taken to Toukheim (ph.) which was a working camp of mainly Greeks. They were there for long time, and thought that they wouldn't make it.

9:00 They knew that the war was coming to an end since they had been moved around so much. She remembers tremendous commotion. They were then told that they would be marched to Dachau.

10:00 While they were marching there, they saw planes flying overhead and bombs began falling. The SS started running and so did they. She ran into the woods with a group of people. They met up with some Russian concentration camp survivors and stayed there the whole night.

11:00 They remained there for a few days. There was alot of fighting going on, but when the shooting stopped they went out to the road. Their were overturned wagons, dead people, and dead horses.

12:00 They walked along the road until they came to a house

owned by some Germans. The people were very hospitable and fed them and put them to bed. They found out that they had been liberated by the Americans.

13:00 They walked into town and saw American soldiers, liberated people. She found Sala and Freida and they got a room and stayed there. She still felt terribly alone.

14:00 She had never had anyone her age to talk to and it seemed like everyone else had someone. She felt like she didn't belong.

15:00 She kept thinking that somehow her parents were alive. She had tremendous hatred and disbelief, but she was also elated.

16:00 Soon after the war she caught typhoid and was taken to a hospital.

17:00 The hospital was filled and there were no more beds so first they were put in the morgue, but then they were moved to a cloister across the street. There were no drugs, but she survived.

18:00 Sala and Freida had befriended some American soldiers and they were able to get extra rations to Hanka.

19:00 Sala and Freida found that their fiancée and husband were still alive, but they wouldn't leave Hanka.

20:00 Hanka got sick again, but the Red Cross had started sending medicine.

21:00 She was very sick this time and was practically left to die, but she recovered.

22:00 Finally Sala and Freida left for Stuttgart with their men, and Hanka soon joined them there. She felt lonelier than ever at this point.

23:00 Everyone had someone but her. She was still a child and didn't fit in. She was 15 years old. She wanted desperately to go to Israel.

24:00 She went to a camp for orphans outside of Heidelberg, which was sponsored by the United Nations.

25:00 The people who ran it were angels of God. There were children of all religions there. This was a happy period for her.

26:00 She still felt alone.

27:00 She has a tremendous will to survive and great compassion for other people because of her experience.

28:00 She was left with a feeling of having to do something so that this will never happen again. She also has tremendous guilt, but she feels that she has gotten rid of much of her hate.

29:00 She has never come to terms with it. She has tried to make her life as constructive as possible because if it wasn't it would have no meaning at all.
.END.