

FRANCES SIMON  
RG-50.005.0049. (recorded 1983 in LA)

Frances, nee Feiga Weiss, was born in 1925 in Iskis, a small Hungarian town near the border of Poland. She was one of 7 children born in a very religious home. Her father was a horse trader. She describes life in a very small religious town where they were very sheltered. There were about 35 families in the town They shared everything they had with each other. Her family did not believe that anything bad was going to happen, and actually were more afraid of the Russians than the Germans. A Christian friend Yura offered to hide them, but they refused. Frances thinks more of the young people would have survived if the parents and rabbi had let them go to Israel.

In 1941 the war started and all the Jews (about 10,000) were sent into the ghetto. She describes hard times in the ghetto, the starvation, the lice, the crowded conditions. Some of the Jews, including her father, thought this was a punishment from God. Then the ghetto was evacuated in the pouring rain and they were packed into trains and sent to Auschwitz. The trip took 3 days without food or water. Frances described the horrors of the train station at Auschwitz. She was separated from her mother and sisters and never saw them again. After the selection, shaving and showering Frances and some of her friends didn't recognize each other.

Frances stayed in Auschwitz for the duration of the war. She was able to survive because she was a good seamstress. She was lucky that she never got sick and was only beaten once. She and 4 other young girls were sent to work at a mattress factory. She talks about having to encourage the younger girls to take care of themselves and survive. She also talks about the foreign POW there who shared their food with them They stayed at this factory for 3 months. There were then only about 3-4 thousand people left in Auschwitz. They were evacuated by train to Ravensbrück for 1 week and then Malchow, near Berlin. They could hear and see Berlin being bombed. They were liberated by the Russians. There were many people on the roads at that time. The Nazi soldiers had taken off their uniforms and put on regular clothes. There were also fleeing German women and children

Frances dressed as a boy to deter problems with the Russian soldiers She talks about she and her friends looting houses in a town and taking fabric as well as food. She says many people died from overeating during this time. She eventually found a horse and wagon and left with her friends to Lodz, which took 6 weeks

Frances says she has 3 sons and a surviving brother in Chicago with whom she is very close.