

SARNA STOGER
RG-50.005.0054. (recorded 1984 in LA)

Sarna Stoger, nee Landau, was born in Krakow in 1909. She had 4 siblings and her father had textile factory where she helped with the accounting. She was active in the Akiva Zionist movement and wanted to go to Israel but her parents wouldn't let her. She met her husband at a summer camp and went with him for 8 years until her parents finally approved of the marriage. She had her son, Martin, in 1937.

She speaks about having to care for the Jews born in Poland but living in Germany who were kicked out by the Nazis in 1938. She and her husband had wanted to leave Poland. He had relatives in Uruguay, but Sarna didn't want to leave her family. At first, they thought the Germans only wanted to take the men, so her father and brother went to Vichy, France and her husband went to Israel, but all eventually returned. She talks about all the trouble trying to get exit visas and the experiences hiding the men when the Nazis came looking for them. Her husband was able to get to Italy and from there took the last boat out to South American. Her brother was taken to Auschwitz in December 1941 and her father in June 1942. Sarna was living in a one-bedroom apartment where she also housed 20 other Jewish people.

In September 1942 there was a notice for a second liquidation of the ghetto. Sarna decided to dye her hair blond and pass for a Polish gentile. Both she and her son spoke perfect Polish. She was able to get false papers. She lived from place to place in Krakow but it became too dangerous and she and Martin moved to Warsaw where they lived as gentiles right near the ghetto wall. After several tries, a doctor was able to undo Martin's circumcision and he went to school as a Polish boy until he got very ill with TB. They were taken to a subcamp of Gross Rosen and liberated in May 1945. She found one sister alive.

Sarna notified her husband in Uruguay that they had survived and he sent them papers to get to the US. They met in New York in October 1946 and eventually moved to Los Angeles. Sarna and her friend, Felicia Haberfeld decided it was important to get the survivors together and they founded the 1939 club. At first there were only 12 of them but it quickly grew. They sent money to care for orphans in Israel.