

-TITLE- SARNA STOGER
-I_DATE- MAY 20, 1984
-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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Sarna's testimony is descriptive about the Kraków Ghetto. She also spent a lot of time posing as a Polish woman, and her story about that is very interesting. She also speaks about Zionism.

1:00 Born in Kraków in 1909.

2:00 Took accounting to help in fathers textile business.

3:00 After Friday night dinners her father would often tell stories.

4:00 She had one older brother, one older sister and a set of younger twins - brother and sister.

5:00 While she was in high school anti-Semitism was growing. She joined a Zionist movement called Akiba. She was very active.

6:00 She wanted to go to Palestine with friends to start settlements but her parents wouldn't let her.(1920's)

7:00 She first went to Hebrew high school and then to public high school. Her husband was from Tarnau (ph.) and was a member of Akiba also.

8:00 She met him at summer camp. They courted for 8 years before they got married because her parents didn't approve.

9:00 She had heard about the anti-Semitic things going on in Germany, but didn't really witness anything until the Germans forced all the Polish people in Germany back over into Poland. The Jewish Poles took care of these people. This was in 1938. She was at this time married and with a child.

10:00 It was hard for them to believe what was going on in Germany.

11:00 She and her husband were interested in immigrating to South America before the war but she didn't want to leave her family. In September 1939 the Germans came to Kraków.

12:00 They wanted to go east towards Russia to get away from the Germans. At this time they thought that it was the men who were in danger, not the women and children.

13:00 Her older brother and husband went to Russia but didn't stay long. They never thought that the Germans would come so fast after them.

14:00 They had a friend in a town east of Kraków and thought that they would be safe there, but they weren't.

15:00 They finally went back to Kraków. At this time her father was in Vichy, France with her younger brother on a vacation and they tried to get French citizenship for her brother.

16:00 To do this, he would have had to join the French Foreign Legion, so he went back with his father through Yugoslavia and Rumania.

17:00 Her husband had gone to Palestine for the summer - he had a passport.

18:00 She and her sister were on vacation in Zakopan (ph.) with their children.

19:00 Her husband met a travel agent who said she could get them destination visas - Jews needed a passport and a destination visa to leave Poland before 1940.

20:00 She would have had to leave her father and brother behind if she was going to go, and the situation was so bad that she refused to go.

21:00 She told her husband to go to Italy and wait for she and their son there, and he did. Then Mussolini joined Hitler and so her husband left Italy on the last ship to South America.

22:00 Kraków was horrible - the Jews had nothing. She went to Tarnau at the beginning of the Ghetto.(1940)

23:00 In Kraków she still had her maid but she couldn't help them at all.

24:00 In 1940, Tarnau was better than Kraków. There were less Jews there.(60,000)

25:00 They stayed there until December of 1940. Her father was in his 50's at the time.

26:00 On December 8, 1941, the SS caught 70 Jews. They grabbed her father and brother.

27:00 Sarna ran out and saw what happened. She was crying for her father, and one of the soldiers gave him back to her.

28:00 She went to jail everyday to visit her brother. In March, her brother decided that he was going to die and benched every day, saying the Kiddush Hashem.

29:00 Her father went to the jail everyday also and prayed. He didn't sleep at all. They didn't know what Auschwitz was.

30:00 They got a letter from the Gestapo saying that her brother had contracted pneumonia and died. Everyone got the same letter, so they knew that they had been killed but they didn't know the circumstances.

31:00 June 1942 was the first liquidation of the Jews. First they were surrounded, then the Jewish policemen came with a list. Her father was on the list, but she had hidden him in a bunker underneath their apartment. She lied and said that he was away. The policeman told her that if she was lying that all the other men in the building would be killed, and so her father came out and gave himself up. She was left with just her child.

33:00 She found out that her aunt and cousin and baby were shot because they were at the incorrect address. She knew she had to get work.

34:00 A drunk German soldier came in to look for men, and she lied and said that there weren't any there, but they were really hidden in the bunker.

35:00 Finally he left without finding the men.

36:00 In June she was forced to work.

37:00 She had one bedroom only, but she had a garden also. She had twenty people living with her. In September, she got a tip that there would be a second liquidation for children.

38:00 She decided to run away. She dyed her hair blonde. Luckily she and her son spoke perfect Polish and had bought Polish papers.

39:00 She took her child and just left. It was risky even just going to the train station. They went to a Christian's house in Kraków.

40:00 They went from place to place. It was very bad. Her son Martin was only 5, but he was starting to understand. They had to sell clothes for money.

41:00 A lawyer she knew in Tarnau told her to run away.

42:00 There were still Jews left at this time. She decided it was too dangerous to stay in Kraków (Ghetto), so she went into Warsaw (not the Ghetto).

46:00 She was in Kraków as a non-Jew. She left Martin with their maid and went into Warsaw to find a place to live.

47:00 She got a recommendation to rent a room from a dressmaker in Warsaw.

48:00 The dressmaker told her that she did have a room for rent. She took it and hid two friends there for the night.

49:00 She was safe there most of the time. A young boy bribed her for her wedding ring because he knew she was a Jew.

50:00 She stayed in Warsaw through the first uprising (she lived right next to the wall). The sky was red this whole time. Martin was with her after she found the apartment.

52:00 Martin was terrified the whole time she was away from him looking for the apartment.

53:00 She used to meet friends at a doctor's office. She found out that the Germans were checking men and boys to see if they had been circumcised.

54:00 She found a doctor who would reverse Martin's circumcision for free. It didn't work the first few times and had to be done several times.

55:00 Martin got very sick, and no doctors would help.

57:00 Martin was questioned by the police and was accused of being Jewish. Martin denied it and turned around and accused the German officer of being Jewish. Nothing happened.

58:00 Martin was going to school at this time, and was sent home by the doctor because he had tuberculosis.

59:00 They were happy that it was just tuberculosis and not because he was circumcised.

1:00 They still lived in Warsaw at the time of the second uprising.

2:00 Martin was still very sick at this time. Finally the Germans stopped the uprising.

3:00 At one point they were all forced to leave their apartment building and were almost sent away, but an officer saw Martin crying and said that the women and children could go.

4:00 Martin's crying saved them. This was after the second uprising.

5:00 Their whole apartment building was taken by the Gestapo and made to march.

6:00 Sarna and Martin somehow ran to a barricade where Polish soldiers were standing and got in.

7:00 Martin got sick from eating and there was no water to give him. Someone had to steal water for him.

8:00 They were taken to a camp, and she and Martin tried to run away, but they got caught.

9:00 They were shipped to a camp in Czechoslovakia to do road work. It was close to the end of the war.

10:00 Martin went to a church to beg for milk and got some to give to his mother.

11:00 They were in a sub camp of Gross Rosen. There was no gas or killing there. She was still thought to be Gentile. They were freed in May 1945.

12:00 The Russians gave her papers to help her. She was liberated on her birthday.

13:00 She met her sister in Slovakia, then went back to Kraków and Tarnau. She found some friends and relatives.

14:00 She finally got telegram to her husband after the war. He hadn't known if she was dead or alive after 1943.

15:00 Her husband sent them papers and they met in New York City in October 1946. He had gone from South America to Chicago.

16:00 He only had a small room. His family thought that she was lying about the war. Her husband was bitter because he had it so easy in South America.

17:00 She didn't know English. Her husband hated the U.S. but she liked it and appreciated it because she had come from such hell.

18:00 She had awful nightmares and had to see a psychiatrist. She was depressed and cried all the time.

20:00 Martin kept all of his feelings to himself and had some problems. He also had to see a psychiatrist.

21:00 She and Martin both kept their stories to themselves because people didn't believe them. Even her husband didn't believe some of them.

22:00 She realized that survivors should talk about it and started the 1939 Club with Felicia Haberfeld.

23:00 She and Felicia were friends from before the war.

24:00 The first meeting was only twelve people, but it quickly grew. They raised money to send orphaned children to Israel.

28:00 She believes that it is important for future generations to know and hear from people who went through the Holocaust that it did happen and that it can't happen again.

.END.